



Aboriginal Family Support Services Newsletter

September - October 2014

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AFSS website:
www.afss.com.au

Family matters – Kids safe in culture, not in care



Above: Participants at the Adelaide Forum listen to one of the speakers.

More than 180 people, including community members, staff from non-government and government agencies and other groups, attended the South Australian Family Matters Forum on Wednesday 27 August, held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, Adelaide.

The forum was part of a national initiative of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), supported by AFSS, the South Australian Council of Social Service, Uniting Communities and Child and Family Welfare Association SA.

Numbers attending the forum exceeded expectations (and available chairs!), highlighting the level of concern amongst community members and service providers over the alarming increase in the number of

Aboriginal children in state care (see page 3 of the last AFSS Newsletter for more information).

The day commenced with a Welcome to Country by South Australian Elder, Tauto Sansbury, who shared with those present some of his own personal journey, including the trauma he experienced as a child in state care, and its long lasting effects.

This set the scene for the day's events, which included the opportunity for participants to join in small group discussions covering a diverse but complementary range of topics, including focusing on cultural needs, child protection decision-making, early intervention services, expenditure and more.

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A message from the CEO

Once again it's been a busy couple of months at AFSS, as you will see in the pages of this newsletter.

We were very pleased to be heavily involved with the SNAICC "Family Matters - Kids safe in culture, not in care" forum, held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor Hotel in Adelaide, on Wednesday 27 August.

This was followed by a community meeting in Port Augusta on Friday 29 August. Attendance at both meetings exceeded expectations, and feedback received has been very positive.

As a result of the forum a working group is being formed to progress matters to help address the unacceptably high number of Aboriginal children being separated from their families. We will keep you updated on the progress of the working group in future editions of the AFSS Newsletter.

Special thanks to two of our Port Augusta staff, Charles Jackson and Elizabeth Grace, for their hard work in helping at the events.

Staff have attended extensive training in solutions-based casework, which is being adopted by Families SA. In addition a number of staff attended the Unique International Trauma Conference: Understanding the Basis of Change and Recovery, in Melbourne in the first week of August. The Conference provided valuable information from a number of experienced international professionals.

Continuing professional development for our staff is of the utmost importance, to ensure that we are kept abreast of the latest practices as well as benefiting from the knowledge and experience of national and international experts. This enables us to continue to provide the best possible care for the children and young people in our care and service to the Aboriginal community.

*Sharron Williams
Chief Executive Officer*



Be deadly – be money smart!

As you know it's getting towards the end of the year, with only a little way to go until we're all stressing about Christmas. During my time as a Financial Counsellor I've developed a library of resources for both clients and myself. Part of my role requires some innovative approaches to money management and applying it within our programs, and I've looked at many ways to introduce these to our unique community in Coober Pedy.

Thanks to the deadly Meschelle Darr (Stronger Families) and Jennifer Riessen (Safe Pathways), we are now joining forces and running a women's group each Monday fortnight to provide an informative and creative program our ladies can enjoy and learn valuable information on issues that affect them, their families and communities.

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Above: Left to right, Toni Williams, Natasha Lennon, Shirley Williams, Diane Edwards, Paula Williams and Yvonne Roesch enjoying their time together at the Monday women's group.

Family matters – Kids safe in culture, not in care

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The information collected in the discussion groups was collated by the facilitators and shared with the whole forum; the first part of the day focused on identifying the problems and challenges, the second part on possible solutions.

The sensitive topic of Aboriginal children in care definitely touched the hearts of those present, prompting tears and painful memories for many. However, the groups always presented clear, educated and practical points and suggestions. The expertise and knowledge in the room, shared by people who have experience in the field, the community and the home, provided all the ingredients for an empowering day.

The Adelaide forum was complemented by a community consultation, held in Port Augusta on Friday 29 August, which was also well attended by around 40 participants, once again calling for an extra supply of chairs.

Participants included representatives from regional agencies including Uniting Care Wesley Country SA, Department



Above: Adelaide facilitators Charlie Jackson – AFSS Port Augusta Community Development Worker, Leila Plush – AFSS Cultural Consultant, Sarah Decrea and Deb Moyle.

for Education and Child Development, Centacare and more. It was also great to have members of the local Aboriginal community contributing, including some of our AFSS carers and team members.

