



FREMANTLE WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

Annual Report 2021-2022



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FOREWARD

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

It seems like only last week Peta reminded me I needed to get the 2021 Chair's report to her in time for the Annual Report and AGM. Time truly does fly.

March 3, 2022 saw the WA borders open to interstate and overseas arrivals under the so called 'Safe Transition Plan'. Up to that time WA had been largely COVID free and we were mostly living life 'as normal'. Of course, the open borders led to the inevitable high rates of COVID within our community and both our staff and clients were not spared. Once again, our staff were able to quickly pivot to backfill the absences of fellow staff and move online to ensure our clients were able to access telehealth appointments where appropriate. We have evolved now to find COVID requirements are now largely sitting within 'business as usual'. I thank all staff for their dedication and flexibility in continuing to find ways to provide care for women who depend on our service.

I reported last year on a significant grant awarded to FWHC by the Department of Communities to support Ways of Working project. This project aimed to counter the effects of family and domestic violence on mothers and infants, in partnership with the Muslim Women's Support Centre (MWSC) of WA. A team from the School of Global and Population Health at UWA evaluated this project on its completion and highlighted that activities undertaken by MWSC as part of this collaboration supported a professional, welcoming and safe environment with direct access by women and children to counselling and other support services.

FWHC Outreach Nurse continues to work with Headspace, South Metro Adult Mental Health Step up Step down, ZONTA refuge and South

Metro Alcohol and Other Drug Service in addition to multiple health promotion clinics. We frequently receive heartfelt letters of thanks from women who have historically shied away from traditional health services, all citing Outreach Nurse's warm, supportive and non-judgemental nature as integral to their reason for receiving services and visiting our South Street centre.



Our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan challenged us to 'build our capacity to assist more women'. FWHC have been working from this site for over 35 years and while it has served us well, it does not meet the requirements for the provision of a contemporary model of health care. To that end we engaged ConsultingAlchemy to undertake focus groups with relevant stakeholders including representatives from Cockburn, Melville and Fremantle local government areas; our staff; other community stakeholders and of course our clients. These focus groups overwhelmingly confirmed that while FWHC is held in very high regard within the local community, our current premises are also an impediment for some who may otherwise wish to access the centre. To that end 2023 will see us undertake further ground work to determine the best outcome for our service to enable it to grow and support women at risk of poor health outcomes. This work remains a priority for the Board and CEO.

This is an exciting time in the history of FWHC and we remain focused on the changes required to provide high quality care to more women, to meet opportunities when they arise and expand our scope. Thank you for supporting us on this journey.

Dr Gail Ross-Adjie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the country on which we live and work, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation, and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.



CLIENT INTRODUCTION

"I first came across FWHC shortly after giving birth to my second baby who was experiencing colic. At the time I had two babies under 2, the age gap was tight and I was experiencing some anxiety and mixed emotions juggling my new challenging adventure as a mother of two.

"I participated in individual counselling which equipped me to tackle life with confidence and skills to manage feelings of anxiety.

"I also took a group class in the circle of security program which was the highlight of my week, meeting with other mums, having a snack and learning about parenting whilst my children played happily in the creche nearby.

"All staff particularly front desk, crèche and counselling were so welcoming to my children and me."



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Introduction of trial for Single Session Counselling Sessions informed by Motivational Interviewing framework
- Successful student and intern program which resulted, on completion of practicum, all FWHC student alumni successfully finding employment in their preferred discipline
- Comprehensive feasibility study undertaken by Consulting Alchemy
- FWHC auspiced Indigenous Mindfulness workshop WAYAPA WUURRK for staff and board during NAIDOC week
- Trauma informed training with Doctor Ann O'Neill to strengthen our service capacity to support community and each other's well-being in the workplace
- Led health promotion scope of practice workshop for WA women's health centres
- Conference poster presentations at Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand
- Participation in district leadership group to progress 'no wrong door' framework for south metro



FUTURE PLANS

CEO REPORT

I'm proud to present the *2021-22 FWHC Annual Report* – a summary of our work during a year where the community continue to feel the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

The seventh annual *Women's Report Card (2022)* shows us that women were at the front lines of the pandemic occupationally, however, West Australian women still experience the highest gender pay gap in Australia at 21.2%.

