

## Kelly's Message

Welcome to 2022, not the start we had hoped for and certainly has brought another changing landscape for Nova with the spread of omicron and staff shortages. The team here at Nova continue to adapt service delivery to the ever-present demand and lack of supply issue that has hindered us since early last year.

My thoughts remain on the needs of women and children and their attempts to navigate COVID, access the basic needs of shelter, food and utilities such as showers and laundries. The continuance of the Pandemic has left so many without the support and access to vital services and most importantly social contact. The other day I pondered what do you do, if there is no accommodation available for you, you are unwell and COVID positive. Where do you isolate? We have had the suggestion of possibly providing a tent for a client to isolate in.

I could not imagine anything more horrifying than isolating with no utilities, for food or personal hygiene, nothing to charge devices on to maintain access to others or support services. This really is extraordinary times with such a lack of compassion. I have a roof, utilities, virtual social networks, food and so forth. Is it really that difficult to plan a more humane approach that have none of these essential needs to survive.

We have plenty of vacant buildings here in Newcastle, we are also a university town with vacant student accommodation. We surely could have come up with a more planned response for those living without.

On a happier note, Nova was inundated last year by so many with goodwill and generosity. I am always humbled by the community's response to ensure that women and children experience a wonderful Christmas, providing food and gifts.

So very heartfelt thank you from myself the team at Nova and most importantly the women and children that benefitted from the wonderful heart that this community is so well known for.

The Newsletter this month, will present the different projects that Nova has implemented over the past few years. Projects that were developed from identifying gaps within the sector and attempting to ensure that women and children do not fall through the gaps. Each of the projects have been dedicated to quality service delivery and effective result for those we work with.

Stay safe, stay well and let's ensure everyone has access to shelter, safety and food.

Best

Kelly Hansen

“  
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”

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# Last Christmas...

## The Community Spirit was certainly alive and well this last Christmas and Holiday Season...

Once again this year, we were completely overwhelmed by the generosity of people within our amazing community who donated the most beautiful and thoughtful gifts to us, to pass on to the women and children we were supporting over Christmas and beyond. There was everything from food and hampers, toys, clothing, jewellery, shoes, handbags, bedding, hair accessories, toiletries, gift cards, foot balls, totem tennis, scooters, homewares, backpacks, school necessities and so much more!

It's impossible to describe every gift we received, but so many of you took time out of your days, to choose thoughtful items and gifts, wrap and/or delivered them to us to pass on to people you will never get to meet, know, or even hear a thank you from.



It's been another tough year for so many, with Covid, isolations, illness, and many people losing their own employment, yet the way everyone reached out and gave to others just warms our hearts. That enabled us to take the weight off others shoulders, provide Mums with gifts for their children while they're going through tough times, to keep those burdens away from their children as much as possible, give those Mums a well needed surprise too, and to also treat women who may be alone at this time. A huge heartfelt thanks from everyone on our team to all out there who gave, in any way shape or form.

Thank you!

I'm not sure we'd have enough room to mention every single person connected to every single group, but we do need to make special mention to a few of the groups and organisations that supported us either for the first time this year, or again this year, as we very much appreciate the huge amount work that goes into coordinating group donations, Christmas giving trees, the delivery and more. In no particular order, our huge thanks to:

- Girl Friday,
- Aveo Newcastle,
- Junction Fair
- Shopping Centre,
- Go Kindy,
- The Lemon Tarts,
- Bunnings Kotara,
- Alesco College,
- Fair Play OOSH Group and everyone else that helped us in so many ways. ❤️



# So Many to Thank!

Just some of the beautiful gifts our families received!





# Welcome Lara!

This edition we welcome Lara who is one of our newest employees, in the role of Practise Leader here at Nova.

**How long have you been with Nova?** Just a few months 😊

**Tell us a little about your work history:** I have worked with children, young people and their families in the Newcastle area for over 22 years. My roles have been varied, including direct casework support in Brighter Futures, working with high needs young people in care, working in the Children's Court as DCJ's liaison officer, managing child protection teams, working in the Child Dispute Services in the Family Court and leading learning and development programs in DCJ.

**Who/What inspires you?** Vikki Reynolds (social worker from Canada) – Vikki motivates me to identify and name the oppression and injustices in the system; as well as building a culture of solidarity with the people I work with to do our best for women and children.

Nature inspires me – its resilience and ability to regenerate, its simplicity and complexities and its ability to heal, soothe my busy mind and soul.

The women and children we work with – The stories, triumphs and efforts of the people we work with is a constant source of inspiration to me.

