

WestCASA

Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault

(ABN 29 351 352 921)

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

Wyndham MDC, Level 2, 236 Hoppers Lane, Werribee. Victoria 3030

Phone: 9216 0411 (Admin) | 9216 0444 (Counselling) | info@westcasa.org.au

www.westcasa.org.au

CONTENTS

WestCASA 32nd ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

2019-20 Board of Governance and Staff	1
WestCASA Board of Governance and Members' Bio Notes	3
Chair Report	6
Chief Executive Officer Report	9
Strategic Plan 2018 – 2020	14
WestCASA Vision, Mission, Aims	14
Strategic Goals	
– Prevention	15
– Partnerships	18
– People	22
– Provide and Promote Services	27
Feedback	31
Counselling Statistics	34
Financial Statements	37
Auditor's Report	40



WestCASA acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government, particularly Department of Health & Human Services, Family Safety Victoria and Department of Justice and Community Safety.

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE & STAFF

2019-2020

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Jacqui Morse – Chair
Michelle Wells – Deputy Chair
(leave of absence March 2020)
Jenny Elliott – Treasurer
Helen Barnes
Joanna Ellis (resigned November 2019)
Kate Culmsee
Lauren Porter (resigned November 2019)
Mohana Mahadevan
Nicole Battle
Skye Kinder

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Robyn McIvor

CLINICAL SERVICES MANAGER

Susan Geraghty

TEAM LEADERS

Business and Administration Services:
April Multanen
Footscray Office: Melissa Alloway
MDC Team Leader: Esen Uygun
(leave of absence Nov 2019)
MDC Team Leader: Sarah Bano
(acting in Esen's role)
Specialist Trauma Service at Dame Phyllis
Frost Centre: Penny McDonald

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Alanna Smith
HR/Payroll Manager
Georgia Mihnjak
Reception/Administration Officer
(Sep – Dec 2019)
Marisa Goegan
Reception/Administration Officer
Michelle Kenney
Office Administrator
Stephanie Tomasello
Reception/Administration Officer

QUALITY & SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Julie Tsilemanis (from November 2019)
Lesley Hyde (to November 2019)

INTAKE COUNSELLOR/PROJECT OFFICER

Lesley Hyde (from November 2019)

SENIOR PRACTITIONER

Ursula Benstead

COUNSELLOR/ADVOCATES

Carolyn Wilson (resigned July 2019)
Catherine Munyanyiwa
Eileen Mundy
Geetha Chetty
Georgia Taylor
Heba Bendak
Jessica Krummel (leave of absence)
Jessie Brautigan
Julie Kruss
Kristina Sass-Nielsen
Lejla Arnautovic (resigned January 2020)
LJ (Laura-Jane) Singh (maternity leave)
Luciana Castagna
Megan Mahon
Mira Chazan
Monica Karst (resigned January 2020)
Narelle Fowler
Rachel Preston
Sonia Tomasiello
Sophie Manente (resigned April 2020)
Tamara Kolak
Tara Schintler
Tigist Kebede (resigned December 2019)
Toril Pursell

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE & STAFF

2019-2020

AFTER HOURS CRISIS TEAM

Cindy Tarczon
Crisis Care Unit Coordinator
Asha Acuoth (*resigned September 2019*)
Cigdem Yilan
Geetha Chetty
Jessica Ekserdjian
Maha Saleh
Marta Jones
Ruqaya Almirgani (*resigned November 2019*)
Senem Doner
Sonia Tomasiello
Sudha Narayan

SPECIALIST CONSULTANT STAFF

Alex Caldwell
Trauma-Informed Shiatsu Practitioner
Clare Pritchard
Trauma-Informed Yoga Practitioner
Karen Woolford
Human Resources Consultant
Radhika Santhanam-Martin
Education and Service Development Consultant

CONTRACT AND CASUAL STAFF

Asha Acuoth
Casual Intake Team support
Catherine Roberts
Contract Receptionist
Cigdem Yilan
Casual Intake Team support
Krista Multanen
Casual Reception/Administration Officer
Therese Slee
Casual Administrative support

STUDENT

Paula Lay

THERAPY DOG

Goldie (*resigned with Lejla January 2020*)

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

MEMBERS' BIO NOTES

JACQUI MORSE *joined the Board in 2010*

I am a Social Worker with 30 years' experience in specialist sexual assault response and prevention, more recently facilitating the provision of trauma informed supervision/reflective practice/debriefing for individuals and teams.

I became involved in the WestCASA Board because of my continued commitment to the provision of quality response and prevention sexual assault services. As a previous employee I experienced first-hand the dedication and skill of this service.

Our current whole of community response to sexual violence has certainly improved, but much more needs to be done to have our understanding of violence also see resources dedicated to comprehensive ongoing prevention programs.

JENNY ELLIOTT *joined the Board in 2012*

I am originally from New Zealand but have lived in Melbourne for more than 20 years, and it is now home. I have 2 daughters who I adore. I have worked for more than 25 years at PwC where I am a partner.

I became involved in the WestCASA Board because I have a desire to support a cause which I feel passionate about.

I am inspired about being on the Board and involved in this community agency because it means working with an inspiring group of women. I have learnt so much from my fellow Board members as we all have different perspectives we bring. It is a very supportive Board. And I feel privileged to assist an organisation that is making the world a safer place for women.

HELEN BARNES *joined the Board in 2014*

Being a member of the WestCASA Board for the past six years has been a rewarding experience. Joining a group of dynamic and passionate women committing their time to such an invaluable cause, I would describe as nothing less than heartening. A particular inspiration that continues to draw me is the women who make up WestCASA. The relentless drive, skill and compassion in making a difference for many vulnerable members of society is so evident within this organisation. Through rapid growth and change, caused by internal and external influences, WestCASA has weathered the storms with both tenacity and open-mindedness.

My personal values strongly resonate with the values of WestCASA – promoting a feminist environment where equality is the norm and living in a world free from violence. For me, joining WestCASA as a Board member allows me to contribute to this mission.

Change and Program Management is my profession, I bring to the Board skills within this discipline. Throughout my tenure, I have been involved in various subcommittees: Change Management for the transition to the MDC, Board recruitment during 2019 and 2020 and currently the Policy and Risk subcommittee.

I look forward with anticipation on helping to shape the future of WestCASA as we weather further storms and move towards making the world a better place.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

KATHRYN (KATE) CULMSEE *joined the Board in 2018*

I have moved around a lot both internationally and within Australia before settling down in Melbourne around 14 years ago and I now feel like a Melburnian through and through!

I have been a lawyer for more than 20 years and before that was an Environmental Scientist. I am interested in governance and have a Graduate Diploma in Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia and have completed the Company Directors Course at the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

My interest in social justice, feminist leanings and drive to see the elimination of sexual violence in society makes me want to help WestCASA be a success.

We are a dedicated group of women, with differing backgrounds and experience, who are working together to make the world a better place, free from the fear of sexual violence and where people who have experienced sexual assault are treated with care and respect to recover and heal.

MOHANA MAHADEVAN *joined the Board in 2018*

I arrived in Australia in 2007 and have been working as a social worker in the human services sector for the last 10 years interstate and in Melbourne. I have worked in settlement services, children and family work, youth work and family violence.

I am a Person of Colour and a migrant. I am passionate about cultural diversity and migration having worked with asylum seekers and refugees for many years. I have a strong understanding of systemic disadvantage and unconscious bias.

I am currently leading a team of therapeutic practitioners supporting families impacted by family violence in the Western Region.

I was approached to be on the WestCASA Board. I am a strong feminist and am passionate about eliminating family violence and sexual assault from society. I felt that my experience in managing projects and passion for the WestCASA vision meant that I could make a valuable contribution to the Board.

I feel privileged to be amongst such talented women who inspire me with their expertise and passion on a daily basis. I am also humbled by the amazing work that WestCASA staff do every day for the betterment of clients that they support.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

NICOLE BATTLE *joined the Board in 2020*

I hold a Bachelor of Social Work from Victoria University, as well as a Master of Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne.

I have over ten years' experience working in local government, holding senior roles within Community Development, Youth Services, Emergency Management and Governance. I have also held a number of positions within the not-for-profit sector and as the current CEO of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria.

I am passionate about social justice, with a particular focus on gender equity and the important role that this can play in helping to end discrimination and violence against women.

I had been involved with WestCASA previously, having worked as part of the after hours on-call team for approximately seven years. I am passionate about WestCASA and was keen to contribute my skills in whatever way I could to support the ongoing work of this important organisation.

I am inspired about being on the Board and involved in this community agency because I love knowing that the work of WestCASA is helping to create a safer community for future generations of women and girls, while providing much needed local support for people who have experienced sexual assault within the western suburbs.

DR SKYE KINDER *joined the Board in 2020*

I am a passionate advocate for disadvantaged and marginalised patient populations, currently working as a doctor at a major metropolitan hospital.

I am completing specialty training in psychiatry through the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, as well as additional studies in Medical Law through the University of Melbourne. I have been recognised for my health advocacy work as VIC Junior Doctor of the Year in 2017 and VIC Young Australian of the Year in 2019. I have additionally been recognised by the Australian Financial Review as one of Australia's top "100 Women of Influence".

I became involved in the WestCASA Board because as a doctor, I work with patients who have lived experience of sexual assault. I believe that WestCASA provides the highest standard of care for people who have experienced sexual assault and their communities in the Western region of Melbourne. Supporting the work of WestCASA is a privilege.

The WestCASA Board is made up of women from all walks of life and at differing career stages, but with shared feminist values. The opportunity to teach and learn from these women as we work towards an end to sexual violence is inspiring.

