



Many tracks, one road, sustaining community.
Northern Rivers Community Gateway

2019-2020 **annual report**

Head office and community hub

76 Carrington Street, Lismore NSW 2480
Email info@nrcg.org.au
Telephone 02 6621 7397
Fax 02 6622 0235

Grafton

2/70 Prince Street, Grafton NSW 2460
Telephone 02 6643 4726

Murwillumbah

Room 8, Murwillumbah Community Centre,
Nullum Street, Knox Park,
Murwillumbah NSW 2484
Telephone 02 6672 5552

Our childcare services

Alstonville

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
11 Perry Street, Alstonville NSW 2477

Casino

Casino West Public School
84 Hotham Street, Casino NSW 2470

Kyogle

Kyogle Public School
192 Summerland Way, Kyogle NSW 2474

Lismore

Lismore Public School
10 Pound Street, Lismore NSW 2480

Ocean Shores

Ocean Shores Public School
166 Shara Boulevard, Ocean Shores North
NSW 2483

Wollongbar

Wollongbar Public School
Simpson Avenue, Wollongbar NSW 2477

Our postal address

PO Box 525, Lismore NSW 2480

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Geographic coverage

We provide services throughout the state of New South Wales.



Our people

84

Members of staff who were working with Northern Rivers Community Gateway over the last year.

428

Registered volunteers who were active in our database over the last year.

Our services

Social and financial inclusion

- Community Hub
- Volunteer Resource Centre
- Community Visitors Scheme
- Timebanking
- Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme
- NSW No Interest Loans Scheme coordination
- StepUP low interest loans
- Warruwi gambling help
- Work and Development Order organisation
- First Step emergency relief
- NSW Financial Inclusion Network
- Social enterprise Cart Café
- Be Connected

Community hub facilities

- Community information
- First Step emergency relief
- Assisted referrals
- Community calendar
- Budget counsellor
- Tax Help
- Skills development, including literacy and numeracy classes
- Computer tuition and senior's kiosk
- Food pantry
- Shower facilities
- Laundry facilities
- Free spectacles (eligibility conditions apply)
- Backpack Beds
- Room hire and office facilities
- JP services

Community support

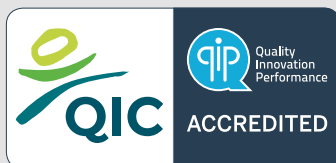
- Parents Under Pressure
- Connecting Families
- Child and adolescent trauma counselling
- Adult trauma counselling
- Helping Hands

Children's services

- Rainbow Region Kids before school care, after school care and Vacation Club
- Flourishing Families
- Books & Butterflies
- Discovery Club

Our purpose

- Strategically secure funds to deliver programs and services that target socially and economically disadvantaged people.
- Establish an evidence base to plan, develop and manage innovative services that deliver positive social impacts and improve personal and community capacities.
- Provide facilities that promote community engagement and harmony by supporting community groups and services.
- Provide collaborative leadership to celebrate diversity and advocate for social justice.
- Advocate for empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Provide opportunities for service users to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.



Accreditation

We are proud to have achieved independently assessed, external accreditation of our systems and processes. This accreditation is a formal acknowledgement of our excellent organisational practice, service delivery and quality improvement processes, assessed by Quality Innovation Performance against the *QIC Health and Community Services 7th Edition Standards*.

Our core values

Vision

Commitment

Respect

Integrity

Innovation

Our locations

Head office and community hub

- 76 Carrington Street, Lismore NSW 2480

Grafton

- 2/70 Prince Street, Grafton NSW 2460

Murwillumbah

- Room 8, Murwillumbah Community Centre, Nullum Street, Murwillumbah NSW 2487

Rainbow Region Kids locations

- Alstonville – St. Joseph’s Primary School, 11 Perry Street, Alstonville NSW 2477
- Casino – Casino West Public School, 84 Hotham Street, Casino NSW 2470
- Kyogle – Kyogle Public School, Summerland Highway, Kyogle NSW 2474
- Lismore – Lismore Public School, 10 Pound Street, Lismore NSW 2480
- Ocean Shores – 166 Shara Boulevard, Ocean Shores North, NSW 2483
- Wollongbar – Wollongbar Public School, Simpson Avenue, Wollongbar NSW 2477

