**COVER PAGE**

**Finding Possible**

Edition 1, Autumn 2022

Cover story: When housemates become family. Meet the Murray Bridge trio celebrating 20 years with Cara

Other headlines:

* From homestay to haircuts: How Specialist Services transformed Kym’s life
* Welcome to the Neighbourhood: Introducing our new service model
* Assistive technology trial: Innovative tech provides round-the-clock monitoring

**Image description:** a portrait image of Cara customer Karyn wearing a straw hat and a blue and purple top.

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**What does *Finding Possible* mean to you?**

It might mean something as small as finding time in your day to go for a run, or cracking today’s Wordle. Or finally being able to go on that overseas holiday that you’ve been planning for two years.

For a person with a disability, it could be going to their mailbox to collect their mail independently, cooking a meal, or being able to go surfing when they are a wheelchair user.

*Finding Possible* means something different to everyone. That’s why Cara’s promise is ‘we find possible’ and the reason behind the name of our new newsletter.

As an organisation, we find possible in our values, in our commitment to being person-centred and in our drive and passion for our work.

We work alongside our customers to find *their* possible and support them to live their everyday lives.

Through this new quarterly newsletter, we want to engage with you, our Cara Community. In *Finding Possible,* we will shine a light on some good news stories from our customers and staff, while sharing some of the latest information from our organisation, the broader disability sector and the NDIS.

If you turn to page 3, you can find out more about Neighbourhoods, our new service model which will enable us to provide more consistent supports to our customers and increase opportunities and stability for staff.

On page 4, you’ll read the story of our cover star Karyn and her housemates Heather and Leeann, who recently celebrated a milestone of 20 years living together in Supported Independent Living with Cara.

We also share a story on page 7 about Cara’s longest-serving employee who recently retired after an amazing 45 years of service with us.

Finally, we recently welcomed two new patrons to Cara in Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia and Mr Rod Bunten.

We are grateful to Her Excellency and Mr Bunten for their support of Cara.

Thank you for working with us, and I hope you enjoy *Finding Possible*.

Liz Cohen
Chief Executive

**Image description:** Chief Executive Liz Cohen with Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC and Board President Nick Smith at Cara’s 2021 Recognition of Excellence Awards.

**New appointments to the Cara Board**

Cara is governed by a Board of Directors, a group of South Australian business leaders who are committed to guiding our strategic direction and ensuring that the organisation remains sustainable now and into the future.

In late 2021, the Cara Board of Directors elected Nick Smith as its new President. Fellow Director Lucy Davies was appointed Vice-President, and corporate lawyer Sam Scammell joined as a new Board Director.

Serving on the Board since 2015, Nick brings highly-respected business intellect and extensive commercial and risk management expertise. He has held senior management roles across the private and public sectors, predominantly in the energy and construction materials markets.

Thank you to outgoing President Phil Dorman, who served on our Board for 13 years, including four in charge. Phil, a now-retired lawyer, contributed greatly to Cara over this time.

Congratulations Nick and Lucy and welcome Sam!

**Image description:** CustomerGeorga and Support Worker Irshad smiling at the camera.
**Image caption:** Congratulations to Cara Support Worker Irshad Haidari who was named as South Australia’s Trainee of the Year 2021 in the SA Training Awards, announced in August. Irshad is pictured with customer Georga.

**PAGE 3**

**Welcome to the Neighbourhood!**

A new service model is coming to Cara in 2022.

Living in a neighbourhood inspires a sense of comfort, community, shared interest and safety. For these reasons, and many more, we’re excited to introduce you to Cara’s very own Neighbourhood project.

At the heart of the Neighbourhood project, is a new service model for Cara, that will allow us to provide more consistent support to our customers. By grouping services into Neighbourhoods, primarily by geographical location, we will have larger, core groups of staff, all trained appropriately to meet the needs of the customers within their Neighbourhood.

The Neighbourhood concept is the next natural phase of transformation for Cara. The project will benefit customers and staff with better stability, while also playing a part in ensuring our financial sustainability into the future. Change can be daunting but there’s no need for worry or concern - we are adopting a gradual, supported and considered approach to this transition phase and will keep you informed throughout the rollout.

**What does this mean for customers?**
For some customers, not much will change! For others, they may be welcoming some new, regular faces into their service as part of their core support team. With staff split more evenly across services within a Neighbourhood, it will mean less disruption for customers when one of their core Support Workers goes on leave.

