

ISSUE NO. 1

UNITING SA

WINTER 2017

# FLOURISH



## 12 ONE MUM'S JOURNEY FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HAPPINESS

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*“UnitingSA represents our work, not just in the Port but across South Australia.”*

CEO LIBBY CRAFT, 2017



## WELCOME

It was 1986 when I first came to work for this great organisation, which was then known as Port Adelaide Central Mission Inc.

I was a social worker fresh out of university and I was honoured to run the Youth Accommodation Program, working alongside young people to improve their quality of life.

At that time we had approximately 300 staff working across aged care and community services in the western suburbs. After a few years I took on new challenges, working for government and non-government organisations, but returned 10 years later.

By then we had grown to more than 400 staff and volunteers but were still focused in the Port Adelaide region, and in 2003 we changed our name to UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide.

As demand has continued to grow for our services, so have we, and we are now privileged to have more than 900 staff and almost 150 volunteers working alongside communities from as far north as Whyalla and south as Mount Gambier.

The heart of what we do has never changed but the areas in which we provide our services has, as we respond to community need.

Now we are at the start of an exciting new chapter in our organisation's history.

We are becoming UnitingSA.

In the coming months you will see new brochures, signage, uniforms and other changes as we roll out our new brand across our sites.

We are the same organisation with the same vision, but UnitingSA represents our work not just in the Port but across South Australia.

In this edition of Flourish you will hear from those people in the community whose lives we touch, and the staff and volunteers who enable us to achieve our vision.

Be it our aged care services, employment support, community mental health programs, emergency assistance, homelessness services or engagement programs for young people, we are committed to enriching people's lives and improving wellbeing.

No matter the location, we are united as one in our vision to create a compassionate, respectful and just community in which all people can participate and flourish.

At UnitingSA, together we can.

**Ms Libby Craft**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

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## UPCOMING DATES

### June

5 World Environment Day

12 Queen's Birthday

18–24 Refugee Week

### July

2–9 NAIDOC Week

8–23 School holidays

25 Free BBQ at the Family Centre

### August

9 World Indigenous People's Day

12 International Youth Day

19 World Humanitarian Day

## UNITING SA PROFILE



9,879

**LIVES TOUCHED**



923

**EMPLOYEES**



157

**VOLUNTEERS**



2,821

**PEOPLE CARED FOR ACROSS AGED CARE**



3,501

**OCCASIONS OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**



# EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM PROVIDES BRIGHTER FUTURES

**N**ajeeba Abdullahi knows how difficult it can be to find a job in Australia.

Since moving from Afghanistan to Adelaide in 2005, Najeeba has spent her days studying to give her the best chance of getting paid work.

She began by studying at the Adelaide Secondary School of English as a 16 year old, and then proceeded to work her way through a further four years of study to complete Year 12.

After school she obtained tertiary qualifications – a cabin crew course, another in hair and beauty, a Certificate 3 in Health Services Assistance and, finally, she obtained her enrolled nursing qualifications.

“After each course I would try for six months to get a job,” Najeeba explains.

“After that I would study something else to try to get another job.

“After studying enrolled nursing I spent a year applying for jobs in every city and I still couldn’t get work.”

Feeling low and unsure where to turn, Najeeba heard about our Building Family Opportunities (BFO) program, which helps long-term unemployed families secure work.

For 12 months, our BFO staff supported Najeeba to apply for jobs and when she was close to giving up, they encouraged her to keep her head high.

“I told them I was getting disappointed ... they said, ‘Don’t get disappointed, you will get a job’.

“They told me, ‘It takes time but don’t give up’.”

Najeeba’s persistence finally paid off this year when she secured a position as a Personal Care Assistant at our Hawksbury Gardens Aged Care home in Salisbury North.

“Firstly I didn’t believe it because I thought it was impossible because I had tried so many places,” she says.

“I have no words to use to say thank you ... the staff at Building Family Opportunities are like angels for me.”

BFO Case Management Coordinator Peter Wilkes was part of the team which helped Najeeba secure her first paid job.

“It was so great to see her finally get work and she is so grateful,” he says.

“She came out here after she found out she had the job and brought food and wanted to celebrate with us.”

Mr Wilkes says it is not uncommon for people who are well educated to still struggle to get employed because of a competitive job market.

One of the more recent challenges facing the region is the downturn in manufacturing and automotive jobs, which has led to the launch of BFO – Families in Transition (BFO-FIT).

