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PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT SOUTHLAND MAGAZINE



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Supporting our most vulnerable

As a charitable organisation operating in the social services and aged care sectors, it's hard not to be concerned about the future for our most vulnerable.

We've always operated with financial headwinds, and in many ways, over the years these headwinds have helped build resilience and minimise inefficiency. However, in recent times, the headwinds are feeling more like unrelenting cyclones that continue to batter our sails.

It's no secret that as a nation, demographics and data tell us that the pressure on the social services and aged care sectors will continue to grow over the coming decades, so it's critical we find a way to operate and sustainably support our community into the future.

Our Family Works Directorate has proudly served vulnerable children and families in Southland for more than 100 years. Over the past few decades, we have received government funding to deliver social services contracts. Just as importantly, with the help of numerous and generous community funders, we've been able to provide a range of additional programmes and services for children and families focusing on prevention rather than intervention. Recent cuts to Oranga Tamariki's budget have resulted in significant contract funding reductions up and down the country which mean either the consolidation or removal of services, affecting us and many other local

service providers. This is concerning and disheartening when now more than ever, our waiting lists are growing with families and young people requiring support.

Our aged residential care services are largely reliant on government funding to be able to continue to provide critical services. Government funding comes in the form of subsidies on the monthly fees residents pay once their savings fall below the prescribed threshold.

In recent years there have been a multitude of reports commissioned showing that the aged residential care sector is in crisis because of significant under-funding. Comparatively, Southland is one of the more under-funded regions across the country. Demographics tell us that the demand for aged care services will increase significantly over the coming decades, particularly for hospital and dementia care. As Southland's sole provider of psychogeriatric dementia care through our Enliven Directorate, our ability to meet future demand is concerning.

So, what does the future look like for both social services and aged care in Southland? It is clear that with multiple competing funding priorities nationally, an environment of increasing demand,

and the increasing complexity of client and resident needs, we won't be able to cost-cut our way into the future using the same approach to service provision that has got us to this point. Our aged care residents and Family Works clients – so often the most at-risk people in our community – must not be forgotten.

An approach that emphasises information-sharing and streamlining resident/client movement across service providers needs to be a focus. While ensuring quality service provision and the necessary protections for residents and clients are important, in many ways we seem to have become too risk averse. This has made our administrative and compliance burden too onerous and costly, with significant duplication.

Irrespective of where you sit on the political spectrum, for the sake of supporting and assisting those in our community who need us the most, we need to figure out how to best prioritise funding trade-offs, whether for health, education, infrastructure, welfare or any of the many competing expectations we value as a developed society.

Southland's capacity to work together as a community and support each other is a reassurance which cannot be overstated. However, it's hard to imagine a solution that doesn't involve a transformational approach to these sectors into the future.

- Matt Russell, PSS chief executive



Funding cuts

An estimated 120 Southland families with high, complex needs will be impacted by a significant restructure of Family Works following recent Oranga Tamariki (OT) funding cuts.

Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) chief executive Matt Russell said the recent OT funding cuts had been incredibly disappointing, particularly given that the critical services Family Works provided made a real difference in the lives of many.

“The cuts would ultimately result in more children in Southland being at risk of poor outcomes or worse,” he said.

Family Works director Judith McInerney said the team remained committed to their clients and the community, and they would do everything possible to continue to meet the needs of the community.

In early August, OT announced front-line service contracts with 190 social service providers would be discontinued and funding reduced to more than 142 others across New Zealand following a government directive to streamline services. This included a reduction in funding for the national Family Start programme equating to about \$14m and the disestablishment of the Young Parents Service (YPS) nationwide in addition to cuts to other services.

Family Works, contracted by OT to run the Family Start and YPS programmes in the Southland region, was among those impacted

with a reduction in funding of \$390,000.

Judith said taking into account pay equity funding, the reduction was closer to \$550,000 (an additional payment from OT to cover agreed salary increases for registered social workers).

