



Forbes, NSW

www.centacarewf.org.au



'We feel so fortunate to have had SVA walk beside us for the last five years, and inspire us to believe in what we do, to strengthen our systems and business operations, and to dare to develop innovative services that are so much more responsive to the needs of communities in western NSW. SVA has definitely left its footprint in the red soils of western NSW!'

Margaret Flynn CEO
Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes

How we came together

SVA has worked with Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes since 2004. Initially SVA's association was via the *Dream the Pathways (DTP)* programs which work with at-risk and mainly Indigenous young people in central and western NSW. SVA provided *DTP* with mentoring, funding, strategic planning support, consulting services, financial management support and links to the business community.

Since 2008, SVA has had involvement across the breadth of Centacare's work. Centacare offers over 30 services and is one of the few non-government organisations west of NSW's major centres of Dubbo, Orange and Wagga. Its services now extend across rural and remote communities in more than 50 per cent of the state.

Centacare has a proven track record of engagement with the vast regional and rural community, employing and training local, particularly Indigenous people to work in the organisation.

Approximately 25 per cent of Centacare's 120 staff is Indigenous to ensure cultural sensitivity and to support the development of leadership within Indigenous communities. Centacare also very deliberately takes a lead role in engaging all levels of community to work together to develop innovative models to address issues and create sustainable change. With so few resources available to rural and remote communities, Centacare believes this approach is imperative in forging their future survival.

SVA believes that Centacare's programs are well placed to provide those in need with access to a range of services to help them improve the quality of their lives and have access to opportunities, breaking the chain of inter-generational welfare dependency.

Mission

To empower individuals, families and communities in central and western NSW by enhancing social and emotional wellbeing and strengthening support networks.

Purpose

Centacare's work focuses on high-need areas in central and western NSW where communities are suffering severe decline and widespread loss of hope and possibility, largely due to ongoing drought, lack of public transport leading to increasing geographic isolation, limited local resources and endemic poverty. Of particular concern is the alarming number of early school leavers, teenage pregnancies, prison admissions, high levels of domestic violence and generational unemployment, lack of qualifications and racial discrimination.

Established in 1996, Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes offers over 30 services across the western half of the State to address these critical issues. Its services fall into two directorates, each with two suites of programs.

1. Family & Community Services

- i) Parent Child Services: helping young parents increase parenting skills and opportunities for their children;
- ii) Family Services: supporting families struggling with mental health issues, lack of financial management skills and the impact of the ongoing drought.

2. Employment & Training Services

- i) Youth Services: encouraging disadvantaged young people to stay at school and those who have already dropped out to engage in training opportunities and employment;
- ii) Employment and Training Services: assisting jobseekers into relevant vocational training and meaningful employment.

Growth

In the last 12 months, Centacare has:

- Doubled its staff, expanded into new areas of western NSW, and established four new sites (Broken Hill, Cowra, Young, Orange);
- Developed a stronger management structure with an Executive team which meets monthly;

- Expanded into far west NSW, with a well established office and 25 staff in Broken Hill, and further plans to open an office in the remote town of Wilcannia;
- Developed Program Logics for all programs and commenced a process for data-collection and service evaluation;
- Strengthened its IT infrastructure so all branches are networked;
- Commenced a Certificate IV in Frontline Management for 16 of its middle management team (including four Indigenous managers); and
- Commenced two new social enterprises.

Social impact

Parent Child Services:

- Over 4,000 families assisted to create more opportunities for their children. Over 300 families supported through early intervention programs. Of those participating in parenting education programs and receiving parenting support, 68 per cent reported improved confidence in their parenting ability and 77 per cent reported improved relationships with their children.

Family Services:

- Approximately 200 Indigenous fathers participated in a range of Centacare programs and activities. As a result, 50 per cent indicated they felt more connected into support networks, and more confident to seek employment;
- Over 70 members of the farming community across Western NSW have been supported by *Drought Support Services* program with 84 per cent of participants reporting improved skills. All participants report feeling more supported and connected to their communities and better equipped to cope with the ongoing impact of drought;
- Through the *Manage Your Income* program, seven enterprise and employment projects have been

Initial SVA distribution to Centacare	2005		
Total distributions from SVA to Centacare		\$680,000	
SVA in-kind support		\$78,500	
SVA brokered support (from 2007/8)		\$158,000	
– Total leveraged funding		\$220,000	

	2005	2009	CAGR
Revenue*	\$340,000	\$6,870,726	82%
Participants**	160	7,500	116%

developed with over 130 participants. As a result, six Indigenous artists have been supported with the development of their own businesses;

- Over 100 participants have attended *Mental Health First Aid* training courses across Western NSW, with all participants reporting increased awareness of mental health issues and 83 per cent reporting they feel better equipped to support someone close to them with mental health issues.

Youth Services:

- 500 young people assisted to engage in education, training and employment. Outcomes: 94 per cent of at risk school students remained in education; 95 per cent of those disengaged from school completed vocational courses; of those, 18 per cent found employment.

Employment Services:

- In the first six months of the new service, six permanent offices have been established that also service 17 outreach sites. This program has 35 staff who have commenced 2,457 job seekers, listed 850 vacancies and made 563 placements.

Why Centacare is graduating

Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes and SVA have had a long and successful partnership over five years. SVA supported Centacare during its growth phase and more

recently assisted in reviewing how Centacare operates. In 2008, SVA reviewed the criteria it uses to select ventures to form part of the SVA venture development portfolio and it was determined that Centacare would transition out of the venture portfolio at the end of 2009.

With a recently defined five year growth plan, a strengthened culture of leadership and evaluation, together with a revised operating model that supports a new management team and 120 employees, Centacare is poised to grow its impact in the communities of western NSW and no longer requires the in-depth support from SVA.

Looking ahead

Centacare is planning to consolidate its recent rapid growth through the strengthening of its management skills (continuing the management training) and structures; development of stronger governance at Board level, and the ongoing development of its evaluation tools. With a stronger approach to building the capacity of rural communities, Centacare also plans to develop a range of enterprises such as the SYM (sewing) enterprise; Indigenous art; a lawn mowing service (for work experience); and a driving school – to increase employment opportunities. These new developments will require enhanced business practices, which is also a key focus.