



# **Annual Report**

## **2015-16**

Hunter Region Working  
Women's Group Ltd

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## Our Purpose

To engage, support and empower Hunter women and their families to improve their lives through childcare, early learning services and gender specific health and family programs.

## Who are we?

Mary Callcott, with her daughters Barbara and Ruth, inspired by the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre and assisted by local women, formed the Hunter Region Working Women's Group Ltd in 1974. The purpose of the HRWWG was to champion equality and empowerment for women in all aspects of life and to raise the status of women.

A Working Women's Centre was established in Mayfield at the beginning of 1975 in temporary premises on Maitland Road and moved to its current premises in 1975.

In 1975 the HRWWG Committee met Elizabeth Reid who was Adviser for Women and she was interested in the idea of a multi-purpose centre that helped women have more control over their own identities and equality of work and pay. Purchasing the current building was an initiative of the Whitlam Government as part of International Women's Year and the incoming Fraser Government honoured the commitment. The health department were prepared to fund a community health centre but it had to be around Mayfield.

One of our early founding committee was Sybil Smith who voluntarily started English day classes for migrant women and after one or two years adult migrant services funded this program.

Lyn McLardy, the only woman practising law in Newcastle at the time, provided services to the Centre.

Over its 40 years the HRWWG has established the Hunter Women's Centre and Six Hats Early Childhood Service on the site at Mayfield and has continues to diversify its services to women of the Hunter

On International Women's Day 2016 the HRWWG celebrated its 40th birthday.

## Management and Structure

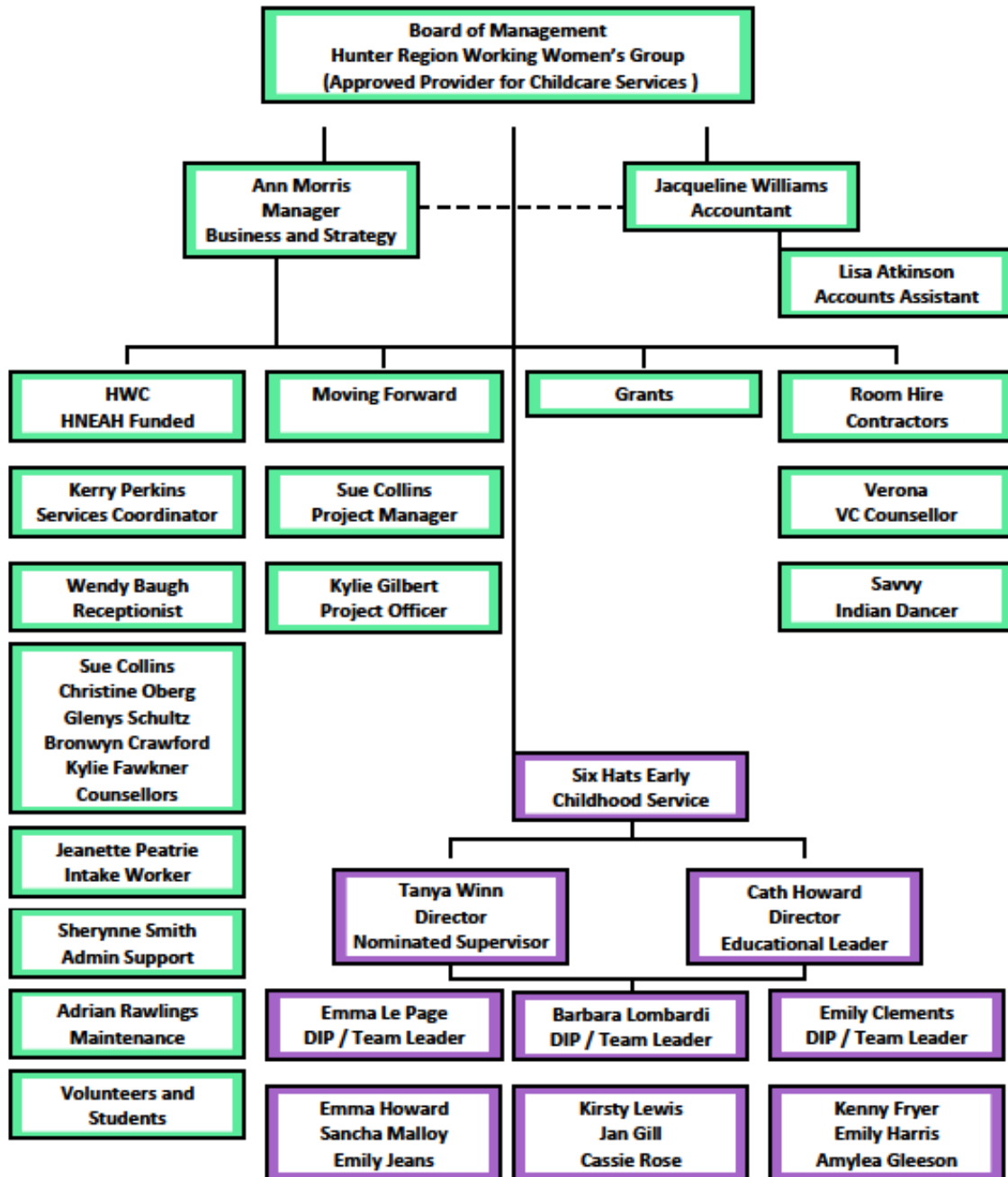
The HRWWG is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) and managed by a Board of Management who meets on a monthly basis. The Board employs an accountant and manager who assist in the management of the two major projects, Hunter Women's Centre and Six Hats Early Childhood Service. The Hunter Women's Centre is funded by NSW Health through Hunter New England local Health District and Six Hats Early Childhood Service operates as a fee-for-service community childcare service with Department of Education subsidies.

