



**WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS**

2023 ANNUAL REVIEW

**SAFE, SECURE,
SUPPORTED
AND EQUAL**

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Acknowledgement of Country

Women's Community Shelters (WCS) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the many different lands across Australia, including Torres Strait Islander and First Nations people, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

As we work to address the pressing issues of domestic and family violence and homelessness, we must recognise the strength and resilience of these communities, who have endured these challenges for generations.

We also acknowledge the ongoing consequences of colonisation, which continue to impact these communities today.

WCS stands in solidarity with Torres Strait Islander and First Nations people, and we are committed to working towards a more just and equitable future for all Australians.

We acknowledge the importance of self-determination, and we are committed to listening to and learning from these communities as we work together to create a safer, more inclusive society for women and children escaping homelessness and domestic and family violence.





GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SYDNEY

Message from

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



It is an honour for me to introduce this Annual Review, highlighting the important achievements of Women's Community Shelters (WCS) whose 10th Anniversary we were delighted to celebrate at Government House in September last year.

That evening was a sparkling occasion – and a well-deserved recognition of the dedicated work of Women's Community Shelters across Sydney and in the Great Lakes area in providing not only a much-needed safe shelter, but a haven and community for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Each night, one in two women is unable to find a safe place to stay in a crisis shelter due to the limited amount of crisis accommodation. Each day, the work of Women's Community Shelters continues – rebuilding self-esteem, providing wrap-around services, helping women and children get back on their feet.

Domestic and family violence is a whole-of-community problem and tackling it requires whole-of-community engagement and commitment, including in our schools and through community education. Our response demands both our immediate action and long-term attention to protect women and children from living with fear of violence and coercive control.

There is a growing and pressing need for shelters within communities, as indicated by the figures outlined elsewhere in this report. Working hand-in-hand with local community organisations, businesses and providers to establish emergency and transitional accommodation; pathways into safe, secure, longer-term housing, and support services for women to enable a better future for them and their children is where Women's Community Shelters has made its most significant impact.

There is always more to be done. Since January 2022, three new WCS Shelters have opened – in Revesby, Camden and a second shelter, under a new core and cluster model, in Penrith – expanding the reach of Women's Community Shelters' network. Also in the past year, there has been an expansion of services offered to women and children, including additional outreach and child support services.

This vital work is not only made possible by the ongoing dedication and generosity of the wonderful team at Women's Community Shelters and their volunteers, donors and supporters. Thank you for your whole-hearted commitment, "working community by community to establish an Australia where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal."

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

CEO & Chair Report



“It is absolutely delightful to reflect on 2022, with a level of perspective, as being the first year that our work started to creep back towards a ‘new normal’ in a post-COVID world.”



Where much of the previous two years had been focused on supporting our Hub, our shelters and residents to stay funded, safe and healthy, with all the attendant policy and procedure changes, it was a relief, in 2022, to be able to look once more towards our bigger mission of an Australia where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal.

Annabelle had the benefit of a Sabbatical under a Leadership course during 2021/22. Simone Parsons, WCS’ Deputy CEO, was ably in charge of WCS until March 2022, when Annabelle returned. WCS was also delighted to welcome Founding Board Member Julie White to the role of Chair, after the departure of long-standing Chair, Kris Neill, in April 2022.

Last year proved to be a pivotal year for WCS, in our core work with communities, in our advocacy around domestic violence and homelessness, and in our mission to provide more safe homes for women and children in NSW and beyond.

The last year has highlighted an ongoing housing crisis in Australia, with rental vacancies below 1% in most major cities and regional areas across Australia. The competitiveness of the rental market, rising interest rates, and the roll-back of COVID supplements and provisions means more people are competing for fewer available properties.

This has the effect of squeezing those on lower incomes or benefits out of the bottom of the housing pipeline, with caravan parks, tents and sleeping rough becoming unavoidable for many people, even those with employment.

For women attempting to leave domestic and family violence, this choice becomes one between remaining in abuse, or taking yourself and your children into potential poverty.

It is against this backdrop that WCS seeks to continue to innovate with housing solutions, working with local communities, philanthropists, businesses and governments to create more safe and affordable housing for women and children. We need your help more than ever, as costs of living rise.

WCS’ work with local communities to establish shelters has meant that over the last decade, we have opened our shelters mostly in properties offered to us for periods of time at a peppercorn rent or sourced from the private rental market.

The opening of the NSW State Government Core and Cluster domestic violence capital investment program in May 2022 meant we were able to apply to secure a permanent home for a number of them, and additional safe beds for women and children who need them. We look forward to being



able to update you over the course of 2023 about these initiatives!

We were delighted to open Allawah House, our fourth meanwhile use project, and our third dedicated to housing Australia's fastest growing group of homeless people – older women. In partnership with the landlord, Pacific Link Housing and the NSW Government, we demonstrated the value of our work in this critical area – and the stories of women finding a true 'home' after many years of housing insecurity are heartwarming. This has been a much needed service on the Central Coast.

Our Abbie House project with City West Housing and the City of Sydney, along with Scape Student Accommodation also had a full, and vital year of operations, assisting over 40 women with housing close to their employment and education.

WCS supported the NSW Government's moves to criminalise Coercive Control – the pattern of behaviours that sits behind all domestic and family violence.

Annabelle had the privilege of being present in November 2022 at the invitation of the Attorney-General, Mark Speakman MP, when the Bill passed the Lower House in NSW, and spoke in support of the changes.

This law, when implemented well, should prevent many abusive relationships progressing to the point of severe physical abuse

and domestic homicide, with the controlling and fear-inducing elements of the relationship highlighted in the NSW Crimes Act. Police will be empowered to gather different kinds of evidence and to intervene earlier.

Annabelle represents the Domestic and Family Violence Sector on the Coercive Control Implementation Taskforce, which seeks to ensure that training and education for relevant stakeholders and the broader community are rolled out effectively, and that the new offence is well-understood.

While many women choose never to use the criminal justice system in the aftermath of domestic abuse, it's incredibly important that our laws reflect their experience – and that they have a choice.

The last year has also seen WCS explore opportunities for community development in Victoria, with several groups keen to explore our shelter model in areas of need. We also secured our Community Housing Registration, enabling us to lease and manage properties from governments – a core step in our mission to expand our reach to help more women and children.

2022 was also a year of celebration for WCS as we marked 10 years of supporting women and children into safe housing and a future full of hope and opportunity.

Far left from top: Annabelle Daniel OAM, WCS CEO and Julie White, WCS Chair.

Clockwise from previous page, top: Annabelle with Dominic Perrottet at the announcement of the DV core and cluster investment funding; WCS presenting at the Upper House inquiry concerning older women's homelessness; Receiving vital donations at the WCS Hub; WCS 10-year celebration event at Government House; Camden/Wollondilly DV Committee.





We are incredibly grateful to Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of NSW, for hosting this very special event in Government House. It was wonderful to see so many of our supporters, past and present Board members and the hardworking shelter managers and staff joining together to celebrate and acknowledge the journey that WCS has been on.

We have an incredibly committed hardworking WCS Hub staff and all of the achievements of WCS over the past 11 years would not have been possible without these wonderful 'angels'. Alongside them are a dedicated focused and committed Board, who provide guidance, professional expertise and experience and underpin all that WCS does. We would like to acknowledge and thank each and every one of the staff and the Board for this.

Our plans for 2023 are full of optimism. Our Blue Wren House – Camden Women's Shelter opened after COVID delays, and we seek to reach 3,500 students with our Walk the Talk High Schools program.

We will also be relaunching Walk the Talk... in your workplace, providing meaningful domestic violence literacy education evidenced with front-line learning and experience.

Our long term goal, of course, is an Australia where an organisation like WCS doesn't need to exist. Until that happens, we need to do more to assist women and children leave violence and homelessness, and work community by community to educate, empower and take concrete action to eliminate domestic violence and support those affected by it.

We can't do that without your help. WCS Hub operations, which do all the work to establish new safe housing options and support existing shelters, are fully funded by philanthropy, corporate partnerships and your generous donations.

We couldn't do what we do without you. You are our 'village', and we are enormously grateful.

Annabelle Daniel

Julie White

**Annabelle Daniel OAM,
Chief Executive Officer and
Julie White, Chair**



Clockwise from top left: WCS CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM presenting at City West Housing; Ministerial visit at Allawah House; internal shot at Biyani House – Revesby Women's Shelter; WHS training at the Hub.

Deputy CEO Report



Simone Parsons,
Deputy CEO

“This year our partnerships with Community Housing Providers have been key to our ability to extend our service delivery.”



The past year has been an industrious and ambitious one for WCS with a goal to double our impact, ensuring women and children can access the help they need. It has been a year of service innovation, and I am grateful to our Hub team, Network Boards and Shelter teams for their commitment to continuously working to deliver high quality services.

Our meanwhile use housing projects are now a foundational part of the way we work, and our successful community housing registration reflects our commitment to being part of the sector wide priority of addressing the housing shortage and finding permanent housing solutions.

This year our partnerships with Community Housing Providers (CHP) have been key to our ability to extend our service delivery. My thanks to all our CHP partners for the work you do and for getting behind and supporting the WCS community-based model. I strongly believe our collaborations have strengthened our shared practice. We know that this results in better service delivery and integrated pathways for the women and children we support.

I look forward to continuing the work with you this year and in the future.

Simone Parsons,
Deputy CEO



From top: Pacific Link Housing and WCS teams at a special Allawah House thanks event; Allawah house residents; corporate volunteers preparing a WCS meanwhile use property.

Vision & Values



Our Purpose is: To build a world where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal.

Our Vision is: That the communities we work with across Australia are empowered to respond to and prevent domestic and family violence, and women and children's homelessness.

Our Mission is to:

- Create strong relationships and engagement – taking our community with us on our growth journey.
- Build and leverage the experience, resources and networks of Women's Community Shelters (WCS).
- Support the development and operation of a network of best practice, sustainable specialist shelters and transitional accommodation properties to support women and children.
- Work at a system and community level to innovate and advocate for vulnerable women and children.
- Be innovative and solutions-focused to support improved outcomes for homeless women and children escaping domestic and family violence and homelessness.
- Strengthen the long-term capacity and sustainability of independent shelters and the WCS Network.
- Develop resources and programs to promote community understanding and empower them to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence and homelessness, and support those impacted by it.

Our Values are:

Respect:

We value our clients, staff, volunteers and all our communities and partners, 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, through collaboration and partnership.

2022 Highlights

- WCS opens shelter number nine in our growing network, **Biyani House – Revesby Women’s Shelter**.
- **WCS celebrates over a decade of achievements** with a thank you event for staff, key donors and partners hosted at Government House.
- **Julie Brady**, President of our Great Lakes Women’s Shelter, **nominated for a NSW Woman of the Year Award 2022**.
- **WCS partners with City West Housing and Scape Australia**, with support from the City of Sydney and Lendlease to **open Abbie House**, to make use of underutilised student accommodation for 14 single women. *Read the full story here.*
- WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM and Deputy CEO, Simone Parsons represent WCS during their **appearance at the Upper House inquiry** concerning Homelessness Amongst Older People Aged Over 55 in NSW.
- **Great Lakes Women’s Shelter** moves into their brand-new, purpose-built shelter Marrungbaa Garuwaga – meaning ‘Good Place by the Sea’.
- Our early intervention and prevention program **Walk the Talk**, supports its **first out-of-state school** in Victoria.
- **WCS hosts Minister for Women’s Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence**, Natalie Ward, and Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC at Allawah House, our third meanwhile use property for older women, located in East Gosford.
- **WCS CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM appears at the NSW Upper House Inquiry** to consult with Government and discuss the drafting of the coercive control legislation. The Bill passed in November 2022, making NSW the first Australian state or territory to have a dedicated stand-alone offence of coercive control.
- **The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC, Minister for Family and Communities, and Minister for Disability Services visits** our Northern Beaches Women’s Shelter (NBWS).
- **WCS becomes a Tier 3 Community Housing Provider (CHP)** as part of our ongoing growth strategy.



