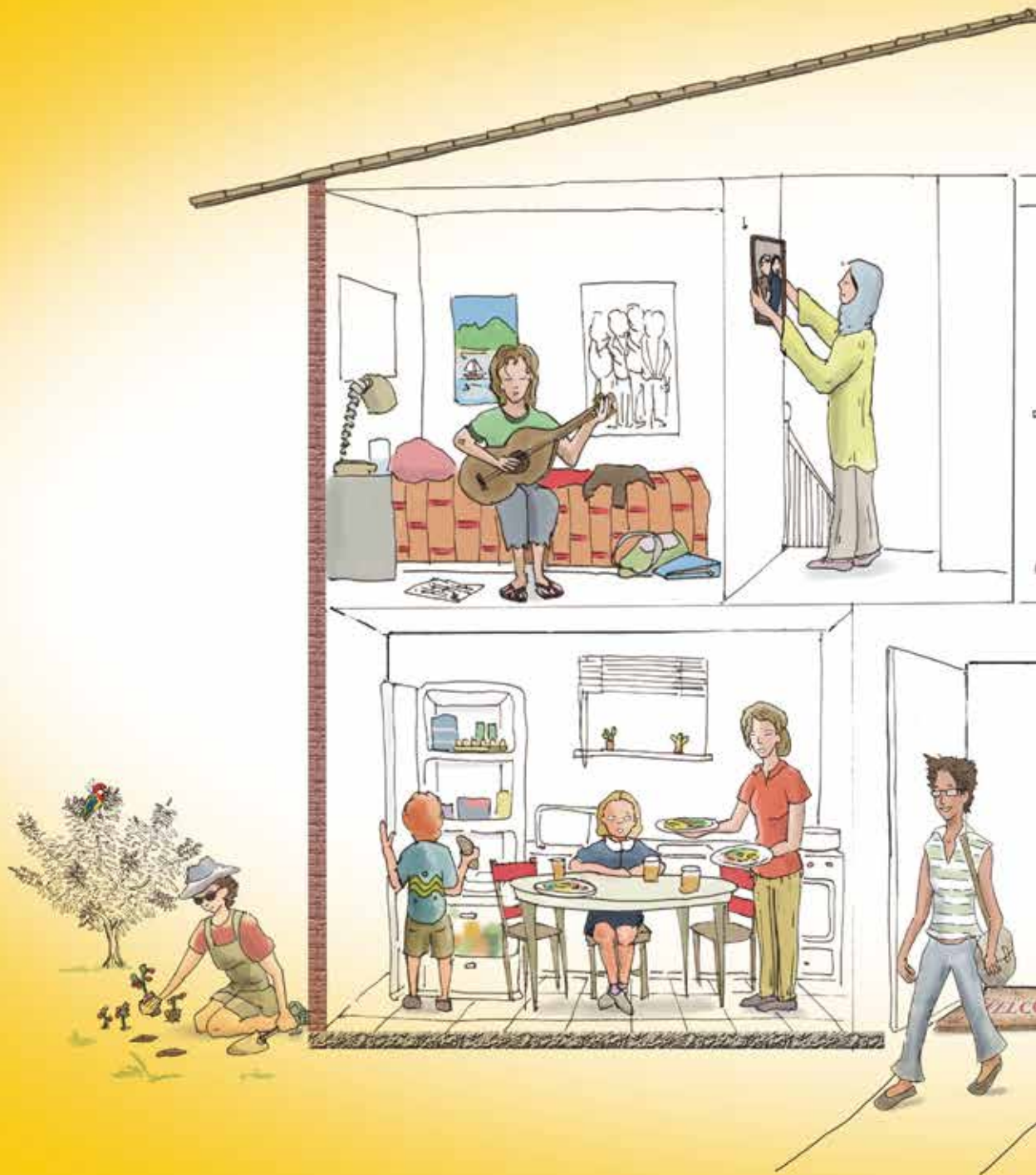


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Annual Report 2014-15
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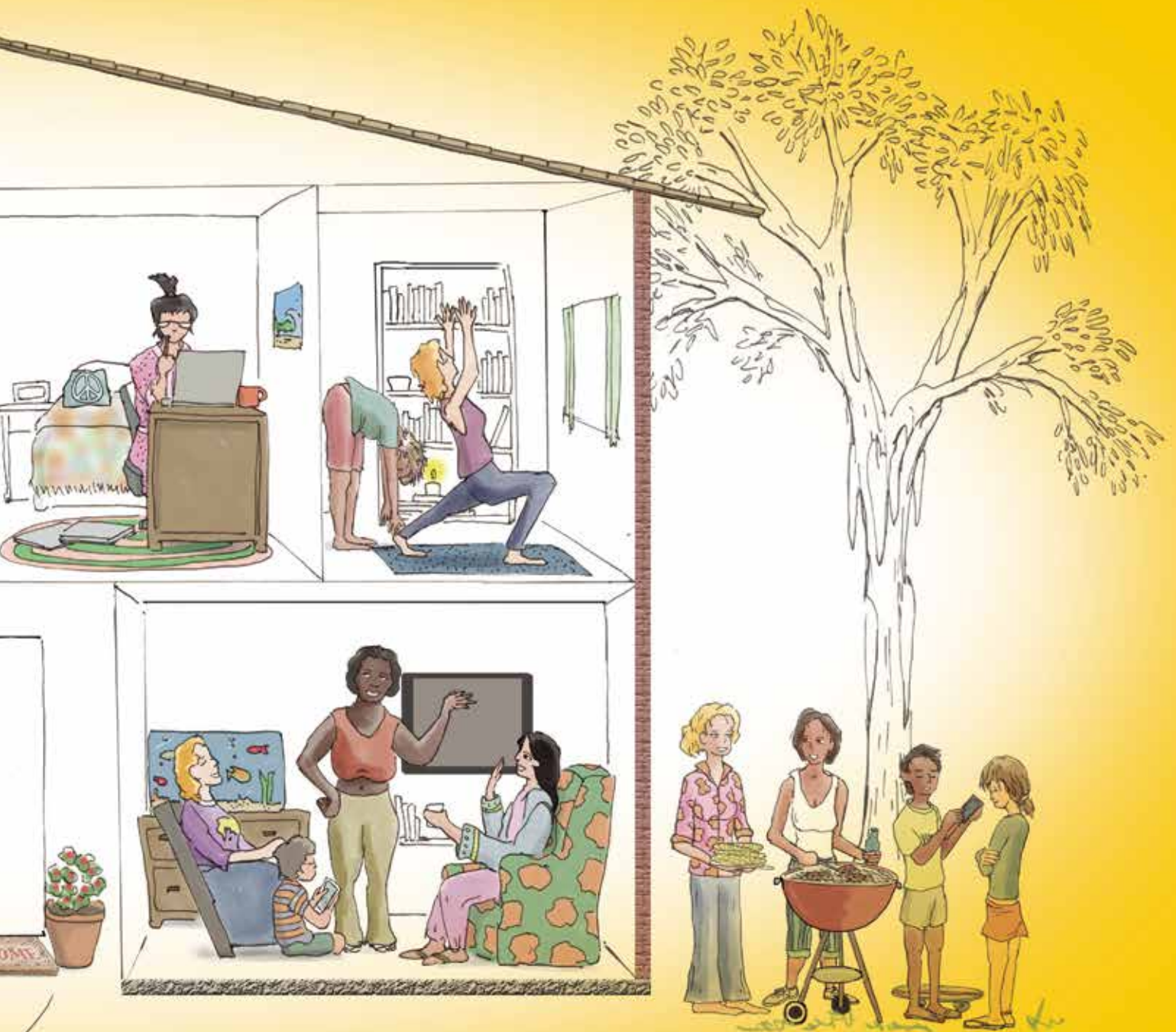


