

# ac.care

*opportunities for life ... for country people*

est. 1986



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**ANNUAL REPORT | FY 2023 - 2024**

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# 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, Erwirung, 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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# ac.care helps *change lives*

# regional care snapshot **2023-2024**



302

children found homes with local foster carers



168

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



49

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



240

people were able to get through a crisis with access to emergency or short term accommodation



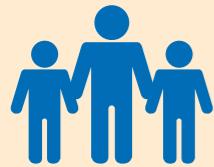
435

people avoided homelessness with early intervention support



41

families were supported to have safe contact with their children through the Children's Contact Service



162

people were supported to strengthen their family relationships through groups and programs



402

people managed a difficult financial situation by seeking financial counselling



1005

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



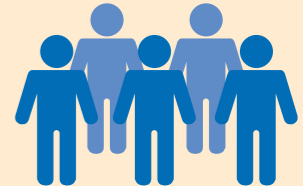
1994

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



312

people moved from homelessness to stable accommodation



231

people were employed by ac.care

# Board convener's report

**The year past has seen no let up in the call for our services. High interest rates and costs of living, and an acute shortage of affordable housing, leave many families and individuals struggling to have shelter, food or the resources to lead lives that could be considered adequate by any measure in the 21st century.**

Our organisation has continued to deliver assistance, counselling and crisis relief across nearly 50 programs to an overwhelming number of people in need. I take this opportunity to thank our workers and carers who every working day support disadvantaged people and those in crisis. Your care and efforts give hope, purpose and partnership with and for those who would otherwise struggle on alone.

Balancing high workloads, we have expanded our capacity to house and care for homeless young people with the second stage of our 'Studio Purpose' units in Murray Bridge and the purchase and development of more properties. We have also kept our strategy focuses of early intervention and forming networks and relationships with

our local communities central to our work. We have explored our opportunities to be 'place-based' and more efficient in deploying the great resources available within community. Measures of strong support for our work include the amazing success of our first Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon since COVID 19, and the We Care Cally Camp Out. Also, the many other projects instigated and supported by local businesses and industry, and the very generous donation of goods and money from right across our regions.

The result of the referendum on an indigenous voice to parliament was a crushing blow to many of our people. It has caused us all to take time out to think about the nature of reconciliation and what the path forward might look like. It



remains a high priority for ac.care to walk together with First Nations people toward a future where our rich and diverse cultures are respected, valued and protected for the benefit of all.

In the past year we have put plans and processes into action for the deployment of new technologies to reform financial, payroll and data management to improve our operational efficiency.

We are also reforming our organisational business structure to reflect the size and maturity of our operations.

I can also affirm that within the year to come, our head office in Mount Gambier will move from its aging and inadequate White Avenue home of 29 years to a central, well-resourced, accessible and professional workspace in the heart of the Mount Gambier CBD.

I thank all staff and volunteers, our leaders, executives and directors for their dedicated hard work, and contribution to the great culture of ac.care. Especially I thank our CEO Shane Maddocks for his excellent, energetic and creative leadership, and personal support for me as convener.

I encourage all who support ac.care to seek creative ways to work and partner with us to bring the people of our communities together to share our skills and resources, and to enable all, especially our children, to thrive and reach their potential.

**Richard Fisher GAICD**  
Convener – ac.care

# CEO's report

**We continue to be a strong organisation delivering great services to empower people in our country communities. We are strong because of the commitment, compassion, creativity and energy that our people bring to work every day. Our staff, along with volunteers and board directors, are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of children, young people, families, and adults who may be struggling with various aspects of their lives.**

The caring response provided by our staff is underpinned by their strengths-based approach focusing on the positive attributes of people seeking our support and working in partnership while valuing their experience and identity as we shape more positive futures together.

The past year has seen our communities continue to recover from the impacts of the COVID pandemic and River Murray floods. These events have impacted country people in varying ways, along with cost of living pressures, reduced housing options and increasing levels of family, domestic and sexual violence, all increasing demand for our services.

Many people in our communities continue to struggle with mental health issues, substance misuse and loneliness. In the past year we have received increased funding to expand our community-based programs. We now have funded community centres in Mount Gambier, Millicent and Berri, supported by the Community

Connections program, which also operates in Murray Bridge. (If you live in these communities, I urge you to find out about what goes on in the Chatty Café.) Meanwhile, the Wyatt Linker pilot has evolved into a program offering support to women aged over 50, along with other client groups. These programs are connecting people to the services they need, but probably more importantly, to each other and new friendships in the wider community.

As an organisation, we are still learning to listen more to service users and our communities. We are working to improve opportunities for service-users to work with us in partnership in developing new services and working to improve existing programs. The outcome of the national Voice to Parliament referendum means that listening to the voices of our Aboriginal staff, clients and communities is more important than ever. We look forward to working with the Aboriginal Voice to the South Australian Parliament as we unite with Aboriginal people to



close the significant gap that exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on many aspects of their lives. Challenging racism and working to address the intergenerational impacts of colonisation continue to be central to our work.

We cannot do our work without the trust and support of our communities. Following a COVID pause, the Limestone Coast Support Homeless People Luncheon was held with local businesses raising close to \$130,000 for ac.care services. New supporter, Monarto-based Australian Portable Camps also raised \$100,000 for ac.care, along with further funds for other causes, through the We Care Cally Campout in Callington. These funds enable us to provide intensive support to the expanded Studio Purpose program in Murray Bridge supporting young people into independent

living while remaining connected to education and employment. A donation from the One Forty One forestry company, facilitated through the Stand Like Stone Foundation, will enable us to improve our Mount Gambier Community Centre, which is a bustling hive of activities supported by amazing volunteers. O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier also generously supported one of our youth residential care properties with donations of goods and labour, including a working bee to improve the property's rear yard for the enjoyment of the four young people living at the home.

I would like to thank the executive team for their strong leadership, support and dedication during the year – executive managers Kirsty Barnett, Stephen Green and a special thanks to Kris Roberts for stepping in as CEO during my three-month Social Impact Leadership sabbatical.

Building support and strong connections within our communities is vital to achieve our mission of ensuring country people have safe homes, enough money to live on and strong positive relationships. We must do more to empower people to overcome barriers and provide support early before issues reach a crisis in people's lives. We can only achieve this when we all work together. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our staff, volunteers, foster carers, board directors and supporters for their unwavering commitment to making our country communities stronger every day.

**Shane Maddocks**  
CEO – ac.care

# The private rental market on low incomes according

# Fails people to snapshot

**RENTERS on low incomes are being left behind in the private market across the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands. ac.care's 2024 Rental Affordability Snapshot, prepared in partnership with Anglicare Australia, found people on income support, especially those who were out of work, had few options.**

"We found no rentals were affordable in our regions for a person on the JobSeeker payment, including share houses," ac.care chief executive Shane Maddocks said.

"The shortage of affordable rentals condemns people to make difficult decisions to keep a roof over their head."

The report found families out of work were also facing a dire situation.

"An out-of-work couple with two children can afford 4.4pc of rentals, but single parents out of work face even tougher odds, with affordability at just 2.2pc," Mr

Maddocks said.

"This helps explain why the rate of JobSeeker is such a critical factor in child poverty – one in six children now live in poverty, with those growing up in households that depend on JobSeeker at much greater risk."

Each year, the regional snapshot, conducted as part of national research, tests if it is possible for people on low incomes to rent a home in the private market.

This is assessed by taking a snapshot of the properties listed for rent on realestate.com.au on one weekend in March.

Considerations for each rental include suitability for each household type and the income available based on government data, following the internationally accepted benchmark that rent must be no more than 30pc of a household budget to be affordable.

The results of this year's survey again showed how brutal the rental market was for young people.

A person on Youth Allowance looking for a sharehouse could not afford any of the rentals on offer.

"Youth Allowance is the lowest of all government payments and year after year we find young people are at the bottom of the affordability ladder," Mr Maddocks said.

The snapshot also found people with disabilities faced unique challenges in the rental

market.

"Some will find that the rentals listed in this snapshot don't meet their needs and for many people the disability support pension is too low to allow them to rent a home that does," Mr Maddocks said.

A person on the disability support pension could afford none of the rentals at the time of the snapshot.

The most generous of government payments is the age pension, yet for a couple living on the age pension, only 8.9pc of rentals were affordable.

Single retirees had it even worse with no listings left to compete for.

A single person working full-time on the minimum wage would have found 4.4pc of rentals affordable.

"Of course, this snapshot doesn't tell the whole story," Mr

Maddocks said.

"Although we assess based on the full-time minimum wage, we know more and more people are working casually and their plight is likely to be much worse than this snapshot shows."

He said the snapshot did also not account for competition for each property.

"In an overheated market, an affordable property can attract dozens of applications," he said.

"All of this is a wake-up call – the snapshot shows finding an affordable home in the private rental market is complete fiction for people on low incomes and it is time for action to make housing more affordable."

**ac.care and Anglicare Australia calls for:**

- Raising Jobseeker and related payments above

the poverty line

- More social and affordable homes for Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands
- Fixing tax concessions so they do not encourage property investors to speculate on the property market at the expense of people trying to buy or rent a home.

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

"Nobody should be forced to make impossible sacrifices just to keep a roof over their head."



# 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

## COMMUNITY AND LEARNING

- Adult learning
- Berri Community Centre
- Murraylands Centre
- Community Connections

- Millicent Community Centre
- Mount Gambier Community Centre
- Personal Success Coaching

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION

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

## HOMELESSNESS

- South Australian Country South Homelessness Alliance Lead Agency
- Limestone Coast Homelessness Service

- Murraylands Homelessness Service
- Riverland Homelessness Service
- Reconnect early intervention program for young people aged 12 to 18 at risk of homelessness
- Studio Purpose Youth accommodation and support
- TED Tenancy Education program

## OUT OF HOME CARE

- Foster carer recruitment, assessment, training and support
- Occasional, emergency, respite, long and short-term foster care
- Staffed 24/7 youth and child residential care homes

# supporting country people

## 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 Services

Communities for Children  
Murraylands facilitates programs delivered by our Community Partners – Playgroup SA, Taillem Bend Community Centre and Centacare. Programs are delivered across the Murraylands region including Murray Bridge, Mid-Murray, the Coorong and Karoonda.

