



ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

Hunter Region Working Women's Group



HUNTER EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE
Partner of Hunter Women's Centre

hwc
hunter women's centre

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About us	3
Mission	3
Vision	3
Our History	3
Services under the HRWWG Banner	3
Our People	4
Chairpersons Report	5
Service Reports	7
Hunter Early Childhood Centre (HECC)	7
Hunter Women's Centre (HWC)	10
Notes to FINANCIAL statements	14
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT	16
Auditor's Report	16

ABOUT US

Mission

We engage, support and empower Hunter women and their families to improve their lives through gender specific health and family-safe programs, and the provision of early education and care services. Our targeted, integrated and quality services focus on:

- Reducing violence against women and their children
- Facilitating women's health, safety and wellbeing
- Providing high quality, price competitive early learning and childcare
- Undertaking charitable works to build community participation and partnerships.

Vision

Healthy women, supported families and safer communities.

Our History

Hunter Region Working Women's Group (HRWWG) is a community owned, not-for-profit, charitable organisation, operating in the Hunter Region since 1976. HRWWG governs its two business entities – Hunter Early Childhood Centre and Hunter Women's Centre.

Services under the HRWWG Banner

Hunter Early Childhood Centre

Hunter Early Childhood Centre (HECC) has been operating since 1976 and was initially established as 'Hunter Women's Child Care Service' and was established to provide much needed care for working women and for children within the community. Since then the service has evolved and changed its name to Hunter Early Childhood Centre in April 2019. HECC provides high quality early childhood education and care for children and families in the Hunter at affordable rates. HECC provides care to children aged 6 weeks to 6 years and is based on a holistic, play based learning environment, structured to support, nurture and respect each child and their family.

Hunter Early Childhood Centre is funded by the NSW Department of Education, Start Strong funding following the conclusion of the previously held Legacy Funding and is assessed as 'Meeting the National Quality Standards' by the Australian Children's Early Childhood Quality Authority.

Hunter Women's Centre

Hunter Women's Centre (HWC) has been operating since 1975 and commenced its operations as the 'Working Women's Centre' and provides services to women who are marginalised, experiencing disadvantage or are having difficulty in accessing services elsewhere. Services include counselling both at our Mayfield centre and at our outreach centres, information and referral, therapeutic and support groups, workshops and community education.

Hunter Women's Centre is funded by NSW Health via the Hunter New England Local Health District, community grants and fundraising. The Centre is a member of Women's Health NSW, the peak body for non-government women's health services

Our People

Board of Management

Hunter Region Working Women's Group Board of Directors is made up of voluntary positions held by dynamic and professional women who are committed to the strategic governance of the organisation and its services. The board of management is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and its services with the aim of enhancing service provisions. Currently there is a good mix of professional women who bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the board including; finance, law, marketing, risk management, welfare, education, business, employment and social services.

Name	Position	Date Position Appointed	Date of Board Appointment
Jennifer Parkes	Chairperson	November 2017	November 2015
Kattie Bugeja	Deputy Chairperson	November 2019	November 2016
Nicole Waddell	Secretary	November 2019	February 2018
Annette Morrissey	Treasurer	July 2016	September 2014
Venessa Wells	Leave		April 2018
Dawn Denton	Leave		April 2018
Colleen Webb	Ordinary		November 2016
Tracey Roxby	Ordinary		November 2019
Rebecca O'Sullivan	Ordinary		November 2019
Shannon Eagles	Ordinary		November 2019

Staff and Contractors

Hunter Early Childhood Centre

Name	Position
Samantha Gilmour	Director and Nominated Supervisor
Cath Howard	Room Leader
Emma Howard	Room Leader / Educational Leader
Jucinda Spencer	Room Leader (res. June 2020)
Jennifer Verhoef	Room Leader (app. June 2020)
Cassandra Rose	Educator
Jann Gill	Educator
Rebecca Hogg	Educator
Kirsty Lewis	Educator
Sancha Malloy	Educator
Abbey Wyllie	Trainee
Taylah Hyland	Trainee
Andrew Robertson	Cleaner

