


THE WASH HOUSE INC

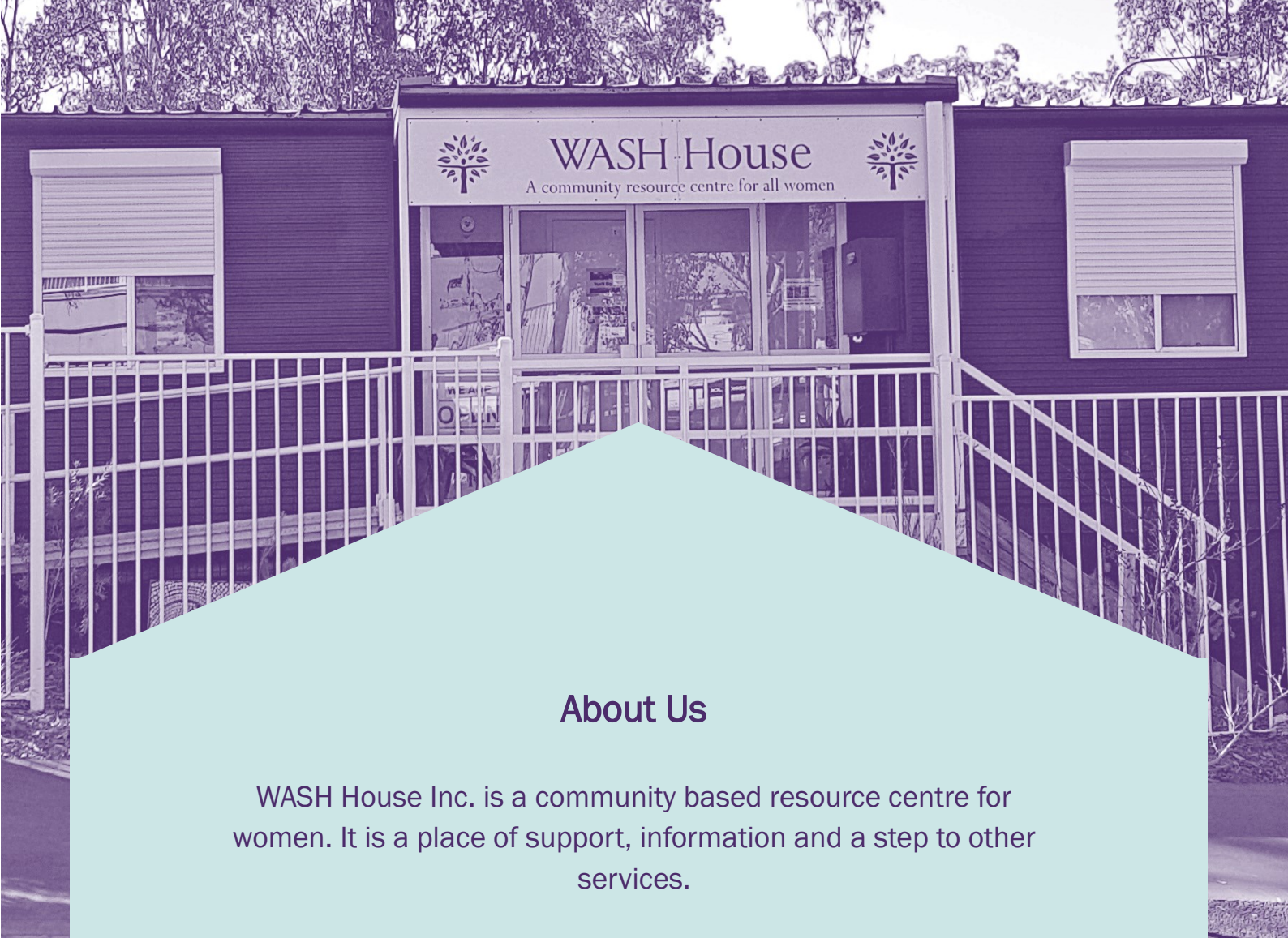
Resourcing Women



ANNUAL REPORT
2020- 2021



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About Us

WASH House Inc. is a community based resource centre for women. It is a place of support, information and a step to other services.