### Evidence-based Programs:

- PEEP LTP Playgroup and developmental checks
- Parent Child Mother Goose group program

- DRUMBEAT music wellbeing program
- Seasons for Growth grief education program
- Tuning into Kids parenting program
- Circle of Security parenting program

### Evidence-informed Programs:

- Celebrate Connection term and holiday family activities
- Family Fun Time term and holiday family activities
- The Murraylands Family-Friendly Business Awards
- Dad's Net – Dad's space, Antenatal and Playgroup Sessions
- Individual Family Support sessions
- Holiday Swim in partnership with Royal Life Saving South Australia

# Homelessness and financial support

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





# Personal housing struggle pensioner to dig deep for

**A MOUNT Gambier pensioner has provided basic living essentials to support more than 10 vulnerable residents as a way of giving back following her own brief involvement with ac.care's homelessness service.**

Louise Rawle, 77, made the sizeable donation of new clothing, sleeping mats and hygiene products to the Mount Gambier Community Centre after months of patiently planning and spending at local stores.

Now having the stability of a safe, secure home, Louise was inspired to support vulnerable residents through ac.care following her own experience with the Limestone Coast Homelessness Service team when she arrived in Mount Gambier around three years ago without a place to stay and few belongings.

Prior to arriving in Mount Gambier in 2021, Louise had been living in Mackay, Queensland, after relocating from Wangaratta in Victoria due to a health condition.

"I have chronic obstructive

pulmonary disease and the warm weather is supposed to help with that, but I ended up in hospital twice with pneumonia due to the humidity," Louise said.

Having sold all her belongings to restart life up north, Louise made the tough decision to move back closer to Victoria, which resulted in a brief stay in Adelaide.

"When I arrived in Adelaide, I saw people lying on the footpath or lying in doorways and I'd never seen that before," Louise said.

"It was a rude awakening because I thought that only happened in other countries and I'd just never been where it was happening."

This eye-opening experience coincided with Louise's own struggle to secure housing with a charity in

Adelaide suggesting she move to Mount Gambier in the hope of finding affordable housing and to be closer to her Victorian family.

Louise was connected to ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre in the hope of finding a home, with ac.care homelessness client support worker Carmel Grosvenor securing a motel stay for one week, followed by a caravan site the following week.

"Carmel never stopped trying to help me – she was so beautiful," Louise said.

"I still remember when she called me down to the community centre and told me she had found a house for me, as well as some furniture."

The humble pensioner was determined to navigate her unexpected situation, which put her on the brink of homelessness.

"The fear of not knowing for sure if you have somewhere to live is unbelievable," she said.

"Unless you have been in that position, you can't really understand

what that feels like."

Settling into her modest home, Louise's recent experiences and exposure to homelessness remained front of mind.

"I remember sitting in my home on a cold night and just thinking 'how can anyone survive in that?'"

"In a rich country like Australia, that should not happen."

A quick Google search for what was most needed by people rough sleeping followed, with warm socks, sleeping bags and sleeping mats among the top responses.

Having appreciated the support she received from ac.care, Louise set a "challenge" to purchase and donate items that would help at least 10 vulnerable people.

"To me it had to be a group of 10 because then you know you have really done something if you help that many people," Louise said.

Louise praised the support of Mount Gambier businesses, including Kmart, Aussie Disposals and Best and

# inspires homelessness

Less, joking that staff likely thought she was the "lay-by queen".

"I went in and told them what it was for and they would extend the lay-by time for me and I'd just keep paying a little off every fortnight," Louise said.

"I was challenging myself and I won that challenge."

After making her significant donation to ac.care, Louise has vowed to continue in a smaller, regular capacity.

"Even a pensioner can extend themselves if they want," she said.

"If you just throw a tin of food in or a pair of socks with your shop, stack them up and it makes a difference."

"I think if people just tried and saw what they get back from it and how that feels, they would do it more."

ac.care Limestone Coast Homelessness Service manager Kelly McGuinness said staff were moved by Louise's donation, which made a difference in the lives of several vulnerable community members.

"To be shown appreciation in this type of way is special because it not only highlights the importance of our work, but it is paid forward to someone else doing it tough," Kelly said.

"We are glad Louise has been able to overcome her own challenges with some support from ac.care and are grateful for her generosity."

"Donations like these give people the comfort and dignity they deserve as they work towards overcoming their own life challenges."

ac.care is grateful for the community donations it receives through [www.accare.org.au/donate](http://www.accare.org.au/donate) or in-person at its service sites.

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 our Homelessness Services webpage or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).





# Community *at risk*

**LIVES of vulnerable youths in Murray Bridge will be transformed after the community has worked together to develop a second set of four units to provide housing for young people at risk of homelessness.**

The charity Habitat for Humanity South Australia completed the construction phase of the project led by ac.care, converting a second duplex provided by the South Australian Housing Authority into four units suitable for young people.

Donors, building material suppliers, tradespeople and businesses, along with volunteers, combined their efforts to complete the construction phase of the second Studio Purpose housing project.

Habitat for Humanity South Australia executive officer Louise Hay said construction was achieved with significant support from Impact100 SA, Morialta Trust,

Harvey Foundation, Shape, The Rural City of Murray Bridge and private donors, along with many local volunteers and contributors.

“Community collaboration has been the cornerstone of Habitat for Humanity’s involvement in addressing the critical need for safe accommodation for at-risk young people in Murray Bridge,” Ms Hay said.

“Through the dedication of donors, volunteers and partners, we’ve created not just four homes, but havens of hope and opportunity.”

The properties are managed by Believe Housing Australia to allow ac.care to provide housing and intensive support to transform the lives of young

# builds homes for young *of homelessness*

peoples at risk of homelessness.

The expanded capacity builds on the success of the first phase of the Studio Purpose project, which involved creation of four apartments in 2021, which are tenanted by young people working towards independence and a brighter future.

Regional specialist ac.care now has eight specially-developed homes available for 15–23 year olds selected to benefit from the intensive support model.

A community celebration was held at the site on February 21 to mark completion of the second set of four homes, with more than 50 supporters in attendance.

Ngarrindjeri and Kokatha man Harley Hall conducted a traditional smoke cleansing ceremony to “bring positive energy to the homes from the land and ancestors of the area”.

Taking a housing-first approach, The Studio Purpose project has

been led by ac.care and extends beyond provision of independent accommodation for vulnerable young peoples to include broad support to help young people reach their potential.

“It has been wonderful to see the community come together once again to build on the success of the first Studio Purpose development. This will help address the shortage of safe accommodation for young people in the region, which ac.care identified as a priority and worked with other agencies and organisations to address,” ac.care Murraylands homelessness program manager Thanuja Hiripityage said.

“These homes not only provide a warm bed and welcoming space, but connect young people with a service model focused on health and wellbeing, education, development, connection and engagement to help them work towards independence.”

The partnership involves ac.care, Believe Housing, South Australian Housing Authority, headspace Murray Bridge, Rural City of Murray Bridge and Habitat for Humanity.

Local services clubs have helped with furnishing the homes, with Soroptimist International Murray Bridge donating refrigerators, Murray Bridge Rotary Club supplying washing machines and the Lions Club of Murray Bridge providing toasters and kettles.

Human Services Minister Nat Cook has welcomed completion of the second block of four units and said Studio Purpose was already transforming lives.

“This initiative is already achieving such wonderful results for young people who needed help to turn their lives around – these successes have included young people, once without housing security and direction, successfully entering private rental accommodation and

starting jobs and traineeships after Studio Purpose stabilised their accommodation and linked them with the right supports,” Ms Cook said.

“This is so heart-warming and it illustrates the kind of dramatic and positive turnaround that is achieved when young people have stable housing, the right support and engage with those supports.”

ac.care continues to seek financial supporters to sustain and expand the housing and intensive support model in Murray Bridge and beyond to other areas of country South Australia.

“Supporters of Studio Purpose know this initiative makes a difference in the lives of vulnerable young people in country South Australia for the long-term,” Ms Hiripityage said.

Donations to help sustain and expand the Studio Purpose initiative can be made at [accare.org.au/donate](http://accare.org.au/donate)

**CONSTRUCTION COMPLETE:** Habitat for Humanity South Australia executive officer Louise Hay and ac.care’s Skye Wilson inside one of the complete Studio Purpose apartments.



# Financial counselling helps people overcome *crippling debts*

**DIVERSE people across regional South Australia were assisted by ac.care's financial counselling service during the 2023/24 financial year.**

Our staff and volunteers are passionate about educating people of all ages and backgrounds through free, confidential and non-judgmental services to help clients avoid a crisis or overcome challenging situations.

Financial counsellors provide information, advice and advocacy to people in debt or unable to meet their ongoing expenses, helping to get their finances back on track and plan for a better future.

This includes supporting people to prioritise their debts, develop budgets and money plans, access grants or concessions, negotiate with creditors, access dispute resolution services or legal help and understand their rights.

One positive outcome from the 2023/24FY period involved Jane\*, who reclaimed her financial stability after enduring a challenging period after losing her employment.

Living in a three-bedroom home but with debts including a mortgage and credit card, Jane became reliant on Centrelink JobSeeker payments and her credit debts increased.

Experiencing some health challenges at the time, Jane told her financial counsellor that she was struggling on a reduced income and felt there was no prospect of future employment due to her health.

Supported by ac.care's financial counselling team, Jane's credit providers were contacted

to arrange a manageable budget for her mortgage and credit card plans.

The creditor suggested Jane focus on her relatively small mortgage so that she did not lose it in the long term. They were also able to advocate successfully for a waiver of her large credit card debt.

A manageable plan was put into place which delivered a small tax return, enabling Jane to pay her mortgage a month in advance and maintain serviceability.

Jane has regained control of her financial situation and is doing well.

In another instance, a young mother was supported to overcome a series of complex challenges and develop a more positive relationship with her finances.

Kira\* first engaged with ac.care in a state of financial hardship

while managing the removal of her child from her care, as well as a significant decline in income.

During her initial financial counselling appointments, Kira would speak fast and want the sessions to end quickly due to experiencing anxiety.

This also led to missed or rescheduled appointments.

With debts varying from fines, an ambulance bill and being in arrears for her utility payments, Kira expressed hopelessness due to her significant drop in income from a parenting payment to JobSeeker.

