

# A CONVERSATION WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

MAY - JUNE 2021

# FAIRFIELD CONVERSATIONS 2021



**FAIRFIELD  
CONVERSATIONS**





Image: Fairfield City Council, Uncle Harry doing Acknowledgement of Country

## Acknowledgement

Thank you to Uncle Harry Callaghan for the Welcome to Country, Steven Nguyen at Fairfield Youth and Community Centre for assistance with the venue and to the House of Welcome for catering.

Thank you to everyone that participated in Fairfield Conversations 2021, it would not have been possible without your involvement and insight into the communities you work with.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and to having future conversations.

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# Introduction

Fairfield Conversations is an extensive consultation process conducted with the community sector to find out about issues experienced by the sector and to identify ways to address these issues. The last consultation, held in 2017, identified over 100 issues that Council has worked collaboratively with the sector to progressively address.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the community and the sector had to quickly adapt to a new and different way of providing services to the community.

The focus of Fairfield Conversations in 2021 was to investigate how community services were impacted, how the sector responded and where there was more work to be done. A webpage was developed that reported on the findings and served as a central point for important resources for workers.

This report documents the Fairfield Conversations process, the findings and the actions that came from the 13 conversations with 164 service providers from 68 organisations that participated. It is hoped that the valuable information in this report will be helpful to plan for future services, programs and collaborations.



Image: Fairfield City Council, Aged Services Hybrid Meeting, Fairfield Conversations.

# The Fairfield Conversations Process

Council holds an extensive consultation process with the community sector to find out about issues experienced by the sector and to identify ways to address these issues. The last consultation held in 2017 identified over 100 issues that Council has worked collaboratively with the sector to progressively address.

In previous years, Fairfield Conversations was held on one occasion. This year, Council adopted the 'conversations' approach and met with existing networks across the sector in May and brought the findings to a Summit in June. This approach provided opportunities to meet with service providers face-to-face and online. It also provided access to a broader cross-section of the community services sector in Fairfield, which gave a clearer picture of the day-to-day issues experienced by service providers and, how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted services.

There was a two-pronged approach to Fairfield Conversations 2021:

1. Conversations with existing networks collected data from service providers on the issues and challenges for the sector generally and in the COVID context and surveys distributed widely asking similar questions
2. Creation of a webpage that reported weekly on the data collected and provided a central point for important resources for workers.

Fairfield Conversations 2021 commenced on 3 May 2021 with the launch of the webpage and the first of 13 conversations held. In total 266 workers across 68 organisations participated in the conversations, polls and surveys.

## Conversations with the sector

Conversations focussed on gathering responses to these four questions:

1. What are the main issues (2 – 3) that your clients are presenting with?
2. What are the main challenges in providing support for these identified issues?
3. How has COVID-19 changed your perspective on how to provide services to your community?
4. Where and how would you like to see change to better support your clients?

## Fairfield Conversations Webpage

In addition to the conversation process Council developed a [Fairfield Conversations webpage](#) to keep the sector informed on the consultation process as well as provide a place to locate useful information and resources such as research reports and statistics.

This page will continue to be accessible on Council's website and serve as a resource to the community.

## Community Services Sector Summit

The findings from these conversations, along with the two surveys, were presented to the Community Services Sector Summit on 23 June 2021 attended by over 30 service providers. After hearing about the findings, attendees were asked to develop strategies or interventions to address identified issues. The Summit was a great opportunity for the sector to come together, to meet face-to-face after the lockdown in 2020, for insightful discussions and collaborative thinking.

# Moving forward: Where to from here

Throughout the conversation, participants were asked what needed to change to support clients better. The data has been analysed and four outcome statements have been developed that will guide the collective actions moving forward.

## 1. Strengthening Collaboration – workers and organisations feel connected, complement, and create synergies for the benefit of the community.

