



Annual Report

2020/21



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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 (CoW), who oversee the Governance of the SHWC work, live or reside in the local community. The service currently employs nine (9) permanent part time and full time staff dependent upon current funding streams; with one (1) sub-contractor – limited contract. The centre is supported by volunteers, including administration volunteers.

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 New South Wales.

Centre Fundamentals

Our 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.

Our Mission

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

Our Philosophy

SWHC is committed to empowering women and valuing women's life experiences. We strive to incorporate into our work the feminist ideal of women's right to a valued place in society; accountability in providing quality multidisciplinary, integrated health care services; professional integrity in maintaining ethical standards in the provision of services; and on-going development and support for staff and volunteers.

Our decision-making process is guided by equity, effectiveness, relevance and appropriateness.

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre operates from a feminist perspective that views health within a social context as emphasized by the World Health Organisation and supported by the frameworks within Health Ministries both State and Federal. This view recognizes that:

- Health is determined by a broad range of social, environmental, economic and biological factors;
- Differences in health status and health objectives are linked to gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, location and environment, racism, sex-role stereotyping, gender inequality and discrimination, ageism, sexuality and sexual preference;
- Health promotion, disease prevention, equity of access to appropriate and affordable services and strengthening the primary health care system are necessary, along with high quality illness treatment services;
- Information, consultation and community development are important elements of the health process.

Furthermore, critical considerations in women's health include:

- Women's health being understood as encompassing all of a woman's lifespan and reflecting women's various roles in Australian society, not just their reproductive role;
- The greater participation by women in decision making about health services and health policy, as both consumers and providers;
- The recognition of women's rights, as health care consumers, to be treated with dignity in an environment which provides for privacy, informed consent and confidentiality;
- The availability of accessible information which is appropriately targeted for different socioeconomic, educational and cultural groups; and

Women's health policy and services must be based on accurate data and research concerning women's health, women's views about health, and strategies which most effectively address women's health needs.

Chair's Report

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate every member of the staff at the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre on behalf of the Committee of Women (CoW).

The dedication, resilience and flexibility shown during this year of uncertainty and disruption has been an enormous challenge.

Our team has faced and managed all obstacles with the presence of Covid-19 in communities, they have managed multiple and changing health guidelines and rules. They have still been able to provide support and wellbeing services to our clients while being Covid safe.

The Centre underwent Accreditation late last year and I am proud to say we passed with flying colours, congratulations to all involved. We were highly praised for our ethics.

Our team of staff, practitioners are thanked for their ongoing work, well done all.

Linda Bradshaw (Massage Therapist), Carolyn Lette (Alternate Therapist), Kym Nicholson (Counsellor), Suzanne Buzza (Social Worker/Counsellor).

Lia Anderson (Finance), Ali Goodwin (Financial Counsellor) and Kim Perkins (Financial Counsellor). Leane Davidson our Receptionist does a wonderful job, keeping everything organised.

Our Manager, Tracy Lumb does an amazing job, she values each and every one of her staff for what they are able to achieve. Everything runs smoothly with her at the wheel. Well done, Tracy.

Unfortunately, we did not have our Federal Funding renewed and this has caused strain on our budget. Tracy has been able to confer with staff to ensure our door stays open for five days per week.

We have been able to extend outreach services to Ulladulla and Sanctuary Point for Financial Counselling and Counselling with increasing demand in both areas.

Staff work face to face when able, remotely, by telephone or email to continue to assist clients. Workshops have been held over the year depending on the health directives as to whether they are able to go ahead. Thank you to the staff for their organisation of workshops.

We are fortunate to have Lizz Gerlowska (Well Women's Program ISLD) who provides women's health nurse services to clients. Thank you Lizz.

We are also very fortunate to have Liz Parnell (Solicitor) who assists our clients, pro bono, with legal issues, a much-needed service. Thank you, Liz.

Volunteers are highly valued at the Centre and thanks must go to Kathy, well done.

I would like to thank the Committee of Women (CoW) who continue to give their time and experience in guiding the Management of the Centre. Thank you to Dot Winspear, Erin Nichols, Kate Morris, Maureen Cable, and Michelle Waples for your support and friendship.

Thank you to all CoW members. To Alison Murie who relocated from the area, thank you for your years of service to SHWC as a CoW member.

I look forward to a good year ahead and continuing support of the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre.

