

**GIPPSLAND  
WOMEN'S  
HEALTH**

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# **ANNUAL REPORT**

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**2020-21 EDITION**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Gippsland Women's Health acknowledges Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of country and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging for they hold the stories, traditions and culture.

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai and Bunurong as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters now known as Gippsland and acknowledge that they have never ceded sovereignty. We recognise the Gunaikurnai and Bunurong long and continued connection and protection of the beautiful coastline from the oceans through inland areas to the rugged southern slopes of the mountain ranges.

Gippsland Women's Health commit to respectful truth telling and working in partnership with Gunaikurnai and Bunurong to improve the health and well-being and security and safety of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.

## Acknowledgement of Family Violence

The Board and staff of Gippsland Women's Health acknowledge and honour the victims and survivors of family violence, those who have lost their lives, and the family and friends who have been impacted by these appalling crimes.

Gippsland Women's Health is a member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), the peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women. GEN VIC works with organisations across Victoria to advance a shared vision of gender equality, health and freedom from violence for every woman and girl in every community across Victoria. Through GEN VIC, Gippsland Women's Health is able to advocate, influence and collaborate to improve outcomes in gender equity, women's health and in the prevention of violence against women at a statewide level.

We would like to acknowledge the many partner organisations with whom we collaborate to improve women's health, wellbeing and equity in Gippsland and to also acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government.

Gippsland Women's Health remains committed to safe and inclusive work places, policies and services for our LGBTQIA+ community.





# CHAIR REPORT

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**Dr. Sue Barker**  
**Gippsland Women's Health Board Chair**

This year I wasn't expecting to be writing a report that reflects the ongoing pandemic and its impacts, but we have all endured further lockdowns, in particular those who live in the Greater Melbourne area but work with us at Gippsland Women's Health. There has been restricted travel and access to those we love and hold dear, our families, friends, and colleagues. We have seen mass vaccinations occurring to reduce the impact the Delta strain of COVID-19 is having on the world's populations. Gippsland has been a part of all of this and the changes that everyone was required to make last year have stood us in good stead this year. I fear though that the resilience of many may have been reduced somewhat through these difficult times. I hope that you are able to access support as you need it.

It has been an exciting time for Gippsland Women's Health as we embarked on a recruitment process last year to appoint a new Chief Executive Officer. We welcomed Kate Graham to this role in March this year. Kate has already achieved a significant amount in her short time with us. Melanie Brown, as our Acting CEO in 2020, supported Kate during the transition period. On behalf of the Board and all at Gippsland Women's Health, I would like to thank Melanie for her leadership and untiring work during her time as Acting CEO last year.

From all the Board, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing work of the staff of Gippsland Women's Health who have remained flexible in how they worked and in continuing to undertake the work of our organisation. You have done a remarkable job yet again – thank you.

We welcomed new Board members from last year's election and those who have so ably filled casual vacancies. Thank you all for your due diligence and your dedication to not only Board activities but your ongoing commitment to Gippsland Women's Health as an organisation. My role has been made so much easier because of all that you do. Your support has been unwavering, and I have been very grateful for it.

The Board of Gippsland Women's Health is committed to good governance – open and transparent governance, as we undertake behind the scenes work on behalf of the organisation. Governance is about how an organisation behaves and interacts both within the organisation and with others outside of it. Governance is about the major decisions that we are entrusted to make that affect not only what the organisation does but in how the decisions are made. Good governance requires a commitment by those responsible for the organisation i.e. the Board of Management. This is reflected in what the Board does, how it does it and in ensuring the provision of evidence of the Board's performance through reporting processes.



Good governance and how the Board behaves, along with the Board values, is reflected in how the organisation operates and in its overall values. Governance policies and procedures are important and there are always regular reviews of these processes. It is, however, the Constitution that provides the Board with the authority to operate on behalf of the organisation. The only way an organisation can change its Constitution is through the membership.

Our Constitution guides our decision making along with Governance Policies and Procedures for Gippsland Women's Health Board of Management. These documents are critical to how we conduct ourselves as an Incorporated Association. Last year we attempted to make some timely changes to the Constitution; unfortunately, they did not occur. As such we will be undertaking a full review of our Constitution over the coming year to ensure that we comply with and reflect all the technological, societal and legislative changes that have occurred recently. These constitutional changes will be taken to the members to accept or reject.

We have three committees within the Board of Management that reflect our commitment to good governance, ensuring that we follow the Constitution and our own policies and procedures. I ask that you read the section in our report titled Our Governance as it outlines some of these activities since last year's Annual General Meeting.

