



ANNUALREPORT

2018–2019

Our Board

It is our great pleasure to present the 2019 Annual Report on behalf of CareSouth.

The financial year 2018-2019 has seen significant change across the organisation not least of course, saying farewell to a much admired CEO, Deb Tozer. 'With change comes change' and on the back of the changes being implemented by the Government, it is important to remember our past but look to making the future strong alongside challenges within our sector.

The Board is encouraged by CareSouth's people who carry out our vision of creating a positive future for children, young people, individuals, families and communities every day. It is their passionate enthusiasm and desire to help others that drives the organisation to higher goals. To all the CareSouth employees and partners, we wish to thank you for

the part you play in providing the much needed services across our footprint.

We extend thanks to past Director, James Parrish who stood down due to a work change. James held the important role of Company Secretary and, by using his daily position as a lawyer, providing CareSouth with the much needed experience required in this important role.

CareSouth is pleased to report a healthy balance sheet allowing the Organisation to complete its obligations under the Government funding arrangements. Due to significant changes in management this financial year, development of the South Nowra property has fallen behind our planning schedule. Despite this, CareSouth's new Head Office and Community Hub will proceed as a priority in the next financial year to ensure its completion.

The Board looks forward to the year ahead being one of the best in CareSouth's history.



Our Carers

It takes a village to raise a child. But when you are a foster carer it is even more important to have a support network of people around you who can step up and lend a hand when needed.

Jan and her husband Ken have been short-term foster carers with CareSouth for the past five years. The Sussex Inlet couple are currently caring for a six-month-old baby girl who, like most children in care, had difficulty settling and forming attachments.

Jan and Ken were asked to care for the newborn after they had booked Grand Prix tickets for their son's 40th birthday in Melbourne. As the celebration drew closer Jan was reluctant to disrupt the baby's routine and newly formed attachment. So she insisted her husband attend, while she stayed home with the baby.

"The tickets were all paid for and then we got bubby," said Jan. "I decided not to go because I didn't want to disturb everything we had worked so hard to put in place. I kept thinking 'my son will understand'."

When the couple's caseworker Peter Johnston heard Jan was willing to miss her son's milestone birthday, so as not to disrupt the infant's routine, he and the Carer Recruitment team swung into action.

"Peter insisted that I go to Melbourne," said Jan. "He said to me 'No Jan, you can't miss this, it's too important, you need to take that time and spend it with your family, we don't want you to burn out'. And Peter was right."

"My son was so happy. He said to me afterwards that he would have really missed me if I wasn't there."

The Shoalhaven team reached out to Sanctuary Point respite carers Kirsty and Ian and introduced them to Jan and Ken and the baby girl.

"Peter is the most wonderful caseworker in the world. He and the Carer Recruitment team made all the plans to make sure bubby had the best care possible," said Jan.

The two couples then set about establishing a month-long transition where they would visit each other's houses in the lead-up to overnight respite care so Jan and her husband could fly to Melbourne.



"Everyone needs time out every now and then," said Shoalhaven Permanency Support Program Manager Chris Stubbs. "And in this case it was really important that Jan and Ken were able to focus on their own family. That's why it's so important to have respite carers like Kirsty and Ian, who are willing to step up."

Kirsty and Ian, who became carers with CareSouth 18 months ago after moving from another foster carer agency in the ACT, said the transition to becoming respite carers for the baby girl "was the easiest one we have ever done".

"Babies don't come with a manual, but this little one did," said Kirsty. "Jan and Ken were so open and honest with her routine. They had a list of all the things they did, from the songs they sing to her at bathtime, to the way they wrapped her at bedtime. And because the baby knew they were her cues for sleeptime she settled in really well."

"We did a lot of meet and greets before the baby stayed over. It was a really smooth adjustment because we were able to establish a relationship over a period of weeks in the lead-up to having her overnight. Usually it doesn't happen like that, you get a phone call saying 'we need a carer quick'."

Kirsty and Ian continue to be respite carers for the six-month-old baby.

"We like having another little person in the house," said Kirsty. "And our 11-year-old daughter is an only child so she loves having another child around."

Jan said the respite care arrangement has been beneficial for everyone involved.

"The little one had a lovely few days with Kirsty and Ian and their daughter," said Jan. "She's clearly in love with them and gets so excited to see them. It worked out perfectly."

Our Carers

Deni carers lighting up kid's lives

If they show me the spark, I'm going to give them the fire". It is a mantra that CareSouth foster carers Jody and Stan Mikolajski have lived by since they began their journey as carers a decade ago.

The Deniliquin couple have opened their home to more than 50 vulnerable young people over the past 10 years. They have covered the whole gamut of the Permanency Support Program – from long-term care and restoration to emergency, respite and short-term care.