The organisation raises additional funds through fundraising, donations, grants and commercial tendering.

### Current Board Members

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Geri Reeve        | Chairperson         |
| Karen Phillips    | Vice Chairperson    |
| Annette Morrissey | Secretary/Treasurer |
| Helen Harvey      | Member              |
| Jennifer Parkes   | Member              |
| Rhonda Spain      | Member              |

## Organisational Structure



## Chairperson's Report

The HRWWG Board has had an eventful year with both Hunter Women's Centre and Six Hats achieving milestones.

With two directors (Noreen Fleming and Rikki Jones) resigning this year, our board has diminished to five directors. Fortunately we have recently welcomed a new director (Rhonda Spain) into the group and we have interest by another two women who will hopefully join in the near future.

October 2016 saw the directors attend a strategy day where a number of areas were addressed and this has helped the Board focus on which direction we need to take in 2017.

Despite a lengthy investigation in January by ACNC (Australian Charities and Not for Profit), the Board and HWC came out with a clean slate but it did highlight the importance of good accounting which is why we are so grateful to have Jacqueline Williams as our hard working accountant on staff.

HWC celebrated 40 years of service with an art display. Not one to rest on her laurels, Ann Morris, our Manager of Business and Strategy introduced a number of programs including outreach services, training and mentoring, amongst them the highly successful Moving Forward Program that linked volunteer mentors with women who have experienced domestic or family violence. This was in keeping with the strategic plan to increase and diversify services.

A higher profile for HWC led to an increase in donations and local grant funding from Aurizon, Wests, NRMA, Chubb and the community. A highlight this year was being chosen as the recipient of a very generous donation from Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group. I had the pleasure of attending the annual NCIG Ball with the board and staff members from HWC to witness the frenzied fundraising by NCIG employees on the night to achieve the outstanding figure of \$93,700 for our organisation. NCIG also donated goods (furniture and computers) and repair services to help offset the financial demands made on HWC to keep its services running.

HRWWG spent some reserves (reflected in overspending of the HNEH Grant) in supporting additional counselling and women in need and investment in the ongoing establishment of a medical service to hopefully be in operation in 2017.

To ensure both HWC and Six Hats are safe and pleasant environments for clients, there have been significant repairs to the buildings and grounds of both services including guttering, roof repairs, external lighting on time switches, garden drainage to reduce flooding of garden and car park and new garden beds.

