



**MARRUNGBAA
GARUWAGA**

**GREAT LAKES
WOMENS SHELTER**

**Annual Report
2024-2025**



GREAT LAKES
Womens
Shelter

WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

At Great Lakes Womens Shelter, we honour all First Nations people and their enduring connection to culture and land, the land on which we work and play on, always was and always will be Worimi Land.

Recognising Worimi people as the Traditional Owners, Custodians, and Keepers of ancient cultures, we pay our respects to their Elders – both past and present and upcoming.

While addressing critical issues like domestic violence and homelessness, it's crucial to acknowledge the resilience that our community has faced and the generational trauma and the impact of colonisation has on all First Nations communities today.

Emphasising the significance of self-determination, we are dedicated to listening to and learning from our community to collaboratively build a safer, more inclusive society for women and children seeking refuge from domestic violence and homelessness.

OUR STORY WHAT WE DO

Great Lakes Womens Shelter (GLWS) is located on the traditional land of the Worimi people in the Forster-Tuncurry (Great Lakes) region of NSW. Our shelter offers secure, supportive housing for women and children seeking refuge from domestic and family violence and homelessness.

We walk along side resident families to empower them to build dignity, self-esteem, practical life skills and the ability to move back into community safely.

Through advocacy and support, we aim to educate our community to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic and family abuse and other causes of homelessness.

We cohesively work with other local support services to reach the best outcomes for all our residents and community clients.

We aim to empower our clients with strength, dignity and courage.

With the specialised staff and the generous support of the wider community, we are now a sector leader for outcomes for women and children.

Crisis Accommodation: Capacity to provide supported crisis accommodation to upwards of 40 women and their accompanying children per year.

Providing Specialist (DFSV) Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Case Workers, Child Support Workers, and Outreach Support.

Community Engagement: Includes Volunteer Board, Volunteer Program, Donors, Service Clubs, Community Groups, Small and Large Business Partners, Schools, Real Estates and more.

Sector Engagement: Includes Women's Community Shelters (WCS), Community Housing Limited, Mission Australia Housing, Mid Coast DV Committee, DVNSW, Thread Together, Betty Basics, DV Collective, DV Safe Phones, District Homelessness meetings.



OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

2023-2026

QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

STRONG PEOPLE AND CULTURE



OUR VISION:

To eliminate domestic and family violence and homelessness in our community



OUR PURPOSE:

To support vulnerable women and children at risk of domestic and family violence and/or homelessness.

Our work is trauma-informed and culturally safe.
We achieve this through:

Increasing safety through shelter and support
Enabling independence and choice
Specialist advice and targeted advocacy
Community engagement and influence
Targeted prevention education

OUR VALUES:

Empowerment Confidentiality Compassion
Respect Integrity Teamwork
Collaboration Social Justice



MEET OUR BOARD

BERNADETTE FLANNERY

Chair/ President from 2024

Board Member since May 2023

Qualification: Bachelor of Science (Uni of Newcastle)

Graduate Diploma in Local, Family and Applied History (UNE)

Career: Managing Director Blue Mango Investments

Chair of Philanthropic Fund

Finance Administration Presence of IT

Multiple volunteer roles over a 30 year period including

- Campaign coordinator, archives officer, multiple school parent organisation roles, team manager, breastfeeding counsellor

Key Skills: Organisation and planning skills, business administration, leadership, property management expertise, empathy, willingness to listen and learn.



Bernadette believes that everyone deserves respect and compassion, embodying the idea that no one person is more valuable than another. Her passion for supporting women and children has led her to join the shelter board. Bernadette views her role with Great Lakes Womens Shelter as a unique opportunity to share her experience and knowledge and to learn from those around her.

CORINNE STEPHENSON

Board member since November 2022

Deputy Chair since 2023



Bringing over 12 years' experience working in not-for-profits in the Forster/Tuncurry region advocating for programs and services in our local community. In February 2023, Corinne took on extra duties as Executive Director - Strategy to support the governance of the Board and operational compliance of the shelter.

Corinne has completed her Bachelor of Sustainability (Social Resilience) and is passionate about using her skills and experience to work alongside our First Nations people to promote reconciliation.

JASON LUKJANENKO

Treasurer 2023

Board Member since November 2023

Qualification: Bachelor of Business (Accounting/Finance) University of Technology Sydney

Career: Financial Adviser and local business owner

Multiple volunteer roles over a 30 year period including – various animal welfare charities and rescues, social justice and activism causes

Key Skills: Financial background, problem solving, curiosity for knowledge, empathy and compassion.



An inspirational mum and acknowledgement of her dedication to raising myself and my brothers brought GLWS on to the radar for being able to give something back to the community.

Jason is driven by the ethos that everyone in society is equal regardless of circumstance, sometimes if we are in a position to lend a hand than we should.



MEET OUR BOARD

FELICITY CARTER

Minutes Secretary

Founding GLWS Board Member 2015

Resignation from GLWS Board July 2025

Qualification: BSc Ag Sydney University

Career: Managing Director and owner of a Human Resources/business consulting firm with clients in IT, banking, pharmaceuticals and insurance .

Clinical research consultant managing global clinical trials in the fields of cardiology and asthma employed by Astra Pharmaceuticals.

Key Skills: Strategic planning; business strategy; change management; sales and marketing

Current Affiliations: Board Member, Great Lakes Womens Shelter.

President, Forster Neighbourhood Centre.

Joint Co-ordinator of Better Learning, Better Communities Program.

Founding Member of Better Reading Better Communities Committee.

Co-ordinator of ASHOW (Coomba Park after school program).



Felicity believes that all children deserve equal opportunity in education, especially when learning to read.

She is particularly committed to helping improve Aboriginal education in Forster/Tuncurry.

