



umfc

Annual Report 2023

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians and Elders past and present, who have raised children, taught them about the world around them and gave them the gift of culture and language. We recognize our part in bringing fairness to our Indigenous brothers and sisters and creating a community where all children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can 'grow up strong'.

### Celebrating Diversity

We celebrate diversity and are committed to inclusion for all as a service and a workplace.

### Registered Charity

Upper Murray Family Care is a registered charity and acknowledges the support of the Victorian, NSW and Australian governments.





## About Upper Murray Family Care

Upper Murray Family Care supports children and families in their time of need throughout North East Victoria and Southern NSW.

UMFC has been providing a diverse range of services to children, young people and families for more than 40 years. Through our commitment to evidence-based and culturally informed approaches, our highly skilled practitioners, counsellors and mentors walk alongside children, young people and families to achieve positive outcomes and sustainable change.

UMFC is owned by and accountable to our communities. UMFC's success is grounded in understanding our communities.

Our focus is always on the best interests of the children and young people we support. We strive to hear their voices and we maintain their safety and well-being as paramount. When dealing with individuals and families, we act without judgement and treat all involved with compassion, honesty and transparency.



Supporting children  
and families in their  
time of need

# Annual Report 2023

# Our Commitments

## Our Mission

Strengthening families and individuals to build vibrant communities.

## Our Values

**Participation** – We are collegiate and collaborative with a common purpose.

**Respect** – We acknowledge that everyone’s situation is unique and they are an expert in their own life.

**Excellence** – We are accountable and hold high standards in all that we do.

**Justice** – We are unbiased and fair.

**Honesty** – We speak with transparency, authority and integrity.

## Our Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people who access UMFC Services have a right to feel and be safe and to be treated with respect. We are committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment and working towards the best interests of children and young people at all times.

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### Dean Bocquet, President

Every year at UMFC brings the fulfillment of supporting vulnerable families and children in the region, and the frustration of operating in a challenging and forever moving sector environment.

The Board seeks to strategically point the Organisation in the right direction, whilst providing Governance and support to the Executive team. On the ground staff are working diligently and with passion.

As 12 months goes by since my last report, I ponder how well we going? What we can do better? What are we doing well? It is a continual review process.

The Organisation continues to transform itself into the 21st Century and Felicity and the Executive team should be recognised and congratulated for their hard work, thoughtful thinking and strong leadership.

At Board level we have completed the draft of the new Strategic plan and look to enhance our relationship with key stakeholders and Government Agencies, whilst ensuring our service provision to children and families is meaningful and effective.

Enormous appreciation to all Board members for their continued support and stewardship. Thank you for your commitment.

### Felicity Williams, CEO

The past year has been an opportunity to be curious and discover what sits within the foundations of UMFC that has been built on over four decades by Luke and his teams. Alongside our new Executive team, and in developing our new strategic plan, we have been exploring the reasons why UMFC remains a trusted voice in our communities speaking with and for children, young people and families, and the value of being authentically place-based and grounded within our regional communities.

In support of this, UMFC continues to network with like-minded community service organisations throughout Victoria advocating for recognition of the critical role place-based organisations perform within communities.

Highlights of the year for me include the re-location of Hume Riverina Community Legal Service into its new purpose-fitted location. We completed the restructure of our Executive team rebalancing it with two Directors of Client Services and a Director of Operations. In support of our commitment to the success of the Ovens Murray The Orange Door (TOD), we have created a sixth program area and appointed a dedicated TOD Manager to support TOD's operations and our highly committed team of practitioners supporting this critical initiative out of the Family Violence Royal Commission.

I thank our passionate and committed staff and leadership team for their continued commitment to ensuring UMFC serves our communities, and the wisdom and guidance provided by our engaged Board.

Our Board



**Dean Bocquet**  
President



**Robyn Gillis**  
Vice President



**Jacqui Vaughan**  
Treasurer



**Thomas Crumpton**



**Kirsten Genter**



**Tracy McCrohan**



**Sunita Rama**



**Paul Robb**



**Liz Heta**  
Retired November 2022

Executive Team



**Felicity Williams**  
CEO & Public Officer



**Narelle Klein**  
Director of Operations



**Melinda Carlyle**  
Director of Care & Legal Services



**Kath Kerin**  
Director of Child & Family Services

# Our year at a glance



**\$9k**

Trust in Kids enabled 13 children and young people to receive assistance to the value of \$9302.50.



