

SEWACS

Annual Report 2019-2020

## Chairpersons Report

**I would like to begin by acknowledging the the Djiringanj people of the Yuin nation as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and to pay my respects to Elders past and present. A better appreciation of the culture, beliefs, history and hopes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people helps us all achieve reconciliation.**

**The SEWACS annual report for the 2019-20 year highlights a year of challenging circumstances accompanied by an increase in overall demand for the services delivered to the community. The local area has been significantly impacted by drought, bushfire and pandemic of unprecedented proportions which have seen our economy struggle and individuals and families significantly impacted both physically and mentally.**

Through all this SEWACS have remained active as an essential service provider across the three funded programs and have maintained their role as a key service provider in the region in domestic violence and homelessness.

During this financial year SEWACS provided a total of 710 people services across three programs: Staying Home Leaving Violence, Eurobodalla Domestic and Family Violence Homelessness Support Service and South East Youth Accommodation Support Services funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

The management committee and staffing profile of the service have remained relatively stable over the 2019-20 period which has helped the team to focus on the important tasks at hand. The management committee would like to acknowledge and extend thanks to the program managers and staff across SEWACS services who continue to show passion and dedication to the work they do and the clients they serve.

Acknowledgement and thanks is also given to the management committee volunteers for their contributions to the running of the service over this year.

We are pleased to table this year's annual report and to recognise the many accomplishments of the organisation and of the people for who it exists.

Brianna Van Leeuwen  
Charirperson



## Regional Manager's report

This is my first full year as the Regional Manager. It has been a learning curve and I know I have left the running of Staying Home Leaving Violence in capable hands.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee and staff for their ongoing commitment to SEWACS. I acknowledge and thank the Management Committee for volunteering their time and expertise and hope this will continue as we move forward. I would also like to thank the Program Managers for forming a solid team while supporting their own programs.

This has been a challenging year for many. We have faced drought, fire, floods and COVID-19. All staff have maintained a high level of professionalism and have adapted to the changing circumstances as needed. Sometimes this has required working from home while maintaining contact with clients and fulfilling contractual obligations. These challenges have continued to be met during the ongoing COVID-19 situation. I would like to thank all staff for continuing to work under these extreme circumstances. We have needed to modify how we work while remaining operational as essential services. We have achieved this.

SEWACS continues to be innovative in responding to the needs of our clients. Both the Safe Around Me app and the Skillbot app are now updated. As administrators of the apps, new information can be added as needed. Tony has developed a Men's Behaviour Change program, which we are anticipating will be implemented as soon as practicable, and an informal partnership has been developed between NSW Health and SEWACS to fill a gap in service delivery. SEWACS was also a major contributor to the Community Industries Group short film highlighting the heightened homelessness issue since the bushfires. The next challenge will be to achieve our accreditation, ensuring ongoing funding and continuing to provide a professional service to the people we support.

Thank you again

Caroline Long – Regional Manager



**SEWACS**

**History**

South East Women and Children's Service (SEWACS) is a not for profit community organisation with a strong history and presence in the Bega Valley. In the early 1980's a group of women in the Bega Valley started to meet to identify the needs of women, including having a safe place to stay when leaving violence, a resource centre, a child care centre, medium term housing and help with women's health issues. The Bega Women's Refuge (BWR) began operating in 1988 as part of the Southern Women's Group and became an independently incorporated entity in 1990. The refuge continued to respond to the community's need to provide a range of safe and supportive options for women and children who were experiencing domestic and family violence, and were at risk of homelessness as a result of this violence. 2004 saw the organisation successfully apply for funding to run the pilot program for Staying Home Leaving Violence.

In 2005 the BWR expanded to include ten transitional housing properties in Bega. In 2008, to reflect the changing geography of the organisation, BWR changed its name to South East Women and Children's Services (SEWACS). SEWACS further expanded into Eden where it



ran a drop in, outreach and support service with a strong focus on domestic and family violence. Today, SEWACS provides three comprehensive programs: Staying Home Leaving Violence and South East Youth Accommodation Service within the Bega Valley, as well as the Eurobodalla Domestic and Family Violence Homelessness Support Service, which provides crisis and transitional accommodation and an outreach program supporting men who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless in Eurobodalla.

## **What we do**

SEWACS is addressing homelessness within the South East region of NSW. The work of SEWACS is primarily based around the provision of support and accommodation for women, children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence. SEWACS also provides outreach support, case management and housing options to males who are at risk of homelessness or homeless in the Eurobodalla region.

SEWACS is committed to working towards the elimination of domestic and family violence in the work provided through the Staying Home Leaving Violence program and the specialist homelessness services.

SEWACS works within a feminist framework of practice which emphasises the safety of women and children first and provides client centred support and case management to empower women, children and young people to live safely in our community.

Our organisation actively promotes and supports the employment of Aboriginal workers across all programs and seeks Aboriginal participation and support on Management. Cultural competency training for all staff is of high priority and reflected in policy.

## **Vision**

SEWACS is a community organisation working within social justice principles to achieve greater safety and wellbeing for all people in the South East region of NSW.

## **Values**

Our values define who we are. They are the fundamental beliefs of our organisation. They guide our actions and behaviour. They influence the way we work with each other – and the way we serve our clients and engage with our communities, funding bodies and partners.

### **Dignity**

We will treat all of our clients with dignity and respect

### **Inclusiveness**

We work with everyone with a spirit of openness, acknowledging our common humanity

### **Integrity**

We will be honest, sincere and committed in everything we do

### **Accountable**

We will be accountable for all our activities and services to our clients, community and funding bodies

### **Collaborative**

We will work collaboratively with our clients, funding bodies, partners and each other

### **Social Justice**

SEWACS is underpinned by the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights



## SEWACS

- is an Incorporated Association
- is registered as a public benevolent institution
- is a registered Community Housing Provider
- provides 'Officers and Directors' Liability Insurance for Management Committee members

Tanner, Salt and Associates were the appointed official auditors of SEWACS for this period. Thanks to Liz for her support throughout the year.

## Principle statement

SEWACS is working towards the elimination of homelessness and domestic and family violence in a community where all people are treated with respect and live in a safe and secure environment.



## Management committee

Chairperson	Brianna Armstead
Secretary	Ange McKechnie
Treasurer	Stephanie Rayment
Members	Marjorie McKnight Danya Thompson Sue Ogier Catriona Thomson

