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Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC) is a public benevolent institution and an incorporated entity, and is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC). It is endorsed to access the following tax concessions: GST Concession, FBT Exemption, Income tax Exemption and is endorsed as a Deductable Gift Recipient.

The activities of the organisation are regulated by relevant State and Commonwealth Laws, and the Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre Constitution and it is governed by an elected voluntary Board of Management. The Board of Management operate Finance and Risk, Governance and Service Model sub-committees to support the governance of the organisation.

Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC)
ABN 92622900342

RESPECT SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP WOMEN & FAMILIES

RESPECT encompasses acceptance, a non-judgmental attitude, understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the clients.

SUPPORT covers all the practical aspects of what the client would expect – knowledge, expertise, pathways, information, better outcomes and confidentiality.

PARTNERSHIP is key to our relationship with clients, partners, donors, supporters and the sector as we all work in collaboration across different levels to deliver positive outcomes and develop best practices.

OUR VISION

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, seen from the side, gently kissing the forehead of a baby she is holding. The baby is wearing a white knit hat and a white long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and warm sunlight. On the left side of the image, there is a vertical graphic overlay consisting of several stylized human figures in various shades of green and blue, some holding hands, set against a background of green leaves.

A safe future for women and families.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Gabrielle Martinovich

The Women's and Girl's Emergency Centre (WAGEC) celebrated 40 years of operation this year. It's a significant achievement in the current climate of decreasing government funding, stubbornly high rates of domestic violence and the perennial problem of housing for the homeless.

WAGEC emerged from humble beginnings when our founder Jeannie Devine became homeless with six children in tow, following a neck injury that hospitalised her for 12 months. Jeannie set up WAGEC to help other homeless women and children like herself. She built a strong resource centre and broke down the stigma surrounding homeless women, she showed that it could happen to any one of us.

To date, the total number of people accessing specialist homelessness services in NSW has increased by 30% since 2011/12, to over 69,000 in 2015/16, as highlighted in the 2016 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report. Homelessness is also closely linked to domestic and family violence.

Domestic violence continues to be the scourge of the 21st century in Australia. The 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey released a snapshot of just how bad the problem really is – on average over a 12-month period, one woman is killed every week. In the past decade, despite all the work that has been done, one in six Australian women (or 1.5 million) have experienced violence at the hands of a male partner that they live (or have lived) with, and one in four have experienced emotional abuse.

Our vision has always been to empower women and families and make a substantial contribution towards ending abuse and homelessness. As always, our clients are at the centre of what we do. We support women and families to find a safer and more certain future. With our partners – St Vincent de



CEO'S REPORT

Helen Silvia

Paul Society, Wesley Mission, Jewish House and Stepping Out – we work together to deliver quality services.

We have grown from a small inner city drop-in centre to an organisation delivering a range of crisis and early intervention accommodation and support services to women, children and young people and families who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness and/or domestic and family violence in the Inner West and south west Sydney regions. Throughout our time we've always had the commitment and expertise of a strong board, which has continuously provided clear direction, and we have had the dedication and enthusiasm of our CEO, Helen Silvia, and all the WAGEC team making great strides in delivering positive client outcomes.

And now, 40 years on, WAGEC is still standing, and we will continue to grow from these solid foundations. We look forward to finding new and innovative ways to support women and families to stay housed. We will continue to change attitudes and relationships throughout every level of society. We will continue to collaborate and strengthen our support systems and partnerships, and we will continue to co-create a new and sustainable future.

Government and business remain key to scaling our impact as the nonprofit sector was never meant to be a separate sector just for the poor. We are heartened by the NSW Government's review of the Homelessness Strategy, and the parliamentary inquiry into preventing and addressing homelessness in NSW. We hope these initiatives will guide government delivery of services as well as deliver every woman and family a home.

Resilience and community are core to our work, and it is in this spirit I thank all our partners and collaborators for helping us celebrate our 40-year milestone, for their continuing support, and for their voices.

For 40 years, Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC) has been a lean, grassroots organisation, which is astutely aware of the needs of women and families in our inner-city communities. We have an absolute commitment and willingness to go above and beyond to accomplish whatever is needed.

We are strong advocates for our client group, giving a voice to the voiceless and stretching ourselves to always do more. At the very cornerstone of who we are and what we do is a strong culture that values, creativity, inclusivity, diversity and professionalism.

This year, we have worked very hard with our Alliance partners to create greater operational efficiencies and to streamline our business processes. We have also focused on investing in strengthening community and corporate partnerships, expanding our service offerings, measuring outcomes and enhancing the quality of our advocacy work.

We have supported nearly 1500 women and children to find safe and secure housing and access to essential support services. We have also launched three new programs, each of which provides specialist, targeted services that augment the core support case managers provide.

Through the strength of our partnerships with government, our sector colleagues and community and corporate supporters we have built strong relationships and collaborations that have grown our impact.

I would sincerely like to thank the WAGEC Board for their robust governance and oversight and the enduring dedication and hard work of our Client Services Managers and the entire WAGEC team.