I end this report by again thanking Kate Graham and her team at Gippsland Women's Health, and our Board of Management, who are unpaid directors, in undertaking the important work of Gippsland Women's Health at many levels. I would especially like to thank you, our members, for your ongoing commitment to Gippsland Women's Health. You are a very important part of who we are.

I trust that 2022 allows us all to spend more time with those we love and care for and that we can continue to achieve important goals in our lives. Stay safe and stay well as we face the new challenges that Covid-19 will bring us in these lingering extraordinary times. Thank you all for your ongoing support of Gippsland Women's Health.

**Dr. Sue Barker**  
**Gippsland Women's Health Board Chair**





# Get to know the GWH Board

[Read more about our Board Members here!](#)



**Dr. Sue Barker - Chair**

Registered Nurse with a Master of Nursing Studies (Women's Health)

PhD in medical/cultural anthropology examining the effects of colonisation on the tradition and culture of the people of Nauru

A committed mentor, volunteer, counsellor, leader and committee member across multiple associations



**Alisha Gilliland - Deputy Chair**

Woman, mother, partner, daughter, friend, sister, advocate, leader, mentor, feminist, scientist.

Passion for gender equity, violence prevention and the inclusion of people from diverse communities.

Aspires to create social inclusion and a safe, equitable community



**Jenny O'Neill - Treasurer**

Social work degree focusing on mental and community health

Values fun, social justice, equality and the outdoors

Dedicated to giving time and resources to social causes, including 'social' housing over the last 25 years.

In 2019, initiated the nursing scholarship amyandnancy



**Dr. Debra Manning**

Longstanding GWH Board Member

Retired Monash University academic with a PhD in Education

Spent three life-changing years in a remote village as a community development worker

Passion for PVAW and exploring issues of power and privilege in society



**Jessica Saunders**

Grew up on the Mornington Peninsula; over half of her career living and working in Gippsland

Practising law since 2011

Passion for advocacy and social justice with a focus on the areas of child welfare and family violence law



**Alissa Wallace**

**Board Secretary**

Registered nurse with a graduate certificate in Emergency nursing

Strong sense of advocacy and social justice led to studying Law

Lover of the great outdoors, the ocean, sport, family, friends and travel.



**Belinda Hua**

Biomedical Sciences undergrad with a Masters in Medical Radiations

Volunteer children's soccer coach and past Opal/ LGBTQIA+ youth group facilitator

Desire to bring about positive change in the community, particularly for women's health and gender equity



**Madeleine Forbes**

Accredited Practising Dietitian at Central Gippsland Health

Paediatric nutrition specialist

A new mother, upskilling in breastfeeding education to complement skills with maternal, child and infant nutrition



# Our Governance

Gippsland Women's Health continues to benefit from the skills, experience and passion of our unpaid Board members.

This year we have seen that commitment expanded with some Board members pursuing the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) training and a Board professional development package in planning.

Our Board of Management have undertaken a range of new and revised initiatives this year including:

- Completion of a Board Skills Matrix process in order to achieve our goal of ensuring a skills based Board.
- Formalisation of a Board Finance and Risk Committee that meets monthly and reports to the full Board. This Committee have worked diligently to undertake a number of improvements including oversight of the development of related policies such as Conflict of Interest and Related Parties Policy and Fraud and Whistle blower Policies.
- Redevelopment of Board recruitment policies, procedures and processes in the lead up to this year's Annual General Meeting.

Major work has also been undertaken with our financial processes, including redevelopment of our Chart of Accounts and Board finance reports and the development of a fee for service schedule.

During 2020 Gippsland Women's Health undertook a review of the organisational structure, however, due to a range of internal and external challenges and changes it was pertinent to revisit that work in early 2021. Following a detailed analysis of our core and fixed term funding, combined with our auspice responsibilities and consultation with staff, we have now landed on an organisational structure that is viable, sustainable and accountable to our community and funders.

Over the past few months we have also formalised our governance and organisational structures in an attempt to describe our service in a meaningful way and we hope that this year's Annual Report will further assist in showcasing our important work.





# CEO REPORT



**Kate Graham**  
**Gippsland Women's Health CEO**

It is with enormous pleasure I provide my first CEO report for Gippsland Women's Health.

Firstly, my thanks to the Gippsland Women's Health Board of Management and to the team for such a warm and supportive welcome to the organisation. My greatest appreciation to Mel Brown and Janine Pilgrim for their management support, particularly during my first few months and a special acknowledgment and debt of gratitude to Mel Brown for her work during her time as Acting CEO.

During my short time as CEO at Gippsland Women's Health I have been asked on many occasions – "what is it that you actually do?" It has been a constant reminder that our work in health promotion and prevention is not always easy to describe, let alone demonstrate the evidence of the impact of our work.

