



International Women's Day

## Women's Wellness Festival

15th March - 1pm till 7pm  
Lady Denman Heritage Complex

- Workshops
- Performances
- Food
- Information stalls
- Market Stalls
- Giveaways
- Come Rain or Shine!

For women, their families & friends

For more information please call:  
Judith Beardon, East Nours Neighbourhood Centre - 4422 1299  
Maxine Edwards, Nours Neighbourhood Centre - 4421 5077



### Women's BIZ

July 2013  
Newsletter of Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre

**Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre**

Empowering | Holistic | Supporting

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre empowers women to take control of their health and wellbeing through the provision of accessible, holistic health services within a caring, feminist environment.

Funded by Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District



### The Belly

A Story of Inner Beauty







# Annual Report 2012/2013

## Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre

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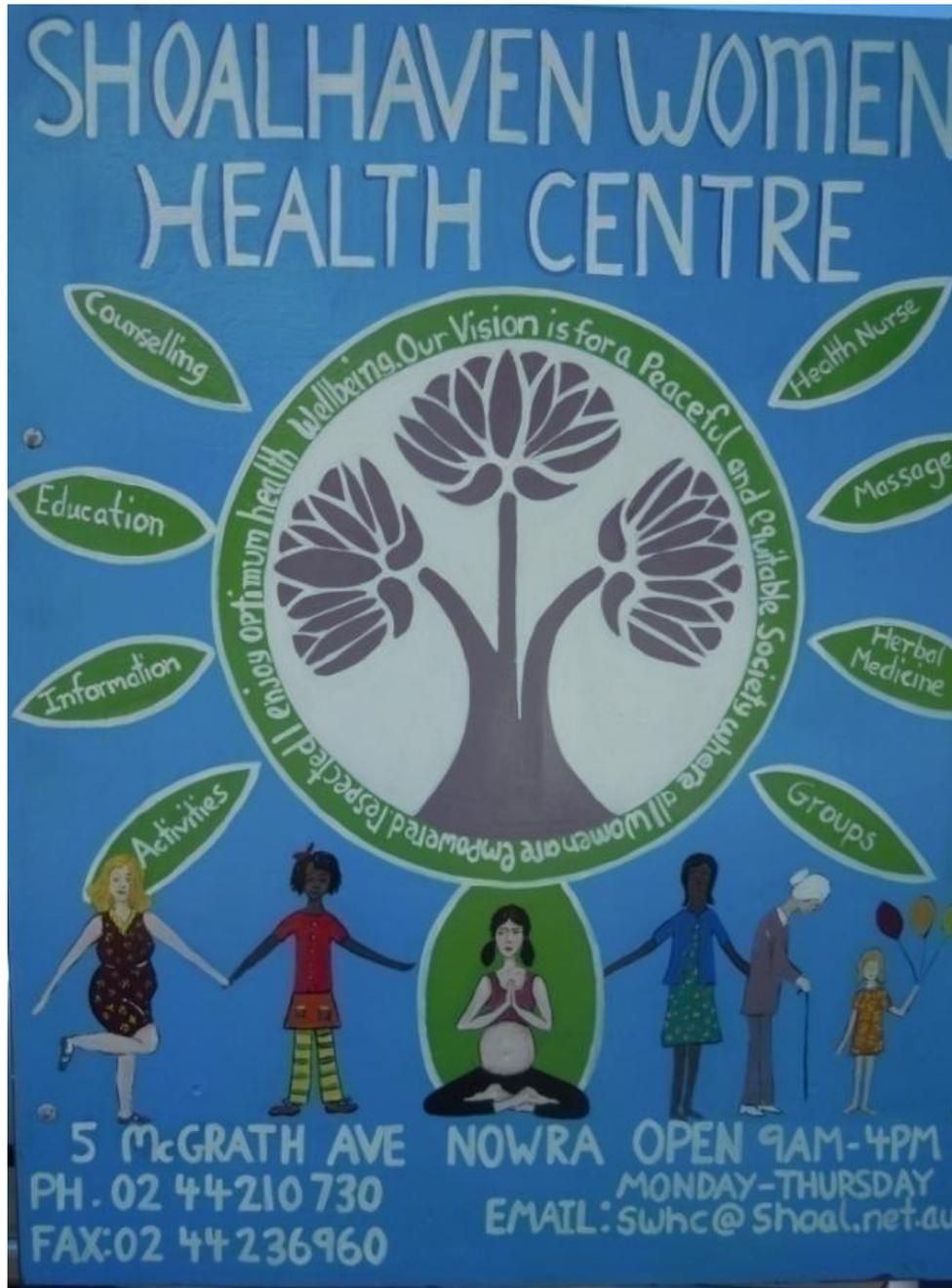
**Email:** [swhc@shoal.net.au](mailto:swhc@shoal.net.au)