**Will I get a new Quality Service Manager (QSM)?**
We recently sent a communication to customers to notify of their QSM and Operations Manager moving forward. If there are changes,

a comprehensive handover process will take place, including sharing individual customer needs with the new QSM. QSMs will reach out to customers and/or their decision-makers as part of the handover. Please note that customers in Mount Gambier did not receive a communication, as little will change in this region at this stage.

**When will my service move into a Neighbourhood?**
We will be establishing two Neighbourhoods at a time, with all Supported Independent Living, Short-Term Accommodation and Home and Community Support services transitioning to the Neighbourhood model in 2022. We will be in touch with you when it’s time for your service to make the transition.

**What stage is the project at now?**
Our first four Neighbourhoods are already in progress! Each time a Neighbourhood is in the development phase, we first work through a comprehensive staff consultation process. This helps us to build new master rosters that will benefit customers, staff and Cara.

**Image description:** Two customers and two Support Workers are sitting alongside each other playing with colourful balloons.

**PAGE 4 AND 5**

**When housemates become family: Heather, Karyn and Leeann celebrate 20 years.**

In 2002, John Howard was Australia’s Prime Minister, Kath and Kim premiered on the ABC, Steven Bradbury won our first ever gold medal at the Winter Olympics, and the Euro became the official currency of 12 European countries.

More importantly, it was also the year that Cara Supported Independent Living customers Heather, Karyn and Leeann first began living together in Murray Bridge.

January marked their 20th anniversary as housemates and 20 years since joining Cara.

When asked how she feels about Leeann and Heather, Karyn beams and breaks out in to a wide smile. Her answer says everything.

“Family.”

The housemates have a friendship built on mutual respect and common interests.

“Heather, Leeann and Karyn’s relationship works so well because of their ability to accept one another,” Cara Quality Service Manager Emma Hansen said.

“They have many things in common but they also have their own interests and they respect each other’s differences too.”

Karyn says one of the trio’s favourite things to do together is to “go to the hotel” for lunch, especially the local Swanport Hotel, which they affectionately call “Swannies”.

“They like visiting restaurants, going out for coffee and cake, and bowling together. Leeann is also a big footy fan and attends games to support her beloved Adelaide Crows,” Emma says.

The housemates operate as a team when it comes to making decisions around their home and their weekly routines.

“They work with each other and their staff to plan the household grocery shopping and make choices around their meals.”

“When it comes to cooking, Karyn is a master recipe reader, Leeann loves to mix, and Heather (who is non-verbal) communicates with eyebrow raises and expressions. If a meal needs more salt or seasoning, Heather will let us know!”

In their time together, they have had just two other housemates – Cheryl, who has since passed away, and Danielle, who moved to Renmark to be closer to her family after 11 years living with the trio.

Leeann, Heather and Karyn’s home is a warm and friendly environment.

“They are so welcoming of anyone who comes in to their home – from their staff to visitors,” Emma said.

“They are happy and always laughing, they enjoy singing and having a dance. They really do see the lighter side of life.”

While the housemates have shared many happy memories and milestones together, they have also supported each other through hard times.

“Their empathy for each other is amazing. If one of them is unhappy or not feeling well they will always check in.

“They genuinely care for, and love each other, like they would their own family.”

Congratulations Heather, Karyn and Leeann on reaching this special milestone together!

**Image description:** Photos of Karyn, Heather and Leeann throughout their years of living together.

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**The Connector: NDIS updates from the Cara Connect Team.**

The Cara Connect Team plays a critical role as ‘The Connector’ between the Cara head office, our support staff, customers and decision-makers.

This knowledgeable team owns a collection of responsibilities, ranging from managing customer funding and billing, to updating and recording National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) goals, to handling service agreements and bookings. We asked the Cara Connect Team to round up some of the latest NDIS news and information.

**Schedule of Rates:**
On Monday, January 24, all decision-makers received an email or letter regarding a new Schedule of Rates. These changes were actioned to bring Cara’s pricing in line with the NDIS updates to pricing limits. You can view Cara’s current Schedule of Rates at www.cara.org.au/rates.

**COVID-19 claiming:**
Since Monday, February 7, providers of Supported Independent Living (SIL) services have been able to claim costs relating to COVID-19, directly from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The good news is for claims made directly from the NDIA, customers don’t need to do anything – Cara will take care of it!

**Program of Supports:**
The Program of Supports is a new approach to SIL funding, introduced by the NDIS. Together, a household will agree on a Program of Supports, which is made up of both shared and individual support, for a 12-week period.