This financial year has continued to pose challenges for us, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and enduring responses to disaster management in our region. Our staff have continued with their agile responses to COVID-19 lockdowns and our important work has continued regardless. We are delighted to have welcomed a number of new staff during this financial year and we now have a full complement of experienced and passionate staff to manage our health promotion and prevention of violence against women activities. This year we also formalised a new Employee Assistance Program for our staff to ensure confidential access to counselling support where required.

Gippsland Women's Health is primarily funded by the Victorian State Government for women's health promotion activities and 2021 was the final year of the four year (2017 – 2021) Women's Health program funding cycle. For the first time, women's health services in Victoria have this year been called on to participate in a review of the Women's Health program guidelines to help shape the future of the program.

Gippsland Women's Health is also funded through the Free from Violence strategy which is Victoria's plan to break the cycle of family violence and violence against women. More detail on this work is included later in the report.

Our team have also worked diligently in developing prevention of violence against women training and resources and this has resulted in the production of an evidence informed training package entitled "Making the Link." This package has been delivered to a range of organisations across Gippsland including Community Houses, local government and health and social service organisations.



In March 2021 we were honoured to host a visit with Minister Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. During this visit, Minister Williams announced a one off funding boost to Gippsland Women's Health of \$140,000 to assist bushfire affected regions of Gippsland in the prevention of violence against women. This joint project with the East Gippsland Shire Council aims to improve the capacity and capability of the community and develop sustainable strategies to reduce violence against women.

Following a joint budget bid from the Women's Health Services Council we were advised of an increase in core funding of \$200,000 for the 2021 – 2022 financial year to meet growing demand for gender responsive healthcare.

2020/2021 also saw the enactment of the first ever Gender Equality Act (2020) in Victoria. This has been a historical opportunity for Gippsland Women's Health to assist defined entities – i.e. local government and public health services – in meeting their obligations under the Act and to actively work in reducing gender inequality.

This year has also seen the addition of one off projects, including the Workforce of Multicultural Health Educators (WoMHEn) Project. This project aims to support women from culturally and linguistically diverse background communities in Latrobe Valley in navigating through the major health and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19. Gippsland Women's Health and Gippsland Multicultural Services collaborated to form a team of bilingual women's health educators who would deliver health sessions across different multicultural communities in the Latrobe Valley.

Also this year, the Exploring the Impact of Disasters on Rural Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing project aimed to understand the reality of the cumulative impacts on women's mental health through a photo voice platform. This project collected the voices and images of those women living in remote and rural communities in Gippsland who have lived experience of COVID-19, drought, bushfire and/or other disaster during the last two years.

The acknowledgement of the impact of ongoing disasters and COVID-19 on women's mental health has been further confirmed through additional women's mental health funding announcements by the State Government for the 2021-2022 financial year.

A portrait of Minister Gabrielle Williams, a woman with curly brown hair, wearing a black blazer over a floral patterned top. She is smiling and standing in front of a stylized purple map of Gippsland.

**Minister  
Gabrielle  
Williams**



Our work is dependent on effective collaboration with partners across the region, including Local Government organisations, public health services, community health services, Gippsland Primary Health Network, GPs, and family violence and support services to name a few.

Our relationship with Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) across the region continues to be of great importance, as does our commitment to working with all local governments, particularly in the development of their Municipal Health and Wellbeing plans. Not only do we support and collaborate with the PCP's, but in Wellington Shire we also provide an auspice function for the Wellington PCP.

We continue to embrace the importance of the relationship with the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance (GFVA) both through our auspice responsibility and Governance Chair responsibilities.

This past year has seen a significant review of the governance functions associated with this auspice relationship, including the development of a Governance Partnership Agreement and formalisation of an auspice agreement.

The GFVA - through the solid work of the Principle Strategic Advisor - continue to provide opportunities for organisations within the family violence response sector to collaborate in a meaningful way to improve outcomes for women and children experiencing family violence in Gippsland. Further details of this work are provided in the GFVA reporting section. To see the full report, please [click here](#).

This year we have continued to support the McGrath Foundation Breast Care Nurse in the Wellington Shire and we extend our appreciation to the McGrath Foundation for their support and flexibility this year, particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 response.

**Kate Graham**  
**Gippsland Women's Health CEO**



**Jade Willox**  
Executive Assistant





# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

## Sexual and Reproductive Health Forum 2021

On 28 April 2021, the Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance held their annual Sexual Health Forum at the Traralgon Vineyard. The forum provides a dedicated professional development opportunity for nurses, teachers, school support staff, doctors, health promotion workers, community health workers or similar fields with an interest in sexual health, to come together and hear industry speakers present on a wide range of sexual health topics.