Bonnie
Support Services

by women and with women



OUR MISSION Support women with children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence and/or are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



Bonnie Support Services Ltd works to enhance women's skills, knowledge and capacities through the provision of information, referral, case management, supported housing and independent living enabling women to make informed choices and enhance their opportunities to participate in social, economic and cultural life and activities in the community. Bonnie's also supports women to develop supportive and trusting relationships, self-management skills and accountability thus enhancing confidence and independent living skills.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Bonnie's operates within a feminist philosophy with an unshakeable belief that women and children have the right to be safe and access services which enable them to be autonomous, independent and self-determining.

The Bonnie's commitment is based on the principles of social justice, equity and provides:

- > An environment which values each person's right to be heard
- > An environment which acknowledges the importance of their stories
- > A professional quality service that facilitates reciprocal learning, respects differences, recognizes and supports each person's knowledge, experience and the right to self determination
- > Information and referral, clinical assessment, case planning and management, group work and advocacy to enable women and their children to access their rights and entitlements
- > Services in a manner that is flexible and respectful of each person's cultural background, language and religious beliefs



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Chair's Report

The past year has been satisfying and exciting for the Board and for staff as we have worked together to meet the opportunities and challenges in the progressive implementation of the new model of service. The latter part of 2014 saw the completion of the amalgamation process with the support and guidance of Zakumi Consulting, Manager Marilyn Roche completed her contract and the overseeing of the transition was undertaken by Melina Isgro-Rarp. As a result of the changing environment and in the strategic interests of the service the Board believed that an Executive Officer position was required to lead the service. The Board was delighted to welcome Tracy Phillips into this new role. Under Tracy's leadership new partnership opportunities have been explored and outreach

agreements in place to ensure the services Bonnie's provides are accessible to vulnerable women in our community.

Over the last six months the staff team has settled into the model of service and has achieved good outcomes for the many women that have been engaged with the service. The highlight of the year was the launch of the new service on 30th June 2015. It was an absolute delight to meet

some of the women of the founding collective and hear their stories and recollections of the early years of Bonnie's. The historical display of funding documents, minutes from collective meetings and press stories of events and issues the Bonnie's women campaigned on was a reminder to all of us of the struggles and challenges feminists faced in the 1970s and 1980s in building services to meet the needs of women in our communities. As one of the twenty women's specific services in New South Wales we take pride in our feminist history and are committed to carry forward those values and ethics in providing best practice woman centered services in a feminist framework that is respectful, non-judgmental and supportive of women's choices.

...and it has been pleasing to see staff's commitment to strengthening the service and promoting Bonnie's as a leading women's service in southwest Sydney.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of Bonnie's in their commitment and passion in providing services to vulnerable women. On behalf of the Board I would also like to acknowledge staff's professionalism in walking with us as in the implementation of the new model. Change, while being inevitable can also be stressful for all involved and it has been pleasing to see staff's commitment to strengthening the service and promoting Bonnie's as a leading women's service in southwest Sydney.

The Board has also undergone changes and we were delighted to welcome Frances Atkins and Danielle Winzenried to the Board and I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members for their time and energy over the year. I also wish to thank Family and Community Services for their support throughout the year.

The year ahead I believe promises to be exciting as we embark on new projects and programs in our quest to build a strong women's service in southwest Sydney.

Betty Green
CHAIR



Betty Green with Tracy Phillips at the 40 year anniversary celebration.

Executive Officer's Report

The 2014-15 has been a huge year of reform for Bonnie's, as it has been for all other services in the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Sector. We have re-branded, developed a new logo and gone live with our fabulous new website. Additional staff have been recruited, our service has expanded to include working with women and children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and on 30 June we launched the "new expanded" service and website while celebrating 40 years of proud history.



It was important for us to remember and honour the past and Bonnie Women's Refuge's 40 years providing support and accommodation to women and children escaping domestic or family violence. Bonnie's was the second refuge to open its doors, way back in 1975.

The launch and celebration was a very significant day which brought together some early founders of the service such as Susan Varga, Di Powell and Chris Sykes, with women currently working here and of course the many stakeholders, including other service providers, current and former clients, bureaucrats and politicians.

The day of the launch was cold and wintery but the joy and warmth that emanated from Bonnie's belied the outdoor weather. Our enthusiasm for a successful launch and celebration seemed to be contagious and the day was wonderful. We were "launched" into our future business by Tanya Davies MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Affairs and Homelessness; and speakers included Dr Lesley Laing, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Worker at Sydney University; Mary Perkins, Executive Officer of Shelter; and the Chair of Bonnie's Board of Directors, Betty Green. We were pleased to be joined by Paul Lynch, Guy Zangara and Nick Lalich the members for Liverpool, Cabramatta and Fairfield, respectively.