First Step outreach locations

- Byron Community Centre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay NSW 2481
- Casino Neighbourhood Centre, 138 Canterbury Street, Casino NSW 2470
- Kyogle Family Support Services, 5 Geneva Street, Kyogle NSW 2474
- Murwillumbah Community Centre, Nullum Street, Knox Park, Murwillumbah NSW 2487

Our vision

Many tracks, one road, sustaining community.

Our report card

Strategic investment

Build capacity for sustainability

- Build IT capacity
- DA approved for affordable housing development
- Disaster-ready facility established in Goonellabah
- Explore larger space for increased Alstonville RRK demand
- Develop 2020-2023 strategic plan
- Integrate new assessment and data collection into CRM
- Mobile workforce investment across all services

Build on existing funding options and be proactive in sourcing additional revenue streams

- Various funding submissions
- Indigenous Money Network extension projects through NILS
- Children's services accreditation
- Disaster management grant
- Funding submission for affordable housing development
- Counselling funding acquired for Recovery and Resilience grant
- Disaster ready facility established in Goonellabah
- Continued service delivery during COVID pandemic

Influence and lead investment in the sector

- Financial Inclusion Forum progressing work for 2019 state election platform paper
- NSW Financial Inclusion Network
- Presence on Homelessness NSW & Homelessness Australia boards
- Finalise framework for management of spontaneous volunteers
- Planning of the 4th Financial Inclusion Conference
- Member of DSS NSW/ACT COVID Emergency Relief subcommittee

Innovation

Be proactive and responsive to a changing social environment

- Disaster management committee formed
- Affordable housing DA for affordable housing
- Develop Reconciliation Action Plan
- Update operation plan
- Increased NSW Financial Inclusion Network engagement
- Disaster management business and continuity plans
- Organisation-wide Child Safe review
- Adaptive and virtual delivery of all services in response to COVID

Create a culture of innovation

- Evaluated Flourishing Families service model
- Clinical governance committee
- Rewards and recognition continue
- Evaluated spontaneous volunteer framework
- Disaster management committee
- Develop a framework for clinical supervision
- Continue professional development for hub staff
- Digital engagement for CVS delivery expanded
- Peer supervision implemented across therapeutic teams

Social impact

Measure the social impact of Northern Rivers Community Gateway

- QIC Health and Community Service Standards 7th Edition review
- Clinical governance committee
- All of organisation presentation of impact
- Operational plan
- Bank of social impact assessment tools
- CRM wellbeing measurement tools
- Stakeholder and staff engagement surveys
- Targets set for Target Early Intervention outcomes
- 95% satisfaction rate for trauma counselling services

The Northern Rivers Community Gateway Board saw a year of challenges in 2019/20 with COVID-19.

We expanded our funding base again which led to a positive outcome. This included a grant for disaster management which enabled the organisation to be fully prepared for the event of a disaster event such as the current pandemic, providing the purchase of resources to enable remote working.

The CEO is to be congratulated on the successful mid-term QIP assessment against the QIC Health and Community Services Standards 7th Edition. This assessment involved the review of the Governance and Operational continuous improvement plan. The Board, CEO and management team are to be congratulated on the work that has gone into meeting these plans throughout the past 18 months.

The board continued to focus on strategic direction and governance. Two new board members join the team Chris Hartley and Kathy Kroes. They both bring significant National and State perspectives.

A board, CEO and management strategic planning weekend was held in late 2019. I'm pleased the board endorsed a new strategic plan for 2020 to 2023 with three key strategic priorities:

- Leadership
- Social Impact
- Strategic Growth

Principles of good governance and strategic planning continue to underline the success of our organisation. Learning and development continues to be a focus of our organisation.

