

We care about our **community**





About us

Since 1979, Mallee Family Care has been at the heart of our region, delivering vital child and family services across north-west Victoria, south-west New South Wales and Far West New South Wales.

We empower children, families and individuals to not just cope, but to thrive, offering programs shaped around the unique strengths and needs of the people we serve.

We believe strong communities are those where no one is left behind. That's why we're working every day to ensure people experiencing disadvantage are supported, and opportunities are open to all, right across the Mallee.

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people. They have never ceded sovereignty, and remain strong in their enduring connection to land, water and culture.

Inclusion statement

We are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. Everyone is welcome and supported to access our services, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexuality.



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A message from our Chair and CEO

Every year, this report gives us a chance to pause and reflect on what we've achieved together. This edition shares just some of the stories about our work in 2025-26. There are many more we couldn't fit in these pages, and we're proud of them all.

They all speak to why we care. We care about our vision for communities where individuals and families can live their best life. We want everyone in our community, whatever their background, to feel optimistic about their future, to understand their rights, to be able to navigate life's challenges, and to have a genuine voice in shaping the change that affects them.

We supported our community in different ways this year. For separated parents expecting a baby, it meant delivering Navigating New Beginnings, a pilot program that closes a real gap in family law support during pregnancy and a child's early months. For young people across our region, it meant 25 more scholarships through our Chances for Children Foundation, helping them pursue their education and talents. For people who've experienced homelessness, it meant re-establishing our Southern Mallee Homelessness Focus Group, giving them a genuine voice in shaping better housing for our region.

This year marks 30 years of our Community Legal Centre. What began in 1996 as the Murray Mallee Community Legal Service has grown into a service that has stood beside our community through three decades. Along the way, the service established a Family Violence Legal Unit, a Victims Legal Service, and was the first in Mildura to deliver openly advertised legal education for the LGBTIQ+ community. You'll find more highlights from across the 30 years on pages 10 to 13.

Reconciliation remained a priority for us in 2025-26. Having had our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) endorsed in 2024, we submitted our Innovate RAP draft, moving from reflection into organisation-wide action.

Looking ahead, we're working towards Rainbow Tick accreditation to strengthen how we support LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusion across our services.

Thank you to our dedicated staff, Board, partners and donors who are committed to ensuring everyone in our community has the services and supports they need, when and where they need them.

Strong communities where people can live their best life take time, commitment and genuine care for one another. It's a privilege to play our part in making that happen.



Teresa Jayet
Chief Executive Officer
MBA, Grad.Dip.FDR, BSW, Dip.Fin. Couns, B.Ed.



Ross Lake OAM
Chair
Bachelor of Law, Bachelor of Economics, Diploma of Education



How we cared in 2025-26.

Our vision

Strong communities where individuals and families can live their best life.

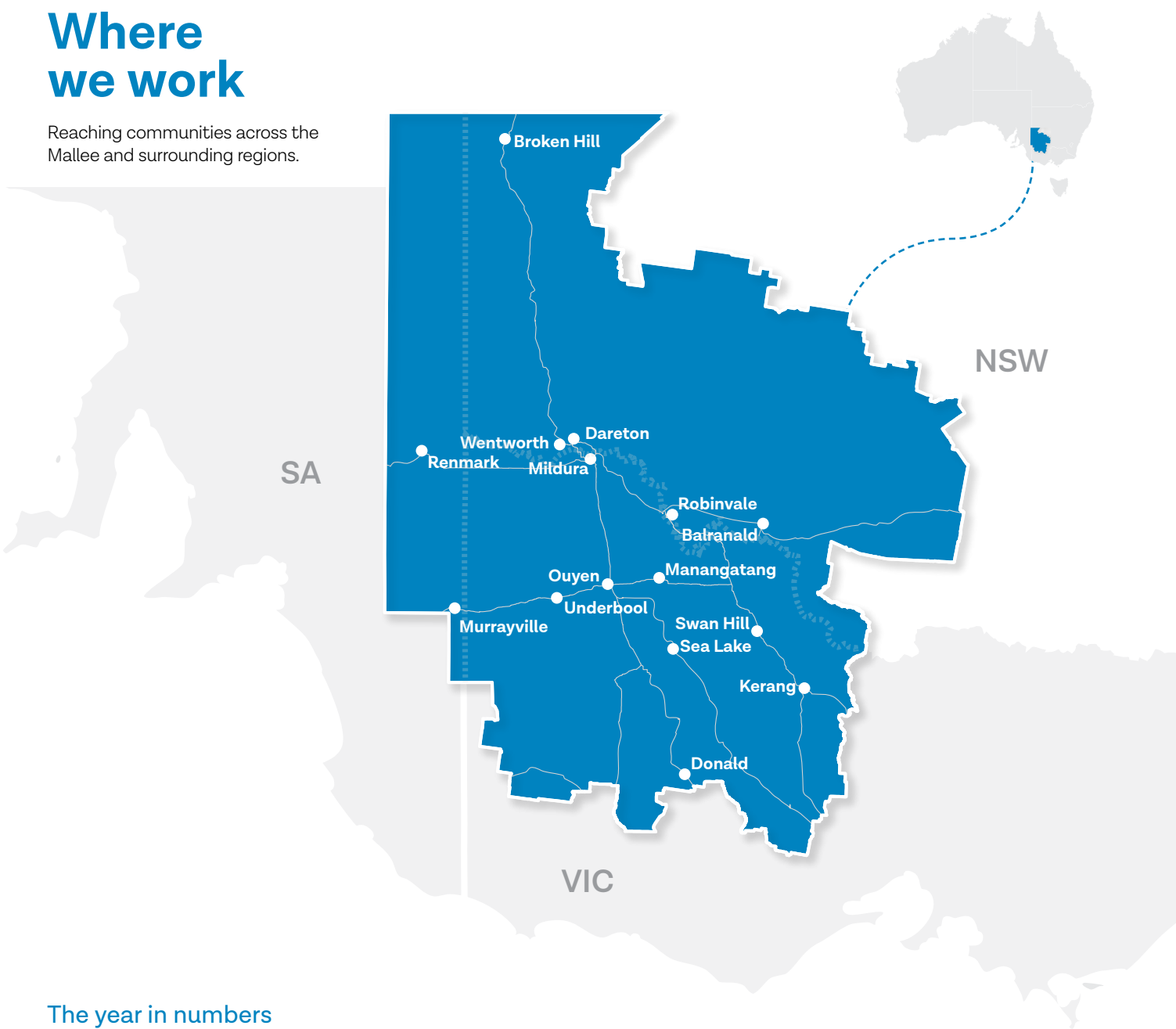
Our five strategic priorities

Everything we do is guided by five priorities.

