

Bonnie
Support Services



Annual Report 2022-23



Acknowledgement of Country

Bonnie Support Services acknowledges the Cabrogal clan of the Darug Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our organisation is situated. We extend our acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of this nation on which we call home. We pay our deepest respects to Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. Bonnie's is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders holistic, cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas.

Vietnamese

Dịch vụ hỗ trợ của Bonnie công nhận tộc Cabrogal của Quốc gia Darug là những Người giám hộ truyền thống của vùng đất mà tổ chức của chúng tôi đặt trụ sở. Chúng tôi mở rộng sự công nhận của chúng tôi đối với tất cả các dân tộc Thổ dân và Cư dân trên eo biển Torres Strait với tư cách là Chủ sở hữu truyền thống của quốc gia mà chúng tôi gọi là quê hương này. Chúng tôi bày tỏ lòng kính trọng sâu sắc nhất tới Tổ tiên và các bậc cao niên, trong quá khứ, hiện tại và mối nối. Bonnie's cam kết tôn vinh những người Thổ dân Úc và Cư dân trên đảo Torres Strait có mối quan hệ toàn diện, văn hóa và tinh thần với đất liền, vùng nước và vùng biển.

Hindi

बोनी सपोर्ट सर्विसेज दारुग राष्ट्र के कैब्रोगल कबीले को उस भूमि के पारंपरिक संरक्षक के रूप में स्वीकार करती है जिस पर हमारा संगठन स्थित है। हम सभी आदिवासी और टोरेस स्ट्रेट आइलैंडर लोगों को इस देश के पारंपरिक मालिकों के रूप में अपनी स्वीकृति देते हैं, जिसे हम घर कहते हैं। हम पूर्वजों और बड़ों, अतीत, वर्तमान और उभरते हुए लोगों के प्रति अपना गहरा सम्मान देते हैं। बोनीज ऑस्ट्रेलियाई आदिवासी और टोरेस स्ट्रेट आइलैंडर्स को भूमि, जल और समुद्र के समग्र, सांस्कृतिक और आध्यात्मिक संबंधों का सम्मान करने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है।

Arabic

تقر خدمات دعم Bonnie أن عشيرة Cabrogal في Darug Nation هي الأمانة التقليدية للأرض التي تقع عليها منظمنا. نقدم اعترافنا لجميع السكان الأصليين وسكان جزر مضيق توريس بصفته المالكين التقليديين لهذه الأمة التي نسميها الوطن. نقدر أعمق الاحترام للأجداد والشيوخ، في الماضي والحاضر والناشي. نلتزم Bonnie's بتكريم العلاقات الشاملة والثقافية والروحية للسكان الأصليين الأستراليين وسكان جزر مضيق توريس مع الأرض والمياه والبحار.

Urdu

بونی سپورٹ سروسز داروگ قوم کے کیبروگل قبیلے کو اس زمین کے روایتی محافظ کے طور پر تسلیم کرتی ہے جس پر ہماری تنظیم واقع ہے۔ ہم تمام قبائلی اور ٹورس اینڈس کے جزیرے کے لوگوں کو اس قوم کے روایتی مالک کے طور پر اپنا اعتراف دیتے ہیں جس پر ہم گہر کہتے ہیں۔ ہم اپنے بزرگوں اور بزرگوں، ماضی، حال اور ابھرتے ہوئے کو انتہائی احترام کرتے ہیں۔ بونی آسٹریلین ایجوکیشن اور ٹورس اینڈس کے جزیروں کو زمین، پانیوں اور سمندروں کے جامع، ثقافتی اور روحانی رشتوں کا احترام کرنے کے لیے پرعزم ہے۔

Serbian

Бонние Суппорт Сервицес признаје Цаброгал клан Дарушке нације као традиционалне чуваре земље на којој се налази наша организација. Изражавамо признање свим Абориџинима и оточанима у Торесовом пролазу као традиционалним власницима ове нације коју називамо домом. Одајемо најдубље поштовање прецима и старешинама, прошлим, садашњим и новим. Бонние'с се залаже за поштовање холистичких, културних и духовних односа Аустралије Абориџина и острва Торрес Страит са копном, водама и морима.

Chinese

Bonnie Support Services 承认 Darug 民族的 Cabrogal 氏族是我们组织所在土地的传统监护人。我们向所有原住民和托雷斯海峡岛民表示感谢，他们是我们称之为家的国家的传统所有者。我们向过去、现在和新兴的祖先和长老致以最深切的敬意。Bonnie's 致力于表彰澳大利亚原住民和托雷斯海峡岛民与陆地、水域和海洋的整体、文化和精神关系。

Spanish

Bonnie Support Services reconoce al clan Cabrogal de la Nación Darug como los Custodios Tradicionales de la tierra en la que se encuentra nuestra organización. Extendemos nuestro reconocimiento a todos los pueblos aborígenes e isleños del Estrecho de Torres como propietarios tradicionales de esta nación a la que llamamos hogar. Presentamos nuestro más profundo respeto a los Ancestros y Ancianos, pasados, presentes y emergentes. Bonnie's se compromete a honrar las relaciones holísticas, culturales y espirituales de los aborígenes australianos y los isleños del Estrecho de Torres con la tierra, las aguas y los mares.

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Bonnie
Support Services

by women and with women



Executive Officer's Report



Every year, one of the best things about writing this report is the chance to look back on what we faced and what we accomplished. I'm always proud of what I find.

This year again, Bonnie's achievements are so impressive, as is our team. I have the good fortune to work with a group of women who are professional, kind and caring. They are committed to ending domestic violence and homelessness and helping women make positive changes in their lives.

When women and children come to Bonnie's, they're seeking sanctuary and safety. We work hard to make it a place where good memories can be created and new possibilities found. It's about dealing with the past, finding the support to heal and prepare the way for a longer-term home.

Finding a new home is never easy but the current housing crisis has intensified that difficulty. Bonnie's has been supporting women and children for almost 50 years but I can't recall there ever being a time like this when the community generally, has felt this housing pressure. It's particularly the case for the women and children we are working with.

In response, we've been hard at work looking for creative solutions and thinking long term about how we can address this housing crisis for our families. This has resulted in some fantastically encouraging partnerships and prospects. I hope to share more about these soon... so keep your eyes out!



We have always recognised children as clients in their own right, and with their own particular needs. The funding of Specialist Workers for Children and Young People roles has been a magnificent acknowledgement of this.

We have always recognised children as clients in their own right, and with their own particular needs. The funding of Specialist Workers for Children and Young People roles has been a magnificent acknowledgement of this. It's very exciting. The additional resourcing has enabled Bonnie's to provide even greater support for children and develop more resources to ensure their emotional and psychological safety.

It is approaching 10 years since we created our much loved, sunshine-coloured brand story and website. We thought it was time for a bit of revamp but without losing the essence of what we created. Check it out! Only Human Stories has done a great refresh and we think the updated version looks wonderful. It's easier to read but is still full of useful information about domestic violence and homelessness, the services and supports Bonnie's can provide. The staff blogs remain and give insights into our view of this work we do – they are uplifting and full of joy and thoughtfulness.

We have grown our social media reach this year reaching more people including a younger cohort; and we have plans for further development in this area, in the coming year.

Partnerships continue to be a vital element of our work: drawing on expertise of others to provide the best solutions we can. Another new partnership is with Opportunity Pathways, supporting eligible women into training and employment. Jemima Brewer provides on-site counselling for our clients which has been a great addition to the team this year. Centrelink, Housing NSW and Salvos Financial Counselling all co-locate with us and that accessibility for the women is a huge benefit.

Thanks to everyone involved with Bonnie's. We have a great Board, a fantastic team of workers, many supportive and active partners who work together to provide the best services we can for the brave women who put their trust in us to support them to heal.

Tracy Phillips
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Some of the Bonnie's Board at the Annual General Meeting



Happy Bonnie's crew at the Team-Building Day

From our Chair, Betty Green



This year has been a time of change and opportunity; a time of stretching and resourcefulness.

The resilience and strength of staff is evident in meeting the

increasing demands placed on Bonnie's in responding to the safety needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

The introduction of specialist teams such as DVRE and specialist children's and young people's program has presented for instance additional options in providing safety pathways for women in crisis and therapeutic support for children and young people. This is something the sector has advocated for over a long period of time.



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Significant focus and resources have been applied in participating in the Core and Cluster Project introduced by NSW Government with an announcement in 2021 of new funding of \$426.6 million. The funding was allocated to establish and operate new core and cluster refuges for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. The Board continues to work closely with our Executive Officer and our partners in this once-in-a-generation injection of funding and growth opportunities that this presents.

In particular the Board is grateful for the ongoing support of Habitat for Humanity in assisting in providing the maintenance and much needed upgrades to our transitional properties and Brush with Kindness volunteers in painting. Maintaining properties is a

significant cost presenting challenges because repairs are largely unfunded. Structural and/or significant repairs such as replacement of roofs, perimeter fencing, broken sewer pipes are beyond the capacity of services funded primarily for direct service provision. The provision of safe, comfortable, functioning and welcoming places are important for our families at a time of disruption and trauma.

Appreciation is extended to the Department of Communities and Justice for their continued support. The Board and staff look forward to the year ahead, to presenting possibilities and opportunities as we continue to provide a compassionate, best practice service women and children's domestic and family violence service in south-west Sydney.

Thank you to our staff, a wonderful team of passionate and dedicated women striving to meet the needs of women and children affected by domestic and family violence. On behalf of the Board I acknowledge our Executive Officer Tracy Phillips in providing the leadership and energy that is critical to the quality and impact of the service. And to An Le and Ciara Reddington in their leadership and support of staff in maintaining best practice and quality responses. The appointment of An Le to New South Wales Domestic Violence Death Review is welcomed by the Board in ensuring the voices of women victims in the context and reality of navigating system experiences is represented.

Finally I wish to extend a sincere thank you to my fellow Board members for their continued support and commitment in volunteering their skills, knowledge and time. Governance is a team effort and it is a pleasure working with you all.

