

A photograph of three women smiling and looking down together. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a light-colored top. The woman in the middle has dark hair and is wearing an orange top. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue floral patterned top. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# Women's Liberation Halfway House

Refuge for women with and without children  
escaping family violence

**2018- 2019**

## ANNUAL REPORT

WE ARE MORE  
POWERFUL WHEN  
WE EMPOWER  
EACH OTHER



We are pleased to present the Women's Liberation Halfway House's performance over the 2018-2019 financial year.

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# Our principles

Women's Liberation Halfway House is a feminist organisation that emphasises consistency between its values and practice and is informed by a structural understanding of women's disadvantage.

- Self-determination
- Respect & dignity
- Best practice
- Access & Equity
- Holistic approach
- Flexibility
- Community obligations

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## OUR VISION

Our vision is a community free from family violence in which women and men have the same power and freedom to realise their life choices and potential.

## OUR MISSION

Provide a holistic crisis response to women and children experiencing family violence who have least resources, and to effectively support them in their transition and recovery.

Ensure the experiences and voices of women and children are heard and recognised in policy and service system design.



# Our Refuge Our History

Women's Liberation Halfway House (WLHH) was the first women's refuge in Victoria and one of the first in Australia. We have a long and proud history of working together with women to provide safety and support to all women and their children. We began in 1974, when a group of women formed the Women's Liberation Halfway House (WLHH) in Victoria to provide support and accommodation for women and accompanying children fleeing from what was then called Domestic Violence.

The intent of establishing WLHH was more than providing a safe house for women and children experiencing Domestic Violence – it was to make political statements regarding the status of women and children in society during that time. 2003 saw the start of several changes to our Collective framework model, and we appointed a Co-ordinator. By 2006 further changes occurred with the development of a new Constitution. This saw the creation of a Manager position and a Committee of Management.

In 2010 the Constitution was again amended to change the governance model to a Board of Management. WLHH is now governed by a Board of Management comprised of volunteers from the broader community. The Board of Management solely consists of women, all from different professional backgrounds and skills. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring WLHH maintains its tradition of strong independent governance. WLHH is committed to empowering all women by respecting the right of the individual to make her own choices and feel valued.

# OUR PEOPLE

## BOARD

		meetings attended	
Donna	Chair	10/10	
Anna	Deputy Chair	9/10	
Chelsea	Treasurer	8/10	
Diane	Member	*4/10	*leave of absence Mar 19 - Jun 19
Rosi	Member	4/4	
Autumn	Member	4/4	
Meredith	Member	8/10	
Esra(Resigned Sept. 18 )	Member	2/5	
Xenia (Resigned Mar. 19)	Member	1/2	

## STAFF

Anne	Manager
Yan Senior	FV Support Worker
Liliana	FV Support Worker
Laura	Finance Worker
Emma	FV Support Worker
Sally	FV Support Worker
Luisa	Maintenance/Resource Worker
Chantelle	FV Support Worker (Casual)
Ivy	FV Support Worker (Resigned Feb.19)
Susana	FV Support Worker (Casual) (Resigned Sept. 18)





# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017-2018 MINUTES



**Venue:** Hawthorn Library Meeting

**Held:** November 11, 2018

**Present:** Donna, Diane, Anna, Meredith, Chelsea, Anne, Yanru, Laura, Luisa, Sally, Emma, Liliana

**In Attendance:** Claire Emmanuel, (DHHS) Tendai Togara (Gracious Women), Liz Davidson (Our Kitchen Table), Kathy Kaplan (Impact), Nicole Zannoni (ASRC), Flor Seghidi (ASRC)

**Apologies:** Diana, Esra Apologies

**Guests:** Tina (Hawthorn Community Chest)

## Chairpersons Welcome:

Dona welcomed the Board of Management and staff of WLHH making acknowledgement that we come together tonight to learn from each other, to provide governance to the organisation and assistance to paid staff when necessary. We meet on and acknowledge Wurundjeri land and their elders past, present and emerging. Donna welcomed the visitors for taking time to attend the meeting and asked individuals to introduce themselves.

