



"We focus on getting people the support they need, when they need it."



FOCUS connect

Annual Report 2023

Contents

Year in Review 2023

Chairperson Report	4
CEO Report	6
Finance Report	8
Meet the Board	12
Staff	13
2023 Highlight	14
Disability Services	15
Aged Care Services	24
Community Programs	28



Our Values

Accountability

We communicate openly and honestly and mean and do what we say.

We create a culture of trust and integrity without fear.

We are respectful of each other.

Continuous Improvement

We are willing to learn, being flexible, adaptable and open to change.

We are open to new ideas and practices through team collaboration, feedback and training for workers and management in compliance and new techniques.

We consult with our communities to build resilience to create a better future.

Creativity

We are open and willing to create and foster new partnerships.

We advocate with assertiveness.

We support ideas and innovation incorporating leaps of faith and calculated risks.

Diversity

We support whole communities by providing an inclusive, diverse quality service.

We look for connections through teamwork and collaborative practice.

We cater to the changing needs of the community.

We do not make judgements or base our opinions on stereotypes but work on goals.



A message from
Darren Byrnes,
Chairperson of the Board



As we look ahead to 2024, we eagerly anticipate the potential reforms in the Disability Sector, aligning with the new Aged Care quality standards, reforms and funding model. Our focus remains steadfast on quality, information security, compliance, innovation, efficiency and alignment with emerging government initiatives to enhance our services and positively impact the lives of those we serve.

It is my privilege to present the Chairperson Report for FOCUS Connect for the year 2023. This report encapsulates our remarkable achievements, the challenges we've conquered and the progress we've made in delivering exceptional essential services in aged care, disability and community support.

Our team at FOCUS Connect has consistently excelled, even in the face of industry workforce shortages and shifting government policies.

This steadfast commitment to excellence has firmly established us as the leading provider in our region.

Looking back on the past year, our core mission to improve the lives of the disadvantaged and those in need has never been more resolute.

Despite the myriad challenges, both internal and external, 2023 saw our organisation adapt and continue to make a meaningful impact in the Macarthur community and beyond.

This year has been marked by constant change, as we navigated the path towards aligning with emerging aged care reforms and quality standards. These changes will significantly impact how we operate and deliver services, leading up to the full transition in mid-2025. Our organisation's determination, resilience and unwavering dedication to serving the community shone brightly, particularly in the first quarter of 2023.

We faced several high-impact staff events, including unexpected senior management exits and key staff resignations such as:

- Two unexpected senior management exits with the resignation of the CEO.
- Operations, coinciding with the Divisional Lead Aged Care requiring maternity leave months earlier than planned.
- The subsequent resignation of the Aged Care maternity leave replacement due to poor alignment with expectations around compliance.
- The untimely resignation of the Divisional Lead Community Services who wanted to pursue case work in hospitals.
- Several other key staff resignations including a rostering clerk, a newly appointed Quality, Risk and Compliance Officer and the HR maternity leave replacement.



In response to a significant turnover of management and staff within a short period, the CEO of Corporate Services, with unwavering support from the FOCUS Connect team, assumed the role of Interim CEO. Collaborating with the services division, to ensure stability and direction a restructured business solution was presented to the board. With the assistance of the HR Officer, who returned from maternity leave early, skilled staff who aligned with FOCUS Connect's culture were successfully recruited. This achievement was the result of a collective effort by all staff, minimising disruptions to our usual operations and highlighting the team's commitment to delivering high-quality services to our community.

Despite these challenges, 2023 was marked by proactive responses to industry reforms and

an emphasis on consolidation and efficiency, especially in anticipation of competitive aged care services in July 2025. Our organisation consolidated its property footprint, fostering collaboration and teamwork, although challenges like a termite infestation at the Airds Bradbury Men's Shed led to its closure.

While we have made substantial progress, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges, learn from them and proactively address them in the coming year. Our organisation has maintained excellent financial sustainability through prudent financial management, support from funders and efficient resource allocation, which will serve us well as we adapt to the changing aged care landscape in mid-2025.

I extend my sincere gratitude to our dedicated management team, staff, volunteers, funders and fellow board members for their unwavering support and commitment to our mission. Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones and positively enhanced the lives of countless individuals.

In conclusion, it has been an honour to serve as the Chairperson of the Board for such an exceptional organisation. As we move forward, let us remain steadfast in our dedication to making a difference in the lives of those we serve, upholding our mission and staying true to our values of Accountability, Continuous Improvement, Creativity and Diversity.

Thank you for your continued support and trust in our organisation.

Darren Byrnes
Chairperson





A message from our CEO,
Lee-Ann Byrnes,

“

FOCUS Connect remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing the lives of the elderly, individuals with disabilities and the broader Macarthur community. Our mission is to provide unwavering support, care and resources to those in need, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives with dignity and respect.

I am delighted to present the Annual CEO Report for Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative Ltd, operating as FOCUS Connect, covering the year 2023. With deep gratitude, I reflect upon the accomplishments and challenges faced by our organisation as we tirelessly pursue our mission to support our clients through the provision of Aged Care, Disability and Community Support services.



