Annual Report
2016–2017
It gives me great pleasure in writing this, my first Annual Report welcome as CareSouth Chairman.

This past year has been a steep learning curve for me since taking on the role of Chairman from CareSouth’s founder and long-serving Board Chairman Jim McEwan. It is a wonderful accolade that someone in Jim’s position, with his experience and expertise, would identify me to replace him as Chairman, especially in a year when we are celebrating our 25th anniversary.

It is an honour to step into this role at a time when we are reflecting on the highlights of the past quarter of a century and looking ahead to continue to create positive futures for children, young people, families and communities across NSW and more recently the ACT.

Since stepping into this role our organisational focus has been on meeting our accreditation and training requirements across our wide geographic footprint, including implementing our Safeguarding Children, Young People and People with Disability policy across the organisation.

I was honoured to be the first to sign CareSouth’s Safeguarding Children, Young People and People with Disability Commitment Statement. Safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility at CareSouth, every day. The Board of Directors have supported and endorsed this Safeguarding Policy, to show our commitment at the highest level of the organisation. And more than 200 staff have undertaken the required training and pledged their commitment to the policy.

The Board also had the opportunity to participate in the Third Party Verification audit for our Disability Services, which we passed with flying colours, and more recently the Office of the Children’s Guardian audit for Out-of-Home Care Reaccreditation.

I would like to thank everyone across the organisation for the tremendous effort that has been put in preparing us for these audits. The audit undertaken by the OCG was very detailed, and it was a pleasure to participate in the assessment, seeing first-hand the depth of knowledge and passion of our staff.

In order to achieve best practice the Board has also set a target of 100% completion of mandatory training for all staff. Since implementing this benchmark we have already seen an increase in staff taking the opportunity to increase their knowledge. It is an important element of our drive to be the best at what we deliver.

I would like to thank everyone who has warmly welcomed me to the CareSouth team and I feel privileged to be a part of such a warm, vibrant organisation. On behalf of the Board I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our wonderful staff in creating positive futures for those with whom they work.

John Dorahy – Board Chairman
It is my great pleasure to share with you our 25th year of operation at CareSouth. I have had the privilege of leading our strategic direction for the past six years. It has been my most rewarding role especially being surrounded by so many people who care, beyond our expectations.

Fittingly our 25th year has been celebrated by some extraordinary achievements such as winning the Business of the Year in the Shoalhaven Business Awards, along with Employer of Choice and Excellence in Community Services. We were the first Not-for-Profit to win this prestigious award. We were also recognised in our Western Region with Pru McManus awarded Business Leader in the Deniliquin Business Awards. We were also finalists in the Illawarra Business Awards in the Employer of Choice Category.

Sadly, after a quarter of a century leading the organisation we farewell our Chairman and founder Jim McEwan. Jim has been a passionate advocate for CareSouth, those we support and our communities, and his legacy will reach far into the future. Personally, Jim has been my greatest support and I thank him sincerely.

With every ending there is a new beginning and we have been fortunate to welcome our new Chairman John Dorahy in an exciting time for the organisation as we enter our second quarter of our first century. John is highly regarded and has strong ties to the Illawarra, he is compassionate and a perfect replacement to take on the role of filling Jim’s large shoes. Our Board as ever remain diligent, vibrant and truly committed to our vision and purpose.

Looking back on the last year it really has been a mammoth year for CareSouth with our retendering for Permanency Planning and Intensive Therapeutic Care in an environment of great change within the Out-of-Home Care sector. We also commenced the extensive auditing process led by the Office of the Children’s Guardian to achieve Re-Accreditation.

Disability services continued to experience change with our remaining regions coming on board for the NDIS and undergoing Third Party Verification. We are also in the process of Voluntary Out-of-Home Care, Safeguarding Children and White Ribbon Accreditation, all of these processes taking place whilst staff and volunteers continue ‘business as usual’ providing quality services to those we support.

This year we saw the introduction of our CareSouth Connect call centre which allows both staff, carers and the community to have a central contact point and 24 hour support.

We also launched our inaugural Emerging Leaders program to identify and develop future leadership talent. The 12 month work-based learning program supported seven staff from across the organisation considering a career in management and leadership.

CareSouth continued our long tradition of advocacy in the sector by becoming founding members of the Children in Care Collective. The Collective was formed to share information and work collaboratively and proactively on a range of issues for children and young people with complex needs living in Out-of-Home Care.

A huge thank you and acknowledgement of staff, carers and volunteers – they continue to amaze me every day – their resilience, energy and innovation applied in their work inspires and drives me to achieve better, to challenge the status quo.

Debra Tozer – CEO
Former Chairman’s tribute

CareSouth founder and recently retired Chairman Jim McEwan has dedicated his life to helping children and young people.

Jim’s vision – to create positive futures for all those with whom we work – has spent the past 25 years doing his best to make that happen and it underpins all the work we do here at CareSouth.

Jim has helped enhance the lives of thousands of children and young people across NSW and the ACT and CareSouth has always been in safe hands under Jim’s guidance as founder and Chairman. And it will remain so with our CEO and Board sharing the same visions and values.

CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer said Jim’s contribution and commitment to CareSouth over the past 25 years has helped the not-for-profit become a leader in the sector.

“Jim has been an incredible support to me and a great source of knowledge since my commencement with CareSouth. I now look forward to working with John in the role of Chairman,” said Deb.

Jim’s journey in building CareSouth from a handful of staff to a team of almost 300 began when he was asked to join a steering committee to help save Nowra’s only youth refuge. Jim’s unwavering vision to “give every kid a terrific life” led to him fostering a young person and setting up an Aunties & Uncles program in the Shoalhaven. This soon led to Jim establishing Shoalcare – now known as CareSouth – and we now have offices in the Illawarra, South Coast, Southern Tablelands, Western NSW and Deakin, ACT.

“I hate seeing kids’ (potential) being wasted,” said Jim. “I had a terrific life. I think every kid should have a terrific life. I thought maybe I could make some contribution. I knew I wasn’t a welfare worker but I was good at getting things going and keeping them going so that’s what I did. I think everybody wants to make a difference don’t they.

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

“I had a terrific life. I think every kid should have a terrific life. I thought maybe I could make some contribution.”

“The core values haven’t changed which was really doing the best for kids that we can possibly do, or for people with disabilities (as the organisation grew) so that hasn’t changed at all. It’s been a theme that’s existed from day one and still exists.

“Deb (Tozer our CEO) I would say is the one with the vision, I think I’m the one who did whatever had to be done to get us where we were going. Deb is the one who inspires and provides a vision for the organisation and will take us into the future.”
It has been an exciting time at CareSouth with the organisation winning several prestigious business awards in the 2016-2017 financial year.

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

CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer said the awards were recognition of the importance CareSouth places on investing in our future – the vulnerable children and young people supported by our team of dedicated employees. “At CareSouth we work with people most in need,” said Ms Tozer. “Every day our committed staff arrive for work with a desire to help others. They are dedicated professionals from diverse backgrounds who have a unique skill set – from direct care workers to accountants and psychologists to IT specialists.”

In another significant win for CareSouth, Deniliquin Program Manager Pru McManus was named the Business Leader of the Year at the 2016 Deniliquin Business Awards. Pru is the driving force behind CareSouth’s Deniliquin team who have worked “tirelessly” over the past four years to develop and provide quality programs in the Western region.

“I was extremely proud to be named Business Leader of the Year at the Deniliquin Chamber Business awards,” said Pru. “Although it was presented as an individual award, it was really one for our whole Deniliquin team. And my recognition and appreciation goes to them for their dedication and passion for all that they do for the children, young people and families that they support. Without their commitment, we wouldn’t be where we are today.”

