

Embracing communities to build a better future

**2024 - 2025
Annual Report**



ENTER

CareSouth EVERYDAY

Contents

Our Organisation	2
Our Programs	4
Our People	8
Our Year in Review	10
Financial Overview	12

Acknowledgement of Country

CareSouth acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we live and work. We recognise their strong and ongoing connection to land, waterways, and sea and their contribution to society as one of the oldest living cultures in the world.

We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, carers, children, young people and communities on our path to reconciliation, which we walk together. We are privileged to work with and alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community, and families and show our honour and respect to Elders past, present and future.

All content contained in this Annual Report is correct at the time of publication. Images used throughout this Annual Report are stock images or images used with permission.



Commitment to Child Safety

CareSouth is unequivocally committed to child safety.

We believe that every child has the right to be safe and to be protected from abuse, harm, and neglect. Child safety is everyone’s responsibility, and we have zero tolerance for child abuse of any kind. CareSouth is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children feel safe, are listened to, and where their rights are respected. We actively work to protect children from abuse and harm in our organisation and in the services we provide.

Our Commitment:

- We place the best interests of children at the centre of all our decisions and actions
- We have zero tolerance for child abuse
- We take all allegations and concerns seriously
- We support children who raise concerns about their safety
- We treat everyone with respect, including children, families, staff, and carers
- We are committed to promoting diversity and cultural safety
- We continually review and improve our child safe practices

Belonging at CareSouth

CareSouth warmly welcomes everyone, irrespective of their ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation or gender identity. We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination.





Our Organisation

CareSouth supports children, young people, families, people with disability and community members across a range of programs. We are bold, big-hearted and determined to drive positive outcomes for those we support. This support is delivered through a therapeutic lens that is built on safety, healing and connection. We operate in regional locations across NSW, including Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Southern Tablelands, Murrumbidgee Murray and Riverina. Our offices are located in Nowra, Wollongong, Goulburn, Griffith, Deniliquin and Wagga Wagga.

Our Vision

Embracing communities with kindness and humility to build a better future.

Our Values

Courage

We encourage ideas and behaviours that are bold and big-hearted. We aren't afraid to speak our truth and foster a positive feedback culture.

Compassion

Our practices are underpinned by trauma-informed principles and are carried out with kindness and empathy. We aim to fully understand the past experiences and needs of our clients and communities.

Relationships

We nurture the connections we have internally and externally. Strong, effective relationships are at the heart of our success.

Integrity

We cultivate a collaborative environment, working with colleagues, clients, people with disability and community to make informed decisions.

Belonging

We strive to create a nurturing environment filled with kindness, empathy, and respect where people can bring their whole authentic selves to work.



Foster Care

CareSouth’s Permanency Support Program supports foster care placements for children and young people, which include long-term, short-term, respite, emergency, and kinship care, as well as restoration to family, guardianship and adoption.

Every child who grows up in a supportive environment helps create a healthier, more resilient community over time. Children and young people who are provided with stability in their home-life, supported in their education and receive trauma-informed care have the chance to build a better future.



342 children and young people were supported by
217 foster carer households.

Aunties & Uncles

Aunties & Uncles, CareSouth’s longest running program, links children with trained volunteer mentors to receive support outside of their family unit and share in new experiences.

This grassroots, early intervention program relieves some of the pressures faced by families by becoming part of that family’s village – as it takes a village to raise a child. An evidence-based evaluation of the program shows improved mental health, increased physical activity, more time outdoors, and a stronger sense of community connection for participating children. These mentor connections often extend beyond the program, building long-term community ties that strengthen families and communities.



28 children and young people were mentored by
25 Aunties & Uncles volunteer mentors

Our Programs



144 Family Connections staff provided more than
9000 hours of support.

Family Connections

The Family Connections Program provides a range of services including family time, transport, mentoring, respite and youth support services to CareSouth’s Permanency Support Program, the Department of Family and Community Services and other non-government organisations across CareSouth’s footprint. The frequency of these services is dependent on each individual child’s placement status or their specific needs.

