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WINTER 2026

PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT SOUTHLAND MAGAZINE

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Winter update

There are times in the life of any organisation when change is not only necessary but essential to ensure a strong and sustainable future.

At Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS), we are currently navigating one of those periods, one defined not just by change, but by opportunity, clarity of purpose, and a renewed focus on our strategy and our community.

In recent months, we have progressed the divestment of our Frankton Court site and moved to an unconditional agreement for the sale of Resthaven Village. These decisions have not been taken lightly. Resthaven, in particular, holds a long and proud history within our organisation and community. However, as we look to the future, it is clear our responsibility is to ensure our resources are positioned where they can deliver the greatest impact.

By consolidating our footprint, we are taking a deliberate and strategic step towards strengthening our core services. This approach reflects a disciplined focus on sustainability, ensuring PSS remains resilient and able to deliver on its for-purpose mission for many years to come. Our goal is simple: to direct our efforts and investment into areas where we can continue to make the most meaningful difference in people's lives.

Alongside these structural changes, we are also seeing a season of renewal within our Family Works directorate. I am pleased to acknowledge our new social services general manager Tom Hunter, who has taken up the mantle from Judith McInerney, is settling in well. This transition brings fresh energy and new perspectives, with the continued

support of a committed and capable team. As we look ahead, there is real potential to further strengthen and expand the social services we provide across Southland, ensuring we continue to respond to evolving community needs with empathy, innovation, and professionalism.

A key part of our future focus is the continued investment into community infrastructure, particularly through the Peacehaven redevelopment. I am pleased to report the project is progressing exceptionally well. The first tranche of new units is on track to be ready for sale in July, with strong progress already underway on the second tranche, anticipated for completion in December this year. Notably, the redevelopment is tracking on schedule and under budget, an outstanding result that reflects the diligence and commitment of everyone involved.

The project is more than an update to our bricks and mortar; it is a tangible expression of our continued commitment to the provision of aged care in Southland. It represents modern, high-quality living environments designed to support wellbeing, connection, and dignity. Importantly, as with the recent D6 dementia-care expansion project, it demonstrates our intent to reinvest in our facilities, ensuring the benefits of our strategic decisions are returned to the people and communities we serve.

As we move through this period of transition, I want to acknowledge the professionalism, resilience,

“A key part of our future focus is the continued investment into community infrastructure.”

and dedication of our staff and volunteers. Change brings challenges, but it also brings opportunities to evolve, to strengthen, and to reaffirm who we are and why we exist.

At our core, PSS remains committed to walking alongside people at every stage of life—supporting, caring for, and empowering those in our community. The decisions we make today are guided by that enduring purpose, and by a clear vision for a sustainable and impactful future.

- Matt Russell, PSS chief executive





An Invercargill mother and her autistic child find invaluable support through the Incredible Years parenting programme.

Finding the calm in a chaotic world

When parents learn their child has autism, the early days can feel overwhelming and uncertain, but with the right support and strong community around them, they do not have to face that journey alone.

Invercargill parents Maia* and James* are now navigating that journey after their son Kai* (3) was found to have autism six months ago.

Maia said it was when Kai first started kōhanga reo aged 2 ½ years she noticed differences between her son and the other tamariki in such things as language, attention/focus and hand-eye coordination.

Discussions with Kai's teachers confirmed her concerns.

Since then, the family has begun a whirlwind of appointments with various agencies for support, including the Ministry of Education for educational resources, a speech and language therapist and soon Child Development Services.

Joining Family Works' Incredible Years Autism parenting programme (IY Autism) in February this year had also provided Maia and her family with support, reassurance and a safe space in which to learn how to engage more effectively with their son.

"The [IY Autism] tutors are calm in a world that is pretty chaotic. It is a

very safe space...with no judgment.”

The programme had given them reassurance there were things they could do to help their son to thrive.

They had learned the importance of staying calm in situations that unsettle Kai and following his lead rather than forcing situations on him.

“When Kai shows an interest in something, that is the time to jump in and use it as a teaching opportunity,” she said.

“It’s about working with him rather than working against him.”

Maia had also benefited from talking and connecting with other parents on the programme who were going through similar challenges.

“It’s that shared struggle,” she said. “Everyone on the course is there for the same reason. They all have an autistic child, so there is more buy-in.”

Since implementing the strategies and skills learned on the programme, there had been significant improvements in how Maia and James engaged and communicated with their son and a noticeable positive change in Kai.

