

ac.care

opportunities for life ... for country people
est. 1986



ANNUAL REPORT | FY 2021 - 2022



Acknowledgement of country

The ac.care community of staff, volunteers, board members and other contributors recognise we live and work on land that always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We are honoured to provide services on the lands of the Boandik, Meintangk and Bindjali in the South East, Ngarrindjeri, Kurna and Ramindjeri in the Murraylands and Fleurieu Peninsula, Peramangk in the Adelaide Hills and First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region, including the Meru language group, the Ngaiawang, Ngawait, Nganguruku, Erawirung, Ngintait, Ngaralte and Ngarkat people, along with the many other clans and family groups across these regions.

We respect the Traditional Custodians of these lands and their ancestors and acknowledge their deep and ongoing connection to the land and continuation of cultural practices.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of the First Nations people of Australia.

Our respect extends to First Nations people from these lands and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from different nations that reside here today.

We recognise the tragic impact of past injustices and generational trauma that has led to systemic disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today and commit to contributing to reconciliation and building a better future for all alongside First Nations people and communities.

OUR MISSION

**We want all country people to have a safe home,
enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships**

our values

**Compassion
Adaptability
Relationships
Excellence**

Australian Service Excellence
Standards Accredited



A commitment to diversity, inclusion and respect is fundamental to ac.care's dedication to supporting all people living in country South Australia.

Anglican Community Care Inc

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A member of the Anglicare Australia network

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ac.care helps *change lives*



350

children found homes with local foster carers



171

families opened their homes and hearts as foster carers with ac.care



38

children and young people were cared for in our residential care homes



216

people improved their family relationships through counselling and group programs



419

people managed a difficult financial situation by seeking financial counselling



1042

parents and children were supported by Communities for Children Murraylands programs and activities

regional care snapshot

2020-2021



403

people avoided homelessness with early intervention support



216

Limestone Coast families improved family relationships through post-separation counselling and group programs



1888

people were supported in a crisis with financial help and food assistance through emergency relief services



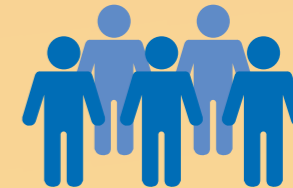
704

people moved from homelessness to stable accommodation



192

clients were supported by our Aboriginal support services



250

people were employed by ac.care

board convenor's report

AS THE nation emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, we find the people of our communities struggling with a lack of affordable housing, increased cost of living and a sense of uncertainty and insecurity around local and global issues.

The call on our services has never been greater. Some of these issues have also made the provision of accommodation and services difficult for ac.care. I am happy to report that the dedication and amazing capacity of our team has continued to provide excellent service, which has delivered heart-warming outcomes and long-term solutions for so many people.

During these hard times, ac.care has continued to work creatively and strategically in response to rapid change in our social, financial and political environments. We have adhered to our mission of providing safe homes, enough money and strong positive relationships and not lost sight of the individual person and their unique circumstances. The ac.care way of Compassion, Adaptability, Relationships and Excellence generates a strong positive culture, guides how we operate as an organisation and how we care for our service recipients.

During the last 12 months, ac.care



has launched the next level of its Reconciliation Action Plan with ceremonies in Berri and Mount Gambier. Delegates at the recent Anglicare Australia Annual Conference acknowledged the leadership of ac.care in engaging First Nations people as corporate leaders, workers and board members. Recent cultural tours of Boandik Country for board and local staff with Boandik elder Aunty Michelle Jacqueline-Furr helped us gain clear understanding of Boandik culture and the sad effects of colonisation. Our

determination to walk together with First Nations people is reflected in our board's support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart and strengthened by recent support of the statement by the whole Anglicare Australia community.

The desperate shortage of housing available for lease has necessitated ac.care purchasing properties in Berri and Mount Gambier and modifying existing stock to house young people in residential care programs.

Our current strategic plan is in the last year of its life and the board has taken the opportunity to completely review our planning process into the future. The board development weekend in May focused on redefining our mission and vision, and while at this time we are not ready to describe our new future, there is organisation-wide support and enthusiasm for a plan which actively engages and builds community, measures impact and has a long-term vision for positive change.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank and congratulate our CEO Shane Maddocks, his leadership team, all staff and volunteers for their outstanding work and true care of each other and those we serve. I also thank our board of dedicated and highly skilled directors for their generosity of time and effort.

**Richard Fisher GAICD,
Convenor, ac.care board of directors**

chief executive officer's report

Caring is what we do at ac.care. It's who we are. Our values - Compassion, Adaptability, Relationships and Excellence are demonstrated every day and underpin our commitment to strengthen communities and work with people who are struggling.

The care we provide is needed now more than ever. The last year has seen increasing demand on our services and we continue to work to meet that demand.

More children are coming into care and we desperately need more people to open their hearts and homes to become foster carers.

We work tirelessly to keep country kids in their communities and have recently opened a new residential care house in the Riverland and two new houses in Mount Gambier.

The housing crisis continues to worsen with growing numbers of people unable to secure a roof over their heads.

Cost of living pressures see more and more people seeking our financial support and counselling and the provision of food and basic essentials.

But our staff continue to perform miracles.

They are dogged in their determination to work with people who use our services to have a safe home, to become financially stable, to connect to others to reduce their loneliness and to work with all people to build hope for a more positive future.

ac.care staff continue to deliver amazing service while at the same time managing their own life and family challenges.

The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on all our people.

The launch of our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan in May 2022 continues our commitment to learning from Aboriginal people and to accept the responsibility we have as an organisation to work towards reconciliation addressing the impacts of colonisation and ongoing racism and discrimination.



We are humbled that over 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people choose to work for ac.care.

We have much to learn from them to improve the service we provide to First Nations peoples.

Our current strategic plan comes to an end in 2023. In May this year, the board of ac.care met to consider the future of the organisation.

I am excited that the board continues to accept the responsibility that we have to our communities and is prepared to step up and challenge ourselves to

do more. Unless we work and think differently, things will continue as they have been with the numbers of vulnerable people in our communities continuing to grow substantially.

We must change how we work in partnership with our communities to get in earlier and provide the support families need before their situation becomes a crisis.

The coming year will see the development of a new long-term vision for ac.care and we hope that community members, governments, business and community organisations will join with us to work together to break the cycles of disadvantage impacting too many country people.

My sincere thanks to our board, staff, volunteers, foster carers and supporters.

I hope you will continue to work with us to address the challenges and seize the opportunities that come our way.

**Shane Maddocks GAICD, JP
Chief Executive Officer,
ac.care**

We are committed to keeping children safe

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NPCSO) were developed as a result of a recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The NPCSO sets out a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures and practices that promote the safety and wellbeing of children in Australia.

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people has always been at the heart of ac.care's work across our diverse program areas. To support teams and programs to progress this important work, the implementation of the NPCSO was one of our agency's major projects for 2021-22.

Prior to the commencement of the project, a review was completed by the Strategic Knowledge and Information (SKI) team, to determine where ac.care was currently meeting various elements of the

principles, what work needed to be done, and identify priorities for this work.

In September 2021, Mandy Pearce commenced in the role of Project Lead for the implementation of the NPCSO.

Some highlights of the project have included:

- The Child Safe Organisation Policy was expanded and updated and

about the statement, and other information about how ac.care keeps children and young people safe.

- Residential Care staff spent time with young people gathering feedback about their experiences of, and thoughts about ac.care's complaints process. This feedback was used to inform the review of ac.care Complaints Policy. It led to



Scan the QR code to see a video of ac.care chairman Rick Fisher announcing the agency's commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation

became ac.care's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure, which is now available on the new Keeping Children Safe page of our website. This page also has ac.care's Statement of Commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation, the video of Board Convenor Rick Fisher talking

the introduction of an electronic feedback form being created on the website, after young people identified that would be a more useful mechanism to provide feedback. The information was collated into a report which was shared with residential care staff.

- A Client Charter for ac.care is in development and will be released soon. Staff and clients, including children and young people were consulted to identify what was important to them, and determine the most appropriate wording to ensure it was accessible for all clients.

- After the update to the Code of Conduct and the Complaints policies, an "Information Sheet for Kids and Teens" was developed about each policy, in order to share age-appropriate information with young people explaining those policies. A video was also developed about each one, to ensure that this information is accessible to all of our clients, including children and young people.

The project concluded in September 2022, with a series of workshops across the organisation, in which all staff within ac.care received training about the national principles, and their relevance across all program areas of the organisation.

ac.care helps Mark avoid homelessness

MOUNT Gambier man Mark Collins was facing the threat of being left homeless when the house he was renting was sold.

Looking for an alternative home to move into, he found few affordable options in Mount Gambier and experienced competition from around 40 other potential tenants each time he applied for a potentially suitable rental property, prompting him to start exploring the Naracoorte market.

But as he started looking at homes more than an hour north of his hometown, he faced the added risk of isolation away from his valued support network and the services he relied on to assist with his disability.

He began seeing a staff member at ac.care's Limestone Coast Homelessness Service on a weekly basis, welcoming the opportunity to also pick up donated food and other supplies while at appointments to help

extend his budget.

"I was lucky to secure a Housing SA home thanks to the help of ac.care," Mr Collins said.

"That's allowed me to stay in Mount Gambier and connected to Chronic Illness Support Limestone Coast and other networks."

Mark welcomed the broad support provided at ac.care and said he was glad to be part of Friday's Pride In Your Stride event to highlight issues around housing affordability and availability in the region.

"I rested up to get through the walk today because I wanted to help share an important message," he said, adding it was a good opportunity to socialise and connect with service providers."

Mark is one of hundreds of people supported by ac.care's homelessness services over the past financial year. We are grateful for the people who have allowed us to share their stories throughout this report to provide insight into the difference we make in their lives.

ac.care achieves goals despite ongoing COVID-19 challenges

ac.care continued to implement its COVID-19 containment strategy throughout the 2021-22 financial year while still achieving bold goals identified in our business plan.

It was a whirlwind 12 months for our sector, our nation and the world. In late 2021, after more than a year of managing a COVID-19 containment strategy, the South Australian Government opened our borders to the world.

Within weeks we had more than 30,000 cases and Emergency Management directions that required us to change the way we worked with the community and with each other.

This could have been a huge setback for our priorities. We were facing a once in a generation challenge.

Yet, in spite of the complexity this created for our operating environment, our teams did an absolutely amazing job.

We made excellent progress on the

business plan, with more than 61% of priorities **Achieved** and a further 23% remaining **On Track**, as several multi-year projects have carried over into FY2022-2023.

Approximately 6% of ongoing priorities require **Monitoring** and, unfortunately, a further 10% are considered **Off Track**.

But we'll give these additional attention this year. What follows are some of ac.care's key business development achievements for the year beyond our remarkable ongoing service delivery.

Achievements

- Reconciliation Australia approved and ac.care formally launched our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, a significant achievement for ac.care. In line with this work, we successfully implemented the FY21-22 priorities within the Aboriginal Employment Plan and the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Plan. Aboriginal employment is currently sitting at

14%, another major achievement for ac.care.

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NPCSO) project remains On Track to be completed by December 2022.
- Additional residential houses in Berri and Mount Gambier are now fully operational. This now includes securing a further house in Mount Gambier, which will be ready to take on additional placements within FY2022-2023.
- Significant progress has been made on the Workforce Plan this year. A Leadership Development Program through the Leaders Institute of SA was completed. This was coupled with Prince2 training in project management across several areas.
- Following a successful consultation process with staff and a majority vote, Fair Work formally approved the termination of the Employment Collective Agreement.
- The ac.care Client Voice Framework was successfully released in 2022,

with detailed support, tools and templates to ensure a formalised and integrated approach to client voice.

- All services and corporate services have attended Program Logic workshops to continue our progress towards an outcome measurement approach, including a trial of outcome measurement software in the Community Data Solutions platform.
- The HIPPY program met its KPIs in terms of client numbers and percentage of Aboriginal families enrolled, along with completing the successful pilot of a new culturally aware version of the program with community.
- All the required Country South Homelessness Alliance plans were successfully developed, including the Regional Integration & Action Plan, a Cultural Competency plan, Operational Plan and the Lived Experience Plan.
- Our Treasury Management Policy was developed. In March, Ord Minnett were selected as the ac.care Investment Advisor, a critical milestone in our Treasury Management process.
- A draft of the Infrastructure and Asset Management plan was *developed. Property condition assessments have been

undertaken for all sites to assist with maintenance schedules and future lease versus buy calculations within the master plan within FY2022-2023.

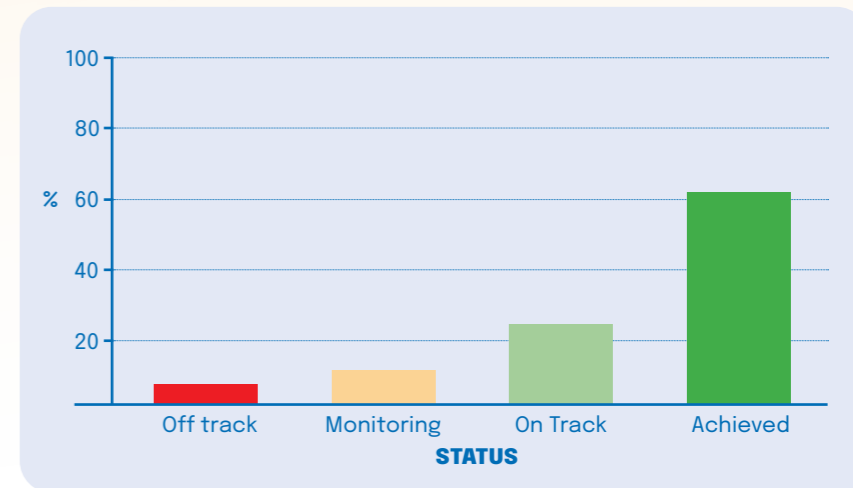
- Risk workshops were completed to undertake deep dives into program level risks across services. Corporate services will be the primary focus within FY2022-2023.
- The Information Technology Team has completed a renewal of all Telstra contracts, InTune Cyber Security updates and hardware upgrades across the agency, including new video conferencing suites across all regions.

- The HR and incident management systems have been successfully established. Roll out of these systems is ongoing and a priority for FY2022-2023.

COVID disruptions put considerable pressure on a wide range of services. This was especially true for staffing in our rostered services. Ultimately, all our teams have done a terrific job.

The last 12 months have proven what a resilient and adaptive organisation ac.care is. In the face of challenges, we continue to grow our capability and impact.

