



## **FOOTSTEPS** **ROAD TO RECOVERY**

The beginning of this year was an exciting time for us all – the Australian Government allowed us to lease a facility at Ellis Close, Port Augusta, the site of the old asylum seeker family detention centre. On the 18th April, building and construction works commenced to establish a suitable residential rehabilitation service “Footsteps – Road to Recovery”.

Prior to establishing Footsteps, ADAC undertook extensive community consultation across the north west region of South Australia and found a number of service gaps in the region when it came to addressing harmful alcohol and drug use.

Because of the size of the area, it was found that the few services available were inaccessible to many who lived in remote areas. There were very alcohol and drug services available, and few places where people could go to for support re harmful alcohol and drug use, with no transport or means of accessing services for those needing alcohol and drug treatment.

After identifying these gaps, ADAC sought funding under the 2015 Indigenous Advancement Strategy Grants to support a comprehensive approach that serves to strengthen and coordinate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community responses to alcohol and drug misuse and provide the best outcomes for the region.

**ADAC was successful in securing funding until 2018 for :**

- “Footsteps – Road to Recovery”
- Stepping Stones Drug and Alcohol Day Centres (Port Augusta and Ceduna)

In partnership with the Aboriginal Health Council of SA (AHCSA) and Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) the residential rehabilitation service in Port Augusta now called “Footsteps – Road to Recovery” was seen as an important link in the coordination of care for people wanting to address their alcohol and drug problems. As the lead agency, ADAC manages Footsteps, with AFSS and AHCSA representatives overseeing its establishment, providing direction, support and advice.

Both services will provide a continuous pathway of support for communities, individuals and families wanting to address alcohol and drug issues.

The funding announcement was great news considering Footsteps – Road to Recovery, is the only alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation facility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a catchment area of 900,000 square kilometres across the NW SA region.

ADAC adopts a harm minimization approach to reduce the impact of alcohol and drug usage on our community. At the same time its residential rehabilitation service “Footsteps – Road to Recovery” operates under a therapeutic community (TC) model, which is abstinence based. The TC model is suited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations because it is based on family and a sense of community. The “community” is the method of treatment, a holistic approach empowering people to pay attention to how they are connected to all aspects of life and their thinking - which is essential to improving overall wellbeing. Footsteps TC program has been developed to fit within a person’s culture and uses proven ways that are successful in treating addiction.

Our vision is to Inspire and empower Aboriginal people to live free of the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs.

The 12-bed residential rehabilitation centre offers a 12-week program that includes:

- Therapeutic community programs and activities
- Alcohol and drug education and counselling
- Life and employment skills
- Family skills program
- Cultural programs and activities

Footsteps, in conjunction with the Drug and Alcohol Day Centres (Stepping Stones) also supports individuals with after care and case coordination, to strengthen their capacity to address alcohol and drug problems and reconnect with their families, communities and cultures.

### **Some of the highlights and activities this year have been:**

#### **Staffing**

Footsteps management team, support staff and admin/receptionist were appointed, with 90% staff being Aboriginal. Staff have been busy training and developing, resources, tools and therapies using a therapeutic community (TC) model of practice. They have also been adapting the therapeutic community principles to develop a culturally suitable program.

Strong links were established with leading Therapeutic Communities in WA, Vic, NSW, NT and SA. These TC's have generously contributed their policies, resources, expertise and advice to the establishment of Footsteps.

Cyrenian House, Rick Hammersley (WA) and Woolshed have hosted Footsteps staff for training purposes. Staff have learnt counseling techniques, individual and group therapies, behaviour therapies/activities, risk management and facilitating groups, which provides invaluable skills for the Footsteps service.

Footsteps Staff have also attended other training and forums to increase their skills and develop valuable networks. Many thanks to Denise Gilchrist who used to run Banyan House in the NT, who also contributed to their understanding and knowledge of TC's.

