



ABORIGINAL FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Newsletter



November - December - 2025

Engaging with the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

In November, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People SA visited our Galinyala – Port Lincoln AFSS office and region to engage with local agencies, schools, and community services. The visit focused on discussing the key issues affecting young people and families, with an emphasis on strengthening collaboration, early intervention, and cultural connection within the community.

AFSS shared our commitment to focus on supporting families through an early intervention and preventative approach, ensuring that the needs of children and families are met before challenges become overwhelming. By working collaboratively with local services and community members, we aim to build a stronger, more resilient community where families are empowered to thrive.

The Commissioner's office expressed appreciation for



the dedication of our staff who continue to support children and families under challenging circumstances. Staff at AFSS welcomed the recent legislative updates, including the strengthened Aboriginal Child Placement Principles, which have paved the way for more culturally informed practices.

Discussions during the visit highlighted several opportunities for greater Aboriginal-led decision-making, Family Group Conferencing, and kinship-based care models. The Commissioner is eager to explore these avenues further and is keen to hear the voices of local elders and carers. A meeting will be convened early in 2026 to create an open dialogue, allowing community members to share their stories and experiences, and discuss the progress of initiatives in the area.

The Commissioner is also looking to hear directly from our children and young people, with a focus on their concerns and aspirations for a better future. This is a valuable opportunity for our community to have a say in the direction of future policies and programs.

If you wish to be part of this important conversation, please contact our office on (08)8683 1909 for more information or the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People's office direct on (08)8226 3353.

A message from the Chief Executive

As we move into the Christmas period, I want to acknowledge the commitment, professionalism and cultural integrity shown across all AFSS sites throughout 2025. Our teams have continued to provide steady, reliable and culturally grounded support for children, young people, carers and families in every region. The stories in this edition highlight the resilience of our workforce, the innovation occurring across programs, and the genuine connections being built with community.

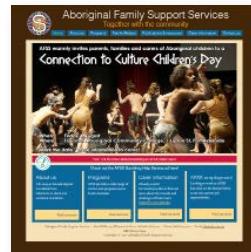


Christmas can be a demanding time for many families, and for our staff as well. It can stretch emotions, resources and energy - but it is also a moment to pause, reconnect and take pride in what we have achieved together. I am deeply grateful to every staff member, foster and kinship carer, volunteer, Board member and partner organisation who has contributed to culturally informed, community-led support this year. Your efforts have ensured children remain safe, families stay connected, and culture continues to guide practice.

Please take the time you need over the break to rest, reflect and recover. A healthy workforce is essential to our mission, and looking after yourself is part of looking after our families and communities.

I wish you all a safe, joyful and restorative Christmas and New Year. I look forward to returning in 2026 with the same focus on strong practice, cultural safety, Aboriginal leadership and better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

Sharron Williams
Chief Executive



www.afss.com.au



Merry CHRISTMAS

On behalf of the Board, Chief Executive and everybody here at Aboriginal Family Support Services, we would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year!

As the festive season approaches, we want to keep you informed about our service availability during the Christmas break. Residential houses and essential services will continue to be staffed during the holiday period, with staff on-call as needed.

However, for all other sites, the premises will be closed from Thursday 25 December 2025 and will reopen and normal services will resume again on Friday 2 January 2026.

We thank everyone for their hard work and dedication throughout the year and wish our staff, carers, families, and community a safe and happy festive season.

Aboriginal Family Violence Helpline	1800 800 098
Child Abuse Report Line	131 478
Crisis Care	131 611
Lifeline	131 114
SAPOL	131 444

Merry Christmas from Whyalla Office

As the holiday break is nearing, Whyalla AFSS office wanted to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We hope that everyone enjoys the break. We can't wait to see what 2026 brings us.





Aboriginal Family Support Services
Together with the community

Join us for our
**Annual General
Meeting**
2024-25

When

Thursday 11 February 2026

Time

Starts at 11.00am

Where

134 Waymouth Street, Adelaide
(Training Room - 1st Floor)

Contact

Please RSVP to AFSS' Executive Assistant
by Monday 2 February on:
(08) 8205 1523 / Kate.Rice@afss.com.au

A light lunch will be provided



Beeswax Wraps Project – A Creative and Cultural Gift for Our Carers

This Christmas, our Foster Care Metro and Kinship Care Teams came together to create a thoughtful and sustainable gift for our carers: handmade reusable beeswax wraps.

