

2024



Family Support Newcastle
your family, our community

ANNUAL REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 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 and present 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 FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

We acknowledge the history of invasion and subsequent colonisation of this country and the impact this has had on its peoples. We acknowledge that this is, always has been, and always will be Aboriginal land.

Our commitment is to:

- 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.

We have processes in place to regularly and openly measure and review our effectiveness in implementing this commitment.



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 45 years.

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



The safety and wellbeing of children and families are at the centre of everything we do.



Diversity



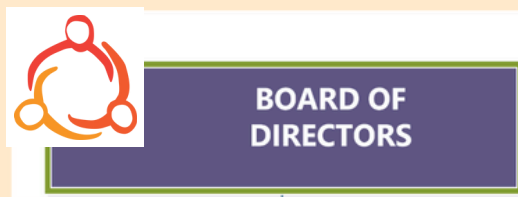
Generosity

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



External Providers



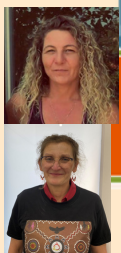
Erin Beard
Team Leader



Nicole Cameron
Team Leader



Nikki Brookes
Admin/
Accounts Officer



**Children's
Activity
Workers**



**Family Support
Program
Family Workers**
Jane
Beth (seconded IFP)
Susanne
Teagan



**Intensive Family
Preservation
Program Family
Workers**
Louise
Victoria
Neralie (Mat Leave)
Beth (seconded)



Playtime Plus
Jessica



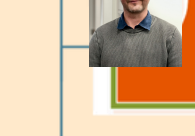
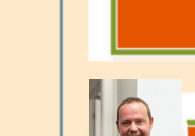
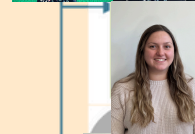
**Reception Intake
Family Work Asst**
Kathryn



**Cultural Liaison
Worker**
Maxine



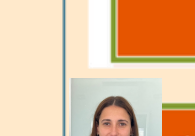
**Staying Home
Leaving Violence
Family Workers**
Julie
Sophie
Cherie
Emma



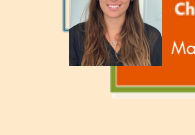
**Family Relationship
Services
Group Facilitators**
Jo



**Separated Dads
Program
Family/Group
Worker**
Mark H



**Family Relationship
Services
Men's Program
Group/Family
Roger**



**Children's Specialist
Worker**
Maddie (Mat Leave)



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. Our board helps with planning, evaluation and guiding improvements.

The FSN Board members for 2023-2024 comprise:

- **Joshua Comyns (Chair and Treasurer)**
- **Kerrie Thompson (Secretary)**
- **Clementine Kayobera**
- **Margaret Stewart**
- **Janelle Atkinson**
- **Martine Ward**
- **Jacqueline Gissane**

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 contributions and support are greatly appreciated.

REPORT FROM JOSHUA COMYNS, CHAIRPERSON

I am pleased to present my report for the year ending 30 June 2024.

This is my fifth year on the Board and it has been a great honour to serve in my capacity of Chairperson.

2024 has been a transition year, with Sue retiring and handing over the reigns to Prue as CEO.

I would like to thank Sue for all her dedication and hard work during her time at FSN. She has been instrumental to ensure a high level of integrity and continuing the great work with families over the years and we wish her all the best with retirement. The transition with Prue has been well received with the Board and we are looking forward to many years to come carrying out the strategic plan to ensure long-term viability and future for FSN.



We continue to increase our awareness and responsibilities around governance and accountability to ensure best practice. We as the Board take these responsibilities seriously and are supportive first and foremost of FSN staff and the families.

I would like to thank the diligent efforts of Sue, Prue, Erin and Nicole in particular for their hard work, dedication, and genuine passion for helping families and staff during the 2024 year.

Thank you Board members for your input and support to ensure a healthy and safe workplace for FSN staff .

Thank you to all staff of FSN for their commitment and professionalism, and support of the most vulnerable people within our community.

It has been a pleasure and an honour to continue to serve FSM again this year.

Best regards



Joshua Comyns, Chairperson Family Support Newcastle Inc.

REPORT FROM PRUE HUGHES, CEO

It is a privilege to present my first report as CEO of Family Support Newcastle, having stepped into this role just 10 days before the end of the financial year.