Despite numerous challenges, Kira was supported by ac.care's financial counsellor to establish affordable payment plans for her debts.

At one stage the hardship arrangement for gas and electricity was cancelled by the provider due to no contact with

Kira at the end of the agreement period.

Kira revealed she had not answered or returned calls as she remained focused on reunification with her child.

The financial counsellor was able to re-establish the previous payment plan and avoid further action by the provider.

An arrangement was also put in place to put Kira's outstanding fine debts on hold while she attended substance misuse counselling, with the fines eventually waived.

The continued engagement between Kira and the financial counsellor has built a strong relationship and Kira noted her financial situation was improving, leading to less pressure and stress around her finances.

Kira remains focused on reunification with her child but feels more confident and relaxed

about managing her finances.

These positive outcomes reflect the diverse and complex environment ac.care's financial counselling team operates within.

Their roles not only require knowledge about the credit, bankruptcy and debt collection laws, along with training in negotiation and counselling, but financial counsellors must also have a willingness to offer emotional support and a listening ear when people need it.

ac.care's financial counselling service is available by appointment in the Murraylands, Riverland and Limestone Coast.

The team is also available to speak to groups and organisations on financial management skills.

Visit [www.accare.org.au](http://www.accare.org.au) to learn more.

\*Names have been changed to protect identities.





**WORKING TOGETHER:** Australian Portable Camps operations director Gino Martino, ac.care Murraylands Homelessness Service acting manager Skye Wilson and Australian Portable Camps managing director Frank Martino.

# 'Cally Camp Out' night shows that community cares

**THE inaugural 2024 We Care Cally Camp Out event raised a remarkable \$185,000 for South Australian charities to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.**

Major donations announced on the night included \$100,000 to Murraylands homelessness service ac.care, \$65,000 to Adelaide-based women's homelessness service Catherine House and \$10,000 each to the Vinnies Fred's Van meal service and the Salvation Army Murraylands Corp.

The inaugural event was presented by major Monarto South family business Australian Portable Camps, including directors Frank and Gino Martino and their staff, as demonstration of their

commitment to the regional community.

Hundreds of people turned out to the Callington Oval to enjoy live music by Midnight Radio and Coombsy, performances by Sparky the fire performer, Stunt Juggler Scoot and other entertainers following a Welcome to Country by Ngarrindjeri and Kokatha man Harley Hall.

The family-friendly night of entertainment on Friday, June 21, also included campfires, children's activities and mechanical bull rides, along with a fireworks finale.

Event spokesperson Kristy Fitzgerald of Australian Portable Camps said organisers were thrilled with the success of the event with an outstanding fundraising result and strong community turnout to enjoy the festivities.

"It really demonstrated the community spirit in the Callington and Murraylands area with people uniting to make a difference while enjoying a night of entertainment," she said.

"The camp-out showed we care about people doing it tough and can make a difference when we all come together behind a common cause."

The event also featured the launch of a food van developed by Australian Portable Camps under the leadership of director Frank Martino to regularly provide meals to people in need of support across Adelaide and the Murraylands.

"We know the rising cost of living is having an impact on many people and as a major business in the region we want to make a difference in the community and do our bit to

support vital charities, such as ac.care, which is based locally," APC co-founder Gino Martino said.

"The Cally Camp Out is one way we are giving back to the community that has supported us and providing something for families to enjoy while contributing to the extraordinary work undertaken by local services in often challenging circumstances so they can increase their impact with people in need of support."

ac.care chief executive officer Shane Maddocks welcomed the major donation.

"The rising cost of living and lack of affordable housing, along with growing issues around loneliness and isolation, is leading more people to seek support from our organisation to secure the stability they need now and build a more hopeful

future," Mr Maddocks said.

"We are overwhelmed with the generosity of the Callington and district community, Australian Portable Camps, the Martino family and many generous supporters who made the inaugural We Care Cally Camp Out event such a huge success."

Many businesses contributed to the event, along with community groups and associated charities.

Sponsors included CMV Truck Centre, QCV Australia, Project Communications Australia (PCA), Brice Steel and Coil and Qantac, Australian Camp Services, Add a Bathroom (Fibre Composites International), Armstrong Packaging, Dentons Lawyers, McMilligan Construction, Milwaukie, Nacap, Nasslec Electrical and Waste Water Services.

# Homelessness fundraiser raises nearly **\$130,000** in one day

**A MAJOR charity event at The Barn Palais raised close to \$128,000 to boost the work of regional South Australian organisation 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.

"We were thrilled to be back at The Barn Palais for this major event and overwhelmed by the generosity of the business community with \$127,786 raised and donations continuing to come in over recent days," ac.care

chief executive officer Shane Maddocks said.

"It was not only an extraordinary fundraiser, but fantastic opportunity to share our work with the community and speak to businesses about how we can work together more closely to do more to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in our community and break cycles of disadvantage – together we can make a difference."

Mr Maddocks thanked the diverse contributors who made the event a success, including the dedicated team at The Barn and major sponsors, including DiGiorgio Family Wines, Coopers, Thomas Foods, Barry Maney Group, auctioneer Andrew Whan of Miller Whan and John, emcee Di Ind of Limestone Coast

Solutions and guest speaker Mr Malinauskas.

"The long list of supporters, sponsors and donors of supplies, along with raffle and auction items, represents many of the region's businesses and we are truly grateful for this support," Mr Maddocks said.

"A special thank you also to the brave people who shared their deeply personal stories of how ac.care helped them move from homelessness to a more secure future and Tim Brennan for his deeply meaningful and grounding Welcome to Country."

Mr Maddocks said the event was more important than ever after need in the community had grown over recent years due to the ongoing impacts

of COVID-19, rising cost of living and ongoing lack of affordable housing and after the organisation's fundraising capacity had been limited due to the pandemic restrictions.

"We were thrilled to bring back the luncheon and proud to continue the legacy of the late Barry Maney OAM, who, together with Barry Stafford and the initial event committee, brought businesses together for the first time over 10 years ago for the first luncheon to support our work and we are humbled that the generosity of our community continues," Mr Maddocks said.

**OUTSTANDING SUCCESS:** Premier Peter Malinauskas helps celebrate the success of the luncheon, which raised close to \$130,000 to support vulnerable people.



**TEAM EFFORT:** Event emcee Di Ind of Limestone Coast Solutions and a large team of ac.care staff were pivotal in the event's success.

Event manager Jason Wallace of ac.care said every dollar raised would go towards the work of ac.care to support vulnerable country people.

"This major fundraiser truly makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of vulnerable country people at times of crisis and we could not achieve all we do without such significant and valued support," he said.

"Thank you everyone – together we are changing lives for the better and helping people move from crisis to stability, safety and hopefulness."

A major charity auction at the event, featuring 27 items, including some late additions announced on the day, raised more than \$50,000, with the premier's offer of dinner for 10 people as his guests at Parliament House raising the highest price at \$7000.

Raffles and other activities were also held on the day with broad support from regional businesses helping boost the fundraising result.



Scan the QR code to watch a video of the event

# Out of home care

Providing safe homes for children in care



# Murraylands foster carers driven by love

**MURRAYLANDS couple Suzanne and Darren Moss have been guided by love and a passion to help children succeed as country foster carers for almost a quarter of a century.**

Blessed with a country lifestyle on 130 acres in the Murraylands, the rural setting has provided a perfect backdrop for children to grow and thrive.

From exploring the creek and rock beds to bonfires and experiencing farm life, Darren and Suzanne said children in their care loved life on the land.

"They really enjoy the lack of fences and abundant open spaces," Darren said.

"We feel grateful we can do this for children and provide them with experiences they may not have had the opportunity to enjoy otherwise," Suzanne added.

Seven children have grown up in or remain in the long-term care of the Moss family, while many others have visited for shorter stays.

The fulfilling journey of providing love and support for young people began when Suzanne and Darren first explored options to start a family together.

"I always wanted to be a mum, but we weren't able to," Suzanne said.

The possibility of becoming foster parents captured the then Sydney-based Moss couple's attention through a newspaper advertisement before they moved back to Adelaide.

"We went through the IVF program and that did not work for us, so we engaged in the foster care system and started the process to become carers," Darren said.

A few days before Christmas in 1999, they welcomed their first foster child into their home – a young boy who remains in their lives, now aged 32.

"Suzanne and I have always said that if we can change a child's life for the better by them having known us, well then we are happy," Darren said.

The Moss family expanded as the couple welcomed a second foster child into their home, followed by their sibling, while also providing short-term and emergency care for

other children.

"We had a lot of children just for emergency placements for a night, week or few months when we were younger," Darren said, highlighting a period in the early 2000s.

"We would nurture them and just knew we had positively impacted on their lives," he said.

"Even if we had them for a week, we could provide some stability and hope they knew there was someone who cared for them and we really enjoyed having them," Suzanne said.

"We hope what we did for those children in the short time they were with us stayed with them for the rest of their lives."

The lasting impact the couple has had on shorter term visitors to their home is clear with a child who lived with them for two years around a decade ago reaching out to the family through social media to reconnect.

"She still has a real fondness for us and it is incredible to think that at 10 years old, half her life ago, 10 years later she is like 'oh my goodness, they remember me'," Darren said.

The couple welcomed the opportunity for the heart-warming

reconnection and sharing of photographs and anecdotes from that period of the young woman's life to build on her existing memories.

Meanwhile, today the Moss family's foster care journey is as active as ever and they proudly continue as 'Mum and Dad' not only for the three now young adults who entered their long-term care as children two decades ago, but also to a 12-year-old and three siblings aged 11, 10 and seven who have joined the family over the past seven years.

"We thought we had finished being ongoing foster carers and we were doing a few emergency placements, but then my maternal instincts kicked in," Suzanne said.

Darren said while the couple knew they did not need to do "foster care 2.0" after the three young people in their care became adults, the decision to open their hearts and home to more children was a choice they would not swap for anything.

"We created the position we are in now and we love it," he said.

They are supported by country agency ac.care, which provides foster care services across the

Murraylands and beyond in regional South Australia.

"They are there if we need them and they know we will call if we need help with anything," Suzanne said.

It was through that relationship with ac.care, as well as the Department for Child Protection, that the Moss family has been able to create positive outcomes for children in need of care, including the earlier siblings who are now adults, and the younger sibling group now in their care.

