45TH
Annual Report 2026

MANNING VALLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES INC.















A Joyous, diverse and inclusive community that celebrates its uniqueness and strengths.

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Acknowledgement to Country

MVNS acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional owners and custodians on whose land we walk, work, play and live – the Biripi people.

Our Vision

A joyous, diverse and inclusive community that celebrates its uniqueness and strengths.

Our Mission

MVNS is a community development organisation that resources and empowers individuals, groups and the community in the Manning Valley and surrounding LGAs, to address issues that affect them.

MVNS Activities Umbrella

Neighbourhood Service and Community and Family Support

- Information & Referral
- Advocacy
- Community Development
- Cheap use of phone, fax & computer.
- Support and programs for community members
- Promotion and assistance for community groups
- Tax Help - July to Oct - free assistance with tax returns for low-income earners
- Groups and courses

Garden Kitchen

A kitchen resource that provides support toward self-reliance to disadvantaged clients in a purposeful approach which provides a meal, advocacy, education and opportunities to commune.

Community Support – Previously Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program

- Financial assistance is provided via community donation only, for individuals & families in crisis.
- EAPA, Frozen Meals and limited resources available to all people living in the Manning Valley who are experiencing financial crisis and/or other misfortune or suffering which is contributing to poverty or helplessness.

Migrant Settlement Project Worker

MVNS facilitates the Migrant Settlement Service. This service operates from Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services in Wingham with outreach work on the Mid North Coast, including Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Taree and Forster areas.

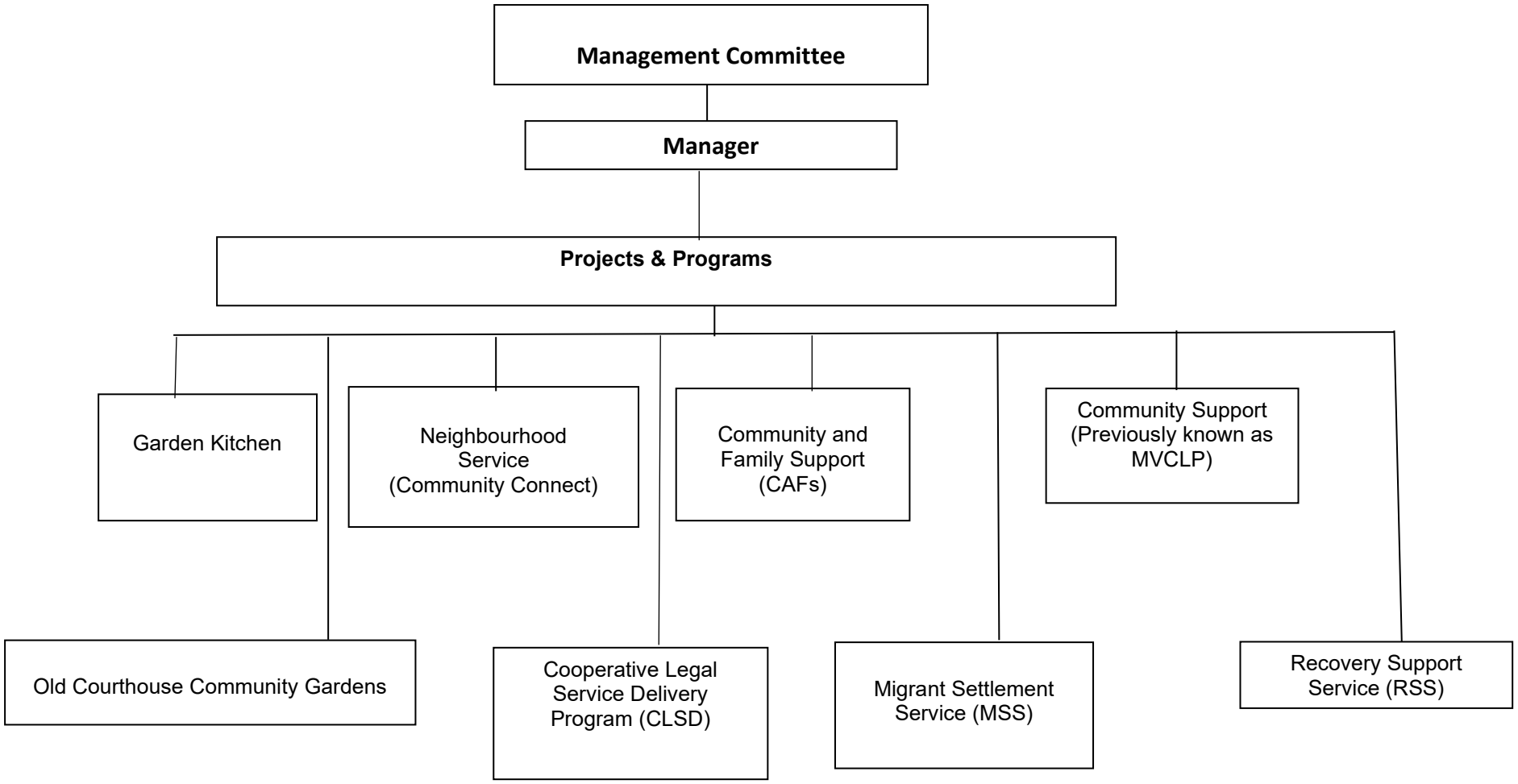
Cooperative Legal Service Delivery

Building cooperative & strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations.

Manning Valley Community Gardens

Development and maintenance of a sustainable garden for the community by the community.

MVNS Organisational Chart and Overview



Chairperson's Report

Each year, I gather all the reports and go through my files for meetings, documents and letters and I am always amazed at how much we have achieved. What is MORE amazing is what has been achieved is by few staff, limited monies, time constraints and the uncertainty of future funding. The secret – amazing people. With continuing support, we can develop programs and projects to assist our local community.

