

ac.care

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



ANNUAL REPORT | FY 2022 - 2023



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.

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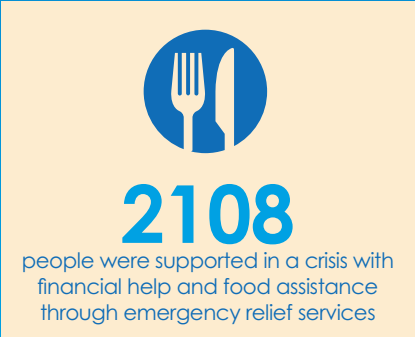
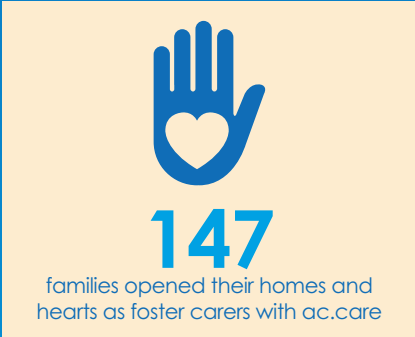
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ac.care helps *change lives*

regional care snapshot

2022-2023



Board convener's report

Across our region and within our diverse range of communities, people are calling on our services at rates which never seem to diminish. The lasting effects of COVID-19 and the flooding of the River Murray have left people even more vulnerable to the current difficulties of severe housing shortage and the ever-increasing cost of living.

Many people are anxious about the future and none more than our Indigenous people who face uncertainty with the October referendum.

ac.care and the Australia wide Anglicare community support the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We will continue working towards closing the gap with a Voice to Parliament, treaty, and truth-telling. Our thoughts and prayers are with all our

Indigenous people at this time.

I extend the board's sincere thanks to our hardworking and dedicated teams in our offices, and out working with those for whom we care. It's been a hard year, however, there are many good news stories and our research suggests we are delivering well to meet targets. Staff report that they feel satisfaction from knowing that their work makes a big difference to the lives of many. However, there is a growing feeling that we are holding back a great tide of ever-increasing demand, and that we make little progress with solving community problems at their root cause.

Last year I alluded to a change in direction for ac.care with a new vision and priorities. Throughout our history we have sought to help individual people and families reconstruct their lives, reconnect to their communities, aspire and



plan for a better future, and to walk with them along the way. To achieve this, we must bring about change within our communities which goes beyond the accommodation and care programs, counselling, emergency relief and assistance services for which we are directly funded.

Our new strategy reaches

well into the future with a carefully staged plan to weave communities together, break cycles of intergenerational disadvantage and increase aspiration, optimism, opportunity and hope for country people.

ac.care has gathered an enviable team of executive leaders, managers, administrators and service deliverers. We have a highly competent Board of Directors who are experienced, skilled, and drawn from a diversity of sectors, communities and regions. Our organisation is financially and administratively stable and secure. We believe now is the right time to step up as leaders in our industry to affect transformative community change.

In July this year we hosted our first Support Homeless People Luncheon since pre-COVID-19 and it was again very well supported. Business and

industry in Mount Gambier has already indicated a strong desire to partner with us more directly, and in new and creative ways. This is a great start to our strategic aim of helping our communities interconnect, focus resources, build capacity and grow resilience.

We see disturbing evidence that children begin their education on "the back foot", and that many do not recover or catch up with learning. We aim to make sure that children start school prepared for learning on their first day, and that all are supported to learn and to succeed, then to contribute fully to community life.

I thank all who have supported ac.care this year. I encourage you to find new ways of working with us to weave our communities together in support of each other, and especially our children.

**Richard Fisher GAICD
Convenor - ac.care**

Personal stories shared at major charity event

A MAJOR charity event at The Barn Palais raised close to \$128,000 to boost the work of ac.care to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The 2023 Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon, traditionally held every two years, returned to the venue after five years of delays caused by COVID-19 restrictions.

Around 430 people, representing many businesses, along with civic and community leaders, from across the region, Adelaide and interstate, welcomed the return of the networking and charity luncheon on July 28, with Premier Peter Malinauskas adding to the appeal as the event guest speaker.

Among the special guests at the high profile event were clients who generously shared their lived experiences and how ac.care has supported their personal journeys. **Kelly's story features on page 18.**



Scan the QR code to view a full wrap up of ac.care's 2023 Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon

Chief executive officer's report

ac.care delivers great services to thousands of country people every year. We work every day to support people to have a safe home, enough money to live on and strong positive relationships. Our staff demonstrate every day that their work is more than a job – it is a personal commitment to working hard to improve the lives of people who are struggling or to support children and young people to grow up healthy, happy and with hope for a strong future.

Our volunteers give us their time, their skills and experience and their compassion for their fellow human beings. We are all better off when community members step forward to offer a hand whether it be in supporting our

programs, or bringing a child into their home through foster care.

But, the need continues to grow. A housing crisis combined with increasing costs of living mean that safe homes are harder to keep and to find.

Our staff do work miracles and together with the community are often able to achieve the impossible. Sadly though, there are many people we are unable to help to find that longer term answer to their needs.

We have seen increasing demand for our financial counselling and emergency relief programs with more and more people also collecting donated food to be able to feed their family. We receive more and more requests to care for children and young people who are not able to continue living with their current family.



Our new Strategic Plan has a strong focus on getting in early aiming to prevent issues before they become a crisis.

We will continue to advocate for increased funding for prevention and early intervention support and will be adapting our services to increase this focus where we can.

We cannot achieve significant change unless we all work together and this is why we will be working more closely with our communities to develop local responses and solutions. It will take all of us – government, services, business, churches, community groups and caring individuals working together to challenge the systemic and multi-generational cycles of disadvantage that impact too many people in our communities.

The closure of the Minya Porlar Creche was a very difficult decision to make. Unfortunately, the limitations of the building meant that we were unable to continue to meet the high standards that we and our funders expected when providing quality care to young children.

We have continued to grow in other areas however with new or expanded funding for

community centres in Millicent and Berri complementing our existing centre in Mt Gambier; new Community Connections programs connecting people in our communities to each other and to other services and ongoing funding for our major services in residential and foster care, homelessness support, family services, financial counselling and emergency support. Aboriginal services to young people and families and expanding our work in partnership with other organisations.

Our work with Aboriginal people and communities continues to be a significant focus for us underpinned by the commitments in our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

Cultural bus tours led by local elders were an important way for staff and volunteers to learn about the truth of the impact of colonisation in the

places we live. Listening to the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, staff and communities has always led to better outcomes and we hope that everyone in our communities will open their hearts and listen more deeply.

Our staff and volunteers are our greatest asset. They often go above and beyond what should be expected because they are committed to ensuring that vulnerable people receive the support they need. I want to sincerely thank them for the inspirational work that they do.

The foster families we support also need special mention as without them, we would not be able to keep over 200 children living with a family in their country community. Thanks also to our board, donors and the many supporters in our communities.

Shane Maddocks
GAICD, Chief Executive
Officer, 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.

We are part of our community and achieve more by working together.

ac.care strategic direction

The Weaving Stronger Futures Together 10-year vision for ac.care was released in 2023. It sets out our strategy for disrupting cycles of disadvantage and strengthening the fabric of our community.

Our strategy at a glance

ac.care remains committed to working with communities to support children, young people and adults facing disadvantage, trauma and crisis, but we are aspiring to a bolder and more collaborative approach.

ac.care aims to prevent family breakdown and provide early support to disrupt cycles of disadvantage and help people thrive in their communities.

We believe in taking a whole-of community, collaborative approach that is evidence-informed and driven by the needs and experiences of those who require support.

By working together with our communities and building trust and cooperation over the next 10 years, we aim to create stronger

futures for everyone.

We want all country people to feel safe, supported and a sense of belonging.

An inclusive approach to work together

We want our communities to be fairer, safer and more inclusive and invite you to join us in ensuring there are opportunities for all to thrive in country South Australia.

Our long-term vision and strategy not only provides direction for the future of ac.care, but also our communities, working together to build on our strengths and create a better future.

It is informed by decades of experience

supporting vulnerable children, families and individuals.

We have witnessed the increasing demand on services and know we need to do more, as part of our communities, to break cycles of disadvantage that prevent people reaching their potential.

Our strategy is guided by many voices. These have come from within our organisation, along with people we support, partner organisations, our communities, government agencies and the growing evidence within the sector that points to a future of working together on big issues within our communities to generate lasting change. In essence, our strategy takes us back to the basics of working together to address seemingly

unbreakable cycles of disadvantage.

We will continue to deliver our diverse services, from crisis support through to early intervention and community development, but with increased focus on preventing issues before they arise and getting in earlier to support people who are struggling. But we can only achieve these goals by collaborating with our community, particularly when we all want to achieve a common goal – we urge you to join us in delivering our strategy and weaving a stronger fabric of support to allow all people to thrive in your community.

You can find the full version of our new strategic plan and long-term vision at www.accare.org.au/about/annual-reports/



Scan the QR code to download the full version of the Weaving Stronger Futures Together strategic plan



ac.care services directory

- ABORIGINAL SERVICES**
 - HIPPY – Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters empowering parents to become their child’s first teacher
 - 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
- 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

- COMMUNITY AND LEARNING**
 - Adult learning
 - ac.care Berri Community Centre
- HOMELESSNESS**
 - South Australian Country South Homelessness Alliance Lead

- ac.care Murraylands Centre
 - Community Connections
 - Millicent Community Centre
 - Mount Gambier Community Centre
 - Personal Success Coaching
- OUT OF HOME CARE**
 - Foster carer recruitment, assessment, training and

- 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

- support

 - Occasional, emergency, respite, long and short-term foster care
 - Staffed 24/7 youth and child residential 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
 - Children in Focus Information Sessions
 - Children’s Contact Service, providing a safe, neutral place for changeovers and supervised contact
- Specialised Community Referral
 - Specialised Family Violence Service
 - Family Advocacy and Support Services
 - Family & Relationship Counselling
 - Youth Resilience Scholarship
 - Family Dispute Resolution for parenting and property matters
 - Family Reunification
 - Strong Families, Strong Communities
 - Intensive Family Support
 - Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre
 - Communities for Children Murraylands facilitates programs delivered by our Community

Partners – Playgroup SA, Tailm Bend Community Centre and Centacare, evidenced-based programs – PEEP LTP Playgroup @ Callington, Drumbeat music wellbeing program, Parent Child Mother Goose, Seasons for Growth, Tuning in to Kids, Circle of Security, Bringing up great kids, evidenced-informed programs, Dads Net, Celebrate Connection Coorong, Murray Bridge, Mid Murray, Karoonda, Callington, Family Support, Murraylands Business Awards, Child safe communities, Family Fun Time



Homelessness and financial support

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



Kelly's story: Uncertainty the *hardest part* of homelessness

KELLY says the “unknown” is the hardest part of homelessness.