“The range of awards we have received across our geographical footprint highlights the professionalism, innovation and quality work our not-for-profit organisation does in the community sector,” said Deb. “Each and every day our staff work towards creating a positive future for the children, young people, individuals, families and communities that they support. It is a privilege and an honour to lead such a compassionate, hardworking and inspiring team.”
The Board

To read their full profiles visit caresouth.org.au/about-us/board-of-directors
Our year in focus

JULY 2016
- All Staff Development Day
- Pyjama Day

AUGUST 2016
- Media Training for ELG
- ACWA Board Meeting
- Won Employer of Choice, Excellence in Community Services (not for profit) and Business of the Year at the Shoalhaven Business Chamber Awards
- ACWA Conference

SEPTEMBER 2016
- ACWA Board Meeting

OCTOBER 2016
- CEO Forum

NOVEMBER 2016
- ELG Western Road Trip
- ACWA Ethics Committee

DECEMBER 2016
- CEO Forum
- SPBA Leadership Compass Launch
- Staff End of Year function, Mercure, Gerringong
- Met with Minister Hazzard

JANUARY 2017
- John Dorahy became Chairman of the Board and Rebecca Keen became Deputy Chairman
FEBRUARY 2017
- CEO Forum
- Shoalhaven Business Forum
- Children in Care Collective Meeting
- ACWA Meeting
- ACWA Board Meeting and Strategic Planning Meeting

MARCH 2017
- International Women’s Day, WIN Entertainment Centre, Wollongong
- Tender Response Workshop
- TPV Accreditation
- Children in Care Collective Meeting
- Office of the Children’s Guardian Audit commences

APRIL 2017
- Shoalhaven Business Forum
- Foster Care Single Invited Proposal Submission

MAY 2017
- ACWA Board Meeting
- Women In Business High Tea, Guest Speaker – Deb Tozer, Cambewarra Estate Winery

JUNE 2017
- CEO Forum
- Therapeutic Care Framework Training for staff commences
- Safeguarding Children Declaration signings across the whole organisation
- Children in Care Collective Meeting
- ACWA Meeting
- Kerryn Boland Farewell
- Partnering with University of Wollongong to support work placements in Education and Community Services
- University of Wollongong Vice Chancellor’s Research Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement in Research Partnership
Our Footprint

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

In 2017 we changed our structure to a regional model to best meet the needs of the communities we serve.

**Illawarra Region**
Total staff: 101

**Programs:**
- Foster Care Illawarra
- Residential Illawarra
- Drop in Support / Leaving Care
- Aunties and Uncles
- Brighter Futures
- Supervised Contact
- Homework Hub
- NDIS

**Shoalhaven Region**
Total staff: 80

**Programs:**
- Nan Bishop House
- Tartarian House
- Drop in Support / Leaving Care
- Residential Shoalhaven
- Foster Care Nowra
- Shoalhaven Youth Support Service
- Aunties and Uncles
- Family Choices
- NDIS
Board

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Support

Western Region
Total staff: 60

Programs:
- Foster Care Deniliquin
- Foster Care Griffith
- Foster Care Wagga Wagga
- Residential Care Wagga Wagga
- Supervised Contact
- Family Choices
- NDIS

Southern Region
Total staff: 50

Programs:
- Foster Care ACT
- Foster Care Goulburn
- Residential Queanbeyan
- Aunties and Uncles
- NDIS

Business Units
Total staff: 48

Programs:
- Corporate Services
- Strategy and Projects
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Community Relations
- Policy and Research
- Property and Asset Management
- Finance (including Payroll)
- After Hours
Our Services

Shoalhaven Youth Support Service

What's it like to be homeless?

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

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

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

Jen explains to students that programs like SYSS offer a safety net for young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Caseworkers focus on building young people’s resilience through support, assistance and guidance and help them access resources and referral networks.

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

The SYSS program has a focus on early intervention (Outreach) which aims to support young people at risk of becoming homeless by facilitating the restoration of family relationship breakdown when possible and stabilising young people in their accommodation options. The Outreach program allows young people to be supported from an individualistic approach, identifying their specific needs and supporting them with a tailored case plan. This involves areas such as advocacy, basic budgeting, cooking and cleaning, self-care, access to professional advice, access to education and referrals to other services.

“The SYSS Outreach program supports up to 70 young people each year and helps them begin their journey to independence,” said Jen.

As well as this, SYSS also has a short-term accommodation service. This program is available for young people aged 16-24 who require immediate housing, which they can receive for 6-8 weeks. During this time the focus is on identifying stable accommodation options for the young people, while helping them access all the services offered by our Outreach program. When they leave the residential program they can continue to be supported for up to 12 months in the Outreach program.

]In 2016/2017 the combined number of young people accepted for both the SYSS Outreach and Residential Program was 140.

Champions

The CareSouth Champions program is an early intervention strategy to support children and young people whose families are struggling, by linking them with a volunteer mentor.

Based on the highly successful CareSouth Aunties and Uncles program, Champions has grown to include willing volunteers from many different areas of society – younger and older people and those who are unable to commit to large amounts
of mentoring time. What matters most is seeing the child or young person enough to establish a strong relationship.

When families are under pressure a child’s sense of happiness, self-esteem, and well-being is undermined. The Champions program supports vulnerable children by matching them with carefully selected and trained volunteer mentors who engage children in activities like fishing, bike riding, family picnics, weekend sport or simply cooking a meal together.

Parents under pressure also get a break while the young people spend time with their CareSouth champion. A Champion can make a big difference for a child living with disadvantage and hardship, simply by engaging them in everyday activities. This helps them learn social and life skills and also creates happy childhood memories.

The Champions program currently has 24 young people from across the Illawarra and South Coast. Those in the program are primary school-aged when they are first linked with their volunteer mentors. Volunteers come from all walks of life and are carefully selected and dedicated to supporting and nurturing the young people they share their time with. Most children spend one weekend a month with their CareSouth Champion. However the six staff who manage and coordinate the program are developing a more flexible provision of service to meet the needs of families and volunteers.

Aunties and Uncles program managers and coordinators are based in Berkeley, Nowra and Ulladulla and staff frequently run school holiday workshops in a bid to bring those who are a part of the program together.

Little things help young people in big ways

Zac* is 12 years-old and, along with his older brother, cares for his Mum when she goes through bouts of depression. Before Zac joined CareSouth’s Champions program his life revolved around school, video games and helping his Mum get well.
Then Zac met volunteer mentors Cathy and James* and their children and a whole new world opened up for him. Aunties and Uncles – part of CareSouth’s Champions – was one of the organisation’s first support programs since its inception 25 years ago. Aunties and Uncles is an early intervention strategy for young people whose families are struggling. The program matches the young person with carefully selected and trained volunteer mentors who engage in everyday activities like fishing, bike riding, family picnics, weekend sport or simply cooking a meal together.

Zac believes Champions has changed his life in big ways through small things, like eating family meals together, going for bike rides, swimming and shooting hoops.

“CareSouth thank you so much because you guys are just awesome, you guys pretty much changed my life in the best of ways so I dearly appreciate it, thank you,” he said.

“It (Champions) changed how I feel about things.”

Cathy became a volunteer mentor in the program because of her own difficult childhood.

“Champions has definitely helped me be able to give back,” said Cathy. “From my background as a child I feel like I really needed a program like this growing up so that’s inspired me to get our family involved.”

“We felt we had so much to give to a child whose family might be struggling and need extra support. We just include him as one of our children.”

The program has also helped Zac with his transition to high school this year, often a tricky period for young people, let alone those who are already vulnerable. Zac suffered from bullying while at primary school and the Smiths have worked with him to build his resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

Cathy says: “When he first came to us he wouldn’t try anything. He would get frustrated bike riding and throw the bike and say I can’t do this. But with James’s encouragement he tackles the tough tracks and now he always wants to jump on the bike and go for a ride. They go for hours. Now he has that confidence to try new things.

“We wanted to give him that confidence for high school so that he had those shared experiences to talk to the other kids about and be included, and he could do those things with his friends because he knew how to do them.”

Zac admits that life gets difficult when his Mum is unwell and he often escapes into a world of video games to cope. “Sometimes Mum just needs some time alone so she can get better. Recently Mum has been a bit stressed, our dog died. So I’ve been supporting her as best I can,” he said, showing maturity beyond his years.

And that is what CareSouth Champions is all about, helping vulnerable kids get back on the bike and stay on track. Next on the list of adventures is surfing!

But it is the small, everyday moments, like sitting around the dinner table with the Smiths that Zac cherishes the most.

“Our Services

Zac admits that persistent bullying made school tough.

“There were a few mean people in primary school but I’ve got over it and learned to shove it all off,” said Zac matter-of-factly. “I haven’t met any people in high school that have been disrespectful to me. I’m lucky enough to have lots of friendships with other kids from CareSouth.”

Zac agrees that Champions has helped him scale new heights – literally and figuratively. The youngster recently climbed Sublime Point with a group of teen boys and their caseworkers from across CareSouth’s programs.

“I wouldn’t have had enough courage to do that before,” said Zac. “But Cathy and James and CareSouth have helped me build up my courage, so that’s really cool, they’ve really helped me out.”
the kids and James.”

It’s those everyday interactions that have left an indelible mark on Zac.

“It’s a really good feeling to know them and hang out with them,” said Zac. “It’s pretty much a win-win situation.”

*Names have been changed

**Relationship building key for CareSouth Champions**

Since the Champion team’s first road trip to Bundanon in 2015 it has become a tradition to have the team’s All-Regions Activity Day in this beautiful location.