We offer a range of services and activities for women in the Blacktown LGA and surrounds.

The aim of the WASH House is to reduce the impact of poverty, social disadvantage and violence on the lives of women and their families. We do this through the provision of women-centred, quality, timely, culturally sensitive and accessible services.

WASH House Inc.

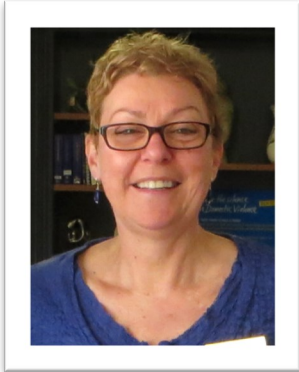
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Chair's Report - Jo Fuller



In looking back over the past year, there is no doubt that one of the biggest issues that we had to grapple with, along with the rest of the world, was the COVID-19 pandemic. I need to acknowledge our Acting Executive Officer, Catherine White, who set the WASH House up to manage during an incredibly stressful time so that staff and clients continued to receive support safely. While we are still struggling with the ongoing impact and aftermath of COVID-19, there is no doubt that WASH House continued to deliver much needed supports to our community. Thank you to all who made sure that we kept going during such a difficult time, particularly our team for their patience, flexibility and hard work!

But even with those challenges there have been some wins in the past 12 months. The completion of the Courageous Conversations filming to make that amazing series available on-line was a major achievement. The finalisation and endorsement of the Reconciliation Action Plan was also a highlight for WASH. We were successful in securing additional funding to support our community to cope with impacts of the pandemic.

Sadly we farewelled a number of Board members during the year. Heather Chaffey resigned as did Widad Idelbi and we thank them for their contribution to WASH. But I must make particular mention of Tarsa Linsdell, a very long-standing Board member who also resigned during the year. Tarsa had been a staunch and passionate member of the Board for more than 20 years so her loss is significant. I want to publicly acknowledge her commitment and support of the WASH and thank her for her all she has done over so many years. We will miss her!

Over the past 12 months, the Board went through a self-assessment process to identify what skills and abilities we have, but also what we needed to ensure that we were supporting the WASH as much as possible. As a result we went through a recruitment process for Board members and I am pleased to advise that we welcomed three enthusiastic women to the Board who bring a range of needed skills to the WASH in the areas of marketing communications , finance and survivor advocacy. Welcome to Amelia Seeto, Alexandra Radcliffe and Anu Iyer.

After a prolonged period of reliance on Catherine White as Acting Executive Officer, the Board was successful in recruiting to the EO position and welcomed Trishima Mitra-Khan to the WASH. Unfortunately due to personal reasons Trish was only with us for a few months before needing to resign. Once again we have been reliant on Catherine to hold the fort for us while we recruited (again successfully) to the EO role. I want to publicly thank Catherine for her care and concern for WASH and her ongoing support of the Board during a challenging time.

In closing I would like to thank the Board – Tarsa Linsdell, Julie Jasprizza-Laus, Heather Chaffey, Widad Idelbi, Vicki Hill, Caroline Ferris, Kristy Hill Amelia Seeto, Alexandra Radcliffe and Anu Iyer for their ongoing commitment to WASH House. Our amazing staff also deserve recognition for their hard work during what has been a very challenging year for all of us. And finally I would like to acknowledge the women who continue to seek support from WASH House. You are the reason WASH exists and we are inspired by your resilience and strength.

