Caring for Country People

2012/2013 Annual Report
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Vision
A compassionate, respectful and just community in which all people participate and flourish.

Values
Based on Christian ethics, our values are:
- Respect and compassion for all people
- Belief in the innate worth of all people
- Justice, particularly for those less advantaged in our society
- Being of service to others
- Restlessness for what could be
- Non-violence and peace

2012-13 at a Glance
- Number of Staff 308
- Number of Volunteers 138
- Total Budget $20.5 million
- Number of Contracts 57
- Foster Care Households 70
- Housing Association Houses 69 plus 37 tenancy managed properties
- Number of Emergency Relief services provided 3864
- Number of Financial Counselling services provided 657
- Number of No Interest Loans 317
- Number of Microcredit Loans 891
- Number of Homeless Persons assisted 1570
- Number of Homeless Youth assisted 520
- Number of Women and Children assisted through Domestic Violence Services 700

Acknowledgement
UnitingCare Wesley Country SA would like to acknowledge and thank all its partners and donors for their ongoing contributions and support to the organisation.
It is with pleasure that we present the 2012-13 Annual Report of UnitingCare Wesley Country SA as the organisation celebrates its 100 years of service to the community. UCWCSA began as the Port Pirie Central Methodist Mission in 1912 based at the Methodist Church in Port Pirie and was run by the Minister of the day, J.C. Hughes with the help of a Sister of the People. Today UCWCSA is an organisation of 308 staff, 138 volunteers, over 50 government contracts and 12 offices across Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Coober Pedy, Port Pirie, Peterborough, Clare and Kadina. UnitingCare Wesley Country SA is proud of the work we do and the positive difference we make across a vast geographical area of rural and regional SA.

Celebrations were held in each site across UCWCSA’s geographical footprint to mark the organisation’s milestone of 100 years of service. These celebrations culminated in the official celebration at All Staff Day with Rev. John Mauviel, the Superintendent in charge when the organisation became an incorporated body in 1976, cutting a celebratory cake and sealing a time capsule.

2012-13 has seen the Board continue to develop in its leadership and governance. A Board retreat held in March, led by an experienced governance facilitator and including organisational senior management, successfully undertook the task of developing the organisation’s Strategic Plan for 2013-18. This plan ensures that UCWCSA will continue to provide quality services that are relevant and outcome driven for the people we serve and put the organisation in a strong position to meet the increasing and ever changing demands within our communities into the future.

During 2012-13 the UCWCSA Board elected a new Chairperson in Liz Malcolm who comes to the position with extensive senior management experience within State Government, particularly in the area of Housing and has been a member of the UCWSA Board since 2006. Liz replaced Jenny Hughes the longest serving Board Member of UCWCSA. The Board of UCWCSA would like to particularly acknowledge and thank Jenny for her commitment and contribution as chair and for providing insightful and supportive leadership during her term.

A number of measures were undertaken by UCWCSA during 2012-13 to ensure the ongoing provision of quality services including the development of the organisations Business Continuity Plan 2012-17, a new Disability Action Plan 2013-15 and a new Information, Communication and Technology Plan 2013-18. The organisation was also successful in retaining its Disability Service Standards Certificate with 100% conformity and undertook a Client Survey with the most outstanding result being that 99% of respondents said ‘that they would recommend UCWCSA services to other people’.

UCWCSA continued throughout the year to advocate for justice and fairness in our communities. The organisation partnered with other agencies both government and non-government to lobby for change, participated in research and public campaigns, contributed to national activities through UnitingCare Australia and shared our knowledge and expertise at conferences and other public forums.

During 2012-13 UCWCSA made a pledge to put children at the centre of everything the organisation does by undertaking the Child Aware Approach initiative which was funded through FACHSIA. This initiative aimed to develop a whole of agency approach to being ‘child aware’, thus improving the quality of services to children and families with children across the organisation’s services. The project developed and delivered a training package to staff across the agency, developed CAA Champions to champion the cause across the agency and also developed resources that can be used throughout the agency into the future.

No Annual Report would be complete without recognising and commending all staff and volunteers of UCWCSA for their dedication and commitment on a daily basis to advancing the organisation’s mission. We thank them all for their enormous commitment and many achievements.

A big thank you must also go to the Board of UCWCSA for their untiring commitment, generosity and support to the organisation. The Board is made up of very skilled individuals who are highly committed to advancing the work of the organisation and its strategic directions.

As UCWCSA continues its journey under the guise of a new Strategic Plan we feel confident that the organisation will continue to grow and develop as a provider of valuable services and advocacy to communities in Country SA.
To assist people to overcome barriers to living life to the full

At different times of life we are faced with different challenges. None of us know when ill health, unemployment, social/emotional difficulties or loss of family support may affect us. UCWCSA seek to be there for people facing tough life changes, seeking to ensure that even through these tough times people can remain active members of society and gain all the benefits that come from social and community participation.

