



Annual Report 2020-21

Highlights and
Achievements



Welcome

The last year has been one of the toughest our community has ever faced, both locally and globally. However, despite the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about, Carrie's Place has continued to stay strong, and keep moving forward. From strengthening our partnerships with housing providers, to expanding our programs into new areas, we've accomplished a lot this year and we're excited to share the highlights in this report.

We still hope for a time when our services are no longer necessary – but until that day, we'll do all we can to ensure they're available to anyone in our community who needs them.

Carrie's Place acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we provide our services including the Wonnarua, Worimi and Awabakal Nations.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and to those of the future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal people on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

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About Carrie's Place

Carrie's Place is a not-for-profit organisation that provides a range of services to support people experiencing domestic violence and homelessness in the Maitland, Cessnock, Port Stephens and the Upper and Lower Hunter region.

Our organisation is built on the values of social justice, feminism, and human rights and we strive to be an agent for positive change in our community. Through our holistic, person-centred services, we work to build capacity, inclusion and resilience in the people we support, and empower their recovery.



Our vision

A community where there's zero tolerance towards violence and homelessness.



Our mission

To increase the number of families in the Maitland and Lower Hunter area, who are housed, safe, and live free from abuse.



Our purpose

We provide person-centred, culturally appropriate programs that aim to empower vulnerable people who may have experienced domestic violence and other forms of trauma and abuse.

Our year in review

The Challenges

- COVID-19 has presented many challenges to service delivery. Not only have we been able to accommodate fewer people in our accommodation, but the pandemic has also been a stressor to both staff and clients, with increased reports of mental health issues.
- We have also seen people accessing our service who have not needed support previously due to loss of employment and family breakdown.
- There's currently a housing crisis, with an influx of buyers relocating to the area from Sydney driving up prices and reducing available properties. Our real estate partners report that they're seeing upwards of 70 applications per rental vacancy, and some clients have demonstrated they have applied for upwards of 100 properties without success.
- Maitland LGA has become the fastest growing city in NSW, putting infrastructure and our service under increased pressure.

The Highlights

- 257 clients supported through Staying Home Leaving Violence, and expanded the program into Dungog LGA.
- 847 clients supported through Specialist Housing Services (up 30% from last year).
- 2137 clients supported by Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services.
- 21 clients supported through the new Path 2 Change program.
- 21 hairdressers educated via the Cut it Out initiative.
- Carrie's Place Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is underway, including our RAP artwork commissioned by Saretta Fielding.
- We've strengthened existing real estate connections and are developing new housing partnerships and pathways for our clients for the next financial year and beyond.
- Success in a number of grant applications, ranging from transformation grants (to improve our IT infrastructure allowing a more flexible workforce), Club Grants to continue our much-valued assertive outreach services and COVID-19 grants, to refurbish and upgrade our accommodation services.

Chair Report

On behalf of the Governance Committee, thank you to all those involved with Carrie's Place over the past 12 months, and what a 12 months it has been.

Carrie's Place like many charitable organisations has had to navigate the difficulties and increased demand as a result of COVID-19. Fortunately, despite the increased demand, our staff and volunteers continue to provide exemplary service delivery to those most vulnerable in our community: those experiencing domestic violence as well as those experiencing and/or at risk of homelessness. We thank you for this and your continued commitment to Carrie's Place and meeting our mission. You make Carrie's Place the wonderful organisation it is.

In September 2021, we celebrated 12 months with our CEO, Jayne Clowes. Jayne's contribution to Carrie's Place has been profound. Under her leadership we have seen a number of changes which will ensure our longevity and ability to grow Carrie's Place to meet the demands of our community. We are very excited to see the opportunities for Carrie's Place under Jayne's leadership.

Over the past 12 months Jayne has focused on, among a number of things, undertaking an extensive culture review of the organisation. As we continue through the focus groups, those results will guide our strategic plan for the future. We are grateful for staff and stakeholder participation in this process.

We also saw the departure of some amazing staff as they sought out new opportunities. In particular, I want to thank Jo Weatherstone, who along with Karen McKenzie, worked with the Governance Committee during some

difficult periods. Her experience and steady presence is missed.

Thank you to all our supporters who assist in funding our programs through grants or donations. In particular, thank you to Multiplex whose significant and much appreciated donation means Carrie's Place has an amazing opportunity to support our community in innovative and exciting ways. We are very grateful for the donation and their ongoing support of Carrie's Place.

Finally, I would like to pass on my deepest appreciation to my fellow members of the Governance Committee, all of whom are hardworking, passionate and amazing women who volunteer their time. The demands placed on them at times are significant. In particular, we say goodbye to our current Secretary Clare Cook who was instrumental in working through complex matters over the past 24 months. You will be greatly missed.

The next 12 months present a significant opportunity to continue the growth of the organisation under Jayne's management. As the Governance Committee, the focus will be on strategic planning and further developing good governance.



Alex Longbottom

Alex Longbottom

Chair, Governance Committee

CEO Report

It gives me great pleasure to present Carrie's Place Annual Report 2021. I hope you enjoy the story of our year in review.

I have now been in the CEO role for just over 12 months, and what a busy year it has been for the whole team. We have had some long-standing team members leave Carrie's Place. We were sad to say goodbye to Johanna Weatherstone, Program Manager for the Supported Homelessness Services team and Liz Jaramillo, Admin Support Officer, who was the first point of contact for Carrie's Place. Both ladies were members of our team for more than 10 years. We wish both of these staff well in their future endeavors.

We thought last year was challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this year has been tough, due to the affordable housing shortage in NSW. In the face of massive demand, landlords have been implementing huge price increases on rental properties, impacting our clients' chances to secure a safe property to call "home".

Again, when COVID-19 hit us for the second time around, placing us all in lockdown, our focus had to be the safety of our clients and staff. We have had to reduce the number of women and children living in our accommodation services, and wherever possible providing contactless services. Our workforce quickly adapted to the working from home environment again, which was also assisted by receiving a Social Sector Transformation grant from the NSW

Government, Department of Communities and Justice, which enabled us to buy new, reliable technology.

However, despite the challenges of this year, we have had lots of highlights to share. The whole team has been busy reviewing Carrie's Place values, and taking part in a culture journey, starting off with a culture survey that the whole workforce took part in. The show stopper was also the fundraising initiative from Multiplex Construction. This was a significant donation for our organisation and will go towards strengthening Carrie's Place footprint well into 2022. It is our vision that we will be able to build an accommodation service in the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA).

My sincere thanks go out to our dedicated workforce and volunteers at Carrie's Place who have worked through another big year, with rising referrals for our services, and managing the complex environment in which we have had to work. Our workforce continues to work together and support one another to deliver quality services for all our clients. Thank you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the Governance Committee for their dedication and support over the past 12 months. I am looking forward to the next chapter for Carrie's Place as we have a really exciting year ahead, as we will commence work on our strategic plan, and our

Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation.

My last acknowledgement is to the community we work within. I am always overwhelmed by the incredible support we receive from the community, whether this be fundraising activities or individual donations as financial or material goods. The heart and generosity of all is extremely humbling.

