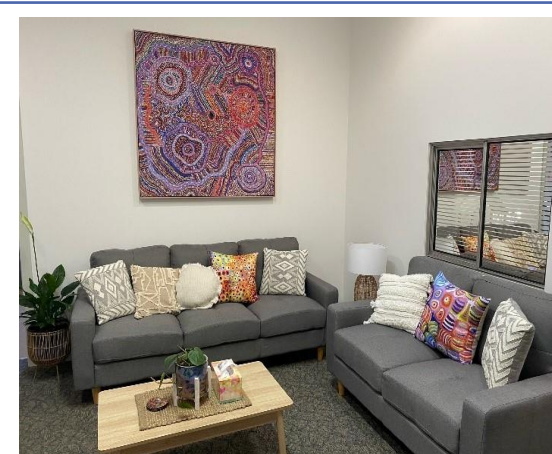




Family Support Newcastle  
*your family, our community*

# Annual Report 2022



# Acknowledgment of Country

Family Support Newcastle would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where Family Support Newcastle provides services. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work. We acknowledge that this land was never ceded. We are grateful for the care of the land that occurred historically and that we are able to work and live on this land now; we acknowledge the sadness, loss and injustices of Aboriginal people as a result of colonisation.



## Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

We recognise that the trauma that Aboriginal families have experienced and continue to experience as a result of ongoing colonisation and racism means that our service must be particularly accessible and effective for Aboriginal families.

We will:

- Provide a respectful, safe and welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Provide services appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal agencies
- Proudly and visibly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and openly challenge racism in ourselves and others
- Develop Aboriginal cultural competence
- Respectfully learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that this is a life long journey.

In this reporting period FSN provided support to 197 Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. Our support of Aboriginal people has grown significantly over the past four years – in 2019 FSN supported 69 Aboriginal people.



# About Us

Family Support Newcastle (FSN) is a non-government, for purpose, incorporated association that has provided services to families with children in the Lower Hunter Region for over 40 years. The safety and wellbeing of children and families are at the centre of everything we do.

## VISION

Family Support Newcastle provides services that promote the well-being of children and their families, of individuals, and communities. We often work in partnership with other services to provide more options for the families we support. We are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from other culturally diverse backgrounds, and those who experience discrimination and disadvantage.

## MISSION

Communities that are just, safe, strong and connected, providing opportunities for *all* families, individuals and children to grow and live well. Communities where history is acknowledged and healing is supported; where diversity and creativity are embraced and encouraged.

## VALUES

Integrity

Justice

Diversity

Generosity

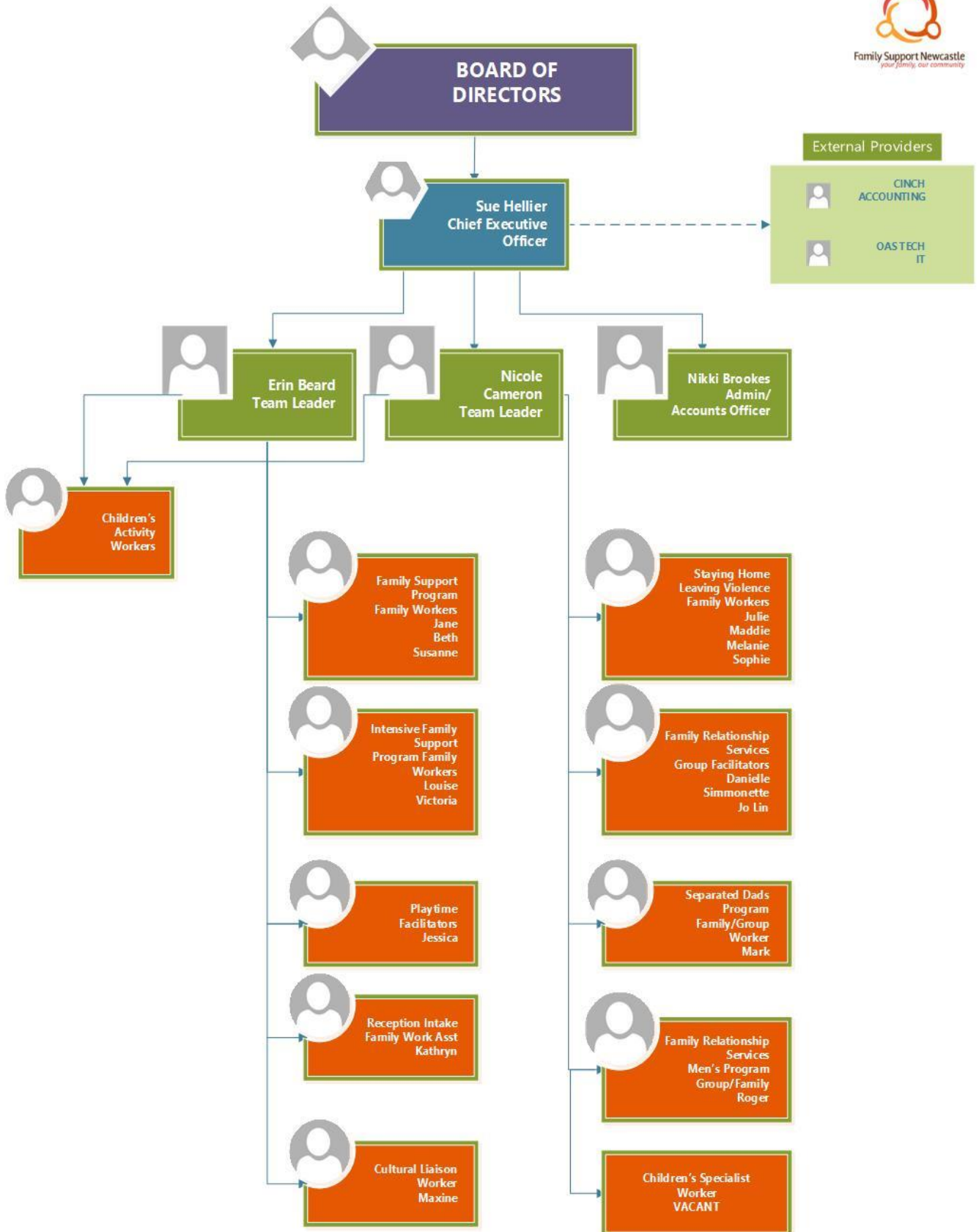
Our services include:

- Intensive assistance to families where there is serious risk to children
- Counselling and individual assistance in the home, Family Centre or agreed venue
- Therapeutic group programs with associated child development activities
- Supported playtime activities
- Support to women and children leaving domestic violence
- Support to men in their fathering role and in their relationships
- Approaches that are informed by research, evidence and best practice





# Organisational Structure



## Family Support Newcastle Board of Management

The Board has overall responsibility for running the service, overseeing our financial management and other responsibilities such as work health and safety, funding requirements, compliance and human resource matters. It helps with planning, evaluation and guiding improvements.

The FSN Board members for 2021-2022 comprise:

- Joshua Comyns (Chair and Treasurer)
- Jo-Anne Black (Secretary); resigned May
- Raelene Hopkins, finished January 2022
- Clementine Kayobera
- Margaret Stewart
- Kerrie Thompson
- Martine Ward

Thank you to the Board for your ongoing work in supporting FSN, attending meetings and other activities, decision making, questioning and valuable input. Your ongoing input and support are greatly appreciated.

### Report from the CEO, Sue Hellier

2021-2022 proved to be another period of change and managing various iterations of the impact covid. A Covid Safe Policy and Plan was developed, we worked through the dynamics of mandatory vaccinations for the human services sector, further developing on-line groups and working from home when required. Many staff and their family's contracted covid, which often meant staff shortages, I appreciate the way staff were resilient and continued to give priority to supporting families and their safety and wellbeing. I appreciated the support and commitment of team leaders, Erin and Nicole during some challenging times.

The current FSN Strategic Plan concludes this year and we are in the process of preparing the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. This has provided a good opportunity to reflect on the past five years.

Over this period, we have progressed through development and stabilising; changing and fine-tuning processes and systems; e.g. upgrading technology, outsourcing our IT work to New Era, changes to the governance structure and Board, raised our profile and increased our engagement with other services, outsourcing financial management to Cinch, become more child focussed in our practice, refurbishment of the Waratah Family Centre including new play spaces, improved program accountability, implemented CSNet a client management system, moved to a Lambton office, introduced more evidence based practice and group work, enhanced staff conditions by introducing external supervisors, EAP and Domestic Violence Leave. It has been a huge five years!



In 2019 we consulted with families of FSN, seeking feedback from both adults and children. It has been helpful to revisit this. Despite the disruptions of COVID I am pleased to say we did manage to introduce some of the requests from this consultation. For example; a wonderful climbing frame in the front play space, an after-school craft group (Yarning Kraftevenings), a multicultural cooking group, school holiday activities, a notice board in the reception area with information about other activities and services. While there are lots of great ideas, we are constrained by the type of funding receive, or simply by resources. Unfortunately, we couldn't manage the Games Arcade!