The idea began when Ruby Winnen, Administrative Assessment Officer (Foster Care Services & Kinship Care), came across similar wraps online. Inspired by their practicality, sustainability, and the personal touch of a handmade gift, Ruby shared the concept with the team during discussions for Carers Week. From there, the project quickly took shape with support from Cultural Practitioner Michael Akselsen, Kinship Practitioner Deborah Irvine and Matching and Placement Officer Sharon Crawley .

Using cotton fabric infused with beeswax, jojoba oil and damar resin, the teams created a practical and environmentally friendly alternative to single use plastics. The wraps are not only functional but also rich in cultural meaning and community connection.



The fabrics feature Aboriginal artworks by artists from across Australia, including:

- Ruth Nungarrayi Spencer – Goanna Dreaming (Wardapi Jukurrrpa)
- Sharlene Nakamarra Nelson
- Adrianna Nangala Egan
- Alicka Napanangka Brown – Bush Potato Dreaming (Yarla Jukurrrpa)

Each artwork carries deep stories, cultural significance, and strong links to Country - making every wrap unique.

Carers received their wraps along with simple care instructions on moulding, washing and refreshing them, ensuring they can be used again and again.

This project is a beautiful example of creativity, teamwork, cultural appreciation and sustainable practice.

Thank you to Ruby for sparking the idea, and to our Foster Care Metro and Kinship Teams for bringing it to life with enthusiasm and heart.

A stunning new artwork at our new Kilkenny Office!

A vibrant new artwork now welcomes staff, families and visitors into our Kilkenny office - an inspiring piece created during last years Connection to Culture - Children's Day celebrations.

This artwork pays tribute to the late Barbara Falla, whose tireless commitment brought Children's Day events to life year after year. Her leadership, creativity and deep care for Aboriginal families have shaped countless celebrations across AFSS.

By displaying the artwork at Kilkenny, we honour both the voices of our young people and Barbara's legacy.



AGL Spreads Christmas Cheer for Children in Care

AFSS extends our thanks to AGL for their generous donation of Christmas gifts for children in our care. AGL went above and beyond, helping create excitement, smiles and a sense of celebration for young people who may find this time of year challenging.

We appreciate their generosity, community spirit and ongoing commitment to supporting children and families.

Christmas Support for Families at 4 Ann Street

The elves have certainly been busy at 4 Ann Street, bringing the true spirit of Christmas. Thanks to the incredible generosity of Back Packs for Kids and Sister Janet's Day Centre, our space has been filled with hampers, food supplies and beautifully chosen gifts.

These donations have made a real difference, ensuring families are supported throughout the Christmas period. From essential food items to thoughtful presents that bring smiles to young faces, each hamper reflects care, kindness and community connection.

At a time of year that can be challenging for many, this support reminds us of the power of compassion and collaboration. We are deeply grateful to our supporters for helping ensure no family feels forgotten this Christmas - creating moments of joy, relief and hope.





National Foster & Kinship Care Conference 2025 – Sydney

AFSS was proud to attend the 2025 National Foster & Kinship Care Conference, held in Sydney from 28–30 November, alongside 16 Foster and Kinship carers and four AFSS staff members. This year's theme, Empowering Carers to Transform Lives, reflected the vital role carers play in providing safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children and young people.

The three-day conference brought together carers, practitioners, and sector leaders from across Australia to share knowledge, lived experience, and best practice. The program featured keynote presentations, workshops, and breakout sessions focused on trauma-informed care, supporting children and young people with complex needs, carer wellbeing, and strengthening placement stability through strong relationships.

AFSS representatives attended the opening address by Minister Katrine Hilliard, who also took time to meet with carers, reinforcing the importance of recognising their contribution and supporting collaboration across government and community sectors.