Six Hat's relationship with the Newcastle Men's Shed has benefited both groups with the men building a buddy chair and a stage for the day care centre. The initiative of both Tanya and Cath at Six Hats has resulted in the education of the children attending the centre in the benefits of healthy eating through the growing and cooking of vegetables out of their very own garden. And as I write this report, a colourful cookbook is in production as part of their fundraising drive.

Six Hats received a very positive Assessment and Review in their Quality Assurance Audit and HWC undertook its first audit against Australian Service Excellence Standards with only a few areas cited for improvement. All these will be finalised by the end of the year for accreditation.

After eight years on the board and the last one as Chairperson, I am resigning to follow another path. I wish to acknowledge the support from my fellow board members. Although there have been some challenging times this past year, Karen Phillips (Deputy Chair), Annette Morrissey (Secretary), Jennifer Parkes and Helen Harvey have given expert advice and guidance when needed and each has played to their strength depending on the challenge at the time!

*Geraldine Reeve*

Chairperson

## Manager's Report

This year The Hunter Region Working Women's Group (HRWWG) has consolidated the progress made in 2015 to expanding services and locations.

From a managerial perspective the main focus has been to ensure the consolidation of quality services and ensure the organisation had the resources it needs to meet strategic objectives, in particular financial stability in the face of ever changing funding models.

Planning has focussed on ensuring a sustainable future for the HRWWG through increased promotion, advocacy, building partnerships, profiling, promoting the services on offer and ensuring financial stability through diversification of income streams. Both Hunter Women's Centre and Six Hats have worked within this framework.

Financial management has now ensured the organisation has the ability to report accurately against all funding received and monitor financial viability. Accountant, Jacqueline Williams has worked tirelessly in reviewing account structures and staff wages, purchasing and maintenance costs to enable costs savings and waste minimisation. We have now commenced a process to consolidate services such as carpet cleaning, pest control and maintenance across HWC and Six Hats.

A disappointment this year was the inability to secure a medical service for the HRWWG but this is firmly on the agenda for 2017 as we focus on service expansion and alignment to good health initiatives.

A considerable amount of time has been put into expanding and strengthening working relationships and referral pathways with other organisations. This has also facilitated and increased the profile for the organisation leading to greater levels of donations. Success with additional grant funding has not been as successful as liked but Aurizon provided \$5000 in funds to expand the HWC program supporting the friends and families of domestic violence impacted women. A Volunteers Grant of \$2,493 was obtained to enable provision of an additional computer and office space to volunteers, NRMA, Mary Kay and West Leagues Club also donated funds. We have also received in kind donations from Chubb and suppliers. Then there are those who donate what they can in cash, kind and all manner of items to support disadvantaged women.

As the buildings on our site age more maintenance had been required and financing this has added to the year's financial loss. A decision was made to employ an internal maintenance officer to undertake cleaning, gardening and the many small maintenance jobs. This has proved to be a very cost effective measure as less external tradespersons have been required.

Major maintenance works were required to repair roof leaks, clean out guttering and drains and replace plumbing from the building to the street. Water isolation switches to place Six Hats and Hunter Women's Centre on separate supplies was also completed so water interruption to the children's service is less risk. An additional space has been created this year to meet demand for counselling and referral services and the kitchen build last year from grants has been equipped and is now in full use. Vertical drapes and air conditioners also required replacing.

The Board also approved the replacement of all external lighting with energy efficient time set lights which in the long term will save money and are better for the environment.

Thanks to the donation of computers from Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group we now have a computer hub for women to use to print documents, complete assignments and access the internet. This encourages independence and self-reliance.

Highlights of the past twelve months include:

- Ongoing chair of the Multicultural Domestic Violence Prevention Committee
- Moving Forward program expanded and now able to be part funded under Hunter New England Health funding

- Ongoing support of the Walk a Mile Koori Style White Ribbon event
- Establishment of a Computer Hub to facilitate access to technology and the internet
- Beneficiary of the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group fundraising ball and donations totally approximately \$100,000 which will be realised in the financials in 2016-17
- International Women's Day art exhibition celebrating 40 years of operation
- Increase in profile with the Indigenous and Multicultural communities
- Finalisation of quality assurance under the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES)
- Revamp of all garden areas and planning of new shrubs.

