

THE WASH HOUSE INC.

Resourcing Women



ANNUAL REPORT

2018 - 2019



About Us

The 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.

The WASH House Inc.

ABN 2274 241 0284

Lot 5 Kelly Close MT DRUITT | PO BOX 551 MT DRUITT NSW 2770
Ph. 9677 1962 | F. 9677 1046 | E. admin@washhouse.org.au
www.washhouse.org.au | www.facebook.com/washwomen



Chair's Report



This past year has again been one of change for the WASH House, but with some strong foundations now put in place to enable us to move forward.

Contents

Chair's Report	4
Our Partners	6
Community Engagement	8
Parenting From Afar	10
Counselling	12
Information and Support	16
Photo Collage	19
Staying Home Leaving Violence	20
WASH House Group Program	22
With thanks from the WASH House	23
Our People	24

We said goodbye to the WASH House Manager, Debra Coulson, who made the decision to move on for personal reasons in January 2019. We thank Debra for her passion and commitment to WASH and wish Debra all the very best for her future. The Board is very grateful to our acting manager, Catherine White, who has very ably and professionally steered WASH through what has been a challenging but ultimately positive year.

We also saw the departure of long term staff member, Anuna Boughton, who was the Staying Home Leaving Violence Team Leader. We would like to acknowledge the contribution that Anuna made over her years at WASH and wish her all the very best.

The Board saw the departure of two members – Lou Reed and Sharron Wood for personal reasons, who we thank for their contributions – but welcomed two new Board members in Ntumba Mitshabu and Heather Chaffey and also Widad Idelbi, past member Board member, who made a welcome return.

Despite all of this change, I am very pleased to advise that WASH House undertook strategic planning over the course of this year and now has a Strategic Plan in place for the organisation which gives us clear directions for the future. We also undertook significant work in mapping our services and activities to ensure that WASH remains in a strong position as part of the Department of Communities and Justice Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) Reforms which will impact on our funding and service going forward.

As a result of this mapping, WASH Board undertook a review of the organisation and made the difficult decision to restructure to ensure the organisation's future viability given the impending changes. The restructure is still underway but the outcome will be a robust, vibrant organisation with a strong leadership team and opportunities to enhance our service delivery to women and their children in Mt Druitt and surrounding areas.

In closing I would like to thank the Board – Tarsa Linsdell, Julie Jasprizza-Laus, Ntumba Mitshabu, Heather Chaffey and Widad Idelbi for their commitment to WASH and for giving their time so generously. Thank you also to our amazing staff for all their hard work during the year.

Last but by no means least I would like to acknowledge the women who access WASH House. Their strength, determination and courage is inspiring and they remain the reason behind all we do at WASH.

Jo Fuller

Our Community Partners and Collaborations

BACC (Blacktown Area Community Centres)
Blacktown City Council
Blacktown City Safety Advisory Committee
Blacktown City Council Women's Advisory Committee
Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre
Cara House
Communities for Children
Community Safety Committee
Deakin University
DVSM ROAR
FACS TEIP Reform Consultations
Housing NSW
Hawkesbury Area Women's and Kids Service (The Women's Cottage)
Intellectual Disability Rights Service
Legal Aid NSW
TAFE Outreach Mt Druitt
Western Sydney Women
West Connect DV Services
Mission Australia
Mt Druitt Family Violence Service
Mt Druitt, Blacktown, and Quakers Hill/ Riverstone Local Area Commands
Outer West DV Network
Penrith Women's Health Centre
Rosie's Place
SydWest and MECA Multicultural Services
University of Sydney
Western Sydney Local Health District
Western Sydney Community Legal Centres
Western Sydney Family Referral Service

Our Community Partners and Cont

Western Sydney Health District Cervical Screening
Willmott Public School
Women's Advisory Committee
Women's Multicultural Luncheons Working Groups
Women's DV Court Advocacy Service (Western Sydney and Northwest Sydney)
Women's Legal Services NSW
Victim's Services NSW

Events, Forums and Conferences

- Sorry Day
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia
- International Women's Day
- Heart to Heart Domestic Violence Vigil
- Mt Druitt Rotary Changeover Dinner

The WASH House is a quality organisation, committed to the quality cycle. Programs are all well evaluated. This evaluation feeds back into our program planning. We also highly value and support staff and board training.

We encourage diversity in expertise, qualifications, skills, experience and interests within the team. This upholds an important strength of the WASH House in meeting the needs of the community.