“I am calmer and more prepared and can identify ahead of time situations that will upset him, like new or noisy and crowded environments,” Maia said.

“There are also less frequent meltdowns, and Kai is taking the lead more and being more explorative.”

Families starting out on the autism journey need to know they are not alone and that there is help available so their child can live their best life.

“There are people out there to help you, you just need to reach out.”

Maia recommended Family Works’ IY Autism parenting programme.

“Definitely make time for the course. It’s not just the course; it’s the support you get from the others on the course.”

Through IY Autism, Maia and James have gained not only practical tools and confidence, but also a supportive community helping them build a bright future for their young son.

* Not their real names. Names have been changed to protect the family’s privacy.

“The [IY Autism] tutors are calm in a world that is pretty chaotic. It is a very safe space... with no judgment.”



Incredible Years Autism

IY Autism is a FREE programme delivered weekly over 14 sessions, providing practical strategies to help parents and caregivers of children aged 2-5 who have been diagnosed with autism. The programme covers play, language development, encouraging a child’s emotional self-regulation, developing social skills and empathy and much more.



IY Autism is one of three parenting programmes run by **Family Works Southland.**

To find out more, visit **familyworkssld.nz**, or phone **Nicole on 03 211 8272.**



Momentum building at Peacehaven

A year on from when work started, significant progress has been made on stage one of the Peacehaven Redevelopment, with six villas well on the way to completion and another six underway.

The project involves constructing 38 stylish and modern units and a residents' lodge over multiple stages. Stage 1a, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year, involves building 12 villas, a mix of standalone and duplex options, and a show home. The entire project is expected to take up to five years to complete.

➡ An artist's impression of how the village will look when the project is completed.



Nick Hamlin, managing director of Maxis Projects and project manager provides an update:

Things are going really well and are mostly tracking as planned. At times we've been slightly behind, and at other times ahead, but thanks to the hard work from both the project management and construction teams, we've stayed pretty close to our original timeline.

The groundwork phase took a bit longer than expected, but the villa build team has done a great job making up time without cutting corners on quality.

Originally, all 12 villas were going to be completed at once. However, following direction from the client team, the call was made to finish the first six early so residents could start moving in sooner.

Looking ahead, building through a Southland winter always brings its challenges, but the final six villas are still on track for completion in late 2026, as originally planned.

There's a lot more that goes into these builds than what you see day-to-day, from in-ground services and the latest technology installs, through to landscaping and finishing touches, all helping create modern homes for the future.

In terms of challenges, the main change has been staging the build so the first six villas could be made available earlier. This has been a great outcome for the Peacehaven community, but it did mean adjusting how parts of the project were planned and delivered.

Overall, things have been running smoothly with no major roadblocks.



The concrete for the last two floor slabs in Stage One being poured in May.

Early sales signal strong demand

Interest in the new villas is strong, with several already under offer. The opening of the show home in December had helped to drive engagement, with multiple groups and individuals taking the opportunity to explore the unique villa design as well as explore the retirement village amenities.

"It is very exciting to have three of the first six new villas under contract, and we are looking forward to welcoming the new residents to the village," operations manager Matt Pettersson said.

"Potential buyers are very impressed with the quality and finish of the new villas."

The villas offering a flexi space built into the design were also proving popular.

"People love the idea of the flexi space. Ideas for its use range from art studio, spare bedroom for grand kids and guests to enabling less mobile family members to be part of the living area whilst in a comfortable bed which can then be closed off."

The perception retirees are technologically-challenged had been well and truly debunked, with several discussions around smart home automation, Matt said.

Open homes are conducted each **Wednesday from 12.30 – 1.30pm** with guided tours available on request. Reach out to **Gareth and Nikki at Bayleys Southland** today or visit **enlivensld.nz** for more information.



Driven by early support, not last resort

We are pleased to introduce Tom Hunter, who joined as general manager of social services in January, following Judith McInerney's retirement.

Tom brings a broad background across New Zealand and Australia, with experience spanning Corrections, paramedicine, youth services, disability support, and most recently mental health and addiction services with Odyssey House in Christchurch. His career has included senior leadership roles supporting vulnerable communities and managing large teams and client groups.

In this reflective piece, Tom shares his insights from his first six months in the role—what has shaped his perspective, what drew him to Family Works, and the opportunities he sees in its early intervention focus, wide-ranging services, and long-standing community impact.