Suzanne said agreeing to care for multiple children was a personal decision they made based on their circumstances.

"ac.care gives you as much information as they can about a potential placement and then you make the decision whether you are able to welcome the child into your home – the child's situation has to fit your family and what is going on for you at the time," Suzanne said.

Suzanne and Darren encourage other people to consider becoming foster carers to provide the love and support children need.

"If you want to change a child's life for the better, even if it is for one day,

one week, one month, or one or two years, then do it," Darren said.

"Do it because you really want to nurture children and you want children to succeed," he said.

"You give them all that you have – your skills, your love and hopefully it is enough for them," Suzanne said.

"That is what they need – someone to love them and care about them genuinely."

"The reciprocation is a hundred-fold," Darren added. "You give the kids a bit of love and it just comes flooding back."

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.

The country specialist organisation 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 need.



Scan the QR code to hear Suzanne and Darren Moss speak about their foster care journey with ac.care





# Restructure for children

As part of our continued commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in Out of Home Care (OOHC), residential care and foster care programs have moved to a more contemporary leadership model. This new approach reflects the complexities of modern care environments and aligns with priority one of our Weaving Together 2023–2028 Strategic Plan focusing on building a dedicated team to lead transformational change.

We are excited to share that two new key leadership roles have been created.

Shalini McCarthy has stepped into the role of Lead Practitioner OOHC. Her focus on clinical expertise marks a critical step forward in how we care for the vulnerable children and young people we support across residential and foster care.

Additionally, Adam Robins has been appointed as Manager Operations OOHC. Adam will be concentrating on the operational side of our programs, ensuring

they run smoothly, efficiently, and with a strong focus on managing risks and improving service delivery.

This leadership transformation is part of our commitment to providing better, more coordinated services. The changes also mean greater support and training for our staff, creating more opportunities for professional development and growth, especially for our emerging leaders.

We believe this will allow us to meet the evolving needs of the

# to achieve *better outcomes* and young people in care

children and young people in our care, and we're excited about what the future holds.

This year has been particularly significant for Out of Home Care services. One of the highlights was the opening of a new residential care home in Murray Bridge, furthering our commitment to creating healing therapeutic environments for children in OOHC.

On a national level, we strengthened our leadership by partnering with Anglicare OOHC networks, driving innovation, and sharing knowledge across the sector.

We have also begun a comprehensive review of all our policies and procedures to ensure we're following the best practices. Internally, we've made significant strides in improving data literacy, which has resulted in more enhanced reporting to both the CEO and the ac.care board.

Incorporating a more therapeutic

focus across all operational areas has also been a key achievement. This has led to improved outcomes for the children and young people we support, with initiatives like an increased number of children's camps, including "Return to Country" programs, which help Aboriginal children reconnect with their culture.

SA Foster and Kinship Carer Week 2023 was a wonderful time to celebrate our incredible foster carers. We organised coffee mornings, lunches, and special recognition events to show our appreciation for their dedication.

We are also excited about the progress we have made in revamping our foster care recruitment strategy. Looking ahead, we are preparing to submit a tender for specialist foster care, which, if successful, will commence in 2025.

**Stephen Green**  
ac.care Out of Home Care  
Executive Manager



**PASSION:** ac.care recruitment, training and retention coordinator Sally Smith (left) and Out of Home Care executive manager Stephen Green (right) were joined by foster carers and guest speakers Holly Upton, Tracy Upton and Suzanne Moss at ac.care's Strathalbyn Foster Care Forum in June.





# Local business gives back with child and youth care home project

**A MOUNT Gambier business has made a significant contribution to support vulnerable young people living in an ac.care child and youth residential care property.**

O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier donated around \$17,000 in goods and labour to improve the local property, including installation of a solar energy system and complete garden makeover of the rear yard.

Around 20 O'Brien Electrical employees donated their time to help complete the project, which included installing a \$10,000 battery donated by the business.

It has made a lasting impact at the property, which provides a caring and nurturing home environment for up to four children and young people who are under the Guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection and for whom foster or kinship care is not currently an option.

With a Giving Back initiative already engrained in the long-standing business, ac.care was the beneficiary

of the local business' latest charitable cause thanks in part to fortunate timing.

"ac.care had been in touch for a quote for a solar package and we just saw it as a prime opportunity to give something back to an organisation that gives a lot to the community," O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier operations administrator Bonnie Rothall said.

"Giving back to the community is important to our business and our team.

"A business can only thrive with the support of the community and its clients, so it is important for us to give back to the community that has supported us over the years.

Ms Rothall's sentiments were echoed by her brother and O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier managing director Dane Paproth, who praised



**GIVING BACK:** ac.care administration and facilities coordinator Hannah Carruthers is shown the new solar energy system by O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier operations administrator Bonnie Rothall and managing director Dane Paproth.

his team for giving up their Saturday morning to make a difference.

"We are fortunate we have got the staff that we do," Mr Paproth said.

"Staff have donated their time back to the community and it is a good opportunity for us to all get together and do something positive to help.

"This upgrade is really going to help

with the property's energy use and will allow it to be more sustainable with the help of the battery storage."

ac.care community engagement manager Jason Wallace thanked the business for its generosity, which will continue to positively impact on the children and young people living at the property.

## child and

"Community contributions increase our impact supporting vulnerable country South Australians," Mr Wallace said.

"We are grateful for the team at O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier for generously donating their goods, time and expertise to not only reduce electricity costs at this house, but importantly create an inviting and easy-to-maintain garden for the children and young people to enjoy," he said.

The property is one of six in Mount Gambier that can house up to four children or young people at a time, aged 10-18 years, who receive support from ac.care's skilled staff team of child and youth workers on a 24/7 roster.

The children and young people live in a safe therapeutic environment until they are able to transition into a longer-term living arrangement, such as foster care, kinship care, reunification with family or support to transition into an independent living program.



Scan the QR code to hear what inspired the O'Brien Electrical Mount Gambier crew to give back to the community



# Foster carers celebrated in

# festive season

**CELEBRATING** the meaningful impact and significant contribution of our foster carer network is important to our agency.

We work with an amazing community of foster carers across the Limestone Coast, Riverland, Murraylands, Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula, who every day are making a difference in the lives of children and young people.

One way we were able to acknowledge this commitment in 2023 was through our Christmas parties held in Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge and Loxton early in the festive season to bring together foster carers and their families, including young people in care.

These regional events provided a valuable opportunity to celebrate and thank our carers, who were able to socialise with fellow foster carers and share in festive cheer.



Our agency was not alone in showing its appreciation for local foster carers, with businesses generously sharing their time or donating goods in support of the initiative.

This included a group of OneFortyOne employees bringing their own barbecue along to the Mount Gambier event, cooking lunch for guests while they enjoyed entertainment from local music duo Strings Attached.

Staff at The Loxton Club, which welcomed our Riverland carer community, went above and beyond to facilitate our event and ensure it was a relaxed, enjoyable day for our special guests.

ac.care also received generous support of local businesses that donated food or gifts to help make the celebrations special, including



She's Apples, Coles, Woolworths, Big W, Good360, Mount Gambier and District Community Bank, Metro Bakery and Café, Backpacks for Kids SA, Gambier West Service Station, Raptcha'u, AFL Max, 1924, Bounce, GCS, Little Local Co, Grazing for Dayz, Woolworths, Serenity, and Fruit and Veg Shop.

It is these gratefully received donations of goods, services or time from our local communities that help increase the impact we can have supporting country people.

This also allowed gifts to be handed out to children and young people in care, along with the children of carers, who welcome foster siblings into their homes.

The regional foster carer Christmas celebrations form part of our yearly calendar of events aimed at building relationships and supportive connections between our foster carer network.

This includes regular coffee mornings or other gatherings throughout the year.



# Family, child and youth services

Building strong families



# Ongoing ac.care support *find positive outcomes* - case

**WITH a mission to ensure all country people have safe homes and strong, positive relationships, ac.care supports families and relationships of any makeup and at any stage.**

ac.care's family services team has provided a range of programs and services during the 2023/24 financial year, including programs to help new parents adjust, providing counselling and workshops to help sustain and improve relationships with children, partners and extended family, as well as supporting parents and children with positive connections after separation.

These services are delivered from the Mount Gambier Family Relationship Centre in the Limestone Coast, the Berri Community Centre in the Riverland and the ac.care Murraylands Centre, as well as the children's contact service at Mount Gambier.

With a focus on keeping families and children together, the Intensive Family Services program achieved

positive outcomes for families over the past 12 months.

This included supporting a single mother and her three children who moved into the region after experiencing domestic family violence, but found the only option for housing was with relatives.

This was a temporary, unsafe living arrangement that was overcrowded with up to 11 people staying in the three-bedroom home at one time.

With a referral to ac.care's homelessness service, along with the intensive family support program, the agency was able to support the mother to move into safe, local accommodation that was within walking distance of her children's school.

Intensive family support

brokerage supported the mother to purchase new home appliances, along with further support from ac.care's financial counselling team.

ac.care will continue to work with this mother to focus on her case plan goals, which is now possible as the family feels safe and secure in their new home, improving the mental health and wellbeing of all family members.

In a similar outcome, the intensive family support team helped a mother and her three children after they were referred to ac.care when moving into country South Australia.

Support from financial counselling helped the woman to clear outstanding debts, as well as applying concessions moving forward to manage the household finances.

Through her involvement in the program, the mother identified short-term and long-term effects of her children's exposure to domestic and family violence and has gained

strategies to help manage the associated behaviours, as well as supporting one child to access mental health services.

The mother worked to reduce the safety concerns at the time of referral and at closure of the service, and there is a trusting confidence from the mother that she is well equipped from her insight gained and increased confidence to reach out in the community if future help is needed.

She now has stable accommodation for her and her children and is now working on her own goals of looking at local volunteering options and job seeking.

Her children have been enrolled in the school of her choice and are now making friends through local youth groups that they thoroughly enjoy.

For some families, their connection to ac.care has been through the reunification program.

In one successful outcome, an

# helps *families* studies of success

infant returned to the care of their parents through ongoing support by ac.care.

The parents, who both have a diagnosed intellectual disability, were referred to Relationships Australia by the Department for Child Protection to ensure adequate support was available.

