

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

# Building Resilience, Sustaining Growth



# Acknowledgement of Country

ACSO proudly acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. ACSO acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first peoples and as the true custodians of the land, air and water on which we rely. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australian life and how this enriches us.

ACSO embraces the spirit of reconciliation, working towards equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have come in contact with the justice system.



## COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

ACSO recognises the right to a safe and inclusive service without bias. ACSO is committed to the equitable treatment of its participants, employees and partners.

We believe in humanity and celebrating the diverse voices of our community through leadership, practice and policy design, to honour and embrace the diverse traditions, cultures and experiences of those we support and work alongside.

# Welcome to ACSO's 2025 Annual Report

Looking back on the past twelve months, we reflect on a significant year for ACSO, a year of building resilience and sustaining growth. ACSO remained highly active throughout FY24/25, growing our services across Queensland and Victoria, celebrating our 40th Anniversary, and co-hosting the inaugural National Complex Needs Conference in partnership with ermha365 and funded by the Victoria Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH).

ACSO in 2025 is a diverse and independent non-government organisation employing close to 500 people across VIC, QLD and NSW. Our work continues to focus on supporting people with complex and forensic needs and risks. We pride ourselves on our ability to innovate specialised solutions for social and justice problems that often appear intractable – this is what makes us unique, valued and effective.

We are an actively inclusive organisation. Our work is informed by evidenced practice, lived experience expertise, and authentic partnerships. ACSO's door is always open. We cross the boundaries and barriers of the varied justice, human, and health sectors to connect people with the right support. Our approach prioritises human-centred outcomes, positive social impact, and community safety through integrating support for mental health, diversion, and transition from prison with forensic disability, social housing, and alcohol and other drug treatment.

We have celebrated a lot of successes this year, but it has been a challenging year too. At ACSO, we're seeing first-hand how rising costs, the housing crisis, and the intersection of mental health, disability, and justice are making our clients' needs more complex than ever. No single organisation can tackle these challenges alone, and we are actively building partnerships to help address the increasingly complex needs of our client cohorts. As we come to the end of 2025, we are also particularly concerned by the extent and increase of extreme violent, gang, and property crimes being committed by a small number of young people in Victoria.

As always, ACSO's considered advice to Government is to invest more in communities, education, and prevention. These are the meaningful solutions. Investing in building more youth detention centres and prisons will only result in higher rates of violent crime as people exit without the necessary support and rehabilitation programs.



## Unnecessary and increasing incarceration in Australia

Sadly, the incarceration data indicate that governments are choosing to take the opposite approach. The 2024 data are tragic, compelling and increasing across all domains:

- A record 46,000 people are being held in custody across Australia.
- 42% are unsentenced; this includes a 20% increase in 2024.
- 37% of all persons in custody are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

First Peoples\* alongside people with co-morbid complex needs associated with indicators of social vulnerability remain the most overrepresented in Australian prisons.

Speakers and delegates at this year's Reintegration Puzzle Conference – for which ACSO was proud to serve as platinum sponsor – confirmed these distressing statistics and brought awareness to the depth of trauma that is caused by widespread over incarceration of First Peoples in Australia.

The case for justice reform is compelling.

ACSO's vision – a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, and prison is truly the last resort – remains as relevant now as it did in 1983, when our organisation was first created.

## ACSO – Celebrating 40 Years

Last year, ACSO celebrated 40 years of helping people build meaningful lives in community after contact with the justice system. This milestone provided an important opportunity for us to come together, to appreciate the progress we've made, and to reaffirm our shared purpose.

ACSO was brought into being through the lived experience of Stan McCormack, a charismatic, born-again Christian, sentenced to 10 years jail for armed robbery. Stan's plan was a simple one: support people leaving prison to find a home, a job, and positive social connections.

On parole, Stan asked the Chair of the Adult Parole Board, Justice Alastair Nicholson to help him set up a support service for people leaving prison. Justice Nicholson went on to become ACSO's first Board Director, Chairperson, and Patron. This Board connection to the Judiciary continues to endure at ACSO.

While Stan passed away in 2023, he left behind a substantial legacy that ACSO strives to uphold.

