

**WOMEN'S  
COMMUNITY  
SHELTERS**

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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**SUPPORTING  
HOMELESS  
WOMEN**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Women's Community Shelters acknowledges the Gadigal, Darug, Worimi and Dharawal people who are the traditional owners of the land upon which we work.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the strength, resilience and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and celebrate their ongoing custodianship of this beautiful land.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
SYDNEY

Message from

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC**

**Governor of New South Wales**

It is my great pleasure to introduce Women's Community Shelters' (WCS) Annual Report 2020. This report highlights the ways in which WCS works with local communities to address the growing issues of women's homelessness and domestic and family violence.

Women's Community Shelters has been working with local communities for nearly ten years. During this time, it has become evident that communities engaged around local initiatives are key to addressing these pressing social issues.

In November 2019, I was fortunate to visit the seventh shelter in the growing WCS network. Located in the Parramatta Local Government Area, the new shelter provides much needed emergency crisis accommodation and support to women and children experiencing homelessness and domestic and family violence in western Sydney.

During our visit, I met and spoke with staff, board members, volunteers and partners involved in the shelter's establishment and ongoing operations. The afternoon offered a great insight into the outstanding support they provide to women and children when they need it most.

WCS continues to grow and diversify its services to assist as many women and children as possible. Emergency accommodation, case management, outreach and child support services, transitional and 'meanwhile use' housing, education and work training programs are all part of WCS' front-line services. With seven shelters currently operating and two more in development, WCS provides a successful model that is innovative while focused on essential services, earning the respect of the wider community sector.

Reflecting on the past year, Australia has had much to deal with - drought, bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, WCS has continued to provide 24/7 emergency accommodation and wrap-around support services to women and children when they need it the most.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank WCS staff, board members, volunteers and supporters for their hard work, determination and commitment. It takes a dedicated community of people to support the hundreds of women and children that stay at WCS shelters each year and assist them in their journey to recovery, and for their generous support we are all very grateful.

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC**  
**Governor of New South Wales**

Government House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
telephone: 02 9228 4111 | website: [www.governor.nsw.gov.au](http://www.governor.nsw.gov.au)

## VISION & VALUES

### VISION & VALUES

Women's Community Shelters (WCS) is an Australian charity working directly with local communities to set up crisis accommodation shelters for women and children experiencing homelessness and domestic and family violence.

WCS' ground-breaking funding model brings together business and corporate support, philanthropic investment, Commonwealth and NSW State Government funding and vital local community fundraising to support our head office (Hub) and shelters. The Hub is not funded by government.

### OUR PURPOSE

Our core purpose is establishing crisis shelters for women and children at risk of homelessness and domestic and family violence, in partnership with local communities.

We are working to expand our network to at least nine shelters across NSW, and have developed a host of complementary programs to support women and children after crisis, including transitional housing and outreach programs, child support, employment, education and training as well as our 'Walk the Talk' education program.

The programs we offer in each shelter community continue to grow and evolve, reflecting local community needs and the dynamism of our partners to do more to assist our mission.

### WE BELIEVE

Community engagement in local initiatives is key to resolving the pressing social issues of women's homelessness and domestic and family violence.

We believe specialist women's shelters offering best practice support are a critical service for women and children.

### OUR VALUES

**Respect:** We value our staff, our volunteers and all our communities and recognise their value and worth.

**Kindness:** We are generous and considerate, non-judgemental and understanding of others' needs.

**Excellence:** We strive always to exceed expectations and deliver high standards.

**Courage:** We seek to drive positive change and challenge the status quo.

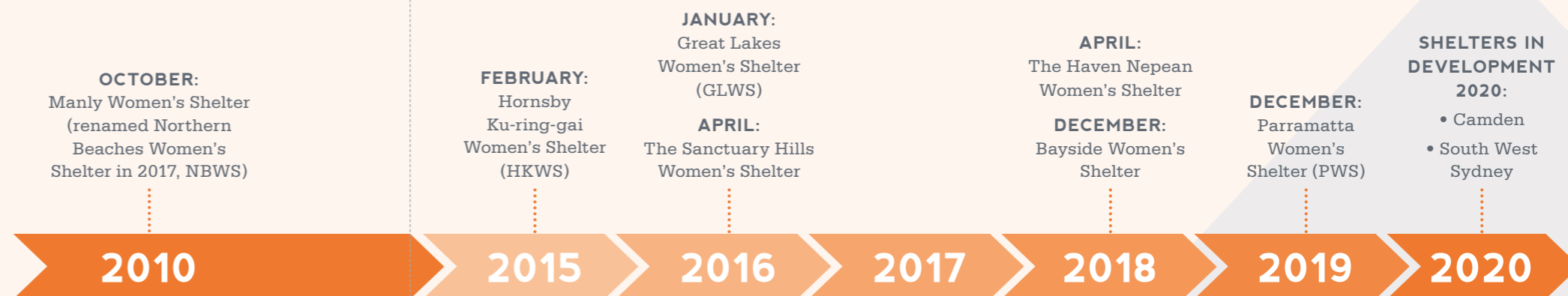
**Hope:** We provide hope and optimism to all our clients and communities. Hope for those most needing it and all our values can be achieved through collaboration and partnership.

## WOMEN'S COMMUNITY

## SHELTERS: NETWORK TIMELINE

### BUILDING A NETWORK

Since 2010, Women's Community Shelters (WCS) has helped seven different communities establish and operate shelters on a 'social franchise' model to provide more desperately needed support for vulnerable women and children across NSW.



### OUR FUNDING

**WCS Hub:** \$950,000 per annum, underwritten by philanthropy.

**Each shelter in our network:** On average a minimum of \$440,000\* per annum to run, through a tri-partite funding model involving philanthropy/business, local community fundraising and in-kind support and the NSW Government.

\*Certain shelters cost more to run due to higher operational and running costs.

### TRANSITIONAL PROPERTIES



**"If you give someone a home, they can believe in themselves and that belief makes them want to step back into the world. We need to empower women and their children to feel that they matter and that they can contribute to the world."**

Kylie, NBWS





**KRIS NEILL, CHAIR**

What a period we are living through!

Unprecedented, terrifying summer bushfires followed swiftly by a global pandemic – and at time of writing, we were not yet through the first half of 2020. While some of us were affected by the bushfires, all of us are affected by COVID-19, by lockdown and the attendant recession.

It has been a difficult time for everyone but especially cruel for those in our community who were already vulnerable, impoverished

or both before these twin crises. Their disadvantage has quickly doubled or tripled, if we include drought, allowing no time for escape or recovery.

At the start of the current COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, many domestic and family violence (DFV) services across NSW reported an approximate 30% increase in calls for assistance and advice but not a commensurate lift in requests for crisis housing. According to the sector experts, including our own, the lockdown enabled greater surveillance and control by a perpetrator and therefore fewer opportunities for a woman and her children to flee to safety.

Economic uncertainty, COVID-19 restriction confusion, fear of the virus and the unknown also led women to remain in unsafe circumstances. The safe havens that are schools for children and workplaces for women were no longer available.

Internationally, it has been reported that incidents of DFV increased in France by 32% during lockdown and in Wuhan, the number of reported incidents tripled. Bushfires and similar crises can also trigger a spike in DFV. University of Melbourne research into Victoria's 2009 Black Saturday fires revealed a seven-fold increase in the incidence of domestic violence following the fires.

So now, more than ever, our services and those of our sector are urgently needed with the incidence of DFV already reaching alarming levels prior to these crises. Here are a handful of grim statistics to prove the point.

According to Australia's DFV primary prevention advocacy group, Our Watch:

- ▶ On average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner;
- ▶ 75% of women's homelessness is caused by DFV;
- ▶ 1 in 3 Australian women (30.5%) has experienced physical violence since the age of 15.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Data, in 2019, 233 women approaching homelessness services were turned away every day due to a lack of capacity across the sector.

Significantly, older single women are Australia's fastest growing homelessness cohort. They are often dependent on social security and because of their once full-time, unpaid caring role, they are without employable skills, income or superannuation to provide a roof over their heads without support.

**“According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Data, in 2019, 233 women approaching homelessness services were turned away every day due to a lack of capacity across the sector. Significantly, older single women are Australia's fastest growing homelessness cohort. They are often dependent on social security and because of their once full-time, unpaid caring role, they are without employable skills, income or superannuation to provide a roof over their heads without support.”**

**From top, page at right:**  
Bushfires last summer near our Great Lakes Women's Shelter; Volunteer support is vital to WCS.

All this is precisely why we do what we do. Why the WCS team and Board strive to open more shelters, improve our capacity, capability and performance. To this day, WCS remains true to our social franchise and community activation model. This is why we continue to expand and now operate seven women's shelters and important ancillary services when other services have closed. WCS is the only organisation in NSW to open new crisis shelters since 2014.

The WCS model is unique to Australia's homelessness and DFV sectors. It is unique because we are supported by diversified funding including contributions from corporate and private philanthropy, government and importantly, local communities in cash donations and pro-bono and in-kind contributions.

