



The *Women's* Centre  
safe space for women

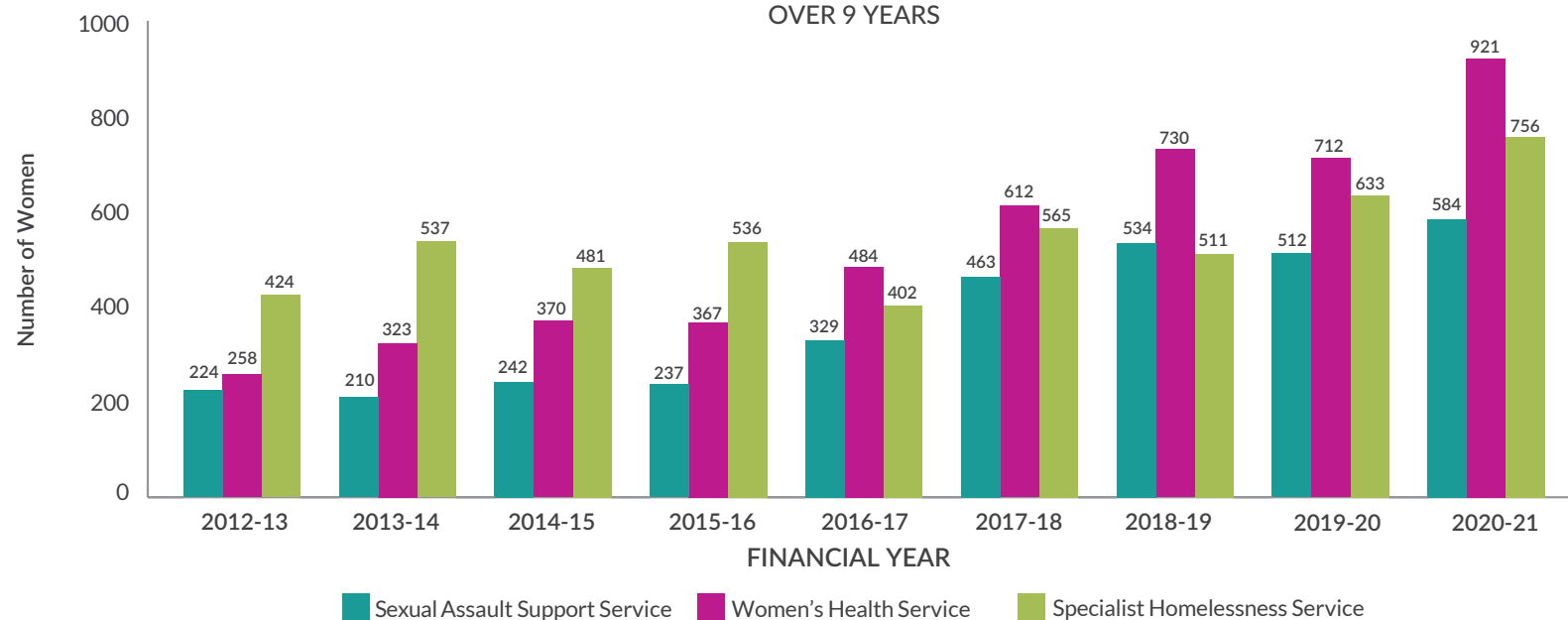


Annual Report  
2020 - 2021





PRESENTATIONS FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT, WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES OVER 9 YEARS



## President's Report

I am pleased to present the 2020-2021 Annual Report for The Women's Centre. The Women's Centre is guided by the vision that "We Support All Women" and the staff and volunteers have been working hard to ensure we do that proactively and comprehensively. The increased demand for the service is a testament to how well they do that work.

In the previous financial year, we relocated to our new premises on Charles Street in Aitkenvale. The 2020 AGM was held there, and in the twelve months since that meeting, the staff have further settled in, made the space feel like home, discovered work-arounds for challenges of the space, and come up with ways to maximise its potential to Support All Women.