From top: Biyani House staff induction; Abbie House welcome pack; Annabelle Daniel OAM and Simone Parsons at the Upper House inquiry into Homelessness Amongst Older People Aged Over 55 in NSW; Great Lakes Women’s Shelter opening.

About Us

Women's Community Shelters (WCS) exists to help local communities establish and operate crisis accommodation shelters and transitional housing options for women and children of all ages, who are homeless or leaving domestic and family violence.

Since being established 11 years ago, the WCS head office (the Hub) has supported 10 shelters to establish and maintain successful accommodation and additional support services. This includes providing crucial funding and project management, intellectual property guidance, and governance expertise in an ever-changing world of legal requirements.

Once operational, WCS continues to help these communities achieve positive outcomes for women and their children, whilst remaining cost efficient and sustainable. This is known as a 'hub and spokes' social franchise model and is unique in Australia.

We adopted this model because we believe this is the most effective solution to achieve our vision – an Australia where the communities we work with are empowered to respond to and prevent domestic and family violence, and women and children's homelessness.

Addressing these complex issues requires us to be agile, flexible and quick to respond, and we have created a set of effectiveness principles reflecting this, on the next page.

It also calls for a multifaceted, collaborative approach, combining both prevention and crisis response tactics, as well as wrap-around support services to ensure that the women and children we work with go on to live independent, safe and happy lives free from violence.

Our programs include outreach-based case work, child support, employment and training pathways, and delivery of wellbeing programs.

We also operate transitional and meanwhile use housing, which provides the all-important next step of affordable housing and additional safe exit pathways for women and children leaving our shelters.

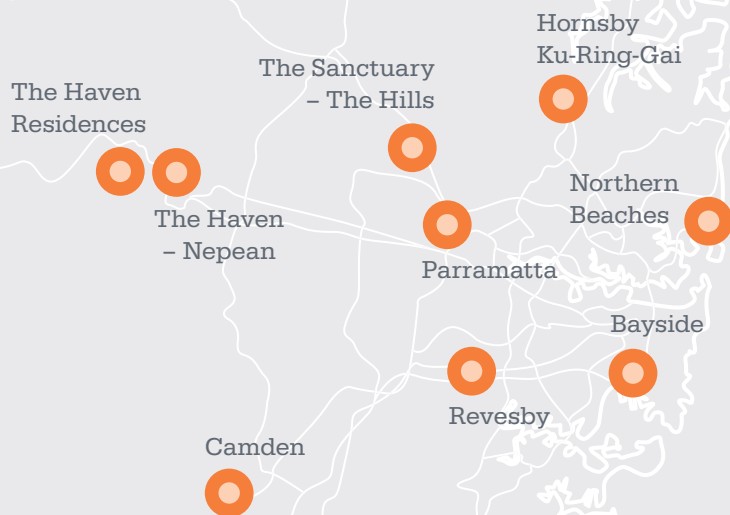
Early intervention, prevention and advocacy

Working with schools, we deliver an early intervention and prevention program called 'Walk the Talk' to around 3,100 Year 9 and 10 students each year. This program is unique in its approach as it gives young people an opportunity to be part of the solution and understand the real-life impacts of domestic and family violence, by working with our shelters. We have also introduced Walk the Talk Corporate, which works with organisations to help them identify warning signs, how to handle disclosures and what it means to be an ally. Scan here for more information.



We seek to influence personal, community and social change and have established strong connections with the domestic and family violence (DFV) and homelessness sectors.

Our CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM serves as the Chair of the Domestic Violence NSW Board and our Deputy CEO, Simone Parsons is on the Board of Shelter





Great Lakes

NSW, and a member of the Homelessness NSW Policy Committee. We are members of Women's Safety NSW, The Fundraising Institute of Australia, and registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

We are advocates at a federal, state and local government level. In October 2022 this advocacy, in partnership with many others, was realised when legislation to criminalise 'coercive control' was introduced to the NSW Parliament.

WCS is proud to be part of this historic moment, which will see NSW become the first state to introduce a stand-alone offence of coercive control.

Our CEO continues to advise the inquiry into the Crimes Legislation (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 to help with the education and funding required, before the law comes into effect.

Our Effectiveness Principles

- **Organisational Agility:** We are agile and responsive, making and taking advantage of opportunities as they arise to pursue our Vision and Mission.
- **Effectiveness:** We focus our effort where there is an unmet need and think about how we can best leverage our resources to close gaps in the system.
- **Purposeful Risk Taking:** We are dynamic and take informed risks to demonstrate and test what is possible.
- **Collaborative Endeavour:** We work in collaboration with others, seeking to leverage our experience, resources and networks to build on, and complement the efforts and capabilities of the communities and partners we work with.
- **Capacity Building:** We always take a community asset and capacity building approach with our partner communities and organisations.
- **Diversity and Inclusivity:** We are inclusive and promote diversity through everything that we do.
- **Sustainability:** We work in financially, operationally and environmentally sustainable ways.

Below, from left: Students taking part in our Walk the Talk program; WCS Hub staff taking part in a change workshop.



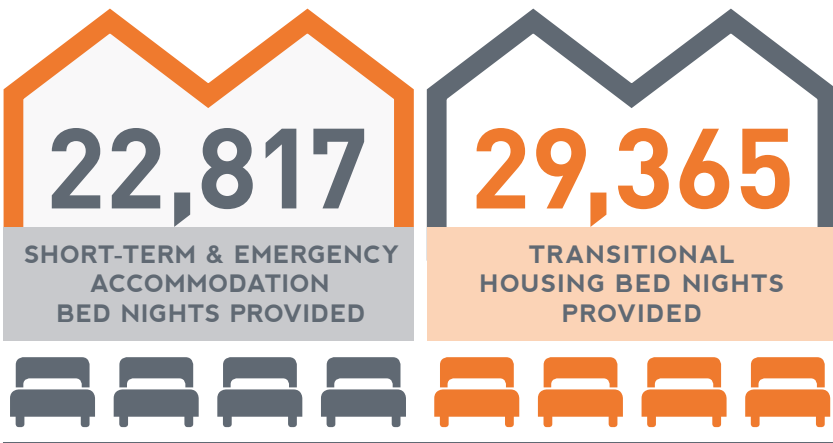
2022 Year in Review – Statistics



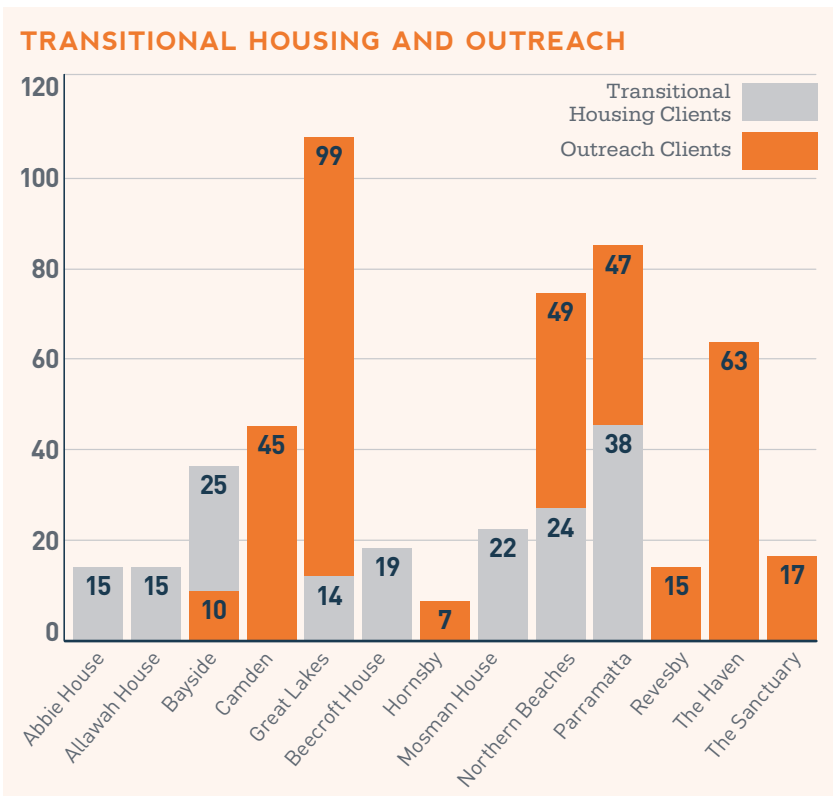
- In 2022, Women's Community Shelters supported **863 women and children** in crisis with a support period*: **582 women, 281 children.**



- We accommodated **428 women and children** in our crisis accommodation shelters: **229 women and 199 children.**



- We provided outreach support to **352 women and children.**
- The number of women and children that shelters support in outreach varies depending on factors such as location, demand, and availability of other service options.



- We accommodated **172 women and children** in Transitional Housing.
- There were **1,174 support periods** opened for our clients, **812** for women and **362** for children.
- There were an additional **222 women and children** that were provided with assistance in some capacity, case worker support, advocacy, or liaison when our shelters were full.
- There were **615 women and children** who were **unassisted.**
- WCS provided over **50,000 bed nights** to the sector.

WCS Shelter Snapshot:

JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2022

- **22,817** short-term and emergency accommodation bed nights and **29,365** Transitional Housing bed nights.
- We provided **82,418** support period days.
- **90.18%** of shelter clients had worked towards completion of their case management goals at exit.
- **41.61%** of our shelter clients exited into long-term housing, and **5.67%** of our shelter clients exited into medium term housing.
- Compared to 2021, there was a **21.9% increase** in the number of support period days we provided: **67,560 up to 82,418**.
- Compared to 2021, there was a **21.9% increase** in the number of clients we provided with Transitional Housing and a **25.3% increase** in the number of Transitional Housing bed nights, we provided:
 - 141 up to **172**
 - 23,443 up to **29,365**.
- Compared to 2021, there was a **17.9% increase** in the number of women we accommodated in shelter: **363 up to 428**.



*See glossary on inside back cover.

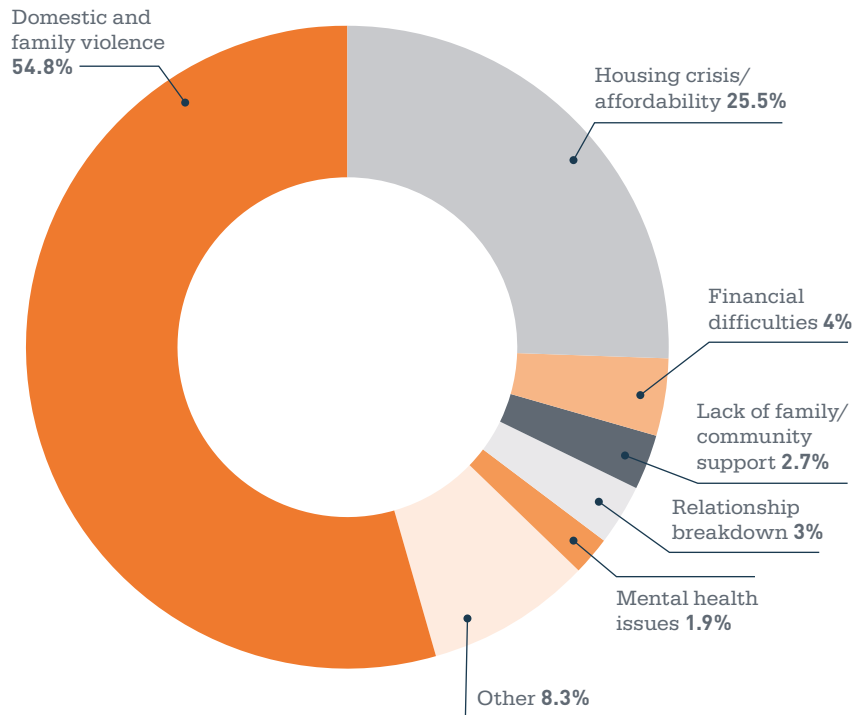
PRIMARY REASON FOR REFERRAL

The statistics shown here indicate that over half of the referrals were made due to domestic and family violence, highlighting the alarming prevalence of this growing issue.