## Confirmation of Previous Minutes:

The Minutes of the 2016/2017 Annual General Meeting were tabled. Donna proposed that the Minutes be accepted Seconded: Anna, Meredith Minutes accepted

## Presentation of Annual Report:

The annual report was passed on to all participants of the meeting. Donna highlighted Chairperson's report noting that it was another successful year for the service. She spoke of the significant changes across the sector as a result of the recommendations from the Royal Commission and the Core and Cluster approach that has been introduced that will see improved crisis refuge accommodation for women and children accessing service. Donna noted the collaboration during the year with EDVOS to develop pet kennel so that women with pets can access high security refuge. In addition, the discussion with Emerging Minds to assess the potential of a yearlong capacity development process to increase competence in trauma informed practice especially for children. Finally, Donna informed the development of a new Strategic Plan to take us to 2021 by the Board and staff.



### **Nomination of Auditor**

Chelsea proposed - Assur Audit & Assurance Chartered Accountants as auditor for the 2018/2019 financial year. Nomination seconded by Donna

### **Election of Office Bearers:**

- **Chair:**Anna proposed Donna

Nomination seconded by Chelsea  
Donna accepted the nomination

- **Deputy Chair:**Donna proposed Anna

Nomination seconded by Meredith.

- **Treasurer:** Donna proposed Chelsea  
Nomination seconded by Meredith  
Chelsea accepted the nomination

- **Secretary:** Donna nominated Anne  
Nomination seconded by Chelsea  
Anne accepted the nomination.

### **Floor opened for further discussion.**

Cathy Kaplan from Impact talked of her organisation that she started about 10 years ago when she met with a few friends and they decided instead of giving each other Christmas presents to donate to women and children who were fleeing family violence. Impact has grown from their kitchen table and now they give Christmas and Mother's Day presents each year. They donate over 1,000 impact bags across Victoria and it is all run by volunteers. She said the organisation has received a grant which they are going to use to assist women who are attending magistrate court to provide Child Care.

### **Meeting closed: 7.30pm**



## CHAIR'S REPORT

2018-19 has seen a milestone year for Women's Liberation Halfway House (WLHH) with the service reaching 45 years since our establishment, confirming our place as the longest continuously running women's refuge in Victoria.

A total of 401 women and children received essential crisis support this year and demand for services increased 15% again this year referrals compared to 340 the previous year.

WLHH is one of 17 essential refuges in Victoria in addition to 2 Aboriginal services.

Family violence reform within our service and across the sector continues to be progressed with 120 of recommendations from the Royal Commission implemented and 107 in progress.

WLHH staff have actively participated in sector wide training and reform and are dedicated to improving our support to children through an innovative, new collaboration with Emerging Minds, to build our capacity and skills in supporting the mental health of children.

WLHH had contact with 180 children over the past year and are committed to continually increasing our competence in trauma informed practice.

WLHH is engaging with the Department to move to the Core and Cluster approach set out in the Royal Commission recommendations and WLHH is very pleased that a site for our new facility has been identified with support from Whittlesea Council. Work on transition planning for relocation and in establishing the best facility possible, are priorities for the coming period.

Facilities and Procedures to accommodate pets at the Refuge - a first in Victoria, are now in place and outdoor areas have been refurbished to be more children friendly and sympathetic to the needs of those experiencing trauma. Our art therapy project and exhibition was very well received by clients and the community with a very moving exhibition Kew Neighbour Learning Centre.

Board and staff continue to implement our Strategic Plan to 2021 in support of our mission and vision:

**Our vision** is a community free from family violence in which women and men have the same power and freedoms to realise their life choices and potential.

**Our mission** is to provide a holistic crisis response to women and children experiencing family violence who have least resources, and to effectively support them in their transition and recovery ensure the experiences and voices of women and children are heard and recognised in policy and service system design.





WLHH underwent a diligent and comprehensive accreditation process during the year and were pleased the accreditors found us to be compliant in the overwhelming majority of areas, demonstrating innovation through the Board skills and interest tool and good practice in regard to:

- The quality of overall guiding documentation including governance, finance, risk management and quality management policies and procedures.
- The model of support that is focused on building capacity, resilience, and independence, and empowering women who come into contact with the organisation.
- The passion and commitment of staff. The congruence across the team is underpinned by the clarity of the service delivery model, the quality of their orientation and induction, and ongoing commitment to support and supervision.
- The strength of the relationships that the organisation fosters across a broad range of stakeholders.
- The strong focus on advocacy that ensures clients are supported to access much needed services and resources in the community
- The quality and completeness of client records.
- The focus and capacity to respond to the cultural diversity of our client group.

