



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

## Annual report 2017-2018



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# Our direction

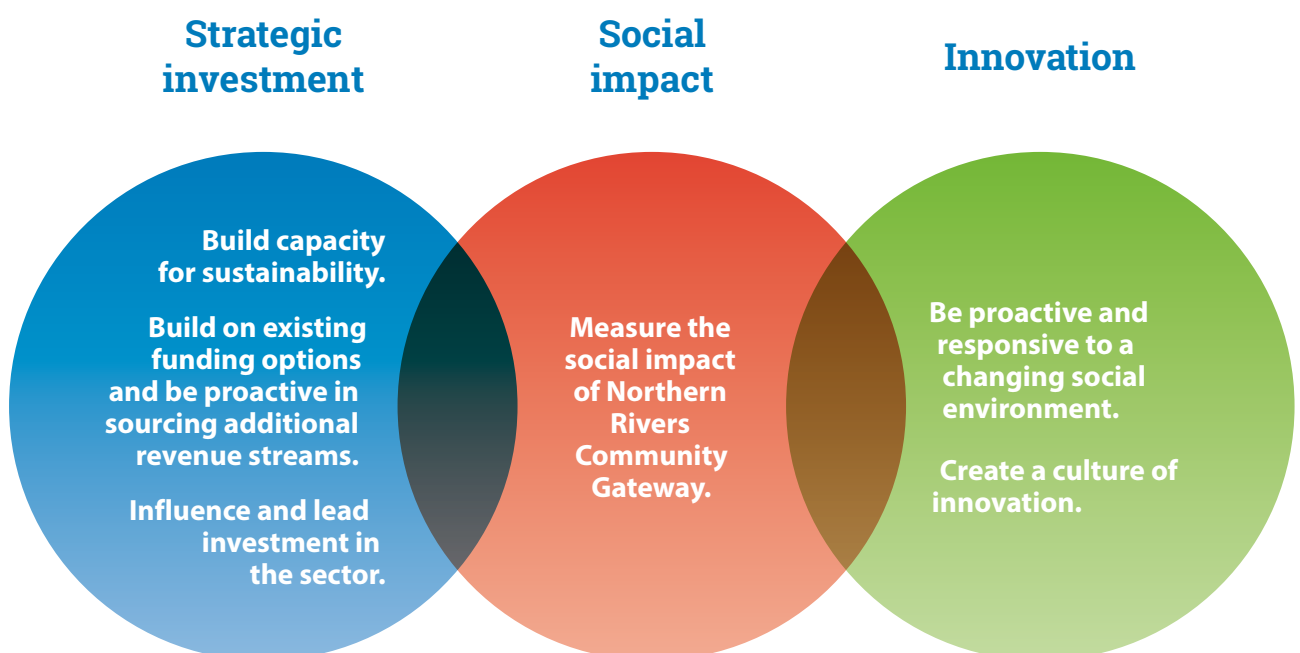
## Our vision

Many tracks, one road, sustaining community.

## Our core values



## Our strategic priorities





# Organisational snapshot

## People

61

staff were working with Northern Rivers Community Gateway.

40%

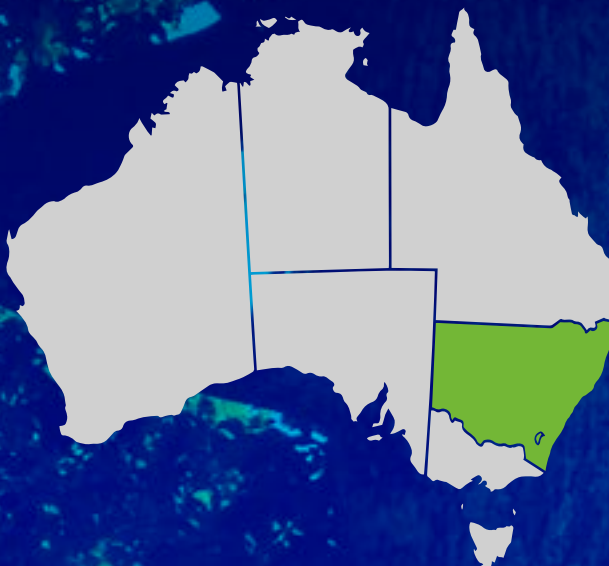
of volunteers registered with Northern Rivers Community Gateway were actively contributing to our communities.

6

trainees were placed with Northern Rivers Community Gateway.

## Geographic coverage

Servicing the State of NSW



## Accreditation

Northern Rivers Community Gateway has undergone external accreditation of its systems and processes.

Area	Lismore	Wollongbar	Casino	Coorabell	Alstonville	Corndale
Educational program and practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children's health and safety	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staffing arrangement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationships with children	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leadership and service management	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



# About us

## Our purpose

- Strategically secure funds to deliver programs and services targeting socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and families
- Establish an evidence base to plan, develop and manage innovative services that deliver a positive social impact and develop individual and community capacity
- Provide facilities that support community groups and services to promote community engagement and harmony
- Provide collaborative leadership to celebrate diversity and advocate for social justice
- Advocate for empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Provide opportunities for service users to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives

## Our locations

### Head office and community hub

76 Carrington Street, Lismore NSW 2480

### Postal address

PO Box 525, Lismore NSW 2480

### Other locations

- **Grafton**  
2/70 Prince Street, Grafton NSW 2460
- **Murwillumbah**  
Room 8, Murwillumbah Community Centre, Nullum Street, Murwillumbah NSW 2487

### Rainbow Region Kids locations

- **Alstonville**  
*Before and after school care*  
St. Joseph's Primary School, 11 Perry Street, Alstonville NSW 2477
- **Casino**  
*Vacation care*  
Casino West Public School, 84 Hotham Street, Casino NSW 2470

- **Coorabell**  
*After school care*  
Coorabell Public School, 21 Mango Lane, Coorabell NSW 2479
- **Corndale**  
*After school care*  
Corndale Public School, Corndale Road, Corndale NSW 2480
- **Kyogle**  
*Vacation care*  
Kyogle Public School, Summerland Highway, Kyogle NSW 2474
- **Lismore**  
*Before and after school care and vacation care*  
Lismore Public School, 10 Pound Street, Lismore NSW 2480
- **The Channon**  
*After school care*  
The Channon Public School, Standing Street, The Channon NSW 2480
- **Wollongbar**  
*Before and after school care and vacation care*  
Wollongbar Public School, Simpson Avenue, Wollongbar NSW 2477

# Our people

**Community Gateway recognises that our people are the bedrock of our vision “many tracks, one road, sustaining community.”**

Our leadership team recognise that knowing our people, understanding our strengths, our abilities and our training needs are all connected to our success in service delivery. We continue to invest in our people through ongoing training and development.