BFO-FIT began this year and focuses on helping families in the north find employment following retrenchment.

“The department really liked the BFO model and decided to adapt the program to respond to the needs around the automotive industry,” Mr Wilkes says.

**For more information about Building Family Opportunities call 8259 2900.**

*“They told me,  
‘It takes time  
but don’t give up’.”*

NAJEEBA ABDULLAHI



## Harmony reflected through art

The theme of Harmony Day – ‘everyone belongs’ – was felt through and through at our Family Centre festivities on March 21.

People we support in the community united with our staff and volunteers to celebrate our cultural diversity at the special event, which centred on the unveiling of a new mural.

Our Chief Executive Officer Libby Craft unveiled the mural which consists of more than 150 wooden discs, painted brightly to represent what harmony means to each person involved.

Sav Riley, of our Communities for Children program, was the brains behind the project and says it came about after she spent many days looking out her window at a row of dying conifers.

“I looked out there and it looked so sad – I could see the kids in the playgroup and I thought, ‘There needs to be something else there to brighten it up,’” Sav explains.

“It started off as a dream and it has exceeded my expectations.”

Sav and Aboriginal Family Worker Ingrid O’Loughlin painted the tree’s branches and background, while more than 100 others painted the discs.

Among them were staff and volunteers from our Family Centre, members of the Taperoo Community Centre art class, representatives from our SRF program, Kalaya Children’s Centre and students in our Flexible Learning Options program.

“When the wall was finished I stood back and felt an overwhelming sense of achievement,” Sav says.

“It was amazing to see how working in partnership with other programs and the community resulted in a beautiful piece of artwork to be shared by all.”

Those involved in the project attended the Harmony Day celebrations to see their work unveiled, listen to music and indulge in food from a variety of cultures.

Plus, there is more to come.

Work is underway to create a sensory garden near the mural to enhance the experience of visitors to our Family Centre.

Stay tuned!



# EVERYONE IS WELCOME AT TAPEROO

There is a sign when you walk into Taperoo Community Centre that reads, 'Enter as strangers, leave as friends'.

Speak to anyone who attends classes there and they will tell you it's true.

Ask Dorothy Crofts and she'll take it one step further; she'll say 'friends' should be replaced with 'family'.

"I am happy, contented and I feel as though I belong for the first time in my life," the 72-year-old says.

"This has become my second home, my second family.

"The only time I won't be here is if I'm hospitalised or I'm sick in bed or I've left this earth.

"I'm on top of the world here."

Dorothy has endured a lot of trauma in her life, mainly at the hands of an abusive family.

The suffering left her depressed, anxious, lonely and timid.

Just over 12 months ago a community health worker suggested Dorothy attend a class at Taperoo Community Centre as a way of improving confidence and reducing social isolation.

She started with craft and has since been involved in many classes including computing, painting, meditation and personal development.

*"Coming to these classes has helped me to believe in myself and that I am capable of learning,"*

DOROTHY CROFTS

She has also recently started one of our literacy classes to improve her reading and writing.

"Coming to these classes has helped me to believe in myself and that I am capable of learning," she says.

"I feel as though I have something to look forward to – life has opened up for me.

"If this centre wasn't here it would break my heart."

Dorothy isn't the only one who has found a sense of belonging at the centre.

A diverse group of people travel from surrounding suburbs to take part in the vast array of classes on offer each week.

And there's always room for more.

Dorothy has a word of advice for anyone considering joining a class:

"Go for it – you won't be sorry. It will be the best move you have ever made."

Classes at Taperoo Community Centre, Yongala St, Taperoo, are 9am-5pm weekdays during the school term.

Phone 8248 2122 for details.



## Generous spirit shines through the darkness

**E**ven in her darkest hours, Jean Schroeder gives back to her community.

When two of her children died six weeks apart last year, Jean still volunteered to help people in need at our Family Centre in Port Adelaide.

She says the centre acted like an anchor, giving her a sense of purpose through what was - and still is - an unimaginably difficult time.

"It either makes you stronger or you pack up and go to bed and stay there," Jean says of coping with grief.

"You need to keep doing what you were doing beforehand.

"You need to be out with other people."

Jean, 77, has been volunteering with our organisation for more than 10 years and can be seen behind the Emergency Relief counter at 58 Dale St, where vouchers and food parcels are distributed to those who come in seeking support.

