

LUTHERAN
CARE



BE THE VILLAGE
foster care

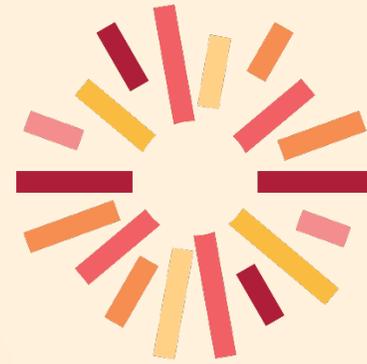
Thriving together by **supporting** *each other.*

Drawing On The Strengths Of Families To Offer
Meaningful Foster Carer Peer Support.

Hi, I'm Nat

- I have been the Family Engagement Worker at Lutheran Care, Foster Care Services, since December 2023.
- I have been a foster carer since 2013. Long term care, now Long-Term Guardian.
- Previous work history – enrolled nurse for 10 years, primary school teacher for 20 years, with a big chunk of this teaching in a Montessori school. I have travelled extensively and love people, learning about other cultures and celebrate diversity.





LUTHERAN CARE

*Changing Lives,
Building Communities*

Empowering communities to thrive across SA & NT.

For more than 50 years, Lutheran Care has been a trusted supporter and advocate for vulnerable people. From early intervention programs to frontline crisis relief, we work together with all people from all walks of life to provide dignity, build skills and grow connections for a brighter future.





OUR PRIORITY

Investment into the retention of Carers

- HIGH PRIORITY - Carer Retention links to Carer Recruitment
- FOCUS - The quantity and quality of meaningful Peer Support is a key marker of Carer Retention
- CHALLENGE - Making peer support meaningful and practical for an agency that supports 200+ households dispersing 186km and representing various cultures
- SUPPORTING – Generating organic relationships in meaningful ways, on a large scale



While the core principles of peer support remain consistent, the implementation of these models can vary significantly.

- Intentional peer Support
- Support groups and mentoring
- Informal or structured

Overall, peer support is increasingly recognised as a valuable component of foster care systems worldwide, with research showing its positive impact on both foster parents and children in care.

Lutheran Care were searching for a point of difference which has involved risk for reward.



CONTEXT

Reality of Implementation

- TIME - People are busy
- CHOICE - Peer support looks different to everyone
- DIFFERENCE - Accessible events look different for everyone
- INVESTMENT - The risk is it's just “more for a carer to do”
- COMMITMENT - Developing meaningful relationships take time
- TRUST – Genuine connection takes time and trust in the process



THE JOURNEY

Providing a 'meaningful' Service

THE PROGRAM MUST:

- be uncomplicated
- be diverse
- have dedicated investment to gain any kind of new momentum
- realise a vision from the carers
- gain shared ownership with carers
- be intentional
- strive for organic connections independent of Lutheran Care

Dad's Group

An established peer group requested by carers.



Dad's Group - Event One



Dad's Group - Event Two

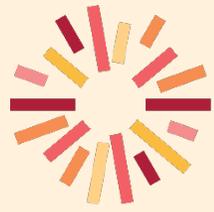


Dad's Group - Event Two



Dad's Group - Event Three





LUTHERAN
CARE



**Why a peer support
program and not
something else?**

THE CATALYST

Initiating a co-designed program

- OPENNESS - To doing something different
- GENUINE - Commitment to working with carers
- CHANGE - Began with an eight-month, joint process led by The Australian Centre of Social Innovation (TACSI)
- FOCUS - Highlighted key areas for growth and carers' priorities
- IMPLEMENTATION - Resulted in a blueprint for presenting peer connect opportunities
- REVIEW - Conducted desktop literature research of Peer Support Models in Australia
- Drafted a proposal for activity.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead





BE THE VILLAGE FOSTER CARE

'Be the Village' started as a LC recruitment campaign in 2022 and has evolved to encompass all that we do as a Foster Care agency to support both the carers and child in care.

