



Bankstown  
**women's**  
health centre

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020**

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*We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of this land, the Aboriginal elders past and present. As we foster health and wellbeing, may we also pay respect to the healing knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal custodianship of country*



CEO Mariam Mourad, has led the Organisation to deliver quality health and wellbeing services for women.

Services and activities are delivered by an interdisciplinary team of qualified and accredited trauma-informed staff. Our team is supplemented and contracted by specialist contractors who provide outreach clinical services, and health and wellbeing activities.

# About us

*Our Vision: An empowered community which values and supports the health and wellbeing of women and their families. Our goal is to deliver meaningful and targeted services for women and their families to achieve positive health outcomes and sustainable wellbeing.*

We are an independent, non-profit organisation run by women, for women and their families. We provide free or discounted health and wellbeing services in a safe, welcoming environment. We are committed to building a stronger community in which all women and their families are able to realise their full potential without fear of prejudice, violence or abuse.

## Our People:

We are governed by a dedicated and informed Volunteer Board consisting of local women who have expertise in relevant fields such as education, finance, law, housing and health.



*BWHC board members AGM 2018*

# Chair's Report



It has been my great privilege to serve the Bankstown Women's Health Centre (BWHC) as the Chairperson of the voluntary Board of Directors for five financial years. Each year has brought diverse tests and trials, but also, many achievements to celebrate.

However, I can safely say that the 2019 – 2020 financial year brought a whole new set of challenges to the Board and to BWHC. For much of the financial year, the Board's focus was driving the accreditation cycle through extensive policy and procedure reviews as the foundation of robust governance. Quality time was dedicated to collaborating with the CEO to review existing contracts; develop new partnerships and ensure all contractual obligations were met (if not exceeded!). This included the auspicing of Fairfield Women's Health Service (FWHS), which is delivered by BWHC in partnership with Liverpool Women's Health Centre (LWHS). Of course, my priority during the latter part of the financial year was supporting the CEO and other Board members to navigate the extensive and diverse challenges of operating safely and effectively in the context of the COVID-19 global public health crisis.

I am fortunate to lead an experienced, professional, committed and dynamic Board of Directors. I take this opportunity to thank each

volunteer member for their contribution of time, energy and passion during this most

challenging year. BWHC is sustained by the ongoing commitment of highly experienced and talented Board Members, Treasurer Karen Staines and Secretary Amani Haydar. I thank and acknowledge Karen for her integrity and professionalism in guiding BWHC's financial management systems. Additionally, I thank and acknowledge Amani for her dedication in the role of Secretary and also for contributing her extensive legal expertise to the continuous process of developing and refining BWHC's policies and procedures.

Welcoming new Board members is part of our commitment to upholding best practice in governance and maintaining strong links with women leaders in the community. This financial year, we were delighted to recruit and induct one new Board Member, Vasileia Petrakis. Her injection of enthusiasm and 'fresh eyes' were just what the Board and BWHC needed to help sustain our momentum in recent months.

On behalf of the Board, I thank CEO Mariam Mourad for her leadership, drive and focus in guiding the development and operation of BWHS and FWHS during this challenging year. I acknowledge the dedicated staff team who continued to deliver services from their own homes in the months that the Centre was closed during the peak of the pandemic. Finally, I thank all our funders and supporters, including SWSLHD, FACS and the Cancer Institute, for supporting and assisting BWHC. Their financial assistance is vital to support the provision of the innovative programs and services that BWHC provides to support and empower local women and their families. Moving into 2020 – 2021, I look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Board, CEO and staff team to support the continuing development BWHC as an organisation which focusses on leading the way to respond to the needs and priorities of women and their families in our community.

*Rene Demos - BWHC Chairperson*

# CEO's Report



It's hard to believe that yet another year has passed. 2020 has been a very eventful year especially with COVID-19 impacting our service delivery.

This year marked the conclusion of the 'Wellness for Women' Program, which is a new initiative by Bankstown Women's Health Centre and funded by the Cancer Institute. The program targeted Arabic and Vietnamese women who are affected by cancer. 2020 was a year of strengthening the partnership with Liverpool Women's Health Centre to move forward with Fairfield Women's Health Service. We conducted our first planning for Fairfield Women's Health service to date; this has been one of the most significant milestones in ensuring accessible and responsive services for women across South Western Sydney. Of course, my priority during the latter part of the financial year was supporting the BWHC and FWHS teams to navigate the extensive and diverse challenges of operating safely and effectively in the context of the COVID -19 global public health crisis. Our work included daily monitoring of public health trends; liaising with funders, Women's Health NSW and peer agencies; and developing and maintaining a robust risk management plan including developing effective policies and procedures to

support staff while working from home and while transiting to a COVID Safe workplace.

Thank you to all the board members for your support of BWHC and coming along over the past 12 months. I am grateful for the time taken in your busy schedules as you come to meetings, training, conferences, planning days and phone support. You are truly appreciated. I would like to make a special mention of BWHC Chairperson Rene Demos for her continuous mentoring guidance and support throughout the year.

I acknowledge the dedicated staff team who continued to deliver services from their own homes in the months that the Centre was closed during the peak of the pandemic. Your resilience, flexibility and dedication to serving the community ensured that women and their families were able to access telephone services and online activities throughout this period. With COVID-19 looming over our nation, Referrals to our service now present with greater complexity and therefore the work is more challenging, and our practitioners focussed on working with our local women to navigate through these unprecedented times towards achieving their goals.

Thank you very much for your dedication, enthusiasm. I feel so blessed to be leading a team of dedicated people who truly believe in the 'Why' we do what we do and yet understand that 'How' we do things is very different today. Your flexibility, 'can do' attitude, humours and dedication is truly motivating. Thank you there are so many people and organisations to thank for the ongoing support to BWHC. I would like to begin by thanking our Local, Federal and State members The Honourable Jason Clare and Tania Mihailuk. Your support is truly appreciated in particularly during COVID-19. Thank you for checking in and always being available to us, often at short notice. Thank you to all our stakeholders our partners and our clients.

Mariam Mourad, CEO  
Bankstown Women's Health Centre 2020



# Treasurer's Report



We acknowledge the South Western Sydney Local Health District for our core recurrent funding, Family & Community Service funding, and other grants we received and tendered from local bodies, including the Cancer Institute NSW. These resources together, ensure we deliver the highest quality services to women and their families in our local and broader community.

I look forward to the next year, engaging with the community as the centre evolves in many new ways to continue to meet the need and deliver important targeted health services for women within the South Western Sydney region.

It is a pleasure to be associated and work with dedicated women on the Board, the CEO and the committed, passionate team members at BWHC.

*Karen Staines  
Treasurer – Bankstown Women's Health  
Centre Board.*

The 2019-20 financial period has again been a rewarding year with a strong focus on our clients, the community and our team. The many challenges that everyone has faced since March 2020 have been met with resilience and sound management with appropriate financial resource targeting remote off site operation for staff and practitioners to continue to deliver excellent service to our clients.

The BWHC is still in good financial shape, thanks to the hard work of the Board members, the CEO and our wonderful staff and newly appointed bookkeeper, always working together in harmony.

We are now online reporting straight to the ATO through the MYOB system. This is important for financial management and has streamlined the reporting with secure access for the finance committee and bookkeeper.

Most importantly, the centre operated within its projected budget and we can meet our financial responsibilities when and if they fall due.

# Our Services

## Activities and Events

**BWHC changed the way we deliver services and activities to meet the ever changing environment of COVID 19 restrictions from March 2020**

We deliver Health and Wellbeing services for local women and their families. Our services and activities are delivered in alignment with NSW health priorities and community needs.

It has been challenging for staff to deliver activities and services to our clients during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Some of our clients are experienced in using social media platforms, and have access to internet whilst others have never used IT, or have access to a phone, computer, or internet. Many clients have now been supported to access our Zoom groups when safe to do so, and now participate in the Zoom Healthy lifestyle group, Wellness for Women group, and or the Vietnamese Cultural group. BWHC staff are still working towards supporting, and upskilling clients to access these groups.

Many women who access our centre have experienced a range of issues and challenging situations, including but not limited to: domestic and family violence, homelessness, financial barriers, unemployment, social isolation, mental health issues, family breakdown, relationship issues, language barriers, and poor health and wellbeing.

The majority of women refer to our Centre with complex and multiple issues having experienced interpersonal trauma including domestic and family violence, and childhood abuse.

## Information and Referral

A key service of BWHC is to provide accurate information and referrals to women for their health and wellbeing needs. Our first point of contact for clients is our Information and Referral Officer Rima who provides a warm, safe greeting for women who access our service; she manages telephone calls, enquiries, links the clients with the correct service and practitioner, registers clients for groups and activities, and conducts the initial intake process for the team. All Services receive and assess referrals from NSW Justice

Department, Bankstown Hospital, Family Referral Service, Centrelink, Housing NSW, and non-government organisations. Self-referrals are also received. Our practitioners work with women primarily who have experience domestic and family violence, and other complex issues. All services use a collaborative process of assessment, a trauma informed approach, planning, facilitation, support, and referrals and advocacy to identify and meet each woman's individual health and wellbeing needs.

