



# Further demonstrating our strengths

**Year in review 2019 – 2020**

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

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

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## Our Foundations

Contact Inc. (Contact) was established in 1979 as a follow-on program for the International Year of the Child to help to address the impacts of isolation for children, families and communities.

Contact has Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) Charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

## Our Objectives

- a) To relieve, within the limits of the resources available to the project, poverty, disadvantage and isolation suffered by young children on the basis of need, irrespective of race, creed or religion;
- b) To provide assistance, information, referrals and support to people caring for young children in isolated circumstances;
- c) To stimulate interest in the wellbeing of young isolated children by improving community awareness of the needs of children.

## Our Purpose and Vision

Isolation is defined as those who lack reasonable and reliable access to other people, services and resources and have no regular links with other families and children.

Our purpose is to address the impacts of isolation on children, families and communities, serving the community by working across all child, family and children's sectors, to relieve disadvantage and isolation.

Irrespective of locality and circumstances, our vision remains that isolated children, families and communities have access to education, health, supports, information and services to best meet their needs.

Consistent with emerging global consensus, Contact provides holistic programs to overcome isolation and increase the social cohesion of communities particularly in rural and remote areas with a focus on children, inclusive of families and other caregivers.

In seeking to address these issues Contact delivers programs that are respectful of communities and in flexible and innovative ways, that are right for the unique requirements of children, their families and their community.







## Our Board

### Executive

President	Joan Treweeke OAM
Vice President	Kristy Kennedy
Treasurer	Rosemary Chung
Secretary	Fiona Prentice

### General Board

	Nerida Healey
	Nathan Kitto
Public Officer	Maureen Fegan OAM

### Auditor

Audit and Risk Solutions Pty Ltd



## Consolidating our Future

In 1979, Contact was the name selected by the Organisation's establishment Committee and upon reflection over our 40 plus years history, this has proven to be the most appropriate choice. Contact is what we do on a daily basis, that is making contact or links with people in the community and within government effectively and intuitively utilising the contacts and networks across the nation that have been built up over the decades by being on the ground in the outback, towns and cities. Knowing just who the right person or organisation is to approach to make things happen is Contact's special skill.

We continue to work predominately in rural and remote regions across Australia, in an effort to address the impacts of isolation and measure our effectiveness through the delivery of high quality, place based child and family solutions that flexibly respond to local needs complimented by continuing sound governance practices

Community development approaches are embedded in our service delivery model and maintaining strong relationships, extensive links and associations with communities, families and organisations are all key to the success of Contact's endeavours.

With over four decades of experience and understanding of the complexities of regional community issues complemented by established

professional relationships throughout rural Australia, Contact is able to have an informed capacity to navigate the barriers that emerge and continue to deliver targeted regional projects and outcomes.

In locations linked to Contact current activity, the impacts of drought and isolation remain evident for many rural and remote families and their challenges have been heightened by COVID-19 restrictions, with indications in many ways that the isolated have become further isolated.

During these difficult times, Contact has utilised its wide networks to find ways to develop and implement new localised responses and build program sustainability by partnering with families, communities, regional services and organisations.

New and existing partnerships have strengthened Contact's capacity to further support and reach isolated children and families and we particularly highlight the value of working unitedly towards shared agendas with a range of groups such as Royal Flying Doctor Service South East Division, Paroo Contact Children's Mobile, Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool, Playgroup Queensland, Kids Giving Back Foundation and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW and Federal Councils) during this year.



Photo by Gillies Rolland Monnet on Unsplash

Contact and its partners can be proud of many achievements during this year such as:

- The establishment of the RuralCONNECT initiative designed by Contact with Royal Flying Doctor Service South East (RFDS SE) seeking ways to better support families with young children living in rural and remote parts of far north-western NSW in the areas previously serviced by Paroo Contact Children's Mobile;
- An awarding of a 12 months RuralCONNECT Scholarship to an individual from the north-western NSW region, to assist with the costs associated with their Bachelor of Midwifery academic studies through Charles Darwin University;
- Developing the Murri in Murri (Hand in Hand) partnership with Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool

Brewarrina to build a further capacity for future child and family programs linked to the Preschool designed directly with family and community input and involvement; and

- The delivery of Supported Playgroup programs for isolated children and their families in the Bulloo, Paroo and Quilpie Shires (south-west Queensland) in collaboration with Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM) and Playgroup Queensland (PGQ).

