

The Women's Cottage

Hawkesbury Area Women's & Kids Services Collective Inc.



2023 Annual Report

Supporting women and their children since 1983

The Women's Cottage is a community-based crisis support and resource centre for women experiencing abuse, financial disadvantage, distress, poverty, or isolation in the Hawkesbury region.



The Women's Cottage

Hawkesbury Area Women's
& Kids Services Collective Inc.

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www.womenscottage.org.au

2022 – 2023

**1,440 Women
Supported**

+1,300 children in families
receiving ongoing support

**4,812 Occasions of
Service Provided**

The Women's Cottage is committed to genuine connection and principles of practice for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and community.



Addressing ongoing inequity

The Women's Cottage is a place that all women regardless of age, class, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity are valued and treated equally. It is a place for women to be supported and to nurture themselves, to learn and grow. Our work supports women's autonomy and self-determination and recognises women as the central expert in their own lives.

We acknowledge the Darug People as the Traditional Owners on this Land where we live and work and pay our respects to all Aboriginal people and to Elders past, present, and future.

We acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonisation, oppression, racism, injustice, and inequity that impacts Aboriginal people today and we commit to address these issues wherever we can.

We stand with and support First Nation people's right to Voice, Treaty and Truth Telling.

The Women's Cottage Management, Staff, Volunteers and Students acknowledge the Darug People as the Traditional Owners on this Land where we live and work.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal people and to Elders past, present, and future. We recognise and acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonisation, oppression, racism, injustice, and inequity that impacts Aboriginal people today and we commit to address these issues wherever we can.

We stand with you and support First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.



The Uluru Statement from the Heart

“We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart: Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago. This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown. How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last 200 years. With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood. Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness. We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country. We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination. We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history. In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.”

Contents

About The Women's Cottage	7
Thanking Our Supporters	10
Staff and Management Collective	11
Management Collective Report	12
Manager's Report	14
Additional Funding and Donations	15
Yearly Updates	16
Thinking Globally / Acting Locally: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)	19
The Women's Cottage SDG's Contributions	20
Online Community Engagement	22
Summary of Services Provided 2022 - 2023	23
Domestic Violence Case Work Project Report	24
Targeted Early Intervention Project Outcomes Report	26
Anti-Violence Project Outcomes Report	29
Events, Campaigns and Group Programs Outcomes Report	31
National Redress Support Project Outcomes Report	32
Student Report	36
Financial Administrator Report	37
How Can You Help?	38
Audited Statements 2022 - 2023	39



About The Women's Cottage

In 1983, The Cottage opened its doors for the first time in premises at Windsor Street, Richmond. In 1986, The Women's Cottage moved to its current premises at 22 Bosworth Street, Richmond. Over the years, the Cottage has grown, along with the population in the Hawkesbury. There are currently 10 amazing part-time staff as well as wonderful relief workers, students and volunteers that support the work of The Cottage as we strive to provide services and support for women, children, and young people in the Hawkesbury region.

The Women's Cottage is a place where all women; regardless of age, class, race, religion, or sexual preference; are valued and treated as equal. It is a place for women to nurture themselves, a place of safety, and a place to learn and grow. It is a place for all women. It is a place that believes that access and equity are more than ideas and principles, they drive how we operate and what we offer.

The Women's Cottage is an information, resource, referral, advocacy, and crisis support service for women and children living, working, or studying in the Hawkesbury region. NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) funds our Anti-violence work, 'drop-in' support, advocacy, and referral services and up to two group programs under the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) funding program. Short-term funding in 2023 – 2023 was also received from The Office of Responsible Gambling to extend our Domestic Violence Casework Project. All other group programs are self-funded and reliant on past, present (and future) community donations.

The Women's Cottage also received funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) for our National Redress Support Project. This project initially provided support services to women affected by the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It has now evolved into the formation of the National Redress Support Project, providing specialist counselling / casework support to women who are considering making a claim application for Redress. The National Redress Scheme started July 2018 and is set to run for 10 years. This project covers the area from Parramatta to Lithgow but does not turn away out of area requests for assistance. In these situations, we work with women via phone and video calls while connecting them to services closer to where they live and/or on an ongoing basis if local Redress Support Services are not available.

The Women's Cottage is a Feminist organisation. Strength-based and trauma informed approaches inform all our work. All work is within the context of understanding social inequity and the gendered nature of violence that impacts women's lives, and through the Feminist framework lens that acknowledges and supports women's self-determination as the central expert in their own lives.

The Women's Cottage is committed to our role as an advocate for social justice, for women and children in this Community.



Purpose:

The Women's Cottage is a Feminist community-based organisation that is run by and for women, providing services to women and children / young people in the Hawkesbury LGA and surrounding areas.

We are committed to all forms of freedom (from oppression, violence, abuse, disadvantage, poverty, injustice and inequity) for women and children / young people, supporting clients to determine their own lives and choices.

We have a commitment to an ecologically and socially just and diverse society, where all women are treated with respect and dignity.

The Women's Cottage is a place where all women; regardless of age, class, race, religion, sexual preference, orientation or gender identity; are valued and treated as equal.

The Women's Cottage is a place for women to nurture themselves, a place of safety, and a place to learn and grow. It is a place for all women. It is a place that believes that access and equity are more than ideas and principles that drive how we operate and what we offer.

As a Feminist organisation, The Women's Cottage takes a strength based and trauma informed approach in all our work. All work is within the context of understanding social inequity and the gendered nature of violence that impacts women's lives, and through the Feminist framework lens that acknowledges and supports women's autonomy, and self-determination as the central expert in their own lives.

The Women's Cottage acknowledges the Darug People as the Traditional Owners on this Land where we live and work.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal people and to Elders past, present, and future. We recognise and acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonisation, oppression, racism, injustice, and inequity that impacts Aboriginal people today and we commit to address these issues wherever we can. We are sorry and we stand with you.

Vision

We are committed to all forms of freedom (from oppression, violence, abuse, disadvantage, poverty, injustice and inequity) for women and children / young people.

We are committed to an ecologically and socially just and diverse society, where all women are valued and treated as equal.

We are committed to an ecologically and socially just and diverse society where all women; regardless of age, class, race, religion, sexual preference orientation or gender identity; are valued and treated as equal.

We are committed to assisting and supporting women, children / young people to determine their own lives and choices.

We uphold women and children / young people's rights to a safe environment whether within the home or in the community, including the safety of animals.

We actively pursue political measures to address the elimination of social and environmental oppression, injustice, and violence, locally and globally.

Objectives

To help alleviate poverty, misfortune, distress and suffering of women and children / young people in the Hawkesbury LGA and surrounds through direct provision of material aid, emergency accommodation / referral services, counselling, and other services to improve their lives directly.

To promote the health, education and welfare of women and children / young people impacted by all forms of oppression, violence, abuse, disadvantage, poverty, injustice and inequity. With focus on particularly those residing in the Hawkesbury LGA and surrounds.

To collect and distribute information for individuals and groups concerning services and issues of relevance to women and children / young people impacted by all forms of oppression, violence, abuse, disadvantage, poverty, injustice and inequity.

To reduce the isolation of women by encouraging the development of support networks and self-help activities.

To provide emotional and practical support to women and their children / young people.

To promote participation in the planning of services based at the centre.

To promote public discussion on issues relevant to women and children / young people impacted by all forms of oppression, violence, abuse, disadvantage, poverty, injustice and inequity.

To reduce the oppression of women and children / young people regardless of age, class, race, religion, or sexual preference, orientation or gender identity.

Understanding Gender Based Violence

Women and children / young people are never responsible for the domestic violence they are experiencing.

Responsibility for violence and abuse lies with the abuser.

Domestic violence is a betrayal of trust and a misuse of power.

Domestic violence can seriously affect the lives of women and children / young people, sometimes it results in death.

People who have experienced domestic violence are able to overcome the emotional and psychological effects of abuse.

Abusers use strategies to ensure that the violence remains a secret and to avoid responsibility for their actions.

Common attitudes in society towards women and children / young people can increase the effects of the abuse.

These attitudes lead to women taking on blame, guilt and responsibility for abuse as well as impacting upon legal, financial, education and housing choices available.

Thanking Our Supporters

The Women's Cottage could not continue without the generosity of individual and community donations and support. We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who has donated, through cash donations, groups program support, membership fees, Go Fund Me, groceries for hampers, time, and energy. 2022 – 2023 Supporters:

Hawkesbury Council	\$1,000	Donation towards Reclaim the Night Costs
J Reefman	\$1,000	Donation
Godolphin	\$2,000	Donation passed on to Lucy's Project
Academy Construction & Development	\$1,500	Donation for supporting the clients of Refuge
Zonta	\$1,000	Donation for Food cupboard
J Reefman	\$1,000	Donation
J McNeillage	\$100	Donation
Jungle Studios	\$488	Donation
U3A Patchwork	\$360	Donation to client Christmas needs
D Hartz	\$200	Donation to client Christmas needs
Various	\$534	Donations towards Building Extensions
Jude Irwin	\$98	Donation

Thank you also to those who are Supporters of the Building Extension who donated through the GoFundMe campaign and those who wished to remain anonymous.

Major sponsors who donated the equivalent of \$5,000 or more:

Richmond Market Place	\$10,000	Kickstart Grant to fund Childcare and Jacaranda Group
Viv Court	\$20,000	Funds to support extra opening hours
Scully Fund	\$26,000	Funded Saturday morning opening hours



Hawkesbury City Council – for a 30-year lease at \$1 per year for our premises at 22 Bosworth Street Richmond in support of vulnerable women and children in the Hawkesbury.