## Case Management

The Case Management team coordinates and facilitates various Social, Health, Educational, and Wellbeing groups and Activities to meet the needs of the local Women. This year the case management service facilitated and coordinated groups, activities and events including: Active Women, Wellness for Women, general Yoga, Craft, Bowel screening workshops, breast screening workshops, mindfulness and stress sessions, Health promotion outreach, Bilingual community education workshops, Food Share, Volunteers Program, First aid training for volunteers, Have your say day, community awards, International Women's Day, Cultural exchange days, End of year Xmas party, events, workshops, and outreach Wellness for Women sessions.

Our Case Manager Jenny and the client work closely together to implement and achieve the agreed goals within a given time frame. We work with women who eligible for applying Work Development Orders to access mental health treatment, counselling and life skills courses to satisfy debt obligations.



# Our Services

## Child and Adolescent Trauma service (CAT service),

Our Child and Adolescent Trauma Counsellor Greta provides free counselling and support for children, adolescents and non-offending parents and carers who have experienced domestic violence, sexual abuse, and trauma. Outreach support is offered in schools when required. The counsellor facilitates parenting programs - Tuning into Teens and Tuning into Kids in addition to active involvement in the Love Bites program at local primary and high schools and in the community.

*"I need to address what has happened to me" "The trauma keeps popping up and affecting my life" "I now have hope for the future for the first time in my life"*

## Generalist Counselling

Our Generalist Counsellor Coordinator Alison provides a free counselling service for clients with the aim to support psychological wellbeing of women.

Counsellor Coordinator delivers therapy and supports clients to develop realistic goals, understand and heal the impacts of life challenges including relationship challenges, loss, grief and trauma. In addition, clients are equipped to develop assertive communication skills, manage stress and gain more confidence.

## Health Promotion

BWHC provides Health promotion activities and workshops in the community. The Health promotion workshops are designed to deliver information on Women's health and wellbeing, and disease prevention to a culturally diverse community.

Health Promotion activities include groups, workshops, exhibitions, events, outreach groups and health presentations aligned with NSW Health Priorities. Some examples for this

year have been health workshops at local schools, wellness festivals, IWD, community centres, community hubs, cultural groups, and meetings.

## Dietitian

### NSW health priority: lifestyle health related chronic disease

A trauma informed, collaborative, strengths based approach practice is used by our Dietician at BWHC for best client outcomes. Noticeably throughout the COVID 19 environment, there has been an increased number of women requiring intervention regarding nutritional needs.

A broad range of ages and nationalities have been assessed by our dietitian service. Each client attends with very different needs ranging from basic dietary modification needs to complex dietary modifications and non-nutrition related concerns impacting on their nutritional status.

Referrals to our dietitian, Renee, have included clients who are struggling financially impacting towards food access, those with a diagnosed mental health disorder whereby emotional status and external factors impact on their eating patterns. Referrals also include women who have experienced domestic violence and are currently rebuilding their lives, single mothers, local Aboriginal and Torres's strait islander community and women in recovery from addictions. Food security has also been a common concern and factor impacting on many referred clients.



# Our Services

## Contracted Services

### Psychologist

#### NSW health priority: Mental Health

The BWHC Psychologist specialises in working with all mental health issues, addictions, grief, stress, including domestic and family violence.

Our psychologist is available two days per week, on Thursdays and Fridays, and bulk billing is provided through the Medicare scheme. A Mental Health Care Plan is required from the patient's GP. During the height of the COVID 19 period our psychologist worked with clients via telehealth consultations



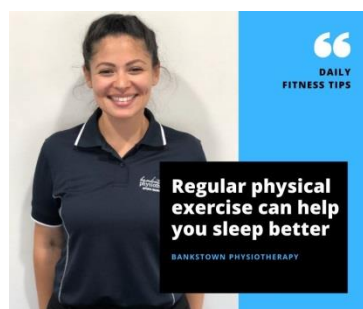
### Medical Clinic

Our Medical Clinic specialises in women's health issues and is provided by a female health practitioner Dr Ngaire Millener. It is a bulk billing service through the Medicare scheme. Dr Millener practices from the centre every Tuesdays afternoon and evening.

During the COVID 19 period, Dr Millener has offered consultations via telehealth for existing patients.

### Physiotherapist:

BWHC are pleased to announce collaboration between Bankstown Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Centre to deliver this service from BWHC every Mondays. Christina is a motivated physiotherapist who has a special interest in chronic pain and hand therapy. She is looking forward to working with clients and helping them return back to normal function.



Our staff and contractors collaborate across services, disciplines and activities to provide integrated trauma-informed care to individual clients and to multiple family members, in order to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and support each person's personalised healing and recovery process.

# Responding to meet the needs of Local Women and the Community

## Wellness for Women “Cancer Support Group” at Bankstown and Fairfield Sites (funded by the Cancer Institute NSW)

The ‘Wellness for Women Program’ offers a weekly culturally sensitive cancer support group and outreach program. Each week, there were 32 women from Arabic and Vietnamese speaking backgrounds who accessed the support group as cancer survivors; 16 with breast cancer, 2 brain cancers, 2 bowel cancers, 1 lung cancer, 2 stomach cancers, 2 with metastasised cancers, and 7 did not wish to disclose or discuss their cancer. In addition, 40 women attended the Mentor Training and Leadership Program.

BWHC has worked closely with the NSW Cancer Institute to lessen the impact of cancer for women in the community. BWHC applied for a Cancer Institute grant to address priority 6: ‘improving the experiences of people with cancer in multicultural communities’.

BWHC worked with the Cancer Institute NSW to deliver a video of women living with cancer in multicultural communities. The video featured Anna from the BWHC “wellness for women program’ who told her brave story of living with cancer. The video was filmed at Fairfield Women’s Health Site and upon completion this video was distribution throughout NSW Health district to improve the lives of women with cancer in multicultural communities and it was featured at the Nation care conference by the Cancer Institute.

Supported by a \$120,000 grant from the Cancer Institute NSW, BWHC and FWHS offered culturally-sensitive, safe and supportive weekly groups for women with cancer, as well as their carers and family members. “The wellness for women support group is run in a women’s only space; it’s culturally appropriate. It gives women an opportunity to bond together, particularly when you have the same health issues such as Cancer. Sheetal Challam, Multicultural Strategic

Advisor at the Cancer Institute NSW, said “It’s important for people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups to have somewhere to turn for reliable information and support”.



Vietnamese Immigrant Woman, Anna Pham from the Wellness for Women program at Fairfield, shared her story of what it was like to live with Cancer in her community. This video was launched at the Cancer Institute NSW national forum at the Sofitel Sydney and distributed through the NSW Heath district.

See Anna’s amazing story on <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMd2NTL8m-oTb3zn2uXTs5A>

*Anna (Thao Pham) is a lung cancer survivor and attends the Cancer Support Group at Fairfield Women’s Health Service. Anna shared her story at the Fairfield Women’s Health Service launch and also shared her story in a video produced by the Cancer Institute NSW, filmed at the Centre.*



*National care conference by the Cancer Institute Presentation on improving the lives of Women with cancer in multicultural communities through the Wellness for Women program*

# Responding to meet the needs of Local Women and the Community

**Food Share Program** The Food Share Program has become a community hub, reducing food insecurity, ensuring the community has access to fresh nutritional food, and meeting the community nutrition and health needs.



## Volunteers Program/ Capacity Building

We are grateful to the volunteers who assisted each week at the Food Share program. Our Volunteers attended a Food Hygiene certificate course, safety Course and First Aid. They are also booked in to attend workshops on Workplace Health and Safety, and Leadership certificate course. MP Jason Clare has presented the volunteers with a community appreciation awards.



BWHC Volunteers received community award from Jason Clare MP

## Legal Aid DV Outreach Service:



BWHC in partnership with Legal Aid NSW, delivers a fortnightly outreach legal aid to support women experiencing domestic violence. Women who have experienced domestic and family violence are able to access legal advice and support through appointments with Legal Aid staff in our safe, women-only space at BWHC.

## Therapeutic Craft:

It was identified that many local senior community members were experiencing isolation so a partnership was formed with SSI to offer a weekly Craft group. A large number of Chinese Women from the LGA Canterbury Bankstown attended this group weekly as one of the facilitator spoke Mandarin. They mainly worked on jewellery making as a form of mindfulness.

## Generalist Yoga



## Healthy Lifestyle Group:





# Responding to meet the needs of Local Women and the Community

**Wellness for Women Program** (Cancer Institute NSW grant). This program sadly comes to an end in September 2020, as the grant was for 2 years. To sustain the program, a Mentors and Leadership program was established to continue supporting the group. In addition, application was submitted to Women NSW, and meetings arranged with SWLHD and Cancer Council to collaborate and expand this much needed program.