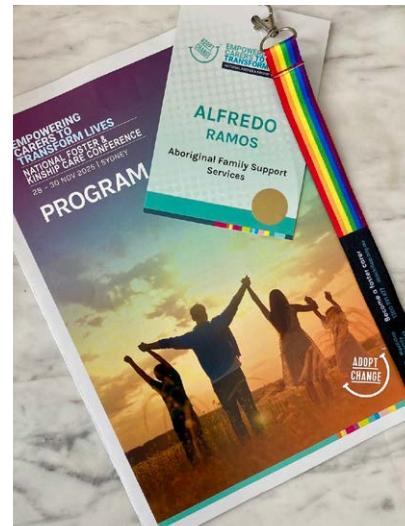
For many, a highlight was the sessions delivered by Sarah Naish, whose trauma-informed insights strongly resonated with carers and staff. Her work emphasised understanding behaviour through a trauma lens and responding with empathy, consistency, and connection. One message captured the spirit of the conference:

“Children who have experienced trauma don’t need perfection - they need connection, consistency, and compassion.”

The conference also provided opportunities for connection and reflection, with carers networking with peers from across the country and sharing experiences. A highlight was the Gala Dinner on Friday night, celebrating carers and their collective commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people.

AFSS sincerely thanks Rachael Dodd, Megan Baverstock, and Nishani Seneviratne for their support across the four days, ensuring carers were well supported and able to fully engage.

Events such as this conference are invaluable in strengthening skills, building confidence, and reaffirming the important role carers play every day. AFSS remains committed to supporting carers through development, connection, and recognition, as together we continue to empower carers and transform lives.



Community Safety & Wellbeing - Program Updates - Metro

Good news stories

Hi everyone, I am very happy to say that 2025 has been a very successful year for our CS&W programs. AFSS Community Safety and Wellbeing – Metro recorded a high number of participants across all programs, with 51 participants receiving certificates in 2025. We also received strong feedback from participants who said they enjoyed the programs and learned valuable skills.

Community engagement and networking

As part of our community engagement, we have continued to work closely with local service providers and schools. In 2025 we engaged with:

- **Playford International College Nunga Day** celebrated culture, community and connection, and provided a great opportunity for networking with Northern Metro community members.
- **The Northern Nunga Network** hosted guest speakers and presentations from Nunkuwarrin Yunti, Uniting Communities and other service providers, who shared important information with attendees.
- **Elizabeth East Primary School** invited us to participate in their School Community Open Day, where we set up a stall with program flyers, merchandise and student activities. We have already been invited back next year to do it all again

Annette O'Loughlin
CS&W Education Team
Facilitator – Metro





Community Safety & Wellbeing

Galinyala (Port Lincoln)

This year, we've celebrated many success stories as families engaged with our suite of culturally safe, strengths-based programs. Participants have strengthened their confidence, built practical skills, and, in many cases, remained together through early intervention and prevention support - contributing to Closing the Gap outcomes in child safety, family wellbeing, and community resilience.

One participant in Shark Cage has been able to rebuild boundaries, communicate assertively, and regain access to her son - now spending three nights per week with him and working towards shared care. Across all programs, group settings have provided peer-to-peer support that boosts self-esteem, reduces isolation, and strengthens community connections.

We warmly acknowledge the support of community, Elders and our partners, including Family Legal Violence Services, West Coast Youth and Community Services, Yarredi Services and the Community Hub at Lincoln Gardens Primary School, whose collaboration has helped families thrive this year.

Term 1, 2026 program information can be found on our website. Please complete a referral form and contact the Port Lincoln office on (08) 8683 1909 or 0417 255 724.

Cultural Immersion - Surfing Lessons Connection to Water



Young People in Residential Services, Malaki, Michael, Gilbert and Alarni, together with Youth Support Workers Mollie, Sarah, Rachel and Phil, took part in surfing lessons as part of AFSS' Cultural Immersion program. They approached the experience with maturity and deep respect for the ocean - recognising both the joy of the water and the dangers that come with it.

The young people listened attentively to instructions, showed great awareness, and demonstrated a strong commitment to staying safe. Throughout the day they supported one another, learned new skills, and connected with Country and Water.

