



Annual Report

2023/24



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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 has at times felt like we were 'holding our breath', however our much-anticipated Enhancement Funding from the NSW Ministry of Health was received in April 2024. This awaited lifeline was in response to the Women's Health NSW Business Case.

Shoalhaven Women's Health (SWHC) will now look to the future and plan for continued support for Shoalhaven Women.

The future will be busy with SWHC continuing to increase the high standard of services offered to our clients, throughout the Shoalhaven Local Government Area.

During 2023/24 our client numbers have increased overall (outlined in Service Provision) with the expansion of our geographical delivery footprint. Consequently, this has also increased our wait time for some services. However, with careful planning by our manager and utilizing flexible service delivery styles our enhanced funding has allowed for minimal wait times for our traditionally high demand services of Counselling and Financial Counselling. In addition, SWHC Outreach Services in Counselling and Financial Counselling continue to grow, with services to Ulladulla and Sanctuary Point planned to increase in the coming years.

While Enhanced Funding provided certainty for service provision and clients, it has also provided a level of security and confidence for staff, ensuring employment contracts were renewed and for some, services increased. SWHC staff have always and will continue to provide continuity and enhanced care and support for their clients.

SWHC continues to operate on a tight fiscal budget ensuring that funds go directly to service delivery. Staff continue to work through mixed service methods and flexible rostering, which not only benefits the clients with flexibility of service but adds to the benefits of work/life balance for staff and office/desk space pressures in our centre.

The staff are the backbone of the SWHC. A professional team of women dedicated and loyal to their clients. The Committee of Women (CoW) would like to thank them all for their ongoing dedication and hard work. They deliver above and beyond for the Centre and the women of the Shoalhaven

Staff include

Ali – Financial Counsellor

Carolyn – Naturalist/Alternate Therapist

Kym – Counsellor

Leanne – Administration/Pathways Project Site Coordinator

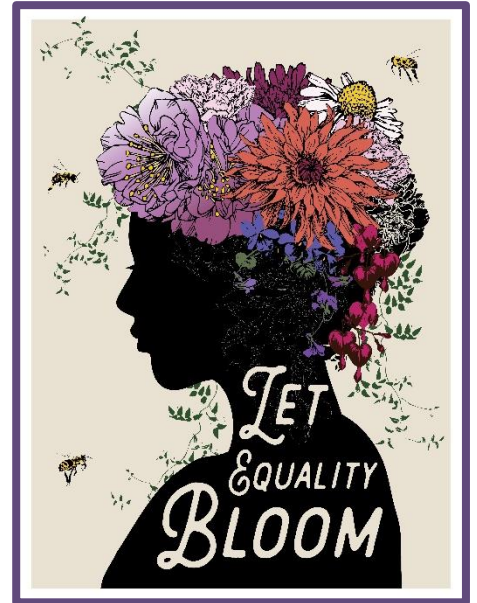
Lia – Finance

Linda - Massage Therapist

Melissa – Social Worker/Art Therapist

Suzanne – Social Worker/Counsellor

Tracy – Manager.



SWHC staff form a supportive and cohesive team. Always willing and ready to support each other in their service provision.

The staff are expertly mentored and managed by SWHC Manager Tracy Lumb.

Tracy proudly guides SWHC on a daily basis, always a professional sounding board for staff and Committee Members. Supportive of her staff, visiting practitioners and volunteers alike, Tracy values each and every one and has pride in all they achieve.

SWHC continues to work with external service providers and host visiting services.

Legal guidance is provided by Liz Parnell and Isabel Arenas-Mangan from Parnell + Brien Solicitors, offering their services two days per month pro-bono for our clients. A much valued and needed service for our women.

Our Well Women's Nurse Lizz Gerlowska continues to support our Centre two days per month undertaking screening and support for women's health issues, supporting their health and wellbeing. We appreciate her contribution to our Centre.

A big thanks to our volunteer Kathy who is an important part of the Centre and the 'Data Entry Queen'. Her work reduces the workload upon staff who are always eternally grateful to her, for the work she does.

I would also like to thank the Committee of Women for their support and experience in guiding the governance of the centre and contributing to the smooth running of the Committee of Women. Their continued work reviewing policies and procedures, their focus on quality improvement and strategic guidance is invaluable.

Thank you SWHC Committee members: Erin, Jaime, Maureen, Lyn and Dot (resigned) for your support.

At the end of my first year as Chair I would like to express my sincere gratitude, and to acknowledge the outstanding commitment of staff and Committee of Women in their excellent service, client care and continued fiscal management.

It has been an invaluable experience being part of the Committee of Women and I look forward to the coming year.

