



connect
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Celebrating 40 years of
supporting children's
and families' learning
and well-being

Annual Report
2020-2021

Connect Child & Family Services Limited is a not for profit organisation and public benevolent institution based in the Blue Mountains, NSW.

Vision - how we want it to be

Children and families thrive in safe connected communities.

Purpose - why we exist

Together, we support children's & families' learning, safety and wellbeing.

Values - what we believe is important

We tune in, connect and are kind. We strive for social justice; walk together and celebrate every child.



From the Chair and Board

To say that the past two years of operation have been some of the most challenging times I have experienced at Connect Child and Family Services (Connect), especially as chair, would be an understatement.

Although almost every organisation in NSW has had to navigate survival, those organisations in the human services sector have also had the onus of ensuring the most vulnerable in our society didn't slip through the cracks at the same time.

Despite the challenges, Connect came into its own during the 2021 financial year successfully transitioning out of the first Covid lockdown and effectively ramping back up to face to face service delivery.

Many of Connect's services such as child care and pre school were part of the governments initiatives to provide effective solutions to families in essential services and those who were working from home for an extended period. Connect also experienced a significant shift in the way it delivered some of its key disability services successfully implementing telehealth and designing creative ways to stay in touch with families who desperately needed support.

The Board, along with senior staff, started the 2021 year with an offsite strategy day aimed at preparing the organisation for the development of the next iteration of its strategic plan. The current strategic plan is scheduled to complete in FYE 2022.

The Board and senior team also explored a number of initiatives to ensure we were utilising our funds for the maximum impact in the community. Initiatives such as extending and evaluating YAWN, Best Start Coordination Project, Culturally Safe Workplace Training, strengthening our compliance management and a practitioner research project. These initiatives are detailed further in this report.

As you will discover in this annual report, overall the organisation managed to navigate through the challenges of the 2020 – 2021 financial year achieving positive service outcomes, preserving great family and community connections and maintaining a positive financial position.

In June 2021, the organisation farewelled CEO of six years Mark Turley. Mark joined Connect as the NDIS was being implemented and he steered the organisation through other challenges such as our merger with Lapstone pre school and the first Covid 19 shutdown in 2020. Mark was also instrumental in the development and implementation of our RAP.

During the year we also farewelled one of our longest serving directors and past Chair, Associate Professor Christine Woodrow. Christine joined the board of Connect in 2003 (initially Possum management committee) and has worked tirelessly as committee member, Chair and board member to assist the organisation in its pursuit of best practice, community impact and sustainable growth during that time. The Board of Connect could not function without the generous support of its directors and we would like to acknowledge Christine and all our directors for their work and effort.

We would also sincerely like to thank our full time and part time employees, volunteers and supporters for contributing to another successful year; without you Connect Child and Family Service would not be the fantastic organisation it is today.



Robert Crowe

Chair November 2021



Overview

Over 1,400 children and their families

accessing our programs across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

578 children and their families were supported through transition to school

in the Nepean, the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney Regions.

380 children nurtured and educated in our Early Learning and Care Centres,

from more than 226 Blue Mountains families.

Financial stability

further supporting organisational sustainability and innovation.

Over 116 Employees,

with 78% residing in the Blue Mountains LGA.

Connect Child and Family Services Core values



We Tune In.

We listen. We seek to understand our children, families, people, community's needs. We are responsive to their lived experience and to research in our field.



We show Kindness.

We are compassionate, gentle and think about the safety and wellbeing of others. Being kind often takes courage and strength to give honest feedback – being clear is kind.



We Connect.

We build relationships. We believe that the best outcomes for children and their families come from respectful relationships and working together.



We strive for Social Justice.

We oppose inequality and challenge social injustice by removing barriers to our services and identifying ways to enable equity of access, inclusion, and children's rights.



We All Walk Together.

We respect the lived experiences and heritage of Aboriginal peoples. We promote self-determination. We are Culturally sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal children and their families.



We Celebrate.