We believe that over the medium to long term, our diversified funding model is scalable and sustainable. WCS was established in 2011 and remains an Australian first. We have opened, on average, a shelter a year since the appointment in 2013 of our CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

We are proud that the WCS model not only offers vital emergency accommodation to women and children in need but also offers a cost-effective service to the NSW Government.

It is through the wonderful support of our private donors – individuals, corporates, family foundations and others – that we can offer our services at a significant discount to government. In 2019, the total cost for a woman to stay at a WCS shelter was \$140 per night to which the NSW Government contributed \$49.

The Hub of WCS – its excellent management and operations team underpinning the network – is wholly funded from private sources allowing the \$1.4 million per annum of NSW Government funding to flow in entirety to the front-line of the shelter network.

We sincerely thank all our donors for your support and encourage you all to keep giving at this difficult time. Each of you is important to our operation and we thank you.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the entire WCS team for their focus, hard work and swift crisis response to COVID-19. The team – Hub and shelters – did not miss a beat in their COVID-19 response. It was a privilege to witness.

In addition to acknowledging the outstanding leadership of Annabelle Daniel OAM, I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding leadership and dedication of our COO, Simone Parsons, the commitment of our prudently expanded Hub team, our hard-working shelter teams and their Board members and, of course, the Board of WCS.

The WCS Board has been replenished with three new and highly skilled and motivated members: Terence Kwan of Macquarie Group Limited (and a long-time supporter of WCS), Betty Ivanoff of Coca-Cola Amatil, and Daniel Martin from the University of NSW. We warmly welcome these three new members and their future contribution to our organisation.

We farewell two Board members also and thank them for their important contribution to our cause. We thank Paul Kelly and Shenaz Khan for their generous and intelligent contribution over a sustained period. We wish them well.

Thank you again for your remarkable support. WCS wishes you well in these troubled times. Stay safe.

**“All this is precisely why we do what we do. Why the WCS team and Board strive to open more shelters, improve our capacity, capability and performance. To this day, WCS remains true to our social franchise and community activation model. This is why we continue to expand and now operate seven women's shelters and important ancillary services when other services have closed.”**







**ANNABELLE DANIEL OAM, CEO**

As I write the foreword to Women's Community Shelters' Annual Report for 2019, the Australian social landscape stands changed immeasurably in a few short weeks by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have seen unprecedented transformation across business, charities and schools, as the nation grapples with the twin challenges of protecting citizen

health and attempting to limit the worst of the economic damage from the necessary closure of businesses.

Women's Community Shelters, like many other organisations, has had to make a complete shift in the way we work, from our fundraising to our policies and procedures, from our business continuity to the means in which we support women and children in our shelters. Against this backdrop, 2019 feels like a long time ago.

The fundamentals of why we do what we do have not changed. As ever, we will continue to need support to reach more women and children in need. The problems of domestic and family violence and resultant homelessness for women and children have been chronic in Australia for decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown acute challenges into sharp relief, and I am heartened by the public conversation around how the current circumstances make it so imperative for us to continue our important work.

WCS' most significant achievements of 2019 were the opening of our seventh shelter, Parramatta Women's Shelter, and our older women's housing project, Beecroft House. Both projects meet specific and very pressing needs – those of accommodation for women with large families leaving domestic and family violence, and older women becoming homeless in increasing numbers due to financial crises and a lack of affordable housing in greater Sydney.

Whilst those are our headline achievements, the quieter ones are reflected in our core business – more than 370 women and children were kept safe through our shelters and outreach program during the year. That's 370 lives that have been improved forever with caring support, safe housing and social connection.

We continued the development of two more shelters in Camden and Canterbury-Bankstown, which we hope will come to fruition in 2021. We forged new partnerships with housing providers and increased the number of 'meanwhile use' properties we support, which is the incredibly important next step for women and children when they leave our shelters.

We commenced our employment, education and training program with Western Sydney University and Service NSW, and had a blockbuster year with our 'Walk the Talk' Respectful Relationships high schools program, with over 2,500 students engaged in learning and supporting their local shelter.

**“The fundamentals of why we do what we do have not changed. As ever, we will continue to need support to reach more women and children in need. The problems of domestic and family violence and resultant homelessness for women and children have been chronic in Australia for decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown acute challenges into sharp relief, and I am heartened by the public conversation around how the current circumstances make it so imperative for us to continue our important work.”**



The landscape looking forward is different to the one we had planned. Many of our shelters have had to cancel long-standing fundraising events which are critical to the ongoing sustainability of their operations.

The focus of each Shelter Board, and the WCS Hub, has pivoted to two main priorities – seeking fundraising and philanthropic support, and making sure our front-line staff are equipped with all they need to work in a safe and still-supportive way with the women and children who continue to need us.

Against this backdrop, we are enormously grateful for your ongoing support – from committed supporters and donors who continue to financially, and in other ways, assist us. Many have proactively reached out to us recently, not just with the financial support we need, but with genuine concern for women and children affected by domestic and family violence during the pandemic. This is heartening and heartwarming.

As a society, we are now in a position where we can have a sophisticated conversation about domestic abuse and how a pandemic has the potential to exacerbate it. As current social restrictions abate, we expect the need for our services to continue undiminished and potentially to increase.

WCS is a team effort. I am enormously grateful for the expertise of the WCS Hub staff which builds year-on-year and thank them for their 'over and above' commitment to our mission.

We thank the WCS Board, led by extraordinary Chair Kris Neill, for their rigor, governance and collaborative approach to strategy and problem-solving.

Also to the Shelter Boards for their ongoing and active commitment to the support of their local shelter, and to the Shelter staff for their relentless commitment to excellence, kindness and compassion in supporting women and children who seek our assistance.

To our volunteers at the WCS Hub and our shelters – we couldn't do what we do without you. You enhance every part of what we do to support our shelter residents.

To our State Government partners, thank you for working with us on a 'whole of society' problem that needs a 'whole of society' solution.

To our very special and vital donors, philanthropists and supporters – thank you for placing your trust in us to do what we do, and rest assured that troubled times have redoubled our commitment.



**“Whilst those are our headline achievements, the quieter ones are reflected in our core business – more than 370 women and children were kept safe through our shelters and outreach program during the year. That's 370 lives that have been improved forever with caring support, safe housing and social connection.”**

**Clockwise from top right:** Volunteers at the Parramatta Women's Shelter working bee; Camden Community Forum; 'Walk the Talk' Program Awards.

THE CHARITY

Women's Community Shelters Ltd (trading as Women's Community Shelters) is a registered charity in Australia and New Zealand and a company limited by guarantee (ACN: 153 006 556) and is governed by its Constitution. WCS has DGR1 status and is a Public Benevolent Institution.

OUR BOARD



**Kris Neill (Chair)**

Kris Neill is the Head of Public Affairs at the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Managing Director of Kris Neill Consulting. She is a leading corporate brand and reputation strategist with global experience. Kris is a former Macquarie Group Executive Director and a board member and mentor of the Melba Opera Trust.



**Peter Hunt AM**

Peter is a philanthropist involved in funding, developing and scaling social sector organisations and the founder of WCS. As an investment banker Peter advised local and multi-national companies and governments in Australia. Peter became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2010 for services to the philanthropic sector.



**Paul Say**

Paul has over 35 years' experience in commercial property with Lend Lease, Dexus and JLL. Currently he is a non-executive director of listed trusts ALE and FLT and several HNW Family Offices providing governance, transactional and strategic advice. Paul is a Fellow of the AIV and RICS and a qualified property valuer.



**Emily Hodgson**

Emily Hodgson is Chief Financial Officer at Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). Emily is also a member of Ashfield Council and Inner West Council Audit and Risk Committee, where she oversees the Councils' governance, internal controls, financial reporting and internal and external audit.



**Sr Mary-Louise Petro**

Sister Mary-Louise Petro is a Sister of Mercy, of the Parramatta Congregation. In 1985, Mary-Louise founded The Mamre Project at St Marys, which assisted the unemployed, people with a disability, youth at risk and refugees. Mary-Louise is currently the Congregation Leader for her order.



**Paul Kelly (Retired July 2019)**

Paul is the CEO of The Channel Group with more than 30 years' experience as a communications adviser, facilitator and personal coach to senior executives and Directors. Paul is also a Director of Channel Ventures, which provides advice to and invests in disruptive technology businesses.



**Shenaz Khan (Retired April 2020)**

Shenaz Khan is a Human Resources Executive at the Westpac Group. She has over 25 years' experience in Banking and Financial Services in a variety of leadership roles, leading large business and HR teams. Shenaz has also served on the Boards of various wealth management entities and not-for-profit organisations.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The Board has established a number of committees to support the fulfillment of its governance responsibilities.

RISK, AUDIT AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Supports the Board in the management of risk; maintenance of internal control systems to assure financial management and transparency; and provide effective financial stewardship and management within WCS.

NOMINATION AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Reviews the organisation's governance policies in accordance with best practice within the sector and oversees appointments to the Board or its committees.

