



nova
for women and children
WOMEN AND CHILDREN MATTER

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Specialist Homelessness and
Domestic Violence Service



Acknowledgment of Country

Nova for Women and Children acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land across the different services where Nova staff work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work.

We also acknowledge our gratitude that we share this land today, our sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and our hope and belief that we can move to a place of equity, justice and partnership together.

Table of Contents

2	About Nova
3-4	Nova's Objectives
5	Agenda
6-8	Minutes of Previous AGM
9	Chairperson's Letter
10	Our Board
11	Organisational Structure
12	Message from CEO
13	From Our Operations Manager
14	Practice Leader's Report
15-17	Newcastle West
18-19	Eastlakes
20-21	Trisha House
22-23	Westlakes
24	Charlestown Hub
25	Transitional Housing Project
26	Partnering Agencies
27-28	Supported Temporary Accommodation
29	Domestic Violence Response Enhancement
30	Staff Training
31-33	Marketing and Community Engagement
34	Events and Photos
35-39	Women's Stories
40-42	Statistics and Results
43	Areas of Concern
44	Future Directions and Acknowledgement and Thanks.

About Nova

Our Vision

A world where women and children live: a life that is safe, independent, valued, respected and free from violence.

Our Values

Are built upon the foundations that women and children matter. Underpinning this we;

- Act with good intent
- Focus on strengths
- Promote collaborative, innovative and inclusive practice
- Respect and embrace diversity
- Appreciate and value cultural diversity
- Work respectfully

Our Purpose

To prevent or end homelessness, confront injustice and advocate for the right of women and their children to be safe.

Our Why

A world where women and children matter

[#WomenAndChildrenMatter](#)

[#NovaForWomen](#)



Nova's Objectives

Goal 1: We deliver and develop quality services that have a positive impact for women and children experiencing or at risk of homelessness and domestic and family violence

Strategic objective 1.1

We ensure best practice principles and evidence underpin all our work, service development and planning

Strategic objective 1.2

We will develop strategic partnerships as we pursue growth opportunities

Strategic objective 1.3

We are identified as a leader in the development and delivery of services for women and their children

Strategic objective 1.4

We develop and deliver services informed by women and children

Goal 2: We offer culturally appropriate, inclusive and supportive services to women and their children

Strategic objective 2.1

We acknowledge and embrace the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and we aim to deliver a culturally safe service that values their strengths and seeks to address structural and systemic inequalities

Strategic objective 2.2

We aim to foster a service that is safe for women and children of all cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual backgrounds

Goal 3: We provide a welcoming, respectful, confidential, equitable and inclusive service to clients in the LGBTQI+ community

Strategic Objective 3.1

We recognise the strengths of, and the challenges experienced by, the LGBTQI+ community and seek to deliver a welcoming and adaptable service that is safe and respectful

Strategic Objective 3.2

We acknowledge the barriers when women and children from the LGBTQI+ community are accessing support services including safe accommodation and aim to address this inequity with a client focused service

Strategic Objective 3.3

We aim to provide quality support to women and their children within the LGBTQI+ community

Nova's Objectives

Goal 4: We have highly skilled and engaged staff who continue to grow in their roles and contribute to the positive culture of the organisation

Strategic Objective 4.1

Staff will be committed to their own professional development and supported in this by the organisation

Strategic Objective 4.2

We will employ staff who are highly skilled

Strategic objective 4.3

We will seek to engage a workforce who reflect the diversity of our community

Strategic objective 4.4

Staff will demonstrate commitment to the organisation's values

Goal 5: We are a sustainable and dynamic organisation

Strategic Objective 5.1

Ensure our governance, operations and infrastructure enables us to achieve our goals and objectives

Strategic Objective 5.2

We will work towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

Strategic Objective 5.3

We will explore, contribute to, implement innovative practice

Strategic Objective 5.4

We will challenge the systemic barriers that limit women's full, safe and equitable participation in society

Strategic Objective 5.5

We will strengthen our financial capacity

Goal 6: We are respectful of the needs of women of all abilities

Strategic Objective 6.1

We aim to ensure access to women regardless of physical or intellectual requirements within our own abilities

Strategic Objective 6.2

We aim to ensure we have sites which are accessible

Strategic Objective 6.3

Staff will be aware of supports and services available for a range of physical and emotional requirements of the women we support

Agenda

The Annual General Meeting Nova for Women and Children Tuesday 17 October 2023 5.45pm

Valentine Bowling Club,
17a Valentine Cres Valentine NSW 2280

1. Acknowledgement of Country
2. Chairperson's welcome
3. Apologies
4. Minutes of the AGM of Nova for Women and Children held on 17 October 2022
5. Business arising from minutes
6. Presentation of Annual Report
7. Presentation of Auditor's Report
8. Declaration of Positions Vacant
9. Election of Committee Members
10. General Business
 - a) Appointment of Auditor
 - b) Signatories
 - c) Appointment of Public Officer
 - d) Times and dates of future Board Meetings

Minutes from previous AGM

Annual General Meeting Nova for Women and Children

17th October 2022

558 Hunter St, Newcastle West

Meeting commenced 5:50pm

Attendance: Lara Turley, Gabbi Ewers, Mary Ann Hill, Kirsty Porteous, Rayleen Ableson, Wendy Pinch, Kate Davies (minutes), Kelly Hansen, Marette Gale, Sue Hellier, Megan Coombes, Zoe Smith, Rozyta Englert, Louise Rak (Chair, joined online), Makayla Pugsley (joined online)

1. Acknowledgement of Country: Kelly
2. Chairperson's Welcome: Louise
3. Apologies: Katy Mooney (approved Kelly Hansen to act as proxy), Janine Johnston, Samantha Smith, Lee Liewes
4. Minutes of the AGM of Nova for Women and Children held on 18th October 2021
Motion: Accept the minutes from the previous AGM
Moved: Marette; Seconded: Kelly
5. Business arising from minutes.
None
6. Presentation of Annual Report
 - Chairperson's Message, Louise: Expressed gratitude to the women and children who trust Nova in some of their darkest times and the way that Nova rises to that.
 - CEO's Message, Kelly: Noted the ongoing environment of change, and that "Women and Children Matter" sits at the heart of everything Nova does.
 - Operation Manager's Report: Lee's valuable contribution noted and acknowledged.
 - Practice Leader's Report, Lara: Noted the importance of taking time to get the systems right and credited the ways that Team Leaders took on these changes.
 - Reports prepared by Team Leaders for each site and the community engagement report were noted and acknowledged.
 - Even with reduced service delivery Nova supported 1,702 women and children and supported 143 clients aged over 55 years during the year.
 - Future Directions: Key developments will include accreditation and embedding child specialist workers.

Motion: Accept the Annual Report

Moved: Rayleen; Seconded: Marette

Minutes from previous AGM

7. Presentation of Auditor's Report

Kristy Porteous (Pitcher Partners) presented the annual financial reports.

There was an increase in government funding received this year, expenses increased a small amount due mainly to brokerage and security upgrades, and employment costs remained comparable to the previous year. The organisation was in a healthy financial position at the end of June 2022.

There was nothing to report in relation to the audit and an unqualified audit opinion has been issued.

Motion: Accept the Auditor's Report

Moved: Rayleen; Seconded: Rozyta

8. Declaration of Positions Vacant

All positions were declared vacant by the Returning Officer Mary Ann Hill.

9. Election of Committee Members

Appointees were elected as follows:

Chairperson: Louise Rak (Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

Vice Chairperson: Kate Davies (Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

Secretary: Sue Hellier (Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

Treasurer: Rayleen Ableson (Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rozyta Englert)

Public Officer and Board Member: Katy Mooney

(Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

Board Members: Rozyta Englert (moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

Marett Gale (Moved: Rayleen Ableson; Seconded: Rozyta Englert) Samantha Smith

(Moved: Marett Gale; Seconded: Rayleen Ableson)

10. Special Resolution—transfer from Association to Company Ltd by Guarantee

Motion: It was agreed unanimously that the special resolution to transfer to Company Ltd by Guarantee be passed and accepted.

Minutes from previous AGM

11. General Business

a) Appointment of Auditor

Decision agreed unanimously to retain Pitcher Partners as the Auditor.

b) Signatories

Motion: Signatories to be removed are Janine Johnston and Fiona Edwards.

Signatories to be retained are Kelly Hansen, Lee Liewes and Rayleen Ableson

New Practice Leader to be added when appointed and probation completed.

Moved: Rozyta; Seconded: Marette

c) Appointment of Public Officer

Motion: Katy Mooney to remain as Public Officer

Moved: Marette; Seconded: Rozyta

d) Times and dates of future Board Meetings

Board meetings are to be held bi-monthly on Thursday evenings.

Updates to be provided by the CEO and extraordinary meetings to be held in addition to the bi-monthly meetings as required.

Meeting closed 6:26pm

Chairperson's Letter

It is a privilege to be part of the Nova community, and as Chair of the Nova Board, a privilege to present the 2022/2023 AGM report for Nova for Women and Children Inc.

I have been on the Nova Board for five years, and more recently as Chair. I am proud to be part of an organisation that serves and supports women and their children through some of their most difficult periods. I want to pay a special tribute to the strength and resilience of these women.