All direct service and community engagement staff take part in external supervision. The whole team is involved in training such as fire safety and emergency and evacuation procedures.

All staff are encouraged to take an active part in consultation regarding any restructure or change in the operation of The WASH House.

Community Engagement

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

I am happy to return to The WASH House for this short time as a Locum Project Officer. Josephine, before she went on leave had started developing two projects, Courageous Conversations and Fierce and Fearless.

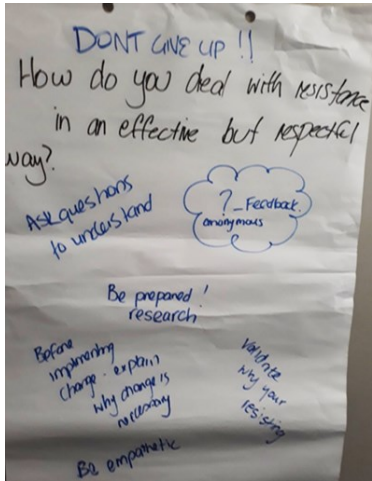
Courageous Conversations.

Courageous Conversations addresses the drivers of violence against women; gender equity, stereotyping and respect.

12 workshops were delivered across the Blacktown LGA. The workshops were offered both to the general public and community workers, male and female.

- 196 people attended in total.
- 83% of participants reported a change in their understanding of gender inequality
- 89% of participants indicated an increased knowledge about violence against women.
- 93% of participants reported feeling they wanted to /had more confidence to take action to stop violence against women.

Courageous Conversations was funded by the NSW Crime Preventions Grant and delivered in partnership with Blacktown City Council. The project is based on a framework developed by Women's Health in Victoria.



Mindmapping exercise in Courageous Conversations

Fierce and Fearless.

Fierce and Fearless is about empowering young women towards a brighter future. Workshops were offered to women aged 14 to 24 across the Blacktown LGA. The workshops were a combination of; mindfulness coaching being offered in schools and storytelling circles being offered in the community. The storytelling circles were based on a “train the trainer” model. Young women were invited to apply for seed funding to be able to share their learnings with other young women.

Comments from the Young Women

“Your feelings are valid. You are the most influential aspect of your life. You are not alone.”

“My main goal is to have women be able to feel at peace and be able to be themselves.”

“The message I want to give other young women is to be yourself. Don’t let other people bring you down, everyone is different.”

Parenting from Afar (ILC)

Increasing knowledge, skills and confidence of people with a disability that have a child removed from their care (or at risk of removal).

Parenting from Afar is delivered in partnership with The WASH House, The Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) and the parents participating. It is funded by the NDIA.

The project works with parents with a learning disability to develop easy to read resources. These resources are to be made available to other parents with a learning disability. For parents with a learning disability this provides access to information and opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and confidence that will ensure they feel connected and empowered to exercise their rights.

8 parents participated in the development. Two parents (Lisa and Renee) were recruited to work with us throughout the project. An advisory group of parents was formed. The parents shared experiences and knowledge and decided what information was to be included in the resource.



Aimee and Lisa



Renee

Comments from parents involved:

"I have learnt to be understanding and listen to others."

"By working on this project I hope to achieve an understanding of the child protection services."

"I took on the role because I want to help other parents."

"I am learning new skills and I love that everyone gets involved."

"(The resource) will benefit any mother or dad with a disability to have a better understanding of what's involved and how to find information."

"Cannot wait for the group to come up with the resource and it out to many services. The next couple of months is going to be quite busy working on it. "

Easy read



Mindmapping ideas



Advisory Group Meeting.

Counselling

Providing information, support, counselling and group work.