Hunter Women's Centre

Name	Position
Kathryn Saint	Service Manager
Bronwyn Crawford	Counsellor
Glenys Schultz	Counsellor
Kylie Fawcner	Counsellor
Sue Collins	Counsellor
Deanne	Counsellor
Jeanette Petrie	Intake Worker
Helen McCauley	Administration Officer
Jennifer Locke	Education/Research Support
Deanne Sullivan	Counsellor/Educator

Hunter Region Working Women's Group

Name	Position
Natalie Driver	Finance Officer (app. May 2020 from contracted role)

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Hunter Region Working Women's Group, it has been a privilege to work alongside our dedicated staff, Directors and Service Managers in a challenging and unique 12-month period. The reverberations of a global pandemic and community upheaval from the beginning of 2020 have been felt across the organisation. The starkest impacts have been brought about by the continuing increase in domestic and family violence in the Newcastle and Hunter region, influenced by enormous change to working and family conditions caused by rapidly evolving economic circumstances, increasing unemployment and the impact of a more strictly regulated way of life in Australia.

Allowing for these challenges, the organisation's service providers have navigated these uncertainties in a practical, creative way despite extreme challenges in preserving continuity of service provision when faced with suspension of base funding provisions for childcare services, and the implementation of public health precautions which have (necessarily) halted face-to-face interactions in counselling and programs. The impacts of COVID-19 in our community continue to be felt. It will be with some trepidation, but with kindness and optimism that HRWWG proceeds into its next year of operation.

The work of the Hunter Women's Centre has continued to be furthered by Kate Saint and the experienced and dedicated staff, delivering high quality and beneficial services under extreme prejudice - both in terms of offering services in-person to the Centre's clients for the past eight months but also in facing an ever-increasing number of women and children impacted by violence in the home. The Centre has been a deserving recipient of benevolent donations, most notably from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Organisation. It gives me great pride to also acknowledge the commitment of the Hunter New England Local Health District and NSW Health in committing base funding for the work of HWC for a three-year period, to 2023.

HRWWG's Hunter Early Childhood Centre has again been rewarded and recognised in its immediate, and wider community for its exceptional educational programs and as a preferred provider of quality childcare services. The experience of COVID-19 was challenging for the childcare sector at large, both to ensure that childcare services continue under strict attendance and social distance requirements, but also to cope with financial challenges with the suspension of base funding models to allow for free childcare provision. The response from HECC was to invest in the quality of care, and to integrate technology and remote learning opportunities and to continue to support its families. A testament to these measures is the level of satisfaction reflected in families, who hold out their 100% endorsement of the Centre's staff and educational programs. This approach was championed by the highly capable Director of the service, Samantha Gilmour, along with her committed team of educators.

I again offer my sincere thanks to our 2019/2020 Board for their dedication and input in guiding the organisation – Kattie Bujega, Nicole Waddell, Annette Morrissey, Colleen Webb, Rebecca O'Sullivan, Tracey Roxby and Shannon Eagles. This year has seen the Board produce its strategic vision for the period 2020 to 2025, immediately before COVID-19 impacts reverberated. With this said and acknowledging that challenge and change may well await in 2021, the Board has prepared this framework as its statement of commitment to its vision of healthy women and families in the Hunter Region.

We farewell this year from our Board Colleen Webb, to whom I am personally grateful for her calm counsel. We are also welcoming back Board members Venessa Wells and Dawn Denton from leave of absence, and I look forward to having again their vigour and commitment amongst the Board.

I have made the decision that this year will be the last year I will fulfil the role as the Board Chair. It has been a privilege, and I sincerely thank the Board members for their support over the past three years of my tenure; and our staff for their exceptional resilience and commitment during this time.