A family group conference was held to put formal supports and roles in place prior to the reunification.

ac.care still supports this family weekly and has extended the reunification service beyond 12 months to provide additional support to set the family up for success.

In another positive journey, three children were returned to the care of their parents following a layered support process.

The children's reunification was helped by support around language delays and developmental needs that may have been a result of the

disruption in care.

ac.care staff also advocated to the Department for Child Protection to provide furniture and assistance with home modifications to create a safer environment for the children.

The family reported wanting to stay connected to the service as they found the additional layer of support valuable to talk through routines and behaviour, the parents' work schedules and continued journeys of healing from substance misuse and poor mental health.

The family's housing manager approved a close relative, who had been instrumental in the care of the children during their removal, moving permanently into the home to support the family with their practical and emotional supports and to stay on track.

ac.care also provides the Strong Families, Strong Communities program - a targeted early intervention response to families experiencing risks to child safety

and aims to empower families and provide support that diverts them from entering statutory child protection services.

An ac.care family practitioner supported one young person during the 2023/24FY period to reengage with their education.

The young person had been experiencing violent outbursts, but support from the Strong Families, Strong Communities program allowed the young person to be heard and their family supported.

ac.care also supported the family through advocacy to enter a new property that has increased family safety.

The mother, who previously was sleeping in a kitchen, now has her own bedroom, while each child also has their own bedroom.

To learn more about ac.care's family services, including eligibility criteria and referral pathways, visit [www.acccare.org.au](http://www.acccare.org.au)





# Family bonds 'wonderful'

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partner team and our valued Community Partners Centacare, Tailem Bend Community Centre and Playgroup SA had an exciting 2022/23 supporting families and children in the Murraylands region.

During this time our playgroups and group programs, which use evidence-based strategies to support age-appropriate development and promote strong parent-child attachments, saw some beautiful outcomes for families.

One parent expressed their own personal struggles and remarked how the group provided a safe space to be able to express concerns, frustrations and share advice.

Sessions held at aged-care facilities were particularly special, with one man sharing: "It is so wonderful, there are no words, it is just wonderful."

Our parenting programs

supported participants to learn new skills to understand their children's behaviours.

Feedback from these sessions included a parent stating they never knew what their child was telling them and how the program information had supported them to change the way they parented.

Dad-focused programs also produced some great outcomes, with some feedback from fathers highlighting how the interactions had put some of their anxieties at ease around supporting their newborns, as well as how to be a better involved father with their child.

# strengthened through community sessions



During the summer holidays, we collaborated with Royal Life Saving SA to provide 121 children with access to free swimming lessons, a 70pc increase in engagement from the previous year.

We were joined by multiple multicultural families, children with

disabilities, and many who were unable to swim.

Parents of the children involved highlighted an increase in confidence of children, including more positive experiences at bath time and around washing hair.

Other families were grateful they



were able to access the lessons for free, thanking the team for providing the opportunity that they were not able to afford in their circumstances.

As we move past the midpoint of our funding cycle, the CFC team is looking to the future.

This year has seen some big changes for the team, which moves forward with a view to building the program and working alongside the Murraylands community to support the region's most vulnerable children and families.



# Training gives youth skills and confidence *to stay connected*

TEN young people have received construction qualifications and re-engaged with school, work and their community through the support of ac.care's STAY program (Service to Aboriginal Youth) and Youth Support and Development (YSD).

The group were each issued a White Card after attending trainings, which allowed them to volunteer alongside Habitat for Humanity and contribute to construction of ac.care's second Studio Purpose property at Murray Bridge.

Under the guidance of experienced tradespeople, the 10 young people played a hands-on role in the construction of the property, transforming a duplex into four one-bedroom studio apartments to house at-risk or homeless Murraylands youth.

Each participant also received new safety equipment sponsored by forestry and sawmilling company OneFortyOne to support their work, with volunteers and their YSD coordinator left impressed by their dedication throughout the project.

It was one of the many success stories to come from the STAY and YSD programs during the 2023/24 period in the Murraylands and Riverland. STAY provides support for Aboriginal young people aged 10-19 years, while YSD is primarily focused on supporting people aged 15-19, but can be extended to between 10 and 25 in some circumstances, especially for people disengaging from education, family and community.

The programs support young people individually and in groups to strengthen cultural identity and sense of self, work towards goals and learn health and wellbeing life skills.

Other highlights from the 2023/24 period included a program-first girls cultural camp at Woodhouse Activity Centre, including a cultural tour at the Living Kaurna Cultural Centre, cooking



**CONNECTING ON COUNTRY:** Elder Aunty Betty supports STAY participants during the Coorong cultural camp.

by campfire, as well as lots of laughs and yarns.

Connection to culture and Country is at the heart of STAY, with a three-day camp on the Coorong and a boat tour providing fun, engaging opportunities for youths to make friends and build relationships while learning new skills.

Some sessions throughout the year also centred around health and wellbeing, including a Homework/

Hangout Club and Fitness Club.

Both group activities supported general wellbeing, as well as encouraging engagement in school.

The success of this program was highlighted by the growth shown by a 14-year-old who was supported during the 2023/24 period.

This young person had been received near-fortnightly suspensions from their school when they first engaged with the program.

They have since become more settled in school and is motivated to continue their positive behaviour.

The young person met another youth during an excursion to Wilabalangaloo Reserve, which has led to a strong friendship with both discussing their job prospects for the future.

A highlight of this outcome has been verbal feedback received from teachers around the young person's behaviour at school.

With trust built over time, they have opened up a lot about their challenges to their STAY coordinator in what has been a significant milestone.

It is a positive example of STAY's impact, with young people also supported with case management and advocacy to ensure their needs are met through existing services.

ac.care also delivers the HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) as part of its Aboriginal services program.

HIPPY is a two-year, home-based, early learning and parenting program to help Riverland and Murray Bridge families prepare young children to achieve at school.

Visit [www.accare.org.au/services/aboriginal-services/](http://www.accare.org.au/services/aboriginal-services/) to learn more about these services.



**STRONGER TOGETHER:** A program-first Piltenggi Miminar (Strong Women) camp included a cultural tour at the Living Kaurna Cultural Centre.

# Community and learning

Supporting community  
and social wellbeing



# Berri Community Centre

## for the whole community

THE Berri Community Centre has become a hub for activities to connect people and break down social isolation.

Long-term Department of Human Services funding to support activities at ac.care's Riverland service hub has prompted the name change and program expansion.

While the Kealley Street premises has long been the home of ac.care's diverse services, the new funding arrangement provides additional resources to combat social isolation, promote a stronger sense of belonging for people who are disadvantaged and foster inclusive, equitable and resilient local communities.

ac.care was successful in its funding application after demonstrating a strong connection to the local community, as well as proven capacity to deliver appropriate and quality services.

The development follows the revamp of the rear yard at the Kealley Street site, which was unveiled in September last year, supported by the Department for Human Services, Community Connections and Skylight Mental Health.

The ongoing improvements to the outdoor area, including a community garden, have provided a welcoming space to facilitate socialising, arts and crafts, games, gardening and more.

ac.care community services regional manager Sue Watt said while the Berri Community Centre name was new, visitors could still expect the high quality of services that have long been delivered.

"You don't need to be engaged with an ac.care service to enjoy the benefits of the community centre,"



Ms Watt said.

"It truly is a place for all to benefit from the opportunities provided, whether that be social connection, learning new skills, enjoying a toasty or warm drink or as a way to learn more about ac.care and

what support is available.

"We want our community centres to be safe, nurturing spaces that provide broad opportunities and experiences for people to connect through events and programs.

## a place

"By being a part of the community centre, you also become aware of what support is available and how it could benefit you or someone you know.

"This could make a significant difference in someone's life as we know early intervention is crucial in avoiding crisis and getting people back on track."

The Berri Community Centre is home to all of ac.care's Riverland services, including foster care, homelessness, emergency relief, financial counselling, Aboriginal services, family and youth support and more.

Fun, interactive social programs are held at Berri Community Centre each week, including art and craft, gardening, music, games and more.

Follow the **Berri Community Centre noticeboard – ac.care** on Facebook to stay connected to the latest news, events and opportunities.



**A PLACE FOR ALL:** ac.care community services regional manager Sue Watt, community services executive manager Kirsty Barnett and Berri Community Centre coordinator Sue Dayman explore the vibrant Berri Community Centre garden.



**COME HAVE A CHAT:** The Haven Murray Bridge community partner Helen Mattick and ac.care Community Connections support worker Sheila Millington ready to chat with the community at the Chatty Café launch.



# Cuppa and a chat builds community connections

A GLOBAL initiative that connects communities and 'gets people chatting' was launched by ac.care at Murray Bridge in August 2023.

ac.care partnered with The Haven Murray Bridge to host South Australia's first Chatty Café on Thursday, August 3, aimed at brightening the day of residents while reducing social isolation in country communities.

Community Connections Murraylands support worker Sheila Millington was the driving force behind the initiative, which encourages community members to come along and meet new people in a safe, comfortable social space.

"Building friendly social connections does not need to take grand gestures, it is often the simple and small things like a brief chat that can brighten someone's day," Sheila said.

"Our Chatty Café provides that

safe, social space where people from all walks of life can come together and chat for a minute or an hour – the choice is theirs.

"We know that forming these connections can take time and that is why we meet weekly on Thursdays, allowing people to return or new faces to join in and simply have a chat."

Sheila said the Chatty Café initiative was known in other communities across Australia and the world, providing visitors or people relocating to the region with a familiar way to connect to their community.

Its popularity in the Murraylands led to ac.care's Community Connections programs in the Limestone Coast and Riverland also launching Chatty Cafes in the



2023/24 period.

"We continue to learn more about how social isolation affects mental health and general well-being so we feel it is important to provide a regular opportunity

for people to come together and meet new people," she said.

"This aligns strongly with a core part of ac.care's mission, which is for country people to have strong, positive relationships."



# Community need drives start *free shuttle bus*

**COUNTRY agency ac.care is driving to break barriers for local people by offering a free shuttle bus to key services and retailers in Mount Gambier.**

The agency has started weekly dedicated return trips for residents to access Foodbank Mount Gambier or the Mount Gambier Marketplace.

The initiative was launched following feedback from visitors to the Mount Gambier Community Centre, who highlighted their own challenges accessing Foodbank Mount Gambier's Cave Road site.