Kaye (Kate) Morris
Chair

Manager's Report

And the wait is over.....Enhancement Funding received. Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre with the support of Women's Health NSW and our network centres produced a Business Case for Sustainable Investment in NSW Women's Health Centres for the Women's Health Program to highlight funding shortfall.



This has been a journey for many of our statewide centres and a number of years in the making but we achieved.

So what does this mean? This Enhancement Funding is in addition to our existing funding from the NSW Ministry of Health. This is the first time we have received a funding increase in our history of operation.

The funding guarantees our services, staff hours and client support into the future, with contracts at this funding level until 30th June 2027. We will continue to operate five (5) days per week and offer outreach to Sanctuary Point and Ulladulla.

But most importantly this funding recognises the need for dedicated, safe and accessible community health services for women.

*SWHC sincerely thanks the work of Mr Brad Hazzard MP, (Retired) previous NSW Minister of Health for supporting the WHNSW Business Case and its development and the current NSW Minister of Health the Hon. Ryan Park MP and the Minn's State Government funding increase to our services/network throughout the State and, providing us with a sustainable pathway.....
As a Manager, the security of the service into the future is paramount.*

The Shoalhaven is a growing landscape and a sought after area to live, work, holiday and retire; but women's health, wellbeing and safety continue to be part of our dialogue with regional and rural areas like ours still facing a staggering lack of funding needed to support women in our community. Sexual, domestic and family violence, mental health, pregnancy options and lack of social/affordable housing still require intensive support/funding. Then add to this, the 'cost of living' pressures.

From our inception 40 years ago, SWHC has worked with and supported, thousands of women in this community with dedication, commitment and loyalty of staff, volunteers with the 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.

To my staff who continue to show dedication, support and empathy in their work and, loyalty to our service, I am truly a grateful Manager. I do not have enough words to afford them the praise they deserve.

To 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.

Here's to another 40 years in the Shoalhaven.

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 will increase our outreach for the coming year. Staff feel the benefits of a better work/life balance with no impacts on clients and/or service delivery.

Our funding grant from the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program has now ceased. We sincerely thank the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources for supporting our service and the opportunity to provide more counselling/outreach/group work for those women impacted by this devastating natural disaster.

With the success of the Women's Health NSW Business Plan and Enhancement Funding no staff hours will be lost with some increases and, our doors will remain open five (5) days per week, with secure funding contracts until 30th June 2027 from the NSW Ministry of Health.

At time of authorship the Financial Wellbeing and Capability funding has one (1) year remaining in our extension – 30th June, 2025 with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. It is our understanding that new contracts will be available for services to apply via the competitive tendering process.



This year we have seen the introduction of an important education and referral pathway project, in partnership with Women's Health NSW. The project "It Left No Marks" aims to raise awareness and understanding of the risks and health implications of non-fatal strangulation and sexual choking in the community. The project provides resources for healthcare and service providers to educate and strengthen their professional understanding of non-fatal strangulation and sexual choking and support their response with the development of a multidisciplinary referral pathway. The

overall aim of the project is to support women seeking help and making informed choices about their health and wellbeing.

Our Staff:

- ✳ ***Administration/Pathways Project Site Coordinator – Leanne Harrison***
- ✳ ***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;***

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:

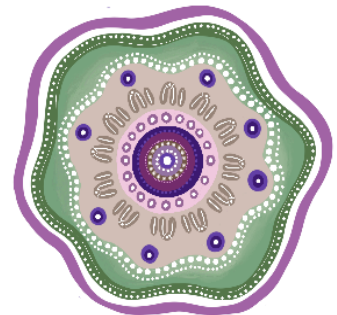
- ♥ ***Kathy Eade***
- ♥ ***Lyn Gerstenberg***
- ♥ ***Valerie Hill***

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 Kate Morris (Chair), Lyn Gerstenberg (Vice Chair) Dorothy Winspear (Treasurer - resigned), Erin Nichols (Secretary – Treasurer); Maureen Cable and Jaime Carpenter (Ordinary Members). Special thanks to Kate Morris, our Chair, for sharing her vast experience and support.

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 requirements and legislation within a tight fiscal environment.

Special thanks to Jaime Carpenter who supported our service through our Cultural Audit to ensure our space was culturally safe for First Nations women. Thanks to Holly Sanders for the beautiful artwork which now hangs in our entrance, telling the story of our region and how our services link to women, community and stakeholders. SWHC has been able to use some of the digital assets to brighten our brochures and spaces.



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 (current to December 2026) and successfully holds all current funding body and Legislative requirements, meeting all ongoing obligations.

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.

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 philosophy throughout our years of operation.