“I had never been in that situation before, so it's pretty hard,” she explains.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kelly and her then-partner had well-paid jobs and structured lives. Yet a series of setbacks saw them camping on the beach at Robe with their children because they had nowhere else to go.

“It's a hard fall from the top to the bottom,” she says.

The couple had hit rock bottom after losing their jobs and rental property. Then, when they were forced to motel-hop during the summer tourist season, their savings ran out.

“We camped for a couple of nights over New Year's Eve and New Year's Day and then we suddenly realised we had nowhere to go,” she says. “It was bad – everyone was scared, so finally we went to ac.care.”

“We camped for a couple of nights over New Year's Eve and New Year's Day and then we suddenly realised we had nowhere to go. It was bad – everyone was scared, so finally we went to ac.care.”

ac.care staff were able to organise a week of accommodation, along with food and clothing.

“It was just fantastic – we had a whole week where we didn't have to stress out,

wonder where we were going and what we would eat,” Kelly says. “We would not have survived that week without them at all – they gave us clothes, we had food, we had warmth and we had a roof over our heads.”

After her relationship with

her partner broke down, Kelly eventually secured a private rental for her and her young son, but they had to vacate when the owner wanted to renovate. Even though she was working up to 50 hours

a week, it was not enough to secure another property, with the coastal town experiencing an ongoing accommodation shortage.

“I moved in with family and yeah, that got pretty hectic and a bit too much as I didn't have a great relationship with one of my family members and so it forced me to move into a motel in Robe, which was astronomical at \$500 a week rent,” she says.

“It's awful being forced to live somewhere you don't particularly want to – it's hard and I sheltered my son a lot from the actual situation.”

Exhausted from working such long hours to pay for her accommodation, Kelly was reluctant to phone ac.care again, but realised that she

needed help.

“There are always people worse off, you know what I mean? I was lucky to have the roof over our heads, but we needed a rental, we needed a house,” she explains.

Kelly said it made a big difference being able to explain her situation to a case worker.

“You're actually speaking to a real-life person and they will meet with you face-to-face too,” she says. “The worker I spoke to at ac.care was fantastic – they make it feel like it's not your fault.”

Kelly says ac.care has since given her “more than she could ever imagine”.

“I've always donated and

then to be on the other end of the stick is pretty bad, but life's good – it's a lot better,” she says.

“There's still that fear of not knowing how long I am going to have my rental for, but I've got a full-time job, my son is in a fantastic school and we've got support – ac.care is one of those support networks

PERSONAL ACCOUNT: Kelly shared her story at the 2023 Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon to explain the impact ac.care had on her life.



that you know you can always fall back on.

“They save lives mentally, physically and financially.”

Kelly has shared her story to raise awareness of the lifechanging impact of asking for help from local services and hopes her journey inspires others to find stability and support in their lives.

ac.care is a specialist homelessness service provider for the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands, supporting people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

To find out more or seek assistance visit accare.org.au or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

Exhibition *empowers people* who have experienced homelessness

"I FEEL better because I know it is not only me who has been through this and I'm proud of myself for coming this far."

Those were the words of a young man aged in his 20s at Murray Bridge's 2022 National Homelessness Week event.

He shared personal contributions to the Reflections on Homelessness – Our Future Can Still Be Bright exhibition about how ac.care helped him move on from 15 years of housing instability, including periods of homelessness.

The exhibition, hosted by ac.care at Murray Bridge Town Hall on August 2, provided an opportunity for people who have experienced homelessness to express themselves by sharing photographs, written reflections and recorded audio statements, offering unique insight into their lives.

Another participant said he felt "uplifted" by the way his photographs and comments were featured in the exhibition.

Wiping back tears at times, he quietly explained his story and the meaning behind his images to community members who wandered through the exhibition.

The man's pride in sharing his story and personal growth was clear in the way he wandered outside to encourage passers-by to explore the display.

The exhibition attracted more than 50 people for the one-day display and was supported with games and activities provided by Communities for Children Murraylands and Together 4 Kids and free soup served to all visitors by the Rotary Club of Murray Bridge.

ac.care chief executive officer

Scan the QR code to see the online exhibition



Shane Maddocks said the exhibition was a valuable opportunity to raise awareness during National Homelessness Week and gain insight into personal experiences.

"The bravery of people who have shared their stories is incredible after we have come to know these individuals through our services," he said.

Mr Maddocks said the exhibition reflected the importance of connection with family, friends, pets, culture and community and the strength of people to focus on hope rather than desperation during challenging times.

"When you read the stories you gain unique insight into the tragedy of many people's lives often due to circumstances beyond their control and instances where society has let them down," Mr Maddocks said.

He thanked the Murray Bridge community for supporting the work of ac.care and said addressing homelessness required a united approach.

"There is a lot of work to be done

in country communities to address homelessness and that often starts with agencies like ac.care working to keep people in their homes to avoid homelessness," he said.

"But we also need more affordable accommodation and increases to JobSeeker to lift people out of poverty, as well as local solutions developed with the community to support people in times of need."

He backed the National Homelessness Week theme of "to end homelessness we need a plan" and called for broad action to address the underlying causes of homelessness.

"This exhibition shares a message of hope and the importance of the community wrapping around people who need a helping hand – care and compassion for people who are struggling is an important part of who we are as a society," he said.

The exhibition was officially opened by Rural City of Murray Bridge Mayor Brenton Lewis, who reflected on the increasing number of people facing housing stress due to the rising cost of living and lack of affordable homes.

"When you read the stories in this exhibition, you have to wonder where these people would be today without the support of ac.care," he said.

"It does not take a lot in life, especially in these times, to find yourself in upheaval, but it is inspiring to see the messages of people



WORKING TOGETHER: Rural City of Murray Bridge Mayor Brenton Lewis, ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks and ac.care Murraylands Homelessness Service manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage launch the Reflections on Homelessness – Our Future Can Still Be Bright exhibition.

finding stability in life to have the ability to hang in there."

Development of the exhibition was led by Murraylands Homelessness Service manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage and staff at ac.care.

"We provided opportunities for people to contribute in different ways to share their experiences, which led to some really raw emotions," she said.

Ms Hiripitiyage appeared on local radio in the lead-up to the exhibition, joined by one

of the featured artists.

The young woman shared her story about moving to South Australia at the age of 5 with her parents, who were unable to secure accommodation and slept in their car under a bridge for months.

"We had to think about where we would sleep, what we would eat and when we could shower," she said.

"But ac.care supported my family to find accommodation and my parents have now been in public housing for 20 years and are not struggling anymore – it shows that when families and individuals work with services there can be positive outcomes."

She shared a photograph of her shoes, expressing her view people should not judge others on their appearance as they have not "walked in their footsteps".

Ms Hiripitiyage said the exhibition touched on many themes, such as showing how family dynamics and violence can be a trigger for homelessness and how difficult situations can lead to addictions and health problems.

"There are some very striking and thought-provoking images and statements, with the pictures capturing the personal perspectives of people's experiences, which can be very touching," Ms Hiripitiyage said.

"We are grateful people we have worked with welcomed the opportunity to express themselves and thank them for their contributions to an exhibition that shared important messages with the community."

Innovative *Studio Purpose* supports youths at risk of homelessness

PARTNERS in an innovative project to provide housing and intensive support to transform the lives of youths at risk of homelessness have started development of a second block of apartments in Murray Bridge to double the capacity of the initiative.

ac.care is leading the bold initiative and continues to support four young people living in the first block of Studio Purpose apartments after the keys to the building were handed over in 2021 following a broad community effort to convert a disused South Australian Housing Authority duplex into four apartments.

A second property has

now been made available by the housing authority and conversion of a second disused building into four apartments started in the 2022/23 financial year with volunteers, donors and suppliers of construction materials and skills stepping up to the community construction project.

Once complete, ac.care will work with partners to support eight youths aged 15-23 who receive an independent income across the four self-contained and fully-furnished apartments that will be available thanks to the community effort to transform these buildings.

Taking a housing-first approach, the Studio Purpose project will extend beyond provision of independent accommodation for vulnerable

youths to include broad support to help young people reach their potential.

South Australia's branch of international non-profit

Habitat for Humanity, The Rural City of Murray Bridge and other private donors.

Habitat has a global mission to "bring people together to build

We are thrilled to be building on the success of the first phase of Studio Purpose and helping address the identified shortage of safe accommodation for young people in the area, but this is about much more than a warm bed and welcoming space, with a focus on health and wellbeing, education, development, connection and engagement.

ac.care Murraylands homelessness regional manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage

organisation Habitat for Humanity will drive the construction phase of the project thanks to the generous funding from Impact100 SA, Morialta Trust,

homes, communities and hope" and is working with the project partners and supporters from the community and business sector to convert the second

building after the success of the previous project.

"We are thrilled to be building on the success of the first phase of Studio Purpose and helping address the identified shortage of safe accommodation for young people in the area, but this is about much more than a warm bed and welcoming space, with a focus on health and wellbeing, education, development, connection and engagement," ac.care Murraylands homelessness regional manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage said.

The project is the result of strong cooperation between various organisations and government agencies after ac.care identified a worrying trend of young clients being unable to find suitable accommodation in the Murray Bridge area.