"There can be several barriers for people accessing Foodbank or the shopping complex, from gaps in the public transport system to the cost of fares or lack of their own transport," ac.care Homelessness Services senior manager Trish Spark said.

"We hope introducing this free service removes some of those

barriers and allows people to access the services or shops they need each week," she said.

While vulnerable community members have experienced these issues for some time, it was the recent securing of a larger vehicle capable of transporting numerous people that made this initiative possible for the Mount Gambier Community Centre.

"We knew of these barriers and that created the opportunity for ac.care to go beyond our core services and provide this free transportation," Trish said.

"We can help connect people to Foodbank or provide them with other supports, but if transport is then an issue, we have solved one challenge and created another.

"As locals ourselves, we



understand some of the challenges within our community and strive to find solutions or work with others to improve outcomes."

After a soft launch of the service, Trish said more seats were being reserved each week.

"As word has spread, we are seeing more people coming

# agency to

forward to request a seat and we can only imagine this will continue as the colder, wetter weather sets in.

"We have limited seating so we appreciate if people register in advance to help us with planning."

Foodbank Mount Gambier regional branch manager Lynne Neshoda said there had already been great feedback from people using the service and she predicted the number of users to grow.

"We know it is difficult for people struggling to put food on the table to have regular access to food relief at our Foodbank Cave Road food hub," Lynne said, adding cost of living pressures continued to increase the number of people seeking support.

"For people who cannot afford to eat, let alone drive or do not have access to a vehicle, it is

extremely difficult to get here," she said.

"This is a fabulous and a much-needed service for the most vulnerable people in our community and we appreciate ac.care's support."

The free community shuttle to Mount Gambier Marketplace leaves the Mount Gambier Community Centre at 11am on Tuesdays, returning from the shopping complex to the centre at 1pm.

A return trip to Foodbank Mount Gambier leaves the community centre at 11am each Wednesday, returning after all occupants have collected their goods.

Follow ac.care and join the *Mount Gambier Community Centre noticeboard - ac.care* on Facebook to stay up to date with the latest news, events and opportunities.



**DRIVING CHANGE:** ac.care Linker project officer Jennifer Doody has been a driving force behind the introduction of the community transport. The initiative followed feedback received through her Linker project, which focuses on supporting vulnerable people from specific demographics who are experiencing financial hardship.

# Our people and culture

Working together to increase  
our impact





# Drawing on help uplift

**LOXTON man Tony Collier is a shining example of how personal strengths and experiences can uplift others in the community.**

He is part of a proud group of volunteers making a meaningful impact at ac.care Berri Community Centre.

The 54-year-old joined ac.care as a volunteer in February this year but his first interaction with the country agency's Kealley Street site came in April 2023 when a friend noticed a change in Tony's behaviour.

"Someone had noticed I had started becoming quite reclusive and I was not normally a reclusive person," Tony recalled.

They suggested Tony join the regular Growing Together social group, which is hosted Wednesdays at the centre by Community Connections Riverland support worker Sue Dayman.

"It took me a couple of weeks to come to the community centre as I had been told I might be the only male in the social group. That normally would not have bothered me but with how I felt at that time, it did stop me," he said.

"I eventually went along, walked down the driveway and saw the group and Sue there.

"The group was very welcoming and that is how it all started basically."

As Tony's confidence grew, he formed new friendships and became more involved in activities at the site.

"I was just doing little things like tinkering around in the garden and I thought I had a lot to offer," Tony said.

A workplace injury over a

# personal strengths to Loxton community

decade ago left Tony unable to work, which he said had been difficult to manage given his work ethic and experience, including a Certificate V in Horticulture and over 14 years as maintenance manager at Mount Lofty House.

"When the opportunity came up to volunteer, I was told to just work within my limits and I am trying to help where I can and share my knowledge with others," he said.

Tony's help has extended well beyond supporting Sue's Community Connections program with his hands-on, can-do approach leading to building shelves, supporting the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) and even noticing and changing a staff member's flat tyre in the car park.

He has also become a welcoming presence for other men joining the centre's community programs.

"I am coming back to who I was and I loved that person and that is who I am," Tony said, reflecting on

his journey since first visiting ac.care Berri Community Centre.

He also encouraged others in the community to consider how they could offer their time, skills or knowledge to the community through supporting ac.care.

"Becoming a volunteer was definitely the correct move for me and one I will not regret," Tony said.

"This has got to be one of the best places I have worked and every person shows their appreciation for one another.

"You are only as strong as the team you are working with and I am working with a really strong team."

Berri Community Centre is supported by other volunteers, with their contribution expanding the agency's capacity to make a difference.

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



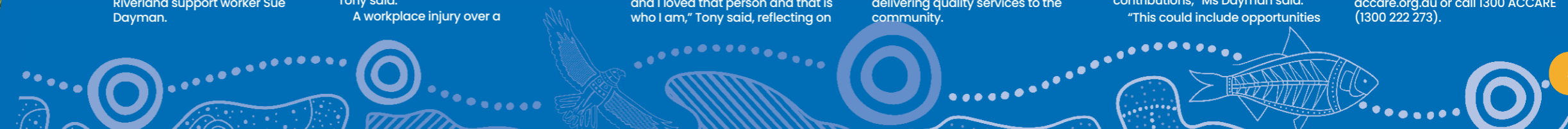
"If you have specific skills or expertise and the desire and time to support your community, we are always seeking new and innovative ways to support our clients, on top of the vital service delivery work that benefits from volunteer contributions," Ms Dayman said.

"This could include opportunities

for social engagement and empowering community members to secure tenancies or invaluable employability skills."

To discuss volunteering with ac.care visit Berri Community Centre at 5 Kealley Street, email [care@accare.org.au](mailto:care@accare.org.au) or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273).

**INVALUABLE SUPPORT:** Loxton man Tony Collier has used his personal strengths and experience to support community members at ac.care's Berri Community Centre.



# ac.care celebrated for community conscience

**THE team at ac.care is celebrating the organisation's win of the Community Conscience award at the 2023 Women in Business and Regional Development and Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce Awards.**

The award, presented at the gala ceremony at The Barn Palais, recognises a not-for-profit or social enterprise that tackles social problems to generate positive change in the community.

"This award celebrates the life-changing impact the organisation has on individuals' lives," event emcee and Women in Business and Regional Development deputy chair Toni Vorenas said.

Like the businesses celebrated at the awards, ac.care was founded in Mount Gambier.

From humble beginnings in a spare room of the Mount Gambier Anglican Church in 1986 with one social worker employed to

support homeless youth, ac.care has grown to become a diverse organisation with around 250 staff who offer direct care for children, as well as working with foster carers, delivering homelessness support, along with emergency relief and other diverse services, extending its country-specialist approach across eastern regional South Australia.

"ac.care has certainly grown to be a significant social services provider and trusted charity," Ms Vorenas said.

"It is with gratitude that we congratulate the incredible individuals who make up the ac.care team for the lifechanging work they do."



**GROWING CHANGE:** Community member Mark McMahon and Bunnings Mount Gambier activities organiser Hannah Harvey at the Mount Gambier Community Centre community garden, which has provided opportunities for new skills, social connection and fresh produce for centre visitors.





**UNITED:** Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation board member Cheryle Saunders, acting chief executive officer Tara Bonney and Jason Wallace of ac.care called on the community to attend a forum at the Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre to learn about the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

ac.care SACOSS

**You're invited!**

**Voice, Treaty, Truth Forum**

Come and hear about the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the Voice referendum, and the referendum question that we're all being asked to consider.

The Forums will be facilitated by Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna and Wirangu woman, Melissa Clarke, a delegate at the Constitutional Convention at Uluru and a signatory to the Uluru Statement.

The forums will include:

- an overview of the Uluru Statement and the referendum process
- a panel discussion
- a Q & A session
- a call for action to help take our nation forward
- an opportunity for general discussion

There will be two forums with the same content but available at different times

Wednesday 8 September  
1:00pm - 3:00pm OR 8:00am - 9:00pm

Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre  
Register via the QR code below  
close of business Friday 1 September

For further information contact jason.wallace@acare.org.au

# Allyship is *vital* in reconciliation

**PROVIDING** allyship to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and helping educate the community about the Indigenous Voice to Parliament aligned with ac.care's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan commitments.

Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation, ac.care and the South Australian Council of Social Service partnered to deliver forums in Mount Gambier, with a similar event held in Murray Bridge in partnership with local community organisations.

The forums featured guest facilitator Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna and Wirangu woman Melissa Clarke, who was a delegate at the Constitutional Convention at Uluru and a signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart – Voice, Treaty, Truth.

The forums included an overview of the Uluru Statement and referendum process, followed by a panel discussion about the voice to parliament and question and answer session.

Details were shared about the

importance of the voice to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice on laws and policies that affect them to achieve better outcomes for First Nations people.

ac.care Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan champion Jason Wallace said the forum was not only an opportunity to learn, but also gather with local Aboriginal community leaders and First Nations people as a unifying demonstration of support in learning and walking together towards a more reconciled nation.

Although constitutional recognition and a voice to parliament were rejected in the referendum, ac.care remains committed to the three pillars of the Uluru statement, ensuring the



voices of First Nations people are heard, facilitating truth telling and advocating for treaty making.

The referendum result prompted ac.care to pause its Reconciliation Action Plan commitments for a period of reflection and listening as

we consider the best way forward to contribute to empowering First Nations people.

This involves working with communities to design new approaches to collaborating and walking together to a better future.



# Work to *connect children to culture* celebrated

OUR work connecting young people to culture was recognised with the inaugural reconciliation award at the 2023 Anglicare Australia National Awards.

ac.care was the joint winner of two awards presented in the category.

Tyra Motto and Tenesha Pickering were recognised for their work creating resource packs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.

The proud Ngarrindjeri women developed the packs for children living in the Riverland to create and grow connection to local First Nations culture.

ac.care's work partnering 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 was also recognised.

Visiting artists worked with the

children to create paintings for the walls of their homes as a daily reminder of First Nations culture and encourage young people to express their own community connections.

Artists worked with young people to talk about the importance of connection to culture to achieve a sense of pride and self-respect.

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 People of River Murray).