I hope you enjoying reading our highlights and achievements for the past year. I would also like to thank Emma Nuance, Words by Nuance for assisting us to put this Annual Report together, as a gift to Carrie's Place.



Jayne Clowes

Jayne Clowes

CEO

Our history

Overview of our history and key milestones since the 1970s.

The story of Carrie's Place

Our heritage and evolution

Since the early 1970s, Carrie's Place has grown to become an important presence in the Lower Hunter community. It's been a journey marked by many milestones, and we're proud of how far we've come.

The 1970s: Where it all began

Carrie's Place began as a community organisation, set up by a group of local women who wanted to help support women experiencing domestic violence. Thanks to the efforts of these women and the generosity of community donations, Carrie's Place was able to purchase a property in Maitland which became a women's refuge – and by 1979, Carrie's Place was supporting its first clients.

1991: Our second refuge

With more demand than our original refuge could accommodate, and as a result of community advocacy, this led to NSW Government funding a purpose-built refuge, which was managed by NSW Housing.

2004: Carrie's Place starts growing

Our original refuge was repurposed as our main community access point, the "Resource Centre". This gave us a hub from which we began to offer an increasing number of services, such as case management support, information and safety planning, and social and group programs.

2005: An important new service

Carrie's Place started to assist clients to navigate the legal system, by delivering Court Advocacy Services in partnership with the Community Legal Centre.

2010- 2012: Expanding our reach

In 2010, the Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) Program was launched in the Maitland LGA, thanks to funding from NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice. By 2012, this program was expanded to Cessnock. In this same period, we also created a new role for an Education Support Worker, which was funded by Glencore Mining.

2014: Going Home, Staying Home

We successfully tendered for the expansion of our accommodation and support program to include outreach and transitional accommodation services. This new integrated service was renamed The Lower Hunter Specialist Homelessness Service, and was expanded to reach Maitland, Cessnock and Dungog LGAs.

2016: Adding to our properties

We secured funding for the Domestic Response Enhancement Program (DVRE) from the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice. With this funding we worked with accommodation partners to secure properties in Cessnock, Maitland and Dungog. All three properties are dedicated to providing short-term accommodation for clients who are at high risk due to domestic violence.

2016-2018 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) Local Coordination Point

In 2016, NSW Government under Legal Aid Administration commenced the roll out of the Safer Pathway program under the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children. This meant in 2016 the Hunter Valley WDVCAS began responding to all female victim-survivors of domestic family violence who had a response from the NSW Police in the Hunter Valley Area Command.

The full rollout with associated funding occurred in 2017 including the commencement of the Safety Action Meetings for the Hunter Valley.

2018: Our main office opens its doors

Carrie's Place purchased a building in East Maitland bringing all Carrie's Place teams and services together under one roof – a great moment for all of us. This same year, we also established a new Supported Temporary Accommodation Program in East Maitland in partnership with Hume Housing.

2020: An assertive step

Our newest initiative, an Assertive Outreach program, was established in Cessnock and Dungog.

Expansion of WDVCAS

After a successful tender with Legal Aid for the WDVCAS services, Carrie's Place was able to increase our footprint for the Court Advocacy Services to Port Stephens LGA.

Who is Carrie?

The story of our namesake

Carrie's Place is named after Caroline Chisholm, a legendary civil rights pioneer who arrived in Australia in 1838. Caroline was appalled by the conditions that greeted poor and vulnerable women migrants, and she devoted her life to finding ways to improve the situation. From setting up job schemes to campaigning for better working conditions, Caroline made an impact on the lives of colonial women in many ways.

Among Caroline's many achievements was the establishment of the Female Emigrant's Home in Sydney in 1841, which provided shelter and found employment for young women. She worked to foster independence and resilience among migrants, establishing the Family Colonisation Loan Society to help new arrivals find their feet. In the 1850s, Caroline also successfully lobbied the government in Victoria to provide much-needed accommodation for those seeking work on the goldfields of Bendigo and Ballarat.

Today, Caroline's legacy lives on through the Chisholm Institute, which helps students who are experiencing financial hardship to access education – and she has appeared on Australia's official \$5 note, as well as many stamp collections. And of course, this incredible woman continues to be a true inspiration for our organisation, and a constant reminder of how much can be achieved through vision and determination.

Who we are today - Carrie's Place in 2021

Where we work

The Carrie's Place Head Office is in East Maitland, NSW. However, our reach is much broader – encompassing accommodation and services in Cessnock, Singleton, Dungog and Maitland, and delivering services to the entire Upper and Lower Hunter region.

How we operate

Carrie's Place is an Incorporated Association made up of elected committee members, and all our activities and operations are guided and directed by our Governance Committee. We'd like to thank everyone who has served on this committee over the years and contributed to the strength and growth of the organisation.

Meet our Governance Committee



Alexandra Longbottom

Chair

Alexandra Longbottom joined Carrie's Place Governance Committee in mid 2019 after having volunteered with Carrie's Place conducting legal advice clinics for those affected by homelessness and domestic violence since August 2014.

Currently the Chairperson of the Governance Committee, Alexandra was admitted as a lawyer in July 2014 and currently works in private practice.



Robyn Blackwell

Vice President

Robyn Blackwell joined the committee in late 2020 and was elected Vice President. Robyn has more than 30 years experience working and volunteering in the community sector in youth affairs', child care, aged care and services for women.

With qualifications in psychology and political science, human resources/industrial relations, project management and management, Robyn has worked across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors as a management consultant and more recently as a General Manager in aged care.

Having moved around a lot in the past 20 years Robyn and her family are enjoying Newcastle and the Hunter and contributing to the community.



Clare Cook

Secretary

Clare Cook joined the Governance Committee in October 2019 and has taken up the position of Secretary.

She has extensive experience in accounting and internal auditing and has worked across private industry and higher education.



Jess Salvador

After a career in early childhood education, Jess now works as a strategic planner in local government to support children and families to thrive in their communities. Through this work, Jess chairs one of the local domestic violence committees and also the Hunter Region Domestic Violence Committee.

It is through her work that she has gained an insight into the real issues facing families and how she can advocate for, and help, develop policies and practices which will support vulnerable members of our communities. Jess is passionate about collaborative approaches and developing practices which utilise the strengths of everyone involved.

Jess loves to travel and has recently had her first child and lives with her husband and two fur babies.



Ceci Brieva

Ceci is a hospital social worker in the areas of oncology and palliative care. She enjoys supporting patients and their families, building relationships and working collaboratively within multidisciplinary teams. Ceci graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work Honours and has completed a Master in Counselling.

Ceci started her career as a social worker in Carrie's Place, working in the SHLV program and later moving to the refuge. This experience gave her a chance to see first-hand the great need for support to people experiencing domestic violence and the invaluable service Carrie's Place provides to our community. Ceci is originally from Argentina and moved almost 20 years ago to Australia with her husband and three children.



Emilie Wiggers

With a passion for social justice including women's empowerment, Emilie comes to the board of Carrie's Place eager to see how she may support staff and customers to benefit from an increased quality of life and sense of wellbeing.

