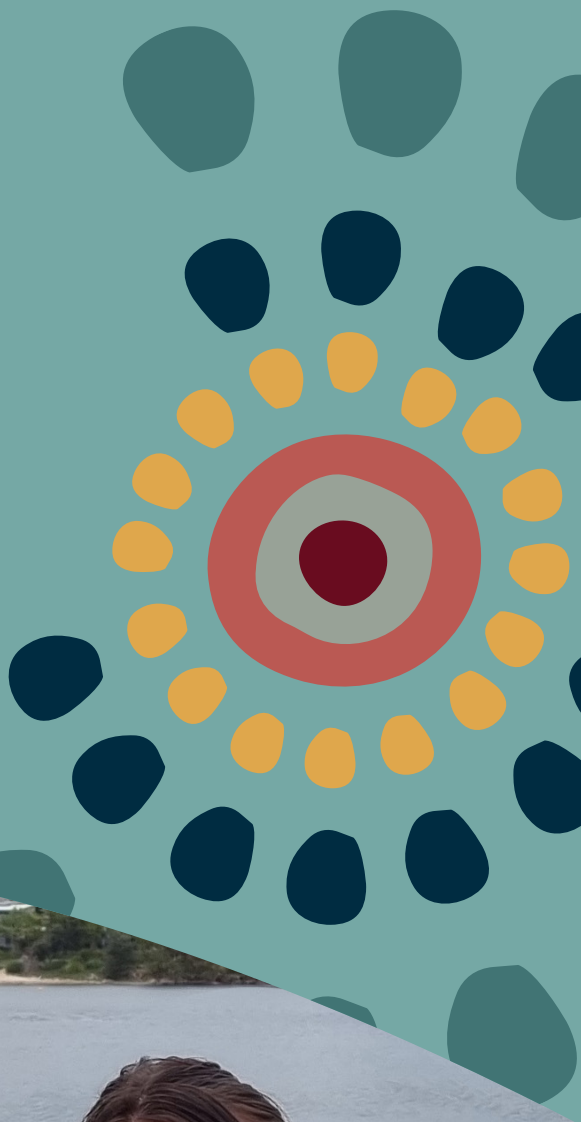


Children, Youth and Families Quarterly update

It takes a community

ISSUE 2

October-December 2021



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.

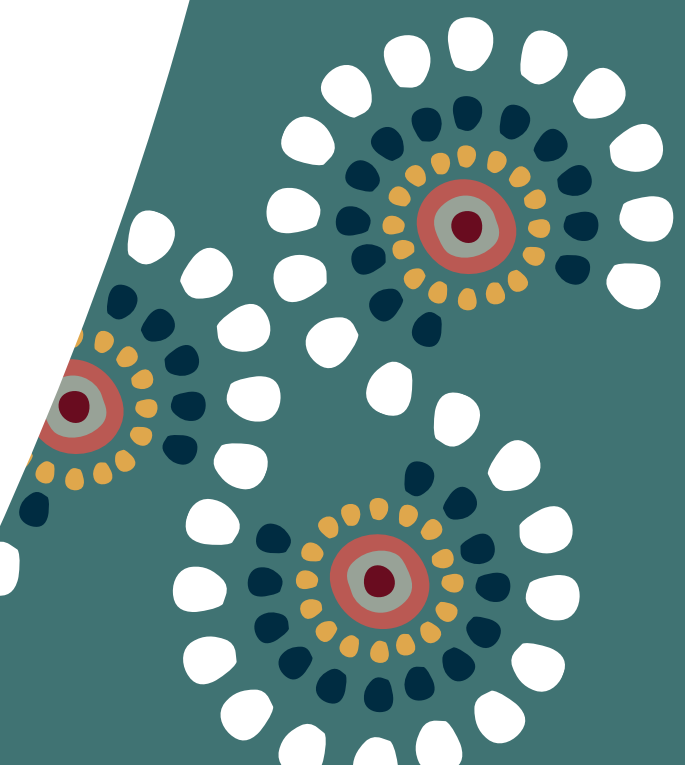
Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we stand and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures, hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We recognise, respect and celebrate the survival and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including recognition of those whose ongoing effort to protect and promote the world's oldest living culture will leave a lasting and proud legacy for their people.

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.



Message from our Director.

**Child, Family and Housing Services,
Mike Folland**



In November 2021, I accepted the newly created role of Director – Child, Family and Housing Services for Churches of Christ. I am excited and hopeful to take on the Housing Services portfolio in addition to our Child and Family Services. I see significant opportunities to expand many existing partnerships and share knowledge with the aim to provide a sense of welcome, wellbeing and community for every Queenslanders.

It is my great privilege to work alongside our team and witness the compassionate and inspiring support that we offer every day to some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our general managers, Kerith Culley and Grant Hawgood have utilised the short time they have been with us to implement new systems and strategies. They have been travelling the state to meet with our teams and listen to their daily challenges. You can read the report from Kerith and Grant on page 4.

Cultural connection

Our work continues across CYF to support young people to be culturally safe and connected to community. Our work to find new paths to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system is strengthened by our partnerships. We are proud to partner with the University of Sunshine Coast around developing practice that enhances cultural connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people transitioning from out-of-home care. Read more on page 5.

