



# Aboriginal Family Support Services Annual Report 2014 - 2015

## Where to find us

Adelaide  
134 Waymouth Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Phone: (08) 8205 1500

Murray Bridge  
C/- ALRM Inc, 27 Beatty Terrace  
Murray Bridge SA 5254  
Phone: 0418 499 649

Berri  
23 Denny Street  
Berri SA 5343  
Phone: (08) 8582 3192

Port Augusta  
1st Floor, 47 Commercial Road  
Port Augusta SA 5700  
Phone: (08) 8641 0907

Ceduna  
28 Poynton Street  
Ceduna SA 5690  
Phone: (08) 8625 3466

Port Lincoln  
3 Gloucester Terrace  
Port Lincoln SA 5606  
Phone: (08) 8683 1909

Cooper Pedy  
Lot 1991 Aylett Street  
Cooper Pedy SA 5723  
Phone: (08) 8672 3066

Smithfield  
39a Anderson Walk  
Smithfield SA 5114  
Phone: (08) 8254 1077



## Table of contents

Our Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles . . . . .	Page 4
Organisational chart . . . . .	Page 5
The AFSS Board . . . . .	Page 6
Chairperson's message . . . . .	Page 7
CEO's message . . . . .	Page 8
Meet the Senior Management team . . . . .	Page 10
Metropolitan Services . . . . .	Page 11
Regional Services . . . . .	Page 15
Therapeutic Services . . . . .	Page 24
Corporate Services . . . . .	Page 30

# About us

## Our Vision

Together with Aboriginal communities strengthen families to ensure safe and culturally strong futures for our children and young people.

## Our Mission

Aboriginal Family Support Services acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal communities and ensures that all services are innovative, creative and healing-based.

Through strong leadership Aboriginal Family Support Services influences change in policies and service delivery in all areas of capacity building within Aboriginal families and communities.

We maintain that our Aboriginal heritage is beyond value and no child should be deprived of its richness.

## Our guiding principles

### Together with the community

*We work together with the community to ensure our purpose is achieved in a culturally sensitive manner.*

### Spirituality, culture and country

*We recognise the importance of our spirituality, rich cultural heritage and our strong connection to country. We ensure that we acknowledge this as an integral part of our organisation.*

### Leadership

*We show strong leadership that challenges and influences social change for the wellbeing of our communities.*

### Equity

*We treat all people in an ethical and professional manner.*

### Respect

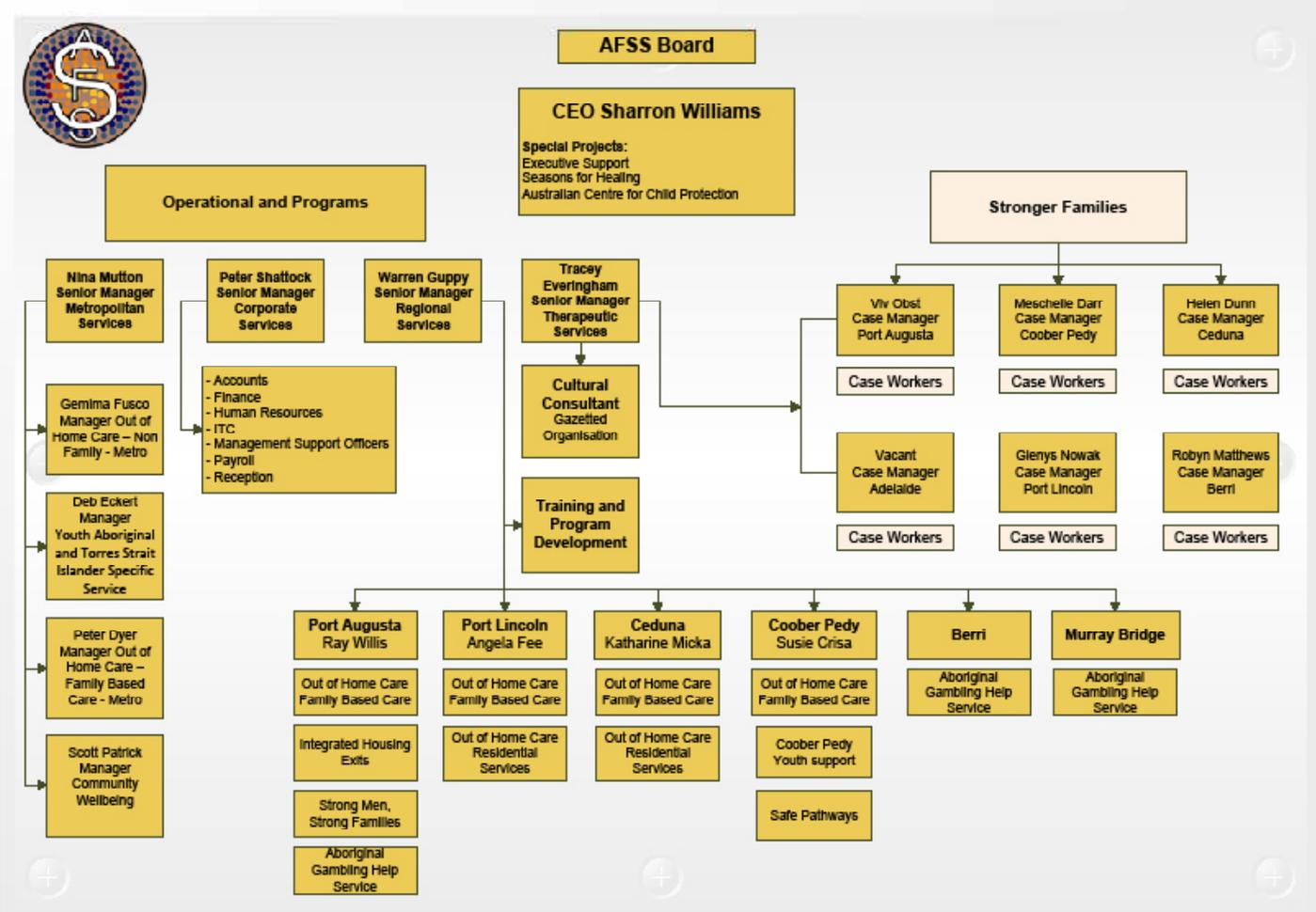
*We treat all people with respect, honour cultural sensitivity and promote an environment based on these principles.*

