

COMMUNITY CENTRES SA

2021-2025

STRATEGIC PLAN



Community Centres SA
Strengthening Local Communities

“

THE NEED FOR CONNECTION
AND COMMUNITY IS PRIMAL,
AS FUNDAMENTAL AS THE NEED
FOR AIR, WATER AND FOOD.

”

WHO WE ARE. OUR MISSION.

We are a Not-for-Profit leader and member based organisation in local, place based community development.

It is our mission to find the strength, uniqueness and possibilities in our communities and to speak of them, magnify them and bat for them by nurturing the local community spaces and people that support community connectedness.

Because local responses, that tell the local story and deeply know and value a community's own strengths and assets, will always lead to better outcomes.

Meaningful community connectedness helps to solve tough problems like loneliness, anxiety, racism, unemployment, illiteracy, and family breakdown.

We enhance community connectedness through advocacy, research, capacity building and training. We support and walk alongside our 170+ member Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses and other community organisations.

These are organisations who share our ethos and who have the skills and deep local community insights to support the most hard-to-reach people.

“

WE FIND THE STRENGTH
UNIQUENESS AND POSSIBILITIES
IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

”



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO. OUR VALUES.

In the 1970s

As the women’s movement started to have meaningful impact on social structures, many women started meeting for a day or two per week to assist families and young single mothers who felt isolated, lacked local social connections outside their family. Initially such informal gatherings took place on church premises or community halls. This marked the beginning of the Community Centre and Neighbourhood House movement in South Australia, and the Commonwealth Government was generous in its funding of local organisations to foster community participation in community health and decision making. Volunteer participation was encouraged, community groups thrived and were a conduit for raising community concerns. 1983 saw the early beginnings of Community Centres SA as the peak body for many emerging Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses across SA.



Inclusivity. Empowerment.
Strengths Based. Social Justice.
Community Participation. Diversity.
Collaboration. Integrity.

In the 2020s

We are a powerful advocate for local place based community responses, social justice, inclusivity, prevention, reconciliation and community connectedness. Since then, we have become a voice for over 170 Community Centres and other organisations that share our ethos. We advocate for justice for people who face multiple barriers in life and for empowering local communities to influence and have a say about things that impact their health and wellbeing. We have a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, reconciliation, community connectedness and inclusivity.



We believe deeply in the power of local place-based community support. Our 103 Community Centres around SA are, at their core, connection nurturers. They are non-stigmatised. Open and inclusive to all.

We know that working from a community development framework yields meaningful and sustainable change.

It empowers meaningful community connectedness, which can reduce the incidence of relapse for people suffering depression and addiction, lower the risk of premature mortality amongst retirees following the loss of their work and social identity, and provide safety, security, support, a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose.

“
ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE,
TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH
HELEN KELLER
”



1 in 4

AUSTRALIANS ARE LONELY. BEING MORE SOCIALLY CONNECTED LEADS TO A 50% REDUCTION IN THE RISK OF EARLY MORTALITY FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES.



35,000

PARTICIPANTS EACH WEEK! THAT’S NEARLY 2 MILLION EACH YEAR IN SA, AND OVER 21 MILLION EACH WEEK ACROSS AUSTRALIA!

OUR ASPIRATIONS.

1. Communities are deeply connected

People in their communities know and care for each other. People are involved in, feel deeply connected to, and contribute to their community.

We will know that these aspirations are being achieved when we see:

- 1. People know their neighbors and others in their local community. They know who to turn to with issues and ideas.
- 2. Communities display resilience through deep connections, and by acting collectively to come up with solutions to community needs and crises.
- 3. Community Centres are a trusted source of information in the community, they are trusted for their "knowing".
- 4. People are willing, motivated, invested, and contribute to their community. They feel pride in their community.