We also note the need to improve risk management processes and the opportunity to further strengthen the service in operational planning.

Our sincere thanks to Anne, our retiring Manager for her dedication, positive and thoughtful style of engagement and improvements to the service made over four years. Anne has left a positive legacy to build on into the future. To those staff who have joined us over the past year, including new Manager, Deb, thank you for the positive difference you have brought and an equally heartfelt thank you to those who have been with us for some time, your contribution is valued and recognised.

The Board would like to thank Yan for acting in the Manager role as we transitioned through Anne's retirement to the appointment of Deb as our new Manager.

We also welcomed Chantelle to the service and the Board deeply appreciates the skills and commitment of the WLHH team. The Board welcomed Autumn and Rosi to the Board and are pleased to welcome Diane back from her leave of absence. We are delighted to have the combination of skills, experience and dedication the Board displays.

Our strategic goals over the next 3 years have been identified as:

- 1 Increase resources available for enriching responses to women and children; and strengthening the effectiveness of WLHH
- 2 Grow evidence, knowledge and influence
- 3 Best locate services to enhance access and options for women and children



A key output of the Board over 2019 was a comprehensive review and update of our Governance Policy Platform, improvements to financial reporting thanks to Treasurer, Chelsea, and support to project management of the outdoor refurbishment supported by Rosi and assessment of potential sites for relocation supported by Chelsea, Meredith, Anna and Donna.

The Board congratulates staff on their regular progress reporting and support in addressing queries and notes improvements project accounting over the year.

The coming period will represent a period of significant new developments for our service and we look forward to working with you to provide expanded and high quality support to women and children.

From 1st July 2018 to 30th June 2019, WLHH provided support to 35 women and 49 children in high security crisis accommodation, 29 women and 39 children supported in the community including in transitional housing and 157 women and 92 children supported in Motels.

Feedback from clients indicates that women felt the refuge provided them safety and support in an environment that felt "homely" and that reduced isolation. WLHH enabled women and children to transition to their own home and provided respite and an opportunity to develop plans for a new life and built personal confidence in implementing their plans.

**Donna,**  
October 2019



## MANAGER REPORT

During the year we held several programs in the refuge included sewing class, Tuning In Group, Art as a Healing Process program, children activities, and refuge innovation and garden project. We would like to thank our funders, DHHS and Family Safety Victoria and the wonderful volunteers from the local community for their donations and fund raising. Your efforts made these programs possible.

One of the highlights of the year was a public Art Exhibition held in November at Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Along with many community members, past and present refuge residents also attended this successful exhibition. People enjoyed an inspirational night through the powerful messages expressed by the artworks. Many thanks to the learning centre for the use of the venue.

**This year has seen the development of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan which saw the Board and staff share the future dreams and directions of WLHH.**

**One of our goals is to increase the resources available to assist in enriching our responses to women and children and strengthening the effectiveness of this engagement.**

The children resource funding received from Family Safety Victoria has enabled many upgrades both internally and externally at the refuge. We saw feature walls painted in each room and communal living areas, new carpet installed, furniture replaced, purchase of age appropriate children books, toys, and educational resources available for children, Mums and staff.

Another highlight was the transformation of the backyard being turned from a bushy terrain area into a children friendly playground with a cubby house, basketball ring and colourful grass floor mats.

For the first time NON PR funding was granted by Family Safety Victoria to support women and children with no PR (permanent residency) and no income. As a result we were able to extend our support to women and children on a bridging, student or temporary protection visa.

2019 is a landmark year for Women's Liberation Halfway House. As the **first women's refuge in Victoria** and one of the first refuges nationwide,

**we have been providing support and empowering women and children escaping family violence for :**

**45  
years**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the pioneers who established the service and the survivors for their courage in **speaking up and saying NO to family violence.**



Prior to this we had only been able to support those on spousal visas. Along with the already complex needs of those experiencing family violence, the additional challenges of working with this group of clients are their extended length of stay in the refuge and retraumatisation as a result of the complex process of obtaining a visa, income support, and lack of exit plans due to having no income. In total we have supported 10 women and 14 children on NON PR status, and two of those families stayed in the refuge for more than 6 months.