It is a great pleasure being part of the Committee of Women and I wish SWHC continued growth moving forward.

Lyn Gerstenberg **Chair**

Manager's Report

In 1972 a young Australian woman sang...

I am Women hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore.....

I was about to leave my younger years behind and enter high school, whilst I really had no idea about what this song was about...the Women's Movement and Equal Rights; I loved the song, would sing along and here I am, all these years later, still singing it, loud and proud.

And for all women, this last 12 months have been and will continue to be, an ever changing landscape. What we have had to learn: to navigate, reevaluate, assess and steer a path forward. For many women, it has changed their roles; many becoming teachers, carers, changing careers paths and learning a whole new language.

Words like Zoom, iso, bubbles, jab, worry worms, click and collect; my favourite 'work from home', (I thought we already did 'work' in the home); now have a new meaning for all of us. We have seen changes to community, increased risk to some, isolation for others, community stepping up to donate, deliver goods and cook for others.... We have seen the best and worst of people in society.

But what we have witnessed and, continue to witness in the face of change, women 'roaring'.

Grace Tame a sexual assault survivor 'Australian of the Year 2021'; Brittany Higgins calling out appalling behavior perpetrated against herself/women in the workplace; recognition by policy makers of the domestic work women do in the home; now including, remote learning for children; working from home. For many women, formal and informal support systems have faded away (childcare, grandparents, friends).

But in the face of all this, gaining an understanding of what a pandemic is and what it means for us; our families, our community, our work and our futures..... we have done it. Addressed, adapted, enhanced, acknowledged and reached out.... Not for one moment, with all these challenges has it been easy – it is exhausting. But we have taken it in our stride, as women do.

SWHC's staff have equally been and will continue to be, on a journey of change. The services we can deliver, the services we currently change/cannot deliver and how this looks for our clients.

We acknowledge that none of this is perfect, none of this is how we like to engage but, what is important, is in whatever form it takes, we continue to serve the women of the Shoalhaven.

During the 2020-2021 period we again, were accredited by ASES Certificate Level and awarded 100% in every standard (ASES executive summary within this report). Acknowledged for our client centred focus, empowering clients to control their recovery journey..... however long that may take.

We have kept our doors open with staff always being on site and welcomed another one hundred and thirty three (133) new clients to our service. This saw an increase from our previous year.



SWHC in the reporting period continued to operate five (5) days a week, delivering outreach to Ulladulla with Counselling and Financial Counselling and, Financial Counselling in Sanctuary Point. Thanks must go to Ulladulla Community Resource Centre for providing a safe space for clients in this region.

We have seen some cuts to funding but also received funds via our BAS and COVID Boost from various Government Departments which has enabled us to 'plug' this shortfall and allowed us to carry on as 'normal'. Unfortunately, for the 2021/2022 year this will not be the same. Services and staff hours will be cut. But we will continue to lobby, apply, liaise and annoy all levels of Governments to obtain a funding stream to cover this shortfall and in the 'perfect world', increase service delivery and staffing levels.

The SWHC staff and volunteers continue to support the women of the Shoalhaven with programs that provide intervention and prevention strategies working from a trauma informed model of care.

Our space in these different times still remains busy, just a new type of busy - do what we do best: approximately 6,505 points of contact, an increase of approximately 25% from last reporting period. Women were either attending centre appointments/Zoom/phone, outreach locations, groups/workshops where allowable, emergency drop ins, drop in for information, via email or letter, outreach clinic or by telephone. SWHC continues to focus on the importance of client centred service provision, with the focus on intervention and prevention. This philosophy makes SWHC an extremely comfortable and consumer friendly sought-after service providing a safe space even in the virtual world to all women.

Due to health guidelines and restrictions our much-loved groups had to cease but in between lockdowns we were able to get in a few..... SWHC still provided eighty eight (88) group sessions and taking into account COVID-19 shutdowns/lockdowns, an amazing achievement by all staff. Group work plays a vital role in women's wellbeing and all staff look forward to when we can find what is our 'new normal'.

The staff at SWHC continues to provide a high standard of service and continue to develop, revamp and reassess all things we do; ensuring that all practice and information is accurate and current. Intervention and prevention is the key focus when identifying and supporting a diverse range of women with often complex needs within a regional setting.