Gemma Unwin, Manager of Family Matters, SNAICC, is collating the information collected from these valuable forums and meetings, from which SNAICC will formulate recommendations.

Moving forward, working groups

are being formed in each state to propose plans and develop pathways to both facilitate much needed change to the system and work towards the common goal of reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care. Twenty participants from the Adelaide forum have volunteered for the South Australian working group.

More information?

It is important that the final report accurately reflects the discussions at the Family Matters Forum in Adelaide and the Community Meeting in Port Augusta. SNAICC will be emailing a draft report to everyone who attended for their feedback and input.

After all the comments are incorporated the final report will be sent to all participants and uploaded onto the SNAICC website, www.snaicc.org.au so those who attended, if you haven't already received it, expect to see the draft report in your in-box very soon!



Above: AFSS CEO and SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams, with Professor Fiona Arney, Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection.



Training focuses on Solution-Based Casework

Throughout September, AFSS joined other NGOs in working with Dr Dana Christensen, from the University of Louisville, to learn more about Solution-Based Casework (SBC), and how it will become the model of choice for child welfare casework in South Australia.

Dr Christensen is an internationally recognised expert in the field of child welfare casework.

According to the developers of SBC, “SBC provides a common conceptual map for child welfare case workers, supervisors, and treatment providers to help focus everyone’s efforts on clear and agreed upon outcomes” (SBC website).

In 2013 Families SA decided to adopt SBC, and engaged Dr. Dana Christensen, the main developer of the SBC approach, to facilitate the implementation of SBC in South Australia, and to provide training to the NGOs.

The AFSS Stronger Families Program will begin implementing SBC shortly, with a number of staff already trained in the SBC approach. Remaining Stronger Families staff will be trained in coming months. AFSS foster care, residential care, and community wellbeing staff will also participate in SBC training in the future, to ensure a consistent agency-wide approach.

Although AFSS supports the use of SBC, including the strong focus on: the family life cycle, relapse



Above: Bonnie Yates, AFSS Stronger Families Program, Program Support Officer and trained SBC Coach.

prevention, and solution-focused practice, further work will be done in consultation with Families SA and Dr. Christensen, to ensure the approach’s relevance for Aboriginal families and communities. AFSS has a responsibility to develop and utilise models of best practice for Aboriginal families and communities, ensuring an Aboriginal focus and perspective is maintained on all issues relating to AFSS services and practice (AFSS Strategic Plan, 2011-2016).

You can find out more about SBC at www.solutionbasedcasework.com

Be deadly – be money smart!

Continued from page 2

Our first program afternoon saw a great turn out and we had a cook up of marlu (kangaroo) stew and a yarn about ways that they can spend less on shopping days by looking at alternative ways to shop, such as online shopping and bulk shopping, to get their food each fortnight and save some money, which is a big issue in remote areas, as we pay more than others due to our isolated location.

All the ladies had a great time and were very enthusiastic about the program. We invited them to be more proactive in what happens in the program and play an active role in the decisions about the structure of the sessions, such as guest speakers and activities.

I also get to travel to Oodnadatta and attend the women’s shed to deliver the program there, with Jennifer Riessen.

Since the first program day we have had more sessions with the women on selling their art, knowing their rights and the cost of art supplies, and incorporating it into a budget. Guest speakers have included a visit from the Coober Pedy Health Service to talk to the ladies about diabetes and affordable ideas for meals, and blood sugar level checks.

As I’ve already mentioned, Christmas is on its way and we all want to know about making our money go further. If you need ideas and tips on saving and budgeting for these times of the year check out the Money Smart website, moneysmart.gov.au a free website that helps you make the most of your money. It also has some excellent tools such as budget planners, retirement planners and mortgage calculators. Remember, *be deadly – be money smart!*

*Leeanne Witenko
Financial Counsellor, AFSS Coober Pedy*

Little Bags of Hope

Bringing a little bit of hope in the shape of a bag

What are Little Bags of Hope?

