



ILLAWARRA WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

Annual Report 2016-17

Health, respect and equality for women and girls



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WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION

Women and girls are respected, safe and healthy and experience full participation and equality in their lives.

OUR PURPOSE

To improve the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of women and girls, and build engagement and activism by women for change in communities and the health system.

WHAT WE DO

We are a community based women's health centre, run by women for women and girls.

OUR CORE BUSINESS IS:

- Free or low cost individual and group health care services:
 - Medical, mental health and complementary therapy services.
 - Counselling and wellness workshops and programs.
- A safe and woman-centred space for social support, community activities and groups.
- Primary prevention and early intervention outreach programs and health education.
- Community development, activism and advocacy to address the underlying causes of poor health for women and girls and improve policy and services.

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT



The past 12 months has flown; so many highlights and fantastic achievements to celebrate at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. At the Annual General Meeting held November 2016 we saw significant changes to the Council of Women, farewelling Carol Lymbery, Tessa Parsons, Sarah Cunningham, Julie Burdock, and Gaye Sykes. Nominations received and accepted meant we welcomed Vi Blazevska, Sue Dawson, Sue Dignan, Elisabeth Homer, Jess McNeil, Deb Williams and Shannon Wright, joining Sue Brown and myself.

Unfortunately during the early part of this year we farewelled Sue Dawson, Deb Williams and Jess McNeil, then fortuitously we welcomed Mary Papakosmas and Julie Crawford. While I know this may appear unsettling, this all happened prior to commencing the strategic planning exercise in May. This process was one that strengthened the team at the Centre and the Council of Women.

Lyla Rogan was appointed as the Strategic Planning facilitator early this year. Lyla engaged the Council of Women and centre staff in a very positive, focused and empowering way. After much consulting and listening to many perspectives, Lyla documented our journey by collating agreed upon ideas and then formulated this into a very manageable document. The Illawarra Women's Health Centre Strategic Plan 17 – 22 is to be launched at the October 2017 Annual General meeting. It is a document that provides purpose and a clear direction for core business over the next five years.

Strong leadership by the Council and Centre Manager Sally Stevenson sees the Women's Health Centre in a comfortable financial situation, plus the certainty of having a three year funding agreement with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District supports ongoing viability and a strong future. There has also been considerable growth of community based funding partners including, Warilla Bowls and Recreation Club, Oak Flats Bowling Club and The Shellharbour Club.

Additional highlights this past 12 months include the Annual Gala Dinner with Van Badham as guest speaker and Melinda James as MC, raising over \$12,000, and a trivia night organised primarily by Centre staff raising a much appreciated \$2,500 and the celebration of our 30th birthday.

Programs within the Centre are very well utilised. Some are expanding at a great pace and some cannot meet community need. There is increased recognition within the sector and the broader community, and this continues to grow as the Centre's reputation is spreading.

The future for the Illawarra Women's Health Centre looks bright - strong leadership from the Council, a dedicated and visionary Manager Sally, passionate and professional Centre staff, sound financial situation, a three year funding agreement, a new Strategic Plan and increased community reputation and recognition. However, the future is not without challenges. We must continue to work hard, remain vigilant and advocate for young girls and women experiencing hardship, such as mental health, domestic violence and homelessness.

I am aware one of our Council members Elizabeth Homer is not renominating due to study and work commitments. Thanks Liz for your insight and valuable contribution these past 12 months. I hope you remain a close friend of the Council and the Centre, and all the best for future endeavours.

Finally, a big thanks and congratulations, to all Council Members, Sally and Centre Staff. Please join me in sharing the Vision of the Illawarra Women's Health Centre, a future where " Women and girls are respected, safe and healthy, and experience full participation and equality in their lives".

Judy Daunt Chair ■



Our Centre provides a critical service to women of the Illawarra and it does so in a professional, caring and empowering way. The staff are supportive of all the women who walk through our door, regardless of age, ethnicity, sexuality or disability. It is a safe place, that puts words into action in a way that demonstrates to women how they can and should be treated in all aspects of their life: with respect, dignity and kindness.

And this year we celebrated 30 years of providing such an exceptional and much needed service.

The Centre had a strong year, meeting both our operational and financial goals. We provided a range of services that both reflect our community-based feminist approach, and respond to the social determinants of health. Addressing key health issues for women we focused on sexual and reproductive health, mental and emotional health, and violence against women. We did this using a variety of strategies, including clinical and allied health services, therapeutic and information work-shops on health, relationships, financial and legal matters, education and health promotion, and group activities. We employed or engaged doctors, women's health nurses, massage therapists, social workers, psychologists, generalist counsellors and a dietitian. The range and availability of these practitioners enables us to provide continuity of care under one roof, particularly important for women who are vulnerable and marginalised.

Indeed, we are a unique service providing safe, accessible and cost-effective support to vulnerable and marginalised women - women who could otherwise

end up costing the health system substantial sums of money, particularly through hospitalisation. We are a vital and dynamic component of the primary health care system in the Illawarra.

During the year we supported 1,490 individual clients, compared to 1,284 last year, an increase of 16%. This translated to 3,628 occasions of service, covering 7,212 presenting issues, reflecting our approach of offering integrated care across a range of health concerns. In addition, we facilitated and/or implemented 1,095 group sessions in areas such as yoga, meditation, quit smoking, healthy relationships and self-esteem.

We continued to develop our much-needed Young Women's Program and Women with Disabilities and domestic violence program, increasing partnerships and outreach in both areas.

