



# *Annual Report*

## *2022/23*



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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. 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

This year seems to have flown by with Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre again reaching the high standard of support and services offered to our clients, throughout the Shoalhaven region.

With our client numbers increasing due to more referrals for appointments and the increasing demand for our services in counselling areas it has been necessary to close the books to new clients at times and, this is very disappointing to us all.



The ongoing uncertainty of continued funding is also a concern. We continue to operate on a shoestring budget, amazingly well, thanks to good management.

However, the Centre has been able to increase the number of groups and workshops this last year.

We are going from strength to strength with our extended outreach services to Ulladulla and Sanctuary Point with Financial Counselling and Mental Health Counselling.

These staff work remotely either face to face or by telephone, Zoom or email to continually assist clients.

The staff of Practitioners at the Centre are very dedicated and professional in all they achieve and The Committee of Women (CoW) thank them for their hard work. They all operate above and beyond for the Centre.

**Linda** - Massage Therapist

**Carolyn** – Naturalist/Alternate Therapist

**Kym** – Counsellor

**Suzanne** – Social Worker/Counsellor

**Melissa** – Social Worker/Counsellor

**Ali** – Financial Counsellor

**Lia** – Finance Manager 'a master of figures'.

**Leanne** – Reception/Admin who assists with the smooth running of the Centre, 'an organiser extraordinaire'.

All these members of our team make for a very happy workplace and support our amazing Manager Tracy, who oversees all to run smoothly, daily.

Tracy is very supportive of her staff, visiting practitioners and volunteers, she values each one and is very proud of what they can achieve.

We are very fortunate to have Liz and Isabel of Parnell + Brien as solicitors, offering their services two days per month pro-bono for our clients. A much, valued service.

Our Shoalhaven Community Nurse, Lizz (Well Women's Program ISLD) works from the Centre on two days per month dealing with women's health services and advising them on any problems being experienced. We appreciate her contribution to the Centre.

I would also like to mention our volunteer Kathy who is an important part of the Centre, thanks Kathy.

I would also like to thank the Committee of Women (CoW) for their support and experience in guiding the management of the Centre and contributing to the smooth running of the CoW. Their continual reviewing of policies and procedures, aids in our quality improvement process.

**Thank you; Dot, Erin, Kate, and Maureen for your support and for your friendship for myself as Chair. It has been a great pleasure being part of the Committee of Women (CoW) and I wish the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre continued growth and success moving forward.**

Lyn Gerstenberg **Chair**

## Manager's Report

*And we wait.....*At time of authorship Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre (SWHC) was eagerly awaiting the 2023 NSW State Government Budget to be delivered in September.

Women's Health New South Wales (WHNSW) our peak body together with participating Women's Health Centres throughout NSW, worked together with consultants to produce the Business Case for *Sustainable Investment in NSW Women's Health Centres for the Women's Health Program*.



So what does all this mean? And more importantly, what does it mean for the women of the Shoalhaven.

In summary, the WHNSW Business Case put a proposal to the NSW Ministry of Health to increase the funding for the sector. SWHC has not had a funding increase since its inception in 1984. The Business Case was then taken to the 2023 March State Election with the Minn's Government pledging to support 'Scenario Two' with a funding increase.

For SWHC this would mean an increase from approximately \$323,000 base funding to \$643,000 in the 2023/24 financial year.

This would mean a significant increase to our funding and provide stability and continuity of care for our clients but also, more stable employment for our staff. Plus, funding contracts would move from three (3) year funding cycles to five (5); providing even more stability and improving our ability to plan.

It will enable us to bring all practitioners and services under the one funding agreement thus reducing the need, as previously undertaken, to find opportunities to 'top up' our core funding. This has always had a 'see saw' effect on service delivery and strategic planning.

Here at SWHC, while pledges have been made, we are more the type of service who will believe it, *'when the money is in the bank'.....* so we wait.

The Shoalhaven is an ever changing, continually growing part of the landscape; whilst women's issues have become an increasing part of our dialogue, regional and rural areas like ours still face the staggering lack of funding needed to support women in our communities. Sexual, domestic and family violence, mental health, pregnancy options and lack of social/affordable housing still require intensive support/funding.

But there is an upside; for 39 years SWHC has worked with and supported, thousands of women in this community with dedication, commitment and loyalty of staff, volunteers and Committee of Women delivering effective, preventative, integrated health services at low or no costs due to our strong fiscal policy and budget management. This work ethic will not change.

With the promise of additional funding, we hope to be able to undertake more outreach services in our community.