The beach was filled with smiles, laughter and excitement as they rode the waves. Their enthusiasm, resilience and cultural pride shone through, making it a day of confidence-building, teamwork and genuine fun.

They were quick to ask, "When can we go again?" We closed the day with lunch at Port Elliot Bakery on the way home a perfect finish to an unforgettable experience.



Port Lincoln Hosts Annual Kids and Carers Christmas Party

Here are some photos from our annual Kids and Carers Christmas Party – a much-loved community tradition jointly hosted by DCP, Centacare, AFSS and KWY.

The event brought families, carers, staff and children together to celebrate the end of the year, enjoy some well-earned downtime, and share in the spirit of Christmas.



The day was packed with activities – a bouncy castle that never stopped bouncing, face-painting, rock-painting, games and plenty of outdoor fun. Everyone enjoyed a delicious BBQ lunch of sausages, steak and fresh salads, with families relaxing together in the warm weather.

And of course, no Christmas celebration is complete without a visit from Santa, who arrived with a sack full of lollies and fruit boxes and plenty of smiles for the children.

It was a beautiful sunny day, the atmosphere was relaxed and welcoming, and there was lots of laughter, colour and excitement from start to finish. A wonderful time was had by all who attended, and we look forward to doing it all again next year!



Susie Dixon Honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award at PAE Council

AFSS congratulates Board Member Susie Dixon, who was recently recognised with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Port Adelaide Enfield ceremony. The award acknowledges Susie's long-standing contribution to Aboriginal children, families and communities, and her ongoing work in community leadership and advocacy.

Susie has spent many years strengthening cultural understanding, improving outcomes for Aboriginal young people and supporting practical, community-led solutions across South Australia. As a member of the AFSS Board, she provides clear guidance, cultural knowledge and strategic direction that informs our work and supports organisational growth, stability and accountability.

We thank Susie for her continued commitment, her professionalism, and her willingness to share knowledge and experience, and we congratulate her on this well-deserved recognition.





Cultural Capability Training with Renee Andrew

Renee Andrew (née Coulthard) has joined AFSS as our Cultural Training Facilitator, delivering high-quality Cultural Capability Training for staff, carers and partners. A proud Adnyamathanha/Kuyani woman, Renee brings extensive experience in cultural capability education across South Australia and is deeply committed to strengthening understanding and respect for Aboriginal cultures.

AFSS Cultural Capability Training empowers participants to build meaningful cultural awareness by deepening knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures and connection to Country. The program explores the ongoing impacts of colonisation, supports reflection on cultural identity, and encourages culturally safe practice when engaging with Aboriginal children, families and communities. Renee facilitates this through the 'knowing, doing, being' model of cultural capability, creating a learning environment grounded in truth-telling, respect and relational understanding.

In addition to her role with AFSS, Renee also operates Arraru Yakka (Aboriginal Cultural Capability Training). If you visit her website, you'll also find a stunning selection of earrings featuring artwork designed by her son, Ajay.

To place an order, you can contact her on:



NEW DESIGN

ARRARU YAKKA
EARRINGS

STUDD EARRINGS
\$22

DROP EARRINGS
\$25

Postage \$5 (within Australia)

Artwork for Arraru Yakka is a very special piece as it was designed by the Director Renee Andrew nee Coulthard's eldest Son Ajay Nguyen.

Ajay is a proud Adnyamathanha, Kuyani man from far north of the Flinders Ranges.





**Thank you to all our generous
Christmas donors this year,
including Futures Adelaide Church,
the Department of Treasury and
Finance, AGL, and KPark for their
delicious Charlesworth Nuts.**



BECOME AN AFSS Foster Carer

Are you passionate about the future of Aboriginal children
and young people?

Can you help keep young people safe in culture and community?

Contact one of our team members in your area!