Cubitt's Granny Flats and Home Extensions – for their ongoing support towards building extensions



Please consider donating to The Women's Cottage this coming year.

ALL donations over \$2 are tax deductible

The GoFundMe Campaign to fit out the new extension is still open

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/womens-cottage-domestic-violence-support-space>

Staff and Management Collective

2022 - 2023

Management Collective

Janine Madden

Jude Irwin

Mary Conyard

Sam Campbell

Sonya Parker

Parvinder Jill (resigned Jan 2023)

Maria Losurdo

Permanent / Part Time Staff

Maria Losurdo Manager

Meg Keith Finance Manager

Mel Olsen Anti-Violence Worker

Melissa Brodie Domestic Violence Casework

Kim Ward WAVE (Women's / Advocacy / Violence / Emergency) Worker

Jess Reed WAVE (Women's / Advocacy / Violence / Emergency) Worker

Angie Gleeson Redress Specialist

Sarah Dillane Redress Specialist

Kelly Haines Redress Specialist

Tabitha Steward Redress Admin Support Worker

Relief Workers

Emma Belling DEX / Database / WAVE Relief

Caitlin Broadie-Davies WAVE Relief

Students

Lauren Stow

Local Suppliers helping to keep

The Women's Cottage looking great!

Karen Brown Cleaner

Arben Gashi Gardener

Management Collective Report

Firstly, the collective would like to thank our hardworking industrious team of workers at The Women's Cottage. The skills Maria has in supporting the team is unmeasurable. Her knowledge of how to get funds for the Cottage is bar no one ever at the centre. Managing the construction of the building, working with the builders and Hawkesbury City Council in making the development happen is overwhelming, but you take it all in stride, for that and everything else we, "the Collective", are very thankful.

Maria's knowledge of what is needed and future planning for what the community needs is amazing. I don't think the community knows what strategic planning you apply to helping the women of the Hawkesbury. Keeping the doors open in times where funds are tight, you are always looking to support staff and our community of women and families. For that the collective is truly grateful. A special mention also for Maria's partnership efforts with Link Wentworth in the major project of getting a refuge for women escaping domestic violence to the Hawkesbury after more than 30 years of lobbying. A dream comes true!

Our Redress team (Sarah, Angie, and Kelly) are very busy supporting women from all over NSW. Helping them through their stories and supporting and encouraging their braveness in sharing their most painful stories. This team is fully committed to the best trauma informed practice possible.

Our ever ready first line of workers the Wave team (Kim, Jess, Emma) are commended for the great consistent work you do in supporting women and families in their courageous calls for assistance. You are there to support our community in their time of great need, without judgement. The level of support and comforting listening you do is much appreciated from the community.

The DV Caseworker is in great demand and is a very hectic role. Melissa gives 100% and more every day for the women she supports. Unfortunately, this is not a permanently funded project. It is based on short term funding contracts and supplemented by philanthropy and other funds. It is a priority to keep this most valuable work going, providing support and consistency with our women and families.

Mel Olsen, the Anti-Violence Worker, and Group Worker Emma, have been busy running loads of valuable group programs including art therapy and wrapped in angels and meditation. Mel also worked tirelessly on many more activities planned for the community throughout the year from Reclaim The Night to 16 Days of Activism, and running an interagency to support other services who work with Family and Domestic violence.

Thank you to the childcare workers who support work done by all aspects of our service.

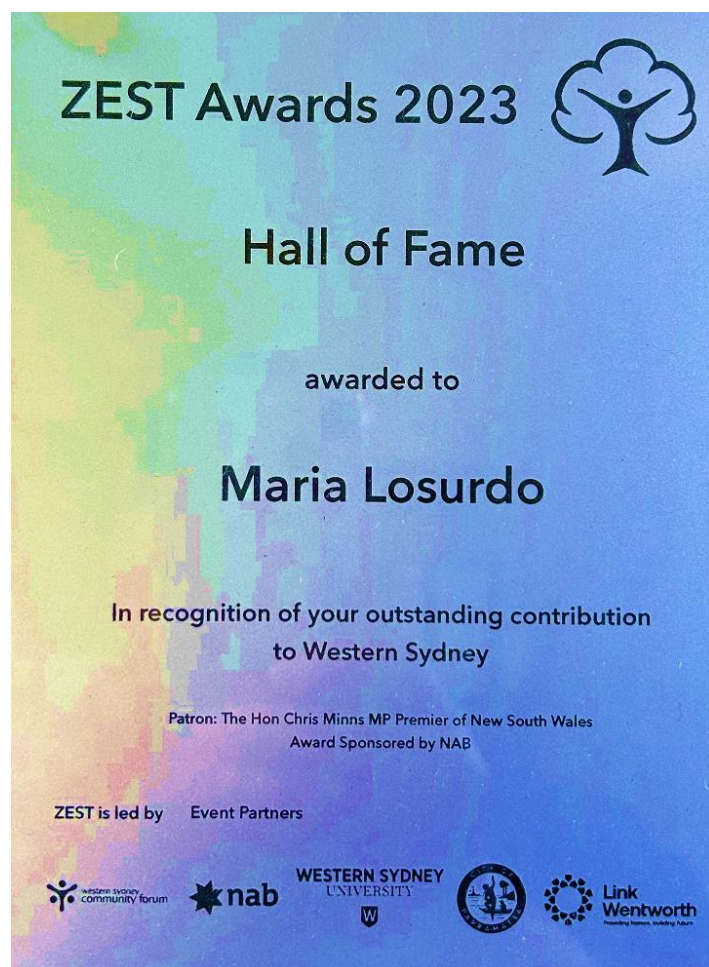
The Cottage is building on what they deliver to the community each year, but I think this year has seen a large increase in delivery to the community and with our building starting soon we are hoping that the access to the centre will grow; stay tuned for what we have planned for next year. The Collective and the whole team have also committed to a 5-year strategic plan on how to most effectively meet the needs of the community which we look forward to progressing in coming years.

The collective would like to thank everyone who has supported our team over the year and hope that this commitment will be stronger in the future

In particular, the collective would like to acknowledge the upcoming retirement of our Finance Administrator, Meg Keith, who has been with The Women's Cottage for more than 13 years. Thank you to Meg for her dedicated commitment to our finances and administration of our many different programs and grants. The collective would like to wish Meg well in her future endeavours.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge Maria being inducted into the Zest Awards Hall of Fame for her contributions to the sector.

HAWKES Management Collective



The Women's Cottage Management Collective acknowledges Maria's ZEST Award in recognition of her many years of work for community.

Manager's Report

It has been another big year for The Women's Cottage. Demand on services continues as has financial hardship, and costs of living and interest rates rise. Rates of domestic violence requests for assistance continue to rise. The lack of affordable housing has put further pressure on families who can least afford it and house prices and rents continue to grow pushing more and more people out of the rental market. Instability of funding further worsens the situation and leaves some programs operating on a short-term basis and others stretched to the limit with no capacity to grow to meet increasing demands.

The biggest issue is the lack of dedicated funding to cover the amount of domestic and family violence work that The Women's Cottage covers. Even as the lead specialist domestic violence service provider in the region for over 40 years, this work is not recognised within Government funding structures covering responses to domestic and family violence.

Current funding policy covers refuges, court support and short-term support for women who stay in their own homes after domestic violence has occurred. There are no long-term funding programs for ongoing casework and support services for women and children who are recovering from the impact or for women currently living in abusive and unsafe situations. The Women's Cottage does this work in response to the need in the community but operates outside the formal guidelines of its base funding to do so. In the past 2 years we have moved from short-term DV casework funding during COVID to short-term funding from the Office of Responsible Gambling. As it stands now, we have no known funding options after June 2024. Lobbying for change to existing funding policy takes up a huge amount of time and energy that could instead be directed to supporting women directly.

The Redress Support Project team have also faced many challenges in the past year. Systems issues continue to make it difficult to honour a truly trauma informed response to clients impacting our striving for best outcomes and genuine relationships with the clients we support. Insecure funding past June 2024 also puts pressure on the Redress team to get the most done for as many clients before that time which adds additional stress to already difficult work.

I hope by next year's report I can offer more promising news. Yet despite these challenges, the whole team step up to these challenges again and again to meet the needs of the women coming to The Women's Cottage for help. With everyone giving 100% and beyond in supporting clients and each other to get through. I extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to all staff and students who have supported clients over the past year. And to the Management Collective, who work in the background, to help juggle all the complexities and challenges that go with running a crisis response service in these challenging times.

Maria Losurdo, Manager

Additional Funding and Donations

To meet ever increasing demands in a static and sometimes shrinking funding base, The Women's Cottage commits a lot of time and energy to seek additional funding. In the past year The Women's Cottage was successful in securing a range of grants and large donations this year that have assisted the service to expand service delivery to ever increasing community needs.

Pre-Election Commitment (one-off grant \$117K) - The NSW Labor Government committed to support The Women's Cottage towards the fit out and set up costs of the new renovation.

Office of Responsible Gambling (\$109k x 2 years) Has been received to operate the DV case work project and to increase awareness and response to the impacts of gambling and in particular the relationship that can exist between gambling and domestic violence.

Skully Trustees - \$26,000 grant to fund Saturday open hours

Resilience NSW - \$16,800 COVID-19 Community Connection and Wellbeing Program funded the meditation group.

Richmond Marketplace - \$10,000 Kickstart Grant to fund Childcare and Jacaranda Group

Wentworth Healthcare PHN - \$2,700 Community Wellbeing Grants funded the social group and part of meditation group costs.