OUR PEOPLE

WCS employs 11 staff at its head office (Hub) in Redfern, three full-time and eight part-time, all working together to support the network of growing WCS shelters and transitional properties.

WCS HUB STAFF





OUR NETWORK

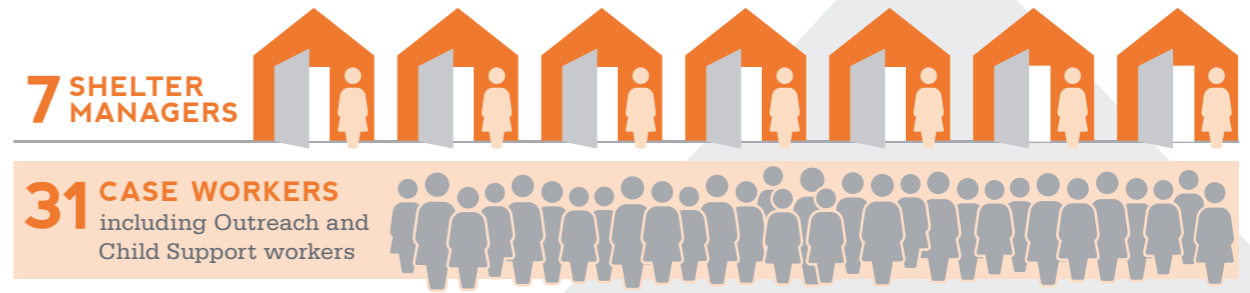
Each WCS shelter is its own incorporated entity with a skilled volunteer Board. The Shelter Board is supported by the WCS Hub to establish and operate each new shelter in partnership with their local community.

Each individual shelter employs a paid Shelter Manager, a number of Case Workers, an Outreach and Child Support Worker (where funds allow) and are further supported by a network of hard-working volunteers.

In addition to our volunteer boards, shelters have up to 80 active volunteers who support the work of the shelter through fundraising activities, event coordination, giving, organising and supporting activities for women and children.



SHELTER NETWORK FRONT-LINE STAFF



WCS HEALTH AND SAFETY

Women's Community Shelters takes its Work Health and Safety obligations seriously. All WCS shelters have policies and procedures in place to ensure occupational health and safety standards are adhered to. This includes supporting the mental health of our staff and volunteers through dedicated programs.

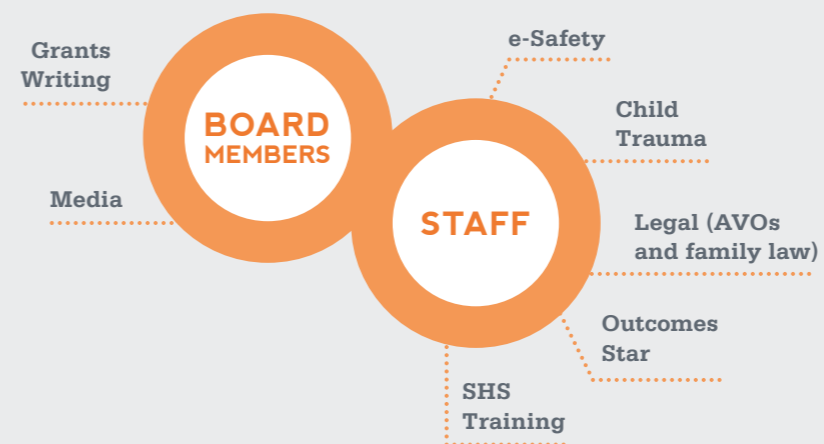
Everyone in our network has access to an Employment Assistance Program. WCS works with industry peak bodies in the homelessness sector to ensure we are compliant and up-to-date with all requirements.

WCS TRAINING

As part of the WCS network, each shelter benefits from training undertaken and administered by the WCS Hub.

Shelter staff use these opportunities to network with peers, and to develop their professional careers. This gives them the tools and techniques required to support homeless women and children across NSW.

SHELTER TRAINING UNDERTAKEN IN 2019



From top: Board members undertaking media training at the WCS Hub; WCS Hub staff virtual meeting; Shelter network training.

WCS works with local communities to empower them to change our collective attitudes to homelessness and domestic and family violence and take positive action against them.

In 2019 our strategic focus was to broaden the support we offer on either side of shelter accommodation, securing funding for outreach support and negotiating partnerships to provide housing and employment pathways.

- ▶ In 2019, the network of Women's Community Shelters Boards and their communities, provided essential and life-changing services to **370** women and children and provided **20,211** 'bed nights' to the sector.
- ▶ **1,240** were unable to be accommodated because shelters were full, women elected to take alternate accommodation or their needs changed.
- ▶ We supported **318** women and children in outreach programs.
- ▶ Across the WCS network, staff members participated in training to support our reporting on client outcomes; attended conferences and events to support their delivery of trauma informed, client-centred service; and extended their knowledge and skills through a range of Specialist Homelessness Services training opportunities.
- ▶ As a network, we began developing our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan.
- ▶ Across the network, shelters invested in the professional development of their staff with all staff supported through learning and development opportunities as and where possible.

**STRATEGIC FOCUS: BROADEN SUPPORT, SECURE FUNDING, SECURE PARTNERSHIPS**



**FEEDBACK FROM THE WOMEN WE SUPPORT:**

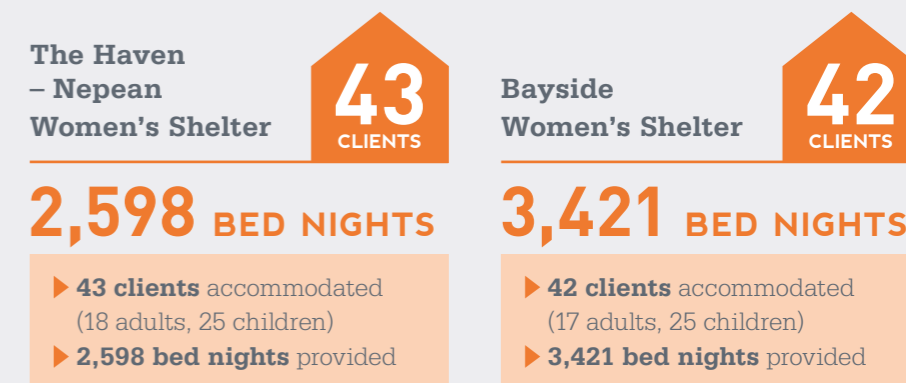
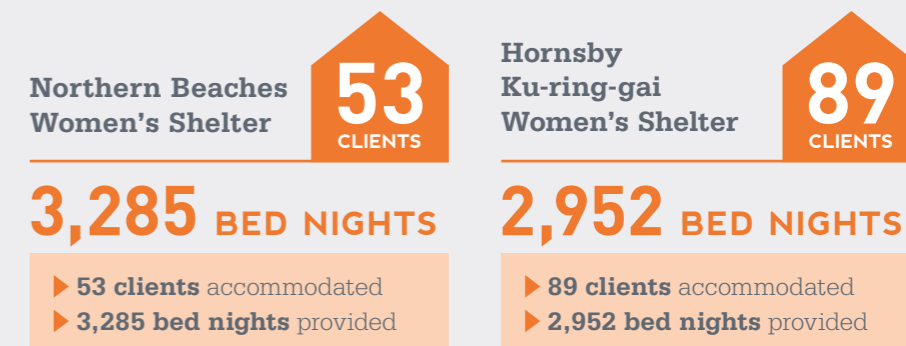


**WCS SHELTER SNAPSHOT: JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2019**

No single shelter in the WCS network is the same as another. Five of our seven shelters accommodate women and their children.

Our newest shelter, Parramatta Women's Shelter (PWS), which opened in December 2019, is able to accommodate larger families, which many other shelters across NSW are unable to do.

Two of our shelters assist women without dependent children. Women and families stay at our shelters for different lengths of time and therefore trends in shelter occupancies and bed nights vary as detailed here.