With the ever-increasing complexities of our clients and the environment which we currently live, staff remain steadfast in their dedication; a loyal and caring team of women working, in collaboration ensuring an effective and pleasant workplace.

This year we welcomed Lia Anderson to our team as our Finance worker; Ali Goodwin left this role and increased her hours in Financial Counselling. Lia 'retired' from another local NGO where she has worked in finance for too many years to count and I look forward to her being with SWHC, for many years to come.

SWHC continues to forge strong networks, partnerships and MOU's with other service providers in the region. The Shoalhaven covers a vast geographical area and services like ours find it difficult to meet the growing needs of both existing and new clients. These networks provide us with pathways for clients, where our service does not meet their requirements or service needs. Cooperative working relationships, partnering and network supports have never been more important than during this time and how we are able to link our clients.

Our Women's Biz we published, we cancelled, we published but rest assured we will be back, and the groups will be great. Our website providing information of the services we provide. Facebook provided 'updates and what's on' but unfortunately somewhat limited during this time.

The dedicated and responsive staff at SHWC continue to provide a valuable service to women; their ability to adapt and provide empathy, loyalty and commitment to delivering outcomes are evident in the ongoing and growing client base.

Our team - Ali, Carolyn, Kym, Linda, Leane, Kim, Suzanne and Lia; Lizz our ISLHD Well Women's Nurse; our committed volunteers. We said farewell to Alison Murie from our CoW but welcomed Kate Morris and Dorothy Winspear.

The pride I take in working with the staff, volunteers and Committee of Women (CoW), with not having enough words to describe. The women who come to our service seeking support, only makes me reflect during this time of pandemic, the privilege I have in being the manager.

SWHC is unique, hard working, accessible, client focused; doing all this, on very few dollars. The commitment of staff during this time, is unwavering.

So like Helen Reddy, who passed on the 29th September 2020.....

I (We) are woman, hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore and I know too much to go back and pretend.....

Nothing has changed, this song still resonates with our past, our present and our future.

Tracy Lumb **Manager**



Accreditation Assessment Report – ASES Certificate Level

Overall Summary

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre, originating from the Nowra Rosa Refuge's collective action in 1983, operates from a feminist perspective that views health within a social and economic context of a women's lifespan. SWHC's purpose is to empower women to control their health and wellbeing through the accessible, multidisciplinary and integrated health services within a safe, caring, supportive, feminist environment.

SWHC is unique in the region. SWHC retains the service model that allows women to join social, recreational and wellbeing activities or services. In such a hub, services become gateways for each other. Even more importantly, they are not time-limited and enable women to feel strong enough to make a difficult decision about engaging in counselling and other therapeutic interventions.

The service model emphasises seeking to understand and partner with women to support them in recapturing their independence and personhood.

Consistently, women say that this Centre works.

The women see the SWHC as instrumental in them making changes, normalising and living a better life. They praised the respectful, client-centred and holistic services and acknowledged that the Manager's and staff's responsiveness had prevented self-harm and potential suicide.

The eight mostly part-time staff acknowledged the demanding nature of their jobs and the risk of vicarious trauma when working from trauma-informed practice. The team reported that they received support and were nurtured but never micro-managed. Led by the Manager, the ethos is that staff take care of themselves and look after each other.

The centre ensures that its relationships with similar services such as Waminda and Grand Pacific Health who have a substantial footprint and the matching resources remains friendly and collaborative in the environment of competitive funding. The sector stakeholders commented on the Centre's ability to look ahead and bring ideas and collaborative approaches to the Shoalhaven Region.

The Committee of Women (CoW) discusses the current and emerging policy and funding issues. It considers potential fork-in-the-road decisions about the organisation's sustainability, the service model and related activities.

The staff at the Centre work at capacity because of limited space. Moving to larger premises would involve the dollar costs and change from the house, which has become imprinted on the women's consciousness as a safe, friendly, ordinary type of a home, near the park. It is a decision point for the Centre; various ideas and solutions are canvassed, such as growing its outreach arm similar to the initiatives in Ulladulla.

Ms Lucyna McDermott **Assessor**

SWHC Staff & Volunteers

Centre staff continue to provide a high level of compassionate and professional service to the women of the Shoalhaven through dedication and commitment.

All staff employed have varying hours and are classified by the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Modern Award. Bogumila Gerlowska (Lizz), our Women's Health Nurse who conducts outreach clinic through our partnership with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Well Women's Program.