We celebrate every child – their individuality, gifts, ideas, and culture. We focus on their well-being, strengths and what triggers their curiosity and delight.



At Connect Child & Family Services we are adopting the Child Safe Standards. We are committed to:

- upholding the rights of each child as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We model this in our practices and behaviours.
- creating environments where children have a voice and feel they are heard. We promote the wellbeing of each child.
- prioritising our child protection obligations. We integrate protective behaviours into our practices enabling each child to grow in their capacities to promote and protect their own wellbeing and safety. As mandatory reporters, we report harm, or risk of harm, to a child to senior colleagues in Connect and to the relevant authorities.
- acknowledging children’s vulnerability, paying attention to each child and family. We are mindful of children’s lived experiences and aware of the impact of trauma on children’s behaviours and emotional well-being. We apply the best professional insights into child development and wellbeing.
- building safe relationships with children and families, acknowledging that parents and families are the first and most important source of care and education in the life of a child. We notice signs that indicate they may need support and act to prevent, the behaviours and situations that might put a child’s wellbeing or safety at risk.
- working together and in partnership with families, knowing it takes the whole community to keep children safe.

Reconciliation Action Plan – Update

Embarking on the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan has seen us invest in training, develop a monthly RAP newsletter and we have begun to shift our practices, for example Acknowledging Country where we live and work at every meeting across the whole organisation. We have made Culturally Safe Workplace training available to all our teams. Team members have told us this was thought provoking and has helped them to understand and align to the important Reconciliation work that the organisation is undertaking. An example of this is the development of our value – We All Walk Together. It has also ignited the passion for Reconciliation in more staff, giving them the opportunity feedback about what more our organisation can do and give clear directions for our next steps.

We have been able to work more closely with our local Aboriginal organisation - Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture Resource Centre - as we were able to offer them a space in one of our buildings to operate their playgroup. It is a privilege to have this Koori playgroup operating side by side with one of our early childhood centres and to be able to develop a pathway into our early education services. These strengthened relationships and the process of developing the RAP is enriching cultural discussion between colleagues, management teams and the Connect Board. It has given us the foundation to reflect on what it means in practice to Walk Together.

Early Childhood Education & Care



Our Early Childhood Education and Care Teams' primary focus this year has been engaging in the Self-Assessment process to achieve the elements listed in the seven Quality Areas of National Quality Standards.

This self-assessment process enables teams to critically reflect on the key practice decisions they make and to implement these. The teams have been working to ensure high quality practices are being embedded throughout each of Connect's centres.

Through this critical reflection process, the teams have identified the areas they need to seek improvement on and have developed plans to achieve this. Utilising this approach has led Connect's Early Childhood Centres to achieve higher results each time they are assessed against the National Quality Standards. This year, Possum Early Childhood Centre was rated as 'Exceeding the National Quality Standards'. This is a significant achievement as only 25% of services in NSW are rated as 'Exceeding'. *

All our centres have seen consistent occupancy rates and strong positive feedback from the families who choose to be part of our Centres. Families tell us that the way our team members build and value relationships with each child and their family, leads to them feeling a sense of belonging. Our Early Childhood Education and Care teams have shown incredible resilience, innovation, dedication, passion and creativity, not only in their bounce back from the impacts of Covid 19, but in their commitment to continuous improvement in each of our centres.

* ACECQA snapshot (Q2 2021)



LAPSTONE PRESCHOOL AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This year, the Lapstone Preschool team has been focussing on co-constructed learning in the physical environment - that is how children learn from sustained interactions learning and thinking with each other and their educators. This particular focus on the outdoor learning environment began by looking at the how changes to the environment could support the flow of indoor and outdoor of learning, and support children's self-regulation to play where they needed to play, throughout the day. The team continued to discuss and reflect on these changes and the types of interactions children were engaging in. This led the team to introduce more open-ended materials and loose parts for play into the spaces, which has seen educators guiding children's natural curiosities throughout the day.