I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking my predecessor, Sue Hellier, for her many years of dedicated service to FSN. Her leadership has left a solid foundation upon which we continue to build.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Board for entrusting me with the opportunity to lead this incredible organisation into its next chapter. It is both a great responsibility and an honour to work alongside such a committed group of leaders to advance our mission of supporting families, young people, and children in our community.



To the staff: your unwavering dedication, expertise, and passion for the work we do is inspiring. I am deeply grateful for the warm welcome you have extended to me and for the tireless efforts you put into serving those whom we work to support.

I would like to make special mention of Naomi, Nicole and Erin who have each proved invaluable sources of information and support to me as I have settled into my role. I am sincerely grateful to you. Thank you.

Over the past year, the complexity of the challenges facing families has grown, reflecting broader social and economic pressures. Despite this, Family Support Newcastle continues to rise to the occasion, finding innovative and compassionate ways to respond.

Our strategic priorities—Quality, Relationships, Equity, Culture, and Sustainability—guide us in ensuring that we provide meaningful support while building resilience in the communities we serve. These priorities remind us to focus on delivering exceptional services, fostering strong and respectful partnerships, championing fairness and inclusion, cultivating a positive and dynamic organisational culture, and securing the sustainability of our work for years to come. Together, these goals strengthen our ability to navigate challenges and create lasting impact.

I am excited about the road ahead as we continue to adapt, innovate, and work collaboratively toward a future where every family has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your trust and support as we move forward on this journey together.

Warm regards,

Prue Hughes

Chief Executive Officer

2023-2024 OUR PEOPLE

This year saw some movement within our staff teams. In addition to Sue's retirement at the end of June, the following changes occurred;

- Victoria took most of this year off to spend time exploring our beautiful nation.
- Neralie commenced maternity leave and welcomed baby Vera and Maddie prepared to commence her maternity leave early in the 2024-2025 year.
- We said farewell to Mark Dewhurst from our FaRS team.
- We welcomed Kerrie Manning to the team in position of Casual Family Worker.
- Naomi commenced working remotely to accommodate her personal circumstances and has continued to do an amazing job from afar!
- We also said goodbye to Bronwyn Lin from our CAW Team and Coralie Properjohn - one of our external supervisors.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024-2025?

Our priorities for the year ahead are;

Recommissioning:

IFP, FSP and Playtime Plus programs are expected to head into the recommissioning process throughout 2024-2025. It is likely that we will be required to re-tender for at least the IFP program. The priority will be to ensure that clear and consistent communication is maintained for staff and our families as it can be an unsettling and uncertain time. The reputation of FSN and our ability to consistently deliver high quality outcomes will be important focus areas throughout the recommissioning process.

Sustainability:

In alignment with our 2023–2027 strategic plan, organisational sustainability will be a central focus in the coming year, particularly in light of recommissioning. A primary objective will be identifying opportunities to diversify income streams and foster partnerships with a range of stakeholders.

Culture:

Our staff are the foundation of our organisation—our success is built on their dedication and expertise. Reviewing and developing our culture is a continuous process to ensure that our workforce feels safe, supported and encouraged to thrive both personally and professionally.



Guests at the Waratah Family Centre Open Day
Oct 2023



ERIN BEARD- TEAM LEADER

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

Playtime Plus: Playtime Plus has established itself as a vibrant and essential part of the community at Waratah Family Centre, drawing a diverse range of families each week. This engaging playgroup is designed to foster connections between parents and their pre-school aged children through play, offering a variety of developmentally appropriate and educational activities.



One of the standout features of Playtime Plus is its commitment to creating “invitations to play.” Each week, families are welcomed into a warm environment filled with innovative play opportunities that encourage creativity, exploration, and learning. The inclusive nature of the program ensures that all families feel valued and engaged, which contributes to its popularity. The program also prioritizes parent involvement through biannual consultation sessions. These sessions are a valuable opportunity for parents to provide feedback and suggest improvements, fostering a collaborative environment. This year, the input from parents led to the introduction of additional cultural celebrations and excursions elements that have clearly enriched the experience for both children and families.

Family Support Program (FSP): I am pleased to report that the Family Support Program has had a productive year, despite an increase in the complexity of referrals. We ensured all eligible families received an intake assessment within weeks of referral, leading to either brief interventions or ongoing support. The team has remained responsive to community needs, collaborating with schools and agencies to deliver cross-cultural parenting workshops at Jesmond and Heaton Public Schools and hosting school holiday activities at Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre with partners including the Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre, The Canopy, and The Samaritans.