Emilie currently works in local government focused on community development in the areas of mental health, homelessness and multiculturalism and enjoys working together with many stakeholders in the community services sector.

Emilie holds a Bachelor of Development Studies including overseas study in politics and cultural science, and a qualification in community engagement with the International Association of Australasia. She brings more than 10 years' experience to the board of Carrie's Place after working first hand on the ground with anti-poverty campaigns, and not-for-profit organisations in mental health, disabilities, and migrant and refugee settlement.

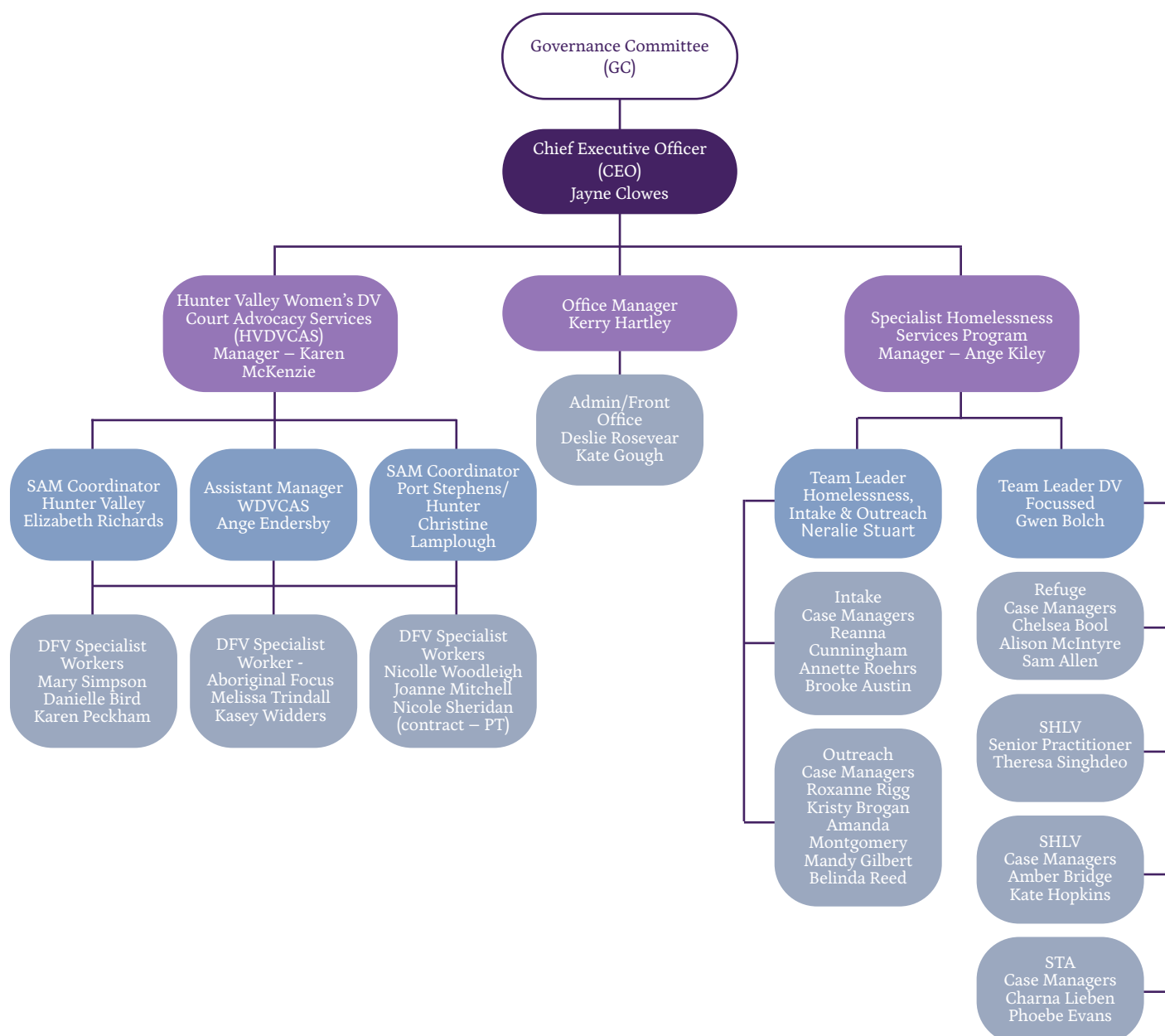
Our dedicated workforce

Carrie's Place currently has a team of 37 staff, one of which is full-time, 34 part-time and two casual staff. We are also fortunate to have the support of volunteers.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident in our team, which brings together people with many different ages, backgrounds and skillsets.

We work closely with the local Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander community and respectfully acknowledge Indigenous Australians past and present as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land on which we live and work.

Organisation structure





Jayne Clowes
CEO

I have now been the CEO at Carrie's Place for more than 12 months. My experience covers roles in a variety of organisations, including state and local government and the not-for-profit sector.

I am an executive, strategic leader, who thrives on challenge and implementing change to ensure we continually improve outcomes for our clients by ensuring we deliver high quality services.

I have an authentic, transparent leadership style and pride myself on utilising a high level of emotional intelligence to be aware of how my approaches influence the way I interact with the variety of people I meet each and every day.

I am a values-based leader, with integrity, accountability, respect and honesty being my core values. Joining Carrie's Place in September 2020 was a new chapter in my career. During the past 12 months, I have been inspired by the dedication, resilience, and commitment of the Carrie's Place workforce, and so humbled by the support from our local community.

I am looking forward to the next 12 months, and completing our strategic plan.



Karen McKenzie
Domestic Violence

I have been developing my organisational leadership skills and knowledge within the community sector for 15 years and have been employed by Carrie's Place as a Program Manager for the past six years in both the Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) and our Specialist Domestic Violence Programs.

The frequent change experienced in this sector, from government policy directions as well as organisational change to support existing and emerging community needs and expectations, have grounded my leadership style and strengths to be adaptive and consultative with a focus on leading with integrity.

During a period of change in my own life, I took a break from the community sector and after six months of working in various industries and rural locations, I came to realise I could not sate my passion to support women and families achieve independent and safe futures anywhere else but, in a community-led and supported organisation such as Carrie's Place.



Ange Kiley

Homelessness

With a background in community development in regional and remote NSW, my passion for social justice was actualised, particularly for women and children experiencing domestic violence and the Aboriginal community. I am a compassionate, inclusive, innovative and authentic leader who thrives in an environment where I am challenged and can make a difference.

I came to Carrie's Place in 2010 to complete work placement and in early 2011 successfully applied for a paid position. I have now worked for Carrie's Place for 10 years and have seen many changes. In 2011, I was employed as the first and only Stay Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) Program Case Manager. At the time there were 13 staff across the WDVAS, Accommodation Support Program (including the Women and Children's Refuge) and The Resource Centre. After three-and-a-half years with the SHLV program, I moved to the Specialist Homelessness Service Outreach team following the successful tender as part of the GHSH reforms.

