2025

Family Support Newcastle
your family, our community

ANNUAL REPORT

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.

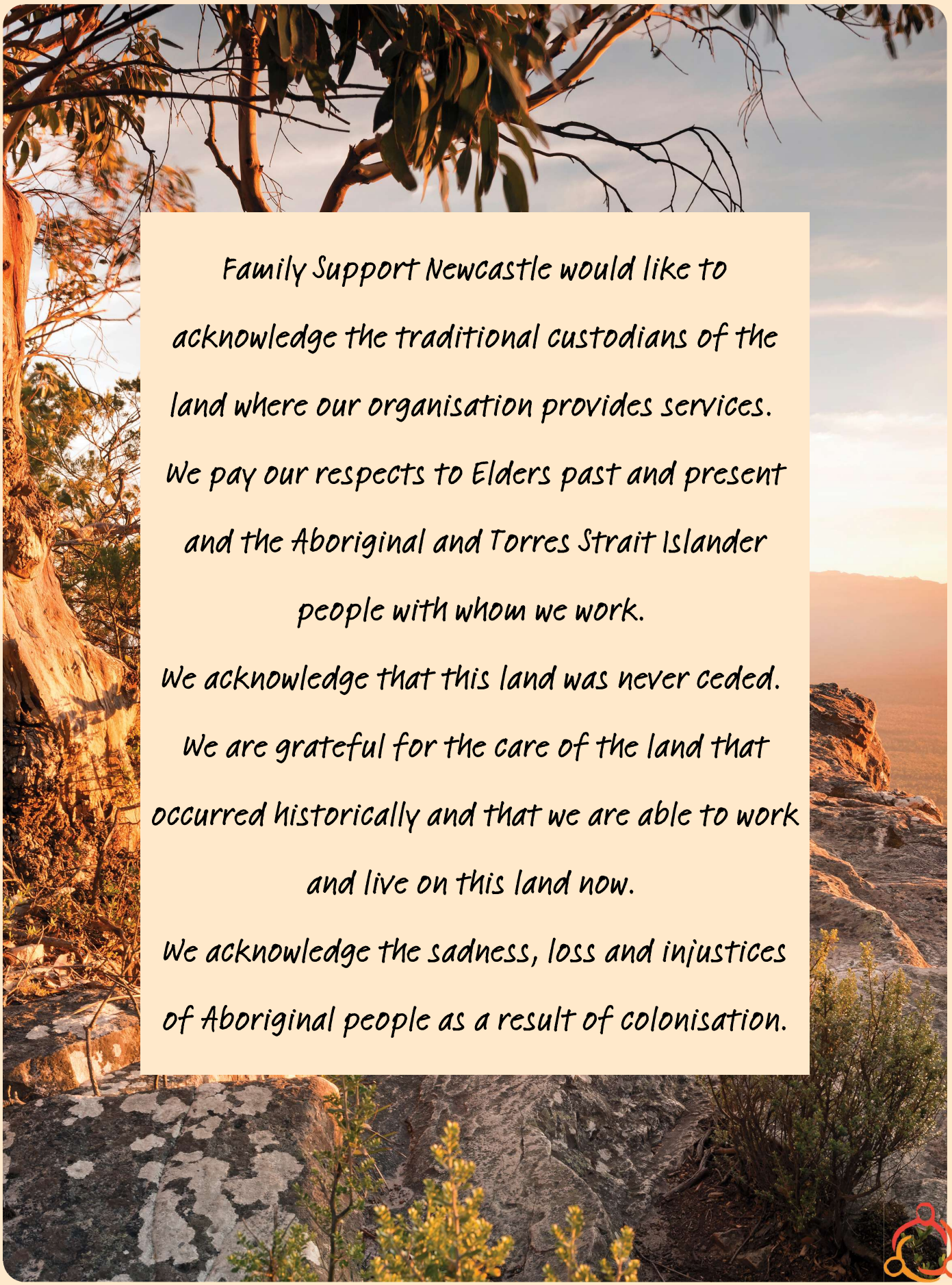
• Develop Aboriginal cultural competence.

• 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.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Family Support Newcastle would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where our organisation 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.

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.