Women and children who have used the service generously provided us with their stories and they



Bonnie's founders with Tracy Phillips.

featured on our walls at the launch and also on our website.

We have designed our website with many people in mind – women experiencing domestic or family violence, referring bodies, students, funding bodies and friends wanting to support a woman they are concerned about. Our weekly blogs have meant that we keep up to date on what is happening in the community in domestic violence and in homelessness and hopefully show our audience that we are up to date and informed. I thank all the staff for their incredible work and contribution in the site's development and in keeping it current. I must also thank Moya Sayer-Jones, Anna Sutton and Clive Jones for the amazing job they have done in developing the website and helping us to keep it innovative, sustainable and interesting while still strongly linked to our history. We at Bonnie's can't thank you enough for the support and mentoring also.

We are now close to having a full complement of staff and employing Karen Grant as Program Manager has really helped ease the operations load and it is great to have her join the staff.

This year also saw Bonnie's gain National Community Housing Registration.

The demand for services remains high and we are unfortunately never able to meet the high demand for accommodation, particularly for women and children experiencing domestic violence and needing a safe place. Moving women to private rental remains one of our biggest challenges in this high priced, high demand housing market of Sydney.



We were also delighted to have Jane Caro, writer, feminist and advocate for young women and education come on board as Bonnie's Ambassador – thank you and welcome Jane.

Bonnie's staff has provided an overview of the service's activities over the past year, in the coming pages. We have given the reader an overview of the type of services we provide and detailed some of the groups, workshops and partnerships that we have had for this year.

I sincerely thank the staff of Bonnie's who are an amazing, dedicated and passionate group of women who work hard at making Bonnie's a service that is responsive to the needs of women and children. Thanks also to the Board of Directors for their support and expertise.

Tracy Phillips
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Bonnie's staff.

Program Manager's Report

The amalgamation of Bonnie Support Services Ltd and South West Women's Housing was the commencement of a new era in service delivery under the Going Home Staying Home reform throughout the sector. The new service design meant a larger service delivery team, a focus on early intervention and prevention, quality assurance measures and key performance indicators.

Challenges

For the first six months, Bonnie's operated with approximately half the operational staff required but still with the dedication to provide quality support services. New position descriptions were developed and recruitment processes commenced.

New service agreements with FACS, the funding body, stating a specific number of clients that organisations are expected to support each year, with no significant increase in available housing, has increased the pace at which Bonnie's team need to move families through crisis and transitional accommodation and into the private rental market. The real challenge is finding long term housing rentals at weekly rates that are realistic for women with children to be able to sustain their tenancy, especially with the rapid increase in rental rates during the last six months of the financial year.

A large focus has been on service development to meet new contractual requirements of the Going Home Staying Home tenders: we have been developing and implementing processes to meet the "No Wrong Door" policy of the Specialist Homelessness Services Guidelines, providing early intervention and prevention to women with children prior to them becoming homeless. This has largely impacted the positions of our Community Network team who take the majority of referrals, complete assessments and intake. We are still finalising reporting and data collection processes.

Our Tenancy and Finance Officers have been training and implementing a new tenancy database – SDM, a new Chart of Accounts, and, having properties

scoped in the lead up to taking on property repairs and maintenance of all our transition properties.

Highlights

In December 2014 Tracy Phillips commenced as the new Executive Officer for Bonnie's, bringing a wealth of knowledge and sector experience.

Since coming on board in March 2015 as the Program Manager, we have recruited 3 more Family Workers and a Child Support Worker. The Child Support Worker role is new; this position is responsible for conducting individual assessments to address the children's immediate needs when they come into the service. The Child Support Worker also runs open space sessions in the playroom for women and their younger children, and separate after school sessions for students in the service.

Bonnie's is now the local provider of Wesnet phones and guidance on safety around technology, to victims of Domestic Violence. Other organisations are able to refer eligible women to Bonnie's for this assistance.

By being involved in Liverpool and Fairfield FACS Triage meetings, Bonnie's has been able to offer assistance to women with children whom FACS have referred, instead of closing the case when the Department have not been able to provide support due to the number of higher priority reports they receive.

We are very grateful to Cabramatta Fire Service for conducting a Pre-incident Assessment of our premises.

Karen Grant
PROGRAM MANAGER

Bonnie's is moving forward with an extremely talented and effective team of women, and we appreciate all the support from the Liverpool and Fairfield services and organisations that have supported our commitment to assisting our clients to move forward.

Who are we and what do we do?

We are Bonnie Support Services Ltd but most people call us Bonnie's...

Bonnie's exists to serve women and their children, supporting them to lead the best lives they can. We provide support and/or accommodation to women and their children who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or escaping domestic and family violence.

We're essentially an all-female not-for-profit support service, working for more than 40 years with the women and children of South-Western Sydney. We are committed to bringing our years of experience, understanding and best practice to make a real impact.

Our priority and specialisation is in supporting women who are escaping domestic/family violence. Our service was originally underpinned by a feminist philosophy and this continues to drive everything we do.

Bonnie's recognises that Aboriginal women and children are over represented in their experience of domestic violence and homelessness. We are committed to working with the local Aboriginal community and to offer culturally appropriate and supportive services to our Indigenous sisters and their children.

We are a registered Community Housing Provider and are funded mainly by Family & Community Services (FACS) under the Going Home Staying Home model.