She describes herself as a "jack of all trades" and is not fussy about the tasks she takes on.

"Anything I can see that needs doing, I'll do it."

Over the years this has included helping with our Chat 'n Chew program,

which offers mental health support and social connection, and supporting people in financial hardship who need food and other emergency assistance.

"Until you are somewhere like this you really don't realise how bad it is for some people," Jean says.

"You see them come in with their kids and it really hits home.

"It just makes you so grateful for what you have."

Anti-Poverty Team Leader Cindy Adey says Jean is one of the most generous people she has known.

She has nominated her for the 2017 Premier's Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service, as well as a Volunteer Recognition Award through the office of Port Adelaide MP Mark Butler, which she has just received.

"She's just beautiful and we are so fortunate to have her among our amazing group of volunteers," Ms Adey says.

"Even when she has been going through such a tough time, Jean has kept coming here, giving back to others in the community.

"Her strength is unbelievable."

### Thank you for your contribution

A special lunch was held on May 10 to recognise the incredible contribution volunteers make to our organisation.

The event, at the Lakes Resort Hotel, included a ceremony where volunteers received a certificate of appreciation.

Our volunteers provide invaluable support to our organisation across community services and aged care.

Our recognition event coincided with National Volunteer Week (May 8 – 14).



# A CUPPA WITH GAEL FRASER

An opportunity to give back to the community saw Gael Fraser take on the role of Board Chair with our organisation two years ago. We sat down for a coffee to talk about her role, the Board's vision, ongoing challenges and our exciting new brand.

## Q. What is the role of the Board and Board Chair?

A. The Board focuses on the strategic future of the organisation because that's what we can do to add value to what is being done by all the people who work here. Our job, in part, is to look through our crystal ball into the future and see how we can be the best we can be in terms of serving people who are homeless, and serving people in need of aged care and family services. In looking at the history of the Port Mission, fantastic people have been involved in supporting the organisation and I hope that the Board continues that tradition. We are really stewards for the wellbeing of the organisation. I see my role almost as a conductor to make sure that all Board members can contribute their best and that we are all heading in the same direction.

## Q. How did you come to be appointed to the position?

A. I was in Canada at the time visiting friends and somebody sent me an email saying, 'This position has just been advertised in the paper in Adelaide, would I be interested?' I had been retired for a few years and I thought, 'It is a really great organisation and I really want to give

something back'. I applied and I was interviewed while I was away by Skype, and here I am.

## Q. What has been the highlight so far of your time with the organisation?

A. There have been a lot but I think last year's volunteer lunch has been the highlight for me so far. When I went to that lunch, I went around to each table and introduced myself and shook hands. One of the guys turned to me and he said, 'You have no idea how important this event is to us'. And I just thought, 'That's why we do what we do'.

## Q. What does a new name and new brand mean for us?

A. It's about renewal. I am very conscious that the organisation has been going for almost 100 years and that's pretty significant, but it's important to keep growing and living and being dynamic. That's what this name and the meaning represents to me. We also hope it will help with identification in terms of all the services we are offering to people, not just in the Port but across South Australia. The name UnitingSA is really important in terms of our connection with the Uniting Church. The work of the church is done through organisations such as this –

## FUN FACTS

**Favourite colour?**  
Blue

**Favourite animal?**  
Dog

**Favourite food?**  
Roast lamb

**Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?**  
Helen Mirren, Justin Trudeau and Meryl Streep

**What three items would you want if you were stranded on a desert island?**  
Water, books and my paints

that is caring for people in our community, looking out for each other in our community – and so having our name still linked to the Uniting Church is really, really important. It was quite an easy decision in terms of the options that were put to us. The Board was absolutely unanimous about it.

## Q. In terms of the services we provide, can people expect to see any change with this new brand?

A. I expect that our brand will still be synonymous with those qualities of compassion and social justice and helping people to live the best lives they can. What will be business as usual is our values and the quality of the services we offer. But we may do more, we may do some different things, we may be in different locations. Wesley House has been a huge development for us and I think that's gone really, really well but we are very aware that we need to keep up with the growth demand for services for older people. There is a particular demand for older women who are finding it harder to afford housing. Because women often have very little superannuation and are, generally speaking, financially less secure, we think there will be a huge demand for an array of services, whether it's in the homeless end or in care services. That's been highlighted all over the country as a major dilemma and what we are dealing with now has been predicted for years and years.