These approaches are now embedded in how the team plan for and document children's learning. The team have also taken part in ACECQA'S Quality Support program to further embed best practice standards in their approach. This year has also seen the team focus on the inclusion of children with additional needs, they have taken part in programs led by KU Inclusion Support, and Stone and Sprocket. The team has also increased the opportunities for children attending the Early Development Program and those attending the Preschool to have share more time together during outdoor play and enjoy the art space and meals together.



POSSUM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

The Possum team is celebrating this year as in April they were assessed and achieved a rating of 'Exceeding the National Quality Standards'. Congratulations to the team for this recognition of their hard work. We welcomed Macaila Passmore (March '21), as Early Childhood Teacher and the Educational Leader. Macaila joining the team will continue to strengthen the already consistent excellence in the program at Possum ECC.

The learning and education of our 3-5 year old's has looked different to previous years. Possum educators offered families many learning at home ideas and experiences to keep engagement strong within the community during the lockdown and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in NSW. The team members at Possum are proud of the positive relationships they have built with families and children, this has included supporting families through difficult times - families have described Possum as a "safe place" during their challenges. This feeling of safety and belonging is what we strive to create for families and children every day.



HAZELWOOD EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

The Hazelwood team has had another exceptional year of supporting families and children in the mid mountains. At the end of 2020, the centre farewelled Lil DeBono as Centre Director. We thank Lil for her commitment and dedication to Hazelwood Early Childhood Centre and Connect during her tenure.

Rachelle McCoy took on the role as Centre Director (March 2021) and Vicky Peterson became the Educational Leader (January 2021). These leaders have supported the team to review their practices and approaches to program implemented at Hazelwood. There has also been a commitment to investing in the team's professional development opportunities, including building knowledge around theories, research and practices that relate specifically to our youngest children aged birth-3 years, as well as approaches that support the rights and agency of young children. The team has also introduced a range of new resources to the children to support and extend their learning and follow their interests.

