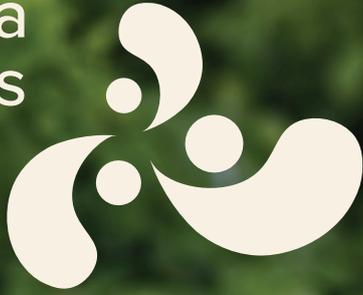


Illawarra
Women's
Health
Centre

Established 1986



Annual Report

2021 - 2022

Acknowledgement of Country

Our Centre is situated on the land of the Dharawal Nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land, where the Aboriginal people have performed age-old ceremonies of storytelling, music, dance and celebration.

We acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present, for they hold the memories, traditions and hopes of First Nations people.

We must always remember, that under the concrete and asphalt, this land is, was, and always will be, traditional Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge that we work in the context of generations of resilient, strength-based, holistic resistance to violence in First Nations communities.

We commit to actively supporting and promoting the voices of First Nations people and organisations in our work, and continuing to work on decolonising our views and actions.

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Who We Are

We are an independent community-based feminist health care centre for women only. We provide a safe place for women to access specialised and trauma informed medical, mental health, casework and wellbeing services, groups and programs. We are run by women for women and girls and are a nationally accredited organisation.

Our Vision

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

Our Purpose

We work to improve the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of women and girls and advocate for positive change for women in the community and the health system.

Our Role

We achieve our purpose by focusing on sexual and reproductive health, domestic and family violence, and mental health and wellbeing, providing:

- **Free or low-cost individual and group health care:**
 - Medical, including sexual and reproductive health services.
 - Mental health care services.
 - Domestic and family violence and sexual violence support
 - Complementary therapies, social and wellness workshops and programs.
- **A safe woman-centred space for social support, community activities and groups.**
- **Primary prevention and early intervention 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.**

All women of all ages are welcome in our Centre. We particularly support women in marginalised and vulnerable situations.

Our Values

Illawarra Women's Health Centre is guided by values grounded in feminist philosophy and the proud legacy of women's health centres. Our values are lived out in the way we understand women's experience and health needs, in our practice and action, and in the way the Centre is managed and governed.

Respect

We treat all women with care, dignity and respect.

Equity

We focus on women and girls who are at high risk or have special needs, and we stand with women in their struggle for justice, safety and equality.

Compassion

We provide a caring, non-judgemental and person-centred approach to service delivery that responds to each woman's individual circumstances.

Integrity

Honesty, transparency and trustworthiness are foundational to the professionalism of our board, staff and volunteers and our relationships with clients, other services and donors.

Diversity

We value and respect women's racial, cultural and sexual diversity and strive for excellence in being a culturally competent and inclusive service provider.

Recognition & Reconciliation

We value and recognise the heritage and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and are committed to advancing healing, reconciliation and justice for Indigenous Australians.

Our Strategic Direction

Established in 1986, we are a dynamic community-based organisation that offers woman-centred, safe, high quality health services and programs. We respond with compassion and respect to the evolving health needs of women and girls in the Illawarra and deliver best practice care based on research, evidence and the voices and experiences of women.

Despite the significant gains in accessing appropriate, quality health services made by women and girls over the last 30 years, gender inequality remains a major challenge in our society, and with it, discrimination, marginalisation and violence continues to occur to women and girls – across all aspects of our lives.

With young women experiencing mental health rates twice as high as young men, rising rates of domestic and family violence, crisis levels of violence against women with disabilities, the pervasive and increasing objectification, sexualisation and abuse of (ever younger girls) and women online, and older women being the most rapidly increasing demographic for homelessness, we are as relevant to women's wellbeing as when we began. In this context, the provision of women centred services, the presence of a safe and inclusive community and a voice that argues for equitable access to employment, housing, justice and health is critical.

That is what we do, and why we are here.

Our strategic direction for 2017-2022 focuses on three key health issues that adversely affect women: **sexual and reproductive health, domestic and family violence**, and **mental health and wellbeing**.

The outcomes we work for:

1. Women of all ages coming to the Centre:

- have choice and control in how their health needs are met at different life stages;
- can access timely, woman-centred clinical, allied and complementary health services in a safe community setting;
- feel connected, validated and strong through participation in learning, social support and wellbeing programs; and
- get timely information, advice and support – directly and through referral to other services – on issues related to housing, legal matters, financial management and access to community services.

2. Women experiencing domestic and family violence and sexual assault, get the information, guided referral and advocacy needed to ensure their safety and a specialised, holistic response to their needs.

3. Girls can access appropriate information that empowers them to make healthy life choices and helps them access safe and personal support when they need it.

4. The health and community service system in the Illawarra is more accessible, cohesive and effective for women and girls who are at risk of poor physical and mental health.

Our Achievements

As we conclude our five-year 2017-2022 strategic plan and despite the impact of COVID-19, we have met most of our goals, as outlined in the following table. Maintaining strategic focus whilst responding to the pandemic over the past two years – including the lengthy lockdown from July to October 2021 - demonstrates the alacrity, flexibility, resilience and professionalism of our staff, Management and Council of Women – a great team, working together.

As expected some of our strategies have been impacted, and achievements compromised because we were unable, to return to pre-pandemic levels of activity due to COVID-19 physical protocols. This particularly affected what we could offer in terms of community and therapeutic groups and programs.

Goals	Achievement
Strengthen current offerings	<p>Achieved with:</p> <p>Limitations on community group activities and therapeutic workshops and programs due to COVID-19 physical protocols.</p>
Develop community engagement and outreach programs	<p>Achieved with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural and cultural barriers making accessing women with disabilities a significant challenge. • No access and then very limited access to schools for our Young Women’s program due to COVID-19 restrictions.
Strengthen research, advocacy and activism	<p>Achieved with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnerships with University of Wollongong and the University of NSW. • Successful regional advocacy campaigns for: accessible and affordable abortion services in the Illawarra; a Women’s Trauma Recovery Centre; and gendered impact of COVID-19 itself and the consequences of the government response to the pandemic.
Develop the organisational capabilities to success	<p>Achieved with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened governance. • Improved funding, albeit boosted by JobKeeper payment and still reliant on one-off grants. • Workable balance of full time and part time staff, and continued investment in staff learning and development.



Sisterhood is
Blooming &
Fireside Farm
Edge County, NC

Our People

Illawarra Women's Health Centre

Board

Judy Daunt

Chairwoman

Vi Blazevska

Treasurer

Tanya Sainty

Secretary

Pavla Stupkova

Jessica Koot

Rachel Dyer

Christine Donayre

Emma Rodrigues

Visiting Practitioners

Robyn Craigie

Psychologist

Stacy Fuller

Dietitian

Staff

Miranda Batchelor

Client Support &
Community Liaison Manager

Linda Bradshaw

Massage Therapist

Laura Brooks

Senior Counsellor

Ellen Chevalier-Kidd

Assistant Receptionist
& Client Support

Katrina Dick

Case Worker

Kylie Froome

Counsellor

Isobel Georges

Young Women's
Specialist Counsellor

Rachael Humphris

Social Worker

Georgie Igoe

Young Women's
Program Coordinator

Sue Ilievski

Operations Manager

Editt Melgarejo

Women's Health
Nurse Practitioner

Kristina McLaren-Bell

Social Worker &
Telephone Counsellor

Maggie Menagh

Assistant Receptionist

Alexandra Mlodziejewski

Counsellor

Emily Okros

Counsellor
& Case Worker

Kim Sattler

Weavers Project
& Disability Support

Hayley Simpson

Business Manager

Mackenzie Simpson

Project Officer -
Women's Housing Justice

Sally Stevenson AM

Executive Director

Stella Topaz

Nurse

Trish Van Leeuwen

Business Development
& Philanthropy Officer

Therese Wolfe

Receptionist

Chairwoman & Executive Director's Report

This annual report highlights the many achievements, and some of the challenges we have faced over the last year. And what a year it was.