Here is a snapshot of our people and culture in the last year.

Staff recruitment:

- We recruited twelve new staff
- Six employees were engaged on a wage subsidy or traineeship, increasing from last year
- We rolled out a new online HR orientation for new staff, including five online training modules

Working together, we supported a knowledge-management framework with the following actions:

- Ten monthly staff meetings
- Running a practice framework workshop for all staff, facilitated by Beacon Strategies
- Delivering cultural awareness training for all staff
- Organising staff events and celebrations for occasions such as International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, International Women’s Day and Aboriginal Reconciliation Week
- Holding our annual staff Christmas party
- Appointing and supporting our values champions – Jenni, Helen, Tam, Peta and Fiona

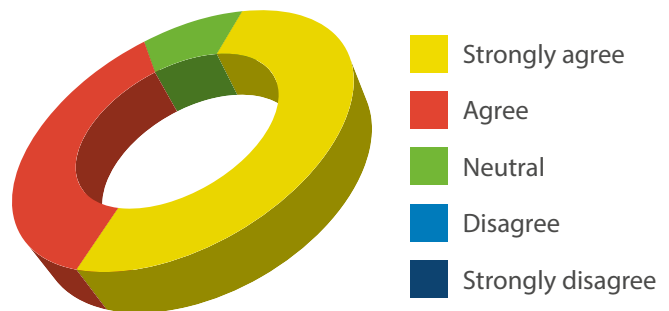
We awarded six staff Rewards and Recognition winners, each one nominated by a peer or colleague who believed they have actively demonstrated value-driven behaviour. Our winners were:

- Rainbow Region Kids Assistant Coordinators, who won as a team
- Maree Combe, volunteer
- Tam Cassidy, Volunteer Development Project Officer
- Melissa Coulton, Corporate Services
- Ariel Andrew-Smith, Cart Café Barista
- Cait Fitzgerald, Intake Officer

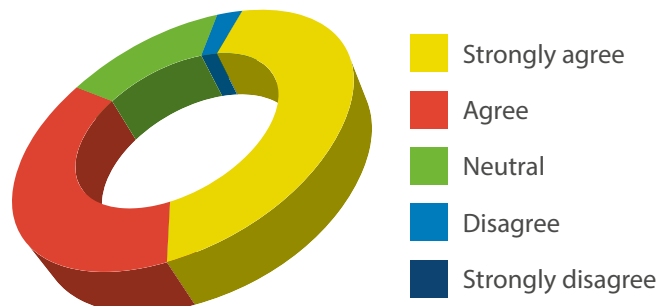
We organised a staff lunch to celebrate Wear It Purple Day, part of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia activities.



**Staff survey response to the statement “I feel proud to say I work for Community Gateway.”**



**Staff survey response to the statement “Open and honest communication is an important part of the culture at Community Gateway.”**





# Our service delivery



Northern Rivers Community Gateway operates a number of welfare and community capacity building services in the township of Lismore, the Far North Coast and New South Wales.

## Our services

### Social and financial inclusion

- Community hub
- Volunteer Resource Centre
- Community Visitors Scheme
- Timebanking
- Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme
- NSW No Interest Loans Scheme management
- StepUP low interest loans
- Home Energy Action
- Waruwi gambling help
- Work and Development Order organisation
- First Step emergency relief
- NSW financial inclusion

### Community hub facilities

- Community information
- First Step emergency relief
- Assisted referrals
- Community calendar
- Budget counsellor
- Financial counsellor
- Tax help
- Skills development, including literacy, numeracy classes
- Computer tuition and senior's kiosk
- Community food pantry
- Showers
- Laundry facilities
- Free spectacles (eligibility conditions apply)
- Street swags
- Room rental and office facilities
- JP services

### Community support

- Connecting Families
- Child and Adolescent Trauma Counselling
- Reaching Out
- Helping Hands
- The Cart Café

### Children and disability

- Rainbow Region Kids – outside school hours child care
- Rainbow Region Kids – school vacation child care
- Dragonites – school vacation care for teenagers with a disability
- Flourishing Families

# Social inclusion

## Community hub

**Our community hub coordinates a range of programs and services to those most vulnerable people in our community.**

These services include:

- Information and assisted referrals
- Emergency relief
- Community food pantry
- Tax Help
- Broadband for seniors
- Community calendar
- Office facilities
- Room rentals for community groups
- Laundry facilities and showers for people who are homeless

The hub also organises events to build community capacity and resilience through building community connections.

We opened after the floods in a newly renovated reception and intake area within the building and, with our intake officers, our capability has grown. More than ten thousand instances of help, advice, intake and referral have been captured in our systems since November 2017.

This transition into our new centralised database allows for information to be captured and used to ensure clients have all available information and are able to be supported with our wrap-around services.



In November 2017, we hosted a community event for Social Inclusion Week, which brought a large number of community members, clients, staff and representatives from a number of organisations together to celebrate the diversity in our community with a barbecue, yoga and fabulous live music.



# Social inclusion

**Nature of appointment requests at our community hub from November 2017 to June 2018**



- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Chemist vouchers          | Financial counselling |
| Supermarket vouchers      | Food parcels          |
| Calendar                  | Fuel cards            |
| Room booking              | Information           |
| Community Visitors Scheme | JP access             |
| EAPA vouchers             | Telstra vouchers      |
| Emergency Relief          | Volunteering          |
| Finance                   |                       |

## First Step emergency relief

**Our First Step emergency relief service has had a strong and positive year.**

It is the lead agency working in partnership with other community organisations to deliver emergency assistance to vulnerable people living in the Northern Rivers region, including people from Lismore, Casino, Byron Bay, Murwillumbah, Kyogle and surrounding areas.

