



# FREMANTLE WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

*2023 - Celebrating quality care for over 35 years*



**Annual Report  
2022-2023**



# FOREWORD

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Our annual general meeting provides both an opportunity to reflect on the past year and to look forward with enthusiasm to 2024 and beyond. This year marks 35 years in operation, no small feat at a time when we see constant churn and change. Our thanks to Ronelle Brossard whose vision 35 years ago to provide for women, particularly migrant and Aboriginal women, has seen FWHC grow to become an inclusive, trauma-informed health centre providing high quality services to the women of Fremantle, Cockburn and Melville local government areas.

We are grateful that COVID while not gone, has subsided and that FWHC can return to business as usual. However, while one challenge subsides, others take its place. Let me share some frightening statistics around family and domestic violence (FDV) from the WA government (2023): 2022 saw the number of victims of FDV increase by 7%, the highest number in 30 years; FDV is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children and continues to be a driver of gender inequality in the areas of employment, participation and financial security; FDV affects Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse women and children, those with a disability and those who identify as LGBTIQ+ at disproportionately high rates; and COVID saw FDV increase in both intensity and frequency by many women. Our CEO Peta Wootton represented FWHC at a recent FDV crisis summit and we will continue our advocacy in this critical area.

Our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan prioritised growing our capacity and ensuring sustainability to achieve our vision of Women enjoying gender equality and good health. Part of our strategy to achieve this includes exploring opportunities for partnership to expand the services we provide and exploring opportunities to redevelop this site or relocate. I am please to report that not only have we increased the range of services we provide to

women including a monthly legal clinic but we have engaged local architects to bring our vision on this site to life (on paper anyway!). A vision which sees a fit-for-purpose, contemporary but welcoming and multi-function space where we can expand our service provision and future-proof this site. While it is always wonderful to report on our successes, funding uncertainty is a constant threat and hampers our ability to bring this redevelopment to fruition. Having said that, we continue to research opportunities and options and are optimistic of a successful outcome ensuring that FWHC continues to grow and thrive into the future.



As always, it is our team, ably led by Peta Wootton who make FWHC a special place where women can access high quality medical, nursing and counselling services and without them, there would be no FWHC. Feedback from our clients confirms that we remain a welcoming and safe space and we continue to advocate for women at every opportunity both local and state. To our staff I say a sincere thank you on behalf of all the board for the tireless work you do looking after women in our community.

This AGM sees us farewell two board members, Deputy Chair Julie Atkinson and Treasurer Roseanne Thomas and welcome two others, Liz Biggs and Mel Grove. Our sincere thanks to both Julie and Roseanne for their leadership and guidance and all you have done during your time on the board. To Liz and Mel, thank you for bringing your skills and fresh eyes to our board. We look forward to working with you as we navigate both the challenges before us and seek opportunities to allow FWHC to continue to grow sustainably and continue provide for vulnerable women in our community.

Dr Gail Ross-Adjie

## CLIENT INTRODUCTION

*"Migrating to Australia in 1990 I had the opportunity joining a TAFE course for migrant women. During length of the course we went to visit Fremantle Women's Health Centre. From that first visit onwards I have always appreciated the friendly, helpful & professional Staff at the centre. Still today after 33 years I am still happy to visit the centre."* (HK)



## CEO REPORT

I am pleased to present Fremantle Women's Health Centre (FWHC) Inc. Annual Report 2023 and grateful to HK, a long-term client of the service, for her thoughtful introduction. For 35 years, we have delivered women's health services across their lifespan using evidence-based practices and research to address the multiple and complex needs in community. It is important to acknowledge and thank all previous volunteers, staff, board members, partner organisations, funders and supporters who have contributed to our shared work.

2022-23 required adjustment as two innovative COVID-stimulus projects ended. This occurred in an environment of increased need and complexity and we have been required to

think carefully how to deliver support. Working in partnership increases reach and capacity and I am grateful to the following valued community partners who have worked from our site over 12-months: Carers WA, Communicare, Meerilinga, Playgroup WA, Sing and Grow, Uniting WA and Women's Legal Service.



Women's health continues to matter. Across the life span, women and gender diverse people experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. We commit to strengthening and broadening sustainable services to meet community need into the future.

