

# EveryDay

CareSouth Magazine Issue One

our special 25th  
anniversary edition

# Inside

Welcome to our new magazine  
Meet our new Chairman  
Keeping our kids safe

ENTER



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We absolutely believe  
in creating positive  
futures for children,  
young people, families  
and communities.

# Welcome

## CEO's

Welcome to an exciting first edition of the new CareSouth magazine. We hope you enjoy the inspiring stories from our people.

This year we are celebrating 25 years since CareSouth first opened its doors. It is a particularly exciting time for us to reflect on our growth, our achievements and our learnings for the future.

Our success is largely attributed to our founder Jim McEwan for steering us through a quarter of a century. Thank you Jim for your foresight, leadership and unwavering support.

With big shoes to fill, we are thrilled to introduce you to our new Chairman John Dorahy, who we feature in this inaugural edition.

For over 25 years CareSouth has challenged the status quo as we have cared and advocated for some of our communities most vulnerable people.

We absolutely believe in creating positive futures for children, young people, families and communities. The wonderful stories captured in this magazine highlight the diligence, dedication and compassion of our staff, carers, volunteers and communities involved in our programs.

CareSouth aim to help people in a number of ways through Foster Care, Brighter Futures, Everyday Champions, Residential Care, Disabilities, Accommodation, Supervised Contact, Clinical and Youth Support Services, and a 24/7 Call Centre.

We are proud to be recognised as a progressive and influential organisation, dedicated to supporting and empowering children, young people, families and communities.

This year the sector faced many changes including Permanency Support – Out-of-Home Care and most notably the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which was launched in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven in July.

Our NDIS Working Group is continuing to develop our programs and strategies to embrace the new world of Disability Services and ensure parents and carers know how to advocate for their children and loved ones.

We know people living with disability want the opportunity to pursue their passions and dreams, to live an enriched life they have designed for themselves. We can help you do that at CareSouth.

The people we support are at the centre of everything we do, of every decision we make, and they should be. Our staff, carers and volunteers go above and beyond our core business to deliver better outcomes for those we work with every day.

We are very proud of our initiatives that include improved educational outcomes for children and young people through the Homework Hub, keeping our communities connected through our Community Hub activities, and promoting an organisation-wide culture for safeguarding children and vulnerable people.

We hope you are inspired by the courage and determination of those we support, their stories and the challenges they face in pursuit of a positive future.

Partnerships are highly valued by CareSouth and critical to the success of our vision, so please contact us. There are many ways you could help and we would love to hear from you.

CareSouth founder and recently retired chairman Jim McEwan has dedicated much of his life to helping young people. Jim's journey in building CareSouth from a handful of staff to a team of almost 300 began 25 years ago, when he was asked to join a steering committee to help save Nowra's only youth refuge. Jim's unwavering vision to "give every kid a terrific life" led to him fostering a young person and setting up an Aunties & Uncles program in the Shoalhaven. When he decided to combine the two services, Shoalcare – now known as CareSouth – opened its doors. We now have offices in the Illawarra, South Coast, Southern Tablelands, Western NSW and the ACT and remain a not-for-profit community organisation.

Jim's vision – to create positive futures for all those with whom we work – became our mission statement and underpins all the work we do here at CareSouth. For 25 years, Jim has committed himself to doing his best to make that happen. He has enhanced the lives of many children and young people across the Shoalhaven, Illawarra, Southern and Western NSW.

# Our Jim McEwan Founder's story

Jim's feelings showed through in an interview he did a few years ago:

