

## Kelly's Welcome

How does one begin to write amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?

Life has certainly not been business as usual.

As an essential service, Nova for Women and Children continued to provide accommodation and support for women and children. Albeit, through a fast tracked technology learning curve of Zoom meetings, video calls, phone calls.

We maintained one-on-one assistance through screening and physical distancing. We entered new territory complying with COVID-19 hygiene and cleanliness guidelines at our accommodation sites and at our drop-in HUB.

We had skeleton teams rostered on and other team members working from home. Life/work balance became muddled as designated work spaces impacted on our homes.

I am writing in the past tense although I know we are not back to normal yet, there is however a semi-normal that is emerging and very welcome. When I think back to the beginning (besides the fear of no toilet paper!), one of my greatest concerns at the beginning was women and children further marginalised, unsafe and isolated. All our planning was motivated by ensuring that Nova could alleviate any exacerbated barriers created by the pandemic and its restrictions for women and children.

***“The Pandemic has raised a national awareness of the ills within our society; poverty, homelessness, social isolation and inadequate health care”***

The Pandemic has raised a national awareness of the ills within our society: poverty, homelessness, social isolation and inadequate health care. It has been heartening to see a more humanitarian approach to shelter and a standard of living. Let us hope for further steps towards a human rights framework to our most important social policies and a strong community desire to rectify the harsh conditions of the last three decades.

I would like to acknowledge the Nova team and their amazing resilience in the face of such extraordinary conditions. They have worked so hard to ensure that Nova provided essential services and ensured that women and children mattered. **Kelly Hansen - CEO**

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# During COVID

## We're still open!

Despite COVID-19, we're still open and operating. As a specialist homelessness and domestic violence service, we're classed as an essential service, but of course, we're doing it safely. Our staff are taking all precautions to keep everyone safe, with each of our sites are cleaned on a regular basis throughout the day. We're practising correct social distancing and following both government and world health recommendations.

If you or someone you know are experiencing homelessness, may be at risk of homelessness, or in a domestic violent situation and need some assistance, please don't hesitate to phone us, or drop into our Newcastle Hub at: **558 Hunter Street Newcastle West.** (See back cover for contact details, phone numbers and opening times)

## Please take care...

How are you coping during COVID-19? Please remember this has been and still is a difficult time for many. It may be yourself or someone else that is really feeling the stresses that isolation, financial stress, domestic and family violence and more can bring. Some days you may feel fine, others it may all take it's toll. If you, or someone you know finds yourself stressed, anxious, worried or generally uneasy (for whatever reason) - please remember to reach out to family, friends, work colleagues, online resources or medical professionals etc

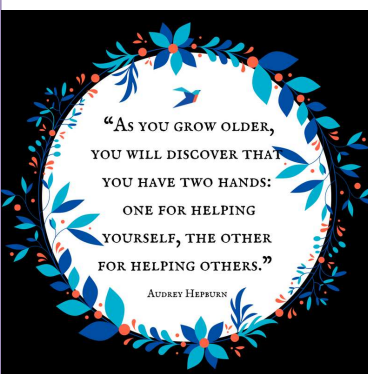
Don't forget there are also numerous online free resources to help you with almost anything that's of interest to you, or know works for you. Jump onto the internet for lots of information, or download some various apps, that can assist you with all sorts of things like meditation, mindfulness activities, health and fitness, managing finances, music, animals, crafts and lots more.

If you ever find yourself at risk of self, or inflicted harm, please don't hesitate to call one or more of these various numbers to assist you.

**Police/Ambulance/Fire: 000    Domestic Violence: 000 or 1800 RESPECT/1800 737 732    Lifeline: 13 11 14**

## Support and Thanks

One thing we understand at Nova is the impact that COVID-19 has had on us all. Individuals and families alike have all been under various levels of stress or strain. The lack of socialisation, missing family and friends, losing your job, trying to manage home schooling not to and the extra expenses that people have incurred - are just a few.