**My hobbies/interests outside of work.** Going to the beach, swimming in the ocean, hanging out with friends, walking in the bush and going to music festivals – from Woodford to Splendour and everything in between.

**My favourite things:**

**Movies:** Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, Pulp Fiction, Into the Wild

**Music:** Pink Floyd (got quite a Vinyl collection), Australian Hip Hop, Angus and Julia, John Butler Trio, Rufus Du Sol.

**Artists:** Brett Whiteley, Russell Drysdale

**Books:** A Fortunate Life, To kill a Mocking Bird

**Food:** Absolutely anything and everything.

**Family:** My immediate family is relatively small; my beautiful 21 year old daughter, who our staff will absolutely get sick of hearing about (*apologises in advance*), my brother and my 15 year old niece are both local, and my folks who live in Queensland. I also consider my amazing friends and their children as family. And last but not least our beautiful boy Frank who is a 4-year-old Labrador cross Australian Cattle/Border Collie (*warning: buying a puppy from a farm at the back of Wingham is not for the faint hearted*).

**Something people may not know about me:** I can't drive a manual car. I recently bought a motorbike and then self-preservation got the better of me so I sold it. I play a pretty mean recorder and have the awards from Kempsey Music Eisteddfod to prove it.

**Something I'm looking forward to:** Traveling and exploring more of Australia and the world.

Making a difference to women and children's access to support and assistance when they are experiencing homelessness or escaping/surviving violence.

The next female Prime Minister being elected.  
Frank slowing down.



# Transitional Housing Program

## So what is Transitional Housing, and how does it work?

Transitional Housing is a form of social housing for women and children experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Transitional Housing is not long-term housing, it's offered on short-term leases of 3 months, which are renewable up to a maximum timeframe of 12-24 months (depending on social housing provider). Nova for Women and Children provides this accommodation through our partnerships with the Social Housing Providers.

Our transitional housing accommodation is provided as a Transitional Housing Program with clearly outlined responsibilities for both Nova (the provider) and our client (the participant).



The Transitional Accommodation under the program is split into two zones – Newcastle West and Lake Macquarie with a dedicated Transitional Housing Case Worker for each zone to co-ordinate and manage the program and tenancies under the guidance of the Transitional Housing Manager. This provides a more stream-lined approach and better outcomes for both Housing Providers and the participants in the program.

Many of the women we support have multiple barriers to long-term housing which makes gaining and/or sustaining a tenancy extremely difficult for them. Many are also living in unsafe or unhealthy environments which is further impacting on their health and well-being. The Transitional Housing Program provides these women and children with the

opportunity to have safe, stable housing whilst engaging with intensive case management support in order to build a positive tenancy history, address these barriers as well as building capacity for the future.

In order to access the Transitional Housing Program, women need to have been engaged with a Nova for Women and Children Case Worker in either an outreach capacity or in our crisis accommodation, and demonstrated commitment to working towards achieving their case plan goals.

Selection for properties when they become available is done through nominations by case workers who need to be able to demonstrate their client meets the criteria for the program (active engagement and case plan, how the transitional housing program will benefit the client, and any identified barriers and strategies to address these).

Whilst in the program, the Transitional Housing Case Worker provides intensive support with sustaining the tenancy (maintaining rental payments, property care, maintenance, advocacy with Housing Providers), gaining long-term housing (DCJ Housing products/applications, rental packs, advocacy with real estates/landlords, rental references).

We help address barriers (DV, MH, Negative Tenancy History, Low income), support to identify strengths and ways the women wish to build capacity for the future (employment, education, community connections), then provide the support and pathways needed to achieve these goals with referrals to other services depending on the goals/needs of the individual participants.

**"The majority of our participants from this program have overcome multiple barriers and gone on to safe, stable, long-term housing, and built a strong foundation for their future"**

Since commencement we have seen extremely positive outcomes for the women and children whom have engaged in this program.

# DVRE Project

## Domestic Violence Response Enhancement Project

The Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE) Project is funded by the Department of Communities and Justice.

The aim of the project is to enhance the service response for women and their children who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or in unsafe housing as a result of domestic and family violence.

Nova for Women and Children's DVRE Project provides both business hours and after hours support to women with or without children who are experiencing and/or escaping domestic and family violence in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie area.

After Hours On-Call workers provide support between 5pm – 8am Monday to Friday, and 24-hour support on weekends and public holidays.

After hours support includes assisting women with temporary accommodation and meal assistance, as well as providing that phone support and referral information they need.

The DVRE Project was awarded new funding this year and Nova for Women and Children now have their own DVRE team which comprises of two domestic and family violence (DFV) caseworkers and a team leader.