TREASURER'S REPORT

Meera Iyer

I'm pleased to present my Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2017.

The financials statements have been prepared in accordance with the appropriate accounting standards and other mandatory professional standards and have been independently audited by Marjorie Wessels, Director, Wessels & Co Pty Ltd.

WAGEC has had a very successful financial year in terms of delivering services to clients. There has been an ongoing commitment to seeking continuous improvement, creating efficiencies and economies of scale and using the organisation's monies to achieve great outcomes for communities.

Sound internal and external financial controls are in place and adhered to, ensuring our monies are utilised lawfully and ethically, and for the purpose they are intended.

Our prime focus in 2017 was increased direct spending on client services, programs and activities through achieving greater efficiencies in our operations.

Our gross revenue for the year was \$4,025,379, an increase in excess of 16% from the preceding year. In addition to the normal increase in government funding, we were successful in our applications for several infrastructure grants during the year amounting to \$51,790, while the strategic short-term investment of surplus funds generated additional unbudgeted income of \$15,903. Spending was closely monitored and we came in on budget for the year.

Total expenditure on assets of \$164,245 was undertaken during the year – our crisis and transitional properties

were refreshed with the replacement of tired and worn out furniture; a vital child safety upgrade was undertaken at one of our crisis properties; security was improved at our Redfern Head Office and the outdoor communal meeting area of the office received a long-overdue facelift.

The receipt of the infrastructure grants through various NSW departments allowed this work to be undertaken with minimal impact on our operations budget.

WAGEC has adopted a collegiate approach to providing services. During this year WAGEC invested in working together with other local not-for-profits to tailor programs for our clients that are specifically designed to improve their skills. We have worked closely with our alliance member partners to develop greater efficiencies for the coming year.

Our FACS funding agreements have been renewed for a further three years and we have renegotiated our Alliance Member agreements for the same period, which allows us to continue to provide these vital services to our local community.

Our financial statements for the year show a surplus of \$183,623, resulting primarily from the receipt of the infrastructure grants and the capitalisation of assets by WAGEC.

I'd like to thank my fellow board members and all WAGEC staff for the passion, inspiration and commitment they bring to our organisation.



THE INAUGURAL WAGEC BAKE OFF

Inspiring entries, enthusiastic judges and eager participants made the first WAGEC Bake Off a resounding success. The competition was fierce and friendly, the dishes were amazing and the team-building salads were sensational. The brunch was enjoyed by everyone on the day, so we are all looking forward to next year's event.

OUR SERVICES

Our core services are delivered in partnership through an Alliance with the following organisations: Jewish House, St Vincent de Paul Support Services NSW, Stepping Out Housing Program and Wesley Mission.

We operate crisis refuges and medium-term transitional housing for women and children and single women experiencing homelessness and domestic and family violence as well as case management services and community outreach support.

We also provide a domestic violence after hours response service and a specialist service for adult survivors of child sexual assault in partnership with Stepping Out Housing Program. We also partner with the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's Boarding House Outreach Service.

WAGEC BOARD MEMBERS

Gabrielle Martinovich PRESIDENT GAICD, BA (Psy, PolEc)

Board member since 2010 – Governance Committee.

Gabrielle is a communications and engagement professional who has made a career out of tackling complex projects. Providing reputation management advisory and facilitation services to leaders across the business, government and not-for-profit sectors, she advises on a range of issues including crisis management, community and stakeholder engagement, media relations, corporate communication and training. Gabrielle is a member of the Public Relations Institute of Australia NSW Council, a member of IAP2 Australasia, an alumnus of Social Leadership Australia, and is a professional management services provider to the NSW Government.

David Allen VICE PRESIDENT BA SocSci (Psy), Grad DipM

Board member since 2013 – Service Model Committee.

David is currently Wesley Mission's Executive Manager, Community and Family Support, which manages a range of programs including Brighter Futures, Youth Hope, Financial and Gambling Counselling, various Family and Youth programs, a Mental Health program for mothers with severe and persistent mental health issues who also have children under five years of age, and a range of specialist homeless services for adults, families and youth. He has experience in disability accommodation, respite services, youth services, property maintenance, post-release ex-prisoner programs and out-of-home care accommodation. David is Treasurer on the Board of Homelessness NSW.

Meera Iyer TREASURER B Commerce, MBA, CPA (Australia), CIMA (London)

Board member since 2015, Finance & Risk Committee. Meera is a Senior Financial Services Executive and has broad experience in finance, operations and strategy with Citi, Westpac and CBA. Meera is passionate about her involvement in the not-for-profit sector that involves assisting women. Meera's outstanding contribution to the financial governance of WAGEC was recognised in 2017 in the CBA's Not-For-Profit Treasurers' Awards Honour Roll.

Karen Elliff SECRETARY (from August 2016) B Business (Marketing), MBA (International Studies)

Board member since 2012 – Governance Committee. Karen began her career in the corporate sector, holding various sales, marketing and strategic roles for IBM and Canon. Broad marketing, communications and management skills, combined with a passion for community, has seen her transition with firm commitment to the not-for-profit sector, to hold senior fundraising and marketing roles. For the past eight years Karen has worked in international aid with a particular focus on women's rights, and more recently medical research in senior management roles. She is currently Director of Fundraising and Development at the Black Dog Institute and Company Secretary of the Black Dog Institute Foundation.

