

Annual Review 2023/2024.

CatholicCare Diocese of Wollongong





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Where we work.

In addition to our office locations, we provide social, emotional and practical support in homes, schools and communities throughout the Diocese of Wollongong

 Campbelltown

 Wollongong

 Nowra



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

CatholicCare acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country on which we live and work, the lands of the Dharawal, Yuin, Dharug and Gundunurra Nations. We recognise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.



Mission

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring joy to those we serve by enabling growth, healing, and hope. By delivering effective and high quality social services, CatholicCare helps to build the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.



Vision

For inclusive, thriving communities where the human dignity of all is respected and valued.



Values

- **Dignity:** Everyone is worthy of respect.
- **Integrity:** Always do the right thing.
- **Compassion:** Be empathic and responsive.
- **Excellence:** Be the best we can be.
- **Solidarity:** Working together for the common good.

Forewords.



Bishop Brian Mascord
Bishop of Wollongong

As we present the 2023/24 Annual Report for CatholicCare Wollongong, we take the time to reflect on another year of dedicated service to our community. This report not only outlines the activities and achievements of CatholicCare but it also reflects the Diocese of Wollongong's commitment to being Bearers of Christ's love.

In a world that often presents us with trials and uncertainties, the work of CatholicCare stands as a beacon of hope. The organisation's mission is grounded in the Christian imperative to love our neighbour, and through this love, we witness the presence of Christ among us.

The efforts of CatholicCare are a testament to the belief that every per-

son has an innate dignity and worthy compassion. The work done here profoundly enriches the lives we work with.

I wish to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the CatholicCare team, under the leadership of Michael Austin, his tenth year as CatholicCare CEO. The dedication shown by the staff in supporting those in need reflects the depth of our faith. Each person encountered is met with respect and kindness, ensuring that the core values of our Diocese are upheld in every action.

I am also deeply grateful to the CatholicCare Advisory Council, whose wisdom and commitment has been invaluable.

To all those involved with CatholicCare, I offer my sincere thanks. Your work is not only a service to our community but a profound expression of our faith in action. May God's grace continue to guide and bless you in all your endeavours.



Franca Facci
CatholicCare Advisory Council Chair

As Chair of the CatholicCare Advisory Council, I am pleased to reflect on the very considerable efforts and accomplishments of CatholicCare Wollongong over the past year. It has been a period marked by significant progress and thoughtful evolution within our organisation, particularly in governance and strategic planning.

First, I wish to express my deepest appreciation for the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff, who are the very foundation of CatholicCare's mission. Their unwavering commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities is truly inspiring. Michael Austin, along with his exceptional team, has continued to breathe life into our Mission with unwavering dedication. This year, Michael celebrated 10 years as CatholicCare's CEO, and we are grateful for his leadership and commitment to our organisation.

This year has also seen important planning and assessments in reviewing our governance structure, aimed at strengthening the leadership and oversight of our operations. Reviewing our governance structure is vital as we navigate an increasingly complex landscape and continue to serve our communities with the highest standards of care and accountability. I extend my sincere thanks to the Advisory Council members for their commitment and professional guidance.

In addition, we have been deeply engaged in the development and launch

of our strategy - Purpose. Passion. Possibility. This strategy is designed to position CatholicCare for sustained growth and impact in the coming years, ensuring that we continue to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. The collaborative efforts that went into crafting this strategy are a testament to the shared vision and commitment of everyone involved.

To our clients and participants, thank you for the trust you place in us. We recognise the profound privilege it is to be part of your lives, particularly during challenging times. Our commitment to honouring and upholding your dignity remains at the forefront of everything we do.

Navigating the challenges of a complex labour market, diverse funding models, and significant community needs is no small feat. The breadth and quality of our services are sustained by the resources and unwavering commitment behind the scenes. As Chair of the Advisory Council, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together. I am confident that CatholicCare will continue to provide vital, high-quality services that are both impactful and deeply valued.



