

Working Together

Annual Report 2020 - 2021



Uniting
Country SA



Uniting
Country Housing



Contents

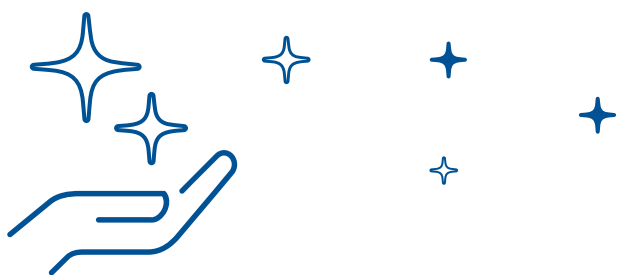
Mission & Values	04	Case Studies	25
Chief Executive's Report	05	HIPPY	29
Chairperson's Report	07	Communities for Children	30
Board Members	08	KIDtober Festival 2020	31
Anthea Pavy Q&A	09	Foster Care	33
Best Place To Work	11	Community Centre Placemaker Projects	34
Homelessness and Domestic Violence Alliances	13	The Children's Contact Service (CCS)	35
Reconciliation Action Plan	15	National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP)	36
STAY Program Port Pirie	17	ELMO Software Expansion	37
NAIDOC 2020	20	Volunteering Advertisement Project	40
NDIS	21	All Staff Day 2020	41
Our Impact Together	23	Financials 2020/2021	43
		United Country Housing - at a glance	45



Mission & Values

Uniting Country SA / Uniting Country Housing (UCSA/UCH) are not-for-profit social and community services organisations operating in country South Australia.

UCSA/UCH provides services to families, single adults and children, who are experiencing difficulties such as domestic violence, disability and mental health issues, financial distress, homelessness, and family matters in country SA.



Headquartered in Port Pirie, UCSA/UCH is fully committed to servicing the needs of country people. UCSA/UCH are the local experts making a difference in your community. With over 100 years of experience servicing regional communities, UCSA/UCH is dedicated to *Caring for Country People*.

Uniting Country SA is guided by the Values

- ✦ Respect and compassion for all people
- ✦ Belief in the innate worth of all people
- ✦ Justice for all, particularly for those less advantaged in our society
- ✦ Being of service to others
- ✦ Restlessness for what could be
- ✦ Non-violence and peace

To achieve their vision of:

Compassionate, respectful and strong country communities where all people flourish.

Chief Executive's Report

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I present the 2020-21 Annual Report for Uniting Country SA (UCSA) and Uniting Country Housing (UCH), my last before I enter retirement.



Anthea Pavy
Chief Executive

Once again, the events of the previous twelve months can only be described as unprecedented and this continues as I write today. However, despite all the disruption and challenges UCSA/UCH has faced during COVID, the organisation has successfully continued to deliver high quality services to people and communities throughout a large area of regional SA.

As UCSA/UCH meet the challenges of the future and seek ways to respond to the needs of country people and communities, we acknowledge and commend all our wonderful staff and volunteers for their untiring efforts and dedication on a daily basis to advancing the mission, vision and values of the organisation. We thank them all for their enormous commitment and many achievements. These efforts have never come to the fore more than during this pandemic when staff have continually been asked to be more flexible, adaptable and innovative in the way that they deliver services – a great effort by everyone!!

2020-21 has seen a number of pending changes in key personnel within the organisation. Brian Martin, Executive Manager Services, after 16 years with UCSA has decided to retire. Aside from overseeing a range of programs within UCSA, Brian has also had a number of key responsibilities across the organisation including being

pivotal in such things as the organisation's University Placement Program and research partnership with the University of South Australia. Liz Malcolm, the organisation's General Manager Operations, has also decided it is time to retire after 12 years of service. Liz became a staff member of UCSA after having spent several years as a Board Member and subsequently becoming Board Chairperson of the UCSA Board. Our organisations have been exceptionally fortunate to have had the leadership and wisdom of both Brian and Liz and we wish them well for their retirement.

2020-21 saw a number of measures undertaken to ensure our services remain of a high quality and at the forefront of best practice. The organisation successfully completed both the Certificate and Award levels of the Australian Service Excellence Standards with 100% compliance in both levels and also the Disability Service Standards Certificate, again with 100% compliance.

Tender writing has been a significant part of the work undertaken by UCSA during 2020-21 with a number of key programs coming to an end of contract and subsequently new services being offered for tender. One of the biggest changes and pieces of work undertaken has been the Alliance tenders for Homelessness and Domestic Violence.

"I feel so privileged to have been a part of such a wonderful organisation that does so much life changing work across our rural communities.

I can genuinely say I have loved every minute of my work at UCSA/UCH and the people I have worked with."

UCSA has partnered with four key agencies across our geographical footprint to form an Alliance to deliver Homelessness services to Country North and we look forward to working with these agencies to develop even better and more seamless services for the people who seek our support. UCSA has also been successful in becoming a part of the Statewide Domestic Violence Alliance to deliver Domestic Violence services across South Australia.

Acknowledgment must go to Debbie Devlin and the tender writing teams that have come together to achieve such successful outcomes in all tenders undertaken.

UCSA/UCH continued throughout 2020-21 to advocate for fairness and justice 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 various conferences and other public forums. UCSA once again partnered with the Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise (AASE), at the University of South Australia to investigate several important pieces of research which will underpin our practice with sound evidence into the future. No report would be complete without thanking UCSA's and UCH's dedicated and highly skilled Board Members for their

generosity, exemplary stewardship and commitment to advancing the organisation's mission and strategic directions. The Board undertook an external evaluation of its performance both collectively and individually during 2020-21 which revealed that the Board is high functioning, highly skilled and cohesive.

UCSA/UCH would also like to acknowledge and thank the many corporate, business, organisation and individual donors who have generously supported the organisations during 2020-21 to continue to provide essential services throughout regional SA even though they themselves may have been facing hardships in the face of the pandemic. Your support is vital to UCSA and UCH and is greatly appreciated.

As I write my final Annual Report for UCSA/UCH, I reflect on the many achievements of the organisation and just how far it has come over the last 31 years. I started at UCSA as a Social Worker with Port Pirie Central Mission (now UCSA), a position that was needed to enable the organisation to accept a contract from the State Government to run Emergency Foster Care in Port Pirie and Port Augusta. At this time the office was located in Ellen Street and was funded for a couple of other programs including Homelessness and Family Support.

In 2003 I was fortunate to win the position of Chief Executive when the organisation comprised of around 60 staff, \$3 000 000 in government funding, several government contracts and had moved to a new office in Florence Street. Today the organisation has grown to around 300 employees, over 50 government contracts, 27 sites and covers a geographical footprint of two thirds of regional SA. I feel so privileged to have been a part of such a wonderful organisation that does so much life changing work across our rural communities. I can genuinely say I have loved every minute of my work at UCSA/UCH and the people I have worked with. I would like to thank everyone within the organisation and the wider community for the opportunities I have had and sincerely wish everyone all the best for the future.

UCSA/UCH look forward to meeting the changes and challenges of the future and to continuing to develop an organisation that is responsive, innovative and a leader in the delivery of community services across regional South Australia.

Chairperson's Report

I can only echo Anthea's sentiments about the wonderful work done during the last twelve months by both our employees and our volunteers across the rural and regional communities in the north of SA.



Sue Park
Chairperson

We consistently hear from those who have had contact with our staff that they have appreciated the skilled, warm and respectful support they have received. The Board regularly receives presentations and reports from key staff, and we never fail to be impressed by the professionalism and commitment we observe.