Aged Care Services

In 2023, we organised six consumer forums to educate clients and their families on Aged Care Reforms. We facilitated and encouraged the transition of clients with complex needs to receive additional support for independent living. Our ten social support groups benefited from thirty-six educational sessions covering healthcare, finance, lifestyle, the new aged care system and future planning, ensuring that our elderly community members receive the care and information they deserve.



Disability Services

Our Disability Services program introduced new initiatives to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with disabilities. We expanded our programs into Primrose Cottage, a dedicated facility, and introduced activities such as art and craft classes, basketball, cooking classes, fishing trips and a Halloween disco that became a favourite and fun event.



Community Support

Our commitment to community support remained unwavering. We provided essential supplies to families in need, offered no-interest home loans (NILS) and delivered support services to educate families and individuals on domestic violence and child education.

A Year of Resilience

The year 2023 was marked by resilience, adaptability and unwavering dedication from our team. Despite the persistent challenges posed by rising inflation, industry reforms, the Royal Commission into Disability Services, funding changes and other uncertainties, FOCUS Connect demonstrated unwavering commitment by adapting to these challenges. A strategic investment in strengthening our quality, risk and compliance plus people and culture management enabled our organisation to continue delivering essential services and support to the most vulnerable members of our society.

Financial Transparency

Transparency and accountability are at the core of our organisation. We are pleased to report that 75% of our total income has been directed toward funding our numerous program activities, with only 17% allocated to administrative and corporate overhead expenses. The remaining 8% was reinvested in ensuring the financial sustainability of the organisation. This prudent financial management guarantees that your contributions have a direct and meaningful impact on those we serve.

Our Team

I extend my heartfelt appreciation not only to our dedicated Board of Directors, who contribute their professional skills and time voluntarily, but also to our incredible staff, volunteers, students and partners. Their passion, commitment and genuine care are the driving force behind our success.

Looking Forward

As we step into 2024, we remain committed to enhancing the lives of those we serve. We will continue to innovate and adapt to the evolving needs of our community. We are excited about the opportunities ahead and the positive impact we can create together.



Lee-Ann Byrnes
Chief Executive Officer



Financial performance summary from **Tanya Fung**, Finance Manager

FOCUS Connect is pleased to present a summary of our successful 2023 financial year, marked by strong performance and responsible management. As we look ahead to 2024, we're prepared for a dynamic landscape influenced by global factors. Our healthy cash reserves from previous years bolster our ability to navigate challenges, seize opportunities and manage risks.

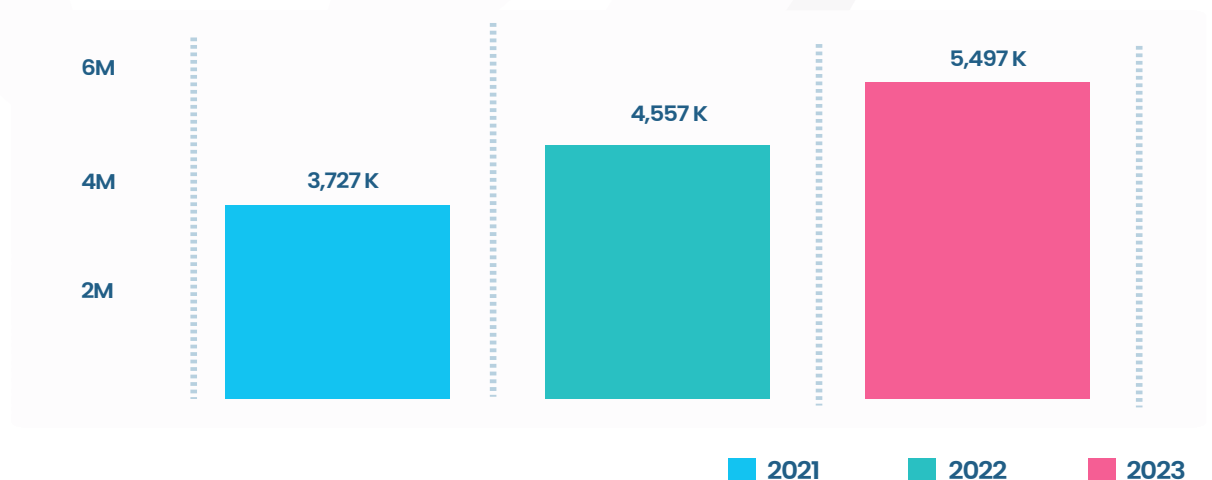
The collaborative efforts of our dedicated Board of Directors and executive management yielded impressive financial outcomes across our Aged Care, Community and Disability services:

- ✔ We achieved the highest number of Aged Care participants.
- ✔ Substantial operational efficiency improvements enabled us to serve a larger client base within our community.
- ✔ We expanded our programs and client groups operating from our properties on Dumaresq Street, Campbelltown.
- ✔ The relocation of our Aged Care team to the modern head office at 3 Chamberlain Street, Campbelltown, allowed us to close the Ingleburn rental office, resulting in reduced rental costs.
- ✔ We made strategic efforts to pay down existing debt and reduce current liabilities.