With slight concern I might neglect to highlight a specific person; I do need to commend the work of our fabulous manager - Kate Darnell. Everyone would agree that she is "the wind beneath our wings"; Kate's enthusiasm and joy for her job and for our organization buoys us all so we can be proud and invested in MVNS. Behind every great person is a Kerrie McTaggart. Our office administrator Kerrie is the calm duck floating on the MVNS pond. We all know that underneath she is furiously balancing lots of tasks and responsibilities.

Our social media may have made you aware of our staff, Hanna Deer - Community and Family Support Coordinator, Kate Darnell - Cooperative Legal Service Delivery, Hanna Rees - Recovery Support Services and Kate Stokes - Migrant Settlement Program (replacing Beata Mclean). I give my Congratulations and acknowledgements to each of them on a very successful 2026. PLEASE READ THEIR REPORTS.

Thank you to our Management Team – new and old (in terms of service). This year we updated our Strategic Plan to be more relevant, reflective and relatable to our daily operations. Angela Pink, Susan Ballard, Lisa Hort, Helen Kemp, Stan King, Aspen Charlesworth – Fabulous team and people.

Thank you to Rhonda Futterleib - our accountant and auditor. Your advice from last year has put us in a favourable position for 2026 going into 2027. More information has been provided in the reports in this document.

I would like to end this report with a reflection. A YEAR LATER - A time to gather and reflect - MVNS is a place where you can chat, reconnect, obtain advice and assistance.

No one is forgotten or left behind.

Susan Ballard

Chairperson & Treasurer, Management Committee

The bird references were inspired by all the beautiful Art on our walls at the 2026 Our Neighbourhood Community Art Project.

Treasurer's Report

The audit report is a comprehensive report detailing MVNS financial standing statement of profit and loss, comprehensive income, changes in equity, financial position and cash flow.

The document synthesizes the organization's financial turnaround to a $57,663 surplus, key profit and loss metrics, balance sheet liquidity, major grant funding allocations across community programs, and statutory compliance under the unqualified independent audit report.

For FY2026, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc. generated $791,162 in total revenue (up from $502,201 in FY2025), alongside $4,260 in net finance (interest) income.

The organization's revenue is heavily reliant on government grants, supplemented by service fees, donations, and minor operating streams.

The main revenue sources are Government Grants (Primary Revenue Source: $716,310)

Grants account for 90.5% of total revenue. Funding is provided by local, state, and federal government bodies to run specific community programs:

Operational Revenue ($36,412)

Other Income & Fundraising ($38,440)

Sponsorships & Donations: $30,440 ($24,548 in 2025).

Finance Income ($4,260)

Employee benefits expense is the single largest cost driver for Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc., directly reflecting the personnel-intensive nature of delivering community programs.

In FY2026, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc. allocated its total operating expenditure ($737,759) across a range of dedicated community initiative accounts. Each program operates under an individual acquittal account to track grant compliance and service delivery.

MVNS is considered Going Concern & Solvent: The auditor and Committee affirmed reasonable grounds that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Susan Ballard

Chairperson & Treasurer, Management Committee

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.

MVNS has continued to fulfil its mission this year by empowering individuals and communities through community development and direct service delivery.

Last year, I closed my report by wishing for an enriching and abundant 2026. I am delighted to share that this year has delivered exactly that. Across every part of our neighbourhood service, we have experienced growth, opportunity and abundance, not simply in financial terms, but through stronger community connections, meaningful partnerships, staff development and the positive impact we have made together. The achievements outlined in this report reflect what is possible when community, partnership and purpose come together.

While the year has not been without its challenges, from the conclusion of Department of Social Services Emergency Relief funding to funding uncertainty, rising living costs and the ongoing demands of long-term disaster recovery, the gains have far outweighed the difficulties. Through these challenges, we have built stronger relationships, deepened our impact and continued to grow as an organisation. Most importantly, we have seen firsthand the strength and resilience of our community, reminding us that our greatest assets are the people, partnerships and shared purpose that underpin everything we do.



Additional Funding Opportunities 2025-2026

During 2025–2026, MVNS successfully secured several additional funding opportunities that enhanced our capacity to support the community and respond to emerging needs.



Key funding received included:

- **$25,000 from ETC** to support the *Community Cuppa* initiative, providing opportunities for community connection, engagement and wellbeing via our new and improved Community Cuppa garden shed.
- **$20,000 from TURSA** to strengthen the delivery of **Emergency Relief** services and assist individuals and families experiencing financial hardship.

- **$10,000 from Australia Post** for the *Community Reset* program, supporting community recovery, resilience and social connection through facilitated programs each month.





These valuable contributions enabled us to extend our reach, strengthen existing programs and continue providing practical support to community members throughout the year.

Celebrating Community Resilience

Coles, First Bite and Sunrise Recognition



As reported in 2025, one of the significant challenges we faced was the closure of the Coles SecondBite food recovery program following the devastating floods. In response, Coles generously provided MVNS with a $10,000 contribution to establish what we affectionately called "First Bite", enabling us to continue providing essential food support to community members experiencing hardship.

Coles further demonstrated its commitment to our community by hosting a community lunch to celebrate the opening of its new store. During this event, MVNS was honoured to be recognised for its contribution to flood recovery and ongoing community support, with our work featured on Sunrise. This recognition was a testament not only to the dedication of our organisation, but also to the generosity, resilience and collective spirit of the Manning Valley community, which continues to support one another through times of challenge and recovery.

Securing the Community and Family Support Contract

This year marked the conclusion of our DCJ-funded Targeted Early Intervention program and the successful negotiation of a new five-and-a-half-year Community and Family Support (CAFS) Strengthening Communities Stream funding agreement. We are delighted that this has enabled us to offer Hanna Deer a position as our CAFS Coordinator, ensuring that her passion, expertise and community-focused approach continue to benefit local children, young people and families.

Hanna's contribution to MVNS has been truly remarkable. From nurturing curiosity and connection through Preschoolers in the Garden, to engaging and supporting high school students, facilitating mothers' groups, and delivering resilience-building programs, she has consistently gone above and beyond to create inclusive, supportive and empowering opportunities for our community. Her ability to connect with people of all ages, foster meaningful relationships and bring creativity and energy to every program has made a lasting impact on countless individuals and families.