Mary Preece, the education manager at Bundanon’s Boyd Education Centre, on the banks of the Shoalhaven River, has facilitated a school holiday art workshop for the Champions program for the past two years and has seen first-hand how much students, caseworkers and carers benefit from the creative bonding experience and the calm, picturesque environment.

Ms Preece was once a volunteer carer in CareSouth’s Champions program and this has given her some insight into the importance of providing bonding, team building and creative therapy activities for all those who are a part of the program.

“There are so many benefits to art, it helps these students develop self-confidence and communicate how they see the world,” said Mary. “The structured workshop gives them some boundaries but helps them find their own way.”

This year Mary designed the workshop around the gardens of the beautiful Arthur Boyd homestead and caseworkers, carers and young people were guided through stages of a creative activity.

The group was given a tour of Arthur Boyd’s studio and the family property before using different forms of art to create a collaborative piece based on their observations throughout the day.

The creative exercise not only helped build confidence, but also social connections with program coordinators and children from across our regions getting the chance to learn about each other’s strengths and also the things they find challenging.

**Family Connections**

**Supervised Contact and Mentoring**

CareSouth’s Family Connections program provides Supervised Contact, Transport and Mentoring services to children and young people in foster care.

Supervised Contact workers promote a safe, supportive environment for children and young people while they spend time with their biological family. Last financial year 30 Supervised Contact staff helped facilitate positive relationships and experiences for families while ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people at all times.

The majority of the services the Family Connections Team provide are for supervised contacts and mentoring. CareSouth’s Family Connections program provided around 550 hours of Supervised Contact each month or 6500 hours in the past financial year. Most supervised contact hours are for long-term foster care placements of children and young people in our internal programs. We have a high retention rate with more than 75% of our children and young people remaining as ongoing clients.

Fortnightly mentoring sessions and monthly contacts are the most commonly requested engagements in the Family Connections program. Most of the children that we provide contact for are in long-term placements and are supported by a team of supervised contact workers with a range of experience in social work, psychology, welfare, policing, education and health. The program actively recruits Aboriginal and CALD workers, in line with caseworker and client requests, to ensure children and young people maintain their cultural identity.

Our one-on-one mentoring program for 10 to 18 year-olds helps young people develop new skills, build on their strengths and live up to their potential. CareSouth mentors helped 19 young people in our foster care program this year by offering guidance, support and encouragement, as well as setting goals and making plans for the future. Our CareSouth mentors are carefully matched with children and young people based on individual needs and focus on relationship and capacity building.

The CareSouth Mentoring Program provides guidance, support and encouragement to young people who need a helping hand to improve their confidence, resilience and life skills. We help young people reach their full potential by tailoring mentoring activities to suit their individual needs. The young person, their caseworker and their mentor meet regularly to establish learning goals and build capacity.
Our Services

Contact workers have decades of experience

The Family Connections program has some of CareSouth’s longest-serving employees, with three staff providing consistent support and care to children and young people in our foster care program for more than a decade.

Anne Scoular has been with the program for 13 years and is one of CareSouth’s longest serving contact workers. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the sector and continues to learn and build her skill set through internal training opportunities. Anne has brought together more than 200 families and supported over 500 children and young people during

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her time with Caresouth. Anne has been regularly supervising an ongoing family contact for the past eight years and this consistency of care is an important factor in providing vulnerable children and young people with a safe and supportive space in which to spend time with their families.

Kate Tammjarv has also been with CareSouth’s Family Connections program for the past 13 years. Kate has a background in early childhood teaching and is a very nurturing contact worker, who always ensures that the child’s well-being is a priority. Kate has been working consistently with the same family for the past decade and is often the first worker called when vulnerable children under five require support.

Nowra Aunties and Uncles coordinator Noga Bertram started at CareSouth 11 years ago as a supervised contact worker and has since found her niche linking vulnerable children with caring mentors. Noga continues to provide support to the Family Connections program when required, while also juggling her role with Aunties and Uncles. Noga has worked consistently with one family for the past decade and continues to cover contact visits for families with whom she is familiar when the usual worker is on leave.

Robyn Perry has been with the program 11 years and is one of the most sought after workers in the Milton/Ulladulla region due to her high level of reporting and her extensive experience working with children in foster care.

**Brighter Futures**

CareSouth’s Brighter Futures program is a service which aims to prevent families who are struggling from fracturing.

The program, which has been running for over a decade, provides support to families facing challenging situations like domestic violence, mental health issues or drug and alcohol problems. Brighter Futures caseworkers work directly with families to build the capacity within the family unit and assist parents to give their children the best possible start in life. Caseworkers also advocate for parents to access essential support services which will enhance their child’s quality of life.

This year CareSouth’s Brighter Futures caseworkers have helped 177 families from Gerroa to Helensburgh who have one or more children under the age of nine, or families who are expecting a child but face challenging obstacles to parenting.

The program received 130 new referrals, 96% of which were referred by the Department of Family & Community Services because children were considered at Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH). Of the 130 new referrals received this year 107 families were allocated a caseworker and began working with the program.

Brighter Futures is a voluntary program so families can choose to decline the service. Of these 107 allocated families only 6 declined resulting in a 95% uptake for Brighter Futures.

Families struggling with parenting issues or experiencing domestic violence had the highest referral

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**Brighter Futures (Illawarra) Figures**

- **177** Total number of families who received a Brighter Futures service
- **103** number of families who graduated from the program
- **130** new referrals received of these 23 were assessed as unsuitable and were referred on to universal support services, 6 declined resulting in a 95% uptake

**Suburbs with the highest need for Brighter Futures Services:**

01 Warilla, Barrack Heights, Lake Illawarra, Mt Warrigal
02 Warrawong, Berkeley, Cringila, Lake Heights, Primbee
03 Dapto, Kanahooka, Koonawarra
04 Wollongong, West Wollongong, Unanderra
rates to the Brighter Futures program in 2016-2017, however, there were significant increases across all our entry criteria. This was particularly noticeable in relation to clients being referred for parenting issues (13% increase), domestic violence (15% increase) and mental health (9% increase).

In the 2016-17 financial year our Brighter Futures program was selected to participate in the NSW SafeCare trial. SafeCare is an evidence-based parent training program developed for parents with children aged 0 to 5 who are at risk of, or have been identified as experiencing neglect and abuse. The program aims to increase positive parent-child and parent-infant interactions and improve the health of children and safety in the home. We will implement the program in 2017-18.

What’s it like to be a Grandmother and carer?

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

Jean, a carer for her two young grandchildren, was at breaking point when she joined CareSouth’s Brighter Futures program in 2015. Now two years later, with the support of her Brighter Futures caseworkers, Jean has gained the skills and confidence to advocate for her grandchildren – one of whom has a disability – and her community.

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

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

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

“I knew I had to be a role model for my grandchildren, but I didn’t feel like I had a voice.”

“She always had that in her,” said Cristina. “But nobody gave her that support that she needed and told her ‘yes, you can do it Jean!’”

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

One of her proudest achievements is earning a TAFE diploma.

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

Jean was also asked by Wollongong Police to become a domestic violence mentor for her community. She is candid about her hard-knock life and the domestic violence she has been subjected to at the hands of her daughter, who suffers from a mental illness. When Jean saw that her grandchildren were also at risk of harm she knew she had to do something to break the cycle of abuse.
“They did ask me because of my experience with domestic violence. They were able to train 12 of us to mentor people who were in an unsafe situation and too frightened to know what to do. Our role is to mentor people who are maybe too scared to talk to the police themselves. I’ll go and do it for them.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Out-of-Home Care

All children and young people have the right to be raised in a safe, loving environment and have access to the services and support they need to enhance their quality of life.

Some families are unable to provide the protection, safety and support children and young people deserve. In these cases, children and young people live in accommodation outside their family homes. This is known as Out-of-Home Care or Foster Care.

CareSouth offers Foster Care services in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Griffith, Deniliquin and Queanbeyan and there are currently 286 children and young people in Out-of-Home Care, ranging in age from 0-18.

CareSouth employs 26 caseworkers to provide around-the-clock support to those in Out-Of-Home Care, along with foster carers and families.

CareSouth has 316 Foster Carers who provide a safe and loving environment for children and young people who are often unable to live at home due to abuse or neglect, parental mental illness or drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence or general family breakdown.

Foster Care can be for just a few nights, a couple of weeks or months or for many years. Foster Carers come from a range of backgrounds; they are young couples, same-sex couples, single people, have children of their own or are retired. Foster Carers who provide a stable, loving home with structured routines and firm boundaries can make a huge difference to the life of a vulnerable child or young person.

