

Communication  
SAFE CARE  
Floods  
Therapeutic  
Bushfires  
Essential FAMILY  
Service  
Skype  
Hope  
Time

CareSouth

# Annual Report

COVID-19  
Home  
Visits  
Support  
Carer  
EXPERIENCE  
Permanency  
Telehealth  
COMMUNITY  
LOCKDOWN  
EVERYDAY  
Champions  
Disability  
SERVICES  
Kinship  
FaceTime  
DROUGHT  
2019 - 2020



# Chair

CareSouth would like to congratulate Jim and acknowledge the incredible contribution he has made to creating positive futures for vulnerable children, young people and families.”

**Christine Cook**  
**CareSouth Chair**

**Chairperson's**

**welcome**

**It gives me great pleasure to write my first Annual Report welcome, as the Chair of CareSouth.**

To say it has been a challenging year since I stepped into this role in late 2019, is somewhat of an understatement. Since then, Staff, Clients, Carers and Members of the Board have endured bushfires, floods and a global pandemic. However, despite these adversities, CareSouth has continued to provide the highest level of care to our families, communities and young people.

My focus when I first took on this role was to meet as many CareSouth staff as possible and to acquire a broader sense of the difficult, yet rewarding work undertaken in the child protection sector. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to visit offices in Goulburn, Wagga, Deniliquin and Griffith just prior to the commencement of COVID-19 restrictions.

The warm welcome I received was a highlight and I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to meet our dedicated teams and hear their stories about the valuable services we provide throughout our sizeable footprint. The timing was indeed fortunate as the situation changed rapidly.

As a frontline care provider, the organisation's role was considered an essential service under the Government health guidelines. At the height of the pandemic, it took some creative thinking, but staff and carers went above and beyond the call of duty to maintain quality service provision during lockdown. The Board was impressed by just how swiftly and efficiently our Executive Officers, Leadership Group and Managers then instigated procedures to ensure staff, carers and volunteers received the necessary resources to remain healthy and safe.

The Board and I have been honoured to witness the resilience and determination of CareSouth's staff and carers in managing a delicate balancing act of supporting clients while adhering to strict safety restrictions. Their strength in the face of adversity, and their ability to think outside the square to provide that ongoing support, is admirable.

A priority for the Board this financial year has been to maintain connections between staff, carers and communities across our demographic area. Staff achieved this by sharing the challenges and achievements they faced throughout the year. Solutions to problems were found and moments of kindness were highlighted, in otherwise difficult times.



# Chairperson's welcome

It is hoped that stronger connections are also forged as a result of the release of CareSouth's Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 – 2021: which lays the foundation for the future work of CareSouth, working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. CareSouth is committed to closing the gap, to provide support based on cultural needs that will enable vulnerable children and young people in our care to remain connected to culture and country.

A highpoint of 2020 was that after years of planning, the first sod for the CareSouth Community Hub and Head Office development at South Nowra was turned. The celebration was small due to COVID-19 restrictions, but I was delighted to be handed a shovel at this significant event. CareSouth is grateful for the \$1.5m received under the Federal Government's Regional Jobs Investment Package which made this purpose-built facility possible. We all look forward to its realisation and our relocation to the new premises in 2021.

I would also like to acknowledge changes to the management structure of the organisation. The new-look executive role is a shared one, between two Executive Officers. Tracy Mayo (Executive Officer - Practice) and Renee Knight (Executive Officer - Business) bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and dedication to these leadership roles having been long-serving members of the CareSouth executive leadership team. Their passionate and collaborative style of leadership is evident, with the Board supporting their vision as they continue to make a significant and positive difference within the CareSouth family.

Changes to the Board include the welcome appointment of Deb Tozer, former CEO of CareSouth, as a Director. The combination of Deb's passion, commitment and experience will be of tremendous value to the governance of the Board of CareSouth.

Jim McEwan has re-joined the Board having relinquished the role of CareSouth's Ombudsman. Peter Murphy, a past Chairman of the Board has accepted the position of Ombudsman.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that Jim - founder of CareSouth, who has devoted much of his life to helping young people - was awarded an Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to youth and to the community, as part of the Australia Day 2020 Honours List.

Nearly 30 years ago, Jim set up CareSouth, (Shoalcare) by combining the Aunties & Uncles program with the local Shoalhaven Youth Refuge. His vision was to "give every kid a terrific life". Jim has done that in spades, building CareSouth from the ground up with just a handful of staff in Nowra, to the present, with offices and residences across NSW and staff numbers in excess of 350. The Board is conscious that these foundation programs hold a special place in our hearts and will remain a focus in its vision for the future.