This service provides intake and assessment, food parcels, Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA), Telstra phone cards, Telstra bills assistance, chemist vouchers and fuel vouchers. Our wrap-around service model uses a person-centred approach through intake and assessment, and provides referral pathways both internally and externally.



# Social inclusion

## Volunteer Resource Centre

**In the last year, Community Gateway was successful in gaining funding for a project called Spontaneous Volunteering. This project is linked to the recent flood recovery and the need to be more structured in the community's response to a disaster event.**

Partnerships with Red Cross, regional councils, SES and specialist response teams will start with a workshop we will host in November, with a view to developing a structured framework which can be reused by other regions to assemble volunteer groups in a timely and managed fashion. There will be more news to come on this project throughout the year to come.

The Volunteer Resource Centre has continued with a strong year of volunteering in the community, through promotion, education and placement of volunteers as well as facilitating a network of more than sixty member organisations to build the skills of managers and volunteers.

The New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services has funded us to deliver a Certificate I in Volunteering. We have started delivering this qualification as a thirteen week program, with most attendees having made their way through the majority of the program. This positive attendance response has resulted in value for future use of these potential volunteers in meaningful community actions.

There are a number of volunteers which we would like to acknowledge for their tireless work in our community and the support they have given over the past years. Our Maree was presented with an award at the New South Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Many thanks to Maree and all of our other volunteers who consistently give their valuable time, even just in small amounts, to make a big difference to our community.

40%

Of volunteers registered with us are actively volunteering in our communities.





# Social inclusion



## Community Visitors Scheme

**The Community Visitors Scheme is a federally funded service which undertakes activities to find companions for socially isolated residents in aged care facilities.**

In 2018 the scheme celebrated 25 years of operation in the Lismore region.

Our community visitors come from various backgrounds and are matched with residents who have similar interests for a long-lasting friendship.

All our visitors make an exceptional contribution to the scheme and find it a rewarding experience.

Requests continue to flow in, enabling the continued overcoming of social exclusion and isolation for aged care residents in our community. We continue to work on engagement, building strong relationships and the dependability of our community visitors for social interaction.

# Financial inclusion

September 2017 was a positive month for our financial inclusion services. We were successful in tendering for NSW financial inclusion services and for collaborative loan provision including No Interest Loans Scheme funding for the Northern Rivers region and loan management for NSW. To be successful in these new program models shows that we are making a real difference to all regional communities throughout New South Wales.

## Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme

**No interest loans were approved and delivered across New South Wales.**

Good Shepherd Microfinance implemented a new model of service delivery this year, which included moving from paper to computer-based loan submission processes.

Our No Interest Loans Scheme staff attended forums across New South Wales to promote Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme as a loan manager for the state.

**402**

Number of Northern Rivers NILS loans approved.

**\$392,500**

Total amount of Northern Rivers NILS money loaned.





# Financial inclusion

Following the transition to this new model, we have received positive results and continue with strong figures into the new financial year.

The team has also worked tirelessly to ensure clients are satisfied with the service and we are working towards streamlining the process and increasing region capability to ensure we service more clients with better processes in the coming year.

As well as loan assessment and management for New South Wales, we provide no interest loans regionally from Tweed Heads to Grafton, providing access to affordable goods and services that improve the quality of a person's life.

Our service delivery works with clients at the centre to improve their financial capability through simple money management strategies, budgeting skills and financial counselling if necessary. We also employ the concept of circular community credit – when one person repays, the money is then available for someone else in the community to borrow.

## StepUP loans

**StepUP Loans have also had a strong year, with each month increasing the popularity of the service.**

By comparison with Northern Rivers No Interest Loans, these loans are targeted towards more expensive household and travel items. This allows our financially vulnerable clients and families to pay off larger amounts at a low interest rate to achieve independence and deliver an outcome which benefits all involved.

The amounts loaned are from \$800 to \$3000 at a low interest rate of 5.99% which is achievable for all those who apply.

This service provides a secondary funding option to Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme and supports Community Gateway principles.

61

Number of StepUP loans approved.

\$172,900

Total amount of StepUP money loaned.

# Financial inclusion

## Warruwi Aboriginal gambling help

**The success of this group service has been acknowledged with a funding extension through to December 2019, allowing a continued focus on the issues of gambling which are linked to many family services covering health, wellbeing, unity and support.**

Warruwi works in partnership with Aboriginal communities in the North Coast, Mid North Coast and New England regions. We develop strategies, conduct workshops and produce events to raise awareness and education in overcoming problem gambling.

This year we conducted forty three events and workshops in the three regions. Community events varied in size from regional football tournaments, health promotions, community forums, Warruwi specific events in Aboriginal communities to large



Warruwi spokesperson Nathan Hindmarsh talking to Casino High School students.

Warruwi spokesperson Nathan Hindmarsh with Pius X Aboriginal Medical Service in Toomelah



community events such as NAIDOC and football knockouts where we have had up to five thousand people attending our country events.

We host stalls and yarn with the community at these events. They were held in some of the most rural and remote regional communities, in small to mid-sized regional cities and in twenty different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Snapshot of January to June 2018 –

- 16 major Warruwi events across 3 regions
- Attendees of over 1600 across all sessions
- Provider engagement of over 350 instances of attendance
- 9 community workshops across 3 regions
- Attendees of over 210 for the workshops

Cultural awareness training, community strategies and program development, partnerships and wellness focus are all a part of the service.

While there is always more to do, we are looking towards a strong 2018-19 where we continue to make a difference, and where we can ensure education and awareness is delivered to those who need it.

43

Events and workshops were delivered.

>1600

People attended our events and workshops.



# Financial inclusion

## The Cart Café – coffee with a conscience

**It has been a challenging year for retail businesses in Lismore after the floods, and we have been there to help and support our community at events where we can, to produce a quality service at a low price.**

As well as serving great coffees, teas, refreshments and a variety of hot and cold snacks, our Cart Café provides employment pathways for vulnerable people in our community.