The Centre this year was funded (70%) by the NSW Ministry of Health, through the NGO Health Partnerships grant program, distributed and monitored by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. We met and in most cases exceeded our key performance indicators associated with this funding. For 2017-2020 we have a three-year agreement, which provides not just certainty, but acknowledgment that community based women's health services are critical. Nevertheless, as the NSW Government pursues funding reforms, particularly in the form of a commissioning/purchasing model, in the not-for-profit health sector, and government run women's health services are cut across the state, we remain vigilant about the threats to women's health Centres. We will continue to diversify our income streams to minimise the risk of funding cuts, and ensure financial sustainability.

Our Centre is, year on year, responding to increasing demand for our services. This is partly because our positive reputation continues to grow, especially as we develop more outward reaching partnerships and relationships, and we persist in raising our voice to advocate for women's health. But, it is also because the incidence of mental health and violence against women is increasing, and areas such as Warrawong, Warilla and Cringilla continue to experience high levels of poverty and disadvantage. We are limited only by the physical capacity of our facilities, and by funding – not any lack of desire to provide appropriate and adequate support.

Next year promises to be equally dynamic, as we operationalise our strategic plan, build our fundraising base, and look toward implementing key new initiatives to tackle violence against women, homelessness in older women, and mental and sexual health in girls and young women.

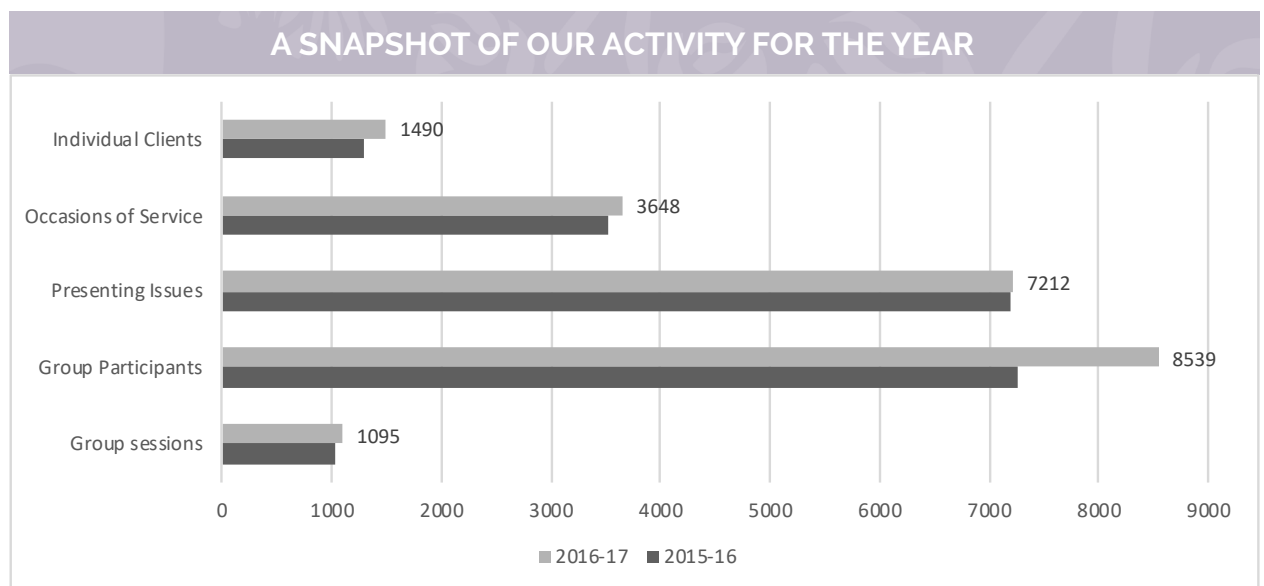
I thank our networks and partners for their support and commitment to the needs of our shared clients. I thank our Council of Women and staff for creating a women's health centre that we can all be proud of.

And most of all I thank our clients who continue to put their faith in us, often under the most awful circumstances. Their quiet strength, remarkable resilience and perseverance, humour and humility are without question, inspiring. It is our privilege to support them.

Sally Stevenson AM ■



Judy Daunt, Chairwoman and Sally Stevenson, General Manager at our Annual Gala Dinner.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2016 - 2017

- The **development** of our Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2020, with a focus on mental and emotional health, sexual and reproductive health and domestic violence and sexual assault, and giving particular attention to girls and young women, older women, disabled women and women with mental health issues. In addition to building on our current offerings in these areas we will increase our advocacy regarding key issues that affect women, with a view to driving systemic improvement for women's health. This includes homelessness for older women and access to termination services. We are ready for the future.
- **Celebrating** our 30th birthday, and acknowledging the immense work of all the women who established the Centre and have consistently delivered high quality much needed services over the decades to women of the Illawarra .
- **Increasing** support to individual clients by 16% over the year, representing a 38% increase since in the 2014 and growing group sessions to 1,095 reflecting a 31% increase for the same period.
- The **development** of our Women With Disabilities and domestic violence program - including individual support and face to face counselling, group sessions on healthy relationships, training of carers and disability workers, establishment of a peer support group and high-level advocacy.
- A significant **increase** in public fundraising and donations and successful grant applications (including ClubGrants and NSW Government infrastructure funding), reflecting a strong and respectable reputation in our community.
- Substantial **upgrade** of our IT infrastructure, equipping us for the next five years and a Cloud and NBN future as well as the launch of our new website.
- **Maintaining** a safe, welcoming and highly professional and caring Centre whilst continually improving and expanding services, with the same level of government funding. ■

OUR WOMEN

Our staff, volunteers and student interns, independent service providers and community group conveners are a dedicated and committed team who provide a high level of compassionate and professional service to Illawarra women.