**1,500+**

Dedicated a total of 1,517 hours to providing volunteer support.



**3,800+**

Offered safety assistance to 3,852 children.





# 75

Established foster and kinship carer households.



# 17

Local government areas across North East Victoria and Southern NSW receiving ongoing support.



# 10k

10,433 Individuals participated in our services and activities this year.



# 18m

Travelled 18,361,222 kilometers to support and deliver outreach services.



# 150+

Proudly employed 159 people who live within our communities contributing \$15m to our local regional economies.



# Services Report 2023

# Carers, Aged and Disability Services

Our Carers, Aged and Disability Services provide short term supports when most needed, which can make a difference in people's lives.

The Support for Carers Program utilises an extensive network of service providers to develop flexible support solutions for carers and families. Our support groups and regular carer activities help keep carers informed and provide valuable social connection.

The Interchange Program specialises in supporting young people with disability. Our children's services centre provides an ideal space for out of school activities, along with Individual and group play therapy sessions. Community based supports are also available, along with a range of family based options.

*"I really appreciate all the carer group activities I have attended, getting to see and do things I couldn't do on my own."*

*- Lynette, carer.*

## Highlights

In the past year we have initiated close to 100 carer and family events across the region providing a wide range of opportunities to gather and connect. For Lynette, an elderly woman who no longer drives, it was the joy in being able to get out and about, explore and enjoy seeing old and new sights.

Connection is the vital ingredient, whether it is meeting up with others at a support group, attending an information session, enjoying a fun day out or even time away at one of the family or carer retreats, shared lived experiences unites and provides a unique bond of support.

Similarly for our young participants, the out of school group activities have provided safe and challenging experiences for children with disability. Through social play, children are motivated and encouraged to explore and learn.

Children need lots of practice to learn how to get along with others and build their social skills. When engaging with the children, we work on using a scaffolding model to support their growth – giving just enough help at first, then letting them do more and more on their own.



**765**

clients supported

**12,261**

hours of support

**1,517**

volunteer hours of support



# Care Services

UMFC's Care Services team is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are safe, healthy, have a sense of belonging, and are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Our Care Services team expertly assesses home-based care arrangements for vulnerable children and young people aged 0–18 years, taking into consideration their individual circumstances and diversity.

These children and young people may be cared for by foster carers, kinship carers (members of the child's extended family), or kith carers (community members who the child has an existing relationship with).

The UMFC Care Services team recruits, assesses, supports and trains foster carers. We also provide initial supports to new kinship carers; and conduct ongoing case management of children and young people in foster or kinship care.

## Highlights

During Foster Care / Kinship Week, we ran five events throughout Wangaratta and Wodonga with over 100 carers and children attending these events, providing much needed recognition to the dedication and commitment they offer and opportunity to connect with others.

The Easter event was a great example of how Care Services ensures every child has someone who cares. This was a day of games and fun, including sharing of numerous chocolate goodies.

Other Care Services events included Children's Movie Night, Art Night, Carer Massages, and BBQs in Wangaratta and Wodonga. Special thanks to the staff especially the carer management team for putting on these events and for the care services staff volunteering their time to come along and support.

We also thank a number of businesses that supported and donated to the events. Without their support it would be difficult to ensure these treasured events would not be able to happen. They include: Grilled, Wodonga TAFE, Regent Cinemas, RB Party Hire, SS&A, The Lincoln, Brady's Tavern, Bended Elbow, Wodonga Office Supplies and Bunnings.



**238%**

increase in Kinship  
Placements this year

**x2**

Kinship team doubled to  
support extra placements

**80**

placements provided for  
vulnerable young people

# Child and Family Services

UMFC's Child and Family Services (CaFS) offer care, support, and advocacy for children and families throughout North East Victoria.

Child and Family Services include supporting families to create safe and nurturing home environments, and enable positive family relationships and connections to community. We promote child wellbeing, development and participation in early education. We support our LGBTIQ+ community through creating places of inclusivity and care.

## Highlights

CaFS were successful in obtaining funding for a twelve-month pilot for a Community Connector Role focused on improving outcomes for young people experiencing mental health issues. The role will work in partnership with The Man Cave and Flourish Girl and will support the Victorian Family Preservation and Reunification Response (VFPRR) program provided by UMFC and partners MacKillop and VACCA.