-  **Drive change around known inequities**
-  **Empower individuals, families and communities to seek help early**
-  **Focus on children, families and individuals early, and build their capacity to transition through the key stages of life**
-  **Build an organisation that reflects the diversity, intersectionality and lived experience of our community**
-  **Increase our service capacity and innovative models to address current and evolving community needs**

Where we work

Reaching communities across the Mallee and surrounding regions.



The year in numbers



We care about fairness and equity.

Here’s how we drove change around known inequities in 2025-26.



A story told through art

To mark the beginning of National Reconciliation Week in May 2026, we launched a bespoke artwork created by Barkindji artist Channy Mitchell. Raised in Mildura, Channy drew on the Country, rivers, and communities of the Mallee region to create a piece that tells a story of belonging, shared learning, and commitment to reconciliation.

“The flowing blue waterways throughout the artwork represent the Murray and Darling Rivers, the lifeblood of the region, carrying stories, culture, and connection across generations. These moving pathways also symbolise Mallee Family Care’s ongoing Reconciliation journey: a journey of listening, learning, and walking together in meaningful partnership with Aboriginal communities.”

The meeting circles woven through the artwork represent the communities, families, and individuals we support. Places of gathering, yarning, and care, where each circle is connected by pathways. This reflects the belief that when we walk together, we create stronger futures for children, families, and generations to come.

For Channy, the work is deeply personal. Her pop was her greatest influence and the inspiration behind her first ever painting. After he died, every piece she creates honours the stories and wisdom he shared with her.

Channy’s artwork features in our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), across our digital platforms, and throughout our organisational spaces.



Our reconciliation journey

Reconciliation isn’t a destination. It’s a commitment that we renew every day, and in 2025-26, we took meaningful steps forward.

RAPs progress through four stages: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, and Elevate. Each stage needs endorsement from Reconciliation Australia before progressing. In 2025-26, we submitted our Innovate RAP draft, having had our Reflect RAP endorsed in 2024. This marks our second step in that journey, and a shift from reflection to organisation-wide action.



This year we also:

- Delivered a Cultural Immersion experience at Mungo National Park, led by NSW Parks and Wildlife rangers and open to all Mallee Family Care staff
- Participated in National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day, and Ochre Ribbon Week, alongside local and regional events
- Progressed consultation on a Cultural Safety Framework that includes a Cultural Safety Policy, Cultural Safety Plan, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy
- Had ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and communities including participation in RAP networks, learning circles, and reconciliation forums
- Developed a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement Protocol
- Launched online learning modules in cultural safety and trauma-informed practice



“As a descendant of Ngyiampaa tribe, it was good to be on Country today since being a teenager. It was good to embrace and experience where my ancestors once walked the land thousands and thousands of years ago. It makes me feel proud of my bloodline and who I am today.”

Irene Vehekite, Senior Child and Family Services Worker shared this reflection during our Cultural Immersion experience at Mungo

Celebrating 30 years 1996–2026

In 2026, we're celebrating 30 years of our Community Legal Centre. Here are some highlights throughout the years.

1995

Funding for a new community legal service was announced by Attorney General Michael Lavarch.



1997

The service became part of the Duty Solicitor Roster at Swan Hill Court and welcomed new staff, Kim Avers as Education Officer and Fiona MacRae as Women's Legal Outreach Solicitor.



1999

A Women's Outreach service to Swan Hill was established.

1998

A toll-free phone number was introduced, making it easier for the community to access the service, and the Mallee Family Care Program of Financial Counselling joined the service, presenting its first workshop on joint debt. A series of legal issues seminars for community workers was co-presented with Victoria Legal Aid and Do It Yourself Divorce Workshops began in Swan Hill. The service also expanded its support for women that year, opening drop-in legal services at two Mildura locations and developing a two-year action plan for women.



1996

Murray Mallee Community Legal Service officially began operations, with outreach services commencing to Robinvale, Ouyen and Swan Hill. Member for Mallee, John Forrest, formally opened the service, and the service's first practice manager, Les McPherson, won the inaugural Pro Bono Regional Practitioners Award. A Volunteer Training program was also conducted in Swan Hill, with eight people trained to support solicitors who visit Swan Hill weekly.



2001

A new logo for the service was designed through a community competition.



2000

The service advocated for increased legal support for carers of people with disability.



2002

Ground-breaking work was undertaken on legal issues for the community then known as GLBTI, with the service delivering the first openly advertised gay and lesbian legal education event in Mildura. This helped attendees understand their legal rights under Victorian law.

2003

The service partnered with local housing and family violence services to produce a plain English booklet on tenancy rights for people in violent relationships.



2005

An annual newsletter was produced and distributed to 200 stakeholders, local agencies and support groups.



2007

The service held legal information displays at Mildura Centro and the Mildura Courthouse during Law Week, with its main event a debate built around a quote from Voltaire: "I do not agree with what you say, but I will fight to the death your right to say it."



2009

The service was involved in the government's National Human Rights Consultation process including surveying local views on human rights and participating in a roundtable community discussion held in Mildura. A submission was also made to the National Human Rights Consultation Committee, drawing on case studies from the community to argue for a National Human Rights Act.

2004

Recommendations for improvements to the legal system's response to family violence were submitted to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Review of Family Violence Laws.



2006

The service produced a response to the Family Law Council's Discussion Paper on Relocation. Its recommendation to make the law easier for non-lawyers to understand was specifically mentioned in the final report.

2008

Do It Yourself Divorce Workshops continued and were held on a bi-monthly basis, with high participation levels.

2010

The service commenced its Intervention Order Support Service at Mildura Magistrates' Court.

Celebrating 30 years 1996–2026

2011

The Swan Hill outreach service collaborated with financial counsellors to help clients with credit and debt matters.

2012

The Intervention Order Support Service was extended for the first time to Wentworth Court, bringing the service to a disadvantaged community that hadn't had access to it before.

