

## Partnerships/Alliance/Networks

- » ACOSS
- » Althea Projects
- » ATSILS
- » Children by Choice
- » Coalition on Criminal Assault in the Home
- » Coast to Country Housing Company
- » DOVETAIL
- » EVAWQ (Committee Member)
- » Food Rescue Initiative
- » FoodRelief
- » Homelessness Australia
- » Housing Connections
- » James Cook University
- » NASASV
- » Northern Australia Primary Health Ltd - ATAPS
- » NQWSN
- » PAVE
- » QCOSS
- » QPILCH
- » QSAN
- » Queensland Police Service
- » Queensland Women's Health Alliance
- » QWLS
- » Red Cross Australia
- » Red Rose Project
- » SARRG
- » SASP
- » Second Bite
- » Sera's Women's Shelter
- » Sharehouse
- » Sky Foundation
- » Townsville City Council
- » Townsville Multicultural Support Group
- » Townsville Women's Correctional Centre
- » Townsville Youth Justice Centre
- » Upper Ross ERF Collective
- » Victims Assist Qld
- » WESNET

## Thank you, fundraisers & supporters

- » Alison Brennan - Townsville Women
- » Anglican Church of the Ascension
- » Anne Goodbun - BBB
- » Beefsteak and Burgundy Club
- » Bernadine Symms, TCC Corporate Services
- » C&K Blue Skies Preschool & Kindergarten
- » Call Back The Tribe
- » Catholic Diocese of Townsville
- » Centrelink Aitkenvale
- » Charles Fisher Bank of Queensland
- » Church of the Ascension
- » Coutts Redington Accountants
- » CSIRO
- » CWA Willows
- » Debbie Rains - Escape Travel
- » Dept Housing Townsville
- » Dr Claire Campbell - JCU
- » Ergon Energy
- » Dan Thomson - Etchd Building Design
- » Grace Baptist Church
- » Grill'd
- » IGA Mt Louisa
- » Ignatius Park College
- » Inner Wheel Club of Townsville
- » Ittakesallsorts
- » Jamie Twelve Oaks Poultry Farm
- » Joyful Noise - Linda Janetzki PLO
- » Just Peachy Cupcakes
- » Kathy Doyle
- » Kerry Donlan - Holy Spirit School
- » Kim Addison - Colliers, Ferry and Townsville Rentals
- » Kim Burton
- » KLP Family Law
- » Lee Bowman Aurizon
- » Martin McDonough - Explore Property
- » Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
- » Mobile Phone Surgeon
- » NQ Phoenix Dragon Boat Club
- » Kimbo - Paleo Cafe
- » Parishioners of St James and St Marks
- » Payce Foundation
- » QPS NQ Pty Ltd
- » Ray White Commercial
- » Rotary Club port of Townsville
- » RSL North Qld District Auxiliary Conference
- » Sarah - Ray White Ingham Road
- » Seniors Aqua Aerobic Group
- » Sexual Health Service Townsville
- » Shayne Hanran - AECOM
- » Sky Foundation
- » Smile Dental
- » St Anthony's Catholic College
- » St Margaret Mary's College
- » Circus Quirkus
- » St Margaret's Anglican Girls School
- » St Patrick's College
- » St Peter's Anglican Church
- » Strand Fitness Seniors Group
- » Tai Chi of the Fox
- » The Ville Resort Casino
- » The Yoga & Fitness Studio
- » Thuringowa Village Discount Drugstore
- » Townsville Appliance Service- Circus Quirkus
- » Townsville Birth Centre
- » Townsville Bridge Club
- » Townsville Dragon Boat Club
- » Townsville Mount Stuart Lions Club
- » Townsville Podiatry Centre
- » Townsville RSL Women's Auxiliary
- » Tracie Aylward
- » UGL Rail Services Pty Ltd
- » Verve Design
- » Willows Presbyterian Church - Jason Smart
- » Willows Shoppingtown
- » Wingate Properties - Stephen Williams
- » Zest Financial Solutions



## Management Committee

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Diana Falcomer

**Secretary**  
Theresa Petray

**Treasurer**  
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**Vice President**  
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Santina Winterkorn  
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## Staff Team

**Coordinator**  
Cathy Crawford

**Senior Counsellor**  
Di Plumb

**Administrator**  
Rose Alexander

**Sexual Assault Counsellor**  
Belinda Vincent

**Women's Health/Sexual Assault Counsellors**  
Karen Rowan  
Kim Ramsden  
Leena Mehta  
Catherine Ouma  
Daneka Lay-Weldon