Reasons for women staying in family violence situations are complex and one consideration is leaving behind beloved pets. In collaboration with EDVOS, an exciting initiative of Pets in the Refuge has been developed. We now have an outdoor pet's kennel and a policy to support women who wish to bring a pet with them into refuge. Preparations including an agreement with Kew Vets and Care, information update with Safe Steps and the inclusion on our website have been completed.

Discussions are continuing for the development of our new Core and Cluster refuge, with land permits recently being granted by Whittlesea City Council.

The Peer Education Support Program (PESP) survey has also reflected on the improvement of our service delivery, and gathered quality information for our future improvement. This year we received a much greater response from participants, and the compliments about our support and service through effective case management have been overwhelming.

The coming year should bring much planning and activity in this space. WLHH actively participated in community education, and capacity building to respond to family violence.

All staff participated in a research project on the CALD community and Family Violence conducted by a student from RMIT as part of her PHD study.

Thanks to Anna, our Vice Chair for her significant contribution to our website redevelopment. The website provides easier access which helps the website browsers, in particular women experiencing family violence, needing a safety plan and or planning to leave an abusive relationship in obtaining useful knowledge and valuable information.

Ongoing QIP improvement and preparation for our quality audit in August 2019 has been another highlight of the year.

We are committed to ongoing implementation, development and improvement of policies, procedures, and service delivery, which had led to the success of QIP audit with one corrective action requirement, and strengths identified in vary areas, such as the quality of our policy framework, our model of support for women and children, and the passion and commitment of the staff.



We were excited to see lots of changes, improvements and achievements throughout the year. In total we supported 221 women and 180 children throughout the year. This included those accommodated in the refuge, THM's, community and Office of Housing properties and motels.

However we remain committed to a better quality of service and greater numbers of women and children being supported through self-reflection and ongoing improvement.

In conclusion of the report we would like to thank our Board members for their support to our team throughout the year and particularly during the recruitment period for our new Manager.

Anne expressed her gratitude in having such a supportive Board.

Many thanks to our former Manager Anne, who is now overseas and to the team, Sally, Liliana, Emma, Luisa and Laura for your commitment and tireless contribution to the quality service, and being a team with passion, and congruence as commented in QIP Assessment Report

**Yanru,**  
October 2019

As our former manager, Anne, retired on 30th Aug 2019, and our newly appointed manager Deb officially commenced on 22nd Oct 2019, this report has been written by acting Manager and Senior Support Worker.

# 2018/19 at a Glance

## women and children supported this year



**386**

Their support period was opened this year

**+ 15**

Their support period commenced prior to start this year



**221**

Women



**180**

Children



## Our work assisted women and children with

**466** support periods

How many support periods were provided to women and children?

women and children

**345**

only **one** support period

**47**

**Two** support periods

**9**

**Three** support periods



Length of support from beginning of support period

Support Period

**228**

**1 day**

**85**

**2- 7 days**

**79**

**1 -14 weeks**

**29**

**14-26 weeks**

**40**

**26-52 weeks**

**5**

**52 + weeks**



# SERVICE DELIVERY

Women's Liberation halfway House (WLHH) is a feminist organization and family violence specialist service, believing in that women and children have the right to be safe, and have the right to access support when experiencing family violence. WLHH endeavour to provide quality service and tailored support to women and children, and be sensitive and responsive to the unique story of each individual, and diversity of women and children from all culture, believes/religions, customs, food, parenting, and sexuality.



## REFUGE

WLHH provides high security crisis accommodation to women and children escaping family violence and needing immediate protection. It is a residential property with communal living arrangement for maximum 5 women and 10 children accommodated at a time.

As a short-term accommodation for up to 6 weeks stay, intensive case management support is provided to address their complex needs in areas such as:

- legal (IDs, IVO, family court, and children court matters)
- visa
- incomes financial hardship (debts and fines) physical and mental health
- housing (including property retrieval, storage, lease and exit planning)
- children's health, childcare, schooling and others as identified.



