Annual Report 2026

1st July 2025 - 30th June 2026

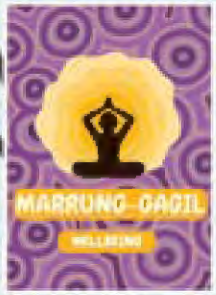
Supporting the well-being

FORSTER NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

of all Great Lakes residents!

















Our Story

Forster Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) exists to support and improve the well-being of all Great Lakes residents. We have operated a central hub within the community for over 40 years. We are flexible and have grown in response to the needs of the community.
As an ally in reconciliation or 'real conciliation' as Aunty Janice Paulson has coined the term, we walk alongside the local Worimi Aboriginal community to increase understanding between all Australians, build mutual respect and more often than not, nurture long-term friendships.

FNC highly values the contribution of volunteers and acknowledges their contributions in achieving our purpose and impact in the local community. Through committed volunteers we achieve a high level of impact for social value at very low-cost to funders.
FNC is a community-driven registered charity governed by a Volunteer board with extensive knowledge and experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, community development, local government planning, financial management and organisational development. Our Board consists of 33% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and 83% female representation.

The strength of FNC is realised through a winning combination of a dedicated and reliable team (including staff and volunteers), community integration, management expertise and established rapport with those most vulnerable in the community as a 'safe pair of hands'. As a regional fringe community, we lead advocacy efforts for much needed services to have a physical presence to meet the diverse and complex needs of our community.

Vision

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

Our Mission

To operate a 'one stop shop' hub of holistic community and health services that wraps support around those most vulnerable in our community to move forward safely.

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

To facilitate a coordinated, person centred service where People, Families, and Communities are supported through a single, accessible Hub that connects them to the right services at the right time. The Hub ensures a no wrong door, culturally safe experience.

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 alongside the Aboriginal community as an ally and advocate towards reconciliation between all Australians.

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 established hosting a range of outreach services
2025
'Cup of Coffee' Fundraising Campaign launched to support Central Hub.
Financial Wellbeing Hub contract awarded by Department of Social Services.
Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Collaboration Agreement signed.
2026
New site for Great Lakes Regional Hub purchased by local family.
Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Great Lakes launched.

What We Do

Our 'one stop shop' model recognises the different stages of wellbeing, providing services across the resilience continuum. Service responses include prevention and early intervention to crisis intervention to recovery and ultimately, resilience. It is important to create resilience by building networks of support before they are needed.



AT RISK	CRISIS	RECOVERY	RESILIENCE
• NILS • Financial Wellbeing • Financial Counselling • Child & Family Support • Mental Health • Cultural Activities	• Hub Support Worker • Outreach Services • Mental Health • Suicide Prevention	• Social Participation • Cultural Activities • Financial Wellbeing • Child & Family • Mental Health	• Social Participation • Cultural Activities

Our Impact

80 Families supported with specialist Child and Family support

Info/Advice/ Referral **3087**

$38,362 value of EAPA vouchers distributed through **286** applications

149 individuals supported to address Financial Wellbeing concerns and **$30,000** in vouchers and debt support provided

217 NILS Loans valued at **$275k**

Emergency Relief Packs distributed **749**

9 individuals supported with Tax Help

4 complex clients supported with Advocacy and Support (Evolve)

$13,215 value of fines cleared through **14** WDOs

450 Outreach spaces provided for services at the Community Hub



The Hub (Core Function)

The Hub is the central entry point for all clients, providing:

- Intake and initial screening
- Holistic triage and assessment
- Warm referrals to specialist services
- Short term support or crisis response
- Case coordination for complex needs
- System wide communication and feedback
- Data insights to identify trends and service gaps

The Six Spokes

1. Financial Wellbeing

Supports stability and capability through counselling, budgeting, emergency relief, and debt support.

2. Mental Health

Provides emotional and psychological support through warm referrals to counselling, peer programs, and self-help resources.

3. Child and Family Support

Strengthens family functioning and child development through parenting programs, casework, family capacity building, and safety planning.

4. Social Connection

Builds belonging and reduces isolation through social groups, volunteering, peer networks, and community events such as Men's Group, Baraya Wakulda, Great Lakes Women's Shed.

5. Cultural Activities

Promotes cultural identity, pride, and community cohesion through cultural knowledge sharing and appreciation.

6. Hub partners

Provides professional space for a range of external services to outreach within the hub in response to community need such as homelessness, domestic and family violence, mental health support, legal aid and Services Australia.

Executive Report

Prepared by Felicity Carter OAM (President) and Corinne Stephenson (Executive Officer)

It is with great pride that we congratulate the FNC staff and volunteers for their continuing, selfless work on behalf of and alongside the local Worimi community and broader Great Lakes community. 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 respected, resourceful and resilient.

We started the year with recognition from the Australian Government on the value of our one-stop shop Hub model, being awarded the Financial Wellbeing Hub contract by the Department of Social Services. Forster Neighbourhood Centre was the only Financial Wellbeing Hub funded in NSW, demonstrating the great need for place-based services in regional fringe communities such as ours. This initiative has greatly enhanced the work of the hub, allowing individuals and families reaching out for food support, to be linked in with confidential non-judgement financial counselling support to address the underlying causes for financial hardship. With only six weeks notice, the team worked incredibly hard to design and implement the Financial Wellbeing Hub to support the financial recovery and resilience for community members across the MidCoast LGA. We thank Wesley Mission and Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services for providing outreach space for our team to reach community members in both Taree and Wingham.

In July last year, Forster Neighbourhood Centre was invited by Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network to present to a community stakeholder meeting on the needs of the Great Lakes community and the challenges of keeping our doors open to meet these needs. With over 40 concerned community members in attendance, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss how we could increase access to mental health support within our community. The unanimous support from the community was that we would enhance the community hub already established by Forster Neighbourhood Centre rather than duplicate hubs. Since this time, FNC has been working alongside Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Charlestown to develop the capacity to provide mental health advice and support to the community.

On 28 July, The Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Great Lakes was launched, meeting a long-term need of the centre to fund a trauma informed Support Worker at the front desk to support community members presenting in crisis. This position is funded by the Kahi Simon Fund. We thank Social Futures, Care Connect and Flourish Australia for answering the call to have mental health specialist support available within our hub to meet community members in need.