ROBYN KIRK

Board Member since 2022

Career:

Retired NSW Office Manager- Placard (13 years)

Current Director Club Forster - (8 years) - Green's Director, Club Grants, House & Building & Future Development Committees (Club member 15 years)

Current Director Great Lakes Womens Shelter - (2 1/2 years)

Current NSW Real Estate Bowlers - Tournament Director - (14 years)

Current member Great Lakes Evening View Club - (13 years)

Current member Sporties Ladies Bowls Club - (14 years)



TORGE STRUWE

Board Member since 2024

Torge has been a trusted real estate professional in the Great Lakes region since 2019, drawing on his background in business, recruitment and sales to provide clients with expert guidance and genuine support.

Committed to community life, he volunteers with the Cape Hawke Surf Club and serves on the board of the Great Lakes Womens Shelter.

Outside of work Torge enjoys mountain biking, the beach, and time with his wife and three daughters.)



MICHELLE ROBINSON

Board Member since 2024

I am passionate about women's empowerment and community wellbeing. With a background in social services, I have spent over 7 years working in community outreach.

Throughout my career, I've focused on creating opportunities for women and families to build safer, more independent lives. I believe strongly in the power of collaboration and compassion to drive meaningful change.

Serving on the board allows me to contribute to an organisation whose mission—to provide safety, dignity, and hope to women in need—deeply aligns with my own values.



MEET OUR BOARD

ANNABELLE DANIEL

CEO Women's Community Shelters
Founding Board Member 2015



As CEO of Women's Community Shelters (WCS), Annabelle Daniel OAM has worked with local communities around NSW to establish and open ten shelters at Hornsby, Forster, Castle Hill, Penrith, South Penrith, Bayside, Parramatta, Revesby, Camden and Guildford. She has also been instrumental in the ongoing success of the very first shelter which opened in Manly in 2010. (Now known as Northern Beaches Women's Shelter.)

Annabelle has collaborated with a range of organisations, individuals and stakeholders, from the community and all levels of government to achieve change in the fields of domestic and family violence and homelessness for women and children. Annabelle is continuing to lead work into the establishment of further shelters, transitional homes and preventative programs to address these pressing social issues across New South Wales and beyond.

Annabelle's volunteer roles include Chairing Domestic Violence NSW (the peak body for domestic and family violence services in NSW) and acting as the Independent Member on the New South Wales Coercive Control Implementation and Evaluation Taskforce, along with Chairing the DFV Sector and Lived Expertise Reference Groups.

Annabelle has been a leader in women's homelessness and DFV for over 15 years – also working on the front line as a Shelter Manager and with the Federal Government as a Senior Departmental Leader within Services Australia, overseeing the Child Support Program, and as a Senior Investigator with the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

NEESHA ECKERSLEY

COO Women's Community Shelters
WCS Representative Board Member since 2023



Driven by social justice, equality and equity; I am proud to be working alongside the Board, staff, volunteers and community of Great Lakes Womens Shelter (GLWS) to be part of the solutions to end domestic and family violence across communities.

Women and children have the right to live free of violence, and GLWS offers that safe space to recover, heal and reset on a pathway free from violence.

JUDY WOOLSTENCROFT

GLWS Board Member since 2023

Judy worked at the Australian Bureau of Statistics until she retired early to become a fulltime carer for her partner who had early onset dementia and has now passed on.

She is passionate about local social justice issues and formed a social justice group where she met Board members of the Great lakes Womens Shelter and became interested in the issue of violence around women.

Judy joined the GLWS Board in November 2023 and is currently chair of the Board's Fundraising Committee

Previously Judy has been Chair of the National Advisory Dementia Australia Group and Chair of another not-for-profit organisation.





BUSINESS MANAGER

INSIGHTS

Carly Ravenscroft
GLWS employee since 2016
GLWS Manager since 2022

Career: Started my Community Services career path in 2010 at Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre, 6 years later my family and I made the move to the Mid Coast, and we fell in love with this amazing coastal community, almost 10 years on, and we wouldn't change a thing.

After a short stint at Mid Coast Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MCWDVCAS) I was also working as a Case Worker at GLWS, that was 2016 and I am grateful to use my passion, experience and commitment to keep as many women and children safe in our shelter and outreach programs.

Passion, Empathy and Support. 3 things that drive what I do every day.

We have been through some huge changes and diversity in the past few years, notably building and moving in to our purpose built 10 bedroom shelter "Marrungbaa Garuwaga", our good place by the sea.

We have grown from a small team supporting 5 families in crisis, across 2 rented premises, to supporting 10 families at a time in one facility.

At the end of their financial year, I handed over the reigns of the shelter to Liahna Paulson, our new Client Services Manager and I am stepping into the Business Manager role. Liahna brings many years of experience working with our community and people in need, and has been a case workers at the shelter for the past 3 years. It has been such a pleasure to support and empower Liahna to be the amazing leader she was born to be, and I can't wait to see where he takes the shelter over the coming years.

Our new shelter is phenomenal, and has all the mod cons and creature comforts you would want if you were in crisis. We have considered almost every possible scenario, and created a space for it.

The feedback from the women and children in shelter varies from "I never want to leave here" to "oh my gosh, I don't deserve to be here, it is so beautiful" "it's like a big hug when you walk in the door".

The children love the shelter, they have all the equipment and resources they could ever ask for, and they love to play together, and just be kids, with no fear of anyone.

I want to thank every woman, who has walked through our doors, or called us for help, for trusting us with your safety. It is an absolute privilege to witness a woman or family leave our shelter and move into a new home with a safety net of support built up around her. When a family leave the shelter they are armed with advice, information and most of all empowerment to live their lives, how they want to. We have had the joy of seeing babies born, taking first steps, or speaking their first words, watching the trust grow in little people, after sometimes years of experiencing abuse and adverse environments.