Customers will experience more predictability, consistency and sustainability in relation to their supports, and will participate in regular reviews with Cara to ensure that their Program is working for them. We will be in touch with SIL customers and their decision-makers to book a Program of Supports meeting in 2022.

**Get in touch with us.**
08 8347 4588
contact@cara.org.au

**Image description:** Cara Support Worker Cherie and customer Emily are playing Connect 4.

**Get to know Cara Connect. Meet Lucien.**

Lucien is a Customer Engagement Coordinator in the Cara Connect Team.

**What are your main responsibilities?**
The main focus of my role is in supporting customers to appropriately utilise their funding and ensuring shifts are in place and in line with the supports they need. I’d like to think of my role as a combination of customer service, finance, and rostering all in one!

**What is the most rewarding part of your role?**
Helping customers achieve their funding requirements! Funding discussions can be quite enlightening. I enjoy how creative the role can be, and how it involves thinking outside the box as well as learning about different perspectives from all walks of life.

**What do you believe Cara does really well?**
The way staff here are dedicated to helping the organisation evolve and grow over time. People here are very kind and willing to listen.

**What is your favourite...?**

**Album:** Dear Catastrophe Waitress by Belle & Sebastian.

**Holiday you’ve taken:** Drove up to Uluru with a bunch of strangers mid last year!

**Meal:** Love a good Mediterranean-style Atlantic salmon! Olive oil, lemon, balsamic vinegar, salmon fillets, capers, with a Greek salad on the side (lots of fetta and olives). Yum!

**Image description:** Lucien is wearing a green top and has a shaggy light brown haircut. She is smiling at the camera.

**PAGE 7**

**Celebrating 45 years of Jenny!**

After an astonishing 45 years at Cara, Jenny Millikan is moving into an exciting new phase of life: retirement.

Jenny began her journey at just 16 years of age, when Cara was known as Spastic Centres of South Australia. Employed as a Nurse’s Assistant in 1976, she went on to become a Support Worker and later, a Quality Service Leader.

When asked what she would miss most about Cara, Jenny said, “the people, without a doubt. It’s the customers and staff I’ve worked with that have made it an amazing place to work.”

Jenny recalls being part of the Cara Community through many milestones in her life - her engagement, wedding, the birth of her daughter and most recently, the arrival of her grandson.

“I’ve always gotten along really well with the families of our customers, maybe because I talk a lot!” Jenny laughed.

“I remember bringing my daughter Kate in to meet the customers I supported, when she was just two weeks old. It was special to be able to share that with them.”

It’s almost as if Jenny knew that one day, Kate would grow up and become a Support Worker herself, a position which she still holds today, further strengthening her family’s connection with Cara.

We are so grateful to Jenny for her four-and-a-half decades of commitment to finding possible with us and wish her all the very best for her retirement!

**Image description:** Jenny holds a certificate for her 45 years of service. Which was presented to her by Cara Chief Executive Liz Cohen. They are standing in front of a large screen that says Cara Years of Service Awards, 45 years.

**COVID-19 update**

The last few months have not been without their challenges relating to COVID-19.

Through high levels of vaccination, social distancing, mask-wearing and following basic hygiene practices, we are doing everything we can to reduce the risk of virus transmission at Cara.

**Boosters:**
COVID-19 boosters are essential to maintain high levels of immunity against COVID-19, in particular, to defend against the Omicron variant. Once again, we have given Supported Independent Living (SIL) customers the opportunity to be vaccinated in the comfort of their own home. In-home boosters are currently being administered in SIL services, in partnership with Aspen Medical.

In January, the South Australian Government vaccination mandate for disability workers was extended to boosters. This means all customer-facing Cara staff are required to have had their booster within one month of becoming eligible, or within four months of recording a positive test result.

**Visiting services:**
As has been the case since the pandemic began, we ask family and friends to please withhold from visiting services if they are unwell. Please follow SA Health instructions if you test positive, or if you are a close contact. If you are safe and clear to visit a service, you must check in using the QR code, sanitise your hands upon entry and wear a mask if possible.

**Image description:** Cara staff member Vasanthi is getting her COVID-19 vaccination. She wears a purple Cara polo.

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**Technology trial provides round-the-clock monitoring**

Cara has trialled new assistive technology, which provides round-the-clock monitoring of our customers’ health and wellbeing while they sleep.