In Summary

Our audited financial statements revealed a slight decrease in total revenue, totaling **\$7.8 million** (compared to \$8.2 million in 2022). This reduction is attributed to our strategic decision to discontinue providing settlement services in the Macarthur region, reducing revenue by **\$403.8k**. Our expenditure decreased in line with the reduced revenue, reflecting our budgeted cost-saving measures. Our consistently increasing Net Assets signify improved financial strength, equipping us to meet financial obligations and seize opportunities.

Net Assets



Governance

As a registered non-profit organisation and a public company limited by guarantee, FOCUS Connect operates within a very specific legal and regulatory framework. To ensure that the organisation has adequate controls and safeguards in place, the Board of Directors meet to discuss and evaluate compliance with service-specific legislation. As part of this compliance, the financial position of FOCUS Connect is closely monitored. The results are presented to the Board so that we can ensure that:

- ✓ Financial performance closely reflects monthly and year-to-date budgets
- ✓ Overhead costs are in line with funding requirements
- ✓ Legal and regulatory frameworks are operated within
- ✓ Strategic issues are identified and accounted for
- ✓ The organisation continues as a going concern

Financial Focus Moving Forward

It is anticipated that 2024 will present a mix of opportunities and challenges influenced by global factors. Inflation is projected to stabilise and fall, putting downward pressure on interest rates and overall expenditure. The organisation has accumulated healthy cash reserves from previous years, which will aid in overcoming financial challenges, capitalise on emerging opportunities and mitigating potential risks.

Business Partners

We thank our newly appointed auditors, CIB Accountants and Advisers for the fiscal year 2023 financial audit. CIB Accountants bring their Not-for-Profit industry experience to deliver valuable insights, practical advice and have a focus on providing excellent service.

We would also like to thank our funding bodies for their continued support of FOCUS Connect and the much-needed work we provide within our community.

Tanya Fung
Finance Manger



A message from our HR Manager
Maya Almandarawi



At FOCUS Connect, we prioritise our employees so they can wholeheartedly concentrate on making a profound difference in the broader community.

In terms of HR, FOCUS Connect has experienced remarkable growth. Our HR department has expanded, boasting an increased number of HR professionals to better support our expanding workforce. We have also seen a consistent rise in employee retention rates, as well as in our volunteer and student programs. Our HR team's adept implementation of talent acquisition strategies has resulted in attracting top talent, building a diverse, and highly skilled workforce.

Strategic HR Expansion

This year, we introduced a comprehensive employee performance appraisal system to provide constructive feedback and facilitate professional development. Recognising and nurturing our employee's talents is a core value, and this system is instrumental in achieving that.

Dedication to Creating Lasting Positive Change

Our committed staff consistently demonstrate outstanding communication, teamwork, and adaptability, empowering our community and fostering independence. Their unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in the Care and Community Services sector is commendable. Together, we are shaping a culture rooted in empathy, collaboration, innovation, continuous learning and employee well-being.



Building Stronger Teams

FOCUS Connect has celebrated significant milestones, including a successful organisational restructuring aimed at enhancing support and nurturing staff growth. Continuous training programs have been put in place to ensure our staff remains updated with the latest knowledge and skills. We have conducted both internal and external audits to identify areas for improvement and provide tailored support and training. Furthermore, we have fostered a culture of collaboration within our teams by organising initiatives such as team lunches at our Head Office, which strengthen relationships among staff members.

Enhancing HR Operations

Recognising the importance of enhancing our HR processes, we are dedicating time to update our HRIS (Human Resources Information System) in 2024. This update will streamline our HR operations, enhance efficiency and provide an even better employee experience, reinforcing our commitment to supporting our team's growth and success. We are dedicated to creating a positive and inclusive work environment where everyone is encouraged to thrive.

A Commitment to Excellence

These achievements underscore our unwavering commitment to creating a professional and supportive work environment at FOCUS Connect. We firmly believe in investing in our employees' development and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Naya Almandarawi

HR Manager



Darren Byrnes

Chairperson

Master of Business and Technology Management, UNSW

Darren, a Director at FOCUS Connect since 2019, currently serves as the proprietor and Director of an IT software company. With a strong background as an IT Executive, he possesses a wealth of local and international experience working across various sectors, including small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and large global 500 corporations. His expertise spans a range of disciplines, including operations, sales, research and development, project management, marketing and people management.

Darren is passionate about enhancing the lives and social opportunities of the most vulnerable members of our Campbelltown and Greater South-West Sydney communities.



Caroline MacPhail

Company Secretary

Bachelor of Science (BSc) Hons, Business Administration and Ergonomics; Graduate of Australian Institute of Company Directors

Caroline is an executive director with over 20 years experience in leadership and executive board roles. With a background in general management, Caroline has experience guiding cross-functional teams, managing finances, shaping strategic development and nurturing positive team culture.

Caroline is passionate about diversity, fostering inclusion and actively supporting the local community.



Naina Patel

Treasurer

Bachelor of Science (BSc) Hons, Economics and Management, International Certificate in Risk Management

Naina serves as a Strategy and Risk Advisor for an Australian financial regulatory agency. With over 16 years of experience, Naina is a certified risk professional with a strong foundation in governance, risk management and prudential regulation within the finance sector, both domestically and abroad. In addition, Naina brings her valuable board management experience from the education sector to further enrich her contributions.

