Annual Review

2024-2025



catholic care
DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

Together in Care.



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Where we work

We provide social, emotional and practical support in homes, schools and communities throughout the Diocese of Wollongong covering the Macarthur, Illawarra, Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven regions. We have premises in Campbelltown, Wollongong and Nowra.

Macarthur

Illawarra

Southern Highlands

Shoalhaven



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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



As bearers of Christ's love, we are an inclusive Catholic social services organisation committed to providing professional services across the lifespan to individuals, families, and communities in need throughout the Diocese of Wollongong.

Mission

We offer compassionate, high quality community services that promote human dignity, connection, and wellbeing. Our passion is supporting people to harness their strengths, thrive in their relationships, and build positive futures.

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 reflect on the year that has been, I am reminded of the late Pope Francis' call for the Church to be a "field hospital" — a place of healing, accompaniment, and hope. In this spirit, CatholicCare Wollongong continues to walk as Pilgrims of Hope, journeying alongside those most in need with compassion, courage, and deep faith.

This past year has brought a mixture of joy and sorrow. We have celebrated remarkable achievements, whilst at the same time, mourned the passing of Pope Francis, a shepherd whose humility and unwavering commitment to the poor and marginalised inspired a generation.

We welcomed Pope Leo XIV, whose early ministry already reflects a heart attuned to the cries of the vulnerable and a vision rooted in mercy and justice.

CatholicCare works to be a living expression of the Gospel. It is in the quiet, daily acts of service that the face of Christ is revealed to those they encounter.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to the CatholicCare team, the Advisory Council, the newly appointed Board, Michael Austin and his Leadership Team and all our partners in mission. Most especially, I thank those we serve, you are our teachers and companions on this sacred journey.

May we continue to walk together as Pilgrims of Hope, building a more just, compassionate, and Christ-centred community.



Franca Facci
CatholicCare Advisory Council Chair

It is with great pride and deep gratitude that I reflect on CatholicCare's achievements over the past year.

This year marks a significant milestone. The transition to a new civil entity governance model, alongside the establishment of a Board of Directors, has strengthened our commitment to transparency, accountability and strategic oversight. I am honoured to serve as Chair and to work with a Board with such unwavering dedication. I extend my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board members for their steadfast guidance and support.

Our enhanced governance framework has been matched by a year of remarkable growth and resilience. CatholicCare continues to respond to the evolving needs of our community with compassion, integrity, and excellence.

I wish to acknowledge the Executive Leadership Team, led by Michael Austin, for their strategic vision and operational leadership. I also extend heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, whose tireless efforts bring dignity, hope, and healing to those we serve each day.

To our clients and participants, thank you for your trust and engagement. It is our privilege to walk alongside you.

As we look ahead, I am confident that CatholicCare will continue to be a catalyst for transformation, guided by our mission, strengthened by our people and our partners, and inspired by the hope we nurture in the lives of those we serve.



Michael Austin

CEO, CatholicCare Diocese of Wollongong

The past year has been one of both challenge and opportunity for CatholicCare. Guided by our mission and values, we have continued to grow in strength, driven by the dedication of our exceptional team and the trust and courage of those we serve. Our commitment to compassionate, innovative care has enabled us to respond to evolving needs with agility and heart.

A major highlight was the launch of our new organisational strategy, Purpose. Passion. Possibility. Our strategy sets a clear direction for the years ahead, ensuring CatholicCare remains focused on its mission while embracing innovation and growth. It reflects our commitment to service excellence, to staying agile in a complex and changing environment and positions us to create lasting impact for individuals, families, and communities.

We also celebrated national recognition for our Cross+Gen program, receiving an award from the Australian Institute of Intergenerational Practice for outstanding innovation and contribution. This achievement reflects the power of collaboration between CatholicCare, Catholic Education, and our parishes, and the program's success in building meaningful connections across generations.

