

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023



Inside this edition:

- Trachoma prevention in our communities
- Letters from school kids to our Elders
- Going live with Alayacare
- Launch of NATSIAACC
& more

Message from the CEO

Graham Aitken



Welcome to our Spring edition of our ACS Newsletter. It has certainly been a very cold winter and we are all looking forward to the warmer weather.

Over the past 12 months, ACS has continued to welcome new Elders to our community, and are currently supporting over 900 Elders across South Australia. Our services are delivered in a range of forms, from low level care, to high level residential care. ACS services are provided to Elders living in urban, regional, and remote locations.

The aged care reforms continue with the Government changing the Aged Care Act, aged care services, and aged care regulation. We will provide further updates on these matters, especially changes to aged care services where the Government aims to combine the Commonwealth Home Support Programme and Home Care Packages. The date for this change has now been deferred until July 2025.

It has been over 2 years since the recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission were released, and progress by the Federal Government and Department of Health and Aged Care to implement all the recommendations has been slow. Of particular concern is the slow implementation of the Aged Care Royal Commission's Chapter 7 that relates specially to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care.

As one of the largest aged care providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, the uncertainty about the aged care changes, and what our future model of service might look like is a concern. I repeat comments from many previous newsletters, that we will keep Elders informed of the aged care reforms. (cont.)

(cont.) I have repeated some of the above information in our previous newsletters as it seems the aged care sector is still working in a period of uncertainty with many changes.

I have informed all Elders in our services that ACS currently has some non-compliances, especially relating to clinical governance and clinical care. As a result, ACS is employing our own registered nurses and changing some of our contracted nursing arrangements. Elders who receive clinical care have been prioritised for a new clinical assessment.

Many Elders will remember when our community services started back in 1995 at Nunkuwarrin Yunti as Aboriginal Home Care funded under the Home and Community Care (HACC) program. The community never intended for Aboriginal Home Care to duplicate or replace clinical/health services that were and still are being provided by Nunkuwarrin Yunti or SA Health through their Watto Purunna Aboriginal Health Services. Despite the significant investment in Aboriginal health by the Commonwealth and state governments, the aged care reforms now hold ACS responsible for clinical care outcomes of our Elders in our services.

I have also advised all Elders on Home Care Package of changes to purchasing exclusions arrangements. Whilst the changes were made by the government in January 2023, we tried to reduce the impact of these changes by using our discretion on items purchased using our existing purchasing framework, the alignment of purchases to Elders goals, purchases that are related to the ageing process and reports from specialists. We have always tried to find a way to support the choices of Elders who are needing to purchase items under their Home Care Package, however, government rules have impacted our decision making. Please also read the article in this newsletter that related to our organisation's social Impact Statement, our vision and Cultural Integrity statement.

The new Support at Home program is scheduled to start in July 2025 and merges the existing Commonwealth Home Support Program and Home Care Packages. The new program will contain a number of service categories which mean older people can choose the service category they need and service providers will need to demonstrate their capability to deliver the various service categories. Please also see the article in this newsletter relating to the new Support at Home program.

I trust you enjoy reading this newsletter and as always, we are happy to receive your feedback, kind regards.

Launching AlayaCare

In September, ACS switched to a new software solution called AlayaCare, that will allow us to optimise our operations, generate valuable insight, and give our staff access to reliable systems! Switching to AlayaCare has changed the way ACS stores client information. We have reduced manual work and created better efficiencies through data accessibility. As our organisation is spread across the state, it is crucial that the correct level of client information is being provided to the right people at the right time. Importantly, the new software has increased our capabilities to meet reporting requirements. We were very impressed with our staff who handled the extra workload of this transition with commitment, and worked together for an outcome we are very happy with, and will result in a better quality of care.



TREVOR'S COMMITMENT

The ACS community is lucky to call Trevor Buzzacott a part of the team. An Arabana man, Trevor has been working to improve Aboriginal eye health since before the Fred Hollows Foundation was even in its infancy. In fact, the data that Trevor and the team in the National Trachoma and Eye Health program collected in the 1970s, would mean the formation of the Fred Hollows Foundation, and a plethora of Aboriginal Medical Services across the country.

In a spare office space in the Aboriginal Community Services building at Mile End, Trevor sits and points to the massive stack of paper he'd placed on the desk nearby.

"This has got every single person that we had listed in terms of eye ailments, ear ailments, diabetes, you name it, we had it listed there. And we were then ready to do something about it, way back then."