Jennifer Parkes

SERVICE REPORTS

Hunter Early Childhood Centre (HECC)

HECC continued on its growth and improvement period throughout the 2019/20 financial year. Our highly experienced and dedicated educators continue to work to provide high quality education and care to all children and their families and this is evident through our successes of late. HECC was awarded the 2019 Hunter Local Business Award for Excellence in Early Childhood. Nominated by our families and the community, this award recognises service leaders in the Newcastle and Hunter Region in their respective fields. Further, HECC's service director Samantha Gilmour was also nominated as Outstanding Business Person of the Year. Nominated for her commitment to the success to the overall sustainability and improvement to HECC's future viability. During Sam's time at HECC, the service has experienced an overall growth to its utilisation by more than 30% as of the end of July 2020. The educators at HECC have been committed to ensuring the service is authentic, responsive to the community and displaying our philosophy in practice each and every day.

The team at HECC continue to strive for excellence in their service provision, providing high quality education and care to children and their families within the Mayfield and wider Newcastle region. It is a testament to their unwavering commitment to the organisation that HECC continues to operate 44 years later, since its inception in 1976. The team, led by our Room Leader's Emma Howard, Cath Howard and Jucinda Spencer/Jennifer Verhoef consistently ensure each child in their care is treated with respect and is empowered to make choices, be confident and involved and co-construct their own learning, each day of their life journey.

HECC maintains an overall rating of 'Meeting the National Quality Standards' across all seven quality areas set out by the Australian Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

HECC's focus in the 19/20 FY was to continue our improvement journey however with the global pandemic, COVID-19 placed additional pressure on the viability of the centre. As a short term measure, HECC reduced enrolments to provide places for essential workers as much as possible with the commitment that the centre would remain open for our families and staff to access. Our continuing commitment to support educate shone through more than ever as HECC took our programs completely online for our self-isolating families to access, keeping our relationships and connectivity strong.

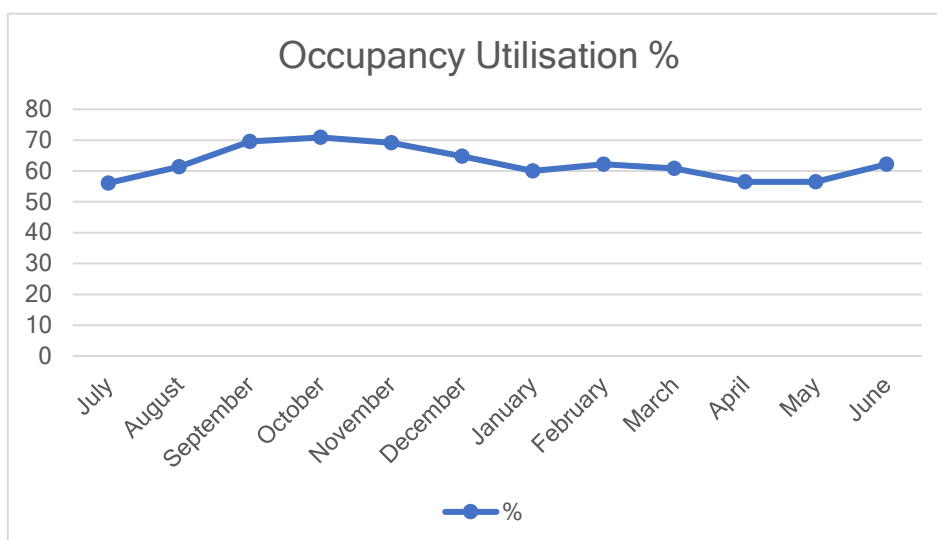
Partnerships

HECC values its community partners as they assist us to provide a quality service both at the centre and within the wider community. In 2019/20 HECC was fortunate to receive two grants from the Department on Education to support an upgrade to the playground, to include more inclusive and sensory safe resources. These grants will be expensed by June 2021.

HECC values and encourages the input we receive from our families and the community. Due to the change to service operations, HECC has taken our survey questions online, allowing families to provide their feedback through individual survey questions via our OWNA online platform and the centre's social media pages.