Elizabeth Wilkins MCommerce (E-Commerce), MBA

Board Member since 2016. Elizabeth is an Executive Coach, Business Facilitator, Strategic Advisor, Change Management Consultant and Company Director. She has a corporate history spanning the media and within learning and development organisations and has worked in a range of industry categories including new and traditional media, manufacturing, financial services and advertising, among many others. Elizabeth brings over 30 years of experience working in, around and with small, medium and large enterprises (for profit, not-for-profit and public companies) both in Australia and off-shore. She is well respected by high-profile senior executives and leaders, assisting them to drive organisational sustainability, build businesses, reach enterprise goals and navigate change. She is currently working extensively in the Aged Care and Property sectors and has previously served on other not-for-profit boards. She is currently a board member of ChilOut (Children Out of Immigration Detention). She is also a pro-bono Coach and Facilitator for the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. Elizabeth is passionate about helping people to build clarity and authenticity in inter-personal communications to reach their full potential, and in assisting leaders to successfully steer their organisations through the disruptive forces of technology and innovation to achieve strategic outcomes.

Caroline Stewart BA, Dip Law, GAICD

Board member since 2015. Caroline is the Executive Officer for the UBS Australia Foundation, a private ancillary fund that also oversees the community engagement and partnership activities of UBS in Australia. She has responsibility for establishing, nurturing and evaluating key community and corporate partnerships. She is a Council Member of Philanthropy Australia, Co-Chair of Philanthropy Australia's Corporate Foundations Network and a member of the Audit

& Risk Management Committee. She is on the board of Lenity Australia, and on the marketing sub-committee for WIPAN (Women in Prison Advocacy Network). She is past president of the Sancta Sophia Alumni Committee, Sydney University. Past roles include the 90 Homes for 90 Lives Collective Impact Group Committee, Marist Missions Overseas Fund Advisory Committee, and many working groups as part of her Foundation role. Caroline is also admitted as a Solicitor in NSW and the ACT.

Jacinta O'Connell Bachelor of Taxation, CPA

Board member since 2015 – Finance & Risk Committee.

Jacinta is a JP, Registered Tax Agent and has over 20 years' experience within the accounting profession. She has proven success consulting to small and medium businesses by establishing effective partnerships and building profitable teams. Her depth of knowledge has seen her become well respected for providing recognised music, entertainment and sports clients with strategic taxation, business and finance solutions, including three years as Finance Director on the board of the Sydney Kings. She has also worked as a Senior Financial Accountant for the Banks Group and Financial Controller for Tickets Pty Ltd. Most recently Jacinta extended her business model to encompass working with businesses in the rapidly growing health and wellness industries.

Helen Deas EMPA, MLshipMgt (Policing), BSocSc, BPolicing (Invest), GAICD, JP

Board member since 2016 – Finance and Risk Committee.

Helen has had extensive experience in the NSW Police Force at a senior level and recently retired after 28 years service. She is experienced in the investigation and management of major, serious and organised crime. Throughout her career she has worked closely with victims of sexual assault and child abuse and held the role as the Commander of the Child Protection and Sex Crime Squad. Helen has extensive experience working with vulnerable communities, including Aboriginal, elderly, CALD, disabilities and mental health. Throughout her career she has served on a variety of state and commonwealth level committees and boards. She currently operates a consulting business and volunteers on a number of committees and boards.

Frances Atkins LLB, BCom, LLM, MBA (current)

Board member since 2016. Frances has significant experience in banking and finance, including advising senior management, boards and committees on a range of corporate and strategic matters. Frances also serves on the Board of a specialist domestic violence service for women and families, and has participated in a range of programs supporting women and children for the past 13 years.



OUR VISION

A safe future for women and families.



OUR MISSION

WAGEC is a not for profit charity based in inner city Sydney, New South Wales.

We provide safe spaces for women and families impacted by the effects of domestic and family violence, homelessness and systemic disadvantage.

We create enduring change in times of crisis through access to safety, housing and material support.

We work with our communities to advocate social change.

We are trauma-informed and culturally appropriate in our practice.



OUR PRINCIPLES

Flexible and focused on our clients.

Creative and professional in all our work.

Respectful and inclusive with and of others.

We act with integrity.

We are proactive.

We are compassionate.

We are feminist in our approach.



A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

When WAGEC contacted Chico Monks, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts Teacher from Eora College, about creating a mural for the revamped courtyard he immediately knew the right person for the job – his former student and now fellow artist and friend Nicole Renee Phillips.

Painter, sculptor, printmaker, animator and teacher, Nicole was born in Grafton in 1977. She's a descendent of the Bundjalung people and her language group is Gumbaynggirr. After moving to Sydney in her late teens, Nicole discovered her creative side and has since become a groundbreaking artist. In 1994 she was given the opportunity to work alongside other Aboriginal people from different nations to document "Dreaming Stories" from around Australia, it was this work that saw her become the first female Aboriginal animator.