**PARRAMATTA WOMEN'S SHELTER OPENED DECEMBER 2019**

**"I think that WCS have made some amazing changes for the shelter – I have seen what can happen with that overarching body supporting us. As a service we have been around for a long time, but we have really stepped into a very organised place now with WCS."**

Case Manager, NBWS



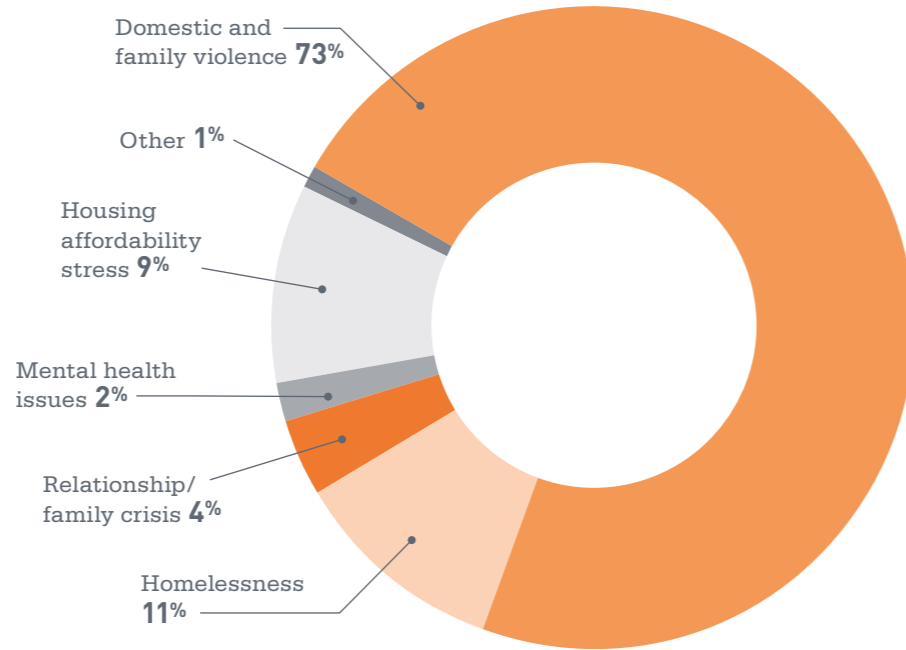
**ABOUT THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN WE SUPPORT**

The reasons women and children are referred to crisis shelters are complex and rarely relate to a single risk factor or vulnerability. Across Australia, the primary presenting cause for women's homelessness is domestic and family violence.

**PRIMARY REASONS FOR REFERRAL**

Over 73% of the women and children supported through our shelter network were escaping domestic and family violence. A further 4% were at risk of homelessness due to family and relationship crisis.

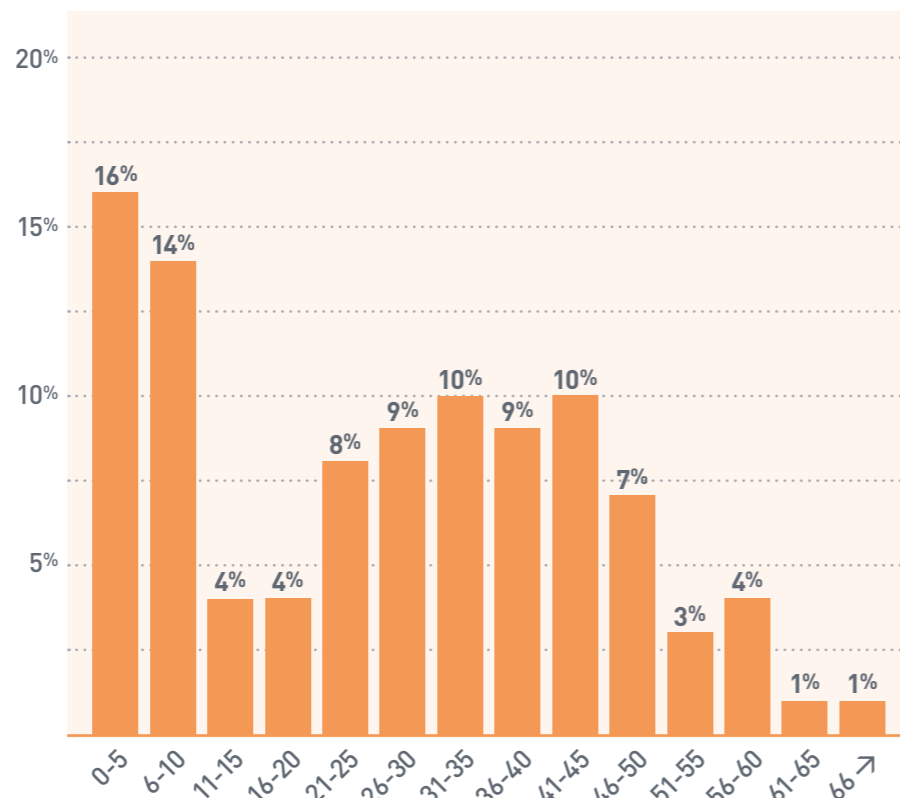
Being homeless, experiencing mental health issues and being at risk of homelessness were the other primary reasons women presented to our services.



**AGE RANGES**

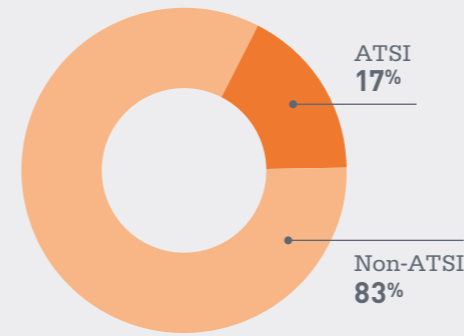
The majority of women occupying shelters were in the peak working and parenting years aged between 21 and 55 years of age. This highlights the importance of our return to work and training programs and focus on secure income and housing pathways.

Older women have emerged as one of the most vulnerable groups in relation to housing insecurity and homelessness in Australia in recent years. They are not a group that we as a society thinks of when we consider homelessness, with many older women never having had experience of homelessness before. Our highlight project for 2019 'Beecroft House' directly responded to the needs of women over 55 years.



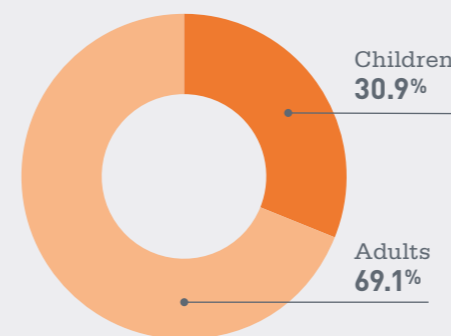
**NUMBER IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women make up 17% of the people we support across the network. Our Great Lakes Women's Shelter, in particular, averages nearly 60% percent of women identifying as indigenous.

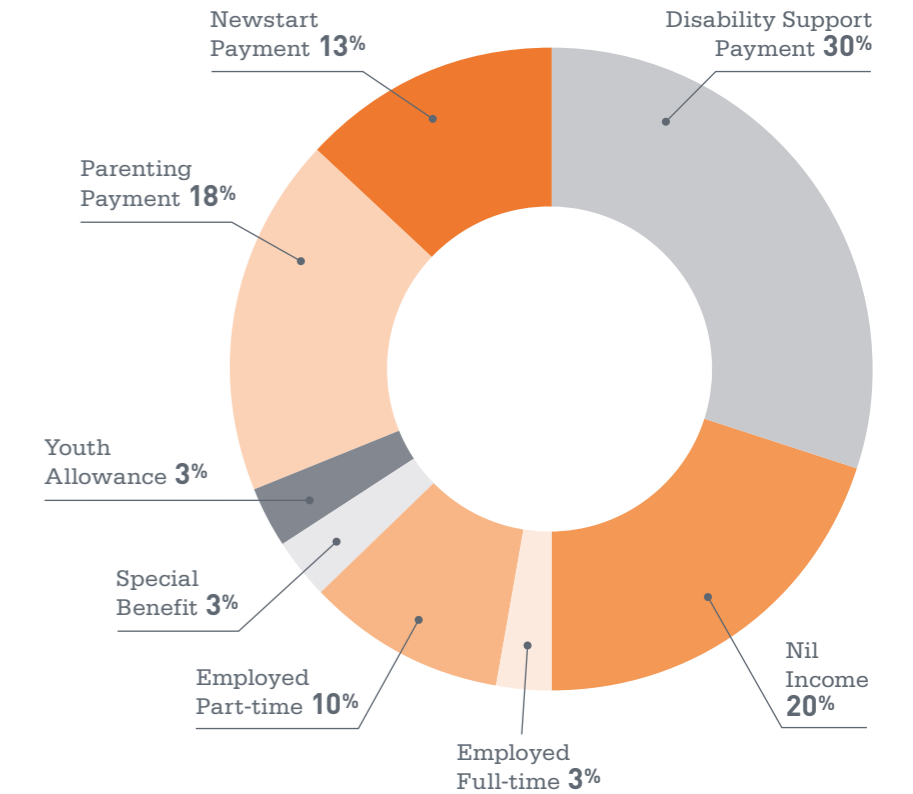


**WOMEN VS CHILDREN ACCOMMODATED**

Over 30% of the clients supported in the WCS network are children and young people (under 18 years). The majority of children supported are primary school age. Our support to children and young people comprises an individual support plan, a commitment to school engagement and learning and the focused support of an experienced team member delivering child support programs.



**SNAPSHOT OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS**



**THREE-MONTH SNAPSHOT: NUMBER OF WOMEN ASSISTED THROUGH EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

WCS established three new pilot programs/partnerships:

**WOMEN RETURNING TO WORK**

A partnership with Western Sydney University and the College to provide training in business administration and work experience within the University.

**3** Women completed the program



**COMMUNITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

An employment program in partnership with Service NSW.

**1** Client employed



**KICK START CAFÉ**

A social enterprise run by the PAYCE Foundation that provides employment and hospitality training.