Andrew Brackman
Outgoing Planning, Finance & IT Executive Manager



ac.care services directory

ABORIGINAL SERVICES

- HIPPY – Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters empowering parents to become their child's first teacher
- Opening Doors flexible individual support service for Aboriginal young people.
- STAY Service To Aboriginal Youth aged 12-25
- Youth Support and Development Program for young people aged between 15-19 to improve participation in education, training and volunteering

COMMUNITY AND LEARNING

- Adult learning
- ac.care Berri
- ac.care Murraylands Centre
- Community Connections
- Millicent Community Centre
- Mount Gambier Community Centre
- Personal Success Coaching

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

- Emergency Relief – financial help and food in a crisis
- Financial Counselling
- Low Income Support program
- Millicent Service SA agency
- Millicent Services Australia agency

HOMELESSNESS

- South Australian Country South Homelessness Alliance Lead Agency
- Limestone Coast Homelessness Service
- Murraylands Homelessness Service
- Riverland Homelessness Service
- Reconnect early intervention program for young people aged 12 to 18 at risk of homelessness
- TED Tenancy Education program

supporting country people

OUT OF HOME CARE

- Foster carer recruitment, assessment and training
- Occasional, emergency, respite, long-term and short-term foster care
- Staffed 24/7 residential therapeutic strength-based care homes

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 123 Magic and Emotion Coaching
- Blast Off for children aged 5-12 affected by separation of their parents
- Changing Tracks men's positive behaviour program
- Children in Focus Information Sessions
- Children's Contact Service, providing a safe, neutral place for changeovers and supervised contact
- Communities for Children Murraylands
- Drumbeat music wellbeing program
- Family Advocacy and Support Services
- Family and Relationship Counselling

- Family Dispute Resolution for parenting and property matters
- Family Reunification
- Family Support
- Intensive Family Support
- Minya Porlar Crèche Murray Bridge
- Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre
- Parenting programs:
 - Dads Net
 - Family Time
 - Kids Connect Coorong and Karoonda
 - Family Support
 - Patch, Plate, Play
 - Yoga Youngsters
 - Celebrate Connection
 - Let's Play with Music
- Seasons for Growth change, loss and grief program for young people
- Specialised Community Referral Service
- Specialised Family Violence Service
- Stories Through Song
- Storm Birds extension to Seasons for Growth
- Youth Resilience Scholarship

Homelessness and financial support

Preventing homelessness and ensuring country people have enough money to live on



Emergency family housing continues Barry Maney legacy

Emergency housing for families is now available in Mount Gambier thanks to a significant donation to ac.care by a long-term business supporter.

Staff from the Barry Maney Group joined forces with the broader CMV Group Staff Foundation to provide \$19,720 to the agency, which is being used to cover the first 12 months of rent for a three-bedroom house.

The significant donation will allow ac.care to house families of up to four children in the self-contained property, which also features large outdoor play areas.

It is the second emergency relief property managed by ac.care in Mount Gambier, with a two-bedroom unit also used to house vulnerable residents.

That property was established under similar circumstances thanks to the generosity shown at the city's Support Homeless People Luncheon, an initiative which is the legacy of the late Barry Maney OAM.

ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark said the larger, family-orientated property filled an important need in Mount Gambier.

"We do have families that come to us with nowhere to go, nowhere to sleep at all," Ms Spark said.

"The option has been they will sleep in their car, or we can give them a tent," she said.

"Now that we have access to this property, it's a nice home that people can come to.

"Everything they need is here, they're safe, warm, the kids can still go to school, the parents can do what they need to do."

Ms Spark said the two-bedroom unit, used by ac.care for emergency housing over the last four years, worked well for single people and couples, but fell short of providing adequate space for families with children.

"It's really quite small and there is no backyard or front yard for the kids to get outside and to run around - it's hard to keep children

really quiet if they're locked inside all day," she said.

"This property is so important because we can fit bigger families and there is space for the children to play inside or outside depending on the weather."

Praising the Barry Maney Group and CMV Group Staff Foundation for their generosity, Ms Spark said the financial security of covering rent for the first year was vital.

Ms Spark said the agency would accumulate funds through support rebates, which would then be used to fund future costs associated with the property.

"Throughout the year we bring back in the funds to pay for the next 12 months," Ms Spark said.

"We don't make a profit, we're just here to make sure we can sustain the property and keep it happening each year."

Barry Maney Group general manager Shannon Wilson was proud to continue the strong support shown to ac.care.

"The Barry Maney Group has had



MAKING A DIFFERENCE: ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark accepts a \$19,720 donations from Barry Maney Group CMV Group Staff Foundation representative Jason Peake and Barry Maney Group general manager Shannon Wilson.

a really long-standing relationship in supporting ac.care and all the good work they've done around the community for many, many years," Mr Wilson said.

"The luncheon has been the biggest thing over the years, Barry Stafford has been heavily involved in that in recent times and Barry Maney before him," he said.

"Barry Maney himself, who built

the business we all work for, had been a wonderful community ambassador and we've really tried to keep his legacy running into the future."

Mr Wilson said issues like homelessness and vulnerable living were not always visible in the Mount Gambier community, with people also struggling at home.

"It pulls at the heart strings when

its family and small kids involved and struggling to integrate into the community through their school or sports, or creating friendship groups," he said.

"It is a really good thing to support locally because you don't want those people forgotten about."

Explaining how the donation was allocated, local CMV Group Staff Foundation representative Jason Peake said a submission was put to the foundation, which collects contributions from staff working at CMV Group sites during the pay cycle.

"That gets matched dollar for dollar by the CMV Group," Mr Peake explained.

"At the moment we probably have over 400 staff that donate across the CMV Group so every little bit helps," he said.

"We just try and give out as much as we can and give back."

Ms Spark acknowledged the support of the Mount Gambier community, which she labelled fantastic.

"It's really important that we continue to get that support so we can continue to do new projects like this one," Ms Spark said.

"Without the support of Barry Maney Group and CMV staff we wouldn't have the opportunity to have this property so we're really grateful."

Studio Purpose provides foundation for growth

Four purpose-built apartments developed through a community partnership led by ac.care continue to provide safety, security and a foundation to grow for young women in Murray Bridge.

The transformational power of the Studio Purpose project has become clearer since the four apartments started housing young Murray Bridge women in August 2021.

The disused duplex, overhauled through broad community support, has provided a safe and secure environment for at-risk teenage women to grow and take steps towards building the life they want.

While the Studio Purpose site has primarily housed young women aged 16-17 years old, ac.care was able to help house 21-year-old Tyler in early 2022 during what was a traumatic time for the teenager.

Tyler found out she had been accepted into the accommodation while sadly in hospital following a miscarriage.

"I was seeing it as though it was

another door opening, considering one just shut," Tyler recalled.

"Even though there was all this crappy stuff that just went on, there's still a little positive amongst it all."

One month later, the 19 year old moved into the Studio Purpose site and admitted the transition required a lot of adjustment.

As the oldest of nine siblings, the shift from growing up in a "big, hectic space" to the solitude of her new environment was "good, even if a little scary, and sometimes bad".

"I'm finding myself again because I feel like I used to do a lot to make other people happy or just not disrupt their life," Tyler said.

"I feel like I'm a lot more in control of my life than I did previously."

Tyler had unsuccessfully been applying for rental properties since turning 18, finding Studio Purpose her "second chance" at pursuing her ambitions.

"I'm trying to make sure I'm happy with what I'm doing and not just doing it to make other people happy," Tyler said.

"I want to do it because it makes me feel good about myself."

This has included undertaking training to earn new qualifications in the hospitality sector, which Tyler hopes will unlock new opportunities.

"I feel I've come a long way since living here," Tyler said.

ac.care homelessness services Murraylands program manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage said the young women housed within Studio Purpose were making the most of their opportunity to assess and plan what comes next in their lives.

"It has been really good because the young people that are there are going to school or holding a job," Ms Hiripitiyage said.

"Some have gone into solid, positive relationships too."

Ms Hiripitiyage said the housing prevented the occupants from having to sleep rough or couch surf, also minimising risk-taking behaviour.

"They are able to make plans really clearly," Ms Hiripitiyage said, adding ac.care was offering support to the women around education and employment opportunities.

"But we are also taking the time to let them do it their way," she said.



MODERN HOME: Inside one of the four apartments developed through the Studio Purpose community partnership.

"Most of the time they will take the opportunity because they know there's someone they can question if they need, but they take the initiative."

Ms Hiripitiyage said the women also benefited from the routine and responsibility of life at Studio Purpose, including simple budgeting and household management.

A highlight of the project's first year has been the growth of a former resident, who has moved interstate to be with family and work.

Ms Hiripitiyage said another occupant was exploring their options for further education, which would require a move from Murray Bridge to join extended family.

Studio Purpose is an initiative of ac.care that went beyond the homelessness and other services funded through our Commonwealth and State Government contracts to address a root cause of youth homelessness in the Murraylands.

Through support of construction

partner Habitat for Humanity SA, property manager AnglicareSA, headspace, Rural City of Murray Bridge and the South Australian Housing Authority, which provided a disused duplex for the project, we worked with broad community support to transform a long-vacant building into a place that now offers safety, stability and hope for up to four young people disconnected from society due to a range of issues, from domestic violence to family poverty.

Study shows vulnerable people being priced out of housing

Leading into the 2022 state election in March, ac.care called on South Australians to consider commitments by candidates to address the growing housing crisis in regional areas when voting.

The public stance came as ac.care reported an increasing number of people seeking support after rental affordability has diminished and an increasing number of people were being pushed to the brink of homelessness in the wake of COVID-19.

"Various impacts from COVID-19 on the housing market, which pushed up prices in regional areas and reduced availability of affordable properties for people on low incomes, along with decades of underinvestment in social and affordable housing, which has not kept up with demand, is making it challenging for country people on low incomes to maintain or secure tenancies," ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said.

"We are seeing an increasing number of people, including families with young children, approaching our services



for support in the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, but finding a shortage of affordable, emergency and transitional properties making it increasingly difficult to ensure people have safe homes for stability now and to build their lives for the future."

He said the situation had

become so serious with emergency accommodation at capacity in many regions that sometimes offering a tent was the only option available for some clients while ac.care worked with people to help them overcome crises and secure a more sustainable situation.

Mr Maddocks said it was concerning to see an increasing number of people who were not among the agency's traditional client base seeking support to access housing, such as teachers, nurses and other skilled and professional workers hoping to move to the regions, but unable to secure affordable homes for rent.

"We have to focus our services on the most vulnerable people in our community to protect their welfare, but the challenges people relocating for employment are facing is a sign of how tough the market is, making it harder than ever for people reliant on low incomes to afford to rent or move towards home ownership," he said.

"The issue is affecting an increasing number of people as availability of affordable housing diminishes in regional areas."

ac.care called for greater investment in emergency accommodation, including funding to place more people with nowhere else available in short-term arrangements with motels and other providers for longer where necessary, as well as packages to support innovative solutions, such as developments to specifically meet the needs of vulnerable people, including those experiencing homelessness, and address affordable housing shortages.

The agency also called for increased maintenance and expansion of social housing, reduction in stamp

duty for property sales and greater funding for drug, alcohol and mental health services, along with increased support for social welfare agencies to help meet growing needs in regional communities.

The pre-election stance was followed by the release of a study focused on properties available in southern country South Australia, which found the private rental market was failing people on low incomes.

"Some people may have shelter or accommodation, but for many of the people on our nation's lowest incomes there is sadly very little on the market in the Murraylands, Riverland and Limestone Coast that could be a place to call home," Mr Maddocks said.

The regional data was shared in collaboration with Anglicare Australia's national Rental Affordability Snapshot, released in April.

On the snapshot weekend of 19 March 2022, 55 private rentals were advertised for rent across the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, with ac.care analysing whether each property is affordable and suitable for 14 types of households on low incomes.

"The key to making housing more affordable lies in two factors - making sure everyone has a decent income and providing enough affordable rentals for the people who need them," Mr Maddocks said.

"It is clear we must invest in

affordable housing and the shortfall of affordable rentals in our regions must be tackled."

ac.care called for major parties to commit to an increase to the rate of JobSeeker and other payments in the lead-up to the 2022 federal election.

The study showed that in the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, as is the case across Australia, renters on low incomes were being priced out of the rental market.

People on income support, especially those who are out of work, had few options, with no rentals, including sharehouses, affordable for a single person on the JobSeeker payment.

"The shortage of affordable rentals will condemn people to make difficult decisions to keep a roof over their head," Mr Maddocks said.

But Mr Maddocks said the rental affordability snapshot did not tell the whole story.

"Although we assessed properties based on the full-time minimum wage, we know more and more people are working casually," Mr Maddocks said.

"Their plight is likely to be much worse than this snapshot shows."

He said the snapshot also did not take into account competition for each of the properties with dozens of applications commonly being submitted for affordable rentals in the regions and the most vulnerable left demoralised by constant knockbacks from housing applications.

Donated data keeps vulnerable people *connected and safe* through crises in country SA

FREE mobile calls and data is now available to help country South Australians in crisis.

Clients at ac.care's Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Berri and Millicent sites now have access to free prepaid Optus SIM cards to ensure they can remain connected.

"We are constantly seeking ways to boost the diverse support we provide to people as the housing crisis impacts on country communities and people face increased pressures from factors such as homelessness, rental pressure, domestic violence and poverty," ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark said.

"We know that access to communications is vital for people in crisis to protect their safety, engage with services, apply for jobs or housing and keep connected with family and friends, especially if they may not have a stable home or

personal address."

Ms Spark said internet-access was vital as services, including Centrelink, have increasingly moved online.

"Mobile data is essential if someone is in crisis and needs to be connected with these services, especially for

"Mobile data is essential if someone is in crisis ... especially for people in rural and regional settings unable to access services in-person due to having no access to effective means of transport"

- ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark

people in rural and regional settings unable to access services in-person due to having no access to effective means of transport," she said.

The country specialist has become part of Optus' Donate Your Data™

program through its partnership with national charity Good360 Australia.

With an eligible mobile plan, Optus customers can donate some of their unused data to help Australians in need, with the benefits now flowing to ac.care clients as part of the national initiative.

"By giving a mobile service to participants of the Donate Your Data™ program and inviting our customers to donate their data, we're providing internet access to the people who need it most," Optus' Group sustainability director Helen Maisano said.

"Optus is proud to work with ac.care through its partnership with Good360 so we can continue to help power Australia's potential."

Good360's South Australian partnerships manager Kate Stock said the charity was proud to partner with ac.care.

"Through our partnership with Optus, Good360 has provided six-



KEEPING PEOPLE CONNECTED: ac.care Limestone Coast homelessness service manager Bec Hogg, ac.care Murraylands homelessness service manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage and ac.care Riverland homelessness service manager Michelle Storry with Optus SIM cards now available through the organisation to provide free calls and data to vulnerable people in need of support and connection to telecommunications services

month Crisis SIM cards to multiple ac.care sites to provide support to a range of vulnerable people, including to youth and country South Australians who are experiencing homelessness," Ms Stock said.

