



WASH House Inc.
RESOURCING WOMEN



2022-2023
Annual Report

Contents

- 3 About the WASH House**
- 4 Chair's Report**
- 5 A Busy Year**
- 6 Intake**
- 7 Group Work**
- 8 Staying Home Leaving Violence**
- 9 Crisis Counselling Service**
- 10 Redress**
- 11 Rosie's Story**
- 12 Other Program Highlights**
- 13 Partnerships and Collaborations**
- 14 Board of Directors**
- 15 THANK YOU**



About the WASH House

Our Aim

Our aim is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of women and girls in our local community by reducing the impact of poverty, social disadvantage and violence on their lives.

Our Vision

We envisage a community in which women exercise equal rights, choose their own destiny and have a safe environment for themselves and their family.

Who We Are

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 are feminists, we are strong and we are capable of anything.

What We Do

We offer a range of services and activities for women in the Blacktown LGA and surrounds. We do this through the provision of women-centred, quality, timely, culturally sensitive and accessible services.

Our Statement of Reconciliation

We acknowledge the Darug people as the original custodians of this land on which we live, work and learn and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

The WASH House is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas. We respect that the continuous and deep connection to their Country is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We believe a better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage and will support reconciliation.





Chair's Report

Following my second year as Chair of the WASH House board, I am so proud of everything that the team has accomplished. From supporting, collaborating with and learning from our clients to helping women via our services; from helping to stop abuse before it starts by presenting in schools and building local partnerships to celebrating the successes of the women who work with us - the WASH House is committed to empowering women.

This report highlights some of the WASH House's achievements over the past year as we continued to deliver a wide range of services to women in Blacktown and surrounding suburbs.

It has been a year of flux, but despite these changes, the WASH House team has ensured that the women and community we support continue to receive the highest quality of care and support. Throughout the year, many of our team members have shown great resilience and adaptability, without wavering from their commitment to delivering quality services to our clients.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to take this opportunity to thank the team at the WASH House for the work they do every day.

With new staff on board for the 2023-2024 year, I am excited to see how the WASH House grows. And while we reflect on our achievements, we are ambitious in our mission to help survivors of domestic violence and the attitudes that underpin it. There is still so much more to be done and we are resolute to look forward.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the WASH House this year. It takes many busy hands, big hearts and fine brains to use the limited funds at our disposal to best ensure women have access to quality services.

It has also been an honour to work with my colleagues on the WASH House board, all of whom dedicate their time without any remuneration.

The strength and resilience of the women who visit the WASH House continues to renew and inspire me. I very much look forward to working with you all again, as together we embrace the challenges and opportunities of 2023-2024!



Julz Jasprizza-Laus (Chair)

A Busy Year

It was another jam-packed year with many people connecting with the WASH House. It is important to our staff to meaningfully engage with the women in our community. Here are just some examples of the many impactful events and presentations arranged by our staff.

- International Women's Day celebrations
- DV Memorials and Community Vigils
- Stage programs delivered to Blacktown Girls High School
- Female, Fierce, Fearless delivered at Rooty Hill High School and Chifley College
- Family Christmas present wrapping day
- Mother's Day gift boxes
- NAIDOC celebrations
- Easter Egg Hunts
- Youth Week scavenger hunt



Intake

Information, Referrals and Support

The intake team welcomes women into the WASH House for a variety of reasons. Women connect with our team, for example, to:

- Access information and support
- Build social connections
- Attend various group activities
- Access material aid
- Get assistance if they are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness
- Connect with our team if they are experiencing domestic violence or are a survivor of domestic violence

Our team meets and chats with everyone to try to understand their individual story and needs so they can make sure they are connected with the right support. The intake team meets new women and old friends of the WASH House and all are welcome.

The team is embedded within the WASH House services including counselling, Staying Home Leaving Violence, Redress and group activities as well as within local services to ensure women have all the information they need.

1,100+ women were supported through intake this year.

Marie's Story

Marie* is a survivor of domestic violence. She was staying in transitional accommodation but unfortunately her safety was compromised when the perpetrator found her location. Marie came to the WASH House in the hope of finding safe and permanent accommodation.

Our intake team met with Marie to understand her situation and they were able to advocate on her behalf to the Department of Communities and Justice - Housing (DCJ Housing). Due to the relationship that the WASH House has with DCJ Housing and the support offered by the intake team, a transfer was offered.

Marie was supported to a safe, permanent location, and she is now happy starting a new life.