# Acknowledgements

We extend our appreciation to the ACSO Board, Executive Team, employees, and stakeholders for their ongoing commitment to the organisation's vision and values.

We acknowledge the significant contribution of ACSO Board Directors Dean McWhirter and Lynn Warneke who retired in 2025 and McCormack Housing Director, Rob Leslie who retired in 2024. As the organisation navigates complex policy, regulation and funding environments, Board succession planning plays a critical role. In 2024 we welcomed a number of new Directors who bring deep experience from across health, lived experience, criminal law, and delivery of First Peoples policy. We warmly welcome new Directors Felicity Topp, Dr Jen Nicholls, Shane Hamilton, and Julie Buxton.

Finally, we acknowledge our frontline workers, team leaders, program managers, and business services staff across all our programs, services, and teams. It is the passion, integrity, belief in humanity, and innovative spirit of our people that has empowered us to do this important work for more than four decades and will sustain us in the decades to come.

On behalf of the ACSO Board, Executive Team and our employees, we are proud to share our 2025 Annual Report with you.



**Karen Corry**  
ACSO Chair



**Vaughan Winther**  
ACSO CEO



\*In this report, we use the term "First Peoples" when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly in recognition of the language adopted in Victoria's Treaty process. We acknowledge that terminology preferences may vary across regions, and we respect the diverse identities and cultures of First Nations peoples in New South Wales and Queensland.



## Vision

Our vision is for a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and prison truly is the last resort.

## Purpose

Our purpose is to strengthen the wellbeing of communities by advocating for and delivering services which divert people away from the justice system.

## Values



### Passion

Our heart and passion is at the core of everything we do.



### Belief in Humanity

We believe that everyone deserves another chance and is entitled to change their lives and realise their potential.



### Integrity In All We Do

We are genuine in our relationships with clients, each other and are always courageous in our approach.



### Innovative Spirit

We are willing to explore and develop new and innovative solutions and take on the challenges that confront us.



# Meet the Team Behind ACSO



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ACSO is proud to be governed by a board of esteemed industry stakeholders who bring decades of experience and unique insight into all facets of the justice system.



**Karen Corry**

CHAIR | DIRECTOR



**The Honourable  
Justice Jane Dixon**

DIRECTOR



**Andrew Chadwick**

DIRECTOR



**Dr Danny Sullivan**

DIRECTOR



**Sue Lloyd**

DIRECTOR



**Dean McWhirter**

DIRECTOR



**James McGinnes**

DIRECTOR



**Lynn Warneke**

DIRECTOR

[Meet Our Board](#)

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our leadership team have extensive experience in the social, criminal justice and business sectors and are passionate about making stronger, safer, thriving societies for our clients, workforce and the community as a whole.



**Vaughan Winther**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**Cath Williams**  
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER



**Larissa Daniel**  
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER



**Dan Spillman**  
CHIEF DATA & TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Tory Gruen served as our Chief Corporate Services Officer until her departure from ACSO in October 2024.

[Meet Our Leaders](#)





# Highlights

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

Together we supported

**26,506** people on  
their journeys.



**Residential**

31 people in 24/7 model  
33 people in McCormack Housing



**Justice Services**

12,890 people supported



**Clinical Practice**

164 people supported



**Alcohol and Other  
Drugs (AOD)**

10,380 people supported



**Mental Health**

2,720 people supported



**Youth**

288 young people supported

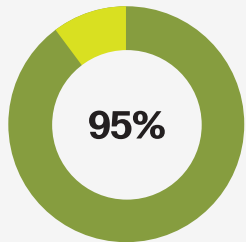


# Our Impact

With extensive experience and capability supporting people with diverse and complex needs, our work is informed by both lived experience and evidence, and underpinned by a strong risk framework and robust governance structures.

We operate 27 programs across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to divert people from the justice system or safely reintegrate into the community, and rebuild their lives.

At the conclusion of their engagement, ACSO clients are invited to complete a Client Outcomes Survey. The data below reflects the responses of those who chose to complete the survey.



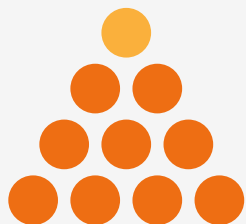
## Residential Programs

95% of residents reported they felt able to manage their emotions and stay happy and balanced. 100% of residents reported they felt they could stop themselves from doing things that got them into trouble.