This year the forum was pleased to present:

- **Maree Crabbe (It's Time We Talked)** – Pornography, young people and sexuality today
- **Ashlee Bennett (The Body Image Therapist)** – Body image, mental health, wellbeing and working with youth
- **Simon Suttie (Gippsland Community Legal Service)** and **Mark Tregonning (Victoria Legal Aid)** – Sex and the Law
- **Sue Moreira (Family Planning Victoria)** – Teaching Consent from Foundation to Year 12
- **Adrian Hubble (Clinic 281)** – STI Partner notification processes and technology; online dating apps changing the STI language

The day coincided with Denim Day, with all attendees wearing denim to acknowledge and support victims of sexual assault. The forum hosted **70 attendees** who came from all across Gippsland, who were pleased to attend the first face-to-face event in 12 months and unfortunately one of the last for 2021.

### Wins

- Sex and the law
- Encouraging STI testing to young people / colleagues
- Info provided was relevant to various organisations and sub-regional Gender Equity & Violence Prevention Partnership
- Team discussions and feedback regarding policy
- Information on sexting & porn was eye-opening
- Four pillars of relationship education
- Sharing information gathered

### Learnings

- Hold the forums more regularly
- Increase advertisement in the lead up to the forums
- Record for future reference
- Live stream to increase accessibility

### Key Takeaways

- Teaching of consent to different ages, as this is a current issue in schools
- Presentations were very informative and available resources were useful
- The forum was well-organised, ran smoothly and on-time, and had broad and engaging speakers and information
- Exceptional knowledge and expertise of speakers
- Great venue and well-catered for all attendees

SRH Forum Attendee Feedback

**I have attended this forum in the past and have found it to be very informative and provides great professional development. This forum was no different. An exceptional line up of knowledgeable speakers who presented well and provided information that increased learning and strategies for application across a number of sectors.**

**Marleigh Andrews**  
Health Promotion  
Officer



# Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance 2017-2021 Strategy.

## Five Objectives.

1. To increase safe sex practices in young people in Gippsland by end of June 2021
2. To increase the number of Gippsland schools delivering comprehensive, inclusive relationship and sexual health education
3. To increase awareness about respectful relationships and access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for adults with minor intellectual disability in Gippsland by end June 2021
4. To improve affordable and confidential access to emergency contraception and termination
5. To increase health professionals' knowledge of endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome and menopause

## Gippsland Women's Health is the chair and lead organisation of the Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance.

The Alliance is made up of 30 dedicated partner organisations and across 2020/21 completed the final 12 months of their four year strategy.

## Outcomes.

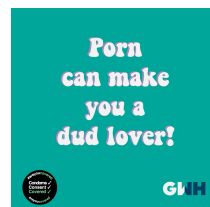
- Launched **Increasing Abortion and Contraceptives Services in Gippsland working group** - includes representation from 1800MyOptions, The Royal Women's Hospital and Gippsland PHN that aims to increase abortion and Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) services in Gippsland.
- Designed / launched **Pornography Talk Now Together Group** - includes school nurses across Gippsland, Education Department, lawyers and Family Planning Victoria. This group's primary aim is to prevent young people using pornography as a form of sex education, to highlight that pornography is not an accurate representation of real bodies, and demonstrates what consensual, respectful sex is. This is done through providing speakers such as **Maree Crabbe from Its Time We Talked** to the SRH Forum.
- Co-organised and funded **Maree Crabbe** to do an individual session at Bairnsdale Secondary College. School staff were provided with evidence-based knowledge of the impact of pornography on children and young people. Staff now have confidence to address this with school students and pass knowledge onto parents and care givers. **75% of participants strongly agreed** that the content of the session had built their knowledge and was applicable to their role.
- Launched **Stage 2 of the Condom Vending Machine Project** in the development of the **Home Town Condom Mapping project**, an online resource providing the location of easily accessible condoms across Gippsland.
- Across 2020/2021 SRH messaging has mostly been posted on the Gippsland Women's Health social media streams. This has increased the reach of messaging and has provided a greater opportunity for evaluation of effectiveness of communications.

The Gippsland Sexual Reproductive Health Alliance recognises the challenges that the COVID-19 Pandemic has had on service delivery and education during 2020-2021 and will ensure the next strategy does its best to mitigate these challenges.