The culture of excellence, driven by vision, and underpinned by values, is in large part due to the outstanding leadership provided by our retiring Chief Executive, Anthea Pavy. Anthea's clear, thoughtful and dedicated approach to her work has been the foundation on which UCSA has grown to become the largest community service organization in country SA. Her commitment to people and communities in this region is reflected throughout, and her warmth and respect for staff has led to us being selected in a national study as among the very top workplaces in Australia.

As Anthea leaves us to enjoy a well-earned retirement, we welcome Dr Harry Randhawa as our next Chief Executive. Having started his career as a medical practitioner, Harry moved into leadership roles in health and community service organizations around rural and regional Australia. He brings with him both very substantial experience and a clear commitment to the culture of UCSA/UCH. We look forward to working with Harry to further enhance our contribution to the communities we serve.

Finally, I want to thank my fellow Board Directors for their dedication, their sharp, incisive questions, their heartfelt enthusiasm for their task, and their willingness to take on the responsibility for ensuring that UCSA/UCH meet all their obligations. It's an honour to Chair such a group.

Board Members



Anthea Pavy
Chief Executive and
Board Member

*B.Soc Work, Ass. Dip.
Social Work, GAICD*



Sue Park
Chairperson

BA, Ass. Dip. Social Work, GAICD



Peter Hollister
Deputy Chair of
Uniting Country SA

GAICD, B.Sc (Hons I) Maths, MBA



Fiona Duffield
Deputy Chair of Uniting
Country Housing and Chair
of the Housing Committee

*Diploma of Teaching
(Early Childhood Education)*



Jo Court
Chair of Audit Risk and
Compliance Committee

*BA Commerce, Adv Dip
Financial Services, CPA*



Jo Curkpatrick
Director

*SCMP, GAICD, MPRIA,
BA (Journalism), DipAg*



Bill Othams
Director

LL B



Rev. Ted White
Director

Bachelor of Theology



Chez Curnow
Director

Bachelor of Nursing

Anthea Pavy

Q&A



What are your earliest memories of working for Uniting Country SA?

A| When I started the organization was called the Port Pirie Central Mission and was in a building at the end of Ellen Street which was originally a printing press for a paper. That building had been bought through a bequest by the Ward family. The organization had little money and the staff had just moved in and made the best of it.

At that stage there were a couple of us in the Emergency Foster Care team, with a few staff in the Emergency Housing service plus two small program teams in Family Support and Tenancy Support. That was the small start which would later become UCSA.

What was working at the organization like?

A| Right from the start the organization had a nice feel about it. This was emphasized by the fact that I was working somewhere that I could make a difference to people's lives and work with others who had the same philosophy. I was happy to work off the smell of an oily rag, making the most of all sorts of things.

There was a real sense of purpose, sense of commitment, and a sense of possibility. We were working because we were passionate about making a difference in people's lives.

What was the social services industry like at the time?

A| It was quite different back then given that it was a time when the government had just started to outsource their services to the NGO sector. This was one of the very early efforts by the government to outsource some of these services. Not-for-profits ran different services, but they were run voluntarily or via philanthropic funding that had come in through the organization or through fundraisers. We relied heavily on volunteers across the sector.

Around the early 90s or late 80s was when the government started to outsource some of the roles they had. If you think about foster care, there was a conflict of interest for government to remove children from a family and then be the people working with them to reunite the family while also supporting the foster family. By separating the roles of the government through funding NGOs to undertake some of the work, the conflicts of interest were removed which made the service better for all involved.



After 31 years with the organization, and 17 years as the Chief Executive, Uniting Country SA and Uniting Country Housing's Chief Executive Anthea Pavy made the decision to retire this year. She sat down for a Q&A exploring her many years with the organization to reflect on her career.

What do you feel has been the biggest achievement you have accomplished while working here?

A | Working with the board, and the Uniting Church broadly, to change the thinking about how organizations like ours could be structured. The idea at the time was that there was a view that a member of the clergy ought to be the head of the organization. We could see that it was causing a lot of pain in certain situations. I worked with the board to recognize that we needed to change the way we governed and led the organization. That was the first step.

When I was given the opportunity to grow the organization I relied on the team behind me to get more staff, locate new offices and to establish governance policies and structures which would underpin the sustainability of the organization.

This was a wonderful opportunity to work with staff and Board to develop the organization in a way that was sustainable. I emphasize that no individual can do all the work. This means it's really about the team having an opportunity to be a part of that and this represents my most significant achievement.

What have been some highlights from working here?

A | Working with clients and learning about their stories. What has never ceased to amaze me is how so many of our clients get out of bed everyday and function. If you sit and listen

to their stories some of them are horrendous, yet they are still giving life a shot, they are still out there trying. Their lives are often chaotic and not going very well but they still get out there and give it a shot. I am damn sure I couldn't achieve half of what they achieve had I been in that situation. It is a privilege to have clients trust you and share their story with you, often when they are at the lowest point in their lives. It is such a privilege to have people trust you with that.

Working alongside foster carers has been a wonderful experience. They are an amazing group of people who go above and beyond. I have seen foster carers hang in there where the foster child has been through a great deal of trauma and has taken this out on the foster carer. Despite this the foster carers are saying "no, we have got to hang in with this kid. If we don't keep trying who will?" I don't think people realize just how much investment occurs from foster carers financially, personally, emotionally, psychologically and physically. They are absolutely amazing.

What would you like to say to the Staff and Volunteers of UCSA?

A | Thank you for all you do and keep doing what you are doing. We need good people to hang in there and keep doing what they are doing.

I think we have wonderful staff. People don't come and work here unless they are committed to the intent of the organization. It's hard work when you go into homes where there's violence or squalor or whatever else. That takes a toll emotionally, yet our staff go back repeatedly, saying that "If I hang in there, the client will hang in there too."

What about our new CE, Dr Harry, coming in. What would you like to say to him?