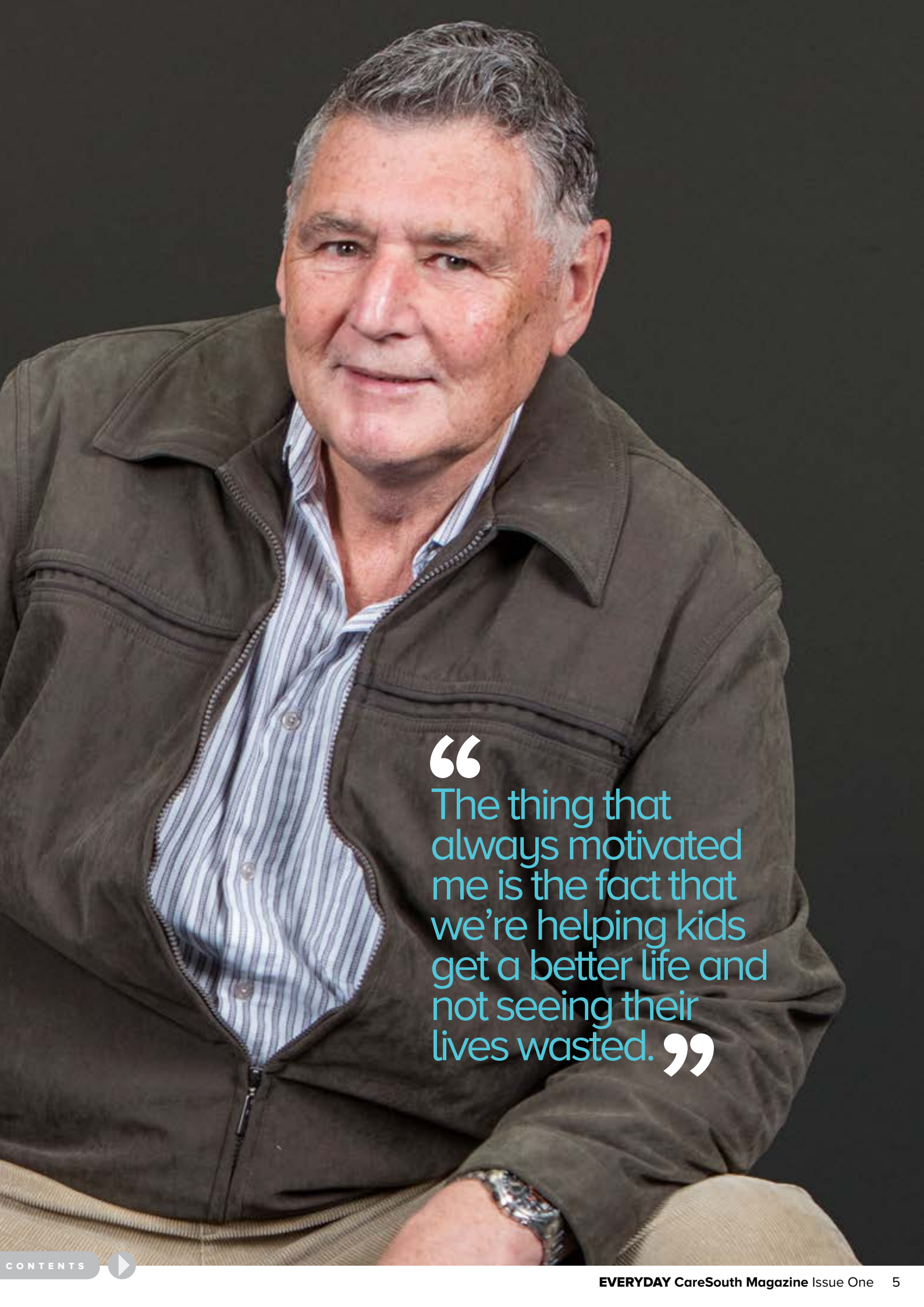
"Kids have so much potential and I hate seeing it wasted. I grew up in a perfectly normal family, I was the oldest of six kids and I had a terrific life. I think every kid should also have a terrific life. Many years ago I coached an under 13's footy team and there were lost kids amongst the group. I found I was OK relating to these boys so I thought maybe I could make some contribution. I knew I wasn't a welfare worker but I was good at getting things started and keeping them going so that's what I did. I think wanting to 'make a difference' is a very human aspiration.

After all these years our core values haven't changed – doing the best for kids that we can possibly do, and the same for people with disabilities as the organisation grew and developed. It's been the theme that's existed from day one and still exists.

I think I'm the one who did whatever had to be done to get us where we were going. Our CEO, Deb Tozer, is the one who inspires and provides a vision for the organisation that will take us into the future."

Jim has always been the guiding force behind CareSouth, stepping in when needed. As such, CareSouth has always been in safe hands and will remain so with our CEO and Board sharing the same visions and values.





“  
The thing that  
always motivated  
me is the fact that  
we're helping kids  
get a better life and  
not seeing their  
lives wasted.”

JOHN DORAHY

# Our Chairman tackles new role

**T**his year CareSouth is celebrating a major milestone – 25 years of creating positive futures for children, young people, families and communities across NSW and more recently the ACT.

It is also a year in which CareSouth's founder and Chairman Jim McEwan has stepped aside and handed over the mantle to Wollongong councillor and former footballer John Dorahy. John was invited to take on the chairman's role in January this year and jumped at the opportunity to help those we work with to enhance their quality of life.

"It is a wonderful accolade that someone in Jim's position, with his

experience and expertise, would identify me to take over his role," said John, displaying the humility that made him a crowd favourite on the football field. "I can only imagine it stems from the fact that I have empathy for the children and young people CareSouth works with."

It is clear that John is passionate about supporting and nurturing those that need a helping hand. He firmly believes that instilling confidence in young people and letting them know that you support them can often make all the difference to the way in which they view the world.

"You give them the confidence to





“  
**There’s lots of  
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opportunity.**

”  
take the next step forward, that was a big part of why I said yes to becoming the Chairman,” said John. “I believe in what CareSouth does and there’s so much more that can be achieved. But it’s small steps, I’m on an extremely steep learning curve.

“There’s lots of doors in life and all I see behind those doors is opportunity,” said John. “If you don’t open a door you never know what’s behind it. It could be fantastic or it could be not so good. But if it’s not so good then you learn from your mistakes. I always say to kids just never be afraid to take those opportunities.”