**Web:** [shoalhavenwomenshealthcentre.org.au](http://shoalhavenwomenshealthcentre.org.au)

**Facebook:** Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre

**A feminist service funded by  
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District**





Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre (SWHC) is incorporated under the Associations Incorporations Act and is a registered Charity with Public Benevolent Institution Status. This status enables donations to be a tax deductible item.

The Committee of Women, who oversee the Governance of the SHWC work, live or reside in the local community. The service currently employs six (6) part time staff, and the centre is supported by volunteers, including administration volunteers and Tafe NSW placement students.

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre is a member of Women's Health NSW, the peak body for all Non Government Organisations (NGO) Women's Health Centres in NSW.

# Centre Fundamentals

## Vision

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre (SWHC) has a vision for a peaceful and equitable society where all women are empowered, respected and enjoy optimum health and wellbeing.

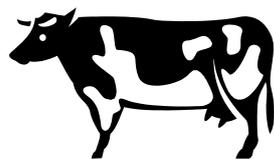
## Mission

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre (SWHC) empowers women to take control of their own health and wellbeing through the provision of accessible, holistic health services within a caring, feminist environment.

## Objectives

The objects of the Association are:

- To provide a non-profit primary health care service for women, managed by women, within a feminist framework, in the Shoalhaven area.
- To prioritise access for women who are living in poverty, or who have low or fixed incomes, by providing services at a minimal cost, or for no cost to ensure that women are not refused service, due to inability to pay.
- To ensure that services reflect the needs of local women providing educational, preventative and self-help programs which encompass women's life span, experience and cross a broad range of health issues.
- To network, liaise and collaborate with other local service providers in order to provide necessary services to women in the community.
- To facilitate access to the service activities and to assist women to access other appropriate services (acknowledging and addressing the different needs of women of diverse backgrounds and the barriers they may face).
- To uphold the rights of women who may use the service to express themselves freely, to be treated with respect, dignity and consideration.
- To ensure the creation and maintenance of a safe, healthy and supportive environment for the well being of staff, management and women who use the service.
- To actively encourage the empowerment of women in both the personal and social aspects of their lives by promoting informed decision making processes.
- To provide a range of services which reflect the holistic nature of Women's Health.
- To ensure effective community management and operation of the Women's Health Centre by and for women.
- To encourage training and staff development of Centre staff in all areas of Women's Health to ensure the highest standard of health care to consumers.



## Chair's Report

The 2012/13 year has been a challenging one for the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre in which staff, volunteers and committee members have been required to introduce and adopt a number of changes to bring the organisation in line with best practice.

Some of the challenges were external such as the implementation of the Modern Award and the NSW Government's review of Women's Health which will open the sector up to open tender. Others arose from the Centre Review conducted in 2011/12.

Over the last twelve months the organisation has successfully implemented the Modern Award, upgraded the Centre's Information and Technology facilities, completed and made available the Policy and Procedure documents, upgraded the financial administration procedures, reviewed and revised the appointments system and improved client services by adjusting staff hours.

The Centre has also had a change of staffing during the year with Coordinator Jane Dowling having to leave for personal reasons at the end of 2011-12 and the new position of Manager was filled by Tracy Lumb in February 2013.

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre has a long and proud history of providing quality services to women in this community and on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Tracy, the staff, volunteers and the other Committee members for their commitment to the organisation and their willingness to participate in the process of change.

It is understood that change is never easy. However, with the changing dynamics of this sector it is important that this organisation puts itself in the best position possible so that we can continue to operate as a locally-run, community-based organisation.

**Judith Reardon**  
Chairperson  
Committee of Women

# Manager's Report

During 2012/13 Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre was primarily funded through the NSW Ministry of Health, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, NGO Grant Program. Income was also received from service fees, donations, fundraising and interest. The Centre continues to auspice funds for the International Women's Day (IWD) Committee, and other local groups as required.

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre Incorporated (SWHC) is a community-managed women's health service initiated by women, for women.