The Women's Centre has developed partnerships with other individuals, businesses, and organisations, operating as a hub for women to access important services. These range from free haircuts to midwifery services to legal consultations, and much more. Some of these partnerships were showcased at the fantastic Open Day in April 2021. This day-long event brought together a number of services, speakers, performances, food stalls, and classes and was attended by over 400 women and children. The feedback about the Open Day was overwhelmingly positive, and further partnerships have developed from it – this is an exciting ongoing project.

In November 2020 The Women's Centre launched its Reconciliation Action Plan, and since then has worked hard to ensure that reconciliation, cultural awareness and cultural safety are embedded in business as usual. The Centre has also participated in events like Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Deadly Day Out. We are still learning, but trying to actively work on dismantling the barriers that First Nations women particularly face.

It has been absolutely wonderful to work with the Management Committee for another year. Since the 2020 AGM, we have had some new additions to the team. Mangalam Sankupellay, Angela Carroll, and Bernice Hookey have joined us as co-opted members, and they add to the vibrant, diverse and highly skilled group of women providing oversight for The Women's Centre. 2020-2021 has been my first year serving as President, and Diana Falcomer has served for this year as Secretary.

We are sad to say goodbye to Jenny Sebba, who is stepping away from the Management Committee after many years of service. We are so appreciative to Jenny of her time and commitment to Support All Women, and the expertise she has brought to the Management Committee, but we wish her all the best for a fulfilling and restful retirement from the Committee!

I would finally like to acknowledge Cathy for her seemingly never-ending commitment to making The Women's Centre better. She has vision, and isn't afraid to innovate, which is what the service needs especially in these times of uncertainty.

Theresa Petray, President.

## Coordinator's Report

On the 30th September we made the move from the old to the new premises and after nine months in we were starting to feel settled. The continual stream of workmen for the first three months was a struggle and it felt like the work was never going to end. Thankfully, it did and it became far more exciting watching the rooms be decorated and women's individuality shine within the collective achievement. There are so many multi-talented women working at the Centre. What a major achievement and thanks go to all that made it happen.

The Women's Centre has continued to provide specialist homelessness services, women's health services and 24hr sexual assault response and support services. Systemic barriers, COVID, housing shortages, violence and the inadequate justice system has effected many women. This combined with the increasing complexity of women's issues has meant that caseworkers and counsellors are often juggling many issues with women at any one time. In saying that the staff are often privileged to be a part of many successful journeys and stories of women gaining housing, women's changed situations, achievement, safety and happiness.

The disaster recovery funding ceased on the 30th June 2021 resulting in a reduced capacity of the Homelessness team. This team have worked tirelessly in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. The state and federal government provided COVID funding to the Women's Centre to employ extra temporary staff in the Women's Health and the Sexual Assault Support and Response teams and this funding continues into the new financial year. Temporary positions come with challenges and I am forever concerned about the expectations that grow with extra staff reducing waitlists and providing services that cannot and will not continue if the funding does not become permanent.

The beginning of 2021 saw groups and events start again following the break through COVID and the move. Many wonderful opportunities have presented in the new Women's Centre space. International Women's Day was very well supported with 80 to 100 women present. The theme the centre adopted was "Challenge for Change" which differed from the government's theme but felt more dynamic and proactive than "Choose to Challenge". The event team led by Di discovered staff with hidden but amazing talents! Some incredible songs were presented by Abigail and Chloe, and Portia's traditional Ghanaian dance about unity while wearing traditional costume, followed by her courageous speech describing the racism she has experienced in Australia, was powerful and emotive.

On April 23 the Women's Centre held an Opening Day. The event was well supported by the Townsville City Council, Ergon and Bunnings with 32 stalls on the day. We were joined by Rochelle Courtney from Share the Dignity, Bec O'Connor from DV Connect, wonderful feminists from the femcol shared some herstory, again staff sang, Redcross shared stories from the Women's Prison and the wonderful Kee'ahn sang. With the support of staff Tiffany and Rose worked tirelessly organising this hugely successful event.