Residential Care

CareSouth provides residential accommodation to children and young people aged 12 to 18 who may not be able to live in their family environment due to their complex support needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foster Care Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>286</strong> Children and young people in foster care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>316</strong> Dedicated foster carers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong> Children and young people in 5 residential care units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CareSouth has 14 young people in Residential Care across five residential units in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Griffith and Queanbeyan.

Highly qualified, experienced and dedicated staff provide a consistent and predictable environment that allows children and young people in Residential Care to feel valued and safe through the development of self-esteem, living skills and independence.

CareSouth residential staff work intensively with a clinical psychologist to provide a therapeutic, trauma-informed care environment. Staff also work collaboratively with other professionals, agencies and stakeholders to achieve the best outcome for the children and young people in our care. The service provides intensive case management to assist each young person to work towards an improved independent living option.

**Driver Mentoring program**

CareSouth has identified that paying for driving instruction is a major barrier to independence for young people in residential and foster care. Young people in care have little to no capacity to achieve the 120 hours driving experience needed for their licence.

In response to this roadblock, CareSouth has developed an internal Learner Driver Mentoring Program to assist young people to reach their required driving hours by providing mentors who are trained in driving instruction through Wollongong City Council. This allows young people in our programs to gain driving experience and recorded log-book hours.

Since the program was launched 12 months ago three young people in residential care have acquired their provisional licence.

The Learner Driver’s Mentor Program trains mentors to take clients with their L’s out for lessons once they have had 10 hours with a qualified driving instructor. Mentors complete the Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers workshop and transfer this knowledge to the young people they are teaching.

This is an innovative program which aligns with the Safer Systems approach by providing education and information to Learner Drivers. The program helps young people understand and avoid risks and crashes by giving them the skills and tools to be safe drivers.

A GoPro records all driving lessons with a young person and mentor and this is used to evaluate gaps in their skills set and any further instruction required.

The Learner Driver Mentoring Program is an initiative in both the Illawarra and Shoalhaven to help young Learner Drivers in our Out-of-Home Care program receive the training and tools needed to keep themselves and others in the community safe while on the road.

**Regional Growth**

This year our regional growth has been significant, particularly in our Southern and Western regions. CareSouth’s footprint grew from two offices – Deniliquin and Griffith – in our Western Region to three, with an office opening in Wagga in July 2016. We also expanded across the NSW border and opened an office in Deakin, ACT.

**“Having a community and carers responding to the needs of the children and young people we work with has allowed us to build a strong presence in those communities.”**

The infrastructure growth aligns with CareSouth’s vision to strengthen our relationships with families and communities in more remote locations.

Figures from the Department of Family and Community Services showed a 373 percent rise in the number of children taken into care in the past two decades, significantly increasing the need for foster carers.

CareSouth has helped to fill that need through consistent growth of staff and recruitment of carers in the Western region. Our Out-Of-Home Care programs in Deniliquin, Griffith and Wagga have provided safe, nurturing environments for over 75 children and young people in care in the past financial year.

Tracy Mayo, Regional Manager for our Southern and Western Regions last financial year, believes the significant growth in our more remote areas comes from “a generosity of spirit” in the communities in which we work.

“Having a community and carers responding to the needs of the children and young people we work with has allowed us to build a strong presence in those communities.”

The Western Region is the most generous community I’ve ever worked in,” said Tracy. “Having a community and carers responding to the needs of the children and young people we work with has allowed
us to build a strong presence in those communities. If it wasn’t for the massive growth in our number of carers in the Western Region we would not have been able to build such strong, cohesive teams with very little staff turnover.”

“The ongoing growth and development of our teams in the Western Region has been a highlight for me. Our caseworkers work alongside the carers in an inclusive manner, and support the natural family and significant people in children’s lives to remain connected.”

CareSouth is committed to strengthening the capacity of the sector and community to support children and young people through our increase in infrastructure, staff positions and recruiting, assessing and training foster carers.

What’s it like to be a Foster carer?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“CareSouth foster carers are everyday people,” said CareSouth CEO Deb Tozer. “Almost anyone can become a foster carer. What matters is that you can provide a stable, caring family environment for a child or young person. We provide ongoing support and training to our foster carers so they can support those who need it most.”
What’s it like to be in Foster Care?

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

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

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

“What I wanted from my carers was love and support, knowing I had someone to talk to if I ever had any worries and concerns. That’s the thing I craved the most,” said Jess.

“Sometimes I did get that but other times I didn’t.”

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

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

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

“Walking into a new home felt so daunting,” said Jess. “You don’t know what to expect as you haven’t met these strangers before, you have so many thoughts and worries.”

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

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

“What I wanted from my carers was love and support, knowing I had someone to talk to if I ever had any worries and concerns. That’s the thing I craved the most.”

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

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

*Name has been changed

Jamberoo Fun Day

Every year children, carers and caseworkers come together from across CareSouth’s wide geographic footprint to enjoy the Out-of-Home Care fun day at Jamberoo. The action-packed event gives carers, caseworkers and young people an important opportunity to bond.

“Whilst not difficult, planning for Jamberoo has its challenges,” said Shoalhaven OOHC team leader Lisa Loveday. “We are required to pre-purchase tickets and there is considerable cost to this. It’s also not easy feeding 150 hungry people. We like to keep it simple and the cost down by doing the catering ourselves and our army of caseworkers make the annual BBQ lunch look easy.”

Illawarra OOHC caseworker David Allman said activities like the Jamberoo fun day are an important part of the support CareSouth caseworkers offer to the children, young people and carers with whom they work.

“It’s normalising the experience for kids in care because they meet others like them. It is breaking down silos, for caseworkers, children and carers because we get to meet people from across CareSouth,” said David.

“It really is a worthwhile day,” said Lisa. “It’s lots of fun and a reminder of the simple pleasures in life.”

Foster Care Awards

At CareSouth we support a diverse mix of children and young people who are working hard in school, taking part in and excelling in their chosen activities, contributing to their community and making progress in their lives. Each year, in recognition
Our Services

of this, our Illawarra Out-Of-Home Care team hosts an Awards Day (for 0-10 year olds) and Awards Night (for 10-18 year olds) to honour their achievements throughout the year. This year we hosted our fourth annual awards night to recognise and celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of children and young people from our program.

Each child and young person is presented a certificate and prize in recognition of their individual triumphs in Sport, Education or Personal Achievement. The awards are presented based on nominations from significant people in the young person’s life, such as carers, mentors, teachers and caseworkers who are asked to think about the strengths of each child and young person.

We also recognise individuals who have made significant progress each year with an outstanding effort award for one specific young person in each category. And at the end of each night we announce the recipient of the Jim McEwan Award – named after CareSouth’s founder. This special award recognises the all-round achievements of one particular young person who has stood out from the crowd.

The awards are a way to not only honour individual strengths, effort and perseverance in pursuit of personal goals, but to also forge stronger relationships with the children, young people and carers whom we support.

The celebrations provide an opportunity for caseworkers and carers to connect and engage in conversations in a relaxed environment and to work collaboratively to build self-esteem in children and young people through rewards and praise.

NDIS and Disability Services

Ready for NDIS roll-out

At CareSouth we focus on the person, not the disability and promote a culture of empathy and open-mindedness and social inclusion for all. We are driven by what our clients need and we have the flexibility and creativity to identify and meet existing needs in the community. For the past 12 months an NDIS working group, led by our frontline staff working in the disabilities sector, has been preparing for the roll-out of the new scheme.

Our NDIS team work collaboratively to tailor services to best meet clients’ needs, through individual NDIS plans that are created in collaboration with families and clinicians. In the lead-up to the NDIS roll-out CareSouth has employed a skilled team of clinicians to help with assessments while our NDIS team work directly with families to design the best package available to meet their needs.

Jodie Heasman, Team Leader of Drop-In Support Illawarra and Lisa Chorlton, Team Leader of Drop-In Support Nowra, have been instrumental in determining the best way forward for our clients to access the NDIS.

Under the NDIS our clients will have an individual plan that allocates them funding to spend on the services they need with the people they want to receive them from.

“For the past 12 months we have been setting up plans to support our clients’ needs,” said Jodie. “There are a lot of families out there who don’t know how to access services under the NDIS. We have been working collaboratively with those families to find out what their children need and putting together evidence-based material to get the best possible package and outcomes for that young person.”

Jodie has worked in the Community Services sector for the past seven years and is passionate about supporting those with whom she works. Spending time getting to know her clients and families is an essential part of Jodie’s role, and one that she loves.

“We not only spend time with families to give them the information they need about navigating the NDIS,
but we also spend time building relationships with them so we can get to know the young person and their family and build a trusting, supportive relationship,” said Jodie.