Go Fund Me Campaign: Was established to keep the community connected with our renovation plans and to invite individuals and business to support the fitting out of the extension once it is built.
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/womens-cottage-domestic-violence-support-space>



Yearly Updates

The Women's Cottage Renovation Update

DA approval for the building was received early 2023. Additional work and funding needed to meet DV requirements have commenced. **The new start date for the start of building works is now late 2023.** The new extension will give The Women's Cottage the space to provide more services and groups for the Hawkesbury community as well expanding the availability of on-site workers.



Background: The Women's Cottage has been in its current location at 22 Bosworth Street for close to 40 years. These premises are a small residential scale cottage owned by Hawkesbury City Council, in which The Women's Cottage has a 30-year lease. Growing community needs over many years and the significant impacts on the community in more recent years has placed enormous pressure on local families. This includes significant increases in financial hardship, isolation, stress, mental health issues and the rates / severity of domestic violence.

Safe Places Crisis Accommodation Partnership Report

In 2020, The Women's Cottage partnered with Link Wentworth Housing Ltd in support of a Federal Government funding application to build short term accommodation for women and children (and their pets) escaping domestic and family violence. This application was successful and around \$1.3M was awarded to Link Wentworth for the cost of the building. The Women's Cottage role will be to support the development and implementation of the service and support model for residents and to support the ongoing oversight of planning, evaluation and running of the premises. This wonderful outcome is the culmination of over 30 years of local lobbying from local services and the community. **The building was completed in May 2023, opening its doors to residents soon after.**

Ngarrunga Women and Childrens Safety Service

The Women's Cottage and Link Wentworth Housing successfully partnered in an EOI to the DCJ Core & Cluster Tranche 2 funding that opened in September 2022. **This funding has made it possible to plan for the building of a second crisis accommodation building beside Safe Places and for staffing for a fully integrated women's refuge across both sites.**

Ngarrunga (pronounced Nah-lung-a), is a Dharug word meaning 'a calming place' and has been adopted as the name of the new service with the blessing and support of local Aboriginal Elders and community. The name ties back to the word Arrunga which was the communities name for a short-term crisis accommodation that ran in the early 2000's until funding was withdrawn. A painting by local Dharug artist Leanne Tobin was commissioned for Ngarrunga as a support for Aboriginal clients and community.



BUDYARI MIDIGA YINYAM (Good Friends Here) 2023

By Dharug artist Leanne Tobin



**Link
Wentworth**



**The
Women's Cottage**

Ngarrunga *'a calming place'*

A warm and welcoming safe haven for women escaping domestic violence.

The service has grown out of the partnership between Link Wentworth and The Women's Cottage through the Commonwealth Government Safe Places funding program. Extended further by the NSW Government Core & Cluster funding program to cover support staff. **Ngarrunga offers accommodation to women with and without children and small pets.**

Ngarrunga is a purpose-built, self-contained short-term accommodation service aimed at helping women take those first steps to creating a new life for you and your family. It offers quality, short-term, **affordable** home where women can breathe and gather their resources to create a new life. **The service welcomes women and their dependent children and young people, regardless of their age.**

We have designed a culturally safe space in partnership with local Darug elders to welcome and support all Aboriginal women and children coming into the service.


We know it takes great courage to leave a violent relationship. We are here to help and provide support, free of judgement or burden.

COVID-19 in 2022 - 2023

Despite being through the worst of COVID-19, The Women's Cottage maintains its practice on safe practices and protocols. Workers continue to monitor their own health through RAT testing and offer clients masks and hand sanitiser as needed. These practices and other steps taken to maintain safety for clients and workers are outlined in our COVID Management Plan which is regularly reviewed and updated to keep pace with current needs.

The Women's Cottage

Hawkesbury Area Women's
& Kids Services Collective Inc



COVID-19 Management Plan

Version 9: Feb 2023

Flood / Natural Disaster Preparedness

The Hawkesbury region has experienced many years of impacts of multiple floods since the major fires in late 2019. The Women's Cottage has seen a compounding impact after each disaster. Increased emotional distress, trauma response, mental health issues and increases in the occurrence and severity of domestic violence.

**Domestic Violence
and Safety Risks Can
Increase After
Natural Disasters**



**Support for Friends, Family,
Neighbours or Yourself.**

The Women's Cottage

Hawkesbury Area Women's & Kids Services Collective Inc



Flood Management Plan

Version 2: 17/06/2022

In response to these issues The Women's Cottage has developed a Flood / Natural Disaster Management Plan and communicates closely with the community to offer options for help during and after disasters for these issues.

Thinking Globally / Acting Locally: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

The United Nations describes the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS as the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace, and justice. The SDG's interconnect and seek to leave none behind, with a 2030 achievement target.



The Women's Cottage recognises the valuable role we play by providing a community centre that offers women and children a place to go where they can get information, support and where they can experience a sense of belonging and safety. For many women, who have not experienced this before in their lives, this offers a new window of possibility into what they deserve and could have for themselves and their family. The Women's Cottage also recognises the importance of standing for the rights of all women in the community regardless of race, religion, sexuality, lifestyle, family make up, and for women with and without children. The work done at The Women's Cottage is vital for supporting the rights and safety of women and children locally. It is also in line with global efforts to improve conditions and lives. This is highlighted by The Women's Cottage Vision, to:

“Actively pursue political measures to address the elimination of social and environmental oppression, injustice and violence, locally and globally”

The Women's Cottage is working to strengthen our awareness and capacity to do this by using the United Nations 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG's) as a framework to identify where we are doing this well and where we can improve our actions.

The Women's Cottage SDG's Contributions



What We Did:

- Applied community donations and internal funding to expand the amount and availability of ALL areas of financial and food assistance for women experiencing financial disadvantage and poverty:
 - Emergency Relief and food / fuel vouchers
 - Gabrielle Fund for women in DV
 - Food Relief, (bread, meat, dry goods)
 - Sourcing fresh meat, fruit and vegetables where possible



What We Did:

- Offering physical and emotional support for those impacted by domestic violence, past and present trauma, poverty and hardship via drop-in service and group programs and National Redress Support Services



What we did:

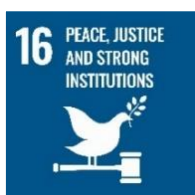
- Provided support/ information / advocacy / referral services for individual women experiencing injustice and inequality. Supporting the rights of women and children to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect, organising public awareness events.
- Reclaim the Night
- International Women's Day
- Stop Domestic Violence / 16 Days of Activism initiatives
- Lobbying and political representation on behalf of women's equity and safety issues, including access to services by non-vaccinated clients
- Submissions for funding to address women's equity and safety issues
- Use of social media on the rights of women and raising awareness on equity and safety issues

The Women's Cottage SDG's Contributions



What we did:

- Maintained improved recycling systems and reduced waste
- Modelled recycling & reducing waste for client participation
- Shared excess food with other services



What we did:

- Supporting women's legal rights
- Access to Apprehended Violence Orders
- Referrals for legal advice /Family Law advocacy
- Advocacy: police, DCJ, court support & SAMS meetings
- Victims Services applications support
- National Redress (Institutional Sexual Abuse) application support and advocacy
- Convening local domestic violence networking group
- Representing the issues of women's rights at local, state, and federal levels
- Partnership with Western Sydney Community Legal Service to provide an in-house Legal Clinic for women impacted by domestic violence
- Providing space for Victims Services approved counsellors for easy access for clients and local women.



What we did:

- Multiple successful new funding partnerships at community, local business, and corporate level to increase services available to vulnerable women and children
- Successful joint submissions with Link Wentworth Housing for new crisis accommodation services
- Partnerships work with Hawkesbury City Council on the local Domestic Violence Action Plan

Participating in the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals reminds us that we can all contribute to the big and small issues facing the planet and, for The Women's Cottage, to issues that are faced by women all over the world.

Our Commitment:
'Actively pursue political measures to address the elimination of social and environmental oppression, injustice and violence, locally and globally'.

Online Community Engagement

The Women's Cottage aims to extend information, engagement and access to service provision to the community through multiple formats. 2022 – 2023 Summary:

Website

www.womenscottage.org.au

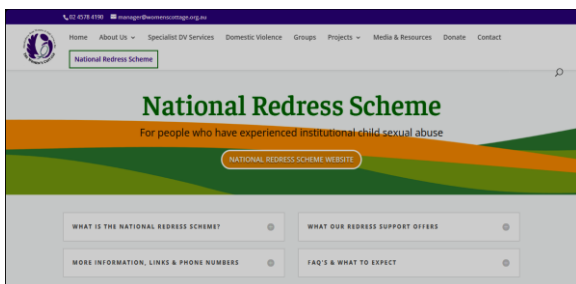


New Website has been adapted and improved throughout the year.

In particular with up-to-date information about group programs and services, support after natural disaster, and ongoing COVID issues and support

National Redress Support Website

<https://womenscottage.org.au/national-redress-scheme/>

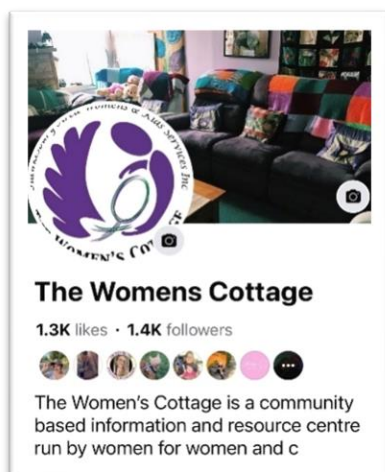


Provides easy to access and understand information for women considering an application to The National Redress Scheme. Including 4 specially designed videos (created by the team) on the different stages of the application process.