The data also shows that a significant number of referrals were made due to housing crisis and affordability, further emphasising the ongoing need for WCS to extend accessible and affordable housing options.

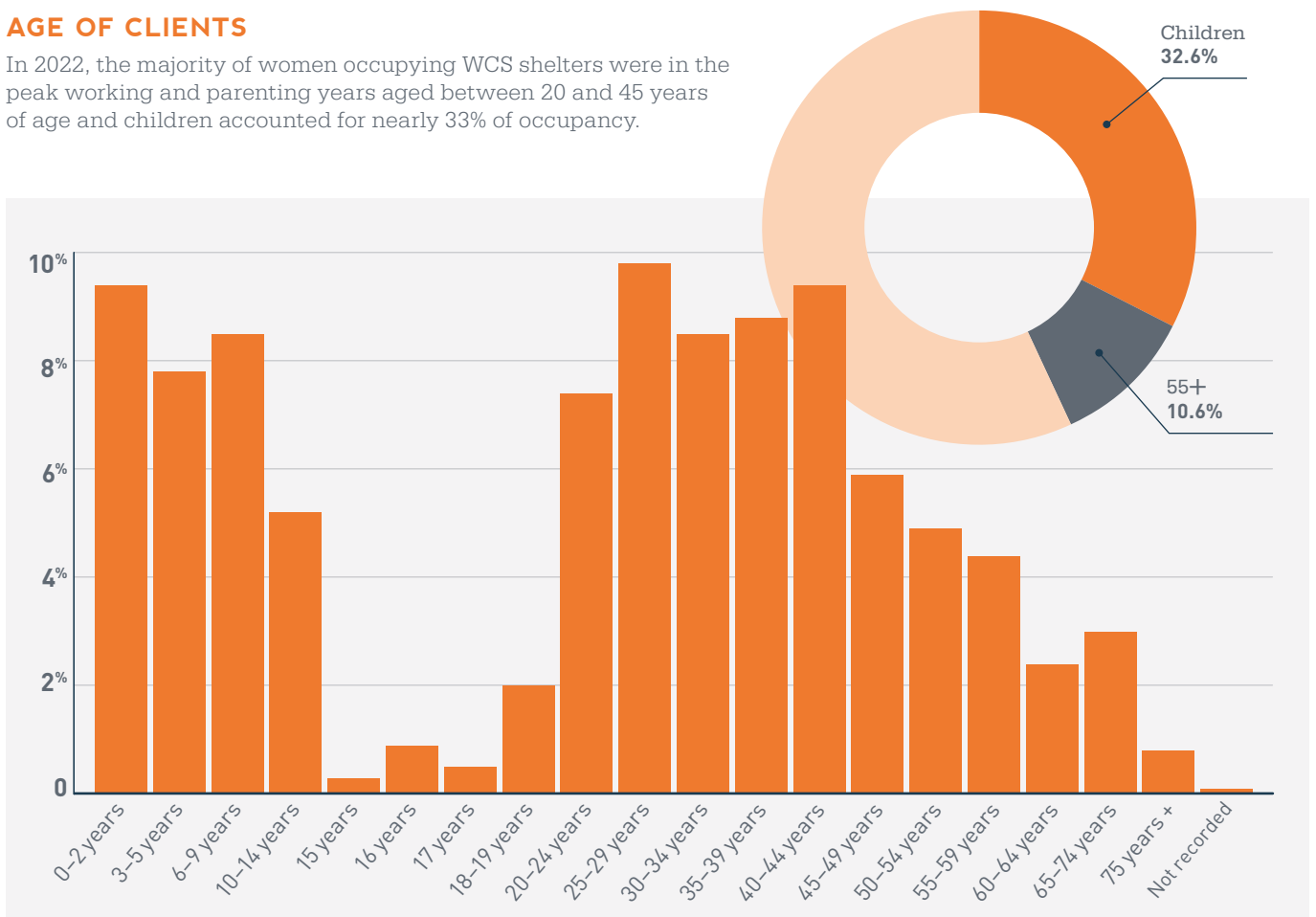
Additionally, the statistics reveal that a small percentage of referrals were made due to financial difficulties, lack of family/community support, relationship breakdown, mental health issues, and other reasons.

These statistics underscore the critical importance of providing comprehensive support services that address the complex and varied needs of women experiencing homelessness and domestic or family violence.



AGE OF CLIENTS

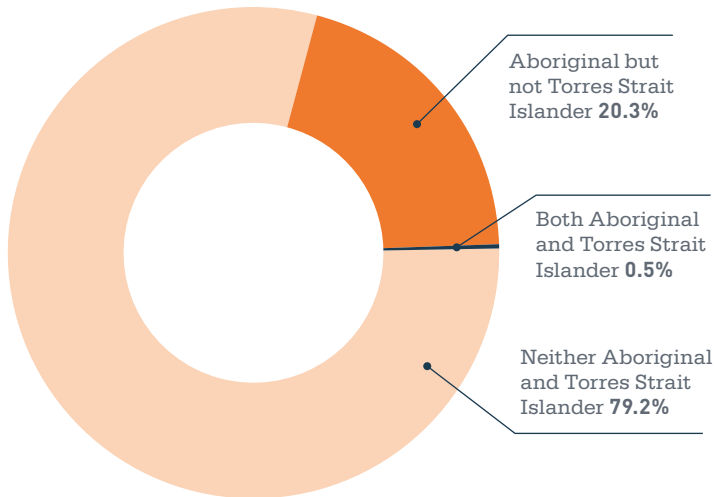
In 2022, the majority of women occupying WCS shelters were in the peak working and parenting years aged between 20 and 45 years of age and children accounted for nearly 33% of occupancy.



NUMBER IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

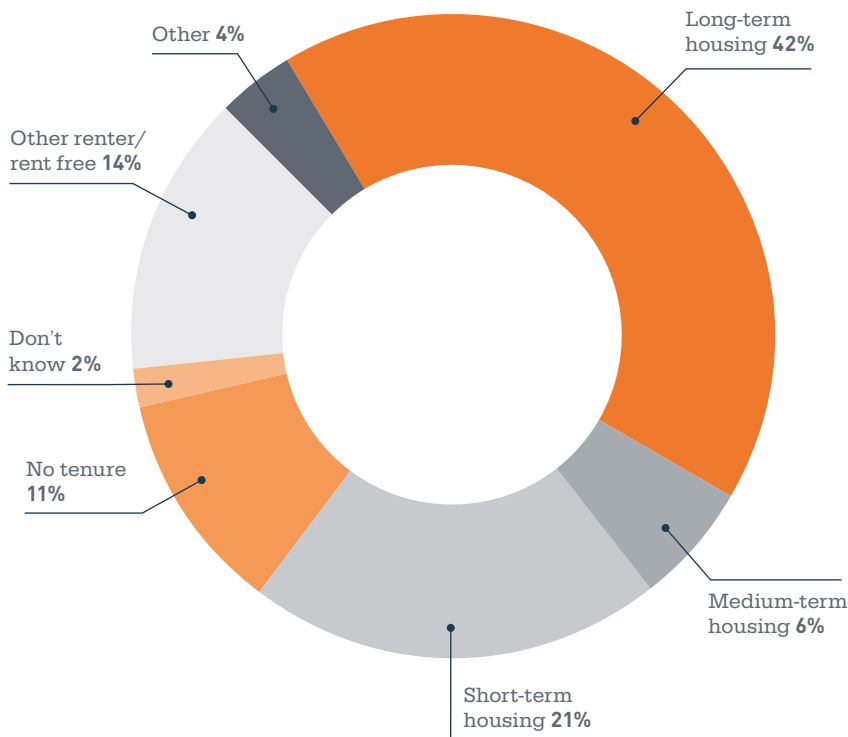
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women make up 20.8% of the people we support across the network.

Our Great Lakes Women's Shelter, in particular, averages nearly 60% percent of women identifying as indigenous.



The statistics shown here underscore the critical importance of providing comprehensive support services that address the complex and varied needs of women experiencing homelessness and domestic or family violence.

HOUSING OUTCOMES – SHELTER CLIENTS



COUNTRY OF BIRTH

We supported clients from **72** different countries.

- Afghanistan
- Armenia
- Brazil
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- Central African Republic
- China
- Congo, Republic of
- Denmark
- Egypt
- England
- Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Germany
- Ghana
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Korea, Republic of (South)
- Lebanon
- Mexico
- Myanmar
- New Zealand
- Pakistan
- Papua New Guinea
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Russian Federation
- Samoa
- Saudi Arabia
- Sudan
- South Africa
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand
- Turkey
- United States of America
- Vietnam



Spotlight on Impact and Innovation

Above from left: Shelter Manager's meeting at the WCS Hub; WCS CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM presenting on International Women's Day.

“WCS has never been afraid to take risks to create change. They are always calculated, with proper governance in place, but without risks, there can be no innovation, and the challenges our sector faces require constant innovation.”

WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

EXPANSION AND INNOVATION

WCS has always been at the forefront of developing solutions that address the growing and unmet demand for safe and affordable housing for at-risk women and children in Australia. Every aspect of our work includes innovation, scalability, opportunity, impact, growth, local community, philanthropy, corporate and government partnerships to provide increased support and safe bed nights to those who need it most.

This reflects WCS' strategy since our inception more than a decade ago – a consistent drive to pursue opportunities and adapt our innovative model, in order to meet our clients' growing needs and to increase our impact in the sector.

It is this approach that has seen WCS grow from a small charity offering crisis accommodation at our core, to being a respected sector leader, operating 10 emergency shelters, a portfolio of transitional and meanwhile use properties and a range of other vital homelessness services, across NSW.

INNOVATION

“WCS has never been afraid to take risks to create change. They are always calculated, with proper governance in place, but without risks, there can be no innovation, and the challenges our sector faces require constant innovation,” says WCS CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM.

What has made WCS different since the beginning is its model of community engagement, capacity building and collaboration.

“When communities identify a need for shelter accommodation, they have the passion and determination to make it happen, but setting up a shelter isn't easy if you don't have the funding or in-depth sector and compliance knowledge.

“We created our unique social franchise model in response to these needs. Essentially, we walk alongside communities to support them every step of the way in establishing the services they need in their area,” explains Annabelle.

This approach addresses the national issues of women's homelessness, disadvantage and domestic and family violence and empowers local communities to have an impact at the grassroots



Clockwise from top left: Shelter Case Workers undertaking training at the WCS Hub; Ribbon cutting at the launch of the tenth WCS Shelter, The Haven Residences; WCS Director of Education Dannielle Miller OAM with WTT students.

the WCS model works. What's more, because of its structural set-up, the model can be replicated wherever there is a need, so long as funding and community drive exists.

WCS relies on philanthropic support to operate. Philanthropy has been at the centre of the Hub, fuelling our growth and impact for over 11 years.

"We're different because of how we work and how we're funded. Our tri-partite model works, and I can't express enough how crucial philanthropic support has been to our work in the past and will be to our future.

"We are constantly approached by communities all over Australia, and with the support of philanthropists and community and corporate fundraising, we know we can scale our model and bring additional funding and government to the table. We pride ourselves on being agile and community-led and we welcome partnerships with like-minded individuals to do more. What we're dealing with are solvable problems. And we've got some great solutions, and that's what we want to look forward to," says Annabelle.

level. It also creates a ripple effect. What starts with critical emergency accommodation in response to a local need, soon sees engagement from community members who have 'time, treasure and talent' to give.