Michael Austin
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

This past year has been one of continued strength and resilience for CatholicCare, as we have maintained our commitment to providing essential services to those in need throughout our community. Our ongoing efforts to anticipate and manage strategic risks, alongside identifying new opportunities, have been central to our mission of expanding and deepening our impact.

Since our founding in 1980, CatholicCare has proudly upheld its legacy of service across the Diocese of Wollongong, which includes the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven, and Southern Highlands regions. The increasing need within our communities continues to drive demand for our services in 2023/24.

I am deeply proud of the dedication, compassion, and professionalism that our entire CatholicCare team has demonstrated in rising to meet these challenges, serving over 14,000 clients across the Diocese this past year.

Despite the challenges posed by a competitive job market, we have remained focused on attracting and retaining a talented, motivated, and highly skilled workforce. Investing in our people has been a top priority, ensuring they have the necessary tools

and support to excel in their roles. Our commitment to excellence is grounded in our conviction that the communities we serve rightfully expect and deserve the highest of standards.

Throughout the year, we have also concentrated on enhancing several key operational areas. These include advancing our project management capabilities, strengthening our risk management practices, refining our reporting processes, and bolstering our cyber security measures.

Our work is made possible through the partnerships we share with various levels of government, across the Diocesan Pastoral Works, and other community partners. I am thankful for the collaboration and support of these relationships as CatholicCare strives to be an agent of positive change in the community.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Bishop Brian for his unwavering support of CatholicCare's mission and for his personal encouragement. My gratitude also goes out to Franca Facci, Chair of the CatholicCare Advisory Council (CAC) and all the members of the CAC for their steadfast commitment and wise guidance. I am also fortunate to work alongside an exceptional Executive Leadership Team and a dedicated workforce whose commitment to the people we serve and to each other is truly remarkable.

The communities we serve rightfully expect and deserve the highest of standards

Their collective efforts are the driving force behind CatholicCare's ongoing success and the fulfillment of our mission.

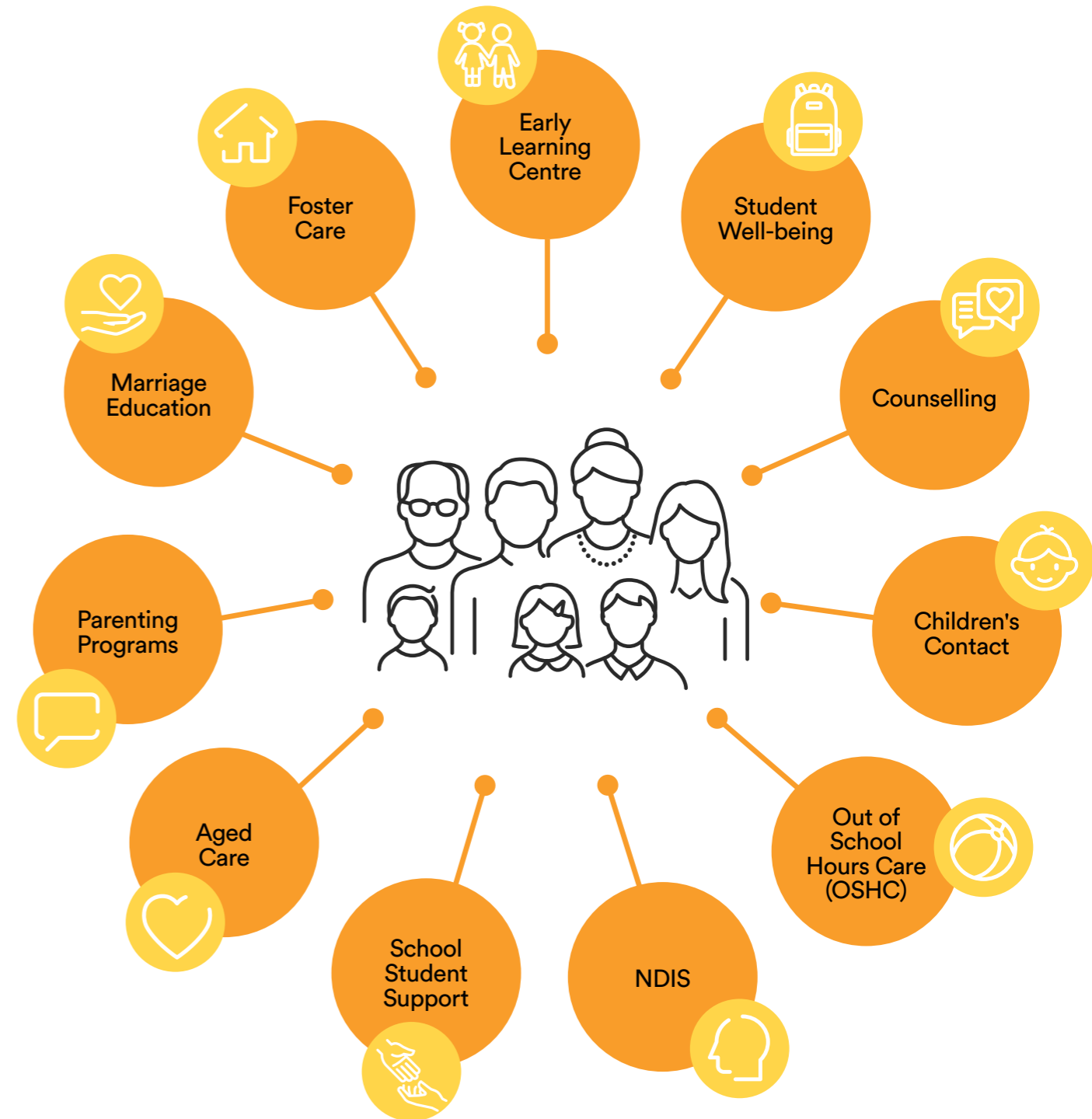
As we continue to navigate the dynamic nature of our sector, I remain deeply thankful for the guiding principles of our Mission and Values. They serve as our foundation, our guiding star, and our steady anchor as we carry forward CatholicCare's work of service within the community.