In 2015, I returned to the refuge as Co-ordinator of the accommodation program which had expanded to include a number of transitional properties and the DVRE program. This role changed and evolved over time and I oversaw the Staying Home Leaving Violence program and Supported Temporary Accommodation program. In early 2021, I moved into the Specialist Homeless Service Program Manager role and am now responsible for a team of 20 highly skilled and dedicated staff. My initial passion for working with women and children who have experienced domestic violence has grown and now includes a deeper understanding and compassion for homelessness.

This work is both challenging and rewarding. I have had the privilege of being part of the stories of many clients and staff members and look forward to continuing to be part of the important work that our organisation does in the community and the continuous improvement of Carrie's Place.

Program highlights

What we do, how we do it, and the impact we have

Carrie's Place currently offers a range of services and programs, all designed to support those experiencing domestic violence and/or homelessness. In this section, we've explained each service or program, and provided some insight into the impact they've had this year.

Individual program highlights

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV)

Established in 2010, the SHLV program provides support to women who have experienced domestic or family violence. The goal is to help these women live in a home of their choice, free of violence.

SHLV is funded by NSW Department of Communities and Justice, and is available to women in Maitland and Cessnock LGAs.

SHLV is a holistic program that allows women to access a whole range of services, with a Case Manager coordinating the various processes and providers. We know that domestic violence situations are often very complex – and through SHLV, we are able to offer legal, financial, practical, emotional and psychological support.

Safety is also a big focus, with safety planning, information and equipment all provided as part of the program. A highlight in 2021 was purchasing technology that allows us to sweep for listening devices and GPS trackers – increasing our capacity to keep clients safe.

“The person who uses the violence is responsible for their violence. If anyone leaves the home it should be them.”



The impact of SHLV in 2021

- 257 clients
- 115 safety audits
- 92 safety upgrades
- 21.5% of clients were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (up from 16.3% from last year)
- 6 CALD clients

Breakdown of clients



18 - 25 years

13%



26 - 55 years

68%



56+ years

19%



Case study

One woman's SHLV story

2021 was the third year Carrie's Place worked with Lani*, a 25-year old woman with cognitive impairment, who'd experienced multiple sexual assaults and fallen pregnant as a result. Lani's abuser had then moved in with her and her mother, and the abuse escalated.

When Lani came to Carrie's Place with her mother, she was initially fearful and nervous, but she gained trust in her Case Manager as they worked together to undertake safety planning and upgrades. Lani's Case Manager also played a critical role in helping her give evidence to the police and handling court proceedings.

Lani's abuser was initially charged and arrested, and issued with an interim Apprehended Violence Order (AVO), before going to trial. Lani's Case Manager was there every step of the way – for multiple case conferences, helping Lani prepare for cross-examination, and, throughout the trial. While the abuser was found not guilty, the AVO was granted for two years.

On top of the legal assistance, Lani's Case Manager completed a Primary Victim Application on her behalf, and Lani's was approved for \$10,000. She has since attended regular Victim Services counselling, and has been approved for a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package for further support.

"As challenging as this case was, it was a good outcome," says Lani's Case Manager. "I noticed that Lani became empowered, strong and confident over the time we worked together. She absolutely wanted to keep her baby, report the abuse to the police, and hold her abuser accountable.

"She understood that it would be very difficult but wanted to tell the truth about what happened. Both Lani and her mother were so happy and relieved that Lani was believed and acknowledged that the domestic violence and sexual assaults had happened.

"I saw her grow during this experience ... she still has some struggles but overall, she's moving on and getting the support she needs."

According to police feedback: "SHLV had been such a great support for their client and made the police's job so much easier. The matter would not have proceeded in court without the client having so much support from SHLV."

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Individual program highlights

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)

Homelessness is one of the key issues that Carrie's Place was set up to address – and we do so via our SHS. These services support women, men, children, and families who are homeless, or at risk of losing their home.

SHS encompasses the Lower Hunter Specialist Homelessness Services, and Supported Temporary Accommodation programs, as well as our SHLV program.

2021 has been a big year for all these programs, and our team of 20 plus has worked hard to deliver services across Maitland, Cessnock and Dungog LGAs.

Lower Hunter Specialist Homelessness Services

Funded by the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice, Lower Hunter SHS supports people in a whole range of ways – from providing crisis and transitional accommodation, to advocating with real estate agents and landlords.

- Currently, our accommodation includes: Carrie's Place refuge, which can accommodate up to six large families at a time. Clients are provided with onsite, intensive support including parenting, mental health, financial and material aid with the ultimate goal to transition into medium to long-term accommodation.
- Transitional accommodation: we have five units for single women in partnership with Compass Housing and a three-bedroom home in partnership with Pacific Link Housing in the Maitland area. Women and families can stay in these properties for up to 12 months and receive case management support whilst building a rental history to increase their chances of success in the private rental market.
- Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE): we have properties to provide short-term accommodation for clients at high risk of domestic violence: one in Cessnock (provided in partnership with Compass Housing), one in Maitland (provided in partnership with EASTS Bowling Club) and one in Dungog (provided by a generous community member). Here, women receive intensive support to stay safe and are supported into medium to long-term accommodation.

Outreach services

Outreach services have been part of the Carrie's Place service delivery since 2014. We do this in partnership with Samaritans Information and Neighbourhood Centre (SINC) in Cessnock – with Carrie's Place staff attending SINC twice a week to provide initial assessments, information, advice, referrals and support. We also provide valuable outreach services to Maitland Neighbourhood centre.

This year, we were also delighted to reach an agreement with Hunter New England Health to deliver our outreach services from Dungog Hospital, allowing us to reach more vulnerable people across the community.

Supported Temporary Accommodation programs

Delivered in partnership with Hume Housing, this is an expansion of the current temporary accommodation model that provides short-term accommodation to people who are homeless, have nowhere to stay short-term and are needing intensive support to find medium to long-term accommodation. Our temporary accommodation facility can accommodate up to three families and two single people or couples at a time.

Case Management

Each SHS client has a dedicated Case Manager who helps identify their support needs and achieve their goals. Our Case Managers are highly skilled, and support clients to overcome barriers that have resulted from domestic violence and trauma.

Case Managers assist clients to achieve independent, long term sustainable accommodation and meet their goals. They help provide everything from information and advice to emotional and financial support, applications for Victims Services, housing and funding, and referral for parenting, NDIS, mental health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) support.