Many women from Shoalhaven and its surrounding areas have accessed the Centre's services, at little or no cost.

In accordance with the Centre's aims and objects, a range of clinical, counselling, and health promotion/education services were offered during 2012/13. Detailed information is contained within this report.

With the challenges faced by staff, volunteers and the Committee of Women through the unfortunate resignation of the Centre's Coordinator, the recruitment of a Service Manager, continuation of the Centre restructure to name a few; SWHC continue to offer a high standard of service with unwavering dedication, to the women of the Shoalhaven.

The additional stresses and strains associated with uncertainty surrounding funding and the contestable tending mechanisms for NGO's, the centre has continued to provide unique and varied services to our existing clients and continues to attract new clients. The Committee of Women continue to access and evaluate information and best practice strategies to place the centre in a strong position for the future, during times of change.

The Committee of Women worked within the framework during this period with the knowledge that the existing funding would cease at the end of June 2014. SWHC were delivered the good news by the NSW Ministry of Health after consultation with the NGO Advisory Committee, that all Health Funded NGO's will have their funding extended up until the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The purpose of the extension is to allow time for sector capacity building, informed development of packages for future purchasing and greater transparency and accountability. This was great news for all Women's Health Centres in NSW.

The Centre saw the completion of the Policy and Procedure Manual, the successful upgrade of computers and IT (extremely overdue) and the purchase of an electric Massage Bed that allows greater access for women with disabilities.

The Centre will commence its journey of self assessment supported by Quality Innovation Performance Limited (QIP) within the coming year and address the areas of quality management, with the focus on accountable and viable strategic planning.

This year the Centre entered its 28th year of operation and continues to provide unique services to the women of the Shoalhaven. In the short period since commencing with SWHC, I have observed the professionalism and commitment of staff and volunteers to the goals of the Centre and thank them sincerely for their hard work and dedication.

Thanks also to all members of the Committee of Women, and especially our Chair, Judith Reardon for their commitment and ongoing support.

**Tracy Lumb**  
Manager

# 2012/2013 Staff/Volunteers

All staff are employed part time and classified by the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Modern Award with the exception of Maureen Cable, our Women's Health Nurse who conducts a regular outreach clinic through Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Well Women's Program.



Centre staff remain a dedicated and committed team who continue to provide a high level of compassionate and professional service to Shoalhaven women.

Thanks to Kym Nicholson, Carolyn Lette, Linda Fenech, Sally Gardner, Lyn Wallin, Jane Dowling (resigned) and Maureen Cable.



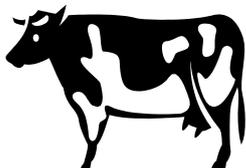
Our volunteers and Tafe NSW placement students continue to 'outdo' themselves with the support and talents they offer the SWHC.

These women support the Centre on a weekly basis and without their consistent efforts especially in the area of administration; our services would not have run as smoothly.

Thanks to Alicia Cruwys, Michelle Waples, Robyn Clements, Lesley Brook and Lyne French.

The Committee of Women (CoW) are a diverse range of women with a high level of skills, knowledge, professionalism and commitment.

Our Centre is critically dependent on these attributes, and we recognise and acknowledge the invaluable contributions, hard work, energy and enthusiasm of Committee of Women members over the last year which ensures our organisation promotes best practice.



Our thanks to Judith Reardon (Chair), Sally Wallace, Sandra Kettlewell, Linda Merryful, Jan Frikken and Tracey Gmur (resigned).

# Strategic Plan 2010-2013

- ✓ Build a strong and dynamic organisation capable of providing a range of sustainable and effective programs which address women's health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Provide a range of holistic services, education and information to empower women and improve their health and wellbeing, and build community capacity.
- ✓ Work through strong partnerships and cross sector collaborations - at local, state, national and global levels - to have a positive influence on public opinion, politics, services and practices relating to women.
- ✓ Improve access to health services and information for all women.