Betty Green
CHAIR

Program Manager's Report



I am honoured to be able to present this year's Program Manager report, after stepping into the role while An Le is on maternity leave. An's shoes are hard to fill, but working at Bonnie's and in the

broader domestic and family violence sector, is an immense privilege that I am so proud to be a part of.

This past year at Bonnie's has been an extremely busy one. While we are no longer working under the pressure of COVID-19 disruptions, a new set of challenges has emerged. The pandemic shone a light on systemic changes needed to improve lives for women and children and this did lead to increased resources, crucial housing policy reform and coercive control legislation. Yet despite this progress, we now face coinciding crises of housing and cost of living and these have had a devastating impact on how we can provide services.

The demand for our service just continues to grow and we are constantly exceeding capacity. No one wants to let a woman and her child go without help, or without a safe place to sleep at night. This is an aspect of our work that is gruelling, exhausting and complex. I can't count the amount of times, I've overheard a staff member accepting a new referral - knowing full well that we are already at capacity - but we continue proudly on because we know we are needed and we know we have each other.

This year we have been working towards our Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation too. This has been an opportunity for reflection and quality improvement. It has been nice knowing a lot of the work we are doing is in line with the standards, but also a good opportunity to highlight gaps and areas for improvement, a project the entire team has been involved in.

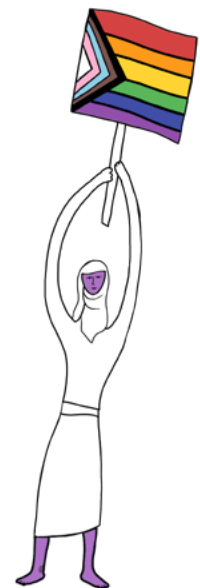
Speaking of the team, they have been truly inspiring this year. I want to commend every staff member who has consistently jumped in to help each other, no matter how big the workload sitting on their desk already is. I would also like to thank the services who come into Bonnie's to help with the necessary support and guidance of a client's life. These partnerships ensure we are able to meet the diversity of women's needs with an integrative and holistic approach.

It has been almost 50 years since we first opened our doors here at Bonnie's. While it breaks my heart that there is still such a high demand for our services, it gives me hope to know there are so many people supporting us to make a difference. We have stayed true to our core beliefs and continue to provide the best support we can. 'By Women, For Women' always.

Ciara Reddington
PROGRAM MANAGER

“

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WE ARE BONNIE'S

Stronger together

“ *Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.* ”

Maya Angelou

Our philosophy

Bonnie's operates within a feminist philosophy and an unshakeable belief that women and children have the right to be safe and feel free. All women deserve access to services which enable them to be autonomous, independent and self-determining.

Our vision is for a world where women and children flourish and reach their full potential.

Our commitment

Our commitment to safety is based on principles of social justice, equity and provides:

- » **An environment which values each person's right to be heard.**
- » **An environment that acknowledges the importance of every woman and every child's story.**
- » **A professional quality service that facilitates reciprocal learning, respects differences, recognises and supports each person's knowledge, experience and right to self-determination.**
- » **A deep respect and understanding for each person's cultural background, language and religious beliefs.**



WHO WE ARE

We are Bonnie's!

What we do

Bonnie's provides support and/or accommodation for women and their children who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or escaping domestic violence. We work to enhance women's skills, knowledge and capacities with a range of services that allow women to make informed choices and enhance their opportunities. Bonnie's supports women to develop supportive and trusting relationships, self-management skills and accountability thus enhancing confidence and living skills.

Who we are

All staff at Bonnie's collectively have a total of 44 qualifications among 31 women ranging from Certificates to Master's Degrees. Most of the staff at Bonnie's are also either mothers themselves, or aunties to beautiful nieces and nephews to whom they help impart all their wisdom. There is a myriad of qualifications running around on any given day at Bonnie's. This diversity in experience and skill makes Bonnie's a place with a wealth of knowledge in this sector. It keeps getting better and better as a few staff members are studying for even more qualifications.



WE ARE BONNIE'S

"You gave my son's smile back."

Community Officer Report

As Community Officers, we are the first port of call for many women seeking support and due to the shortage of temporary accommodation, we are receiving more calls than ever.

This year we have seen an increase in women calling purely for housing assistance, but in more cases than not, we learn that there has been domestic violence as well. Many of our clients are reporting that when they ring the DV Line or Link2Home, they are told that there are no vacancies and that homelessness ends up being the inevitable option.

It is especially difficult to find accommodation for people on visas, as a lot of services don't take them or like us, have a limit on the number of women we can serve. Unfortunately, we are constrained to these limits because women on visas are often ineligible for Centrelink and Medicare. We support them with rent, food, travel, medicine and more. We have supported many families like this for years because it's difficult to support them with no quick exit point.

We always do the best we can to advocate for them, and through Legal Aid are able to support them with their visa and permanent residency journey.

This year I have been very touched by two clients who went through a lot of hardship. They both had access to very little income and despite experiencing some terrible domestic violence, wrote beautiful thank you cards to Bonnie's and brought flowers. They are now both in more stable accommodation, with one of them in a transitional property and the other in more long-term housing. One client said to me, "You gave my son's smile back."

Written with Sue and Alison

One story that stands out for the year is Elise and her son. They came into our refuge with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. They had fled horrible domestic violence and Mum was on a temporary visa which meant no access to Centrelink, Medicare or Housing. We went to work straight away. We helped her get access to an immigration lawyer and supported her with the many, many forms and pieces of evidence she needed to submit. And then we waited...

One happy day we heard a cheer from outside, and to our delight we saw Elise with a letter in her hand. Finally, Permanent Residency for our client! After this, things started to fall into place: a housing application, Medicare access, Centrelink support, a home of their own, and a bright future ahead.

— Story from a Family Worker



Embracing change

Family Worker Report

It's been another big year for the Family Worker team. We've said some sad goodbyes to several colleagues who have moved on to their next adventure but the good news is, we've been able to say hello to lots of new faces in our team. It's been fun getting to know each other and everyone has settled into the team beautifully.

We nervously said "See you soon" to our Program Manager, An, as she went on Parenting Leave to welcome her baby girl. Thankfully, we've been left in the capable hands of Ciara who has been a great support to us while An has been away. To fill Ciara's shoes, I have taken on the task of stepping in as Team Leader. They are big shoes to fill, and it's been an honour to take on this role.

I remember one client from late 2022, Violet. We didn't speak each other's language and relied on translation apps and phone interpreters to communicate. She had texted me to let me know she had finally secured a job after months of searching. It's not easy to find employment when you don't speak the local language. I went to see her to celebrate the good news but I couldn't get an interpreter on the phone. It turned out this didn't matter at all; we spoke without language. We smiled, we hugged, and she squeezed my hand so tight. We celebrated together without needing a single word. From there, Mum saved up and moved her family into a rental property. She bought a car and last I heard she was planning to bring her parents to Australia for a visit so they could finally meet their grandkids. I'll never forget Violet and what she taught me about connection.

Change is always a bit tricky to navigate, but we are always up for a challenge here at Bonnie's. As a team we've forged ahead and worked hard to make sure our clients are receiving the support they need, even when we might be a little bit stressed ourselves!

We've been focusing on lots more face-to-face support this year after leaving the dreaded lockdowns of 2021 behind. We love getting together in person with our clients, so this has been a huge relief.

In many ways, it has been a tough year, but we always find happy moments to balance out the hard ones. We celebrate big when something good happens – every success for a client is seen as a win for us all. As a team, our Family Workers have had many successes for our clients this year. I wanted to share a few of these stories so you too can share in our good news.

My best success story this year is Priyanka and her kids. Mum came into our service after being sexually assaulted. The family stayed in our refuge for a few weeks and then we were able to move them into one of our transitional houses. While there, we advocated hard to DCJ Housing, and we got her on the priority housing list! Fast forward a couple of months and Mum and her kids were moved into their social housing property. The kids settled into their new schools with a few extra supports in place and things are really looking good for this family. Mum is feeling much stronger and ready to face the upcoming court case with Bonnie's by her side.



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The importance of play

Child and Youth Worker story



Marryanne

Every family we work with is different so this means, no day in the life of a Child and Youth Worker is the same.

Some tasks could be as simple as enrolling a child into a new school or organising doctor appointments, to something more complex such as putting an NDIS plan in place or working on behavioural issues. We often try to share educational resources with families about the effects of Domestic Violence on children. Our aim is to be child-focused and try our best to meet a young person's needs. Sometimes we work with a family for a few weeks, and other times for almost a whole year.

One of the best parts of the job is gaining a mother's trust and supporting the family to the best possible outcome. There's no blueprint for how to parent, but we offer various parenting skills that can help families rebond after Domestic Violence. The need for play in rebuilding bonds is often underestimated and

this is something I encourage. It might happen through structured activities or something as simple as going to the local park and having quality time together. We offer activities during school holidays that are often too hard for the families to take part in because of the cost. We also offer our support during this time, so the family can enjoy this time together.

Written with Child and Youth Worker, Marryanne

Coming up... Connecting With My Child Group

Child and Youth Worker Marryanne, and Community Worker Alison, will be running a creative parenting group this year. The intention of the group is to provide a space for parents to connect with their own creativity and playfulness in a group setting, tapping into their own childhood in a safe and fun environment. We hope to inspire and encourage Mum's to bring this spirit to connections with their own children. Childcare and lunch will also be provided!

Funding for the group has been generously provided by MFS International Australia Pty Ltd



Unlocking housing insecurity

Tenancy Officer Report

The number of people using a homelessness service increased by 7.5% between December 2022 and March 2023. And 74% of people using homelessness services in March 2023, were women or children.

– Homelessness Australia

Our Tenancy Workers are like 'the keepers of the keys' to all our properties. They wear many different hats but in essence, they unlock the housing insecurity felt by many of our clients. They make sure our refuges and temporary accommodations are safe, liveable, and feel like home.

Thanks to our supporters we are able to stock the cupboards with all the essentials, make the beds with fresh linen, and provide bathroom supplies for each family entering into our crisis accommodation.