Hanna, thank you for sharing your magic with us. Your dedication, compassion and unwavering commitment to strengthening our community are deeply valued, and we look forward to seeing the continued positive impact of your work in the years ahead.

Growing Community Connection



Throughout the year, uncertainty around ongoing funding and the increasing complexity of community needs presented significant challenges. Rising cost-of-living pressures, the ongoing impacts of disaster recovery, and a rapidly changing funding landscape required us to continually adapt and find new ways to support our community. While these challenges tested our capacity, they also strengthened our resolve and encouraged greater innovation and resourcefulness. As a result, our Community Connect initiative continued to grow, evolving into a suite of programs including Community Cuppa, Community Craft, Community Place, Community Support, and Community Reset. Together, these programs have created more opportunities for connection, wellbeing, inclusion and practical support, demonstrating how resilience and creativity can transform challenges into meaningful community outcomes.

The expansion of Community Connect also enabled us to welcome new volunteer Kerri to the organisation, further strengthening our capacity to deliver meaningful community programs. Kerri has led the way at Wednesday's Community Craft sessions and has become a vital contributor to all things Thursday at Community Place, bringing energy, creativity and a genuine commitment to community connection. Much of this growth has been driven by the dedication and vision of our Recovery Worker, Hannah Rees, whose efforts in coordinating and expanding Community Connect have transformed it into a thriving suite of programs that foster belonging, wellbeing and support. Through her strong community relationships, passion for recovery and



ability to identify emerging needs, Hannah has played a pivotal role in creating opportunities for connection and resilience across the community. Encouragingly, the success of these initiatives may also help secure future opportunities, ensuring that Hannah's skills, experience and invaluable community efforts continue to support residents as they navigate their recovery journey and build community connection.

An Even Stronger Team



The continuation of Recovery Funding, together with additional CLSD Project funding, enabled us to further strengthen our team and expand our community impact. We were delighted to welcome Arwen back to MVNS, where her experience, compassion and practical approach have strengthened our recovery and community support efforts. We also welcomed Kate Stokes as our New Migrant Worker. Kate has quickly become a valued member of the team, bringing enthusiasm, compassion and a strong commitment to supporting people as they build connections and confidence within our community. Both team members have been tremendous assets to MVNS and have helped us enhance the quality and reach of our services.



Our strong team extends far beyond our paid staff, and this report would be remiss not to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of our volunteers and Management Committee. Their generosity, commitment and belief in our organisation are at the heart of everything we do.

To our volunteers, thank you for the countless hours you dedicate to supporting programs, welcoming community members, sharing your skills and helping create the sense of connection and belonging that defines MVNS. You each enrich our service in ways that cannot be measured.



To our Management Committee, thank you for your support, guidance and governance throughout the year. Our board has been made even stronger by your willingness to give your time, expertise and encouragement which ensures that both our staff and volunteers feel seen, valued and supported

The strength of MVNS lies in the collective efforts of so many people, and we are deeply grateful for the commitment, wisdom and care that our volunteers and Management Committee bring to the organisation and our community every day.



Thank you to our Management Committee, Susan, Angela, Lisa, Helen, Stan and Aspen.

Celebrating Kerrie McTaggart



This year, I would like to formally acknowledge Kerrie McTaggart, who this year celebrates an incredible 22 years with MVNS. Kerrie's administrative and financial expertise, attention to detail, organisational knowledge and unwavering dedication have been the backbone of our organisation for more than two decades. She provides support not only to staff and volunteers, but also to the many community members who engage with our service, often working quietly behind the scenes to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Kerrie's contribution to MVNS, and indeed to the wider Manning Valley community, cannot be overstated. Her commitment, professionalism and genuine care for people are evident in everything she does. She has an extraordinary ability to make people feel welcomed, supported and valued, and her knowledge, wisdom and kindness are relied upon by us all.

On a personal note, Kerrie, thank you for your unwavering support. You have been my greatest advocate, a trusted sounding board and a constant source of encouragement. I hope you know just how deeply appreciated you are by all of us. Your contribution has helped shape the organisation we are today, and we are profoundly grateful for all that you do.

Finally

Last and never least, thank you, dear reader, for engaging with our service, getting to know a little more about us and contributing in whatever way you do.

Here's to a year of connection, gratitude and vibrant community building!

Kate Darnell

MVNS Manager

Our Neighbourhood Art Project (ONA!)



Following the tremendous success of its inaugural year, the Our Neighbourhood Art (ONA!) Project returned in 2026 bigger and better than ever. What began as a creative fundraising initiative has quickly become a much-anticipated annual celebration of local talent, creativity, and connection.



This year, just over 400 artworks were submitted by community members of all ages and abilities, demonstrating the remarkable depth of creativity across our region. Artists of all ages and abilities contributed works across a variety of mediums, with each piece reflecting the unique perspectives, experiences, and talents that make our community so vibrant.



ONA! continues to demonstrate the power of community arts to bring people together, foster belonging, and celebrate the diverse talents within our region. The project provides an inclusive and accessible platform for artistic expression, encouraging participation from individuals who may not otherwise have opportunities to share their work publicly.



The growth and enthusiasm witnessed in 2026 confirms that ONA! has become a cherished community event; with 165 community members joining us on opening night and over another 100 throughout the following extended exhibition hours Friday-Tuesday. MVNS is grateful to all participating artists, volunteers, donors, and attendees whose contributions made the project possible and looks forward to continuing this annual celebration of creativity, connection, and community spirit for many years to come.

Migrant Settlement Service (MSS)

The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other vulnerable migrants, and their communities with the knowledge and tools to address their settlement needs. The program focuses on improving social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being, and community connectedness, and is targeted at new arrivals in their first five years of life in Australia.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Service (MVNS) is funded by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to deliver the SETS program under the current grant period (July 2024-June 2027) in the Midcoast, Hastings and Kempsey Local Government Areas.