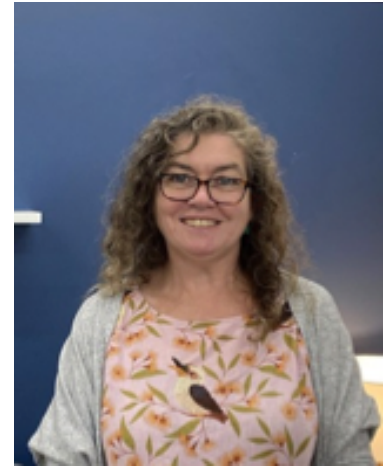
Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFP): We continue to provide IFP services to families residing in the Newcastle/Maitland areas who have the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) involved. As with FSP, we have seen an increase in the complexity and demand for supports under this program. The strong working relationships we have developed with local DCJ offices are a result of the quality of support that the team provide.



NICOLE CAMERON- TEAM LEADER

Nicole is a proud Wiradyuri (Wiradjuri) woman, social worker, and line manager for the staff of the following programs:

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV): Nicole is honored to support and collaborate with the talented practitioners at FSN. At the Hunter DFV Forum 2023, colleagues Jo Lin and Maddie Taylor, alongside Saskia Behan, presented the Child in Focus workshop, emphasizing the importance of recognizing children impacted by DFV as co-victims/survivors rather than secondary victims. The session also addressed how behaviors stemming from DFV experiences are often misunderstood or misdiagnosed. This year, Nicole completed the Safe & Together Model CORE training and plans to focus on further integrating this model into Family Support Newcastle's practice in the year ahead.



Family and Relationship Services: Nicole and her team have been encouraged by the positive feedback from families supported throughout the year (some quotes are included in this report). A key highlight has been responding to the needs of families and the community, exemplified by the development and delivery of Little Fish, an evidence-informed therapeutic and educational group program. Designed for mothers and children who have experienced domestic and family violence, the program helps strengthen and rebuild their connection. We are hoping to explore opportunities to deliver this program to a wider audience next year.

Separated Dads Program: In addition to delivering individualised, therapeutic supports to fathers, the Men's Team have played a key role in developing the Hunter Men's Forum, an annual event held during the 16 Days of Activism. The forum provides valuable insights for practitioners working with men and boys in the areas of domestic, family, and sexual violence prevention, early intervention, and behavior change.

Highlights across all three programs have included developing strong collaborative partnerships with other services such as headspace (Samaritans), Hunter Women's Centre, Interrelate, MOSAIC Multicultural, Refugee Hub Relationships Australia, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Young People's College and working with the Zahra Foundation to deliver their Pathways to Empowerment program at our service.



SERVICE DELIVERY DATA

Our programs are primarily delivered from the Waratah Family Centre, with alternatives in family homes or other suitable venues. Most group programs are offered in partnership with other organisations, either at the Centre or in community spaces. Our services are free, respectful, accessible, and inclusive of people of all abilities and backgrounds.

Below is a snapshot of the 2023-2024 service delivery data.