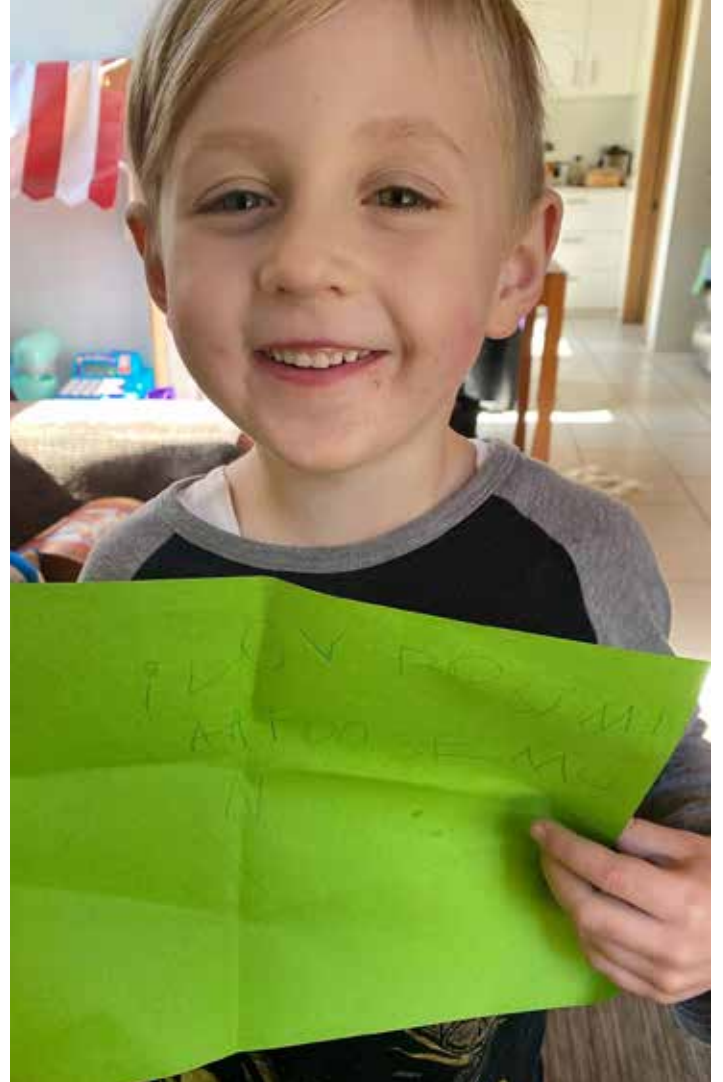


POSSUMS PATCH, MOUNT VICTORIA

The Possum's Patch centre said farewell to Rachelle McCoy as the Director and welcomed Simone Chaffey to step up into the role and Nicole Boothroyd became the Educational Leader.

Over a series of ten visits, Auntie Jacinta Tobin and Erin Wilkins shared their knowledge, traditions, songs, and stories of Darug Culture. This was a fun and enriching program and great opportunity to explore Indigenous tools, talk about Culture and an opportunity to experience Darug music and art. The team have also implemented 'Bush Tucker' gardens into both the front and back yards, which has allowed both children and educators opportunities to explore our native flora and integrate Indigenous Culture into our learning space.

Due to a successful Quality Learning Environment Grant, an outdoor classroom was built in the back outdoor space. This allows for the team to provide a diverse range of experiences and opportunities for the children in the outdoor space. This great new space means rest times and group times can happen outside, as well as sheltered picnics at mealtimes.



“He appreciated the activity packs you all sent out. He sent a letter saying: ‘To Simone, I love Possum Patch.’”

Children's Development & Disability Services

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY SERVICES (CDaDS) TEAM

This year the team have continued to apply a family centred approach, developing individual programs of support for each child in their home and educational settings. The team has focussed on supporting families to identify their child's strengths and to build the capacity of the family, teachers, and community around them, supporting each child's participation in everyday life. As well as strengthening our skills in delivering telehealth, the team has explored new ways to deliver services. For example, we collaborated with one school where multiple children under the NDIS scheme attend, and our Occupational Therapist joined the class for one day of the week enabling her to be "embedded" into the environment for each child. One of our teachers created a social "gameboard" to address the specific goals of some of our children – it has proven to be a popular tool to use as the basis for skill development in emotional regulation, executive function and making friends. In addition to supporting children in their educational settings, the team have been identifying opportunities with each family to promote community participation, such as our Speech Pathologist attending Girl Guides to support social interactions.

LAPSTONE EARLY INTERVENTION TEAM

The Lapstone Early Intervention Team has continued to provide transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary support within children's homes, preschools, schools, and the community. We have strengthened our skills in Telepractice as a form of service delivery for our families, so that they have more choices about how to engage and connect with our team.

We have put an emphasis on relationships within the community this year, liaising with specialists, doctors, and therapists along with connecting with other providers and organisations in the Penrith and Blue Mountains region. The team has been keeping attuned to the research and best practice approaches in the field, capitalising on the increase in online professional development opportunities. The team has participated in an internal audit, reflecting on, and evaluating, our practices and outcomes families

achieve. This process has enabled us to plan for quality improvement and develop new systems and ideas for the organisation that are sustainable.

“Having a Key Worker is perfect for us. It is not like other service providers that do their 30 (or 60) minutes per week in isolation. We feel like we are looking at our child as a whole, we are working and investing in our skills in supporting our child.”

SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING (SCB) PROGRAM

The Sector Capacity Building Program team partners with preschools to include and support children to gain improved educational outcomes. The team worked with 16 settings in the Blue Mountains and District region to identify their training and support needs and provided information and resources they required. The team adapted their usual service delivery model to include videos, online workshops, as well as a new SCB Facebook page with daily posts - alerting preschool staff at all levels to training, resources, tips, and local services.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM (ELP)

The Early Learning Program, based at our Bungarrabee Centre in Hazelbrook, supports families to understand their child's development and learning in a supportive environment for both parents and children who need a

more gradual transition into a preschool space. Families gained valuable information about local services and other service providers and were gently supported to seek further investigation into developmental concerns that were identified.