“We have been working hard to identify how best to make the required changes and subsequent savings in a way that strikes the right balance between the impacts on our people, the services we provide and the families we work with, but we are going to lose a considerable amount of what we can offer the community.”





“The cuts would ultimately result in more children in Southland being at risk of poor outcomes or worse,”

To address the funding shortfall, most staff had had their hours cut and four staff had been made redundant.

“We decided to reduce hours where we could rather than removing roles, hence the broader impact across the team. However, when things get better, our hope is that we will then be able to flex those roles back up again,” Judith said.

“There is a huge investment involved in the induction and training of staff, so we wanted to retain staff wherever possible, not to mention the impact on our people of their livelihoods being affected.”

Other service areas affected included reducing the number of children supported by the Buddy Programme in Gore and Whakatipu, the Parenting Programme reduced from four courses a year to two and a small reduction in hours for the Dedicated Intake Service.

“During this really difficult time, we highly value and appreciate the commitment of our community funders as without them we would need to make further cuts to what we can offer to the community.

Judith said Family Works had been completely unprepared for the news OT would make cuts to the Family Start and YPS because both programmes work with families with really high and complex needs.

These programmes have demonstrated how much they are needed in our community and had achieved positive outcomes. Those we work with in the community who refer to these services also struggled to make sense of why these much-needed services were cut.

“These are very crucial early intervention programmes with evidence they are needed. It makes absolutely no sense at all to cut funding for them.”

The current 15 YPS clients are being supported by other Family Works staff.

There are 22 families on the waitlist for the Family Start programme at present, with an average wait time of three months.

Judith said they had gone out to the community to see if there were other providers who could take some of the families on their waitlist, but in most cases there

was nothing in the community that matched what Family Works offered or clients had indicated a preference for Family Works, so staff were doing their best to absorb the families within Family Works.

Matt said PSS had “stridently advocated against the cuts and would continue to do so on behalf of Southland to relevant politicians, sector heads and stakeholders. “

“These are very crucial early intervention programmes with evidence they are needed. It makes absolutely no sense at all to cut funding for them.”



Yodelling star takes break

Enliven's Resthaven retirement village is home to local celebrity Max McCauley and his wife Coral.

The Gore country music identity has spent the past six decades entertaining residents in Southland and South Otago care homes, including our Enliven care homes, simply for the joy it provides.

"I just love to make people happy if I can, because that makes me happy too," Max said. "It is something I enjoy with a passion."

He particularly enjoyed seeing people with dementia "come alive" as they recognised the songs he was singing.

"They have still got the music inside and when they start singing along with you, that makes it worthwhile."

Unfortunately, the 87-year-old's trademark yodelling came to an abrupt halt last year when his vocal cords collapsed, putting paid to performing, at least for now.

During lockdown he had sung online in a bid to cheer people up and he believed the damage may have been done when he had continued to sing while having COVID-19, putting a strain on his voice.

He had an operation to repair the damage in Auckland in October with the hope of restoring his singing voice and was now at home recuperating.

Not being able to sing has been difficult for Max, as his love of country music has been a life-long passion.

He was born in Lumsden in 1937 into a family of country music lovers. His mother yodelled and his father played numerous instruments including the button accordion and mouth organ.

"I just sing because I love it."

Resthaven retirement village resident Max McCauley at home while waiting for surgery to repair his vocal cords.

Max said he remembers hearing his mother yodelling when he was a toddler and thinking the sound was interesting.

He took up the craft at the age of three and never looked back.

He had his stage debut at the Lumsden RSA hall singing The Yellow Rose of Texas at the age of five.

“I still remember it like it was yesterday,” he said.

Max realised early on yodelling was not for everyone, so as a child he would climb trees to practice where he would not disturb anyone.

On moving to Gore when Max was about 6, his school teacher asked him to sing to the class. He was reluctant, only agreeing on the condition he could sing while hidden behind the blackboard.