"Together ac.care and Good360 are contributing to help close the digital divide in regional South Australian communities."

Good360 has previously partnered with ac.care by providing a range of surplus goods from retailers to benefit vulnerable people and reduce the costs of support programs delivered by the agency in country communities.

"It's been wonderful to be able to provide vulnerable individuals and families with toys for children, warm

clothing for people sleeping rough and pamper packs to provide some dignity to women struggling to pay for essentials," Ms Spark said.

"This new initiative expands our partnership to ensure people remain connected while we work together to build stability in their lives and help ensure they have safe homes and enough money to live on."

Riverland man *takes control* of life journey

Hard work has paid off for Riverland man Matt who, after years of living socially isolated from the community, has stepped out and taken control of his life journey.

Empowered by support services, including ac.care's Riverland Homelessness Service, Matt's life has altered dramatically over the last two years, shifting from living in squalor as a recluse to now working full-time, spending time in the community and building his independence.

Matt's progress has been so significant that he has successfully withdrawn from ac.care's support services and no longer relies on a Centrelink benefit.

It has been reward for effort by Matt, who was referred to ac.care by a housing provider around two years ago, pleading for support.

Matt was only just existing in a tiny unit with no support and rarely stepped out of his front door due to his Tourette's syndrome and other health needs, choosing to live socially isolated with just his beloved

dog for company.

Feelings of abandonment and hopelessness fueled Matt's frustrations to the point a lack of care spiraled his property's condition to being almost uninhabitable.

"The place was a mess - I was living like a pig, sleeping on the floor on a mattress," Matt recalls.

Matt would make-do with items collected from hard waste left on kerbsides, having no furniture of his own and was facing eviction when ac.care intervened.

The first step was supporting Matt to engage with health services to help manage his Tourette's syndrome, which had been a major barrier in his ability to leave his home.

ac.care Homelessness client support worker Jacqueline recalls accompanying Matt to Barmera supermarket, one of the only places he would regularly leave his home to visit.

"It was amazing to watch someone like Matt, he knew exactly what he wanted and where he had to go," Jacqueline said.

"I have to get in and have to get out

because people are judging," Matt adds, referencing the effects of his Tourette's syndrome.

"People with disabilities do get looked at and judged. We are who we are," he said.

Jacqueline said the shopping experience proved to be a real eye opener as to how the judgment Matt felt would cause him to isolate further.

"Looking at the judgment he got and how people would look at him and scowl and think there was something wrong because he was verbalising, it was very brave (of Matt)," Jacqueline said.

Matt's shopping days soon extended to visits to Berri as his confidence grew, establishing important routines that eventually led to him to apply and successfully secure employment.

A full-time spray painter, Matt is now saving his hard-earned funds to buy his own car in readiness for when he graduates from his Learner's Permit.

Matt has also taken control of his own health and wellbeing needs with the confidence to make his own appointments and proudly views himself as a valuable contributing

member of the community.

"Matt has maintained all that himself," Jacqueline said.

"Even through the whole process it wasn't a case of we came in and rescued Matt because Matt was willing to do all that hard work.

"All he needed was the people to link him in with the support he needed and Matt did the rest."

Matt said he believed people in similar circumstances to what he had faced did not like to ask for help due to embarrassment or shame but he implored people in need to come forward.

"Ask for help - don't be afraid," Matt said.

"It is a good service and they help the people who need help," he said.

"It will make you feel better."

While Matt's support journey with ac.care has officially ended, it hasn't stopped the connection from continuing.

"Matt still keeps in contact with us and comes in and gives us progress reports on how he's going and we make the odd call just to follow up to make sure he's on track," Jacqueline said.

ac.care's Riverland Homelessness Service operates at 5 Kealley Street, Berri.

Anyone in need of support due to financial hardship or housing insecurity in the Riverland is urged to contact ac.care on 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

Support helps *break the cycle* of homelessness

Going to the gym, digging into the garden or enjoying some quiet study are life's simple pleasures that some may take for granted - but not Charlotte*.

Fighting to survive through a cycle of homelessness and domestic violence, Charlotte has "started over" with nothing more than a backpack full of clothes three times since her late teens.

Now aged 30, life is full of hope and possibilities for Charlotte - a mother-of-three - thanks in part to a long-term housing lease agreement, which has given her young family the security it needs to blossom.

It has been over a decade since Charlotte first accessed ac.care's services as a then-homeless teenager but the agency's most

significant impact is more recent through its strong advocacy to housing providers and alliance partners to secure a long-term property for Charlotte and her two sons.

The offer of stable housing came as a shock to Charlotte who, after several short-term lease extensions, feared she would soon be starting over again.

"In my head I was adamant I was going to end up homeless again - I didn't have much hope," Charlotte said.

"I was in a bad mental state, I was losing sleep and anxious - I just didn't know what was going to happen the next day, like I am going to get the letter that says we've got 14 days left," she said.

"Things happen, miracles occur."

***Client's name changed for privacy**

That miracle has meant Charlotte and her children have been able to transform what was temporary housing into their own home.

"I always had all these goals and all these things I wanted to do to better the property but I didn't want to put the time and effort into something I'm going to have to take down," Charlotte said.

The house now has air-conditioning to help manage her son's seasonal and ongoing health conditions, improved security features including screen doors and cameras, and Charlotte has plans for a garden makeover.

Outside of the material benefits long-term housing provides, Charlotte and her children have now also increased their participation in sport and social activities given they can see their future within the community.

"I'm playing sport again, the children attend sport, we just have more of a routine in place knowing we can commit to things like that," Charlotte said.

"Before I didn't see a point in committing to sport or of extracurricular activities if we were just going to be pulled out of things because we had to move."

Charlotte has also joined a gym where she enjoys personal training sessions, has gained

seasonal employment and has accepted financial and escaping violence counselling.

The proud and determined way Charlotte has transformed her life has come as little surprise to ac.care homelessness client support worker Antonietta, who was steadfast in her support of Charlotte and helping her build a positive future.

Antonietta explained Charlotte had endured repeated challenges in securing housing due to circumstances outside her control, including past property damage caused by violent ex-partners.

"Now she has got some stability back in her life and for her children – she has always put her children first and attempted to do the right thing," Antonietta said.

"It was always incidents around her that brought her back to a dark place and the support wasn't there for her.

"I've never met a client as house proud as Charlotte."

The hopeful future now ahead of Charlotte comes off the back of mountains of work by Antonietta through adversity, which has included winning over Charlotte's trust and helping to manage her anger.

"When you spend time with a client and get to know her story and how she is feeling each day you get to understand her reaction to things in

life and you can see where it stems from," Antonietta said.

"I could see where she needed that help but I could see Charlotte had really no one to turn to either," she said.

"Now I see beyond Charlotte – I see who she is as a person and what she can do for herself.

"She's a very determined person. I can see how much she loves her children."

Earlier this year Antonietta helped Charlotte celebrate her 30th birthday with lunch and birthday cake.

"It was a privilege to be there with her for her birthday," Antonietta said.

"I really enjoyed spending that time with her and we spoke at the table about the future and what she wants."

Those desires largely revolve around a better life for her and her children, with stable housing helping to support Charlotte's reunification with her daughter, who had been living in a relative's care.

"I've started out with a backpack and couple of pairs of clothes three times," Charlotte said.

"I've got to where I am now with a house full of furniture and cupboards full of clothes.

"It wasn't easy but staying persistent and positive paid off – and I wouldn't have stayed positive without Antonietta."

Pop-up clinic delivers vaccine to those in need

MORE than 80 people were immunised against COVID-19 when pop-up vaccination clinics were held at ac.care sites to ensure people experiencing or at risk of homelessness did not miss out on the statewide roll-out of the vaccine.

ac.care partnered with Country SA PHN to hold pop-up vaccination clinics at the Mount Gambier Community Centre and ac.care sites in Murray Bridge and Berri.

While the clinics were held to support clients of ac.care's programs, including its regional homelessness services, the service was also made available to anyone in the regions.

Staff also made use of the opportunity to ensure they were vaccinated to protect themselves, clients and the broader community ahead of the opening of state borders.

Visitors on the clinic days were also invited to roll up their sleeves and receive the vaccine.



"We understand the importance of ensuring all sectors of the community have access to the vaccine and partnered with Country SA PHN to provide pop-up clinics in our centres so our clients could obtain the vaccine in a place where they felt safe and supported so they were not at risk of missing out on the roll-out"

– ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark

ac.care homelessness and community services senior manager Trish Spark said it was one way ac.care contributed to ensuring all South Australians, especially vulnerable people in country areas, had access to the vaccine.

"Our community spaces are places where vulnerable people feel welcome and supported after many have been affected by past

trauma or discrimination and reached out for our support to build a better future," Ms Spark said.

Ms Spark said this not only benefited vulnerable South Australians, but also the broader community to help in the state-wide push to lift vaccination rates as a step towards easing restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Pfizer vaccine was provided at no cost through the clinics.

Financial support *makes a difference* to client lives

Positive client outcomes as told by ac.care's financial counselling staff

On top of bills

A client first engaged in financial counselling in 2019 and had over \$1500 owing in electricity, weren't covering their usage and was on low, restricted income.

The client was unable to stick to payment plans and would still have outstanding balance before the new bill was due.

At the time the client wasn't interested in increasing their repayment plan and would often become vocal during the appointments towards me and towards the utility providers on the phone.

The client would shut down without wanting to negotiate.

It was extremely hard to build rapport with the client due to this and there was also a lack of understanding on my

behalf about how the client managed their finances due to their cultural background, as well as how money worked in the community and family due to the client not willing to build rapport.

Over time I continued to work with the client and gain a better understanding of their background and I was able to build rapport with the client.

Throughout the appointments I was able to educate the client on daily usage, how to read their electricity bill and how to make changes to their current electricity usage to see a reduction in their daily usage.

The client also taught me about how money works in their community and that they often help others out even without paying their debts first because this is how the community worked.

We successfully negotiated a payment plan of \$113 per fortnight (previously \$50) which covered their ongoing usage and a small amount to the outstanding debt.

With the assistance of a Wyatt grant and Emergency Electricity Payment Scheme payment I was able to lower the client's outstanding balance to a more affordable amount.

Fast-forward to 2022 and the client has managed to pay all bills on time, never owe money on their electricity bill, have a low daily usage and I recently assisted the client to contact the electricity provider to request a refund as their new bill had come in and they had over \$1000 excess funds sitting with their provider.

This allowed the client to use these funds to assist in moving and pay some of their other outstanding bills.

At the conclusion of our last appointment, the client thanked me for the knowledge I had shared and that they felt without ac.care's support, they wouldn't be where they are today and they will take this knowledge with them to pass on with their community.

Sometimes rapport takes years to build.

Back on track

A single mother with two children had her employment impacted by COVID-19 due to working in the hospitality sector.

She was constantly having to juggle which bill to pay and used all the food assistance in the area to help get on top.

She had a personal loan that she had



applied for many years ago and was unable to get back on top of this.

ac.care was able to get her personal loan of over \$9500 waived, which saved her \$296 per month.

This change allowed her to be able to budget each fortnight, get back on track and no longer require support from ac.care and food charities in the area.

Hand up helps

This client often pops in for a fresh coffee and to see what food we have on offer.

He has engaged previously in financial counselling for assistance in budgeting as after his niece and nephew were reunited with their parents the client was left with a large house with a lowered income.

The client was impacted by COVID-19 with a lack of work opportunities, with

time spent at home leading the man to start drinking in excess and neglecting his bills.

The client hit a point where he realised he couldn't continue and needed some assistance accessing his superannuation under hardship to assist with an old electricity bill that had gone to the debt collectors, while his rent and water were in arrears.

We discussed other options instead of accessing his superannuation and emergency assistance was provided as a hand-up for his rent and water arrears and we were able to negotiate a very small payment plan for the amount owed to the debt collectors.

The client had moved to the Riverland six years prior and had only been able to find one job that paid correctly and into his superannuation.

Over the past six years he had

survived off working now and then at a small wage, normally cash in hand and they didn't pay superannuation.

When the client presented to the office for me to assist him with setting up Centrepay, he was excited to inform me that he had secured a "proper" job working in the vines that actually paid him to his bank and to his superannuation and he felt he could finally start to live his life properly.

This was an extremely great outcome and it also meant the client didn't need to use what little superannuation he had left.

Our assistance provided him a hand up out of his situation and I think without our support he may have continued to drink at damaging levels.

Instead, this gave him encouragement and he knew he didn't have to go through it alone.

Free clothing boutique on wheels provides fresh new looks

KELLY turned to ac.care when the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the loss of her employment and subsequently left her at risk of homelessness.

"I lost everything, but support from ac.care made a huge difference through COVID," she said.

Kelly was supported by a case worker at ac.care's Limestone Coast Homelessness Service, who connected her to the organisation's housing and financial support programs, along with emergency relief, including food supplies.

More recently, she had the opportunity to adopt a new look when the Thread Together mobile clothing service visited ac.care's Mount Gambier and Millicent community centres.

"I am normally an op-shopper or rely on hand-me-downs, but it was so nice to pick something brand new off the rack," she said.

The "mobile wardrobe" operated by not-for-profit partners AnglicareSA and Thread Together takes excess stock from Australian fashion stores



NEW LOOK: Kelly welcomed the opportunity to collect a new outfit at no cost when AnglicareSA and Thread Together's mobile clothing van visited ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre.

and uses vans to deliver the new clothes to communities in need, such as people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Young couple Kym and Monty also welcomed the visit by the mobile clothing van and said the free

clothing helped spread their limited finances.

Monty said it was "a bit like Christmas".

"We wouldn't usually have new clothes like this," he said.

The couple was previously assisted



OPTIONS: Kym looks through the clothing on offer thanks to the Thread Together mobile clothing van.

into transitional housing by ac.care and Monty said their case worker also encouraged them to be involved in the community and "not sit at home and be depressed".

"These guys helped me a lot to get where I am today," he said.

Kelly said she was glad to be able to extend the benefit of the service to a friend who was at home with a seven-month-old baby.

"They will have a nice surprise when I drop by later," she said.

ac.care Limestone Coast Homelessness Service support worker Kelly McGuinness said it was



WELCOME TO THE BOUTIQUE: AnglicareSA staff Stephanie Ashby and Selena Hart welcomed ac.care Limestone Coast Homelessness Service clients and other visitors to the Thread Together clothing van to choose a free set of new clothing.

wonderful to provide the additional visiting service to clients.

"A new set of clothes can make a remarkable difference to someone's self-esteem and sense of dignity, especially if they have interviews for employment, housing or other commitments coming up," she said.

"This donation of clothing will allow those trying to secure a better future to take pride in their appearance without having to choose between updating their wardrobe or meeting other essential costs of living."