Nicole often draws inspiration from human anatomy and nature and her work depicts a lot of personal symbolism, which lent itself perfectly to the idea of creating a meaningful mural to help create a sanctuary for our clients.

WAGEC CEO, Helen Silvia, says, "We wanted a place that is safe, inclusive and welcoming, and Nicole has helped us achieve that with her artwork."

Nicole says, "The criteria for this mural was something family-orientated, WAGEC had chosen the animals and the plants, which I then researched a bit further, I looked into the totem side of them.

"I was also really inspired by the family theme. When I was drawing all the images for the mural I did observational drawing, I would sit out on the street and have a coffee and I used to sketch people with prams and families holding hands. I didn't realise how many people actually held hands these days, it's not until you just sit and watch that you see these things. I even saw lots of old people holding hands, and I thought that was really cute."

Nicole hadn't heard of WAGEC before she was asked to do the project, but says she wishes she'd known about them years ago. "I could have used the services myself in the past and I could have told other people about the service, people who were in similar situations. I think WAGEC is absolutely beautiful and I've been inspired by all the people who work there."

Nicole adds, "I think you have to be so strong-minded to work in an environment like WAGEC. Me, myself, I'm an artist, so I would just go home and cry for ages and curl up in a ball and shake or whatever. I would definitely take people's trauma home with me, I'm not built for that. The people I've met through this project are amazing and they have lots of advice. They have ways to deal with situations that I think are just unreal. In order to be in the helping profession you have to have a heart of gold, and I have been inspired after working on this project."

When talking about what else inspires her, Nicole adds, "Throughout my artistic life I have always found myself producing art with a connection to my Bundjalung heritage. Most of my family still live in Grafton and going home is just a beautiful feeling. There is a beautiful river that runs through it and it almost calls out to you when you're nearly there. I'm still inspired by it. This, like many other things, has been passed down to me by my Elders. These many teachings will stay with me for life."

The vibrant colours and images of the mural and the traditional Aboriginal symbols blend in harmony with local flora and fauna to capture the essence of WAGEC, it adds value to the courtyard and helps to make it a welcoming and positive space.

Helen says, "After hearing Nicole's story and spending time looking at the mural you can truly sense that there is a little bit of Grafton in the heart of Redfern, which is something we are very honoured to have."

WAGEC's courtyard renovation project was made a reality thanks to the 2016 Community Building Partnership Grant from the office of Jenny Leong (Local Member for Newtown, NSW Greens).



"When you think it's the end of it all and there are no supports, there is WAGEC to guide you and pull you through."

Donna, WAGEC Client

PEOPLE POWER

Working at WAGEC is about so much more than just turning up and getting the job done. The often complex nature of our work means that staff need to be flexible, understanding, creative and dedicated to empowering and supporting women and families in crisis. Here, some of our staff explain what WAGEC means to them.



Chloe Sarapas
Project & Admin Coordinator

“A place filled with strong, intelligent and remarkable individuals, including both clients and staff, who motivate me each day to do my part in the fight against homelessness and domestic violence.”



Janet Dandy-Ward,
Practice Manager-Families

“For me WAGEC is a positive, inclusive work environment where I feel valued. With our skilled team and strong leadership we can support women and their families navigate through the often tricky situations brought about by economic hardship, homelessness or family and domestic violence. It’s great to see the clients grow in confidence and move forward in a positive way.”



Rebecca Wilschefski
Client Services Manager

“This work isn’t always easy but working with a committed, passionate and caring team makes it worth it.”



Natalie Webster
Domestic Violence Case Manager

“Sisterhood!”



Lauren King
Domestic Violence Case Manager

“Working with an inclusive passionate and committed team.”

PEOPLE POWER

The partnerships we've created with other organisations and individuals are a huge part of what makes our service so special. These are just some of the amazing people we work with on what WAGEC means to them.



Derek Brinkman

Portfolio Infrastructure Manager,
Test Environment Management
Services, Westpac

"The support WAGEC provides to their clients is truly inspiring. To support people in their darkest moment to have the courage to step forward, and to act with compassion and empathy is such a wondrous thing. I see the team at WAGEC display such outstanding human qualities that I become a better person just by simply being around them. The support that Westpac provides to WAGEC is very fulfilling, but it is done with awe and humility."



Alan Kirkland
CEO, CHOICE

"CHOICE is incredibly proud to partner with WAGEC. They deliver essential services to the community and we are very happy that we are able to help through the donation of household appliances. It is a partnership that is highly valued by myself and all staff at CHOICE."



Stevie Rodgers
Actor and Playwright

"WAGEC to me is one of the most important organisations in the inner city of Sydney. I witness government at all levels washing its hands of protecting, providing and looking after women and children made homeless due to domestic violence. WAGEC is hope. Its outlook, services and care seek a future for those who in the short-term can't imagine one."