Naina's dedication extends beyond her professional expertise, as she is deeply passionate about community service.



Kathy Hubble

Director

(Clinician)

Bachelor of Science (Nursing); Master of Pain Medicine (MPainMed)

With over three decades of dedicated nursing experience, Kathy's journey has been diverse. She has lent her expertise to gynecology oncology, high dependency surgical units, emergency rooms, and anaesthetics and recovery departments. For the past two decades, Kathy has passionately focused on pain management and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Behavioural Science in Psychology and an MBA.

Kathy is not only a healthcare professional but also serves as the CEO and Founder of Amelia Health, an innovative online chronic pain management program. Her vision has extended beyond borders, with successful business launches in both the USA and the UK.



Our Staff

Adrian Hurst
 Adrian Murphy
 Aluong Ayiik
 Ana Carmichael
 Ann Tibbles
 Anna Faizi-Sobbi
 Annie Tungcab
 Antonietta Bugge
 Antonio Dominguez
 Areeg Tafeesh
 Azza Khan
 Bapu Brahmane
 Catalina De Santis
 Chido Madondo
 Christiane Ibrahim
 Chutinan Suchatphong
 Darren Stevens
 David Bowmer
 David Romero
 Dewak Ram
 Eun Sun Choi
 Gambhir Shrestha
 Georgia Bellos

Gilles Huet
 Gyosim Chang
 Hala Halata
 Harpreet Kaur
 Harry Ram
 Houssam Halabi
 Jan Jerome
 Jane Mariani
 Ji Jan
 Ji Son
 Jieyi Chen
 Jirada Muangnil
 Jo-Ann Fletcher
 Jodi-Lee Charnock
 Judith Brabrook
 Kasak Aldalmi
 Katherine Herrera
 Katrina Overton
 Kelly Grasso
 Kelly McClutchie
 Kimberly Tiquia-Damian
 Kirti Verma
 Kristin Russell

Kwannet Uadhao
 Kylie Anable-Gausden
 Leanne Restuccia
 Lee Zebic
 Lee-Ann Byrnes
 Leonard Akeje
 Lilieta Teaupa
 Linh Thi Phạm
 Lorraine Babu
 Luohui Yao
 Madhu Singh
 Marco Iglesias
 Maria Decker
 Maria Hartnett
 Maria Mourraile
 Maria Murphy
 Marie Jeanne Bunga Mbenza
 Mary Smolcic
 Maureen Lonergan
 Maya Almandarawi
 Mehdi Khan
 Mi Jeong Lee
 Milagro Acevedo

Nafiza Buksh
 Nandini Narayanaswamy
 Nanhwa Chong
 Nantikhan Traeksuk
 Natalie Graham
 Natasha Oxford
 Nikki Ali
 Osamede Ikhinmwini
 Penelope Allie
 Peter Lonergan
 Reem Khraizat
 Rietta Hellyer
 Rochelle Bogie
 Roksana Chowdhury
 Ross Haydon
 Rowena Wilson
 Rubita Shrestha
 Rudaba Tonni
 Samija Avdic
 Samuel Arenas
 Sandra Urbina-Huezo
 Sannaa Tawadress

Sawsan Wahba
 Shahana Ahsan
 Sharon Hooper
 Shubhas Joshi
 Siwaporn Prapatsaro
 Smriti Nepal
 Sofia Bouyiotis
 Soyoung Lee
 Suha Al-Zuhiri
 Tanya Fung
 Thi Nguyen
 Thomas Jones
 Tirupa Gohil
 Tracey Button
 Veronica Sanchez
 Vida Angangan
 Wafa Jabarin
 Xiaoying Zhang
 Xuehui (Sheffy) Zheng
 Yongmi Park
 Young Zu Park
 Zoe Parnell

2023 Highlights

A Year of Achievements and Milestones



The Multicultural Stronger Families Program

In early 2023, FOCUS Connect achieved a significant milestone by successfully competing in a grant process supported by the National Partnership Agreement. This accomplishment resulted in us securing funding to launch our Multicultural Stronger Families Program, focused on addressing issues related to Domestic Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV). This program is designed to empower multicultural victim-survivors of DFSV, enabling them to lead independent, secure and more fulfilling lives. Its core objectives include providing stable housing, facilitating social connections, creating a sense of safety, establishing essential service links and promoting improved health and overall well-being. It also offers participants the opportunity to connect with others who share similar experiences on their path to recovery within a supportive group setting.



Distinguished Visit and Gratitude

A notable highlight of our journey in early 2023 was the visit of The Hon. Jodie Harrison, MP., Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, to FOCUS Connect. This visit provided us with the opportunity to express our gratitude to her and the NSW Government for their funding support. We had the privilege to explain how the funds will be used and how our program will make a meaningful difference in the lives of survivors and families affected by Domestic Family and Sexual Violence in the Macarthur Region.



Mr Greg Warren, our local member for Campbelltown, was also in attendance and we acknowledge his ongoing support of FOCUS Connect.