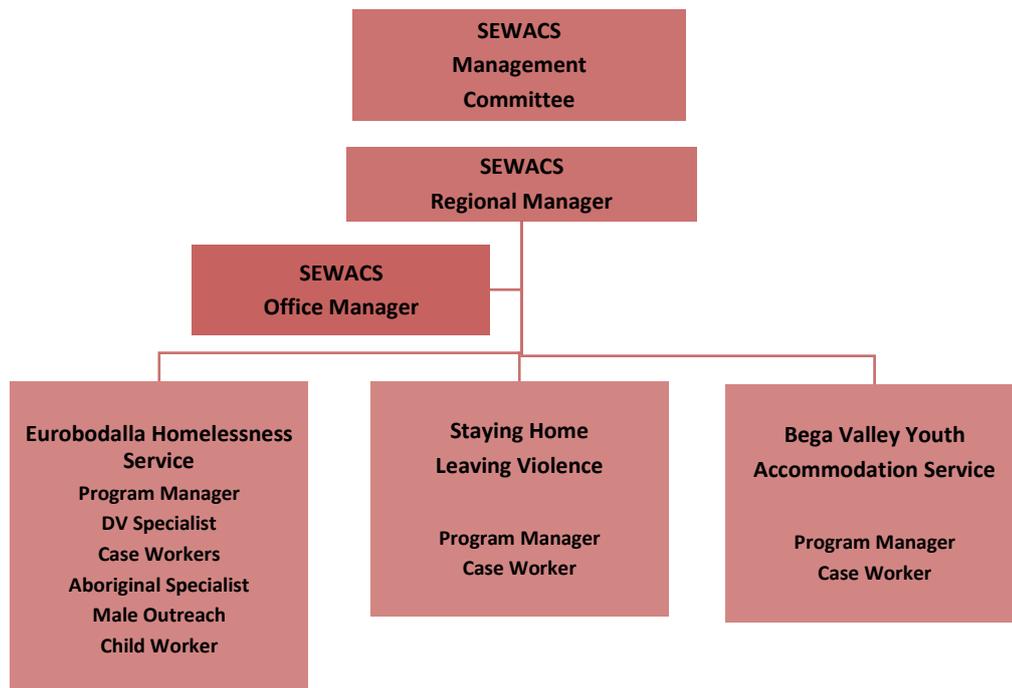
SEWACS staff acknowledges the huge commitment and expertise that members bring to the organisation. The robust committee of SEWACS enables us to uphold our culture of social and community understanding through its feminist values. We thank you all greatly for your contribution.

## Staffing

Regional Manager	Caroline
Office Manager	Sylvia
A/SHLV Program Manager	Tahnee
Case Worker	Jenna
SE Youth Accommodation Program Manager	Kylie
Case Worker	Skye
Eurobodalla Homelessness Program Manager	Zoe
Case Workers	Liz and Naomi
Outreach Worker (Aboriginal)	Jay
Euro Child Support Worker	Sara-Jane
Male Outreach	Tony
Evening Case Workers	Sam, Vicky, Sarah, Kylie, Veronica
Relief worker	Elizabeth, and Joanne

During the past year we have continued to support students in gaining essential skills to enable them to build a career in the community sector. We have been fortunate to have supported and supervised Jenny Sinclair a CERT iv TAFE student, and Danya Thompson a Bachelor of Social Work student from Charles Sturt University. The ongoing commitment to supporting student is one of the strengths of the organisation and something that will be continued.

## SEWACS organisational structure



## SEWACS service provision

SEWACS provides a range of services and support mechanisms through its various programs operating in the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla Shires. This is provided across an intervention continuum which includes:

- Integrated Case Management
- Intensive Intervention/Crisis Accommodation/Transitional Accommodation
- Primary Prevention/Education/Community Awareness
- Early Intervention/SHLV
- Post Crisis/Outreach/Follow-up
- Outreach Support
- Support Groups
- Child & Adolescent Support

This report details the varied services that SEWACS programs deliver, including client demographics, program activities and outcomes. It also includes the local, state, national and international networks and partnerships we value and maintain.

## SEWACS programs

For the year 2019-2020 SEWACS managed three programs funded by the NSW Government, Department of Communities and Justice:

- South East Youth Accommodation Support Services
- Staying Home Leaving Violence
- Eurobodalla Domestic and Family Violence Homelessness Support Service



Communities  
& Justice

## Strategic planning

SEWACS is currently reviewing the strategic plan for the organisation. The Strategic Plan provides us with our Vision and Values. The Operational Plan provides a clear picture of how each program will contribute to the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals. The Risk Management Plan clearly identifies our risks, assesses the risk and develops strategies to support the organisation. The current strategic plan has undergone the first stage of the review process. This has involved hiring a consultant to interview all program managers and committee members in how the service should move forward. This report has been circulated and will form the next, vital stage of the consultation process with all staff that will be incorporated into the final document. The consultation with staff has been placed on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions, although we are anticipating this will be completed in the near future.

## Community Housing registration

SEWACS is accredited under the National Regulatory System as a Community Housing Provider. This year SEWACS was successful in completing the NRSCH compliance assessment.



## Referral networks and partnerships

SEWACS staff also worked in partnership with a range of other agencies and services to assist in the delivery of coordinated responses for youth, women, children and men in our service and to foster broader community awareness of the prevalence and the impact of homelessness and domestic and family violence.

SEWACS is committed to partnerships with other services and community organisations such as Mission Australia, Anglicare and Impact Eurobodalla, Police, Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, FACS/Housing, Far South Coast Family Support Services, The Family Place, Campbell Page, Katungul Medical Services, Women's Resources Centre, Southern Cross Housing, Brighter Futures, Sapphire Community Pantry, NSW Health Services, Headspace, Teen Clinic, Youth Frontiers, Anglicare, Police, Juvenile Justice, Parole and Probation, Illawarra Tenants service, Wellways, Eden Access Centre, Bega Valley Shire Council, Disability Trust/Workability, SYFS, Campbell Page, Mission Australia NSW Health and Mental Health Services, McKillop Family Referral Service, Bernados, St James House, Homelessness NSW and YFoundations, Peak bodies, the Social Justice Advocacy Group and many more community groups such and the philanthropic Church Groups and Charities to support and care for young people, men, women and children who are experiencing homelessness and/or family and domestic violence and in the South East NSW region.

A partnership between Domestic Violence Health and SEWACS was formed to fill a gap in service delivery by providing safety assessments and counselling services to women who choose to stay in the relationship.

## Eurobodalla and Bega Local Homelessness Forums

Staff have actively participated in the local area Homelessness Forums facilitated by DCJ (Department of Communities and Justice). SEWACS staff are committed to working with other Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) in the South East region to support clients who are at risk of homelessness and provide coordinated case management which ultimately provides better stability for the clients in the community.

Attendance at these forums helps develop stronger interagency networks to help build collaborative practices, which ultimately assist in gaining better outcomes for clients.

## Family Case Management

SEWACS continued its participation in local integrated Family Case Management as needed. This integrated approach is now embedded in local practice bringing together services and departments with a focus on supporting families where children and young people are identified as 'at risk of harm'.

## Work Development Orders

SEWACS is registered with the State Debt Recovery Office to cover Work and Development Orders (WDOs) for clients who have debts from fines. Each program has assisted clients to either pay off or reduce their debt through engaging in case management and support activities. This continues to be an integral part of the service provided by SEWACS staff. SEWACS has been involved in the WDO program since 2012. During this time, we have supported 86 clients to pay off debts valued at \$97,874. For the 2019-20 financial year SEWACS has supported 16 clients to pay off a WDO credit value of \$22,908.



## Memberships

- Jobs Australia
- NCOSS
- NSW Federation of Housing Associations
- WESNET (Women's Emergency Services Network)
- Yfoundations
- Youth Action and Policy Association – YAPA
- DV NSW
- Homelessness NSW



## Donations and special thanks

- Social Justice Advocates of the Sapphire Coast
- Share the Dignity
- Pambula/Merimbula CWA
- Dalmeny Women's Bowling Club
- Woolworths Moruya
- SAGE gardens-Moruya
- SECOND BITE
- The Moruya CWA
- Dalmeny and Batemans Bay Quota club
- Sapphire Community Pantry
- Salvation Army

## ACNC

SEWACS is registered as a charity with Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.





## South East Youth Accommodation Service (SEYAS)

The past 12 months have been highly unusual for the Bega valley and its residents, with drought, fires and COVID-19 all impacting on the community in many ways. The SEYAS program and staff have been resilient, innovative and professional in maintaining a high level of support for the community.