FSN has welcomed many new staff, like most human service organisations and businesses generally, there has been a high level of staff turnover for various reasons during COVID. We have been fortunate to welcome Kathryn, Jane, Jess, Beth, Roger, Mark, Mel, Maddie, Sophie and Nikki. These staff are skilled, experienced, qualified, values that align with FSN and are eager to learn, develop and contribute.

### What else did 2021-22 bring?

- Waratah Family Centre was repainted internally and looks wonderful.
- Funding was received from Women NSW to upgrade the counselling and meeting spaces in the Centre and to develop a new outdoors play area
- Installation of a small play area in the front area at Waratah, a new climbing frame and seating
- Implementation of the Social Sector Transformation and Social Sector Support Funding which enabled FSN to provide updated technology for staff increasing their autonomy, work options and safety. We also employed casual staff to meet the increasing needs of families needing additional support.
- Rapid Relief funding which meant we could provide families with practical items, especially personal protective equipment and internet support so they could connect with services (on line groups for example) and schools.

### What are we looking forward to in 2022-2023?

- Nikola Brookes commenced as the Administration and Accounts Officer. Nikki hit the ground running and is providing great support to me and to FSN.
- Additional funding was received for Staying Home Leaving Violence which means the trial Intake, Referral and Family Work Assistant role has continued as a permanent role, a new Family Worker position has been added to the team and partially funding a new position (Children's Specialist Worker) to provide therapeutic support to children who have experienced the trauma of family and domestic violence. FSN will also fund part of this position to better meet the demand for this work
- Lambton property has been reconfigured to provide a workspace for the expanded SHLV team
- Renewed play spaces in the front and rear areas of Waratah Family Centre will be finalised; the current demountable will be replaced with a newer style and compliant demountable to provide additional work spaces for staff
- We will make headway with the Families Reference Group which has been mostly on hold during COVID and lockdown.

After so many changes, adaptations and disruptions, it will be a pleasure to settle, appreciate our new processes, systems and technology, spend time connecting with each other, the appreciate lovely space at Waratah and continue supporting families and children.



## Erin Beard – Team Leader

Erin is a social worker, and line manager for the staff of the following programs:

*Playtime Plus:* A group at our Waratah Family Centre on a Thursday morning during the school term, with the aim of supporting parents and their pre-school aged children; e.g. developing socialisation skills, parents connecting with other parents, craft and play activities, skills development for children and just fun playing, singing and stories. This group has diverse attendees and over the last term has had up to 40 participants each week!

*Family Support Program:* Parents/carers needing additional support who have children 0-12years; FSP provides all eligible referrals with an intake and assessment appointment, information and referral support. Where appropriate, case management will be provided, including home visiting to support with challenges to parenting, such as mental illness, child development concerns, social isolation, family and domestic violence, poverty, and drug and alcohol use.

*Intensive Family Preservation Program:* Families residing in the Newcastle/Maitland areas who have the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) involved; FSN family workers will visit regularly to provide support, information and assistance to the parent/s to develop goals to keep children safe, refer to other relevant services, 24/7 telephone access to support, practical parenting suggestions. Referrals are received from DCJ only.



## Nicole Cameron – Team Leader

Nicole is a social worker, and line manager for the staff of the following programs:

*Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV):* Support to women and children in the Newcastle area, who have left family and domestic violence and either remain in their family home or home of their choice. Women and their families may be assisted with obtaining orders to exclude the perpetrator from the home, keeping the family safe in their home by improving home security, support to children and emotional support. Support is provided by referral and intake assistance, information & advice, advocacy case management or case coordination. Due to SHLV expansion funding received from the NSW government we are pleased we can support more eligible women and children and our team has grown in order to do so. We now have three part-time workers, one full-time worker and are in the process of recruiting to a newly created FSN position, a Children's Specialist worker which SHLV partially funds. This position is a therapeutic role



providing support to children and their family where domestic and family violence is, or, has been present.

*Family and Relationship Services:* There are two delivery streams for this program within this service: Family Skills and a Men's Program. The Men's program; a male worker who support men who reside in the Lower Hunter and are experiencing challenges in their relationships with their children aged 0-18 years. Support is provided by an intake and assessment appointment, can include home visits and centre based visits, information and referrals to other services and group work. The Family Skills program offers a variety of evidence based (e.g. Tuning into Kids, Shark Cage) and evidence informed groups (e.g. Self-Compassion, Great Minds) in collaboration with other services in and around the Lower Hunter. The groups are delivered in school term and focus on parenting and family relationships; and the types of groups offered are based on the identified needs of the community. For some of the groups a separate children's activity is provided to non-school age children and supported by Children's Activity Worker.