Our amazing caseworkers and team of angels make it all happen, walking alongside families to help them get to where they want or need to go, there is nothing that is too hard, or out of the question, our staff are resilient, hard working and most of all, passionate about seeing women and children thrive and grow.

Here is to the next chapter in the GLWS story.

Carly Ravenscroft
GLWS Business Manager





MEET OUR NEW CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER

Liahna Paulson
Employee since 2022
Client Services Manager July 2025

Hi, my name is Liahna Paulson, and I am a proud Worimi/Bundjalung woman. I was raised in the Forster area of New South Wales, and I'm a devoted mum to my son Keanu, as well as a foster mum to three beautiful children.

My career began in retail and hospitality, but my passion for helping others led me to pursue studies in community services starting with a Certificate I Statement of Attainment and progressing all the way to a Diploma of Community Services.

I've been working in the community sector since I was 18, beginning with an Aboriginal employment strategy that supported young people into meaningful work. I then joined Homebase Youth Services in an administrative role and remained there for nine years. During that time, I took on a variety of roles including youth work, playgroup coordination, drug and alcohol support, and event planning organising significant events such as NAIDOC celebrations.

My experience also includes working with Housing NSW, serving as a social worker, and supporting clients as a NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) officer.

For the past 3.5 years, I've been part of the Women's Shelter team, where I've worked across multiple roles such as intake officer, crisis outreach, and case management, after a brief stint as Team Leader, I now proudly serve as the Client Services Officer, continuing my commitment to supporting women and families in need.

Liahna Paulson





2024-2025 SOCIAL IMPACT



46 Women and 68 children supported in our crisis shelter



107 families received Outreach support



8 families resided in our Transitional units (up to 12 months)



6116 nights of crisis accommodation provided in Shelter



3115 nights of transitional accommodation provided



54% of our shelter clients identify as First Nation families



Safety Assessments showed 75% of our clients are at Serious risk of Domestic Homicide



7 weeks is the average stay for a family in our shelter.



NEW DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SAFETY PROGRAM

Last year, DCJ started the initiative to fund a new program for an Outreach Case Worker to support women and children who are experiencing domestic violence and/or at risk of homelessness. Therefore, I was lucky enough to get the job! :)

I started in October last year and have provided support for over 70 women. Sometimes the support is short, but sometimes my clients need more extensive support lasting 3-6 months. For the women I support, many express a feeling of safety when talking with. I aim to provide comfort so women know there is someone they can talk to safely and guide them to accessing the right services.

I provide outreach support in three regions at present, which means I go to three different locations and work from those spaces, so my clients can come and meet with me in person in a safe and confidential environment. It is all about safety planning in my work, so this is at the forefront of what I do with my clients... and for myself.

Safety planning has many different aspects, but some safety planning tools are-

- Packing a safe bag
- Emergency contact list
- Teaching children safe words to use
- Calling the police, what to expect and what to tell them
- Discussing exit points in the house
- Telling a safe person what is happening at home
- Letting Centrelink and the bank know
- Letting the school know that things are happening for this family

Some other things I do in this role are making referrals to services like housing services, or DV services- like Victims of Crime, Escaping Violence Program and Staying Home Leaving Violence.

Nicole - Baayali Case Worker



"Rise each other up"

FREE and CONFIDENTIAL
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
Support Service

baayali@glws.org.au
0473 186 076

Monday to Friday
Bulahdelah - Pacific Palms - Forster-
Nabiac- Gloucester



SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

The Social Media Analysis Report provides a brief overview of how many supporters are interacting with our Social Media Accounts



Facebook
Performance
Overview

5.9K

Content
interactions

9.3K

Facebook
Visits

53.3K

Facebook
Reach

2915

Followers

2345

Shares

1.4k

Link
Clicks



Instagram
Performance
Overview

69

Content
interactions

422

Instagram
visits

4.8K

Instagram
reach

727

Followers

2345

Share

Gender (as per Social Media account holders) of visitors

Social Media
Visitor
Demographics



93.3%



6.7%

Time visitors
spent viewing our
content



**16.4 hours of watched
content time**





TALINA'S FEEDBACK FOR OUR CASE WORK TEAM

"I AM A SURVIVOR!!!"

I have been able to stay open and honest with you all, you always remained non-judgemental towards me.'

Well, I have started a new journey now but I always believed that GLWS ladies would and have, bent over backwards in getting to the bottom of things for me.

I have always had faith. The violence, abuse, homelessness, I knew one day that someone like GLWS ladies, would help me grow.

I feel so passionately toward women who have endured what I have in my life.

I AM A SURVIVOR

but I couldn't have done it without all the professional, caring, compassionate, honest ladies and I want to say THANK YOU!!

I will always be grateful for the day after day of support you all gave me. You have helped me in a way that has changed my life.

All the magic work you have done for me, you are AMAZING, FABULOUS!

Talina xxx





OUR ONGOING IMPACT

\$3k

The daily operating costs to provide our Marrungbaa Garuwaga – safe place by the sea, for up to 10 families and to provide targeted outreach and child support services

769

January 2016 - July 2025

650 women and children have received safety and supported accommodation from GLWS

55k

The total number of nights since January 2016 that a woman or child has slept safely at Great Lakes Womens Shelter

40%

Referrals come from community members or self-referrals
This highlights our presence in community and the trust we have from our community to support our families in need.

75%

Over 75% of women and children supported in Marrungbaa Garuwaga transition from shelter into private rental accommodation



OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN

At GLWS, our primary focus is safety and empowerment of women to live a safe and independent life, free from violence.