Stakeholder and network meetings continued changing from face to face to web based meetings because of COVID-19. In my role as Coordinator I continued on the Management Committee for the Queensland Sexual Assault Network and as the Co-Chair of the Women's Health Service Alliance. These links and relationships are key to the ongoing growth, development and support to the organisation.

The management committee have provided strong governance, leadership, honesty, enthusiasm, time, support and openness. The management continue to provide support and incentives to staff through above award leave, external clinical supervision, and staff yoga.

The management and staff commitment to our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has seen the plan progress and many positive and constructive actions have developed. Thanks also goes to The Reconciliation Working Group particularly Theresa, Erin, Narelle and Holly. RAP is an ongoing commitment with RAP being embedded in many meetings and projects.

I would like to acknowledge all the staff that work at the Women's Centre, their dedication, creativity, professionalism, competence, commitment and hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank you to Coral for giving all of us at the Women's Centre the opportunity to take time out in our working week and come to her wonderful yoga classes. Thank you to all who have donated time, money and/or goods, you have all made a difference to what women have been able to access at the Women's Centre this year. Thank you to Workways for their ongoing commitment, work and time dedicated to The Women's Centre.

Thank you to our funders *Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy.*

*We acknowledge the survivors of sexual assault who have willingly shared their stories and experiences. We hope the work we do and our continued endeavours, honour their stories and courage, and ultimately contributes to understanding, responses and change that ought to rightfully be theirs.*



## Counselling Report

### Women's Health Service and Sexual Assault Support Service

This financial year heralded times of significant change for The Women's Centre. Moving to new premises, counsellors revelled in opportunities to create therapeutically appropriate and aesthetically pleasing spaces in which to welcome women for counselling and support.

Purposeful choices informed the selection of furnishings, room decor and art pieces all designed to foster a sense of safety and establish and enhance a therapeutic alliance. Endeavouring to create a relaxed and comfortable environment can support women to feel more at ease, and underpins the creation of a safe therapeutic space designed to allay anxieties or other responses associated with trauma. These considerations are imperative when working alongside women who are survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

We have noted a very high prevalence of women seeking support following experiences of domestic violence, with these referrals comprising the majority of requests for Women's Health counselling. Similar to the previous year, support and counselling following grief and loss results in a relatively high number of urgent referrals, particularly for situations involving sudden unexpected death.

The centre saw a number of staff changes across the counselling team, and a period of time in which the wait for counselling was lengthy and protracted. Despite this difficult situation, counsellors were still able to ensure prompt engagement with women supported in the framework of the Sexual Assault Response Team, as well as young women and children from age twelve years upwards.

Informed by feminist practice, and within a framework shaped by theoretical and practice wisdom, counsellors and women explore the continuing impact of experiences of sexual violence. Women's knowledge, insights and courage are honoured, safety is paramount and women recognised as the experts in this process. Space is held by the counsellor to be present with each woman as she confronts the enormity of her experiences.

Counsellors strive to ensure that counselling is a creative and empowering process in which women are encouraged to speak and their voices will be heard. Again, this emphasises the nature of the therapeutic environment and alliance, a space in which the key principles of trauma informed care are embedded and prioritised: rights, control, collaboration, safety and choice.

The year 2020 – 2021 once again highlighted and reinforced the value of the Sexual Assault Response Team and the

continuation of strong partnerships between the key agencies in ensuring an holistic trauma informed response to victims of an acute sexual assault. This service, unique in Queensland, strives to deliver an evidence based standard of excellence in which reflective practice and continual improvement are fundamental to enhancing quality support for victims of sexual violence.