## 2020-21 SRH Social Media Performance

**9649** **130** **528**  
PEOPLE REACHED SHARES LIKES

## TOP PERFORMING POSTS: Festive Season + Safe Sex Series





# FREE FROM VIOLENCE

**Gippsland Women's Health is funded through the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence for the Free from Violence Project. This funding is to ensure Gippsland Women's Health provide strategic leadership across Gippsland and support organisations and communities to collaborate in ending violence against women.**

This year, the third year of four years of funding has seen a major review of this project and re-calibration of a number of functions, to ensure we not only meet the project requirements, but strengthen our role as leaders of prevention of violence in the region. These improvements include:

- Establishment of a Regional Prevention Steering Committee led by Gippsland Women's Health and membership, inclusive of the sub-regional Prevention of Violence Against Women (PVAW) Convenors and other key stakeholders. This group has oversight for the Strategic Plan and to ensure that activities are rolled out both regionally and sub-regionally along with promoting partnerships and collaboration.
- Redesign of the Strategic Leadership Group to become the Regional Prevention Advisory Committee with Executive sponsorship responsibilities.

We have clearly articulated the responsibilities of Gippsland Women's Health as the funded lead agency for this work and invitations to all interested organisations across the region to become members of the Gippsland Free from Violence Partnership. Membership will enable organisations access to resources and support (such as training) from both Gippsland Women's Health and the Free from Violence Partnership.

Our staff have played a significant role in supporting the sub-regional PVAW committees and working groups and resourcing a range of initiatives across the region, including 15 Gippsland Women's Health staff participating in Active Bystander training.

Support of seven PVAW sub-regional groups with an estimated membership of 107 staff from across diverse sectors in Gippsland (Support services, Aboriginal services, Sexual Assault and FV services, Schools, Department of Education, Police, PCPs, Health services, Legal Services, Local Government).

There are an average of 35 members in each of the sub-regional PVAW groups, with some members sitting across multiple networks and groups.

Over the past year, Gippsland Women's Health staff have attended approximately 35 PVAW meetings across the region. Gippsland Women's Health staff also assisted in the development of a new PVAW network group in East Gippsland (Orbost Act Local) which has approximately 12 members.

This year Gippsland Women's Health also provided evaluation support and guidance to seven PVAW sub-regional groups, which has included the sharing of evaluation tools for evaluating social media and training, as well as providing extra support for sub-regional groups to utilise the Free From Violence/ANROWS knowledge and attitudes questionnaire.

Gippsland Women's Health also facilitated one prevention of violence social media skills workshop with approximately 15 participants.



**Melanie Brown**  
Manager -  
HP, GE and  
PVAW

**Fiona Passarin**  
Project  
Coordinator  
- GE and  
PVAW

16 Days of  
Activism  
Social  
Content

Overall Performance



11 posts in total



4124 people reached



3245 engagements

We facilitated five Making the Link (PVAW training) with approximately 10 participants at each workshop.

- Post workshop surveys were completed by 48 respondents and an increase in knowledge was identified among all participants in four out of the five modules.
- In four out of the five sessions, 100% of participants indicated that their self-capacity (to share and deliver the MTL information) had improved.

This year we partnered and collaborated with the PVAW networks on the 16 Days of Activism (16DOA) Film Campaign, with 28 people attending the introduction to Gender Equality and film making workshop. Eight films were submitted, seven of which can be viewed [here](#).

Gippsland Women's Health also partnered on the Gippsland research project with Common Cause to conduct research across Gippsland regarding Gender Equality messaging (involvement on working group, including project implementation and disseminating research findings).

The Common Cause Messaging project for rural and remote Gippsland aimed to test and evaluate gender equality messaging to assist regional partners in prevention of violence against women and to develop meaningful and impactful messages for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence and other relevant campaigns and projects.

This year we also partnered on the International Women's Day film screening for *Girl's Can't Surf*. with approximately 60 people attending the Wonthaggi event.

## GE Messaging Workshop Feedback

I seriously do not know where my head has been at with the GE messaging and this workshop from the very start. Going through the readings and the workshop has been brilliant. I have been racking my brain as to why I wasn't the first to book in!

It was brilliant. [Claire has] done such an amazing job in organising it and I know it would have been massive and hectic (especially with people wanting to lob in). I hope [Claire does not] go anywhere anytime soon, I think [Claire is] a real asset to Gippsland and this work. It is such a pleasure working with you.



# WORKFORCE CAPACITY TRAINING



Following the successful **Make the Link** campaign, the evidence informed “**Making the Link**” workforce capacity building training package has been developed and is being rolled out across Gippsland. The first training of the entire five modules has been completed and has received significantly positive feedback and support, with **99%** of participants strongly agreeing that they would recommend the training to colleagues in the workplace.

The modules are now accessible to organisations and the community and can be tailored to meet specific needs of organisations.

The training and subsequent feedback highlights the continued importance of education, training and workforce capacity building in the prevention space, with one participant revealing that this was the first time she had heard of the link between gender inequality and family violence.