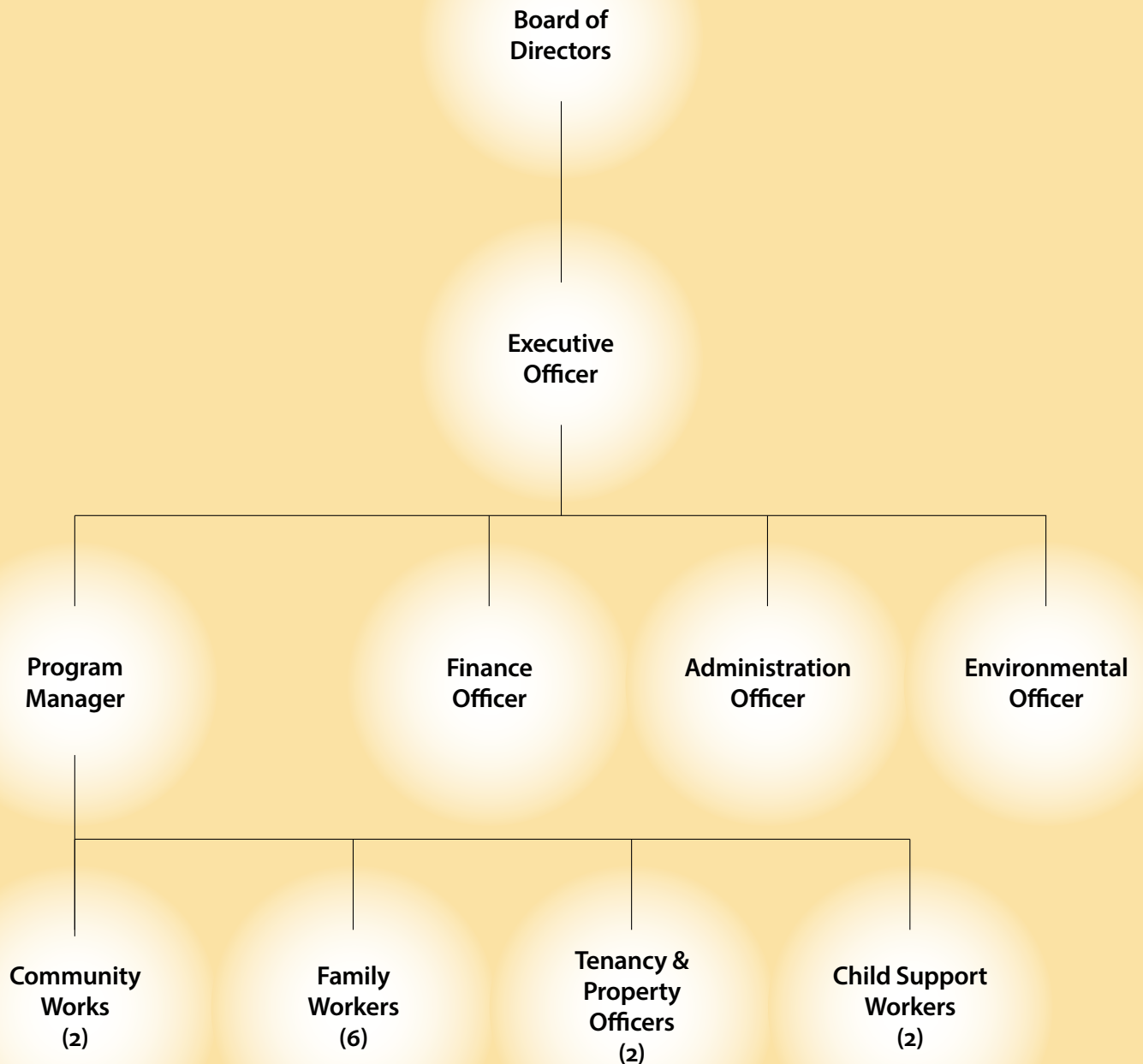
Our service works towards achieving outcomes in four core response areas:

- 1. Rapid Rehousing** – achieved through collaboration with real estate agents and social housing providers to gain long term housing.
- 2. Early Intervention and Prevention** – achieved by: promoting awareness of the causes of homelessness; working closely with schools, child and family services, housing providers, correctional facilities and other community organisations to identify women with children who may be at risk of homelessness; working in partnership with other services to provide support to women with children to ensure they maintain their current accommodation; working with others to promote innovative housing solutions; facilitating access to income support, legal and financial advice, family support, mediation and tenancy advice and support services; and, access to education.
- 3. Crisis and transitional accommodation** – Providing safe short term or medium term accommodation, case management to address immediate needs, support clients to develop independent living skills, working with clients to enter longer term accommodation, providing post-crisis support.
- 4. Intensive response for clients with complex needs** – Providing intensive, multi-disciplinary support for clients entrenched in homelessness, including access to services such as mental health and drug and alcohol; assisting the client to access and establish permanent housing linked to intensive and integrated support; undertake multi-disciplinary case planning with other support providers to address client needs.

Bonnie's is supported by Hume Community Housing, St George Housing, FACS and Address Housing.

Organisational Chart

Bonnie Support Services Ltd



Our Board



Betty Green – Chairperson



Jemima Brewer – Treasurer



Maree Mullins – Secretary



Amelia Scott



Frances Atkins



Danielle Winzenried

Donations Received

Mounties Club

Nicole Beaton – Parexel Intl P/L

Jodie Littlewood and her daughter Poppy Littlewood

Reverend Lorna – SydneyCARE

Woodville Community Service

Lady Variety Club

Health Care Complaints Commission – Staff Christmas donation

Omran Omran – Oz Physiotherapy

Rose Parra Liolios

Alison Barns

Elisabeth Barry

Jasmina Tung

Helen Callaghan

Anglicare Liverpool

Robyn Metcalfe

Footpath Library

Hotsprings Clothing

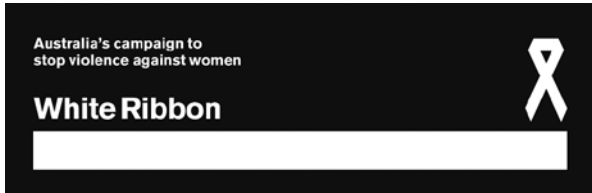
Dorothy and Canley Heights Community Group.



Thanks so much to all of the above who have generously donated to Bonnie's in the past year. We have received cash, new clothes, toys, toiletries and furnishings. We are very grateful for your support and assistance.

For anyone interested in making a donation of cash to Bonnie's, we now have a Donation Button which is easy to use and accessible on our website – www.bonnie.org.au

Services and Activities Partnerships and Programs



White Ribbon Day

Bonnie's is a member of the Liverpool Domestic Violence Liaison Committee. The aim of the Committee is to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence while challenging the stigma by initiating discussions and conversations with services, businesses and clients. The committee worked together to organise a march on the 24 November 2014 in the Liverpool LGA and in order for this to be a success staff also participated in a White Ribbon Day workshop on the 21 November 2014 to create white ribbons, signs and canvases to display and give out on the day.

