

## Celebrating 40 years of community service

### Contact 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 is an Incorporated Association and is recognised as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) Charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status by the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Charities Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

### Contact Objectives

1. 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;
2. To provide assistance, information, referrals and support to people caring for young children in isolated circumstances;
3. To stimulate interest in the wellbeing of young isolated children by improving community awareness of the needs of children.

### Vision and Role

Our vision continues to be that isolated children, families and communities irrespective of their locality and circumstances have access to education, supports, information and services to best meet their needs.

The organisation serves the community by working across all child, family and children's sectors, to relieve disadvantage and isolation.

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

Working in urban, as well as rural and remote communities throughout Australia, Contact utilises its extensive networks, experience and established strategies to:

- Design and deliver innovative resourcing programs to skill the community and its services;
- Offer community specific child and family programs, supports and referrals; and
- Develop creative solutions that are responsive to locally identified needs for rural and remote children, families and communities.

## Contact Board

### Executive

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

### General Board

Nathan Kitto	
Tara Walker	
Maureen Fegan OAM	Public Officer



## Proudly celebrating 40 years of community service

In 2019, Contact celebrated over four decades of continuing community service.

Established in 1979, Contact's core role remains to serve the community by working directly with families, carer's agencies and all levels of Government, through a range of approaches encompassing the breadth of child and family life.

Contact believes current rural economic instability and social circumstances makes the delivery and maintenance of early childhood child, family and community education, health and social services, in isolated and remote contexts much more difficult and tenuous, but at the same time more essential.

Drought continues in many rural areas and impacts have been widely felt in the locations that Contact works.

For children born during these drought conditions, this means many children have known nothing else in this crucial first five and half years of life and these young children are often invisible as they do not go to school or are isolated and have limited or no regular links with other children and adults.

To address social disadvantage and isolation and the impacts of the drought, Contact's agenda consistently has been upon addressing social disadvantage with a focus on young children, supporting parents and families.

A range of resources and information related to the drought including a Drought Directory containing details of a range of supports to assist are now featured on Contact's website and social media. In an effort to further work towards overcoming some of the challenges associated with the drought, as a first step, Contact has commenced efforts to engage with families in targeted areas of western NSW region and to encourage a multi-agency approach with existing child and family services in the regions and policy makers to seek to further engage families with young children and connect them to services and supports with a focus on the early period of child development, from conception to age five years.

Contact believes there is great value in respectfully working in a complementary approach with others with the realisation that each member organisation will bring a different strength. United activities enacted during this year have included:

- Four credible group(s) with similar interest related to isolated rural and remote children, families and communities were invited to come together with the view of progressively defining ways to formally work together to accomplish mutually defined specific purposes, drawing on all the expertise and largesse of each these groups. This activity remains as a work in progress;
- In Central Australia, BushMob Aboriginal Corporation with Contact, worked in partnership within a first phase approach to scope a young parent project; and Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation and Contact united in efforts seeking to address child and family service gaps with the Utopia Homelands;

- Through CAGES Foundation support, Contact Fieldworker role continues to be offered in northwest NSW to complement and support existing child and family services to achieve desired goals and outcomes for children and families; and
- Paroo Contact Children's Mobile with Contact have undertaken a range of initiatives seeking to reinstate this important service for children and families in northwest NSW and southwest Queensland.

Contact's commitment to assisting community agencies continues through a range of ways such as the provision of pro bono guidance through Purpose Accountings and Contact's Treasurer for a remote children's enterprise navigating government financial contractual matters and through the CEO's ongoing role as Public Officer for Paroo Contact Children's Mobile, the NSW Mobile Children's Services Association (MCSA), within committees such as NSW Children's Week Council, the National Association of Mobile Children's Services and as Ambassador with Mooramilla Voices.

Sincere thanks and gratitude are expressed to all who have contributed and assisted Contact achieve its tasks throughout the year. The warmth and generosity of individuals, organisations, donors and funding bodies that have further supported the organisation are greatly valued.