The impact of SHS in 2021

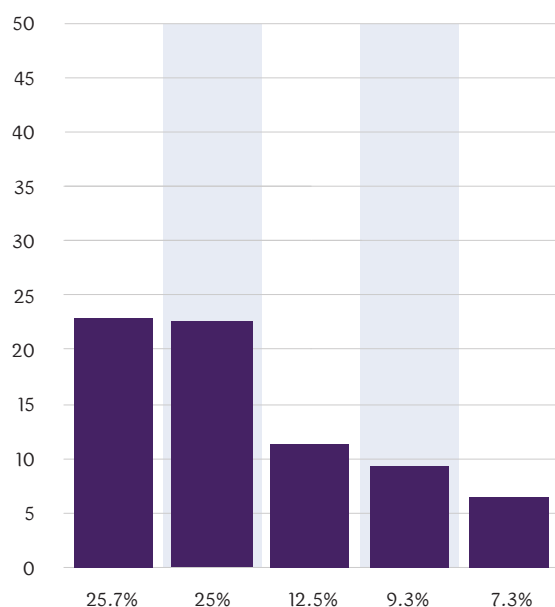
- 847 clients supported
- 30% increase from last year (590 clients in 2020)
- 25.5% of clients were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 50% homeless / 50% at-risk of homelessness



Breakdown of clients

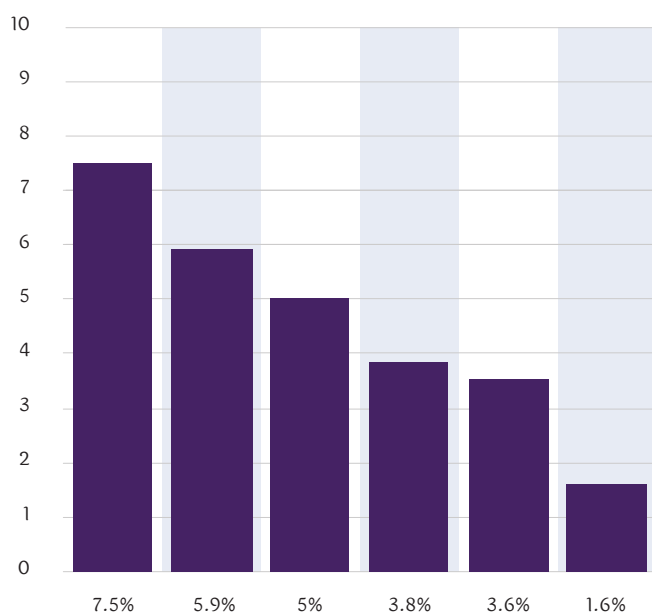
- Single women – 58.8%
- Single men – 14%
- Young people – 11.3%
- Families – 15.8%

Main reasons for seeking assistance in order of frequency



- 25.7% Domestic violence
- 25% Housing crisis
- 12.5% Itinerant
- 9.3% Lack of family and/or community support
- 7.3% Inadequate or inappropriate living conditions

Other/additional reasons for seeking assistance



- 7.5% Mental health issues
- 5.9% Relationship or family breakdown
- 5% Previous accommodation ended
- 3.8% Medical issues
- 3.6% Unemployment
- 1.6% Problem drug or substance use

Case study

Carrie's Place takes a holistic approach to support

Karen* came to Carrie's Place with a significant history of domestic violence and trauma. A mother of three, she'd been in a 12-year relationship, during which she'd experienced emotional, verbal, physical, psychological and financial abuse. She was isolated, belittled and berated on a daily basis – and had no rental history, no access to transport, and no family support.

After an initial stay in a refuge, Karen and her children were transitioned into one of Carrie's Place DVRE properties. From there, our team got her accepted into the Hume Housing Carinya program, where Hume Housing would take responsibility of her lease for three years. Karen's home was set up with help from Carrie's Place, as well as Kurri Kurri Women's Shed, Beresfield Rotary and GBYS who donated furniture and other essentials.

Since moving into her new home in April 2021, Karen has had the security to focus on the complex needs of her family and work towards rebuilding and strengthening the bond with her children. Karen was referred to Victim Services to access counselling, and support.

Given the issues Karen had with her ex-partner's volatile, controlling behaviour and his alcoholism, Carrie's Place also arranged legal support through our partners at Harper's Legal, and a Dispute Resolution Conference was held. Since Karen's ex-partner refused to agree to regular hair follicle drug screening, he will have no contact with the children until a final court hearing, at which Karen aims to get full custody. Harper's Legal support is ongoing.

The needs of Karen's children were also an important part of this story. Her two school-aged children had not been engaged with school but have since enrolled and attended regularly. Meanwhile, Carrie's Place staff identified concerns around the development of Karen's youngest child, who was non-verbal at the age of four. With the support of Carrie's Place, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding was applied for and approved for this child, and he is now receiving intensive support from an early intervention educator through Early Links.

When asked if she'd be willing to share her story, Karen said she'd be happy to do so, as she wanted others to know that they too can change their lives and live free of domestic violence.

"When me and my family first arrived at refuge at Carrie's Place it was a bit scary knowing that I have children with disabilities and have just come out of a bad domestic violence relationship," she said. "But as soon as we arrived, the staff were so lovely and made us feel more comfortable in our new surroundings. The amount of support they have given my family was outstanding and I couldn't thank them enough for all that they have done. We are now in our own home thanks to Carrie's Place and Hume Housing ... my family is much happier than we could ever think was possible, and my kids are finally getting the help they need. We couldn't be happier. Thank you."

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Individual program highlights

Assertive Outreach

A new addition to our line-up of service, Assertive Outreach is enabling us to fund essential items for our clients – including sleeping bags, tents, phones and food vouchers from Cessnock Leagues Club.

We work with SoupzOn, who provide meals several times per week to people who are sleeping rough. Carrie's Place staff now attend SoupzOn weekly to provide initial assessment, information, advice referrals and support – with follow-up support provided by SINC.

The impact of outreach in 2021

The Assertive Outreach project so far has supported more than 232 people across 32 occasions of attendance at SOUPzOn.



Case study

Turning life around after eight years of homelessness

David* had been living with his grandfather but when he passed away, David suddenly found himself without a roof over his head. For the next eight years, he slept rough at places such as Drain Oval and Turner Park, using methadone and battling with an ICE addiction.

When our Cessnock Assertive Outreach team made contact with David, he had been picked up by the police and was facing a hearing in three days' time. We worked to arrange urgent assessment and approval of a legal grant for David and arranged a Solicitor.

Not only did David's Solicitor negotiate a good behaviour bond for David, rather than a jail sentence, he secured an extension of David's curfew hours so he could attend SoupzOn without breaching his bail conditions.

Our team helped David with a number of practical things to get him back on his feet – securing his birth certificate, arranging a mobile phone and credit, and getting pre-approval for a Rent Start Bond Loan. David was offered a Compass Housing property – the first time in a long time he's had a place to call home.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.



Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS)

The NSW Government through Legal Aid funds and oversees 27 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) operating across the state. In 2021, Carrie's Place is responsible for delivering services in the Hunter region. It was the first year of our four-year funding agreement, which also meant that we could expand our services to Port Stephens LGA. We are grateful to our community partners in the region for making the transition as smooth as possible.

We do this via two WDVCAS Local Coordination Points (LCPs), which align with local police districts: Hunter Valley LCP (which covers Cessnock, Singleton, Muswellbrook LGAs and the Upper Hunter Shire areas of Scone, Merriwa, and Murrurundi) and Port Stephens-Hunter LCP (which covers Maitland, Dungog and Port Stephens LGAs).

