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Media Release

## **"Can You Help Just One Child?" CatholicCare Wollongong launches latest foster care campaign**

**Wollongong – 16 April 2024** – CatholicCare Wollongong has recently shared its latest campaign to recruit foster carers. The campaign, titled "Can You Help Just One Child?", focuses on the plight of one young boy who has been living in short term accommodation cared for by staff for over 2 years due to a critical shortage of foster carers in our local community.

Ollie\* is an 11-year-old boy who first entered the foster care system in 2012. Since his long-term placement with carers broke down in January 2022, he has lived in temporary, high-cost emergency placements, primarily within an AirBnB hotel type accommodation, and is being cared for by a rotating roster of youth workers. Ollie deserves so much better than this. He needs a stable home with a family where he can enjoy his childhood, and where he will be provided with love, nurturance, and care to thrive.

Across NSW, there are more than 400 children who are in desperate need of a foster care placement living in non-home based care like Ollie. This number is confronting and overwhelming for people who want to help but are flustered by the scale of the challenge. The campaign's focus on one child aims to personalise the challenge, prompting audiences to help one child and, by extension, potentially help other children as well, in an effort to meeting this need for our most vulnerable children.

"It is extremely tough times in the foster care system at the moment, more than I've seen in 20 years. The unfortunate reality is that kids like Ollie are missing out on enjoying a happy, stable childhood and the care and security of a normal home life. It's incredibly sad and we must do so much better for our children now and into the future," said Michelle Ferrara, Executive Manager – Children & Youth Services, CatholicCare Wollongong.

"At CatholicCare Wollongong, we recognise the economic hardship that many Australians are currently facing. For all of our foster carers, we offer training, financial and emotional support to ensure that we are supporting our carers and the children every step of the way."

If you are interested in becoming Ollie's foster carer, or other children like Ollie, please call Fostering Futures, CatholicCare on 0418 783 956 or email [fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au](mailto:fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au).

Campaign assets can be downloaded [here](#).

For further information about CatholicCare Wollongong's foster care program, visit <https://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au/services-and-programs/family/foster-care/>

*\*Name changed for privacy.*

### **About CatholicCare Wollongong:**

CatholicCare is the social services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, covering the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Macarthur and Southern Highlands Regions. We work with the whole community, supporting people to have positive relationships and connected lives, achieve the dignity of self-reliance, and realise their full human potential. We advocate for

social equality and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable. CatholicCare is an inclusive organisation committed to helping anyone in need regardless of religious beliefs.

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