Some of the major repairs we were able to achieve this year include the replacement of two roofs and thanks to Habitat for Humanity's Brush With Kindness Program, these houses were made to feel fresh and new when a family arrived. Our Tenancy Workers have the best eyes for detail and understand accommodation

“

This year we were delighted to build a new connection with DV accommodation offered via YourTown. They offered clients beautifully appointed (and new!) apartments especially for women and their children escaping DV. They include lots of extra security features to help clients feel secure. We had several clients move from our refuge into this accommodation and we've had nothing but great feedback. The units are bright and welcoming, and they come fully furnished! They have trauma informed case workers who really seem to "get it" and support our families with the transition. We love you, YourTown!

– Story by Mel

needs to feel good, feel safe, and while temporary, have a feeling of home.

Source: Homelessness Australia, 'Overstretched and overwhelmed: the strain on homelessness services', August 2023.



WE ARE BONNIE'S

Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE)

DVRE ensures women fleeing Domestic Violence receive weekend support when normal services are closed. We operate from Friday 1pm until Monday 9am.

This is a snapshot of a woman commencing support with the DVRE team. At times this year, we found ourselves to be actively working with 18 clients. This means we can get very very busy!

FRIDAY

- 1 From Friday 1pm, the DVRE team is open to take referrals.
- 2 We can receive referrals from Link2Home, DV Line, NSW Police or from clients directly. Most of these women have fled domestic violence in the past 24-48 hours and need immediate support.
- 3 The DVRE team contact the woman and assess the situation.
- 4 If she has nowhere to stay, the DVRE's first response is to organise hotel accommodation for the weekend to keep her safe.
- 5 We then take the woman and her children to the hotel, assist them with checking in and drop off some food hampers, phone chargers, cab vouchers etc. - anything that will help them feel safe and reduce worry. An intake meeting is organised for the next day.

SATURDAY

- 1 DVRE team meet with the woman/family at an agreed safe location - we always take into account areas where she feels at risk. We want her to feel as safe and comfortable as possible.
- 2 We listen to the details of her situation and identify priority needs moving forward. Some of these include housing, food, financial assistance, legal support, medical support, counselling etc.
- 3 We also do some safety planning with the family to reduce risk, including her own safety plan and strategies to use. If necessary, we can provide women with a new phone and mobile number so she can communicate with us safely.
- 4 DVRE and client establish a case plan with the aim of finding the woman/family long term accommodation and safe future.

SUNDAY

- 1 DVRE team check in to see how they're doing. We provide emotional support if needed and a connection with telehealth counselling i.e. Lifeline, 1800Respect if needed.

MONDAY and onwards

- 1 From Monday, the DVRE team starts to put the case plan into action. Our priority is to organise accommodation - whether this is crisis or transitional accommodation or applying for housing. We support the woman with building financial capacity and touch base with other services she might already be working with.
- 2 Depending on her needs, the DVRE team makes referrals so the woman/family benefits from collaborative, holistic support including legal and health services, children's schools etc. We might also accompany clients to make a statement at a police station if they wish to apply for an ADVO.
- 3 If the client has children and wishes to speak about sensitive matters, we organise child care at our Bonnie's office so their Mums can continue to work on her case plan with our team.

Ongoing Support

Even though DVRE is a short term program, we help women to connect with important long-term supports to help them become stronger, more independent and resilient for their future.

Once the urgent priorities like housing, health and finances are addressed, the DVRE team goes into action with referrals for services like family support, vocational courses or English classes and employment services. We also offer women's community groups to expand the person's social circle and identify / build on their strengths.



Some of the DVRE team, from left to right: Tania, Nonye, Ciara and Georgia



Reaching out in a housing crisis

The Housing Crisis has made everything more difficult, that's why we need Outreach Support more than ever.

Here at Bonnie's, we don't just work with women and children staying at our refuges or transitional properties. We also have many outreach clients who come to us in lots of different ways. Some contact us themselves, others are referred by other services. And some we meet at Liverpool Women's Health Centre (LWHC).

We've been working with the LWHC for many years and have a great partnership with them. Bonnie's conducts regular outreach at the centre on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

We work with lots of different women via outreach who have lots of different needs.

- » We connect clients with legal advice.
- » We help them apply for financial packages and refer them for emergency relief.
- » We help them find counsellors and support groups to join.
- » We do a lot of safety planning and help women prepare to leave their violent situations.
- » We take women to make statements with the police.
- » We go with them to court.
- » We fill in forms (so many forms!) for Centrelink, for housing, for visa applications.
- » We help survivors unpack their experiences and share understanding about DV and their rights.

And increasingly, one of the most pressing needs for many of the women is finding safe, long-term accommodation.

We've always been busy, and appointments are often booked out weeks in advance. However, these past few years we've noticed that things have shifted a bit. The clients we are seeing are more and more complex, and their needs are becoming harder to meet.

The cost of living pressure that is currently gripping our country, along with the housing crisis, is making things extremely difficult for our women. And as always, hitting the most vulnerable the hardest.

In previous years, we've had lots of options for clients. Now options are so limited.

One of the housing options for our clients who have fled Domestic Violence is the Start Safely program. This is a 3-year program of subsidised rent with DCJ Housing that aims to support survivors as they get back on their feet. It's a wonderful program and it usually works out fantastically for us and our clients. However, the issue we're now facing is that clients are required to secure a property within the private rental market and then the help kicks in for a percentage of the rent.

The problem with this is that the private rental market is in chaos. Supply is low and competition high. It's hard for single mums on Centrelink payments to be given a fair go by real estate agents. Rents are so high that our clients are completely priced out of so many areas of Sydney. Many regional areas are even worse.

We are seeing clients who are Start Safely approved and ready to go, but they are stuck in temporary or crisis accommodation for months and months while they spend endless hours every week applying for properties and then get knocked back, time and time again.

Imagine applying for 30 properties and being declined 30 times. Imagine towing your kids around on public transport or wasting precious

petrol driving around to various property inspections knowing you've barely got a chance to be considered. It's a physical toll. It's a financial toll. And it's a heavy emotional toll.

There's often a lot of shame connected to domestic violence, and we work with so many survivors whose sense of self has been completely eroded by the abuser. It's hard enough to get out of bed when you feel like this, let alone face yet another rental inspection you have a slim chance of securing.

Of course, we do not give up. We think outside the square, we get creative. We link in with other services to try and find a solution. We open clients' eyes to solutions that may not be perfect, but they are safe and secure.

“

Of course, we do not give up. We think outside the square, we get creative. We link in with other services to try and find a solution. We open clients' eyes to solutions that may not be perfect, but they are safe and secure.

It's tough out there, but we are still here. We are always here for our clients, and we will face the hardships by their side, no matter how challenging they may be.

Written by Team Leader, Mel



FEATURE

A new Reconciliation Action Plan

This year we decided to embark on our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We will be working together with Ngurra and Amy Barnes, as well as our Board member Wendy Morgan and staff members, Peta Link and Alison Chatfield. Together with Mel, Jessie and Tracy, we are the RAP Working Group and we are all very excited to get started again.

We completed our first Reconciliation Action Plan a couple of years ago now, and the experience helped us focus on how we can create positive relationships with our First Nations community. The aim was to ensure we are creating a culturally safe space for women and children, while also having supportive, educated, and empathetic staff who are able to provide the best service.

And I'm happy to report that every year over the last 10 years, we have seen an increase in

the number of First Nations families using and working in our service.

It's very exciting to be working on our next plan. I have loved hearing all the staff's enthusiasm and interest in learning more. Our RAP will be complemented by regular training and ongoing review and reflection of our work practices and policies. The plan will also include working closely with First Nations' businesses. We especially looking forward to the cultural immersion and art workshops the whole team will be involved in, as we develop our RAP.

As the whole country moves toward voting on the 2023 referendum, The Voice, Bonnie's wants to be involved in the hopeful tide of positive change for First Nations people in this country.

We aim to continue to develop Bonnie's as the organisation of choice, both for women looking for support from domestic violence and homelessness, but also as the employer of choice for First Nations women.



Aboriginal Women's
WellBeing
Conference & EXPO



Connect Inspire Empower

“

To me, the Kari conference is an example of Black Excellence for Koori women, by Koori women... I found it very empowering.

— Peta



Don't forget the children

Bonnie's new Specialist Child Worker Program

This program was created specifically to address the needs of children. To acknowledge them as victims of family and domestic violence, in their own right.

The Specialist Child Worker Program began in December 2022. It was a whole new team, whole new program, everything was starting from scratch. It was only funded for 12 months but at the time of writing this, it's just been continued for another year. Originally it was to work with kids in crisis refuge settings but from the beginning we thought that here at Bonnie's we had the opportunity to do more. We thought, "How can we extend our reach?"

So we spoke with Tracy about it and she spoke with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and we were given the opportunity to open

it up. This means we can now work with children in our transitional properties as well.

How we decide to work with children is very flexible. We can go to them in their homes or to the refuges. Yes, we're in the car a lot!

We do a lot of one-on-one work: skill building and therapeutic activities like re-conceptualising family; building an emotional vocabulary; and so much more. The work we can do with sibling relationships is really important. Domestic violence can sometimes cause a fracture between the siblings and between the mother and the children. A part of our role is to repair that.

We had one mum come in with three children. The DV in the family was focused on hard gender roles and how girls meant nothing and boys had the power. This young boy had witnessed all that it played out in his own interactions with his mum and two sisters: he was bringing those attitudes into the way he saw them. And they were really struggling with that. Their attachment was strong but their bond was broken a little and it was very hard.

The work we did with the mum and the kids was all about building their relationship. When you see the family dynamics changing for the positive, even sometimes in the midst of crisis, and you're walking them through that, you're supporting them through that and you see them come out the other end... that's really so good to see.



Our program is multi-focused and because it's still relatively new, we're constantly re-assessing and figuring out what works, what doesn't, what can change. We've been able to start gathering and creating some really awesome resources that we can use to shine the light on creating safety for children and wraparound support, in everything we do. We're creating these resources for the whole team to use. For example we've just done one specifically for mums around safety.