2013

Project ICE, a co-operative campaign addressing crystal methamphetamine use in Mildura, was supported by the service, raising awareness of its prevalence and effects.

2014

Monthly outreach clinics were introduced at the Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services Mildura office, providing information and advice on family violence issues.

2015

A Family Violence Legal Unit was established in partnership with the Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services.

2017

A partnership with SuniTAFE offered free and confidential legal advice to students and staff.

2016

The Health Education Legal Project (HELP) was introduced, providing new mothers with knowledge of their legal rights on family violence and general legal issues. The project also included reciprocal training between lawyers and maternal child health nurses.

2018

The Consent and Relationships Project launched, featuring two animated videos with characters Tom and Amy, alongside factsheets and postcards, helping young people understand sexual consent and the legal risks of sharing intimate images.

2019

The Federation of Community Legal Services' Free our Sisters, Free our Kids campaign was supported, aimed at reducing the incarceration of Indigenous women and children linked to family violence and disadvantage.

2020

Murray Mallee Community Legal Service changed its name to Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre.

2021

The service partnered with libraries in Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale, Murrayville and Ouyen for Law Week, with 113 Legal Health Checks completed.

2022

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre expanded the Domestic Violence Unit/Health Justice Partnership to include a Mental Health Social Worker.

2024

The Broken Hill office opened in July 2024, extending access to justice to some of the most remote communities in Far West NSW. Mabels, a philanthropically funded partnership with Eastern Community Legal Centre and Mildura Rural City Council also launched, providing mothers and children with legal and non-legal support.

2023

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre secured delivery of the Victims Legal Service, providing legal advice, casework and referrals for victims of crime across the Loddon Mallee region.

2025

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre launched its first ever digital advertising campaign, generating more than half a million impressions.

2026

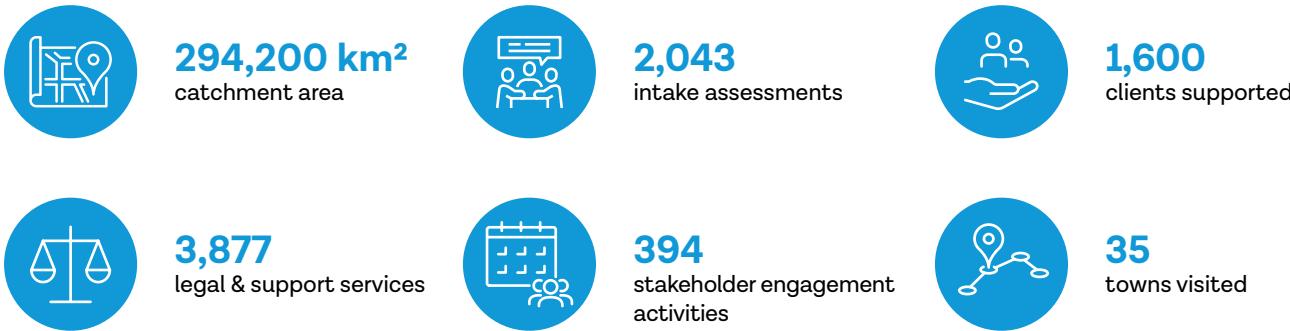
Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre celebrates 30 years.

celebrating
30 years of
community
legal service | 1996-2026

Our Community Legal Centre

Our Community Legal Centre provides free and confidential legal advice, information, referrals and casework to people across Victoria (Vic) and New South Wales (NSW).

2025-26 at a glance*



*Vic and NSW numbers combined



30 years of stories

Over three decades, we have stood beside people in our community navigating some of life's hardest moments. Every one of them came to us with a different story. This year, one of those stories was Rebecca and Harry's.

Rebecca* was referred to Mabels, a philanthropically funded partnership that brings together legal and social support for mothers and children, after concerns were raised about her family. She was anxious about parenting arrangements for her two-year-old son, Harry*, and had disclosed a history of family violence and coercive control that had made her doubt her own judgement.

We reassured Rebecca that the care arrangement being sought by Harry's father was unlikely to suit a two-year-old.

We supported her through mediation, helped her advocate for an arrangement that reflected Harry's needs, and connected her with counselling and specialist family support.

Rebecca no longer feared court proceedings. She understood the legal process and felt empowered to pursue arrangements that reflected Harry's best interests.

**Names and accompanying image have been changed to protect privacy.*

What our clients say

“ I felt like I was made to feel so comfortable there. Phone calls weren't something I was watching ring out from anxiety. I would leave every conversation feeling more positive and reassured. ”

“ Overall, this experience was incredible. I was listened to, supported, understood and I felt important when it came to discussing my concerns. ”

“ We support clients, but it helps their partners, their children, the broader family too. You help one person, but you're helping a family, you're helping a community. ”

Leanne Bosman
Principal Solicitor

We care about people getting support early.

Here’s how we helped individuals, families and communities seek help early in 2025–26.

Building belonging from the beginning

Through two complementary programs, we’re giving more than 22 kindergartens across the Mallee support to create inclusive learning environments for children.



Amanda Leslie
Kindergarten Inclusion
Support Assistant

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program

Not every child finds kindergarten easy, but every teacher wants to provide the best possible learning experience for each child. Our PSFO program supports this goal by strengthening the skills, confidence and capacity of early childhood teachers to deliver inclusive programs for all children in their group.

Rather than waiting for a formal diagnosis or an external referral, our PSFO bring specialist expertise directly into the kindergarten environment when it’s needed most. They work alongside early childhood teachers and educators to identify strengths and barriers, develop strategies, role-model adjustments to learning environments, and strengthen collaborative relationships between families and kindergartens.



When teachers are supported, every child benefits

A local kindergarten raised concerns about a three-year-old who was having difficulty regulating their emotions, wasn’t participating in group time and was struggling with transitions. The teacher was finding it difficult to support the child while also meeting the needs of the wider group.

Our PSFO visited the kindergarten and worked with the teacher, building their capacity so they were confident to have conversations with the parents. Together they set shared goals and observed the child’s actions to identify strengths and triggers. The PSFO modelled practical strategies including visual supports, predictable routines and calming techniques.

The PSFO also developed a service plan and shared it with the teacher who gave a copy to the family so there was a consistent, collaborative approach between the kindergarten and home. They supported the teacher throughout the program, recommending referrals to other services and modelling and monitoring strategies until the goals were reached.