CareSouth’s Family Connections program also provides a safe, secure and neutral environment for visits to occur between children, their parents and other significant people in their lives.



143 NDIS participants were supported across a range of services.

NDIS and Disability Services

CareSouth is a provider of choice and NDIS Partner. We work towards supporting people to live full and meaningful lives. The services we provide include financial plan management, clinical services, community participation, skill building, early intervention (0 – 7) and support for independent living. CareSouth also has disability accommodation services including Disability Supported Independent Living homes and Residential Care homes.

Our services aim to promote acceptance and empower individuals by respecting their unique needs and abilities. By focusing on inclusion and independence, not just the disability, we strive for acceptance, meaningful relationships, and social inclusion for everyone.

Our Programs

Shoalhaven Youth Support Service

Shoalhaven Youth Support Service (SYSS) provides crisis and transitional accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness, with a focus on early intervention and support.

The priority of SYSS is to work with young people to facilitate the restoration of family or supportive community relationships and to address the individual needs of each young person to enable stability in their housing situations. SYSS strives to empower young people with the skills and knowledge to be resilient and learn how to reach out for support when needed.



127 young people were supported by our Shoalhaven Youth Support Service (SYSS)

SafeCare

SafeCare is delivered to help parents of children aged 0-5 at risk of neglect and abuse. It focuses on developing parental skills and confidence across three areas: parent-child interaction, safety and health.

SafeCare addresses risk in the home and increases positive outcomes for families. Evidence shows the facilitation of the SafeCare program reduces child protection intervention, as well as the length of time where families need to interact with child protection services.



299

families have participated in the SafeCare program and

131

families have graduated



Therapeutic Care Homes

CareSouth delivers a range of different models of homes that provide round-the-clock care for children and young people who are unable to be placed in foster care or reside with family.



806

individuals and

225

families were supported by Family Preservation caseworkers.

Family Preservation

Family Preservation is an early intervention program that supports families through challenges and is designed to reduce the number of children entering the child protection system.

Family Preservation supports families through tough circumstances like domestic violence, mental health issues or drug and alcohol problems. It also helps parents struggling to bring up their child or children without support. From addressing learning difficulties to behavioural issues, the program helps parents to give their child the best possible start in life.

Clinical Services

CareSouth's Clinical Services team provides psychology and family support services, occupational therapy, speech therapy and behaviour support planning to those we support across every region in our footprint.

Clinical Services provided 9,500 hours of support to children, young people and participants

CareDogs is CareSouth's animal-assisted therapy program which provides therapeutic support and companionship to children, young people, families and people with disability. Whether it's sitting with them during a therapy session or bringing a smile to their face after a tough day, CareDogs are there when needed to induce calmness and safety.



17

different trauma-informed care courses delivered to almost

500

staff members.

6

CareDogs booked by those we support to provide over

20

hours of support per month.



Our People

CareSouth has **637** staff across the organisation

35 staff have **10** or more years of service

96 staff have **5** or more years of service



45 staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



Empowering our Team

CareSouth's Learning and Development program provides an extensive suite of **423** courses available for all staff. Delivered through online learning, webinars and in-person courses, we offer flexibility and access to both office based and rostered shift staff.

CareSouth provides opportunities for staff to shape the way the organisation approaches issues that impact them and their communities. This is facilitated through seven committees, each with a critical focus area. **Nearly 60 staff are members of at least one committee.**

All CareSouth staff can **access benefits from our partners** including Westpac, HESTA, TELUS Health, Advantage Plus, Westfund, Flare Benefits and Fitness Passport. Staff actively make appointments with HESTA to seek financial literacy advice. Over 50 staff use CareSouth's Fitness Passport membership, with 108 people benefiting, including their families.