In the 70s, Trevor and the team had travelled across the nation, going from community to community, collecting statistics on eye health. He said that connections to groups of Elders all over the country were utilised, so that doors were already open when they arrived. It was connection, Trevor explains, that

"...set the smooth path [...] which gave us the permission to travel all over Australia. And visit every single Aboriginal remote community."

Trevor's job didn't end at data collection, and after presenting the report to the government it was decided that there needed to be some kind of agency.

It was obvious to the team that they couldn't just swing through communities, doing the tests, engagements, and operations, and leave. There had to be a community-lead effort to maintain eye and ear health in these remote areas indefinitely. This was something the team realised even as they were collecting their data; they needed to establish local Aboriginal Medical Services in community to see what was really going on. Trevor says that if it were not for these Medical Services, "The Fred Hollows Foundation would not begin to form, and we would've been in dire straits still about Trachoma in remote areas."

93% clarity on the elimination of Trachoma is what Trevor describes as the current context for Trachoma in Australia – but even still, according to the Australian Government, Australia is the only developed country [sic] where Trachoma still occurs. Trevor says that his,

"...commitment is the same now as what it was in 1976 and it's not gonna change until such times as we can not only be rid of Trachoma, but we then can look at building the capacity. Ownership can go



The Cave Hill Meeting called by the Custodians of Anangu Munda that saw the beginning of The National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. (Trevor sits bottom row, second from the right in green top)

back to the different community groups; they can set up their own medical services if they choose to. They can unite with existing commonwealth and state government services."

"...and no one is going to relax because we've come across this situation before where some of the communities have relaxed a little bit. And you will find that that will then ignite, I guess, the health and eye care problems from our little ones. There's also a mixture of dental problems now in a lot of our communities because there's too many sugar products that's going into our remote areas. So we've still got a mix of all those sort of things which we must keep an eye on. And so its ongoing, nothing's gonna stop."

The work that Trevor has been doing through ACS is a credit not only to his own dedication, but to the organisation's holistic approach when it comes to supporting community. What could simply be described as an aged service provider is certainly more – a presence embedded in Aboriginal Community across South Australia. Trevor's work is a great example of what ACS backs outside of your regular aged care services.

Going into communities, Trevor implements a variety of engagements that bring people together, and provide the team with the opportunity to yarn about things like washing your face and hands 3-4 times a day, and eating 3 meals a day with local kids. Trevor describes a recent engagement he'd set up, "...we've done it in the APY Lands over the last couple of years by running a sports competition there. The North Adelaide Golf Club has given me 100 clubs, old clubs,

so we chopped the clubs up to that size, and we go and play golf, on the oval, with the little ones. So everyone's having a bit of fun, and while their doing that we say, 'right you need to wash your face now, wash your hands'. And they're doing that, and the little ones are actually doing the whole process of washing their face and hands 3 times a day, having a bit of fun, that sort of thing. And they're the simple, little ways which I think are very positive, and it involves everyone in the communities, because while we're doing that and playing golf, on an oval, the Elders will come along and sit down and have a feed – so we'll have a barbecue."

It's obvious that Trevor, and by extension, ACS, feel an all-encompassing responsibility to community. Perhaps this is why Trevor laughed out loud when asked what his official role title was here at ACS. Humbly, he describes himself as being

"...just a reminder of making sure you wash your face and hands every day. And it's working."

Talking to teachers, healthcare workers and general members of each community is key to ensuring symptoms of eye and ear problems are not going unnoticed. Trevor will also often visit family homes, making sure their sewerage systems are operating effectively, that they have access to hot and cold water, and that families are aware of the benefits of having animals outdoors rather than indoors.

"So there's a lot of those common sense things that we can embrace with the community ... there's no cost factors there! ... it just opens up the doors, and once you open up the doors to one or two of these communities, you'll find that – bang! – it's done. It'll steam roll. So, we're lucky because we're not only dealing with our Elders, we have access to go to the communities and sit down and talk to their children. At the schools, the young workers."

Trevor feels good about the opportunities available in Aboriginal health. He emphasises the importance of setting up local services, and highlights the government's willingness to fund such endeavours. One of his biggest hopes is having more Aboriginal medical nursing staff coming through.