Disability



Disability Services Coordinator

Nikki Ali



Our vision is to create a society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, can actively engage and prosper within their community.

FOCUS Connect, as a recognised leader in the disability services sector, maintains its steadfast commitment to enriching community access and delivering personalised individual services. Our core mission at FOCUS Connect is to empower individuals with disabilities, enabling them to lead fulfilling lives through community integration and tailored support.

Empowering Lives Through Community Integration

At FOCUS Connect, our primary objective revolves around empowering individuals with disabilities to seamlessly integrate into their communities. We offer a comprehensive suite of services that are thoughtfully crafted to enhance community access, promoting active participation and engagement among our clients. With personalised interventions, we aim to eliminate obstacles that might impede individuals with disabilities from fully participating in aspects of community life.

Personalised Support

Our success is built upon the foundation of delivering personalised support. We acknowledge that each individual's needs are unique and we tailor our services to cater to these specific requirements. Our dedicated team works closely with every client, providing essential support, guidance and resources to help them achieve their distinct goals and aspirations. The result is a more meaningful and impactful approach to enhancing the lives of those we serve.

Our Vision for an Inclusive Society

FOCUS Connect's vision extends beyond our immediate service provision. We envision a society where inclusivity reigns, where every individual, regardless of their abilities, enjoys the opportunity to actively participate and thrive within their communities. This vision drives our commitment to advocate for systemic changes that promote equality, accessibility and social integration.

Commitment to Excellence

In our continuous pursuit of excellence, FOCUS Connect remains dedicated to staying at the forefront of best practices in the field of disability services. We consistently invest in staff training, research and development to ensure our clients receive the highest quality support. Our commitment to quality extends to both our direct service delivery and our internal operations.

Collaboration and Partnerships

We understand that achieving our mission and vision requires collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders. FOCUS Connect actively seeks partnerships with community organisations, government agencies and other service providers to create a more inclusive environment for those with disabilities. These collaborations are instrumental in reaching our goals and driving positive change in the lives of our clients.

Pursuing a Vision of Inclusivity

FOCUS Connect's dedication to enhancing community access, providing tailored individual services and fostering community integration is unwavering. Our mission is deeply rooted in the belief that every individual, regardless of their abilities, deserves to lead a fulfilling life within their community. Our vision for an inclusive society remains our driving force and we will continue to strive for excellence in all that we do. We extend our gratitude to the Board of Directors for their continued support and guidance in our pursuit of these noble goals.

Together, we will persist in making a positive impact in the lives of those we serve and contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.



Individual Services

At our organisation, we prioritise the utmost importance of personalised care to effectively address the unique needs of each individual under our care. In the year 2023, our Individual Services Division achieved remarkable milestones.

Tailored Support Plans

Throughout the year, our dedicated support team fostered close and collaborative relationships with the individuals and their families in our care. This collaboration enabled us to create and implement highly customised support plans, meticulously designed to cater to the distinct goals and aspirations of each individual. These tailored plans represent a significant advancement in our commitment to providing highly individualised care.





An exceptional talent, combining creative prowess with computational skills. He independently funds his projects and efficiently transforms ideas into tangible results, such as hand-drafting maps for tabletop games. Collaborating with fellow FOCUS Connect clients has honed his teamwork and leadership abilities, unveiling his full creative potential.

A journey into art began with a passion for animated cartoons, particularly Family Guy, and a fascination with manual skills and objects featured in cartoons. His love for hands-on activities allowed him to authentically express his creative thoughts.



Skill Enhancement

Within our Individual Services Division, we played a pivotal role in facilitating skill development for the individuals in our care. This included comprehensive training in various critical areas, such as independent living, communication, vocational training and self-advocacy. This multifaceted approach has not only enhanced their skills but has also led to a remarkable increase in self-confidence and autonomy. The positive impact of skill enhancement on the lives of those we serve is a testament to the quality and efficacy of our individual services. These achievements are a direct result of the unwavering dedication of our staff, who consistently go above and beyond to provide the highest level of care to the individuals we serve. We are also grateful for the trust and confidence that individuals and their families have placed in our organisation, as their partnership enables us to continually make progress in our mission. In addition, our collaborations with community partners have been instrumental in supporting and expanding the impact of our Individual Services Division.

Community Access

Diverse Range of Activities

Throughout the year, our Community Access Programs have offered a wide variety of activities tailored to the unique interests and needs of our participants. These activities have included art and craft classes, sports events, nature excursions and community-based experiences. These offerings have not only enriched the lives of our participants but have also contributed to improving their overall well-being and social integration.

FOCUS Connect's Community Access Programs have played a pivotal role in advancing our mission of fostering social inclusion, skill development and meaningful engagement for individuals with disabilities. In the year 2023, we are thrilled to share significant achievements.





Establishment of New Partnerships

A standout accomplishment in 2023 has been the formation of valuable partnerships with local businesses and community organisations. These partnerships have significantly expanded the array of activities and experiences available to our participants. This strategic collaboration has enabled us to access a broader spectrum of resources, expertise and opportunities, resulting in a positive impact on the quality and scope of our programs.