MEASURE

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
IN COMMUNITY CENTRES
AND HOUSES

2. Communities are inclusive

Where everyone has a sense of belonging, of cultural, physical and psychological safety, and feels comfortable being themselves. Where communities feel free from judgement and stigma. Where communities foster equality of opportunity.

We will know that these aspirations are being achieved when we see:

- 1. People have a place to go where they feel a strong sense of belonging and that is relevant to their needs. A place where they feel physically, psychologically and culturally safe.
- 2. Our members' organisational governance, staffing, programs and activities are as diverse as the communities they support and empower.
- 3. Communities celebrate, deeply know and value cultural diversity.
- 4. There is diversity in participation in Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses because they are open and inclusive to all, they are for everyone.

MEASURE

A COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS
COMPLETED BY OUR MEMBERS
THAT MEASURES THEIR
COMMUNITY DIVERSITY



WHERE EVERYONE HAS
A SENSE OF BELONGING

“

OFTEN WE ARE
INVITED TO THE DANCE
BUT NOT TO DANCE

”



3. A just and reconciled South Australia

Where we have moved from words to action. Where the deep hurt has been acknowledged by everyone, and the pathways to reconciliation for our First Nations peoples are known and walked upon by everyone.

We will know that these aspirations are being achieved when we see:

- 1. Acknowledgement of, valuing and celebrating South Australia's Indigenous history.
- 2. Expression and commitment to shared values, and an acknowledgement that there is more that unites us than divides us.
- 3. Participation by Indigenous Australians in volunteering, employment pathways, and community learning activities. This participation supports professional and personal growth and builds capacity.

- 4. Local ground up actions for reconciliation and listening to local truth telling.
- 5. Communities call out racism each time it appears.

MEASURE

RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

4. Communities feel empowered

Where organisations acknowledge that communities know their strengths far better than anyone else. Where communities use their voice and their power to take control of their own lives and build pathways to improve individual and community outcomes.

We will know that these aspirations are being achieved when we see:

- 1. People's stories are told.
- 2. People with a lived experience of a health or social condition are actively involved in policy, programs/ services and decisions that impact on them.
- 3. Participation in volunteering, employment pathways and community learning activities. This participation supports professional and personal growth, and builds capacity.
- 4. There are plentiful examples of local community led initiatives operating from Community Centres across South Australia that show community growth, community unity, community connections.

MEASURE

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN
OUR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS /
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
IN OUR COMMUNITY
LEARNING

OUR STRATEGIES.

Strategy 1

Nurture our members’ long term sustainability and best practice community development practices

1.1 Advocate for our members and their communities

Through advocacy we seek to change conditions that create fair and just communities. We lift others who need support, and band together to make a difference. State and Local Government know of and value our advocacy and it informs their decision making.

- 1. Advocate for ongoing Local, State and Federal Government funding to support the work of our member organisations who share our ethos and goals.
- 2. We will have a voice in public debate on social justice issues impacting on our member communities, particularly where they relate to community connectedness and isolation, inclusivity, reconciliation and their right to have a say.
- 3. We will drive positive cultural change for fairer and just communities through engaging and targeted social, print and radio media.
- 4. Develop and share policy positions to inform our advocacy, which is informed by qualitative and quantitative evidence including lived experience, research and policy.

1.2 Build our members’ community and organizational capacity

Through the provision of capacity building activities we act as a catalyst for best practice community development.

- 1. Regularly engage with our member organisations to understand their ongoing and changing workforce needs, and respond to those needs through blended training offerings to maximise their accessibility to capacity building opportunities.
- 2. Build members’ staff, Boards and volunteers’ capacity in sound governance, understanding and reporting on community needs, organisational sustainability, strategic planning and goal setting, partnerships and networks, and wellbeing and resilience.
- 3. Host an annual conference and capacity building events on issues of relevance to provide forums for our sector to participate in discussions, explore and refine existing values/knowledge/ideas, strengthen networks and alliances amongst each other, and contribute to a robust communities of practice.