72% of the workforce are women

the average length of service across the organisation is **2.66** years





July '24

Our Year in Review

July 2024: Aunties & Uncles (A&U) Day is an annual CareSouth event which takes place in July to promote the Aunties & Uncles program. The Warm Hearts, Warm Feet campaign ran across several CareSouth communities to recruit new volunteer mentors. Businesses, preschools, clubs and Nowra MP Fiona Philips participated by wearing slippers to work to signify how A&U volunteers help kids feel safe, snug and supported – just like a cosy pair of slippers.

August 2024: CareSouth Deniliquin named Outstanding Community Organisation at the Deniliquin Business Chamber's Excellence Awards. Judges praised CareSouth for supporting cultural belonging and striving for best-practice service delivery.



Aug '24

September 2024: SafeCare program expands to Western Region as selected staff from Wagga Wagga and Griffith were trained to deliver the SafeCare program locally. This opens opportunities for SafeCare to strengthen practice in the foster care space. It can be employed within casework practice to address risk in the home and increase positive outcomes.



Sept '24

October 2024: Griffith Roundtable Discussion, hosted by CareSouth, united local foster carers in the Riverina to share their insights and stories with key policymakers from NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the Office of Helen Dalton MP Member for Murray. Foster carers were provided a platform to advocate for sector-wide change that can encourage more people in the region to offer safe and caring homes for children and young people who are unable to live with their families.



Oct '24

November 2024: Virtual Staff Engagement Day brought staff from every team and region together for an action-packed, fun and informative day. Staff heard impactful stories of those we supported over the past year, enhanced their skills in key areas and shared in giggles at creative videos, dance moves, and of course – scavenger hunt competitiveness.



Dec '24

December 2024: Art with Heart showcase at Bundanon Art Museum exhibited the artwork of 20 NDIS participants. Art with Heart is a community-based initiative where NDIS participants attend art workshops that are tailored and accessible for people with disability. Art with Heart challenges participants to think boldly, create freely and express themselves through art.

January 2025: CareSouth History Book 1994 – 2024 was published to mark the 30-year anniversary of the organisation. The book showcases CareSouth milestones from the past three decades and shares stories of many dedicated people who have helped create positive futures for children, young people, individuals, families and communities.



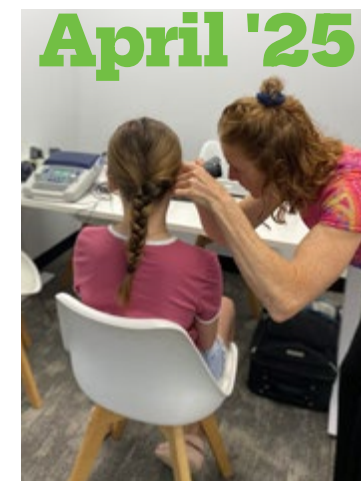
February 2025: MythBusters campaign was launched to bust common foster care myths and showcase that foster carers come from all walks of life. The campaign ran across radio, podcast, TV, and social media ads and posters. It spotlighted a different myth each month, sharing foster care facts and telling stories of CareSouth foster carers who are busting them.

March 2025: Employee Engagement Survey collected confidential staff feedback to better understand the strengths and opportunities within CareSouth. The survey received 265 responses and over 3500 comments from staff. These were translated into an Action Plan that continues to be implemented by leadership to address the feedback shared by our people.

April 2025: Health Hubs were held at the CareSouth offices in Wollongong, Nowra, Goulburn and Griffith. The events provided over 100 children and young people in foster care, A&U and Family Preservation a comprehensive range of health checks all on the same day, in the same place. They included free GP, dental, hearing and speech check-ups, as well as occupational therapy and NDIS consultations. Health Hubs travel to Deniliquin and Wagga Wagga in July.

May 2025: Carer Support Group launches in Wagga Wagga, with the inaugural event attended by eight enthusiastic carers and two young people. The group, set to meet quarterly, serves as a platform for carers to voice their opinions and share ideas for enhancing support and improving practices. Each session includes a learning and development activity, equipping foster carers to better support the children and young people in their care. Members can also provide and receive peer-to-peer support from new and experienced foster carers.