Ongoing professional development is key to skilled and professional staff, particularly in relation to the board and our key employee, the



CEO. The CEO through support by the Board completed her Master of Leadership through Deakin University.

The board last year endorsed our organisation's move to strategically invest in affordable housing for older women. Affordable housing for older women is a significant social gap in Lismore and the Far North Coast. The CEO has worked with architects and town planners to develop plans for ten units at our site at 16-18 Bounty Street, together with a ground floor coffee shop. I'm pleased to say that a Development Application was approved by Lismore City Council this year and the CEO is currently looking at opportunities for funding this development.

In conclusion, I'd like to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to my fellow board members for their valuable input and support, to our CEO for her leadership and management skills, and to the managers and staff of Northern Rivers Community Gateway for their commitment and professionalism. I look forward to our future with confidence and enthusiasm.

Robyn Riordan



Whilst facing one of the biggest challenges since our organisation's inception 47 years ago with COVID 19, having good systems in place, we managed to finish the year with a positive outlook.

The timely creation of a disaster management committee and our successful Clubs NSW disaster grant application just prior to the declaration of a pandemic, enabled us to respond very quickly to the situation having already planned for such an event. The grant enabled us to purchase vital equipment. We enacted our business continuity plans and all staff and services were working remotely with advanced remote IT systems. Our online orientation systems and SharePoint intranet enabled staff to easily access a suite of information and services from any remote location. Our staff and Board embraced teleconference facilities and creatively applied the tools in trauma counselling, Board meetings, team meetings, daily catch up meetings during COVID-19.

Whilst most staff worked from home during the last four months of this financial year, special mention must be given to our Rainbow Region Kids staff who continued to provide before and after school care and vacation care to children throughout the pandemic. Providing a vital service for those children of essential workers was important at that time. Also, a special mention to our community hub intake officers and NILS staff who continued to man the office and provide a shop front service via video intercom, telephone, Zoom and Skype, whilst many other services locally closed or significantly limited their services. The commitment shown by these staff to our organisation ensured that these essential emergency relief services continued to be provided to individuals and families who were significantly impacted by COVID-19. I participated in weekly Department of Social Services, Emergency Relief, NSW ACT Coordination Group meeting to provide input into the impact of COVID-19 on our client group. Receiving additional funding for this year and next year to provide emergency relief services is vital in meeting the needs of our community.

Many tracks, one road, sustaining community remains our vision and epitomises the work that we do. Following our strategic planning which included input from key stakeholders; clients, staff and management the Board endorsed our Strategic priorities for 2020 to 2023 Leadership, Social Impact and Strategic investment. Our values; vision, commitment, respect, integrity, innovation, revised by Board, management and staff underpin all that we do as an organisation.

Ensuring that we have good governance systems and building the evidence base continues to be a priority. We underwent our mid-term external accreditation against the QIC Health and Community Service Standards 7th Edition by QIP which assessed our achievements in against the operational and governance continuous improvement plan. The outcome of this accreditation was very positive, thus meeting all requirements of the 3-year accreditation process,

Our clinical governance committee continued to provide focus and support for the ongoing quality improvement of our clinical and client services. The assessment tools were reviewed in line with our new TEI funding agreements negotiated with Department of Communities and Justice. Key training was identified and sourced through the committee. Our practice framework incorporating six high level social impact goals guides our practice and enables us to focus on the impact of our services on clients, their families and communities. Our clinical supervision policy and procedure were reviewed with new robust systems put in place.

Further development of our client relationship management system was undertaken to include new funded programs, new reporting data and assessment outcomes so that our systems are consistent with our funding bodies' reporting systems. These improvements have enabled better measurement of our impact and identification of gaps in services.

As an addition to our head office and community hub in Lismore, we have a shop front in Grafton. Our staff provide services across six locations in the Ballina, Richmond and Lismore local government areas, and deliver outreach services across various locations in the Far North Coast, New England, Mid North Coast regions.