"This has contributed to some young people sleeping rough in inappropriate living conditions, adding further risk in the lives of vulnerable youths," Ms Hiripitiyage said.

The partnership involves ac.care, Believe Housing

BUILDING CHANGE: Murray Bridge volunteer Steve Brown and Habitat for Humanity volunteer Bob Martin with ac.care Murraylands homelessness regional manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage during a tour of the second Studio Purpose property, which is under construction.



Australia, South Australian Housing Authority, headspace Murray Bridge, Rural City of Murray Bridge and Habitat for Humanity.

Accommodation will be managed by Believe Housing Australia for young people

receiving an independent income, with an expectation tenants will engage with employment and education opportunities to boost their future prospects and wellbeing.

Project partners will deliver services to tenants via

agreements either through home visits or with external priority appointments and develop exit strategies to help youths transition from the units to reunification with families, private rental arrangements or other housing options.

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

TIMELY SUPPORT FOR UNEXPECTED CARER

A client aged in their mid-50s was receiving a JobSeeker payment, working part-time and coping okay financially.

This changed when his elderly father underwent surgery, resulting in ongoing pain, reduced mobility and a struggle to cope independently.

The client needed to visit their father daily and had to give up employment to help care for him, assisting with medication, cleaning, attending appointments and other daily tasks.

Due to giving up employment and urgently needing funds, the client had incurred debts for loans and did not know how he was going to pay for his pending

energy or phone bills.

When the client first met with a financial counsellor at ac.care, it was identified he was able to apply for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance to assist their elderly father.

The financial counsellor assisted the client to apply for the payment.

After assisting the client with some groceries, the counsellor also supported the man by setting up an affordable, ongoing payment plan for his energy account and getting an extension on his phone account so that he could have more time to pay the bill.

The loan providers were approached and debt waivers were applied for due to the change in life circumstances for the client.

One of these was granted while the other accepted an affordable repayment amount over a longer time to pay off the debt.

A short-term money plan was devised with the client to ensure that essential living expenses and payment plans were paid while the Carer Payment was being assessed by Centrelink.

Eventually the client received both the Carer Payment and allowance.

This now enables the client to care for their father without the requirement of looking for employment, coupled with additional income to cover costs of living.

The client was able to pay off their debts and move forward with a sustainable budget, in control of their finances.

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF FOR WOMAN FACING HARDSHIP

A woman engaged with our services in August 2022 as she had lost her partner and had been managing his mortgage, which had been left to her in his will.

This person then stopped working due to health issues and was relying on JobSeeker payments. JobSeeker alone was not enough to cover the mortgage and everyday expenses, which was compounded by the cost of running a house.

The client could access her superannuation in two years to pay the loan outstanding balance and the hope was to try and buy time until that point so she did not

have to sell the home.

Establishing Hardship was a hard process as the client was not on the loan and was only listed on the estate.

This needed to be escalated higher to get assistance.

The goal was to establish an affordable repayment plan, have the client apply for a Disability Support Pension to continue the regular repayments and then access superannuation when available.

Hardship for \$60 per fortnight was accepted after four months of back and forth.

Unfortunately, this was only in place for three months and ac.care continued to apply for hardship until it escalated again and this was granted ongoing as long as no payments were missed.

In September 2023 the woman was approved for a Disability Support Pension and has been able to commence regular repayments and will access her superannuation next year to pay out the remaining balance.

This is a great example of how sometimes our staff will need to work long-term with some clients to achieve a positive outcome.

Showcase puts *services in spotlight*

ac.care hosted a Limestone Coast Showcase on May 16 to highlight the social issues affecting the region, what services are available and how the community can support people in need.

Key staff working in family services, emergency relief and homelessness support, foster care and community partnerships gave insight into the current situation within the Limestone Coast and how ac.care is working to achieve positive outcomes.

Held at Mount Gambier City Hall, the two-hour presentation included guest speaker Glyn Scott, a domestic violence survivor who uses her

experience to support other victims.

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said the free, public event provided insight into the issues affecting country South Australians and helped educate residents on what support services are available in their area.

"ac.care is focused on early intervention and prevention services to support our mission for all country people to have a safe home, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships," Mr Maddocks said.

"We hope that by showcasing our agency's Limestone Coast services, we can help educate our community, learn from members of the

public and build on new and existing relationships we have in the region to increase our impact and break cycles of disadvantage."

Mr Maddocks said ac.care was currently embarking on engaging communities around a long-term vision and strategy focused on providing earlier support together to break cycles of disadvantage for vulnerable people.



Scan the QR code to watch the event

Foster and residential care

**Providing safe homes
for children in care**



Decades of care leaves *proud legacy* for Muir family

THE story of Murraylands couple Jock and Lynette Muir is one of generosity, kindness and true dedication to helping children in need. Sadly, Jock passed away in 2023 following a long health battle, but his story is shared in this report as a tribute to the family's commitment to young people.

Decades ago, they opened their home to foster children with the support of country agency ac.care, providing a safe and loving environment, and ultimately changing the course of the lives of young people in their care.

One of these children was Hudson, pictured on the front cover of this report, who was able to stay with his biological brother thanks to Jock and Lynette welcoming the two boys into their care.

"Most foster kids should stay as a family throughout the whole experience ... it just helps all round," Hudson said.

The Muir family home became a safe haven not only to Hudson and his brother, but also five other siblings who joined their household in addition to Jock and Lynette's own children.

"There's not many carers out there willing to do what Mum and Dad did and be able to take that many of the same family in," Hudson said, adding many other foster children visited the home for shorter stays over the years.

Children had plenty of room to play with animals and explore their surroundings at Jock and Lynette's small farm.

Playing with sheep, horses, buggies and even Hudson's pet ferret kept the young people occupied on the property.

While providing a loving foster home was rewarding, it also came with challenges.

"We have had the ups and downs like any other family really, but they have all been really good kids and I think living out here has helped - you don't have them wandering the streets and all the kids loved it out here on

the farm," Lynette said.

Today, the family includes many adults who have followed their own paths in life, many becoming parents themselves, after being raised in the Muir household.

But many remain connected to Lynette and visit when they can.

Hudson is 26 years old and has built a family of his own with wife Danielle, raising their two young children while managing a Monarto chicken farm and range of residential and farm properties.

Hudson credits the stability and success he has achieved in life to Jock and Lynette's unwavering support.

"They were just there a hundred percent of the way guiding me and the others through what life threw at us," he said.

Hudson was around 18 months old when he entered the care of the Muir household.

"He left here when he was in his 20s because he started off working on a farm



Scan the QR code to see a video of how Jock and Lynette opened their hearts and home as foster carers.

just up the road and stayed here," Lynette said.

For the Muirs, seeing the children they had cared for thrive and become successful adults remains a source of pride.

"When we had Hudson's 21st over at the hall his dad got up and gave a speech and actually said that without me and Lynette, he wouldn't have known where the kids would be or what they would have been up to - he

said he doesn't know how they would've got by without us looking after his two boys," Jock said.

Meanwhile, Hudson has reconnected with his birth mother after Jock and Lynette focused on maintaining contact where possible with birth parents for children in their care.

"She has openly said going into care was one of the best things that happened to us and doesn't resent Mum and Dad for that at all - I'm very grateful for how my life has panned out," Hudson said.

But he acknowledged there were not enough carers available today to provide the level of support he received in his childhood.

"You do hear stories of where other kids are today and have to wonder if they had a good, safe foster care structure, like what we had, hopefully they could have got to where I am today."

While the Muirs retired from fostering, they encouraged others to follow their example.

"People should put their hand up and at least have a go - it makes you feel good, I'm glad we did it and even today they are like brothers and sisters to each other, including our own kids," Jock said.

To find out more about how you could transform the life of a young person by joining ac.care's network of respite, short-term or long-term foster carers, visit accare.org.au/services/foster-care or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

Fleurieu couple's *lives transformed* by foster care

"HE'S DONE more for us than we have for him," says Fleurieu Peninsula foster carer Tony about the boy he has welcomed into his family with wife Laura.

It is a heartfelt endorsement of the transformational power of foster care, which has blessed the couple's lives and provided love, safety and support for their five-year-old foster child.

Laura strongly advocated for the couple – who were unable to have their own children – to become foster parents, but Tony concedes he took some convincing at the start.

After around a year of discussing the idea, Tony and Laura attended an ac.care foster care information session, contemplating what they had learnt before applying to join the carer network a year later.

"We couldn't have our own children and I knew we still had a lot to give a child,"

Laura explains, adding she did not want to give up on her hopes of raising a child in their home.

"I can't believe that I was hesitant about it at the start because the way I feel about him now and the bond that we all have is amazing," Tony said.

"You can't imagine life any other way."

After meeting all requirements through the approval process to become foster carers, Laura and Tony received a phone call to arrange a meeting with the then-three-year-old boy.

What was seemingly a typical Tuesday afternoon at a neighbourhood playground actually set the foundation of a life-altering journey for all involved.

Just days later Tony and Laura opened their home to the boy for a long weekend visit.

"He just waltzed in with his suitcase like 'yep, no problem'" Tony recalled.

The boy's confidence and independence continued to blossom

under the care of Tony and Laura, with the self-proclaimed "busy people" adapting their lifestyle to balance becoming foster parents alongside their respective full-time professions.

"With anything we're doing, he loves to help – he loves to be busy," Tony said.

Building relationships through camping, gardening and countless hours spent playing board games, the child has also become a much-loved member of the broader family.

"All our family and friends just treat him like he is part of the family," Laura said.

"My mum was a foster child, so it wasn't strange to our family and we love him like he is our own."

Laura encouraged anyone interested in learning more about foster care to attend an ac.care information session or contact the country-specialist organisation.

"A lot of people think about foster care, but don't always know how to get involved



Scan the QR code to see a video of how Tony and Laura opened their hearts and home as foster carers.

or are a little bit scared to take that first step," Laura said.

"If there is anybody even just considering it, look into it because we

just keep hearing about the thousands of children that are out there that are desperate for homes and carers," Tony added.

ac.care is seeking country people to become foster carers and offer children and young people, who cannot live with their birth families, a chance to thrive in a safe and nurturing home in their own community.