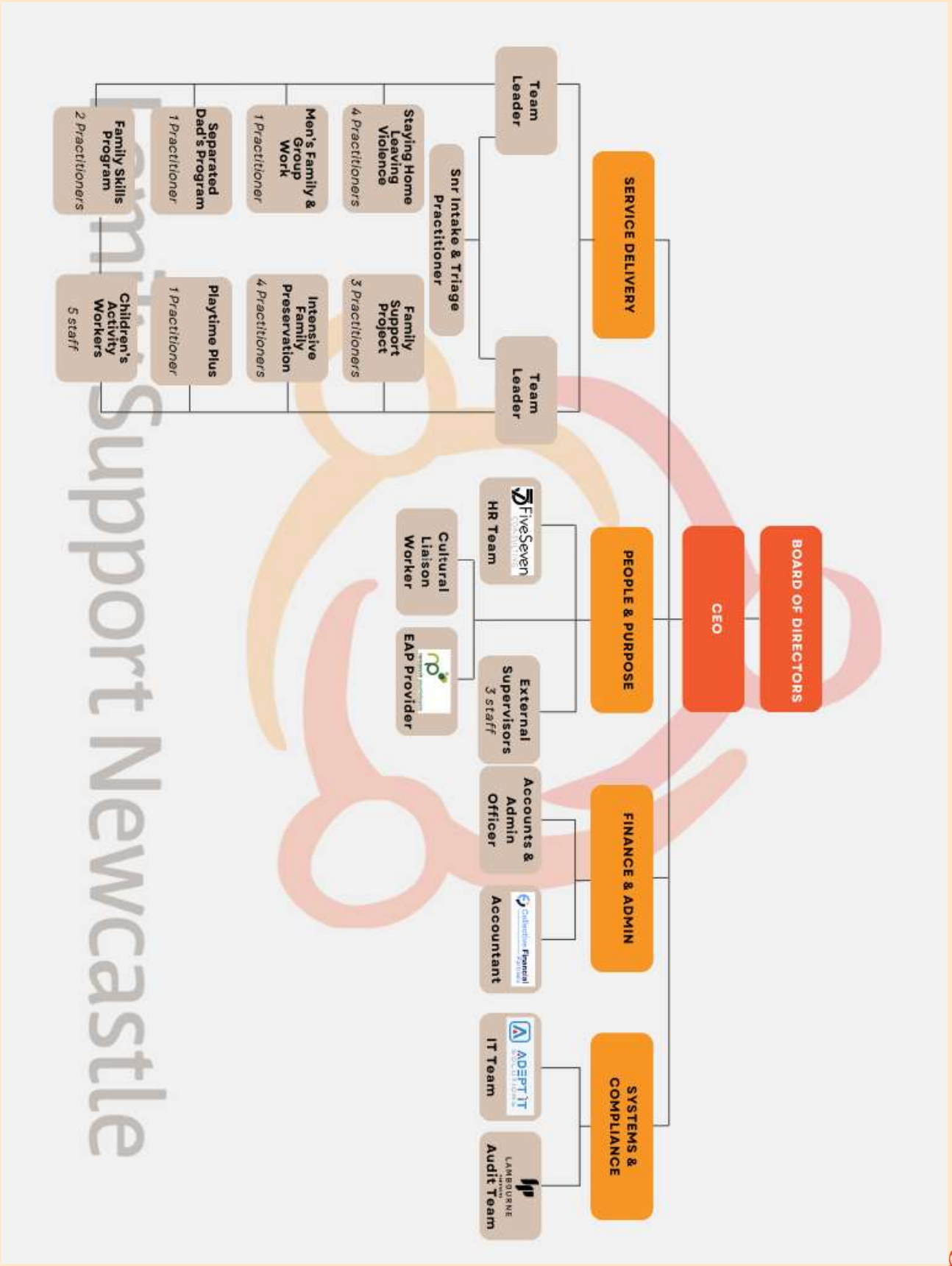
Diversity

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



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 2024-2025 comprise:

- **Joshua Comyns (Chair and Treasurer)**
- **Janelle Atkinson (Secretary)**
- **Jacqueline Gissane**
- **Martine Ward**

We farewelled

- **Clementine Kayobera**
- **Margaret Stewart**
- **Kerrie Thompson**

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 2025.