"We provide tangible opportunities for community members to understand the issues, educate themselves and contribute something meaningful to support vulnerable women and children," adds Annabelle.

"Our Walk the Talk program delivered in schools and corporate organisations is our most recent innovation and a great example of how we're creating change by doing things differently."

While WCS is not the only non-profit running early intervention and prevention programs, Walk the

Talk's delivery in schools, which is 100% funded by philanthropy, is unique in its community approach. Schools are introduced to their local shelter, and the students continue to have their consciousness raised well beyond the initial in-school workshop through hands-on activities like fundraising, volunteering or creating wellbeing packs for the women and children.

In the corporate world, organisations and their staff are equipped with the knowledge to identify warning signs and how to respond if someone discloses their experiences of abuse.

SCALABILITY

Adopting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation has resulted in more than a decade's worth of evidence that shows that



OPPORTUNITY

WCS continues to increase our response to community need, and plans to expand our existing model of shared living shelter arrangements.

In 2023, we are excited about the opportunity to support more women and children by introducing self-contained accommodation to our portfolio through a mix of government and philanthropic support.

In October 2021, the NSW Government announced its biggest ever investment into domestic and family violence housing and support for women and children. The funding – almost \$500 million over four years for capital infrastructure – is specifically for a model called core and cluster, where self-contained accommodation is located next to a ‘core’, which provides access to services such as counselling, legal assistance, education and employment support.

Currently, WCS shelters are based on the traditional congregate model, where individuals and families are allocated a bedroom within a large house with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. While this tried and tested model is proven to work, especially for those

in need of crisis support, the core and cluster approach will increase our capacity to support women and children with independent living solutions, with greater choice and flexibility.

We are working with our Shelter Boards to identify the scope for core and cluster accommodation within each shelter’s existing and future operations. Though the six successful NSW Government funding applications to date will provide support for infrastructure costs and staff, an important part of this growth is to identify and increase the availability of philanthropic funding, which will be essential in the operational and sustainability of each site.

“WCS was a critical advocacy driver for this much-needed investment into the sector. We knew that our team at the Hub, and our incredible network of shelters, had the expertise and knowledge to make a real impact if we were able to secure funding,” says WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

“The innovative crisis model will allow us to provide independent living and privacy for women with or without children within a refuge, along with access to critical case management support.”

“WCS was a critical advocacy driver for this much-needed investment into the sector. We knew that our team at the Hub, and our incredible network of shelters, had the expertise and knowledge to make a real impact if we were able to secure funding.”

WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

Top, from left: Salesforce corporate volunteers; Shelter life.



Clockwise from above left: Shelter Manager training; NBWS Board and staff; HKWS Board.

DOUBLE THE IMPACT

There are currently ten WCS shelters across NSW, based in Manly, Hornsby, Great Lakes, the Hills, Penrith, Botany, Parramatta, Revesby and Camden. Our capacity to support women and children has grown with each shelter opening.

In 2022 we provided 52,182 safe and secure emergency crisis and transitional bed nights, an increase of over 11,000 additional bed nights since 2021.

Despite this, more than 50% of women who apply to crisis shelters are still turned away due to lack of accommodation and every night more than 54,000 women are homeless across Australia.

From 2023 onwards, with the assistance of the NSW Government funding, and vital support of our donors and community we are aiming to double the number of safe bed nights we can provide to women and children at risk.

“The core and cluster model will enable us to increase our capacity through the expansion of existing shelters and the establishment of independent accommodation. While the Government funding is very much welcomed and will cover infrastructure costs, we can only keep the doors open with the ongoing generous support of our donors, key stakeholders and community partners,” adds Annabelle.

In the Penrith LGA, the core and cluster model has already been brought to life through a new three-way partnership between WCS, The Haven–Nepean Women’s Shelter, and community housing provider, Evolve Housing.

Launched in May 2023, the project sees 11 fully self-contained residential units and one on-site office located within the Penrith LGA. The shelter provides a mixture of core and cluster and rapid rehousing units for single women and women with children.

In addition to Penrith, our core and cluster funding successes will help to increase our services in Hornsby, Manly, Parramatta and Revesby. We are also collaborating with Waminda, an Aboriginal led community organisation, which is looking to expand its response for Aboriginal women experiencing domestic and family violence in the Shoalhaven.

Core and cluster funding applications have been released in tranches, and we will be putting forward more applications when the final round opens in Q2 2023.



FUTURE GROWTH

WCS is poised to take the next step in our growth with an expansion beyond NSW. Local community interest and an overwhelmed shelter system in Victoria has ignited conversations and early research into a Victorian expansion is underway.

“When WCS explores a conversation around growth, it’s a response to community and their identification of a local need,” says WCS Deputy CEO, Simone Parsons.

“We have a committed, passionate group of advocates on the ground in Victoria and we have begun scoping the feasibility of establishing a shelter on the Mornington Peninsula.

Research shows that women will stay in abusive relationships if they can’t find a safe place to go, and according to Safe Steps, the family violence response centre, 80% of women seeking to leave domestic violence in Victoria are accommodated in unsatisfactory motels each night.

“We recognise that there is a need and we’re working with communities to explore how our meanwhile use and shelter models can be activated in Victoria.

“It’s important that we continue to build a strong and resourceful Hub, that in turn can continue to build the capacity of our Shelter Network. When opportunities arise that are a fit for the way we work, we need



to be ready, because the outcome is engaged communities, strong partnerships and more support for women and children,” says Simone.

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, WCS became a Tier 3 Community Housing Provider (CHP). This means that we are now formally recognised under NSW Government legislation as sharing a commitment to client outcomes and working within the NSW Government’s social policy framework.

“Safe and secure housing is foundational to quality of life. Our registration as a Community Housing Provider is in line with our purpose of achieving safety and securing equality for women and children. We value our ongoing collaboration with our CHP partners.”

“Our registration as a Tier 3 provider increases our partnership potential and will give us the opportunity to innovate even more, identifying and filling in the gaps. It’s a key part of our growth strategy,” says Simone.

Key to this growth will be the ongoing and increased engagement, activation and support from our community, philanthropy and corporate partners.

“Our aim is to increase capacity to provide support. We thank all our supporters and look forward to welcoming more on board as we continue to expand our critical work,” concludes Simone.

Above, from left: Children playing; A working bee at Parramatta Women’s Shelter.



“Innovation and growth can take many forms, from developing new programs to improving existing ones, to forging new partnerships and collaborations, as the WCS shelter network has grown, so have its programs and services.”

WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

Above, from left: Celebrating International Women's Day at Credit Suisse; Case workers are a vital resource across WCS Shelters.



Spotlight on our programs

The following programs highlight how WCS has consistently responded to the changing needs of the women and children we exist to support, through the introduction and evolution of innovative wrap-around solutions and partnerships.

Outreach Program

The WCS Outreach Program provides women and children who are leaving WCS shelters with ongoing support as they move to independent living.

Providing continued care and guidance through outreach programs, with professionally trained and qualified staff is critical to a person's long-term recovery and resilience.

Supporting women and children with crisis accommodation and immediate support as they leave domestic and family violence, or homelessness is just one part of helping them to rebuild their lives.

“When you're getting back on your feet, what might seem like simple everyday tasks can be overwhelming. Navigating services, booking and attending

appointments, connecting to the local community – all of this can seem insurmountably alone,” says WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

“What we offer is a friendly, knowledgeable and consistent contact who knows the women and their history. This means that each person gets personalised support and feels heard and understood. It also makes it more likely that they'll reach out for help, and that is the most important thing of all.”

The support needs are different for each individual and family, but the ultimate aim is to work with women to help them to become independent and develop relationships within their local communities and points of access to local services.

For some women, this is regular phone-based checks to ensure they are on-track and to identify any potential crisis events early. Others require home visits, help understanding tenancy agreements or court support and advocacy.

The Outreach Program is in place for families too, providing parenting information and support for children around schooling and building school networks.

Shelter Practice Lead, Donna Bourke says that it's not just a one-way street. “Our staff have a level



of intuition and it's not a case of waiting for the phone to ring before we provide support."

One example of this intuition comes from the Sanctuary Shelter in the Hills District of Sydney. A mother of two young boys, who was in the midst of a very complex family legal matter, was called by outreach staff because there was a sense they needed to 'check-in'.

"The client had been doing really well but a change in legal representation meant she was confused and scared for her and her children's future. Outreach staff immediately made an appointment to go through all the issues worrying her and to identify what other wrap-around supports might be required," says Donna.

OUTREACH FUNDING

The WCS Outreach Program is funded purely by philanthropy and has received valuable support from a number of generous organisations including Hummingbird Community Choirs, which began supporting the program in 2017.

One hundred percent of outreach funds raised goes to brokerage for clients (including relocation expenses, housing set-up costs and utility connection etc) and outreach staff salaries to provide case management and support to achieve positive outcomes for women and children.

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE IMPACT

We know that outreach works. It is the resource we need to be able to provide continued wrap-around support services for the women and children who exit our crisis accommodation.

We have ambitions to grow our Shelter Network, and with this growth, the need for outreach is bigger than ever before.

We want to offer the Outreach Program with every new shelter and new housing project that we support, which will only be possible with additional and sustainable funding.

Hummingbird Community Choirs have been instrumental in the critical outreach that we do, and we look forward to working with our current and future supporters to increase our outreach capacity in order to support even more women and children each year.

Child Support

Imagine you're a child who has found themselves in a shelter following a traumatic experience. The support you need differs greatly from what your mother might require. The events that happened to you, or that you've witnessed will have impacted you in ways that need specialist support, tailored for your age. This is why the WCS Child Support Program exists.

As an organisation, we are committed to recognising children as clients in their own right, acknowledging their experiences and supporting their healing processes.

Our shelters have dedicated child support case workers and a program that ensures every child has their own individual case plan.

"It's incredibly important that children have their own case worker. They need specific services to enable them to repair and forge stronger bonds with their parent, including

“Our case workers help children to feel safe and give them a voice. They also help in the longer term, giving them the tools and confidence to make good choices and decisions about their own future.”

psychological, learning and mentoring support,” says WCS CEO, Annabelle Daniel OAM.

“Our case workers help children to feel safe and give them a voice. They also help in the longer term, giving them the tools and confidence to make good choices and decisions about their own future.”

This work comes in many forms. Just as each parent’s case is unique, so is each child’s. Child support workers advocate for the child with local school principals, they are there with them on their first day at a new school, ensuring that they have all the necessary equipment and clothing so that they feel comfortable.

For many children, a trip to the aquarium or a day out during school holidays may be unheard of. Our dedicated case workers recognise how important these ‘normal’ activities are in a child’s life, and the impact that they can have now and in the future.

CHILD SUPPORT WORKER FUNDING

Similar to the WCS Outreach Program, our Child Support Program relies entirely on charitable donations and successful grant proposals. These crucial contributions are dedicated to funding case worker salaries and expanding case worker hours across our Shelter Network.

We are grateful to the James N. Kirby Foundation for funds that support child support case worker hours across the WCS network of shelters.

“The James N. Kirby Foundation is very passionate about helping to support women and their children on their journey out of domestic abuse and homelessness. Early intervention and tailored support can change the direction of a child’s life. To be able to intervene at this critical point in children’s lives, to break this cycle is helping to make a significant impact in Australia’s domestic and family violence and homelessness crisis.”

Margaret Kirby
James N. Kirby Foundation



Tia’s story*

Tia and her two children were referred to a WCS shelter seeking crisis accommodation and domestic violence support. When we met the family, Tia’s eldest daughter had already changed primary schools three times when they had been forced to flee unsafe locations.

She lacked confidence and suffered bullying at school, which severely affected her attendance and self-esteem.

WCS assisted Tia to enrol her daughter in school and child support activities were designed to build her confidence and friendships with the other children at the shelter.