"...it would be good to have another thousand senior Aboriginal medical nursing staff right throughout this whole nation. This number is just plucked out, but you can spread that all over the country, and you're going to be short in numbers anyway, but the reality is if you set yourself a target and achieve it, you will find that the next round of target is going to be much easier to achieve. And it'll be more willing to be supported as well."

Trevor speaks about his work in the Aboriginal health sector as not just an interest, but a life commitment. Full of knowledge, stories, and a past that entails being at the forefront of ear and eye health in Aboriginal communities, Trevor is interested in looking forward. 'Why can't we do this?', he often asks, "There's nothing stopping us from..." he might exclaim.

"That's why my interest – not an interest, it's my life commitment, is what we do, it's ongoing."



Trevor (third from the right in yellow top) and other Trachoma Elimination Program team members in 2018

REFORMS UPDATE

New Aged Care reforms seek to create a better aged care services system to give older people more choice, more control and easier access to a full range of services.

Earlier this year, ACS made a number of presentations to the Aged Care Royal Commission including the regional and remote services delivery hearing that was held in Broome.

The Royal Commission has released its final report, and ACS is happy to have contributed, especially to chapter 7, which contains recommendations specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care.

ACS is looking forward to the Government and the Department of Health implementing all the Royal Commission Recommendations and updating the Aged Care Act. The new single assessment system and new Aged Care Act are set to commence from the 1st of July 2024, and the new Support at Home program is scheduled to commence from July 1st 2025.

REGIONAL REPORT

ACS Always Learning



To comply with My Aged Care and grow the skills and knowledge of our team, all regional support staff have begun training to get their Certificate III in Individual Support. They are set to graduate with their certificates in December 2023, ready to continue providing appropriate care for our Elders. In the course they are learning to provide physical and emotional support to older people to enhance their independence and wellbeing. It introduces the aspects of a support worker's role including assisting with daily activities and personal care, and developing skills to support individuals with a disability.

SOCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Our purpose: Aboriginal Community Services supports the growth of progressive and prosperous Aboriginal communities that are built on a foundation of respect, self-determination and accountability. By empowering individuals, families and communities through choice and control of their needs, we connect our expertise, knowledge, passion, corporate and governance structures to build sustainable programs. The lives of our clients are enriched through the delivery of culturally appropriate services that are continuously improved and represent value for money.

Our Vision: Our vision is to be a national service provider, recognised for the cultural and professional integrity and commitment to the self determination of current and future generations of Aboriginal communities, families and individuals.

Cultural Integrity: ACS is guided by our obligations and responsibilities in our decision making and activities to maintain, protect, preserve, promote, and adhere to First Nations cultural practices, lore and customs. These obligations and responsibilities underpin our policies, service delivery and practices in the way we conduct ourselves when engaging with the consumers we serve and the communities we operate in. This extends to our business practices and advocacy with our partners, stakeholders and agencies we work with.

A day at the Quorn Races

On August 19th, Elders Nancy and Leon Murray, Sydney Carter, Kathleen and Abdul Sultan went on a big day out for the Quorn Cup. The group did some exploring around Quorn, and ate lots of country cooked food, with a barbecue at the park and a feed at the Great Northern Lodge. They enjoyed watching the races and having some quality time together. A friend of Leon and Nancy had them get up close and personal with his trophies, and the group admired the Waukarie Falls about 17 minutes out of Quorn. Here's to making more memories together with our Elders!



Kathleen Sultan and Nancy Murray waiting for the barbecue at the Quorn Park.



A friend of the group showing off his trophies. Nancy Murray stands behind Leon Murray sitting on walker,



Sydney Carter, Kathleen and Abdul Sultan enjoying a good feed at the Great Northern Lodge.



Sydney Carter, Abdul Sultan, Kathleen Sultan and staff-member Lisa May at the Waukarie Falls.

Art Spotlight: Ruth Harding

Community member Ruth Harding was kind enough to send in some poetry she wrote. We'd like to thank her for sharing her beautiful words. We hope readers enjoy immersing themselves in the stories and memories from Elders in our community.

'I.' by Ruth Harding

*I sit in my rocker on my front porch,
I wait in the early morning picinini dawn,
Until the first rays of light show through the
Curtain of bluey, purple and red.
I stand and walk up to the new on coming day,
I turn around to see the old homestead in its full.*

Submit your art!

Are you an artist, poet or writer who is part of the ACS community? We would love to feature your work in our newsletter!