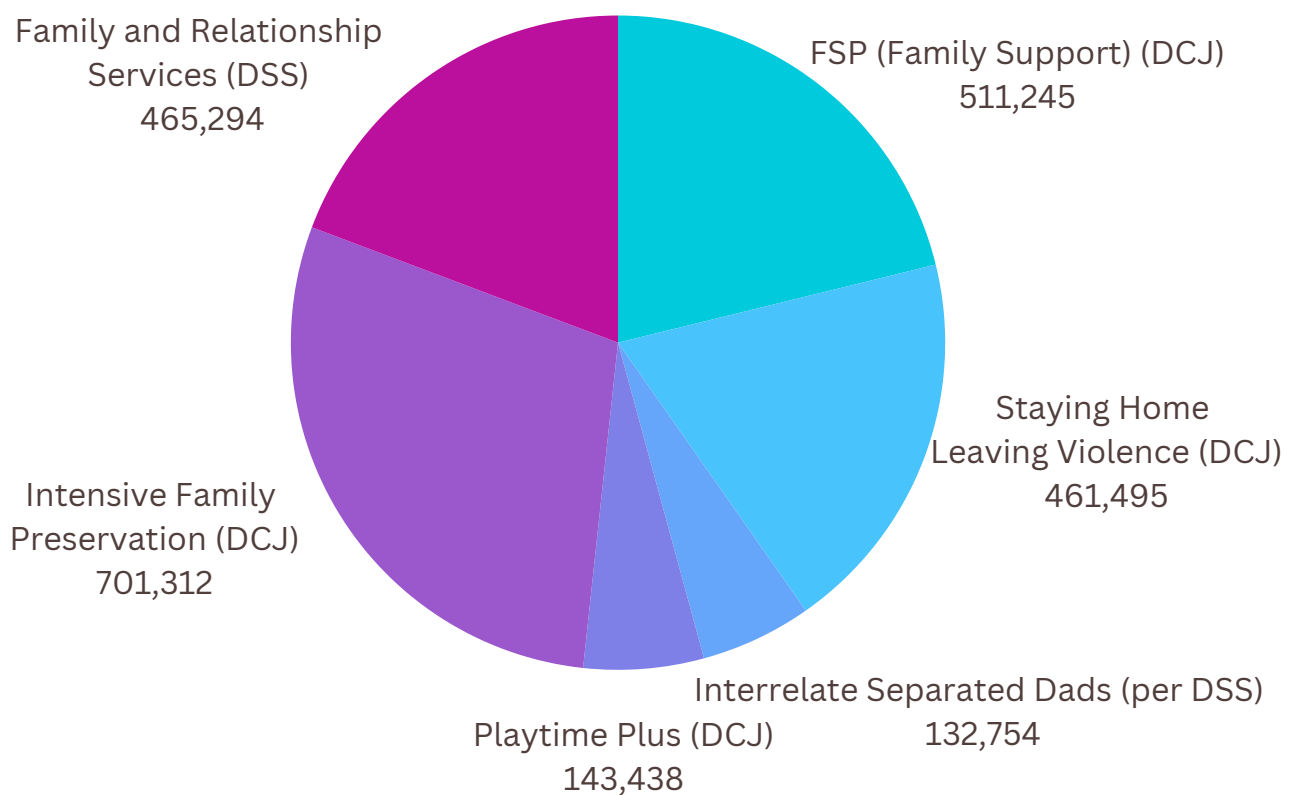
**some families are accessing more than one FSN program.*