1.3 Inform our members

Through information dissemination we raise the profile of our organisation and our members, we raise awareness of issues that we advocate for, and we advise our members on key policy or legal changes that will impact on them and their communities.

- 1. Provide regular, up to date and relevant information about issues impacting on community development and the Community Centres sector including legislative changes, best practice examples, grants and other funding opportunities, partnership opportunities and advocacy activities.
- 2. Provide regular, evidence based and relevant information to funders, partners and other stakeholders about the value of best practice community development approaches as an integral part of addressing structural “wicked problems” that impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- 3. Continue to build our social media profile as a core means of disseminating information in an engaging and contemporary manner.
- 4. Promote value of and provide opportunities to attend networking, celebration and information events, connect with others and contribute to collaborative community effort.

Strategy 2

Maintain our operational excellence

2.1 Build our business sustainability

Reducing reliance upon grant funding, being creative and agile, and building effective and meaningful partnerships is a pathway to enhanced sustainability.

- 1. Identify and build diverse ranges of potential partnerships with community leaders, service providers, local assets, the corporate community, all levels of government and philanthropists who share our ethos and values.
- 2. Identify partnership goals with complementary organisations, and mutually agree on goals, resources and capabilities required, outputs, roles and responsibilities, communication approaches, acknowledgement of power differentials, conflict resolution systems, and measures of success.
- 3. Nurture a shared understanding that effective partnerships built around trust and social currency are important because they can achieve organisational efficiency and effectiveness, achieve meaningful social structural change and community impact.

2.2 Maintain our service excellence

We will maintain our impressive reputation as deliverers of excellence in all aspects of our day to day operations, recognising that this is necessary in order to continue to best serve our members and advocate for communities.

- 1. Ensure that our services, products and advocacy reflect our members needs through ongoing, varied and meaningful engagement opportunities.
- 2. Maintain our ASES Quality Accreditation.
- 3. Continue to input rich and accurate data in our internal CRM system.
- 4. Our governance model and execution is at all times transparent and best practice.
- 5. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for Community Centres SA’s staff so that they are supported in continuous learning around their community development knowledge and professional skilling.

2.3 Embed continuous improvement in all that we do

Through the process of innovation, incubation, evaluation and reflection we nurture a culture of continuous improvement. It is the mechanism through which we use our resources for the ultimate benefit of our members and their communities, to creatively and effectively address “wicked problems”.

- 1. Through innovation and creativity, develop new community development project ideas and approaches around our key areas of focus – inclusivity, reconciliation, community connectedness, community learning and loneliness. Monitor, evaluate, learn, adjust, repeat, learn, and then partner with other organisations to find ways to scale the approach, bringing its opportunities to our members and their communities.
- 2. Co Design approaches and solutions to persistent disadvantage in our communities that are informed by lived-experience, community evidence and are based around local, place based solutions.

“SOMETIMES, WE ARE BUT ONE VOICE IN A CHOIR, AND AT OTHER TIMES WE ARE THE CONDUCTOR.”



Strategy 3

3.1 Achieve a reputation as South Australia’s leading Community Development and Community Learning Not-For-Profit Organisation

For 40 years, our practice in community development has been of exceptional quality and integrity. Building our community development products and telling the story of our skills and our offerings must be part of growing our profile in this space, ultimately contributing to our enhanced and widespread reputation as the leader and core provider of community development expertise and services.

1.

Grow the breadth and depth of our online Community Learning Hub, including our community development courses, to increase its reach and effectiveness in upskilling community and workforce learners around South Australia.
2.

Collaborate with training institutions and employers to share learnings and opportunities around training and employment pathways in the community services fields.
3.

Continue to contribute to community development and human services think tanks and expert forums to advance the knowledge and understanding of community development approaches.



