

Children, Youth and Families Quarterly update

It takes a community

ISSUE 5
July-September 2022



"Every child, in every community, needs a fair go!"

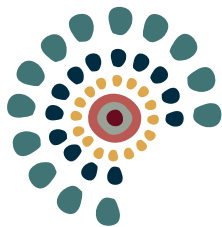
About Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ has a long and proud history of care. Active across more than 100 local communities in Queensland and Victoria for almost 140 years, we are an organisation dedicated to innovative and holistic support.

By empowering people to live hope-filled, meaningful lives, we are able to truly live our purpose—to bring the light of Christ into communities.

Through our local churches, and care and support services, we are able to assist tens of thousands of people each year.

Through inclusive, caring, compassionate environments that meet individual needs without discrimination or prejudice, we are helping to build a community where everyone is welcome.



Acknowledgement of Country

Churches of Christ acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we stand and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures, hopes and aspirations of First Nations People.

We acknowledge and recognise the resilience of generations of First Nations People and stand with you now and always.

We are committed to walking alongside First Nations People to establish a foundation of trust and to taking meaningful action to preserve, affirm and promote the world's oldest living culture.

Connecting to culture

Churches of Christ Children, Youth and Families consistently creates and ensures opportunities for young people to enhance their cultural connection with their community. Connection to culture and community, and a strong cultural identity, helps young people become resilient adults.

Front Cover: Our team at the Brisbane Child Protection Week Family Fun Day at Orleigh Park in West End.

Director's message.

A message from Director Children, Youth and Families and Housing Services, Mike Folland.



Welcome to our fifth edition of Children, Youth and Families quarterly update. We hope it finds you all safe and well.

Children, Youth and Families restructure

Over the past few months we have made some changes to the way we operate in the interest of delivering better outcomes for our young people and families. We are confident that our new functional-based leadership team will enable us to be agile in adapting to change and delivering on best practice Child-Centred Care. You can find out more about the changes on page four.

Child Protection Week

Throughout September we celebrated Child Protection Week with a number of events, including walks and a family fun day. Throughout the week the Child Protection Week Awards also took place and we were thrilled when one of our foster carer couples, Karen and Darren, from our Ashmore service won! Darren and Karen are incredible foster carers who have set up a Queensland arm of Hope in a Suitcase.

NAIDOC week

Throughout NAIDOC week in July our team members joined together in celebrations to recognise the theme 'Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!'—our call to take braver actions for reconciliation than ever before. Community members, residents, team members and First Nations people gathered together at morning teas, yarning circles and smoking ceremonies throughout the week.

Thank you

Thank you as always for your continuous support of the important work we do in partnership with the Queensland Government to keep children safe and support vulnerable families to thrive in our community.

National Child Protection Week.



Child protection in everybody's business.

The responsibility lies with adults in keeping children safe from harm. All members of society need to play a part in ensuring children are nurtured and safe, and adults are essential in ensuring children's safety and wellbeing.

As a care-based organisation, we interact with children in so many services and communities and we each have a role to play in ensuring they are nurtured and safe at home, at work and in the community.

At Churches of Christ, we are on a journey to becoming a Child Safe organisation and embedding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations across all of our services and communities.

Throughout Child Protection Week we took part in several events including Child Protection Week walks and Family Fun Days.

Stepping out and coming together to raise awareness

During National Child Protection Week our teams coordinated walks at Southport and Bribie Island (*pictured*) to bring people together, increase awareness and raise money.

The three-kilometre walk along the beach at Southport raised funds for Bravehearts, an organisation dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse. Around 40 people attended the walk, including team members from our Ashmore and Daisy Hill offices and a team from Southport Church of Christ. After the walk they enjoyed morning tea with a discussion about child protection.

Another walk was also conducted on Bribie Island, with team members from our Bribie Island Housing

team, Families Together Moreton Bay Intensive Family Support, residents of our Bribie Island Campus, clients and church members. Staff and children from the Bribie Island Community Kindergarten, as well as Uncle Ron (the Elder in residence at the kindergarten) also joined the group for the walk. It provided a great opportunity for everyone to connect and after the walk they enjoyed afternoon tea and learnt about our work in child protection.





Family Fun Day.