Since launching in April 2018, the

Anglicare SA and Thread Together partnership has prevented more than 150,000 items of brand-new clothing, valued at an estimated \$12m, ending up in landfill.

During 2020, the program delivered clothes to nearly 3000 South Australians, including people affected by the Kangaroo Island and Adelaide Hills bushfires and others impacted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Limestone Coast visit by the Thread Together van was supported by CMI Toyota's CMV Foundation and RAA Grassroots giving sponsorship.

Foster and residential care

Providing safe homes for children in care



Super-mum Michelle provides a loving home for six children

COUNTRY South Australian mum Michelle was juggling work commitments and caring for her three children as a sole parent when she decided she still had space in her heart and home to fulfil her childhood dream of becoming a foster carer.

Today, her career is on hold, but her house is full of love, colour and sometimes a little chaos as she commits to caring for six children, including three in long-term foster care arrangements.

"I have no regrets at all since becoming a foster carer - it can be a challenge at times with six children in the house, which can be hectic and chaotic, but I wouldn't give up seeing their smiles, happiness and how far they have all come with each of their own milestones," Michelle said.

"Seeing the faces of the children that come into your life, watching them grow and making a difference in their lives is worth everything - it's the most rewarding experience to see them happy, content and settled.

Michelle became a foster carer



with ac.care in 2020 after being interested in the role since she provided babysitting as a teenager.

"I always loved kids and wanted to be there for vulnerable children and foster care just seemed to be where I could help," she says.

"I discussed it with my children and they were on board straight away, so we started the process and here

we are with three little kiddies in my care, in addition to my own three children."

After completing the rigorous assessment process to become a foster carer, Michelle welcomed a four-month-old baby into her home, with a second child arriving for an emergency placement a few months later and a third joining the household after two years, with all three now in her long-term care.

"They are just part of our life and family now and it is hard to imagine life without them because they are so much a part of our lives," Michelle said.

The dedicated foster carer also continues to welcome two girls once a month for a weekend of respite foster care in her home, in addition to the three foster children in her long-term care.

She also assists at times as an emergency carer for other children.

Michelle said she was well supported by ac.care through regular visits from a support worker, training and social events to connect with other carers, but her own network of



friends was also vital.

"They love the kids as much as I do and there's always someone to lend a hand."

Meanwhile, her older children enjoy looking after and playing with the younger members of the household.

"Everyone just pitches in and helps - the kids are all like siblings and always there for each other," Michelle said.

"Family is everything and seeing all the kids happy and all being together is amazing - you don't need to be blood-related to be family because family is what you make it and I treat all the children the same - they are all loved."



Scan the QR code to see a video of Michelle talking about her foster care experience

However, Michelle also recognises the importance for the children to maintain links with their birth families, which continues through contact when it is possible and safe to do so, with support from the Department for Child Protection.

"It is important the children know their story and where they have

come from, so we have connections through extended family and birth parents."

Although Michelle is employed by the Department of Education, she is currently not working, opting to spend her time supporting the six children in her home.

"I am focusing on the children and being the best mother to them that I can, helping them with all their needs," she said.

After joining ac.care's network and becoming aware of the dire need for more foster carers across country South Australia, Michelle encourages other caring adults to consider opening their hearts and homes to vulnerable children.

"If you have room in your life, a big heart and have thought about it, then just call ac.care and get some information," she said.

"Once you have a child come into your life, any doubts fade away - you just love them as if they were your own because you are mum to them while they are either waiting to go back to their own parents or with you long-term - to them, you are the person they look up to, so you just love them as if they were your own."

To find out more about becoming a long-term, short-term or occasional foster carer in the Riverland, Limestone Coast, Murraylands, Fleurieu Peninsula or Adelaide Hills, visit accare.org.au or call ac.care on 1300 ACCARE.

Foster family *shares joy* of Christmas together

THREE young siblings welcomed into a country South Australian family in 2020 were looking forward to everything about celebrating Christmas in the stability, safety and care of their foster home last December.

Kylie and Will decided they had space in their hearts and home to support vulnerable children in their region despite already being parents of four children.

"Last Christmas (2020), we welcomed three very sad children into our home and they were not excited about celebrating Christmas at all because they had just had such a big upheaval in their life," Kylie said last December.

"But nearly 12 months on, we've got three kids that are settled, have certainly become a part of the family and are looking forward to Christmas."

Now raising a household of seven children as Christmas approached, the

couple had split the cohort into two teams for shopping outings with a parent leading each group so each child could purchase a gift for another family member.

"The kids put a lot of thought and effort into picking one present for the person they were buying for and we have a special Kris Kringle dinner on Christmas Eve where the person giving the gift always seems to receive more joy than the person receiving, which is what Christmas is all about," Kylie said.



However, it is not just at Christmas when Will and Kylie reflect on the different life the three foster children are living to the alternatives they may have faced if the family did not choose to care.

"These children we now care for would never have experienced the life they are experiencing now – they are going to go on holidays they never would have experienced and have a loving foster mum and father who make sure they are safe, loved and cared for," Will said.

"We both work in difficult jobs where we have unfortunately become aware of abuse and neglect of children in our community, but we are also quite privileged and content in our life, so thought we could probably offer a lot and it is good for our own children to see you can give back to others and share what we are fortunate to have."

Kylie said she had no regrets about adding to the number of children in her care and urged others to consider opening their doors to vulnerable youngsters as foster carers.

"We thought 'we've got a home, we've got four beautiful children of our



FAMILY SUPPORT: Will and Kylie's four biological children contribute to making three foster siblings welcome in their home and part of the family.

own and the capacity and space to love some more, so why not?"

Many people would consider raising seven children a daunting prospect, but Will said the couple's own children contributed after being part of the family decision to offer foster placements.

"The children are all really close, which makes it so much easier for everyone to get along and care for each other," he said.

"It's not uncommon to see two

kids playing in one room, two kids in the other room and then two kids out on the trampoline – our second oldest boy calls his foster brother his 'brother from another mother'."

Will and Kylie did not initially plan to welcome a group of siblings into their home when they were approved as carers through ac.care, but were asked if they would consider taking in the children to keep them together and decided to see if the arrangement would work.

"We've had the three kids for 12 months now and knowing how close they are, the thought of having them in a placement where they are not together just would not be an option for us," Will said.

Kylie explained the family had broad support to sustain the arrangement from ac.care and the Department for Child Protection, together with services such as an occasional babysitter, along with assistance from friends, colleagues and family

members, to help make the task of raising seven children manageable.

"It is a team approach because it takes a village to raise a child and if you don't have a village, you create one and we certainly have with the support in place," Kylie said.

Will and Kylie urge other caring adults to consider becoming foster carers after they have enjoyed the experience and seen the dramatic improvement in the wellbeing of children in their care.

"Children are born into circumstances outside of their control and if you've got the capacity and the love in your heart to be able to do that, why not?" Will said.

"If you're child orientated, having a child that's not biologically yours write you a letter saying that you've changed their life and they love you like their own mother or father, well, it's heartbreaking for anyone and as meaningful as watching your own child take their first steps - I don't think you'll find anything more fulfilling."

Meanwhile, Will and Kylie are also potentially raising another generation of carers.

"It's been a very positive experience for our four children - they know they are doing something amazing and we've already heard them say when they grow up, they want to provide foster care," Kylie said.

"Even our foster children are saying 'I want to be a foster carer like you' and these kids come from a background of trauma that our children will never experience and for them to say 'I want to be a foster carer like you' is huge," Will added.

Sadly, there are not enough foster carers to meet the needs of vulnerable children in our community and ac.care is continuing to recruit more adults committed to the safety and care of young people to help provide safe homes and positive relationships.

Find out more at www.accare.org.au/services/foster-care/ or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).



Scan the QR code to see a video of Kylie and Will talking about why they chose to be foster carers and the impact it has had on their lives

Safety and care provided for more than 20 babies and children by Mount Gambier family

HAVING two young girls of their own has not held Kate and Jeremy Thomas back from welcoming more than 20 children into their home over three years as foster carers.

The Mount Gambier couple decided they had enough love to share to support some of the most vulnerable children in the region.

They opened their hearts and home as foster carers with regional agency ac.care after becoming aware of the need for more family-based placements in the Limestone Coast to protect the safety and wellbeing of children in state care.

The couple shared their story at ac.care's Supporting Vulnerable Children In Our Community Limestone Coast foster care forum at Mount Gambier City Hall in the hope of inspiring others to open their hearts and homes to young people in need of care.

Jeremy works full-time for Mount Gambier City Council, but said he loved dedicating time with his wife and daughters to nurturing babies and



FAMILY CARE: Kate and Jeremy Thomas welcome foster children, including infants, into their care, with their own children Gemma and Zoe also contributing to nurturing young visitors to their home.

other youngsters in need of a safe and nurturing home environment.

"What you get out of it emotionally is fantastic, but it's more about what the children who come into your care get

out of it," he said.

"If you go into it with an open heart, you're going to get more out of it than if you go into it with a closed heart - you have to go in there knowing it's

going to have its ups and downs, but at the end of the day, love that child unconditionally."

The Thomas family focuses on providing short-term placements while also raising their own children as part of ac.care's diverse network of 80 carer households in the Limestone Coast, which includes carers who have selected to provide emergency and short-term placements through to long-term arrangements, sometimes raising children from birth to adulthood.

Kate said the couple faced some challenges when they first became foster carers and initially provided emergency placements for children of a similar age to their own daughters.

"They didn't really understand the whole concept at the time as our youngest was only three, but then we started accepting short-term placements for babies and that just seemed to work for us," she said.

"As the girls became older, they have been more involved with the babies and they love to give them cuddles, feed and interact with them more, such as sitting and reading stories or putting

on puppet plays for the babies, which is really nice to watch.”

Kate said it was emotionally challenging when babies she had bonded with left her care to be placed into long-term arrangements or were reunited with biological family members, but she valued the opportunity to provide care and stability when it was vitally needed.

“People say ‘I don’t know how you do it. Don’t you get attached?’ Of course you get attached and there is a bit of grief when the placement ends with short-term care, but there’s also a lot of joy in knowing you’ve given a baby a really good and stable start,” she said.

“It’s really nice to see attachments form with their long-term carers when they go into the right placement, which makes all the sleepless nights worth it just to see them happy, loved and really wanted.”

The couple have cared for babies from overnight to a few months and have not ruled out providing long-term care to a foster child when the time and connection is right.

Kate said constant support from ac.care staff based in the region, along with their personal support network of family and friends, helped overcome any challenges they faced as foster carers.

“It makes a big difference being supported in the role,” she said.

Jeremy urged other caring adults to consider becoming foster carers, even



if they could only commit to providing occasional respite care, which could be for occasional nights or weekends.

“If another carer needs a night off because they need their own time, then you can just help out as a respite carer and say ‘yeah, we’ll take them for a night,’” he said.

“More people are needed for all types of care, including respite, which can help ensure longer term carers have the opportunity if they need a break.”

Kate urged people to learn more about foster care and consider joining the region’s network of diverse carers.

“There is a saying ‘you can’t help everyone, but everyone can help



someone,’” Kate said.

“It would be great if everyone could work out the way that they can help someone and maybe it is through foster care.”

ac.care foster care manager Dani Atkinson said carers transformed the lives of vulnerable children, providing safety and stability.

She said the agency staff were privileged to support a diverse network of 92 carer households in the Limestone Coast, but more were needed to provide family-based placements for the growing number of children in state care.

ac.care can be contacted on 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

Foster carers *celebrated*

THE remarkable contribution of foster carers providing safe homes to vulnerable children was been celebrated by ac.care with Easter barbecues.

The country specialist agency hosted a Limestone Coast Easter barbecue for foster care families, with the Mount Gambier Rapid Relief Team supporting the event by providing catering.

A similar event was held in Murray Bridge, supported by the Mobilong Rotary Club, while the Riverland barbecue unfortunately had to be cancelled due to weather.

“Foster carers contribute every day by providing hope and safety for vulnerable young people unable to live with their biological families, opening their hearts and homes to provide a stable environment to grow, learn and feel loved and supported,” ac.care foster care manager Dani Atkinson said.

“We were unable to hold a 2021 Christmas party with our carer community due to the risk posed by COVID-19 and welcomed this overdue opportunity to celebrate with the wonderful support of the Rapid Relief Team and Mobilong Rotary Club volunteer caterers joining us to thank



CELEBRATING SUPPORT: ac.care Limestone Coast foster care manager Sherri Winter with foster carer Kerry Johnson at the local agency’s Easter barbecue at the Valley Lakes.

foster carers for everything they do.”

The events brought together foster carers and their families, including children in their care, together with ac.care staff, for a day focused on building connections and social support in the carer community.

Meanwhile, ac.care continues to call for more people to join its network of foster carers across the Limestone

Coast, Riverland, Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula.

“Sadly, the number of foster carers supported through our network across eastern country South Australia to care for local children unable to live with their birth families is not enough to meet the demand,” Ms Atkinson said.

“We simply need more people to become foster carers with our support so that when children face a situation where they need a safe home and positive relationships there is somewhere available for them, even if it is for a short time until a longer term option is available.”

The local agency is seeking caring adults to join its network of carers to provide short-term, emergency or long-term care for children, or occasional respite care, such as at weekends, to support other foster carers.

“We have staff based locally to support people with training to become foster carers and are available to provide 24/7 support as part of a care team for young people,” Ms Atkinson said.

Anyone interested in finding out more about foster care is urged to visit accare.org.au or email care@accare.org.au.

ac.care provides *more safe homes* for vulnerable young people

The Riverland's first residential care home operated by ac.care for young people unable to live with their birth family was officially opened in March 2022.

Up to four young people who are unable to live with their birth family can be housed in the Berri property, which provides a home-based setting that is overseen by trained ac.care staff on a 24/7 roster.

ac.care was also able to house an additional two children in Mount Gambier during 2021-22 as the result of a new residential care home being launched.

The agency also recently secured the capacity to house an additional four children, which is planned to become available in December 2022.

The developments mean that ac.care anticipates entering 2023 with the capacity to house 20 young people in Mount Gambier, eight in Murray Bridge and four in Berri.

It is a fantastic outcome for the child and youth residential service, which provides medium to long term accommodation and support to

young people 5 – 17 years under the Guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection for whom foster or kinship care places are not available.

In the 2021-22 financial year, the service provided 38 young people with a safe therapeutic environment until they are able to transition into a longer term living arrangement.

ac.care Therapeutic Strength Based Care senior manager Michelle Toogood said the Berri residential care home had been largely at capacity since opening.

"We have had four children in the home for most of the time since it opened and in that time we have also developed some really strong professional relationships with the Department for Child Protection's Berri office," Ms Toogood said.

"The establishment of a residential care house in Berri resulted in one young person coming home to their community after a lengthy period away in a metropolitan placement," Ms Toogood said.