In appreciation, we wish to highlight the generous funding commitments provided through the CAGES Foundation, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and Playgroup Queensland as well as individuals and groups that have greatly contributed in a range of ways. To name a few, these include Associate Professor Elizabeth Harris who has offered voluntary professional assistance during the year; the Royal Flying Doctor Service SE Dubbo Base and the Department of Communities and Justice (Western District) providing Board Dubbo meeting rooms at their facilities; Western NSW Local Health District Risk Management Unit assistance towards Contact's developing Risk Management strategy; and others such as Megan Mitchell, National Children's Commissioner; BushMob Aboriginal Corporation and Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation for their consistent professional assistance and support.

Respectfully, we pay tribute and acknowledge the Contact staff for their professionalism and shared commitment to the organisation. We deeply value the efforts of Contact Administrator, Cherie Butryn; Project Officer, Robin Saunders; Consultants Purpose Accounting and Prue Ritchie; Northern Territory Young Parent Initiative Project Officer, Angela Roepcke and our newest employees in Queensland, the Paroo Contact Children's Mobile Supported Playgroup team members of Amy Palmer, Carissa Hammond Melrose and Corissa Jackson.

Contact's Board bring a wealth of governance experiences and skills and represent specialist areas such as Aboriginal, Audit and Accounting, Governance, Government policy and rural and remote health, education and community agendas.



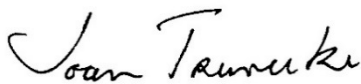
*The Purpose Accounting team attending the launch of a mobile education centre at Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC).*

As per Contact's Constitution requirements, the Board met five times during the year with face-to-face meetings including a full day Board meeting in Dubbo. To ensure Contact meets its financial and legal responsibilities, financial oversight is monitored through the Board's Finance Audit and Risk Committee supported by Purpose Accounting. In turn the Strategy, Sustainability and Communications Committee and supported by the CEO, review governance policies, procedures and defined underpinning sustainability strategies.

Appreciation of all Board members contributions on behalf of isolated children and communities are recorded and all at Contact wish Tara Walker well upon her retirement from the Board in 2020.

With the realisation that when one door closes another opens, Contact closed its Surry Hills office and successfully moved to remote satellite offices linked to ongoing staffing endeavours.

It is a testament in 2019 to Contact's solid foundations and dedication of all involved that the organisation continued in its functions although significantly challenged as a result of a car accident involving the Contact CEO. Despite these setbacks, Contact faces 2020 with renewed optimism and commitment to the future.



Joan Treweeke OAM  
Contact President



Sue Kingwill  
Chief Executive Officer

21 February 2020



*Maxine Mackay OAM was acknowledged in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours List for her service to the Indigenous community of Bourke.*

*Maxine has been involved with Contact for over 40 years contributing in many ways including as a Board Member.*

## Collaborations in Action

### Rural and Remote Shared Agendas

Potential partners who are working effectively across a range of rural and remote health, education, community, social and community wellbeing, access and equity agendas linked to isolated rural and remote children and families were identified by Contact during the year and invited to explore options for ongoing collaborative intents.



Although Contact has worked individually with these organisations, it was recognised that the other groups may not be familiar with one another, or may not have worked formally together or considered the potential benefits of forming an alliance, coalition or partnership approach with others who share common goals or intents.

During the year, the group met as a collective and have agreed in principle to:

- Focus activity upon service gaps for children and families who live in more remote areas in nominated LGAs plus in-principal scope to engage, as relevant, other areas; and
- Explore the development of a shared project to respond to identified child and family needs and enable the evolution of opportunities to commence to work together more fully within the emerging initiative.

Contact's role remains to find ways to fund the proposed shared project and co-ordinate ensuing endeavours.