These achievements underscore our unwavering commitment to facilitating the meaningful inclusion and empowerment of individuals with disabilities within our community. We are excited to build upon these successes and remain steadfast in our mission to create a more inclusive and accessible world for all.

Support Coordination

Disability Support Coordination (SC) has an invaluable impact on our participants and their families. This past year has been a testament to the remarkable work that FOCUS Connect has undertaken to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities. Disability Support Coordination is not just a service; it is a lifeline that empowers our clients and this report highlights the benefits they receive through our unwavering commitment.

Holistic Well-being

Our Support Coordination program recognises that the well-being of our clients encompasses more than just immediate needs. Our Coordinators work closely with our clients to address their physical, emotional and social well-being. By embracing a holistic approach to support, we aim to enhance their overall quality of life.

Personalised Care and Support

Our Disability Support Coordinators play a pivotal role in tailoring services to meet the unique needs and aspirations of each client. Their expertise in assessing individual goals and collaborating with various service providers ensures that clients receive the most appropriate, effective and comprehensive support possible.

Empowering Choice and Independence

Our Support Coordination empowers our clients to assume greater control over their lives and develop a deeper sense of independence. Our Coordinators assist in exploring options, establishing priorities and making well-informed decisions that align with participant's goals, whether in terms of education, employment, or community involvement.

Simplified Access to Services

Navigating the intricate landscape of disability services can be an overwhelming task. Our Disability Support Coordinators act as advocates for our clients, streamlining the process and ensuring efficient access to all eligible services. This simplified approach reduces the administrative burden on participants and their families.

Enhanced Support for Families

Families of individuals with disabilities encounter unique challenges. Our Support Coordination program benefits not only the participants but also offers significant relief to their families by guiding them through the support landscape, providing information and ensuring that their loved ones receive the best care.

Continuous Adaptation

The success of Disability Support Coordination lies in its ability to adapt to the changing needs of clients. Our Coordinators remain engaged with clients on an ongoing basis, ensuring that support remains relevant and effective, even as circumstances evolve.

Measurable Outcomes

Our reporting encompasses a variety of quantitative and qualitative data that highlights the outcomes our participants have attained through Support Coordination. The compelling narratives of transformation and progress serve as a testament to the tangible impact of our services.

Disability Support Coordination stands as an invaluable resource that has played a transformative role in the lives of our clients. We remain steadfast in our commitment to enhancing our services, nurturing independence and delivering unwavering support to individuals living with disabilities and their families.

Our dedication to empowering individuals and championing their rights lies at the core of FOCUS Connect's mission. This annual report underscores the positive influence of our Disability Support Coordination services and our unwavering commitment to enriching the lives of those we serve.



We are grateful for the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients and their families. Together, we will continue to ensure that everyone, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to thrive and live life to its fullest potential.

Aged Care



Aged Care Manager

Kelly Grasso



FOCUS Connect is dedicated to supporting older individuals in South West Sydney and Northern Sydney, ensuring they maintain their independence while enjoying quality care tailored to their needs.

FOCUS Connect is a dedicated advocate of senior's independence, providing essential support through the Commonwealth Home Support Program and Home Care Packages Program. Throughout 2023, our commitment to the well-being of older individuals in the Campbelltown/Macarthur region, South West Sydney, and Northern Sydney was unwavering. We extended our support through various means, including the facilitation of social support groups, educational sessions through to personalised one-on-one support.

Commonwealth Home Support Program

Funded by the Department of Health, the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) serves as a vital initiative that offers essential in-home care for those in need. This program is tailored to Australian citizens aged 65 and over, or 50 and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, who are seeking additional support to maintain their independence. CHSP is a subsidised program designed for those requiring low-level assistance.

FOCUS Connect CHSP provides comprehensive assistance to elderly individuals in South West Sydney and Northern Sydney, offering services such as domestic assistance, personal care, in-home flexible respite care, social support groups, individual support, transportation for outings, medical appointments and shopping assistance.

Social Support Groups

Our Social Support groups are thoughtfully designed to provide culturally rich and appropriate support for our CALD community. These groups convene on a weekly basis for social interactions and also organise monthly outings to various locations. Each Multicultural Social Support Group celebrates its own cultural events. At FOCUS Connect, we wholeheartedly respect the diversity of these cultures, approach them with open-mindedness, share common interests, and foster unity and education. Each group's unique cultural events are celebrated, and at FOCUS Connect, we hold these differences in high regard.

Aged Care Consumer Forums

The FOCUS Connect management team greatly values the opportunity to connect with our Aged Care Consumers and receive their feedback on our services through the Aged Care Consumer Forums. In collaboration with Service Australia and Service NSW, we offer comprehensive information on various aspects of Aged Care, including Reforms, Systems, Saving Finder, Service Australia (Centrelink) payment guides, and Age Pension Portability Requirements for those travelling outside Australia.