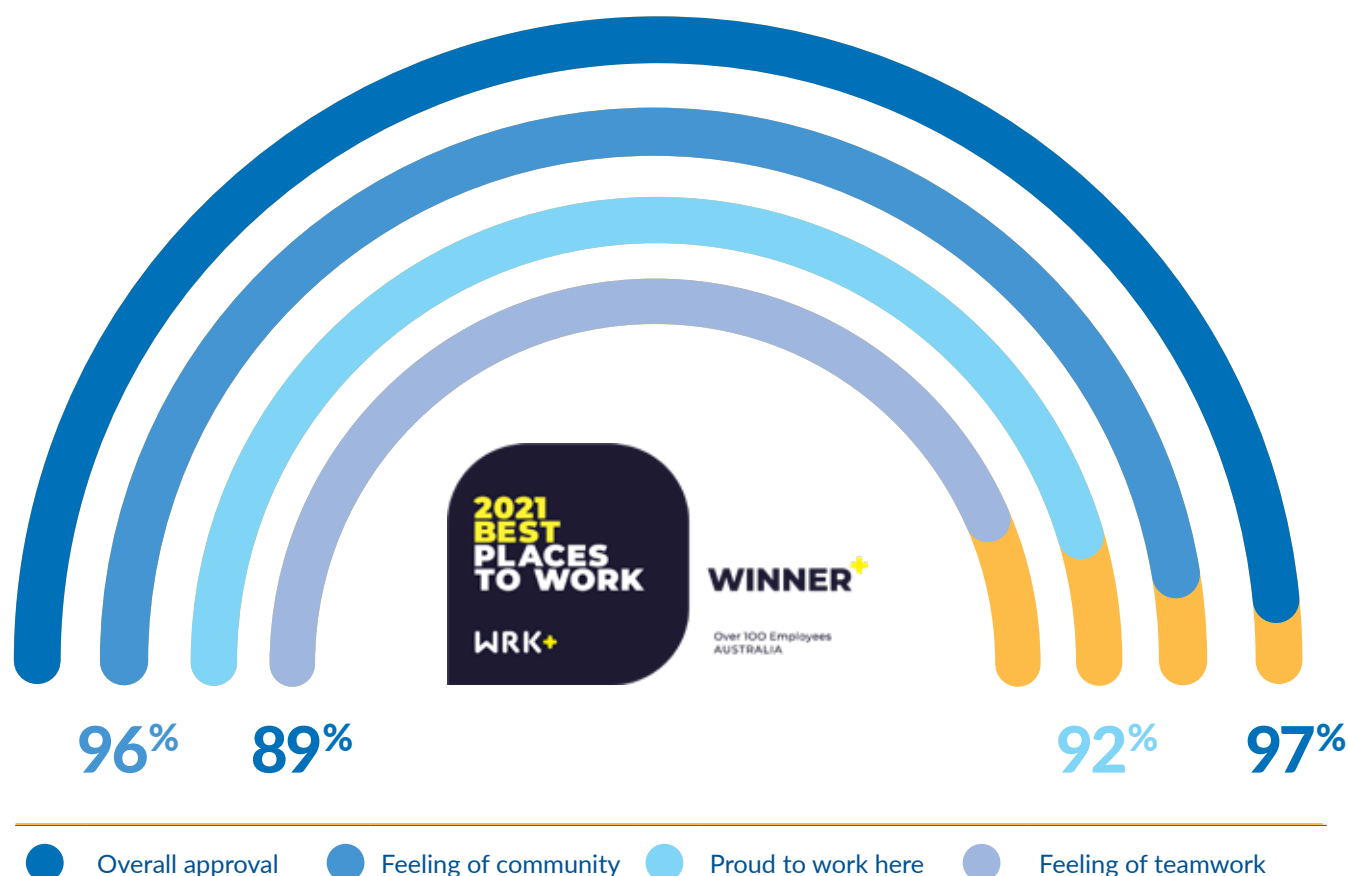
A | Embrace this organization and the work that it does. Listen to the staff and enjoy your work. It's a great place to work. I love the job and what I have been able to achieve knowing that it is a huge task. You need energy to do such a job and Harry has that. He is a lovely man and think he will be great.

What are you looking forward to most in retirement?

A | Slowing down and not having the alarm go off at 5.40am and hitting the floor running and to be still going at 10:00 or 11:00 pm. I still want to do lots of community work, I want to get really involved again, but I want to do it at a more leisurely pace when I retire.

Best Place To Work 2021

Uniting Country SA (UCSA) was very excited to be recognised as one of Australia's "Best Places to Work" in 2021 by WRK+ following the study of over 15,000 Australian based employees from 112 companies.



The final list published in a lift out in *The Australian* on 19th August, ranked UCSA 7th overall in the category of Employer's with 100+ employees.

To be considered, UCSA employees responded to an independent 52-statement engagement survey and the agency participated in an evaluation of workplace culture specific to people, operations and practices. UCSA is the only Not for Profit organisation to be recognised on this list.

UCSA recognises that being a "Best Place to Work" needs a holistic approach which includes people initiatives in the areas of wellbeing and mental health as well as training initiatives that build skills and competency.

The award also recognises system initiative's such as the recent expansion of our electronic Human Resources Information System.

The team celebrated this achievement at a small event held in Port Pirie. There the team learned of the organisations rank and virtually celebrated with the other finalist organisations across Australia. The team also began planning what they could achieve during the next 12 months to ensure that UCSA continues to be recognised as an employer of choice in regional South Australia.



"We are really honoured to be acknowledged as one of the best places to work In Australia. It's important to us that we value our people and formally receiving this recognition demonstrates we do that."

Karen Shearer, Executive Manager People & Culture

Homelessness and Domestic Violence Alliances

In order to provide more integrated, collaborative services, South Australia's Homelessness and Domestic Violence Services are now being delivered through alliances, which are comprised of collections of organisations who deliver the services.



These alliances will work together to support people in achieving safe, long term, sustainable housing across the state.

Four of the alliances focus on homelessness and the fifth is a state-wide Domestic and Family Violence alliance. By working alongside each other, the organisations that make up these alliances can share resources and provide broader opportunities to clients that otherwise would have been outside of each individual agency's capability. The South Australian Housing Authority will work closely with all alliances and be members of the alliances' leadership teams.

Country North Homelessness Alliance

Uniting Country SA (UCSA), the largest homelessness provider in the Country North region, played an integral role in the formation of the Country North Homelessness Alliance.

The alliance supports all members to continue delivering highly effective homelessness services in their communities where they are known and trusted.

All organisations have a strong history of working together and look forward to the opportunities a collective and integrated service model will bring such as: a seamless service journey, common assessment tools, increased connection with Aboriginal Community Controlled Community Organisations, integration of lived experience in service and system design plus research and leveraging opportunities.



South Australian Domestic and Family Violence Consortium

The state-wide Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Alliance, which is led by Women's Safety Services SA, brings together the collective knowledge and experience of all eight current service providers. The DFV Alliance will be working collegiately to deliver services that are focused on safety, are accessible and flexible to ensure all people, in particular women and children, live safe, connected and supported lives.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Uniting Country SA and Uniting Country Housing (UCSA/UCH) recognises that if we are to overcome the division and inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians we need to take action.

The agency started on a formal pathway to reconciliation in 2014, with the development of the organisation's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). As a result of the actions within the RAP the organisation significantly increased its Aboriginal workforce, service delivery and client base.

The RAP was revised during 2018/2019. The revised version recognises the need for lasting relationships with the Aboriginal community, along with a stronger voice for the Aboriginal community and the development of collaborative partnerships between UCSA/UCH and the Aboriginal community.

To build upon these points, the Connected Beginnings Team has forged ahead in implementing Actions from within the RAP.

The Connected Beginnings team have relationships and partnerships with the Aboriginal community. The Team have established an Aboriginal Community Reference Group to guide the Connected Beginnings initiative. A 2-way governance process has been developed in partnership with the Reference Group to ensure the Aboriginal community's voice is heard and actioned in regard to the initiative.

To scaffold the relationship building and governance process, UCSA/UCH supported the Reference Group and Connected Beginnings team members to attend ChangeFest21.

ChangeFest is a festival of change for Aboriginal people and organisations. It focuses on solving immediate problems and putting strategy into action.

The Group that attended ChangeFest received tools to put into practice when they returned to community. They built relationships with each other, networked and practiced new ideas with peers, colleagues and leaders. In addition, the Reference Group and the Connected Beginnings team members had the opportunity to think about the impact they are planning to make and the actions they implement to make change into the future.

Together the community and UCSA/UCH are working together to achieve a balance between maintaining cultural integrity, maximising self-determination, while managing the financial and legal accountability requirements of being funded by the Government.



09 ChangeFest attendance

- 05 Reference Group Members
- 04 Connected Beginnings Members



09 Reference Group Membership





Service to Aboriginal Youth (STAY) Program Port Pirie



The STAY program is an early intervention service to at risk young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between 10-19 years of age, providing support and guidance by strengthening their cultural and community connections and building long-term resilience.

The program works alongside Aboriginal Health to provide cultural events for young people including the Youth Group held every week at UCSA's Parham Street Centre in Port Pirie.



STAY has run 11 culturally specific activities in the past 12 months with young people attending the Youth Group. 46 young people in the community have attended the group over the year, with 31 attending multiple sessions.

The most recent cultural activity focused on designing a t-shirt for the STAY youth that held a meaning to them; beginning a journey of their Cultural heritage and Dream Time stories.

As each young person chose their animals, stories were told of the past, tragedies and the strength it took to survive. This allowing a sense of belonging and pride for some young people who did not know where they were from. The young people coloured their animal to have a sense of ownership and pride in the STAY t-shirt that would be created for them.