Since starting in January, I have had the privilege of spending time alongside our teams and witnessing first-hand the incredible work happening with our clients every day. What continues to stand out to me is that we are often meeting people at some of the most vulnerable points in their lives. That carries a deep responsibility and is a genuine privilege.

Over this time, it has become clear that Family Works is well placed—but we must continue to evolve as a service, refining our systems, approaches, and service delivery to continue to meet our growing community need. We need to continually invest in supporting our people to hone their skills and strengthen our practice to maintain and build the excellent outcomes we have. While many of the situations we encounter involve crisis, I'm confident we can continue to respond in ways that are both effective and well-resourced. We have come a long way over the years, but we remain committed to continuous improvement, by choice and by necessity. As we all know,

our funding landscape is constantly shifting, and that reality requires us to adapt and evolve.

One of our greatest strengths lies in our client-centred approach. Our frontline staff and leaders consistently advocate for and champion the needs of our clients and communities with dedication and passion. That commitment is something we should all be proud of.

At the same time, we are seeing increasing demand in several key areas, including housing, serious mental health challenges, system navigation, addiction, and the ongoing impacts of relative poverty. These pressures highlight the complexity of the work we do and the opportunities we have to grow and strengthen our services for the community.

It has been incredibly humbling to play a part in supporting those facing material hardship, made possible through the generosity of Southlanders and the wider community. We are deeply grateful to the businesses, families, individuals, and trusts who give so freely of their time, resources,

and funding. Quite simply, we could not achieve the outcomes we strive for without you. Family Works feels, to me, like a vital part of the Southland community, sustained by the generosity, care, and commitment of the people within it.

I'm reminded of the words of Sir James Henare: "We have come too far, not to go further. We have done too much, not to do more."

The level of need in our community is ongoing, and we know it is not going away. With that in mind, our focus over the next 12 months is on planning and delivering innovative ways of working. Some of this may involve new services for Southland; other initiatives will focus on strengthening how we deliver what we already do. We are not waiting for external changes to drive this. Our intention is to lead this work ourselves, with purpose and confidence.

As we move forward, we do so grounded in our values, responsive to our community, and committed to making a meaningful difference.



New chapter for Enliven Southland

Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) has sold its Frankton Court and Resthaven Village facilities in a bid to consolidate its assets in what is an increasingly challenging time for the aged care sector.

PSS chief executive Matt Russell said the consolidation meant the organisation would be in a better position to adapt and ensure it was well-placed to meet changing aged care needs across the communities it served.

“Our commitment remains the same — to support older people across the wider Southland region — but we must do so in ways that are flexible, sustainable, and responsive to what our community needs now and into the future.”

The sale of Resthaven retirement village and care home was formally confirmed in May this year, with the new owners, Phantom Eldercare, taking over operations on July 1.

Phantom Eldercare is a family-owned business and an experienced operator of multiple care home facilities in the Otago region.

Matt acknowledged the exceptional care, compassion and dedication the Resthaven Village team had demonstrated every day in supporting residents throughout the process.

PSS had engaged openly with all stakeholders, including the unions connected to the village, providing an opportunity for residents, families, and team members to ask questions and share their views before any final decisions were made. From the outset, PSS sought to ensure any transitioning team

members did so on the same or better terms.

PSS and Phantom Eldercare worked with staff, suppliers and contractors to ensure a smooth transition, where the provision of care to residents remained stable and uninterrupted.

PSS Board chairman Craig Smith said the sale marked an important moment in Resthaven Village’s history.

“For over 50 years, our organisation has had the privilege of supporting residents, families, and the wider community. We’re confident Phantom Eldercare will continue to deliver this legacy of care into the future.

“We extend our sincere thanks to residents, families, and the community for their trust in us and their support over many decades. It has been an honour to serve this community, and we remain committed to ensuring the transition ahead is calm, respectful, and centred on residents’ wellbeing.”

Demand for dementia beds

Strong demand for specialist dementia care has seen Enliven Southland's expanded Iona dementia unit operating at capacity within its first year, confirming the need for additional psychogeriatric (D6) beds in the region.

Within the first week of the unit opening in March last year, three of the six new beds were reserved. The unit has been operating at full capacity for the past seven months.

"It was evident very quickly the expansion of our dementia unit was needed to meet the growing demand for specialist dementia care and address the long-standing lack of D6 beds in Southland," Enliven Southland general manager Carol Riddle said.

"Operating at full capacity within the first year reinforces that this investment was both timely and necessary."

