



Annual Report 2025

1st July 2024 - 30th June 2025

Supporting the Well-being of all Great Lakes Residents



**Warning: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following document contains images of deceased persons.*

Timeline - Established in 1980

2007
ASHOW Coomba Park commenced

2008
Forster Community Garden kicked off

2010
FNC successful with No Interest Loans Scheme funding through Fair Trading & DSS

2011
FNC entered first agreement with NSW Dept of Family & Community Services for Child & Family Work

2014
Better Learning Better Communities established in consultation with Worimi Elders

2015
Great Lakes Women's Shelter established in partnership with Women's Community Shelters

2017
The Inaugural Big Sing By The Sea commenced



2018
No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) Stand Alone Status granted by Good Shepherd Microfinance & Fair Trading

2019
Department of Aboriginal Affairs NAIDOC cultural cruise offered for the first time

2020
- Targeted Early Intervention contract with NSW Dept of Communities & Justice signed for 5 years

2022
- FNC successful in grant with NSW Office of Youth for Aim High Project
- Worimi women's cultural camp project initiated in consultation with Aboriginal Elders

2023
FNC relocated to new home at 3 Lake Street Forster

2024
Central Community Hub establishing hosting a range of outreach services.

2025
'Cup of Coffee' Fundraising Campaign launched to support Central Hub



Our Story

Forster Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) was first established in 1980 and today reflects a range of services and programs (identified as community priorities) in response to the changing needs of the Great Lakes community.

FNC highly values the contributions of volunteers and acknowledges their contributions in achieving our purpose and impact in the local community. Through committed volunteers we achieve a high volume of social value at very low-cost to government.

FNC respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners of the land where we work, the Worimi people, and pay our respects to their Elders both past and present. We walk along side the Aboriginal community as an ally towards reconciliation between all Australians.

Vision

An inclusive and connected community where people are respectful, resilient and resourceful.

Values

- **Kindness:** We show empathy and understanding to all in a professional manner
- **Competence:** We are a trusted knowledge and skill base for the community
- **Respect:** We provide services and support in a non-judgemental way
- **Integrity:** We act honestly, ethically and do what we say we will
- **Client-Focused:** Our work is guided by the needs and aspirations of the client
- **Advocacy:** We draw on our relationships and partners to influence positive change and increase access to services
- **Open-Minded:** We are open to learning new ways of working and sharing our knowledge with others

Our Purpose:

Forster Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) exists to support the well-being of all Great Lakes residents.

We are flexible and respond to the needs of the community through:

- Emergency relief and support
- Information, advice and referral
- Programs and services to address identified needs
- Social Inclusion activities and programs

What we do:

Emergency Relief: (See Page 21)

Provides emergency relief parcels for community members experiencing crisis.

Information, Advice and Referral: (See Page 21)

Provides an information hub 5 days per week where community members can access advice and referral to meet their needs.

Child and Family Support and Counselling: (See Page 22)

Provides child and family support and general counselling to vulnerable families.

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS):

(See Page 23)

Provides access to No Interest Loans of up to \$2,000 for essential items.

Community Programs: (See Page 15)

A range of programs developed in response to community need including Better Learning Better Communities, The Women’s Shed, Community Garden, Baraya Wakulda, Men’s Group, Work Development Orders, EAPA vouchers and School Holiday Programs.

Community Events (See Page 19)

Provides opportunities for social participation and community connectedness including Big Sing by the Sea, Wallis Lake Cultural Cruises and Forster Farmers Market.



Our Impact

3107

Community Members accessed Information/Advice and Referral through our Front Desk Volunteers, Staff and Outreach Services at Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

571

Emergency Relief Food packages were distributed to vulnerable Individuals and Families in need of support.

125

Families received Child and Family Support which provided one-on-one Parenting Programs, Case Management, Counselling, Home Visits, Advocacy, Information/Advice & Referral in Family & Domestic Violence, as well as support in:

- Court
- Centrelink
- Mental Health
- Child Development
- NDIS

331

NILS loans helped Individuals to purchase essential items such as vehicle related expenses (service, repairs, CTP, registration), rental bonds, white goods (fridge, washing machine/dryer), school fees, medical expenses, VET bills, furniture and more.

\$10K

Worth of Fines were cleared through Work Development Orders (WDOs). This gave people an opportunity to reduce their debt.

\$20K

Worth of EAPA vouchers were distributed to assist people in need who were struggling with paying their electricity bills.

250

Outreach spaces were provided for services at the Community Hub to ensure their physical presence in community; this way our Great Lakes residents have easier access to services and can make face-to-face appointments.



Presidents Report Felicity Carter OAM



It is with great pride that I congratulate the FNC staff and volunteers for their continuing, selfless work on behalf of the Great Lakes community. Manager, Corinne Stephenson and Administration and Finance Coordinator, Lisa Hinton have formed a group of like - minded people into a resilient, solutions orientated team, no matter what issues are being faced. As we are still dealing with the aftereffects of floods and the rising cost of living, 2024-2025 has been the year of hard slog for staff, volunteers and community. FNC's role in community continues to be that of "first responder" and we deliver services well beyond our remit and funding.

To live within our means and capabilities, we have reluctantly been forced to close our office one day/week, on Mondays and reduce staff.

We were sorry to lose the skills of Stephen Davis as Programs Coordinator

and Lilly Lertsinpaktee as NILS Officer.

To highlight the value of FNC services, Manager, Corinne Stephenson, has put in a great deal of time and effort advocating to every level of government, including at a visit from NSW Governor, Margaret Beasley, about the importance of Neighbourhood Centres, and the enormous value that a wholistic community services hub, centred around FNC would provide to Great Lakes, as this is what we do already!

This has led to many conversations with other service providers and potential partnership opportunities all in the cause of ensuring Great Lakes gets the best possible breadth of community services.

To augment our coffers FNC decided to raise community awareness of our limited resources by launching our "One cup of coffee at a time" campaign to encourage people to donate \$5 a month. This has had several upsides; not only was FNC able to raise money and community awareness of our situation, but we created a fantastic new community event- FNC Pub Sing. Keep your eyes peeled for our next one in October!

An on-going challenge for the FNC Board is the need to find our "forever home" and we have been exploring every avenue and opportunity. At this stage we are open to almost every permutation available.

I cannot speak highly enough of our staff and volunteers, especially those at front desk/reception. These volunteers manage difficult and complex issues every day with great patience and compassion. To this end, our volunteers were named Regional Volunteer Team of the Year. I know that the level of commitment from everyone is a direct reflection of the leadership and values demonstrated by Corinne Stephenson, Lisa Hinton and Kitana Paulson. Included in the "volunteers" category are the Board members who continue to help steer the ship. I cannot thank you enough for your continued interest and support.

It is with great reluctance that we have accepted the resignation from the Board of Anne McKay. Anne has been the backbone of NILS approval process for more than 7 years, improving professional management of the approval system, thereby ensuring the most rapid loan approval turnaround of any other NILS provider. Thank you so much, the Board meetings won't be the same without Anne and the loss of her technical expertise will leave a huge hole.

We are also losing Christine Collins, who has made a massive contribution to FNC both as a Board member and front desk volunteer. Christine will be sorely missed.