With this in mind, Nova have been helping the women and children we support in a number of ways, *but*, we could not have done this without the incredible assistance we've also received from our supporters, the general public, the local business community and councils. Numerous people and these organisations have contributed with things like: Toilet Paper and Hand Sanitiser (when that was so hard to get!), Shopping Vouchers, Frozen Meals and Food Hampers, Opal Cards, Top up's for internet Data Cards, Clothing, Books, Toys, Jigsaws, Games and lots more!

Thank you so much to everyone that has assisted us - your kindness and generosity towards others during these tough times has been amazing.

# Domestic Violence

At the end of March, the NSW Attorney-General Mark Speakman reported a 75% increase of Google searches related to Domestic Violence since the first recorded cases of COVID-19 in the state.

Before the pandemic, Australia's DV statistics were described as a "national scourge" with one in four Australian women experiencing physical violence since age 15.

As people isolate to prevent the spread of the virus, many victims of domestic and family violence have been left inside their homes with their abusers - all day, every day. With all but essential movement restricted, for women and children experiencing DV, it can make it even harder to get help.

After reports that incidences tripled in parts of China during the country's isolation period, and reports of men in the US threatening to lock women outdoors so they get sick, Australian GPs are also warning of an impending increase of Domestic and Family Violence.

The Australian Federal Government announced, in response, an initial \$150 million to support Australians experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence as a result of coronavirus.

## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence consists of many types of abuse, but a person doesn't need to experience all types to be considered a victim.

DV also doesn't have to be physical abuse. It can be any type of behaviour that exerts power or control, such as:

- **Verbal abuse:** swearing and continual humiliation, attacks that follow themes, such as: intelligence, sexuality, body image and parenting capacity putting someone down
- **Sexual abuse:** any form of pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation by an intimate partner/ex-partner, forcing someone to watch pornography against their will, causing pain during sex, assaulting genitals, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or STI, making someone perform sexual acts unwillingly, taking photos or distributing them without the subject's consent, criticising or using sexually degrading insults
- **Emotional abuse:** blaming the victim for relationship problems, comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth, sulking, giving the silent treatment, emotional blackmail, threats of self-harm, or harming pets, children or family members
- **Social abuse:** isolation of family and friends through techniques such as rudeness, instigating and controlling the move to a location where the victim has no established social circle or employment opportunities, restricting the use of the car, phone or internet, forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people
- **Financial abuse:** control of all money, restricting access to bank accounts, providing only an inadequate "allowance" not allowing the victim to seek or have a job, coercing to sign documents, take out loans or make false declarations, using all wages earned by the victim for household expenses, controlling the victim's pension, denying that the victim has an entitlement to joint property
- **Physical abuse:** direct assault on the body ie strangulation, shaking, biting, slapping, pushing, spitting, punching or kicking, use of weapons, assault of children, locking the victim in or out of the house, withholding medication, food or medical care, sleep deprivation, controlling access to medications
- **Psychological abuse:** reckless driving, property destruction, animal abuse in front of family members, threats regarding custody of children, asserting that the police and justice system will not support or believe the victim, threatening to "out" a person's sexuality, intersex or gender
- **Harassment and Stalking:** following and watching, monitoring the victim's movements, sending harassing text messages or getting someone else to do it, phone and online harassment, tracking with GPS or through social media or online interactions, being intimidating.

# Everybody's Home

## Everybody's Home Campaign – where to now after COVID-19?



The Everybody's Home Campaign was launched in March 2018 as a direct response to Australia's broken housing system. Nova for Women and Children are proud partners of this ground-breaking campaign and believe that housing and shelter is a human right.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown laws, a major spotlight has been shone on the inadequacy of the current housing system. Many people have been stood down from their jobs and can't afford to pay rent, and now facing eviction. There are rough sleepers with nowhere to seek shelter, placing them at a higher risk of exposure to the virus. Women living with domestic violence are trapped with their abusers increasing their barriers to gaining safe housing. We anticipate the strain on the economy will see more and more people at risk of homelessness and seeking assistance from frontline services even as restrictions ease.

There are ways we can improve housing outcomes for Australians, and we are campaigning to Government for these 5 simple things that we believe will repair the current system.