To have your art showcased to Elders all across the state, please email your writing or a photo/scan of your artwork, along with your name and any information you'd like published alongside it to:

jessica.rowe@aboriginalcs.org.au

Introducing: the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council

On the 31st of July our CEO Graham Aitken travelled to Canberra to be a part of the official launch of NATSIAACC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council. This exciting new council will work to ensure Elders can access support and care that is culturally safe, trauma aware and healing-informed, and recognises the importance of their personal connections to community and Country. The council will develop policies, advocate for improvements in the sector which will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers and Elders, conduct research, provide education, develop relationships within the sector, and collect important data. Graham is a director on the NATSIAAC board, and ACS is proud to be a part of this new initiative and continue learning from the wisdom and experience of Elders.

Visit NATSIAACC.org.au for more information.

New Support at Home Program

New aged care reforms are set to be put in place on July 1st of 2025. ACS wants Elders to feel they are in-the-know about policies that will effect them. The new Support at Home Program will see the merging of the current Home Care Package Program, Commonwealth Home Support Program, Short Term Restorative Care Program, and Residential Respite Program. The new program aims to give greater choice, flexibility and transparency, greater clarity of services, individualised support plans, a single assessment process, an integrated assessment tool, better matching of services, and easier access to assistive technologies. As work continues on these changes, ACS will endeavour to keep Elders informed.



THE METRO MANIFEST

The Metro team have enjoyed looking back on the last 12 months throughout the Annual Report writing process that ACS recently underwent. We wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate how the team have faced this massive period, where workload was the biggest challenge. The team began supporting over 20 new Elders, and continued to receive feedback like this;

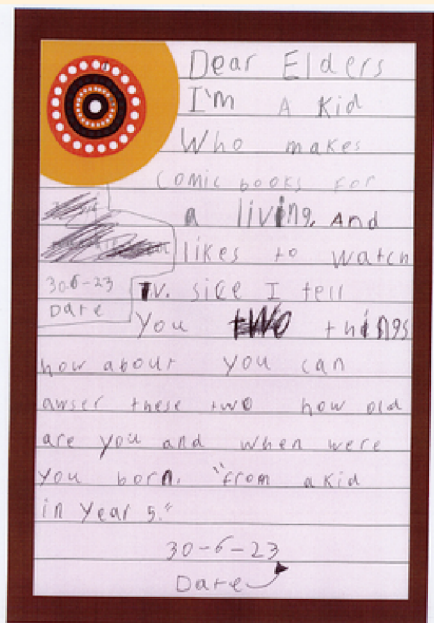
"...Your support has been exceptional allowing me to have shoes that ease my walking and standing difficulties. (...) Your team at Aboriginal Client Services a huge vote of thanks for a job not only fantastically well done in a timely manner but allowing this oh so grateful Elder a large degree of confidence."

One of the biggest achievements the team reflected on was that they were able support many

Elders in being assessed and re-assessed by My Aged Care Care to grant them the best care they are eligible for. Many Elders transitioned from the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), onto the Home Care Package Program, and are now receiving additional funding supports through their Home Care Package.

The month of October saw us sadly say goodbye to one of our coordinators, Archie Davison. Archie worked in the metro team for the last 18 months supporting Elders within the CHSP program. The metro team welcomed Leany Harrison who is replacing Archie's former position as CHSP coordinator, the metro team is excited to have Leany on board and part of the team and look forward to seeing the support and care she will provide to elders.

The metro team will be growing in other areas and over coming months is hoping to grow our workforce in order to better support our Elders. On the 13th of November we welcomed an additional Aged Care Advisor to work within the HCP program, Leanne Carter. Leanne comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the program and will be a great asset to the team and community.



Dear Elders...

The art of letter writing is something many people believe lost - but, the cultural studies students at Lonsdale Heights P-6 School are reviving the art as a way of connecting with Elders. Inspired by the NAIDOC Week 2023 theme 'For Our Elders,' students wrote letters and drew self-portraits for our Elders at the AEV. Their teacher, Gemma Trueman, explains, "I think it's important for the students to connect with Elders because the Elders are knowledge holders and the students are the next generation." Gemma says its an opportunity for students to learn from them and grow up having respect for Indigenous Elders. ACS would like to express a massive thanks to the students and Gemma for coming up with, and bringing this beautiful idea to life!

SPRING RESET

*This season the new things
I'll be trying are...*

What do you need to let go of?

*Are there any changes
happening in your life? How
do you feel about them?*

*What can you do to make
your life more vibrant?*



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