Enrolments

Enrolments at HECC have remained steady with increases from the 18/19 fy. Despite the global pandemic, HECC maintained above average occupancy with an average of 62.5% occupancy across the 12 months. HECC continues to raise occupancy into the new financial year. Moving forward, HECC will continue to work strategically considering growth opportunities for service operations.



Staff Development

This year has seen a commitment to staff development opportunities for the HECC team. With changes to the leadership team, HECC remained proactive to ensure our respectful values were upheld.

Samantha Gilmour and Emma Howard commenced their journey through their Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching), becoming the centres required ECT educators, leading the service's educational program, underpinned by the Early Years Learning Framework.

Cath Howard has further embedded her Mindfulness Program throughout the centre, firstly by undergoing Mindfulness Teaching qualifications, specifically designed for early childhood. Cath supports all educators at HECC to implement quality mindfulness experiences, respond and be present for all children and be aware of the contribution mental health and wellbeing has on children and adults.

HECC continues to work with KU Children's Services to support inclusion and equal access to the centre. Providing educators up to date training and professional development.

Parent Survey Results

National Quality Framework Snapshot

- 100% of families believe HECC's program is educational, age appropriate and supports play based learning for their children
- 100% of families believe HECC educators program intentionally to provide high quality learning experiences for children
- 100% of families believe HECC provides for children's wellbeing and comfort, including their right to rest and sleep
- 100% of families believe HECC ensures adequate supervision and takes precaution to ensure all children are protected from harm or hazard

“When we’re working so much, it really brightens our day when we see how our child’s day is going from all the information and daily posts on OWNA.” - Pennington Family

Financial

In 2019/20 fy HECC was notified of the finish to the Department of Education Legacy Funding. This funding has been a secure income stream for HECC since early 2000's and meant a reduction to income by \$45,000 per year. Despite this significant loss, HECC continued to strive to bridge the gap, however daily fees experienced an increase in order to continue providing high quality care and education to \$105 per day. On April 2, 2020 The Australian Government announced the national 'Free Childcare' package, in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This would mean HECC would receive 50% of its usual fee income through the Child Care Subsidy System and would be subsidised by the Federal Government's Job Keeper scheme. Whilst HECC did receive Job Keeper, many of our educators were ineligible, leaving a significant short fall in the HECC budget.

Despite this shortfall, HECC maintained a significant improvement to the previous financial year balance sheet. HECC would like to thank the families and members of the community who donated to the organisation throughout this period. It is through this community support and generosity, HECC was able to purchase much needed technology and resources to support ongoing programs and educational experiences.

HECC also received a small business grant, thanks to Service NSW which supported some of our educators who were ineligible for the Job Keeper Scheme, ensuring that HECC could retain all employees throughout this period of uncertainty and reduced income.

Hunter Women's Centre (HWC)

Hunter Women's Centre (HWC) major goal is improving the overall health, well-being and empowerment of women in the Hunter. The HWC has evolved through a number of transformative processes over the 45 year history and today remains a safe welcoming place for women to come where they can access specialised quality trauma informed care services that are available appropriate and affordable.

These services includes:

- information and referral,
- counselling and support
- education

KPI's and Effectiveness

Hunter Womens Centre performance against the HNEH Funding KPI's has exceeded the KPI's in almost every case, this is despite the changing and challenging times.

HNEH KPI's	Expected Number	Actual Number	Status: target on track, exceeded or not met.
Number of women receiving timely information, advice and referral	750	2014	Exceeded Dramatic increase in service demand due to COVID-19
Number of women receiving counselling	195	240+	Exceeded The introduction of telephone counselling, welfare calls and online counselling has increased service capacity
Occasions of service delivered to women including Outreach services	400	939	Exceeded
Improved Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale between the 1st and 5th/6th counselling session	70%	54%	Not met. Many women's anxiety/distress levels have not improved in this timeframe plus COVID has impacted as well
Number of educational workshops/groups including 4 invitation only courses Involving domestic violence and abuse and women who have experienced child sexual abuse	24	26	Exceeded Despite 3 months of no courses re COVID-19. Reduced numbers of participants due to COVID-19 space restrictions
Percentage of women reporting improvements to knowledge; understanding and skills to cope with challenging situations and environments; improving comprehension of health and lifestyle factors and their impact on well-being; improvement in understanding of what is a healthy relationship; and understanding the cycle of violence	75%	93%	Exceeded Workshop/group/course evaluations exceeded expectations and KPI's

and how to use strategies to prevent violent behaviours re-occurring.			
Percentage of women receiving information about healthy lifestyle programs; Quit Smoking; Alcohol and Drug information and referral to appropriate services if required	100%	100%	Met: All women receive health information bag on first counselling appointment at HWC. Healthy lifestyle and other issues are discussed with client as part of counselling session
Assessment of clients undertaking counselling for chronic disease risk etc.	205	23%	Not Met: Although many women have multiple complex health issues HWC is not staffed by health practitioners and is not a women's health service per se' However, chronic disease and illnesses impact greatly on the general health and well-being so HWC endeavours to have brief conversations, supply up to date and relevant information and refer to appropriate websites and services if required, including GP's;

Partnerships, Donations and Support

HWC is very fortunate to have many partner organisations and agencies, families, groups and individuals that continuously provide ongoing support to Hunter Women's Centre.

We would like to Thank All of the following for their generosity, kindness and assistance, and their efforts allows the clients of HWC to have a safer, more comfortable and valuable experience.

- Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation
- Merewether Golf Club Womens Committee
- Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group
- Jade - 28 Days of Flowers
- Lisa Hyde-Mills Art Therapy Workshops
- Anastasia Dunstan
- Ramsey Health Care, Lake Macquarie
- Trauma Teddies
- Newcastle City Council
- Emma-Leigh Heighway & Anytime Fitness Newcastle
- Community Builders Partnership
- NDIA
- Ingrid
- Women of Courage AA
- Walka Grange Crochet Group
- Pride Cleaning
- Dangling Threads
- Bunnings Heatherbrae
- Bunning Kotara
- Grilled Junction
- Happy Hookers
- Theresa
- Linda
- Tiffany
- Health Care Interpreting Service HNEH
- Hicksons Lawyers
- Ellis Group
- Hunter Valley Financial Counselling Project

- Woolworths Mt Hutton
- Woolworths Cardiff
- HNE Health Sexual Assault Service
- Ingrid
- Samaritans Foundation
- Speaking in Colours
- Northern Territory Cards
- Dr Trisha Pender – University of Newcastle Gender Equity Network
- Toni @ Barber Industry
- Community Helping Community Inc.
- Volunteer: Judy Jacobs
- East Lakes Quirky Quilters
- Zonta Newcastle
- Limitless Property Group – Tradie Network
- Share the Dignity
- Wendy & Co.
- Savitri Naidoo- Chakras Dance
- Tina Chen: Tai Chi

...and a number of anonymous donors who choose not to be named.

Client Feedback

'I really enjoyed this workshop. My mind found a million reasons to not come or to not participate. The educator was so welcoming, gentle and inviting us to feel safe to share and to listen. Thank You.'

'The counselling approach I received was very supportive and guiding. There was never any judgement on the decisions I made or the guidance in which I did or didn't take on board. The counsellor was patient and considerate of my journey and the tough decisions I had to make along the way. Through the counselling and support I received MY life was improved immensely on every level. I am extremely grateful to the service. Keep up the good work'

'I absolutely enjoyed this program, it's really opened my eyes to the abusive behaviour that I thought was completely normal and acceptable. Thank you'

Financial

The majority of HWC funding is provided by the NSW Ministry of Health through Hunter New England Health NGO Program. July 2020 commenced a new three year funding cycle.