Queensland Foster and Kinship Carer conference

We were platinum sponsor at the long awaited and rescheduled three times (due to COVID) Queensland Foster and Kinship Carer conference, 5–7 November 2021 at the Novotel, Sunshine Coast. What a wonderful opportunity to listen to some powerful guest speakers, reconnect with colleagues old and new across the sector, meet with our foster and kinship carers and families and network. Read the

feature on pages 8–9 and utilise the QR code to watch my video from the conference, reflecting on our work with our foster and kinship carers and their families.

It was my absolute privilege to meet with one of our kinship carers, Zara, who is also on this update's front cover with me. Zara shared her story during the welcome reception on Friday night. I was humbled to introduce Zara and listen to her story. To bring homefulness, wellbeing, community and hope to those we serve in the community is the Churches of Christ way, and foster and kinship care is a fantastic expression of that.

“I feel hopeful for more opportunities to lift the voices of our young people and help them to thrive.”

Looking to the future

As we look back at the last quarter of 2021, I do so with the knowledge that our partnerships combined with the hard work and dedication of our team have helped to make a difference in the lives of the young people and families we support. This includes our Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy that took effect on 31 January 2021, read more on page 17. Looking ahead to 2022, I feel hopeful for more opportunities to lift the voices of our young people and help them to thrive.

CYF General Managers' update.



Kerith Culley General Manager (GM) Operations and Grant Hawgood GM Strategy Support and Assurance share their highlights and challenges for the year that was 2021 and their goals for 2022.

Q: What has been a highlight in the October-December quarter

KC: The Better Together CEO regional tour gave me an opportunity, not only to hear directly from the CEO the organisational achievements to date and aims for the future, but to also network with colleagues and meet up with the local teams that I now lead.

It was fantastic to spend time working with the service managers and regional managers at each of our locations across the state; to listen and understand their local challenges and successes and how they align holistically with the organisation. It was such a productive time to really gain a sense of what our teams are delivering on a daily basis and the depth of compassion and talent within our teams.

I have to also mention the Annual Christmas Appeal and Christmas parties held across our state for young people and their families and all the generously donated gifts; it was just wonderful to see.

GH: As part of CYF's focus on staff safety and continually reducing staff injury, we have implemented a quarterly workplace safety census. This survey provides regional managers with information specific to their region, with no staff injuries reported for the last quarter of 2021. We will continue this initiative to ensure our people are safe and supported to provide

the high-level support and care to the children, young people and families that we serve daily.

We also have a proposal being considered for improving efficiency in procurement that will benefit across our CYF services. I hope to report on further in the next edition.

Q: Thoughts on our COVID response

KC: I have to applaud our teams, especially during Christmas, remaining agile and responsive in an ever-changing COVID landscape and those generous and supportive team members who worked on Christmas day. Our frontline workers have navigated COVID health requirements and impacts including, the potential for social isolation for our young people in our care. Given all this, our team's care and support has been exemplary.

We worked together with our teams across the organisation to bring joy at Christmas utilising staff Christmas drives, and our Annual Christmas Appeal. This meant that young people in our care had a Christmas gift to open with the knowledge that they are cared for and thought of during what can be a challenging time of year.

GH: CYF has received fantastic support from the Clinical Governance Team within Seniors Living at Churches of Christ. Both Ashok Sharma (Manager – Clinical Support and Governance) and Vidyanee Jhundoo (Practice Lead – Clinical) have been proactive in supporting CYF with advice on infection control, risk management with young people in residential houses, what PPE to source, making training modules for PPE available and generally providing collegial support at short notice.

Ashok has also extended the invitation to CYF to support us with building our capacity to conduct train-the-trainer style sessions with our CYF team, so that we have ongoing capacity to assess staff in the practical component of the PPE module. The support the Clinical Governance Team have provided is a wonderful example of living the Churches of Christ values and working cross-organisational functions to achieve positive outcomes for our team and the people we support.



