



**Developing positive outcomes for
isolated children and families.**

Contact's unique expertise is in delivering effective and impactful child, family and community programs in isolated, rural and remote contexts.

Year In Review 2022 – 23

Contact would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which we all live and work, paying respect to First Nation Elders past, present and of the future.

Contents

- Our Role 3**
- Our Board. 5**
- Our Year in Review 6**
- Our Work in Action 10**
- Murra in Murra (Hand in Hand). . . 12**
- Wanaaring Community Hub . . . 14**
- Mobiles making it happen. . . . 16**
- Our Partners 18**



Our Role

Contact is dedicated to addressing the profound impacts of isolation and disadvantage for children, families, and communities, with a specific focus on fostering genuine, sustained, and meaningful community engagement, working collaboratively across diverse communities, agencies, and sectors.

Our strategic focus areas:

- Supporting children, families and communities.
- Building the capacity of the local service sector

Our Mission

Our approach involves building resilience, strengthening social capital, fostering sustainable communities, and cultivating positive outcomes for isolated children and families.

As an agency with specialist, place-based expertise, authentic connections and partnerships with children, families and communities, and collaborations with local people, regional agencies, and networks are central to our work.

Our Objective

To address disadvantage and isolation experienced by rural and remote children and their families, within the available resources





Our Board

Contact is headed by a multidisciplinary Board of highly experienced professionals with expertise in governance and in a variety of fields related to children, families, policy, and program delivery, as well as direct experience with rural and remote communities.

The expertise of the Board continues to inform the articulation, review and adaptation of Contact's organisational priorities and strategies needed in these changing and challenging times.

Executive

President	Megan Mitchell AM
Vice President	VACANT
Treasurer	Nathan Kitto
Secretary	Fiona Prentice

Board

Kathryn Greiner AO
Nerida Healy

CEO

Sue Kingwill

Public Officer

Maureen Fegan OAM

We acknowledge all who have advised and assisted Contact throughout its history and for the commitment shown for the welfare of Australia's isolated children, families and communities.

Our Year in Review

Contact utilises its strong community and agency networks to ameliorate isolation, create connections, promote, inform, and enhance the delivery of its programs, and to leverage community actions and partnership roles within the community.

Approximately one-third of the Australian population resides in Regional Australia (ABS 2022e), and for 45 years Contact has been reaching the most rural and remote areas, evolving solutions to meet community-defined needs.

Years of delivering responsive child and family services has resulted in deep and established organisational relationships within rural and remote areas. Connectedness and community focus are the essence of our being and the hallmark of our success.

Listening to the community informs all our responses, in our advocacy on behalf of children and families and in the development of targeted proposals to government, philanthropy, and corporate Australia.

In response to the 2022-2023 flooding, Contact developed several 'Keeping Rural Communities Connected' proposals focusing on practical child and family-focused flood recovery support, targeting an estimated 14,232 families (2021 ABS Data) in sixteen (16) rural and remote flood impacted LGAs.

In 2023, universal access to child and family services is not the reality for many families across Regional Australia. Consistently families have shared their inability to access quality early childhood development programs (especially for children aged between 0-8 years), early intervention, allied health, parenting supports and related services.

The Mitchell Institute's 'Childcare Deserts and Oases' report (2022) further reinforced a service gap, highlighting that about one million families do not have access to any childcare in Australia, with almost all these families living in rural and remote areas.

A partnership with the Mitchell Institute has been forged with a project concept directed towards examining service models and solutions to regional child-related unmet service needs and capturing the experiences of families, carers, and workers directly impacted by current early childhood development system approaches.



A Commitment to Good Governance.

Responsible financial management and sustainable growth are crucial, and Contact is an efficient and lean organisation focused on impactful resource utilisation.

Our work is made possible through funding, and we express gratitude for the funds and support received through Philanthropy, and Government. We particularly also acknowledge the continuing generous air travel assistance for the CEO, made possible by Martin Daniell and Tony Willsallen, and Wanaaring's Hugheston family, and Leila Leigo Centre Trustees, in addition to donations and pro bono contributions of many other supporters that extend the reach and impact of Contact's programs.

Like many non-government organisations, Contact has not been immune to the significant challenges in securing the needed level of funding to ensure sustainability and growth in ways to best support the communities it serves and the children and families who live in them.

Through the 'Building Foundations for a Stronger Future' project, Orange Compass Consultancy is working with Contact to define strategic business opportunities and build organisational security. A Foundation Rural and Regional Strengthening Rural Communities grant is contributing towards this work.

Contact's Board ensures continuous review of statutory responsibilities, overseeing financial reporting, risk management, strategic planning, and regulatory compliance processes. The Board has met five times during the

year, including a face-to-face meeting, supported the CEO in delegations to Federal and State officials and politicians, reviewed the organisation's governance, and undertaken a Board appraisal. The CEO has tirelessly worked to serve the Board and identify opportunities to augment our resources, and to maintain the highest standards of governance.