STAFF

Thank you to Sue Ilievski (receptionist, intake and referral, communications and cupcake maker extraordinaire), Linda Bradshaw (massage therapist), Editt Melgarejo (women's health nurse practitioner), Gail Morgan (receptionist), Gabi Martinez (health promotion manager), Belinda Fabrianesi (health promotion officer), Louise Pople (generalist counsellor), Tina McLaren-Bell (telephone counsellor), Danielle Trayner and Sharon Stewart (practice nurses), Denika Thomas (young women's social worker), Kim Sattler (women with disabilities project officer), Dianne Frohmuller (centre coordinator) and Sally Stevenson (general manager).

VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENT INTERNS

Thank you Anna Read (nurse), Michele Kenworthy (meditation), Jessie Bruton (community services) and Olivia Robin (law student).

INDEPENDENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Thank you Drs Eniko Ujvary, Elna Stoltz, and Zeenath Hassim, Catriona Robinson and Stacey Fuller (dietitians), Dr Desley Hennessey and Jeanette Hindmarsh (psychologists), Jo Walker (social worker), Fiona Curll (counsellor) and Liz Shepperd (financial counsellor).

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPISTS

Thank you Denise Orr (reflexologist), Sharon Flegg (massage), Debbie Bruce (massage and pelvic floor exercises), Louise Steffens (body therapy), Julia

Burdock (natural therapies), Kez Robinson (beauty therapist and massage), and Kushi Kumari (beauty therapist).

VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY GROUP CONVENERS

Thank you Tamara Carmody (strength and conditioning), Lyn Young (craft), Tracy James (yoga), Marta Vagnas (tai chi and ukulele), Elena Bellinato (drumming), Tanya Lenartowicz (women's circle), Myra Suchs (exercises), Lisa Morey (yoga), Val Markovska (belly dancing), Fiona Stephens (musical moments), Debbie Bruce (boxing) Julia

Burdock (meditation), Elisabeth Brandis (crystal bowls meditation), Elanore Belantio (drumming), Sue Reid (exercise and meditation) and Kim Sattler (aromatherapy).

COUNCIL OF WOMEN

The Council of Women are a diverse range of women with a high level of skills, knowledge, professionalism and commitment. COW members are Judy Daunt (Chairwoman), Vi Blazevska (Treasurer), Susan Brown (Secretary), Sue Dignan, Mary Papakosmas, Shannon Wright, and Julie Crawford. ■



Denika Thomas (Young Women's Social Worker) and Kim Sattler (Domestic Violence project officer).



Sue Ilievski lighting our 30th birthday (cup) cake.

OUR OPERATIONS

Our Centre provides a multidisciplinary, inclusive and integrated health service for women across all stages of their life. Access and participation is open to all women of the Illawarra, regardless of financial status or background as services are provided at no or below market cost.

This year 1,490 women were provided individual attention and received direct benefits from the Centre in terms of sexual and reproductive health, emotional health, violence and sexual assault and cardiovascular and other lifestyle diseases. The number of women that attend workshops, short term programs or groups increases this number to over 3,000.

Many of our clients have complex issues that require attention before health care and or counselling can be effective. Our staff work with each other, accessing skills and knowledge across areas to re establish the foundations for health and well being. We use the Womens Health NSW statistical database which captures 157 presenting issues in clinic and counselling services. In 2016-17 a total of 8,161 services were provided for 7,212 presenting issues.

SERVICES

Demand for our individual service provision continues to be high, with waiting lists of 2-4 weeks for all services. Apart from services provided in the Centre, we also offer a clearly needed information and referral service through our reception. We receive between 30 - 50 telephone calls per day, with women seeking advice, referrals, information, booking appointments or simply wanting to talk to someone, because they have nowhere else to go for support. In addition to our in-house health services, we work with the Illawarra Legal Centre and Shellharbour Legal Services to provide free legal advice. Centrelink uses our rooms to provide private and personal attention to women with complex cases, and a local bank manager offers free individual financial guidance and group workshops. Because we coordinate and facilitate a range of medical and health related services at our Centre, women receive high quality support within a continuity of care framework. This provides a significant, though often intangible added value to vulnerable women who attend the Centre.

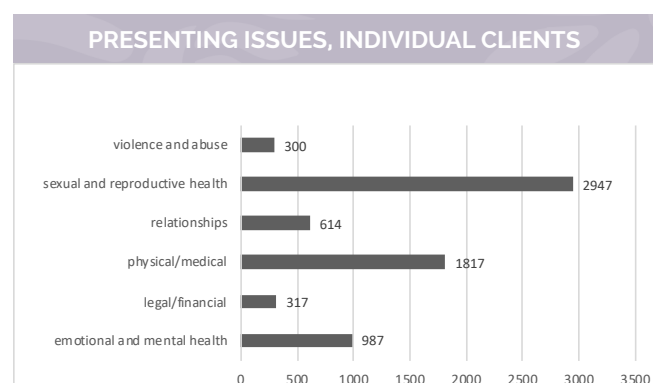
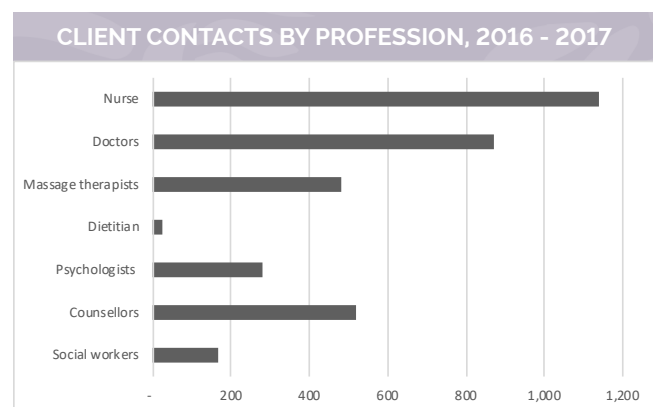
WORKSHOPS AND PROGRAMS