## 2021 Participation Summary

**Module 1 – Introduction to Gender Equity = 25 participants**

**Module 2 – Introduction to Prevention = 20 participants**

**Module 3 – Prevention of Violence against Women = 19 participants**

**Module 4 – Disaster and Gender = 10 participants**

**Module 5 – Bystander = 16 participants**

**Nine (9) sessions.  
90 participants in total.**

## 2020

Gippsland Women's Health delivered Module 1 of MTL in September. **23 participants** registered from the following organisations:

- Gippsland Lakes Community Health
- Change for Sam
- Aspen Education Group
- Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal Healing Service
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Education
- Positive Minds Australia
- Ramahyuck
- Uniting Care Australia
- Gippsport
- Save The Children
- Link Health and Community

## 2021

Gippsland Women's Health delivered the Making the Link modules twice. **Five (5) modules** that began in April 2021 and **four (4)** that began in July 2021. The Gender and Disaster Module was not delivered in the second round. Participating organisations:

- West Gippsland Healthcare Group
- Gippsland Lakes Community Health
- Department of Education
- Latrobe Community Health Service
- Yarram District Health Service
- Victoria Police
- Latrobe City Council
- South Coast PCP
- Department of Defence
- Quantum Support Services
- Quantum Support Services
  - Adolescents Building Connections (ABC)

**Fiona Passarin**

Project Coordinator  
– GE and PVAW

**Claire Bower**

Health Promotion Officer

**Louise Kennedy Young**

Workforce Capacity and Training

# OUR WORK PROJECTS

GIPPSLAND  
WOMEN'S  
HEALTH

## The WoMHEn Project

Commencing in May 2021, the WoMHEn Project Gippsland is one of 12 regional projects across Victoria, bringing together Gippsland Women's Health and the Gippsland Multicultural Service in an innovative community approach to health and wellbeing for bilingual and migrant women. The project aims to bring multicultural women's health educators into Gippsland to provide educational information and support to communities, in relation to COVID-19.

Led by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), the Workforce of Multilingual Health Educators (The WoMHEn project) establishes a much-needed multilingual women's health education infrastructure across the state. This project highlights the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on Victorian women, and that migrant and multicultural women have been disproportionately impacted during this time. Our Gippsland project is focused on the Latrobe area, with health educators providing language sessions, as well as access to COVID-19 resources in over 20 languages.

**An open discussion with multicultural women - prior to enforcing rules - would help women raise their voice, have a say and understand better without fear. Religious and cultural beliefs of multicultural women should be taken into consideration by governments. More choice and flexibility for immigrants should be expected. - A woman from Latrobe.**

The team has been continuing to offer both online and in-person health education sessions on issues such as the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, mental health, sexual and reproductive health and family violence. The project also utilises collecting photos, interviews, and videos to engage with the community and explore their experiences and difficulties since the pandemic. It aims to go into the community, listen to refugee and migrant women, and use that information to develop resources, and build pathways to engaging, effective, empowering and respectful education.



The WoMHEn Project -  
Gippsland Team



On 28 July, the team reached out to 10 local health service providers and 12 community leaders in Latrobe through the community engagement session. The Zoom session - attended by leaders of multicultural community organisations - was held to introduce the WoMHEn Project and the all-women team of health educators.

Until the end of September 2021, more than 60 community members with different cultural backgrounds directly joined us through three health education sessions and photo-sharing / filming activities, including Indian, Filipino, Chinese, Italian, Serbian, Thai, Poland, Greece, German, Korean, Maltese and Malaysian.

**You are [all] doing an amazing job. People like us need to have activities like getting together and COVID-19 sessions, especially during current hard times.**

Across our activities, most of our participants expressed their anxiety and struggle both at home and the workplace. However, their willingness to share their stories has impressed the team and each session received highly positive comments.

It is evident that our multicultural women remain vulnerable and at risk. Gaps in accessing COVID -19 information for multicultural women have also been identified during these sessions. Currently, two health service providers in Latrobe have expressed their interest, and have since started to build a long-term relationship with our bilingual health educators to provide the local multicultural community with better access to health information. We extend our thanks to Gippsland Multicultural Service for their significant contributions. The team will continue to create a safe and comfortable space as a bridge for multicultural women to talk about their health and wellbeing, and to provide better access to health services.

**Thank you for your wonderful project, and [for the] chance for people in the community to share their stories and struggles. The resilience and courage of the participants is something to be acknowledged.**

**Wen Liu**

Health Promotion  
Officer



# GENDER EQUALITY ACT

This year the Gender Equality Act (2020) came into force in Victoria. This unparalleled legislation aims to ensure that defined entities promote gender equality in the workplace and consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services to the public.