The Family Therapy program has moved to a stand alone fee-for-service model, recognising that there is a growing need for trusted and reliable cost-effective family therapy services for families to allow them the space to continue on their therapeutic pathways and heal.

## Good News Story

VFPRR program worked with a mum and two young people (one of the young people was residing in Melbourne to escape the home), who had lived through significant family violence perpetrated by their father to their mother. VFPRR wrapped a team around the family, including a youth mentor, Family Violence Child Safety team and financial counselling for the mother along with consistent three-times per week in-home support by a VFPRR practitioner.

The care team acknowledged the impact the violence had on the young person particularly the financial abuse, which meant they couldn't continue their sport due to the high cost. VFPRR team were able to support the young person to fund equipment, uniforms and fees for the winter season giving the young person purpose and interactions with his community.

The mother recently contacted the VFPRR practitioner to inform her the young person had come 1st and 2nd in two events in the state championships for his sport and the 15 year old has returned to the family home two nights per week on a reunification plan. Through the intervention the mother was supported with therapeutic strategies to improve the outcomes for her family.



**585**

referrals across  
7 local government areas

**1,011**

children supported this year

## Top 4 Issues

- parenting skills
- family violence
- child behaviour, aged 5-14 years
- mental health support



# Family Relationship Services

Family Relationship Services provide impartial and objective assistance to families impacted by separation and/or divorce in North East Victoria and Southern NSW.

Using a child-focused and non-judgemental lens, we encourage parents to reduce conflict and resolve differences as they move through separation phases and beyond. This can involve parental consultations that include children, allowing their views to be heard. We also provide access to therapeutic group sessions for children experiencing family separation.

Our ultimate aim is to develop parenting arrangements in the best interests of children, and to foster healthy ongoing relationships between children, parents, and other family members. Access to our programs can be voluntary or may be court-ordered. Our programs are as follows.

**Family Relationship Centre (FRC)** assists families affected by separation to develop child focused parenting arrangements in the best interests of their children. Families are supported in discussing issues and reaching agreement through family dispute resolution as an alternative to attending court. Property Dispute Resolution is also offered and can be done in combination with children’s matters.

**Regional Family Dispute Resolution (RFDR)** assists separated parents with counselling, education and information provision prior to, during or post family dispute resolution.

We also assist with appropriate and helpful referral and support through all stages of family separation.

**Children’s Contact Centre (CCS)** provides a child-centred model of intervention that assists children of separated parents to establish and maintain relationships with their ‘other’ parent and family members, and help achieve sustained and workable long-term arrangements.

**Post Separation Co-operative Parenting (POP)** assists separated or divorced parents who are experiencing difficulties in resolving or managing conflict, which arise over parenting arrangements for their children.

**Financial Counselling** is a free service that supports people with financial worries, debt management, financial hardship arrangements and early intervention services. This includes budgeting, billing arrangements and saving goals, addressing financial problems information gathering, and advocacy on behalf of the client while building longer-term capability to budget and manage money while making informed financial decisions.



## 926 clients supported

- 513 Family Relationship Centre
- 153 Financial Counselling
- 114 Children’s Contact Centre
- 101 Regional Family Dispute Resolution
- 45 Post Separation Co-operative

81

children supported this year

# Hume Riverina Community Legal Service

Hume Riverina Community Legal Service (HRCLS) provides free legal services to people experiencing barriers to justice across North East Victoria and the New South Wales Riverina.

HRCLS provides legal services across 17 local government areas in multiple locations including Wodonga, Wangaratta, Mount Beauty, Myrtleford, Corryong, Albury, Corowa, Finley and Deniliquin.

Working in partnership with social service partners, educators, and private legal practitioners, HRCLS provides legal services to communities where they are most needed.

HRCLS is a client-centred service providing legal information, advice, casework community legal education, and law reform and advocacy. HRCLS focuses on family and civil law for people who would otherwise be unable to access legal assistance.

This includes young people, Aboriginal people, people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence and poor mental health. HRCLS works to provide people with access to justice, and fair legal outcomes.

## Highlights

HRCLS has a team of lawyers and community engagement professionals providing legal services to bushfire affected communities, particularly those in the Towong and Alpine regions. HRCLS lawyers have provided legal assistance and support to clients experiencing multiple complexities and legal issues ranging from insurance to family law in the aftermath of this disaster.