Our Services.

CatholicCare is the social services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, covering the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Macarthur and Southern Highlands Regions. We support people to establish and build positive relationships and connected lives. Our aim is to help people through difficult times to help them achieve self-reliance and realise their full potential. We advocate for social equality and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable.

CatholicCare is a local not-for-profit organisation committed to helping those in need regardless of religious beliefs, background or circumstances.



Our Impact.

3,468

children in Catholic school communities accessed counselling and early intervention to support their social and emotional wellbeing



7,103



students participated in well-being groups and community initiatives



91

Foster care households provided a safe, nurturing and secure family environment for children and young people needing care

5

new foster care households approved

57 

couples entered into married life with a clearer picture of their own and each other's expectations through Marriage and Relationship Education



771

older people accessed Aged Care services to help them live well in their home and community



321

people focused on their parenting and relationships skills to improve family life

71

children enrolled at CatholicCare Early Learning Centre - Shellharbour developed their social skills, self-confidence, creative thinking and love of learning



113

families experiencing separation carefully navigated supervised visits and changeovers of children using Children's Contact Service



250

people increased insights and awareness and developed personal strategies through speaking with a Family & Relationship counsellor

45

people living with disabilities increased their independence and community connections

1,823

children of working families enjoyed activities in a safe environment before and after school care

Celebrating National Families Week.

In May CatholicCare celebrated National Families Week Family Fun Days across two locations, St John's Parish at Dapto and St Thomas More Parish in Ruse.

National Families Week is an initiative designed to celebrate the crucial role that families play in Australian society. The theme was "Celebrating Family Diversity & Connections", highlighting the importance of recognising the unique qualities of every family.

At the Family Fun Days, there were a number of activities that families could participate in:

- A petting zoo in Dapto
- A reptile zoo in Ruse
- Face painting
- Lawn games
- Kids craft stations
- Sausage sizzles
- Skill games from Wave FM at Dapto
- Fire Truck walk-throughs at Ruse
- Football games from the Illawarra Dragons at Dapto

National Families Week allowed us to celebrate family diversity and connection, bringing over 650 people together across two parishes for a day of community and fun.