CHAIR REPORT

With much of the violence in our community hidden in the home, the recent measures implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 have inadvertently left many (particularly women and children) more vulnerable.

For some services, this has meant an increase in demand. For others, where the impact of violence and abuse impedes them from reaching out, the demand for such services may come once more freedom is allowed.

Either way, the full impact for those who have been suffering behind 'locked down' doors, is yet to be fully realised.

WestCASA is one of fourteen Centres Against Sexual Assault in Victoria, and along with mental health/violence response services across the globe, this year has demanded an agility and creativity like no other.

As a service, we were required to reflect on the nature of the problems our client and staff group were facing, and then work together to problem solve each barrier as it presented. Much of what we have learnt through the pandemic will continue to be a part of our service delivery model, should it be evaluated as better serving our community.

I want to share some of the more prominent themes over the year for the organisation, which include: the impact of the pandemic, the broader sexual assault and family violence sectors working together, how we understand violence, and finally, how we continue to develop as a team of people and as a service aiming to connect and work with our local community.

An additional consequence of this pandemic for violence response/trauma services like WestCASA, across the country and indeed across the world, was the expectation to continue uninterrupted service, even though the workforces of those services were equally and directly impacted by the same crisis. The definition of 'essential services' is refined, and the community expresses (and discovers) through emergency guidelines, what we value and what we consider we can and cannot live without.

Being declared an essential service demonstrates advances in both the understanding of the impact of violence and the critical role of the services, like ours, that promote prevention and recovery.

Being part of a community of people who have worked to highlight and elevate the importance of these services, these decisions could be seen as a marker of success in achieving this recognition. However, they also pose a dilemma.

In meeting this community expectation, how do we also consider the needs and protection of the workers? What are their rights, and how do we support them to continue to provide services in these riskier conditions, while not exploiting their commitment to their work and or asking them to compromise their very wellbeing?

The above 'real life' scenario also tests our commitment to being Trauma-informed, not only in service delivery but also in workforce support and development. As a response, we aim to continue to explore how to best embed 'trauma principles', having them inform the organisations operation model, including the management and support of WestCASA staff.

Our sincere thanks for the hard work of our staff, our funders, our partners at the Multi-disciplinary centre (MDC, our primary location) and all those in the sector who pulled together to support the ongoing delivery of services through such a demanding and uncertain time.

CHAIR REPORT

In the current climate, an ongoing challenge for WestCASA, as one of Victoria's Sexual Assault Services, is achieving recognition (and relevant funding) for Family Violence work. Family violence has always been a significant part of the current or historical experience, for at least 60% of our client group.

WestCASA continues to develop and articulate the intricate ongoing therapeutic work being carried out with those impacted by both sexual and family violence. We believe this work is unique in its approach and essential to the combination of interventions, that meaningfully contribute to the response and prevention of these insidious and devastating crimes.

As the field of sexual and family violence are further 'merged', sexual assault services are required to meet the challenge of providing integrated service delivery in the best interests of this client group.

As a Sexual Assault Service, we also have a responsibility to highlight and further the therapeutic and prevention work with those whose experiences of child sexual abuse or sexual violence are unrelated to Family Violence. In doing this, we honour the range of voices and experiences of those who have been harmed, and ensure design of our services and prevention programs address the various forms in which these crimes are perpetrated and can manifest.

As a service, we continue to examine the thinking and practice that guide and inform our work in and with the community in the west. While vital constructs of 'gendered violence' and 'male entitlement' are still critical to our approaches to violence in a patriarchal society, they are not the whole story.

For many years the challenge has been 'put to' (white) feminism' to acknowledge the colonising and oppressive effects of the movement, that marginalise and silence indigenous women, women of colour and gender diverse people.

To progress our responses we look to broader frameworks, including 'the workings and effect of power and privilege', for how we work with each other and also to guide our understanding of the violence we are working to prevent.

We are a predominantly white organisation, located in a cultural context and community that struggles to own the devastating effects of colonisation and denies white privilege - expressed through structures, systems and behaviours.

WestCASA, like most organisations in this country, has more work to do to cultivate and nurture an inclusive workplace and service.

We commit to continuing to confront this challenge, to listen and learn from each other, and with and from our diverse local community.

Related to this work, we would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Radhika Santhanam-Martin (as a private consultant and in her role with Victorian transcultural mental health services). We really appreciate Radhikas' sustained and compassionate work with this organisation, with the aim of making us more accountable to each other and those we serve.

In addition to the quality therapeutic services and progressive body based therapies being developed at WestCASA, I want to refer in particular to the ground-breaking and essential work being delivered at the correctional facility, the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

The innovative programs are noteworthy examples of the creativity and commitment, to providing services to some of the west's most marginalised women. WestCASA commits to continue to support this vital work, while acknowledging the next post COVID-19 economic period will require difficult decisions being made, in where to allocate precious resources.

CHAIR REPORT

THE WESTCASA BOARD

Now to the Board. A group of committed, smart women, who give of themselves in order to ensure the gifted WestCASA team are able to continue to make a significant difference to those impacted by violence in the west.

The WestCASA Board welcomes **Nicole Battle**, a governance and sector specialist (and CEO herself), and looks forward to her taking on the Chair role from July 2020.

We have also been joined by **Skye Kinder**, a celebrated doctor, (and young Australian of the year in 2019). During the financial year we farewelled **Joanna Ellis** who had joined the Board in 2015 and **Lauren Porter** who had joined in 2017, many thanks to them both for their work and contributions as Board members.

A special mention needs to be made of another departing Board Member, **Michelle Wells**. Michelle has been an active and vital member since 2011, taking up Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer positions in that time. Michelle's broad skills and knowledge, specialising in the risk and quality spheres, has made her contribution in time and energy substantial. We are very grateful for the significant role she has played in the governance of WestCASA over her time with us.

Thank you also to the remaining Board members **Jenny Elliot**, our dedicated and skilled Treasurer, **Helen Barnes**, **Mohana Mahadevan** (Interim Vice Chair) and **Kathryn Culmsee**, who have sustained their energy and commitment through a challenging time.

Thank you to the entire team, our **CEO Robyn McIvor**, our leadership team, and every member of staff. There are many of you who have weathered the recent challenges, at times putting the work ahead of your own health and wellbeing. This has not been taken for granted, and we want each one of you to know that we are grateful for the critical services you have provided.

As a Board, we continue to see demonstrated your unfailing dedication to women, young people and men impacted by sexual violence. This year in particular has shown that even under extreme stress, your passion, and continued striving for excellence endures.

As outgoing Chair, it has been an honour to play a part in supporting the vital work of WestCASA, and I remain grateful to each member of the team for the commitment to, and quality of, all you do.

Thank you

Jacqui Morse
WestCASA Board Chair

CEO REPORT

Thank you to the WestCASA Board for their support and governance of the organisation, and the diverse range of skills that they bring and contribute to our organisation, and specific thanks to the WestCASA Board Chair and Vice Chairs, Jacqui Morse, Michelle Wells and Mohana Mahadevan and to Jenny Elliot, WestCASA Treasurer for financial oversight and expertise.

With some of our long standing Board members reluctantly moving off the Board and a decrease in membership and planned leave for some other Board members, there was recognition of the need to strengthen the Board skills and numbers.

Skye Kinder and Nicole Battle joined the Board this financial year and Kate Culmsee, Helen Barnes and Mohana Mahadevan worked on Board recruitment, advertising for Board members and interviewing prospective Board members to enable a gradual induction period for new members and a strengthened Board in the next financial year.

My appreciation to the work of the existing members to enable a strengthened, diverse Board for WestCASA, and a spreading of workload of the Board members. Specific thanks to Jacqui Morse, Michelle Wells and Mohana Madahaven for their work in the roles of Chair and Vice Chairs throughout the year.

It was wonderful to see a Police Medal awarded to Jenny Wilson in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours and to know that Jenny's long-term contribution to the WestCASA Board and as Chair, was a part of receiving this award.

Further events with our partners at the MDC and beyond, were held this financial year with a return to the **WestCASA Spring Breakfast** in early September, held a little later than the WestCASA breakfasts of the past. This event celebrated the WestCASA staff and events of previous years, our move to the Wyndham MDC, with recognition of long-standing staff, and our appreciation of our partnerships. The opportunity to come together, gather and build relationships, is always appreciated and relevant to our work.

The long-planned **Wyndham MDC Smoking Ceremony, Welcome to Country** and unveiling of our Wutherong glass Welcome to Country plaque in October 2019 was led by Hazel Bickerton, MDC Co-ordinator and the Local Governance Group.



CEO REPORT

A great deal of planning was needed for this event around appropriate timing and where the event could be held. The cordoned off carpark and the beautiful weather came together, complete with a falcon soaring over us.

This event was a welcoming of the staff and services based at Wyndham MDC to the lands of the traditional custodians, the people of the Kulin nation and a welcoming of Aboriginal services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to Wyndham MDC, recognising the strong connection to land held by our First Nations people.

For WestCASA, the smoking ceremony was particularly significant around coming together, resilience and collaboration.

The **WestCASA Bands Event** was held in late October, to raise awareness of sexual assault and funding for WestCASA services. Thanks to Bianca Raffin for organising the event. Bianca completed her Social Work student placement at the MDC in November 2018. And special thanks to Lauren Porter, Board member who organised communications and publicity about the event and to Nicole Tadpole for linking us with the Triple R Breakfasters program where myself and Bianca were interviewed.

The event gathered people together in a safe space to enjoy music, and to provide an opportunity for women and nonbinary folk to present their music. The event was well attended by staff, Board members, Northern CASA CEO and community and raised funds to support our work to welcome nonbinary folk to WestCASA services.