As a long-standing community-based organisation the Northern Rivers Community Gateway has delivered

Chief executive officer's report

programs and services that build community resilience and support vulnerable people across Northern New South Wales for over 47 years. As a volunteer resource centre, our organisation has a role in building social capital through the recruitment, training and placement of volunteers into relevant organisations and meaningful roles. The experience of the Lismore flood event in March 2017 strengthened our commitment to work alongside our communities and stakeholders to build the resilience and preparedness to contribute to disaster management and recovery arrangements. Our organisation undertook the 18-month Management of Spontaneous Volunteers project to explore what works, to collaborate with local partners, develop and trial resources, and learn more about how to build and manage a capable network of spontaneous volunteers in this community. This report was completed this year and provided to the Office of Emergency Management. The report shared valuable insights and resources with other community-based organisations and disaster management and recovery agencies across New South Wales to help strengthen the management of spontaneous volunteering in all local communities.

We also extended our state-wide commitment this year and as CEO I have continued in my role Treasurer of Homelessness NSW. I also joined the board of Homelessness Australia as Treasurer. I am pleased to have presented at the Homelessness NSW Conference Wollongong on the impact of climate change. I have continued chairing the NSW Financial Inclusion Network. The network, developed by our organisation in 2015, includes a range of state-wide peaks, government and large NGOs, and formed as a policy think tank on financial inclusion. We partnered with the Centre for Social Impact at the University of NSW and facilitated the 2019 Financial Inclusion Forum in August focusing on two cornerstones of financial resilience; social capital and economic resources. We also partnered with Centre for Social Impact and the FIN network to host the 4th Financial Inclusion Conference, in March 2020 with key international speakers. We received strong number of registrations however, this conference had to be postponed to 26th to 27th October 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Affordable housing is a growing need in our community. Last year we engaged McVeigh Architects and Newton Chapelle and Denny Town Planners to develop initial concept plans for shop-top housing in

Lismore located over our current car park site. This year, a development application was put together and submitted to Lismore City Council which included four two-bedroom units, six one-bedroom units, a communal area on each floor of the building, a rooftop entertaining area with an outdoor kitchen, ten garden plots for residents, a coffee shop, ground floor car park, toilets and solar power. This housing application focused on providing affordable housing for older women. I am pleased to say that Lismore City Council approved our development application and this approval is a major step in addressing the need for affordable housing. This development will meet a growing social need, increase housing availability in the CBD, utilise the space over our car park within walking access to local shops and services. Most importantly, it will revitalise Lismore CBD with a modern and sustainable development. We are currently talking to key stakeholders to identify opportunities to fund this development.

Appreciation and thanks to the board for their support of my role as CEO and their commitment to my professional development. I graduated from Deakin University this year with a Master of Leadership. I am thankful for their vision in strategic governance. Thanks to our leadership team for their continued commitment in building an engaged culture with strong management processes. Thanks to all our staff for their continued commitment to quality service delivery for the most vulnerable people in our communities whilst facing extreme challenges this year.

I finish again this year with a quote from our QIP accreditation report:

"Northern Rivers Community Gateway is to commended for the big picture approach to its work plan and its commitment to stretching its capacity and using improvement plan to facilitate effective governance, operations, service delivery and outcomes" (QIP accreditation report May 2020).

Knowing this insight comes from an external accreditation authority I am proud that our organisation is acknowledged for its commitment to quality outcomes for clients and strong governance and management systems. I look forward to next year and hopefully an end to the global pandemic.

Jenni Beetsen-Mortimer

Our social inclusion services

Spontaneous Volunteering project

Development of a scalable framework for the effective organisation and deployment of spontaneous volunteers during times of emergency or disaster.

Northern Rivers Volunteer Network

Building skills, capacity and opportunities for organisations throughout the Northern Rivers region who want to use volunteers.