These are the words of counsellors as they reflect on the work they undertake with women:

*It is a complete privilege that women and girls invite me to support them and bear witness to their courage, resilience and bravery. My work at The Women's Centre is an exceptional opportunity to honour their voices, experiences and stories.*

*It is a privilege to facilitate a space for women to feel able to be both vulnerable and empowered.*

*What I value about the SART role is the continuity of care provided to survivors by our service from being there at the initial presentation to ED or Police station, then with the opportunity to provide further support and advocacy throughout interactions with police and the legal system. The feedback I have heard from women who access our service is that they value having the support of another person there whilst providing their statement and talking with police and DPP.*

*In relation to SASS counselling in general, I often hear that The Women's Centre is somewhere women know that they will feel safe and their stories protected. They share that sometimes The Women's Centre and their counselling sessions are one of the very few places they can truly feel safe to talk about their experiences and receive support.*

*A young woman stated that she could not have gone through with everything (statement and forensic) without the support of our service. She stated it was a huge relief to know someone would listen and believe her.*

*A woman stated that she has been through lots of counselling before but feels the Women's Centre is the first place that she feels comfortable.*

*Erin is interested in how the practice of narrative therapy can be used to compliment feminist practice and be used as a way to explore taken for granted ideas and processes that can replicate gendered issues of power and oppression; and make visible the social and political problem of men's violence toward women.*

Even though there wasn't enough evidence to proceed with Amanda's case, this is what she had this to say about SART:

*"I am grateful for the support I received. Knowing that I was going to be supported gave me the courage to report. The detective was so understanding and made me feel safe, unlike the detectives I had in the past who made me feel unsafe and blamed."*





## Specialist Homelessness Service Report

The Specialist Homelessness Service team have faced enormous challenges over the past 12 months, supporting women in the ever-changing and unpredictable world of COVID 19. Some challenges are familiar, however many are new with social housing properties non-existent and the rental market now unaffordable with vacancies at an all-time low.

The team strive to support women into safe and affordable accommodation, however with what was once considered short-term accommodation options, has now become long-term with women accommodated in motels, hostels, caravan parks and tents for many months at a time. Many women continue to live with family and friends in overcrowded accommodation resulting in relationships breaking down. Securing a vacancy is extremely time consuming and unfortunately at times, staff have been unsuccessful due to the current housing crisis.

The theme for Homelessness Week 2020 was "Everybody needs a home". This is still very much the case with many women experiencing homelessness with uncertainty for their safety. Staff from the Specialist Homelessness Service attended a Mini Expo at the South Townsville Drop In Centre (Althea Projects) with other local services to showcase available supports during that week.

We have seen an increase of approximately 100 women presenting at The Women's Centre each year over the past 3 years, with significantly complex issues. At least half our presentations are women either seeking advice to leave a domestic and/or family violence relationship or requesting to access a safe shelter. Domestic and family violence continues to be the leading cause of homelessness for women.

During the year, the Specialist Homelessness Service team supported 783 women, with 339 women assisted to access accommodation into crisis, transitional and long-term housing and in addition supporting women to sustain tenancies.

The Specialist Homelessness Service team currently consists of 1 Team Leader and 6 Case Workers – 3 x Full-time and 3 x Part-time, who work incredibly hard to achieve favourable outcomes for women. I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce our wonderful team and to provide an opportunity for you to learn a little more about them.

*Gabe – "I like spicy food – the hotter the better – and carbohydrates".*

*Holly – "I am terrified of mice, because a wild one got caught in my dressing gown sleeve as a child".*

*Kate – "I am afraid of rollercoasters and dislike public speaking".*

*Kat – "I am a dual citizen of Australia and America and I am petrified of toads".*

*Laura – "When I grow up, I'd like to be the person in charge of painting the names on the sides of boats".*