During Child Protection Week our Brisbane Kinship Care Service held a Family Fun Day at Orleigh Park in West End.

The event not only acknowledged and celebrated our carer families, it also provided the opportunity for community awareness on the topic of child protection. Over 60 attendees came together and enjoyed a range of fun family activities, a delicious barbeque, fairy floss, popcorn and donuts, which certainly gained the attention of children and community members! The event was a great opportunity to discuss with curious individuals the meaning of child protection and share resources about our work in supporting children and young people, including our focus to support children placed in out-of-home care.

Moreton Bay Foster and Kinship Care Service held their Child Protection Week event on 10 September 2022 at Hope Community Baptist Church. The event was a great success with a large number of our carer families in attendance, along with other families from the community. Attendees enjoyed a jumping castle, petting zoo, face painting, and a wonderful workshop and performance by the Gibbah Gonyah Indigenous dance group.

Child Protection Week Awards.

The child protection industry gathered on Thursday 1 September for the annual Queensland Child Protection Week Awards.

We were proud to have many of our staff, teams and carers nominated, and were thrilled when one of our foster carer couples from our Ashmore service won! Karen and Darren Germon received the Volunteer

Queensland Child Protection Week Award for their work in setting up the Queensland arm of Hope in a Suitcase. The incredible foster carers were nominated by Case Manager Masayo Suzuki.

As foster carers, Karen and Darren were heartbroken to see how many children and young people were removed from their homes with nothing but the clothes on their back, or a few items in a bag.

Determined to give foster children a sense of self-worth and dignity, the couple established the Queensland arm of Hope in a Suitcase Australia, a non-profit organisation run by volunteers that provides children and young people entering foster care with a suitcase of their very own filled with goodies. Things like brand new pyjamas, clothing and toiletries, a book, small toys or activities and a comfort item such as a soft toy and a message that they are loved.

Karen and Darren are extremely passionate about Hope in a Suitcase and their greatest reward is hearing case workers tell of young faces lighting up with joy after realising the beautiful new items are all theirs and come from a community that cares about them.

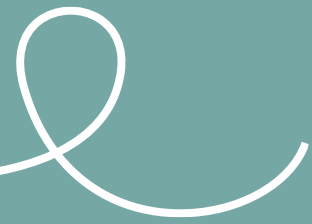
"Raising awareness of Hope in a Suitcase will help us have an even greater impact in our community," Karen and Darren said.

"We are passionate about giving hope, love and joy to vulnerable children who are going through traumatic circumstances beyond their control."

Hope in a Suitcase partners with foster care agencies and case workers to deliver suitcases to the children in foster agencies, hospitals and Child Safety Service Centres.



Get up! Stand up! Show up! Bringing the light to NAIDOC Week 2022.



Throughout NAIDOC week our people joined together in celebrations to recognise the theme 'Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!'—our call to take braver actions for reconciliation than ever before.

Community members, residents, team members and First Nations people gathered together at morning teas, yarning circles and smoking ceremonies throughout the week.

NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and histories and participate in celebrations of the oldest, continuous living culture on earth.

Our South West Fostering Service and Housing Services held a stall at the Ipswich regional NAIDOC event. At the stall, they spent time with children and

young people, helping them to make special badges focused on the 2022 NAIDOC week theme.