We've only got a little window to try to plant those seeds and do as much work as we can while those families are with

us. They've been through significant trauma and they may still be struggling when they leave Bonnie's. It's not all rosy. There'll still be many challenges but you can see the difference. You can really see the difference...

Alison McIntosh and Alison Chatfield

Our combined team experience:

DCJ, child protection, out-of-home care, intensive family based support, youth work and project management

I'm staying right here!

Finding a good place to work, at the right time, with the right people, isn't easy. However when it does come together, it's a little spark of office magic. That's what happened when two A-star social work students came to Bonnie's for their University placements and spoiler... they never left!

Students turned staff, Kate and Jessie, spill the beans on why they came as students to Bonnie's and didn't want to leave.

What is the biggest difference between being a student to being a full-time Bonnie's staff member now?

KATE: You can learn the theory but working in the real world will teach you something else entirely; interacting with clients, hearing real stories, and developing relationships isn't something you can be taught.

JESSIE: Similar to what Kate has shared, but as a social work student, you learn about DV as dissections of statistics, theories and policy, but what is missing are the faces and real stories of the families impacted by violence. What you could never learn from a book, or a lecture about survivors, is their humanity that is separate from their experience of violence. The extraordinary families that I have had the privilege to work with are women with a diversity of interests and goals for their future; and children with the most inspiring imagination and dreams. Ultimately, this made the most profound difference for me.



What made you want to stay at Bonnie's after your placement?

KATE: It was always my goal to work in the domestic violence sector and in a community organisation like Bonnie's. Here the power structure is more horizontal and we all work together towards the same goal.

JESSIE: Raising awareness and working alongside women and children affected by domestic violence was always something I felt compelled to do growing up. However, during my time at Bonnie's, it became very clear to me that grassroots, feminist organisations like Bonnie's are the backbone of the DV sector. Services like Bonnie's are fundamental to creating meaningful change to increase consciousness and education within the community.

What's something you've learned from your colleagues and Bonnie's community?

KATE: I remember early on, Mel, my supervisor at the time said to me, "We are here to walk beside the women we work with. We're not rescuing them. We're not telling them what to do. We're beside them on their journey and we're offering the support we can." She was saying that it's our role to support them in their goals and accompany them on this very little part of their journey; and help them lay the groundwork for the next part. This is something I carry with me all the time.

JESSIE: I am lucky enough to be surrounded by women who can harness these to create a ripple of resilience, hope, passion, and a drive for change.

FEATURE

From survival to safety: a new beginning

Many people in our community are starting to understand how being stressed and scared for a long time, like days or months or even years, affects us. It's like always being ready to run, fight, or hide. We are starting to realise this is how trauma feels. It feels like always being on the lookout, feeling scared, tired, and not trusting ourselves.

Because of many years of abuse, women and their children who come to Bonnie's feel these effects in their thoughts, feelings, and bodies.

Talking with a counsellor who knows about trauma can help people let go of some of this stress. It can help them understand that it's normal to react to danger, and they can learn to use these reactions as a source of strength to get through tough times and find safety.

Getting counselling support during tough and uncertain times can give us a chance to pause, reflect, and maybe, with time, be thankful for

our instincts that helped us survive. We can explore what we needed to do to live through it and recognise our strength and our ability to find a new way of being.

In counselling, we get the chance to talk about how safe we feel, even if feeling safe is a new thing for some of us. We can understand how staying calm and being truly present with ourselves can help our kids feel more secure and connected to us. This is really important for their well-being, and it helps both us and our kids heal from bad experiences and unsafe situations.

By having counselling services right here, Bonnie's can give more help to women and children who are escaping violence.

*Jemima Brewer,
Psychotherapist & Trauma Specialist*



FEATURE

Welcoming new and returning faces

Every year, as Bonnie's grows and evolves, we are lucky to welcome new people to the team. People leave too, of course, but many of them end up coming back! We asked our newbies and returners, what they like about working at Bonnie's, and what it was like on their first day on the job.

Welcoming new faces

Jasmine: I first noticed the warmth of the office, the willingness of everyone to share resources and the flow of sweets and food everyone brings in. Bonnie's is also the first organisation I have worked in that is only women. Working alongside strong women to support women and their families during turbulent times in their lives has been an incredible experience. I love the holistic support we're able to provide through the connections built with other organisations.



Vicky: The first thing I noticed when I started working at Bonnie's was the wonderful mix of employees from different ages, cultures, experiences and backgrounds. I noticed that everyone was friendly and made me feel welcome and were quick to answer questions and make themselves available to me, which I really appreciated. I also found that Bonnie's atmosphere and work culture is much more relaxed than other places, even though everyone is busy. At other organisations, I could feel tension when walking into the office. Everyone works as part of a team and is very supportive of one another.



Sumina: The main thing that amazed me here at Bonnie's is the continuous support and guidance from my colleagues. Everyone is so busy with their own work and despite that, everyone is so cooperative and helpful in guiding new staff. More than that, I am glad about the teamwork. If anyone asks for help, then there are multiple helping hands that inspire and motivate me to work in a better way for women and children.



Vasita: One thing I love about Bonnie's and being a newbie here, is the diversity in our workforce. Women from different cultural backgrounds with different work ethics are doing amazing work for our clients.



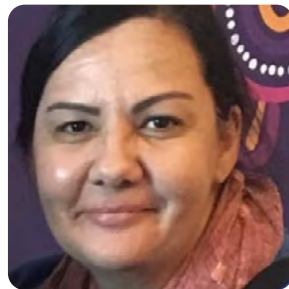
Jessica: How warm and welcoming Bonnie's space is. I feel like the team at Bonnie's has genuine care for the wellbeing of the women we work with. This care makes me feel so motivated and passionate to keep going.



Welcoming (back) old faces



Sandra: Bonnie's is different from the place I was working last. The eagerness of staff to assist clients is the same at both organisations but I love that at Bonnie's, we get to meet our beautiful clients right here. It's nice to be able to say hello and offer a cuppa, and welcome the children too. The first thing I noticed on returning to Bonnie's was so many new faces. I was surprised at how easy it was to fit right back in. It's like I had never left. It's home!



Alison C: Bonnie's has various multidisciplinary teams that work together with the common purpose of making sure the families are well supported across various areas of their lives. Something that surprises me every day at Bonnie's is the passion. The way staff go above and beyond for the families we work with.



Alison M: On my first day back I noticed how busy/productive everyone is. There was a buzzing energy in the office that is so great.

PROGRAMS

About our Groups

What makes our Support Groups unique?

Let me count the ways...

Bonnie's Support Groups are for women and children of all ages, who are either currently in the service or have left and are living in the community. These groups are intended to facilitate empowerment, strengthen families, and create a sense of community. They're a regular and supportive touch-point for women to share and connect after in many cases a lot of hardship.

We offer a safe and supportive environment to talk about and learn about the impacts of domestic violence, which is vital for a woman's

journey toward healthy relationships. All of our groups are run in a safe and trauma-informed environment and have had a myriad of positive outcomes, such as reducing isolation, skill-building, connection with others, and a reminder that we are always here to support them.

We often provide lunch and childcare, as women sitting together without children is often a luxury. Transport can also be organised if necessary, making our groups accessible for everyone involved. All in all, these groups provide spaces for cultural awareness and knowledge sharing, and promote self-discovery and healing.

Written by Alison D



PROGRAMS

Aunty Bonnie's



"Aunty Bonnie's is a therapeutic art space facilitated by myself and with the support of Darany. In my approach to Aunty Bonnie's, I choose activities from my cultural background that I can share with the women. I find that this opens conversations about the participants' own cultures and together we immerse our knowledge of art, craft, and healing."

PETA

Some activities included making clay coolamons, weaving, group painting, and much more. This year Aunty Bonnie's group had 15 participants. To end the 8 week sessions, we attended Casula Power House for lunch and a good look around at the gallery.

Written by proud Gooreng/Gooreng Kabi Kabiwoman, artist and Family Worker at Bonnie's, Peta.

Funded by Aunty Bonnie's: Be Kind Sydney Ltd + Sydney Community Foundation



PROGRAMS

Creative Space

Our Creative Space is now in its 7th year of providing an opportunity for our women to sit together in a therapeutic environment... and simply create.

What does 'home' mean to me?

SOMETIMES WE DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT BRINGS US COMFORT IN OUR HOME, BUT WE CONTINUE TO CREATE IT. FROM THE FOOD WE COOK TO THE FURNISHINGS AROUND US AND THE MUSIC WE LISTEN TO.

Everything starts from home

Our beginning

Our birth

Our life

And it ends in our home.

In-between we go through millions of emotions.

Happiness

We cry

We fight

We raise our kids

We stress

But... at the end of the day... home is where you want to be.'

*The symbol of freedom
I can identify with a butterfly.*

My whole life was in a cocoon.

*After the cocoon broke,
I slowly got my wings back.*

*They began growing,
flapping, and I learned how to fly.*

*My dream is to discover
and explore the world like
a butterfly for the rest of
my life.*

That's me!

Home is where I rest my head
The quietness is all around
Safety
Home is where I celebrate
Music, dance, and play
Joy
Home is where I replenish
Family, food, and happiness
Healing
Home is a retreat
Rest, calm and stillness
Peace
Home.....my place

A feeling, a location a garden perhaps.

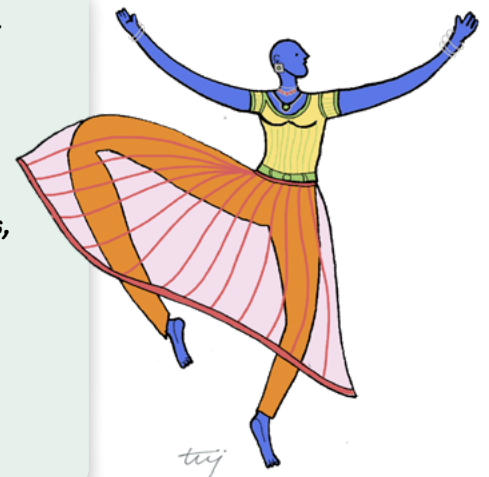
It's what we are drawn to in times of stress, where we go in our minds and hearts.