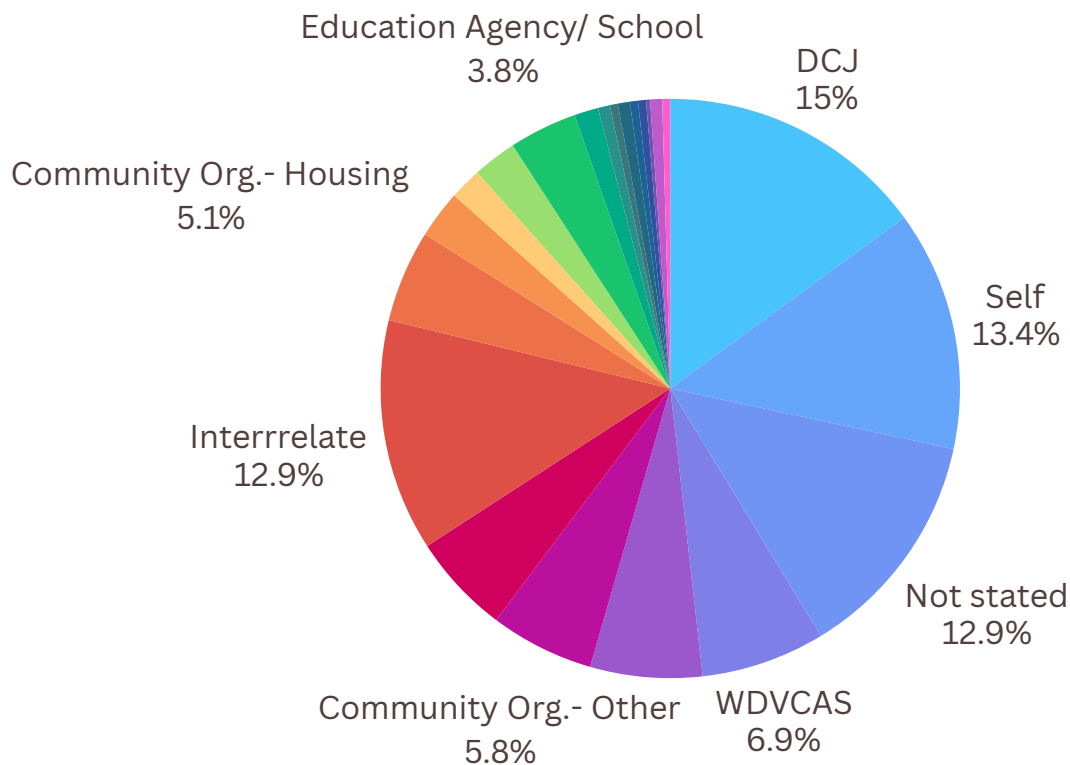
FAMILY SUPPORT NEWCASTLE FUNDING

Our primary sources of funding throughout the 2023-2024 year have continued to be the NSW Dept. of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Australian Dept. of Social Services (DSS). Throughout the year we were also grateful to have received a generous donation from Lambourne Partners. The graph below shows a comparison of funding for each program.

PROGRAM FUNDING 2023-2024



REFERRAL SOURCES



Referrals were received from:

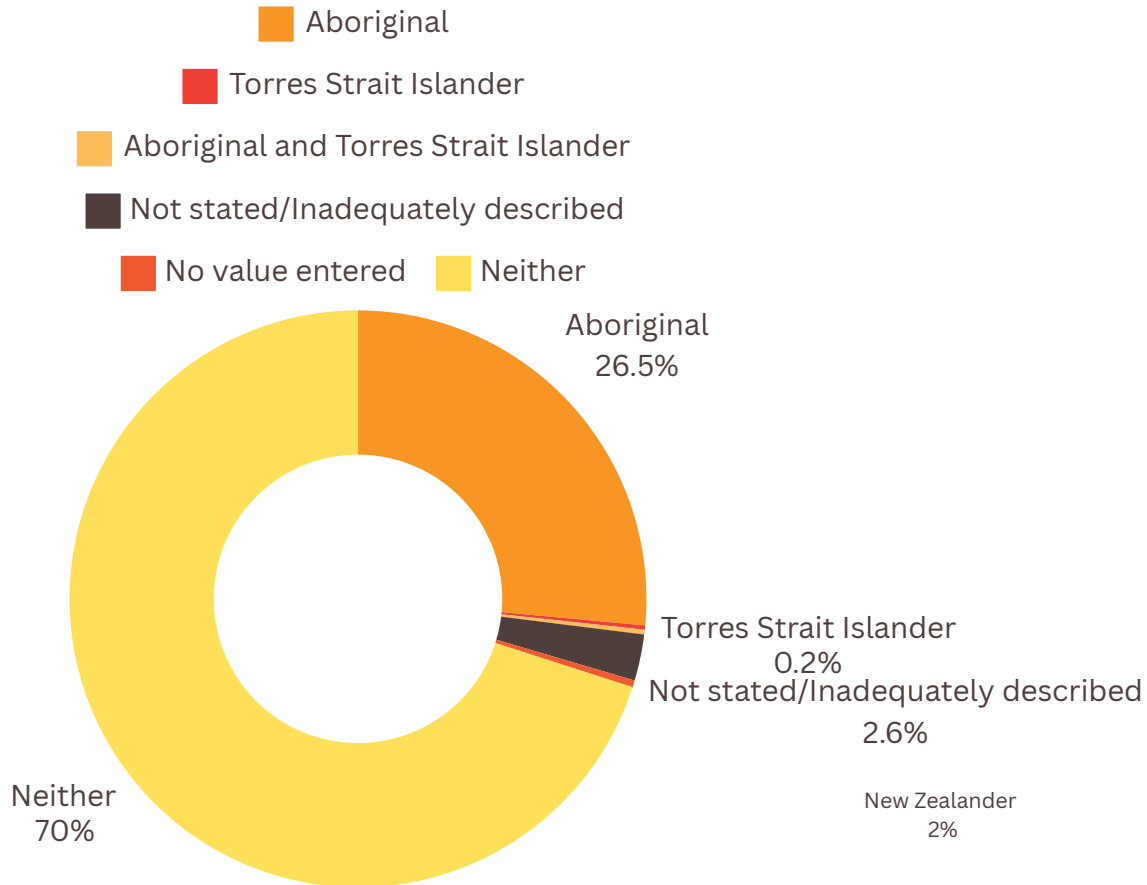
- Not stated
- DCJ NSW
- Self
- WDV CAS
- Internal FSN Referral (client of another program in FSN)
- Community Organisation - Other
- Health general - Hospital
- Community Organisation – Housing (Nova, Jenny’s Pl, other housing)
- Community Organisation - Other Family Support
- Community Organisation – Samaritans / Salvation Army
- Interrelate
- Mental Health Services
- Education Agency / School
- Family Referral Service
- Police – Probation and Parole
- VOCAL – Victims of Crime
- Community Organisation – Aboriginal Organisation
- Community Organisation – Wesley Mission
- Family / Friends
- Legal Services (Community) / Lawyers / Legal Agency
- Disability Services / NDIS
- GP / Nurse