Information collected from Conversations identified several areas linked to collaboration. A model where service providers work together in a well-functioning, cohesive service system who are genuinely looking after the holistic needs of residents offers up a vision of how our community could work – as opposed to working in a competitive, threatening environment where referrals to other services is not the norm. This was a recurring theme within the feedback as the 'strengthening collaboration' theme developed. Participants cited the need to strengthen relationships between services, developing referral pathways, address issues collaboratively amongst services rather than tackling them on their own, sharing resources, collaborating within the sector around training and professional development, prioritising consistent, ongoing partnerships over one off projects for longer term impact, collaborating to provide more holistic wrap around services.

On considering why there was a need to strengthen collaboration Summit participants identified the following objectives:

- To maximise outcomes for community with limited resources
- To work with others to identify gaps
- To attract investment and resources by working together
- To provide forums to share expertise
- To provide opportunities to speak together as a 'collective'.

From both the conversations during May 2021 and the summit the following activities were identified to strengthen collaboration:

- Leadership from Council in engaging decision makers to promote collaboration and advocacy opportunities
- Council and NGOS to work together to identify resource sharing, training opportunities and ways to work collectively
- Advocating to keep government agencies based in Fairfield and working with NGOs, attending network/interagency meetings to understand community need and engaging with community directly (if appropriate)
- Tailored courses for the sector on how to work collaboratively
- Allow time for building relationships
- Working with community religious leaders
- Consider cross sector collaboration

## Action Plan

Task	Time Frame	Responsibility / Lead agency
Promote collaboration across the sector	Ongoing	Fairfield City Council (FCC)
Provide opportunities for services to meet and discuss changing circumstances and provide flexible responses	Within 12 months	FCC
Provide training for the sector in working collaboratively	Within 12 months	FCC
Identify and work more collaboratively with Community leaders	Ongoing	FCC and services – Refer to interagencies for more input



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

## 2. Attracting Funding – Services can articulate the needs of the community and funding bodies are responsive to these needs.

The sector needs to be flexible to respond to fast-paced changes in the community. Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic is that service providers need to be more flexible and responsive given the changing environment that comes with lockdown restrictions and uncertainty. Fairfield is also facing demographic changes due to an increasing number of multistorey units. Service Providers need to develop their capacity to engage with the community and hear its desires and concerns in difficult times and have contingency plans enabling them to be able to respond quickly to changing community needs and adapt their services accordingly. In recent times the sector has begun engaging more with community leaders to assist with these changes.

Ways to ensure services are flexible and meeting community needs include:

- Tailored interventions
- Tailored funding arrangements to meet local needs
- Develop sector skills at engaging with clients via social media
- More collaboration across organisations at leadership level to share information and develop plans to adapt to changing needs of the community

Service providers identified the following issues related to funding:

- Need for stronger advocacy to funding bodies around the unique needs of Fairfield –(culturally diverse, new settlement area, many refugees) who can then provide appropriate funding that enables local services to be adaptable, flexible, sensitive and responsive
- Need for longer-term government funding that is secure and transparent in its allocation processes.
- Seeking higher funding amounts for Council's funding programs
- Need for more funding for areas such as early intervention, case management, crisis housing, drug and alcohol, youth accommodation, obesity, Domestic and Family Violence and Foodbank
- Funded childcare when running programs or services
- Affordable insurance for community organisations
- Funding supplements should be implemented for services working with hard to engage clients

Ideas on how to attract funding identified throughout the conversations and the summit include:

- Increasing awareness of funding available
- Promoting funding opportunities on Council's website
- Training on writing grant applications
- Developing skills on how to identify needs in a way funding bodies will consider for funding
- Inclusive, shared research and data collection that will help identify solutions and support the need funding applications
- Advocate to governments to change competitive tendering processes to be more transparent





## Action Plan

Task	Time Frame	Responsibility
Advocate to state and federal governments to ensure service levels in Fairfield LGA meet community need	Ongoing	FCC and the sector
Review FCC community grants program in line with general program costs to determine suitability of funding levels	Within 12 months	FCC
Funding bodies are educated on the unique needs of Fairfield and funding provided reflects this	Within 12 months	FCC and the sector
Seek solutions for services that are impeded by issues relating to insurance and other administrative blocks	Within 12 months	FCC and the sector
Grant writing training for the sector	By December 2021	FCC
Weblinks to grant funding opportunities available and easily accessible by the sector	By December 2021	FCC
Advocate for more open and transparent funding processes	Ongoing	FCC and the sector



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

### 3. Enhancing Service Provision – Organisations have increased capacity to provide appropriate services to the community.

Organisations need to be able to respond to changing needs, provide quality services as well as support the wellbeing of their staff. The Conversations identified Fairfield as a unique community that needs appropriate localised services and many additional (or expanded) services. Key services required include:

- Gambling services for CALD communities locally based
- Housing support for women and children escaping Domestic and Family Violence
- Drop-in activities within services
- Trauma informed practice within services
- Parenting skill courses
- Local service directories being available on Councils Website
- Working with General Practitioners to share resources and information
- Affordable programs for clients to attend
- More allied health therapists
- Emergency Food relief services as well as a Foodbank in Fairfield
- Culturally appropriate aged care friendly activities
- CALD community specific services E.G Sudanese
- More drug and alcohol workers and services provided in-language
- Translated information on preschools

Ways to achieve this, identified at the summit include:

- Reaching out to clients to identify what they want
- Having a people-centred approach
- Redesigning programs to improve client consultation
- Involving clients at the beginning during and end of their involvement with a service
- Sector services to ensure staff are provided supervision and access to relevant training
- Enabling staff/workers to be aware of and have access to new technology or resources
- Continuous development of staff, the organisations and the sector.

#### Action Plan

Task	Time Frame	Responsibility
Maintain the Community Services Guide and library data base	Ongoing	Fairfield City Council
Develop a project that increases GP awareness of local community services	Ongoing	FCC
An expo that showcases services for the benefit of other service providers	Within two years	FCC and the sector
Upskilling of staff across the sector to meet the changing needs	Within two years	FCC and the sector to work with training providers to bring training options to our community

## 4. Inclusive and Accessible – Spaces are accessible, well utilised and the need for new spaces is articulated.

There were many comments regarding the need for office, program and outdoor activities. An often-mentioned need was for more tailored open space to increase community connections. There was also discussion around spaces that were inclusive and safe. Some examples include Fairfield Court House needing a safe room for families, spaces for LGBTQI young people to meet, for older people to connect and space that includes technology including access to the internet.

### Action Plan

Task	Time Frame	Responsibility
Implement the findings of the FCC Community Facilities and Open Space needs study	Ongoing	FCC
Research into safe space needs for diverse population	Within two years	The sector
Ensure Council facilities are accessible	Ongoing	FCC
Identify translating and interpreting needs for community and agencies explore options for a local translation service (possibly social enterprise)	Within two years	FCC and the sector



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

# Conversation findings

A wealth of information was collected from the 13 conversations and surveys. As this was reviewed, the information was categorised into common themes. The most prevalent themes across the conversations were:

- Accessibility of services
- Finance and funding
- Lack of services
- Mental health
- Impacts to families including isolation and domestic violence
- Lack of affordable housing
- Diversity of language

## Main issues

Service providers were asked to identify the main issues they were responding to on a daily basis.

COVID-19 challenged the community in 2020 and exposed what living in disadvantage meant when there was no respite, and in 2021 service providers continued to respond to these issues.

Common themes identified by service providers were:

- Accessibility of services – a broader definition than not being able to get into a service
- Domestic and family violence and its impact on the community
- Lack of housing options or affordable housing
- Financial stress and its impacts in a family's day to day life
- Social isolation – exacerbated by COVID-19
- Health issues
- Mental health

These themes are explored in more detail below.

## Accessibility of services

This phrase was coined to cover the myriad of issues identified by the sector.

Reasons included:

- a lack of service capacity, such as childcare or access to programs
- lack of awareness of services and what they can provide
- inability to access services due to concerns around stigma
- digital exclusion
- lack of transport
- language barriers
- cultural concerns around accessing services such as distrust
- exclusions on visa conditions and
- understanding of how service systems work.