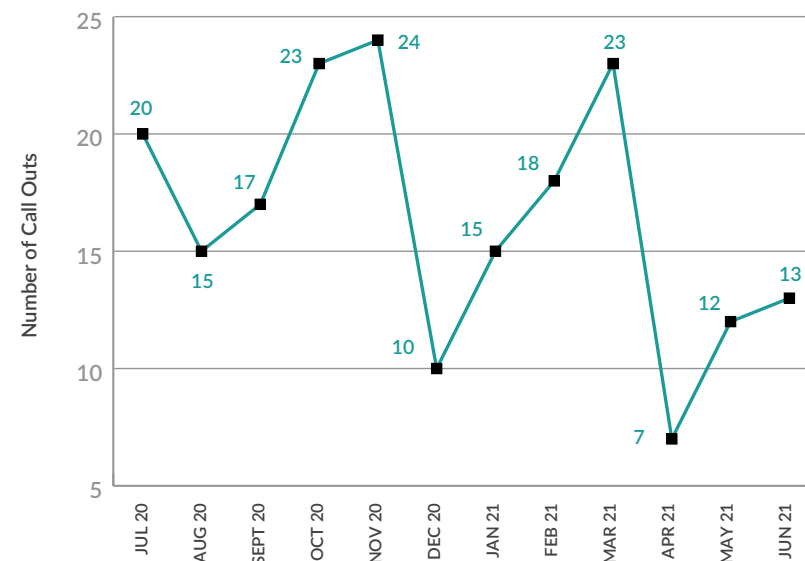
*Ana – "I like toast with butter, marmite and a sprinkle of sugar and will not tolerate brussel sprouts".*

*Sallie – "I have a daily dose of chocolate but refuse to admit that this is a problem".*

We continue to remain active in homelessness networks and have attended many events to educate community groups, school students and other services. We also continue to work collaboratively with other external service providers to support vulnerable women and their children in Townsville.

The Specialist Homelessness Service Team have settled into their new office and the beautiful space we occupy at our new centre. We are also thoroughly enjoying sharing the facilities the building offers with women in the Townsville community.

FREQUENCY OF SART CALLOUTS BY THE MONTH OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020 - 2021



On average there was a SART callout every 1.85 days during 2020 - 2021.



## Treasurer's Report

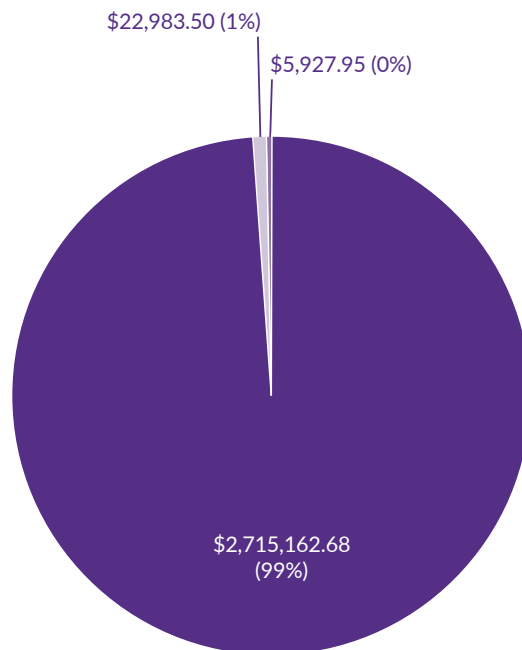
I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2021 for the Women's Centre on behalf of the Management Committee.

Following the momentous move to the new premises last year, Cathy has shifted the focus from premises to practice. The Women's Centre has commenced another chapter with new innovative ideas, partnerships and funds to provide greater access to services and support for women and families in our community.

The Women's Centre income has grown from previous years with just over \$2.7 million income received in 2020/2021. The largest proportion of this funding came from regular Queensland government grants through the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and the Commonwealth Government, totalling over \$2 million. A number of generous donations were provided during the year to the value of over \$23,000 along with just under \$600,000 received in other non-recurrent and new government and non-government one-off grants to enhance service delivery. The diverse number of grants applied for and awarded during 2020/21 was an outstanding area to highlight and demonstrates the focus towards practice growth following the move to the new premises.