*Separated Dads Program:* A program in partnership with Interrelate; a male worker who supports dads who live in the Hunter and Port Macquarie areas, with children 0-18 years who may have had contact with a family mediation service. Support is provided by an intake and assessment appointment, short-term face to face, telephone or online therapeutic support around issues impacting on co-parenting or mediation. Support may include referrals to other services including FSN. Evidence based and evidence informed group work programs are also delivered and some groups are delivered in partnership with other organisations.

## Supporting Families

Our programs are delivered primarily from our Waratah Family Centre, alternatively in the family home or other appropriate venues. The majority of our group programs are delivered in partnership with other organisations, either at the Waratah Family Centre or in a community space.

We provide our services in a context where there is growing inequality between the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged members of our society. We believe that this is harmful to everyone including the most advantaged. The structural disadvantage that is experienced by the families that we come into contact with must be addressed for us to make a lasting and significant difference to the outcomes for our most vulnerable children. The families that we work with are more stretched than ever before. Affordable housing is virtually non-existent. Domestic and family violence is significantly impacting the lives of large numbers of mothers and their children. Income support for those who have limited abilities to participate in the work force is completely inadequate and the associated conditions and penalties are demeaning and draconian. We recognise that some or all of these impacts the families with whom we work and that we need to recognise the larger context that impacts on families. During the past year family work was sometimes provided via phone or zoom, depending on the needs of the family. Staff and families both proved to be flexible and adaptable to this environment.

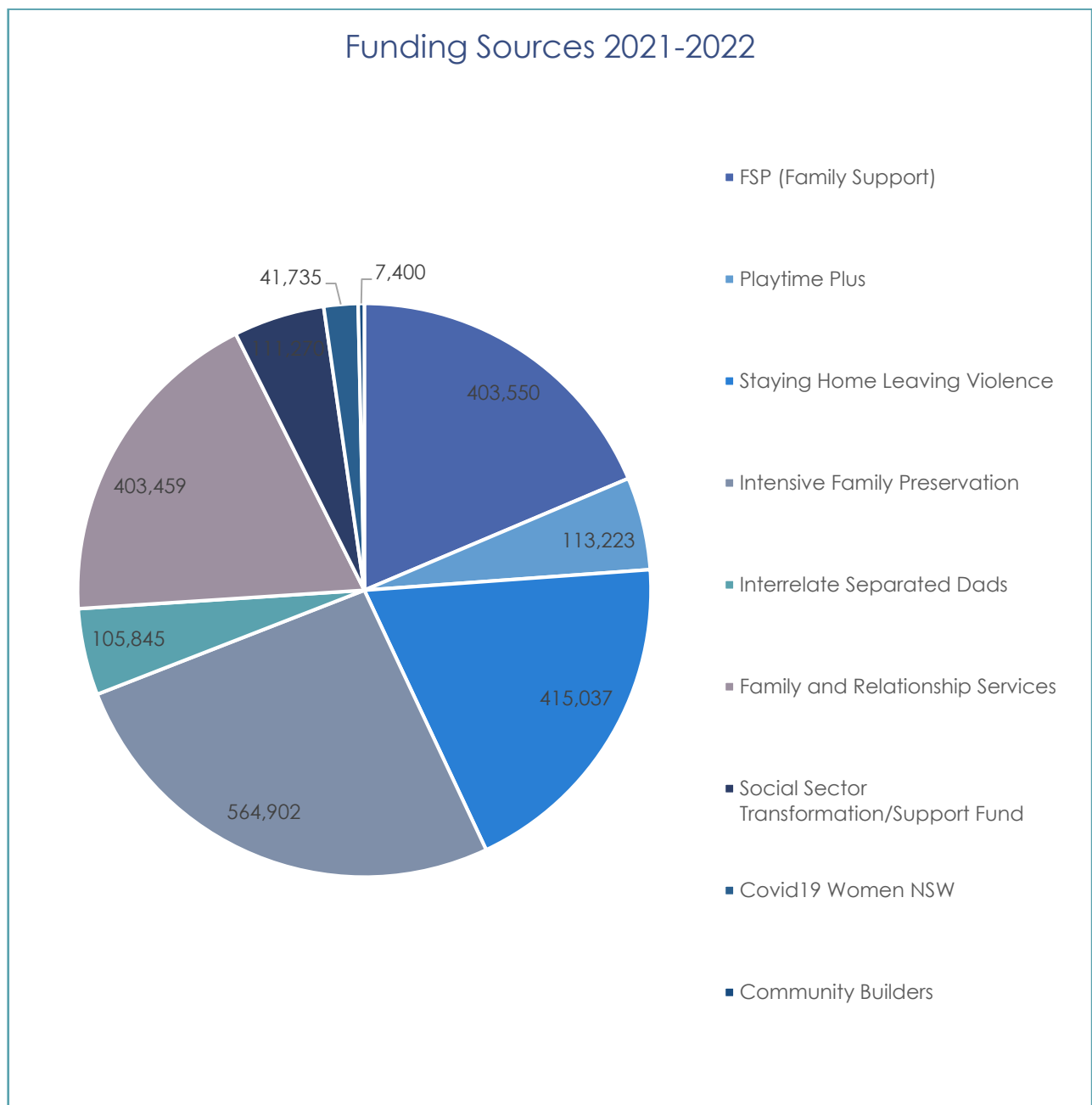
Our services are free, respectful, accessible and accommodating of people with varying levels of ability. Families and staff are given opportunities to engage with the Family Support Newcastle community and to participate in decision making. We strive towards ensuring our work is evidence informed with the skills and practice to reflect this approach. Over the next few pages there is data and detail about the services and the people we support with those services.



