



*Artist: Karen Patten
2024*



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Proudly funded by the Department of Communities and Justice, Department of Social Services, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Indigenous Advancement Strategy and Hunter New England Primary Care.



**Communities
& Justice**



**Australian Government
Department of Social Services**

**PRIMARY
HEALTH
NETWORK**



Brotherhood of St Lawrence
Working for an Australia free of poverty



**Premier
& Cabinet**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Us	3
Governance	4
Our Values	5
How Much Did We Do	6
How Well Did We Do It	7
Our Impact	8
Advocacy and Policy Development	9
Partnerships	10
Visiting Services	11
Service Staff	12
Team Highlights	13
Community Reviews	14



ABOUT US

Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services is an incorporated not for profit organisation providing community services in the Port Stephens LGA. We offer support and information services that include Child, Youth & Family Counselling and Casework, Homelessness Services, limited Transitional Accommodation, Neighbourhood Centre Drop In, Parent's & Carer's Groups, Children's and Young People's Groups, Domestic Violence Support including Safe Houses, Aboriginal Culture Groups, Playtime Groups, Outreach Programs, Financial Assistance, Financial Counsellor, Home to School Mentoring, Youth Centre and more.

Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services is an amalgamation of Port Stephens Family Support Service and the Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood Centre; both centres delivering service to the Port Stephens Community for over 35 years. Proudly funded by the Department of Communities and Justice, Department of Social Services, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Indigenous Advancement Strategy and Hunter New England Primary Care.

PSFaNS is a strong advocate for social wellbeing in our local community and has formed close partnerships with various government and non/government agencies with similar objectives. These partnerships give opportunity to enhance outcomes and social conditions in the community particularly in respect of vulnerable groups and individuals.

Building caring, healthy and inclusive communities across the Port Stephens Region



BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

It's been another year where we have seen overwhelming demand for service that we do not have the resources (funding/staff) to meet. Responding as best we can, within this context, to the humanitarian crisis of homelessness has stretched us to the limit.

Domestic and Family Violence continues to be a large part of our work and lack of adequate systemic support adds to the complexity and the injustice of what children continue to have to live with.

Our staff remain as committed as ever to this community and we are so grateful for how they show up every day to do this work.

And importantly, every day we meet with amazing Port Stephens community members who support our work by volunteering, by donating food and funds, by supporting other community members to access our programs, and by participating in our programs themselves.

Thank you for your support,
Tim Mizzi

OUR COMMITTMENT TO COMMUNITIES

Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services commitment is to know, understand and leverage off the strengths of the existing communities to eliminate social and economic disadvantage across the Port Stephens region. We will continue to work with the many communities across our region (Aboriginal, Women's, Families, Youth, Education, Business, Government etc) to ensure all people can live lives which are satisfying, meaningful and connected with their communities.

Chairperson

Tim Mizzi

Vice Chairperson

Giacomo Arnott

Secretary

Helen Smyth

Treasurer

Chris Baguley

Members

Bronwyn Leary

Nicki Saroca

Our Vision

A just community that includes and acts

Our Purpose

Working with and for the communities of Port Stephens to eliminate social disadvantage

OUR VALUES *We believe in:*



Community

We acknowledge that the Port Stephens area is made up of many communities. We believe that building communities in ways that acknowledge and respect differences is the key to building healthy and inclusive lifestyles. Creating opportunities to link up communities to address social and economic disadvantage is our focus.



Creativity

We encourage and value creativity. We are open to learning and like to encourage all of us to think out of the box. We are always aware of available resources and look to sharing what we have with others. We value new ideas and would like others to expand on ours.



Courage

We take risks. We believe all good things that we have come to value in our communities have been born out of courage and follow through. We won't ridicule ideas and like to encourage everyone to give it a go. Redressing social and economic disadvantage needs us all to be courageous.