**Thanks must go to staff who continue to show dedication, support and empathy in their work; our volunteers including our Committee of Women for their 'gift' of time and knowledge; and, to our clients who continue to trust us with their journey.**

*We look forward to 2024.*

Tracy Lumb **Manager**

# **SWHC Staff & Volunteers**

***Centre staff continue to provide a high level of compassionate and professional service delivery 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 conducts outreach clinic through our partnership with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Well Women's Program.

Our reception continues to be supported by staff and skilled volunteers. Staff are flexible, adapting to change as our cohort grows; with the continuation of in house and/or remote, outreach service delivery. Staff continue to work from varying locations, and we hope to increase our outreach in the next year. Staff feel the benefits of a better work/life balance with no impacts on clients and/or service.

We have continued with our funding grant from the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources – 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program with the additional counselling hours and group work. This funding will cease in April 2024.

The centre at this point in time will continue to remain open five (5) days per week, being assessed on a yearly basis, funding dependant.

Our Staff:

- \* ***Complimentary Therapist/Naturopath – Carolyn Lette;***
- \* ***Counselling – Kym Nicholson, Suzanne Buzza, Melissa Hedger (Art Therapist);***
- \* ***Financial Counselling – Ali Goodwin;***
- \* ***Finance – Lia Anderson;***
- \* ***Massage – Linda Bradshaw;***
- \* ***Policy/Intake – Suzanne Buzza;***
- \* ***Reception – Leanne Harrison.***



Our wonderful volunteers support the Centre on a regular basis in administration or workshops. Without their ongoing dedication and attendance, our services would not operate as smoothly.

Thanks to:

- ♥ ***Kathy Eade***
- ♥ ***Lyn Gerstenberg***
- ♥ ***Valerie Hill***

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), Dorothy Winspear (Treasurer), Erin Nichols and Maureen Cable and Kate Morris. Special thanks to Lyn Gerstenberg, our Chair, who continues to be outstanding in her role, sharing her vast experience and support.

Lyn will step back from her role as Chair at this year's AGM and will retire from her weekly admin role on our front desk. Whilst we will be sad to not see her beautiful face and hear her words of support, in her 80<sup>th</sup> year, we really should let her retire.

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, ensuring 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 in our successful delivery of services meeting KPI's, business requirement and legislation within a tight fiscal environment.

Thanks to Liz Parnell (Principal Solicitor) and Isabel Arenas-Mangan from Parnell & Brien Solicitors, Berry for continuing to facilitate pro bono legal clinics at our centre. For women to receive legal expertise, plays an enormous factor in their empowerment. We thank Liz for her continued generosity and service to the women of the Shoalhaven. We look forward to another year of this valued service.

SWHC continues to be an ASES Accredited Certificate Level Service and successfully hold all current funding body and Legislative requirements, meeting all ongoing obligations. SWHC heads into another round of Accreditation in December 2023.

***At SWHC 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.***

At the time of authorship one of our CoW members and one of our staff had been nominated and moved onto Finalists in the 2023 Community Industry Group Community Services Awards.



- Leadership - Lyn Gerstenberg, Chair Committee of Women
- Above & Beyond Individual – Alison (Ali) Goodwin.

SWHC is proud of the work these two women undertake day in day out and it is fantastic to see them receive some recognition for all their hard work and dedication. Well done.



# 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 flexibility, continued adaptation and clear understanding of client needs we have continued to provide effective, 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 in all our years of operation.

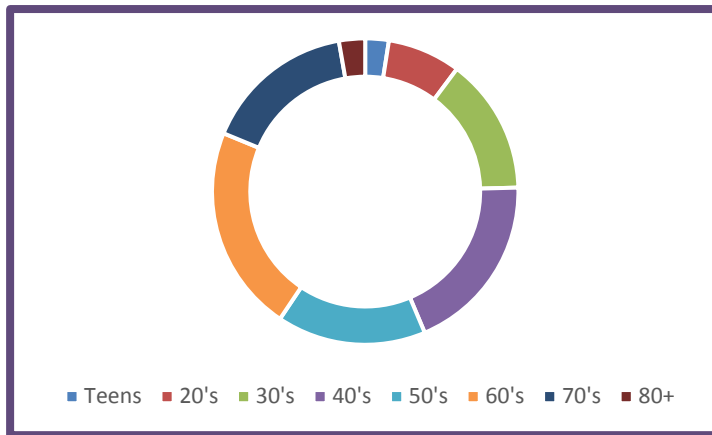
The SWHC and the Illawarra Women's Health Centre (IWHC) continue to work and support our services. The Telephone Counselling Service for the region continues to offer supportive and much needed services for women, without the need to travel. This is an invaluable service and SWHC looks forward to this 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 2022/23 appointments and services were delivered in core service areas in various and different ways; some face to face, some by phone, some by Zoom, some by email. SWHC staff provided group work to clients in the 2023 calendar year.