HRCLS successfully secured funding to establish the Bagaraybang bagaraybang mayinyalang (BBM): Empowering and Alleviating: A Health Justice Partnership offering legal support for social and emotional well-being program. The BBM program is a Health Justice Partnership with Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS), launched in 2022 to provide free legal services to Aboriginal people experiencing poor mental health. This partnership will improve legal, social, financial and health outcomes.



**1,332**

clients during the year

**1,166**

advices provided

## Top 5 problems

- family and domestic violence
- parenting and separation
- debt issues
- separation property disputes
- victims of crime



# The Orange Door



The Orange Door (TOD) provides a service for children and families who are experiencing family violence.

Through an intake service; TOD operates in conjunction with our partners Gateway Health, Centre Against Violence, VACCA, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Family Safety Victoria.

Our UMFC child wellbeing practitioners focus on the Child Wellbeing aspect, willingly sharing their knowledge and skills with other practitioners to ensure child wellbeing is a focus of all interactions.

As well as supporting families experiencing family violence, TOD provides an intake service for any child wellbeing worries.

UMFC also operates the Wodonga Access Point (WAP) for TOD within the UMFC Stanley Street building, WAP have expanded their presence within the local community and have grown enabling clients to make direct contact with practitioners in their local area.

UMFC have identified the need to have a dedicated manager in TOD to support the education and wellbeing of UMFC practitioners and to build on and support partnerships within the complexity of TOD's multiple agency approach. This role has been beneficial in allowing the UMFC leadership group in TOD to focus on their support of the practitioners, the building of a wider network with other TOD home agency managers and in building positive relationships with Family Safety Victoria (FSV) who maintain the operational oversight of TOD.

## About one of our clients

Recently a father self-referred into TOD with concerns for his adolescent daughter's disengagement from school, her withdrawal from her community and her grief over the recent death of her mother. Through a child wellbeing lens, that was kind, caring and empathetic, the family was supported to access local animal assisted therapy for the daughter to process her grief, as well as a referral to an adolescent support agency to support father and daughter to build relationships around schooling and community connection, therefore supporting her social, emotional, educational and overall wellbeing needs in a manner that reflects the importance of prompt and early support for families.



**2,680**

children referred

## Top referrals sources

- Police (L17)
- Direct contact
- Professional referrals
- Child Protection



# Betty McLean Award

This award gives recognition to the work of volunteers, who assist UMFC in achieving our mission and purpose.

We are pleased to announce this year's winner of the Betty McLean Award is Meaghan Lewin. Meaghan has been awarded consecutive awards for her tireless commitment and selfless dedication to children in foster care, and the ongoing support she provides other carers.



Meaghan Lewin

Meaghan began her journey as a foster carer in 2018. Meaghan also works for UMFC's Interchange in Carer, Aged and Disability Services where she supports children and young people with disabilities.

Meaghan currently has care of four children through UMFC Care Services. Earlier this year one of these children devastatingly received a cancer diagnosis. Meaghan has been this young boy's rock, without question spending the last six months caring for him in hospital in Melbourne. Meaghan's family has been supporting her to be in Melbourne, especially her 21 year old daughter who currently cares for the other children. She stated for her daughter to take on care of the other children was "huge, she never had to but they all have supported each other to continue through, they are all going through it as well". Meaghan values the many people who support them including UMFC.

In terms of how she gets through difficult times as a carer, Meaghan believes "we need to try to remember in challenging times it's never personal, kids just get through best way they know how". Of the last six months Meaghan stated "it's an experience that no-one wants to go through, you have to make the most of every day." She has been doing this by being in the moment where the child is at, exploring the hospital or when they cannot do this, simply being there to be his safe person. Importantly Meaghan has been the young boy's strong advocate, advocating for him when he needs it. She stated she has learnt so much that she will take back to work, both in her position at Interchange and in her support of other carers.

Meaghan loves being a carer, she states that if someone is thinking about being a carer "there are so many kids that need somewhere safe to be, if you have any interest in being a carer ring and get more information". She adds "it's the most rewarding experience supporting a child when they need someone the most" and "children need your care and support for so many reasons, it's a privilege to be part of a child's journey".