June 2025: Shoalhaven Domestic Violence (DV) Cup hosted a CareSouth booth led by CareSouth's Domestic and Family Violence and CareDogs committees. A group of staff, with the helping hand of Iris the CareDog, engaged youth in meaningful conversations about DV. They provided valuable educational content to young people from high schools across the region. As a bonus for the students who engaged with our booth, schools entered a draw to win one of three footies signed by former professional rugby player Ashton Sims.



April '25



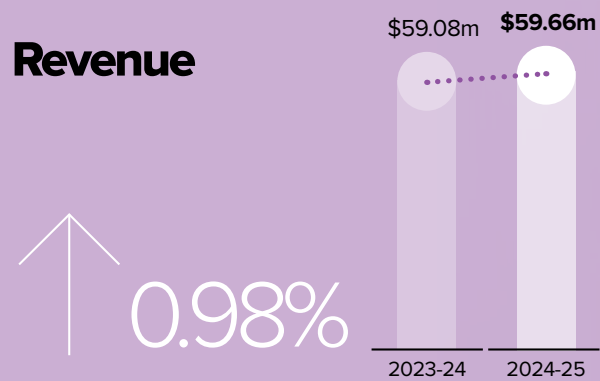
June '25

Financial Overview

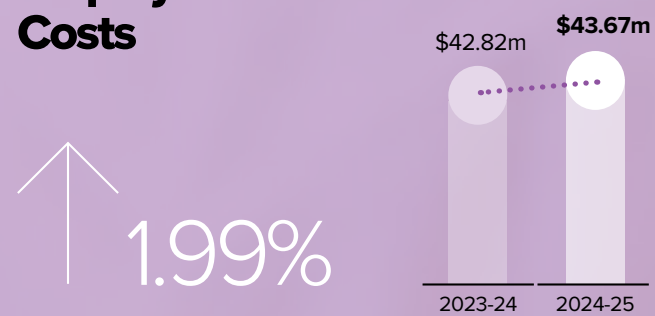
Financial Performance

Our financial performance is summarised from extracts of the audited financial statements of CareSouth for the period ended 30 June 2025.

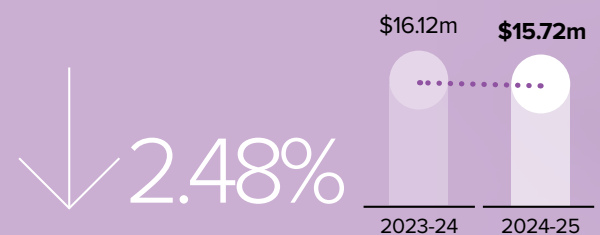
Revenue



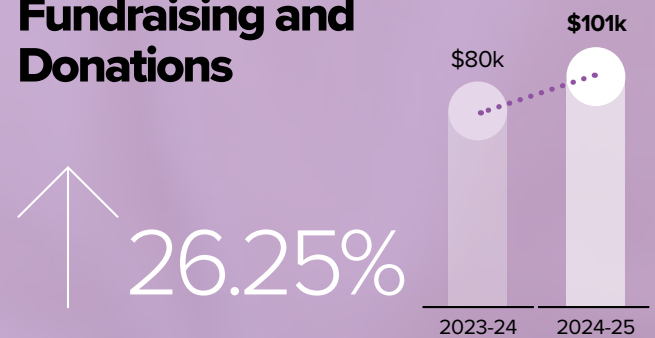
Employee Costs



Operating Costs



Fundraising and Donations



A photograph of a man and a young boy outdoors. The man is wearing a white shirt and a blue and white baseball cap with sunglasses perched on it. He is smiling broadly. The boy is sitting on the man's shoulders, wearing a blue t-shirt and black shorts. He is also smiling. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and foliage.

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