“The hardest aspect of the NDIS scheme is support coordination and that is what we do on behalf of the young people we work with. Relationship building is so important in determining where their support needs lie and advocating for our clients to ensure they get them. And if we can’t provide those services directly we will link them to external providers who can.”

Lisa has worked in the Disabilities Support sector for more than a decade and has a wealth of experience in the field. She says the roll-out of the NDIS has been the biggest sector reform experienced by Disability Support providers. But Lisa has embraced the change and is dedicated to helping her staff and clients navigate the system to get the best outcomes.

“The NDIS has certainly presented a number of challenges in its lead up, such as budget planning, policy review and recruitment strategies,” said Lisa. “Although the NDIS is a positive social shift for our clients, change of this proportion is a difficult process for many of the people we support.

“Our priority has been giving our clients the pre-planning support they need to alleviate any anxiety. We have also worked hard to ensure our support workers have the information and resources they need to support clients for the full roll-out.”

In June CareSouth employed NDIS Project Officer Kim Sneddon to support the work of our frontline staff by developing NDIS service agreements for our clients.

Kim has a wealth of experience in the Community Services sector and has worked in Disabilities and Mental Health for over 20 years, both on the frontline and as a manager. Kim’s focus has always been on person-centred planning and this has been a key component of her work practice as CareSouth transitions to the NDIS.

“Change is inevitable but it is an opportunity to build dynamic, innovative services and systems,” said Kim. “This role is about listening to people to shape their services, to create impact and to transform and enhance their everyday life and dreams.”

Our Services
Our Disability Services

CareSouth currently provides Disability Services Support to children, young people and adults through our Residential and Drop-In Support programs so they can live full and meaningful lives. These programs include Supported Accommodation Programs, Disabilities Out-of-Home Care Residential, Leaving Care Alternative Family Placement and Leaving Care/Drop-In Support.

CareSouth also offers a Family Choices program in our southern and western regions. The program supports families who have a child living with a disability by matching them with a respite carer willing to open their hearts and home. Children in the program come from loving, caring homes but are in need of an extra support network; someone who can provide some individual attention to a child with complex needs, while also giving their family a break.

Carers are recruited, well-trained and supported by CareSouth to nurture children and young people living with disability. They work in co-operation with families and build rewarding long-term relationships with children. Birth families make all of the normal parental decisions during any process and are involved in choosing options that fit their child’s needs or assisting their children make the best choices.

This program also helps families access ongoing specialist, respite or in-home support services and works collaboratively with a wide range of support networks such as psychologists, educators, speech pathologists and occupational therapists.

“The Family Choices program has provided some wonderful links between families and carers which have been rewarding not only for the child with a disability but for the carer and birth family,” said CareSouth’s Family Choices Southern Region Project officer Rhonda Miller. “Finding the perfect match isn’t easy, but when you get that match and it works it’s a beautiful thing.”

Marg Davies and Cherin Laver run our Western Region Family Choices Program and are inspired by the children and families they work with.

“Family Choices allows families who are raising children with disabilities to link with carers who provide support, accommodation and help build stronger relationships,” said Cherin.

“This allows the family to maintain the social and well-being aspects of their lives,” said Marg.
Support Services

Corporate Services
CareSouth covers a huge geographic region with offices in Berkeley, Nowra, Ulladulla, Queanbeyan, Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Deniliquin and the ACT. The last 12 months has been a busy time for our Corporate Services team who have the responsibility of looking after CareSouth’s major assets, including our fleet of vehicles and suite of offices and living spaces.

July 2016
- Contracts were exchanged on three lots of vacant commercial land at Enterprise Ave, South Nowra. These lots comprise a total area of 6,870sqm and will be the home for our new head office and community hub facility. We intend to develop 4,530sqm of this land to house this facility and will retain 2,340sqm for future development.

September 2016
- Our Griffith Office relocated into larger premises at 106 Yambil St. This move was necessary to accommodate the growth in business and staffing numbers in the Western Region.

November 2016
- Work commenced on installing a new automated Work Order System to streamline our back office processes. This new system fully integrates with our accounting package and significantly reduces duplication and improves accountability and compliance. This system became fully operational February 2017.
- A Security upgrade was undertaken at our Bolong Rd, Bolong property. This upgrade included the installation of swipe card access and screening off the kitchen to make the area safer for staff and residents during meal preparation.

December 2016
- New kitchen cabinets and appliances were installed into our Deniliquin office. This upgrade was required to accommodate the increasing staffing levels in our Western region.

March 2017
- Our Wagga residential home relocated to a more suitable site at Hampden St, North Wagga. This new property offers more privacy and yard space for the young person living at the home.
- Our residential home at Worrigee received a minor upgrade including painting all rooms and ceilings and the installation of new vinyl flooring planks.

May 2017
- CareSouth entered into a commercial lease on office premises at Wagga Wagga. Securing this office space was the first step in growing our business in the Wagga Wagga region.
- Funding was received from NSW Land & Housing to complete structural repairs to our disability home at Kinghorn St, Nowra.
- Our residential disability home at Tartarian Cres, Bomaderry received a major upgrade which included interior painting, replacing internal doors, replacing roller blinds, installing a new leather lounge and installing a new built-in wardrobe in one of the resident’s rooms.
- Our residential property at Bolong Rd, Bolong received a minor upgrade which included painting a number of walls, creating a safe play area at the front of the property, mulching gardens, providing a safe external walkway to the staff office and providing staff with an outdoor breakout area which included a large picnic bench.

June 2017
- A contractor was engaged to complete a major upgrade to our Shoalhaven Youth Support Service at Moss St, Nowra. This upgrade included a new roof to the large carport area, new security gates at the front of the property and a semi-contained outdoor breakout area for residents.
- Our development application for our new Head Office & Community Hub at South Nowra was completed during June in readiness for lodgement with council. We have applied for a Federal Government Regional Jobs and Investment Package grant to provide dollar for dollar funding for our new Head Office and Community Hub at South Nowra.

Maintenance with a smile
For the past seven years Chris Davies has been keeping CareSouth’s Illawarra properties and gardens in shipshape as Corporate Services’ “go-to” contractor. Chris’s wide range of skills and happy-go-lucky nature were in such high demand that he
was offered full-time employment as a maintenance officer with CareSouth in February 2016.

Corporate Services manager Rob Strickland said Chris is one of those people who can turn their hand to anything and will give everything a go. From removals, carpentry, painting, minor plumbing, carpet cleaning, glazing to designing and maintaining CareSouth’s gardens and outdoor areas. However, the most valuable skill Chris has is his ability to deal with everyone, from the most vulnerable young people and families whom we assist on a daily basis, right through to the CEO and the Board of Directors.

When Chris is not working you will find him spending time with his family, riding his Harley, relaxing at Currarong or miles off the South Coast chasing Marlin.

“CareSouth is really lucky to have such a great guy as part of our team,” said Rob.

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**Support Services**

**Corporate Services Figures**

- **85** Cars in Fleet
- **1,878,692** Kilometres travelled
- **21,753** Kilometres per vehicle
- **44,000** Kilometres Rob Strickland has travelled
- **49,000** Kilometres Deb Tozer has travelled
- **42,000** Kilometres Mark Potts has travelled
- **163,902** Litres of fuel used
Human Resources

Our People

CareSouth employs 301 staff across the Illawarra, Western, Southern and Shoalhaven regions of NSW and Deakin in the ACT.

CareSouth’s vision is to create a positive future for those with whom we work and we recognise that our staff are key to achieving this.

Staff training and retention is a key aspect of building capacity and best practice. In the past financial year the HR Department’s major focus has been on implementing a robust Learning and Development strategy through our ELMO e-learning system. This allows staff to complete online training modules in our push to ensure all staff have the necessary skill set to meet our benchmarks for best practice. CareSouth aims to be a leader in our sector and as such we have offered staff 63 training courses this financial year with 4182 staff enrolled in these. Of these courses 39 are mandatory training. We currently have a 76% completion of training rate and the Board has set a target for 100% staff completion. In June CareSouth released our Safeguarding Children Policy and Acknowledgement with 91% of staff completing the online acknowledgement, 95% of staff completing our Mandatory Reporting training and 89% of staff completing our Code of Conduct acknowledgment.

Everyday Emerging Leaders Program

Last year CareSouth launched its inaugural Emerging Leaders program to identify and develop future leadership talent. The 12-month work-based learning program supported seven staff from across the organisation considering a career in management and leadership.