2025 has been a successful and challenging year for FSN, conquering changes in constant compliance matters, governance, human resources and financial management at the forefront, while ensuring the delivery of services to family remains top priority.

Prue (CEO) has continued to navigate the NFP responsibilities while maintaining a high level of integrity and continuing the great work with families over the past year.

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.

The profit for the year of $53,605, represents a $97,335 improvement on the prior year result, which is a great result and reflective of the diligent efforts of the key management personnel and leaders for their hard work and dedication for helping families and staff during the 2025 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 FSN again this year.

Best regards

Joshua Comyns, Chairperson Family Support Newcastle Inc.

REPORT FROM PRUE HUGHES, CEO



It is a privilege to present my second report as CEO of Family Support Newcastle. This year has been one of both progress and profound uncertainty for our organisation and the broader sector.

The delays in government announcements regarding program redesign and funding have created an environment of instability that has tested all of us. These uncertainties have made planning difficult and placed additional pressure on staff and services. Despite this, we have maintained high quality service delivery and continued to support families, children and young people in our community. This commitment speaks volumes about the resilience and professionalism of our team.

To our staff: you are the backbone of this organisation. Your ability to adapt, innovate, and remain focused on families in the face of sector-wide disruption is extraordinary. Every day, you demonstrate that our mission—to support families, children, and young people in Newcastle and the Hunter—is more than words; it is action.

I want to acknowledge the Board for its role in governance during this challenging period. While the year has not been without its complexities, their oversight has supported FSN in maintaining compliance and continuity of service.

Once again, 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 continued to into my role. I am deeply grateful to you. Thank you.

Our strategic priorities—Quality, Relationships, Equity, Culture, and Sustainability—remain our compass. They guide us in delivering exceptional services, fostering strong partnerships, and ensuring that FSN is positioned to thrive despite external uncertainty.

Looking ahead, we anticipate ongoing challenges, particularly as uncertainty in the sector persists. Despite this, our commitment to families remains steadfast. We will continue to deliver the support they need, regardless of the external pressures, because that responsibility is at the heart of our work.

Thank you for your trust and support as we navigate this complex landscape together.

Warm regards,

Prue Hughes

Chief Executive Officer

2024-2025 OUR PEOPLE

This year saw significant movement within our staff teams.

- Victoria returned following almost a year off travelling.
- We welcomed Mark Dewhurst back to the FaRS team.
- We farewelled Julie Dowse who headed north for the warmer weather after serving FSN for 16 years.
- Maddie commenced maternity leave and welcomed baby Valetta and Neralie returned from maternity leave.
- We farewelled Kathryn Kennedy, Teagan Barry and Kerrie Manning.
- We farewelled Maxine Fennell after 17 years of service.
- We welcomed Caitlin Purvis to the SHLV and FSP Teams.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025-2026

Our priorities for the year ahead are;

Recommissioning:
Significant delays in the recommissioning process for our IFP, FSP and Playtime Plus programs means that this work has not yet commenced and will likely be undertaken in the 2025-2026 period. We do know that we will be required to go to open tender for the IFP program. The priority will be to ensure that clear and consistent communication is maintained for staff and our families throughout this period. 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 continues to be identifying opportunities to diversify income streams and foster partnerships with a range of stakeholders. There needs to be a focus on collaborative partnerships with like minded organisations with a view to exploring innovative solutions to external challenges.

Culture:
Maintaining a stable, supported workforce - especially in the current climate is a key priority for the year ahead. Targeted efforts to support our staff will be undertaken to encourage the team to thrive - personally and professionally.



Guests at the FSN Families Christmas Party 2024

ERIN BEARD- TEAM LEADER

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



Playtime Plus:

Our supported Playgroup continues to be an integral and vibrant weekly event at the Waratah Family Centre. Every Thursday morning during school terms, parents/carers and their preschool aged children gather at Waratah to engage in sensory play opportunities, singing, reading, craft and games and to share morning tea and 'circle time'.

Speaking to its popularity, over the past year, 62 clients from 10 different countries have attended the group! This year saw the introduction of the 'Small Talk' model to morning circle time- with the Playtime facilitator, Jess, supporting parents to learn a set of evidence-based strategies they can use to enhance the home learning environment for their children 0-4years. Anyone with preschool aged children is eligible to attend the group, with no referral or commitment to weekly attendance required.