"This young person has continued to thrive since being back home.

"Their homecoming has been significant in how they view their future and definitely has had positive benefits to their wellbeing."

ac.care made the financial decision to purchase the Berri property, the first time the agency has taken the approach, and one that has been repeated in alignment with the planned Mount Gambier expansion in late 2022.

"This gives our program some flexibility, including being able to make home modifications that benefit the children and they can also have some input into those changes," Ms Toogood said.

"It also limits third party involvement in management of the property, which provides an additional layer of location confidentiality."

By the end of 2022, ac.care will operate six homes in Mount Gambier, two homes in Murray Bridge and one in the Riverland, giving the agency the capacity to accommodate 32 children.

"Without our homes, local children and young people would most likely need to relocate to metropolitan



CARING FOR CHILDREN: Mount Gambier ac.care child and youth residential care house supervisors Natalie, Lynne, Caroll, Brooke and Jaana look forward to welcoming new staff recruits and continuing to support vulnerable young people as the service expands.

areas," Ms Toogood said.

"By keeping children in their local community, they benefit from being around their local connections, such as school, friends and access to family," she said.

"When children enter the care system or experience a placement change, their world is significantly impacted.

"Therefore, there needs to be a focus on maintaining as much stability as possible."

The agency's youth and child residential care service worked to overcome a number of challenges brought on by COVID-19 last financial year, most notably to staff resources.

"It was a very challenging time and we needed to be creative and flexible with our rostering," Ms Toogood said.

Part of the management strategy involved the Riverland team travelling to Mount Gambier and Murray Bridge to help cover staff levels affected by isolation requirements and illness.

Ms Toogood said this benefited the Riverland staff, several of who were new to the sector, as they worked alongside experienced support workers in other regions.

"The new staff had fresh energy and excitement and they were willing to travel to the other regions and learn from the more experienced staff," Ms Toogood said.

"Our team as a whole really stepped up during this period and we are most grateful for that."

Family, child and youth services

Building strong families



Two decades of *Minya Porlar* Creche services celebrated

MORE than 20 years of providing childcare services for the Aboriginal community and vulnerable families in Murray Bridge was celebrated by ac.care in May 2022.

The organisation celebrated 21 years of Minya Porlar Creche after a 20th anniversary community party could not be held in 2021 due to COVID-19 regulations.

It was a significant milestone for the creche, which will be closed at the end of the 2022 school year after ac.care made the “enormously challenging” decision to wind down the service.

Among those acknowledging the celebrations was ac.care children’s services director Meri Daniel, who has worked for the organisation for 20 years, soon after its commitment to providing childcare in Murray Bridge began when ac.care was asked by the community to be the auspicing body for the service 21 years ago.

Over that time, she witnessed the importance of offering tailored and culturally-appropriate

care to vulnerable children and supporting parents to work, secure employment, study or benefit from respite from their caring roles.

“I’ve seen families come back around with the next generation over that time and also many staff complete training and continue to work at the creche or contribute to the broader community in health or education thanks to the training provided as part of their employment,” Ms Daniel said.

Early childhood educator Alma Wilson was among the Aboriginal staff to gain an industry qualification while working at the creche and contribute as part of the care team.

The centre models best practice in Aboriginal-specific child care and provides opportunities for children to experience local language, a nutrition program, natural play environments, links with other community based programs and cultural experiences focused on the Ngarrindjeri nation on which the creche operates.

“We connect with the community and celebrate culture every day,” Ms Daniel said.

This focus on culture is treasured by ac.care’s senior Aboriginal advisor Kathy Rigney.

“Sharing language, knowledge, stories and history with our children is important,” Ms Rigney said.

“It is great to see the kids speaking some of the language and singing in Ngarrindjeri.”

Ms Rigney’s own son was cared for at the creche almost 20 years ago when she needed a suitable childcare place for her child while she pursued employment opportunities.

“I love working and family were too far away to babysit for me, so it was great to have the creche available,” she said.

“I have so much respect for the service as an Aboriginal creche and the staff that work there.”

Ms Daniel explained the centre went beyond childcare to providing broad support for vulnerable families, including connection to other services.

This includes the creche providing a bus service to help families with limited transport access the centre, as well as take children on



MEANINGFUL WORK: Early childhood educator Amy enjoys guiding children through learning activities at ac.care’s Minya Porlar Creche.

excursions into the community. ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said the creche had provided a culturally supportive environment.

In an announcement regarding the closure in September 2022, Mr Maddocks said the not-for-profit organisation had sought to secure

the long-term future of the creche for many years, but its ongoing operation had proven unfeasible.

Mr Maddocks said this was due to the building not complying with new government standards for commercial childcare and challenges recruiting qualified staff in a competitive environment.



DEDICATED: ac.care children’s services director Meri Daniel has contributed two decades to leading delivery of high quality early childhood care at Minya Porlar Creche.

He said the growth of alternative childcare services in the community had also reduced the need for the service.

The creche was operated by ac.care with funding from the Department of Employment, Skills and Education for children for decades.

Youth Support and Development program helps vulnerable *young people achieve*

Helping vulnerable young people achieve and participate in the Murraylands community is the core driver of ac.care's Youth Support and Development program.

Carrying a "life first" focus, the program was introduced in 2021 and is for young people aged 15-19, but can be extended to people aged between 10 and 25 in some circumstances, especially those disengaging from education, family and community.

The program attracted nine clients in the 2021-22 Financial Year, with one client starting driving lessons during that period through its empowering focus.

Some joint group activities were held with the STAY program, while one-on-one work was still available to clients.

One client exited the program during this period to move

interstate to be with family in what is a positive outcome.

The program is welcoming of all young people, including those who are:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Identify as LGBTIQ+
- Young parents
- Young carers
- Living with a disability and not eligible for NDIS funding
- From areas of identified disadvantage.

"The service focuses on supporting young people to build capabilities and experience to successfully engage in social, educational and employment opportunities," ac.care Youth Support and Development worker Hayley Abbondandolo said.

"As a youth worker, I guide, mentor and support people to set their own individual goals and work through barriers to achieve them," she said.

"The service also aims to connect young people to their community, so they thrive personally and socially."

Youth Resilience Scholarship

Young people from the Limestone Coast, Murraylands and Riverland have benefited from ac.care's Youth Resilience Scholarship.

The scholarship is not about academic achievement, it is about resilience, and is an early intervention and prevention strategy to keep young people from becoming homeless.

It is for young people who are doing it tough, yet who want to



YOUTH SUPPORT: A client speaks to ac.care Youth Support and Development Program youth worker Hayley Abbondandolo as part of a video promoting the service. Scan the QR code to see the full video

hang on to or get back into their education.

The scholarship program was formed through ac.care's acknowledgement that a sound education is one significant factor upon which a young person's long

term future can be developed.

The scholarship aims to provide encouragement, financial assistance and support to young people living in rural and regional community so they will continue with existing education and

training or undertake new opportunities.

It is the generosity of our donors who want to make a difference, and indeed do, that enables us to give these scholarships.

Find out more at accare.org.au

Communities for Children looks ahead after busy year

THE Communities for Children Murraylands team secured many achievements throughout the financial year.

This included the innovative Stories Through Song partnership program being recognised in South Australian Children's Week Awards presented in October at Government House.

We also hosted a National Children's Week tea party at Mannum and raised awareness of National Child Protection Week through distribution of resource toolkits to Murray Bridge kindergartens.

Our community engagement even extended to coordinating the parent room at the 2021 Murray Bridge Show.

While a suitable replacement was not found until the start of February 2022, remaining staff continued on until the part-time employee accepted alternate employment, again leaving a challenge.

Thankfully, the program is now serviced by a full team of 2.6FTE, which is manageable for the workloads.

A large part of the financial year was spent on community engagement,



service mapping and research to help write a thorough and robust Strategic Plan as it shapes the next four years of the service.

The main administrative and facilitation activities included:

- Mentoring Community Partners (CP).
- Maintaining the local Murray Mallee Children and Families Network and information dissemination.
- Continuous improvement with surveys pre/post when required

or when new activities come into place.

- Promotion of CFC Murraylands, particularly at local community events.
- Facilitating and information dissemination for the Murray Mallee Children and Families Network.
- Providing the best possible programs and activities that best support the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Community engagement and consultation.
- Service mapping and data.
- Development of the new Strategic Plan.
- Significant events such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and National Children and Families Week.
- Data entry including training, follow up and recording so that the data is correct.
- Attending other network meetings such as the Murray Bridge Safe Network and when capacity allows the Mid Murray Family Connections network.
- Navigating the challenges of COVID



New look for community service

Communities for Children Murraylands launched its revamped logo in March 2022.

Produced by Dynamic Media Creation (DMC), the logo's colours represent Moorundi - the Murray River - which is at the heart of the Murraylands region.

Handprints represent the

community supporting children coming together to create a hopeful sun rising over the river.

And at the heart of Communities for Children are the babies and young people from all backgrounds and cultures who we hope enjoy and benefit from the activities provided.

The launch of the new logo coincided with the establishment of a new Facebook community group, which regularly promotes news and events to around 200 people.

Communities For Children Murraylands is facilitated by ac.care, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and delivered by our Community Partners Centacare, Taillem Bend Community Centre and Playgroup SA.

Community and learning

Supporting community
and social wellbeing



Community Connections program to connect people and overcome social isolation

NEW opportunities will be provided to help isolated country people connect and build positive relationships in the Riverland, Limestone Coast and Murraylands through ac.care's Community Connections program.

"It is estimated one in ten people experience social isolation and that figure is likely to have grown significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," ac.care Community Connections manager Sue Watt said.

"It is well-known social isolation has a negative impact on people's mental and physical health, along with their ability to participate in the community.

"We want to help connect the disconnected by providing opportunities to bring people together in positive ways."

Community Connections will be delivered by ac.care as a community partner in the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, replacing



CONNECTING: ac.care Community Connections support worker Deanne Swift with the new Community Connections brochure.

the former Home and Community Care Program.

"Community Connections is all about supporting people to

increase their independence in the home and build stronger social and community connections," Ms Watt said.

"Strong social connections can improve quality of life and provide better health outcomes."

The program was developed by the Department of Human Services South Australia and won the Public Sector Values category in the 2021 South Australian Premier's Excellence Awards.

Community Connections involves short-term support for up to 12 weeks and help connecting people with longer-term support where required.

Support may include facilitating opportunities for people to become involved in local community activities, find new support groups, meet neighbours or benefit from extra help at home.

South Australians aged 18 to 64 who are not eligible for Federal Government programs such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and My Aged Care

to connect people



CONNECTING: ac.care Community Connections manager Sue Watt (second left) with ac.care Community Support Workers Deanne Swift, Cindy Koolmatrie and Sheila Millington are working to connect people in the Murraylands affected by isolation or loneliness to local support groups, community activities, social opportunities and other services.

may qualify for the program.

Priority will be provided to Aboriginal people aged 18 to 49, people from linguistically diverse cultures, unpaid carers, individuals

who are financially disadvantaged and those living in disadvantaged locations and communities.

Visit Community Connections for more information.

20 years of care in the Millicent community

A DIVERSE human services centre established in Millicent two decades ago when a need was identified for local support for vulnerable people continues to serve the community.

Twenty years of service delivery at the ac.care Millicent Community Centre was recently celebrated with clients invited to express what the centre meant to them, prompting praise for the support they received in the “welcoming” and “safe zone” from “kind staff”, some of whom have been employed at the site since it was established.

Continuously adjusting to match community needs, the centre has grown to offer diverse services, from emergency relief to family support, supervised child contact, personal and financial counselling, as well as serving as a Service SA and Services Australia agency and base for outreach by other organisations, including employment and housing providers.

“It’s great to be able to provide services in Millicent so people can



FINANCIAL SUPPORT: ac.care financial counsellor Melissa Snook.

just pop up the street, instead of having to go to Mount Gambier, especially when transport is an issue,” said centre manager Evonne Lambert, who notched up 20 years of service at the celebration after being part of the centre since its foundation.

“We do have a lot of housing issues in the Millicent area and people can visit the centre to access services and payments or even just obtain some emergency food supplies – it’s

great that ac.care has been able to continue the service in the town for 20 years.”

Mrs Lambert said the centre was extensively supported with diverse donations, including food from Millicent supermarkets and restaurants, together with contributions from service clubs, Wattle Range Council and the broader community, to increase its impact for vulnerable people.

She said the longevity of staff service demonstrated their commitment as they embraced ac.care’s mission of providing support for country people to have safe homes, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships.

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said local people providing local services was vital to identify and deliver community needs.

“ac.care is incredibly proud of the service that has been provided to the Millicent community over the last 20 years,” he said.

“Our dedicated staff team with over 80 years of experience serving this community continues to provide



a range of services, often saving people a 100km round trip to Mount Gambier – it is important people can access local services close to home, particularly when we know there are limited transport options.”

Wattle Range Council member John Drew said the work of organisations like ac.care supporting the community was vital.

“You just have to look around the centre and you can see what they provide to help people who are battling and those who just don’t have access to a bank or need help with paperwork and government forms – the range of services is just amazing,” he said, thanking staff, volunteers and ac.care on behalf

of the council for supporting the community.

Retiree Lynn Fisher was involved in establishment of the community centre and managing the service for the first five years.

“Staff, including some still here today, along with volunteers, spent weekends painting the interior of the building once the rooms had been constructed and we had a lot of fun,” she said.

“It’s a wonderful community and I think still being here 20 years later speaks for itself ... the staff are friendly and happy and it’s just a wonderful service for the local community of Millicent and surrounds.”

Client comments about the Millicent Community Centre

A vital service for communicating with Centrelink and other services for older residents unsure of using electronic communications.

This place is a safe zone. Friendly and very helpful to people like me.

Caring, helpful, kind. A place which can help when anyone needs.

Being in the situation that we are in, the helpful staff from the Millicent Community Centre have been so great in helping out with paperwork and advice in other decisions we make.

All of you guys should have wings. Sincerely thank you.

Resource helps *families and educators* support children

ac.care's Communities for Children Murraylands distributed toolkits to Murray Bridge kindergartens featuring resources to help families, teachers and support staff working with children impacted by domestic and family violence.

The Safe From The Start project was developed by Dr Angela Spinney of Victoria's Swinburne University in partnership with The Salvation Army in Tasmania.

Resources in the kits include children's books focused on feelings and emotions, stories for children who have witnessed violence or trauma, books on bullying, puppets and more.

"To treat all Australian children fairly, we need to make sure every family and community has what kids need to thrive and be healthy," ac.care Communities for Children manager Teresa O'Brien said.

The resources were distributed as part of National Child Protection Week, which runs from September 5 to 11 with the theme "every child, in every community, needs a fair go".