“As a group we all stand proud of where we are as individuals and are able to share a connection with others. Each young person comes from a different nation, but we have formed a family unit at the STAY program out of a sense of respect for others, feeling safe and a fun place to share”

Kim White, Youth Worker



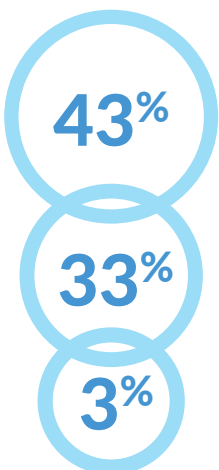
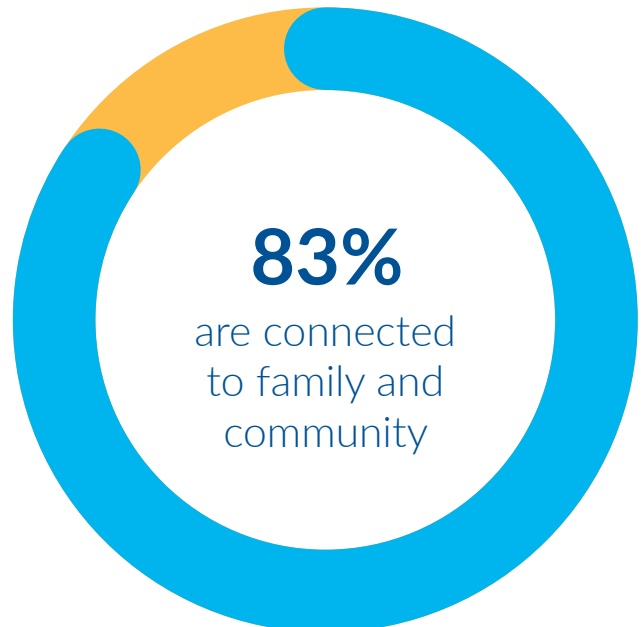
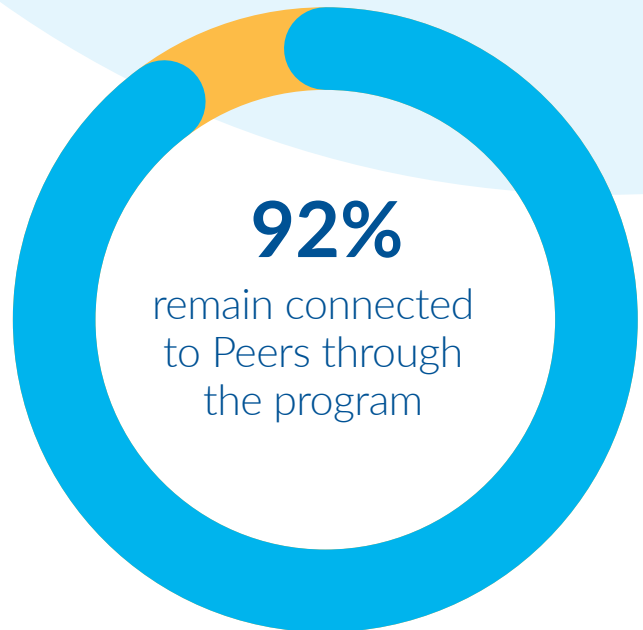
100%

of youth are happy
with the youth program



92%

engage in schooling





NAIDOC 2020

The theme for this year's Port Augusta NAIDOC event was "One Community Together" celebrating the importance of community connections during times of difficulty.

Uniting Country SA's (UCSA) Connected Beginnings team worked in partnership with the South Australian Department of Education, local service providers, and Umeewarra Media to hold a family event at the Port Augusta Foreshore to celebrate NAIDOC week 2020. The event was well attended with hundreds of Port Augusta community members coming together to celebrate their culture, friends, and family, including Port Augusta Mayor Brett Benbow and representatives from each of the schools.

The event celebrated local Aboriginal students, art and culture through awards, performances and comedy from the comedian Kevin Kropinyeri. Launched at this year's event was a series of awards for Aboriginal students, encouraging them to attend school and put in their best efforts.

NAIDOC week is an important celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, history and achievements. UCSA is honoured and excited to help organize and attend events celebrating the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.



National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS)

Uniting Country SA (UCSA) has been a National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS) provider since the system was implemented nationally.

In South Australia children were the first to move onto NDIS plans and UCSA were asked by current clients to continue to provide services. Now UCSA's Disability Services Team provides services in plan management, support coordination and social support. These services assist participants to access support, navigate complex service delivery models, link with providers, resolve conflicts and provide one-on-one support to access communities and complete daily tasks.

The NDIS has supported huge growth across Australia, however one of the common features which relate to rural and regional Australia are thin markets of service providers, for which the Yorke and Mid-North region of SA are no exception.

UCSA was able to rise to this challenge and step in and support NDIS services which have continued to grow over the last year to deliver support services to the communities that we serve.

UCSA's reputation in this area continues grow in tandem with the increased demand for services. During this journey UCSA has become a provider of choice and receives direct referrals from a range of sources which are fuelled by the best kind of advertising available: word of mouth from existing participants to community and others whom the service maybe useful for. This in turn assist UCSA to be able to expand into more services and regions.

216

Support coordinator clients

480 hours of support each month

55

Community engagement clients

800 hours of support per month

353

Financial plan management clients





Dylan's story

Dylan is a 23-year-old male who lives in a small rural town in the Flinders Ranges with his family.

When Dylan was younger, an accident resulted in paraplegia impacting his trunk, back and legs. Dylan uses a wheelchair and requires vehicle modifications.

Dylan, was unable to fully pursue his interests and engage with the community where he lives and UCSA's NDIS support team worked together with Dylan to achieve these goals.

UCSA commenced NDIS Support Coordination services in February 2020 and since then have been able to work with Dylan to purchase equipment which supports him to work full time, meet daily needs and get engage with his community.

The team have supported Dylan to purchase an off-road electric wheelchair enabling Dylan to get around difficult and rugged terrain. He can now go out camping with his mates and get down to the beach. For the next step, UCSA will be helping with updates to his vehicle to be able to transport this chair and take it out of town.

Due to the significant weight of this machine, Dylan requires modifications to his vehicle to ensure he can transport this chair safely. The team is currently working to purchase a remote hydraulic crane for his ute to be able to lift this chair so it can be transported. Dylan has worked with a specialised driver Occupational Therapist from Adelaide to trial new electric hand controls and an electric, turning driver's seat which enable him to enter, exit and control the vehicle with ease and comfort.

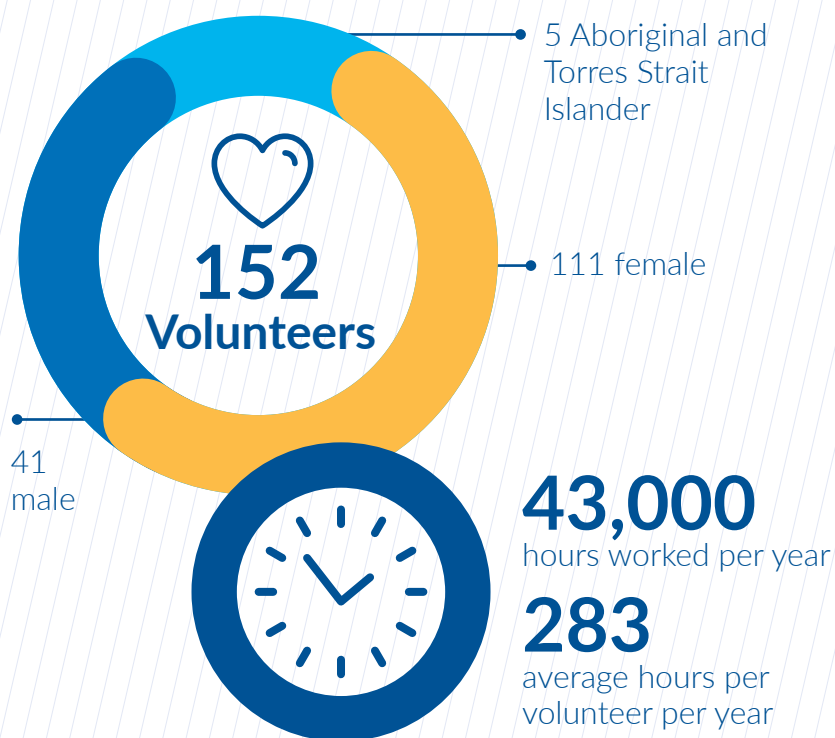
The team is also working with Dylan to replace his everyday manual chair as it is no longer supporting his every day needs. Dylan has trialled a carbon fibre chair weighing a total of 6kgs with the wheels on. The team is currently approaching the NDIS to request the funding for this purchase.