Provided Refuge accommodation to

**35  
women**



Provided Refuge Accommodation to

**49  
children**



## THM (Transitional Housing)

WLHH nominates women and children to available transitional housing and provides ongoing case management support on their exit from refuge. Due to factors such as language barriers, mental health, social isolation, breach of Intervention Orders, and others, some individuals will require ongoing intensive support to address complex needs and response to crisis situations.

Transitional housing gives women and children greater stability to receive further support from external services and to recover from their trauma. The rent is in general 25% of their Centrelink income, and much lower than the market price. Unfortunately, the resource of transitional housing is very limited.

In general, case management supports include but not limited to ongoing court support, education, Centrelink income, housing, referrals to and co case managing with external services to address issues such as parenting, mental health for both women and children, financial hardship, social isolation, housing, house moving, etc.




## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

WLHH provides case management to women and children who are self-referred or referred by community services, and women and children who exit from refuge or transitional housing, reside in a private rental property, office of housing, or community housing and in need of ongoing support to address their issues.

The aim is to assist women and children to stay safe, provide advice, information and referrals to local services or ethnic communities, court support, emotional support and to be independent.



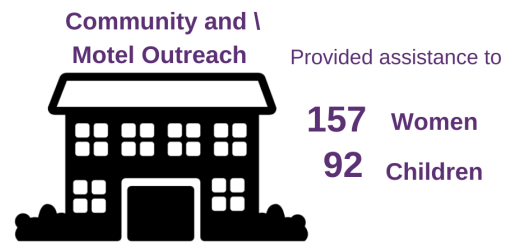


## MOTEL OUTREACH

WLHH partners with Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre by providing face to face outreach support to clients accommodated at motels when they have newly escaped family violence and are waiting for crisis accommodation at a refuge or other housing where applicable.

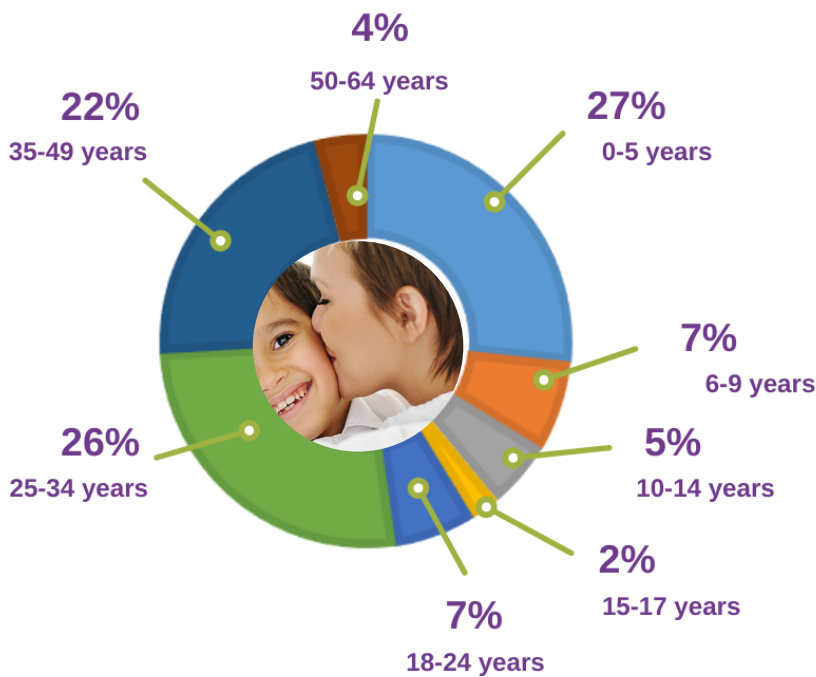
The provision of outreach support includes emotional support, material aids, such as toiletries, toys, clothing, mobile phones, and vouchers for groceries, petrol and medications, to information and advice about safety, housing, legal, and health.

WLHH does not receive funding for the motel outreach, however the outreach support helps to reassure women and children accommodated at motels that they have made the right decision and to have primary knowledge and understanding of what is available to them.



# WOMEN AND CHILDREN DEMOGRAPHICS

## Age of women and children supported 2018-2019



Women and children supported during this year were:

**67 %** Australian  
**33%** from culturally and linguistically diverse background



Women and children accommodated at the refuge during this year were:

**from culturally and linguistically diverse background**

**9 nationalities were represented**

including women from: Vietnam (32%), Pakistan (16%), Somalia (16%), Iran (11%), Romania, nigeria, South Korea, sudan and Lebanon with 5% each one.

