



# Country SA PHN 2022-2023 Annual Report

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COUNTRY SA

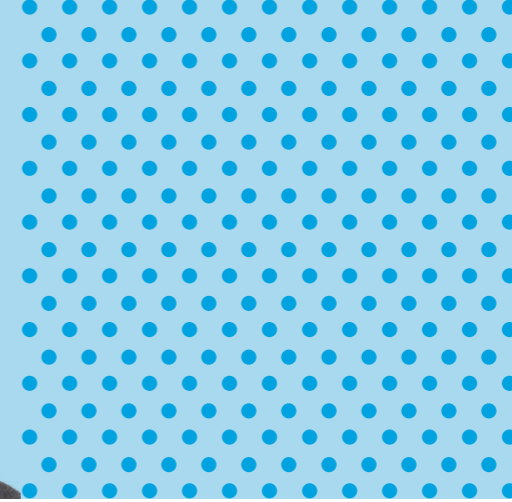
An Australian Government Initiative



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I would like to thank our Board who have worked diligently to ensure the continued good governance of our organisation.



We experienced a modest expected increase in income by \$8.3M, reflecting our ability to provide even more services to SA communities.

## Chair of the Board Report

**This year has been a year of consolidation with the ongoing excellent work of our organisation in the commissioning of health services throughout country South Australia.**

We continue to create local and innovative solutions for regional, rural and remote communities and work collaboratively in partnership with our services providers to improve outcomes for everyone.

The Board has continued throughout the year to hold meetings in major regional centres to engage with stakeholders and hear from local people the impact of our programs and where we can improve. We have visited areas including the Barossa, the Eyre Peninsula, The Fleurieu and Whyalla. This has been incredibly valuable for all of us and has led to insights into where we can improve and engage better. Our heart remains in the health of country.

I would like to thank our Board who have worked diligently to ensure the continued good governance of our organisation. We have welcomed Devinia Binell to the Board as a Director. "Beanz" brings a wealth of experience in leadership at Board level in a number of organisations, and as a mentor and engagement facilitator. She is already proving to be an integral part of our team. Professor Svetlana Bogomolova has taken up the mantle from John Curnow as the Chair of Finance for our organisation and is presenting her first annual report at our AGM. Our finances remain in good shape.

I would also like to thank our executive leadership team who continue to provide operational excellence in an environment of constant change.

We have continued to implement a Performance Based Commissioning process for the services which we commission to ensure the best possible outcomes for our stakeholders. In addition, we are currently developing a Health Access and Equity Framework to try to reach those people who would most benefit from our programs. I am also pleased to report that the Rural Health Innovation Fund has been launched and we have successfully awarded a number of grants to local communities to assist them improve the health and wellbeing of their populations.

I would like to thank all of our staff for continuing to work hard in their important part in delivering health services to the people of country South Australia. I would like to also thank all of our stakeholders including our community advisory committee network for their continuing engagement with our organisation and suggestions and feedback in assisting us to provide the best service we possibly can for the health of all country people in our state.

I look forward to the next year of innovation and progress.

**Dr Simon Lockwood**  
Chair of the Board\*

\*As accepted at the Country SA PHN 2023 Annual General Meeting

## Chair of Finance Report

**I am honoured to assume the role of Chair of Finance for Country SA PHN and express my gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to this remarkable organisation.**

Country SA PHN's mission to support health and wellbeing in regional South Australia aligns with my own values, and its dedication to addressing the unique health challenges of remote communities is a cause I wholeheartedly support.

I follow in the footsteps of John Curnow, previous Chair of Finance, whose exceptional leadership has left Country SA PHN's financial foundation strong and seamless for my transition.

Our CEO, Mark Hartigan (previously CFO), and his finance team deserve credit for maintaining our financial stability despite some challenges and changes in the team. Auditors from William Buck confirm the organisation's ongoing strong financial performance.

I recommend accepting the Financial Report and Audit report.

In the 2022-23 financial year, we experienced a modest expected increase in income by \$8.3M, reflecting our ability to provide even more services to South Australian communities. Additionally, the surplus has seen a slight increase (a total of \$402k), largely driven by the increased interest rates. This provides us with more resources for reinvestment.

The launch of the Rural Health Innovation Fund, a ground-breaking initiative, allows us to reinvest surplus funds into the community, supporting innovative ideas that may not qualify for mainstream funding. Country SA PHN's thought leadership in this regard is both innovative and courageous, and I applaud our management for conceiving and successfully implementing this bold project. While this activity is not yet reflected in the 2022-23 financial report, we eagerly anticipate its future impact, including through opportunities for co-investment with other stakeholders to increase our collective impact and reach.

In addition to the Fund initiative, our performance in core activities, department-set KPIs, and the rollout of Performance-Based Commissioning allows Country SA PHN to serve as a model of sound business acumen and strong governance culture on the national stage, among other PHNs.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt thanks to John Curnow for his outstanding service and leadership as Chair of Finance. I am looking forward to contributing to the continued success and positive social impact of Country SA PHN in regional South Australia.

**Professor Svetlana Bogomolova**  
Chair of Finance\*

\*As accepted at the Country SA PHN 2023 Annual General Meeting

Country SA PHN is constantly evolving and maturing as an organisation to reflect the changing landscape in which PHNs now operate.



## Chief Executive Officer Report

**It is my great pleasure to provide my inaugural report as Country SA PHN's Chief Executive Officer. I was appointed to the role of Chief Executive Officer in July 2022 and have been pleased to reinvigorate the organisation over the course of the last financial year.**

Country SA PHN is constantly evolving and maturing as an organisation to reflect the changing landscape in which PHNs now operate. To do this we have created exciting new opportunities, fostered growth and have attracted numerous new and enthusiastic staff members with a diverse range of skills and backgrounds.

I would like to welcome Suzanne Delaney to the role of Chief Operating Officer. Suzanne has been with Country SA PHN in multiple leadership roles for seven years. Suzanne brings a wealth and breadth of experience to the Chief Operating Officer role. I am pleased to be guiding the organisation forward into 2023–2024 and beyond with Suzanne.

The Country SA PHN Board consistently provides unwavering support and wise counsel. Dr Simon Lockwood has continued his exemplary work as Chair of the Board. This has assisted the stable and successful senior Executive handover and activities throughout 2022–2023.

Our Board has two new members. I am pleased to welcome Bangarla-Kokatha-Wirangu woman Devina Binell (Beanz) to the Country SA PHN Board. Beanz is passionate about the health of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people and closing the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes. I would particularly like to thank Beanz for her role as Cultural Advisor to our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group – ensuring our activity is viewed through a culturally appropriate lens.

I also welcome new Board member and Chair of the Finance Committee Professor Svetlana Bogomolova. Svetlana is a Professor of Health Marketing in the College of Business and Law at Flinders University. Her work brings the voice of consumers to the design, improvement and evaluation of health services, programs, and policies.

I thank the Clinical Council who have continued to provide key links between primary health care providers and the Country SA PHN Board. These links ensure our decisions, investments and innovations are clinically safe, patient centred, cost effective and local.

Our Community Advisory Committees are our community voice and I would like to acknowledge them and the activity that has been achieved during another cooperative year of collaboration. Country SA PHN greatly values our relationship with our Community Advisory Committees and the range of information they provide on local health and social issues.

2022–2023 has been an interesting time for all organisations as we emerge from the ravages of COVID-19. Having the opportunity to re-engage

with our service providers and communities face to face has been extremely pleasing. It is wonderful to see those relationships being consolidated and expanded.

Mental Health commissioning has been our largest area of activity over the last couple of years having increased significantly due to the challenges faced by our communities during COVID-19.

The Department of Health and Aged Care has progressed the roll out of Head to Health services across Australia. In country South Australia the use of the phone line is gathering pace, and our first Head to Health site is now operating in Mount Gambier with sites in Mount Barker and Port Pirie to follow.

This expansion of collective services provided by the Commonwealth through our commissioning activities remains a critical pillar of mental health and alcohol and drug support for country South Australian communities.

This period has seen significant change and future direction at the Commonwealth level. The Department of Health and Aged Care has developed the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report outlining a vision for the future of Australia's primary care system. The report recommends significant change as to how primary care is funded and delivered to enable high quality integrated and person-centred care for all Australians.

The Commonwealth has also directed activity through the Medicare Urgent Care Clinics (MUCC). The first in country South Australia will open in Mount Gambier by the end of 2023. The Mount Gambier MUCC will make it easier for people in the Limestone Coast region to get the urgent treatment they need from highly qualified doctors and nurses while taking the pressure off the local hospital. MUCCs are open seven days a week and offer walk-in bulk billed care.

Our country South Australian ageing population has continued to grow and require adequate resourcing. Our Ageing and Palliative Care team has been working with Residential Aged Care Homes, service providers and the community to ensure our focus on ageing well in place can be achieved.

In December 2022 we were proud to officially launch the Rural Health Innovation Fund. This fund is a stand-alone charity Country SA PHN supports to

offer grants to community organisations in country South Australia. This financial year the Rural Health Innovation Fund opened and awarded its inaugural grant round. We were delighted with the calibre of the applications, and we look forward to working with the successful grant recipients as they bring their ideas into reality.

Throughout 2022–2023 Country SA PHN has continued its commitment to the principles of reconciliation. As Chief Executive Officer, I am humbled by this commitment. It is a privilege to stand with the oldest continuing culture on the planet as we walk towards a truly reconciled future. Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group has been guided by the principles of our Innovate RAP. The creation and embodiment of our Innovate RAP provides our whole organisation with a set of guiding principles for us to adhere to.

Country SA PHN has continued to demonstrate financial stewardship with prudent management of resources and being a leader across the PHN network regarding efficiency and productivity. We ensure that around 85% of expenditure is used to commission frontline services, with corporate expenditure being well managed.