Facebook - 1,473 followers

[https://www.facebook.com/The-](https://www.facebook.com/The-Womens-Cottage-194124280711819)

[Womens-Cottage-194124280711819](https://www.facebook.com/The-Womens-Cottage-194124280711819)



Covering political issues, therapeutic support, access to support services, community information and campaigns aimed at supporting and promoting the rights and well-being of women. Our Facebook page achieve around 1,600 reaches per month.

Summary of Services Provided 2022 – 2023

1,440 Women Supported

+1,300 children in families receiving ongoing support

4,812 Occasions of Service Provided

Service / Project	Occasions of Service
Domestic Violence Case Work Project	468
Targeted Early Intervention Services: Client Support	1233
Targeted Early Intervention Services: Providing information and support to other workers / services	500
Emergency Relief Services / Hampers	250
Redress Support Service Project	1100
Group Programs and Events	1261

Approx 1000 occasions of service related specifically to current impacts of domestic violence.

Many other clients seek support related to the lasting impacts of domestic violence and other forms of trauma long after the danger has passed.

Domestic Violence Case Work Project Report

The Domestic Violence Casework Project was first established during the Pandemic with short term COVID-19 related funding. This funding allowed our service to address a major gap in service delivery / community need as there are no formally funded programs to provide long term case work and support to women experiencing domestic violence before they have left the relationship and/or if they do not remain in their own home. The Women's Cottage had been gap filling this community need as best as possible without funding before this time. When the COVID-19 funding ran out, The Women's Cottage funded the project from reserves for 5 months until the Office of Responsible Gambling stepped in to fund the project for a further 2 years, starting in July 2022.

DV Casework Outcomes July 2022 – June 2023:



The project also provides information sessions, mentoring, support and information to community groups and other local workers and services dealing with clients impacted by domestic violence.



Domestic Violence Case Work Worker Report (Melissa):

It has been a busy, and at times, overwhelming year of DV Case Work at the cottage. I have supported 41 clients and 15 of these were new clients.

The support has been varied, extensive and complex. I have supported clients with court matters, legal appointments, court clinics, housing issues, referrals, safety planning and advocacy on many issues.

There are some clients that I have been supporting for over a year. The complexities of domestic violence and post separation abuse is a lengthy and ever ongoing process. Court matters can go on for long periods of time and it's imperative that we continue supporting women throughout these processes. Domestic violence doesn't end once our clients leave their abusive partners. It in fact escalates to new levels after women leave and we see how women are further abused throughout legal systems and processes. Their trauma gets added to during these times and clients often will say they feel like they are being abused by these systems in the same way they were abused by their perpetrators, the gaslighting and coercive control continues in their lives.

It is so necessary and important to stay engaged with clients for however long is needed and not set a time limit on the support offered. It is integral that we don't limit support offered based on a specific time frame because of the ongoing nature of domestic violence, and it's impacts on women and children.

I have attended the Trauma Recovery Conference in Wollongong over two days and was very thankful for this opportunity to be around so many other skilled workers to discuss and learn about the trauma recovery journey, quite often our training is centered around managing the violence, which is necessary, but it was refreshing to look at the recovery journey.

Our strategic planning day was full of future planning and hope for our service, it reignites the determination and passion we have as workers to strive to create an even bigger and better service for our clients, I am incredibly grateful to work with such strong, determined and fierce women to create safety and further nurture our clients.

I have also attended SAM's training, Our Family Wizard training and a voice workshop.

DV Case Work Case Study:

Sally is a strong, determined woman with two children, who has been experiencing domestic violence perpetrated by her partner for five years. This escalated significantly when she fell pregnant with their first child and then second child. Her partner's abusive behaviours towards Sally included financial abuse (he would make her call him at the checkout of the supermarket once the groceries had gone through and tell him the exact cost for him to transfer money to pay, even then he would question what groceries she was wanting and she had to explain what the items were), emotional, verbal and psychological abuse (he would insult and belittle her, call her abusive and vile names in front of their children, blame her for his abuse, take no responsibility for his behaviour, tell her he would take the children and she'd never see them again, use threats of his families wealth against her to take her to family law court to keep the children from her) Physical intimidation (he would punch holes in walls, slam doors, intrude into her bathroom whilst she was showering), social isolation (he wouldn't allow some of her family members over or allow the children to go to their house).

Sally had a strong determination to leave, she could see the impact his abuse was having on their children and was adamant that she would not continue to raise them in this environment. Thankfully, Sally had strong family support, so along with this and case management support and a safety plan in place Sally picked a safe day to flee with her children and lived with family for a short period of time until she got her own safe home with her children.

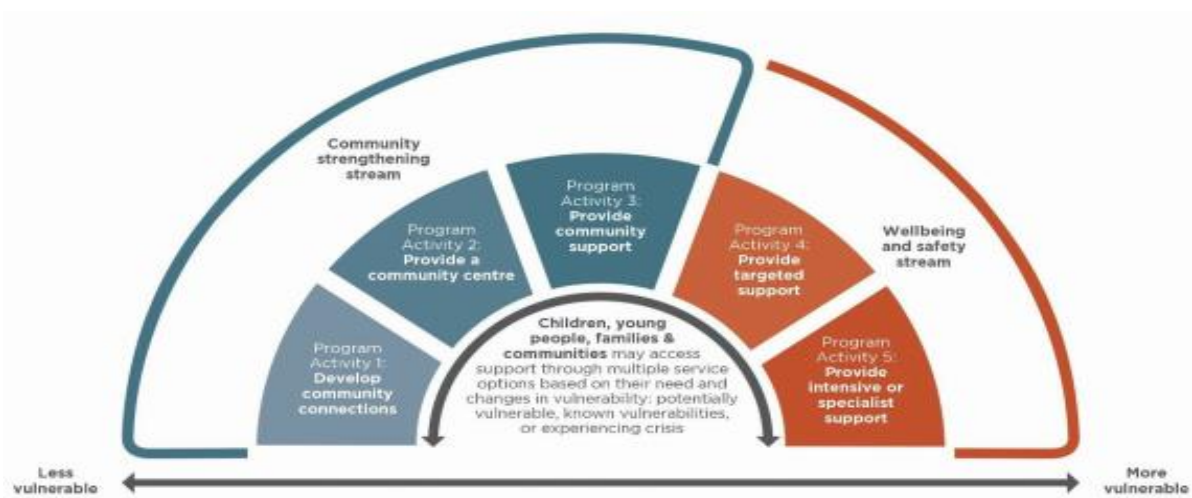
Sally engaged with a victim's services counsellor for ongoing support, has commenced family law processes, accessed financial support, and was in a safe enough space that she could report the years of abuse to the Police and take an ADVO out on him to further protect her and the children. Sally stated the casework support she received gave her the added determination and strength to leave. She said it also guided her to access services and follow processes, so she didn't have to try and navigate Legal/Police/Centrelink/Start Safely and other support she was eligible for on her own when she was already feeling overwhelmed. Sally and her children have been away from the abuse and violence for three months and their lives are so much safer, calmer, and happier now. Sally states that her children have settled into their new peaceful lives, and she is seeing great improvement in their behaviour, Sally is relieved that they don't need to 'walk on eggshells' anymore.

Pseudonyms used for all names.



Targeted Early Intervention Project Outcomes Report

The Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) Program is the funding program for all services funded by the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ). TEI replaces the former EIPP Child, Youth and Family program. The TEI program is aimed at children, young people, families, and communities within NSW who are experiencing or at risk of vulnerability. 2022 – 2023 Outcomes included:



The TEI program covers a range of activities from community development through to responding to high risk. The Women's Cottage is funded to provide services across all 5 TEI activity levels.

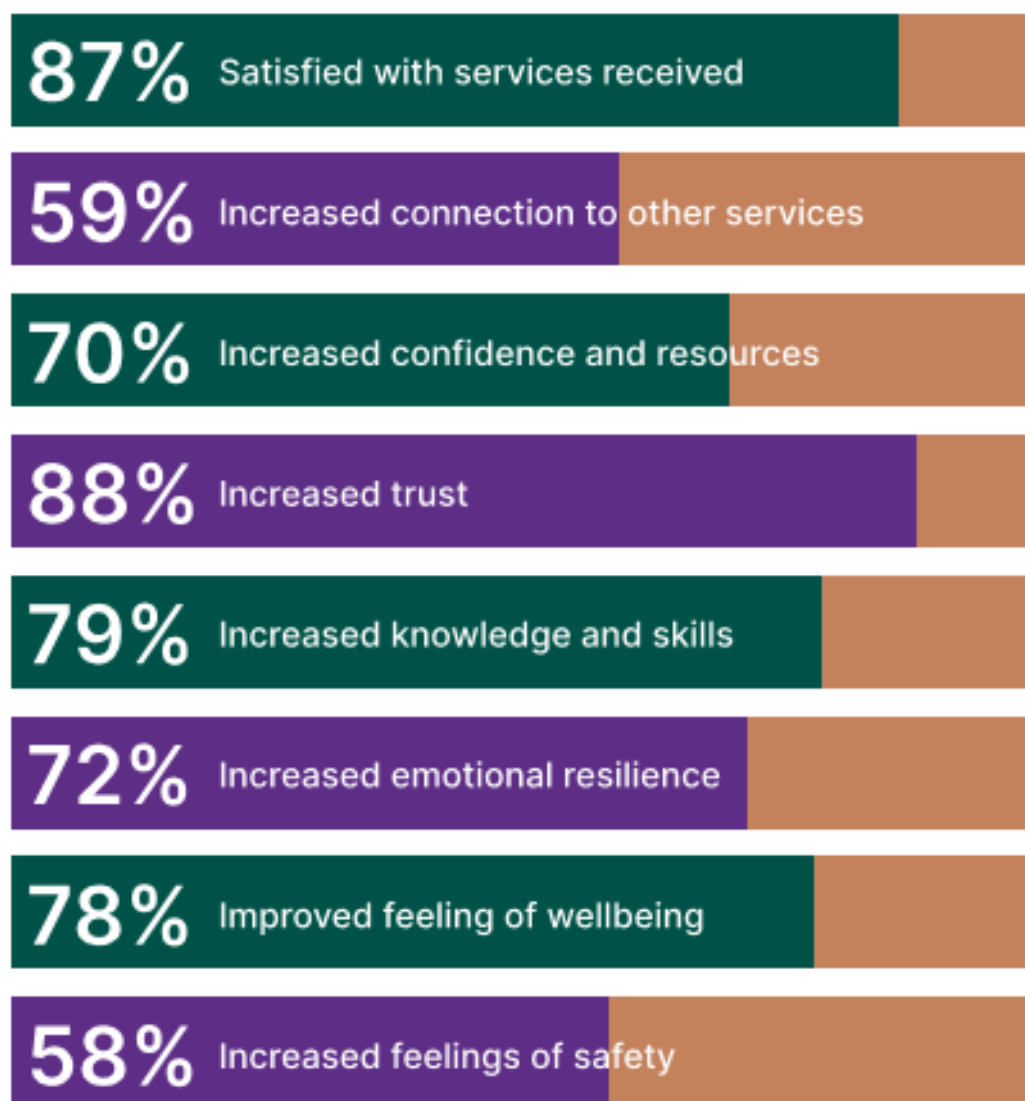
Summary of TEI Activity 2022 – 2023:

1] Community Connections Information/Advice/Referral Community Engagement Community Sector Coordination	• 646 responses
2] Community Centres Social Participation	• 54 responses
3] Community Support Advocacy and Support	• 172 DV related responses • 383 Other responses
4] Targeted Support Education and Skills Training Intake/Assessment, Counselling Family Capacity Building	• 286 DV related responses • 41 Other responses
5] Intensive Support Specialist Support Family Capacity Building	• 56 DV related responses • 6 other responses

Summary TEI Client Outcomes 2022 – 2023:

** Reports from approximately 500 clients in 2022 – 2023*

The differences we make for the women we support



WAVE Worker Reports (Kim and Jess):

Kim: Here we are again, where has the year gone? It's been a busy year for WAVE. The women we support are as varied and unique as their situation that they come with. It's a privilege to walk alongside these women, their courage is incredible to witness.

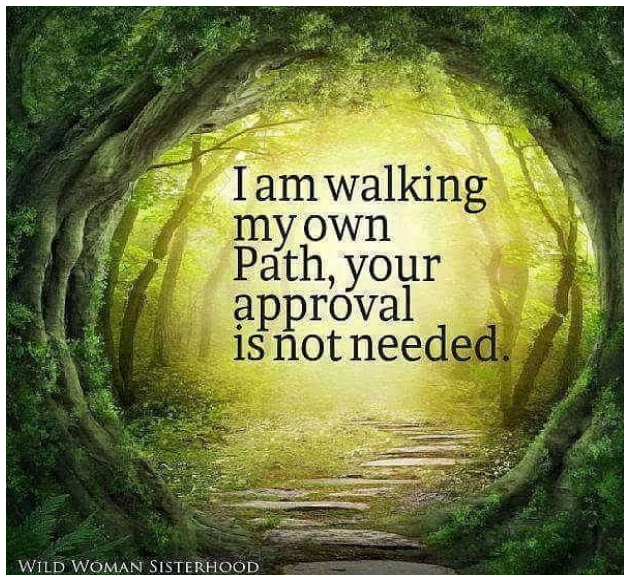
When I was first starting out a wise woman said to me that as a worker you always have your L plates on as you are always learning. This advice I have carried with me and the women I meet and work with I also learn from.



The year isn't without its challenges as WAVE is often stretched to its limits, and as we support our clients to navigate the wider systems impacting their lives these systems can create another level of trauma for them and frustration for us. Yet even though at times the system seems to be broken our clients and workers show up courageously for another day.

I would like to acknowledge the awesome team of women I have the pleasure to work with and lead by our wonderful manager Maria. Thank you to the commitment of The Women's Cottage Management Collective.

Jess: We have seen an increase in women seeking assistance, as well as an increase in referrals from other agencies. As the cost-of-living soars, more and more stress is being placed on families and we are being met with a larger variety of help sought.



As an NGO, this has been hard to navigate, however we continue to give our all to those needing assistance. We are also in the process of starting our much-needed building extension. It has been interesting to say the least, but it is a very exciting time, and we cannot wait for it to be complete.

As the dedicated Victims Service's worker, I have also seen an increase in applications for both counselling and financial needs. At the beginning of the year, this was fine, however, Victims Services made several changes to the application process that made it more difficult to access. This was a challenge to navigate as the changes were not expected nor were providers informed.

On a positive note though, we now have 2 VS counsellors on site. This has been a fantastic change, and I am excited to see this blossom! I am also excited to say we have been successful in assisting clients with the new Escaping Violence Payment (EVP). It has had some teething issues, but we worked alongside Wesley Mission, and it has so far been successful. It has truly been an honor to work with women as they build their new lives, with the help of the EVP.

Anti-Violence Project Outcomes Report

The Anti-violence Project Worker takes a key role in community development and education projects and activities that raise awareness about the effects of violence and to reduce violence against women and children. This position also involves front line work providing group programs, crisis support, offering information, and making appropriate referrals.



16 Days of Action 2022

Anti-Violence Worker Report:

Group work:

- Wrapped in Angels, Art Therapy and Social Drop-in groups ran face to face for term 4 of 2022 and 1 of 2023. It has been great returning to in person groups.
- Richmond High schools' program that Sonya (HCOS) and I run for the Girls years 10,11,12 (150 students) in term 3 and 4. We covered Relationships, health, E-safety, and selfcare/self-esteem.
- I'm really looking forward to running groups from the new space that is being built at the back of The Cottage!



International Women's Day 2023

Local anti-violence events and campaigns:

- Reclaim the Night was a big success. The weather was great, and we had high attendance for this event we marched down the main street for the first time since the COVID restrictions have been lifted.
- NAIDOC was a wonderful celebration. There was singing and dancing, stalls and the sun was shining down. This year the Redress team were able to attend The Women's Cottage stall.
- The White Ribbon schools cup was held at Windsor High school. It was a full day with lots of schools participating such as Richmond High, Colo High, Bede Polding, and Hawkesbury High.
- The launch of 16 Days of activism was held at the Hawkesbury Leisure and Learning Centre. I was given the opportunity to speak along with councillors Daniel Wheeler and Mary Lionsbucket
- Richmond Park was lit up in orange and information about the event was posted on the lights around the parks.
- Zonta has also donated some knitted ladies that have been placed up in The Cottage.
- The Women's Cottage celebrated IWD at the Hawkesbury Leisure and Learning Centre. We had local choir 'Women Song' sing, and lunch/afternoon tea was provided.

Attend and participate in relevant networks. Develop and sustain partnership with key government and non-government services.

- Hawkesbury Action Network Against Domestic Violence. I am convenor of this meeting, we continue to meet monthly online, but we have four meetings per year in person.
- I've also been a part of advisory groups Aboriginal Work force referral/advisory. Recognise Respond Refer Steering committee.
- Safe places/Ngarrunga operations meetings have continued as the transition to a staffed refuge, which has taken some time and energy.
- Working on the policies and towards the new units being built has been very exciting and I look forward to this coming together next year.



Reclaim The Night 2022

Events, Campaigns and Group Programs Outcomes Report

The Anti-violence position plays a key role in organising and supporting community awareness raising events and group programs run by The Women's Cottage.



Events / Campaigns (14 events / 811 participants)

Hawkesbury Action Network Against Domestic Violence (8 sessions / 81 participants)

International Women's Day (50 Participants)

NAIDOC Day Stall (200 participants)

16 Days of Action (20 participants)

Reclaim The Night (55 participants)

White Ribbon Day Event with 5 local high schools (105 participants)

RU OK Day Highschool Events (300 participants)

Group Work: (63 sessions / 400 participants)

Wrapped in Angels (15 sessions / 63 participants)

Art Therapy Group (8 sessions / 41 participants)

Social Group (10 sessions / 17 participants)

Young Women's Health & Wellbeing High School Program (6 sessions - 150 participants)

Meditation Group (25 sessions / 129 participants)

Self-Run Social Groups Supported by The Women's Cottage: (Approx 50 members)

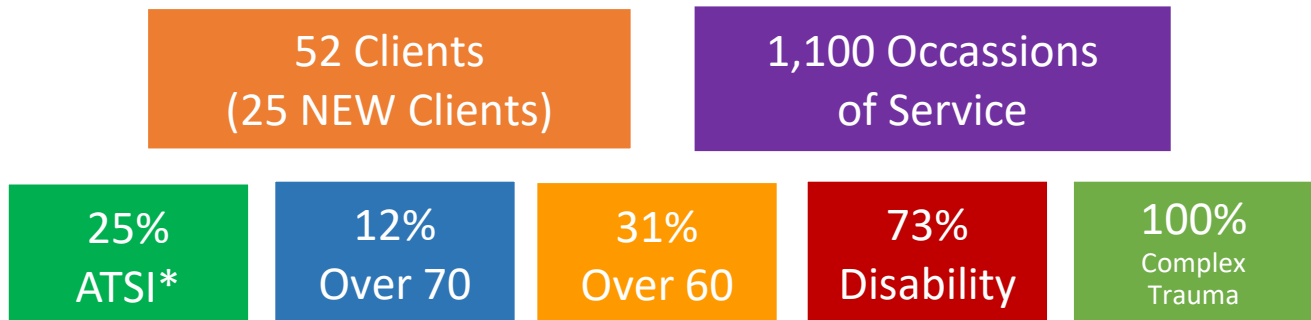
Jacaranda Group (for women over 50)

Blush Group (For Bi-sexual, Lesbian, Queer women)

National Redress Support Project Outcomes Report

The National Redress Support Project is funded by the Federal Government Department of Social Services. The project provides free support to women who are applying or considering applying to the National Redress Support Scheme which was established for people who experienced sexual assault in Institutions as children.