The refurbished unit at Peacehaven Village was officially opened on March 7 last year following a \$400,000 redevelopment project. The project included the establishment of six additional D6 beds, providing hospital-level dementia care for some of

Southland's most vulnerable older people.

Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) chief executive Matt Russell said the project was fully funded by the community thanks to the generosity of Southlanders, and stood as a true reflection of working with the community, for the community.

"Over the past year we've seen first-hand the difference these additional beds have made for residents and their families, allowing people to remain in the region, close to their support networks, rather than having to leave Southland to access care."

Prior to the expansion, limited access to D6 psychogeriatric beds sometimes meant residents needed to move out of the region to receive the necessary care.

"The expansion of the D6 unit reflects our ongoing investment

in ensuring people have access to high-quality, compassionate care close to home.

"Being able to provide this level of care locally offers dignity, stability and support at a time when people need it most."

"As an organisation, we remain focused on meeting the evolving needs of our community, recognising the ongoing challenges facing aged care. Increasing complexity, workforce pressures, and rising expectations require us to adapt how we deliver support, so services stay person-centred and sustainable," Mr Russell said.

"Looking ahead, we are committed to diversifying our service models and embracing new approaches that strengthen our ability to respond effectively and support older people to live well into the future."



Presbyterian Support Southland chief executive Matt Russell and Enliven Southland general manager Carol Riddle tour the six additional D6 dementia beds, opened in March last year and now fully occupied.



Tony Mennell, owner of T & T Property Management and his team.

Business + Community = Real Impact

Local businesses can now directly support Southland families in hardship through a new Family Works partnership model, with T & T Property Management the first local business to sign on.



Presbyterian Support Southland fundraising manager Andrei Robertson said they were excited to have T & T on board.

“Their contribution ensures we can meet urgent financial needs for our most vulnerable clients. We are incredibly grateful for their support and can testify first-hand to the impact their funding has made.”

The corporate partnership model is a collaborative relationship between Family Works and Southland businesses to support community outcomes while strengthening local business connections. Partnership opportunities may include promotion and marketing exposure, event collaboration, community initiatives and/or sponsorship or in-kind support.

Andrei said whilst many organisations, businesses and groups contributed to Family Works in a variety of ways, the corporate partnership was a more proactive approach which provided a clear pathway for like-minded organisations to align with and support Family Works programmes or initiatives directly.

“It provides a clear and meaningful way for organisations to contribute to positive outcomes within their own community, with the ability to choose from five key investment areas within Family Works Southland that resonate most with them.

“These key investment areas would

see their contribution either maintain or grow key service delivery or meet direct hardship costs for clients.”

Owner Tony Mennell said the team at T & T had wanted to find a way to give back to the community. Initially they had considered setting up their own charity but soon realised it was quite an involved process.

“By partnering with Family Works, the structure is already in place, and we are not reinventing the wheel.

“...and Family Works aligns with our values.”

The Family Works team identifies client families facing financial hardship in relation to a specific situation under its Helping Hand key investment area.

“Their contribution ensures we can meet urgent financial needs for our most vulnerable clients. We are incredibly grateful for their support and can testify first-hand to the impact their funding has made.”

T & T discusses each request as a team to determine how they could best support the family.

“It is an easy process for us, and we can respond quickly to a person’s urgent situation.”

Tony recommended Family Works as a corporate partner.

“If other businesses were considering a corporate partnership, I would definitely jump on board with Family Works. It’s simple, it’s easy, it’s good for the community, keeps it local and it’s a real feel-good factor knowing you have done something really good for someone that really needs it.”