In the 2025/26 financial year the SETS program was delivered for MVNS by Beata McLean This report has been prepared by Kate Stokes, who has recently been employed by MVNS in the Migrant Settlement Service role, with reference to Beata's records.

Migrant Settlement Service on the Mid North Coast

The objectives of the SETS program are to assist migrants to integrate into Australian society, foster a whole-of-community approach and build community capacity. We do this through case work support for individuals, networking with other services and organisations, and running or supporting programs that build community capacity.

Case work

Individual assistance is provided to recently arrived migrants, particularly to those holding protection; family and partner; and working and skilled visas. Case work also focuses largely on assisting migrant women and families with domestic violence experiences; and migrants through the Pacific Engagement visa stream.

Case work includes assessing the settlement and support needs of the person; providing advice, assistance and information particularly regarding government services and supports, health and education services, legal and financial services, and housing; and making warm referrals to other services and supports as required.

Networking

As the Migrant Settlement Service is not funded to provide intensive and ongoing case management, establishing effective relationships with local services and community organisations, and staying across the programs they offer, supports the officer in making effective, well-informed referrals and to identify opportunities to collaborate on and support initiatives of benefit to the migrant community. Networking includes attending regular interagency meetings in the MidCoast, Kempsey and Hastings LGAs; participating in relevant issue specific working groups; and contributing to local events and initiatives.

Building community capacity

The Migrant Settlement Service aims to build the capacity of recently arrived individuals and their families, and of the community as a whole, to support connected and cohesive communities. The MSS Officer facilitates group-based information, education and social events; works to identify and support local leaders in the migrant community; and supports the development of new or existing community groups relevant to the migrant community.

Outcomes in 2025/26

Case Work

In 2025/26, 38 new clients consulted the service and 33 of these received case work support. Referrals were made to numerous services including Victim Services, IARC, Legal Aid, The Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS), Child Protection Counselling Services (CPCS) - NSW Health, Vinnies ER, MVNS ER, Manning Base Hospital and GP, Link2home Homelessness and Liberty DFV.

The support provided to clients related to employment and job searches, legal and migration matters (visa applications, childcare and property settlement, will and estate), relocation, TAFE AMEP, relationship breakdown, domestic and family violence, counselling, safety, financial support, school enrolment for children, medical appointments, Centrelink matters, applications and appointments, driving tests and licenses.

Networking

The Migrant Support Worker attended interagency and networking meetings in person and online as appropriate and continued to explore opportunities for collaboration in supporting the migrant community. Also engaged with the Convenor of Great Lakes Rural Australians for Refuges (RAR), the Local Connector from Regional Development Australia MidNorth Coast (RDAMNC) and Mid North Coast Refugee Support Group (MNCRSG). The Migrant Support Worker also worked collaboratively with the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) and the Taree Women's Refuge to ensure the safety and well-being of DFV affected clients and their children.

Regular meetings attended included:

- MidCoast Child & Family Interagency meeting
- DV Monitoring Committee Meeting
- SETSCoP Domestic & Family Violence Meeting
- Safety in Settlement CoP meeting
- Data Work Group Meeting
- Hastings Community Network meetings
- Kempsey Community Services Interagency

Building community capacity

Information sessions were delivered at Tuncurry, Taree and Port Macquarie TAFE campuses. Community members participated in the Community Christmas Lunch at MVNS and at a Christmas lunch at TAFE. We participated in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence through a Bunnings BBQ. And attended the Migrant Education and Employment Expo at Port Macquarie.

Plans for 2026/27



There are inherent challenges in supporting the settlement needs of a diverse cohort of people across a large geographic area. The multifaceted nature of the role also requires discipline and careful time management to balance individual case work with the ongoing work of building and maintaining effective networks and the longer-term work of fostering connected and resilient communities.

In 2026/27, the Migrant Settlement Service will:

- establish a more consistent client intake and needs assessment process and records management system;
- provide clients with clear and consistent expectations regarding the scope of the MSS Officer's role;
- establish, document and utilise effective referral pathways;
- ensure the Migrant Settlement Service is visible and accessible to local organisations, services and community members;
- deliver or facilitate regular and ongoing education, information and social events and groups;
- identify and take up opportunities to collaborate with other organisations and services on community-based events and initiatives.

Kate Stokes

Migrant Settlement Project Worker





Community and Family Support (CAFS)

The Community and Family Support program (formerly Targeted Earlier Intervention Program) is funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. This program is an early intervention program aimed at supporting people "early in life and early in need" (DCJ). Evidence has shown that early intervention is the most effective strategy to improve short- and long-term outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

Please note: Due to the change in NSW Govt program contract, this report will cover both the former Targeted Earlier Intervention Program (ended Dec 2025) and the current Community and Family Support Program (began Jan 2026)

The Community and Family Support program (CAFS) officially transitioned from the Targeted Earlier Intervention program into its current form in January 2026 and MVNS successfully negotiated a new 5.5-year contract with Department of Communities and Justice to deliver this program to the Manning Valley region.

MVNS is funded to deliver programs through the "community strengthening" stream of the CAFS program, where the main goal is to engage community and provide programs and opportunities that promote community cohesion, inclusion, empowerment and well-being. These programs include education and skills training, community connection and social participation, advocacy and support and organising and participating in community events and workshops.

Under the new CAFS program, the specifications have now broadened in scope beyond the former specified disadvantaged target groups to also include "any community or person in need". This has allowed MVNS to offer programs and support to a wider number of people.

It has been a challenging 12 months within our local community with rising cost of living pressures, on-going impacts from the major flooding event and a rise in homelessness. Our local young people continue to experience high rates of unemployment and mental health issues and there has been a concerning rise in incidents of school refusal and violence. All these issues are indicative of our current wider societal environment and the stressors that inevitably ripple down to the more disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in our community. It is these groups and community members that the CAFS program is designed to recognise and engage with, to ensure that despite the challenges they face, these members of our community are seen, heard, valued and supported.

