



Year in review 2021–2022

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

In Tibooburra with the National; Mental IHealth Commissioner, the Commission and RFDS representatives.

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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 and disadvantage for children, families, and communities.

Our Purpose and Vision

Our purpose is to serve the community by working across all children, family, and children's sectors, to relieve disadvantage and isolation. Irrespective of locality and circumstances, our vision remains that isolated and disadvantaged 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, in flexible and innovative ways that are right for the unique requirements of children, their families, and their community.



Photo by Blendax O'Donnell

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 |

General Board

Kathryn Greiner AO
Nerida Healy

CEO

Sue Kingwill

Public Officer

Maureen Fegan OAM

Auditor

Audit and Risk
Solutions Pty Ltd

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

Bringing people, organisations, and communities together to strengthen and foster more resilient communities.

Contact has a proud history of helping to sustain rural and remote communities by developing positive outcomes for isolated children and families.

For over forty years, Contact has worked nationally, as well as directly, with local children, families, and communities in rural and remote communities across New South Wales, Queensland, and the Northern Territory.

Over the last decade, many isolated rural and remote New South Wales and Queensland children and their families have faced the effects of prolonged drought, bushfires, COVID, mice plagues and now floods. The cumulative impact of these events has long term consequences for the wellbeing of communities, and the children and adults who live within them.

In this present context, Contact's unique expertise in delivering effective and impactful child, parent and community programs for isolated, vulnerable, and disadvantaged families is needed now more than ever.

We particularly extend our heartfelt thoughts to all who have been and continue to be touched by the ongoing consequences of widespread flooding.

Strengthening community connectedness and focus has long been the essence of our endeavours and the hallmark of our success. After years of delivering child and family services based on needs identified by communities themselves, the Contact organisation has deep roots into, and strong relationships with, rural and remote communities.

By listening to communities and through our own lived experience with the impact of floods, the Contact team acutely understands the need for accessible, properly targeted recovery services for children and families in western NSW. Thus, Contact is working to implement programs which focus on community renewal, reducing social isolation, supporting child and family health, educational and developmental needs, and promoting mental health and wellbeing.

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 these endeavours.

Bringing people and community organisations together to foster stronger and more resilient communities is a foundational aspect of Contact's work, while collaborating with local people and service providers is essential to the delivery of effective programs. Partnerships with a diverse range of people, networks



and organisations are deeply valued and over the last year, there were many examples of these in action including:

- Two (2) RuralCONNECT Child and Family Days were held at Wanaaring and Louth to build connections for children and families to their community and services and enhance a sense of belonging. These events were delivered in partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section (RFDS SE). Local and regional agencies joined in to support these events and contribute to their success. This included a regional Mobile Children's Service providing children's activities; local community groups providing catering to assist in their fundraising; and local schools offering program guidance, circulating promotions and attendance on the days.

Unfortunately, weather conditions and road closures eroded our capacity to facilitate further planned RuralCONNECT events at Louth, Tilpa, and Wanaaring. These will be rescheduled for 2023.

- Murra in Murra (Hand in Hand) continues in association with Gainmara Birrilee Preschool at Brewarrina, guided by a co-designed strategic work plan, focusing on solutions identified with Aboriginal children and families in Brewarrina.
- Improving child, family and community health and wellbeing outcomes is a key organisational goal and a continuing partnership with Hearing Australia is enabling an ability to offer child and adult hearing checks linked to our activities in various remote areas.
- Close links with Paint the Town

REaD has enabled Contact to provide three (3) Street Library Australia kits to some remote western NSW communities, further promoting the love of reading and early literacy. Paint the Town REaD have also generously facilitated Christmas Giving Tree donations to be made available through the IGA Supermarkets at Bourke and Cobar that were distributed by Contact in association with local agencies to areas of need in the region .