**1** Client completed the program and another currently enrolled **1**





## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

The core work of each WCS shelter is providing crisis accommodation and accompanying wrap around support services. In addition to these life-saving services, each shelter works on other important projects simultaneously across the year, with the aim of preventing women and children returning to the cycle of homelessness and domestic and family violence.

In line with the WCS Strategic Plan 2019-2021, a key focus in 2019 was to widen WCS' scope of programs offer to include additional Outreach and Child Support; early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence; transitional and 'meanwhile' housing and to explore partnership opportunities that strengthen our service delivery and pathways out of homelessness for women with or without children.

**Here we highlight just a few of the diverse WCS programs successfully delivered in 2019.**

### What is the most important aspect of your role?

**“Giving the women a safe house and hope of a brighter future. If we can do that and secure safe and affordable housing for when they leave everything else is just a time factor.”**

Jackie Dowling, HKWS



**Clockwise from top right:**  
Councillor Emma Heyde supporting Beecroft House; Amity Created afternoon tea fundraiser; Celebration launch of Beecroft House, transitional housing for women over 55; Bayside Women's Shelter; Creating art as part of a corporate volunteer day; Women In Design and Construction making furnishings for WCS.

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: BEECROFT HOUSE

WCS, as a change-maker, has established strong partnerships with like-minded organisations and the broader community to trial new ways of addressing the shortfall of safe and affordable housing for older women.

In May 2018, WCS was approached by Twilight Aged Care with an offer to use a vacant facility, located in Beecroft, rent-free for two years as transitional housing for women over 55.

The project was a unique collaboration between WCS, Link Housing, National Projects and Maintenance, Generous and The Grateful and supported by Twilight Aged Care.

Beecroft House opened in August 2019 and now provides safe and secure accommodation to 20 older women with a guarantee of permanent housing when they leave. A forever home is so important for this cohort.

Simone Parsons, COO of WCS explained: "This collaboration shows the power of organisations joining together with a shared purpose to create positive housing solutions for vulnerable older women.

"Whilst transitional housing is not permanent, in the current housing market it provides a period for an individual to seek more permanent housing whilst having a place to call home."

Due to the success of Beecroft House, WCS is currently replicating the project and preparing a similar transitional property in Mosman.





## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

### TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: PATHWAYS HOME

Pathways Home is a collaborative project conceived by WCS, PAYCE Foundation and Bridge Housing. Through a strong focus on encouraging partners to the program, we now work with Link Housing, Twilight Aged Care and Evolve Housing to provide transitional housing to women, their children and older single women escaping homelessness and domestic and family violence.

Access to safe, secure and affordable housing is a critical component of a woman's recovery post-trauma and it is essential to preventing homelessness.

This innovative 'meanwhile use' project aims to create an additional 100,000 extra bed nights over the next three years. The term 'meanwhile use' originates from the UK where it has been used to describe vacant land and buildings that could be repurposed for cultural or community development purposes until they were brought back to commercial use.

For Pathways Home, 'meanwhile use' housing describes residential property that is under-utilised during a residential development cycle. It is made available for the provision of transitional housing for women, their children and older single women who need an exit point from emergency accommodation.

In 2019, as part of the Pathways Home initiative, six properties were provided to WCS for use as transitional properties, which have housed 38 women. This includes Beecroft House.

### COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM: WALK THE TALK

In 2019, WCS launched Walk the Talk, a pioneering program to ignite high school students' awareness of homelessness and domestic and family violence. Walk the Talk empowers students to support the women and children in their community by 'adopting' their local WCS shelter, raising funds, volunteering and donating in-kind.

The response from local high schools near shelters has been overwhelming. This proactive initiative reflects the innovative approach of WCS, and over 2,000 enthusiastic students have successfully "walked the talk" in 2019.

Leah Pappin, Head Teacher Wellbeing, Randwick Boys High School, NSW, was incredibly pleased with the students' reaction to the program. She explained: "What a gift we have been given to be invited to participate in this program! My students were in awe and enamoured. As Head Teacher Wellbeing, it is not often I come across an initiative that 100% of students are invested in. Walk the Talk has achieved this. My students left the session feeling energised, empowered, inspired and ready to take action."

**"I learnt that I can do something to prevent violence against women, I can be who I want to be in life and it is always going to be fine to just be me."**

**Cameron, Walk the Talk program**

### THE PATHWAYS HOME MODEL



Cameron, a student who took part said: "I learnt that I can do something to prevent violence against women, I can be who I want to be in life and it is always going to be fine to just be me."

In 2019, on average:

- ▶ 100% of the 2,000 students involved said they would recommend the program.
- ▶ 99% of the girls rated the workshops as either Very Good or Excellent (options were Poor, Good, Very Good, Excellent).
- ▶ 93% of the boys ranked it as either Very Good or Excellent.

WCS will be rolling out the Walk the Talk program to more schools in 2020.

### SHELTER DEVELOPMENT: PARRAMATTA WOMEN'S SHELTER

Parramatta Women's Shelter opened in December 2019 and is the seventh shelter in the growing WCS network.

The shelter is located across two adjacent buildings, donated by the PAYCE Foundation as part of the Pathways Home initiative. It comprises one large dwelling and two large flats, where three large families now reside.

Liz Scully, Chair of the Parramatta Board, and instrumental in its establishment explained the need for such a shelter: "It can be tough to find a safe place to stay in a hurry for mums with a few kids who are escaping family violence."

Prior to opening, the Shelter Board received initial funding from Wentworth Point Community Central, which was matched by the City of Parramatta Council. This allowed the process of establishment to begin.

### EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION PATHWAYS

2019 saw the development of our Education and Employment Pathways Program, with the employment of a WCS Projects Officer to pursue partnership opportunities with educational institutions and employers.

Women who experience domestic and family violence are more likely to experience extended periods of unemployment or disrupted education/employment. As a result of time spent out of the workforce women may face barriers to finding a job such as limited or outdated qualifications, lack of experience, limited job search skills and damaged self-esteem.

Domestic and family violence also has negative impacts on mental and physical health, challenging successful employment.

The WCS Education and Employment Program aims to provide opportunities for clients to build their skills, gain confidence, overcome barriers to employment and education and access supported pathways into employment.



**Clockwise from top right:** Inaugural Walk the Talk Awards; Signing the contract for Parramatta Women's Shelter (PWS); Accepting donations at PWS; Graduation Day: Business Administration; Students celebrating Walk the Talk; PWS staff.



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

### WOMEN RETURNING TO WORK

WCS, Western Sydney University (WSU) and The College partnered to deliver a six-week pilot program for women preparing to re-enter the workforce following an extended break, or women entering the workforce for the first time.

The program combined units of the Certificate III in Business Administration with work experience at WSU to develop critical workplace skills, increase employability and rebuild self-esteem. Women also worked with their trainer to update CVs, write cover letters and apply for jobs.

Three women participated in the pilot program and have since been successful in securing part-time or full-time work. A survey completed by participants found that the program had improved their overall self-esteem, confidence in their skills and abilities and belief in their ability to find and secure employment.

### INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

WCS partnered with Service NSW to establish the Community Internship Program, offering an alternative pathway into employment for women impacted by homelessness and domestic and family violence. The Internship Program offers entry level positions within Service NSW for a period of six months, with the aim of transitioning participants to permanent employment, based on performance and the availability of suitable positions.

One WCS client commenced employment with Service NSW via the Internship Program in late 2019. WCS and Service NSW hope to make more positions available to WCS clients in 2020 and beyond.

This year, WCS hopes to build on the successes of existing partnerships and work with other organisations that share an interest in providing education and employment opportunities for the empowerment of women who have experienced homelessness and domestic and family violence.

Maddy Neely, Housing and Employment Pathways Coordinator, explained the importance of the WCS Education and Employment Program: "We've seen that when women are ready, work can actually help to rebuild self-esteem. Not only do women feel productive and more connected to community, but there is a sense of regaining control and being able to make choices about their future."

**"We've seen that when women are ready, work can actually help to rebuild self-esteem."**



**From top:** Building skills as part of the WCS Employment and Education Program; The WCS Internship Program: Helping build skills following domestic and family violence.

## OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS: ACHIEVING CHANGE!

In 2019, WCS shelters had successful housing outcomes for residents of between 64% and 84%. These results speak to both the best of what can be delivered, but also to the challenges of working with an absence of adequate affordable housing. Some residents have higher needs where additional support services were required.

When women leave our shelters there are a range of pathways. They may have secured private rental accommodation, social housing if eligible or if we have properties available through our housing partnerships they may be accommodated in transitional housing. Where that occurs we can provide additional support and women can grow their tenancy history.