WCS has continued to provide intensive support, including specialist counselling which has helped her to better manage her emotions and begin to overcome past trauma.

Tia’s youngest child had never attended pre-school, so WCS helped to place her into a supportive pre-school on a flexible arrangement, and worked with Tia on applications for a subsidy to cover the fees.

When the time came, the children were nervous about moving from a shelter into their own housing, and said they would miss seeing our staff every day, but the team helped with the move and assisted the family to purchase beds, furniture and essentials for their new home. This, along with our positive encouragement, allowed the girls to settle in well to their new environment.

We remain connected to the family through our Outreach Program. Both girls are thriving in their education, have made new friends, and are even engaging in extracurricular activities. They still engage in our child support activities and assist the case workers in running our children’s house meetings, which is building their confidence in public speaking. ●



OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE IMPACT

Children account for approximately 32.6% of those that we work with every year. With the impacts of the pandemic still having a ripple effect on domestic and family violence and homelessness, and the current rental market pricing, these numbers are expected to increase.

We want to ensure that every child that accesses our shelters and services has their own child support worker.

“This need will only increase as we grow our Shelter Network and we must ensure that our philanthropic funding continues to grow in-line with the demand for increased services,” says Annabelle.

IMPACT TO DATE:

281 CHILDREN SUPPORTED



PROPERTY OWNER

Provide properties to the domestic violence service at no cost for a minimum of 18 months

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE

Project coordination, client referral, case management and support

COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDER

Provide tenancy management and responsive maintenance services

Meanwhile Use and Transitional Housing

The 2021 Census recorded 1 million unoccupied residential dwellings. At the same time, 122,494 people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness, an increase of more than 5% since 2016. Shockingly, women accounted for 82% of that increase.

Meanwhile use is an innovative housing model that aims to make use of vacant or underutilised properties, such as aged care facilities, hospitals, church-owned buildings and government assets, to provide an immediate and pragmatic response to the affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

WCS' foray into meanwhile use began in 2017, with the establishment of the Pathways Home program. Through Pathways Home, WCS partnered with the PAYCE Foundation and Bridge Housing to deliver additional transitional housing for women and children exiting crisis accommodation. Under the program, PAYCE donated use of five vacant properties land-banked for future development, that were sublet by Bridge Housing to WCS

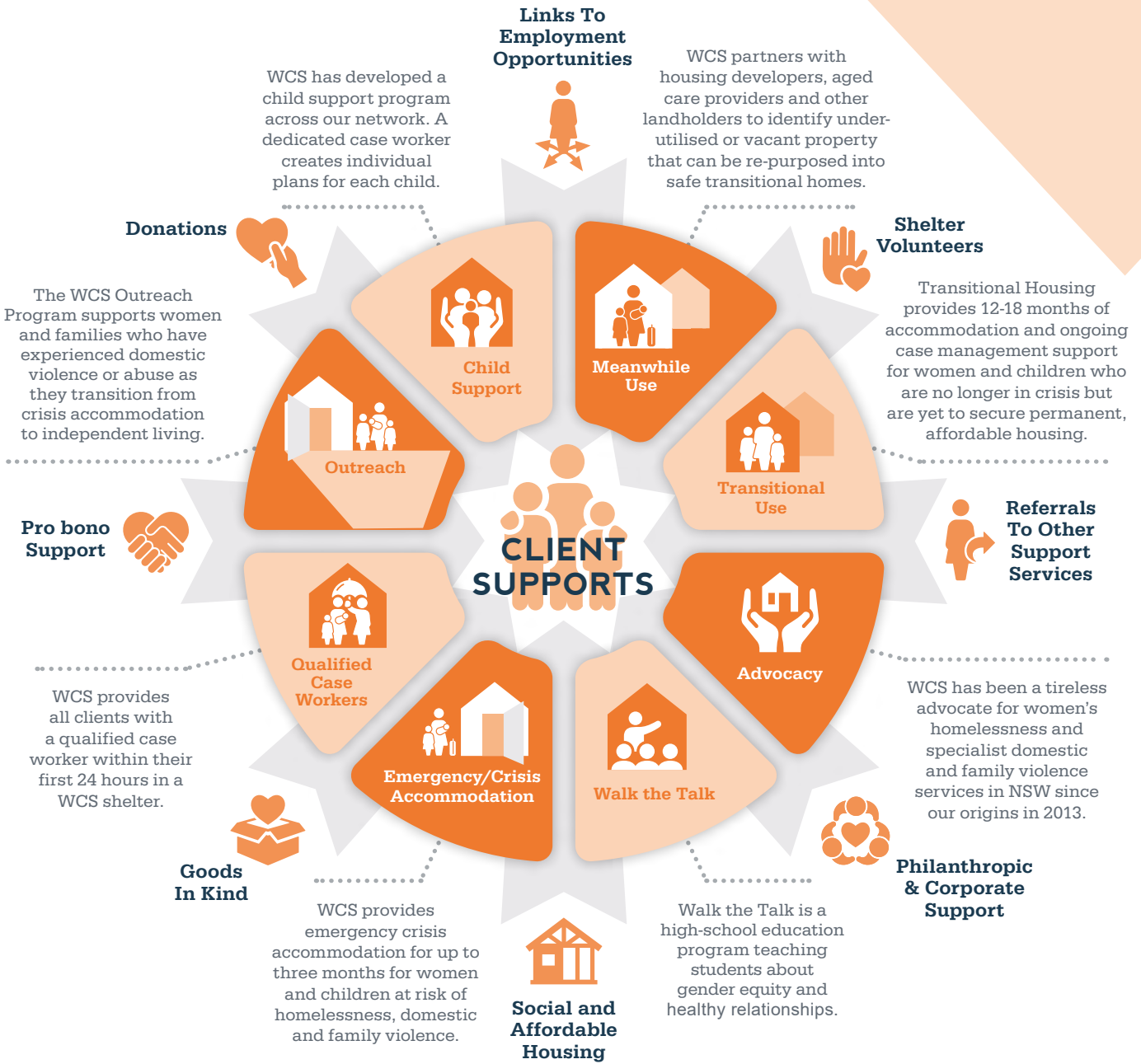
clients. This innovative project brought together the expertise and assets of each organisation to create a cost-effective and replicable transitional housing model.

“Transitional housing gives the women leaving our shelters a period of stability until they are ready to move on. It is particularly critical for those not entitled to mainstream housing supports or for whom the private rental market is completely unaffordable. The program as a whole aims to prevent re-entry into homelessness or the return to an unsafe home,” says WCS Deputy CEO Simone Parsons.

WCS has since replicated the Pathways Home model with a number of other partners.

“With meanwhile use housing, we work with property owners to temporarily convert their spaces into accommodation with support services for women and children who, don't have a safe place to call home,” says Simone.

“We are recognised as a sector leader. In 2022 we opened two new meanwhile use properties and provided advice to the NSW and QLD Governments on this area of housing innovation,” adds Simone.



In January 2022, WCS partnered with City West Housing, Scape Australia, the City of Sydney and LendLease to deliver Abbie House in Darlington. Abbie House made use of vacant student accommodation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to provide a safe and secure place for 14 single women experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

As with all WCS models, it's not just a housing solution. "We're also providing wrap-around support services to assist each woman

with their personal housing, employment and education goals, to prevent a return to the cycle of homelessness," says Simone.

Abbie House has had a transformative effect on the lives of many living there. One former resident credits Abbie House with quite literally saving her life.

"I've found my place again in the world and I have managed a plan for the short-term future. I have regained my sobriety since moving in, I work part time and have also

reclaimed my love of writing and creativity. I feel more confident in my ability to be able to value myself and my contributions. There's a lot of words here but somehow not enough to convey the sizable effect this has had on my physical and mental wellbeing. I could have easily slipped through the cracks of the system, but I didn't. Abbie House really did save my life."

Read the full story here.





Members from Action on Housing for Older Women (AHOW) at Allawah House.



MEANWHILE USE PARTNERSHIP

Our meanwhile use transitional properties are made possible thanks to the generous contributions of property owners and managers, philanthropists, volunteers and in-kind support from partners like Temple & Webster, who have been critical in furnishing so many of our properties.

We are incredibly grateful for the support of property owners such as PAYCE, Twilight Aged Care, Scape, BEA Projects, Sisters of Mercy Parramatta, Momento Hospitality and Uniting Church North Parramatta who have provided us with no- or low-cost spaces; supporters such as the PAYCE Foundation, City of Sydney, Lendlease, Pater Foundation and NSW Department Communities and Justice who have provided critical financial support; and our CHP partners and collaborators, Link Wentworth Housing, Bridge Housing, Pacific Link Housing, Evolve Housing and City West Housing.

In addition to meanwhile use projects, some shelters in our network provide transitional housing or extended crisis accommodation on site as part of their service model. WCS also works with Community Housing Partners to secure access to

new and existing transitional, community and affordable housing stock for women and children exiting our shelter network.

Other transitional properties are supported by Twilight Aged Care, Link Wentworth Housing, BEA Projects, Pacific Link Housing, Sisters of Mercy Parramatta, Evolve Housing and Momento Hospitality.

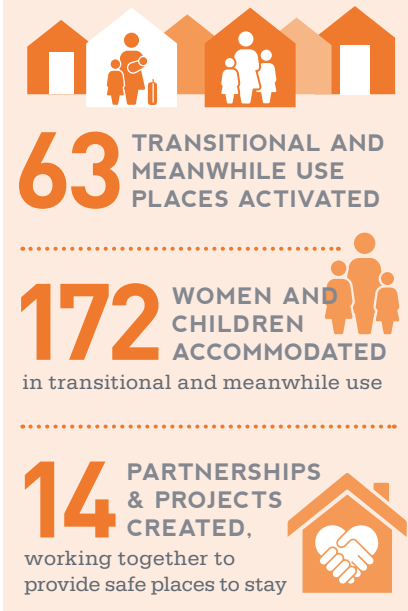
OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE IMPACT

Women over 55 are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people in the country. That’s why, in partnership with Pacific Link Housing and BEA Projects, and thanks to NSW Department of Communities and Justice funding, we opened Allawah House in East Gosford in 2022.

Allawah House is a formerly disused aged care facility that has been temporarily transformed into a 14-unit home for women, aged 55 and over.

“Allawah House is addressing a significant need on the NSW Central Coast, providing women over 55 with safe, secure, supported housing and the opportunity to build a rental history. Residents receive support through an on-site case worker to work towards their personal goals and access public and community housing – support that many didn’t even realise they were eligible for,” says Annabelle.

IMPACT TO DATE:



“We are always looking out for opportunities to use vacant or underutilised properties. With more properties and partnerships in NSW and beyond, we could support many more women and children of all ages, particularly now, as they become priced out of the rental market.”

To find out more about how partnerships like this work, and the impact they have, scan the QR code to watch the Pathways Home video.





Walk the Talk participants.

Walk the Talk in Schools

“My hope for our organisation is that we no longer need to exist. We believe that our work must extend beyond crisis support and into proactive prevention strategies. That’s why in 2019 we introduced a unique program called Walk the Talk that works specifically with teenagers,” says WCS CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM.

What makes the program so unique is the combination of theory and real-life experience, introducing students to their local shelter, helping them to become agents of change.

Our two-phase program begins with a ‘respectful relationships’ workshop delivered by our Director of Education Dannielle Miller OAM and her team of presenters. We educate students about healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and how to support anyone experiencing relationship abuse. We build awareness of domestic violence and women’s homelessness by introducing students to WCS and their local shelter. Then students work collectively with support from a WCS Education Officer and their Year Advisor to support their shelter through a range of projects to raise money and awareness.

The projects take different forms. Some students raise money, create welcome packs or toys

Ava’s story*

Following a Walk the Talk workshop, 16-year-old Ava identified that she was experiencing domestic and family violence.