Our School Student & Family Program showcased its expertise on a global stage, presenting the impact of Kindy Kids Connect at the International Conference on Social Work in Health & Mental Health held in Melbourne. This early intervention initiative is helping children build resilience and thrive during critical transition periods, and its inclusion at an international forum demonstrates the quality and relevance of our work.

Another significant milestone was the relocation of our Wollongong office to Regent Street, creating a modern, collaborative space that supports our people and enhances service delivery. This move reflects our commitment to providing welcoming environments for staff and clients alike. We also proudly introduced our inaugural Values Champion Awards, acknowledging and celebrating members of staff who consistently exemplify and uphold our values.

Throughout this year, CatholicCare supported more than 9,000 lives, delivering services that empower individuals, strengthen families, and build positive futures. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our team and the trust placed in us by the communities we serve.

I am deeply grateful to our staff, partners, and supporters for your unwavering commitment. Your work changes lives every day. Together, we look forward to another year of purpose, passion, and possibility.



Vale Fr David Catterall

This year, we farewelled a remarkable champion of our mission, Fr David Catterall, parish priest of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Oran Park. Fr David was the visionary behind CatholicCare Sunday in our Diocese, and his wisdom, energy, and generous spirit have left an indelible mark on our work and on countless lives. His unwavering strength and deep faith inspired all who had the privilege to know him. May he rest in eternal peace.













Our Services



We are committed to helping those in need regardless of religious beliefs, background or circumstances.

Our Impact

2,058

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





84

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

3,151

students participated in well-being groups and community initiatives.

3

new foster care households approved.

18

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



1,048

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



424

people focussed on their parenting and relationship skills to improve family life.

69

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



107

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

227

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

46

people living with disabilities increased their independence and community connections.

2,052

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

Our total impact

9,287

Individuals have been supported by CatholicCare Diocese of Wollongong in 2024 / 2025







A New Chapter for CatholicCare Wollongong

March 2025 marked a transformative moment for CatholicCare as we transitioned from our long-standing premises on Auburn Street premises to our new home at 6–8 Regent Street, right in the heart of Wollongong. This move reflects our commitment to fostering a modern, collaborative environment – one that supports innovation, care and the evolving needs of our staff and the communities we serve.

Our new office features an open-plan design that encourages teamwork and collaboration. Dedicated meeting spaces and wellness areas to provide opportunities for staff and clients to connect, reflect, recharge and engage meaningfully. The central location strengthens our ties with the wider Wollongong community, making it easier for us to collaborate and extend our support where it is needed most.

This relocation is part of a broader vision within the Diocese, with Auburn Street set to become a future Diocesan Hub. For CatholicCare, the move is a testament to our adaptability and forward thinking approach - ensuring we have the right environment to deliver services and grow alongside our community's needs.

In May, we celebrated this new beginning with a blessing ceremony attended by Bishop Brian Mascord, staff, and community leaders. The event captured the spirit of our new space: a place of belonging and collaboration for our team, and a place of welcome, possibility, and healing for the people we support.

While the address has changed, our mission remains steadfast: to provide care, connection, and hope to everyone who walks through our doors. We invite you to visit our new office, connect with our team and join us as we embark on this new chapter.

"I think the new office has a much nicer feel than Auburn St, for both clients and staff."

"I think it's a great space. The more I am in the office, the more I enjoy it. It feels like a big space when there are not a lot of people in here. The buzz of a full office is great, with laughter and chatter. The mural looks great!"

"The new office is creating a more welcoming and connected environment for our team."



Showcasing Innovation on a Global Stage: SSFP at the International Conference

CatholicCare's School Student & Family Program (SSFP) is engaged by Catholic Education to provide psycho-social support in systemic catholic schools in the Diocese of Wollongong.

In November 2024, SSFP proudly represented CatholicCare at the 10th International Conference on Social Work in Health & Mental Health, held in Melbourne. This prestigious event brought together more than 1,000 delegates from Australia and around the world, providing a unique opportunity for CatholicCare to share its expertise and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families.

