

WE CARE CONNECT

IMPACT REPORT FY25





Local Case Worker: "Premmie baby born at 33 weeks. Baby's mum has fled Domestic Violence, now single and homeless."

Baby needs Nappies, linen, formula, baby capsule, stroller, change table, baby bath"



OUR YEAR - FY25

IMPACT AND REACH

At We Care Connect, we're passionate about reducing the day to day impact of childhood poverty throughout the Central Coast and Hunter.

Over 30,000 children live under the poverty line in our region - a statistic that breaks our hearts.



10,434 CHILDREN

Supported in FY25.
39,188 children supported since 2016



260,461 ITEMS RE-HOMED

Valued at over \$2.595 million in second hand value



150 MARVELLOUS VOLUNTEERS

Donated 41,638 hours, the equivalent of 17 full time staff!



650 CASE WORKERS

From over 200 Welfare Agencies across the Hunter and Central Coast



296 PRAMS, 368 CAR SEATS

141 Cots, 90 Bassinets, 2328 packets of nappies, 106 Highchairs, 1377 Back2School Packs, 12,000+ Christmas gifts, 27,742 linen, blankets & towels Distributed to families needing a helping hand.

WE CARE

CONNECT

Chairperson's Report

Robert Dixon



The past year has seen We Care Connect continue to grow, with our support of disadvantaged children across the Central Coast and Hunter regions now reaching over 10,000 children this year.

Our priorities remain supporting our volunteers and management staff as they respond to the needs of families in our widespread communities. We are close to securing an improved warehouse for our Hunter operation, which will better meet rising demand and provide a more suitable environment for volunteers. Significant planning is underway, and the Board is conscious of the costs and labour required for this transition.

The Board recognises the pressures faced by key management personnel and has introduced initiatives to better support them, including engaging an external organisation to provide assistance programs. We were pleased to welcome Krista and Bronwyn as Program/Partnership Coordinators, with their roles clearly defined by our CEO, Derryck.

Our volunteers continue to inspire us. They respond to critical requests with care, thought and personal dedication. Their efforts were publicly acknowledged with long-term volunteer Laurie being named Central Coast Senior Volunteer of the Year. We sincerely thank all volunteers for their ongoing commitment and feedback to the Board.

The Board remains mindful of volatile economic conditions and the importance of corporate and individual generosity to our sustainability. We constantly assess our long-term financial position to ensure stability as demand for our services grows. Our inaugural major fundraising event, "I Care, You Care, We Care," was highly successful, supported by Hunter Financial's generous dollar-matching of community donations. Another standout moment was our involvement in a Central Coast Mariners home game, which raised both funds and awareness. This year we also passed on our millionth item to families—a milestone reflecting both community need and the positive environmental impact of our recycling and sustainability practices.

Our philosophy of providing 'delightful' items to children continues, with volunteers adding special touches that create treasured moments for families. We are grateful for the support received from individuals, clubs, businesses and our local politicians, including Emma McBride, David Harris, Liesl Tesch, Dan Repacholi and Jenny Aitchison.

While challenges lie ahead, I am confident that with our dedicated people, drive and commitment, we will continue expanding our support to more children across the Central Coast and Hunter regions.

CEO & Founder's Report

Derryck Klarkowski

At We Care Connect, our volunteers are the heart of everything we do, bringing the dedication, creativity and passion that strengthens our programs and amplifies our impact every day. The importance of our volunteers is reflected in our strategic focus on sustaining at least a 50:1 ratio of volunteer to paid staff contribution—an approach that is fundamental to our identity and success.

This model allows us to benefit from the best of both worlds: the energy and scale of a volunteer driven organisation, combined with the structure and standards of professional practice. Our volunteers bring with them a lifetime of expertise, experience, and insight. For so many, We Care Connect provides an opportunity to continue applying invaluable skills beyond retirement.

This year, we once again reached more children than ever before, as the levels of poverty and need in our communities continue to rise. We are supporting caseworkers who are stretched to the limit, and we are asking more of our volunteers and donors as the demand intensifies. When will it end?

Behind every request are difficult and often heartbreaking stories. At the same time, our operational costs are climbing—not only due to inflation, but because the scale of our programs relies centrally on warehouse space. Growing need requires greater capacity, and greater capacity brings increased costs.



This is why your financial support remains absolutely vital to sustaining and expanding our work.

Since our inception, We Care Connect has also been proudly grounded in community. Every person who has donated, volunteered, or supported us in any way is part of an amazing community saying “no” to childhood poverty. This year, we celebrated an extraordinary milestone: one million items distributed to local children in need. This achievement was only possible because we are, and always will be, a true community charity.

