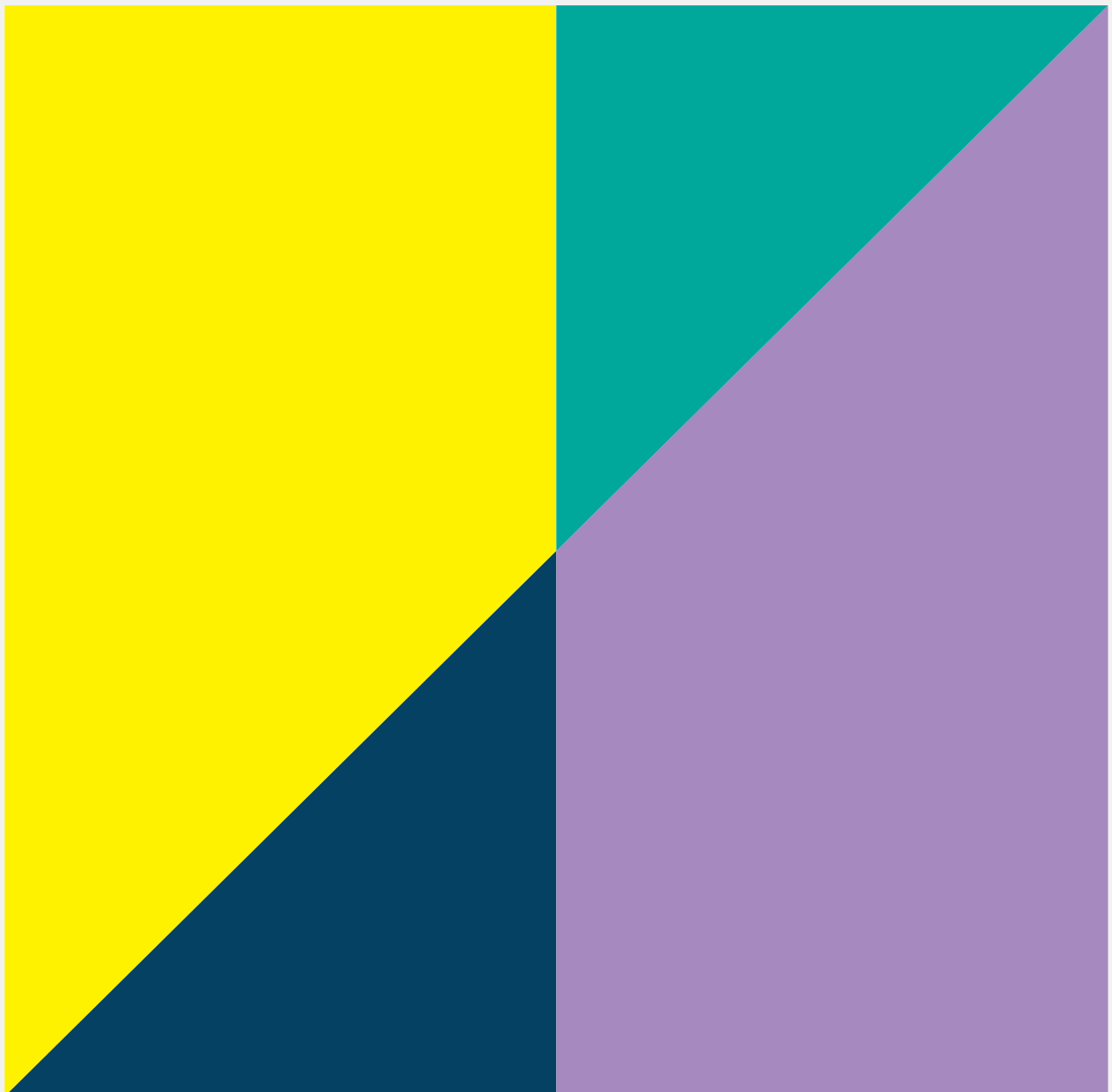


# GIPPSLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Annual Report

2019-2020



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[www.gwhealth.asn.au](http://www.gwhealth.asn.au)

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+ Group images in this document were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation Gippsland Women's Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people are the traditional owners of Gippsland. There are approximately 3,000 Gunaikurnai people, and their territory includes the coastal and inland areas to the southern slopes of the Victorian Alps. Gunaikurnai people are made up of the five major clans the Brabralung, Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Krauatungalung and the Tatungalung people.

We also acknowledge the Bidwal and Monero (Ngarigo) people whose land crosses the Gippsland border.

## Acknowledgements

GWH 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, GWH 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.

GWH would like to acknowledge the many partner organisations with whom we have worked in this reporting period. These partnerships are integral to our work, being able to improve women's health, wellbeing and equity in Gippsland.

Gippsland Women's Health acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



# Our Vision: An equal and respectful Gippsland for all women.

Gippsland Women's Health (GWH) is the lead organisation for gender equity, women's health, prevention of violence against women, and family violence system leadership in Gippsland.

## Our Purpose

To improve women's health, wellbeing and freedom of choice by advancing gender equity and working to prevent violence against women.

In line with our vision, we:

- Put women's experiences first
- Are inclusive and respectful
- Value the contributions of our partners
- Have the courage to innovate and build the evidence base
- Are bold in our efforts to achieve fairness and justice for all women in Gippsland



GWH has been  
serving women  
for 29 years,  
since 1991.

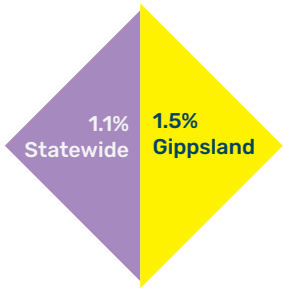


Gippsland has a female population of 138,177, which is 50.9 percent of the total population of 271,273.

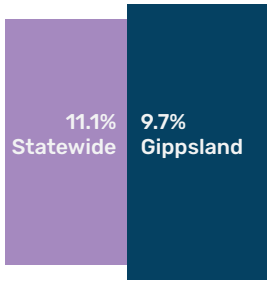
Based in Sale close to the geographic centre of Gippsland, GWH works to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life outcomes for women living and working in the six local government areas of East Gippsland, Wellington, Latrobe City, Baw Baw, Bass Coast and South Gippsland.

Gippsland stretches from the east of Greater Melbourne’s eastern suburbs to the New South Wales border, covering an area of over 41,000 square kilometres. The region consists of beaches, farmland, mountains and lakes, with industries including agriculture, forestry, dairy and pastoral productions, fishing, coal mining, and oil and gas extraction and processing.