The professionalism and commitment of all staff across the organisation is to be commended and it has been my pleasure to work with them this year. In particular I would like to acknowledge Kerry Perkins in her role as Services Coordinator who has assisted greatly in the successful ASES audit and the general running and expansion of services.



Ann Morris

Manager-Business and Strategy



## Hunter Women's Centre

Over the 2015-16 funding period HWC has seen consolidated its position as a leader in the provision of specialised services to women impacted by violence and isolation. Counselling has continued to grow but Casework has lessened as this is now provided by others including homelessness services. As a result of this decline negotiations were undertaken with HNEH to remove Casework from the 2016-17 contract.

The HWC continues to enjoy strong relationships with providers who are key to the services funded by HNEH including government departments, women's refuges (Carrie's Place, Nova and Jenny's Place, Warlga Ngurra), financial and legal services, neighbourhood centres and community services. HWC is now represented at all Domestic Violence Committees across the Hunter Region.

During the financial year significant collaboration has been occurred in response to the demand for outreach counselling services with Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood Centre, Nikinpa Family and Children's Service (Toronto) and Carrie's Place in Maitland.

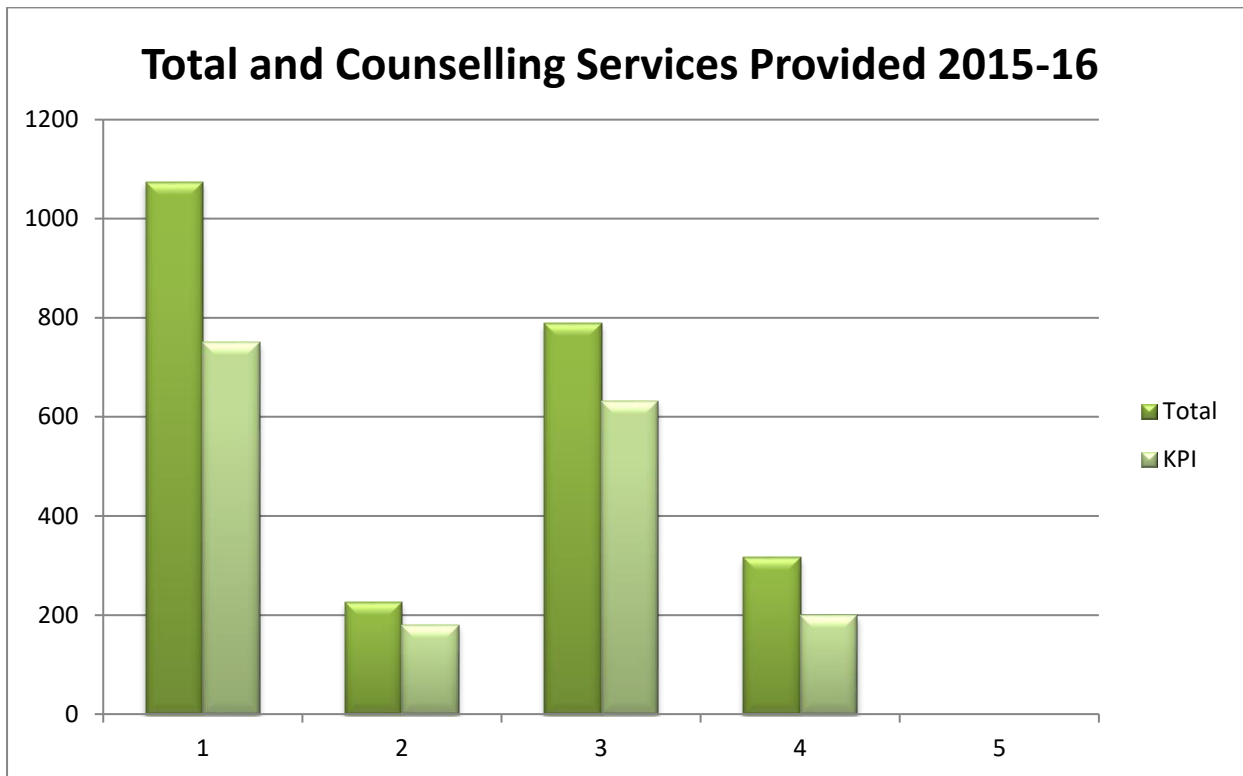
Collaborations on the following groups were undertaken with the owner organisations conducting these at HWC premises and taking HWC clients-Shark Cage conducted by Newcastle Family Support Service, Flourish program by Neami and Living Beyond Abuse by Baptist Care. These programs compliment the funded services by providing access to additional support for women experiencing DV.