- A Strengthening Rural Communities grant, secured through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, is aiding an ability to promote the Contact/Paroo Contact Children's Mobile Wanaaring facility and examine, in collaboration with the Wanaaring community, ways to utilise the facility as a Community Hub, thus enhancing opportunities for people to gather and connect. An open day held at the venue resulted in the generation of ideas for community upskilling, extension of personal interest and other programs to meet local requirements and interests.
- Other special highlights this year include the joyfulness associated with the launch of two (2) remote area Preschools for families in Pooncarie and Ivanhoe. The establishment of these Preschools are a tribute to the commitment and drive of local people and their supporters who continued to advocate for these services.
- Contact also had the pleasure of attending a surprise celebration with families from far western NSW

to acknowledge and celebrate, Vicki Old's 30 years of service with the Outback Mobile (Children's) Resource Unit.

- An invitation to accompany RFDS SE representatives to Packsaddle, Tibooburra, and Broken Hill as part of a Making Connections visit to these areas with Christine Morgan, the National Mental Health Commissioner, Commission representatives and Royal Flying Doctor Service Australia was greatly appreciated, providing scope to further focus upon identified remote area child and family mental health and wellbeing requirements.

The organisation continues to be an active participant on several campaigns and initiatives, including the Minderoo Foundation's Thrive by Five Campaign and as a member of its Rural and Remote working group, resulting in the launch of the Thrive by Five Rural and Remote Five Point Action Plan at the NSW Parliament House.

Contact also contributed to the development of the Paroo (south-west Queensland) Shire birth to 5-year plans and remains as a Member of the NSW Week Council Executive, planning towards the annual October Children's Week celebrations.

Contact pays tribute to the many individuals, organisations, donors, funding bodies, Members of Parliament and government representatives who have aided, and provided advice throughout the year. We pay tribute towards the generosity of Graham Wheeler, Solicitor, for ongoing legal guidance;



Martin Daniell and Tony Willsallen for assistance with remote area air travel arrangements for the CEO; Robyn Monro Miller and Rachel Kerry's contribution to our strategic planning; Wanaaring's Hugheston family for their volunteer efforts; NSW and Federal Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA); and Lee O'Connor from the Coonamble Times, for their collegiate assistance.

Contact values the project-based funds that have been secured during the year from a range of sources including:

- The Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDS SE), RuralCONNECT Tackling Tough Times Together grant provided through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.
- A gifting to Contact to explore options for the Wanaaring Community Hub potential

through Strengthening Rural Communities funding from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.

- A further investment by the CAGES Foundation towards the Brewarrina based Murra in Murra initiative; and
- A Department of Communities and Justice, Social Sector COVID Support grant.

All of this would not be possible without Contact's dedicated staff – a small but mightily impressive team. Heartfelt thanks are extended to Contact's Administrator, Cherie Butryn; Project Officer, Robin Saunders; RuralCONNECT Project Officer, Helen Ponder; Sylvie McNab; Wanaaring Groundkeeper Robert McDonald; Purpose Accounting; and Brendan O'Donnell.

The professionalism and



Celebrating 50 years of Isolated Children's Parents Association (ICPA) achievements at its Bourke birthplace.

commitment to the organisation of these people are sincerely recognised.

Contact's Board has continuously monitored the organisation's statutory responsibilities and ensured its operations are underpinned by sound financial, risk management and governance practices. Close oversight of financial reporting disclosures has been maintained. Similarly, the Board continues to uphold the integrity of the organisation's financial statements, risk management practice and documentation, business and strategic planning, and regulatory compliance.

Board meetings were held on five occasions during the year including a full day face-to-face meeting in Griffith. These have been complemented by meetings of Board Committees, Organisational Think Tank and Strategic Planning sessions, Governance reviews and appraisals.

All current Board members are renominating for the 2022/2023 year and opportunities to co-op Board members with skills to add to existing strengths are being examined.

Like many small non-government organisations, Contact faces significant challenges in securing the level of funding needed to ensure ongoing sustainability and effective growth, in ways that can best support the communities it serves and the children and families who live in them.