Feedback on the day was very positive, with many families expressing their gratitude to CatholicCare for putting on these events to enjoy together as a family. Our parish partners, Fr Michael from Ruse and Fr Francis from Dapto, were also very pleased at how the events brought the community together.

We estimated that we had over 450 attendees at Dapto, and over 200 attendees at Ruse.

The great success of these events wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of our staff. Thank you to each and every one of them.



Child Protection Week Presentations.

Child Protection Week runs every September and serves as a powerful reminder that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people are paramount.

In support of National Child Protection Week, the School, Students and Families Program (SSFP) and seven schools in the Diocese facilitated an hour long parent information sessions aimed at providing psycho-social education to parents and carers.

These sessions were designed to enhance protective factors and are aligned with our program logic focused on developing resilience. The workshops also connected with the 2023 Child Protection week theme, "Where We Start Matters", emphasising the importance of early intervention and support in child development.

The information sessions covered a range of topics including:

- Managing Big Emotions
- Building a Child's Resilience
- Support Children in Developing Friendships
- 178 parents/carers registered to attend a range of workshops
- Overall satisfaction rating 9/10

178 parents and carers attended the workshops and they gave the an overall satisfaction rating of 9/10.



Technology Improvements.

CatholicCare has been conducting an IT Transformation Program to upgrade our IT infrastructure and application. The upgrades have resulted in increased efficiencies, lower technology costs, improved service delivery which has resulted in improved client experiences and increased client satisfaction.

The activities in the 2023-24 financial year were focussed on our infrastructure, applications, security and compliance requirements to ensure we continue to meet the needs of the agency and maintain the confidentiality of our client's data.

Our IT Transformation Program is improving efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing client satisfaction.

The ICT team also developed and delivered a number of major Client Management Information Systems (CMIS) projects, including implementing Penelope for School, Student and Families Program and Permanency Support Program teams, as well as being in the first

stages of Penelope implementation for FCP and Contact. ICT also successfully implemented CareLink GO via a pilot program with 10 Community Support Workers (CSW), which will continue to roll out to all CSWs.



Client and participant testimonials.

Counselling client

“The counsellor was so lovely, she listened and understood what I was saying, she didn’t make me feel stupid. I’m so glad I got to meet her.”

Cross + Gen participant

“May I take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the staff and wonderful year 10 students, for their generous and expert assistance over the past 6 weeks of guiding us seniors in the use of phone technology. Your patience and kindness is greatly appreciated by us all. Thank you doesn’t seem enough to express our gratitude for you all taking the time to share your knowledge with us. You really have helped us ALOT. It was comforting to know your heart was in it too. Thank you for all you have done and all you continue to achieve.”

Aged Care clients family

“Mum loves the care workers and I feel confident leaving her with them while I attend to matters away from the home. They are compassionate, helpful and communicate well with my Mum.”

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

“My daughter absolutely loves going to OSHC and wishes she could go every day”

CatholicCare Early Learning Centre – Shellharbour family

“A hugh thank you for making my son’s first week so stress-free and seamless. He’s enjoying it so much and is a huge change to his previous experience. Thank you”

School Student & Family Program parent

Thank you so much to the school counsellor who has been working with my son. He is a different child since going to counselling.

Family and relationship course participant

“I have grown so much since I started the course, and I want to keep doing them as I get more out of them each time. The course made me feel great, the facilitators are non-judgemental, supportive and I feel like I can trust them. I have my self-esteem back.”