Q: Goals for 2022

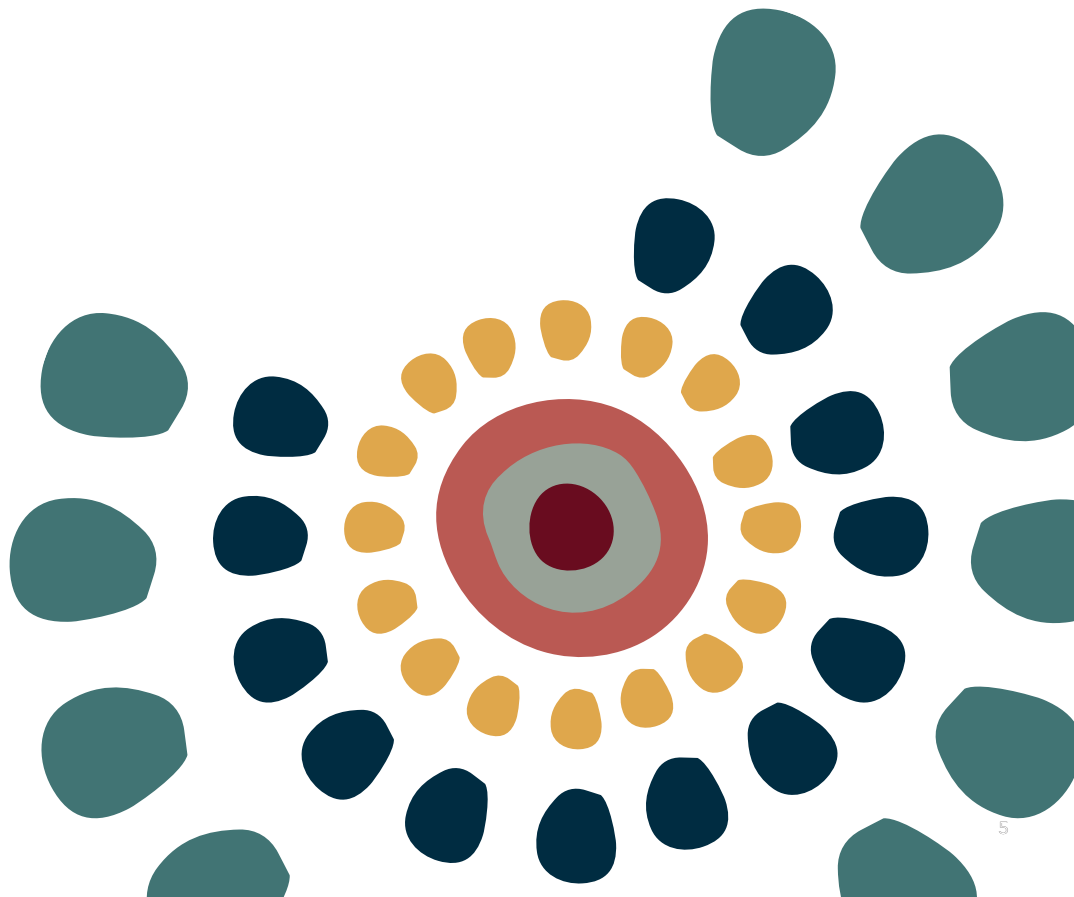
KC: Key goals for me are continuing to work in partnership with the department on our shared priorities and Director-General Diedre Mulkerin's strategic objectives. These include safeguarding the health of our team and the young people and families we care for; continuing our strong partnership with government; accessing funding that supports our team and organisation; attracting the right people, talent, investment and corporate partnerships; investing in the skills of our people; and continuing to build capacity of our frontline workers to ensure the young people we serve are culturally safe and connected to community.

Another goal is reducing young people in non-family-based care and placing more children with kinship carers, including the over-represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in our care. Defining what we need to do operationally to achieve these objectives is my aim for 2022.

GH: Top of mind for me is continuing to identify ways to improve efficiencies across our service, while collaborating across our diverse organisation to achieve benefits for our teams and those we serve.

In line with that, CYF has developed a Service Level Agreement with the Property Team and is looking forward to working closely with Housing Services GM Gus Taddeo to identify opportunities to share knowledge and resources.

I am also focused on building our thought leadership within the child protection sector. A great example of this is the work of our Program and Practice Development Support Officer Alannah Grace, who has co-authored an article with Phil Crane and proud Jurrbal woman Tammy Wallace detailing the multi-faceted approach Youth CONNECT has taken to cultural practice. During the October Cultural Practice Participatory Action Research (PAR) Meeting the group discussed cultural connection strategies and engaged in a reflective open forum around culturally competent case work. The article is published nationally in the **Council to Homeless Persons magazine, Parity.**





Youth CONNECT brings Christmas joy.

Wrapping up a successful year for the Youth CONNECT clients and team.

In 2021, we celebrated alongside our clients as they welcomed new babies, started studies, passed driving tests and bought first cars. Our team was privileged to be on-hand to provide support and guidance to help them achieve these milestones.

The 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021 reporting year has recorded the first cohort of graduating clients in the Youth CONNECT program. The program reported a 37.14 per cent success rate for the first payment period of the program, significantly exceeding initial expectations of 20 per cent. We have witnessed positive and inspiring outcomes for the young people in the program and have celebrated graduations for 49 clients at the end of November 2021.

Christmas joy

Christmas 2021 was a different one for many reasons. For most of us, we were grateful if we could meet face-to-face with loved ones. Although for the more than 200 young people our Youth CONNECT team serves, it can be an especially isolating time of year, even without adding the challenges of a global pandemic.

During Churches of Christ's Annual Christmas Appeal, the Youth CONNECT team were determined to ensure that the 15–25-year-olds we support each received a Christmas present this year. And, so began the Christmas Drive.

The call went out to the broader team at our Kenmore Head Office with gift tags added to Christmas trees on all the floors for the Annual Appeal, with the age demographics and suggestions for gifts included.

Gifts came rolling in for our young people. We received everything from gift cards, phones, homewares, children's toys, handbags and personal care items and much more. We were humbled with the response from team mates across Kenmore Head Office and noted when people know what they can do to help they really go above and beyond.

During three days, travelling across the Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich and Toowoomba, our team went from house to house delivering the donated gifts to our clients. Some clients couldn't wait and unwrapped the gift straight away, while others said they would wait, so they had something to open on Christmas day.

One client asked why people would want to do this for them. The answer: "So you know that there are good people out there, you may not see them, but you know they are there."

"So you know that there are good people out there, you may not see them, but you know they are there."



Pictured above clockwise from top, left to right: Youth CONNECT team members, Jamie Jayasuriya, Ryan Salzke (former CYF Chaplain), Evie Dulhuan and Racheal Martig on their way to deliveries. Youth CONNECT clients accepting Christmas presents for their families (also pictured opposite page top).

Youth CONNECT is a social benefit bond contracted service operated by Churches of Christ and established in late 2017.