1. **Support for first homebuyers:** We need to rebalance our tax system to make it fairer for ordinary Australians wanting to buy a home.
2. **More social and affordable rental properties:** Develop a National Housing Strategy to meet Australia's identified shortfall of 500,000 social and affordable rental homes. We need more homes for local communities, not for profits.
3. **A better deal for renters:** Get rid of "no grounds" evictions and unfair rent rises so that the 1 in 3 Australians who rent have the security they need to create homes, build lives and raise families.
4. **Immediate relief for Australians in chronic rental stress:** Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance for the thousands of Australians who are struggling to pay the rent.
5. **A plan to end homelessness by 2030:** With real effort we can halve homelessness in 5 years - and end it in 10.

You can take action by being informed on these issues and help right now by signing the petition in this link:

<https://everybodyshome.com.au/petition/>





# Winter is coming...

## WINTER WOOLIES DRIVE

Help keep someone warm this winter by donating to others.

We need Jackets, Coats, Jumpers, Beanies, Scarves, Gloves or Blankets. These will be placed on a rack on our front porch for those that need them.

*Leave what you can, or take what you need.*



There's no doubt about it the colder weather's really starting to set in, and unfortunately there are many people out there that just don't have a warm coat, jumpers or blankets that they need for the winter.

So once again this year we are running our Winter Woolies Appeal and **we would love your help!**

If you have things like Jackets, Jumpers, Beanies, and Blankets that are still in good condition, but no longer fit anymore, or you won't use, then anymore please consider donating them to someone that will.

We'll be having our Winter Woolies Library available week days on the front porch of our office at:  
**558 Hunter St Newcastle West.**

Drop in to leave what you can or take what you need!

## Filthy Rich & Homeless

If you miss this documentary on SBS TV, we urge you to try and take a look on catch up.

As a local organisation that has been a part of the SHS sector for over 35 years, and on a daily basis supports up to 80 women and children without access to the safety and dignity of a home, - we urge you to tune in to see for yourself what the impacts of homelessness are and how people even find themselves in this situation.



It's confronting viewing at times, but it explores and may enlighten many about what happens in people's lives when our systems of social care, including having a decent home, are under-resourced.

Poverty can happen faster than you imagine (to anyone), and trap people in a cycle of homelessness. This show is a great teaching tool as well, as many people (of all ages) are genuinely uninformed about how easily it can happen, or what the guidelines for assistance.

At times, it can look like there's no way out. But there is. People can resolve their homelessness situation if they have secure, affordable housing, and the supports they need. For this to be possible, we ALL need to take action to create a housing system that has a place for everyone. You may not think so, but homelessness affects everyone.

We need more social housing for people without a home right now. Low-cost housing for those in our community who for many reasons, simply can't afford or access other housing options.

**Home is key to who we are as individuals and as a nation.**

Speak up for the right for Australians, no matter their struggles, as everyone deserves somewhere safe to live.

**Did you know you can help us achieve change by simply signing a petition?**

Please click this link to add your name of support, and please share it amongst your family and friends to do the same: <https://everybodyshome.com.au/filthy-rich-homeless/>

# Meet Our Board Member

## Introducing Janine Johnston

**How long have you been on the Nova Board?** I am one of the babies of the Nova board, having commenced mid 2019.

**A little about your work history:** I've worked as a researcher, in various incarnations, most of my working life. I started as a Neuroscientist, exploring the neuro pathways involved in the development of addiction. Then moved into stroke research, firstly as a neuroscientist – trying to increase vascular regeneration in the brain after stroke. Then as a public health researcher, mapping stroke survivors and their families experiences after leaving hospital/rehabilitation facilities. I now work as a public health researcher in the mental health sector. Having done work in building the capacity of teachers to respond to students with anxiety, I am currently piloting the introduction of media guidelines for the safe and responsible reporting of alcohol and other drugs – so going full cycle back to my addiction days.



**Who/What inspires you?** I'm inspired by the little things in nature. A perfectly formed leaf, the sky before a storm, a plant growing in some ridiculous location.

**My hobbies/interests outside of work.** I like to paint, I mainly do plein air landscapes. I also enjoy camping with my family, we particularly love going to the Myall Lakes area.

### **My favourite's:**

**Movie/s:** Tank Girl. It is absolutely awful – but I love the Tank Girl comic series so I was excited that it was even made into a movie.

