2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Reflecting on our journey.

Table of Contents

01 The Our Town Berri Story

02 Chair Report

05 Initiatives

06 Impacts

07 Data Metrics

08 2025

09 Snapshot

10 Partners

The Our Town Berri Story

Vision

An inclusive town, Berri that thrives through community connections. A community that understands and activates its strengths and assets (people, organisations, spaces and things) to create strong identity and town pride where all generations feel welcomed and supported to embed and nurture a culture of positive wellbeing.

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Town Berri acknowledges that Berri is built upon the traditional land of the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee. Our Town Berri recognises the Erawirung People as the traditional custodians of Berri. We also pay respect to the seven Riverland Aboriginal groups Ngaiawang, Ngawait, Nganguruku, Erawirung, Ngintait, Ngaralte & Ngarkat people.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Insights

All of the work, initiatives and partnerships Our Town Berri is involved in reflects the needs of their community. In the early days of Our Town Berri's development, the Core Team engaged with their community to identify the needs voiced by locals. Here are their findings:

The light on the hill went out | Historically, Berri has had some major setbacks. We want to proudly reclaim & build our identity.
It's hard to see the river for the reeds | Services should connect & network to support the wellbeing of a community. Many are falling through the cracks.
The river connects us | When generations & groups come together, impacts are felt across a community.
Navigating uncharted waters | Life events & transitions have connections to wellbeing. Strong communities support these transitions.

Chair Report

David Binney

As we wrap up another impactful year, I am excited to share the many highlights and achievements that have unfolded in Our Town Berri. Our activities across the year and partnerships underscore our commitment to community well-being, cultural pride, and social innovation.

River Families First

In our continued effort to support families through transitions, Britney has been instrumental in developing an engaging Mother's Group Program. This initiative includes activities such as art sessions with Karl Raams, nutrition workshops, and yoga classes with Jade Malinovski. The shift to a flexible, drop-in style format has been well-received, reflecting our adaptability to community needs.

Nina and Alysia from FFRR visited to review the impact of the River Families First program, which addresses the challenges posed by recent events like COVID and regional flooding. Britney's efforts have significantly contributed to the program's success, and we are grateful for the opportunity to highlight this work. We look forward to this work continuing with some exciting ideas coming up in the near future.

Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland

Community Steward Julie Ahrens participated in the RDAMR Regional Leadership Development Program. This two-day workshop focused on cultivating authentic and purposeful leadership. The program emphasized self-discovery, empathy, and courage, which align with our mission to foster local leaders and change-makers.

Reconciliation Garden

In collaboration with Berri Regional Secondary College (BRSC) and the local Aboriginal community, the Reconciliation Garden project is progressing well. Aboriginal students are engaged in constructing the garden's pathways, plantings and firepit area, gaining valuable skills and a sense of ownership. We were thrilled to receive funding from Country Arts SA for a cultural art project within the garden.

Our activities across the year and partnerships underscore our commitment to community well-being, cultural pride, and social innovation.

Berri Primary School Art Wellness Program

Sara's initiative at Berri Primary School has introduced a well-being-focused Art Group led by Karl Raams. This program provides a creative and supportive space for students to engage with mental health topics through art. The positive impact on students has been remarkable, fostering self-expression and personal growth.

Native Food & Culture Program

Additionally, we are funding a Native Food and Culture Program at BRSC, aimed at empowering young First Nations girls and women to explore careers in native food and agriculture.

Community Breakfasts and Friends of Berri

Core Team members Kiralee and Chris hosted community breakfasts, fostering connections with around 30 locals. Additionally, the inaugural meeting of Friends of Berri saw enthusiastic participation, discussing various community needs and opportunities for improvement.

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Earlier this year, KAIZEN Business Support facilitated an enlightening Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training over two days. This initiative, supported by Our Town Berri, made the training accessible to many local volunteers and mentors. Our heartfelt thanks to Suzi for her exceptional facilitation and to all participants for their enthusiastic engagement. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting both the course's impact and Suzi's inspirational delivery.

Students have been actively engaging with the community, creating meaningful connections across generations.

Volunteering

In celebration of National Volunteers Week, we hosted a special event to honour our dedicated volunteers. Gathered around a firepit, volunteers and community members of all ages enjoyed a warm evening of appreciation and networking. A special thank you to the Berri Girl Guides for the delightful catering and to the Berri Community Centre for providing the venue.

Our Berri Regional Secondary College students have been actively engaging with the community, creating meaningful connections across generations. Their work, from teaching hockey to primary schools to recording the stories of Berri Cottage Home residents, is truly commendable. What an staggering year for volunteering, thanks to Emma's role we've seen 3000+ hours of volunteering, over 150 volunteering opportunities have been offered, 58% of students have been engaged with volunteering projects and there has been many positive outcomes for all participants.

ChangeFest

At ChangeFest, Community Steward Julie Ahrens, alongside Our Town's Strategic Leader Oli Carlton, showcased our community-led efforts, emphasizing the importance of place and collective growth. Julie's reflection on creating spaces of love and hope resonated deeply.

Innovation Space

We have been excited about the opening of the Our Town Innovation Space, a new hub designed to evolve with our community's needs. Julie and Kirste have diligently prepared this space, and we look forward to the opportunities it will bring.