Jackie Ruddock
CEO, The Social Outfit

"Working in partnership with WAGEC and their new-migrant clients is a wonderful opportunity for The Social Outfit. These collaborative programs ensure we can help build the capacity of women through specialised skills and work training."



Moo Baulch
CEO, Domestic Violence NSW

"WAGEC works with some of our most vulnerable families in the inner city area of Sydney. It's a unique service built on feminist good practice principles, supporting women and children who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence, homelessness and disadvantage. WAGEC staff consistently go above and beyond to deliver the best possible outcomes for their clients. I'm proud to support the WAGEC team."

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

The Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC) has been supporting women, families and the transgender community of Sydney for 40 years, and it celebrated with a big birthday bash in Redfern. This special anniversary event featured some incredible performances by the singer/songwriter Thelma Plum and the a cappella group Isingonthe cake.

"With this 40th anniversary party we wanted to honour our founder Jeannie Devine's amazing foresight and passion, along with our own past work. We also wanted to celebrate our present and share the vision we have for expanding our services in the future," says WAGEC CEO Helen Silva.

In 1977, Jeannie Devine opened the first WAGEC office in Sydney after her own experience of homelessness. The impact of her work and the passion she felt for ending homelessness is what still drives WAGEC and its staff today. The 40th birthday celebration and festivities were a great way to thank all the people we have worked with and to celebrate the partnerships we have created.

We would like to say a special thank you to our good friends at Table and Two Good Co for their catering and for hosting the event at Table HQ. Top young chef Lauren Eldridge flew up from Melbourne to help craft and deliver the menu with the Two Good kitchen team. It was a very special evening and we thank everyone who joined us.



JEANNIE'S STORY

In 1977, after her own journey through homelessness, Jeannie Devine opened the first WAGEC office. And now, 40 years, on we are proud to be continuing her work of supporting and empowering women, girls, families and the transgender community. Sadly, Jeannie passed away on 10 April 1996 at the age of 80, but her passion for ending homelessness still drives us today. This is her story of how it all began.

"My husband was killed when my youngest of six children was three weeks old. I managed through part-time work until he was 13, when I collapsed while on medication and fell and broke my neck. I spent nearly 12 months in hospital. When I recovered I'd become homeless. I was sent to Samaritan House, a women's refuge, up till this time I had never heard of such places. I'd been a very independent person, never asked for assistance and knew little about assistance from various places. When I arrived at Samaritan House I was pretty sick and weighed only six stone. When introduced to the Matron I realised this woman was a very special lady. Her quiet manner and compassion showed in her face. I feel sure she cared about every woman and girl who came through the refuge. I was placed in what was called a dormitory (eight beds for women and girls). Little did I realise that this place was the foundation of the work that I would be asked to do later on.

I stayed at Samaritan House for some time and through the doors came all sorts of women, bashed women, alcoholics, some on drugs, girls from prisons, young women through prostitution and women with psychiatric problems. I learnt so much about why these things had happened to them. I helped them in any way I could.

In 1977 Matron Rush spoke to me regarding an offer from Social Security, they wanted to interview me. There had been a report given to this person regarding the problems of homeless women and girls in the inner city and he was looking for a woman whom he thought would look into this problem and understand their needs. He interviewed me at Samaritan House for about an hour. It was a very penetrating interview as he gave me no indication of what he really wanted. While he was assessing me I was trying to suss him, it all seemed so strange.

Two weeks later he phoned Samaritan House and sent for me to call and see him at Social Security in Wynyard. He said the position is yours if you'll take it. He then explained to me a little of the report he had received. Many women and girls wouldn't go into the big organisations' refuges (religious & charitable), he'd been advised they were sleeping in parks and other places. When I said I'd take the position he replied now you'll have to do everything yourself. I asked what he meant by this and he said you'll have to find an office, set it up and find out exactly what was happening. I agreed, as the foundation for this work had begun at Samaritan House. I'd seen so many homeless women and girls and had learnt from many why this had happened and they trusted me. I was one of them, they also cared about me. I said I'd have to find suitable offices in Haymarket as that seemed to be the Mecca of homeless women.

I really wanted a shopfront office, but as I couldn't find one I decided on a room inside the Anthony Horden building. It was easy to access from

Pitt St and close to Belmore Park and hotels in the area. In the beginning I'd close the office and go to various hostels, also through the parks and squats where I heard women were. Also, the women from Samaritan House told many other homeless women. In six months, I'd spoken to and assisted over 200 women. I heard about the incredible places they had slept in and the ordeals they'd been through, some had slept on empty trains just outside Central, others in parks or empty houses. All types of homeless women and girls came through the Centre. During this period I was building a very strong resource for women, as the stigma was there if a woman was homeless and the need for great change for women was there. This was certainly a challenge.

I had strong contacts by now with refuges, clinics, hospitals, etc, who would supply food and clothing and cheap rooms. I realised by this time how much confusion was in the homeless scene. Homeless women had very few places to go for assistance and advice, this would have to be a very strong base for women.