### Responsibility

*We are responsible for the decisions we make and for our actions. We are responsible to each other and to our clients.*

*All employees are supported and valued  
As an organisation, we value our staff and their contribution.*

# Organisational chart



## The AFSS Board



Pictured, from left to right, are the AFSS 2014-15 Board:

Bev Ewen, (Chairperson), Margaret Nelson (Secretary), Maryanne Clements (Executive Member), Wayne Rigney (Executive Member), Greg Sinclair (Executive Member) Sharron Williams (Public Officer).

Absent from photo is Paul Elliott (Treasurer), pictured below.



## Chairperson's message

I am pleased to provide you with the Chairperson's Report for 2014 - 2015.

This document is testament to the hard work that AFSS undertakes and provides an overview of our activities for the reporting period.

I became Chairperson at the end of 2014, taking over from Paul Elliott. We have maintained a wonderfully committed team of Board Members, Greg Sinclair, Wayne Rigney, Margaret Nelson, Paul Elliott and Maryanne Clements.

Together with our CEO Sharron Williams, the Senior Management team and all AFSS staff, we focus on keeping Aboriginal families together, safe in culture, and we work to ensure that we fulfil the aims of our vision and mission, which you will find on page 4 of this Annual Report.

I encourage all Aboriginal people in South Australia to become members of AFSS, so that you are able to join with us as we strive to provide the best possible service to, and outcomes for, Aboriginal children and families in South Australia.

*Bev Ewen  
Chairperson*



## CEO's message



Sharron Williams  
Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to report that, once again, it been a very rewarding 12 months at AFSS, with much happening throughout the organisation.

Staff participated in a number of significant Aboriginal community events throughout the year:

Our involvement with the NAIDOC Week Family Fun Day is a regular part of the AFSS calendar. As in previous years staff ran an information stall and hosted the Elders' Pavilion, providing free refreshments to the community. This is always an enjoyable event and we look forward to it each year. Staff in our regional areas also celebrated NAIDOC events with their local communities.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day was celebrated in August, with activities taking place throughout our regions, along with the distribution of activity bags to the children in our care

As Chairperson of the Gladys Elphick Awards Committee in 2014 I was extremely proud to host the Awards Ceremony on 9 July 2014. It was a most successful event, enjoyed by all who attended, and took place at the Grainger Studio on Hindley Street.

AFSS was very much involved in the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Family Matters forum – "Kids Safe in culture, not in care", held here in Adelaide in August 2014. As National Chairperson of SNAICC I was pleased to see numbers for the Adelaide forum exceed expectations. As a result of the forum a working group has been formed to progress matters to help address the high number of Aboriginal children being separated from their families.

Due to funding cuts to Aboriginal programs nationwide under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), April saw the closing of our doors in the Community Wellbeing program, at both Smithfield and Christies Beach. Similarly, the end of June saw the end of our Safe Pathways and the Strong

Men Strong Families programs. Fortunately, as one door closes another opens, and we have been successful in securing funding through the IAS to provide a Community Safety and Wellbeing program statewide. This will commence in July 2015.

Continuing professional development for our staff is of the utmost importance at AFSS, and throughout the year staff have undertaken a range of training to enhance their knowledge and skills. You will find more details about staff training within this Annual Report.

The 2014 Annual General Meeting was held in Port Lincoln. It provided a wonderful opportunity to share with the local Aboriginal community, funding bodies and other Port Lincoln service providers information about the work AFSS undertakes.

Each year we plan to hold our AGM in a different AFSS region to connect with the local community and build on the sound relationships we have established with staff and communities across the state.