More than 90 women from CALD backgrounds, specifically targeting Arabic and Vietnamese women, have attended the mentors program, support groups, and were offered education on the facts of Cancer in specific languages, wellness approach, activities and information to live well with cancer.



*Wellness for Women mentor Fadia (august 2019)*

Four of the identified mentors were invited to speak at community events on the subject of living with cancer. The mentors received support from Project Workers in preparing for their speaking engagements. The mentor was well received and the feedback from the mentor was that the training and support from W4W improved knowledge and confidence in communicating about cancer myths and beliefs in their community.

## BWHC Have your Say Day

Our annual Have your Say Day is the time when BWHC consults with the community about their needs and service provision. The 2019 Have your Say Day was combined with our annual End of Year Xmas Celebration and Presentation.

86 attended this event. Certificates of appreciation were given to 12 of our Food Share volunteers. There was a celebration of women and culture with music, presentations, cultural food and speeches. Centre client surveys were completed.



A new BWHC website has been developed to enable the community, and local organisations access to information and updates on BWHC services, groups, activities, events, newsletters. The BWHC site now contains accessible, affordable training modules for both individuals or community organisations.



# Achievements

## Local Canterbury Bankstown Community Award

Jennifer Ashwood Case Manager at BWHC received the 2020 community Services Award presented by MP Jason Clare

Canterbury - Bankstown showcases the diversity and strength of women in our City and formally recognises their contribution to the development of the region.

*Congratulations Jenny*



## NSW Premiers Award

Rene Demos BWHC chairperson and Amani Haydar BWHC secretary were nominated by our local MP's Tania Mihailuk and Jihad Dib for the Women's NSW Premiers Award. Amani was the finalist of this prestigious award.

*Congratulations Amani and Rene*



## Collaborative Work:

### Working with the Cancer Institute NSW

#### Health literacy

To encourage culturally and linguistically diverse people to take up appropriate screening and reduce the incidence of Cancer, the Cancer Institute NSW with support of BWHC staff and clients developed fact sheets and brochures about 'What is Cancer' BWHC staff also assisted the Cancer Institute NSW in developing the content of the bowel and breast screening in-language education resources suitable for multicultural communities.



### Working with South West Local Health District

CEO Mariam Mourad is part of the SLHD literacy group which looks at simplifying health language to the CALD community.

### Work with the South West Sydney Domestic and Family Violence Alliance

The BWHC CEO was involved with the group. The focus of this group was prevention and early intervention around respectful and healthy relationships education. The working group focused on the adaptation and delivery of the Love Bites program to CALD communities.

### BWHC worked with the Women's Community shelter

A community consultation was held at the Centre in 2019, advisory committee identified, and evaluation report compiled. It was identified that crisis accommodation was needed in the LGA to meet the needs of Women and children escaping domestic and Family violence. Amana Haydar BWHC Board secretary and Mariam Mourad CEO are now working closely with the Revesby Workers Club, Community Women Shelters, local businesses, and local stakeholders on the foundations of the shelter.

### Bilingual Community Education (BCE) Programs

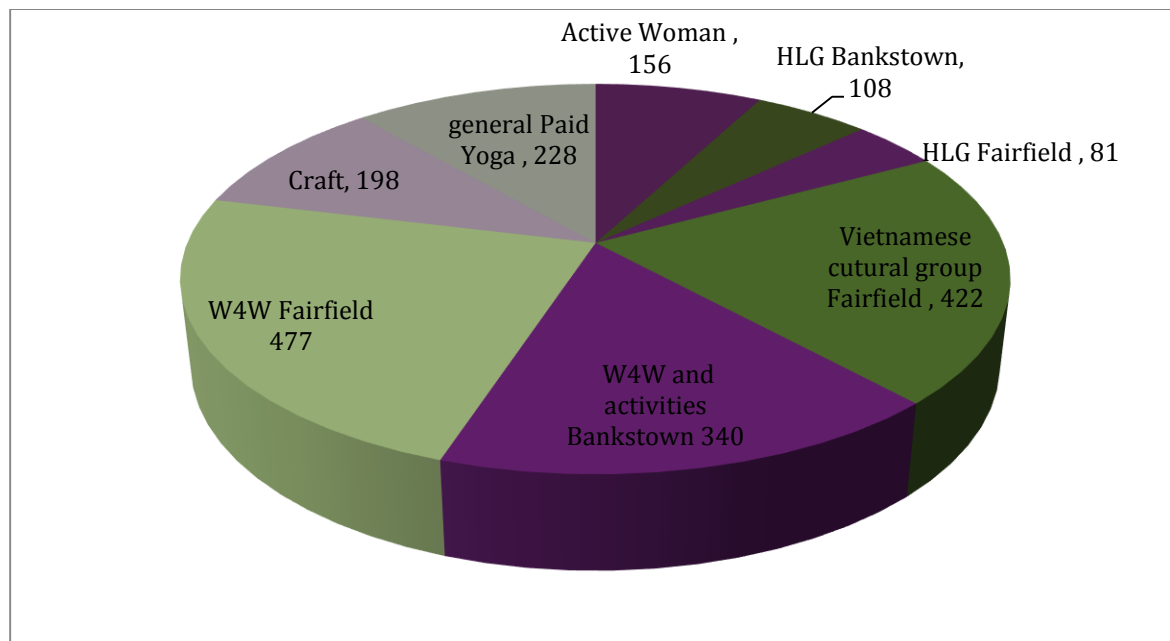
BCE programs were delivered in Arabic, Madarin and Vietnamese at the Cetnre on topics including as menopause, healthy living, parenting and nutrition.



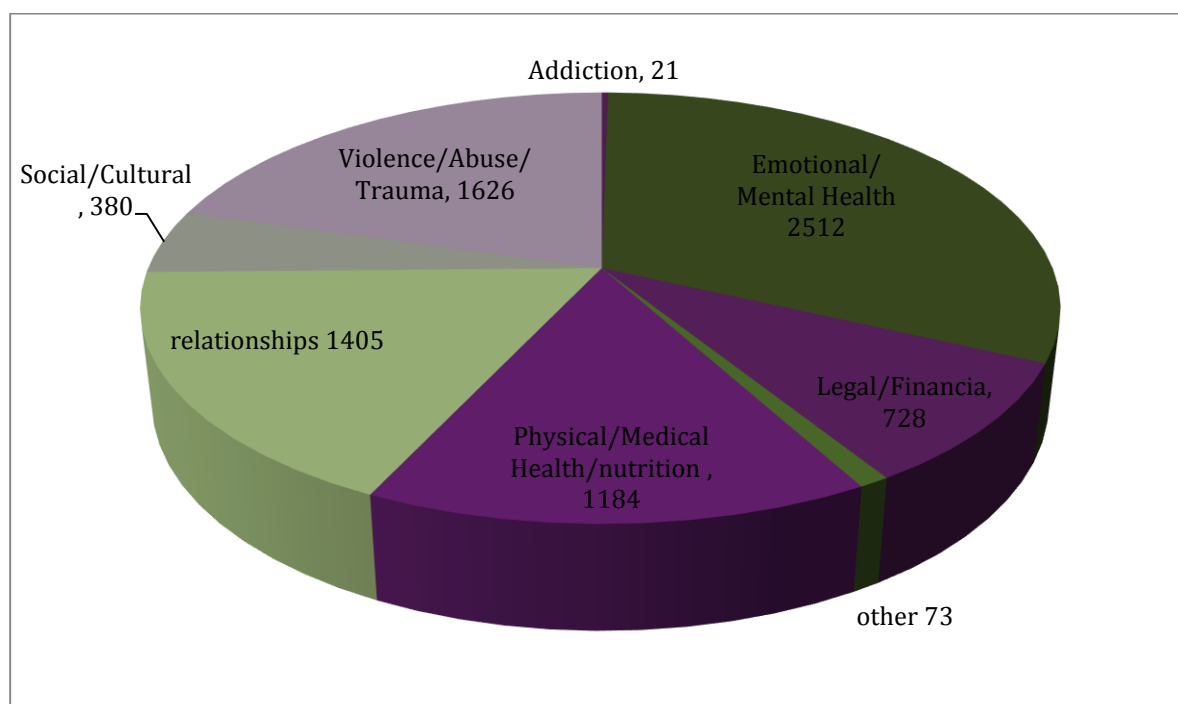
# Service Statistics period 01/07/2019 – 30/06/2020