## The objectives of the GE Act are to:

- Promote, encourage and facilitate gender equality
- Identify and eliminate systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and delivery of services in workplaces and communities
- Recognise that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination
- Redress disadvantage, address stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence, and accommodate persons of different genders by way of structural change
- Enhance economic and social participation by persons of different gender
- Promote the right to equality

Gippsland Women's Health have been active partners in the Action for Gender Equality Partnership (AGEP) alongside our peak organisation GEN VIC and other women's health services across Victoria. Several of our staff have undertaken significant training on the GE Act, Gender Impact assessments, workplace gender audits and Gender Equality Action Plans in order to train and support defined entities - i.e. local government and public health services - in meeting their obligations.

Following this training, our staff have facilitated and/or co-facilitated three GE training sessions for:

- South East Regional Health Services
- South East Regional Local Government
- Environment and Parks

Presentations to defined entities, such as local government CEO's and Mayors across Gippsland, have occurred this year to support them in meeting their obligations and to provide resources and support where identified and negotiated.



AGEP is a partnership of gender experts who provide gender equality transformation, support and excellence services to organisations across Victoria.

# Auspice Services

The **Gippsland Family Violence Alliance (GFVA)** provides regional strategic leadership for the family violence and community services sector along with brokerage, training and MARAM.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) provides guidance to organisations prescribed under regulations that have responsibilities in assessing and managing family violence risk, and ensures services across the region are effectively identifying, evaluating and handling family violence risk.

The GFVA co-designed and implemented the **System's Integration Survey** which was designed to provide a snapshot of how MARAM and information sharing was being used by practitioners across Gippsland.

During  
2020/2021  
there were  
**23 MARAM**  
sessions across  
the region with  
**551 participants**

## From the **191** survey responses:

**64%** confidence in the referral pathways for those using family violence

**78%** confidence in the referral pathways for those experiencing family violence

**57%** attended MARAM collaborative practice

**92%** had access to internal policies and procedures relating to risk assessment

**77%** confidence in working with those experiencing Family Violence

**58%** confidence in working with those using Family Violence

## BUSHFIRE RECOVERY PROGRAM

The GFVA played a significant role in the **Bushfire Recovery program** with **220** people trained in Family Violence literacy and MARAM foundations.

The participants were either employed at Bushfire Victoria or community services workers employed to assist bushfire recovery.

GFVA website went live  
**24 June 2021.**

**1332** visitors on  
Day 1 of launch

**6718** people reached via Stop  
Family Violence social  
media campaign

**Sarah  
Goddard**  
Family Violence  
Program  
Support

**Kim  
Adams**  
Principal  
Strategic  
Advisor,  
GFVA



# Auspice Services

## The McGrath Breast Care Nurse.

**Gippsland Women's Health has continued to support the co-location of the McGrath Breast Care nurse for Wellington and for women experiencing cancer.**

The McGrath Breast Care Nurse in Wellington - Marg Centra provides breast cancer support and patient care coordination in Wellington.

### Purpose.

- To provide patient education, appropriate resources and information relating to each person's breast cancer diagnosis, assist with decision making, patient advocacy, care coordination through the various phases of treatment and beyond, and emotional support to both patient and family members.
- McGrath Breast Care Nurses (BCN) show leadership on breast care matters through the provision of evidence based education to health care staff and the wider community.

### Project Partners.

BreastScreen Victoria; local, regional and metropolitan hospitals; doctors, surgeons, oncologists, nurses and allied health workers; pathology departments; Aqua Energy (Sale), Counterpart, Breast Cancer Network Australia; and local fundraisers and donors.

COVID-19 continued to create significant challenges to providing care, education and support, usually done through face to face meetings and hospital visits. With careful thought, planning and patient understanding, online technologies enabled us to continue to provide optimum care.

## OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS

**51** newly diagnosed patients

Along with providing continued care and support to those diagnosed in the last few years.

## 30 June 2020 - 1 July 1 2021

**529** activities / patient and specialist contacts

via phone or written, care coordination or psychological support.



**Marg Centra**  
McGrath Breast Care  
Nurse, Wellington



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**In February 2022, Gippsland Women's Health will celebrate a significant milestone in our 30 year anniversary - a remarkable achievement and an opportunity to showcase the significant contribution Gippsland Women's Health has made for the women of Gippsland over many years.**

Our focus continues to be on improving access to appropriate and timely health services for women in Gippsland, supporting women's health literacy, ending violence against women and leading the way for a more equal space for women and girls. This will only be achieved if we continue to nurture our relationships and collaborate effectively with the women of Gippsland and our key stakeholders.