There were no changes to staff members this year. We have provided placements to six students from TAFE, Newcastle University and private colleges. These have been undertaking studies in counselling and social work. We hosted an international student (USA) for 12 weeks and she was a great asset in assisting with data collection and spread sheet design.

All staff have undertaken training in Trauma Informed Care and Staying Current in Child Protection this year. Counselling staff have attended mandatory supervision and this has increased as we have more clients with complex needs. Management has continued to engage with WHNSW attending the Women's Health Summit and the quarterly meetings.

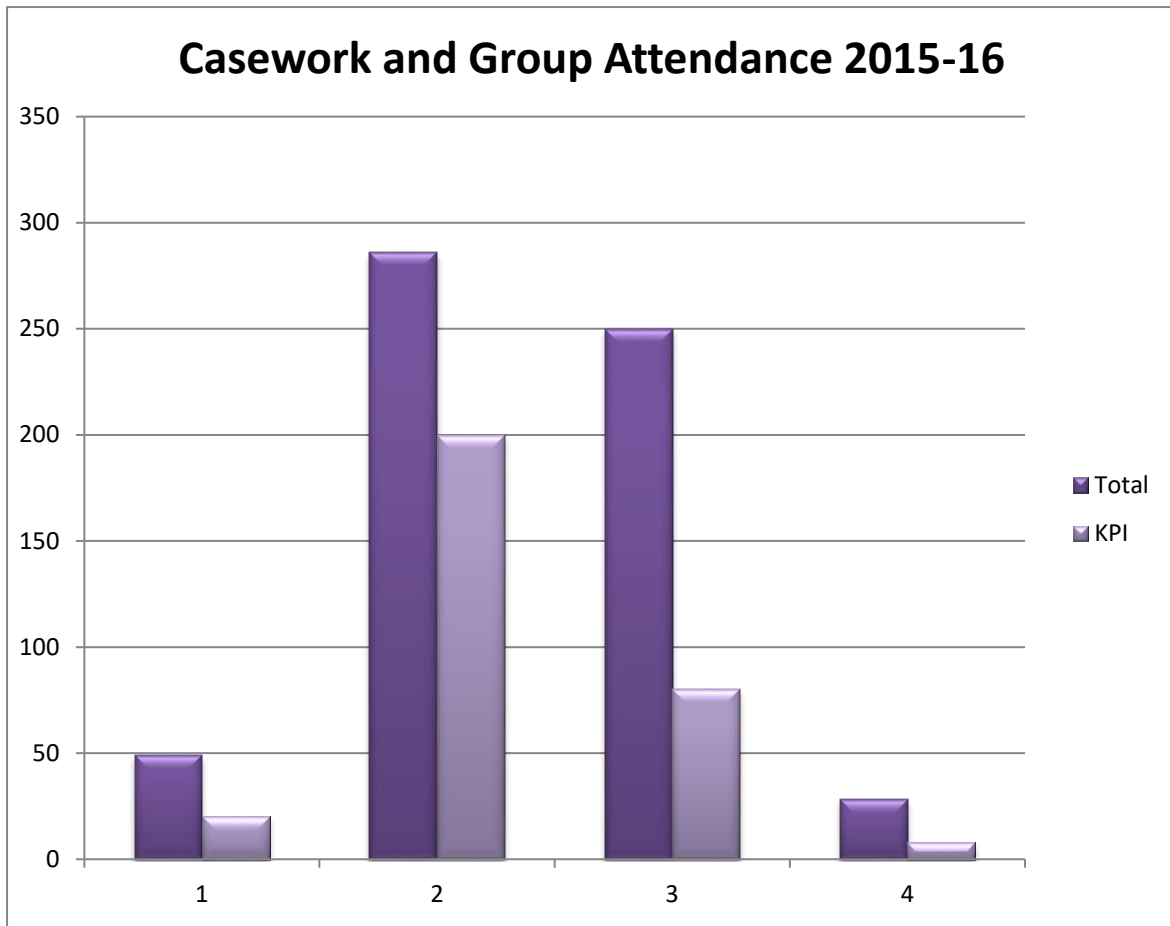
Overall HWC is managing an increasing demand for services especially in the area of domestic violence support. Demand for counselling, particularly for domestic violence, continues to exceed the capacity of Hunter Women's Centre. Women are referred out to alternative services and appropriate practitioners however a waitlist for counselling was introduced for women who did not accept or could not secure referrals to other services. HRWWG has contributed additional funds to support this increasing number of women.