## GROUPS

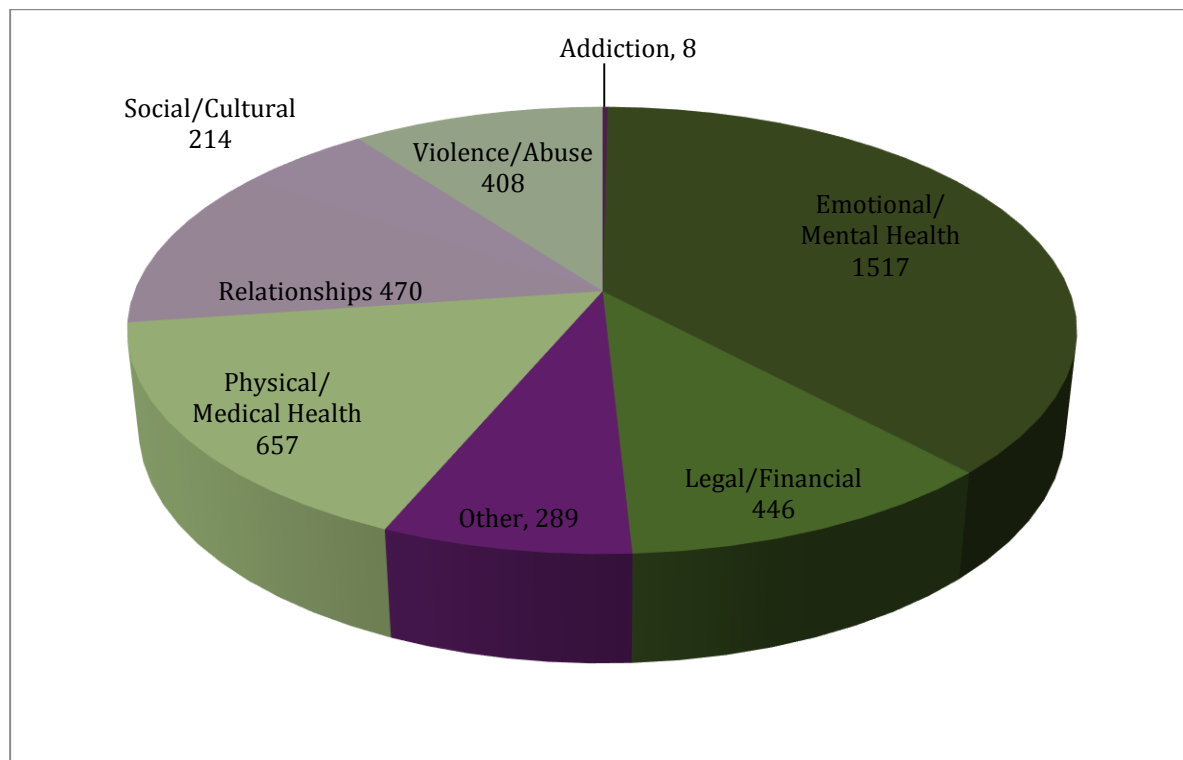
Number of occasions of service



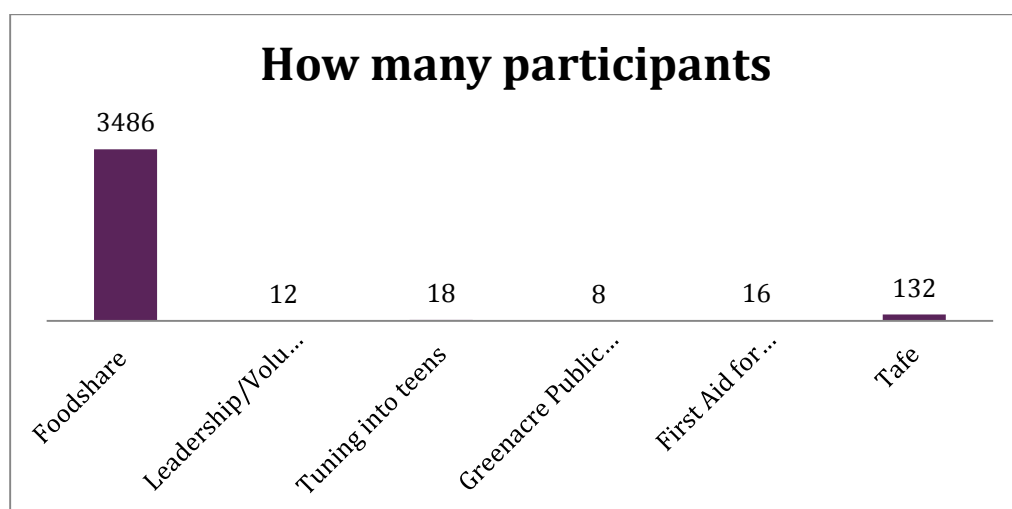
Client Contacts BWHC – Presenting Issues