Contact recognises the challenges that the Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM) voluntary Management Committee, and families with young children within the PCCM service region have faced throughout this year and beyond with the ongoing impacts of drought and the escalation of their isolation heightened with COVID-19. Projects

in the PCCM service region have continually reinforced how important this service is to the families and as a result Contact and PCCM, have continued to explore ways to reinstate and sustain PCCM into the future.

The warmth and generosity of individuals, organisations, donors and funding bodies that have assisted Contact are truly valued. In appreciation, we wish to highlight the important funding secured and provided through the CAGES Foundation, Playgroup Queensland, Royal Flying Doctor Service SE through the NSW Ministry of Health, as well as donors and individual groups which have greatly contributed to a range of in-kind ways to assist the organisation to achieve its tasks.

Sincere thanks and gratitude are expressed to all who have contributed and assisted Contact throughout the year and to name a few these include Graham Wheeler, Solicitor, for pro bono legal guidance, Kids Giving Back for their welcomed offer to supply packs for drought affected school-aged children in far western NSW; the Royal Flying Doctor Service SE Dubbo Base providing Contact with Dubbo meeting rooms at their facilities; Western NSW Local Health District Risk Management Unit assistance towards Contact's developing Risk Management strategy; and many other community contacts and government representatives who have unreservedly provided guidance and information throughout.

Contact's staff professionalism and commitment to the organisation is particularly treasured and the

efforts of Contact Administrator, Cherie Butryn; Project Officer, Robin Saunders; RuralCONNECT Project Officer, Helen Ponder; Consultants Purpose Accounting, Prue Ritchie, Prue Warrilow, Brendan O'Donnell and Lee O'Connor; and the Paroo Contact Children's Mobile Supported Playgroup team members of Amy Palmer, Carissa Hammond Melrose and Corissa Jackson are all acknowledged. Contact also welcomes our four newest Coonamble team members – Lucy Robinson, Jenna Fernando, Tahlia Arrowsmith and Tahleeta Fernando who are commencing as the Contact's Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers.

Contact's organisational strength is enhanced by continuing diligent governance oversight, complemented by a solid Board and CEO working relationship. To further mitigate organisational risks, Contact's Board whilst acting ethically and prudently, consistently ensures that Contact's strategic goals are strongly aligned with Contact's vision, purpose and objectives.

The Board has met five times including a face-to-face meeting in Dubbo. Further developing systems, controls and reviews are an ongoing Board practice and to illustrate, the Board's Finance Audit and Risk Committee supported by Purpose Accounting have maintained a responsibility to ensure the organisation's financial oversight is monitored and this included an External Audit Review process. In turn, the Strategy, Sustainability and Communications Committee have



fully reviewed Contact's governance policies, procedures and Board succession planning. These actions all contribute towards ensuring the achievement of governance standards, statutory responsibilities and positioning Contact to build approaches in the years to come on these solid foundations.

Contact's experiences in the last 12 months have also led to the development of prioritising CEO succession planning strategies to ensure that the organisation's leadership is managed into the future.

The impressive diligent contributions of all Contact Board members on behalf of isolated children and communities are recorded in appreciation with a special acknowledgment to the newer Board members who have wholeheartedly embraced Contact's potential. Collectively, all at Contact wish Rosemary Chung, Kristy Kennedy and

Joan Treweeke OAM well upon their retirement from the Board in 2020.

Of course, over the last 12 months there have been many far-reaching challenges, however Contact has continued to adapt to multiple new pathways, demonstrating resilience, drive and determination to turn impediment into opportunity and rallying with new enterprise to seek out alternate options and partners that have turned possibilities into actions.