The brochure states: "Little Bags of Hope is a not-for-profit charity who aims to provide backpacks of both essential and fun items for children entering the foster care system, kinship care and residential care facilities on the Eyre Peninsula. These backpacks help make what is a traumatic time just a little easier."

Both the Ceduna and Port Lincoln AFSS offices have been grateful to receive backpacks for all the children and young people entering foster care and non-family based care.

The contents of the bags are tailored to the child's age and gender and contain essential and



Above: LittleBags of Hope provided for AFSS children and young people.

personal items as well as things for comfort and fun.

Just recently we've received a box of small Little Bags of Hope designed to give to children and young people on arrival in their placement before the personalised backpack arrives.

The founder of Little Bags of Hope, Catherine Higgins, who is a foster carer herself, contacted AFSS Ceduna office in 2013 advising of her charity and since then all children and young

people in out of home care have received a backpack.

The bags and contents are very much valued by their recipients and AFSS would like to thank Catherine and all helpers for the great work they do.

If you would like further information and/or find out how to donate to this fantastic charity please email

littlebagssofhope@hotmail.com

*Katharine Micka
Manager, AFSS Ceduna*

Foster carer info sessions

Come along to one of our information sessions and find out more about the rewards and challenges of being an AFSS foster carer.

Where: **Enfield Community Centre**

540 Regency Road,
Enfield

When: Wed 22 October,
6.30pm - 8.30pm

Where: **Gowrie Training Centre**

43 Dew Street,
Thebarton

When: Wed 19 November,
6.30pm - 8.30pm

For more information, please contact Linda on 8205 1518.

We look forward to seeing you!



Foster Carers needed URGENTLY

Aboriginal Family Support Services is looking for family based carers who are committed to providing safe and culturally appropriate homes for children in need.

You can be single or a couple, with or without children. And whether you're willing to provide emergency, short term, respite or long term care, we'd love to hear from you!

Contact:

Adelaide Linda Dorward linda.dorward@afss.com.au (08) 8205 1500

Ceduna Michelle Naylon michelle.naylon@afss.com.au (08) 8625 3466

Coober Pedy Susie Crisa susie.crisa@afss.com.au (08) 8672 3066

Port Augusta Cara-Lee Mullen caralee.mullen@afss.com.au (08) 8641 0907

Port Lincoln Lee Sutcliffe lee.sutcliffe@afss.com.au (08) 8683 1909



Aboriginal Family Support Services Inc
Together with the community





tips and info for foster carers

bits 'n' pieces is a new section in the AFSS Newsletter designed with our foster carers in mind!

In it you'll find some useful information and news that will help you in your vital role as a carer. We hope you find it interesting and informative.

Dealing with children's behaviours

Behaviours we see in children are really coping mechanisms that children have developed to manage their emotions and the distress that they feel inside.

In this and upcoming issues of the AFSS Newsletter we'll look at some of these behaviours, explain why they are occurring and provide you with tips and information to cope with them.

The material is taken from the "Iceberg Model" fact sheets, used by kind permission of Families SA.

Change

When a child is faced with change – even minor change to their daily routine – they may react negatively.

Problem behaviours may worsen, such as throwing tantrums, becoming defiant or aggressive. A child may simply withdraw or become depressed. The reasons for this are often hidden under the surface.

For most people, changes are accepted and easy to deal with, but children in care have often experienced little predictability; their lives may have been full of uncertainty and little routine, and discipline was probably inconsistent.

To children who have faced these circumstances, change often signifies threat, they become anxious, and this leads to problem behaviours.

Strategies

There are a number of strategies that can help you deal with difficult behaviours that may arise in children in your care brought on by the stress of change.

Keep your patterns for the day consistent and predictable. Make sure the child knows what to expect, as this is very reassuring. Talk about the planned activities for the day. Don't try to teach the child to be flexible by introducing

unnecessary changes; this will be unsettling and will backfire.

Establish routines. Include morning and night time routines with regard to meals, homework, bath and bedtime. If the child knows what to expect it will reduce anxiety and also assist them to learn independence as they get to know what to do next. Having your schedules shown visually, such as on the fridge or bedroom wall, may be very helpful for some children.