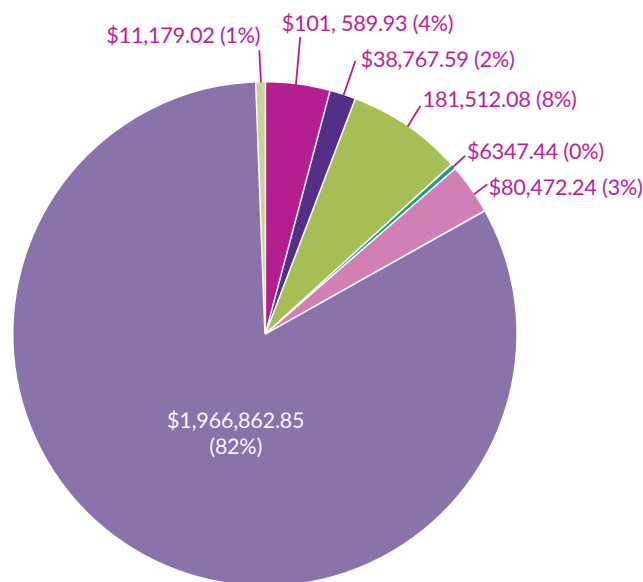
The largest area of expense were salaries and related expenses equating to approximately \$2 million. Expenses associated with support to clients saw an increase which aligns with the additional government funding received by the Women's Centre to help support the effects from COVID-19. Fit-out of the new premises throughout the year totalled just under \$400,000 to bring the building into a home for women's services.

The Women's Centre would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our financial supporters, members and staff for their ongoing support, commitment and dedication to the organisation.



## INCOME

- Total Grants
- Total Other Income
- Total Fundraising - Gifts



## EXPENSE

- Total Administration Expenses
- Total Organisational Expenses
- Total Client Expenses
- Total Motor Vehicle Expenses
- Total Property & Energy
- Total Salaries & Wages Expense
- Total Training & Development (Staff)





## Administration Team Report

During the last year The Women's Centre has attained two significant achievements and made herstory for the women of the Townsville community. The first of these achievements was the completion of brand new premises; at \$4.2m and 4,000m<sup>2</sup> the largest scale women's services property development in Australia. The second achievement was securing \$1.96m in recurrent funding, to cement the establishment of 24hr interagency support services to victims of sexual assault. These two milestones for The Women's Centre can be attributed to the tenacious stoicism of the Coordinator, Cathy Crawford, who worked without compromise for many long years to see her visions come to fruition. The Women's Centre is not only a unique multi-disciplined service offering capacity building opportunity, but is also recognised as an innovative leader, in terms of its 24hr Sexual Assault Response Team model, as best practice for the sector.

With the growth of the organisation over the past year, came welcome change to the Administration Team and the women who work selflessly at the frontline of services as well as behind the scenes, to ensure that their colleagues can do their jobs to the best of their ability. The team of women who assist to make The Women's Centre a welcoming space to visit, a safe space to be, and who we need to acknowledge for their skills, patience and conscientious support to women are :-

### Rell – Reception

*"I've been working at The Women's Centre for a little over a year now and I really enjoy doing what I do. It's both challenging and rewarding."*

### Kiara – Reception/Cert III Trainee in Business

*"This year I began a Certificate III in Business at The Women's Centre and my experience working within the Administration Team has been a welcoming and enjoyable one. Our team work extremely well together and the support and wisdom I have received from them, particularly with my traineeship is invaluable."*

### Tanya – Quality, HR & Finance Officer

*"I started working at The Women's Centre this year in this new role and have loved learning about what we do. The Administration Team is a wonderful, supportive team to work in and I love working here."*

### Tracey – Property & Resource Officer

*"I started at The Women's Centre during their move to their new Centre, this was challenging but most rewarding when we got to the new building and filled it with our welcoming team. We have had nothing but positive feedback about the new building and how comfortable all the team make women feel when they are here. Working here is gratifying, rewarding and inspiring, and to be part of this team is a privilege."*