**Q. What are the goals of the Board for the year ahead?**

A. There are a lot of them. We want to make sure the brand is widely recognised - that's going to be a big goal for the organisation as a whole, not just the Board. We also need to continue to develop our financial base so that we're in a good place to do the things that we want to do. Whether that's development of new property or whether it's development of new services, I think the Board is very mindful of how we do that. At our March Board meeting we heard from Joe Gannon from Homelessness Services and he said if he had 400 units or houses, he could fill them immediately. We are passionate about the Homelessness to Housing Strategy and if we can get that happening on a larger scale, I think we will see better responses for people who are in housing need. In the area of community mental health, our services are really well thought of throughout this state. We serve a considerable number of people and there's a real danger that those people will fall through the gaps, so one of our goals this year is to make sure that doesn't happen. You can see this huge amount of need out there and we have to make sure we are doing the best we can for our community. That's what we're there to do.

**Q. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing our organisation?**

A. I think some of the biggest challenges are the way our society is developing or emerging. There's been a lot written about how Australia is essentially an egalitarian society but I think for a long time that hasn't been true. I think for a long time there has been a gap between those who are very wealthy and those who can't afford to have a roof over their heads. And I don't mean people sleeping on park benches but I mean people who don't have a secure home. That gap is widening - all the literature and all the research tells us that - and I think that's one of the biggest challenges. As that's happening government policies are changing. Governments don't want to spend money on social services so we are having to look at creative ways of earning money in some areas so we are able to transfer it across to provide the services that in the past would have been provided by government. I think that's a really big challenge. We have great staff. One of the other big challenges is maintaining a culture in the organisation that means staff really want to keep working here and that we keep on attracting really great staff, because it's the people who work in the organisation who make that difference. Boards come and go but a



**Red Lime Shack at 158 St Vincent St, Port Adelaide, is an official partner of our organisation. When we go there for a cuppa, we make sure we buy a Suspended Coffee for someone in need to redeem at a later date. If you're ever in the area, it's a wonderfully simple way to pay it forward.**

lot of staff are here for quite long periods and they make the biggest difference to people's lives.

**Q. If you could grant one wish for the community services and aged care sectors, what would it be?**

A. If I was Fairy Godmother it would be secure, affordable and decent housing for all the people that we serve in our community.

That would be my one wish.



**Digging in the soil is good for the soul**

A group of residents from our Regency Green Aged Care site have spent an afternoon getting their hands dirty as part of a new partnership with Bunnings.

The residents visited Bunnings on Churchill Road to plant lettuce and get creative with paints and stickers to decorate the pots.

Regency Green Activities Officer Margaret Renn says the day means more to residents than just a few hours of fun.

"Days like this keep our residents connected to their past, it keeps their minds and their hands stimulated," she says.

"They get to reminisce. It also connects them with the community outside Regency Green."

Participant Noela, 97, agrees.

"I used to have a beautiful garden and to be able to put my hands back in the dirt is just wonderful" she says.

"It just brings back memories.

"This is absolutely magnificent ... it is a credit to every single person who has taken part."

Margaret aims to continue the partnership with Bunnings to provide seasonal gardening opportunities for residents and to keep developing the gardens at Regency Green.



## Wesley House officially launched

**M**ore than 150 people gathered to celebrate the official launch of our new-look Wesley House Aged Care home in Semaphore Park on May 2.

The \$40 million redevelopment was on show during an afternoon tea, which included speeches from our Board Chair Gael Fraser, CEO Libby Craft and Uniting Church SA Moderator Rev. Sue Ellis.

Historical photos were on display showing the amazing transformation from the original old villa, which opened in 1951, to a two-storey state-of-the-art building.

The site is now home to 166 residents, who each have their own room and ensuite.

The redevelopment also includes a memory support unit for residents with dementia, a café, hairdresser, large activity spaces and outdoor landscaped gardens.

## Celebrating an incredible 104<sup>th</sup> birthday

**F**amily travelled from near and far to celebrate the 104th birthday of a very special lady, Rhoda Both.

The Wesley House resident was surrounded by those who mean the most to her when she marked the momentous occasion with a gathering at the Semaphore Park home.

Rhoda was born on March 26, 1913, in the farmhouse where she grew up near Springton in the Adelaide Hills.

Known as Springfarm, the property still evokes happy memories for Rhoda, who recalls some of her favourite life moments there.