Meaghan works hard to keep children in her care connected to their families and culture. Meaghan stated being a carer is "an important role, by supporting children you are supporting their family and the connection to their family".

Meaghan remarkably also serves on the Foster Carer Advisory Committee and has continued her commitment to this committee from Melbourne.

Meaghan is described by the UMFC Care Services team as an amazing, generous, wonderful and very therapeutic carer.

*"It's the most rewarding experience supporting a child when they need someone the most."*

Caring  
for each other

## Operations

During the 2022-2023 financial year the Business Services Team underwent a substantial restructure and is now known as the Operations Team.

Which was to ensure the team was able to meet the needs of a growing organisation now and into the future. Recruitment is currently underway to fill the new roles created by the restructure.

The Operations team is now headed up by one Director of Operations and it includes People and Culture, Finance, Information and Communication Technology, Client Experience, Marketing, Facilities and Fleet, Quality and Risk, and Transformation.

Due to the recent rapid growth, and after undertaking substantial consultation for the development of the new strategic plan, the Board have supported investment in a three-year program of transformation across UMFC's systems and processes. The first project to commence was the implementation of Magiq Software to enhance the financial reporting capability of UMFC, and which is well underway at the end of June 2023.





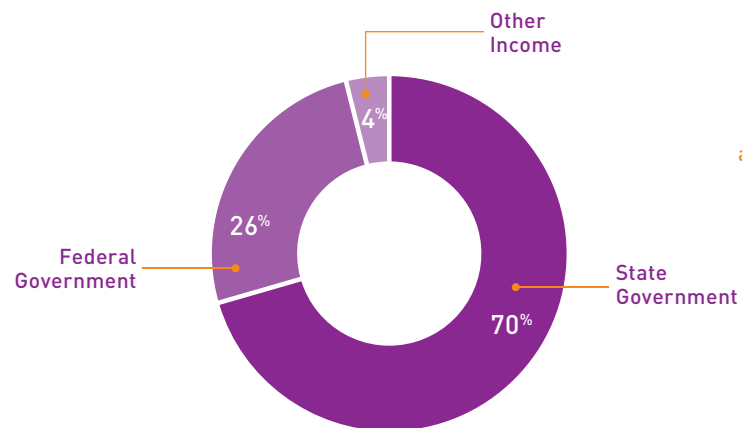
# Treasurer's Report

UMFC's strong financial position continues to place the organisation in an ideal position to manage future challenges, which includes increasing competition for and tightening of funding.

Our Executive team and Board are actively pursuing opportunities to invest in our organisation, including organisational transformation, programs and our people.

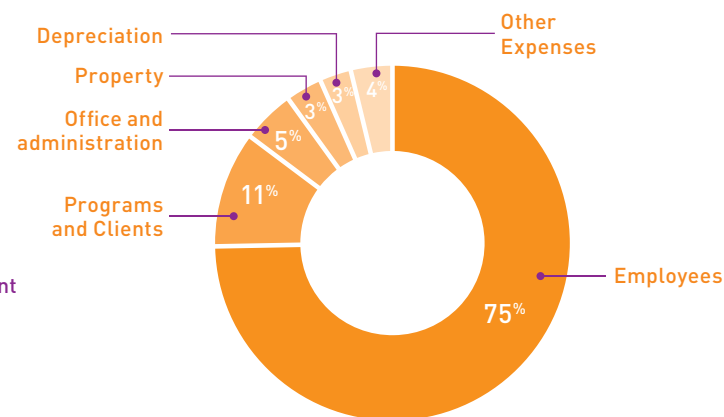
UMFC is reporting a surplus of \$207,993 for the 2023 financial year (2022: \$3,726,140). The impact experienced in 2021-22 from the income recognition accounting standard is now normalizing.

Expenses increased, particularly employee related expenses, reflecting the impact of CPI and on-cost



Total sources of revenue

**\$19,892,768**



Total use of resources

**\$ 19,684,775**

increases and increased full-time equivalent staff. It is also partially related to the unspent funds from 2022.