The MVNS CAFS program aims to act as an important early intervention service attempting to prevent the challenges that these community members face from escalating into more serious issues such as child protection matters, poverty, mental illness and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Over the past 12 months the CAFS program has delivered the following workshops and programs to disadvantaged community members across the Manning Valley:



- Bake and Barista workshops
- Introduction to Barista skills
- Under The Bonnet: Introduction to car maintenance
- Engage with Equine program
- Resilience Building workshop
- Youth Holiday Activity workshops
- Nature Play workshops
- Women's groups
- Safe Food Handling course for young people
- Garden Play preschool excursions
- Creative Therapy workshops to young people
- Community Cuppa work experience opportunities

Alongside these on-going programs CAFS has also been involved in a number of community events which have included:

- NAIDOC Week celebrations
- Manning River Rugby Ratz Indigenous round
- Youth Week celebrations
- The VOYCE Youth Conference
- Wingham Youth Fest
- Manning Youth Interagency Committee
- VOYCE Youth Conference planning committee

As Coordinator of this program, I have also undertaken the following professional development training:

- First Aid Certificate
- The Resilience Doughnut
- Stormbirds Disaster Recovery program
- Waterways Cultural Awareness training
- Certificate of Creative Therapies

There are always endless highlights when working within the CAFS programs and it is often the small, unexpected comments and progressions that are the most meaningful. For example, hearing how important attending a women's group is to a young mum's mental health, or the new social connections and friendships that a young person has formed after attending a CAFS workshop. Or even the shy, socially isolated young person who begins to attend CAFS events on a regular basis and witnessing their self-confidence slowly grows.

One of the more notable highlights of the past 12 months however was the charity partnership MVNS formed with the Manning River Rugby Ratz team. Through this partnership an opportunity was offered to a local young Indigenous girl who has previously engaged in the CAFS program, to design and create an artwork that would be featured on the rugby club's jersey for their annual Indigenous round. This young artist put a great deal of thought into producing an artwork that not only represented her local Biripi culture but the history of the rugby club as well. The artist and her family were invited by the club on the day of their Indigenous round where she made a speech about her design and presented each of the senior men's and women's team with their jersey's. It was an incredibly proud moment for MVNS, the young girl and her family. A special thank you to the club and their president Stephen Rees for offering up this opportunity!

In many ways the past 12 months has been a year of transition and change. But that has always been one of the strengths of the CAFS program - its ability to be flexible, adaptive, responsive and change the changing needs of our community.
The program has grown in maturity over the past 5 years and has become a vibrant, varied and important part of the local community services landscape. MVNS has established and maintained many varied collaborative relationships within the community services sector and new collaborations continue to emerge and evolve.

Heading into the later stages of 2026 and beyond, the CAFS program is in a very strong and healthy position to continue caring for and supporting our local community and its members.

As always, a program can only thrive when it has the wider support of its organisation and staff. MVNS offers that in abundance! This is a workplace full of committed, professional, caring, skilled and heart-led staff and volunteers who all support one another and share genuine care and love for our local community and the people who call our area home. It is a privilege to be a part of the MVNS team.

Hanna Deer

Coordinator Community and Family Support Program




MVNS COMMUNITY
CUPPA!












Resilience



The Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program partnership is one of 12 regional justice partnerships across New South Wales that aims to improve legal outcomes for socially and economically disadvantaged people. The partnership is guided by an Action Plan that provides a framework for addressing local unmet and emerging legal needs.

Taree Forster Region Priorities

Throughout 2025-2026, the CLSD partnership delivered projects aligned with the 2025-2027 Action Plan, updated in March 2025, the plan identifies ongoing, unmet, and emerging legal needs within the Taree and Forster communities.





1. Fines and Debt

A continued effort has ensure that CLSD has engaged and supported community members with fines and debt.

Key outcomes included:

- Law Week information and resources shared through MVNS Community Cuppa events and community social media platforms.
- Successful delivery of the EWON Bring Your Bills Day in Taree in May 2026.
- EWON established ongoing attendance at MVNS Community Cuppas on a bi-monthly basis, aligned with Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre attendance.
- Delivery of an information support for staff at the Forster/Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Centre.

2. Housing and Homelessness

Housing and homelessness remained a significant focus throughout the year.

Key outcomes included:

- Regular attendance and updates from the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service (TAAS) at CLSD quarterly meetings.
- Promotion of and participation in local TAAS information sessions.
- Ongoing support for the Homelessness Hub and the creation of additional Legal Service Days.
- Continued monthly engagement by Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre through attendance at MVNS Community Cuppas.
- Development and distribution of a Local Legal Outreach Guide to support referrals and service navigation.

3. Referrals, access to legal services and sharing information

Significant progress was achieved in improving service accessibility and referral pathways.

Key outcomes included:

- Completion of activities funded through additional project funding during the 2025-2026 financial year. Taree/Forster CLSD expresses a huge thank you to Arwen O'Keefe, Casual CLSD Project Worker for creating and updating these valuable resources
- Delivery of information regarding Legal Aid NSW fee waivers at both the Quarter 1 CLSD meeting and the Taree/Forster Interagency, increasing awareness of access options for community members experiencing financial hardship.

4. Community Legal Education



Community legal education remained a key priority, with several successful collaborations and information-sharing initiatives.

Community Legal Achievements included:

- WDVCAS and Women's Legal Service participation at the Quarter 3 2026 CLSD meeting.
- CLSD support and promotion of the "Your Knowledge, Her Safety" legal education event delivered by Women's Legal Service and Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre in Taree on 20 August 2026.
- Regular attendance and youth-focused updates provided by port Macquarie Legal Aid NSW at quarterly meetings.
- Participation by Home Base Youth Services at the Quarter 2 2026 CLSD meeting, resulting in ongoing engagement with the mailing list and interagency network.
- Continued engagement with Flourish Australia supporting community members in need.
- Presentation by Mid North Coast Financial Counselling, highlighting emerging legal issues, service information, and case studies at the Quarter 2 2026 CLSD meeting.

Events and Partnerships





Strong partner engagement enabled the successful delivery of numerous regional initiatives, including:

Birth Certificate Initiatives

CLSD ensured Birth Certificate Days were delivered across the region.