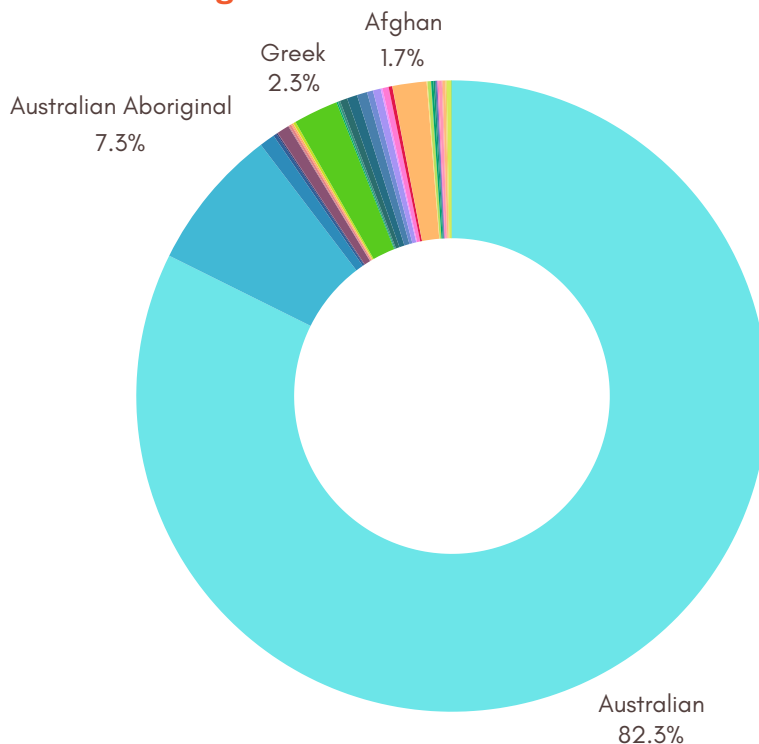
CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Our services have become more reflective of the diverse Hunter community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients



Cultural Backgrounds of Clients



Other Cultural Backgrounds - not labelled

Australian South Sea Islander	Indonesian
Torres Strait Islander	Malay
New Zealander	Chinese
Fijian	Bengali
Samoan	Indian
English	Nepalese
Irish	Pakistani
Dutch	Indian Tamil
French	Afghan
Western European	American
Northern European,	Canadian
Italian	Paraguayan
Maltese	Mexican
Portuguese	Nigerian
Greek	Congolese
Macedonian	Central and West African
Polish	Ethiopian
Russian	Rwandan
Egyptian	Not stated
Lebanese	
Saudi Arabian	
Syrian	
Iranian	
Mainland South-East Asian	
Khmer (Cambodian)	
Thai	
Vietnamese	
Filipino	



OUR GROUP PROGRAMS

The delivery of evidence based and evidence informed groups for parents and children continues to be a strength of FSN. Throughout the year, some of the groups that the team have delivered include;

- Little Fish
- Tuning into Kids for Dads
- Connected Kids & families
- Tuning into Teens
- Understanding Dad's
- Circle of Security
- Black Box Parenting for Dads
- Bringing up Great Kids
- Settling, Playing... Connecting.

WHAT OUR FAMILIES SAY...

CONNECTED KIDS & FAMILIES

"I would love to say thank you so much for having my family with a warm welcome and being supportive :)"



TUNING INTO KIDS FOR DADS

*"I have really gained a lot from the work that you and * do, and I often think of you during moments of day to day life. You guys deserve to know that the work you do makes a big difference in people's lives, and I think you're both amazing."*



SETTLING, PLAYING.....CONNECTING

"The group environment - so powerful feeling held and validated alongside other parents. The facilitators - so gently and consciously taking us through the flow of concepts in the program. It's been healing and empowering."



LITTLE FISH

"Bringing the children into the conversation and addressing their need. It was really hard but really valuable."