UCSA has worked together with Dylan, manufacturers, occupational therapists and the NDIS to develop the equipment needed for Dylan to meet his needs and accomplish his goals.

Our Impact Together

2020/21

Volunteering



KIDtober Festival 2020



Best Place To Work 2021



Communities for Children (CFC)



22 children

attended 7 sessions of the Nathan May Ukele workshops with the Port Augusta Ukele Club in attendance, spurring on regular workshops.



120 activity packs

70 gardening and 50 science themed school holiday activity packs were collected in December.



2000+ books

have been borrowed from our free Green Bookcases library.



130 Halloween activity Packs

collected in October, with a target of 150 this year.

Service to Aboriginal Youth (STAY) Program Port Pirie



100%
of youth are
happy with the
youth program

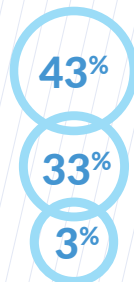


92%
engage in
schooling



46 young
people have
attended in
the past 12
months

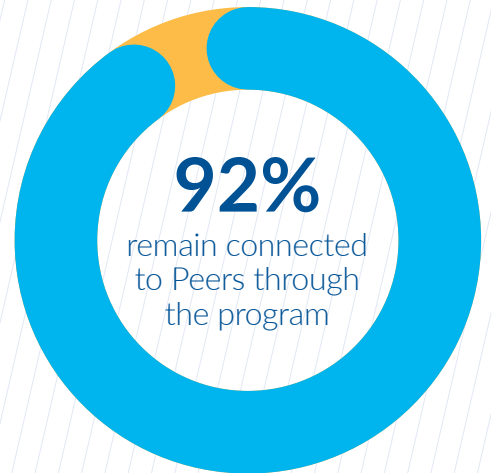
31 young
people attend
regular events



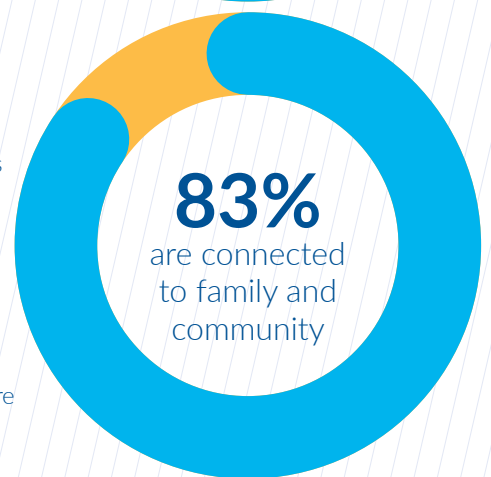
43% of all referrals are word of mouth from community

33% of young people are in State Care and in out of home placements

3% go on to become leaders in the program and become volunteers for UCSA



92%
remain connected
to Peers through
the program



83%
are connected
to family and
community

National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS)

216

**Support
coordinator clients**

480 hours of support
each month

353

**Financial plan
management clients**

55

**Community
engagement clients**

800 hours of support
per month

ELMO Software Expansion



155

job vacancies
since
September
2020

76%

of employees
have completed
their core
competency
training

Reconciliation Action Plan



**Darwin
ChangeFest
attendance**

- **05** Reference Group Members
- **04** Aboriginal Staff Members



Uniting
Country SA



Uniting
Country Housing



Case Studies

During the past year, Uniting Country SA (UCSA) has supported individuals, couples and families throughout country South Australia by working alongside individuals and communities to provide specific support and services to meet their needs.

Emergency Relief



Ros is an Indigenous woman living in Eight Mile, an off-grid community 14 kilometres west of

Coober Pedy. She has lived in Eight Mile for over 30 years, in a shed with a wood stove, long drop toilet and rain water. It is basic, but Ros loves the quiet living and friendship of the small community.

Ros came to UCSA earlier this year to ask about a loan for a solar powered fridge. UCSA were able to organise Emergency relief funding to support Ros who is now the proud owner of her first ever new fridge. The fridge operates using two 12-volt solar panels on the roof which are powered by the abundant sunshine that characterises the region.

"My fridge/freezer is the best thing ever! It has made my life so much easier. I have a freezer, it saves me money, as I don't have to shop in Coober Pedy so often."

"When I found out I got an Emergency Relief grant I just burst into tears. I couldn't believe it. And since then I have been doing budget support with a Financial Inclusion Worker. I'm in much better shape financially now."

Peterborough Parenting Group – Children and Parenting Support Service

The Peterborough Parenting Group has continued to support families during a pandemic affected year.

In late 2020 the group was fortunate to secure a trip to Adelaide Zoo as a break from the day-to-day stress of being a parent during COVID-19.

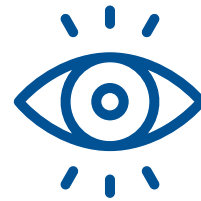
The zoo adventure

The group of 19 Adults and 22 children travelled to Adelaide and met at the Adelaide Zoo. For many, including adults, this was their first ever Zoo experience. Families enjoyed their time together wandering through the Adelaide Zoo to view the animal attractions. The group was encouraged to move freely around the grounds exploring, observing and learning.

Why the zoo?

It is easy for families to hide behind screens these days. The zoo visit provided an opportunity for bonding time, where families could get out and have some fun together.

Visiting the Zoo, also provided an opportunity to connect with animals in a safe environment. For some, this experience supported growth in their vocabulary as children learned new words such as 'Endangered, Herbivorous, Nocturnal, Venomous, Camouflage and Extinct.



Seeing animals in real life is a far more immersive experience than reading about them in books or watching them on screens. Children learn about the animals and their habitats, become curious and over time, develop an understanding about conservation.



COVID-19 Advocacy

In 2020 Uniting Country SA supported a client facing a unique set of circumstances due to COVID-19.

Having lived and worked in Australia for 12 years on a working visa, the client's visa application was caught up in an unexpected backlog, resulting in both the client and their wife no longer being permitted to work in Australia. Ineligible for government benefits, Uniting Country first supported the family with emergency relief payments fortnightly, but soon worked with other organizations for additional support. In late 2020 support worker Sharen Flynn advocated for the client with their local member of parliament.

Sharen contacted the minister's office multiple times to assist the clients with their application. The minister's office supported the family to maintain their housing while they waited for the outcome of their application.

This was a good example of the organization working with a range of stakeholders to care for country people, who are often in dire need.

*"Thank you
so much Sharen.*

You have been such a great help for me and my family during the last 15 months and every-time we reached out seeking assistance you have helped us. I still think about the help you provided to change our car tyres and my son's school needs as I struggled as a parent unable to provide for my family without any income. Couldn't have done it without your generosity. Means a lot to us as a family going through continued hardships.