Bonnie's had their own information stall with other services such as Housing NSW, Liverpool Council, Liverpool Women's Resource Centre, Liverpool Women's Health Centre to provide the community with information about domestic and family violence. There was a sausage sizzle to encourage communal participation and staff were available for questions and or discussions if needed.

Although the heat was 40 degrees plus, the day itself was a success at Bigge Park Liverpool and the community participation was admirable as local schools performed, local politicians spoke, the police band played and the crowd was larger than expected. Bonnie's prides itself in service partnerships and is looking forward to participating and being part of such an incredible event again in 2015.

Nite Under The Stars

Bonnie's staff were part of the Nite Under The Stars committee which included both the Fairfield and Liverpool LGA this year (2015). The aim of the Nite Under The Stars committee is to raise community awareness about homelessness while also trying to change the face of homelessness, as the reality is that no one wakes up one day hoping this will be their fate. Losing a job, a serious illness, a failing business, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, drugs, alcohol and mental illness are just some of the factors contributing to someone becoming homeless.

It is hard to imagine sleeping on the streets with minimal clothes to keep warm and no bed or shelter to save you from the cold so it was agreed that on the 07 August 2015 staff would attend the event at Fairfield Neeta City from 6pm to 6am the next day, to raise funds in order to assist and purchase food vouchers and travel cards to be distributed at identified homeless hubs throughout Fairfield and Liverpool.

It is not every day that staff are willing to participate in events such as these but staff were more than happy to engage and experience even for one night what so many are forced to experience. Bonnie's enjoyed every minute of this event and is looking forward to continue participating in such eye opening events.



YMCA

Bonnie's launched their new website and logo in 2015 and with all the changes taking place Bonnie's really wanted to encourage service partnerships that would benefit clients. Therefore discussions were had with YMCA and an agreement was reached where the YMCA offered fee assistance for programs they were already providing and use of their space at the Liverpool Whitlam Leisure Centre and Miller Michael Wenden Aquatic Leisure Centre.

The YMCA advised Bonnie's that they were committed to ensuring opportunities for all as they believed that participation in any of their programs and services should not be restricted to the financially privileged. Therefore staff attended a meet and greet session at the two Centres to become familiar with the space, the opportunities and each other.

The frame of thought that it is our job to identify those in need in our communities and ensure that they have opportunities to be happier and healthier is the aim of many services, including Bonnie's. Therefore Bonnie's has agreed to participate in YMCA's launch with an information stall and to work together to engage clients with their sport competitions, gymnastics, swimming lessons, pool memberships, fitness memberships etc. Bonnie's is excited and eager to see clients' communal participation in 2015.

International Women's Day Lunch

"Make it Happen" was the theme of this year's International Women's Day. Bonnie's partnered up with Liverpool Women's Resource Centre and Liverpool Women's Health Centre to host a lunch at the Casula Powerhouse Museum.

It was decided to hold a luncheon to not only rejoice in the achievement of women in Liverpool, but to encourage and inspire other services and young women to take action and improve the opportunities and lives of all women in our area.

In a climate of funding cuts and increasing gaps in service provision for the women in our community, we invited women to join us for thought provoking speeches, entertainment, laughs and a great lunch. The day was a great success, well spent with our sister services!



Community Building Partnership

Thanks to the Community Building Partnership Bonnie's has been able to undertake office refurbishment which has meant we have created additional offices and interview spaces to ensure clients have a private but pleasant environment when they are in the office. A "teenage space" is also underway which will provide a more appropriate place for young people who are connected to Bonnie's.

Groups and Workshops

In this financial year at Bonnie's, we offered different groups and workshops for our service users.

The aim of each workshop or group is to promote one or several of the following areas: social inclusion, enhanced living skills, exploration of therapeutic techniques and encouraging a healthy relationship between mother and child.

Art Workshop – Healthy Relationship: Reflecting on the impact of domestic violence in women's lives

This six-week art based project was a collaborative program between Bonnie's, Liverpool Domestic Violence Liaison Committee and Child Protection Counselling Service.

The aim of the workshop was to create a safe space where women were given the opportunity to utilise art as a positive means to explore and raise awareness of the impact that domestic and family violence has on an individual.

Financial Education Workshop

Financial Education Workshop is a 7 week program that is based on the MoneyMinded financial education program developed by ANZ in 2002.

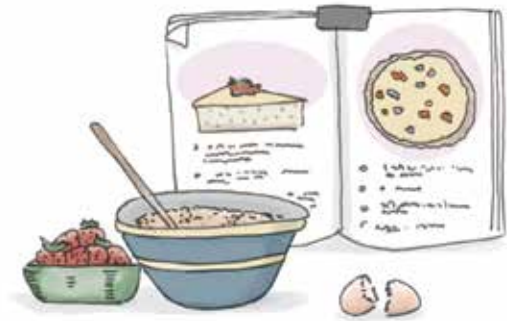
The workshop looked at budgeting and saving skills, everyday banking know how and how to plan and save for the future.

School Holiday Workshop

These workshops are designed for school-age children to come to Bonnie's with their mother and to participate in a range of activities, which enhance their self-confidence, self-esteem and the relationship between mother and child.

Cooking Workshop

Cooking workshop is a six-session program to create a safe space where mothers and children are able to interact with positive communication. By providing



this safe environment both clients are able to increase their verbal and non-verbal communication skills and therefore improve their interaction while learning a new skill.

This workshop is available on a need basis and can be included in each family's case plan.

Memory Box

The Memory Box activity is a 2-3 session workshop for children ages between 6-14 years. This activity helps the child keep memorabilia of things they are good at and the things they enjoy doing and it holds things that make them happy.

The aim of the memory box is to preserve memories, both intangibly, in the form of oral history and family stories, and tangibly, in the form of objects, written stories, photographs and letters that can be placed inside a Memory Box. This can help to build the child's resilience and nurture their sense of identity.

This workshop is available on a need basis and can be included in each child's case plan.



Emotional Regulation Workshop

This personalised workshop is aimed to assist children with techniques and skills to regulate their emotions when they feel overwhelmed.

The workshop consists of relaxation techniques, grounding techniques and activity sheets that allow the child to practice and find suitable soothing methods.