Contact Board Members and Contact CEO share a commitment to ensure the organisation remains viable and connected to the foundational legacy of June Jeremy OAM and to many others that have contributed to the organisation's achievements over the past four decades.

We look towards celebrating new directions with optimism in the coming year.



Joan Treweeke OAM  
CONTACT President



Sue Kingwill  
Chief Executive Officer

19 November 2020

## Our work in action highlights from the year.

### Shared agendas

**Contact and the Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) launched RuralCONNECT during this year, a collaborative project created to better support families with young children living in rural and remote parts of north-western NSW.**

RuralCONNECT is being designed to offer a range of information and support services for families with children aged between 0 and 12 years of age living in areas previously serviced by Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM).

The initial priority has been engaging with families to find out about how we can better assist and at the same time, defining related agencies that may have a role in assisting children and/or families.

To date, connections have been made with 24 remote families with 46 children aged from birth to 13 years. 100% have indicated a priority to be able to have social interactions with other families and their children; to access early childhood programs and child and family supports and have all expressed a desire to have the PCCM service reinstated.

Access to child related early intervention screening has been flagged as a need and some have shared observations about their

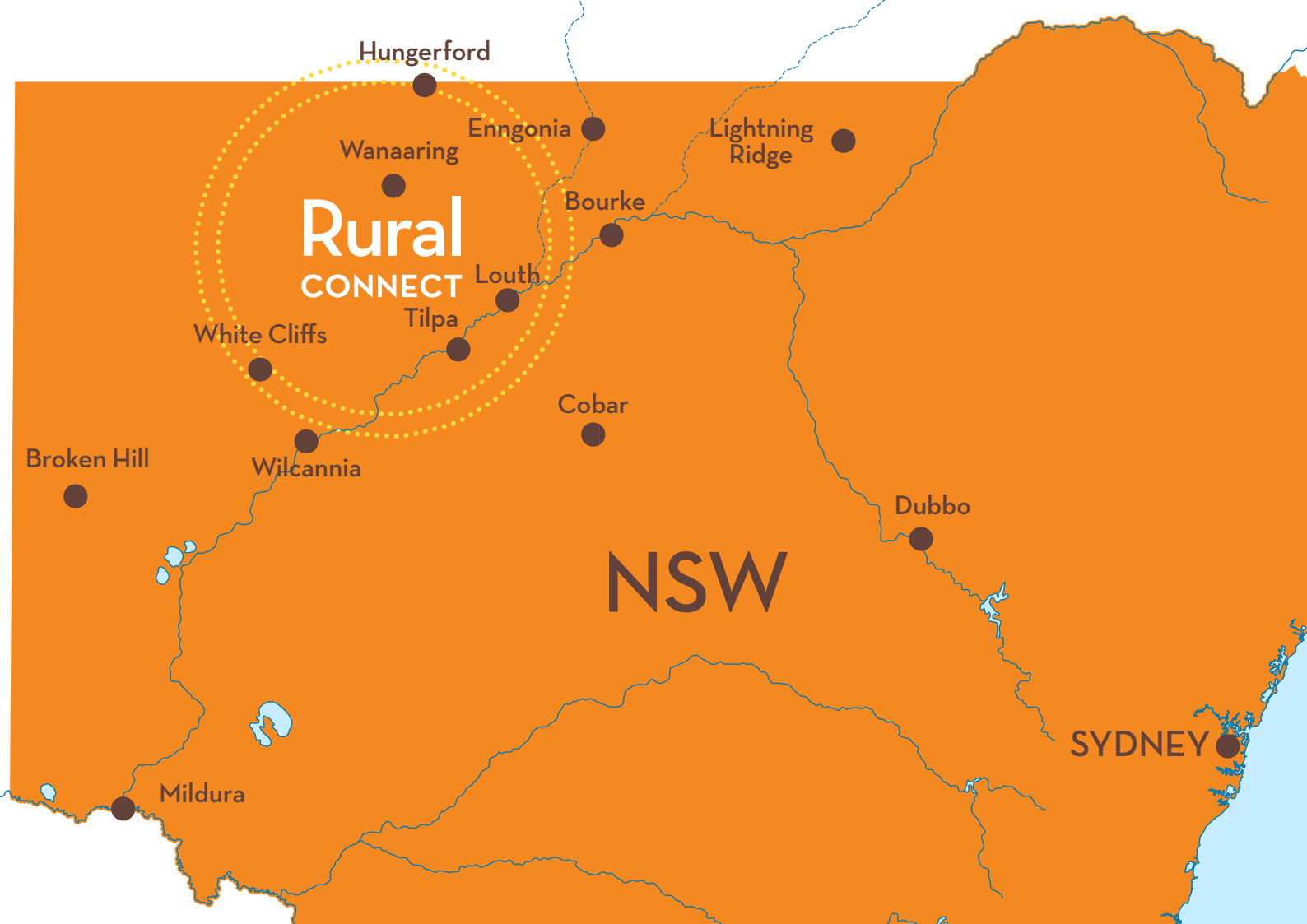
children showing some signs of anxiety when attending a group setting as they have not had much social interactions with others due to COVID19 coupled with their geographic isolation. Based on this information, in collaboration with RFDS SE, planning is underway for a range of activity.