A common issue raised was the need for safe spaces for marginalised and at-risk communities however this then posed other difficulties related to being easily identifiable by members of their own community.

Participants at the summit recognised that for services to be accessible, they needed to be able to respond to changing needs, support their staff and wellbeing, be person centred and focused on client consultation, be supportive of staff development and growth as well as that of the sector.



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

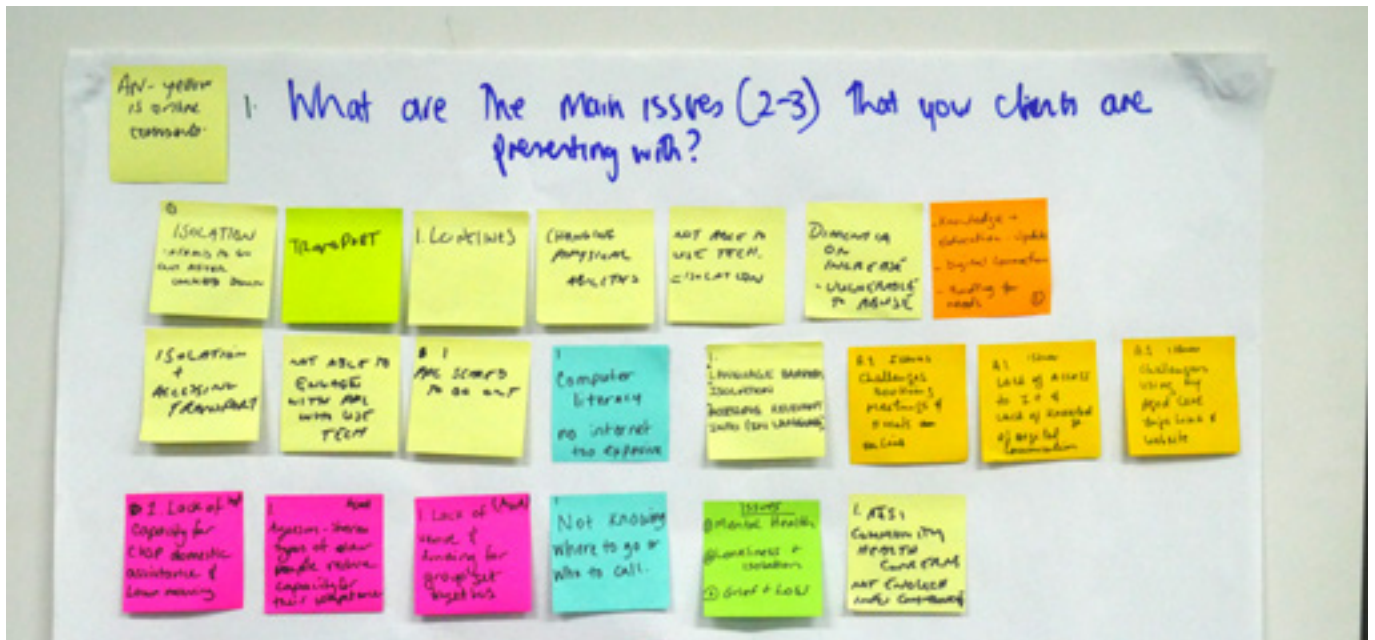


Image: Conversations findings

## Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

This was an issue raised in most conversations. In particular the need for more affordable accommodation, education programs for perpetrators, supports for young people in families who are impacted, more community education on its prevalence, better supports for existing services, and access to specialist services such as psychologists. The need for safe places was highlighted, however, they need to be non-identifiable for the protection of clients.

Further discussion at the Summit reinforced these comments. There is a need to better link clients with services, work with community leaders to raise issues and increase education around DFV and to create safe and culturally specific ways of working.