The Social Benefit Bond Pilot Program is a Queensland Government initiative to trial impact investment in Queensland. The service works with young people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and are referred between the ages of 15 and 25. To be eligible, a young person must have had at least one substantiated notification to Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, with most having had extensive placements in out-of-home care, especially residential care, and/or Youth Justice.

Scan the QR code to watch our Director Mike Folland share the history and impact of Youth CONNECT.



Overview of key outcomes.

The Youth CONNECT program supports young adults with safe, stable and affordable housing, education and work-readiness training, employment, personal development and social and community connections.



300

Final number of total referrals recorded in May 2021.

13%



Increase in clients finding employment.

20%



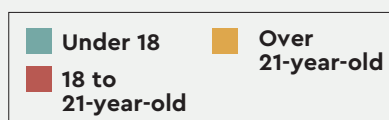
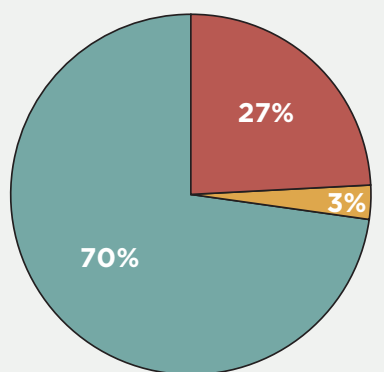
Young people are parents of infants and young children. A further 6 young people or their partners are pregnant, and 3 clients are currently expecting their second child.

Outcomes Star

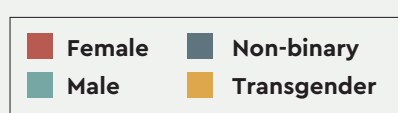
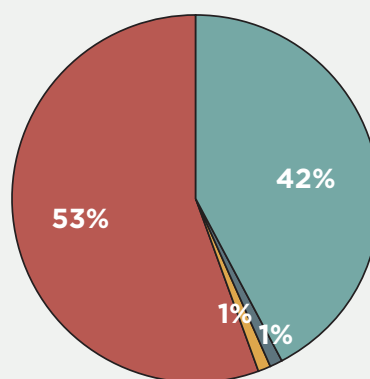


A case management tool completed by clients. In 2021, clients rated themselves consistently higher in all domains of the Outcomes Star tool, especially *practical life skills; choices and behavior; and people and support* categories when compared to data from 2020.

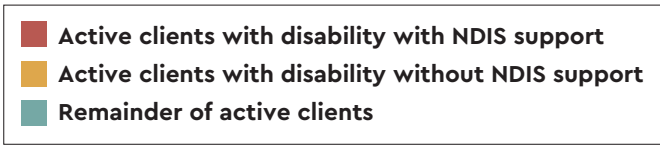
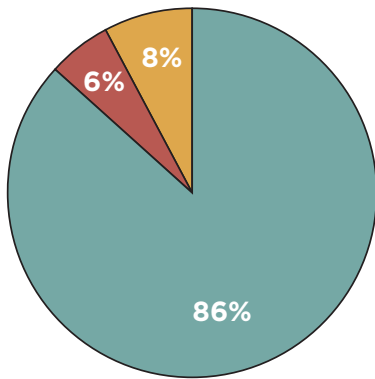
Age



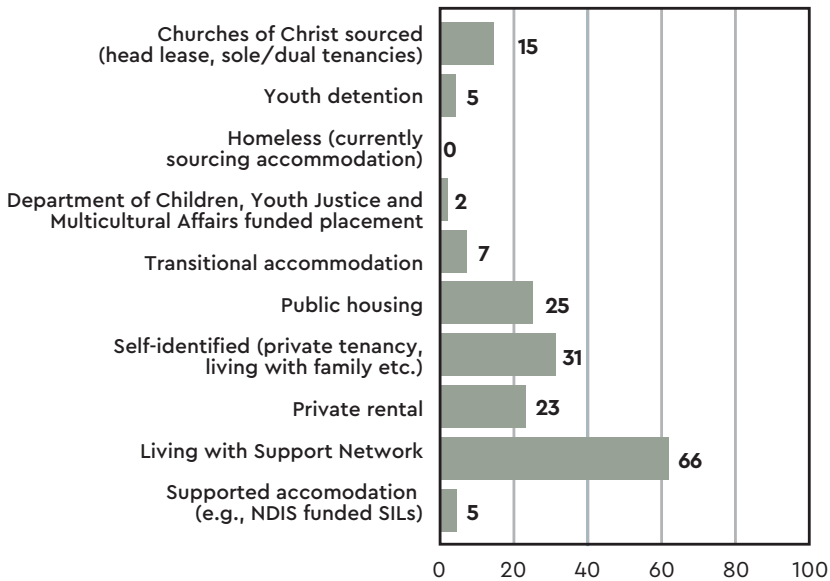
Gender



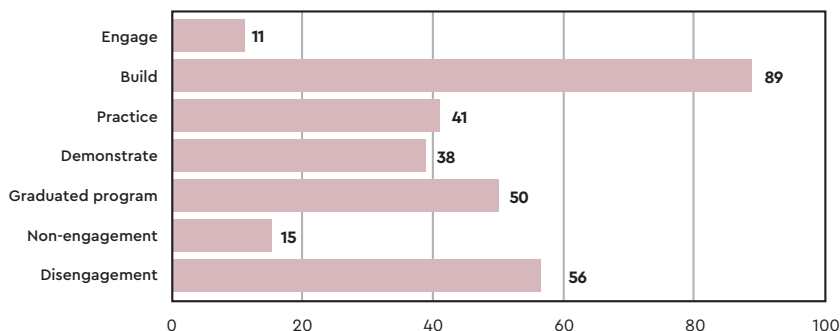
Active clients with disability



Housing Types



Progress Phases



Over representation

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

42%

identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

66.7%

of young people in Townsville identify as Indigenous.