Family Support Program (FSP):

This year, our Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program provided case-managed parenting support to 86 families with children under 12. Referrals came primarily from DCJ, alongside education, health, and self-referrals. Eligible families attended an intake appointment for assessment and allocation, though increased demand and complexity sometimes led to wait times. Following the success of co-designed Cross-Cultural Parenting groups last year, two staff presented at the 2025 DCJ Multicultural Community Engagement Conference, strengthening sector connections and securing a consulting role with a Western Sydney multicultural service. TEI recommissioning is underway, with contracts expected to be renewed late 2025—likely with minimal service changes but a new program name.

Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFP):

Our Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) program supported 117 clients this year, with 88% of families completing the program achieving at least one case plan goal—demonstrating its impact on child safety and wellbeing. Practitioners maintained strong collaboration with DCJ and other services, which was vital for culturally safe practice, as 37% of clients identified as Aboriginal. The program will conclude in March 2026 as DCJ transitions to a new 'Families Together' model, requiring FSN to tender. This shift brings uncertainty, but we remain focused on supporting families through the change.

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): The SHLV program received 165 referrals, supporting 112 women and children through case management or coordination. Fifty-three women without caseworker allocation still received follow-up support. Of participants, 29% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 13% as culturally and linguistically diverse. SHLV works closely with the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, its main source of high-risk referrals, and provides long-term support averaging eight months. Staffing gaps, including the loss of a Senior Practitioner, led to a waitlist. Of closed cases, 62.5% achieved goals, and 81% were not rehoused during support. SHLV also partnered with Jenny's Place to deliver DFV education to Young Parents College staff and facilitated safety planning training with NOVA Women and Children workers, sharing tools for home, community, and online safety.

Family and Relationship Services: This year 427 individuals participated in program activities. Of these, 389 engaged in parenting and relationship group programs which also included children attending our children activity groups that run alongside our groups and school holiday activities. Evidence-based groups delivered in over the year were Bringing Up Grear Kids, Tuning in to Kids, Circle of Security Parenting and Tuning in to Teens. Some of the evidence-informed groups offered were Bush Playgroup, Understanding Dads, and Dads in Connection. Furthermore, 38 received individual support from the Men's & Family Practitioner. Among all participants: 21% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; 9% came from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 7% were reported to be living with a disability.

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 included FSN's Separated Dad and Men's Practitioners presenting at the 2024 Hunter Men's Project Annual Forum, attended by around 80 professionals. Additionally, SHLV team members, a group worker, and a men's worker completed Theraplay Level One and MIM training—an evidence-based, attachment-focused intervention using play to strengthen parent-child bonds. This training was made possible through a scholarship from the Primary Health Network.

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 2024-2025 service delivery data.



9,569
Contacts



2551
Individuals*



6,142
Sessions





1,240
Adults*



1,222
Children*



438
Group Work Sessions

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

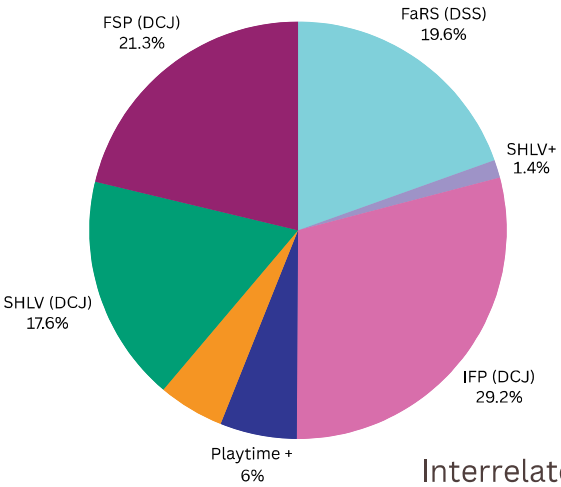
FAMILY SUPPORT NEWCASTLE FUNDING

Our primary sources of funding throughout the 2024-2025 year have continued to be the NSW Dept. of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Australian Dept. of Social Services (DSS). The graph below shows a comparison of funding for each program.