It was also identified that social isolation, employment uncertainty, gambling harm, mental health issues, financial dependency, cultural nuances on family roles and that of men and women as well as exploitation of visa status all contribute to DFV.

## Housing

In most conversations the lack of affordable housing was raised and the impact that has on other aspects of people's lives. When the majority of an individual or family's income is being spent on housing costs, it leaves little for bills and food. This often increases the household stress contributing to other issues including mental health.

The Job Keeper/Seeker payments initiated as a result of the pandemic provided some short-term relief for those who were eligible, but it was reduced in December 2020 and ceased in March 2021.

Housing prices continue to increase across Sydney. According to the Rent Report March Quarter 2021, the weekly rent for a 3-bedroom house in the 2165 postcode was \$460 per week. In April 2021 Hume Housing identified that there were 3,478 people on the waiting list for a home in Fairfield.

Discussion at the Summit centred on the affordability of housing within Fairfield City. The increase in development of units has impacted housing prices. Housing being built is not suitable to accommodate the needs of the community for larger families, intergenerational living, younger people, and older people. This highlights the issue of tertiary or 'hidden' homelessness with people living in substandard accommodation, in insecure circumstances or sleeping rough.

## Financial stress and social isolation

A common thread weaving through the conversations highlighted the over-representation of Fairfield by indicators that outline disadvantage. The words that came up often were social isolation and loneliness. Long term, entrenched issues like domestic violence, unemployment, gambling, drug use, stress, trauma, language, mental health and poverty were also common responses.

Social disadvantage and under-resourcing were evident with many comments prefaced by 'lack of' (e.g. income, money, food, housing, access, knowledge, early intervention etc).

Financial stress impacts all parts of a person's life. The Fairfield community is impacted by high rates of gambling harm, no access to income due to visa status, low income earners, hours of employment that are only part time, people living on benefits that barely cover rents, the impact of COVID-19, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) requirement for expensive reports to gain funding, and people with disabilities who do not have NDIS having to pay for support from their income support payments.



Image: Fairfield Conversations introduction

Gambling was identified as a significant issue by service providers and government. Statistics on poker machines showed that people in Fairfield lost approximately \$1.6 million dollars per day. While this provided a significant income stream for pubs and clubs it was at the expense of families. A pilot study across local services identified that 62% of people interviewed shared they had been impacted by

gambling harm. A review of electronic gaming machines legislation in NSW in 2018 resulted in the State Government amending legislation so that Fairfield LGA became the only area in NSW where an increase in the number of poker machines was prohibited. Illegal gambling was also identified as an issue, but this was hard to quantify.



Image: Social isolation brainstorm

Isolation and the impacts on mental health was mentioned many times in conversations. It appears that COVID-19 has exacerbated social isolation and loneliness within our community and increased fear of interacting in public. Many service providers mentioned that they saw the impact of isolation on their clients on a daily basis. Young people particularly felt isolated within families due to mental health issues.

Further discussion at the summit focused on the root causes of financial stress. The lack of employment or underemployment, cultural perceptions and inadequate government benefits led to low-income levels. The cost of living, rent, medical and community expectations and providing for others were hard to meet on limited income.

Factors increasing social isolation included the lockdowns due to COVID-19, being disabled, having limited language, being older, not providing activities in the evening, affordability, transport, technology or having anxiety or mental health issues.



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

## Health

As identified by service providers, chronic health issues were a major concern for the Fairfield population. Of all the SWSLHD LGAs, Fairfield LGA reported the highest proportion of the population known to have diabetes, which can lead to several life-threatening co-morbidities. Compared to the rest of NSW, Fairfield LGA residents were also more likely to be hospitalised for heart failure and 66% more likely to be reported as same-day dialysis admissions.

The accessibility of health services and resources, especially for refugees and newly arrived people, was also a major concern, as were other issues such as obesity, general health issues and men's health.

## Mental Health

Service providers reported the increasing prevalence of mental health issues. Anxiety, suicide, isolation and the impacts of unemployment and housing uncertainty on mental wellbeing were all key concerns.

