

# FAIRFIELD CONVERSATIONS

Latest news and bulletin updates

Social Planning and Advocacy Team

## Why are we here?

Fairfield Conversations 2021 was held on 23 June at the Fairfield Youth and Community Centre. It was a day to review conversations across interagencies, develop collaborative solutions, and to finally meet post COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. By the end of that week, we were back in lockdowns, harsher and longer than we ever could have anticipated. By October 2021, lockdowns were over, but it took many months for the community to recover and rebuild. Fairfield Conversations 2023 is an opportunity to connect and collaborate.

With the onset of the omicron variant, COVID-19 became part of our day to day living. Return to work and normal services was the expectation and slowly throughout 2022, we returned to our new normal. Borders reopened, migration returned, and masks and sanitiser became more of an afterthought than a necessity. But what does this all mean for our broader community and the services provided by the community services sector?



Packed food ready for distribution to residents in need during the second COVID lockdown.

We know that the community has been impacted by the financial burdens of lockdown, and by the stigmatisation accorded to Fairfield City and Southwest Sydney facing much harder lockdowns.



Fairfield Conversation Summit, 23 June 2021

The rising cost of living associated with both lockdowns and global issues has resulted in a community that is facing harder and more complex issues than 2021.

Cost of living pressures are being felt across the community. The Department of Communities and Justice *Rent and Sales report* (December 2022) identified that rentals within Fairfield LGA have increased by 7.14% over a 12-month period. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) the consumer price index (CPI) in the March quarter 2023 was 7.0% with housing (+9.5%), energy (+15.6%) and food (+8.1%) all rising. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) notes that whilst the major offences of crime in Fairfield City are generally stable, domestic violence related assault and possession and/or use of other drugs as well as liquor offences are going up over a 5-year trend.

The total gambling profit in Fairfield for 2022 was \$335,606,002, with daily losses amounting to \$1,838,937 - that is a loss of over \$1.8 million dollars per day.

### National Reconciliation Week Flag-Raising Ceremony

Tuesday 30th May 9:30 am - 12 pm  
Location: Fairfield City Council  
Administration Centre, 86 Avoca Rd,  
Wakeley 2176  
Contact: 9725 0222

Fairfield has 4.4% of the state's electronic gaming machines but raises 28% of the state's income.

The pandemic and the harsh lockdowns showed us the resilience and commitment of our sector with services pivoting to meet growing community needs. The Fairfield Food Hub Partnership is an excellent example of the pivot and collaboration of place-based services working at many levels to ensure those most in need in Fairfield were fed.

The community sector continues to be challenged in meeting the needs of this community. Fairfield Conversations 2023 is one measure to help services identify issues and develop collaborative responses to work towards meeting the community's needs.

### Sector Achievements

See page 2 for more details

Acknowledgement of the sector's efforts since 2021.

### Arts Sector

See page 3 for more details

This will outline the reality of what is happening with the arts sector in Western Sydney.

### Community Needs

See page 4 for more details

Community needs identified in 2021 are still relevant today. An opportunity to review these and identify more at Fairfield Conversations 2023.

## Fairfield Conversations Achievements Since 2021

The Fairfield Conversations Action Plan had 4 themes. These were:

- Strengthening collaboration
- Attracting funding
- Enhancing service provision
- Inclusive and accessible services



*Fairfield City Council in partnership with the Parks Community Network, Community First Step, CORE Community Services and Woodville Alliance won the 'Exceptional Community Partnership' award at the 2022 Zest Awards*

A review of the action plan in April 2023 has identified the following achievements:

### Strengthening Collaboration

Collaboration between services was key to our COVID-19 response. Fairfield City Council in partnership with the Parks Community Network, Community First Step, CORE Community Services and Woodville Alliance won the 'Exceptional Community Partnership' award at the 2022 WSCF Zest Awards. Youth Week programs for 2022 and 2023 have involved over 30 organisations working together. Service connect expos have been held for seniors, homelessness and employment. Interagencies have continued to meet and collaborate. Fairfield Youth Workers Network (FYWN), Liverpool Youth Workers Network (LYWN) and Fairfield Child and Family Services interagency are holding a Service connect to build a better understanding on each sector.

The collaboration between community leaders and services has increased. An Alcohol and other drugs workshop and forum was held in 2021 with community leaders, as well as

gambling harm workshops and ethical bystander training. During lockdowns more engagement with community leaders strengthened understanding on how to communicate with diverse communities.

### Attracting Funding

Many representations have been made to state and federal government about the unique needs of Fairfield City. Submissions to the National Plan to end Violence against Women and Children 2022- 2032, partner visas, gambling reforms and research, National Preventative Health Strategy 2022-2023, Keeping People Healthy: SWSLHD Preventative Health Strategy 2023-2033, Department of Home Affairs Multicultural Framework Terms of Reference (draft) were made. We had input into the National Cultural Policy and FWYN ensured young people contributed to the Election Priorities of Young People by Youth Action.