On behalf of the staff and Board, I thank you both for all your work and wish you only the best for what comes next.



Treasurers Report Julie Brady



Overview

Forster Neighbourhood Centre is now in its 45th year of supporting our community across a whole range of needs, from short-term relief for food security and support with immediate costs such as electricity, through to referral to - and help to access - other services. We also offer counselling and support for families and community members struggling with a range of problems.

Everyone knows, times are tough for many Australians and demand for our services is high. We constantly seek additional funding and resources to advocate for, and to increase and broaden our ability to support and assist the community.

As the first port of call for community members in financial and emotional distress - as for FY2024 - there were great pressures on staff and volunteers, and on expenses. Given all that, we remain forever grateful for the wonderful level of community fundraising support and donations-in-kind. The President's Report will acknowledge those contributions in more detail.

Financial results

I am pleased to report that FNC has this year posted a modest surplus of \$28,244k.

Intentionally, to balance the budget for the year, operating expenses were managed down by around \$54k, mainly made up of staff wages and superannuation (\$30k) and program expenses (\$18k).

Our efforts to increase income paid dividends with a \$62k increase in donations and other income, and a \$25k increase in other grants.

With a tighter than anticipated budget, I acknowledge that FY2025 has been a really difficult year for staff and volunteers, but we are optimistic that our 2025/26 Financial year will be one of growth and extended services. As always, we will develop a responsible and comprehensive budget for 2025 for approval by the committee.

Outlook and Conclusion

I commend the Manager, Corinne Stephenson, who has been tireless in sourcing additional funding, resources and services to benefit the community, and the outcome of these efforts should be evident in the years to come.

It has again been my pleasure to work with Corinne and Lisa Hinton, the FNC Administration Coordinator and with the volunteers and staff. Staff and committee again worked effectively together, continuing to provide responsible management and good governance.

Managers Report Corinne Stephenson

Another year at Forster Neighbourhood Centre has demonstrated the high value of local place-based services to be flexible and responsive to community needs. Our skilled team live and work in the Great Lakes community, noticing where support is needed most, to bring together people across the community to support each other towards our Vision for a community that is respectful, resourceful and resilient.

This has been an incredibly challenging year as our central community hub has become the 'no wrong door' safe place for community members in crisis to access the services they need.



Managers Report Cont'd

Sadly after two years of advocacy, the response from the Government has remained unchanged: *"We greatly value the work of Neighbourhood Centres however there is no more funding"*. As a result, we made the difficult decision to close our central community hub on Mondays, reducing access for already vulnerable community members by 25%. Both the increasing number of clients and level of complexity presenting at the centre, makes it unsafe for volunteers to respond to. For the well-being of staff and volunteers, we cannot re-open on Mondays until we have a trauma-informed Support Worker on-site who is available to walk alongside clients experiencing crisis to navigate to services to meet their immediate needs.

We continued to be a staunch advocate for place-based services to co-locate within our central community hub to meet the needs of our community. Thank you to Womens Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Great Lakes Womens Shelter Outreach Worker, The Samaritans, Legal Aid, Uniting NDIS and Carers Gateway to answering the call and having a regular physical presence in our regional community.

The reality of the cost of living and housing crisis is biting hard on more community members from a wider demographic. We are seeing for the first time, working families unable to make ends meet and reaching out for emergency support. The increase in clients presenting at the centre has seen our team respond to more than triple the instances of information, advice and referral that we are funded for. As a regional community without a physical presence of essential services (located in Taree, Port Macquarie or Newcastle), compounded by repeated natural disasters, we are a community in crisis. We continue to escalate this issue to the broader public, government and decision makers.

We continue to advocate alongside peak bodies LCSA and NCOSS for core operational funding for the work that we do. With revenue under \$500,000 per annum we achieve over \$1.5 million in social value to our community. This needs to be recognised and resourced to meet the growing needs of support during times of crisis and recovery.

We could not achieve a quarter of the impact we do in our community without the commitment and dedication of our team. Staff and volunteers work tirelessly to not only meet the ever-increasing demand but to continuously review and improve our service delivery to achieve better outcomes.

As the Manager of Forster Neighbourhood Centre, I feel incredibly privileged to work alongside such a dedicated team who motivate and inspire each other to keep the needs of our community central to our work.

As a dedicated team, we remain committed to our Mission to support the well-being of all Great Lakes residents, supporting new projects in response to community needs.

There has been strong community support for the revitalization of the Forster Community Garden. Through a series of community consultations, we have co-designed concept plans of how to make the space a culturally safe and inclusive asset for the whole community. We have a team of passionate community members putting their heads together of how we can access funding to build the new space.

Following the Voice Referendum, Forster Neighbourhood Centre has identified the community need for further education on our true history and the significant contribution of our First Nations people to a stronger more resilient future. We have partnered with the Yarning Circle to license the First Feet Cultural Appreciation workshop to deliver education to community groups and service providers in a meaningful and respectful way. We look forward to our partners signing up for this important initiative while supporting the ongoing work of Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

We also continue to advocate for the central community hub model that we operate from 3 Lake Street, Forster. We welcome interest and funding from a broader network of partners in the new year to further enhance the range of services available to Great Lakes residents, watch this space!

Committee Members



Anne McKay

Anne McKay has been a member of the Committee since February 2020.

She has a watching brief for the NILS program and also volunteers in the Better Learning, Better Communities program.

Anne and her husband have a passion for travel centred on twin interests of animal and bird watching and National Parks, both in Australia and overseas.

Anne plays bridge, does jigsaws, and enjoys socialising when possible with friends and family. A longtime volunteer in various organisations, she is especially interested in contributing to the work done in the community by the FNC.



Janice Paulson

Aunty Janice Paulson is a well-known and loved Worimi Elder who has lived much of her life in Forster.

She has a long-standing commitment to working for her community and culture and amongst other things, she has worked extensively in the field of DVA.

She is also involved in the Elder's Olympics, Elder's stretching and strengthening exercises and Elder's events and outings – basically if there is an Elder's Community event, Aunty Janice would be at the helm!

Janice is passionate about advancing the cause of Aboriginal education and is a founder of Better Learning, Better Communities, a program for primary school Aboriginal Students and our Baraya Wakulda (singing together) program.



Felicity Carter OAM

"There are few other community services organisations that have the will, capacity and responsiveness to meet community needs that FNC has. I am so proud to be part of it.

The innovation and compassion shown by our staff and volunteers is second to none" Felicity said.

This will be Felicity's 14th year on the management committee and 7th as President. She initially joined to help with programs working with children, especially around literacy.

Since then, this has expanded to working with Worimi Elders and the broader Aboriginal community in areas of education and cultural awareness which has greatly enriched her life.



Julie Brady

Julie has been on the FNC Committee for 15 years, initially as President, and for the last six years as Treasurer.

"The committee sees how hard the last two years have been on the most disadvantaged people in this community, and we get great satisfaction from providing our support programs and being creative in finding new ways to provide assistance.

"Two things that I love about FNC -Seeing the caring and empathy of the FNC staff and volunteers, who every day think about how things could be better and work to achieve that".

-Being part of creating a loving, respectful and productive partnership with the Worimi and off-country Aboriginal community" said Julie.

