

# Annual General Meeting 2020



superhero

noun – A superhero is a person whose actions or achievements are far greater than what people expect.

*Cambridge Dictionary*

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## Funding Acknowledgements

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### Department of Social Services

- Emergency Relief Program



### Department of Home Affairs

- Multicultural Information Network Service



### Primary Health Networks (phn)

- Youth Health Clinic
- Safe Your Sex – Sexual Health Youth Worker
- Little Beginnings



### Department of Communities, Disability Services & Seniors

- Financial Literacy & Resilience Program
- Emergency Relief Program



### Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women

- Erin House – Specialist Homelessness Service
- Gympie Region Domestic & Family Violence Service



### Department of Housing & Public Works

- Community Rent Scheme (Housing Service)
- Specialist Homelessness Service (Youth Service)
- Lease agreements on Department owned properties for community housing and crisis housing (Housing Service, Youth Service, Erin House)



### Gympie Regional Council

- Pensioner Units Program (Housing Service)

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## Our Mission

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Community Action Inc works together with the community to provide supports and services in response to the needs of the community.

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## Our Vision

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Our vision is for a socially and culturally inclusive community without poverty, homelessness, or violence.

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## Our Values

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## Community Action Inc

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**Registered Charity with the ACNC  
Endorsed as a Public Benevolent Institution  
Registered Tier 3 Community Housing Provider  
Endorsed by the ATO with Deductible Gift Recipient status,  
GST concessions, FBT exemption and Income Tax exemption**

Our programs are based in Gympie and service the Gympie Local Government Area with a very small portion of work based outside of the region in Kingaroy.

The four key strategic priority areas that drive the direction of our business include:

Leadership and Quality  
Services and Supports  
Workforce Skilling and Support  
Corporate Sustainability and Growth

We provide service through five key program areas:



### Youth Service

Crisis housing and a variety of support services to young people and their dependants who are homeless or at risk



### Housing Service

Subsidised housing for people through a range of community and other housing programs



### Domestic & Family Violence Service

Crisis housing, support services, court support and specialist counselling to women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence and working with the community through our Partnership's Facilitator on sector development opportunities



### Financial Literacy & Resilience Program

Financial counselling, support and financial aid to people who are experiencing financial stress



### Multicultural Information Network Service

Assistance for migrants in their first five years in Australia with the knowledge and skills to identify, understand and take action to address their identified settlement needs

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## President's Report

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This annual report reflects the many challenges and successes experienced by Community Action Inc. COVID-19 has had a lasting and significant impact on the way each service operates, requiring the implementation of a Risk Management and Business Continuity Plan to ensure services were provided for both staff and community.

The Community Action management group is to be commended for the speedy and well-considered responses to the differing needs of each service. Staff at each of the agencies are also to be congratulated for continuing to live up to the Community Action standard of service under such trying and often frustrating circumstances.

This Annual General Meeting marks General Manager Ruth's first full year, and I note her 2019 report she mentions "settling into the role". At times I am sure Ruth has not felt settled, she has however managed with her wonderful mix of grace, humour, and energy, to appear settled.

2020 saw a comprehensive audit of Community Action Housing Service under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. This was successful and we have retained registration as a Tier 3 provider. Community Action also went through the certification process for the Human Services Quality Standards. The certification applies to organisations who provide direct service delivery to vulnerable people. Our Previous CEO Judy, in her new role as Quality & Compliance Manager ably ensured we were well placed to gain certification.

Gratitude goes to the Board members. It is a privilege to work with such a diverse yet responsive, respectful, and forward-thinking team. The efforts of the Board members certainly compliment the highly motivated and capable management team and staff. 2020 saw us welcome new Board member Andy Nicolai who comes to us with a background in finance.

2021 I am sure will usher in new challenges for the organisation. This Annual General Meeting sees another step in the process of Gympie Women's Health merging with Community Action. By necessity, such mergers are protracted and carefully managed. It is essential that Gympie Women's Health Centre's identity and ideology are retained and enhanced by the inclusion with Community Action.

Community Action strives to be responsive to the needs of the community. 2021 will provide an opportunity for us to conduct an operational review and set a new strategic plan for the next three years. One significant area of focus will be affordable housing, particularly for vulnerable young people and women experiencing domestic and family violence.

Jeff Davies

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## General Manager Report

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I celebrated my first year as General Manager and what a huge year it has been for all of us with the unexpected challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic.

I am very proud to say that through the efforts and dedication of staff Community Action have been able to continue providing effective services and have achieved a great deal this year. Thank you everyone. Together we have overcome the obstacles of COVID-19 and turned them into opportunities.

Our board members have demonstrated their commitment and resilience in these unprecedented times and have remained steadfast in providing strong governance throughout the year. As General Manager I am extremely grateful for their ongoing support and wish to acknowledge their hard work and investment in the Gympie community.

**PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD** - Jeff Davies

**VICE PRESIDENT** - Ann Rigbye

**SECRETARY** – Andrew Nethercott

**OUTGOING TREASURER** - Rae Gâté

**TREASURER** - Abbie Grant-Taylor

**MEMBER** - Clacy Fatnowna

**MEMBER** - Andy Nicolai

As a result of the pandemic Community Action received additional one-off funding from the Commonwealth Government for emergency relief to assist people experiencing financial hardship. With these funds we have been able to support many people by implementing additional ER support one day a week where we provide assistance with such things as fuel and food vouchers, paying rental arrears and utility bills. A significant portion of the funds have been used to assist women and children fleeing domestic violence situations by paying relocation expenses and replacement of essential household items.

Community Action have also been fortunate to receive one-off COVID-19 brokerage funding from both Federal and State Governments specifically to meet the increased demand for the support of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. This discreet funding has been used to pay for safety and security upgrade, motel accommodation and additional staffing to provide brief intervention and case management support.

Additional support has been made possible through the Hand Heart Pocket COVID-19 Emergency Community Grant from the Freemasons Charity. This

money has expanded our capacity to provide crisis accommodation, community based support and facilitate a Youth Mentor program to help manage the needs of young males residing at the women's refuge with the aim of reducing generational domestic and family violence.

This year in particular we are very grateful for the ongoing PHN funding, which enables the Youth Service to provide a pregnancy education and support group for young women under 26 years, a sexual health service and youth friendly GP Clinic. These programs make a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of the young people of Gympie who may otherwise not have access to this type of healthcare.

Collaborating with other service providers has remained a priority this year as it builds our service capacity and ability to respond to the needs of the community. We have managed to stay connected through the use of videoconferencing, phones and through perseverance and sheer determination.

Community Action continues to pursue a possible merger with Gympie Women's Health Centre and have submitted a formal proposal to the Department of Child Safety Youth and Women and eagerly await a response.

We have affirmed our commitment to continuous improvement this year by dedicating resources to a quality and compliance position and are proud to have successfully completed the HSQF maintenance audit, attaining certification until 2021.

The only activities Community Action have not been able to provide this year due to the pandemic have been the Harmony Day event and the "Dollars and Sense" Financial Expo. These events have been postponed until 2021 and as the community has been deprived of many opportunities to come together, we anticipate greater community involvement when they resume.

The staff of Community Action have also missed out on their team building activities this year. However, despite all the difficulties we have been able to maintain a high-level of morale and look forward to coming together as a whole team at Christmas for a celebration.

I am so proud to be working for an organisation that is so invested in the wellbeing of the community and eternally grateful to be working with such a great group of staff and board members who in my opinion have been true super heroes this year.

Ruth Tidswell

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## Operations Manager Report

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Community Action consists of 7 Board Members, 36 Staff Members, 8 Service Areas (Housing Service, Youth Service, Erin House, Gympie Region Domestic and Family Violence, Financial Counselling, Multicultural Information Network, Finance and Senior Management) 155 Community Housing properties, 17 Crisis Housing beds and an approximate total of 3,579 clients supported within the Gympie Region

The demand for service continues to grow and this year the need hit a new crisis point. The many challenges of COVID-19 have further impacted our vulnerable communities.

Housing affordability and availability is at disaster level and this creates a bottleneck for Specialist Homelessness Services who are unable to exit clients into safe and sustainable accommodation. Community Housing continues to be in high demand.

Migrants face the reality of job loss, further isolation from families due to travel restrictions, increased episodes of racial attacks and ineligibility for welfare payments all contribute to settlement issues.

Domestic and Family Violence has increased both in numbers and severity due to increased social isolation and greater mechanisms to assert power and control.

As our Organisation continues to grow so too do the responsibilities within my role. With some growth comes change and challenge, but at the heart of what drives me as Operations Manager is my passion for a healthy and happy workforce. This in turn positively impacts our clients and our community

Role highlights for me this financial year include:

- Supporting Ruth as General Manager and building a strong leadership partnership
- Strong relationship with the Board to contribute to strong governance and strategic direction
- Working in partnership with EastCoast Human Resource Group to deliver our Staff Review Program
- Attending the local Housing and Homelessness Forum
- Recruitment and induction of new staff
- Supporting remote work arrangements throughout COVID-19
- Human Resources support and guidance
- Permanent appointment to the Operations Manager role
- Day-to-day support for service delivery
- Mentoring staff
- Internal HSQF audit support to the Quality & Compliance Manager
- Program review and development

Thank you to our wonderful staff, client's, and community,

Andrea.

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## Quality & Compliance Report

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Community Action implemented the Quality & Compliance Manager role in 2019 with the purpose of managing and maintaining quality systems and compliance requirements across the organisation. Judy transitioned into this role following the recruitment of new General Manager Ruth Tidswell.

Achievements for the year:

- A maintenance audit under the Human Services Quality Standards of services relating to Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women and Department of Communities, Disability Services & Seniors was conducted by the Institute for Healthy Communities Australia Certification Pty Ltd. Community Action received the overall rating of 'conformity' for each of the four standards assessed at audit. The next audit will be a recertification audit to be conducted no later than December 2021.
- A self-assessment against the Human Services Quality Standards was completed for the Youth Service which is not currently in-scope for certification. The self-assessment was submitted to the Department of Housing & Public Works as required under our funding agreement.
- The Human Rights Act (Qld) 2019 came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020. The Act includes several key mechanisms to protect and promote human rights, including placing an obligation on 'public entities' such as Community Action, to consider, interpret and act in accordance with human rights. Adherence to human rights is consistent with the ethos and practice of Community Action who already had a strong focus on human rights as part of our organisational approach and work with clients. Relevant policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect human rights and the requirements of the Act.
- Mandatory staff training is delivered via the web-based portal – Sentrion. Various training modules are completed by staff each month such as Workplace Health & Safety, Workplace Bullying, Ergonomics just to name a few. This system is also utilised by staff to read and sign-off new and revised policy and procedures.
- A Workplace Risk Management & Business Continuity Plan was developed and implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan was updated a number of times and developed into the Recovery Plan as restrictions started to ease.

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## Youth Service Report

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The 2019-2020 Financial Year has been a busy one for the Youth Service, with adapting service delivery to accommodate COVID-19 while meeting the support needs of young people. Some of the highlights of this year have been:

- This year we farewelled Amanda as the Sexual Health Youth Worker and welcomed Danni to the role.
- Staff attended the Tree Top Challenge as part of a team building exercise.
- Renovations and repaint of one of the properties.
- Ashley and Prue attended and presented at the Early Years Forum.
- Client Christmas Party 2019 was held at the Gympie Aquatic Recreational Centre. This was attended by 17 young people with a further 17 children. This was successful with clients providing feedback that this was a really nice day.
- Nomination for the Healthy Town Award for Project 180.
- Successfully getting through COVID-19 changes and challenges!

### **YOUTH SERVICE ROOM HIRE**

We hire out different rooms within the youth service building to external services requiring a space to provide support to young people. This financial year we have provided space to Psychologist Carmen who provided 128 sessions to young people aged 12-25 years of age.

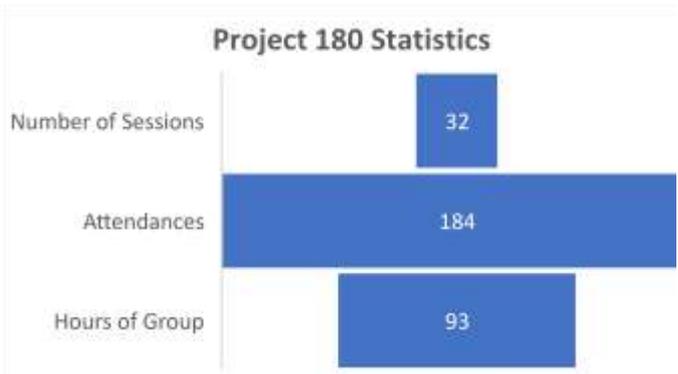
Coming together with other programs and services has proved to be beneficial in many ways such as clients feeling comfortable in the youth service space, networking between services, referral pathways and providing wrap around support. We are looking forward to continuing relationships as well as welcoming new ones.

### **PROGRAMS:**

#### **PROJECT 180**

Supports young people 25 years and under who do not attend school, training, or employment by providing a hang out space and a program of health-oriented activities to reduce the temptation to use drugs.

Project 180 was attended 184 times over 32 Thursdays this year. Staff provided 93 hours to this group



**EMERGENCY RELIEF (ER)**

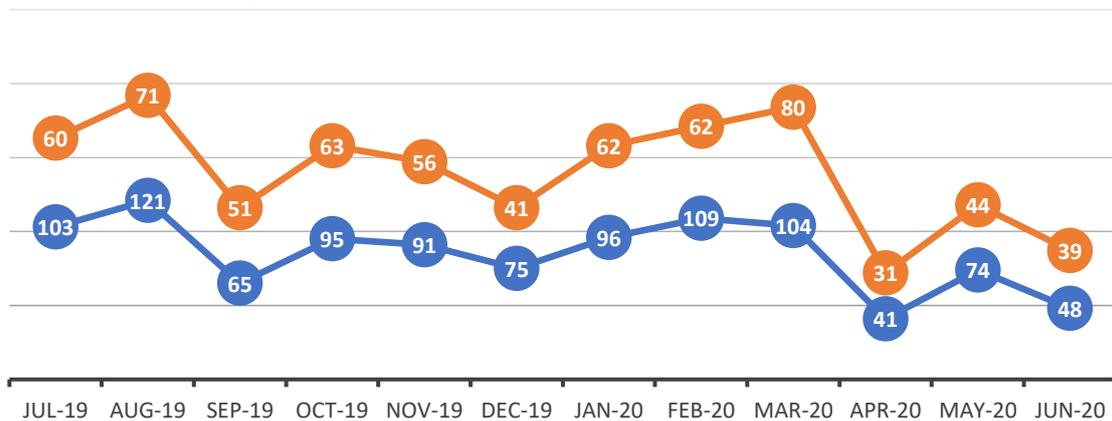
The ER program supports young people aged 12 to 25 years who are experiencing financial hardship through a range of options including provision of pantry items; food and fuel vouchers, transport assistance, payment of bills; chemist vouchers; payment of rent/arrears; medical support. Where appropriate clients are referred to the Financial Literacy and Resilience Program. Generally, assistance is limited to four occasions per person in a financial year.

Total Number of Adults and Children Assisted:  
**1022**

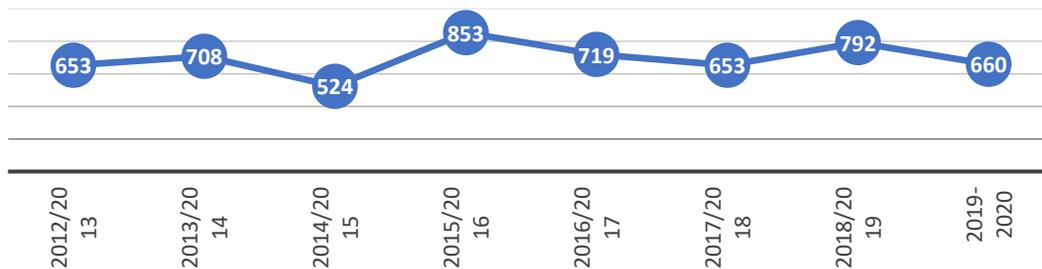
Emergency Relief was accessed a total of 792 times (Occurrences) by 313 young people this financial year. This meant that each person accessed an average of 2.5 assists within the

financial year.

Monthly ER Statistics 2019-2020



Yearly Occassions of Assistance



## CENTRE-BASED SUPPORT

This program supports young people aged 12-25 years who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and are not currently housed in our Crisis Accommodation.

These young people are assisted through a 'Drop-in' service, mentoring, advocacy, case-management and the provision of social and educational groups.

This financial year youth support workers (both housing and resource) completed over 30 Department of Housing Applications. 103 young people received intensive centre-based support.

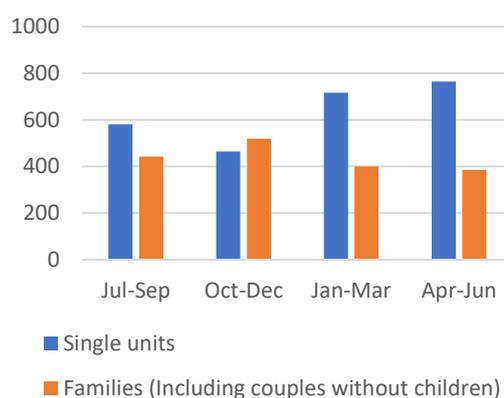
## TEMPORARY SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

This program provides temporary accommodation to young people aged 16-25 years who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who need support from a youth worker to obtain and maintain secure and sustainable housing.

Young people are assisted with living skills development, education and employment support, support gaining an income, addressing any health needs (emotional, physical and/or mental).

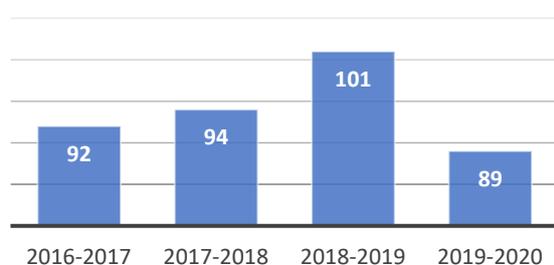
Temporary Supported Accommodation supplied 4255 bed nights to young people and their children in the 2019-2020 financial year. These periods of accommodation varied in length due to the individual needs of the young people.

**Breakdown of Accommodation**



## SAFE YOUR SEX (YOUTH SEXUAL HEALTH PROGRAM)

**Yearly No. of STI Screenings**

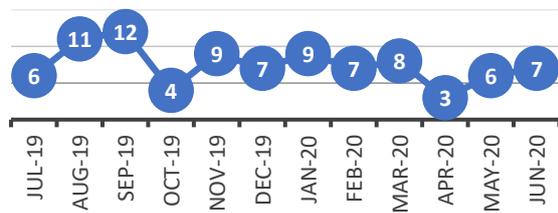


The sexual health program is provided to young people aged 16-25 years (under 16 with parental consent). The service is available to young people living in Gympie and outreach areas, including Tin Can Bay, Cooloola Cove, Rainbow Beach and the Mary Valley.

The program offers free non-invasive sexual health screenings for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea. It also provides pregnancy testing, contraception support and education around safe sex and healthy relationships, this support can be provided to individuals or groups.

Safe Your Sex provided education and information sessions to 145 young people this financial year with 89 young people participating in STI screening. Positive sexually transmitted infection (STI) results show that out of the 89 screenings, 9 came back positive for an STI.

Monthly No. of STI Screenings



**LITTLE BEGINNINGS**

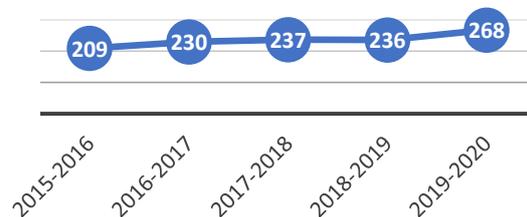
This program supports pregnant young women and new mums aged 25 years and younger who may have extra support needs or not fit traditional maternity support groups. This program has an educational and social focus.

Little Beginnings has been well utilised this year with 305 individual support sessions provided and 305 group attendances over 49 group sessions. Transport assistance, ensuring young women can access this support program, was provided on 115 occasions.

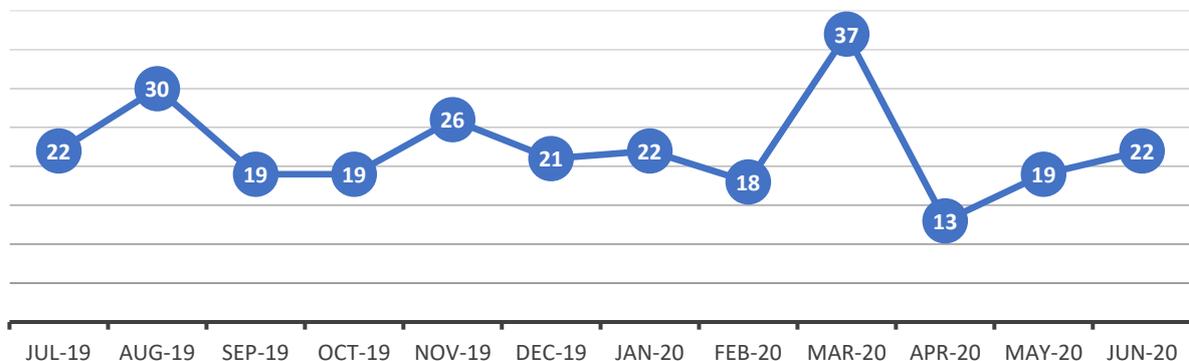
**GP CLINIC**

This program provided free health assessments and treatment, Mental Health Care Plans, ante-natal care, cervical screening, contraception advice, advocacy, and referral to at risk young people aged 12-25 years with physical and mental health and wellbeing needs.

Yearly GP Appointments



Monthly GP Appointments



Thank you everyone for a great year,

Murray

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## Erin House Report

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### **SAFETY AND APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

There have been some significant legislative changes to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act with the aim of providing a legislative framework that puts the safety and security of victims

first. This is intended to send a clear message to perpetrators that violence is not tolerated and supports the broader systemic reforms. The Act includes a preamble and principles to guide the administration of the legislation to make a clear statement that Domestic and Family Violence is a violation of human rights and is not acceptable in Queensland communities.

During the reporting period CAI Erin House gave intensive support and crisis accommodation to 108 women and 205 children in crisis due to domestic violence. If we had the space, we would have filled it many times over – a higher number of women this year left our region to gain safety.

A total of 6,074 bed nights were recorded for the year in our secure accommodation facility. 29% of our families identified as Indigenous, while 6% of our families were from Asian countries, with Vietnam, Thailand, China and the Philippines represented.

**CENTRE BASED SUPPORT** - Erin House staff assisted many women (with and without children) who were not accommodated but required varying levels of support – approximately half of these women had been accommodated by the service in the past and knew of the extended services available to them. The other group of women were often still living in domestic violence situations or were planning to leave or had recently left the abusive relationship. Depending on the complexity of the situation, various hurdles could be overcome by maintaining a support network via Erin House, such as ongoing counselling, including children's counselling and safety planning. The most requested support has been safety upgrades, assistance with legal or court processes and referral and assistance to access other services.

The numbers of women and children receiving direct support from Erin House were almost insurmountable with 975 women and 257 children receiving direct support from Erin House. The number of women and children assisted this year has more than doubled.

Within the Centre Based Service model we have been inundated with requests for safety planning, security/safety upgrades to allow women and children to stay safe in their homes. It is remarkable that we have managed on such a limited budget to do what we have. We are very grateful for the support received from our builder and locksmith who are priceless.

A focus on families and acknowledging the work that is required to nurture, parent and educate children is something we can never take for granted and we need to keep this as the highest priority in our ever-changing society.

We believe if more emphasis is placed on healthy relationship building, loving and responsible parenting, good nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices the future of the families that we see here at Erin House would be considerably enhanced. What is practiced in the home will always make its mark on future generations, so if we are seeing increases now in violence, abuse and coercive control then we need to have an effective response that includes education – the pattern needs to be broken.

Recently we have seen more funding available to our broader services to extend the focus on counselling for children who have suffered trauma from being exposed to domestic violence. It is essential that we do more for children who from birth have been exposed to violence and homelessness at the most critical time of their development. As well as these initiatives more dedicated educational programs promoting healthy and respectful relationships could be running across schools.

We know that it is women who bear the greatest burden of the economic costs of domestic violence – the ongoing struggle to survive, relocate and all too often the loss of the ability to earn an income. The shameful and hidden poverty has never been more profound in our region. The impact on the psyche is even more alarming - the ultimate loss of quality of life, poor self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, fear and anxiety, depression, ongoing health problems, dysfunction and chaos, lack of self-worth, no confidence and so the list goes on.

Empowering our families (women and children) to try another way, concentrate on them, plan for a future, educate, role model, inspire, rally around, encourage, applaud, laugh, play, progress, develop and hundreds of positive steps along the way brings great meaning to this work – and bravo for a team that is resourceful, courageous and innovative.

Our families inspire us, their challenges, survival strategies and determination will always be so much more than statistics – we work with real people and we want the very best for them.

**CRISIS RESPONSE WORKER BASED AT THE GYMPIE POLICE STATION** - Debbi has been working very effectively in this role for some time, responding to high risk clients and totally dedicated and committed to the work. It has evolved into a worthwhile and much needed resource for the Gympie region. Debbi is well accepted by Queensland Police Services and fully supported while being safely located within the station.

The complex nature of domestic and family violence requires a specialist approach in order to gain trust and retrieve valid information from aggrieved persons, understandably the Crisis Response worker is able to work with police to enhance and improve police practice when investigating and responding to domestic abuse. Debbi has assisted in improved responses with timely referral to other community services and resources with the day to day operations responding more effectively.

As the Manager of Erin House, I am extremely grateful to be working with a wonderful group of women who have a diverse range of abilities and expertise that combined with commitment, strength and positive attitude makes for a formidable team. Thank you, Kerry, Sue, Maria, Prue, Dette, Debbi and Kristy.

We have the added benefits of the wider Community Action team (men and women), Mary Street DFVS Counselling & Court Support, MINS, Finance, Financial Counselling, Community Housing, Youth Service, General and Operational Managers who make us an amazing integrated community organisation.

All of this could not have been achieved without our professional and progressive Community Action Board of Management.

We acknowledge the generosity of our Gympie Community who have supported us throughout the year and extend our heartfelt thanks,

Bernadette.

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## Gympie Region Domestic & Family Violence Service Report

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The story of our work in 2019-20 has very much been one of adaptation and innovation to find new ways to deliver a service and keep women safe during an international pandemic and restrictions. I would like to congratulate our team on finding new ways of working and engaging with women. At times this really required some out-of-the-box thinking.

In the year 2019 to 2020 we provided support to:

- 707 women through counselling, crisis intervention and brief intervention
- 328 women through court (there will be some overlap for women who then sought additional crisis or counselling support from us).
- 95 children through our children's counselling program

### **RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**

Here at Gympie Region Domestic & Family Violence Service we have changed our service delivery in a range of ways to adapt to changing health directives and risks (both health and domestic violence risks).

### **WHAT WE NOTICED DURING COVID-19**

- Our clients experienced heightened anxiety and reached out for support more often. Many of them experienced issues such as having their ex-partner withhold their children to 'keep them safe from COVID', or, in one case taking their children into every crowd and sending pictures of this to alarm our client.
- We received less new referrals and enquiries for the first few months of Australia's COVID response. The calls we had were often women wanting information and support around managing child handover. Police referrals to our service were also down during this time.
- From about May, we saw increased requests for support, particularly an increase in women seeking support to apply for or vary a Domestic Violence Protection Order. We also noticed an increase in the number of women named as respondents in applications.
- Many women reported an increase in controlling and monitoring behaviours from their abusers. This behaviour can be difficult to see from outside the relationship and, if reported to police at all, may not be understood as domestic violence or as contributing to risk.
- Our own experience was reinforced by research carried out by Monash University "Responding to Queensland's Shadow Pandemic during the period of COVID 19 Restrictions" and by Australian Government Institute of Criminology: "The Prevalence of Domestic Violence Among Women during

the Covid-19 Pandemic". Both studies found an increase in the occurrence and complexity of domestic and family violence during the pandemic, and importantly, that women were less likely to seek help from police at this time.

### **HOW WE RESPONDED**

- Counselling sessions mostly delivered by phone or zoom with the majority of our counsellors working remotely. Immediate safety responses continued to happen in person.
- We introduced a brief intervention and case management model to ensure that any woman seeking support with domestic or family violence receives a timely intervention, has her risks assessed and where appropriate, is linked to services and interventions that increase her safety whilst awaiting entry to DFV counselling.
- We changed our court support service delivery as DFV court was heard by phone and contacted women before or after court for information, planning and debriefing.
- We worked much more closely with other Gympie services to provide domestic violence support through case coordination and through providing DFV consults to workers seeking to address safety issues with their clients
- Additional money provided to manage increased DFV risk during COVID-19 was very useful indeed. In this part of the organisation we were able to:
  - Contract an additional court and brief intervention worker to meet increased demand. Kristy works across Erin House and Mary St services and this has been great for communication as well as service delivery.
  - Support women's increased safety through emergency relief
  - Work with Erin House to motel or offer home safety upgrades to increased numbers of women as required

### **WHAT WE LEARNED:**

- That safety can be supported in a whole range of ways as well as face to face (this is great for parts of the region outside of Gympie town)
- That we can coordinate effectively with colleagues through online forums and this saves a heap of travel time!
- That sometimes the best way to support a woman's safety is to work through another service and worker with whom she has an existing relationship
- That communicating with each other and maintaining a sense of team is vital
- That safe operation of the service with very small in-person staff numbers can be quite challenging, but possible if we work across service silos, and that this also makes for better service delivery to clients

## SOME OF OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

### Women of Worth (WOW) – DFV Education and Support Group for Women



The women's counselling team facilitated **Women of Worth (WOW)** until COVID-19 restrictions were enforced. We received very positive feedback from group members about the positive impact their participation in group had on their sense of self, sense of safety and relationships. One client reported, "I'm enjoying the two workshops [i.e., WOW and Circle of Security]. I feel I'll get a lot out of it. My brain's engaging again and that's good. I'm feeling a bit more empowered. I've got this. I can do this". The client attributed her change of perspective to WOW. "I'm not the only one. I'm not the crazy one. Seeing other women who've been further and overcome obstacles. There's hope. I'm doing okay. That's been positive."

**Circle of Security** - The goal of our children's trauma-focused counselling program is to help children (and their mothers/caregivers) develop the skills and strategies to assist them to better understand and manage their trauma responses, and to process emotions and memories tied to traumatic experiences. The end goal is to increase families' safety by breaking the transgenerational cycle of D&FV.

In 2020 we focused on working with caregivers because the adult has more 'degrees of freedom' in changing patterns of attachment (caregiving interactions) than the child. The *Circle of Security (COS) Parenting Program* began in February and aims to support children's safety through supporting secure attachments with their parents. This parenting program addresses the trauma effects caused by D&FV during childhood and adulthood.

We adapted the program delivery to meet COVID-19 restrictions by providing the 8-week course on Zoom. Our Children's Counsellor, Nelson, provided individual courses for mothers unable to participate in the group. We have received outstandingly positive feedback from our group members about the positive impact their participation in group has had on their sense of self, their increasing capacity to make positive changes in their parenting, and their development of attachment with their children.

**Brief Intervention** - As part of our review of service delivery during COVID 19 we introduced some new practices around intake to ensure a greater number of women could receive a more timely response (usually within a few days, often immediately) to assess her risks and needs and support and resource her safety. Interventions such as safety planning, home safety upgrades, safe phones, refuge, linking to police, court support and referral to internal and

external services to support housing, legal needs, emergency relief, child and family support etc can all be provided quickly, within a case management framework while awaiting DFV counselling.

**Partnership with Baldwin Lawyers** - Baldwin Lawyers Mary Valley Law, partner with Community Action to provide three 45-minute sessions of free legal advice per fortnight to women experiencing Domestic & Family Violence. This has often supported our clients managing matters in Family Law and DFV Law simultaneously, supporting the coordination of information and processes in two very different legislative frameworks. Many women then successfully apply for Legal Aid which pays for further legal support. We have had considerable positive feedback from our clients about the support they have received from lawyers Beth and Stephen.

**Integrated Safety & Support Responses** - Our service works closely with a range of other agencies to keep women and children safe. These include:

- Gympie-Cooloola Partnership Against Domestic & Family Violence is our Gympie region DFV network where we address regional and strategic issues such as planning for community awareness and education, worker and sector practice and development, referral pathways and information sharing. Meetings are monthly and in 2020 have been largely virtual. Many workers report preferring online meetings as they are a more efficient use of time.
- Family Support Collective is held fortnightly and is the region's case coordination forum for families. In 2020 we have endeavoured to use the Safe & Together model to map perpetrator patterns, map the efforts of the non-offending parent to promote the safety and wellbeing of the client and plan effective and coordinated interventions to support the safety of adult and child DFV survivors.
- DVCAM – our Crisis Response Worker participates in Domestic Violence Collaboration Agency Meetings with Child Safety, QPS and Community Corrections to support the safety of DFV victims who are at high risk.
- Secondary Consultations provide support to other Gympie Region organisations seeking advice about domestic violence informed practice to support the safety of their clients. This area of our work grew exponentially during the COVID pandemic.
- Court Stakeholders is a quarterly meeting convened by the Magistrate at Gympie District Court. Over 2020 a range of changes have been introduced to support both health and DFV safety for persons attending court.
- Regional Domestic Violence Services Qld Domestic Violence Service Network (QDVSN) – This has supported us to check our practice against industry standards, share wisdom around effective service design and

management practice and benefit from emerging practice. Both Ruth and Talia have attended.

**Practice Studio: Social Entrapment Framework** - At the beginning of 2020 we successfully obtained funding from WorkUp QLD (Workforce Planning and Development for DFV, Sexual Assault and Women's Health service) to host a practice studio in order to pilot some new practice around the use of the Social Entrapment Framework. The SEF recognises that the aim of domestic abuse is not usually to harm the victim but to control them. Instances of abuse such as physical violence, sexual violence, verbal abuse, surveillance etc. are tactics used to ensure the ongoing compliance of the victim, and are very specifically designed to intersect with other forms of oppression in her life so as to make her do what the perpetrator wants and to prevent her efforts to seek help. When existing support systems, such as police, courts and community services (including us) respond to 'incidents of violence' as opposed to unpacking the whole pattern of abuse used to control a victim, we can fail to identify risks correctly and put in place safety responses that increase rather than decrease her risks.

The SEF tool we have adapted in this project is an interview and documentation tool designed for use in DFV court documentation to tell the 'story of entrapment' so that DVPO conditions can appropriately respond to risks. In 2021 we will be sharing the tool and some case studies with our colleagues in legal and other systems.

**Our Team** - In 2019-20 we welcomed Kaz who is multi-talented, working as a women's counsellor, a children's counsellor, and a group facilitator. We sadly farewellled Karen – Women's Counsellor and group Facilitator. We both welcomed and farewellled Nelson, Children's Counsellor and Circle of Security Intervention Facilitator. For a brief and wonderful period, we included Mel (Coordinator of the FLARP program) as one of our counselling team, utilising some of the augmented COVID funding to boost our service capacity.

**Our team at time of printing consists of** - Lisa (Clinical Practice Manager), Andrea (DFV Counsellor), Kaz (DFV Counsellor), Debbi (Crisis Intervention - really part of the Erin House Team, but we are claiming her too!) Talia (Community Partnerships Manager), Dette (Court Support), Vish (Court Support), and at the centre of it all is Jules (our amazing Admin & Reception).

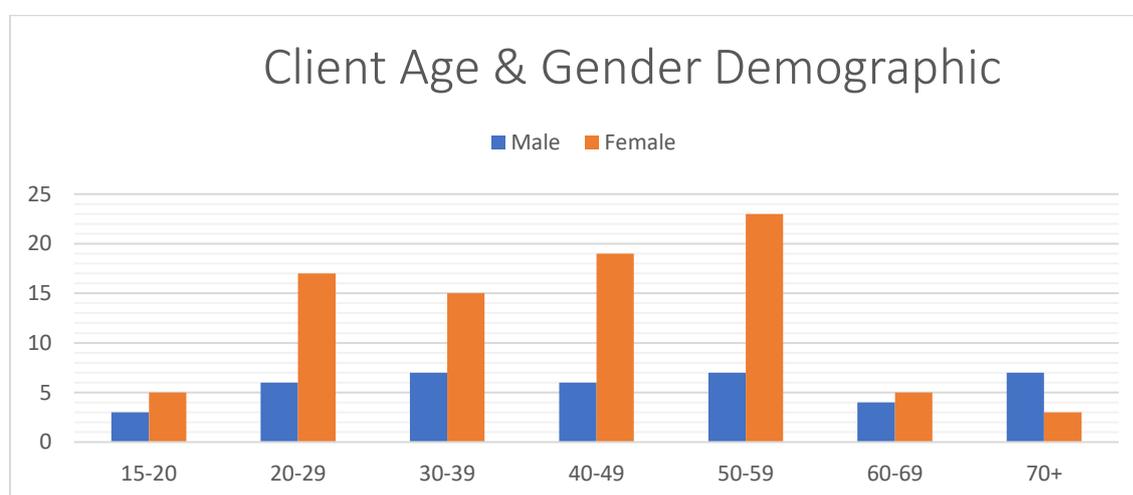
Rita (part-time Children's Counselling), Fiona (part-time Children's Counselling and Children's Group facilitator) and Kristy (part-time Intake Coordination) more properly belonging in the next Annual Report, but I really wanted to acknowledge the amazing work they are doing and the wonderful skills and qualities they bring to our service. Thank you all,

Lisa & Talia.

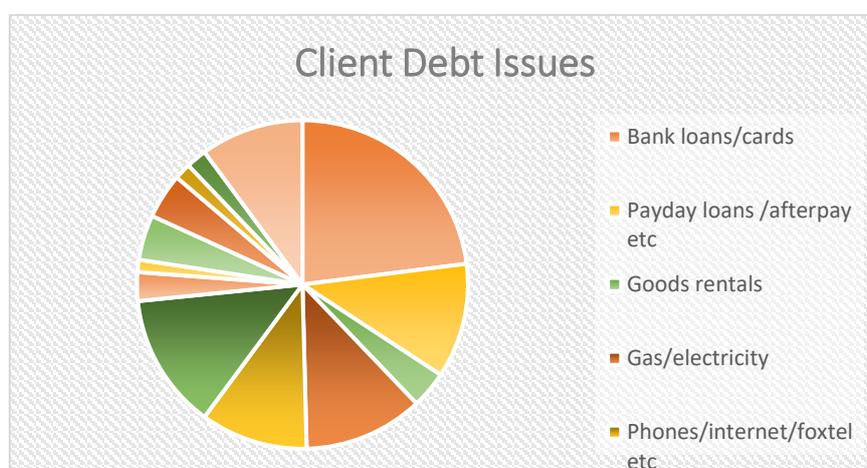
## Financial Literacy & Resilience Program Report

This year we saw 127 clients (40 male and 87 female) and dealt with the challenges of working from home for a few months of that time. Working from home proved to be difficult at first as we rely on getting clients to bring in their bills, Centrelink statements and signing privacy authorities. Luckily, there were still people in the office so clients could come in and do that if they did not have the facilities to do so at home. It did not take long to adapt and so the phone financial counselling became the new “normal”.

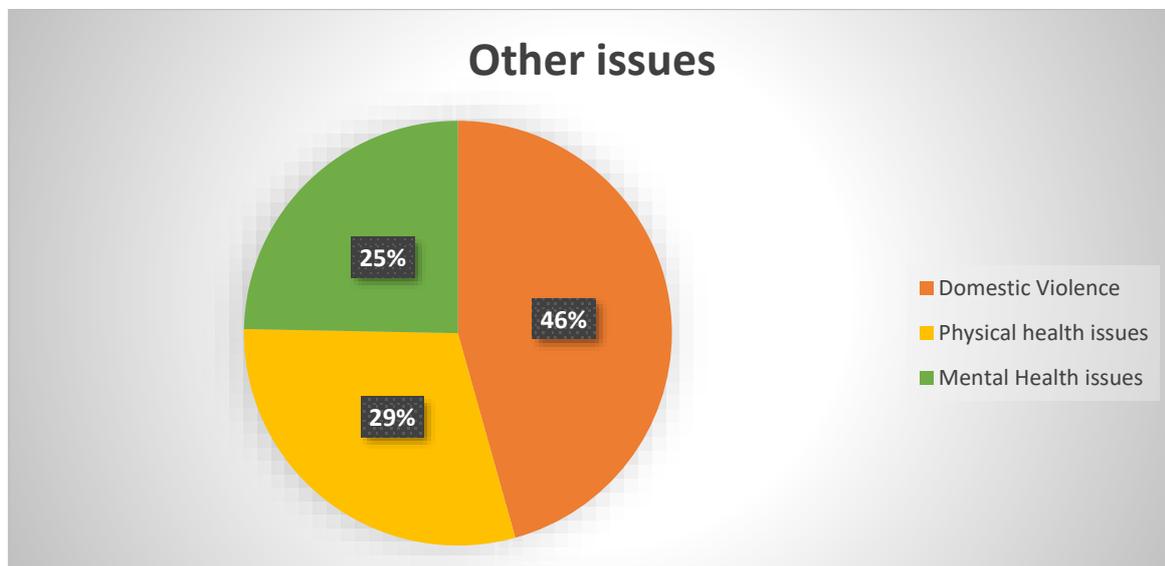
Other issues associated with this period were accessing creditors as they were also in lockdown and some of their workers were in other countries who were also put into lockdown, so things took longer to resolve.



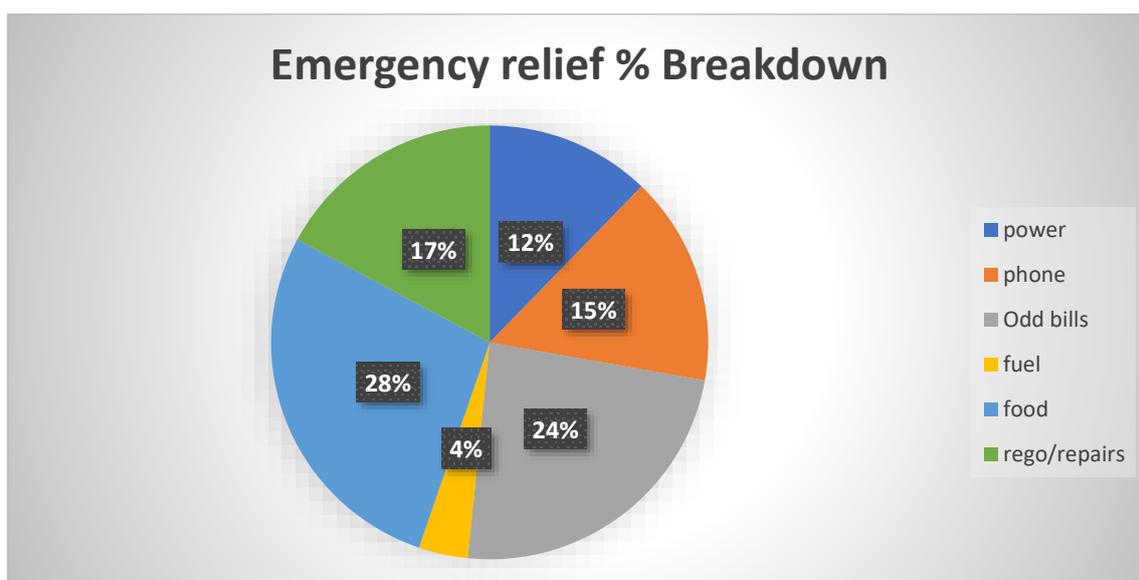
As you can see from the following pie graph, there are quite a range of issues that clients present with, the largest being bank loans, credit cards, personal loans, and mortgages.



Other issues that we noticed this year were 25% of our clients had mental health issues, 29% had physical health issues and 46% were experiencing domestic violence.



The biggest percentage of expenditure for emergency relief was for food followed by car maintenance and payment of bills, including buying water as many people in Gympie rely on the rain for their water and we have had long periods in recent years when we have had very little of that.



This year we had \$258,218 worth of debts waived, usually because of domestic and family violence, sudden physical or mental health conditions or other unforeseen events that had impacted the client's ability to repay the debts

back. One of our clients, who we are still waiting on a resolution for, has had ongoing advocacy for 2 years 5 months and an amount of 113 hours but we are expecting a good result within the next month. Sometimes when lending has been unconscionable and very unjust, we will keep trying to get it resolved in a fair way and not give up!

We had planned to do a big expo at the Civic Centre but this had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 which was a shame as we had managed to get an amazing line up of ombudsmen, Legal Aid Consumer Protection Unit, various utility providers and it would have been very helpful for our local community to access these, and other people, to find out their rights and what assistance there is available. As soon as we feel it is viable to do this, we will try to organise it again.

Moving forward we intend to try to get ourselves out more into the community doing workshops and education around the help available. We are also now part of the SPER Hardship Partner Program so are hoping to assist people in that area too. Thank you,

Mel

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## **Housing Service Report**

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The Community Action Housing Service team is committed to providing stable and affordable housing to those in need in the Gympie region and surrounding community.

March to May this year, a number staff worked from home when the COVID-19 restrictions were in place. This time was challenging for them and those that remained in the office. It was very stressful for tenants and clients with the insecurity of health and normal life. The Housing Service team contacted each tenant on a fortnightly basis throughout this period. We discovered different ways of making contact, different ways of communicating with each other and were innovative in the way we operated. Here is the Housing Service take on COVID-19:

<b>C</b> ompassion	<b>C</b> leaning
<b>O</b> penness	<b>O</b> bsessive Cleaning
<b>V</b> ery Stressful	<b>V</b> ery Obsessive Cleaning
<b>I</b> nnovation	<b>I</b> ntensive Cleaning
<b>D</b> iscovery	<b>D</b> aily /Disinfectant Cleaning

**NEW PROPERTIES:** Community Action Housing Service has the privilege of managing two more properties that are owned by the Department of Housing and has transferred a family living in an overcrowded home into these properties considering their cultural needs and enabling them to live close by each other. This family identify as indigenous, have multiple health issues, including mental health challenges, diabetes, and cancer. This is a wonderful opportunity for this family.



Additional Department owned Properties now managed by CAI Housing Services

#### **TENANT VIEWS:**

##### **'What does having a house to live in mean to you?'**

- *I can have an address*
- *I am safe*
- *I can have my children with me*
- *I can enrol my children into school*
- *I can keep a steady job*
- *I can get a loan*
- *I can feel safe at night*
- *I can buy fresh food because I can have a fridge*
- *I can go on the dental register to get my teeth fixed because I have an address*
- *New beginnings*

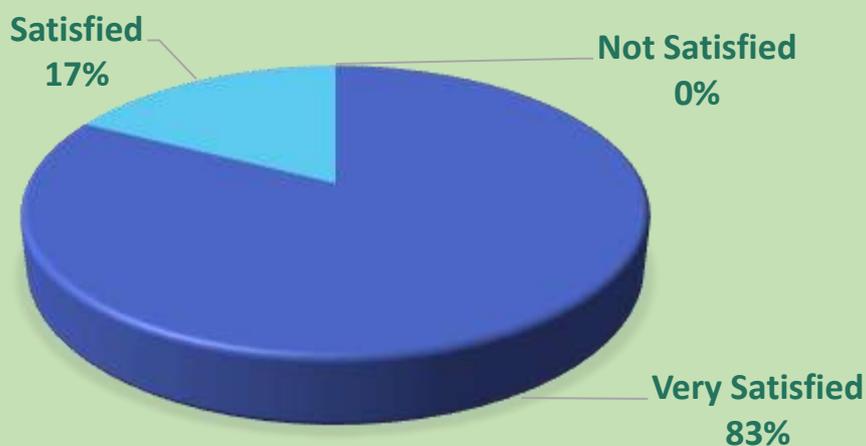
**By a CAI Housing Service tenant, 2020.** "NO ... the word that gave me freedom... Some say that freedom is a state of mind, in my case it was true. I guess we have all heard or experienced the relationship break-down. Well, that is where I found myself a few years ago, lost and penniless with no sense

of direction or a path forward. Like many before me I found comfort in the bottle. The further I fell into depression the more I needed that comfort and before I knew, four years had vanished along with all my sense of pride.

Fifty-two years old, rock-bottom, sleeping rough, my lowest point...That is when a woman approached me as I sat on a bench in front of a shop and said, 'you look like crap, R U OK?' The first thing that came to mind was to reply YES, as I had done many times before. I just could not say it, with tears rolling down my cheek I said NO...She reached out her hand and said, 'Will you trust me?' I had nothing left, so I just said YES and from that moment things moved fast. She made a call got me an interview with, of all places a women's shelter, but that is what she knew, and they gave me the right people to call and so I did.

The right people were at Gympie? A long way from me at the time, so after another call I jumped at the chance for accommodation, and as many will know, short-term accommodation was my starting point. I had no reference's so for the Community Action Housing staff it was a matter of trust, I guess...They gave that trust and belief, so for me I had to pull myself up as to repay their support. To me there is no magic wand or magic pill, it is recovering self-belief. Being honest with myself was the first step. With stable accommodation and support of the Housing Service staff, the understanding from the staff of the training course I started, I have now replenished myself worth. I have employment where I can help others to live a happier life and now have long-term accommodation. So, thanks to the support of the Community Housing staff and the warm and trusting nature of all involved. Gympie gave life to the man that said NO." Happy Tenant

### Tenant satisfaction with services provided by Community Action Housing



**Women Housed: 103**

**Men Housed: 96**

**Children Housed: 135**

**TENANT CHRISTMAS 2019:** Was held at the Nelson Reserve Park where we had Face Painting for the children (and adults), games and a BBQ. We were unable to organise a Tenant Christmas Party this year due to COVID restrictions in place at the time of preparation but have made gift packs for all our tenants instead.



**TENANT CHRISTMAS GIFT PACKS 2020**

**THANK YOU:** The Housing Service team for their commitment to the Gympie and surrounding community. This team of professional individuals work incredibly hard to support and assist every client and tenant for the best outcome possible. Pamela (Housing Worker), Emma (Housing Worker), Kay (Tenancy Support Worker), Renee (Housing Assistant), Katrina (Administration), Anne (Administration Support). Well Done!

Thank you to the Department of Housing and Public Works staff in Brisbane, Maroochydore and Maryborough. Thank you to our community partners, local support services, our contractors, our lessors, most importantly our tenants and others who have assisted and supported us throughout the year,

Shelley.

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## Multicultural Information Network Service Report

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Xin chào tất cả mọi người ở đây và lời chào nồng nhiệt đến tất cả các bạn. Tôi hài lòng với sự hiện diện của bạn.

Hello everybody here and warm greetings to you all. I am graced with your presences.

Đa văn hóa - "Multicultural".

This year has brought unique challenges to this diverse sector. The ability to provide the necessary support for this vulnerable group has required us to become ever more resourceful and responsive as we negotiated the fluidity of the times. It is truly a privilege to work with such resilient clients and to be rewarded with their smiles, relief and tears of joy.

Community Action Multicultural Information Network Service (MINS) has undoubtedly progressed over the year with many positive challenges that have brought about stronger relationships within the local community to best benefit Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients and the growth of MINS within this organisation. It is with great pleasure that I present this report as part of Community Action.

MINS Report showcases the hard work and dedication of Multicultural Gympie in promoting and advancing cultural diversity, social cohesion, and community harmony. We are proud of what CAI MINS has accomplished during 2019-20. Many of the programs and initiatives that were implemented this year were driven by our strategic priorities: Community, Language and Capability.

### **PROGRAM**

MINS is funded by Department of Home Affairs to provide Settlement Services to newcomers in their first five years to the Cooloola and surrounding regions. The objective of MINS is to help migrants settle into and become a part of our local community, as well as linking them to appropriate support and services.

By means of referrals, employment, help with understanding documents, Licenses, Centrelink, TAFE, Law, Police, Health, and other Government agencies that make up the Australian culture.

MINS also collaborates with other organisations group sessions that have been tailored to the client's needs, which may include citizenship, housing, counselling, Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) improving English skills etc.

MINS is about enriching the lives of all cultures of Gympie.

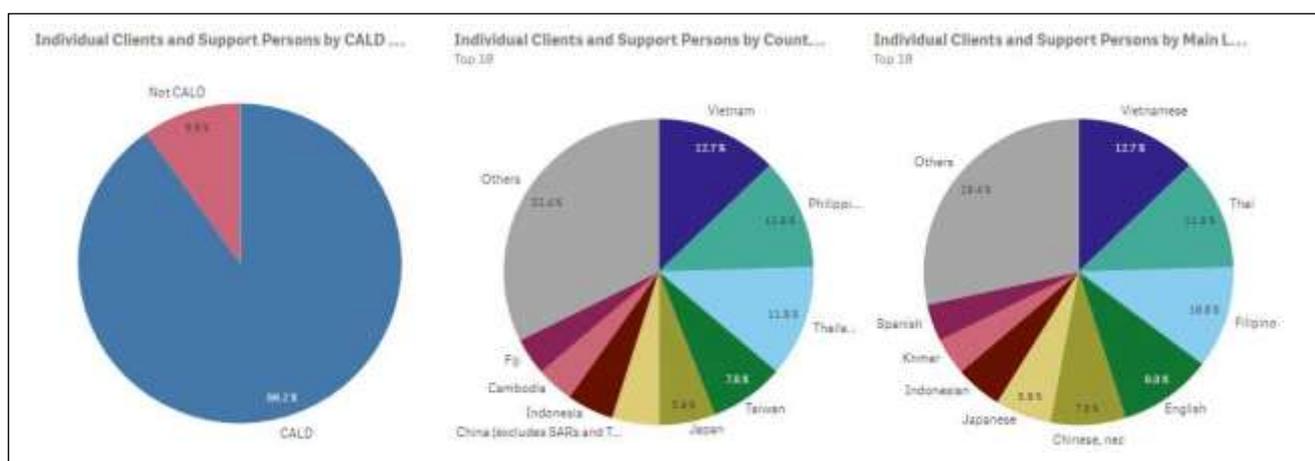
## CASEWORK AND COORDINATION

MINS has had the privilege of helping 54 non-program clients for 2019-2020 (Clients who have surpassed the 5-year funded program requirements) . This may include referrals to other services within the Gympie/Noosa region.

Case management of clients for July 2019 to June 2020 has surprisingly remained high during COVID-19 with 119 migrants needing support. Many changes to support needs for various reasons included job loss, income loss, non-eligibility for Centrelink, non-travel, lock down and DV etc. These enormous changes brought new challenges to support migrants with new programs emerging to cope with arising issues. Interceding actions were a daily occurrence, moment by moment change at a strategic level. Without the dedicated support from all other services it would have been no doubt a very difficult time for migrants.



**Casework Clients who have accessed MINS July 2019 to June 2020**



**Top ethnicities who've made contact with MINS this Year**



### **SOME OF THE GROUP INFORMATION SESSIONS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:**

- Community events throughout the year using social distancing and lower numbers to classrooms have been positive to moving forward through various group sessions
- Presentations via zoom by local Police providing information on laws in Australia
- Presentations by local Community Housing Association on housing issues
- Presentations by local Financial Counselling (FLARP)
- Presentations via zoom Centrelink
- Presentations via zoom by Queensland health - mental health
- Presentation via zoom by Home Affairs regarding travel

All the programs and activities of MINS throughout 2019-20 fostered social participation and enabled many new migrants to broaden their connections to the wider Australian community beyond their own ethnic community or religious group. The goodwill and support of members of the wider community enhanced many clients' feeling of wellbeing and inclusion.

A major and very important highlight of the year was the implementation of ZOOM sessions for clients to come together to connect and express their concerns and happy moments through this very challenging and changing times. Collaboration with Noosa Council, CAI MINS would like to thank all those who made this possible for the greater community and look forward to many more to come.



Thank you letters from clients showing their appreciation and the importance of the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

The regular visits to the AMEP have proven essential for building familiarity and rapport. The MINS Coordinator visits the Gympie and Noosa class on a weekly basis (during term) to follow up on any casework and new clients. Clients are also referred by many different agencies, businesses, health and govt services.

Last but certainly not least, MINS would like to thank all the supporting services who have worked tirelessly and been patient and kind to help migrants achieve their goals in settling into our region. MINS has so many stories from clients and receives so many thank you's, gift, cards and food from clients, and expressions of gratitude from other service provider's who are truly grateful for the support,

Kupa.

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## Finance Report

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### INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
Revenue	4,426,733.86	4,167,972.41
Other Income	7,685.90	15,210.09
	<u>4,434,419.76</u>	<u>4,183,182.50</u>
Advertising expenses	(994.50)	(905.00)
Auditors' remuneration	(8,250.00)	(8,100.00)
Bad and doubtful debt expenses	(41,389.14)	(90,352.91)
Commissions paid	(3,434.71)	(12,688.76)
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	(39,516.31)	(40,824.29)
	(2,633,782.51)	(2,433,898.25)
Employee benefits expenses	(1,677,797.15)	(1,660,313.01)
Other expenses	29,255.44	(63,899.72)
<b>Profit (Loss) before income tax</b>		
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	958,428.28	987,300.72
	(13,745.38)	105,328.88
Transfer to Reserves	<u>973,938.34</u>	<u>1,028,729.88</u>
<b>Profit attributable to the association</b>		

FULL FINANCIALS - To view a full copy of the Community Action Audited Financial Statements as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, please visit:

[www.communityactiongympie.com.au/publications](http://www.communityactiongympie.com.au/publications)

**Balance Sheet**  
**As at 30 June 2020**

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b><u>Current Assets</u></b>			
Cash and cash equivalents		1,884,420.66	1,687,649.00
Trade and other receivables	4	43,889.75	36,993.71
Prepayments		90,742.87	67,970.65
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<u>2,019,053.28</u>	<u>1,792,613.36</u>
<b><u>Non-Current Assets</u></b>			
Property, plant and equipment	5	3,113,981.49	3,140,100.62
<b>Total Non-current Assets</b>		<u>3,113,981.49</u>	<u>3,140,100.62</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u>5,133,034.77</u>	<u>4,932,713.98</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b><u>Current Liabilities</u></b>			
Accounts Payable		147,842.36	126,809.31
PAYG Withholding Payable		33,806.00	76,850.00
Superannuation Payable		18,933.47	15,298.85
Salary Packaging Liability		0.00	192.68
GST Payable		59,078.81	46,950.03
Leave Provisions		812,052.41	685,610.37
Bendigo Mastercards		0.00	2,567.61
Unspent Grants		62,944.13	2,665.22
Income in Advance		5,488.13	0.00
RTA Bonds		1,002.21	228.71
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>1,141,147.52</u>	<u>957,172.78</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
HQ Mortgage		2,328,955.20	2,258,653.60
<b>Total Non-current Liabilities</b>		<u>2,328,955.20</u>	<u>2,258,653.60</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<u>3,470,102.72</u>	<u>3,215,826.38</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>1,662,932.05</u>	<u>1,716,887.60</u>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Reserves	8	688,993.71	688,157.72
Retained earnings	9	973,938.34	1,028,729.88
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<u>1,662,932.05</u>	<u>1,716,887.60</u>