With a shared committed to enhancing the lives of rural and remote people and their communities, a 12-months RuralCONNECT scholarship has also been offered to individuals that live in the project region.

Bec Bennett from the Louth area who is completing a Bachelor of Midwifery through Charles Darwin University was awarded the Scholarship, providing funding towards educational (non HECS fees or loans) costs linked to the course







requirements complemented by external professional mentoring opportunities.

On the basis of continuing family support from the region, ongoing links with Paroo Contact Children’s Mobile Committee have focused on defining funding proposals to be presented with a view to reinstating programs in this region and a series of RuralCONNECT child and family activity days are in planning for Louth, Tilpa and Wanaaring in early 2021.

Helen Ponder who lives in the region is our valued RuralCONNECT Project Officer and we record with thanks, appreciation for her efforts and to RFDS SE and the NSW Government Ministry of Health for the opportunity to offer RuralCONNECT, all working together to seek to make a difference in northwest NSW for children, families and the community.



RuralCONNECT



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
SOUTH EASTERN SECTION



Health

## Practical and Meaningful Activities

Contact partnered with Kids Giving Back, during the year, a charity offering programs for children 6-18 years old and their families to assist vulnerable people in the community, enabling children and young people to undertake practical and meaningful activities to support the work of charities whilst at the same time assisting them to acquire empathy, experience altruism and achieve a sense of belonging.

In association with Kids Giving Back, we are working towards disseminating packs for children (6-12 years) in defined drought affected remote areas of far western NSW.



Expressions of interest are being canvassed with a range of remote small schools seeking their involvement and their feedback is guiding the selection of the pack contents which will include - a pencil case, coloured pens, coloured and HB pencils, exercise books, USB, eraser, ruler, sharpener, glue, basic calculator and stickers.

The resulting contents will be purchased and assembled by children and volunteers linked to Sydney based, Kids Giving Back before being sent out to the small schools to distribute directly to the children.

Contact records our heartfelt thanks to Kids Giving Back as their generous support is enabling this valuable initiative to be offered in the community.

## Community led, local solutions

Contact has always adopted a Child Aware Approach in working with any community; this is where practical, community led, place-based local solutions that promote child wellbeing and this approach is strongly aligned with the CAGES Foundation's emphasis on funding projects that recognise the "strong cultural, creative and innate assets of our First Nations peoples"

The CAGES Foundation supports organisations committed to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. A CAGES Foundation commitment is enabling Contact an ability to continue work within defined areas of northwest NSW, utilising community development approaches that recognises individual and ever changing community circumstances, to define child and family gaps, whilst complementing existing child and family services to achieve desired goals and outcomes for children and families.

To date, Contact has utilised face to face engagement with key stakeholders in the western NSW within these endeavours to help develop regional skills, resources and building connections, trust and successful outcomes were predicated on continued face to face engagement.

As this year was also informed by COVID19 work and travel requirements, a more sustainable operational model was required to





work towards the same goals. In 2020, the new approach is focusing upon contracting Regional Aboriginal Consultants who most importantly have local knowledge and are connected to and with their local Aboriginal community.

This a model is now being initially implemented within the Brewarrina and Coonamble communities and in both instances, local Aboriginal people are conducting child and family needs analysis.

Resulting data will be used, as needed, to identify and implement place-based, community led solutions. In a complimentary way Contact, as required, has been undertaking strategic discussions with government departments, funding agencies and other relevant stakeholders to further support the development of collaborative regional outcomes.

#### **Gainmara Birrilee Preschool**



To illustrate this in action, in Brewarrina we have formed a partnership with Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool, that has been called Murri in Murri (Hand in Hand). Local Ngemba Elders named the

Preschool Gainmara-Birrilee providing a 'meaning' of a gathering of young children in a learning environment and the community vision is that Gainmara-Birrilee will promote Aboriginal culture and strengthen the children's awareness of pride in their Aboriginal culture and heritage.

The Preschool recognises that children, their families and their staff are all part of the Brewarrina community and place emphasis on building and valuing connections between a child's home life, their families and preschool and supporting a sense of belonging and self-worth.

In the first instance, with this in mind, the Murri in Murri initiative is focusing upon one on one consultations with families linked to Gainmara Birrilee at the family home or their place of choice, seeking to define ways to further respond to their child and families' unmet health, early childhood and other emerging child and family needs and supports.

Whilst in Coonamble, a local Coordinator and four Coonamble Aboriginal Community Engagement Project Officers are using their experience, skills, connections and knowledge of the Coonamble community to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with young children to define their child and family needs and service gaps and explore solutions to family defined requirements.



Contact expresses our sincere thanks to the CAGES Foundation for their encouragements and this ability to work in partnership with far western local stakeholders and service providers to further understand and then work towards community capacity building as required.

## Shaping our future

Whilst operating as separate services, PCCM and Contact acknowledge a shared history and visions dedicated to achieving more for remote and isolated children and their families through early childhood development programs and family supports.

Contact and Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM) continue to seek ways to reinstate this valued service to then provide itinerant child and family programs within isolated, rural and remote contexts across a vast geographic region of 36,000 sq. kms in northwest NSW and southwest Queensland.



Welcomed funding from Playgroup Queensland enabled the ability to provide supported playgroups to enhance early learning social development and community connections within the Bulloo, Paroo and Quilpie Shires of southwest Queensland. Participant families were also provided with generous complementary Playgroup Queensland membership and access to its various member benefits and resources.

This along with RuralCONNECT actions have reaffirmed unmet young children and family service gaps and the importance of Paroo Contact Children's Mobile to families and the communities it served. On the basis of this encouragement, efforts continue with Playgroup Queensland and many others to seek ways to enable itinerant child and family programs to be further funded.



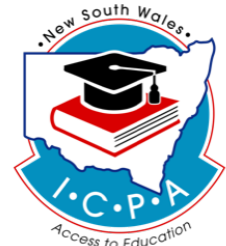
Despite our best efforts, to date insufficient funding has been secured to enable PCCM to consider resumption of independent governance, contractual and service delivery functions. As a result, both organisations have formerly explored a foundational framework for a shared united future together and are now working towards making this happen.

Contact and Paroo Contact Children's Mobile convey with deepest thanks, opportunities provided through the Playgroup Queensland (PGQ) partnership and to all that have assisted us along the way.

### Our current Partners



Gainmara Birrilee  
Preschool



Health



Contact   
inc.  
[contactinc.org.au](http://contactinc.org.au)