It was very much a year of two parts. From July to October the spread of COVID-19 resulted in a range of state policy responses such as lockdowns and Public Health Orders enforcing mandatory vaccinations, that impacted the women of the Illawarra, our Centre staff and clients, and our ability to deliver health and wellbeing services. The Centre is a place of integrity, where women are treated with respect, dignity and kindness and these values were in abundant evidence throughout the pandemic.

As predicted, during this time, it was also a devastating year for many women, as the impact of COVID-19 resulted in increasing rates of violence, mental health issues and financial insecurity.

This put enormous pressure on the Centre, noting that staff themselves experienced the stresses of COVID-19 as individuals and as women outside of work. However, the professionalism, compassion, perseverance, humour and unwavering resilience of the entire team, underpinned by the Centre's feminist foundations and active feminist philosophy, meant that we were able to remain fully operational, providing essential services to women who needed it the most.

We know we can tackle anything with this team. Working from this small patch of Dharawal land we are privileged to be on, they are truly world class.

As we continue to face challenging times, exacerbated for women by the disproportional gendered impact of crises and disasters, with the long-term impact of COVID-19, increasing cost of living pressures, the housing crisis and rolling adverse weather events because of climate change, the essential services that we provide have never been more important or more needed.

The second part of this year however was more positive, as we enjoyed successes that were the result of our hard work in the previous six months and indeed previous years. In November, we achieved accreditation meeting all national standards for a community health centre, with particular commendations for service delivery and advocacy. In March, we were thrilled to announce that \$25 million had been allocated to support the establishment and operational expenses of the Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre – following years of lobbying and advocacy, we met with the then Prime Minister's representatives, initiated and drove the national '80/80 in 2031' campaign and participated in the National Women's Safety Summit.

As is so often the case, we were sustained and uplifted by our community: our clients, union representatives, political representatives, local media and the huge number of concerned community members who all wrapped their arms around our Centre, and made sure we were able to continue providing services to those women and girls who found themselves in need of support, services or a friend. We thank you all.



Our major challenges remain sustained funding, physical space, unmet demand and recruitment of doctors. The Centre this year was funded by the NSW Ministry of Health (49%), through the NGO Health Partnerships grant program, distributed and monitored by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and an additional much needed one-off grant of \$300,000 approved by the Minister of Health, Brad Hazzard. Our financial situation is healthy, with reserves of \$215,000. Our medical practice remains financially challenging, given lack of access to doctors and the Medicare financing structure. This year we subsidised the practice by just over \$46,000.

Whilst we cannot know what 2022-23 will hold, we are ready to manage as we have for the last two years, both an unpredictable environment and the growing need for our services. As we renew our five

year strategic framework (2023-2027), our thinking will continue to be informed by the unstoppable momentum for change this year has galvanised, when we raise our collective voices in solidarity against injustice. When we shouted #EnoughisEnough.

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

Judy Daunt | Chairwoman

Sally Stevenson AM | Executive Director

2021-22 Highlights

- **Supported** 1,356 individual clients, in the difficult context of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. This translated to 3,907 occasions of service, covering 10,702 presenting issues reflecting our integrated care holistic approach to services and support, and the increasing complexity of health issues for the women who come to see us.
- **Progressed** the Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre with a number of significant milestones:
 - **Held** a futuring webinar #DFSV2031 which drove the 80/80 in 2031 campaign to raise awareness of the need to fund domestic, family and sexual violence recovery and healing services, supported by an open letter signed by community leaders across Australia.
 - **Launched** the 'A Model of Care for women experiencing trauma from domestic, family and sexual violence' Report by Dr Patricia Cullen.
 - **Received** a commitment from the Commonwealth Government of \$25 million over five years for the operational costs of a Centre, in the 2022-23 Federal Budget.
 - **Gained** our Founding Corporate partner with South32 IMC donating \$250,000.
- **Founded**, in partnership with the organisations across Australia, the National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Recovery Alliance.
- **Launched** the Illawarra Women's Housing Justice Project, to support women staying out of prison, by providing safe secure housing and wrap around casework support.
- **Launched** the Weavers Program to support women who are caring for partners of family with dementia, a peer support programs developed by the Australian Centre For Social Innovation.
- **Increased** our media presence with a continued focus on gender equity, domestic and family abuse, the adverse impact of COVID-19 virus and government policy responses on women.
- **Held** three highly successful events, connecting and supporting women across the community: a Christmas market, International Women's Day Market and our record-breaking Annual Fundraising Dinner.
- **Held**, in partnership with Women Illawarra, the Housing Trust and the Illawarra Mercury, a very successful 'Representing Women Forum', for all candidates in the Federal election, a community event to question candidates on their policy platform specifically to support women.
- **Achieved** all planned outcomes for our Disability Action Plan regarding staff training and Centre modifications, making the Centre an even more accessible and disability friendly service for women with disabilities.
- **Achieved** accreditation meeting all national community health standards, with two commendations for integrity of service provision and advocacy.

Our Work

Overview

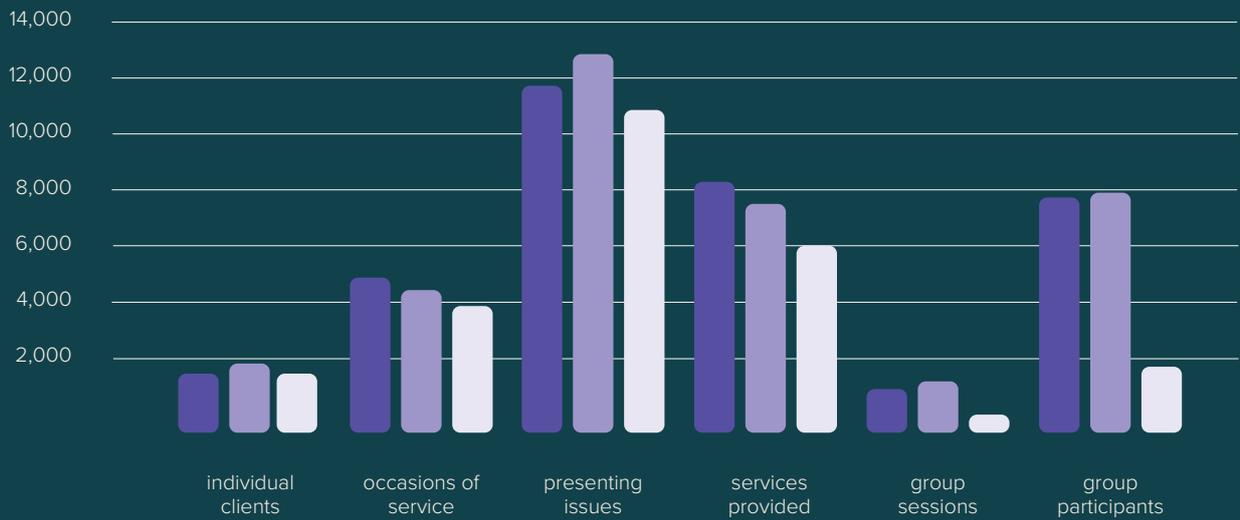
We address key health issues for women using a variety of strategies, including clinical, allied and mental health services, casework support, therapeutic programs, information workshops, financial and legal services, outreach, and community groups and events. The range and availability of these services enables us to provide continuity of care under one roof, particularly important for women who are in vulnerable and marginalised situations.