Queensland Foster and Kinship Carer conference.

Following various date changes, due to COVID-19 impacts, the fourth time was the charm for the Queensland Foster and Kinship Carer (QFKC) conference.

Held at the Novotel Sunshine Coast from 5–7 November 2021; we finally came together to discuss the challenges, initiatives, research and opportunities for change to keep our children safe and to provide an environment in which they can thrive.

Churches of Christ Director Child, Family and Housing Services Mike Folland said the QFKC conference was a wonderful opportunity to listen and to learn.

"We have a lot of history," Mike said.

"Churches of Christ in Queensland have been involved in foster care for more than 50 years. We are one of the largest foster care providers in Queensland and we take our responsibility to support foster and kinship carers and the children they support seriously.

"What's more important is doing whatever we can to help young people to find a new hope for the future, a new sense of safety, and so foster and kinship care, within that home-based care environment is absolutely vital.

"That's why the QFKC conference is a significant opportunity for us as care providers to do a lot of learning, a lot of listening.

"It's a chance to hear what people who are actually providing that care have to say, and what questions

they have, what support they need, what resources they need.

"It gives us time to engage with other service providers and to hear how they're going.

"And, also, to connect with our state government department friends with whom we share a very close relationship to provide care.

"So, for me—it's all about learning and listening."

The conference theme: The Challenge of Change Shaping the Future was the result of feedback from the QFKC's 2019 carer forums. The feedback identified the challenges for carers, agency and departmental staff, as well as positive changes that can shape the future and enhance the lives of our children and young people.

Churches of Christ CYF General Managers Grant Hawgood and Kerith Culley (*pictured opposite page*) attended their first QFKC conference dinner and both said it was invaluable to meet carers, staff from other care provider organisations, and departmental staff.

"To meet these people who are all deeply committed to the wellbeing of our children and young people and to listen to the dedication to their work was inspiring to be around," Grant said.

"It was so worthwhile to meet so many carers and witness how enthusiastic they were to meet other carers. You could really sense the understanding and compassion between them," Kerith said.

"It was great to hear from some inspirational speakers, such as football legend Steve Renouf and meet some of our own staff that volunteer for the conference, including our Regional Manager Linda Smith. The sheer size of the event was amazing."

Queensland Foster and Kinship Care represents more than 5700 foster and kinship carers in Queensland. The conference provides a wonderful opportunity to bring together like-minded people such as carers, government and care provider staff to participate in professional development, network and share their experiences. Churches of Christ was the platinum sponsor for the 2021 QFKC conference.



Watch one of our kinship carers, Zara from Townsville who shared her experience during the welcome reception at the QFKC conference.



Watch video of our Director Mike Folland sharing his thoughts on the importance of foster and kinship carers at the QFKC conference.

Pictured below clockwise from bottom left: CYF GMs Grant Hawgood and Kerith Culley; keynote speaker, Australian football legend, Steve Renouf; Our Director Mike Folland "learning and listening" with colleagues and carers at the conference; CYF team members at the conference dinner, left to right, CYF Fraser Coast and Central Queensland team members – Clare Booker, Cindy Kember and Jillian Rodd; at the welcome reception from left to right: Deidre Mulkerin Director-General of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, Hazel Little QFKC President, Julieann Cork Regional Executive Director Sunshine Coast and Central Region, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, and Linda Smith QFKC Secretary and Conference Co-ordinator and Churches of Christ CYF Regional Manager Central Queensland region. **Pictured opposite page top:** Traditional dancers at the welcome reception.



Foster carer. It's a family affair.

Genevieve (52) and Daniel Pitcher (60) have been general Foster Carers for more than seven years, with their two daughters (18 and 19), and a grandson and granddaughter growing up with foster siblings.

The rewards

For Genevieve, one of the greatest parts of being a foster carer is the relationships she has maintained with children, even after they have returned to their birth families.

"The best part is when I get a phone call from Brent*, who I had from the age of four months to three and a half years and is now 12, asking to stay for the weekend. I have maintained close contact with Brent and his biological family since then."

Brent* and his little sister Jodie* stay with the Pitchers on school holidays and have done so since they returned to their family many years ago.

"We know that, as a family, we have helped reunite Brent with his family, while still also helping him be the most amazing young man," Genevieve said.

"I can see him growing up, and although loving him was very easy, letting him go was hard. We must give credit to his dad. Brent's Dad and his new family have embraced us and we will always be part of their lives."

The challenges

Genevieve says the most challenging thing about being a carer can be the impact it has had on her biological children.

"Foster caring does impact on our family – but I'm very lucky and blessed that my girls support what we are doing as a family," she said.

"In fact, my 19-year-old daughter and I did a 'Who's in charge' eight-week training course together to help us understand how best to build healthy relationships with children dealing with past trauma.

"This was an awesome and practical course and I was so proud that my daughter wanted to do it with me.

"The foster kids are a part of our family for the rest of their lives. I still have the original photos of my first children in care with me up on my wall, and explain to the kids that once their photo goes up on my wall it never comes down; they are a part of our family.