Our reception continues to be supported by reception and skilled volunteers. Staff are flexible, adapting to change as our cohort grows, and for many establishing a safe work space to deliver their practice from home. But at no time has the service closed.

Our Staff:

- * ***Naturopath/Complimentary Therapist – Carolyn Lette;***
- * ***Counselling – Kym Nicholson, Suzanne Buzza;***
- * ***Financial Counselling – Ali Goodwin, Kim Perkins;***
- * ***Finance – Lia Anderson;***
- * ***Massage – Linda Bradshaw);***
- * ***Policy/Intake – Suzanne Buzza;***
- * ***Reception – Leane Davidson.***

Our wonderful volunteers when able support the Centre on a weekly basis and without their ongoing dedication and attendance our services would not operate as smoothly.

Thanks to:

- ♥ ***Kathy Eade***
- ♥ ***Lyn Gerstenberg***

Our beloved Valerie Hill has had to take time out during the last 12 months but we look forward to her return in the future.

The Committee of Women (CoW) are a committed, professional team who bring a range of skills and knowledge to the governance of our service. They face the challenges of the changing environment of NGO's and the legislative and statutory requirements of the position. It must be remembered that the work contributed by these women in meeting the service standards is demanding of their time, and, ongoing.

The SWHC would like to thank Lyn Gerstenberg (Chair), Alison Murie, Erin Nichols and Maureen Cable, Michelle Waples, Kate Morris, Dot Winspear. Alison Murie held roles of Chair, Vice, Chair, Treasurer, and Committee Member – we wish her well with her move to the north coast of New South Wales and thank her for her contribution. Special thanks to Lyn Gerstenberg, our Chair, who continues to be outstanding in her role, sharing her vast experience and support. Lyn continues to be available to me to meet, discuss, debrief; and ensures all staff are supported in their positions. Her dedication is never ending and she is admired and cherished by all staff..... never too busy to listen.

The CoW's governance of the SWHC and attention to detail and the importance placed upon following the process, reviewing policy, ensuring strategic and business plans are in place is a credit to such a small team this ensures quality outcomes and workspace for clients, volunteers and staff. With the ever changing and competitive environment, these women work together in a cohesive and dedicated manner. This was evident to our assessment for our successful accreditation process.

Acknowledgement and thanks must go to Liz Parnell (Principal Solicitor) and Isabel Arenas-Mangan from South Coast Law and Mediation, for facilitating pro bono legal clinics at the centre. For women to receive legal expertise, plays an enormous factor in their empowerment.

With the successful renewal and awarding of our ASES Accreditation Certificate for another three (3) years thanks and praise must go to Suzanne Buzza and Lyn Gerstenberg for their work in ensuring this outcome.

Whilst in the greater landscape of community services we are small, our focus is guided and encouraged by the shared philosophy of the importance of high-quality standards of service and the basic human rights of women. We will continue to apply this philosophy to all areas of our work and service.

Women Supporting Women

Strategic Plan 2019-2029

Our Objectives

- Ensure that the Governance of SWHC is of the highest standard and members are drawn from the local community.
- Strive to maintain ethical standards in all our activities.
- Commitment to best practice and continued quality improvement.
- Provide a non-profit primary health care service for women, managed by women, within a feminist framework in the Shoalhaven area.
- Prioritise access for women who are marginalised and/or have poorest of health issues by providing services at a minimal cost or for no cost to ensure that women are able to receive service and support.
- Ensure that services reflect the needs of local women providing educational, preventative and self-help programs which encompass women's life span, experience across a broad range of health issues which also recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women of CALD backgrounds.
- Network, liaise, collaborate and establish MOU's where applicable with other local service providers in order to provide necessary services to women in the community.
- Provide services and activities to guide women by the referral process, acknowledging and addressing the different needs of women of diverse backgrounds and social, physical and emotional barriers and mental health issues.
- Provide specialised support and service provision for women who have experienced historic or current trauma and/or domestic violence.
- Uphold the rights of women who may use the service to express themselves freely, to be treated with confidentiality with respect, dignity and consideration.
- Ensure the creation and maintenance of a safe, healthy and supportive environment for the wellbeing of staff, volunteers, Committee of Women (CoW) and women who use the centre and its services.