We also work through public advocacy, political engagement and community development strategies to address the social, structural, cultural and legislative determinants that undermine or prevent progress on women's health. Our strategic focus is on mental health, sexual and reproductive health and the "shadow pandemic" of our time, sexual, domestic and family violence. We receive an average of 40-50 calls a day for support and information as well as referrals from police, local refuges, GPs, private mental health providers, community service organisations, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Housing, and local health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the extended lockdown for over three months had a significant impact on the number of women seeking support from the Centre and on what services we could offer, including non-urgent sexual and reproductive care and social and community support. As an essential service we remained open throughout the pandemic, continuing to offer face to face support (as well as Telehealth and other remote support options) for women experiencing domestic and family violence, mental health issues and those needing urgent sexual and reproductive care. However, the number of individual clients decreased by 23% though occasions of service only dropped by 10% and services provided 17%, reflecting the complexity of challenges our clients face. Due to the lockdown and the ongoing physical distancing protocols, face to face group activities were suspended and then limited so these numbers dropped significantly, by 30%.

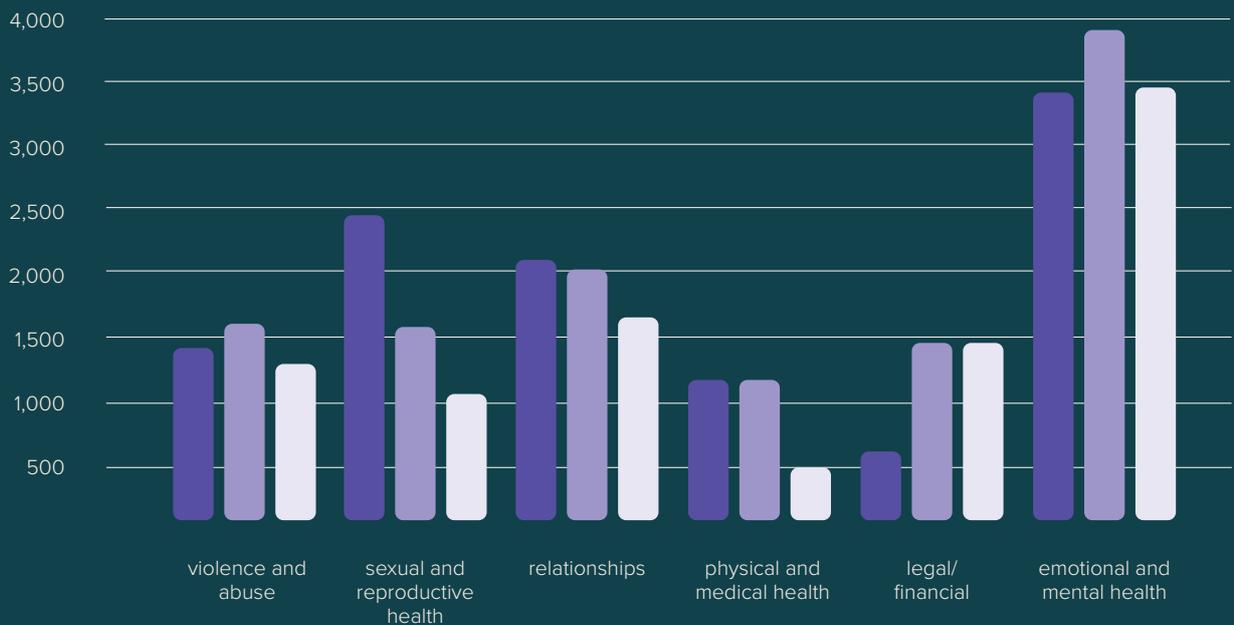
Client Activity Snapshot

● 2020 ● 2021 ● 2022

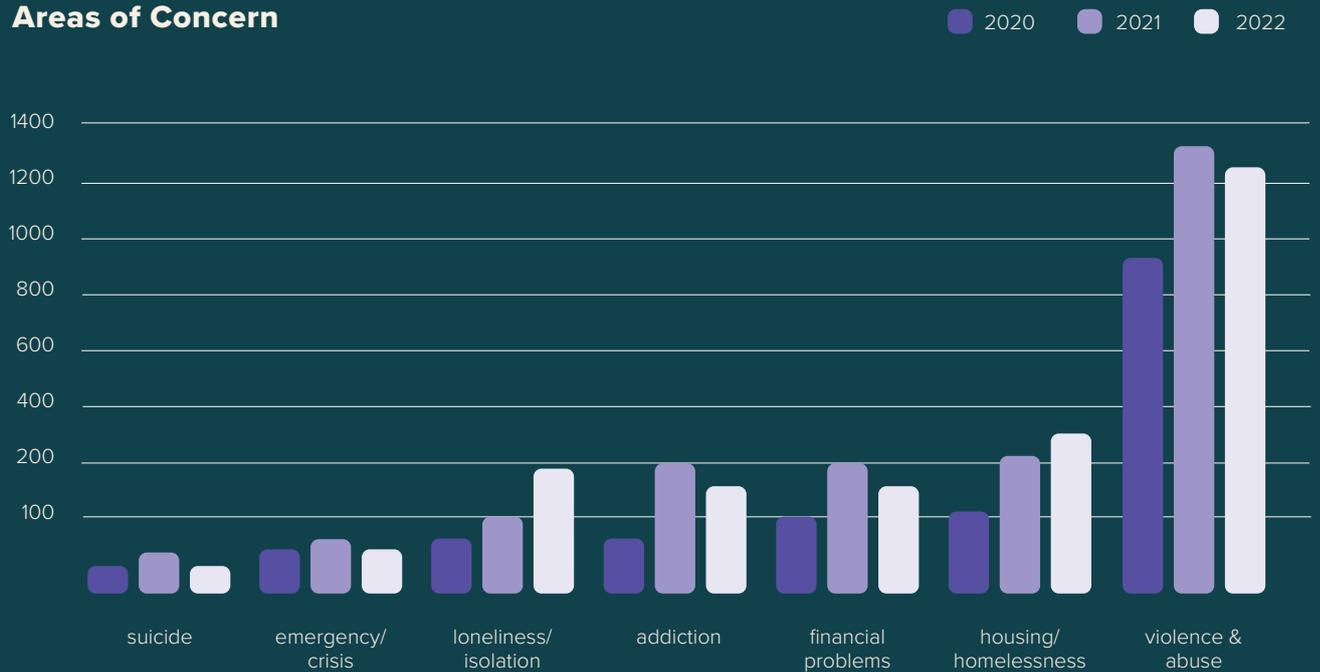


Presenting Issues

● 2020 ● 2021 ● 2022



Areas of Concern



Client Overview

16 635 Overall contacts

3 907 Individual client contacts

688 Clinic

2 548 Mental health & casework

67 Massage therapy

2 039 Group contacts

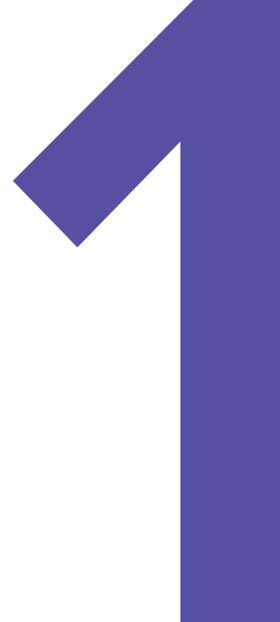
7 386 Reception, telephone and walk in contacts

402
new clients

954
returning clients

1356
total clients

Strategic Focus Areas



Mental & Social Health

Mental health increasingly dominates the disease burden for women, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and wellbeing has been substantial. The scope of this impact includes increased psychological distress and mental health presentations amongst women and young people, due to the pandemic itself and the policies and measures taken to prevent its spread, as well as the longer term social and economic consequences of the global pandemic.