"Children deserve to be safe and able



BUILDING A SAFE COMMUNITY: ac.care Communities For Children Murraylands staff conduct activities during National Child Protection Week while visiting kindergartens to share resources for families and educators.

to thrive and National Child Protection Week is an important opportunity to promote the value of children and young people by focusing attention on the prevention of child abuse and neglect."

The project is a collaboration between the Rural City of Murray Bridge Community Safety, Wellbeing and Inclusion Program, supported by the Murray Bridge SAFE Taskforce, which promotes a safe, vibrant and thriving community.

Funded by the Federal Government, the Communities for Children program supports children and families through community partnerships to deliver programs and services to children aged up to 12 years old.

More information can be found on the Communities for Children Murraylands Facebook page, ac.care.org.au or by calling the ac.care Murraylands Centre on 8531 4900.

Limestone Coast Homelessness Service clients *join in Fringe fun*

CLIENTS of ac.care's Limestone Coast Homelessness Service shared in the colour and festivities of Fringe Mount Gambier 2022.

Street circus performer Mat E Tricks took his startling stunts to the grounds of the Mount Gambier Community Centre, entertaining clients of ac.care's homelessness service and other programs.

"It was really wonderful to host a top Fringe performer at our site and for clients to have the opportunity to enjoy the show in a space where they feel supported, comfortable and welcome alongside staff and friends they have made at the centre," Limestone Coast Homelessness Service spokesperson Bec Hogg said.

"A huge highlight was when our client Damien joined in with Mat-E-Tricks to showcase some stunts of his own to help entertain everyone at the centre, demonstrating his skill and confidence."

The visit was part of the FringeOUT initiative, extending Fringe performances into community spaces, also including aged care homes and schools, as part of an outreach program to take



SHARING TALENT: Friend of ac.care Damien was inspired by Fringe performer Mat E Tricks to share some of his own juggling and circus skills. Picture: TIM ROSENTHAL

entertainment beyond usual venues as part of the festival.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to provide entertainment to visitors to the centre, which we are sure provided a welcome diversion for some people from hardships they may be experiencing and are working to address through our support," Bec said.

"It's been a very challenging time for many people with the lack of affordable

housing in Mount Gambier and isolation resulting from COVID-19, so to bring people together to socialise safely and enjoy the show, as well as learn about our services and support, was really wonderful."

A highly experienced street performer, Mat E Tricks began his career over a decade ago and has refined his talents on the streets of his home-country New Zealand, Australia and England,

Our people and culture

Supporting community and social wellbeing



ac.care launches *bold vision* for change with Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

OUR Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan launch in May was a significant milestone as ac.care set an agenda of three years of bold work to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The document has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and was launched on May 25 with a community event at ac.care's Berri centre ahead of a follow-up celebration at the Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre as part of National Reconciliation Week.

Local Aboriginal and broader community representatives, fellow service providers and staff of the homelessness, foster care and human services agency gathered for the Berri celebration, which also featured unveiling of a large mural by First People of the River Murray artist Daniel Giles.

The Stretch RAP maps out ac.care's

commitment to working towards genuine reconciliation, being guided by and providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and walking together to generate change.

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said the Stretch RAP reinforced the need to understand truths of Australia's past, ongoing impacts and broad action needed to repair damage.

"ac.care's commitment to reconciliation is reflected not just in this document but through our actions every day," he said.

"We have come a long way over the past few years and together have made progress in achieving our commitments through our previous Innovate RAP, but we decided we need to stretch ourselves to do more."

ac.care is the only non-national not-for-profit in South Australia to set RAP commitments at a Stretch level.

Riverland HIPPY coordinator, Yorta

Yorta and Wemba Wemba woman and chairperson of ac.care's reconciliation action group for the region Katisha Jackson said she was proud to lead delivery of the Stretch RAP after years of working with Aboriginal families as part of the community.

"Having a strong passion and commitment to working with our First Nations community, backed with experience, allows me to guide the agency's focus on ensuring all ac.care people appreciate the importance of being culturally safe within the workplace and ensuring we are building respectful relationships within the community," she said.

ac.care Stretch RAP champion Jason Wallace said there had been a comprehensive process across the organisation to set goals, stretch the organisation and expand its vision to create the document.

He said the "reconciliation map" for ac.care provided measurable outcomes to ensure the



UNITED: ac.care's Riverland reconciliation action group chairperson Katisha Jackson, chairman Rick Fisher, artist Daniel Giles, chief executive officer Shane Maddocks and Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan champion Jason Wallace launch the ac.care Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan in Berri.

organisation's deep commitment to reconciliation is backed with meaningful and ambitious action.

Mr Wallace said ac.care did not only want to generate change and opportunities in the country South Australian communities in which it operates, but be part of Reconciliation Australia's national advocacy for change and encouraged other organisations to adopt

reconciliation plans.

"We hope our commitment contributes to the broader movement to create a fairer society, a fairer nation, where everyone is respected, has opportunities to thrive and the value of our First Nations culture, the oldest surviving culture in the world, is recognised, respected and enshrined at the heart of our nation's foundations and identity," he said.



Scan the QR Code to access ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

Boandik mural celebrates culture and connection at Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre

A BOLD Boandik artwork has been installed on ac.care's Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre to celebrate National Reconciliation Week.

The event on Tuesday, May 31, followed the launch of ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan in Berri on May 25, outlining three years of bold action to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Local Aboriginal and broader community representatives, fellow service providers and staff gathered for the unveiling of the mural by Boandik woman Bonnie-May Saunders.

Installation of the artwork is the final stage of a revamp of the Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre design to ensure it is welcoming of all and pays respect to Boandik people as the traditional owners of

the Mount Gambier region.

"We want to respectfully acknowledge we work on land that always was and always will be Aboriginal land," ac.care Stretch RAP champion Jason Wallace said.

"Here in Berrin, Mount Gambier, this land is Boandik land."

ac.care worked with Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation to incorporate Bunganditj language and artwork at the centre.

"We have welcomed opportunities to engage appropriately with Burrandies and install this bold artwork highlighting the deep connections that remain across this region for the Boandik people, beautifully illustrated by Bonnie-May," Mr Wallace said.

Mount Gambier-based Boandik, Meintang, Gunditjmara, Ngarrindjeri and Narrungga woman Ms Saunders said she was proud to see her work, My Home, displayed on the Mount Gambier Family

Relationship Centre windows.

"My Home as it is represented in this piece is full of beautiful colours," she said, explaining the combination of lush green land and extensive water.

"In the centre we have a symbol which represents people sitting and talking together, which emphasises we have a great facility here in Berrin with the Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre, which keeps families connected and links them with supports," she said.

"I hope that people look at my piece and remember the importance of culture, families and most of all being connected to Boandik Country."

Mr Wallace said the artwork installation was one step in the three-years of action outlined in the organisation's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

"We want to be an advocate that stands up, speaks up and



UNITED: ac.care trainee James Cooper, Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan champion Jason Wallace, ac.care Limestone Coast Reconciliation In Action group chairperson Lynette Heiming, Boandik artist Bonnie-Mae Saunders, ac.care chairperson Rick Fisher, Mount Gambier Mayor Lynette Martin, Boandik Elder Aunty Michelle Jacquelin-Furr, ac.care senior Aboriginal advisor Kathy Rigney and chief executive officer Shane Maddocks.

makes a difference," he said, explaining ac.care sought to go beyond generating change and opportunities in the country South Australian communities in which it operates to be part of

Reconciliation Australia's broader national advocacy for change.

"Together we can make a difference and create a society we can all take pride in where everyone belongs and has equal opportunities

to participate freely and with equity in all areas of Australian life," he said.

ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan is available at accare.org.au.

Thank you to *our dedicated* ac.care volunteers

VOLUNTEERS are vital in delivering ac.care's mission of ensuring all country people have a safe home, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships.

Formed in Mount Gambier 35 years ago, the "country specialist" agency combines the efforts of staff, community partnerships and dedicated volunteers to make a difference in people's lives.

"We are a community-based agency working with the people around us as part of their community, which shines through in the way volunteers commit to our mission and support us in contributing to improving the lives of country people," ac.care chief executive Shane Maddocks said.

"Thank you to our volunteers, who all make a wonderful contribution to expanding our capacity to make a difference."

The agency's volunteers include more than 200 remarkable individuals, couples and families who share their homes with over 370 children as foster carers across eastern regional South Australia, supported by ac.care staff.

"These dedicated volunteers, who



DEDICATED: Mount Gambier Community Centre volunteers Annette Cassidy, Cheryl Tilley and Cathy Mangan help with various duties to support vulnerable people.

open their hearts and homes to vulnerable children in need of positive relationships truly transform young lives," Mr Maddocks said.

"Sadly, we always need more volunteers to accommodate the growing number of children and young people in state care, but are forever grateful for the efforts of our valued network of carers and the

commitment they make."

Volunteers also contribute to ac.care in many ways beyond foster care, supporting financial counselling and relief services across the regions.

The homelessness programs delivered out of the Mount Gambier Community Centre are backed by a dedicated support team.

Some volunteers gather weekly at

"Our volunteers are an instrumental part of the agency and we simply couldn't provide the range of services, programs and support we do without them"

- ac.care chief executive Shane Maddocks



SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY: Mount Gambier Community Centre volunteers Annette Ford and Cassie Gill.

the centre to help pack and distribute emergency food relief hampers to assist people doing it tough in Mount Gambier.

Meanwhile, other volunteers share their skills and knowledge, providing opportunities for social engagement and empowering community members to secure tenancies or invaluable employability skills.



HERE TO HELP: Volunteer Trish McQuade is a valued ac.care volunteer.

Volunteers also help with reception duties through to general maintenance at the Millicent Community Centre, which delivers a diverse range of services to the community, not only providing ac.care's emergency and family support programs, but also acting as a Service SA and Services Australia agent for the town.

A further team of volunteers at

Kingston South East also distribute emergency relief packages, as well as coordinating a second-hand shop to raise funds to support ac.care's valued programs.

"Our volunteers are an instrumental part of the agency and we simply couldn't provide the range of services, programs and support we do without them," Mr Maddocks said.

ac.care joins *Racism. It Stops With Me* national campaign

WE believe everyone is entitled to feel they belong.

But sadly we are aware racism, including in country South Australian communities, continues to prevent people from equal opportunities and outcomes.

Monday, March 21, marked the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, also known as Harmony Day.

This year, at ac.care we focused throughout Harmony Week on stepping up our commitment to challenging racism and promoting equality, engaging staff at all levels across our regions, sites and services.

As part of this commitment, we became supporters of the national Racism. It Stops With Me campaign, headed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Since 1966, March 21 has marked the anniversary of the 1960 police killings of 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa.

It reflects a recognition by nations around the globe of the ongoing



need to actively address and eliminate racial discrimination.

As we reflected on the significance of the date, we committed to learning more, listening, challenging racism in our workplaces, communities and homes and creating a society that is fair and equal for all.

Together, we all recognise racism can only be addressed by all of us learning and taking action.

Racism. It Stops With Me.

@aushumanrights

#ItStopsWithMe #IDERD #HarmonyDay



Scan the QR Code to access ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

ac.care *community* networks

ac.care participates in and works across many community networks to ensure our clients, country communities and dedicated staff have a strong voice.

We are passionate about the work we undertake across various service areas, with many employees going beyond their regular duties to represent ac.care and the interests of clients on advisory groups, multiple-agency networks and other collaborative committees.

From national and state groups, such as Anglicare national and South Australian bodies, through to regional roundtables on topics ranging from community building to

youth resilience, domestic violence and emergency relief, our team is committed to advocating for positive outcomes for vulnerable country people.

Partnering with Aboriginal-controlled organisations and other agencies with missions that align with our own, as well as peak bodies such as the South Australian Council of Social Services, increases our joint impact.

We are proud to be part of and support NAIDOC committees and other organisations dedicated to fostering reconciliation and provide the expertise of our staff to contributing across the community, beyond our diverse programs.

volunteers guide governance

Board Members

Rick Fisher (Convener)
Emma-Kate Griffiths (Limestone Coast Representative)
Paul Duka (Treasurer)
Tony Wright (Local Government Representative)
Vacant (Community Representative)
Dr Ken Pidgeon (Fleurieu Peninsula Representative)
Ruth Daws (Riverland Representative)
Louise Nobes (Adelaide Hills Representative)
David Hill (Anglican Parish Council Representative)
Shane Maddocks (CEO, Non-Voting Member)

Sub-Committee Members

Mike Bleby OAM
Craig Nisbet
Madalena Vellotti
Gillian McGinty
Rosie Schellen



LEADING GOVERNANCE: ac.care chairman Rick Fisher.

Decades of *making a difference* in community celebrated

Loyal ac.care employees were recognised during the financial year for long service, with seven staff accounting for 95 years through 20, 15 and 10 year milestones.

Millicent Community Centre co-ordinator Evonne Lambert and Murray Birdge-based children's services director Meri Daniel were both celebrated for 20 years of dedicated service to the agency, making significant contributions which have benefitted their communities.

Ms Lambert was joined by fellow Millicent colleague Homelessness and community services client service officer Janette Stringer, who reached 15 years of service.

Both Ms Lambert and Ms Stringer work at the George Street facility, providing outreach initiatives for the diverse country specialist organisation, including homelessness and emergency relief support.

Ms Lambert's foray into the community-centred role started prior to ac.care's involvement with the site, with a chance opportunity

the first step into what has been two decades of outstanding commitment.

"I was doing a TAFE course and my lecturer was the Millicent agent at that time," Ms Lambert said.

"She asked me to cover for her while she was away on a business trip.

"From there I volunteered full time for a year, then worked one paid day a week and continued to volunteer for the rest of the week."

Ms Lambert's involvement blossomed from there as she worked her way up and now manages the George Street facility.

She now lists the faith shown in her by previous leadership as a career highlight that spurred her on to become centre coordinator.

Ms Lambert has also witnessed significant change and evolution over the 20-year period, listing the increase in staff numbers and diverse programs as the most notable changes.

"This has allowed the agency to target gaps in the community that are needing support," she said.

When asked what elements of her work kept her loyal to ac.care, Ms Lambert's response was straightforward.

"Being able to make an impact on the community, and clients knowing that if we can't offer the services they are needing, we will steer them in the right direction," she said.