PROGRAM FUNDING 2024-2025

Family and Relationship Services (DSS) 488,179

FSP (Family Support) (DCJ) 530,416



SHLV + (DCJ) 33,963

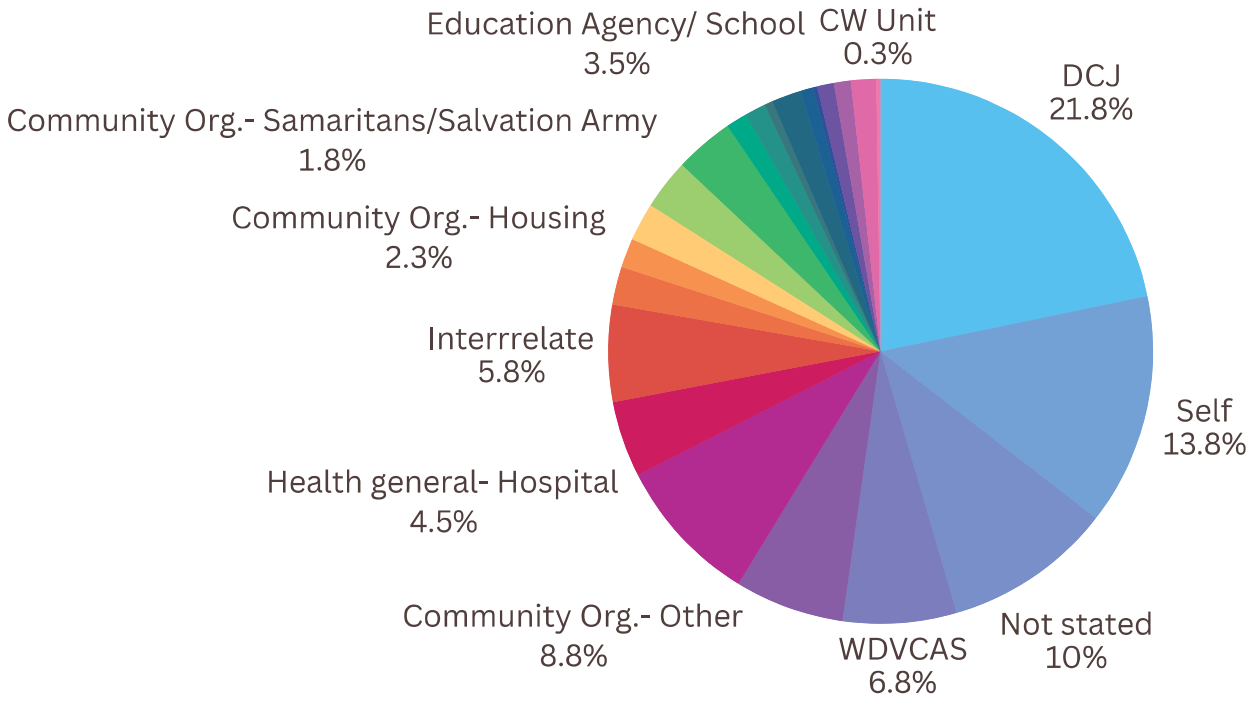
Staying Home Leaving Violence (DCJ) 438,278