The women didn't just come from the inner city, they came from outer suburbs and country areas. During the following 18 months I saw and assisted hundreds of women and girls. I received phone calls from interstate, even as far as Darwin. The ages ranged from 13 to 82 years.

In one year I placed 375 children and their mothers in accommodation. I had good support from YACS and two officers at the Housing Commission in Sydney. Also, I'd been asked to speak to hospital social workers, nurses and doctors to explain what I was doing, why this was happening to women and perhaps what I felt was needed. I also spoke to groups at UNSW to trainee social workers and doctors. I told them this is a war on homelessness and poverty.

I decided to write to the Minister for Social Security in Canberra. The Senator replied and in 1979, she wrote and asked me to join her "Women's Welfare Advisory Committee". I spent two years on the committee, travelling to Canberra four times a year. This gave me greater strength as I was then funded for another worker. The Government also funded me for the adjoining room, which was used by the women to sit and have tea or coffee while waiting to see us.

Transgender people also came to the Centre, the first one who called had been sleeping in a squat and someone had suggested she come to see me. I realised I couldn't put her in a refuge so I contacted YACS to find the cost of a room. After this many more transgender people came. I was very concerned about their plight, they had nowhere to lay their head when they become homeless. Many had been bashed and many were being put in prison.

The Centre has been functioning for nine years and I have tried to give an idea of how it started and the type of people who've passed through. Many of the young single women who first called for help before they had babies still call back to see us. Women and girls from all over the state come back to visit. I feel the Centre serves as a sanctuary, a place where they can come to discuss their problems. It's a strong resource linked into all areas of assistance for these women. It also shows, by the thousands of women and girls who have called to the Centre, the great need for more places like this when you have people who journey from all areas of the outer city, country areas and interstate how much confusion there has been in the homeless scene and how little information was given to this area. At the moment we're closed waiting on new premises at 646 George Street to re-open."



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY



Nowhere to go?
Nowhere to stay?
Feeling alone?
Money worries?

WOMEN'S
& GIRLS'
EMERGENCY
CENTRE inc.



190 Elizabeth St. Sydney 2000
(02) 2811277 (02) 2811275

independent community based service funded
under the Support Accommodation Assistance Program.
1974





CLIENT SERVICES REPORT

Katie Young

Throughout 2016/17 WAGEC has continued to support women and families through their experience of homelessness and a support many of our clients through the courageous journey of escaping domestic and family violence.

The client services team is a dedicated team of passionate and focused women who have worked diligently over the year supporting the many women and families that come to WAGEC who stay in our refuges, our transitional accommodation or through outreach in the community. We have been lucky to be able to expand our team to include a Child and Young Person Case Manager. She supports the children in their own right and runs supported playgroups and parenting groups to help promote healthy attachment.

WAGEC was successful in receiving funding to start our Domestic Violence Response Enhancement service. This is where we provide an on-call, after-hours service to women and children escaping domestic and family violence and then follow through with intensive case management. The service provides reassurance to the clients, risk assessment and safety planning. It also focuses on linking them in with additional supports and facilitating a pathway to safe housing.

This year we have seen the development and implementation of two programs that we now offer our clients to help strengthen the central support that case managers provide. It has afforded WAGEC the opportunity to create partnerships with some exciting organisations, in order to deliver rich and meaningful programs that are diverse in nature. They are delivered in a client-centred and trauma-informed manner.

The SEED Program offers a range of experiential, fun and therapeutic programs and activities that build the Social, Emotional, Educational Development potential of children and young people who are being supported by WAGEC.

The different activities we have offered throughout the year include workshops with the Sydney Story Factory, School Holiday Programs, Music Therapy and Supported Playgroups.

ACCESS is a program focused on creating education, training and employment opportunities for women to support their future financial independence. We partnered with TAFE Outreach and ran the first semester of a Working Opportunities for Women program (WOW). The course provided education around budgeting, goal setting, advice on further education, training, career advice, engaging with children and parenting skills. We also strengthened our amazing relationship with Two Good and ran a breakfast cooking program in Malachite House. This created pathways for our women to further training and work opportunities.

We look forward to building on these holistic programs and continuing with them in the coming years to be able to always offer the best possible support for our clients.

Working within the homelessness sector definitely comes with its challenges. Throughout the year we have continually battled with being able to find safe and appropriate long-term tenancy options, due to the housing affordability crisis. The lack of social housing has had a direct impact on our crisis and transitional properties. We have also had difficulties accessing services for clients that arrive at WAGEC with no income and precarious visa issues. WAGEC's case management team works tirelessly and persistently to overcome these systemic issues as best we can, and we continue to always provide support to the women and families despite the hurdles we come up against.