This 6-8 session workshop is available on a need basis and can be included in each child's case plan.



Vietnamese Domestic Violence Group

Bonnie's partnered with Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre to run a domestic information and support group for Vietnamese women each month. The group runs throughout the year, provides child care for participants and guest speakers are invited to discuss matters such as family law or other matters of interest identified by the participants. During school holidays the children take part in the group and enjoy craft activities with their mothers.

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

On 21 May Bonnie's staff joined with clients and their children to hold a Biggest Morning Tea to raise money to support the Cancer Council's aim to "help beat cancer". We had an abundance of food provided by staff and clients and great company, but it was a bittersweet event organized as a tribute to our friend and colleague Jackie Parsons who passed away on 10 May.

Following the morning tea we planted a tree for Jackie and another for Alass. Alass had a long term connection to Bonnie's and sadly lost her life in an accident in April.



Accommodation and Support Services

Crisis Accommodation

One of the pivotal services Bonnie's provides is crisis accommodation for women and children who are homeless. Presently Bonnie's has two crisis accommodation residences that can house eight families and we can provide them with immediate, shared accommodation for up to 3 months. Both residences are easily accessible to Bonnie's office, which means Family Workers are able to provide the intensive casework support, advocacy and information which is required when working with women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

While Bonnie's has a long proud history of working with families escaping domestic and family violence,

this year under recent reforms we have seen our client base expand to include families who may not have experienced family violence but are addressing other issues that cause homelessness such as issues with immigration and cultural and language barriers.

One of the positives of crisis accommodation is it provides a safe, supportive environment for women and children to heal

and at Bonnie's we have seen many clients forging strong friendships and supporting each other through this time.

Living in crisis accommodation is not without its challenges and one of the issues faced is that women have to adjust to a new geographical area, away from many familiar services and supports. Bonnie's staff address this issue at intake by providing the clients with a brief tour of the area, highlighting local amenities. While crisis residents have their own lockable rooms and share the common areas; sharing space with three other families can have its challenges, especially when each client is coping with their own personal issues. It can be hard to accept cultural customs

and differing levels of living skills; however, sharing accommodation, while offering challenges, also means women can form strong and supportive connections and throughout the year, clients from crisis, transitional and outreach gathered at Bonnie's for several events and workshops, giving them another opportunity for social interaction.

Transitional Housing

Bonnie's has twenty transitional properties and they vary from two beds to four bed units, townhouses and houses. Clients can move from the crisis refuge into one of the properties or can be housed directly after the intake process, depending on their situation and property availability. Additionally we provide support in a number of other properties where the tenancy is managed by an alternative Community Housing Provider.

A vital aspect of the support provided by Bonnie's is to give the clients safe and secure accommodation. Many of the women have been forced to leave their previous accommodation in order to try and escape domestic and/or family violence. Bonnie's provides leases from 3-12 months dependent on the needs of the client.

Due to the 'Going Home Staying Home' reform the service now supports women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as women escaping domestic/family violence. By providing accommodation, the clients have some housing stability whilst staff work intensively with them to help rebuild their lives.

One of the positives of crisis accommodation is it provides a safe, supportive environment for women and children to heal...



Outreach Support

Bonnie's also provides outreach support to women and children living in the community and can continue to provide assistance to the clients who have moved from our accommodation and into community housing or private rental, to assist them to sustain their tenancy. If women require this type of support, we can organise an assessment and assign a worker to assist them. Contacts are arranged at Bonnie's or places that are safe and convenient for the client and staff. Supports are provided until the clients achieve their goals. Bonnie's can also provide outreach as a specialist Domestic Violence service and co-case manage with other service providers.

The benefits of Outreach support mean that the service can provide continuity of service from a woman's existing, unsafe housing through to crisis accommodation, transitional housing until she is in a position to sustain her tenancy and return to the rental market. Women do not always require accommodation but may need information and guidance, or referral to an appropriate service to get their life back on track or assistance to maintain their tenancy.

Challenges:

- > Some clients may not engage with the service due to past trauma, mental health, safety issues.
- > Clients move out of the local government areas where Bonnie's are funded to provide support. Clients are sometimes unwilling to be referred to a local service so that Bonnie's can do a gradual handover of the case, as it is not always realistic to maintain support, dependent on distance. If the client disengages with services when they still require support to plan for future events or budget their money, then it is likely, for example, if their rent is subsidised through Start Safely, they may not be ready to pay the full rent when the Start Safely subsidy ends. This can lead them back through the homelessness cycle.



Family Workers

The role of the Family Worker is to provide a supportive case management service to clients living in Bonnie's accommodation or in the community. Each client participates in and devises a person centered case plan. It is reviewed on a regular basis by the client and the Family Worker. Securing long term housing where required and gaining the skills to sustain a tenancy are included in case plans. Family Workers provide support and assistance in the application process for Housing NSW. Clients may be offered Priority Housing or the Start Safely Program for those who have experienced domestic violence. Both the Tenancy Team and Family Workers actively seek and advocate on the client's behalf for private rental properties.

Even when accommodated, clients still may face challenges and barriers such as being housed in a new and unfamiliar area. Family Workers make referrals to local community groups and programs to try and make the transition a little easier. The children may need to move schools and the Family Workers and Child Support Workers can provide support in the

Even when accommodated, clients still may face challenges and barriers such as being housed in a new and unfamiliar area.

enrolment process. Language barrier and lack of community networks can often be a challenging issue. It is important for the workers to find appropriate services to accommodate these needs.

Many of the clients face immigration issues and after leaving a violent partner their visas can be cancelled, adding an additional stressor at an already difficult time. Family Workers provide assistance and make referrals to Legal Aid; they can provide a support letter for Immigration and attend or transport clients to appointments when necessary.

Family workers also provide assistance with legal matters such as family law, by helping to obtain AVOs, or attending court hearings to support the client.

The overall aim of the Family Workers is to support the clients to be able to live independently. By having a safe home in a transitional property; the goals such as employment, education, obtaining a driving licence and improving parenting or living skills can be achieved.

"I feel like a millionaire, this is better than winning the lottery, it's more than I could have dreamed of".