CEO REPORT



The **Zonta Club of Melbourne's West** has continued to support WestCASA with donations of skincare products to be used as resources for our group work, particularly with our clients at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC).

Last year's AGM saw the early presentation of findings of **WestCASA's Body-Based Therapy research**. Work has continued on this research and it has been published as outlined later in this report.

Pro bono work on our legislative register was undertaken by **White and Case** legal firm through introduction from Kate Culmsee, Board member. The work of Mai Kuroda and Chenez Dyer Bray and their colleagues has been very much appreciated and has enabled WestCASA's compliance and knowledge in this area to be of a high standard.

Board member Helen Barnes' review and input into **WestCASA's risk register** has been very valuable. It has been helpful to have a Board/staff group reviewing this and affirming to have all risks at an acceptable level.

My appreciation to the WestCASA Leadership team and all WestCASA staff for their commitment to our work to enable recovery to occur from sexual assault and related family violence and to advance community understanding of the structural barriers that allow sexual assault and family violence to occur.

Our advocacy for change of legislation, systems and processes that disempower the people that we work with, all the work that we did together onsite and face to face this year and for continuing this work in new ways during a pandemic is greatly appreciated and valued.

Specific thanks to **Susan Geraghty and Ursula Benstead** for continuing to provide excellent reflective practice, for further developing our trauma informed counselling practice and training for staff and for continuing, in conjunction with Melissa, to supervise our counselling staff.

Esen Uygun and Sarah Bano, (Sarah acting in the MDC Team leader role while Esen was on extended leave), **Melissa Alloway, Penny McDonald and April Multanen**, our **Team Leaders** have continued to provide great support and guidance to their teams which is very much appreciated, as is **Cindy Tarczon's** co-ordination of the After Hours team.

WestCASA has been fortunate to welcome several new Counsellor/Advocates and After Hours team members this year and to maintain full staffing.

The second half of this financial year has involved fast planning to move all staff offsite and all services to non-face to face within two weeks in the early stage of the pandemic.

CEO REPORT

This decision was made at what was intended to be a Board/Leadership planning day to move WestCASA toward our new strategic plan, and after meeting with all staff teams.

My appreciation to **April Multanen** for organising IT equipment for staff to take offsite, and for keeping track of this and for the Administration team's assistance.

Work with IT systems, online meetings, moving services to online, continual adapting to environmental changes, creating changes within the workplace to enable a COVID-safe workplace and some onsite work, has continued for myself and the Leadership team throughout the last months of this financial year. I have greatly appreciated the input from the Leadership team, in continuing to support high quality clinical services and to support the staff who are delivering these.

Thank you to all **WestCASA Counsellor/Advocates** for continuing to provide counselling and intake services for our clients within the community and our DPFC Team, led by **Penny McDonald**, for adapting to trauma service provision online or by phone for the clients we support at DPFC, and to our Body-Based therapy team for adapting to online delivery and continuing this service.

April Multanen, Stephanie Tomasello, Marisa Goegan and Karen Woolford have been instrumental in assisting me to change the space at the MDC, enabling social distancing, enhanced hygiene, cleaning and the myriad requirements for a COVID-safe workplace. Plans are in place to do the same at Radcliffe House (Footscray Outreach).

Julie Tsilemanis joined us this financial year in a Quality and Service Development role, joint managing our maintenance audit in early March with Lesley Hyde, with wise input from Board members Helen Barnes and Michelle Wells. Since then, Julie has continued to update and align the policies and processes surrounding WestCASA's Quality Management System.

Julie has worked with me on COVID-19

organisational continuity planning and constant updating of information as new requirements are announced by our funding bodies. Julie skilfully compiled all government announcements into a coherent format for WestCASA with processes, protocols and decision-making flowcharts.

My thanks to **Lesley Hyde** for an excellent handover and continued support of the Quality area and for collating and organising COVID resources for our staff and clients. The Leadership team have worked together on further policy development, particularly the Anti-Discrimination and Supervision Policy areas, and beginning to align the changes from the external environment in Information Sharing and Family Violence Risk Assessment.

WestCASA appreciates our funders:

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Family Safety Victoria (FSV) and Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). The work with Louise Turner DHHS and Jason Bujaki DJCS, has been valued in supporting our organisation to continue to provide our work in different modes. Regular meetings with the Minister for Corrections, DPFC service providers and DJCS staff have clarified the planning for service delivery at DPFC during COVID-19.

Our ongoing collaborative relationship regarding our Crisis Care Unit with **Western Health Sunshine Hospital staff**, is appreciated. We look forward to the renovations being completed and our new Crisis Care suite being made available to our clients who have experienced a recent sexual assault.

My involvement with **CASA Forum** has increased with weekly meetings to share information and support sexual assault services during COVID-19. The presence at these meetings of **FSV staff** Sarah Sanders and Megan Andison, communication with FSV staff and enabling increased meetings with Senior FSV staff, has enabled input of funding changes and clarification of questions from our services.

CEO REPORT

The fast pace of Victorian Government restriction changes has then required intense drilling down to what this means for WestCASA services.

The ability to work this out with FSV and my colleagues working in sexual assault services has been valued, while understanding that the service model is different across regions.

The work with CASA Forum has intensified as we move to becoming a Peak Body. I welcome this development and look forward to continued involvement on the new Peak Body Board.

My involvement with the Executive of the **Western Integrated Family Violence Committee** has continued with a standing position for Sexual Assault Services. The regional partnerships, collaborative work through this committee and opportunity to raise the profile of sexual assault specific and family violence issues, are highly valued.

Our website has continued to develop with the assistance of **Georgia Taylor** and our communications consultant, **Karen Parish** from Red&Crew. A direct donations facility is now live on the website, and a feedback process via the website is being developed.

Translations of WestCASA client information booklets and the information brochures will be available on our website soon and will be printed for clients onsite.

Susan, Julie and I have welcomed the opportunity to work with **VACCA** staff to undertake a **Strengthening Cultural Safety Audit**. We are looking forward to involvement in workshops and further work with VACCA.

We are continuing to plan our **WestCASA Groups** and I am really pleased that we are planning our first group for men who have experienced abuse.

Melissa worked with our Gatehouse and IPC Health partners to provide further sessions for **Respectful Relationships Communities of Practice** in Western Region schools, with specific input regarding sexual assault and response to disclosures from children and young people.

These sessions were evaluated very positively by the participants and it was an area where the expertise of our services was very much welcomed.

Our **Rainbow working group** has continued to develop, advocate and lead on ways in which WestCASA can be inclusive of nonbinary people in all areas of our service.

At Wyndham MDC, working alongside SOCIT, Westgate Family Violence Investigation Unit, IPC Health nurses, Gatehouse, DHHS and Women's Health West staff, provides us with opportunities for best practice through referral and joint practice. I look forward to all services being back onsite to further these relationships, models of practice and to learn from the evaluation that we have been involved in together.

WestCASA Board and Leadership team will be involved in a **Strategic Planning Day** in the new financial year to start the process of moving WestCASA forward with future planning.

WestCASA is now well placed to continue to provide our services within the current restrictions and to move back to a face to face service when it is safe for our clients and staff to do so.

In writing for the WestCASA Annual Report of 19/20, I wonder if the Social Work, Psychology and Counselling students of the 2030 decade will have suspicions about whether there ever was a pandemic or will accept some services online as the way that services have always been delivered!

I am hopeful that there will be some learnings from our changed model that we will take forward as we continue to learn to adapt service delivery for the needs of our diverse client group, and that WestCASA will be resilient in our return to full service delivery in the next financial year.

ROBYN MCIVOR
Chief Executive Officer

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2020

WestCASA is currently consolidating underpinning values in the organisation's planning process for a new strategic plan. This process has been delayed due to the COVID19 restrictions.

VISION

- A world where everyone lives free from the fear of sexual assault and family violence.

MISSION

- To promote the recovery of all people who have experienced sexual assault and to strive for a world free from sexual violence and family violence in collaboration with family violence services.

AIMS

- To create an environment in which recovery from the effects of sexual assault and related family violence can occur.

To strengthen our practice excellence to ensure we are at the forefront of therapeutic responses to people who experience sexual assault and related family violence.

To advance community understanding of the social conditions that allow sexual assault and related family violence to continue to occur.

To encourage communities to take responsibility for addressing the crimes of sexual assault and related family violence.



STRATEGIC GOAL 1: PREVENTION

Advocating for greater understanding and community responsibility for the conditions under which sexual assault and related family violence continues to occur.

Advocating for resources and delivering services that support the prevention of and education about sexual assault and related family violence across our community.

- We will focus on the gendered nature of sexual assault and related family violence and the structural factors that cause and maintain the social conditions under which women and children, mostly, are the victims of family violence and sexual assault.
- We will look for and create opportunities to undertake action to change these factors.
- WestCASA will undertake social action, advocacy, research, direct service delivery, organisational capacity building, community education and development that support and enable a better understanding of sexual assault and related family violence and how these can be prevented.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We have had a number of consultations and enquiries from a range of services and community groups throughout the year.

The beginning of the pandemic has led to some delays and disruptions, however utilising online platforms to deliver community education is planned for the second half of the year.

Victoria University

We participated in a panel discussion held at Victoria University regarding gender-based violence following a live performance of the play 'You the Man'.

Werribee Mercy Mental Health

We have provided two training sessions with the staff at the Mercy Hospital Saltwater Clinic regarding responding to disclosures of sexual assault.