Community Visitors Scheme

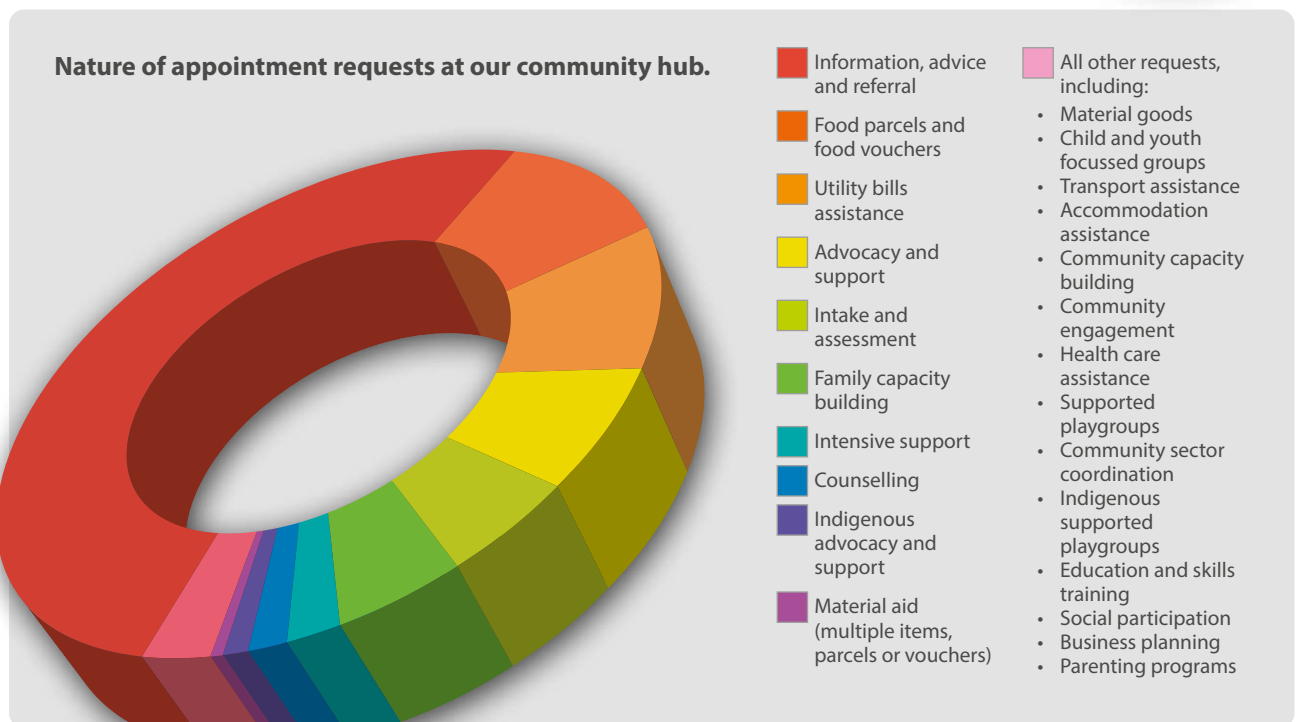
Social connection and companionship provided to older people living at home alone and in residential aged care, by our approved volunteer visitors and correspondents.

Be Connected

Digital mentorship for older people by our trained volunteers through free, one-on-one lessons on how to use communications technology, get online and stay connected to the services and people they care about.

Corporate Volunteering

Supporting organisations and professional staff who want to support their communities by matching them to a variety of community volunteer projects.



Financial inclusion services

Our financial inclusion services

Community Hub

A one-stop shop for people seeking support through our physical locations in Lismore, Grafton and Murwillumbah, outreach services in Casino and Kyogle and online through our virtual hub.

First Step emergency relief

Immediate support for people throughout the Northern Rivers region who are experiencing financial crisis.

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

Safe, fair and affordable credit for people in the Northern Rivers region on a low income to help with essential household goods, with no interest payments or loan fees. We assess NILS loan applications from all over NSW.

StepUP Loans

Low interest loans for people in the Northern Rivers region on a low income, for more expensive household and transportation purchases.