- Two birth certificate events were held for the Manning Valley in September and December 2025 – supporting over twenty people with Birth Certificates.
- Ten birth certificates and registrations were completed in Taree during May 2026.
- Twenty-Two birth certificates were delivered at the Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service in August 2026.

CLSD Program Transition

As the Taree/Forster CLSD partnership reflects on the achievements of the previous year, it does so against the backdrop of significant change for the program across New South Wales.

It is with great sadness that Legal Aid NSW has advised that, due to budget constraints, Regional Coordinator positions across all 12 CLSD regions will cease from 1 January 2027. While this marks the end of the Regional Coordinator model that has supported local collaboration and community-led responses to legal need, the impact of the work undertaken across the MidCoast region will continue well beyond this transition. Regional Coordinator positions will conclude and MVNS will lose a valuable community program, however, the CLSD Program Unit at Legal Aid NSW will continue its responsibility for supporting local collaborative service planning within the legal assistance sector.

The Taree/Forster CLSD partnership leaves behind a legacy of collaboration, innovation, and community connection. We thank every partner, stakeholder, and community member who has contributed to this work.

Kate Darnell

Taree/Forster Regional Coordinator

Recovery Support Service

Immediate Recovery Support funded by NSW Reconstruction Authority

Throughout 2025–2026, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services' Recovery Support Services have continued to provide practical, emotional and advocacy-based support to individuals and families impacted by the Mid North Coast floods.

As the recovery response has moved from immediate relief into longer-term recovery, the needs of community members have continued to evolve. While many people have made significant progress, others are experiencing increasingly complex challenges relating to housing, rebuilding, financial hardship, access to trades, grant requirements, insurance and emotional wellbeing.

A key learning throughout the year has been that recovery does not follow a set timeline. Community members continue to present for support months after an event, while others who appeared to be progressing have re-engaged when new barriers have emerged.

Recovery Support Services have therefore continued to provide a flexible, relationship-based approach, supporting people to understand their options, navigate complex systems, access available assistance and advocate for outcomes that reflect their individual circumstances.

Supporting Community Members Through Recovery

The service has continued to support a significant number of active and re-engaged cases throughout the year. While case numbers fluctuate as people progress through their recovery, the level of re-engagement demonstrates the ongoing and changing nature of post-disaster support.



Many community members have required assistance across multiple areas at the same time, including recovery grants, appeals, insurance, housing, financial hardship, legal matters, rebuilding and access to practical assistance.

For many people, having a consistent and trusted person to help understand options, make referrals, follow up with agencies and advocate alongside them has been an important part of their recovery.

Key Achievements and Positive Outcomes

Advocacy and Grant Support

Advocacy has remained a significant component of Recovery Support Services.

Community members have been supported through Home Repair Grant and other recovery funding processes, including late applications, exceptional circumstances, additional funding requests and appeals.

There have been a number of positive outcomes where individual advocacy and detailed documentation have helped overcome barriers to funding. In some cases, successful appeals have resulted from circumstances that were not initially reflected in funding decisions, including complex property and administrative issues.

Legal Aid and other specialist services have also played an important role where insurance, property ownership and legal matters have complicated recovery.

GIVIT and Practical Assistance



GIVIT has continued to be an important pathway for providing practical assistance that sits outside traditional government funding programs.

Support has included essential household items as well as larger recovery works such as flooring, hot water systems, plumbing and electrical work. This assistance has helped households progress repairs and, in some cases, safely return home after extended periods of displacement.

To date, MVNS has requested **13,044 items through GIVIT, with 6,558 items funded**, totalling **$292,367.40** in assistance going directly back into the local community.

GIVIT has also provided practical assistance to rural community members, including fuel, helping to reduce some of the barriers created by isolation and travel.

Local businesses, community organisations, churches and community groups have also continued to provide valuable practical assistance, including household goods, bins, tip fees and other support when government funding pathways have been unavailable or insufficient.

Housing and Temporary Accommodation

Housing has remained one of the most significant areas of need.

Recovery Support Services have assisted community members experiencing rental affordability issues, temporary accommodation challenges, relocation and difficulties transitioning back into permanent housing.

Some community members have received extensions to temporary caravan accommodation due to exceptional circumstances, providing additional time while recovery works or alternative housing arrangements were pursued.

The transition out of temporary accommodation has also highlighted the importance of individualised planning. Relocation can have significant impacts on employment, schooling, family connections and access to community support.

Financial Support

Financial hardship continues to be a significant part of flood recovery.

An encouraging development has been an increase in community members feeling comfortable discussing their financial circumstances. This has enabled more appropriate referrals to financial counselling and other services, while supporting earlier intervention where financial pressures are affecting recovery.

Financial challenges are often closely connected to housing, rebuilding and household costs, reinforcing the importance of a coordinated approach rather than addressing each issue in isolation.

Strong Partnerships and Collaboration

Strong partnerships have been one of the key strengths of Recovery Support Services.

Throughout the year, MVNS has continued to collaborate with organisations including:

- Mid Coast Council
- Reconstruction Authority
- GIVIT
- Legal Aid
- Mid North Coast Legal Centre
- Community Legal Services Delivery
- Mid Coast Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service
- Red Cross
- Financial Counselling services
- Uniting



- Farmgate and RAMP
- RSPCA
- TRAC
- Thread Together
- Mid North Coast Youth Services
- Wesley Care Finders
- Local businesses and community organisations
- Local community groups, churches and service clubs



These partnerships have enabled community members to access specialist assistance while allowing Recovery Support Services to remain focused on coordinating, advocating and supporting individuals throughout their recovery.

A particularly positive example involved collaboration with Community Legal Services Delivery to assist two families experiencing complex birth registration issues. Specialist support helped the families navigate administrative barriers and obtain essential identification, improving their ability to access other services and supports.

Legal Aid has also provided valuable assistance with insurance claims and communication with insurance providers, reducing some of the stress experienced by community members navigating complex insurance processes.