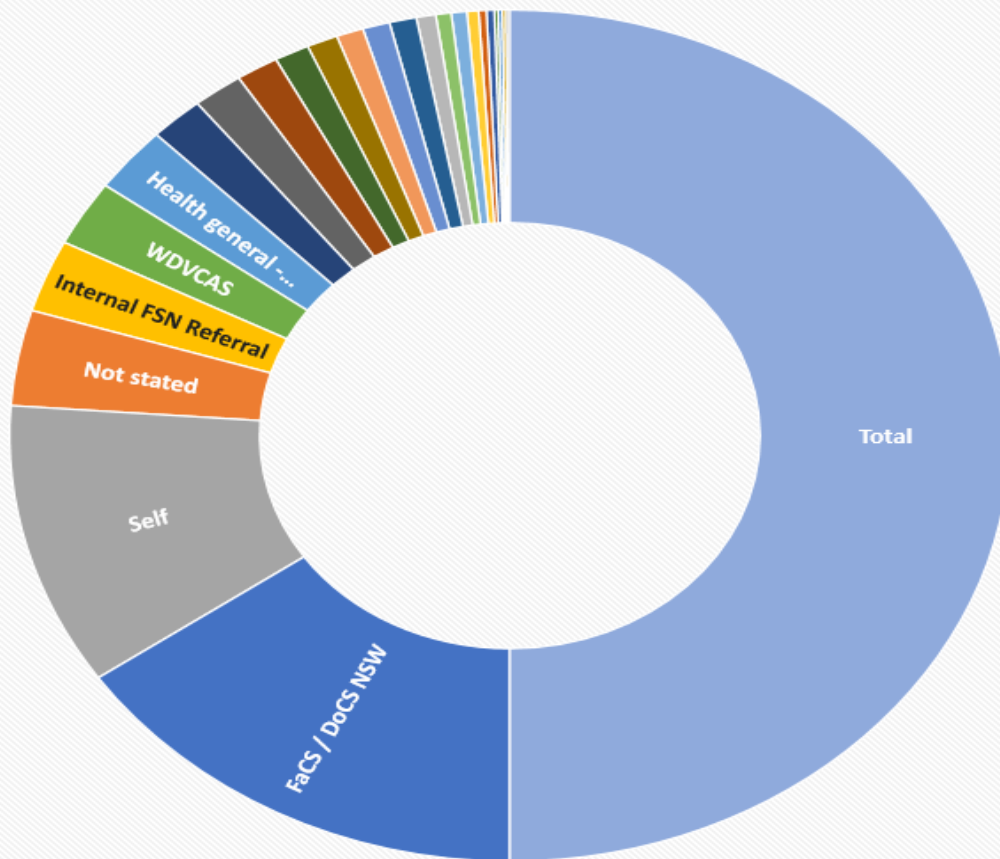


## Family Support Newcastle Funding

FSN receives government funding from Department of Social Services (Federal) and Department of Communities and Justice (State). FSN is also in partnership with Interrelate to deliver the Separated Dads program which is federally funded. Please see below for the distribution of these funds across the organisation. Family Relationship Services is Family Skills and Men's program. Due to the impact of COVID-19, FSN was granted additional funds for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, from Women NSW; Social Sector Transformation Fund (x 4), Rapid Response (Council of Newcastle) and additional DCJ funding for our Staying Home Leaving Violence Program.