# OUR WEB SITE

**1,178**

unique visitors



with an average of 145  
visitors per month.

Our website was redeveloped with extensive support from our vice-chair Anna over the course of 2018 and officially went live in September 2019.

The majority of visitors are located in Australia (77%), followed by the United States and Canada (6%) and a range of other countries all across the world.

The website is predominantly accessed through search engines such as Google (46%) and by direct search (43%). We continue to monitor the traffic to our site and complete regular updates to ensure our information is up to date and accessible to community members and service providers.

# ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

## CHILDREN ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

### Playground and Garden

What a busy year it has been for the children at the house!



We have a new play area with a basketball hoop and a beautiful cubby house. The children are loving having this area with enough room for them to run around. There are plans afoot to plant a vegetable garden where children can harvest their own vegetables for cooking activities.



## ART GROUP



Art group empowered women and children through creative art activities to re-establish a feeling of self-belief and self-worth. They presented themselves as Survivors and Creative Individuals

Survivors finding ways to express themselves, and strengthening the parent/child bonding and attachment



The art group assisted mothers and their children to rebuild a close connection and reconstruct their attachment to their mothers expressing them-selves through play and joyful creating art during their transition to their new lives.



Raise the community awareness about Family Violence creating the connection with the community through the women and children's art expressions developed during their stay in the WLHH High Security Refuge

You can see our artists' in residence work as it is displayed around the kitchen and office.

## COOKING ACTIVITIES

A very popular activity is the baking of cupcakes, decorated with lots of icing. During the baking activities mothers often like to be involved which is a great time for them to bond with their children. We also take this opportunity to educate the mothers on how to make meals that are budget friendly but also healthy. This year we have created a cooking book with recipes that are affordable. All recipes have been taste tested and enjoyed by all.



Nourishment for the soul and body!

## CELEBRATIONS

For Christmas we made biscuits and cakes that had a festive feel to them. Even though our families are from different cultural backgrounds they all enjoyed decorating the Christmas tree. The Christmas party was very well attended by current and past residents and children and fun was had by all. The children particularly enjoyed receiving their beautiful gifts so generously donated by Our Kitchen Table.

Time to enjoy and celebrate together!



## TUNNING IN GROUP

In collaboration with Wavecare, the Tuning In group ran in the first half of the financial year.

During the sessions women learnt to be more aware of their emotions, developed skills of assertive communication, and had better understanding of their children's feelings and of ways to strengthen communication with their children.

Feedback from women was that they felt more hope as they became more aware of both their and their children's emotions. Some women said they had more confidence as they had learnt ways to manage stress.

## SEWING CLASS

Sewing class was a program supported by a group of volunteers from Our Kitchen Table, coming on each Monday morning with sewing machines and materials to teach women sewing skills at the refuge.

Women enjoyed playing on the sewing machine, and making pillows and make-up bags, and others while their children were looked after by a volunteer. It was a great program that helped learning a living skill, having fun and being away from their complex issues. Through the activities women's confidence was rebuilt as they gained a sense of achievement while holding the products they made.



Thanks to Our Kitchen Table and their volunteers for the amount of work they have put in

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# FEEDBACK

This year the Client Strategy Participation has given us a clear understanding about opportunity areas to continue improving our service for women and children which will shape the future directions of the organisation.

## Positive feedback about our service and our workers

*"It felt much more homely and less isolated rather than being moved around in hotels"*

*"I believe I can help myself now and life is so much better than before"*

*"treated me like a human being and I never felt neglected"*

*"a big, big thank you to all who helped me. Without their help I wouldn't be where I am today in my own home, safe and with a thriving daughter [...] I don't know where I'd be without your help".*

*"You don't realise how much they have done for you and now I'm in my own home and my daughter is close to a school that she has received a scholarship for her tuition throughout her primary school years. I am so close to a TAFE that I am able to now start studying and gain employment afterwards. They have given me a new life that I can be proud of. It did take time because of all the red tape but I reached all of my case plan goals".*

The three strategies used were:

- Client Feedback forms
- Client Consultation via telephone
- Build Clients' Capacity to Participate

*"little mini supportive community where I felt very safe and supported".*

*"you changed my life for the better, such wonderful staff who check in on you regularly"*





## WORKER'S REPORT

2018/2019 has been another busy and challenging year where we have seen a small team with passion and commitment working tirelessly to support women and children during a difficult time of their life.