COVID-19

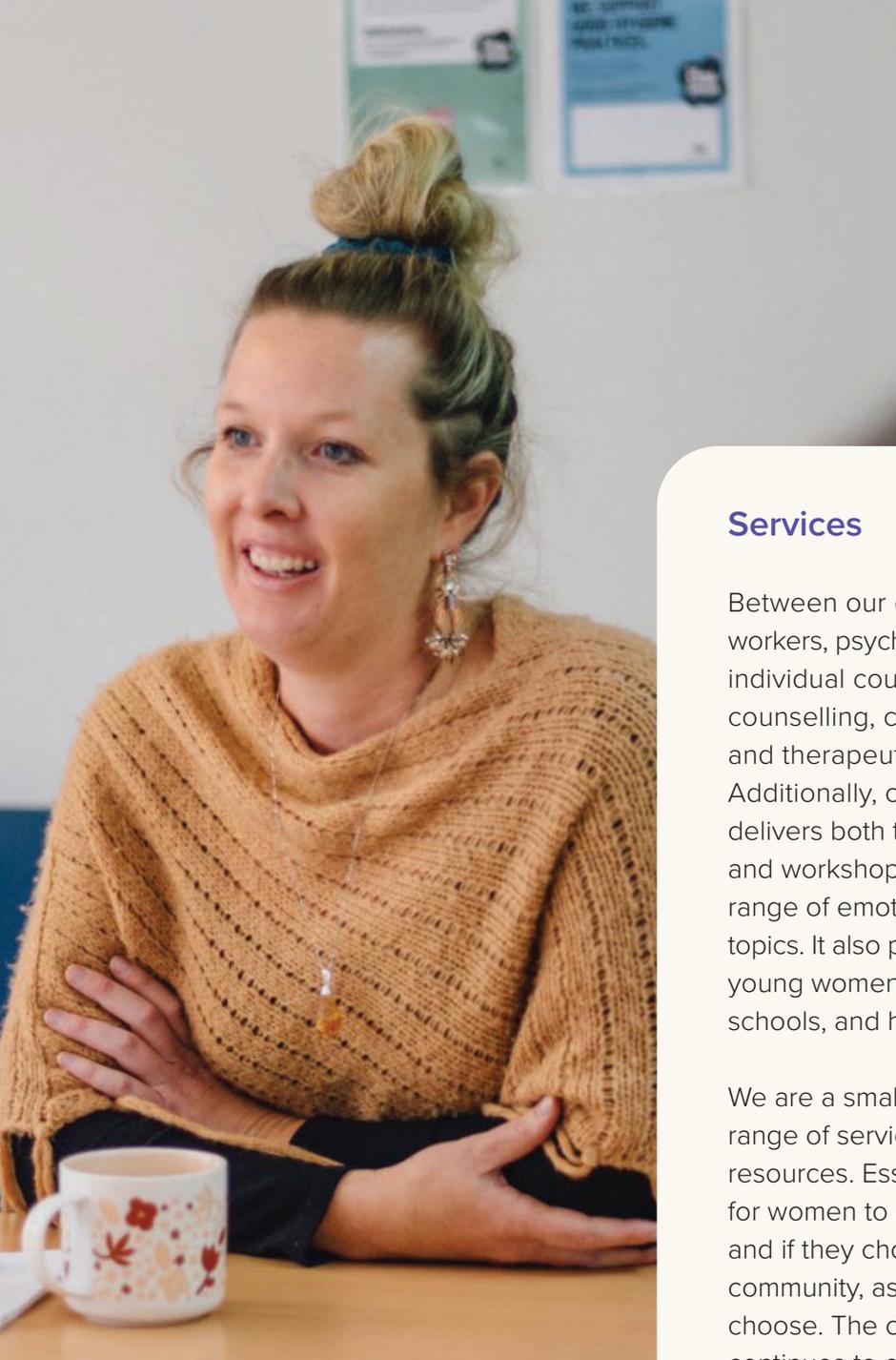
The direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our mental health and well-being services has been an increase in numbers, risk profile and complexity of our clients. Including growing crisis presentations, both during and following the COVID-19 lockdown.

The sheer demand on the services offered by our mental health team continues to be an ongoing challenge. In the second half of the year we saw the impact of the pandemic post-lockdown, with more women than ever presenting with complex mental health presentations, social isolation,

homelessness, difficulty obtaining affordable housing, increased experiences of domestic violence and abuse, including ongoing experiences of abuse, post-separation, as well as unmet medical and social needs.

One troubling aspect of the complexity in client presentation is the increasing number of women we are supporting who are no longer eligible for services that were supporting them as they have either exceeded the maximum service delivery time of these services, or are no longer eligible due to their children no longer being in their care, often due to Family Court or child protection removal. We also support growing numbers of women whose children have been removed through Family Court processes and have been placed, either with the perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse, or paternal grandparents (with the perpetrator still having ongoing access). Often the perpetrator uses family court process against clients by weaponising real or alleged mental health issues, previous trauma and/or addiction thereby preventing women from accessing their children, thus directly impacting on the mother/child attachment relationship. Our frontline staff are left frustrated and helpless at the failings of the Family Court system. We continue to look at ways in which we can advocate on these issues nationally.

Strategic Focus Area 1



Above: Laura Brooks -
Mental Health Team Leader

Services

Between our generalist counsellors, social workers, psychologists, and caseworkers we offer individual counselling at the Centre, telephone counselling, crisis support, psychoeducation, and therapeutic group work programs. Additionally, our Young Women's Program delivers both therapeutic and educational groups and workshops within local high schools on a range of emotional, health and social well-being topics. It also provides individual counselling to young women, both as an outreach model within schools, and here, at the Centre.

We are a small team, providing a significant range of services with very little funding and resources. Essentially, our Centre is a safe space for women to come and simply be themselves and if they choose, be part of a supportive community, as well as access the services they choose. The current waitlist for counselling continues to grow at an increasing rate, with the waitlist sitting at over 70 women.

Partnerships

We partner with a wide range of agencies to increase service delivery and meet gaps in service provision. This includes delivering multiple therapeutic and educational group work programs at the Centre. Looking ahead we will continue to build these partnerships so we can provide the services that women identify as needed within the local community.



Sexual & Reproductive Health

This year our support to women for their sexual and reproductive health was significantly impacted by the lockdowns and restrictions. Nonetheless we continued to provide, where possible:

- Screening and referral for cervical cancer
- Provision of a wide range of contraception options, include IUD.
- Counselling, information and management of fertility, pregnancy planning and pregnancy options to women.
- Screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment and referral for women who present for sexually transmitted infections, or other sexual and reproductive issues.
- Targeted outreach services for sexual and reproductive health, and breast awareness information and community education to vulnerable populations.
- Provision of a comprehensive program to treat urinary incontinence.
- Provision of group-based workshops or programs on menopause, continence, nutrition and stressmanagement.

Our medical team consisted of a specialised Women's Health Nurse Practitioner (4 days per week), a Practice Nurse (2 days per week).

Unfortunately we were unable to provide medical terminations of pregnancy this year, due to a lack of doctors - although we are receiving numbers of requests from women seeking support regarding abortions. Abortion is critical to reproductive justice, and a human right and we continue to advocate at all levels, from the Local Health District to the Commonwealth Government that women must have timely safe confidential non-judgemental and free access this standard medical procedure. It is a travesty of the health system and our society that this life changing procedure is not available to women when they need it.



Sexual, Domestic & Family Violence

The mental and physical health consequences of domestic and family violence and abuse are significant, long lasting, and evidence based - impacting women, children, future generations, our community, Government services, and our economy. At a population level, evidence shows the impact includes increased rates of heart disease, cervical cancer, brain injury, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidality.

The complexity of domestic and family abuse demands integrated, high quality, flexible and safe services and referral pathways. We have 36 years of experience in addressing the impacts of domestic and family abuse and provide wrap around support services that address the multiple physical, psychological, economic and social needs of women. This includes, medical assessment, safety planning and casework, trauma counselling, priority access to doctor and nurse consultations and a range of therapeutic, educational and support programs.