Pictured above: Genevieve with one of her grandchildren.

The supports

"Although I have my Certificate III in Child Care, Disability and Aged Care, and I am always open to doing more training, you definitely need that extra support that Churches of Christ can provide.

"I love the workers at our local office, I am always popping in and we have our support worker, Jackie, who is always there.

"She knows me and the kids in my care. She can be the go between for us and the department to follow up anything we need or any concerns we have.

Just knowing I can call her and bounce any issues I have or just for somebody to talk to. It really makes a difference.

Making a difference

"Sometimes, we are lucky we get to see these children again. Sometimes, the parents allow that, but quite often that's not the case. This is the heartache of our family and the reality of being a foster carer," she said.

"It is a reality that some foster children will come out of their time in foster care stronger, and knowing they are loved and have attachments to the foster families. But sometimes the trauma they have experienced will take a lifetime of therapy to mend.

"My hope is that we help a little bit by giving them love, structure and a sense of family."

Kinship carer.

Stepping up when your family needs you.

Why did you decide to become a kinship carer?

I am a 37-year-old single woman and became a kinship carer approximately 18 months ago to help my family in what was a very emotional time of our lives.

I care for a child with a disability (hearing impairment), which includes a cochlear implant. My family are very close and when my niece needed somewhere to live while their mother was unable to care for them, I readily agreed to open my home.

From my perspective, I have always had a very loving relationship with my niece and I was already taking care of her medical and schooling needs, so I guess this was just the next step. I was in a position where I could offer a safe and loving home with routines; it just felt right.

What do you love about being a kinship carer?

What families may not know is that being a kinship carer is an amazing opportunity to keep family with family. It's a chance to help the young people in your family in the hope that they will soon be able to return home.

To be able to support their self-growth and help them heal and to be a part of their journey through this process; is very rewarding.

What challenges have you encountered?

I have a reasonable relationship with the mother and would like to keep it that way to ensure that this relationship can have a positive effect for my niece.

I leave the family contact, that is the visits between mother and daughter, with the department to organise. That might be hard for some families, if they don't have a good working relationship with the parent.

I am, however, able to have conversations with the mother in relation to my niece's requirements and to assist in the decision making process. If you can't do that, this is when the department will facilitate these conversations, which takes the pressure off this process.

How has Churches of Christ helped you?

Having the support from Churches of Christ from day 1 has been amazing. The child that you care for will have

a lot of people come into their lives and this can be overwhelming for them, but the right care provider is the key to a smooth working relationship. They have been there for me to run concerns and ideas by and I know there is no judgement, which makes it a lot easier.

Having that same case worker who did the first assessment with us, and who I know I can call on to talk to the department for us, or to just talk to and vent, is just the best support.

Your case worker is your advocate in times when you are not feeling able to do it for yourself. They can speak with Child Protection officers when you feel you can't and they can also attend any meetings on your behalf.

I feel like there is no silly questions with our case worker. She is the first person I ring if there's something on my mind about caring for my niece — she gives me that non-judgemental, but informed validation that I need. We are very grateful for the tremendous support.

"... being a kinship carer is an amazing opportunity to keep family with family."

Any words of advice to kinship carers?

I feel that potential kinship carers need to know there is support available. Also, they have rights to ensure their safety if they are worried about members of the family that may be abusive, or in challenging situations.

I know there are a lot of grandparents out there looking after their grandchildren as kinship carers and they need to know respite is available; after-school care, many options to give them a break, instead of 'soldiering on'.

Anyone either being asked or considering becoming a kinship carer needs to talk to someone that is a kinship carer to really understand the process and your rights. You also need to remember that you are very important in the life of your family, but in particular the child or children you are caring for.



Service area Foster and Kinship care process.

Reaching milestones warms case worker's heart.



Since 2014, Cassie Mayes, 32, has been a Fostering Case Worker at Churches of Christ's Arana Hills office supporting foster and kinship carers to provide safe and stable homes.

Reaching milestones for children, like learning to crawl or walk, tie shoelaces, or achieve reading levels are essential markers to ensure they are on track and thriving.

"I just love seeing the kids reach their milestones," Cassie said.

"For teenagers when they are hitting puberty, it is a challenging time for them, and is just not fun. But it is just so great to see them being able to navigate it (puberty) within a supportive environment. That's what we love to see."

Cassie completed her Diploma of Youth Work, when Churches of Christ was highly recommended to her as the best place to work within the care sector. It took two years, but Cassie finally secured a position and now wouldn't work anywhere else.

Cassie explains the fostering and kinship care process:

One of the ways that we first get involved and support kinship carers is when the department has assessed a need to remove a child from an unsafe situation. For potential kinship carers, the department will ask in the first instance if any family can be identified to care for the children.

A Provisional Approval Assessment is undertaken by the department and the family members that have agreed to be kinship carers for a 30, 60 or 90-day approval process. While the provisionally approved carers are being assessed as potential full-time kinship carers.

So, it's only when the Child Safety Department has

been activated, and Placement Support Services has referred it to us, that we then become the agency for the kinship carers.

Then we will visit their home and explain the whole process from here, make sure they have a copy of the department handbook and help them complete all the paperwork.

We go through the allowances, who and when permissions need to be given for certain situations, such as vaccinations or haircuts. When and how they need to report an incident and file an incident report if a child in their care has hit their head or has been hospitalised for some reason.