Consumer Forums were conducted at the following venues:

- ✔ Campbelltown Catholic Club on September 30th, 2022
- ✔ Hornsby RSL Club on October 7th, 2022 and March 31st, 2023
- ✔ Mounties in Mount Pritchard on January 20th, 2023 and April 21st, 2023
- ✔ Campbelltown RSL on June 9th, 2023





Collaboration and Partnerships

We understand that achieving our mission and vision requires collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders. FOCUS Connect actively seeks partnerships with community organisations, government agencies and other service providers to create a more inclusive environment for those with disabilities. These collaborations are instrumental in reaching our goals and driving positive change in the lives of our clients.

Seniors Week at Campbelltown Civic Centre, February 10, 2023

Under the theme of 'Cultural Celebration,' staff and volunteers showcased their cultural heritage by wearing traditional attire. We also encouraged all attendees to join in the festivities by dressing in their own cultural or traditional attire to truly embrace the spirit of the occasion.

Educational Sessions, Empowering Knowledge

Throughout the year, our CHSP social support groups engaged in a wealth of educational sessions that proved to be both productive and informative. We delivered a grand total of 36 enlightening sessions from Service Australia, 9 sessions from Service NSW, 15 sessions from SWSLHD, 10 sessions from Hearing Australia, and 2 sessions from Health Promotion Services for Older People. These sessions have left our participants better equipped to make informed decisions concerning their finances, lifestyles and healthcare.





Home Care Packages Program

The Australian Government has established the Home Care Package (HCP) Program to assist senior Australians aged 65 years and above (or 50 years and above for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) with complex care needs to maintain their independence in their own homes. The program employs a consumer-directed care approach, ensuring that the support provided is tailored to each individual's specific needs and goals. Coordinated packages of care and services are provided to meet a person's assessed care needs within the limits of their budget and the program's scope.

FOCUS Connect provides support to Home Care Package consumers in Campbelltown/Macarthur, South West Sydney, and Northern Sydney. We provide and coordinate care including personal care, domestic assistance, social support, meal preparation, shopping for goods and equipment and facilitation referrals for additional services.



Community



Community Services Coordinator
Kristin Russell



FOCUS Connect remains committed to its mission of assisting those in need to maintain and improve their quality of life. Our focus extended to encouraging self-esteem, self-respect and independence among our community.

FOCUS Connect's community services programs provide essential support to individuals and communities. They offer assistance, education and advocacy to improve well-being, address social challenges and foster community engagement.

Targeted Earlier Intervention

The TEI program provides vital support to vulnerable Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families with children aged 0-17 residing in the Macarthur Region. Funded by the Department of Communities and Justice, the TEI program is dedicated to reducing the risk of children entering the child protection system, including out-of-home-care. Its primary focus is to empower families to lead independent and meaningful lives while ensuring they have access to support related to childhood health and well-being.

Partner organisations who support us in providing this program include Campbelltown City Council, Camden City Council, Land and Housing, Keneally's Funerals, WILMA Women's Health Centre, Growfit, St Andrews Public School, Sarah Redfern Public School, Airds High School, Campbelltown Library and Hillsong Church.





FOCUS Connect contributes to the TEI objectives through four key areas: Intake and Assessment, Family Capacity Building, Parenting Programs and Supported Playgroups.

Parenting Programs

Triple P, our free parenting program, is available to all families with children aged 0-11 years, living in the Macarthur region. This program equips parents with practical solutions to everyday parenting challenges by teaching evidence-based strategies backed by research.

Supported Playgroups

Designed for children aged 0-5 years in the Macarthur Area, our supported playgroups are led by qualified facilitators. They are designed to promote "Learning through Play" and support the child's emotional, social and motor skills development. These playgroups place a significant emphasis on supporting parents to strengthen their bond with their children through play. Our facilitators also provide valuable information about childhood development, learning and local services that assist families in need.

Family Capacity Building and Intake And Assessment

Family Capacity Building targets CALD families with children in their care aged 0-17 years, who live in the Macarthur region. Families work alongside a qualified caseworker to identify any family goals, needs or risk areas. The process is holistic, child-centered and strengths-based. The aim is to empower families to build their capacity and skills in areas that are specifically identified by the family or through caseworker assessments.



Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) is a free 2-year home-based early childhood enrichment program for preschool children. The program builds parental strengths and encourages families to incorporate learning experiences into their daily lives, making it an integral part of their routines.

Parents/carers and children engage in a series of play-based activities for 10-15 minutes a day, 5 days a week over two years during school terms. HIPPY families receive support from dedicated tutors who visit their homes, helping them with the curriculum aligned with the Australian school curriculum.

HIPPY 's 5 Key Learning Areas

- **Thinking and Exploring**
- **Communication**
- **Creativity**
- **Social and Emotional**
- **Family and Community**



In addition, we organise regular HIPPY gatherings where families receive activity packs, practice activities, share their experiences and have the opportunity to hear from guest speakers.

Children develop the necessary skills to confidently begin school with a positive attitude towards learning.

The program's impact has been highly appreciated by parents, resulting in numerous success stories to share.