Derived from the well-known proverb, *'it takes a village to raise a child'* the title is reflective of a child belonging in community and supported by safe people working together and looking out for their best interests.





LUTHERAN CARE

FOSTER CARE

BE THE VILLAGE

lutherancare.org.au





THE SOLUTION

TACSI Implementation

- APPOINTED - a worker with lived carer experience to lead this portfolio from a place of empathy and expertise
- INVESTED - in new systems and processes
- DEVELOPED - new events and communication tools
- REFLECTED - Some gained traction, some didn't

First Event

Today



SAT 15TH
June, 2024



31
Events

- Peer Connections
- Carer Wellbeing
- Carer Connects



229
Participants



9 intentional
groups
established

- Footy tips
- Dad's group
- Biological family members
- Single carers
- Rainbow Families
- Carers who have children with FASD
- Carers with deaf and non-verbal children
- New carers
- Carers who are 60+ years

THE SOLUTION

TACSI Implementation



Quiz Night 2025

Quiz Night – an exciting musical finale to a year of intentional peer connection



Barossa Retreat

Retreat - a wellness retreat, for peer connections, relaxation and rejuvenation.



Barossa Retreat



Reflection

- Foster care families are busy
- We want to offer well-deserved break time
- Once carers attend, they want more
- Peer Connection helps reduce the feelings of isolation
- Patience and belief in the program
- Continues to grow.





Biological Family Members 2025



Biological Family Members 2025

Biological Family Members

Peer Group





Carers with deaf or non-verbal children



Over 60's Carers

Carers with deaf or non-verbal children & Over 60's

Peer Groups



Footy Tipping Competition

Peer Group



*Footy Tipping End of
Season Dinner*



Footy Tipping Comp Winner!



Carer Connects

Regular catch ups



Carer Connect - Term 2 2025





Paint and Sip 2024



Paint and Sip 2025



Sound Bath Experience



Mindful Meditation Session

Paint & Sip Mindful Meditation Sound Bath

Carer Wellbeing Events





Guest Speaker: Annie Harvey



Guest Speaker: Annie Harvey



Night out at the Theatre, 2025

Guest Speaker: Annie Harvey **Kimberley Akimbo Musical**

Carer Wellbeing Events





Quiz Night Winners!



Quiz Night 2025



Quiz Night 2025



Quiz Night Feedback



Quiz Night 2025



Quiz Night 2025

Quiz Night 2025



IMPACT

Feedback & Testimonials

“The Barossa retreat was an incredible and supportive opportunity to connect with other carers in a non-judgmental setting.”

“Keep making events to meet up at 😊”

“Great to share with a fellow carer living a similar experience - they get it firsthand with no need for lengthy explanation - they just get it! My LC worker also gets it but there is that added support from a fellow carer who is operating at the same level of the gravy train.”



IMPACT

Feedback & Testimonials

“I think the opportunities you currently offer are fantastic.”

“Keep offering a variety to suit a wide range of carers.”

“Keep providing support and links to other carers and workshop opportunities. Being a carer can be quite isolating, and it is good to be able to meet with lived experience carers who just get it.”

“Just to say thank you to the LC team for their efforts and hard work they do in trying to connect and support us carers. My family and I very much appreciate it.”





OUTCOMES

Learning so far

- What would we do the same?
- What would we do differently?



VISION

Where Are We Heading?

- PHASE ONE - This role is still in its preliminary stages
- CHANGE - For many carers in *Our Village*, meaningful and intentional peer connection opportunities have not been the norm
- DEVELOPMENT - Family Engagement Worker is attending home visits to share a brochure about peer connection opportunities
- UNITY - We have developed a Support Squad (experienced carers), offering a mentor for new carers



*“Change will not come if we wait for
some other person or some other time.
We are the ones we’ve been waiting
for. We are the change that we seek.”*

- Barack Obama



Q & A