In addition, WA breast cancer screening participation rates declined by 5.1% during the last two year of the COVID-19 and this state displayed the highest overall rate of family and domestic violence related assault in 2021.

Within this complex environment, FWHC staff responded at our South Street site and multiple outreach locations offering unique supports and service improvements.

With the ongoing support of funders and community partners I believe the outstanding efforts of FWHC staff, board and volunteers has a secure future heading towards our fourth decade.

Peta Wootton
CEO



- Deliver West Australian Cervical Cancer Prevention Program strategies to promote cervical screening and the option for self-collection in the community
- Develop Health Justice Alliances with Community Legal Centres for the provision of accessible legal clinics on-site
- Use two-phase feasibility data to inform decision making on location, service model, partnership and growth
- Explore SUNFLOWER therapeutic playgroup model in new community settings
- Develop cross sector training opportunities with valued community partners and develop shared language and improved referral pathways
- Increase nurse-led specialist Unplanned Pregnancy Triage

PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS IN COMMUNITY

WAYS OF WORKING (MUSLIM WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTRE) – DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

MWSC is a not for profit organization entirely run by some amazing volunteers, who have been supporting Muslim women in the community for over 35 years. The Ways of Working project was a joint capacity building venture between FWHC and MWSC and ran across 12 months and over 753 women participated in the numerous events. They were also introduced to many other organisations in the community for support with a number of issues

“This is the first place I have been able to talk to someone without the fear of being judged”

“Through the activities I have learned new skills and knowledge. I feel more confident and connected to the centre”

“95% satisfaction rate for Mums & bubs workshops facilitated by WOW staff”

EVERYWOMAN COUNTS – LOTTERYWEST

Lotterywest supported the recruitment of a Specialist Women's Outreach Nurse to work within the South Metropolitan Perth region to offer mobile women's health services. The 'Every Woman Counts' pilot program was successful and cost effective with over 420 women seen over the year-long project. Programs and services were offered at a women's refuge, a mental health facility, schools, universities, hospitals and different cultural centres.

Of those screened, the majority of women had not prioritized or accessed medical services for over 12 months, some never. Reasons for not accessing medical services were fear of being judged, lack of education and knowledge, too time consuming, overwhelming, long wait periods, fearful of bad results and outcomes whilst already experiencing trauma and crisis. The project gave many women the opportunity to access this vital service.

Acknowledging valued community partner sites: South Metro Community Alcohol and Other Drug Services, Zonta House Refuge Association, Fremantle headspace, Mental Health Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospital Group

“This is a great idea. We are in a safe place and more likely to deal with our long overdue problems” (client)



“Before the nurse came on board at the women's refuge, the women in our service, at times, went without vital health care due to many reasons. The women were often met with judgement and little empathy for what they had endured and at times had been retraumatized by the social responses they received when they have reached out for support. The nurse was amazing and made women felt comfortable and safe” (staff member)

GARDENING PROJECT – DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Funding from the Department of Communities resulted in 10 gardening workshops to women in the community between August 2021 and April 2022. The community garden provided fresh produce and the activities and workshops were held at multiple locations. Participants learned more about horticultural activities and the links and benefits the mental health that can be gained by green therapy.

“The workshops were part of a plan of getting back into activities and socialising in the community after illness” (a cancer survivor)

“The activities in the workshops were good to practice not being a perfectionist and just 'doing it'. The workshops were an opportunity to practice “imperfect is perfect”- one of our mottos and so important with mental health”

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

The Mental Health Commission provided new funding to co-design and provide innovative well-being programs and services to vulnerable women in their perinatal period who were unlikely to access mainstream services with an aim to improve infant and maternal wellbeing. The group provided a safe and relaxing environment, assisting mums in learning new skills to help them cope, connect and parent more effectively. For women unable to attend the group workshops due to COVID, art packs with all the instructions and materials needed for self-guided activities were created and distributed. This initiative was well received and helped many mums with mental health support in a fun way.

Thanks to a partnership with Uniting WA, Communicare and Department of Communities Fremantle District SUNFLOWER playgroup has been supporting families in the reunification space.