Shelter residents have reported an increased feeling of independence and choice in the following areas after moving out of shelter:



Safety

Feels safe and feels that she has the ability to make safe choices for herself and her family

Accommodation

Feels that she has the tools to find and maintain safe and secure accommodation without service support

Legal issues

All legal issues are being handled and resident feels able to move through justice system without service support



Financial independence

Financial support has been accessed and debts are being managed and repaid. Financial stability is achievable without service support

Health and Wellbeing

Health and mental health concerns have been addressed and she knows how/when to get the support required



Support Networks

Support networks have been identified and established or reconnected with, safe people to seek support from

Empowerment and self esteem

Ultimately women feel empowered to be “her” again, independent and able to look after herself and her children without or with little support from others or services.





CHAIR REPORT

On behalf of the Great Lakes Womens Shelter Board, I am pleased to present our charity's annual report for the year ending 30 June 2025. This year has been one of growth, resilience and the continual support of our community for the women and children in crisis in our area.

Our volunteer board, staff and community volunteers work hard to support vulnerable women and children in our community. While we ultimately aim for the elimination of domestic and family violence, this year we have seen yet another increase on the demands for our services.

Key Achievements

- A stronger board – we have welcomed several new volunteer board members in the last year filling all vacant positions. Building on the legacy of founding board members Julie Brady, Felicity Carter and John English our board works hard to help keep our shelter doors open.
- Vesting of Land – Julie Brady's final task before resigning was to work with Mid Coast Council to follow through with their promise to vest the land our new shelter stands on to our organisation. This has provided a secure location for our services going forward.
- Volunteer Engagement – Our volunteer base continues to grow and we could not do the work we do without them. We have a multitude of volunteers who help in shelter, offer pro bono services, run Bunnings BBQs, hold raffles, coordinate fundraisers, pick up food donations and many other tasks. A special mention to John and Cheryl English who continue to work tirelessly for our organisation and to the Hallidays Helpers led by Russell Smith.
- Financial Support of Local Clubs – Club Forster continue to be our biggest financial lifeline. Tuncurry Beach Bowling Club have pledged financial support of \$100,000 over the next few years with their Annual Sports Luncheon. Through the Club Grants program, this year we received much needed support from Forster Bowling Club and Club Gloucester.

Financial Overview

Our new shelter has doubled our capacity but has also greatly increased our funding requirements. Despite minimal funding from government and a large fundraising target, we achieved our financial goals for the 2025 Financial Year.

We finished the financial year on budget and with a small surplus to carry us into the new financial year. A financial statement is included at the end of the Annual Report.

I would like to personally thank the board and staff of our shelter for working within our budget to help achieve our financial goals for the year.



Ongoing Challenges

This year, an increase in Domestic and Family Violence and a shortage of affordable housing have increased demand for our services. We continue to advocate for systemic change at local and state levels and are exploring new partnerships to expand our support offerings.

Our shelter faces the challenge of securing long-term funding. However, we are optimistic that with community backing and continued innovation, we can meet these needs and remain a lifeline for those who rely on our services.

Thank You

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our board, staff, volunteers, donors, and partners. Your dedication ensures our shelter remains a place of hope and healing. To the women and children we serve, your courage inspires us every day.

As Chair of the Board, I am proud of what we have achieved together.

We move into the year ahead with a strong board, passionate staff, willing volunteers, a caring community and the support of Women's Community Shelters. Together we work towards supporting vulnerable women and children.

Looking Ahead

In the next twelve months, our focus will be on expanding transitional housing, enhancing our advocacy work, and continuing to provide trauma-informed support to every person who walks through our doors. We invite all members of our community to join us in this vital mission.

Bernadette Flannery





DONATION IMPACT

Annual fundraising goal \$400k

Great Lakes Womens Shelter receives NSW Government funding to cover approximately 40% of our operations. We rely on the support of our community partners to cover the remaining 60% each year. All donations received are used to directly fund the delivery of safe and supported shelter accommodation and casework support for local women and children experiencing homelessness and/or domestic and family violence.

\$10k	Provides one woman and her children a bedroom, safety and support for 3 months
\$6k	Supports the cost per family / pa for a specialised and trauma-informed children's case worker to support their healing journey while staying in shelter
\$5k	Supports 1 day / per week /pa for specialised domestic and family violence outreach worker that supports women to escape from domestic and family violence without needing to enter crisis accommodation
\$3k	Supports a family in need with food, transport, access to counsellors, workplace training and housing support services for 3 months
\$1k	Provides immediate crisis assistance to a woman and her children in their first 24 hours of escaping domestic and family violence to set up their safety plan
\$300	Supports the cost to create a safe home with essential household items such as toiletries, healthy food, warm blankets and access to internet for up to 10 families and their children each day
\$100	Supports the cost of 'children's welcome packs' including a warm toy, snuggly blanket and comfy pyjamas to give comfort for a child in trauma
\$50	Supports the cost of ensuring each child staying in shelter has necessary stationary and a packed lunch to attend their school day



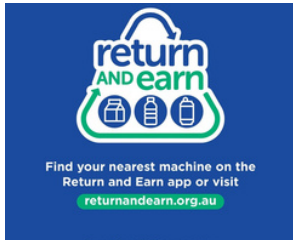
These initiatives—led by dedicated individuals and groups—form the backbone of our financial support and enable us to deliver critical shelter services to women and children in need.

A special thank you goes to all GLWS Volunteers and to the inspiring Happy Hallidays crew—our champion fundraisers—who consistently go above and beyond to raise awareness and funds. Your love, hard work, and unwavering support are felt in every corner of our organisation.

[illegible]



FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS



ONE MILLION CANS AND BOTTLES

Great Lakes Womens Shelter has realised a long-term goal to collect one million cans and bottles. This mammoth achievement has resulted in a \$100,000 windfall for the day-to-day operation of the shelter, which provides short-term emergency accommodation and case support for women and their children experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

BUNNINGS BBQs have been supporting GLWS one melt-in-your-mouth sausage at a time

Over 24-25 our hard working volunteers have raised \$5000 by giving up their days to make a difference to the families who need support in our community.