### Service delivery

In total there were 35 women and 49 children accommodated in the refuge and provided with intensive case management support, and 29 women and 39 children from the community and residing in THM were assisted with case management support. The average stay in the refuge is 8 weeks which is two weeks longer than funded, and the longest stay was for just over 6 months.

We have also provided outreach support to 157 women and 92 children some of them accommodated by Safe Steps at motels across Melbourne. On average each staff member spent a half day out of four working days each week on providing this kind of support. This unfunded support included emotional and material aids, such as clothing, toys and toiletries, to purchasing mobile phones and vouchers for groceries, petrol, and medication. Travelling distances can be as much as one hour each way to some of these motels.

### Challenges

Other challenges we have is in our work with clients who do not have permanent residency status. There are often significant language and cultural barriers, complex visa and income issues, and as a result lack of exit points, a generally much longer stay at the refuge is necessary.

Communal living often provides challenges for clients especially when many have small children. Supporting women to have their complex needs met whilst they're also balancing childcare needs can add a more challenging aspect to the work. In saying this, our staffs' "can do" attitude ensures that we work effectively with all women and children.

### Advocacy

Advocacy is a highlight of our practice. Through strong advocacy we have been able to link women and children to external services for specialised support and resources as needed. This resulted in three women's housing applications being upgraded as a result of advocacy and being offered housing earlier than expected.

### New practices

As part of our commitment to ongoing improvement we have implemented and developed some new practices such as providing brand new linen to women and children, checking on new residents on their first day at the refuge and providing a telephone check-in at the refuge during public holidays and weekends. As we are not providing 24/7 onsite support, the latter helps to reassure women and children that they were in a safe and supportive place.



Any breeze can stir up a wave within a small team.

## Celebrations

We continued to celebrate women and children's birthdays as they arose. We also celebrated Christmas and 2019 Lunar New year.

A very successful Christmas Party was held at Kew Baptist Church where both previous and current refuge residents and their children were invited. In total there were 16 women and 19 children in attendance where face painting for both women and children was provided by artist Cathy, delicious food prepared by Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre Café, a playground with toys for children from all ages, and generous gift bags donated by Our Kitchen Table and Impact made the event an agreed success. Many thanks also to Kew Baptist Church for the use of their

## Training & Professional Development

Throughout the year staff have been provided opportunities for internal and external training and professional development. Training areas covered SHIP, MARAM, Child Led Practice, Case Management, Safe and Secure, HOW2, and First Aid.

## Staff's well being & team building

To ensure our continued staff's well-being and team building we had several staff lunches, group supervision, massage and an outing combined with Kris Kringle before Christmas. The feedback of group supervision has been positive; it helped in shaping the team culture and bringing about positive changes.

I would like to say a big thanks to the team as there was a little bit of transition due to promotions and maternity leave. We were also able to welcome a new staff member to the team. The team was able to maintain its quality service and support to women and children throughout these changes



## CASE STUDY

### **This is the story of Simone and her 3 year old son Jack**

Simone and her 3-year-old son Jack were referred to WLHH refuge by Safe Steps in April 2019. Prior to this Simone and her son had to constantly move around within a city, to interstate, and even relocated overseas.

Experiencing long term, ongoing family violence perpetrated by her ex-husband, Simone had first left her home approximately one year earlier, and entered a refuge in Melbourne where Simone and Jack were tracked down by perpetrator who slashed the tyres of her car and a refuge work car. As a result Simone and Jack had to be relocated to another refuge in Melbourne. Due to the overwhelming stress and fear they were experiencing, Simone and Jack returned to Vietnam for support and safety provided by family.

Coming back to Australia a month later, Simone made the decision to leave Jack behind in the care of her family in Vietnam to ensure his safety and to allow herself time to secure accommodation to re-establish their life. Simone relocated to Sydney away from Melbourne where the perpetrator was living. Unfortunately, despite changing her address, her phone number and having an intervention order in place, Simone was again tracked down by the perpetrator, who continued contacting and threatening her. Simone was once again forced to seek safety and moved into crisis accommodation and a refuge in Sydney.