For this child, those small but important changes made a real difference, and over time they were participating more confidently alongside their peers.

The teacher felt that they could also better manage and respond to the needs of the wider group.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program

Sometimes kindergarten services need more than advice and professional guidance. Our KIS program can provide additional staffing to support the group, specialist advice or minor building adjustments to further support the inclusion of children with a disability and/or complex medical needs.

Our KIS Team Leader coordinates the program and supports more than 40 Kindergarten Inclusion Support Additional Assistants (KISAAs) working across local kindergarten teams.

The demand for the KIS program has grown significantly since it started, from only a handful of approved applications each year to more than 60 children receiving support today. This shows that the need for inclusion support across kindergarten services is growing. Without this program, many kindergartens would have limited capacity to support children with additional needs.



Navigating New Beginnings

Our Family Relationship Centre has been supporting separated families for more than 20 years, but one group consistently fell through a gap. Under the Family Law Act, Family Dispute Resolution can't assist with matters involving unborn children, who aren't legally recognised until birth.

In Mildura, that gap matters.

Mildura has one of the highest adolescent birth rates in Victoria, and many of those young parents are navigating pregnancy apart.

Launched in May 2024, our Navigating New Beginnings (NNB) pilot program was created to address this need.

It supports separated expectant parents to develop interim parenting arrangements during pregnancy and in the early months after their baby arrives. The program continues until families are ready to transition to Family Dispute Resolution or feel confident managing arrangements on their own.

Since its launch, NNB has received nine referrals. Eight of these families have actively engaged in the program following through to their child's birth, receiving support to navigate arrangements and reduce conflict.

By giving early guidance and practical support, NNB helps parents make decisions that put their child's wellbeing first and gives families the best possible start.



Tracey (pictured left) and Sarah (pictured right)

A life rewritten

This story discusses mental health and recovery. Free, 24/7 support is available through Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636.

Sarah joined our Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) program, accessing one-on-one mental health support, at the end of 2019. This is her story.

"Before entering the program, I felt completely alone and isolated. I believed I only had myself to rely on, and at that point, I couldn't even rely on myself.

In 2021, I was paired with Tracey. From the moment I met her, I knew she was different. There was no hesitation in her, no fear of the darkness I carried. She met me exactly where I was, with honesty, patience, and a determination that I hadn't encountered before.

The EIPSR program was, in so many ways, life-changing. It gave me somebody to walk alongside me not only through the struggles, but also through the achievements, through the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of recovery.

EIPSR provided the support, guidance, and consistency I had been longing for, even if I didn't know how to ask for it at the time. It gave me a space where I could slowly begin

rebuilding my life, learning how to trust again, and finding the strength to continue fighting battles that once felt impossible to survive.

The weekly appointments, and sometimes more when things became overwhelming, gave me something to hold onto. Something to look forward to. In some ways, they became a reminder that no matter how dark life felt, I didn't have to carry it all completely alone anymore.

Tracey didn't save me by saying the perfect thing. She saved me by staying.

Today, I work two jobs. I am in a loving and fulfilling relationship. I am saving for adventures and building a future I once believed I would never live long enough to experience. But more importantly than any of that, I am still here.

Recovery is possible. Even on the darkest days, it is possible."



Read Sarah's full story.

"Sarah's resilience and courage are truly incredible. What Sarah taught me is the true meaning and consequence of the word 'choice' and how, in the darkest moments, it does not always feel available. I will carry that lesson with me forever in my work supporting others. Sarah educated me, and that has changed me as a practitioner. "

Tracey Curruthers, Senior Community Mental Health Practitioner



About EIPSR

Delivered in partnership with Mildura Base Public Hospital, the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response program provides people experiencing moderate to severe mental health challenges with individualised support from our Community Mental Health Practitioners. The aim is to help them live safely and independently in the community.

"Having NNB alongside our other family programs means expectant parents get the right support at the right time, without falling through the cracks. "

Kate McLaren
Family Relationship Services Manager

We care about children through every stage of life.

Here’s how we supported children, families and individuals to navigate life’s key stages in 2025-26.

Chances for Children Foundation

Since 2000, our Chances for Children Foundation has been providing scholarships to young people aged 24 and under across the Mallee. These scholarships help reduce financial barriers so they can pursue education, sport, music, the arts, and leadership.

This wouldn’t be possible without the generosity of our donors and supporters. Thank you to every individual, business and workplace giving partner who contributed in 2025-26.



25 new scholarships awarded



48 current scholarship recipients



\$157,391 donations received



110 individual donors



4 registered workplace giving employers



We care about Aydin Gunn

Chances for Children’s Keeping Kids at Secondary School scholarships support Years 11 and 12 students with the costs of staying in school, from fees and uniforms to technology and study materials.

When Trish Pongraz, a teacher at Mildura Senior College, saw one of her Year 12 students struggling under pressures beyond his control, she nominated him for a Keeping Kids at Secondary School scholarship.

“I nominated Aydin after learning, through discussions with his family, of circumstances he was facing beyond his control, which were incredibly challenging and threatened to derail his progress at school,” Trish said.

“ Every student should have the opportunity to do their best. By supporting them to reach their goals, what’s good for them becomes what’s good for us as a community. ”

The scholarship eased financial pressure on Aydin’s family and provided him with the study materials he needed to get through Year 12. But its impact went beyond the financial.

“This opportunity has given me a boost in confidence in the idea that I can graduate and that I am heard. I have struggled with this for a long time. This scholarship means a lot to me. It’s not just a support, it’s an opportunity to perform optimally in Year 12,” said Aydin.



“ It’s not easy having a disability and trying to do anything, really. But he puts in his best effort. It’s tiring, but I’m very proud of him. ”

Tracy Lawn
Mum to Nate Lawn
Non-Tertiary scholarship recipient

We care about Nate Lawn

Chances for Children’s Non-Tertiary scholarships help young people pursue their talents in sport, music, the arts and leadership, supporting opportunities at state level and beyond.

At 14, Mildura local Nate Lawn already knows exactly what he loves. Tennis.

“I like having fun,” he says. But on the court, that fun becomes focus, determination and real talent.

Nate lives with a disability. But according to his mum Tracy, it fades into the background the moment he picks up a racquet.