"I loved it on the farm – I used to help my dad milk the cows and my mum make butter," she says.

"I was a bit boyish ... I used to run and climb trees.

"My dad taught me to drive and I used to drive my brothers and sisters to school from the farm when I was 16."

Rhoda married shortly after high school and went on to have three children, Peter, Anthea and John.

She says raising her children was without a doubt the best part of her 104 years.

One of the happiest times in her life was when she used to take her children back to Springfarm during the school holidays to stay in the house she grew up in.

With three generations under one roof, those holidays have always held a special place in Rhoda's heart and her face lights up every time she speaks of those days.

Rhoda says playing lawn bowls for West Lakes Bowling Club also brought a lot of joy to her life.

"I joined the ladies team and I did very well – I was the captain of the team which kept winning," she recalls.

"I was chosen to go to carnivals in Tasmania and Brisbane and I still bowled in my 80s."

Third on her list of favourite things is sewing, and she spent many hours creating clothes for her adored three children.

Her youngest boy, John, says his mother has always put family first.

"I think that rubbed off on the three of us children," John says.

"She was always very calm and considered – she seldom had a cross word to say.

"She has always also been very supportive."

Rhoda has eight grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and now even one great-great-grandchild.

***Sadly, Rhoda Both passed away a few weeks after our interview. Her family has given permission for us to publish her story. At the time of print, plans were underway to have her ashes scattered at Springfarm, where she grew up.***

## Wreath to honour World War I veteran

**T**he remains of the late Aboriginal World War I veteran Private Miller Mack were laid properly to rest in Ngarrindjeri country at a ceremony on March 24.

Our Employment Education Housing Coordinator Elana Turner laid a wreath on behalf of our organisation at the service, which she said was "an honour".

Mr Mack's remains were moved to Raukkan near the Murray Mouth - the South Australian community where he grew up - after being discovered by his family in a grave in the West Terrace Cemetery two years ago.

Ms Turner joined hundreds of others from across the country to witness the moment Private Mack returned home, almost 100 years since his 1919 death from tuberculosis contracted at war.

"There were quite mixed emotions on the day but after the ceremony it was a celebration of his life and what he had done," Ms Turner said.

"I felt pretty honoured to be there and to lay the wreath."



## Top award for dedication to cultural diversity in aged care

**E**thnic Link Services has been recognised in the Governor's Multicultural Awards for its significant contribution to the lives of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

More than 400 people attended the awards ceremony in the grounds of Government House on Harmony Day (March 21) to witness the celebration of South Australia's cultural diversity.

The event was hosted by His Excellency, the Honourable Hieu Van Le AC, Governor of South Australia, and a total of 17 awards were presented including to ELS in the Aged Care (Organisation) category.

ELS Program Manager Rita Lobban, who attended the ceremony with Sandra Karayannis from our service in the Riverland, says it was an honour to accept the award on behalf of the organisation.

"I was thrilled - firstly that we won and that I was able to accept on behalf of Ethnic Link Services," Ms Lobban says.

"It was incredible to see the wonderful

work being done in the multicultural sector by the different award recipients."

Senior Manager Aged Care Deborah Burton says the award is a wonderful recognition of Ethnic Link Services' standing within the multicultural communities sector, which played such a significant role in its establishment some 30 years ago.

"It is testament to the dedication of our Ethnic Link Services team over the years and their passion to improve the lives of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds," Ms Burton says.

"We are also extremely thankful to Dr Kate Barnett, who has a longstanding relationship with Ethnic Link Services and nominated us for the award."

We were privileged to be named joint winners with Multicultural Aged Care, which shares our vision and values in advancing access and equity outcomes for older people from diverse backgrounds.

In 2015/16, ELS provided specialised support and programs for 1551 older people from 45 ethnicities and 51 countries of birth.

## Financial outreach in the community

**W**e are now offering a No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) outreach service from two community centres.

Each Tuesday from 10am to 3pm we provide NILS information and support to people at Bower Cottages in Semaphore Park.

On Thursdays from 10am to 3pm we are at The Junction Community Centre in Ottoway.

The NILS volunteer also provides financial counselling referrals and support around Emergency Relief.

Anti-Poverty Team Leader Cindy Adey says being able to provide services from the new sites is allowing us to expand our community impact.

"Being at these community centres makes us so much more accessible to people needing financial support," Ms Adey says.