Our service providers must also be recognised in supporting the best results for the community. We continue to have productive working relationships with all our commissioned service providers. We thank them for their ongoing diligence and local expertise to provide Commonwealth funded activity tailored to their individual communities across country South Australia.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those with whom we have collaborated during 2022–2023. From the communities we serve, to service providers, small community groups and everyone in between we acknowledge the role you have played in improving the health and wellbeing of rural South Australian communities. I would also like to thank our team at Country SA PHN. Our staff are committed to our communities and I am delighted by their dedication to go above and beyond to achieve our goals. I look forward to continuing our work as we strive to bridge the gap in health inequity for country South Australians.

**Mark Hartigan**  
Chief Executive Officer\*

\*As accepted at the Country SA PHN 2023 Annual General Meeting

# Rural Health Innovation Fund

**In an Australian PHN first, Country SA PHN is proud to have launched the Rural Health Innovation Fund to support innovative community led opportunities that enhance country South Australians health and wellbeing.**

The seed for creating the Rural Health Innovation Fund or RHIF as it is fondly known was planted by Country SA PHN CEO Mark Hartigan. Like all good things it takes time and nurture to develop into the fund we launched this year. With the support of the Board of Directors and the appointment and contribution of our RHIF coordinator Trudi Penrose-Starr it was possible for the dream to become a reality.

“We are passionate about supporting rural communities by strengthening and encouraging innovative programs that will have lasting impacts,” said Doctor Simon Lockwood, Chair of the Board of Directors.

“RHIF will create positive change through supporting community-based programs that address the diverse health and wellbeing needs of the community.”

Country SA PHN enables the Fund to achieve their vision for better health and wellbeing for all country South Australians.

RHIF’s objectives are to:

- Provide one-off funding for community-based projects targeted at innovative initiatives that support quality health outcomes for people living in country South Australia.
- Enable grant recipients to drive health care improvements (outcomes and experience) for people living in county areas, through projects and initiatives that are effective, efficient, sustainable and in support of equitable access to care.

RHIF was officially launched in December 2022. The new year started with planning and establishing the launch of the first grant round and associated processes. We then moved into networking and communication focusing on sharing this opportunity with the South Australian community.

The first grant round opened on April 3 and closed eight weeks later. We were overwhelmed with the volume and broad spectrum of proposals from right across the State.



Embrace Collective’s Dr Zali Yager and Taryn Brumfitt

RHIF has been honoured to hear from the South Australian community and listen to the needs of our individual communities. It has been happy to provide this opportunity to support communities to achieve their goals and positively impact the lives of country South Australians.

These projects are well underway, and we look forward to sharing their positive outcomes and continuing to showcase these activities and the impact RHIF grants are having to help achieve our vision of better health and wellbeing for all country South Australians.

The sustainability of RHIF will be provided by offering opportunities for key stakeholders to partner with us to further enhance positive outcomes for country South Australians.

It’s a very exciting time as we continue to observe the benefits of the projects delivered by country South Australian communities for country South Australian communities through our inaugural grant round. We look forward to showcasing the amazing work of rural communities that RHIF is funding, creating positive change and supporting community-based innovative programs that will have lasting impacts.

Barunga Village staff



Our Town Ceduna/Far West



For our inaugural grant round, we were thrilled to announce the following successful recipients:

**Riverland Youth Theatre**

Community arts and wellbeing festival to connect allied health practitioners with regional artists. Art workshops and experiences focused on disability and health wellbeing for community to explore and test art practices.

**Diabetes SA**

Population health, community led activity in collaboration with Lions Club/s to check diabetes risk. To be held at the Paskeville Field Day.

**The Embrace Collective**

Activate Regional Community Program reducing shame and pressure around appearance and to improve physical and mental health. Two, one day event, networking event and two online sessions.

**Barunga Village**

Focus on falls prevention at Barunga Village but supporting around 40 people across the Yorke, Mid North, and Barossa.

**Whyalla Men's Shed**

Delivery of regular, consumer centric information sessions for Whyalla Men's Shed members, friends, family, partners, and carers.

**Our Town Ceduna**

Community led, lived experience one off event for men's mental health and wellbeing in Ceduna aiming for a men's group to form.



Diabetes SA's Cathy Whitely and Country SA PHN's Trudi Penrose-Starr



Riverland Youth Theatre participants



Port Vincent Easy Moves morning tea

**Port Vincent Progress Association**

Weekly exercise class in the Port Vincent Institute run by a trained and locally based coordinator. Funding for some additional equipment also.

**Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service Inc**

Heart conditions community awareness campaign. One off purchase of crucial medical equipment including four defibrillators.

**Hawker Community Development Board**

Purchase updated gym equipment and purchase screen and WIFI enablement for online exercise.

# Reconciliation Action Plan

**A significant number of South Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population resides in rural and remote areas of the state.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are an important part of country South Australian communities – enriched and enriching in a diverse range of histories, experience, culture, and languages that help form our collective perspectives.

Country SA PHN recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians, and we celebrate their diverse culture and heritage. We are committed to reconciliation and building respect, relationships and understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. We do this in our personal and professional spheres of influence. As an organisation we have a shared commitment to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in country South Australia to live healthy lives.

To embed the principles and purpose of reconciliation and assist our actions, we established a committed and active Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group in 2019 to work with the whole of the organisation to create our Reflect RAP. Country SA PHN then embarked on our Innovate RAP in 2021.

The Working Group is pleased to have the steady guidance of our Innovate RAP Champion - Country SA PHN Chair of the Board Dr Simon Lockwood. We have been fortunate to welcome new Board member Devinia Binell (Beanz) to the RAP Working Group as our cultural advisor. Beanz is a Barngarla-Kokatha-Wirangu woman who is passionate about the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and closing the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes. We are very grateful to have Beanz guidance - ensuring our activity is viewed through a culturally appropriate lens.

As Reconciliation Australia explains, RAPs enable organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation. RAPs promote a framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities for implementing reconciliation action.



Country SA PHN's Julie Di Rito at the Aboriginal Football and Netball Carnival



Country SA PHN's Lorreta Swincer, Kate Dorsey and Baani Adhvaryu at Closing the Gap Day event

Based around these three core pillars – relationships, respect, and opportunities – individuals, organisations and communities can provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – increasing economic equity and supporting self-determination.

Throughout 2022-23 the RAP Working Group has continued to embed across the organisation these three core pillars through the following activity:

- Hosting a table at the National Close the Gap Day event on 16 March in Adelaide. An important day to highlight the ongoing disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A day of action aimed at closing the gap in health outcomes. Three Country SA PHN staff were in attendance to chat about the activities we are funding and supporting, to have a yarn with community members and meet many of our service providers.
- Organisation wide promotion of NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week including posters in office sites and communication, design and facilitation of staff led events throughout the week including activities to research and share information of country where people lived and worked, an online quiz, promotion of resources, and films to watch and discuss in teams.
- Country SA PHN funded Headspace Port Lincoln, Country and Outback Health and Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service to Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service Cookout and Community Expo for NAIDOC Week.
- External promotion of NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week with email banners and RAP artwork displayed on video call background.
- Our ongoing commitment to the Innovate RAP as part of one of the five dimensions of reconciliation – Institutional Integrity.
- Aligned with another of the five dimensions of reconciliation – Historical acceptance and race relations – we commit to the delivery of cultural sensitivity and respect training for staff, country South Australian General Practices and service providers.



Country SA PHN CEO Mark Hartigan and Board Member Devinia Binell

Country SA PHN's Julia Overton, Chez Curnow, Kelly Smith and Karen McCollat at Headspace Forum



- We continued the ongoing important task of raising broad awareness of reconciliation through social media and on our website, including recognition of annual days of recognition such as Mabo Day, National Sorry Day and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.
- The artwork created by Aboriginal artist, Shane Mankitya Cook for our Reflect RAP continues to be successful in visually communicating Country SA PHN's commitment to reconciliation with stakeholders and community. This takes many forms including video conference backgrounds, collateral, and office displays. The artwork regularly ignites discussion across our stakeholder group about our commitment to our RAP and the broader aims of reconciliation.
- Completion of the RAP Measurement Impact Questionnaire. This questionnaire is an annual opportunity to reflect on and collate our activity and endeavours to support reconciliation.
- Creating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific initiatives such as the creation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's palliative care messages directly to patient's mobile phones. This followed the success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's specific COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Both campaigns involved engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and respected

- community leaders to share culturally appropriate and motivating video messages with their communities, discussing the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and palliative care.
- In partnership with Asthma Australia (SA Branch), Country SA PHN funded and supported seven Aboriginal netball teams to attend the State Netball Carnival which included providing Asthma First Aid training to all the teams.
- In 2022-23 Country SA PHN launched the Rural Health Innovation Fund (RHIF). Country SA PHN enables the Rural Health Innovation Fund to achieve its vision for better health and wellbeing for all country South Australians. RHIF's inaugural grant round included funding the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service Inc to create a heart conditions community awareness campaign. This included the one-off purchase of crucial medical equipment including four defibrillators.
- Country SA PHN has continued to fund, support, and collaborate with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to effectively provide health programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in country South Australia. These include Chronic Disease Management, Workforce Support, Ngangkari (traditional healer) Services, Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drug Services and Health Navigation.

## RAP Message from the Chief Executive Officer

At Country SA PHN we are committed to adhering to the principles of, and advancing, reconciliation. As Chief Executive Officer, I am humbled by this commitment. It is a privilege to stand with the oldest continuing culture on the planet as we walk towards a genuinely reconciled future.

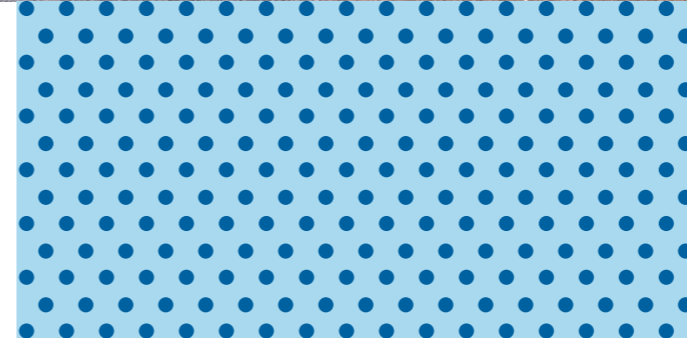
Our Innovate RAP serves to ground and guide us, to ensure we stay true to the fundamental principles of reconciliation. The creation of our Innovate RAP provides our whole organisation with a set of fundamental principle to which we adhere.