This was reciprocated with an information session provided to WestCASA regarding the mental health services provided in the western region.



Anglicare Youth Residential Care

We have provided two training sessions for Youth Residential Workers regarding impacts of trauma and responding to sexual assault disclosures from young people.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: PREVENTION

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Respectful Relationships

WestCASA partnered with MDC Gatehouse staff to provide a joint presentation regarding childhood sexual assault with primary and secondary school education staff in the Wyndham region, as part of the Respectful Relationships program.

This involved 6 presentations with participants including teachers, welfare coordinators and school nurses from a wide variety of schools in the Wyndham region both State and Catholic.

These presentations were evaluated very positively and some of the participants' comments about their learnings were:

Understanding that there is so many layers to this type of disclosure to understand the barriers involved.

The stories and real examples were great.

All of it was very useful as it built an overall understanding.

How trauma affects learning development.

Having empathy for us and how much courage it takes to disclose information.

How I approach disclosure.

Allow the time for students to talk. Be more aware of secondary abuse.

SOCIAL ACTION

During the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence**, WestCASA organised a social action event to raise awareness about the prevalence, frequency and impact of gender-based violence and also to acknowledge the courage, resilience and recovery of those who have experienced violence.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence begins on 25 November on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

These two dates highlight that violence against women is a human rights abuse.

This is a global campaign to raise awareness about violence against women and its impact on a woman's physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being. Human rights cannot be universal without human rights for women.

During the 16 Days of Activism Community members and organisations are invited to coordinate or participate in an event to unite in the struggle to end violence against women.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: PREVENTION

SOCIAL ACTION

On Wednesday December 4, WestCASA established a **display table in the foyer** of the Women's Health Hub building where we had our banner displayed and had badges, stickers, brochures and sweets to distribute to the community and Women's Health Hub co-located agencies.

We were delighted to be able to include some of our clients' artwork, poetry and storytelling as part of the display.

This event provided us an opportunity to educate some of our co located workers about WestCASA and our MDC partners, meet with community members and celebrate resilience and recovery of survivors.

As WestCASA also works with male adolescents and men, many of whom have experienced sexual abuse and violence, we want to acknowledge that men too are victims of sexual violence and acknowledge their courage in speaking out and seeking help to recover.

The themes for the day were:

- 16 Days of Activism.
- Resilience and Recovery.
- Partnerships with agencies and individuals to better respond to violence – to prevent, intervene and to assist in recovery.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: PARTNERSHIPS

Working with others to achieve our goals.

- We value the partnerships we have that enable us to work in collaboration to achieve our goals and the best outcomes for those who use our services and the community we serve.
- We seek to maintain existing and develop future relationships that continue, extend and expand our capacity to achieve our goals.

DIVERSEXY PROGRAM – WESTCASA ENGAGEMENT

WestCASA has been engaged with the Western Network that delivered the **Sexual Lives and Respectful Relationships (SLRR)** program for more than 5 years now.

In the past year, through feedback from participants, this network has evolved into the **Diversexy Program**, a peer-led program that engages people with a disability around the issues of relationships, sexual health, pleasure and human rights.

Other members of the network are workers from different councils that cover this geographical area, Northern CASA and WestCASA. The program is coordinated by a worker from CoHealth.

The role of WestCASA in the Diversexy program is to provide support and debriefing opportunities for the peer advocates during specific sessions throughout the program.

Due to the restrictions on face to face services, this was put on hold when it was due to run in the first semester 2020.

The WestCASA representative participates in network meetings and contributes to the network through consultation and information sharing, as well as feeding information and resources back to the WestCASA team.

This has predominantly happened via email in 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, WestCASA will continue to support and be connected to the Diversexy Program over the coming year as it adapts to the COVID-19 context.



WestCASA CEO and staff participating in NAIDOC Week activities.

CONTINUE TO BUILD OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND SERVICES

As part of the **Strengthening Cultural Safety of Family Violence Services Project**, WestCASA has engaged with our Cultural Safety Advisor (CSA) from VACCA to complete a Cultural Safety Self-Assessment.

We have been working in collaboration with our CSA to complete the self-assessment and develop our **Cultural Safety Action Plan**.

This has been achieved through a number of face-to-face meetings and then moving to online meetings during COVID-19.

We will continue to work with our CSA to implement identified actions over the coming months.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: PARTNERSHIPS

We have continued to develop a greater understanding of the services in the West who are supporting the Aboriginal community through our participation the **Aboriginal Services Network of Wyndham**.

The network has grown to more than 60 members and we are all kept up to date with developments in services, programs and issues that relate to improving the lives of the Aboriginal people living in the West.

Supervision for Dardi Munwurro indigenous leadership training and coaching

WestCASA is working with the **Family Safety and Engagement team** at Dardi Munwurro through the provision of clinical supervision to the workers.

This has been a collaborative partnership where the workers are able to explore the impacts of their work and reflect upon the challenges and the inspiration they gain from working with women survivors of family violence. As the Clinical Supervisor I, Susan Geraghty, am privy to the wisdom of the workers in the approach they take to provide an ethical and safe response to their clients. It has been a joy to work with the team.

In the words of the Team Leader,

"It has been a great opportunity for us to collaboratively reflect, debrief and learn strategies to strengthen our work practices. In particular, getting the support we need as women workers in a men's service has been an important part of that self-care, particularly at this time".

Supervision for Western Health

WestCASA counsellor/advocate, Mira Chazan, has provided group supervision for the women's day rehabilitation service at Western Health in 2019-2020.

Supervision sessions have touched on ethical dilemmas and discussions about cases and situations that arise in the course of delivering a community based group rehabilitation program to women, including in relation to trauma, sexual assault and family violence.

Feedback through an evaluation process at the end of 2019 indicated this supervision was going well and meeting the needs of Western Health staff.

During the period since March 2020, in which most WestCASA staff have worked from home due to COVID-19, this service continued online via telehealth.

DAME PHYLLIS FROST CENTRE

The 2019-2020 year continued to be busy with many women and gender diverse people in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre referring to WestCASA for individual trauma therapy.

WestCASA continues to maintain a valued service both from the clients' and staff's point of view which is consistently demonstrated by the high number of referrals.

The team has maintained their strong working relationships with other services out at DPFC including the Aboriginal Welfare and Liaison Officers, the Multicultural Liaison Officer, Forensic Clinical Team, Caraniche AOD services, the Medical Centre, Transitional and Remand Workers, Custodial staff including seniors, supervisors and Operation Managers as well as other programs staff.

These relationships have remained vital to the work and have created a space for WestCASA to be flexible and creative in their approach with clients (e.g. bringing in resources for art therapy and safe cultural practices, such as a possum skin for work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – this was supported by the Aboriginal Welfare Officer).

We ran one full group and began another just before the first wave of restrictions hit relating to COVID-19 and the team relocated to working from home.

The first group we ran in late 2019 was a pilot program created by two of our Counsellor/Advocates – Kristina Sass-Nielsen (Somatic Experiencing trained therapist) and Narelle Fowler (Accredited Trauma-Informed Yoga Teacher and studying Somatic Experiencing) – called **My Body, My Home**.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: PARTNERSHIPS

With the loss of Goldie (Therapy Dog) we decided to see this as an opportunity to create new spaces for women and gender diverse people incarcerated in DPFC and draw on the skills and expertise of the staff.

My Body, My Home is an experiential group that involves body mapping through art therapy, somatic experiencing exercises and trauma-informed yoga.

The group has an 'individual' focus in that each participant is the creator of their own body map and can share as much or as little as it is safe to do. This was also the agreement with the yoga aspect of the group and clients could participate as much or as little as it felt safe to do.

My Body, My Home received overwhelmingly positive feedback and the women commented that there is nothing like this program based in DPFC.

The participants put on an exhibition for select staff at DPFC of the life size body maps at the beginning of 2020. This was a great success with both the women and the facilitators giving speeches on the experience of the group and how this has impacted on their healing journey.

We hope to continue this program when we finally can return to DPFC after restrictions ease again and the team has already met to discuss creative ways of continuing while social distancing and working with other restrictions that will remain in place for the long term.

When I was asked "What do you think of your body?" my reply was "my body is what carries all the crap in my head." This is true, but now I recognise that feeling in my gut or that burning sensation in my shoulders and that need to punch something or just scream are all natural, normal reactions. Instead of questioning them, now I acknowledge them and deal with them appropriately.

I have made it so far and through everything, I will make it through whatever comes next. Without all that I have experienced, I would not be the person I am today!

My body map is the truth I need to remember, which I sometimes forget or minimise or disregard.

I am made up of so many different balls of energy. I am beautiful and even though I am sometimes surrounded by every colour and situation possible, I am still alive, thriving, and I will get through whatever it is!

*I am not a nut job!
I am not dysfunctional!!
I am just ME!*



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: PARTNERSHIPS

One of the DPFC Team Counsellor/Advocates, Tigist Kebede (now resigned) created a social action program for the **women and gender diverse people in DPFC** which coincided with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

The group was a **Knitting Group** and it ran for three sessions throughout the 16 Days. At these sessions, participants not only knitted and crocheted together (some of the more experienced knitters taught the beginners of the group), but there were discussions around violence against women and children.

They created a therapeutic tool – a blanket that will be used in therapy sessions (individual and group) with other women and gender diverse people incarcerated in DPFC.

In February 2020 we held an unveiling of the blankets – there ended up being two because there were so many granny squares knitted.

The prison officer training had also come to a halt because of COVID-19 and we were able to run one session before having to leave DPFC.

Once again, the team has met to discuss other new creative ways of running the training upon our return and the idea of borrowing from some of the experiential exercises from the 'My Body, My Home' group has been raised with interest.