It is sage advice. John has never shied away from stepping out of his comfort zone and taking on new challenges. It has stood him in good stead throughout his varied and successful careers. As a fullback he was his team’s last line of defence but always managed to remain calm under pressure. It earned him the nickname Joe Cool on the football field and John displays a similar approach to his business ventures and as head of CareSouth’s Board.

John studied business management and accountancy after finishing high school and, contrary to popular belief, did not start his career as a butcher but worked in sales and marketing for his family’s meat business. Eventually he opened his own butchery in Sydney with his brother-in-law, while playing for the then Wests Magpies. A broken neck in 1980 made John re-evaluate his career and he moved back to Wollongong to captain the Steelers in 1982. John opened a fitness centre which was a “huge success” but when he began travelling to England to play football he sold the business and went into sales management.


He is modest about his achievements and quick to point out that he had a good support network of mentors and role models as a footballer, councillor and a businessman. It is for this reason that he strongly believes his role as Chairman of CareSouth’s Board is such a good fit. “I have seen in my sporting career and as a councillor for the past five years that people who are in a vulnerable situation, who require assistance, you put your hand out and offer support. That brings a smile to my face and makes what we do worthwhile.”



Our youth  
caseworker's story

# Passion to help homeless youth





**C**areSouth youth worker Jen Toms is determined to change the stigma associated with youth homelessness. Jen, a caseworker at our Shoalhaven Youth Support Service (SYSS), does this with a hands-on approach. Armed with a truckload of cardboard boxes she frequently visits schools in the Shoalhaven and gives students a cardboard box, some sticky tape and scissors and asks them to create a home.

"Students are challenged to build a house, just like a person living on the street might do," said Jen. "While assembling their cardboard creations I ask them to think about someone who might be homeless, what things might be like for them, how they might survive."

"It is an important conversation because the general perception of homeless youth is that they are dysfunctional, druggos, bums and there because of their own choice. We aim to show students the importance of empathy, non-judgement, and to break down the fear associated with a homeless person."

Jen explains to students that programs like SYSS offer a safety net for young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Caseworkers focus on building young people's resilience through support, assistance and

guidance and help them access resources and referral networks.

"We discuss how homelessness doesn't always look like people sleeping rough," said Jen. "It can also be couch surfing, and not having a stable long term address. We make young people aware of our service by having a conversation with them and creating something constructive."

The SYSS program provides both early intervention (Outreach) and accommodation for young people aged 16 to 24. Young people involved in the program can get help with advocacy, basic budgeting, cooking and cleaning, self-care, access to professional advice and referrals to other services.

"SYSS offers crisis accommodation for up to eight weeks but we have made a significant shift to Outreach support to help prevent homelessness and work towards stabilising young people in their accommodation options," said Jen. "The SYSS Outreach program supports up to 70 young people each year and helps them begin their journey to independence."

For more information about SYSS call (02) 4422 7625.



# CareSouth reco



Left to right: Renee Schott – Chief Financial Officer, Sharon Prosperi – Human Resource Manager, Michael Mason – Regional Manager Shoalhaven, Bronwyn Howlett – Regional Manager Illawarra, Tracy Mayo – Regional Manager Southern NSW & ACT (absent Michele Saffery - Regional Manager Western NSW)  
Centre front: Debra Tozer - Chief Executive Officer

**SHOALHAVEN  
BUSINESS  
OF THE YEAR  
2016**

**SHOALHAVEN  
EXCELLENCE IN  
COMMUNITY SERVICE  
2016**

**SHOALHAVEN  
EMPLOYER OF  
CHOICE  
2016**

**DENILIQUN  
BUSINESS LEADER  
OF THE YEAR  
2016**

**DENILIQUN  
EXCELLENCE  
IN BUSINESS  
2017**

**It has been an exciting time at CareSouth with the organisation winning several prestigious business awards in 2016 and 2017.**

Most recently CareSouth was recognised for Excellence in Business at the 2017 Deniliquin Business Awards. Program Manager Pru McManus – the 2016 Business Leader of the Year at last year's awards – said the Deniliquin team have worked "tirelessly" over the past four years to develop and provide quality programs in the Western region.

"Small towns can be difficult to engage when new services come into town, and it's essential that our service provision is of the highest standard to gain that community confidence," said Pru. "This award recognises that CareSouth has been accepted into the town as a highly respected organisation. And this is directly attributable to the hard work, dedication and commitment of our team, and the support they provide to the children, carers and families we work with. I am extremely proud of what the Deni team have achieved, and we look forward to what the future brings for CareSouth in the Western region and beyond."

In 2016 CareSouth was named the Shoalhaven Business of the Year. Along with the prestigious main award, we also won the Employer of Choice and Excellence in Community Service awards.



# gnised as business leader



“It’s essential that our service provision is of the highest standard to gain that community confidence.”

CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer said the range of awards we have received across our geographical footprint highlights the professionalism, innovation and quality work our not-for-profit organisation does in the community sector.