# Service Provision

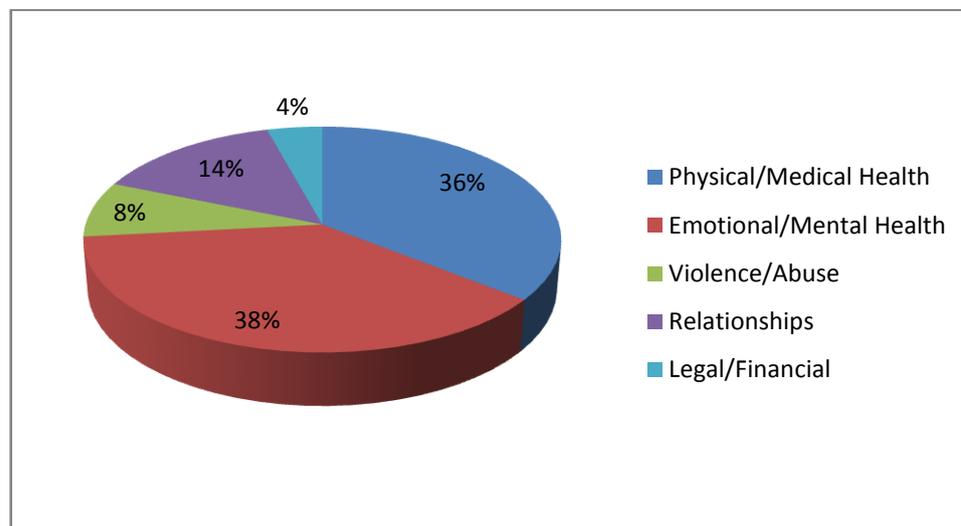
**Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre** activities continue to reflect the objectives, philosophy and goals of the Centre in line with our Strategic Plan 2010-2013. Project and Service goals were achieved with service provision occurring across counselling, clinical and health education areas.

SWHC continues to respond to the expressed needs of local women and to address NSW Health priorities, including those in the NSW Health Framework for Women's Health 2013. The Centre provides a wide range of services accessible to all women of the Shoalhaven at a minimal or no cost.

During 2012/13, 619 women attended appointments in core SWHC service areas.

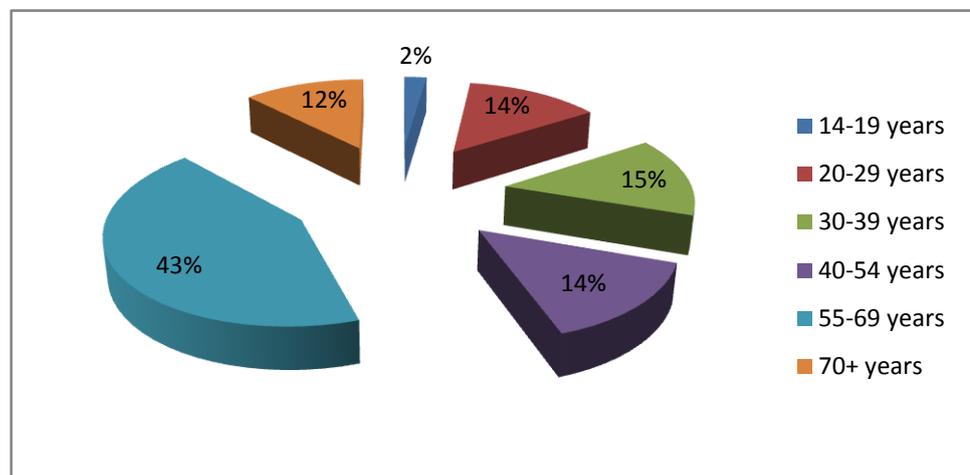
- ◆ Provided appointments (face to face and by phone) for women across core service areas – **counselling (151 contacts)**, **massage (224 contacts)**, **alternative therapist (80 contacts)** and the **nurse (228 contacts)**;
- ◆ recorded **272** women attending health education and promotion groups including yoga and gentle stretching, health, relationship and self esteem workshops, art based therapy groups and information sessions held at the Centre; and
- ◆ managed an estimated number of **1,044** requests for information and or referral by phone, drop in, email through reception staff and practitioner referral.

Of a total of **473 presenting issues** across counselling, massage and the alternative therapist service, the main presenting issues were in the broad areas of physical/ medical health (345), emotional/ mental health (363), violence/ abuse (77), relationships (140), and legal/ financial (41).



**NB: Women may present with more than one issue. Figures for Well Women's Clinic (Women's Health Nurse) are not included.**

The age range of clients who accessed SWHC core services during 2012/13 was broad. Percentages saw a significant increase in the ages of 55-59 years and an increase in 30-39 years, 20-29 years and a slight rise in the 70+ age range.