**Women's Health Counsellor**  
Alison Thorburn

**Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership Project**  
Trudi Contarino

**Women's Homelessness Workers**  
Tiffany Goodman  
Emily Hellyer  
Erin Costello  
Kat Buchta  
Judy Warner

**Reception/ Support Worker**  
Toni Lilley

**Playgroup Facilitator**  
Hayley Plumb  
Kylie Alison

**Relief Workers**  
Chantelle Whitehead  
Rechelle Louk

**Art & Craft Group Facilitator**  
Virginia Hurst

**Yoga Tutor**  
Meredith Starck

**Volunteer**  
Kathy Doyle  
Judy Wheeler



the women's centre

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The Women's Centre  
Annual Report 2016

Building Our Safe Future

## President and Coordinator's Report

Through 2015 until June 2016 The Women's Centre remained committed to the drop-in facility and integrated service delivery model of the Women's Health Service, Townsville Sexual Assault Support Service and the Specialist Homelessness Service. Demand remained constant for financial assistance, food, utility bills, accommodation support, baby and hygiene products, clothing and household items. We thank volunteer organisations, Second Bite, Food Rescue Initiative and the public for their generous donations; their time and effort to meet the demands proved invaluable.

The limited Emergency Relief funding received from the government was gained from an alliance with Althea Projects and three other local community services. The need was far greater than the capacity and resources of The Women's Centre. As a result our planning days in June 2016 saw Management and staff identify the sacrifices that stretched resources and the demand on core service delivery. Changes to the current business model were considered. The focus for our future is to improve and develop our three funded services and to provide specialist counselling and support to the women of Townsville. This is hoped to build capacity within The Women's Centre for change to women's lives in the broad policy context.

Part of the change to women's lives we seek, has developed from the Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership project. This was initiated in 2014, and by February 2016 had produced a Strategic Plan for Townsville. The group is a collaboration of Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Queensland Courts, Queensland Health, Queensland Police Service, Townsville City Council, Townsville Sexual Assault Support Service, and Victim Assist Queensland. The aim is to work together to integrate and improve responses for survivors of sexual assault. The dedication and commitment of this group has been the catalyst for the Queensland Police Service to introduce a twelve month trial for a Sexual Crimes Unit in Townsville. Specialist investigative detectives will work in tandem with the Townsville Sexual Assault Support Service to provide 24hr support to victims of sexual assault, alongside the Townsville Hospital and Forensic Medical Unit. The Sexual Assault Response Team will be launched in July 2016.

Our Specialist Homelessness Service has brought a strong relationship with Housing Connections, the local housing consortium, that has seen a great improvement for streamlined outcomes for women and children facing homelessness. As the Homelessness Hub is now situated in Ross River Road, in a precinct adjacent to The Women's Centre, our staff have been able to support women escaping domestic violence at either venue, and provides for safe referral into both crisis accommodation and short term tenancies. Case conferencing and networking opportunities have improved.

An outstanding success of the year has been the re-introduction of the Women's Health Service therapy groups, Art Workshop on Monday and Craft Group on Thursday, as well as Balancing Life, Creating Choices, and the Women's Hall of Fame initiative. Playgroup continues to thrive as a social and parenting support group for mothers and their children and the benefits of Yoga to mind, body and soul need no introduction. Progress has also been made with local health services and medical practitioners now

offering contemporary and cost effective solutions and options for women. Our specialist child and family Women's Health Counsellor has deepened their strong and effective relationships with our community health partners. The Northern Australia Primary Health Counsellor visits The Women's Centre to deliver free psychological support to women with a mental health diagnosis on a weekly basis, which in particular offers an alternative and barrier free access point for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women outside of a clinical setting.

Under the recent strategies of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to achieve quality standards across the community services sector, The Women's Centre is in preparation for Human Services Quality Framework audit and certification in early 2017. Evaluation and review has begun to critically analyse performance aspects of our service, for continuous improvement and to ensure that our clients, stakeholders and the community have opportunity to contribute their feedback, complaints and compliments to us and inform our plans for the future. Our premises issue at 50 Patrick Street remains unresolved and in 2014 - 2015 we were offered an alternative building opportunity. Unfortunately, the development opportunity was not successful in suitability of our long term future needs. The Women's Centre will continue to fundraise with plans to build and develop. We acknowledge and thank the Sky Foundation for their ongoing support and tireless fundraising. We are extremely grateful to Wingate Property and Payce Foundation for their pledge to contribute \$50,000 each year for the next five years in support of The Women's Centre. This financial support would not have happened without the Sky Foundation's fundraising support.