Adding these much-needed new programs to the FNC offering has allowed us to restructure our Management team to better support an expanded operation. As of 1 July, the new management team consists of:

- Corinne Stephenson – Executive Officer
- Lisa Hinton – Operations Manager
- Kitana Paulson – Cultural Lead
- Megan Ellerton – Contracts Administrator

Supported by our skilled and dedicated Board, Forster Neighbourhood Centre has strengthened governance capability this year, building capacity to continue to grow and expand the support provided to the community in response to the need

An on-going challenge for the FNC Board is the need to find our "forever home", exploring every avenue and opportunity over the past 10 years. As a result of the strong connection with the Kahi Simon Fund, our need for a 'forever home' has evolved into a far bigger project for an integrated one-stop shop Hub, where the whole community can access support for a range of needs. Due to the generous contribution of a local family motivated to share God's love, a new site for what is known as 'The Great Lakes Regional Hub' has been secured, allowing Forster Neighbourhood Centre to commence planning and development of a purpose-built Hub that will be fit for purpose for decades to come. We are thrilled to embark on a multi-year project to raise the funds required to turn the Great Lakes Regional Hub from a vision to a reality. Watch this space!

After another incredibly busy year, we cannot speak highly enough of our staff and volunteers, especially those at the front desk/reception. These volunteers manage difficult and complex issues every day with great patience and compassion. To this end, our volunteers are the unsung heroes of the community. We could not achieve a quarter of the impact we do in our community without the commitment and dedication of our team. Our volunteers support our work across the board, including committee membership, facilitating peer support groups for our community, providing tutoring to local children, preparing and packaging emergency relief parcels, volunteering at fundraising events, being the band of musicians for our 'Pub Sings' or simply washing up.

I know that the level of commitment from everyone is a direct reflection of the leadership and values demonstrated by the Management Team who are always prepared to roll up their sleeves and support clients and community members as needed. It is with great pleasure that we welcomed five new team members, several volunteers and one new committee member. It has been a year of massive change, essentially doubling our team size.

We would like to acknowledge that this journey has not been easy on the team however slowly but surely, we have come through together stronger than ever, excited and energized about the future.

As the Executive of Forster Neighbourhood Centre, we 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.

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 vouchers, through to assistance to access a broad range of other services. We offer counselling and support for families and community members struggling with a myriad of problems.

Everyone knows times are tough for many Australians and community demand for assistance is high. We constantly seek additional funding and resources to advocate for, and to increase and broaden our ability to support and provide services to the community.
As the first port of call for community members in financial and emotional distress - as for last year - 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.

Financial results

I am pleased to report that FNC has this year posted a modest surplus $38.2K

To balance the budget, operating expenses were managed down by $54k, mainly from staff wages and superannuation ($30k) and program expenses ($18k).

Our efforts to increase untied income were rewarded 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 FY2026 was a really difficult year for staff and volunteers but we are confident that our 2026/27 Financial year will be one of growth and extended services. As always, the board has approved a responsible and detailed budget for FY2027.

Outlook and Conclusion

I commend the Executive Officer, Corinne Stephenson, who has been tireless in sourcing additional funding, resources and services to benefit the community. The outcome of these efforts should be become 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, cost-effective services and good governance.

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 fund a crisis support worker

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



Board Members



Aunty 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 aged Aboriginal students and our Baraya Wakulda (singing together) program.



Felicity Carter

"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.

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 many years, initially as President, and for the last seven 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.



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 Gardner



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.

Heather Gresham



Heather Gresham, originally from New Zealand and Sydney has been living in the beautiful Forster region for the last 10 years. She has 'retired' to a small farm and is now working harder than ever!
Heather started working life as a Primary School teacher and was then promoted to mother and foster-mum. During these child raising years, she was extensively involved with voluntary programmes for young children and their families. She then worked for several years in pastoral care for the aged.

Heather was drawn to the work of the FNC as she became aware of the shortfall of services available in Forster-Tuncurry, especially for those experiencing suicidal ideation. After becoming connected with the Kahi Simon Foundation and the Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub in Newcastle, she became very passionate about bringing these services to Forster region to enable ALL people to access care. She is committed to assisting the FNC to gain a purpose- built facility and to extend their services to make a positive difference for everyone in any need.

Heather regards her life journey as her greatest qualification but also values her Diploma of Teaching, Batchelor of Education, Master of Education and especially her Diploma of Chaplaincy (completed here in Australia, which informed and educated her on how best to respectfully care for and empower people from all backgrounds).

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.



Kitana Paulson

Kitana is a very proud Warrimay/Bundjalung woman who grew up in the Wambuynbaa (Forster) area, joining the Forster Neighbourhood Centre in January 2023 as our Programs Officer. She is currently our Cultural Lead.

Kitana is a talented Artist who spends her spare time in nature. She is passionate about growing and strengthening cultural knowledge within her community; with a particular interest in learning and teaching Gathang, the Language of her people.



Michelle Robinson

Michelle joined the Forster Neighbourhood Centre in September 2025 as the Client Services Manager. With more than six years' experience in the not-for-profit sector, she is passionate about supporting people in the community and helping connect them with the services they need. She feels fortunate to work alongside such a caring, dedicated team that shares the same commitment to making a positive difference.



Deborah Armstrong

Deborah is excited to be part of the FNC team. As the P/T Senior Financial Counsellor, Deborah works with the Financial Wellbeing Hub team supporting clients to become more confident about challenging their financial situations. Previous to joining the FNC in July 2026, Deborah managed the Bawinanga Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (BHAC) Money Management team working with Bininj people who wanted to improve their money story. I love spending time with my family and now I'm semi retired I have time to garden and please myself.



Karen Crowther

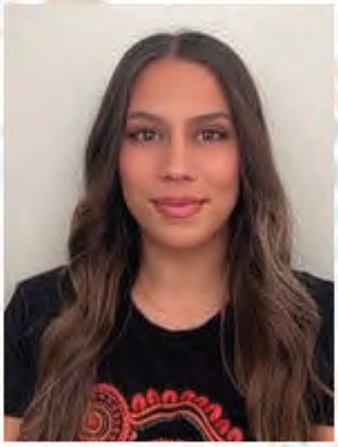
Karen has recently joined Forster Neighbourhood Centre to assist with payroll and accounts. She brings with her over 40 years of experience in administration, bookkeeping and finance in various sectors, including Financial Services, Insurance, Real Estate and Community Services.
Karen grew up in the Blue Mountains and then lived and worked in Sydney for her early career years. She moved to Forster almost 30 years ago to raise her family and enjoys spending time in the great outdoors.



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.

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 16 years now.