**Health Education Programs** focused on self esteem issues, confidence building, diet, nutrition and lifestyle issues. 272 women attended workshops and groups held at the Centre including:

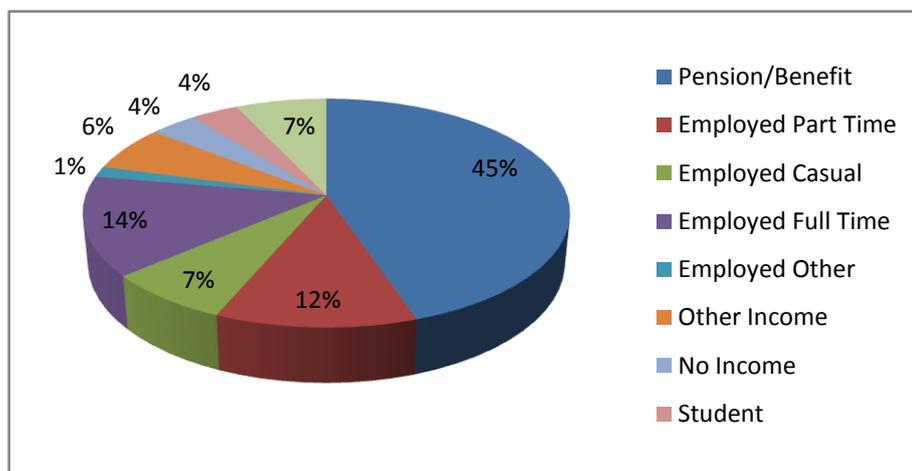
- Menopause workshop
- Self Esteem and Assertiveness x 3
- Self Care Stress Management Workshop
- The Belly Art Project x 4 groups
- Spirit Nest Random Weaving x 2
- Assertiveness Workshop
- PHAMS Group
- Waminda Pamper Day – external x 2
- Arthritis and Fibromyalgia
- Breathing Techniques and Relaxation
- Breathing Techniques and Relaxation x 6 weeks
- Food for Thought
- Healthy Mind Healthy Body
- Meditation
- Women’s Wisdom Group (4 x 6 weeks)
- Multicultural Women’s Health Group

Over 70% of new clients attending workshops go on to access further SWHC services.

Clients report feeling less stressed, more informed about health issues and able to make more informed choices.

2012/13 the Centre received approximately 1044 requests for information and or referral by phone, drop in, email or through practitioners and staff.

Numbers increased from last year with 328 women completing the socio economic section of the registration form. The largest client group in this area was women on a pension or benefit which represented 45% of all women. 14% of women indicated they were employed full time, with 12% working part time, and 7% reporting that they worked casually. 6% of women reported having other income, 4% of women were students, and 7% of women reported having no personal income.



SWHC continues to receive feedback surrounding the welcoming, friendly, information, safe and non judgmental atmosphere of the Centre. Clients continue to comment that 'no request is too great' and staff, practitioners and volunteers will 'go out of their way' to provide information and resources. Clients comment on individual attention received and even in group situations each person is recognized.

**Well Women's Health Nurse Program- 228 women** attending Well Women's Clinics and of these **176 pap tests** were taken.

Of these, 24 women had not been screened for four years or more (under-screened), and 6 women had never been screened. A total of 43 women were referred to other health service providers as a result of their clinic visit. Of the total women receiving pap tests, 3 were referred to their local general practitioner as a consequence of their Pap test result, for further management by the GP or referral, a further 6 women had low grade changes and are for 12 month review.

A further 10 women were referred to Dr Brown (SHCN for further management of a clinical issue due to their not having a local GP or were unable to afford access to specialist services for a Gynecological issue.

Opportunistic sexual health (swabs/urine) testing is included in the clinical service and provided to women who present at consultation with symptoms.

<26 years of age who are asymptomatic will be offered Chlamydia testing - 14 women (7%) were tested for Chlamydia and nil positive results recorded the opportunistic sexual health screening is supported by standing orders document with the sexual health service as per Dr Brown sexual health policy and standing orders agreement.

The women's health nurse also receives phone calls from clients who have been referred from the women's health centre for information concerning women's health issues and possible referral for further management. The women's health nurse also responds to drop in clients to the Centre who require medical information and referral to discuss pregnancy options.

The emergency pill was dispensed to 3 women requiring treatment due to failed contraception. This medication is given using the standing orders from Dr K Brown as per sexual health policy protocol for women's health nurses.