Special Thanks to Marian Smith, Norm Smith, Rachel Dodd, Wendy Fahey and Peter and Glenys Bickerstaff for organising all the volunteers for each and every BBQ.



LONG TABLE CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

Thank you so much to Beach Brew and all your helpers for holding a truly magical Christmas Day lunch, and supporting our shelter at the same time.

Over \$1500 was raised for our shelter as well as for men's mental health support. Way to go, community!!!

Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazely AC KC

In August 2024, we were honoured with a visit from her Excellency Hon. Margaret Beazely AC KC and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson along with Jack and the team.

We were absolutely delighted to have the chance to show off our beautiful shelter and share some beautiful moments with the shelter residents.

The children were able to chat with Her Excellency and each received a special government coin from her.

What an amazing, once in a lifetime moment





FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS



Sisters on Steel SMC Hunter Region Chapter proudly organised with the much appreciated help from the manager Carly Ravenscroft from our Great Lakes Women's Shelter a Black Tie Bikers Ball .

This event was to raise much needed funds for the women and children of our local facility who have been affected by domestic violence in their lives. Every week and we are hearing of more homicides and domestic fuelled violence in all states of our country , which is just heart breaking as it's the innocent ones and their families who suffer.

A little bit about our club, we are an all-women social motorcycle club who are all year round raising awareness and much needed funds for women and children of domestic violence.

This is our mission statement.



The Ball was a fantastic night everyone who participated contributed to raising money for the GLWS. Everyone put their best frocks on and best suits , enjoyed a delicious meal at Club Forster. Throughout the night there were speeches , raffles, and some auctions. It was a real pleasure also to have Annabelle Daniel, CEO of Women's Community Shelters send a video on our special night thanking and recognising Sisters on Steel SMC and congratulating our Great Lakes Womens Shelter and Community. We would like to acknowledge Sallianne McClelland for the wonderful job she did as our MC for the night



Sisters on Steel SMC Hunter Region Chapter
Helen Dare (H), Janette Robbins (Jewelz), Debbie Pollard (Boo),
Gina Ferguson (Camel Lady), Amanda Payne (Dash)





FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

Sporting events played a pivotal role in our fundraising efforts throughout the 2024–25 financial year, energizing our community and amplifying our mission.

We kicked off the year with the inspiring Coast to Coast Adventure Campaign, led by our Vice Chair and Executive Director of Strategy, Corinne Stephenson, and her partner. Their year-long training journey culminated in the grueling Kathmandu Coast to Coast race—a 240 km multisport challenge across New Zealand, involving paddling, cycling, and running from one coast to the other. Their determination and grit captivated us all.

To support their journey and raise awareness, we hosted a series of engaging events:

- 240 km in 16 Days Challenge, aligning with the 16 Days of Activism campaign
- Coast to Coast Launch Event, featuring legendary guest speakers:
 - The Honourable Pat Farmer AM
 - Bonnie Hancock, record-breaking ocean paddler
 - A special video message from Hamish Blake, sharing personal insights from his own Coast to Coast experience

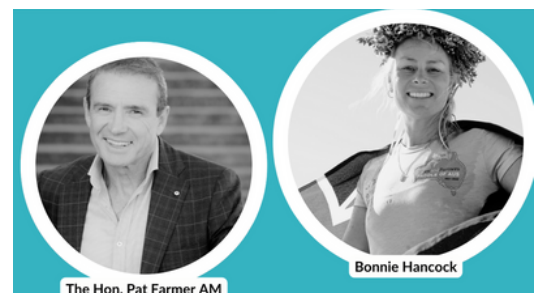
These events not only celebrated athleticism and resilience but also rallied support for our cause.

We followed up with our inaugural Charity Golf Day at Cromer Golf Club, generously supported by Macquarie Bank and our incredible fundraising champions. The event welcomed amateurs, enthusiasts, and professionals alike, with exciting auction prizes and a vibrant atmosphere that made for a memorable day.

Another standout supporter this year was the Tuncurry Beach Bowling Club (TBBC), who made an extraordinary commitment to GLWS by pledging \$100,000 over the next four years. This generous contribution will directly support our Shelter in delivering vital programs to women and children experiencing domestic abuse and homelessness.

Each year, TBBC hosts a spectacular Sports Luncheon, featuring iconic sporting legends, raffles, and auctions. With hundreds of attendees and growing momentum, these events consistently raise upwards of \$25,000, making a significant impact in our fundraising landscape.

Together, these sporting initiatives brought our community closer, raised vital funds, and showcased the power of movement and momentum in driving change.





It was a morning of heartfelt stories, tears, laughter and everything in between. Celebrating all things women!!!

Have a read through these strong, empowering women's stories





Julie Brady O.A.M

THEN

I was born in 1949 and raised, the third of four siblings, near Randwick racecourse in a loving, upwardly mobile, stable Catholic family with strong values and connection to our community.

I left school in 1967 with a very clear idea of what I did NOT want to do: teaching, or nursing, or working in an office. That pretty much wiped out most options!

After some false starts I “enlisted” in the Department of Employment, Education and Training and seventeen years later emerged with an MBA and great senior executive level experience.

Executive roles in the private sector filled in the next twenty years until ...

NOW

... 2004, when I moved with my partner to a small farm at Coomba Park, on the shores of the beautiful Wallis Lake, and discovered the Great Lakes community. Since then I have volunteered my socks off in many organisations, particularly, Forster Neighbourhood Centre (2009 to present) and Great Lakes Womens Shelter (2015 to September 2024)

I sometimes say that all that past experience and skills was boot camp training for my volunteer life.

It is deeply satisfying to be connected: to contribute to the well-being of the community while meeting some really fine people along the way!