At our essence Country SA PHN exists to bridge the gap of health inequity for all country South Australians. The key goal of Primary Health Networks is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for people, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes. We know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at greater risk of poor health outcomes. Therefore, the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is embedded in our core - a key aspect of our reason for being. Working to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a vital part of who we are and what we do. We fund, support, and closely collaborate with Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations and other commissioned service providers to ensure culturally appropriate health and wellbeing services are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their own communities and are relevant to their identified needs.

At Country SA PHN we are privileged to have this direct connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in country South Australia. We are acutely aware of the complexities, histories, traditions, languages, and cultures that form a delicate web of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This richness and diversity mean that no two communities are the same. The needs of those communities are as unique as the people who inhabit them.

We also recognise that an organisations values, structures, and daily interactions matter. Our RAP Working Group collaborates across our organisation to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives are central to all that we say and do.

As Country SA PHN Chief Executive Officer, I am proud to endorse our Innovate RAP and to continue to lead our organisation on the reconciliation journey.



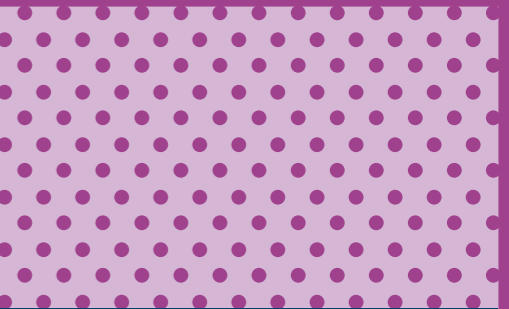
Celebrating NAIDOC Week





# Aboriginal Health

SHINE SA team at Closing the Gap Day event



"I think it's a really fun campaign and targeted well to the younger people that are most at risk."

## No Shame in Getting Tested

**An innovative creative awareness campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases has been effective in targeting hard to reach populations.**

SHINE SA collaborated with the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia to draw on existing partnerships, cultural knowledge, and sexual health expertise to create an effective campaign.

HIV infections in South Australia reflect a national trend with higher rates of HIV infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the non-Indigenous population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also report significantly higher notification rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and blood borne viruses (BBVs) compared to the non-Indigenous population. Young people aged 15-29 years, and those living in remote and very remote areas, account for a large proportion of all STI and BBV notifications in this population.

To create awareness around HIV transmission and prevention within this specific population of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people Country SA PHN commissioned SHINE SA to create an innovative campaign.

SHINE SA collaborated with the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) as a co-lead to design campaign messaging, create health promotion initiatives and resources, and provide support in consultation with AHCSA and Aboriginal communities.

This collaboration led to the design of messaging to reach young Aboriginal people through a targeted digital campaign. Social media and online sharing platforms are increasingly recognized by public health organisations as an influential source of health information for young people. Research suggests social media campaigns can be used successfully to reach specific populations for health promotion purposes.

A variety of different designs were created for this campaign aligning with the resources and merchandise, including short video animations and static images. The advertising was linked to the No Shame in Getting Tested landing page on the AHCSA website.



Awareness campaign merchandise

The paid campaign reached approximately 635,000 people. In total the ads were clicked on more than 3,600 times. The audience engaged with the ads with approximately 21,000 interactions including shares, reactions, post saves, comments and page likes. In addition to the paid digital/social advertising SHINE SA also produced a series of organic ads to share across the SHINE SA and AHCSA social media accounts, focusing on Instagram as a main platform for our audience of young people (under 25 years).

SHINE SA also created five short videos that promoted the No Shame in Getting Tested campaign and others that directly spoke to STIs and BBVs. These videos performed well and were later 'boosted' on Instagram (paid promotion, targeting regional/rural South Australian young people). The most popular videos were those that took a comedic perspective to STI testing.

Aboriginal artist Mali Isabel created amazing artwork for the Condom Card game. A useful resource for community-controlled health services and community sector organisations.

The Safer Sex flipchart was created with information on STI and BBV prevention and intended for use by Aboriginal Health Workers, doctors, nurses, and community educators to use with clients and/or for educational opportunities.

A STI and BBV learning activity was also created intended for Aboriginal Health Workers and other workers who engage directly from an educational perspective with clients in ACCHS. The activity involved a series of 'plushie' versions of STIs/BBVs and other sexual health related topics. Each plushie has information on the STI/BBV etc including symptoms and what the test involves. The pack included ideas and instructions for using the activity.

A small HIV information hand out was also developed by Molly Hunt, a Yolngu and Balangarra woman who has experience creating artwork around STI and BBV prevention and has an established following of young people in this campaign's target audience. Molly's artwork has an approachable fun style of illustration that made the campaign artwork engaging and novel.

To build on, extend and strengthen the No Shame in Getting Tested campaign SHINE SA offered grants to ACCHOs to host events and incentivise screening and conversations around sexual health/STI and BBV testing.

Ten ACCHOs applied for and were granted the six-week screen grants including: Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation, Umoona Tjutagku Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Tullawon Health Service Incorporated, Nunyara Aboriginal Health

Service, Pika Wiya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Yadu Health Aboriginal Corporation, Oak Valley Health service (Maralinga) Aboriginal Council, Moorundi ACCHS and Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service.

Sexual health resources were provided to ACCHOs as part of the grant including condoms and lube, contraceptive kits, Group Norms cards (a resource designed to support Relationships and Sexual Health education), STI and BBV pamphlets, Respect Me + You, Is Your Syphilis Check Up Due? posters. Additional resources were requested by and delivered to six ACCHOs.

Six Week Screen event applications varied in type of event with many utilising the grants to purchase incentives and raffle prizes to encourage testing, others like Oak Valley Health Service hosted an art competition to create a theme around sexual health and eliminating shame about getting tested and or treated.

*"Sexual Health workshop and promotion was successful and the people who attended, both male/female/gender diverse, were all extremely engaging. Guest speaker was a successful addition. Will run an evening event in the future to capture those who were working."*

**Feedback from Pangula Mannamurna on their Six Week Screen Grant events**



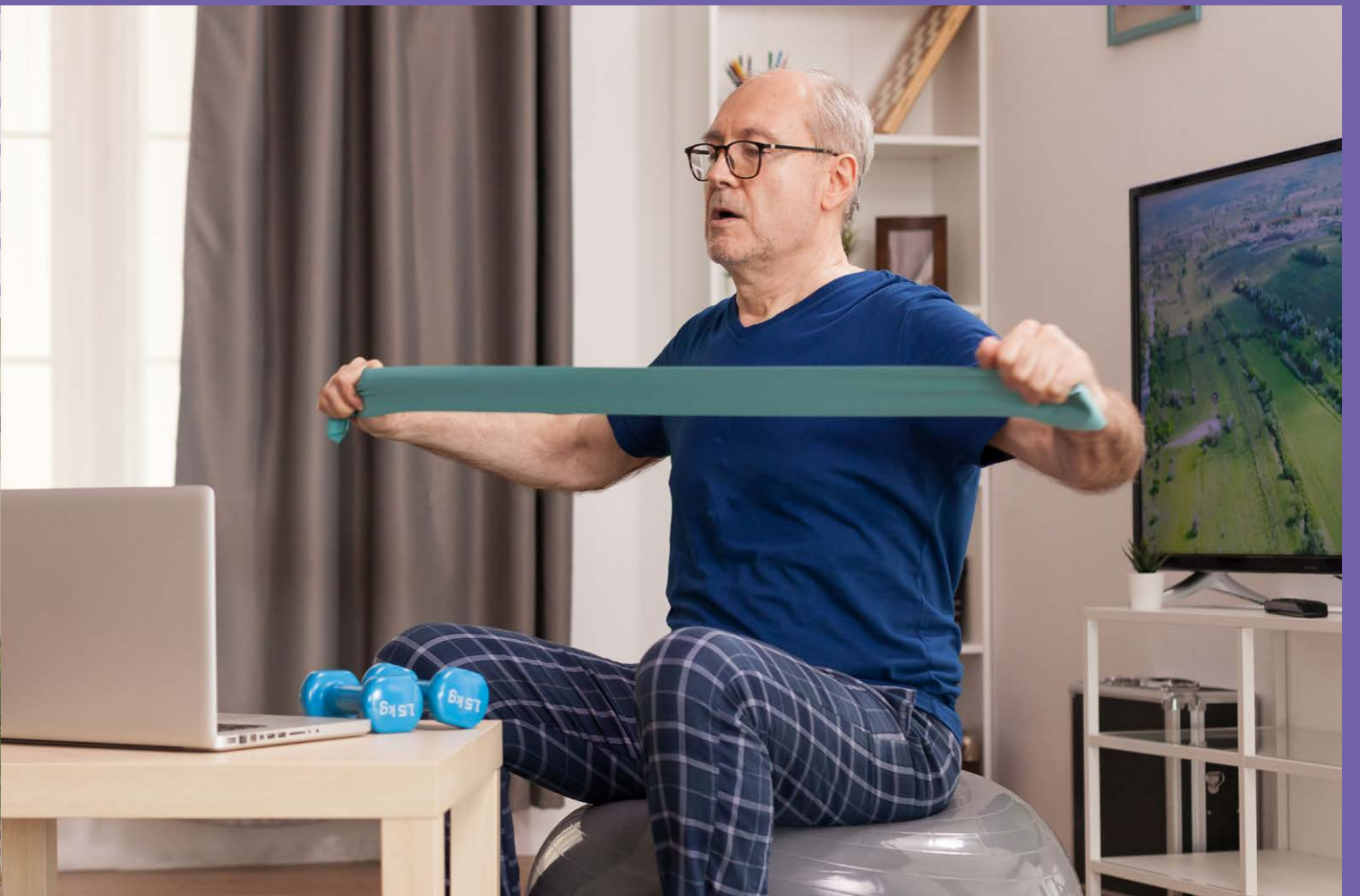
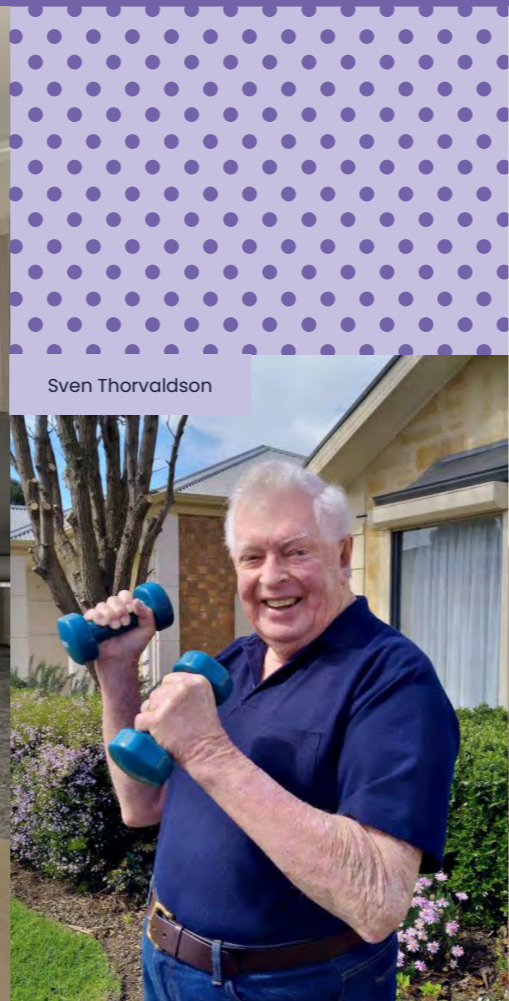
# Aged Care