The women's health nurse also provides Education sessions on a range of women's health topics. The women's health nurse and multicultural service of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) are working in collaboration with the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre (SWHC) to provide a venue where women from CALD backgrounds can meet. The Project can provide women with an opportunity to explore their own health and wellness needs and to have access to information and resources on women's health and wellness.

#### **Major activities/ achievements during 2012/13:**

- ◆ Continuation of service provision in core areas of **counselling, massage, alternative therapist, Well Women's Clinic (outreach), and health promotion (internal health education workshops** including yoga and gentle stretching, health, relationship and self esteem workshops& outreach groups);
- ◆ Community development activities including **IWD, The Women's Wellness Festival** and partnerships/networking relationships and activities with other agencies;



- ◆ Strengthening our relationship with **Waminda** through their **Pamper Days** for clients and the services provided at SWHC;

- ◆ Member of the reference group for the **"Strong Koori's Strong Community" Waminda Cancer Care and Wellness Project;**
- ◆ Participation in the **Nowra Domestic & Family Violence Interagency Managers' Group** and the **Shoalhaven SHLV Reference group;**
- ◆ Network member of **Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention & Awareness Network (SSPAN);**
- ◆ Sector activism/ advocacy in areas of improved service delivery to women and their families i.e. **Anti Poverty Committee;**
- ◆ The continuation and growth of groups which were established in the last reporting period – **Women's Wisdom** and the **Multicultural Women's Health group;**
- ◆ Establishment of new self help support group for women who have been, or still are, in an unhealthy relationship – **Next Step;**
- ◆ **The Belly – A Story of Inner Beauty Project** was held in four locations in the Shoalhaven – Nowra, Nowra East, Bay & Basin and Ulladulla.



**Participants create their Belly.  
The Belly Book launch at Squid Studio.**



- ◆ This was an art therapy project to create plaster casts and decorate using different techniques and mediums. The artwork demonstrated the participant's inner strength and sense of self worth. Approximately forty women attended the workshops over a period of 6 weeks and then held an exhibition in three of the outreach areas. A book was developed showcasing the completed works and the story of the

women behind each piece. One of the participants to her story/work and presented as an **abstract to the 17<sup>th</sup> Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference in South Africa**. The project was funded with the assistance of ClubGrants.

## Organisational development

- ◆ **Implementing new processes** in line with recommendations received from Booth Partners to stream line our financial procedures;
- ◆ **Policy and Procedure Manual** completed and the review process commenced;
- ◆ Self Assessment process commenced included the reassignment from **QMS to QIP**;
- ◆ **Volunteer program** continues along with the supporting **two Tafe NSW placement students**;
- ◆ Consultation and further processes around the implementation of the **internal centre review**
- ◆ **Replace old, outdated computers** including the provision of a server to support and hold our information and data;
- ◆ Purchase of **electric Massage table**. This will not only benefit existing clients but provide the opportunity to engage a greater client base **for women with disabilities**;
- ◆ Staff attending **training/personal development** opportunities.

The SWHC supports local agencies and works in partnership to:

- ◆ **auspice local events** e.g. IWD;
- ◆ agency visits and attending local community agency events and celebrations e.g. **NAIDOC, Healthy Minds Conference, The Women's Wellness Festival**;
- ◆ providing guest speakers and **outreach opportunities** e.g. Waminda, Pamper Days;
- ◆ supporting **women's issues through activism** including women's pregnancy choices, IWD activities and Women's Wellness Festival;
- ◆ Supporting **Awareness Days** including Daffodil Day, Breast and Ovarian Cancer:
- ◆ **Tafe NSW Illawarra** Nowra Campus;
- ◆ providing and **receiving/providing supervision** to and from workers from other agencies:
- ◆ entering into **partnerships with other organisations** in sourcing funding and program implementation - e.g. ClubsGrants, IMS, Women's Wisdom group in partnership with ILSHD and various workshops/information sessions

# Shoalhaven International Women's Day 8 March 2013



During March, under the auspices of the Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee (SIWDC) eight events celebrated women's achievements and challenges.

The events ranged from a trivia night, a breakfast and a lunch, an art exhibition and awards, to a wellness festival, a dance night and a performance night.

Fourteen organisations sponsored these events, and more organisations were involved in organising them.

The events effectively appealed to a cross-section of the Shoalhaven to support women's project of having a respected voice in both public and private spaces.