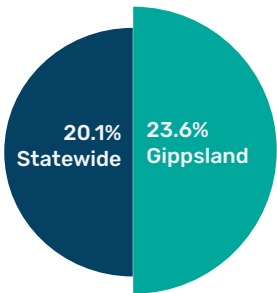
Women identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



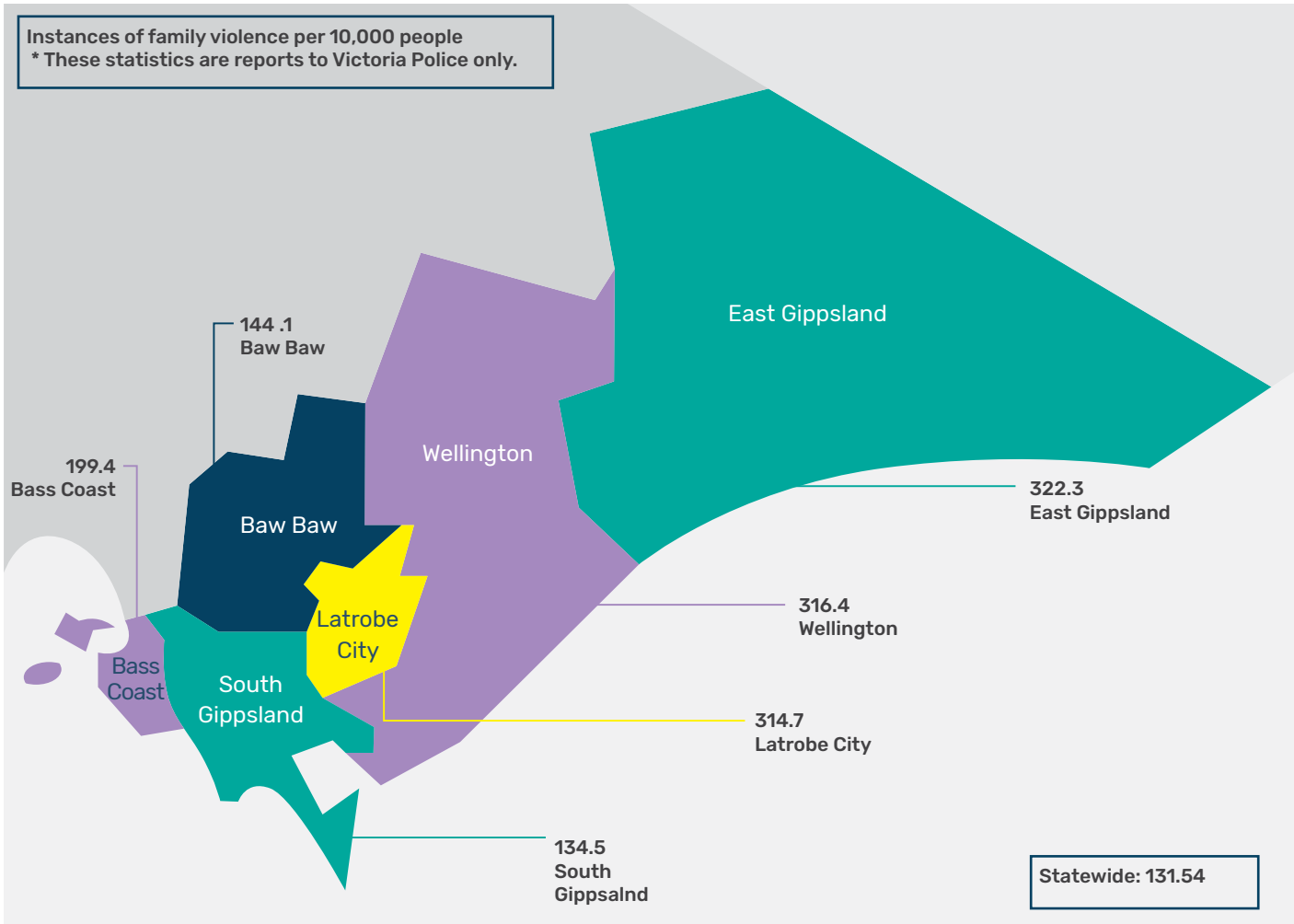
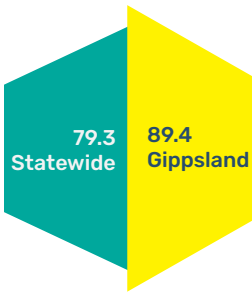
Women aged 15-24



Women aged 65+



Women per 10,000 diagnosed with breast cancer in 5 year period



# Board Report

Whilst many changes have been happening within Gippsland Women's Health, extraordinary changes occurred in the world as we knew it. Gippsland continued with the effects of drought, then bushfires impacted entire communities again.

However, in the background a global disaster was unfolding. COVID-19 arrived and we began to experience the impacts of a global pandemic. Gippsland was not spared. The world that we knew changed; how we worked, how we schooled children, how we maintained existing relationships and how we built new ones. Through all of this I have seen the amazing strength and resilience of women demonstrated yet again.

To continue the theme of change and extraordinary times I need to acknowledge and thank our CEO, Fiona Owen, for the work that has predominantly been undertaken offline to ensure that all the phases of the Review and Refresh will conclude this year. This work ensures that GWH remains a relevant and robust organisation in the area of women's health and wellbeing. During this time we've had an Acting CEO, Melanie Brown, who has steered the organisation and staff through the many day to day changes including those that COVID-19 has brought. Thank you both Fiona and Mel. It's been exceptionally rewarding working with you, unusual to work with two CEOs at the same time, but I am grateful to you both for your efforts and commitment to GWH.

I would like to acknowledge the staff of Gippsland Women's Health for their ongoing commitment to not only the organisation but to the women of Gippsland. Thank you for your flexibility in how you adapted to organisational changes, the changes to how you have worked due to COVID-19 and in ensuring the ongoing delivery of programs. Your working world changed in so many ways and so did you.



To the Board of Management – you have been wonderful in the ongoing support and commitment you have demonstrated in these most peculiar times. You have all had your own personal challenges but you have never failed to provide ongoing support and governance to GWH and to me. Thank you all for your remarkable work this past year.

I conclude this report by announcing with regret that our CEO, Fiona Owen, has tendered her resignation. On behalf of the Board of Management of GWH I would like to acknowledge Fiona's visionary work and leadership and thank her for the work done in ensuring the viability and relevance of the organisation through the changes we have undertaken through Review and Refresh. Fiona leaves GWH in a very strong position. We wish Fiona well in her retirement and hope that she leaves us with a sense of achievement and fulfillment for a job well done. Thank you Fiona!

I hope that 2021 brings new growth and new opportunities but mostly that we have found a way to be kinder to each other and can continue to support each other in our collective roles, and also in achieving our individual goals. Thank you for your support of Gippsland Women's Health.

Sue Barker  
Chair

"I would like to acknowledge the staff of Gippsland Women's Health for their ongoing commitment to not only the organisation but to the women of Gippsland."



# CEO Report

So much of 2019 and 2020 has presented us with extremes that have challenged our ingenuity, tested our resilience, pushed our resolve and strained our agility and adaptability: -drought, bushfires, COVID-19.

Many people have said that the worst purchase that they made in 2019 was a 2020 planner. Well that's true. However, look at what we have come through together, and become stronger because of.

Many people have said that they just want 2020 to be over. Well that's true too. However, we would never have had such an opportunity for reflection, and to learn new ways to work, focus on ours and others wellbeing through discipline, kindness and gratitude. We have had an extraordinary opportunity to take a deep dive into what we really mean by community, team work, inclusion, respect, tolerance, diversity and, ultimately, how we behave and foster a sense of belonging under pressure.

There is no doubt that the twelve months from the Winter of 2019 until the Winter of 2020 have been a time of reflection, review, challenge, change and renewal for GWH. Our new branding has given us a bright and modern uplift and our new website provides a simpler, cleaner and more accessible way to communicate with the women of Gippsland and our partner and funding organisations.

Ticking away in the background during this time was an important piece of work lead by the GWH Board. The GWH Review and Refresh was initiated by the Board in July 2019 as a final action from the Board's strategic priorities and planning process. It has resulted in a newly organised and refreshed structure and positions in GWH and has seen the establishment of new positions and new ways of working together.

The Board wanted to make certain through the Review and Refresh that GWH has the right positions, organised in the right way and with the right people to deliver on our strategic priorities for the women



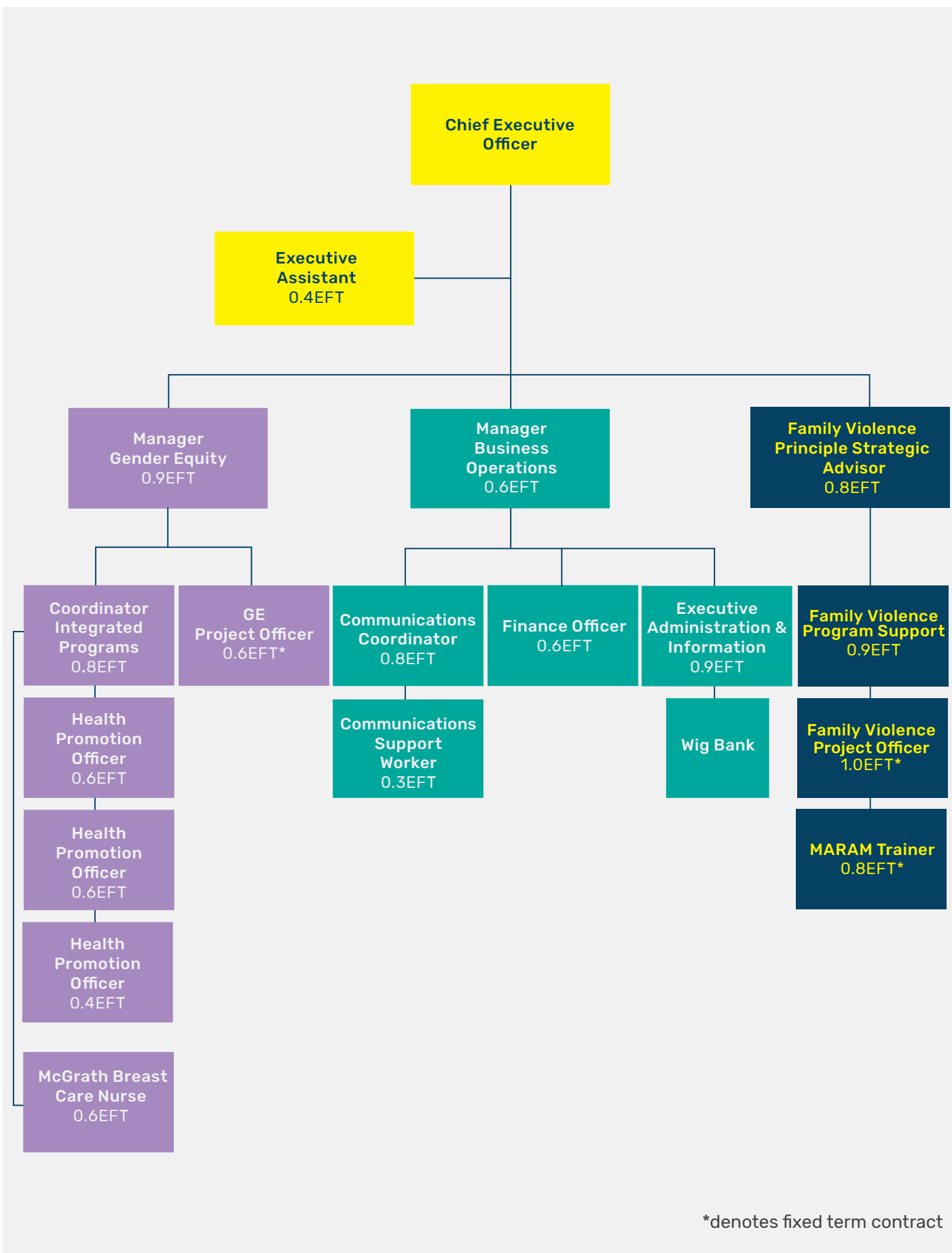
of Gippsland. The Board wanted a structure that achieved strong integration of our work, enhanced collaboration, reflected distributed leadership and shared responsibility across the organisation for leadership and decision making. The structure needed to enable career progression, strength based performance development and succession planning. Overall the Review and Refresh needed to support the long term sustainability of GWH, including a more robust business structure and stronger business acumen, expanded administration capacity and a greater strategic focus.

Change always brings a range of challenges, emotions, possibilities and opportunities. Our need to be courageous in reflection, to be brave in seeking a new shape for our organisation, and to be flexible and adaptable to find new ways to work, has made us uncomfortable some days. Not everyone has stayed. Others have joined us.

In the end, we believe it makes us more relevant into the future and better able to achieve our vision of an equal and respectful Gippsland for all women.

Fiona Owen  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our New Structure



# Board Members & Staff

## Board Members

Sue Barker  
Chair

Leah Radatti  
Deputy Chair

Kristen Millar  
Treasurer

Alisha Gilliland  
Secretary

Kirstie Pearce  
Chair  
Leave of absence March to June 2020  
Board Member

Alissa Wallace  
Board Member

Deb Manning  
Board Member

Antoinette Holm  
Board Member resigned March 2020

Vanessa Leahy  
Treasurer and Board Member  
resigned April 2020  
Leave of absence January to April 2020

## Staff Members

Andrea Hall

Anna Roberts

Claire Haines

Clare McHugh

Fiona Owen

Fiona Passarin

Grace De Keersmaecker

Gillian McIlwain

Heather Watts

Jan Tracey

Janine Pilgrim

Jill Wood

Judith Cobby

Kerry Walker

Kim Adams

Lynette Teese

Marg Centra

Marilyn Manukia

Melanie Brown

Pam Parker

Sarah Goddard

Selena Gillham

Sophie Gillham





# Our Work

## Advancing Gender Equality

Women's health and wellbeing is shaped by gender inequality. Gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women. Through gender equality we prevent family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls, create equitable access to women's health services and improve financial security and equal opportunities for women. We promote fairness and justice for all women, to fundamentally shift the causes of health inequalities for women.

## Gender Equity

- Gender Equality Report
- Submissions and Advocacy
- International Women's Day
- Health Information
- Period Support
- Global Climate Strike

## Family Violence System Leadership

- Gippsland Family Violence Alliance
- Regional Integration Coordination
- Workforce Capacity Strategy
- Stop Family Violence Resources
- Family Violence Training and Education

## Cancer Support

- McGrath Breast Care Nurse, Wellington
- Breast Cancer Support Group
- Breast Cancer Assistance Programs
- Living Well after Breast Cancer Program
- Survivorship Program
- Wig Bank

## Preventing Violence Against Women

- Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition
- Gippsland For Gender Equality Coordination
- Workforce Capacity
- Active Bystander Program (MATE)
- Gender and Disaster in Gippsland Leadership and Projects
- Make The Link Campaign
- Respectful Relationships Schools Poster Competition
- 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

## Sexual and Reproductive Health

- Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance
- Statewide Community of Practice
- Theory of Change
- Relationship and Sexual Health School Grants
- Annual Sexual Health Forum
- Non-Directive Pregnancy Options Counselling Mapping
- Condom Vending Machines Initiative
- Are You Covered Campaign

# Our Strategic Direction

The Gippsland Women's Health Strategic Plan 2018–2025 and the Operational Action Plan identifies the outcomes and changes that Gippsland Women's Health want to achieve for the women of Gippsland.

## Strategic Priorities

### Building the Evidence

Using our expertise in a regional, rural and remote context we will build on existing evidence and create opportunities to lead new research.

### Organisational Sustainability

Creating stronger organisational systems that enhance our workforce and the promotion of our expertise in women's health in Gippsland.

### Partnerships and Integration

Collaborating at all levels for greater fairness and justice for all women in Gippsland.

### Communications and Engagement

Strengthening our connection with all women across Gippsland, communicating and engaging with expertise and conviction.

### Lead and Influence

Advocating and leading using our expertise in women's health and wellbeing to achieve equality for all women.



## Longer-term Changes

Organisational cultures and practices across Gippsland are gender transformative.

The work of GWH is mainstreamed and we have an equal and respectful Gippsland for all women.

# Advancing Gender Equality

## International Women's Day 2020: Female Artists collaborate

'Powerful together, Uniquely different' exhibition celebrated women and women artists. A collaboration with six female artists and hosted at the Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale, to celebrate the diversity and unity of women in our community.

The exhibition was a powerful display of artwork that highlighted women's unique stories, with all pieces emphasising gender inequality, discrimination and violence women have faced through the centuries and continue to face today, and remind us of the importance of advancing gender equality. The exhibition helped to increase the visibility of female artists in gallery spaces, it included established and emerging Gippsland artists with diverse artistic styles from right across Gippsland. The artists were Kate Shone and Cat Blamey, Casey Miller, Claire Marston, Emma Hearnese and Jaquie Swan.

## Support for Global Climate Strike

Gippsland Womens Health endorsed the Global Day for Climate Action, Friday 20 September 2019 by supporting the School Strike 4 Climate, the Australian student leaders of the global movement for change and endorse their demands for a cleaner, safer, more just society. The Board and staff committed to taking action and made the decision to close our Sale office on the day, with staff and Board attending Climate Strike rallies across the world, in Sale, Foster, Melbourne, Perth and Dublin, Ireland.

GWH works from a feminist perspective that is committed to being sustainable and responsive to the environmental factors affecting women's health.

## Period Support

Wanting to contribute to the care of women and girls in East and Far East Gippsland after the summer bushfires, we put the call out to receive donations of period products. Whether it's convenient or not, women continue to bleed at regular intervals regardless of what is going on around them.

Donations immediately came through the door. Locals dropped off items and many made trips from further afield to deliver car loads of collected items, while some boxes were posted to us from interstate. Distributors TOM Organic, Bamboo Babe and Libra generously donated pallets of product; Accalia donated menstrual cups; and Modibodi provided period underwear. Share the Dignity, Melbourne Period Project, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre all delivered supplies. Celebration Day for Girls provided a beautiful variety of reusable cloth pads. With requests to give monetary donations, an online donation capacity was set up, and over \$8,000 in donations has been generously received.

GWH continues to deliver and supply free period products, with the assistance of our partner organisations and pick up points in many towns, to anyone who bleeds monthly in East and Far East Gippsland. Supplies are also being posted out.



We were delighted to receive so many generous donations to the Period Support Project for anyone who bleeds and was impacted by the summer bush fires.



Cara and her children from Geelong delivered items collected from her community (above); Trish with a load from the Churchhill Voluntary Fire Relief (middle); Samara from Prahan (bottom).

# Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women

**GWH convenes and leads the Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition (Preventing Violence Against Women) (GFFVC), with the aim of achieving a Gippsland free from violence and equality for all.**

This year, unlike previous years, we saw our work in gender equity and the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women take an unintended and tragically unwanted specific focus on the impact of disasters on women's lives.

The drought that beset the Wellington and East Gippsland Shires in 2019-2020 was crippling and during that period of time we saw the inevitable increase in gender stereotypes re-emerging in the face of chaos, uncertainty and tragedy. Farming families and those that relied on them for social and economic support were driven into spaces where they had little power or control over the forces of nature.

Predictably family violence escalated and we worked to provide support to the Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition partnerships as they attempted to maintain service provision in rural towns where gender inequality and family violence rose, as social capital and the economy was diminishing.

We undertook a project with farmers across Wellington focussing on the harmful impacts of male stereotypes in an attempt to support men in their agricultural workplaces. We discovered that there were in fact several layers of the community who were being impacted by the drought. Little did we know that with the opening of January 2020, the lessons learnt and the resources developed for this project would be the basis of extensive work we would then undertake in East and Far East Gippsland in the tragic aftermath of the bushfires.



Tracey Gaudry, CEO Respect Victoria and Gina Boyanton, past Chair GWH Board.

## Prevention of Violence Against Women Projects

### Disaster and Gender

- Building capacity of frontline responders in East and Far East Gippsland bushfire affected areas.
- Building capacity of prevention practitioners in bushfire impacted and affected areas
- Farmers in Drought: Wellington Shire co-designed with farmers and related groups
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (Design on a Bus)

### Development of:

- Making the Link - a training resource of five complimentary modules designed to build workforce capacity
- Building leadership capacity of MATE facilitators and trainers
- Building capacity and capability of the Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition
- Establishment of the fifth subregional group - Wellington Gender Equity & Prevention of Violence Against Women Group - of the Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition

### Emerging Issues:

- Climate change and women in rural and remote regions
- Modern Masculinity and the Man Box
- Prevention measurement and evidence
- Cumulative impacts of disasters on women's health and wellbeing
- Impact of disaster on gender equality
- More reliance on spoken narrative and visual expression of gender equity in Gippsland
- The gendered aftermath of disaster

Funding source: The Office of Women, Department of Premier and Cabinet.





## Gender Equity Program

### Capacity Building

Training in workplaces and community:

- 6 Disaster and Gender workshops
- 9 Make The Link workshops
- 18 Gender Equality sessions
- 2 Communities of Practice workshops

### Advocacy

- Expert Leadership – 3 panels including impact of COVID-19 on prevention practitioners
- Expert content input into 2 Prevention of Violence Against Women Masterclasses
- Presentation to One Gippsland (Mayors and CEOs of Gippsland's Shire Councils)

### Committees and Representation: Partnership Contribution

- Five Subregional PVAW groups across Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, Wellington and South Coast
- Change For Sam
- Women's Health Services Council
- Wellington Bushfire Recovery Committee
- East Gippsland Psychosocial Recovery Committee
- Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance
- Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition Convener's group



+ Images on these page were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Finalists, Design on a Bus competition, Sale November 2019.

## Challenging Gender Stereotypes Through Art

GWH partnered once again with Gippsland Department of Education and Training to run an art competition with the Gippsland schools signed up for the Respectful Relationship initiative during Term 3, 2019. The 'Challenging Gender Stereotypes' school student Design on a Bus competition launch was hosted by Wellington Shire Council at the Port of Sale in November 2019.

- 520 students from 23 Gippsland Respectful Relationships schools entered the competition
- 376 posters received
- 7 finalists' were selected and their artwork was displayed on the side of buses in Wellington, Latrobe and Baw Baw (funding from the Latrobe Health Assembly, Wellington Shire Council and Baw Baw Shire Council)
- reproduced as posters and displayed across Gippsland during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to the 10 December (Human Rights Day)
- Promoted and normalised gender equality by challenging gender norms
- Posters can be **downloaded at our website** as classroom and community resources.

Pictured left: Gender and Disaster Training, Bairnsdale February 2020: Building capacity of the gendered aftermath of disasters.

# Family Violence System Leadership



**GWH plays an integral role in addressing family violence in Gippsland by coordinating and supporting the integration of family violence services, employing the family violence service systems integration team and resourcing the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance.**

## **The Gippsland Family Violence Alliance**

The Gippsland Family Violence Alliance (GFVA) is made up of 30 organisations guiding the integration of the regional family violence service system and overseeing reform processes to achieve safety, accountability and choice.

## **Family Violence System Integration Team**

The team, including the Principal Strategic Advisor, provides leadership for family violence service system integration, convenes and supports regional networks and forums, disseminates key family violence service system information, delivers and supports workforce capability and training, builds and facilitates links between local, regional and statewide family violence governance structures.

## **Partnership Restructure**

The GFVA is a robust longstanding partnership and has sustained a large membership for 13 years. A significant change for the GFVA is a new co-designed strategic structure. The structure reflects the partnership's commitment to a successful family violence integrated service system in Gippsland and supports the strategic priorities and statewide initiatives to increase safety for victim/survivors and their children, and hold perpetrators accountable.

## **Strategic Planning**

Extensive strategic planning was undertaken to define the direction of the GFVA over the next four years. A rural and remote lens will be applied to the four reviewed strategic pillars, which are:

- Governance
- Workforce Capability and Capacity
- System Integration and Improvements
- Data and Evidence

## **Communication**

Four electronic newsletters were distributed to over 300 practitioners and agencies.

- Governance: essential, strategic and decision making updates
- GFVA Updates: practitioner communication providing cross sector information on local, state and federal developments
- Communities in Focus: builds practise to address family violence across a number of diverse communities
- GFVA Partnership: quarterly newsletter supporting knowledge building and encouraging collaboration.

## **Stop Family Violence campaign**

GWH led a community focused social media campaign by the GFVA during the first COVID-19 lockdown (19 May-7 July, 2020) asking Gippsland organisations and businesses to display the STOP Family Violence cards and posters in public spaces. The primary goal of highlighting that family violence support services remained open despite COVID-19 restrictions. Reach included:

- Reaching over 7,400 people
- 7 Facebook posts
- 49 shares
- 356 post interactions
- 226 website views
- 26 requests for resources

Funding source: Family Safety Victoria and Department of Health and Human Services.



## Workforce Capacity and Capability

### MARAM Collaborative Practice

GWH delivered Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Collaborative Practice training sessions to community services workers across Gippsland. The training aims to promote cross sector use of the MARAM Framework to ensure identification, response and shared information across family violence services.

### Building on Gippsland's Foundations

A four year workforce capability and capacity strategy 'Building on Gippsland's Foundations' was developed. 120 individuals participated in an open consultation around all aspects of the workforce. The strategy outlines nine key priority areas to support workforce development, recruitment, knowledge and skill building.

## Advocacy

In 2020 the GFVA advocated to ensure that all Gippslanders have access to an equitable service system and that rural and remote voices are included within the reform, through submissions to:

- The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor
- The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System
- Inquiry Into Homelessness In Victoria
- Joint advocacy with Domestic Violence Victoria on key issues affecting the safety of victims of family violence including safety hubs and bushfire recovery.

## Partnership moves online

Due to COVID-19, GFVA moved its partnerships online. This transition was a learning curve for all members however online programs are now being used to effectively and proactively facilitate communication, meetings and training sessions.



# Sexual and Reproductive Health

**GWH continues to lead and engage in advocating for improved sexual and reproductive health services in Gippsland. GWH guides and resources the Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance, working 'for people in Gippsland to have positive, respectful, safe sexual relationships and reproductive choice.'**

## Gippsland's 9th Annual Sexual Health Forum

The annual forum was held in December 2019 with almost 50 Gippsland health, community services and education professionals attending. Presentations included Sexting, the National Survey of Secondary School Students and Sexual Health; Sexuality Education and Respectful Relationships; Teaching sex positive sexuality education; and concluded with Ro Allen, Gender and Sexuality Commissioner, Equality Branch, speaking on Inclusive Practice.

## Relationships & Sexual Health School Grants

The Relationships and Sexual Health School grant program, initiated in 2015 as part of the Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2013-17, continues to be included in the current strategy 2019-21. The eligibility criteria expanded in 2019 to include schools that were participating in the Respectful Relationships program.

Since 2015, 25 Gippsland schools received grants: Baw Baw (6); Bass Coast (2); East Gippsland (4); Latrobe (2); South Gippsland (7) and Wellington (4).

The grants have funded:

- 43 teachers to do 'In-class professional learning workshops'
- 13 'Parent/Carers Information Sessions';
- 10 'Whole of school professional learning workshops' across Gippsland
- Resources to support students/families and assist with lessons
- Sexual Health and Wellbeing educational day
- Sexual health awareness and gender diversity (LGBTIQ+) education campaigns.

Gippsland has strengthened the relationship with Family Planning Victoria, accessing their expertise and evidence based resources, curriculums and secondary consultations. This has increased the number of Gippsland teaching staff who are trained to deliver comprehensive, inclusive sexual health education. It has also enabled schools to involve the wider community, particularly parents and carers in discussions and education of the students about sexual health and wellbeing.

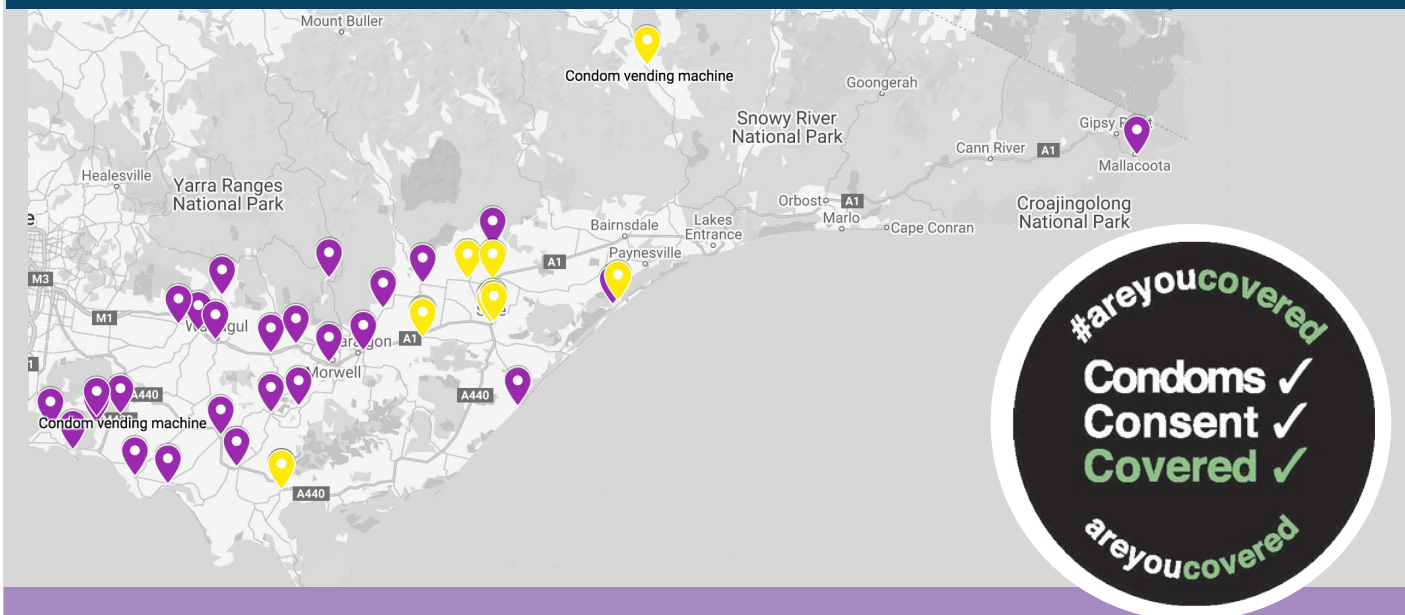
## Feminar Series #2: Sex Ed by Porn? Pornography, young people and sexuality

It was heartening to see the level of interest in the Pornography, Young People and Sexuality Forum, July 2019, addressing pronography and young people. Maree Crabbe shared her expertise, research and activities to over 50 professionals working to prevent violence against women, promoting sexual and reproductive health and advancing gender equity.



Funding source: Department of Health and Human Services.

## Condom Vending Machine Map



### Condom Vending Machine Project

Collaborating with local government, health services and community groups, three new machines were installed during 2019/2020, increasing access to condoms and bringing the total machines installed across the six local government areas to 36. GWH sent condoms to bushfire affected communities to help reduce risk of STIs and unplanned pregnancies.

All 36 condom vending machines and the location of free condoms are now logged on **Goggle Maps**. A full list of locations is available at [www.gwhealth.asn.au](http://www.gwhealth.asn.au)



Sex Ed by Porn? presenter Maree Crabbe, Selena Gillham GWH, Prue Moston-Duggan, Kate Neocleous GCASA, July 2019



# Cancer Support

**GWH continues to support women experiencing cancer.**

## McGrath Breast Care Nurse in Wellington

Providing 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.

Despite almost half the year being impacted with COVID-19 restrictions, the Wellington BCN had 1150 direct contacts (with patient) and indirect contacts (members of the health team and provision of care coordination) with breast cancer patients during this past year.

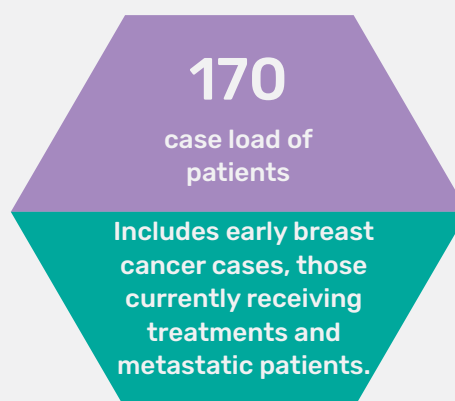


Marg Centra, McGrath Breast Care Nurse in Wellington

### Highlights

- Assisted with establishment of new lymphoedema clinic and referral process for the region
- 8 Pink Ribbon Breast Cancer Support Group meetings held at GWH
- Facilitated quarterly peer support meetings with McGrath BCN's in Gippsland.
- Established smoother referral process between BCN and Gippsland Central Health Palliative Care unit.
- Promotion of breast self-check during COVID-19.

COVID-19 created 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.



Funding source: McGrath Foundation and donations.

# Wig Bank

The Gippsland Women's Health Wig Bank provides wigs to any women living in Gippsland who experience hair loss due to cancer treatment or other health conditions requiring chemotherapy.

The arrival of the COVID-19 coronavirus resulted in the Wig Bank being closed for the first time since it's opening in 2010. Steady borrowing in the first 8 months of the financial year saw 22 borrowers who were able to come in and borrow a wig free of charge, whilst they navigated the health circumstances that caused their hair loss. This can be enormously important for maintaining a sense of identity and confidence for many women and is the driving force behind the Wig Banks existence.

The Wig Bank continues to be funded by donations and has expanded now to house more than 100 wigs of all colours, styles and lengths. A number of donations of good quality wigs were received, enhancing the number and variety of wigs available for borrowing. We look forward to the time when the Wig Bank can be reopened and for this important resource to be available for Gippsland women once again.

## 9 Years Service

The wig bank will celebrate 10 years in August 2020.



Lynette Teese, Wig Bank Coordinator

"I dreaded the reality and implications of having to have a wig, but your care and empathy meant it was a gentler experience with a sense of positivity at the outcome. I really appreciated your help, and the generosity that made the wig bank possible."

## Wig Borrower



Funding source: Donations and GWH support

# Communication

## Events

### 2018/19 Annual General Meeting

GWH's Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 21 November 2019 at the Port of Sale. Featuring an engaging panel discussion titled 'We are Rural Women, We are Diverse' guided by ABC Gippsland presenter Amber Irving-Guthrie with local guest speakers Erin Mathews, Dr. Sybille Dobber, Yumna Ahmed, Ivy Yarram and Susanna Pain. Prior to the formalities Erin Mathews, Curator of the Gippsland Art Gallery conducted a tour of the art gallery.

### Women's Health Week (2-6 September 2019)

GWH celebrated Women's Health Week by promoting resources and messaging from Jean Hailes on social media and hosting the screening of the Women's Adventure Film in Wonthaggi and Stratford. These events provided a unique opportunity for GWH to engage with the community and reach a new population of women in Gippsland.

### International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated at Gippsland Art Gallery's First Friday event, for a discussion with the 'Powerful Together, Uniquely Different' exhibition artists on March 6. The exhibition ran for several months, however it was interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions.

### New Brand and Website

September 2019 saw a new look for GWH with the launch of our bold new logo and brand. The new colours and geometric design reflect our work in shaping and advancing a Gippsland for equality and respect. Our new tagline 'Advancing equality and respect' succinctly defines our purpose. Our new website went live in March 2020, features our strong new colours and modern design. It is easy to navigate and tells you everything you need to know about our work, with downloadable resources, publications and information on support services.

Funding source: Department of Health and Human Services.

## Influence and Reach

### Newsletters

One print newsletter was produced this year: Resilience and Renewal: after crises (Winter Spring 2020) with messages of strength as we all adapted to the impacts of living in regional and rural Victoria, bush fires, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic.



520 people received 13 additions of the eNews

### Media

11 Media Releases and Position Statements with multiple interviews

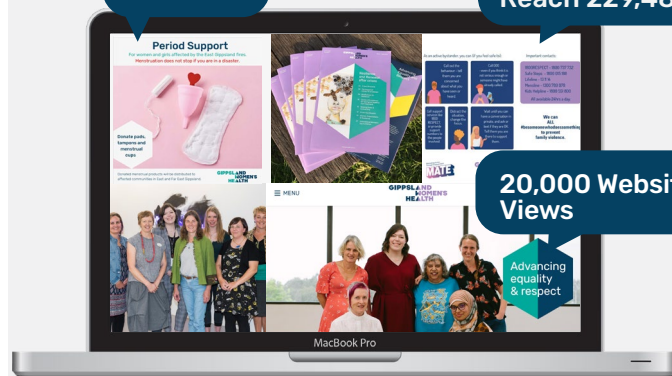
We have created engaging online content that has reached just over **290,000** people.

Instagram Reach 41,064



Top Post 7.2k Reach

Facebook Posts Reach 229,489



+ Images on this page were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.



# The impact of COVID-19 on our work

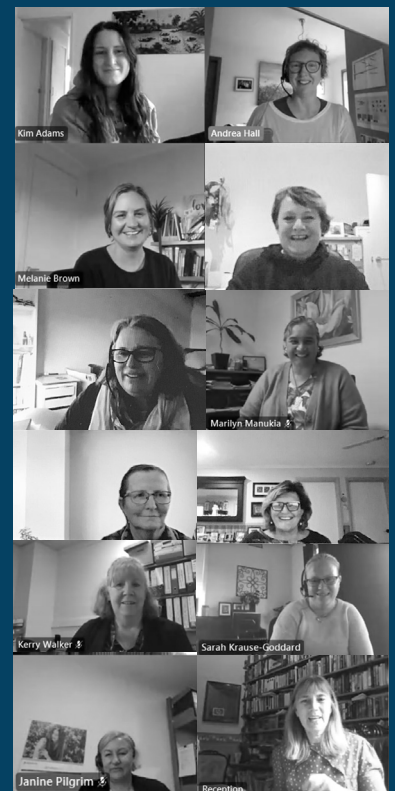
In March 2020, with the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and stakeholders front of mind, Gippsland Women's Health closed its office doors and transitioned to remote working.

At the time we anticipated this being a short term method of operation, with a return to normalcy occurring within months. We are now through most of the year and still navigating through the challenges of COVID-19 to ensure continuity of service.

Women are disproportionately affected during a crisis such as COVID-19 due to financial pressures, escalation of family and intimate partner violence, and caring responsibilities. The impact on women is further complicated when looked at through a rural and remote lens. As a result COVID-19 had immediate impact on GWH planning, commitments and methods of operation. It required a dedicated refocusing of actions to address the far reaching consequences of the pandemic. What it did not impact was our commitment to equality, empowerment, health and wellbeing for all women. GWH staff, with the ongoing support of the Board of Management, embraced the new operational challenges and developed responsive actions to support and advocate for the significant emerging community need, with a strong focus on safety and wellbeing.

GWH continues to progress our work to advance gender equality, prevent violence against women, and improve women's sexual and reproductive health, with a refocused COVID-19 approach. Partners, stakeholders and community members will have seen ongoing statewide advocacy by GWH, a redesigning of our meetings, engagement and trainings for an online platform. There has been a significant time investment in our communications (Gippsland Family Violence Alliance newsletters, Gippsland Free From Violence Coalition newsletters, Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health COVID-19 fact sheet, Being an Active Bystander during COVID-19 tip sheet, and the Gender and Disaster fact sheet) as well as updating our community members through our newsletter, eNews and social media.

Our COVID-19 journey is not yet complete at the writing of this statement and in many ways is just starting. GWH exists to improve women's health and wellbeing and freedom of choice, and this purpose becomes all the more important in times such as these.



GWH staff on a Zoom call.



# Operations

GWH delivered another productive year of programs, enabled by a range of management, systems and resources. Our financial position continues to be stable. This overview summarises our incomings and outgoings.

## Financial Overview

Our income sources include core government funding (the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the Office for Women, Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet), grants, donations, health promotion activities and other income (auspicing body fees and resource sales). Full financial statements are available on request.

Staffing, program and operating expenditure represents the majority of our outgoings. Prior to COVID-19, travel and communication costs continued to be substantial as our programs and organisational reach continued to expand. However, the second half of the year saw a sharp decline in travel costs due to COVID-19, as staff transitioned to online service delivery. Communication enabled by telecommunications upgrades in the previous year, supported the transition to remote working arrangements.

## Donations

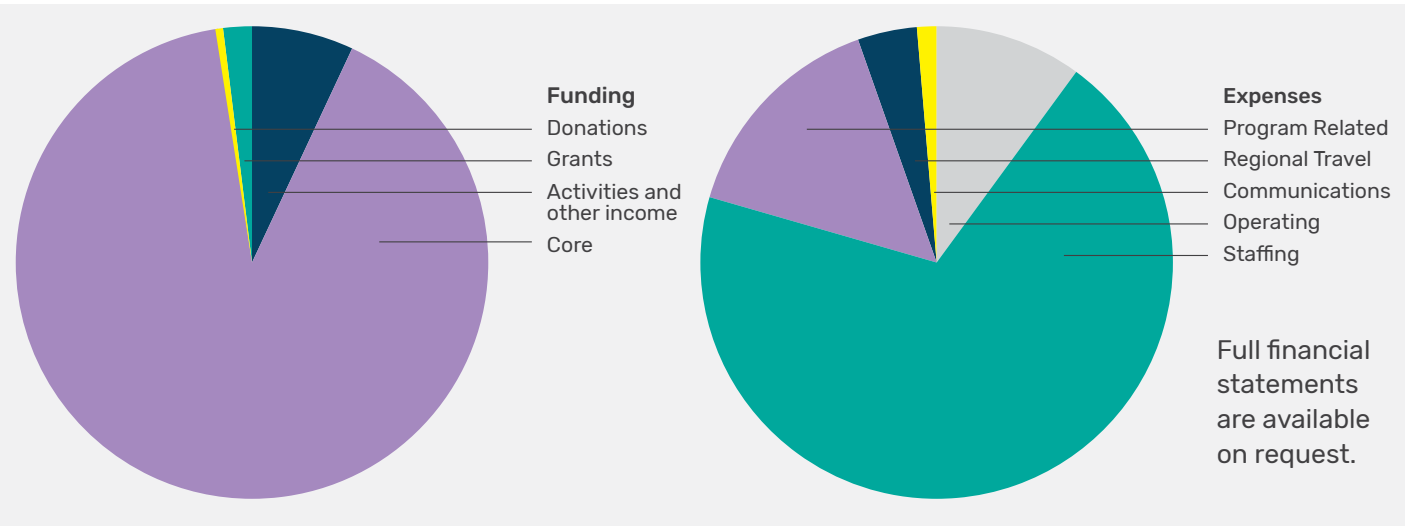
Donations were significantly higher than previous years with \$10,634.13 being received this year which was due to the summer bushfire Period Support callout, with \$8,037.79 generously donated between January to June 2020.

Period Support funds will be used to provide resources for East and Far East Gippsland until expended. General donations are used to extend project work; purchase wigs and care products for the Wig Bank; provide support to local women experiencing breast cancer treatment, including food and travel vouchers; and access to other services that support the health and wellbeing of women.

Our kind thanks to:

- Generous donations from over 140 individuals for Period Support
- Yoga Day Central Gippsland 2019
- Maffra Golf Club Ladies Members
- Avon Branch CWA (Stratford)
- Europe Deli
- Stratford Elderly Citizens
- CWA North Gippsland Group
- Direct Appliance Rentals
- A Walker
- T Bliss
- N Snowden
- S Fong
- Waratah Breast Cancer Support Group Legacy (David Lucke’s Fresh Food Market and Richies IGA community benefits)

Gippsland Women’s Health’s deductible gift recipient status enables donors to claim a tax deduction for donations of \$2 or more.



## Health Information

2019/2020 was definitely a year in two parts. GWH continues to be a source of information and assistance for many in the community. From the relative normality of the first half of the year, to the horror of the fires during the summer months, followed by the coronavirus, our phone lines have remained open and accessible to women seeking information around health, safety and connectedness.

## General

We turned our mind to sustainable cooling systems in the office with the installation of retractable awnings on all north facing windows, providing shade to the front of the building and to the second floor offices.

The face lift at the front of the building with the improvements to our small garden pots by the students at Catholic College Sale, incorporating a seating arrangement for passers-by were a welcome enhancement to the entry way at GWH. Finished off with the new branding on the windows the look and feel is both refreshing and welcoming.

## COVID-19

With the closure of the office to the public and all staff working remotely from late March we have managed to overcome the varied obstacles to remaining in contact with each other, our partner organisations and the general public. We have been reminded regularly of the phrase 'we are all in this together', the cohesiveness of the staff team at GWH is testament to this. We have learnt and developed new ways of working as a team regardless of distance or location, and have been innovative in our methods to reach out and connect with our community.

## Memberships

Membership for 2019/2020 remained steady with a final membership total of 188. With a requirement for memberships to be renewed every year this number fluctuates with many members failing to renew despite there being no cost involved. As an incorporated organisation our membership base is very important to us, our members are women living across the width and breadth of Gippsland and are an invaluable source of inspiration and local knowledge.



Lynette Teese, GWH, with Amrita and Robyn, Yoga Day Central Gippsland delivering their kind donation.



Catholic College Students Lara Weston, Jack Austin, Alex Buckley and Molly Chessum with Lynette Teese (GWH) on the new seating.