## Better for Life in Country SA

**An innovative program utilising telehealth is having great success improving older country South Australians health and fitness. The Better for Life in Country SA program has enabled participants to exercise with the assistance and support of an allied health professional in the comfort of their own home.**

The Better for Life in Country SA program has been specifically designed for older Australians who are looking to improve their health and fitness. Country SA PHN recognises that accessing allied health services can be challenging for older people living in rural locations. Utilising telehealth enables the reach of allied health services to be extended and offered to many who would not have capacity to access this support face to face. The program empowers the clients to take ownership of their health and fitness over the longer term.

Country SA PHN funded Southern Cross Care to deliver the Better for Life in Country SA program enabling the program to be offered at no cost to participants. Eligibility includes all country South Australians aged 65 years or over and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 40 years or over. Participants must have sufficient digital literacy, access to an appropriate device, reliable internet, an appropriate space for exercise, the capacity to commit to the program and have been assessed as a low fall risk.



Southern Cross' Aakriti Chhetri at Waikerie Lifestyle Village information session

Following an initial eligibility review and health assessment, program participants take part in a 12-week program of personalised online exercise delivered twice a week. The one-on-one and small group sessions are run by a qualified exercise physiologist and aim to improve participants' strength, fitness, balance, and general wellbeing. All sessions are delivered online through telehealth videos. Participants join the sessions using a desktop computer, laptop or tablet and enjoy the live, interactive sessions over the internet.

In the 12-month period from July 2022 to June 2023 there were approximately 675 individual Better for Life participants and 649 group classes.

A fee-for-service option is also available for sessions with an Occupational Therapist, Dietitian or Social Worker to compliment the exercise classes.

The Better for life in Country SA program has participants from all over the state. Most days Andrea, the health wellness promoter, is delivering exercises to clients from Port Pirie to Kangaroo Island, and from Berri to Mount Gambier.

Sven Thorvaldson is a great example of the possible achievements and outcomes that can be gained from the program. The Fairways Retirement Living resident on the Fleurieu Peninsula said he was motivated to start the program to improve his agility, balance, coordination, and strength to assist him to complete daily tasks like shopping.

Thanks to telehealth and Sven's hard work and dedication to the program, Sven says Better for Life has changed his life for the better.

"My wife has noticed that my general health has improved, and I am much more active and moving (more) freely," Sven said.

"I have achieved more than what I thought I could."

Sven's tailored program includes a range of exercises including bicep curls, exercise band pulls and squats.

Sven says he was thrilled to be able to help his daughter with setting up a new home office.

"I was delighted but also was not sure I would be able to do it," Sven said.

"To my surprise I was able to lift the heavy and large items such as the tabletop and office chair onto my roof rack with the help of an IKEA staff member."

Sven plans to encourage other residents at The Fairways to try the program, and Southern Cross Care Accredited Exercise Physiologist, Julie Ly, said she was very impressed with his progress.

"Although we've had a couple of ups and downs with technology, Sven has been able to engage with us to complete his tailored exercise program and classes," said Julie.

"It was great to be able to work with Sven through both his technology issues, his health goals and movement concerns."

"We've been able to see him engage with not just us, but also benefiting from meeting other participants in the program!"

"We've been able to see him engage with not just us, but also benefiting from meeting other participants in the program!"

**Julie Ly, Southern Cross Care Exercise Physiologist**

"This program has given me the confidence to get up and move."

**Male, 80  
Barossa Valley**



# Alcohol and Other Drug Intervention and Management

**The combination of a lived experience peer support workforce and clinicians who are trained across both mental health and Alcohol and other Drugs disciplines has spear headed the success of the Alcohol and other Drug Intervention and Management program delivered by Sonder.**

Country SA PHN has funded Sonder to deliver the Alcohol and Other Drug Intervention and Management program (AIM) since July 2021. AIM is an innovative program that supports people experiencing co-occurring Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) use concerns and mental health issues.

The program is delivered at consulting locations in Nuriootpa, Gawler, Victor Harbor and Kingscote by a team of clinicians trained in comorbidity and peer practitioners with lived experience of AOD use concerns. The program's peer practitioners are uniquely positioned to provide understanding and non-judgmental support, creating a safe space where clients feel heard and validated.

Sonder has a strong commitment to the development of a lived experience workforce and works collaboratively with the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia's Lived Experience Workforce Program to implement an Action Plan to lead the organisation towards adherence to the National Lived Experience Workforce Development Guidelines.

# Alcohol and Other Drugs





Sonder Centre Gawler AIM program consulting space



Sonder's Andrea Gregory and AIM Peer Practitioner at Australia and New Zealand Addiction Conference

Clinicians in the AIM program are trained across both mental health and AOD disciplines, allowing for the exploration of the relationship between the client's substance use and mental health concerns. Evidence suggests that the relationship between AOD use, and mental health concerns can be mutual. In some instances, the co-occurrence of mental health and AOD disorders can be bi-directional, that is, substance dependence can arise from using substances as a coping mechanism for anxiety and depression, while depression can be an outcome of substance dependence.

In the program, a range of treatment modalities are utilised including motivational interviewing, solution-focused therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. Peer practitioners also work with clients to provide care coordination, hope, and motivation to achieve better outcomes.

In the 2022/23 financial year, AIM supported a total of 188 individuals experiencing co-occurring AOD concerns and mental health issues. 93% of people accessing the service reported a positive experience, with one client commenting:

"The dual care from [my] peer support worker and clinician has been amazing. Previously I have struggled to receive care and support for AOD use and my mental health.

[My] workers really are making a difference in my life and making me make these changes. I appreciate it so much."

In April 2023, the AIM team presented at the Australia and New Zealand Addiction Conference, hosted by The Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association.

The team presented compelling evidence to emphasise the prevalence of comorbidity and the need for integrated mental health and AOD services, revealing that a staggering three in four clients receiving AOD treatment across Australia meet the criteria for at least one mental health disorder.

Speaking of the importance of integrated treatment for people experiencing mental health issues and substance use concerns, Andrea Gregory, Sonder's Country Mental Health and AOD Manager explains, "Better outcomes are achieved when people do not need to go to several organisations for different aspects of their care needs."

Trevor Burch, Peer Practitioner in the AIM program also presented a reflection piece at the conference, sharing the transformative impact that peer support had on their personal recovery journey and advocating for further development of the lived experience workforce.

Country SA PHN is proud to fund the AIM program. It's making a real difference to the lives of its clients and its success will hopefully pave the way for more programs to embrace the voice of lived experience people and the importance of integrated treatment for people experiencing mental health issues and substance use concerns.

## Testimonials from AIM Alcohol and other Drugs Support clients

"If like me, you need help getting a substance abuse issue under control, I highly recommend this service. I cannot stress enough how wonderful my team were during what was a really stressful time in my life, but I felt supported through the entire process.

The dedicated nurse took care of my health concerns before and during the withdrawal week. My Peer Worker made me feel like I could do anything and always had time for me, and my counsellor is one of the best people I have met in my entire life."

**Paul**

"I honestly recommend Sonder, such a nice friendly group of people that truly want to see their clients get better and start living a better life. I'm now eight days clean from cannabis use and clean of any other substances.

I thank from the bottom of my heart all of my helpers there!!

Don't hesitate to call this group and set up a referral if you are struggling with any substance abuse and know there is help and they really do care. Their excitement for my improvement has enabled me to see that I can live a much healthier and happy life without drugs.

Thank you, Jess, Aris, and Efdi! You're all such caring and encouraging people."

**Adam**

"Your support, care and professionalism has been unbelievable and even though I'm still fighting a daily battle, without you I wouldn't even be fighting."

**Tracy**

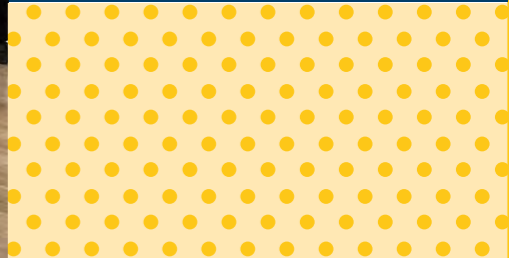


# Mental Health

Clare Lifeline Connect Centre



“The counsellor has been astronomical in my mental health improvement. I don’t know where I would be without her counselling.”