Services in Fairfield have worked collaboratively on funding applications. A number of case studies have been developed and included on the Fairfield Conversations Web page.

Council's own funding programs were reviewed, and all grants were increased to \$3,000. The disability grants were expanded to aged and disability and the program guidelines were renewed. Grant writing workshops for the sector were held in both 2022 and 2023. Funding information is promoted on the Fairfield Conversations website.

### Enhancing service provision

Community information was an essential part of the sector's response to COVID-19. A services support card was developed as well as a Low Cost and Free Meals directory, Sport, Recreation and Leisure Activities for People with Disability, and widespread promotion of the Ask Izzy database.

A Seniors Expo was held in 2022 and 2023, Homelessness Service Connect in 2022 and Employment Expo in 2022. These provide useful forums for services and our community to connect.

Training was held in Ethical Bystander Intervention, Gambling Harm, Young Carers Awareness, Nitty Gritty sexual health, LGBTQIA+ Intersectionality, as well as grants information and writing.

### Inclusive and accessible Services

A Queer Safe Space for young people has been operating within Fairfield LGA, providing an inclusive space for young people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

The Zero Barriers initiative has been active and working with Council to increase accessibility within our town centres. The Council website accessibility has been improved with vocal and visual adaptations. Works have continued on Council buildings to improve accessibility. Tasman Parade Early Learning Centre, Cabravale Senior Citizens Centre, Bonnyrigg Community Centre, and Prairiewood Youth and Community Centre have received upgrades to improve accessibility over the past two years. Upgrades are planned for Whitlam Library and the Villawood Senior Citizens Centre.

### GYMS IN PARKS

Term 2, 2023

8th May to 29th June



JOIN our **FREE** fitness sessions using the outdoor gym equipment at:  
Allambie Park (in Bossley Park) &  
Emerson Park (in Wetherill Park)

Program 1: Mon & Wed 9:30-10:30am,  
Allambie Park, Bossley Park  
Program 2: Tue & Thu 9:30-10:30am,  
Emerson Park, Wetherill Park  
Contact: 9725 0222

REGISTER ONLINE

<https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/>

## State of the arts



In person Creative Communities Grant Workshop

The *State of the Arts in Western Sydney report* outlines the funding, infrastructure and resource inequities in the arts sector and how these impact social and economic outcomes for the sector and region. Creatives in Western Sydney can drive a vibrant and diverse economy and provide

cultural assets closer to home for the people of our region. Western Sydney represents 10% of the Australian population, yet only received 3.4% of federal funds for the arts between 2015-2023. This is a stark contrast with Eastern Sydney, which received 23.5% of federal funding. At a state level, Western Sydney received 36.6% of cultural infrastructure funding. Most of this funding (33.1%) was allocated to the upcoming Powerhouse Parramatta precinct and museum. In 2021-2022 Western Sydney received just over 12% of Sydney based grants awarded by Create NSW, with the remaining 88% awarded to Eastern Sydney. Culture and creativity are critical to strengthening and building the social, economic and cultural resilience of Western Sydney.

Fairfield is recognised as a creative incubator for stories that explore the lived experience of cultural diaspora. This is evident through the work of Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) and Fairfield City Museum and Gallery. Both organisations have produced works and fostered artists that widen the lens on national identity and cultural perceptions of Western Sydney, while local community service providers such as Think and Do Tank embed the arts in their investigations and response to complex social needs.

Greater equity in arts funding for Western Sydney will give individuals, communities and service providers greater capacity and agency to tell their stories their way and innovate the way issues of equity are expressed and addressed.

## Our Community

Fairfield City is a growing community, with a population increase of 4.9% (+9,658 people) and an additional 4,875 dwellings between 2016 and 2021.

The number of renters has increased, with 36.4% of the population renting.