## Youth Mental Health

88% of participants rated their overall experience with ACSO as being very good or excellent. 88% felt listened to and 100% happy with the support they received.



## Family and Carers Support

88% of participants rated their overall experience of working with ACSO as being very good or excellent. 98% felt listened to and 81% happy with the support they received.



## AOD Short Term Intervention

100% of participants rated their overall experience of working with ACSO as being excellent. 100% felt listened to and 100% felt happy with the support they received.

## OUR PEOPLE

# This year, ACSO employed

**449** people across 27 programs, residential houses and business services teams.

Our latest Employee Engagement Survey found that the most common words employees used to describe working at ACSO were **rewarding, challenging, meaningful** and **supportive**, reflecting the purpose-driven and people-centred culture we continue to foster.

**89%**

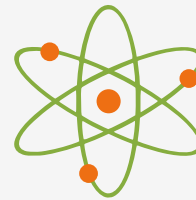
of people said they feel safe in the environments in which they undertake their role and feel they can stop work if they believe something is significantly unsafe.

**88%**

of people are proud to work at ACSO.

**75%**

More than 75% of people work in a hybrid arrangement across hubs, homes and co-located sites.



### Learning & Development

84 courses available comprising a mix of facilitated (35) and self paced courses (49)



### People/Teams

4.4 years average tenure increased from 3.6 years in FY23



### Gender/Diversity

ACSO Board and Executive consists of nine females and six males.



# Our Work



# ACSO Hosts the Inaugural Complex Needs Conference

Under the shared leadership of ACSO and ermha365, the inaugural Complex Needs Conference brought together diverse service areas to explore how we can improve outcomes for people with complex needs.

Funded by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), and supported by Swinburne University of Technology, the conference focused on knowledge sharing with the aim of fostering greater collaboration and bridging gaps in service provision.

**Vaughan Winther, CEO of ACSO, put it this way in his keynote address: “We need to recognise that we can’t do this work in isolation. Supporting people with complex needs takes a village, and it’s not only ACSO doing this work; it’s our partners in government and our partners in industry as well.”**

**Featuring 117 speakers and 71 presentations, the conference was split across three streams:**

- Best practice: building interconnected systems.
- Innovative research: what’s working and what’s next.
- Real stories, real solutions: hear from those who have been there.



**“It’s wonderful to have a chance to see the breadth of the supports and how they link together and to see what other mental health and clinical services organisations are doing. It can really inform practice.”**

– Tim Wong (Clinical Services)

**By any metric, the Complex Needs Conference 2025 was a success. Tickets sold out, and over 700 people attended across the two days.**

The conference also initiated a roundtable, bringing together key decision makers from across Victoria to discuss new approaches for supporting people with complex needs. Attendees at the workshop included Victorian Government departments (Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Department of Health (DH), and Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), ACSO, Victoria Police, Jesuit Social Services (JSS) and ermha365.

Later in the year, DFFH announced it will fund the Complex Needs Conference again for 2026. Considering our breadth of services and our ongoing role hosting the Complex Needs Conference, ACSO is well placed to provide leadership in this space.



# ReStart Secures Funding to Manage Growing Complexity in Client Cohort

Over the past 12 months, ReStart has seen an increase in both the number and complexity of participants referred to the program. Many are presenting with multiple and intersecting needs linked to mental illness, cognitive impairment, substance use and trauma.

ReStart supports people leaving prison after serving short sentences, helping them to reintegrate into their communities, access housing and health supports, reconnect with family and build stability. The program aims to reduce the high number of people cycling in and out of custody due to short sentences and limited post-release support.

This growing complexity presents an ongoing challenge for the team. With each participant requiring more intensive and tailored support, ReStart is spending significantly more time with each person, placing pressure on existing resources and capacity.





**The innovative ReStart team have used several strategies to manage the growing number and complexity of their participants:**

- Internally referring highly complex participants to our Assertive Outreach and Support Service (AOS)
- Collaborating with other forensic case work programs like ReConnect to manage high caseloads
- Drawing on the support of Clinical Services to ensure wellbeing of the team through high stress periods, and to contribute mental health or disability expertise where needed.