## Lifeline Connect Centres

**Country SA PHN is pleased to provide more options for people seeking to improve their social and emotional wellbeing with the funding of the Lifeline Connect Centre in Port Pirie. This centre joins the existing Clare Lifeline Connect Centre as the second in country South Australia.**

Lifeline Connect Centres are based on an early intervention and prevention model which provides a gateway to non-clinical interventions, suicide prevention services and information to connect the community.

Lifeline Connect Centres have been co-designed by those with lived experience of suicide. They are run by qualified counsellors and trained volunteers who bring skills and experience into the region along with local connections and the ability to engage vulnerable community members before crisis escalates. Volunteers are experienced and skilled in recognising and responding to signs of suicide risk.

The inclusion of volunteers enables clients to access the Lifeline Connect Centre as a one-stop service for both counselling needs and support with other practical issues impacting their mental health and

wellbeing. Volunteers also serve as gatekeepers to be alert to distress at a community level, therefore enabling a response to those at risk of suicide who have had no prior contact with formal mental health services.

The Lifeline model provides an approachable and safe space catering for walk-ins for early intervention or a crisis response. Free counselling is available to people aged twelve years and above with no requirement for a mental health plan or to meet specific criteria and self-referrals are accepted – thus removing many of the traditional barriers and impediments to seeking assistance when needed.

“Country SA PHN is committed to increasing access for country South Australians to services that can assist them with their mental health and wellbeing,” said Country SA PHN Chief Executive Officer Mark Hartigan.

“Country SA PHN’s funding of this Connect Centre enables Lifeline to provide additional support in a welcoming, safe and compassionate space – providing one point of contact for the Clare and Port Pirie communities to connect and seek help early.”



"I enjoyed my visits. I came away feeling a lot more relaxed than when I went in. Very satisfied with what you've done."

A strengths-based, person-centred approach and recovery focus is used in counselling. Services are primarily delivered face-to-face at the Lifeline Connect Centre as per respondent preference from a 2020 community consultation. However, to ensure accessibility and flexibility, telephone and video conferencing sessions are available along with outreach services for those who prefer a face-to-face service but are unable to access the Centres.

The service delivery model combines counselling services, suicide prevention programs and activities such as delivering talks at community organisations to increase awareness of suicide and mental health issues, increase community connection, reduce isolation, and reduce stigma associated with asking for help and support.

Support services are flexible and innovative ensuring services are easy to access, there are no waitlists and critically that clients in crisis can receive an immediate response. This has proved particularly effective in providing a service to male clients who are typically harder to engage in counselling services.

Lifeline Connect Centres are developed with considerations to the final report from the Prime Minister's National Suicide Prevention Advisor and CEO of the National Mental Health Commission Christine Morgan. This included:

- Lived Experience knowledge and leadership.
- Building community capability.
- Responding earlier to distress.
- Connecting people to compassionate services and supports.
- Focusing on communities disproportionately affected by suicide.

The Lifeline Connect Centres in country South Australia are delivered by Lifeline Broken Hill Country to Coast.

"Lifeline Broken Hill Country to Coast is committed to delivering mental health and wellbeing support," said Marisa Pickett, Acting CEO, Lifeline Broken Hill Country to Coast.

With the support of Country SA PHN, in 2021 we opened a Connect Centre in the Clare valley, which has been hugely successful in supporting people in the region and to now be able to do the same in Port Pirie is amazing."

In six months in 2022-23, the Clare Connect Centre had an increase in the number of people accessing services – with a higher-than-average amount of males accessing counselling services. Male clients in particular show a preference for the ease of walk-in service and are most likely to attend the centre on a day of crisis to seek ongoing counselling support until the issue is resolved. They then have a higher level of engagement (an average of three counselling sessions) for males who walk into the centre as opposed to those who are formally referred.

Overall in 2022-23, 68.75% of Clare Connect Centre clients have shown a significant improvement, with none having a deterioration in their mental health after attending counselling.

**404 community members** received support services (excluding counselling).

**500** individual counselling sessions provided.

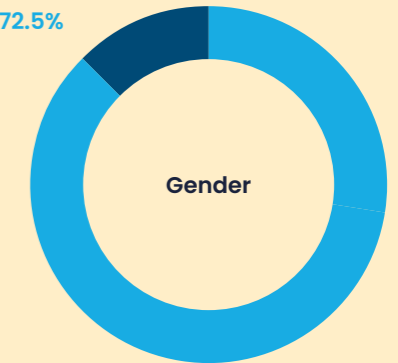
**113 community members** accessed counselling services.

**40 talks and information sessions** provided to community groups and organisations across three council areas.

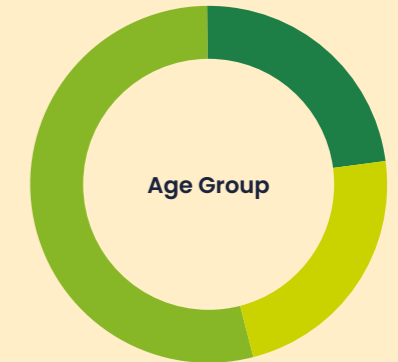
**30 community events** attended by staff and volunteers including country shows, NAIDOC week and fundraising.

### Clare Connect Centre clients accessing counselling

Males **27.5%**  
Other **72.5%**



14-30 years **24.5%**  
31-60 years **57.2%**  
61+ years **24.4%**



Self-referred **50%**  
Local service providers **29%**  
GP referral **21%**







## Gender Connect Country SA

**Gender Connect Country SA supports country South Australians of all ages who identify as trans, gender diverse or gender questioning – with lived experience Peer Support Workers.**

Country SA PHN's funding recognises the importance of this unique award-winning service to gender diverse people in our rural and remote communities as well as their personal and professional supports.

SHINE SA delivers the Gender Connect Country SA service. It has a successful two-pronged aim – to support gender diverse people and to increase primary health care providers' knowledge about the needs and referral pathways available for trans and gender diverse people living in Country SA.

Gender Connect Country SA provides confidential information, support, advice and understanding through Peer Support Workers with lived experience of gender diversity. Peer Support Workers also offer ongoing wellbeing checks.

Gender Connect Country SA operates between Monday and Thursday from 3 to 8pm (excluding public holidays) with the phone/webchat open from 3 to 8pm. Each shift includes one Senior Peer Support Worker, one Peer Support Worker and an externally available Team Leader.

# Population Health



SHINE<sub>SA</sub>



## GENDER CONNECT COUNTRY SA

### Free service for transgender and gender diverse people and their supports

This program is funded by Country SA PHN

#### Feedback from health professionals

"Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge and experience with us. It is obvious that you take pride in increasing community awareness. There were some interesting self-reflection activities."

"Thank you for the informative and interactive but down-to-earth training."

"Please continue to create awareness to all other professionals and communities."

"The training was informative. Would have much preferred it face-to-face but nevertheless, it was good."

"Thanks for the presentation. I found it informative and feel better informed to work with a gender diverse population."

"Fabulous presentation, thank you for the sharing of the personal experience."

#### Feedback from the community

"I like your service and think there should be a similar one nationally."

"I honestly don't know where I would have gone, I don't have access to mental health services, so this has been an absolutely incredibly resource for me."

"Just getting to talk to someone that has similar experiences to me is wonderful."

"Just to keep doing an amazing job! I'm sincerely so thankful to all of you."

"Very good listeners and helpful to provide piece of mind and stress."

"The regular chats help me to learn how to open up more."

(If this service was not available, where would you have gone?) "I'm not sure. It is the only service of its type that I know of."

"It's very helpful and I'm thankful for it."

The program also provides the following additional activities to further increase and enhance information and support available for transgender, gender diverse and gender questioning people, and their personal and professional supports:

- Support services within country South Australia to create community groups for trans, gender diverse, gender questioning people and their personal supports,
- Provide peer support to existing community groups within country South Australia,
- Develop and distribute peer led community and professional resources available on the SHINE SA website, and
- Facilitate Regional Queer Youth Services Network Meetings.

Peer Support Workers with lived experience is one of the key features of the program's success.

Sean and Brynn from the Gender Connect Country SA team are a great example of this community connection. They attended the Port Pirie Picnic in the Park to engage with the local community and services at large.

"It was a great day, and it makes it very heart-warming to be able to reach out directly to families with young trans and gender diverse community members and let them know that our Gender Connect Country SA service exists for both them and their young person," said Peer Support Worker Brynn.

"These events are important. They let us know that there are places and people out there that are accepting and affirming, and they let us know that we are not completely alone."

As a unique peer-led service, it is recognised nationally for its impact. In recognition of this, four Gender Connect Country SA team members were finalists in the Channel 7 Young Achievers Award, with Lucy Solonsch winning the 2023 Department of Human Service Pride Award. These staff are inspiring and wonderful role models for the trans and gender diverse community.

The Gender Connect Country SA program was also recognised as a semi-finalist at the Community Achievement Awards as part of the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency Rural Community Health and Wellbeing Award category.

Gender Connect Country SA supports health professionals and organisations via the Gender Connect Country SA out of hour service or via professional development opportunities. This support is tailored to need but includes advice on the needs of trans, gender diverse or gender questioning people, using respectful and inclusive language, gender affirming healthcare and referrals to other health professionals, and for those who would just like more.

# 24/7 Remote Testing

Country SA PHN in collaboration with the Rural Support Service, and Integrated Cardiovascular Clinical Network (iCCNet) launched the 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service - the culmination of a sustained period of work by a determined and skilled group of collaborators.

The South Australian Health Minister Chris Picton MP applauded all those involved in this South Australian first.

The 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service is a brilliant example of innovation in action. An innovative idea being brought to life to support country South Australians access care when they need it from the comfort of their own homes.

For the first time in South Australia, participants can measure their vital signs at home using a monitoring kit and be assessed by a nurse or doctor live 'on screen' at any time of the day or night, seven days a week.