Overall, domestic and family violence rates increased there was also an increase in first-time reporting and new forms of violence, which included tactics to achieve social isolation and forms of violence specifically relating to the threat and risk of COVID-19 infection. As we did, service providers across Australia reported seeing increased complexity in client presentations, with victim survivors needing higher levels of psychosocial support. This included a loss of control due to the public health directions and stress from managing work, schooling and childcare responsibilities was often devastating.

The Impact of COVID-19

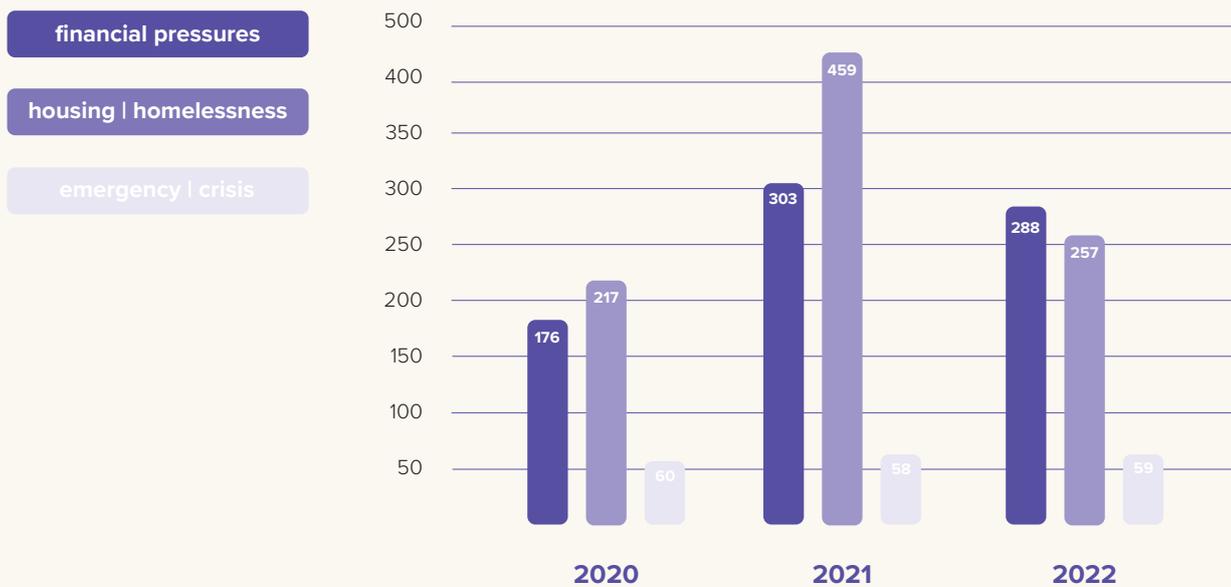
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The Impact

As illustrated by the graph below, financial and housing are significant stressors for women experiencing domestic and family violence.

Presenting Issues Related To Domestic And Family Violence



After significant advocacy we were able to secure additional resources to respond to the immediate demands on the Centre, with the NSW Ministry of Health providing an one-off grant of \$300,000 and Médecins sans Frontiers funding a part-time Counsellor, which supplemented the JobKeeper funds we received. We now need to ensure that this additional funding is followed by sustained and appropriate resourcing otherwise, the twin risks of burnout and vicarious trauma for staff will be realised. As well, the damage of unmet support for women experiencing domestic and family violence will have predictable and disastrous long-term consequences for our clients, staff and community.

In addition to providing individual support, we deliver the following unique programs:

Women With Disabilities and Domestic and Family Violence Program

Around 90% of women with disabilities experience domestic, family and sexual violence, often with multiple experiences and multiple perpetrators. We are the only service in the Illawarra to provide specialised and dedicated support to these women. We work in partnership with a wide range of disability service providers to provide individualised support and advocacy and deliver appropriate domestic and family violence and healthy relationships training to women and men. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding, this program could only operate one day a week this year.

Mothers & Sons Program

Developed as an early intervention program and run over six weekly sessions, this program supports the mother and son relationship through new skills, techniques and strategies that foster the development of boys into respectful young men. Designed and implemented by a female social worker and a male clinical psychologist, community interest in this program has been overwhelming. This year the program has received significant private funding from Daniele Dobson, who is very generously donating 10% of global sales of her ground-breaking book *Breaking the Gender Code* to support the program.

...'a little bird told...'

This awareness campaign is designed to reach out to women who may be experiencing violence and control in their relationships - but don't know 'where to seek help in the Illawarra. We distribute a little bird told me' cards with our contact details, places that are primarily used by women, such as

hairdressing salons and women's gyms. Women can keep these cards discreetly in their purses, handbags, or at home. Research shows that 2 out of 5 women who experience domestic and family violence do not know where to seek help.

Safe and Together Institute

One of the most significant partnerships to us is the Centre's partnership agreement with the Safe and Together Institute. We are completing the Train the Trainer Certification Program, which will allow us to train both internal and external service providers in the Safe and Together model. This model fills the gaps in knowledge and practice. It assists all systems touching on domestic and family violence and child well-being to become domestic and family violence informed. It supports women's and children's safety across all partners in the domestic and family violence community. The implementation of the model throughout the Centre will ensure we continue to provide health and well-being services from a violence-informed position, and it will allow us to advocate, train and work with external agencies so we continue to help build a community of domestic and family violence-informed services and practitioners in the Illawarra. Our advocacy work regarding the Family Law Court system will be considerably enhanced: the model is to be rolled-out throughout the Family Law Court nationally.



More information on the 'Safe & Together' model can be found here:

Special Projects

The Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre

**Supporting healing.
Rebuilding lives.**

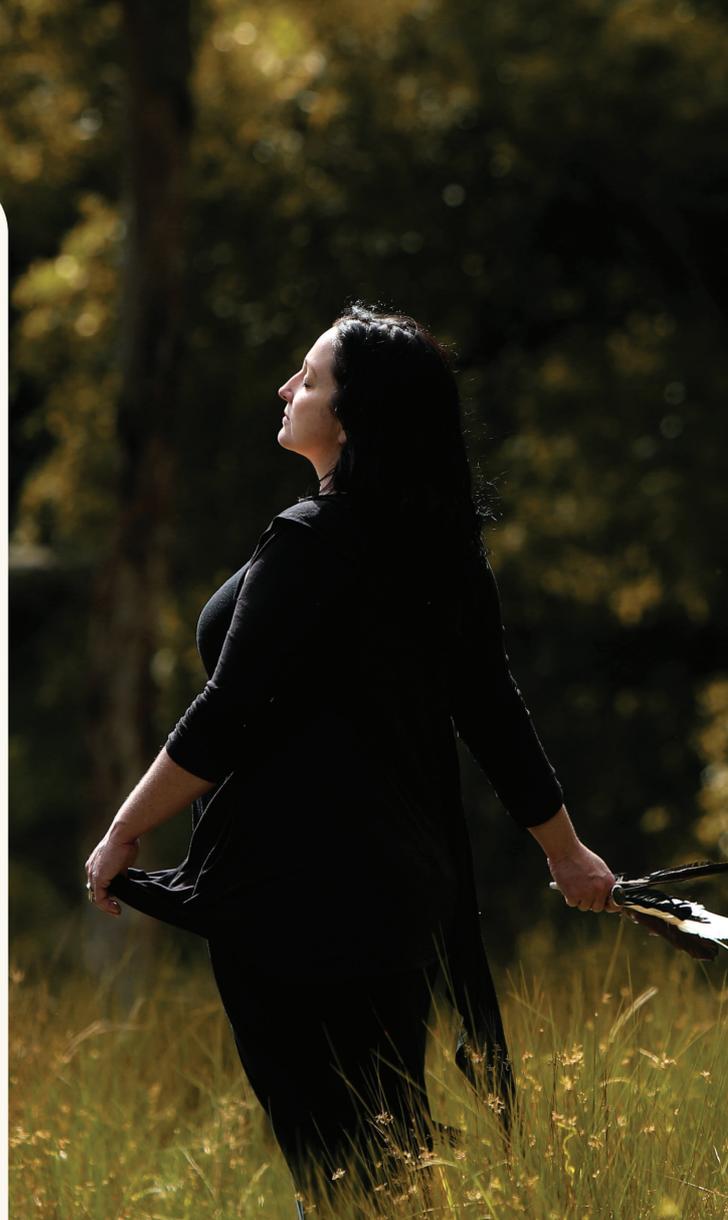
This year we have made exciting progress in the establishing an Australian first – a Women's Trauma Recovery Centre.