Asked why they became foster carers Jody replied: "You could call it selfish on my part. I couldn't have kids but we really wanted them, so foster care seemed like the next logical step. Our neighbours at the time were foster carers and they inspired us."

"We were keeping up with the Jones'," joked Stan.

But jokes aside it is the Mikolajski's who are now inspiring the Deniliquin community as passionate advocates for vulnerable young people. They are often told how amazing they are for creating a loving family for so many kids in need. But the modest couple insist that there is nothing "special or superhuman about us".

Their first experience as carers was supporting two sibling groups of three children, ranging in age from 15 months to seven. Soon after this they were asked to care for a baby. Nurturing seven children was a baptism by fire but the Mikolajski's were up to the challenge.

"It was the Brady Bunch, plus one," laughed Stan. "It helped us realise that we have a limit," said Jody. The couple are now caring for five children, aged three to thirteen, from two sibling groups.

"We consider ourselves normal, everyday people, doing something we thoroughly enjoy," said Stan.

"Somebody has to support these children so it might as well be me or Jody. We genuinely feel that this has been our purpose in life for the past decade."

"Becoming foster carers is a decision we certainly don't regret," said Jody. "There's been a few heartaches along the way, where they go home or they have to go elsewhere. But you have to be realistic, not every child fits and we might not be able to give every child what they need. That's heartbreaking but you do more harm to the child if you're not honest with yourself."

Stan is quick to point out that the wins far outweigh the difficulties.

"The journey has had its ups and downs," admits Stan. "But it's fair to say that the ups definitely outnumber the downs. The joy that we encounter when we see the children in our care develop and flourish is the best reward we could possibly ask for."



“Somebody has to support these children so it might as well be me or Jody. We genuinely feel that this has been our purpose in life for the past decade.”

“We really try to identify, as much as possible, what each individual child really needs. They all need love and attention, they all need school. But you have to sit back and observe the children, listen more than talk, to find out what sparks their interest.”

The couple take turns telling a heartwarming story about a teenage boy who joined their family as a 14-year-old. The teen couldn't read or write and wouldn't speak. A year before coming into the Mikolajski's care he had been diagnosed with low functioning autism.

“He didn't know his alphabet and his short-term memory was non-existent,” said Stan.

But when Jody and Stan discovered that the boy, an avid gamer, was desperate to learn to read so he could follow the instructions on his gaming console, they had their spark and set about lighting the fire.

“When he left us he was a 19-year-old who had completed Year 11 and 12 and was reading chapter books,” said Jody proudly. “Watching that light switch go on is what makes it worth it, you just have to keep encouraging them and find that interest.”

“For me that's the reason why I do this, the reward of seeing really positive outcomes,” said Stan. “You have to be prepared to go into bat for these kids. This young fella, he was allowed to slip through the cracks right up until Year 8. But we finally found a wonderful school for him



and a wonderful teacher and he progressed in leaps and bounds.”

Asked if they would give any advice to prospective carers, Stan and Jody both talk about the importance of cultivating positive relationships with birth families.

“Our philosophy is if we are able to have a relationship with the birth family, it certainly makes things easier when it comes to family contact,” said Stan. “Kids are quite perceptive, so a good relationship between carers and birth family can often be the difference when it comes to having a close, stable relationship with the children in our care.”

“Several years back we had a sibling group of three young girls, aged six to eight. They were with us for four-and-a-half years before going back to family. We continue to have a relationship with their family to this day.”

The couple also stress that communicating with caseworkers is key to ensuring children and young people get all their needs met.

“We are very fortunate to be associated with CareSouth in Deniliquin,” said Stan. “They have been very supportive of us as carers, and have given us all the necessary tools and resources to be able to provide what these children need.”

Jody is honest when she points out that being a foster carer is not always easy.

“It's not a walk in the park,” said Jody. “But it's worth every step.”



Our Footprint

Our reach is great and has expanded throughout regional New South Wales and the Southern Tablelands, now providing services across five regions.



A stylized map of regional New South Wales and the Southern Tablelands. The map is dark grey with a light grey outline of the region. Three large, semi-transparent grey circles represent service areas. Each circle contains a smaller, solid-colored circle: a green circle for Griffith, a pink circle for Deniliquin, and a blue circle for Wagga. The names of these regions are written in white capital letters next to their respective circles. A white line representing a river or road runs along the bottom of the map.

GRIFFITH

DENILIQUN

WAGGA

CANBERRA



Our year in focus

2018

**JUL
2018**

- CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer announces her retirement. Recruitment for a new CEO begins.
- Diversity and Inclusion Committee launched to provide resources, training and support for the CALD community, the LGBTIQA+ community, the disability community and Australia's First Nations people.
- Permanency Support Program (PSP) implemented across all sites. PSP focuses on the best long-term outcome for children and young people who have entered the child protection system.