This year, The Women's Centre ended a long term lease of 52 Patrick Street. With some modifications to our 50 Patrick Street property, our team will be working at a central location. Our storage space is limited however a container has provided space for much needed work areas and facilities for staff. This is a significant change after many years of utilising both premises.

We anticipate that Christmas this year will look quite different to the phenomenal response that the community and volunteers achieved for The Women's Centre during 2015, where record breaking amounts of food, gifts and 240 Christmas hampers were distributed to patiently waiting women and children. The blistering heat and queue outside The Centre certainly took its toll, despite a sausage sizzle, with staff extremely thankful that the demand could be met and pleased to see the huge pile of donations diminish to the women and their children.

We wish to acknowledge the wonderful leadership and direction the Coordinator and Management Committee of The Women's Centre have provided the organisation. We thank all the staff and Management Committee members for their valued input and contribution during 2015 -2016. Our Management Committee team building day in November 2015 brought a strong commitment for progress of The Women's Centre, and has led to a highly successful planning day where innovative plans focused to **build our future** have now been laid.

**Diana Falcomer (LLB)**  
President

**Cathy Crawford (BSW)**  
Coordinator

## The Women's Centre has helped and supported me through my hardships

### Sexual Assault Support Service Report

The Sexual Assault Support Service has continued to provide women-centered support and counselling for survivors of sexual assault throughout the past year. The ongoing efforts of the Sexual Assault Regional Response Group (SARRG) and Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership (SASP), has evidenced a sustained commitment to improving sexual assault service provision. To further cement significant change in the area, the two entities have recently merged to one group. Continuing to reflect a true 'partnership' approach endorsed by state government policy, SASP now moves forward with greater focus and clarity, to further the Strategic Plan 'to establish a 24-hour sexual assault support and prevention centre of excellence'.

Fundamental to consolidating the work of SASP and the broader SASS, and to signposting future endeavours, is the recent completion of two significant documents. Financially supported with philanthropic funding from 'Women and Change', the first report provides a localised Strategic Needs Assessment of Townsville and the region. This report highlights the magnitude of the issue of sexual violence, and ultimately provides 'a single access point to shared statistics and data pertaining to sexual assault' within our community. **Significantly, and in comparison to Queensland, the findings evidence Townsville and the region has a higher reported rate of sexual offences; a higher increase in reported sexual offences; and a higher representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as victims of reported sexual offences, in recent years.**

Building upon this work, and financially supported with

funding awarded by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the second report uses the data provided to demonstrate the evident 'need' regarding sexual violence in the community. Entitled 'We fall through the cracks in the system'; the report highlights the issue of sexual violence locally, the evident gaps in service provision, and the significant work needed to progress broader sexual assault service initiatives and service delivery improvement. **Specifically, the report provides a number of recommendations to meet this identified 'need', and to continue to develop best practice responses to survivors of sexual assault in Townsville and the region.**

Finally, a direct result of the working relationships established and strengthened through SASP, and in light of the Queensland Police Services' recent commitment to trialing a dedicated Sexual Crimes Unit in Townsville, the SASS has also committed to trialing a return to the provision of '24-hour crisis response'. The proposed formation of the new Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) comprising detectives, SASS support workers, forensic nurses and hospital triage staff, provides the foundations for true collaborative interagency work, and potentially a 'best practice model' meeting the needs of survivors of sexual violence, that may well be promoted and endorsed throughout the State.

The period marks a challenging and incredibly exciting time for both SASP and SASS, and there is much work as always, that lies ahead in our ongoing, privileged work alongside survivors of sexual violence, allied organisations, and indeed the broader community as a whole.