The Crisis Counselling Service

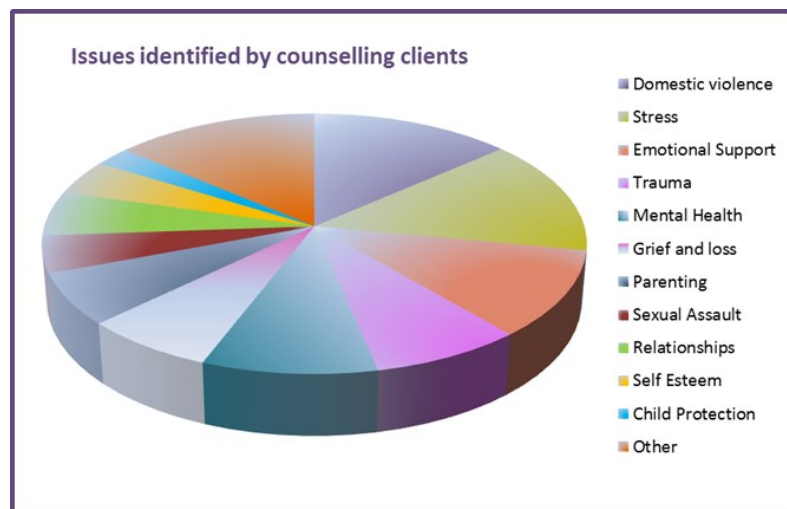
Providing free, high quality, specialised counselling for women continues to be a priority of the WASH House. This is only made possible by ongoing funding and donations. We would like to acknowledge the ongoing support by Family and Community Services and WentWest which have enabled us to maintain one full-time and two part-time counsellors.

Sadly this year the outreach domestic violence specific counselling we had been providing one day per week at Blacktown Women and Girls Health Centre (BW&GHC) was closed due to end of funding that was provided by GoldCrest Securities through the Outer West Domestic Violence Network (OWDVN). We would like to thank GoldCrest and the OWDVN for their generous support over the years which allowed us to increase capacity and support the work of BW&GHC.

This financial year 105 women accessed counselling, 685 sessions being provided. While women present with a range of issues over 65% identify domestic violence as the reason for attending counselling.

Many of the other issues women come to counselling for are related to the impacts of the violence experienced. As a team we continue to challenge stereotypes, gender inequality, and violence.

Demand for counselling remains heavy (even after referrals to other services) which means we have a waiting list. Sources of referral are varied with the primary sources being women making a self-referral (30%), other Non-Government Organisations (20%) and in house (20%).



2019 Highlights

The team was involved in many external activities throughout the year. One highlight of the year included our involvement in the Theatre of Disruption Project in collaboration with Blacktown Arts Centre. This involved supporting clients and the actors during the one-on-one interviews and a special performance by the actors for the clients. It was also a special privilege for Nancy and Lisa to attend Parramatta Girls Home in partnership with Richmond Women's Cottage. This event supported women to reclaim the space where they once lived as teenagers and experienced horrific physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It was an honour to be part of holding so many hurting hands and hearts and witnessing the resilience of these women.

Counselling Group Work

Group work continues to be an important and valuable source of information, connection and healing for women. Nancy and Lisa facilitated groups each term, allowing Linda to focus on seeing individual clients. Groups remain popular with evaluations confirming positive outcomes for the participants.

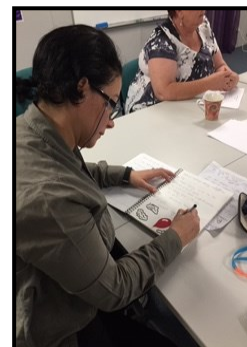


Owning Our Stories (Facilitated by Lisa and Nancy)

This group was for women who had endured trauma and other challenges and wanted to reclaim lost parts of their identity. This program was developed by the facilitators drawing on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the work of Dr. Brené Brown. Topics included boundaries, shame and blame, gratitude and forgiveness. The women reported they were positively impacted by the group.

Keep Swimming (Facilitated by Lisa and Nancy)

This group was funded by a generous donation from Zonta.



The group was designed to help women discuss and explore helpful coping strategies. The funding provided the women with morning tea, quality art journals and supplies. The women were able to express their thoughts and feelings using different mediums. By taking their journals home they were able to revisit the learning from the group. They also made a coping box which contained symbols, pictures and other items as reminders of how to let go of old ways of coping that no longer serve them and focus on new strategies.

Bursting the Bubble (Facilitated by Lisa and Nancy)

This group was for women who had been impacted by people with a narcissistic personality. The program was developed by the facilitators, drawing on ACT and other resources. The shared experiences of the group allowed them to bond quickly and provided a space where they engaged well with the content. This group saw many positive outcomes for the women, with one finding the clarity to move with her children and enrol in a Social Work degree, another accessing paid employment and others reporting increased capacity to manage anxiety and reduced isolation.

Art Therapy (Facilitated by Nancy and Sophie)

For this group we engaged an Art Therapist (Sophie). The women were taken on a journey to explore different parts of themselves through the modality of art. The women were all unique, worked at their own pace and increased their awareness into their own life experience. In turn, it provided the opportunity to make more considered choices for the future.



Prepared by: Linda, Lisa and Nancy.