"No Interest Loans can be used to help people who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford things such as furniture, household appliances and even vet bills.

"We previously only offered face-to-face support at our Family Centre in Port Adelaide, so these outreach services are a great new way to reach people who really need it."

We also have a Financial Counsellor providing outreach at Centrelink Port Adelaide on Fridays from 9am to noon.

NILS applicants must be on a genuinely low income or have a concession card, have lived in their residence for a minimum of three months and have a capacity or willingness to repay the loan.

Loans of up to \$1000 are available and repayments are generally scheduled over 12 months.

Our No Interest Loan Scheme is funded by Good Shepherd Microfinance.

Phone 8440 2299 for more information.

# HOUSING EVERYONE DESERVES



## Alicia has every reason to smile

Alicia can't wipe the smile off her face when she is asked to reflect on her life today.

She has a healthy son, her first paid job, is close to getting her driver's licence and on her way to securing long-term community housing.

"2017 ... I guess it is my year," she beams.

But the 20-year-old does not take her good fortune for granted, nor has it come easy.

Alicia first came into contact with us three years ago when, at age 17, she found herself pregnant and homeless.

She didn't know where to turn after continual fighting with her mum left her with no place to stay.

She spent a couple of weeks couch surfing and after contacting numerous hostels across Adelaide, found a vacancy in a women's shelter.

It provided short-term relief but Alicia knew it would not provide enough security for her soon-to-be-born son.

She was put in touch with the team at our Western Adelaide Homelessness Service, who found a house for Alicia to move into with her newborn son, Tyrell.

The house provided the security Alicia needed to get her life on track and create a positive future.

Two years on, Alicia continues to meet with her case worker, Katie, every two weeks to ensure she has all the support she needs to live independently.

It is this support which has helped her complete her Certificate II in Hospitality and secure a job setting up for events at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

"Having a house has helped me get to places I never thought that I could," Alicia says.

"It has inspired me to get a job and do better for my child."

Alicia is now in the process of applying to secure long-term community housing.

The only "downside", as she puts it, is that it would mean she will no longer work with Katie as it is not supported accommodation.

It is, however, a sign of how far the single mother has come.

Not only is she living a busy, productive life, but she is also proud of the person she has become through her lived experience of homelessness.

"I care for others more, I acknowledge

more things and I'm more thankful for things," she says.

"Plus I realise how brave I can be."

And her future is looking bright.

In between her hospitality work and racing around after a two-year-old, she spends three days a week at Tauondi College improving her literacy and numeracy to ensure she can move up the ranks in her career.

"I am thinking now in the future I could even take on a role as a team leader," she says.

"But most importantly I know I want to be happy and I want the best for my son.

"I'm pretty happy right now, so I guess I want to stay this way forever."



## Housing options needed to address homelessness

**H**ousing affordability is the biggest issue facing the homelessness sector, as we find ourselves up against a system which lacks options for the most disadvantaged people in our community.

Joe Gannon, Manager of our Western Adelaide Homelessness Service, says changes are needed to cope with the ever increasing demand for appropriate and affordable accommodation.

In 2015/16 our Homelessness Service supported 1796 people – up 15 per cent from 2013/14.

Of those, more than 40 per cent identified as homeless at intake.

“Ninety-five per cent of all clients who access our services do not exit into rough sleeping – and no children exit into rough sleeping – which means we are able to get them into housing of some sort,” Mr Gannon says.

“At the moment we are still hanging in there, but just.”

He says housing stress “does not discriminate” and affects people of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds.

Despite this, there are some groups of people who are harder to accommodate.

“Being single and female is far more

difficult than being single and male because most boarding houses are set up for males,” he says.

“There are only 16 beds available for single females in emergency accommodation across the state, so where do you accommodate single females, whatever age they are?”

“Another really difficult group is 18 to 21 year olds. Up to 18 they are in our 24-Hour House but there’s a gap in service delivery once they turn 18.”

Mr Gannon says access to culturally appropriate accommodation for Aboriginal families is also severely lacking.

With one in five of all clients accessing our Homelessness Services identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, it is an area of great need.

“The call for action is to create innovative models for providing affordable housing for those most disadvantaged in our community,” Mr Gannon says.

“The current market doesn’t work, particularly for those who are part-time employed or unemployed.

“Social housing, public housing and the private market need to work something out on behalf of our clients.