Peta Wootton, CEO

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Wisdom project

- Facilitated peer group work exploring resiliency and aging well.

## Women's Legal Service WA

- The co-location of lawyers, with valued community partners, removes barriers for women accessing 'face-to-face' confidential legal assistance. Monthly WLSWA clinic provides legal assistance in the areas of family violence, family law and protection and care.

## Trauma and Culturally Informed Training

- by Dr Carol Kaplanian to strengthen our service capacity to support community and each other's well-being in the workplace.

## Mental Health Commission

- Circle of Security evaluations show social connectedness was a key outcome from the group and the majority of participants continue to regularly meet via ongoing friendships. FWHC also hosted 2 Circle of Security graduate groups to maintain peer support and deepen learnings.

- FWHC secured ongoing contract funding for perinatal mental health counselling and group work for five year term (through to 30 June 2027).
- Continued funding for SUNFLOWER therapeutic playgroup 2023-2024.

## Women and Newborn Health Service / North Metro Health

- Significant increase in nurse led clinics and Unplanned Pregnancy support parallel to changes to WA abortion laws.
- Single session trial and evaluation.

## Complexity and Vulnerability Rating Scale

Development and trial of FWHC Rating Scale with following findings:

- 69% experienced a major life changing event in the previous 12 months.
- 62% experienced financial insecurity.
- 47% required additional time to the scheduled appointments given the complexity of the issues discussed and / or a follow up appointment or communication.

# PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS IN COMMUNITY

## SUNFLOWER PLAY GROUP

The SUNFLOWER Play Group ran during school terms throughout the year and was for parents and children under the age of 3. The group provided a safe and non-judgmental place where participants could enhance their relationships with their children, build positive peer connections and improve self-esteem and parenting confidence. Social interaction and networking helped participants to meet new people and make friends. The group was supported by a "Sing & Grow" facilitator, a great way for parents and children to have fun and learn through music.



*our kids and I realise we share some things in common"*

*"I can't believe how confident I am now. I can speak up, share ideas and thoughts. I can encourage other mums and have tough conversations"*

*"I feel more connected and positive as a parent"*

Funder: Mental Health Commission

SUNFLOWER partners included Department of Communities, Communicare and Uniting WA.

Overall the feedback was extremely positive.

*"I have learnt that nothing is easy but everyone is going through similar challenges and if you open up, you won't feel alone. We talk about*

# OUTREACH NURSE SUMMARY

A specialist FWHC Outreach Nurse visited numerous groups and individuals. 2392 women received support through information, education, treatment, or referrals.

Complex health issues and environments often impact on a woman's ability to attend external services so this model of health creates many opportunities eg. women's refuges, community groups, CALD and Aboriginal groups and those from the LGBTQI+ community.

Client Feedback: *"It was a pleasure meeting you and thank you for always making me comfortable. We need more services and nurses like you"*

Funders: WA Cervical Cancer Prevention Program and Fremantle Women's Health Centre



clients present with a range of past experiences that might affect their care requirements



## CLIENT FEEDBACK

**Thankyou for professionalism and lovely conduct during my visit. Means a lot.**

**The nurse was very informative, helpful and understanding. Great service and gave me information to assist with my health and wellbeing.**

**Incredibly supportive and non-judgemental staff/ environment, which takes some of the anxiety away from visiting health professionals/ discussing sensitive topics. Thank you!!**

**I felt very comfortable and highly respected by all the FWHC staff. All the information was very clear and helpful. Thank you so much!**

**Have benefited immensely from the FWHC services. Love coming here and it has made a positive impact on my life. Thanks**

**Dawn is amazing! So kind and thorough. Appreciate the affordability and ease of service.**

**It's been my favourite place to go to when I've needed women's health care, for many years now. A valuable service, Thanks!**

**The nurse explained treatments to me in a way that helped me to understand options, far more understandable than my usual doctor in my home town**

**I love it here. So comfortable being a woman in this space. Thank you, sincerely, for helping women the way you do.**

**Excellent healthcare provider, refreshing to visit a healthcare provider that shows care for what they do**

**I am grateful for the recommendation to this facility and appreciate the support provided to me**

**Wonderful service. It's really important to have service focused on womens health**

**Very friendly and informative. Felt safe and informed about cervical screening process. Nurse knowledgeable about gender diversity.**

## CLIENT EXPERIENCE

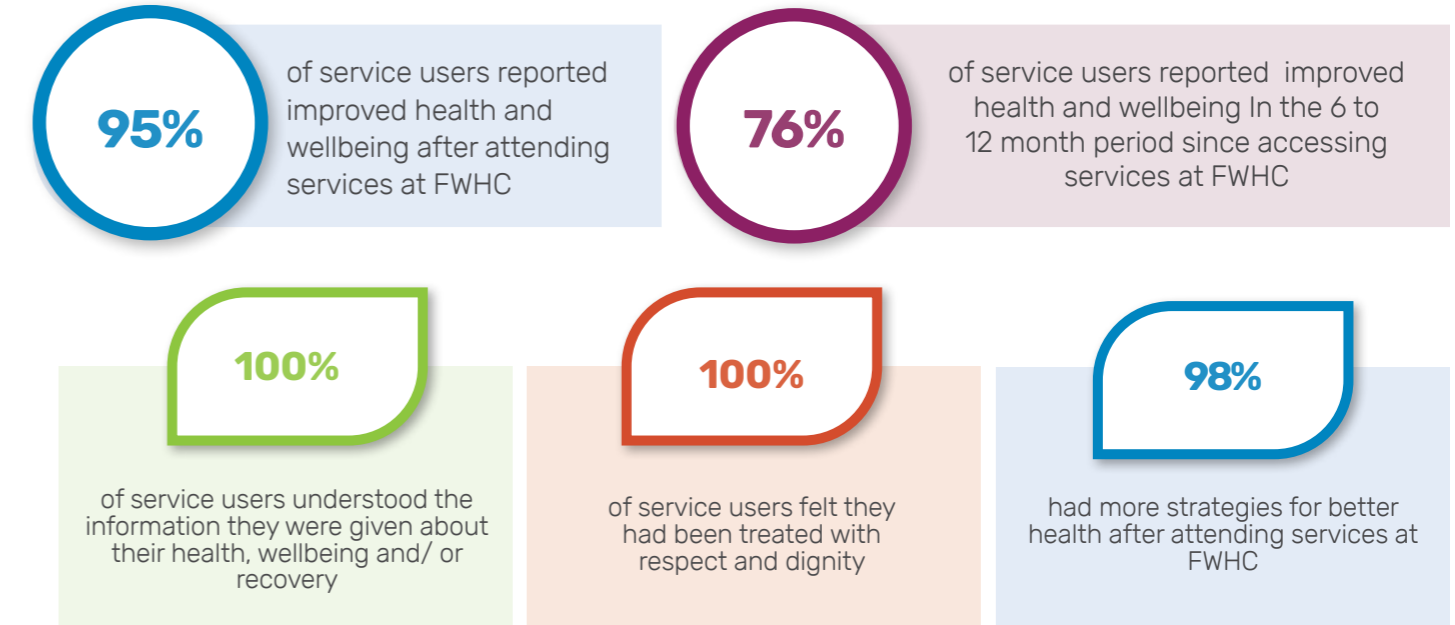
**100%** of service users felt that staff at FWHC respected their beliefs and values.

**98%** of service users felt that staff at FWHC respected their culture.

**30%** increase in the number of perinatal mental health counselling clients supported either in individual counselling or Circle of Security group work. Successful implementation of Circle in Action graduate peer support and learning space.



## CLIENT OUTCOMES



## CLIENT ACTIVITY





# 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](mailto:enquiries@fwhc.org.au)

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](mailto: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.

- Thanks to K&L Gates law partners Adam Levine and Paris Petridis for pro bono advice.
- Thank you Pharmacy 777 Wray Avenue for their generous gift contributions.
- Thanks to community member Alison for period poverty donations.
- Thank you to FWHC founder and life member Ronelle Brossard for her ongoing generous support.

## FWHC ACKNOWLEDGES AND THANKS FUNDERS:



Government of Western Australia  
Mental Health Commission



Government of Western Australia  
North Metropolitan Health Service  
Women and Newborn Health Service



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