Those who took part in the year-long learning and development journey were:
- Tayla Arneman from Berkeley’s Human Resources team
- Codie Harrington from Deniliquin’s Foster Care team
- Stefanie King, Executive Assistant to the CEO
- Lisa Chorlton, Nowra’s Drop-In Support Program Team Leader
- Kate Van Seumeren from Berkeley’s Out-of-Home Care team
- Jennifer Toms from the Shoalhaven Youth Support Service team
- Kristine Williams from the Nowra Disabilities team

The group worked together to develop an employment strategy to provide job opportunities to vulnerable people in a bid to develop meaningful occupational skills and support independence. At the end of the 12-month program, staff received a Certificate IV in Leadership Management, provided employment for one person and developed meaningful occupational training for four others.

“One of the most important things we learned from this was that the process of applying for and being inducted into employment contributes to occupational skills and independence,” said Tayla.

The program helped the group to better develop their skill set, set concrete, achievable goals, improve their confidence and capabilities in their roles and increase their knowledge of CareSouth, outside of their individual programs.

The knowledge they gained included insights into their personality type and subsequent communication style, how to prioritise, transformational leadership skills and recognising that conflict is an opportunity for communication and growth. The
group also learned how to effectively support team members through periods of change and how to motivate peers.

“I developed more confidence and self-awareness, in terms of understanding how I like to be communicated with, how I can come across to others, being aware of my faults and working to improve them,” said Tayla. “I became more confident in my ability to achieve goals and in being able to put my hand up for new opportunities even if they are challenging and scary.”

The group was also asked to set five win-win goals as part of their course work.

“By creating these goals I was able to see myself as an integral part of the HR team because I was able to set goals that helped the team. It also gave me an opportunity to research new areas that I was interested in and get motivated to pursue them,” said Tayla.

Lisa Chorlton, Team Leader of Nowra’s Drop-In Support Program, said taking part in Emerging Leaders helped her set goals and contribute to achieving CareSouth’s key success factors.

“It was a great opportunity to work and learn with such a friendly and dedicated group of people,” said Lisa.

Kristine Williams, an integral member of Nowra’s Disability Support team, almost didn’t apply to join the Emerging Leaders program, but the experience has been career-changing. It has improved her confidence in her ability to work across programs and helped her gain a better understanding of the work CareSouth does as a whole.

“The biggest challenge for me was applying initially when Emerging Leaders first started,” said Kristine. “Since then I have been faced with many more challenges and I have overcome them all. I have worked through a secondment in policy, something I would not have applied for prior to Emerging Leaders. But the knowledge and confidence I gained through completing this course has me actively looking for new challenges and goals to meet.”

The mutually beneficial program gave staff the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills while helping CareSouth to identify and develop potential talent across the organisation, thereby engaging and retaining highly skilled employees.

“A key goal within CareSouth is to build leadership skills at all levels of the organisation,” said CEO Deb Tozer. “The Emerging Leaders program has certainly progressed this goal and generated great interest and enthusiasm for the continuation of the program and future involvement of staff.

“I am incredibly proud of the individual and collective achievements of Jen, Lisa, Tayla, Codie, Stefanie, Kate, and Kristine, and early observations suggest the program had a profound impact on their performance.”

Where are they now?
- Tayla has received a promotion within CareSouth’s Human Resources Department
- Codie is on maternity leave
- Stefanie has implemented a range of efficiencies for the CEO and is a key member of CareSouth’s tendering process
- Lisa has been a key driver in

**Our Staff**

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<th>Male</th>
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**Programs managed by Regional Manager**

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**Murrumbidgee**
Support Services

Qualifications

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<th>49</th>
<th>Tertiary qualifications (some staff have more than one)</th>
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| 220 | Staff hold a tertiary qualification |

Diversity

| 7 | Staff identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island |

Course enrolments status

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>4182</th>
<th>Total Enrolments</th>
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| 76 | % Completed |

supporting the roll-out of NDIS at CareSouth

- Kate is on a 12-month secondment to the Department of Family and Community Services
- Jennifer was appointed as a part-time Safeguarding Officer to establish CareSouth’s Safeguarding Children Policy, while remaining an integral part of the SYSS team
- Kristine has been instrumental in supporting clients who are navigating the new NDIS scheme.

Work, Health and Safety

Over the past financial year, with support from CareSouth’s Board and the Executive Leadership Group, our Work, Health and Safety (WHS) team has introduced a safety management system and rejuvenated an internal return to work system and recovery at work process.

This involved strengthening external relationships with CareSouth’s Rehabilitation Provider and Insurance Company as well as introducing a WHS team with a qualified advanced return to work coordinator and two return to work coordinators to manage Workers Compensation claims and the rehabilitation process internally. Prior to establishing a WHS team all of CareSouth’s Workers Compensation claims were managed by an external rehabilitation provider. Having an internal team allowed the organisation to significantly reduce the amount of time lost due to injury. In the past some Workers Compensation claims were complex in nature and the process in finalising claims was lengthy. This proved frustrating for staff and had a severe impact on their health and recovery and, in some cases, resulted in long-term incapacity for work or permanent disability.

Our Work Health and Safety Team have worked tirelessly over the past 12 months to introduce a new return to work program that ensures our employees who are injured at work receive the psychological support they need upfront. This involved introducing a new Employee Assistance Program and reshaping the Workers Compensation rehabilitation process that places psychological health at the forefront of our employees’ recovery at work.

Building positive staff relationships, transparency and trust was also a major focus for the return to work coordinators. This has not only had a positive impact on injured staff’s morale but it has also reduced the severity of long-term injury or illness sustained by staff and encouraged supported staff to return to work in record time after the incident occurs.

The WHS team has also implemented an online Incident Reporting system. This enables the WHS team to report on incident trends and hazards, thereby allowing the team to take a strategic approach to safety by identifying and addressing the highest risks throughout the organisation.

As a result, a snapshot of incident statistics at one of our residential care homes showed that work-related incidents and Workers Compensation claims have been slowly trending downwards since July 2016 when the residential care team, clinical team and WHS team began working collaboratively to put supports in place for staff before and after incidents occurred.
Support Services

Community Relations

CareSouth’s Community Relations Team is a key driver in keeping our staff and the communities we work with informed and engaged

As CareSouth continues to grow, so does the need for effective communication across the regions we cover. Our Community Relations team travel far and wide across NSW and the ACT to engage and inform potential carers, organise events, manage media and ensure we communicate with the communities in which we work.

One of the Community Relations team’s most important roles is to reach out to potential carers – who are integral to the work we do – so they can join CareSouth in creating positive futures for children and young people.

One of the ways in which we have streamlined this process is through the roll-out of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database in 2016. Our CRM system enables us to enhance and track all aspects of our customer interface, whether it be for on-boarding carers, volunteers or employees to donation management. This is the first time in CareSouth’s history we have had a standardised process for enquiries as well as year-on-year data to assist us in developing and refining strategic intake processes across the organisation. The first year-on-year data since implementing our Customer Relationship Management database found there were 866 enquiries received in the first two quarters of 2017, compared with 283 in the previous year, achieving a 306 percent increase.

Our Community Relations team has been pivotal in developing new marketing initiatives and strategies to build our profile, managing engagement within the wider organisation and liaising with our partners and external stakeholders.

The highly successful Aunties & Uncles program underwent a rebrand in 2016/17 in an effort to broaden its appeal. CareSouth Champions is designed to be inclusive of other groups of people who can’t always commit to a full weekend with a child or young person every month. The rebranded program makes provisions for younger or older people who have varying skills and times they are available.

The essence of the program, spending quality time together, remains unchanged. Initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with the new branding being rolled out across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.

CareSouth’s Community Relations team ensures we always have a voice and presence at child protection industry forums and working groups such as Families Week, Child Protection Week, Volunteers Week and Foster Care Week, where we recognise the tireless work of our foster carers, who provide a safe, loving environment for children and young people who are unable to live at home.

Our Aboriginal Community Development Officer runs events at NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day.

CareSouth also sponsored the regional NAIDOC awards and the Kids in Care Cup – an annual Aboriginal Rugby League knockout competition held in Wollongong in September to raise awareness of what fostering is all about and the need for more Aboriginal carers across NSW.

There is always something positive happening across our regions and in a bid to keep our internal and external communities in the loop the Community Relations team have a blog on our website. The blog is frequently updated and engages and informs stakeholders about our wins and challenges, upcoming events, the latest research underpinning the work that we do, carer stories and client experiences.

There are many achievements that happen within our organisation and it is important for our community to know how amazing our staff, carers and clients are. We also share our stories on our Facebook and Instagram pages.
Support Services

Information, Communication and Technology

CareSouth has offices in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Southern Tablelands, Western NSW and ACT. Keeping our staff connected across a wide geographic area is a vital part of the organisation’s everyday work practice.

