

## Financial Report

The fiscal position of the Women's Centre remained mainly stable in line with inflation in the financial year 2014-15 but there were a few changes of note in comparison with the previous year. Although non recurrent grants decreased this was more than offset by a significant increase in donations thanks to the continued excellent fundraising efforts of the Sky Foundation. Included in their total for the year were generous donations from Wingate Communities Pty Ltd and Escape Travel. The Sky Foundation's funds, combined with significant donations from The Morris Family, Zonta Club of Townsville Metro, the Rotary Club of Port of Townsville and a host of smaller amounts lead to over \$170,000 increase in the donations account. The SACS wages supplement from the Department of Housing which was paid during the year covered wage rises that had already been implemented so the funds can be utilised for wages for client service delivery. Among the significant changes year on year in expenses, there was a large increase in IT spending due to hardware replacement. The social enterprise, Above and Beyond Cleaning, ceased trading during the year due to staffing difficulties and the lack of seed funding to maintain the beginning stages of a new business. The Women's Centre remains in a strong financial position to continue helping women in need in the community of Townsville.

## Management Committee

Ryl Harrison	President
Diana Falcome	Secretary
Jenny Sebba	Treasurer
Nonie Harris	Vice President
Skye Jerome	
Judith Threlfall	
Francesca Church	
Kierra-lee Schmiedel	
Suzanne Jarschke	

## Staff Team

Cathy Crawford	Coordinator
Di Plumb	Senior Counsellor
Rose Morton	Administrator
Belinda Vincent	Sexual Assault Counsellor
Deneka Lay-Wheldon	Sexual Assault Counsellor
Alison Thorburn	Women's Health Counsellor
Kim Ramsden	Women's Health Counsellor
Tiffany Goodman	Women's Homelessness Worker
Emily Hellyer	Women's Homelessness Worker
Kat Bates	Women's Homelessness Worker
Toni Lilley	Reception/Support Worker
Kylie Allison	Playgroup Facilitator

## Partnerships/Alliance/Networks

- NASASV (Vice President)
- QSAN
- WESNET
- NQWSN
- DOVETAIL
- PAVE
- SARRG
- EVAWQ
- Victims Assist Qld
- Sera's Women's Shelter
- Althea Projects
- James Cook University
- QCOSS
- ACOSS
- Homelessness Australia
- ATSILS
- Queensland Women's Health Alliance
- BM Webb
- Townsville City Council
- Ashurst Australia
- Red Cross Australia
- Sharehouse
- Coast to Country Housing Company
- Housing Connections
- Townsville Multicultural Support Group
- Townsville Mackay
- Medicare Local – ATAPS
- QPILCH
- Queensland Police Service
- Upper Ross ERF Collective
- Coalition on Criminal Assault in the Home
- Women & Change – Giving Circle
- Townsville Youth Justice Centre
- Townsville Women's Correctional Centre
- Red Rose Project
- Sky Foundation
- Children by Choice

## Thank you, fundraising & supporters:

- Anne Arlett
- Bohle Barn Social Club
- CBC Lawyers
- Community Connections
- CSIRO
- Dan Thompson
- Architectural Drafting
- Stacey Robertson
- Escape Travel
- Explore Property
- Fever Fitness for Women
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- Hutchinson Builders
- Ibis Townsville
- Iron Rose – Catherine Simpson
- Kirwan High Junior
- Interact Team
- Lions Club Alligator Creek
- Magistrates Supreme and District Court
- Mothers of Preschoolers
- Quota Club of Thuringowa
- ReJect Shop
- Rollingstone & District Seniors Club
- Rotary Club of Thuringowa
- St James and St Marks Mothers Union
- Stepping Stone Baskets
- Thuringowa Library
- Townsville Family Medical
- Townsville and Suburban Medical Practitioners
- Townsville Fire
- Townsville Hospital
- Douglas
- Uro-gynaecology & Women's Health
- Wingate Properties – Chris Hall
- Zonta Club of Townsville Metro
- Pam Wilson
- Sharon Anderson – Keir Constructions
- Australian Taxation Office – Townsville
- Coles Supermarket – Aitkenvale
- Active Nutrition – Vivienne Salu

The Women's Centre feels like my second home and I feel safe and valued here.



the **women's** centre

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Queensland  
Government

Funded by Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services  
Funded by Department of Housing & Public Works  
Funded by Department of Social Services