Warruwi gambling support

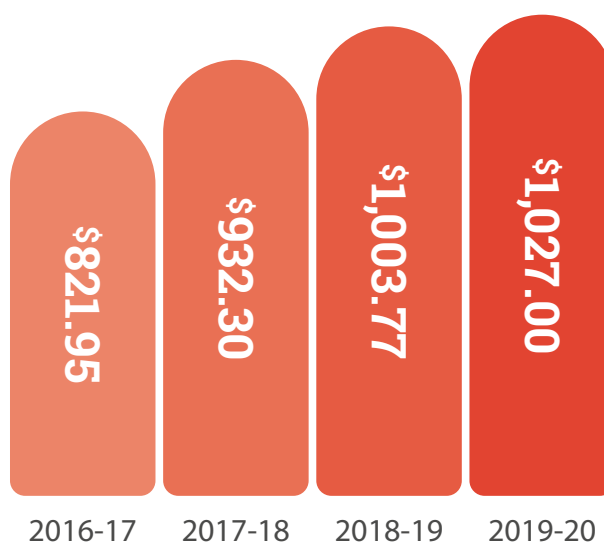
Free support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities throughout the Far North Coast, Mid North Coast and New England regions of NSW who are experiencing problem gambling.

Budget counselling

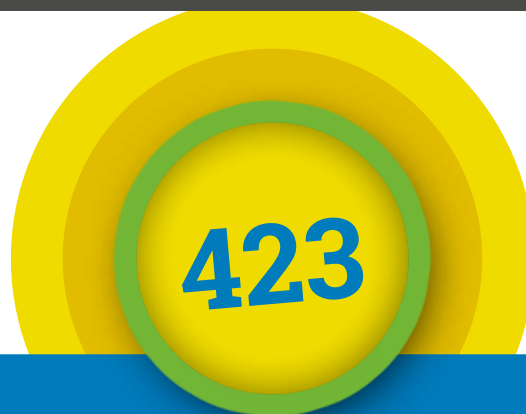
Free, confidential and practical advice from our trained financial experts to help people on a low income manage their day-to-day finances.

Tax Help

Free, one-on-one advice from a trained Tax Help volunteer for people in the Northern Rivers region on a low income to prepare and lodge a tax return.



Average NILS loan amount



Number of NILS loans approved.



Total number of NILS credit provided.

NSW financial inclusion coordination

Our NSW financial inclusion services aim to coordinate state-wide strategies to support financial inclusion services, including coordination of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network.

Financial Inclusion Network partners

- Centre for Social Impact, UNSW
- Community Gateway (coordinating partner)
- Energy Water Ombudsman NSW
- Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Homelessness NSW
- Legal Aid, NSW
- NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
- NSW Government Fair Trading
- NSW Council of Social Service
- Redfern Legal Centre
- Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul Society

2019 Financial Inclusion Forum

The NSW Financial Inclusion Network planned and delivered a financial inclusion forum in Sydney on 13 August.

The program included seven speakers and two collaborative workshops, which were aimed at:

- Expanding conversation around financial inclusion/resilience
- Exploring two of the main building blocks of financial resilience
- Providing a platform for delegates to gain further insight into innovations and solutions

The forum sold out with 60 participants engaged in a day of engaging presentations, lively debate and collaborative networking.

NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice sponsored the event and Community Gateway was the leading network partner to facilitated its delivery.

4th Financial Inclusion Conference – Roads to Resilience



Within this reporting period, the Financial Inclusion Network undertook a major project to deliver the 4th Financial Inclusion Conference, scheduled to take place in Sydney on 18+19 March 2020.

The primary conference theme *Roads to Resilience* was established to address financial exclusion and build capacity for financial resilience, by bridging important academic research with innovative service delivery practices. The conference program included over fifty presenters across Australia and two international presenters.