Children not only worked with the artists but also local Elders where possible, with 2022 and 2023 Limestone Coast NAIDOC Elder of the Year (female) Auntie Michelle



**NATIONAL AWARDS:** ac.care senior Aboriginal advisor Kathy Rigney, human resources coordinator Robin Wright and community engagement manager Jason Wallace receive dual reconciliation awards on behalf of ac.care at the 2023 Anglicare Australia National Awards.

Jacquelin-Furr visiting Mount Gambier children to talk about Boandik culture, share Dreaming stories and identify a floral emblem for the homes, choosing plants traditionally used by Boandik people and sharing knowledge about their cultural use. Uncle Ken Jones also

took Aboriginal boys out on country along the coast on Boandik land to learn about cultural practices and history.

Full stories and videos at [accare.org.au](http://accare.org.au): "Resource packs for children in care" and "Art provides insight to Boandik culture".

# Staff *milestones*

## 15 YEARS

- Riverland homelessness services manager Michelle Storry
- Family services regional manager Dianne Doll

## 10 YEARS

- Homelessness client support worker Deanne Swift

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



Shane Maddocks with Michelle Storry - 15 years



Dianne Doll - 15 years



Deanne Swift - 10 years



# Community support increases our impact

Working together to increase our impact





# Brodie's big challenge raises \$8600 for country homelessness

**MOUNT** Gambier eight year old Brodie has inspired a community and raised \$8600 for country homelessness in the process after completing an acTIVE.care running challenge in January.

Brodie pledged to run throughout January while fundraising to support ac.care's homelessness and emergency relief services with his initial \$200 target soon snowballing into the thousands as community support ballooned.

The significance of the achievement has likely not yet dawned on the energetic Brodie, who took on the challenge after being captivated by inspirational runner Nedd Brockmann, best known for running almost 4000km across Australia over 46.5 days in 2022, raising \$2m for homelessness in the process.

Brodie covered around 65km throughout the month, including a 10km run on the penultimate day of his challenge, and was joined

by family, friends and supporters as he hit the pavement.

Community support continued to grow as more people followed along with Brodie's efforts, including Nedd himself.

ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre served as the finish line for Brodie's final run on January 31 where his achievement was acknowledged by the staff and he received a small giftbag, which included vouchers donated by Intersport Mount Gambier and Kaboom Family Entertainment.

Among those to greet Brodie at the custom-made finish line arch was ac.care Limestone Coast homelessness service manager Kelly McGuinness.

"Brodie visited us late last year at the Mount Gambier Community



Scan the QR code to see a video on Brodie's inspirational effort.



Centre and shared his desire to help people facing hardship locally," Kelly explained.

"From that conversation, Brodie launched his acTIVE.care fundraiser and we watched on

in awe as he quickly surpassed the original goal of \$200 and that figure climbed into the thousands.

"We are grateful for Brodie's inspiring effort and for the

generosity of our community that shared his amazing journey.

"Thank you to everyone who contributed through donations or raising awareness of Brodie's campaign, which has shown the collective impact communities can have to support local people facing hardship.

"We look forward to inviting Brodie back to ac.care in the future to show how he, with the generous support of the community, has made a difference."

Visit [accare.org.au/donate](https://accare.org.au/donate) to learn more about how you can set a personal challenge and support ac.care along the way.

You can walk, run, ride, read, paint, sing or come up with a unique challenge of your own. Every donation helps our mission of ensuring all country people have a safe home, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships.



**FINISH LINE:** Staff from ac.care's Mount Gambier Community Centre celebrated Brodie's arrival on the final day of his running challenge.

# Thank you to all of our generous 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



**CELEBRATING:** Rural City of Murray Bridge Mayor Wayne Thorley, Habitat for Humanity South Australia executive officer Louise Hay, ac.care corporate services executive manager Kris Roberts and ac.care's Thanuja Hiripitiyage, instigator of the Studio Purpose project, at the community celebration marking completion of Studio Purpose's second apartment block.

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.

# Country communities show warmth during winter

**COUNTRY South Australians helped bring warmth to people experiencing hardship this winter with donations of blankets, jumpers, beanies, bedding and more being made to ac.care.**

A surge of community support increased ac.care's impact during the winter period as people sought shelter and comfort amidst the cooler conditions.

In the Limestone Coast, 675 blankets and dozens of other winter warmers were donated to ac.care to help people cope with wintry conditions as part of the Triple M and SAFM 96.1FM Limestone Coast 2024 appeal.

Park Dry Cleaners added its support to the appeal for a second year as a donation collection point, delivering several basket-loads of blankets and other winter warmers to Mount Gambier Community Centre.

The agency received broad support across the Limestone

Coast with over 60 handmade beanies collected by South East Property Sales and Management on behalf of Millicent Community Centre.

The generosity continued in the Murraylands and Riverland, where donations of blankets, sleeping bags, swags, warm clothing and more flowed into ac.care sites.

A new element of support for ac.care this winter was the inaugural We Care Cally Camp Out, a Callington-based fundraising event led by Australian Portable Camps that raised \$100,000 for ac.care's Murraylands Homelessness Service.

ac.care homelessness and community services manager Trish Spark thanked the donors

and supporting businesses for their generosity.

"We are fortunate to work alongside communities who are ready to act and give generously to help people in need," Ms Spark said.

"People experience hardship in different ways depending on their circumstances, but we always find that warm clothing and blankets are in need.

"Whether it is helping keep someone warm in their home as they try to keep their electricity costs down or providing some much-needed layers to someone sleeping rough, every contribution helps people in need.

"Thank you to each and every person who donated in some way to help others in the community. Your contribution truly makes a difference."

ac.care provided financial help and food assistance to

almost 2000 people across the Limestone Coast, Riverland and Murraylands during the 2023/24 financial year.

"We are providing what we can to help lessen the impacts of the cost of living increases and housing shortages," Ms Spark said.

"We are here to help so if you or someone you know does need support, please get in touch with your nearest ac.care site to discuss what support is available.

"While we do support people in crisis, we can also help manage your circumstances to potentially ease some of the pressures that contribute towards significant hardship."

Visit [www.accare.org.au](http://www.accare.org.au), email [care@accare.org.au](mailto:care@accare.org.au) or call 1300 ACCARE (1300 222 273) for more information on support available.

# Spreading Christmas cheer people in need

**HUNDREDS** of country South Australians received a much-needed dose of Christmas cheer last festive season thanks to strong support for annual community appeals.

Despite ongoing increases to the cost of living, the generosity of our country communities shone through as food, toys, vouchers and other goods were distributed to people in need throughout the Murraylands, Riverland and Limestone Coast.

Over 700 toys and 510 hampers were handed out as part of the Riverland Christmas Appeal, with ac.care staff volunteering at distribution days held throughout the region.

The community also rallied behind the annual Murraylands Christmas Appeal, held in conjunction with The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and the Rural City of Murray Bridge.

The combined effort results in 180 applicants receiving support, including 140 Murraylands families who received toys as well as vouchers.

Meanwhile, the Mount Gambier Community Centre's Christmas Cheer initiative received generous support from diverse donors that benefited over 250 applicants seeking help over the festive season.

A significant donation of \$25,000 as part of the Mount Gambier Mayor's Christmas Appeal underpinned the annual initiative, which also received support from local businesses, schools, churches, charity partner Good360, other organisations and the Limestone Coast community.

This donation made a meaningful impact to the support provided to over 250 applicants over the festive period, which included food, vouchers and gifts.

"Christmas can be a difficult period for families who struggle on a daily basis to provide the most basic needs



**TIS THE SEASON:** ac.care homelessness client support workers Bec Hogg and Deanne Swift, Community Connections support worker Kimberly Lucas, client services officer Kylie Kilsby and Linker project officer Jennifer Doody were proud to deliver the annual Christmas Cheer program.

for their children so this additional support helps to ease the pressures experienced by these households," ac.care Christmas Cheer coordinator Deanne Swift said.

"We handed out over 150 bags

of toys and had all staff on board, running around trying to help anyone who came in," Deanne said.

"Everyone was just so grateful and we saw a lot of tears and gave a lot of hugs.

## for country



**JOY:** ac.care Community Connections regional manager Sue Watt and Limestone Coast homelessness service manager Kelly McGuinness.

"Thank you to the community for donating to the Mayor's Christmas Appeal or direct to ac.care, it helped so much.

"Every dollar went out to the community to help those who needed

our assistance this year."

Among those to receive support from the Christmas Cheer initiative were Rob and Jo, who were looking forward to Christmas celebrations with their extended family.

"We have a blended family so we celebrate Christmas over two days with children and grandchildren," Rob said.

"That's two Christmas dinners and two Christmas lunches so this extra support helps us a lot with buying groceries," he said.

Jo said the inclusion of toys, biscuits and other items would help add to the special time.

"We have all the main gifts and food sorted but now we have some stocking fillers to help out, plus the vouchers will help get us through the few weeks over Christmas," she said.

"This definitely makes Christmas so much easier for us.

"We are so grateful, they're wonderful down here (at the community centre)."



# ac.care funding partners

Brotherhood of St Laurence

South Australian Housing Trust

Department for Child Protection SA

Uniting Communities

Department of Human Services SA

Wyatt Benevolent Institution

Department for Infrastructure and Transport

Services Australia

Australian Department of Social Services

Skylight Mental Health

Legal Services Commission

Anglicare New South Wales

## Treasurer's report

**In light of continuing cost challenges faced in the past financial year, ac.care continues to evolve as an organisation and strengthen its financial position. The 2023/24 financial year has returned another positive financial result, with a surplus of \$1.252M being recorded. The surplus position was greater than the \$676,000 surplus recorded in 2022/23. The result exceeded budgeted expectations largely due to financial performance of its investment strategy, coupled with an increase in funds received.**

Underlying the financial performance for 2023/24 was ac.care's focus on the following strategies:

- continuation of the implementation of strategies from ac.care's strategic plan
- continuing expansion of its asset base, and
- refinement of ac.care's treasury management and investment strategy.

ac.care has a key strategy to build foundations for sustainable change. The 2023/24FY was largely a year focused on evolving this strategy by implementing transformative

structural and foundational changes within the organisation, including:

- progressing the structural requirements necessary to change the legal structure of ac.care to a Company Limited by Guarantee,
- changes to ac.care's enterprise resource planning software with the selection and commencement of migration to Technology One finance platform and UKG payroll software, and
- securing a long-term lease for a new head office administration building in a central location at Mount Gambier.