To sum up the Footsteps team – you couldn't wish for a more committed, passionate, dedicated and enthusiastic group of people! With the guidance of Maria, our Program Coordinator and support from Tony, our Senior Alcohol and Drug Counselor, all have been instrumental in shaping how the service will operate.

### **Service Delivery**

ADAC regards its human resources, cultural integrity and service partnerships as key components to the success of its service. A lot of effort has been put in to the development of the program and how the therapeutic community (TC) will operate, with importance placed on how the client can also be supported pre entry and post recovery. The success of a person's recovery is dependent, not only on the TC program, but what happens before and after recovery. The establishment of service and community support links play a key role in the coordination and continuum of care for clients wanting to address their harmful alcohol and drug problems. For this reason, key partnerships are being developed, extensive community consultation and referral training has been undertaken across the region. Footsteps has spoken to withdrawal and sobering up units, Aboriginal Health services, GP's and private practices, mobile assistance patrols, police, magistrates, courts, corrections and various social, employment and welfare services. This is an ongoing task to cover such a large region and we aim to reach as many towns and communities as we can.

Referrals kits were developed and key agencies received training on the referral process and what is a therapeutic community. Because of the waiting list prior to the service opening, some clients received support through Footsteps staff and the Stepping Stones drug and alcohol day centres, in preparation for Footsteps to open.

With the service opening soon, all are looking forward to helping clients achieve their goals and getting their lives back on track.

## Community Consultation

Footsteps staff visited services where they could, to promote Footsteps and respond to any enquiries. They also assisted Stepping Stones drug and alcohol day centre where they met community members and spoke to them about Footsteps. BBQ's and stalls were held at community events where the service attracted a lot of interest from the public.

AOD education, resources, Footsteps community information and advice continues to be distributed widely, including through email, newsletters and the website. Various media interviews with the local news updated the community on progress

There was also a demand for presentations on the service in Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Ceduna and Coober Pedy.

At forums and presentations, information was provided on the referral process, relevant forms and assessments, eligibility criteria, what is a therapeutic community and Footsteps rules and guidelines. Attendees also received an overview of what a therapeutic community is and how it works in a residential rehabilitation setting.

For those in more remote areas, a newsletter to keep people informed is sent out monthly and is available on website.

## Partnerships

ADAC is working in partnership with Uniting Communities who manage a residential rehabilitation service in SE region of SA. Clients in Port Pirie and outlying areas can now benefit from Footsteps services if they choose. Footsteps clients can choose to go to United Communities for further rehabilitation (12 months).

ADAC is also working in partnership with Aboriginal health services in Port Lincoln, Port Augusta, Coober Pedy and Ceduna to provide health services and support to clients wanting to access Footsteps – road to recovery.

Provided advice and offered to support to Mt Gambier Aboriginal Health Service re a model of rehab and other initiatives to address AOD issues.

Red Cross Australia MoU will be providing well being, nutrition, budgeting workshops to Footsteps residents to improve their life and coping skills.

## Infrastructure

Building and construction work for the Footsteps road to recovery facility is now complete, including additional works required to ensure building were compliant. Asbestos, rain, termites and previous poor building practices hampered progress and caused considerable delays. Despite this McMahons Building Services have achieved completion in record time, considering. Credit goes to all McMahons staff for their quality work and consideration for a work safe and culturally appropriate facility. They were a cheery lot, professional, culturally considerate in all the work they did, and a pleasure to deal with.

McMahon's Building Services had a huge task ahead of them when they commenced work 18th April 2015. Despite delays with the weather, design approvals, an increased workload removing asbestos, termite damage and remedying previous poor building practices, within 4 months 90% of the works were completed.

Many thanks to Michael Smeardon – project manager and his team for a job very well done!

It's been a busy, exciting and challenging year – thanks go to all those people who have supported ADAC and contributed to getting the services up and running. These people have laid the foundations for a much needed and valuable service to Aboriginal communities, families and individuals – where alcohol and drugs has had such an impact on people's lives. It is humbling and rewarding to work with them.

One step forward can be a road to recovery.

*for individuals for families for communities*