Safety Action Meetings (SAMs)

These meetings are held fortnightly for both our LCPs, these meetings are attended by key government and non-government services with the aim to share targeted information to develop tailored, time-specific safety action plans to reduce threat.

This year, 557 of the 4861 DFV incidents referred from police were flagged as "serious threats", with indicators that the woman and/or her children's life, health or safety was at grave risk due to domestic and family violence, and urgent action was needed to prevent or lessen this threat.

A further 44 referrals received from external services/support networks were flagged as "serious threat" and discussed at a SAM.



The role of WDVCAS is to provide women with a range of support services, including:

- Threat assessment and safety planning
- Case coordination
- Referrals for support
- Information
- Court advocacy and support, and
- Liaison and female client representation at cross agency coordinated Safety Action Meetings.

The impact of WDVCS in 2021

This year we received:

- 4861 referrals from NSW Police of DFV incidents involving a female victim-survivor.
- 79 referrals from other services/support networks.
- 55 self-referrals from women experiencing DFV.

From these referrals, our team contacted and supported 2137 women.

1100 of these women identified having children under the age of 16 years in their care. A total of 2269 children under 16 years old were impacted by DFV incidents.

Breakdown of clients



12.96%

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait
Islander



2.57%

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



10.25%

Living with a disability



1.12%

LGBTIQA+

Services provided

487 At court – mention and hearing support

1073 ADVO/APVO information before

344 Court process information

188 After court information/referral

54 Hearing preparation and information

697 Advocacy

803 Safety assessments – DVSAT

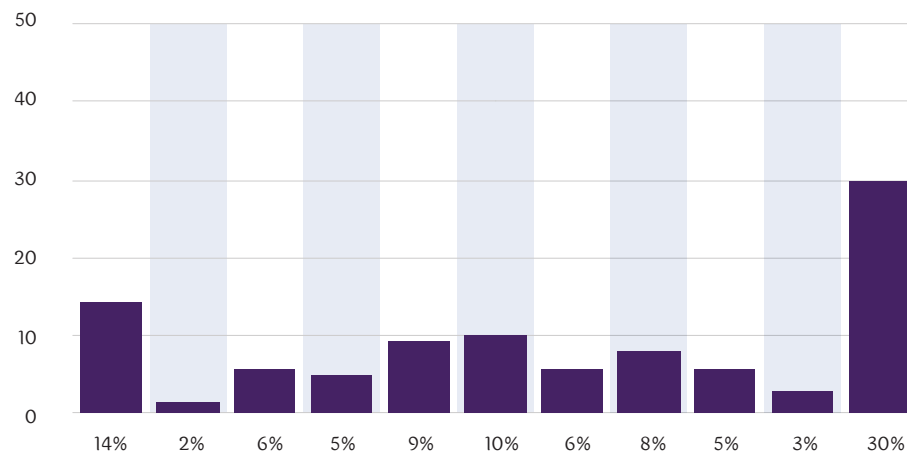
405 Child protection assessment

3235 General and other service information

1990 Safety Action Meeting – information,
preparation, and follow up

1554 Other – referrals provided

Referrals



14% Helpline / app / online assistance

2% Mental health services

6% Victims services

5% Legal

9% Other

10% Police

6% Accommodation options

8% Community support service

5% Counselling

3% Court services

30% General referral information

Total referrals = **5602**

Case Study

How one SAM had a life-changing impact

Annie*, a woman with two young children, had originally contacted the police when she was assaulted by her partner following an argument. Her case was raised in a SAM and given the nature of the violence and threat indicators (and the fact the police had already been involved five times previously), her situation was flagged as posing a “serious threat”.

When a SAM Coordinator couldn't reach Annie by phone within 24 hours of the referral, they worked with the police to determine the whereabouts of the perpetrator. Finding that he was being held in custody for two days, the SAM Coordinator had time to make contact with Annie and ensure her and her children's safety.

Liaising with relevant services, the SAM Coordinator arranged temporary accommodation for Annie and her children in a hotel until the ADVO and domestic violence related charges were taken to local court. The perpetrator was granted conditional bail with restrictions not to enter the area.

Since then, the SAM Coordinator has worked with Specialist Homelessness Services and two other service providers to secure long term housing for Annie and her children, as well as help with transport, food, and health and wellbeing products.

Quote of an excellent example of why we have Safety Action Meetings:

“By receiving an automatic referral from police which is flagged at significant threat allowed a quick and coordinated response between multiple agencies. We were able to ensure the safety of our client and her children, removing them from a situation where the risk could have been life threatening.”

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Partnerships highlights

Working together for greater outcomes

As in past years, 2021 saw Carrie's Place team up with several other organisations whose values and mission align with our own.

Together, we were able to run a number of different programs, all aiming to benefit our community in different ways. We'd like to thank these partners. Through collaboration, we've been able to accomplish things we simply could not have done alone.

Path 2 change



Path 2 Change (P2C) is a non-for-profit organisation that provides support to vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Newcastle and Hunter region impacted by homelessness. This year, we worked with P2C on a new initiative to give our clients a new kind of one-on-one support.

This initiative was part of a successful grant application funded by the Federal Government and allocated by NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice. This program was triggered by the recognition that COVID-19 has caused even greater disadvantage to some clients, reducing their abilities to access employment and other opportunities. In response, a P2C Case Manager had started working with Carrie's Place clients to address these issues.

Through the P2C partnership, our clients were given access to a unique "life skills" program which involves workshops focused on job readiness, confidence, and the ability to manage day to day issues such as finances, presentation, mental health, and relationships. The P2C Case Worker also gives clients one-on-one support in everything from writing resumes to job search and applications.

Since the program began in April 2021, it has already empowered 21 of our clients to take back control of their lives and find employment – and as a consequence, reduce their likelihood of returning to domestic violence relationships or homelessness.

Hume Community Housing

Hume Community Housing provides homes and services to more than 9000 customers across NSW.

Throughout 2021, Carrie's Place once again worked closely with Hume Community Housing – a like-minded organisation that shares our commitment to providing safe housing and support to vulnerable clients. There's a clear link between domestic and family violence and homelessness and this reinforces why cross-organisational partnerships like the one between Carrie's Place and Hume are essential.

Through our partnership, Carrie's Place clients can access Hume's Temporary Accommodation Program plus, specialist domestic violence support so they can remain safely housed and secure stable housing in the longer term. Importantly, both organisations understand the time sensitivity that is present in domestic violence situations, and work to find solutions swiftly.

The Carinya Program

Our strong partnership with Hume Housing has led to the Carinya program. Through this program, clients who have experienced domestic violence are supported into a rental property. Hume Housing initially lease the properties and Carrie's Place provide case management support for up to two years. The hoped for outcome is to have the lease signed over to the client. We have had some wonderful outcomes from this partnership.



Case study

Short term accommodation makes a long term difference

Shay* came into Short Term Accommodation (STA) in early September 2021, after completing a detox from alcohol at the Mater Hospital. While Shay had previously rented her own home, she'd struggled to keep up with the rent, as her mental health (borderline personality disorder) affected her ability to maintain a steady job.