Community Engagement and Outreach



Community engagement and outreach have remained important ways of connecting with people who may not otherwise seek assistance.

Activities throughout the year have included community events, outreach visits, resilience activities, Community Cuppa, Community Craft, Community Place, school holiday programs, Youth Week activities, NAIDOC events, Connected Communities activities and Community Recovery Network meetings.

The One Year Later Community Lunch provided an important opportunity for community members to come together, share their experiences and raise ongoing concerns. It also created an opportunity for residents to discuss individual recovery matters and strengthen connections between community and government representatives.

These activities have demonstrated that community engagement is more than simply providing information. Informal and welcoming spaces can allow people to raise concerns, disclose emerging needs and connect with support in a way that feels safe and accessible.



Emerging Challenges

Despite the positive outcomes achieved, significant challenges remain within the longer-term recovery landscape.

Access to builders and trades continues to be a major barrier. Community members report difficulty obtaining quotes, contractors not responding to enquiries and challenges finding trades willing to undertake government-funded recovery work. In some cases, funding has been available but people have been unable to progress because they cannot find a suitable contractor.

Funding limitations also remain an issue. While grants such as the $25,000 Home Repair Grant have provided valuable assistance, they do not always meet the actual cost of significant repairs, particularly in regional areas where construction costs and access to trades can be challenging.

Housing affordability and safety continue to affect vulnerable households. Some community members have struggled to secure appropriate rental accommodation, while temporary accommodation can require relocation away from employment, education and established support networks.

Emotional wellbeing has become increasingly evident as the recovery period continues. Community members have described exhaustion, hopelessness and burnout after months or years of managing repairs, financial pressures, housing uncertainty and administrative processes.

These challenges reinforce the importance of sustained, trauma-informed and relationship-based support beyond the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Practical Recovery Support

An emerging area of need has been practical assistance to help community members identify, prioritise and plan outstanding recovery works.

Many people are overwhelmed by the number of tasks they need to manage and are unsure where to begin. Working with local services and GIVIT has provided opportunities to explore practical assistance for smaller tasks that may otherwise prevent people from progressing.

This demonstrates the importance of looking beyond traditional grant funding and considering the practical barriers that can prevent a household from moving forward.

Training and Workforce Development

Ongoing professional development has supported the Recovery Support Worker to strengthen trauma-informed practice, legal awareness and knowledge of available recovery pathways.

Training and information sessions have included:

- Legal Help in Your Region – Mid North Coast Legal Centre
- Stormbirds Training
- Compassion Fatigue Training
- Resilience Canopy Information Session – Mid Coast Council
- EWON Information Session

Looking Ahead

As the broader disaster recovery response continues to transition, it is important that the ongoing needs of affected communities remain visible.

The experience of the past year has demonstrated that long-term recovery requires more than financial assistance. Community members need access to housing, trades, legal and financial support, practical assistance, emotional support and strong advocacy.

Recovery Support Services will continue to focus on:

- Providing accessible, individualised and trauma-informed support
- Strengthening referral pathways and local partnerships
- Advocating for community members experiencing barriers within recovery systems
- Connecting people with financial, legal, housing and practical supports
- Identifying emerging needs through community engagement and outreach
- Supporting community members through the longer-term stages of recovery



Conclusion

The 2025–2026 year has demonstrated both the progress achieved across the Mid North Coast and the ongoing challenges of disaster recovery. Positive outcomes, including successful support pathways, practical assistance and stronger community connections, show the value of flexible, person-centered recovery services. While many residents continue to face complex impacts on housing, finances and wellbeing, MVNS remains committed to providing ongoing support and advocacy, recognizing that recovery is a long-term journey that requires time, connection and community support.

Hannah Rees

Recovery Support Worker

Manning Valley Community Support

Previously Manning Valley Cooperative Living Program

Following significant funding reductions, the Manning Valley Community Support Program (formerly MVCLP) now relies heavily on community grants, donations, partnerships and the dedication of volunteers to help people experiencing financial hardship across the Manning Valley.

The program offers limited financial assistance, information, advocacy and referral services to community members facing crisis, with a focus on connecting people to both immediate support and longer-term solutions. Using a holistic, community-centered approach, Community Support brings together several key MVNS initiatives, including the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Program, Community Gardens, and the Food from the Heart Kitchen Project.

Together, these programs help address immediate needs while promoting social connection, food security, wellbeing and community resilience for some of the region's most vulnerable residents.

Funding Challenges and Community Impact

There is no denying that funding directly influences our ability to support the Manning Valley community.

The devastating loss of Department of Social Services (DSS) Emergency Relief funding in early 2025 significantly impacted the services we were able to provide. Without this funding, MVNS could no longer deliver government-funded Emergency Relief assistance, including food and fuel vouchers for individuals and families experiencing hardship.

The funding loss also resulted in changes to the role of our valued Emergency Relief Volunteer, Anne. While she was no longer able to provide the same level of direct Emergency Relief support to community members, we are incredibly grateful that Anne has continued to assist people through the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) voucher program, despite the service receiving no dedicated funding to administer this support. Thank YOU, Anne!



Recognising the ongoing and growing need within our community, MVNS acted quickly to secure alternative funding opportunities. We were fortunate to receive $20,000 through TURSA Community Support funding, enabling us to continue assisting some of our most vulnerable community members during a period of significant uncertainty.

TURSA Community Support Outcomes

The TURSA funding supported 287 individuals experiencing financial hardship and disadvantage.

Priority Group	Number of Individuals in total
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)	64
Linguistically Diverse (LD)	48
Single Parents	72
Disability Support Pension (DSP)	39
Domestic Violence (DV)	26
Experiencing Homelessness	38

Of the 287 individuals supported, 100% were experiencing significant financial vulnerability, including unemployment, caring responsibilities for young children, reliance on the Disability Support Pension, or living as seniors dependent on the Age Pension.

These figures highlight the ongoing demand for practical assistance and the critical role that targeted community funding continues to play in supporting those most at risk of hardship.