Her mother’s partner has been abusive for several years and Ava described being emotionally neglected by her mum when she was a child, as she continuously tried to ‘keep the peace’ with her violent partner.

After the presentation, and her disclosure to a teacher, her school contacted The Haven–Nepean Shelter and Ava and her mum moved in.

Ava was angry about the stigma of her cultural heritage and growing up in poverty and with domestic and family violence. Case managers worked with Ava to help improve her ability to understand different perspectives. She’s now more confident in using her voice to advocate and is feeling more positive about her culture. She’s become passionate about standing up to volunteer for leadership roles and is becoming a role model for her peers.

Ava’s mum is also more confident in her ability to sustain a nurturing relationship with her daughter and their relationship has improved. ●

for the shelters, others volunteer to landscape gardens and grow vegetables or get involved in renovation work.

“Through this program, students realise that domestic and family violence is real, and it happens in their community, and that they have the power to make a difference. They see the impact of their work. It’s a very powerful program,” adds Annabelle.

Recently, the program helped a young girl to feel ready to disclose her own experience.

WALK THE TALK FUNDING

Walk the Talk is WCS’ investment in the prevention and mitigation of violence, and as such, we offer the program across the socio-economic spectrum of schools. The program and the Hub are funded solely by philanthropy, as all government funding that WCS receives is passed through to our shelters for frontline delivery.

For this reason, we are incredibly thankful to our donors for enabling this invaluable program to continue.

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE IMPACT

“We see the impact of this program and we want to expand wherever we can,” says Annabelle.

“Consent education is about to be mandated in all Australian schools from 2023, and we see great potential to collaborate with and support schools to navigate this new addition to the curriculum.

“We’ve already started to branch out beyond our own network of shelters, working with a school in Melbourne and in Queensland. There’s no reason that this model can’t be rolled out at schools and education facilities throughout Australia,” adds Annabelle.

We have created a new role and employed a Walk the Talk Education Officer to be the dedicated liaison between schools, WCS and each individual shelter. The program is currently delivered to around 3,000 students each year, and with increased capacity and funding, the impact could be limitless.



IMPACT TO DATE

The long-term impact of Walk the Talk is an Australia where women and children are safe, secure, supported and equal. WCS has already witnessed students and teachers who have ended unhealthy relationships, and sought support from our shelter network, as a direct result of this program.

We are excited to be undertaking a Social Impact Analysis with the Social Impact Hub to support the evolution of Walk the Talk, its strategic direction, and provide an objective and demonstrable understanding of its impact.

As part of our culture of continuous improvement, we have also implemented a 'Hypothesis for Change' and 'Theory of Change' to the model to measure successful outcomes.



11,000 MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AWARE

of the impacts of domestic and family violence and homelessness

100% OF PARTICIPANTS RECOMMEND THE PROGRAM

98% OF GIRLS AND **96%** OF BOYS rated it as excellent or very good



Women with No Income

WCS was established over a decade ago with a core focus on crisis accommodation. Today, one of the most vulnerable groups we assist are women with insecure residency or visa statuses.

Often, they have no entitlement to Centrelink or Medicare and may only have limited work rights. Abusive partners can use sponsorship and visa restrictions as ways to entrap them and enforce compliance.

When these women come to a WCS shelter, they need financial, practical and emotional support. They are provided with subsidies and helped with the costs of essential items such as medical expenses, food and clothing. They also receive all of the case worker support required for their recovery, and ongoing outreach as necessary.

One such women is Maria* (read Maria's story far right) who was referred to a WCS shelter with her three-year-old son, Nicko.

FUNDING FOR WOMEN LIKE MARIA

Philanthropic funding like this is critical to the work of WCS. The Goodman Foundation has been supporting women without income at WCS since 2020. Not only does this repeat funding enable WCS to provide support and advocacy to this very vulnerable group, it also assists them to leave our shelters and transition safely into secure and affordable housing by providing rent subsidies.

Without ongoing philanthropic funding, WCS' work to make sure that people like Maria and Nicko are safe and supported would not be possible.

"Sadly, violence against women is a serious and widespread problem in Australia. Women with lived experience of violence by a current or former partner are dealing with the profound and long-term impact for them and their children. For some, the situation is compounded when they have no access to income and are therefore unable to move to safety. This is where Goodman Foundation's support has been targeted; ensuring that

women without income have the financial support they need to escape violence and re-establish their lives."

Kris Ashpole, CEO Goodman Foundation





OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE IMPACT

The following data shows the distribution of income sources among clients who utilised WCS shelter accommodation and services in 2022. This information highlights the varying financial circumstances of clients seeking our services and emphasises the critical need to tackle poverty and address the inadequate access to sufficient income support. Moreover, this highlights the ongoing need to provide support to women who have no income.

- 24%** of clients **rely on Newstart** payments
- 20%** receive **parenting payments**
- 18%** report having **no income** at all
- 13%** have **employment income**
- 7%** receive **disability support** pension
- 5%** receive **other government** pensions
- 4%** receive the **age pension**
- 3%** receive **youth allowance**
- 2%** receive **carer payments**
- 2%** report **other sources** of income
- 1%** **do not know** their source of income

“Sadly, violence against women is a serious and widespread problem in Australia. Women with lived experience of violence by a current or former partner are dealing with the profound and long-term impact for them and their children...”

Kris Ashpole, CEO Goodman Foundation

Maria's story*

Maria and her partner moved to Australia in the early years of their relationship.

Once here, her partner – who had Australian citizenship – tracked Maria's movements and controlled everything she did. He prevented her from working or having friendships, and when their son was born, he was not permitted to attend day care.

During the eight years of their relationship, Maria endured physical violence, psychological and financial abuse, and intimidation. In Australia, her isolation was intensified by her limited English.

As the violence escalated, Maria contemplated leaving, but that would have invalidated her visa, putting her at risk of losing her son. She also had no entitlement to any government-funded income or housing assistance and was completely financially dependent on her partner.

Following the death of a close family member, Maria attended counselling sessions at the Family Court, where she disclosed that she feared for her life. She was anxious to know that her son would be cared for if she was murdered by her partner. She was quickly assisted to leave the home and referred to a WCS shelter.

First, shelter staff helped Maria to get an AVO in place to protect her and Nicko, then they began the complex work of supporting her to resolve her immigration issues so that she could remain in Australia with her son. WCS helped her transition from the shelter into her own affordable apartment and she now has a permanent visa. She has shown incredible courage and resilience, motivated by her determination to make a better life for herself and Nicko. She is now studying and looking forward to the future. ●

The Charity

Women's Community Shelters Ltd, trading under the name Women's Community Shelters, is a registered DGR1 charity and holds the charity tick.



The organisation is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) and operates as a company limited by guarantee, with the Australian Company Number (ACN) 153 006 556.

WCS is also working towards Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation and supporting each of its shelters with the process. ASES accreditation is a new set of internationally recognised standards being introduced by The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) that all DCJ-funded homelessness providers must achieve by June 2024.

As a Public Benevolent Institution, WCS is dedicated to ensuring transparency, accountability and sound governance, which are integral parts of its Constitution.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The Board maintains several committees to aid in fulfilling its governance obligations. Participating in these committees offers WCS directors an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the organisation, engage more actively, and fully utilise their expertise.

RISK, AUDIT & COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

The committee is an officially established body of WCS, entrusted with the duty to support and counsel WCS in meeting its corporate governance obligations and ensuring independent oversight over the charity's risk management, adherence to laws and regulations, compliance with audit requirements, external reporting obligations and regulatory duties.

NOMINATION & REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Nomination and Remuneration Committee is responsible for scrutinising the charity's selection and appointment procedures, addressing issues of Board succession, and ensuring that the Board possesses the requisite skills, knowledge, experience and diversity to effectively fulfill its duties and responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Board ultimately holds responsibility for these practices.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

The Fundraising Committee is a permanent committee established with the objective of generating funds to secure the financial sustainability and steadiness of the charity.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE: Established April 2023

The Board of Women's Community Shelters Ltd has established a Property Committee for the purpose of managing WCS Community Housing (CHP) assets and associated CHP compliance requirements and together with Finance Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC), providing advice to the Board in relation to the acquisition, sale or development of properties in the WCS Property portfolio.



Above: The WCS Board and alumni at Government House Sydney.

“Last year proved to be a pivotal year for WCS, in our core work with communities, in our advocacy around domestic violence and homelessness, and in our mission to provide more safe homes for women and children in NSW and beyond.”

The Women's Community Shelters Ltd Board



Julie White (Chair)

Julie White has over 40 years' experience in both not-for-profit and corporate sectors. Executive Chair of Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation; Independent Chair of COORDINARE (SE NSW PHN) and a Board Member of Southern Highlands Community Foundation. A member of Chief Executive Women and Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Peter Hunt AM (Founding Board Member)

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 40 years' experience in commercial property with Lendlease, Dexus and JLL. Currently he is a Non-Executive Director of listed company Cedar Woods and Chairman of the Mirvac Wholesale Office Fund 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.



Terence Kwan

Terence is a partner at Fidelis Advisors, a risk advisory firm. He has had a long relationship with Women's Community Shelters commencing in 2016 when he led fundraising efforts with the Macquarie Group Foundation. Terence is a Board Director for Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and is a former Director for Radio Community Chest Incorporated as well as One Disease, which works with remote indigenous communities in Australia.



Daniel Martin

Daniel Martin is the Director of Foundation at St Aloysius' College and serves on the College's Leadership team. Daniel has over 20 years' experience working within leading health-related charities, universities and schools and previously held senior leadership positions at UNSW Sydney and the University of Sydney, where he contributed towards the successful \$1B INSPIRED philanthropic campaign.



David Winterbottom – joined February 2023

David is an experienced Chartered Accountant with over 30 years of expertise in complex financial scenarios. He specialises in not-for-profit boards and executive roles, including being the Chief Financial Officer of the Paul Ramsay Foundation since 2020. Previously, he led KordaMentha's restructuring practice for 13 years. David also serves as a Non-Executive Director at the Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation.



Harriet Whyte – joined March 2023

Harriet Whyte is an Executive Director with the Department of Regional NSW. Across numerous roles with the NSW Government, Harriet has worked on policy challenges and with communities, politicians and all levels of government to improve the lives of all NSW residents. She has previously served as NSW State Director for LGBTIQ+ mentoring charity, Out for Australia.

Our Structure

Each WCS Shelter is a local solution to a national problem. WCS as the Hub, provides four key pillars of support to local communities seeking to establish shelters:

1. Project Management Support:

Working closely with local communities to establish the legal framework of the shelter organisation, locate suitable properties, engage local stakeholders, and recruit appropriate staff.

2. Shelter-in-a-Box Intellectual Property:

The necessary policies and procedures, templates, job descriptions, computer systems and outcomes measurement systems required for the day-to-day operation of a shelter.

3. Funding Support: 50% of the setup costs for each shelter, two-thirds of the funding for operations during the first two years, and half of the annual funding in the years that follow.

4. Ongoing Network Support:

Continued support for governance, human resources and operational matters to ensure high-quality service delivery and excellent oversight for the not-for-profit sector.

SUPPORTING OUR SHELTER NETWORK

The WCS Hub also goes beyond governance, funding and expert advice for our shelters. Our case workers and shelter managers deal with traumatised clients every day, and we want to ensure that they are well equipped to manage a range of situations, not only for the clients they serve, but for their own mental and physical wellbeing.

In 2022 we introduced the Practice Framework, which documents the way we work and the approaches we take as a network. This ensures a consistent way of working, and provides our workers with detailed, trauma-informed 'how-to' guides that are more than just a set of policies and procedures.



Peer support is also something that is highly valued at WCS, and last year, a 'communities of practice' was introduced. These groups provide those with similar remits, for example child support workers, the opportunity to meet up and discuss issues and experiences related to their roles.