The carts have been at a number of events, located at Lismore Central Shopping Centre and have been successful in supporting Lismore TAFE campus with a canteen service for staff, community and students.

This will continue to grow as a business in 2018/19 and we look forward to an increased presence in Lismore and further afield throughout the Northern Rivers region. To ensure that our services are relevant and that we can make a difference we will travel to any location in the region and are always keen to support community events.

Our carts are available for events and functions. To book or for more information, please contact us through our Cart Café Facebook page, email [cartcafe@nrcg.org.au](mailto:cartcafe@nrcg.org.au) or call us on 02 6621 7397.



# Community support

## Connecting Families

**Now in its third year of operation, the Connecting Families service continued to provide much needed support to vulnerable families who required parenting capacity building and intensive case management across the region.**

With the utilisation of the evidence-based Parents under Pressure curriculum, the service was able to provide families with a modulated approach to stabilising crisis and supporting parents to increase their capacity for attachment and family functioning.

Well established in the Grafton and Lismore regions, the service continued to build on its relationships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

60

People engaged with our Connecting Families service during the year.

311

Appointments were met by people participating in the service.

It recognised a keen rise in referrals to the service, evidence of the need and demand for parenting capacity building in our communities.

The service gained recognition from key stakeholders for its innovative and evidence-based case management model and has been promoted within key organisations as the preferred family preservation service for referral.

In response to the high demand for this service across the state, Community Gateway was able to secure additional funding for the Richmond to Tweed region, increasing its capacity to deliver the service to a larger number of families in need.

Moving forward into 2018/2019, the service aims to continue its work building strong links with the communities across the Northern Rivers, securing additional funding to increase the capacity of the service, and improving health outcomes for vulnerable families across the region.





# Community support

## Trauma counselling

### Child and adolescent trauma counselling

**2017/2018 proved to be an exciting year for our Child and Adolescent Trauma Counselling service, which saw the completion of our newly refurbished counselling rooms and purpose-built family counselling room.**

Designed according to trauma informed practice principles, the new counselling spaces are able to down-regulate anxiety and increase accessibility for clients experiencing trauma. Dimmable lighting, separate waiting areas, safe entry points, comfortable

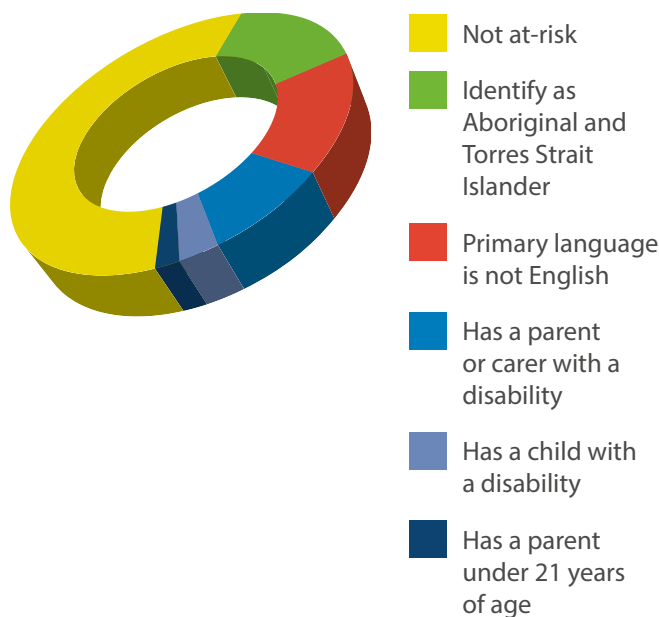
seating and a range of new resources have further enhanced our capacity to provide services to those impacted by the effects of trauma.

The 2017/2018 year also saw the expansion of this service, in partnership with Rainbow Region Kids, to deliver trauma counselling to vulnerable children identified through our Flourishing Families service.

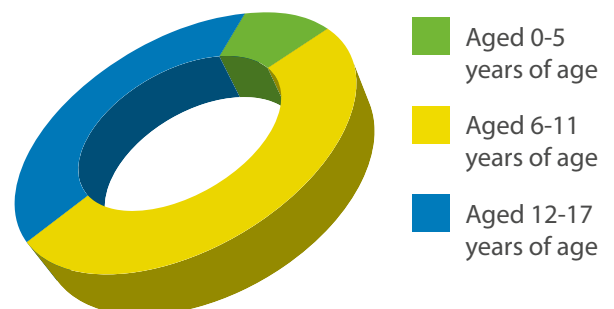
In the short term this has drastically reduced the wait times for children currently on the waiting list, and longer term will mean that more children will receive a service in relation to the effects of trauma.

As trauma counselling continues to be identified as a high need by various governing bodies across the Northern Rivers region, Community Gateway will continue to seek investment for this service as a means to expand and provide this vital service across the state.

#### At-risk groups accessing the service



#### Children and young people accessing the service



90%

Participant parents and carers who said that they learned new parenting knowledge and skills as a result of the service.

97%

Participant young people and families who engaged with the service for their planned duration.

93%

Participant young people aged 12-17 who said that they feel more confident as a result of the service.

93%

Participant young people aged 12-17 who said that the most important goal was fully achieved.

# Community support

## Trauma counselling

### Reaching Out – sexual assault survivors

**In addition to the success of our child and adolescent trauma counselling service over 2017/2018, Community Gateway continued to deliver Reaching Out, providing counselling and case management to adult survivors of sexual assault.**

This service saw a range of client groups across a range of settings and throughout the region. It worked on improving access for clients that, for whatever reason, were unable to attend one of the locations that Reaching Out is facilitated from. This meant that the service utilised a range of mediums for counselling which included telephone, Skype, and outreach when required.

The service also identified a need to support adults to improve their comfortability in social settings and expand their ability to create and maintain support networks, outside of counselling sessions after a period of support.

It looked at ways in which this transition could be achieved and developed a closed support group which enabled adult survivors the safe place in which to expand these resilience skills. Various positive outcomes have been achieved in relation to these groups, which include a reported increased confidence in public settings and engagement in volunteering opportunities.