Children's Activity Workers

Our Children's Activity Workers (CAW), Donna, Joelle, Chantel and Tanya have continued to provide care and a wide range of beautiful activities for children whilst their parents/carers are participating in one of our group programs. We are incredibly grateful for our CAW Team - without the work you do many parents / carers could not access our services.



We would be lost without our
Children's Activity Workers!
Thank you for all that you do.

NAIDOC WEEK 2023



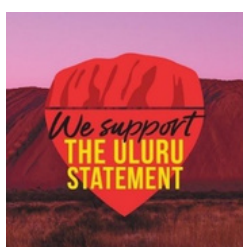
FSN's Aboriginal staff celebrating
NAIDOC Week - July 2023



FSN representatives at the
wonderful NAIDOC Women's
Dinner - July 2023



FSN participating in NAIDOC
celebrations - July 2023



PLAYTIME PLUS & SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Expertly coordinated and led by Jess, our Playtime Plus program provides a safe and welcoming space for parents / carers to bring their young children.

If you are at Waratah Family Centre on a Thursday morning during school terms, you will hear the chatter of children as they engage in the activities that have been prepared for them.

Playtime Plus also serves as a point of connection for families, with many building lasting friendships which outlive their time with FSN.

There are also opportunities for parents/ carers to connect with some of our skilled family workers to seek advice and support in relation to any concerns they may have for their child(ren).



School holiday activities are a combined effort from all programs across FSN. Activities this year have included NAIDOC celebrations, a visit to the Museum, Nature Play Day, Disco at Waratah Family Centre and Lambton Pool.



2023 - 2024 IN PICTURES



Sorry Day - May 2024



Team Building - May 2024



Multicultural Expo



Biraban Banner



End of Year Brekky - 2023



Organisers of the Men's Forum - Nov 2023



DFV Consortium & MP's July 2023



ACTIVITIES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We cannot do what we do without collaborating with other services. FSN has continued to be part of the Hunter Domestic and Family Violence Consortium this year. Consortium partners are: Jenny's Place, NOVA, Carries Place, Port Stephens Family & Neighbourhood Centre, Upper Hunter Homelessness Support, Newcastle WDVCS, Warlga Ngurra, Got Your Back Sista and FSN. Throughout the year, we have met with several MP's including Kate Washington and Jodie Harrison MP. The consortium was also successful in obtaining a grant from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation which will be used to complete a partnership project with Work Ventures for DFV sector workers about Tech Facilitated Abuse (TFA).

Other partnerships: In addition to our Family Skills and groupwork partnerships, FSN is involved with the fortnightly Safety Action Meeting, Newcastle DV Committee, Multicultural Action Group. Other organisations with whom we work closely include NewPin, Nova for Women and Children, Mosaic, STARTTS, HNEH, VOCAL, Matthew Talbot, DCJ Cultural Hub, Mission Australia, Police incl. DVLO's, MAXX Solutions, JCPRP, First Steps, Hunter Family Outreach, Muloobinba, Birra Li, Jenny's Place, Interrelate, Relationships Australia, Warlga Ngurra, Samaritans, schools in the Western Corridor and schools local to Waratah.

Activities planned, delivered or acknowledged on Facebook by FSN included: Reclaim the Night, 16 Days of Activism, Sorry Day, NAIDOC, Multicultural Expo, and Aboriginal Children's Day.



Hunter Homeless Connect - Aug 2023



Reclaim the Night - Oct 2023



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, Friends with Dignity
- Cinch Transform
- New Era Technology Group
- CSNet (Client Management Systems)
- Paul Quealey – Lambourne and Partners Auditors
- Supervisors: Jacinta and Kristy
- Our team of contractors
- FAMS NSW
- ACWA
- FRSA
- Port Waratah Coal Services

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

- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Social Services
- Interrelate
- Staying Home Leaving Violence NSW
- Domestic & Sexual Violence National Partnership Program (KWSITH)



Neralie and Beth- our face painting dream team



FSN children's activities at Hunter Homeless Connect Day 2023





Family Support Newcastle

Waratah Family Centre
2 High Street Waratah 2298

68 Orlando Road
Lambton 2299

Mail: PO Box 67 WARATAH NSW 2298

Phone: (02) 4926 3577
0490 331 617

Opening hours: 9am-4pm Mon-Thurs,
9am-2pm Fri

Website: nfss.org.au

Email: reception@nfss.org.au



Family Support Newcastle