*Names have been changed to protect client's identity

Group Work

The Group Work Program coordinates various groups designed in collaboration with our community. They offer a range of different ways for women to connect, build confidence, gain new skills, explore something new and share their experiences in a way that empowers and unites the community.

Most women accessing our group programs are aged between 30 and 50 years of age and represent the diversity of our community.

Feedback collected from the programs indicates overall positive outcomes.

We have had almost 500 people participating in our group programs this year.

Groups delivered each term consisted of the following:

Social Health & Wellbeing

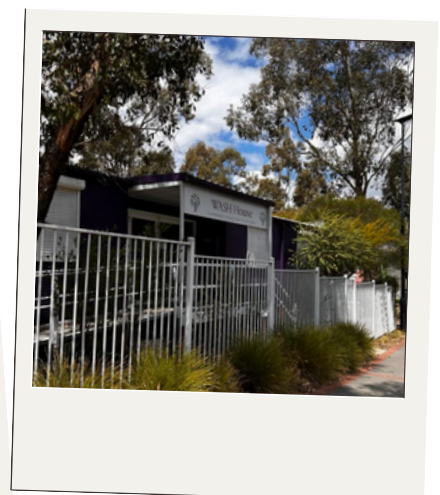
- Yoga
- Dance, stretch and tone
- Belly dancing
- Feel Good Fridays
- Spanish social group

Skills, Training & Parenting

- Sewing
- True Colours
- Financial budgeting courses
- 123 Magic (Mission Australia)
- Circle of Security (Mission Australia)

Therapeutic & Counselling

- Making Connections
- Book Club
- Shark Cage



Staying Home Leaving Violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) provides casework to women who have left, or are seeking to leave an intimate partner relationship; and require support to continue to live safely in their own home; and/or move to a new home of their choosing.

At the WASH House our SHLV workers support women and children living in the Blacktown LGA including Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Riverstone Police Area Commands.

The WASH team works collaboratively with a range of services including police, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS), DCJ Housing, NSW Health services, victim services and many other community services and support networks.

The SHLV team supports clients with:

- Intake and risk assessments (including home safety audits)
- Safety and case planning
- Security upgrades to their home including CCTV and lock changes
- Homelessness/housing/maintaining tenancies
- Mental health, drugs and alcohol
- SOS devices and safe phones
- Obtaining apprehended violence orders (AVOs)
- Advocacy and referrals to other services for:
 - Financial support (victims services, Red Cross, escaping violence payments)
 - Employment support
 - Education (TAFE, groups and courses)
 - Legal and court support

SHLV has kept 214 women and children safe at home when leaving abusive relationships.

SHLV provides practical and emotional support that is centre-based but it can also offer home visits. The service conducts safety assessments and works on safety plans with clients throughout the support period that are tailored to individual circumstances.

Security enhancements are assessed on a case by case basis and offered only when indicated as necessary following a safety audit and include:

- Relocation or tenancy support
- Safe phones
- Safety upgrades (e.g.: locks, peepholes, sensor lights, counter-surveillance)
- Technological support (such as SOS devices and CCTV cameras)

Our case management support is strength based, trauma informed and client focused. In the last 12 months, the Staying Home Leaving Violence project has kept 214 women and children safe at home when leaving abusive relationships.



Crisis Counselling Service

Providing free, high quality, specialised counselling for women continues to be a priority for the WASH House. We would like to acknowledge the ongoing support by the Department of Communities and Justice which enables us to maintain our counselling team.

We have continued to offer women the choice of video, phone, and face to face counselling as well as after-hours appointments. With this flexibility we can offer counselling to a more diverse group of women. These different modalities reduce the barriers of seeking counselling for many.

We noted that, as costs of living escalate, so do stress and anxiety levels within families. Women wanting to leave violent relationships face the additional barriers of the scarcity of affordable rentals and increased living costs generally. It is difficult to address the emotional impact of abuse before basic needs are in place. Having in-house caseworkers and group workers to refer to is a real strength at the WASH House.

We struggle more than ever to keep up with the demand for services and our wait list really swells at times. A triage system ensures that the most acute presentations are seen quickly. When we can, we link clients on the wait list to other services however the options for free counselling are limited. Group work can be a good holding space for people waiting as well.

During the past financial year, we have conducted 474 sessions of general counselling, 43 sessions of family capacity building and 83 sessions of specialist support. We work on a 10-session model that is solution focused. Women can self-refer, however most are referred through services.