Prepare the child for change. Talk to the child and reassure them about future changes well before they happen. This may include things such as new children coming to stay, the arrival of visitors, upcoming events and even slight changes that need to be made to their daily routine. This will help the child to prepare themselves and to feel safe.

Explain why the change is needed. Tell the child why the change is occurring. This helps them to understand that change is not random.

Repetition. You may need to have repeated discussions with the child about any upcoming changes to minimise their anxiety. This can be time consuming and frustrating, but it plays an important role in reducing the child's anxiety and helps to prevent escalation in behaviour problems.

Bushfire season – be prepared!

Now that summer's around the corner, bushfire season is also upon us.

Bushfires don't just happen out in the bush – they can occur in outer metropolitan suburbs as well as country locations – so it pays to have an action plan in place.

The CFS has put together a fact sheet to help you be ready in case of emergency so that you can do everything possible to keep you and your family safe.

Pre-prepare and practice a checklist, listing what everyone's actions will be in the event of a bushfire, and get the children involved where appropriate.

Include simple things that can be acted upon immediately. Divide your list into things to do inside and outside the house before, during and after the bushfire has passed. The information below will assist if you're staying to defend your property or are unable to leave.

Remember, property can be replaced but lives cannot; if you intend to leave in plenty of time, make sure that you do so either early in the morning or even the night before.

As the fire front approaches:

Inside

- ❑ Alert family and neighbours
- ❑ Bring pets inside
- ❑ Dress in protective clothing
- ❑ Shut all doors and windows.
- ❑ Fill bath, sinks and buckets etc with water
- ❑ Place wet towels in any crevices, such as gaps under doors etc
- ❑ Take curtains down and push furniture away from windows

- ❑ Place ladder in ceiling access ready to inspect ceiling cavity.

Outside

- ❑ Remove last minute combustibles from around house including flammable blinds, wooden furniture and doormats etc
- ❑ Start pump for fire hose and/or roof sprinklers. (Make sure to manage your water supply well, so that there is sufficient water left for when the fire front actually arrives)
- ❑ Wet down all areas on side of house facing the direction of the fire
- ❑ Dampen window ledges letting water penetrate any gaps
- ❑ Plug drains and fill gutters with water
- ❑ Wet down any pre-determined problem areas
- ❑ Patrol for spot fires and extinguish.

Information from CFS Fact Sheet – What to do in the event of a bushfire (2009).

Share your news!

If you have any ideas or information that you'd like to share with other carers on these pages, such as things that you've found helpful, special events or activities that have worked well, we'd love to hear from you and publish your story (your identity will be kept confidential).

Simply write to:
Grace Nelligan, AFSS,
134 Weymouth Street,
Adelaide SA 5000 or email
grace.nelligan@afss.com.au.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Children have rights!

Becky Matthews, Foster Carer Support Worker at AFSS metro office, is a champion for the Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care.

“Children need to have a voice,” says Becky, “they have opinions and if they're not happy with something they have a right to be heard. We're making decisions about their lives.”

Becky encourages all AFSS carers to obtain a copy of the Charter, and also the booklet *about being in care*, prepared specifically for children and young people in care by young people in care.

If you would like to know more, Becky would be very happy to meet you for a chat about the booklets and also the rights of children and young people in care.

Becky's located in the AFSS Adelaide office at 134 Weymouth Street, Adelaide,

If you'd like to meet with her, simply ring 8205 1500 to arrange an appointment.

Alternatively, if you would like to receive a copy of the booklets, Becky will be happy to post them to you.



Just for kids

You could win a prize by colouring in this picture!