Everything we do at Nova is underpinned by our belief in the rights of women; and their children, to live and participate in the community safely and to make choices in their own lives.

This belief is backed up by the work of Nova staff and leadership team every day and evidenced by the achievement of all the essential requirements of the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES). A 100% accreditation for Nova in 2022 is even more noteworthy as this was Nova's first time participating in this process. We could not have achieved this without the hard work and commitment of our staff, Nova's leadership team and the Nova Board, so a heartfelt thanks to all.

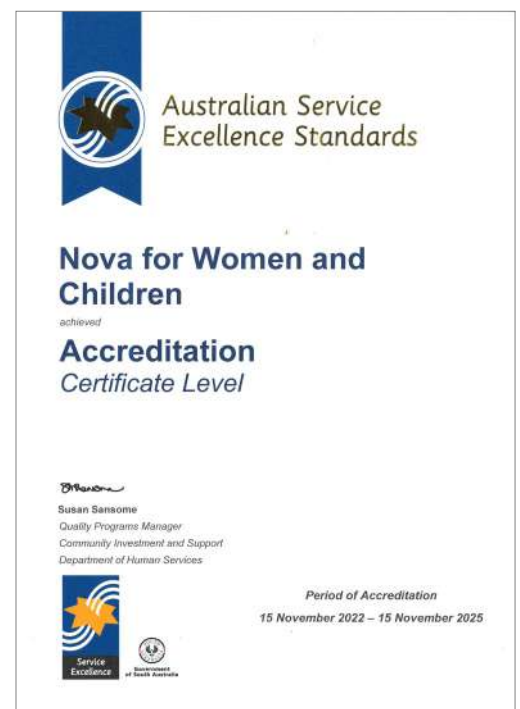
Another noteworthy achievement for Nova is the success of the Core and Cluster submission. In preparation for the changes in the Sector, the Nova Board have approved an extensive organisational review that will inform Nova's strategic direction. We also continue to implement the improvement recommendations from the accreditation process to strengthen our governance and service delivery now and in the future.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Nova leadership team, our staff, our many partners, donors, and supporters.

I would like to also extend my gratitude to this Board and the previous Nova Boards. It is a joy to work with such skilled women who together bring their intelligence, integrity, and humanity to governing Nova.

Regards

Rozyta Englert
Chairperson



Members of the Nova Board



Rozyta Englert
Chairperson



Kate Davies
Secretary



Brodie O'Sullivan
Treasurer



Katy Mooney
Vice Chairperson



Rayleen Ableson
Board Member



Sue Hellier
Board Member



Marette Gale
Board Member



Samantha Smith
Board Member

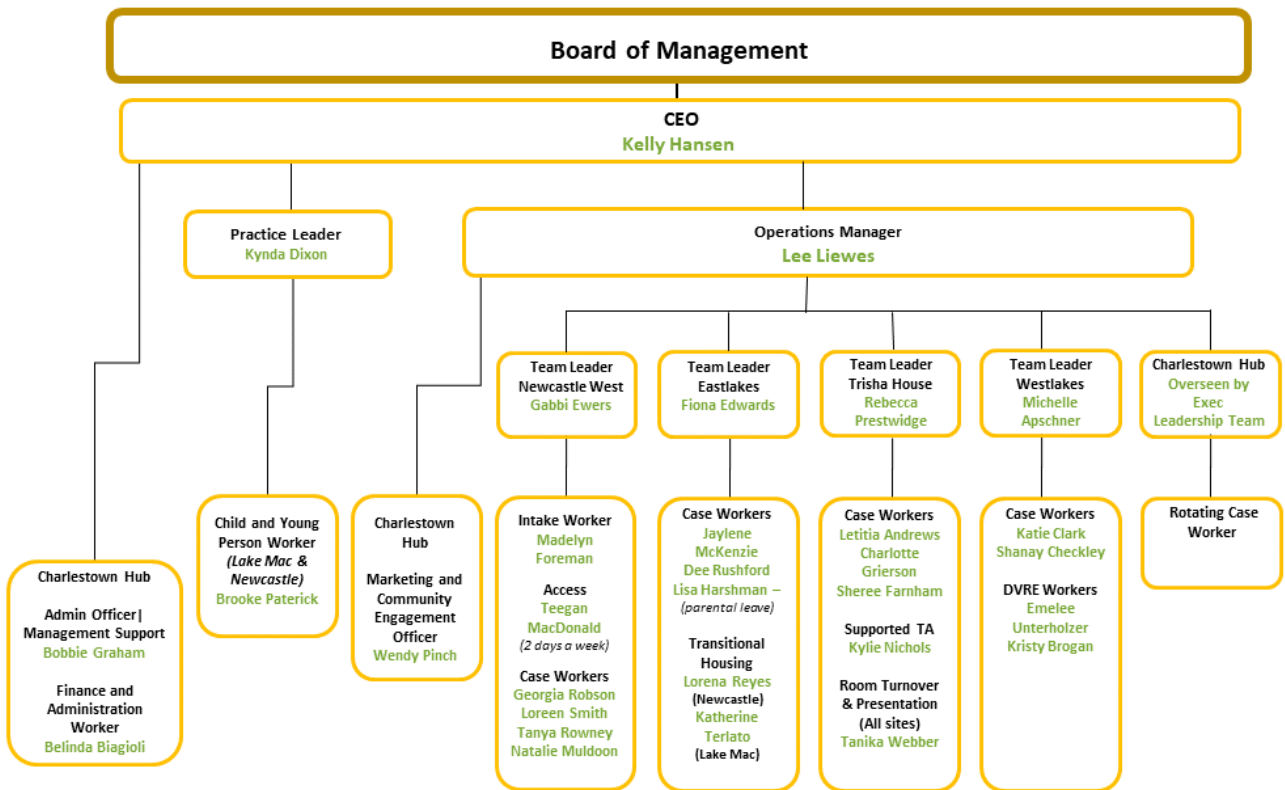


Natalie Oliver
Board Member



Kelly Hansen
Nova CEO

Organisational Structure



Meet some of our team:



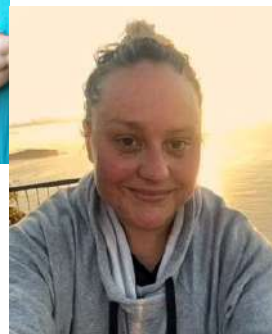
Sheree



Wendy



Bobbie & Belinda



Lisa



Teegan

Message from the CEO



How does one describe a year of such highs and lows?

As I look back, I'm extraordinarily grateful for the mammoth effort the women of Nova put in to achieve 100% accreditation for the Australian Services Excellence Standards. A feat that at times appeared to be moving further away, rather than to completion, and yet, we did it. Thank you and well done to everyone and to those who assisted us along the way, such as Mary Ann Hill and Nicholas Adams.

Another big achievement for Nova was the successful tendering of the Core and Cluster Model, in partnership with Home in Place. A partnership that assures to be beneficial for women and children escaping Domestic and Family Violence. The Core and Cluster model is an innovative and trauma-informed crisis accommodation and support site that will be state-wide in its implementation. We are looking forward to providing this model that has been advocated for over a decade by the sector.

We said goodbye to a few people last year that have had quite an impact on Nova. Firstly, I'd like to thank Lara Turley, our inaugural Practice Leader, who provided training, expertise and a considered approach in all her dealings with the organisation. I'd also like to thank both Lou and Rayleen for their commitment to Nova through their roles on the Board, as chairperson and treasurer. Their dedication, time and expertise over many years assisted the organisation to attain a level of accountability, viability and innovation.

Nova for Women and Children is in for a very exciting 12 months, with new innovation, new board and current board members supporting us, a new practice leader, Kynda Dixon, and new team members that we welcome to the Nova fold.

One of the lows for Nova last year was the news of our much-loved Operations Manager, Lee Liewes having cancer and needing extended leave. As per our mantra that "women and children matter," Nova women rallied and surrounded Lee with care, compassion and love. An amazing circle of sisterhood that I'm so proud to be a part of, and I'm sure assisted Lee in her recovery.

On a final note, I would like to acknowledge the deep despair of the deepening crisis of poverty and finding secure and affordable shelter in this country. Currently, women with or without children continue to cycle into homelessness and are barely able to exist financially, due to outdated social policies and lack of investment in social housing. Over the past four years, we have been at the frontline attempting to battle a system that is punitive and cruel, a system that lets down those who need it most. My wish for the next twelve months, is a society that cares, a society that holds itself accountable in ensuring the safety and wellbeing for all its peoples, and particularly for women and women with children. They matter, they belong, they have rights.

Best,

Kelly Hansen

From our Operations Manager



A bit personal this year.

The 2022/2023 financial year started with my first bout of Covid. Nova were very focused on all things accreditation and core and cluster. Demand for service was increasing and exit options for the women and children we support decreasing. Staff shortages due to illness and turnover were presenting challenges. We were always on the go, extremely busy, so feeling very tired all the time seemed pretty standard. A few other minor health issues which the Dr and I put down to post Covid ails didn't get any better, and then a few weeks later I felt a large lump in my stomach. Getting an ovarian cancer diagnosis in Oct 22 was not at all what I expected and I was terrified; not only of the health repercussions, I'm a single woman solely responsible for a 16-year-old, have a mortgage and at the tail end of my working life.