## Client Contacts FWHC – Presenting Issues



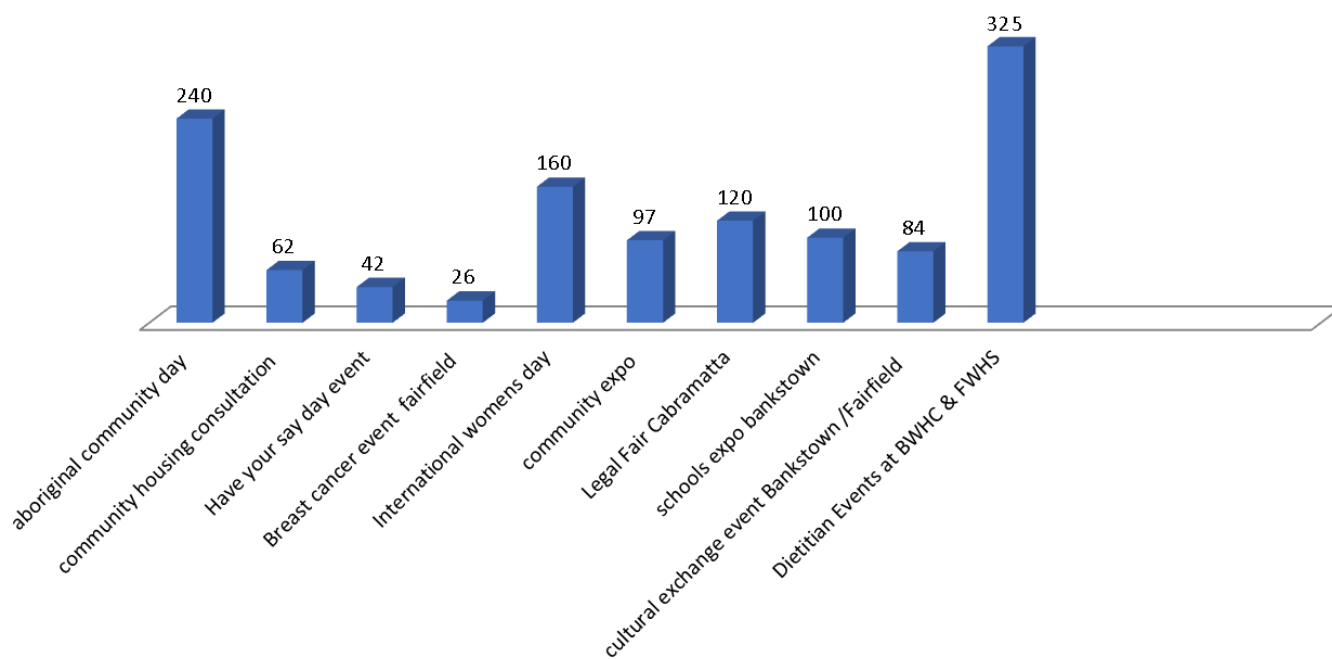
## PROGRAMS –Bankstown site



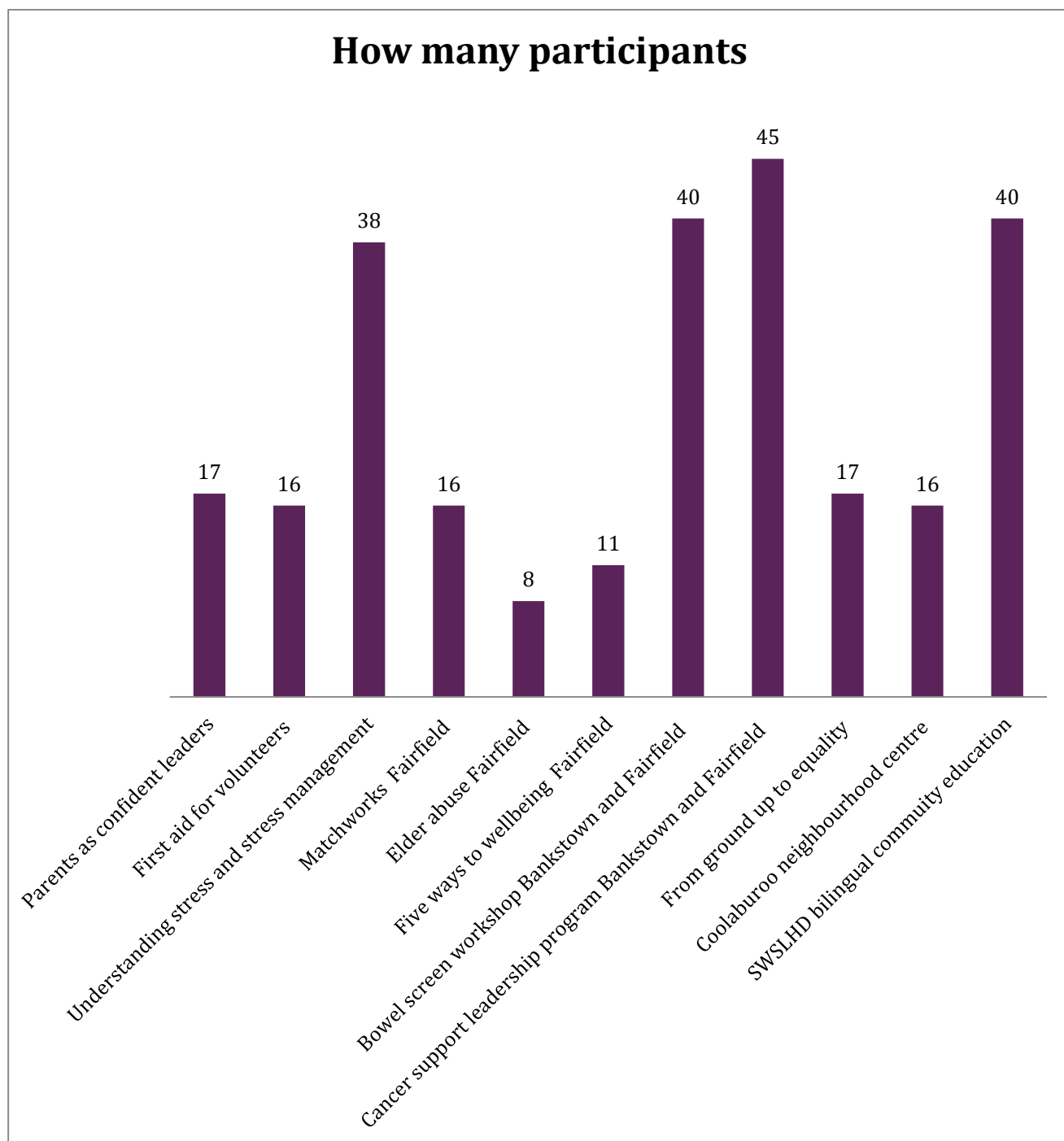


## EVENTS –Bankstown and Fairfield sites

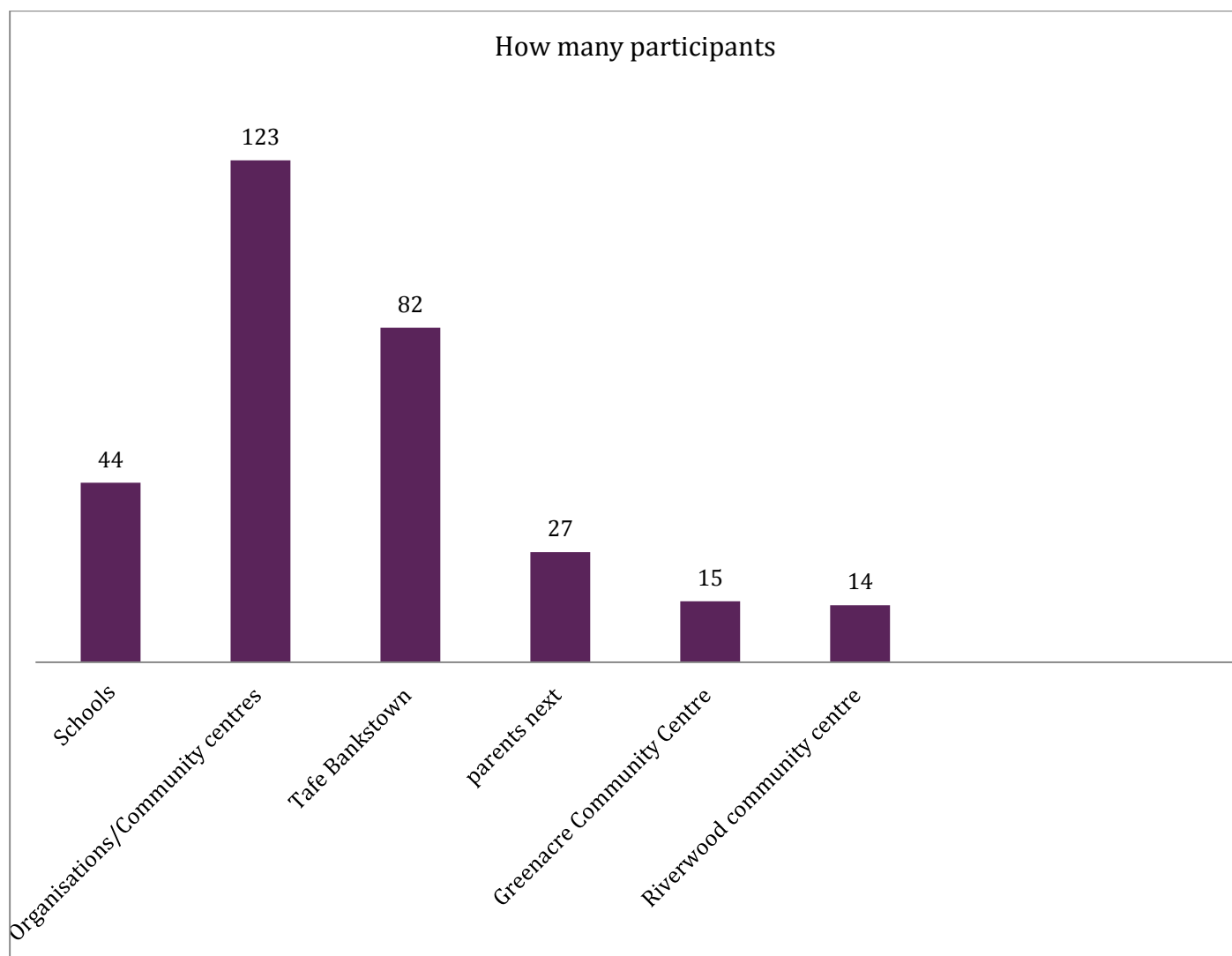
How many attendees at the event



## WORKSHOPS –Bankstown and Fairfield sites



## HEALTH PROMOTION/OUTREACH/Bankstown Site



### Case study: Assisting Women to take Control of their Lives

## Using Trauma Informed Approach

### Generalist Counsellor Coordinator



Helen, aged 34 years, was referred to the Centre by a Brighter Futures Program Caseworker for counselling and social support. Funded by NSW Communities & Justice, Brighter Futures is an early intervention program helps families with children who are at high risk of entering or escalating within the child protection system.

Helen was recently separated from her violently abusive partner, who was the father of her three children, aged 2, 7 and 9 years. At the initial counselling assessment appointment in early March, Helen arrived in tears and reported fearing for her life and for the lives of her children. Generalist Counsellor Alison focused on conducting a thorough risk assessment and discussing relevant internal and external referrals and linkages. The DV safety plan developed by Helen with the support of the referring Caseworker was reviewed and updated. Helen reported experiencing significant financial stressors, having left her part-time retail job because she felt unable to cope with the pressures of work in addition to managing multiple trauma symptoms while sole parenting her children. Helen accepted a referral to the BWHC Caseworker for financial advice and support.

During the second counselling session, the Generalist Counsellor supported Helen to explore and identify her goals for counselling. Helen presented with multiple and complex emotional and psychological issues relating to prolonged exposure to domestic violence and abuse including grief, intrusive memories (flashbacks), nightmares, lack of concentration, disrupted sleep and anxiety/panic. Helen identified her joint counselling goals as healing from the abuse and violence and learning how to support her children in their own healing and recovery.

The third and subsequent appointments were conducted by telephone because our Centre was closed in response to NSW Health advice relating to the COVID 19 pandemic. Attending phone counselling brought numerous challenges for Helen, not least because she had begun home schooling her children and she was isolated from informal and formal support networks during the pandemic. Due to the fact that Helen was minding her children while attending counselling sessions, the Generalist Counsellor worked closely with her to monitor and uphold the psychological and emotional safety of the children, who could potentially be exposed to further distress should they overhear their mother discussing traumatic material.

Helen reported feeling less affected by the isolation and uncertainty experienced by much of our community during the pandemic because “my marriage was like that anyway and I’m used to feeling scared and lonely. Now other people know what we go through every day living in domestic violence!”

Using a trauma-informed approach prioritising psychological and emotional safety and stability, the Generalist Counsellor provided trauma psychoeducation and gradually supported Helen to stabilise her affect by practicing self-regulation techniques. Working with the Generalist Counselling Service and a range of other services, Helen began to feel emotionally stronger and to resource herself to make constructive decisions for herself and her children.

During her most recent phone counselling session, Helen stated “I feel so much calmer and more in control. I’m more confident and I’m getting to know who I am. Can you believe it, I didn’t even know what my favourite colour was before! Now I’m planning to go to TAFE and get a job – I’m getting my life on track!”