Respect

For us, this means being honest. Empathic. Allowing time to listen and speaking and acting positively. We aim to “practice what we preach” and always follow through on what we have committed to. We support communities to accept each other's differences and work together at points of shared needs.



A look back...

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

- 4 x Tuning in to Kids Programs;
- 3 x Tuning in to Teens Programs;
- 6 x Women Speak Programs;
- 1 x Rent It to Keep It Programs;
- 26 x Work & Development Orders with \$11,586.64 in credits applied;
- 6 x Playtime groups weekly;
- 4 x after school groups;
- 2 x Weekly Art Therapy groups (young people and adults);
- Youth drop in once a week;
- Youth LGBTQIA drop in once a fortnight;
- Youth school holiday day camps;
- 4 x Aboriginal traineeships in Community Services
- Weekly food provisions through Oz Harvest and Second Bite;
- 19 full time staff & 16 part time staff (3-4 days per week);
- 8 x social work student placements;
- \$165,600 of Emergency Relief vouchers;
- \$26,200 for Energy account payment assistance scheme vouchers (with more available as needed);
- \$3,428 of Hunter Water PAS Vouchers;
- \$4,250 of assistance for PSC council rates;
- 916 Oz Harvest hampers were given out;
- 400 Grocery hampers given out;
- 28 x visiting services regularly used our rooms for training, access visits, meeting clients with a total of 247 x individual uses of our rooms;
- Child & Family Support - 772 children and families including 149 intensive support;
- Child & family support (Tilligerry) - 138 children and families;
- Youth & Family Support - 475 young people and families including 125 intensive support;
- 408 engagements via our Tilligerry Family Network site which included groups, counselling / mentoring and food assistance;
- 756 people accessed our Homelessness service (this included 257 children under 17 years old) and an additional 393 people given information and/or referrals;
- **1455** people accessed ERF (some more than once)
- **3883** people accessed our Neighbourhood Centre (some more than once);
- **51** children and their families accessed HIPPY each week;
- **805** clients accessing Staying Home Leaving Violence Program;
- **43** x Wesnet Telstra Pre-Paid phones given out to families escaping DV;
- **\$1000** Wesnet Uber Credit for women and children escaping Domestic and Family Violence;
- **20** x free 12 month Optus SIM cards given out to clients experiencing DV and homelessness;
- **32** free car seats given out to parents/carers;
- Free PBS Medication Program from homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless;
- **2** x Safe Houses for Families escaping DV;
- Partnership with Hunter Water enabling us to negotiate reductions in rates for homeowners/mortgagees;
- Partnership Friends with Dignity who furnish/stock homes for women leaving DV, school bags with school items, Christmas presents;
- Partnership with Headspace for outreach at the Neighbourhood Centre;
- Partnership with Lifeline for counselling services;
- Partnership with Centrelink Community Outreach for payment support;
- Partnership with St Johns Anglican Church for weekly food hampers;
- Partnership with Raymond Terrace Rotary for food help and household donations;
- Partnership with Hunter Womens Centre for counselling services;
- Partnership with Hunter Valley Project for financial counselling;
- Auspiced and chaired Port Stephens DV Committee;
- Hosted Hunter Region DV Committee and Port Stephen's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Contemporary Challenges Forum;
- Manage 4 Facebook and 3 Instagram pages to engage with community;
- Partnership with Health for onsite Pediatrician;
- Partnership with ALS for onsite legal support;
- Partnership with Northcott for onsite Early Childhood NDIS
- Successful bid for Port Stephens Refuge (coming late 2025).



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

PSFaNS is an evidence informed service. We deliver evidence based practice. In 2023-2024 staff were trained in Coercive Control, Trauma informed Practice, Child Protection, Child Development, Infection Control, Safety Planning, Suicide and Self Harm Prevention, Media Training and more.

Staff participated in individual and group supervision and case reviews in keeping with our commitment to reflecting on and developing practice.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID WE MAKE?