That early reluctance soon gave way as his passion for the music grew.

A pivotal experience was joining the Gore operatic society on leaving school. A member of the group, Iris Barron, was a country music enthusiast and asked him to entertain the audience while the sets were being changed behind the curtain. He later joined the chorus, performing in several shows.

Being part of the group exposed him to a wide variety of music he had not heard before, which he had really enjoyed, he said.

However, it was seeing the Viennese Comedy Harmonists perform in the Regent Theatre in Gore in 1954 that cemented his love for Alpine yodelling, a style popular in rural Europe.

Alpine yodelling was his preferred style because of its complexity and difficulty, he said.

Max’s singing achievements and accolades have been many.

One of his proudest achievements was receiving a Gold Disc Award

presented by recording company Houghton Hughes for sales of his 1978 record 20 Golden Yodells exceeding 50,000 copies.

He has been inducted into the Tamworth and Gore Country Music Hands of Fame, which pay tribute to people who have made a name for themselves in country music.

Max also has an impressive list of high-profile New Zealand country music singers and entertainers he has performed with over the years.

That list includes Paul Walden, Maria Dallas, Eddie Low and Kevin Greaves. He has also performed with Sir Howard Morrison, Suzanne Prentice, Gerry Merito, and his favourite female country music singer Patsy

Riggir, who sang the early country music he loved so much.

Despite all his success, Max was a humble man, uncomfortable boasting about his achievements.

“I just sing because I love it.”

“I just love to make people happy if I can, because that makes me happy too.”





A home transformed

Georgia* was at the end of her tether when she asked Family Works for help.

Her eldest child had become very defiant, and Georgia and her husband had very different ideas of how to parent their children.

“My husband was very strict, whereas I was more laid back.”

Georgia joined the Parenting Programme and learned different parenting styles and techniques and developed more clarity around what behaviours were acceptable and unacceptable.

After her marriage broke up several years later, Georgia struggled to parent her children on her own, particularly because the children were unhappy with the shared custody arrangements and had become confrontational.

It was during this time, Georgia self-referred to Family Works, this time for social work support.

“My social worker was my lifeline... my saving grace.”

The social worker was very direct

when it was needed, she said. He helped her gain confidence in her parenting, encouraged her to stand up for the truth and establish boundaries around her children’s behaviour.

“The social worker was a listening ear and someone I could offload to.”

The eldest child had become extremely angry and violent, to the point of punching Georgia and kicking holes in the wall. With the guidance of the social worker, the next time her child became violent, she called the police.

Although calling the police had been an incredibly difficult thing to do, it had taught her eldest child and the younger ones that the behaviour was not acceptable, and the violence had stopped, she said.

She used to be very reactive to her children’s behaviour, often resulting in her yelling at them, but with the guidance of her social worker she had learned how to calm herself before addressing her children’s behaviour.

Another positive change to have come out of working with Family Works was she and her children were now able to have more fun together.

“We do have a lot of fun times together now that we didn’t have before. I feel like we are all more

“My social worker was my lifeline... my saving grace.”

relaxed and we don’t have the violence in the home anymore, particularly with the eldest child.

“I would 100% recommend Family Works to others. I can’t fault them. I am just so grateful.

“Family Works is not just for the under-privileged. It is for everyone.”

**not her real name. Name has been changed to protect the family’s privacy.*

Family Works’ Social Work Support Service provides families with advice, parenting strategies to manage children’s behaviour, advocacy and other support for issues families may be facing.

Social work support can be provided to any family or situation where a child or young person is being cared for, up to the age of 17 within the wider Southland area.

Social workers work with individual family members and with families as a whole - whatever is in their best interests.

Dementia care grows

Funding milestone met to provide more psychogeriatric dementia beds for the community's most vulnerable

The need for more psychogeriatric dementia beds in Southland has resonated with funders with more than three-quarters of the funds raised in support of the development of Peacehaven Village's Iona D6 dementia unit.