This year we said farewell to our long-standing staff, Kathie O'Connor and Lisa Caines who were instrumental in the development and delivery of the ELP. Their established systems and practices meant it was a smooth transition to our new, very experienced, Special Educators Lisa Manning and Anita Andrews.

MYTIME

In 2021, we re-established Connect@MyTime from our Westend Street space. This group supports families, from the mid to upper Blue Mountains, with young children with a developmental delay, disability, or chronic illness. The MyTime group meets on a weekly basis for support and information in a relaxed atmosphere. Families have the chance to talk about their experiences and concerns, as well as access to a range of resources, information, training, and speakers in response to the needs identified by the group.

This year the group has enjoyed hearing from speakers from local community services including Thrive and Carer Gateway and enjoyed a self-care session of Laughter Yoga. Most often the parents are happy to relax with a coffee and piece of cake and chat with other parents who really understand all their ups and downs. Family feedback, such as "It's the best part of my week" and "This group is important for my mental health" indicate that Connect@Mytime is holding a valuable space for these families.

BEST START PROJECT

The Best Start Project is an innovation in response to the needs expressed by families with children with additional needs and disabilities who live in the Nepean Blue Mountains area. Families and carers have been supported by the team to build understanding of the services in their community. The team acts as a bridge for families to access mainstream local services, specialty areas and disability specific pathways.

The team focus on a families' and child's strengths, building confidence as a family unit, and assisting families with completing application forms, understanding documents, explaining information and processes to parents. This support sustains a family and builds their confidence and ability to understand their child and their needs until they are engaged and accessing early childhood intervention or other community supports.

“Just being able to talk to Lisa and have practical support in referring my child to services has really taken a load off my mind and reduced my stress. This has really enabled me to be present and available to my children instead of stressing about a massive task list.”





“Thank you for all your efforts in helping our children learn so much naturally and through discussions.”



Connect Child and Family Services Map

Connect Child and Family Services Locations

Head office

1. Bungarrabee Centre



Early Childhood Centres (ECC)

2. Possums ECC
3. Hazelwood ECC
4. Possum's Patch ECC
5. Lapstone Preschool ECC



4 Possum's Patch ECC

Mt Victoria



Blackheath

Blue Mountains National Park

Medlow Bath



Community services sites

6. Hazelbrook CDAD (Children's Development & Disability) Services
7. Heatherbrae
8. Lapstone CDAD (Children's Development and Disability) Services
9. Westend Street



Katoomba

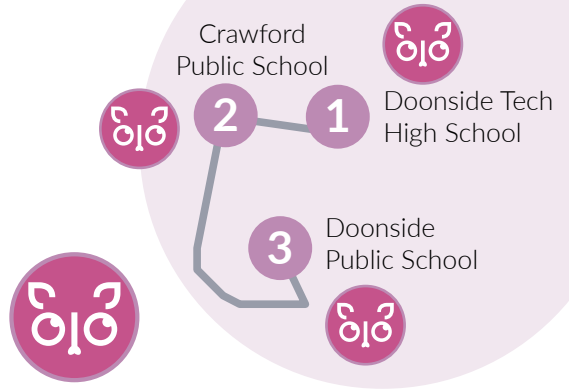
Leura

Three Sisters walk

9. Westend Street



Doonside



Little Possums

1. Doonside Tech High School
2. Crawford Public School
3. Doonside Public School

Bungarrabee Centre

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Head office | • Early Learning Program, |
| 2 Possums ECC | • Sector Capacity Building |
| 6 Hazelbrook CDAD | • Best Start Program |

Lawson

- 7 Heatherbrae
• YAWN

3. Hazelwood ECC

Woodford

Springwood

- 5 Lapstone Preschool ECC
• Early Development Program (EDP)
- 8 Lapstone CDAD
(Children's Development & Disability) Services
• YAWN

Lapstone

Community Based Child & Family Services

COMMUNITY HUBS, TOY LIBRARY, DADS GROUP AND YAWN

In 2020/2021 we offered welcoming and useful spaces for 445 families at six sites from Penrith to Katoomba. Families comment that our groups are a nurturing place to be, a welcoming place to stay and play, make connections with others in their local community and support when they are facing difficulties. Children can play, practise skills that ease their transition into early childhood centres and school. We adapted our service to meet the changing needs during the Covid pandemic, operating out of parks, community buildings, school sites and Heatherbrae when able, as well as providing a variety of online and phone-based interaction and groups.