“With someone like Alicia, you have to ask – ‘What would her story be without this organisation?’”



## STITCHED WITH LOVE FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

Every Monday morning at Regency Green Aged Care, the sound of knitting needles tapping combines with music from years gone by.

The Wool Club is in full swing creating blankets, scarves and beanies.

Activities Officer Margaret Renn says the club, led by volunteer Di, has been transformative for the 16 men and women who attend.

“All I can tell you is this – when they first started going to Wool Club people weren’t even looking at each other and it’s been almost 12 months now,” she says.

“As time has gone on, they have started to communicate with each other and some of them have become very good friends.

“It gives them a sense of achievement, it gives them independence and it has allowed them to develop friendships with people who have similar interests.

“They get more than just knitting out of it.”

And so do others in the community.

The Wool Club has decided to donate their creations to our Western Adelaide

Homelessness Service, with their first donation in March going to the service’s 24-Hour House for young people. Program Manager Sarah Pretty visited Regency Green to collect the donation and to tell residents how their work would benefit others.

“When they were told the blankets would be put on the young girls’ beds to make their rooms more personal, they were really happy,” Ms Renn says.

“The residents were so pleased to know their work was going to make somebody else’s day better.”

Ms Renn says the only thing missing on donation day was the presence of former club member Carolyn Garland, who was prolific in creating woollen accessories.

However, she says Carolyn would have been happy to know her creations are now being put to good use by our Homelessness Service. And for now it’s back to work for the Wool Club members, as they create more woollen accessories for their next delivery to help people in need.

Ms Renn says donation day will become an annual event – and a highlight on the residents’ calendar.

## Youth Expos help spread the word

Hundreds of young people learnt about our URBAN Youth Service during two expos held as part of National Youth Week (March 31 – April 9).

The southern suburbs community discovered the ways we support young people during Regeneration, an expo run by Onkaparinga Council at Seaford Quarry Reserve on March 31.

Council staff provided information about our services during the event, which showcased local youth arts and music, as well as community services and programs.

We then had a stall at Titanium Security Arena in Findon on April 5, where we provided information about our support for young people.

We also engaged youth in an activity where they wrote down what they think the best and worst things are about being young.

“Attending the Youth Expo allows us to give information about our service directly to young people, who can self-refer,” Youth and Family Services Case Manager Jessica Collins-Roe says.

“It also gives us a chance to talk with school related staff about our service who often don’t attend other networking events, missing the opportunity to learn what we do.

“We can talk directly to both young people and adults about how our service could support someone and through the conversation, help them understand how broad our service can be.”

URBAN Youth Service provides support to young people aged 10 to 25 through group-based programs and one-on-one case management.

Young people can self-refer or be referred by families, teachers or agency workers.

For more information phone 1800 714 051.



## Caring for residents for almost 40 years

**O**ur longest-serving employee Jenny Ramsay has seen a lot of change in her 37 years working at Westminster Village Aged Care. But one thing has remained constant – her love of developing relationships with the residents she supports.

“I have met a million people here with lots of lovely stories about their life and the things they have done,” she says.

“I can still remember some of those original people I looked after and what they were like.

“We were part of their life and they were part of ours.”

Ms Ramsay started work at Westminster in 1979, when she was 27. She lived on the same street and when she heard about a job opening, she was quick to snap up the position.

She started out helping each evening set up for dinner, serve meals and clean up afterwards. Over time she changed to a cleaning position and then became a nurse’s assistant on afternoon shifts.

After about 10 years, Ms Ramsay studied enrolled nursing and now works as a nurse at both Westminster and St Teresa Aged Care. She says

some of the biggest changes in her time have been the age of residents when they move in, the level of support required and the buildings services are offered in. When she began, Westminster was a hexagonal-shaped hostel with a large dining hall through the middle. She recalls the interior design was tartan carpets throughout and orange and green striped curtains.

“In those days people came in here in their late 50s after their spouse was deceased and they didn’t want to be home alone,” she says.

“It was like a hotel – people came and went when they wanted.

“They didn’t need much care ... most of them would even do their own washing.”

She has watched as Westminster grew from the original hostel into its present state as an aged care home for 110 residents. In that same time she has also witnessed our organisation change from Port Adelaide Central Mission, to UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide and now, its rollout to become UnitingSA.

“It’s forever changing – so much is different from those early days,” she says.

“But the best thing will always be the people that you meet and the friends that you make.”



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