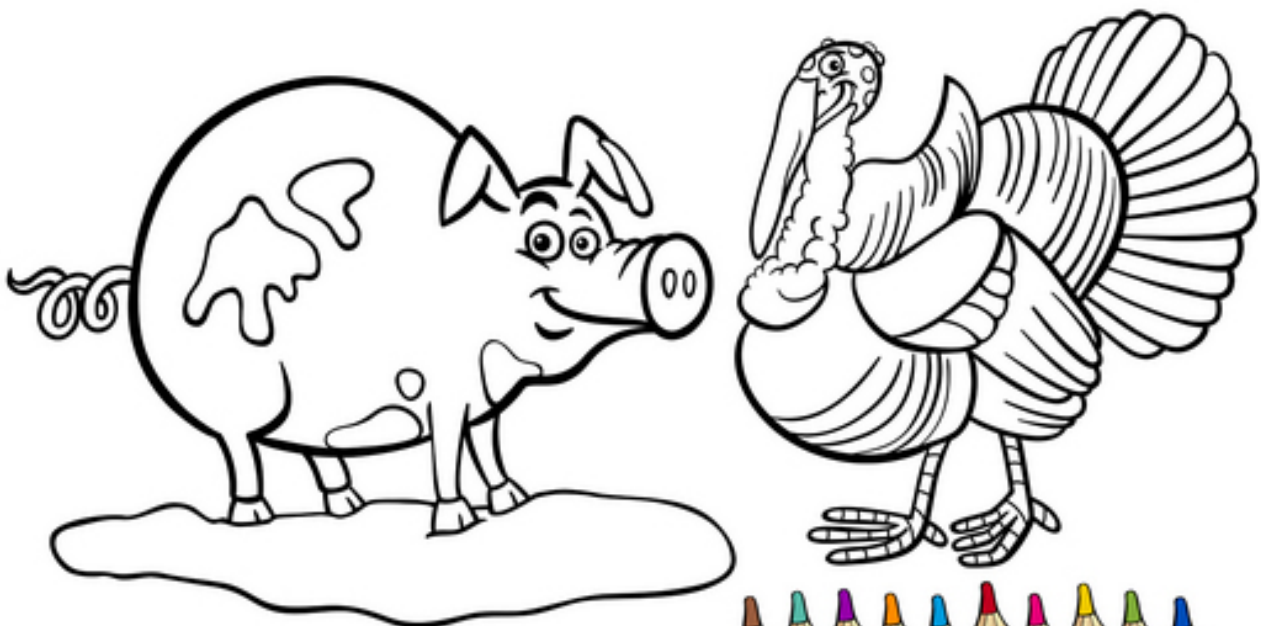
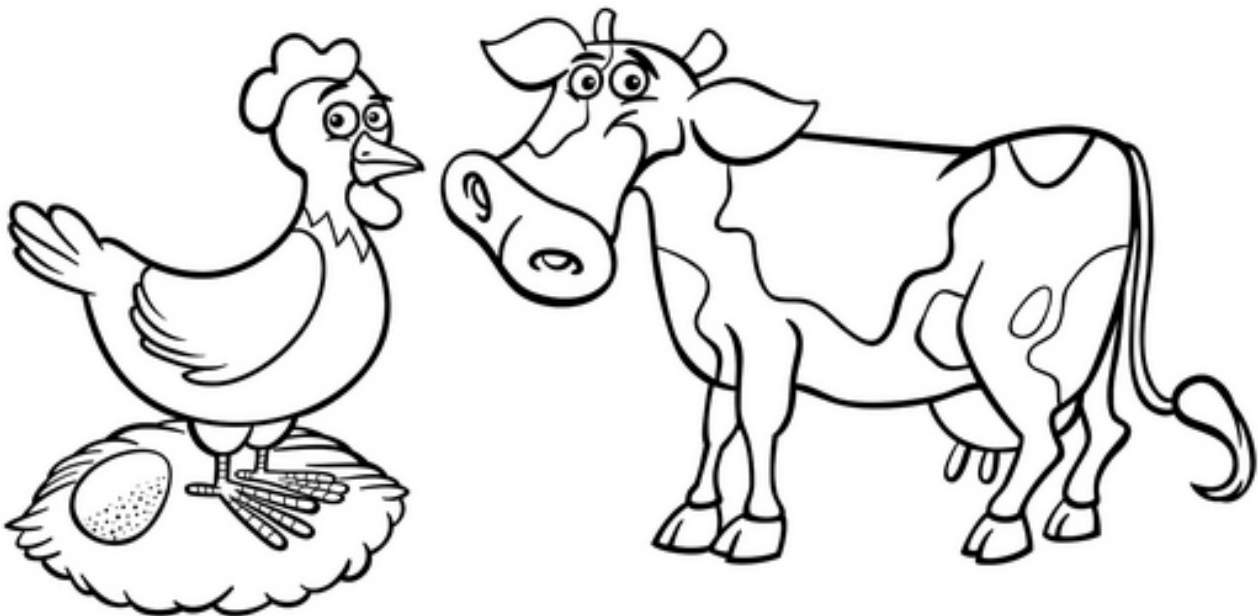
Now that Spring is here it's show time! The Royal Adelaide Show was held in September and there are also lots of country shows around South Australia – you may even have been to one this year!