We're basically there to support the kinship carers and answer any of their questions and give them as much information as they need. We hold their hand (metaphorically) every step of the way. Side by side, making sure they feel safe and comfortable to come to us with any queries.

Once we completed the assessment and the kinship carers have come on board with us, we liaise with them daily, if required and basically stay with them until the child turns 18-years-old, or they are reunified with their parents or the placement ends for some reason.

We liaise with all stakeholders for the kinship carers and are basically there till the end.

We endeavour to provide one case worker for the entire process, to keep that consistency for the kinship carers and the children. Consistency, stability and a friendly face are so important during this process and we do everything we can to provide that.

With other aspects of the process they may be encountering lots of different support workers in different situations, so we try very hard to keep the one case worker for the entire time they are with Churches of Christ.



For potential foster carers the process is different. Foster carers have to go through training before a child is placed. They need to do pre-service training and an assessment of their home. And then go through the full general foster carer assessment, which then goes to a panel for the department to approve.

There can be emergency placements, short and long-term placements and respite placements for foster families that just need a break for a short time, like a weekend or school holidays.

A foster carer can request what type of placement they would prefer, which we follow when placing children for foster care.

If it is an emergency placement, the kids might be coming and going and it might be quite chaotic, so we may need to give more attention at this time. To make sure all participants feel safe and comfortable."

Cassie loves working with the kids and witnessing their progression and improvements during care.

"My favourite part of the job is working with the kids and seeing them living their best lives with their carers," Cassie said.

"That they can be children, and have a childhood and not worry about adult responsibilities like having a safe home and food.

"Watching them grow up with their own little individual personalities is really just so lovely. I can't express it more than that.

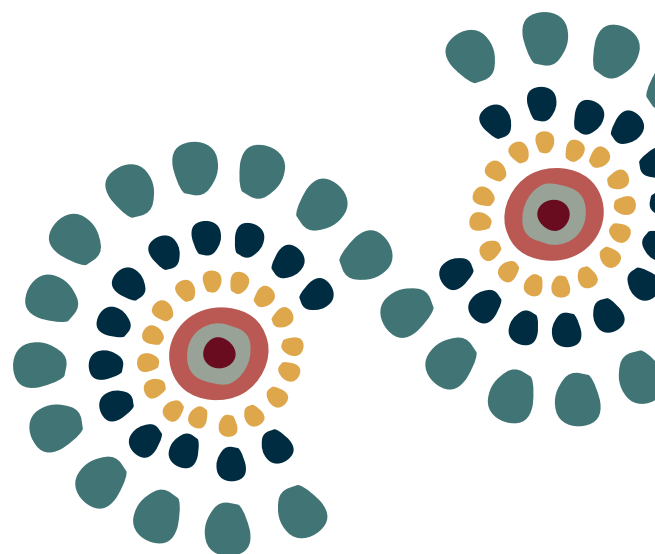
"Reaching their milestones, as I mentioned, and seeing them able to grow in a safe environment and to develop on par with kids that haven't undergone trauma is so heart-warming and rewarding.

I would seriously not work anywhere else, and I encourage those in our community who can consider becoming kinship or foster carers to do it.

"Providing a safe and caring home for a child to thrive and belong to their community, makes all the difference in the world."

For more information about becoming a foster or kinship carer, please visit www.ittakesacomunity.com.au

Pictured top, from left to right: Case Worker Cassandra Mayes; Service Manager Gemma Squire; Team Leader Belinda Reber and Case Worker Beth Murphy from CYF's Brisbane Kinship Care Service.



Sky and sea together.

Last edition, we featured established Torres Strait Islander / Indigenous Australian illustrator and artist, Tori-Jay Mordey and her commissioned work for our IFS office in Caboolture.

Her paintings portray work that represents meaning and is part of cultural identity for Torres Strait Islander families that we work with daily.

We were grateful to also accept donated artwork from Tori-Jay's mum Jessie Mordey (nee Ketchell) from Maluilgal (Badu – Wakaid) and Meriam (Mer – Dauareb Clan) Country.

Jessie shares her love of art...

My artwork brings the sky and sea together. As a child I loved lying on the island mat gazing into the night sky, looking for satellites and falling stars and be in awe with all that was above me.

The background in my artwork is inspired by nebulae in space. A nebula would illuminate deep space and whether it's a birth of a star or the end of one, the colours and patterns are breath taking. These beautiful colours exist in deep space and the deepest part of our oceans.

The stars that fill the dark sky, the sea and sea animals have strong connection to Torres Strait culture, traditional stories and beliefs. As a Torres Strait Islander, I feel connected to these elements.

Artwork

TAGAI

Tagai is one of our warriors and can be seen in our star constellations holding his spear standing in front of his canoe. The Southern Cross is his left hand holding a spear. Tagai's image is spread across the Pleiades star cluster (Usal – the seven sisters), Orion (Utimal) and Corvus constellation which forms his right hand. Tagai's canoe is formed by the stars of Scorpius.

Tagai was known for his fishing and hunting skills. On one of his fishing trips, 12 members of his crew jeopardised their journey drinking and eating rations without his permission. They were thrown overboard. Only one crew member remained, his friend Kareg who told Tagai what the others have done.