“I am so proud of the individual and collective achievements of our staff and their commitment to do the very best they can for those they support,” said Deb. “It was an honour to receive these awards in recognition of our hard-working, dedicated staff and carers.”

Deb said the awards are recognition of the importance our organisation places on investing in our future – the vulnerable children and young people who are supported by our team of dedicated employees.

“At CareSouth we work with people most in need,” said Deb. “Every day our committed staff arrive for work with a desire to help others. They are dedicated professionals from diverse backgrounds who have a unique skill set – from direct care workers to accountants and psychologists to marketing and IT specialists.

“Each and every day they work towards creating a positive future for the children, young people, individuals, families and communities that they support. It is a privilege and an honour to lead such a compassionate, hardworking and inspiring team.”



**FOSTER CARE**  
A NOWRA CARER'S STORY

# Bringing families together





**T**arriann is a single mum, has a teenage son and works full-time running a child care centre in the Shoalhaven. Despite her busy life she found time to become a CareSouth foster carer.

It was a decision which changed her and her son's life for the better. Tarriann is a respite carer and has welcomed four families into her home over the past two years.

"I find being a carer so rewarding," she said. "I did it to make my life and my son's life richer. We needed it as much as the children needed carers. My son had to learn to share things; people, places and time. And the children in our care needed someone to spend time with them, to listen to them."

Tarriann admits that being a carer is a steep learning curve and exhausting at times.

"But that was because I thought I had to entertain the children all the time. I realised I don't have to do that. They are regular kids who just need guidance, love and support," she said.



**I tell everyone I come across to just do it, become a foster carer.**



"It's really about building relationships and understanding who they are as individuals," said Tarriann. "All my kids have been different but spending time with them, getting to know them and adapting to their needs is so rewarding, for me and for the children. I've never had a child who doesn't run in and want a cuddle."

Tarriann said it is not unusual for her son and the children in her care to bicker like siblings but when the kids tell her about a squabble she's "glad to hear it" because it means they're functioning like a normal family.

"For us it was all about normality. My son has never had to share me until I became a carer. Being raised in a house that revolves around you is not reality. The benefits have been emotionally rewarding for everyone," she said.

Tarriann is well aware of the demand for foster carers – there are more than 20,000 children and young people in foster care in NSW alone and around 660 new carers are needed – and she has experienced first-hand how carers can help children get back on the path to a positive future.

"I tell everyone I come across to just do it, become a foster carer. There are so many different roles you can play, who doesn't have one weekend a month to make a difference to a child's life?"

"CareSouth foster carers are everyday people," said CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer. "They are young couples, same sex couples, single people, have children of their own, have jobs or are retired. Almost anyone can become a foster carer. What matters is that you can provide a stable, caring family environment for a child or young person. We provide ongoing support and training to our foster carers so they can support those who need it most."

\*Last name withheld.



### FOSTER CARE A YOUNG PERSON'S STORY

# Now I belong

“Am I going to like it here?  
Will they love me?  
Will I belong?”

These are the questions Jess\* would ask herself each time she stood at the door of a potential new home, preparing herself to meet a new family.

Jess has spent the past decade in foster care and in that time has had at least half a dozen placements. She recalls some placements fondly - the ones where she felt safe, loved and secure – but others she would prefer to forget.

“What I wanted from my carers was love and support, knowing I had someone to talk to if I ever had any worries and concerns. That’s the thing I craved the most,” said Jess. “Sometimes I did get that but other times I didn’t.”

Isolation and loneliness plagued Jess during some of her placements, along with the feeling of never being good enough.

“At one of my placements I didn’t even ask to see friends outside of school because my carers would always make me feel bad for it, so I’d lie to my friends and say I was busy,” said Jess.

A stuffed tiger with one eye missing became Jess’s constant companion and her most treasured possession. She carried that tiger with her into each new home in the hope it would help comfort her in her unfamiliar surroundings.

“Walking into a new home felt so daunting,” said Jess.

“You don’t know what to expect as you haven’t met these strangers before, you have so many thoughts and worries.”

Fortunately Jess found the safety, security and love she craved in many of her placements and this helped set her on a path to success.

Jess is 19 now and has aged out of the foster care system. She has completed her HSC, moved into her own house, has a part-time job, her licence and her own car. Jess is studying Community Services at TAFE so she can help children and young people like her navigate the foster care system.

Throughout all the change and upheaval Jess has faced, she has remained determined and resilient. She has built herself a happy, meaningful and productive life. And her tiger still has pride of place in the room that she now calls her own.

“Foster care taught me that you’re not alone, that you have caseworkers and people to help and support you,” said Jess. “It also taught me that I could be independent and stand on my own two feet. Going through it all has made me want to give back to others in similar situations, making sure they have the best upbringing possible.”

\*Name has been changed.



# ong



### EVERYDAY CHAMPIONS VOLUNTEER STORY

CareSouth carer Pam King is Scottish and her husband Shane is a Kiwi. Both grew up in rugby obsessed households, so it was inevitable that any children who came into their lives would be well-versed in the game they play in heaven.