Each of these key strategies became a focal point for determining the future financial position of ac.care and became a focus for the development of ac.care's draft long-term financial plan.

ac.care's asset growth strategy continues to evolve. In 2023/24 ac.care acquired a house located on Mannum Road, Murray Bridge for the purpose of residential care. While the property required some modification, these modifications have resulted in both improved market value and functionally enhanced the maximisation of the building use.

Throughout the year ac.care continued to refine its treasury management and investment strategies, as its maturity evolves in this area. In 2023/24 the Board resolved to increase investment into the fund by reinvesting dividend funds through its investment fund managers Ord Minnett. In addition, further borrowings were also secured with Anglican Fund SA (AFSA) throughout 2023/24.

The Audit & Risk Committee

continues to review, assess and recommend improvements to the financial and risk strategies.

During the year the committee welcomed David Hill as an independent Audit & Risk Committee member. With a full complement of committee members, the committee continued to provide critical oversight of ac.care's evolving and complex systems and organisational environment.

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

Overall, the final financial position of ac.care continues to be 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 – ac.care

# Anglican Community Care Incorporated

## Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income - For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>INCOME</b>			
Revenues from fees and charges	3	388,908	424,000
Grants and contributions	4	25,758,665	24,524,893
Interest income	5	278,057	210,482
Investment income	6	215,271	111,596
Net gain from the disposal of non-current assets	7	1,325	-
Other income	8	742,915	484,555
Fair value gain / (loss) from financial assets	13	500,323	129,544
<b>Total income</b>		<b>27,885,464</b>	<b>25,885,070</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Staff benefit expenses	9	20,471,997	19,023,546
Supplies and services	10	4,891,648	4,824,727
Depreciation and amortisation	11	1,024,791	1,128,032
Finance costs	12	219,090	202,798
Net loss from the disposal of non-current assets	7	-	23,426
Other expenses	14	25,368	6,523
<b>Total expenses</b>		<b>26,632,894</b>	<b>25,209,052</b>
<b>NET RESULT</b>		<b>1,252,570</b>	<b>676,018</b>
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>		<b>1,252,570</b>	<b>676,018</b>

# Anglican Community Care Incorporated

## Statement of financial position - For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	15	5,782,815	5,616,193
Receivables	16	93,479	35,461
Other current assets	17	485,064	285,645
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>6,361,358</b>	<b>5,937,299</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Financial assets	18	5,411,383	4,911,806
Property, plant and equipment	19	2,445,630	1,962,145
Right of use assets	23	2,142,919	2,208,731
Intangible assets	20	44,496	59,816
Other non-current assets	21	8,370	8,370
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>10,052,798</b>	<b>9,150,868</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>16,414,156</b>	<b>15,088,167</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Payables	22	802,586	683,853
Lease liabilities	23	558,208	575,593
Loan borrowings	24	41,319	33,914
Staff benefits	25	2,613,367	2,731,530
Other current liabilities	26	200,077	585,781
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>4,215,557</b>	<b>4,610,671</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Lease liabilities	23	1,838,929	1,933,345
Loan borrowings	24	1,459,343	894,342
Staff benefits	25	507,758	509,810
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>		<b>3,806,030</b>	<b>3,337,497</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>8,021,587</b>	<b>7,948,168</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>8,392,569</b>	<b>7,139,999</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Other reserves		1,332,068	1,345,499
Retained earnings		7,060,501	5,794,500
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>8,392,569</b>	<b>7,139,999</b>

## Anglican Community Care Incorporated

### Statement of changes in equity - For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Other reserves \$	Retained earnings \$	Total \$
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2022</b>	<b>2,028,529</b>	<b>4,435,452</b>	<b>6,463,981</b>
Net result for 2022-2023	-	676,018	676,018
Transfer to / (from) reserves	(683,030)	683,030	-
<b>Total comprehensive result for 2022-23</b>	<b>(683,030)</b>	<b>1,359,048</b>	<b>676,018</b>
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2023</b>	<b>1,345,499</b>	<b>5,794,500</b>	<b>7,139,999</b>
Net result for 2023-24	-	1,252,570	1,252,570
Transfer to / (from) reserves	(13,431)	13,431	-
<b>Total comprehensive result for 2023-24</b>	<b>(13,431)</b>	<b>1,266,001</b>	<b>1,252,570</b>
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2024</b>	<b>1,332,068</b>	<b>7,060,501</b>	<b>8,392,569</b>

## Anglican Community Care Incorporated

### Statement of cash flows - For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Receipts from fees, charges and grants		29,408,442	28,186,887
GST recovered from the ATO		704,367	655,084
Interest received		273,138	210,482
Payments to suppliers and employees		(26,516,926)	(23,852,101)
GST remitted to ATO		(2,733,450)	(2,595,274)
<b>Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities</b>		<b>1,135,571</b>	<b>2,605,078</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		1,325	-
Investment income		210,352	111,596
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(770,259)	(842,044)
Purchase of financial assets		-	(4,611,219)
<b>Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities</b>		<b>(558,582)</b>	<b>(5,341,667)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>			
<b>Cash inflows</b>			
Loan borrowings		600,000	521,061
Payment of lease liabilities		(900,367)	(888,930)
Repayment of borrowings		(110,000)	(30,385)
<b>Net cash provided by / (used in) financing activities</b>		<b>(410,367)</b>	<b>(398,254)</b>
<b>Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>166,622</b>	<b>(3,134,843)</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		5,616,193	8,751,036
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>	15	<b>5,782,815</b>	<b>5,616,193</b>

The above statements should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes, available on [accare.org.au](http://accare.org.au)

## Carbon accounting - our environmental commitment (2023-2024FY)

Emissions Source	Consumption Units	Consumption	Base Year 2010-11 CO <sub>2</sub> -e (tonnes)	2023-2024 CO <sub>2</sub> -e (tonnes)	Proportion of total inventory (%)	Reduction from Base year (%)
<b>Direct Emissions (Scope 1)</b>						
Petrol - vans and company cars	kL	52.98	215.69	122.13	27.00%	
Distributed Natural Gas	GJ	233.48	8.31	12.00	2.65%	
Diesel - company cars	kL	2.40	0.51	6.47	1.43%	
LPG - Bulk heating	GJ	166.16	0.04	10.00	2.21%	
Autogas - vans and company cars	GJ	0.00	5.98	0.00	0.00%	
<b>Total Scope 1</b>			<b>230.53</b>	<b>150.60</b>	<b>33.30%</b>	<b>-34.67%</b>
<b>Indirect Emissions (Scope 2)</b>						
Electricity usage	kWh	422,023.00	216.84	105.51	23.33%	
<b>Total Scope 2</b>			<b>216.84</b>	<b>105.51</b>	<b>23.33%</b>	<b>-51.34%</b>
<b>Optional Emissions (Scope 3)</b>						
Waste (municipal collection)	m <sup>3</sup>	336.41	18.65	75.36	16.66%	
Electricity (distribution losses etc.)	kWh	422,023.00	41.45	33.76	7.46%	
Flights (staff travel)	km	175,242.00	35.34	41.29	9.13%	
Water - reticulated supply	kL	5,416.37	2.58	7.19	1.59%	
Petrol (extraction, production etc)	kL	52.98	17.08	31.17	6.89%	
Natural gas (extraction, production etc)	GJ	233.48	1.65	2.47	0.55%	
Diesel - (extraction, production etc)	kL	2.40	0.04	1.60	0.35%	
LPG -Bulk heating (extraction, production etc)	GJ	166.16	0.00	3.36	0.74%	
Autogas (extraction, production etc)	GJ	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.00%	
<b>Total Scope 3</b>			<b>117.33</b>	<b>196.19</b>	<b>43.38%</b>	<b>67.22%</b>
<b>Total Scope 1 + 2</b>			<b>447.37</b>	<b>256.11</b>	<b>56.62%</b>	
<b>Total Scope 1+2+3</b>			<b>564.69</b>	<b>452.30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	
<b>Reduction Measures and Offsets</b>						
Carbon Credits			0.00	0.00		
<b>FINAL TOTAL</b>			<b>564.69</b>	<b>452.30</b>		<b>-27.70%</b>
<b>FTE</b>			<b>136.00</b>	<b>193.11</b>		
<b>tCO<sub>2</sub>-e /FTE</b>			<b>4.15</b>	<b>2.34</b>		

### 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](http://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.

# Fine wine helps community

WINE sales have generated \$41,700 to support ac.care's vital homelessness services in country South Australia thanks to a unique partnership.

The 2018 Homeless Grapes Project Cabernet Sauvignon was produced with surplus Coonawarra grapes that did not have a home, but online wine retailer Vinomofu worked with vignerons, wineries and the community to use the fruit to make a unique drop to raise funds for ac.care.

Staff from ac.care's homelessness team volunteered to pick the grapes, Coonawarra wineries pitched in with the wine making process and now all proceeds from sales of the wine (\$25 per bottle) are donated to ac.care

to support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Supporters of the project include Redman Wines, Brand & Sons Coonawarra, Hollick Estates, Patrick of Coonawarra, Raidis Estate and Penley Estate, along with Torresan Estate, CCL Label, Visy and Orora.

We are grateful for the contributions of all project partners, along with supporters who have purchased and enjoyed the wines.

You can support the initiative by buying a bottle or box of wine while stocks last.



**GRAPE SUCCESS:**  
ac.care's Sue Watt picks grapes for the 2018 Homeless Grapes Project.

# 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

David Hill

Mike Bleby (OAM)

Gillian McGinty

Erika Vickery



**WORKING TOGETHER:** ac.care people and culture senior business partner Rob Wright and senior Aboriginal advisor Kathy Rigney have developed and delivered the Living, Working and Walking Together training to support all ac.care staff to work respectfully with and alongside First Nations people and communities. Among those to receive the training during the 2023/24FY period were ac.care board treasurer Paul Duka, community engagement manager Jason Wallace, chief executive Shane Maddocks, risk management coordinator Danielle Helbers, board members Tony Wright and Louise Nobes, board convener Rick Fisher, governance officer Daniela Waters and marketing coordinator Brett Kennedy.

# 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](https://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

[accare.org.au](http://accare.org.au)

[care@accare.org.au](mailto:care@accare.org.au)

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(1300 222 273)

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