

ANNUAL REPORT

2021/2022



Yes Unlimited is all about investing in people and building better communities.

We are a not-for-profit, community-based organisation and have been delivering a range of services and supports in Albury and surrounding areas since 1983.

Yes Unlimited is a Company Limited by Guarantee and proud to be locally governed by our Board of Directors who bring a mix of skills, experience and community perspectives to the strategic direction of our organisation.

Our team of over 45 staff are passionate about our community, and believe that everyone should have access to the resources, knowledge and supports they need to thrive.

Yes Unlimited acknowledges the funding support provided by NSW Department of Communities and Justice during the 2021 and 2022 financial years.

Contents

Vision, Purpose and Values	3
Organisational Chart	4
Chairman's Report	6
Executive Team Report	8
2022 Changemakers profiles	12
Youth Services Report	16
Broughton House Youth Refuge	18
The Hive Youth Resource Centre	20
The Albury Project	24
Adult and Family Services Report	26
Staying Home Leaving Violence and Betty's Place Women's Refuge	28
Together Home	30
Transitional and CAP	32
Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing	33
Centralised Intake, Assessment and Brief Intervention	34
Reflections from the Yes Unlimited Aboriginal Welcome Worker	36
Community Engagement Report	38
Yes in the News	40
Our Sincere Thanks	47
2021-2022 Audited Financial Statements	48
A Case for Change: Domestic and Family Violence in Albury/Wodonga	56



Vision, Purpose and Values

Yes Unlimited acknowledges the First Australians as the traditional custodians of the continent, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history. We pay respect to the Elders of the community and extend our recognition to their descendants.

Our Vision:

Future generations without homelessness by 2050.

Our Purpose:

Investing in people; building better communities.

Our Core Values:

Clients First

- ✔ We are deeply on our clients side
- ✔ We are eternally optimistic and don't give up
- ✔ We actively support clients autonomy

Leaders in Practice

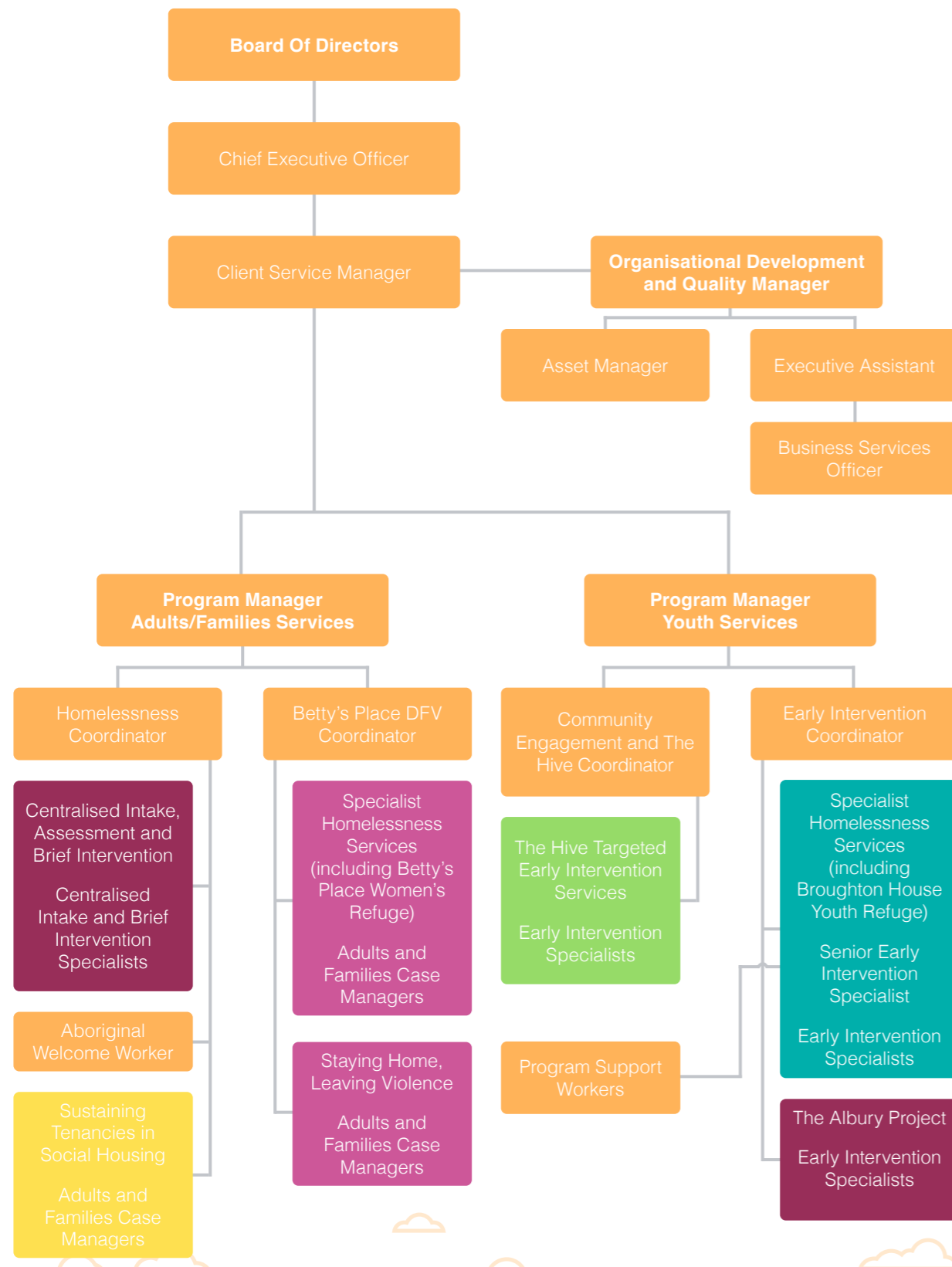
- ✔ We remain constructively discontent
- ✔ We are brutally honest with ourselves
- ✔ We are creative, innovative and purposeful
- ✔ We have unusually high expectations of ourselves and others