We want our trainings to be unique, informative and interesting enough to keep their attention. Custodial staff must attend a lot of ongoing training throughout their careers in Corrections, so we want to bring something fun and different to the table for them.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PEOPLE

WestCASA recognises and values the people who make up our organisation.

- We employ staff and provide a work environment that enables development of evidence informed specialist skills and knowledge.

These qualities and capacities enable us to push service boundaries and deliver high quality services to those who have experienced and been affected by sexual assault and related family violence.

This also allows us to develop and explore different ways of working to meet the changing needs of service users and service delivery.

We recognise the impacts that undertaking this work has on people and are committed

to managing vicarious trauma through self-care, transparency and accountability to ourselves and each other. We also recognise that our staff are inspired, rewarded and committed to work alongside people who experience sexual assault and related family violence.

We will identify the factors that make up an effective service, ensuring financial sustainability, organisational accountability and systems that sustain those people.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTENDED BY WESTCASA STAFF YEAR 2019/2020

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION
Bouverie	Centre Clinical Supervision Training
CASA Forum	Practitioner & Therapeutic Support for Trans & Gender Diverse children Providing Therapy via video or phone Regulating through the Body Shame without Shaming Sleep treatment issues in SA survivors
CASA House	Shame in the treatment of those who have experienced childhood sexual assault
Delphi Centre	Transforming Trauma-Related Resistance and Stuckness
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)	MARAM Comprehensive Family Violence Specialist MARAM – Renewing Practice from CRAF to MARAM
Dragan Zan Wright	Practitioner and Therapeutic Support for Trans Children and Adolescents
Family Safety Victoria	MARAM Training
Lead the Way Institute	Advanced Therapy Dog Training Recertification and Trauma Masterclass
PDT Training Management Centre	Supervising Others Training
Psychology Training	EMDR Part 2
Reckon	Payroll 7 End Year Training
Robyn Elliott & Louise Carmi	Havening Techniques Refresher Course Introduction to Havening Techniques
Schema Therapy Institute Australia	Schema Therapy for Chronic Disorders – Introductory Workshop
Somatic Experiencing Australia	Somatic Experiencing Professional Training Level 1
Supporting victim/survivor through the legal system	Supporting victim/survivor through the legal system
Trades Hall	OH&S
Workforce Development	Inclusive Practice: Gender, Sexuality & Relationship Diversity Sound play therapy for survivors of sexual assault
Yoga for Human Kind	60hr Trauma-Informed & Community Yoga

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PEOPLE

WESTCASA TEAMS

Clinical Services Team

Susan Geraghty, Clinical Services Manager

The last twelve months has seen the development of a Clinical Services Team with Susan remaining as Manager, Ursula being appointed Senior Practitioner and Melissa continuing as Clinical Supervisor.

As Clinical Supervisors we are committed to the continued development of our practice in enhanced counsellor and client relationships, in expanding and consolidating therapeutic approaches, and importantly in supporting the health and wellbeing of WestCASA staff. In this we are partnered by the Team Leaders who provide stability and support to their staff and are instrumental in sustaining staff wellbeing.

During this year we have had the benefit of Lisa French from ShantiWorks as our external group supervisor and also had Bethany Brand, Janina Fisher and Naomi Halpern as external consultants. Each has brought different perspectives to our work and enhanced our capacity to monitor ourselves and join with our clients in their healing journeys.

Like the rest of the world, nothing has challenged us more than the global pandemic and what this has meant for our clients and for our staff who support them.

Connection within a safe and supportive relationship is the foundation on which we deliver our therapy at WestCASA. Counsellors have quickly adapted to building and maintaining therapeutic relationships via telephone and digital mediums. Staff have shown such commitment, passion, resilience and flexibility in ensuring clients can continue to rely on WestCASA for high quality sexual assault counselling during this difficult time.

The Clinical Services Team continue to provide one on one clinical supervision to staff. We are committed to creating a variety of connected and reflective spaces in which our clinical team can be supported by us and each other to explore and deepen their clinical expertise. In addition to individual supervision and monthly group supervision we have introduced a regular 'opt in' reflective practice hour.

Our aim is for this space to be nourishing and stimulating where we share a rich diversity of perspectives, experiences, training and practice wisdom.

Plans are underway to create another reflective space based on particular models of therapy that are effective in working with clients with complex trauma histories. In these spaces, staff will share and expand their knowledge of Body-Based & Expressive Therapies, Internal family Systems Therapy, Schema Therapy and other approaches that have shown effectiveness in helping our clients on their journeys of healing and transformative growth.

MDC Team (including Melton Outreach)

Esen Uygun, MDC Team Leader

We are well settled into our MDC building. Different Teams (Footscray and DPFC) are also located in the MDC on certain days of the week and provide counselling services for our clients.

On Wednesdays the whole team unites at the MDC for our meetings and training sessions. We are welcoming other service providers into our building. Having different services under the one roof is helpful as referrals and consultations increase the efficiency of services for our shared clients.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PEOPLE

Prior to the COVID lockdown we continued to provide services at Melton one day per week. During the COVID-19 lockdown, we made all the required changes to create a safe counselling space for our clients as well as a safe working environment for WestCASA workers, with services provided by phone and online.

Intake Team

Esen Uygun, MDC Team Leader

Our intake workers were very busy this year as the demand for our service increased. Our waiting list was longer than usual and WestCASA staff worked very hard to respond to our client group's needs.

With the COVID-19 restrictions WestCASA began providing online/telehealth services for our client groups as public safety was the focus of WestCASA.

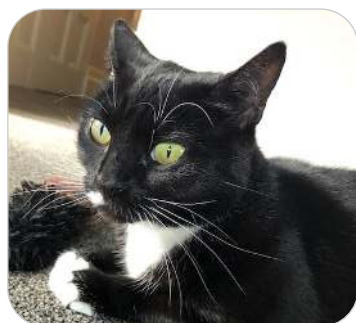
Due to WestCASA's adaptation to the pandemic environment our internal operations changed, therefore we could offer more space to our clients. The result of this was that our long waiting list was dramatically reduced.

Footscray Team

Melissa Alloway, Footscray Office Team Leader

The need for our services at our Footscray outpost has continued to remain strong while we have established our main office within the MDC.

A small team of Counsellor/Advocates outpost to our Footscray site three days per week to provide counselling to people from the surrounding area.



Cricket - the resident staff cat at Footscray for a while.

As 'Stay At Home' restrictions have come into place in response to the pandemic, along with all of the counselling teams at WestCASA, we have also adapted our services to provide more phone counselling and have introduced online counselling sessions.

Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (Prison) Team

Penny McDonald, DPFC Specialist Trauma Service Team Leader

The DPFC Team have continued to be involved in reflective practice with our monthly group supervision. This supervision is facilitated by external practitioner Radhika Santhanam-Martin, and it is a space the team can connect and share their experiences of the work, the system and relationships without pressure to provide feedback and suggestions to each other.

It is also a space for case consultation, and this is always facilitated in a way that is non-judgemental, trauma-informed and individually designed.

The DPFC Team have felt the impacts of COVID-19, as have the whole of WestCASA. We have worked hard with DPFC and DJCS to be able to maintain our support of our current clients, while continuing to receive new referrals.

Two new staff joined the team at the time we were moving from onsite to work from home, and this has been challenging, but also supportive. Both staff have done amazingly at adapting and connecting with the clients in DPFC, all over the phone, so this has been a tremendous effort on their part.

All of the DPFC Team have adapted to the new way of working and have continued to be engaged in not only the one-to-one work, but also in case consultations, advocacy work, report writing and letters of support, as well as contributing in team meetings, supervisions and work reviews.

I cannot thank the DPFC Team enough for their commitment to the program and the clients. I continue to look forward to the next year of work with these amazing staff and inspirational clients out at DPFC.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PEOPLE

Crisis Care Unit Team

Esen Uygun, MDC Team Leader

The After Hours team responded to 58 callouts before April 2020. Due to Sunshine Hospital being designated the COVID-19 response centre, our stakeholder Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine decided to respond to clients from the Western Region at Royal Women's Hospital, where our sister agency CASA House responds to Crisis Care clients. Our heartfelt thanks goes to them.

Administration Team

April Multanen, Business and Administration Services Team Leader

Over the past 12 months we have seen many changes and had many challenges. We have had a lot of maintenance work completed at the Footscray location, major plumbing and the internal painting of the building. Radcliffe house is looking great.

The MDC has brought many challenges over the year and we take these one day at a time. Overall, the move has been worth the wait. It has been a great experience to work with all the different agencies.

A special thank you to all of the Administration Team, Alanna, Michelle and Stephanie (Steph) and Marisa (Ris) for all their hard work and constant support over the year. I would also like to thank Krista and Catherine who assisted with Reception/Administration while we were recruiting for the Reception positions.

In conclusion my thanks to Robyn, Bhavna Joshi (External Accountant) and Jenny Elliot (WestCASA Board Treasurer) for their input and assistance over the year with the monthly financial reports and end of year financial report. Thank you to Karen Woolford for her continuous support to both me and my team.

I am looking forward to the next financial year and the new challenges it brings.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: PEOPLE

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF TO EXPLORE, RESEARCH, THINK AND DEVELOP NEW WAYS IN WHICH SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RELATED FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES CAN BE DELIVERED.

WestCASA continues to develop and respond to changing needs, always with the aim of providing professional, trauma informed, consistent, compassionate and timely services to clients and the wider community.

With the advent of the coronavirus and the subsequent restrictions, WestCASA has moved from an almost exclusively face to face service to a remote service, utilising the phone and various media platforms to connect with and support our clients.