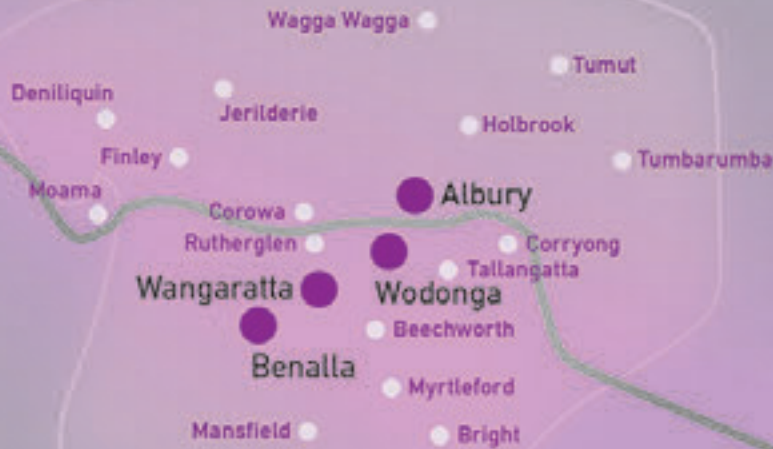
Cash assets decreased by 4.4% with cash and financial assets sitting at \$11,992,496. However, our current ratio remains strong at 3.6.

Recognising increased interest rate costs, the Hume bank loan is has been paid down to a nominal balance and retained. The remainder of the current plus non-current borrowings relate to lease liabilities for rented premises of \$1,350,560. A Right of Use asset is recorded in respect of this lease liability of \$1,301,864 shown as part of property, plant and equipment in Note 8 and now includes the new leased property for the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service. Land and Buildings continue to be disclosed at a depreciated Cost Value of \$8,723,701.

Our auditor indicated that the audit went smoothly and through checks of our controls did not indicate any areas of risk or concern. The Finance Team have been diligent and thorough in ensuring that UMFC's funding is managed and acquitted within our increasingly complex funding environment. I thank all involved in the finance team for their hard work and the commitment to this task.

Through Narelle Klein's leadership, there has been a strong focus on our systems, reporting and budgeting process to support the Board and Executive with decision making. UMFC is in a strong financial position to invest in opportunities to ensure UMFC continues to be a leader within our sector and operates effectively within our communities.

The UMFC Queerspace program can support people Victoria wide.



Upper Murray Family Care extends a warm “thank you” and our heartfelt appreciation to all who have supported us in the community for over 40 years, in particular, our donors, volunteers, carers and local communities and look forward to strengthening this bond for many years ahead.

Volunteers are the life blood of our community and at Upper Murray Family Care we are continually astounded by the strength of support, time, skills and experience given by our volunteers to help care for our children and families.

Numerous donors also sustain our agency with financial contributions assisting us to provide care and support to families and individuals in our region through our Trust in Kids fund. Thank you to our donors for your generosity and support – even the smallest contribution can help change a life.

#### Sponsors and Partners

We thank all of our sponsors and partners for their generosity that helps us support children, young people and families in our communities.



#### Federal Government

Department of Social Services  
Attorney-General’s Department  
Department of Health

#### State Government

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
Department of Justice and Community Safety  
Department of Education

Victoria Legal Aid  
Legal Aid NSW  
Victorian Legal Services Board

**If you would like to make a difference and work as a volunteer or carer, please call us on 02 6055 8000 or 03 5720 0000 for further information. UMFC has ongoing Deductible Gift Recipient Status.**



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#### **Wodonga**

27-29 Stanley Street  
Wodonga, VIC, 3690  
Telephone 02 6055 8000

#### **Wangaratta**

36 Mackay Street  
Wangaratta, VIC, 3677  
Telephone 03 5720 0000

#### **Hume Riverina Community Legal Service**

L1, 9 Stanley Street  
Wodonga, VIC, 3690  
Telephone 02 6055 8090

#### **Carers, Aged and Disability Services**

76 Nordsvan Drive  
Wodonga, VIC, 3690  
Telephone 02 6057 8400

### **Family Relationship Services**

#### **Family Relationship Centre**

282 Beechworth Road  
Wodonga, VIC, 3690  
Telephone 02 6057 5399

#### **Family Relationship Services**

681 Young Street  
Albury, NSW, 2640  
Telephone 02 6057 5399

### **The Orange Door**

#### **Wangaratta**

60 Reid Street  
Wangaratta, 3677  
Telephone 1800 271 157

#### **Wodonga**

27-29 Stanley Street  
Wodonga, VIC, 3690  
Telephone 1800 271 157

#### **Benalla**

52 Carrier St  
Benalla, 3672  
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