Research shows that left untreated, the traumatic consequences of domestic and family violence can have lifelong physical and mental health consequences, including increased rates of acquired brain injury, heart disease, diabetes and chronic pain. Beyond physical injury, women who have experienced domestic and family violence have increased mental health problems including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress and substance use, and are over-represented in prison.

It also has a devastating impact on the development and wellbeing of children.

Domestic and family violence is a complex issue.

Whilst there are primary prevention programs and crisis intervention services, there is increasing recognition of the need for the domestic and family violence response, and support services to go beyond this and address the long term impact of trauma, particularly in terms of the emotional and psychosocial needs of women and their families.



There is nowhere in the public health system, or across the community service sector, where women can access integrated, comprehensive long-term support to recover from the health impact of complex trauma.

In response, we are working to establish a Women's Trauma Recovery Centre.

This specialised Centre will offer a whole-of-organisation trauma and violence sensitive approach that enables recovery from domestic and family violence trauma and helps to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. A range of holistic, and free, health, legal and psychosocial services will be provided.

Highlights

1. Successful advocacy activities and outcomes such as

- Delivering the 'Futuring' #DFSV2031 webinar in partnership with Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Médecins sans Frontières, Women Illawarra, the Accountability Matters project and the University of Sydney. With over 300 participants we led the development of a vision, 'of hope and a call to action' to influence the 2023-2035 National Plan to Eliminate Violence against Women and Children.
- Invited to be one of 300 participants across Australia in the 2022 National Women's Safety Summit.
- Invited to speak at conferences including the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation and There's No Place Like Home, an award-winning *FutureWomen* podcast putting survivors of family violence at the centre of the story.

2. Submitted the Business Case for the Centre to the NSW and Federal Governments.

3. Federal budget commitment of \$25 million over five years to operate the Centre due to its 'national significance and in light of its potential for impact on a broader scale'.

4. Convened the Women's Trauma Recovery Centre Establishment Team, in a rapid response to the Federal funding announcement.

Read our Business Case for the Illawarra Women's Recovery Centre:



"It was incredible to sit down with the contributors, advisors, and consultants and move forward after a three-year campaign. We want everybody to see we have the right people. We've got legal advice, architectural co-design advice, our research and evidence frameworks and an ethics plan. We have a really clear vision, a set of underlying guiding principles, and we have a very clear picture of next steps." **Judy Daunt** | Chairwoman

5. South32 Illawarra Metallurgical Coal were announced as the Founding Corporate Partner, donating \$250,000 to support the establishment of Australia's first Women's Trauma Recovery Centre. This generous funding has enabled the employment of the first staff, the development of our marketing and communications material and community engagement activities to develop further services and resources to establish the Centre.

6. Lived experience advocate and campaign champion Melissa Edwards presented her story on stage her story saying, "I cannot stress enough how much of a difference having access to this centre would have made on my mental and physical health, my children's and my sense of safety and our ability to get our lives back on track faster."

Key Partners

- Waples Marketing Group
- Violet Co Legal & Consulting
- The Illawarra Mercury
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- University of Wollongong
- University of NSW
- Domestic Violence NSW

Young Women's Program

Our Young Women's Program is evidence based and uses innovative tools which seek to empower young women to cultivate healthy relationships with their bodies, identities, and relationships. We build resilience in young women by providing the skills and knowledge to better understand and develop protective behaviours across the domains of domestic, family, and sexual violence, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health.

This year we faced a revolving door of lockdowns and restrictions in place due to COVID-19, requiring us to be more creative, adaptive, and responsive than ever in our commitment to supporting young women in the Illawarra. During the tightest of COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to operate face-to-face for our in-school and one-on-one counselling activities. The feedback we were receiving from young women during this time was that they were feeling isolated, fatigued and unmotivated with online education.

In response, we continued to provide phone and video counselling support as well as transitioning some of our program activities to an online setting. For example, we were able to continue to deliver sessions in the Accelerate Her Program, through our partnership with Multicultural Community Councils of the Illawarra. This program supports the health and well-being of young women from culturally diverse backgrounds in the Illawarra, and aims to promote resilience and respect for self and community.

Due to our strong partnerships and relationships with school communities, we were able to transition back into educational settings in Term 4 2021. However, the landscape had weathered big storms. Fatigue and anxiety were rife and well-being and support services were in great need. Educational settings recognised the value of our service and its positive impact on the well-being of young women in schools. Specifically, we showed how to create safe and respectful

places for young women to explore their worlds and to express their needs, hopes and fears about the world around them. The fears that young people are facing are robust; Headspace reports a staggering 50% of young people reported that COVID-19 had an impact on their confidence to achieve future goals and 74% of young people reported their mental health has worsened since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Through the Young Women's Program, in addition to providing a specialised and therapeutic place to explore their feelings, we remain committed to amplifying young women's voices politically and socially, so they can have experiences in the world that are just and empowering.

One of the successful ways we responded to this need was supporting the establishment of The Young People's Action Alliance. Founding member Max Fraser and the Young Women's Program partnered with Wollongong Youth Services to support young women and non-binary people 16-19, to come together and explore issues that are important to them, and support their advocacy around these issues, thus amplifying youth voices in the Illawarra. The Young People's Action Alliance demonstrates the power of youth organising around issues affecting them. As most participants came through the in-school program we facilitate across the Illawarra, it is also evidence of how the in-school program can be expanded in the community to support the amplification of youth voices.



Weavers Program

The Weaver Program, developed by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) is a peer-to-peer carers support model that we have been funded to deliver by Coordinaire Primary Health Network.

Weavers connects people who are caring for a loved one with someone who has lived experience of being a carer. ‘Weavers has been co-designed with carers in Australia, which means we listened to the voices of carers and worked with them to design a program that actually works for them,’ says Barbara Binns, the Weavers Implementation Lead. ‘That includes the areas that support needs to focus on, how carers support happens and what outcomes carers want to see.’ Carers receive personalised and flexible 1-to-1 peer support from someone who has been a carer.

We have developed a specialised version of the program, in response to experiences of women at the Centre, training a cohort of Weaver mentors who have lived experience of caring for a person with dementia. This group is then matched to those who are currently caring for a person with dementia. Starting in 2022, we have matched four Weavers and Carers. Carers have provided very positive feedback about how supported they feel and how having someone who isn’t a family member, or a paid professional, allows a level of honesty and genuine listening which they really appreciate.

A key aspect of support is navigating the opaque, complex and often overwhelming aged care system, and as part of our role, we advocate strongly on behalf of early onset dementia clients who have to engage with the NDIS system. This has been such a successful model to implement that we have secured a second year of funding.

Illawarra Women's Housing Justice Project

In partnership with The Housing Trust, Women Illawarra and Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP) we established the Illawarra Women's Housing Justice Project this year.

Imprisonment carries with it significant social and economic costs, both short and long term. These costs are borne not just by imprisoned populations, but also by their children, families and communities as well as government and society. While women are a small minority of the total prison population, there has been an alarming increase in their numbers over the last decade in NSW, particularly of Indigenous women. The incarceration of Indigenous women has been growing at a faster rate than any other demographic.