**Marg McHugh**  
SIWDC



*Performers at Tomerong Hall....Photos 1 & 3  
SIWDC Trivia Competition*

## Local Opinion Questionnaire Summary for Annual Report

The Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre conducted a community consultation project entitled Local Opinion Questionnaire, which ran from mid June through to mid August 2013. The aim of the project was to investigate which issues affecting Shoalhaven women are important to local community members.

Consultation was conducted by voluntary completion of the survey. The questionnaire was circulated through several community service organisations throughout the Shoalhaven, including, Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre, Nowra Youth Centre, Headspace, East Nowra Neighbourhood Centre, Waminda, Shoalhaven Drug and Alcohol Service and Nowra YWCA.

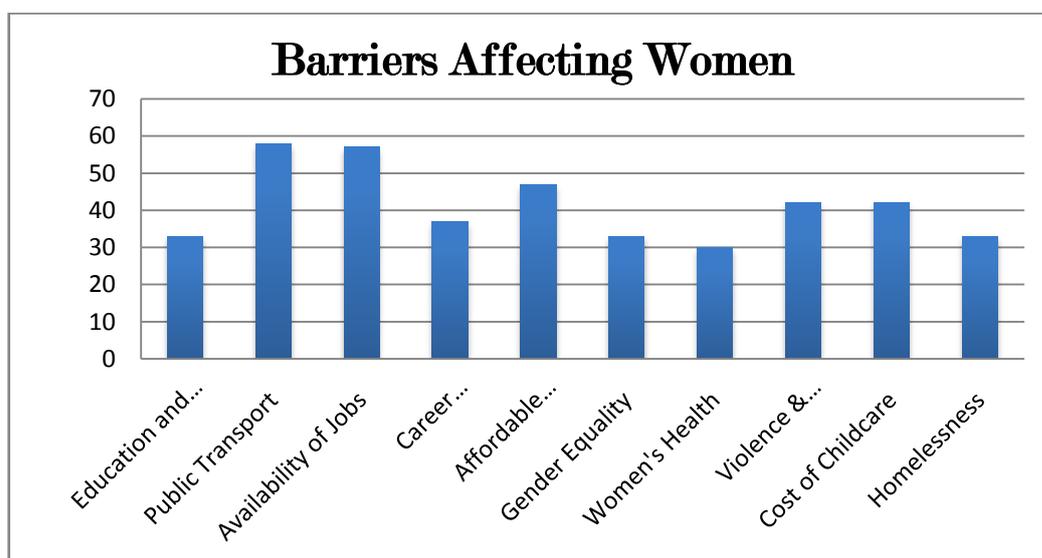
A total of 79 questionnaires were received back, the responses have been collated and an overview of some features are as follows:

### Demographics

74 participants (94% of respondents) completed or partially completed the demographic section of the survey, of which 70 were female and 4 were male. Of the 72 participants (% of respondents) who advised their age, 10 were aged between 18-30, 13 aged 31-40, 22 aged 41-50, 15 aged 51-60, 9 aged 61-75, and 3 aged 75 or over. The 54 (% of respondents) that indicated cultural background reflect the Shoalhaven's cultural diversity with respondents identifying as Australian, Aboriginal, English, Asian, Italian, Polish and Welsh.

### Barriers affecting women

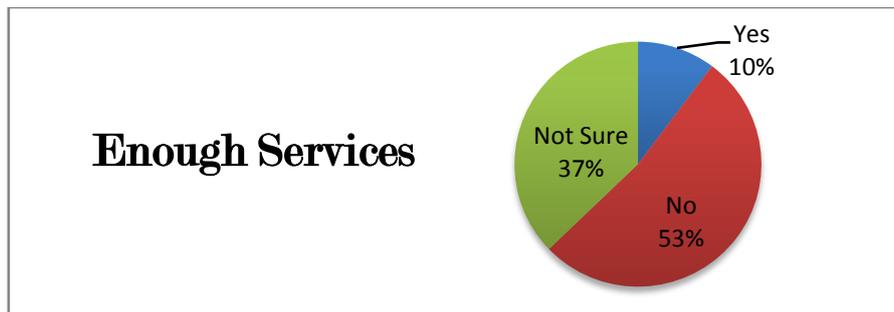
The table below shows the response to the multiple choices given for the question about barriers affecting women. As the table clearly shows, access to public transport and availability of jobs are most concerning for those who responded.



Other barriers indicated by written responses to this question included limited mental health services, social isolation, cost of medical services and insufficient women specific health services.