We are so grateful and thank you so much once again."



Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

The HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) Program aims to develop a love of learning in young children through the development of early literacy and numeracy skills.

The program empowers parents with the knowledge and recognition that they are their child's first teachers and that such a role is lifelong.

As a part of the curriculum that HIPPY has developed, children and families regularly explore the many types of animals within their world.

This year the Whyalla and Port Augusta Coordinators were successful with an application for enhancement funds through HIPPY Australia. These funds further support the outcomes of families in the program. The additional fundraising was used as a 'thank you' and culmination of the learning journey by way of an excursion to the Adelaide Zoo. For some families, this was a first-time experience to be able to see these animals in real life.

This opportunity allowed us to further support the bond between parent and child, resulting in children enjoying their learning through HIPPY and further into starting school.

Case study

HIPPY achieves great things for children and families on an individual basis.

One example is a child in the program who started as a four-year-old in February 2020. She is a non-verbal autistic child who would scream to communicate, was loud, very physical and was sometimes aggressive. Her mother was worried that the HIPPY activities would be difficult to do with her child.

After exploring the child's interests (Pepper Pig), the HIPPY Home Tutor was able to modify the activities to suit the child's learning challenges. Following the school break between Term 1 and 2 of 2021, mum provided the Tutor with HIPPY story books, completed activities, colouring in and reported that the child was writing letters of her name, saying words, counting from 1-5 and recognised numbers. Her behaviours are also beginning to improve.



Communities for Children (CFC)

Uniting Country SA's (UCSA) Communities for Children (CFC) program supports the Port Augusta community to improve the wellbeing of their children from birth to 12 years of age. The CFC team works together with local community groups, organisations and individuals to accomplish this goal.

Launched in 2005, the program has worked with the community to support new parents, improve the physical health of children, and encourage the creativity and literacy of children.

CFC works to ensure that strong communities are forged with deep connections to culture. One of the initiatives this program engages with are the Engaging, Motivating, Uniting (EMU) Community Grants. In 2021 a group of Aboriginal artists from Aboriginal Arts created 'Stobie Pole Artwork' to depict their cultural interpretation of

the United Nations Rights of the Child. These bright, professional and creative pieces of art were copied on to metal signs and have been installed on to 17 stobie poles (electricity poles) around Port Augusta. Each poster has a QR code which will take the viewer straight through to the UN Rights poster.

The CFC team worked together with the Port Augusta City Council and SA Power Networks who approved the request to use their stobie poles. Selection was based on prominence of the location, along with avoidance of intersections where they could cause a traffic accident.

The posters have created a buzz due to their vibrancy and the unique way they highlight children's rights. More stobie poles have been identified and the team will be requesting more usage into the 2021-22 financial year.



22 children

attended 7 sessions of the Nathan May Ukulele workshops with the Port Augusta Ukulele Club in attendance, spurring on regular workshops.



120 activity packs

70 gardening and 50 science themed school holiday activity packs were collected in December.



2000+ books

have been borrowed from our free Green Bookcases library.



130 Halloween activity Packs

collected in October, with a target of 150 this year.

KIDtober Festival 2020

The challenge of holding a COVID-safe KIDtober children's festival in 2020 was met by many people working together to continue the focus on supporting families with young children to have fun together enjoying our own back yard and nature play.

UCSA auspices the KIDtober Planning Group and joined 6 other Port Pirie based early childhood and family support services to design the COVID-safe event with the help of a Grants SA COVID-19 Support Grant. A dedicated website kidtober.com.au and Facebook page were developed to promote 75 free events offered by 34 different local organisations.

2,500 KIDtober Calendars were printed and distributed to all children in local schools. The back of the calendar featured a revised list of '50 things to do in and around Port Pirie' predominantly featuring things families could do together in COVID-safe ways such as making and flying kites, designing your own scavenger hunt, and catching and releasing tadpoles in creeks in the Southern Flinders.

17 'Virtual' events were offered including bedtime stories. Local professional film maker Joby Connor of Big Day Productions provided substantial in-kind sponsorship filming virtual tours of a police car and the fire station and cooking sessions with local stars Lyn and Sal of My Kitchen Rules fame, and building projects with Daniel and Jade from The Block.

KIDtober is a very successful partnership between Uniting Country SA, local businesses, sporting clubs, other service providers, State and Local Governments and the community working together for country people.



75 free events



2500 smiles*

*KIDtober Calendars!



17 virtual events



Foster Care

Uniting Country SA (UCSA) delivers Foster Care Services which support foster carers to look after children in their care.

The services provide education and other practical supports which maximize a foster carers ability to create a safe and stable environment for children in their care.

Last year, UCSA supported 108 foster care households who collectively provided care to 131 children in general care and a further 6 children who required specialist care placements due to having more complex needs. Across the financial year the foster carers were also supported to prioritize self-care by accessing a total of 347 nights of respite care.

The Foster Care team plans events throughout the year to enable connections and networking for workers, carers, children and young people.

Despite COVID 19, the teams hosted a group of foster carers and the children and young people in their care, to a fun day at Redwing Farm located at Weetulta on the York Peninsula. The day saw 116 carers and children have fun and enjoy activities.

This event brought together workers, foster carers, children and young people from across the Yorke and Mid North and Far North regions of SA to connect with each other, share stories, laugh and play and develop deeper connections within and across families.

Following the event, Foster Carers were asked to complete a feedback form, below are some of the comments:

"We think Redwing Farm is a great venue. Kids had fun visiting the animals."

"Fantastic venue. Family friendly and child friendly. Venue staff were great too."

"I think that this space worked really well for the fun day. The lawn area and games set out were great for the kids to run around and the seating area was well suited."

"I really enjoyed the food that was available. I think there was enough choice to suit everyone and the cupcakes were AMAZING!"

"I think that this space worked really well for the fun day. The lawn area and games set out were great for the kids to run around and the seating area was well suited."

"The food was enjoyable, plenty of variety, fresh and we enjoyed the choice of hot or cold. Lots of laughter and fun between children, carers and staff which was lovely to see."



Community Centre Placemaker Projects

The Port Pirie Community Centre and the Peterborough Community Hub provide unique services to the communities they are located in, helping connect people to Uniting Country SA (UCSA), other service providers and each other.

These sites have become focal points, bringing people together and providing a sense of community.

In 2020, both sites were successful in gaining a grant from Community Centers SA which were funded by the Department of Human Services. These grants provided one off funding for “placemaking” to update the look of each site. Placemaking is a process where community or public spaces are designed to be healthy, happy, and inclusive of all people.

Each site took a different direction with the grant to solve issues identified by a team of local staff, volunteers, and community members.

The Peterborough team focused on updating the sites colour scheme and entryways. The site used UCSA's blue and white colour palette to improve site visibility from the street. Landscaping and bunting was used to highlight the entrance and three signs were placed to clearly identify the site and the services available.

The Port Pirie site focused on signage and entryways, with attention placed on ensuring that the site was identifiable at a glance. This took the form of increased signage at the site advertising the services available. The team also worked to ensure that the entryway was easily identifiable and that the landscaping was safe and accessible.

Both sites launched the changes at separate ceremonies held in May. They were attended by local dignitaries, UCSA staff and volunteers, community members, and guests from the Department of Human Services and Community Centre's SA.



The Children's Contact Service (CCS)

The Children's Contact Service (CCS) provides supervised contact sessions and changeovers at Whyalla and Port Augusta sites to assist children in seeing family members they otherwise wouldn't be able to see.

This service provides a safe space for children to spend time and develop a relationship with parents that they don't live with. The CCS services the regions from the far north to far west including both the York and Eyre peninsulas.