## The Women's Centre Annual Report 2015

Supporting Townsville Women for over 30 years





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## President’s Report

It is my great pleasure to write the annual report for 2014/15. In Oct 2014 The Women’s Centre reached a milestone, 30 years of delivering services for women by women. It was a special time to celebrate the women whose lives have been changed forever through their tenacity, who come to the Centre and who have found acceptance, support and understanding. The Women’s Centre provides unique support for women; working with each woman according to her need, to the best of our ability. Whilst we celebrated women’s tenacity this anniversary year, we commiserated the fact that the social context in which violence and poverty has not changed markedly; not yet. In fact, in 2015, the very year in which Rosie Batty has been named Australian of the Year, more women than ever are being killed in Australia – the statistic has recently doubled, from one woman per week, to two women per week. And for every woman who dies, dozens more are maimed or living in terror. When we talk about violence against women as a social epidemic, it becomes imperative to name men as perpetrators. It is a social epidemic that occurs because not enough men have done enough, yet, for things to be different. We must hold men to account, individually and collectively for the crimes they commit and the unearned power they harness as silent bystanders. Men have much work to do. There is growing momentum, and it’s time for change. Laws must change and justice must be done. The Palaszczuk government’s commitment on August 17 this year to follow through on all 140 recommendations in the Not Now, Not Ever taskforce report led by Dame Quentin Bryce is a very important step. The taskforce was set up by the previous Premier, Campbell Newman – and ongoing bipartisan support will be essential. It can be very uncomfortable to acknowledge that the way that power is expressed in gender relations in our society is not as it seems or should be, and yet, it seems to me, this is a prerequisite to real cultural change. The Women’s Centre has been the beneficiary directly, and also indirectly via the Sky Foundation, of significant community support and goodwill. We are grateful to each and every person who has donated goods, time and money, from \$1 to \$50,000. A heartfelt thank-you! The Sky Foundation, in particular, has worked tirelessly. As an organisation that is independent of the Women’s Centre, the Sky Foundation raises funds and awareness about domestic violence, sexual assault and homelessness through various events in broad ways that include engaging men. It’s great that the Foundation is independently doing this work with fresh energy and enthusiasm. The Women’s Centre has negotiated over many years the ebbs and flows of government policy and funding, yet our model has remained fundamentally women centred. The Women’s Centre is women’s only space in practice (men do not come physically into the space) and in our analysis (thinking space which values women’s experiences and understandings of the circumstances they find themselves in). The Women’s Centre’s political analysis has been developed through listening to, and centring, women’s experiences. This praxis is the nexus of theory and practice; the two are not connected. “Women’s space” excludes men for a political purpose – to enable women the space to think and understand and take action around the ways in which women

The Women’s Centre is invaluable – without it many women would be lost emotionally, socially and physically



are victims of men. Whilst safe women’s space remains central to the Centre and to the shelters, Flora House and Sera’s; we acknowledge with appreciation the important work that our sister feminist organisation, the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Centre does not only with women, but also in working with men who are perpetrators of violence, precisely because this is not the focus of the Women’s Centre work. The Women’s Centre has continued to work with other homelessness services in Townsville as part of the Housing Connections consortium; and we hope that this cooperative model of resources and referrals will deliver increasing benefits for women and their children. The private rental market has recently eased and reduced rents has provided some temporary financial relief for some families. The Women’s Centre, like many of the women who come to our service, has been in a position of precarious housing for a number of years. Looking back over previous reports shows the trajectory of this – with the purpose built premises in Wotton Street promised by the Bligh Government and then rescinded by the Newman Government. A breakthrough moment came for the Women’s Centre when we negotiated to buy the building we’d occupied for so many years from the Department in April 2014. The plan was to raise the funds, with the help of the Sky Foundation, to do much needed renovation works. In the meantime the Centre has been offered a 10 year peppercorn lease on a building owned by Brad Webb that will be fitted out by the Sky Foundation to meet the needs of the Women’s Centre; this offer presents a solution to the immediate hurdles we face in having adequate premises to operate from. Given this intention, and noting that if all goes to plan, the Centre will relocate at the end of next year to Fleming Street, Aitkenvale, we are in the process of working through options for our Patrick Street property in the short, medium and longer term. Underpinning our considerations is an acute awareness of the fact that, for the first time ever, a strategic parcel of land at Patrick Street is held safely in women’s hands. This strikes us as very significant and we are keen to explore ways to future-proof the ownership of these parcels of land in ways that ensure generations of Townsville women can build on the solid foundations that having title to property represents. I thank the women who have served on the Committee this year, and in particular I acknowledge those who have resigned. The Women’s Centre benefitted enormously from the practice wisdom of Dr Nonie Harris, whose time on the