- \* Provided appointments (face to face, phone, Zoom, email including outreach settings) for women across core service areas – counselling (368 contacts + 325 contacts via phone, Zoom & email), financial counselling (118 contacts + 980 contacts via phone & email), massage (247 contacts), complimentary therapist (45 contacts + 17 contacts via phone & email) and the nurse (59 contacts);
- \* A total of 134 health education/promotion groups, events and intervention/prevention workshops across a multitude of disciplines; plus 27 legal clinics;
- \* Managed an estimated number of requests for information, referral, and appointments, follow up, totalling 2578 through our Reception; totalling 5059 for centre.
- \* SWHC welcomed 122 new clients to our service.
- \* In addition to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, 20 countries of origin were identified.

Presenting issues across counselling, massage and the alternative therapist service were extensive but the main presenting issues in order of priority, were in the areas of emotional/ mental health, physical/ medical health, legal/financial, relationships, other, violence/ abuse, gynaecological, reproduction, addition, social/cultural and breast health.





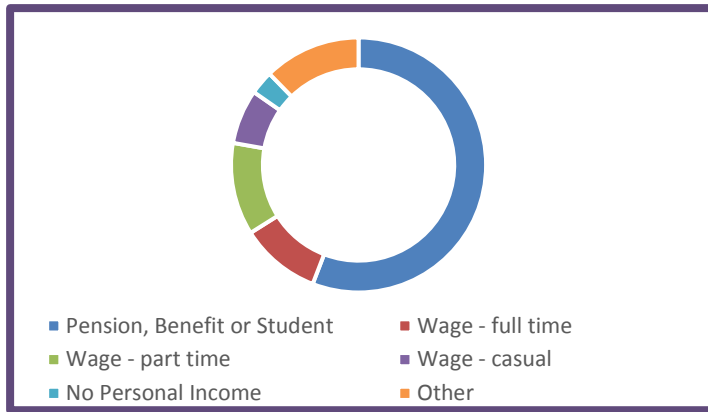
The age range of clients who accessed SWHC core services during 2022/23 was broad. Services were provided to clients from teens to 80's+. Women's health and wellbeing is essential to the ongoing strength of family and community. Gender specific services allow women to receive client centred support throughout their lifelong journey with a focus of intervention and prevention.

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

- ⊙ ***Aromatherapy***
- ⊙ ***Arthritis***
- ⊙ ***Basketry***
- ⊙ ***Bereavement***
- ⊙ ***Consent***
- ⊙ ***Creative Journaling***
- ⊙ ***Drumming***
- ⊙ ***Grief & Loss***
- ⊙ ***Gut Health***
- ⊙ ***International Women's Day Events x 7 Events***
- ⊙ ***Jiggle & Giggle***
- ⊙ ***Kokodama***
- ⊙ ***Legal Clinic***
- ⊙ ***Lymphoedema***
- ⊙ ***Many Masks – Art Therapy***
- ⊙ ***Noah's My Time***
- ⊙ ***Pelvic Floor***
- ⊙ ***Riding the Waves of Grief during the Festive Season***
- ⊙ ***Rising from the Ashes – Art Therapy***
- ⊙ ***Reboot Your Budget***
- ⊙ ***SDMH Sub Acute Unit – Community Hot Seat***
- ⊙ ***Self-Massage & Gentle Stretch***
- ⊙ ***Stress Management***
- ⊙ ***Sweet Poison – Sugar Free***
- ⊙ ***Vision Board/Goal Setting Workshop***
- ⊙ ***Widow's Support Group***
- ⊙ ***Women's Wisdom Group***
- ⊙ ***Wrapping Workshop – Art Therapy***
- ⊙ ***Zinc Assessment***



Through the collection of data on client registrations 108 women identified as disabled. This was an increase of clients from the last reporting period. This included: Chronic Health Complaint, Physical, Intellectual, Mental Health, Neurological and Sensory Impairment.