The Kings joined CareSouth's Aunties & Uncles program four years ago and began caring for a shy young boy named Lachie\* (not his real name). Last year they asked him if he would like to play rugby. Lachie, now nine, took the ball and ran with it and has never looked back.

Lachie is one of 30 children in CareSouth's Aunties & Uncles program, which operates in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Milton/Ulladulla, and was set up more than 20 years ago to support disadvantaged children by linking them with carefully selected and trained volunteer carers.

After a careful selection process the Kings were chosen to be an Auntie and Uncle to Lachie when he was five and a half years old. He began spending one weekend a month with the family and, like rugby, it proved to be a match made in heaven.

"I think with Lachie it was a perfect match for us. Aunties & Uncles has been the best thing, it has really worked for our family," said Mrs King, who has a teenage son and daughter.

When the Kings signed up to join the Aunties and Uncles program they had no idea how life changing it would be. The Kings wanted to make a difference to a vulnerable child's life but instead it was Lachie who changed their lives.

"Aunties & Uncles is an amazing program, not because of what we do for Lachie, but because of what Lachie does for our family," said Mrs King.

"Lachie really looks up to both our kids as role models and it is an invaluable lesson for our own kids to have him in our lives. It is good for them to stop and think, 'well we are so

lucky'. It teaches appreciation to our kids and reminds them that they shouldn't take anything for granted."

Mrs King recalled the day Lachie first came into their home and marvelled at how far he has come out of his shell.

"Lachie was five-and-a-half when he first came to us and he would hardly speak," said Mrs King. "Since then the changes we have seen in Lachie have been amazing. He is articulate, confident and loves socialising with other children."

"We are all rugby fans but it was my husband's idea to ask Lachie if he wanted to play. I was delighted when Shane raised it with him and Shane was so keen to support the whole thing. Lachie went along and tried it and he completely loved it. That was the turning point for him I think.

"Playing a team sport gave him confidence. Now when we get to training he just runs off with his friends. It is really good for him to be part of a team and to be socialising with other children."

So much so that Mrs King threw a ninth birthday party for Lachie last year and invited his entire rugby team to help him celebrate.

"He really is part of our family," said Mrs King. "I think of him as our third child. I would be devastated if he didn't want to be a part of our family anymore. I really love him, he's a really good wee boy."

The flexibility of CareSouth's Aunties & Uncles program also means the Kings can spend as much time with Lachie as they choose to, which makes getting to rugby training and matches a lot easier.

"With rugby over winter it is much easier for us to have him

# A match made





more than once a month,” said Mrs King.

“We have been doing this for a while now and we have a really good relationship with Lachie’s dad. We have linked up with Lachie’s brother’s Aunty and Uncle to try and plan our weekends so that Lachie’s dad, who is a single parent, gets some respite.”

While Lachie’s family and the Kings deserve much of the credit for his transformation Mrs King is quick to point out that an array of support networks have helped Lachie to reach his full potential.

“CareSouth take quite a while matching a child to a family, it is very carefully done,” she said. “The Aunties & Uncles coordinator is so good at matching a child with a family and you get constant support, there is always someone helping and advising. You’re not on your own.”

Aunties & Uncles Program Manager Jo Rafferty said pressure on families, for all sorts of reasons, can impact on a child’s happiness, self-esteem, and well-being. Aunties and Uncles help take some of this pressure off families who are struggling by including vulnerable children in their everyday activities.

Ms Rafferty said the success of the Aunties & Uncles program lies in its simplicity.

“CareSouth Aunties and Uncles spend quality time with a child or young person on a regular basis doing things they would normally do, like walking the dog or cooking a meal together. This flexibility allows families to simply include vulnerable children in their everyday activities.”

Mrs King agrees wholeheartedly.

“We are really conscious of the fact that Aunties & Uncles is not about money and what you can give these kids, it’s about them spending time with your family and the enrichment that provides to everyone who is involved,” said Mrs King. “One of the things Lachie loves most is going fishing with my husband.”

And of course playing rugby, said Mrs King, recalling a recent conversation she had with Lachie.

“He said to me in the car on the way home from rugby: ‘I’d like to keep playing for another three years’. I said to him ‘Why would you stop at three, you’re so good at it’. And he told me he would keep playing ‘just as long as you can keep taking me’.”

The Kings are looking forward to many more weekends on the sidelines cheering Lachie on as he continues to kick goals throughout his life.

“... it’s about them spending time with your family and the enrichment that provides ...”

in heaven



### **BRIGHTER FUTURES** A FAMILY STORY

“Brighter Futures said  
'we do believe you can do it' so I  
said to myself well they think I can,  
so alright I can.”



# A TAFE graduate at 60

**It has taken almost 60 years but Bellambi grandmother Jean Barham has finally found her voice.**

Jean, a carer for her two young grandchildren, was at breaking point when she joined CareSouth's Brighter Futures program in 2015.