Increased Community Engagement Through Community Lunches, Community Cuppa and Community Place



In addition to providing direct assistance, TURSA funding enabled MVNS to begin expanding our outreach and community engagement activities, particularly through the re-establishment of Community Lunches and community events.

These initiatives have proven highly effective in reducing social isolation, fostering connection, and creating opportunities for people to access additional services and supports. For many participants, attending a Community Lunch represents more than a shared meal; it provides a welcoming environment where friendships can develop, information can be shared, and pathways to further assistance can be identified.

We are incredibly grateful for the generous support received throughout the year from GIVIT, DineSmart, Rotary, Quota, the Lions Club, CWA, Karitane, and the many individuals who contributed through our GiveNow fundraising platform. These donations enabled us to provide practical assistance to community members experiencing hardship, including the purchase of food and fuel vouchers, as well as the distribution of donated sleeping bags, sheets and towels.



We also extend our sincere thanks to Bunnings Taree for its ongoing support through the provision of resources and materials that enhanced our programs and community spaces. In addition, Bunnings team members generously assisted with

the delivery of community engagement activities, helping to create meaningful opportunities for community connection, participation and wellbeing.

Together, these contributions have strengthened our ability to respond to immediate needs while promoting dignity, inclusion and resilience across our community.

Food from the Heart

Secondbite Food-rescue program and meals



We extend further heartfelt thanks to the dedicated volunteers who help ensure the collection, sorting and distribution of food relief runs smoothly each week. Their commitment plays a vital role in helping us provide practical support to individuals and families experiencing hardship.



A special thank you goes to our food relief delivery team, Emma, Terrey, Darren, Sarah, Brian and Phillip, whose reliability and generosity ensure food reaches those who need it most.

During 2025-2026, we estimate that more than 3,000 people accessed this essential service, demonstrating the ongoing need for food relief within our community.



We also extend our sincere appreciation to Wendy, whose passion and generosity continue to shine through the nutritious and delicious meals she prepares every week. These meals provide not only nourishment, but also comfort, dignity and care for the people we support.

Old Court House Community Gardens



Our beautiful *Old Courthouse Community Gardens* continue to provide a vibrant and welcoming space where community members and volunteers can connect, learn, and contribute to something meaningful within our community.

The garden is looking better than ever, thanks to the dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work of our volunteers. We continue to enjoy an abundance of amazing produce throughout the year, with the gardens are thriving thanks to some composting upgrades!



Community members are always welcome to visit, enjoy the space, and make the most of what is available. Donations from plants remain our main source of fundraising and are greatly appreciated! We now have more space for seedlings – so feel free to donate your seeds too.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all our enthusiastic and hardworking garden volunteers. We are delighted to welcome our new members, Simone and Kate, to the team and look forward to their contributions in the years ahead. We also extend our sincere appreciation to our returning members, Di, Wendy, Cam, Lawrence and Malcolm whose ongoing commitment, knowledge, and support continue to be the backbone of the garden's success. Your efforts in planting, growing, weeding, harvesting, and caring for the gardens make this wonderful community space possible.



As always, we are grateful to everyone who contributes their time and energy to keeping the gardens flourishing.

"The beauty of a community garden lies not only in what it grows, but in the people who grow it together."

Special Thanks

MVNS continues to deliver high-quality support and services thanks to the commitment of our Management Committee, dedicated staff, incredible volunteers, funding partners and generous donors.

Volunteer Teams

We extend our sincere gratitude to our amazing volunteers across our Front Office, Garden, Garden Kitchen, Food Relief and Management Committee teams. Their generosity, dedication and countless hours of service help make MVNS the welcoming and supportive place it is for our community.

Management Committee
Susan, Angela, Stan, Lisa, Aspen and Helen

Administrative and Program Volunteers
Katherine, Kerri, Lyn, Aby, Vera, Misty, Sylvia and Anne

Garden Team
Di, Wendy, Simone, Kate, Cam, Lawrence and Malcolm

Food Relief Team
Emma, Terrey, Darren, Phillip, Sarah and Brian

Additional ONA Support
Bec, Freida, Eden, Lucy, Aubrey, Matilda, Colm, Toni and William

Funding Bodies

- NSW Department of Communities & Justice (CAFS)
- Legal Aid NSW (CLSD)
- Department of Home Affairs (Migrant Settlement)
- Energy NSW - EAPA vouchers
- Mid Coast Council (Youth and Community Programs)
- ETC Community Support Fund (Community Cuppa)
- Tursa Community Funding (Community Support)
- AUSPOST Community Funding (Community Reset)
- NSW Reconstruction Authority (Recovery Support)

Donors

A huge thank you also goes to those who have kindly made donations throughout 2025/2026.

Linda Walters	Probus Club
Busker Muster	Wesley Mission
Stephanie Brown	Paypal Giving Fund
James Johnson	SYNERGY
Wingham Uniting Church	Gillian Stone
GIVIT	Manning River Rugby Union Club
Regional Australia Bank	Blooming Surprise 2025
GiveNow	Catholic Care – Taree and Street Tunes
Taree Quota Club	Minnie Masters
Coles Wingham	Rees Family
Wingham CWA	Correctional Services Taree
SecondBite	McTaggart Family
Estate Late Michael Harding	Wingham Nursery & Florist
Share the Dignity	Regional Australia Bank
Essentital Energy	Bunnings Taree
Wingham Rotary Club	Wingham Uniting Church
Wesley Mission	Busker Muster
StreetSmart	D & J Longstaff
The Darnell Family	Catholic Care
Taree Quota Club	Wingham Music Festival
RSPCA	



If we have inadvertently omitted any individual, business or organisation from this list, we sincerely apologise and encourage you to let us know so we can properly acknowledge your contribution.

To each of our volunteers, funders, donors and community partners: thank you. Your generosity, trust and support enable MVNS to remain a vital source of connection, assistance and hope for people across the Manning Valley. Together, we continue to strengthen our community and support those who need it most.

Appendix A: 2024-2025 Financial Reports

Please see attachments.