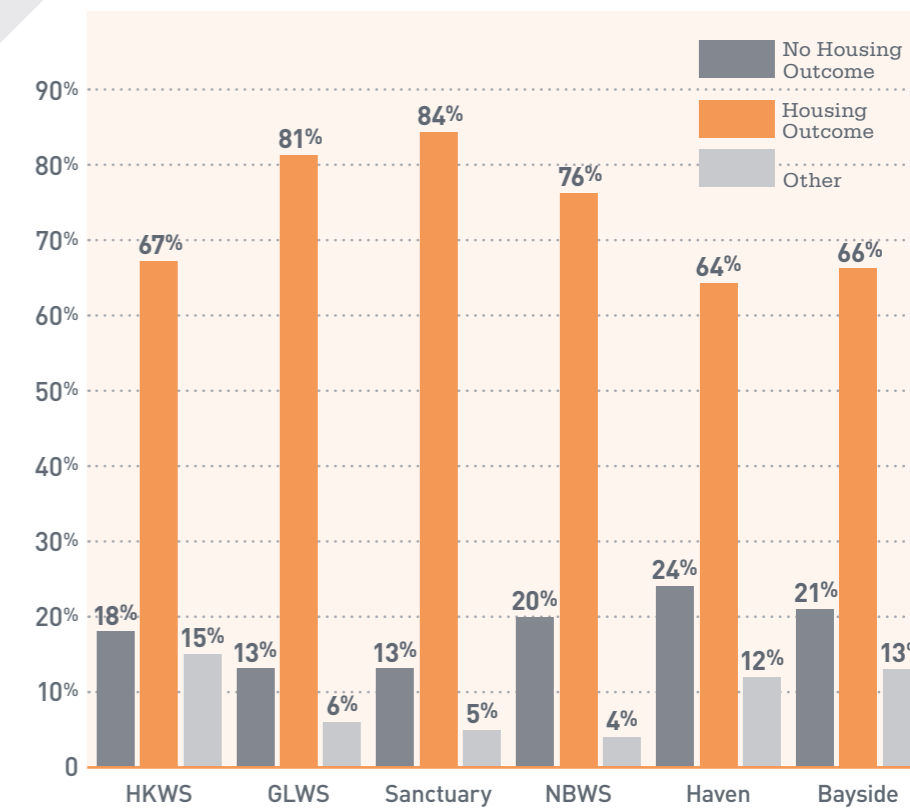
As can be seen from the statistics here, successful housing outcomes are often facilitated by intensive outreach.

In addition to the 370 women accommodated in our shelters, an additional 318 women received ongoing case work support through our outreach programs.

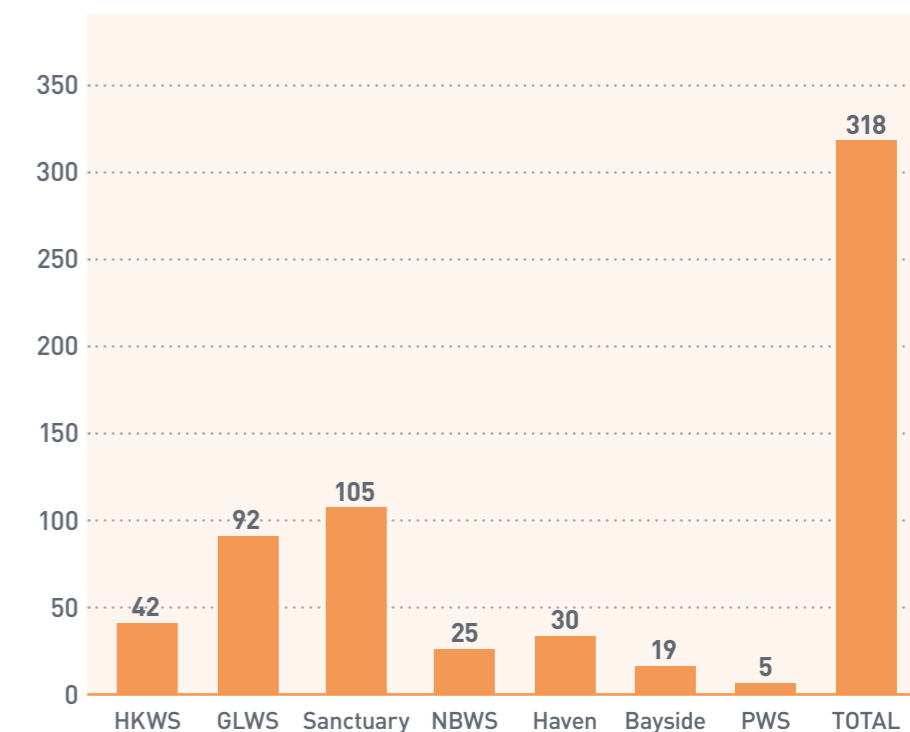


**318** women supported in outreach programs

### HOUSING OUTCOMES 2019



### OUTREACH PROVIDED BY WCS 2019





WCS shelters provide up to three months accommodation and a range of supports, including assistance to access affordable housing, medical and psychological referrals, legal assistance, police and justice assistance, and employment, education and training programs through our network of shelters and affordable transitional housing.

Our seven shelters provide wrap-around support services, and are a safe and secure place to stay. They would not work without the dedicated and skilled staff that tirelessly advocate and support the hundreds of vulnerable women and children who call our shelters home each year.

Within the first 24 hours of entering a shelter, each woman is assigned a qualified Case Worker who assists them to access all the supports they need including:

- ▶ Legal aid and assistance (such as applications for Apprehended Violence Orders, separation of bank accounts)
- ▶ Court and family support
- ▶ Assistance to assess eligibility and obtain government payments
- ▶ Counselling for trauma
- ▶ Medical assistance
- ▶ Access to training and employment opportunities

The ultimate goal of the Case Worker is to set a woman on the path to financial independence, social inclusion and a new future free from violence and the risk of homelessness.

Here we showcase some of our extraordinary Case Workers, including Outreach Workers and Child Support Workers who walk alongside each and every woman who enters our shelter network until she is confident enough to walk alone.



### NYCOLLE CLAYTON, CASE WORKER: GREAT LAKES WOMEN'S SHELTER

Nycolle Clayton is a Case Worker at our Great Lakes Women's Shelter and describes herself as a: "Children's Case Worker, Case Worker and Outreach Worker – a Jill of all trades! They're the official titles then there are all the others roles that are included under Case Worker – removalist, counsellor, cleaner, gardener, peacemaker-negotiator, pet therapist organiser, meeting organiser extraordinaire, comedian, teacher, school liaison and cheerleader."

Despite the complexity of the role, Nycolle relishes the challenge it can often bring. She continued: "This role is so amazing because we can have such positive interactions and assist women and families to rebuild their lives and identities".

WCS Case Workers also advocate with a wide range of community agencies and develop professional connections to further assist with educating local agencies how to work with women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Nycolle also assists with the WCS Child Support Program which provides support to vulnerable children as they transition through their shelter stay. The program connects children to support services, and works with mothers to develop positive relationships and parenting skills.

Through the program, children receive specialised support for their individual needs, as WCS works to break the cycle of domestic and family violence.

Nycolle explained the value of the program: "This role is so important as all children are on their own journey and have been impacted differently by their own experiences. As Child Support Workers, we are flexible and adjust to their needs and this is an ongoing learning for all involved."

WCS has been so pleased with the additional expert support provided by our Child Support Program that we have made the role a key component of staffing across our network of women's and children's shelters. We now have the role active in five of our seven shelters.



**"This role is so important as all children are on their own journey and have been impacted differently by their own experiences. As Child Support Workers, we are flexible and adjust to their needs and this is an ongoing learning for all involved."**

**Nycolle Clayton, GLWS Case Worker**





**KYLIE PALMQVIST, CASE WORKER:  
NORTHERN BEACHES WOMEN'S SHELTER**

Kylie Palmqvist, a Case Worker at our Northern Beaches Women's Shelter which houses up to 10 women without dependant children, explained the diversity of her role: "My role is really diverse. I work in the shelter as a Case Manager, so I have clients in the shelter that I support – normally one or two. In my Outreach Program I have anywhere from 10-20 women at any one time. Generally, in Outreach I touch base with the ladies at least once per fortnight depending on what they've got happening. Some of them are still working on housing so I have a lot more contact with them.

"I also manage one of the transition houses, which is case management for three ladies in one house and four ladies in another house. At that level its more looking at where they will go next, what their accommodation needs will be, what they need in place to step away from the shelter. I love my job – support, support, support and listen, listen, listen."

Launched in 2016, the WCS Outreach Program allows WCS to support women who are leaving our shelters and need continued support as they move to independent living.

While our current services connect with women after they have exited the shelter through phone contact and occasional social activities, it has becoming increasingly apparent that more active outreach supports are required and many women, especially those with few local community connections or with young children need more intensive support during the period of transition, with outreach supports withdrawing over time as local relationships develop.

Kylie explained how she walks beside the women in the Outreach Program: "Outreach is like this 'light touch'. It's like saying to somebody, 'well done, you're out there but hey, how are you going? What is happening for you?' The people that stay in Outreach are often the more isolated ladies and they are often the people with really complex mental health issues."

"For me, finding that space for them, just to meet them, go for a walk, go and have a coffee and have a chat is really important, and I see that someone holding space for another person can make a huge difference in their life."