Intensive Family Preservation (DCJ) 727,611

Interrelate Separated Dads (per DSS) 128,071

Playtime Plus (DCJ) 148,817

REFERRAL SOURCES



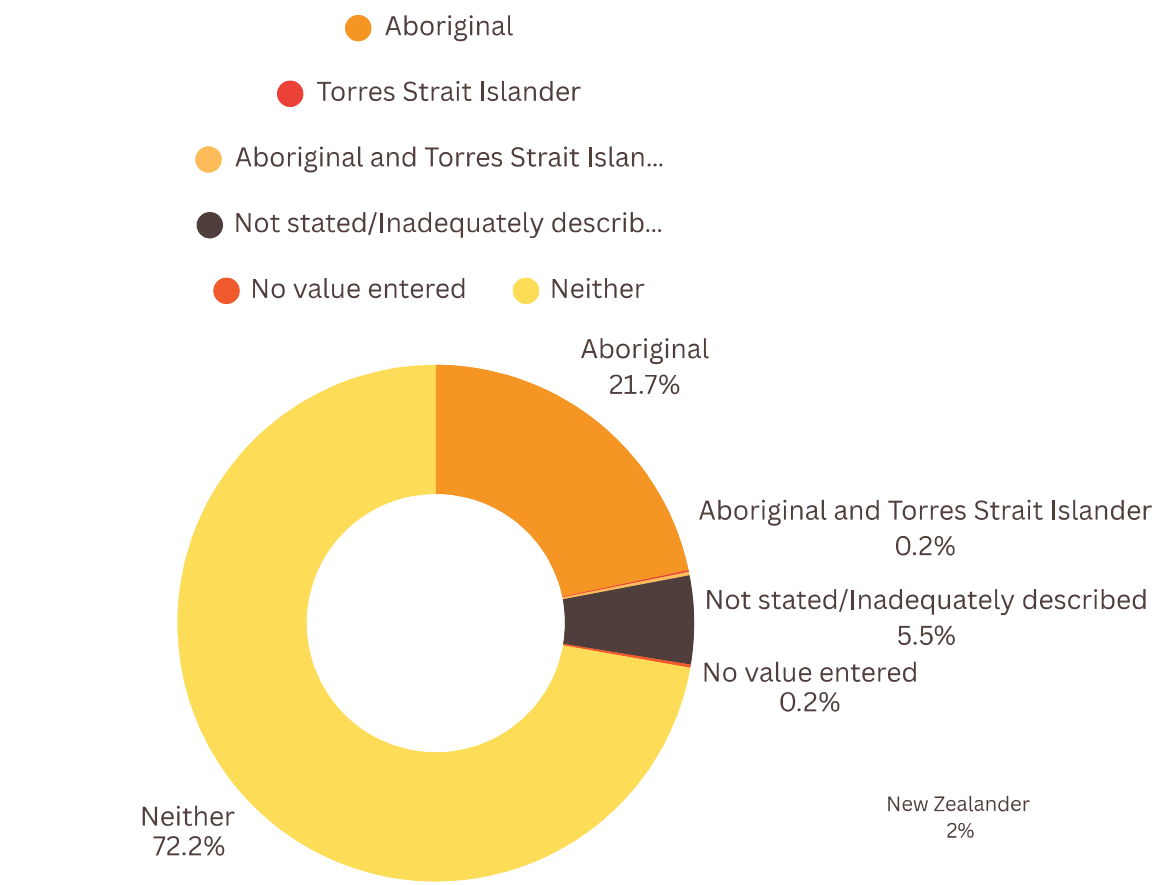
Referrals were received from:

- DCJ NSW
- Self
- WDVCAS
- 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
- Child Welbeing Unit (CWU - Police / Health / Education)
- Community Organisation – Aboriginal Organisation
- Community Organisation – Wesley Mission
- Family / Friends
- Legal Services (Community) / Lawyers / Legal Agency
- Disability Services / NDIS
- GP / Nurse

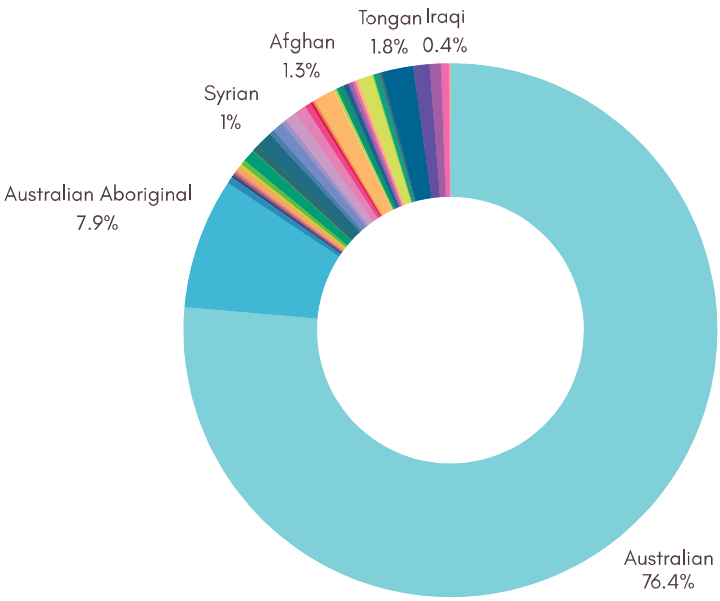
CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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