**Music:** I have an embarrassingly deep love for Robbie Williams (don't judge me).

**Artists:** There are so many artists I admire. If I had to pick one, I deeply admire the late great Margaret Olley.

**Books/TV shows:** I collect old medical books on syphilis – don't ask, I just love syphilis.

**Food:** All food is good. Just don't give me trifle. I love all the components separately, how mixing them together ruins them I don't know.

**Family:** I've been married for a ridiculous amount of time (19 years), and to the same man the whole time!! I don't know how I managed it. We have 2 small girls who are the funniest, sweetest, and smartest children that have ever lived (no bias). To round it all out, our family also includes 3 cats – all girls. We are a household of strong women.

**Something people may not know about me:** I grew up in country NSW. My high school had a larger population than my home town. Due to this I have all sorts of hidden "talents". I have my welding ticket, am quite a good shot, and can drive pretty much anything.

**Something I'm looking forward to:** Other than looking forward to COVID-19 getting under control, I look forward to tomorrow. Every new day is a fresh start, and a step closer to achieving all that I want to accomplish in life. I live with a general anxiety disorder, and sometimes just making it through the day is a huge achievement.



# International Women's Day

We were extremely lucky that we got our second IWD Breakfast in before we all ended up isolating with Covid-19, and what a great morning it was. Thank you to Catherine Britt, Nuatalie Nelmes and Carlene Heise, who were our guest panellists on the day. These three strong, inspiring and amazing women talked about their life, their achievements and some of the challenges they have faced as women throughout their careers and within their current roles. Mixed in with some fun stories, great music and delicious food, - it certainly was a great way to start the day and celebrate all that women are, have become and can be. 230 people joined us this year and we thank each and every one of you for coming along, your ongoing support made this another very successful event.



# End of Financial Year



Yes, the end of the financial year is looming again and at this time of year, most of us are starting to bundle our receipts and trying to remember who (if any) we donated to during the past year.

On the other hand - if you've not donated as yet and are able to, you now have a few short weeks left to **increase your tax deductions** for the end of this financial year.

**As a registered charity, with full DGR status, all donations to Nova are tax deductible!**

Not only will you be assisting the women and children of our town who may be experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence, you'll be getting a tax deduction with a built in feel-good-factor. **Now that's a win win!**

If you'd like to donate to Nova, head directly to our donations page on our website here: [https://www.novawomen.org.au/get\\_involved.html](https://www.novawomen.org.au/get_involved.html) and click the donate button. We use PayPal for your added security, but also because PayPal does not charge you or us a fee for donations. You don't need a PayPal account, just enter your credit card details and it's all done.

For those that may have donated throughout the year via our 'Tap Donation' machines at places such as Happy Wombat and more, don't forget to check your credit card statements for these amounts, as they too are fully tax deductible. Thank you for all your generous support during the year!



## Our Values

Nova for women and children is based upon a feminist philosophy and is guided by the principles of social justice that are;

- Act with good intent
- Focus on strengths
- Promote collaborative, innovative and inclusive practice
- Embrace diversity
- Work respectfully

We will work with you to make sure you receive the best possible assistance to avoid becoming homeless or, if you are homeless, to access safe, affordable and secure housing.

We are committed to working with you in a respectful way that protects your dignity, is fair, and does not discriminate. **#WomenAndChildrenMatter**

## OPENING HOURS

### General Office Hours:

9am to 4.30pm  
Monday to Friday

We are closed on weekends and public holidays.

### Please Note:

*The Newcastle office is closed to the public on Tuesdays, except for pre-booked appointments.*

## CONTACT US

### Nova Office

558 Hunter Street  
Newcastle West NSW 2302

### Intake Phone:

1800 769 654

### Office Phone:

02 4023 5620

### Email:

[nova@novawomen.org.au](mailto:nova@novawomen.org.au)

### Website:

[www.novawomen.org.au](http://www.novawomen.org.au)

### Facebook:

@novawomen

### Twitter:

Novawomen1

## AFTER HOURS

If you are a woman escaping domestic violence, requiring after hours assistance please

**Phone: 1800 656 463**