## Referrals Sources 2021-2022

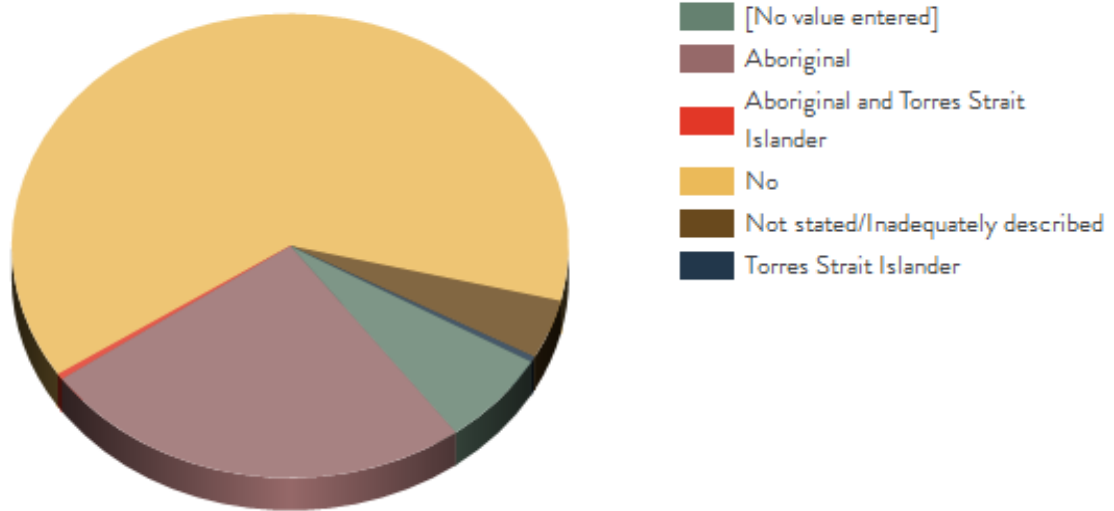


- FaCS / DoCS NSW
- Not stated
- Self
- Internal FSN Referral
- Health general - Hospital
- WDVCAS
- Community Organisation - Other
- Community Organisation – Housing (Nova, Jenny’s PI, other housing)
- Mental Health Services
- Community Organisation - Other Family Support
- Community Organisation – Samaritans / Salvation Army
- Interrelate
- Family Referral Service
- Community Organisation – Wesley Mission
- Education Agency / School
- Disability Services / NDIS
- General Medical Practitioner - GP / Nurses
- Community Organisation – Aboriginal Organisation
- Self-referred
- VOCAL – Victims of Crime

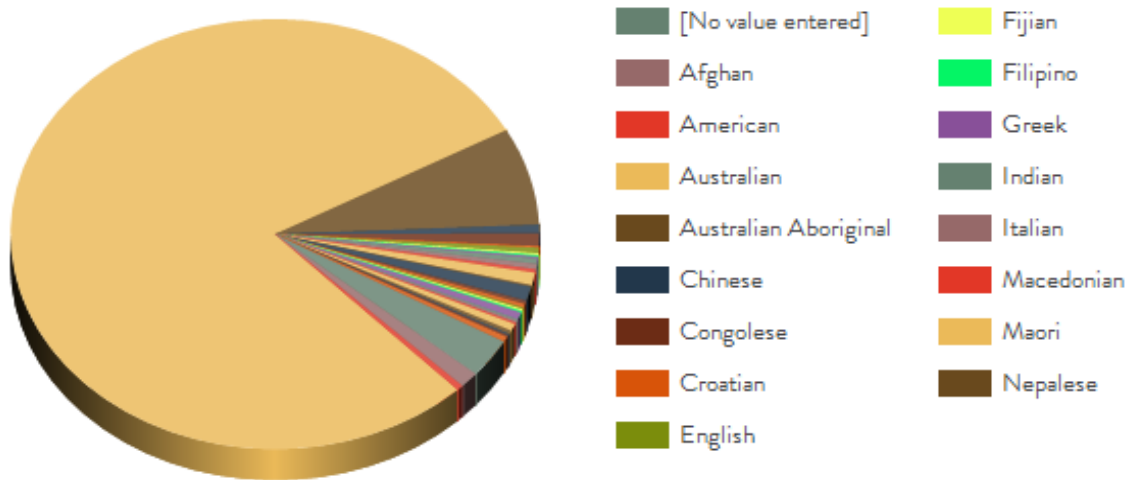


# Cultural Diversity – our services have become more reflective of the diverse Hunter communities

**Clients by \*Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**



**Clients by Ancestry (Cultural Background)**



Aboriginal Children's Day Artwork



# Evaluation and Feedback

FSN recognises the importance of collecting evidence-based data, both quantitative and qualitative, about the services we provide. This is critical to ensure that the services we deliver are effective. It also enables FSN to measure what we are doing well, to assess areas for development and improvement, and to comply with the requirements of funding providers. The results reflect the commitment of families to their wellbeing and growth and, reflects our workers commitment to this also.