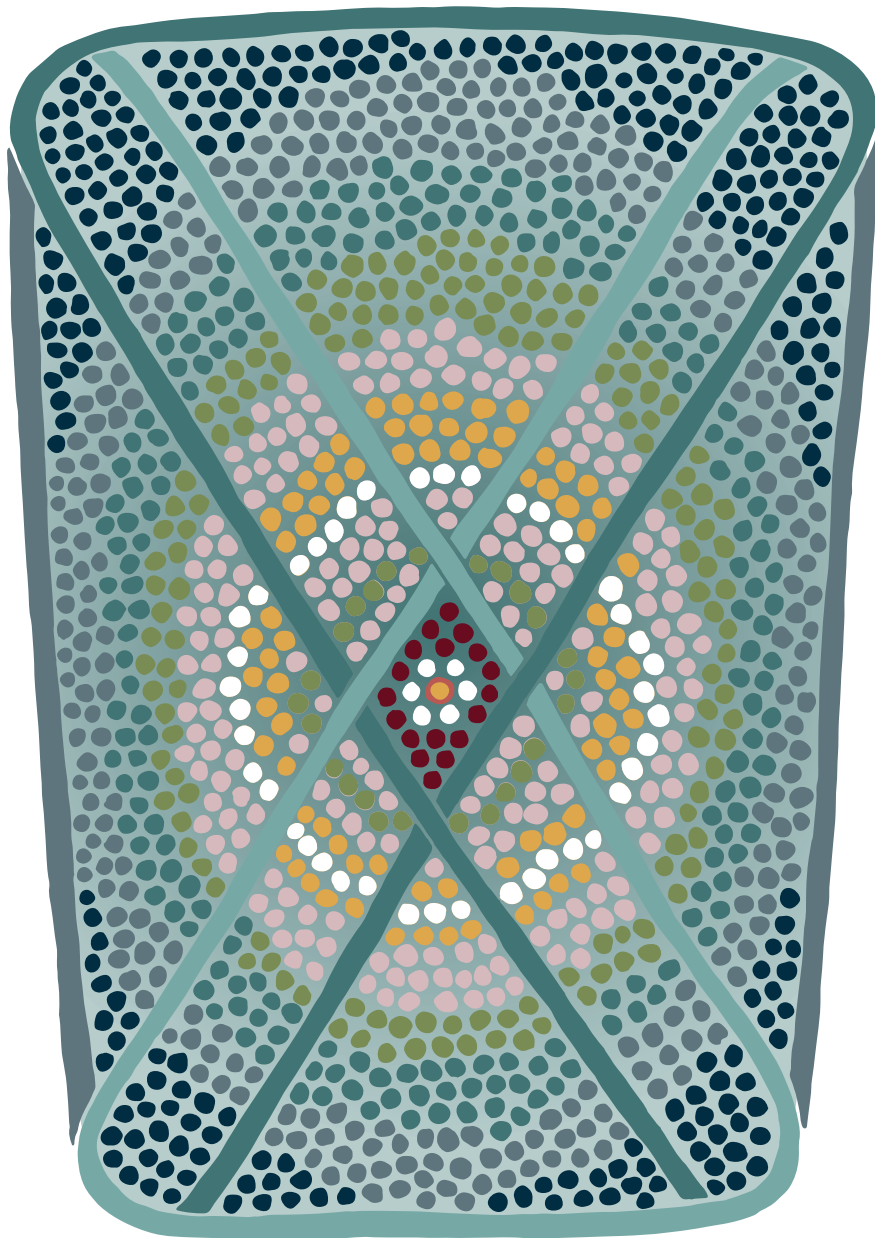
The stall allowed local community members to find out more about the services we offer in the area and the part we play in the local community.

As part of our organisation-wide recognition of the week, an updated version of our 'Bringing the Light' artwork was unveiled at 24 services throughout the week as a reminder of our cultural inclusivity and how we can each Get Up, Stand Up and Show Up. You can read more about the artwork below.

A morning tea was also held for South West Residential, Supported Independent Living Services and fostering staff. Service Manager Darren Llewellyn and Acting Service Support Manager Vicki Bork spoke about the meaning and importance of NAIDOC Week and the Bringing the Light canvas.



Left to right: Rowen Singleton, Reconciliation Action Plan Specialist; Elder, Aunty Kerry Charlton, Go'enpul-Yugerra, Ngunda-Kabi Kabi & Walangama of wider Brisbane, Moreton Bay & North Queensland; Jacob Spall, Cultural Engagement Officer; Gary Edwards, CEO at the unveiling of the Bringing the Light artwork at an event during NAIDOC Week at Kenmore Campus.



About Bringing the Light

The 'Bringing the Light' artwork is intended to become a living representation of our commitment to inclusivity.

At the centre sits an individual—happy, healthy, and whole. Surrounding and embracing them are their family and primary carers; their warmth keeps the individual's fire bright.

Protecting the individual and their family from the darkness are their community, represented by the green ring. Supporting everyone is Churches of Christ, represented in white; our staff are present to listen and support through personalised care. We help individuals, families, and communities find their light when it seems lost, making peoples' lives lighter, brighter, and better.

The happy and supported individual has light radiating out, bringing light to all those they come in contact with. When someone is happy, healthy and whole their light shines from them and creates light in the lives of those around.