Despite ongoing safety concerns, Simone and Jack had to return to Melbourne in response to a summons to Family Court. In fear of her and Jack's safety, Simone made contact with Safe Steps for safe accommodation and was then referred to WLHH refuge. Living in refuge provided physical safety, however Simone continued to experience verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse both directly and indirectly whilst facilitating video calls between perpetrator and Jack several times a week as directed by a Family Court order. This caused extensive stress and anxiety for Simone.

Despite experiencing ongoing family violence, Simone has displayed tremendous courage and resilience. With assistance from her support worker Simone has stayed focused on her goals and plans, and has been proactive and independent in taking actions to achieve her goals. Simone was able to retrieve her belongings from Sydney, secure a head leasing property and has subsequently obtained long-term public housing where she and Jack are currently residing.

It was inspirational to witness her strength and determination. Simone expressed the feeling that someone was walking by her side throughout the journey and it gave her so much hope. This really confirmed how valuable the work we do is and how powerful the difference services can make.



WLHH continued to support Simone through the family law process which is still ongoing. Simone reports that she is feeling determined to move on and work towards achieving her goals which include furthering her studies and starting a diploma of nursing next year.

Before starting to work with Simone it was evident from her referral that she had endured significant stress and upheaval caused by the perpetrator's violence. On commencing supporting Simone it became clear that despite having reason to feel completely defeated, she was willing to take the steps necessary to enhance her and her son's safety and create the best future she could for her and her son.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WLHH board members, management and staff would like to recognise the effort of individuals and organisations who have provided material and donations to the women and children who accessed our service.

The donations we received were diverse and helpful. For example, having all size nappies, clothing, toys, toiletries, gift bags, mother's day gifts and makeup to cheer the women and children at their low points.

We would like to acknowledge DHHS our funding body, Family Services Victoria and to our stakeholders for the ongoing support you provide.

### Thank you!

- The Rotary Club of Preston
- Our Kitchen Table
- The Nappy Collective
- Alannah & Madeline Foundation
- St Kilda Mums
- Phillip Webb Real Estate
- Impact
- Kew Baptist Church
- Kew Neighborhood Learning Centre
- Uniting Care
- Hawthorn Community Chest
- Camcare
- Eastern Emergency Relief
- Kew Junction Business Association
- Kristy
- Salvo Housing
- Opening Doors



## TREASURER'S REPORT

It is my pleasure to serve as the Treasurer for Women's Liberation Halfway House (WLHH) and present this report for the year ended 30 June 2019.

Thank you to our finance worker Laura for her support and assistance during the year. I would also like to thank and acknowledge Anne for her support to me over the past two years in her role as Manager of WLHH.

For the year ended 30 June 2019, the income and expenditure statement shows an operating deficit of \$47,525. Some of the deficit relates to spending funds received in the prior year in which we reported a surplus of \$26,636. Other reasons for the operating deficit relate to the accrual of employee entitlements such as annual leave.

Gross Income received during the year has increased by \$115,418 compared to 2017 which is equal to 17% growth. Much of this growth relates to new special purpose grants and I would like to thank the efforts of all staff in securing this extra funding for projects we are all excited about.

During the year, WLHH received \$5,154 in donations and is thankful to the individuals and groups who have supported us.

Ordinary operating expenses tracked closely to budget in 2018/19 and were in line with spending in the prior financial year.

Overall, expenses have increased by \$121,716 compared to 2017/18. The increase includes spending the special purpose grants. Liquidity at the end of the financial year remains solid, with cash assets of \$181,630 and short-term deposits of \$104,385.

The working capital ratio at the end of the year is 1.7, which means that WLHH has 1.7 times more cash available than we need to meet our current liabilities of \$165,818. Increases to assets during the year are \$39,267 and are mostly an increase to cash. Increases to liabilities during the year were \$86,793 and are mostly unspent grant funds, as well as increases in employee entitlements accrued. I would like to welcome Deb to Women's Liberation Halfway House and I look forward to the year ahead working together with the whole team of staff and supporters.

**Chelsea**  
October 2019



**Women's Liberation Halfway House**  
*Family Violence Service*

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