Tanisha Dumas

Tanisha Dumas is a proud Birrbay Galbaan (Biripi Woman) who grew up on Biripi Country in Taree. She currently lives and works within the Warrimay(Worimi) community in Forster as a NILS Officer where she is able to assist individuals and families on low incomes to access safe, fair and affordable credit.

Tanisha is passionate about strengthening her cultural connections through traditional practices such as Weaving, Dance and Language. This passion is carried into her valuable work as a First Feet Cultural Appreciation workshop facilitator. Tanisha is dedicated to supporting her family and the broader community with an ultimate goal of working alongside people to ensure positive outcomes for mental health & wellbeing, therefore creating a safe, strong and thriving community for future generations to grow in.



Megan Ellerton

Megan joined Forster Neighbourhood Centre in July 2026 as Contracts Administrator and Client Support Officer. Megan recently moved to Great Lakes after travelling Australia in her caravan for two years. Megan brings over 5 years of case management experience, helping individuals with Mental Health conditions, disabilities, and lifelong workplace injuries.

Megan holds a Bachelor of Development Studies and is currently studying a Post Graduate Certificate in Human Services. Megan has a passion for person- centred care, advocacy, and community service delivery.



Annemarie

Annemarie is a Financial Counsellor in the Financial Well-being program, and she supports community members experiencing issues with paying bills.

Her mob are Kamilaroi and family are her heart and soul. She loves most animals and believes in compassion, integrity and kindness. She has worked in community for nearly 30 years.



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.



Jade Reily

Jade is a proud Warrimay Galbaan (Worimi Woman) who has returned to live on country and been here for 4 years. In February 2026 Jade joined FNC making it her first time working in community services. Working in administration as the Intake Officer with the Nils Team, Jade supports the Nils officer and front desk with all sorts of enquiries.

Jade has lived experiences and working in an organisation where she can help her community strengthen, feels more than rewarding, it uplifts her.
When Jade isn't working, she enjoys spending her time outside, going on bushwalks, connecting with the land and she really enjoys painting.



Luke Steain

Luke joined FNC as a Client Support Officer within the Evolve Mental Health Hub. Luke supports clients in a welcoming, respectful and non-judgemental space so all community members feel heard, supported and connected with appropriate services where needed.

His background includes a Bachelor of Indigenous Studies (Trauma and Healing), training and experience in mental health and wellbeing support, as well as experience working within community services. Luke says, "I'm passionate about supporting people through challenging periods, building trust, and helping individuals identify practical pathways toward improved wellbeing, connection and stability".



Kristy Walsh

Kristy joined Forster Neighbourhood Centre in July 2025 as our Child and Family Worker. She has more than six years of experience supporting young people, families, and older adults, helping them meet their individual needs while promoting independence.

Kristy holds a Bachelor of Social Science and a Diploma of Counselling. She is passionate about advocating for children and ensuring they are supported in safe, nurturing, and loving environments.
Outside of work, Kristy enjoys spending time in nature, going for walks, and exploring restaurants.



Julieanne Worth

Julieanne has been volunteering with Forster Neighbourhood Centre since August 2023 after completing her Diploma of Community Services at TAFE NSW and more recently come onboard as the Sunshine2428 Administrator.

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".

She enjoys travelling and exploring new places with family and has a love of nature and scrapbooking. 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.

Volunteers



Sue Anderson

After retiring as a primary school teacher, Sue worked for a book agency supporting authors to develop their manuscripts to published works. She also volunteered at the Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre.
After recently moving to the beautiful Mid Coast area, the Forster Neighbourhood Centre was an obvious choice to volunteer with. The scope of services to support people in need and expertise, dedication and care of staff and volunteers create a special community service.
Sue enjoys time near the ocean with beach swims and walks, yoga and Pilates, travelling and reading.



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."



Helene Easton

Helene has been a volunteer at the Forster Neighbourhood Centre on and off for the past 15 years, with her main focus being FOOD support. In connection with the Women's Shed, Helene started up the 1st Food Bank in conjunction with Breakthru Employment services in the old CWA building. Helene now assists Rhonda in the variety of food support options provided by the Neighbourhood Centre to assist members of our community. Helene has been a stalwart volunteer during our Big Sing by the Sea coordinating the food. Helene says "I love reading, enjoying the outdoors and helping people".



Clare Ganly

Clare is recently retired after working in the Community Services area for many years. She most recently worked with young adults with a disability providing fun recreational activities. Clare says "I am happy to be a volunteer and to be able to contribute to the local community. I enjoy travelling, arts and crafts, knitting and taking my cavalier dog for long walks"!



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). 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. Rhonda's 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 Painey

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.

Fiona has hit the ground running and fits 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"

Community Hub

With the continued support of Club Forster Club GRANTS funding, the FNC was able to provide Emergency Relief to community members experiencing financial hardship and crisis throughout 2025/2026.

Through the generosity of our volunteers, community members and local businesses, the FNC provided essential toiletries, personal hygiene items and emergency food parcels containing pantry staples, meat, eggs and milk. This support provided immediate relief and helped individuals and families prepare nutritious meals during challenging times.

The ongoing generosity of our local community has enabled us to extend our resources further and support more people when they need it most. We are incredibly grateful to the businesses, organisations, volunteers and community members who continue to contribute to this important service.

We would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank:

- **Butterfingers Bakery**, Tuncurry – for their generous weekly donations of fresh bread and cakes.
- Community Support - The generosity of our community continues to make a meaningful difference, with donations of pantry and essential items, helping us provide emergency relief to individuals and families when they need it most. A special thank you to Robyne, who generously donated a large collection of beautiful handmade blankets, helping keep community members warm throughout the year. We also extend our sincere appreciation to **Larry & Cara Fulton and Jim & Phyllis Haworth** for their generous donation of thoughtful Christmas gifts, which brought so much joy to many local families last Christmas.
- **Eastern Tiger Restaurant**, Forster – for providing Chinese meals, that are packaged and distributed to community members.
- **Forster Bowling Club** – for their generous support of our Emergency Relief initiatives.
- **Little Beavers Pre-School** – who generously raised funds through a mango drive, donating the proceeds to purchase 50 Christmas hampers, along with **Stash House** and **Whaft St Gourmet Meats** providing vouchers, bringing joy and support to community members experiencing hardship during the Christmas period.
- **Quota International**, Forster – for providing home-cooked soups to support community members throughout the winter months.

Together, these contributions demonstrate the strength of our community and the difference we can make when we come together to support those experiencing difficult times.

In the 2025-2026 financial year, we provided 749 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 can 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. Last year, our volunteers provided information, advice and referral support to 3087 members of the community.

