

NELSON WOMEN'S SUPPORT

ANNUAL REPORT for 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013

**Presented at the AGM, 16 September 2013
at the Nelson Women's Centre, 44 Trafalgar Street, Nelson**

Kia Ora and welcome everyone.

It is my pleasure to present this Annual Report to this combined AGM of Women in Nelson, Nelson Women's Support and SASH.

The past year has been steady for Nelson Women's Support.

Both our contracts with the Ministry of Social Development were fulfilled.

The first contract, with Family and Community Services, was to help 20 families under stress and in severe financial difficulty because of the economic recession (short-term funding through the Community Response Fund.)

The second contract, with Child Youth and Family, was to help 125 women experiencing difficulties that are affecting the wellbeing of their children.

The total actual numbers of people we worked with this past year included: 279 families (with 617 children) and 240 single women.

Nelson Women's Support free counselling service served 52 women. The Pathways to Power course ran twice and helped a total of 20 women.

We had a further 60 walk-in clients who wanted emergency help (for example, with accommodation and food).

In the past, Nelson Women's Support statistics have generally shown us working with up to 1200 women and children per year; however, we have now greatly improved our client registers to accurately track actual numbers of clients, not just numbers of client contacts.

Nelson Women's Support, Key Roles

Community Social Worker
Assistant Social Worker
Chairperson NWS
Secretary of Collective
Finance Administrator/Treasurer
Pathways to Power Facilitator

Lyn Ginty
Christine Henwood
Carrie Mozena
Mal Shepherd-Harris
Kathleen O'Connor
Kindra Douglas

Paid Employees

Lyn Ginty, Community Social Worker, 30 hours per week. Christine Henwood, Assistant Social Worker, 15 hours per week. Both social workers are ANZASW qualified members. Kathleen O'Connor, a qualified accountant, is the Finance Administrator, 2.5 hours per week.

Current Collective members

Carrie Mozena, Lyn Ginty, Christine Henwood, Malinda Shepherd-Harris, Mira Markovic, Nadine Kunz, Ruth Parsons, Jenny Davis, Rebecca Young, Mia Riddell, Sarah-Jane McMillian, Kathleen O'Connor, Deanne Kilpatrick.

Voluntary Counsellors

Currently Jenny Davis, Rebecca Young, Mia Riddell, Ruth Parsons, Mira Markovic, plus Nadine Kunz (new trainee); Sarah-Jane McMillian is on leave; Merrin Bailey, Vikki Wilkinson and Malinda Shepherd-Harris resigned this year.

NWS Employment Group

Deanne Kilpatrick, Malinda Shepherd Harris, Carrie Mozena

NWS Funding Group

Carrie Mozena, Kathleen O'Connor, Christine Henwood

Hours

Nelson Women's support operates from Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4pm. We have a cell-phone where one of our social workers is able to be contacted in an emergency out-of-hours.

Supervision

External professional supervision is required for social workers and volunteer counsellors. Supervision is an important safety factor for both client and counselor/worker. Both Christine and I receive external supervision once per month. The counsellors all receive one hour of external supervision for every eight hours of counselling. They also have peer supervision monthly here at the Women's Centre as a group.

Training

Training is offered to all staff. Training is selected often from community short courses. Funding for training is available from Nelson Women's Support, thanks' to a Lotteries grant. Training must be approved by the Collective.

Legal Status

We are an Incorporated Society, registration # 642797. We are registered with the Charities Commission, # CC25231. The Collective meets monthly and manages our organisation. Our Collective has Employment and Funding Sub-Groups.

Funding

Our funding is sourced from several different funding pools:

- Canterbury Community Trust, for workers' wages, training & supervision
- MSD/Child Youth & Family, contract for family support
- NZ Lotteries, for social workers' wages, training and supervision
- MacDonald Trust, for partial wages for social workers
- COGS, for overheads
- George Brown Trust, for the counselling service
- JV Ilott Trust for Pathways to Power courses

Financial

Please find enclosed reviewed annual accounts for this period. Our reviewer is Carl Jorgensen.

Nelson Women's Support Mission

Our mission is: Empowering women to be safe, resourceful, to value themselves and to reach their potential.

Nelson Women's Support Services

We offer a practical social work support, advocacy, information and referral service for women and children with a wide range of needs. This service operates from the Nelson Women's Centre and aims to foster individual and family well-being and independence.

Both social workers, Christine and I, work a combination of 45 hours per week providing practical social work support and advocacy for all women and their families.

The most common issues women seek our help with include:

Family and domestic violence information, education and advocacy

Relationship breakdowns

Access and custody Issues

Parenting challenges

Financial and budgeting

Attending Family Group conferences – advocating for clients at Child Youth & Family and at Strengthening Family meetings.