Samantha Campbell, who worked as Shelter Manager of The Haven Women's Shelter, summarises the importance of the Case Worker and Child Support roles.

She explained: "I find that the work that we do, having it set up in the way that we have, the way we have engagement in a residential setting, Case Workers for women and then separate Child Support Workers, means we can give families what they need individually as well as a unit which really strengthens a family which has been through abuse or homelessness or mental health crisis.

**"Outreach is like this 'light touch'. It's like saying to somebody, 'well done, you're out there but hey, how are you going? What is happening for you?' The people that stay in Outreach are often the more isolated ladies and they are often the people with really complex mental health issues."**

**Kylie Palmqvist,  
NBWS Case Worker**

"It helps a family to come together rather than remaining dispersed in these silos and feeling isolation within a family unit. We really try dismantle that isolation and bring back strength within a family unit."

Explaining the benefits of Outreach, Samantha continued: "I think Outreach and Child Support are invaluable parts of what we do. It would be remiss of any service to have support for only a small period of time primarily focused on the adult of the family and then leave the family to their own devices. And although there are community groups that could potentially pick up Outreach Support, when you establish a rapport with someone, particularly in a residential setting, that continuity of casework support and care is important because they don't have to tell their story again.

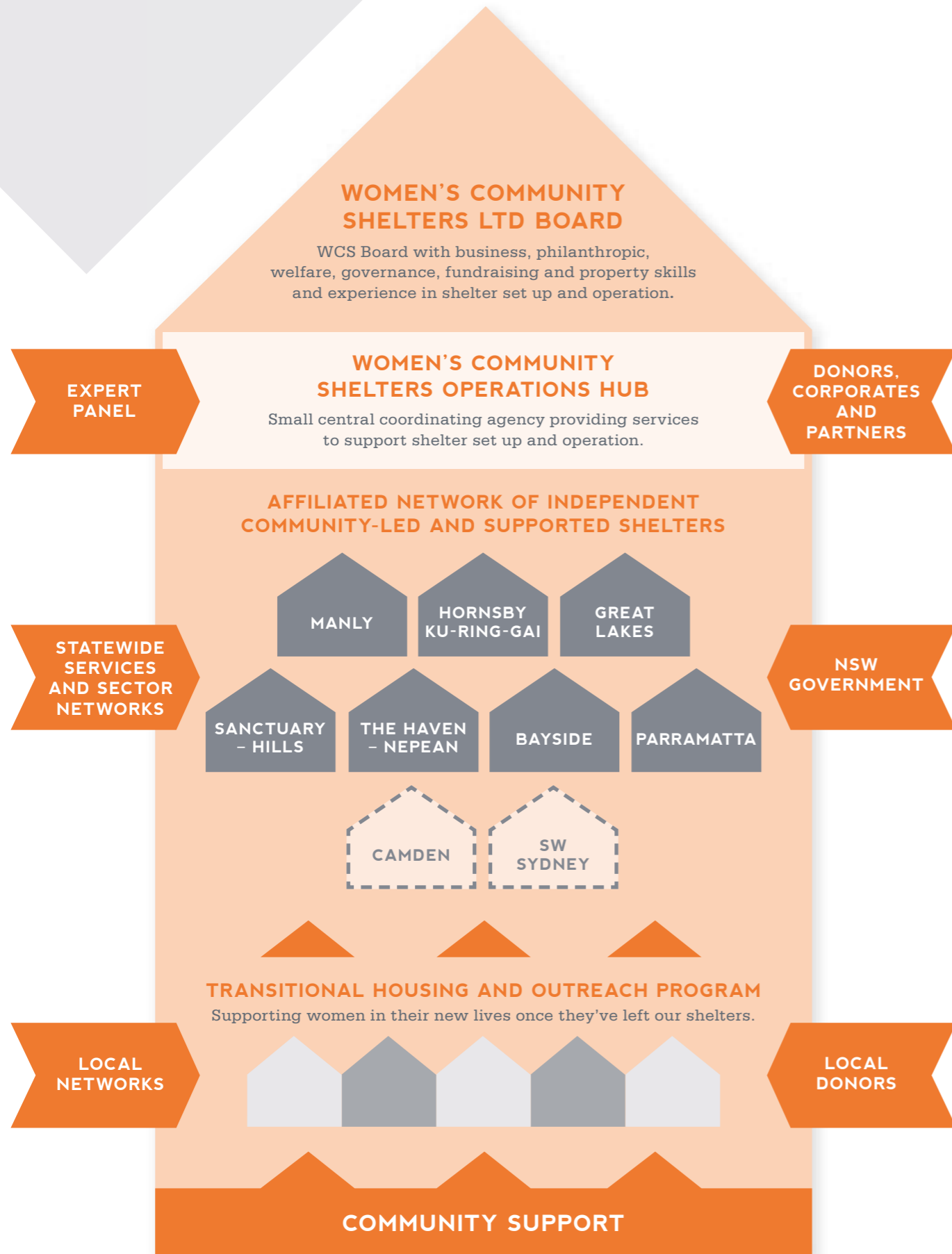
**"When a person has been through domestic and family violence and has to explain themselves again, there's a good chance they will give up on the service and have a go themselves again and potentially end up feeling isolated again as though the service cared for 12 weeks and now it doesn't care anymore. So Outreach Support is important for continuity of service and support."**





## SOCIAL FRANCHISE MODEL

Women's Community Shelters is a social franchise model, the diagram below illustrates our relationship with all stakeholders.



## INDIVIDUAL SHELTER MODEL

WCS has seven shelters across its network – each one an affiliated, yet separate incorporated entity, tied to the WCS Hub under a unique Funding and Support Agreement.

Always at the heart of what we do are the women and children, who are cared for and supported by our Shelter Managers, Case Workers, Shelter Boards and their local community.



REVIEW OF 2018/19 FINANCIAL YEAR

WCS received good support from donors and partners during the 2019 financial year, providing a financial platform to:

- ▶ Commit to an expansion of the shelter network
- ▶ Increase the wrap-around support to existing shelters
- ▶ Offer the 'Walk the Talk' educational and respectful relationships program.

During the year:

- ▶ Shelters were funded from a mix of NSW Government grants and donations from individuals, corporate partners and philanthropic trusts.
- ▶ The WCS Hub and Walk the Talk were funded exclusively from philanthropic grants and donations.

The surplus for the year was \$633k, coming from donations, will serve future WCS Hub and shelter commitments.

The audited balance sheet at 30th June 2019 shows a net asset position of \$4.86 million. Whilst the health of the balance sheet has improved over the past year, all funds are fully committed towards future shelter and WCS hub costs. In fact, as described in the fundraising targets of this report, there are significant funds still to be raised to meet five-year commitments including the planned expansion of the shelter network.

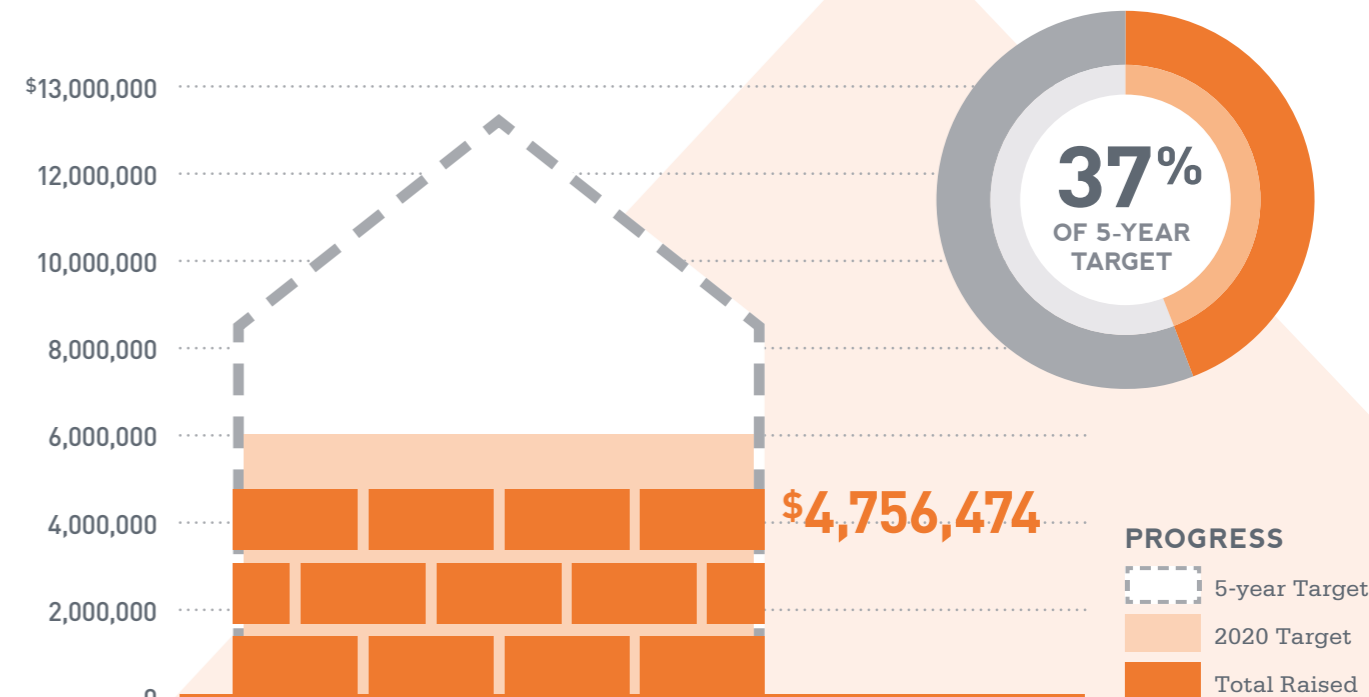
There remains a necessary focus for fundraising on the long term, to support the ongoing work (and associated financial commitments) of WCS and its shelters as the network grows to meet community need.