Our Collaborations

Blacktown Alliance for the Reduction of Gambling Harm
Blacktown City Community Safety Advisory Committee
Blacktown City Council Women's Advisory Committee
Blacktown City Elder Abuse Prevention Collaborative
Blacktown Domestic and Family Violence Leadership Group
Support the Girls
Outer West DV Network

Community Events

Say No to Violence
Say No to Ice
Kites 4 Kids
Child Protection Week
NAIDOC Celebration
Support the Girls

Our partners

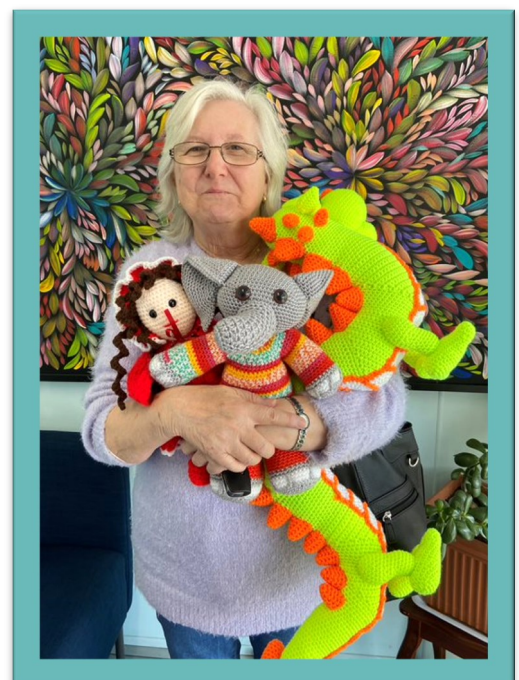
Baabayan Aboriginal Corp
BACC
Blacktown City Council
Escabags
Mission Australia
Mt Druitt TAFE
Together in Bidwill

Our major suppliers

Access Easy English
Adair Evacuation Cons.
Adam's Home Building & Maintenance
Blacktown Roving Child Care
Jerah Technology
Kallico Catering
LM Commercial Cleaning
Wavesoup
Milex Technology

Our funders, donors, and financial supporters

Blackmores
Blacktown City Council
Blacktown Workers Club
Because You Matter/ Wendy James
Bianca Freedman
Bunnings Minchinbury
CBA Mt Druitt
Community Smiles
Dept of Communities and Justice
Good Start
Good Neighbours
Hillsong
Ikea
Isidora Trovato
Office of Responsible Gambling
QIS, Blacktown Westpoint
Rapid Relief Team
Rotary Club of Blacktown City
Rotary Club Mt Druitt
St Agnes Catholic High School
Tamil Women's Development Group
WentWest



Group and Program Activities

The group program meets the social inclusion needs of the women in our community.

It contributes to the health and wellbeing of women and gives them a soft entry to using other services.

Service delivery from the centre was again impacted by COVID-19 this year, particularly face to face services including groups and events.

Despite this Reception received 899 drop ins to the centre.

Group Work Program for 2020 - 2021

Enrolments and Attendances

- Term 3 2020: 373 Attendances, Total number enrolled: 106
- Term 4 2020: 404 Attendances, Total number enrolled: 77
- Term 1 2021: 481 Attendances, Total number enrolled: 109
- Term 2 2021: 566 Attendances, Total number enrolled: 123

Health & Wellbeing

- Yoga
- Dance Stretch & Tone
- Tai Chi
- Belly/Bolly Fusion

Therapeutic

- True Colours
- My Needs Matter (online)
- Art Therapy
- Conscious Parenting
- Bursting The Bubble (online)
- Upstaging the Critic
- SOS: Surviving Our Stress

- 123 Magic

Skill Development

- Computers
- Sewing
- Art

Workshops

- Personal Safety
- Anti-Bullying
- Fierce & Fearless

Women's Health Conversations

- Raising Gambling Awareness
- Money Pains
- Where to Now – Finding help when you need it

Events

- Community Vigil
- International Women's Day
- Support the Girls – Bra Fitting
- Courageous Conversations

Community Projects - Georgie Crabb

Developing and supporting projects and initiatives to resource and strengthen the local community.