Aunty Janice Paulson

My mother was a proud Worimi women. My father was a proud Bungulung man. Both my parents were diligent workers. I was raised in Worimi Country in Forster on the old Tobwabba Reserve. Life was simple.

Sometimes everyday chores could be hard work, for example; walking 150 meters to the “well” in the middle of the flat at the reserve with a bucket in each hand.

My sister –Pam and I might have been eight and ten years old.

We had to fill two big round galvanized tubs, one for rising clothes and one for bluing clothes to make it whiter.

We also had fun, bush walks, just roaming around getting yams, picking mushrooms, blackberries and Christmas Bells. We also played games in the big fig tree, all the kids did.

I left school in Year 10 and worked locally until I went to Sydney, married, divorced and raised a family. In 1983 I completed a Nursing Aid Course. Attended Macquarie University in 1986-1989 for a Diploma in Aboriginal Health and Community Development.

From 1987 - 2012 I worked as a DV Support Worker in Taree refuges and in 2010 and 2011 at Taree Police Station as a Womens DV Court Support worker.

For the last decade I have used my skills, caring and sharing and working for the well-being of my family and my community. This is what drives me.



Aunty Lynette Davis

I am a proud Gumbaynggirr Worimi woman, reared up on the old Tobwabba Aboriginal Reserve in houses built by our fathers and grandfathers that were later bulldozed against our wishes.

Our mother and father all had jobs and we kids all had chores.

When I was 12 my dad passed away after an accident on his job on the railway.

We were never compensated for that.

The best part of my childhood was walking through the bush and picking wild flowers and selling Christmas Bells. We fished in little rowing boats lent to us in exchange for mullet, bream or whatever we caught.

We were taught to look at the night sky, to learn the constellations, the milky way and what the moon was saying to us.

We were taught that the bush and country speak to us and we must listen.

I married and moved to Taree in 1983, and later I moved back to Forster.

I am most proud of my family, including 24 great grandchildren.

My great passion in life is my Community and my Aboriginal Culture and I feel them deeply. I live for my family and my community and have been fighting all my life for them.

We were taken off our land, not allowed to speak our language, or to keep the stories alive that our people had spoken forever.

My community needs to be proud of who they are and where they came from.



Tanya Thompson

I'm Tanya Thompson, the State Member for Myall Lakes.

Born in Tenterfield, I grew up in Port Macquarie after my family moved for a coastal lifestyle. I'm the middle child between an older sister and a younger brother, raised by a nurse and a bricklayer.

I started working at 13 in a fish and chip shop and have been working ever since - in hospitality, real estate, retail, and as a legal secretary.

Forster has been my home for nearly 28 years. It's where I built my career, raised my daughters, and became part of a community I love. It's also where I met my husband, Ben, and together, we share five daughters and Arlo the Labrador.

I was privileged to work alongside the late Stephen Bromhead, the former Member for Myall Lakes, who encouraged me to step forward and continue his legacy. In 2023, I became the first woman to represent Myall Lakes in the NSW Parliament.

What I'm most proud of:

My two beautiful daughters, Bianca and Lucy. They're all grown up now, but you never stop being a Mum.

What drives me:

I'm passionate about healthcare, mental health support, and creating opportunities for women - because when we lift each other up, we all rise.



Julie Dowse

From a young age, I felt a calling to work with vulnerable children. This led me to begin fostering at 23, then moving into a professional career in child welfare with the Australian Red Cross and the NSW State Government Early Intervention Program.

A pivotal experience I had in Thailand, witnessing the devastating impact of sex trafficking, ignited a fire within me and I knew I had to do something. I returned to Sydney and completed a Master of Child Protection Investigation and spent many long hours learning about the issue of trafficking.

In 2010, I moved with my husband to Cambodia to begin working in anti-trafficking. The realities we encountered were harrowing. It was during this time that I realised I would not be able to walk away from all that we had witnessed.

In 2012, we founded our International Non Profit - AusCam Freedom Project. For 13 years, we have worked to empower and support thousands of girls impacted by trafficking and exploitation. Their strength and resilience inspire me daily. While I am proud of our achievements, my greatest pride comes from knowing that we chose not to turn away but to stand with them and fight for their freedom.



Nadra

YOLO...

Everything burnt into ashes...

Tears in my eyes, mourn on my lashes...

It's been more than a decade when I randomly penned down these lines while once sitting in a classroom but I never knew that I was enclosing the pain and sufferings of my life into those words which I would have to face and bear after years. Looking at the series of tragedies of my life including abusive marriage and subsequently losing my parents, these pains were enough to shatter one's soul and so was mine but the only thing which sparked the spirit within myself was the temporary nature of this world. The term "Life" encloses some deep secrets of evolution which one has to go through either emotional, psychological or physical and they are always a blend of sorrows and happiness. Nature never shows up in one color and that is why we see colors in this world. One should always believe in painting the picture of his/her life with faith and purity but at the same time, we should also have a firm belief in what we call "DESTINY" which chases to take us to a point where light enters us. The beautiful thought of meeting your loved ones one day makes you live each day of your life as "You Only Live Once"...

Prayers and Peace,
Nadra



Vanda Gooley

I am a 67-year-old wife to Wayne and mother to my beautiful children Grace and Harry and my adorable moodle, Lily. I am originally from England but fell in love with Australia and Wayne 39 years ago whilst backpacking. I have lived in beautiful Forster ever since. I retired from teaching, which I loved, six years ago due to a very devastating diagnosis of a bone marrow disorder and consequently ill health.

Prior to this, I participated in multiple athletic challenges including many triathlons and Half Ironmans.

Fitness and competing was always a priority.

Whilst recuperating I discovered a new way of living and new activities. I wrote a children's book, 'The Awakening' which I'm proud to say, was published. I also started writing articles for the local newspaper, 'The Forster Fortnightly.' My articles are called 'Local Identity' and 'Connections.'