Children’s Contact client

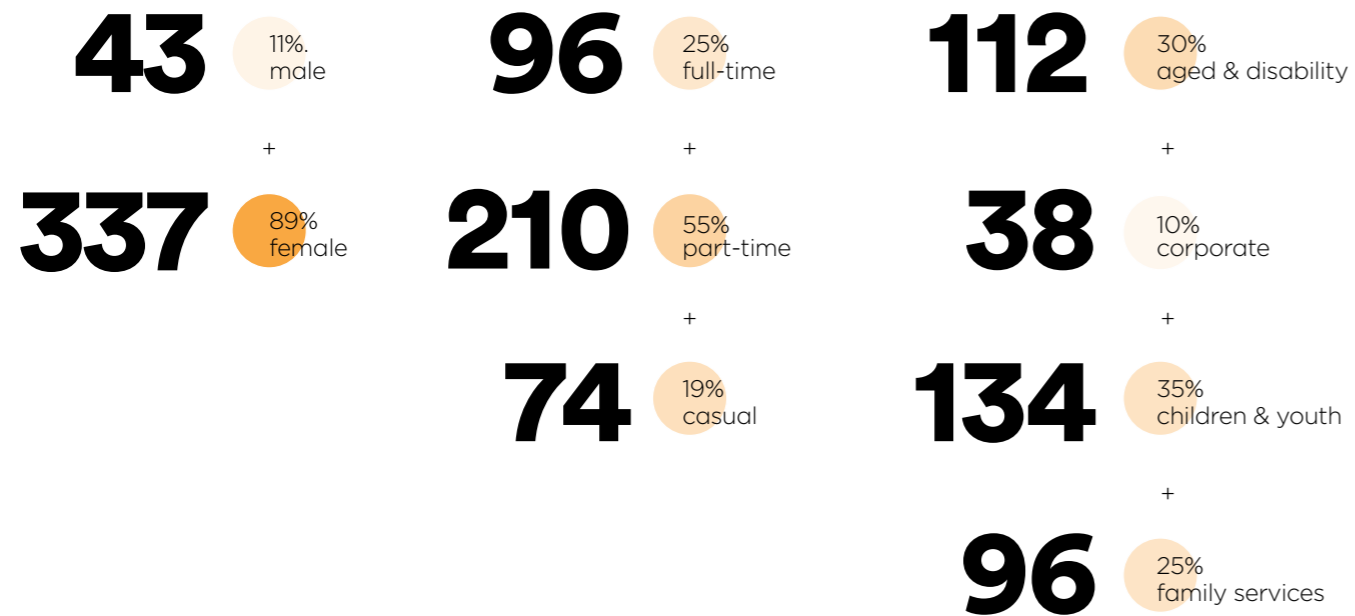
“Thank you for going above and beyond over the past 12 months to ensure a positive experience and for maintaining the safety of my child.”

Our People.

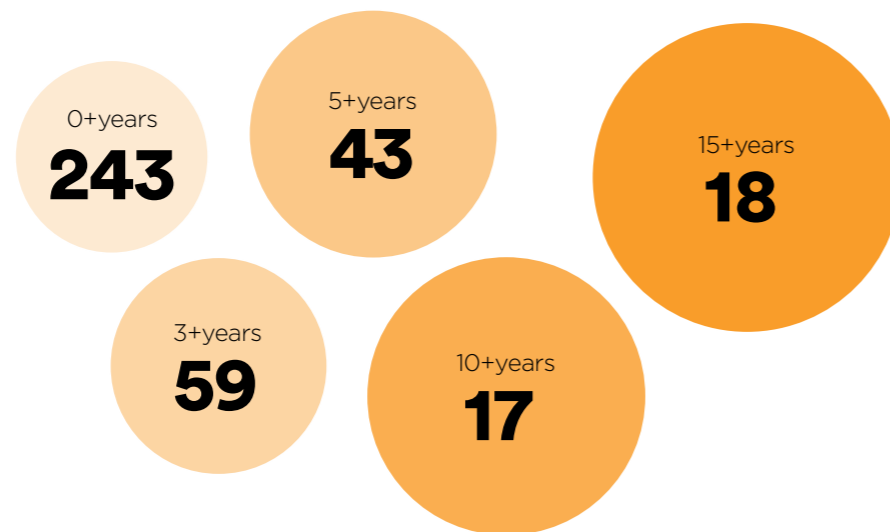
AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

380

total number of staff



YEARS OF SERVICE



CatholicCare Advisory Council.