"We need carers in the Fleurieu Peninsula, Adelaide Hills, Murraylands, Riverland and Limestone Coast," ac.care foster care manager Dani Atkinson said.

"Care doesn't have to be long-term – we also need short-term and emergency carers, as well as respite carers to occasionally provide a break for primary carers, such as on a weekend or for a day when carers have other commitments."

Ms Atkinson explained the backgrounds of carers was diverse, from young adults to retirees, single people, same sex couples and people with experience raising their own children or new to caring for young people.

"It really helps to have a diverse pool of carers to match the needs of children to the homes available," she said.

ac.care works with people who are considering making a commitment to care for vulnerable babies, children and teenagers by providing an initial assessment, training, connection with other carers and ongoing 24/7 support to ensure carers have the assistance they require.

Young leaders *develop resource* to connect children in care to culture

TWO proud Ngarrindjeri women have developed resource packages for Indigenous children living in care in the Riverland to create and grow connection to local First Nations culture.

ac.care employees Tyra Motto and Tenesha Abdulla Pickering developed the cultural packs while working together as foster care placement support workers, aiming to support Indigenous children in care and non-Indigenous foster carers in keeping connection to Aboriginal culture strong.

Their innovative work earned them a nomination as finalists at the 2023 Department for Children Protection Awards in the Active Efforts Award, which recognises outstanding active efforts used to implement the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.

The initiative went on to win the reconciliation award at the Anglicare

Australia National Awards in September.

Among the items included in the resource packs are Ngarrindjeri language cards, photographs and interviews with local Elders and an Erawirung Country t-shirt from Riverland business Blak Scarlett.

Tenesha, who continues to work with children and young people as ac.care's HIPPY Riverland coordinator, said the pair both identified a cultural gap for children coming into care, as well as the challenges for non-Indigenous carers in making that connection.

"When children come into care, we want to connect them to culture as much as possible," Tenesha said.

"With our Ngarrindjeri language cards for example, we don't want the children to lose language because they aren't surrounded by it.

"We've made these in the hopes our carers will teach the kids how the language works and what things mean.

"They're really basic words, but that could

go a long way in the future."

Tyra said emphasis was placed on using connections in the community to make the resource packs so that the contents had meaning to the children in care and local foster care families.

Continuing to work as a foster care placement support worker with ac.care, Tyra praised Riverland-based foster carers for their willingness to engage in and promote First Nations culture to children in their care.

"We're pretty lucky in the Riverland that we have carers that want to be a part of and immerse themselves in culture, care about Aboriginal kids and want to do the best that they can to learn," Tyra said.

A key part of the resource packs is the images and stories of local Elders, who were interviewed by Tyra and Tenesha around their upbringing, experience living in care and how it impacted their lives, including a profile on the late Uncle Reggie Black.

ACTIVE EFFORTS RECOGNISED:
ac.care Riverland foster care placement support worker Tyra Motto and HIPPY coordinator Tenesha Abdulla Pickering were named finalists at the 2023 Department for Children Protection Awards for their cultural resource pack initiative.



Scan the QR code to see a video of how Tyra and Tenesha created their resource pack.

"Uncle Reggie grew up in the Stolen Generation so it was good to have that aspect of life shown to the carers so they can understand what it was like for him in

that time and how to make sure the kids that they have in care don't feel the same way about losing culture and not being connected to family," Tenesha said.

"I think it's important they know where they come from, who their Elders are and what it means to be on this land and be connected," Tyra added.

"If they aren't able to be around their family for whatever reason, I think it's important they feel some sense of belonging through Aboriginal people in the community."

While ac.care provides a wide range of family support services to help keep families together, Tyra and Tenesha's innovative work helps to create the most caring and culturally appropriate placements possible for children who do enter care in the Riverland.

"Sharing connection to culture is all about helping the kids in care and their carers," Tenesha said.

Ahead of the Department for Child Protection Awards being announced, Tyra reflected on the Active Efforts Award nomination, highlighting the importance of continuously being innovative and allowing space for new approaches.

"Everyone is under pressure, has key performance indicators and in child protection that is no different – it may be harder," she said.

"I think if you work within a space that you know there is a gap and work with people who are willing to bridge it, priorities come into play and it was easy to make the decision to take this approach."

Connecting *children in care* to culture through art

CHILDREN in country residential care homes have welcomed opportunities to express their creativity while learning about Aboriginal culture through an award-winning ac.care initiative.

ac.care partnered Aboriginal artists and cultural educators with young people in residential care homes across the Riverland, Limestone Coast and Murraylands to provide connection to culture and education about the First Nations peoples of these regions.

A core element of the project was children working with the artists to create paintings to adorn the walls of their homes as daily reminders of First Nations culture and the importance of connection to community.

Artists taking part on the



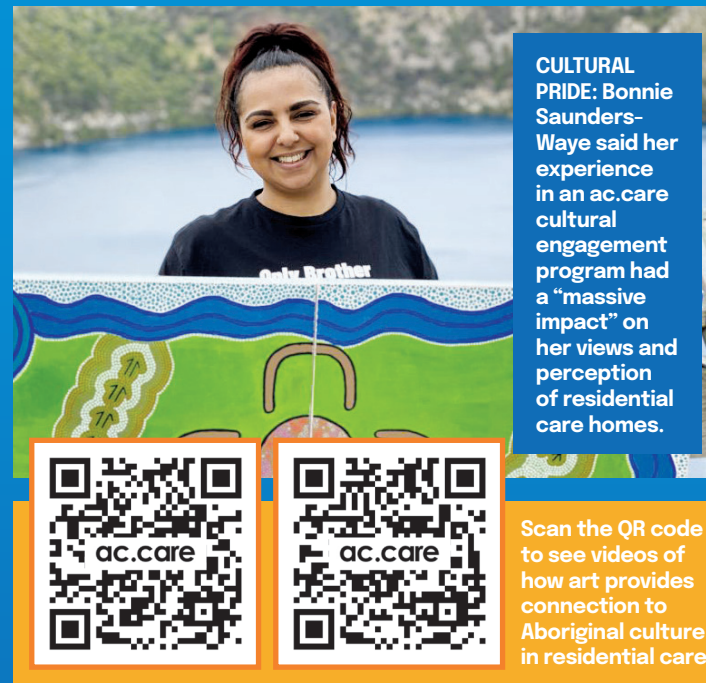
various lands included 2022 Limestone Coast NAIDOC Artist of the Year Bonnie Saunders-Waye (Boandik), 2023 NAIDOC SA Creative Artist of the Year Harley Hall (Ngarrindjeri) and 2022 Riverland NAIDOC Artist of the Year Daniel Giles (First Peoples of River Murray).

The project, delivered as part of ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan commitments, also involved Boandik Elders Aunty Michelle Jaquelin-Furr and Uncle Ken Jones spending time with the children and taking them to regional locations to share stories and knowledge of local

Aboriginal culture.

Bonnie, Harley and Daniel worked with young people in their respective communities to talk about connection to culture contributing to pride and self-respect, including sharing of Welcome to Country statements in language and explaining the

CONNECTING THROUGH ART: Children in Mount Gambier residential care homes worked with Aboriginal artist Bonnie Saunders-Waye to create striking artworks.



CULTURAL PRIDE: Bonnie Saunders-Waye said her experience in an ac.care cultural engagement program had a "massive impact" on her views and perception of residential care homes.

Scan the QR code to see videos of how art provides connection to Aboriginal culture in residential care

importance of cultural protocols.

The initiative was praised at the 2023 National Anglicare Australia Awards at Cairns with presentation of the Outstanding Commitment to Reconciliation

Award.

Working with children in three residential care homes in Mount Gambier, Bonnie reflected on the process of connecting young people to First Nations culture.

"Two special little people I met had a massive impact on my views and perception of the residential care homes and what they offer to our local children," Bonnie said.

"They showed me kindness, love and their resilience was amazing – I was humbled to sit and learn about and from them.

"We drew together, had a yarn and although from different country to my own and having limited information about their Aboriginal culture, we were able to connect."

Children in each home selected colours for the paintings and discussed and developed the symbolism featured in the art that now brightens their walls.

"The children are represented in the artworks by three beautiful big seed pods, representing their birth, and although their journeys are unique and can be complex, they have led to them all living in these homes," Bonnie said.

"Children in these homes make friends that hopefully form a new family structure or add to the one they have already, represented by the seed pods in the artworks that stem from the middle big seed pods as they make

connections and memories.

"They are able to take these friendships with them as they grow into the final seed pod, which is when they are old enough to leave the home, entering a new journey independent of ac.care and they take with them the memories and what they have learnt to the next chapter of their lives."

Bonnie said she hoped to engage in other projects with the children and ac.care.

"I find it very humbling because working with children is my passion – I know that as a child I remember certain adults in my life who gave me time, gave me praise and sat and listened to my thoughts and helped shape who I am today," she said.

"Some of the children who live in these homes have experienced trauma and loss, grief and neglect prior to entering care, but I found they were still so happy and supported and there are not enough words to express my appreciation for the workers and how much they give of themselves to the children – their love and care for each child."

Carer communities *celebrate* Easter together

FOSTER carers and their families joined ac.care's first Easter carer community event held in the Riverland.

Over a dozen carers and 24 children attended the social outing, which celebrated the difference carers make when they open their hearts and homes to vulnerable children.

After weather forced an event cancellation in 2022, sunshine greeted attendees at Berri's Alan Glassey Park as fun games and activities kept everyone entertained.

In our other regions, inclement weather saw Murraylands-based carers and children enjoy their Easter outing at a Mount Barker play café, while a barbecue lunch

for Limestone Coast carers was held at Mount Gambier's Valley Lakes precinct.

ac.care acting foster care service senior manager Sherri Winter said the Easter gatherings were just one way foster carers and their families could come together, along with ac.care staff, to build connections and social support in the carer community.

"With Easter and school holidays being a busy time for many, it was pleasing to see so many carers and children at these events having fun and socialising together," Ms Winter said.