In closing, I thank our dedicated Board and staff, the Aboriginal community of South Australia, our funding bodies and those agencies with whom we work closely, for their support throughout the year. I look forward to the challenges that will be presented to us as we continue to strive to achieve positive outcomes for the Aboriginal children, youth and families in this state.

*Sharron Williams  
Chief Executive Officer*

## Meet the Senior Management team



*Above: The Senior Management Team. Standing are Nina Mutton, Senior Manager, Metropolitan Services and Peter Shattock, Senior Manager, Corporate Services. Seated are Warren Guppy, Senior Manager, Regional Services and Tracey Everingham, Senior Manager, Therapeutic Services.*

## Metropolitan Services

The last 12 months have been a busy and exciting period for Metropolitan Services. Key partnerships have continued to be maintained with the major funding providers, including the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI). Some funding, including the previous funding from the Commonwealth Department for Prime Minister and Cabinet, is now provided under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding, which will provide a service covering both regional and metropolitan areas. As a result, the metropolitan Community Wellbeing Program has been de-funded to make way for a program that services both regional and metropolitan areas.

Significant relationships have been established with other Non Government Organisations to scope partnerships and joint service delivery across the Metropolitan region, including Re-Engage Youth Services, Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide and Junction Australia.

AFSS participated in the Family Matters forum, held in Adelaide and hosted by SNAICC. This forum highlighted many of the issues faced by communities and families, and the concerns over the high numbers of Aboriginal children presenting within the child protection system.

## Family Based Out of Home Care

This year has continued to be a busy time for the Family Based Out of Home Care program. Significant shortages of foster carers, including Aboriginal foster carers, continues to place pressure on the foster care system. Late last year AFSS presented a submission to the Select Committee on Statutory Child Protection in South Australia. The major points highlighted in AFSS' submission included:

The high rates of Aboriginal children entering the child protection system; current rates indicate that Aboriginal children are on average 10 times more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to enter the child protection system<sup>1</sup>.

Since the 1997 inquiry into the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (stolen generation), child removal has increased by 400%<sup>2</sup>.

The shortage of Aboriginal foster carers, due to several factors, including carers caring for their own kin, systemic practices that deter Aboriginal community from becoming carers, resource shortages and an ageing population.

1. Davey 2014

2. NAPCAN 2014



The increasing complexity and needs of children entering the care system.

Assessment of foster carers that is not culturally sensitive, aware or safe.

Payment system for foster carers that places a financial burden on the carers. The current payment system does not take into account the longer term social and financial impact on carers, such as lack of accrual of superannuation<sup>1</sup>.

While the above issues are sobering and do highlight a system that is somewhat in crisis, it should not detract from those carers who have provided, and continue to provide, extraordinary care and support to children and young people who have had to face many challenges.

Currently, Metropolitan Services has the following number of carer households, including assessed new carer households over the year:

80 carer households

25 new carer households assessed.

This year AFSS developed a statewide recruitment plan in collaboration with Regional and Metropolitan Services; this provided a professional look and slogan to AFSS recruitment and branding.

The metropolitan family based out of home care team has continued to participate in community events, including NAIDOC Week Family Fun Day, where they facilitated the Elders' pavilion.

Over the last 12 months AFSS Family Based Out of Home Care has been privileged to receive a generous donation of funding, organised by Mr Eoin Loftus, for a scholarship fund to assist carers in the cost of children and young people's extra curricular activities. This has included the cost of dance classes, football fees, singing lessons and netball fees to name a few. Many thanks Eoin.

1. Berry Street 2013

Above: Greenhills Adventure Park was the venue for the Metro Family Based Care annual Christmas party.

## Non-Family Based Out of Home Care

Metropolitan residential services has worked closely with regional residential services, to develop and deliver closely aligned programs coordinated by policy and best practice approaches. The last 12 months have seen a program restructure, moving from one coordinator position, to two team leaders, to provide consistency and continuity of practice within the program.

Challenges in the residential care space include the system's issues that have been part of daily media reports and the increasing complexity and challenging needs of children and young people placed in residential care.

However there are times when residential care can be appropriate for some children and young people, particularly where staff have appropriate training, small groups of children are placed and the developmental stages and needs of children and young people are similar.

Training for staff has included accredited training provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation. See page 21 for more details.

Evidence is clear that the physical environment is very important to support children and young people to heal from trauma. AFSS has continued to refurbish the service and supported the children



Above: Metro Family Based Care team members, from left, Peter Dyer (Manager), Lily Stuart and James Thelwell getting ready for the AFSS Reconciliation Week event at Marra Dreaming.



and young people to personalise their own spaces and participate in this process.

This year AFSS metropolitan residential care developed a Partnership in Practice forum with other organisations, including Junction Australia, delivering services in the residential care space to better inform practice, service delivery and knowledge.

Ongoing work continues to connect children and young people with their communities and culture, through participation in community and cultural events and support to access family and community.

## Youth Accommodation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Specific Service (YAATSISS)

Over the past 12 months YAATSISS has undergone a service restructure. This has created two team leader positions, one for Olga Fudge Lodge and one for Narungga House. The service continues to provide best practice approaches in supporting young people who are homeless and at risk, including outreach support, and sourcing longer term housing options.