Given that Shay entered STA at the start of lockdown, it was tricky to arrange access for in-person support workers. However, she received regular phone calls from mental health and drug & alcohol support workers – and she was encouraged to contact the Mental Health Support line if she ever needed someone to talk to.

Our team provided Shay with a tenancy facilitation pack and rent start bond loan application, and advocated on her behalf with Hume when a suitable property became available. Shay was offered the property and signed the lease about a week later. Her entire time in STA was under one month.

Shay is now doing well, loves her new home, and is looking to get a cat over the next few months for some company. She would like to thank everyone who supported her during her time in STA and beyond.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Compass Housing

Our partnership with Compass Housing has continued to be invaluable in the past 12 months. With Compass Housing recently opening an office in Cessnock, we are able to collaborate more closely and effectively to support our Cessnock clients through outreach services.

Compass Housing continues to provide critical accommodation in the form of transitional housing, short-term accommodation and affordable housing, as well as delivering housing products for disadvantaged people who have difficulties sourcing adequate housing.

We're very grateful for our relationship with Compass, which keeps growing from strength to strength.



PAWS

When pet owners flee domestic violence, it can be extra challenging for both the people and animals involved. This year, Carrie's Place was pleased to start helping to address this issue via new partnerships with Lochinvar Pet Motel and East Maitland Veterinary Clinic. We'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to both these new partners.

The project, which we call DV PAWS, supports the pets of domestic violence survivors in many ways, from providing short term accommodation, to essential vet services such as vaccination, microchipping and desexing. In doing so, PAWS helps protect animal welfare, and makes it possible for pets and owners to be reunited in a new home where they're safe from violence. PAWS was initiated from a successful grant application from NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice called "DFV PAWS"



Communities
& Justice



Cut it out

Research shows that one of the places where domestic violence is most commonly disclosed is in the hairdresser's chair. Carrie's Place welcomed the opportunity to partner with other organisations to empower hairdressers to respond in a positive way if this happens in their salon. So, on 19 October 2020, we took part in an event to help do just that.

The afternoon tea event, called Cut it Out, took place at Kirkton Park partnering with a number of organisations through the Cessnock Domestic and Family Violence network including Cessnock Family Support, Cessnock Council, Samaritans Neighbourhood Clinic, and the HNEH Young Parent Network Social Worker.

The aim of the program was to educate hairdressers and other salon professionals around safe responses and available supports when a client discloses domestic or family violence. It was inspired by a pilot program called 'Hair-3Rs', (Recognise, Respond and Refer) which was launched in January 2018 in Victoria. This event was funded by Legal Aid NSW through the Hunter Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD).

We had 21 attendees, and all said that they gained valuable knowledge from the training, including around the different types of abuse – and all said they felt more confident in how to recognise and respond to abuse as a result.



Team Highlights

Keeping calm and carrying on through COVID-19

As well as maintaining all our regular services, the Carrie's Place team has had a busy year internally. The past 12 months has seen us embark on a journey to review and redefine our values – a process that's sparked some worthwhile discussions and exciting ideas. We look forward to sharing our new values in next year's report.

Carrie's Place has also embarked on a Culture and Leadership Program facilitated by Collective Courage, Anna Ranaldo. Collective Courage believe in Your Leadership, Your Courage and Your Community.



Some highlights from the Culture and Leadership Program have been:

Culture & Leadership Development

In 2021 Carrie's Place embarked on three key initiatives to create a more courageous and accountable work culture where everyone can bring their best. These initiatives included a culture survey and staff focus groups, leadership development program, and a review of Carrie's Place values. This work remains ongoing. Key outcomes to date include:

Q1 Culture survey

- High survey engagement with 95% of workforce participating
- 100% of staff report a sense of purpose and 80% feel proud to work at Carrie's Place
- 73% reported they still feel unsafe to share openly/trust in middle leadership
- 40% were unclear on Carrie's Place strategic goals/vision
- 45% indicated a retention risk (within two years)
- 2022+ areas of focus: communicating strategy, improving leadership capability, imbedding Carrie's Place values within systems and culture to drive accountability, trust and create a more inclusive culture.

Q2- Q3 Leadership development

Delivered by independent consultancy Collective Courage, the culture survey and subsequent staff focus groups reported strong support and trust in the CEO's executive leadership: "Jayne is a breath of fresh air" and "Jayne shows compassion and is being vocal about change".

In Q2, the Leadership Team commenced a leadership program based on the work of Dr Brenè Browns Dare to Lead™ curriculum. This work is designed to upskill leaders in the skills of courage namely:

- Managing vulnerability
- Operationalising values
- Building trust
- Rising from setbacks

Based on staff survey feedback, further leadership development is planned to equip leaders with the skills to provide coaching, supervision and difficult feedback.

Q3 – Q4 Carrie's Place values

In Q3, all leaders and staff participated in workshops to develop an agreed set of Carrie's Place values. Working with a graphic artist, staff identified specific behaviours which they will commit to in order to bring Carrie's Place values to life within their own teams and the broader community. Further Q4 integration work is planned to test the draft values with Carrie's Place key community stakeholders and to align these with HR processes of; onboarding, training and performance appraisals.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

This year has also seen progress made towards the development of a Carrie's Place RAP. Discussions first began back in August 2019 at the 'Make it Happen, Make it Matter' meeting – and this led to a series of further meetings.

We are pleased to announce the theme for our RAP will be WOLA MALONG, which means “walk together”. Our draft RAP was submitted to Reconciliation Australia early this year, and we look forward to refining it further before launch (anticipated to be late 2021).

To celebrate our RAP, we are proud to have commissioned a beautiful artwork by local indigenous artist, Saretta Fielding. Saretta is a Wonnarua woman of the Upper Hunter through her grandmother, and an Anaiwan woman of the New England area through her grandfather. She has lived in NSW her entire life and has strong connections across the country. Saretta's deep love of culture, country and community is reflected in her work – which reflects the style of traditional sand engravings found throughout the Wonnarua country.

As well as being a successful artist and designer, Saretta is a board member and CEO of Yarnteen, and founder of not-for-profit organisation, Malang Indigenous Corporation.

“In my artwork, I aim to evoke emotion, enhance connection to spirit and country, and invite the viewer to ponder and experience something new.” – Saretta Fielding



NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week for Carrie's Place in 2020 was celebrated on 18 November 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Carrie's Place held a team building activity – which was facilitated by Speaking in Colour. This activity was basket weaving.

All the team embraced the challenge of basket weaving – some found it easier than others and enjoyed learning the history of basket weaving. We all had a great day. Thank you Speaking in Colour.

Photographs are of two members of staff basket weaving, and a framed picture of all the collective baskets completed on the day.



**HEAL
COUNTRY!**
4-11 JULY 2021



Kurri Kurri High School

A small group of Carrie's Place staff attended Kurri Kurri Public High School to present to an education group of 30 male students from years 8 to 10. This group, called Real Man Project, describes their single goal as: "To change the culture of disrespect and create a future that is free of domestic violence in the Kurri Kurri community by promoting respectful relationships".