It could be a favourite meal, a tree, a flower, or a particular kind of house.

When we are safe to create our homes, we all have our own ways, some ways are drawn from our culture, the past some ways are sometimes borrowed.

Home can sustain us and remind us of who we are and where we have come from.

Home is...



PROGRAMS

Creative Space

What's been a highlight?

The trip to the beach

Getting out for a day trip to Austinmer Beach was so special and it was great to show the women how easy it is to get out of the city.

I picked everyone up in the van in the morning, first stop Stanwell Park beach, then lunch at the Imperial Hotel overlooking the ocean. Next stop Headlands Hotel for cake and coffee. The women strolled the beach hunting for shells, stones and driftwood for future creative projects.

A beautiful moment was seeing two women in the group linking arms. It's great for us too, because we're all just women hanging out together. Child care was provided for this day too, so the women could have a day out, child-free.

I found out later that one of the women returned to Stanwell Park with her kids because she knew where to park, and knew it wasn't so stressful.

Yay! Success on all fronts.

Thanks to funding by Post Office Australia for making this wonderful day trip possible!

This group is organised and facilitated by Alison and Ruth. Ruth works at Rosebank, Child Sexual Assault Counselling Service, a longstanding partner of Bonnie's.

What's the best part of the Creative Space?



I think you are giving a space to be insightful with ourselves. A place to find relaxation and peace.



PROGRAMS

Kidz Space

Making memories

Kidz Space is an art therapy group, designed to build a sense of self and belonging in children. It encourages everyone's unique strengths and allows them to express themselves creatively. Too often children have been silenced or seen to be in the background, in this group we give children the opportunity to be on the main stage and be seen and heard.

This project began in 2017, in partnership with Rosebank a child sexual abuse counselling service. It has since evolved into a fun, crafty, and playful group offering support and activities for children aged 7-11. The activities are often craft and play activities facilitated by our experienced workers, who have expertise in child protection, early intervention, and Domestic Violence prevention. In this group, we aim to address the trauma and

Marryanne is AWESOME... she is so patient, persistent and on the ball with both me and my son. She's just what we need. I really like Marryanne.

— Feedback from Bonnie's client

“

This year we ran a school holiday program where the kids did rock climbing and trampolining. Getting out is always something exciting and the women and children love it. Many families don't have the opportunity to do these things, due to finances or domestic violence control. The school holidays are an opportunity for memory-making. And friend making too. I love seeing my young clients make new friends.

— Marryanne, Kidz Space organiser.

behaviour problems of children, by providing a safe and nurturing space where children can express themselves, and tell their stories while building pathways toward resilience and emotional well-being.

Thanks to Commonwealth Bank (Federation Grant) + Streetsmart (Kids Creative Time) + MFS International Australia Pty Ltd for making Kidz Space possible!



PROGRAMS

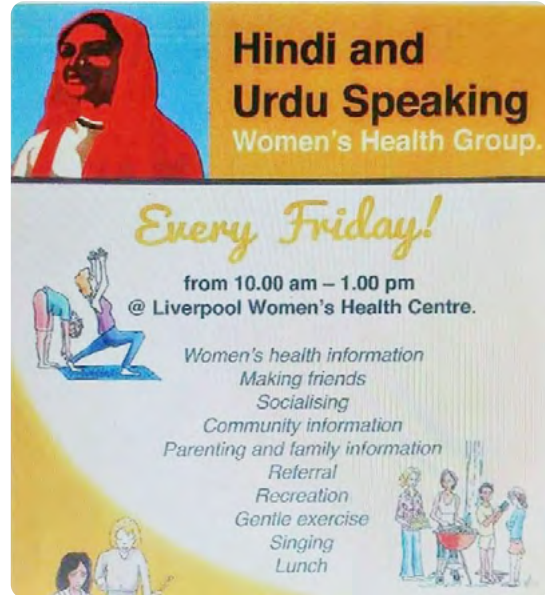
Hindi and Urdu Speaking Women's Health Group

Our Hindi/Urdu Women's Group meets every fortnight and is run by Nancely at the Liverpool Women's Health Centre. On average, around 6-12 women between the ages 40-70 years gather to build friendships, celebrate their culture and enjoy each other's company, participating in various activities.

Reflecting on the year, what were some highlights from the Hindi/Urdu Women's Group?

One of our highlights was our women participating in our Women's Week at the Liverpool Women's Health Centre. There was a huge turnout, and it was wonderful to see the women dressed up in their Indian cultural clothes.

Another popular activity that our women love, is going on outings. We have previously taken them out for lunch, on walks and day trips exploring different areas of Sydney. Some of our community members organised bus tours to the Blue Mountains, Summer Bay and to VIVID in the city this year. It was great to see our group members being so involved and having fun with one another.



What has been encouraging about the growth of the Hindi/Urdu Women's Group?

It is always so encouraging to see the women gathering regularly. Previously, I would organise transport for women to arrive at Liverpool Women's Health Centre. This year, many of the women made their own way which shows their enthusiasm to come along to the group.

Seeing our women care for one another is a beautiful attribute of our group. By building new connections, they also grow in confidence to try new hobbies. For example, some of our women started joining Zumba and Tai Chi classes together. They also often share photos of their time at Hindi/Urdu Women's Group on their social media. This has been a great way for family members who are living overseas to see their mothers, aunts and sisters being involved in the community here in Sydney.

“

I wish to thank Bonnie Support Services for this group where women are greatly benefiting from it, for their self-care. This group has been running for the past 15 years and I hope it continues for a longer time in the future. — Nancely



PROGRAMS

The Shark Cage

“

In the Shark Group, we talk a lot about boundaries but what it really comes down to is learning how to love yourself. And making informed decisions about your rights as a woman.

– Peta, Facilitator

This was the second year we hosted a Shark Cage program and group. It was so successful last year, that facilitator Peta collaborated with a new staff member Jessie to do another. This year we had 12 women complete the full program. We sat down with Peta and asked her what the purpose of this group is and how it helps women find their strength in the aftermath of Domestic Violence.

What is the Shark Cage program?

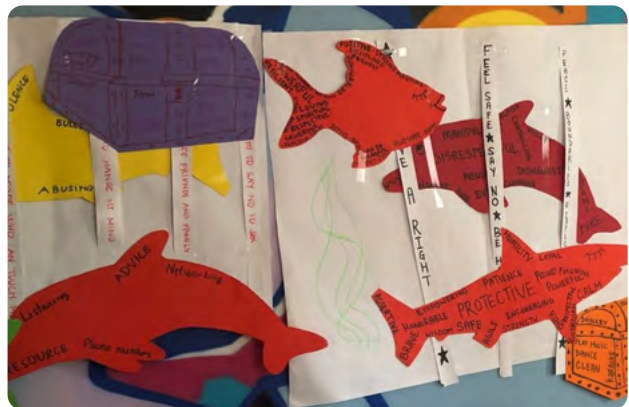
The Shark Cage program is a therapeutic group that meets over the space of 8 weeks. Shark Cage is a framework that was designed by psychologist Ursula A. Benstead to help survivors of trauma to understand the re-victimisation process that can happen in abusive environments. It's a powerful metaphor to help people break the cycle of abuse. It stems from the idea that the world is a big, beautiful ocean filled with lots of harmless friendly fish, as well as dangerous predators, which is usually the shark. To survive in the ocean, you need a good Shark Cage.

This year we had a little ceremony at Bonnie's to celebrate the group members' graduation from Shark Cage. We set up for High Tea and decorated the tables with white tablecloths and flowers. Everyone came all dressed up and looking beautiful. I remember one woman got a phone call during the ceremony, and I heard her say, 'Can't talk now, I'm graduating, I'll call you back later.' I thought to myself, bless her darling; because I could hear in her voice that she was proud to be here. She had a sense of achievement and accomplishment.

It was the school holidays, so we invited the kids to come and watch their Mums graduate too. It was very moving. It's been beautiful to see the women grow into their friendships with each other and their kids too.

– Story by Peta

People aren't born with Shark Cages, so we teach women in this group how to build their own. When facilitating Shark Cage, we are very mindful of being culturally safe in this space. Our members come from all different cultural backgrounds, and to some women, the Shark could represent their totem or have some other cultural significance, if that's the case, we will flip the shark into a dolphin or some other underwater creature. We respect all cultures in this group, making it a safe space for all.



PROGRAMS

Khmer Women's Group

Healing together, one breath at a time

This was our first year of hosting and facilitating the Khmer Women's Group and we already have 25 participants who join us every week! This group started after many calls from the community to find spaces where Khmer women could come together and connect. Many of the women in this group have either lived through or experienced the intergenerational trauma of the Khmer Rouge, a violent genocide that impacted Cambodia in the late 1970s. So, this group provides a culturally safe space to share stories in their language, share food, practice self-care, and simply but most profoundly, enjoy each other's company.

Darany, one of our newest Family Workers, facilitates this group. She is Cambodian and speaks fluent Khmer and also has a background in mental health and mindfulness and often incorporates mindfulness exercises into these groups.

“

On the first day, I gave the women some mindfulness colouring exercises. This was a good way to get to know everyone: their individual personalities and needs. Through the colours they chose and the marks they made I was able to gain more insight on how they were feeling. It's also a good gauge to track the women's progress in each session...Considering what Khmer women have gone through, learning how to breathe well is very important. A lot of stress is carried in the mind and body. So, it's important for Khmer women to release this by returning each week to progress in their meditation journey.

– Excerpt from Darany's blog

Thank you Be Kind Sydney Ltd + Streetsmart + MFS for making this group happen!



DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Women supporting women



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton is on a mission to ensure ALL children have access to books! At Bonnie's, we know how important it is for kids to read and be read to when they are young. So when we were asked if we'd like to be a partner with Dolly's Imagination Library, we jumped at the chance.