Information and Support

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

The Information and Support Officer at the WASH House provides individual, specific and time-limited support to assist women who are often in crisis, to articulate and address their needs as well as navigate their way through the Community Services Sector.

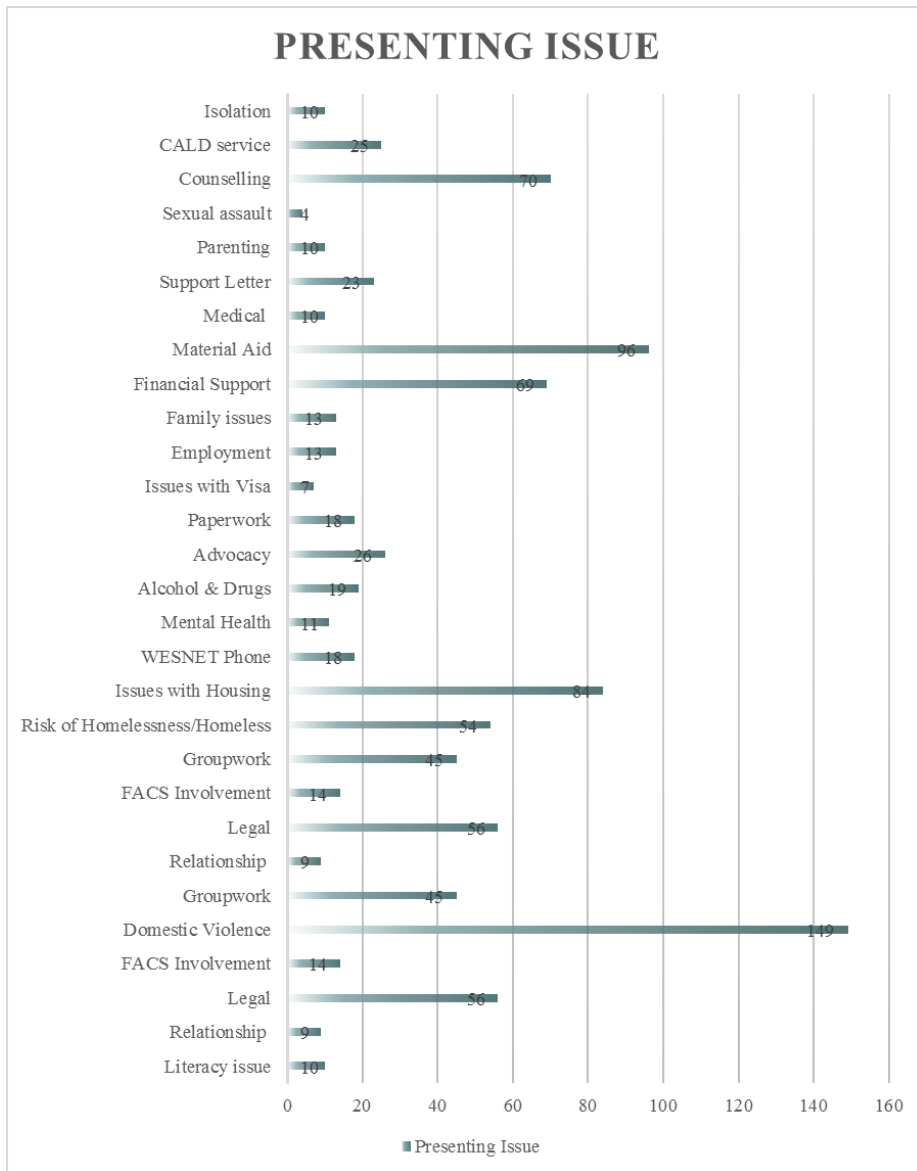
In this financial year I worked with over 320 women who sought assistance for a variety of issues. Domestic violence, material aid and concerns with their current housing were of greatest concern for women.

This year, I have also worked within the Staying Home Leaving Violence team which supports women escaping domestic violence.

I have attended many events in the community, this is an important part of our work at The WASH House.

I co-facilitated several groups including;

- *Circle of Security Parenting Program* with Kerrie from the Staying Home Leaving Violence Team
- *Art Therapy* with Art Therapist Sophie Nyssen



About Women Seeking Support

- The most significant presenting issues are; domestic violence, housing issues, counselling, family issues, material aid and financial support.
- Almost half of the women seeking support have previously been supported by us.
- Mostly women just drop into our centre without an appointment. Others email or call.
- The age group of women seeking support is from 18 to 75 years
- Many of the women do not speak English as their first language and interpreter support is often needed.
- Mostly women are Australian born with 16% of women identifying as being Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander. We have also seen women that were born in 24 other countries.
- The number of women in crisis accommodation is equal to that of women living in private rental.