Stars tell Islanders when to plant, expectations of seasonal changes, when to hunt turtle and dugong and a way to guide them home. In the Southern sky when Tagai's left hand dips into the sea, wet season (Kuki) is about to start. When Pleiades and Orion appear in mid-November, it's mating season for turtle and dugong (Solal season).



WARU Nin sesthamaik – Turtle's Curiosity

(Torres Strait Kala Lagaw Ya – Western Islands language)

Turtle (Waru) is my totem from both my father's and mother's side of the family. Turtle symbolises home, sense of belonging and long life. No matter where you go in this world, you will always return home. Just like the turtles returning to their birth place to lay eggs.



Pictured from left: Jessie Mordey (nee Ketchell) donated two paintings to our IFS office in Caboolture with Rosalind Sapolu, Service Manager, Families Together Moreton Bay. Artwork featured is both Jessie's and her daughter's Tori-Jay.

Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination policy.

As a mission-led organisation committed to working together with our partners to help communities thrive, we believe we all have a role to play in keeping each other, our clients, and the community safe.

To continue to operate safely and maintain service levels in an unpredictable COVID-19 context, we made the decision to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine for all staff in December, with all staff now fully vaccinated. This decision was informed by public health advice and scientific evidence, and is grounded in our value of Safety – to protect the health and wellbeing of our team and the vulnerable young people and families we support.

We were committed to engaging with our team by enlisting third party experts in health, law and change and resilience that provided accurate information and supported our team. This is an extension of our values of Unconditional Love and Mutual Trust.

We are very grateful to our team for their understanding and support as we continue to work together to protect our clients, the community and each other in our 'new normal' COVID-19 operating reality.

Jake centre stage.



Pictured above: Darren Llewellyn (Jake's previous youth worker), Jake and CEO Gary Edwards at the event.

You might remember Jake from the last edition of the CYF Quarterly update. His story was so inspiring we invited him to share his experiences with out-of-home care at an all staff event at our Kenmore campus.

Following nearly 14 years with us, Jake transitioned to living independently with our Supported Independent Living Service. He is now studying to be a youth worker himself and shared the enduring impact that one of our youth workers, Darren, had on him. Darren was a consistent support for Jake during this time. Darren also spoke at the all staff event to share his experiences. You can read Jake's story on [our website](#).

Digi Youth Arts Annual showcase.

In December, we held our Digi Youth Arts (DYA) end of year showcase for 2021.

DYA have hosted various weekend workshops with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in care in the South West region. We are so proud of the creative young minds behind these beautiful artworks and grateful to those at DYA who have taught and mentored our young people to unlock their creative potential.



Bringing joy at Christmas.



CHRISTMAS PARTY AT WHITEHILL

More than 145 children with their foster and kinship carers felt the Christmas spirit at Whitehill Church of Christ with hot breaky bacon and egg rolls, water play, dancing and a visit from Santa.



LAKES CHURCH IN CAIRNS TAKES FLIGHT WITH CHRISTMAS JOY

Members of The Lakes Church in Cairns kindly donated 25 Christmas Hampers to our Cape York Foster and Kinship Care Service. These hampers were gifted to our carers and children in care as part of recent Christmas celebrations that occurred in seven communities across Cape York.

The hampers were generously freighted into each community by East Air // Weipa Air who donated the freight costs. Various people and agencies met the plane in each community to assist with Christmas party arrangements, helping us bring Christmas joy to our carers and young people across Cape York.



BEENLEIGH CHRISTMAS PARTY

265 of our foster care families came together at the Beenleigh Historical Village and Museum for a festive Christmas party organised by our CYF South East team.

Christmas can be a challenging time for children and young people in care. Our dedicated team plus volunteers organised a day of wonderful activities, such as jumping castles, face painting, crafts and delicious food. We also had a visit from Santa who presented the children with more than 150 locally donated gifts.



LOCAL CHURCHES AND TEAM MEMBERS DRIVE CHRISTMAS DONATIONS

Our Churches, Children, Youth and Families and Housing teams have driven community donation appeals to ensure our children, young people and families in need feel a sense of hope and joy this Christmas.





LOCAL CHARITY LIVES UP TO ITS NAME

Local charity, Baby Give Back stayed true to their name with carloads of donations for our team to distribute for the families we support at Christmas. Pictured is Service Manager Rosalind, from the Moreton Bay region taking delivery. And from the IFS team at Jamboree Heights Lauren and Todd with another delivery. We are so grateful for all their contributions – they made a real difference for Christmas.



MORAYFIELD STATE SCHOOL CONTRIBUTES

A huge thankyou to the students and families of Morayfield State School for their incredible contributions to our Christmas Hamper drive this year. These hampers will be gifted to our families in need in the Moreton Bay region. This is the third consecutive year Morayfield SS has donated to our service, we are so grateful for their support.



ST JAMES RETIREMENT VILLAGE DONATE GIFTS

Residents and staff at our St James Retirement Village presented giftboxes full of children's toys to our Townsville foster care team. We support over 120 children and young people in the Townsville area, which made a significant impact at Christmas.



THANK YOU TO ALL

And at Head Office, across our Kenmore campus, 440 gifts were donated for Children, Youth and Families and Youth CONNECT, as well as \$285 in cash donations to distribute to our local services in time for Christmas.

Thank you to all who participated in bringing joy to the young people and families we serve at Christmas.





CHURCHES
of **CHRIST**



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

Connect with us at
[ItTakesaCommunity.com.au](https://www.ItTakesaCommunity.com.au)



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