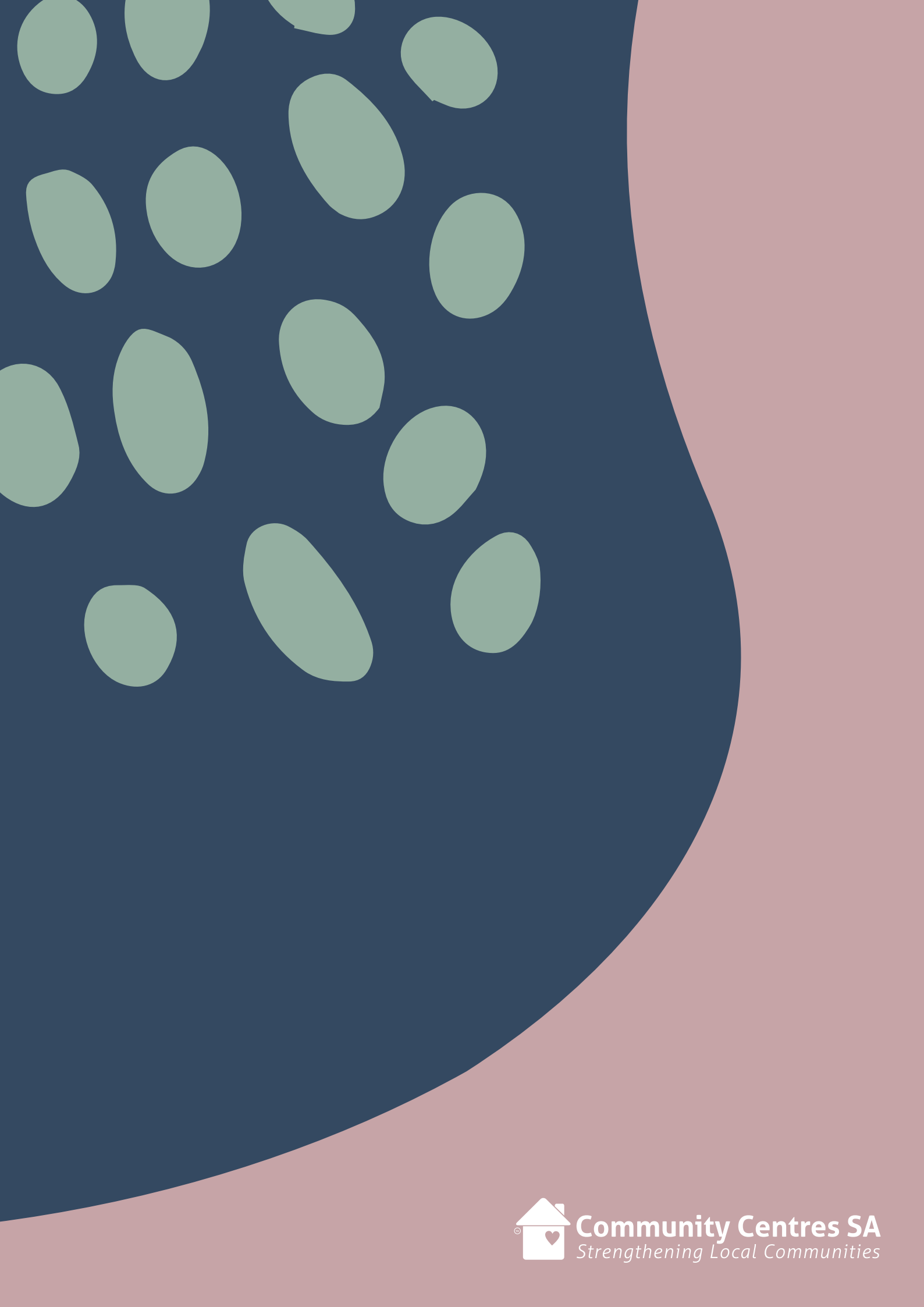
40 years

FOR 40 YEARS, OUR PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY AND INTEGRITY.

For further information visit:

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