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.

In 2025-2026, Forster Neighbourhood Centre acted as a WDO sponsor. FNC's role was to interview potential participants in the WDO program and then assist them in accessing activities that will help them to repay their fines.
In 2025-2026, FNC supported to pay off their fines at the value of $13K.

Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) program helps pay current residential electricity or gas bills if you're in short-term financial hardship, crisis or emergency. FNC helps assess eligibility for EAPA vouchers. This assistance includes collating documents, form filling, and uploading information to the EAPA portal. In 2024/2025, FNC hub processed 287 applications and provided $38,362 in EAPA support.

Financial Wellbeing

Financial Well Being Hub commenced operation October 2025 and really kicked off in the new year. To date we have assisted:
149 clients who have attended 858 sessions
83 Clients with Emergency Relief vouchers to the value of $12,060
32 Clients assisted with Emergency Relief debt to the value of $17,819.25
A total of 320 Financial Counselling sessions have been attended from 1/1/2026 – 30/6/2026
A total of 328 Financial Capability sessions have been attended 1/1/2026 – 30/6/2026
A total of 112 Emergency Relief sessions have been attended 1/1/2026 – 30/6/2026
A total of 9 Community events were held between 1/1/2026 – 30/6/2026

Client Story

Client presented in financial hardship, homeless, family breakdown, he was unable to work due to an accident outside the workplace. He was in financial hardship and homeless due to the loss of employment.
We have been able to work with the client and Fair Work to look at loss of wages. We were able to engage in further training to develop new skills to work in a new industry. He has expressed that he has made connections with others and feels he has purpose and inclusion. He has been able to secure housing which has allowed him to reconnect with his child. Long term he is now able to meet his financial needs and sees that there are more opportunities that will present themselves moving forward.

Client was referred to the financial wellbeing hub, after she applied for another service with the center and wasn't eligible due to the item not meeting the program criteria.
The client's rental property had recently been sold, and the client was fortunate to be offered a long-term lease with social housing.
The client was receiving the Disability Support Pension and associated costs with moving and downsizing had really stretched the clients' budget to the maximum and she had no way of paying for the removalist costs or managing the move herself due to not having her own vehicle or license.
Through the Financial wellbeing Hub, Emergency Relief, funded the full cost of the removalist, this was a great outcome for the client, and didn't put her in any additional financial stress, and made the move much more manageable.



No Interest Loans (NILS)

A total of 217 Loans were disbursed for the year to the value of $274,380, with the average Loan amount being $1264.
40% of applicants are individuals living alone, and 29% of loans disbursed were for vehicle registrations.
59% of clients are 45+ or older.
Throughout the last 12 months a total of 289 loans have been paid off in full.
Client Story
A young mum contacted us in despair; she had her fridge blow up over the weekend and lost all her food for the week. We were able to assist her with her application for a Nils loan and manage to negotiate free delivery for her and get her Nils loan assessed within 24 hours so she could have her new fridge within a couple of days. We also assisted her with a referral through to the Financial Wellbeing Hub whereby they helped her with budgeting for the future and a grocery voucher to fill her fridge, she said "thank you for helping with my situation, I don't know what I would have done if I couldn't get a Nils loan, there is no way I could afford to pay up front that amount of money for a new fridge, you have really made our life a little easier this week, thanks again".

Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Great Lakes

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our community is an important part of the FNC's work. In 2025/2026, staff and volunteers completed Mental Health First Aid training and Black Dog Recognise and respond certification, strengthening our team's knowledge, skills and confidence to respond appropriately to mental health presentations. The FNC recognises this training as an integral step in ensuring our staff and volunteers are equipped to provide safe, compassionate and trauma-informed support to community members accessing the FNC Hub. This investment in our team reflects our ongoing commitment to building a skilled, informed and responsive workforce that is better equipped to support our community.

In July 2025, FNC Hub was invited by the Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network to present on local mental health challenges at a stakeholder forum. The meeting aimed to explore the establishment of a localized Mental Health Hub, modelled after the successful Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub in Charlestown. A consensus among key stakeholders concluded that the most effective approach would be to invest in expanding the capacity of FNC Hub as our region's central community hub. This strategy allows FNC Hub to integrate tailored elements of the Evolve framework to best serve our community's unique needs.

FNC Hub formalized the initiative through collaboration agreements with Evolve Charlestown, Kahi Simon Foundation and Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network. This strategic partnership is designed to strengthen our organizational capacity and significantly increase access to mental health services for community members experiencing mental health challenges.

Thanks to the generosity of the **Kahi Simon Foundation**, the FNC Hub has been transformed with new indoor and outdoor spaces. The internal wellbeing room ' Marrung Gagil' and offers a warm, relaxing, and comfortable environment for clients accessing mental health support. Just outside, ' Kahi's Space' offers a outdoor area where community members can enjoy a safe, welcoming area to sit back and take a moment for themselves.

FNC Hub appointed two Client Support Officers in July 2026. Operating directly from our central community hub, these officers provide a critical physical presence at reception to assist clients navigate complex crises and mental health concerns. Through dedicated advocacy and frontline support, they ensure vulnerable community members are effectively connected to the care they require.

The Evolve Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub officially launched its brand-new Great Lakes Regional site on 28 July 2026. The event successfully engaged local residents, partners, and service providers, establishing a collaborative foundation for the new facility. The Launch involved hearing from our community leaders about the Evolve Hub and why it is so important for the Great Lakes community; wellbeing activities and resources hosted by a range of community services; BBQ lunch and coffee.

Flourish Australia – Mental Health Support

Flourish Australia is an important part of the FNC Evolve Mental Health Hub, providing accessible mental health and emotional wellbeing support in a familiar community setting. Their service helps people access support early, build wellbeing and connect with other services and community supports.

Social Futures – Care Connect

Care Connect provides a safe and confidential point of support for people experiencing emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or following a suicide attempt. The service also provides guidance and support to family and friends, helping them understand how best to support their loved ones. Their presence strengthens the FNC Evolve Mental Health Hub by providing early support, connection, and pathways to appropriate services.
Together, Flourish Australia and Care Connect strengthen the FNC Evolve Mental Health Hub's ability to provide accessible, early and person-centred mental health support, while creating stronger connections between individuals, specialist services and the broader community.