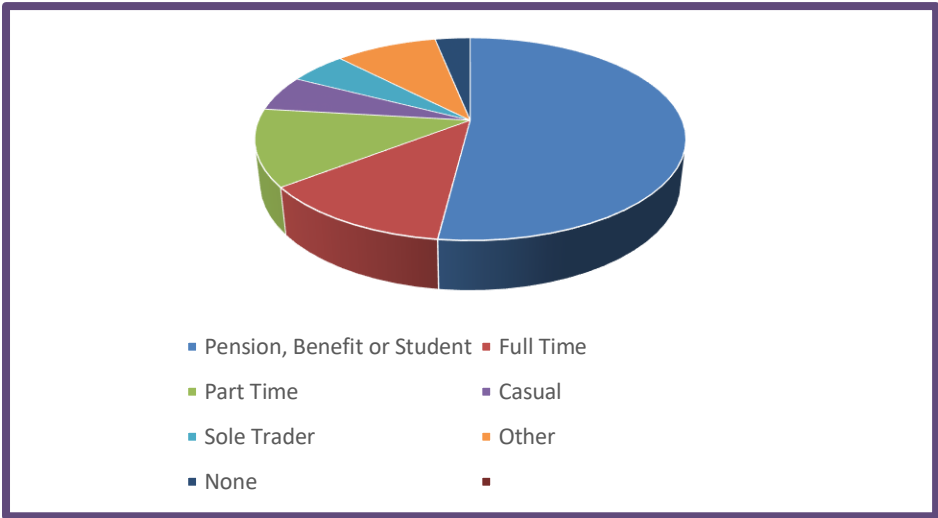
During the period, we commenced the *It Left No Marks* project in partnership with Women's Health NSW, in response to an increased incidence of non-fatal strangulation and sexual choking. The project aims to raise community awareness and understanding of the risks and health implications for women. The website www.itleftnomarks.com.au and associated training, provides resources to healthcare and service providers to educate and strengthen their professional understanding of non-fatal strangulation and sexual choking and further support their capacity to respond, with the development of a multidisciplinary referral pathway. The overall aim of the project is to support women seeking help and making informed choices about their health and wellbeing.

The SWHC continues to receive some support from The Telephone Counselling Service that offers supportive services for women, without the need to travel. Thanks to Tina McLaren-Bell, Illawarra Women's Health Centre.

During 2023/24 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 during the reporting period.

- * Provided appointments (face to face, phone, Zoom, email including outreach settings) for women across core service areas – counselling (494 contacts + 210 contacts via phone, Zoom & email), financial counselling (123 contacts + 1,110 contacts via phone & email), massage (233 contacts), complimentary therapist (50 contacts + 13 drop ins + 27 contacts via phone & email) and the nurse (86 contacts);
- * A total of 125 health education/promotion groups, events and intervention/prevention workshops across a multitude of disciplines; plus 22 legal clinics;
- * Managed an estimated number of requests for information, referral, and appointments, follow up, totalling 2867 through our front desk; totalling 5483 for centre.
- * SWHC welcomed 130 new clients to our service.
- * In addition to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, 25 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, legal/financial, physical/ medical health, other, relationships, violence/ abuse, gynaecological, addiction, social/cultural, reproduction, and breast health.



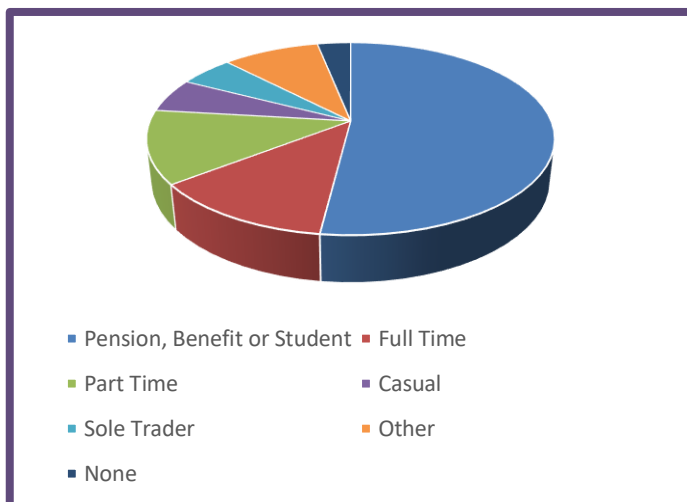
The age range of clients who accessed SWHC core services during 2023/24 was broad. Services were provided to clients from teens to 80's+. Women's health and wellbeing is essential to the ongoing strength of family and community. Gender specific services allow women to receive