Better Bet 4 Blacktown

This is the 2nd year for the Better Bet 4 Blacktown (BB4B) project. Overcoming barriers to delivering the project during a pandemic has been the biggest challenge yet the most rewarding time. Due to COVID-19 constraints creating organisational change for the project partners it was decided by the partners to work independently.

At the WASH House we focused on

- understanding gambling harm and the impacts on women;
- raising awareness of gambling harm in the local community;
- continuing to grow strong working relationships with key stakeholders;
- building the capacity of the local workforce to include gambling harm in their service delivery.

Following the results of the first survey, community consultation was focused on exploring the links between activities at poker machine venues such as bingo and raffles and poker machine use for women. We did this using face to face, qualitative interviews. We held 20 interviews before COVID-19 restrictions were brought in. We had hoped to do more, but despite this clear patterns began to emerge from what we heard.

Women's experience of gambling harm fell into 3 broad groups:

- Women who were aware of gambling harm associated with poker machine venues and did not attend these venues.
- Women who were aware of gambling harm associated with poker machine venues and attended the club for social events but did not participate in any gambling activities.
- Women who did not consider bingo and raffles to be harmful and participated in club loyalty programs. These women did use poker machines and often spent more money than intended. These women also said that clubs were a big part of their life and they often went there to escape the pressures of home life.

Pilot workforce education and awareness training sessions were held with some of our team and Blacktown Area Community Centre (BACC) staff. Using the feedback and outcomes of these training sessions a program of training workshops were developed.

The workshop program was delivered to more workers from organisations including WASH House and Mission Australia. Participants reported an increased knowledge of gambling and gambling harm. Participants were able to identify action they could take to their own workplace to start the conversation around gambling harm. We hope to continue to deliver this to more workers in the future.

The relationship with the Blacktown Alliance for the Reduction of Gambling Harm continued to grow and the group is currently working on a campaign for Gamble Aware Week 2021. There will be a strong focus on youth in the campaign and we have partnered with BACC Youth Engagement Team to design and deliver this activity. The 'BARGH' have adopted the BB4B branding and the Alliance changed it's name to BB4B Alliance for the Reduction of Gambling Harm to reflect the branding.

I would like to thank the supporters of the BB4B project; Alliance for Gambling Reform, University of Sydney Gambling Clinic, CatholicCare Counsellors. We hope we get renewed funding to continue this important work.



It became clear when the pandemic hit that we needed to find a new way of delivering our Courageous Conversations workshops. We all have a role to play in challenging injustice and the WASH has been committed to engaging the community as active bystanders. This year we

modified the program into a series of free online webinars exploring gender stereotypes and inequality and how they link to unhealthy relationships and violence against women.

Our online Courageous Conversations program was officially launched at a morning tea event where we celebrated with many supporters of the WASH House. Special guests included Cllr Kathie Collins, Edmond Attala MP and the Elders from Baabayan Aboriginal Corporation.

Many hours of hard work, collaboration and sharing of wisdom and experience made this work possible. Not to mention the funding provided by Blacktown City Council and the support from Cr Kathie Collins in advocating for the project for which we are very grateful.

We would like to thank; Michael Maxwell, Jes Varela, Sharmila Falzon, Jo Fuller, Julz Jasprizza-Laus, Liam Dooley and Debra Coulson for their valuable knowledge and dedication. Without Catherine White this project would never have happened. It is because of her true commitment to speaking out for women this project was born.

For me personally this was a wonderful experience I am proud to have been a part of. Imagine a community where every man, woman, boy and girl feel safe, respected and are free from violence.



Snap shots from filming day



Counselling - Linda, Lisa, Nancy, Natasha and Val

Providing information, support, counselling and group work.