At the conference, the SSFP team presented the impact of the Kindy Kids Connect program, an early intervention school counselling initiative designed to support children as they transitioned to kindergarten. The program takes a wrap-around approach, engaging children, parents, and educators to build resilience, foster social-emotional skills, and create a strong sense of belonging during this critical developmental stage.

Kindy Kids Connect uses evidence-based strategies to build resilience, foster social-emotional skills and create a strong sense of belonging.

Through classroom-based sessions and resources for parents and teachers, the program equips children with coping skills and confidence, while strengthening partnerships between families and schools.

Presenting at this global conference was more than an academic exercise; it was a chance to demonstrate CatholicCare's leadership in school-based mental health and wellbeing. The conference also highlighted our commitment to knowledge-sharing and collaboration. By engaging with international peers, SSFP contributed to a broader conversation about how social work empowers communities and transform lives.

Looking ahead, the program continues to expand to more schools, ensuring that even more children benefit from early intervention strategies that promoted resilience and wellbeing.

This achievement reflects CatholicCare's vision for inclusive, thriving communities where every child feels safe, supported, and ready to learn.

By sharing our approach on a global platform, we reaffirm our commitment to innovation, excellence and collaboration in service delivery.







Our Strategy for the Future:

Purpose. Passion. Possibility.

In July 2024, CatholicCare launched its new organisational strategy: Purpose. Passion. Possibility. This strategy sets a clear direction for the next five years, guiding how we respond to community needs, strengthen our services, and build a sustainable future.

At its core, the strategy is anchored in three guiding principles:

- **Purpose**

Everything we do is grounded in our mission to serve and support people in need. Purpose reminds us why CatholicCare exists and ensures that our decisions and actions reflect our values.

- **Passion**

Our work is driven by commitment and care. Passion speaks to the energy and dedication of our people, who consistently strive to make a meaningful difference every day.

- **Possibility**

We believe in creating opportunities. Possibility is about innovation, adaptability, and finding new ways to accompany individuals and families in discovering new ways to thrive, even in challenging times.

Our strategy comes to life through four strategic pillars, each with specific actions and measurable targets:

1. Our People, Mission and Culture
Investing in our workforce and nurturing a culture that reflects our mission. This means supporting professional development, wellbeing, and creating an environment where staff feel valued and connected.

2. Service Excellence
Delivering high-quality, evidence-based services that meet the diverse needs of our communities. We aim to continually improve how we work, ensuring consistency and impact.

3. Service Growth
Expanding programs and partnerships to reach more people. Growth is not just about size—it's about responding to emerging needs and being present where we are most needed.

4. Sustainability and Stewardship
Building strong foundations for the future through sound financial management, efficient systems, and innovative practices that ensure long-term viability.

This strategy was shaped by extensive consultation with staff, clients and community partners.

Progress will be tracked through a balanced scorecard, covering client outcomes, staff engagement, financial health, and innovation. Key metrics and targets will be published annually, ensuring transparency and accountability.

We recognise the complexity and uncertainty of today's world, including funding pressures, workforce shortages, and evolving community needs. Our strategy is designed to address these challenges by remaining agile, investing in our people, and embracing innovation.

Purpose. Passion. Possibility. sets the tone for how CatholicCare will meet future challenges: by staying true to our mission, energising our people, and embracing innovation. The work we do today shapes the opportunities of tomorrow, and with this strategy as our guide, we are ready to create lasting impact for individuals, families, and communities across the Diocese of Wollongong.

Cross+Gen: Bridging Generations and Winning National Recognition

In February 2025, CatholicCare's Cross+Gen program celebrated a major milestone, earning the Award for Innovation and Contribution at the Australian Institute for Intergenerational Practice's Annual Conference. This national recognition highlights its success in strengthening intergenerational connections.