- The Child Aware Approach (CAA) was introduced to UCWCSA on July 1st 2012. This initiative has highlighted to all UCWCSA staff the needs of children and resulted in further developing their skills to ensure appropriate services are provided to all children who come into contact with the organisation. 16 CAA Champions were recruited and trained, a CAA training package was developed and 195 staff and 4 foster carers were trained. The CAA initiative culminated in a presentation at the National CAA Conference in Melbourne.

- The Yorke and Mid North Domestic Violence Service were successful in obtaining a UCWCSA Innovation Grant. This was used to purchase bikes and scooters for the women and children coming into the service which they could borrow. The aim of the initiative was to provide a cheap transport alternative and promote healthy lifestyles.

- 2012-13 has seen the development and completion of the new Port Pirie Men’s Shed Complex. This project which was funded through a Regional Development Australia Grant provides an amazing facility offering training and skill development opportunities, a gathering spot for males of all ages and a great community facility.

- UCWCSA has welcomed an experienced Drug and Alcohol worker to the Specialist Services Team alongside our Clinical Psychologist. Rosanna has been providing staff development in the area of responding to clients who are experiencing drug and alcohol issues as well as using her expertise in providing case support and direct services to clients.

- The Better Pathways Program has engaged with 103 school students over the past year that have a diagnosed disability and/or mental health condition. The work being done with the students focuses on their strengths and qualities resulting in increased levels of self esteem and confidence and improved personal and educational outcomes. Of the 103 students engaged in the program, 24 have undertaken work experience, 16 have gained employment, 2 have commenced a school based apprenticeship and 1 has been offered a traineeship.

- UCWCSA through its Foster Care Program is funded through Families SA to provide respite, emergency, short term and long term care to the Yorke, Mid North and Far North regions of SA. UCWCSA have recruited and licensed 13 new Foster Care households this financial year, provided 98 children per quarter with an emergency, short term or long term placement as well as provided 1417 nights of respite for the year.

**UCWCSA cannot thank our Foster Carers enough for opening their hearts and their homes to children and young people needing care!**
Goal 2

To build strong communities which are inclusive and which celebrate diversity

Tolerance and acceptance of difference and celebrating of these differences is part of our life in South Australia and something we are proud to support at UCWCSA. Our agency takes the opportunity to promote and celebrate, acceptance and respect of difference through all our programs and seeks to find ways to build bridges within the community that reinforce cultural and community diversity.

- The Port Pirie Men’s Shed has provided programs, activities and services to 16 male asylum seekers from the Port Augusta Accommodation Centre, overseen by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship. This opportunity is providing meaningful activities for the men to utilise their skills as well as positive social interaction resulting in improved psychological well being.

- The UCWCSA Indulkana Youth Shed provides a range of services to young people in the community after school hours. These activities include homework assistance, playing pool, listening to music, discos, a girl’s group and band practice. Between 40 and 50 young people between the ages of 5 and 20 visit the Youth Shed every day except Sundays when the shed is closed.

- The Low Income Support, Gambling Help Services and Financial Counselling Services worked in collaboration with Aboriginal Health to run successful NAIDOC Week celebrations. The celebrations which are open to all community members included a flag raising ceremony at the local Council Chambers followed by a barbeque of kangaroo meat, locally based music and traditional dancers.

- The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program in conjunction with the Disability Employment Services Program organised events during Mental Health Week and National Day for People with a Disability. These events, which were well attended, provided a great opportunity to raise awareness in the community of the challenges of living with a disability and mental illness as well as the services that can be of support.

UCWCSA wish to thank all their wonderful volunteers for the valuable contribution they make to the organisation and the people we serve.
Goal 3

To advance fairness and justice in our society

True community services are not just about a hand out but a hand up. It is about changing the way we as communities serve each other to ensure no one gets left behind. Advocacy and speaking out for justice is central to this process. As we learn more about the patterns of disadvantage and how these serve to exclude people economically and socially then speaking out to Government and communities about these issues is central to the work of UCWCSA.

• Youth Connections held a Youth Summit in Port Augusta in September which included representation from both local and state government as well as young people from across the region. The summit was successful in assisting the government agencies that were represented to better understand the needs of rural young people particularly those with complex needs.

• UCWCSA provide advocacy through their senior representation on several peak body groups. The organisation currently provides the Chairperson of the South Australian Financial Counsellors Association. SAFCA advocates for clients on many levels and often work in conjunction with other advocacy groups to raise awareness of issues such as hardship policies, access to legal services and financial counselling and unfair practices.

• UCWCSA also currently provides the Chairperson of the South Australian Emergency Relief Network which focuses on the high cost of energy and the impact this has on people on low incomes and accessing information to assist people in managing their energy bills.