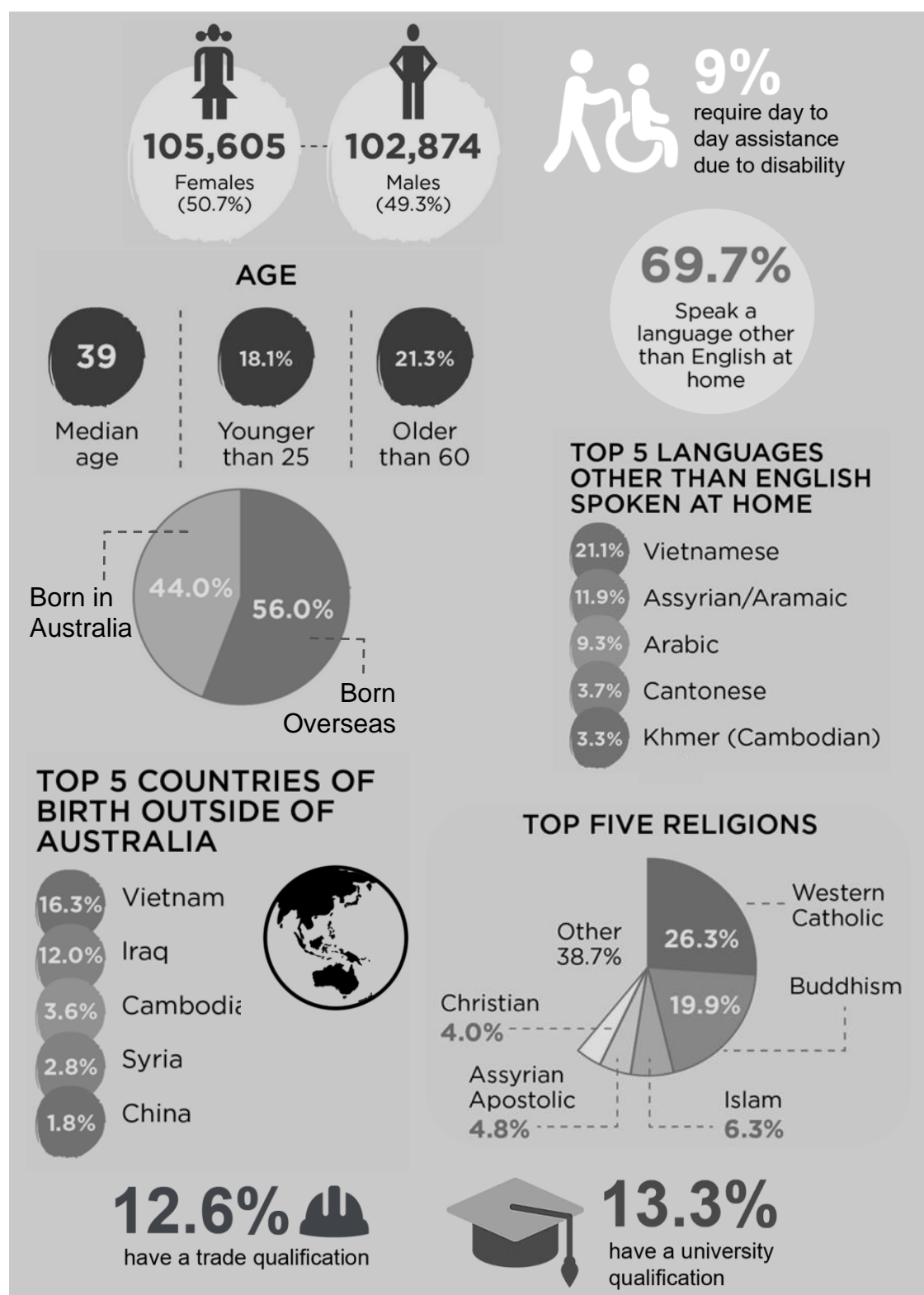
The 2021 census had a new question on health, which revealed that 26.8% of our total population is living with a long-term health condition. The most common long-term health condition identified was arthritis at 7.1% followed by diabetes at 6.8%. This is higher than Greater Sydney which recorded figures of 6.7% and 4.6% respectively.

In 2021, 19,285 people (or 9.3% of the population) in Fairfield City reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability compared to 5.2% in Greater Sydney. This was an increase of 2,374 persons (or 14%) from 2016.

There was a significant increase in residents who held educational qualifications between 2016 and 2021, with an additional 4,568 persons in 2021 with a Bachelor or Higher degree.

Fairfield City saw a significant decline of 13% in its labour force (participation rate) from 80,340 persons in 2016 to 69,896 persons in 2021. This may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

Fairfield City was ranked 1st in disadvantage of all 130 local government areas in NSW, meaning that there were no other local government areas that had a lower SEIFA ranking. A low score indicates relatively greater disadvantage in general. For example, an area with many households with low income, many people with no qualifications, or many people in low skilled occupations can contribute to a low score.





## Meeting the needs of our community

Service providers will talk further about community needs at Fairfield Conversations this month

**Accessibility** – This includes a lack of service capacity due to funding limitations or staff; lack of community awareness about services and what they can provide; inability to access services due to concerns around stigma; safe spaces for marginalised and at risk communities; lack of transport; language barriers; cultural concerns around accessing services such as distrust; long waiting list for specialist or other services e.g. My Aged Care; exclusions on visa conditions and understanding on how service systems work.