Whilst this was consistent with data trends within the SWSLHD, Fairfield LGA-specific data was either not available or inconclusive. Further data collection and analysis is critical to ensuring these health issues are addressed promptly and effectively.

# Challenges

There were clear themes in the challenges organisations faced in responding to the social needs of the community and interestingly, they were similar to the issues identified. For example, 'stigma' came up as a daily issue as it impacted service providers' work with clients, and it also came up as a challenge as it is stigma that impacted the work service providers do.

Challenges identified were:

- Funding
- Language barriers
- Stigma
- Reluctance to seek assistance
- Technology
- Lack of suitable spaces to run activities

"We have seen extremes - those able to access online platforms thrived, while those that couldn't, struggled and felt more isolated."

– Participant,  
Fairfield Conversations  
Survey 2021

## Funding

Funding was identified as a major challenge in providing the services required for the community. Service providers expressed difficulties with funding bodies not understanding the unique nature of Fairfield. The community was suffering from the insufficient funding provided to meet the diverse cultural and often complex needs of the community.

There were challenges associated with short term funded projects where they end before adequate outcomes can be achieved. Other identified issues were having a fragmented and poorly resourced sector, service restrictions due to funding constraints, uncertainty around current and future funding hindering good planning, people being excluded from services due to visa status, and a lack of funding for people with disabilities who don't qualify for the NDIS.

Discussion at the Summit focused on how services could articulate their needs and funding bodies be more responsive. For example, greater opportunities to discuss with funding bodies and convey the uniqueness of Fairfield may also result in a better understanding of the needs of Fairfield. Service providers expressed the need for adequate time to partner and collaborate with other organisations on funding applications to improve the likelihood for successful funding. They also identified the need for more information on types of available funding and developing skills in writing applications that clearly articulate need to increase funding to the area.

## Stigma

Stigma was mentioned across all conversations impacting most services provided. It was a significant barrier for people accessing the services they needed. Service providers reported that it was a fear of being identified as needing help or being someone who was LGBTQI+ or having a mental health issue or dealing with an addiction or seeking financial aid and others knowing. This stigma made it more challenging for organisations to provide services for those in need.



## Reluctance to seek assistance

To some extent this issue relates to stigma. It was identified that people with mental health issues, sexual health issues or clients who were LGBTQI+ or victims of domestic abuse or families struggling financially were not seeking assistance due to how their community may view them or because of stigma. Some did not seek assistance because they lacked trust in services or the system, or sometimes others in their community told them they wouldn't get any help so there was no point.

Language barriers were another factor causing a reluctance to seek assistance due to a lack of confidence communicating in English or the service did not have anyone who spoke their language. Others were wary of wait lists, were not aware of the services accessible to them or did not have the financial means to pay for particular services.



Image: Fairfield City Council, Summit Workshop Participation

## Language barriers

Service providers identified language as a barrier for people accessing services and this included difficulties accessing interpreters and translated information. COVID-19 showed that translated information was not enough to inform the community and that information needed to be culturally appropriate and tailored to different communities.

Working with community leaders was important so that the community hears the information from members of their own community. Organisations responded well with the use of bilingual staff, however, depending on the issue and its complexity, multiple engagement methods are often required to effectively communicate with different communities. Some difficulties for organisations might be the equitable prioritisation of languages for translated materials and preferences for bilingual staff.



Image: Conversations findings

## Technological challenges

The sudden move to online services brought Fairfield's digital divide to the forefront. With 18% of households (Census 2016) having no internet connection, providing services online proved to be a challenge.

Technological challenges were also created when government support services require people to use online platforms, such as MyAgedCare. Further challenges identified included not enough devices in families to support requirements, lack of knowledge on how to use devices, working with older community members with lower tech literacy and teaching people how to use smart phone apps and web features.

With a move toward telehealth, video conferencing and the ongoing threat of COVID-19 outbreaks, there is a need to raise and maintain our community's digital literacy as well as making internet and devices more readily accessible.