Committee Members cont'd



Christine Collins

Christine joined the FNC board in 2023 and is also a volunteer on the front desk. In her role she answers the phone, deals with emails and helps people who come into the centre to access our services. Christine has a work background as a Primary School Teacher and in Aged Care and she enjoys talking with people and social activities. This role gives her many opportunities for that, including volunteer tutor with BLBC.

"I have learnt so much about our community services through this Position. I love the variety of the tasks and the wonderful staff I get to work with at FNC" Christine said.



Sophia Romano

Sophia Romano is a Meriam woman from the Komet tribe in the Torres Strait. She also has family connections to Erub. She is the Partnering and Programming Manager for Youth within the Australia First Nations Program (AFNP) at World Vision Australia where she is accountable for the development and Implementation of best practice youth programs and working with First Nations communities. She partners with First Nations organisations on the development and implementation of partnership and capability plans. She also leads the work of co-design, adaptation, implementation, transition and monitoring of youth programming, across youth programming with First Nations communities for WVA.

Sophia has a Bachelor of Arts in Communications majoring in Journalism from UTS, and attended school in Australia and New Zealand.



Graham Gardener

Graham is a retired local government Director from Councils including Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester where he was involved in planning, building and environmental matters. He acknowledges the amazing work in community services being done by the staff and volunteers of the Forster Neighbourhood Centre on very limited resources.

"I have learned quickly about the increasing demand being made on the services of the FNC given the growth in population of the local area, and both the limited availability of services here and the difficulties of transport to services elsewhere."

He is keen to help in establishing a more permanent home for the FNC and to see the once wonderful community gardens being re-established. "The FNC has established a deep trust in the community through its willingness to help and support those in need in our community, and I hope I can help in further development of the services."



Staff



Corinne Stephenson

Corinne started with Forster Neighbourhood Centre in January 2022 as our Manager. Corinne has over 15 years' experience working in not-for-profits in the Forster/Tuncurry region advocating for programs and services in our local community. She has completed her Bachelor of Sustainability (Social Resilience) and is passionate about using her skills and experience to work alongside our First Nations people to promote reconciliation.



Lisa Hinton

Lisa joined Forster Neighbourhood Centre in January 2023 as our Administration and NILS Coordinator. Lisa brings 30 years of experience in Admin and Bookkeeping, holding qualifications in Frontline and Business Management. Lisa chose to join our team because of the great services that are provided to the local community, and for the opportunity to be able to assist those requiring support and assistance. She is encouraged by the opportunities the NILS loans provide to our clients, allowing them to access funds in all sorts of circumstances and empowering them to manage their own finances. Lisa is relatively new to the area, moving here from Western Sydney several years ago. She enjoys fishing, camping, and spending time by the water.



Kitana Paulson

Kitana is a Warrimay/Bundjalung woman from the Forster-Tuncurry area. Kitana joined Forster Neighbourhood Centre in January 2023 as our Programs Officer with 4 years experience in Community Services at the time, particularly Cultural Support and mentoring First Nations children/young people in Out of Home Care. She is taking the opportunity to share her experience and skills with Warrimay and off-Country First Nations community through programs, events and collaboration with services, as well as strong relationships with local Elders and First Nations community.

In her spare time, Kitana is an Artist and also sits in the Gathang space, our local Indigenous Language. She loves spending time in nature and is passionate about the continuation of her Culture.



Linda Dennett

Linda began volunteering at the FNC in 2005 after moving to Forster from the Central Coast.

Linda started on the front desk but soon got interested in a lot of the other services the Centre provided. Linda was involved in organising and attending various events and courses. Some were 6 Bands for 6 Dollars and Anger Management awareness Course.

Over the years Linda has also been volunteer support to the Stroke Recovery Group and Vision Impaired Support Group. Linda also has been coordinator of the Forster Farmers Market for over 10 years now. She gets paid for the day and other associated tasks with the Market and graphic design.

Staff Cont'd



Lilly Lertsinpakdee

Lilly joined the Forster Neighbourhood Centre team in September 2022 initially as a volunteer, then our NILS Officer. Lilly has over twenty years' experience working in not-for-profit organisations in various roles involving community projects, networking, counselling, case management and group facilitation. She holds a Bachelor of Community Service Work (Family and Community) and Diplomas in Business (HR), Accounting and Leisure and Health and is passionate about social justice and being part of the process in making positive changes in someone's life. The team enjoys Lilly's interest in cooking and sharing food with friends.



Steve McWilliams

Steven commenced his professional relationship with FNC in 2010 as a volunteer while completing his Tertiary studies. Volunteering enabled Steven to gain an understanding of the important role FNC plays within this region.

"Fortunately, I was offered a paid position in 2014 as a Child and Family Worker and I have remained in this position ever since." Steven's role is primarily to provide personal counselling and parenting programs to individuals and families within the target groups.



Anniqua Olsen

Anniqua is the Child and Family worker who comes with a wealth of knowledge. She has had over 15 years of experience working in the welfare sector, primarily working with families with dependent children.

Prior to relocating to this region, Anniqua has previous experience working with youth, women and children in crisis accommodation settings in Tamworth, the disability sector and separated parents reconnecting with their children in a positive and supportive manner.

She holds a Diploma of Community Welfare Work, Financial Counselling,

Cert IV in visual Arts and more recently, studying Certified LifeForce Energy Healing, meditation and numerous alternate healing modalities.

Anniqua's absolute passion in life is to bring the best possible outcome for all the families she has encountered throughout her profession.

In her spare time, she loves exploring this beautiful area by bush walking in the national parks, bird watching and enjoying the lake and beaches. meditation and numerous alternate healing modalities.

Volunteers

Tony Bennett

When Tony retired after a career in finance, he retrained as a financial counsellor and worked in western Sydney for 3 years. He and his wife then moved to the coast and they both became involved in volunteer work, Tony in Taree (mainly with NILS) and with FNC since 2022."The work is very rewarding as it enables me to give back to the society that has supported me forever. It is also uplifting to work with a team of like-minded people. My other main passion is birdwatching and I am a long-term member of the Manning Great Lakes Birdwatching Club."



Volunteers

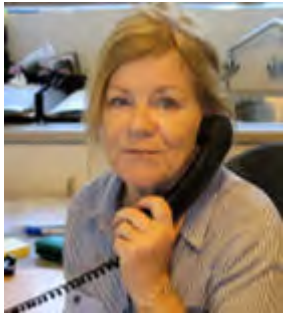


Christine Collins

Christine is a volunteer on the front desk of FNC. In her role she answers the phone, deals with emails and helps people who come into the centre to access our services. Christine has a work background as a Primary School Teacher and in Aged Care and she enjoys talking with people and social activities. "I have learnt so much about our community services through this Position. I love the variety of the tasks and the wonderful staff I get to work with at FNC" Christine said.

Eileen Marks

Eileen generously volunteers her time three days per week at FNC. As part of the FNC team, Eileen's role is in administration for clients who need help with their electricity bills (EAPA) and Telstra vouchers, also Work and Development Orders (WDOs). Other tasks are keeping data records of our clients for Emergency Relief. She was also part of the 'Be Connected' team training clients with their tablet and mobile phones, which she found very enjoyable. In between jobs, Eileen attended Tuncurry Tafe, did Business Admin Certificate III and received a distinction. With the encouragement of her teachers to carry on, Eileen decided to study Information Technology both Certificate II & III, which was very intense, and took a full year!



Robynn Milner

Robynn has been a volunteer at Forster Neighbourhood Centre for over 10 years. She works on the front desk and enjoys assisting people experiencing hardship. Through her previous youth work and over the years volunteering, Rob has met a lot of the locals and has a great rapport with the community. Her skills in admin have come in very handy with general front desk duties. As part of the Emergency Relief, Rob coordinates the donations and pantry items to accommodate people struggling to get through and need assistance with food. In addition, she volunteers at the Forster Community Garden with a great team of volunteers every Tuesday. What a powerhouse! "ROCK ON" Robynn said.

Rhonda New

Rhonda has lived in Forster-Tuncurry over 20 years. Since retiring she has worked for Animal Welfare League in their Op shop, Forster Library as a volunteer, and for over ten years at FNC on front desk/reception. Duties are varied and include answering phones, referring clients to appropriate FNC services or other services as required. She helps with access to Housing Providers, emergency food relief, etc. Hobbies include yoga, U3A, walking group, VIEW club. "I enjoy the variety each day at FNC brings and enjoy helping people and working with all the wonderful staff" says Rhonda.



Helen Paine

Helen joined our Front Desk volunteer team in 2024 and has enjoyed learning how FNC helps the community in different ways. Helen has over 40 years admin and customer service experience. Retiring from her role as Store Manager at Repco, she missed the interaction with people so decided to give back by assisting people in the community seeking support through the centre. Outside her professional experience, Helen loves the outdoors, touring in her caravan and reading, with an interest in period and historical novels.

Fiona Roberts

"Fiona Roberts has recently joined the FNC team after retiring from a lengthy career in administration management with the Department of Education. She has hit the ground running and fitted in extremely well, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience. Fiona is looking forward to utilising her extensive admin expertise and skills in providing support to clients and staff at the centre"



Volunteers Cont'd



Julieanne Worth

Julieanne has been volunteering with Forster Neighbourhood Centre since August 2023 after completing her Diploma of Community Services at TAFE NSW. Julieanne said "I thoroughly enjoy volunteering on the Front Desk and giving back to our local community, no two days are the same, and it is rewarding to offer people in need assistance. The team at FNC that I volunteer with are exceptional people going above and beyond to assist our community, and it is a privilege to volunteer alongside of them. Their knowledge of service providers and ability to aid those in need is inspiring".

Julieanne's greatest joy is her family and her faith which brings peace and gratitude. "I would recommend volunteering to anyone who has the time, as it is personally very rewarding" said Julieanne.

One Cup of Coffee Campaign

HELP SUPPORT

FORSTER NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

ONE CUP OF COFFEE AT A TIME!

Could you donate the price of a COFFEE once a month? (just set and forget)

We need \$110K per annum to:

- Re-open 5 days
- Fund a Crisis Counsellor

Our goal is for 1800 Community Members to sign up for \$5 a month

QR Code



Provides a Laundry voucher for a homeless person to have clean clothes.



Supports one person in crisis to engage with services that meet their needs.



Provides a food hamper for a family struggling to make ends meet.



Provides one counselling session for vulnerable families in need of support.

As we are a charity, all donations are tax deductible.

Community Programs

Forster Neighbourhood Centre delivers a range of community programs co-designed with the local Worimi community-intended to support education for children and promote social participation from people in our community experiencing isolation and/or disadvantage.

Better Learning Better Communities was developed with input from elders and the community, delivered by volunteers to support primary age Aboriginal students re-ignite a love for learning. Once a week, each child works one-on-one with a volunteer tutor to concentrate on the areas most needed and/or of most interest to that student.



Our aim is to make learning fun and keep students engaged so they want to come back. All our tutors have Working with Children checks and are carefully trained in how to support Aboriginal kids in their learning. We learn, eat and play games together!

Over the school terms in the 2024-2025 financial year, we delivered Better Learning across 34 sessions providing 280 one-on-one tutor opportunities for Aboriginal children and 240 social participation opportunities for our tutors.

Forster Community Garden provides an inclusive space for the wider community. A motivated and committed team of volunteers put their blood, sweat and tears into making the Garden a success. We enjoy the generous support from MidCoast Council and Bunnings Warehouse to keep our community activity going. The Forster Community Garden offers residents of the Great Lakes the opportunity to come together to share ideas and learn how to grow their own organic food in a sustainable manner. Established in September 2007, the garden is open to all members of the Great Lakes community to participate in sustainable gardening.

In 2023-2024 our Community Garden project facilitated 32 sessions, creating 165 volunteering opportunities for our local community. Unfortunately our last Community Garden session was on the 28/03/2024 due to the Midcoast Council demolition of the Tourist Information Centre and CWA Rooms to make way for a new 'Green Space'.

In 2025 Forster Neighbourhood Centre received a grant through FRRR to run a community consultation and co-design of the redevelopment of the Community Garden space, the current plans are the outcome of three formal community consultations and direct consultation with local Elders and other community members who attended one or all of the sessions.

There is strong community interest in developing the site into a whole-of-community asset that provides opportunity for cultural education and inclusion including ideas such as restoring the seven trees for the seven Elders, allocating a tree or garden plot to each family within the Worimi community to maintain and care for, showcasing bushtucker and its uses, incorporating interpretive signage that provides education on the importance of the adjoining creek to the local eco system, incorporating local artwork as features of the new space. In the coming year, we turn our attention to raising funds for the construction of the new space.



Baraya Wakulda

(meaning 'Singing Together' in local Gathang language) is a weekly gathering to sing songs in both English and Gathang language. The singing group encourages social participation and connectedness through song and music, providing an opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community to develop friendships and a shared understanding of local history and culture.



Baraya Wakulda, supported by a local choir conductor, practice each week as a group of approximately 15-25 and perform their songs at local community events as requested. Over the year, we delivered Baraya Wakulda across 40 sessions providing 560 participation opportunities for our group members.

Community Programs Cont'd

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Men's Group started in response to an identified community need for a safe place for men to come together and connect.

The Mens Group provides an opportunity for any male in our community who is feeling isolated to come along and join a group for a cuppa and develop connections and friendships.

We facilitated 41 Men's Group sessions, creating 420 social participation opportunities for our group members.

Work and Development Orders program is a government program intended to help people who have difficulties in repaying their State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) fines.

Forster Neighbourhood Centre acts as a WDO sponsor. FNC's role is to interview potential participants in the WDO program and then assist them in accessing activities that will help them to repay their fines. In 2024-2025, FNC supported to pay off their fines at the value of \$10K.

Holiday Program #1

Sea Acres Rainforest Centre + Stoney Aqua Park

Before the 2024-2025 summer school holidays came to an end, Forster Neighbourhood Centre, with the support of Tobwabba AMS and Homebase Youth Services, were able to take 56 local Indigenous youth on an excursion to Sea Acres Rainforest Centre in Port Macquarie, on Birpai Land.