This has required great flexibility and adaptability from our clients, our Counsellor/ Advocates and administrative staff who have worked tirelessly alongside the clinical team to ensure that services can be delivered seamlessly and safely.



In addition, concerns regarding an escalation of family violence and limited reporting opportunities for those who experience family violence and sexual assault in the home have required counsellors to consider above all else, the safety of their clients.

Texts prior to sessions, careful consideration of timing of contact and checking in re privacy have all been required to ensure safety of the client before a counselling session commences.

Our clients have met the changed conditions with resilience and patience. We have discovered that many clients prefer the online contact, with some clients stating they are more regulated with the absence of transport considerations and the time pressure involved in face to face counselling and enjoy being in the safety of their own home for counselling.

Others of course do not have sufficient privacy and space for counselling to proceed safely, may have audio or visual concerns or have found the transition more difficult and miss the face to face contact.

In response to the changing needs of the situation and clients' preferences, counsellors are becoming very creative with their support responses.

Counsellors report that many clients are preferring sessions of a shorter duration or are alternating between longer and shorter sessions. Body-Based counselling support has been able to be continued as has expressive artwork with counsellors and clients learning along the way.

We will be taking our new learnings into the continuing journey to provide safe and accessible counselling for our clients.

EMPLOYEES ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

On 22 July 2019 the FairWork Commission approved WestCASA's Enterprise Agreement 2016-20, which will remain in force until it is superseded by a new Enterprise Agreement. The drafting process for the new Agreement has commenced.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

PROVIDE AND PROMOTE SERVICES

WestCASA is committed to providing specialist therapeutic responses to people who have experienced sexual assault, family violence and other trauma.

- We provide services that are accessible and culturally appropriate.
- We seek and value feedback and responses from those who use the service.
- We want to extend our service models, develop and try new therapeutic techniques and share our knowledge and wisdom with others.
- We will identify and nurture the factors in our organisation that maintain and progress delivery of quality services.

KEEPING CLIENTS UP TO DATE WITH INFORMATION

WestCASA is fully aware of our responsibilities to ensure our clients are informed of changing legislative requirements, their rights regarding privacy and safety as well service system developments designed to support their safety.

The introduction of the Child Safety and Information Schemes, the consolidation of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), the opportunities through the Restore Program and Redress schemes are all important information for our clients to understand. In this way, clients are aware of their options and can make informed decisions and thus contribute to their sense of agency and empowerment.

WAITING LIST SUPPORT SESSIONS

In response to our increasing waiting list, it was decided in late 2019 to run a trial program involving one-off information support sessions for a small selection of waiting list clients.

The purpose was to provide people on the waiting list some psychoeducation around common trauma impacts, relevant coping strategies, and to provide them with some support while they are waiting for their counselling to commence.

Two WestCASA Counsellor/Advocates ran the program and 5 one-hour sessions were trialled. There was a total number of 11 participants.

With support, a student social worker analysed the waiting lists, starting with those who had been waiting the longest, screened for suitability, and contacted people on the waiting list as part of a check-in and to gauge interest in an information session. If interest was expressed, each person was given verbal information and booked into a session.

Facilitators chose topics that related to the impacts of trauma we most commonly hear about. Topics included psychoeducation on the impacts of trauma on the brain and body, the Flight/Fight/Freeze responses and the Window of Tolerance. Intervention/coping strategies focused on different grounding techniques and exploring ways to become present, nightmare and flashback management, normalising feelings and exploring the concept of self-care.

To keep the session informal, a presentation was not developed. Facilitators collated various handouts as part of an information pack, handed these to each participant and referred to them throughout the session.

The sessions and environment were kept small and as casual as possible, in order to be welcoming and to foster a sense of safety and warmth. This included the use of weighted cushions, blankets, water, music and other implements.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: PROVIDE SERVICES

Overall, the feedback (from an anonymous survey) was positive. When asked what was the most important thing they learned from the sessions, participants reported:

*"reassurance and information",
"grounding / nightmare strategies" and
"some simple daily things I can do to make
my feelings more manageable to make
sense of them".*

Participants were also asked, "As someone on the waiting list for counselling, how do you feel attending this session has helped you or how do you anticipate it will help you while you are on the waiting list?" Responses included,

*"it is good to have tangible resources that
I take home while I wait,"
"it will help with coping until I have
counselling,"
"I think it is a good idea because going into
a new environment as well as opening up
is a lot at once. So, meeting the ladies and
knowing where to go is calming."*

Whilst the feedback was mainly positive, it was decided not to continue with the groups for the time being as uptake was limited. This may be revisited in the future depending on time and resources.

QUALITY ACCREDITATION

On 6 April 2020 it was determined that WestCASA continued to meet the requirements of the Human Services Standards (HSS) and ISO 9001:2015 standards by certification body HDAA. The assessor identified that all assessed criteria were found to be conforming.

The assessor noted that WestCASA "has reinforced its commitment to quality with the establishment of a Quality and Service Development Officer role which strengthens the interaction of the quality management system principles across all reporting levels and program areas".

It was also noted that "general observations and discussions indicate that the organisation has a clear direction and alignment to its vision, mission and aims".

WestCASA's Management Review Committee (MRC), comprising leadership team, staff representative and the Quality & Service Development Officer leads the ongoing review of the organisation's Quality Management System (QMS). A focus of the MRC is continuous improvement of the QMS which is informed by client feedback, internal audit, risk, document review and service performance.

Work in the quality space has included preparation for and facilitation of the HDAA assessment, review of legislative registers, undertaking a Cultural Safety Audit in collaboration with VACCA, policy review, the development of quality documentation including Policy Review Schedule, Internal Audit Schedule and document review guidelines. Julie Tsilemanis, who commenced in the Quality and Service Development Officer role in October 2019, continues to work collaboratively with Lesley Hyde who was previously in the Quality Accreditation role.

As a client-centered service, we continue to encourage clients to take the opportunity to provide feedback about our service. This may be done during intake, counselling sessions, in our feedback book at reception, clients surveys or at any other time.

During the HDAA assessment, in client discussions undertaken with the assessor, clients "expressed high levels of satisfaction with the supports which they receive, and appreciation was expressed for the support which encourages self-confidence to actively make life decisions".

MARAM

2019 saw the implementation of major legislative reforms in Family Violence with the introduction of the **Information Sharing Schemes** and **MARAM (Multiagency Risk Assessment and Management Framework)**.

The overlapping interconnection between family violence and sexual assault has long been apparent in our counselling work. As part of the first round of services to be trained in MARAM, WestCASA has been working to incorporate these reforms across our policies, procedures and responses to improve the safety of people who have experienced family violence.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: PROVIDE SERVICES

WESTCASA'S TRAUMA INFORMED BODY-BASED THERAPIES PROGRAM

Trauma Sensitive Yoga

There continues to be strong demand for WestCASA's trauma informed Body-Based programs. Yoga commenced as a face-to-face program in 2019 before moving to a virtual space in March 2020.

WestCASA had six regular participants over 2019, who had not engaged in a trauma informed Body-Based intervention or program before. Having the opportunity to safely connect to their body and engage in a practice that encourages relaxation, grounding and somatic processing of trauma has been a valued and integral part of these client's experience at WestCASA.

An unexpected opportunity though COVID-19 emerged for WestCASA's Trauma Informed Yoga Program and participants mid-way Term 1 when the program transitioned to a virtual space. Trauma informed practice is often about building and maintaining flexibility and a sense of control/choice and this was encapsulated in participants being able to seamlessly transition as the Program evolved to an online practice.

This transition also involved the Trauma Sensitive Yoga Class (facilitated by WestCASA's trauma informed Yoga facilitator Clare Pritchard and practiced in a group setting at the Yarraville Yoga Centre) moving online.

The number of participants doubled in the Trauma Sensitive Yoga Class in March and April 2020, highlighting the value and need for a trauma informed Yoga practice for people who have experienced sexual assault and other trauma.

The feedback from WestCASA's online Yoga Programs has been overwhelmingly positive.

Moving online has carved out a new and exciting way for WestCASA to provide an innovative service that attends to the needs of our clients at this time and into the future.

Feedback from our clients has suggested that practising Yoga in their own space has assisted with increased emotional safety as a result of feeling more in control of their environment. It has also allowed them to remain in a state of calm and relaxation for a more prolonged period post-session.

Feedback has also suggested that clients who may not attend this program face-to-face due to anxiety and more acute Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptomatology have felt more confident and able to access this program in an online capacity.

The following quotes highlight the success of WestCASA's Yoga online program in 2020:

I personally am liking them (online trauma sensitive Yoga sessions) more. Easy to stay relaxed post session, as I can continue to feel the benefits both physical and emotional. Because normally the fact of gathering your stuff and then commuting back from the studio actually disrupts this sort of "Zen" and soothing feeling I get from our practice.

Not sure if others experience the same, but I definitely feel the big difference. In fact, having my practice from home helps me extend that benefit for longer during my day.

Because we have PTSD, this means we are constantly in a certain degree of anxiety, so the great benefit from doing practice from the comfort of our homes, is it takes away a bit of that taunting feeling of going out, getting too stimulated by the external environment (driving, public transport, noise, etc) and doesn't sort of terminate the practice so "abruptly" if you understand what I mean.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: PROVIDE SERVICES

Due to the success of the online Trauma Sensitive Yoga Program, WestCASA hopes to continue to provide a trauma sensitive Yoga program facilitated in a virtual space into the future.

Trauma Informed Shiatsu

The Trauma Informed Shiatsu program operated onsite through the second half of 2019 and then transitioned online from March 2020.