Goals and Corresponding Strategies

Each goal is underpinned by the SWHC on-going commitment to advocate for and support women from a feminist perspective including at all levels of government and their Ministries.

1. To secure and develop a strong and dynamic organisation providing a range of multidisciplinary and integrated health services by professional and experienced practitioners.

- Maintain evaluate and review the SWHC Policy and Procedure Manual.
- Maintain appropriate KPI's in line with the 'NSW Health Framework for Women's Health 2013' in collaboration with The Ministry of Health to underpin our yearly Contractual obligations.
- Complete the self-assessment process (QIP) and maintain best practice industry standards.

- To ensure effective Governance and operation of the Centre by and for women.
 - To encourage training and staff development in all areas of women's health.
- 2. To work collaboratively through strong partnerships and cross sector organisations at local, state, national and global levels.**
- To ensure the SWHC delivers high quality health and wellbeing services to target groups within budget.
 - A Business Plan embedded into our Strategic & Operational Plan to steer the financial planning, budget and management of SWHC and its services.
 - Build the public profile of the Centre through a variety of activities and mediums.
 - Build and expand partnerships and MOU opportunities with other services, organisations and groups to offer an extensive, diverse, supported, client-focused service to women.
- 3. To improve access to health services and information for all women with the aim of expanding and developing greater opportunities for their health and wellbeing.**
- Maintain planning and evaluation processes and cycles to ensure SWHC operates effectively while meeting the changing needs of women.
 - Ensure that all women involved in the Centre feel valued and supported.
 - To provide a range of services which reflect the nature of women's health with a focus on prevention and early intervention, empowering all women through:
 - the referral process;
 - education provided by the nurse and through workshops; and
 - provision of alternate therapy, counselling, massage and legal counselling for continued wellbeing.
- 4. To work towards expansion of services operating on a five-day basis.**
- Maintain a strong, diverse and dynamic membership base with the aim to build and grow these numbers.
 - To decrease lengthy waiting lists for current services provided.
 - Expand service provision to encompass groups and activities which address women's social, cultural and recreational wellbeing. Service provision to include the introduction of new services such as financial counselling.
 - Advocate for greater support and recognition of the importance of gender specific health strategies through promotion, policy, practices and activism.
- 5. To expand our client profile and services targeting new groups as a response to the changing population of the Shoalhaven.**
- Expand our existing outreach services in the Shoalhaven to include off-site health workshops and women's and cultural festivals.
 - Explore and build our technological capacity to increase opportunities for women including services profile and contact via Website, email and social media.
 - Continue to work towards increased service provision by exploring a variety of options including funding submissions and opportunities, partnerships and MOU's.

Service Provision

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre activities and outcomes reflect the goals and philosophy of our Strategic Plan (2019-2029) being underpinned by our Business Plan, the Environmental Scanning Document and Key Performance Indicators set down by our funding bodies, which determines our direction and service outcomes during the reporting period.



Project and service goals were achieved across all areas of service delivery. Outcomes and client support were met and, in many instances, exceeded expectation through client centred wrap around care.

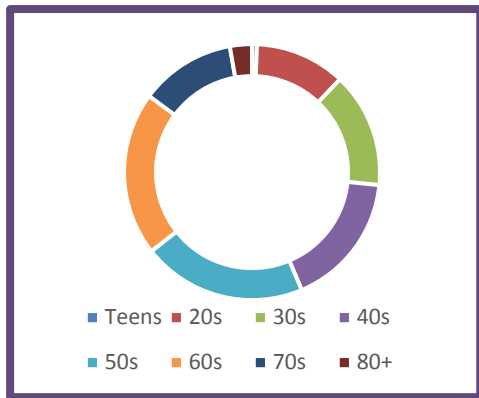
SWHC continues to evaluate its services and consult with women who attend the centre. We pride ourselves in responding to the expressed need of local women and develop assessable services with a prime focus on prevention and intervention at minimal or no cost. This service has remained steadfast in this view for over 37 years.

The SWHC and the Illawarra Women's Health Centre (IWHC) continue to work and support our services through a strong, positive and supportive MOU. The Telephone Counselling Service for the region continues to offer supportive and much needed services for women, especially when appointments for face to face counselling are not available. Waiting time frames for face to face counselling can be extensive and books are often closed. This service provides SWHC with the ability to 'link' new/current clients into a therapeutic relationship and not just 'wait listed'. The service in the combined areas of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven handled 322 points of contact. This is an invaluable service and SWHC looks forward to this continued collaboration between the two services. Thanks to Tina McLaren-Bell for being 'on the other end of the phone' and to Sally Stevenson IWHC CEO for her ongoing support of SWHC and the women of the Shoalhaven.