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***
- ⊙ ***Basketry***
- ⊙ ***Consent***
- ⊙ ***Drumming***
- ⊙ ***Dying to Know Day***
- ⊙ ***Gut Health***
- ⊙ ***Introduction to Meditation***
- ⊙ ***International Women's Day Events x 7 Events***
- ⊙ ***Mask Making***
- ⊙ ***Legal Clinic***
- ⊙ ***Lymphoedema***
- ⊙ ***Many Masks – Art Therapy***
- ⊙ ***Noah's My Time***
- ⊙ ***Pelvic Floor***
- ⊙ ***Playing with Clay***
- ⊙ ***Printmaking***
- ⊙ ***Reboot Your Budget***
- ⊙ ***Safe Talk – Suicide Alert***
- ⊙ ***SDMH Sub Acute Unit – Community Hot Seat***
- ⊙ ***Sweet Poison***
- ⊙ ***Vision Board and Goal Setting***
- ⊙ ***Women's Health Week – drop in groups***
- ⊙ ***Women's Health Week Weaving Circle***
- ⊙ ***Women's Wisdom Group – Nowra & Ulladulla***

Through the collection of data on client registrations 109 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 52% of all women. 13% of women indicated they were employed full time, 12% working part time, 5% were Sole Traders and 6% reporting that they worked casually. 3% of women reported having no personal income, and 9% 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

- ♥ *Just wanted to pass on my sincere thanks & gratitude to you and the staff at SWHC.*
- ♥ *I've recently had very helpful appointments with both Mel and Ali – they're both so constructive and practical, and caring, and giving me some great strategies that are really helping me.*
- ♥ *Thank you all so much for what you do.*
- ♥ *My session left me feeling much better than when I entered, feeling understood and supported,*
- ♥ *Thanks so much for sending this information on and, all your help and encouragement last week – you're amazing!*
- ♥ *Thankyou for all your support, guidance & basically for just 'getting me'. You should be so proud of what you and your team continue to achieve year after year.*
- ♥ *The Women's Wisdom Group has changed my life, and I keep getting "better and better".*
- ♥ *Just wanted to tell you what a fantastic service you run, and I would be lost without you.*
- ♥ *I found SWHC very welcoming, a great service for women. I can't say enough about how wonderful Linda's massage and your service is.*
- ♥ *I am very happy I came across your service and that it has already made a huge difference to my life!*
- ♥ *Kym was the best thing that ever happened to me.*

Well Women's Nurse Program 2023/2024

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
- Pregnancy testing
- Sexual and reproductive health care including termination
- Education

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 2024



Writer's Afternoon

This year the Writer's Afternoon was held on the afternoon of 2 March in the meeting room of the Shoalhaven Library and was attended by approximately twenty women. Andrea Lofthouse facilitated and once again displayed her razor-sharp wit with her dissection of current topical situations. Several women, both new and experienced writers, shared their writings of personal stories, observations, and experiences to a very receptive and appreciative audience. Afterwards everyone enjoyed afternoon tea and general lively conversation ensued. Led by the example of the writers at this Shoalhaven IWD event, a new local writer's group was established and is ongoing.

Trivia Night

The Trivia Night is always an eagerly awaited for IWD event, particularly for women in the southern areas of the Shoalhaven. Following on from the success of the 2023 event, the event was again held in the Dunn Lewis Centre at Ulladulla and once again very ably facilitated by Tracy Lumb. Although this event was held on the same date as the Writers' Afternoon, albeit an evening event versus an afternoon event, the event still managed to attract 60 women who, judging by the amount of laughter heard throughout this night, had a fun night.

Weaving with Lissa de Sailes

The venue for the weaving workshop, held on 3 March, was at Lyrebird Park, Nowra a location especially chosen by Lissa alongside the sports oval on a grassy area shaded by large leafy trees. It was a balmy day; a light wind was blowing and with a view of the mountains to the north it was a perfect setting.

Attendees brought their own chairs/rugs and gathered in a circle with the raffia piled in colourful bunches on a blanket in the middle. Lissa explained that as a needle would be used to fashion the items it was a stitching process rather than a weaving one and that the technique would be easy to master, so with her careful instructions and patient individual support everyone picked it up rather easily.

Under Lissa's easy no stress approach, masterpieces were created, and three hours passed in a flash with everyone either finishing their pieces or taking materials home with them to complete their project.

Twenty women originally booked with nine attending on the day. There was no income or expenditure associated with this event - the workshop was free of charge, Lissa donated her time and prepared for the workshop by dyeing the raffia (which was donated by committee member Marg McHugh).