Moving into the new year, the service aims to increase its capacity to deliver these groups and grow its evidence base in relation to supporting adult survivors of sexual assault into socially inclusive settings.

# Community support

## Helping Hands

**2017/2018 saw a continued sector wide discussion relating to the housing crises and the lack of affordable housing options available which effected the region's most vulnerable.**

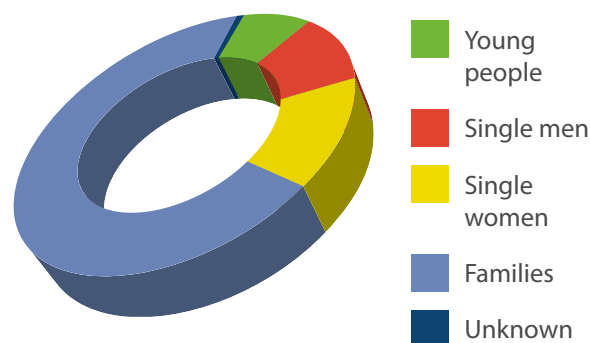
Vacancy rates continued to be the lowest they had been in five years across the state averaging at around 2.5%. However the Northern Rivers region experienced a significantly lower vacancy rate reaching as low as 0.08% and averaging around 1.2% (REINSW 2018).

Our Helping Hands service continued to witness the impacts of this crisis as Aboriginal families and individuals in particular were faced with high competition for affordable housing stock, and long periods of being in crisis.

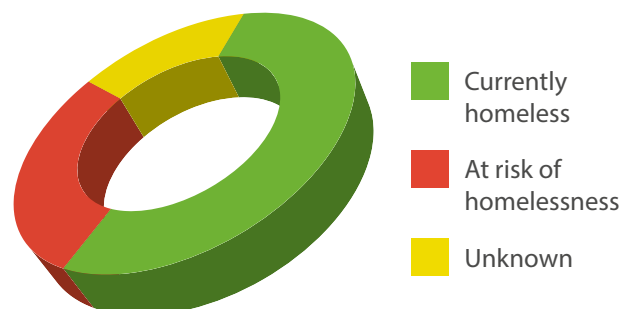
During the year the service employed a number of strategies to assist Aboriginal families and individuals who were homeless or at significant risk of being homeless. With a mix of intensive case management, advocacy, brokerage and key partnerships, the service was able to assist clients into a variety of medium and long-term housing options, ranging from private rental, boarding, social housing and transitional housing. The service also implement strategies to sustain existing tenancies at risk.

At a strategic level, Community Gateway participated in a number of forums and boards that led community discussion and action across the homelessness sector, and raised key issues facing the Aboriginal community in relation to securing stable housing.

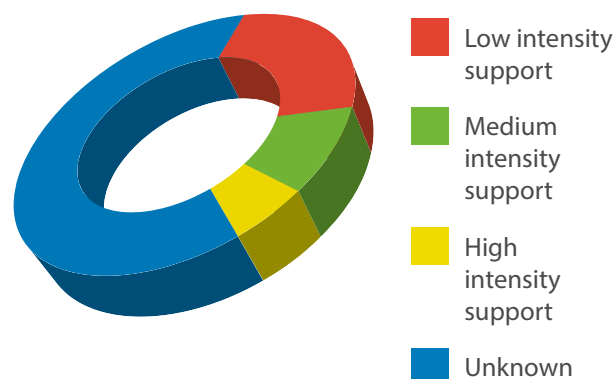
**Households accessing the service**



**Homelessness status of people accessing the service**



**Level of support required for people accessing the service**





# Children and young people

## Rainbow Region Kids

**Rainbow Region Kids is a successful social enterprise that offers fully accredited child care services for school aged children across five Local Governments Areas including Lismore, Richmond Valley, Kyogle Shire, Byron Bay Shire and Ballina Shire.**

The service delivers outside school hours child care, including vacation care, after school care and before school care. It operates across multiple locations including:

- Lismore Public School
- Wollongbar Public School
- Casino West Public School
- Kyogle Public school
- Corndale Public School
- Coorabell Public School
- Alstonville St Joseph's Primary School
- Our new service at The Channon Public School.

Rainbow Region Kids joined the local Yarning Circle, designed for early childhood and child care services eligible under the Inclusion Support Program (ISP). Working in conjunction with the Inclusion Agency, the service has a strong commitment to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families into our child care settings.

The service is registered under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Educational and Care, which includes the Educational and Care Services National Law and the Educational and Care Services National Regulations. It has undergone external assessment and rating conducted by Early Childhood Education and Care.

Our supervisors and administration staff are to be commended for the work they undertook to implemented a system change for the new Child Care Subsidy that was introduced in July 2018.

Service staff participated in International Women's Day activities held in Lismore in March 2018, and were actively involved in several local events such as the Lismore Aboriginal Rugby League football tournament.



# Children and young people

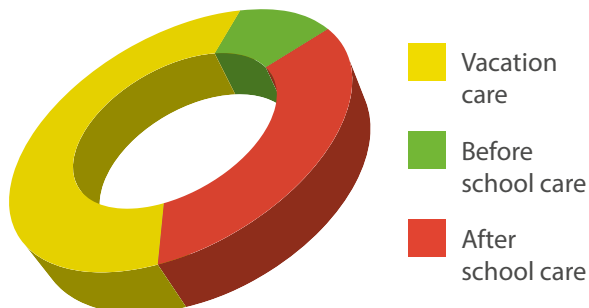


- Ice skating fitness workshops
- Magic shows
- Triple Zero (000) Day
- NAIDOC celebrations
- Barefoot bowls
- Laser skirmish
- Discos
- Movies
- Ten pin bowling
- Cooking demonstrations and activities
- Circus skills workshops
- Macadamia Castle excursions