"The contribution carers make to children in their care by providing safety and security is immeasurable.



EASTER TREAT: ac.care placement support worker Sammy Mulraney (right) gets into the Easter spirit with Zoe and Gemma Thomas at Mount Gambier's Valley Lakes playground.

"Carer community events like these are another place where we see how the love and support carers provide is

helping children to thrive. "They are also important to allow carers to connect socially as they are each on



FAMILIES CELEBRATED: Luca and Sam Andrews with ac.care placement support worker Anne-Maree Irvine.

a challenging but rewarding journey."

Ms Winter also thanked Big W Mount Gambier and Murray

Bridge for donating Easter eggs, which were handed out to families at the events. Meanwhile, ac.care

continues to call for more people to join its network of foster carers across the Limestone Coast, Murraylands,

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 Winter 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 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 children and young people," Ms Winter said.

Family, child and youth services

Building strong families



Small steps *help reconnect* mother and daughter

Strong Families, Strong Communities

NEW funding for ac.care has changed priority groups to include adolescents at risk.

Our family practitioner who accepted the role was initially worried about her skillset transferring to working with parents and older children, as working with risk-taking teens was a new area of growth.

A referral was received regarding a 12-year-old girl who had a relationship breakdown at home with her parents, resulting in her leaving the family home to stay in another town with family friends.

The mother was preoccupied and distraught with her

daughter's choice making, particularly around risk-taking and associating with unsafe/unknown people, drug and alcohol use and school avoidance.

ac.care's family practitioner worked with the daughter and

The setting up of weekly 'dates', where mother and daughter committed the time to spend together, and ongoing support of the intervention, led to the daughter returning safely home within two months of intervention.

the family friend to increase safety and address the issues that led to the breakdown at home.

Through ongoing parental support through upskilling the mother to view her daughter with an attachment lens

and see her behaviour as having meaning and seeking connection rather than attention, the worker gave the task to both mother and daughter to exchange daily gratitude texts.

This was a micro skill

amidst some larger case work including linking to external services and understanding assessments to support the goals of the family.

The act of connection on a platform (texting) that was non-confronting at first was a

huge win for the relationship and very effective at drawing the parent and child back to a healthy and respectful place.

The setting up of weekly 'dates', where mother and daughter committed the time to spend together, and ongoing support of the intervention, led to the daughter returning safely home within two months of intervention.

The family opted to cease service access as the risk taking behaviours and safety concerns were mitigated.

This experience highlights the wisdom, experience and skills of ac.care's family practitioners to mould and apply knowledge to deliver a client-focused service at every stage of parenting.

School non-attendance uncovers *bigger concern*

Intensive Family Support

A YOUNG boy and his mother were referred to the Intensive Family Support program due to non-engagement at school by the child.

After the ac.care practitioner had worked with the child's mother and built trust, it was disclosed the mother was living in a very controlling and abusive relationship.

The mother previously had children removed by the Department for Child Protection due to family domestic violence concerns.

The practitioner worked with domestic violence services and South Australia Police to assist the mother in leaving the relationship.

ac.care managed to secure safe domestic violence housing, a change of

schools for the young person and the mother was connected with counselling support.

The mother is now learning to live without constant fear and control in her life and is on a new journey of independence.

She is now also reconnecting with her other children and the future is looking bright.

Mother and children make move *to safe home*

Strong Families, Strong Communities

WE HAVE supported a mother and her two children who were living in a caravan on a very isolated property.

The mother was living in an environment where her ex-partner, who lived on the same property in a different caravan, was

controlling. There were concerns around physical violence and the condition of the property.

The local council were threatening to evict her off the property due to it having no running water. The mother had an extensive trauma history and had saved for her caravan herself.

The caravan represented freedom

for the mother but it was unfortunately unroadworthy.

After extensive work with ac.care's homelessness service, we managed to secure a property for her and her two children.

The children now have their own rooms and beds, while the mother feels free from the controlling community she was living in.

Communities for Children helps Paint the Bridge REaD

COMMUNITIES for Children Murraylands helped Paint the Bridge REaD as part of a community partnership encouraging residents to read, talk, sing and play with children from birth to help develop reading and writing skills.

Launched in September, Paint the Bridge REaD is part of the Nationwide Early Literacy community program and was developed from a national initiative instigated by a school principal in Parkes, New South Wales, in the 1990s.

The program's initial stages revolved around the circulation of a red and white egg to key community sites, including kindergartens, child care

centres and early learning centres.

Children were encouraged to sing, read, talk and play with the egg, which remained in their care during the week.

A journal was created to keep a record of the egg's journey and its visits.

Children were asked to vote for what they thought was in the egg and its journey culminated with a community event on June 3 where a dinosaur hatched.

The children then had two weeks to help choose a name for the dinosaur, with the winning mascot name being Roary the Readasaurus.

Roary has since visited children across Murray Bridge reading books and reminding everyone to read, sing, rhyme and play every day.

STARTING SMALL: Communities for Children Murraylands community development worker Christine Kamau nurtures the egg.



Paint the Bridge REaD was funded through a \$30,000 grant from the State Department for

Education and Local Government Association of South Australia. ac.care partnered with Murray



CALLING ON COMMUNITY: Children sing, read, and talk to the egg to help it grow.

Bridge Council, Murray Bridge Library, the State Department of Human Services, the Wellbeing



POWER OF GROWTH: Christine shows how much the egg has grown from listening to children sing, read, talk and play.

Hub and the Murray Bridge Community Centre to deliver the program.

The program was considered important as more than one in five Australian children arrive



DINO ON SHOW: Roary the Readasaurus and Communities for Children Murraylands administrative support worker Amy Pfitzner at the Murray Bridge Show.

at school without the skills necessary to make the most of their early education.

Community *unites to farewell* Minya Porlar Creche

THE joy and laughter of children at play provided a fitting backdrop to Minya Porlar Creche's community farewell, with the Murray Bridge service ceasing operation in mid-December.

Imperial Football Club hosted an afternoon of fun, games and even a petting zoo, as creche families and staff, both past and present, came together to reminisce on almost 22 years of service.

ac.care announced in September 2022 that despite working to secure the long-term future of the creche for many years, its ongoing operation had proven unfeasible.

The centre was serving around 18 families at the time its closure was announced with the agency working to support their transition into other childcare services.

The decision impacted five regular staff and additional casual employees, whose contribution and connection to the community was highlighted at the farewell event.

In a touching tribute, local resident Gloria Ebsworth spoke of her 14-year connection to the creche, which helped care for and support three of her children.

"To ac.care, thank you for running a beautiful program for our families," Ms Ebsworth said.

"The staff have been

amazing," she added.

"I want to say thank you for caring for our kids throughout the years and loving them, giving them a safe space.

"You will be truly missed by the community."

A ceremonial cake cutting was carried out by ac.care child care services director Meri Daniel, who provided over 20 years of service to the agency.

Mr Maddocks said despite the creche being a relatively small service, it had provided the Murray Bridge community with a sense of family and support.

"We are immensely proud of the achievements of the creche over the past two decades of service to the Murray Bridge community,

especially the dedicated staff and management who have provided local opportunities for families to access childcare, with a special focus on connection to Ngarrindjeri culture," Mr Maddocks said.

The centre modelled best practice in Aboriginal-specific child care through 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 operated.

Explaining the "enormously challenging" decision to wind down the service, Mr Maddocks said the building on Gail Crescent was unable to



HEARTFELT THANKS: Gloria Ebsworth (second from right) delivered a touching speech to Minya Porlar Creche staff at the farewell event. Gloria attended with her partner Chris Kropinyeri and children Jaylen, Latrell and Teleiyah.

meet new Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority Safety and Quality standards announced in early

2022 due to deficits relating to indoor spaces, sleeping spaces, bathrooms and changing facilities.

Challenges recruiting qualified staff in a competitive environment also contributed to the closure, as well as the

growth of alternative childcare services in the community, which had reduced the need for the service.



TREAT FOR ALL: ac.care Child Care Service Director Meri Daniel cuts a cake that was shared among guests.

Community and learning

Supporting community
and social wellbeing



Community Connections team

weaves positives across country SA

NUMEROUS friendships, a new business and several new ac.care volunteers are among the growing list of positives weaved throughout country South Australia thanks to ac.care's Community Connections team.

The four-person, dynamic team continues to help isolated country people connect and build positive relationships across the Riverland, Limestone Coast and Murraylands.

From the popular Mind 2 Canvas art program in Berri, free lunch events in Pinnaroo, regular meet and greet events and other outreach services, Community Connections produced a diverse calendar

of events across the 2022/23 financial year, understanding that strong social connections can improve quality of life and provide better health outcomes.

Community services regional manager Sue Watt said the diversity of program offerings was reflected in the varied circumstances of people engaging in the sessions, bringing together people from different walks of life.

"We have people attending who are facing significant hardship who are socialising and connecting with people that may not be managing those same vulnerabilities, but have become disconnected or isolated," Ms Watt said.

"Community Connections caters for all people and it has

been pleasing to see how these social bonds being formed at our activities are creating friendships and support networks."

Ms Watt said her passionate team was "making a bigger impact than we probably realise" through connecting people back to their community and supporting them to access services they may not have been aware of.

"The door is open for anyone to come along for as little or as much as they want and there's no expectation," Ms Watt said.

"It's amazing to watch people's confidence grow from not engaging much at the start to making friends, showing leadership to others and just enjoying socialising with others."

Ms Watt said staff had reported friendships and a relationship forming from the regular meet and greet events, with ac.care also fielding applications from residents eager to volunteer with the agency.

"We also had one man who had the goal of starting his own landscaping business after being involved in the community garden in Mount Gambier," Ms Watt said.

"We were able to support him directly and also connect him with other services to help get started.

"These are special outcomes that show how just providing simple support and opportunities can empower someone to make positive changes in their life."

Ms Watt also paid tribute to several partner organisations and services that work alongside the Community Connections program to make a difference.

The Community Connections 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.

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 may qualify for the program.

Priority will be provided to Aboriginal people aged 18 to 64, people from linguistically diverse cultures, unpaid carers, individuals who are financially disadvantaged and those living in disadvantaged locations and communities.