Conference sponsors

- NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice
- National Australia Bank
- Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- icare
- Ecstra Foundation
- Transurban
- Earnd

Conference keynote speakers

- Professor Sharon Collard, Research Director at the University of Bristol Personal Finance Research Centre, UK
- Professor Frederick Wherry, Townsend Martin, Class of 1917 Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, USA
- Professor Kristy Muir, CEO at Centre for Social Impact, UNSW

Due to the emerging global COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, and the various restrictions resulting from it, the NSW Financial Inclusion Network postponed the conference to 3+4 December 2020.

Children and young people's services

Our children's services

Rainbow Region Kids

Flexible, accessible and affordable outside school hours childcare for school-aged children throughout the Northern Rivers region, including Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Club during school holidays.

Books & Butterflies

Free, weekly playgroups that offer a supportive learning environment for children aged 2-5 years old, who may not otherwise have access to community playgroups or other services.



	Families that used the service	Number of attending children	Hours of before school care provided	Hours of after school care provided	Hours of vacation care provided	Suburbs and towns serviced
Alstonville	62	84	410	615		14
Casino	26	46			660	7
Kyogle	21	28			660	8
Lismore	61	96		615	550	11
Ocean Shores	66	95	310	118	660	7
Wollongbar	133	191	410	615	550	16



Our community support services

Child and Adolescent Trauma Counselling

Free, confidential counselling from our trained, trauma-informed professionals for children and young adults in the Northern Rivers region who are living with the effects of trauma.

Reaching Out

Free, confidential counselling from our trained, trauma-informed professionals for adults in the Northern Rivers region who have experienced sexual assault as a child.

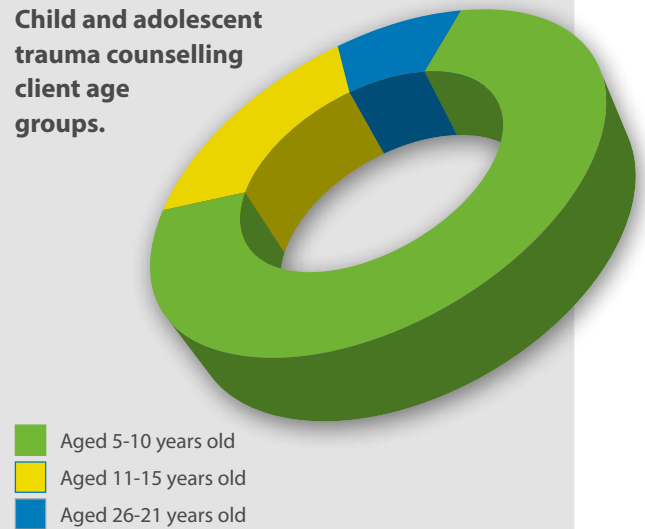
Connecting Families

Free, confidential supports for vulnerable families in the Northern Rivers region to support the development of parenting, emotional and behavioural skills, including the Parents Under Pressure (PuP) curriculum.

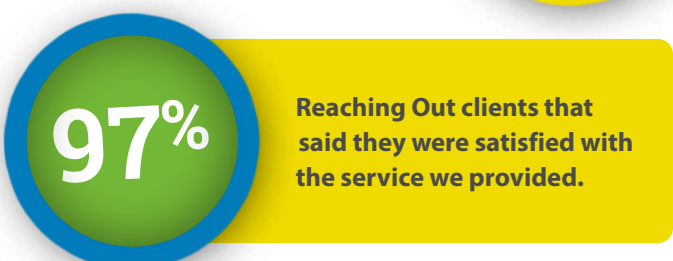
Helping Hands

Support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Rivers region who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

Child and adolescent trauma counselling client age groups.



Trauma counselling clients who identified as First Nations Australian



Indigenous support services

Supporting First Nations Australians

We supported First Nations Australians through all of the services we delivered. In addition, we provided the following services exclusively to support disadvantaged First Nations people:

Helping Hands

Free support services for First Nations Australians in the Northern Rivers region who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of becoming homeless.