## Facilities for programs and safe spaces

Safe spaces were needed for programs for LGBTQI+, domestic and family violence programs, as well as more places for organisations to run programs. Discussions held with service providers noted the safety concerns and stigma associated with accessing service spaces.

# What can we done to bring about change?

In identifying how to bring about change, funding and resourcing were the most common response. Digging deeper it was obvious that organisations needed more funding to provide programs to meet the needs of Fairfield's disadvantaged community, and they also needed more transparency and certainty in funding, longer time periods for programs to run, a better understanding from funding bodies about what Fairfield needs and the challenges organisations are facing in providing programs to a unique area such as Fairfield. Every conversation raised the need for more funding to provide much needed services to the community. Translations across all service types was raised as well as additional funds to work with hard to engage clients.

As one participant said:

"What we need are funding bodies who truly understand the needs of the Fairfield LGA - culturally diverse, new settlement area, many refugees...and be adaptable, flexible, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the local services."

There is a need to work more collaboratively across the sector - increasing coordination, networking, partnerships and strengthening of relationships to build better referral pathways and increase knowledge on services. Workers need opportunities for ongoing professional development and have well-supported and resourced services.

"More available resources to deal with social issues, not timed by government grants, strategies and attitudes and political powers."

– Participant, Fairfield Conversations Survey 2021

Based on responses the following five action outcomes were developed:

- 1. Strengthening Collaboration –**  
Workers and organisations feel connected, complement and create synergies for the benefit of the community.
- 2. Attracting Funding –**  
Services can articulate the needs of the community and funding bodies are responsive to these needs.
- 3. Enhancing Service Provision –**  
Organisations have increased capacity to provide appropriate services to the community.
- 4. Inclusive and Accessible –**  
Spaces are accessible, well utilised and the need for new spaces is articulated.
- 5. Flexible –**  
Services have the flexibility and skills to adjust to challenges faced by the community, across a range of issues or place-based scenarios.

# The impact of COVID-19 on services and lessons learnt

Service providers were asked to reflect on how the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 had changed their perspectives on service provision, where they had to adapt to doing things differently and what they learnt from this experience. The purpose of this question was to explore new approaches to service delivery and measure the adaptability of the community and the sector.

## Reflections from service providers

Technology was the biggest challenge identified by service providers and having to embrace technology enabled them to develop diversity in service delivery. The upskilling of clients meant that technology could be a useful tool to address social isolation. Technology also provided additional resources and to some extent more clients. Online and face-to-face options would be key considerations in the planning for future programs.

From a worker's perspective, their technology skills improved, and familiarity with online meetings increased. As a sector, the ability to collaborate was strengthened with increased access to online meetings creating a more connected network of service providers.

Clients and workers were more familiar with social media, and it became an effective way to convey messages about services and issues in the community.

Additional funding was directed to areas such as affordable housing, domestic and family violence and youth mental health. Clients on benefits also received additional government assistance with the COVID-19 payment during the lockdowns in 2020 and that enabled them to survive better with more than the Newstart rate.



### Challenges for service providers due to the lockdown included:

- The difficulties for clients being magnified with lockdown as they tended to live in smaller units, that may be overcrowded with no balconies and limited to no internet
- Limited access to devices to engage with or access the internet
- An increase in domestic and family violence and its impact on all the family including young people
- An increase in gambling numbers despite clubs being closed
- An increase in anxiety and triggering of other mental health issues for clients
- Providing services online to a range of different clients with different access to digital devices and internet
- Changes in service provision from direct face to face to online. For example, running playgroup via a Zoom session.
- The impact of digital fatigue on clients and workers
- Inability to make referrals for clients as some services were closed
- An increase in clients experiencing social isolation

### There was an increased demand for:

- Case management support
- Free children's activity packs or books that they can give to the children and families
- Information on grants available to help more families in need - COVID or technology grants (the hunt for more laptops, tablets and dongles in Fairfield LGA was at its peak around March - July 2020)
- Ideas and mentoring to overcome isolation and provide support
- Flexible services
- Respite or help for children with additional needs
- Persons seeking financial assistance and access to mental health support
- More families needing food and emergency relief.