"HIPPY encouraged my daughter to have good routine to read, doing a lot of craft, gain confidence by practicing fine motor skill and creative to explore our imagination field. My daughter loves to sing, now she can sing in front of all students and parents in the assembly with confidence. HIPPY activities also improve her literacy and numeracy skill by introducing phonemic awareness and joining the dots activity. Maths is everywhere, tutor mentioned let's count programs and make the child feels learning maths is fun. HIPPY team provides craft materials and rewards for the child's motivation. My social skill is getting better after home visit, we did role play something and gave me opportunities to speak English with my tutor. My daughter loves doing HIPPY activities with me and her brother. I would like to thank HIPPY team, especially Ann, she provides this opportunity for us to join, having age 5 mums gathering, building relationships with other families, and I already refer my neighbour to join HIPPY in this year."

Our valued partner organisations who have assisted us in delivering the program this year include:

- ✓ Campbelltown Police
- ✓ South Western Sydney Primary Health Network (PHN)
- ✓ Campbelltown TAFE
- ✓ EACH/NDIS
- ✓ SWS Local Health District
- ✓ Legal Aid
- ✓ MDS
- ✓ RMS
- ✓ MC&YS
- ✓ Macarthur OT
- ✓ Camden City Council
- ✓ Campbelltown Council
- ✓ The Salvation Army
- ✓ Centrelink
- ✓ Campbelltown Police
- ✓ Campbelltown Library
- ✓ GrowFit
- ✓ Mini Maestros,
- ✓ Smith Family (Let's Read & Let's Count)
- ✓ WILMA Women's Health Centre
- ✓ SWSAHS
- ✓ Cynthia the Storyteller
- ✓ Steps vision screening
- ✓ Cool Kids first Aid
- ✓ B 4 Big School
- ✓ Camden Women's Coffee Clubs
- ✓ Little Travel Adventures

Child & Parenting Program

Our Child & Parenting Program is specifically designed to assist CALD families residing in the Macarthur area with children aged 0-17 years who are seeking assistance or have been identified as at-risk. Funded by the Department of Social Services, the Child and Parenting Program is delivered through two key areas: supported playgroups and case management.



Supported Playgroups

Our Yasmin Playgroup and Koala Playgroup are supported playgroups that cater to parents with children aged 0-5 years. Through well-structured play activities led by qualified early childhood facilitators, children are introduced to literacy and numeracy skills in preparation for school. Parents are encouraged to build on their parent-child relationship through these play activities and are equipped with valuable information related to childhood health, safety, development, parenting education and soft entry to other family support services. These playgroups offer both informal and formal social networking opportunities for parents, effectively reducing social isolation. Parents have the opportunity to participate in informative sessions delivered by local services like Area Health, Primary Health Network, WILMA Women's Health Centre, and Smith Family as a soft entry to local support services and to receive key messages related to health and support. Our Yasmin Playgroup operates in Minto, while our Koala Playgroup is based in Campbelltown, with each accommodating 23 clients. Over the course of this year, we conducted 78 supported playgroup sessions across four school terms.



Case Management

Over the past year, we have helped our clients strengthen their parenting capacity, improve health and wellbeing, increase participation in social inclusion activities, secure sustained, safe, and stable housing, and develop effective goal-setting and planning skills. We provided case management support to 65 individual clients during this financial year, including both children and parents.

Start Strong Pathways Program

The Start Strong Pathways Program caters to children aged 0-3 years residing in the Macarthur region, offering vital support for their educational development through play-based activities. Start Strong Pathways places a strong emphasis on addressing the individual goals, strengths and developmental progress of each child in a nurturing supported playgroup environment. During the 2022 - 2023 financial year, the Start Strong Pathways Program was available in Campbelltown, Minto and Bradbury.

This year, our facilitators engaged in a training workshop with EACH, a purpose-driven organisation that delivers health and support services to enhance lives and strengthen communities. Their engagement in this workshop aimed to broaden their knowledge and understanding, ultimately improving their ability to support our children and families. We also welcomed a guest speaker to our playgroups, who explained the services and eligibility criteria for joining EACH. This initiative has empowered our facilitators to effectively refer clients to EACH and assist parents in completing self-referrals when they have concerns about their child's development. This proactive approach enables families to access essential support before their child attends preschool or kindergarten.

In addition, we established a partnership with Mini Maestros, offering a music program tailored to our preschoolers. These classes provide a delightful fusion of fun and development, encompassing activities like dancing, singing, playing percussion instruments, and musical games. Such engaging sessions stimulate children's creativity, enhance their imagination, promote speech development, improve listening skills, nurture social skills, and enhance physical abilities.





No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

The No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) is a crucial initiative providing people and families with access to fair, safe, and affordable credit, with a maximum loan value of \$2000, for the purchase of essential goods and services.

NILS offers loans in several categories:

- ✔ Support for victims of domestic or family violence
- ✔ Vehicle loans, with loans of up to \$5000 (please note that this program is temporarily suspended)
- ✔ Assistance for disaster-affected community members
- ✔ Loans for rent advances, rental bonds, and rental arrears due to exceptional circumstances

These loans are exempt from fees, charges plus interest and they are required to be repaid within a maximum period of 24 months.

During the reporting period, we extended loans to individuals facing various extraordinary circumstances, including those experiencing family and domestic violence. Our support encompassed covering relocation costs, such as removalist fees, rental bonds, advance rent, arrears, and utility payments, offering a helping hand during challenging times.



FOCUS connect

Annual Report 2023

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