### Rose – Business Administrator

*"One of the joys of working at The Women's Centre is to see the progress women make in their lives from the experience of receiving professional support, especially their happy smiles and shared laughter at reception when women turn a corner and journey in a positive direction."*

Prior to the transition from our Patrick Street premises, to our new address at Charles Street, the administration team organised vital resources and state of the art IT infrastructure to become ready for the future development of programs and services at The Women's Centre. The premises provides technical capability for all kinds of activities for women that includes free wifi, laptop and phone use, a Writing Group, NDIS Information Sessions, Centrelink agency visits, Tasty Time, Midwifery Clinic, free Hairdressing and Hearing Australia checks. The Women's Centre's facilities have delivered Children by Choice Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling & Responding to First Disclosure of Sexual Violence training, Cultural Safety, a Soroptimist Annual Conference, Mental Health morning tea, NAIDOC celebrations, Christmas Lunch, Thursday in Black Workshops, T-shirt screen printing and a Multicultural playgroup. Next year looks to be just as exciting with a potential community garden, social enterprise, health services and child therapists adding other dimensions to the continual growth of the White House on Charles Street!



Kate's Campaign for Change



Open Day playgroup

Viv Salu - Tasty Time



When women first walk into the Centre, they are greeted with kindness, respect and then directed towards the help with (sic) which they need.



Without youses (sic) providing this opportunity for women to grow confidence and learn no means no...





"...reminded me once again that we can never take anything for granted as all of our rights and privileges have been worked for and fought for by people who came before us. And it is the responsibility of us all to continue fighting for what is fair and equitable for all."

"I think you ladies are doing a good job with providing the community with a well presented and functioning centre to cater for everyone's needs."



Family



Workways Team



Soroptimist Volunteers



## Management Committee

### President

Theresa Petray

### Secretary

Diana Falcomer

### Treasurer

Verity Bennett

### Committee Members

Angela Carroll  
Bernice Hookey  
Sara Potts  
Mangalam Sankupellay  
Jenny Sebba  
Trudi Tronc

## Staff Team

### Coordinator

Cathy Crawford

### Senior Counsellor

Di Plumb

### Business Administrator

Rose Alexander

### Quality, HR & Finance Officer

Tanya Jones

### e-Services Project Officer

Nadia Hilton

### Property & Resource Officer

Tracey Slattery

### Administration Trainee / Reception

Kiara Seabourne-Radecker

### Reception

Narelle McKenzie

### Relief Reception

Stephanie Jacobsen

### Sexual Assault Response Team

(SART) Interagency Program

### Coordinator

Trudi Contarino

### Sexual Assault Counsellors

Kady Agius  
Portia Darkwa Baffour  
Isabella Chellingworth

### Women's Health Counsellor

Erin Costello

### SHS Team Leader

Sallie Kearnan

### SHS Women's Caseworker

Anagi Gunasekara  
Holly Wilson  
Laura Stokes  
Gabe Cairns  
Kat Buchta  
Kate McIntosh

## Contracted Services and Volunteers

### Private Practitioner

Betty McLellan

### Art & Craft Group Facilitator

Sonia Ward

### Yoga Instructor

Meredith Starck  
Paddy McGrath  
Jennifer Scott  
Coral Gilmore

### Hairdresser

Monique Frawley

### Tasty Time Facilitator

Vivienne Salu

### Handywoman

Melissa Cattle Cabinetmaker

### Kate's Campaign for Change

Kate Pemberton

### Dept Communities, Housing and the Digital Economy

Vicki Ford  
Emily Mussap

## Former Staff and Students

### SHS Women's Caseworker

Abigail Cousins  
Angela Russell  
Belinda Matthews

### Sexual Assault Counsellor

Ashley Burk  
Belinda Vincent  
Dadi Jabangwe  
Karen Rowan

### Women's Health Counsellor

Chloe Simpson  
Jennifer Heron  
Tiffany Russell

### Reception

Serai Zaro

### JCU Social Work Students

Saskia Cederloef  
Stephanie Jacobsen  
Preethy Joseph  
Lelly Pawape  
Jeenat Sharma