Despite this, we have continued to secure project-based funding. There are also several avenues on the horizon that we are energetically exploring with the help of our many supporters. We are confident that the new year will bring sufficient additional funds to deepen and broaden the resource base of the organisation.

Again, thank you to all our funders, supporters, and friends, and to the families and communities of rural and remote Australia. Stay safe and well.



Megan Mitchell AM

Contact Inc. President

25 November 2022



Sue Kingwill

Chief Executive Officer



Paint the Town REaD sharing messages in Louth about the importance of reading with babies from birth so they ready to learn at school.

Vale

Three people that have had long links and been important to Contact have died during this year and we would like to respectfully acknowledge Dr. Dianne Roberts OAM, Janet Moore and Bails Myer AC.

Dr Dianne Roberts OAM



Dianne Roberts was originally from Bellbrook, a Thunghutti woman of the Dhungutti nations. Much of her life was dedicated to the education of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. She was Director of Armidale's Minimbah (a place of learning) Pre-School then developed the Minimbah Primary School (Principal 1997-2013). She was also involved within a broad range of organisations, committees and received many awards over her lifetime in recognition of dedicated contributions to children's education and services including an honorary doctorate from University of New England (UNE). Dianne was a loyal friend and supporter to Contact, and we also pay tribute her service as a past Board member.

Janet Moore



Janet Moore's contributions were highly respected within the NSW Early Childhood, Out of School Hours Services (OOSH), Vacation Care and TAFE sectors. In 2022, the Janet Moore Legacy was established as an ongoing tribute to Janet. Funds from the Legacy will contribute towards the development of the Murra in Murra bush food, fruit and vegetable garden project at the Gainmara Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina.

Sidney Baillieu (Bails) Myer AC



Bails Myer, as he was affectionately known, was highly respected for his strength of character, curiosity, mental agility, and business acumen. We will be forever grateful for the generous support of Bails and his family which made it possible for Contact to develop a range of National, Northern Territory and New South Wales programs for children and families living in isolated rural and remote communities.

Lasting Legacies

Contact recognises the significant contributions made by two (2) national peak Australian Children's Services' organisations which closed in 2022, namely **Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS)** and the **National Association of Mobile Services** for Rural and Remote Children (**NAMS**).



Founded 40 years ago, ACCS had long been a national voice for quality, not for profit, community owned children's services.



With strong encouragement from the Bernard Van Lee Foundation and the many Mobilers from rural and remote communities who had participated in numerous Contact Residential National Mobile Musters (1991-2000), Contact facilitated the establishment of NAMS from 1992 onwards. Then in 1996 during the Contact Mobile Muster in Townsville, Contact's President chaired the inaugural Annual General Meeting of NAMS. Contact continued to play an active catalyst role in the development of NAMS particularly through the Contact CEO's role as inaugural and continuing NAMS President following the 1996 AGM.

We salute all who have been involved with, and supported, these organisations over the years including employees, children, families, and volunteer management committee members.

Both entities have made significant and unique contributions in shaping the history and inclusive future policy foundations for children's services across Australia.

Celebrating enduring contributions



Frayne Barker

Gainmara Birrilee Preschool Director celebrating her 25 years with the Preschool.



Vicki Olds

Outback Mobile Resource Unit Coordinator celebrating her 30 years with the Mobile along with Nerida Healy and Sue Kingwill.



Hearing Australia conducting remote area hearing health checks.

Our work in action

Building sustainable communities through community led, local solutions.



Murra in Murra

The CAGES Foundation is committed to projects that ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children reach their full potential and that recognise the “strong cultural, creative and innate assets of our First Nations peoples”.



A CAGES Foundation commitment is enabling Contact to continue to work with Gainmara Birrilee Preschool based in north-western NSW at Brewarrina. Located on the banks of the Barwon River, Brewarrina is 800 kilometres south-west of Brisbane and 800 kilometres north-west of Sydney. The Traditional Owners represented in the Brewarrina region are the Ngemba, Ualarai, Murrawarri and Wailwan Aboriginal people.