Now two years later, with the support of her Brighter Futures caseworkers, Jean has gained the skills and confidence to advocate for her grandchildren - one of whom has a disability - and her community.

Jean credits her caseworkers Cristina and Kate with turning her life around.

"I knew I had to be a role model for my grandchildren, but I didn't feel like I had a voice," said Jean. "Sometimes as a nanna you're not heard, you're not listened to. So it was important that I did get heard because there were children at risk. It was Cristina who listened to me. She's weaved her magic."

Cristina immediately recognised Jean's desire to help her grandchildren and her hunger to learn the skills to do this.

"She always had that in her," said Cristina. "But nobody gave her that support that she needed and told her 'Yes, you can do it Jean!'"

Education was the key for Jean and she signed up for every Brighter Futures program on offer. This opened up a multitude of doors and now Jean is a driving force behind The Collective 2518, CareSouth's Stir It Up cooking program and Healthy Cities Illawarra's Cook, Chill, Chat. Jean also runs the Bellambi walking group, a

Bellambi safety group and an anti-graffiti group.

One of her proudest achievements is earning a TAFE diploma.

"I'm 60 and I got a diploma, how good is that? You have no idea what freedom you get when you have an education. You can understand more, you don't have to fear things, you don't have to live in fear," said Jean.

Jean was also asked by Wollongong Police to become a domestic violence mentor for her community. She is candid about her hard-knock life and the domestic violence she has been subjected to at the hands of her daughter, who suffers from a mental illness. When Jean saw that her grandchildren were also at risk of harm she knew she had to do something to break the cycle of abuse.

"They did ask me because of my experience with domestic violence. They were able to train 12 of us to mentor people who were in an unsafe situation and too frightened to know what to do. Our role is to mentor people who are maybe too scared to talk to the police themselves. I'll go and do it for them."

There is an increasing number of grandparents who are primary carers to their grandchildren across NSW. Australian Bureau of Statistics data reports that there were 31,100 children and young people living with their grandparents in Australia in 2005. That number is on the rise and as Jean points out it is essential that they have a voice.

"It's important for a Nanna in my position to be heard. We're a growing group, hopefully we don't become a majority, we do stay the minority. But it is big, the amount of grandparents who are doing what I'm doing."

Reflecting on the changes in her life over the past two years, Jean credits CareSouth's Brighter Futures program, and the support from her caseworkers, with turning her life around.

"Just having those extra skills that I have collected along the way through Brighter Futures has empowered me. That has given me the confidence to be able to articulate more than three words in a sentence."

Jean admits she still has moments where she doubts her capacity to step up and face the difficult challenges that being a kinship carer presents but she knows she has the backing of her caseworkers.

Brighter Futures said 'we do believe you can do it' so I said to myself well they think I can, so alright I can."

"Brighter Future, that's exactly what it feels like. Not just for me but for my grandson, my grand-daughter and as it's turned out the whole community. The whole of Bellambi."





DISABILITIES

DISABILITY  
SERVICES

# Our Everyday Maintenance

CareSouth Disability Support Worker Ofer Engel loves his job. Each day he makes a difference in the lives of the clients he supports, particularly 46 year-old Steven, a Nan Bishop House resident and CareSouth Disabilities client whose passion is mowing lawns.

Recently Ofer, his manager Tony Briggs and CareSouth's Property and Assets Supervisor Rob Strickland rolled out an innovative project called Everyday Maintenance to provide supported and meaningful employment for Steven to maintain several CareSouth buildings and gardens.





# ance Man

When Ofer became Steven's Support Worker three years ago he recognised his talent and it evolved into a supported employment program which aligns directly with CareSouth's vision for our Disability clients; to ensure they are accepted, recognised for their strengths and supported to achieve their hopes and dreams.

"We focus on the person, not the disability," said Ofer. "We are able to generate meaningful work for clients who are doing something they love. It's a win-win situation. We are harnessing their skills with the client's wishes."

"It makes me happy," said Steven when asked what he loves about his job.

On rainy days when Steven was unable to mow lawns he would become frustrated so Ofer began teaching him how to do basic handyman jobs so Steven could continue to work regardless of the weather. The pair now use these skills to maintain CareSouth properties.

"I enjoy mentoring my clients and teaching them everyday skills," said Ofer, who migrated to Australia in 2000 and describes himself as a "humble plumber from Israel".

In the six months since the program began Steven has increased the hours he works each week from five to eight and the maintenance and lawn mowing carried out by Steven and Ofer at various properties has saved CareSouth \$5000 in outsourcing labour costs.

But most importantly the program has given Steven a purpose and sense of self-worth. Ofer said the Everyday Maintenance program allowed Steven to constantly engage with the community in a safe, supported way.



"We go to the hardware store to get supplies and he is interacting with the staff. This boosts his self-esteem and improves his social skills," said Ofer. "We are not isolated from the community, Steven is out there living in it and making a meaningful contribution. He looks forward to doing work."

When Ofer migrated to Australia he had to generate his own employment and began working as a handyman. So he understands how important it is to create meaningful employment opportunities for CareSouth's Disability clients.