In partnership with organizations such as Relationships Australia, Family Services Illawarra and providers such as Inner Therapy the Centre offers a variety of therapeutic and educative workshops. These cover topics ranging from healthy relationships to anger management, to parenting techniques. A range of health

programs are run at the Centre by women from the local community. The rooms are provided free of charge if attendance for participants remain free or at minimum cost. For example, we support a number of weekly groups such as craft, drumming, singing, yoga and cooking that break down the social isolation experienced by many women who suffer from poor emotional health or experience violence. These groups directly contribute to the women reconnecting with community, reducing further deterioration in emotional or mental health and as social isolation and depression are risk factors for cardiovascular disease, contributing to the long-term avoidance of hospitalisation. ■



Boxing at the Centre with Deb Bruce.



LIVING FREE FROM ABUSE

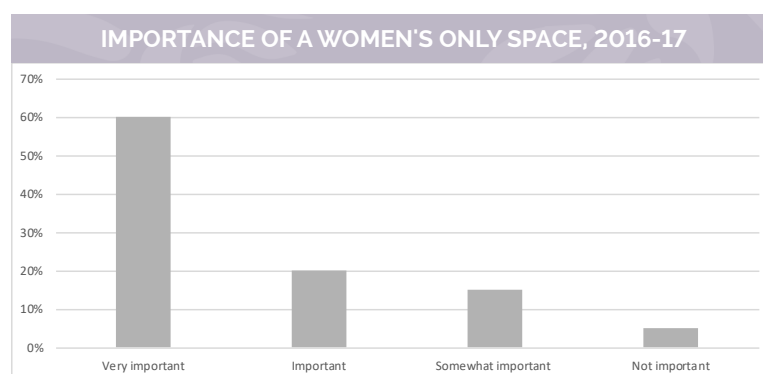
The Centre provides safe, accessible and free support, information and referral services for women confronting domestic violence. We continue to liaise with other agencies, and sat on the Illawarra Domestic Violence Committee which works towards a region-wide response to this continuing (and escalating) problem. We partner with the ISLHD Violence, Abuse and Neglect Team who are co-located in our Centre and work closely with Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra (SASSHI), which manages the Warilla and Wollongong women's refuges. Recognising the ongoing and debilitating effects of trauma on victims of violence, in the coming year we will continue our work to establish a Trauma and Wellbeing Centre.

Our other strategies for improving the responses to domestic, family and sexual violence against women and enabling greater continuity of care for women experiencing violence (including sexual assault) and protection of children include:

- Early and effective interventions through the provision of information about violence and sexual assault (including a confidential 'DV information pack').
- Counselling and trauma support.
- Improved community awareness and response.
- Practical and emotional assistance, including as part of the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service.
- Provision of therapeutic programs, including massage.
- Educating young people on safe and healthy relationships, e.g. delivering the LoveBites Program into local schools.
- The provision of legal and financial advice.

BEING AND FEELING SAFE

Being able to access relevant services and activities within a safe environment is critical to many women's health and wellbeing.



HAVING CONTROL OVER OUR BODIES

Accessible and affordable termination services in this region continues to be a major challenge. Services are vital not just because they provide options that allow a woman to exercise her fundamental right to choose, but also because we are hearing disturbing stories of women self-terminating due to lack of access to such services.

If a girl or a woman becomes pregnant the next steps she takes will differ

greatly depending on where in Australia she actually is - from facing imprisonment, to inducing a miscarriage with RU486 in the comfort of her own home, seeking approval from two doctors that she needs a termination, or heading to a clinic for a surgical procedure, while picketers wait on the edge of their inclusion zone. Abortion remains in the NSW Crimes Act, meaning women can only seek one if their mental or physical health is deemed to be jeopardised by a pregnancy.

In the Illawarra Shoalhaven the public health system does not provide termination and there is one private provider, financially inaccessible to many.

We continue to advocate for the decriminalisation of terminations in NSW and greater access to safe and affordable termination services in our area. ■

OUR UNIQUE PROGRAMS

SUPPORTING WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

This year we completed our research project **Breaking the Silence**, which sought to understand the experiences of young women with intellectual disabilities who have or are enduring domestic violence. The results were disturbing but unfortunately not surprising.

Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic violence and sexual assault and are subjected to violence and abuse by a greater number of perpetrators than the general population. Research shows that women with an intellectual disability are typically subject to multiple experiences of violence and sexual assault from a young age and from a variety of perpetrators. Many of these young women often do not recognise they are suffering domestic or sexual violence. The experience of these women is extreme, devastating, unacceptable and preventable.

90% of Australian women with an intellectual disability have been subject to sexual abuse and/or domestic violence, with more than 2/3 having been sexually abused before they turned 18 years old.