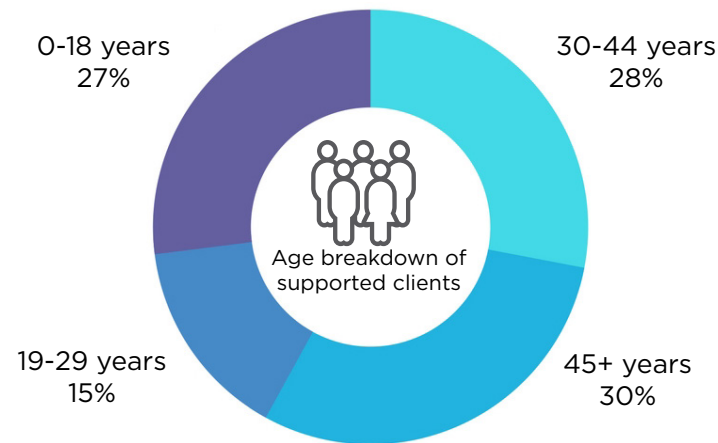
Since I started working at WAGEC in 2008 I have had the pleasure of being involved in lots of changes, and I have also been able to watch it being shaped into the wonderful, diverse and inclusive organisation it is today.



“My 12-week placement at WAGEC has been so much more than just filling in hours on an assessment timesheet. It has been a life-changing experience. I have met women (both staff and clients) whose courage, determination and joy will inspire me for years to come.”

Ruth Lindsay, TAFE Diploma of Community Services Student

YEAR IN REVIEW



1477

Total number of clients supported in 2016/17.



72,359

Total number of bed nights provided.



114,642
DAYS

Total number of support days provided to clients in our services for 2016/17.



16
DAYS

Average length of support given to clients who used our domestic violence after hours rapid response services.



12.5
WEEKS

Average length of stay in crisis accommodation.



22
WEEKS

Average length of stay in medium term transitional housing for single women.



64
WEEKS

Average length of stay in medium term transitional housing for families.



97%

Clients who reported they were treated with respect.



94%

Clients who reported they felt WAGEC's services helped them move on with their life.



84%

Clients who reported they were in secure housing after leaving WAGEC.



98%

Clients who reported their confidence in parenting was maintained or improved while being supported by WAGEC'S programs.



31%

Percentage of women supported by our inner city women's services over the age of 45.

CASE STUDIES

Everything we do at WAGEC is designed to support people on their journey to find safe and secure housing, and each client has their own story to tell. Rochelle and Melissa are just two of the many wonderful people we have worked with this year and they've been kind enough to share their tales of homelessness and hope.

FAMILY TIES

Rochelle was struggling to make ends meet as she was using her pension to put food on the table for her three grandchildren and to get them to school. It can be incredibly difficult to watch your grandchildren impacted by addiction and violence. Rochelle was living through her worst nightmare in an overcrowded one-bedroom apartment with her daughter and her three grandkids. Rochelle's daughter was in and out of their lives, depending on where she was in her journey with addiction. This was not the living arrangement Rochelle had envisioned for her family, but she was doing all that she could to provide them some stability and safety.

However, the family's safety was compromised when they were subjected to domestic violence from a man her daughter was dating. Rochelle immediately knew they needed to escape from where they were living, they needed a place free from violence that was big enough to house them all, a place to call home.

This was just the beginning of their homelessness journey, as the family spent months moving from hotel to hotel, none of which had cooking facilities. The hotels were definitely not equipped to accommodate a family and they were places that exposed the children to violence and drug misuse. No matter what location they were placed in, Rochelle got up bright and early and travelled to get her grandkids to school each day.

Rochelle visited the WAGEC office to access food, Opal cards for travel and, most importantly, she pushed for her and her grandkids to be allocated a Housing property. WAGEC offered a place of respite for Rochelle, she was able to talk through all her issues and concerns with her Case Manager and they worked together tackling one thing at a time. Her Case Manager worked intensely and persistently to ensure Rochelle's safety and the safety of her family, this was paramount at every step of their homeless experience. For a very long time, each day felt like groundhog day and Rochelle would spend many sleepless nights wondering

when it would all be over. After a long and arduous journey, Rochelle was finally offered a property close to family and community supports, where her grandkids could once again start enjoying home-cooked meals.

WAGEC supported Rochelle in setting up her long-term tenancy and helped ensure the kids had comfy beds to rest their heads on. The family finally had white goods and a relaxing couch where they could all hangout and enjoy a Sunday movie.

The road ahead is not all smooth and straight, but re-building their lives after experiencing trauma is now a possibility for Rochelle and her grandchildren. They have a place of stability and safety, a place they know they can return to every day, a place they can start to build positive memories together.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Melissa had experienced a range of different interpersonal traumas throughout her life, this had led to her using drugs to cope with the pain and she'd spent time in and out of rehabs. When Melissa came to WAGEC she had been clean for eight months, but she was still struggling with the impacts of addiction. She had also recently left a violent relationship, which resulted in her being left homeless. This relationship and trauma from her childhood had built up and left her with a lack of confidence and a constant feeling of shame. Melissa described herself as feeling "worthless".

While Melissa was at WAGEC's Malachite House refuge she worked closely with her Case Manager and was linked in with a local psychologist who helped her process the trauma she had suffered. She also joined up with local programs and used the gym at the local community centre. Melissa's Case Manager worked with her on her goals, one of which was going back into the workforce. Melissa was determined to get back on her feet and not let the trauma define her.