Initially developed in response to COVID-19 restrictions, CCS created a procedure for using video conferencing to help connect parents to their children for court ordered supervised sessions when separated by vast distances. This service was piloted in February by a separated family with a four-year-old son. The parents are living six hours apart from one another and neither party possessed a driver's license or had access to transportation to allow for visitation. The video conversations were proposed as a temporary solution while transportation hurdles were overcome.

Uniting Country SA (UCSA) has since facilitated 8 virtual supervised sessions, allowing this 4-year-old boy to 'see' his father for the first time in a year. Every session, the 4-year-old has spent nearly 40 minutes interacting with his Dad via Zoom. It's been humbling to witness the little boy's face light up while he excitedly shows his Dad nearly every toy he has. Dad's cried tears of joy after each session as he's felt so overwhelmed seeing his son and having the opportunity to build that relationship. Dad has expressed how grateful he is for the opportunity, as well as the support and encouragement he had. The child and his Dad have now even been able to spend time together face-to-face, building from the virtual foundation established by the CCS.

Through this service UCSA has been able to refine and produce a finalised procedure for supervised virtual sessions which are now being promoted to agencies and families the organisation works with all over the state.



National School Chaplaincy Program (NCSP)

The National School Chaplaincy Program's purpose is "to support the wellbeing of students through pastoral care services and through strategies to support the wellbeing of the broader school community (based on the requirements of the school community)".

The Uniting Country SA (UCSA) team of Pastoral Care Workers has continued to grow. At the beginning of 2019, the agency was providing this service to five schools, however UCSA now services 12 schools across the service region – three of which are new for the 2021 year.

The continued expansion of the program is testament to the amazing work being undertaken by the committed team of Pastoral Care workers in regional and remote schools.

The Pastoral Care team work one-to-one with students; running specialised groups around emotional literacy; emotional regulation; mindfulness; self-esteem; lunchtime activities; excursion attendance; community links and events; breakfast clubs and more.

UCSA has been able to provide innovative and responsive approaches to ensure that remote and regional schools, such as Andamooka Primary School and Peterborough High School, receive regular and consistent service through online weekly contact.

Intermittent face to face visits also occur at least once a term.

This online servicing model is unique, the first of its kind and after 12 months in practice is showing that with creative and innovative approaches, the UCSA National School Chaplaincy Program works well with schools to support country people.

The work undertaken in our service region is tailor made for each school community. All Pastoral Care Workers resonate with Maya Angelou who states, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel".

"Robyn has been working with us at Peterborough High School for the past year. As the Student Wellbeing Leader, Robyn's support has been invaluable to me.

Being in a rural community, I found it difficult to refer students to support services and was finding that I did not have the time to support the students as much as was needed. Having regular access to Robyn through video conferences has given the students the extra level of support that they required.

It has alleviated pressure from my role and allowed me to be more effective with my time. Robyn quickly formed positive relationships with the students, and they look forward to their regular meetings. Robyn provides face to face individual and group sessions twice per term. This has been useful in building relationships and providing for those students who prefer to meet face to face. We have a few students who don't want to access the online meetings but request to join in with group face to face activities. We are grateful for the support of UCSA and Robyn for the supports that we currently receive."

Esther McCann,
Student Wellbeing Leader
Peterborough High School

ELMO Software Expansion

The ability to provide a suitably qualified and experienced workforce is a critical factor for Uniting Country SA and Uniting Country Housing (UCSA/UCH).

Over the past 12 months, UCSA/UCH has expanded their Human Resources information systems so that employees have an end to end electronic work life cycle.

The suite of modules associated with this expansion range from the Learning and Course Builder modules, purchased in 2017 through to the inclusion of Onboarding, Performance, HR Core and Recruitment all purchased in 2020. More recently, the organisation has purchased Survey, Payroll, Rostering and Time Attendance modules for implementation over the following year.

The additional modules have enabled UCSA/UCH to replace many paper-driven manual processes with online record-keeping practices, effectively removing the need for paper-based HR and payroll personnel files.

The ELMO suite manages an employee's work life-cycle electronically from their initial recruitment phase, during their ongoing employment, through to their final offboarding phase. It provides a consistent, user-friendly experience to all staff and being cloud-based technology, can be accessed from anywhere at any time.

Overall, the expansion of the ELMO suite has allowed UCSA/UCH to streamline processes, capture and track mandatory employment requirements, effectively maintain training information and provide instant, real-time statistics and data as needed. The result of which has improved the organisation's ability to maintain quality and internal and external audit compliance which allows our staff to be able to spend more time caring for country people.



228,364

automatic email notifications sent by ELMO since inception



76%

of employees have completed their core competency training



238

Average logins per day across the organisation



155

job vacancy requisitions raised since September 2020



2,723

external training certificates uploaded since inception





See the ad made in partnership
with Flinders University by
scanning the QR code



Volunteering Advertisement Project

In 2020 UCSA had the opportunity to work with Flinders University to develop a volunteering advertisement for the organisation, as part of the universities Community Voices Program.

UCSA sought out this opportunity to ensure that the organization can continue to find volunteers to assist in delivering services. Uniting Country SA's volunteer workforce is a vital resource for the organization, volunteers allow the organization to provide services to the community it otherwise would not be able to. UCSA's volunteers operate the organizations social enterprises and community centers and hubs.

They provide support to UCSA workers through administration duties and support the organization in many other ways.

The theme of the ad was "Everyone has something to offer" and showcases the variety of opportunities available to volunteers at UCSA. Showing people of different backgrounds, cultures, and genders to demonstrate anyone can volunteer.

Developed over nine months, the advertisement was developed, filmed and edited entirely by film students as their final year project. It launched in early 2021 as the centerpiece of a campaign to recruit more volunteers. It accompanied a redesign of the Volunteering webpage.



152 Volunteers

- 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 111 female, 41 male



283 hours

average per volunteer per year



43,000 hours

worked per year



All Staff Day 2020

Keeping people connected, especially over large geographical regions, is always a priority for Uniting Country SA and Uniting Country Housing (USCA/UCH). With over 260 staff and 150 volunteers, it can be easy for people to lose this connection, especially during a time of crisis like COVID-19.

USCA/UCH overcomes this with the annual celebration All Staff Day. All Staff Day is an opportunity to strengthen connections with other staff located outside of their regular programs and sites. It is also an opportunity to come together and celebrate the excellent work which is undertaken every day.

Staff leave the event feeling rewarded and with an increased sense of belonging. The additional knowledge gained from networking is a vital resource, allowing people to work together across programs and sites, helping USCA/UCH to better support country people.

The pandemic presented challenges for the day which required adaptation by USCA/UCH to ensure that the event was COVID safe by holding a "Virtual All Staff Day".



The virtual event provided staff with an opportunity to enhance existing connections whilst building new connections.

The elements of the day included filming content that would normally be seen in person and encouraging staff to work together to come up with site based, interactive activities which engaged the audience. By encouraging people to be creative and giving them the resources to do so, staff were able to work together to celebrate the day in a safe way. Given the large number of staff, the event reinforced existing working relationships and also introduced staff who had not previously met.

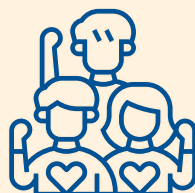
Whilst the event could not entirely replicate a face to face All Staff Day, the virtual event provided staff with an opportunity to enhance existing connections whilst building new connections, the result of which was to be able to better deliver services to clients throughout country SA consistent with the theme of working together for country people.