*\*Names and personal details have been changed to uphold confidentiality and privacy*

### Case study:

### Dietician



**SWSLHD Health Priorities:** lifestyle health related chronic disease, nutrition and physical activity/healthy weight. Mental health and social wellbeing

*Alexandra states 'I feel better now that I have lost weight and eating healthier.'*

Yasmine is a 36 year old women from \*India, married with child. Yasmine self-referred to the dietitian service after attending the Healthy lifestyle group – aware of the centre from other services she had attended.

*\* Names and personal details have been changed to uphold confidentiality and privacy*

Yasmine has attended the healthy lifestyle group run by the dietitian where she disclosed needing assistance with other concerns including nutritional assistance and emotional eating as a result of her circumstances at the time.

From our initial consult in March 2020, to our last consult in July, there were barriers to implementing nutritional interventions in addition to the beginning of a global pandemic, the corona Virus (COVID19). This had a significant impact on Yasmine due to her 'over thinking nature' and stress cause from the pandemic and her occupation in dentistry. At this stage, the dietitian service has discussed and offered the generalist counselling service at BWHC in which Yasmine was happy with and began sessions. This provided Yasmine with emotional relief and assistance with implementing nutritional changes required. More so with Sydney being under several restrictions over the course of our consults due to COVID19, this had a significant emotional and mental impact on Yasmine which heightened her referring symptoms. Over the next several months, the COVID19 pandemic began to ease and so did Yasmine's thoughts, feeling and emotions which significantly resulted in an improvement of referring symptoms in addition to her continues sessions with the counselling service.



Throughout her sessions with myself and the counselling service she voiced feeling safe to express her concerns and received the assistance required.

## Case Study:

## Case Management- Fairfield Women's Health Service

**SWLHD Health Priorities:** Mental health and social wellbeing

\*Thi, aged 50, came to Fairfield Women's Health Service highly distressed as she had no contact with her 22-years old- daughter. Thi is a single mother who was a victim of DFV and has been living with a mental health condition for the past 2 decades. She is on Disability Support Pension. Thi has no other family member in Australia. "My daughter is the only reason I live" she said.

Thi spoke Vietnamese only and originally attended FWHS requesting assistance in finding her adult daughter. At the time of assessment, and during other appointments more issues were identified. The caseworker and client agreed to work together towards some of the identified issues. Thi's adult daughter suffers from a mental health condition, disclosed sexual assault, and was incarcerated. Her daughter's partner had been diagnosed with a mental health illness and had attempted suicide in the past.

Caseworker Lianne assisted client with referrals to appropriate legal services, and assisted with gathering documents for her daughters bail application. Thi's daughter was eventually released to her Mothers care, whilst on bail.

To assist with Thi's ongoing needs the caseworker referred Thi

- to a series of mental health education workshops
- invited Thi to FWHS Vietnamese Cultural Group where she met other Vietnamese women, to connect with
- FWHS Nurse for Screening and health information.

The caseworker arranged a free smart phone and free data so Thi can join the FWHS cultural group via zoom, and have ongoing contact with her daughter via teleconferencing. FWHS has supported the client with not only installing the app but continuous support in accessing social media for communication.

Thi reported that her health and wellbeing has improved, and she has learnt strategies to keep

feeling positive. She is grateful she can still talk to her daughter almost every day via social media whilst she is incarcerated. Thi has reported that she feels more confident and motivated, since receiving support and attending the FWHS Vietnamese cultural group

Thi is now the support person for her own daughter. She said: "I could not thank FWHS staff enough for their professional support. I never thought I would be like this today. Even though my daughter is still in jail and I still feel sad from time to time but I am getting stronger and better to be there for her. I don't feel lonely anymore as there are many good people and services are by my side to support me when I need them".

*\*Names and personal details have been changed to uphold confidentiality and privacy*

## Case study: Bankstown Women's Health Centre

**Case Management collaborating to support women recovering from abuse and trauma through different programs at Bankstown Women's health centre**

**NSW Health Priorities:** Violence, Mental health social wellbeing and access to affordable and healthy food.

**Demonstrates** – collaborative interdisciplinary teamwork, trauma-informed approach, person centred approach

At Bankstown Women's Health Centre we have numerous programs to assist women who attend the Centre affected by domestic violence, abuse and trauma.

Single parent Fatima, aged 42 years, sought support from our Centre in November 2019 because she was concerned about a penalty notice she had received in the Bankstown area. Our Information and Referral Worker spoke with Fatima and gathered all the information required and filled out relevant forms. The client felt that she had been listened to and given details of other services and programs at the centre, including Food Share and the Active women's group. The client was booked in to see Jenny our case worker so she could be assessed for a work development order.

Fatima disclosed that she had a past domestic violence relationship and her confidence and self-esteem had been affected. The client also informed the caseworker that she had adult children and had stayed with the father until the children left home. Fatima was now single and had never told anyone of her situation due to shame and embarrassment. A safety plan a domestic violence safety assessment tool was completed to ensure Fatima was safe to go home.

Fatima also had concerns about her weight as she stated that she ate large portions of food as she was bored and felt unloved. Fatima agreed to participate in the active Women's group as part of her Work development Order. Fatima attended this group even after her work development order was completed. Fatima informed me that she felt like she now had friends and had a reason to get up each day. Fatima also regularly came to Food Share to get food for herself and also put her name down to be part of the BWHC leadership group. Fatima was referred to the Dietician service and was booked an appointment for the Women's Health Doctor for routine screening.

Fatima attended weekly appointments and I found that Fatima became more and more confident and was able to talk about her goals in her life and what she wanted and what makes her happy. Fatima changed from being quiet and sad to being more confident and positive and wanting to do a TAFE course to better educate herself.

Using a person centred and trauma informed approach. Fatima felt that she was being heard and was able to make goals and accomplish them. Fatima still attends the Centre through Food Share and regularly updates myself of her accomplishments and how her life is going.

Fatima attended the centre believing that she was just going to pay off a fine but instead she said that she felt that she had found a safe place where she feels safe and welcome.

*Names and personal details have been changed to uphold confidentiality and privacy*

## Case study: Child and Adolescent Trauma Counselling Service

Seventeen year old Maha was referred to the Child and Adolescent Trauma Service after

disclosing bullying and sexual assault. The counsellor was able to offer outreach counselling support at school in a safe space where Maha felt able to explore her needs, concerns and worries.

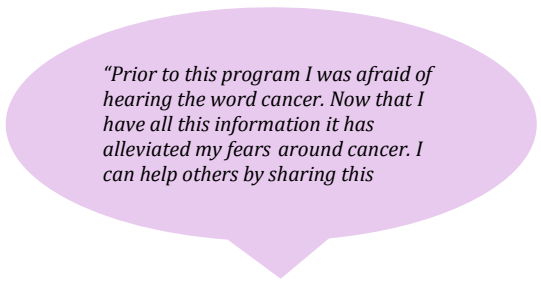
Maha initially felt targeted, vulnerable and unsafe at school despite the school having a no bullying policy. The school was very engaged and supportive with Maha who realised speaking up allowed her to understand people cared, she was not alone and she had a right to respect, to feel safe and be safe.

Working from a trauma informed, person centred approach the counsellor supported Maha using a range of therapeutic approaches. Maha learned to recognise her feelings and emotions; how to connect these with her body and how to safely express her emotions when feeling sad, angry, scared or ashamed. Over time Maha started gaining confidence and putting into practice the skills she had learned through her counselling sessions.

Maha worked hard to build her confidence, believe in herself and speak up to those in her support network who she knew she could trust. Engaging with the counsellor on a weekly basis supported Maha in being able to put into practice the skills she had learned. Maha started to feel happy and to smile; she learned to follow her gut feeling and to listen to her body for safe or unsafe warning signs.

Maha made new friends who liked and respected her and she was able to re-focus on her studies. Learning to trust, to feel safe and not feel judged gave Maha a sense of safety and control of her life.

*\*Names and personal details have been changed to uphold confidentiality and privacy*



*"Prior to this program I was afraid of hearing the word cancer. Now that I have all this information it has alleviated my fears around cancer. I can help others by sharing this*

## Case Study: Client Service Officer: Fairfield Women's Health Service

Q, aged 69, first visited FWHS in January 2020 because friends informed Q that Fairfield Women's Health Service is a safe place for women. During the conversation with the client service officer (CSO), Q was teary. CSO offered Q some tea. Q informed the CSO her husband passed away from cancer not long ago and Q was she had especially found it difficult during his last few months. Q mentioned her children were in the US, she came to Australia with her husband.

CSO advised Q on information about the Centre, what kind of services are provided by the FWHS and what other services in the area. CSO encouraged Q to join the FWHS Vietnamese Cultural Group every Wednesday at the Centre, where Q can come, share information and have time chatting with ladies, make friends, feel supported and less lonely. Q mentioned that she did not have time to look after her own health since her husband had been in hospital with cancer. CSO checked with Q if she wanted to book for a Cervical Screening test and health check up with our Nurse Practitioner, Wendy.