Redress Clients Supported:



* ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Client Outcomes – Redress Support Project:

Client Outcomes are identified through practitioner observations and client reports.

82% of clients reported a reduction in stress / distress

69% of clients reported increased strategies for managing difficult emotions

97% of clients were supported to learn new self-regulation strategies and skills

75% of clients increased their self-regulation capacity, skills, and confidence

100% of clients reported feeling satisfied with the services they received

At the end of each session, we ask clients how they felt about their experience.



Client Voices:

"I was shocked in a good way that you rang, that you are there and listen. That means the world to me. I am thankful to you, my support workers and my daughters."

"The application has definitely made me realise I need help to deal with the event."

"Just being listened to today – very anxious about how long Redress process will take – have had solicitors phone calls today and it just causes so much stress."

Redress Support Project Worker Report 2022 - 2023



The Redress Support Service at The Women's Cottage assists women participate in the National Redress Scheme (NRS). We support women with every stage of the process, from making the decision as to whether they want to make an application to the scheme, through to handling the application outcome.

We want to start off by making it clear that we could not do this work without the support we get from Maria and from everyone else at The Women's Cottage, and the encouragement we get from the collective. We are grateful to the other Redress Support Services of NSW and the ACT for sharing in the complex, challenging and occasionally gratifying process of making this scheme work for everyone.

This year the team has been busy, very busy, and so we have been extra thankful that COVID19 has settled somewhat, and we have been free of floods and fires. There have been some changes in the team: Kelly started with her own cases and was soon at full capacity; and since March we have had a new admin worker who Kelly has been training. Tab picks tasks up before they have even hit the floor and has taken on making the team run smoothly to everyone's delight.

We continue to receive referrals and calls from all over the country. We are supporting women, their counsellors and caseworkers and family members, with the decision whether to do an NRS application, with referrals for legal advice, counselling and other support, and a multitude of other matters. Some of our work is very short-term and may just involve answering questions about the scheme or assisting with one part of the application. We also are engaged in long-term work with women who are taking the time they need to prepare to make an NRS application. We are working a lot online and on the phone which allows us to support women from a distance. The shortage of counsellors who are qualified, available and willing to work with sexual abuse survivor/victims continues to be a problem.

As the scheme goes into its sixth year we are more frequently working with women whose applications are complete and have been submitted to the NRS in Canberra. We are learning about how vital ongoing support can be, especially when women are asked by the scheme to supply more information to their application. For many women, the process of revisiting and talking about the sexual violence they experienced again, and feeling that they have not done enough, is extremely challenging. We are also finding that the inevitable mistakes made by personnel operating the scheme in Canberra can have deeply distressing effects on clients. We are learning more all the time about how the processes work in Canberra, useful information which we can then pass on to women who are thinking about applying. There have been some problems which we have taken the opportunity to raise at a state and federal level, with mixed results.

Some applications have been through the entire NRS process, and we have been supporting women with whatever the outcome of their application turns out to be. One of the offers the NRS makes is for a "Direct Personal Response" from the institution and we have been privileged to be present at a personal

apology which had a deeply beneficial effect on the survivor. Other DPRs are taking considerable time to negotiate with institutions.

We have had a very satisfying time running the group program that we wrote last year, "Steps on the Journey". Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resources Centre were keen to work in partnership with us to deliver the group, and to have it run at their centre. That made it possible to meet face to face in the perfect environment. Women were made very welcome when they arrived, all staff were friendly and respectful and went out of their way to assist participants at every step. The atmosphere was quiet and calm, and women reported that it felt like a safe place to be. We delivered module one of Steps on the Journey: "Window Shopping" which is for women who are interested in Redress, want to know more about it, and decide whether or not it is right for them. There were many things that women in the group appreciated: "you have snacks that I can actually eat"; "thanks for putting in the effort to find those tea-bags!"; "I feel comfortable here"; "you have been honest with us about redress, and now I can choose what I do"; "it's good to get together with others who had similar experiences"; "I didn't think I'd have fun, but I am!"; "just so good to not be alone"; "hearing [her] story made me realise I could do it"; "you were answering her question and I learned"; "I now know I need to do more therapy before I can make an application"; "wow! I'd not been able to get counselling, and you sorted it then and there!"; "I am not alone!" They said they found it useful to hear each other's questions about the scheme and to get a sense of the way the scheme works. They particularly liked that their thinking about such a difficult and upsetting subject, and the complex decision whether to make an application or not, could be made with the support of the whole group. One woman decided to make an application at once and we took the time to get that submitted while the group ran. Others took the information, support and thinking they had done in the group away to their counsellors to decide if Redress was the choice they wanted to make, or to get ready for the application process.

The Steps on the Journey program has also been distributed to Redress Support Services federally, receiving good feedback. The discussion paper "Do No Harm" has also spread through Redress Support Services and been well received, and to the people who deliver the scheme, the federal Department of Social Services, and has informed the thinking of decision makers.

Even though we are through the fifth year of the scheme, which has a life of ten years, we are still finding that very few people know about it. We have put a lot of time over these five years into speaking to services, agencies, organisations, worker groups, and individuals about the scheme, with the simple aim that they are at least aware that it exists and know where to come for more information. We have taken part in the NSW/ACT-wide project to spread the word about the Scheme along with other RSS. We have presented at half-day workshops in Redfern, Penrith, Mt Druitt and Parramatta and are in the process of organising a Central Coast workshop.

All RSSs are asked to assist the NRS by providing feedback about publications, websites and videos and we have done more of that this year, particularly to the consultants who were in the process of making the first publicity posters and flyers direct from the NRS. We also take part in a bi-monthly meeting with the DSS, both along with other RSS, and as an individual team where we get to bring forward praise and problems.

The NSW/ACT Community of Practice (RSS services forum) meetings continue to keep us all up to date with what is happening for services and applicants, to exchange and learn good practice, and to gather shared concerns to feed back to the DSS. Over the years this meeting has developed into an open and supportive venue for us and other workers. Two new RSSs have been funded in Western Sydney and another in Northern NSW who we have been able to offer informal support and mentoring to and we have been learning from them too.



We've also been making things. We have done the filming of the next three videos in our series, taking viewers through the various forms involved and letting them know what we know about how the scheme works, and what support we can offer. They will be on the website, and we also distribute them to workers in community services in our beautiful information & resources wallets. These wallets go with us to events where we can tell workers about the scheme, and we have distributed about 100 of them. They include comprehensive information about the scheme, what sort of support is available and how to access it.

While we didn't actually make them, we have loved giving these little Pocket Pals, knitted by a woman in the community, to women who are having a hard time and they have said: *It was such a beautiful surprise!* and *"Oh my goodness – I'm in tears. The package arrived today. It's beautiful and so special. It made me know someone was thinking of me. Please also thank the women that hand made these treasures. It made my day."*

It was such a beautiful surprise! and *"Oh my goodness – I'm in tears. The package arrived today. It's beautiful and so special. It made me know someone was thinking of me. Please also thank the women that hand made these treasures. It made my day."*



We have designed 'with compliments' slips to go with forms, so that we are not sending anonymous paperwork. At the moment, we are in the process of designing Visual Aid Wall Posters that explain the scheme with simple graphics, which will be a useful visible reminder in all our future talks to workplaces and organisations.

We were relieved and delighted to be able to attend face-to-face training this year – we find there is so much more to be gained from talking to other workers sitting near you, or on the way to a tea-break, and we certainly took advantage of the opportunity to let lots of people know what the NRS is. Among other things, we attended the Lithgow Trauma and Resilience Conference, which was excellent, and enjoyed staying at Rydal with the rest of the Women's Cottage team. We also went to the University of New South Wales's Big Anxiety Research Centre for a three-day workshop on Creative Approaches to Working with Trauma and Mental Health, which was enormously refreshing, pushing at personal and systemic understandings of mental health and treatment and inviting organisational and personal responses and initiatives.

The women who we assist have given us some lovely feedback, but we would like to give them the feedback that their persistence, bravery, honesty and kindness are what keep us going.

Angie, Kelly and Sarah

Student Report

Lauren Stow, Master of Social Work (Qualifying) | ACAP | May – September 2023

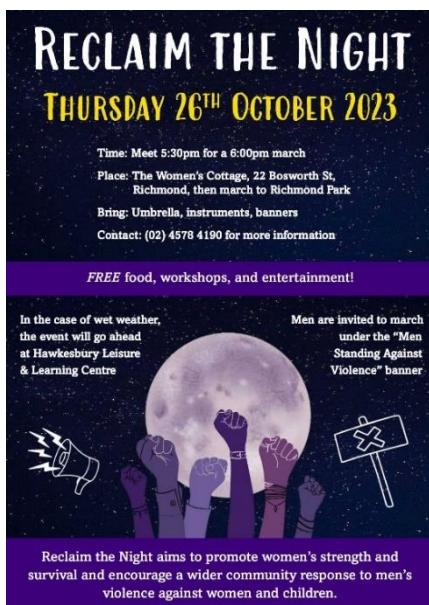
Since May, I have had the opportunity to spend 500 hours of my Social Work field education placement at The Women's Cottage. From the beginning it was clear that I would be working with a warm, encouraging, and highly knowledgeable team of women. Each worker has generously shared their expertise and wisdom, patiently answered my questions, and supported me to develop confidence in my own professional practice.

So far my placement journey has involved representing The Women's Cottage at community events like 16 Days of Activism, a Youth Services Expo, and NAIDOC week, alongside the wonderful National Redress Scheme team. I have also attended interagency meetings, professional development courses, a staff training day on Trans and Gender Non-Binary inclusivity and am excited for the upcoming training event with the renowned Vikki Reynolds. I have also been privileged to witness a long-held dream of The Cottage – *Ngarrunga* – come to fruition, and observe the collaborative, responsive, and determined efforts made by Maria, Mel, and the management team to meet the challenges of establishing and managing a brand-new women's refuge. All of this has enabled me to see how Feminist, Rights-Based, and Trauma-Informed frameworks can be put into practice at the grassroots level for the benefit of women and children in need and the broader community.



My placement journey has also involved sitting in on DFV client case meetings and providing support to the WAVE team. The scope of knowledge and expertise demonstrated by Melissa, Kim, Jess, and Emma has been mind-boggling. Thanks to them, I continue to learn and develop my own practice knowledge and skills every day.

A particular highlight of my placement has been co-facilitating the popular Guided Meditation Group. I have enjoyed creating a warm and welcoming place for the participants each week, building relationships with them, seeing them (and their children) forge new friendships, and witnessing their pride in having used skills they learned in group during stressful times. Ending gender-based violence is a particular passion of mine, and so I am proud to be playing a small part in local antiviolence activism by helping Mel organise the annual *Reclaim the Night* march – one of many mammoth community engagement events Mel and The Cottage team take on every year.



The Women's Cottage celebrates its 40th anniversary this November. It has been a privilege to work alongside such committed, highly skilled, and deeply kind women, and I look forward to seeing The Cottage continue to flourish in the decades to come.

I must extend my deepest gratitude to Maria and the entire team for their guidance and support throughout this journey. I must also thank the women and children I have worked with for allowing me into their lives. **Lauren Stow**

Financial Administrator Report

During 2022-2023, the Cottage was fortunate to receive the following donations and grants which contributed towards funding extended hours of service provision and material support for clients.

- The Responsible Gambling Fund – funded the Domestic Violence Casework position.
- The Scully fund and Pay Pal helped fund Saturday opening hours
- 2 x \$10,000 Donations from Vivcourt contributed to funding extended opening hours
- Many donations from individuals and groups in the community to help The Women's Cottage support clients through donations of funds, groceries and back to school items.

NSW Department of Communities and Justice funds the TEI projects which include WAVE and Anti-Violence work. The Federal Department of Social Services funds the Redress Scheme projects. The Responsible Gambling Fund has funded the Domestic Violence Casework position for 2 years.

In the past financial year staffing costs have increased primarily due to the additional staff and extra working hours partially funded by additional grants and donations. Staffing costs continue to be the major expense of the organization as is expected in the service industry.

The full story of our year can be found in the financial reports at the back of this book. Overall, the Cottage operated at a loss of \$26337 for the 2022-2023 financial year because of the increased staffing hours needed to provide services to our clients.

The Women's Cottage is in a financially secure position with adequate funds in the bank to meet the expenses of the organization as and when they fall due.

The Women's Cottage is a remarkable service, staffed by remarkable women and it has been a privilege to work with this team of wonderful, compassionate, and supportive women. Exciting times for The Women's Cottage ahead with the building of the extension to commence soon.

I will be leaving the Women's Cottage in October 2023 but am glad to know that the wonderful work and the support of the vulnerable will continue for many years to come.

Meg Keith , Finance Administrator

"Even if you are a minority of one the truth is the truth" Ghandhi

"If I can be anything I want... I think I will be a unicorn"



It is with sadness and deep gratitude we say goodbye to Meg after more than 11 years of valued employment. Meg has provided The Women's Cottage with financial expertise, creativity, quality, and accountability throughout her time with the service. We wish her all the best for her retirement!

How Can You Help?

How can you help? So glad you asked!

The Women's Cottage is only able to provide the extent of the services we do, the emergency relief and food supplies, and a full group program with the support of our local community. **If you or your place of work can support us in any way to help us support vulnerable women and children that would be wonderful.**

You can make a general donation, or nominate the area you would like to support:

Christmas Appeal (Hampers and Toys)

Emergency Relief & Food Supplies

Gabrielle Domestic Violence Support Fund

Building and Equipment Upgrades

Group Work

Crisis and Counselling Support:

Crisis Support – 1 day / week	1 year	\$34,000
	6 months	\$17,000
10-week group program	1 year	\$10,000



**For information or to donate phone us on 02 4578 4190
or visit: www.womenscottage.org.au**

ALL DONATIONS OVER \$2 ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

AUDIT CERTIFICATE

**Standard full Audit Certificate by a Qualified Accountant in respect of
Community Funded Organisations.**

I, Sue Ann Paine, of Shop 9, 100 George Street, Windsor NSW 2756, being a qualified accountant within the meaning of the Community Funding Program, do hereby certify that I have examined the books and financial records of **Hawkesbury Area Women and Kids Services Collective Inc.**

In my opinion the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the organization and the results of its operations for the year ended 30 June 2023 in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards.

I have satisfied myself that:

- a) Establishment of all reserves/provisions is justified and represents funds set aside for Long Service Leave, Annual Leave and Relief Workers and Maternity Leave.
- b) Payments to associated and/or affiliated bodies have been adequately disclosed.

Signed 
Sue Ann Paine, FIPA

Date August 31 2023

Qualification: Fellow, Institute of Public Accountants
No: 104947

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF
HAWKESBURY AREA WOMEN AND KIDS SERVICES COLLECTIVE INC.**

Report on the Financial Report

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Hawkesbury Area Women & Kids Services collective Inc., being a special purpose financial report, which comprises the Statement by Members of the Committee, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Accounting Policies and explanatory notes for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Committee of The Association is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations). The Committee is responsible for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, by selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies, as stated in Note 1, and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the

auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting my audit, I have complied with the independence requirements of the Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

Auditor's Opinion

In my opinion:

- i) The financial report gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Hawkesbury Area Women & Kids Services Collective Inc. as at 30 June 2023, and of its performance and its cash flows for the year ended in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards; and
- ii) the financial report also complies with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements.

Signed on: August 31, 2023



Sue Ann Paine, FIPA
Institute of Public Accountants

HAWKESBURY AREA WOMEN & KIDS SERVICES COLLECTIVE INC.

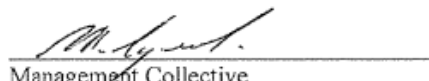
**Statement by Members of the Committee
For the year ended 30 June 2023**

In the opinion of the Committee the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance and Notes to the financial Statements:

1. Present fairly the financial position of Hawkesbury Area Women & Kids Services Collective Inc. as at 30 June 2023 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act and Australian Accounting Standards, mandatory professional reporting requirements and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.
2. An amount equal to the payments received for the year less any advance grants has been spent on the projects, and
3. Establishment of all accruals is justified, and
4. A full and complete set of financial records has been maintained, and
5. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:


Management Collective


Management Collective

Dated this 20th day of September, 2023

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Balance Sheet

As of June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Assets

Current Assets		
Cash On Hand		
Community Sector Bank Account	\$210,942.30	
TD153563549 to	\$40,524.27	
TD 141990044- 2/5/2023@2.1%	\$150,921.90	
TD 144481025 - to 7/5/2023 2.1%	\$23,097.32	
Womcot At Call Account BB	\$1,189.10	
Debit Card Account	\$1,415.70	
151847928 to	\$99,307.88	
PayPal Account	\$2,909.18	
Petty Cash - Cottage	\$236.35	
Cottage Coles Card	\$116.40	
Petty Cash - Emergency relief	\$200.00	
Cash on Hand - Gabrielle Fund	\$200.00	
Red - Petty Cash	\$233.20	
Undeposited funds	\$488.00	
Total Cash On Hand	\$531,781.60	
Trade Debtors	\$275.00	
Pre payments	\$6,000.00	
PrePayments VR Workshop	\$2,643.01	
Total Current Assets	\$540,699.61	
Other Assets		
Refundable Bonds	\$100.00	
Total Other Assets	\$100.00	
Plant & Equipment		
Plant & Equipment - At Cost	\$22,515.49	
Plant & Equipment - Accum Dep	-\$22,225.49	
Total Plant & Equipment	\$290.00	
Total Assets		\$541,089.61

Liabilities

Current Liabilities		
Grants & Funding Provisions		
Income in Advance VR Workshop	\$8,818.18	
Provision- Natural Disasters Supports	\$17,345.05	
Provision for Program Funds	\$39,710.11	
DSS- Funding carried forward Redress	\$9,432.09	
Kyckstart Grant Unexpended	\$10,000.00	
Scully Fund Donation Balance	\$1,819.24	
DCJ - Building Grant COVID Infrastructure	\$56,886.23	
Cyber Security Provision	\$2,825.45	
Paypal Donation Grant	\$18,539.91	
Emergency Relief Provision	\$7,665.23	
Unexpended Grant	\$2,807.80	
JG Grant Unexpended	\$464.07	
Gabrielle Fund provision	\$13,823.41	
Provision for Client Christmas	\$3,521.93	
Responsible Gambling Fund Grant In Advance	\$6,238.47	
Provision - Building	\$110,433.26	
Total Grants & Funding Provisions	\$310,330.43	
Other Current Liabilities		
Staff Fund Donations	\$349.90	

This report includes Year-End Adjustments.