Top Row: Franca Facci - CAC Chair, Gail Maurice, Greg Parish
Bottom Row: Kerry Hunt, Kieran Biddle, John Akele - Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC) Chair, Fr Duane Fernandez - Priest

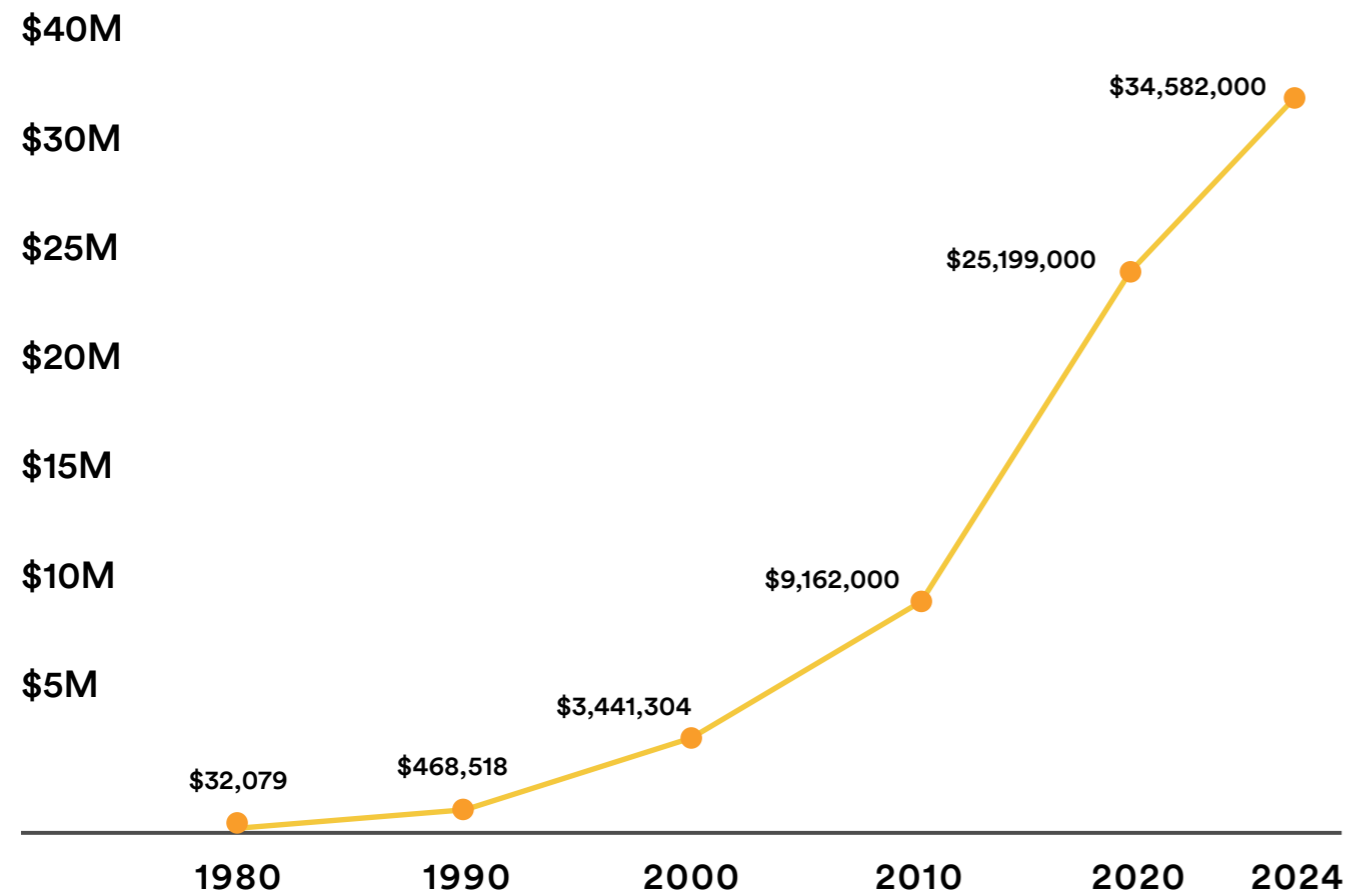
Executive Leadership Team.