**“We continuously advocate for our participants, helping them navigate a system that too often feels stacked against them. We understand that for many, we may be their only reliable support, and we take that responsibility seriously. Our innovative spirit drives us to think outside the box, consistently seeking creative and effective ways to improve outcomes.”**

— Rochelle Rosvall, FCW ReStart

While these strategies went some way to resolving the challenge, a more long-term solution would be needed to ensure ReStart could meet the needs of its evolving client cohort.

To strengthen the ReStart program's capacity, ACSO worked closely with the **Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) Victoria** throughout FY24/25 to advocate for additional funding. Through this partnership, we secured funding for **two new caseworkers** based in **Sunshine and Gippsland**, and an **Advanced Program Worker** role commencing in FY25/26.

This achievement reflects the **strong collaboration across ACSO programs** and our **proactive approach to shaping services with government partners** in response to the evolving justice landscape.

# CREST Expands into Statewide MRS Program

Throughout FY 24/25, ACSO's CREST team has supported 11,093 clients across South East Queensland (SEQ), where it has been operating since 2016.

In 2024, the CREST contract was retendered, and ACSO succeeded in its bid to deliver the updated statewide CREST model, the Men's Reintegration Service (MRS).

**"Providers are well aware of the continuous hard work that ACSO CREST does for the clients and advocacy they provide. She even mentioned, no other providers could do what you do—and I reckon you'll continuing growing in Queensland with the program."**

— Service Provider (Busy Ability)

**With support from leadership and business services, ACSO's Queensland team underwent a major transformation in early 2025** to prepare for the launch of MRS on 1 July. The statewide service saw Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) nearly double from 32 to 58.5, with all CREST employees transitioning across and 10 additional team members onboarded from former Northern and Central CREST providers, bringing valuable local knowledge and community relationships. ACSO executives and senior leaders visited key locations to personally welcome new employees, with CEO Vaughan Winther travelling across Queensland to meet every team member in person.



**"You have employed an amazing team who are so professional and easy to work with. Added to this, they all have a great sense of humour which is essential in this environment."**

— QCS Employee

Throughout this period, ACSO has also established new locations and relationships across QLD. Colocations have already been set up in Cairns (alongside Quihn) and in Gladstone (alongside Bob's Garage), with further locations planned for Hervey Bay, Townsville, and Rockhampton.

**The rollout of MRS is one of the most significant moments of growth ACSO has undergone in our 41 years.** There are over 10,000 people incarcerated in male Correctional Centres across Queensland, all of whom are eligible for MRS support.

At the close of FY24/25, ACSO's MRS is poised to provide services at 35 community corrections offices, 140 reporting locations, and 10 correctional centres across the Sunshine State.





# McCormack Housing Provides Much Needed Support

The current housing crisis is making it more difficult than ever for Victorians impacted by the justice system to find safe, stable housing. McCormack Housing (McH) has been working hard to bridge this gap.

One McH participant commented,

**“There needs to be more services like McCormack Housing to support people coming out of prison. I don’t think I would have breached my parole and gone back to prison, if I had the support of a service like McH. I am so glad they accepted me into the program. I can’t thank them enough. I’ve got my life back.”**

FY24/25 has proved to be another successful year for McCormack Housing. As a registered Housing Provider with the Victorian Housing Registrar, McCormack Housing received a total of 67 referrals over the year. Of these, McH housed:

- 33 new clients for Residential services, with 16 clients vacating and 2 transferring to alternative residential support.
- 5 new clients for Safe Steps, with 3 vacating (40% exiting into stable accommodation).
- 13 new clients Stepping Stones Bendigo and Gippsland, with 9 vacating (49% exiting into stable accommodation).

Clients were referred to McCormack Housing from across a range of ACSO programs, including CSP, ReStart, AOS, ReConnect, and YORS.



Stable housing is more than a roof over someone’s head; it can be the turning point that breaks the cycle of incarceration, and McH continues to play a crucial role in collaboration with ACSO’s programs and services.

**“Having that secure and safe accommodation with McCormack housing is often an extreme motivator for individuals to get back on their feet. We give tenants the tools, but it’s up to them how they use them.”**

– Sylvia Cassar, Operations Manager at McCormack Housing.