This greatly improves access to urgent care and is particularly beneficial for country South Australians who often need to travel vast distances and support rural General Practitioners.

Country SA PHN's funding enabled the 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service to be offered free of charge to country South Australians ordinarily at risk of hospitalisation, aged 15 years and over with a GP referral.

After referral, patients are given a take home kit, including a smart tablet. They can check their blood pressure, oxygen levels, pulse rate and temperature and upload results to a secure website. A specialist nurse reviews the results and speaks to the patient before deciding the next steps, which could include escalating care to an after-hours GP service.

The 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring creates a significant breakthrough, and a fundamental improvement in the way health care is delivered now and into the future.



24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service participant



Minister for Health and Wellbeing Chris Picton MP at the 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service launch

## Benefits of the 24/7 Remote Health Monitoring Service

**Hospital avoidance:** help is always available for patients.

**Readmission reduction:** nursing care always available to allay patient fears and play a role in service coordination.

**Service pathway:** giving patients a clear way to access care.

**24/7 access** to medical care in the patient's home by country-based doctors that understand the unique experience of country.

**Reduced hospital stays:** patients with unique needs requiring out of hours support would otherwise be having to stay in hospital. This service allows patients to maintain their regular lifestyle.

**Autonomy:** patient initiated care puts patients in the driver's seat maximising their autonomy and making them partners in their own care.

**Personalisation:** tailoring equipment to patient's needs.

**Unique engagement:** engagement in care is personalised to the patient on an individual level allowing them to have more care when they need it and less when they don't.

# Primary Care and Digital Support Workforce

Country SA PHN recognises the importance of having a strong primary care professional workforce to serve people living in country South Australia.

As such we have a dedicated Primary Care and Digital Support team to ensure that we are assisting those delivering primary care to be able to provide the very best possible care.

The Primary Care and Digital Support Team supports the country South Australian primary care workforce to enable them to deliver effective, efficient, and equitable care.

The team supports general practice, pharmacies, allied health, residential aged care homes and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations by providing:

- Supporting new general practices in all areas
- Supporting practice closures
- Supporting accreditation
- Assisting with grant applications and promotion
- Upskilling and education promotion
- Providing relevant resources
- Attending local CPD events to engage with primary care providers.

Country SA PHN's Julie DiRito at Naracoorte General Practice



# Primary and Digital Support

## Practice Network Meetings

During the COVID-19 pandemic it became evident that general practice was disconnected after the cessation of the face-to-face practice visit scheduling.

In response the Primary Care and Digital Support Team provided online remote practice network meetings to establish connection to general practice staff. The informal hourly meetings over lunch provided updates general practice staff about Country SA PHN current activities and the opportunity for general practice staff to network in all regions of country South Australia. The meetings have been very well received.

## Quality Improvement and Accreditation

Country SA PHN's Primary Care and Digital Support team provides support for practices undertaking Quality Improvement and accreditation for the first time, or for those undergoing re-accreditation. This support includes:

- Deciding on an accrediting body.
- Enabling the practice to plan and implement policies and procedures.
- Providing templates and resources.
- Demonstrating available resources.
- Providing in-practice support to practices preparing for accreditation.
- Sourcing relevant resources, including templates and guidelines.
- Supporting and training staff to deliver Quality Improvement activities.



Country SA PHN's Julie DiRito at Boston Bay Family Health Practice



Country SA PHN's Julie DiRito and Jane Cooper at Port Lincoln



Country SA PHN's Maria Hassan providing IAR Training at Gum Medical, Gumeracha

## Emergency Response Planning Tool (ERPT)

Country SA PHN continued to fund country South Australian general practices to access and use the Emergency Response Planning Tool (ERPT) - an up-to-date plan which best positions general practice to appropriately prepare for, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of emergencies in the community.

The ERPT is managed by Healthpoint ANZ and was developed in collaboration with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Critical information is used to create an emergency response plan which is individually tailored to the practice, providing a roadmap to recovering from emergencies.

Maintaining an up-to-date emergency plan helps ensure the safety of staff and the smooth recovery of the practice which reduces the risk of financial loss.

## GoShare

Country SA PHN is funding Healthily (health technology company specialising in patient education) to create GoShare for general practices to support quality improvement and preventive health activities within our region. GoShare allows a Practice staff member to send patients information embedded as a link in a SMS. It can increase patient understanding and motivation to participate in preventative health campaigns and quality improvement activities.

The Primary Care and Digital Support team collaborates with Healthily to determine what packages would be most appropriate, content design, recruitment of participating practices and consumers for the video content.

Forty-six country South Australian general practices and Aboriginal Health Services have registered with GoShare.

## Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR)

The Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) is a national initiative from the Department of Health on establishing effective systems for the initial assessment and referral of individuals presenting with mental health conditions in primary health care settings. Each PHN has an IAR Training and Support Officer to provide training to general practitioners and clinicians in their catchment to learn about, use and embed the IAR Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST) into clinical practice.

Guided by clinicians' own assessment and clinical judgement, the IAR-DST provides a consistent framework to deliberate decisions when matching a person's mental health needs with the right level of service intensity, at the right time. National widespread use of the IAR-DST aims to build a common language across the mental health sector about treatment needs based on the person-centred and evidence-based stepped care approach.

The Country SA PHN Primary Care and Digital Support Team has been delivering IAR training to general practitioners and clinicians. From March 2023 to date the team has delivered workshops and one on one training to 239 individuals, of which 143 were general practitioners to provide support in clinical judgement and supported decision making.

Trainings have been delivered Online and Face to Face. Face to Face trainings have been delivered in Port Augusta, Whyalla, Gawler, Nuriootpa, Waikerie, Gumeracha, and Mount Compass. Trainings have also been organised online for individual practices.

Pop-up COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic roadside signage



Port Augusta Markets Pop-up COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic



Port Augusta Basketball Carnival Pop-up COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic



## National Cancer Screening

The Primary Care and Digital Support Team support general practices with the expansion of the National Cancer Screening Register in the form of the Participant Portal, Healthcare Provider Portal, and integration with clinical software. The team also assists with raising awareness of the register's benefits.

## Vulnerable Population Vaccinations

To ensure continued access to COVID-19 primary course and booster vaccinations, the Australian Government has extended the Vulnerable Population Vaccination program, with a specific focus on non-Medicare eligible patients.

Country SA PHN has funded and supported Stellar Health to provide the following pop-up COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics to reach vulnerable populations:

- Port Augusta - Basketball Carnival and Christmas Markets
- Eyre Peninsula (Cummins and Tumby Bay) - Navigating Aged Care Expo
- Kilburn Oval - Regional Football and Netball Carnival
- Country SA PHN also funded vaccinations to players and community members at the carnival training at the Ramblers Footy oval at Murray Bridge in the week leading up to the carnival.



# Suicide Prevention

MATES in Construction GAT training at Goyder South Wind Farm in Burra



“MATES has given me the confidence that if someone wanted or needed to talk with me, I feel I could assist them”

## MATES In Construction SA Suicide Prevention Training

**Suicide Prevention Training across country South Australia has been boosted by MATES in Construction as funding from Country SA PHN has enabled them to extend their training further into rural regions of our state.**

Country SA PHN has continued to fund MATES in Construction SA to extend their delivery of suicide prevention training throughout country South Australia in 2022-23. Following the success of the MATES SA training and to capitalise and build on the momentum created during the National Suicide Prevention Trial MATES SA has been able to extend their supportive reach to more rural regions of the state.

This extension was assisted by positive word of mouth recommendations that resulted in MATES SA providing training in many diverse workplaces across country South Australia. This has been supplemented by several community training sessions arranged with the help of local suicide prevention networks.

The MATES in Construction training model is based on capacity building. Building support around individuals with thoughts of suicide is instrumental in reducing suicide deaths and suicide attempts.

Through MATES' help offering model they build a community of people who look out for each other by being able to recognise when another person is struggling and have the skills to offer help.

The skills participants learn in the MATES training are directly transferable and applicable to all aspects of their lives. It equips them to recognise when a family member or friend is struggling and increases the likelihood that they can offer help, building a stronger and more caring community far beyond the workplace.

The MATES training is divided into three sections: General Awareness Training (GAT), Connector Training and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). GAT training provides guidance to recognise the signs and signals of a person at risk and explains how to connect them with help. Connector training equips people with the skills to keep someone in crisis safe while connecting them to help. ASIST provides people with the skills and ability to work with someone at critical risk, to keep them safe by listening to their concerns, and can develop a safe plan for their ongoing safety and wellbeing.



MATES in Construction Connector training at Goyder South Wind Farm in Burra

After every training session each participant completes a questionnaire which includes a question on their current emotional state and one that asks, 'Would you like a call back from a MATES in Construction worker?' This resulted in MATES in Construction Case Manager calling 30 workers that requested a follow up phone call during 2022-23.

It is also common in almost all MATES SA regional trainings for informal debriefs to take place post training. Individuals who may have had prior experience or current stressors take the opportunity to engage with MATES SA to discuss past or current issues. This includes everything from prior suicide attempts, self-harm behaviours, and loss of a loved one to suicide, current or historical issues around alcohol or other drug misuse, financial issues, relationship breakdowns and more.

These debriefs are often 'one-off chats' where the individual takes the opportunity to share but has turned down further support as they are either connected to support and resources already, have been in the past, or feel as though it is not needed. These debriefs provide a great opportunity for people to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences post training in a safe and non-threatening environment. In the six-month period of July 2022-December 2022 MATES SA had 10 requests for case management and counselling from across country South Australia.

**961 people**  
trained over  
60 sessions.

**12% sought**  
help for  
themselves.

**89% of survey respondents**  
indicated the training had a  
positive or extremely positive  
impact on their workplace.



Eyre Peninsula MATES in Construction safeTALK training

To measure these ongoing effects, a second questionnaire is sent to participants several months (three months or more) after they completed training to gauge the ongoing effectiveness of the program on the participants, their workplace and community.

34% of people responding to a follow-up questionnaire had used the skills they learned in a MATES in Construction presentation to assist somebody else.