During 2020/21 appointments and services were delivered in core service areas in a variety and different manners due to COVID-19; some face to face, some by phone, some by Zoom, some by email.

- * Provided appointments (face to face, phone, Zoom, email including outreach settings) for women across core service areas – counselling (557 contacts + 179 contacts via phone & email), financial counselling (401 contacts + 1,104 contacts via phone & email), massage (243 contacts), complimentary therapist (52 contacts) and the nurse (55 contacts);
- * A total of 88 health education/promotion groups, events and intervention/prevention workshops across a multitude of disciplines; plus 18 legal clinics.
- * Managed an estimated number of requests for information, referral, and appointments, follow up totalling 5,505 through our Reception;
- * SWHC welcomed 133 new clients to our service.

Presenting issues across counselling, massage and the alternative therapist service were extensive but the main presenting issues were in the broad areas of physical/ medical health, emotional/ mental health, other, gynaecological and breast health, relationships, and violence/ abuse.

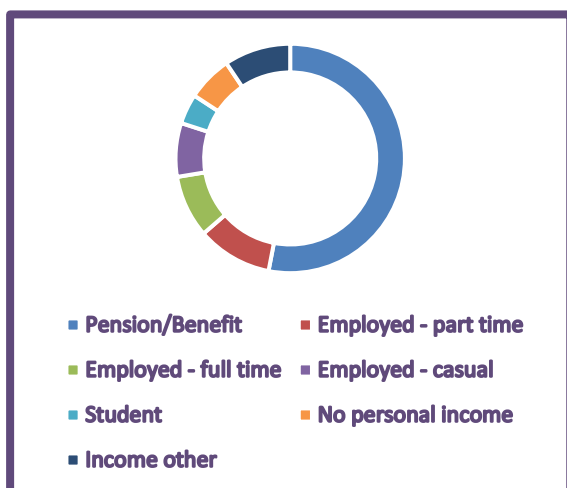


The age range of clients who accessed SWHC core services during 2020/21 was broad. Services were provided to clients from teens to 80's+. Women's health and wellbeing is essential to the ongoing strength of family and community. Gender specific services allow women to receive client centred support throughout their lifelong journey with a focus of intervention and prevention.

Health Education Programs focused on prevention and intervention strategies, self-esteem issues, confidence building, diet, nutrition and lifestyle issues. Women attended an extensive range of workshops and groups held at the Centre and outreach locations, including:

- ⊙ **Aromatherapy**
- ⊙ **Art & Wellness**
- ⊙ **Arthritis**
- ⊙ **Drumming**
- ⊙ **Gut Health**
- ⊙ **Healthy Relationships – Flagstaff Group**
- ⊙ **Kidney Health**
- ⊙ **Kombucha Kraut**
- ⊙ **Ladies Probus Club**
- ⊙ **Legal Clinic**
- ⊙ **Mood Food**
- ⊙ **Noah's My Time**
- ⊙ **Reboot Your Budget**
- ⊙ **SDMH Sub Acute Unit – Community Hot Seat**
- ⊙ **Self-Massage & Gentle Stretch**
- ⊙ **Therapeutic Doll Making**
- ⊙ **VIEW Club Culburra**
- ⊙ **Women's Wisdom Group**

Through the collection of data on client registrations 121 women identified as disabled. This was an increase of clients from the last reporting period. This included: Chronic Health Complaint, Physical, Psychiatric, Intellectual, Brain/Nerve Damage and Vision/Hearing.



Socioeconomic information collated demonstrated the largest client group in this area was women on a pension or benefit which represented 53% of all women. 9% of women indicated they were employed full time, 11% working part time, and 8% reporting that they worked casually. 9% of women reported having other income, 4% of women were students, and 6% of women reported having no personal income. We saw an increase in the number of women who had no personal income.

SWHC provides a multidisciplinary, integrated health service from a trauma informed model of care with a primary focus of client centred care. The number of new clients continues to grow and returning clients are a constant with the service. The number of clients utilizing other services provided by SWHC demonstrates the direct benefit to our clients. SWHC consistently receives high numbers of referrals from other local health services requesting service provision. Unfortunately, due to service demands, we are unable to meet all requests which can be equally distressing for clients and staff. Staff ensure when service provision cannot be supported by SWHC that referrals to other supporting agencies within the region are undertaken so clients received the most client focused, appropriate service. Again, this process can have its challenges due to demand in a regional area with limited community services.

Comments and Feedback

- ♥ *You have given me my life back.*
- ♥ *The programs offered are of great service to our community.*
- ♥ *Your support and generosity during my time of crisis has been instrumental in my attempts to re-boot my life path. I offer much gratitude and massive thanks for all the effort.*
- ♥ *Your workshop was fantastic and much needed.*
- ♥ *My experience for my massage was more than excellent. This is very important to me and my whole health, I can walk away feeling so relaxed and can walk straighter and my pain is not as severe.*
- ♥ *I have to thank you for providing the most wonderful art class. An excellent and very encouraging teacher, always positive finding something to enthral about in each women's work. Her energy was infectious for a very diverse group.*
Only one problem.....the four weeks went too quickly!

Well Women's Nurse Program

Nowra Outreach

Women's Health Nurse

Clinical Service to Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health Districts Women's Health Service continues to work collaboratively with the Nowra Women's Health Centre in providing clinical services to women.

Women's Health and Sexual health Clinical Nurse Specialist Lizz Gerlowska who is also a nurse immuniser and has a background in working with women involved in the criminal justice system, women who have recently left drug and alcohol facilities, refugee communities and remote area nursing in Aboriginal communities.

The Women's health service provides clinics twice a month prioritising woman who do not or who are unable to access mainstream services in our community.

Services include:

- Cervical screening
- Breast health
- STI screening and management
- Menopause information
- Contraception including referral to the LARC contraception clinic for eligible women/trans men
- Pregnancy testing
- Sexual and reproductive health care including termination
- Education and research

Services are prioritised for women in the following groups

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- LGBTQI including both transgender men and women
- Homeless
- Mental health issues
- Alcohol and other drug dependencies
- Disabilities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Refugees
- Women who have been affected by the criminal justice system.

The Women's Health Service looks forward to continuing the Well Women's Outreach Program in Collaboration with the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre for the coming year.



Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District

Shoalhaven International Women's Day 8 March 2021

Current members of the Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee are: Tracy Lumb (SWHC), Hayden Fineran (Shoalhaven City Council), Linda Pfeiffer, Robyn Sedger, Lyn Wallin, Mary Preece and Marg McHugh (LISA).

The success of 2021 events fell onto three new initiatives, as Covid restrictions prevented the staging of the more traditional performance night, writers' night and dance in March this year.

The first initiative was the development and launch of a website:

shoalhaveniwd.org

This was made possible through funds received from the Shoalhaven City Council Community Development Program and expertise from Mary Preece.

The success of this online platform was demonstrated by the data collected:
5,519 Views- (1.1K January, **2.5K February**, 1.4K March), 939 Visitors, Best Views ever- 28th February

Most popular pages- Festival 2021(1430), Home(1193), Visual Arts(516), What's On(421)

Referrers: Search Engines 525, Facebook 254, South Coast Register 11, 2ST 6

Countries of viewers: Australia, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, Russia, UK, South Korea, Belgium

The second initiative was to stage an online Digital Festival aimed at ensuring that despite the pandemic, women would have the opportunity to celebrate this international day of action through the creative arts.

As this was a completely novel venture for Shoalhaven IWD, the committee needed to develop creative ways to promote the event and encourage Shoalhaven women to participate. Consequently, a digitally focused promotion / marketing plan was developed and utilised.

In the Open Section of the Festival there were winners of a cash prize in all four categories:

Sound and Music: Ini Veerkamp, *Earth Mother*

Visual Arts: Barbara Dawson, *Bushfire Recovery*

Writing: Joni Braham, *A Letter A Dilemma and an Uncertain Future Moving Forward*



Performance: Venator Corvus.
Winners in the 14-24 Section were:
Visual Arts: Rhiannon Chapman, *Heal Country*
Writing: Cassie Beavan, *Paper*

The third initiative was a 'Picnic in the Park, held in the Amphitheatre of Harry Sawkins Park, Nowra. This was well managed as a COVID safe event, which included checking in procedures, a COVID Marshall and social distancing.