First virtual staff day



265 Staff



152 Volunteers



Financials

2020/2021

Uniting Country SA Ltd and Controlled Entities
Summarised Financial Statement for the year ended 30 June 2021

Financial Position	2021	2020
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	13,336,809	11,782,324
Trade and other receivables	488,065	477,896
Other current assets	134,239	89,197
Total Current Assets	13,959,113	12,349,417
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Other financial assets	1,562,481	1,289,240
Rights of use assets	1,357,289	1,458,730
Property, Plant and Equipment	18,097,212	14,779,583
Total Non-Current Assets	21,016,982	17,527,553
Total Assets	34,976,095	29,876,970
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	1,034,452	1,289,033
Government Grants in Advance	5,793	-
Contract Liabilities	2,644,106	1,858,437
Lease Liabilities	506,086	353,265
Provisions	2,382,005	2,391,534
Total Current Liabilities	6,572,442	5,892,269
NON -CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease Liabilities	789,791	1,120,799
Provisions	332,708	353,320
Liability for Government Assets	53,730	90,683
Total Non-Current Liabilities	1,176,229	1,564,802
Total Liabilities	7,748,671	7,457,071
NET ASSETS	27,227,424	22,419,899
Reserves	2,525,892	1,471,888
Capital Grants	12,673,437	10,191,237
Retained earnings	12,028,095	10,756,774
TOTAL EQUITY	27,227,424	22,419,899

Profit and Loss

	2021	2020
Revenue	38,931,343	31,091,716
Employee benefits expense	(18,191,510)	(17,300,970)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(696,262)	(583,910)
Amortisation Expense – right of use asset	(397,192)	(363,569)
Other expenses	(18,375,058)	(12,464,872)
Profit for the year	1,271,321	378,395

Comprehensive Income

	2021	2020
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	1,271,321	378,395
Other comprehensive income/ (loss) after income tax		
Net Gain/(Loss) on revaluation of Financial Assets	-	-
Net Gain/(Loss) on revaluation of Land and Buildings	1,054,004	-
Receipt of Capital Grants	2,482,200	-
Total other comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	3,536,204	-
Total comprehensive income attributable to members of the entity	4,807,525	378,395

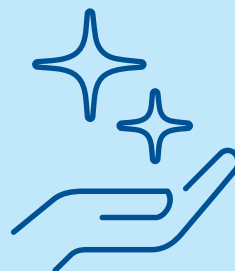
The summarised financial statements have been derived from the Association's full financial accounts which are available on our website ucsa.org.au.

Uniting Country Housing - at a glance

Uniting Country Housing (UCH) provide accommodation to individuals and families who have limited access to affordable housing.

Uniting Country Housing is guided by the values of

- + Respect and compassion for all people
- + Belief in the innate worth of all people
- + Justice for all, particularly for those less advantaged in our society
- + Being of service to others
- + Restlessness for what could be
- + Non-violence and peace



By working together with these agencies UCH staff are able to ensure a high percentage of tenancies are successful which ultimately results in clients securing longer term, stable accommodation options.

A wide variety of housing programs provide targeted support for those who are experiencing housing issues as a result of:

domestic violence

homelessness

exiting custodial arrangements

relocating from remote areas for employment and education which is specific for Aboriginal people

mental health

lead toxicity in which case those affected have access to housing whilst their property is being cleaned through the targeted lead abatement program

a disability which requires supported accommodation

UCH staff work in partnership with various stakeholders including teams based within programs for Domestic Violence and Youth Homelessness, SA Housing Authority, Centacare, Community Mental Health, Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Service, the Salvation Army, West Coast Youth Service, Yarredi Services and the Port Pirie Environmental Health Centre.

By working together with these agencies UCH staff are able to ensure a high percentage of tenancies are successful which ultimately results in clients securing longer term, stable accommodation options.

Employment and Education Housing Program

The Employment and Education Housing Program (EEH) provides a worker to support individuals and or families who qualify for the service.

To be eligible to receive this service the clients must be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who is relocating to Port Augusta or Whyalla from a rural or remote town or community to participate in employment or educational activities.

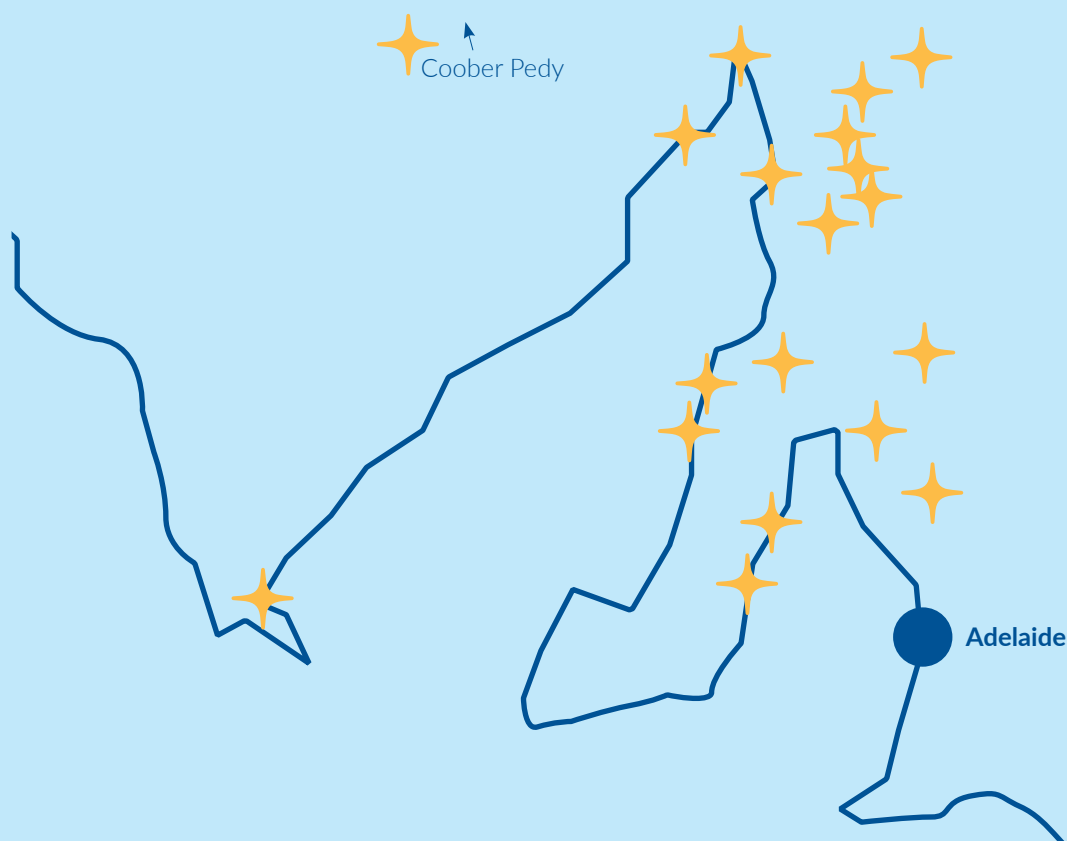
During the financial year the UCH Support Worker provided support to 12 tenancies with 7 located in Port Augusta and 5 in Whyalla. Of those assisted during the year there was one stand out tenancy which had been successful over a five-year period.

The client and their family wanted to explore options for home ownership which was facilitated through the support worker who was able to provide the relevant information which would be required to secure a mortgage and successfully purchase their own property.

UCH staff provide support either directly, or through a referral process in conjunction with organisations who are providing case management to tenants. Through an intensive support framework and early intervention strategies the tenants acquire the individual skills which are required to support their tenancy.

Snapshot for 2020-2021

Properties are currently located in Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Coober Pedy, Crystal Brook, Moonta, Wallaroo, Wirrabara, Booleroo Centre, Gladstone, Bute, Clare, Ardrossan, Balaklava, Owen, Orroroo, Port Vincent and Laura.



109

New tenancies
established this
financial year

256

Adults
currently housed

166

Children
currently housed



228

Total number
of properties

215

Total tenancies for
the financial year

19

Number of locations
with properties





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Caring for Country People