How very fortunate I was and am, to work at Nova, a proudly feminist organisation that supports its employees and truly wants the best for women. I was immediately wrapped in love, care and support and was able to take the time off I needed to process my diagnosis, attend many medical appointments, begin the treatment phase and supported to work from home the days I was well enough. This certainly assisted me in my recovery. To say that I was, am, and always will be forever grateful to all at Nova, doesn't do justice to the way I feel. Far too many women in similar circumstances are not afforded this opportunity and for some of those, homelessness follows.

We have had older women come into our communal crisis accommodation with life threatening or life limiting illness, with little or no family or other support. I cannot begin to imagine how bloody hard (impossible actually) it would have been for these women to be attending to their health needs while experiencing homelessness, having to share living, bathroom and kitchen space with other women and their children who are in crisis.

None of us know what is around the corner; an unexpected health crisis, job loss, relationship breakdown, housing stress or loss, rising cost of living, the lack of safe affordable accommodation - any of these has the potential to bring us to the point of being at risk of homelessness, or one step away from experiencing homelessness.

Our 'why' is women and children matter, and our vision is "A world where women and children live a life that is safe, independent, valued, respected and free from violence". We will continue to work toward, promote and strongly advocate for this in the world,. We will always respect, value and honour the women and children we support and those we work with. We acknowledge and honour the women and children who had their lives taken by people who were meant to love them and fight for everyone's right to have a place to call home, and for those in power to make sure this is a priority!!

Cheers and best wishes

Lee Liewes

P.S in April 2023 I was found to have no evidence of disease.
Please women, listen to your bodies and act early x



Practice Leader's Report

The 2022-2023 Financial Year

This year's been a test of resilience with challenges that stretched our organisation logistically, strategically and emotionally. We found ourselves with a vacant Practice Leader's position, the Operations Manager needed to take unexpected extended leave, and we had some staff turnover within our Case Worker team. Combine that with an unprecedented increase in demand for service from women and children in crisis and it leads to an exhausted workforce. Not surprisingly, Nova's staff rose to the occasion and continued to support our clients and achieve positive outcomes for the numerous people we support each year. We held strong to our vision, values and strategic plan, ending the year with vacancies being filled with more passionate Case Workers, a return of our Operations Manager and my appointment as the new Practice Leader.

The year, whilst turbulent, also provided an opportunity to rethink how we work and what our priorities are. It (yet again) shone a bright light on our phenomenal staff, who remain steadfast in their desire and dedication to support some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Future Initiatives for the Practice Leader Role

In alignment with our Strategic goals of being identified as a leader in the development and delivery of services through highly skilled staff, I have developed a training and development calendar for the next 12 months covering topics such as case planning, enhanced trauma informed practice, as well as facilitating assessments such as the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) and Client Outcome Surveys (COS). We have also commenced additional workshops for our Team Leaders focusing on areas such as supervision and courageous leadership, and our administrative staff are receiving development opportunities with sessions focused on engaging heightened clients. These workshops will not only enhance the competency of our staff, they will also improve consistency of practice across the organisation.

These development areas will be reflected in a revision of our service delivery manual, onboarding procedures, as well as the development and revision of various documents to streamline our processes. Our aim is to embed methods that allow for a systemic scaffold that operationalises continuous quality assessment, control and improvement.

The improvement of internal procedures and implementation of an intranet and documentation systems is underway. A SharePoint system will improve time, practice and efficiency, with more streamlined workflows and improved communication. There is a lot on the horizon for Nova, but the changes are positive and will ultimately improve outcomes for the women and children we support, as well as employee satisfaction. We are mindful that adjusting to change can come with challenges, and training will be provided to support staff adapt to new systems for a smooth transition. According to the Harvard Business School, *"For an organisation to successfully pursue and implement change, it must be prepared both logistically and culturally"*. Therefore, there has and will continue to be, a lot of planning, consideration, consultation and communication to all stakeholders to support the change process, that sets everyone up for success moving forward.

Regards,

Kynda Dixon

Newcastle West

The Site: Newcastle West is a bustling, exciting hub due partly to our location and its proximity to the local DCJ Housing office as well as Nova's reputation in the community. These factors ensure a relatively constant flow of women dropping in to the office seeking support. The Team of skilled and dedicated women regularly providing Outreach, Drop-in, Intake and Access Support, as well as Case Workers attending from other sites on a more ad hoc basis, ensure that the site is vibrant and well humoured! The Newcastle Hub is also the front door to Nova in the sense that the Intake role is situated here.



As the Team Leader, I feel privileged to work alongside the skilled practitioners as well as those coming to the office for support. The site has in some ways been a lot less frenetic since the move by our Administrative Team to the Charlestown Hub.

During this year, the Newcastle West Hub provided information and support to 154 women who came to our door.

The Team has worked so hard this year against so many barriers; the achievements of the women we support should not be overshadowed by the incredible dedication by the women who support them. Whenever the service is super busy, (due to the unexpected), the Case Workers seem to go to another level. I'm also extremely proud and thankful for the way my team worked together during the busy Accreditation time.

Intake: In my role as Team Leader I have been responsible for overseeing the Intake and Access space for Nova. As usual, our capacity to provide support to women and children experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the area is inherently restricted due to an increase in demand and without an increase in funding. We have been challenged by the number of women and children who are facing or experiencing Homelessness and Domestic Violence. However, over the past 24 months (at least) we are confronted by the ever-increasing numbers of women coming to the door for support or through our Intake process. This trend has been mirrored in the decrease in affordable long-term housing options.

Nova for Women and Children has been looking at ways to ameliorate the pressure applied to Case Workers whilst continuing to provide some form of support, however restricted this may need to be, on a continuing basis: Identifying women whose needs might be met with short-term access to support rather than case work allocation is one way we have attempted to take some pressure off, as well as to mitigate the number of women requiring an Intake Assessment. Needless to say, the Case Workers at the Newcastle West Hub are required to find a great deal of flexibility in support provision - juggling as they do their Outreach caseloads as well as the immediate needs of women coming to the door. Nova's solid relationship with DCJ Housing has been so greatly appreciated this year, as each service works to meet the needs of those in the community, whilst negotiating our own systems and restrictions.

Newcastle West

Losses and Gains: The past financial year has had its staffing challenges sector wide with Nova including the Newcastle West site being no exception.

The Newcastle Hub's capacity for support was further enhanced by hosting a 3rd Year UoN Social Work Student who joined the Team in October 2022 completing her placement in February 2023; this was a great asset to the Team.

Due to unforeseen and far from positive circumstances, I was given the opportunity to perform the role of Acting Operations Manager during October 2022. This provided me with an exciting opportunity to be more engaged with the Accreditation process, and to play a deeper role in ensuring consistent practice across the service in line with the ASES encompassed by and crucial to on-going SHS Accreditation- a space I am particularly passionate about! This opportunity to perform duties within the scope of the Operations Manager is one I am deeply grateful for.

Partnerships: Women being supported by Nova in either a Case Work or Access capacity have been able to access DCJ Senior Client Service Officers on site by appointment, on a monthly basis. This presents a useful opportunity for women and/or their Case Workers support on their behalf to discuss in a more personal way any issues, barriers or hurdles arising in relation to a woman's status on the Housing register.

We have also most recently been able to provide Financial Counsellor appointments to women receiving support across Nova at the Newcastle site on a monthly basis. Jonathon from Hunter Valley Financial Counselling is an incredible asset to the service as many women seeking support also often face complex financial situations, when fleeing Family and Domestic Violence, and managing the cost of being homeless.

Events: I was pleased to attend a press conference at The Stockton Centre in August 2022 relating to local Member and SHS frustration that it has not been seriously considered for use as emergency and temporary accommodation. Kate Washington, Member for Port Stephens, Tim Crakanthorp, Member for Newcastle and Hon. Rose Jackson, Shadow minister at the time for Water, Housing and Homelessness spoke passionately about the Government's failure to act in the face of increasing housing pressure in the region. To date this option continues on the agenda for the local government.

In May 2023 I attended the SHS Network meeting in Sydney, convened by Trina Jones, the CEO of Homelessness NSW. I find attending events such as these incredibly valuable as a Team Leader, to be present at the announcement of important reforms as I was that day, is gratifying and exciting. It also provides a good opportunity to meet and speak with people within the SHS space as well those who are important in "feeding-up" pertinent concerns and matters of the industry.

Guest speakers attending Trisha House/Newcastle West Case Work meetings throughout this financial year include attendance by representatives from Newcastle Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Community Corrections, NSW Police, Mathew Talbot, Newcastle Assertive Outreach Team.

Newcastle West

Hunter Homelessness Connect Day is possibly the biggest annual event regarding Housing and Homelessness on the local community calendar. It's a day that represents connection and community, which is evident seeing the services come together and the smiles on attendees faces. Our Case Worker, Georgia, was involved in the working group this year, which gave her a great insight into the processes and involvement needed to bring this large event together.