Since putting the call out, \$341,926 has been raised for the project thanks to the generosity of numerous individuals, community groups and community funders.

There is \$44,074 left to raise.

"As is so often the case in Southland, the community has pulled together to get behind an important project for the region," Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) chief executive Matt Russell said.

"We're extremely grateful to all our community funding partners who have contributed to the project despite financially challenging times. In particular, the ILT Foundation, Stewart Family Charitable Trust, PH Vickery Trust, First Church Charitable Trust, Guy

Anson Waddel Charitable Trust, and Aotearoa Gaming Trust.

"We've also had several private donors generously support the expansion."

The project, expected to cost \$386,000 excl GST, involves creating six additional bedrooms as part of an upgrade of Peacehaven's Iona dementia care unit by repurposing office and storeroom space within the existing building footprint.

Fire safety compliance work is being done as well as equipping and furnishing each new room, creating a new nurse station and nurse call system and refreshing the lounge and kitchenette.

Work began in mid-August and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

If you still wish to support the Iona D6 project, you can donate online at pss.org.nz/get-involved/donate or email fundraising@pss.org.nz



Peacehaven manager Ronette Bolivar (left), Enliven Southland director Carol Riddle and PSS chief executive Matt Russell review the progress of construction of the Iona D6 reconfiguration project.

What legacy might you leave behind?

Presbyterian Support Southland has many valued supporters whose donations contribute to funding our work with vulnerable children and their families and with elderly people. Thank you. Your ongoing support helps us make a difference together.

But have you ever considered leaving us a gift in your Will so you can go on helping us make a difference after you've passed. Not only is such a gift hugely appreciated, it is a way of creating a lasting legacy.

There are two kinds of gifts in Wills. A one-off donation (known as a bequest), is the simplest option. You can ask your lawyer to write a clause in your Will nominating a dollar amount, a percentage of your assets remaining at the time of your death, or even items of value to be given to a charity or charities. It's up to you how specific you want to be. For instance, if you have supported the Family

Works Southland Buddy Programme for years, then maybe you want to leave a gift to Family Works. Or you may wish to leave a general gift for us to use where the need is greatest.

Making provision for a one-off donation means you can rest assured you are also able to provide for family and friends. A gift left in your Will does not have to be large. Every gift is appreciated and collectively they add up.

Over the years we have received many one-off bequests ranging in size from a few hundred dollars to more than \$200,000. People have also left us items such as vehicles, paintings, and even houses. One man left us a small forestry plantation.

The other gift in Wills option is most often chosen by individuals or couples who know they will have a lot of money available when they die. A trust fund is established and

invested by a lawyer or other professional. The investment continues year after year, with the interest distributed annually to the charity or charities of your choice.

The ongoing money PSS receives through distributions from trust funds helps fund programmes and services such as our SupportLink service to the elderly in Whakatipu and children we care for with the help of foster families.

If continuing to make a difference is something that resonates with you, we invite you to get in touch. There are no obligations and the conversation will be completely confidential. Contact Partnership and Engagement Coordinator **Allison Beckham**, 03 211 8252, or email fundraising@pss.org.nz.



Together we can make a difference

Our staff work with more than 3300 vulnerable children, whānau/families and older people in Southland and the Whakatipu Basin every year. Every contribution, large or small, helps us help others.

How to donate



Website: pss.org.nz/get-involved



Internet banking: Our bank account number is 02 0924 0545924 00 (BNZ)



Cash/Eftpos: Please visit our Central Office, 183 Spey Street, Invercargill, or any of our Enliven care homes

For more ways to see how you can help through donations or volunteering your time, please visit our website.

Unemployment, poverty, family disputes, mental illness, loneliness, social isolation and social inequity are just some of the issues we see people struggling with every day.

Thank you to all those who have donated towards the work we do. Your donation will help enable us to walk alongside them, letting them know they are not alone and can get the support they need.

Thank you to our major community funders



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