A snapshot of our evaluations

- **92%** of parents/caregivers reported that since attending Playtime they have learnt of a service, resource or activity in the community for children and families
- **93%** of families reported that they learnt new things about positive parenting in our parenting programs
- **85%** of families improved in parent/caregiver warmth and empathy towards their child/ren
- **90%** children at school entry age had participated in formal early childhood education at least two sessions a week for at least a year prior school
- **82%** of young people said their most important goal was achieved in counselling/ casework
- **95%** referring services reported that PSFaNS is responsive to community needs
- **95%** referring services found the staff at PSFaNS to be helpful, friendly and knowledgeable
- **97%** of Staying Home Leaving Violence clients said because of the service I feel safer
- **100%** of Staying Home Leaving Violence clients said because of the service I feel my children are safer
- At the start of Women Speak, **91%** of participants blamed themselves in various degrees for the abuse that happened to them. By completion of the program, this number reduced to **18%**.
- **100%** of Women Speak participants said they now knew the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship on completion of the program.

95%

of referring services reported that PSFaNS is responsive to community needs

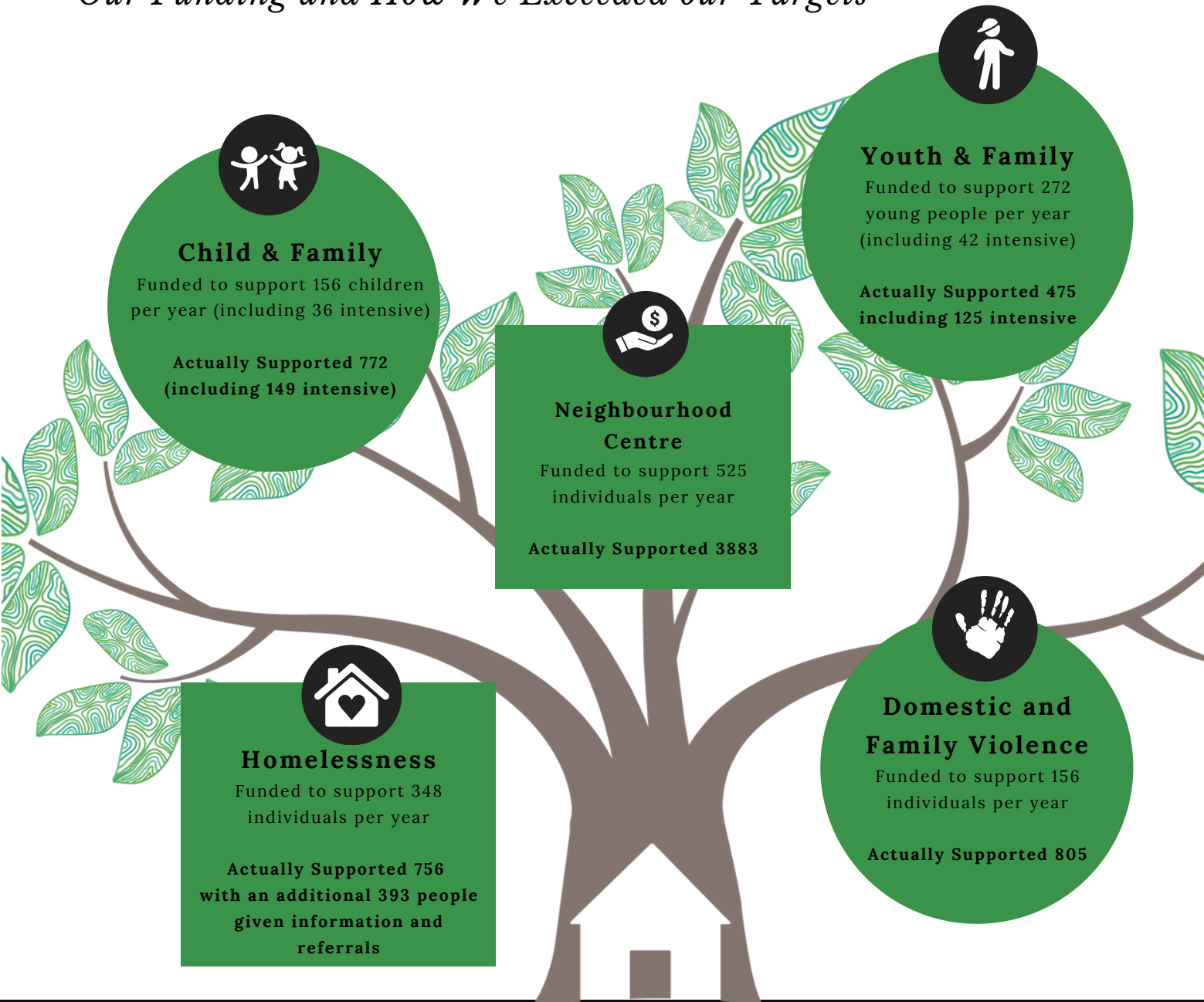


100%

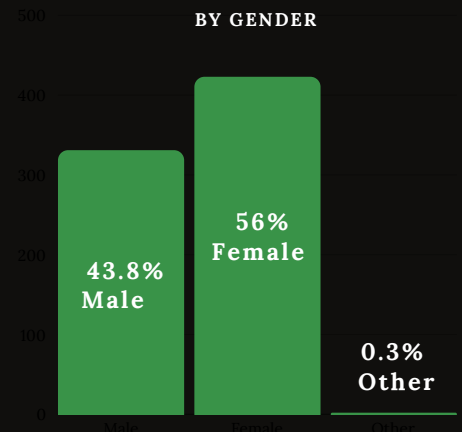
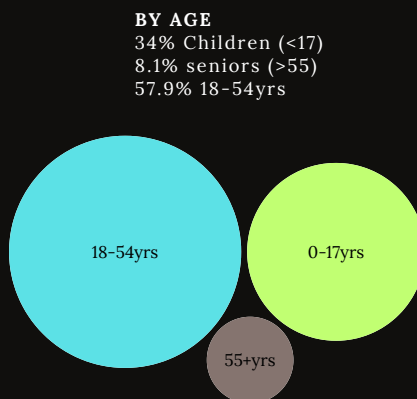
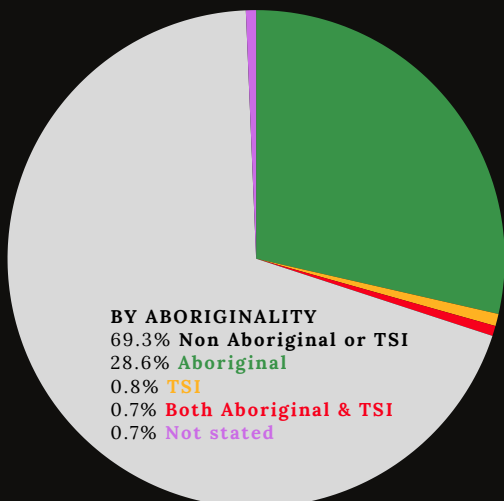
of Staying Home Leaving Violence clients said because of the service I feel my children are safer

OUR IMPACT

Our Funding and How We Exceeded our Targets



Breakdown of our 756 clients accessing homelessness services:

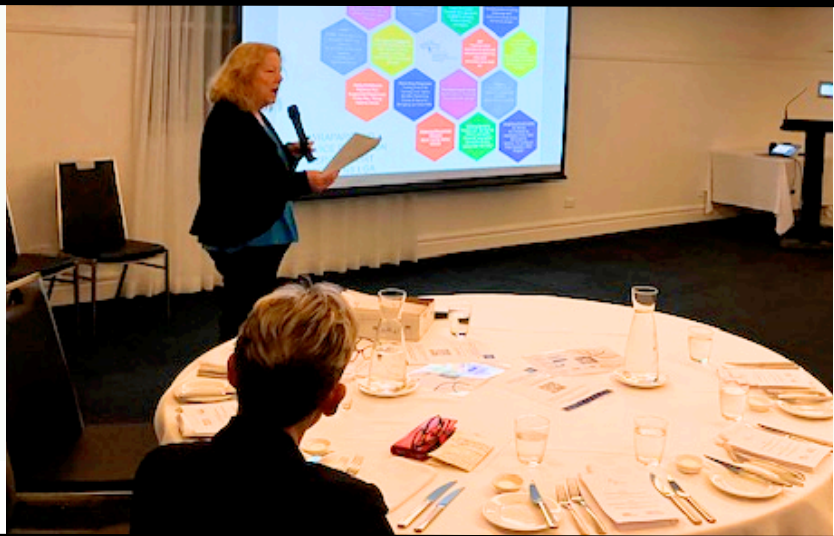


ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT



On Friday the 7th July Hunter DFV Consortium met with Kate Washington MP and Jodie Harrison MP to discuss a number of issues relevant to the DFV Sector in the Hunter region. There was so much to talk about we ran out of time. The Hunter DFV Consortium will continue to advocate with all levels of Govt to ensure the DFV sector is supported to meet the needs in our region, and to implement strategies and programs to prevent DFV.

The Hunter New England and Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECC PHN) recently hosted a domestic and family violence education dinner for GPs and Nurses at the Anchorage in Port Stephens. PSFaNS Manager Sue and Assistant Manager Ann attended.



PSFaNS Manager Sue and the Hunter DFV Consortium spent the afternoon with Rosie Batty talking about the recent government announcements and what's important for the government to know about what is happening here in the Hunter.

PSFaNS Manager Sue met with Jodie Harrison, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault with the Hunter DFV Consortium on 26 March. Sue spoke about the current context of DFV work - how we are overwhelmed with demand and thus not able to provide the intended comprehensive and long-term support. Sue talked about the burden of the high risk that we, and women and children, carry in the current context of multiple systemic failure - the DCJ system in extreme struggle and thus serious concerns re children at risk are not able to be responded to by the statutory agency as well as the impact of the police understaffing (notwithstanding the homeless crisis etc). The minister spoke about ministers beginning to work together across portfolios for better systemic outcomes.

PARTNERSHIPS

PSFaNS is a strong advocate for social wellbeing to its local community and has formed close partnerships with various government and non/government agencies with similar objectives. These partnerships give opportunity to enhance outcomes and social conditions in the community particularly in respect of vulnerable groups and individuals.