Murra in Murra (Hand in Hand) is the name given to the shared initiative of Gainmara Birrilee Preschool and Contact, which has the goal of improving and strengthening education, health, and positive wellbeing outcomes for Brewarrina's Aboriginal children, their families and those connected with the Gainmara Birrilee service.

Continuing impacts of COVID, flooding and Sorry Business, have eroded the

progress of some Murra in Murra potentials during this year.

Some highlights however include:

- Relationships built with groups such as Threads Together that is providing options for a seasonal popup shop at the Preschool for families to access donated quality new child and adult clothing.
- Civil Law Services (Legal Aid) remains available to offer legal assistance linked to the Preschool and its families.
- Donated books were sourced through via Khan's IGA (Bourke) Christmas Tree and Paint the Town REaD.
- Funding applications completed towards child, family, and community driven COVID recovery responses, the development of the Preschool Garden and towards the potential of a Family Worker to further foster family's engagement with the Preschool.
- The establishment of the Janet Moore Legacy Fund is now providing an essential kick start towards a long-term goal of developing a sustainable culturally safe gathering place through a bush food, fruit, and vegetable garden at the Preschool.

It is intended that the garden will further build a sense of identity, purpose and belonging for the children, families, Elders and Preschool representatives and help to overcome personal loneliness and the impacts of social isolation. The garden will also provide avenues to

improve access to fresh fruit and vegetables and develop nutritional programs. In addition, it is desired that local Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP) representatives and other community members will also be engaged in support of the initiative.

Appreciation is recorded for the immeasurable support provided through the CAGES Foundation, Janet Moore's family, Threads Together, Civil Law Services, Paint the Town REaD and the range of agencies that have contributed towards making a difference for the community that surrounds the Gainmara Birrillee Preschool.

Wanaaring Community Hub

Building a sense of optimism.

Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM) amalgamated with Contact in 2021 and as a result their Wanaaring base became Contact's responsibility. The building in Vicary Street, Wanaaring has been under-utilised in recent years and could provide opportunities for many potential communities uses such as:

- Hiring as a small private meeting space;
- A base for a variety of scheduled outreach programs and visiting or local providers to offer activities;
- Self-contained accommodation as a rental option for visiting professionals who require overnight, weekly, or long-term regular stay options; and

- Attractive outdoor areas that are child friendly and suitable for meetings, outdoor training or demonstrations, special community gatherings and social events.

With an intent of transforming this Wanaaring facility into a Community Hub for use by locals and visiting agencies, a Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal Strengthening Rural Communities grant has provided a capacity to scope and research other models / programs that could be adapted at this remote centre. As a result:

- Consultation with the Wanaaring community occurred including the offering a Facility Open Day, with various community members dropping in during the day with welcomed catering supplied by the Wanaaring Public School Parents and Citizens (P&C).
- Wanaaring Community Hub booking systems, policies, and promotions were developed.
- An accommodation option for visiting professionals to Wanaaring was promoted and it is pleasing that the venue has been occupied during part of the year.
- Potential agencies and other visiting programs that may have an interest in utilising the facility were defined.
- Funding proposals were enacted in response to community expressed skilling and support activities and to support the costs of some new facility equipment.

With gratitude Contact respectfully records thanks to the Foundation for Regional and Renewal Strengthening Rural communities granting that has enabled these actions to be undertaken.



RuralCONNECT

Fostering a positive sense of belonging, and building connections for isolated and remote children, families, and communities.



Discussing skilling and new project opportunities at the Wanaaring Open Day.

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.

RuralCONNECT is the resulting

Contact and RFDS SE partnership 'product' working towards health and wellbeing outcomes for remote and isolated outback children, young people, and their families.

To date, RuralCONNECT's focus has been upon north-western NSW regions encompassing the small villages of Louth, Tilpa and Wanaaring and surrounding regions.