VITAL LINK: ac.care's Community Connections team of Sheila Millington, Sue Watt, Sue Dayman and Lily Lucas passionately deliver a diverse and dynamic program across country South Australia.

Children bring colour and creativity to Murray Bridge Showgrounds

CHILDREN from across the Murraylands brought colour and creativity to the Murray Bridge Showgrounds with the installation of a mural and wellbeing wheels on the parents room facade.

Communities for Children (CFC) Murraylands organised the activity in partnership with Taillem Bend Community Centre, engaging children from across the Murraylands for the public art transformation.

Students from Fraser Park Primary School, Murray Bridge High School and Unity College participated, along with children who attended a Birdhouse activity.

The project involved children painting plywood handprints with a broad range of styles displayed, including impressive blends of

colour, nature scenes, unique patterns, and various artistic versions of the Aboriginal flag.

Key themes represented included art, agriculture, dancing, games, music, sports, singing and technology, categorised into six wellbeing wheels - community, family, fun, friends, health and school.

Children discussed the themes in what was an insightful part of the project, highlighting how children value connection to culture, family, farm machinery and farming, and time spent in nature among other activities.

A highlight during the activity was a young Aboriginal boy who shared about the importance of culture for him and how his family inspires him.

Another example of the positive impact was observing the children

celebrate each other's talents.

"You have a gift in art," one student said to another.

CFC Murraylands values the voice of children, their ideas and perspectives on their lives, as well as creating a platform for communities to listen and learn from children's experiences of everyday life.

This child focus was woven into the entire process, from the interactions during the activity to having the art on display.

Activities that engage children in this way align with CFC Murraylands' strategic plan to support a child-friendly community.

The art is another addition to murals CFC has engaged children to design in the region over the years, including one at Murray Bridge High School and another at Taillem Bend Hospital.



HANDY ARTWORK: The Murray Bridge Showgrounds parents room features a colourful and creative mural that involved children from across the Murraylands.

Fringe performers thrill homeless centre visitors

TWO Mount Gambier Fringe Festival performers shared their talents at the city's homelessness service when they entertained centre visitors and staff alike as part of the FringeOUT initiative.

A small but enthusiastic crowd gathered at the centre on March 27 to enjoy a community barbecue before American-born BasketballMan showed off his slick spins, dribbles and juggles that have made him known as one of the world's top basketball trick performers.

While mixing his talents with music and humour, two young boys enjoying the show were thrust into the spotlight as BasketballMan helped them balance a spinning ball on their finger.

The show then moved indoors as Melbourne performer Miss C introduced the audience to the talents of a Balloonologist, sharing three circus balloon acts, ending up inside a giant yellow balloon.

"It was a treat to have BasketballMan and



FRINGE FUN: Miss C - Balloonologist, ac.care marketing and communications manager Jason Wallace, ac.care Limestone Coast Homelessness Services manager Kelly McGuinness, BasketballMan and Fringe Mount Gambier artistic program manager Louise Adams.

Miss C join as at the community centre to entertain and interact with the audience," Limestone Coast Homelessness Service manager Kelly McGuinness said.

"We had some regular centre visitors manning the barbecue and despite the rain and last-minute show announcement, it was a great social event for our community," Kelly said, adding for some people it was their first time witnessing a Fringe act.

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 entertainment beyond usual venues as part of the festival.

"Events like these build on the diverse experiences we offer people, such as our community garden and Monday mindfulness sessions, as ways to engage and connect people, build confidence and skills, and bring some fun and joy into their day," Kelly said.

Residents who visit the centre are encouraged to search Mount Gambier Community Centre Noticeboard on Facebook and join the community group to stay updated with events, food and other supplies and services available at the centre.

Our people, culture and community support

Working together to
increase our impact



First Nations *cultural perspective* shared through familiar sites

STAFF, volunteers and board members of ac.care boarded a bus with Boandik Elder Auntie Michelle Jacquelin-Furr in 2022 to see the Limestone Coast from a First Nations perspective.

The Limestone Coast Reconciliation in Action Group organised the cultural immersion bus trips with a range of dates available to allow all staff an opportunity to participate.

The cultural learning focused on public places in Mount Gambier and the Lower South East where local residents were likely to be familiar with the surroundings, but not know the Boandik history of the sites.



WHALE SONG: Auntie Michelle Jacquelin-Furr shares a traditional song as part of a Boandik cultural bus trip for ac.care.

Auntie Michelle provided commentary throughout the journey and coordinated stops to encourage

exploration and learning about the sites - from traditional activities to more recent history around the

impact of colonisation. Chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said it was a wonderful learning



CULTURAL LEARNING: Auntie Michelle Jacquelin-Furr teaches net making during a Boandik cultural bus trip for ac.care.

opportunity for everyone involved. "I learnt so much, including how to make a net, but more

importantly hearing the story of strong Boandik woman Annie Brice and how her life went from living her culture to

being treated with kindness to appalling treatment by others," he said. "We heard the creation

stories, the truth of massacres that occurred in the area through to current activities, such as re-enlivening the Bunganditj language and traditional skills such as possum skin coat making and so much more - it was a real privilege to spend the day with such an incredible teacher."

Murray Bridge staff member Rina Atkinson visited with Aboriginal staff from the Murraylands.

"Auntie Michelle is such a beautiful storyteller and it was a privilege to find myself immersed in her mob's history and story," she said.

Mount Gambier Family Relationship centre staff member Caroline Dwyer said she "absolutely loved it".

"What a great experience - I loved the whale song and obviously the net making and am very much looking forward to taking my children for a trip around the district using one of the maps Auntie Michelle provided to all participants."

Staff celebrate **Wear It Purple Day**

PURPLE was the colour of the day on August 26 as staff across the ac.care network celebrated Wear It Purple Day – a day of significance for many Australians, focusing on our LGBTQIA+ youth and the issues they face, whilst showing them they have the right to be proud of who they are and who they are becoming.

Staff were encouraged to wear purple and host a morning or afternoon tea in the workplace featuring purple where possible, as well as finding innovative ways to bring purple into their day.

A highlight of the day was the chance for staff to join a video conference hosted by Minus18, building on a connection formed through various training sessions for staff.

The agency threw its support behind the international movement of expression, celebration and support under the 2022 theme of “Still me, still human”, expanding on the involvement of the Riverland team in a local pride march in 2021, which was a significant



milestone for their community.

The message behind the Wear It Purple Day theme of ‘Still me, still human’ was that people tend to focus on labels, news stories or data regarding the rainbow community and forget about the humanity and complexities of the diverse individuals involved.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

ac.care became a member organisation of The Welcome Here Project in October, signifying agency sites as a safe place for LGBTQIA+ community members.

Welcome Here rainbow stickers are displayed in the windows of ac.care sites to create and promote environments

that are visibly welcoming and inclusive of rainbow community members.

The Welcome Here Project is the new Safe Place Project, which started in 1992 in response to high levels of street-based violence directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people.

Local businesses signed up to become a ‘Safe Place’ and proudly displayed a sticker in their shopfront to let LGBTQIA+ community members know they could seek refuge if they were under the threat of violence.

As times have changed street based violence has reduced, but there is still work to be done in this space.

Members of the project receive the Welcome Here rainbow stickers to display in their window to let everyone know that LGBTQIA+ diversity is welcomed and celebrated within their business.



Volunteers *vital in work* of ac.care

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.

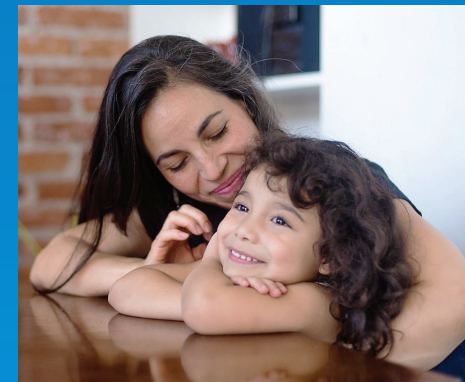
Formed in Mount Gambier 35 years ago, the “country specialist” agency combines the efforts of staff, community partnerships and dedicated volunteers to make a difference in people’s lives.

“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 all our volunteers, who make a wonderful contribution to expanding our capacity to make a difference.”

The agency’s volunteers include close to 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 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, with

the homelessness, community centre and Community Connections programs delivered in Mount Gambier, Millicent, Murray Bridge and Berri backed by a dedicated support team.

ac.care is currently seeking volunteers to support staff in delivering quality services to the community.

Do you have specific skills or expertise and the desire and time to support your community?

Get in touch to discuss how you could support ac.care.

We are always seeking new and innovative ways to support our clients, on top of the vital service delivery work that benefits from volunteer contributions.

This could include opportunities for social engagement and empowering community members to secure tenancies or invaluable employability skills.

“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.

Email care@accare.org.au, call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

Decades of *making a difference* in community celebrated

STAFF came together in June to wish family dispute resolution practitioner Diane Jablonski a long, happy and healthy retirement after decades of valued service to ac.care.

Diane has been involved in the evolution of ac.care from her time as a family support volunteer to seeing the organisation secure a Federal Government contract to establish the Mount Gambier Family Relationships Centre 15 years ago and provide diverse programs today.

"Seeing the impact of our services in supporting people in the community is what has kept me committed to ac.care for more than 25 years," she said. "There are people who I worked

with as children decades ago when they were going through a challenging time who I now see achieving in the community, including working with my own grandchildren as staff in schools or at sports and other community events and even becoming mediators themselves – you see the impact of our services in improving people's lives when you are part of the community for such a long time."

Diane previously retired from ac.care, but returned for six-months, which extended into three years, during which time she became a valued mentor for the next generation of ac.care's mediators and family dispute resolution practitioners.

"It has been wonderful to work with inspiring younger people today who will continue the



Staff celebrate with Di Jablonski (back row, fourth from right) on her retirement.

important work of ac.care, which is so important to support people through a crisis and break cycles of disadvantage to help people achieve their potential," she said. "I am also grateful for the opportunities ac.care has

provided to me, including changes in roles over the years and encouragement and support to study and further my learning." Many other staff were celebrated throughout the year for their long service to ac.care.