Given that Shiatsu work is predominantly a touch-based intervention, the program needed to be creatively adapted in order to provide support through an online format.

What has been developed by Alex Caldwell is the creation of a **Trauma Informed Online Body Work** program that provides support to clients on a virtual platform. The sessions are individually tailored and are described as practical Body-Based sessions with a goal of promoting a sense of comfort, connection, awareness and ease with the body.

Rather than going deep these sessions aim to resource and support stabilisation within an individual's system. Grounding, Visualisation, Movement, Breathwork, Self-Shiatsu, Exploration of Boundaries & Qi Gung are some of the techniques that Alex may draw upon in her online sessions.

In the past financial year, seven individuals have engaged in either face to face sessions, online sessions or a combination of face to face and online sessions.

Online sessions have provided both opportunities for connection and also challenges in working to support individuals to connect with their bodies in safe and supportive ways.

It has helped me connect to and tune into my body... Not only tuning in, but a philosophic shift.

The Qi Gung was very helpful.

Further to the individual work that Alex is offering at WestCASA, she is currently developing some short resource videos to be uploaded onto the WestCASA website.

These videos will have Alex demonstrating a few body-focussed techniques that will support mindful body connection and resourcing. People can remotely watch, learn and practice these techniques for themselves, playing back the short videos as many times as they like. It is another way we are creatively adapting resources through these challenging times.

Body-Based Therapy evaluation

At our 2019 Annual General meeting, WestCASA Counsellor/Advocate Tara Schintler presented the findings of WestCASA's research: *Trauma Informed Body-Based Therapies in Sexual Assault Program Evaluation*.

This research has now been published and reflects the development of the Body-Based therapy work in trauma informed yoga and shiatsu, led by Tara Schintler and Georgia Taylor, WestCASA Counsellor/Advocates, and delivered by Clare Pritchard and Alex Caldwell.



WestCASA is committed to continuing to embed this innovative response to trauma, and the positive evaluations of our clients attest to the value of this work.

The published document can be found on WestCASA's website at <https://westcasa.org.au/body-based-program-evaluation>

FEEDBACK

■ FROM AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION

I just thought I would touch base and pass on the wonderful feedback I have received about WestCASA from a client whom I am working with. The client has been involved on and off with WestCASA since 2016, and speaks incredibly highly of the service, and of their counsellor in particular.

It's been wonderful to hear this client's reflections on the changes which she has made in her life, and how therapy from WestCASA has been a major contributing factor in that space.

■ FACILITY FEEDBACK

WestCASA continue to deliver a high-quality service albeit from a distance. Since the restrictions of COVID-19 were introduced, CASA have been adaptive and flexible, to ensure their support for the women continues, this has been via phone calls and Zoom.

Penny maintains frequent contact with the writer, and is willing to assist where she can, this was evident when CASA required the use of an interpreter for one of their sessions, and Penny made all necessary calls to coordinate this via zoom.

Unfortunately, it did not go to plan due to internet connection issues, however, it was changed to a phone call, to ensure the woman was still serviced.

It is noted that the Programs Team have had several staffing issues, with regular staff being off-site and Justice Officers being utilised to assist, this has at times caused delays in sending referrals through to Penny, however Penny was understanding and would touch base if there was a break in receiving referrals. CASA continue to flag women with the writer if they have concerns, to ensure that DPFC staff can follow up where required.

CASA continue to contribute to care team meetings and maintain communication with staff who have contact with a woman who is long term management and feed into her monthly case conference.

Lastly, CASA have continued to meet the prison's requirements re: green pass applications etc, completing relevant paperwork, to ensure when they do return on-site, the administrative tasks would have already been completed.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: PROVIDE SERVICES

FEEDBACK

■ CLIENT FEEDBACK

Clients have stated that they have really appreciated WestCASA still doing the phone calls at this time, and that they have continued to be in touch.

Two of my post release clients gave thanks for WestCASA's service at DPFC, and gave positive feedback about the support they were given at DPFC by WestCASA.

One client noted the whole team approach, she thanked the TL, as well as the clinician, and was grateful/noted that the team worked well to support all women at DPFC.

A clinician emailed at the request of the client to share information as the client was now at Tarrengower. Clinician stated that it sounded like WestCASA had done some very positive work with the client.

Whenever I receive a note for counselling [WestCASA appointment] I am very happy about, because I can share my feelings. [Otherwise] I can't take it anymore.'

A Vietnamese client with phone interpreter, working through grief and loss of the death of a sibling overseas.

'I wanted to read through it all (Police Statement/ VOCAT documents) rather than block it out. I couldn't take it though and put it in envelope in box and shoved it under the bed, then watched TV.

*But I don't want my [traumatic] memory to be erased...
He doesn't deserve to be named.'*

A client reclaiming her survivor story and taking the first steps in revisiting her trauma experience through counselling.

One client said to me on the phone yesterday:

*"I am grateful that I am able to speak with you,
even if it is not for very long".*



■ CLIENT FEEDBACK

This is an interpreter client

I just had an uplifting chat with former client who was exited from DPFC and returned to her daughter and grandchild in Melbourne. She was so grateful for the WestCASA counselling and advocacy at DPFC. I was already in contact with her Forensic CW, but she beat us to it and rang MDC today because she was eager to let us know about how good it was to be out and to return to a new normal. She was extremely grateful to WestCASA and me as her C/A for the commitment to supporting the women in prison while we were offsite.

Many clients have shared the difficulties they are facing due to the reduction of services they are able to access at DPFC due to COVID restrictions, particularly the cessation of face to face visits with family and friends. With this in mind most clients continue to emphasise how valuable their ongoing phone link appointments with WestCASA are - even more so than before.

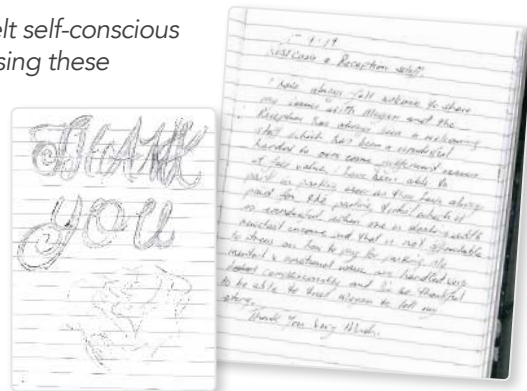
Many clients have highlighted that the vibe within the centre is heightened due to COVID, and they are reporting an increase in collective anxiety of the other women and staff alike. As is the case in the broader community many of the clients are highly frustrated with the increased isolation and decreased activity.

Clients continue to reflect that there is little space to debrief and share their own worries and fears about the future without either adding to the collective anxiety or increasing their own. Within the privacy of the phone appointments clients are able to explore their own fears and frustrations about the current situation in a neutral, safe and empathetic environment, without fear of judgement or repercussions.

One positive of the move to phone counselling over the last few months has been the ability to explore different sensory mediums with clients and how this impacts the client/counsellor relationship. One client reflected that having sessions over the phone has allowed her to focus in on the voice of the counsellor with less anxiety about how she is being perceived visually as well as less visual distractions. This client in particular reported that this has increased her ability to relax when practising mindfulness and breath work in the session.

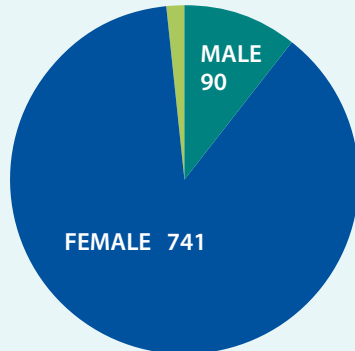
She reported that she previously felt self-conscious and struggled to relax when practising these techniques in front of others. She now reports that this is one of her favourite parts of counselling.

Further she identified that her ability to relax independently through self-guided breath work has also deepened.



STATISTICS 2019-2020

GENDER-DIVERSE 12



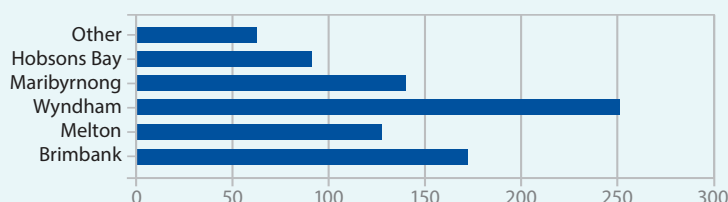
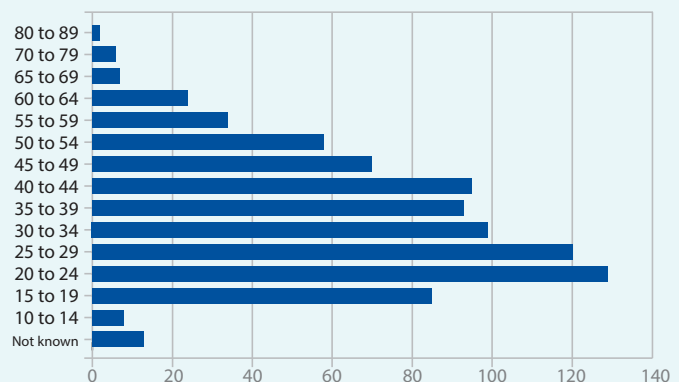
Clients by Gender

This financial year, WestCASA saw a further increase in clients identifying as gender-diverse.

Our recording system underestimates the diversity that we are actually seeing in our client groups.