We submitted our form and waited until one day a big box arrived at the office full of books! We had a great time handing these new books to our families. Smiles on kids' faces are a great perk of our job!



Habitat for Humanity

Thank you to the volunteers from Habitat for Humanity for your continued support in repainting our transitional properties. These are homes where families who are escaping homelessness and/or domestic

violence can find a comfy place to rest and heal, while they make their plans for a better life. And getting help from volunteers to make these properties not only liveable but beautiful, makes such a difference.

DONORS AND SUPPORTERS



Dandelion Support Network

Nine out of ten children at Bonnie's wear clothes donated by the Dandelion Support Network. We are so proud to be involved with an organisation that is 100% volunteer-run and 100% privately donated. Thank you to Dandelion and your great Dandelion network for supporting us.

Share The Dignity

Thank you to Share The Dignity for your #ItsInTheBag delivery this year. Each bag contains period products providing dignity and spreading love and kindness to women and girls experiencing homelessness and escaping violence in our shelter.



“ Kate's Mum, Carol

It gives me great joy to see that I can make even the tiniest difference in someone's life and make it a little better. I wish I could knit faster! Especially in winter.

– You might remember Kate from page 35, these are her Mum's words

GIVIT



GIVIT is our go-to when nobody else can help! GIVIT cuts out the middle (wo)man and connects donors directly to us. Our clients have received all sorts of goodies from kind-hearted Aussies this year through the GIVIT portal. We've received lots and lots of vouchers for groceries and petrol, we've also scored some preloved (but still lovely!) furniture items like bunk beds, fridges and couches. One mum received brand new school uniforms for her kids – uniforms are so expensive and the kids were so excited to start school in their fancy new gear.



OzHarvest



Alongside OzHarvest's weekly food drop-offs at Bonnie's, this year they showered us in flowers for Valentine's Day. Our refuges were filled with so much colour and sweet fragrance. OzHarvest is a leading food rescue organisation and the work they do is both food-saving and life-saving! Even though Australia is one of the most food-secure countries in the world, the increases in the cost of living we saw this year meant a lot of families were struggling to put food on the table. Every Friday the team at OzHarvest

comes into Bonnie's and drops off a bunch of food hampers that we either give to women and their children in need or stock up the fridges in our refuges. It's so lovely when we get to see, smell, and taste the dishes our clients make.

DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Two Good

Frozen meals you actually want to eat!

It's always a good day when we get a call from our friends at Two Good to let us know a delivery is headed our way. We get to stock our freezers with yummy, nutritious home-made meals. These are so handy. After a long hard day, the last thing anyone wants to do is cook dinner – popping something in the microwave that is quick and healthy is a winner!



Putting the pro in pro-bono

Thank you to the Law Firms Gadens, Herbert Smith Freehills, and Legal Vision for all your **pro-bono work**. Your support and expertise is crucial for many of the women we work with. Thank you!



Mission Australia

Again this year Mission Australia has gifted their amazing Starter Packs. We love handing these out to our clients when they are ready to move into their own property. It includes all the essentials such as a kettle, toaster and pots and pans. It's such a great feeling to help our clients stock their kitchens with all the necessities so they can get on with everything else that needs to be done.

We also regularly reach out to our local offices of Mission Australia, and they always offer any support they can. When possible they assist with paying bonds, rental arrears and removalist costs which are often a huge burden for our clients who sometimes have to move 2 or 3 times in a year.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Opportunity Pathways

The Evolve Housing Opportunity Pathways program has been co-locating at Bonnie Support Services since February 2023. This program is voluntary and provides support to social housing clients to access employment, training, and work opportunities.

Thanks Kathy and the team at Opportunity Pathways for helping more women find financial freedom!

Lastly, a very special thank you to all of the women we work with, our clients.

Thank you for showing up. Thank you for believing in yourself. Thank you for paving the way for so many other women by inspiring them to leave, inspiring them to ask for help, and inspiring them to choose the life they deserve. Thank you for your generosity, stories, and everything you have achieved. It's a pleasure to walk alongside you.

“

We have received 12 referrals through the program to assist and support women towards working with them on their individual goals, and aspirations, building their confidence, and setting achievable goals for the future. Four participants have successfully entered into study and continue to progress toward completion. We are seeing some excellent progress and fruitful collaboration in our partnership and hope to continue with further development moving forward.

– Kathy Parry, from Opportunity Pathways



HAPPINESS IS ...



KNOWING WHAT I'M COMING HOME TO...

SPECIAL MOMENTS THIS YEAR

Events and highlights

Fairfield March Against Domestic Violence & Family Violence

This March was organised by a committee and sought to raise awareness about domestic violence in our area. The key message was that everyone in the community has a responsibility to speak up and break the silence. It was a massive turnout, with schools, local organisations, and community groups all joining in together on how we can better understand and speak up about domestic violence.



The Unseen Project

This year we were asked to participate in Belinda Mason's Unseen Project. This is a site-specific, multimedia project to raise awareness about homelessness among culturally diverse women.

We were asked to respond to the theme of homelessness and came up with the idea of creating our own cushions to represent our home and our culture. The women in the Creative Space all come from different cultures and we wanted each other to represent what 'home', culture and the experience of coming to Australia means to us. The embroidered cushion

art reflected the stories shared during a workshop, **'What Home Means To Me.'**

Stationed in Parramatta Square, women from Bonnie's showcased their beautiful cushions that were displayed and then later donated.



Candlelight Vigil

Every year we host a Candlelight Vigil to commemorate the women and children who were killed by domestic or family violence in the past 12 months. This year was especially poignant and beautiful, because we were again able to organise our own event without any Covid-19 restrictions. Every event is very important, in commemorating the women and children, speaking their names, remembering them, and reminding everyone that they were not a statistic and that they will not be forgotten. This year Kate had the idea of creating origami heart boxes, with empowering messages inside to give to everyone. Some of them read, 'What you want exists. Don't settle until you get it. Be fearless in pursuit of what sets your soul on fire.'

"In 2022, the youngest person to die at the hands of domestic violence was just 6 weeks old... the oldest was 90 years old."



Healing and Recovery Conference

Kate and Jessie went to the Healing and Recovery Conference to provide a talk about the importance of domestic violence education in breaking the cycle of abuse. Kate shared a story about her own experience with a client that made her aware of how valuable education can be in giving someone the tools to change their life,

International Women's Day

We celebrated International Women's Day with our clients and their children by sharing food, making flower garlands, and watching the kids play with their newfound friends.



I had a client who came into the service for homelessness. She didn't come in for domestic violence, but once she started sharing some things with me, it was very clear that she had indeed experienced domestic violence. Her ex was still harassing her but the domestic violence education I did with her was really helpful. It allowed her to see that she wasn't making it up, that it wasn't respectful behaviour, that she wasn't at fault and that she'd done the right thing in leaving. She deserved to be happy and do whatever she wanted, and she did just that.

– Kate

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training

Every year we attend an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training, and this year we had the pleasure of working with Flic Ryan from Big River Connections. We learned about the importance of culture and history when understanding and acknowledging the ongoing impact of colonisation. We were taught new skills about how best to support our First Nations clients, including specific tips about communication styles and ways to be more culturally sensitive.

NAIDOC Week

This year we had a stall at a NAIDOC week event, and one of our staff members had a very special moment of re-connection with an ex-client of Bonnie's.



"I fought hard to keep the house, but no one could get onto Jenny. Not even me. I couldn't help but worry and think: Would they be homeless again? Where would they stay? Would I ever hear from Jenny again?"

Months turned into years, and I never found out what happened to them. From our last conversation, I assumed they were in Queensland with their family.

Then something amazing happened.

It was NAIDOC Week 2022 and I hosted Bonnie's stall with my co-workers. As I was preparing the table, I saw a woman waving and smiling at me. I could make out that this person looked very familiar, but I still didn't quite get who she was, and then her 5 kids came running toward me. It was Jenny! The 7 of us embraced in a big hug and we spent the whole afternoon talking about her new life in Sydney."

— Story by Sophie

Xmas



We adore Christmas at Bonnie's. It's a time of year when everyone is in good spirits and is feeling the love. This year we were even visited by the one and only Santa. It's always a great opportunity to invite the women we work with,

and their broader networks like sisters, mothers, and friends, in a casual and celebratory way. It's also nice to just hang out and celebrate, outside of the case-worker-to-client context. We're just families celebrating Christmas together.

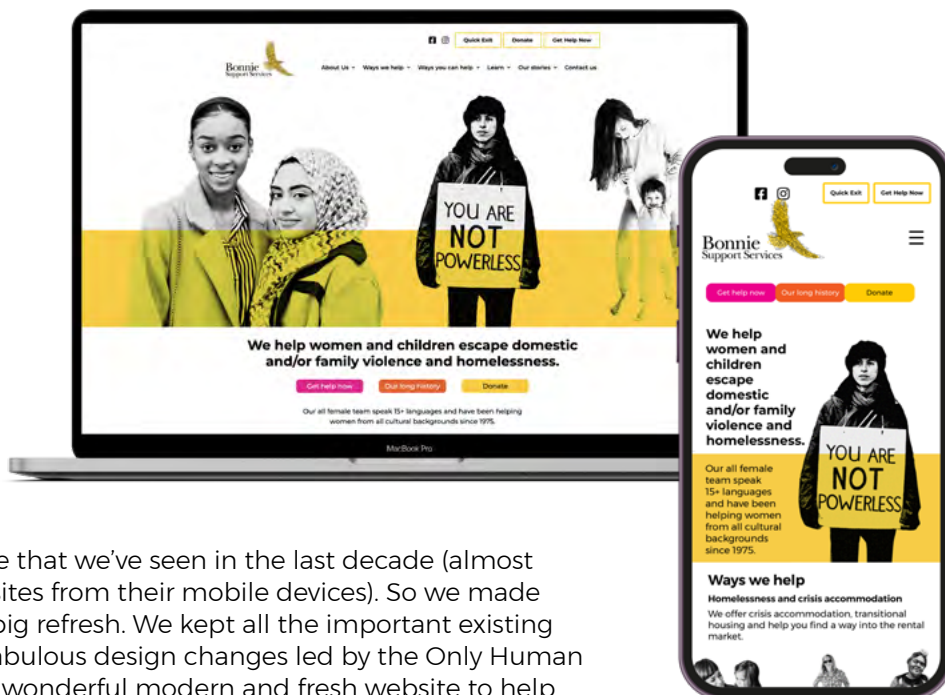


Website refresh

When we first created our website ten years ago, we had a clear objective: make it informative, accessible, and an easy go-to place for women seeking immediate safety and support. We have since received many compliments and wonderful feedback on how thorough it is.

However it wasn't necessarily keeping up with the mobile-first move that we've seen in the last decade (almost 90% of people first visit websites from their mobile devices). So we made a few changes and gave it a big refresh. We kept all the important existing information but with some fabulous design changes led by the Only Human Stories team. We now have a wonderful modern and fresh website to help more women find out how we are and what we do.

If you haven't had a look lately, [here's the link](#).



Biggest Morning Tea

This year we hosted the biggest morning tea. It's so great to be able to come together again after Covid to connect and raise funds for Cancer Council.



WESNET Safety Summit

At this summit, we learned about the importance of keeping up to date with new technologies and how they can pose potential risks to our clients. WESNET has a wealth of knowledge on everything related to technology and safety, and we use their resources all the time. They also have a fantastic program where their support means we can provide our clients with pre-paid Telstra phones for free. We can set these phones up for clients even if they don't have ID, which is crucial, as many of our clients flee with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

ASES Accreditation

Throughout the past year, we have been working towards accreditation of Bonnie's through ASES - the Australian Services Excellence Standards. Maybe accreditation isn't quite as exciting as some of our activities, but it has been a great opportunity for self-assessment and examination of our practice. It has been a huge piece of work, led by Fiona but involving the whole service. We have all benefited from examining our work, learning where we can improve, be more innovative, and keep quality at the forefront. We always learn by self-reflection and Bonnie's is doing just that and looking forward to receiving the tick for achieving the standards we wanted to reach.

Refugee Week

For Refugee Week, our wonderful student Nat organised a creative day and project for women and children at Bonnie's to participate in.

What was the idea behind the event?

I saw that Fairfield City Council was holding a grant for Refugee Week and I thought that considering Bonnie's does so much work with diverse communities in our area, it would be a great idea to bring it to the team's attention

I talked with some of the brilliant workers to see if they had any ideas. Alison and Ruth, who run the Creative Group, shared their idea of women painting stepping stones. Bonnie's is a great stepping stone for many women leaving difficult situations like homelessness or domestic violence, and this way women could think about this theme while engaging in a fun arts project. I worked with Fiona on the grant application, and we got it!

How did you do it? What was the process like?

Considering I had never done any sort of project work or applied for a grant before, I found this process to be pretty tricky. I wrangled up other staff members to help me out with things like sourcing stones,

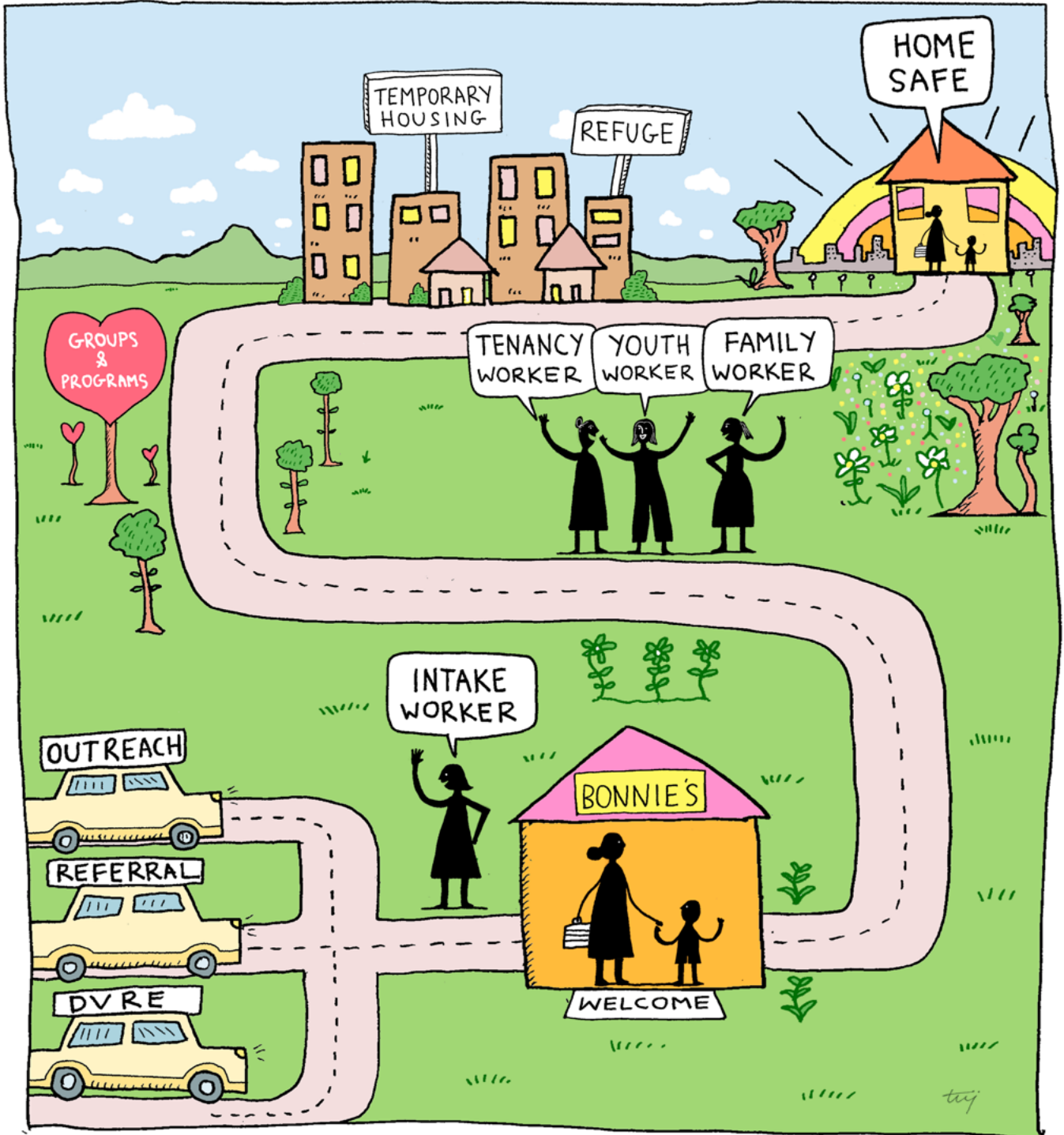
buying art supplies, and checking out where we were going to set up the memorial. We decided that we wanted the rocks to be decorated with flora from each woman's cultural heritage, to highlight the diversity of lived experiences that walk through Bonnie's doors. We had a lot of fun pulling up different native flowers from different countries, and I got to connect to my Spanish heritage a bit more. Getting to see both mums and their kids participate in this event was heart-warming, and I was so appreciative of the staff who came along and represented their stories too.

What has this experience meant for you as a social work student, doing your placement here at Bonnie's?

I had such a fantastic time at Bonnie's; it was life-changing. I am so grateful to have been able to connect with the women and children, build on my skills as a social worker, and most importantly give back to a community that I have lived in for my entire life. Knowing that many of the women who work with Bonnie's are culturally and linguistically diverse helped give me some perspective on my community, and how we can better cater to the needs of people living in our backyards. This project, and this experience, is one that I will never forget.



The Bonnie's Road to Safety



From the Blog

Our Bonnie's Clan

I am leaving Bonnie's for a year to have a baby. While working on my handover, I remembered the time I left a few years back to have my son. My water broke early, and I had to stay in hospital for almost 3 weeks. Lying on the hospital bed in a gown without any make-up on, my colleagues slowly arrived by my side.

After we were all crowded together in a small space, I briefed everyone on what they had to do without me. It was at this moment that I got a warm feeling. I knew then I was part of a little Bonnie's clan where our great work could continue no matter who was here.

Continue reading at <https://bonnie.org.au/our-bonnies-clan/>



Our freedom of choice

Sometimes I find myself sitting in front of my wardrobe for an hour deciding what to wear for the day. Black pants? Nope, I wore that yesterday...jeans? Hmmm not very comfortable... grey trousers? Yes, I think that'll do. The hour can stretch to two if I move on to researching café reviews, deciding where to have coffee. So, there are times when I'm overwhelmed with opportunities of choice

Continue reading at <https://bonnie.org.au/our-freedom-of-choice/>



Love ain't always easy, but it shouldn't be hard



My grandparents were married for 63 years. Their love story is truly one for the ages.

They met when they were dance instructors at the Surreyville Dance

Hall in Sydney. My grandfather proposed in 1950 at the Trocadero dance hall while they were dancing. The Canadian 3-step, La Bamba and the Jazz Waltz were some of their favourite dances. Some of 'their songs' included classics like 'Unforgettable' by Nat King Cole, 'If I had my way' by Bing Crosby and 'The Last Waltz' by Englebert Humperdinck.

Continue reading at: <https://bonnie.org.au/love-aint-always-easy-but-it-certainly-shouldnt-be-hard/>



Life admin

When I first decided to move out of home, it was a surreal feeling of taking my first triumphant step into real adulthood. The thought of having my own apartment made me flutter with excitement. I was ready to become a responsible and independent adult.

But – in the first few days of moving in, things were not all that I expected them to be. I remember sitting in between my packing boxes with my eyes glued to my phone – trying to set up my electricity and gas, keep track of my rent, research affordable Internet providers and coordinate the delivery times of all my new furniture. There was just too much "life admin" to do!