Connecting the artwork is the representation of a string game, played as a part of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions. The game is played as a mechanism for storytelling and bonding as it is almost always played by two people. It represents happiness, togetherness, and a deep connection with culture that is passed down through generations.

The artwork represents Australia as an island nation surrounded by water. As you move further inland you traverse rainforest country, onto bush country and into desert country. The central dot provides continuity as this story continues on in reference to children, community, Elders, and culture.

Restructure to focus on child-centred care.

We recently made some changes to our operational leadership team. At the heart of the change was a shift from a geographic-based regional model to a functional model. This means that our six current geographic regions have now been re-aligned around three state-wide functional streams.

Each function is now headed up by a State Manager who will oversee that stream across all of Queensland.

Our new State Manager leadership team is comprised of:

- Family Support Services (including programs such as Intensive Family Support) State Manager
- Family-Based Care State Manager – Linda Smith
- Non-Family Based Care State Manager – Sally Edwards

The change to a state-wide, functional model has been made in the interest of delivering better outcomes for young people and families.

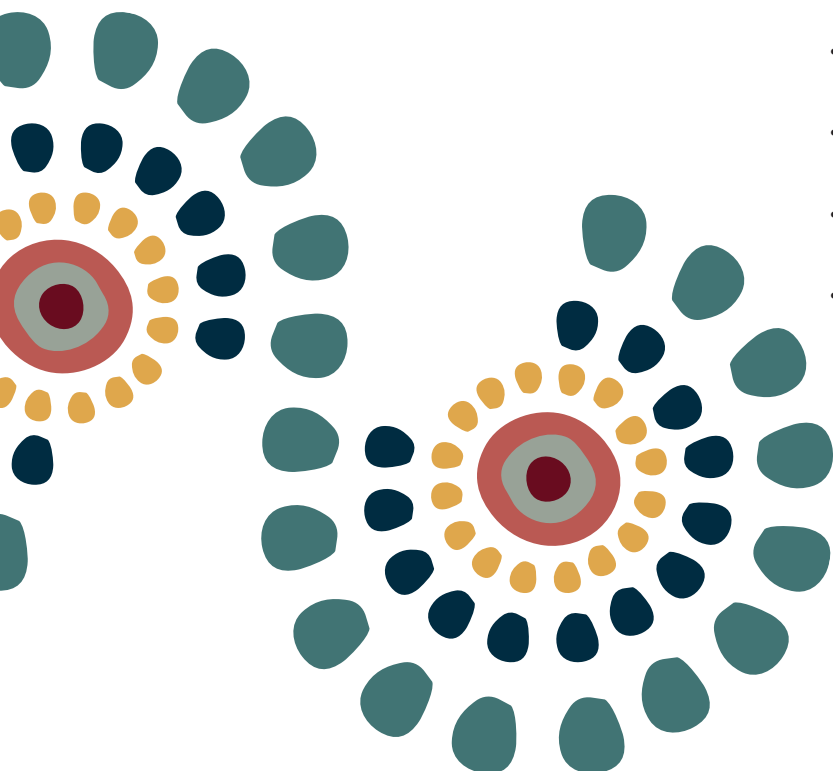
Our vision for CYF is to ensure every person we support has an individual plan to help them thrive, not just survive. Following a comprehensive review of our business early last year, a number of key actions were identified to set us up to deliver on that vision. One of these was a review of our operating model, ensuring it was fit for purpose to enable us to deliver best practice service delivery and set us up for long-term growth. The functional model will unlock our capacity to achieve that.

In addition, we are working alongside the Department of Children, Youth, Justice and Multicultural Affairs on a number of placement reform objectives. We want to be at the forefront and proactively lead the industry in transitioning young people to sustainable family care, building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, and responding to the changing nature of families. We are excited about the growth and capacity-building the new functional model will bring for service quality and outcomes for clients.

We are really optimistic and energised to embark on our journey into the future of Child Centred Care.

The functional model offers us:

- Better outcomes for those we support through consistent practice and processes
- Concentrated subject-matter expertise and governance in the three areas
- Ability to be agile and respond to changing directions
- Consistent and standardised response to growth opportunities
- Improvements to employee learning and development pathways, and succession planning for growing our leaders.