Warruwi

Free services to provide support to individual people, families and communities who are experiencing problem gambling. Delivered throughout the Far North Coast, Mid North Coast and New England regions of New South Wales.



Total number of First Nations Australians supported across all services.

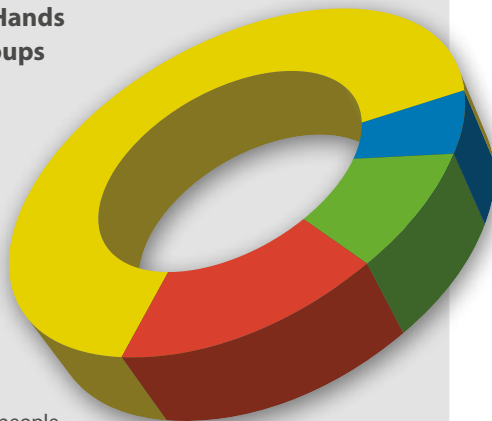


Total number of First Nations Australians supported through Helping Hands.



Percentage of Reaching Out clients who identified as First Nations Australian.

Helping Hands client groups



- Young people
- Single men
- Single women
- Families

Disaster management / work health and safety group

This group provides recommendations to the CEO on issues relating to disaster management and work health and safety.

Group members

- Jenni Beetson-Mortimer (Chair)
- Judith Balderi
- Melissa Clayton
- Helen Hall
- Terry Houlahan
- Natalie McKenzie
- Lisa Wilmer

Clinical governance committee

This committee provides recommendations to the CEO on issues relating to clinical scope of practice, safety, risk and quality.

Group members

- Jenni Beetson-Mortimer (Chair)
- Katie Burgess
- Helen Hall
- Terry Houlahan
- Kelsey McCallum
- Shaun McPherson
- Jennifer Parker
- Carolyn Tanner
- Lisa Wilmer
- Melissa Coulton
- Kathleen Oliver

Reconciliation action plan group

This group of staff members and external community contacts exists to collaboratively define and execute our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Group members

Internal participants

- Jodi Burley
- Harry Beckers
- May King

External participants

- Mook Harrington, Solid Mob
- Laurie Mercy, Department of Human Services
- Tina Williams, Bundjalung Tribal Society
- Uncle Roy Gordon, community member
- Aunty Di Harrington, community member

Harry Beckers, Uncle Roy Gordon, Aunty May King, Aunty Di Harrington, Tina Williams, Laurie Mercy and Mook Harrington are all First Nations Australians from Bundjalung community.

Although Northern Rivers Community Gateway faced significant challenges this year with COVID 19 through Managements good planning and foresight the organisation had a positive outcome for this financial year.

This was supported by an increase again this in its operational income. Our organisations total assets are at \$2,537,996 which include the value of the organisation's land and building at 16-18 Bounty Street Lismore, at \$1,351,410. The end of year resulted in a surplus of \$253,206 which significantly increased our cash flow and together with fixed assets puts the organisation in strong position for future, long-term sustainability.

Our organisation continued to maintain good accounting practice, complying with all Australian and New South Wales company standards. This accounting was supported by an independent external audit. Attached are the audited financial statements. Our finance committee monitors the organisation's expenditure, and is comprised of our treasurer, chairperson, CEO and corporate services manager. Our financial and organisational management practices currently include annual external auditing, internal financial management and monitoring. These activities drive monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports to funding bodies and our board of directors. Insurances including professional indemnity, public liability and work cover are in place as well as a solid base of policies and procedures to govern all areas of our operations.

I'd like to thank our CEO and members of the finance committee for their commitment to good financial management. I'd like to



thank our auditors WCA Audit & Assurance Services and our management team for their cooperation throughout the year assisting the CEO in good record keeping practices. I would also like to thank all our staff and volunteers for the work and effort they have invested over the past year, which directly supports the success and growth of the organisation. I look forward to working with the board and CEO into the future.

Deniel Taylor

Visit nrcg.org.au



Northern Rivers Community Gateway is a registered charity and QIP accredited.