Our Information Technology team are constantly improving the ways in which staff communicate, capture and share information, not only with each other but with the clients we support. Because of the distances between offices, IT staff are using more sophisticated technology such as live Virtual Private Network (VPN) creating one cohesive company, by allowing staff to securely connect across all our locations. We now have 10 Virtual Private Network sites connected to our domain in Berkeley. Staff can also access servers and the intranet remotely.

The IT team maintains 398 devices across all of our CareSouth offices; these include computers, desk phones, mobile phones and printers. Our IT department maintains 27 core servers that manage various aspects of our network such as user logons, email, data collection, printing services and remote access.

CareSouth’s IT department manages over 600 user accounts and mailboxes on the organisation’s network and more than 1TB of data is stored on our main server. Each month our IT team respond to 1300 requests for help.

Our new VOIP telephone system was installed across CareSouth this financial year, connecting all offices from every region to one system.

Policy and Research

CareSouth’s Policy & Research unit work to support the organisation’s practice by advancing our Key Success Factor 1: Research Education and Evidence. During the year, the team of five part-time staff worked on:

- supporting the CEO in planning, service modelling, sector advocacy and tendering,
- organisational policy,
- knowledge translation,
- capacity building across outcomes and impact thinking,
- the CareSouth Practice Framework,
- Safeguarding Children, Young People and People with Disability, through the Australian Childhood Foundation Accreditation program, and

The IT Figures

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Devices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(computers, desk phones, mobile phones, printers)</td>
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</table>

| User accounts & mailboxes on the CareSouth network | 640 |

| Servers | 27 |

| Help desk calls per month | 1300 |
• scoping the progression of the CareSouth Research Agenda.

Supporting good practice through evidence

Bringing research and evidence to our busy professionals at the frontline of program work has been an important focus for Policy & Research. We have introduced a new bi-monthly serial publication, CareSouth Practice Briefs, and four of these were published during the year. Research snapshots were also prepared on an ad hoc basis, responding to individual program needs.

We continued to build and classify our Practice Library of articles and resources, to assist staff to keep up to date with new research and reports, and posted regular updates about new research through the CareSouth Intranet and blog pages.

In December 2016, a part-time Research Officer, Rebecca Coddington, was appointed, to support our knowledge translation and dissemination activities.

Outcome-focused practice

Program evaluations and outcomes assessment are another important source of evidence for building best practice, helping our programs to better understand how the work we do helps to improve lives. Over the year, Policy & Research committed to building a stronger impact-focus across CareSouth, with team level discussions about program logic and theories of change held throughout the year. A simple, consistent framework for thinking about impact was introduced. This has greatly assisted us to grow our knowledge and focus in this area.

Karen Wilcox presented papers on advancing outcomes thinking and practice at the ACWA state conference in Sydney in August 2016, and at the Think Outcomes national conference in Sydney in May 2017. Karen also completed a Social Return on Investment outcomes assessment for the Homework Hub.

Supporting good practice through our policy system

The major overhaul and development of CareSouth’s policies and procedures, which commenced last year, continued throughout this year. Priorities for the Policy team of Kate Senior and Alison Oyston (and for a short time, Ross James) were dictated by three major external accreditation audits; for disability services, our SYSS program and our Out-of-Home Care programs. Many whole of organisation policies were also added to our suite or redeveloped in light of standards introduced by the accreditation bodies. A total of 126 new documents were released during the year. Our policy suite frames our practice across all areas of service delivery, as well as supporting governance, reducing risk and regulating operations. The CareSouth Policy Management System aims to be amongst the most robust in the sector, driving the highest quality of practice.

Access to policies and procedures for all staff was greatly improved with the completion of the Policy Database Project, which provided a ‘keyword searchable’ platform for documents. The Policy team also undertook a stocktake and audit of forms and scoped the development of a document control system incorporating consistent, current form templates, which has now been advanced through the work of Rebecca Tickner in the Compliance team.
Aboriginal Community Development

At CareSouth we are committed to building strong relationships with Aboriginal organisations and communities and making a genuine and positive contribution to the reconciliation process.

This commitment to facilitate partnerships and improve service delivery for our Aboriginal clients and the wider community underpins all of the work we do across our wide range of programs and footprint.

This year our focus has been on achieving “better practice” in several ways:

- Identifying gaps in policy and practice and bringing these to the attention of the CareSouth Policy Review Committee
- Reviewing our cultural support planning and practices and developing a consistent cultural support plan for frontline staff to better support CareSouth’s Aboriginal clients
- Ensuring staff have a sound understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their culture through training opportunities. In October Curijo Aboriginal Consultancy Firm facilitated cultural awareness training for 67 staff and carers across our organisation
- Ensuring education and application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement principles
- Supporting the enhancement and preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people’s sense of identity
- Inspiring and attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to seek career pathways in the Community Services sector through our Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

In the 2016-2017 financial year a working group, led by our Southern Region Manager and Aboriginal Community Development Officer and five staff members from across our regions, coordinated the development, consultation and approval of the CareSouth Reconciliation Action Plan. The ongoing development of our Reconciliation Action Plan has included:

- Frequent consultation internally within CareSouth and externally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations
- Comprehensive consultation with Reconciliation Australia as required, and the submission of the plan to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement prior to our launch and public release of the plan

CareSouth is also a strong advocate and participant in cultural events and community development across the regions in which we work. This year CareSouth celebrated and recognised significant cultural events such as NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day.

CareSouth staff attended NAIDOC family fun days across our regional footprint in NSW and the ACT and staff ran activities including t-shirt painting stalls with the young people they support across our programs.

CareSouth also sponsored the regional NAIDOC awards and the Kids in Care Cup – an annual Aboriginal Rugby League knockout competition held in Wollongong in September to raise awareness of what fostering is all about and the need for more Aboriginal carers across NSW.
Practice Framework

CareSouth Practice Framework
The CareSouth Practice Framework captures the foundations of our work with children, young people, families and people with disabilities. It brings together the key principles, approaches and understandings that help CareSouth to improve lives, every day. During the year, our Practice Framework was revised in a fresh, easy-read format, allowing us to better embed the person-centred, trauma-informed and safety-focused work we do.

The CareSouth Practice Framework was supported by the publication of a new Practice Manual for Out-of-Home Care, which provides guidance to best practice work for new practitioners, and supports reflective practice for all our practice professionals working with children and young people in foster care or residential OOHC.

Therapeutic Care Model
CareSouth works with children, young people, families and people with disabilities with a compassionate commitment to healing and growth. To promote best practice and to cement our Practice Framework, at the end of 2016, CareSouth developed, and later commenced rolling out, a new Therapeutic Care Model. This model was prepared for CareSouth Clinical Services in partnership with Knightlamp Consulting. It is based on principles of trauma-informed practice and on new developments in the fields of developmental psychology and neuroscience, as well as on previous work undertaken by the Department of Human Services in Victoria relating to Residential Care.

This year, our new Therapeutic Care Model was piloted and implemented through training and supervision with Residential Out-of-Home Care staff. All senior and operational managers also received Therapeutic Care Model training provided by Knightlamp. A working group consisting of Clinical Services staff, our Policy and Research Manager and Southern Region Program Manager will progress implementation of this model throughout the remainder of 2017.

Clinical Model
CareSouth started rolling out our newly-established clinical services model to support both our existing clients and to increase our scope to work with a greater range of clients. This process began in line with CareSouth’s NDIS roll-out so that we are able to deliver a range of fee for service offerings that weren’t previously funded.

Our new Multi-Disciplinary Clinical team includes four staff in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven; a senior clinical psychologist, senior nurse clinician and two provisional psychologists. Plans are underway to expand the clinical services to other areas within our regional model including Southern and Western NSW.

We will also increase the types of service delivery provided to include Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy, in line with the needs of our NDIS clients. These services are currently supplied externally and we hope to be able to provide a multidisciplinary approach to therapeutic care in the future.

With the development of the clinical services the therapeutic framework for CareSouth has started being implemented across the organisation. Staff have received training and an implementation committee with staff from across the agency are ensuring the skilled implementation of the framework across all aspects of the organisation.
Compliance and Legal

The past financial year has been an exceptionally busy time for CareSouth with Accreditations across numerous CareSouth services.

**SYSS – Specialist Homelessness Services Standards**

Our first assessment commenced in January 2017 with the SYSS – SHS (Specialist Homelessness Services Standards) where an independent assessment against the SHS Standards was conducted. The results demonstrated that CareSouth provided significant evidence substantiating the implementation of the NSW SHS Standards in service delivery, governance and management.

The key selected strengths included the practical commitment to culturally appropriate practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, using the necessary tools to support young people to make decisions, consulting with and including young people and taking on feedback from staff and external stakeholders.