### North West NSW Fieldworker

With deep appreciation, Contact acknowledges funding from the CAGES Foundation that is enabling a dedicated Fieldworker role to work within defined areas in northwest NSW. Community development approaches are utilised to complement and support existing child and family services to achieve desired goals and outcomes for children and families. In a value adding approach, the Fieldworker acts as a catalyst to link people together as well as identifying efficient ways to adapt or refine existing child and family endeavours to respond to emerging child and family requirements and to more effectively meet identified needs.

Key activities have included approaches to

- Ensure the sustainability or reinstating of existing child and family services in the Fieldworker;
- Defining solutions to existing identified unmet needs within the region;
- Supporting and exploring ways to implement and develop new child and family programs;
- Share information to inform and shape advocacy agendas and relevant lobbying approaches related to families, children and children's services;



- Actively exploring alternate strategies to enable future face-to-face field work actions in the community; and with reference to three-year plan;
- Investigating ways to engage regional people to undertake fieldwork tasks in their community and region; and
- Exploring future sustainability for the Fieldworker role by seeking to secure additional project funds to build upon emerging actions.

### **Building Early Childhood Networks - Shaping the future of Paroo Contact Children's Mobile (PCCM)**

The impacts of drought have significantly affected income levels within the PCCM service delivery area remaining drought declared.

In 2018, PCCM and Contact commenced ongoing lobbies with representations made at local, state (NSW and Queensland) and Federal levels seeking to reinstate PCCM service delivery following changes in the funding and organisational arrangements. These actions were defined on the basis a continuing regional expressed child and family unmet need and PCCM and Contact shared 32 year history.



A Tackling Tough Times Together grant through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) was secured to deliver the Building Early Childhood Networks project to conduct a PCCM region child and family service gap analysis by online survey complemented by face-to-face consultations in the Bulloo, Paroo and Quilpie Shires of southwest Queensland. Federal Government Drought Relief funding was also sourced through Paroo Shire Council to extend the Tackling Tough Times Together grant potential for PCCM committee representatives to attend various community events within the Paroo Shire.

Over 120 people engaged within the Building Early Childhood Networks project activities inclusive of the online survey, three Family Link-up Days and a Thargomindah community meeting process conducted unitedly with the welcomed support of Bulloo Shire Council.



*Sue Kingwill, Contact CEO, engaging with families at the Quilpie and Cunnamulla Family Link up Days.*

Consistently, there was evidence of unmet children and families' needs throughout the PCCM service area. There was sufficient interest in the delivery of Mobile early childhood play sessions on property and at community venue settings in the PCCM region. Nearly 80% of respondents were willing to travel up to 100kms to attend a Mobile session and families articulated factors that may be a barrier to their engagement and participation within any future PCCM programs.

Around two-thirds of project participants were from rural properties with the remainder living in towns and 70% of responses came from Queensland with the remainder in the main from NSW (28%). A total of 118 children under 13 years old were identified in the survey group, with 65 of these being in the birth to 5 years age range and the remainder being older.

Helping to address child and family isolation was the most significant priority for families with young children aged birth to 5 years with 86% of respondents indicating that opportunities to play with other children and socialise as a priority, with access to early intervention screenings and allied health supports also particularly profiled.

Middle childhood holiday programs were identified as a gap and consistently, a co-ordinated or holistic service provision model was defined (74%) by families as a desired future PCCM service delivery approach with families encouraging PCCM to co-ordinate, attend and or combine with other agencies to provide defined child and family activities.

The impacts of drought on children and families were raised with significant and moderate concern articulated related to financial impacts and the mental health of the entire family due to the drought. Respondents cited isolation factors and an inability to socialise for other children and adults as their most significant issue with mental health indicated as their next consternation.

Highlighted with gratitude are the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal Tackling Tough Times Together funding, Federal Government Drought Relief funding sourced through Paroo Shire Council and the support of Bulloo, Paroo and Quilpie Shires; Distance Education and Schools within these three Shires; Federal and State (NSW and Queensland) Isolated Children's Parents' Association; Royal Far West; 2WEB, 4RR, ABC Regional Radio in addition to the broad range of individuals and community groups that all contributed towards to the successful Building Early Childhood Networks project outcomes.