At all the shows you'll find animal displays, so our colouring competition this time features a picture of farm animals.

You could be one of two lucky winners of a Reconciliation game or an AFSS goodie bag if we receive your picture by November 20.

Send your picture to AFSS Colouring Competition, AFSS, 134 Waymouth Street, Adelaide SA 5000.

The two winning entries for our last colouring competition, from two of our talented AFSS children, are shown on the next page. Well done and congratulations!





Colouring competition winners

The two lovely pictures above are from the winners of our colouring competition. We hope you enjoy your prizes!

Special lunch for our foster carers during Foster Carer Week

As part of the Foster Carer Week celebrations, the Out of Home Care-Family Based Care team organised a special lunch for our foster carers.

It was held on Wednesday 20 August at the Watermark Hotel in Glenelg in appreciation of the care, support and dedicated work in caring for our foster children.

It was a wonderful opportunity for carers to meet and greet, share stories and welcome new carers on board.

The Out of Home Care-Family Based Care Team also enjoyed meeting and mixing with carers, providing an informal setting for a good yarning session.



Above: AFSS staff and foster carers join together in a special lunch to recognise the dedicated work of our foster carers in caring for our foster children.

Acknowledgement

In the July-August edition of the AFSS Newsletter (page 3) we summarised some data from the Office of the Guardian and also included a precis of another article (not written by AFSS) suggesting that Australia is creating another Stolen Generation.

The information presented by AFSS in our article is factual and does raise concerns for AFSS about the high removal rate of Aboriginal children and young people from their families.

Notwithstanding this, AFSS wishes to acknowledge the great work of our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carer households across South Australia who open their homes to Aboriginal children and young people who are removed from family and community.



AFSS Gambling Help Service program updated



AFSS Gambling Help Service recognises the need in the community to support Aboriginal people and their significant others, where gambling has become, or could potentially develop, into a problem.

The program has recently been updated to provide even better support, education and awareness about how best to help Aboriginal people with issues around problem gambling.



AFSS recognises that education and awareness are fundamental in supporting Aboriginal people who have gambling problems.

This can only be effectively achieved within the broader context of educating families and communities, agencies, clubs and hotels.

We aim to build resilience by:

- Educating individuals about gambling
- Advocating, supporting and referring service users
- Identifying risk factors for clients.

We promote connectedness by:

- Targeting community

services to raise awareness of gambling behaviours and associated risks

- Providing education and awareness for family and friends of gamblers
- Providing support and advice to family and friends of problem gamblers.

We undertake community awareness and education to:

- Increase awareness of AFSS Gambling Help Service to community groups
- Promote culturally appropriate understanding of gambling to hotels and clubs.

Would you like to find out more?

If you, a significant other or family member have problems with gambling, or know someone who is having problems with gambling, contact AFSS Gambling Help Service for a friendly and confidential chat.

We're just a phone call away. Call:

- Adelaide, Tony (08) 8205 1500
- Berri, Norman (08) 8582 3192
- Port Augusta, Charles (08) 8641 0907
- Murray Bridge, Bronte 0418 499 649.



Funded through the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund



aha|sa Australian Hotels Association (AHA)



Government of South Australia Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

AFSS offices join in R U OK? day activities

September is dedicated to remind people to ask their family, their friends and colleagues the question, R U OK? Even a conversation could change someone's life who might be struggling.

The Ceduna Office held an R U OK? Day morning tea on 11 September. AFSS staff from all programs were invited to come together to talk about the importance of the wellbeing of our colleagues and ourselves. A decorated office (R U OK? balloons and conversation starters) and home made scones both sweet and savoury, as well as other healthy alternatives, made it easy to start the conversation – "A conversation could change a life".