Socioeconomic information collated demonstrated the largest client group in this area was women on a pension, benefit or student which represented 56% of all women. 10% of women indicated they were employed full time, 12% working part time, and 7% reporting that they worked casually. 3% of women reported having no personal income, and 12% of women reported having other 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 receive 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

- ♥ *Thank you ever so much for your wonderful services;*
- ♥ *I received excellent service from SWHC. I would recommend the services to help people with many problems. Thank you to all the staff.*
- ♥ *Thank you for being so understanding about my anxiety problems as well it is so nice to be able to lie (massage) there for an hour and not have to worry about my problems;*
- ♥ *Thank you for helping me not to be in as much pain.....*
- ♥ *I always have a great experience whoever I'm seeing at SWHC. The staff are always friendly and helpful and professional.*
- ♥ *Thank you for your help and support when I needed it.*
- ♥ *To all the beautiful people here – thanks for being my support....*
- ♥ *Thank you for all your beautiful work ladies.*
- ♥ *I really enjoyed today. That was fantastic.*
- ♥ *Thank you for that. I really need it.*
- ♥ *Please can we do this again. It was so good to give my mind a break.*
- ♥ *Isn't it good to know these services are available to us and we don't have to pay an arm and a leg.*



# ***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 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 women 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.



# **Shoalhaven International Women's Day 8 March 2022**



For International Women's Day 2022 the Committee organised 7 events in March that covered the length of the Shoalhaven from Ulladulla to Berry. Over 300 women were directly involved, with far more people exposed to women's creativity through the art exhibition. The success of these events involved collaboration between the Committee (Lyn Wallin, Tracy Lumb, Robyn Sedger, Jessica Richardson, Dawn Burgess, Marg McHugh, Linda Pfeiffer, Mary Preece, Barbara Vickery), Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre, Colleen Langan, Andrea Lofthouse, Shoalhaven City Council, East Nowra Neighbourhood Centre, University of Wollongong (Shoalhaven Campus) and LISA (Lesbians in the Shoalhaven Area).

Dawn did an outstanding job of inspiring a large attendance at the trivia night. Mary Preece continued her work of introducing women to the skill and beauty of creating woven works. Special thanks go to Tracy Lumb for her outstanding role of compere at both the Trivia Night and the Performance night.

***Below are more detailed reports from five of the events.***

## **Meditation**

Looking up river, over Hanging Rock, before a rising full moon on March 7, a powerful circle of women gathered around a stunning altar of palms, crystals & blossoms, to sit in nature and gently breathe in peace, kindness and the enduring sacred sisterhood.

This gentle, yet profound ritual has been offered to the women of the Shoalhaven by Colleen Langan for many years, now and it continues to hold space for women to join together, breathe into the earth and quietly honour ourselves as sisters, mothers, grandmothers, friends, leaders, mentors and daughters of the soil.

Colleen invited us to ground our intention on the eve of IWD and honour the earth as mother, by singing in language, Nungeena Tya ("Mother earth") a song gifted us by Minmia, Wirraloo Aboriginal storyteller and carrier of women's lore for her Wirradjirri people.

We sat in guided meditation, song and mellow reflection, and in closing the circle, as always in the sisterhood, we thanked each other, we honoured each other and we agreed to create that same magic again and again.

Blessings and thank you Colleen and organisers for this beautiful, healing evening.

***Barbara Vickery***

## **Women Writer's Afternoon**

The women writer's session took place at the Uniting Church Hall in Berry on Saturday 11 March from 1-4pm. As always, the afternoon was thought provoking, entertaining and inspiring. Andrea and Kaye provided the obligatory feminist component, covering such hot topics as trans activism, and women's facial disfigurement with Botox etc.

Judy Wright introduced the book "Our Common Threads", and Marg, Denise and Mary read their contributions, illustrated by beautiful garments and pieces made by their mothers.

After afternoon tea there was poetry from Fran and Janee, a further instalment on Jenny Rich's research on the life of Gloria McKillop, and some of Christine's experiences taking over a B&B in France.

There was more, this is a selection. The audience was appreciative of this special gift, women being able to articulate their ideas and stories, and present them to strangers as well as friends. Some women found it hard to hear some of the speakers, so maybe next time we'll need a sound system.

I'd like to thank the Committee for organizing the event, and also Lyn, Marg, Barb and Fran for turning up early to set up and anyone else who brought food (Barb's sandwiches and Lyn's cake were both very delicious).

**Andrea Lofthouse**

### **Dance Night**

A big shout out to the fabulous all women local band Which Witch - the stars of the Women's Dance Night held at Tomerong Hall March 25th. Once again the girls put on a dazzling performance and entertained and amazed us with their enthusiasm, expertise and endurance!

The historic Tomerong Hall never fails to provide, it emits a feeling of unexplainable well being, just by walking through the doors one has a feeling of being cocooned in a safe warm place.