It is this empathy and open-mindedness, along with an ability to tailor programs to clients' needs and promote social inclusion which has made Everyday Maintenance a successful Disability Support program.



## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

# Keeping our kids safe

CareSouth is committed to keeping children, young people and people with disability safe, by promoting a culture in which the safeguarding of those with whom we work is embedded in our policies, procedures, practices and Code of Conduct.

John Dorahy, the Chair of CareSouth's Board of Directors, recently released the organisation's 'Safeguarding Children, Young People and People with Disability Commitment Statement'.

More than 200 staff from across the organisation pledged their commitment to safeguarding children at a communal lunch, held in our offices at Nowra, Berkeley, Deniliquin, Griffith, Goulburn and Canberra.

"Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility at CareSouth, every day. That's why the Board of Directors of CareSouth have supported and endorsed this Safeguarding Policy, to show our commitment at the highest level of the organisation," said John.

"This commitment statement applies to all CareSouth staff, volunteers, carers, students and contractors, and captures our core values



and principles. It shows our leadership as a child safe organisation. Everyone involved with CareSouth has a crucial role to play in safeguarding children, young people and people with disability" said CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer.

"The safeguarding of children, young people and people with disability is an individual and shared responsibility, and one which we uphold on a daily basis, at all levels of the organisation. We are undertaking accreditation with the Australian Childhood Foundation to cement our work in this area", said Deb.

CareSouth is one of the first NSW based



“It will enhance the work we do to help keep children, young people and people with disability safe”



Out-of-Home Care providers to undertake this voluntary accreditation program, and is one of the first to do so in our geographical footprint. All CareSouth staff have read our Safeguarding Children policy and completed the Australian Childhood Foundation's Safeguarding Children online training module. This accreditation program will support us to develop and implement best practice in institutional child protection.

Manager of Policy & Research, Karen Wilcox said: “It works on prevention and early intervention, putting systems in place that make it harder, and riskier, for people linked with CareSouth to commit abuse or crimes. It will enhance the work we do to help keep children, young people and people with disability safe”.

The Safeguarding accreditation program supports many of CareSouth's programs that already work to help protect children from:

- Emotional and psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse and exploitation
- Physical abuse
- Exposure to family violence
- Neglect

CareSouth is leading the way within the child welfare sector in providing the safest possible policies, practices and culture for those with whom we work. For more information about the program, see the Safeguarding Children website.





## HOMEWORK HUB

# Volunteers help students stay on track

CareSouth's vision to create a positive future for the children and young people we work with every day was a key factor in the development and launch of the Homework Hub, a weekly program designed to help students with their school work.

The Homework Hub runs every Monday and Tuesday afternoon in our Community Hub and provides students from CareSouth's Out-Of-Home Care, Brighter Futures, Aunties and Uncles and Residential Care programs with

a safe space to get help with their homework. Students, who range in age from 5 to 18, also get the opportunity to meet and develop friendships with others on a similar path to their own.

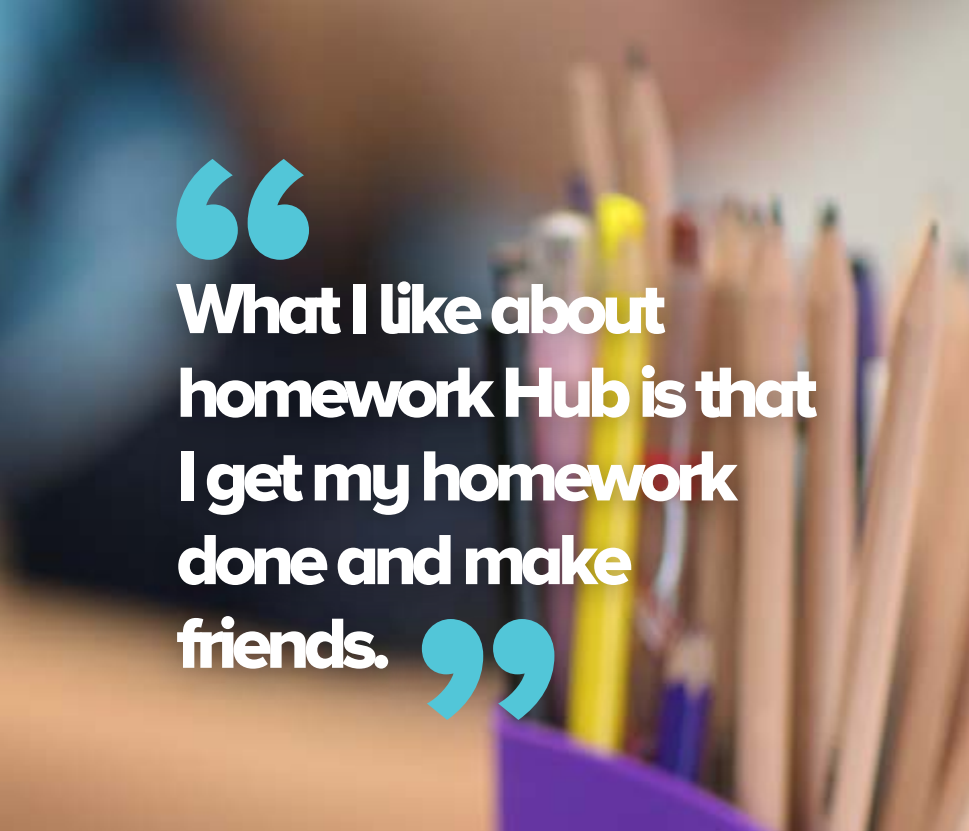
Volunteer mentors from diverse backgrounds, including a local police officer and teaching, social work and psychology students from the University of Wollongong and TAFE, tutor and mentor the students, boosting their confidence and self-esteem through positive reinforcement and role-modelling. The Homework Hub isn't just a positive experience for the students,