Active Fitness Medowie	Hunter Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service	Raymond Terrace Bowling Club
Anytime Fitness Raymond Terrace	Hunter Women's Centre	Raymond Terrace Fire Brigade
Bakers Delight Raymond Terrace	Innovative Computer Solutions	Raymond Terrace Laundrette
Bannisters Port Stephens	Irrawang High School	Raymond Terrace Men's Shed
Belgravia Leisure	Irrawang Public School	Raymond Terrace Public School
Birri Li Aboriginal Birthing Service	JetStar	Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens
Boomerang Bags Boomerang Park	Juvenile Justice	Regional Australia Bank Tea Gardens
Bunnings Heatherbrae	Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council	Revenue NSW
Capital Chemist Raymond Terrace	Legal Aid	Rotary Club of Raymond Terrace
Carries Place	Lions Club of Raymond Terrace	R&R Property
Centrelink	Little Beginnings Medowie	Salt Ash Home Schooling Group
Club Lemon Tree	McDowell Homes	Salvation Army Raymond Terrace
Commonwealth Bank Raymond Terrace	Medowie Family Clinic	SecondBite
Department of Communities and Justice NSW – safer together	Medowie Football Club	Service NSW
Department of Defence PAC NSW	Medowie Pre-Junior Guides	Share the Dignity
Dowling Property Raymond Terrace	Mother Goose Day Nursery	St John's Anglican Church
Euro Patisserie	Motto Farm Auto	Survivors R Us Inc
Evado Studios	Motto Farm Motel	Susan Roskell Toy Drive
Fibonacci Coffee	Nelson Plaza Clinic	TAFE NSW
Fighter Beans Cafe	Newlife Church	Tanilba Bay Fire Brigade
Financial Counselling Hunter Valley	News of the Area	Tanilba Bay Public School
Project Inc	Nextra Newsagency Raymond Terrace	Telstra
Fingal Bay Sports Club	NSW Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers	Terrace Central
Friends With Dignity	NSW Police Force	Terry White Tanilba Bay
Gan Gan Family Centre	Oz Harvest	The Backpack Venture
Headspace Newcastle	PCYC	The Learning Terrace
HIPPY Australia	Port Stephens Council	The Mutual Bank Raymond Terrace
Hume Housing	Port Stephens Domestic Violence Committee	The Terrace Diner
Hunter Heroes	Port Stephens Examiner	Thouwalla Family Centre
Hunter New England Health Child & Family Team	Port Stephens Home Schooling Group	Warlga Ngurra
Hunter New England Health Young Parent Network	Port Stephens Police	We Care Connect
Hunter New England Health First Steps Parenting	Quirky Quilters Group	Wesnet
Hunter Region No Interest Loans Scheme (HRNILS)	Ramada Resort Shoal Bay	Yacaaba Centre
Hunter River High School		

PSFaNS advocates for services, projects and resources to inform, support and empower the individuals or groups that are being disadvantaged.

VISITING SERVICES

PSFaNS collaborates with other services to enable community to access multiple supports in one location.

Services available at PSFaNS via visiting services providing free services to community are:

- Financial Counselling
- Legal Advice
- Help with Centrelink
- Youth Mental Health Counselling
- Free birth Certificates
- Counselling and women's services
- Tax help
- Young Parents Network
- Parenting Programs
- Early Childhood NDIS
- Paediatrician
- Early Childhood Health checks (via Playgroups)



SERVICE STAFF 2023-2024

Manager - Sue Pollock
Assistant Manager - Ann Fletcher

Aboriginal Programs / HIPPY	Child, Youth & Family	SHS	SHLV	Finance & Admin
<p>Team Leader Rachel S</p> <p>Aboriginal Programs Emma Karen</p> <p>HIPPY Domaneca Katrina Emma Angelique Sarah M</p>	<p>Team Leader Andrew</p> <p>Senior Caseworkers Amy Danielle (TFN) Mardi Kelly Sarah W</p> <p>Caseworkers Liz Jordyn Miranda Julia</p> <p>Casework Support Sarah M</p> <p>Children's Group Worker Miranda (TFN) Julia (TFN)</p> <p>Children's Group Assistant Kye (TFN) <small>*TFN (Tilligerry Family Network)</small></p>	<p>Team Leader Kylee</p> <p>Senior Caseworkers Nichola Adrian</p> <p>Caseworkers Kayla Courtney Jess S Blake Brianna Emily Naomi Renea</p> <p>Casework Support Karen Kristiana</p>	<p>Senior Caseworkers Barbara Ellen Sarah Q</p> <p>Caseworkers Camilla Rebecca Kadina Julia</p>	<p>Finance & Admin Manager Max</p> <p>Reception & Admin Jo (Phillip St) Clare (Jac Ave)</p> <p>Reception Support Jullianne (Jac Ave)</p>



Our work would not be possible without the work of our dedicated volunteers. Volunteers have helped out in a great many ways; assisting our emergency relief team, preparing food for schools and groups, assisting in our children's / youth groups; assistance in running and maintaining office IT; gardening and so much more. Your ongoing commitment, dedication and time enable us to deliver exceptional service and support to our wider communities. Because of this invaluable contribution, we're eager to say a big public "Thank you volunteers! We salute you!".