Around 20% of clients who presented for counselling identified as First Nations people and another 13% identified as being from a CALD background. We feel confident that we are reaching and engaging with our most vulnerable populations. Naturally we will continue to search for new and innovative ways to make ourselves accessible to more women. The most heavily represented group of women were between the ages of 25 to 39.



Redress

The National Redress Scheme (NRS) is a government program recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, to acknowledge the harm done to people who have experienced this abuse. For eligible applicants, a Redress offer can include: a payment, an apology from the responsible institution (for those who want one), and access to free counselling.

The WASH House can provide support for those applying, or considering applying to the NRS including:

- Counselling
- Case management
- Support completing the application in a safe and confidential space
- Support to receive an apology in a way that is meaningful to the applicant
- Links to services that offer free legal advice and financial counselling



The Redress team at the WASH is client-focused and we understand that flexibility in the way we deliver service is required in order to be inclusive and trauma-informed. For this reason, Redress appointments will look different for each client. For example, we used alternative spaces for clients who found our rooms triggering, held sessions at the homes of clients, and had clients attend with support workers from other organisations for familiarity.

We understand that flexibility in the way we deliver service is required in order to be inclusive and trauma-informed.

The Redress team at the WASH has been occupied this year attending community events, delivering in-service presentations, attending workshops and meetings with the Department of Social Services (DSS), developing and distributing promotional materials and supporting our clients.

The initial focus has been on raising awareness and ensuring our staff understand the potential complexity of the program and the importance of client driven and strength-based work. The second part of the year, we focused on promoting the service to clients and we successfully engaged and supported 11 clients, six of whom identify as First Nations women. Due to the intense nature of the support that is offered with this program, collectively we held 98 client sessions, delivered seven in-service presentations, completed two applications, received two advanced payment offers, and provided transitional support for those who were not eligible under the scheme.



Rosie's Story

Rosie* is a survivor. Her strength and resilience is profound. She has overcome many challenges and barriers - low literacy due to limited schooling, which also reduced her training pathways and education prospects; a dysfunctional family life; abusive relationships and exploitation leading to isolation, anxiety and hypervigilance.

Rosie knew she wanted to submit an application under the Redress Scheme. Rosie knew she needed support to complete the application, however she also wanted to protect her children from having to hear her story and know about her past. Rosie took a big step and reached out to the WASH House so we could help her through this process.

This allowed Rosie to maintain her privacy and dignity and provided the support she needed.

Rosie shared her story in a safe confidential space.

Rosie's NRS application was complete and she was successful in receiving an advance payment. Rosie decided one of her goals was to gain her independence, for Rosie this meant gaining her learner driver licence, something she never thought she would be able to achieve.

Rosie with the support of her case manager was supported to:

- Engage with a service that provides support for people trying to get their license
- Access to a support person as a reader during the test
- Additional study sessions

Rosie was successful in gaining her learner driver licence, she has passed her hazard perception test and is practicing for her provisional licence test.

Rosie said, "This licence is very important to me - all my life I have never had anything for myself and this is something that I want to do for me."

Rosie no longer requires intensive counselling support as she is more confident expressing her feelings and using grounding techniques she learned in her sessions. She is still engaging with our service for support with her application, and casework support, and is aware of the services she can access such as, free legal advice, and financial counselling.

Rosie is looking forward to buying a car and moving to a small country town where it is quiet and peaceful.



*Names have been changed to protect client's identity

Other Program Highlights

True Colours - Term 4, 2022 and Term 1, 2023

True Colours is a group for women with children, who have been impacted by domestic violence. The group provided a safe space, the women shared their stories, they listened and validated each other and provided support and understanding. Topics included healthy relationships, red flags, the impact of domestic violence on children and ways to move forward after trauma. The group allowed women to form a strong connection and break down isolation making them feel like they were not alone.



Connection Book Club - Term 3, 2022

We read a book by Oprah Winfrey called “What I Know for Sure”. Over the course of six weeks, five women explored the themes of the book in the context of their life stories. The group worked through issues such as people pleasing, self-esteem, love and belonging, empathy, connection, and empowerment. We provided the book and the women read it between sessions so they could participate in discussions and share their ideas. Women attended either in person or via Zoom.

This Book Club gave me a chance to engage in my passion for reading and grow with other women while being part of a community”



Making Connections - Term 2, 2023

Making connections explored the dynamics of the different relationships we have and why we connect the way we do. The women became aware of the type of relationships they attract and were given the opportunity to learn about the relationship that they have with themselves.

“We were able to be “real” and felt safe enough be vulnerable with each other.”