# Our Finances

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In FY25, ACSO reported a surplus of \$0.06 million, a big turnaround from the FY24 deficit of \$2.89 million.

This is the direct result of ACSO pursuing operational efficiencies and strengthening its internal controls that support program sustainability. ACSO had improved revenue of \$0.64 million and lower expenditure of \$2.33 million from the prior year. The main decrease was in construction expenses of \$2.23 million.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURED

In FY 2025, our consolidated revenue was \$59.1 million (up from \$58.6 million in FY 2024).

## REVENUE BY SOURCE

ACSO receives income from state and federal government and other sources, highlighting that ACSO's operations are supported by various government contracts and partnerships.

Other Income includes \$1.15 million investment income and favourable market movements. Expenditure shows that most of ACSO's revenue is allocated to client services, with significant focus on governance, risk management, and employee safety and wellbeing, underscoring the inherent risks in ACSO's programs and the ongoing efforts to manage them.



# Income & Expenditure

\$'000

REVENUE	2021	2022 (restated)	2023 (restated)	2024	2025
Government funding & fees	47,054	51,272	54,610	57,144	57,982
COATS brokerage	6,796	2,938	-	-	-
Other income	3,863	410	1,204	1,355	1,153
	57,714	54,620	55,814	58,500	59,135
EXPENDITURE					
Employee benefits	36,124	39,279	40,770	45,941	45,381
Construction Expenses	-	-	3,703	26,33	400
COATS brokerage	6,796	2,938	-	-	-
Depreciation & amortisation	2,436	2,432	2,325	2,392	3,240
Rental expenses	553	450	234	378	455
Other expenditure	9,919	9,570	9,609	10,142	9,681
	55,828	54,670	56,641	61,487	59,157
NET SURPLUS/(LOSS) BEFORE INTEREST	1,886	(50)	(827)	(2,988)	(22)
Interest received	68	29	69	102	82
NET SURPLUS/(LOSS) AFTER INTEREST	1,954	(21)	(757)	(2,885)	60

# Assets & Liabilities

\$'000

CURRENT ASSETS	2021	2022 (restated)	2023	2024 (restated)	2025
Cash & cash equivalents	28,632	26,836	26,802	16,036	6,493
Trade receivables	6,496	1,031	1,647	3,010	3,501
Other	3,063	4,518	5,660	13,146	16,177
	38,192	32,385	34,109	32,192	26,171
NON CURRENT ASSETS					
Trade receivables	-	393	507	587	890
Intangibles	1,957	2,228	2,020	2,045	1,081
Plant & equipment	10,590	10,210	9,243	12,342	9,903
Other	20	6,692	7,321	7,985	8,636
	12,567	19,523	19,091	22,958	20,510
	50,759	51,908	53,200	55,149	46,681
LIABILITES					
Trade & other payables	30,910	31,296	32,840	37,581	28,801
Provisions	3,818	4,601	5,107	5,200	5,452
	34,728	35,897	37,946	42,781	34,253
NET ASSETS	16,031	16,011	15,253	12,368	12,428

## NOTES FOR INCOME & EXPENDITURE AND ASSETS & LIABILITIES TABLES

### Going Concern

For the year ended 30 June 2025, ACSO reported a surplus of \$59,569 and a working capital ratio of 1.00. The Board approved a 3-year financial sustainability plan to provide assurance of ongoing financial security. ACSO also has investments in managed funds of \$8.64 million that are classified as a non-current asset. Liquidity reserve held in managed funds of \$8.38 million has been reclassified out of cash and cash equivalents to other financial assets.

### McCormack House transfer back into ACSO

In 2024-25 a strategic decision was taken to bring the funding and service delivery of McCormack House back into ACSO operations. McCormack House was deregistered as a housing provider. Employees, assets and liabilities will be transferred across to ACSO and the separate company will be wound up in 2025-26. There will be minimal impact on tenants and funders. There will be no change in control at the group level, and no gain or loss will be recognised in ACSO's consolidated financial statements. Properties will be transferred at book value.



# Thank you for your generosity

ACSO gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Commonwealth Government and Victorian, Queensland and New South Wales State Governments and the following agencies.

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