Hunter Early Childhood Centre (HECC) also contributes significantly to the HWC operational budget – so a huge thank you for their efforts and generosity.

In September 2019 a new HWC Service Manager was recruited to the position and despite her management background and experience found the shift to a small NGO a different sometimes perplexing but inspiring experience.

"the quality of work that is undertaken here at HWC is exceptional and despite the perplexing times we find ourselves in re COVID-19 all staff have worked harder than ever to adapt to meet the challenges and to continue to provide excellent services to clients and the community" - HWC Service Manager

In mid-March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic ascended upon HWC, and like everybody it delivered a number of challenges and changes that needed to be met in order to remain viable.

These included:

- the decision by all staff to try remain open as an 'essential service' to continue to deliver services throughout the entire pandemic
- the continuous monitoring and modifications required to keep HWC a safe COVID -19 free space for staff clients and visitors
- the recommended closure of all groups and education sessions for a 3 month+ period
- the introduction of new risk management procedures and protocols to meet NSW Government Health recommendations
- the challenges to all HWC staff to meet increasing service demand appropriately, effectively and efficiently. This has resulted in the introduction of providing a new telephone counselling and online counselling option to clients plus a new telephone welfare check service for clients experiencing isolation and loneliness due to COVID-19
- HWC was also successful in gaining a COVID-Rapid Response Grant through Newcastle City Council which enable us to increase our counselling hours to help meet service demand.
- the closure of the wait list at least four times in this period to enable appropriate and responsible management of the clients waiting on the wait list.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Hunter Region Working Women's Group Ltd was able to make desperately needed repairs to the Hunter Women's Centre building from the unspent donations contributed by the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group received back in 2016. These repairs also included painting of the internal walls and replacement of outdated fluorescent lighting fixtures. Additional donations from 28 Days in Flowers, Ramsay Health Care and Merewether Golf Club Charity Day have allowed for new furniture in an additional counselling room, as well updating old furniture and new window furnishings in the Conway room.

During the 2018/2019 Financial year The Hunter Women's Centre had unexpended grant funds that was used in the 2019/2020 Financial year to increase the counselling staff at HWC. Monies from the Equal Futures Project was used to upgrade the existing VoIP telephone system as well as provide laptops for all staff members during the COVID 19 pandemic. This provided staff members with the necessary equipment to continue to provide support services via secure online video conferencing in the event of the office at Mayfield being temporarily closed.

Hunter Early Childhood Centre has been through a challenging year with the change of funding offered by the Department of Education in December 2019. In March 2020 HECC was able to maintain services during the COVID 19 pandemic with the help of the Governments Jobkeeper Payments incentives, as well as Community grants aimed at small business. While facilities worked at a reduced capacity to comply with COVID 19 restrictions the Centre continued to provide quality early childhood education. The generous donations received from Parents of HECC children during this difficult time will be used to update current services.

Funding Source	Percentage of Total Funding	2019/2020 Income
Government Grants		
Hunter New England Health	35.8%	\$ 541,587.00
Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC – NSW Dept Education)	2.3%	\$ 34,911.00
Service NSW – Small Business Grant	0.7%	\$ 10,000.00
Hunter Early Childhood Centre		
Childcare Centre fees	42.4%	\$ 641,536.00

Wage subsidies	1.4%	\$ 20,445.00
Other Donations/Grants		
Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group Donation	2.0%	\$ 30,583.00
Newcastle Permanent Building Society – Discoveries Program	0.5%	\$ 6,444.00
Equal Futures	1.4%	\$ 21,477.00
Other Income		
Australian Taxation Office – Cashflow Boost	3.3%	\$ 50,000.00
Jobkeeper Payments	5.9%	\$ 90,000.00
Room Hire and Rental income	0.7%	\$ 11,855.00
Other Donations/Fundraising	1.6%	\$ 23,997.00
Other income	2.0%	\$ 30,877.00
Total income		\$ 1,513,712.00

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Auditor's Report

Attached Report