Shelter Board members are provided with continuous mentoring and professional assistance and a WCS Hub staff member attends each Board meeting. We are involved with HR and recruitment, and the Hub's finance team assists Shelter

Boards with budgeting and payroll, and offers peer support through the Treasurers Forum, which meets bi-monthly.

WCS also provides aid in fundraising, assisting with the setup of the CRM and Supporter Hub for managing donor relationships, and access to advice through the Fundraising forum.

Finally, our internal communications tool, OpCentral is a resource for all guidelines, policies and procedures, and it acts as an online forum to access live peer support. It also serves as a location to store compliance documentation, with timely reminders for expiration dates.

OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

Our highly skilled case managers are trained to use two proven tools for collecting data and measuring the progress of women and children who are experiencing domestic and family violence and/or homelessness. These tools are also used for the sharing of data with relevant services and collaborating with others to improve delivery and outcomes.

Client Management System (CIMS)

CIMS is used by all government funded providers of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) in NSW, facilitating easy client referrals and information sharing between our network and other SHS providers.

CIMS allows case workers to manage vacancies, conduct client assessments, manage client records and to support their day-to-day case management. We also use CIMS to underpin our data collection and reporting, and to contribute data to the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) each month.



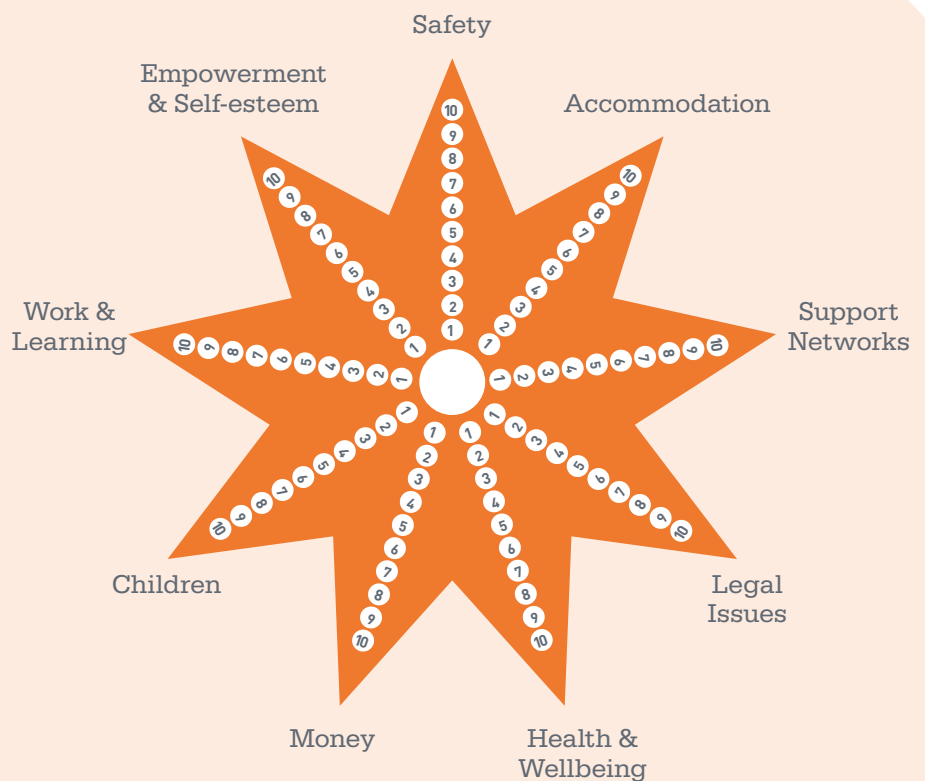
Outcomes STAR™

Outcomes STAR™ is a tool that is designed to help measure meaningful change and empower clients. Each client has their own STAR, which allows them to monitor and track their personal goals and outcome areas with their case manager.

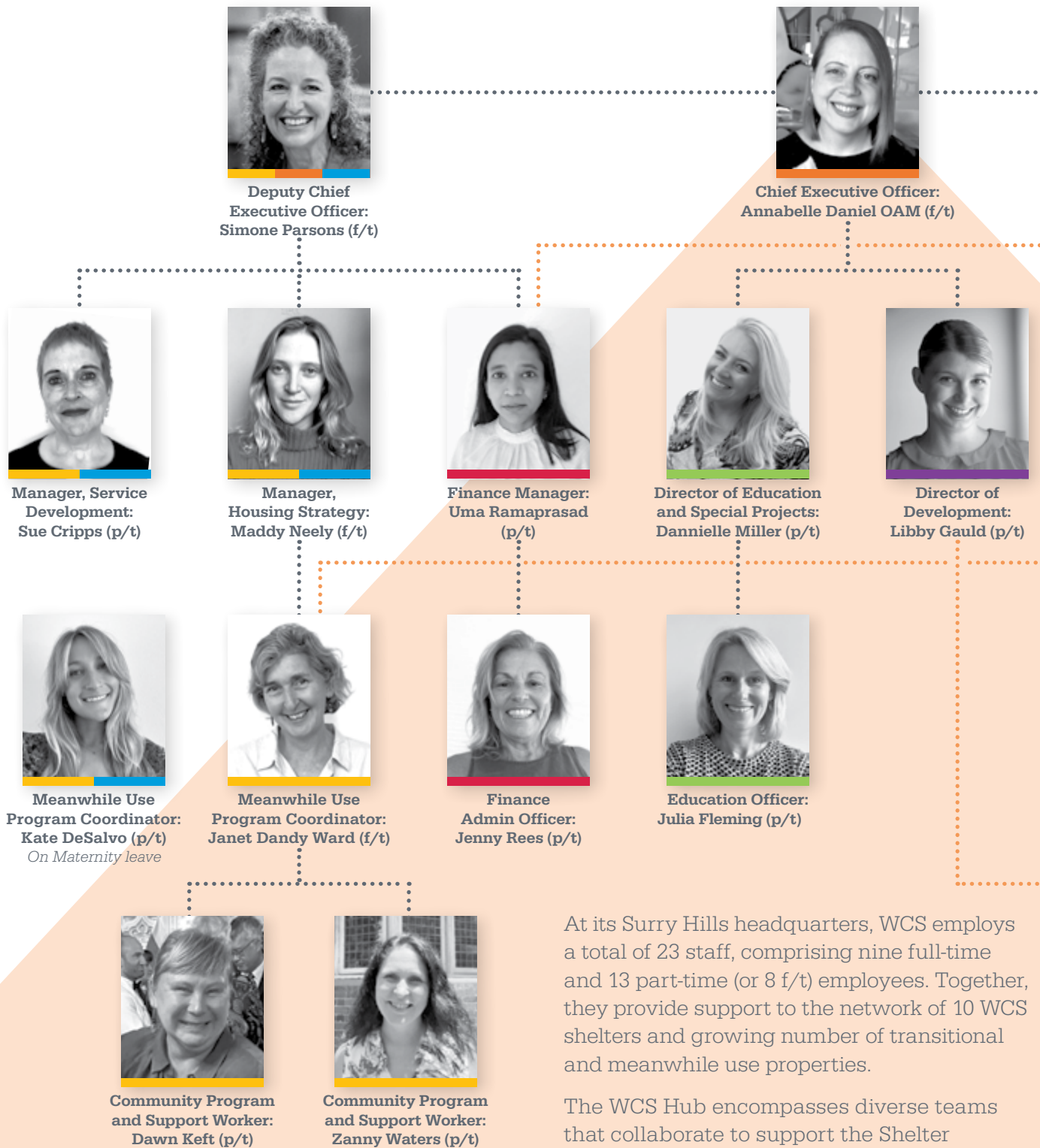
The use of the STAR can help facilitate important conversations about change and to help case

managers and clients remain focused on what's important for them.

Each STAR contains a set of values or goals and different STARS can be used for different needs, ages and stages. This 'family of STARS' were designed by practitioners over 20 years ago and are used throughout the sector today.



WCS Hub Staff



At its Surry Hills headquarters, WCS employs a total of 23 staff, comprising nine full-time and 13 part-time (or 8 f/t) employees. Together, they provide support to the network of 10 WCS shelters and growing number of transitional and meanwhile use properties.

The WCS Hub encompasses diverse teams that collaborate to support the Shelter Network and transitional properties.

Several Hub staff members serve across various teams that have been established to assist with shelter operations, policy formulation, housing, communications, fundraising and finance.



Chief Operating Officer:
Neesha Eckersley (f/t)



Head of Partnerships and Communications:
Nathalie Peacock (f/t)



Director, Capacity and Operations:
Lieske Dowd (f/t)



Shelter Practice Lead:
Armena Voloder (p/t)



People and Culture Manager:
Helen Brown (p/t)



Digital Communications Coordinator:
Sandra Sonn (f/t)



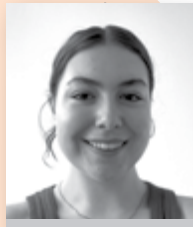
Officer Manager:
Tasmin Hill (f/t)



Quality Improvements and Outcomes Officer:
Gen Sini (p/t)



Grants and Administration officer:
Grace Moscou (p/t)



Office Junior:
Mia Wallace (p/t)

WCS Hub Teams

Senior Executive:
Annabelle, Simone, Neesha

HOUSING, INNOVATION AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT:
Simone, Maddy, Janet, Sue, Kate