Continue reading at: <https://bonnie.org.au/life-admin/>

A Statistical Snapshot

Total number of clients we supported in 2022-23

1763

Specialist Workers For Children and Young People

33

children from December to June

Domestic Violence Response Enhancement Program (DVRE) supported

174

women and children

Liverpool Women's Health Centre Safety Hub

600

women and children

Victims Services Counselling Sessions

36

sessions from March to June

123

women and children supported through Outreach

Country of birth

62%

Australia

37%

overseas

1%

not known

Our Board



Betty Green

Chair

Betty is a committed feminist advocate and her work in the women's community services spans three decades. Violence against

women, particularly domestic violence, has been her focus.



Amelia Scott

Amelia is Bonnie's longest serving Board member. Amelia has a wealth of experience in health and in particular women and children's health.



Wendy Morgan

Deputy Chair

Wendy is an Aboriginal Woman from the Dyiringanj People of Wallaga Lake that forms part of the Yuin Nation. Wendy is an activist and

Aboriginal rights advocate who has worked with government, NGOs and local land councils for more than 30 years.



Karen Beetson

Karen is a Mandandanji woman from south west Queensland. Karen has worked for over 30 years in Aboriginal Community Development



Frances Atkins

Treasurer

Frances has significant experience in banking and finance as is the co-founder/director of Givable a platform that helps businesses

track their impact of social and sustainable purchases.

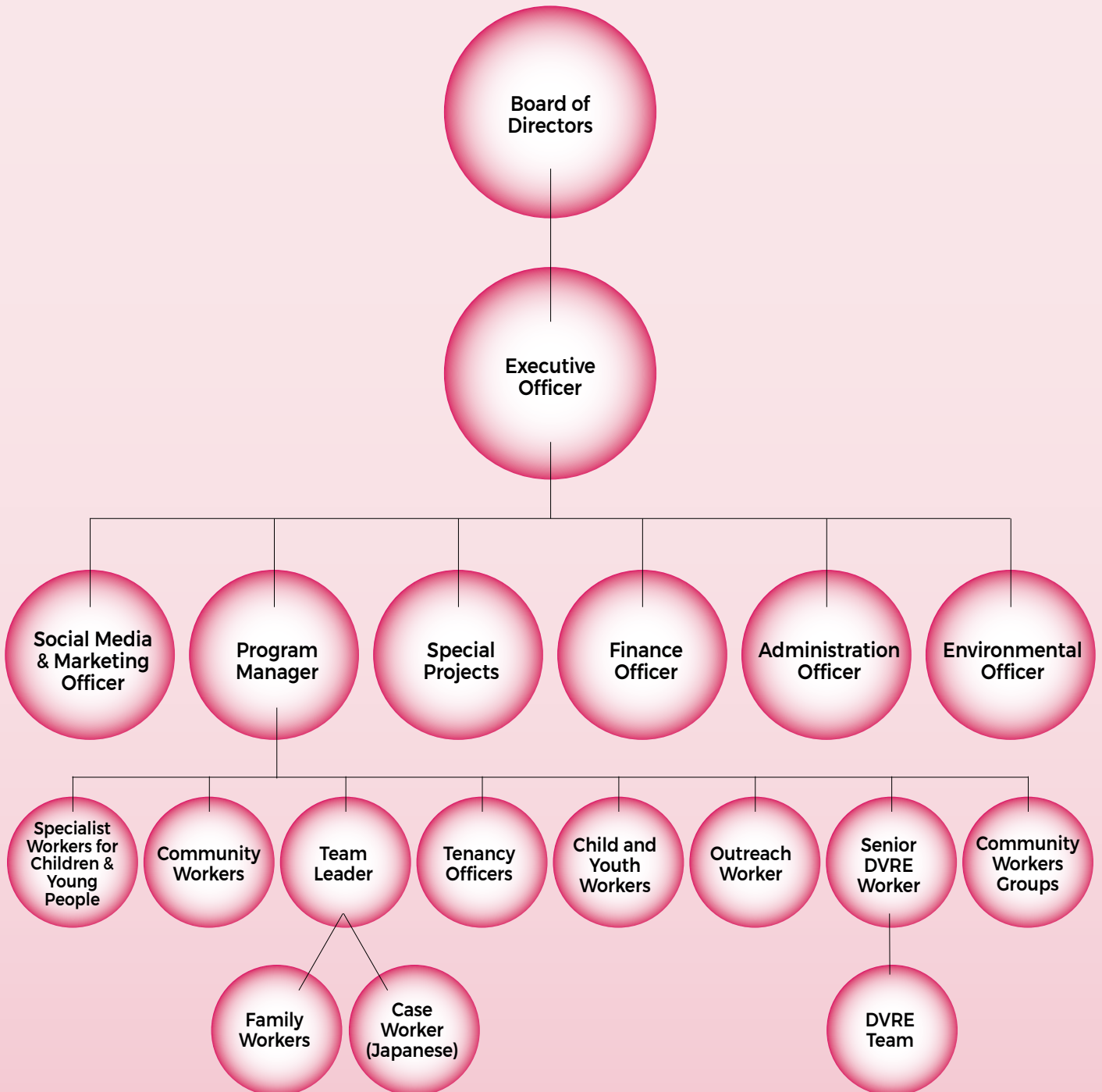


Dr Lai Heng Foong

Dr Foong is a Senior Emergency Physician and Sexual Assault and Forensic Physician based in Sydney who has a passion for Public Health, including domestic violence.

Organisational Chart

Bonnie Support Services Ltd



Five Year Financial Summary

Bonnie Support Services Ltd

ABN 24 003 100 445

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Income					
Government grants	2,978,898	3,002,043	2,643,992	2,330,669	2,304,565
Donations and corporate support	55,304	47,040	54,764	100,988	40,531
Rental income	239,360	255,596	246,149	273,681	227,370
Interest	17,353	1,773	4,875	15,998	29,259
Other	13,181	36,998	56,852	56,882	20,500
Total Income	3,304,096	3,343,450	3,006,632	2,778,218	2,622,225
Total Income	3,343,450	3,006,632	2,778,218	2,622,225	2,332,371
Expenses					
Salaries and on costs	2,471,844	2,291,162	2,151,672	1,917,964	1,919,793
Client brokerage	207,750	295,812	282,343	209,122	151,269
Operating expenses	579,833	732,940	491,862	541,516	508,135
Total Expenses	3,259,427	3,319,914	2,925,877	2,668,602	2,579,197
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	44,669	23,536	80,755	109,616	43,028

The Company recorded an operating surplus of \$44,669 for the year ended 30 June 2023 compared to an operating surplus of \$23,536 in 2022. Income from government grants has remained comparable to previous years. A state grant received in June 2022 for the provision of a Specialist Workers for Children and Young People Service was partially expended in 2022-23. Specialist children's support will continue in 2023-24. The company has been working in partnership with philanthropic and other non-government organisations to harness opportunities to provide more crisis accommodation services to women and children.

Bonnie Support Services measures its performance through annual accountability reports for each individual funding contract. The company also uses a range of other performance measures to ensure its strategic goals as stated in the Strategic Plan 2021 -2024 are achieved.

The company monitors its performance against budget and rolling forecasts. The budget is approved by the Board of Directors prior to the commencement of the financial year. Financial results are presented to the Board who use this information for the purpose of tracking progress, determining if agreed objectives are met and to inform future planning.


A complete copy of Bonnie's Financial Report 2023 including our audited financial statements, accompanying notes and Auditor's Report can be downloaded from our website www.bonnie.org.au or the ACNC register.

Donors and Supporters 2022-23

Allied Health Partnership	Fairfield Council	MFS International Australia
Amar	Good360	Michelle Jewell
Amy	Grace Communion International	Mortgage Choice Charity Foundation
Andrea Rejante	Habitat for Humanity Australia	Nasleene Buksh
Angelia Lim	Helen Callaghan	Natalie Miller
Anna Ralston	Ie Ing Lie	Ngaire Denton
Anne Bennell	Ihab Yaseen	Nguyen Le
Australia Post	Irrelevant Society	Power Care Link
Be Kind Sydney	Jaime Gibson	Robyn Metcalfe
Bethany Smith	Jane	Sandra Salopek
Bunnings Villawood	Josephine	Sandy Janjic
Bunnings Bonnyrigg	Juliet Tang	Share the Dignity
Cabramatta Schools as Community Centres (Cabramatta Public School)	Karen Macy	Sharon
Cabra-Vale Diggers	Kartia Mallanhi	Sony Music
Candle Supply Pty Ltd	Karyn Beggs	Sophie
Carol Mesaglio	Katharine Maxwell	Stephanie Pace
Carole Best	Kathleen Maxwell	Street Smart
Chelsea Maresso	Katz Perry Fund	Sue Rowlands
Deanna Ivetic	Linda Lawson	Susan Varga
Del Leslie	Lisa Lai	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Diane Powell	Lynda Johnson	Two Good
Donna Carmen	Maddy & HPG	Varuna Nauler
Elisabeth Barry	Mai Nguyen	Vivian Ireland
Erin Wroblewicz	MFS	Xanthe

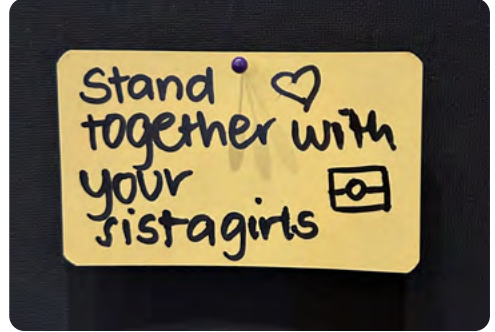


Birds of Hope



"We have watched as our nests have been broken.

We know the fear of trying to fly away."







Bonnie's
02 9729 0939

24/7 Domestic
Violence Line

1800 65 64 63

Translating and
Interpreting Service

13 14 50

Link2home
for accommodation

1800 152 152

www.bonnie.org.au



Communities
& Justice

Bonnie's receives our primary
funding from DCJ



Brand Story & Design: Only Human Stories
www.onlyhuman.com.au