Comments from the evaluation forms indicated that women appreciated the session and would attend again, they enjoyed stitching, chatting, and sharing stories with other women and commented that Lissa was a patient and inspirational teacher.

Women Performing Night

The Women Performing Night was held at Huskisson Community Centre at 7pm on 9 March. Thanks to Lyn Wallin and her fabulous supplies, decorating design and hard work, the Community Centre was resplendent and dressed in a very colourful, almost tropical theme with beautiful floral, table, and fairy light decorations. We also had three non-committee members who either helped set up the Centre or provided and operated the UE Boom for the 'sign along'. The sound equipment was again generously provided, set up and managed by Ineke Veerkamp and Deb Graham.

However, this event created some challenges, including the minimal number of entries (4) received for performances prior to the event. Thanks to Tracy's efforts, the four performers who had entered their names for this event were able, and willing, to expand their repertoires and the result was a full program of entertainment by some very talented women.

Sixty-eight women and 2 young boys were in attendance for this event. Of note is the long-standing tradition that performers do not need to pay an entry fee. Although some performers did willingly pay, we need to consider the impact of non-fee-paying attendees on the overall cost of events such as this, given that the choral performance included at least 15 women.

The committee decided not to have a coffee van to provide supper this year. In its place, tea, coffee etc for supper was provided by Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre.

We only received two evaluations for this event, which I'm sure did not reflect the feelings of other women who attended. Both evaluations were quite negative and included these comments: "Boring, needs to get away from the same old, same old and bring in some new blood". "Needs much more upbeat acts with a greater emphasis on fun".

Tracy Lumb again excelled as MC. As well as providing great entertainment for everyone in this role, she also expertly managed another challenge on stage by one of the performers. Once again, we concluded the evening with an enjoyable 'sing along', including the great favourite, "I Am Woman".

Bushwalk

On Sunday 10 March on a beautiful warm autumn day approximately fifteen women gathered at the carpark of the Mt Bushwalker track head and equipped with hats, sunscreen, sensible footwear, water and food for lunch, and led by the walk leaders Ronnie and Sue, commenced the 7km round trip.

Mount Bushwalker walking track is in the southern precinct of Morton National Park, about 30 minutes from Milton. The track is comfortable to traverse due to the installation of a boardwalk covering the greater part of the track. Along the way the group stopped off at several locations to admire the sweeping views and take photographs of the view towards St Georges Basin and a yabby in a small body of water being of particular interest.

At the end of the plateau, we arrived at the viewing platform where the more adventurous were able to investigate what looked like a goat track running down the side of the mountain (an extra 6kms round trip) while others preferred to sit and take in the panoramic view of the peaks of the Budawang Ranges, Pigeon House Mountain and the intriguing contour patterns of the trees that perished during the 2019/20 bushfires.

Ronnie and Sue took their responsibilities as leaders seriously and ensured that everyone was aware of and followed the rules. Thanks to Ronnie and Sue for their diligence.

Included among the walkers were two women who were new to the area and made connections with others during the walk. As a result of her participation in this event, another woman was encouraged to join a bush walking club.

Women's Dance

Around 60 women gathered at Tomerong Hall on the night of 16 March to dance to the music of Which Witch, Australia's longest running women's rock dance band. Joni Braham, bass player, and the rest of the band kept up a steady rhythm of great music and the dance floor rocked until close. As well as dancing, the women present also used the event to catch up with friends and make new connections.

Robyn Sedger

***Shoalhaven International Women's Day Committee
29th August 2024***

Major Activities & Achievements

Service Provision

- ◆ Continued operation five (5) days per week;
- ◆ Outreach to the Ulladulla community (counselling) – located at Ulladulla Health One Community Health Centre – that to Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District for their ongoing support of this service;
- ◆ Outreach to the Sanctuary Point community (financial counselling) – located in the Sanctuary Point Youth & Community Centre;
- ◆ 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, 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 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

- ◆ Achieved Accreditation in Australian Service Excellent Standards (ASES) – In December 2023– reaching 100% in every Standard;
- ◆ Accredited Service – certification to December 2026;
- ◆ 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 2023/2024 and Environmental Scanning Plan 2023/24, SWHC Compliance Register and Risk Management Register
- ◆ Volunteer program continues; all volunteers joining the organization are offered training in Mental Health First Aid;
- ◆ MOU Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District;
- ◆ MOU Women's Health NSW – It Left No Marks
- ◆ Membership Women's Health NSW
- ◆ Regional Representative – Board Women's Health NSW
- ◆ 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.

On an even brighter note, after many, many years SWHC had a 'facelift' and we painted the outside of our building. We kept with the colours of the Women's Movement using purple, green and white. What a difference it has made!!!