Above: Ceduna staff enjoy the healthy spread provided for R U OK? Day.

The Ceduna staff have always recognised the importance of looking after each other and are very aware of each other's wellbeing. It's essential to ask the question R U OK? regularly and not just once a year, and small events like this bring us all even closer together.

Coober Pedy AFSS office extended invitations to organisations for a morning tea for the event.

Warren Guppy, AFSS Regional Manager, welcomed everyone and spoke briefly about the R U OK? campaign. A morning tea was provided for those who were present, hot beverages, a bite to eat and a chat with everyone. It was great to see a number of people networking together.



Above: The Coober Pedy R U OK? Day morning tea provided a great networking opportunity.

Each year staff of the AFSS Port Lincoln Office also come together to participate in R U OK Day. Staff this year took time from their busy schedules to have coffee and cake at the local café.

Although staff in Port Lincoln support each other daily, the day allows everyone to reflect on the importance of each other's wellbeing and that at times we can all have struggles in life and that there are people that will listen and support us through.

The Port Augusta R U OK? event on Thursday 10 September was a huge success with over 100 people in the community walking down the main street to show their support, and generating awareness, and a lot of smiles, for suicide prevention.

Some of the AFSS team members participated and, along with another 100 or so walkers, stood together on the Port Augusta foreshore to spell out the letters R U OK? which could be seen from the Port Augusta bridge.



Above: AFSS Port Lincoln staff, left - right, David Spearen, Tiffany Rowsell, Glenys Nowak and Lee Sutcliffe.

Several AFSS Port Augusta team members attended a Suicide Prevention Workshop earlier that week, and learned that the current statistics relating to suicide deaths were appalling, particularly for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Staff in the Adelaide office shared an R U OK? morning tea and were pleased to welcome Darren McGeachie, a senior consultant from ACCESS Programs, to provide information about the services offered to staff through ACCESS, providing help and support with any problems or issues they may be facing in their home or working life.

If you'd like more information about R U OK? Day, or how you may be able to help someone you know, why not visit the R U OK? website at www.ruok.org.au





Where to find us

Adelaide

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

Berri

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

Christies Beach

30 Taunton Parade
Christies Beach SA 5165
Phone (08) 8326 3901

Smithfield

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

Ceduna

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

Coober Pedy

Lot 223 Giles Street
Coober Pedy SA 5723
Phone (08) 8672 3066

Murray Bridge

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

Port Augusta

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

Port Lincoln

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

Staff attend unique International Trauma Conference in Melbourne



Above: AFSS staff Becky Matthews, Jody Lynch, Cindy Blackstock (guest speaker), Wendy Wicks and Rebecca Wiles smile for the camera during a break in the conference.

A number of AFSS staff had the opportunity to attend the Unique International Trauma Conference: Understanding the Basis of Change and Recovery, in Melbourne in the first week of August.

The Conference provided valuable information from different experienced international professionals.

Guest speakers included Dan Hughes, Cindy Blackstock, Kim Golding, Allan Schore, Pat Ogden, Stephen Porges, Dan Siegel, Sue Carter and Ed Tronick.

Each speaker held forums in relation to neurobiology, trauma, attachment and therapeutic intervention when working with children, young people and families.

Cindy Blackstock is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. Cindy was very inspirational discussing how children and young people need to be heard and how communities have pulled together to assist children and young people getting

their voice heard. Cindy's key interest and passion is exploring and addressing, the causes of disadvantage for Aboriginal children and families and promoting equitable and culturally based interventions.

During the conference organisations had the opportunity to present themed papers in relation to Child Protection, Trauma informed out of home care, Trauma informed systems, working with children and families. This provided a good insight to how other organisations work from state to state, due to legislation being slightly different in practice and policy.

The staff who attended are looking forward to using the knowledge gained during the conference in their work supporting children, young people and families.

In the next few editions of the AFSS Newsletter we will share with you some of the learnings that were presented by the speakers.

Next edition: Allan. N. Schore – Early Right Brain Regulation and the Relational Origins of Emotional Wellbeing.