One of the strengths and a distinct point of difference of the MATES program is that it provides ongoing support through their tiered training model, phone support and follow-up visits. Daily support is provided by the development of a workplace community where work colleagues provide peer-based support. This contrasts with stand-alone education or one-off awareness sessions.

"The skills and knowledge our workers have developed from the training sessions have become transferable knowledge that directly impacts to help our community."

"It felt good to be able to help someone and get them the help they needed."

"I noticed the person not their normal self & asked if they were OK. Their answer was not convincing, so I pushed a little more - we went for a walk & they opened up. We arranged a visit to their GP who referred them onwards. I check in periodically with them & they are doing much better."

"The training was very well presented & very professional."

"The service was great, and the Case Manager was so friendly and easy to talk to, I felt less alone and now I'm really happy. Great that we have this for free."

"The skills and knowledge our workers have developed from the training sessions have become transferrable knowledge that directly impacts our community."

**93% agreed or strongly agreed** they had learned the skills to notice signs or invitations that a workmate might be struggling.

**92% of respondents indicated** the training had a positive or extremely positive impact on their workplace.

**91% felt confident** they could assist someone who needed help.

**88% agreed or strongly agreed** they would seek help if going through a difficult time, feeling upset, or thinking of suicide.

**38% of respondents** had used the skills learned in the training to assist a work colleague (51%), friend (40%), or a family member (26%).

**14% had sought help** for themselves.

**Personalisation:** tailoring equipment to patient's needs.

**Unique engagement** in care is personalised to the patient on an individual level allowing them to have more care when they need it and less when they don't.





# Workforce Support

## Peer Support Worker

**A robust primary health workforce is essential to provide quality health and well being services to our rural and remote communities. A successful peer support worker program is leading with lived experience to support the country South Australian mental health workforce.**

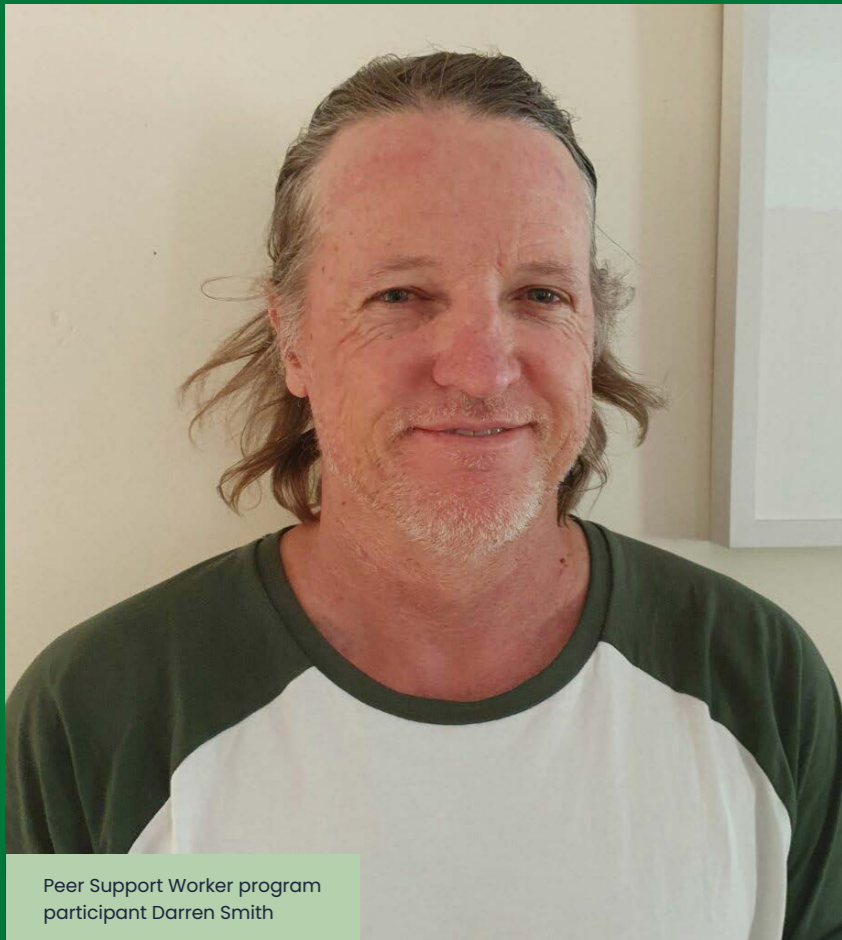
Workforce recruitment and retention difficulties in rural and remote communities contribute to inequitable health care access and poorer health outcomes for country residents. Crucial to the need to address workforce difficulties in rural locations is the need to provide workforce development opportunities.

Recognising this importance Country SA PHN has funded Centacare Catholic Family Services to deliver the Mental Health Peer Work program providing the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work qualification in the Limestone Coast region to address current workforce shortages existing within the mental health, suicide prevention, and disability sectors.

The program has had a positive flow on effect - increasing consumer access to psychosocial capacity building supports in the region.

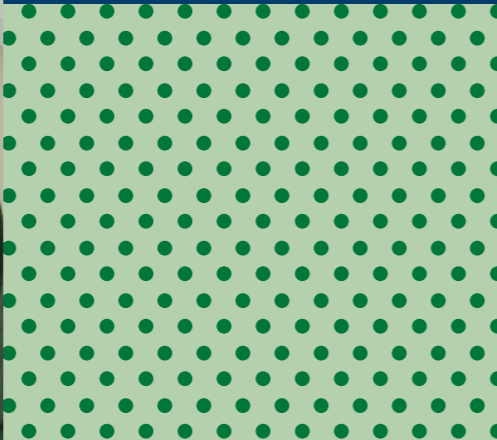
The qualification takes up to 12 months to complete and is for people who have lived experience of mental distress and recovery as either a consumer of services or a carer of someone who has.

Centacare is delivering the nationally recognised training in partnership with the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia's (MHCSA) Lived Experience Workforce Program.



Peer Support Worker program participant Darren Smith

“The most important and beneficial part of my recovery was my peer support worker who had a lived experience of mental health”



Centacare and MHCSA have an established partnership and shared interest in the delivery of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work qualification having previously worked together to consult with industry to plan, contextualise and deliver the course in metropolitan Adelaide and Port Lincoln.

Leading with lived experience has proved invaluable in the program’s success.

Participant in the Mental Health Peer Work program in Port Lincoln Darren Smith knows firsthand the belief that feeling understood can instil when dark thoughts take over.

“The most important and beneficial part of my recovery was my peer support worker who had a lived experience of mental health,” he says.

“He was compassionate, non-judgemental and empathetic. I felt connected, understood and valued.”

This inspired Darren to play the same role in others’ lives.

“I have learnt the importance of self-compassion and self-care, collaborative problem solving, and to seek support from my peers and not to be afraid to reach out for help and ask questions,” Darren says.

“Best highlights have been learning to lean in and face adversity and personal challenges and building a network of peer workers and community resources.”

Darren also sees the Certificate as a catalyst for personal growth through emotional intelligence.

“Gaining confidence and understanding of other people’s experiences and perspectives has assisted me in improving relationships with others and myself,” he says.

Country SA PHN has continued funding Centacare to extend the program with the qualification now being offered in Port Augusta and Mount Gambier. It is open to people living in the Limestone Coast, Flinders Upper North, Yorke Peninsula, and northern regions.

Darren is encouraging others to follow his lead and undertake the certificate.

“You won’t regret it and you will learn a whole more about yourself,” he says.

“It was tough but definitely worth the effort.”

Five learner cohorts have commenced with Centacare in the past two years, with learning retention tracking at higher than 80 per cent and a 70 per cent employment rate.

“I just wanted to say thank you for helping me access this course and getting settled in.

The first face to face for the course was fantastic.

I was really apprehensive and anxious going into that first day, but Katherine and Em were amazing, super welcoming and approachable.

While it was a lot to absorb in a short amount of time, clearly and discussions around the topic were great, everyone’s input or questions were considered and encouraged. I left feeling a lot more confident in getting involved in this course and the work.

I am looking forward to the coming year and digging into it all.”



# Local Health Clusters

## Local Health Cluster Grants

**Local Health Cluster grants deliver significant and meaningful community outcomes. The Local Health Clusters took the opportunity to apply for grants to commission worthy projects in their communities.**

“The diverse range of activities that the grant recipients engaged is testament to the importance of local communities making local decisions about what’s needed in their own communities,” said Country SA PHN Community Collaborations Manager, Brenton Chappell.

“It’s important that we are empowering Local Health Clusters to self-manage and engage in these kinds of unique activities that directly benefit their own communities.

Country SA PHN is proud to continue to support the clusters in their own individual endeavours.”

## Mid North Local Health Cluster, Wilmington Gym

The Mt Maria Movement exercise group commenced on 16 March 2023, and continues to run successfully once a week. The group had a physiotherapist, also a Wilmington Community Gym committee member volunteer their time to plan, run and establish the group for the first eight weeks. The group continues to have strong numbers past the initial supervised eight weeks, with an average weekly attendance rate of 20 people across the two class times. Both the physiotherapist and other committee member have continued to attend every two to three weeks to check in, progress programs and orientate/setup new participants.

One of the group's key successes was the level of community interest. A total of 35 people registered for the program (30 women, five men) varying from 57-90 years of age. Due to this high level of interest, the group was divided into two 45-minute session times to ensure the gym wasn't overcrowded and that participants had sufficient access to ask questions/trial equipment. The group has continued to run past the supervised eight weeks with a volunteer from each group overseeing the weekly sessions. This promotes leadership and ensures the long-term sustainability of the group.

A survey was completed by participants after the eight weeks with feedback on what they enjoyed most about the group. Responses included enjoying the social element, learning more about the equipment and new exercises specific for their health needs, the accountability of having a group class and having a structured program to follow.