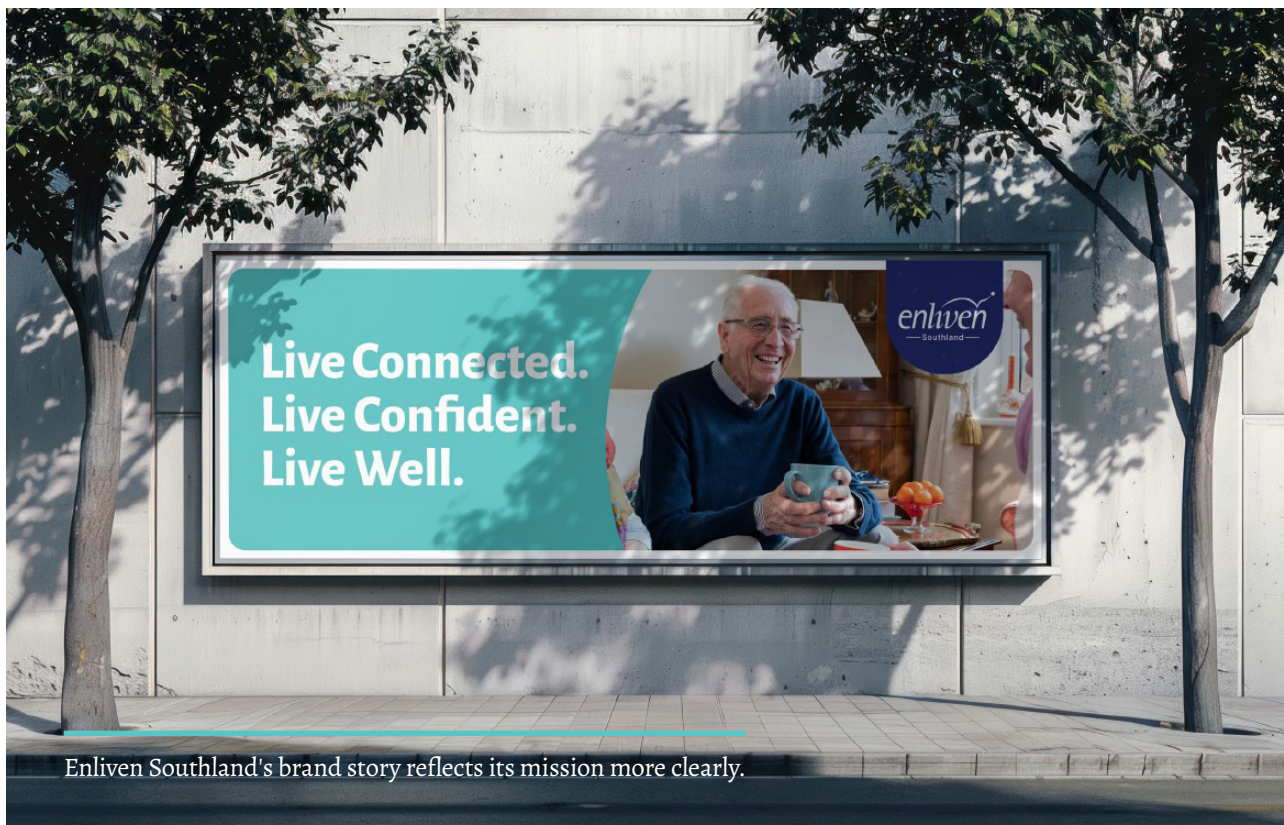
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To find out more about becoming
a corporate partner, contact
fundraising@pss.org.nz.



A more connected identity

Our evolved Enliven Southland story: A clearer,
stronger expression of who we are



Enliven Southland's brand story reflects its mission more clearly.

For more than a century, we've been part of the local story—supporting older adults and their families with care, compassion, and a deep sense of purpose. Whilst many people recognise our individual care homes, retirement villages, and community services, fewer see the full picture of who we are and what we stand for.

That is why we are refreshing our Enliven brand story. Not to change our values, but to express them more clearly, more confidently, and in a way that connects with the hearts and minds of our community.

A clearer, more connected identity

Our updated Enliven Southland brand identity is a natural evolution which brings together our care homes, retirement villages, and community services under one unified story—making it easier for people to understand the full range of support we offer.

You will see a unified voice and tone that feels genuine, consistent, and truly reflects our charitable mission which puts people first.

The refined name and subtle updates to our brand assets allow us to visually connect our aged care sites to our brand.

Our promise, expressed simply Live Connected. Live Confident. Live Well.

These words capture the heart of our mission. They reflect the experience we want every person and every family to have when they engage with us.

At Enliven Southland, we work alongside you and your family to provide the support you need to live well.

Whether you're in your own home and looking to remain connected, to start your next chapter in our retirement villages, or for a place in our care homes, we're here to offer practical support and genuine connection.

We've been part of the Southland story for more than 100 years, with a charitable mission that puts people first, supporting generations of families through life's later stages with care and compassion.

Looking ahead

Our refreshed brand is more than an update—it's a renewed commitment to our community.

Most importantly, it reflects who we have always been: a local, for purpose champion for older adults, dedicated to helping people live the lives they choose.

This is our story—evolved, unified, and ready for the future.

“You will see a unified voice and tone that feels genuine, consistent, and truly reflects our charitable mission which puts people first.”

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



Te Tari Taiwhenua
Internal Affairs



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