FINANCE: Uma, Jenny

WALK THE TALK TEAM:
Dannielle, Julia

ENGAGEMENT TEAM:
Nathalie, Libby, Sandra

ADMIN TEAM: Lieske, Tasmin, Grace, Gen, Mia

PRACTICE TEAM: Sue, Lieske, Kate, Simone, Maddy

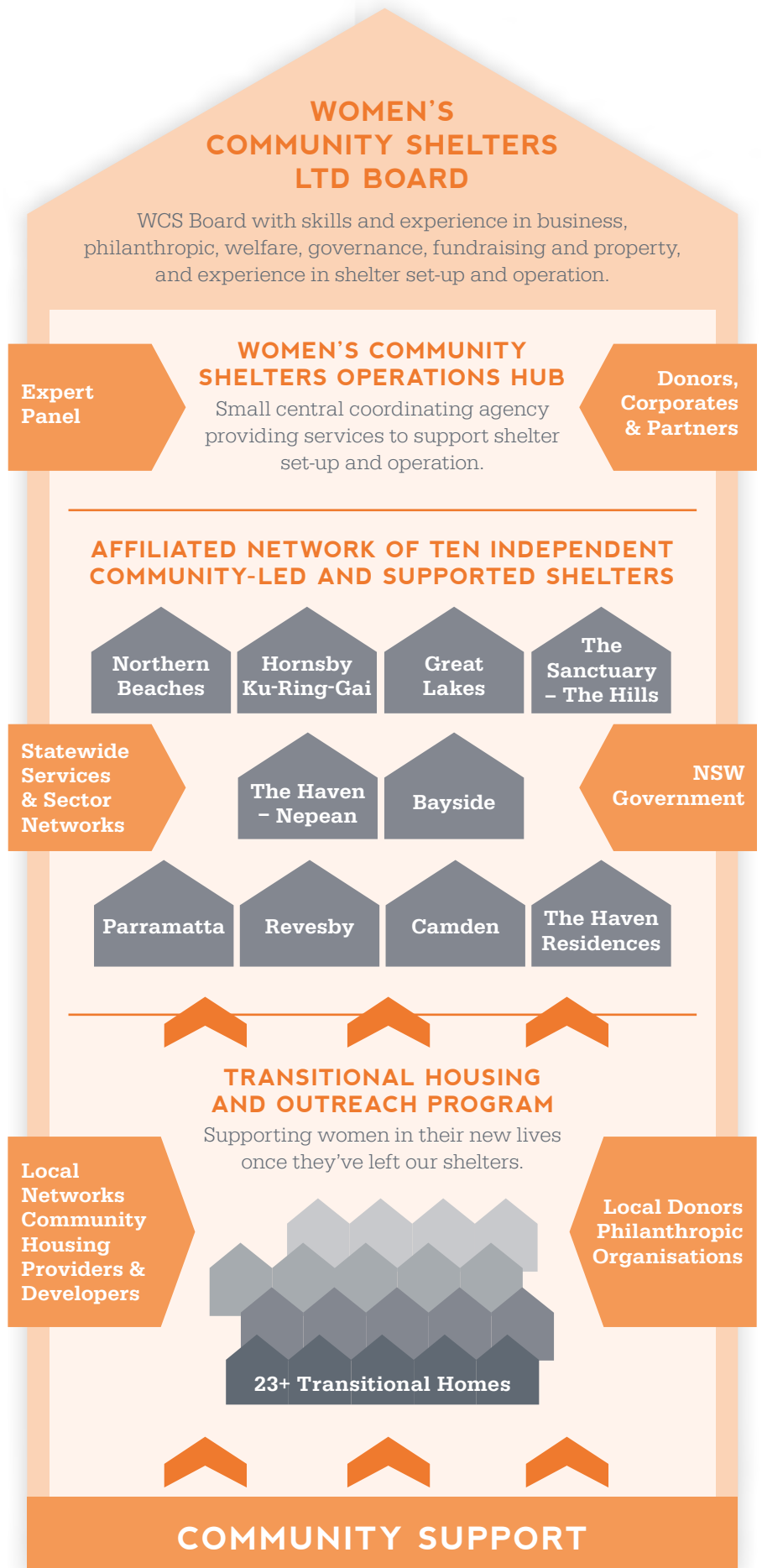
Social Franchise Model

Activating community capacity and partnerships is critical to providing emergency crisis accommodation, transitional housing, outreach, child support, early intervention and prevention education programs. It also encourages increased sector advocacy, awareness and leadership.

What sets this model apart is its ability to draw funding from a range of sources, including corporate, philanthropy and community fundraising.

The key strength of this model is its scalability and sustainability. WCS shares its expertise with local communities and corporate groups, which then take ownership and responsibility of the shelter, with the support of WCS. This enables WCS to establish and maintain community-operated crisis accommodation shelters when and where they are needed most.

Our relationship with all stakeholders is depicted in the diagram to the right.



Individual Shelter Model

WCS has established itself as a prominent sector leader with a network of ten shelters, each operating as independent incorporated entities.

Our highly qualified shelter managers and case workers, shelter boards, and local communities all combine their passion and expertise to provide care and support to those in need.



With Thanks to Our Supporters



We extend our gratitude to donors and supporters whose invaluable contributions have enabled us to carry out our vital mission of supporting nearly 900 vulnerable women and children escaping homelessness and domestic and family violence.

We are inspired by the generosity of our local community, philanthropic organisations, corporations, government entities, partners, stakeholders and individual supporters. Your support plays a critical role in our efforts, and we would not be able to continue our work without your unwavering dedication and support.

Thank you for your ongoing contributions, time, and effort, which have made a meaningful difference in the lives of those we protect.

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Thyne Reid Foundation
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TP ICAP Management Services (Australia) Pty Ltd
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City West Housing
Department of Communities and Justice
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Evolve Housing
Homelessness NSW
Lendlease
Lendlease FutureSteps
Link Wentworth
Momento Hospitality Group
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Zonta

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National Projects and Maintenance
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Tzu Chi Foundation – Buddhism in Action

AMBASSADOR

Sarrah Le Marquand

ADVOCATES

Amani Haydar
Ariana Levy
Cheryl Rae
Eileen Hoggett
James Stewart
Jo Gaines
Lee Townsend
Mark Coulter
Natalie Ferres
Sallianne McClelland
Sandra Hodge

i=Change AND RETAIL PARTNERS

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Alias Mae AU
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All With The Flow
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Isle of Mine
Jam Jam
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Posse US

Pure Elements
QED Skincare
Rachel Gilbert AU
Rachel Gilbert US
Sancia
Sea Level Australia
Sea Level US
2nd Skin the Label
Seeh Skincare
Sia Baby
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GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS

Australian Government
Bayside Council
Camden Council
NSW Department of Communities & Justice
NSW Government
Parramatta City Council
Service NSW

WORKPLACE GIVING

Achievers; Atlassian; Australia Post; Challenger Group Services Pty; Electronic Arts; Equinix; Ernst & Young; Findex; Global Reward Solution; Google; IBM; LexisNexis; Macquarie; Morningstar; REA Group; Reece Australia Pty Ltd; Rio Tinto Services Ltd; Salesforce; Suncorp Group; Sydney Water; TripAdvisor; TTC Global; Veeva; Westpac Group; Zurich Foundation



Thank you

We appreciate the contributions made by our workplace giving donors.

The listing above is for donations \$5,000+ for the period 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, and also includes some long-term major partners.

Any omissions are unintentional; please contact WCS so this can be rectified.

To find out more about giving at WCS, please contact the Engagement Team on (02) 9539 6859 or development@womenscommunityshelters.org.au

We express our gratitude to those who have chosen to remain anonymous. Your support is deeply appreciated, and we are thankful for your contribution.



Celebrating a Successful Partnership



In 2018, WCS began what was to be an invaluable and enduring relationship with Temple & Webster. As an online-only furniture and homewares retailer, Temple & Webster supports WCS with pro bono furniture and furnishings, styling services and generous volunteers to help bring our shelters to life.

It started with the Bayside Women's Shelter in Southeast Sydney, where the team styled and furnished the entire shelter.

"We knew from the first time that we worked with Temple & Webster that they were truly committed to supporting the work that we do," said Nat Peacock, WCS Head of Partnerships and Communications.

The team has been walking alongside WCS on its journey ever since, being a key part of the first

transitional accommodation project at Beecroft House, then later at Mosman House.

They helped to transform the two unused properties into comforting and welcoming homes for women over 55 years old – currently the fastest demographic of homelessness in Australia.

"Taking the living environment into consideration is part of our trauma-informed care approach. Design is such an important part of that because of the link between a person's physiological state, emotional state and the physical environment," added Nat.

Among many other projects – including the total revamp of Biyani House, which previously hadn't been updated since the 1970's, and the newly built Blue Wren House – Camden Women's Shelter, the team has been instrumental in WCS' latest expansion into the core and cluster model.

WCS' introduction of this innovative model, which sees women and children offered individual living solutions, rather than shared

housing, has been made possible following funding from the NSW Government.

"Introducing the core and cluster model of individual accommodation with support services is really exciting, but the NSW Government funding only goes so far. More accommodation means an increased need for furniture, homewares, white goods and everything needed to create a home and without the support of Temple & Webster, getting these projects off the ground quite simply wouldn't be possible," said Nat.

In 2023, Temple & Webster provided the furniture for WCS' first core and cluster housing project, The Haven Residences – an expansion of The Haven-Nepean Women's Shelter, which required 11 whole units and an office to be fully furnished.

"It's been wonderful to work with WCS over the last five years. Our team gets a huge sense of fulfilment from being part of something that changes the lives of women and children. The mission of WCS and the passion of Temple & Webster is a perfect fit," said Mark Coulter, Temple & Webster CEO.

"It's been the definition of a successful partnership and we couldn't imagine what life at the shelters would be like without them," concluded Nat.





Online Support

The digital platforms of WCS continue to be a compelling source of community engagement, with our social media presence rapidly expanding across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Through our website and social media channels, we create opportunities to engage with corporate partners, local businesses, our dedicated and loyal supporters and the general public.

These channels serve as a crucial source of information and support and provide a means to share the most recent updates on all aspects related to WCS.



From far top left: Inside Biyani House – Revesby Women's Shelter; Corporate volunteering at Allawah House, East Gosford; Internal shelter shot; Temple and Webster and Salesforce corporate volunteers.

We currently have:

 **2,354**
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

 **7,897**
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

 **111**
TWITTER FOLLOWERS

(WCS moved from the CEO account to a standalone WCS account.)

 **1,933**
LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS

 **72,295k**
UNIQUE VISITORS

 **19,799+**
NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS



WCS Donor Report 2023 – Financial Narrative

As is powerfully described in this report, the scope of WCS' impact has been increasing substantially to meet the needs of women and children across NSW.

Highlights include:

- The expansion of the number of shelters in operation, improving availability for women and children escaping domestic violence. Shelter numbers grew from seven to eight in FY22, with a further increase to nine shelters in FY23.
- Growth in WCS' transitional housing properties, offering more women and their children medium-term accommodation and an opportunity to get their lives back on track. This work is often in partnership with Community Housing Providers or developers (for meanwhile use).

Critical to the success of WCS' network of shelters is the contribution made by communities, including donors. WCS' financial model reflects this:

- To fund shelter operating costs, WCS' role is to secure NSW Government's support. These funds are passed on by WCS to the shelters in full. The funding amount generally reflects around 50% of shelter operating costs (and the shelters fundraise the remainder in their communities, with assistance from WCS).
- To fund the WCS Hub supporting measures that are provided to shelters (and underpin the operating model) WCS relies on donations and philanthropic grants. These supporting measures include management and governance, shelter services, housing, growth and innovation, education, outcomes and reporting, compliance and capacity building.

As the work of WCS expands, so does the need for these critical donations. We thank you for your ongoing support, and the difference that it has made to so many women and their children.

WCS' financial statements are available in full at the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website (acnc.gov.au) via the 'Find a Charity' function.

Accountability

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS LIMITED

Public Benevolent Institution with DGR1 (Deductible Gift Recipient) Status
ACNC registered

ACCOUNTANTS

Purpose Accounting
583 Elizabeth Street,
Redfern NSW 2016

AUDITORS

SDJA Audit Specialists
PO Box 324,
West Pennant Hills
NSW 2125

SOLICITORS

Hicksons Lawyers
One International Towers,
Level 24,
100 Barangaroo Avenue,
Barangaroo NSW 2000

OFFICE

418a Elizabeth Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010

w womenscommunityshelters.org.au
e hello@womenscommunityshelters.org.au
m: 0434 317 107
t: (02) 9539 6859

Twitter: @WCS_001

Facebook: facebook.com/WomensCommunityShelters/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/womenscommunitysheltersau/

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/women-s-community-shelter

ABN 54 153 006 556
ACN 153 006 556



**ORGANISATIONAL
MEMBER
CODE COMPLIANT**

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Support Period: Each instance of support that WCS provides a client, regardless of the type of support they receive. A support period commences on the day a person becomes a client by receiving a direct service from an agency and it ends on the last day on which services are provided.

A client may have multiple support periods opened (e.g. one shelter support period and one outreach support period). The total number of support periods is made up of accommodated clients + outreach clients + transitional clients + assisted not accommodated clients.

Unassisted Clients: Any person who seeks services from an agency and does not receive any services. Services include the provision, referral, or assessment of needs for services.

Assisted Clients: A client who receives formal support during the intake/assessment process but who is not then accepted into shelter. This may include advice and information, advocacy and liaison or a formal referral to another organisation.

Accommodated/Shelter Clients: A client that is accommodated in a shelter (short-term/emergency accommodation).

Outreach Clients: A client that receives support but is not receiving short-term or emergency accommodation. This is usually, but not always, a client that has transitioned through shelter and is now receiving support in a reduced capacity whilst accommodated elsewhere.

Transitional Housing Client: A client that is currently being accommodated in a transitional housing property which has been arranged/managed by WCS.

All clients that receive transitional housing also receive outreach support. This includes clients at Beecroft House, Mosman House, Allawah House and Abbie House.

Distinct Clients: The distinct number of individuals that have received support services from WCS Shelters at some point during the report period.





TO DONATE PLEASE VISIT
WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SHELTERS
OR SCAN THE QR CODE

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