Raise Mentoring

Graduating students have followed the Raise Youth Mentoring Curriculum for over 20 weeks and have focused on building resilience, school belonging, asking for help and goal setting - all positive skills for a bright future. The event is by invite only, but let's take a moment to celebrate our young mentees on their incredible journeys and to their mentors for their continued support. Carly (Raise) has also proudly noticed students learning how to form trusting relationships with older members of their community and learn to like themselves more.

Annual General Meeting and Planning Day

Last year's AGM provided a chance to reflect on the year's achievements and challenges. We welcomed Sara Ormsby and Chris Zahos to the Core Team, and are excited about the year ahead. Following the AGM, we engaged in a Planning Day with our support team, refining our Theory of Change and ensuring our initiatives align with community needs.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude for the support and dedication of our team, partners, and community members. As we look forward to the next 12 months, we remain committed to making a positive impact and continuing our journey of growth and community engagement.

Warm regards,
David Binney
Our Town Berri Chairperson

Initiatives

Our Town Berri has had a busy year! Here's a few of the initiatives Core Team members and partners have been working on.

ART WELLBEING AT BERRI PRIMARY

RIVER FAMILIES FIRST

MENTAL HEALTH TRAININGS FOR COMMUNITY

NUNGA DRIVING

FRIENDS OF BERRI

STUDENT VOLUNTEERING

COMMUNITY BREAKFASTS

NATIVE FOODS AND CULTURE PROGRAM

RAISE MENTORING

RECONCILIATION GARDEN

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS EVENT

BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS

SOCIAL INNOVATION SPACE

Impacts

River Families First

Britney Townsend joined the Our Town Berri team this year as the River Families First lead. She jumped at the chance to be involved in this initiative, as a parent Britney struggled with creating deeper connections with other families and services. The triumphs and the challenges that parents face is something that should be acknowledged and supported throughout their journey, and she want to help create connections and support within the community.

Raise Mentoring

Thirteen year 8 students and volunteer mentors participated in Raise Mentoring. Students met with their mentors for one hour every Thursday throughout terms two and three with a focus on building resilience, school belonging, asking for help and goal setting – all positive skills for a bright future.

Art Wellbeing at Berri Primary

Karl Raams is an Art Therapist who has been building their business and reconnecting with their hometown after studying away. Karl has been working with Sara Ormsby at Berri Primary School and focusing on student art wellbeing program, from this Karl has found additional work at Riverland Youth Theatre, attended the Our Town Network Gathering, chatted about their practice as an Art Therapist and deeply connected with their community again.

Data Metrics

STUDENT VOLUNTEER HOURS
5,000+

PARTNERSHIPS
21

FUNDING PARTNERS
8

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
10

SPEAKER EVENTS
7

Into 2025

Our Town Berri is dedicated to continuing trekking and developing our already-formed pathways. Our team's passions moving forward still reflect strongly in what we've worked on and achieved in 2024. We will continue thinking upwards and outwards, and watch the ripples grow.

Influence

We're seeing a shift in our community in understanding the What, How and Why of Our Town Berri. Our way of working is starting to influence businesses, local groups, individuals, and local council. Our Town Berri is influencing how organisations, community groups and Government go about their work and engage with the community. Funder practices have shifted as a result of Our Town Berri's advocacy. Community led and informed processes, partnerships, and learning our way through change underpin the work of Our Town Berri and are something others want to know more about.

Our Stories

Berri has such a thriving artistic community with emerging and established artists of all disciplines and ages. Our Town Berri wants to utilise the skills and passion of those artists. Relationships with organisations like Riverland Youth Theatre and Part of Things mean we can continue to build this relationship with the arts – and, in turn, Berri's relationship with its identity once more.

Young People

To continue our work with young people, we want to see those relationships develop and thread into Our Town Berri. We would like to see and hear our young people in spaces where they can make a difference. Our Town Berri has created pathways for various groups in the community to connect with young people through volunteering. Strengthening community identity, pride, and culture for young people has positive ripples for how connected they feel to their community and how the broader community perceives them.

Community Engagement

The Our Town Berri Core Team is working at full capacity, but we know there are keen community members that are keen to jump in and begin developing their own initiatives and we want to make sure those passions are supported. Microgranting is one of many ways we're thinking about threading the community into the Our Town Berri way of thinking and working.

Snapshot

CHANGING MINDSETS
LIFE COACHING & HYPNOTHERAPY
Anxiety & Stress
Fears & Phobias
Addictions
Emotional Eating
Pain Management
Life Goals
Christos Zahos
River Families First
What would you like to know more about?

CHANGEFEST

Berri Regional

Welcome to
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID® COURSE
4TH EDITION

Partners

volunteering sa&nt
support grow celebrate

Berri Regional Secondary College

Ski for Life

GIRL GUIDES AUSTRALIA

COUNTRY ARTS SA

ac.care

Walking Together

raise

Fay Fuller Foundation

Berri Riverside Holiday Park
South Australia

Berri Primary School
Learn, Believe, Achieve

KAIZEN
business support

Government of South Australia

human services

paulramsay FOUNDATION

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Future Drought Fund

FRRR
Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal

Australian Rural Leadership Foundation

PART of THINGS

Schools Plus

TACSI

WYATT

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