Naturally, everyone at CareSouth would like to congratulate Jim and acknowledge the incredible contribution he has made to creating positive futures for vulnerable children, young people and families.

Personally, I would like to thank my fellow Directors for their support during this incomparable year, remaining committed to our governance roles while upholding the vision of CareSouth.

On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank all staff for the part they play in helping to ensure "every kid has a terrific life".

**Christine Cook**  
CareSouth Chair



Broken Hill

Griffith

Deniliquin

Wagga Wagga

Goulburn

Cooma

Bega

Ulladulla

Batemans Bay

Nowra

Berkeley

Sydney

**CareSouth's**

**footprint**



Welcome to CareSouth's 2019–2020 Annual Report, our first under a new joint-leadership structure with two executive officers: Tracy Mayo (Practice) and Renee Knight (Business).

# CEOs'

# welcome

Both of us have spent the better part of a decade working with CareSouth to support families and the communities we live in. We are passionate advocates for evidence based, best practice and as such we are always looking for ways to improve our service delivery. At no time was this more important than in the latter part of the 2019–2020 financial year, where many of the communities in which we live, work and provide support were devastated by bushfires. This was followed by severe flooding and a global pandemic that sent us into isolation for months.

As organisational leaders we value and recognise the importance of relationships. Community connections and building and maintaining strong relationships is essential in all we do. Listening to children, carers and our clients and teams, identifying collaborative, creative solutions to meet those needs has always been a key priority. This is something CareSouth has focused heavily on over the past 18 months through our Carer Experience Project where we interviewed carers, collating their extensive knowledge and experience to better inform our day-to-day practice.

This research has not only allowed us to build better relationships with the families with whom we work, but to better understand their needs and the support they require. This proved invaluable at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when we had to design creative service delivery solutions, such as virtual online platforms and Telehealth, to support our communities and continue to meet best-practice guidelines and keep everyone safe.

As an essential service, we were busier than ever during the lockdown, with many of our NDIS staff directly supporting clients, carers and communities, and others using online platforms to ensure everyone remained safe and supported. Our Permanency Support Program, Brighter Futures and Champions caseworkers continued their regular home visits and check-ins with families virtually, while our Clinical Services Team

used the Telehealth platform to support families. Getting creative with technology allowed us all to feel connected during this difficult time.

We facilitated a series of online training resources to ensure CareSouth maintains its reputation as a child-focused organisation with passionate staff and carers whose practices are trauma-informed. The trauma informed practice training was delivered via zoom to staff and carers.

The dual leadership model has allowed us to apply a strengths-based approach to the redesign of our Leadership Group, which also happened during this financial year. By having the right subject matter experts at the table, the organisation has benefited from the collaboration we've seen across different programs areas, enabling us to make the right decisions for our staff, clients, and communities.





We were also very excited to take part in a virtual ceremony to mark the breaking of ground at the site of our new head office and community hub in South Nowra. The project has been five years in the making and the ground-breaking ceremony signals a major step towards the construction of the purpose-built facility, which will include office space, meeting rooms, training facilities, our call centre, family contact rooms and a community hub.

As executive officers we proudly and jointly lead CareSouth. We are committed to ensuring CareSouth provides the best possible support for the families and communities we serve, so they can continue to focus on raising happy, healthy, independent children and young people and building independence and resilience in our people.

**Tracy and Renee**

CareSouth Executive Officers



**We are committed to supporting families and communities so they can raise happy, healthy, independent children and young people.”**



# board

# overview



**Christine Cook**

**BOARD CHAIRPERSON**

Christine Cook has been a member of the CareSouth Board since 2004 and was appointed as board chairperson in late 2019. After taking on the new position, Christine spent some time travelling to CareSouth's rural offices, but bushfires put those plans on hold. She was able to visit Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Deniliquin and Griffith in the week before travel lockdowns, due to COVID-19 restrictions, were put in place. The warm welcome she received was a highlight in what has been a difficult year. Christine was pleased to have the opportunity to meet our dedicated teams and gain an insight into the valuable services we provide across our footprint. Christine says, "It is important to the board that we stay in touch with staff and remain connected to the vital work of CareSouth".

Christine has been a secondary school teacher for over 30 years, spending 27 years at Bomaderry High. She has been the producer of Bomaderry High School's Rock Eisteddfod productions since 1995, mentoring over 100 students during rehearsals. Christine is also a member of the management committee of the Nowra Show Society. She has a Diploma of Teaching and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. She is married with three children and two grandchildren.