Committee included four years as President, also of Judith Threfall and Francesca Church. Thank you. I’m sure Nonie, Judith and Francesca join me in wishing incoming committee members the very best as they carefully guide the Centre in 2015/16. Finally, this report concludes by paying tribute to the women who work at the Centre, Cathy and the team, who under often very difficult circumstances create a special kind of magic. Dr Ryl Harrison  
President 2015, Committee Member 2009 – 2015

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## Coordinator’s Report

The Women’s Centre celebrated 30 years in 2014 with a high tea in our garden and some great entertainment from the wonderful women that support us. The backyard continues to be integral to our service as the perfect place for playgroup, yoga and our events, or women attending and catching up together. The Sexual Assault Partnership project was funded by Women and Change, Queensland’s Women’s Giving Circle. This fabulous opportunity enabled the development of protocols and changed referral pathways in the hospital for sexual assault victims. Relationships have been strengthened between stakeholders and the first Townsville focused combined data collection and analysis has taken place which is leading to the development of a Townsville strategic plan focused on responses and pathways for sexual assault victims. I am looking forward to increased engagement of the community to address sexual assault issues in Townsville as the action plan develops. Housing Connections Consortium continued to strive to provide improved pathways for homeless in Townsville. The Department of Housing are working alongside Housing Connections and we hope that we will see the benefits of closer working relationships and streamlined services in the future. We have developed, and are continuing to grow, a Child Therapy service model. This has enabled children who have been affected by sexual assault or trauma, related to domestic violence, to access specialist child counsellors at The Women’s Centre. The Women’s Centres valuable partnerships have allowed two free legal clinics and Centrelinks’ Community Engagement Officer to continue to be accessed at the premises. This year also saw the change of PAVE processes which extended its membership to other women’s services including Townsville Women’s Legal Service. Staff change was minimal but sadly Vicki and Verity did leave us. I would like to acknowledge their contribution to The Women’s Centre, and in particular Vicki’s dedication to the service and her development of the best practice manual and the “My rights Your Rights Our Rights Women’s Rights” booklet. A number of students contributed to the Women’s Centre this year and as usual we were well placed to support their journeys and valued their involvement. I would like to acknowledge Ryl, and the work of the Management group over the year and thank all the women on the committee for their dedication and wisdom. I would also like to wish all those that have left the management committee well for the future.

The Women’s Centre is like reconciliation in action.



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## Women’s Health Service Report

The Women’s Health Service framework for counselling and support is grounded within a rights based approach to women’s health. This framework focuses on the significant influences of inequality and injustice upon the physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing of women, and strives to make visible the role played by gender within this dynamic. Our approach is thus committed to delivering accessible and meaningful services for women through responding to the needs women identify from a holistic, trauma informed care evidence base, in which women feel heard, valued and validated. Violence against women continues to be the most prevalent reason women seek counselling and support. The depth and scope of issues that impact on women’s lives as a consequence of violence can often be traced throughout a lifetime of abuse and denigration. Counselling issues that are identified are frequently directly attributable to experiences of violence and include issues of mental and emotional health and wellbeing, physical health, grief and loss, anxiety and depression, loss of self-worth and trauma as well as suicidal ideation. The counselling process may incorporate an exploration of unequal power relations and in doing so challenge cultural norms and those structures which support them. Through counselling sessions, women are active participants in planning for their safety and that of their children, and may begin to experience a sense of freedom and empowerment. Counselling provides a safe space for women to explore their interactions with institutions such as family law and child protection, and can assist women to be heard as they negotiate their involvement through complex and, at times, confusing systems. Women may become advocates for change and enhance their strengths and skills within these complex arenas. Women also access support for issues concerning their reproductive health, for perinatal support or for parenting or relationship issues; many times these current difficulties are further exacerbated by current domestic or family violence. Groups, aiming to facilitate wellbeing and social inclusion, continue to be popular and are valued by women and include the Art Therapy group and Yoga.

I feel a sense of accomplishment



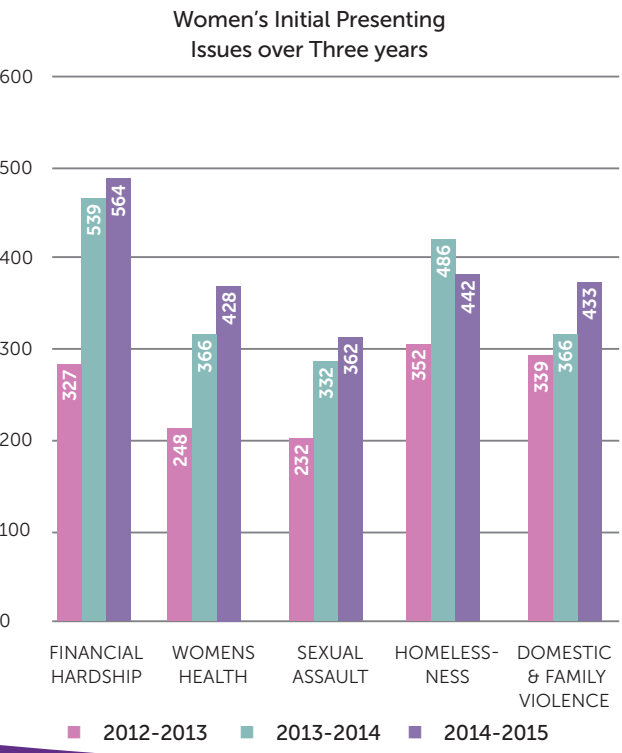
I’ve never felt safer anywhere else



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## Specialist Homelessness Service Report

The Women’s Centre Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) provides women in the Townsville region specialist homelessness support. The Specialist Homelessness Service works from a trauma informed approach supporting women and children who have experienced trauma, specifically women and their children who have been impacted by domestic and family violence. In the last 12 months The Specialist Homelessness Service has assisted 481 women regarding housing and homelessness issues. For many women, the stress of homelessness is often exacerbated by other past and current traumatic experiences, such as sexual assault, illness, separations, grief and loss. It is evident however, that domestic and family violence continues to be the leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Our primary focus is to ensure the safety of women and children who have or are experiencing domestic and family violence and to support them to secure and sustain affordable and safe housing. The Women’s Centre Specialist Homelessness team continues to provide an effective, safety focused service to all women and their children. Strong partnerships with external stakeholders and the development of Housing Connections Consortium in the Townsville region has allowed the team to provide a collaborative service delivery when working with women and their children.



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## Sexual Assault Support Service Report

Significant achievements have occurred during the year July 2014 to June 2015. The provision of ongoing professional and women centred counselling and support regarding the pervasive impact of sexual assault remains our primary role, but is supplemented by community education and awareness raising activities. Counselling is also provided in the outreach communities of Ingham, Ayr and Charters Towers on a monthly basis, and weekly at the Townsville Women’s Correctional Centre. In addition, the Sexual Assault Support Service has had a key role working with our interagency partners to establish streamlined responses and referral pathways for victims of sexual assault, including revised policy and procedure documents for the Townsville hospital. Work has been undertaken at a service delivery level as well as at a strategic, decision making level and has been informed by research and current statistical information. The Sexual Assault Support Service appreciates the collaborative relationships and willing participation by our key partners which has enabled this work to proceed and will result in a shared understanding and commitment to best practice, delivering quality services and support, framed within the fundamental principles of justice and victim’s rights. We have continued to promote and support women to access and share their story with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and have been moved by the courage of women to do so. Sexual Violence Awareness Month, in October, again demonstrated the value of relationships within the regular Sexual Assault Regional Response Group meetings, resulting in a high quality exhibition at the hospital depicting healing and recovery based on a metaphor, “putting the pieces together”. The Queensland Police Service e-referral system, Supportlink, has been an additional resource for women wishing to connect with counselling and support at the Sexual Assault Support Service and we have noted a marked increase in referrals for women who have had contact with police. This includes women who have spoken with police formally or informally in relation to a very recent sexual assault, or past sexual assaults including during childhood. Many women also contact the service directly seeking support, but referrals are often initiated by other professionals, including social workers at the hospital or Centrelink, school counsellors and support staff, disability service workers, workers from mental health and early intervention services and auxiliary services connected with the Royal Commission.