Through interviewing various identities, I have been fortunate to have met some incredibly inspiring people. I also rediscovered the joy of painting. I continue to love exercise but more moderate.

I go to the gym daily, practise yoga and love riding my bike.
Most of all, I love catching up with my beautiful friends – my earth angels and spending time with my family.



Eileen Marks

In between jobs, I attended Tuncurry Tafe, Campus, did Business Admin Certificate III for my studies /efforts received a distinction.

With the encouragement of my teachers to carry on, I decided to study Information Technology both Certificate 11 & 111, which was a very intense, and took a full year!

As part of the FNC team, my role is in administration for clients who need help with their electricity bills (EAPA) and Telstra vouchers, also Work and Development Orders (WDOs)
Keeping data records of our client for Emergency Relief, EAPA, Telstra and WDOs

I was also part of the 'Be Connected' team training clients to with their tablet and mobile phones, which was very interesting and enjoyable.



Deb Nicholas

I am Deb Nicholas. I moved from the Southern Highlands to the Great Lakes in 1995 with my husband and three young sons.

I started working in the community, firstly with war veterans and then with community nursing and palliative care.

In 2001 I was fortunate to have the opportunity to establish a maternity support program for Aboriginal mothers and babies at the Biripi Aboriginal Medical Service. This involved working alongside an Aboriginal health worker and in partnership and collaboration with both the women and the local Aboriginal medical services. The aim was to improve the overall health of mothers going into pregnancy, during pregnancy and improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal babies. Essential to achieving these goals was to build trust within the Aboriginal community including the hospital. To many Aboriginal women hospitals and ultrasound clinics are a source of confusion, embarrassment and judgement. The vital role of the Aboriginal health workers in ameliorating this cannot be underestimated!

While I was mentored into cultural aspects of the community, I was able to mentor the health worker who went on to complete her midwifery degree in Sydney ANU, a great outcome for both her and the community.

During my 21 years working as a Community Midwife and Early Childhood Nurse we: provided comprehensive antenatal care and education and postnatal support in the home. We improved immunisation rates, eclipsing non-Aboriginal rates, introduced specialist obstetric and paediatric clinics within the AMS and facilitated a yearly baby show, celebrating and welcoming new babies in the community.

I was awarded the 2004 NSW Midwife of the Year.



Donna Rankin

Through losing her daughter Shannon, Donna has been taken on a journey to embrace other peoples' suffering to be able to make a difference in the world.

I am Donna Rankin, the founder of Heart to Heart Australia. I was born and bred in our beautiful town of Forster. Attending School in the Great Lakes and Manning region, I had an idyllic life. Creating Art and helping people was always my passion.

I left Forster at age 18 for Newcastle. It was The New York Tavern where a handsome local gave me a wink across the bar. His name was David and the rest is history. We married in 1986 and returned to Forster in our late twenties to start our family.

We had three beautiful children, Holly, Shannon and Reuben. In 2006 our world was shattered when we lost our beautiful Daughter Shannon, aged 11, in an accident involving a faulty spa. The day we lost Shannon was the day we turned our backs on our real estate careers, sold our business and retreated. I spent the first year in bed crying.....I could not face the world.

Art was my savior. I spent hours painting, pouring my heart onto the canvas. My friend Kylie who at the time was a local Social Worker recognized how art was a conduit to repairing my soul. In 2008, together we created Heart to Heart, a School based art program that helps young people challenged by life.

Heart to Heart is an eight-week program that is facilitated in Primary Schools and High schools for "at risk" youth. It combines painting and conversation to help kids learn mindfulness and other techniques to support mental health and resilience.

We now train Artists, Teachers and Facilitators across NSW to run the Heart-to-Heart program in their Schools. The Heart-to-Heart program runs in almost every School in the Great Lakes region, the Upper Hunter and the Northern Rivers region.

Losing my beloved Shannon broke my heart into a million pieces.....with every Heart-to-Heart program my heart grows a little stronger.



Jacqui Jennings

Jacqui Jennings came to live in Forster with her husband Derek 50 years ago. A neighbour in Normanhurst told them about Forster so they decided to have a holiday here. At their first visit, they purchased a block of land, and although they didn't ever build on it, after several holidays here, they purchased a home in Becker Road, overlooking the sea. They loved the sea, the beaches and then, the quietness of the town.

Jacqui has recently celebrated her 100th birthday, so she is proud of the fact that she is still alive today. She is extremely proud of her family and that they have always remained a close-knit family. She has three children, although she lost her eldest son last year, 8 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. From 16, until she married at 26, life was extremely difficult, as she was completely alone, with no family at all – no grandparents, no aunts or uncles, no cousins – no family at all. She was working as a nanny during those years.

Jacqui has a strong Christian faith, which has grown stronger in her later years. She has travelled extensively, and loves playing Bridge, and enjoys indoor bowls, card games and keeping her body healthy. Last year she received a trophy from her exercise class which reads "Amazing Ninja Nannies Student" – being the oldest participant.



Maureen DeLuca

My Journey to Forster/Tuncurry and Beyond

After travelling around Australia for two years, I decided to settle in the picturesque towns of Forster/Tuncurry. To meet people and make friends, I enrolled in TAFE at Tuncurry. It was a great experience, and yes, I did make a lot of friends there.

I secured a position as an SLSO teacher at Tuncurry Primary School, assisting in the classrooms. I loved my work there, but life had other plans for me.

Quite often, I would visit Barry at his shop, Thoughtful Things Gift Shop. One day, Barry mentioned that he was planning to sell the shop. He offered me and my friend Vanessa the opportunity to buy it. After a year, Vanessa decided to sell me her share, and I served the community for seven wonderful years.