“It’s almost like he doesn’t have his disability when he’s on the court. He does tennis well, he can remember his training, his shots. He’s just happy with a racquet in his hand.”

Accessing competitive opportunities isn’t easy for those living in a regional town like Mildura. With no local tournaments available, families like Nate’s have to travel

long distances just to compete. For Tracy, that meant making hard choices about which tournaments were within reach.

“ Before Chances, the only tournaments we could do were Melbourne or Adelaide because we had family in those locations. But now with Chances, we can actually branch out and go to all the state tournaments. ”

Nate can now compete in tournaments that were previously out of reach, including Sydney, Queensland and the ACT. More tournaments mean more points, better rankings and greater exposure, all critical steps toward his goal of one day making the Australian team.

Nate’s ranking has climbed this year. He’s now ranked number two in Australia in the Junior Boys Singles classification for players with an intellectual disability or autism (IDA).



“I adore not only my biological children, but my ‘extra’ children (family) that have been in my life.”

Mel Burns
Mallee Family Care foster carer

Our foster carers

Foster care provides a safe and stable home for children and young people who are unable to live with their own families. We find, train and support carers to do this work across north-west Victoria and south-west New South Wales, offering emergency, respite, short-term and long-term care.

Why Mel cares

Mel Burns became a foster carer in 2008 when her youngest child was just eight months old. In the years since, she says more than 150 children have come into her home.

Growing up, Mel watched family friends’ parents provide respite care for children in need. It stayed with her.

“I was inspired by seeing families help raise children in care to be the best they could be,” Mel said.

Becoming a foster carer has had a positive impact on Mel and her family.

“I believe that my family and children have thrived positively through life, being able to understand compassion and loving unconditionally to themselves and others.”

“My biological children, all males, are compassionate individuals who are very understanding of the diversity of the world.”

Mel says that some of the most rewarding parts of being a foster carer are watching the children smile, enjoy life and thrive.



29
new enquiries



61
foster care families



117
children in care

She loves seeing them become more confident, settle into routines, pursue sport and schooling, and eventually grow into young adults who have dreams and follow them. Mel values being there to celebrate those milestones along the way.

“The children in my care are thriving in all aspects of life. My 18-year-old, who has lived with us since she was four, graduated year 11, found a permanent job and continues to be part of our family unit, living in our home.”

Mel has been a foster carer with Mallee Family Care for more than 15 years. She says the support she receives makes a real difference.

“It’s so helpful knowing that I can reach out to talk to someone about my concerns, focus on my own wellbeing and making sure I take some ‘me’ time. Which I sometimes forget to do.”

Thanks to Mel and carers like her, children and young people across our region have somewhere safe to belong when they need it most.



Brewing awareness

3,000 cups. One simple message.

During Foster Care Week, we partnered with five local cafes across our region to put foster care into everyday conversation. 3,000 takeaway cups carried a simple invitation to start a foster caring journey with us, generating 12 new enquiries and an 89% increase in website traffic compared to the same period in 2024.

Thank you to Beans2Machines and blk.mlk specialty coffee (Mildura), Cafe 202 (Swan Hill), Golly Cafe Bakery (Gol Gol) and Wentworth Cafe & Lotto (Wentworth) for helping us to brew awareness.

We care about building an organisation that reflects us all.

Here’s how we reflected the diversity, intersectionality and lived experience of our community in 2025-26.

Everything we do begins with our people. We’re proud of the diversity, dedication and lived experiences they bring, and grateful for every one of them. Across three states and 10 locations, our team shows up every day for the communities we support.



Why Breanna cares

Breanna Baker, Team Leader, Child and Family Services, Dareton, NSW.

Breanna joined Mallee Family Care in 2021 as an Intern, fresh from her social work studies, and never looked back. From Intern to Caseworker to Team Leader, she’s built her entire career here across two maternity leaves.

“There are so many opportunities for career growth. I’ve never contemplated working anywhere else because I’m well supported here.”

Breanna says that seeing the children she works with grow in confidence over the years is one of the greatest parts of the job.

“I have loved watching their progress and seeing how much they’ve grown. They’ve got more understanding of what they can achieve in life.”



Why Laura cares

Laura Piscioneri, Family and Carer Peer Support Worker & Key Worker (NDIS), Mildura, Vic.

No two days look the same for Laura, who joined Mallee Family Care in January 2025. One day she’s running a carer group, the next she’s helping a family navigate the NDIS or accompanying someone to an appointment they couldn’t manage alone.

“Whatever support they need, I am that support for them.”

The moments that stay with Laura are the ones where families tell her they couldn’t have accessed the help they needed without her.

“Moments like those, this is why I’m here.”



Why Peter cares

Peter Nguyen, Integrated Family Worker, Swan Hill, Vic.

Peter came to Mallee Family Care in 2024 through a community services placement and quickly realised this was the work he was meant to do. Supporting vulnerable families through some of life’s hardest moments, he says, satisfies a passion that’s always been there.

“It’s not always about success or failure. It’s about being there.”

At Mallee Family Care, Peter has found a workplace where he can speak freely.

“Before, I always had a filter. Now that’s no longer there. I can speak my mind and freely express myself.”



Winnie, our wellbeing dog

Three years ago, Winnie joined our team. Three mornings a week she moves through our offices, attending team meetings, checking in at desks and spending quiet time with staff who want her company.

A trained core group of nine staff support Winnie’s care and daily schedule. They are guided by Dogs Connect, a specialist organisation supporting wellbeing dogs in workplace settings. As a recognised Dogs Connect site, we maintain our accreditation annually, with staff completing ongoing requirements to uphold the program’s standards for both staff and animal wellbeing.

To understand her impact, our research team formally evaluated Winnie’s presence across multiple time points. Winnie is consistently recognised as a mood-booster, a source of stress relief and a way of connecting people across the workplace. Staff describe her as “lighting up the room” and creating a sense of camaraderie.

Winnie’s presence in our workplace reflects our commitment to the emotional wellbeing and connection of our people.



A four-legged friend who boosts morale, reduces stress and helps create a more connected workplace.



We care about services that meet local need.

Here’s how we increased service capacity and delivered innovative models in 2025-26.

Children’s mental health

Psychological Treatment Services

For many children, anxiety, trauma or grief can show up early, shaping how they learn, connect with others and manage everyday life. Through our Psychological Treatment Services – Children’s Mental Health (PTS-CMH) program, delivered in partnership with Murray PHN and co-located with our Family Relationship Centre, children have access to the short-term counselling support they need, when they need it.