Adelaide - Assessment Team
✉ assessments@afss.com.au
☎ 8297 5708

Berri - Jamie Sutton
✉ jamie.sutton@afss.com.au
☎ 8582 3192

Ceduna - Michelle Naylor
✉ michelle.naylor@afss.com.au
☎ 8625 3466

Coober Pedy - Deb Merchant
✉ deborah.merchant@afss.com.au
☎ 8641 0907

Murray Bridge - Josephine Breede
✉ Josephine.Breede@afss.com.au
☎ 8532 1790

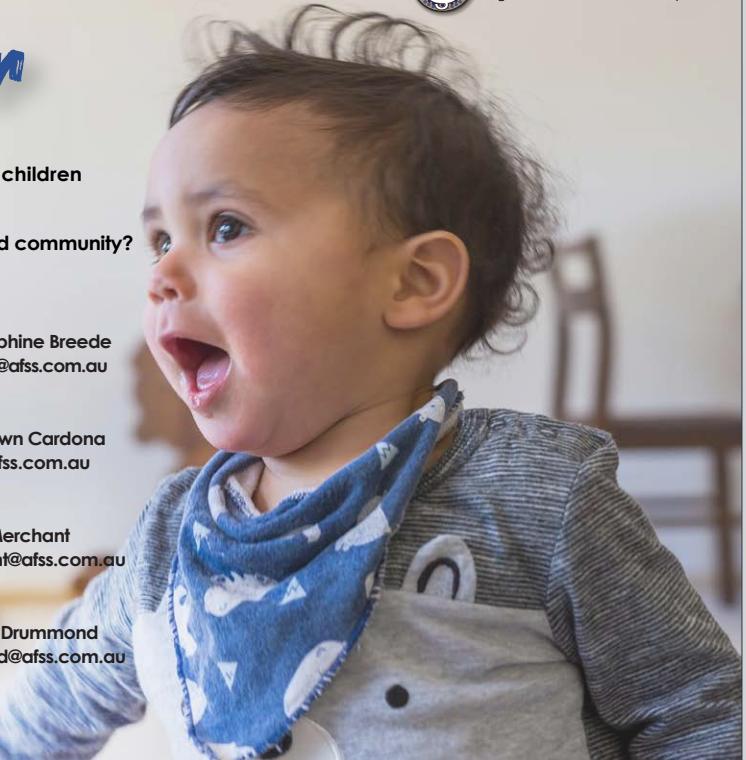
Mount Gambier - Dawn Cardona
✉ dawn.cardona@afss.com.au
☎ 0499 889 729

Port Augusta - Deb Merchant
✉ deborah.merchant@afss.com.au
☎ 8641 0907

Port Lincoln - Mandy Drummond
✉ mandy.drummond@afss.com.au
☎ 8683 1909



Aboriginal Family Support Services
Together with the community





Coober Pedy STAY Program & YOUTH SHED



Bikes Palya

We kicked off with another great Bikes Palya visit, with Brad and Matt repairing Youth Shed and community bikes. Thirty-two young people signed permission forms and took part, with repairs covering brakes, handlebars, chains, seats and plenty of punctures. With bikes back in action, new riders learned the basics while others practised tricks.

Holiday Fun – Water & Foam

School holiday activities included water fights and shaving-foam battles, supported by Dave Wood from Catacomb Church. The oval ended up looking like snow in Coober Pedy, and Dave even played mini-pool with the kids. We also hosted Minister Kyam Maher, discussing Youth Shed programs and local challenges.

Blue Light Disco

Coober Pedy Police ran a Halloween Blue Light Disco, with dressing up, dancing and games - teachers included.

Year 6 Graduation

AFSS was proud to attend the Year 6 Graduation, celebrating young people moving into high school.

Christmas Season

Santa was busy across the community, appearing at the Umoona Community Christmas Party and Coober Pedy Together at the town oval, arriving on a loader with Bluey and Bingo and plenty of presents.