### Specialist Homelessness Service Report

The Women's Centre Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) exists to provide support to women and children who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. A wrap-around case management style of service delivery is offered in order to provide a holistic and flexible service that is responsive to the diverse and specific needs of individual women. A feminist, trauma-informed foundation guides the practice of the team with a comprehensive framework that considers the safety and human rights of women within the social context of health and wellbeing. A key focus on social strengths and potential barriers including physical and emotional health, family relationships, culture, income, employment, education, and social connection inform our ongoing work with women and children. The Specialist Homelessness Service understands that trauma, and specifically violence against women is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Engagement is premised upon a multifaceted approach to responding to complex trauma. This involves

an understanding of the individual social context of women and children to promote safety and access to affordable housing, whilst simultaneously assisting women to continue the process of healing and recovery in their lives. For many women the impact of traumas such as sexual assault, domestic and/or family violence, illness, separation and grief and loss has had an intergenerational effect that continues to impact the experiences and opportunities of their children, as well as other family members. In the last 12 months, the Specialist Homelessness Service has assisted **488** women to obtain and/or sustain suitable accommodation including support to access crisis and short term accommodation, transitional accommodation and long-term sustainable accommodation along with pre-emptive measures to improve safety and sustain tenancies. Our Specialist Homelessness Service strives to work effectively and collaboratively with women and children and the community toward the broad goal to end homelessness; and ultimately to end violence against women in our community.

## Women's Health Service Report

The Women's Health Service is a vital service that provides a range of health and wellbeing responses to women including ongoing counselling, therapeutic groups, information, referral and immediate counselling. In addition the service delivers community education and advocacy related to prominent issues faced by women of the Townsville community. 2015 - 2016 saw 234 women access ongoing Women's Health counselling through The Women's Centre, with the main presenting issue being women who were experiencing or had experienced domestic and family violence. In recognition of the continuous need for support to women affected by domestic and family violence the Women's Health Service co-facilitated three 8 week therapeutic groups for women who had experienced Domestic and Family Violence. These groups were developed and run in partnership with Sera's Women's Shelter Inc. The groups were well attended with an average of 6 women attending each 8 week period. The groups provided women with information and education regarding domestic violence, along with activities and exercises that promoted women's healing from the experiences they have faced. An opportunity was made for women to connect with local services including the Queensland Police Service who attend the 8th week of each group to meet women and provide information regarding their response to Domestic and Family Violence. Women who attended the group have reported that the group has made a positive difference

to their health and wellbeing. Participants identified that through the group they were able to; connect with people, learn new skills, gain a sense of belonging, enrich their knowledge, be able to reflect, de-stress, understand, learn and heal in a safe environment, speak out about abuse that occurred during childhood and open doors to another world.

The Women's Health Service for many years has advocated for women of the Townsville community to have access to affordable terminations of pregnancy. 2015 -2016 saw major developments in this area with one local doctor offering bulk-billed medical terminations. The Women's Centre has been able to refer women under 9 weeks gestation to this doctor and has received positive feedback from women regarding the care and treatment that they have received. Another movement we have seen this year is the access to therapeutic terminations of pregnancy through The Townsville Hospital. The work for women to access this service has involved continuing to develop positive working relationships with local doctors, health care providers and other agencies to support women to have the evidence for The Townsville Hospital to assess this need. Further to this we would like to acknowledge Children by Choice who we have not only continued to work with but have also provided our staff with professional support to assist in advocating for women to have access to this vital service.

## I'm getting my life back on track

### Financial Report

The fiscal year 2015-16 saw some items of note for the Women's Centre. Although government funding remained stable in line with inflation, there was increased support for the centre from the public. This could be a result of the increased media coverage of domestic and family violence issues. The local community were fundraising for The Women's Centre throughout the year in a variety of ways and a look at the list in this report will show the many supporters who we need to thank while others asked to remain anonymous. The online GiveNow Building Fund Appeal was also launched to channel funds into the project for our premises. The continued support of the Sky Foundation has been wonderful and there is now a building fund term deposit with \$220,000 waiting for the new building project to commence.

The closure of the Above and Beyond Cleaning Service

social enterprise resulted in a reduction in service income of roughly \$60,000 and related expenses of about \$7,000. A one-off grant of \$50,000 was received for the Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership project to continue the work started by the Women and Change Grant in 2014, to improve the outcomes for victims of sexual assault and to establish new protocols via the Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership. The move to one premises to be undertaken in July has meant that renovations of the kitchen and offices have led to one-off outlays in this year's results but will lead to operational savings in the 2016 - 2017 financial year. At the time of writing the final figures adjusted by the auditor for the financial year are not available but the income and expenses are in line with annual budget projections with the exceptions noted above for the social enterprise and premises upgrade.

## If this place wasn't here so many women would be effected (sic)