At Sea Acres Rainforest Centre, the children/young people and parents were excited to participate in a Sea Acres Aboriginal culture tour along a boardwalk where an Aboriginal ranger generously shares their cultural knowledge and understanding of traditional uses of rainforest plants.



Holiday Program #2

Totem Skateboarding

During the Autumn school holidays, Forster Neighbourhood Centre, along with Homebase Youth Services and Midcoast Council, collaborated with and supported Totem Skateboarding to run their workshops in the Forster-Tuncurry area as part of their tour. Totem's workshops include a **Learn to Skate Workshop**, **Community Skate Workshop**, **Road Safety Workshop** and **Design Your Own Deck Workshop**.

These programs are designed to educate and empower young people and families in a fun and inclusive environment.



Spotlight

Men's Group Spotlight: Matthew and Barry Lowe

Forster Neighbourhood Centre's Men's Group started in direct response to an identified community need for a safe place for men to come together and connect.

Facilitated by Steve McWilliams, the Men's Group provides an opportunity for any male in the community who is feeling isolated to come along and join a group for a cuppa and to develop connections and friendships.

We asked a couple of our members of the Men's Group a few questions about what the program means to them:

What brought you to engage in the Men's Group?

Matthew had been through a marriage breakdown and moved from Sydney back in with his parents. After the divorce, Matthew was referred to Interrelate for mediation and was put on to Steve McWilliams at Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

What benefits does the Men's Group have for you personally?

The Men's Group allowed Matthew, who is introverted, to build friends of his own and social connections. The group provides a social outlet and an opportunity that Matthew wouldn't otherwise have to meet people his own age. When he can, Matthew's father Barry also attends to support his son but has built his own connections as part of his involvement.

The Men's Group involvement has also led to Matthew engaging with Steve in his role as Counsellor over the past 4-5 months to focus on financial issues, anger management and circle of security to support his parenting.

Do you have a story or highlight of how important the Men's Group is to the you?

Matthew shared how he struggles with motivation and the Men's Group is the one thing that he looks forward to each week. The highlights for Matthew are the socialising and the relationships developed with other members. Both Matthew and his father Barry see the program as vital for the community however noted that more funding is required so it can run at least a couple of times per week and incorporate physical or recreational activities (such as fishing) that could promote more interaction between members.



Spotlight

Front Desk Volunteering Spotlight: Christine Collins

What brought you to volunteer on the Front Desk at FNC?

When I retired I knew I needed something meaningful to fill the time I used to spend at work. I was advised to find a role that aligned with my values. I tried a few things, but I was lucky to discover the Neighbourhood Centre quite quickly, where I found a team of like minded people in the staff and the volunteers.

What benefits does the Front Desk volunteering have for you personally?

This role is very social, I mix with the FNC staff, the volunteers and the community members who walk through the door. There is a variety of tasks, from packaging up the Chinese food to computer work. I feel valued by my colleagues and the people that we help. I have maintained my skills and learnt new things. I feel it can be a privilege to be there when someone is in difficulty and be able to guide them toward solutions and services.

What benefits does Front Desk volunteering have for the community or people presenting in crisis?

This is a place where anyone can just turn up and get assistance with problems large and small. We are non-judgemental and usually immediately available. The Front Desk staff have a lot of lived experience to draw upon as well as resources to assist in referrals for appropriate assistance. We are here where people live and are familiar faces offering a sense of safety and reliability.

Do you have a story or highlight of how important Front Desk volunteering is to you?

On any given day I can think of someone who had a better day because we were there to listen and help out – and I value that opportunity to be useful. However the really important thing I have to mention here is how volunteering helped me through my grief when my son died. I found purpose in my life by helping others and I learnt a lot by allowing the staff and volunteers at FNC to help me. I have so much to be thankful for through volunteering at such a caring place!



Community Events

Forster Neighbourhood Centre runs a range of events to foster community connections and social participation. FNC is committed to reconciliation between all Australians, focusing on community events that provide opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community to come together to learn, build mutual respect and friendships.

Our Community Events run in the past year include:

Forster Farmers Market

Held on the third Saturday of each month in the grounds next door to the Forster Court House. Little Street, Forster. It's a great opportunity to purchase and tantalise your taste buds with the freshest of produce from the farm. The aim is to promote fresh produce grown or homemade products created in the MidCoast area and neighbouring regions.

There is a variety of fruit, vegetables, gourmet sauces, jams, preserves, pure honey, plants and much more.

In 2024-2025 the market provided opportunities for 24 producers to showcase their products to the local community. The markets are looking forward to a great year in 2025-2026.

We are always seeking more local producers to add to the market.

Wallis Lake Cultural Cruises

Provided as a community service to facilitate access to local Aboriginal Cultural knowledge and site exploration for the whole community. Facilitated by local Worimi Elders, the Cultural Cruises are an opportunity to immerse oneself in local Aboriginal culture and feel what it was like to grow up on Worimi country.

We arrange a Cultural Cruise for NAIDOC each year and on request for community groups and private bookings.

This year saw record numbers with over 90 attendees on the Cultural Cruise and a further 70 community members at Coomba Park to greet us to share a barbecue and bush tucker inspired sweets.

We also arranged a private Cultural Cruise for the Community of Christ-Pennant Hills in March 2024. We had 48 attendees on the afternoon cruise where attendees had the privilege of listening to stories from Worimi Elders Aunty Lyn and Aunty Noelene.

Big Sing by the Sea

We were thrilled that the Minimbah Elders and Forster Neighbourhood Centre could once again host the Big Sing by the Sea in November 2024.

With 70 people in attendance, we welcomed everyone at Holy Name School Hall for a weekend of singing workshops and Worimi cultural immersion experiences.

The event was topped off with a spectacular Showcase Performance, attracting a further 50 attendees to see our singing groups perform. We also held a Cultural Cruise as a part of this wonderful event where we saw 45 people in attendance.



Community Events Cont'd

NAIDOC WEEK 2025

Worimi (Forster) annual NAIDOC events bring the broader community together to celebrate and showcase local Aboriginal culture, and recently we have been fortunate to experience Torres Strait Islander Culture here on Worimi Country. Forster Neighbourhood Centre is a proud collaborator of such events and an ally to Indigenous community.



Reconciliation Week Event

Forster Neighbourhood Centre is committed to reconciliation between all Australians.

In 2025 Forster Neighbourhood Centre held a Reconciliation Week event where Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people could come together and learn about Aboriginal culture in the spirit of education, reconciliation and walking forward in harmony.



Culture Day @Pebbly

During NAIDOC Week, Forster Neighbourhood Centre, in collaboration with Tobwabba AMS and community knowledge holders, held a Culture Day.

This was a great opportunity for Indigenous community to come together for a yarn, some delicious food and to share a range of cultural practices such as weaving, tool making, dance and song.



Emergency Relief - Advice & Referral

The Forster Neighbourhood Centre, again with the support of Club Forster Club Grants funding, continued to provide Emergency Relief this year for community members in crisis. With generous support from our volunteers and local businesses, we were able to provide emergency relief parcels of basic food pantry items including meat, eggs and milk to enable recipients to be able to cook a nutritious meal.