Partnering with tech company Cura1, customers across two Supported Independent Living (SIL) houses and one Short-Term Accommodation service (STA) have trialled the ENSIGN Bed Sensor Pad (BSP) product. The BSPs are unobtrusive wireless pads, placed under a mattress, which monitor heart rate and respiration as well as track sleep quality, so they can tell when a customer is awake, in a light sleep or deep sleep.

The pads alert (where appropriate) when a customer is having disturbed sleep, or is out of bed. This ensures assistance can be provided for a customer with limited or reduced mobility or who is a falls risk.

The mats also allow for scheduled turnovers if a customer needs to be regularly turned, and staff are automatically alerted when it is time to do so. And, if the customer has turned by themselves, it will reset the turnover alert for the next scheduled time.

Data is secure and encrypted and can be monitored via the service phone, laptop or computer.

Marcus Gehrig, Cara’s Executive Manager of Customer Experience, says the trial is part of Cara’s commitment to embracing technology to deliver quality, innovative services to customers.

“Through the use of BSP technology, we were able to have additional monitoring of our customers’ health and wellbeing, while utilising the same the level of direct support hours. This created an efficient use of funding with a higher level of safeguarding,” Marcus said.

“The data generated by the mats could be used to provide credible evidence to support a change of circumstances if increased funding is needed for active overnight support, or to confirm if the current levels of overnight support are appropriate.

“This technology is exciting and can provide more reassurance for families of customers with high health or physical support needs, and increased confidence for the staff who support them.”

The BSP trial was recently completed and the data is now being reviewed for potential future use at Cara.

For more information about the ENSIGN Bed Sensor Pads, visit [www.cura1.com](http://www.cura1.com)

**Image description:** Customer Amila plays with colourful musical instruments alongside Cara Quality Service Leader Kylie.

**Image description:** an example of the data provided by the BSPs, demonstrated in a colourful graph.

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**Social Circle @ Cara**

At Cara, we support customers across South Australia to live life the way that they choose. Every day, our staff work alongside our customers to achieve their goals and explore their hobbies and interests.

We use Cara’s social media channels to share our customers’ stories - from mastering a new recipe, planting a veggie patch and catching a wave, to getting a tattoo, playing sport or taking on a craft project.

Here’s a small taste of what our customers have been up to.

**Image description:** James in a beach wheelchair alongside a surf instructor.
**Image caption:** Surf’s up James! Cara customer James, who we work alongside in Supported Independent Living (SIL), recently caught some waves at Moana Beach as part of the Disabled Surfers Association of South Australia’s “Have A Surf Day”.

**Image description:** Emma is smiling and wears an orange headband in her red hair. She is wearing glasses and a patterned shirt.
**Image caption:** Emma’s festival fun! How great is festival season in Adelaide? Cara SIL customer Emma spent some time taking in the colour and magic of the Adelaide Fringe, visiting the Garden of Unearthly Delights to see circus act, The Defiant.

**Image description:** Three customers are playing in fountains at a water park. **Image caption:** A splashing good time. A sunny day and a water park – talk about a recipe for fun! Port Lincoln Day Options customers Cassie, Kyle and Trajan recently enjoyed an afternoon at the Skate and Spray Park at Apex Park in Wudinna**.**

**Image description:** Veronica stands proudly alongside her veggie pod, full of freshly planted vegetables. **Image caption:** Veronica’s veggies. Veronica, who we work alongside in SIL in Port Augusta, has been working with her support staff to plant herb and vegetable seedlings in a new raised garden bed in her backyard. We look forward to seeing how your garden grows, Veronica!

**Image description:** A cartoon image of a picnic basket. **Image caption:** Possible Picnic postponement. We are taking a break from Cara’s Possible Picnic in 2022. We look forward to hosting more events for customers and families in the future!

**Connect with us on social media.**facebook.com/caraorgau
youtube.com/caraorgau
Instagram: @carainc
LinkedIn: Cara Inc
Twitter: @caraorgau

**PAGE 10 AND 11**

**From homestay to haircuts: How Specialist Services helped transform Kym’s life**

There is something so peaceful and comforting about home. It’s a space where you can be yourself, free from judgement and fear. But what happens when you no longer have the courage or means to leave it? When life outside becomes so overwhelming that home is the only place you feel safe?

Cara customer Kym lives with an intellectual disability, schizophrenia and clinical trauma – a trio of factors that forced him to withdraw from his surroundings and disengage from all forms of community participation. Kym would seldom leave home, his sleep patterns were in disarray and he grappled with his emotions, impacting not only himself, but his housemate and support staff.