Thanks: To so many services, to the individuals and groups in the community who donate jackets and clothes and make blankets and scarves for our Winter Warmers rack on the veranda at the site each winter. To Girl Friday for their years of committed fundraising and efforts – the provisions of those incredible Girl Friday Kitchen packs and the Linen packs for women and children! We really appreciate what you did for us at Christmas time and through the year donating gifts, food hampers and Hams - the fun we had loading them in to the fridge on top of each other until there was a hammalanche! We wish all of you the best! To Vicki and her Team for keeping us clean for so many years - happy retirement!

Meetings: Agency Meetings, Groups and Committees attended by workers from the Newcastle West site during this year:

- Newcastle Interagency
- Mental Health Community of Practice
- Youth Private Rental Brokerage Partners Facilitation Group
- Newcastle DV Committee Meetings
- Collaborative Housing and Mental Health Services Committee
- Practitioner Advisory Group (PAG) DCJ

As I am well aware and we say at Nova; Change is a constant, let's embrace it. I believe that is indeed what we have done and continue to do with much enthusiasm at Newcastle West and across the board and I welcome another year of adaptation, successes and growth.

Regards,

Gabrielle Ewers

Team Leader - Newcastle West Hub

Eastlakes

The Site: The Eastlakes site had a makeover by Home in Place during this financial year. The old bathrooms had been leaking water and caused the flooring to buckle and dampness in one bedroom, which could not be used for a few months. The bathrooms were gutted and replaced with correct water-proofing and new modern fixtures. This was followed by the old flooring being replaced with new, lighter timber style vinyl flooring. There was minimal disruption to staff, women or children, as they worked on the bathrooms one by one, and the floors in the bedrooms didn't need replacing. This gave the place a much lighter feel and allowed us to take in our full complement of women.

Staff: The last half of 2022 saw staff turnover at Eastlakes, however the site is now enjoying being fully staffed with a committed and professional team who all enjoy working together.

They are:

Case Worker Dee; Children and Young Persons Case Worker, Brooke; Senior Case Worker, Jaylene and Transitional Property Case Worker, Katherine.



Meetings: The team at Eastlakes attend various regular meetings, including;

- Lake Macquarie Interagency
- Mental Health Interagency
- Rent Choice Youth
- Hunter Homeless Connect Day planning
- Lake Macquarie Domestic and Family Violence Committee
- WHS Committee

These provide great networking and collaboration opportunities and enhance service provision for the women and children we support.

Trends: It would be no surprise to anyone associated with the homelessness sector to know that the main trend has been the increase in the cost of rentals and mortgages across NSW over the last twelve months. We are seeing a rise in no-fault evictions. We are also seeing a rise in renters offering above the asking price for a rental, with some even paying six months in advance. Some real estates will not consider anyone on a Centrelink payment as a potential renter. We know that women and children are the ones most affected by this trend.

This trend has given rise to another trend: a sharp increase in the demand for Specialist Homelessness Services. The Nova Lake Macquarie sites service the entire Lake Macquarie Local Government Area and as a combined team we are contracted to support 291 women and families per financial year in this region. In the last financial year 251 women and families were supported by the Eastlakes site alone.

Eastlakes

Another trend is an increase in the length of stays for women in crisis accommodation as exit options for them are much more limited. Case workers are also finding the length of time they are providing support to their outreach clients is longer, for the same reason. More and more Case Workers are relying on government funded housing, rather than rentals, to resolve our client's homelessness.

We are also seeing a trend in low income workers and older women joining the ranks of those seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services. These combined pressures speak to how resilient and hard working the staff at Nova are, their dedication and client-focused professionalism under tough circumstances is outstanding.

Partnerships: Eastlakes is so grateful for every organisation, big and small, who partner with us to help us deliver essential services to the women and children we support.

Some of these include:

- C3 Victory Church Yard
- Oz Harvest weekly food deliveries
- Swansea Lions Club
- Swansea Cottage
- Ignite Church

Regards,

Fiona Edwards

Team Leader - Eastlakes



Trisha House

The on-site team:

Team Leader – Rebecca, with Michelle
Senior Case Worker – Letitia
Outreach Case Worker – Charlotte
Transitional Case Worker – Lorena
Supported Temporary Accommodation Worker – Kylie
DV Response Enhancement Worker – Kristy
Accommodation support – Tanika
With special appearances from Sheree, our Access caseworker.



The site: Trisha House has been a hive of activity as usual. We have provided support and accommodation to around 120 women at Trisha House in the year, as well as case managing around 110 women in an outreach capacity. The team has had some change, and each time we have rolled with it. Health challenges for our Operations Manager saw a quick shuffle of team leaders and sites. I left Trisha House for just over six months, spending three months at Newcastle first, then moving to the Charlestown Hub to job share with Lee. Thanks to Michelle for moving over to Trisha House and supporting the team. I was very happy to be back, however enjoyed the opportunity to work more closely with Lee, Kelly and the admin team for a brief while. I learnt a lot about the organisation and in particular, enjoyed the HR side of the operations role.

I am immensely proud of all that the Trisha House team has accomplished this past year. Covid and other illness took its toll, and continues to do so.

Challenges and successes: Pleased to say there have been plenty of successes at Trisha House. The Supported Temporary Accommodation and Partner programs are going great, staffing has been plentiful and varied. We have been supported well by external agencies, community organisations and individuals wanting to help. The team is very supportive of each other and this always leads to progressive and positive collaboration and casework.

Challenges have been less present. Some short staffing for brief periods of time would be our biggest one. STA presents its own challenges, juggling the high turnaround of women coming and going is sometimes difficult to manage.

Staff: It has been great to have a consistent team for most of the past year. Tanika accepted a permanent role and has honestly been a blessing for us at Trisha House. Tanika provides the most beautiful service to all of the women with immaculate room turn overs, beautiful styling and care packages, as well as being a friendly face around the site every day.

We had some challenging times with staff being away from work for unexpected periods of time due to illness, and with Kylie covering the intake role at Newcastle West, but we managed it well.

Trisha House

Partnerships:

- DCJ housing – for the STA program, worker outreach off site
- Centrelink – outreach visits at Trisha House weekly
- ZONTA – continue to support us with material items for the accommodation and the women we are supporting
- St Therese's Primary School - fundraising for the women and children staying with us at both Easter and Christmas time
- New Lambton Primary School – Easter Egg drives and donations
- Ritchies IGA – grocery items during the year

We are so grateful for the support we receive from both the sector services, as well as everyone from our amazing community.

Rebecca Prestwidge

Team Leader - Trisha House



Westlakes

"How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness, how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?" - Dr. Seuss

As I write this I'm very conscious of the above quote. It seems we are always talking about time flying and the year passing in the blink of an eye and that it feels like nothing much has really happened. However, it's not until we sit and review the past twelve months that we see just how much change has indeed occurred and how many highs and lows we have all experienced.

For the Westlakes team, change seems to have been the only constant and while this can cause feelings of uncertainty, I do believe the changes have provided us with an opportunity for growth and a strengthening of our team unity. Despite any changes that have occurred, the team continued to provide a high level of support and assisted their clients to achieve significant positive outcomes.

Highlights: The Westlakes and Eastlakes sites cover the entire Lake Macquarie local government area and as a combined team we are contracted to support 291 women and families in this region. In the last financial year, 253 women and families were supported Westlakes site alone.



For the women and families in our area, domestic and family violence as well as housing unaffordability were the major reasons people requested our support. These numbers are a clear indication of the need for services like ours within the community. Unfortunately, it is also an indication that the housing situation is not improving and that rates of domestic and family violence continue to rise.

It goes without saying that without our generous partners we would not be able to continue providing the services that we deliver. We are so thankful for support from C3 Victory Church who assist us with garden maintenance at our site. We also received generous support from Toronto Uniting Church, Zonta, Hearts and Hands and Toronto Anglican Church. Oz Harvest continued to provide weekly food deliveries to our site so we were able to provide fresh food to the women and families we were supporting.

Westlakes

Trends: Like most people, the cost of living crisis has had a direct impact on our clients and increased the need for material aid. Added to this, the housing market has continued to experience a steady rise in the cost of rental properties in the Newcastle Hunter region. For many people, renting privately is no longer an option and case workers are supporting clients for much longer as exit options are limited.

'We have noticed a trend in referrals for older single women experiencing homelessness for the very first time.'

More often than not this has been due to an increase in their private rental which becomes unaffordable and they have no option other than emergency accommodation.

In spite of these trends, case workers have supported many women into permanent and safe housing and each time this happens it is a joyous and satisfying experience for all. We hope that the next twelve months continues to give us more 'wins' than challenges.

Michelle Apschner

Team Leader - Westlakes



Charlestown Hub

In October 2022, the administration team and CEO relocated to our Charlestown Hub. This allowed for increased and more suitable space in the Newcastle West Hub, (which is a much busier hub) for women and children requiring support.

Case workers from all sites and projects are on a rotating roster, to ensure women and children who do access Charlestown hub are well supported. It's also been very beneficial for our smaller teams who don't often work at the same site. Our DVRE, Transitional Housing Project Case Workers and Team Leaders are able to work together on a regular basis which is great for planning and peer support purposes. The Access Case Worker also utilises the hub for meetings with women in the Lake Macquarie area who only require short term or one-off supports.