Shortly after moving into the refuge she gained a volunteer role at another non-government service, which soon turned into a consumer worker role. A further goal of Melissa was to gain more sustainable accommodation. Together with her Case Manager, Melissa worked on submitting a number of applications for housing.

After a short stay at Malachite House, Melissa managed to secure a one bedroom, furnished apartment. WAGEC assisted Melissa with setting up the apartment and provided her with funds to purchase some household goods so that she was able to make it her own. Melissa has the continued support of her Case Manager and now feels the future is looking a whole lot brighter.



CREATING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

WAGEC values strong relationships with a number of corporate organisations and businesses, as well as individuals and community groups, who fundraise on our behalf and provide hundreds of hours of volunteering. These partners and supporters also provide a range of pro-bono services, donate goods and services and give financial support.

The strength in working with the broader community affords us a unique opportunity to expand our services, it also sends a strong message to the women and families that there is active support from the community. It shows there is a real commitment from people to help reduce homelessness and eliminate domestic and family violence.

With support from our local Members of Parliament, local councils and a large number of corporate partners we have undertaken child safety upgrades and working bees at our refuges, given provisions of household goods and furniture to families moving into their own homes and received funding to deliver a range of specialist services. With too many initiatives to name individually here is just a snapshot of the support received in the past year:



Two Good Co and Table have continued to provide delicious and nutritious meals each week to our women's refuge, as well as donating care packs to women arriving at the refuge for the first time. In addition, several of our clients have joined the Two Good team through their Work-Work and scholarship program, clients have also been guests of honour at the wonderful equiTABLE dinner events.



During 2016/17 CHOICE donated over \$100,000 worth of products to WAGEC. Items such as fridges, washing machines, microwave ovens and other smaller household essentials like toasters and kettles have helped WAGEC's clients make a fresh start when moving into long-term housing. CHOICE's Christmas hampers were also very well received by clients and really brightened up their festive season celebrations. CHOICE also provided ongoing financial support through its Workplace Giving Program.



Westpac's Enterprise Testing Services team has held numerous fundraisers throughout the year, and the team also lent its expertise to a unique community working bee at one of our crisis refuges for families in the Inner West. A dedicated team worked tirelessly onsite throughout the day to completely transform the main room into a relaxed, functional space with a designated area for children to play, read or enjoy activities. The team also put up much needed storage shelves in two rooms, sorted a range of donated items, and presented WAGEC with a new inventory system, which is working very well. WAGEC was also one of the recipients of the Westpac Foundation Grants, which supports our children and young person's program SEED.



Our supporters are not just large organisations, we love to build connections with individuals in the community. One of these amazing people is Actor and Playwright Stevie Rodgers. In May, Stevie participated in the epic South Head Roughwater Swim from Bondi to Watson's Bay and raised \$10,690 for WAGEC. What an effort!

OUR SUPPORTERS

OUR FUNDERS



OUR ALLIANCE PARTNERS



OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

- AbSec
- Address Housing
- Amelie Housing
- Appco
- Bingo Industries
- Bridge Community Housing
- Bunnings
- Burwood Council
- CBA graduate team
- CHOICE
- CHOICE workplace giving program
- Circus Quirkus
- City of Sydney Clubs Grant
- City Tattersalls Club, Sydney
- Club Burwood
- Concord Hospital
- Corporate Challenge
- Craig Laundry MP
- Domestic Violence NSW
- Dr Roebuck's cosmetics
- Ecclesia Housing
- Every Little Bit Helps
- Evolve Housing
- Eziwaypayroll
- Fams
- Global Hospitality Solutions
- Grill'd Darlinghurst
- Hassos and Associates
- Hidden Door Event management
- Hillsong City Care
- Homelessness NSW
- Homelessness NSW
- IKEA
- Isingonthe cake
- Jane Brown Interiors
- Jenny Leong MP
- Knit 4 Charity
- Lendlease
- Lush QVB
- MAD Foundation
- McCullough Robertson Lawyers
- Metro Community Housing
- MinterEllison
- Multiplex
- NADA
- NRMA
- One Love Productions
- Pack Force
- Pillow Talk
- Project Strong Woman, Shauna Ryan
- Pymont Community Centre
- Qantas
- Ralph Lauren
- Rotary Club of Darling Harbour - "The Darlings"
- Sacred Heart Church
- Share the Dignity
- St George Community Housing
- St Raphael's Primary School Hurstville
- Stevie Rodgers
- Sydney Medical School
- Sydney Period Project
- Sydney Story Factory
- Sydney University Medical Review Society
- Sydney University Women's College
- Sydney University Women's Engineering
- TABLE
- TAFE Outreach NSW
- Tanya Plibersek MP
- The Behavioural Architects
- The Tudor Hotel
- Tillman Park Early Learning Centre
- Two Good Co
- Vibe Hotel Rushcutters Bay
- Vincent de Luca Cr
- We All Care
- Wesley Community Housing
- Westpac/St. George Bank
- Westpac Foundation





RESPECT | SUPPORT | PARTNERSHIP
WOMEN & FAMILIES