Maori	Saudi Arabian
New Zealander	Iranian
Ni-Vanuatu	Kurdish
Papua New Guinean	Mainland South-East Asian
Cook Islander	Khmer (Cambodian)
Fijian	Thai
English	Vietnamese
British	Filipino
Irish	Indonesian
Dutch	Chinese
Western European	Chinese Asian
Norwegian	Korean
Italian	Other North-East Asian
Maltese	Indian
Spanish	Nepalese
Albanian	Pakistani
Greek	Southern Asian
Macedonian	Paraguayan
Russian	Akan
Ukrainian	Congolese
Iraqi	Central and West African,
Palestinian	Not stated

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;

- Tuning in to Kids
- Tuning into Teens
- Tuning into Kids for Dads
- Understanding Dad's
- Circle of Security
- Black Box Parenting
- Bringing up Great Kids
- Connected Kids & families
- Parents Not Partners for Dads
- Dads in Connection
- Nature Connection with Kids
- Bush Playgroup
- Parents not Partners
- Art as Resistance

WHAT OUR FAMILIES SAY...

BRINGING UP GREAT KIDS

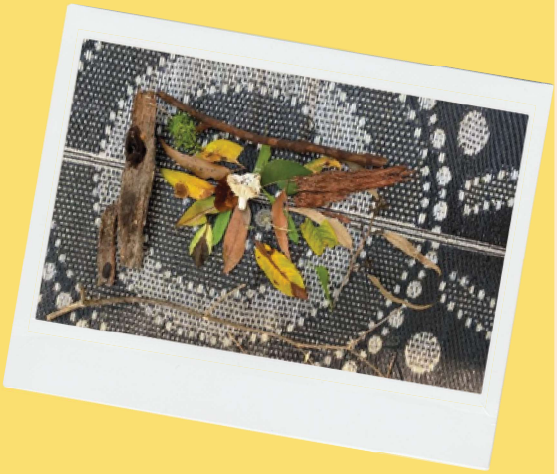
When asked what they liked best, participants stated;

- *"Making new friends."*
- *"Support and learning."*
- *"The deep listening".*



BUSH PLAYGROUP

"Thankyou so much for organising this group and for providing us the precious opportunities to learn Indigenous ways of being and to form a valuable community. this group is so special [heart]"



TUNING INTO TEENS



"I feel like my daughter is opening up more"

PARENTS NOT PARTNERS FOR DADS

"I really liked the supportive and safe space."



Children's Activity Workers

Our Children's Activity Workers (CAW), Donna, Joelle 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. Thank you CAW's!



Fun outside!



Painting with Donna!

NAIDOC WEEK 2024



Our stall was popular!



FSN Staff at the ceremony



Set up & ready!



FSN Staff at the march



The rain didn't stop the crowds



Smoking ceremony

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).



Our Indoor Playtime Space



The cubby house is always popular.

School holiday activities are a combined effort from all programs across FSN. Activities this year have included NAIDOC celebrations, a super fun Teddy Bears Picnic, A Dino show at Newcastle Museum and a combined agency Fun Day.



Teddy Bears Picnic



Holiday Fun Day



Dino Science Show

2024 - 2025 IN PICTURES



Hunter Homeless Connect
Aug 2024



Training with Adept IT -
Dec 2024



Men's Wellbeing Event -
Oct 2024





NAIDOC Women's Dinner
July 2024



Staff Christmas Lunch-
Dec 2024



Julie's Farewell -
Nov 2024



Full house at the Hunter DFV
Forum - Dec 2024



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, Warlga Ngurra, Got Your Back Sista and FSN. Throughout the year, we have met with several MP's including Tim Crakanthorp MP and Jodie Harrison MP. Throughout this year, a grant from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation was used to complete a partnership project with Work Ventures for DFV sector workers about Tech Facilitated Abuse (TFA). We are looking to seek additional grant funding to continue this project into next year.

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.



16 Days of Activism Launch Dec 2024


Hunter DFV Consortium Press Conference - May 2025

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
- Adept IT Solutions
- Collective Financial Partners
- CSNet (Client Management Systems)
- Paul Quealey – Lambourne and Partners Auditors
- Supervisors: Jacinta and Kristy
- Our team of contractors
- FAMS NSW
- ACWA
- FRSA
- Beyond Bank

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

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





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