Partnerships and Collaborations

By working with external organisations, we are able to help and reach more women in our local community. Some of the organisations that we have connected and collaborated with include:

- Adam's Home Building & Maintenance
- Amazon
- Anglicare
- Australian Chinese Charity
- Barnardos
- Blacktown Area Community Centres
- Blacktown City Council
- Blacktown Roving Childcare
- Commonwealth Bank
- CPB Contractors Ghella
- Dandelion
- DCJ Housing
- Escabags
- IDRS
- IKEA
- Junaya
- Lander Toyota
- LM Commercial Cleaning
- MECA
- MILEX Technology
- Mission Australia
- Mt Druitt Community HUB
- Mt Druitt TAFE
- NSW Police
- Penrith Women's Health Centre
- Share the Dignity
- SydWest Multicultural Services
- The Carevan Foundation
- The Red Cross
- Uniting
- Western Sydney Community Legal Centre
- WISE Employment
- Women's Legal Service NSW



Board of Directors

Our directors are responsible for providing strategic oversight, financial management, reviewing our performance and ensuring we are governed by appropriate policies and procedures. They are all feminists who lend their skills and time for no remuneration.



Julz Jasprizza-Laus (Chair). Julz has spent 25 years volunteering and working with local communities. Having had her first child at 16, Julz has experienced first-hand the negative impacts of isolation, fear and judgement, and knows what it takes to overcome these. Julz is now Mission Australia's Area Manager in Western Sydney, leading a team of 60.



Jo Fuller (Treasurer) has worked in the sector for almost 40 years, starting out as a hospital social worker. She was an inaugural member of the board of the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence and has held senior management positions in community health, mostly in Blacktown LGA. Jo is currently the Program Lead, Priority Populations within Western Sydney Local Health District.



Caroline Ferris (Secretary) is a banking executive who started her career in health sciences and worked across a wide range of clinical settings before moving to banking. Caroline loves learning and has an MBA from UTS and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Alexandra Patterson is a chemical engineer and has worked in engineering, quality and operational roles across several industries, currently working in Medical Affairs for a global medical device company. Alex was raised by feminist parents and was inspired as a child to engage with the local community by her mother working as part of a collective to establish a women's refuge in her home town.



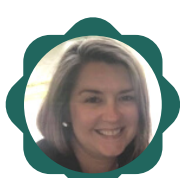
Amelia Seeto is a communications professional who has dedicated her career to working for purpose-driven organisations in Australia, Spain and the UK - including Women's Aid. Amelia is currently the Director of Communications for a charity that raises funds for NSW Health hospitals and research. She is on the board of a youth mental health charity and has three young children.



Asifa Sherazi is a strategic technology leader with over 20 years' experience in Financial Services. Asifa is currently working at Westpac Banking Group as Head of Technology for Customer Engagement, accountable for technology across the consumer and business distribution channels. She thrives on people leadership, developing emerging talent and inspiring through story telling that aligns teams to strategic roadmaps.



Elfa Moraitakis is the CEO of SydWest Multicultural Services and a Director of the NSW Council of Social Services and NSW Council on the Ageing. Elfa has been actively involved in the community sector for the past 30 years and has an extensive background in developing services for culturally and linguistically disadvantaged communities with a strong track record in strategic direction.



Kristy Hill is an experienced Human Resources professional with nearly 20 years experience in HR working across Australia and Europe. Kristy has held senior roles helping to coach, develop and drive talent strategies. She also has a strong background in organisational design, effectiveness and employment relations. Kristy is a proud Indigenous woman who grew up and was educated on Darug country.



THANK YOU

We couldn't have done it without you.

Thank you to all our whole community for their ongoing commitment and support. We wouldn't be here without our dedicated staff, inspiring clients, generous donors and kind volunteers!

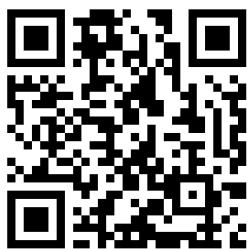
We received **\$14,000** in donations from our community!





Help us to help more women.

Donating to the WASH House will ensure that we can continue giving women the chance to exercise equal rights, choose their own path and have a safe environment for themselves and their family.



Scan to learn more



WASH House Inc.
ABN 2274 241 0284

Lot 5, Kelly Close MT DRUITT
PO BOX 551 MT DRUITT NSW 2770

9677 1962
admin@washhouse.org.au
washhouse.org.au

 /washwomen

 @washhouseforwomen