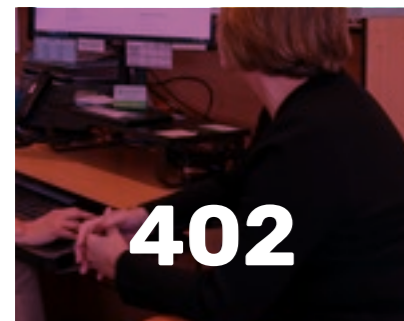
“The art workshops were really eye-opening, talking about mental health issues, chatting and giving information in a fun way, it was much better than lecturing or giving brochures that are usually boring and hard to remember”

“I like everything about SUNFLOWER GROUP - I wouldn't change anything”

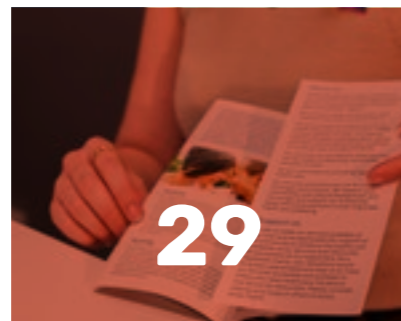
“Mums need a supportive environment where they can connect and enjoy playing with their child. They need a space to be able to ask questions on parenting without feeling judged or looked down on, have conversations on struggles and joys and develop some friendships for themselves as well as for their little ones. They need a space to feel they belong”



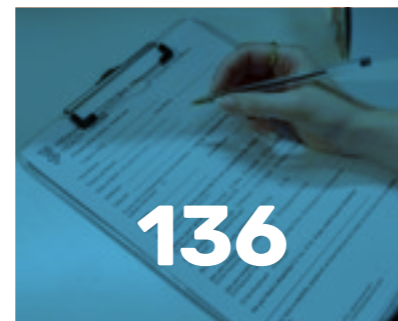
FWHC CLIENTS



Total number of Perinatal service contacts



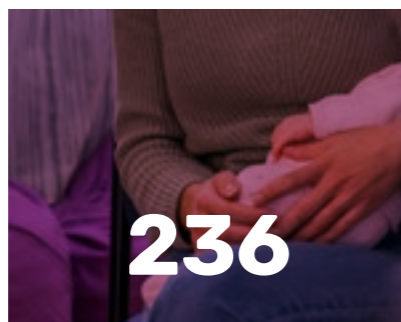
Total number of Perinatal Group sessions



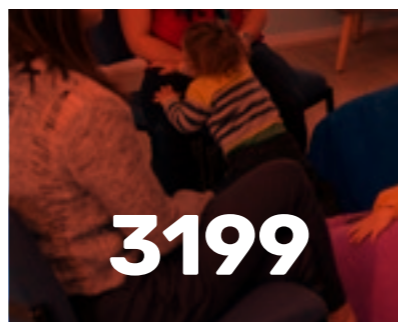
Nurse STI consultations



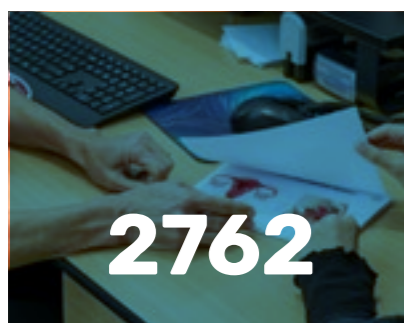
Nurse Cervical screenings



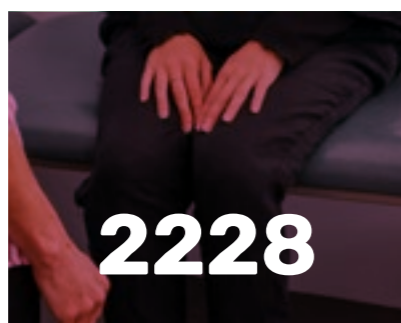
Nurse support/advice for unplanned pregnancies



Number of Nursing service contacts



Number of Doctor service contacts

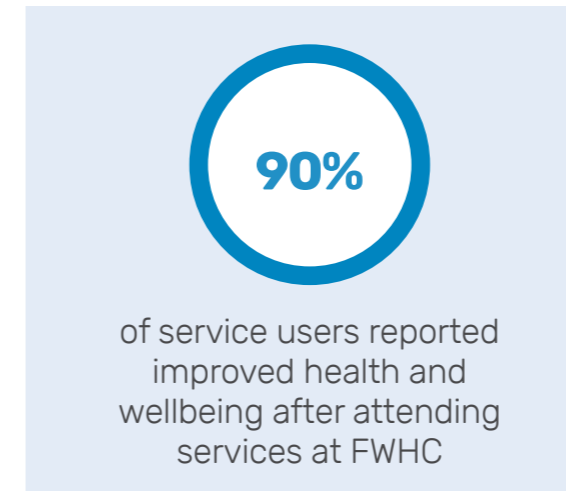


Total number of clients

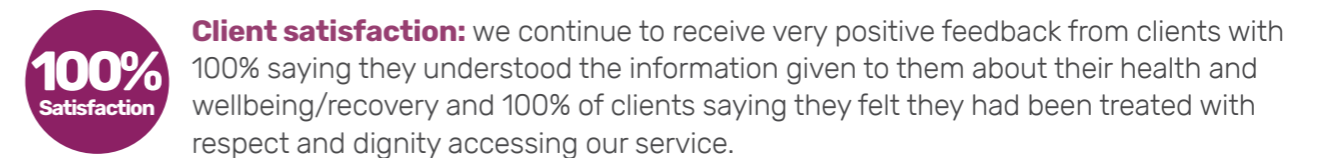
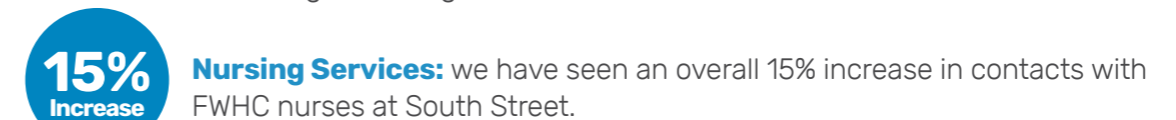
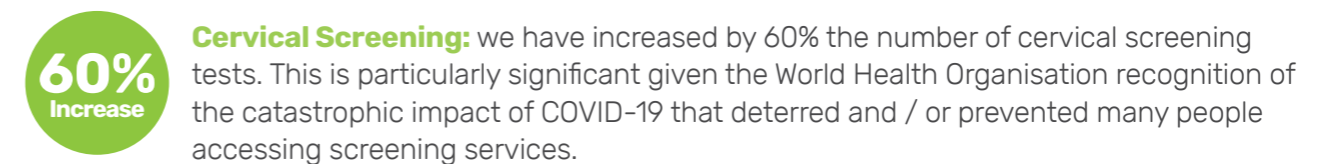


community members benefited from FWHC health promotion in a variety of settings

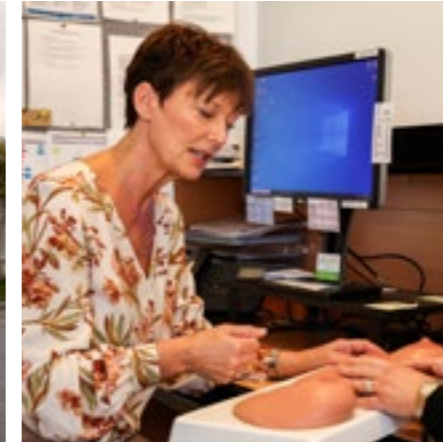
FWHC CLIENT FEEDBACK



CLIENTS IN A GLANCE



FWHC SNAPSHOTS





THANK YOU

Thank you to all our supporters, volunteers, and students who have given their time and expertise to FWHC during the past financial year. We could not do our work without you.

If you are interested in helping us with our work either as a volunteer or doing a student placement with us, please contact enquiries@fwhc.org.au

We would also like to thank our donors big and small who have contributed to FWHC over the past financial year.

Thank you to Wray Avenue Pharmacy 777 for their contributions to SUNFLOWER.

Sincere thanks for ConsultingAlchemy's Sylvia Tokic, Melissa Grove and Batya Eaton for undertaking feasibility study.

FWHC is a registered charity and donations make a big difference to our ability to provide new services. If you would like to make a donation, which would be appreciated and acknowledged, please email us on enquiries@fwhc.org.au

FWHC ACKNOWLEDGES AND THANKS FUNDERS:



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Mental Health Commission



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Women and Newborn Health Service



Government of Western Australia
Department of Local Government
and Communities



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