Recently a client in one of our transitional properties was approved for priority housing. She was provided with a new built, two bedroom townhouse, in an area that is close to her family, upon whom she relies heavily for support. The client stated *"I feel like a millionaire, this is better than winning the lottery, it's more than I could have dreamed of".*

The launch of Bonnie's in June was a great success. The team of Family Workers is looking forward to continuing the legacy and intention of Bonnie's founders. The Family Workers are united in their intention to provide a high level of support for women and their families accessing Bonnie's support services. Bonnie's is currently looking at providing a space for teenagers to access after school hours and educational support for primary school children is also going to be offered.

The team is experienced in overcoming challenges and barriers and will continue to work at providing the best outcome for a woman and her family. Bonnie's Family Worker team works collaboratively with services in the community, attends interagency meetings and fosters good relationships which will benefit the women and children with whom we work.

The team is intent on providing a nurturing approach to women and their families, to assist in capacity building to enhance empowerment, resilience and independence; to educate and inform, and to reflect to all women their inherent strength and self-worth.

Bonnie's has plans to form further partnerships with local schools and mainstream services, facilitating information sessions and workshops. Our Executive Officer is currently working with government departments and other services to overcome the barriers faced by women who have escaped domestic violence and have visa restrictions and consequently have little or no income.

Bonnie's is open to more case management models to include specialist services and Aboriginal specific support to address clients' needs more effectively.

Building on previous successful groups, Bonnie's plan to offer more workshops based on therapeutic models that involve creativity and art.

Community Network Team

The Community Network team is focused on meeting the needs of women and their children who have experienced domestic violence and/or homelessness. We conduct Intake and Assessment interviews for vacancies within our crisis and transitional properties and for those clients who do not meet our criteria, or for whom there is no vacancy, we actively seek accommodation and support via the CIMS database and our networks to secure the best outcome for each client referred.

Additionally we work to identify and support women and children, who are at imminent risk

of homelessness, to remain safely in their existing housing and/or where their current tenancy is at risk. The team build and maintain relationships and partnerships geared towards referral pathways.

The team respond to "Yellow card" requests - this is a card, offered and issued by Police, who have been called to a Domestic Violence incident, where the client requests further support, this may involve advice, linkages, referral to counselling etc. This system ended 30.6.15 and is being replaced by the introduction of Safer Pathways.

Another facet of the work is to develop and deliver education, promotion and awareness raising activities, to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. For example, the team attended the "Engaging Schools & Community Forum" held at Hoxton Park High School. Identify and support all opportunities to promote Bonnie's within our networks and the local LGAs.

Bonnie's engages with Community Partners and the broader community to identify hard to reach families and actively supports indigenous events eg attend "Know Us, Respect Us" event at Miller and training in Aboriginal Cultural Awareness.

Other activities undertaken: attend Migrants and Refugee interagency meeting, WH&S training, CIMS training, Understanding Mental Illness training, Legal Aid information sessions assist with International Women's Day event.

All interactions with clients are recorded on CIMS (Client Information Management System).

Future plans:

- > Worker based at Liverpool Women's Health Centre one day per week to extend our outreach service and increase networking opportunities.
- > Build links with Kari Youth & Family Support Service.
- > Promote our services further to other agencies who may be the first to know of women with children at risk.

Tenancy

A massive change in service delivery and resources occurred in 2014 with the outcomes of the Going Home Staying Home tenders. Bonnie's initially managed two crisis refuges and provided the support whilst Hume Housing, St George Housing and the Women's Housing Company managed the tenancy. The service maintained both crisis refuges. The number of tenants supported in Hume Housing properties has increased. A new specialist Community Housing Provider, Address Housing, is now an accommodation option for our clients with Bonnie's providing support. We continued to support clients in St George Community Housing properties where shared arrangements were put in place for women on little or no income, awaiting immigration decisions; with St George Housing only charging a nominal lease fee. Unfortunately, this type of head lease with St George is being phased out, leaving no transition options for women in this situation. The major change in the last 12 months was gaining the management and maintenance of 20 transitional properties and our National Registration as a Tier 3 Community Housing provider.

Over the past year, Bonnie's has continued to build on existing relationships with Community Housing providers; Hume Housing, Address Housing, and St George Community Housing. We thank them for their ongoing support and partnerships.

St Vinnies have been there to provide essential furniture for our clients who are starting over with minimal belongings and we thank them for their responsiveness and generosity.

Bonnie's has some great relationships with the Benevolent Society, Mission Australia and Partners in Recovery, who have provided brokerage for bonds and moving costs, enabling women with their children to commence tenancies rapidly.

Staffing for our tenancy team has grown from one part time position, to two part time positions, then more recently to one full time and one part time position.

Our Tenancy Officers have been extremely busy with the introduction of the Commonwealth Rent Calculator, changing the entire tenancy system over to SDM, as well as identifying preferred suppliers, negotiating with local tradespeople and contractors to provide services as of 1st July 2015 for urgent and responsive repairs, and planned maintenance. Tenancy Officers and management also attended training in Asset Management in preparation for the new financial year.

Future challenges:

- > The ability to assist our clients to move into the private rental market, given the significant rental increases over the past 12 months.
- > Identifying suitable transition options for women on little or no income due to visa status.
- > As of 1st July 2015, Bonnie's is responsible for financing and managing the maintenance and repairs of 20 transitional properties.

Our tenancy team now has a focus on increasing partnerships with local real estate agencies to assist clients to move from transition housing to the private rental market.

Child Support Worker

In April 2015, a new position of Child Support Worker was filled by Marryanne who reports, "since then it has been a whirlwind of activity, challenging and extremely rewarding."

The Child Support Worker position focuses on the immediate needs of the children when they first enter the service, and provides various supports alongside the Family Workers to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and education of the children is progressing. Providing

parents with information on many areas including; bottle feeding basics, toilet training, language development, conflict prevention, handling anger as a parent, how to listen to our kids, logical consequences, problem solving, parenting when you are a victim of DV, respectful parenting, self-esteem, role modelling, identifying age appropriate activities, the effects of D.V on children and talking about it with your children, behavioural tips, using a reward chart successfully, why smacking is not ok, and health for children/healthy eating/dietary advice. This information has been provided in several other languages.