the mentors gain valuable practical experience working with vulnerable children.

Homework Hub volunteer and teaching student Sarah Shannon has been a part of the program since it began two years ago and she has seen first-hand the difference an extra layer of help and support can make.

"The Homework Hub is beneficial for the students as they get the one-on-one help they need for school," she said. "By enhancing their skills in school it gives them the tools they need for the future." Homework Hub activities are tailored





“  
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to students' needs and include all key learning areas as well as technology, art, craft and yoga/mindfulness techniques to promote self-regulation. Students are encouraged to read during each Homework Hub session and are rewarded with a sticker. When they achieve five stickers, students can take home a book of their choice from our library to keep as their own.

When students were asked how CareSouth's Homework Hub had helped them, one Year 8 student said: "What I like about Homework Hub is that I get my homework done and make friends".

A Year 11 student found the Homework Hub beneficial because it "helps me get my school work done and I can concentrate there. I also like all the individuals involved as they are all such a great help".



At CareSouth we believe students can only reach their full potential when they feel safe, supported and engaged in learning. If we can encourage students in our programs to stay at school and aspire to post-school education, we are increasing social and economic inclusion and breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

The Homework Hub is just one of the many ways in which CareSouth goes beyond our core business to create positive futures for children and young people.



## COMMUNITY HUB

...a gathering place  
within the Berkeley  
community.

# Bringing People

When CareSouth opened its purpose-built Berkeley building three years ago CEO Deb Tozer wanted the space to belong not just to our staff and clients but also to the community.

Deb and her team created CareSouth's Community Hub with a vision to build cohesive communities by bringing together people from all walks of life. Each week CareSouth's Community Hub runs activities which focus on improving the health and well-being of staff, children, young people and the greater community. These include free health screening checks, educational and physical activities and healthy communal meals.

A healthy community is a happy community and CareSouth's Hub Development Officer Natalie Nicastri has been working closely with local service providers to ensure our community has access to a range of workshops, including healthy lifestyle sessions, dental clinics, and eye screening tests. These Health Hubs are a regular, free service, with over 40 children seeing the dentist and optometrist in the Community Hub this year, some for the first time.

"An 11 year-old who visited our Health Hub had been living with the pain of broken teeth for three years. His mother hesitated to get help because she was embarrassed," said Natalie. "But he saw a dentist for the first time at CareSouth and both the dentist and the mother shed a tear as they made plans to have treatment done without cost."

In a bid to promote a healthy lifestyle amongst the youngest members of our community CareSouth has partnered with Go4Fun to run school holiday clinics out of the Hub. The free 10-week healthy lifestyle program is for kids aged 7-13 who are above a healthy weight and focuses on improving eating habits, fitness and confidence. Natalie has also set up a weekly

community walking group to reinforce the importance of a healthy lifestyle and self-care across the broader community.

Communal eating and growing fresh produce also plays a key part in CareSouth's Community Hub development plan. CareSouth opens the doors of the Community Hub on the first Thursday of each month for a Meet and Eat evening. CareSouth staff and students from Illawarra Sports High volunteer their time to cook up a communal, community feast using herbs and produce grown in Berkeley's Community garden – a partnership with Wollongong Botanic Garden, Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre and CareSouth. "Meet and Eat numbers are increasing each month, with families from across the Illawarra enjoying the opportunity to eat out and catch up with friends," said Natalie.

The Hub also runs supported playgroups and Music Time Twist sessions for children who are not yet in school to encourage literacy, learning, play, and movement.

"My vision is for the Hub to become a gathering place within the Berkeley community, providing space for locals and other service providers to participate in activities and to access services," said Natalie. "I'm always looking for new opportunities to offer appropriate activities. It's been great getting to know the local community and being able to respond to their needs."









# i NEED you

**Vulnerable kids don't need a hero. They need you. There are many big and little ways to make a difference in a kid's life.**

**Contact CareSouth on 1300 554 260 to find out more.**

**[www.caresouth.org.au](http://www.caresouth.org.au)**



**EVERYDAY CareSouth**