# thewomensce







### Partnerships/Alliance/Networks

Australian Council of Social Services  
 Althea Projects  
 Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited  
 ATSI Women's Legal Service  
 Burdekin Community Association  
 Child Protection Investigation Unit  
 Children by Choice  
 Clinical Forensic Medical Unit  
 Coalition on Criminal Assault in the Home (NQDVRS)  
 DOVETAIL  
 DV Connect  
 EVAWQ  
 Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville  
 Feros Care  
 Homelessness Australia  
 Housing & Homelessness Area Network  
 James Cook University  
 Local Level Alliance  
 MENTER  
 Northern Australia Primary Health Ltd  
 NQ Alliance for Mental Health  
 North Queensland Women's Legal Service  
 North Queensland Women's Services Network  
 Prospect Community Services  
 Qld Council of Social Service  
 Qld Sexual Assault Network  
 Queensland Police Service  
 Queensland Statewide Tenancy and Referral Service (QSTARS)  
 Queensland Women's Health Alliance  
 Red Cross Australia  
 Red Rose Project  
 Regional Housing Limited  
 Saint Vincent de Paul Society – Maria House

Sexual Assault Regional Leaders Group  
 Sexual Assault Response Team  
 Scrap & Stamp  
 Sera's Women's Shelter  
 Services Australia - Centrelink  
 Sexual Crimes Unit  
 Share the Dignity  
 Sharehouse  
 Street Smart Australia  
 The Townsville University Hospital  
 Townsville Aboriginal & Islander Health Services  
 Townsville City Council  
 Townsville Community Law  
 Townsville Multicultural Support Group  
 Townsville Suicide Prevention Network  
 Townsville Women's Correctional Centre  
 Townsville Youth Justice Centre  
 Victims Assist Old  
 WESNET  
 Workways Australia Pty Ltd  
 Yumba-Meta

### Fundraisers & Supporters

Adairs Stockland  
 Aitkenvale Seventh-Day Adventist Church  
 Bedrock Landscaping  
 Castle Hill Girl Guides  
 City Women NQ  
 Deanna Carl and family  
 Dr Kurinji Kannan Uro-Gynaecology & Women's Health Clinic  
 Evolution Mining  
 Innerwheel Club  
 Kate's Campaign for Change  
 McGrath Real Estate  
 Narelle's Potted Plants  
 Northern Beaches State High School  
 Prospect Community Services  
 Rotary Club Port of Townsville  
 RSL Townsville Womens Auxiliary  
 Sisters on Steel SMC  
 Soroptimist  
 Sphere of Support - Centrelink Social Club  
 Suburban Bowls Club  
 TAMbition Fitness Personal Training  
 The School Locker  
 Zonta Club of Townsville



# The Women's Centre Open Day

118 Charles Street, Aitkenvale  
19 April 2021  
9am - 3pm



Special Guest Kee'ahn  
First Nations Emerging Artist  
Meet Staff from Local Social Services  
Free Entertainment, Activities & Food  
All Women & Children Welcome

The Women's Centre  
safe space for women

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safe space for women

Phone 07 4775 7555  
Facsimile 07 4779 2959  
Email [nqcws@thewomenscentre.org.au](mailto:nqcws@thewomenscentre.org.au)  
facebook.com/NQCWS  
Website [www.thewomenscentre.org.au](http://www.thewomenscentre.org.au)

Funded by Department of Justice and the Attorney General  
Funded by Department Communities, Housing & the Digital Economy  
Funded by Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships



SART  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
RESPONSE TEAM  
TOWNSVILLE REGION



Make a secure  
donation



GiveNow