83% of respondents reported noticing a positive change in their health and wellbeing since commencing the group (this included increased energy levels, reduction in shortness of breath,



Exercise group participants at Wilmington Gym

**"Our committee is proud of the group, the participants and the 'sense of community' that it has created."**



weight loss, feeling fitter, increased movement of joints, less pain, improved mobility, increase in strength) and 72% reported an increase in physical activity levels outside of the group since commencing.

Another success was 14 of the participants signing up as gym members since the beginning of the exercise group so that they could access the gym for additional sessions, assisting them to reach their individual goals. Of this 14, there are a group of five that regularly attend together on other days to complete their exercise programs which demonstrates how enabling the establishment of this group has been for the community.

Feedback from the survey about what could have improved in the group included smaller class sizes to allow more one to one time with exercise prescription and feedback, more advice on increasing/alternating times and weights within exercises, the program running twice a week and the supervised program running for longer. Volunteers that ran the group also found the high group numbers a challenge initially while everyone was becoming familiar with the exercises/how to use the equipment.

"Our committee is proud of the group, the participants and the 'sense of community' that it has created.

The four station multi-gym has been a critical piece of equipment in establishing the group, allowing our target group (older members of our community or those with chronic disease and pain) to feel safe and confident while doing strength training.

This equipment has also been widely used by our gym members outside of the class, contributing to the health and wellbeing of our wider community."



The vibe, the positivity, the learning, the quality of everything shared... it was so inspiring, and I can't wait for 2024!

## Lower Eyre Local Health Cluster, 3 Cs Wellbeing Conference

The 2023 Mentally Fit EP 3C's Wellbeing Conference was held at the Port Lincoln Hotel on 18 and 19 February 2023. Attendees were from all over Eyre Peninsula, as far as Penong and Whyalla and many towns in between. Wellbeing groups and Suicide Prevention Networks from across the region were represented, as well as practitioners and volunteers in the wellbeing space. Nadia Clancy, the Premier's Advocate for Suicide Prevention attended, as well as local MP, Sam Telfer.

Many activities to foster connection were held, as well as the opportunities to listen to guest speakers, including Andrew Lines from the Rite Journey, Dr Kate Gunn from iFarmwell and John Treloar on behalf of SA Ambulance.

Workshops included unpacking what the groups and communities perceived as needing to flourish, learning about choice theory, drum circles, impact sharing and setting goals and benefits of vision boards. Lived experience guest speakers, Shane Grocke, Steve Whillas and Tim Hardy captured the hearts of the audience, with many connections, future collaborations being organised and a standing ovation.

The annual grant writing winners were announced, with this year's \$2000 going to the Wudinna Play Gym who had recognised the need for a women's wellbeing day.

On the evening of Day 1, participants came together to enjoy a meal, live music and a hilarious hypnotism comedy show with Cherry Farrow. Not only did everyone have a great laugh but the show emphasised the power of the mind.

Feedback indicated that an overwhelming majority of participants wanted to see the 3C's Wellbeing Conference continue in 2024.

When asked 'what had the biggest impact on you from the conference?', responses included "Being in a room full of like-minded people who want to make a contribution to better outcomes for mental health in our region", "Connecting with other people and having discussions that may lead to future collaboration projects", "Evening entertainment and networking. Understanding how I can influence my thinking with self-hypnosis", and "All of it".

## Far West Local Health Cluster, Exercise in Aged Care Program, and Eyre Exercise Physiology

The Exercise in Aged Care Program consisted of developing and implementing an on-site exercise program for aged citizens at The Ceduna Senior Citizens Village (Ceduna District Health) and Seaview Village (Yadu Health Aboriginal Corporation).

It targeted Country SA PHN priority areas including aged care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island health with two locations serviced through this grant.

This program was funded by Country SA PHN and Our Town Ceduna/Far West. It focussed on resistance training and balance exercise to help reduce falls risk and help to improve overall physical health and quality of life in aged care.

A pre and post assessment was completed to help form goals and an individualised exercise program. Subjective questions and objective tests including flexibility, lower body strength, grip strength, timed up and go mobility/dynamic balance, static balance and gait/postural analysis in addition to quality-of-life surveys were included in the assessment to inform health background and current level of function.

There were five participants from Seaview Village and eleven participants from Ceduna Senior Citizens Village. There were different health considerations within this group including chronic pain, joint replacement and past bone fractures, cardiovascular disease (heart disease, stroke), dementia, depression, diabetes, and sleep apnoea.

All participants completing the majority of sessions improved in at least four physical measurements and feedback from participants were positive.

A highlight of the program was a participant that tracked their exercise to cycle more than 2500km and walk more than 174,000 steps over the program duration. Pre-program they reported a very low level of physical activity and were restricted in their mobility due to chronic back pain.

### Participant Feedback

'... noticed an overall improvement including weight loss of 8kg, improved fitness and mood, and it's helped me transition from care into an independent living unit. Improvements in the program would be to increase sessions and opportunities to be active within the village.'

'... noticed an improvement in walking and breathlessness had improved. The exercises were feeling easier to do compared to when we started.'

'I liked the group setting and I learnt different exercises. I also built-up confidence with the balance exercises.'

'The exercises were helpful for strength, and I'd be happy to continue with them.'

'The exercises were made to be a level/intensity suitable for my age and body and I'd be keen to continue with the two sessions a week.'

'I don't feel as reliant on my 4WW for balance as I did before.'



Blokes, BBQ & Banter event participants



## Men's Mental Health Events

The Lower Eyre Local Health Cluster (LELHC) determined that there was a need for a series of workshops engaging men that would travel along the west coast of Eyre Peninsula.

The LELHC observed positive engagement from the men who participated in their previous men's events in Elliston. Cluster member, Andrew McLeod, endorsed the need to build consistent connection with the men in town. The Streaky Bay Health Service indicated an increase in the number of men in crisis and the lack of resources and events available to support them. Further conversations across the far west echoed the same stories.

The workshops titled "Blokes, BBQ & Banter" were presented by men with lived experience including Jeremy Edwards of INATT (I am not afraid to talk), Steve Whillas, Marc Ryan, a comedian focusing on

Mental Health, as well as Jim Stockham, a Youth Worker representing Mentally Fit EP. The aim of the workshops was to encourage help seeking, for the men participating to gain an understanding that they are not alone and to connect with other men.

Each event was well supported, with the attendees showing immense gratitude. The positive flow on saw the Warramboos community getting in contact with Mentally Fit EP to run another evening in their town. They raised the majority of the funds needed to run the event and Mentally Fit EP coordinated it for them. It was great to see that the events were such a success, with feedback showing that all survey respondents found the event worthwhile and would attend another in the future. They also all "felt stronger" about supporting others and indicated that they gained ideas and inspiration for their own self-development and self-care.

## Participant Feedback

"What a great night and excellent initiative ... be great to have a follow up night! Anything council can do or if we could collaborate in any other events we would love to help. The other councillors also said to pass on their congratulations. I'm thinking I too would be interested in sharing my PTSD story in a similar format if ever you need a speaker with experience."

"Thank you for organising the event last night at the complex it was very well received from the footy club as I know I really enjoyed and appreciated it. It was a great night."

"This is a great initiative. It's a great way for blokes to start the chat surrounding mental health and good inspiration for trying to be more proactive as a community." - Elliston, 'Blokes, BBQ & Banter', Mentimeter comment

"Awesome to listen to the boys and their lives. Well worth staying around for." - Streaky Bay, 'Blokes, BBQ & Banter', Mentimeter comment

## Roxby Downs, Happy and Healthy Expo

The Happy and Healthy Expo commenced in 2009 as an initiative of the Building Healthy Communities program that aimed to help prevent chronic disease by improving health outcomes.

Since 2012 this event has been auspiced by the Roxby Downs Community Board Health Forum with Expos held in 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2023. The event aims to encompass a holistic view of living a happy and healthy life by including and highlighting the benefits of being involved in community life which in turn helps to connect residents in remote communities. Due to significant community interest with approximately 1,000 people attending this year's Expo was held in the Main Street.

The Local Health Cluster Grant made it possible for the event to be completely free of charge – including all food (free lunch cooked by Rotary), drinks, activities, and merchandise. The Expo incorporated health and community information stalls, kid's activities, a road crash demonstration by Country Fire Service and State Emergency Service, emergency vehicles, roaming characters, smoothie bikes, a Build Up skateboarding workshop, and kid's games including the healthy trail.



Community Hub Healthy Environments stall



Congratulations on a fantastic event on Saturday! The verbal feedback I have received so far has been fantastic!

**Community Hub  
Healthy Environments**



Crime Stoppers SA stall



Congratulations on such a fantastic event! I had a wonderful day with many members of the community coming to chat and hear about Crime Stoppers.

The event was so well organised, possibly the best I have attended to be honest.

**Crime Stoppers SA**

## Riverland, Wellness Expo

FocusOne Health facilitated a Wellness Expo in collaboration with the Riverland Community Services Alliance on 18 March 2023, at the Renmark Markets, on the riverfront. The markets attracted thousands of locals and tourists despite the extreme heat of 41 degrees Celsius.

The Expo's aim was to promote healthy lifestyles and the range of free health and wellness services available in the Riverland and provide linkages to FocusOne Health programs, other local services and disseminate health information and resources. Members of the Riverland Community Services Alliance also provided information and resources to be disseminated on the day.

A Healthy Tune Up was offered by the FocusOne Health Healthy Habits team, local General Practitioners, and medical students from the Renmark Medical Clinic. Healthy Tune Ups is a mobile health education program designed to encourage and support the community to address their health needs. Thirty-five people participated in the Healthy Tune Up who were encouraged to take their health check results and discuss them with their General Practitioner.

The community responded well to the informal nature of the Healthy Tune Up and enjoyed the opportunity to speak with local General Practitioners. There were many useful conversations around services available, wait lists and how to refer.



Build Up skateboarding workshop

FocusOne Health Healthy Habits team





Country SA PHN  
30 Tanunda Road, Nuriootpa SA 5355  
PO Box 868 Nuriootpa SA 5355  
Ph: 08 8565 8900

[www.countrysaphn.com.au](http://www.countrysaphn.com.au)

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