**Disability Services Third Party Verification**

As part of our NDIS roll-out, CareSouth recently passed our Disability Services Third Party Verification audit with flying colours. Disability staff have been working extremely hard to ensure our practice exceeds standards and this was recognised by the review, with auditors congratulating staff on their passion, commitment and dedication to go above and beyond expectations.

The auditors noted that Disability Services staff were incredibly prepared for the audit, part of which involves going to paperless files, and were impressed with the dedication of disability staff who work hard to ensure clients have a voice, are recognised for their strengths and supported to achieve their hopes and dreams.

CEO Deb Tozer described the review as “exceptional” with no areas recommended for improvement. “The auditors were so pleased and observed a strong positive culture, a great sense of camaraderie and cohesive staff teams in our Disability Services,” said Deb. “Auditors complimented staff on initiatives such as providing job opportunities for clients through our Everyday Maintenance Program and relaying positive news stories each week to clients’ families, mentioning this was not an initiative they had seen elsewhere.”

The Auditors were also very pleased with the warm and welcoming way in which our properties are set up and the activities provided by staff such as lawn mower racing, dancing, movie nights and sporting events.

“Audits can be a stressful time for staff with so many of our teams working diligently to assure practice meets or exceeds standards,” said Deb. “It has been wonderful to see the camaraderie of staff and support for each other to achieve this incredibly important work.”

**Office of the Children’s Guardian Accreditation Renewal**

The purpose of the Office of the Children’s Guardian (OCG) Accreditation is to ensure that the rights of children are upheld and that children and young people receive quality services irrespective of where they are placed. The standards expect that agencies understand and meet the particular needs of each young person and demonstrate effective processes and practices in meeting these needs.

The Accreditation Renewal Assessment comprises three stages and commenced in April 2017 with a site visit to our Griffith and Deniliquin offices to review case files, Life Story folders and CareSouth’s Practice Framework. The team then travelled onto Goulburn, Karabar and Deakin continuing with their Direct Evidence assessment.

Stage two of the Assessment involved the collation of Indirect Evidence incorporating evidence of policies and procedures against the 23 Standards.

The final assessment stage involved a return visit by the Accreditation Renewal Team to the Shoalhaven and Illawarra sites. In conjunction with this visit, two members of the OCG Carer Register Team joined the Renewal Assessment Team to review CareSouth’s compliance with the Carer’s Register and relevant legislation and guidelines.

Care South is anticipating receiving the final report from the Office of the Children’s Guardian later this year.
White Ribbon Accreditation at CareSouth

CareSouth is an organisation that promotes its values – respect, accountability, compassion, integrity and inclusion – through everyday actions. Staff at CareSouth believe that violence against women is serious, prevalent and most importantly preventable if each and every one of us takes a stand against it. We are currently working towards gaining White Ribbon accreditation, which involves all 300 of our staff members making a commitment to stop violence against women.

Violence against women affects us all. Our families, our community and our nation. It prevents those exposed to it, both directly and indirectly, from fully participating in society. At CareSouth our vision is to create a positive future for children, young people, individuals, families and communities. CareSouth’s workplace prevention program is an opportunity to address the root causes of violence and ensure that those we work with can achieve a positive future.

Although White Ribbon Day is several months away, we want to start the conversation now and every day so we are all accountable for preventing violence against women.

CareSouth is encouraging all staff to make the commitment to stand up, speak out and act to prevent violence against women as part of a primary prevention strategy to stop violence before it occurs.

Visit White Ribbon’s website to access free resources and sign up to become an advocate for CareSouth and the wider community.

Safeguarding Children

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has brought the issue of child safety within organisations into the public gaze. CareSouth is strongly committed to keeping children, young people and people with disability safe, and have accepted the recommendations and findings of the Royal Commission. Our organisation promotes a culture in which the safeguarding of those with whom we work is embedded in our policies, procedures, practices and Code of Conduct.

During the year, we advanced our safeguarding framework through our continuing involvement in the Australian Childhood Foundation’s (ACF’s) Safeguarding Children Accreditation program. This program has guided the updating of policies, procedures and practices to prevent abuse, and to respond quickly and appropriately to children’s concerns. It contains seven evidence-based strategies, which CareSouth is working towards fully implementing. These are:

1. Public commitment to safeguarding children
2. Personnel roles and conduct which reflect everyone’s responsibility to keep children and young people safe
3. Recruitment and screening practices to minimise risk
4. Personnel induction and training
5. Involvement of children and parents
6. Best practice responses to child abuse reports and allegations
7. A child-safe culture.

At the end of last year, a part-time Safeguarding Officer, Jen Toms, was appointed. Jen has worked closely with programs and business units to advance this important work.

In May, John Dorahy, the Chair of CareSouth’s Board of Directors, released the organisation’s ‘Safeguarding Children, Young People and People with Disability Commitment Statement’. Following that, more than 200 staff from across the organisation pledged their commitment to safeguarding, at a launch of this Commitment Statement. All staff, Board members and the CEO have been required to undertake Safeguarding training with the ACF. A new Code of Conduct and Position Descriptions have been developed which embed safeguarding within our recruitment and onboarding of new staff. Our safeguarding work puts systems in place that make it harder, and riskier, for people linked with CareSouth to commit abuse or crimes.

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

Homework Hub
CareSouth’s vision to create a positive future for the children and young people we work with every day was a key factor in the development and launch of The Homework Hub two years ago. The weekly program is designed to help students with their school work and also provide a safe space where children and young people, ranging in age from 5 to 18, can meet and develop friendships with others on a similar path to their own.

Volunteer mentors from diverse backgrounds, including a police officer and teaching, social work and psychology students from the University of Wollongong and TAFE, tutor and mentor the students both academically and socially.

The mutually beneficial program gives mentors the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in their chosen field while providing positive educational experiences for vulnerable children and young people.

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

The Homework Hub not only improves numeracy and literacy but promotes social engagement by connecting students from similar backgrounds, provides positive role modelling through mentoring, improves emotional regulation using mindfulness and yoga and helps students build capacity and resilience.

An outcomes assessment of the Homework Hub has found that improving confidence, school engagement and life skills leads to better educational outcomes and increased social inclusion. A Social Return on Investment (SROI) study – an outcomes-based assessment using evidence and research to determine the impact of a program against the investment – found that for every dollar invested in the Homework Hub there was a $2 social return, thereby increasing social and economic inclusion for vulnerable students in the long-term.

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

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

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

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

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

CareSouth has partnered with Go4Fun to run school holiday clinics out of the Hub. The free 10-week healthy lifestyle program for kids aged 7-13 who are above a healthy weight focuses on improving eating habits, fitness and confidence. Natalie has also set up a weekly community walking group to reinforce the importance of a healthy lifestyle and self-care.

Communal eating and growing fresh produce also plays a key part in CareSouth’s Community Hub development plan. Each month CareSouth holds a Meet and Eat where staff and students from Illawarra Sports High volunteer their time to cook up a feast for the local community.

“Meet and Eat numbers are increasing each month, with families from across the Illawarra enjoying the opportunity to eat out and catch up with friends,” said Natalie. “We were able to get students from the Work Related Alternative Program prepare and serve food in the Berkeley Community Hub on the first Thursday of each month and this counts towards their school achievement record,” said Natalie.

CareSouth, in partnership with Wollongong Botanic Garden and Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, has also been involved in a community bush tucker garden beside our Berkeley office. A horticulturist from the Wollongong Botanic Gardens has donated 30 native, edible plants and will teach the community, including young people from Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre’s Youth Project, how to grow, maintain and care for them.

“Gardening gives everyone the opportunity to contribute,” said Natalie. “And with a little effort we get immediate results that we all can see. The kids are taking ownership of the project and are genuinely excited to see what they have produced.”

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

“My vision is for the Hub to become a gathering place within the Berkeley community, providing space for locals and other service providers to participate in activities and to access services,” said Natalie. “I’m always looking for new opportunities to offer appropriate activities. It’s been great getting to know the local community and being able to respond to their needs.”
Financial Overview 2016-17

Financial Performance
The financial performance is summarised from extracts of the audited financial statements of CareSouth for the period ended 30 June 2017.

Trading Results
The operating profit for the year ended 30th June 2017 was $85,005. In the previous year it was $851,337.

Review of Operations
Growth in Western NSW Out-of-Home Care continued in both foster care and residential care services. Investment income has declined compared to the previous year due to investments in assets and lower interest rates.

Likely Developments
The Organisation intends to:

a) Expand services provided to clients through provision of more community-based services across a wider geographical area.
b) Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) within the regions where we operate.
### Employee Costs

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### Fundraising and Donations

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### Trading Surplus

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