During this time, I attended my first Sound Bath session. As soon as it started, I had a deep knowing that this was my true purpose in life. Now, it has become my reality, my passion, and my calling.



Jo Bates

Jo Bates: Empowering Women in Trades

Jo Bates is the founder of Tradie Leader Lady, a vibrant design, project management, and social enterprise company breaking stereotypes and creating opportunities for women in trades.

Originally an IT Project Manager, Jo transitioned from the corporate world to construction after discovering her passion for renovations while upgrading her investment properties. Her experience as a Facility Manager on the Sydney Metro project further inspired her to pursue formal construction training through the Institute of Applied Technology.

Based in Forster-Tuncurry, Jo champions gender equity in the trades industry. Her business manages projects, completes home improvements, and mentors young women and men, encouraging them to explore fulfilling careers in construction. In alignment with her mission, Jo sponsored eight regional students to attend the Luminosity Youth Summit at Port Macquarie, an event designed to spark ambitious ideas for success.

Recently, Jo placed a young man into a carpentry apprenticeship with a Pacific Palms builder and hired a female painter and color consultant to transform a coastal cottage. Through her work, Jo demonstrates the power of collaboration between men and women, emphasizing that trades are a space for everyone.



Debbie Scarfe

In 2002 the Manning Valley became home. I have to say it was the climate, the river, the ocean and mountains that seemed to call me to live in the Manning Valley and I also really wanted a Steiner education for our children.

Once settled here my passion as a dance therapist for developmental movement and creative expression lead me to running groups through Taree Community College and for preschools such as Girrawong and Manning Gardens.

During this time, I was also honoured to facilitate some creative movement sessions at 2 of the Saltwater Women's reconciliation camps.

My focus shifted as I was encouraged to go back into my Occupational Therapy work with kids due to the high need in the community and I have worked at Community Health and in private practise here for over 18 years now.

Bringing joy and ease into people's lives has felt like a purpose flowing throughout my life and I am always inspired by the amazing people around me especially the mum's that carry so much.

I also like the feeling of belonging by being part of my local community garden, volunteering at the MEC and actively 'trying' to save our koala's homes.

As the phases of life flow and living in such a beautiful area, I'm being drawn even more to incorporate my passions for nature, movement, creativity and connection into my day, my work and my community.



Penny Pridue

My name is Penny Pridue (nee Fing). I was born in Mungindi, a small town on the border of Queensland and New South Wales, with a population of just 611 people.

I have three siblings, two sons, Jacob and Kai, and three beautiful grandkids, who are the light of my life.

I came to Newcastle when I was twelve and when I got to Year nine, I worked Saturdays and Thursday nights in a hairdressing salon. I began a hairdressing apprenticeship at twenty-one and eventually opened my own salon and for six years I loved it. I also did mobile hairdressing and house cleaning.

I have had nineteen years' experience in aged care as a hairdresser. They have been great rewarding years and I made many beautiful friends.

I moved to Forster in 2015 and I am now a volunteer hairdresser each Monday with 'Church of Christ.' It is very rewarding and I thoroughly enjoy meeting people in our community.



Jessica Gray

I've always believed that life is about solving problems and creating solutions that lead to something better. Whether it's in business, the community, or everyday life, I thrive on finding ways to make things work that create a positive impact.

As the owner of Smart Coast Conveyancing and President of the Forster Tuncurry Business Chamber, time is my most precious resource. I run multiple companies, lead community initiatives, and sit on numerous committees all while trying to parent teenage boys and looking after my own mental and physical health.

I don't do any of these things for the sake of being busy. I believe in doing what aligns with my core values. If it doesn't make me happy, why do it? When you build your life around your passions, you create a life you can't wait to wake up for in the morning.

That's what drives me every day.

I'm passionate about breaking down barriers and proving that success isn't about where you start but about how determined you are to keep going. I love collaborating with like-minded people who want to make a difference, and I truly believe that when we support each other, we all rise through inspiration.

International Women's Day is a perfect reminder of how far we've come and how much further we can go. Let's keep pushing boundaries, solving problems, and creating a future where more women feel empowered to lead, innovate, and thrive.

That is the definition of fabulous!



FINANCIAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Great Lakes Womens Shelter Incorporated
For the year ended 30 June 2025

	2025
Cash	
Cash received	1,028,322.38
Cash spent	967,860.63
Cash surplus (deficit)	60,461.75
Closing bank balance	415,597.73
Profitability	
Income	1,130,575.52
Direct costs	-
Gross profit (loss)	1,130,575.52
Other income	-
Expenses	960,993.27
Profit (loss)	169,582.25
Balance Sheet	
Debtors	3,945.27
Creditors	-
Net assets	3,184,517.90
Sales	
Number of invoices issued	9.00
Average value of invoices	2,391.14
Performance	
Gross profit margin (%)	100.00
Net profit margin (%)	15.00
Return on investment (p.a.) (%)	5.33
Position	
Average debtor days	1.27
Average creditor days	-
Short term cash forecast	3,945.27
Current assets to liabilities	(4.78)
Term assets to liabilities	52.78

For further information and complete Financial Audit see GLWS profile on ACNC website:
Search ABN: 18949934199 or
<https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/2458a069-3aaf-e811-a963-000d3ad24077/profile>



Marrungbuu (Thank You)



GREAT LAKES
Womens
Shelter



Please get in touch.

Phone 02- 6555 9835

Website www.glws.org.au

Email admin@glws.org.au

ABN 18949934199

Charitable Fundraising Number 24523

Great Lakes Women's Shelter Inc. is a registered charity and has been granted Deductible Gift Recipient status by the Australian Tax Office



GREAT LAKES WomensShelter

P.O Box 4587, Forster NSW 2428 02)6555 9835
ABN: 18949934199 CFN:24523