Child and Family Support

The Child and Family Support and Counselling Service is funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice under the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) 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 2025-2026, we provided the following services:

- 792 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 62 vulnerable families
- 2247 support instances (structured support and skill development in the home) to 146 individuals requesting support
- 93 Counselling sessions (emotional support for individuals) for 26 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, Steven McWilliams and Kristy Walsh with over 20 years combined experience supporting families to achieve their goals.

Real Futures delivers the Parent Pathways Program out of the FNC Hub. Parent Pathways is a free, voluntary Australian Government program providing personal, study, and work mentoring for parents and carers with a child under 6 who are not in paid employment. Real Futures mentors will help set and achieve carer and family personal, study and work goals through tailored goal planning. Real Futures saw an increase in family participation in the last financial year. To respond to the increase and ensure families and carers receive support, Real Futures increased their days at Forster Neighbourhood Centre from one day a week to two days a week.



Social Connection

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.

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 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 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.

In January 2026, Forster Neighbourhood Centre signed a collaboration agreement with ETC to bring the community garden back to life. ETC have received funding and workers needed to get the community garden's construction underway through the 'Work the Dole Project'. The Project will develop and upgrade a functioning hub designed to support community use which promotes garden activities, meetings, and shared access for local groups. The hub includes disability accessible toilet, kitchenette, and dedicated storage for tools and equipment!

There is continued 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.

The Womens Shed

Forster Tuncurry Womens Shed is an inclusive community activity run every second Wednesday through school term at Forster Civic Centre. The Women's Shed's purpose is to be an inclusive space for individuals in the community who might have minimal social supports and want to increase social participation. The Shed is 100% run by volunteers who run activities such as arts, crafts and jewelry making. The Womens Shed has grown in popularity in the last year and receive approximately 30 community members each activity.

Volunteer Week Celebration

FNC's volunteers and FNC team celebrated volunteer week by celebrating at the Blackhead Bowling Club, where lunch was provided, and engaged in bare foot bowling. Our Front Desk Volunteers staffed our Community Centre across 48 weeks, creating more than 200 social participation opportunities. FNC's volunteers received certificates for their volunteering effort



Mens Group

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 Men's 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.
Mens Group ran 34 sessions with over 300 opportunities for men to connect.

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:

Baraya Wakulda

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 held 20 sessions creating over 500 opportunities for social connection and learning.

Forster Farmers Market

The Forster Neighbourhood Centre has auspiced the Farmers Market since 2008. Over the years it has had so many awesome varieties of stalls. Fresh produce, cheese, pork and so much more.
A lot of the current stallholders have been with the market for many years.

The Market also engages with Community Groups who want to have a stall for Information, referral and Fundraising and get no fee charged for stall site.
This financial Year the monthly stall fee total ranged mostly over $500.00.

Cultural Activities

Better Learning Better Communities (BLBC)

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, BLBC tutors held 30 Education and Skills sessions for local Aboriginal primary school aged children, creating 434 learning opportunities for participants.



Gathang Language Classes

In response to Aboriginal students Personal Learning Plans at Great Lakes College Forster Campus, Kitana has been delivering Gathang Language classes twice a week as the students have expressed interest in learning their Language.

Learning your Language is important to the growth and continuation of said Language. We're excited and privileged to play a small role in supporting Gathang Language classes moving forward.

Murrook Culture Centre Excursion

In March, a group of 30 people from the Warrimay community travelled down to Murrook Culture Centre in the Port Stephens area. This group combined children, young people, and adults. The aim of the day was a cultural immersive experience through various workshops such as art, a bushtucker walk, artefacts and traditional tools, boomerang throwing, yarning circles, and a sand dune tour including cultural stories.











Community Culture Days

Throughout the year, Kitana and Tanisha worked collaboratively to organise and facilitate day events for our First Nations community to come together and celebrate Aboriginal culture through workshops such as Weaving, Art, Language (Gathang), tool making, and yarning circles. With anywhere between 40-60 people in attendance, these events are full of community spirit and various cultural knowledge holders available to share what they have learned, passing down traditions.









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 2025.

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.



Pictured above: Aunty Janice Paulson, Aunty Deborah Morris, Aunty Noelene Lever. Big Sing 2025.

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 80 attendees on the Cultural Cruise and a further 20 community members at Coomba Park to greet us to share a barbecue and bush tucker inspired sweets. Attendees had the privilege of listening to stories from Worimi Elders Aunty Donna Hall and Aunty Loma Paulson.









NAIDOC WEEK 2026

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.

In 2026, Forster Neighbourhood Centre hosted morning tea for community in Kahi's Space at the Neighbourhood Centre after the flag raising at the Forster Police Station.









Reconciliation Week Event

Forster Neighbourhood Centre is committed to reconciliation between all Australians.

In 2026 Forster Neighbourhood Centre held a Reconciliation Week event at the Forster Civic Centre 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. This event included a performance by Baraya Wakulda, who sing in both Gathang and English

Hub Partners

The Forster Neighbourhood Centre continues to be an important community hub, providing a welcoming and familiar place where local people can connect with a range of visiting support services.

Throughout the year, the FNC was proud to host 10 external services and organisations, supporting our community across areas including housing, financial and government services, family support, disability, employment, legal assistance, domestic and family violence, mental health and wellbeing, and social support.

Having these services available at the Centre helps make it easier for people to access the support they need, particularly for those who may find it difficult to travel to appointments or navigate different services on their own.

Building strong relationships with visiting services also means we can better connect people with the right support. Through regular referrals, information sharing and collaboration, we are able to help community members access the assistance they need, close to home and in a place they know and feel comfortable in.

Services Available at the FNC:

- Baayali – Supports women experiencing or at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence, with a regular Thursday service from 9am – 12noon.
- Centrelink / Services Australia – Provides Centrelink support, information and assistance with government payments and services fortnightly on Thursdays from 10am – 12noon.
- Flourish Australia – Provides individual mental and emotional wellbeing support to help people strengthen their wellbeing and connect with appropriate services, every third Wednesday from 9am – 2pm.
- Home in Place – Provides affordable housing solutions, housing information and support to people seeking secure and sustainable housing, fortnightly on Wednesdays from 9am – 12noon.
- Legal Aid NSW – Provides legal information, advice and support across a range of legal matters on the fourth Wednesday of each month, by appointment.
- NDIS – Uniting – Provides information, guidance and support to people navigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with a monthly service.
- Parent Pathways – Supports parents and carers of children aged 0–6 years, providing practical assistance, guidance, connections to services and pathways to education, training and employment, every Monday and Tuesday from 9am – 4pm.
- Real Futures – Provides culturally appropriate employment support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, assisting clients to identify employment goals, develop skills, access training and education, prepare for work and connect with local employment opportunities. The service is available fortnightly from 9am – 12noon.
- Social Futures – Care Connect – Provides free, confidential suicide prevention and emotional wellbeing support, helping people experiencing distress or thoughts of suicide to access appropriate support and strengthen their connections with community and services, every Monday from 9am – 4pm.
- WDVCAS – Provides specialist support and assistance for people experiencing domestic and family violence, including information, advocacy, referrals and support to improve safety and access appropriate services, with a weekly Friday service from 9am – 12noon.