Staff spotlight.

Kelly Selman.



This quarter we catch up with Kelly Selman, Service Manager Brisbane and Moreton Bay Residential and Supported Independent Living Services.

Our Supported Independent Living Services provides support for young people leaving foster care or residential care and is available to 15 to 17-year-olds across Queensland. Our residential care homes across Queensland support 12 to 17 year-olds who cannot live in their family home and are unable to access or stay in foster or kinship care.

What is your role at Churches of Christ?

I am a Service Manager in the Brisbane Moreton Bay Region for Residential and Supported Independent Living Services programs and I'm currently in an Acting Project Manager role. Over my time at Churches of Christ I have also worked in the fostering space in team leader and service manager positions.

How long have you been with Churches of Christ?

I have been with Churches of Christ 10 years this year!

Why do you work here?

I have continued to work here because of the people I work with and the resilient young people I get to meet every day.

There is something rewarding yet humbling about being a constant in someone's life and witnessing them be genuinely happy to see you because of something you may have done to help them, whether that be big or small.

I had always wanted to work in child protection and while studying Churches of Christ gave me my first opportunity in a youth worker position. From there I continued to stay and move my way around the Children, Youth and Families space.

What do you like doing in your spare time?

I'm a dog mum to a mini dachshund named Ted, so a lot of my spare time is spent taking Ted on adventures to new parks and locations with my partner.



What's your favourite movie?

I wouldn't say that I have a favourite movie. I like to think I'm quite the movie buff so I enjoy watching many genres. Although, the Shawshank Redemption would have to be high on my list of all-time favourites.

What's your favourite travel destination?

My favourite place to travel to is the United Kingdom, there are so many destinations from there to explore! I also spent a number of years living in London when I was younger.

What is your most memorable moment working at Churches of Christ?

For me it's a collection of memorable moments, especially always around Child Protection Week. In Children, Youth and Families, we always pull together special events for our young people to celebrate this special time.

I coordinated, along with a bunch of other Children, Youth and Families friends, a Child Protection Week carnival called Heroes of our community, which was for our young people in residential and fostering to celebrate for a day dressed as their community hero. It was such a fun day visited by many, including our Child Safety stakeholders.

Taking up the challenge.



On 13 August, two teams from our CYF services competed in the 30km life-changing experience in Brisbane.

Two young people aged 15 and 17 from our Bundamba Lodge Residential Care Service took part in the challenge, and were joined by CYF team members Jacob Spall, Claire Rowlands and Molly Robinson.

The team names, Desert Daisies 1 and Desert Daisies 2, were inspired by the artwork of Indigenous artist Uncle Alan Parsons (pictured and explained on the right).

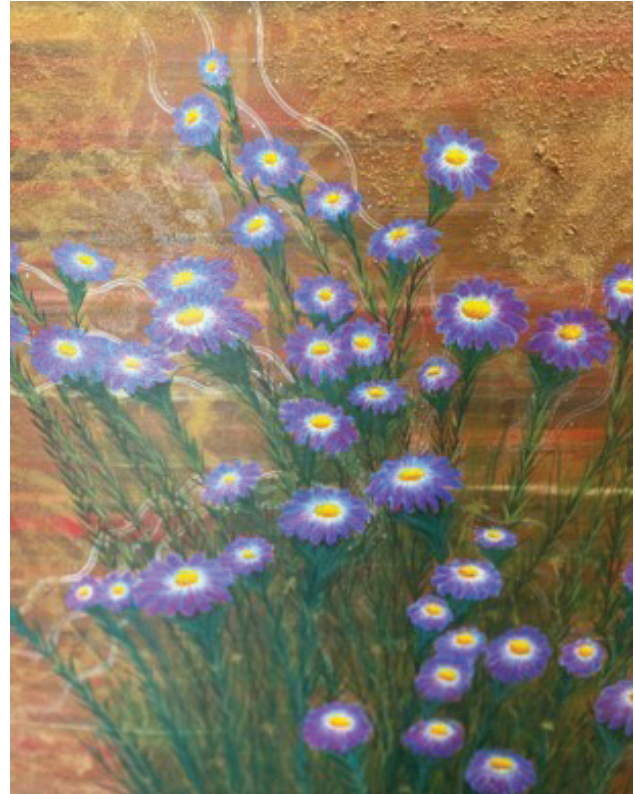
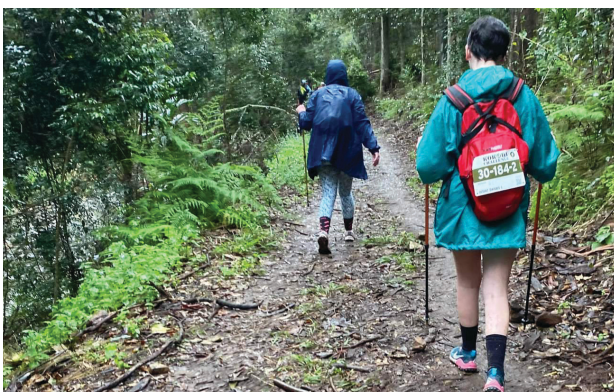
In previous years, the young people competed in an 18km Kokoda Challenge on the Gold Coast, making this year's event with an additional 12km that much more difficult.