**AUG
2018**

- CareSouth features on the ABC's Four Corners, with Brighter Futures Caseworker Brittani Carr delivering SafeCare to a young mother in the program.

**OCT
2018**

- Up to 50 children and young people from the community attend the Berkeley Health Hub and receive free optical, dental and hearing checks as well as occupational health and speech assessments.

**SEP
2018**

- CareSouth celebrates NAIDOC Week – Because of Her We Can – across NSW. Crew from the HMAS Albatross 723 Helicopter Squadron lend a helping hand to support staff.
- CareSouth celebrates Foster Care week, which recognises the wonderful work our carers do in supporting vulnerable children.

**NOV
2018**

- CareSouth has marked White Ribbon Day - a global movement denouncing violence against women - with a range of events across our regions, including a White Ribbon Day walk around Lake Illawarra.

**DEC
2018**

- CareSouth appoints new CEO Liz Forsyth after outgoing CEO Deb Tozer retires.
- Brighter Futures program begins in Nowra.

2019

**FEB
2019**

- CareSouth's Permanency Support Program teams host a day of fun in the sun for children, carers and caseworkers at Jamberoo Action Park.
- CareSouth's Community Housing Property (Nan Bishop House, Nowra) receives confirmation of compliance with community housing legislation (National Regulatory Code) as required by law.

**JAN
2019**

- CareSouth Homework Hub continues partnership with University of Wollongong Master of Teaching students. UOW students complete 30 hours of Professional Experience placement in the Homework Hub as mentors for vulnerable students.

**MAR
2019**

- CareSouth celebrates International Women's Day.

**APR
2019**

- CareSouth receives a three-year certificate of registration from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, allowing us to provide NDIS support services, encompassing 15 different registration groups such as support coordination, therapeutic supports and development/life skills.
- Nowra, Berkeley and Goulburn Health Hubs see more than 150 young people.

**MAY
2019**

- CareSouth hosts the Illawarra Business Chamber 'After Hours' event in the Berkeley Community Hub with more than 100 community supporters, including CEOs, representatives from the IMB (which funds the CareSouth Health Hubs) and the Berkeley Sports Club (which fund the CareSouth Homework Hub) and Families, Communities and Disability Services Minister Gareth Ward.
- CareSouth receives \$15,000 funding from the IMB Foundation for its community Health Hubs.
- CareSouth celebrates Families Week, recognising it takes a village to raise a child and that families come in all different shapes and sizes.
- CareSouth begins Carer Experience Project in a bid to provide the best quality care and service to our clients and carers. This project aims to develop a detailed customer journey map for CareSouth carers.
- Goulburn Office opens.

Financial Overview 2018-19

Financial Performance

The financial performance is summarised from extracts of the audited financial statements of CareSouth for the period ended 30th June 2019.

Review of Operations

The operating profit for the year ending 30th June 2019 was \$359,804. In the previous year it was \$210,550. Growth occurred in the Western & Southern NSW Permanency Support Programs.