Kym struggled to welcome people into his environment, just as he, himself, struggled to leave it. Something as simple as heading out to get a haircut felt completely out of reach.

In the last six months however, his life has changed in the most extraordinary way.

Behaviour Support Practitioner Erika Mullins, from Cara’s Specialist Services Team stepped in, working alongside Kym to foster positive behavioural change, and to educate and empower his support network.

“When I started working with Kym, he hadn’t been out in the community for probably two years,” Erika said.

“He would spend nights watching TV and would sleep during the day. He rarely interacted with staff and had very limited social engagement. Lingering trauma from historical medical treatment meant he would refuse clinical intervention, which was really impacting him.

“I completed an assessment of Kym’s situation and put practical strategies in place to help him increase his confidence and improve his quality of life.”

Over time, Kym and Erika’s relationship has blossomed, and Kym is now achieving his goals in a constructive and rewarding way.

“Things that may seem small, like altering his sleep patterns or allowing people into his safe space, have been huge changes in Kym’s life that he has really embraced. We are seeing his willingness to participate in the community, his mood and his behaviour all lift significantly.”

Erika’s role is not only about working directly with Kym, but also involves putting systems in place for support staff, to offer a consistent and united approach to Kym’s care.

Quality Service Manager Emma Hansen, has witnessed Erika’s thoughtful and pragmatic manner with Kym and the Support Workers around him.

“The change in Kym has been phenomenal,” Emma said.

“Erika has given the team the confidence to work with Kym in different ways. Considering the clinical trauma, behaviours and everything he has had working against him, to see him come so far and start to reengage with staff and the community has been incredibly pleasing.”

Resources and strategies are displayed on the wall of the staff office for a simple point of reference, while Erika also checks in on staff meetings to review Kym’s situation and discuss his progress.

Kym’s protectiveness over his space previously made it difficult for his mother Ruth to visit regularly and even when she was able, the visits were often fleeting. Now, Ruth drops by more frequently, staying for an hour or two to spend precious time with her son.

The clinical trauma that ruled Kym’s life for so long is beginning to heal, with a nurse entering Kym’s home once a week to attend to his medical needs. Not so long ago, this would have been an impossible feat.

“It’s super exciting,” Erika said.

“I love working with Kym and seeing his growth. Other staff say they have seen his amazing progress and are really on board with his behaviour support plan. They can now have more meaningful interactions with him and are supporting him better than ever.”

Kym’s increased independence has seen him start to prepare meals, rediscover his love for drawing, and consciously reconnect with those around him.

And you know what? He even got a haircut.

**Image descriptions:** Kym is smiling and drawing, with his thumb up to the camera. Another image shows him shopping and another shows him in his garden.

**Specialist Services now open to new customers!**

Cara’s Specialist Services Team can support people with disabilities to increase their independence, and improve their quality of life. They offer services including behaviour support, transition planning, budgeting and financial skills, social skills and communication, understanding relationships and sexuality, and growing independent living skills.

Call 8347 4588 to chat to our Specialist Services team or email SSTadmin@cara.org.au.

**Image description:** Customer Benjie and Cara staff member Kerry are drawing together at Benjie’s home.

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**Faces of Cara. Meet Kim, Support Worker.**

Proving it’s never too late for a career change, Kim spent two decades as a dental assistant and 17 years in a distribution centre, before making the change to the disability sector at the age of 61.

After completing her final Certificate III in Individual Support placement with Cara, she was offered a role supporting customers in the Adelaide Hills.

“Working in disability was something I was always interested in doing, long before I even became a dental nurse,” Kim said.

“When I left the distribution centre, I took a year off to study individual support and fulfil the dream I had years ago.”

After three-and-a-half years at Cara, Kim finds the role just as rewarding as ever.

“If you’re thinking about a job in disability, I would say give it a go and you’ll soon see not only the difference it makes in someone else’s life, but the huge difference it makes in your own life.”

Cara is always on the hunt for compassionate and dedicated Support Workers. Visit [www.cara.org.au/careers](http://www.cara.org.au/careers) to find out more.

**Image description:** Kim with customer James, watering James’s garden.

**We want to hear from you!**We’re always open to feedback from our valued customers and families. If you wish to get in touch with us, you can reach our friendly Cara Connect Team on (08) 8347 4588 or contact@cara.org.au.

Finding Possible is produced and edited by Cara’s Public Relations Team. If you have any feedback in relation to this edition, please email prteam@cara.org.au.

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