We were very fortunate this year to have continued support from local businesses whose donations helped our food parcels extend further to help those in need. A big shout out to:

- Butterfingers Bakery Tuncurry, who provide us with weekly fresh bread and cakes donation
- Eastern Tiger Restaurant, Forster who provide us with Chinese meals to package up for community members
- Quota International, Forster who provided us with home cooked soups during winter
- Knit and Spin ladies for personal hygiene items. including toiletries, sanitary items and men's toiletry packs
- Homebase Youth Services for sharing their FoodBank donations throughout the year .
- Dignity bags and essential items from generous community members

All items are subject to availability at the time. Our Emergency Relief only has capacity to meet basic food and hygiene needs for up to a couple of days until other services and support can be accessed.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, we provided 571 Emergency Relief packages to community members experiencing crisis.

Information, Advice and Referral

Neighbourhood Centres are often the first responders to individuals and families. They provide a soft entry point to the community welfare system and are able to triage clients, and where required, make the appropriate referrals to other professional services and link up clients with like-minded community members and community-based activities.

Forster Neighbourhood Centre, supported by our team of reliable and hardworking volunteers, operated our Community Centre 5 days/week until November 2024. Due to unprecedented client numbers and level of complexity presenting, we made the hard decision to close on Mondays for the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers. This was a 25% reduction in access to our central hub, providing information, advice and referrals to community members who have nowhere else to go. Through our Cup of Coffee campaign, we are appealing to the community to re-open on Mondays as soon as possible. (see page 15).

Even with reduced hours, in the 2024-2025 financial year, we provided 3107 instances of information, advice and referral. Almost triple the maximum annual funded instances.



Child ,Youth and Family Support & Counselling

The Child and Family Support and Counselling Service is funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice under the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program.

The program aims to support families who have at least one child aged up to 12 years to ensure:

- Children have a safe and healthy start to life
- Children develop well and are ready for school
- Children meet developmental and educational milestones
- Children live in families that meet their physical, emotional and social needs
- Children and families have access to appropriate and responsive services if needed.

Links with family, school and community are established and maintained In 2024-2025, we provided the following services:

- 67 occasions of specialist information and referral (e.g. information on child behaviour issues, housing/homelessness, unemployment, financial trouble, changing utility companies.
- 1598 occasions of parenting support (parenting skills and support to improve the capacity to build positive relationships, respond to children’s needs, and address challenging behavioural and emotional issues) to 49 vulnerable families
- 2315 support instances (structured support and skill development in the home) to 61 individuals requesting support
- 61 Counselling sessions (emotional support for individuals) for 15 individuals

Our program is voluntary and it takes great courage for vulnerable families to engage and access the support they need to support their children to thrive. This service is delivered by our skilled Child and Family team, Anniqua Olsen and Steven McWilliams with over 20 years combined experience supporting families to achieve their goals.



No Interest Loans (NILS)

Nils are available for essential goods and services available for community members for items such as fridges, washing machines, car repairs, registration, medical and dental expenses with up to \$2000 available for these items and the option for the loan to be repaid over a 12-24 month period, with no fees or interest charges ever.

The past year has seen many changes take effect on the Nils program, including reductions for some items and the removal of other items, which were available in the past, meaning that the Nils numbers were down on previous years.

A total of 331 loans were disbursed to the value of \$419,022, with the average loan amount being \$1266. The bulk of Nils loans issued in the past 12 months has been for car registration and car repairs, furniture and white goods.

Good relationships have been developed with other local Nils providers enabling the teams to reach out in circumstances where they may be overwhelmed with enquiries, which we have seen during the recent flood events.

A special mention needs to be made to our Team of Nils Assessors who work on a rotating roster in a voluntary capacity week in week out, no matter where they are in the country they step up and keep the loans moving, thank you!



Thank you for the ongoing support of local media agencies including:



Ted Bickford - Volunteer of the Year!

86-year-old Tuncurry graffiti buster Ted Bickford has been named the 2024 Mid North Coast Volunteer and Senior Volunteer of the Year for his long dedication to a clean and graffiti free community across the region.

Ted has volunteered for more than 30 years, removing graffiti from public areas across the Great Lakes region. He is on call each day to respond to clean up call outs, driving to sites to clean, remove and cover over graffiti. His volunteer work includes community engagement and education at local schools and the justice system.

"I have been doing this for years and I have built a great rapport with all the kids in the area," Ted said. "The message I spread to everyone is about being proud of your community."

Council's General Manager, Adrian Panuccio, said, "Ted does a fantastic job and it's great to see him recognised for his work that he does in keeping our region graffiti free but also the work he does with the youth and instilling a sense of pride and community in them."

Ted received the award on 23 August at The Westport Club in Port Macquarie as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Recipients in other Mid North Coast regional award categories were also announced, including young, adult, senior and volunteer



Above: Ted Bickford, Mid North Coast Volunteer & Senior Volunteer of the Year, removing graffiti with students Riley Stuart (on the left) and Nate Hilder at the Great Lakes College Forster Campus in April 2023. Photo by Mary Yule.

team of the year. Melinda Lightfoot from Tuncurry was named MNC Adult Volunteer of the Year and the Forster Neighbourhood Centre volunteers were named Volunteer Team of the Year.

Mid North Coast Adult Volunteer of the Year - Melinda Lightfoot from Tuncurry
Melinda is a founding member of the Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network where she gives her time to raise awareness and support

Left: Best Mid North Coast Volunteer Team of the Year - Forster Neighbourhood Centre Community Hub representatives with MP Tonya Thompson (on far left).

for suicide prevention. As a volunteer leader, Melinda brings dedicated volunteers together and provides important information to her local community while breaking down the stigmas often associated with discussions of suicide prevention.

Volunteer Team of the Year - Forster Neighbourhood Centre Community Hub Volunteers

The Forster Neighbourhood Centre Community Hub provides much-needed support to people experiencing mental health issues, suicide concerns, homelessness, escaping domestic violence or in financial distress.



Above: Melinda Lightfoot - Mid North Coast Adult Volunteer of the Year.

Staffed by a team of volunteers 5 days a week, the Hub provides over 500 emergency relief packages and 350 no-interest loans to vulnerable community members each year.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state. The Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering, whose mission it is to promote and support volunteering across NSW.

The Mid North Coast award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the Gala State Ceremony in Sydney at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year will be announced across each category.

www.volunteering.com.au
See page 2 (in Police report) & page 8 for MidCoast Youth Awards.



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www.forsterfortnightly.com.au Page 3

Local Community Centre needs your help!

Continued from page 1:

to over 2200 requests for assistance and saw a 30% increase in emergency relief food parcels provided for local families doing it tough.

The reality of the situation is that although the need is increasing significantly, we do not receive core funding to provide this central community hub. We rely on local businesses, community support and our volunteers to provide this service.

After months of advocacy to Government, Forster Neighbourhood Centre have been unsuccessful in securing the minimum funding needed to meet the increasing needs of the community.

As a result, from 25 November 2024, Forster Neighbourhood Centre will close its central community hub to the public on Mondays. This is an essential step to protect the well-being of our staff and volunteers from the increased demand, without the required funding to respond appropriately.