All Board members efforts are acknowledged. Three Board members' terms of office concluded at the 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM) namely Nerida Healey (Pooncarie), Treasurer Nathan Kitto (Toowoomba) and Secretary Fiona Prentice (Dubbo). We sincerely thank Nerida, Nathan and Fiona for their wisdom, dedication and expertise over many years.

The commitment and professionalism of Contact's staff provide a solid foundation towards achieving the organisation's vision. With heartfelt appreciation we record our appreciation to Sylvia McNab, Robin and Bea Saunders, Robert McDonald, in addition to valued contributions of Purpose Accounting and Corvus Creative.

Cherie Butryn, Contact's

Administrator, retired during this year. Throughout her nearly two decades of service Cherie exemplified the highest standards of professionalism, and loyalty, and we deeply thank her for her diligent efforts.

With great respect and sadness, Contact acknowledges the passing of Judy Finlason OAM. A strong woman who applied her sharp mind, leadership, volunteer, and advocacy skills towards making a difference for the community.

In conclusion Contact acknowledges the outcome of the referendum to recognise First Nations Australians in the Australian constitution through a Voice to Parliament, Interpreting the result is challenging and no doubt reflects the many and varied Australian societal motives and perspectives. Regardless, from here it will take time to digest, regroup and identify the way forward.

We remain committed to the elevation of First Nations voices and agency, participating in the ongoing journey towards truth, recognition, and reconciliation.



Megan Mitchell AM

Contact Inc. President

30 November 2023



Sue Kingwill

Chief Executive Officer



Vale

Judy Finlason OAM – 1931 to 2023

A community and environmental champion.

Judy lived a very rich, full life and has influenced positive changes within policy, funding, public and community awareness agendas, resulting in numerous programs and services that continue to have a lasting footprint across Australian society.

Passionately, Judy focused her energies on many platforms that were dear to her heart including children's and human rights, children's services, community arts and the environment.

Countless memories are linked to Judy's efforts over her lifetime, such as her work within the Redfern community, advocating to save the Magic Yellow Bus at Marrickville, the Children's Theatre, and her beloved Wolli Creek and Cooks River Valley, to name a few.

We proudly acknowledge Judy's role as a founding committee member that established Contact in 1979 and as inaugural Coordinator of Network of Community Activities for over 30 years.



RuralCONNECT

Royal Flying Doctor Service
SOUTH EASTERN SECTION

Our work in action

RuralCONNECT: While separate services, Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) and Contact are working towards finding ways to address health and wellbeing needs for isolated children, families, and community in an outback, remote area service delivery context.

The resulting Contact and RFDS SE partnership 'product' is RuralCONNECT a program working towards health and wellbeing outcomes for remote and isolated outback children, young people, and their families.

To date, RuralCONNECT's focus has been on north-western NSW regions encompassing the small villages of Louth, Tilpa and Wanaaring and surrounding regions, and a shared approach with families and the community forms the basis of all actions .

The prolonged drought that far west NSW had suffered, has had such a sustained impact upon children, families, and communities. A Tackling Tough Times Together grant through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal contributed towards the successful delivery of three RuralCONNECT Child and Family Activity days in Tilpa, Louth and Wanaaring, and a Louth Open Day during this year. Over 136 people attended these events, contributing towards economic benefits for the region through the supply of catering and accommodation, enhanced family and community member knowledge of available agencies and building a renewed sense of place and connection for all involved.

www.contactinc.org/ruralconnect





Murra in Murra (Hand in Hand)

Building positive outcomes for isolated Aboriginal children, families, and the Gainmara Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina.



Brewarrina is in north-western NSW, 800 kilometres southwest of Brisbane and 800 kilometres northwest of Sydney. While separate services, Gainmara Birrilee Preschool and Contact are working towards finding ways to further improve access to early intervention, health, wellbeing, and professional support programs, responsive to the needs of remote Aboriginal children and their families, linked to this Preschool.

Local Ngemba Elders named the Preschool as Gainmara Birrilee meaning ‘a place of gathering’ for young children in a learning environment. The Service was established in 1974 as a Save the Children Fund Preschool and given back to Brewarrina community in 1992 for self-determination. The community vision for the Preschool is that it will promote Aboriginal culture and strengthen the children’s awareness of pride in their Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Murra in Murra (Hand in Hand) is the name of the collaborative partnership ‘product’. In appreciation the CAGES Foundation ongoing support towards

this partnership is acknowledged.

A shared intention is to support Gainmara Birrilee Preschool to build sustainable place-based, locally led early years learning solutions based in culture that enhance children’s outcomes in the first five years of their lives and ensure their families have access to wrap around supports that best meet their needs.

Contact’s role is to provide professional support and assistance to Gainmara Birrilee in developing targeted, responsive child and family programs. This involves identifying funding grants and advocacy strategies, drafting proposals, and utilising organisational skills to create new opportunities that address the preschool’s identified requirements.