The program supports school-aged children under 13 who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, mental health challenges, and who may not otherwise be able to access or afford help.

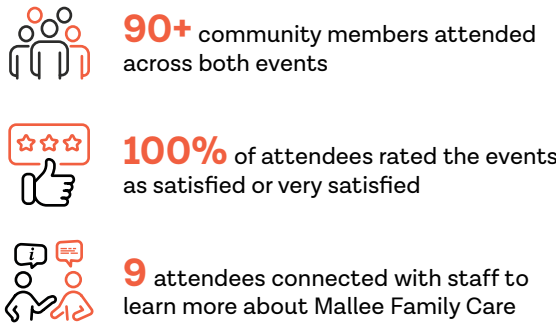
Support is tailored to each child using approaches that feel safe and familiar, including play, art and guided conversation. Families feel the difference too, with many reporting improved communication at home and reduced stress as they learn to better understand and support their child.

While based in Mildura, we also provide weekly outreach to Robinvale, working with children and families at Robinvale College and St Mary’s School. This helps bridge the gap where local mental health services are limited.



NSW Community Days

This year, our NSW Child and Family Services team hosted two free community days for families in Dareton and Balranald. The events included an EnviroEDU animal display, cultural activities and a community artwork where children added their painted handprints. Families also enjoyed a BBQ lunch and took home free resource packs.



We care about this child’s wellbeing

A child with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and learning difficulties, and symptoms of depression and anxiety, found support through the PTS-CMH program. Together with their practitioner, a personalised support plan was developed around small, achievable steps.

Through gentle re-engagement with activities that they had started to withdraw from, the child began to reconnect socially and manage low mood. This progress was reinforced through close collaboration with their school, so that consistent strategies worked at home and in the classroom.

Over time, their parents and teachers noticed real changes. Not just in mood, but in confidence, participation, and everyday functioning.



When home is out of reach

Specialist Homelessness Service

Without secure housing, it's harder to stay healthy, maintain relationships, hold down work, and stay connected to community.

Our Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) supports people across the Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke shires who are experiencing homelessness or are at serious risk of losing their housing.

Based in Swan Hill, our team travels throughout the region so that people in rural and remote communities can get help closer to home.

We work with young people, older adults, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people facing financial hardship or mental health challenges, and women and children escaping family violence.

When the right support changes everything

When one community member first came to our SHS program, they were facing multiple and complex challenges, with low income and housing instability being significant barriers.

Our team coordinated emergency motel accommodation, food relief, counselling, and regular care team meetings, working alongside partner organisations including the Salvation Army, Haven Home Safe's Rough Sleeper Program, and Ngwala's Public Intoxication Response and Counselling Program.

Over time, they secured community housing. From that stable base, they could focus on their wellbeing and start building toward longer-term goals. As their confidence and independence grew, they needed less support from us.

They are now in long-term housing through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. Outcomes like this are why our Specialist Homelessness Service exists.



308
people supported

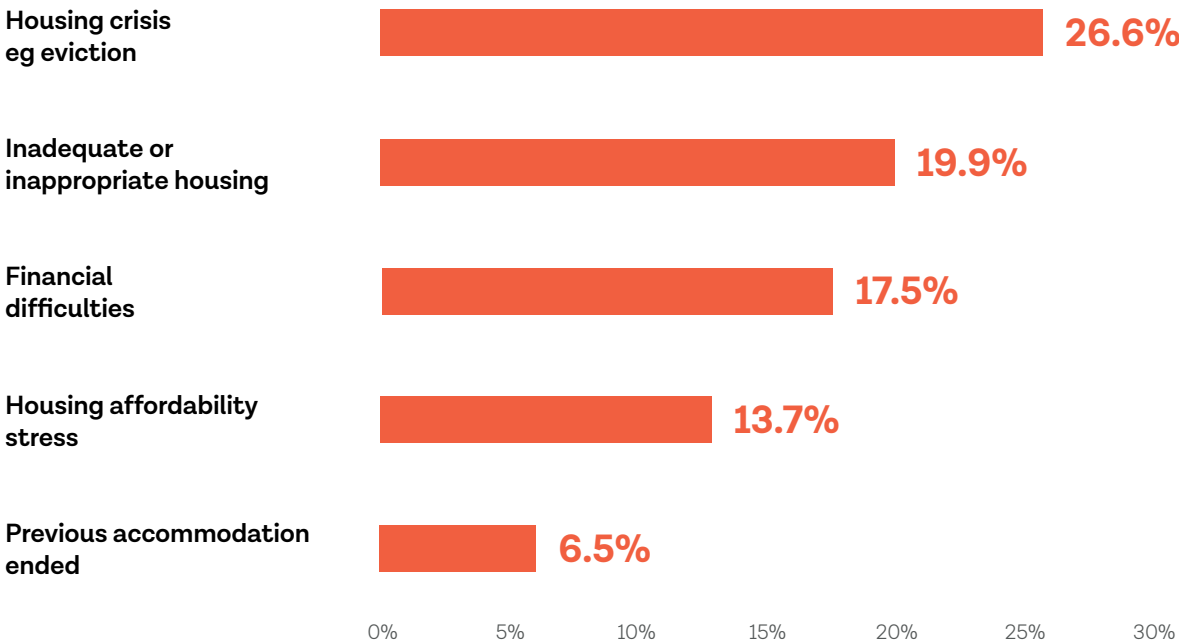


1,434
calls, home visits, appointments and interactions



14.9%
of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Why people came to us



A voice for people who've been there

One of our most significant achievements in 2025-26 was re-establishing the Southern Mallee Homelessness Focus Group, bringing together people who have experienced homelessness firsthand.

Our team worked alongside homelessness and community engagement specialists including services from St Kilda, the Loddon Mallee Homelessness Network and the Victorian Electoral Commission to develop the group members' skills and confidence.

The Focus Group is now a growing and purposeful voice for people with lived experience across the Southern Mallee. Its members identify emerging housing issues, contribute to service planning, and advocate for better housing in our region.

“The Focus Group gives people with lived experience a real voice in the housing conversation. Supporting someone to move from homelessness to advocating for better housing takes trust, time and genuine investment in people. But that’s exactly what this work is about.”