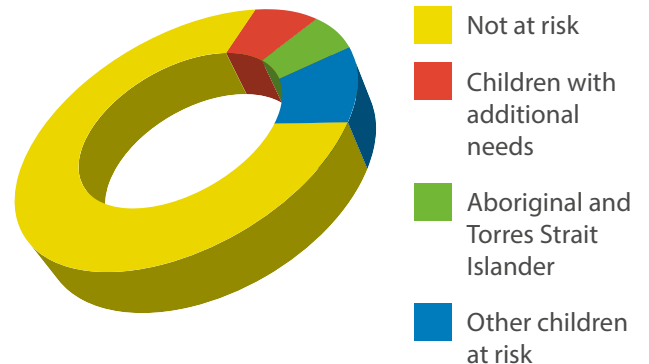


Our vacation care services held combined excursion activities and special theme days for all participating children from each location, bringing them together to expand their social and cultural networks in a child friendly, safe environment. Exciting activities the children participated in this year included:

**Service attendance across all locations**



**Attendance of children at risk across all services and locations**



# Children and young people

The service provided contracted care for clients of:

- NSW Department of Family and Community Services
- Child and adolescent specialist programs and accommodation
- St Vincent De Paul
- UPA
- Foundation Care
- St Carthage's Community Care
- Evans Head Brighter Futures
- Casino Brighter Futures
- Mental Health Respite Program
- Far North Coast Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre
- Wesley Mission
- Family Referral Service
- On Track Community Programs

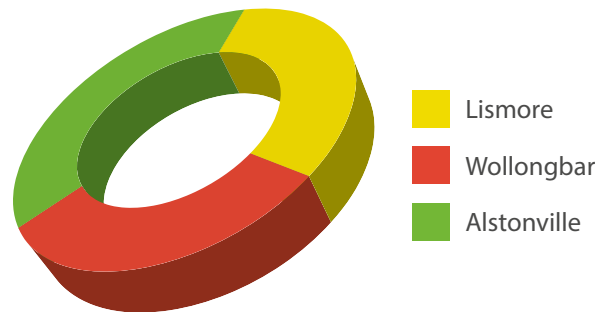
## Disability services – Dragonites Vacation Care

**Dragonites Vacation Care combined with Lismore Vacation Care to provide outside school hours care for teenagers with disabilities. The Dragonites service supported sixteen families.**

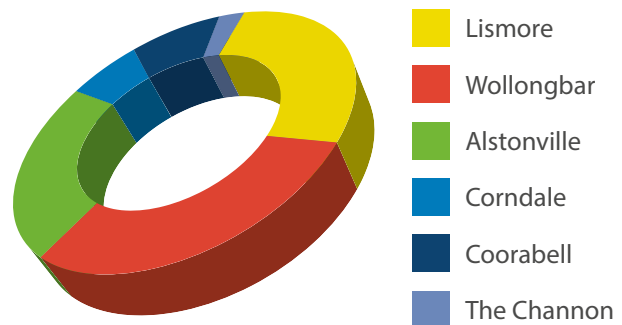
Dragonites allowed parents and carers of teenagers with disability to access appropriate care at mainstream outside school hours and holiday care programs.

It also provided opportunities for teenagers to build their social skills, cooking and living experiences and social outings. Opportunities were provided in areas of interest for participants such as multimedia skills workshops and tuition.

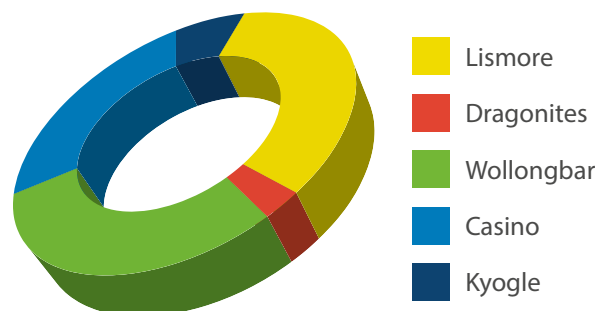
**Before school care attendance by location**



**After school care attendance by location**



**Vacation care attendance by location**





# Children and young people

## Flourishing Families

**This newly developed service builds on our Supported Mothers Program Model, designed in partnership with Beacon Strategies and will be implemented in the 2018/19 year.**

The Flourishing Family service aims to support families to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children. It provides specialist case management to support school aged children between the ages of five and twelve years, and their parents.

The service aims to support both children and parents to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children, through assessment and referral to counselling, therapies and aims to improve access to study or employment opportunities.

Flourishing Families will deliver case management, coordination and integration, service support, counselling and group services to facilitate family support structures that produce positive short and long-term developmental outcomes for families. Our service staff will apply specialised knowledge around barriers to learning, child protection legislation, trauma informed practice and cultural competence.

The service will also develop and leverage complementary services delivered by Community Gateway such as supported play groups, trauma counselling and our Connecting Families service.



# NSW financial inclusion

**After a review of the NSW NILS State coordination and a new competitive tender process for the new NSW Financial Inclusion services, Northern Rivers Community Gateway was successful in regaining this funding.**

Our program had a focus on the broader issue of financial exclusion and coupled with our role in developing and facilitating the NSW Financial Inclusion Network, we were best placed to take on this new role.

The NSW Financial Inclusion Network was formed by Northern Rivers Community Gateway to facilitate engagement with the community sector, government and peak organisations for the purpose of working towards a more financially inclusive future for New South Wales and developing a state-wide approach to financial inclusion.

Community Gateway chief executive officer chairs this meeting and members include a broad range of stakeholders working across government, non-government and the community services sector.