The Building Early Childhood Networks project findings strongly supported the reinstating of Paroo Contact Children's Mobile service delivery and reaffirmed that this remains a shared and continuing regional priority. Data from the Building Early Childhood Networks project reassured PCCM and Contact to continue in shared efforts to reinstate this service.





## South West Queensland

It was heartening that Playgroup Queensland agreed to fund an initial six month project to provide Paroo Contact Children's Mobile supported playgroups in partnership with Contact within the Bulloo, Paroo and Quilpie Shires of southwest Queensland. Playgroup activities are to be delivered for approximately two hours and offer a range of play-based activities structured to enhance early learning social development and community connections. In addition, participant families have been provided with complimentary Playgroup Queensland membership and access to its various member benefits and resources.



Contact and Paroo Contact Children's Mobile convey with deepest thanks, the welcomed opportunity provided through Playgroup Queensland (PGQ) and continue to examine ways with PGQ and others to continue these programs beyond the initial six-month funding avenue.

## Central Australia

BushMob Aboriginal Corporation is a community-based service whose purpose in the community is to assist high-risk young people aged 12-25 years in making positive life choices about alcohol and drugs, violence, crime and other high risk behaviors, partnering on the journey to support these young people get the self-respect, trust, courage and skills to have a good life for themselves and their future children.

BushMob works with young people wanting to get their lives back on track without alcohol or drugs or sniffing and recognises that many of the young people who attend BushMob are already parents or will be parents in the future.



As a result, BushMob Aboriginal Corporation in partnership with Contact, worked together during this year in a first phase approach to scope a young parent project.

To inform this work, specific activities undertaken included:

- The engagement of an Alice Springs based Indigenous women to undertake project tasks including ongoing discussions with Aboriginal Elders, BushMob team and community members to inform progressive project approaches, defining young parent needs through consultation with a sample group of young people within BushMob residential facilities and in other locations;
- Connecting to Alice Springs based services to introduce the project and learn about relevant parenting, birthing and health wellbeing Alice Springs based agencies;
- Exploring opportunities for future agency collaborations, undertaking research into existing young parent programs and relevant information;

- Defining possible avenues to more effectively discuss parenting needs with young people connected with BushMob programs in association with local Elders; and
- Completing a competency-based online foetal alcohol syndrome module.

The Project Worker was based within BushMob facilities and utilised a Contact Northern Territory vehicle with all project actions that were undertaken in the Alice Springs region at the BushMob facilities, within some town camps and by visiting local parenting, health and welfare agencies and, as applicable, attendance at relevant meetings.

In the short term, the project enabled ability to further gain insights as to young people's personal situation and realities; understandings of young people's support networks and the people they feel safe being with (predominately Elders and family); and experiences with Alice Springs or other locations parenting programs with interest in engaging in future programs focusing on parenting explored. The project scoping also enabled learning about the existing Alice Springs based programs available to support young parents.

Possibly the most critical learning gained through these endeavours related to levels of appetite for an initiative that focusses upon greater parenting skills for the young people linked to BushMob.

CAGES Foundation generosity that enabled an opportunity to undertake these scoping approaches are recognised.

## Utopia Homelands

With the conclusion of a Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding contract, Contact has continued to liaise and explore alternate avenues with Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation to address child and family identified service gaps. Actions have included visits to Canberra to meet with various Australian Government Departments as well as highlighting unmet child and family needs through various platforms such as a submission to the Human Rights Commission, National Children's Commissioner to inform reporting, as relevant, to the Australian Government and United Nations (UN) on Australia's performance in relation to the UN Rights of the Child.

Play is the beginning of  
knowledge

~ George Dorsey ~



*Children need the freedom to explore and experience the world around them to help them develop the necessary skills to successfully negotiate their pathways to adulthood.*

## Our Partners and Supporters

*We would like to thank...*