Supporting Access to Essential Services

Providing a range of trusted services regularly available at the FNC creates a valuable connection point for our community.

For many people, knowing they can come into a familiar and welcoming space to speak with someone they trust can make a real difference. It can also make accessing support feel a little less overwhelming.

Our visiting services operate across the week, with weekly, fortnightly and monthly appointments available. This gives community members ongoing opportunities to connect with the service that best meets their needs.

Building Stronger Community Connections

FNC is more than just a place for services to meet with clients. We also provide an opportunity for organisations to build relationships, share information, make referrals, and work together to better support our community.

Having a number of services working from the Centre means we can often connect people with additional support when they need it. It also helps strengthen the relationships between local organisations and creates a stronger network of support for our community.
We are grateful to all of our visiting services and organisations for the time, knowledge and support they bring to the FNC.

Their continued presence at the Centre is an important part of what makes the Forster Neighbourhood Centre a welcoming and connected community hub – helping people find the right support, when they need it, and close to home.

Team Appreciation – it takes a village!

Our ability to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive place for everyone in our Great Lakes community is made possible by the amazing contribution of our volunteers, staff, partners and community.

Every person plays an important role, from our volunteers who generously give their time, to the staff who keep the Centre running each day, and the organisations and services who share their knowledge, skills and support, it really is a team effort.
Together, we connect people with essential services, create opportunities, respond to the changing needs of our community and, most importantly, help people feel supported and connected.

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Forster Neighbourhood Centre throughout the year. Every conversation, every hour volunteered, every service delivered and every small act of kindness makes a difference.
We are incredibly proud of what we can achieve together and the difference we can make in our community- because it truly takes a village!

Media Releases

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

Forster Fortnightly · Advocate · PRIME7 NEWS · NBN NEWS

Community Hub to re-open on Mondays!

By Corinne Stephenson - Forster Neighbourhood Centre



Last November, Forster Neighbourhood Centre was forced to close its doors on Mondays due to a lack of government funding. After two years of advocacy, the community hub made the difficult decision to reduce its days of operation.

At the Great Lakes community so often does, we set about how we could solve our own problem. As part of Neighbourhood Centre Week in May, we launched our 'one cup of coffee per month' campaign where we aimed to have 3500 community members sign up for at least a $5/month donation to help us get the support we needed to re-open on Mondays.

Through the support of our wonderful community and some larger donations from Club Forster, Forster Bowling Club, Forster/Tuncurry Historical Auto Club and philanthropic sponsors we have raised enough funds to re-open our central Community Hub on Monday 11 August, 2025. In response to our request for help, community support has been wonderful, and we thank everyone who has contributed.

The funds raised will go directly towards:

- A new Client Services Coordinator (15 hours/week) to support the Community Hub
- An ongoing social work student placement, for 3 days per week to be available to support clients presenting in crisis

In a further development, we are excited to announce that we will shortly be providing an extended range of financial well-being services to better support the community. Watch this space!

We appreciate and value the fantastic support we have had to date from the community, and ask that you continue to assist us to keep the doors open and the light on! Donations can be made through our website at fnc.org.au/donate or by dropping into the centre.





Community Bush Regen at the Community Garden

Forster Community Garden, led by Wurrol Dawn and Forster Neighbourhood Centre, is planning a revival, and you're invited to join us as we get re-started, with some bush regeneration works around the site on Pacington Creek.

- Hear about the plans for a revitalised Forster Community Garden
- Pick up some tips for plant ID and environmental weed management
- Take up wattle and help remove some weeds from Pacington Creek
- Join us for a sausage sizzle and local conversation over native food plants in the ground

Please RSVP - light refreshments provided.



Bring clothing suitable for a outdoor work including a hat and enclosed shoes
Children require parent or guardian supervision at all times.

Contact: Jodi 0401 992 535

Come join a 'Club Sing' for Forster Neighbourhood Centre

Forster Neighbourhood Centre





Tickets just $15 - on sale now at https://www.therocky.com.au/memberships/fnc-club-sing-tickets

Tickets are also available at the door from 4:30pm on 15 October at the The Rocky in Pacific Palms.

Voices unite for Reconciliation Week



Forster Neighbourhood Centre

Join community regen at Forster Community Garden



By Jodi Dunn - Karuah & Great Lakes Landcare

Friday 29th May 2026 8.30am-11.30am, Forster Community Garden – end of West St, Forster

"Baraya Djukal Garuwaga" Big Sing by the Sea 2025







Kahi Simon Suicide Prevention Fundraiser supports Forster





Forster Neighbourhood Centre

Permanent site donated for new 'Great Lakes Regional Hub'

Forster Neighbourhood Centre

Finally! A "forever home" for Forster Neighbourhood Centre and a New Hub to radically expand services to Great Lakes residents.

Forster Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) has supported the well-being of Great Lakes residents for over 40 years, walking alongside the community while advocating strongly to every level of government for much-needed additional services to be based in Forster/Tuncurry and that they be accessible across the district.

In an area devastated by natural disasters including multiple fires and floods, FNC has known that the fallout for the community would be extreme, ongoing and demanding a strong response. So, after years of planning, advocacy and lobbying, we are thrilled to announce that benefactors who share our values and our vision, have secured for FNC a site in Forster for a "forever home". That concept, due to demand has now expanded to encompass a multi-purpose Community Hub. This is only possible through the belief and generosity of a family residing locally, motivated to share God's love with everyone in the most effective and practical ways, purchasing two adjoining properties on which we plan to build our Neighbourhood Centre, expanded to incorporate a Mental Health/

Community Hub. This future resource will offer many other services and opportunities for the community's benefit for years to come.

What started over 5 years ago as a project to find a forever home for the Neighbourhood Centre has now expanded into a realistic ambition to become a Great Lakes Regional Hub, offering many new services and serving new purposes. Until the new hub is built, which will of course take some years, FNC will use the purchased properties as temporary office space to offer expanded hub services.