As with Newcastle, our Charlestown hub has shower and laundry facilities, clothing, toiletries and emergency food provisions. There is a lounge for women needing some time out or a rest, a computer and desk to catch up on emails, book appointments, complete forms etc., a meeting room where women can bring additional support people with them if they choose, along with toys, colouring and even a backyard to entertain children if/when needed.

Along with pre-booked appointments with our case workers, it is mainly women and families sleeping rough, including in cars, who mostly utilise this location for support. This area was chosen for it's proximity to associated services such as Centrelink, NDIS and even Charlestown Square. It's also a very accessible via public transport from many areas.

We'd love to move to a larger and more central area in the Charlestown CBD, to be more visible and accessible to women and children of all ages, abilities and needs, however as yet, we've been unable to find that suitable and affordable premises. We'll keep working on this, as unfortunately the need for such a space is growing rather than decreasing.

Charlestown Hub also acts as a central drop off point for the numerous donations we receive from those within the community. With free parking right at the door, it's an easier and closer option for



many from the lakes and surrounding areas. These various items gifted to us are then passed on to assist the women and children we are supporting and for all those who have donated, we thank you so very much. It certainly takes a village and it's a village we could not do without.

Charlestown Hub is located at:
21 Canberra St,
Charlestown 2290

We are open from:
9am - 4.30pm on weekdays
(except Public Holidays)

Transitional Housing Project

Aside from ensuring the women and children are well supported and linked into their local communities, the focus for the transitional housing project in this period has been building on our already strong relationships with the Community Housing Providers (CHP) we partner with:

- Home In Place
- Pacific Link Housing
- Amelie Housing
- Women's Housing Company

Technology enables regular meetings to be held without adding travel time as two services are located in Sydney, one on the Central Coast and another in Newcastle. These meetings are held with one CHP at a time to discuss any issues with the services involved including communication which can get a bit lax given the high workloads of all involved, properties, maintenance and support provided.

All parties are respectful of privacy and confidentiality for the women and children, however are still able to identify and address issues early on, which can prevent tenancies ending or other crises occurring.

Three case workers currently provide support to the women and children in transitional housing.

The next priority for Nova's Transitional Housing Project is having a Children and Young Persons case worker provide long term support to children and young people in transitional housing, develop support tools and processes that case workers can utilise on going should funding for a Child and Young Persons Case Worker not be continued.



Fiona Edwards

Transitional Housing Project Leader

Home
in Place



Partnering Agencies

This has been a big year in the Partnering Agency supported accommodation program. We have accommodated 17 women with no accompanying children, and 15 women with children. The initial occupancy is up to three months, but in this last year, we have had several women utilise the program and accommodation for a lot longer. The longest stay was 10 months for a woman with children, and eight months for a woman with no children.

Referrals came from across the board, with the most referrals coming from Wandiyali and Samaritans early in the year, then Jenny's Place in the second half of the year. There were a couple of months where the majority of occupants were Nova clients, with little or no referrals coming in from partner agencies. I do think this was partly due to a lot of new staff at the services, something that I have focused on turning around at the end of the financial year.

Challenges: Establishing new, and fostering existing relationships with managers and team leaders at partnering agencies. All services in the sector are under the pump, so finding time to reconnect, deliver the program to new workers and visit teams has been difficult.

Successes: We have been part of so many great and positive exit outcomes in the program over the last year. Women have exited into transitional housing, social housing, or long term private rentals, for the most part. One woman who was in the accommodation for 10 months, with her seven children, exited into transitional housing, and has since been offered Aboriginal Housing. This is an excellent outcome, for a family who fled severe Domestic and Family Violence.

Sitting on the This Way Home Partners Facilitation Group has also been a great success, in the way that it has opened up greater conversation and planning for women in need of short, or medium term accommodation. It is a very collaborative space and the women referred this way have been a great use of the supported accommodation at Trisha House.

Trends: A definite trend in referrals to Trisha House has been young (18-25yo) mums. The mums coming in to the family rooms have often had little or no family support, and live with really complex needs for themselves and their children. The need for living skills assessments increased as well as linking families in with the Children and Young Persons Case Worker or other appropriate external services.

What's next?

- Continued efforts to engage with service teams
- Focus on relationships with supporting caseworkers
- Revision of the risk assessment, monthly updates and communications with the caseworkers.

Bec Prestwidge

Trisha House Team Leader and STA Supervisor

Supported Temporary Accommodation

12 months

94 women accommodated and supported

Over 1600 nights of accommodation provided

These numbers speak for themselves! The rental crisis, and the rising cost of living, has had a major impact on the number and dynamic of referrals to the STA program, as well as the exit outcomes for the women using the accommodation. We have rarely had an empty room amongst the 5 that we have for women with no accompanying children. Extensions became more challenging due to the demand for TA, the need for complex support and the lack of suitable and safe accommodation outcomes.



Kylie - STA Case Worker

Challenges: The biggest challenge has been the lack of suitable, safe housing for women exiting STA. With affordability at an all-time low and the lack of rentals in general, we saw more women exiting back into some form of homelessness – couch surfing, self-funding in hotels or caravan parks. There was added pressure on NOVA to provide more intense case management, as women presenting after experiencing long term homelessness, and those with very complex support requirements increased.

Successes: The working relationships between the STA worker/s and external stakeholders. A lot of time has been dedicated to fostering the relationships this project requires, with DCJ housing, external crisis accommodation, and supporting agencies. It is due to these relationships that there have been successes such as changes to reporting and communications with DCJ housing, positive housing outcomes for women and well-rounded support for the women being accommodated.

The demand for temporary accommodation for families with DCJ housing greatly increased and so DCJ were frequently enquiring as to the availability of the family rooms for STA. In the periods of time between partner agency occupancy we have been able to do this.

It's been great to be able to offer this flexibility in service provision when there are vacancies. It was a great pathway for women with children to get allocated a Case Worker and commence supports.

Supported Temporary Accommodation

Trends: There has been no singular trend, women over 60yo, young women with young children or pregnant, women who have experienced very long-term homelessness or transience.

*'We have seen a real change in what
the face of homelessness looks like.'*

What's next? STA case worker will attend the local housing office in an outreach capacity, providing support to CSOs and women attending the office for TA. This enables the completion of risk assessments face to face and provides opportunity for collaboration with CSOs on practical support plans. We will continue to review and amend our reporting responsibilities, as well as our own intake and risk assessment forms

Bec Prestwidge

Trisha House Team Leader and STA Supervisor

Domestic Violence Response Enhancement

Nova for Women and Children's Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE) Program is one of our busiest projects and provides emergency, crisis support to women with or without children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic and family violence within the last 24 – 48 hours.

This program is very crisis focused with the aim of addressing immediate safety concerns.

Highlights: The DVRE program provides services across Newcastle West and Lake Macquarie and is funded to support 32 clients per year. In the last financial year, the DVRE team supported 231 clients including 35 Aboriginal women across these areas which far exceeds our target numbers.

This is with a team of only two caseworkers and while it is important to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the team it must also be acknowledged that the need in the community for this kind of service remains alarmingly high.



*'We look forward to the day when our service
is no longer needed, however we know
that unfortunately we are not there yet.'*



**TO ACCESS AFTER HOURS
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT**
WEEKDAYS: 5PM - 8AM WEEKENDS: 24 HRS
Call DV line 1800 656 463 for Assistance

THE DVRE PROJECT PROVIDES AFTER HOURS SUPPORT
TO WOMEN FLEEING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE
IN THE NEWCASTLE AND LAKE MACQUARIE AREAS.



The DVRE is a project of
Nova for Women and Children

Trends: The DVRE team have seen an increase in referrals for older women and in women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds over the last 12 months.

The increase of rental prices has also had a direct effect on the ability of women to secure long term housing which can greatly impact their safety and in some instances leaves them with no option but to return to their previous partner.

In spite of this we remain optimistically hopeful that in the next twelve months housing options will improve and rates of domestic and family violence decrease.

Staff Training

Ongoing staff training has always been a priority for Nova. It maintains our knowledge of changes within the sector and ensures our staff are up to date with the latest practices and policies. Some of the training our staff have attended this past financial year include: -

DCJ provided

- Signs of Safety
- Suicide Prevention
- Aboriginal cultural awareness, working with Clients and Communities
- Understanding Domestic Violence in CALD Communities
- CIMS client files and case management
- Child Protection Part 1: Identifying and Responding to Risk of Harm (SHS)
- Child protection part 2: Child Protection Dynamics (SHS)
- Domestic and Family Violence Toolkit and Family Awareness
- Safety Planning with DFV Survivors Workshop
- Fundamentals of Case Management
- Responding to Mental Health conditions
- SHS Induction
- Trauma Informed Practice (SHS)
- Building Resilience, Wellbeing and Vicarious Trauma for Staff
- Managing Aggressive and Violent Behaviour
- Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) Training.
- Wesnet Training Validata Training
- Coercive Control Training
- Safe and Together
- A Trauma Informed Practice Approach to Mental Health and Substance Abuse in Homelessness
- Immediate Response to distress
- Managing Change in the workplace
- Professional and Clinical Supervision for Managers
- Emotional Intelligent Leadership
- Complex Needs in Homelessness
- First Aid
- Client Outcomes Survey

In house/Skildare/Blakworks :

- Supervision- improving
- Case planning - improving
- PWI - embedding
- Courageous Conversations
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness – Respectful Workplaces
- Enneagram Training

Marketing and Community Engagement

What another great year it's been. The generosity and assistance from the greater community we operate within has just been amazing, so first and foremost a heartfelt thank you, to each and every person who has supported us on their own behalf, or via a group. To those who have run an event, and donated proceeds, goods, time and services to assist us as an organisation and the women and children we support – we thank you. We know the energy, commitment and organisation it takes, and we simply could not do what we do without support from the extended community around us, and we are extremely grateful for it.