## How do you feel about the support you have received?

How Do You Feel About the Assistance You Received?		
<b>1. If I was asked, I would recommend this service to others</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	0	0.00%
Agree	2	6.90%
Strongly Agree	27	93.10%
Total		29 100%
<b>2. I felt listened to and that my concerns were understood</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	0	0.00%
Agree	6	20.69%
Strongly Agree	23	79.31%
Total		29 100%
<b>3. My/Our circumstances have improved</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	4	13.79%
Agree	9	31.03%
Strongly Agree	16	55.17%
Total		29 100%
<b>4. I have more positive connections with my community or others</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	5	17.86%
Agree	15	53.57%
Strongly Agree	8	28.57%
Total		28 100%
<b>5. My children have noticed a difference in how I parent</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	3	10.34%
Agree	9	31.03%
Strongly Agree	11	37.93%
N/A	6	20.69%
Total		29 100%

<b>6. I've learned new skills to help me and my children</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	1	3.45%
Hard to Say	0	0.00%
Agree	7	24.14%
Strongly Agree	21	72.41%
Total		29 100%
<b>7. I feel that things are getting better for me and my children</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	1	3.45%
Agree	10	34.48%
Strongly Agree	16	55.17%
N/A	2	6.90%
Total		29 100%
<b>8. I know where to get help for me and my children</b>		
INDICATOR TYPES	FEEDBACK RESPONSE	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Hard to Say	2	6.90%
Agree	7	24.14%
Strongly Agree	20	68.97%
Total		29 100%





**All Dads Online – participant feedback; What did you like best about the service?**

- The way it was conducted, the content, I've only done two online courses this was by far the best.
- Transparency and honesty that the whole service put across. Very quick and easy that the facilitator was invested in it. Honesty of group members showed that they were there to get something out of it – not just ticking boxes.



**1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching – What did you like best?**

- It helped me to have a smooth relationship with my daughter. All the techniques are really helping to achieve what I want
- Very welcoming and comfortable environment. The key messages were highlighted through all the sessions making it seem achievable. Evidenced based.
- Excellent presentation and resources underpinned with clear explanations. It has been really special to be part of such an open and supportive group and discussion.
- Information was spread out well over 3 weeks, open discussion made it feel light and no pressure.



**Self-Compassion Group - What have you liked best about the service you have received?**

- The connections with like-minded women. I have made a friend from the service - we have met with our daughters at the park
- The support of people - the respect and non-judgement respect
- Great balance of understanding others situations, but also the time & strategies to take care of myself. It's wonderful to sit in a group of mums going through stuff too
- I liked everything in the group, mostly the support I felt by everyone

**Circle of Security – I like:**

- The way it's broken down into simple parts; the allowance to share stories; hearing others
- Interaction with other people and teachers.
- Great course that I'd strongly recommend to other parents
- I wish it was longer

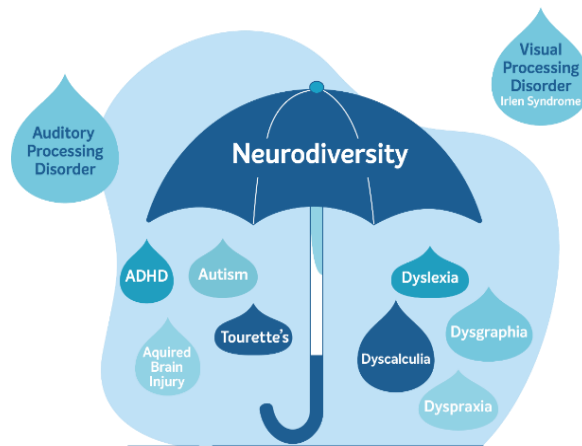


## FSN Groups

Through our Family Skills Program FSN partnered with the Ethnic Communities Council for the popular Gather in the Garden group, Tuning into Kids at the Edgeworth Community Centre. During Terms three and four of 2021 our groups were online: All Dads Online, Circle of Security, Self-Compassion and Turning into Kids. Terms one and two of 2022 saw us return to face to face groups: Raising the Growing Child (Swansea Cottage, Patches of Many Colours (Koe-Nara, Cessnock), Gather in the Garden (ECC) Yarning Kafternoon and of course our ongoing Thursday Playtime. Term two, 2022: Circle of Security, Nature Play (Blackbutt), Neurodiversity and Parenting with Firstchance, Raising the Growing Child (Kurri Kurri Community Centre), Tuning into Kids, Edgeworth Community Centre. Thank you to our partners.