**Jim McEwan**

**FOUNDER AND BOARD DIRECTOR**

In 1992, Caresouth founder Jim McEwan attended a town meeting regarding the impending closure of the only youth shelter in Nowra. He was shocked to find himself conscripted to the new management committee faced with the task of saving the refuge. About the same time, Jim had agreed to help set up Aunties & Uncles within the Shoalhaven. He subsequently orchestrated the amalgamation of the two services, resulting in the formation of Shoalcare, later to be called CareSouth. After a couple of years break, Jim has again become part of the CareSouth Board.



**Theo Boyle**

**BOARD DIRECTOR**

Raised in foster care from age eight to 15, Theo Boyle joined the CareSouth Board in 2004. He has lived in Nowra since 1969, where he has operated a successful bicycle business since 1980. Mr Boyle lives with his wife and two children.





It is important to the Board that we stay in touch with staff and remain connected to the vital work of CareSouth.”



### **Nicholas Sims**

#### **BOARD DIRECTOR**

Nicholas Sims has been a CareSouth board member since 2007. Formerly a science teacher, Nicholas has worked for the NSW Department of Education and Training as a school counsellor for over 15 years. He has been a registered NSW psychologist working for the Royal Australian Navy Reserves for the past seven years, in addition to running his private psychology practice. Nicholas has a Bachelor of Science and Graduate Diploma of Education (Science) from the University of Sydney, as well as his Master of Education, Psychology and Post Graduate Diploma of Psychology from Charles Sturt University.



### **Deb Tozer**

#### **BOARD DIRECTOR**

Former CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer, who retired in 2018, has joined the organisation's board of directors. With a career spanning more than 30 years in the community services sector, seven of which were at the helm of CareSouth, Deb brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to her latest role. One of Deb's greatest achievements as CareSouth CEO includes expanding the organisation into our southern and western regions. CareSouth was also named the Shoalhaven Business of the Year under Deb's stewardship, the first not-for-profit to be recognised as a serious business player in the local community where it opened its doors more than 25 years ago.



### **Rebecca Keen**

#### **BOARD DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON**

Rebecca Keen was appointed to the board in 2012. She has over twenty years of finance and accounting experience and is currently CFO of a large private organisation based in the Illawarra. Rebecca holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Wollongong. She is CPA qualified and continues professional development by way of CPA courses and executive development at the University of Technology.



**Evaluation shows**

# **Champions Program**

**is priceless**

**The Champions program, formerly known as Aunties & Uncles, is a foundational program for our organisation and has been assisting families, children and young people in the Shoalhaven for almost 30 years, expanding to include the Illawarra and Ulladulla regions in the past decade.**

The Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) model is designed to link disadvantaged children with volunteer mentors in the community, with the aim of developing long-term positive relationships for children and ongoing support networks for vulnerable families.

Despite anecdotal evidence from Champions caseworkers, young people, their families and volunteer carers about the success of early intervention and the difference it makes in their lives, the program had not been evaluated through its evolution—including its expansion and changed funding structures—until recently.



**... the development of solid connections, based on trust and frequent interactions are essential in creating lasting relationships between carers and children and young people.**

Dr Kylie Evans-Locke, CareSouth's Research and Practice Manager, undertook a robust program evaluation involving 19 children, young people, their families, carers and caseworkers. She used surveys, interviews and a body-mapping exercise to determine if the Champions program improved social connections, time spent outdoors, physical activity levels and positive impacts on children and young people.

This research by Dr Evans-Locke and her CareSouth colleague Dr Ching-I Hsu has been published in a peer-reviewed journal, *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*.

"Anecdotal evidence from caseworkers suggested the Champions program created positive relationships with volunteer carers and this corresponded with improvements in well-being, resilience and the self-confidence levels of linked young people," said Dr Evans-Locke.

"Caseworker documentation also noted that youth mentoring services may have the indirect effect of reducing birth family risk factors. This anecdotal evidence is important in light of the NSW Government focusing on preventative action for young people and families. But we needed measurable data to evaluate the impact of the program, alongside the anecdotal evidence."

Dr Evans-Locke therefore began collecting evidence and collating data through surveys, interviews and body mapping (a life-size artwork created by tracing around the body and filling it with words and symbols that are meaningful to the individual). Dr Evans-Locke found evidence, through surveys, interviews and the young people's drawings that "the linkages between volunteer carers and children and young people have increased life opportunities and experiences, along with developing the social connections of families".

"During the body mapping, all children and young people who took part reported special activities such as dog walking, beach visits, going to the movies and mowing the lawn as outcomes they have experienced by being part of Champions," said Dr Evans-Locke.