Dads Group

The Dads playgroup supported 46 fathers and male caregivers this year. The dad's playgroup provides a unique out of work hours opportunity for engaging fathers in family and community, including offering attachment based family support, service referral, accidental counselling, and strengths-based father-inclusive practice. The group continued to be held weekly via online and phone-based interaction during the Covid-19 pandemic.

YAWN

This year our wonderful YAWN volunteers have supported 38 families. We have continued to support the volunteers with training and supervision and this program of support has been enhanced with a generous grant from the Zonta Club (Upper Mountains) which has funded Mental Health First Aid Training for volunteers.

Little Possums Program

The Little Possums Program works with three schools in the Doonside – Crawford area. The team uses child-centered trauma informed therapeutic approach. The program offers a holistic approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Our Play and Expressive Therapist works directly with the children, in primary and High School, to support their exploration and free expression of feelings, thoughts, worries and concerns including challenging life experiences and identity. Our Aboriginal Mentor works directly with the

parents through regular phone calls, meetings at the school and community support.

In recognition of their fantastic work, the team were accepted to present at the 2020 International Childhood Trauma conference organised by the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF).



Transition to School

NEPEAN AREA TRANSITION TO SCHOOL (WSTTS)

The Nepean Area Transition to School (NATTS) project manages Starting School groups in 14 Public Schools supporting 283 children and their families across the Hawkesbury, Penrith, Blue Mountains and Lithgow Local Government Areas. In 2020, the program quickly adapted and modified to support children and families transitioning to school during the Covid 19 Pandemic, operating in various locations such as parks, neighbourhood centres and school grounds when available.

The Nepean Area Transition to School project has partnerships with various community organisations and programs to deliver a valued service to the community.

Our partnerships with community organisations include Peppercorn Family Services, Nepean Community Network Service (NCNS), Blinky Bills Preschool, and local government children's services managed by Penrith City Council. These community partnerships enabled the NATTS project to support many more families to enhance transition to school.

The NATTS project continued to encourage and support children's literacy, being involved in Paint the Town Read in Penrith and Hawkesbury and leading the Paint the Blue Read in the Blue mountains, with book borrowing boxes used by some families at Starting School Groups.

Parents and carers commented that they like:

- It was different because of Covid, I am very grateful the program could happen, I felt supported.
- My child is feeling more confident about starting school because of the program.
- It's a great opportunity to meet children and parents beforehand.

Children commented that going to the starting school group helps:

- To play, have fun,
- Find out about big school.
- Say hello, make friends



NATTS Family Survey AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE

92%

My child is feeling more confident about starting school

93%

I felt supported by the Facilitator

79%

My child has made new friends in this group

85%

This program has helped me connect in the school community

90%

My child has developed skills to prepare them for school

90%

I felt able to communicate and work with the facilitator in preparing my child for school

94%

I feel that my child is looking forward to starting school

92%

I would recommend this program to a friend or community member

WESTERN SYDNEY TRANSITION TO SCHOOL (WSTTS)

Our collaborative relationships with schools, services, families, and community, across the Western Sydney region, ensured children continued to experience strong positive transition to school. Programs were delivered via face to face or through online platforms due to COVID19 pandemic restrictions.

Over 295 children and families were supported across 11 programs (including our Transition to School programs, birth-5 years playgroup and our Kidzone / School holiday program (4-12-years). This year the team was also able to pilot a 7-week program, in collaboration with Jesuit Social Services at Willmot Public School, for students transitioning into High School. This program focused on social/emotional needs of students and relationships. This was a very successful pilot that will be continued each year.