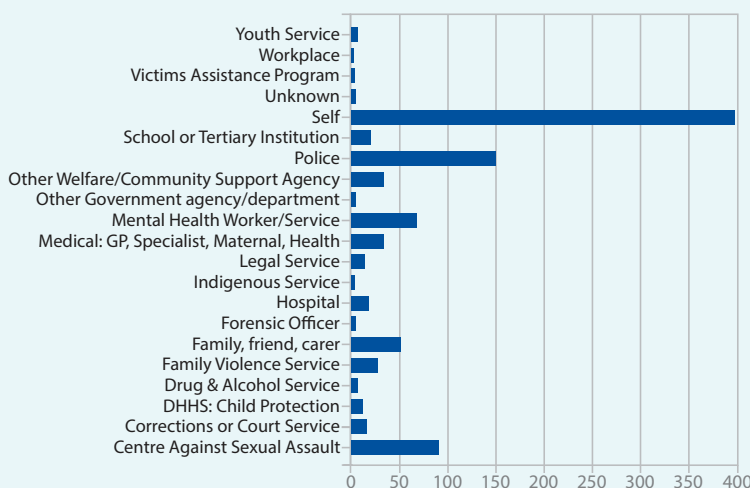
Clients by Age Group

WestCASA has continued to see a number of young people, with the highest age category being 20-24.



Clients by Local Government Area

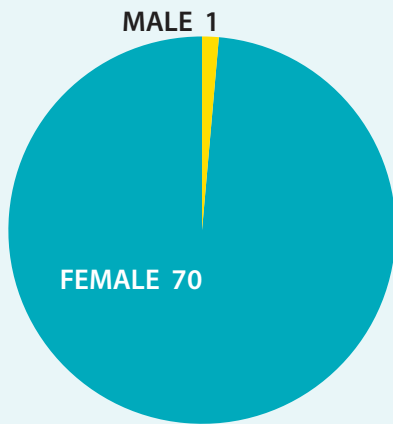
We continue to see clients from across the Western region with the highest number from Wyndham and Brimbank/Melton.



Clients by Referral Source

The highest sources of referral are consistently Self, Police and referrals from CASAs.

STATISTICS 2019-2020

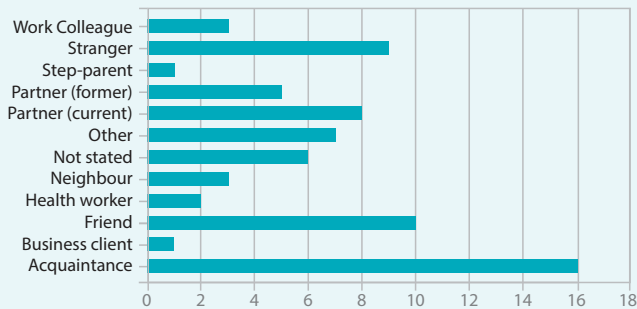


Crisis Care Unit Presentation by Gender

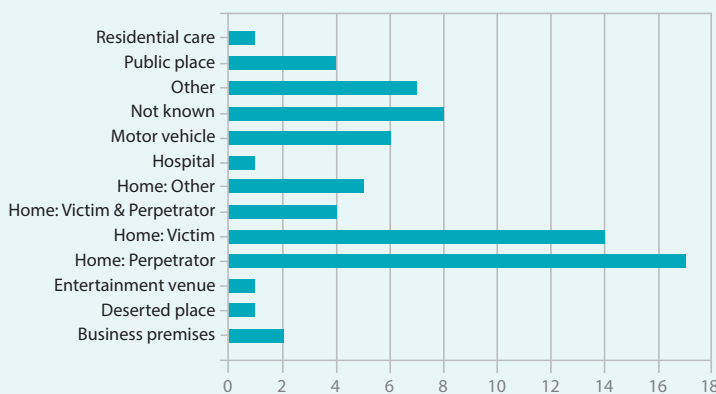
Referral sources are consistent with last year. The location of the assault is varied and this year there have been more assaults by acquaintances, strangers and friends than former partners.

An important consideration about sexual assault being linked with family violence is that sexual assault also sits outside of family violence as an ongoing source of violence against women predominantly.

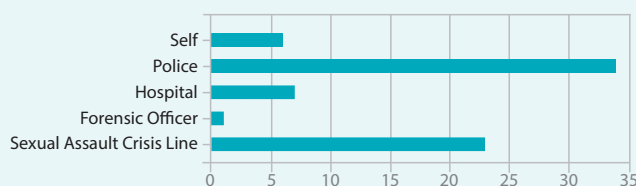
The crisis care unit presentations number is similar to last financial year, with the pandemic lockdown for much of the year not reducing the number of sexual assaults.



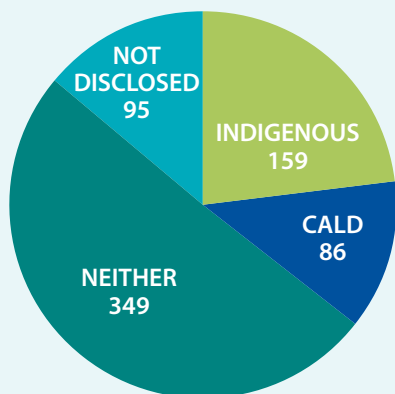
Crisis Care Unit Perpetrator



Crisis Care Unit Location of Assault



Crisis Care Unit Referral Source



Dame Phyllis Frost Centre Prison Diversity of Clients

The number of clients disclosing CALD or Indigenous origin has increased markedly from last year.



Dame Phyllis Frost Centre Prison Service Delivery Hours

Service delivery hours at DPFC: our work at DPFC has continued to provide intake, counselling, group work and training for Corrections staff.

The training and group work areas have decreased since last financial year with a move to offsite work during the pandemic.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,732,721	1,611,381
Trade and Other Receivables	2,046	(812)
Total Current Assets	1,734,767	1,610,569
Non-Current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment	1,540,809	1,556,904
Total Non-Current Assets	1,540,809	1,556,904
TOTAL ASSETS	3,275,576	3,167,473
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	113,106	132,409
Short-Term Financial Liabilities	417,712	572,456
Provisions	410,332	307,789
Total Current Liabilities	941,150	1,012,654
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provision for Contingency	112,692	112,692
Total Non-Current Liabilities	112,692	112,692
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,053,842	1,125,346
NET ASSETS	2,221,734	2,042,127
Equity		
Reserves	1,504,012	1,504,012
Retained Profits	717,722	538,115
Total Equity	2,221,734	2,042,127

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
Retained Earnings - Beginning of Year	538,115	486,110
Surplus/(Loss) from Operations	171,795	52,005
Extraordinary Item Dhelk Dja Adjustments	7,812	-
Surplus/(Loss) for Year	<u>179,607</u>	<u>52,005</u>
Retained Earnings at 30 June 2020	<u>717,722</u>	<u>538,115</u>

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Income		
VOCAT	17,755	8,406
DHS – Core Operating Grant	2,163,018	1,374,311
DJCS - Better Pathways	739,736	708,950
Donations	2,578	2,210
Other Grants	113,676	430,107
Dhelk Dja Net	4,503	(2,922)
Interest Received	28,006	29,501
Reimbursements, Sales & Sundry Income	456	10,311
Recoveries	13,331	-
Government Subsidies	50,000	-
Profit on Sale of Non-current Assets	2,719	(488)
	3,135,778	2,560,386
Expenditure		
Accountancy & Audit Fees	8,491	8,421
Building Maintenance	79,961	3,628
Catering	2,111	2,530
Cleaning & Gardening	1,808	791
Client Costs	28,395	20,568
COM Expenses	8,139	5,502
Computer Support & Supplies	55,928	37,603
Community Ed / Professional Development Costs	2,902	401
Depreciation	30,855	33,421
Equipment Purchases	3,446	16,901
Fringe Benefits Tax	2,345	-
General Expenses	129	-
Holiday Pay Provision	187,818	163,134
Insurance	413	524
Legal Costs	12,046	5,074
Library & Resources	877	484
Long Service Leave Provision	68,153	50,845
Materials / Program Costs	4,045	3,664
Motor Vehicle Expenses	9,928	10,416
Other Staff Costs	51,575	15,152
Outreach - Hoppers Crossing	-	195
Outreach - Melton	6,598	7,257
Outreach - Footscray & Ballarat Road	35,307	33,175
Outreach - Wyndham	-	91
Postage & Courier	554	210
Printing & Photocopying	23,840	20,050
Project Costs	5,440	1,148
Relocation & Moving Expenses	-	2,237
Salaries & Allowances	2,048,318	1,782,784
Staff Amenities	1,389	1,751
Staff Training	20,413	22,327
Storage Fees	1,171	1,175
Subscriptions & Memberships	7,280	7,348
Superannuation Contributions	195,511	181,499
Supervision	18,417	17,171
Telephone, Fax & Pagers	7,184	8,810
Travelling Expenses - Staff & Clients	3,744	3,808
Workcover	29,452	38,286
	2,963,983	2,508,381
Surplus/(Loss) from Operations	171,795	52,005

AUDITORS REPORT



1st Floor, 189 Coleman Parade
GLEN WAVERLEY, VIC. 3150

PO Box 340
GLEN WAVERLEY, VIC 3150
Phone: 03 95600211
Fax: 03 9561 5497
Email: lionel@jllcollyerpartners.com.au

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WESTERN REGION CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT INC.

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault Inc. which comprises the financial position as at 30th June 2020, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including summary of significant accounting policies and managements assertion statement and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault Inc. as at 30th June 2020, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter-Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault Inc. to meet the requirements of Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the applicable legislation and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

J. L. Collyer & Partners

Dated in Wantirna on 29th October 2020