Launched in 2021 with Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong, Cross+Gen pairs high school students with older community members to bridge the digital divide. Now active in four schools and 15 parishes, the program turns technology into a tool for connection. Students teach digital skills while seniors share life experience—building empathy, confidence, and leadership.

The impact goes beyond skills. Participants describe "the hum" of conversation and laughter that fills each session, reflecting belonging and mutual respect. In the past year, 110 older participants and 80 students engaged in the program. Students valued teaching and bonding, while seniors rated it highly, averaging 4.5/5 for helpfulness.



Cross+Gen shows every generation has something to offer. It promotes independence for older adults and purpose for youth, strengthening families and communities. Winning this award affirms CatholicCare's commitment to inclusion and innovation. Sessions rotate each school term across the Diocese—check our Events page for upcoming dates.







Our Client Testimonials

"We could not praise the Early Learning Centre in Shellharbour more highly. The Educators are so passionate about providing supportive, nurturing and caring relationships and learning environments. Our child is thriving in so many ways, particularly her communication, creativity and social development."

PARENT AT SHELLHARBOUR ELC

"My experience has been good. The Family Support Workers genuinely care about my children and put their needs first. They listen to my concerns and provide assistance where they can."

CHILDREN'S CONTACT SERVICE PARENT

"The reason I am still in my own home is because of CatholicCare and their wonderful staff."

AGED CARE CLIENT

"I feel respected and feel like I belong. I have kind, caring adults who care about me."

OSHC STUDENT



"CatholicCare has made a positive difference in my life. I might not live with my Mum but CatholicCare makes me brave to visit my Mum and do things that I might be scared of."

CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

"It's helped a lot. Being able to talk to someone who isn't my parent about things and having someone that is knowledgable has helped me to understand situations and have new and different perspectives. Counselling has allowed me to process stuff that has happened in a safe and supportive environment."

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"Amazing facilitators who are very insightful and always try to help and offer solutions."

COURSES ATTENDEE

"CatholicCare have always helped me to get appropriate equipment for me to be safe in my own home. I'm really happy with the Support Workers that assist me too."

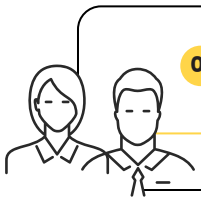
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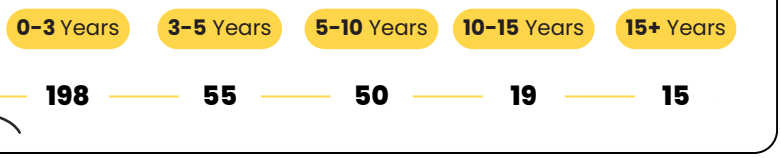


Our People

337

Total number of staff





Years of service

301 89% **Female**

36 11% **Male**

100 30% **Full-time**

182 54% **Part-time**

55 16% **Casual**

41 12% **Enterprise Services**

75 22% **Family Services**

126 38% **Children & Youth Services**

95 28% **Aged & Disability Services**

Celebrating Our Values: Inaugural Values Champion Awards

At Staff Day 2024, we proudly introduced the Values Champion Awards, a new initiative that recognises CatholicCare employees who consistently demonstrate our Values, Code of Ethics & Conduct, and Practice Principles in their work.

The selection process was both an honour and a challenge, as the nominations reflected the incredible dedication and integrity of our team. Every nominee should feel proud of this recognition. In addition to the winners, several individuals were acknowledged as Highly Commended in each category, reflecting the depth of excellence across our organisation.