Staff *milestones*

25 YEARS

- Community Services general manager Kirsty Barnett

20 YEARS

- Limestone Coast volunteer Rose Pilven
- Strategic knowledge and impact manager Ute Herrmann-Bullock

15 YEARS

- Community Services regional manager Sue Watt

10 YEARS

- Strategy and innovation executive assistant Erin Rowley
- Family services case worker Kerry Letheby
- Homelessness services Murraylands program manager Thanuja Hiripitiyage
- Therapeutic Strength Based Care Murraylands team leader Sarah Schellen

10 YEARS

- Risk and compliance officer Julie McKinnon
- Senior financial counsellor Melissa Snook
- Out of home care compliance officer Tanya Glynn

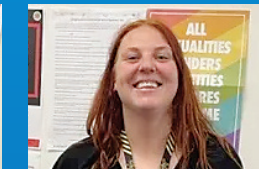
A further 10 staff were recognised for five years of service to ac.care



Kirsty Barnett - 25 years



Rose Pilven - 20 years



Sarah Schellen - 10 years



Melissa Snook - 10 years



Thanuja Hiripitiyage - 10 years



Flood impacts *witnessed first-hand*

A MOUNT Gambier social worker witnessed first-hand the impacts of the River Murray flooding on Riverland communities after volunteering to support affected residents.

ac.care Limestone Coast foster care service manager Sherri Winter was a welcoming and compassionate presence for residents seeking support at the Riverland emergency relief centre in Berri.

Ms Winter was one of several ac.care staff deployed to emergency relief centres established in Berri, Mannum and Murray Bridge as part of an emergency response agreement between ac.care and the SA Housing Authority.

Initially forging a connection with the lead flood response group, as well as forming an internal flood relief committee in early December, ac.care



canvassed interest from staff regarding voluntary deployment to relief centres as recovery officers.

Ms Winter travelled to Berri three times to offer support, starting with an initial eight-day stint in early December, followed by another eight days over the New Year period, returning for a third stay from January 9-15.

Working as a relief officer in the makeshift hub at the Berri Senior Citizens Club, Ms Winter was often the first person residents spoke to for support after being affected by rising water levels.

"Our role was to help assess people's eligibility for financial support, such as government grants, assist people who

had been displaced due to utilities being cut-off, as well as people seeking emergency accommodation," Ms Winter said.

"I also gave out many Foodbank parcels and the local Woolworths and Foodland stores had also donated food vouchers for us to give out to affected people. A big part of it was just being willing to

listen, to show compassion and try to understand what these people were going through.

"It was then important where possible to provide people with the information they needed to receive support or to refer them to services that could help."

Ms Winter said she was faced with people who were uncertain of what impact the floods would have on their livelihoods.

"Other natural disasters, such as bushfires, can have an immediate and clear impact, but a lot of people could only watch and wait to see this disaster unfold over a longer period. That uncertainty weighed on them and the mental health impact of that was certainly an important consideration," she said.

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said the agency

was proud to shift outside its normal scope of service delivery to support affected communities.

"It has been inspiring to see the willingness of our staff to make changes and in some instances completely shift their lives for over a week to support each other and the communities we call home," Mr Maddocks said.

In addition to the deployment of recovery officers, ac.care deployed four financial wellbeing program staff and two Community Connections staff across the Berri, Mannum and Murray Bridge centres.



Scan the QR code to read the full story or listen to Sherri on ABC Radio

volunteers guide governance

BOARD MEMBERS

Rick Fisher (Convener)

Paul Duka (Treasurer)

Brittany Shelton (Anglican Parish Council Representative)

Tony Wright (Local Government Representative)

Emma-Kate Griffiths (Limestone Coast Representative)

Ruth Daws (Riverland Representative)

Dr Ken Pidgeon (Fleurieu Peninsula Representative)

Louise Nobes (Adelaide Hills Representative)

Lou Jayleigh (Adelaide Hills Representative)

Shane Maddocks (CEO, Non-Voting Member)

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Bleby OAM

Craig Nisbet

Madalena Vellotti

Gillian McGinty

Rosie Schellen



Scan the QR code to access the ac.care board member profiles

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.



acTIVE challenge raises vital funds

COUNTRY South Australians are urged to take on a personal active challenge and raise money for ac.care as the organisation faces unprecedented demand for homelessness and emergency relief services.

The acTIVE.care campaign was launched to encourage anyone to help support vulnerable people by nominating a challenge and timeframe, then setting a target for their fundraising, to help provide more support where it is needed most in our communities," ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark said.

A shortage of affordable housing, the rising cost of living and summer flooding in the Murraylands and Riverland has led to a growing number of people turning to ac.care's services for support.

Sadly, the lack of affordable



housing has meant the homelessness service has had to resort to tents and other options in some cases to help families and individuals unable to secure stable accommodation.

"We know people share our concerns about the dire need in our communities and now we are making it easier for people to make a difference by participating in the acTIVE.care

MAKING MOVES: Confession café barista Brooke Jean and Anglican Church of Mount Gambier parish priest Father Neil Fernando were among the first residents to join ac.care's acTIVE.care campaign to raise money to support unprecedented demand for homelessness and emergency relief services.

challenge," Ms Spark said.

"The demand for support and strain on our resources is the worst I've ever seen it in the 11 years I've been here," Ms Spark said.

"We really need the community's help to boost our capacity so we can do more and expand the amount of emergency relief we can provide, which is so desperately needed."

Anyone can visit www.accare.org.au/activecare and sign up, nominate their own challenge and automatically create their own fundraising page to share on social media and support ac.care.

"You might commit to just walking with family or friends a few times per week, become a regular at the gym or maybe you're ready to run a marathon," Ms Spark said.

"It is completely up to the individual, their ability and commitment to set a realistic challenge and start fundraising."

Just \$30 can provide a food hamper for an individual or \$50 will help make sure a family has enough to eat for a few days.

Donations of \$100 are enough to provide a tent and other supplies to a person experiencing homelessness, while \$200 can cover a swag and \$250 can provide two nights of emergency accommodation when long-term housing options are temporarily not available.

Pine Tree Quilters create *handmade items* to support ac.care

A GROUP of Limestone Coast quilters continue to use their skills to provide comfort to children being placed into care.

Members of Mount Gambier's Pine Tree Quilters recently donated 32 quilts to ac.care, taking their tally beyond 400 since the group project started a decade ago.

The handmade quilts, made of fabric emblazoned with bright colours and child-friendly themes, are gifted to children by ac.care staff when they are placed with foster carers or in residential care homes.

Pine Tree Quilter Kaye Dalgarno said the group started making quilts for the organisation 10 years ago as a one-off project, inspired after learning children



SANTA SACKS: ac.care homelessness client support worker Carmel Grosvenor receives Santa sacks from Pine Tree Quilters' Sandra Ray, Jane Calleja, Lyn Sparks and Kaye Dalgarno, to distribute through their Christmas Cheer program.

often had no possessions other than the clothes they were wearing at the time of being taken into care.

"I heard children in care owned absolutely nothing, so I wanted

to give them something that was their own, whether they stayed in the same house or moved between foster homes," Ms Dalgarno said.

ac.care Foster Care service

manager Dani Atkinson explained when a child is placed by ac.care with foster carers or in a residential care home, staff look through the donated quilts to find a match for the child.

"It may seem like a small comfort, but it can have a big impact on a child and add to their sense of belonging in their new home," Ms Atkinson said.

"The quilt then stays with the child forever, including whether they are reunified to their birth family or if they require a longer-term placement with a forever family in foster care."

Pine Tree Quilters also donated handmade Santa sacks for use in ac.care's Christmas Cheer program, which provides food, gifts and other basic items to support people experiencing hardship in the Limestone Coast.

Good360 *partnership delivers* surplus goods to low income earners

TENS of thousands of dollars in surplus retail goods have been distributed to support people experiencing poverty across country South Australia thanks to ac.care's partnership with Good360 Australia.

Every year in Australia, \$2.5b of unsold household goods are wasted, while one in eight Australians are living below the poverty line.

Good360 exists to reduce this need and waste by connecting new unsold goods from businesses across the nation to people in need through organisations like ac.care.

Diverse goods have been delivered over the past year to our sites in the Riverland, Murraylands and Limestone Coast to support the people we work with.

Donated funds are sometimes used to pay the freight and handling costs associated with Good360 deliveries, extending the impact of our fundraising significantly.

A pallet load of \$11,000 worth of Oodies



VALUED PARTNERSHIP: Limestone Coast homelessness team member Becc Hogg welcomed delivery of Kambrook toasters and kettles from Good360 to provide to people struggling on low incomes.

was recently delivered for a cost of \$567, demonstrating how the partnership allows ac.care to multiply the benefit of donated funds.

Frontline workers at ac.care's homelessness services were thrilled to be able to deliver the sought-after items to people struggling through the cold South Australian winter to provide some comfort, especially for people on tight incomes reluctant to turn on the heating or buy quality winter warmers.

ac.care also received a collection of Kambrook kettles and toasters, which our homelessness team provided to people moving into transitional accommodation.

"These people often arrive at homes with very few possessions and a toaster and kettle is a great start to a functioning kitchen so families can prepare their own food and settle into homes and move on from periods of homelessness," Limestone Coast homelessness service manager Kelly McGuinness said.

The Good360 partnership has also extended to giving trees in Big W stores to allow shoppers to contribute to our Christmas appeals to spread festive cheer to vulnerable people in country communities.

Community centre visitors *enjoy fruits* of labour

VISITORS to the Mount Gambier Community Centre have been enjoying the fruits of their labour thanks to a new community garden at the Ferrers Street site.

The project has transformed the previously under-utilised outdoor space at the ac.care multi-service hub, where the Limestone Coast Homelessness Service is based, into a vibrant edible garden to grow free, healthy produce for residents while delivering social and educational benefits.

Members of the centre's existing community have played a large role in preparing the garden space, which has received strong support from OneFortyOne, Van Schaik's Bio Gro and Bunnings Mount Gambier, as well as funding from the Community Connections program.

Among the first to plant a seedling at the celebratory launch on Wednesday,

October 19 was Mark McMahon who, along with several other people, has helped establish the garden.

Mr McMahon said several of the centre's regular visitors had banded together to help develop the community garden project.

"With the price of living today, it's going to be good for the community to be able to come in and swap produce and maybe put in a few hours in the garden," Mr McMahon said.

"It's a good thing because people can get lost in this town and aren't sure of what to do, so this gives us a sense of community.

"It's kept me out of trouble as it gives me something to do to come down here most days."

The Mount Gambier Community Centre, operated by ac.care, has a proud history of providing vital support to the community's vulnerable residents, including food, housing support, financial

counselling, emergency assistance and educational programs.

ac.care Limestone Coast Homelessness Service regional manager Kelly McGuinness launched the community garden on October 19, coinciding with 2022 Anti-Poverty Week, which highlights the need for action to support people facing poverty and hardship.

"The idea first came about as people we work with were noticing the cost of living increases and fruit and vegetables were becoming less affordable," Ms

Scan the QR
code to view a
short YouTube
video on the
edible garden



McGuinness said.

"People can grow their own food to save money or as a hobby, but unfortunately that is not always an option for some people.

"We now have this garden which can not only help people with their food, but also can be used as a learning tool to gain new skills and also socialise and keep active."

Commending the group of regular community centre visitors who had already shown strong support for the garden, Ms McGuinness hoped the project would one day grow to become wholly-managed by the community through a committee, which ac.care would support.

"It is important that this is community driven and we would like for those interested regular visitors to take on that leadership," Ms McGuinness said.

She said the garden area also provided a calm and relaxed environment for some meetings with people in need of support, as well as a green space for staff to enjoy in breaks.

"It is going to be a meaningful and productive space within our centre and we look forward to watching it grow and evolve into the future," she said.

To contribute to or support the community garden, contact Kelly at the community centre on 7725 3000.



DIGGING IN: The Mount Gambier Community Centre's new garden was launched on October 19 with the first plantings undertaken by ac.care Limestone Coast homelessness regional manager Kelly McGuinness, Travis Fatchen representing Member for Mount Gambier Troy Bell, Mount Gambier Mayor Lynette Martin, friends of the centre Mark McMahon and Des Reilly, and Kate Hill also representing Troy Bell MP.

ac.care funding partners

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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

Legal Services Commission

South Australian Housing Authority

Uniting Communities

Wyatt Benevolent Institution

Treasurer's report

In light of the economic challenges of the past year, ac.care continues to evolve as an organisation and strengthen its financial position. The 2022/23FY has returned another positive financial result, with a surplus of \$676,000 being recorded.

Whilst the surplus was less than that recorded in the 2021/22FY period, the financial result did exceed budgeted expectations largely due to financial performance of its investment strategy coupled with the increase in grant funds received.

Underlying the financial performance for the 2022/23FY was ac.care's focus on the following strategies:

- Implementation of actions and strategies from ac.care's new strategic plan.

- Continuation of the strategy of expansion of its asset base.
- Development of ac.care's treasury management and investment strategy.

As a result of the implementation of the strategic plan, unfortunately the change in strategic direction resulted in withdrawal from the Minya Polar Creche childcare service but has seen a redirection of focus and creation of opportunities that support ac.care's early intervention strategy.

ac.care has also continued its asset growth strategy through the acquisition of a further house for the purposes of supported care. During the 2022/23FY period, ac.care acquired a property in Mount Gambier with further expansion of housing anticipated in the 2023/24FY period.

To enable these strategies and to maximise the use of ac.care's available cash

funds, a treasury management policy was developed and ac.care's investment strategy commenced with investment fund managers Ord Minnett. In addition to funds being transferred to Ord Minnett, further investment funds and borrowings were also secured with Anglican Fund SA (AFSA) throughout the 2022/23FY.

ac.care continues to develop as an organisation and has become more complex in nature. The financial information and reporting continues to develop and with this growing complexity the need to have more modern financial software systems has brought forward the requirement to change financial software systems in the upcoming year.

Noting the above changes, the audit and risk committee continued to provide oversight of the strategies and oversee the complexities

of the changing nature of the organisation. During the 2022/23FY Craig Nesbitt resigned as an independent audit and risk committee member. Craig's contribution as both a committee member and as past treasurer of the Board should be recognised, and I thank Craig for his contribution to the Committee and Board over the past years. I would also 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.

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

**Paul Duka,
Treasurer**

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income - As at June 30, 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
INCOME			
Revenues from fees and charges	3	424,000	392,927
Grants and contributions	4	24,524,893	23,385,030
Interest income	5	210,482	20,383
Investment income	6	111,596	9,644
Fair value gain / (loss) from financial assets	13	129,544	(28,958)
Other income	8	484,555	279,647
Total income		25,885,070	24,058,673
EXPENSES			
Staff benefit expenses	9	19,023,546	17,158,191
Supplies and services	10	4,824,727	3,961,381
Depreciation and amortisation	11	1,128,032	1,105,424
Finance costs	12	202,798	148,787
Net loss from the disposal of non-current assets	7	23,426	1,384
Other expenses	14	6,523	33,598
Total expenses		25,209,052	22,408,765
NET RESULT		676,018	1,649,908
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE RESULT		676,018	1,649,908

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of financial position - As at June 30, 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	15	5,616,193	8,751,036
Receivables	16	35,461	72,253
Other current assets	17	285,645	398,469
Total current assets		5,937,299	9,221,758
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Financial assets	18	4,911,806	171,042
Property, plant and equipment	19	4,170,876	3,542,221
Intangible assets	20	59,816	90,987
Other non-current assets	21	8,370	9,990
Total non-current assets		9,150,868	3,814,240
TOTAL ASSETS		15,088,167	13,035,998
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Payables	22	683,853	250,281
Lease liabilities	23	575,593	457,988
Loan borrowings	24	33,914	17,285
Staff benefits	25	2,731,530	2,489,832
Other current liabilities	26	585,781	512,121
Total current liabilities		4,610,671	3,727,507
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	23	1,933,345	1,889,991
Loan borrowings	24	894,342	420,295
Staff benefits	25	509,810	534,224
Total non-current liabilities		3,337,497	2,844,510
TOTAL LIABILITIES		7,948,168	6,572,017
NET ASSETS		7,139,999	6,463,981
EQUITY			
Other reserves		1,345,499	2,028,529
Retained earnings		5,794,500	4,435,452
TOTAL EQUITY		7,139,999	6,463,981
Contingencies			

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of changes in equity - As at June 30, 2023

	Other reserves \$	Retained earnings \$	Total \$
BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2021	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
Net result for 2022-2023	-	676,018	676,018
Transfer to / (from) reserves	(683,030)	683,030	-
Total comprehensive result for 2022-23	(683,030)	1,359,048	676,018
BALANCE AT JUNE 30, 2023	1,345,499	5,794,500	7,139,999

Anglican Community Care Incorporated

Statement of cash flows - As at June 30, 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from fees, charges and grants		28,186,887	25,677,242
GST recovered from the ATO		655,084	628,961
Interest received		210,482	23,406
Payments to suppliers and employees		(23,852,101)	(21,424,968)
GST remitted to ATO		(2,595,274)	(2,407,373)
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		2,605,078	2,497,268
Cash flows from investing activities			
Investment income		111,596	4,790
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(842,044)	(808,017)
Purchase of Finance Asset		(4,611,219)	(200,000)
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities		(5,341,667)	(1,003,227)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Loan borrowings		521,061	450,000
Payment of lease liabilities		(888,930)	(894,362)
Repayment of borrowings		(30,385)	(22,117)
Net cash provided by / (used in) financing activities		(398,254)	(466,479)
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(3,134,843)	1,027,562
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		8,751,036	7,723,474
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	15	5,616,193	8,751,036

Carbon accounting - our environmental commitment (2022-2023FY)

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	56.05	215.69	129.20	31.65%	
Distributed Natural Gas	GJ	284.88	8.31	14.64	3.59%	
Diesel - company cars	kL	3.22	0.51	8.68	2.13%	
LPG - Bulk heating	GJ	23.92	0.04	1.44	0.35%	
Autogas - vans and company cars	GJ	0.00	5.98	0.00	0.00%	
Total Scope 1			230.53	153.96	37.71%	-33.21%
Indirect Emissions (Scope 2)						
Electricity usage	kWh	401,669.37	216.84	100.42	24.60%	
Total Scope 2			216.84	100.42	24.60%	-53.69%
Optional Emissions (Scope 3)						
Waste (municipal collection)	m3	302.59	18.65	67.78	16.60%	
Electricity (distribution losses etc.)	kWh	401,669.37	41.45	32.13	7.87%	
Flights (staff travel)	km	42,569.00	35.34	8.04	1.97%	
Water - reticulated supply	kL	5,511.00	2.58	7.31	1.79%	
Petrol (extraction, production etc)	kL	56.05	17.08	32.97	8.08%	
Natural gas (extraction, production etc)	GJ	284.88	1.65	3.02	0.74%	
Diesel - (extraction, production etc)	kL	3.22	0.04	2.15	0.53%	
LPG -Bulk heating (extraction, production etc)	GJ	23.92	0.00	0.48	0.12%	
Autogas (extraction,production etc)	GJ	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.00%	
Total Scope 3			117.33	153.89	39.08%	-31.16%
Total Scope 1 + 2			447.37	254.38	62.31%	
Total Scope 1+2+3			564.69	408.27	101.39%	
Reduction Measures and Offsets						
Carbon Credits			0.00	0.00		
FINAL TOTAL			564.69	408.27		-27.70%
FTE			136.00	183.93		
tCO2-e /FTE			4.15	2.22		

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.
- 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.
- 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.

HOW TO DONATE

- 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.

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



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 Community Centre

Phone (08) 8580 5300

5 Kealley Street, Berri SA 5343

PO Box 1345, Berri SA 5343

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