The team is continuing to focus on service collaboration to ensure there is no “wrong door” for young people who are experiencing homelessness.

The team continues a partnership approach with other agencies and services, to deliver programs, group work and one-on-one support to the youth who access the service.

There is an increase in younger Aboriginal young people experiencing homelessness, with a corresponding increasing need for more intensive support from the service.

Recently a partnership was formed with Uniting Care Wesley, Port Adelaide, and Re-EngageYouth Services, for a youth program to be delivered across Adelaide. This is an exciting opportunity for AFSS to work in collaboration with agencies that have expertise in youth work to provide much needed services to Aboriginal young people. The new program will be called URBAN youth program and will deliver one-on-one case management, crisis intervention, group work and community engagement.

*Nina Mutton  
Senior Manager  
Metropolitan Services*

## Regional Services

### Select Committee on Statutory Child Protection and Care

As part of general business during the 2014-2015 period, AFSS made a significant written submission to the State Government's Select Committee on Statutory Child Protection and Care. Following our submission, AFSS was also invited to provide a verbal presentation to the Select Committee. This involved responding to questions from the Select Committee about certain elements of our submission.

### Department for Social Services and the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Funding for AFSS Safe Pathways (Coober Pedy Family Violence) and the Strong Men, Strong Families (Port Augusta) programs ceased on 30 June 2015. Prior to this date, AFSS was required to submit funding applications through the Australian Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) and Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding rounds. AFSS was successful in securing Emergency Relief funding for 2.5 years through DSS (for Coober Pedy only) and in securing

significant funds for a Statewide Community Safety and Wellbeing program through to June 2018.

### AFSS Coober Pedy relocation

AFSS was involved in a significant matter with the Coober Pedy Council over the location of our facility being based in a residential area. The matter has taken several years to resolve but has now reached an amicable conclusion with AFSS Coober Pedy currently in the process of relocation to a permanent site.

### Aboriginal Gambling Help Service

In this annual reporting period the AFSS Aboriginal Gambling Help Service (AGHS) underwent a complete revamp to ensure the program is still relevant and culturally appropriate in the current climate, for example, in maintaining currency with the changes in gambling behaviour and with the extended range of gambling products (mainly through online gambling applications) being offered to the consumer.

The first step was the completion of a review and rewrite of the AFSS AGHS *Problem Gambling Awareness and Education Program*. The framework for the Program is focused on building resilience,



promoting connectedness, and awareness and education. The program incorporates six separate modules that encompass all age ranges that are involved in the gambling arena and include the problem gambler, family members affected by gambling and community groups, to raise awareness.

Another significant achievement includes the AFSS-led establishment of an industry-wide *Gambling Help Services and Industry Forum*. The Forum's intent is to facilitate the free exchange of information between GHS workers and industry representatives in relation to changes in legislation or approaches that may impact on the manner in which the GHS workers can best work with their clients. It also provides an opportunity for all workers to discuss any current trends and to share with other workers any difficult cases they may be experiencing, with the hope of attaining a better outcome for the client.

## Out of Home Care – Family Based Foster Care (Ceduna, Coober Pedy, Port Augusta and Port Lincoln)

The growth of foster carer households across AFSS regional sites has been slow. There are real challenges for all agencies involved in the recruitment of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carer households. AFSS Regional Services continue to look at more creative ways in which to encourage Aboriginal families to become foster carers. This is increasingly a challenge because many Aboriginal families already care for members of their extended families through informal arrangements. This, coupled with unacceptably high rates of removal of Aboriginal children and young people from their families and communities, has meant that foster care for Aboriginal children and young people has reached crisis proportions.

As a result of an AFSS-convened statewide forum for all AFSS staff involved in the Out of Home Care – Family Based Foster Care program (July 2014), a 2014-2015 Statewide Carer Recruitment Strategy was finalised and is now being rolled out across South Australia. Its aim is to ensure that the South

Above: The AFSS Gambling Help Service team, from left, Bronte Warneke, Norman Giles, Charles Jackson and Tony Lawrence (Coordinator).

Australian community becomes aware of the urgent need for carers through the saturation of radio, TV and print media with information about AFSS and the need for foster carers.

## Out of Home Care – Non Family Based Care (Residential Care – Ceduna and Port Lincoln)

AFSS spent considerable effort in rewriting its Residential Services Policy and Procedures. AFSS staff from both metropolitan and regional sites were consulted and involved in the development of the new Policy and Procedures, signed off by the AFSS Board in February 2015. A new induction and training package was also developed by the AFSS Training Facilitator and has been delivered to all existing Residential Services staff.

In addition to AFSS' own standards around the care and protection of children and young people, AFSS is required to actively participate in other quality assurance mechanisms. This includes Service Excellence Accreditation, annual licensing reviews by the Department of Education and Child Development and random audits by the Office of the Guardian.

## Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling

During the 2014 - 2015 period, AFSS continued to provide emergency relief to clients in both Port Augusta and Coober Pedy. AFSS' focus for emergency relief is provided through Coles Cards, or in the case of Coober Pedy, through the Miner's Store, both of which allow the recipient to purchase food items only. With such a small allocation of emergency relief, AFSS was keen to ensure that any emergency relief funds were used to purchase food for households with children and young people residing in them.

Where possible, AFSS takes the opportunity to spend time with each client, further exploring their financial issues and looking at options for longer term solutions. For example, Coober Pedy also provides a financial counselling<sup>1</sup> service, which is made possible through funds provided by the Coober Pedy Multicultural Affairs Forum.

AFSS is only able to provide small levels of emergency relief to assist families make ends meet until their next payment comes in. For the period 2014-2015, a total of approximately 200 people in Coober Pedy and Port Augusta were provided with Emergency Relief support.

*1. Note that AFSS no longer receive funds to employ a Financial Counsellor in Coober Pedy*



## Strong Men, Strong Families (Port Augusta)

The Program provided an ongoing holistic and relaxed learning environment for Aboriginal men of various ages to participate and contribute their experiences, mostly at our Merrill Street Programs' House.

Programs centred on positive parenting, communication with children, anger management, roles and responsibilities of men within the family, finance and budgeting, service availability and improved communication with service agencies to mention a few. The men involved have learned from the experience of the program and can understand the importance of education and knowledge to be strong men and parents.

The younger men who continued throughout the program have strengthened their roles as parents and local community members by their actions of being positive and responsible.

Men's Program workshops to develop skills in leather work were very rewarding. The men were taught to make belts, bags and wallets and some purchased leather themselves and are now teaching their children and building a better, united family structure.

The combining of various age groups provided more open conversations and sharing of life experiences of good and bad issues between the men.

Friendships and cultural sharing expanded with the older Aboriginal men willing to speak about their different cultures and experiences from various tribal backgrounds.

The Men's Program also highlighted the effects of family violence and the overuse of drugs and alcohol that destroys families and ruins relationships. This part of the program brought a more sombre feeling within the group of men and some struggled with accepting responsibility and willingness to change. However, during the course of the Program the men were taught to understand the variety of controlling behaviours that are commonly

enacted and the impact that violent and abusive behaviour has on all members of the family. Anger management techniques, self awareness and recognising one's own responsibility to respect others were introduced during these sessions.

Overall, the enthusiasm displayed by the participants and their continued attendance through the highs and lows of the Program, and the positive feedback, indicated the success and popularity of the Strong Men, Strong Families program.

## Safe Pathways

AFSS Safe Pathways (Cooper Pedy) program continued to provide a focus on the provision of community education initiatives around family violence. AFSS actively participates with other local service providers in Cooper Pedy to run a number of ongoing groups including a Women's Group, an Active Girls' and Boys' Group, a Playgroup and a monthly Oodnadatta Women's Group where AFSS staff travel to Oodnadatta to spend a day with the community. AFSS has established pathways with the Courts Administration Authority and now receives referrals to support men who may be engaged in family violence. AFSS also partners with Umoona Tjutagku Health in supporting the men's program to address health and wellbeing issues.

A partnership with the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement has enabled a number of AFSS clients to access legal advice in relation to civil and criminal matters. AFSS staff provided one-on-one support to a number of clients who are involved in family violence. Safe Pathways also co-facilitated a community Family Day BBQ, Reconciliation Week, and White Ribbon Day to help contribute to community safety and wellbeing.

## Integrated Youth Housing (Service to Youth Council)

AFSS, through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Service to Youth Council, provides case work support to up to four young Aboriginal people who are exiting juvenile detention in South Australia. Four independent living units in Port Augusta are made available to these young people and AFSS works closely with SYC in terms of identifying and supporting tenants for this program.

AFSS' role is to assist young people to set themselves up in accommodation, which includes buying a houseful of new furniture and appliances, which they take with them when they move on. Once the young people are set up, AFSS will provide case work services for up to 12 months to assist the young person in terms of day-to-day support, referrals and advocacy.

## Coober Pedy Youth Support

The purpose of the program is to mentor young people to help them to set goals and strengthen protective factors by reconnecting participants with ongoing community activities.

The focus is to assist youth to engage in constructive activities through a mentoring model to minimise the risk of them engaging with the youth justice system. The mentors support and help to empower youth, ensuring there are referral processes for them to access relevant services.

The program provides opportunities for young people to develop confidence and capacity to increase their sense of wellbeing. The program engaged 24 youth in the 2014-2015 period, mainly through a football program and a bike repair program.

Recruiting mentors has proved to be challenging; nonetheless the partnerships with other agencies has continued to grow. These include District Council of Coober Pedy, Youth Justice, Remote School Attendance Strategy, Coober Pedy Area School and the Stride Foundation.

## Staff Training and Development

It has been an extremely busy year for the AFSS Training Facilitator. Significant training was undertaken during the 2014-2015 period across all program areas.

General training delivered to AFSS staff has included Child Safe Environments, Infant Safe Care, Hazardous Manual Tasks, Self Care, Trauma Informed Practice and a number of AFSS-specific induction packages.

A new induction package that reflects the new policy and procedures was also developed and has been delivered to all existing Residential Services Staff.

In addition, the Training Facilitator was the driving force behind the following trainings:

### Maybo

The Maybo Safer PI Assault Avoidance and Disengagement training required significant efforts. As nationally accredited training, the process is much more demanding and requires a solid commitment from all participants including annual refreshers and reaccreditation. Reaccreditation for our four Maybo

*Right: A Statewide Family Based Foster Care Workshop was held at the Arid Lands Botanic Gardens in Port Augusta.*



Trainers has occurred during 2015 with annual refresher training being rolled out across all AFSS Residential Services.

### Residential Services Policy and Procedures

The new Residential Services Policy and Procedures training has been undertaken across all sites. This training provides consistency in standards and guidelines for all our Residential Services. The development has been a collaborative approach and was recently recognised by the Guardian of the Office of Children and Young People for ensuring the voice of young people is at the heart of the work.

### Australian Childhood Foundation Trauma and Young People

This intensive four-day training program provided to residential care staff of AFSS addressed some core aspects of working in the out of home care sector.

Topics covered included:

- Child development
- Impacts of abuse-related trauma
- Intergenerational trauma experienced within some Aboriginal communities
- Vicarious trauma
- Reflective practice
- Supervisor and leadership training.

### Medication Training

The Medication Management Course covered our legislative requirements regarding medication administration in our residential services. Participants were provided with a good understanding of the importance of correct administration and recording of medications for our clients. Additional training and documentation is currently being developed, which will be provided to workers across our Residential Services later this year.



Above: Staff take part in one of the sessions at the Family Based Foster Care Workshop.

## Solution Based Casework (SBC)

Nearly 100% of our workers across the organisation in Stronger Families and Family Based Out of Home Care have been trained in SBC. The next rollout of training will be provided to our Residential Services staff who will undertake a condensed version of the training.

Our two AFSS Trainers, Wendy Wicks and Tania Elliott were certified as SBC Trainers in June this year. Congratulations Wendy and Tania.

In June 2015, 45 staff gathered for a two-day intensive workshop on SBC in Adelaide, providing additional resources and learning materials to assist with the implementation of SBC as a practice model across all AFSS programs.

## Seasons for Healing

The AFSS Training Facilitator is now also one step away from being able to teach others to deliver the Seasons for Healing Grief and Loss Education Program. The Program is a significant partnership with Good Grief and the Healing Foundation. It builds upon the mainstream grief and counselling education program, with a particular focus on Aboriginal people and the extensive and ongoing grief and loss many Aboriginal people experience.

## AFSS communications

The employment of a professional Communications Officer has allowed AFSS to focus on our communications to staff, foster carers, funding bodies and the wider community.

A rebranding process has taken place, to reflect the professionalism of AFSS as the peak body for Aboriginal child care in South Australia.

As well as rebranding our publications, display materials and creating new AFSS pull-up banners, we have been pleased to provide our carers and community with a new professional, easy to navigate website. If you haven't already visited, log in to [www.afss.com.au](http://www.afss.com.au) and take a tour.

The AFSS Newsletter has also received a makeover, and you are invited to contact AFSS Head Office if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

To progress our strategy to attract foster carers, the Communications Officer has worked closely with all regions to develop and implement a foster carer recruitment marketing plan, which will be implemented in the new financial year.

A new slogan "Strong children, strong community, stand with us – become a carer", will feature on all relevant promotional and advertising materials.

## Call waiting system

If you call any of our offices, you may hear the messages on our new call waiting system, once again designed to attract new carers, as well as provide some general information about AFSS.

In addition, all internal forms for AFSS programs are being redesigned for ease of use, and to provide consistency across the organisation.

*Warren Guppy  
Senior Manager  
Regional Services*



**Strong  
children,  
strong  
community**



Aboriginal Family Support Services is urgently seeking foster carers to provide a safe and caring environment in which a child can learn, grow and reach their full potential.

*Finding out more is easy!*

Contact AFSS Ceduna office on **8625 3466**

or visit **[www.afss.com.au](http://www.afss.com.au)**

**Stand with us – become a carer**

## Therapeutic Services

It has been an exciting year for AFSS Therapeutic Services, with the implementation of the Solution Based Case Work model within Stronger Families, which standardises work practice, and the development and extending of the Cultural Consultancy Program in meeting the needs of Aboriginal families and children who have come into contact with Child Protection Services.

### Stronger Families

AFSS' Stronger Families provides services to Aboriginal families who are in contact with Child Protection services. The Program includes Family Preservation, Reunification and Targeted Intervention Services, working to keep children within the family home, or kinship group.

The AFSS Stronger Families program is part of the statewide government funded Family Support Services Program established in 2009. Stronger Families provides services in Ceduna, Coober Pedy, Port Lincoln, Port Augusta, the Riverland and the Adelaide metropolitan area, to a diverse range of Aboriginal communities. Families engage on a voluntary basis to work with AFSS after they are referred by Families SA when child protection concerns have been raised. The Stronger Families program is based on strong beliefs in the importance of keeping children safely with their families and communities, that people have the capacity to change their lives for the better, and that they can come up with their own solutions.

The introduction of the Solution Based Casework (SBC) model provides a structure that guides the practice of Case Managers and workers within AFSS and is in line with the standardising of work practices across the state



*Above: The Community Wellbeing teams undertook a range of fun activities for Aboriginal families and children.*

in government and non-government agencies who work with children. The model was developed to improve service delivery and to work in partnership with families, taking into account the family development model and strengths-based problem solving, reducing the likelihood of families re-entering the child protection system.

The implementation of SBC is now being rolled out across all AFSS sites. There are currently two AFSS certified trainers who are heavily involved in staff training in the implementation process.

Senior Management thanks Tania Elliott and Wendy Wicks for their hard work in the training and implementation of Solution Based Case Work across the state.

## Stronger Families – Regional Ceduna

Ceduna Stronger Families have had two successful reunification cases in the last two years, involving two families and six children.

Case workers were able to work consistently, and made a strong commitment as the families worked in partnership with AFSS staff in having their children returned to their care.

One young eight-year-old boy was reunified to his grandmother and community, after having several placement breakdowns. AFSS worked with housing and the community, in obtaining permanent accommodation and furnishing. The little boy is currently doing very well and is happy in family and community.



*Above: The Community Wellbeing teams undertook a range of fun activities for Aboriginal families and children.*

A family of five children was successfully reunified after the mother turned her life around; the case workers commitment was over four years.

Ceduna has been very good at celebrating our achievements with the families, and has had fun with the families, taking photo shoots. These pictures sit proudly on the families' walls.

Ceduna office also closed several Targeted Intervention referrals given the family's successful completion of meeting their goals in keeping their children safe.

Ceduna staff travel once a week to Yalata and Koonibba communities, to work with clients.

The Stronger Families team in Ceduna is a very committed, engaging and hard working group, who have been around for a while. This, coupled with good communication skills and an understanding of peoples' hardship, contributes to the successes we have achieved.

The team also has a very good, open and honest relationship with Families SA, which has contributed to the success of the last year.

### Riverland

Stronger Families, Riverland has progressed during the 2014-2015 period, as two permanent full-time staff are now employed. Clients/families

have engaged with new staff and partnerships have been formed, collaborative working relationships now exist with Families SA staff and regular Partnerships meetings occur. Professional relationships have also been formed with other agencies through networking and advocacy.

Staff attended SBC training and are starting to implement this with clients. Staff have also updated Child Safe Environments and attended workshops in Post Separation/Family Law (Relationships Australia), and "Crossing the River" & "Pathways to Care" Suicide Bereavement (Standby SA Country South).

AFSS staff are of the opinion that some of the work done over the past months has been about "foundation laying". Developing and/or updating our knowledge and skills, establishing links to community and building trust with clients are all essential if Stronger Families Riverland is to continue to positively support clients.

### Port Lincoln

The Staff in Port Lincoln have had a busy year working with 14 families during this period, which consisted of:

- Targeted Intervention x 8 families
- Family Preservation x 4 families
- Reunification x 2 families.

AFSS staff ran the Circle of Security course; five of our clients have completed the course.

AFSS staff also ran the Cooking in the home six-week program, which shows families how to produce affordable, nutritious meals. Six families have participated and completed the program.

AFSS Port Lincoln has also been involved in the SBC training and have been proactive in starting case consultations.

Staff have a good working relationship with other agencies in Port Lincoln and work closely with Families SA, Housing SA, schools, youth services, the Salvation Army, women's shelter (Yarredi) and the Bargain Centre – which has donated furniture to clients – CentaCare and Uniting Care Wesley.

AFSS Port Lincoln has also been involved in community events, including NAIDOC Week, partnership meetings, and the Family Safety Framework meetings.

### Cooper Pedy

Staff within Stronger Families, Cooper Pedy, have highlighted that the number of barriers we face as an agency has made our work particularly challenging. However, through an amazing turn of events a shift within the Cooper Pedy community by one of the major agencies, has facilitated change for the better, with the establishment of an interagency meeting.

Every second Friday agencies come together as a group and discuss community concerns and share information about upcoming events. Agencies are building a rapport with each other in providing better services to the Aboriginal community. It has been a slow process, but meets a greater need for this community to come together and start to build and grow, both as a community and for the community.

Since the interagency meetings have begun staff have observed some of our clients attending other agency workshops and info sessions to their benefit, for example, doing activities which are therapeutic and take them away from being lonely or depressed, or thinking about drinking or taking drugs. Other agencies have begun to formalise programs to work with their clients.

The location of Cooper Pedy is either too far out of the range of Port Augusta or does not fit the criteria when servicing the APY lands. Therefore the local community misses out. The interagency meetings have been successful in bringing community together, and providing our clients with a better range of services. We would like to see this community grow and families thrive.



Above: Charles Jackson, from AFSS' Port Augusta office, cooks Kangaroo tails at a barbecue to celebrate NAIDOC Week.

## Port Augusta

Port Augusta has achieved full staffing from December 2014. We are now able to carry a reasonable case load and deliver quality service to our clients.

Port Augusta staff feel fortunate that there have been no staffing changes and that they are all navigating through the SBC model as a team.

Getting a people mover has been a big help, especially in terms of running programs.

## Cross Roads, metropolitan Adelaide

A restructure occurred at Cross Roads in February 2015 due to the implementation of the Solution Based Case Work model, with the introduction of a Senior Quality and Accountability Officer, Case Manager, and staff all full time. The restructure design provides a better service to families in ensuring families have continuity of service and support. Staff at Crossroads are dedicated and passionate as change agents in ensuring children have a better chance of returning to, or remaining with their families, through Family Preservation and Reunification.

Over the past 12 months, partnership meetings with Families SA have resumed, after AFSS had some difficulties engaging due to Families SA's redesign and staffing issues. Partnership meetings are an essential component in the communication and referral process.

## Cultural Consultancy program

AFSS is the only active gazetted Agency in South Australia. In 2003, AFSS identified the need to have an independent senior Aboriginal worker to provide advice to the Courts and attend Family Care meetings, and appointed a Cultural Consultant in August 2004 to fill this role. Prior to this date, this role was undertaken by staff within the Alternative Care program.

From 2004 - June 2015 the program has consisted of one Cultural Consultant across South Australia. The Cultural Consultant provides written Cultural responses to all Families SA Care and Protection applications before the Youth Court of South Australia; they also attend all Family Care meetings as a Cultural Representative within South Australia regarding Aboriginal children who have come to the attention of the Child Protection Services, South Australia.

Recent recognition by the funding body regarding to the large volume of court responses and requirements of attendance at Family Care meetings allowed for an increase in funding.

In improving our capacity to represent and respond to Court requests for responses and representation at Family Care Meetings, AFSS has now created two new positions within the program, consisting of a Coordinator, Cultural Consultancy Program and an additional Cultural Consultant in the new Financial Year. A Cultural Consultant will be positioned within the Port Augusta region, servicing the regional areas of South Australia and within Metropolitan Adelaide, servicing the Metropolitan area.

The Program is enhanced through relationships between the Care and Protection Unit, Youth

Court of South Australia, Families SA's Cultural Consultants and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Alternative Care service providers.

## Data

From 30 June 2014 - 30 June 2015, the Cultural Consultancy program responded to 187 Care and Protection applications and attended 140 Family Care meetings involving a total of 612 Aboriginal children.

*Tracy Everingham  
Senior Manager  
Therapeutic Services*

# Corporate Services

Corporate Services incorporates the following areas:

- Administrative Support
- Human Resources
- Accounts Payable/Receivable
- Payroll
- Information Technology (IT)
- Finance and Reporting
- Records Management
- Resources.

The Corporate Services team is a small and diverse group providing a wide range of administrative support.

A major exercise during the year was the upgrade of air conditioning systems at our Waymouth Street premises. The upgrade was well overdue as the systems were old, using less environmentally-friendly gas and were inefficient and ineffective. The four-week project was timed to occur in April once the summer heat had passed, little knowing that the first day of work was the first day of South Australia's bitterly cold winter weather. However, the project was completed and should see a reduction in operating and maintenance costs.

Another activity successfully completed during the year was the renewal of our Certificate level quality accreditation under the Australian Service Excellence Standards, which expired in March. Significant groundwork was undertaken across the organisation in the 10 months leading up to our review by an external assessor. We were thrilled to achieve a perfect score of 100% from the assessor which saw our accreditation endorsed for a further three years.

Negotiations on the renewal of AFSS' Enterprise Agreement continued during the year and the final draft was accepted by majority vote of staff in June 2015. The draft was then submitted to the Fair Work Commission and was ratified by them in July. Thanks to all the staff, the Australian Services Union and Senior Management for their participation and input to the process, with the agreement in place for three years.

It was also extremely pleasing to have all the members of our administration team complete accredited training during the year. Staff undertook a Certificate IV in either Business or Business/ Bookkeeping which enhanced their knowledge and gave them a broader understanding of business operations. It was a difficult exercise for some of the team who hadn't undertaken formal study for a very long time, but they persevered and all now have certificates to validate their effort and the increased knowledge they gained.

In the latter part of 2015, an exhaustive search for alternative office accommodation was undertaken in Coober Pedy. A suitable property was finally located that met our needs and negotiations were undertaken for the purchase, with settlement occurring in June 2015. This will provide a permanent base for our services in Coober Pedy and surrounding areas.

The above provides an overview of the major highlights during the year. A special thanks to the team which, although small, manages to provide a very wide range of support that often goes unseen.

*Peter Shattock  
Senior Manager  
Corporate Services*