### Neurodiversity and Parenting

This year the Neurodiversity and Parenting group was introduced to the suite of groups provided by Family Support Newcastle. It is an evidence informed, therapeutic and educational group that was designed for parents with lived experience of neurodiversity, either as a person who is neurodivergent or as a parent of a child who is neurodivergent.



This group has proved to be very successful with participants. Feedback includes:

What have you liked best about the service you have received?

- Open communication
- The way information has been presented along with the quality of information
- I have been able to achieve my goals in finding some new ways to approach caring with my [child]
- The information I've gained
- Different opinions and situations of all people
- The group worker Danni was amazing, very happy and friendly & explained everything in a way everyone could understand

Playtime Plus



Nature Play - Blackbutt





## School Holiday Activities

These are a combined effort from all programs across FSN. Weather and COVID permitting, activities have included NAIDOC celebrations, visit to Blackbutt, Ferry trip and visit to Stockton – photos below of the Stockton adventure.



Thursday Play Day – every Thursday during school terms



- “Everyone copes in different ways”
- “I’m learning that it’s okay to be me”
- “Good to hear I’m not the only one” (after discussing ‘stimming’ behaviours)
- “I’m allowed to find parenting hard and I can learn to love it”





## Children's Activity Workers

The Children's Activity Workers are vital to the success of the groups FSN provides to our clients; parents/carers are assured and have peace of mind that their children are safe, happy and have activities to do, enabling group participants to focus on the group they are attending and get the most benefit from that group. Ella, Donna, Joelle, Bron and Tanya are employed on a casual basis and are committed to their work and the children they support, for which we are grateful.



Children's Activity Workers: Ella, Donna, Joelle, Bron (Tanya was unavailable)





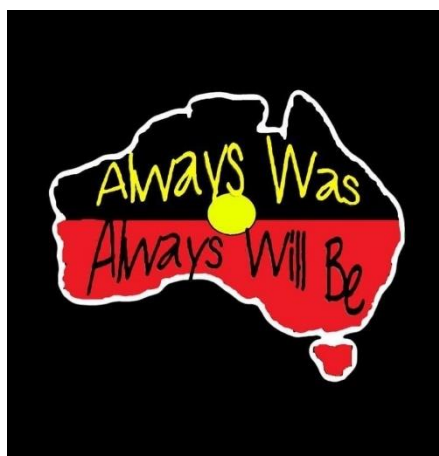
## The stages of the new cubbyhouse at Waratah Family Centre

This cubby was donated to FSN, by SABE Project from the Schools of Architecture and Built Environment. The children love it.





# NAIDOC Week 2022



## Celebrations, Activities and Acknowledgements

Partnerships: Through our Family Skills Program FSN partnered with the Ethnic Communities Council, Edgeworth Community Centre, Swansea Cottage, Koe-Nara, Cessnock Firstchance, Koe Nara, Thou Walla, Maitland Family Support and Brighter Futures. In addition, FSN is involved with the weekly Safety Action Meeting, Newcastle DV Committee, Multicultural Parenting Group, Multicultural Action Group. Other organisations with whom we work closely include NewPin, Nova for Women and Children, Northern Settlement Services, Zara House, STARTTS, HNEH, Interrelate, Samaritans.

Activities included several Covid Vaccination Clinics that operated out of the Waratah Family Centre, Walk A Mile Koori Style (WAMKS) committee meet regularly at our Waratah Family Centre and some of our staff participate in the planning and activities;

Activities planned, delivered or acknowledged on Facebook by the FSN included: R U OK Day, Reclaim the Night, 16 Days of Activism, Sorry Day, NAIDOC, the Multicultural Expo, Walk a Mile Koori Style, Family Law Practice Network.

### We are truly grateful for support provided by:

- Committed and amazing staff of Family Support Newcastle
- FSN Board of Management
- Families and individuals who trust us with their stories and experiences
- Groups and individuals who thoughtfully contribute to the work of FSN through donations and fundraising, including Kiwanis, Share the Dignity, Got Your Back Sista, Survivors R Us,
- Cinch Financial Services
- OAS The Technology Group
- Judy Brown Auditing Services
- Our team of contractors
- Cameron Beard, SABE, School of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Newcastle

### FSN acknowledges our funding providers and key partners in providing services:

- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Social Services
- Interrelate
- Community Builders (Local government)
- Social Sector Transformation Fund and Social Sector Support Fund (DCJ)
- Women NSW (DCJ)
- Family Domestic & Sexual Violence National Partnership Program
- Rapid Response Funding (Council of Newcastle)







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Family Support Newcastle

