DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA

MEDIA RELEASE

19 November 2026

Thousands of Western Sydney locals helped before reaching crisis point: Catholic Care prevents family breakdown in the west.

Over the last year, Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains (WSBM) helped hundreds of families and thousands of people experiencing hardship across the western suburbs, particularly in Parramatta, Blacktown, Mt Druitt, Penrith and Springwood.

The release of their annual Year in Review 2025-2026 Report outlines the real impact that this small, but vital social services agency has to the lives of thousands of people in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

“Economic pressures, housing insecurity, mental health challenges, cost-of-living pressures and social isolation are all acutely felt in the western suburbs of Sydney,” said Helen Emmerson, Executive Director of Catholic Care.

“And within each community there are unique challenges. We have such a high demand for our family services, housing services, First Nations support, support for vulnerable women fleeing domestic and family violence or facing homelessness, children’s services and community engagement,” she said.

During the 2025–2026 financial year, Catholic Care supported 450 Western Sydney families through its family programs, delivered more than 1,800 counselling sessions to approximately 350 clients and helped more than 10,000 people through its Community Engagement Programs.

And the need continues to grow, especially with families. At 30 June 2025, 34,600 children were living in out-of-home care across Australia. Of these children, 72 per cent had been in care for two years or more.[1] In 2024–25, more than 109,000 people experiencing family and domestic violence accessed specialist homelessness services across Australia, highlighting the connection between violence, housing insecurity and family disruption.[2]

“These figures reinforce the importance of supporting families before circumstances escalate, helping parents navigate challenges, protecting children and reducing the risk of family separation,” said Helen.

“Keeping families together, wherever it is safe and in the best interests of children, is incredibly important. Families need support, not judgement, when they are experiencing difficult circumstances.”

As part of a bold three-year strategy, Catholic Care WSBM has been refining its program and service delivery to the needs of locals. This has unfortunately meant ceasing some services, but bolstering its efforts in other areas, particularly early intervention for families. In the Family Services area, Catholic Care has employed four new team leaders to assist caseworkers and provide culturally and linguistically diverse support.

“Early intervention can change the trajectory of a family's life. By recognising vulnerability, building trust and providing practical and emotional support, we can help parents strengthen their capacity to care for their children and give families a better chance of staying together,” said Helen.

---

[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Child Protection Australia 2024–25, Supporting children. Published 21 July 2026. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2024-25/contents/insights/supporting-children

[2] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2024–25. Family and domestic violence as a reason for seeking specialist homelessness assistance. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report

“Equally, when women and children are experiencing domestic and family violence, their safety must come first. They need access to support, protection and pathways to a safe and stable future.

“Our role is to walk alongside people through these challenges, helping them find hope, rebuild their confidence and create a stronger future for themselves and their families,” she said.

Catholic Care WSBM’s work is made possible through partnerships with NSW Government, in particular the ‘Families Together’ program, Community and Family Services and Specialist Homelessness Services Sector.

Catholic Care’s work also extends beyond direct family support and community programs. Through its chaplaincy ministry across nine hospitals and four correctional facilities, Catholic Care provides pastoral care, compassion and connection to people experiencing illness, grief, isolation and other challenging circumstances.

Read Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains 2025–2026 Year in Review.

ENDS

Media enquiries: Anita Sulentic, Head of Communications and Engagement at the Diocese of Parramatta. **M:** 0499 948 533 **E:** anita.sulentic@parracatholic.org

About Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains
Catholic Care is the social welfare agency of the Diocese of Parramatta. Catholic Care was established in Sydney 85 years ago as the Catholic Bureau, and for nearly 40 years as Catholic Care WSBM has existed to do Christ’s work in the community through the support of its dedicated staff, partners and volunteers. Through the Church, Catholic Care aims to make a positive difference in the lives of people who need support, helping them to find joy and purpose in life. Catholic Care supports the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community. Regardless of background, gender, age or faith, anyone who needs it can turn to Catholic Care for support and professional care.

About the Diocese of Parramatta
The Diocese of Parramatta is the Catholic Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains and is home to over 320,000 Catholics with 45 parishes and churches. The Diocese educates more than 43,000 students across its 80 schools, employs more than 5,500 people and cares for thousands of people in need through its social services arm, Catholic Care.

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv was appointed the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in 2016. He is Australia’s first Asian-born Bishop, and the first Vietnamese-born Bishop to lead a Catholic Diocese outside of Vietnam. You can read more about him here