Sonja attending an event.



**Many women
make a difference**

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV)

A specialised domestic and family violence program preventing homelessness by promoting housing stability. The SHLV model is based on intensive, long term case work. It is needs based, person centred and integrates key agencies, networks and organisations.

SHLV provides casework to women who have experienced domestic violence (intimate partner violence) who require support to continue to live safely in their own home, or to move to a new home of their choosing.

SHLV addresses immediate and ongoing safety concerns faced by women and children. The service conducts safety assessments and works on safety plans with clients throughout the support period which are tailored to individual circumstances and can include;

- Safety Upgrades (eg: locks, peepholes, sensor lights)
- Technological support such as SOS devices and CCTV cameras
- Relocation

SHLV works to provide intervention, case management, advocacy, referrals and group work to our clients. We provide long term intensive case management with the goal to improving all aspects of a families wellbeing. This way, our work aims to address the effects of violence on women and children in our community now and in the future generations.

SHLV accepts referrals from a variety of sources. However at times, due to the complexity and high volume of cases, we have reduced our intake to accept clients assessed as “serious threat” only. This ensures active clients receive the support they need to manage their particular circumstances adequately.

From the 1st July 2018 to the 30th June 2019, SHLV;

- Received 372 new referrals and had a carryover of 34 clients from the last financial year
- Provided case management to 129 women and case co-ordination with other services to a further 27 women (again exceeding our target of 110 cases per year)
- The greatest age range of clients was 36-45 years
- The greatest age range of clients children was toddlers aged 1-4 years
- Most clients were born in Australia with 29 different cultural backgrounds.
- Almost half of the clients came from the 2763 postcode area which is Quakers Hill

Group Program

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.

Skill Development

Art
Computers
Starting to Stitch Sewing Group
Seams Sew Easing Sewing Group
Goal Setting
Card Making
Parenting from Afar

“Great knowledgeable instructor and a wonderful environment. Thank you.”

“Fantastic group, Jrisi is terrific.”

“Mindfulness & Meditation is amazing. I have learned so much about dealing with life and managing my feelings. I feel safer and more comfortable”

Health and Fitness

Yoga
Dance Stretch and Tone
Mindfulness & Meditation
Belly/Bolly Fusion
Dance Around the World
Tai Chi

“Thank you, art therapy is such an enlightening experience.”

Therapeutic

Keep Swimming
Art Therapy
True Colours
Journey to Freedom
Owning our Stories
Circle of Security

With thanks from the
WASH House

**Our funders, donors, and
financial supporters**

Blacktown City Council
CBA Mt Druitt
Officeworks Minchinbury
Bunnings Minchinbury
Mount Druitt Rotary Club
NSW Government Dept of Family
and Community Services (FACS)
Zonta Cumberland West
Seven Hills Toongabbie RSL
Riverstone Schofields Memorial
Goldcrest Security

Our major suppliers

Adair Evacuation Cons.
Adam Building & Maintenance
Blacktown Image Print
Blacktown Roving Child Care
Quicksmart Cleaning
Jerah Technology
Telstra SNP Monitoring
Mt Druitt Community Hub

Our supporters

Councillors and staff at Blacktown
City Council
Bianca Freedman
Wendy James/Because You Matter
Isidora Trovato
Women's Electoral Lobby
Penrith Women's Health Centre
Western Sydney Community Legal
Centre
Women's Legal Service
Mt Druitt TAFE
BYSA



Our People

The WASH House Board as at June 2019

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

Deputy Chair: Widad Idelbi

Secretary: Heather Chaffey

Members: Tarsa Linsdell, Ntumba Mitshabu

The WASH House Staff as at June 2019

Acting Manager: Catherine White

Administration: Mary Hassiem, Melissa Palmer

Finance: Lynelle Newman

Community Engagement: Josephine Rechichi (maternity leave)

Project Officer: (Locum): Georgie Crabb

Counselling: Nancy Bannerman; Lisa Brown; Linda Marsonet; Sonja Godschalk (Information & Referral)

Staying Home Leaving Violence: Amelia Webster, Kerrie Heymans, Natalie Ford-Lillie, Emma Ledbrook (maternity leave)