Trading Results

The operating profit for the year ended **30th June 2019**

\$359,804

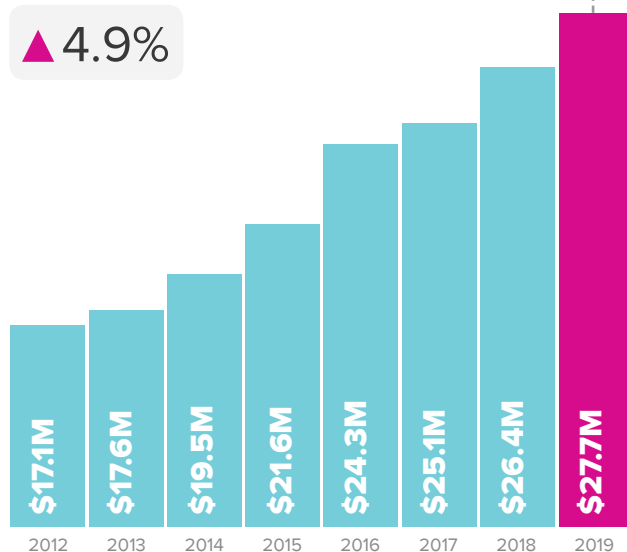
In the previous year it was

\$210,550

Revenue

\$27.7M

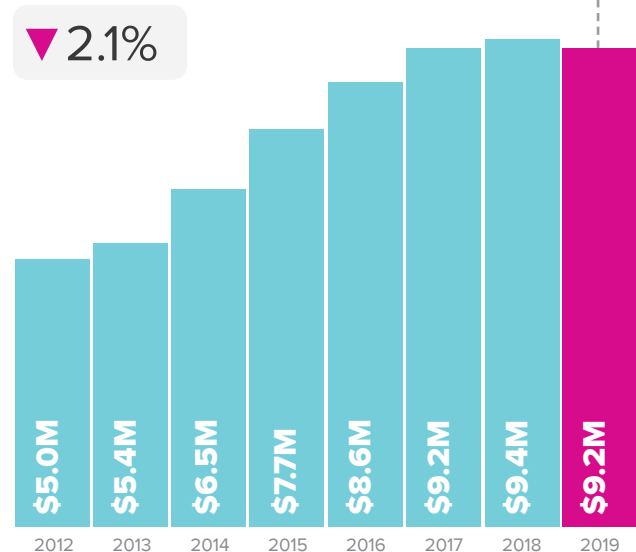
▲ 4.9%



Operating Costs

\$9.2M

▼ 2.1%



Likely Developments

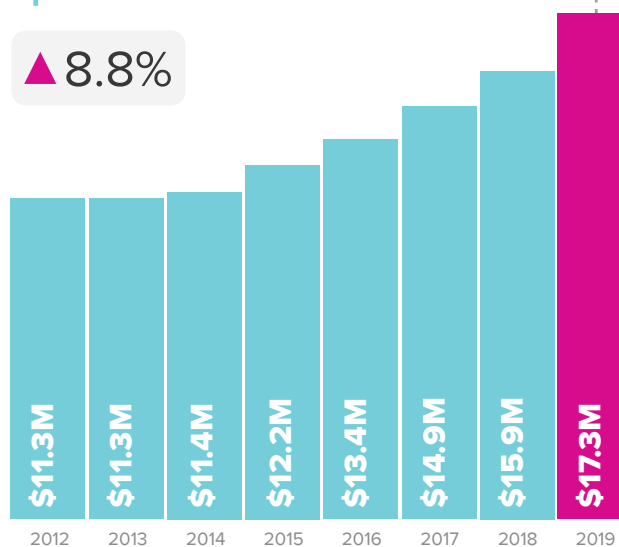
The Organisation intends to:

- (a) Expand services provided to clients through provision of more community based services across a wider geographical area.
- (b) See continued growth in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) within the regions we operate in.

Employee Costs

\$17.3M

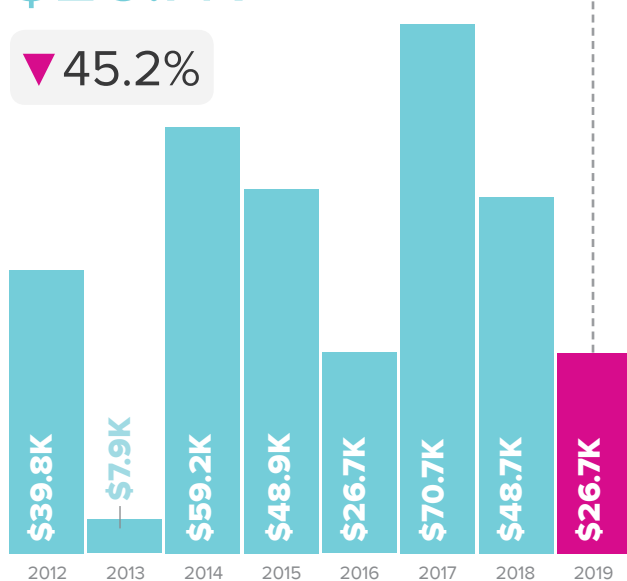
▲ 8.8%



Fundraising and Donations

\$26.7K

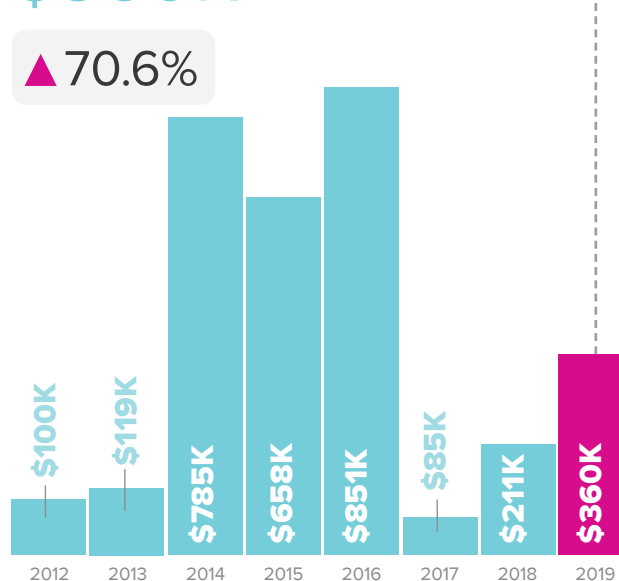
▼ 45.2%



Trading Surplus

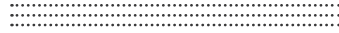
\$360K

▲ 70.6%



EVERYDAY

CareSouth



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