### Considerations for returning to onsite service

By June 2021 services were resuming onsite and face to face programs and services. Some of the challenges faced by organisations then, and in the future included:

- More planning for programs and services as some needed to be either onsite or online
- Digital literacy needed to be considered in running online courses or programs
- Digital accessibility – there is a differing level of access to devices and internet in the community and will limit ability to engage online. This is exacerbated if libraries are closed
- Strict protocols need to be established for home visits
- More reliance on emails and phone contact
- Mild illness needs to be treated more seriously for workers and clients – need for exclusions
- Interagency and communities of practice meeting online – harder to have small spontaneous conversations
- Office and venue sizes are not big enough when factoring in the social distancing requirements
- Clients being fearful to connect with services.

### Lessons learnt

- It is important to check in with people more often
- There needs to be a balance between online and face to face to avoid digital fatigue
- More workers attend online meetings as there is no travel time and quieter workers can input through the chat function
- It is important to ask the client base what they need
- Programs need to be more person centered to consider environments and technology capacity
- There is camaraderie in the sector working together to get things done
- Offering resources like children's activity packs enabled more engagement with some harder to reach families.
- Mental health is more important than ever

# Workshops at Fairfield Conversation Summit

The Summit attendees were separated into five groups to discuss each of the common themes. They were given two activities – the first activity focussed on developing an action plan based on modes of intervention and the second activity was a deeper dive into how and why things are done and in a certain way.

The outcomes of these conversations have been included within this document.

“Keeping in touch has become vitally important. For some of our clients the only people they see or meet are the carers that provide their services. Making a few phone calls to ask them how they are feeling or are coping has made a big difference.”

– Participant, Fairfield Conversations Survey 2021



Image: Fairfield Conversations Team

# Appendix A Organisations that participated in Fairfield Conversations 2021

Australian Bureau of Statistics	Goodstart Early Learning - Fairfield Heights
Arab Council of Australia	Headspace Liverpool
Assyrian Resource Centre	Hume Community Housing Association
atWork Australia	Karitane Linking Families
Autism Advisory and Support Service	Lebanese Muslim Association
Bonnyrigg High School	Lifesource
Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW	Lifeline – Macarthur and Western Sydney
Canterbury Bankstown Council	Liverpool City Council
Catholic Care	Lost in Books
Chamber of Commerce	Macarthur Disability Services
Children and Family Services- FCC	Mental Health Commission NSW
Chris Hayes MP's office	Migration Employment Legal Service
Co.As.It. Italian Association of Assistance	MTC Australia
Community First Step	Multicultural Problem Gambling Service for NSW
Community Migrant Resource Centre	Multicultural Network
CORE Community Services	Nakango Vision
Croatian School	Navitas
CuriousWorks	Neami International
Daystar Foundation	Neighbourhood Watch
Disability and Diversity Alliance	NSW Legal Aid
EACH- Early Childhood Early Intervention Services	NSW Police – Fairfield PAC
Fairfield City Council	NSW SLASA
Fairfield City Museum and Gallery	Odyssey House
Fairfield Community Corrections	OneDoor Mental Health
Fairfield Hospital	Prairiewood High School
Fairfield Women's Health Centre	Parramatta Mission
	Salvation Army

Scouts NSW  
Service NSW  
Services Australia – Centrelink  
Settlement Services International (SSI)  
South West Community Transport  
South Western Sydney Legal Centre  
South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD)  
South Western Sydney Primary Health Network  
St Vincent De Paul  
Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)  
Supported Playgroups  
TAFE NSW  
The Parks Community Network Inc  
The Salvation Army  
The Smith Family  
Uniting Fairfield Family Relationship Centre  
Uniting Multicultural Family Centre – Cabramatta  
Warakirri College  
Wesley Mission  
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre  
Westfields Sports High School  
Woodville Alliance  
Youth Off the Streets