TEAM HIGHLIGHTS



International Women's Day saw PSFaNS' values in action. As a service we are committed to this community and in particular committed to members of our community who are not invited to the 'table', or who feel that even if they were, that they don't belong there.

We held an event for women who have been showing up to life at the same time as having injustices consistently piled upon them time and time again. These injustices have been compounded by how our society then makes them feel less than because of what has happened to them. We wanted to acknowledge them and acknowledge the qualities that we see in them every day. Most who came were very nervous and found it really hard to walk through the door, with some not able to get that far, but the women who made it to the table got so much out of the occasion they then didn't want to leave! Of course ultimately that says so much about women's courage and tenacity but, it also says such a lot about our staff who once again showed the qualities that open up those pathways - qualities that mean that the community feel safe accessing our service and know they won't be made to feel anything less than valued. *Photo - our staff organising the event.*

Families were arriving in our community from Gaza. We wanted them to feel safe and secure, we wanted them to know they can feed their family and keep a roof over their heads. Especially for children, certainty and stability will help their trauma not escalate by being in a new country with another set of worries.

They are currently staying on the floor at relatives' homes. They arrived with nothing (their homes, businesses bombed to rubble) and have no income as their visa does not allow them to work. Some families have gone without food for a number of days, due to not knowing what supports are available and wanting to pay back their debts incurred getting here.

The team banded together to help with emergency supplies such as clothing, medical (no medicare access), pathology, medication, blankets, bedding, furniture, school supplies, help to pay bills like electricity, gas, water.



PSFaNS, like most of Australia, were captivated by the **Matilda's FIFA World Cup journey**.

Matilda's fever was celebrated in our children's groups with dress ups, goal kicking tournaments, messy play and science experiments using green and gold colours. Our team celebrated the pre-game excitement with our own in-house tournament where we were joined by our visiting Paediatrician!

What was unfolding surrounding the Matilda's was going to be transformative and bring about 'generational change' for women's sport in Australia.

PSFaNS was successful (one of only 4 LGAs/agencies selected) in receiving the CHRISTIE Project which aims to develop and strengthen collaboration between non-government child protection organisations and with a broader network of agencies in Port Stephens responding to women, children and families impacted by domestic and family violence. Participation involves joint training (with DCJ, Police, Corrections, Health etc) in the Safe & Together™ Model, engagement in communities of practice, and other joint activities to strengthen collaborative responses to families.

We anticipate a range of benefits to both practitioners and organisations from participation in the CHRISTIE project, including:

- Development or enhancement of effective practice with families (with a particular focus on children) at the intersections of DFV, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and child protection issues.
- Capacity-building workers, management and organisations through:
 - High-quality, internationally recognised training from the Safe & Together Institute.
- Access to evidence-based tools and resources.
- Regular Communities of Practice meetings with secondary consultation and coaching.



COMMUNITY REVIEWS



“They are are really good with the kids and such great help with everything and great to talk to when in a bad spot or just need help with anything they are always there for u”.



Always Wonderful, Caring people.



They great people who work there and they try there best at helping people in need



If they can help they will. Ive needed there help a couple of times over the past few years. Very understanding and easy to deal with. If you need help pop on in im sure you will be blown away with the help they offer. The best people who actually care about us locals.



Thank you for making me feel welcome. It’s hard to ask for help, and I am not one that usually asks, but I felt comfortable and was amazed by all the support!



Wonderful support and lovely people.



The men’s health worker has helped me through probably the toughest time in my life great all round team very friendly and helpful. Very large variety of community programs and services here.



Very helpful when in need. They do a great service!



Amazing people very kind and helpful



I have been involved with Port Stephens support for over five years going to play groups, culture groups and even parenting advice groups. All the staff have always been amazing 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌