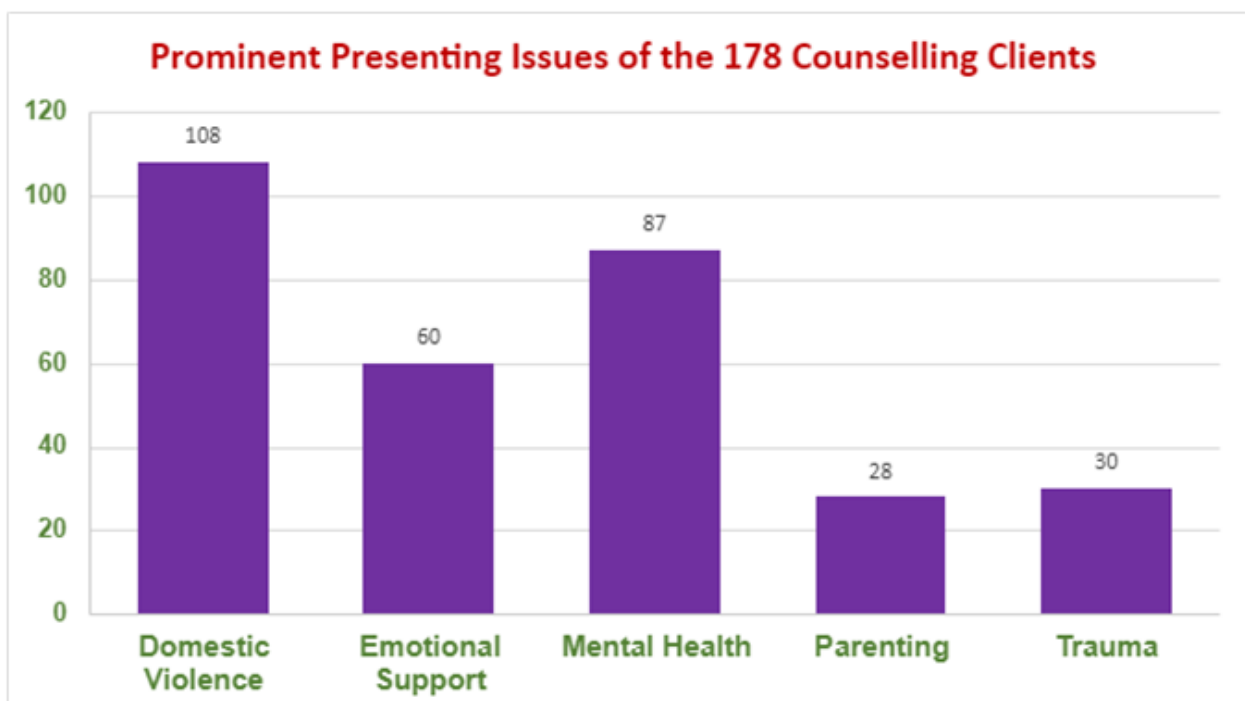
The first half of this financial year was difficult for everyone due to COVID-19 but especially so for those women who were isolated and had limited support. The counsellors needed to become proficient in the use of technology and innovative with the use of resources to provide counselling and support that was not in person.

Women were able to come to the Centre and use a device there to have their session, if they did not have privacy at home. We discovered working online was an advantage for clients whose circumstances prior to the pandemic excluded them from receiving a service. For example, some women who felt unsafe leaving home or others who were unable to take time off from work to travel to the Centre, were able to have their sessions via phone or zoom in their break.

When we returned to seeing women face to face in the second half of this financial year, around a third of the women chose to continue with zoom appointments. It will be a mode of service we will continue in offer to the future.

We were supported financially by the Department of Communities and Justice, Wentwest and Office of Responsible Gambling. We welcomed Natasha on board as a part time counsellor following her student placement with us.

The demand for counselling continues to grow with 178 women accessing counselling with the main issues featured are below. Unfortunately the need is greater than what we can meet. In line with our crisis model we continue to triage clients as they come on to the waiting list and those who assessed as urgent are prioritised for a faster response.



Group work Program

True Colours

True Colours is a group for women with children who have been impacted by domestic violence. Unfortunately, there is never a shortage of women who book in to attend this group. While the program is the same each term, the sessions each week are influenced by the experience, courage, resilience and wisdom each woman brings to the group. Not only do the women learn from and support each other, the consistent feedback is that they also feel safe, validated and understood without judgement.

My Needs Matter

This group was run via zoom in Term 3 2020. The women attending were given an opportunity to explore the benefits of approaching their challenges with self-compassion rather than self-recrimination and to include their own needs when making decisions.

Conscious Parenting.

Conscious Parenting was a six-week program run via zoom. The women were able to gain awareness into why they parent the way they do. They explored their values and own unmet needs as children and gained understanding into how this has shaped their parenting style.

Bursting the Bubble

This group was run via zoom in Term 4 2020. It was designed for women who had been impacted by people exhibiting narcissistic traits, partners, friends and family members. The program was developed by the facilitators, drawing on ACT, Art Therapy and other resources. The shared experiences of the group allowed the women to bond quickly and provided a space where they felt safe to engage with the content.

Upstaging The Critic- Drama Group

This exciting new group was run in person using a space at Mission Australia. The attendees learned stage skills under the guidance of Natasha who is actually a qualified drama teacher while also exploring their relationship with their inner critic. The woman treated WASH Staff with a sensational performance at the end of the 6 weeks.



Upstaging the Critic participants were each awarded a trophy



Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV)

Amelia, Aneita, Casey, De, Nat, Rachel and Sarah

A specialised domestic and family violence program keeping women and children safe at home when leaving violent relationships.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence Project (SHLV) project is a specialised domestic violence program that aims to reduce the risk to women and children experiencing domestic violence and prevent them from experiencing homelessness. SHLV provides intensive long-term casework to women and children who have left or are seeking to leave an intimate partner relationship with the aim of enhancing safety while working holistically to meet individual and family needs.

SHLV works collaboratively with a range of services including Police, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS), DCJ Housing, Health Services, Victim services and other community supports to improve all aspects of the family's wellbeing in recovering from violence.

Case Management in the SHLV project is client focused, strengths based, and trauma informed. As such, case plans are developed in partnership with women to address needs such as:

- Homelessness
- Maintaining tenancies
- Mental health
- Drug and alcohol
- Financial concerns
- Employment
- Education
- Social supports
- Legal issues
- Court support
- Gambling harm
- Medical/general health
- Parenting/caring
- Sexual health

Personal safety is paramount to women who are leaving an abusive relationship and conducting risk assessments, coupled with individual safety plans, ensures all participants within SHLV are supported to live safely in their homes and in the community. Safety plans are reviewed regularly and are tailored to the individual woman's circumstances. They may include a range of strategies including (but not limited to):

- Obtaining AVO's
- Home Safety Audits
- Security upgrades to the home
- SOS devices
- Safe phones
- Installation of CCTV Cameras
- Relocation
- Locating and removing tracking devices

In the last twelve months, the SHLV project has experienced the following challenges, many linked to COVID-19:

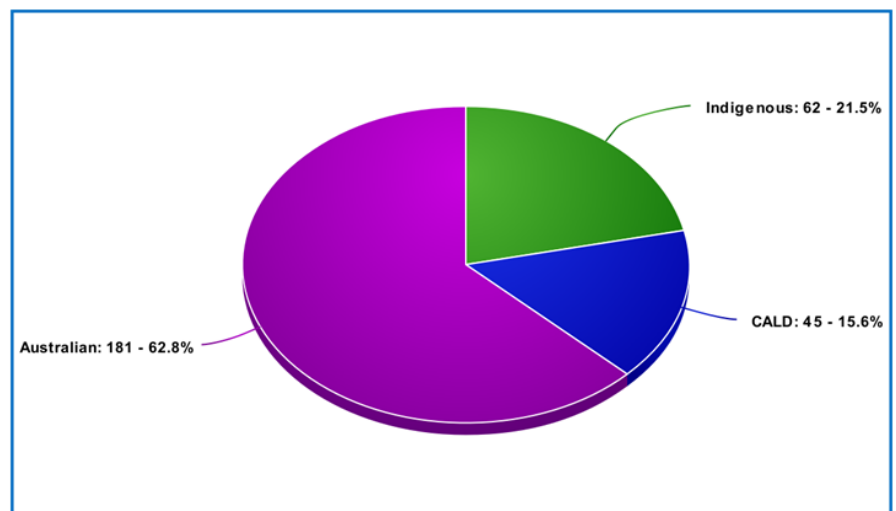
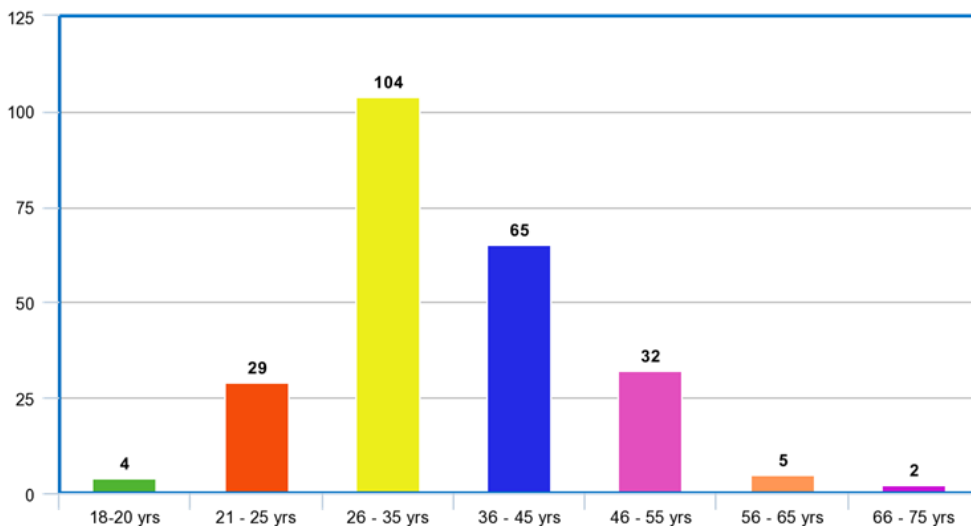
- finding appropriate referral pathways during service closures
- accessing emergency accommodation
- restrictions to open inspections when sourcing private rentals.
- due to the closure of local and family courts, women’s safety was at times compromised and court cases are being adjourned more than usual.

In the last twelve months, the SHLV project has experienced the following highlights:

- We have a 4th team member join the SHLV program which allows staff to adequately accept referrals and attend other contractual obligations such as running groups, attending SAMs and interagency meetings, RAP and trainings.
- Improvements to service delivery and streamlining processes

SHLV has had to close their books for longer than anticipated for a number of reasons including staffing changes and most significantly that demand for the project is higher than we have capacity to respond to. We are contracted to provide service to 110 women per year. Between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021 we received 295 referrals and provided service to 219 women.

Ages of women in SHLV



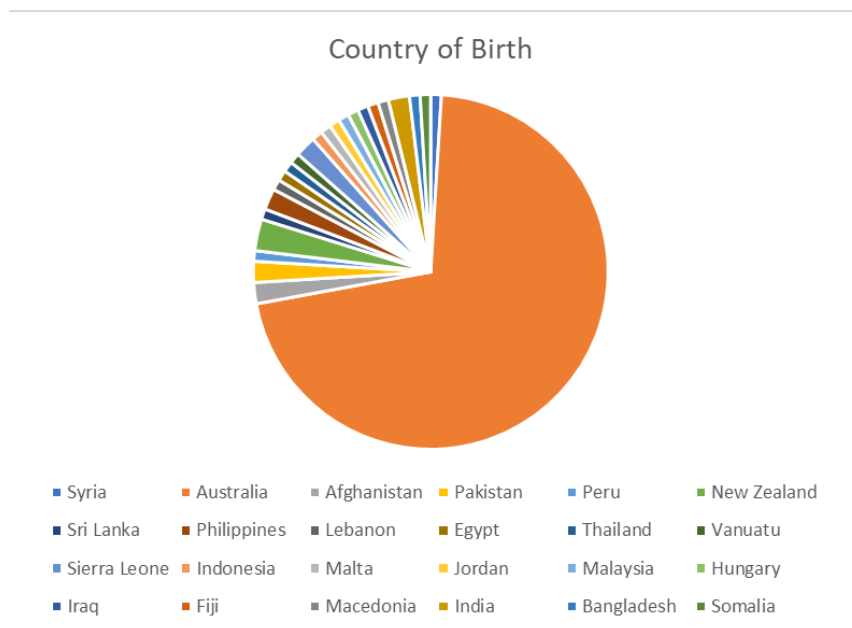
Specialist Casework - Aimelle, Chloe and Mariah

Providing support from the first point of contact for women in need. Ensuring all women seeking support are provided with relevant and timely assistance.

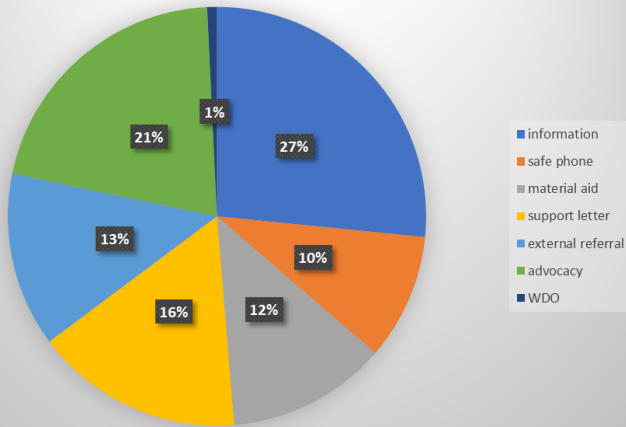
In the past year, Specialist Casework has continued a flexible no wrong door, client centred service to meet women where they are with and respond to what they need. It has continued to be a challenging time for the women in our LGA who were particularly restricted during the pandemic and movements as well as our staff who adjusted to changes in service provision. However, the WASH stayed open and continued to support women who were homeless, did not have access to a phone or devices, or needed a safe place. In times when the restrictions were relaxed our program saw an average of 50 women per month present for face to face services. Whilst that number decreased in lockdown periods the issues that women presented with over the phone remained the same.

Many women continue to drop in for assistance related to surviving domestic and family violence. This includes access to housing, victims services, legal aid, mental health support and material aid. There are also many women who present who are not Australian Citizens with limited access to government safety nets or women who have been in Australia for a number of years but have been misinformed about the systems and support available. We have assisted these women to navigate the range of community services over the phone or online that will empower them to live independently.

The Blacktown LGA is home to women from many different backgrounds. 71% of women who have used our services are born in Australia and from those 35% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We see that same amazing diversity in the women who are supported by our service.



Services Provided



The services we provided to these women included information, advocacy, support letters, safe phone, external referrals, material aid and work and development orders.





The WASH House Board as at June 2021

Our board is made up of up to 8 women who meet monthly to oversee the governance and strategic direction of the WASH House. Currently:

Chair: Jo Fuller

Treasurer: Julie Jasprizza-Laus

Secretary: Caroline Ferris

Members: Kristy Hill, Vicki Hill, Anu Iyer, Amelia Seeto, Alexandra Radcliffe

The WASH House Staff as at June 2021

Acting Executive Officer: Catherine White

Operations Coordinator: Jane Attard-Taylor

Acting Direct Services Coordinator: Natalie Ford-Lillie

Administration: Mary Hassiem, Melissa Palmer

Finance: Lynelle Newman

Community Projects: Georgie Crabb

Counselling: Nancy Bannerman; Lisa Brown; Linda Marsonet

Specialist Casework: Aimelle Manrique, Chloe Mvura

Staying Home Leaving Violence: De Nabarro, Casey Bush, Rachel Grimshaw