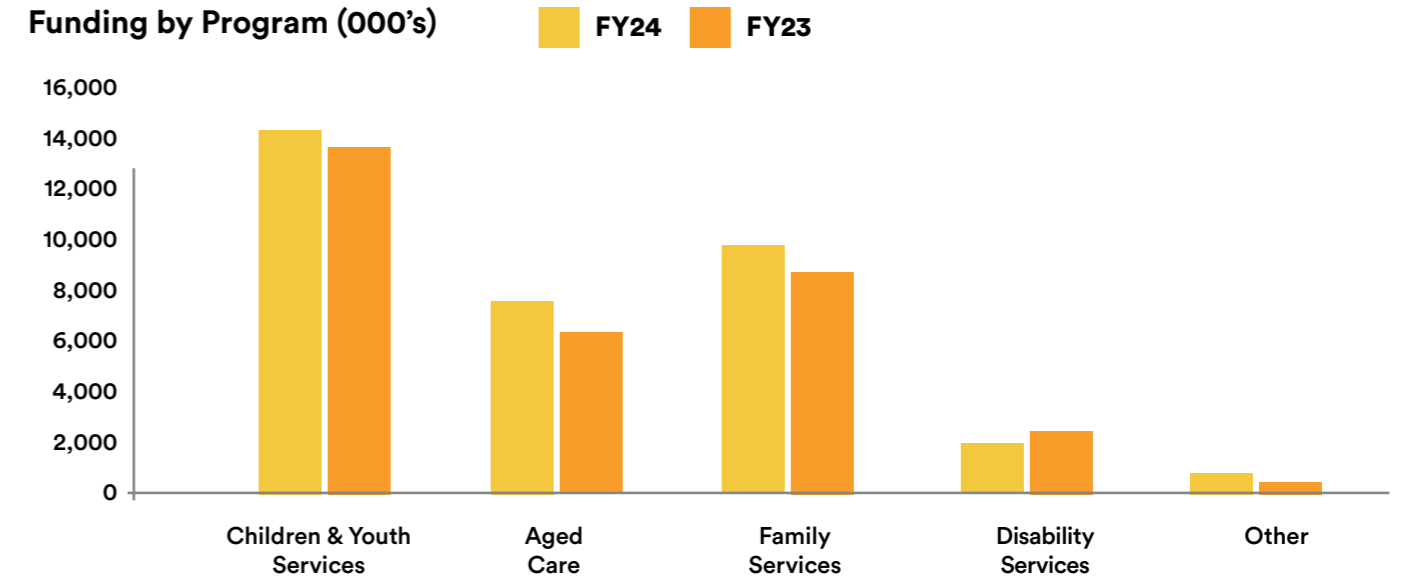
Top Row: Cheryl Tarantola - Aged Care & Disability, Hiep Nguyen - Information Technology, Michael Austin - Chief Executive Officer, Michelle Ferrara - Children & Youth, Moye Prichard - Finance & Enterprise Development
Bottom Row: Narelle Austin-Eames - Quality & Risk, Steven Nielsen - People & Culture, Tony Eid - Chief Operating Officer, Roseanne Plunkett - Family Services

Financial Summary.

Revenue.



Revenue Trends.



Key Snapshots.

The current challenging financial climate has had an impact on the bottom line of some programs, particularly Aged Care and NDIS. Government funding has not kept pace with inflation and the rising cost of living.

We achieved a modest **net surplus of \$1,056,000**, maintaining financial health while expanding our services and reach. This surplus represents a **9% improvement** from FY2023, positioning CatholicCare for sustained growth.

Our expenses rose by 8% (\$2.65 million), largely driven by increased staffing needs. Salary expenses grew by **11% (\$2 million)**, reflecting our focus on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to meet growing service demand.



Our Offices

Illawarra | Shoalhaven | Macarthur

Instagram @catholiccarewollongong

Linkedin.com catholiccare-wollongong

Facebook CatholicCareWollongong

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