Compounding this increased risk is a lack of service and social recognition and often poor service responses to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women if the violence is reported: the women interviewed revealed that when they did seek help, there were no services able to provide sufficient care and supervision for them to move into supported accommodation, follow a court process, take out a domestic violence order or seek a place of safety. The ACT Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2014-2015 highlights the same issues.

We stressed in our final report that it was incumbent on all stakeholders in both the disability and domestic violence sectors to provide much more effective assistance to these women as a matter of urgency.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Funded by donations, including \$15,000 from the IWD Illawarra Committee, and Centre fundraising, we employed a dedicated (part time) project manager and the range of services we now provide includes:

- A monthly peer support group for women with a disability held in Wollongong.
- Education programs for women and men with a disability on sexual health, violence prevention and healthy relationships.
- Client work with individual women who access the Centre for support.
- Delivery of a uniquely developed training program for disability workers on healthy relationships.
- Information sessions for carers of women with a disability.

We have developed successful partnerships with Greenacres Disability Services, the Disability Trust, Yumaro Disability Services, Essential Personnel, the Physical Disability Council of NSW, Kemira Residential Community, the Intellectual Disability Rights Service and Flourish. We are applying for NDIS provider status.

Kim, our project manager, is a member on the expert advisory panel of the national peak body People with Disabilities and one of our peer group members Jacquie Charlesworth advises on the PWD NSW Peer Group project.

As our reputation for safe, open, non-judgemental and practical support grows and spreads so demand increases. Next year we will continue to seek funding for this critical program, and much neglected groups of women. ■



Kim Sattler presenting our work on domestic violence and women with disabilities program.

OUR UNIQUE PROGRAMS



GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM

This year has been one of growth, reflecting the high demand for this program within our community. Program requests and individual referrals continue to increase and our relationships with the community, health services and high schools increase and strengthen. And, as the Centre's reputation for safety, confidentiality and quality spreads, more and more young women are directly contacting me and using the Centre's services.

SERVICES IN OUR YOUNG WOMEN'S PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- Tailored outreach programs to schools for girls in years 7-10, about sexual and reproductive health, women's health, mental health and healthy relationships (including LoveBites and sessions on healthy friendships).
- One on one counselling.
- A drop-in afternoon (Creative Space).
- An annual Young Women's Health and Wellbeing Forum.

Our school program, based on an empowerment model, is led by the girls. We ask them what topics interest them and we deliver modules typically over a 6-9 week period, accordingly. Often if different conversations arise within the session on a topic we allow these to continue and then build on this the following week. Examples of topics include, women's consent, body image, emotional regulation, anxiety, safe partying, stress etc. We are also regularly contacted by schools who have girls who won't speak to anyone but us.

Demand for one on one counselling has increased. Girls as young as 11 and young women (and their parents) have requested counselling for a range of issues, including body image, bullying and sexualised behaviours. We are often providing counselling to young women who are struggling with emotional regulation, feeling overwhelmed with school, family and society's expectations. We also support our clients through the grieving process, working through trauma and navigating the legal/adult systems. Often these young women are not wanting a specialist service - they are wanting a relationship with an adult, based on trust and understanding, who will support them through their issues. We also offer informal - but accessible - support through email, phone calls and text messages.

WORKING TOGETHER:

Our Young Women's Program partners include Warilla High School, Oak Flats High School, Warrawong High School, Woonona High School, Lake Illawarra High School, Albion Park High School, St Joseph's High School, Craig Davis College, Corpus Christie High School, Dapto High School, Shellharbour City Council, Northcott, Spectrum Girls Group, Horsley Community Centre (Careways), Multicultural Community Council Illawarra, SASSHI, Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association, Greenacres Disability Services, Communities for Children (Barnardo's) PCYC, Shellharbour Hospital (Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service), University of Wollongong, Flagstaff (Nowra), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Grand Pacific Health, Healthy Cities Illawarra and the HARP team at ISLHD.

OUR UNIQUE PROGRAMS



We have also experienced an increase in the demand for programs specifically for Aboriginal girls, delivering the same modules but with a culturally sensitive approach. The importance of being a culturally safe, and accessible service to Aboriginal girls and young women should not be overestimated, as they face multiple and unique challenges in their life.

A highlight of this service is being witness to young women becoming increasingly empowered to create change within their own lives. For example, a young woman who was sexually assaulted was able to attend court and speak her story. With our support this young woman was able understand the emotional stress this experience can have, and we at the Centre worked closely with her family to support her court journey and recovery.

Our challenges primarily reflect our capacity limits – we have only 1-2 counselling sessions outside school hours. To work around this, we offer counselling at schools (within lunch time or free periods) but this requires a strong and flexible partnership with the school, and we are still limited by time and social workers (we have one FTE). More broadly, we would like to be able to offer our school program, throughout the Illawarra, yet here we are also nearly at capacity.

As rates of anxiety, depression self-harm and suicide continue to increase amongst young women at an alarming rate, and domestic and family violence continues to climb – our program is a critical service to the girls and young women of the Illawarra. ■



Creative Space -
making healthy snacks.

OUR UNIQUE PROGRAMS



WARILLA OCCASIONAL CARE CENTRE

Illawarra Area Child Care continues to expertly manage the Warilla Preschool and Occasional Care Centre on our behalf. The Care Centre was established at the same time as the Women's Health Centre, in recognition that for women (mothers) to attend appointments or participate in group activities, a high quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care program was a necessary support. This year the Centre cared for 28 children per day aged between birth and 5 years of age, on a full-time, part-time, casual or emergency care basis. It creates a place where all children and families feel a secure sense of belonging.