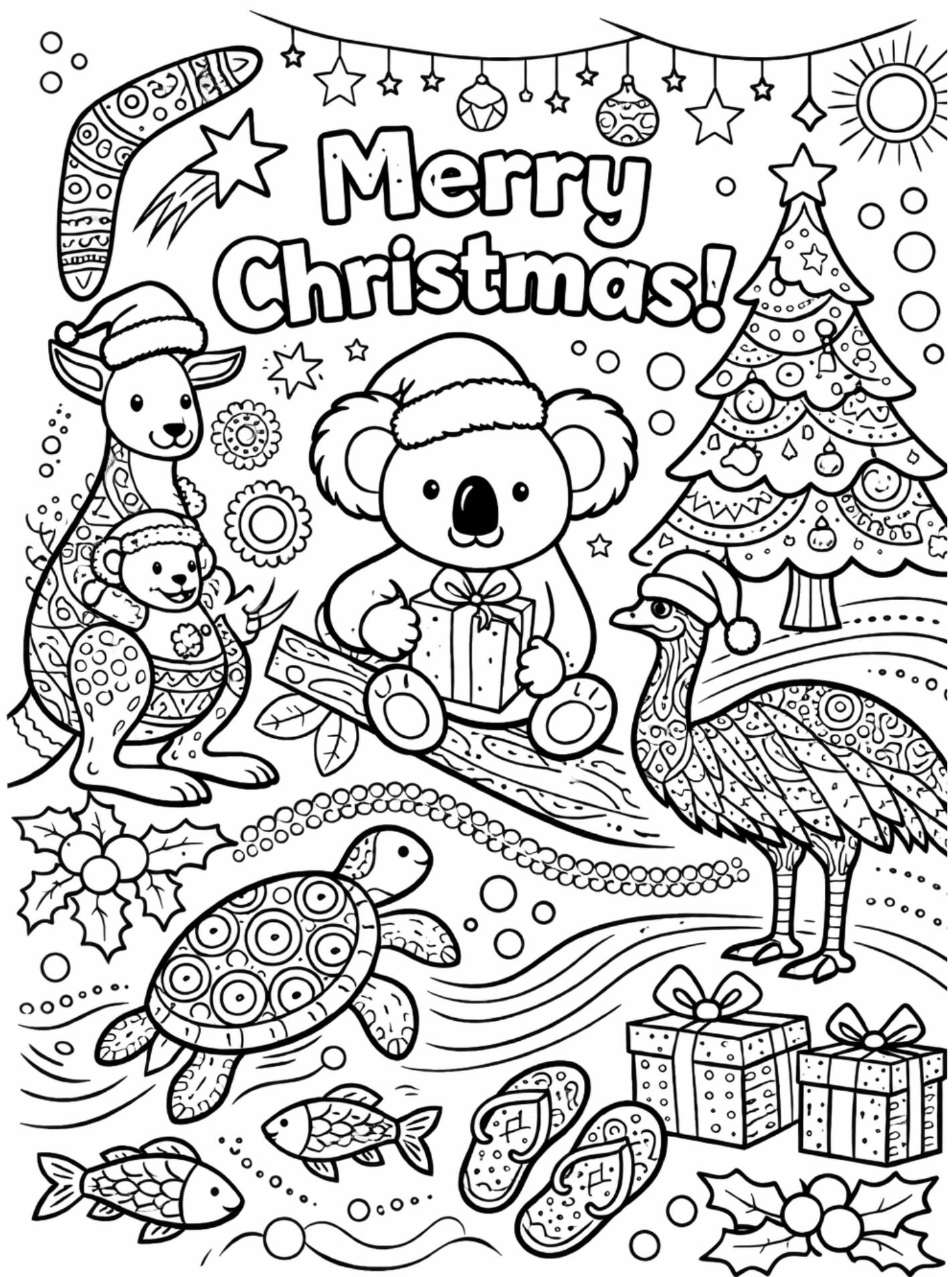
The Indigenous Marathon Foundation Christmas Colour Run brought Santa hats, colour powder and lots of laughs - even before the shaving cream came out. Other highlights included carols with Miss Faith, Uno games, and slime-making at the Youth Shed.



Thank you to our supporters:

Complete Personnel, RSAS, Catacomb Church, NIAA, CP Youth Shed & STAY (DHS), Coober Pedy Area School, District Council of Coober Pedy, Peak Iron Mine, Coober Pedy Police, BHP, Bikes SA, Coober Pedy Together, Indigenous Marathon Foundation and Umoona Community Council.

Merry Christmas!





Christmas Recipe: Festive Bush-Herb Roast Chicken with Lemon, Garlic & Veggies

Ingredients (Serves 6–8)

For the chicken:

1 large whole chicken (1.8–2.2kg)

2 tbsp olive oil or softened butter

1 lemon, halved

1 tbsp crushed garlic

1 tsp salt

1 tsp cracked pepper

1 tbsp dried bush herbs (or rosemary, thyme & sage mix)

1 tsp smoked paprika

For the tray veggies:

4–5 potatoes, cut into wedges

3 carrots, chopped

2 red onions, quartered

1–2 zucchinis, chopped

1 tbsp olive oil

Pinch of salt & pepper

Optional extras: cherry tomatoes, sweet potato, or Brussels sprouts.

Method

1. Preheat & prep

Preheat your oven to 200°C (fan-forced). Place the chicken in a large baking tray. Pat dry with paper towel so the skin crisps.



2. Flavour the chicken

Rub the chicken with olive oil/butter, crushed garlic, bush herbs, paprika, salt and pepper. Squeeze half a lemon over the top, then place both lemon halves inside the chicken cavity.

3. Add your veggies

Scatter potatoes, carrots, onion and zucchini around the chicken. Drizzle lightly with olive oil and season. The veggies will cook in the chicken juices and taste amazing.

4. Roast

Place the tray in the oven and cook for 1 hour 30 minutes (time varies with size). Halfway through, spoon pan juices over the chicken and turn the veggies.

5. Check for doneness

Pierce near the leg—if juices run clear, it's ready. Rest for 10–15 minutes before carving so the meat stays juicy.

6. Serve & enjoy

Carve into generous slices and serve with roast veggies, fresh salad, or warm bread rolls.

Where to find us

Adelaide
134 Waymouth Street
Adelaide SA 5000
08205 1500

Berri
23 Denny Street
Berri SA 5343
08582 3192

Ceduna
28 Poynton Street
Ceduna SA 5690
08625 3466

Coober Pedy
Lot 1991 Aylett Street
Coober Pedy SA 5723
08672 3066

Mount Gambier
20 Elizabeth Street
Mount Gambier SA 5290
08723 6110

Murray Bridge
67 Adelaide Road
Murray Bridge SA 5253
08532 1790

Noarlunga Centre
1A Hannah Road
Noarlunga Centre SA 5168
08186 4000

Paralowie
254 Kings Road
Paralowie SA 5108
08281 5440

Port Augusta
8-14 Victoria Parade
Port Augusta SA 5700
08641 0907

Port Lincoln
21 Washington Street
Port Lincoln SA 5606
08683 1909

Port Pirie
23 Norman Street
Port Pirie SA 5540
08632 2227

Salisbury
4 Ann Street
Salisbury SA 5108
08182 6567

Kilkenny
5/10 - 14 Regency Road
Kilkenny SA 5009
08297 5708

Whyalla
19B Darling Terrace
Whyalla SA 5600
08644 0116

Wingfield
1 Corner South & Grand
Junction Road
Wingfield SA 5013
08281 3440



Elder Care Services

Are you receiving all the care and support services you need?

AFSS Elder Care Support program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50 to understand the aged care system, including identifying the level of care and services required.

Our **Elder Care Support Connector** can come and meet you - at your home or wherever you feel safe and comfortable - with your family or carer if you prefer - there's no cost to you or your family. We can even come and pick you up for our yarns.

When you meet with our **Elder Care Support Connector**, you can yarn about what you'd like assistance with in your home. It might include cleaning, shopping, cooking, personal care or help with other tasks



Our **Elder Care Support Connector** then makes sure you are connected to the aged care services and support you need - and if your circumstances change and you need some additional or different assistance, they will also arrange it - or if you aren't satisfied with the provider of the service, the Elder Care Support Connector can help get things back on track.

Contact our team to find out more

- 📍 1 Corner South & Grand Junction Road Wingfield SA 5013
- ✉️ ElderCare@afss.com.au
- 📞 8281 3440