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Balance Sheet

As of June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Total Other Current Liabilities			\$349.90
GST Liabilities			
GST Collected	\$10,864.24		
GST Paid	-\$24,634.27		
Total GST Liabilities			-\$13,770.03
Payroll Liabilities			
PAYG Tax Payable	\$10,996.00		
Provision for Training	\$1,685.62		
Annual Leave Provision	\$83,981.20		
Maternity leave provision	\$5,000.00		
Long Service Leave Provision	\$32,185.29		
Total Payroll Liabilities			\$133,848.11
Total Current Liabilities			\$430,758.41
Network Funds Held			
HANADV Funds			\$3,062.56
Total Network Funds Held			\$3,062.56
Total Liabilities			\$433,820.97
Net Assets			\$107,268.64
Equity			
Retained Earnings		\$133,606.27	
Current Year Surplus/Deficit		-\$26,337.63	
Total Equity			\$107,268.64

This report includes Year-End Adjustments.

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Profit & Loss Statement

July 2022 To June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Income		
Recurrent funding		
DCJ Funding	\$328,963.53	
DSS Funding for Redress	\$377,559.42	
Total Recurrent funding		\$706,522.95
Other grants		
Scully Fund	\$24,180.76	
MAT Grant - DCJ	\$14,975.02	
Wentworth Healthcare Grant	\$2,727.27	
Council Sponsorship	\$1,000.00	
GAM - Responsible Gambling Grant	\$109,475.00	
Total Other grants		\$152,358.05
Other Income		
Donations - General	\$24,221.70	
Donations - Emergency Relief	\$1,000.00	
Donations - Christmas Hampers	\$715.00	
Donations for Building Extension	\$534.33	
Donations - New Refuge	\$1,500.00	
Kickstart Grant	\$10,000.00	
Bank Interest	\$7,839.19	
Memberships	\$58.18	
Sundry Incomes		\$720.00
Total Other Income		\$45,868.40
Total Income		\$905,469.40
Gross Profit		\$905,469.40
EXPENSES		
Financial		
Insurance	\$7,224.20	
Audit/Legal/Accounting	\$1,900.00	
Admin Contractor	\$10,080.00	
Bank Charges	\$147.48	
PayPal charges	\$18.20	
Eventbrite fees	\$304.65	
Total Financial		\$19,674.53
Operating costs		
Occ Health & Safety	\$664.82	
Cottage Consumables	\$1,110.01	
Print	\$1,099.82	
Postage	\$743.21	
Stationery	\$1,999.93	
Resources & Library	\$3,290.72	
Subscriptions & Membership	\$4,687.74	
Consultants	\$748.23	
Management/Organisation	\$625.91	
Total Operating costs		\$14,970.39
Equipment		
Equipment purchases	\$6,188.07	
Depreciation	\$94.00	
Photocopy Costs	\$2,052.53	
Computer associated	\$1,718.86	
Total Equipment		\$10,053.46

This report includes Year-End Adjustments.

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Profit & Loss Statement

July 2022 To June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Employment Expenses		
Wages and Salaries		
Wages	\$668,690.32	
Child Care Wages	\$268.80	
Relief Wages	\$4,245.29	
Workers' Comp Insurance	\$19,755.26	
Workers Comp -paid to employee	\$1,372.23	
Other Employer Expenses	\$585.47	
Annual Leave Taken + Prov	\$10,135.46	
Long Service Leave Accrual	\$18,899.54	
Long Service Leave Paid	\$2,140.74	
Superannuation	\$70,758.81	
Total Wages and Salaries		\$796,851.92
Staffing expenses		
Supervision	\$4,950.00	
Training/Seminars/Workshops	\$9,017.94	
Travel (non-staff)	\$21.82	
Staff travel costs	\$751.05	
Car mileage	\$2,751.32	
Total Staffing expenses		\$17,492.13
Total Employment Expenses		\$814,344.05
Client/Community Servicing Cost		
Emergency Relief Fund	\$4,755.00	
Emergency Relief Consumables	\$4,249.14	
Christmas Expenses	\$1,843.46	
The Gabrielle Fund	\$3,981.26	
Reclaim the Night Grant Exp	\$703.63	
Childcare Fees	\$2,163.64	
Facilitator Expense	\$11,300.00	
Community Engagement	\$888.12	
Brokerage -Redress	\$2,397.19	
Activity Costs	\$5,392.95	
Venue/ Equipment hire	\$7,262.37	
Catering & group consumables	\$1,760.10	
Program costs	\$2,562.00	
Promotional Advertising	\$3,400.89	
IWD Expenses	\$1,525.99	
Total Client/Community Servicing Cost		\$54,185.74
Special Grant Expenses		
Other Grants Expenses	\$10,000.09	
Total Special Grant Expenses		\$10,000.09
Occupancy Expenses		
Rent	\$17,727.30	
Building maint & improvement	\$11,332.81	
Garden Maintenance	\$1,760.00	
Repairs and Maintenance	\$318.54	
Utilities		
Telephone	\$2,915.04	
Mobile Phone	\$2,614.81	
Electricity	\$1,998.10	
Water & Sewer Service	\$138.43	
Total Utilities		\$7,666.38

This report includes Year-End Adjustments.

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Profit & Loss Statement

July 2022 To June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Total Occupancy Expenses	\$38,805.03
Other Expenses	
Fundraising Expenses	\$146.82
Total EXPENSES	\$962,180.11
Operating Profit	-\$56,710.71
Transferred Income	
Workers Comp Expenses Reimbursed	\$1,224.00
Management Contributions	\$130,380.00
Total Transferred Income	\$131,604.00
Transferred Expenses	
Workers Comp Claim Expenses	\$824.24
Management Contributions	\$130,380.00
Carry Forward future use	-\$35,070.32
Loss on disposal of Asset	\$3,097.00
Donations to Other Orgs	\$2,000.00
Total Transferred Expenses	\$101,230.92
Net Profit/(Loss)	-\$26,337.63

This report includes Year-End Adjustments.

Page 3 of 3

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective

22 Bosworth Street
(P.O. Box 305)
RICHMOND NSW 2753

Statement of Cash Flow

July 2022 To June 2023

ABN: 12 756 046 044

Cash Flow from Operating Activities

Net Income **-\$26,337.63**

Red - Petty Cash	-\$122.50
Trade Debtors	-\$275.00
Pre payments	-\$6,000.00
PrePayments VR Workshop	-\$2,643.01
Refundable Bonds	-\$100.00
Plant & Equipment - At Cost	\$1,006.37
Plant & Equipment - Accum Dep	\$2,184.63
Income In Advance VR Workshop	\$8,818.18
Provision- Natural Disasters Supports	-\$127.27
Provision for Program Funds	-\$7,000.00
DSS- Funding carried forward Redress	-\$25,675.85
Kyckstart Grant Unexpended	\$10,000.00
Scully Fund Donation Balance	\$1,819.24
DCJ - Building Grant COVID Infrastructure	-\$193,113.77
SSTF Grant -Open	-\$20,000.00
SSTF 3	-\$4,050.18
Cyber Security Provision	\$2,825.45
Paypal Donation Grant	-\$8,184.67
Emergency Relief Provision	-\$4,581.06
Unexpended Grant	-\$9,192.20
JG Grant Unexpended	-\$350.02
Gabrielle Fund provision	-\$3,488.99
Provision for Client Christmas	-\$1,128.46
Responsible Gambling Fund Grant In Advance	\$6,238.47
Provision - Building	\$2,060.66
Provision for Governance	-\$807.18
Staff Fund Donations	\$162.66
GST Collected	\$3,751.92
GST Paid	-\$19,619.52
PAYG Tax Payable	-\$276.00
Accounts Payable	-\$2,444.00
Provision for Training	-\$354.99
Annual Leave Provision	\$10,135.46
Long Service Leave Provision	\$18,899.54
HANADV Funds	-\$1,201.92

Net Cash Flow from Operating Activities **-\$269,171.64**

Cash Flow from Investing Activities

Net Cash Flow from Investing Activities **\$0.00**

Cash Flow from Financing Activities

Net Cash Flow from Financing Activities **\$0.00**

Net Increase/Decrease for the period	-\$269,171.64
Cash at the Beginning of the period	\$800,520.04
Cash at the End of the period	\$531,348.40

Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Collective
 22 Bosworth Street
 (P.O Box 305)
 RICHMOND NSW 2753

Equity Reconciliation
 As of 30th June 2023

Equity			
Retained Earnings Balance at 30th June 2022			\$133,606.27
Current Year Surplus/Deficit for 2022-2023			(\$26,337.63)
Equity Balance as at 30th June 2023			\$107,268.64
Equity	Balance 30/6/2022	Balance 30/6/2023	Change in Equity
Retained Earnings	\$133,606.27	\$107,268.64	(\$26,337.63)
Total Equity	\$133,606.27	\$107,268.64	
Hawkesbury Area Womens & Kids Services Collective Inc does not have shares or owners. It is an incorporated Association.			
All changes in equity are the result of the current year surplus or deficit from operations.			

Notes



The first steps

- Listening to women to understand what is happening
 - Support women to explore options and make informed decisions
 - Work with women to make safety plans for themselves and their children
 - Offer women ongoing support to re-establish life after violence
-

We believe that:

- Men who choose to use violence and abuse are accountable for their actions and behaviour
 - Perpetrators of domestic violence use tactics to keep women isolated and keep abuse hidden
 - Negative social attitudes towards women and children contribute to the silence around domestic violence and a lack of available support
 - Women and children who have experienced domestic violence can overcome the impacts of abuse and reclaim their lives
-

Our promise:

- The safety of women and children is our priority
- We believe women and work beside women to support their needs
- We will always provide women with safe space to talk and support to walk their own path to safety