Alistar Baker
Team Leader, Specialist Homelessness Services

We care about using our resources wisely.

Here’s how our funding supported our work in 2025-26.

2025-2026 was a year of consolidation for Mallee Family Care.

Construction of the head office in Mildura at 123 Ninth Street has continued at a steady pace. In preparation for the move, the agency has worked solidly behind the scenes to ensure a seamless transition.

This work has included the huge task of digitising all documentation and archives, cataloguing resources and reviewing fleet vehicles.

As Mallee Family Care’s operating model has evolved since COVID-19, the organisation now requires fewer fleet vehicles. There has been ongoing investment in transformation projects designed to reinforce our systems and enhance support for the programs we provide.

The agency undertook an extensive strategic business model review aimed specifically at strengthening operational resilience and exploring areas for growth.

The Mallee Family Care Community Legal Service celebrated 30 years of service in 2026 and have solidified their presence in Far West New South Wales with the extension of contracts to 30 June 2030.



Mallee Family Care’s audited 2025-26 financial statements were accepted by the Board on 20 August 2026.

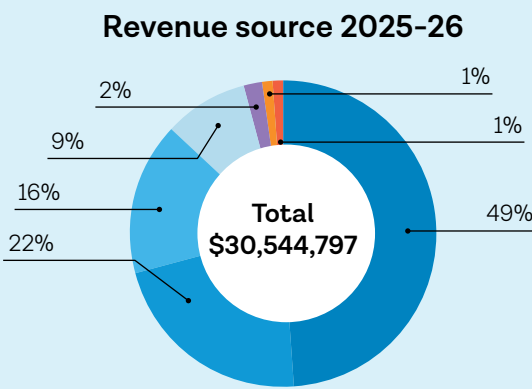
Visit malleefamilycare.com.au or scan the QR code to read our audited financial statements in full.

Our reach into the Robinvale area has also increased with the introduction of a Creative Therapies program in early 2026.

Mallee Family Care’s commitment to lead and build a skilled workforce continued with extensive professional development opportunities for employees including agency wide “Voice of the Child” training. Targeted staff recruitment has successfully addressed vacancies in specialised program areas.

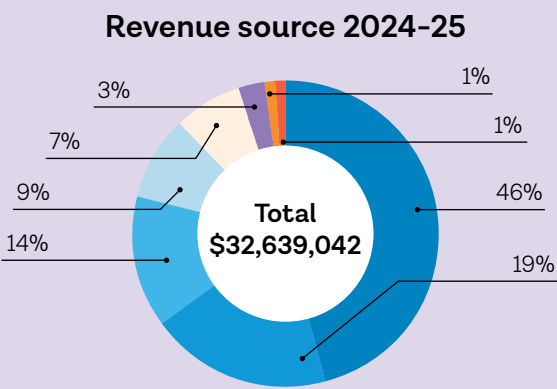
At an operational level, the cost-of-living crisis has continued to create higher demand for our services across all areas of our catchment. The cost of delivering reliable, high-quality services has outgrown government funding, with indexation received not matching the rising inflationary costs.

Despite this, Mallee Family Care’s financial position has remained strong, with a sound net equity balance of \$32M.



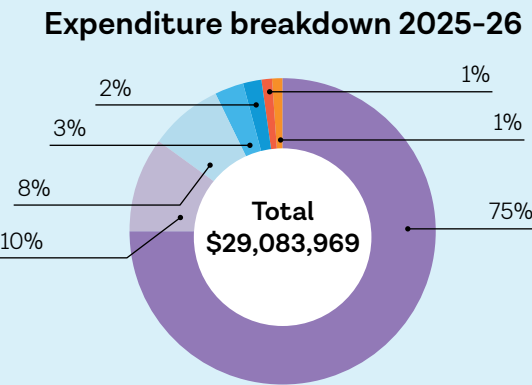
- Victorian Government
- Commonwealth Government
- New South Wales Government
- Fee for service income
- Investment income
- Donations and fundraising
- Other income*

*Other income includes Other Program income, Profit on sale of fixed assets and Sundry income.



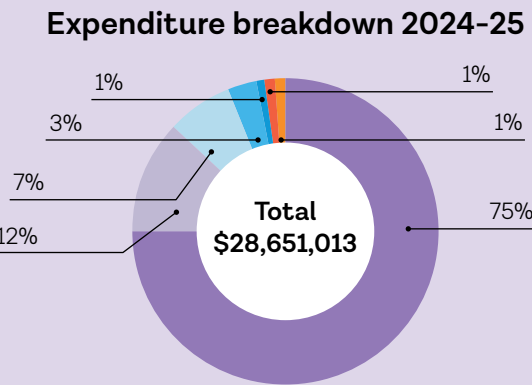
- Victorian Government
- Commonwealth Government
- New South Wales Government
- Fee for service income
- Capital grants
- Investment income
- Donations and fundraising
- Other income*

*Other income includes Other Program income, Profit on sale of fixed assets and Sundry income.



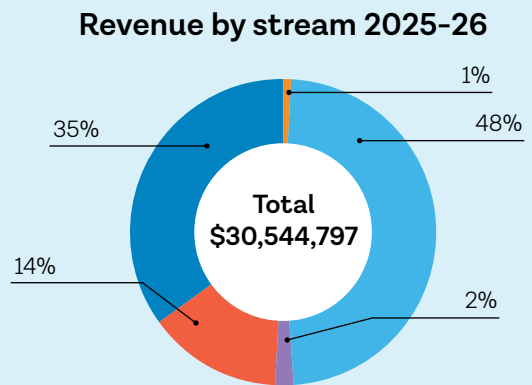
- Employee benefits
- Program delivery
- Administration
- Building occupancy & operating
- Depreciation
- Motor vehicles
- Other expenditure*

*Other expenditure includes Payment to beneficiaries, Fundraising costs, Interest & finance

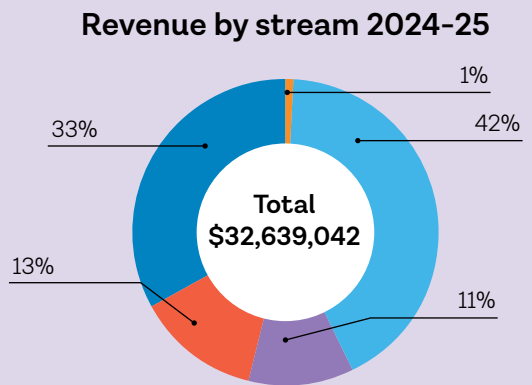


- Employee benefits
- Program delivery
- Administration
- Building occupancy & operating
- Depreciation
- Motor vehicles
- Other expenditure*