"Outcomes from this evaluation have shown the development of solid connections, based on trust and frequent interactions, are essential in creating lasting relationships between carers and children and young people. And insights from young people indicate that linkages have a positive influence on wider issues of routines, physical activity and self-confidence."

Dr Evans-Locke's evaluation showed that linking a young person with a volunteer mentor not only improves a child's connection to community, physical activity levels and time spent outdoors but also extends the social connections and community networks for families experiencing challenges in their everyday lives.

"Initial evidence presented in this evaluation shows children and young people believe the program promotes more positive interactions with parents and family, in addition to reported improvements in well-being," said Dr Evans-Locke.

Figures released by the Department of Communities and Justice earlier this year show that, of the 6820 at-risk children in the Illawarra Shoalhaven district, only 1820 (30 per cent) were seen by a caseworker. TEI allows scope for the 70 per cent that have fallen through the cracks to receive support from programs such as Champions. The financial savings and long-term benefits associated with the Champions TEI mentoring strategy are significant.

The Champions program mitigates the risk of children and young people experiencing further complex childhood trauma, or entering the child protection system, by putting wraparound family supports in place.

If complex trauma is not addressed through TEI programs like Champions, it can lead to substantial costs across health, welfare, education and child protection if a child enters the child protection system, with an independent review of the out-of-home care system finding it costs \$41,000 annually to support children in foster care and \$284,000 over 20 years in welfare costs after children leave care.

The evaluation strategy developed by Dr Evans-Locke not only provides evidence of the positive impact the Champions Program has on all those involved but it gives children and young people a voice. The child's voice is often excluded in child and family service program evaluations, with research traditionally favouring the views of parents, carers and other adults.

Dr Evans-Locke believes that evaluations which do not provide adequate opportunities for children and young people to be involved potentially risk misunderstanding wider program impacts and minimising child and young person-specific outcomes, which is at the core of CareSouth's business.





# Year **in** Review

**July 2019:** Buster the Cavoodle completes Story Dog training and joins CareSouth's Homework Hub each week to help improve literacy outcomes for vulnerable young people.

**July 2019:** CareSouth becomes the first official SafeCare Accredited Agency in NSW. This is a significant milestone for CareSouth's Brighter Futures team, who are passionate advocates for early intervention to keep families together. CareSouth is close to meeting the organisation's 2020 target of 50% of eligible families completing the SafeCare program. CareSouth currently has 11 SafeCare providers, an internal SafeCare trainer and four internal SafeCare coaches.

**August 2019:** CareSouth's Shoalhaven Driver/Mentoring Program—a partnership with HMAS Albatross staff—is a success, with several young people from our Shoalhaven Youth Support Service able to get their required driving logbook hours. The program gives young people, many of whom are homeless, access to CareSouth's pool cars, a free professional driving lesson and ongoing lessons with a mentor from the Navy's 723 Squadron to gain enough hours to get their provisional licence.

**September 2019:** Dr Kylie Evans-Locke, CareSouth's Research and Practice Manager, begins a robust program evaluation of Champions (formerly Aunties & Uncles) involving 19 children, young people, their families, carers and caseworkers. "Initial evidence presented in this evaluation shows children and young people believe the program promotes more positive interactions with parents and family, in addition to reported improvements in wellbeing," said Dr Evans-Locke.

**October 2019:** CareSouth opens the doors of its Anderson Ave service, a purpose-built facility, in partnership with Southern Cross Housing, to provide accommodation to those on the NDIS using a Supported Independent Living model with around-the-clock support.

**November 2019:** CareSouth's People and Culture team were proud winners in the category of Excellence in Recovery at Work for Business at the 2019 SafeWork NSW Awards. CareSouth was recognised for its trauma-informed care model, which focuses on understanding the management of client and worker behaviour after exposure to trauma. The awards recognise businesses and individuals that have made positive changes to workplace health and safety, as well as recovery and return to work.

**December 2019:** CareSouth introduces Rosie the therapy dog into its Wagga Wagga clinical practice team. Rosie and her handler, Western Senior Clinician Tracey Parkes, completed the intensive six-day Visiting Therapy Dog and Handler course with the Lead the Way Institute and Rosie began working with Tracey in providing animal-assisted therapeutic interventions to clients.

**January 2020:** CareSouth founder Jim McEwan is awarded an Order of Australia for significant service to youth, and to the community, as part of the Australia Day 2020 Honours List.

**January 2020:** CareSouth staff based in our Shoalhaven and Batemans Bay offices continue to provide essential services despite many being affected by the devastating South Coast bushfires.