## Summary of Performance



### Key

- 1 Total women receiving counselling, casework and support
- 2 Total women received counselling
- 3 Total occasions of service-counselling
- 4 Total number of women receiving health related advice for smoking and healthy lifestyle



**Key**

- 1 Total women receiving casework
- 2 Total occasions of service-casework
- 3 Total women attending therapeutic/health workshops
- 4 Total number of workshops conducted

## Statistical Data by NSW Health Activity

### **Activity One: Provision of information and referral, counselling, casework, advocacy and outreach working within the NSW Health Framework for Women's Health. Figures in brackets are for the 2014-15 year for comparison.**

Hunter Women's Centre continues to reach baseline targets for information and referral, in-house counselling and outreach counselling as reported in the Quarterly Reports. The number of workshops and groups provided continues to exceed baseline targets. The number of Aboriginal women accessing services remains stable and exceeds the representation of this target group in the Hunter Region population.

The Centre continues to strengthen partnerships with multicultural services and this is reflected in an increase in numbers of CALD women accessing the service and a corresponding increase in the use of interpreters. Of interest is in the past this target group have accessed HWC primarily for information and referral, however in this financial year they are accessing counselling and the occasions of service using interpreters have increased.

Outreach counselling is now offered in Toronto and Maitland in addition to Port Stephens which has seen an increase of women accessing services in these areas. Westlakes 12.5% (6.5%) and Hunter 13% (9.5%).

The number of women accessing the casework service has declined and may be an indication of the increased scope of the specialist homelessness services. However referral partnerships and pathways continue to link clients of these services to Hunter Women's Centre for counselling and groups and workshops.

The percentage of women who identify as having a disability has declined from 16% in the last financial year to 13%. The figure may be reflective of the Centre not delivering outreach workshops to this target group for the year as it has done so in the past as the NDIS has taken on this activity through its service providers.

The number of women access HWC in the Eastlake area has declined 5% (10%), and is indicative of the decline in the number of outreach workshops to the area. This will be addressed in 2017 planning.

To address the decline in outreach workshops HWC is undertaking further promotion of outreach provision throughout the Hunter Region but current funds limit service provision though demand is high.

HWC continues to improve client evaluation and feedback tools and methods. In January 2016 a new general feedback survey was introduced which has seen the number of women providing feedback of the service increase with the same number completed in the last 6 months of this f/y as were completed for the full 14/15fy. Workshop and group evaluation methods have been reviewed and the new feedback tool is ready to be introduced in 16/17 f/y.

Data collection has been improved with the development of data bases that collect information beyond that required by NSWWH have been implemented. This enables the organisation to improve and modify programs and services to clients

### **Economic Status**

45% (49%) of clients receive Centrelink Pensions/Benefits as their primary source of income

3.5% (2%) of clients receive no personal income

724 occasions of service where financial problems were identified

### **Disability**

13% (16%) of clients identify as having a disability (excludes depression/anxiety).

2552 occasions of service where emotional/mental health was identified as an issue. 31% of these were related to anxiety and depression.

## **Age Group**

10.5% over 60yo (10%)  
7% youth (16-24) (12.5%)  
Aboriginal Women

5% (4.5%) clients identified as Aboriginal and/or TSI.

## **CALD**

4 (2) clients with 19 occasions of service requiring an interpreter  
11% clients from CALD backgrounds (4%) HWC continues to strengthen partnerships with multicultural services and Multicultural Health

## **Domestic Violence**

47% (46%) clients contacting HWC are experiencing violence as an issue  
1106 occasions of service were provided to support clients experiencing violence, 85.5% of which relates to domestic violence

## **Rural and Remote Women**

LGA's

Newcastle: 56% (57.5%)  
Port Stephens: 13.5% (15.5%)  
Eastlakes: 5% (10%)  
Westlakes: 12.5% (6.5%)  
Lower Hunter: 12% (9%)  
Upper Hunter: 0.5% (1%)

## **Activity Two: Provision of assessment, brief advice and referral for all at risk clients in relation to risk factors for chronic disease including smoking, AOD, nutrition and physical activity.**

Hunter Women's Centre has met the targets and baselines for the activity. At risk clients are identified at Intake, and at the initial assessment of new counselling and casework clients. There is a challenge in engaging at risk clients to accept brief advice and referral information and take up the support on offer through the Quitline and Get Healthy Resources. As in past years the feedback shows that the majority of at risk clients would like to give up smoking and/or improve their nutrition and physical health, however they will consider it in the future once they have dealt with the more urgent issues such as domestic violence, housing and legal.

This financial year four cooking healthy meals on a budget workshops were successfully incorporated into the term programs in order to increase client engagement, knowledge and awareness of healthy nutritional choices. In addition, this year information on referrals to Get Healthy, Quitline and Hunter New England Health Drug and Alcohol services were included in the Centre's general brochure which is included in client correspondence and available at reception.

Quit Packs, Get Healthy Information and AoD information is available at reception, in counselling rooms and throughout the Centre. At groups and workshops facilitators discussed health risk factors with participants and written resources were made available. Hunter Women's Centre also offered direct client support to supplement brief advice and referral in the form of quit smoking counselling and counselling for drug and alcohol related issues. The fortnightly Support Group for Women Over the Age of Fifty continues to incorporate health information sessions on lifestyle risk factors for women into the program.

For the 2016/17 f/y the Centre is introducing a new health assessment for counselling clients bringing it in line with the HNE Health Better Health Assessment Tool.

## Six Hats Early Childhood Service

Six Hats has continued to provide quality care for children and has focussed on its educational and school preparation programs as well as environmental sustainability. The children and staff have benefited from the new playground which was extensively refurbished following the April storms.

The Long Day Care Professional Development Funding has continued to enable educators to up skill and provide opportunities to attend conferences network and participate in motivational seminars. The qualification level of staff is increasing as is their skills and knowledge in childhood education and care.

A continued supported culture of collaboration with staff has ensured educators have a sense of belonging to the service. All staff completed in service on self-responsibility and creating a happy life (Jan 2016).

Staffing has been stable with only three staff leaving over the year and these have been replaced. Recruitment will commence in December 2016 for a new Early Childhood Educator Six Hats has also supported the training for the industry by hosting trainees from Newcastle University.

The service has maintained compliance and had an excellent result in meeting all 7 standards in Assessment and Review against the National Standards, held in July.

Parents have been generous in donating fabric, food and money to the current programs (cooking, visual/dramatic arts). Jessica Blacklow has volunteered her time and skill in designing and formatting our cookbook. This year families have been deeply involved in feedback and sharing their lives with us.

Six Hats continues to identify itself through innovative programs, staff commitment and training and the relationships it builds with families and the community; as well as its quality reflected in exceeding minimum regulatory requirements.

Several innovative programs have been initiated this year.

- **Mayfield Aged Care** visits were constructed from current research on inter-generational studies outlining the benefits for both residents and children in that it has been shown to reduce feelings of being alone and isolation; increase the children's understandings of diversity and building reciprocal partnerships with the community. In terms of wellbeing and identity, this program has deepened emotional understandings, explored diversity and kindness while broadening children's perspectives of their community and world.
- **Mayfield West Men's Shed** – Six Hats reached out to the Men's Shed when we looked into adding to the current environment ie the preschool stage and buddy chair for outside. This was an intentional partnership with our community to build relationships to benefit both Six Hats and Men's Shed. Our ongoing collaboration will facilitate opportunities to organise repair and construction for Six Hats and projects for the Men's Shed. The children have been able to see their plans come to fruition and engage authentically in dramatic arts (through performance, choreography and design. The children have engaged in metacognitive patterning through order, sequence and critical thinking, developed confidence and learned about the things that make them wonderfully and importantly unique.
- **First Chance** – collaboration to meet outcomes and professional support to assist in planning, strategies and learning opportunities for our additional needs children. Educators can share theory and research in teaching practice and how children learn to give all of the children in our care the best possible opportunities to successfully

reach outcomes. Being able to educate and care for additional needs children, give the children in our care opportunities to engage in an inclusive environment to learn skills across domains. Again, this supports our ongoing community partnerships.

- **The Garden to Cooking Program** is unique to Six Hats in that the educators sought to bring an authentic and holistic practice to demonstrate the inter-dependence between people, land and animals in line with our sustainability goals for children from birth to age 5. Children have had opportunities to engage in sensory experiences, learn how to successfully grow plants they can eat, that are healthy and are part of recipes that they can cook. Learning skills for life, the children have cared for plants, harvested, prepared food, cooked food, developed recipes and engaged in menu planning while learning about health and nutrition in ways that embed the knowledge.

In 2017 we are looking to consolidate and expand on the cooking program and our community partnerships. We will be having inter-disciplinary meetings to set goals for our additional needs programs. We will be working closely with all of the children in our care to observe their interests and incorporate these interests authentically into our program to continue to build on empowering children, giving children a voice and developing resilience. We will be collaborating with our local schools to build on our school readiness program.

### Statistical Data

Occupancy this year has been lower than last year and can be partially explained by the opening of additional childcare centres in the area including the The Hub (Waratah), opening, Tilly's (Waratah) opening, Play Learn Grow (Mayfield) opening. These are all long day care services charging higher fees than Six Hats.

Occupancy % 2015/16 comparison

|           | Mon 15 | 2016      | Tue 15 | 2016      | Wed 15 | 2016       | Thu 15 | 2016       | Fri 15 | 2016      |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|-----------|
| January   | 89     | <b>66</b> | 93     | <b>80</b> | 98     | <b>86</b>  | 98     | <b>79</b>  | 82     | <b>63</b> |
| February  | 85     | <b>67</b> | 93     | <b>75</b> | 98     | <b>81</b>  | 96     | <b>72</b>  | 83     | <b>66</b> |
| March     | 83     | <b>66</b> | 94     | <b>76</b> | 98     | <b>80</b>  | 96     | <b>81</b>  | 83     | <b>75</b> |
| April     | 83     | <b>70</b> | 93     | <b>79</b> | 98     | <b>84</b>  | 92     | <b>86</b>  | 84     | <b>81</b> |
| May       | 77     | <b>71</b> | 85     | <b>80</b> | 94     | <b>89</b>  | 91     | <b>89</b>  | 81     | <b>87</b> |
| June      | 75     | <b>76</b> | 86     | <b>80</b> | 94     | <b>88</b>  | 100    | <b>89</b>  | 86     | <b>86</b> |
| July      | 83     | <b>68</b> | 89     | <b>86</b> | 93     | <b>96</b>  | 100    | <b>94</b>  | 67     | <b>84</b> |
| August    | 63     | <b>69</b> | 67     | <b>91</b> | 93     | <b>98</b>  | 102    | <b>97</b>  | 91     | <b>84</b> |
| September | 85     | <b>70</b> | 91     | <b>91</b> | 97     | <b>99</b>  | 100    | <b>99</b>  | 93     | <b>90</b> |
| October   | 93     | <b>81</b> | 91     | <b>96</b> | 97     | <b>100</b> | 100    | <b>100</b> | 91     | <b>98</b> |
| November  | 90     | <b>78</b> | 91     | <b>96</b> | 93     | <b>101</b> | 100    | <b>101</b> | 91     | <b>94</b> |

# Supplementary Documents

## **Annual Audited Financial Statements**