Between 2013 and 2019 there was a 33% increase in the number of women in prison, 32% were Indigenous and 58% were either on remand or serving short sentences of 12 months or less. Many were misidentified as the primary aggressor in domestic and family violence.

Our project offers women a pathway out of the criminal justice system by providing them with safe, secure accommodation and holistic, trauma-informed therapeutic support. The Illawarra has one of the highest numbers of women exiting custody in NSW, with Indigenous women making up 45% of this cohort. In 2019 in NSW, 900 out of the 2760 women exiting custody were released into homelessness and unstable accommodation. By targeting the social determinants of their offending and providing them with stable accommodation, we hope to provide an alternative to the recidivist cycle that many female offenders find themselves in.

In February 2022, four units rent free for two years, were donated to this project. Since then, in addition to establishing the operational partnership, we have facilitated and coordinated a broader collaboration of community service providers to make the project a success.

Government has refused to support the project despite the strong evidence base that demonstrates the cost effectiveness of keeping women out of prison (one woman in prison for one year costs approximately \$100,000 in direct costs). Each partner has drawn upon its core funding, and we have sought donations to establish and manage the project. We have received support from community members, Wollongong City Council, Harvey Norman, and Koala Mattresses.

We expect to support 6 - 10 women in the coming year to secure long-term housing, establish a connection to the community and improve their health and well-being. Where possible we will also support the restoration of children to their mothers. We trust that our evaluation framework will demonstrate the efficacy and cost effectiveness of this community based response to an awful social problem.

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Warrara
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cially opened by
L. Newman AC Chairman
Broadcasting Corporation
24 February 2011



Community

Our Centre is a women's-only, safe space where women can come to if they are looking for social connection, need respite, are wanting information, support and referral for a specific issue or in an emergency. We are proud to have made this space a warm, welcoming and inviting place that women feel comfortable to attend for any reason. Whether it be our 'boutique' to check out the free clothing available to everyone, to join a community group or to speak with one of our friendly staff members—this is truly a wraparound service that makes a difference in women's lives.

The financial year of 2021-2022 started with our longest lockdown yet. If this past year had a theme for our community engagement work, it would be 'creative and innovative'. In the second year of this pandemic, a great many women were feeling the impacts from isolation and loneliness. Throughout lockdowns and restrictions, we worked hard to maintain connection with our clients and stakeholders, including recruiting a team of volunteers making social support phone call 'check-ins' to potentially isolated women.

We are grateful to all of our community group facilitators who generously offer free or low-cost social activities to bring women together for health and wellbeing, building relationships and enabling women to learn new skills to increase their feelings of confidence and community connection.

We would like to make a special mention of our head volunteer Terry Selby. Terry comes into the Centre nearly every day and works hard to ensure the Centre is a welcoming, tidy and harmonious space for all women. Terry will frequently greet new women coming into the Centre, showing them around the space and finding a staff member to introduce them too. Terry also maintains our clothing room - without her that much appreciated and utilised space wouldn't exist. And lastly, Terry has transformed

the outdoor space into one of tranquillity and beauty which staff and clients are grateful for.

Highlights

- Implementation of online social support groups to maintain connection during lockdown, a number in partnership with other women's health centres across NSW.
- Friday Outdoor Morning Teas to maintain social connection and support
- Outdoor Market for International Women's Day held at Shellharbour Civic Centre was a great success with over 160 women in attendance. The event included stall holders of local women selling handmade items that included macrame, crafts, art, flowers, plants, jewellery, clothing and food, along with interactive activities run by staff and a delicious grazing platter; everyone who came had a wonderful time!
- Reconciliation Week Morning Tea with 30 women in attendance with Aunty Lorraine Brown giving the Welcome to Country. We were privileged to listen to Aunty Lindy Lawler talk about a painting she donated to the Centre for the Annual Fundraising Dinner.

Anti-Racism work

We are committed to learning how colonisation, racism, white privilege and bias is embedded in our work practice, our workplace, and in the institutions and systems we work in and with. We are using a combination of reflective practice and continuous learning to inform our actions, to actively decolonise, challenge and dismantle racism in our work and workplace. We notice how this work can also change how we are in our communities and activities outside of work.

‘Cultural Immersions, Decolonisation and White Privilege’

In March, Waminda South Coast Women’s Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation facilitated a full day workshop for all staff and Council of Women members at the Centre. This included an overview of First Nations histories and culture, and activism that started from invasion and the frontier wars to the current day. We heard of the effects of systemic abuses including genocide, displacement, removal of children, loss of land, enslavement and incarceration, which continue today. We were encouraged to explore our own heritage, education, our bias and gaps in knowledge, and to consider the effects of white supremacy and white privilege on all of us, but particularly for First Nations people and communities. We listened to stories from the lived experience of the facilitators, as Aboriginal women in the Illawarra.

From this workshop we are more alert to the role of allies, and how to better discern allyship from repeating colonising behaviours. This includes monitoring how we approach partnership work and community activities, and how we run our Anti-Racism meetings for staff.

We notice a tendency to move to ‘solutions’ or ‘problem solving’ as familiar and comfortable modes, potentially bypassing self-reflection or

sitting with discomfort. Leaning in to reflection, and slowing down in these meetings opens up willingness to examine long-held patterns of ‘doing’ and how these are not always helpful. Prioritising action can come from a position of privilege for those of us who are white, no matter how good our intentions are.

We increasingly assist each other in these meetings to prioritise reflections, sharing, and questions, before moving onto planning actions or activities. ‘What do we need to learn? Who do we need to listen to? What assumptions or bias may underpin this?’

In tandem to the meetings, several staff members are taking the lead in compiling regular lists to circulate to all staff, with First Nations activities and resources such as links to books, events, campaigns, films, documentaries, articles, music and art. Fifteen of these lists have been circulated to staff over this year, and more recently, some of these items are being shared on our website, under the titles of Read and Listen, Watch and Explore, and Learn and Act.

We are experiencing the sensitivity and gravity of anti-racism work while finding enjoyment and enrichment in the process. Long-term commitment and accountability are essential for personal, organisational and systemic change, and as staff we are in for this.

Groups



**Music Notation,
Ukulele & Musical Moments**



**Alcoholics
Anonymous**



**Mothers &
Daughters**



**Tai Chi, Yoga, Qigong &
Crystal Bowls Meditation**



Walking Club



Aromatherapy



Gardening Club



**African Drumming,
Belly Dancing & Singing**



**Carers Support Group &
Empowered Together**



**Technology Lessons
For Older Women**



**Craft & Playing
With Colour**

Our local community networks include:

- The Illawarra Committee Against Domestic Violence
- Prevention of Older Persons Abuse Committee
- The Illawarra Interagency
- Sexual Assault Interagency Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group

Advocacy



Advocacy



Each year we see growing numbers of women who seek support for health, reproductive, legal or housing justice. We cannot stand by while women continue to suffer and governments do not invest anywhere near enough resources to address women's health at the primary, secondary or tertiary levels. We provide excellent services and support, but it is not enough. Change must happen and we must demand that it does. And this year we have done exactly that. These are examples of some of our work.

Abortion 'practically out of reach' for many South Coast women

The responsibility of men to stop violence

80/80 in 2031 - A vision of hope & expectation

Single mothers - why mums need compassion not criticism

Warilla Education & Care Service

Managed by ECTARC Early Childhood Education Services and Training

Once again, we have operated in the rapidly changing context of a pandemic and all the challenges that brings. Whilst the community was in lockdown, Warilla Education and Care Service remained open and continued to be a mainstay for families and their children.