On a warm day a strong gathering celebrated International Women's Day, the winners of the Digital Festival and the recipients of International Women's Day Awards and relaxed to some entertainment.

This event was opened by Fiona Phillips MP and the IWD awards were presented by the SCC Mayor, Amanda Findley. Several other Councilors also demonstrated their support through their participation on this day.

Photographs of the Picnic in the Park event can be viewed at shoalhaveniwd.org
Given the conditions of this time the Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee did well to facilitate involvement in its activities and to keep the day relevant to the community.

***Marg McHugh,
Linda Pfeiffer
Robyn Sedger
Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee
9th September 2021***

Major Activities & Achievements

Service Provision

- ◆ Continued operation five (5) days per week;
- ◆ Outreach to the Ulladulla Community Resource Centre by Social Worker three (3) days per fortnight, Financial Counsellor (4 days) per fortnight;
- ◆ 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 aromatherapy, assertiveness, budgeting, drumming, gut health, self-massage and gentle stretch, therapeutic doll making workshops, relationship/self-esteem workshops & outreach groups);
- ◆ Community development activities including International Women's Day (IWD), NAIDOC and partnerships/networking relationships and activities with other agencies; unfortunately, some of these events were impacted by restrictions due to COVID-19;
- ◆ Participation in the Nowra Domestic & Family Violence Interagency, Southern Shoalhaven Interagency; Hot Seat SDMH Sub Acute Unit;
- ◆ Member of Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Consumer Advisory Committee;
- ◆ Sector activism/ advocacy in areas of improved service delivery to women and their families;
- ◆ The continuation and growth of groups i.e. Women's Wisdom group; Music and Art in Therapy;
- ◆ Continued support by Liz Parnell to our service from South Coast Law & Mediation who provides two pro bono legal clinics per month to clients at our centre. Support in Family Law property issues, parenting disputes, criminal law; will, power of attorney and enduring guardian; information about applying for legal aid and tenancy disputes.

Service Promotion

- ◆ Our website is outstanding: www.shoalhavenwomenshealthcentre.org.au and continues to keep community up to date;
- ◆ Continuation of Women's Biz our newsletter publication. This is available in hardcopy or via email – over 1,200 copies are traditionally distributed three times per calendar year; this has varied due to COVID-19.
- ◆ Our Facebook page is well supported and liked. Updates are posted keeping our information up to date, interesting, informative, topical and community focused;
- ◆ Print and broadcast media when opportunity arises;
- ◆ Public speaking opportunities upon request.

Organisational Development

- ◆ Australian Service Excellent Standards (ASES) – Completed December 2020 – Awarded with 100% in every Standard;
- ◆ Policy and Procedures are reviewed on a monthly basis to adhere to our Policy Review Schedule to form part of our QIP;
- ◆ Strategic Plan 2019/2029 current and implemented by the CoW.
- ◆ Business Plan 2020/2021 and Environmental Scanning Plan 2020/21, SWHC Compliance Register and Risk Management Register
- ◆ Volunteer program continues; all volunteers joining the organization are offered training in Mental Health First Aid;

- ◆ MOU with Anti-Poverty Committee
- ◆ MOU with IWHC;
- ◆ MOU with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
- ◆ Staff attended training/personal development opportunities to assist with supporting clients who may present in crisis situations; mandatory training is attended in line with our service standards;
- ◆ Staff attendance at centre Planning Days;
- ◆ All staff undertake appropriate supervision.

You know the words...sing along.....

I am woman, hear me roar
 In numbers too big to ignore
 And I know too much to go back an' pretend
 'Cause I've heard it all before
 And I've been down there on the floor
 No one's ever gonna keep me down again

Oh yes I am wise
 But it's wisdom born of pain
 Yes, I've paid the price
 But look how much I gained
 If I have to, I can do anything
 I am strong (strong)
 I am invincible (invincible)
 I am woman

You can bend but never break me
 'Cause it only serves to make me
 More determined to achieve my final goal
 And I come back even stronger
 Not a novice any longer
 'Cause you've deepened the conviction in my soul

Oh yes I am wise
 But it's wisdom born of pain
 Yes, I've paid the price
 But look how much I gained
 If I have to, I can do anything
 I am strong (strong)
 I am invincible (invincible)
 I am woman