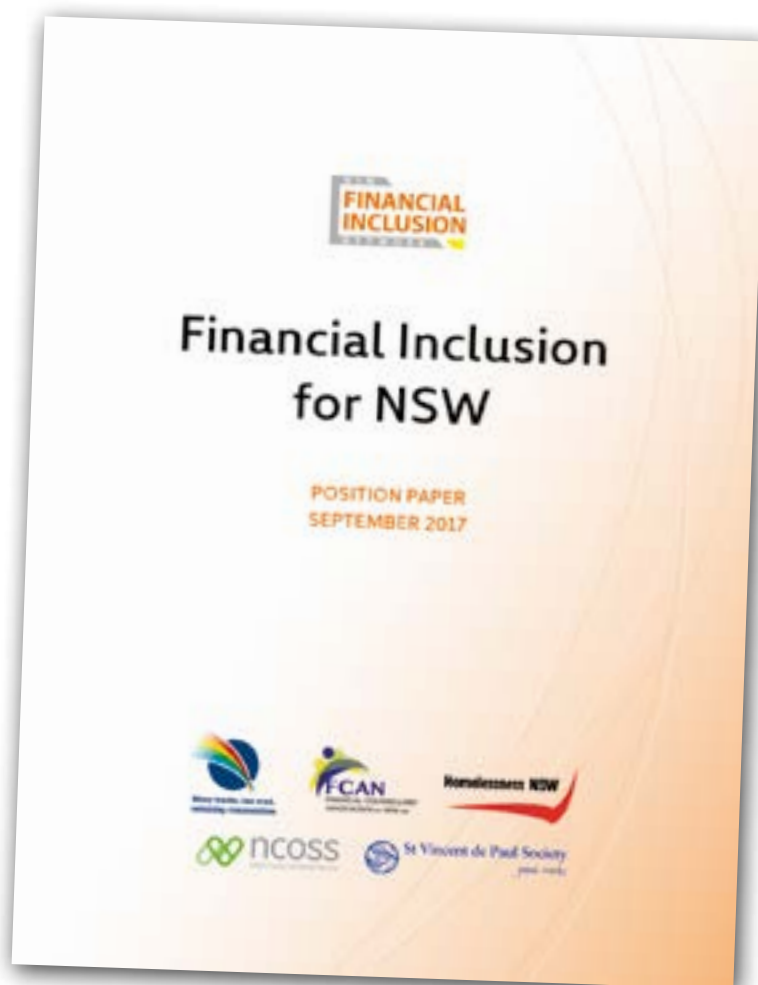
Through the Financial Inclusion Network, we conducted significant research and developed consultation papers. We have provided a fact sheet to all government ministers highlighting financial exclusion in New South Wales. These fact sheets were supported through data obtained from the Centre for Social Impact.

In the last year we provided strategic advice to NSW Fair Trade. We worked collaboratively with the Financial Inclusion Network to produce a position paper on financial exclusion which gave the NSW Financial Inclusion Network's position on financial exclusion in New South Wales.

This position paper entitled *Financial Inclusion for NSW* was launched in September 2017 at NSW Parliament House by the Deputy Speaker of the House and Hon. Member for Lismore Thomas George MP.

Our continued priority is to further develop partnerships with organisations working in the financial inclusion space and with research bodies to further examine opportunities and potential solution development.

We look forward to the continued work of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network.



# Board of directors

## Our board

<b>President</b>	Robyn Riordan
<b>Vice president</b>	Neil Davies
<b>Treasurer</b>	Deniel Taylor
<b>Directors</b>	Deb Pugh Neil Harris

## Valuing our team

### Values

**Northern Rivers Community Gateway continues to remain closely connected to its organisational values.**

A recent review of these values brought about a change. Our values are currently expressed as:

- Vision
- Commitment
- Respect
- Integrity
- Innovative

These new values were reviewed by our board of directors, staff and volunteers. These values continue to underpin our organisation in 2017/18 through strategic human resource management and strong communication around our strategic direction.

Evidence of our values-driven human resource management strategy can be found in areas such as:

- Talent management
- Performance review procedure and regular supervision
- Recruitment and onboarding
- Training and development

The third year of our Values Champions team has seen the development of the values champion role to promote our values and to provide advice to Human Resources in strengthening our connection to our values.

Our Rewards and Recognition project goes from strength to strength. This project enables staff and volunteers to nominate peers and management for formal recognition of outstanding efforts and behaviours aligned to the organisational values.



# Chairperson's report

**The most significant issue that the Northern Rivers Community Gateway Board of Directors faced in the last year was the recovery and rebuilding of our organisation after the 2017 Lismore flooding event.**

I do not use the term 'rebuilding' lightly, as our recovery included not only the physical structures and facilities of our head office and community hub, but also the morale and mental wellbeing of our staff, volunteers and community.

In those efforts, the board of directors would like to make a particular mention of gratitude to our chief executive officer, staff and volunteers for their positive attitudes, determined contributions and resilience to see Community Gateway through that challenge, to rebuild and flourish.

Most importantly, underpinning all of our committed work to rebuild, was the excellent leadership provided by our board of directors, chief executive officer and managers.

The board's governance framework included principles of risk management with policies and procedures in place, which included our flood insurance. This enabled us to complete a full rebuild and refurbishment of the Lismore property.

These principles of good governance and strategic planning continue to underline the success of our organisation, not only for the past flooding event, but for our present position and looking forward with an eye to the future.

In the last year the board endorsed Community Gateway's 2017-2020 strategic plan, giving us clear direction and purpose as we grow into the future. We have seen a marked increase in successful funding acquisitions in the last year, which is a great sign that we're achieving our vision.



In this time the board has also endorsed Community Gateway's move towards acquiring formal accreditation, a process which is well under way and which involves all levels of our organisation from board to clients. This accreditation will ensure that our management, service delivery, operational and practice frameworks are all working as best they can, ensuring we are fit and strong to continue our work and improve outcomes for vulnerable people in our communities.

In conclusion, I'd like to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to my fellow board members for their valuable input and support, to our chief executive officer for her leadership and management skills, and to the managers and staff of Community Gateway for their commitment and professionalism following the flooding event.

I look forward to our future with confidence and enthusiasm.

*Robyn Riordan*

# Treasurer's report

**In the last year, Northern Rivers Community Gateway's focus was on rebuilding as a result of the devastating March 2017 flood.**

Good governance and management systems ensured that we had adequate insurance to rebuild a purpose-built organisation. Insurances including professional indemnity, public liability and work cover are in place as well as a solid base of policies and procedures to govern all areas of our operations.

Our organisation continued to maintain good accounting practice, complying with all Australian and New South Wales company standards. This accounting practice was supported by an independent external audit. Attached are the audited financial statements.

A finance committee comprising the treasurer, chairperson, chief executive officer and corporate services manager monitor our expenditure. Financial and organisational management currently includes biannual external audits, internal financial management and monitoring, driving monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports to funding bodies and the board of directors.