*Other expenditure includes Payment to beneficiaries, Fundraising costs, Interest & finance



- Chances for Children
- Community & Wellbeing Services
- Corporate Services
- Education, Training & Research
- Family Services



- Chances for Children
- Community & Wellbeing Services
- Corporate Services
- Education, Training & Research
- Family Services

Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2026

	2026 \$	2025 \$
Income		
Contract income from Government	26,469,646	25,720,149
Fee for service income	2,733,343	2,885,771
Other program income	73,862	82,469
Donations and fundraising	172,754	192,124
Investment income	659,625	995,645
Sundry income	290,112	231,916
Profit on sale of fixed assets	145,455	171,709
Capital grants	-	2,359,259
Total Revenue	30,544,797	32,639,042
Less: Expenses		
Employee benefits	21,943,038	21,408,539
Program delivery	3,043,702	3,433,125
Administration	2,177,617	2,129,188
Building occupancy and operating	871,405	876,844
Motor vehicles	213,750	226,226
Payments to beneficiaries	122,220	60,097
Fundraising costs	171,013	181,831
Interest and finance charges	39,851	24,090
Depreciation	501,373	311,073
Total Expenditure	29,083,969	28,651,013
Net Surplus For The Year	1,460,828	3,988,029
Other Comprehensive Income		
Revaluation of land and buildings	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income For The Year	1,460,828	3,988,029

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

	2026 \$	2025 \$
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	6,025,430	12,955,390
Cash investments	7,436,511	4,563,639
Receivables	470,334	821,779
Other current assets	409,471	453,101
Total Current Assets	14,341,746	18,793,909
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	30,344,987	25,132,242
Total Non-Current Assets	30,344,987	25,132,242
Total Assets	44,686,733	43,926,151
Current Liabilities		
Payables	1,548,196	2,299,464
Employee benefits	2,266,650	2,129,543
Other current liabilities	8,052,008	8,098,918
Hire purchase liability (net)	163,426	132,087
Total Current Liabilities	12,030,280	12,660,012
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee benefits	90,467	110,718
Hire purchase liability (net)	441,806	492,069
Total Non-Current Liabilities	532,273	602,787
Total Liabilities	12,562,553	13,262,799
Net Assets	32,124,180	30,663,352
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	25,221,402	23,795,282
General reserves	4,491,514	4,491,514
Chances for Children - Special Purpose Reserve	959,126	924,418
Chances for Children Bequests - Special Purposes Reserve	1,452,138	1,452,138
Total Equity	32,124,180	30,663,352

Thanks to all who care

Mallee Family Care donors

Peter & Fiona Devilee
James Henderson
Central Mallee Co-operative
Parish

In memory of Annette
Mathewson
Raylee Schultz
Viona Woodroffe
Pamela Weber

Paul Mathewson
Andrew & Gayle Cottrell
Anne Mullan
Norma Rene Minney
John Taylor

Underbool Ladies Guild
Lower Murray Water
Central Mallee Co-operative
Parish
Meatian Uniting Church

Christmas Appeal donors

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Dianne White
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Megan McEwan
Ruth Mitchell
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Boss Empire Food Truck
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Collie & Tierney
Ladies of Lifeline
Lime Therapy
Lower Murray Water
MADEC
Meatian Uniting Church
Mildura Seventh-day
Adventist Church
Mildura Senior College VET
students
Monash University School of
Rural Health – Mildura
PM Exercise Physiology &
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Suds and Bubs Cleaning
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Swan Hill Rotary Club
TAFE Kids Inc
Toorak Street Party
Underbool Ladies Guild
Uniting AgeWell
United Firefighters Union
Members at Mildura Fire
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Whitfield Group

Chances for Children donors

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Joelle Whiting
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Clinton Wills
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Clarkes Mallee Foods
Community Bank Wentworth
& District
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Devilee's Airconditioning
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Raymond & Kathi Adams Gift
Family Fund
Lions Club Irymple
Lions Club of Swan Hill
Lower Murray Water
MFC Financial Counselling
Team
Mildura Fruit Company
Mildura Iceworks
Mildura Rural City Council
NCF Exports
Prestige Staffing Pty Ltd
Ray White Real Estate
Mildura
Rotary Club of Mildura
Merbein
Seaway Intermodal
Southern Cross Farms
St Mary McKillop College
SuniTAFE
Swan Hill Rural City Council
Wentworth & District
Community Bank
Woolworths Langtree
Woolworths Mildura Central
Yeast Foundation

Funding bodies

Commonwealth Government
Building Better Regions Fund –
Infrastructure Projects Stream
Attorney Generals Department Family
Law Branch
Department of Social Services
National Disability Insurance Agency
National Indigenous
Australians Agency

Victorian Government
Consumer Affairs – Department of
Justice and Community Safety
Consumer Affairs – Victorian
Property Fund
Department of Education
Department of Families, Fairness
and Housing
Department of Health
Emergency Recovery Victoria
Murray Primary Health Network
Victoria Legal Aid

NSW Government
Department of Communities
and Justice
Department of Education
Office of Responsible Gambling
Legal Aid NSW

Our Executive Team



Teresa Jayet
Chief Executive Officer



Natalie Morgan
Chief Financial Officer



Andy Charles
Executive General
Manager Child and Family
Services



Chris Forbes
Executive General
Manager Education,
Training and Research



Lisa-Maree Stevens
Executive General
Manager Community,
Mental Health and
Wellbeing

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Board Chair & Deputy
Chair, Audit Finance &
Risk Committee



Jenna Collett
Deputy Chair



Christine Cottrell
Chair Audit, Finance & Risk
Committee



Geoff Dea
Director



Dr Suriya Hariprakash
Director



Belinda Hudak
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Dr Chelsea Todd
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Dr Pauline Rogers
Director



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Independent Member,
Audit, Finance & Risk
Committee



Anthony Venneri
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Don Wall
Independent Member,
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Committee



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