Grants:

In the last financial year, we were very grateful to the following organisations for their assistance with some special grants: Wallsend Diggers, Toronto Diggers, Wests Group Lambton and Cardiff, as well as StreetSmart, who all contributed to our Removalists and Whitegoods for Women Grant. This very successful grant assists women and families with the heavy and expensive task of moving furniture as well as necessary whitegoods when moving on and starting over after experiencing homelessness and/or domestic violence.

So far, this grant has assisted over 100 people in the last financial year alone, something we could not have achieved without the support of the Club Grants and StreetSmart.

Orica have also generously assisted us again via their Community Investment Program with a fantastic grant, enabling us to fit out several of our sites with much need defibrillators. It's one grant item we hope we'll never have to use, but knowing we have them, certainly gives us greater peace of mind. Thank you so much Orica.

A local Grant from the Warners Bay Branch of the Commonwealth Bank also assisted us with funding to support women and families with much needed gift cards for grocery items, as well as emergency clothing and more. A gift card provides people with the dignity of choice and using that card for payment also protects the privacy of their current situation.



Marketing and Community Engagement

Fundraising, Donations and Events:

Community assistance for the women and children we support and us as an organisation by individuals, groups of friends, businesses, local councils, community social and service clubs, church groups and even other charities – has been fantastic and we are so very thankful to you all. The list is too long to name everyone here, but along with our social media photos and notes of thanks, please know that be it from Easter eggs, Christmas Giving Tree's, sporting events of all kinds, special fundraisers, Newcastle Knights and the 5050 Charity Raffle, Workplace Giving/Events, Supercars, the making of and/or donating of blankets, scarves, beanies and winter woollies to keep people warm during the colder months, all the toys and toiletries, financial or non-financial donations, and more, each and every one of our team is so appreciative. It takes special hearts to do things for people you don't know.



They say it takes a village to raise a child, - that's true.

*It also takes a community to look after those within
that village who are going through hard times,
and you've all certainly helped with that!*



I make mention a new project that the Toronto Anglican Church has taken ownership of, that we just love so much. It's our special Pillow Project run primarily by the amazing Sue McBurney and Reverend Melanie Whalley. They coordinate events and fundraising activities and walk the town of the Westlakes areas gathering donations along the way. Then with some of this money (along with toiletries, linen, mobile phones and more) they purchase new pillows of all kinds for our refuge sites.

This gives the women staying with us the dignity of sleeping on a fresh, clean, unused pillow that they can take with them when they leave. It's things like this that make a difference when people are in crisis, and for that we thank you all.



Marketing and Community Engagement

25 November to 10 December is the Annual 16 days of Activism which calls for the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence. For the past 3 years, the Wests Group and Newcastle Knights have been a tremendous support of this special event. Their internal communications raise awareness across all their sites, and we are so grateful to the management and everyone within those teams who contribute to a collection of goods resulting in such a fantastic donation. Each year they turn up with bags and bags of groceries, toiletries, gift cards and more, for us to distribute to the women and children we support.



We also say a huge thank you to all the amazing people and businesses who year after year have assisted us with Christmas Gifts, be it individually or via Christmas Giving Trees.

Everyone connected to or giving through AVEO Shortland, The Junction Fair Shopping Centre, Paragon Building and the Sky Residents, Health Care, Kindergartens, Government Departments, Sporting Clubs and more. The gifts you all provided not only enable people to give to children and each other, it bestows the gift of participation and dignity and that's priceless – so thank you.

I don't have the space in this report to name and thank everyone, if you haven't been listed, I apologise, but please know that we whole heartedly thank you all so very much and we look forward to another year of your amazing support of all we do for the women and children we support

Wendy Pinch

Marketing and Community Engagement Officer

Events and Photos

During the year, we have been involved in various sector related events. At other times we have been fortunate to have had a number of fundraising events organised on our behalf, for which we are extremely grateful.

Some of these have included:

Hunter Homeless Connect, Waratah Women's Golf Day, Action Boxing and Fitness Fight Camp, Reclaim the Night (Newcastle and Lake Macquarie), Newcastle Knights 5050 Charity Fundraiser, UNLSA Trivia Night, City of Newcastle - Lord Mayors Supercars Function, NAIDOC Week, Newcastle Multicultural Expo, National Reconciliation week, International Women's Week, Anti-Poverty Week, Ingite Community Curry Night, Anglican Church Toronto Fundraiser BBQ, 16 Days of Activism, Golden Years Dance Fund Raisers, Slopes and Plains American Bike Riders Dice Run, Undercover Documentary Premier in Newcastle, Wangi Lions Doherty Art and Craft Exhibition, Lambton High School Fundraiser, Flowers By Sophia, AVEO Domestic Violence Luncheon, and Newcastle Law Society trivia Night



Women's Stories

Supported Temporary Accommodation

Sophie and her daughter Clare, were referred to the Supported Temporary Accommodation Project after experiencing a period of homelessness lasting over 12 months. Their situation arose as a result of their decision to leave abusive partners and seek a fresh start together. Unfortunately, they faced challenges securing suitable housing and became unemployed as well.

Upon entering the STA Project, both Sophie and Clare* were promptly connected by the STA Worker with the Centrelink Outreach Worker, who helped them to secure Centrelink benefits. Both women completed all the requisite housing applications, initiated rental applications, and commenced the process of seeking new employment, all within the first week of their engagement with our services.

Remarkably, by the second week of entering the STA Project, Sophie and Clare successfully secured employment.

This achievement not only provided them with a stable source of income but also led to accommodation being arranged through their new workplace, offering a significant step toward stability and independence.

Recognizing the importance of holistic support, the STA Worker also facilitated a connection between Sophie and Clare and the Hunter Women's Centre. This partnership ensures ongoing well-being support through counseling services, further contributing to their journey toward self-sufficiency and personal growth.

Please note that all personal details have been omitted or anonymised to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in this case study.

Women's Stories

Newcastle

Sarah (age 45) sought assistance from Nova to address her homelessness, which occurred as a result of her escaping an abusive partner of 18 years.

This brave step led to Sarah and her children experiencing a period of homelessness, during which they resorted to temporary accommodation in motels for several months.

Throughout her engagement with our services, Sarah displayed exceptional commitment. She consistently pursued private rental opportunities in an effort to resolve her homelessness. With the guidance and support provided, Sarah successfully obtained approvals for housing products - bond assistance, Start Safely, and priority housing. Additionally, she actively collaborated with a private rental brokerage service, while housing authorities made every effort to support her in securing stable housing.

Ultimately, Sarah and her two children were offered a Department of Communities and Justice (Housing) property. Sarah has reported that both she and her children are adapting well to their new home and have found a sense of stability and security. To further aid her transition and recovery, Sarah continues to receive valuable support from Wesley Mission and Victims Services, ensuring her ongoing well-being.

Please note that all personal details have been omitted or anonymised to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in this case study.

Women's Stories

Domestic Violence Response Enhancement

A 76-year-old woman, Rita, who had endured family violence inflicted by a family member, sought assistance from Nova. The violence encompassed both physical and psychological abuse, which severely impacted her vision and led to a stroke as a result of ongoing physical harm.

Nova DVRE Case Worker supported Rita, coordinating access to Victim Services, the Start Safely program, and facilitating the process for securing Priority Housing, all of which were approved.

Given Rita's specific needs, she required extensive assistance with various aspects of daily life.

Our DVRE Case Worker assisted Rita to navigate essential tasks such as advocacy, using a mobile phone and a computer. In particular, our DVRE Case Worker assisted Rita in liaising with her agent, and recognising the necessity of disconnecting her home phone due to affordability issues. To ensure uninterrupted communication, a new phone and SIM card were provided, with Nova Case Worker offering ongoing guidance on using the phone during each outreach visit.

Rita's reliance on her family member for financial matters, including paying rent using a bank book, was a significant challenge. Nova DVRE Case Worker helped Rita with setting up and ordering a bank card and referred to the appropriate network for ongoing support with her financial needs.

Our Nova DVRE Case Worker recognised the importance of linking Rita with aged care support to enhance her overall well-being. As a result, she now receives three hours of assistance a week, with shopping, transportation and participation in social activities, which contribute to her improved quality of life. Through the comprehensive assistance provided by Nova, Rita has embarked on a journey towards healing, self-sufficiency, and improved overall health and well-being.