Health promotion and prevention activities traditionally receive very little funding however, if done well, can bring about long term systemic change for our communities. A key objective in our work is to be able to provide evidence of the impact of our initiatives and the return on investment - this will be a priority goal over the next few years.

To maximise the potential of our initiatives and services, we recognise the importance of timely and effective communications. An integral tool as a means of making change and connecting with our communities, communications will play an increased key role across all Gippsland Women's Health activities.

We understand that to reach the right people, in the right ways, we must deliver our messaging to the women of Gippsland in a manner that resonates and is relevant to their needs. Our aim is to increase our region's capacity to understand who we are, what we do and signify our role in our community. The first major step - ensuring our website is able to reflect the progression of Gippsland Women's Health and improve the overall user experience.

Indigenous women experience higher rates of comorbid conditions such as diabetes, breast, cervical and ovarian cancers - this coming year we have committed to ensuring the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan to better understand and plan how we can work more effectively with Indigenous Women across Gippsland.

The status of women in Australia in 2021 and the continued inequality and increasing backlash is what drives the team at Gippsland Women's Health to continue our valuable work. We are often asked, **"why women, why women's health, why gender equity?"**



**Sam Foat**

Communications  
Coordinator



What we know is that women are intrinsically valued less than men with our decisions questioned and critiqued more than men's, and we are often held back from achieving our potential because of our gender.

- Economically women are paid on average 15% less than men for the same job and women have to work an extra 56 days a year to earn the same pay as men for doing the same work
- Contributing to the increase in homelessness in older women is the fact that women have an average 42% less superannuation than men when they retire
- Women account for 68% of primary carers for older people and people with a disability
- Women undertake the majority of unpaid care work in Australia

The primary driver of violence against women and girls and family violence is gender inequity.

- On average, one woman is murdered every week in Australia by a man
- Violence is more damaging to the health of Victorian women aged 15–44 years than any other well-known risk factors, including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking
- Women who experience family and intimate partner violence are more likely to report poor mental health, physical function and general health than other women

Australian women experience different health outcomes than Australian men.

- Compared with males, women have a higher life expectancy, experience more disease burden due to living with disease and injury and are more likely to experience sexual violence and to have multiple chronic health conditions
- Women's health outcomes are exacerbated by factors including an ageing female population, increased poverty and homelessness, increases in mental ill-health, chronic disease and dementia, rurality and remoteness and culture diversity with nearly 30% of Australian women born overseas
- Women still do not have control over their reproductive choices and sexual and reproductive healthcare is still seen as optional or a luxury form of care

Gippsland Women's Health commits to identifying, supporting and promoting more innovative approaches across Gippsland to maintain women's safety, ensure access to health services when and how women need them and to ensure women's economic status and contribution is recognised, encouraged and remunerated more appropriately.



# TREASURER'S REPORT



**Jenny O'Neill**  
Treasurer

**I am delighted to present Gippsland Women's Health Financial Report for the year 2020/2021.**

I want to thank the CEO; Kate Graham, our previous Treasurer; Karen Desira, Business Manager; Janine Pilgrim, and casual Accountant; Jo Harris for their significant work, especially over these last eight months. At the end of the 2020/2021 year, we remain absolutely satisfied with the financial position of Gippsland Women's Health.

The total revenue of Gippsland Women's Health was \$1,958,945 which is a slight increase from the previous year. These funds were received from a range of areas including core funding, project work and auspice services. Of particular note is funding for the East Gippsland Prevention of Violence Project and in Latrobe City, the Workforce of Multicultural Health Educators (WoMHEn) Project.

The overall result for this year was a modest operating deficit of \$5,065.

Board reassurance comes with the announcement of additional and ongoing core funding for women's health promotion of \$200,000 annually commencing in the 2021/2022 financial year. Further to this is an additional \$50,000 in 2021/2022 to undertake further work in regard to women's mental health.

The Board Finance and Risk Committee is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the financial performance of the organisation in collaboration with the CEO and Business Manager. This year, all stakeholders worked closely to ensure a detailed and timely end of year audit process was completed which in turn resulted in an uneventful audit report.

Gippsland Women's Health has adequate capacity to manage liabilities associated with auspice services (trust funds) and employee provisions. With revised annual budgeting processes and retained earnings strategies, the organisation is in a very encouraging position.



**Janine Pilgrim**  
Business Operations  
Manager

**Kerry Walker**  
Finance Officer

**Lynette Teese**  
Administration and  
Information Services



# **GIPPSLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH**

**For more information**  
**Gippsland Women's Health**  
**[www.gwhealth.asn.au](http://www.gwhealth.asn.au)**



**@GippslandWomensHealth**