During the current year, a series of six child focused Murra in Murra programs were successfully delivered in Brewarrina, Weilmoringle, and Goodooga. These events garnered enthusiastic participation from 218 children, families, elders, and various professionals, all actively contributing to the initiative’s positive outcomes. This accomplishment was made possible through a Children and Young People Wellbeing Initiative grant jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Government, administered by Regional NSW.

Furthermore, a Strengthening Rural Communities Program grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal continues to support Gainmara Birrilee in delivering practical COVID recovery actions. These include providing individual COVID to families and





Elders, purchasing sewing machines for future sewing lessons at the service, organising a wellbeing day, and developing a vegetable and bush tucker garden at the Preschool.

Through ongoing collaboration and support, Murra and Murra continues

to nurture and work towards positive outcomes for isolated Aboriginal children, families, and the Gainmara Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina.

contactinc.org/gainmara-birrilee-preschool



Wanaaring Community Hub

A Strengthening Rural Communities Program grant through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, enabled the capacity to scope options for the Paroo Contact Children's Mobile and Contact's Wanaaring based, and owned facility, as a future community hub.

Wanaaring is a remote outback village in north-western NSW, 180 km west of Bourke and 980 km from Sydney. There is a store, caravan park, small Public School, Health Clinic complimented by scheduled Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section visiting clinic days and a Police Station.

Over the past decade, Wanaaring has faced challenges, notably with the closure of the local hotel a few years ago, depriving the community of a valued gathering place and some motel-style accommodation.

While Contact's building has seen underutilisation in recent years, there's a drive, supported by community members, to repurpose the facility to address current community needs.

Looking ahead, the aim for the facility into the future is that it will serve as a hub for community events, child and family programs, and potentially offer broader utilisation by the community and visiting professionals including self-contained short-stay accommodation options, catering to various needs within and beyond Wanaaring.

Contact Inc.

FRRR
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

Wanaaring Community hub

Helping to build community resilience and sustainability

Opportunities for use may include:

- Hiring as a small private meeting space by Government departments, agencies and community groups
- A base for scheduled outreach programs and services
- Venue for skilling and professional development programs
- Location for a variety of visiting or local providers to offer activities such as massages or yoga or craft classes (examples only)
- Early childhood and family programs
- Self contained accommodation (bring own linen and food) as a rental option for visiting professionals who require overnight, weekly or long-term regular stay options.

Attractive outdoor areas that are child friendly and suitable for:

- Meetings, outdoor training programs or demonstrations
- Special community days and gatherings
- Community social events



Mobiles making it happen

A Mobile Children's Service provides an itinerant educational and support service for children and families living in isolated communities or disadvantaged localities, or where a stand-alone service is not viable.



A vehicle (car, bus, plane, or train) is used to transport staff, equipment, and appropriate materials to these localities as an integral part of the

educational programs being provided by Contact Inc. since 1993.

In a world of constant change, some things remain – Mobile Children's Services are the connectors, bridging gaps to reduce social isolation and strengthen community resilience.

Mobile Children's Services continue to make a profound impact on the lives of children, families, and communities. They operate seamlessly in diverse, isolated, urban, rural, and remote areas of Australia, ensuring access to essential child and family services.

Since its inception, Contact has proudly partnered with Mobile Children's Services in Australia, aiding numerous rural and remote communities in establishing their own Mobile Children's Services. We've operated two Mobile Children's Services catering to the needs of north-west NSW, south-west Queensland, and another in Central, Australia. Additionally, Contact pioneered mobile-specific residential training programs, NSW Mobile Meets, and National Mobile Musters. Furthermore, we've provided steadfast support for the advancement of both state and national Mobile Children's Service representative bodies.

Contact believes the time has come to be together and further empower Mobile Children's Services in Australia.

To start, during this year, we invited a small group of rural and remote Mobile Children's Services, to join with Contact in an informal virtual conversation to explore the many ways, we could truly make a difference together, such as:

- Discovering new Mobile Children's service support approaches.
- Rekindling connections with other Mobile Children's Services.
- Raising Mobile Children's Services perspectives.

A National Mobile Survey is being conducted and this will be used in the year ahead to start the conversations to shape a new Mobile Children's Service chapter and this opportunity to be a part of something bigger.

www.contactinc.org/mobile



Our Partners

Authentic connections and partnerships with children, families, and communities as well as collaboration with local people, regional agencies, and networks, are at the core of our endeavours.

Many project partners have contributed towards creating connections, to bring children, families, people and communities together with many of Contact's community ventures.

We particularly acknowledge individuals, agencies and services that have assisted and worked with Contact during the year including, Jane Carroll, Goodooga Preschool, NSW and Federal Isolated Children's Parents Association, Louth Chamber of Commerce, Louth and Wanaaring Public Schools Parents and Citizens Committees, , Saltbush Stretch, Taylor First Aid, Wanaaring Rodeo and Gymkhana Club, and Weilmoringle Public School to name a few.







Contact
inc.



contactinc.org