Carrie's Place staff members provided a demonstration of the experience of domestic violence and the issues associated with this through a case scenario rolled played by presenters and students.

We also recreated a Safety Action Meeting to provide understanding of the community responses. The students participated in this simulation by suggesting actions that would assist the case discussed.

We concluded with ideas about how each member of our community may alleviate the issue of domestic violence. A few days later, The Real Man Project organised a school fundraising event on White Ribbon Day where they collected \$700. The students decided to donate half of what they fundraised to Carrie's Place.





Carrie's Place clients show their appreciation

Here's what a few of our clients had to say about their experiences with our team this year.

"Brooke has been a godsend to me and my little girl. I highly recommend this service and people just like Brooke. Thank you so much for your help and support." – SHLV client

"Kristy is a fantastic worker and I don't know what I'd have done without her. Just yesterday, Kristy sat with me for four hours during an NCAT assessment, and provided me with amazing support." – SHS client

"Thank you for the support provided to my daughter by Carrie's Place. She came to you a broken woman, and your kindness will always be remembered. The patience, guidance and respect you showed her allowed her to make difficult decisions and ensured she could continue to move forwards in her life." – Refugee client's next of kin

"Once again thank you for everything your team did to assist us in getting into our home. Everything is going well and we are settling in slowly. I have organised the kids' schooling and the twins will still have their drivers for transport so can return after the holidays. I know you will say you are just doing your job but some people (like you) are very special people that leave lasting impressions on others (like me)." – SHS client

"Thank you very much to all who helped me. Because of you, I have a new life again. Carrie's Place helps people to start their lives again. I will never forget the kindness of the people at Carries Place." – Refugee client

"I just wanted to say a huge big THANK YOU...!!! for this detailed reply you gave me. You totally went above and beyond to deliver me all the information and assistance available to me in one of the most difficult emotional times. All your information and help you provided me was absolutely wonderful and such a great help for me during that time." – WDVCS client

Sponsors and supporters

A big thank you

At Carrie's Place, we couldn't do what we do without the help of our generous volunteers, sponsors and donors. To everyone who has supported us this year – thank you.

To our volunteers

We are fortunate to have had several long-standing volunteers at Carrie's Place, including the wonderful Janette Johns, Joyce Fisher, and Rose Bennis. Rose has just retired after many years of offering her volunteer support to Carrie's Place and is now taking a well-earned rest.

"I'm a grandmother of four girls, and I want them to grow up in a safe community. I love Carrie's Place and the good they do for the women and children. Volunteering lets me support the staff so they can help other women and children in our community going through tough times. So, I feel good, like I am doing my best to create a safer place for my granddaughters as well as other women and children in our community." – Janette Johns (Jan)

Carrie's Place would also like to thank Jennifer Conn for her support and guidance over the past several months. Jennifer is a qualified accountant and has been supporting the organisation to bring our accounts functions back in house at Carrie's Place.

Below is a photograph of Rose Bennis retiring and Carrie's Place presenting Rose with some flowers to show our appreciation.



To our sponsors

A big thank you and heartfelt acknowledgment to our sponsors that continue to support Carrie's Place.

- Kis Marketing – assist Carrie's Place with our branding, website development and social media platforms.
- Words by Nuance – helped Carrie's Place completing this year's annual report.
- Jennings Print – Jennings Print have been sponsors of Carrie's Place for many years and sponsor us with the production of business cards, signage and publications etc.
- East Maitland Bowling Club – provide a property for our Maitland DVRE service and assist us with meeting rooms and catering at extremely low prices
- Haggarty's Real Estate – long time sponsor who are extremely generous for our Christmas hampers with purchasing food items and Christmas goodies, but also assist us with tenancy opportunities for our clients
- Marvel Realty – a new partnership which is working extremely well, assisting with finding rental properties for our clients as part of the Kick Start Program.

Another huge thank you to Multiplex Construction who, during the new Maitland Hospital build, chose Carrie's Place as their charity of choice. Their massive fundraising effort raised more than \$300,000 for Carrie's Place. We have quarantined this money, and are making plans to put it towards bricks and mortar for a presence in the Cessnock LGA.



To our donors

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude for the commitment of our employees, volunteers, and community members for the large amount of donations received in cash and/or goods via a range of activities. We have captured the names of all our donors below, but apologies to anyone we have missed, as some of our donations are received anonymously or sometimes the donor is difficult to identify.

Thank you to the following donors for your support in 2020/21

- Chase Edwards
- Nicholas O'Brien (recurring monthly)
- Kerrie Basha
- Anna Hughes
- Zoe Smith
- Bernadette Tisdell
- Maitland City Bowls, Sport & Recreation Club
- Shimmy Mob
- Janet Lambourn
- Koji Nishimoto
- Elisabeth Berry
- Catherine Berry
- John Starling
- Erin Gilhuly
- Amber Schmarr
- Michael Hake
- Michael Tranter – Tranter Lawyers
- Ladies Long Lunch
- John Bronger – Chemistworks
- Dr Robert Vickers
- Larissa Young
- Skip Rope Yarn Co
- Larry Jongbloed
- Jasmyn Johnston
- Amber Clarke
- Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers
- John Sharpe
- Sophie Littler
- Mark Bergamo
- Lorraine Clarke
- Li-En Diong
- Cherylanne Williams
- Glenda Searles & Rotary Club East Maitland
- Nerida Smith
- Grant Killen
- Rebecca Palmer
- Kelly Rutherford
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- Olivia Greentree
- John Millburn
- Bronwyn Williams
- Leanne Willmott
- Vanessa Morse
- Jeanine Ray
- Susan McCleverty
- Margaret Johnson Foundation
- Kirsten Mulley
- Anne Clarke
- Adam Jackel
- Vijay Randev
- Heidi Court
- Leonie Hanly
- William Arnold
- Jeremy Dunlop

During COVID-19 it's been difficult to organise community engagement and fundraising activities. However, the community still pull together and support us, responding in many ways to assist, especially for stocking up our pantry shelves of food. As always, we have received numerous donations of food, blankets, and toiletries.

Lastly, we'd like to thank the numerous people that follow us on social media, and those who reach out to help and support us whenever they can. Hopefully we have acknowledged this support via our Facebook posts "Thank you Thursdays".

Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be part of the huge community spirit and support which is offered to Carrie's Place.



What's next?

Looking ahead to 2022, we are excited about a number of exciting projects at Carrie's Place.

We will be launching our RAP late 2021, and we are all looking forward to having our commitment for reconciliation formalised.

The review of Carrie's Place values will be embedded into the organisation, and we will be reaching out to our external stakeholders and sponsors for their input and feedback.

Our community hub is now taking shape, this has been funded by a range of different community and Club Grants, this will be launched early 2022.

Our refuge is also getting a face lift, including the demountable unit, which will also provide much needed accommodation to safely house a family escaping domestic violence. This is thanks to a successful COVID-19 infrastructure grant application from Women's NSW.

We will also continue to strengthen our partnerships with our local real estate agencies.





Domestic Violence and Homelessness Services

carriesplace.org.au