Forster Neighbourhood Centre requires an investment of \$100,000 per annum to restore our central community hub to 5 days/week that will directly fund:

1. A Crisis Counsellor to respond to vulnerable community members presenting in crisis with complex issues.
2. The ongoing sustainability of the community hub operation as the accessible safe place to link community members with specialist services to meet their needs.



Above: Forster Neighbourhood Centre on Lake Street Forster has to close services on a Monday. Photos supplied.

We are run by a volunteer board and our limited staff only work part time. 100% of any investment made in our centre will directly benefit the community. We continue to lobby government to make this small investment to support the need in our regional community.

If you (or someone you know) can make a donation, donate here to Forster Neighbourhood Centre: <http://fnc.org.au/donate-to-fnc/> or give us a call to discuss.

For further information, please contact us on (02) 65 554 351.

FORSTER FORTNIGHTLY

Community News www.forsterfortnightly.com.au Page 5

Locals supporting locals

Forster Neighbourhood Centre has been successful in securing a \$100,000 investment from the Forster Neighbourhood Centre Foundation to support the well-being of our staff and volunteers from the increased demand, without the required funding to respond appropriately.

As a result, from 25 November 2024, Forster Neighbourhood Centre will close its central community hub to the public on Mondays. This is an essential step to protect the well-being of our staff and volunteers from the increased demand, without the required funding to respond appropriately.

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First Pop Up Pub Sing-A-Long huge success for Forster Neighbourhood Centre



The first ever Pop Up Pub Sing-A-Long in Forster Tuncurry was a huge success on Sunday afternoon, 18 May. With over 150 community members in attendance, we lifted the roof off the Bellevue Hotel's gig room, singing together in support of Forster Neighbourhood Centre. The event was opened with a warm Welcome to Country from Auntie Janice Paulson and a short introduction from Manager of Forster Neighbourhood Centre, Corinne Stephenson before the mic was handed over to our talented Choir leaders, Sandra Kwa and Tash Rustenholz who lead the singing, supported by a band of local musicians including Annabel Lewis, Larry Belton, Matt Bannerman and Ian Sercombe.

Our choir leader, Sandra Kwa, had expertly arranged the song 'Money, Money, Money' by Abba to reflect the plight of Forster Neighbourhood Centre to get the funding needed to meet the increased demand, in just over an hour, the choir leaders were able

to arrange the crowd into low, middle and high pitch singing groups to create a moving rendition of the song, performing together as the finale to the afternoon. The fun and energy in the room was electric and many attendees were left wanting more, leaving the door open for future Pub Sing-A-Long events in our community.

The event was part of National Neighbourhood Centre Week to launch the 'one cup of coffee' fundraising campaign where Forster Neighbourhood Centre is aiming to get 1500 community members to sign up for as little as \$5/month to better support those in our community experiencing crisis.

This year's Neighbourhood Centre Week theme 'Ripples of Change', reminds us that every action, no matter how small, has the power to create a ripple effect. Whether it's volunteering, having a conversation, or making a small donation through the fundraising campaign - every small action adds up to something big, helping to build a stronger, more resilient and connected community. Forster Neighbourhood Centre, is aiming for not just a ripple but a tsunami of change with the momentum certainly building from the active participation at the Pub Sing-A-Long.

If you or someone you know can afford \$5/month then please go to www.fnc.org.au/donate-to-fnc to directly support your community.



Above and below: Conductor Sandra Kwa (with patterned top) with fellow musicians at the Bellevue in Tuncurry. Photos by Mary Yule.



Above: Corinne Stephenson, Manager of Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

Below & far left: Over 150 community members lifted the roof off to support the Forster Neighbourhood Centre.



Local Community Centre needs your help!



Above: Corinne Stephenson (Management team) and Annika Olsen (Child & Family Worker) outside the front door of FNC.

Forster Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) has operated in our community continuously for over 40 years. The organisation exists to support the well-being of all Great Lakes residents.

We operate a central community hub at 3 Lake Street, Forster as a safe place that any community member experiencing crisis can access for information, advice and referral to a service that best meets their needs. The front desk is staffed by a dedicated and reliable team of volunteers who generously give up their time to support the community.

With the lack of affordable housing and ongoing cost of living crisis, the central community hub is experiencing record number of requests for assistance. From July-September 2024, the front desk volunteers responded

Continued on page 3.

Community support to make Christmas special for all

Each year, Forster Neighbourhood Centre tries to provide Christmas Hampers for vulnerable community members in need. We receive generous support from Club Forster each year to make this happen. Christmas Hampers are purchased through Food Bank to provide a small box of festive items that make Christmas that little bit more special.

This year, Forster Neighbourhood Centre has been able to extend our Christmas Hampers to include dignity items, children's gifts, gift vouchers and additional festive food items thanks to the generous support of our Great Lakes community.

We would like to acknowledge contributions from community members Kathy Butterworth, Larry Fullerton, Desleigh Langford and anonymous people dropping cash donations into the centre to assist; community groups



Above: Grant Maxwell (on far right) with volunteer staff at the Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

Church of Christ, Evermore Retirement Village, MidCoast Outreach and Homebase Youth Services; and local businesses Arvia (Grant Maxwell) and Project Pete Handyman Services (Peter Howard).

At the end of an extremely challenging year, struggling to access sufficient funding for our work, it provides such hope about the future with our village of supporters around us. On behalf of Forster Neighbourhood Centre, sincere thanks to our supporters and partners - we couldn't do it without you!



Left: Steve (on far left) with FNC staff. Photos supplied.

Reconciliation Community Event



Uncle Rob and Corinne Stephenson.

Continued from page 1.

to this Worimi land where we meet today. I would also like to acknowledge this beautiful land that we meet on today and thank our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, colleagues and friends that we continue to learn from to strengthen our understanding of the oldest surviving culture in history.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia. The theme this year, 'Bridging now to next' is two-fold.

Firstly, a recognition of 'Corroboree 2000' - the historical walk over the Harbour Bridge 25 years ago in support of Reconciliation. 250,000 Australians came out in unity to walk forward together. Listening to one of the organisers yesterday, on May 26 2000, an incredibly cold front came across where they thought it might snow in Sydney. They started discussing about postponing and calling it off however the community support was so strong that the response was a resounding 'we are going to walk anyway!'. This significant demonstration of Reconciliation made international news

and shone the light on the long journey and continued determination of First Nations people to work towards a reconciled Australia and justice for their people.

Secondly, the theme 'Bridging Now to Next' comes at a time when Australia faces uncertainty in its reconciliation journey, calling on all Australians to step forward together. The theme urges us to look ahead and continue to push forward as past lessons guide us.

As a non-Indigenous Australian, to me, Reconciliation Week is about challenging what I got taught at school and taking myself out of my comfort zone to learn about the true history of Australia. For the past 15 years, I have been on a continuous journey to re-educate myself about our First Nations people and the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Above: Local Worimi artists (L-R) Clay Dooker, Charlie Freeman (paintings), Thomas Dooker, Tonya Simon and Andy Snelgar (Teacher at Great Lakes TAFE) with artifacts. Photos by Mary Yule.

Thomas said, "Andy is teaching us culture, and we have been making artifacts. We started as a small group in Forster and meet once a week."