Q attended the appointment with Wendy on 16.01.2020. After the check-up, Q informed the CSO she appreciated the work Wendy and the service has provided her. Q said "Wendy was very caring and gentle".

Q mentioned to CSO that she was stressed about her housing situation. CSO asked Q if she would like an appointment with the caseworker Q attended the appointment with FWHS caseworker Lianne a few times at the Centre and the client is now relocated. Q has recently phoned the CSO and stated "I am so thankful for the services FWHS have provided me during this difficult time, and am now settled".

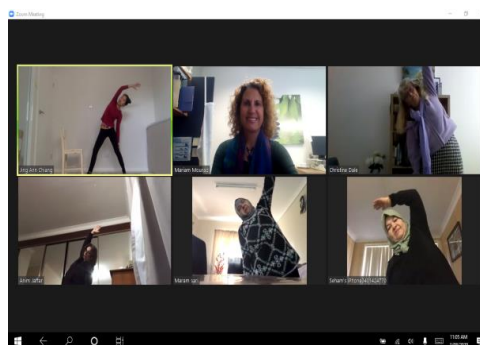
## Case Study: Improving cancer outcomes amongst cultural and linguistically diverse communities. Improving the experiences of people with cancer from multicultural communities

**Wellness for Women Program:** Nada is a 70 year old Lebanese woman with breast cancer. Nada came to the group after completing her treatment and was now in the

'living with cancer' phase of her journey. She presented with anxiety about the possibility of the cancer coming back and she described her treatment as "really traumatic". Nada lives alone and feels very lonely and isolated. Nada used to work full time but since diagnosed with cancer she has had to give up work and consequently has experienced financial hardship and is still not well enough to go back to work full time. She does casual occasionally to subsidise her Centrelink payments. Due to her experience of chemotherapy Nada declared that she would never undergo Chemotherapy again and is actively seeking alternative treatments for her health management. Nada described her choice as being unpopular in the medical system and felt that she was not very well supported in her choices. This caused her significant distress.



Group prior to Covid 19 environment

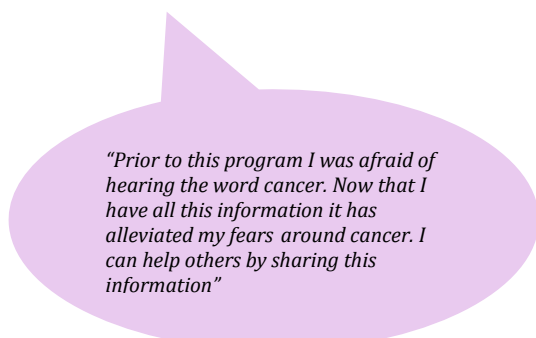


Wellness for Women group delivered via Zoom during Covid 19 environment

Initially Nada was very quiet in the weekly sessions but she quickly grew to form friendships and started to share her experiences with some of the ladies in the group. With time Nada grew more confident and felt safe enough to share her experiences with the whole group. She stated that this group has been a lifesaver and she looks forward to it all week. She does not schedule any appointments



that may clash with the group because it is so important to her. She feels so supported and connected with other women who have had similar experiences. She said that she no longer feels so alone in her experience. The exercise, yoga, bowel cancer screening workshop and the nutrition workshops all support Nada to learn more about how to foster health through healthy lifestyle choices. She loved the approach of fostering wellness rather than focusing on disease. This helps her feel very supported in her decision to live for today,



*"Prior to this program I was afraid of hearing the word cancer. Now that I have all this information it has alleviated my fears around cancer. I can help others by sharing this information"*

## Quotes directly from Clients of Bankstown Women's Health Centre

*Thank you ever so much from the bottom of my heart." "you were there for me when I was going through tough times with my husband, you supported me by giving me knowledge about different services, helped a lot with housing , court and legal issues, I felt so very trapped "*

(This quote came from a Mother of 3 children who had experienced long term domestic violence)

*"What would I do without a service like yours" "when I needed help with my children, you helped me and I knew I was in the right safe place"*

(This quote came from a women had been subjected to domestic violence, and the children had experienced sexual assault)

*"From the time I spoke to Rima, Bankstown women's health centre, information referral office, I felt safe, I felt heard, and I knew what I had to do" I had options"*

enjoy her life, and live a healthy lifestyle that is more aligned with her own personal philosophical orientations. Nada continued to get her regular screening and check-ups and was very pleased to announce that she got the all clear and added that she believes the support of the group is part of the reason why she is healing.

The combination of connection, support, education, helped her feel more empowered and in control of her own health

(This quote came from an older women who was close to homeless after living in her family home for more than 40 years)

*"When I walked into your centre , I felt the warmth of all the staff, I Knew I had come to a place where I knew I would not be judged and I would be helped to reclaim my life and me and my children be free of the abuse"*

(This quote came from a Mother of adult children who was experiencing the impacts of childhood assault and neglect)

*"Everything you do at that centre is about helping women in making better choices for our life"*

(This quote came from long term complex trauma due to domestic and family violence)

*I believe the support of this group must be the reason I am clear on all my tests, the support of this group keeps me going, keep me positive and connect*

(this quote came from a regular participant of the wellness for women program who had stage 3 breast cancer)

*I now know I can live with cancer, I'm not afraid to speak the word. Before I was in hiding and would not go anywhere, I told my community I was going overseas and did not want them to know I had cancer. I felt ashamed and embarrassed, now I can tell my community and all the information about cancer. I don't feel alone anymore*

(This quote comes from a wellness for women participant who has stage 4 cancer)



For the past 2 years, Bankstown Women's Health (BWHC) in partnership with Liverpool Women's Health (LWHC) has supported the daily operation and administration of the Fairfield Women's Health services. The Centre is located in McBurney Road, within the Arthur West Memorial Hall premises.

During that period, 2639 contacts were made with individual clients and 1315 clients attended 113 group sessions. Domestic and family violence presented the highest number of cases, followed by issues with mental health and social isolation.

As the demand for service has rapidly grown, there was an urgency to refurbish the centre so that the existing space could be more functional to meet the increased need.

The Corona Virus personal contact restrictions in March 2020 placed immense pressure on our face to face service. A sudden expectation to rely on technology and remote access to reach clients left us feeling overwhelmingly under resourced for the new work conditions. Recognising this needs gap, Ashlee Ball from Fast Track Communications worked collaboratively with other national technology corporates, CommBox and Logitech Australia to source a state of the art conferencing system. This very generous in-kind donation will impact significantly on the way we work, as well will open up new opportunities to increase our potential to access some of the most vulnerable and difficult to reach members of the community.

Fatima Kourouche led the project to reshape the centre to make it fit for 21<sup>st</sup> Century work space. One of the major tasks was to repurpose the entry way. The entry to the centre faces Cabravale Memorial Park, however the frontage was almost invisible due to the dark coloured gates, limited signage and uninviting entry area.

A new coat of paint in a refreshing pastel green colour with multi-lingual signage was placed on the front gates to increase visibility and to

publicise the services to the local community. The entry was repurposed to a large furnished reception style lounge to create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. The white Perspex added privacy, warmth and a sense of community when using the centre. Following the completion of this project, FWHC hosted a low key celebration in the presence of Fairfield Mayor, Cl Frank Carbone, BWHC and LWHC management and representative from the three donor organisations.

As we move into a new era of working, FWHC is looking forward to expanding the potential of the newly acquired resources to increase not only staff capacity to deliver bigger and better service, but also to give clients an affordable way to gain self-determination whilst developing new skills and personal confidence. *Report by Fatima Kourouche*

Before and after pictures of the entry to Fairfield Women's Health Centre July 2020



Before



After



After

# Our Services

The Service was officially launched and is funded by South Western Sydney Local Health District through NGO partnership for Health. The model is a partnership between Bankstown Women's Health Centre (BWHC) and Liverpool Women's Health Centre (LWHC) to deliver health and wellbeing services for immigrant and refugee women in the Fairfield LGA Fairfield Women's Health service (FWHS) provides free counselling, casework, information and referrals, screening by Nurse Practitioners, health promotion, Dietetics, groups and activities to support CALD Women who may have experienced trauma and other challenging issues which impacts on their health and wellbeing.

The Fairfield Women Health Service provides treatment and prevention programs regarding mental health issues, domestic and family violence, and support and prevention services and programs to reduce chronic disease and illness, and improve health and wellbeing in alignment with NSW health priorities, funding and grant agreements.

The services include:

## Bilingual Client Service Officer

The client service officer speaks Vietnamese, and is able to provide information and referrals for women who have language barriers. Currently the Service is available Monday – Thursday.

## Bilingual Case Management Service

The case worker uses a strength-based, woman-centred approach that emphasises a woman's self-determination, strengths and resilience in the face of adversity. The case worker speaks Vietnamese, and works with the client to implement and achieve the agreed goals in a given time frame. The case worker also facilitates the cultural Vietnamese group each Wednesday, and coordinates different educational programs within the group to meet the needs of the women. Extra workshops, activities and events outside of the group are also offered, such as the cultural exchange morning, International Women's Day, breast cancer session, bowel screening sessions, five ways to wellbeing, and understanding stress.