Our collective impact work in Western Sydney of 'All children start school well' with The Hive in Mt Druitt continues with momentum. Outcomes of this leadership continue to build:

- Advocacy with services, at a local level, for children to have the opportunity for consistent, affordable attendance in quality early education
- Awareness of service gaps and plans for needs based service intervention
- An Early Childhood Educator Community of Practice which meets bi-monthly to network, choose guest speakers of interest and collaborate with Western Sydney University.

Parents and carers commented that they like:

'She has changed so much. She used to cling to me but now she likes meeting new people.'

'Really nice to have the time to sit and talk about how they are feeling about High School.'

'Enjoyed watching my daughter getting excited about going to High School.'

'A safe place where everyone feels respected and supported, great places for kids to play that are isolated at home and the chance to build on social skills.'

Families surveyed in WSTTS at the end of the program AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE

95%

My child is feeling more confident about starting school

93%

I felt supported by the Facilitator

97%

My child has made new friends in this group

88%

This program has helped me connect in the school community

85%

My child has developed skills to prepare them for school

88%

I felt able to communicate and work with the facilitator in preparing my child for school

100%

I feel that my child is looking forward to starting school

96%

I would recommend this program to a friend or community member

“Grateful he can grow in such a safe and nurturing space, thank you.”

“I really appreciate you guys being open as I am an essential worker.”



Investing in

Investing in our services

In 2019/2020 the Board of Connect set the intention to reinvest surplus funds into the organisation. Their vision was to enable the organisation to trial innovative projects that would enhance our service delivery and better meet the needs of the community. Five 'innovative' projects were commenced in 20/21.

1. Extending and evaluating YAWN
2. Best Start Coordination Project
3. Culturally Safe Workplace Training
4. Connect-ED: Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioner Research
5. Strengthening Compliance Management

Extending and evaluating YAWN

The YAWN Coordinator has documented the YAWN model using a program logic and completed a Literature review preparing the service for a formal evaluation. We were delighted to be nominated at the 2021 Zest Awards and to see two volunteers nominated for the Westfield Local Heroes awards. The team are also grateful for a donation from ZONTA to support the training of new volunteers.

"So even if it's only for two hours a week, having a YAWN volunteer come over and hold the baby so I can get stuff done (not to mention restore my sanity) goes a small way to restoring balance... at the end of our two hour period each week, Baby and I close the door and chat about what fun we've had, and we can't wait for next week."

Parent

Culturally Safe Workplace Framework

Dr Lana Leslie has delivered five Culturally Safe Workplace training sessions, enabling 80 per cent of all staff members to attend, with a further two planned once the Greater Sydney Stay at Home Order and restrictions are removed. These sessions have influenced the development of our Reconciliation Action Planning and the revision of our Values, Purpose and Vision for the organisation. This project has also included the development of an Aboriginal Staff Network with mentoring support from Dr Leslie. It has strengthened our capacity to create a workplace and services where

Aboriginal staff, community members, families and children feel Culturally safe. These workshops have laid a foundation for reflecting on our current practice and provided a guide for how we shape our practices to be Culturally Safe.

Best Start Coordinator Project

Our Best Start Coordinator project was established as a support to families with young children who felt they needed additional support in relation to their child's learning and development. The service is responsive to an individual family's needs and aims to build families networks, links, access, and engagement with services to support their areas of need.

"Best Start has been such a key part of helping myself and my child move forward."

Parent

Connect-ED: Practitioner Research

The Board invested in a practitioner research project - Connect- ED - in collaboration with A/Prof. Christine Woodrow (Western Sydney University) and A/Prof. Linda Newman (University of Newcastle). Each of Connect's four Early Childhood Centres have selected a two person research team. The teams will learn specific content which includes The Five Literacy Keys, Critical Reflection, Intentional Teaching, Sustained Shared Thinking and Being an Agentic Professional as well as research skills. The teams will present on their research early in 2022.