The service is highly regarded for its inclusive and caring approach to care, attracting families from diverse backgrounds and children with additional needs. Several children enrolled during 2017 had a diagnosed disability attended across the week and many of these children had complex needs. There were also a number of children who required undergoing assessment and support as they were referred for assessment, including children with high trauma support needs. The teachers and educators are deeply committed to supporting each child's learning and development, and at times needed support in doing so.

This year, the Care Centre has been involved in the Noah's Shoalhaven, Kids Together program. This is a key worker model program where a specialist works alongside the teachers and educators once/twice a week to support children and their families. The key worker, Fiona is an experienced Occupational Therapist and has provided the educators with knowledge, skills and confidence to work with children who have high complex needs. The children are thriving in this environment.



The beautiful team, led by highly experienced Director Hayley Olbrich also implemented the Circle of Security, KidsMatter, Zones of Regulation and the Play and Learning to Socialise program which provided the them with theory, knowledge, resources and confidence to plan and implement quality programs for all children. A further highlight is the very positive relationship the Care Centre has with Carunya Dementia Day Therapy Centre, situated next door. The children often visit Carunya clients, sharing songs, nurse rhymes, stories and play.

Next year will see continued flexible highly quality care being offered to families in Warilla, including an ongoing commitment to make the Centre a culturally safe place for newly arrived refugee, and Aboriginal families. ■





FINDING SAFETY AND SUPPORT AT OUR CENTRE: EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT.

The Family Referral Service at Barnardos received a referral from the Police Child Wellbeing Unit for a young woman "Emily" who was fleeing domestic violence, and had been a victim of family violence.

She was a young Aboriginal woman, who left Adelaide and came back to the Illawarra to be closer to her family, and to maximise the safety of herself and her children.

She has three children.

She moved in with her mother, which suited them all because her mother has a large house.

Her sister was annoyed that she had moved back to the family home; there was a history of trauma and unresolved conflict within the family.

There was a family BBQ one night with all of the family present and her father in law become aggressive and angry and assaulted her quite badly.

Police were called and her father in law was arrested and charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

There was an Apprehended Violence Order put in place which prevented him from attending the family home.

Her mother became increasingly angry and hostile with her because it was her partner.

Emily's sister then became angry with her and wouldn't talk to her. This behaviour increased to Emily's children not being treated the same as the sister's children. Eventually Emily and her children were isolated within the house. Continual verbal abuse occurred.

The Family Referral Service worker went to the home to complete an assessment and to work with Emily to access appropriate services.

The older children were doing well at school, and there weren't any behavioural problems.

Emily identified that she had PTSD from the many years of abuse from the children's father, and the assault by her brother in law triggered the trauma.

The Family Referral Service worker was able to provide some brokerage for Emily, and some Christmas gifts for the children.

The Family Referral Service worker referred Emily to Denika at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. This was a culturally appropriate referral for Emily and she immediately felt a connection to Denika.

Denika attended Housing NSW with Emily and also referred the older children to culturally appropriate counselling. Through her advocacy and support Emily was allocated Transitional Housing. Denika was also able to link Emily to appropriate services within the Women's Health Centre.

Denika and the Family Referral Service worker were able to work collaboratively until it was time for the Family Referral Service worker to step away from the family.

FACS Housing were grateful to have Denika working with the Emily and the children because she was a great support and a great advocate for Emily. Denika stayed involved and had a counselling and support work role with Emily.

Emily shared with the Family Referral Service worker that it was so helpful having someone from her own culture, and how appropriate Denika was.

She felt supported and believed, and Denika's intervention minimised the isolation she had been feeling at a time when moving back with her father (in over crowded and unsupportive housing) seemed like the only viable solution. ■

Sue Dignan
Senior Practitioner-Intake
Family Referral Service

OUR CLIENTS

The views of our clients continue to inform the work we do. We collect feedback via formal workshop evaluations and client surveys as well informally and anecdotally. The Centre is overwhelmingly considered a vital community service, with an example of comments below.

I came to see Louise for amphetamine addiction, through pressure from boyfriend. I did not intend to stop, just keep him quiet. Then I spoke with Louise and walked out of here thinking I might give it a go. 3 sessions and 6 weeks later and I haven't used again.

When you walk through the door, there is a sense of **warmth and kindness** in the centre and also lots of activities. There is great camaraderie with all of the staff.

I would be lost without it. It is just a nice place for a woman to go to.

I attended the **anger course** run over two weeks, it helped me to stop yelling at my child and made DOCS pleased that I was willing and trying to make changes

The **clothing pool** has helped me in many ways. It matters more than anyone would think.

It helped get me into **exercise**. I wouldn't have dreamed of doing a lot of the exercise that I did while I did the program that was offered last year. It really built up my confidence. I wasn't judged. I was supported. It made all the difference.

I had an anxiety attack and all the ladies and staff were absolutely caring. I might not remember a lot 'but' I do know **the support was amazing**.