**February 2020:** Tracy Mayo (Executive Officer—Practice) and Renee Knight (Executive Officer—Business) appointed joint leaders of CareSouth.

**March 2020:** The nation goes into lockdown due to COVID-19 in the final weeks of March. CareSouth is well prepared and transitions to telehealth and virtual home-visit platforms to ensure the organisation continues to provide essential services while keeping clients and staff safe.

**March 2020:** Clinical consult sessions using Skype and Telehealth are a success and allow more clients to access CareSouth's service provisions. CareSouth's only speech pathologist, who is based in Berkeley, is now able to provide speech pathology across all regions using the TheraPlatform program. Our Nowra-based senior clinician provides occupational therapy assessments for NDIS clients via Telehealth.

**March 2020:** An online group, Reflective Practice for Illawarra Carers, is piloted at the peak of the COVID-19 lockdown and is a success in keeping carers connected to each other and staff.

**April 2020:** The Homework Hub moves to a virtual platform to continue to help support children and young people with schoolwork and social interaction and take some pressure off carers during homeschooling.

**April 2020:** CareSouth introduces a weekly segment on Facebook called StoryTime with Buster, where CareSouth staff read with Buster, our trained Story Dog, and encourage children and young people to also read a story with their pets (real or stuffed) to help maintain literacy skills during homeschooling.

**May 2020:** Due to NSW Government Health restrictions, CareSouth's popular Meet & Eat program, which serves meals to the Berkeley community, is put on hold indefinitely. CareSouth's Community Hub coordinator uses the small amount of funding allocated to Meet & Eat to prepare and cook meals for the community, which are frozen and distributed to those most in need.

**June 2020:** Virtual ceremony to mark the breaking of ground at the site of CareSouth's Head Office and Community Hub in South Nowra. The multi-million-dollar, purpose-built facility will include office space, meeting rooms, training facilities, our call centre, family contact rooms and a community hub.

**June 2020:** SafeCare is rolled out in Nowra.

**June 2020:** CareSouth launches its 2019–2021 Reconciliation Action Plan outlining CareSouth's vision for reconciliation to ensure the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, Elders and communities are listened to and strongly contribute to the decision-making process to create a positive future. CareSouth's Aboriginal Collective—Buwanha—worked in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia to deliver the most robust plan possible to meet these needs.

**June 2020:** Staff begin a staggered return to work as COVID-19 restrictions are eased. However, many clients chose to continue using Skype and the Telehealth platform as an accessible service provision.

## From 1992 to 2020 overview

From humble beginnings, employing a handful of people in a renovated squash court in Nowra, CareSouth now has seven offices across NSW, employs more than 300 people and helps more than 12,000 people each year.



# financial overview 2019 - 2020

## Financial Performance

The financial performance is summarised from extracts of the audited financial statements of CareSouth for the period ended 30th June 2020.

## Review of Operations

The operating profit for the year ending 30th June 2020 was \$497,226. In the previous year it was \$359,804. Growth occurred in the Western & Southern NSW Permanency Support Programs, the NDIS Supported Independent Living Accommodation and Interim Care Models.

### The Organisation intends to:

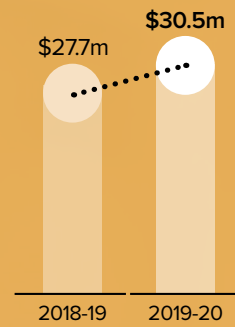
- (a) Expand services provided to clients through provision of more community-based services across a wider geographical area.
- (b) See continued growth in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) within the regions we operate in.





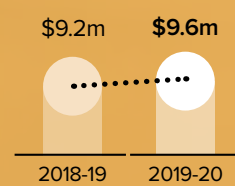
## Revenue

10.1%



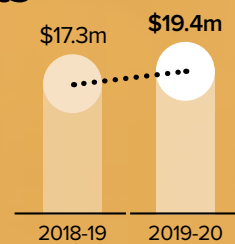
## Operating Costs

4.3%



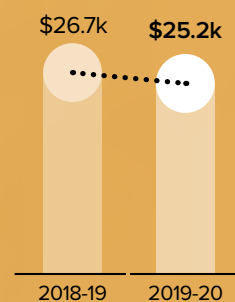
## Employee Costs

12.1%



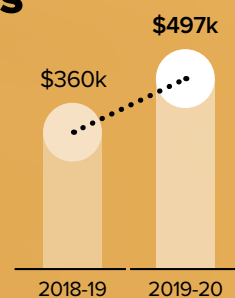
## Fundraising and Donations

5.6%



## Trading Surplus

38.1%



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Essential FAMILY

**CareSouth**

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