WCS's Directors have declared the organisation can meet all commitments as they fall due in the audited financial report, which is available in full at the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website [acnc.gov.au](http://acnc.gov.au) via the Find a Charity function.

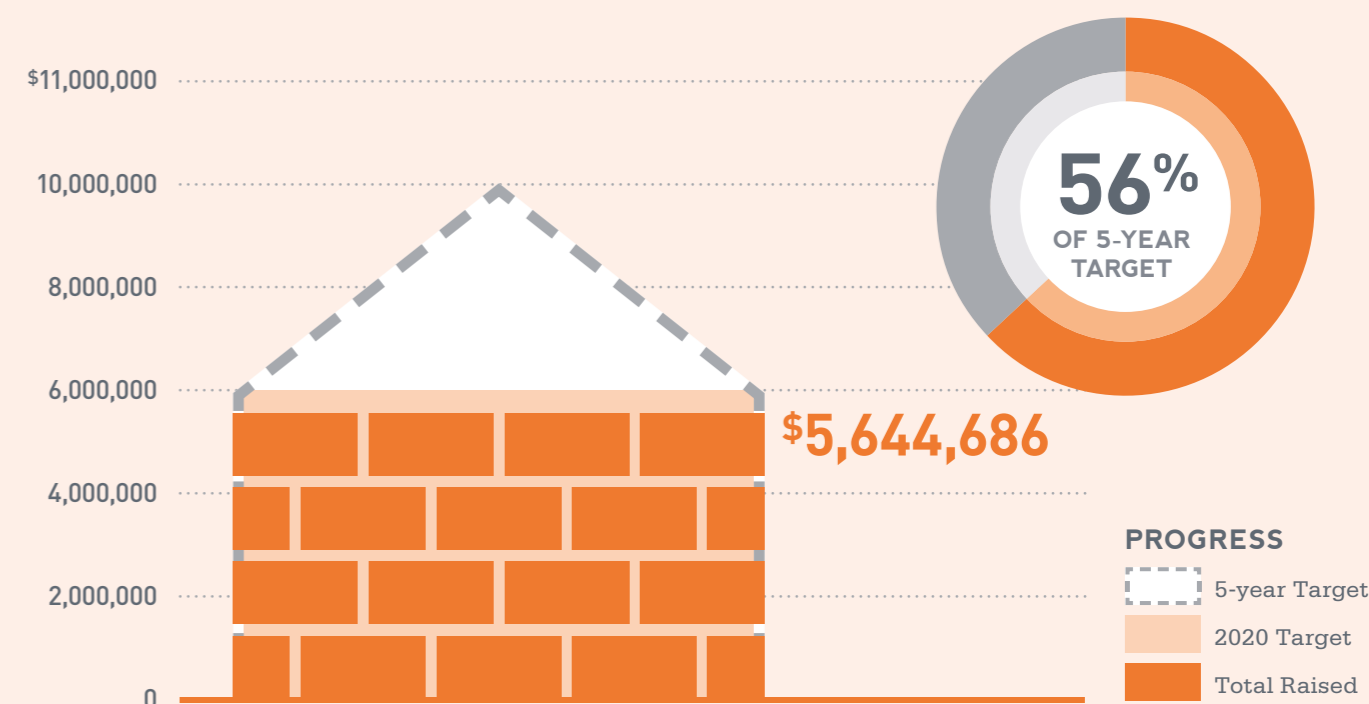
“The work that we do, having it set up in the way that we have, engagement in a residential setting, Case Workers for women and then separate Child Support Workers, means we can give families what they need individually as well as a unit which really strengthens a family which has been through abuse or homelessness or mental health crisis. It helps a family to come together rather than remaining dispersed in these silos and feeling isolation within a family unit, we really try to dismantle that isolation and bring back strength within a family unit.”

Samantha Campbell,  
The Haven Women's Shelter

SHELTERS FUNDRAISING



WCS HUB FUNDRAISING





## WITH THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to all our supporters and local communities for helping us to help hundreds of vulnerable women and children escaping homelessness and domestic and family violence each year.

Our donors and partners are critical to this effort and our work would not be possible without them, and we sincerely thank all for their generosity, time and effort.

### PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORTERS

ANZ Community Foundation  
 ATF Global Discretionary Descendants Trust  
 Ave Fenix Pacific Foundation  
 Bronze Capital Management  
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 Charles Warman Foundation  
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 Hogan Family Foundation  
 Hummingbird Community Choirs  
 Hunt Family Foundation  
 Jante Korringa  
 JBWCEF – Sean Triner Gift Account  
 Kathryn and Timothy Uther  
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 PAYCE Foundation

Perpetual  
 • Adolph Basser Trust  
 • Baxter Charitable Trust  
 • Estate of the Late Patrick Brennan  
 • JLDJS Foundation  
 • Mary Alice Foundation  
 • Myee Codrington Foundation for Homeless Women  
 • Ronald Geoffrey Arnott Trust  
 • The Clark Family Foundation  
 • The Isabel Sims Endowment  
 • The Palmdale Trust  
 PWC Australia  
 Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta  
 Restore Hope Foundation  
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 Ro Markson  
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 Sisters of Mercy – St Michael's Fund  
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Bayside Council  
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 Commonwealth Government  
 Department of Communities and Justice  
 NSW State Government  
 Parramatta City Council

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 Bridge Housing  
 Cox Inall Communications  
 Evolve Housing  
 Furniture By Design  
 John Kell – Hicksons Lawyers  
 King Living Foundation  
 Link Housing  
 Maurice Blackburn  
 OIC  
 Stellar Magazine  
 The Big Issue  
 The Generous and the Grateful  
 Two Good  
 Women's Legal Services

### WORKPLACE GIVING

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 Greenhill  
 Guardian Australia  
 Hometrack Australia  
 National Australia Bank Ltd  
 PwC Australia  
 Sumitomo Mitsubishi Banking Corporate  
 Suncorp Group  
 Westpac

We also thank those who have chosen to remain anonymous, we gratefully acknowledge your support.

There are many ways people have donated to WCS, including:

- ▶ Single payments and monthly gifts responding to critical appeals;
- ▶ Involvement and sponsorship of WCS events and fundraisers;
- ▶ Corporate collaboration projects;
- ▶ Workplace Giving programs;
- ▶ Through trusts, foundations, bequests and government agencies that invest in our future and strategic development.



### EXISTING SHELTER NETWORK AND NEW SHELTERS IN DEVELOPMENT

WCS could not deliver its essential services without the dedication and commitment of our staff and volunteers. We thank our Hub and front-line staff, WCS and Shelter Boards, volunteers, donors, partners, fundraisers and individual and corporate supporters who help us assist hundreds of women and their children every year.

The reach of WCS extends beyond our front-line services and programs, with many women turning to our website and social media channels for information and support.

In 2019 WCS saw:



## ACCOUNTABILITY & CONTACTS

### WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS LIMITED

Public Benevolent Institution with DGR1 (Deductible Gift Recipient) Status

### ACCOUNTANTS

Purpose Accounting  
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### AUDITORS

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### SOLICITORS

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**t:** (02) 9539 6859

ABN: 54 153 006 556

ACN: 153 006 556

### CONTACTS

**For more information about the important work of WCS:**

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**e:** [hello@womenscommunityshelters.org.au](mailto:hello@womenscommunityshelters.org.au)

**m:** 0432 630 359

**t:** (02) 9539 6859

**f** WomensCommunityShelters

**@** womenscommunitysheltersau

**@** WCS\_CEO

**TO DONATE PLEASE VISIT:**

**WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS**

[www.womenscommunityshelters.org.au/donate/](http://www.womenscommunityshelters.org.au/donate/)

**WOMEN'S  
COMMUNITY  
SHELTERS**





**TO DONATE PLEASE VISIT:  
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**w** [www.womenscommunityshelters.org.au](http://www.womenscommunityshelters.org.au)

**e** [hello@womenscommunityshelters.org.au](mailto:hello@womenscommunityshelters.org.au)

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**i** [womenscommunitysheltersau](https://www.instagram.com/womenscommunitysheltersau)



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COMMUNITY  
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