The DVRE Project provides immediate crisis intervention response. Case management involves working intensively with women to mitigate the risks of violence, and maximise their safety and outcomes relating to their housing needs. DFV Case Workers work from a crisis-driven, trauma-informed framework and client-centred approach that focuses on the immediate needs of women and their children.

This includes completing regular safety planning, risk assessments and providing education to women around domestic and family violence.

One example is: we recently assisted a woman to leave her private rental property which she shared with her ex-partner. DFV Caseworkers supported the client with speaking to the police about the abuse she experienced. We then assisted the client with a removalist to remove her belongings from the property, and supported her to issue a Domestic Violence Termination Notice to remove her name from the lease.

The woman entered crisis accommodation and is working with DFV Caseworkers to apply for DCJ Housing products 'Rent Choice Start Safely' and 'Private Rental Brokerage Service'. The woman was also referred to a financial counsellor to assist her with creating a budget.

The woman is now living safely in crisis accommodation while she applies for properties in the private rental market in the hope of starting over very soon.



### 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.

**nova**  
for women and children  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN MATTER

The DVRE is a project of  
Nova for Women and Children

# Assertive Outreach

## Nova's Assertive Outreach Project – plans are on foot.

In 2020, Nova for Women and Children partnered with a team from the University of Newcastle to undertake research into the needs for a specialist assertive outreach program for women experiencing homelessness in the Hunter. The research and supporting report relied heavily on the experience of women experiencing homelessness who were interviewed and the workers who support them.



Assertive outreach is all about taking services to people, working with them where they are at, and the importance of this being done in a trauma informed way.

Nova's motivation for initiating this work was because existing models of assertive outreach have generally been focused on men experiences of homelessness and we wanted to better understand if there were factors unique for women experiencing homelessness.

### So what did we learn?

The need for safety influenced where, and when women experiencing homelessness slept. Women spoke about the need to hide to stay safe, but not too remotely in case they needed to seek help. One woman spoke about using speed to stay awake at night to prevent people assaulting her when she was asleep; this was a woman who has never used drugs before becoming homeless. The descriptions of being mother and homeless was described as a *"struggle within a struggle"* as women need to think about the safety and wellbeing of their children in a daily struggle of trying to find somewhere safe to sleep. Many women had lost the care of their children, even though the need to flee from domestic violence for their children's safety was a leading factor to homelessness.

Seeking ways to respond to the demand of women's homelessness is another big driver for Nova to explore an assertive outreach model. COVID has contributed to housing unaffordability, reduced housing availability and increasing rates of women seek support to escape violence. We have women seeking assistance from us who are living in cars, tents or sleeping rough with children. Wait lists for crisis accommodation services are growing. With both the research findings in mind, understanding the current need in our community and

Nova already having an Outreach Bus (affectionately known as *Betty*) funded by a recent Stronger Communities Grant, in true Nova style we decided to move into action and do something about it.

In early November we made an application through the Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) grant to help us fund an assertive outreach program in both the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie Local Government areas specifically targeting services to women and children.

Our grant application outlines our proposal to use *Betty* to provide a mobile service in the community where practical assistance will be provided as well as creating linkages for women to other organisations and health services. We are also hoping that connection with our outreach program will encourage women and children to utilise our community hubs to access laundry, showering facilities and a safe place to rest during the day.

Assertive Outreach feels like a missing piece of our service – we know women need to stay as invisible as possible when experiencing homelessness, assertive outreach supports everything that women are already doing to help keep themselves and their children safe whilst ensuring accessibility and bridging gaps in existing service deliver.



# Ways to Help or Donate

## Help others, just by shopping

We're excited to be in a great partnership with Betterthat.com – a new online marketplace helping you shop with purpose. Up to 25% of their net commission revenue goes to good causes (just like us!)

Not only will you shop exclusive brands and get better prices, but you'll also be making a social impact too. Use this link <https://bit.ly/3tuKn6p> to start shopping and supporting us today.



## Donate via our new QR

You see and use QR Codes here, there and everywhere these days, and we've joined the party!

Thanks to our friends at Givar, we now have a new, very secure donations page on our website making it much easier for you donate online with your credit card.

Did you know that unlike many other charities, Nova makes a firm stand that we **do not and will not use any** of your donations towards administration, marketing, wages etc. **100% of funds we receive are used to assist the women and children we support.** #Proud



## 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

### Newcastle Hub:

558 Hunter Street  
Newcastle West NSW 2302

### Charlestown Hub:

21 Canberra Street  
Charlestown NSW 2290

### Intake Phone:

1800 769 654

### Office Phone:

02 4023 5620

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[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