The new variants of COVID-19 from July 2021 and January 2022 significantly impacted enrolments and attendance of children at the service. The Federal Government introduced amendments to Child Care Subsidy legislation to enable service providers to waive the gap fee for families who during lockdown chose to keep their children at home or were following public health orders and isolating. Whilst we welcomed the decision from the Government to ease the financial burden on families as to retain their continued enrolment in a service, it did contribute significantly to the budget deficit of the service.

Since the NSW Government aligned the State legislation with the National Law and Regulation for education and care services, our Occasional Care Services will be assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard. To support this transition, the Warilla team is participating in a sector development program with the NSW Regulatory Authority. Educators have grown in confidence and look forward to an Assessment and Rating visit in 2023.

Supported by the Positive Partnerships Project, educators continue to provide quality education and care to children, providing opportunities for them to flourish in a safe and secure environment. Educators continue to build trusting and positive relationships with children by implementing the Circle of Security and the DIRN Approach – Development, Individual, Relational base program. Both programs better support the child's positive behaviour, social and emotional learning, enabling them to engage productively in activities, grow in confidence, develop resilience and thrive.

These challenging times have increased family's complex needs and isolation. Together with the Director, the Child and Family Practitioner and Key Workers (Occupational Therapist and Psychologist) ongoing support has been provided for families. There have been regular exchanges of information with families as sometimes the staff at the service were the only contact outside the home. Families were supported to access referral pathways where needed.

Programs planned for children are underpinned by our knowledge of the importance of the first 2000 days of a child life where 90% of their brain development occurs. Enhanced by the centre's participation in the Enriching Language through Practice and Sing and Grow Project, educators provide a language enriched curriculum for children fostering social competence, emotional maturity, language, communication and cognitive skills – all essential for children's successful learning.

We acknowledge the commitment, agility and resilience of the team who have done an amazing job in this everchanging landscape.



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Volcanoes

Our Partners & Supporters

Operational Partnerships

Our Centre works closely with other organisations, services and agencies to maximise the use of resources and achieve the best outcomes for our clients and the community. In 2021-22 the Centre actively partnered, networked and collaborated with the following services and organisations:

- The Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre and Waminda, South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation
- DVNSW and the Illawarra Community Industry Group
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- The Illawarra Committee Against Domestic Violence, Wollongong Women's Information Centre and SAHSSI (Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra)
- Illawarra Legal Centre, Shellharbour Legal Solutions, Legal Aid NSW and the Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service and Illawarra Prevention of Older Person's Abuse Interagency
- Healthy Cities Illawarra, Relationships Australia, Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI), Barnardos, Salvation Army and Mission Australia
- Five Islands College, Warilla High School, Lake Illawarra High School, Dapto High School, Woonona High School, Warrawong High School, Oak Flats High School, Albion Park High School, Koonawarra High School and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Education Support Network
- Brain Injury Australia
- Waples Marketing Group
- Greenacres Disability Service, People with Disabilities Australia and the Disability Trust
- Illawarra Multicultural Services, the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra and the COMPACT Alliance
- Wollongong, Kiama and Shellharbour City Councils
- NSW Police - Lake Illawarra and Wollongong Local Area Commands
- Centrelink and the Department of Human Services, and NSW Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Victims Services and the Office of E-Safety Commissioner
- Illawarra Women in Business and Illawarra Committee for International Women's Day
- The University of Wollongong, University of New South Wales and University of Newcastle
- Australian Services Union and the South Coast Labour Council

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.

Last but not least, a thank you to our local representatives Anna Watson and Stephen Jones for their unwavering support.

Financial Supporters

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



A thank you to our local supporters donors and fundraisers who continue to provide whatever support they can, however large or small to the Centre.

Our Finances

Treasurer's Report

While 2021-2022 continued to be marked with challenges presented by the pandemic, from a finance perspective, the year was a healthy one, due to our strong focus on compliance, policy and procedure, and high quality advocacy which secured additional funds from the Government, the private sector and the non-government sector.

In particular, the JobKeeper income stream was critical, and we have been able to use this to maintain employment of our additional domestic and family violence caseworker, a vital position.

We had a small deficit for the year of \$7,369 and we remain in a strong financial position, confident we can continue offering our core in the coming years, and can meet all our financial responsibilities when they fall due, with reserves of \$215 207, representing 18.5% of income.

In July 2021, we submitted a comprehensive Business Case and research report for the Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre to Women NSW. This work was funded by a Ministry of Health grant for \$50,000 and was informed by broad community, victim survivor and sector expert engagement. Operational funding for the Women's Trauma Recovery Centre was committed in the 2022-23 Federal Budget for \$25 million over five years – an incredible success.

We acknowledge the NSW Ministry of Health and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District - for our core recurrent funding, and Minister of Health and Medical Research Brad Hazzard for a once off funding boost of \$200,000 to enable us to maintain current staffing levels. We thank South 32 for their \$250,000 donation as Founding Corporate Partner of the Women's Trauma Recovery Centre and Anna Watson MP for her relentless advocacy for additional, critical resources for the Centre. These resources together, ensure we deliver the highest quality services to women in our local community.

The annual financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards. I would like to thank our auditors Waldie & Co for their professionalism and support during the audit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council of Women, our Executive Director Sally Stevenson and all the staff who have been working tirelessly to keep supporting all the women in our community who are facing challenges in their lives. I feel very confident and excited about our Centre and our future.

Vi Blazevska | Treasurer

Key Financial Data

Income	1 160 885
Expenditure	1 168 708
Surplus	(7,823)
Members Equity	117 895 (18.5% of income)

Profit & Loss Statement

Finances

Income	2022	2021
Grants	820 700	713 778
Medical & Therapeutic Services	14 854	37 483
Donations	62 315	53 863
Fundraising	42 485	42 436
Fee For Service	14 180	20 277
Other	102 011	59 260
Membership Fees	50	32
Interest	417	887
COVID-19 Government Support	103 873	199 120
Total Income	1160 885	1 127 136

Expenditure	2021	2021
Human Resources	973 873	794 658
Program Costs & Client Support	28 464	4 925
General Operating Expenses	108 698	201 672
Equipment, Software & Maintenance	57 678	27 754
Total Expenditure	1 168 885	1 022 004

	2021	2021
Operating Surplus/Deficit	7 822	105 134
Accumulated Funds Brought Forward	223 030	117 896
Accumulated Funds Carried Forward	215 207	223 030

Balance Sheet

June 2022

Current Assets	2022	2021
Cash And Cash Equivalent	787 060	557 139
Trade And Other Receivables	6 126	4 747
Other Current Assets	10 764	2 500
Total Current Assets	803 950	564 386
Non Current Assets	2022	2021
Property, Plant And Equipment	30 910	40 753
Total Non-Current Assets	30 910	40 753
Total Assets	834 860	605 139
Current Liabilities	2022	2021
Trade And Other Payables	6 441	35 650
Short Term Provisions	160 157	125 454
Other Current Liabilities	425 839	194 108
Total Current Liabilities	592 437	355 212
Non-Current Liabilities	2022	2021
Total Non-Current Liabilities	27 217	25 947
Total Liabilities	619 654	381 159
Net Assets	2022	2021
Net Assets	215 207	223 980
Equity	2022	2021
Current Year Earnings	7 823	105 134
Retained Earnings		117 896
Total Equity	215 207	223 980

Illawarra Women's Health Centre

Established 1986



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 we face in our communities and Australian society. It also means we see an ongoing need for a gendered analysis and approach to health, the 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. 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 social view of health shape our approach to women's health and underscore why our focus on women and girls in marginalised and disadvantaged circumstances is so important.

We are a nationally accredited community health centre and are committed to excellence in service delivery and continuous quality improvement and learning, guided by national standards and research relevant to our field.





Illawarra Women's Health Centre

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 www.womenshealthcentre.com.au

 info@womenshealthcentre.com.au

 **Open Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm**