



Coast Shelter Annual Report 2014-2015



Coast Shelter's vision is to end homelessness on the NSW Central Coast. We work towards this vision by advocating for and supporting those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. By providing early intervention preventative programs, crisis and transitional housing, we are able to help people achieve independence.



Welcome to the 23rd Annual Report of Coast Shelter.

Coast Shelter has progressively grown, learnt many lessons and adapted to the demands of a changing community environment. The following reports refer to the challenges we have experienced and overcome during 2014-2015.

Following changes as a result of the Going Home Staying Home Reform, it took some time for us to transition into an effective unit, incorporating new programs and staff. It is a compliment to our Executive Officer and his talented team that the whole process was dealt with in a timely manner and without loss to our service delivery standards.

With the addition of new Directors this year, I am keen to report that we have one of the most talented groups of people I have had the pleasure to work with. They contribute a variety of skills and bring great energy, commitment and enthusiasm to their roles.

Coast Shelter has completed the year with a great level of success and we look forward to the exciting year ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gavin Shepherd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gavin Shepherd
President

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The Coast Shelter Team

The growth of Coast Shelter over the past year has been quite an accomplishment and one that ensures we are able to deliver more services to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This transition would not have been possible without a highly skilled Board of Directors and staff force, who are committed to our vision of ending homelessness on the NSW Central Coast.

Throughout the Going Home Staying Home Reform process, we were faced with many challenges which required Coast Shelter to be adaptive and flexible. Despite the chaotic process, our staff remained dedicated and professional in their approach. We are extremely grateful for their reliability and support throughout the entire transition process.

Coast Shelter's staff are at the core of our organisation and we rely upon them to provide support to vulnerable and sometimes traumatised clients. The work can be demanding, yet our staff continue to achieve some outstanding and truly inspiring results.

This kind of work requires special people; staff who care about what they do and who hold a strong belief in the importance of providing positive outcomes for clients.













At Coast Shelter we are constantly impressed by the energy, drive and commitment of our staff. We have a strong focus on professional development and continual improvement to build our expertise. In recognition of the breadth of knowledge and skills of our staff, we have high numbers of tertiary qualified employees. Furthermore, staff training has included; trauma informed practice, child protection dynamics, case management, suicide intervention, self-harm, cultural awareness and domestic violence to name just a few.

On behalf of our clients, we extend our thanks and gratitude for their dedication, commitment, compassion, professional and client-focused practice. Our staff are to be commended for the positive outcomes they achieve with individuals and families each and every day.

Members of Staff



Board of Directors

 Gavin Shepherd President	 Esmeralda Branco Vice President	 Dr Bob McGuinness Secretary
 Gabby Bowles Director	 Mandy Coolen Director	 Pat Dell Director
 Michael Goodwin Director	 Mick Pittman Director	 Margaret Portass Director
 Maree Roberts Director	 Kian Safaei Director	 Vicki Scott Director

Employee of the Year

Steve Keane is Manager of our Coimba Men's Program. He has been employed by Coast Shelter since 2006 and is an enthusiastic and hardworking member of staff. Steve is very passionate about his work and excels at providing a high level of support to men experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. Under Steve's leadership, the Coimba team have adapted to the changes as a result of the Reform, taking on additional outreach properties and achieving some excellent outcomes for men facing adversity.



Runner Up Employee of the Year

Nicole Harvey is Manager of our Elandra Women and Children's Refuge. She has been employed since 2011 and in this time she has displayed very strong leadership and management skills. Nicole is always prepared to assist the Service in anyway needed, particularly during the Going Home Staying Home Reform when she assisted with the tender writing process. Nicole is to be commended for her commitment and dedication, not only to the Service, but also to her clients and the Elandra team.



Executive Officer's Report



To paraphrase Charles Dickens; 2014-15 was the best of years, it was the worst of years. We began preparations for the year in anticipation of the Going Home Staying Home Reform, then the announcements of the successful tenders and finally the implementation of the Reform.

It's great to hear that the Department of Family and Community Services would not submit the Sector to a repeat of the process, which caused so much angst and downright anxiety. Although Coast Shelter lost funding for Rumbalara Youth Refuge, Wyong Accommodation Support Program and the Family Brokerage Project; it was successful in being awarded the management of the three Women and Accompanying Children's Refuges, the Men's Crisis Refuge and four Youth Refuges.

Unfortunately, the Department could not see its way clear to recognise the value of the Community Centre and reallocate the small amount of funding which had assisted us to fund the Centre. This was compounded when, later in the year, we were unsuccessful with our application for Emergency Relief funding and our wonderful supporters at Narara Neighbourhood Centre also lost their Emergency Relief funding. And so, with increasing numbers of homeless persons coming to us for assistance, it was a question of getting on with the job.

To increase our capacity to meet accommodation needs, particularly of women and children escaping domestic violence, staff have been able to negotiate with our friends at Pacific Link Housing, Compass Housing and Housing NSW to obtain an additional 68 properties which allow us to move people from our Refuges into semi-independence. With such a chronic shortage of affordable rentals on the Central Coast, this at least gives us breathing space as we attempt to find permanent housing for our residents.

Unfortunately, the numbers of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness continue to increase, and it is through our Community Centre that we are able to provide

some relief. Whether it is assisting people to maintain their unaffordable rentals by way of supplying food parcels and meals, or assisting with No Interest Loans, Emergency Relief, assistance with Energy Accounts, pharmaceutical products, podiatry, legal or tenancy advice. When people have to choose between paying for a roof over their heads, or paying for food and other essentials, we are just so lucky that with the assistance of our community volunteers and other agencies, we are able to provide such a wide range of support services.

Our biggest disappointment is that, to date we have not been able to convince either State or Federal Governments of the value of our Community Centre, and so continue to depend solely on the financial support of our businesses, Registered Clubs, members of the community and our wonderful team of volunteers. The success of our fundraisers and our Fundraising Committee give us great confidence as we enter the new year. While we will continue to lobby both State and Federal Governments to provide recurrent funding to our Community Centre and Rumbalara Youth Refuge, it seems we will continue to be dependent on our wonderfully generous community.

Under the direction of our Board of Directors and supported by our dedicated staff, 2014-2015 has been an extremely successful year, in which we have been able to provide 49,406 overnight beds and give additional support to further members of the community.

Laurie Maher OAM
Executive Officer

The Going Home Staying Home Reform

It is very difficult to describe the immense impact that the Going Home Staying Home Reform had on the Specialist Homelessness Sector. The process, which was imposed by the State Government, required all Services to tender in order to retain their programs, extend their services or take on new programs.

Coast Shelter tendered for a number of Specialist Homelessness Services and was successful in securing four funded packages, which included the following eight refuges across the Central Coast:

- Kara Women and Children's Refuge
- Elandra Women and Children's Refuge
- Neleh House for Women and Children
- Coimba Men's Refuge
- Maya Young Women's Refuge
- Youth Angle Refuge
- Wyong Youth Refuge
- Woy Woy Youth Cottage

Although we took on three additional refuges as a result of the Reform, the reallocation of funds significantly impacted

a number of our existing services. Disappointingly, our highly successful Wyong Accommodation Support Program, which provided 18,555 overnight beds in 2013-2014, was not included in the new funded packages. Luckily we were able to transfer some of the outreach properties to our Men's Service, however the loss of funding for staff was an unfortunate outcome of the Reform.

Our Rumbalara Youth Refuge was also not considered as part of the Reform as the property was owned by Gosford City Council. We received an immense amount of community support appealing for its funding to continue and fortunately, with the assistance of staff at our local Department of Family and Community Services Office, funding to this essential service was finally restored.

With the wonderful efforts of staff, we were able to provide a consistent and high level of support in all of our programs throughout the turbulent transition process. To ensure the success of the Reform, we put significant effort into collaborating with other agencies and strengthening partnerships, to develop a new and improved homelessness service system on the Central Coast.



Elandra Women and Children's Refuge

Elandra is a six bedroom refuge located at Toukley. The addition of this refuge has increased our capacity to provide crisis accommodation to women and children in the Wyong Shire.



Neleh Women and Children's Refuge

Neleh was previously known as Woy Woy Women and Children's Service. This Refuge is part of the Women and Children's funding package which also includes Kara and Elandra Refuges.



Wyong Youth Refuge

Wyong Youth Refuge enables us to provide crisis accommodation to six young people in the Wyong Shire. This Refuge is part of the Youth Accommodation funding package which also includes Youth Angle and Woy Woy Youth Cottage.

Concise Financial Report

Coast Shelter is committed to achieving and maintaining a financially sound and well managed organisation. This has been certified by our annual financial audit which was undertaken by Fortunity Chartered Accountants. All financial documentation, control and audit requirements related to funds provided by the Government are met.



Statement of Comprehensive Income

for the year ending 30 June 2015

	2015	2014
Revenue	4,785,177	3,748,823
Employee benefits expense	(3,545,173)	(2,881,360)
Depreciation expense	(131,525)	(129,504)
Rental expense	(29,380)	(54,295)
Repairs & maintenance	(54,550)	(35,965)
Insurance	(137,831)	(112,814)
Brokerage	(65,233)	(285,879)
Other expenses	(465,144)	(377,363)
Surplus/ (Deficit) before income tax	356,341	(128,357)
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus/ (Deficit) for the year	356,341	(128,357)
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	356,341	(128,357)

Auditor's Independence Declaration under Subdivision 60-C of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 to the Directors of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Service Ltd (trading as Coast Shelter)

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2015 there have been:

1. No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits commission Act 2012 in relation to the audit; and
2. No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

FORTUNITY ASSURANCE

T R Davidson - Partner

Registered Company Auditor No: 1177

155 The Entrance Road, ERINA NSW

This Concise Financial Report is summarised from the audited financial statements. Complete signed copies of the financial report are available on request.

Statement of Financial Position for the year ending 30 June 2015

Assets	2015	2014
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,159,072	357,135
Trade and other receivables	66,912	57,443
Other assets	31,519	25,283
Total Current Assets	1,257,503	439,861
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant & equipment	2,087,453	2,105,150
Total Non-current Assets	2,087,453	2,105,150
Total Assets	3,344,956	2,545,011

Liabilities	2015	2014
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	359,340	220,408
Other liabilities	231,293	-
Provisions	298,775	283,716
Total Current Liabilities	889,408	504,124
Non Current Liabilities		
Provisions	165,208	106,888
Total Non Current Liabilities	165,208	106,888
Total Liabilities	1,054,616	611,012

Net Assets	2,290,340	1,933,999
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Members' Funds		
Retained earnings	2,065,984	1,709,643
Reserves	224,356	224,356
Total Members' Funds	2,290,340	1,933,999

Directors' Declaration

In accordance with a resolution of the directors of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd, the directors declare that:

- The financial statements and notes are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012:
 - comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements; and
 - give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the company.
- In the directors' opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.

Gavin Shepherd - President

Mandy Coolen – Director

Declaration By Principal Officer in Respect Of Fundraising Appeals

I, Laurie Maher, Chief Executive Officer of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd, declare that in my opinion:

- the accounts give a true and fair view of all income and expenditure of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd with respect to fundraising appeals; and
- the statement of financial position gives a true and fair view of the state of affairs with respect to the fundraising appeals; and
- the provisions of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and, the regulations under the Act and the conditions attached to the authority have been complied with; and
- the internal controls exercised by Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Service Ltd are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received and applied from any fundraising appeals.

Laurie Maher – Executive Officer

Independent Audit Report To The Members of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd (trading as Coast Shelter)

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd (the company), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015, statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the directors' declaration.

Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The directors of the company are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the company's preparation of the financial report that gives true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used

and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of Australian professional and ethical pronouncements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion the financial report of Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd is in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.
- (c) the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991, including:
 - (i) the financial report shows a true and fair view of the financial result of fundraising appeals for the year to which they relate; and
 - (ii) the financial report and associated records have been properly kept during the year in accordance with this Act and the regulations; and
 - (i) money received as a result of fundraising appeals conducted during the year has been properly accounted for and applied in accordance with this Act and the regulations; and
 - (ii) Central Coast Emergency Accommodation Services Ltd is solvent, as it is able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

FORTUNITY ASSURANCE

T R Davidson - Partner

Registered Company Auditor No: 1177
155 The Entrance Road, ERINA NSW

Operation Manager's Report



Homelessness is more than just people living on the streets. Increasingly over this year, we have seen families forced out of the private rental market due to unemployment, family breakdown and high rental costs.

More men, women, youth and children across the Central Coast are living in unsafe and unsuitable housing, often with no cooking facilities, shared bathrooms and no security of tenure. They seek shelter in cars, refuges, boarding houses, caravans or on a temporary basis, on a friend or relative's couch.

Coast Shelter offers those doing it tough across the Central Coast a hand-up and remains committed to providing a place of dignity and safety for those who need it most. To this end, as a result of the Going Home Staying Home Reform, there is greater importance on the provision of a holistic and flexible approach to addressing the complexities of homelessness. With the emphasis on early intervention and prevention, we are able to improve our response to homelessness with a more coordinated and collaborative approach between Specialist Homelessness Services, mainstream services and other specialist agencies.

We have expanded our programs as a result of the Reform and now have the carriage of all refuges on the Central Coast, which includes five youth, three women and children's refuges and the men's refuge. All programs operate within the values, philosophy and standards of Coast Shelter, always with the client at the forefront. This means providing the client with whatever is needed, whenever it is needed and for as long as needed, until a long-term sustainable outcome can be achieved. Our programs operate across the Central Coast with refuges in Wyong, Gosford and the Peninsula. Each local government area is distinguished by its local community, people, agencies, services, geography and history.

Homelessness should never define the person. All individuals and families we work with have their own unique experiences and stories. Our goal is to understand that story and help to rebuild their lives and end their homelessness.

In recognition of the growing numbers of women and children with whom we are engaged, we have increased programs and improved the skills of staff to ensure we provide the best possible support to our clients. This is to guide us further in incorporating and developing our response to each person, especially to women and children where significant trauma from experiences of domestic and family violence has occurred.

Each of our programs is required to network in the Homelessness Service System as well as allied sectors such as education, employment, training, health, maternal health, mental health and Aboriginal services to name a few. Furthermore, throughout 2014-2015 Coast Shelter has continued to maintain a high profile in the community through regular representation on a number of different committees and advisory groups across the Central Coast, including homelessness, domestic violence, youth and Aboriginal interagency meetings.

I thank the Executive Officer and Board of Directors for their support, insights and skills and I applaud the individuals and families we work alongside for their courage in telling their stories, for making major decisions about their life choices, for seeking assistance and for working as hard as they do to create change, for being resilient and strong and for holding onto their dreams.

Shayne Silvers - Operations Manager

Statistics Report

 **49,406** Overnight Beds

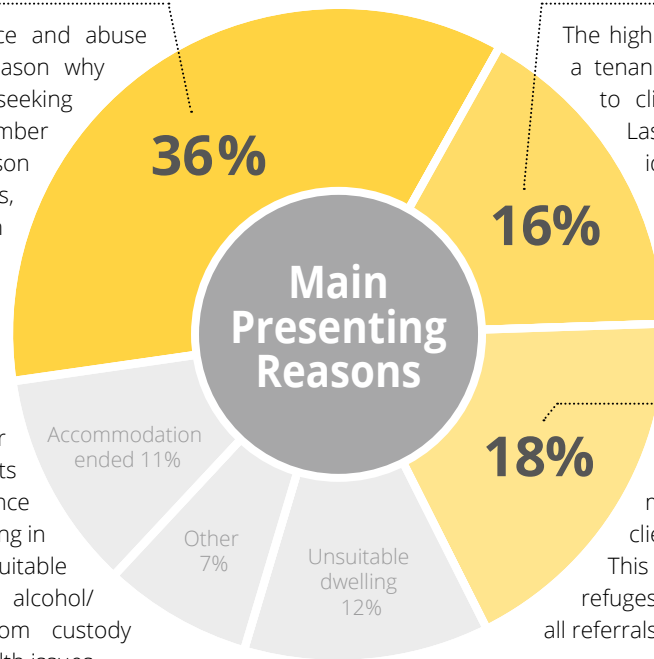
 **693** People Accommodated

Violence and abuse

Last year, domestic violence and abuse was the most common reason why clients came to our Service seeking accommodation. This number has risen by 22% in comparison with last year's statistics, largely due to the addition of the two new Women and Children's Refuges.

Other reasons

There was a range of other primary reasons for clients who sought our assistance such as tenancies ending, living in severely overcrowded or unsuitable dwellings, medical issues, alcohol/drug abuse, transition from custody arrangements or mental health issues.



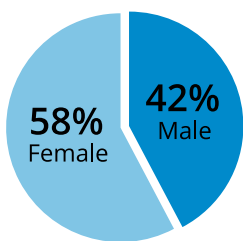
Financial difficulties

The high cost of living and maintaining a tenancy is a significant contributor to clients seeking our assistance. Last year 16% of our clients identified housing affordability related issues (financial difficulties, rents too high or housing crisis) as the main reason for seeking support.

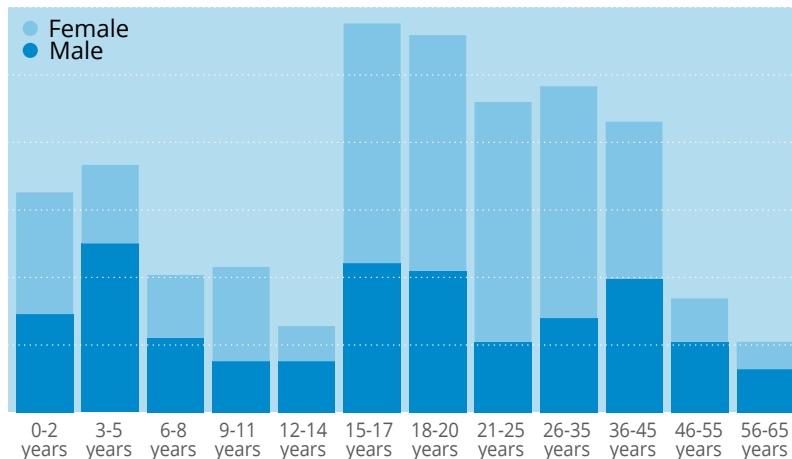
Family breakdown

Relationship issues and family conflicts was the second most common reason for clients coming into our Service. This is mostly seen in the five youth refuges, accounting for almost half of all referrals into those Programs.

Client Demographics



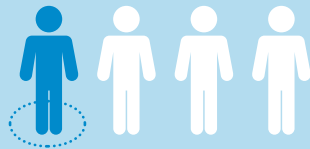
- > Aged between 0-71 years
- > Average age of 21
- > 14% had stayed in a homeless service before
- > 32% had been sleeping rough in the last month
- > 26% had a prior mental health diagnosis
- > 54% were living in a house/townhouse/flat
- > 20% were living with a relative for free



Accommodation

Coast Shelter was only able to provide accommodation for **1 in every 5 people** who sought our assistance with housing last year. We were unable to accommodate 2,334 men, women and young people and of these, **76% was due to having no vacancies**. Those that we are unable to accommodate are provided with information, advice and advocacy in accessing other accommodation options where possible.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients



1 in 4 clients that Coast Shelter accommodated last year identified as being **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**. Coast Shelter has strong partnerships with local agencies including Bungree Aboriginal Association, Nunyara and Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services to ensure our service approach is culturally appropriate.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3% of the Australian population yet continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of Specialist Homelessness Services (ABS 2012). Indigenous people represented 23% of those accessing Specialist Homelessness Services in 2013–14: an estimated 58,420 clients. This represented an increase of 6% of clients compared with the previous year.

Current research on the relationship between **cultural, linguistic, or ethnic diversity** and homelessness is limited, though evidence suggests that family breakdown is a significant risk factor for homelessness for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (AHURI 2013). These clients are more likely to experience social isolation and mental health problems as a result of family breakdown, language barriers, cultural dislocation, discrimination and previous experiences of instability or trauma.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



Last year, **17% of women** in our three Women and Children's Refuges were **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse** clients. These women face additional barriers to safety due to language, cultural beliefs, isolation, immigration risks and a fear of Police or Government Departments. Staff work closely with TIS National (Translating and Interpreting Service) to provide support to these vulnerable women and their children.

Countries of birth included: Philippines, Colombia, Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Sudan, South Korea, India, Russia, Pakistan and Ukraine



Average Length of Stay

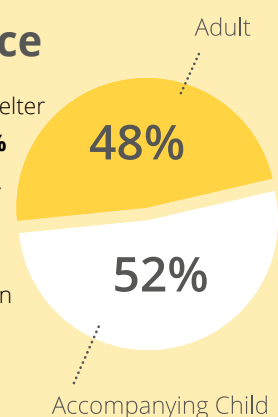
The **average length of stay** in our various programs was **3.5 months**. There are a variety of barriers to clients securing their own tenancy including a lack of affordable housing on the Central Coast and poor/no rental history. We rely heavily on our partnerships with Housing NSW and community housing providers, such as Compass and Pacific Link Housing, to provide low-cost tenancies for clients exiting our Service.

The expected **wait time for public housing** is in excess of 10 years on the Central Coast. At June 2014, more than 390,000 households were living in social housing and there were more than 200,000 applicants on waiting lists across Australia. Non-government provision of social housing is increasing and the proportion of social housing dwellings managed by community housing providers (but mainly funded by governments) increased from 35,700 in 2007–08 to 67,000 in 2013–14 (a rise of 88%). (AIHW 2015)

The 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey highlights the extent of **violence against women** in Australia. It found that, since the age of 15, approximately one-third of women in Australia had experienced physical violence by a partner, 1 in 4 had experienced emotional abuse and almost 1 in 5 had experienced sexual violence. Of women who had experienced violence from an ex-partner, 73% had experienced more than one incident of violence and 58% had never contacted the police. The impact on children who grow up in the presence of domestic and family violence is enormous. Six out of 10 women (61%) who had experienced violence from an ex-partner had children in their care when the violence occurred, including 48% who stated that the children had witnessed the violence. (ABS 2012)

Domestic Violence

Of clients who came to Coast Shelter escaping domestic violence, **52% were accompanying children**. Educational outcomes, future relationships, mental health, social and economic participation and housing stability, are often negatively affected as a result of their homelessness.



Kara Women and Children's Refuge



Judy was a 55 year old lady who had been admitted to Gosford Hospital with bruising and a possible rib fracture as a result of severe domestic violence. Police had arrived at Judy's house after her neighbours reported screaming and immediately took out an AVO against her abusive partner.*

As it was unsafe for Judy to return home, she came to Kara with just the clothes on her back. Staff were able to provide Judy with clothing and toiletries until a time could be arranged with local Police to accompany her home, so that she could collect her belongings.

Through the Housing NSW Start Safely Program, Judy was able to secure a one-bedroom private rental in a new area where she could feel safe. Judy keeps in touch with Kara staff and has made new friends through a Domestic Violence Support Group that she attends weekly. Judy is looking forward to a bright new future and will no longer live in fear.

Once again, it was a busy year at Kara Women and Children's Refuge. Coast Shelter commenced the financial year with the welcome addition of two extra Women and Children's Services; Neleh and Elandra. For two months I was seconded to Elandra to assist in the transitional process and it was a pleasure to work with the staff previously employed at the Refuge, many of whom stayed on to work with us. With the three Women and Children's Refuges now under Coast Shelter's management, we can offer a consistent delivery of service to the most vulnerable in our community; homeless women and children, most of whom are the victims of domestic violence. Unfortunately, the Going Home Staying Home Reform resulted in Kara losing our outreach properties, which are essential for clients requiring intensive case management after leaving crisis accommodation. We must therefore thank Pacific Link Housing for supporting us to provide seven new outreach properties in the Gosford LGA. Our working relationship with Pacific Link continues to be one that we value and respect very highly.

When I meet people and they ask about the work I do, they always remark "what a sad job it must be". This always takes me aback somewhat, because the only thing I find difficult to deal with, is the women and their children we are unable to assist, because there are only so many that we can accommodate. This type of work is really a privilege and we as caseworkers, get to meet so many brave women who just want peace and above all, safety for themselves and their children. However, it is not just accommodation we provide, because evidence-based research shows that it takes a collaboration of services, together with intensive casework, for these women to achieve their goals and end the cycle of violence and trauma in their lives.

This year we welcomed Penny to the Kara Team with Nicole taking on the Program Manager's role at Elandra. Penny has a great wealth of knowledge and experience, which she brings to the role. Jody and I were very pleased to have Penny as a colleague. We continue to work on our partnerships with various services on the Central Coast in order to provide the best possible outcomes for our clients. Some of these services include: Housing NSW, Centrelink, Uniting Care Burnside, Wyoming Women's Health Centre, FACS (Family and Community Services), Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre, Gosford Mental Health, Central Coast Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, Legal Aid, Zonta Group, local schools and church groups.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Board of Directors and Executive Officer for their ongoing support of Kara. I would also like to thank Jody and Penny for their continued hard work and dedication to our clients, which enabled us to achieve so many great outcomes.

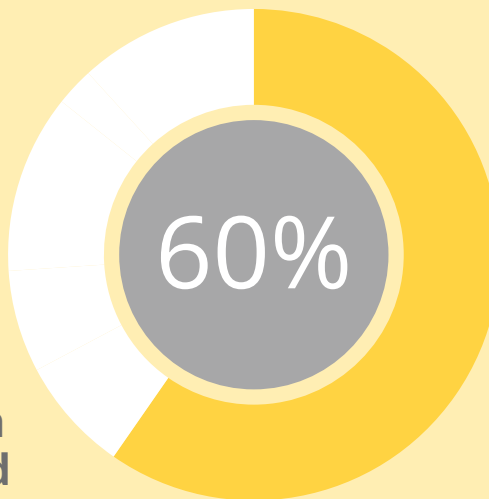
Leisha Seaton - Program Manager

10,135

Overnight Beds were provided

147

Women and children were accommodated

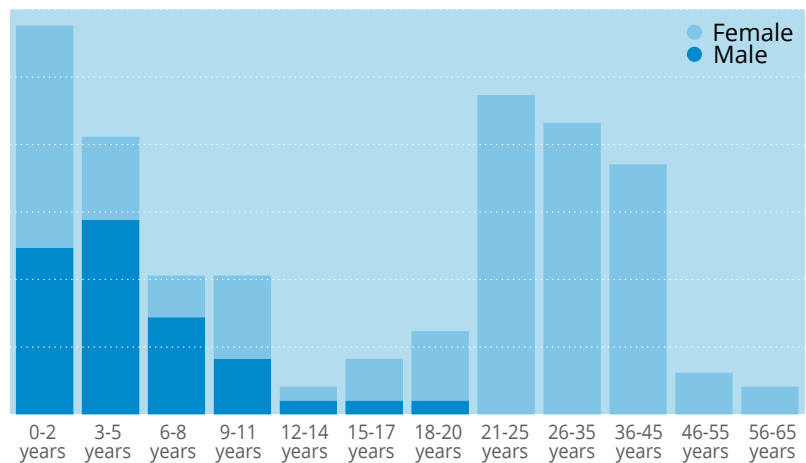


Main Presenting Reason

60% of Kara clients sought our assistance because of violence or abuse. Many women escaping domestic violence are not actually "houseless" but cannot return home because of the threat to their safety and the safety of their children.

Kara Client Snapshot

65% of accompanying children were aged under 6 years old. This can be so unsettling in their young lives and Kara Staff work hard to maintain a supportive and stable environment, whilst also ensuring each child's physical health, educational needs, psychological well-being and any behavioural issues are considered.



Sue* and her young son left their home in country NSW after suffering physical and emotional abuse from her husband for many years. A particularly violent attack compelled Sue to leave and when her husband went to work, she took her son and drove until they reached Gosford.

Sue had enough money for a few nights at a motel and then contacted Housing NSW, who referred her to Kara. We immediately arranged an AVO and organised medical appointments to address the family's physical and psychological needs.

Through Sue's determination to give her little boy a safe and stable home, she was able to secure a two-bedroom unit through a Real Estate Agent who was willing to give her a chance. Sue had built a rapport with this Agent during the 45 applications she had made for a rental property.

We are pleased to report that they are still in this unit. Sue has now commenced study to be a dental nurse, which she is enjoying immensely and her son is settled and happy in his new school. Sue told me recently that she still looks over her shoulder at times, but not as often as she used to.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Elandra Women and Children's Refuge



Lilly and her four children moved into Elandra after a period of homelessness due to a relationship breakdown. They had been staying at her mother's house for some time, which had caused friction in the household and then began 'couch surfing' with family, but was worried that this too would cause problems. Initially, Lilly was very nervous about moving into a refuge, but discovered that it was not what she had expected.*

The children were enrolled at the local public school and staff organised health and dental checks for them and found that the youngest child did in fact need glasses. One of Lilly's sons showed great potential as a Rugby League player and staff registered him in the local team, where he absolutely thrived.

With encouragement and support from staff, Lilly began applying for private rentals and was successful in the local area, which meant the children could remain in their school and sports teams. This was a great result for this family and the children visited recently showing us their school Merit Awards.

Elandra had a busy year assisting and supporting women and children in crisis, most of whom were escaping domestic violence. From the start of the financial year, Elandra evolved with a solid Team whose priority was to provide exceptional care for our clients who came into the Service, at some of the most vulnerable and distressing times of their lives. The Elandra Program grew with each team member bringing their individual expertise and skills to their roles, particularly Chris with a Child Protection background and Kelly with Child Care experience, who had worked at Elandra previously. Both workers were keen to become a part of Coast Shelter and contribute to the creation and expansion of a new Elandra.

Elandra has six bedrooms in total, with four larger rooms downstairs and two smaller rooms upstairs. We also have eight outreach properties attached to the Program, with both Pacific Link and Compass Housing as the property managers. These additional properties provide valuable exit points for clients and are an opportunity to address the barriers to securing and sustaining a future tenancy, while in medium term housing. Often these properties are close to where our children attend school, meaning there is an element of stability and consistency in their lives, which is so important. We work closely with these Housing Providers and the properties are always full.

Integral to the success of Elandra, has been the establishment and maintenance of important partnerships with Neighbourhood Centres, Housing NSW, Staying Home Leaving Violence, FACS (Family and Community Services), schools, preschools and health centres. An Early Childhood Nurse now visits Elandra to conduct developmental checks on our younger children, ensuring their primary health care needs are met. We have an invaluable partnership with a clinical psychologist, who conducts consultations on site. We have strong links with local financial counsellors and assisted in the initial formation of a Domestic Violence Support Group held at the San Remo Neighbourhood Centre. We also facilitate Domestic Violence Groups at Elandra which creates a safe space for clients to discuss their experiences with staff, who they know and trust and also with each other. Another key area is tenancy education and staff incorporate this into casework, ensuring clients know and understand their rights and responsibilities when entering into a lease agreement in the future.

I would like to thank Coast Shelter's Board of Directors and Executive Officer, who were extremely supportive during the transition period following the Going Home Staying Home Reform. This support helped staff focus on their core work; care, compassion and effective casework, assisting women and children reach their full potential in safety.

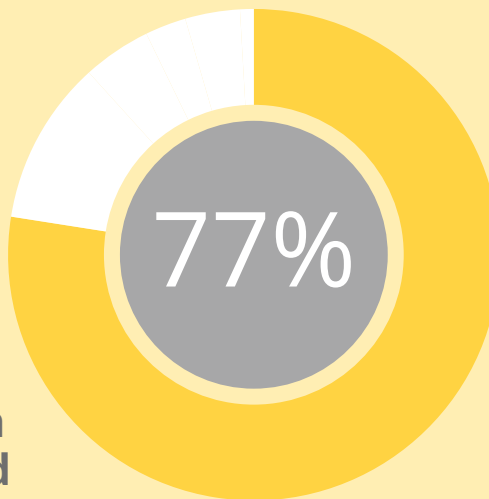
Nicole Harvey - Program Manager

8,476

Overnight Beds were provided

127

Women and children were accommodated

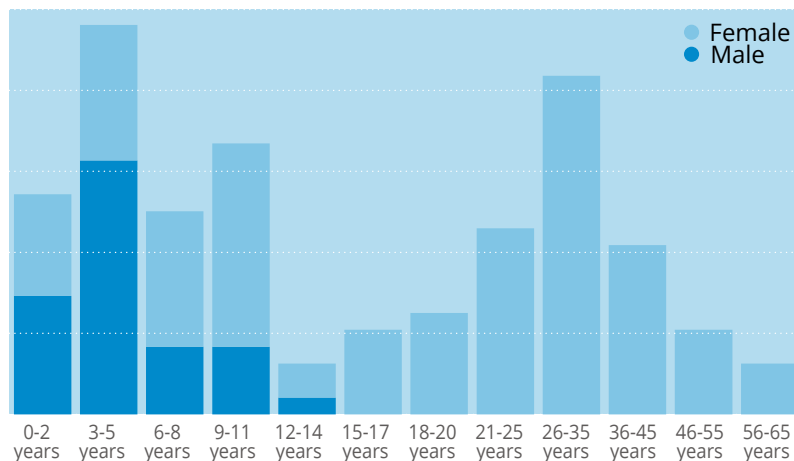


Main Presenting Reason

77% of Elandra clients sought our assistance because of violence or abuse. In Australia, approximately 58% of women had never contacted the police after experiencing repeated incidents of violence from an ex-partner.

Elandra Client Snapshot

33% of Elandra clients identified as being Aboriginal. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients have a higher risk of becoming homeless due to housing difficulties such as overcrowding, physical and mental health issues, breakdown of kin relationships, domestic violence and social discrimination or marginalisation.



Trudy* and her young son Elijah came to Elandra after fleeing a violent relationship with her partner. Trudy was exhausted and Elijah demonstrated some behavioural issues, making parenting difficult for her.

Trudy developed an awareness around domestic violence, budgeting, health care, education pathways and parenting skills. Young Elijah was enrolled in the local preschool and had his health checked with the Early Childhood Nurse. We found that his behaviours began to settle as his new environment was calm and non-threatening.

Staff recognised Trudy's strengths and worked with her around building on these, supporting her in believing she could create a better future for herself and Elijah.

Trudy moved into an outreach property and enrolled in full time vocational training to pursue a career in teaching. Elijah remained at preschool where he had made some new friends, even attending a Birthday Party.

Trudy was an excellent tenant and had a strong rental history with her Housing Provider. This made securing a private rental easier in a very competitive market, which she did successfully. Trudy still keeps in touch with Elandra staff and is now studying at Newcastle University.

Neleh Women and Children's Refuge



Fran came to Neleh at the age of 28 and had previously been living with her parents in an environment with excessive drug and alcohol use. Her home life was made even more difficult when she was diagnosed with schizophrenia. With no support, she had trouble maintaining her mental health which created further conflict within the house.*

With such an unstable upbringing, Fran had been in and out of homelessness since the age of 14 and before she came to Neleh, she had been staying in a motel for nearly two years. When new management took over the motel, she found herself homeless again.

Fran had very limited living skills and staff taught her how to set up a budget, cook meals for herself and even how to use a washing machine. Staff linked Fran in with a psychiatrist and her mental health was soon under control. She secured permanent social housing and is now set up in her new place with a much more positive outlook for the future.

Coast Shelter assumed the management of Neleh House, formerly known as Woy Woy Women and Children's Service, as a result of the Going Home Staying Home Reform. To recognise the dedication and service Helen Maher provided to many women and children, the House was officially opened and named on the 5th December 2014. Neleh (Helen spelt backwards) provides an essential service for women and is a constant reminder of Helen and the contributions she made to the local community.

Although a small Refuge, the effort required to transform the Service into a comfortable, caring and safe environment was our main priority and one that I am pleased to confirm we have achieved – at all times ensuring we deliver positive outcomes for our clients. The positive outcomes would not have been possible without the successful teamwork here at Neleh. The Team, consisting of Wendy, Larissa and myself, was required to balance building the right environment, at the same time utilising our diverse skills to improve the circumstances of clients, who often have challenging and complex needs.

To address the influx of culturally and linguistically diverse clients, we have built solid relationships with external agencies to assist us in providing our clients with the additional support they require. Increasing the awareness of our Service has been key in attaining and building successful community partnerships which has led to support being provided by Henry Kendall Village, Zonta Group, Kariong/Somersby Rotary Club, Ettalong and Kariong Baptist Churches, who all continue to donate much needed supplies to our women. Additionally, to address critical child care needs, we have built a very strong relationship with a local Child Care Service who provide six weeks of free child care to our clients. One of our greatest challenges has been the shortage of suitable, affordable housing and I am pleased to report that Neleh staff have been successful in attaining five outreach properties through Pacific Link Housing – allowing us to help move clients forward and to assist them to gain a positive rental history.

Neleh staff have worked tirelessly to provide the women and children with the support and assistance to meet their needs. The passion, energy and continued dedication have all contributed to achieving such positive results. Thank you to all those who assisted and supported us throughout the year, without you, the success of Neleh House would not have been possible. In closing, I would like to thank Coast Shelter for the opportunity to develop the strategy and lead the very able Team in the successful execution of our Vision. It has been a very rewarding first year and we look forward to building on the results we have achieved, taking Neleh House to its full potential.

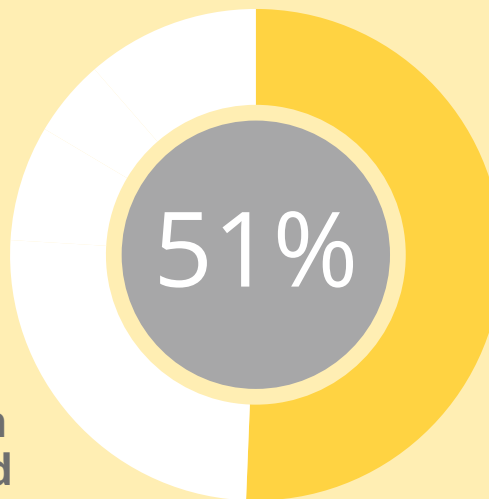
Elissa Clyne - Program Manager

4,346

Overnight Beds were provided

84

Women and children were accommodated

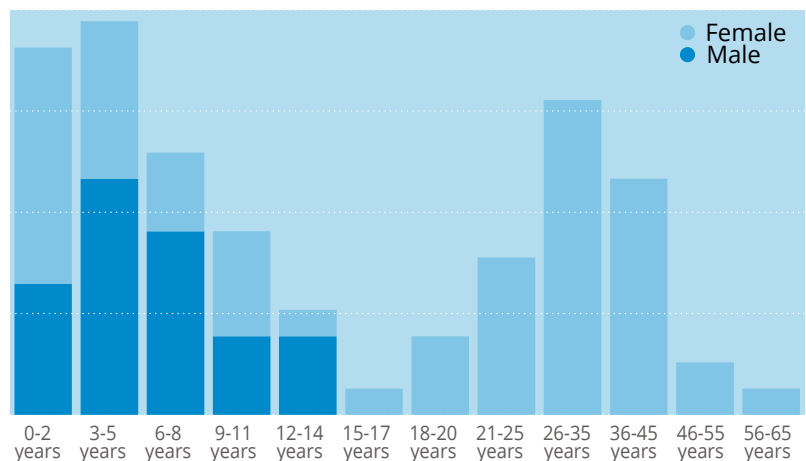


Main Presenting Reason

51% of Neleh clients sought our assistance because of domestic violence and a further 25% had become homeless due to financial difficulties and housing stress. In Australia, it is estimated that 44% of low-income households experience housing affordability issues due to rental stress (ABS 2013)

Neleh Client Snapshot

20% of women accommodated at Neleh were from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. Limited access to and knowledge of how to navigate the complex housing system, is a major factor placing people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at an increased risk of becoming homeless.



Elissa Clyne and Helen Maher at the official opening of Neleh House



Jean* was born in China and had been living in Australia for seven years with her husband, who had become increasingly violent. She had very limited English and no family or friends for support. Jean had to leave her home and began sleeping on the trains, which was a very frightening experience. It had taken a toll on her health and she was diagnosed with severe depression and also suffered with chronic pain due to a spinal condition.

Staff assisted Jean to access medical services and her health dramatically improved once she was settled in the Refuge. She was so overwhelmed with the support and stated how safe she felt in the house.

Jean was offered permanent accommodation through Housing NSW in an over 55's village, which is close to public transport so she can continue to access medical services. She was assisted to furnish her new home through a Brokerage Program, as she had come to Neleh with only a backpack of belongings. Jean will continue to be supported until she is linked in with the necessary support services to maintain her tenancy.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Coimba Men's Service



Alby was referred on to the Coimba Men's Service for assistance from the Oncology Clinic at Gosford Hospital. He had been residing with his family in the local area, but following a fairly innocuous fall, an examination revealed that he was suffering from an aggressive type of cancer.*

Alby was then admitted to the local hospital and it was during this time, that his family decided to move to Queensland, leaving Alby homeless. Alby then took up residence in our Men's Refuge and with the support of the Team and from his fellow residents, he continued battling Hodgkins Lymphoma through regular trips to the Clinic for chemotherapy.

Alby's fantastic attitude to life in those difficult circumstances never wavered and the house certainly benefitted from his inclusion. Recent results suggest that the cancer is now in remission and coupled with Alby's recent move to a nice one-bedroom unit at Umina, the future certainly looks promising.

The Coimba Men's Service has experienced another successful year, resulting in a steady stream of positive outcomes for men facing adversity. The Service now provides support to 36 men, accommodated in five different locations across the Central Coast with the housing being provided by FACS (Family and Community Services), Pacific Link and Compass Housing.

Demand for assistance has remained high with the majority of our referrals coming to us via our Coast Community Centre. The Service remains committed to providing our clients with access to accommodation that has relevance to the respective needs of each presenting referral. The Team is committed to supporting the initiatives outlined by the Specialist Homelessness Service Reform. In fact, the Team has endeavoured to adapt to the changing face of homelessness, by evolving our work practices, whilst always maintaining a flexible and client friendly approach.

Staffing stability remains rock solid, as does our commitment to deliver strong effective case management, not only to the men who access our accommodation, but also in the delivery of assistance to external referrals who are either trying to access affordable housing, or struggling to maintain their current existing tenancies.

We have worked extremely hard to maintain our relationship with a host of community providers who, without their co-operation, success would be so much harder to obtain. The local housing providers deserve special mention for the fair and just consideration that is given to men seeking housing assistance. A clear pathway now exists for vulnerable men, many of whom are signing a lease for the very first time, thus having greater control over their immediate future.

The Team has a strong role in the community in providing a platform of opportunity to men who have struggled to negotiate the barriers to secure housing. Our commitment in assisting men to re-engage with essential supports, has resulted in improved access for men who would otherwise fall between the gaps.

In conclusion, the Team would like to take this opportunity to thank our community partners for their role in reducing hardship on the Central Coast. The overwhelming generosity of the local community in providing all types of much needed assistance to people in need, certainly relieves the stress on an important Service that continues to function well and above our current funding restrictions.

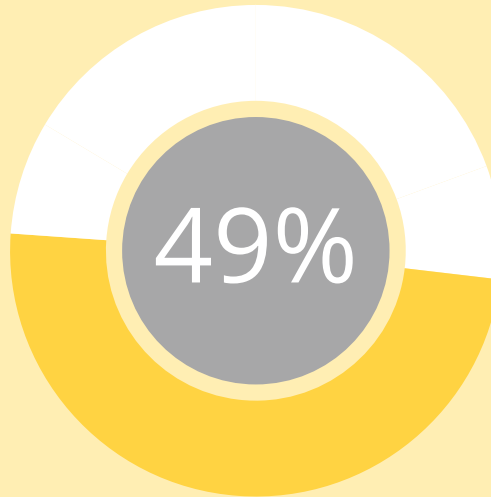
Steve Keane - Program Manager

10,685

Overnight Beds were provided

72

Men were accommodated

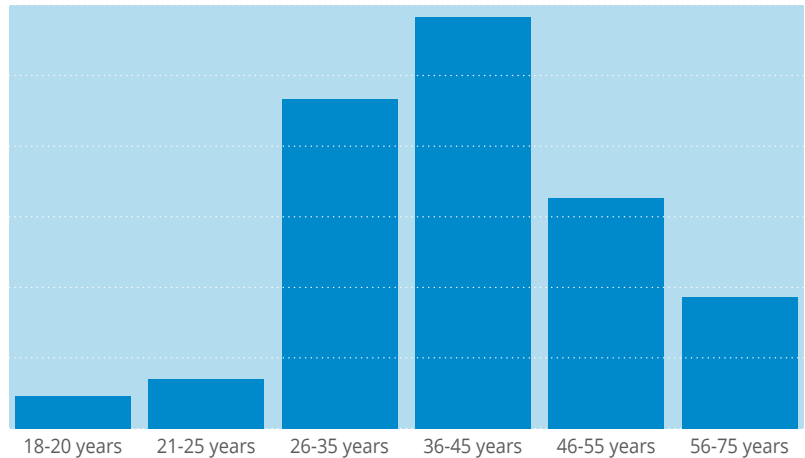


Main Presenting Reason

49% of Coimba clients sought our assistance because they were living in inadequate or inappropriate dwellings. This included staying in motels, boarding houses, emergency accommodation, tents, motor vehicles, sleeping rough or in other improvised dwellings.

Coimba Client Snapshot

Coimba clients were aged between 20 and 71 years old, with an average age of 41. 37% of Coimba clients were sleeping rough before coming to our Service and an additional 37% had been staying in temporary or emergency accommodation.



Patrick entered Coimba Men's Service in October 2014 after becoming homeless. He had limited resources and next to no chance of resolving his accommodation issues without assistance. Patrick engaged well with the Coimba Team and worked together in a co-operative fashion. A case-plan was developed that focused on establishing new supports in the community to prevent further isolation and help Patrick restore the confidence that he had lost in recent times.*

Patrick maintained all of his scheduled appointments with a range of community services and as a result, the Team submitted an application for Priority Housing on his behalf. Patrick now resides in a beautiful one-bedroom unit at Point Clare that he has furnished with considerable flair. Patrick currently volunteers with a Disability Service in his local area and the Team has every confidence that he now possesses the skills and knowledge to negotiate through any future problems.

**Client names and photos have been changed*

Rumbalara Youth Refuge



Zane was referred to Rumbalara by a Juvenile Justice NSW. He was unable to return home because of the broken relationships, which had been caused by his past violent outbursts and abuse. When Zane arrived, he was feeling very isolated and had completely disengaged from school and his peers.*

During his time at Rumbalara, Zane was able to address his anger issues in a positive and supportive environment whilst attending regular appointments at Headspace. With encouragement from staff, Zane also returned to his school to continue his studies. He was determined to get his life 'back on track'.

Eventually Zane was able to return home as he had addressed and dealt with his anger issues and his family could see how much he had progressed. Zane left Rumbalara a self-assured young man and said that he couldn't have returned home to his family without the support of staff.

Rumbalara is the only purpose built youth refuge on the Central Coast and continues to run at capacity most of the time, while still providing a high standard of care in a beautiful, private setting. We provide six beds at the Refuge with one bed allocated to the Bail Assistance Line for young people who have been granted bail, but have no place to go. We also have three outreach properties, which are always occupied by clients transitioning out of the Refuge.

Another extremely busy year has flown by, supporting many young people to work through the crises in their lives. It is inspiring to see young people work so hard to achieve their goals and reach their full potential in life. While staying in this safe and homely environment, clients have the opportunity to obtain support with any issues and also work on their living, budgeting and relationship skills. Residents come from a variety of backgrounds with differing challenges, which may be a result of family breakdown, learning difficulties, domestic violence or mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and schizophrenia.

Rumbalara has provided a supportive environment with staff assisting young people to be empowered and proactive in overcoming life's challenges and move forward in a positive manner. We work in collaboration with a number of agencies who continue to be a great support in creating opportunities for our clients. These include CYPMH (Children and Young People's Mental Health), MMAD (Musicians Making a Difference), Headspace, Juvenile Justice, Pacific Link Housing, GITS (Getting It Together Scheme), Youth Health and FACS (Family and Community Services).

This year we farewelled Therese Woulfe who was the Program Manager of Rumbalara for nearly 10 years. We wish Therese all the best in her new line of work and really appreciate the great support she provided to Coast Shelter, the Rumbalara Team and the many young people she worked with and assisted over the years.

It has been a long battle working towards securing ongoing funding for Rumbalara. I would like to acknowledge the hard work that the Executive Officer, Operations Manager and Board of Directors have put in, as well as the Rumbalara staff for persevering and continuing to provide great support to young people during this uncertain time. I would also like to thank all of the community members and former residents who have advocated strongly for the funding to be continued. At this point, we are funded until June 2017, which gives staff and residents some much needed stability.

I would like to thank to the amazing staff who work so hard to create a positive and supportive environment for our young residents. Thanks also to the clients and their families who allow us to be part of their journey forward.

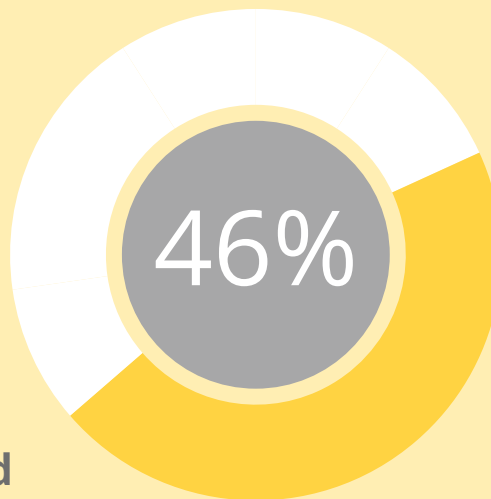
Dave Conway - Program Manager

2,911

Overnight Beds were provided

44

Young people were accommodated

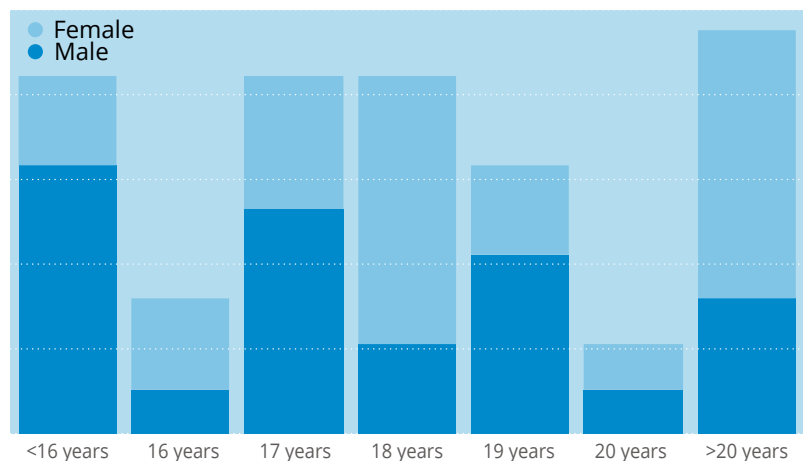


Main Presenting Reason

46% of Rumbalara clients sought our assistance due to family breakdown or conflict. Where appropriate, staff focus on family level interventions and improving relationships, which can be pivotal in transitioning the young person out of homelessness.

Rumbalara Client Snapshot

This year, 11% of clients accommodated at Rumbalara were referred from Juvenile Justice New South Wales. This is an increase of 9% compared to 2013-2014.



Therese Woulfe

Kate arrived at Rumbalara after a relationship breakdown within her family. She had also been suffering with an undiagnosed mental illness, which was making life at home even more difficult for her. Kate had successfully completed her HSC and was accepted into university, however she was under a lot of stress at home as she had taken on the role of caring for her mum and three younger sisters with very little support.*

Once at Rumbalara, she was able to focus her energies on improving her overall wellbeing and continuing with her studies. With some additional support, Kate made it through her first semester and was so proud of her achievements and for being the first person in her family to go to university.

Kate and her family worked together to mend their broken relationship and eventually she returned home to a much more functional and supportive environment. They are much happier and are now saving for a family holiday to South Africa in 2016, which Kate is very excited about..

*Client names and photos have been changed

Maya Young Women's Refuge



Lauren came to Maya after she was unable to live at home due to the ongoing violence and abuse she was suffering. Lauren arrived in a very chaotic state and at first, struggled to adjust to the routine at Maya. Unfortunately, this caused her to rebel and she failed to return home to the Refuge on a number of occasions.*

Eventually, with extra support from staff, Lauren settled in and started to enjoy and rely on the structure and positive household at Maya. She reengaged with schooling, regularly attended TAFE and even obtained a part-time job which was fantastic for her confidence.

As it was unsafe for Lauren to return home, she actively looked for accommodation while saving for a bond. Lauren ended up moving to her aunty's house in Sydney and is now working full time as a trainee chef, which she is enjoying immensely. It was a fantastic result for a young lady who was committed to turn her life around and create a positive future for herself.

Maya Cottage is a specialised Youth Refuge providing safe and secure accommodation and support to six young women, aged as young as 13, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Clients accessing support and accommodation from Maya are offered a holistic approach, which allows them to self-determine what their needs are and what assistance they may require. Each client is provided with a caseworker, who supports them to set realistic goals and develop a plan to achieve these aims, whilst also making positive choices to move forward in life. Wherever possible, staff work with clients to reconnect with family members in an aim to transition them back home or with another relative. When that is not an option, we assist the residents in looking for private rentals, transitional houses or moving in with friends.

Every young woman that resides at Maya participates in the day to day running of the house. This is achieved through a Living Skills Program, where the aim is to identify current skills a client has and then build on them. This Program also gives clients the opportunity to develop further skills such as budgeting, weekly meal planning, cleaning and maintaining relationships that are essential for moving towards independence and making healthy life choices.

Maya is very fortunate to have the continued support of the East Gosford Lioness Club and these wonderful ladies assist Maya in so many ways. With their help this year, we were able to take the residents on a summer holiday, which was a big success and provided clients with an opportunity to relax and recuperate. The Lioness Club also contributes very generously at Christmas and Maya staff and clients are very appreciative of their ongoing assistance.

Maya continues to work closely with Headspace, Youth Health, RAPT (Reconnecting Adolescents and Parents Team), GITS (Getting It Together Scheme), CYPMH (Children and Young People's Mental Health) and MMAD (Musicians Making a Difference) who assist us to achieve positive outcomes for our clients. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of Pacific Link Housing for providing us with three transitional properties, which are used for clients moving out of the Refuge. These properties provide a fantastic opportunity for young women to gain experience in maintaining their own tenancies, whilst also building a positive rental history, which will assist them to secure long-term housing when moving out of the Maya Program.

I would like to thank the Maya Team for the dedication and care they offer to our young women. Thank you also to our Executive Officer, Operations Manager and the Board of Directors for the support they have offered during the year.

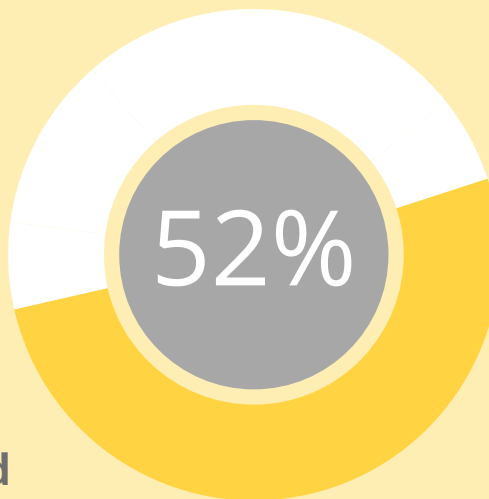
Michelle Connolly - Program Manager

2,016

**Overnight Beds
were provided**

37

**Young people
were accommodated**

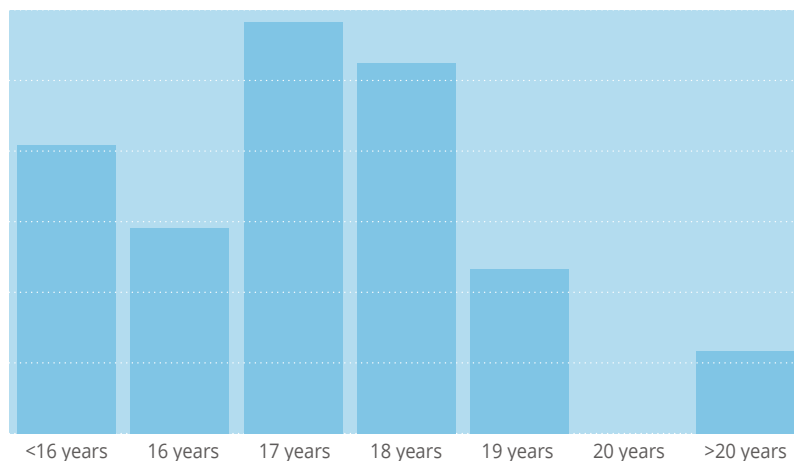


Main Presenting Reason

This year, 52% of Maya clients sought our assistance because of a relationship or family breakdown. 35% of young women accommodated had experienced some form of domestic violence and/or abuse which was a contributing factor to their homelessness.

Maya Client Snapshot

Young women presenting alone at Maya are likely to be identified as needing assistance with living skills, personal development, education, employment and training.



Maggie arrived at Maya very withdrawn, scared and suffering with terrible depression and anxiety as a result of living on the streets for six months. Maggie's mother was unable to care for her due to her own mental health issues, which left Maggie with no choice but to sleep in bus shelters and on trains to keep warm.*

Maggie was referred to Maya through our Coast Community Centre where she had arrived for lunch one day. She initially spent a lot of time in her room alone and did not want to engage with workers or other residents. Over time, she started spending more time out of her room and developed strong friendships within the house.

As Maggie showed an interest in art, we assisted her to sign up for some art classes and she also enrolled herself in a beauty course at TAFE. Over time she developed into a bright and bubbly girl and loved the positive choices she was now making in her life. Maggie moved from Maya into shared accommodation with a friend that she met at TAFE and is currently employed full-time as a beautician.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Youth Angle Refuge



Mason became homeless after a series of unfortunate events and was potentially facing a life on the streets. He came to Youth Angle and with the support and encouragement of staff, made the most of the opportunities available to him, enrolling in TAFE and applying for jobs in his spare time.*

Mason's hard work and dedication saw him reap the rewards as he began receiving solid marks at TAFE and also secured a part time job.

Mason displayed commitment and maturity, waking up as early as 5:00am for his new job and juggling the tricky balance between study and work.

Mason's determination and eagerness to improve his life have been two of his biggest strengths and served him well during his time at Youth Angle. His rapid personal growth is testament to a combination of these strengths and the nurturing environment and resources that Youth Angle was able to provide.

Youth Angle's primary focus is to support and empower residents to make positive life choices and develop the necessary skills required for independent living. Clients are assisted by an experienced and committed Team who offer strengths based support, to enable clients to set goals and work towards achieving them. All clients participate in a comprehensive Living Skills Program with a focus on education, employment, money management, emotional/physical health and general household operations. In the last year, our Program has enabled many young people to rebuild their lives and go on to either gain employment, reconnect with family, graduate from school/TAFE and successfully transition into independent living. As a Support Worker it is quite moving to play a small part in their lives and witness their efforts and positive outcomes.

In addition to crisis accommodation, our outreach properties provide low cost housing and support to young people who are ready to progress from the Refuge and live independently. Through our partnership with Pacific Link Housing, we have three transitional properties, which provide clients with confidence and experience in maintaining their own tenancies. The shortage of exit points remains a concern for our clients, so we continue to focus on building partnerships with local real estates and promoting the benefits of tenancing a client with our support. This year the number of clients transitioning to shared accommodation has risen due to the lack of affordable housing options on the Central Coast.

At times, our clients can present severely disadvantaged by multiple complex issues and in order to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes, we build positive partnerships with many community and Government services to enable a collaborative approach. We have been fortunate to work with some very committed industry personnel and I would like to take this opportunity to thank GITS (Getting It Together Scheme), Headspace, Pacific Link Housing, New Horizons, Central Coast Advice and Advocacy, Youth Health, Youth Connections, MMAD (Musicians Making a Difference), Juvenile Justice, Centrelink, Evolution Youth Services, Uniting Care Burnside and FACS (Family and Community Services). Together we have supported our clients in achieving positive outcomes.

Over the past twelve months our clients have enjoyed a host of activities including various Youth Health programs, trivia nights, circus shows, concert performances, holiday outings and some very memorable client birthdays and milestones, which are a privilege for staff to be a part of. To my core Team, Bianca, Ray and Rachael, I commend you for always going above and beyond for our clients. I would also like to thank the Office Team, my fellow Program Managers, the Executive Officer, Operations Manager and our Board of Directors for their dedication and ongoing support.

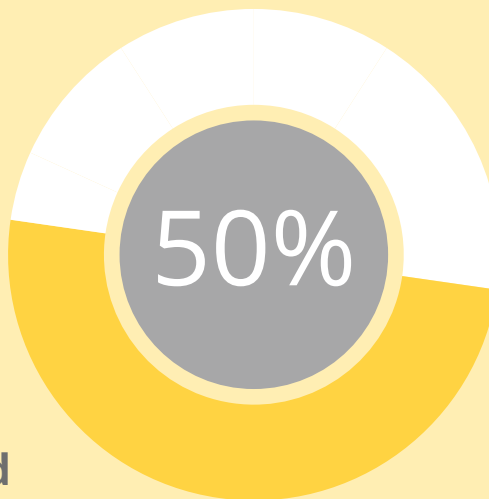
Mick O'Connor - Program Manager

1,795

Overnight Beds were provided

23

Young people were accommodated

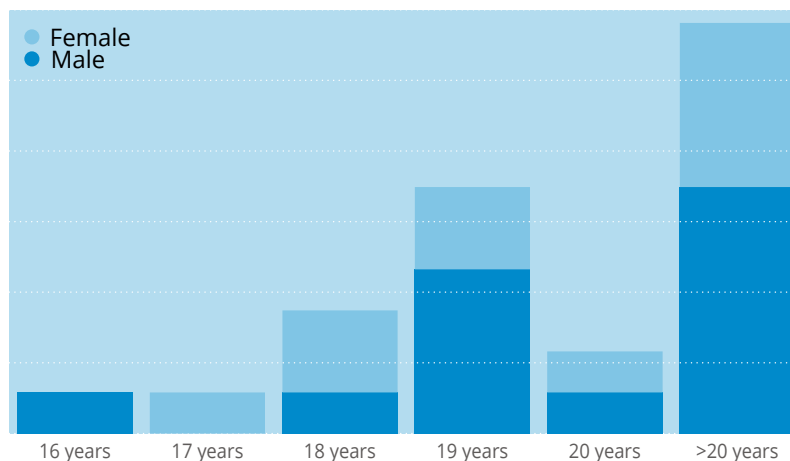


Main Presenting Reason

This year, 50% of clients reported that family breakdown was the main reason they had become homeless. 59% of referrals into Youth Angle were from other Specialist Homelessness Services.

Youth Angle Client Snapshot

For 64% of Youth Angle clients, their last permanent address was on the Central Coast. The remaining clients had come from the Sydney region, NSW North and Mid-North Coast, Queensland and as far as Western Australia.



Taylor* arrived at Youth Angle emotionally broken, with a long history of depression and suicidal tendencies. She was forced to seek crisis accommodation as her family home was both volatile and dysfunctional, with Taylor and her siblings experiencing ongoing abuse.

With the stable environment and support at Youth Angle, Taylor quickly showed promise by demonstrating a high level of maturity and independent living skills. She was also linked in with counselling and mental health services, assisting her journey towards emotional healing.

Supported within the Outreach Program, Taylor continued to build upon her living skills and successfully maintained her tenancy. She also saved a large amount of money, earning her the affectionate title of 'Youth Angle's Best Saver'. Taylor never gave up on her goal of finding a job and finally secured part time employment as a barista in a cafe. Taylor's resilience and determination, along with Youth Angle's support, assisted her to change her life and see her future as one that is bright and filled with hope and choice.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Woy Woy Youth Cottage



Jen came to Youth Cottage at the age of 18, as she was no longer able to live at home due to a very dysfunctional environment caused by her parents' alcohol abuse. She was living on the streets and did not have any friends or family in the area who she could turn to for support.*

Jen had a significant learning disability and her communication skills were quite challenging for staff, but we were able to assist her in identifying some goals and set a plan for the future.

We supported Jen to reengage with ADHC (Ageing, Disability and Home Care) and after four months she was accepted into a Villa with supported accommodation. Jen is so happy in her new place and has made some friends in the area.

She is now taking part in the TTW (Transition to Work) Program and has a bright future ahead. It was a great outcome for a young lady who was faced with some difficult obstacles in her young life.

Woy Woy Youth Cottage provides crisis accommodation to five young men or women who, for a number of reasons, have become homeless. Our Program aims to provide a safe and welcoming environment to the young clients who often arrive unsure of their direction in life. All residents are supported to engage in some form of education and/or employment to build towards their future.

We provide a supportive environment for residents to develop the necessary skills for independent living, as many arrive with very limited experience in a functional and positive household environment. Our focus is on cleaning, cooking and budgeting, whilst also addressing any physical or mental health needs. We aim to assist the young person build strong support networks, to help them move forward through these challenging times. Throughout the year we have had some very positive outcomes with young people returning home or moving into their own property, but unfortunately, we have also seen an increase in the number of unplanned exits due to alcohol and drug use. We continue to receive a steady amount of referrals from Juvenile Justice due to the limited options to accommodate young people leaving custody.

Woy Woy Youth Cottage has had another busy year, working successfully with a number of community support agencies. We would like to thank Youth Health, CYPMH (Children and Young People's Mental Health) and Headspace for their ongoing assistance with counselling, medical consultations and health education for our clients. We would also like to thank Wesley Mission's GITS (Getting It Together Scheme) for their assistance with drug and alcohol counselling and financial support to enable our clients to take part in training programs. We also work closely with RAPT (Reconnecting Adolescents and Parents Team) to help young people build stronger family connections where possible. Our Team also has a strong relationship with FACS (Family and Community Services), Centrelink and Juvenile Justice which aids our young people to receive the supports required to build towards a positive future.

This year we were delighted to receive a donation of \$5,000 from the Central Coast HOG (Harley Owner's Group) to purchase new furniture. It was a wonderful gesture from the members and was made even more special when Super Amart heavily discounted the furniture, allowing us to purchase much more than we expected. Replacing the tired old furniture was such a huge boost to both clients and staff. I would also like to thank the Team for providing outstanding support to our young clients, each other, Coast Shelter and myself throughout the year. Finally I would like to thank the Executive Officer, Operations Manager and the rest of my colleagues for their tireless support.

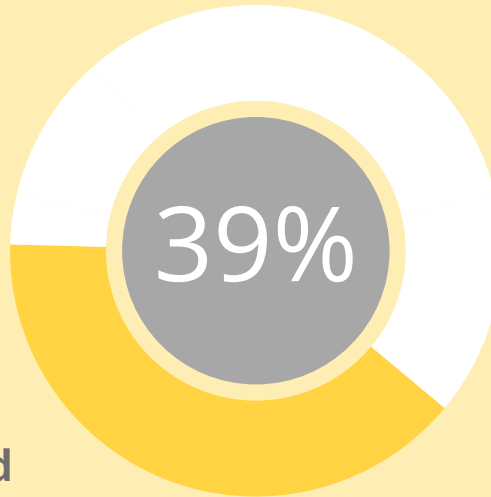
Peter Downie - Program Manager

2,333

Overnight Beds were provided

63

Young people were accommodated

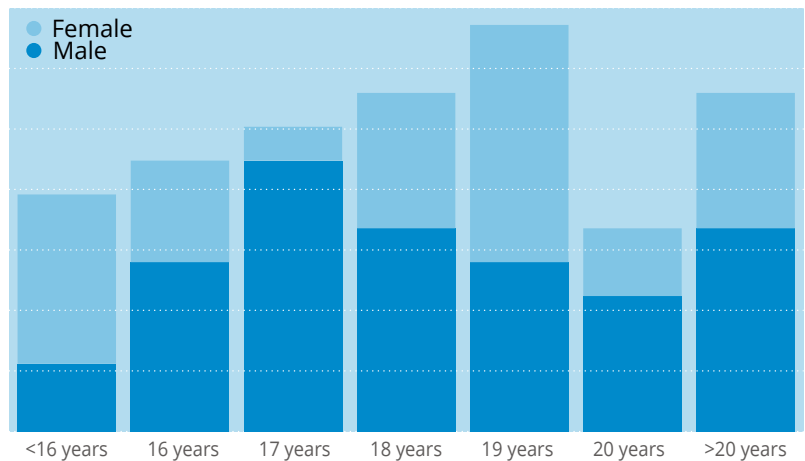


Main Presenting Reason

This year, 39% of clients at Woy Woy Youth Cottage required accommodation because of family breakdown or conflict. 31% of young people had been couch surfing with friends or family before coming to our Service.

Woy Woy Youth Cottage Client Snapshot

48% of young people accommodated had a prior mental health diagnosis confirmed by a health professional. Conditions included one or more of the following; depression, anxiety, stress, schizophrenia, bipolar or eating disorders, to name a few.



Troy* was 17 when he came to Youth Cottage. He was acting out with his family, completely disengaged from school and constantly getting in trouble with the Police.

Troy was struggling to come to terms with trauma that he had suffered as a child. Although he was engaging well with staff, he found it difficult to break the cycle of poor decision making because of the friends he continued to spend time with. Staff encouraged Troy to focus on his future goals and eventually he began taking positive steps to improve his mental health and also mend broken relationships within his family.

Troy was a talented horse rider and there was an opportunity for him to move to a cattle ranch in the Northern Territory. Troy and his family all agreed that this would be a great chance for him to make a fresh new start.

Troy is thoroughly enjoying his new profession as a Jackeroo, is no longer on medication and his relationship with his family has improved immensely.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Wyong Youth Refuge



Aidan was referred to Wyong Youth Refuge when he was 15 and had come from a violent family home with obvious parental neglect. He arrived very frightened, shy and emotionally withdrawn. Aidan's caseworker helped him to set up a plan to address his individual needs and personal goals. Aidan identified that he needed assistance with his mental health issues, education, living skills and recreational activities.*

Aidan focussed on his schooling and also began attending the MMAD (Musicians Making a Difference) Program, achieving great success. He performed three individual pieces in front of a large audience at a Music Camp in Sydney and also performed at the HUB in Erina Fair.

Aidan is now in his own apartment, which he keeps very well maintained. He is continuing with his schooling and remains heavily involved with the MMAD Program. Aidan has improved in all aspects of his life and has matured into an independent young man with so many amazing strengths and ambitions.

Wyong Youth Refuge provides crisis accommodation and support to five homeless young men or women aged between 14 and 24, as well as providing one overnight emergency bed. We receive constant referrals of clients under the age of 16 and this year we accommodated a total of ten, more than any of Coast Shelter's other Youth Refuges. These vulnerable young clients require additional support and our team works hard to ensure they receive the highest level of care during their time in our Program.

It has been a very busy, challenging and enjoyable year since taking over the auspice on the 1st September 2014 and the Team has worked tirelessly to bring the Refuge up to the high standards that Coast Shelter is renowned for. We have spent time networking and building new contacts in the Wyong area and also held an Open Day, which was very well attended by Housing NSW, Youth Health, FACS (Family and Community Services), housing providers and support agencies. We have established strong connections with some local businesses and Service Clubs who are supportive and enthusiastic about contributing in the coming year, which is very promising.

Despite the constant struggle to find exit points for young clients, our Program has achieved some very positive outcomes throughout the year. Some residents were successful in obtaining transitional housing with Uniting Care Burnside's Doorways Program and we also had success in securing two additional outreach properties through Pacific Link and Community Housing. These transitional properties are so invaluable when clients are transitioning to their own accommodation.

It can be very difficult to find opportunities for young people to enter the private rental market and we work closely with a number of other agencies to help prepare clients for independent living and improve their opportunities. These agencies include Headspace, Youth Health, CYPMH (Children and Young People's Mental Health) and the GITS (Getting It Together Scheme). Our Team also participated in numerous training courses to ensure we offer the best possible outcomes for our young clients. This year I completed the Specialist Homelessness Services Executive Coaching Program and I would like to thank Coast Shelter for this opportunity.

I would like to thank my wonderful staff for the brilliant work they do, often going over and above what is required; thanks Team! I would also like to thank the Executive Officer, Operations Manager and Board of Directors for their unwavering support. I look forward to the challenges ahead and supporting Coast Shelter wherever needed.

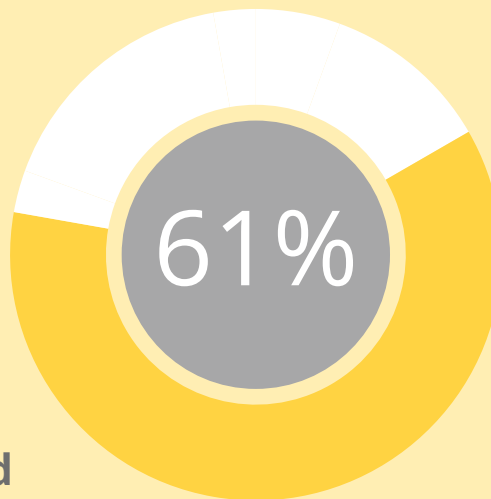
Paul Lewis - Program Manager

1,637

Overnight Beds were provided

39

Young people were accommodated

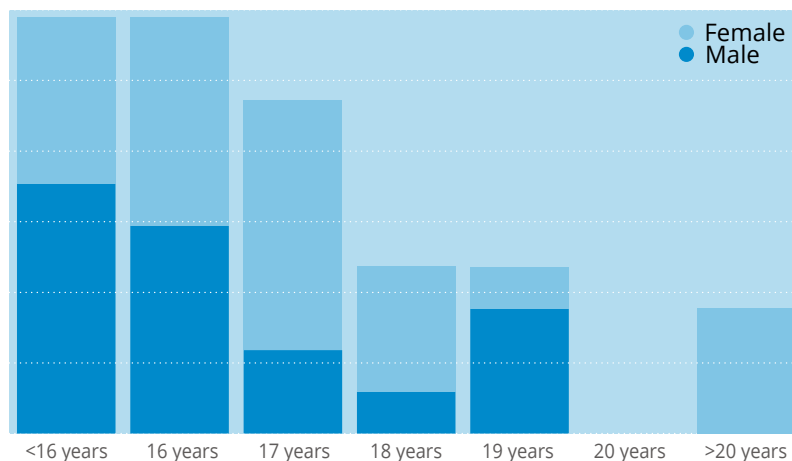


Main Presenting Reason

This year, 61% of young people had become homeless because of family conflict or breakdown. Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, staff involve mediation services to help resolve any issues, which may be causing tension and work towards family reconciliation.

Wyong Youth Refuge Client Snapshot

26% of clients accommodated at Wyong Youth Refuge were aged under 16 years which was the highest number amongst our five youth refuges. Of these clients 60% were male and 40% identified as being Aboriginal.



My name is Tahlia and I am 17 years old. I have lived in five different refuges in my life and I will honestly say that Coast Shelter was the best for me. Some things were challenging to overcome, but the workers were 100% supportive and encouraging, which really helped me stay motivated.

One thing I really enjoyed and appreciated was how it was not like a prison, but with appropriate restrictions of course. The workers treated us equally, made things fun, laughed with us and talked with us, making us have the feeling of security, trust, stability and faith that things will only get better.

During my stay I attended school every day and I received awards and merits for my efforts. The workers really praised me for keeping a sufficient routine both at school and at the Refuge. I intend on going to university and hope to complete a bachelor degree with courses in nursing, midwifery, social science, medical science and biochemistry.

Thank you to the workers at Wyong Youth Refuge who helped me to gain my courage and independence to take such steps in life.

*Client names and photos have been changed

Coast Community Centre

Having had the worst possible start to the year in its 13 year history, the Coast Community Centre paradoxically has had the best ever finish, ending the year on a positive high.



The year began with the entire Specialist Homelessness Services Sector gripped by a deep sense of foreboding and nervous tension caused by the uncertainty of the Going Home Staying Home Reform. The Reform ultimately resulted in the Centre losing the services of two part-time staff, leaving only one full-time worker. In the absence of Government funding, we rely heavily on raising revenue in the community and corporate sector, which has become increasingly difficult. To add to our woes, the shelves in our food pantry were looking bare and our very tired van, which we relied on for all our food and donation collections, was on the verge of breakdown. All the while however, demand for our services from the homeless and those in dire need remained strong.

In reviewing the year, four factors combined to help turn the fortunes of the Community Centre around, namely:

- A "never say die" attitude exhibited by our Board of Directors and Executive Officer
- Our loyal, enthusiastic and committed volunteer groups, without whom, the Centre could not function

- A very supportive and caring community, and finally
- Active networking and a stroke or two of good fortune.

The Centre's fortunes took a turn for the better when a grant from the Shirley Nepean Trust was approved for the purchase of a new van in March. We now boast a brand new Ford Transit van to replace the old one, which had been off the road for several weeks prior. The new van was put into immediate service upon its arrival and is proving its worth. We are extremely grateful to The Shirley Nepean Trust for their generosity.

After years of unsuccessful attempts at attracting government funding, the Community Centre has succeeded for the first time ever, making it possible to engage the services of a second full-time worker who began in April. With staggered shifts, we are now able to expand our capacity to help, by providing assistance from 11am to 7pm on weekdays. This relieved some pressure on staff and also alleviated the frustration of those seeking assistance.



To make things more difficult, we had the withdrawal of Emergency Relief funding to St Vincent de Paul Society Gosford and Gosford Community and Information Services. This resulted in a loss to us of approximately \$25,000 in funding, which went towards providing meals and kitchen running costs. More importantly, it meant there was no longer funds to assist the most marginalised and financially excluded members of our community. Fortunately, Wesley Mission Newcastle was granted Emergency Relief funding for both Newcastle and the Central Coast.

New van generously donated by the Shirley Nepean Trust

Wesley selected the Community Centre as its outlet for the Central Coast and since April, we have had applications approved to the value of \$8,000 which is of great benefit to our clients.

To add to our array of services, we now have qualified Counsellors at the Community Centre every Tuesday and Friday. We also now provide Chaplaincy services every Monday morning, Tuesday night and all day Thursday. This additional support has been of great benefit to many of our clients who sometimes just need someone, with time available, who they can talk to and listen to their problems.

With our food stocks running low, our cries for help received an unparalleled response from the community, which we have come to know through firsthand experience, is not only caring and supportive, but also quick to act. Our pantry shelves are now well stocked and we are able to confidently meet the needs of our clients seeking food assistance. The call was answered by many schools, churches, large and small businesses, clubs, sporting bodies, families and individuals. We have also had fantastic responses for warm clothing, blankets, sleeping bags and swags in the colder months and for items of furniture and white goods.

For several years we have not been able to provide a lunch every Saturday, with the exception of the first Saturday of each month provided by the Goodwin family and friends. We now have three new groups for the remaining Saturdays comprising of Terrigal High School and also Our Lady of the Rosary Church Wyoming who have a youth group and a seniors group. We extend a warm welcome to these new groups in joining our family of volunteers.

Our No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS), courtesy of the Good Shepherd Microfinance and National Australia Bank, saw a 29% increase in approved loans. This Scheme continues to have a positive impact on the lives of the borrowers and from the amount of enquiries



No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) Funding

being received, will see an even higher level of loans sought in the year ahead. In anticipation of this demand we have, on two occasions this year, successfully applied for capital expansion grants which gives us the capacity to grow this vital program.

A new Service commenced last year called Puppy Love Rescue which was aimed at assisting clients with treatments for their dogs and cats. It is now under new leadership and run entirely by volunteers, with the new name of Peggy's Promise. It has an expanded range of services which includes a dog wash, micro-chipping, flea and tick control, which are provided free of charge on the first Saturday of the month. It is a well utilised service, with as many as forty pets treated each month.

We express a heartfelt thanks to all of our supporters, in particular the Central Coast Leagues Club and Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing. Their generosity enables the Centre to function and provide a high standard of service to our clients. We value the contribution made by our volunteers whose enthusiasm, dedication and commitment are the lifeblood of the Centre. As we embark on another year, we will remain proactive in a changing environment, in providing support so desperately needed by our clients in what are very difficult and challenging times.

Charles Boyton - Program Manager



Father Rod Bower leading our Homeless Persons' Memorial Service. This is a very important event in the Coast Community Centre which is held during Homelessness Prevention Week each year.



Staff from Sanitarium



Students from Newcastle University



Ian* had been released from prison and started coming to the Community Centre, regularly visiting for meals, showers and to do his laundry.

Ian was referred to Coimba Men's Refuge for crisis accommodation, however with no vacancies, he was placed on a waiting list. Ian was very diligent, continued looking for his own accommodation and eventually found a one bedroom flat to rent, which was in close proximity to the Community Centre.

Housing NSW provided part of his bond and rent, with the remainder being obtained by us through Emergency Relief Funding from Wesley Mission Newcastle.

We were able to give Ian a No Interest Loan to purchase a fridge and washing machine for his new place. We also provided him with some furniture, linen, cutlery, cooking utensils and crockery items which had been donated to us.

Ian is now settled in his new flat and has nearly paid off the No Interest Loan for his fridge and washing machine. He is currently saving up to buy a new lawnmower and edger as his landlord has offered to reduce his rent if he keeps the grass mowed at the complex where he is renting.



St. Edwards College

Christmas at the Community Centre



Donated gifts



OLR Wyoming Church Choir



Peggy's Promise

Josie* was on an Age Pension and came to the Community Centre completely overwhelmed by her circumstances. She was suffering with chronic health and kidney problems which required her to be on a special diet. This had become quite costly and difficult for Josie to manage. Her financial situation was made even worse when her car broke down and she was left stranded on the side of the road.

We were able to put together a food hamper consisting of items to meet her special dietary requirements. In addition to this, we gave Josie a Woolworths Food Voucher for \$100

to purchase other items that we could not supply.

Staff arranged for Emergency Relief funding through Wesley Mission Newcastle to pay for mechanical costs to get her car back on the road again. Josie was also provided with EAPA vouchers to pay for some of her mounting electricity bills and to lessen the financial burden that she was currently experiencing.

Josie recently visited the Community Centre for a free podiatry check-up. She told us that she is back on top of her bills again and couldn't have done it without our help.



Partners In Recovery - Medicare Local



Peggy's Promise



NRMA

Food hampers

were provided to those doing it tough. Hampers were made up of food donated by generous community members and local businesses.

1,072
FOOD
HAMPERS



118
people

were provided with free podiatry checkups through our partnership with Central Coast Family and Sports Podiatry Kincumber

Clients have access to **shower and laundry** facilities. Last year, 467 clients laundered their **clothes** and we distributed **toiletry packs and towels** when needed.



1,791
SHOWERS



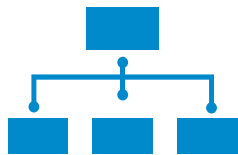
106
people

were provided with free **Legal Advice** through our partnership with Central Coast Community Legal Centre



187 clients

received free **haircuts** by wonderful volunteer hairdressers in the Community Centre.



332 REFERRALS

were made to other support agencies for financial help, counselling, accommodation, well-being, health etc



512

INTERVIEWS for people in need of **emergency accommodation**



685

people were assisted with paying for their **medical prescriptions**



9 people

took part in the **Work Development Order (WDO)** scheme by volunteering in the Restaurant, clearing \$23,470 in outstanding fines.



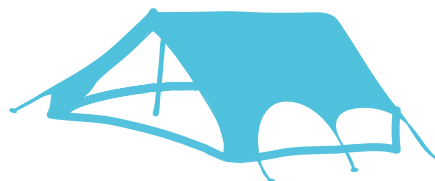
129 No Interest Loans (NILS)

were provided to clients totalling \$98,759. The NILS

Scheme is provided through Good Shepherd Micro finance and National Australia Bank and ensures that low-income families can purchase necessary items such as washing machines, fridges and car registrations

17 SWAGS

were given to clients who were sleeping rough. 42 **sleeping bags**, 144 **blankets** and other **linen** items were also distributed



ELECTRICITY VOUCHERS TO 248 PEOPLE

Over **\$47,000** worth of **EAPA vouchers** (Energy Accounts Payment Assistance) were provided to people who were having difficulty paying their energy or gas accounts.



C3 Church



I am writing today with gratitude for the work that you do and had never thought that I would one day need your services.

I had become unwell and was not able to work. My husband and I had been living on the edge of poverty for about 12 months as I was not bringing in an income. We were constantly juggling bills and fighting to keep our home along with increasing medical costs trying to treat my condition. Unable to get a Centrelink benefit we were struggling to survive on my husband's wage alone. The bills kept coming and we couldn't pay them.

In desperation I finally reached out to the Coast Community Centre and through tears explained my situation. I was made to feel comfortable and reassured that help was available. Our energy bill was taken care of, we were given generous food hampers and CAP Financial Counselling helped us retain our home. With strict budgets in place we will be debt free in 2½ years. If not for the early intervention of the Community Centre, we would surely have lost our home, been bankrupted and unable to pay rent would have become homeless.

Supporters Report

Coast Shelter would like to thank our many friends, donors and volunteers for their ongoing support throughout the year. We are constantly amazed at the generosity of our community and while it is not possible to list every contribution, we would like to extend our gratitude to the commitment of all our supporters.

Coast Shelter is very fortunate to have such charitable friends within the community. This year we raised \$536,421 from our sponsors, fundraising events and through donations. This is an outstanding effort, especially when it does not include the enormous amount of in-kind donations we receive such as canned food, blankets, swags, furniture, toiletries and clothing. These items are of great assistance in our Coast Community Centre, which is a fantastic example of what can be achieved with the help of our generous supporters. It simply could not operate without the amazing team volunteers who donate their time, energy and skills each and every day. We are also grateful for the continued support of the Central Coast Leagues Club and Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing who take the financial strain off our operation.

We have seen some great fundraising events organised by various community groups and individuals this year. The Rotary Club of Erina donated over \$11,500 as part of their annual Century Challenge Cycle Ride and we are very thankful for their continued support. We were also honoured to be the beneficiary of a number of new events including Pink Rose Day, Art Studios Cooperative's Gala Auction, the Kian Hamilton Ice Hockey Cup and some Zumba Events, which was such an inventive way to raise money. The Zoo and Snooze Sleepout is our major fundraiser which took place during Homelessness Prevention Week. This year it raised over \$70,000, which

further highlights the immense generosity of our local community. We extend our thanks to the Australian Reptile Park, Central Coast Harley Davidson, Kwik Kopy, 2GO and Julie's Place for their contribution to this event. Also, thanks to the individuals who raised their money, braved the cold and slept out to gain an experience of what it is to be homeless.

It seems that there are so many 'groups' that share the same philosophy of helping those in need. As well as local businesses, we receive contributions from Registered Clubs, Rotary, Lions and Lioness Clubs, Bridge Clubs, Masonic Clubs, Churches, Scouts, Guides and numerous other fellowships. We must also acknowledge the efforts of teachers and students from local schools who donate an abundance of items, including canned food, gifts, socks, toiletries and blankets. Individual students have also donated their pocket money or birthday gifts, which is so inspiring to see. It is certainly heartening to know that our future generations are so thoughtful and giving.

All of Coast Shelter's supporters play a valuable role in our work and as a result, we have seen many lives changed for the better. Thank you never seems enough, but on behalf of Coast Shelter's staff and clients, we would like to extend a very big THANK YOU to everyone who has assisted us in the last financial year.

Heidi Blyth – Communications Officer



Zoo & Snooze Sleepout which raised \$70,000!



Pinnacle Integrity



Pink Rose Day Fundraiser hosted by the Footprint Group



Central Coast Freemasons



Central Coast HOG (Harley Owners' Group)



Century Challenge Cycle Ride - Rotary Club of Erina



Santa and the Kariong Fire Service



Julie's Place at Zoo and Snooze



Handmade quilts by Gillian and friends from Nowra



Big Yellow Bus Day



PROVIDERS: Holgate Public School students with Charles Boyton, of Coast Shelter. Picture: Jordan Gregory

Shelter helps the homeless

By MADDISON MCNAUGHT and SARAH ROCKOFF

COAST Shelter is a non-profit-making charity that has been operating on the Central Coast for more than 20 years. They provide a number of services to help people at risk of homelessness or who are homeless to get back on their feet.

"The face of homelessness is changing completely," said Charles Boyton, manager of the Community Centre at Coast Shelter.

"There is a common misconception that being homeless means being dirty and sleeping on a street bench. But this is not the case. There

is a whole range of reasons why people can become homeless."

Those reasons include poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, mental health and abuse.

Coast Shelter provides accommodation to more than 150 men, women, families and youth every night. Also, they give away more than 1000 free meals every week through the Community Centre.

Coast Shelter needs support to run its programs and services. Anyone can help by fund-raising, donating canned food, money and items such as linen, white goods and furniture that is no longer needed. Volunteers are also valued.



Joanne Christie of Coast Shelter with the type of foods needed.

Shelter needs canned goods

DONATIONS of canned and non-perishable food for Coast Shelter can be delivered to *The Central Coast Express Advocate* office at Ilya Ave, Erina; placed in a shopping trolley located outside Aldi Gosford; or taken to Coast Shelter 345 Mann St, Gosford.

Coast Shelter in the past 12 months has provided more than 50,000 meals and 1000 food hampers to homeless people. The food drive will continue until Friday, September 18.

Sexual assault in spotlight

A DAY of Action against sexual assault will be held at The Entrance tomorrow.

The community event is being organised by the Central Coast Women's Health Centre at Memorial Park between 10am and 2pm.

Representatives from domestic violence support groups, youth workers, Coast Shelter and other community organisations will be there during the day.

If raining the event will be moved to The Entrance Community Centre.

Details: 4351 1152.

Youth refuge funding saved

\$116,000 GRANT FROM GOVT

Denice Barnes

RUMBALARA Youth Refuge is safe - for now.

The refuge missed out on State Government funding under the new homeless program Going Home Staying Home because it was not a state-owned refuge and Coast Shelter was not a state body.

Gosford Council owns the building which meant the refuge was in a unique position and did not meet funding criteria.

A community uprising, mainly from former residents of the coast's only purpose-built youth refuge, saw continued lobbying for the refuge to stay open.

Gosford state Liberal MP Chris Holstein said he was always confident a solution could be found and was delighted when the government announced last week \$116,000 would be made available to ensure the refuge remained operating until January next year.

"After the council agreed to keep the property for homeless people, we negotiated a formal inclusion of the property and funding for \$116,000 as a one-off payment to ensure it continues," Mr Holstein said.

"It was justified by the special circumstances sur-

SUPPORTERS

When former Rumbalara Youth Refuge residents heard their former home may close, they banded together to mount a social media campaign and organise fund raising events. Mitchell Connolly was just one former resident who credited Rumbalara for turning his life around.

rounding Rumbalara. I always knew it would be reassessed and a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to resolve the issue.

"I was always confident a positive outcome for Rumbalara and I'm very pleased that is now confirmed."

Family and Community Services will complete a review assessing client numbers and operational requirements of the service by December.

Coast Shelter chief executive officer Laurie Maher said he was pleased with the outcome.

"Chris Holstein has been of great assistance and the \$116,000 is a very good outcome," he said.

He said Coast Shelter would be given the opportunity to apply for other programs to ensure the youth refuge remained operational after January.

Provide a helping can

WITH the demand for meals and services for homeless people mushrooming in the region, Coast Shelter is grateful for every single donation.

The *Central Coast Express Advocate* annual food drive is on again and we ask the community to give generously by donating canned and non-perishable food to be delivered to Coast Shelter to help fill the pantry.

Donations can either be delivered to The Express office, Erina, to a shopping trolley outside Aldi Gosford or to Coast Shelter in Gosford.

Coast Shelter operations manager Charles Boyton said on average six hampers and sometimes up to 12 were given out each day.

HOW TO DONATE

Canned and non-perishable food items can be delivered to The Central Coast Express Advocate office Ilya Avenue, Erina, placed in a shopping trolley located outside Aldi Gosford or taken to Coast Shelter 345 Mann St, Gosford.

The food drive will continue until Friday, September 18.

"The hampers contain things like canned foods, fruit and vegetables, noodles and rice," he said.

"Sometimes it has to be enough to last a week, it just depends on the circumstances and the amount of people in the family, it could be a single person or a family of five who may require four

or five bags or boxes of food.

"Our pantry can empty quickly but because of community response and the Wesley Mission we are able to maintain stocks.

"We have found people to be very generous, especially people who were once homeless who often like to give back."

Coast Shelter in the past 12 months has provided more than 50,000 meals and well over 1000 food hampers.

It also has facilities available for homeless people to use including showers, toiletries and laundry.

Meals on Wheels Central Coast recently conducted its own drive and delivered packages of toiletries and non-perishables direct to Coast Shelter.

Homelessness issues appear set to persist

COAST Shelter provided 50,000 free meals and more than 50,000 days of crisis accommodation over the past year and according to new research, those figures aren't likely to change anytime soon.

A recent survey by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed chronic homelessness had increased by 20 per cent and people experiencing domestic and family violence, problem drug and alcohol

use, mental health issues and young people without family support were most at risk of becoming homeless.

"This is not surprising," Coast Shelter executive officer Laurie Maher said.

"It confirms what we, at Coast Shelter, know from experience, but it's good to have research confirm our assessment."

He said other research had indicated homeless people have a much shorter life expectancy than the general population.

"The fact that chronically homeless people have a life expectancy of 30 years less than the general population is quite disturbing," Mr Maher said.

Execs in for a wild night

BUSINESS LEADERS SLEEPING ROUGH FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Errol Smith

WHEN Michael Goodwin lays down for a good night's sleep this evening it won't be on a soft bed and under a warm doona.

More likely it will be on cold, damp ground, under a tree and in a none too thick sleeping bag.

Mr Goodwin will be among 70 business owners, managers and their staff participating in the fifth annual Zoo and Snooze at the Australian Reptile Park, to raise money to help the homeless.

The event is an initiative of Coast Shelter as part of Homelessness Prevention Week.

Coast Shelter supports people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or disadvantaged with a series of refuges across the region while also providing more than 50,000 meals a year to those in need.

To participate, each sleeper must raise more than \$1000, with organisers hope-

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Zoo and Snooze spokesman Vicki de Carle said the event is designed to provide a glimpse of what it would be like to not have a warm home to go to each night. To make a donation please visit zooandsnooze.com.au

ful of exceeding last year's \$73,000.

Each sleeper participating in Zoo and Snooze will sleep rough in the grounds of the Somersby reptile park, surrounded by the resident wildlife.

Mr Goodwin said housing affordability was the biggest problem with many people forced to sleep in their car, couch surf or find a spot under places such as Brian McGowan Bridge.

"The problem on the Coast is not getting any better," the Coast Shelter board member said.

"We're sleeping out for just one night and it won't be easy; imagine having to do it all year round."



Michael Goodwin meets Australian Reptile Park keeper Stacey Denovan and Tiny Tim, the three-year-old alligator, ahead of tonight's Zoo and Snooze sleep out. Picture: PETER CLARK

Charity starts with a shoebox

SOCIAL MEDIA PUT TO USE

Emma Herd

FACEBOOK is about more than just selfies and dinner photos, with two Central Coast mothers turning eight shoeboxes full of goods for charity into more than 100, thanks to social media.

Sisters Sheridan Lenton, of Canton Beach, and Rebecca Law, of Point Clare, started Facebook page Shoebox Revolution three months ago, after being inspired by a group in Wollongong who prepare care packages for the homeless.

"We started with eight shoeboxes and got most of the stuff through our own cupboards," Mrs Lenton said.

"The feeling we got when we dropped off those first eight boxes was just so good, we thought other people need this feeling in their lives."

They set up the Facebook page and have been inundated with support, with the packages they have completed so far donated to Coast



Sheridan Lenton (right) and her sister Rebecca Law put together care packages. Picture: MARK SCOTT

Shelter, Gosford, and Mary Macs Place, Woy Woy.

"We had aimed for 250 shoeboxes by the new year and we'll be exceeding that by far," Ms Lenton said.

"We've handed out 80 boxes so far — and goodness knows how many jackets

and blankets — and we've got quite a lot on the go as well."

Ms Lenton said she doubted they would have been so successful if it weren't for Facebook.

"I'm sure people did do this before social media. We

would have had to have done letterbox drops and taken out ads, but with Facebook it has just been so easy," she said.

They have started to extend the reach of their work by offering collection bins, to enable businesses to act as

drop-off points, to lessen the amount of pick-ups they are required to do, in addition to their fulltime jobs.

The sisters said they were grateful for the guidance they have received from Share the Love director Kristy Chklaev.

TOUCHING GIFT

ONE of the most touching donations to Shoebox Revolution came from a seven-year-old boy. Shocked to hear some children didn't have a home he asked his mum to donate shoebox he had put together containing his own Wests Tigers jersey, shorts and footy cards, as well as toiletries, lollies and thick socks. To find out more, search Facebook and search Shoebox Revolution.

HOW TO HELP

DONATIONS to Shoebox Revolution can also be dropped off at Share the Love's upcoming donation day on September 5. Share the Love assists Central Coast families with babies and young children with essential items they need. The donation day runs from 10am-1pm at Share the Love headquarters, upstairs in Wallerah Rd shops. Contact Details: sharethelove.centralcoast.com

They are also looking for source legal advice in registering as a charity

Coasties sleeping rough every night

MORE WOMEN LIVING IN CARS

Pauline Priest

AROUND 2000 men, women, youth and children are homeless every night on the Central Coast.

This week, Homelessness Prevention Week aims to raise community awareness of those in our community who are marginalised, vulnerable and/or homeless.

Coast Shelter executive officer Laurie Maher said homelessness was not merely a lack of shelter.

"Those living on the streets reveal just one aspect of homelessness," Mr Maher said.

"Coast Shelter estimates that every night thousands are living in unsafe and inappropriate housing, with no cooking facilities, overcrowded and inadequate bathroom facilities and young people couch surfing, all with no security of tenure. We are also seeing more women who are sleeping in their cars, many the victims of domestic violence."

Josie, who sleeps in her car, said she never gets a good night sleep.

"You need to have one eye open for noises or any indi-

A chronic shortage of housing makes it hard for clients to move on.

- Laurie Maher

cator of anyone that might pose a risk," Josie said.

Coast Shelter has five youth refuges, three women and children's refuges and a men's refuge along with the Coast Community Centre, which provides practical support and also serves about 1500 meals a week to those struggling.

"We are seeing a greater divide between the haves and the have nots," Mr Maher said.

"For the 2014-2015 financial year 2083 people contacted us seeking accommodation. That's 2083 men, women, youth and children living on the Central Coast we were unable to accommodate due to having 'no room at the inn'."

"Then when we are able to accommodate people



Lynn Heggie, Laurie Maher, Jenny Callaghan, Margaret Somerville, Elissa Cotterill and Shayne Silvers in the kitchen at Coast Shelter, Gosford.

Picture: PETER CLARK

and support them with intensive case management there still remains a chronic

shortage of affordable accommodation which makes it almost impossible

for our clients to move on from the initial crisis that led to their homelessness."

Sleep-out will raise vital cash

ABOUT 70 Central Coast business owners, managers and their staff will participate in the fifth annual Zoo and Snooze this Friday at the Australian Reptile Park.

The event is an initiative of Coast Shelter as part of Homelessness Prevention Week.

To participate, each sleeper must raise over \$1000, with organisers hopeful of exceeding last year's total of \$73,000.

Each sleeper participating in Zoo and Snooze will have the experience of sleeping rough in the grounds of Australian Reptile Park, surrounded by the wildlife.

Coast Shelter supports people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or disadvantaged.

It provides more than 50,000 meals each year to those in need.

To participate or donate funds visit zooandsnooze.com.au.



Emma Pauley-Hughes and Gobby Bowles at Friday night's charity sleep-out.

Execs snooze at the zoo

DONATIONS pledged to Friday night's fifth annual executive Zoo and Snooze at the Australian Reptile Park are expected to reach \$100,000-\$250,000 more than the amount raised last year.

More than 70 people took part in the sleep-out organised by Coast Shelter to provide support services through its extensive Central Coast network.

Spokesman Vicki de Carle said one of the most important elements of Zoo and

Snooze was that it raised awareness across the business community.

"It changes them forever as they get a little insight into what it would be like to have to carry your possessions, unpack your sleeping gear on the ground, try and get some sleep in the cold and then pack it all up again in the morning and move on," she said.

"I am so proud of the Central Coast Business community who not only

support this event but sleep on the ground in the freezing cold with every year getting more sleepers.

"So many homeless people are women and children fleeing domestic violence, young people escaping physical and sexual abuse, people with mental health issues and sometimes it's just that life has thrown someone a curve ball."

Visit facebook.com/ZooAndSnooze to keep up to date.

Lexy's life is on track

GROWING up in a family of alcoholics and turning to drugs because of ongoing abuse was the devastating recipe that led Lexy Montana to become homeless.

"I got heavily into the drug ice," the 43-year-old said.

"In 2007 I took myself off ice, but as the craving for it was so great, I started drinking alcohol and as the craving got worse I drank more and couldn't maintain the house."

"Just before I became homeless, I was suicidal, but I managed to get myself to Gosford Hospital, where I was referred to a detox centre."

During the three-week wait for a place, Ms Montana lived in her car, parked at the Ourimbah rest area.

"When you are homeless, you no longer think in the long term -- you are strictly in survival mode," she said.

"People I met at the rest stop were very kind and gave me milk, fruit, cakes and magazines. I washed by standing in a bucket and had



Life is looking good now for Lexy Montana. Picture: WAIDE MACGURE

bought a pop-up tent for privacy to do this."

After seven days of detox, she went to a rehabilitation centre, but was disappointed with a lack of counselling.

"Although I only had \$2.50, I drove back to Gosford and went to Centretlink, who directed me to Coast Shelter," she said.

"They fed me, let me shower, advised me of their services and let me cry and cry."

"I was living in my car again and they tried to get

me into a women's refuge, but what became familiar for me was living in the car."

"After six months, they convinced me to go into a women's refuge, where I was able to start over again."

In December 2012, Coast Shelter helped Ms Montana find permanent community housing.

"Life is awesome now and I'm getting stronger," she said. "Coast Shelter became a safe zone for me and Centretlink was sensational."

Bosses rough it with reptiles

Deenice Barnes

LAST year 50 brave local business people slept out in freezing conditions at the Australian Reptile Park to raise awareness and reflect on how lucky they are to have a warm bed at home.

They also raised more

ZOO DIRECTS FUNDS AND FOCUS TO HOMELESS

than \$73,000 for Coast Shelter to help homeless people living rough on the Central Coast.

This year it happens again on August 7, when people can help by dobbing in their

boss and helping them raise money.

Every "sleeper" must raise or donate at least \$1000.

People can register online at zooandsnooze.com.au and create a fundraising page

and share it via email, Facebook, Twitter, friends and family, sell raffle tickets or have a collection at work.

All donations are tax deductible and online donations get emailed receipts.

The boss will get to experience the "sleeping rough" part of the night where everyone has to bring their own ground sheet and sleeping bag.

The fun part of the night is when participants gather around open fires enjoying food provided by former

MasterChef winner Julie Godwin from Julie's Place.

The Reptile Park puts on a night-time show featuring Rosie the alligator and lots of snakes and spiders, so entertainment will not be in short supply.

A guest speaker will also talk about being homeless.

Reaching crisis point

Matt Taylor

HOMELESSNESS on the Central Coast is only getting worse, charities say.

A "perfect storm" of the ice epidemic, high rents and rising unemployment has led to more than 2000 people being forced on to the streets, according to Coast Shelter's Shayne Silvers.

"Homelessness is worse than ever on the Coast," the Gosford-based shelter's operations manager said.

"Many more people are spiralling into it, of all ages, colours and creeds. And the drug problem, particularly with ice, is only making it worse."

This reinforced latest statistics that showed the Coast was the worst region in NSW for the number of homeless people, Ms Silvers said.

She said the homeless problem "may be even worse than we think".

"Look, there's probably more than 2000," Ms Silvers, who is also on the board of charity group HOME, said.

HOME was established two years ago to help house people with a mental health disorder.

"There's the 'hidden homeless' that the official numbers don't take into account," she said.

"We're finding more and more people living in their cars and in overcrowded boarding houses."

She said Coast Shelter was battling to keep up with the



Coast Shelter operations manager Shayne Silvers serving lunch to the needy at the North Gosford facility on Monday.

Picture: PETER CLARK

HOMELESSNESS IS NOW 'WORSE THAN EVER' ON THE COAST, SAY CHARITIES

calls for assistance and she said the situation would only worsen as winter approaches.

"We are averaging 22 food hampers a day for people, and we are getting about 200 people for some meal times," Ms Silvers said.

She delivered a reality check for low- to middle-income earners.

"If you don't own a house, then you're four or five pay packets away from potential homelessness," she said.

When asked if there was a magic bullet to help tackle

homelessness, Ms Silvers said she wished there was.

"Money and bricks and mortar are a good start. There needs to be more affordable housing," she said.

"And services need to be ramped up, especially for people who have a mental

health disorder.

"But my main mantra is that if you have made a difference for one person, then you have succeeded."

If you need help, call Coast Shelter on 4325 3540 or Lifeline on 131 114.

“If you don't own a house, then you're four or five pay packets away from potential homelessness.”

- Shayne Silvers

NIAGARA PARK

Help ease plight of homeless

QUALITY CLOTHES SOUGHT

IF YOU have spare warm clothes taking up space in your wardrobe, the organisers of next week's Coast Connect Day need your help.

Coast Connect Day is in its eighth year and aims to connect with those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or simply doing it tough.

This year's event is on next Wednesday from 9am-2pm at Niagara Park Stadium, with organisers tipping about 1000 visitors, with more than 60 government and non-government services and armies of volunteers ready to help.

The volunteers will also be on hand on Tuesday, from 9am-3pm, to take donations from the wider community to hand out to visitors on the day.

"It's about people getting

help and also being able to walk away with something on the day." Volunteering Central Coast executive officer Michelle Vanstone said.

They are particularly seeking clean and good quality men's, women's and children's clothing, as well as underwear and pyjamas.

Coast Shelter executive officer Laurie Maher said the aim of Coast Connect Day was twofold.

"Coast Connect Day is not only about linking people



Julie Agius, Lisa Wilcock, Michelle Vanstone and Tara Savage pack hampers for the day.

Picture: PETER CLARK

who are homeless and at risk of being homeless with valuable resources and services, it's also about creating awareness within the greater community," Mr Maher said.

Among the organisers were a group of TAFE

community services students, who have worked through a host of tasks including sourcing commercial support right through to packing pauper packs, containing donated toiletries.

"The students get really involved in the whole pro-

cess," Miss Vanstone said.

Coast Connect Day chairman Bob Thomas said the event would help to break down barriers that prevent people moving forward.

"Homelessness is a growing concern on the Central Coast and numbers will con-

tinue to rise if we don't address the issues that these people face on a day-to-day basis," Mr Thomas said.

Free travel passes to the event are available from the Coast Community Centre, Mary Macs, Housing NSW and Centrelink offices.

Wrapt to be sleeping outside

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER ASKS PEOPLE TO 'ROUGH IT' AT PARK

Denice Barnes

WE'RE not sure who was more impressed – the MasterChef, former Mariners player or Fluffy the python – about promoting this year's Zoo and Snooze event on a Harley Davidson.

The annual sleep-out, a major fundraiser for Coast Shelter, is on at the Australian Reptile Park on Friday. Julie Goodwin ventured out of the kitchen and onto the Harley, along with Central Coast Mariners youth development co-ordinator Adam Kwasnik and the giant snake, to help persuade residents to support the cause.

"The Zoo and Snooze Team are thrilled to welcome one of the coast's most popular business people, Julie Goodwin, along with a new sponsor, Central Coast Harley Davidson," said the event's co-ordinator, Vicki de Carle.

"The Zoo and Snooze executive sleep-out is about taking people out of their

SNOOZE AWAY

You can register online at zooandsnooze.com.au, or phone Vicki de Carle on 0437 999 797 to participate

comfort zone to sleep rough for Coast Shelter.

"We started by taking Julie right out of her comfort zone, by surprising her with a beautiful Harley Davidson and Adam Kwasnik."

Businesses are fundraising and challenging each other to raise a minimum of \$1000 per person to sleep out at the Reptile Park.

Money raised will go to the Coast Shelter to support homeless services on the Central Coast.

The Reptile Park is feeding up the crocs and preparing the spiders and snakes for the overnight visit, which coincides with Homeless Persons' Week.

Vanessa Adams and Pat Dow will provide the entertainment, with food supplied by Julie's Place.



Central Coast Mariners' Adam Kwasnik, business owner Julie Goodwin and Fluffy the python are getting ready for the annual Zoo and Snooze executive sleeper, to be held at the Australian Reptile Park on August 8. Picture: MARK SCOTT

CARE FOR PEOPLE AND PETS

CHARITY HELPS ANIMAL LOVERS

NORTH Gosford recovering heroin addict Lyndon Cummings has had his fair share of tough times.

But his four-legged companions Gypsy and Angus have stuck by him, no matter what.

Now the dog lover and Coast Shelter volunteer gives his fur friends – a 14-year-old chihuahua-cross-silky and 13-year-old staffy cross kelpie – regular check-ups and grooming thanks to a Central Coast charity helping pet owners in need.

"Once a month I take Angus and Gypsy to Coast Shelter where the wonderful people from Peggy's Promise come and check the dogs. I don't know what I'd do without my dogs, and they probably wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Peggy's Promise," said Mr Cummings.

Peggy's Promise was set up by a group of like-minded dog lovers who recognised a need on the Central Coast to help people struggling to keep their pets.

This Saturday Peggy's Promise is holding a special family fundraising day in Budgewoi.

"We provide support for people in times of crisis when they really need their fur friend the most," said founder Kattrina Schyndel.

"Many people find themselves in a situation whether it be short or long term where they do want to continue caring for a pet but the financial constraints prevent that, leading to the surrender of

FAMILY FUN DAY

WHAT: Peggy's Promise Family Fun Day

WHERE: Coast Hotel, Budgewoi

WHEN: Saturday, 11am to 5pm

DETAILS: Peggy's Family Fun Day Fundraiser on Facebook

an otherwise much-loved family member."

Once a month the Peggy's Promise team meets at Coast Shelter in Gosford to provide flea/tick treatments and worming as well as giving the dogs a wash.

"We also strongly encourage desexing, vaccination and micro-chipping (which is provided on site) to make sure that each pet is identifiable, as many of our clients may be in transit," she said.

Mrs Schyndel said the monthly event is also a chance for many of her clients to meet up.

"Many of our clients have social isolation issues and the monthly meet is a chance for them to socialise with like-minded people with a passion for animals."

She said the team helped prevent the "needless surrender of a huge amount of dogs where their owners had no other alternative".

The Peggy's Promise Family Fun Day will have stalls, car boot sales, entertainment and a chance to meet the Peggy's team and see the work they do.



Lyndon Cummings gets his dog Gypsy checked out by volunteers with Peggy's Promise.

Artists sell works to help refuge

EVERYONE has a tale to tell, and now 10 Central Coast artists are selling their "stories" to help save Rumbalara youth refuge.

The members of Art Studios Co-operative are selling work from their Stories exhibition, currently on show at the Mann St gallery in North Gosford.

The show will culminate with a gala auction fundraiser evening hosted by HG Nelson at 6.30pm on Sunday.

"We all took youth homelessness as a starting point and put a story to our work," Art Studios Cooperative co-founder Leasha Craig said.

"Coast Shelter, which runs Rumbalara, is just over the road from us and when we heard that the youth refuge was facing closure due to funding cuts, we thought this would be a great way to raise awareness and also some funds."

Former Rumbalara resident, Mitchell Connelly, will speak at the gala auction.

Details: 4339 3349.

Get tickets at rumbalara.stories.eventbrite.com.au or from the gallery.