Community Gateway successfully increased its funding base again this year and so we have been able to further strengthen our financial position. Our income increased to \$2,675,645 this last year and, coupled with insurance excess resulted in a surplus of \$80,877. The organisation's net assets at year-end were \$1,248,538 demonstrating our solid financial position.



Thank you to our chief executive officer for good management of finances through the monthly finance committee meetings. Thank you to our managers for assisting the chief executive officer in keeping good records of their expenses.

I look forward to working with the board and chief executive officer into the future.

*Deniel Taylor*

# Chief executive officer's report

## **The focus for Northern Rivers Community Gateway this financial year was on 'rebuilding'.**

The ground floor of our Community Hub and head office in Lismore was fully demolished after the devastation of the March 2017 flood and for the first half of the year we relied heavily on our community partners to continue operation of our trauma counselling and financial inclusion services.

With foresight and good governance we were fully insured which enabled us to rebuild a purpose-built community hub with a trauma counselling room, interview rooms, community room and community food pantry. Our new community room offers a fully equipped commercial kitchen. Our staff must be commended for the resilience they showed in creating a makeshift intake area and continuing to provide emergency relief, financial support and case management to those most disadvantaged in our community for months after the flood.

Thank you to Peter Turner & Associates for designing a very functional community facility. The positive news in revaluing our property, which was purchased from Lismore City Council in 2012, has proved a healthy investment decision by our board of directors and a very positive bottom line moving forward for our organisation.

We are the lead agency for emergency relief services across the Far North Coast, in partnership with Byron Community Centre, Murwillumbah Community Centre, Casino and Kyogle Community Services. We also work with OTC and the Aboriginal Alliance to deliver homelessness case management services to Aboriginal people. I was fortunate to facilitate Aboriginal homelessness sessions at regional, state and national homelessness conferences, where I highlighted the importance of listening to Aboriginal voices in the delivery of services to Aboriginal clients.

Together with Aboriginal Alliance partners, our staff presented at the regional conference. Our commitment to Aboriginal service delivery is shown through our Aboriginal employment strategy and our Warruwi gambling service working with Aboriginal communities in the Far North Coast, New England and Mid North Coast. Our partnership with Clubs NSW and Nathan Hindmarsh has led to some very positive community engagement outcomes.



*Many tracks, one road, sustaining community* remains our vision. Together with the rebuild, we developed a new strategic plan for 2017 to 2020, with key focus areas of strategic investment, innovation and social impact. We undertook a review of our values to ensure they remain relevant to all our staff and management. These values include vision, commitment, respect, integrity and innovative. They continue to underpin the foundations of our organisation.

We continued our work with Beacon Strategies this year in developing and implementing an organisation-wide practice framework. Our ultimate goal is to generate social impact in the communities we work with. Through this practice framework we developed six high level social impact goals which will guide our organisations practice but also enable us to report on the social impact we are creating through our services.

A key focus of my role this year was the continued development of key partnerships. I continued my role on the board of Homelessness NSW and as chairperson of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network. A key partnership has been the development work we have undertaken with Beacon Strategies in developing new service models, which has led to the realisation of our new Flourishing Families service. With more than two million dollars in funding, we will be able to implement Flourishing Families over the next three years. And with Beacon Strategies engaged to implement an evaluation framework, it will enable clear measurement of outcomes and social impact.



# Chief executive officer's report

Our diversity is our strength and we continue to support disadvantaged people through wrap-around service delivery. Our volunteer services are core to building resilient communities. We have worked with Lismore City Council, emergency services and the community service sector to develop strategies for responding to disasters. Out of this work and through our partnership with Red Cross and Hunter Volunteering, we have been successful in securing funding to develop a framework for the use of spontaneous volunteers in response to disasters. This project will begin in 2018/19 and will extend to the Hunter region. It will work with local councils, SES and other emergency services, and may have national implications for establishing best practice in working with spontaneous volunteers.

As chairperson of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network, I'm extremely proud of the *Financial Inclusion in NSW* position paper we developed. Thank you to Hon. Thomas George, Member for Lismore, for launching this position paper at New South Wales Parliament in September 2017. This position paper highlights the issue of financial exclusion in New South Wales and the need for a whole of government policy position.

Thank you to the board of directors for supporting my role, in strengthening partnerships and for my ongoing professional development to inform our organisational practices. My study tour to America enabled me to build on partnerships worldwide and attend a homelessness conference in New York.

Extensive work has been undertaken this year to ready ourselves for external accreditation. We have engaged Quality Innovation Performance with the intention of completing an accreditation process under the Quality Improvement Council *Health and Community Service Standards*. This also included a full review and redevelopment of our client relationship management systems.

Thank you to the board of directors for your continued support of me in my role as chief executive officer. Thank you to the leadership team for your commitment. We have continued to grow together with a strong collegial culture. Thank you to our staff who continue to strive for excellence and who are open to new and innovative solutions. Thank you to the volunteers for the role you play in selflessly supporting vulnerable communities.

*Jenni Beetson-Mortimer*

## Contact us

### Head office and community hub

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Email [reception@nrcg.org.au](mailto:reception@nrcg.org.au)  
Telephone 02 6621 7397  
Fax 02 6622 0235

### Grafton

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

### Murwillumbah

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

### Our childcare services

Alstonville	St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, 11 Perry Street, Alstonville NSW 2477
Casino	Casino West Public School, 84 Hotham Street, Casino NSW 2470
Coorabell	Coorabell Public School, 21 Mango Lane, Coorabell NSW 2479
Corndale	Corndale Public School, 647 Corndale Road, Corndale NSW 2480
Kyogle	Kyogle Public School, 192 Summerland Way, Kyogle NSW 2474
Lismore	Lismore Public School, 10 Pound Street, Lismore NSW 2480
Ocean Shores	Ocean Shores Public School, 166 Shara Boulevard, Ocean Shores North NSW 2483
The Channon	The Channon Public School, Standing Street, The Channon NSW 2480
Wollongbar	Wollongbar Public School, Simpson Avenue, Wollongbar NSW 2477

### Our postal address

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Visit [nrcg.org.au](http://nrcg.org.au)