Congratulations to our 2024 Values Champion Award winners:

- **Dignity:** Everton Marciel da Silva, IT Systems Officer
- **Integrity:** Jane Hollier, Parish & Community Liaison Officer
- **Compassion:** Colleen Behr, Aged Care Project Officer
- **Excellence:** Rita Maher, School, Student & Family Program Team Leader
- **Solidarity:** Amy Braddick, Growth & Community Engagement Officer and Acting Contact Manager



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 James Arblaster - *Priest*

Executive Leadership Team

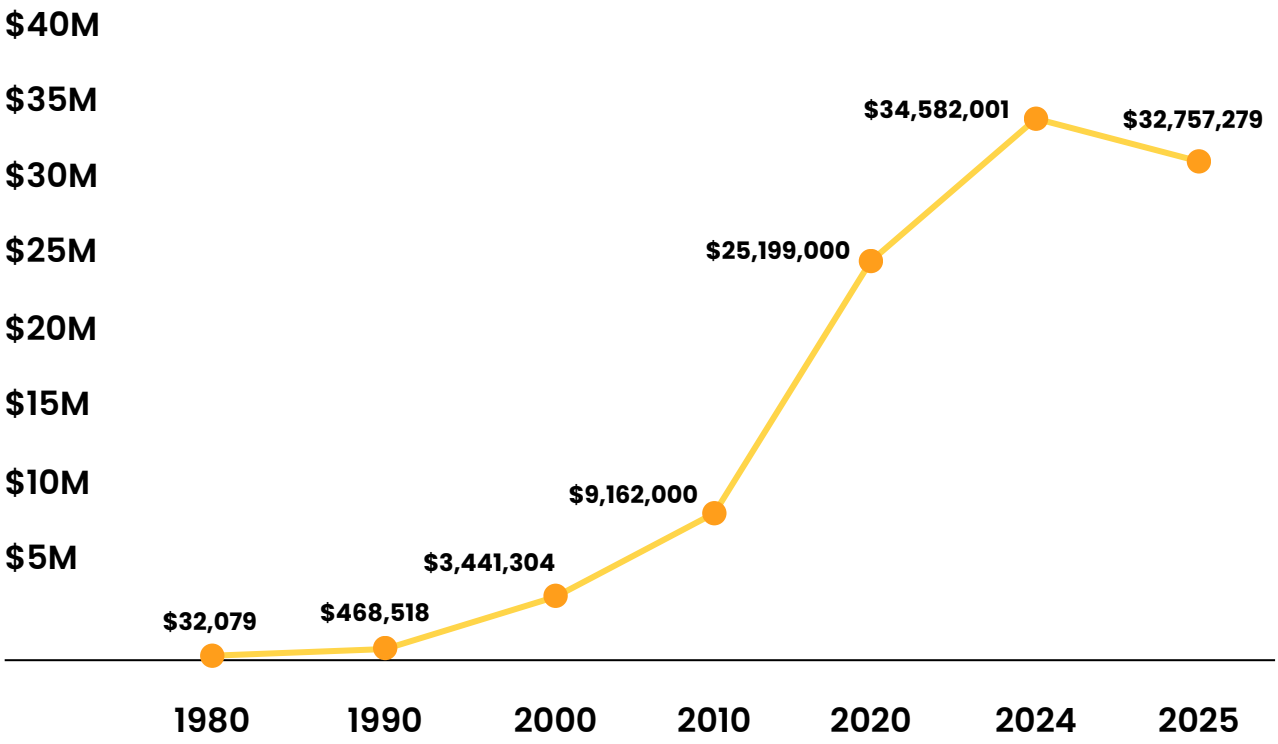


Top Row: Cheryl Tarantola – *Aged Care & Disability*, Hiep Nguyen – *Information Technology,* Michael Austin – *Chief Executive Officer*, Michelle Ferrara – *Children & Youth,* Moye Prichard – *Finance & Enterprise Development*

Bottom Row: Narelle Austin-Eames – *Quality & Risk,* Steven Nielsen – *People & Culture,* Tony Eid – *Chief Operating Officer*, Roseanne Plunkett – *Family Services,* Lisa Cameron – *CX, Marketing & Communications*