Please note that all personal details have been omitted or anonymised to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in this case study.

Women's Stories

Transitional Housing Project

Phillipa has been a transitional housing client for over 12 months. She is a single mother caring for a child with a disability. Despite having minimal supports in Newcastle, Phillipa has actively and effectively engaged with the Transitional Housing Program. She has successfully maintained her tenancy and has also demonstrated her ability to develop budgeting skills not only for her own financial management but also for managing her son's NDIS Support Plan.

Earlier this year, Phillipa accessed one of Nova's successful grants and was provided with ten driving lessons. These lessons have recently been completed, bringing her closer to achieving her goal of obtaining a driver's license.

Phillipa has expressed her gratitude, stating that she never believed she would have the opportunity to obtain her own driver's license. Presently, she is diligently saving money with the aim of purchasing a car, a significant step toward gaining full independence. This achievement holds the promise of improving both her and her son's quality of life enormously, empowering them to access new opportunities and experiences.

Please note that all personal details have been omitted or anonymised to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in this case study.

Women's Stories

Westlakes

Amira, a 58-year-old woman, escaped domestic violence and despite her numerous efforts to secure private rental housing, she encountered continuous challenges, eventually leading her to seek temporary accommodation (TA).

The client faced an overwhelming and complex situation which impacted on her mental health. Amira was allocated a Nova Case Worker for support.

Transitioning from TA to crisis accommodation, Case Worker was able to work more intensively with Amira, focusing on addressing her housing needs and mental health. Advocacy was undertaken to have her placed on the priority housing list. Additionally, Case Worker provided support for Amira to submit a claim for the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

Through Case Worker's advocacy within the Community Housing and Mental Health (CHAMHs) network, an offer was secured for Amira in an over 55's complex. This achievement was a significant turning point in her journey. She was eventually offered a social housing property. Notably, her request to have her companion dog live with her was approved. With the assistance of a removal grant and some donations, Amira has now moved into her new home.

The transition from crisis accommodation to independent living was a challenge. Case Worker provided crucial support during this period, maintaining frequent contact to ensure Amira's well-being and assist her in employing the strategies outlined in her case plan. Amira was also linked with HASI (Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative) for further assistance with her day-to-day responsibilities and to facilitate her successful adjustment to her new environment.

*In a recent conversation marking the closure of her file,
Amira expressed her profound sense of security in
having a long-term, affordable, and safe home to call her own.*

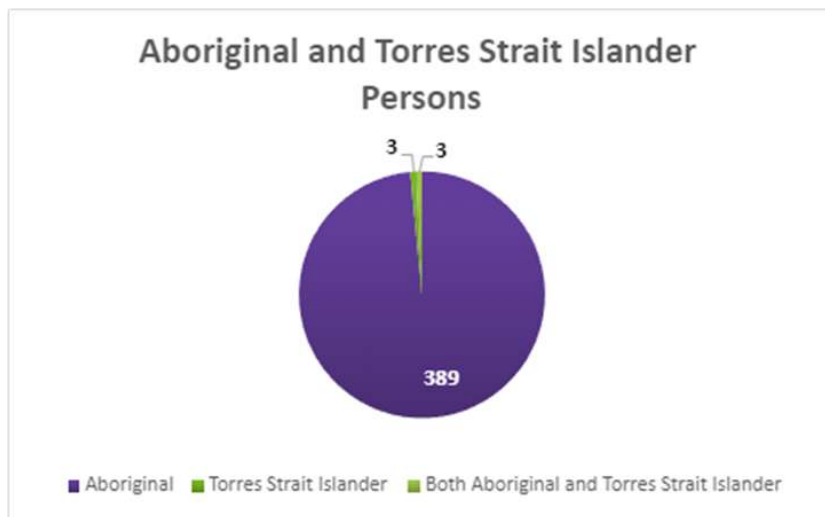
Please note that all personal details have been omitted or anonymised to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in this case study.

Data collected for the period

July 1st 2022 - June 30th 2023
Nova Assisted 1725 distinct clients

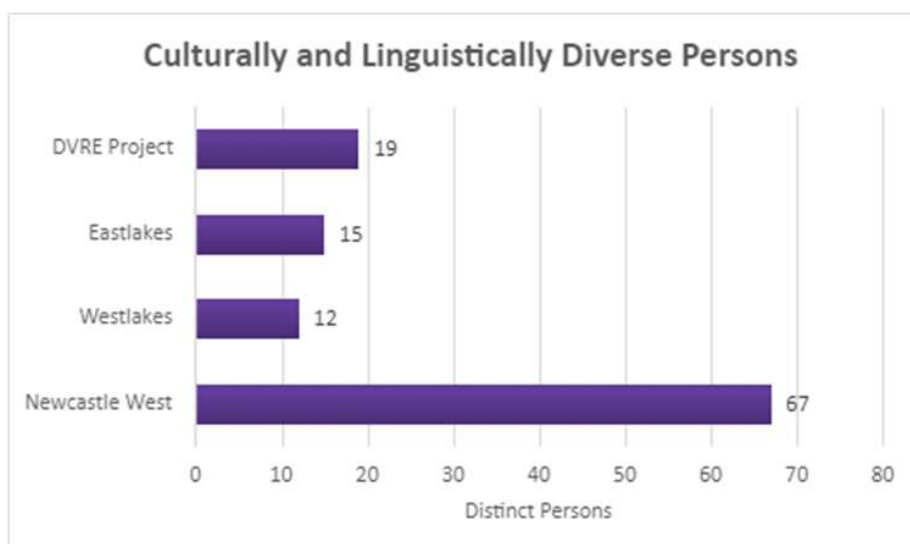
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Persons

395 Nova clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people

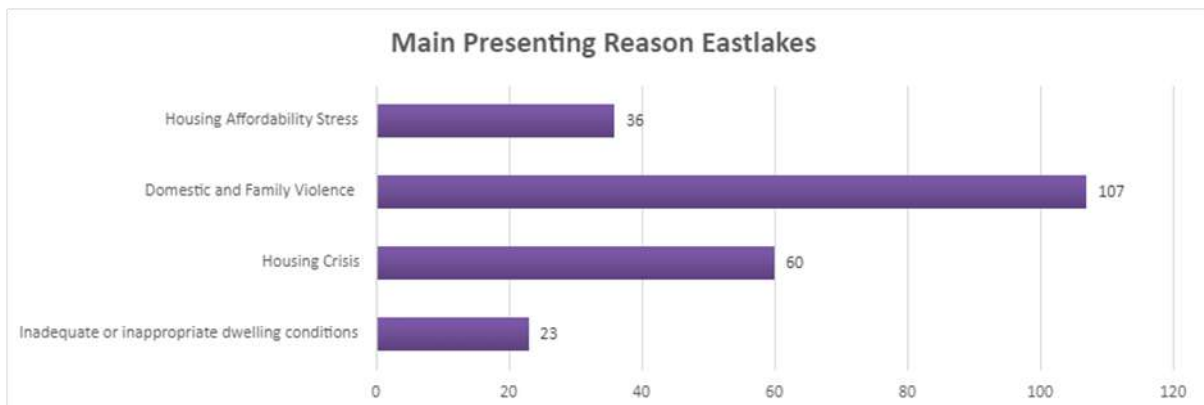
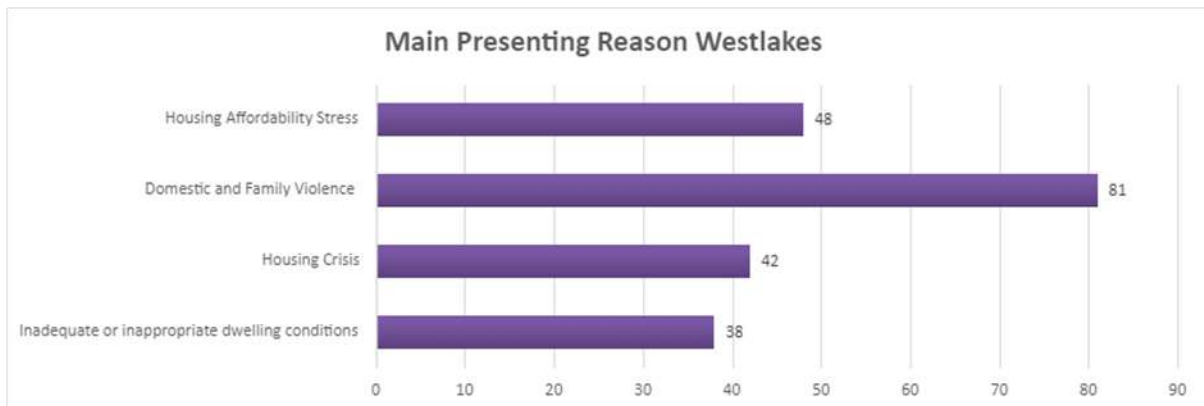
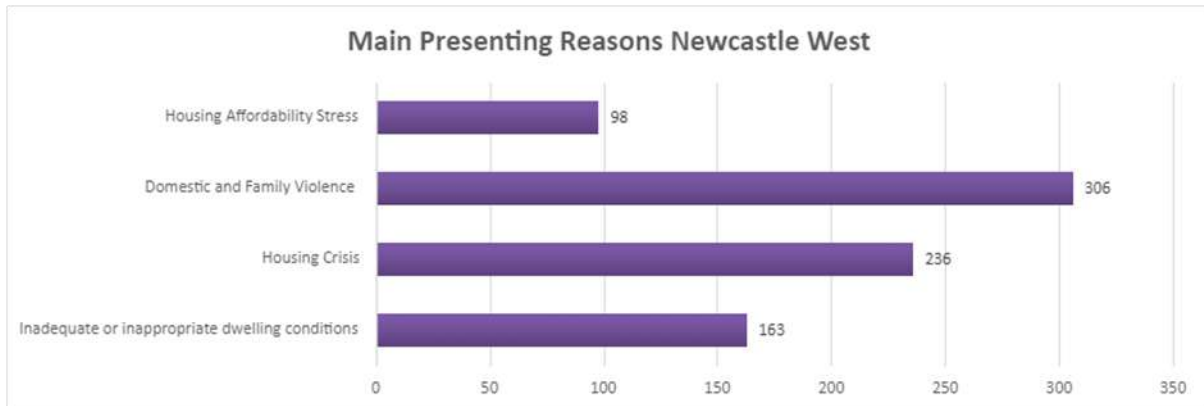


Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Persons

Nova clients identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

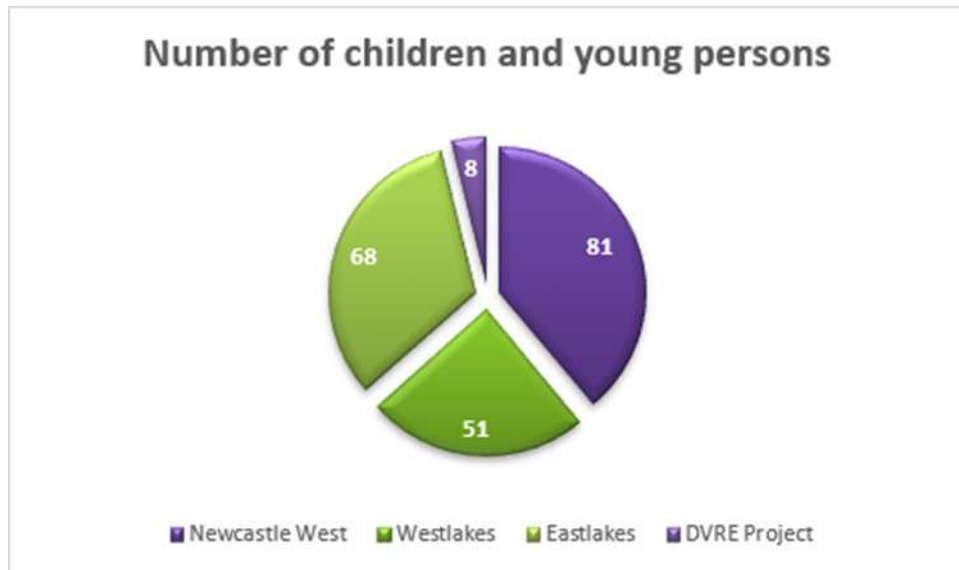


Data collected for the period



Data collected for the period

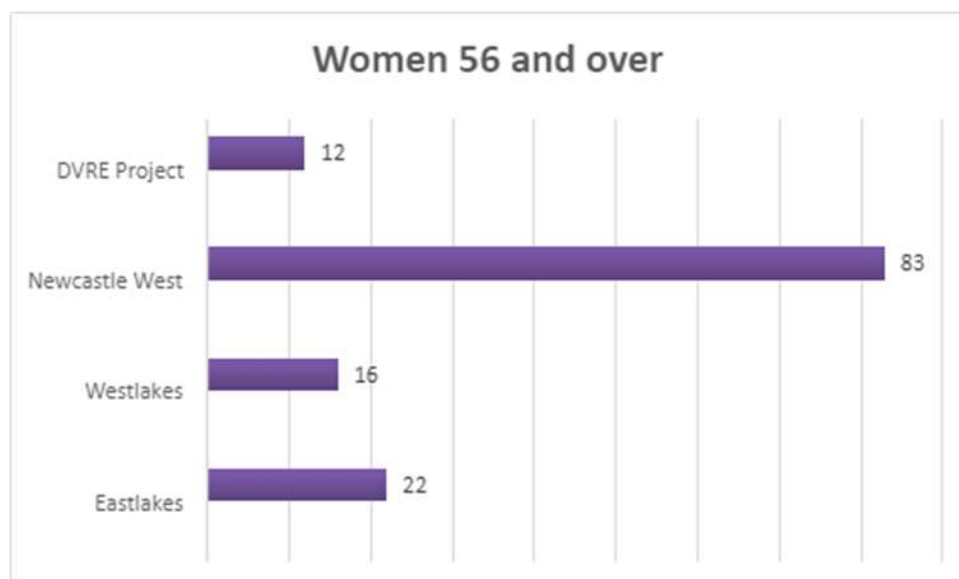
Children and Young Persons



Areas of Concern

Older Women

133 clients presenting for assistance were aged 56 and over

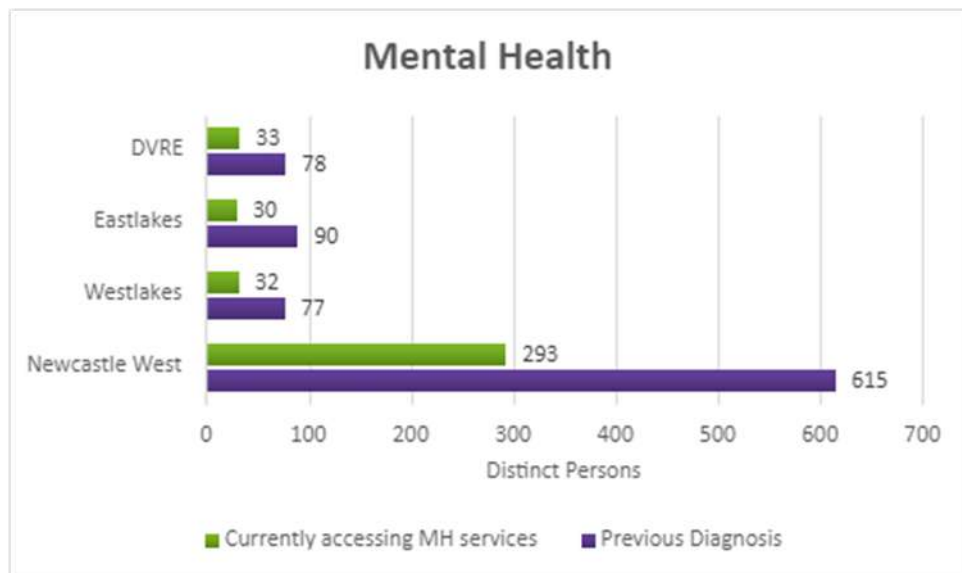


Areas of Concern

Mental Health

860 clients have been previously diagnosed with a mental health condition by a health professional

388 clients are currently accessing mental health services



Future Directions

Nova is in for a big year ahead, with planned expansions to further strengthen our foundations, increase our service provisions and reinforce our organisation's values and goals.

Core and Cluster Model

The twelve months ahead will have Nova focussing upon this service delivery model, to ensure we provide a more trauma-informed environment throughout the practice. We will be developing strong partnerships to provide a wholistic approach that is accessible at the site. It's an exciting new step, not just for the organisation, but for the region, the state and more importantly, for the women and children we will support there.

Expanding our workforce

We look forward to expanding our workforce with additional federal funding to meet the demand for safety and shelter. This is expected to occur in December 2023 and will assist in our planning for improved reach to clients.

Cultural Capacity Uplift

In June 2023, Nova for Women and Children committed to a cultural capacity uplift guided by Blakworks. This is a comprehensive and wholistic approach to Aboriginal cultural safety in our workforce and in our service delivery. The work is crucial to our cultural safety and, diversity and inclusion strategic goals. The most important aspect of the work is to ensure that it matters and the organisation is accountable to this commitment.

Review of the Organisation

Nova for Women and Children has increased in size and income, with many projects within our service delivery. It has been a decade since the organisation has reviewed our structure and evaluated the effectiveness of our work. We look forward to exploring potential changes, building upon our specific approaches, and introducing and consolidating new approaches.

'planned expansions will further strengthen our foundations, increase our service provisions and reinforce our organisations values and goals'

Acknowledgement and Thanks

As a closing to our report, we would like to send our heartfelt thanks to our amazing community, not just locally but also those in our extended surrounding areas.

Without the support of individuals, businesses, community or church groups, schools, and even other local charities, we could not continue to provide the additional assistance we do, for the women and children we support - as these things are not covered by any government funding.

We thank you for standing with us to ensure that Women and Children Matter.



*Supporting Women and Children in the
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie
area for almost 40 years*

Nova for Women and Children

ABN: 52 880 952 916

21 Canberra St, Charlestown NSW 2290
558 Hunter St, Newcastle West NSW 2300