**Domestic and Family Violence** – Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) notes domestic violence related assault and possession and/or use of other drugs and liquor offences are increasing over a 5-year trend in Fairfield City. DFV is one of the main drivers of homelessness. Discussion at Fairfield Conversations 2021 identified that contributing factors to DFV include social isolation, employment uncertainty, gambling harm, mental health issues, exploitation of visa status and cultural nuances around family roles.

**Early intervention (EI)** – Access to early intervention is an issue across all services, from early childhood to My Aged Care. Resourcing is required to ensure that clients can have intervention services to ensure better outcomes. EI services also need to be culturally responsive.

**Engagement and social isolation** – Social isolation was highlighted in 2021 across all services. Its impacts on mental health are well documented. 2021 census data shows the level of disengaged youth (not attending work or study) has risen to 14.3% of all youth.

**Health** – The health of our population remains a key priority for Council, service providers and health partners. Chronic health issues continue to be a major concern. Fairfield City continues to report the highest proportion of the population known to have diabetes compared to other LGAs in the SWS Local Health District and in NSW. Fairfield City also reports higher than state average rates of asthma, babies with low birth weight and same day hospital admissions for dialysis. Other identified issues include childhood obesity, heart disease and dementia.

Greater focus is required to address the social, cultural, economic and environmental barriers faced by CALD communities when accessing and engaging health services to improve health outcomes.

**Financial stress** – The current cost of living crisis is impacting all areas of people's lives. For example the rising cost of petrol, food and housing impacts household budgets. The inflation rate is higher than wages and government income growth. Interest rate rises are also impacting families. There is higher demand in welfare services such as food pantries and services are experiencing a rise in new clients. Financial stress was one of the most common issues in 2021 and it was frequently identified that people had a lack of money, food, housing and access to services like early intervention.

The **unemployment** rate in Fairfield City at the December 2022 quarter was 8.3%. The state average is 3.5%. Fairfield City was ranked 1st in disadvantage of all 130 local government areas (LGAs) in NSW, meaning that no other LGA had a lower SEIFA ranking. A contributor to this SEIFA ranking is income. The majority of households fell into the lowest income quartile, earning \$886 or less per week. This equates to 32.5% of all households in Fairfield City, compared to 21.3% for Greater Sydney. This quartile also experienced the greatest increase in numbers of 3,136 households between 2016 and 2021. This equates to a 20% increase, meaning that the number of people earning less money has increased between 2016 and 2021.

**Homelessness** – Over the past five years there has been an increase in reports of people experiencing homelessness in Fairfield City's streets and parks from residents, business owners and Council staff. To respond to the increase in homelessness, Council convened the inaugural Fairfield/Liverpool Homelessness Interagency meeting in February 2019 to ensure a more coordinated approach to service delivery and a greater presence of outreach services to Fairfield City.

Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) conducted an annual street count in February. In 2020, 7 people were identified, 15 people in 2021 and 13 people in 2022. Street count results for 2023 are not yet released.

According to DCJ's *Rent and Sales Report*, December quarter 2022 rental prices for properties in Fairfield City have increased by 7.14% over a 12-month period. Rental costs in the 2165 postcode for a 2-bedroom unit was \$400 per week and for a 3-bedroom house was \$570 per week, an increase of \$110 since March 2021.

The 2021 Census identified 32.6% of renting households were paying \$450 or more per week in rent.

**Gambling** – The total gambling profit in Fairfield City for 2022 was \$335,606,002, with daily losses amounting to \$1,838,937 – that is a loss of over \$1.8 million dollars per day. (This has increased from \$1.6 million per day in 2021). Fairfield City has 4.4% of the state's electronic gaming machines (EGMs) but raises 28% of the state's income and is 1st in total income from EGMs in NSW across Clubs and 4th in hotels. Gambling harm impacts all areas of services.

**Cultural diversity** – Fairfield City is a culturally diverse community, with most of its residents born overseas (56%) and over 80 different languages spoken in the region. Information for the community needs to be translated in language and culturally appropriate. Individuals may be reluctant to seek help due to language barriers, lack of awareness of services and cultural stigma and shame. Services require additional resources to meet the needs of the diverse community, such as bilingual staff, access to interpreters and translated information.

**Mental Health** – Service providers and health partners continue to report an increasing prevalence of mental health issues. Factors such as uncertainty around housing and employment and a lack of culturally-sensitive mental health resources are identified as key barriers to mental wellbeing. Further data collection and analysis, specifically data that is Fairfield City specific, is critical to ensuring these health issues are addressed promptly and effectively.

### NAIDOC Family Day

Join us for a **FREE** Family Fun Day!  
Activities, cultural performances, **FREE** BBQ, sports and information stall.  
Celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Tuesday 4th July 11am – 3pm  
Location: Fairfield Showground,  
443 Smithfield Road, Prairiewood  
Contact: 9725 0129



Scan to register  
online