Our Financial Summary

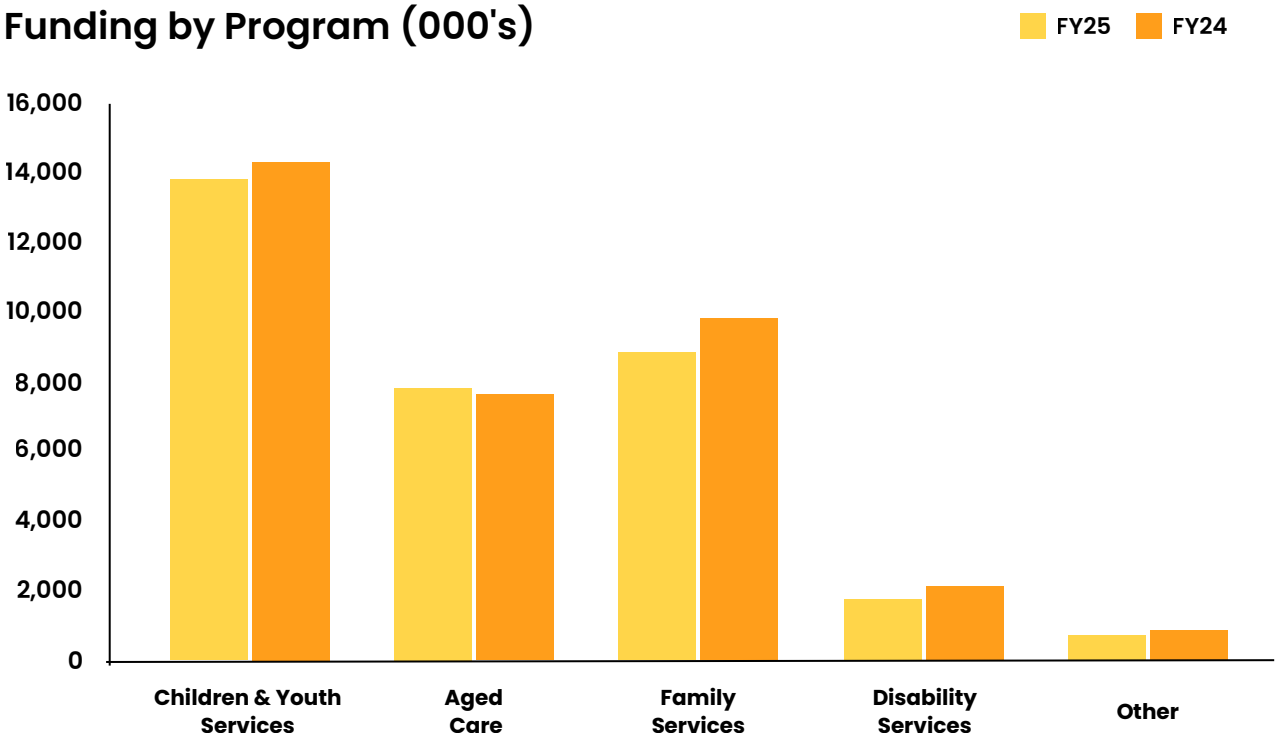
Revenue





Revenue trends

Funding by Program (000's)



Key Snapshots

Overall revenue declined by **$1.82 million (5.3%)**, driven by decreases in **Family Services (-10.7%)** and **Disability Services (-18.5%).** However, **OSHC revenue grew by 13.4% ($756,749)**, reflecting strong demand for out of school hours care and vacation care.

We achieved a **net surplus of $759,761,** ensuring financial stability despite economic challenges. This represents a **28% decrease** compared to FY2024, primarily due to reduced government funding and rising operational costs.

Total staff decreased from **380 to 337**, yet **full-time roles increased by 4%**, showing commitment to a stable workforce. Salary expenses dropped by **$716,936 (-3.4%)**, aligning with efficiency measures while maintaining service quality.

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DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

Together in Care.

Contact Us

Illawarra | Shoalhaven | Macarthur | Southern Highlands

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