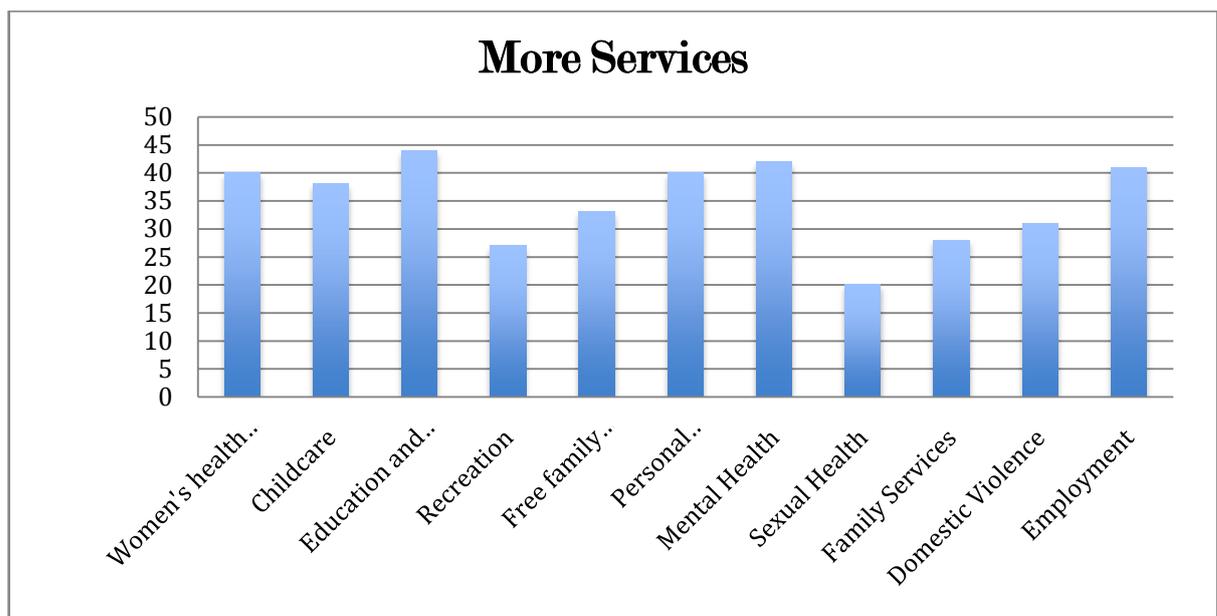
### Enough Services

More than half of all respondents indicated that they believe there should be more services available to women in the Shoalhaven, as shown in the chart below.



### More Services

100% of respondents selected at least one of the multiple choice options relating to what services that they would like to see more of. This demonstrates that all respondents would like to see more services provided for women, regardless of whether or not they believe there are already enough services.



Written responses to this question included free or low cost services and activities, more outreach services, support services for education, and social groups.

### Improvements

43 participants responded to the open ended question about what improvements could be made to the Shoalhaven that would be of benefit to women. Many of these responses resonate with the issues raised in the previous questions including transport, childcare, education, employment, and access to services. The following comments reflect the prevailing themes:

- *Women enterprise projects and mentoring. Challenging consumer culture and championing environmentally sustainable projects designed by women.*
- *Focus on strengths of the community, volunteers, programs that are available advertised more.*

- *Even more availability of women specific health services, including mental and emotional issues. Same income for same work.*
- *Better infrastructure, better media communication, public transport improvements, cheaper & accessible childcare options,*
- *Expanding the current women's services & facilities & offer free meeting spaces for women. (Women can do anything!)*
- *Mental health, different therapies ie: art therapy that doesn't cost the earth!*
- *More transport option – Better access/info about services avail*

### Conclusion

Responses to this survey demonstrate that local community members are enthusiastic about expressing their opinion regarding issues affecting women living in the Shoalhaven, especially women. Based on this enthusiasm and the results of the Local Opinion Questionnaire, it is anticipated that further consultation with the local community surrounding these issues would be well received.

As suggested by a respondent, it would be beneficial to establish a community forum where local members of the community can provide further feedback and engage in discussion about potential ways to address these issues. Participation and action from representatives at all levels of government in this process would be essential in achieving meaningful outcomes to address the issues raised in this consultation.

***The Local Opinion Questionnaire was planned, conducted and compiled by Alicia Cruwys, in the capacity of a volunteer student, conducting work placement for Diploma in Community Services Work.***