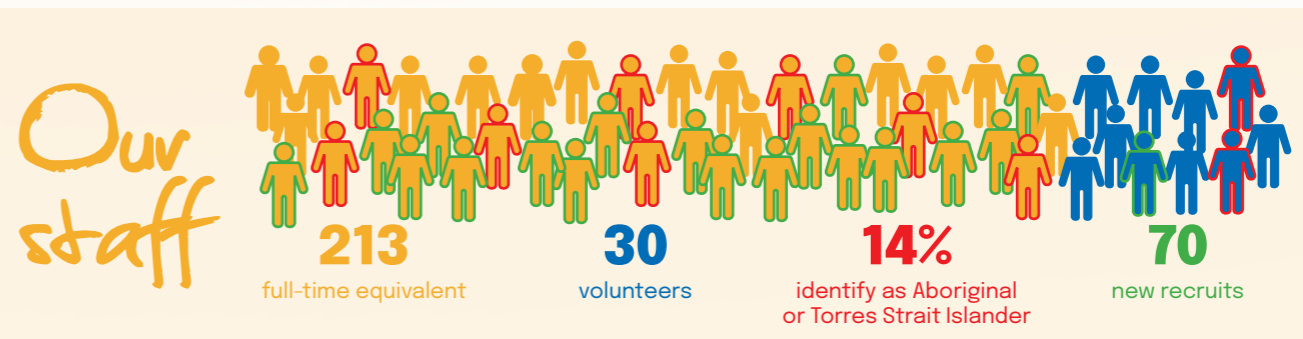
"Also working with a great team of staff and volunteers."

Across the broader ac.care team, four staff were acknowledged for a decade of service each, including:

- Foster Care Services Limestone Coast program manager Sherri Winter.
- Senior administration and facilities officer Hannah Carruthers
- Youth and child residential care worker Rebecca Walsh
- Youth and child residential care worker Tegan Doecke
- A further 21 staff were recognised for five years of service.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Aboriginal people now represent around 14pc of ac.care's staff.



Community support increases our impact

Supporting community and social wellbeing



Thank you to all our supporters

CREATING opportunities for vulnerable country people requires a community effort and we are grateful to be supported by many organisations, businesses and individuals.

We sincerely thank you for your time, donations and care.

We thank our foster families for their care and commitment.

We thank our volunteers for their time and energy.

We thank our staff and board members for their dedication.

And we sincerely thank our supporters, from financial donors to those contributing valued goods, for increasing our impact in providing opportunities for life for country people.

We are lucky to have a broad pool of supporters, which includes businesses across the Limestone Coast, Riverland, Murraylands and beyond.

Our foundations are in the Anglican church and many churches and auxiliaries across the Diocese of The Murray, along with church and religious groups of other denominations and faiths, are proud and pivotal supporters of our work.

Many community and service clubs and organisations have made diverse contributions throughout the year, along with government bodies and other agencies, schools and other education facilities, the media, individuals, not-for-profit bodies and philanthropic trusts.

Together, your contributions increase our impact so we can do more to ensure country people have safe homes, positive relationships and enough money to live on.

While we have not listed all sponsors, we hope the stories in this report provide a snapshot of the diverse ways the community has supported our work.

With your help, we can continue to provide vulnerable South Australians with immediate crisis support, such as short-term accommodation, nutritious meals, clothes, blankets



and other basic essentials when they need your support the most.

Your contributions also enable us to help these individuals and families secure long-term solutions to avoid being in crisis again.

Thank you for your contributions, care and support.

Enduring recycled fashion event raises vital funds

AN AFRICAN Safari theme took over the St Martin's Lutheran College gym at the 2021 Recycled Runway event in Mount Gambier, raising \$10,000 for ac.care.

Recycled Runway continued to attract a large audience in its ninth year after being named the 2021 South Australian Community Event of the Year.

The growing number of participants included many members of Mount Gambier's refugee community thanks to the involvement of the Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre.

Recycled Runway highlights the value of recycling discarded textiles into new outfits, reducing landfill, while providing a unique annual fundraiser for ac.care.

The event is an opportunity for people to showcase their creativity and sewing flare using recycled items from the Anglican Belltower Op-Shop, creating vibrant new outfits with materials sourced from random bags of second-hand items.

Despite ongoing uncertainty regarding COVID-19, the committee



hosted a successful event showcasing local talent and encouraging skills development of participants.

The event was held at the St Martin's Lutheran College gymnasium after growing significantly from the

first instalment in 2013 as a one-off event at the Mount Gambier Library during Environment Month.

Many local businesses and community members supported the function to help secure the significant fundraising result.

2022 Support Homeless People Luncheon cancelled

MAJOR regional fundraising event the Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon was cancelled for 2022 after continual postponements since 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Event committee chairman Barry Stafford said ongoing restrictions meant proceeding on the rescheduled date of April 8 was not practical due to uncertainties regarding venue capacity, interstate travel and potential isolation for participants if someone attended and later tested positive to COVID-19.

"The impact of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, including continued restrictions on trade and hospitality venues, forced our hand," he said.

"This would have been the fifth time we would have had to postpone the luncheon and it is with greater disappointment that we have instead decided to not schedule a new date and instead cancel for 2022.

"This is sad not only for the committee, regular sponsors and guests, but for ac.care, which relied



on the fundraising to support the organisation's local services to individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness."

However, he said he hoped a new committee would be formed to relaunch the luncheon, potentially for a 2023 date, subject to COVID-19 restrictions easing, with major sponsors agreeing to continue their support.

"The Support Homeless People

Luncheon is unique, supported by businesses and individuals for the benefit of a vital charity started in Mount Gambier," he said.

"The event grew every two years, starting in 2012, and raising a total of \$340,000 over four luncheons, with the 2018 event alone raising \$125,000 in a day thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, guest speakers, ticket holders and other supporters."

"The luncheon has been our key fundraising event for a number of years, providing a significant boost to our finances to deliver beyond our government-funded services, build our capacity and increase the impact and diversity of our support for vulnerable people"

- Support Homeless People Luncheon event committee chairman Barry Stafford

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said the loss of the luncheon from the fundraising calendar for 2022 would impact on the agency's capacity in supporting people impacted by homelessness.

"The luncheon has been our key fundraising event for a number of years, providing a significant boost to our finances to deliver beyond our government-funded services, build our capacity and increase the impact and diversity of our support for vulnerable people," he said.

"This funding has allowed us to develop and trial innovative programs such as the Tenancy Education (TED) program, which has supported many people to successfully apply for and maintain private rental housing."

Mr Maddocks said the luncheon proceeds also helped fund a specialist worker supporting young people as they moved from out of home care to living independently.

He thanked the committee and diverse supporters of the luncheon and expressed hope the event would return in future.

Meanwhile, Mr Maddocks urged



COMMUNITY FOCUS: Support Homeless People Luncheon chairman Barry Stafford, committee members Robin Reid, Anne Hinkly-Tyler, Di Ind and Astyn Reid and ac.care marketing and communications manager Jason Wallace launch the 2020 event, which was sold out but continuously postponed due to COVID-19 before the 2022 cancellation.

anyone interested in supporting the organisation to contact ac.care or donate to become a one-off or ongoing online donor.

"Our mission is to ensure country people have safe homes, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships," Mr Maddocks said.

"Sadly, country people need our support more than ever due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the housing availability crisis in regional

areas putting home affordability and security out of reach of an increasing number of vulnerable people.

"Support from the community, including contributors to significant fundraisers like the luncheon, really boost our capacity to increase our impact for regional South Australians, help people overcome crises and build hope for a better future."

ac.care and Lions clubs unite to show gratitude for foster carers

LIONS clubs helped ac.care share gratitude to foster carers on behalf of the community for the remarkable contribution they make to supporting young lives.

When COVID-19 concerns prevented Christmas events being held to bring carers, children and ac.care staff together to mark the end of the year, Lions clubs answered the call for donation of their iconic Christmas cakes to provide to carers.

These were distributed to carers by the ac.care staff who support them throughout the year, along with gifts for children in their homes.

More than 130 Christmas cakes were donated as part of a joint contribution in the Limestone Coast from the Lions Club of Blue Lake City Lioness, Lions Club of Mount Gambier and Lions Club of Mount



MURRAYLANDS SUPPORT: Elycia Noel from ac.care's Murraylands foster care services team receives Lions cakes and hampers from Murray Bridge Lions Club members Hylton Moritz and John Fielder to distribute to foster carers as a gesture of thanks from the community for their dedication to supporting children. The Lions Club of Murray Bridge City also donated cakes and Lions contributed to our broader Christmas appeal for the Murraylands. Businesses including Murray Bridge Woolworths, Big W, IGA Westside and Bakers Delight also contributed to ensure enough cakes were provided for foster carers in the region.



LIMESTONE COAST SUPPORT: Donation of more than 130 Christmas cakes from the Lions Club of Blue Lake City Lioness, Lions Club of Mount Gambier and Lions Club of Mount Gambier City helped our Limestone Coast foster care team share gratitude on behalf of the community to thank carers for the vital support they provide to children. The cakes were presented by representatives of the three clubs to ac.care staff, including Mikayla, Nick and regional foster care manager Sherri Winter.

Gambier City.

Remark Lions Club contributed more than 30 cakes for Riverland foster carers and the Lions Club of Murray Bridge and the Murray Bridge City Lions Club also both contributed, with businesses

helping make up a shortfall in availability of Christmas cakes due to COVID-19 impacting on supplies.

The support allowed for ac.care to distribute cakes in all regions, together with toys donated from

various appeals, including a wishing tree hosted by the Mount Gambier and District Community Bank, donations from national charity Good 360, which diverts surplus goods from retailers to charities, and other contributors.

Community helps ac.care brighten Christmas for families

NEW toys, vouchers and food hampers were provided to families across the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, including hundreds of children to ensure they woke up to something special on Christmas day, thanks to broad community support.

"We are grateful for the many community appeals to help us support vulnerable people at Christmas after the number of people registering for assistance has increased, with many impacted by job losses and other pressures due to COVID-19," ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said.

More than 190 families, including hundreds of children, received gifts distributed at the Mount Gambier Community Centre thanks to support from across the community, including the Mount Gambier Mayor's Community Christmas Appeal, Mount Gambier Family Truck Show and many businesses that hosted giving trees, together with churches, schools, service clubs and individuals.

Gifts distributed at the centre were



COMMUNITY APPEAL: More than 500 toys and other gifts were donated through the appeal at Big W in the Mount Gambier Marketplace and collected by ac.care to deliver to vulnerable families in time for Christmas. Pictured are ac.care's Sarah Alfradj, Big W Mount Gambier manager Kim Coulson and Mount Gambier Marketplace marketing executive Paula Creasey

lovingly packed into Christmas sacks made and donated by the Pine Tree Quilters, adding a creative festive flair to the appeal.

A joint agencies appeal in Murray Bridge supported more than 230

families, including hundreds of children, with Mount Gambier and Murray Bridge Marketplace and BIG W customers among many significant and diverse contributors to appeals in both regions.



SPREADING SMILES: ac.care foster care placement support worker Anne-Maree Irvine and regional foster care manager Sherri Winter collect gifts from Mount Gambier and District Community Bank staff after the branch hosted a wishing tree to collect gifts for children in foster care.

Clients registered with ac.care also benefited from appeals in the Riverland.

Connie and her daughter were among hundreds of people to collect hampers for their children and grandchildren at ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre in the lead-up to Christmas.

Connie said she had relied on JobSeeker after being made redundant, but said there was increased pressure on people with limited incomes at Christmas.

"It has been a struggle going from having a long-term job for many years

to being unemployed, but ac.care has helped, initially with emergency housing when we returned to Mount Gambier to be close to family and throughout the past year when we have needed assistance with food and other support," she said.

Meanwhile, the Mount Gambier and District Community Bank, Lions clubs across the regions, Good360 Australia and other supporters, including diverse businesses, helped ac.care provide extra toys for children in foster and residential care at Christmas, along with special cakes as a gift of gratitude from the community



TREASURED SUPPORT: ac.care foster care manager Sherri Winter (right) with members of the Pine Tree Quilters during the recent handover of 17 hand-made quilts to be donated to children in foster care on the Limestone Coast, along with 139 Santa sacks and 10 small drawstring bags

to dedicated foster carers.

"It is truly appreciated and makes a difference by reminding vulnerable people they are valued at this time of year and that support is available, while helping families extend their budget to cover essential costs and not miss out on having gifts for their children and something special for the table at Christmas - thank you from us all at ac.care."

Online donations to accare.org.au/donate also boosted ac.care's support to vulnerable people at Christmas and helped increase the agency's impact throughout the year.

Community takes awareness campaign to the streets

REGIONAL homelessness issues were highlighted on Mount Gambier's main street as the community walked in support of people affected by the region's housing crisis during the annual Pride In Your Stride march.

Organised by Uniting Communities and ac.care, the National Homelessness Week walk concluded at ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre, where participants learnt more about challenges faced by people in the region and the services available to help.

"A person who is experiencing homelessness faces a daily dilemma as when they wake up they must move from where they are and walk to find food, services and support," said Ruby's Reunification Therapeutic Youth Service senior coordinator Sharon Gray of Uniting Communities.

"The walk across Mount Gambier to ac.care symbolised this daily journey with the community coming together to support those facing homelessness and show that nobody should ever have to walk alone."

ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark said ac.care continued to see an increasing number of people seeking support since JobSeeker coronavirus supplements were wound back.

"Sadly, vulnerable people have seen a perfect storm of government payments being reduced at the same time as house prices are going up across the regions, which translates to higher rent, a lack of affordable options and hardship for people as they are priced out of their homes," Ms Spark said.

"We are doing all we can to support those facing or at risk of homelessness, but people are being left with nowhere to go as the affordable accommodation and social housing is just not available to help keep people housed."

Ms Spark said the coronavirus supplements showed lifting people out of poverty was possible through greater government support.

She said increased investment in social housing was vital, along with a sustainable increase to JobSeeker, which would have long-term benefits

by allowing people to secure independence and a more hopeful future.

"Investing in social housing has not kept up with demand for many years and sadly the current situation is increasingly pricing people out of tenancies and the market, with emergency short-term options filled to capacity and nowhere available for people to move on to, except for a long waiting list," she said.

Ms Spark said people from all backgrounds were seeking ac.care's support, including single parents and couples with children, women who had left domestic violence situations and single job seekers.

The number of people seeking support has continued to rise since the end of June. Sadly, 14pc of the people affected by homelessness and supported by ac.care last financial year were aged under nine years old.

Meanwhile, 32pc of clients were affected by mental health issues and 66pc sought support due to a housing crisis.

"While the buoyant property

"Investing in social housing has not kept up with demand for many years and sadly the current situation is increasingly pricing people out of tenancies and the market, with emergency short-term options filled to capacity and nowhere available for people to move on to, except for a long waiting list"

- ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark

market is positive for people who already own homes, it is putting housing affordability out of the reach of more people and support must be increased to protect the vulnerable as services are already being pushed to the limit." Ms Spark said.

"As the cost of housing goes up, so does the rate of homelessness and government safety nets must strengthen to help those being priced out of homes as we can't afford to allow more people to be pushed into homelessness."

A free barbecue lunch was also provided by the Rapid Relief Team as part of the event as service providers, clients and the community gathered in the grounds of ac.care to connect and learn about local services.