The youth homelessness service began operating in September 2104, providing support to young people aged 16-25 years in the Bega valley, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. SEYAS was staffed by Kylie Furnell as program manager, and Skye Woolhouse as case worker for the 2019-20 year. The service operates in business hours, five days a week.

SEYAS moves into its sixth year of providing support to the youth of the Bega valley. We have continued to strengthen relationships and partnerships with other service providers, to support young people and be responsive to homeless youth by advocating for their needs with 'wrap around' services. For the COVID-19 close down period in 2020, SEYAS staff worked from home utilising phone, text, zoom and social media platforms to connect with clients. This proved to be an effective means of communication.

SEYAS have developed strong ties with the charities and other service providers in all towns across the shire. The combined knowledge and support of SEYAS staff has been regularly requested by various government and community organisations within the sector.

The main barrier to services to assist young people in housing crisis or at risk of homelessness in the Bega Valley remains the lack of a youth refuge and very few youth designated public or community housing properties. Private rental properties in the valley have continued to show a marked increase in rental rates, with higher than normal demand from the general public to secure these properties. This increased competition for available properties has been further exacerbated by bush fires in 2020, followed by COVID-19 virus.



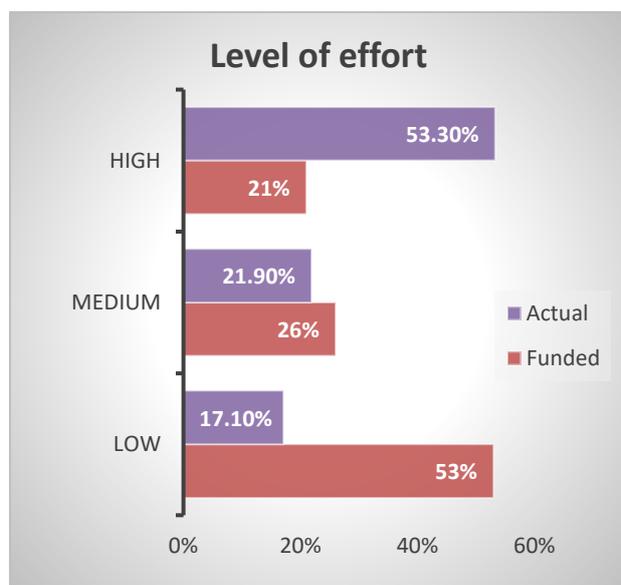
## Clients

SEYAS were funded to provide support to a total of 92 clients for the 2019-2020 financial year. This year the data base shows we commenced service episodes for a total of 94 people.

31% of the clients assisted by the SEYAS program were Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander descent. 83% were “new” service users, and the remaining 17% people returned for repeat service episodes during the year.

### Client level of effort

The level of effort provided to clients is a key performance indicator measure in the SEYAS contract. The level of high needs services provided to clients continues to far exceed the contracted requirement.



The funding bodies definition of “Level of effort” comprises of

**High** - Intensive assistance over a few weeks and lower intensity over a number or months Requiring support across numerous service activities for longer period, case plan coordinating a range of services

**Medium** - More than one service activity, intensive service over a few days, decreasing over one week, short term crisis or transitional accommodation with low level support.

**Low** - Short term assistance, referral, one off temporary accommodation other referral, not normally requiring a case plan.

As can be seen in the table above service provided continues to trend towards the higher level of support. This higher level of support translates to more intensive and often longer term supports. The continued demand for high needs service will require additional funding to adequately support homeless youth in the Bega Valley.

## Reasons for seeking assistance

On intake to the SEYAS program clients identified multiple issues impacting their lives or causing barriers to moving ahead. SEYAS has noted an increase of almost 5% from the previous financial year in clients citing mental health as one of the reasons they seek support.

The top five reasons for seeking assistance, give a clear indicator of the lack of affordable rentals in the Bega valley, with further family breakdown occurring when households are placed under additional stress.

Reason for seeking assistance	Percent
Financial difficulties	76.40
Housing affordability stress	59.55
Housing crisis (e.g. eviction)	58.43
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	59.55
Previous accommodation ended	58.43
Time out from family/other situation	66.29
Relationship/family breakdown	64.04
Sexual abuse	1.12
Domestic and family violence	31.46
Mental health issues	34.83
Medical issues	2.25
Problematic drug or substance use	12.36
Problematic alcohol use	4.49
Employment difficulties	5.62
Unemployment	24.72
Transition from other care arrangements	2.25
Unable to return home due to environmental reasons	6.74
Disengagement with school or other education and training	3.37
Lack of family and/or community support	43.82

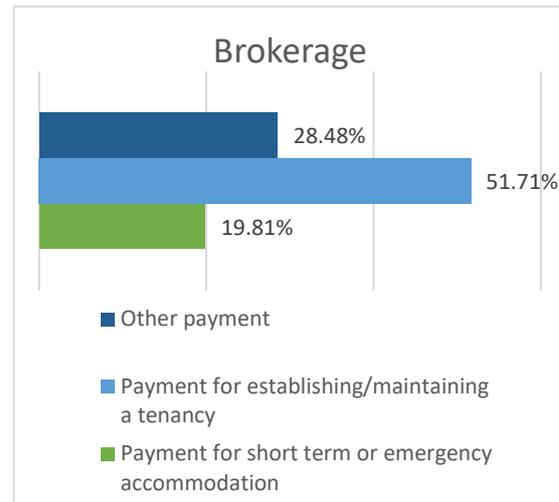
## Rent Choice Youth

Rent Choice Youth is an accommodation subsidy program managed by HNSW. SEYAS has joined the HNSW Partner Facilitation Group (PFG) for the management of the Rent Choice Youth product. This product is now utilised by numerous SEYAS clients to subsidise private rental with wrap around support for three years. SEYAS has supported HNSW to visit agents and inform them of the benefits of the product. Our partnerships with job networks and other support providers is paramount to the success of this product.

## Brokerage

Client brokerage is used to assist young people in a variety of ways. SEYAS program occasionally fills the gap by assisting new tenancies with bond payments when HNSW cannot respond in within a timeline that suits Real estate agents.

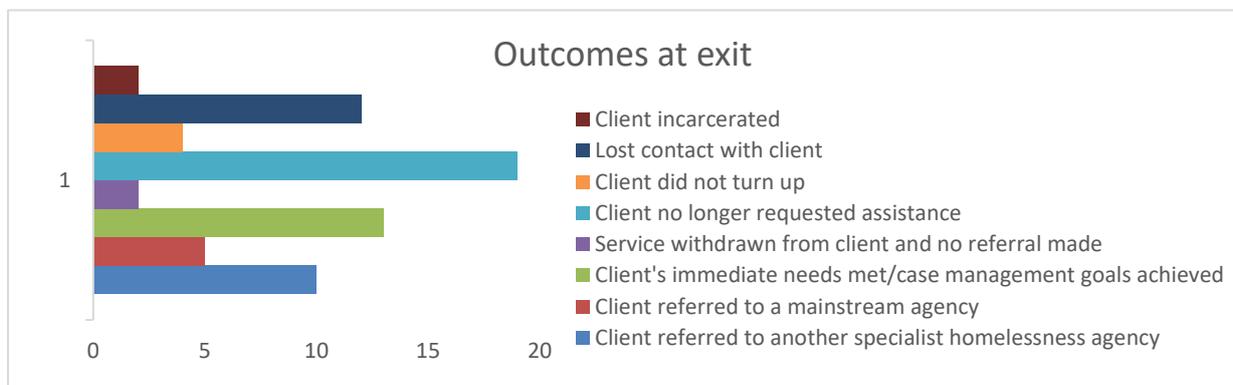
There has been an additional need in 2019-20 for brokerage to be used for food assistance. SEYAS utilises the Telstra phone credit mechanism within the CIMS data base to provide phone credit to active clients as required. SEYAS has supplied toiletries to many clients via donation from Share the Dignity. SEYAS provides household start up kits of basics to clients as required.



## Outcome measures

SEYAS has been informed that outcomes from Case plans and status at exit will become a focus and measure of future funding. SEYAS uses best practice to ensure we manage data to record all relevant information and build comprehensive client lead case plans.

At exit the majority of our clients for 2019-20 had met their immediate needs and goals in case plans or no longer requested assistance. The number of clients with lost contact at exit demonstrates the transient and unstable nature of youth homelessness and further highlights the need for a crisis accommodation model in the Bega valley.



## Lobbying

### Homelessness Matters day

SEYAS program held an awareness raising activity in Littleton Garden Bega, in collaboration with the Social Justice Advocates of the South coast and Mission Australia. The Homelessness NSW Peaks, Everybody's Home campaign was promoted to the public to gain community support to lobby government to recognise their short fall in response to housing affordability and social housing.



### Youth Frontiers

SEYAS staff were asked to mentor a group of students from Bega High school under the Youth frontiers program. The student group researched homelessness in the Bega valley and came up with a solution and pitch to put to their panel. This was a valuable opportunity to support youth in using their voice to make a difference in their own community.

### Community Industries Group

SEYAS Program manager participated in a Community Industries Group film for Homelessness awareness overlaid with bush fire response and COVID-19. One of SEYAS current clients volunteered to tell his story about the struggles of homelessness during the pandemic and bushfire experience. This is a powerful tool which captures the uncertainty and instability people are living in.

Available at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=tmwB9AsuD9c>

### Rent Choice Youth-Deeper subsidy

Advocacy with HNSW to gain 'Deeper' subsidy for Rent choice Youth applicants in the Bega valley. HNSW calculation of affordability is below the current rental market. SEYAS staff have advocated via the Rent choice Partner facilitation group and Yfoundations as well as seeking support for this matter at the state Youth Community of Practice meetings. Yfoundations have raised this concern with HNSW in attempts to get Deeper subsidy for the whole state of NSW.



## Community of Practice (Youth)

SEYAS staff have been active members of the Youth Community of Practice, facilitated by YFoundations, DV NSW and Homelessness NSW since its inception in 2017. CoP members from around the state meet face to face twice a year and teleconference twice a year.

Topics explored and skills shared: Lack of exit options. Working with poor options: Boarding Houses, Rough sleeping. Mental health / Drug and alcohol. Disability. Living skills. When can't assist / Inappropriate referrals. Connect young people with the community. OOHC Gaps. Advocacy issues

Outcomes Based Commissioning- The YCoP group has strongly supported the information sharing of Outcomes Based Commissioning. Current pilots are running across the state to be implemented in all SHS services and linked to funding.

There are 17 organisations are involved in the pilot – representing 19 sites across the state, with a mix of service models and client cohorts. Currently in stage 4 – pilot implementation

Outcome Measures – Safety, Housing and Wellbeing domains with a strong focus on outcomes and quality. Training –webinars – writing manuals, will be disseminated by CPOs.

The induction video created last year for newcomers to the workforce of the community services sector was launched in August and has been widely used as a valued resource. These induction films were made on the topics of CALD, Domestic violence, Rough sleepers and Youth. SEYAS were the only rural voice in the youth section.

The Youth 5-minute film provides an overview of working with young people experiencing homelessness. The film includes:

- Overview of client group
- Building rapport/connecting with clients
- Working in a residential setting/non-residential setting
- Pathways into youth homelessness
- Goal setting
- Practical tips
- Barriers to working with young people



## Bega Local Homelessness Forum

SEYAS staff have actively participated in the local area Homelessness Forums facilitated by DCJ (Dept Community and Justice). SEWACS staff are committed to working with other Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) in the South East region to support clients who are at risk of homelessness and provide coordinated case management which ultimately provides better stability for the clients in the community.

Housing NSW staff have also worked collaboratively with SEWACS through these forums and informal meetings, with improved responsiveness to provide greater options for people experiencing homelessness in the South East Region.

## MOU's and stakeholders

Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme - community housing provider, partnered with SEYAS for the first five months of the year to provide three bedsits at Brogo flats in Bega and 2 parenting properties from their stock. These properties enable young people to gain transitional housing and a formal lease. SEYAS had nomination rights for these properties in exchange for client support. This partnership has now ended as Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme has amalgamated with Southern Cross Community Housing and the bedsit properties returned to HNSW management.

In partnership with Housing NSW, SEYAS has nomination rights on two, 2-bedroom units at Ravenswood St Bega. These properties enable young people to gain transitional housing and a formal HNSW lease. Ongoing support and living skills training is provided by SEYAS staff to these tenants to transition to mainstream tenancies or to permanent placements within the Housing NSW system. HNSW senior management has agreed to work towards a formal MOU with SEYAS for the ongoing support of both Ravenswood and Brogo flats properties by Nov 2020.

SEYAS is committed to informal partnerships with other services and community organisations such as, Headspace, Teen clinic, Youth Frontiers, Anglicare, Police, Juvenile Justice, Parole and Probation, Illawarra Tenants service, FACS/Housing, Far South Coast Family Support Services, Wellways, Eden Access Centre, Bega Valley Shire Council, Disability Trust/Workability, SYFS, Campbell Page, Mission Australia, Katungul Medical Services, Women's Resources Centre, NSW Health and Mental Health Services, McKillop Family Referral Service, Bernados, St James house, Homelessness NSW and YFoundations, Peak bodies, the Social Justice Advocacy Group and many more community groups such and the philanthropic Church Groups and Charities to support and care for young people who are experiencing homelessness in South East NSW.



## Collaborative service delivery

SEYAS with the assistance of St James House Merimbula and Social Justice Advocates, provided crisis accommodation, food assistance and intensive support to an expecting couple experiencing homelessness over a prolonged period. The collaboration by these charities was critical in providing support to move towards an outcome.

Collaboration with McKillop Family Referral Service, Far South Coast Family Support Service, Bernado's, SYFS/Bega, Canberra and Queanbeyan hospitals and HNSW to relocate a client to Queanbeyan and ensure extensive wrap around support has resulted in a very successful transition and safe, stable and secure housing for a particularly vulnerable young woman and her baby.

## **Donations and special thanks**

Thanks to the Social Justice Advocates of the Bega Valley who have again supported SEWACS and the Youth accommodation program by providing accommodation in both caravans and their unit, as well as furniture and white goods for clients in need. Thanks to Tathra Holiday park for donations of large furniture for clients use.

## **Network meetings**

- Local Homelessness and Youth Forums
- Eden Interagency
- Bega Interagency
- Youth Services Network
- SJAG – Social Justice Advocates Group
- YFoundations Peak
- YCOPS – Youth Community of Practice

## **Training/conferences**

- National Homelessness Conference
- Managing violent behaviours
- Red Dust healing

## **SKILLBOT App**

Funding was used to update Skillbot app. We continue to promote and share the Skillbot App, a "Youth Worker in an app," which was devised by Kylie. YFoundations has agreed to promote this app through the Yfoundations newsletter.



## Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV)

Staying Home Leaving Violence Project (SHLV) supports women and children to stay safely in their own home or a home of their choice after leaving a domestic violence relationship. This is accomplished through intensive case management, safety planning, safety equipment and security upgrades to the home. The program is now in its fifteenth year of supporting women and children in the Bega Valley. It began in 2004 with an emphasis on developing partnerships and promoting the program. In 2005 the program started to support women with or without children. SHLV has been rolled out across the state and continues to provide an essential service in the Bega Valley

### Staff

The Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program underwent significant restructuring during the last financial year. Caroline left SHLV to start her role as Regional Manager of SEWACS and Tahnee was Acting Program Manager for the year. Jenna worked in the role of caseworker for the year.

SHLV has supported a Bachelor of Social Work student, Danya Thompson, from Charles Sturt University to complete their requirements for their first practicum. We have also supported a Certificate IV in Welfare student, Jenny Sinclair, to meet their placement requirements. Both students completed their placements in October 2019.

### Service hours and environment

SHLV is located at 50 Parker Street, Bega. We are co-located with SEWACS Youth Accommodation Service and SEWACS administration. Hours of operation are Monday to Thursday 9 am to 5 pm.

Our email addresses are [tahnee.austin@sewacs.org.au](mailto:tahnee.austin@sewacs.org.au) and [jenna@sewacs.org.au](mailto:jenna@sewacs.org.au). We also have a generic email address that can reach both workers at [shlv@sewacs.org.au](mailto:shlv@sewacs.org.au).

### Staff development

Staff development and access to training has been recognised as a high priority within the service, although appropriate, affordable training is often difficult to access. SHLV workers attended the following training:

- Managing Vicarious Trauma
- Managing Aggressive and Violent Behaviours
- Lovebites Facilitator Training
- Complex Case Management
- WESNET Tech Safety
- Professional and Clinical Supervision for Managers
- Red Dust Healing (Orientation)
- Statement of Attainment - Team Leader Skill Set, TAFE NSW



## Network meetings and conferences

Community networking has always been an essential element of SHLV to disseminate information about the project, establish effective referral pathways and to continue to develop collaborative work practices. Workers from SHLV have been active participants in groups and on committees, the details of which are outlined below.

- Local Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Committee, which also acts as the SHLV Consultative Committee.
- Case meetings with fellow service providers, namely Far South Coast Family Support Service, Mission Australia and DCJ
- Safety Action Meetings, where appropriate.
- Interagency meetings organised and facilitated by Family Referral Service.
- FaCS round table meet and greet at Bega Civic Centre.
- Eden Women's Group
- Eden Interagency Meeting
- SHS homelessness forums
- Participation in research conducted by UNSW evaluating the Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes initiative
- Domestic Violence forum hosted by NSW Police & WDV CAS

Our partnership with WDV CAS continues with providing support at court for women seeking ADVOs, cross referrals, and working collaboratively to help achieve the best outcomes for the women we support.

## Presentations and promotion of program

- Reclaim the Night march and event in Bega
- Bega Community Expo
- DV Book Launch at Bermagui Library
- 'Straight Talk' Domestic and Family Violence Forum. Three events were held in Merimbula, Bega and Eden
- Lovebites to Year 10 students from South Coast Anglican College

## Reclaim The Night



*the Bega Valley Youth Choir & the Taiko drummers performing at the Reclaim the Night event in Bega*

SHLV, as part of the local DV Committee were active participants in the Reclaim the Night event held in Bega, with guest speakers and performances from the Bega Valley Youth Choir and the local Taiko Drummers who donated their time. DV awareness raising continues to be a vital component of SHLV activities.

## Straight Talk



*The Great Bush dancers performed at each Straight Talk event*

Straight Talk was a series of Domestic Violence awareness raising events held in Eden, Merimbula and Bega. We were fortunate to have Jess Hill (award winning investigative journalist and author of *See What You Made Me Do*), who volunteered to be part of this innovative event. Her partner, psychotherapist David Hollier, also volunteered his knowledge and experience to be on the panel. Both travelled from Sydney to be a vital part of this three-day event.

We also had local psychologist Chris Pittolo and local social worker Gabrielle Jones as panel members with Caroline Long as facilitator. With the help of a social work student, Danya and the Staying Home Leaving Violence team and collaboration from other services we ran three lively panel discussions. Thank you to The Great Bush Dancers, Eden High, Merimbula Primary school and Bega High school for donating their halls, all the local services including Family Support, Mission Australia, Headspace, Coles and Woolworths in Bega, Eden and Merimbula and the Sapphire Coast Social Justice Committee for their financial assistance.



*The Straight Talk panel-Gabrielle Jones, Chris Pittolo, Caroline Long, Jess Hill and David Hollier.*

## Donations

Share the Dignity continues to support women by donating personal items including sanitary goods and handbags laden with personal hygiene items. This has been well utilised and an essential product provided to our service users.

During the peak of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Sapphire Community Pantry donated food hampers to be distributed to clients. This continues to be a useful resource for women who are experiencing financial hardship.

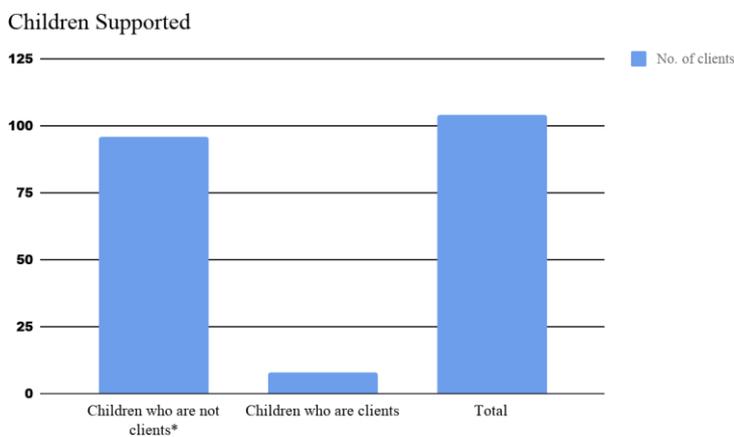
## COVID-19

As with all services, the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for the program. SHLV staff worked from home for approximately two months and client face-to-face contact was extremely limited during this period. Support and assessments were mainly conducted over the phone. However, it is worth noting that clients continued to provide positive feedback, indicating that clients still felt supported by the program despite the difficult working conditions.

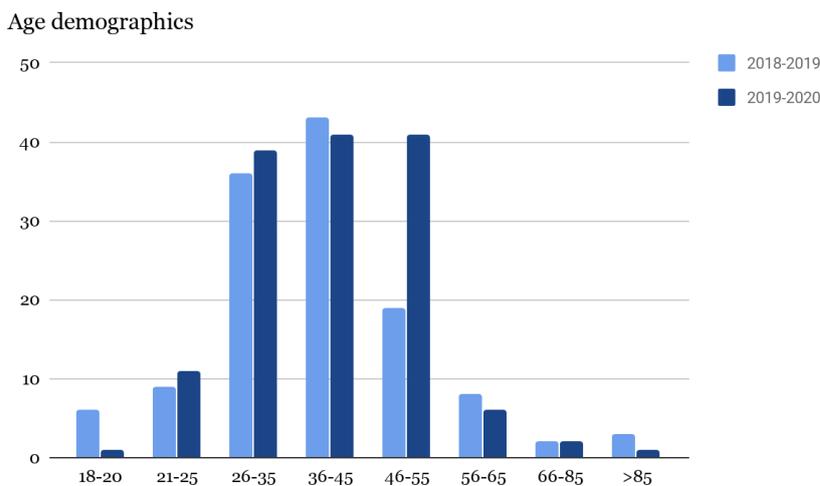
## Clients

220 referrals were received in the 2019-2020 financial year. Some of these were re-referrals due to changed circumstances or an escalation of violence. 100 of these referrals only required information and referral, where appropriate. 59 women were case managed and 25 were case coordinated. The Program Level Agreement stipulates our KPIs as 40 case managed clients and 15 case coordinated. These figures do not reflect the accompanying 96 children, 8 of which also needed direct support. These numbers indicate a moderate increase from last financial year. It is also worth noting that this was achieved despite the restructuring in the organisation during the year, with Caroline stepping up into the Regional Manager role and Jenna working at reduced hours up until November 2019. We received 16 referrals from women identifying as First Nations people, 10 of which were case managed and case coordinated.

There were 11 women who presented to the service when the service was ‘at capacity’ and unable to take on more clients. However, in these cases, women were always offered information, safety planning and referrals where appropriate. This is a nuance in service delivery that is not able to be captured in the CIMS database reporting.



\* Persons aged 17 or under who are not clients in their own right (do not have an Incoming Referral in the reporting period), but have an adult relationship with an Incoming Referral with a Case Management/Case-Coordinated outcome.

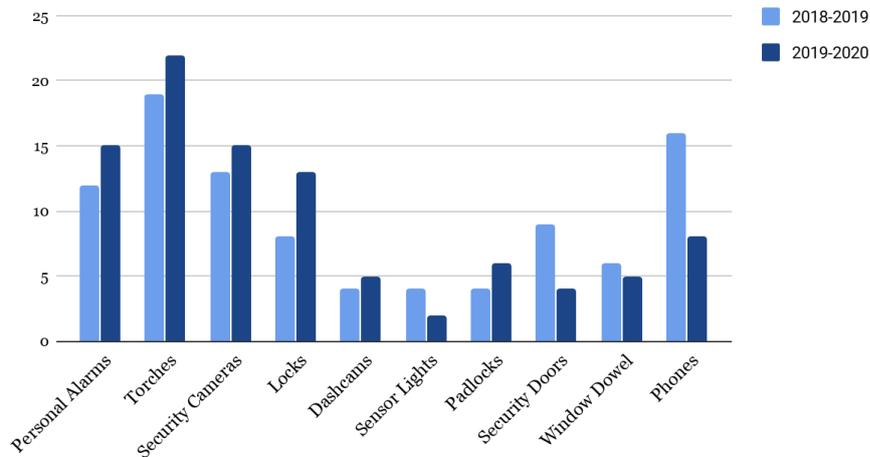


As demonstrated in the table above, SHLV has seen a significant increase in women in the 46-55 age range compared to the previous financial year. There has also been an increase in women between 21-35 years who have sought support.



## Security installations

Security Upgrades Provided

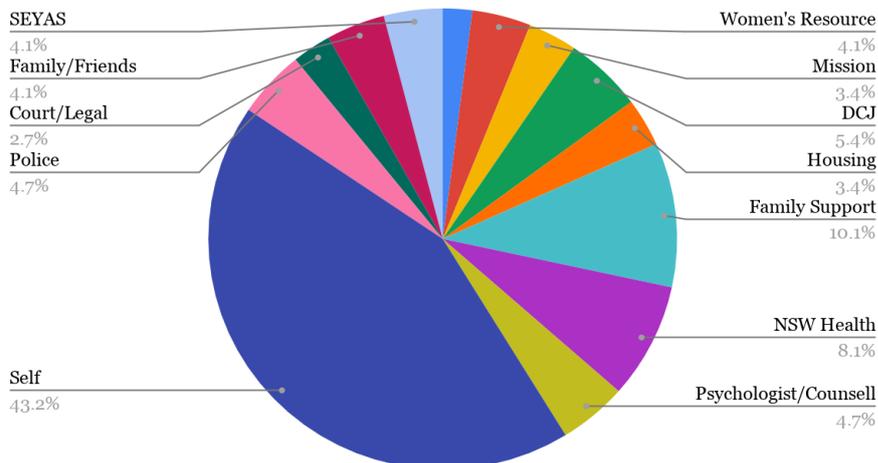


Security installations are still an important safety feature of the program, although it is recognised that this works in conjunction with safety planning and ongoing support. Each plan is individually tailored to the particular needs of the client. As seen in the table above, SHLV saw an increase in women needing security upgrades, particularly security cameras, personal alarms, torches and locks.

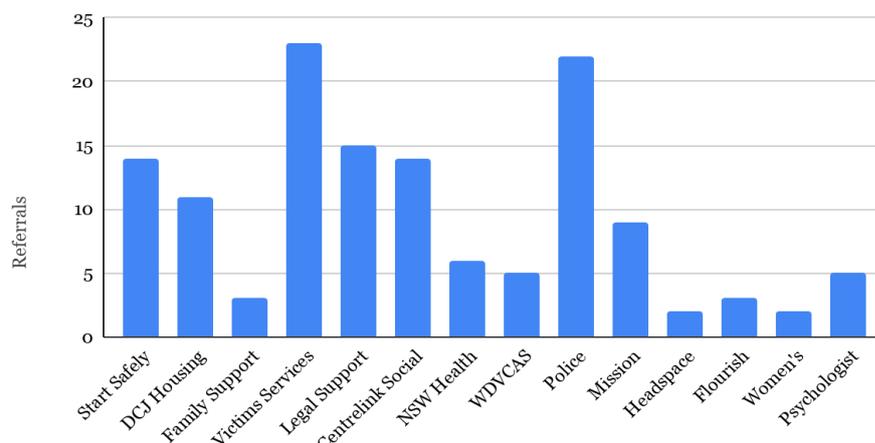
Extra funding from the Commonwealth Government has allowed us to focus on purchasing security cameras and focus on IT security. We are grateful to the federal government for this initiative.

## Referrals

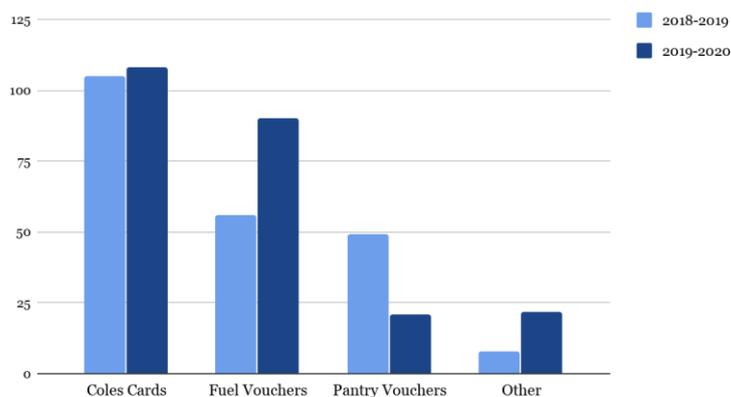
Referrals received



### Referrals Sent



### Emergency Relief Supports



Food and fuel vouchers are part of the emergency relief support provided to clients. 'Other' represents brokerage spent on necessities such as emergency transport and accommodation, bill payments and assistance with pets.

There has been an increase of food and fuel vouchers distributed this year, in particular fuel vouchers. There was a significant number of women needing this assistance to attend appointments outside of the Bega Valley Shire.

## Client surveys

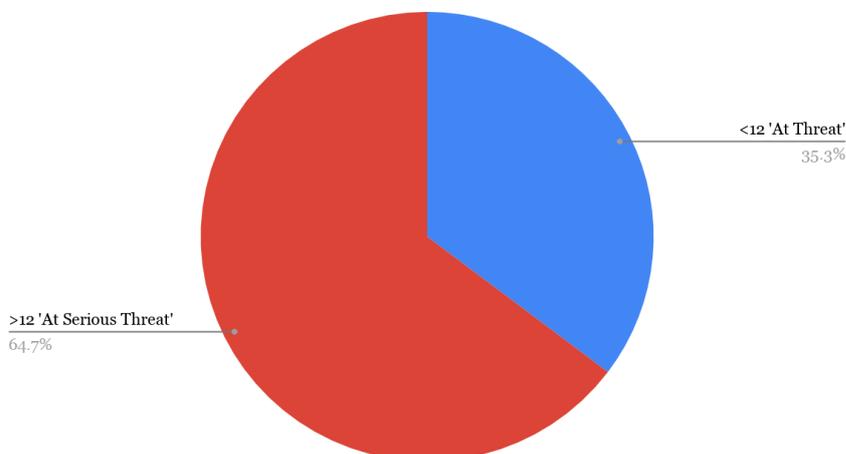
Client surveys are completed during exit interviews as well as intermittently during support periods. This is a crucial component of service delivery as it gives women an opportunity to voice their opinions and identify where support could be improved.

- 96% of women who completed the survey reported satisfaction of the service that they received.
- 89% of women who completed the survey reported feeling safer because of the service.
- 100% of women who completed the survey reported that working with SHLV improved their knowledge of domestic and family violence.

## Risk assessment

The Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT) remains as an assessment tool that is a mandated form consisting of 25 closed questions that allows the service to determine the level of threat.

DVSAT Risk Assessment Results



This chart demonstrates the results from DVSAT risk assessments conducted last year. It reflects that the majority of women presenting to the program scored 12 or higher and were therefore at 'Serious Threat'. These women can then be referred to the Safety Action Meeting. It is worth noting that there were zero scores recorded of less than 9.

From data extracted from exit interviews, 14 clients sought exclusion orders during the support period. 13 of these exclusion orders were granted. 24 women were empowered to access legal and court support.

## iStaySafe duress alarm

In previous years, SHLV has offered SOS devices as an additional security measure for women who are at serious risk. These devices are funded by the Department of Communities & Justice. The devices were well-utilised and women have provided feedback that it increased their feelings of safety. Central Monitoring Service was unsuccessful in the tender bid for the Central Monitoring Service SOS Link Device. All 5 devices will be returned to the Department of Communities and Justice.

This year the provider for the program's GPS back-to-base alarm changed to The Security Monitoring Centre. SHLV were provided with five iStaySafe duress alarms and all have been distributed to clients. A benefit of the new systems is that women do not need to have an ADVO against the perpetrator in order to be eligible for the device, as was the case previously. However, the alarms have presented technical issues, such as inaccurate GPS location and faulty devices. Feedback has been provided to the Security Monitoring Centre in the hopes this can be addressed urgently.

## Client Information Management System database

The Client Information Management System (CIMS) database is being utilised and it has proven to be a useful tool in storing all relevant information, including notes. There are still some issues with extracting certain data that are currently being addressed. As our proficiency in using the database increases and as glitches in the system are rectified, this will be a useful resource for the program.

## **Safety planning booklet/Safe Around Me app**

The Safety Planning booklet is available for services to purchase or is given to each new client of the program. The updated booklet gave the foundation for the safety planning app, Safe Around Me, both of which were written and developed by Caroline. The App has now been updated and as administrators we can now make changes whenever this is needed. The app and booklet have proven to be a useful resource for clients as well as other services.

## **WESNET/Safety connect mobile phones and phone credit**

Providing a new phone is often an important factor in safety planning as phones are often one of the first things to be destroyed in a domestic violence event. The WESNET/Telstra partnership recognised this by providing phones. We continue to receive and distribute free mobile phones and phone credit as part of the WESNET and Telstra safe Connections program. The mobile phones are specifically for women leaving domestic violence and have been a benefit to the service while providing a valuable service to our client base.

Unfortunately, the conditions regarding the free phone credit changed this year which only allow for a limit of 3 credits per year for each client valued at \$40. Any existing credit is erased when it is recharged. Clients have been very understanding of these changes and the resource is still well utilised.

## **SHLV website**

The SHLV Bega website continues to be a well utilized resource. We have provided links to the domestic violence/SHLV webpage and other relevant resources. We also have a virtual copy of the safety booklet online, which is available as a free download. The website is available at [stayinghomeleavingviolence.org.au](http://stayinghomeleavingviolence.org.au).

SHLV is also linked to the new SEWACS website located at <http://sewacs.org.au>. SHLV Bega continues to get referrals from our bordering shires, particularly from Eurobodalla. We will continue to lobby to expand the Bega service to cover the Eurobodalla fulfilling a need within this region.

We thank the Department of Communities and Justice for their continuing support of this program.



## **Eurobodalla Domestic & Family Violence Homelessness Support Service**

### **Our clients**

We have assisted a total of 396 people this financial year, including 42 adult males and 245 females, as well as their 106 children. Out of the 396 people supported by SEWACS, 158 identified as Aboriginal origin and one identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Women 26-35 years represented the most supported aged group this year (78 women) followed by women between 36-45 years (73 women). Domestic and family violence is the main reason for accessing our service for our female clients (173 women).

Most of the clients we have supported throughout 2019-20 experience a range of complex issues, including homelessness; domestic and family violence; legal and medical issues; drug and alcohol issues; trauma and other mental health issues; sexual assault; transport and licence issues; pregnancy; as well as custody and complex family issues. They are likely to be experiencing financial hardship and require assistance with their income support, sometimes compounded by low literacy skills, including relating to digital and financial literacy.

The primary need for women, children and young people seeking assistance at the crisis accommodation is to access safety from domestic and family violence and homelessness. Once safety is established and their physical needs have been met, the priority for the majority of our clients is to access stable accommodation and financial independence. Indigenous clients are over represented in accessing our services and remain a focus for our service.

### **Service and environment**

Our service continues to provide a crisis accommodation service to assist women and men with or without children who are experiencing domestic and family violence, or who are at risk of homelessness. We also provide phone assistance and referral, extensive outreach support, community education programs and child specific support groups, as well as post crisis work and transition support with women, children and young people leaving the service to establish their own homes.

### **Crisis accommodation**

Throughout 2019-20 we have continued to provide crisis accommodation for up to six women and their children. Our Moruya refuge offers communal living areas, an outdoor play area as well as a designated art/craft/playroom for children, client computer and a library. The accommodation is located in town within an easy walk to services. The service continues to receive Domestic Violence Response Enhancement funding to extend our operational requirements from 5pm to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm every Saturday.



## Case management and outreach support

We have continued to provide residents and outreach clients with intensive case management support tailored to address their immediate physical and emotional needs, through a trauma informed approach. We provide them support to plan for and move towards achieving long term goals, including moving into independent and sustainable housing.

Once our clients are ready to leave our refuge or transitional house, their support needs are assessed to ensure a smooth transition to their independent accommodation. This includes consultation with other services and follow-up services for up to three months to give our clients the best chance to secure ongoing tenancy.

We also continue to provide a diverse range of support services and activities to families and individuals including outreach support, court assistance, children and young person's after-school and holiday programs, advocacy, liaison and domestic and family violence prevention activities (Love Bites, within a NAPCAN framework in schools).

The male outreach worker continues to provide support to men who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Due to COVID-19 from March through to the end of financial year, outreach services were restricted to mainly phone and email support with minimal face to face where it was possible to meet outdoors and maintain the 1.5m social distancing.

## Transitional housing

Our transitional houses have continued to provide a stable home for three families. The houses provide accommodation for families for three to twelve months, with the aim of assisting them to attain long term, permanent accommodation. Throughout 2019-20 we have provided case management support and services to the families living in our transitional houses. SEWACS undertakes responsibility for the full management and maintenance of these properties, as a registered Community Housing provider.

## Accommodation outcomes

Our strong focus on building and maintaining positive relationships with local real estate agents has contributed to an ease in unmet demand and a decrease in client's staying in our refuge beyond the maximum three-month period. Continued availability and accessibility of affordable housing options is critical to our service's ability to support positive accommodation outcomes for women fleeing domestic violence.

Whilst an increased length of intensive support may ultimately contribute to better outcomes in terms of future housing stability, living in a communal setting for an extended period can be quite challenging for some individuals. This can result in residents choosing to stay away from the refuge because of tension in the house, which impacts our caseworkers' ability to maintain positive engagement and progress case management outcomes.

## Aboriginal outreach

Our Aboriginal outreach worker supports Aboriginal women by providing culturally sensitive and appropriate outreach support for women experiencing domestic violence or homelessness, or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

## Child support

It is widely acknowledged that children and young people exposed to domestic or family violence experience a heightened vulnerability to poorer educational outcomes, early school leaving, entering into unhealthy relationships, physical and emotional harms, or substance use. Our child support program aims to address the needs of children and young people staying at the refuge and break the cycle of abuse. [L]  
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We offer activities during child support sessions that aim to empower children of all ages and support them to build self-esteem and self-confidence in a playful and light atmosphere.

The child support program employs a child-focused, trauma informed approach in responding to each unique child's strengths and identified areas for additional support. Wherever possible and particularly with preschool aged children, adult caregivers are encouraged to participate.

Due to bushfires in the Eurobodalla area from early November to January, new child support staff recruitment in February and then COVID-19 restrictions preventing group activities from March to June the child support program has not operated for 8 months of this financial year.

SEWACS Eurobodalla has purchased a therapeutic nest swing to be installed by qualified playground installation workers next financial year.

## Male outreach activities

As part of the outreach service for men, the male outreach worker has co-facilitated the *Rent It Keep It* module created by FACS. The purpose of this module is to introduce participants who have experienced homelessness to all aspects of the process of securing long-term private rental accommodation.

Men supported by the outreach program are homeless, at risk of homelessness or living in supported housing. They come from a variety of backgrounds and are of a wide range of ages. Amongst those who have lived in private rental accommodation there are those who have found themselves in difficulty resulting in rental arrears and eviction.

The male outreach worker has undertaken Love Bites training and co facilitated the year 10 Healthy Relationship program at two High schools in the Eurobodalla.

The Male outreach worker has also been supported by the Program Manager to develop material for a Men's Group program aimed at changing patterns of violent behaviour. The program has not yet been piloted and draws on material from the Educational Centre Against Violence (ECAV) and other evidence based resources.

## Collaborative partnerships with local services

### Domestic Violence Committee

SEWACS Eurobodalla has participated in a Domestic Violence subcommittee that reports into the Eurobodalla Family Network meeting. 5 SEWACS workers supported the DV Committee in a Colour Run family activity which showcased Youth emoji messages on the white T-shirts for the colour run event.



The designs printed on the T-shirts were a product of the *Love Bites* healthy relationships program where year 10 students created emoji messages saying *No to Violence* or *Yes to respect*

The committee aims to promote awareness of domestic violence in the community, being an active by-stander to say no to violence against women and children and promoting healthy relationships. The committee does this by sharing ideas and expertise to collaboratively initiate, develop and implement:

- key events and activities to raise local community awareness  
Colour Run 2019, SEWACS staff
- fund raising efforts for events and activities
- collective applications for grants
- other activities as relevant to the scope and purpose of the committee.

### Love Bites

This financial year SEWACS case workers Liz Millikin, Naomi Quintin, Vicky Findlay and Tony Agnew collaborated with other local services to deliver *Love Bites* to Moruya High and St Peter's High reaching approximately 200 15/16 year old's. Other facilitators for the program work for Campbell Page, WDVCS, NSW Department of Education, NSW Police and Eurobodalla Shire council.

*SEWACS staff in Colour run in Moruya*



*Love Bites* is a respectful relationship education program that aims to change attitudes and behaviours. It is a school-based prevention program, based on best practice standards for education programs, as recommended by the Federal Government funded Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House and other leading academics in the area of violence against women.

In late 2019, all existing facilitators completed the refresher training and new facilitators were trained through the NAPCAN *Love Bites* facilitator training. Due to COVID-19 the remaining three High Schools in the shire had to postpone the program until next financial year

To ensure the program is run consistently regardless of the facilitator, schools have been provided NAPCAN resources, such as the opt-out note and checklist. Facilitators met with year advisers/principle and in most cases the school counsellor to prepare them for the program.

## **SHASSA nomination for free solar PVC installation**

The Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance (SHASA) is an alliance of Eurobodalla community members. SHASA's key focus is to highlight and support action to mitigate climate change for our region.

The refuge will receive a solar power unit with a 6,300 W capacity system of 20 Longi Solar - photovoltaic Panels. The Department of Community and Justice Land and Housing Commission has approved the building modification for solar installation. This will go ahead next financial year.

## **In house creative programs**

Much planning had gone into delivering an eight-week art therapy course for SEWACS clients of both outreach and residential services. This would be of the theme "new growth" to recognise the additional trauma that the summer bushfires had caused for many clients. On the eve of delivering the group sessions at a community hall, COVID-19 restrictions meant that all group face to face contact had to cease.

In June Eurobodalla SEWACS delivered an in-house art opportunity for residents to participate in making a mural, while keeping strict adherence to the COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

### **Mural installation**

One of the family rooms which needed patching on the walls and had no colour was chosen for a mural or 'freeze' to create a more nurturing space as well as to provide the opportunity for the art therapist from Interface Therapeutic Arts, Ozlem Guler, to work one on one with residents on a project, or for them to have the option to fill in sections of the design in a more "paint by numbers" approach.

Ozlem was present in the refuge for two weeks and spent the second week in the room for more than 8 hours at a time, providing residents with very flexible drop in times to paint.

The finished product has lifted the room aesthetically and particular attention was given to the eyes of the animals, so they would be sleepy rather than possibly 'watching' inhabitants of the room when finished.



<https://www.interfacetherapeuticarts.com.au/journal/an-unusual-crew>

## Furniture restoration activities

Client directed creative activities complying with COVID-19 restrictions included restoring outdoor furniture.



## Gardening

As residents come and go they are invited to make contributions to the vegetable garden, although it's not everyone's cup of tea. Fresh soil and edible as well as flowering plants have been added to the raised beds. More recently it's butterfly and flowers of the manmade type that have brightened the garden.



## Craft group

Case worker Liz Millikin runs a craft group each Thursday. The women in the house get together and either do canvas paintings, or herb planting so they can take them with them when they get their own place, the women gave feedback that they enjoy unwinding and be able to relax whilst doing craft, and not think about their stress.

## Contact us SEWACS

PO Box 921, Bega NSW 2550  
02 6492 2088  
sewacs.org.au