Assessment for our counselling service

Supporting women at Police interviews, Lawyer appointments, Restorative Justice meetings, Schools, Tenancy Tribunal meetings, hospital and Doctor's appointments, Work and Income appointments, Family and criminal court

Organise Foodbank to drop off bread every week to the house, organize food parcels for individuals

Access to emergency accommodation

Home visits when transport is a problem

AGES OF CLIENTS:

- 26% of women – 20-30 years
- 35% of women – 31-40 years
- 36% of women – 41-60 years
- 3% of women – over 60 years

ETHNICITY:

- 59% - Pakeha/European
- 38% - Maori
- 1% - Pacific Islanders
- 2% - other

Referrals – where our clients come from

- Self referrals – family and friends
- Doctors in the local area
- Mental Health organization's (MCT and Gateway Housing Trust)
- Work and Income
- Hospital Social Workers
- Counsellors
- Women's Refuge
- Stopping Violence Services
- SASH
- Lawyers
- Police
- Lifeline
- Victim Support
- Barnardos
- Open Home Foundation
- Ngati Koata Social Services
- Courts
- Alcohol & Drug Clinic
- Family Start
- Te Korowai Trust
- Age Concern
- Whakatu Marae
- Restorative Justice
- Adult Literacy Services
- Victory Community Health Centre
- Schools
- Food Bank
- St Vincent De Paul
- Salvation Army
- Child Youth and Family partnered response

Outreach Clients - 40 clients were seen this year (at home visits):

85% single parent families
14% two parent families
1% elderly - sick

One-off clients - On average we see 3-5 women each day who walk in off the streets needing help, legal advice or other support/information. This depends on the time of year it can be more or sometimes less. Phone calls for information vary from day to day.

Medium and Long-Term Contact

Because we are a community based service the work we do with our clients varies. We can see a client for 1-2 hours and then refer to another agency and not see that client again. Our medium- to long-term work varies also. This work depends on the capability of the client and how much she is able to undertake herself. For both Christine and myself a medium intervention with a client could be up to three months work.

We have a small core group of long-term women who come in to touch base and fill us in how things are going for them. Some of these women have made positive life changes and have settled into the community with a brighter looking future

Issues and challenges for this year

Poverty – High cost of living verses low income

Rising cost of living e.g. food, petrol, power, rent, car maintenance, dentistry and medical bills

Middle income families accessing help for food, power

Heating homes is still a major problem. People are too scared to use heaters or heat pumps even when they are sick because of the high cost of power

Domestic violence – impact on children

Lack of safe and affordable accommodation for older women living on their own

Working with families that have a bad credit history who come in homeless

Women needing accommodation that allows her children to stay every second weekend due to shared access and custody orders

Breaching of Protection Orders

Parents battling over access and custody arrangements

Impact of legal high smoking on families

Pressure from Work and Income for single parents, young women, and older women to find twenty hours work or more

Women with addictions

Home for life options for women re second pregnancy when child youth and family have uplifted the first child

Working alongside women who have a terminal illness who have no family

During this year, we see that poverty here in Nelson is not only affecting the lower income bracket but is very predominant in the middle range. There is a new name for these people, the “working poor”. These are people who work and struggle. The Women's Centre is experiencing women from this middle bracket coming in and asking for help for a food parcel, power bills, medical or dentistry. Often they are resilient and manage week by week but unfortunately with the rising cost of living poverty is affecting them. They have no backup system as they are not entitled to any financial help from Work and Income.

We have seen families pack-up and sell everything and move to Australia in search for a better future for themselves and their families. Predominately these families have been Maori.

Beneficiaries both young and old are not managing financially. We have young people come in asking for accommodation, food, clothing every week. Both Christine and I have spent a lot of time advocating for clients at Work and Income as many clients have become very fearful due to the welfare changes where they are expected to find part-time or full-time work, where there is none. They are afraid that their benefits will be cut. We have seen this happen to women who were on the Invalid's benefit who were transferred to the Sickness benefit. The difference is that on the Invalid's benefit you do not have to look for work. Sickness benefit means you are fit for work. The financial difference is \$100 less per week. The impact of this change for a lot of women has been homelessness, loss of pets, and loss of independence. Many of these women are in their late fifties and have become quite disillusioned with the struggle of survival and often end up in Franklin Village alone or boarding with strangers.

A notable difference this year from others has been a slight decline in seeing women coming in for help. More work has been done over the phone engaging in long conversations where advice and information for relevant help has been offered. More home visits have been done this year as many women prioritise their spending of petrol due to the expense. Doctors are a priority for women and their families and often we are sent referrals as women are going for the quick medical fix rather than the longer approach of healing. Women are staying home and trying to manage their families, putting their children first before their own needs as the cost of attaining help can be ongoing. A quick fix in the long run can have devastating health effects for women, and their families.

Nelson Women's Support owe a big thank you to Nelson Foodbank, (bread) Lonestar Farms Ltd, (meat) Sealords, (fish) Tozzetti Panetteria Ltd (bread). These people give generously, either weekly or monthly, free food for us to distribute.

WIN (who run the Op Shop here at the Nelson Women's Centre) supply free clothing and supplies to families who need help who have either walked away from violence or lost everything due to circumstances. We thank you for your kindness.

Without the help and support of people like Lois from St Vincent De Paul's who we rely on often for food parcels or finance for medical bills or refills for gas cylinders life would be dismal for some of our clients in a quick fix situation.

Fifeshire Foundation has to be the biggest financial support for our clients in high need. Every month both Christine and I make applications for power bills, firewood, dentistry, washing machines, food, furniture, and car registration. We are very humbled by their generous support.

Thank you to Salvation Army as they provide help for our clients experiencing addictions, travel costs and food parcels.

Thank you to the Nelson Tasman Housing Trust for all their support in housing 3 of our families. This has given these women hope, warmth, security that has encouraged them to make positive changes for themselves and their families. A happy, warm home makes happy people no matter how hard the struggle.

Finally, a very big thank you to our counsellors at Nelson Women's Support for all their work in empowering women to make positive choices and changes to their lives.

Arohanui

Lyn Ginty and Christine Henwood
Community Social Workers
Nelson Women's Support, 2013