Ms Gray and Ms Spark expressed gratitude on behalf of both organisations for the broad support from the community, Rapid Relief Team and businesses, including people who donated shoes in line with the theme of the event to be provided to clients of ac.care, Ruby's and Uniting Communities.



UNITED: Ruby's Reunification Therapeutic Youth Service senior coordinator Sharon Gray of Uniting Communities and ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark highlight the need for more social housing to address the lack of affordable homes in Mount Gambier.

ac.care drives communication through online initiatives

While much of ac.care's transformational work takes place face-to-face, social media and technology remains a key component of the agency's communication strategies.

From Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, through to our own website at www.accare.org.au, ac.care has been able to build and engage with audiences across regional South Australia and beyond, helping to increase our impact on the everyday lives of vulnerable residents.

By being active in the digital world, ac.care can ensure members of the public can access important service information and be informed about upcoming events, key announcements and increase support to the agency through donations.

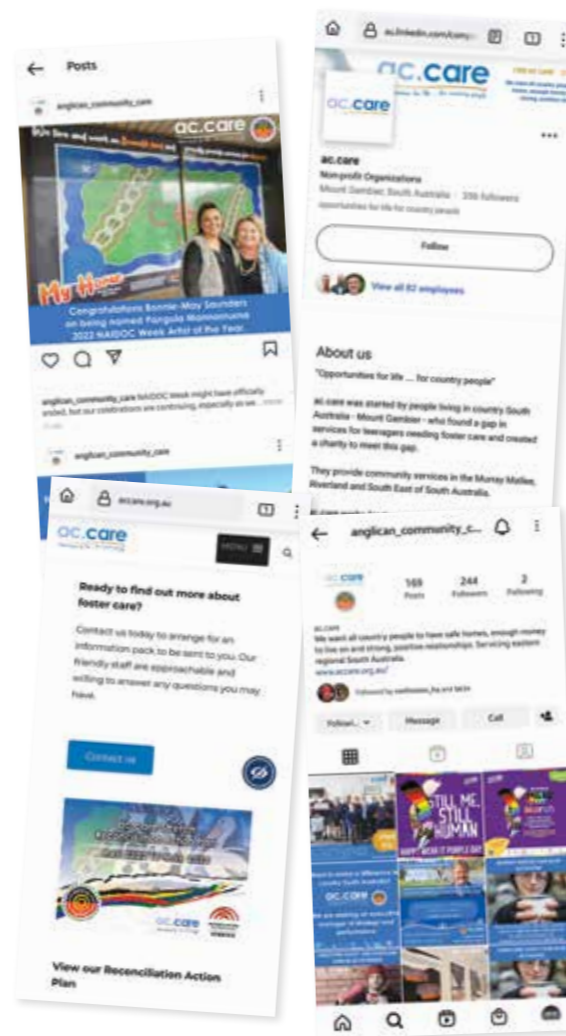
The varied online platforms also allow the agency to respond at short notice to major developments, including helping the agency inform the community when a Code Blue has been declared or directing vulnerable people to appropriate services in their time of need.



Importantly, ac.care can also promote the positive outcomes achieved through its varied programs, including celebrating the commitment of foster carers to providing a safe and nurturing home

for children in need.

You can follow the latest news and updates from the agency by searching for ac.care on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, or by bookmarking www.accare.org.au.



ac.care funding partners

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Country Arts SA

Department for Child Protection SA

Department of Education and Training SA

Department of Human Services SA

Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure SA

Australian Department of Social Services

Good Shepherd

Legal Services Commission

SA Health

South Australian Housing Authority

Uniting Communities

Wyatt Benevolent Institution

Treasurer's report

Given the challenges of navigating COVID-19 over the past two years, ac.care continues to perform strongly financially.

The 2021-22 financial year has returned another positive financial result, with a strong surplus of \$1.6m being recorded. The surplus was significantly more than what was anticipated due largely to a change in accounting standards surrounding revenue recognition. Specifically, the changes have impacted the accounting treatment of revenues from grants paid in advance. In total \$1.4m of grant income has been recognised as income immediately rather than recognised on a gradual yearly basis.

The 2021-22 financial year has also been a busy and transformational year for both the ac.care audit and risk committee and finance team, where a number of strategic financial changes have been implemented including:

- The development and implementation of the treasury management policy.
 - Tendering, assessment and appointment of Ord Minnett as ac.care's investment fund advisor.
 - The purchase and finance of a house in Berri and preparation for the purchase of another property in Mount Gambier.
- The purchase of Berri property for



\$450,000 for the purposes of operating residential care service headlines a significant change to the balance sheet and a strategic board directional change. The financing of the house was undertaken through Anglican Fund SA (AFSA) where a two-year fixed interest

rate loan for the full amount of property was negotiated. Further, as part of the loan negotiations a \$200,000 endowment fund was also invested with AFSA.

The investment and partnership with AFSA has also enabled ac.care to implement its treasury management policy, which saw an immediate change in investing in fixed term deposits with banks to investing with AFSA on a monthly basis, with a negotiated interest rate above Reserve Bank Australia rates. In the later part of the financial year, work commenced with investment of cash funds with an investment fund advisor. After a thorough assessment process Ord Minnett were selected with investment fund transfers anticipated to commence early in the 2022-23 financial year.

Overall, the final financial position of ac.care continues to be financially sustainable and the actions and strategies implemented this year have and will continue to transform the financial operations of ac.care.

I would like to thank both the audit and risk committee and the ac.care finance team for their efforts this year in assisting the development of new strategies and their support to my role as treasurer.

**Paul Duka,
Treasurer**

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income - Year ended June 30, 2022

The full versions of these statements are available from our website accare.org.au

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
INCOME			
Revenues from fees and charges	3	392,927	214,054
Grants and contributions	4	23,385,030	21,087,361
Interest income	5	20,383	25,115
Investment income	6	9,644	-
Other income	8	279,647	199,818
Total income		24,087,631	21,526,348
EXPENSES			
Staff benefit expenses	9	17,158,191	16,084,712
Supplies and services	10	3,961,381	3,606,842
Depreciation and amortisation	11	1,105,424	993,866
Finance costs	12	148,787	153,751
Net loss from the disposal of non-current assets	7	1,384	27,340
Fair value loss from financial assets	13	28,958	-
Other expenses	14	33,598	7,708
Total expenses		22,437,723	20,874,219
NET RESULT		1,649,908	652,129
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE RESULT		1,649,908	652,129

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of financial position - Year ended June 30, 2022

The full versions of these statements are available from our website accare.org.au

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	15	8,751,036	7,723,474
Receivables	16	72,253	216,914
Other current assets	17	398,469	150,318
Total current assets		9,221,758	8,090,706
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Financial assets	18	171,042	-
Property, plant and equipment	19	3,542,221	3,379,359
Intangible assets	20	90,987	85,734
Other non-current assets	21	9,990	7,360
Total non-current assets		3,814,240	3,472,453
TOTAL ASSETS		13,035,998	11,563,159
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Payables	22	250,281	436,499
Lease liabilities	23	457,988	671,052
Loan borrowings	24	17,285	-
Staff benefits	25	2,489,832	2,110,230
Other current liabilities	26	512,121	1,195,616
Total current liabilities		3,727,507	4,413,397
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease Liabilities	23	1,889,991	1,990,430
Lease Liabilities	24	420,295	-
Staff benefits	25	534,224	345,259
Total non-current liabilities		2,844,510	2,335,689
TOTAL LIABILITIES		6,572,017	6,749,086
NET ASSETS		6,463,981	4,814,073
EQUITY			
Other reserves		2,028,529	818,785
Retained earnings		4,435,452	3,995,288
TOTAL EQUITY		6,463,981	4,814,073
Contingencies	27		

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of changes in equity - Year ended June 30, 2022

The full versions of these statements are available from our website accare.org.au

	Other reserves \$	Retained earnings \$	Total \$
BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2020	842,777	3,319,167	4,161,944
Net result for 2020-2021	-	652,129	652,129
Transfer to / (from) reserves	(23,992)	(23,992)	-
Total comprehensive result for 2020-21	(23,992)	676,121	652,129
BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2022	818,785	3,995,288	4,814,073
Net result for 2021-2022	-	1,649,908	1,649,908
Transfer to / (from) reserves	1,209,744	(1,209,744)	-
Total comprehensive result for 2021-22	1,209,744	440,164	1,649,908
BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2022	2,028,529	4,435,452	6,463,981

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of cash flows - Year ended June 30, 2022

The full versions of these statements are available from our website accare.org.au

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash Inflows			
Receipts from fees, charges and grants		25,677,242	23,786,190
GST recovered from the ATO		628,961	406,701
Interest received		23,406	32,227
Payments to suppliers and employees		(21,424,968)	(19,825,065)
GST remitted to ATO		(2,407,373)	(2,140,138)
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		2,497,268	2,259,915
Cash flows from investing activities			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		-	21,364
Investment income		4,790	-
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(808,017)	(168,171)
Purchase of Finance Asset		(200,000)	-
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities		(1,003,227)	(146,807)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Loan borrowings		450,000	-
Payment of lease liabilities		(894,362)	(869,396)
Repayment of borrowings		(22,117)	-
Net cash provided by / (used in) financing activities		(466,479)	(869,396)
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		1,027,562	1,243,712
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		7,723,474	6,479,762
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	15	8,751,036	7,723,474

Carbon accounting - our environmental commitment (2021-2022 financial year)

Emissions Source	Consumption Units	Consumption	Base Year 2010-11 CO2-e (tonnes)	2021-22 CO2-e (tonnes)	Proportion of total inventory (%)	Reduction from Base year (%)
Direct Emissions (Scope 1)						
Petrol - vans and company cars	kL	46.43	215.69	107.03	32.44%	
Distributed Natural Gas	GJ	238.76	8.31	12.27	3.72%	
Diesel - company cars	kL	4.84	0.51	13.06	3.96%	
LPG - Bulk heating	GJ	54.12	0.04	3.30	1.00%	
Autogas - vans and company cars	GJ	0.00	5.98	0.00	0.00%	
Total Scope 1			230.53	135.66	41.12%	-41.15%
Indirect Emissions (Scope 2)						
Electricity usage	kWh	308,960.96	216.84	108.14	32.78%	
Total Scope 2			216.84	108.14	32.78%	-50.13%
Optional Emissions (Scope 3)						
Waste (municipal collection)	m3	162.65	18.65	36.43	11.04%	
Electricity (distribution losses etc.)	kWh	308,960.96	41.45	21.63	6.56%	
Flights (staff travel)	km	75,215.00	35.34	15.65	4.74%	
Water - reticulated supply	kL	2,906.25	2.58	3.28	1.00%	
Petrol (extraction, production etc)	kL	46.43	17.08	5.72	1.73%	
Natural gas (extraction, production etc)	GJ	238.76	1.65	2.53	0.77%	
Diesel - (extraction, production etc)	kL	4.84	0.04	0.67	0.20%	
LPG -Bulk heating (extraction, production etc)	GJ	54.12	0.00	0.19	0.06%	
Autogas (extraction, production etc)	GJ	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.00%	
Total Scope 3			117.33	86.11	26.10%	-26.61%
Total Scope 1 + 2			447.37	243.80	73.90%	
Total Scope 1+2+3			564.69	329.90	100.00%	
Reduction Measures and Offsets						
Carbon Credits			0.00	0.00		
FINAL TOTAL			564.69	329.90		-41.58%
FTE			136.00	183.98		
tCO2-e /FTE			4.15	1.85		

THE GREENHOUSE GAS PROTOCOL:

Note that in preparing this inventory reference has been made to the accounting standards and principles identified in the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, produced by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the World Resources Institute. Also used were the National Greenhouse Account (NGA) Factors October 2020. These resources are available from the Australian Government climate change website www.climatechange.gov.au

Direct emissions (scope 1) are as a result of the organisations activities within its organisational boundaries.

Indirect emissions are generated in the wider economy as a consequence of the organisations activities, and are physically produced by the activities of another organisation. Electricity consumption is designated scope 2 and all other indirect emissions as scope 3.

You can *help increase* ac.care's impact

DONATIONS to ac.care help increase our impact in ensuring country South Australians have safe homes, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships.

While many of our core services are funded by government, we deliver other initiatives from our own fundraising to provide further support for vulnerable people.

Our diverse team is uniquely placed to support people when they need your help and can ensure donated funds assist country South Australians to overcome crises and build hope for a better future.

Your donations increase our impact to make a greater difference in the lives of country people.

This can include:

- Support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including meals and other basic necessities through to special programs in our community centres.

- Homeless Youth Resilience Scholarship grants to support young people to pursue education and development opportunities.
- Support for young people to avoid or overcome homelessness and build a more hopeful and independent future.
- Financial counselling to help people avoid a crisis.
- Other initiatives to help meet gaps in services identified by our staff and clients.

ac.care projects have been started with generous donations from the community and your support can help ensure they continue.



Scan the QR Code to make a donation and support ac.care

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

- You can make a one-off or ongoing tax deductible donation by visiting accare.org.au/donate
- Call (08) 8724 5400 from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday to donate by phone for credit card or electronic funds transfer.
- Nominate ac.care for a bequest in your will so that your legacy supports our work with vulnerable country people.
- Donate by making a cheque payable to "Anglican Community Care Incorporated" and sending to ac.care, PO Box 1842, Mount Gambier, SA, 5290. Please include your name, email and postal address so we can send a tax receipt and thank you.

ac.care helps *change lives*



people were supported by our Mount Gambier counselling team's family violence specialists



children had safe contact with their parents at our children's contact service in Mount Gambier



families in the Limestone Coast were supported through ac.care with mediation



people accessed a range of homelessness services offered at ac.care



Aboriginal children accessed early childhood education and care at Minya Porlar creche



rounds of toasted sandwiches were served at the Mount Gambier Community Centre

ac.care

opportunities for life ... for country people
est. 1986



LIMESTONE COAST Mount Gambier Head Office

Phone (08) 8724 5400
70-72 White Avenue, Mount Gambier SA 5290
PO Box 1842, Mount Gambier SA 5290

Mount Gambier Community Centre

Phone (08) 7725 3000
22-24 Ferrers Street, Mount Gambier SA 5290

Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre

Ph 1800 880 913 or (08) 8721 3500
1 Helen Street, Mount Gambier SA 5290
(Cnr Helen Street and Bay Road)

Millicent Community Centre

Phone (08) 8735 5700
57-59 George Street Millicent SA 5280
PO Box 378, Millicent SA 5280

MURRAY MALLEE AND ADELAIDE HILLS ac.care Murraylands Centre

Phone (08) 8531 4900
29 Bridge Street, Murray Bridge SA 5253
PO Box 2090, Murray Bridge SA 5253

RIVERLAND

Berri

Phone (08) 8580 5300
5 Kealley Street, Berri SA 5343
PO Box 1345, Berri SA 5343

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