THANK YOU, Derryck



GIRL 5, BOY 2

Family has been homeless for 3 years and has just been approved for a house. They are moving in this week and do not have anything. Mostly needing warm clothes and warm bedding. The girl loves dinosaurs, and the boy loves cars.

BOY 4, GIRL 2

The family had been rough sleeping in Newcastle after fleeing family drama in *** and have no belongings and are starting fresh. Family is grateful for any items they get and are most appreciative. Provided: Clothing packs, nappies, board games & puzzles & linen.



GIRL 17, BOYS 15 & 13

Teenagers have fled DV and have nothing. Need schoolbags, lunchboxes and pencil cases and hygiene items, plus blankets to keep them warm

Caseworker Feedback

WE PARTNER WITH OVER 650 CASE WORKERS WHO IDENTIFY THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF EACH CHILD.

Residential Support Worker: My client has asked me to send your volunteers this beautiful message: "My daughter and I who are residing at Kamira refuge would love to thank everyone at We Care for the beautiful organised donation package we received. Every outfit was carefully put together and all matching. So much thought into it all. Thankyou We Care, we loved it"

Samaritans: The 12 yr old starting high school was so excited to go through his bag and then spent time just walking around the house wearing his bag. Another mum started crying when she saw the gifts. So thankyou so much from all of us here and the families we support!

Beyond the Gates Caseworker: I wanted to say that a couple of weeks ago I made an order for a 14-year-old girl, and your amazing volunteers at Thornton went out of their way to not only provide her with the necessities, but also things that she would enjoy. I noted that ** really wanted to read the Harry Potter books and asked if you had any donated copies, and one of your volunteers, an ex-teacher, went above and beyond by personally purchasing a brand-new box set for her. Can you please let her know that ** was so excited! Particularly so that she would now be able to join in on conversations with her friends about it. She's already read the first two books in the last two weeks! Thank you so much for all the work your team does!

The children helped are often dealing with substantial trauma

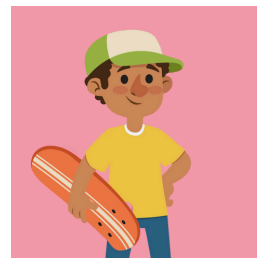
54% are living in sole-parent households

45% have been affected by Family Violence

49% affected by chronic illness or disability

45% are First Nations children

33% are homeless or at risk of homelessness





Local Family: "I wanted to personally msg you and thank you for recently helping me get ready for the arrival of my triplets it honestly has helped me so much so again thank you for everything you guys do I think it is nice for you all to know that what you all do is appreciated and does make a huge difference in peoples lives"

Volunteer Highlights

Led by our volunteer CEO Derryck Klarkowski, 150 marvellous volunteers donated 41,638 hours, the equivalent of 17 full time staff, and valued at over \$1.38million.

We Care volunteers do everything from collecting donations to sorting, washing, ironing, cleaning, safety-checking and carefully repacking items. We're also lucky to have an amazing group of We Care Sewers who handcraft every bundle our care packages go out in—over 5,000 beautifully made bags this year alone. We love hosting teams from local businesses and corporate partners who roll up their sleeves and spend a day volunteering with us at the Base!

**5
YEARS**

In FY25, five amazing volunteers reached a huge milestone: five whole years of sharing their time, energy and heart with We Care Connect! Their generosity means the world to us, and we're thrilled to celebrate them in this Annual Impact Report:

Jane McPhail, Gail Ross, Jenni Sheppard, Laurie Sweet, Pam Slough

**JANE
MCPHAIL**

Jane's five years of volunteering with We Care is something truly special. She was part of the very early days back in 2016, when we were working out of a tiny church hall in Toukley. After moving to the Hunter, she reluctantly paused her volunteering, until the day we opened our Thornton warehouse. And once again, Jane was there from Day 1. Here's a little story about Jane.

In the early days, We Care was a small but determined operation: just three volunteers, a cluttered space, and strollers and cots stored in a tin shed in the car park of a Church hall. "It's incredible to see where it's at now compared to back then," she reflects.

The early days were humble but full of heart. Support from the Toukley Neighbourhood Centre and local schools helped the program grow quickly. Jane credits much of the early momentum to Derryck: "He was amazing, the way he got out there and rallied the community. Truly entrepreneurial."

Today, volunteering at the Thornton warehouse looks different, and the need is far greater. At times, she finds it overwhelming to see how many families are struggling.

"Maybe we can't fix everything," she says. "But each child we help, that makes all the difference." Even though she formally volunteers one day a week safety checking breast pumps, sanitising bottles and essentials, she often spends the rest of the week collecting items from Marketplace and helping in whatever way she can. "I really, really believe in this." Her favourite part of volunteering? "Knowing I'm making a difference, and the camaraderie. It's such a lovely crew. We all support each other."

Jane speaks with enormous pride about the Thornton base. "From day one I was there, helping to set up. And look at us now. Who would've thought we'd outgrow that space in just three years?"

"I'm very proud to be part of such a great organisation," she says. "I love that we care about reducing landfill too. It's incredible to see how far we've come. It warms my heart to know we're supporting a child that needs our help."



Community Kindness

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

A very big thank you to Leasa Rutherford and the Hunter volunteers for organising the second Christmas in July fundraiser. Such a fabulous evening with great food, friends and fundraising!



COMMUNITY COLLECTORS

From Rotary, Lions, Inner Wheel, Kiwanis, retirement villages and daycares to gym groups and local businesses—there are far too many to list individually. But our gratitude is huge. Thank you for the incredible collection drives you organise throughout the year!



DELIGHT DAYS

We decided to rename National Volunteer Week to “Delight Days”. Delight is a word we think of “daily” when we’re sorting and preparing donations to go out to families. But in this instance it was all about delighting this crew of marvellous volunteers!! Our volunteers were showered with treats from various businesses and community groups.



Community Kindness

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS

Our volunteers had a great day out - raising funds and awareness as part of the local soccer team's Charity Round.

ERINA FAIR'S CLASSROOM KICKSTART

The Erina Fair community blew us away with so many Back2School donations - from lunch boxes, drink bottles, pencil cases and textas. Thank you all!



ELLIE AND KATRINA

Here's Ellie & Katarina, two Hunter friends who turned 7 in FY25. Instead of gifts for themselves, they have a beautiful wish: to help other kids receive presents from Santa. Gosh, what a beautiful gesture! Their friends donated close to \$1,500.

The We Care Village

We simply can't say it enough: we are profoundly grateful. Without this incredible village, our impact wouldn't come close to reaching the number of families we support today. As a grassroots not-for-profit, the generosity of businesses, individuals and community groups is absolutely vital. Every contribution keeps us going—and keeps our doors open, and our hearts and hands ready to reverse the day to day impact of childhood poverty.

<p>Australia Post Bloomfield Foundation Cessnock League Club Charlestown Bowling Club Coast FM CWA Lisarow</p>		<p>Doylo E. Maitland Bowling Club Equinox Group Expanded Metal Product Hunter Financial Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation</p>
	<p>Inner Wheel Australia Kiwaniis East Maitland Lions Clubs Little Miracles Maitland City Council Mingara Mounties Group</p>	
<p>One Rail Rotary Clubs Sisters of Charity StreetSmart Swansea Cottage 1666 Foundation</p>		<p>Turrumurra Uniting Church Vernon Foundation Waratah Foundation Weston Workers Club Wyong Leagues Group</p>

In Kind Supporters:

Good 360, E-Threads Foundation, Sew Achieve, Share the Dignity, Streetsmart, The Nappy Collective, Thread Together, Warm Blankets for Everyone,

Finance & Governance Snapshot

We Care Connect remains in a stable financial position, supported by a balanced mix of grants, community donations, fundraising events and corporate partnerships. Operational costs continue to be managed carefully, with the majority of expenditure directed toward program delivery—ensuring essential items reach children and families who need them most.

Prudent budgeting and regular financial review by the Board have helped us navigate a challenging economic environment. Our major fundraising initiatives, along with generous community support, have strengthened our ability to plan ahead and expand services in both the Central Coast and Hunter regions.

On average, it costs \$51 to help a child with \$511 worth of material aid

INCOME: \$573,412

EXPENSES: \$431,200

Our reserves will play a vital role as we move forward with expanding our Hunter program, including relocating to a larger warehouse. This upgrade will allow us to support even more vulnerable children, ensuring they receive the essential material aid they need.



WE CARE BOARD

Chairperson: Robert Dixon

Secretary: Jackie Klarkowski

Treasurer: Robyn Brown

Directors:

Andrew Davison

Ariane Dixon

John Davison

Phillip Smith

Get In Touch

We are a growing community of passionate, local people who say no to childhood poverty. Contact us on the details below if you would like to join our village, we'd love to hear from you.

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WWW.WECARECONNECT.ORG.AU



**ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT
FY25**