• UCWCSA is an active member of the South Australian Council of Social Services Policy Council, Child and Families Welfare Association and a number of other peak bodies which give the organisation the opportunity to actively lobby around a range of issues.
Goal 4

To provide a positive environment that promotes the growth and development of our staff

Supporting, nurturing, enriching and challenging our staff is crucial to ensure they are fresh and ready on a daily basis to provide high quality services. Through our staff development programs and management systems we work to ensure a good balance of professional standards are maintained at all levels of UCWCSA without losing our sense of compassion and justice.

- UCWCSA’s commitment to the ongoing development of our staff has been enhanced with the appointment of a Learning and Development Coordinator. This role ensures that UCWCSA’s employees are challenged, engaged and remain at the forefront of service delivery.

- All UCWCSA staff enjoyed a professional development day which was facilitated by the Proteus Leadership Centre and focussed on workplace culture. The day considered such questions as what do we want our organisational culture to look like and what do we need to do to make sure we get there and stay there. The outcome of the day was a refresher on our organisational non negotiables which set the standards for UCWCSA staff behaviour – a great day enjoyed by all.

- UCWCSA held another successful All Staff Day with a highlight being the presentation from inspirational speaker Sam Cawthorne. Staff travelled into Port Pirie from all ends of the organisation’s geographical footprint for a day of inspiration, fun and great networking.

- Volunteers remain an intricate and enormously valuable part of the work done at UCWCSA. During 2012-13 UCWCSA utilised the services of 138 volunteers in a range of capacities including Goods at Gertrude, the Men’s Shed, within the Low Income Support and Financial Assistance Programs, office administration, as truck drivers and numerous other roles as required.

- In order to strengthen UCWCSA’s leadership base all UCWCSA Managers and Team Leaders have been given the opportunity to attend leadership training through the Proteus Launchpad and Impact Leadership courses.
Goal 5

To use resources in the most efficient and effective manner

Resources in the community services sector are scarce and vary on a yearly basis. UCWCSA continues to use resources wisely, minimising waste and maximising efficiencies through all aspects of our work always seeking to limit environmental impact and build sustainable community programs.

- The Port Augusta Domestic Violence and Youth Homelessness Service have contracted Wesley Country Housing to provide tenancy services for clients in crisis and transitional accommodation. This has successfully reduced role confusion for clients and assisted the programs to focus on targeted support.

- Information and Communication Technology has remained a work in progress for the organisation with the launch of UCWCSA’s Facebook page.

- UCWCSA has continued throughout the year to work towards improving its environmental footprint. Actions supporting this aim have included the development and distribution throughout the organisation of UCWCSA’s Greening Goals, the purchase of three more hybrid cars, the energy audit of Goods at Gertrude and subsequent selection of it as a Community Greening Hub.

- UCWCSA utilises its human resources in a way that promotes cross fertilisation of program objectives. Personnel from different programs work together to share responsibility in producing positive outcomes for clients. A good example of this is the work being done by the Disability Employment Service and the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program. Skills, knowledge and experiences are shared by each programs personnel to assist their clients to reach the best outcome possible.

- Wesley Country Housing has continued to grow and provide good quality, affordable housing and tenancy services across a wide geographical footprint. WCH currently has 69 properties and provides tenancy management to 57 properties including 15 Common Ground units.
**Goal 6**

*To strengthen our partnership with the wider community*

Partnerships across organisations and groups help provide more diverse, sustainable and viable community programs. Families and individuals appreciate services being available for the long-term and programs that are diverse and holistic. Creative partnership between organisations, makes for the development of such services. UCWCSA through its work in developing partnerships across the community services sector seeks to embrace partnerships with organisations to achieve these goals.

- The Ulysses Motor Cycle Club donated funds to UCWCSA and in conjunction with funds from Families SA allowed the UCWCSA Foster Care Program to take some foster children and their families on two special outings. A bus trip to Adelaide for a ‘Dolphin Tour’ and a bus trip to the Blyth Cinema to view Ice Age 4 were enjoyed by all who attended. The trip to Blyth included a homemade morning tea, a drink and popcorn pack and lunch at the Blyth Hotel. A big thank you goes to Ulysses for their kind donation as it helped to make some special memories for all the children involved.

- UCWCSA has committed to signing onto and supporting the Local Action Agreement developed by the Aboriginal Communities Engagement Group in Port Augusta which focuses on four areas including healthy homes, governance and leadership, safe communities and learning (across the spectrum of education). The agreement will now move into the next phase of implementation.

- The Yorke and Mid North Domestic Violence Service in collaboration with the Port Pirie Domestic Violence Action Group celebrated White Ribbon Day in Port Pirie in November. The event commenced with a march from Memorial Park to Foreshore Park, followed by a barbeque, guest speakers including White Ribbon Day Ambassadors and reading of the oath.

- The Yorke and Mid North Generic Homelessness and Domestic Violence Service and Youth Connections program participated in the Yorke Peninsula Youth Expo celebrating National Youth Week.