"Being part of the practitioner researcher has enhanced my critical thinking and to look at things differently. It's inspired me to think more deeply about our work."

Staff member

Strengthening Compliance Management

The Board has invested funds into our infrastructure to ensure that the organisation can work efficiently, remotely and in a paperless way, whilst maintaining the highest levels of compliance and risk management. The investment in compliance software will support Connect's culture of monitoring our data and using these insights to inform decision making. The project will continue to be implemented throughout 2021.

Organisation

Collaborative Partnerships

With thanks to our collaborators and partners:

- A/Prof. Christine Woodrow
Western Sydney University and
A/Prof. Linda Newman - University
of Newcastle
- Lana Leslie Consulting
- Gateway Family Services
- Thrive Services
- Mountains Outreach Community
Services
- Local & regional schools, Early
Childhood Centres and Out of
School Hour Care Services
- G.P's, and Allied Health professionals
- Family Day Care
- ACRC
- The Hive
- Peppercorn Family Services
- Willmot Community HUB
- Penrith City Council
- NCNS
- Paint the Town READ
- Blue Mountains Early Childhood
Educator Network
- Community Kids - Blinky Bills



Organisation

Acknowledgements

The Board takes this opportunity to honour and thank our employees and volunteers for their commitment to our Mission and Values. Connect acknowledges the funding support it receives from Commonwealth, State & Local Governments including the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the NSW Department of Education and Blue Mountains Council. We also acknowledge funding received from Zonta Club (Upper Mountains) and Wentwest to support our Aboriginal Mentoring Program operating in Western Sydney. A special acknowledgment goes to those long-standing members of the team we said farewell to over the last year Kylie Witt, Lisa Cairns, Kathie O'Connor, Karen Hall who all gave a huge amount to the children, families and colleagues. We also said farewell to our longest serving member of staff, Jeanette Crawford. Jeanette was instrumental in the start-up of many of the programs that exist today at Connect including Heatherbrae in Lawson, YAWN, and Dads group. We would like to express our sincere admiration for her outstanding contributions to the success of Connect and we appreciate everything she has done over the past 19 years.

Governance

Connect Child and Family Services Ltd is governed by a Board of Directors elected at each Annual General Meeting. Directors come from the broader community, representing our user base, academia, business, and subject matter experts.

The Board meets bimonthly to review and maintain all governance relating to the company. We are at the mid-point of our three year strategic plan with the aim of sustainably growing service opportunities across the Nepean/Blue Mountains and Western Sydney areas.

2020/2021 Board of Directors

Mr Robert Crowe / **Chair**
Alexandra Payne / **Treasurer**
Peter Carroll
A/Prof. Christine Woodrow
(Stood down at AGM Nov 2020)
Erin Fearn-Smith
Maree Ryan
Klaus Engelhardt
Annie Gethin
Andi Salamon
Barbara Cuthbert

Finances

Despite a difficult operating environment over the past 12 months, Connect was able to maintain financial stability and services to the community. This is testimony to the faith our clients and funders have in Connect to carry out this important work. As a community-based organisation, we aim to maximise the reach of our funds to deliver our programs, while ensuring we make a small surplus that can be invested in innovative programs or worthy services that may be needed in the community but are not funded through traditional channels. This year we expended 99% of income on our programs and reinvested in initiatives that the Board and senior team deemed to be beneficial to the operations.



We acknowledge that our services operate on the traditional lands of the Darug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri peoples, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



“Thank you to all staff for helping, even when COVID stopped ‘normal’ activities it was still amazingly organised, so we weren’t cut out completely”



Contact Us

Connect Child and Family Services Ltd.
ABN 54 617 948 231

Head Office

48-50 Oaklands Road (PO Box 2)
Hazelbrook NSW 2779
P 02 4758 9966 F 02 4758 9988

Lapstone Office

9-11 Explorers Road
Lapstone NSW 2773
P 02 4739 2606

connect@connectcfs.org.au
FB Connect Child and Family Services
connectcfs.org.au