The people are so friendly and welcoming. I'm not a confident person but **from day one I felt a part of something** and I feel more and more each time I go. Everyone is absolutely lovely. ■

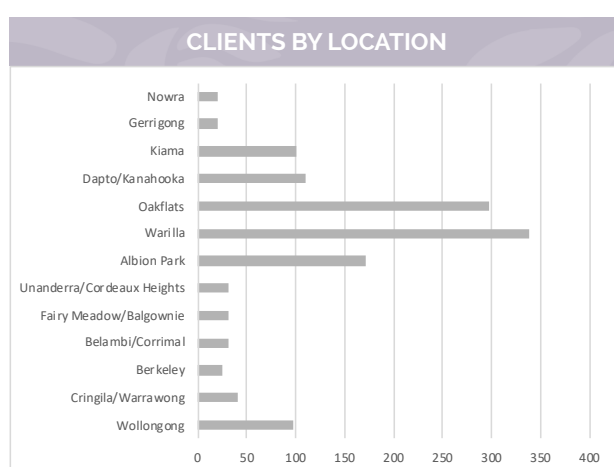


Elaine Crombie
and Aunty Lindy.



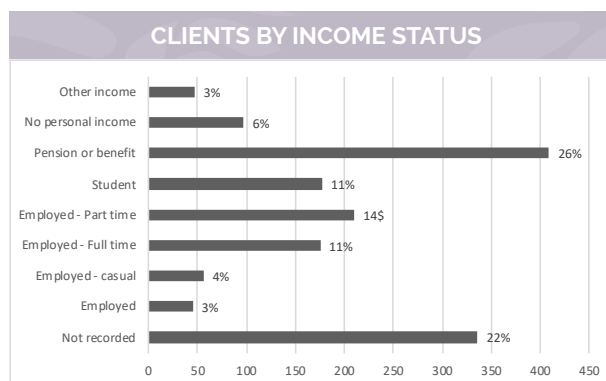
Creative Space -
natural face masks
and meditation.

Of our 1,490 individual clients, 851 were returning and 639 were new. They had contact with the Centre on average 2.5 times each. Demographic data is outlined below, though many clients choose to be selective about how much information they provide on their registration forms. For example, a significant proportion of clients chose not to record their cultural/ethnic background.



This distribution of clients across the Illawarra is shown in the above graph. The majority of our clients are from Warilla, Albion Park and Oak Fats, all of which are well below the socio-economic average according to the ABS Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage, ranking 6th, 15th and 23rd respectively out of 84 suburbs in the Illawarra. The Bureau lists Cringila, Bellambi, Koonawarra, Lake Illawarra, Warilla, Unanderra, Port Kembla and Brownsville among the most disadvantaged places in the Illawarra and we will focus our attention in 2018 on accessing more women from these suburbs, in addition to Warrawong, which is the region's most disadvantaged suburb, and the 33rd-most disadvantaged in NSW.

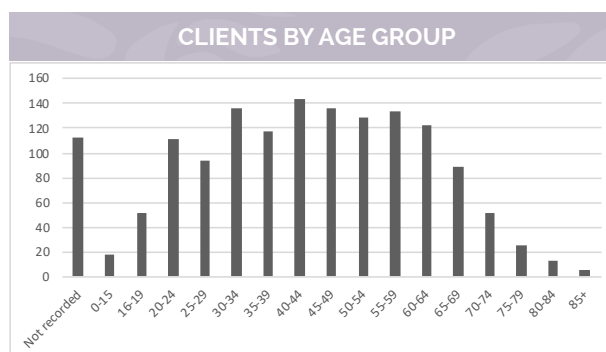
This geographical distribution of low socio-economic clients is also reflected by employment status, with 32% on a pension or benefit or with no personal income.



110 of our clients recorded having a disability.

44% of women chose not to disclose ethnicity. Of those that did, 31% identified as Australian peoples, 4% as Southern European and 3% as South Eastern European and 2% South American. There were also many other cultural and ethnic groups represented in our client numbers including Bosnian, Lebanese, Serbian, Slovak, South African, Thai, Vietnamese, Croatian, Indian, Kenyan, Maori, Nepalese, Uruguayan and Welsh. The Centre will work on accessing more clients from a refugee background in 2016-17.

The age range of clients who accessed our services was well distributed across the age groups, with 51% (752) spread evenly across in the 40-69 age group, and 26% (393) aged between 16-34 years. 36% of women were over 50, one of our key target groups.



I was initially extremely shy and as a long time stay at home mum had developed poor social skills and confidence. I found that attending the centre becoming known and greeted by staff and friends made along the way gave me strength a sense of independence and definitely more confidence.

THE BENEFITS OF ATTENDING THE CENTRE . . .

- **Being treated with dignity and respect**, felt I was listened to always.
- Amazing **holistic approach** to women's health.
- It is healing and gives a feeling of being safe for a short time.
- In what can be a male dominated culture, especially in regard to health, it is soothing to have the resources and support of IWHC.

HOW THE CENTRE HAS HELPED . . .

- Coming to see a female clinician for pap smears and breast checks makes me feel much for comfortable especially since they are much more sensitive to the situation than GP practices. Also as a mental health clinician, I have referred many female clients to the centre and they are always treated with respect and welcomed.
- My daughter and I attended the puberty workshop with Denika, it was brilliant. It was great to spend time with other Mums and the girls all seemed to get along great. It opened communication lines with my daughter and I.
- It has helped me deal with real issues in my life and I appreciate everything I learnt, staff are positive.
- It has helped me from severe depression. and at the moment I am getting relief from pain with a weekly massage as I do not like to take pain killers unless I cannot cope with the pain. ■

OUR PARTNERSHIPS



The Centre works collaboratively with other agencies to maximise the use of resources and achieve the best outcomes for the community. There are many examples of interaction between the Centre and other NGOs, government departments and health services and in 2016-17 the Centre actively networked, attended meetings and contributed to local community and regional forums, consultation committee and interagencies, including:

- The Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre and Waminda, South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation.
- Women's Health NSW, DVNSW, the Illawarra Forum, and NCOSS.
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, including the Women's Health Unit, Violence Abuse and Neglect Team and Drug and Alcohol Services.
- The Illawarra Committee Against Domestic Violence, Wollongong Women's Information Service and SAHSSI (Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra).
- Illawarra Legal Centre, Shellharbour Legal Solutions, Legal Aid and the Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service and the Illawarra Justice Partnership.
- Family Services Illawarra, Relationships Australia, Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI), Barnardos, CatholicCare, the WaterShed, Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association (SACYA) and Family Planning Australia.
- Unanderra Community Centre and Darcy House.
- Warilla, Lake Heights, Albion Park, Woonona and Dapto High Schools.
- Greenacres Disability Service, People with Disabilities Australia, and the Disability Trust.
- Illawarra Multicultural Services and Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra.
- Wollongong, Kiama and Shellharbour Councils.
- Lake Illawarra and Wollongong Local Area Commands.
- Centrelink and the Department of Human Services, and Department of Family and Community Services.
- University of Wollongong, University of Sydney, and Charles Sturt University.
- Mental Health Association NSW and the Heart Foundation.

In addition, we support local agencies by:

- Providing guest speakers and outreach opportunities.
- Attending local organisation and community agency events and celebrations such as NAIDOC and the UOW Health Expo.

The value of these partnerships and relationships in significantly extending and multiplying the impact of the Centre cannot be overestimated. It is also important to acknowledge the time and resources it takes to maintain such relationships and make them both effective and efficient. ■



At the Annual White Ribbon BBQ - General Manager Sally Stevenson, 2nd from left

FINANCIAL PARTNERS



We are funded by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and are deeply thankful for the support offered through grants and donations by the following organisations:



A special thank you to Van Badham and Melinda James, the very generous donors of raffle and auction items and all our wonderful supporters for making our annual fundraising dinner such a success.

And lastly a thank you to our local representatives Gareth Ward, Anna Watson and Stephen Jones and Sharon Bird for their unwavering support. ■



Ann Martin, Van Badham, our guest speaker, and Norma Wilson at our annual dinner.



Sharon Stewart (nurse) Anna Read (volunteer nurse) and Kim Sattler (Domestic violence project officer), happy with the support by IWD Illawarra.

I am very pleased to report we had a healthy year financially, with many highlights.

- After two years of drawing down on our reserves to improve the quality and standards of our systems and services, we made a small surplus of just under \$2,000 this year. This reflects three key points:
 - a. The ground work we put into our marketing and fundraising strategy, which we launched in 2015, is starting to bear fruit.
 - b. The hard work of the staff and the Board, in fundraising but also in providing a highly regarded professional and safe health service to women.
 - c. The value the community places on the health centre –we have had an excellent year in terms of community based grants, donations and fundraising – not least being our annual fundraising dinner.
- Whilst the surplus this year is relatively small, it is because we continued to invest in critical programs such as the young women's program and women with intellectual disabilities and domestic violence program, both of which we established and maintained with Centre funds because even though we didn't have a donor we knew they were essential to our community.

We plan to have a greater surplus this coming financial year, and build our reserves to a prudent level, allowing for flexibility, continued innovation and sensible risk management.

- Our financial statements when matched with the depth and breadth of our services and programs shows that we are **highly cost effective and an excellent investment.** ■



Enjoying our fundraising fashion parade.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2016 - 17

CONSOLIDATED



income	2017	2016
grants	569,230	532,454
medical services	105,499	91,760
donations	13,919	9,874
fundraising	29,534	22,496
Fee for service	6,355	7,330
other	4,199	1,879
membership fees	372	173
interest	2,484	3,125
total income	731,592	669,091
expenditure		
employment costs	550,508	506,485
program costs	11,660	16,449
general operating expenses	147,441	147,798
equipment, software and maintenance	20,271	18,919
total expenditure	729,880	689,651
operating surplus/deficit	1,712	(20,561)
accumulated funds brought forward	15,884	36,445
accumulated funds carried forward	17,596	15,884

Detailed financial statements are available on request.

Our feminist beliefs and this social view of health shape our approach to women's health and they underscore why our focus on marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls is so important. We are a nationally accredited community health service.

We are a feminist women's health centre. This means we understand and value women's life experiences and recognise the continued discrimination and structural inequality they face in their communities and Australian society. It also means we see an ongoing need for a gendered analysis and approach to health, empowerment of women and girls and strong advocacy for gender equity and women's rights.

We embrace a social view of health, as framed by the World Health Organisation, and reflected in Australian federal and state health policies. This view recognises health status is shaped by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Factors such as financial security, affordable housing, education, employment, disability, racism, locational disadvantage, gender inequality and discrimination based on sexual identity and preferences impact individual health outcomes and cause health inequalities.

Our feminist beliefs and this social view of health shape our approach to women's health and they underscore why our focus on marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls is so important. We are a nationally accredited community health service.

We are committed to excellence in service delivery and continuous quality improvement and learning, guided by national standards and research relevant to our field. ■



Saying No to Violence.



We are an Incorporated Association and a registered Charity with Public Benevolent Institution status. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

We are a member of Women's Health NSW, the peak body for all non-government Women's Health Centres in NSW.

We have been operating in the Illawarra for thirty years.



"I'M A FEMINIST.
I'VE BEEN A FEMALE FOR
A LONG TIME NOW.
IT'D BE STUPID NOT
TO BE ON MY OWN SIDE."

MAYA ANGELOU