The challenge started at 9am and took 10-and-a-half hours to complete, including traversing steep hills, uneven and slippery terrains, rain, and creek crossings. It was definitely not for the faint hearted.

"Despite being very tired and sore by the end of the challenge our young people were incredibly proud of their achievements," Jacob Spall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Officer, said.

"The most memorable parts for me were the resilience everyone showed despite how difficult the challenge was at times and the encouragement our young people showed for their teams to get every participant across the finish line. Our young people went into this challenge with a goal to finish and it was incredibly satisfying to see them achieve that goal."

The teams raised \$1126 for the Kokoda Foundation, an Australian charity that runs a variety of youth programs to encourage youth in our local communities to undergo life changing experiences and allow them to reach their full potential as young adults.



The Desert Daisies

The Desert Daisies are named after an artwork created by Uncle Alan Parsons, an Elder from Bidjira/Yiman Country in Central Queensland.

Uncle Alan explained he was exploring the Northern Territory and came across the daisies, which seemed to be growing from nothing, adding remarkable vibrancy and colour to a sparse landscape.

He was moved by the resilience and resourcefulness of the daisies, overcoming harsh desert conditions to grow into thriving, beautiful flowers. He was inspired to create the Desert Daisies artwork, incorporating actual desert sand.

The young people who have overcome challenging circumstances in order to flourish and thrive represent the Desert Daisies. Their determination and strength is as inspiring to witness as that of their namesake. Uncle Alan's painting was donated to CYF, and has become an inspiring symbol for the young people participating in Kokoda, and those who support them.

People and events.

CRAFTERS GIVE COMFORT TO CHILDREN IN CARE

Thank you to the Bethania Village craft group who have been busy over the past few months knitting, sewing and crocheting a beautiful array of baby blankets, matinee jackets, jumpers, booties and beanies for our foster and kinship carers to take home to their young ones. The group of around 40 members meet weekly to get crafty and of course have a cuppa and a chat and we have been the lucky recipients of their latest creative outputs. Linda Smith, State Manager Out of Home Care, gratefully accepted the wonderful items on behalf of our South East teams.



HEARTS AND HANDS BRING HOPE

Students from the "Hearts and Hands" club at Ormiston College have generously filled & donated over 200 backpacks for our children and young people in care. The packs include comforting items such as stuffed toys, warm blankets, colouring pens, reading books, snacks and toiletries.

What an incredible, selfless group of young people – we are overwhelmed and could not be more grateful.



MUMMY MINUTES

Our Brisbane Intensive Families Services program launched a program in July called 'Mummy Minutes' where mothers are welcome to slow down and relax with a craft activity and connect with other mum's while Churches of Christ Children Youth and Families provide child-minding. The aim of the program is to provide community connection, an opportunity to build connections and a sense of belonging.

The time allows mothers to reflect on their wellbeing. At one of our Mummy Minutes sessions participants wrote down a personal goal they had for themselves and then planted that goal inside a decorated plant pot. As they water and nurture their plant the idea is to remember the goal they planted and see it grow too. Pictured below is called 'plant your intentions'.





CHURCHES
of **CHRIST**



Every child, young person and family deserves to grow, belong, connect and thrive in their community.

Connect with us at
cofc.com.au



YouTube