A healthy eating workshop was conducted where we looked at such things as;

- > Which foods we should eat?
- > How much of it we should have?
- > What is junk food?
- > Which food can be disguised as being healthy for you?

A protective behaviour workshop was conducted, which covered such things as:

- > Talking about feelings, what they are, identifying feelings.
- > Understanding and Identifying early warning signs.
- > Codes for keeping safe.
- > Networking/communication.
- > Anger, what is it and what to do with it.
- > Self-esteem.
- > Loss and separation.

Our Child Support Worker now has the child space and resources to run future sessions such as:

- > mums and toddlers
- > arts programs to explore emotion and communication
- > exploring how we use food to comfort ourselves
- > how we hide our feelings
- > engaging young people through art mediums

"My goal in this role is to provide young people with the emotional, educational and social support that they need as well as the developmental support that is required to assist them to reach their goals."

*Marryanne
Child Support Worker*

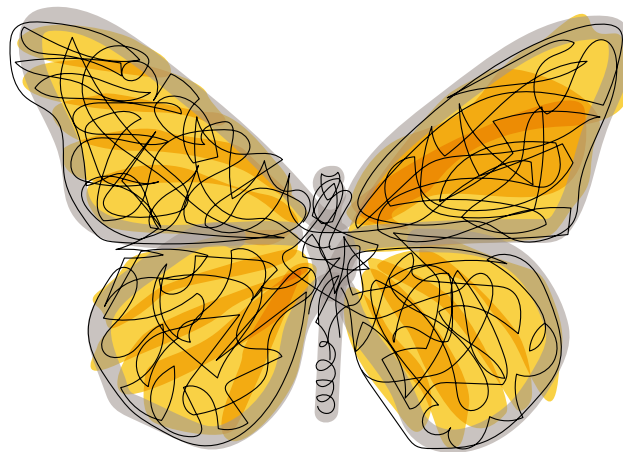
Tribute



On the 10th May of 2015 our dear colleague, Jackie Parsons, passed away and all of us at Bonnie's who knew Jackie or worked with her hold her memory close.

Jackie was a Family Worker at Bonnie's for 5 years and was respected by us all – workmates, clients and other colleagues. She had a gentle and wise way about her and a deep kindness.

Vale Jackie.



The women and children we work with...

Client country of birth

(01.07.2014 to 30.06.2015)

Australia	281
Bolivia	1
Chile	1
China	8
Croatia	3
Egypt	2
Fiji	1
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2
Gambia	2
India	2
Indonesia	3
Iran	3
Iraq	7
Korea	3
Lebanon	9
New Zealand	11
Pakistan	1
Philippines	4
Samoa	6
Sierra Leone	3
Somalia	4
Sudan	4
Tonga	4
Turkey	1
Vietnam	11
Unknown	48
Total	428

Source of Referral

(01.07.2014 to 30.06.2015)

Specialist Homelessness Agency/outreach worker	179
Telephone/crisis referral agency	68
Child protection agency	35
Family and child support agency	28
Other agency (government or non-government)	23
Social housing	10
School/other education institution	6
Mental health service	5
Police	3
Centrelink or employment service case worker	2
Hospital	2
Adult correctional facility	2
Immigration department or asylum seeker/refugee support service	2
Drug and alcohol service	1
Legal unit (including legal aid)	1
Family and/or friends	1
Disability support service	0
Aged care service	0
Youth/juvenile justice correctional centre	0
Courts	0
Other	27
No formal referral	27
Don't know	0
<i>Missing</i>	6
Total	428



This year we saw

1,782

women and children on an outreach basis – some participated in groups and workshops and others were provided with support on an early intervention or a post-crisis basis, to help them sustain their tenancies.

Main Presenting Reasons

(01.07.2014 to 30.06.2015)

	Male	Female	Total
Domestic and family violence	84	172	256
Housing crisis	25	59	84
Previous accommodation ended	7	13	20
Financial difficulties	6	12	18
Housing affordability stress	5	7	12
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	2	6	8
Lack of family and/or community support	1	6	7
Time out from family/other situation	0	3	3
Mental health issues	1	2	3
Problematic drug or substance use	0	2	2
Transition from custodial arrangements	0	2	2
Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements	0	2	2
Relationship/family breakdown	0	1	1
Non-family violence	0	1	1
Transition from other care arrangements	0	1	1
Other	1	0	1
Don't know	2	0	2
Missing	4	1	5
Total	138	290	428

Indigenous Status

(01.07.2014 to 30.06.2015)

	Male	Female	Total
Aboriginal	15	41	56
Torres Strait Islander	0	6	6
Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	0	0	0
Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander	101	213	314
Missing	22	30	52
Total	138	290	428

A poem by Susan Varga

1

Refuge

Forty years ago, we slept on the floor
of a small fibro house scrounged
from the Housing Commission.

We called it Bonnie's
and waited
for the first desperate women
to fall in door, trailing kids.

A cup of tea.
A life story.

In the morning the kids played
in the dusty back yard, safe –
for now.

People gave blankets, sheets, chairs.
They understood, without politics,
that this place of shelter
was needed.

Forty years later
Bonnie's is still here.
A better, bigger house.
Offices!
Long term services.
Paid staff.

This sole survivor
of the refuge movement
is still needed.

In dark truth
as the killings mount,
needed more.

Today a 40th birthday bash
for Bonnie's
Yellow balloons in the courtyard.
Yellow and black posters everywhere –
saying "You are NOT powerless."

Swings and slides for the kids.
A row of suited men,
respectfully silent
in a sea of elated women,

On leaflets, brochures, lips,
an old phrase to gladden my heart –

"By Women, For Women"

2

Words, Actions

Which really matters?
I always thought words.

Words enshrine actions,
give them weight,
pinning the butterfly
to the page, trapping action
beyond its brief life.

But looking back
across oceans of words,
expended, written, read,
I wonder...
Is it Action,
its simplicity, courage,
rush and surge
which truly transforms?
Not books in their stillness,
shut fast upon shelves.

And yet... and yet ...
a phrase,
a submission pleading its case,
a half-forgotten conversation,
can be subterranean weapons,
torpedoes, depth chargers
erupting into action,
here, now!

Then we descend to the street
brandishing placards in bold -

**"You are
NOT
powerless!"**