Decorated by the committee on the night to provide a pleasant ambiance it was obvious that women were comfortable to soak up the atmosphere and took the opportunity to let their hair down, dance, catch up, partake of food and beverages and generally have a good time.

The night was well attended with a good crowd of women who were ready to have fun, shake it out and who did not want the band to stop playing. Door takings indicate 67 women supported this event.

We thank Which Witch who have been staunch generous supporters of IWD Shoalhaven Dance Nights throughout the years and of course the women who support our events.

**Lyn Wallin**

### **Art Exhibition**

The theme of Horizons attracted thirteen entrants for the Open section, and one for the Young Women's Section. They were delivered to the East Nowra Neighbourhood Centre and accepted by a worker from the Centre. Thanks to Nadia and other help. Works were displayed in the Centre's back room and the collection showed a diverse interpretation of the theme.

Judges were Mary Preece and Leanne Harrison Davies. *Far Flung*, by Liz Skewes, was selected as the Open Winner. The judges admired its layering, innovative use of palette, and its suggestive sense of landscape. Janine Leonard, *Spirit of Life*, and Fran Clements, *Above and Below*, both received Highly Commended. Robin Pybus, *Sumeru*, received the Young Women's Award for its energy, mood and light. The works were hung at UOW (Shoalhaven Campus) with the help of Troy. The launch attracted a crowd of around 25 and was catered with Lyn Wallin's accomplished style. Mary Preece announced the winners and gave the awards.

**Marg McHugh**

### **Women Performing Night**

Once again Huskisson Community Centre was dressed in a beautiful and elegant fashion for the Women Performing evening thanks to Lyn Wallin, who always excels at decorating venues for



our International Women's Day events. While we acknowledge Marg and Lyn for setting up the Community Centre, and Robyn and Mary for assisting Lyn with decorating the Centre, we also need to acknowledge that Lyn creates the designs for the IWD events and provides her own decorations, table covers, flowers, foliage, and candles for each event.

The sound equipment was generously provided, set up and managed by Ineke Veerkamp and Deb Graham. Approximately 75 women attended this fabulous evening and seemed to have a great time enjoying the eleven performances, which included instrumental performances, choirs, soloists, drummers, and a memorable visual trip down the memory lane of past Shoalhaven IWD events. Interspersed among these performances were a number of audience participation events where all women present sang their hearts out to songs such as "I Am Woman" and "Big Yellow Taxi". Thanks to Linda for taking entry fees at the door and setting up the song list which was played through her UE Boom.

Tracy Lumb was at her best again as Mistress of Ceremonies, creating great hilarity and managing the night in her usual inimitable fashion. Unfortunately, Emma's Coffee Van couldn't attend on the night. However, although we had very limited notice of the coffee van's unavailability, Marg was able to put together a great supper for us. Marg also provided T-shirts which were sold to raise funds to assist with the cost of operating IWD events.

*Robyn Sedger*

***Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee  
14<sup>th</sup> September 2023***



# Major Activities & Achievements

## Service Provision

- ◆ Continued operation five (5) days per week;
- ◆ Outreach to the Ulladulla community (counselling) – thanks to Waminda with supporting our services at their location;
- ◆ 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, budgeting, drumming, gut health, self-massage and gentle stretch, therapeutic art making workshops, relationship/self-esteem workshops & outreach groups);
- ◆ Community development activities including the month of March for International Women's Day (IWD), partnerships/networking relationships and activities with other agencies;
- ◆ 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; Art in Therapy;
- ◆ Continued support by Liz Parnell, Parnell & Brien, Berry 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: [www.shoalhavenwomenshealthcentre.org.au](http://www.shoalhavenwomenshealthcentre.org.au) providing service information;
- ◆ Publication and circulation of our Women's Biz newsletter. This is available in hardcopy or via email – over 1,500 copies are traditionally distributed three times per calendar year;
- ◆ 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

- ◆ Current Australian Service Excellent Standards (ASES) – valid until December 2023 – reaching 100% in every Standard;
- ◆ Preparation for renewal of Australian Service Excellent Standards (ASES) – December 2023;
- ◆ 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 continued implementation by the CoW.
- ◆ Business Plan 2022/2023 and Environmental Scanning Plan 2022/23, 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 Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District;
- ◆ MOU Waminda;
- ◆ Staff attended training/personal development opportunities to assist with supporting clients with many and varying complex needs; mandatory training is attended in line with our service standards;
- ◆ Staff attendance at centre Planning Days;
- ◆ All staff undertake appropriate supervision.