## Bilingual Dietician Service

The Dietician speaks Arabic and the service is free. The Dietitian service offers individual consultations, outreach workshops, individual sessions at Navitas College at Fairfield, and a weekly healthy lifestyle group. This service provides information and advice about food, nutrition, and weight management. The dietitian can assist with special dietary needs for women with conditions such as diabetes, cancer, food allergies and chronic health conditions.

## Clinical Nurse

This Service is free and includes Cervical Screening, breast check, pregnancy test, post-natal check, and screening for heart disease, Chlamydia tests, and pelvic floor assessment. Information and referral on domestic violence, sexual assault and other women's health issues is also provided.

## Bilingual Counselling Service

A Bilingual counsellor services is offered. Our counsellors speak Arabic, Khmer and Vietnamese. The counselling service offers a brief intervention trauma informed service and is available by appointment.

## Events, Groups, and Workshops at FWHS

Groups, Events and Workshops this year included: Healthy Lifestyle group, Vietnamese Cultural group, Wellness for Women Cancer support group, breast cancer session event, multicultural exchange morning, end of year celebrations, stress management workshops, health education workshops.



*Local women attending the breast cancer session event, August 2019*





*Cultural Exchange Morning, August 2019*



*Vietnamese cultural group*

### Wellness for Women Cancer Support Program (Cancer Institute grant)

This program sadly comes to an end in September 2020, as the grant was for 2 years. To sustain the program a mentors and leadership program was established to continue the support group, and applications were submitted to Women NSW, and meetings arranged with Health to sustain the group, the outreach awareness program. Contact was also made with Cancer Council to collaborate. So far aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Vietnamese women who have experienced cancer or been impacted by cancer. The healthy living education component of this group aims to educate women on the myths and beliefs surrounding cancer in the Vietnamese community. Nutritional education is also offered in this group for chronic health conditions, food allergies and cancer delivered by a Vietnamese speaking trained group facilitator.

### Annual Planning Day



Fairfield women's health service planning day held at Cabravale Diggers Club Feb 2020



Denele Crozier CEO WHNSW, Kate Meyer Manager Liverpool Women's Health Centre, Mariam Mourad CEO Bankstown Women's Health Centre the Fairfield women's health service planning day held at Cabravale Diggers Club Feb 2020

### Annual Have your Say Day

More than 50 local Women and clients attended the annual Have your say day and end of year celebrations



# Snap shot of BWHC Press Releases and Media Engagement





out food on table every week but need more support from public



Blaxland MP Jason Clare visited Bankstown Women's Health Centre to lend a hand in the 'Food Share' program.

## Supplying fresh food for over 100 weekly

DESCRIBING it as a wonderful initiative, Blaxland MP Jason Clare visited Bankstown Women's Health Centre (BWHC) on Thursday to see if its 'Food Share' program was still on the boil.

Food Share gives people in need access to weekly fresh fruit, vegetables and other groceries.

The food is donated by Foodbank Australia, Coles Community Food part-

nered with SecondBite, the Greenacre Area Community Centre and Valley Bakery, Greenacre.

The program is run by BWHC's Jenny Ashwood with a team of 10 volunteers every Thursday from 9.30am at their office on Jacobs Street.

It has become a community hub, reducing food insecurity, ensuring the community has access to fresh nutritional food

and meeting nutrition and health needs.

"This is great for local families who need that extra help," Mr Clare said.

"A recent report by NSW Council of Social Service, highlighted what we already know. People in our area are struggling. Unemployment is high. Wages are low. A lot of people are struggling to pay the bills and the rent."

"Initiatives like Food

Share are so important for families to eat healthy food they would normally skip because of the cost.

BWHC CEO Mariam Mourad said: "We see over 120 people walk through our doors every Thursday."

"Although doors open at 9.30am, we sometimes have people lining up from early in the morning. This shows just how much people need services like this to feed their families."

## Hardworking staff who help to feed local needy

RESIDENTS are encouraged to make use of Bankstown Women's Health Centre's Food Share Program, an essential initiative providing free food to locals and redirecting good food to those in need.

Every Thursday from 9.30am, you can visit the centre's premises at 24 Jacob Street, Bankstown,

where for a voluntary \$2 contribution, you will receive a shopping trolley filled with a wide variety of fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthy and nutritious food, which would otherwise go to waste.

Bankstown MP Tania Mihailuk commended Foodbank NSW & ACT and SecondBite NSW for donating the much-needed food and the dedicated team of hard-working staff at Bankstown Women's Health Centre, who have continued to work tirelessly every week to provide this wonderful service.

"I was delighted to recently join with the team at Bankstown Women's Health Centre to help package food supplies for local organisations and families," Ms Mihailuk said.



Bankstown MP Tania Mihailuk with Bankstown Women's Health Centre CEO Mariam Mourad.

"I applaud the centre's CEO Mariam Mourad and her fantastic team, including Jenny, Rema and

Greta, for their hard work and tremendous contribution to the Bankstown area."

## Win awards for feeding families

THANKING the hard-working helpers, Blaxland MP Jason Clare has visited Bankstown Women's Health Centre and of year celebrations to present Community Service Awards to volunteers of the Foodshare program.

"This event was to acknowledge and give thanks to our wonderful community volunteers and clients of the Thursday Food Share Program," a spokesperson said.

"The continued commitment and efforts every week from our hardworking volunteers and staff is what helps make this program such a success and we wish to thank all those involved."





## Funders & Other Partners

Bankstown Women's Health Centre and Fairfield Women's Health Service is a member of Women's Health NSW and there are 20 sister centres across the state. We are primarily funded by NSW Ministry of Health. The Child and Adolescent Trauma Service is funded by the Department of Family and Community Services. We work collaboratively with a wide range of peer agencies and other partners across the community.





## Our Values

**We value women's own knowledge, skills and their right to make informed decisions about their health**

**We value the importance of maintaining health and wellbeing by focusing on preventative practices.**

**We recognise the importance of the social, environmental, economic, physical, emotional and cultural factors which influence the health and wellbeing of women and their families.**

**We actively encourage the empowerment of women in both the personal and social aspects of their lives with a focus on their changing roles and responsibilities throughout the lifespan, including reproductivity and parenting.**

**We recognise the effects of sex-role stereotyping, gender discrimination, racism and homophobia on health and wellbeing.**

**We support the emotional and social wellbeing of women and their families who have been affected by trauma**





# Bankstown Women's Health Centre Inc.

ABN: 74 181 873 702

## Income statement

For the year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>Income</b>		
Cash Boost Stimulus	90,132	-
Clients Donations	-	3,330
Dept Family & Community Servic	98,793	97,418
Doctors Contributions	2,838	7,744
Donations	2,965	-
Foodshare	6,575	4,461
Fund Income	44,000	64,000
Grants Brought Forward	-	53,698
Interest Received	1,091	2,137
Managed Services Reimbursement	1,509	5,601
Miscellaneous Income	9,002	26,103
Reimbursements	-	1,941
SWSAHS Grant	657,650	641,550
	<hr/> 914,555	<hr/> 907,983
<b>Expenses</b>		
Administration	-	6,291
Advertising & Promotion	1,511	556
Bank Fees & Charges	317	274
Committee & Board Expenses	1,706	1,034
Covid-19 expenses	9,225	-
Depreciation	2,727	-
Donations	360	301
Equipment	8,521	43,919
Filing Fees	-	194
General Expenses	357	248
Insurance	7,574	8,192
Maintenance	8,754	1,520
Office	5,220	4,982
Other	15,563	11,424
Programs & Projects	11,400	16,465
Reference Materials/Books	1,426	244
Rent	3,021	2,982
Staff - Conference / Meetings	2,411	10,674
Staff - Supervision	6,665	4,274
Staff Amenities	305	2,681
Staff- Training	3,298	895
Subscriptions/memberships	10,428	4,935
Telephone	9,440	8,028
Travel Costs	746	6,645
Wages	621,928	612,908
Wages - On Costs	72,334	94,408
	<hr/> 805,237	<hr/> 844,074
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<hr/> 109,318	<hr/> 63,909

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.*

*These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report of MEAGHER HOWARD & WRIGHT.*

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## Contact us

### Bankstown Women's Health Centre

Level 1

24-26 Jacob St. Bankstown NSW 2200

Phone: (02) 97901378

Fax: (02) 9790 1456

Email: [sWSLHD-bankstownwomenshealthcentre@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sWSLHD-bankstownwomenshealthcentre@health.nsw.gov.au)

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

ABN 74 181 873 702



### Fairfield Women's Health Service

Arthur Memorial Hall, McBurney Road  
Cabramatta NSW 2166

Phone: (02) 9755 0008

Email: [SWSLHD-FairfieldWomensHealthService@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SWSLHD-FairfieldWomensHealthService@health.nsw.gov.au)

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