Andy said, "It's an important for people to make these things because in NSW a lot of the traditional knowledge has been lost. It's been a big part of our dreaming forever."

Islander people to fight for justice, in the past, now and into the future. I continue to learn through reading, watching, listening every day and always come back to how proud all Australians can be that we live on this sacred land alongside the oldest surviving culture in the world, what an absolute privilege!

At Forster Neighbourhood Centre, we strive to be an ally towards reconciliation for all Australians. Our programs and activities aim to create meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community to come together to learn together, build

mutual respect and more often than not form lifelong friendships.

We can all be an ally by being open to listening and learning. If you do not know where to start, join one of our cultural programs. The Reconciliation Australia website also has a fantastic recommended reading list, ABC iView has a range of Indigenous programs to build understanding and knowledge, our beautiful Forster library, we now have as a resource, has a collection of books that can take you on a journey of understanding. Marrangbul (thank you)!

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HELP SUPPORT

The Forster Neighbourhood Centre

ONE CUP OF COFFEE AT A TIME!

We need \$110k per annum to re-open 5 days + fund a Crisis Counsellor.

Our goal:-
1500 Community Members to sign up for \$5 per month (just set + forget)

could you donate the price of a COFFEE once a MONTH?

USE QR CODE TO SIGN UP

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Financial Report (Extract)

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
ABN 24 282 113 607
For the year ended 30 June 2025

Prepared by Beaver Novello Moss Pty Ltd

Profit and Loss

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
Income from Operations		
FUNDING - Major Programs		
CCCS TEI (DCJ)	159,238	153,482
TS TEI (DCJ)	151,167	145,704
NILS (Fair Trading)	112,807	110,298
NILS Good Shepherd (DSS)	44,208	30,000
Total FUNDING - Major Programs	467,420	439,483
Generated income & non tied income		
Donation Income - untied	45,408	10,815
Farmers Market - Operating Income	4,725	4,000
Income Other - Untied	53,087	82,657
Total Generated income & non tied income	103,220	97,472
Income, Grants and Donations - Other		
Grants - Other	11,500	28,291
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal Grant	13,854	-
Indigenous Money Network Revenue (IMN)	-	9,637
Regional Youth Holiday Break Grant - Winter Spring 2024	14,000	-
SCCF Project R5 Grant	42,033	-
Total Income, Grants and Donations - Other	81,387	37,928
Miscellaneous Income		
Bank Interest Admin Account	10,572	3,315
Total Miscellaneous Income	10,572	3,315
Total Income from Operations	662,599	578,198
Operating Expenditure		
People Costs		
Staff - Insurance Workers Compensation	23,476	9,347
Staff - Salaries & Wages	412,793	439,643
Staff - Superannuation	46,160	47,944
Staff - Training, development and Supervision	3,808	9,038
Wage Provision	(2,515)	442
Total People Costs	483,722	506,413
Office Expenses		
Accounting Expenses and Audit Fees	4,100	2,360
Advertising and promotion Exp	1,350	1,014
Assets Purchased <\$5,000	-	681
Bookkeeping Expenses	2,283	2,885
IT - Computer Hardware and software purchases	3,529	4,663
IT - Support, internet, web maintenance etc	816	1,311
Motor Vehicle running - ALL expenses	6,538	8,194

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached auditors review report.

	2025	2024
Office - Consumables & amenities	1,638	2,201
Office Expenses - Telephone, Internet, Security & Fax	5,348	5,768
Office Expenses - cleaning	3,700	2,768
Office Expenses - Electricity, Gas and Water	-	1,003
Office expenses - Printing, copying, stationery, postage, etc	4,473	6,661
Property - Rental Lake St	16,539	14,007
Property - Repairs & Maintenance Lake St	571	-
Total Office Expenses	50,884	53,514
Administration Other		
Insurances - Other; Pub liably; Directors, Contents etc	5,786	5,578
Memberships Peak and Sector Bodies	200	314
Committee, volunteer and meeting expenses	543	2,527
Bank fees and charges	17	2
Contractors Expenses - Other	13,000	-
Total Administration Other	19,547	8,420
Program Expenses		
FACS Program Expenses		
Community Connections, Centre & Support (CCCS) DCJ TEI program expenses	16,461	40,624
Total FACS Program Expenses	16,461	40,624
Total Program Expenses	16,461	40,624
Program Expenses - First Feet	17,000	-
Program Expenses - other	43,257	49,658
Total Operating Expenditure	630,870	658,630
Current Year Profit from Operations	31,729	(80,431)
Abnormal Income		
New Office Fitout		
3 Lake Street Forster Expenditure	-	(2,849)
Total New Office Fitout	-	(2,849)
New Motor Vehicle		
Donation New Motor Vehicle	45,000	-
Grant New Motor Vehicle	-	22,727
Motor Vehicle Purchase	(48,485)	(27,273)
Total New Motor Vehicle	(3,485)	(4,545)
Total Abnormal Income	(3,485)	(7,394)
Current Year Profit inc Abnormal Income	28,244	(87,826)

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached auditors review report.

Balance Sheet

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Inc. As at 30 June 2025

	NOTES	30 JUNE 2025	30 JUNE 2024
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash & Cash Equivalents			
Debit Card Main A/C		4,325	1,716
Reserve Account #5461		107,417	106,294
Main Account		91,418	99,637
Term Deposit #1059		157,350	150,000
Term Deposit #2084		52,099	50,000
Minimbah Elders		2,987	-
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents		415,597	407,647
Receivables			
Trade debtors		1,706	500
Total Receivables		1,706	500
NILS Loan Program		264,480	333,350
Total Current Assets		681,783	741,496
Total Assets		681,783	741,496
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Payables			
Provision for Accounting and Audit Fee		3,300	2,200
Employee entitlements		28,311	31,197
Payg Tax from wages		3,708	(4,492)
Grants in Advance		69,500	101,033
Superannuation payable		8,148	-
Trade creditors		24,430	24,941
Total Payables		137,398	154,878
Taxation			
GST		1,872	3,849
Total Taxation		1,872	3,849
Financial Liabilities			
NILS Account		264,612	333,482
Total Financial Liabilities		264,612	333,482
Total Current Liabilities		403,881	492,209
Non-Current Liabilities			
Other Non-Current Liabilities			

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached auditors review report.

	NOTES	30 JUNE 2025	30 JUNE 2024
Non-Current Employee Entitlements		1,662	1,292
Total Other Non-Current Liabilities		1,662	1,292
Total Non-Current Liabilities		1,662	1,292
Total Liabilities		405,543	493,501
Net Assets		276,240	247,996
Equity			
Retained Profits / Accumulated Losses			
Current Year Earnings		28,244	(87,826)
Retained Earnings at End of Prior Year		247,996	335,821
Total Retained Profits / Accumulated Losses		276,240	247,996
Total Equity		276,240	247,996

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached auditors review report.



**Aboriginal Art Paintings © Tobwabba Art
Artist: Jan Leon**

Forster Neighbourhood Centre wishes to
acknowledge and send our condolences to the
family of the late Jan Leon and the Worimi
Community for the recent loss of your
respected elder.



Forster Neighbourhood Centre contact details:

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