A shared approach with families and the community forms the basis of all RuralCONNECT actions including:

- Conducting ongoing child and family health and social needs assessments through telephone, face-to-face consultation and surveys with families and agencies across the region.
- Delivery of child and family events

at Louth, Tilpa, and Wanaaring with attendance by children, families, community members, local and visiting agencies.

- Joint planning of RuralCONNECT events to coincide with the visiting RFDS SE Clinic Days to further built on options for people to travel and access health checks, and at the same time attend the child and family focused RuralCONNECT days.
- Providing an opportunity for people to interact with each other and support one other - families meeting and connecting with other families, children interacting with other children of a similar age, community members engaging with each other and invited agencies to meet with families.
- Giving families and community members access to directly meet and engage with invited regional services and agencies, with the view, as appropriate, of building and establishing relationships that would not have been feasible without face-to-face interactions.
- Enabling a range of information and support to be shared with families surrounding childhood development and supports.
- Helping to develop coping mechanisms for the future, through targeted wellbeing activities seeking to relieve child, family and community member stress and symptoms of stress.

This year's Wanaaring event held at the Contact /Paroo Contact Children's Mobile facility, featured a Hearing

Australia presentation and hearing health checks, children's activities, with delicious catering provided by the Wanaaring Rodeo and Gymkhana Club Inc.

Whilst at Louth, RuralCONNECT and Louth Public School welcomed a Paint the Town REaD Early Literacy presentation. Bountiful catering was provided by the Louth Branch of Isolated Children's Parents Association (ICPA) and the Louth Public School's Parents and Citizens (P&C) at the Louth Tennis Shed

Children, families, and community members along with Contact, The Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section, Louth and Wanaaring Public Schools, and other agencies all enjoyed these two special and happy days.

Contact continues to explore Early Literacy programs in the region with RFDS SE and with Paint the Town REaD. Three(3) Street Library kits have also been sourced for the RuralCONNECT villages of Louth, Tilpa, and Wanaaring.

An invitation to accompany RFDS SE representatives to Unincorporated Far West NSW and Broken Hill as part of a Making Connections visit to these areas by the National Mental Health Commissioner, Commission representatives and Royal Flying Doctor Service Australia, also further showcased the value of RuralCONNECT approaches.

With regret, several other planned activities were postponed due to poor weather conditions and flooding in 2022.

Gratitude is whole heartedly



expressed for the Foundation for Regional Renewal Tackling Tough Times Together Grant enabling the RuralCONNECT events to be facilitated.

Special thanks is expressed to groups such as Wanaaring and Louth Public Schools, ICPA NSW and Louth Branch ICPA, Louth Chamber of Commerce, Tilpa Progress Association, Hearing Australia, Paint the Town REaD, Wanaaring Gymkhana and Rodeo Club, Wanaaring Store and Caravan

Park, Trilby Station, Bourke and District Mobile Children's Service, and the Wanaaring and Louth Parents and Citizens (P&C) to name a few, for their collective contributions towards the planning, design and successful delivery of the RuralCONNECT endeavours.

Evolving sustainable, innovative, solution focused child and family services and programs.

Influencing change takes time. We believe that by providing children, their caregivers and the people that surround them with a process to meaningfully participate in their community and see the results of their actions, that longterm positive outcomes can be achieved for the whole community and to build social cohesion and acceptance.

Many regional Australian families have consistently shared that their ability to access quality early childhood development programs (0-8 years) and support services remain unmet.

Since inception, Contact has acted as a catalyst, as appropriate, in the establishment of new child and family services in rural, remote and outback areas, assisting isolated communities to develop their own solutions and working with a range of agencies and all levels of government to support the policy framework and development of new models of child related service delivery.

It has been rewarding during this year to have played a part in the establishment of some new NSW remote area child and family services.

Making Street Libraries available in remote communities.





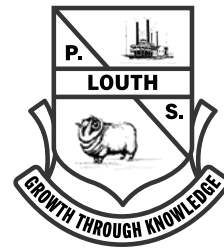
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