The Great Lakes Regional Hub concept is based on the one-stop shop model, offering clients the respect and dignity of wrap around support and removing the need for them to repeat their story again and again to different services. Building on FNC's trusted relationship with the community as a "safe pair of hands", the hub will greatly improve outcomes for clients, especially those with complex and overlapping needs. This connection has come to our community through the strong advocacy of the Kahi Simon Fund and Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network for better access to services in our community.

Kirstie Stephenson, Executive Officer, Forster Neighbourhood Centre says: "We are a community that solves its own problems. After years of advocacy, it was a local family who stepped in to invest in the wellbeing of our Great Lakes Region.

For far too long, our most vulnerable community members have had to travel to Taree, Port Macquarie or Newcastle to access essential services that they are entitled to, and that should be available locally.

We look forward to working with the whole community to deliver this essential project which will benefit so many – watch this space!"

Make no mistake, the purchase of this property is an absolute game changer for our community, providing the foundations to design an open and inclusive space where everyone feels welcome and safe, able to seek support, to volunteer or simply to connect with others.

The new Hub will host financial wellbeing, emergency relief, mental health support, child and family support, space for community groups, education facilities, cultural learning spaces plus other functions that may emerge as part of a community consultation to be undertaken in the coming months.

We will be asking the community to work with us to design this space and ensure it will be fit for the future. Forster Neighbourhood Centre will lead the project from concept through to construction.



FNC Manager Corinne Stephenson stand front right) outside the new site with staff and volunteers.



The new Great Lakes Regional Hub will be centrally located across 28 Wallis Street and 24 West Street.

Media Releases





Suicide Prevention Fundraiser

6:11pm on Saturday 30 May

NEX (Newcastle Exhibition & Convention Centre)

Join us for a special Fundraiser Evening supporting the Kahi Simon Fund – a night of connection, purpose, and community.

The evening will feature guest speakers, live and silent auctions, raffles, and music, all coming together to raise awareness and support for mental health and suicide prevention in Forster.

Tickets can be purchased through Humanitix at:

Who's in the Hub?

THIS WEEK:

FLOURISH AUSTRALIA
WEDNESDAY 15TH APRIL
9AM - 1PM

FLOURISH AUSTRALIA IS A COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE AND REGISTERED NDIS PROVIDER THAT HELPS PEOPLE WITH A LIVED EXPERIENCE FEEL SUPPORTED AND MEET THEIR EVERYDAY CHALLENGES.

HOME IN PLACE
WEDNESDAY 15TH APRIL
9:30AM - 12PM

HOME IN PLACE IS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS, WITH OVER 35 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE MANAGING SOCIAL, AFFORDABLE, AND SPECIALIST DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION (SDA)

CENTRELINK
THURSDAY 16TH APRIL
9AM - 12:30PM

OUR PURPOSE IS TO SUPPORT AUSTRALIANS BY EFFICIENTLY DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE SERVICES AND PAYMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

REAL FUTURES
THURSDAY 16TH APRIL
9AM - 12:30PM

AT REAL FUTURES WE STRIVE TO BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH JOB READINESS TRAINING, SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT.

Reconciliation Week acknowledged at Forster Civic Centre







ClubGRANTS 2026 - Investing in our community's future



Forster Neighbourhood "Club Sing"





Forster Neighbourhood Centre Positions Vacant!
JOIN OUR NEW FINANCIAL WELLBEING HUB TEAM!

Forster Neighbourhood Centre currently has two positions vacant to support the new Multicast Financial Wellbeing Hub. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are strongly encouraged. We pride ourselves on being a good place to work with a great team environment where everyone contributes to service improvements. Job share and flexible working arrangements are available for the right candidate. If you do not meet all the essential criteria but are really keen to be part of our amazing team, please get in touch in your cover letter how you plan to meet the criteria over time. Both roles are based at our central community hub at 3 Lake Street, Forster.

We are looking for quick commencements as close to 1 October 2025 as possible.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE AND CAPABILITY OFFICER

We are seeking a Financial Resilience and Capability Officer to join our Financial Wellbeing team. The role offers a permanent part time, 4 days per week (30 hours) under the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award Level 3. This is a front line role, we are looking for a dynamic self-starter to support tailored financial assistance for vulnerable community members.

Essential Criteria

1. Certificate III in Community Services and or equivalent
2. Strong financial management skills, especially with budgeting and debt management
3. Demonstrated strong people communication skills to identify client needs
4. Demonstrated ability to work well within a small team, manage own schedule & organise work
5. Class C Driver's Licence
6. Ability to provide a Working with Children's Clearance and Criminal History Clearance
7. Ability to work autonomously across outreach locations
8. Attention to detail, accuracy and follow through

Desirable Criteria

1. Knowledge of community based, not for profit organisations
2. Specific qualifications or certificates in financial counselling
3. Knowledge of local issues and services

NO INTEREST LOANS OFFICER

We are seeking a No Interest Loans Officer to join our SEE team. This role offers a permanent part time, 4 days per week (30 hours) under the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award Level 3.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

Essential Criteria

1. Qualifications in Community Services and/or Financial Administration
2. Fundraising experience
3. Strong IT skills, especially with spread sheets and data entry
4. Demonstrated good people communication skills
5. Time management and organisational skills
6. Demonstrated ability to work well within a small team
7. Class C Driver's Licence
8. Willingness to provide a Working with Children's Clearance & Criminal History Clearance
9. Some knowledge of household budgeting
10. Attention to detail, accuracy and follow through

Desirable Criteria

1. Knowledge of community based, not for profit organisations
2. Knowledge of local referral pathways and service networks
3. Knowledge of local issues and services

So, if you like helping your community, are good with people, and you would like to work with a fantastic group of people who will train and mentor you, we would love to see your application. In your application, please include a current resume and a COVER LETTER which addresses the Selection Criteria for the role you are most interested in.

Address your application to Corinne Stephenson, Manager, FNC via corinne@fnc.org.au. Closing date: Friday 12 September 2025

3 Lake Street, Forster NSW 2428 PO Box 314 FORSTER NSW 2428 P:02 6555 4351 E:corinne@fnc.org.au ABN 24210213607



Beaver Novello Moss

Financial Report (Extract)

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
ABN 24 282 113 607
For the year ended 30 June 2026

Prepared by Beaver Novello Moss Pty Ltd

Profit and Loss

Forster Neighbourhood Centre Inc.
For the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026	2025
Income from Operations		
FUNDING - Major Programs		
CCCS TEI (DCJ)	165,935	159,218
DSS - FWH	310,000	-
TS TEI (DCJ)	155,334	151,167
MH Hub	69,229	-
NILS (Fair Trading)	120,066	112,807
NILS Good Shepherd (DSS)	43,366	44,208
Total FUNDING - Major Programs	**863,930**	**467,420**
Generated Income & non tied income		
Donation Income - untied	45,486	37,408
Farmers Market - Operating Income	5,600	4,725
Income Other - Untied	34,595	53,087
Total Generated Income & non tied income	**85,681**	**95,220**
Income, Grants and Donations - Other		
Grants - Other	30,000	10,000
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal Grant	-	13,854
Regional Youth Holiday Break Grant - Winter Spring 2024	-	14,000
SCCF Project R5 Grant	45,000	42,033
Sunshine 2428 Income	3,606	-
Total Income, Grants and Donations - Other	**78,606**	**79,887**
Miscellaneous Income		
Bank Interest Admin Account	8,527	10,572
Total Miscellaneous Income	**8,527**	**10,572**
Other Income		
Grant Administration Revenue	225,989	-
Total Other Income	**225,989**	**-**
Total Income from Operations	**1,262,733**	**653,099**
Operating Expenditure		
People Costs		
Staff - Insurance Workers Compensation	10,751	23,476
Staff - Salaries & Wages	589,269	412,793
Staff - Superannuation	74,715	46,160
Staff - Training, development and Supervision	27,740	3,808
Wage Provision	15,926	(7,515)
Total People Costs	**718,421**	**483,722**
Office Expenses		
Accounting Expenses and Audit Fees	4,300	4,100
Advertising and promotion Exp	2,052	1,350

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

	2026	2025
Bookkeeping Expenses	299	2,283
IT - Computer Hardware and software purchases	18,649	3,529
IT - Support, internet, web maintenance etc	746	816
Motor Vehicle running - ALL expenses	8,301	6,538
Office Expenses - Consumables & amenities	2,420	1,638
Office Expenses - Telephone, Internet, Security & Fax	6,771	5,348
Office Expenses - Cleaning	2,875	3,700
Office Expenses - New Computer Purchases	9,167	-
Office Expenses - Printing, copying, stationery, postage, etc	8,778	4,473
Property - Rental Lake St	11,884	16,539
Property - Repairs & Maintenance Lake St	14,923	571
Total Office Expenses	**91,364**	**50,884**
Administration Other		
Insurances - Other; Pub liably; Directors, Contents etc	8,207	5,786
Memberships Peak and Sector Bodies	1,022	200
Committee, volunteer and meeting expenses	6,136	543
Bank fees and charges	-	17
Contractors Expenses - Other	520	13,000
Total Administration Other	**15,885**	**19,547**
Program Expenses		
FACS Program Expenses		
Community Connections, Centre & Support (CCCS) OCJ TEI program expenses	23,610	16,461
Total FACS Program Expenses	**23,610**	**16,461**
Total Program Expenses	**23,610**	**16,461**
Program Expenses - First Feet	-	17,000
Program Expenses - other	34,920	43,257
FWH Program Expenses	33,630	-
Sunshine 2428	1,501	-
Programs Administration Fees	225,989	-
FWH ER	29,491	-
MH Program Expenses	360	-
Staff - Long Service Levy	6,145	-
Total Operating Expenditure	**1,181,317**	**630,870**
Current Year Profit from Operations	**81,416**	**22,229**
Abnormal Income		
Lake Street Office Insurance Claim		
3 Lake Street Forster Funding	14,112	-
3 Lake Street Forster Expenditure	(17,344)	-
Total Lake Street Office Insurance Claim	**(3,231)**	-
New Motor Vehicle		
Donation New Motor Vehicle	-	45,000

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

	2026	2025
Motor Vehicle Purchase		(48,485)
Total New Motor Vehicle	-	(3,485)
Total Abnormal Income	(3,231)	(3,485)
Abnormal Expenditure		
Operating Expenses	40,000	
Total Abnormal Expenditure	40,000	-
Current Year Profit inc Abnormal Income	38,184	18,744

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 2026

	NOTES	30 JUNE 2026	30 JUNE 2025
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash & Cash Equivalents			
Debit Card Main A/C		4,157	4,325
Reserve Account #5461		108,180	107,417
Main Account		160,604	81,766
Term Deposit #1059		163,487	157,350
Term Deposit #2084		53,727	52,099
Minimbah Elders		1,620	2,987
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents		**491,774**	**405,947**
Receivables			
Trade debtors		1,769	1,706
Total Receivables		**1,769**	**1,706**
NILS Loan Program		212,777	264,480
Total Current Assets		**706,320**	**672,133**
Total Assets		**706,320**	**672,133**
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Payables			
Provision for Accounting and Audit Fee		3,300	3,300
Employee entitlements		43,790	28,311
Payg Tax from wages		10,822	3,708
Grants in Advance		74,200	69,500
Superannuation payable		23,538	8,148
Wages Payable		206	-
Trade creditors		35,882	24,430
Total Payables		**141,738**	**137,398**
Taxation			
GST		4,640	1,722
Total Taxation		**4,640**	**1,722**
Financial Liabilities			
NILS Account		212,909	264,612
Total Financial Liabilities		**212,909**	**264,612**
Total Current Liabilities		**359,287**	**403,731**
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 2026	30 JUNE 2025
Non-Current Employee Entitlements		2,109	1,662
Total Other Non-Current Liabilities		**2,109**	**1,662**
Total Non-Current Liabilities		**2,109**	**1,662**
Total Liabilities		**361,396**	**405,393**
Net Assets		**344,924**	**266,740**
Equity			
Reserves			
Operating Expenses Reserve		40,000	-
Total Reserves		**40,000**	-
Retained Profits / Accumulated Losses			
Current Year Earnings		38,184	18,744
Retained Earnings at End of Prior Year		266,740	247,996
Total Retained Profits / Accumulated Losses		**304,924**	**266,740**
Total Equity		**344,924**	**266,740**

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







A project guided by Tjnaya Simon and Kitana Paulson at FNC for young Artists to create an Art piece for a local football club.
Artists: Allegra Caldwell, Byran Nixon, Jahlara King, Jerramye Bolt and Karlee Simon.

FORSTER NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Forster Neighbourhood Centre contact details:

3 Lake Street Forster NSW 2428
PO Box 314 FORSTER NSW 2428
Telephone: 02 6555 4351
Email: admin@fnc.org.au