Doing it Together

- ✔ We compulsively build partnerships
- ✔ We capitalise on the diversity of our people
- ✔ We build dynamic teams



Organisational Chart



Board of Directors

- Dave Gaukroger**
Chairman
- Heather Downey**
Vice Chair
- Tracey Fraser**
Secretary
- Jennefer McCrum**
Treasurer
- Dianne Sutherland**
Director
- Janet Osborne**
Director
- Michael Brigden**
Director

Program Support Team

- Ben Demeo**
- Craig Rodgers**
- Hannah Wells**
- Kylie Hampson**
- Nicholas Gruessing**
- Ryan Scott-Young**
- Shannon Wishart**

Youth Services Team

- Kate McGrath**
Early Intervention Coordinator
- Elizabeth Cattell**
Senior Early Intervention Specialist

Executive Team

- Dianne Glover**
Chief Executive Officer
- Jon Park**
Client Services Manager
- Tam Quinn**
Program Manager – Youth Services
- Kira Pace**
Program Manager – Intake and Adults/Families Services
- Bec Glen**
Organisational Development and Quality Manager

The Hive

- Michelle Milligan**
Community Engagement Coordinator
- Celeste Schaeffer**
- Emmaleigh Nokes**
- Jade Clements**
- Kristy Phillips**
- Madeleine Reid**
- Ryan Harris**

Business Services:

- Cara Smillie**
Executive Assistant
- Deb Ferrara**
Assets and Maintenance
- John Davern**
Financial Accountant
- Lia Carle**
Administration Assistant
- Lauren Biddell**
Administration Assistant

Adults & Families Team

- Serena Kent**
Homelessness Coordinator
- Charlie Harsant**
- Forward Gonekai**
- Davina Jackson – Aboriginal Welcome Worker**
- Jo-Anne Campbell**
- Paul Andrews**
- Rachel Pettit**
- Renee Whitehead**
- Shelbie Strauss**
- Samantha Whittet**
- Tracey Girvan**

- Jacqui Devlin**
DFV / Betty's Place Coordinator
- Anna Gates**
- Chris Cameron**
- Emily Woodfall**
- Jane Dickinson**
- Katrina Warnock**
- Kelsey Wrobel**
- Liam Colvin**
- Robyn White**
- Roslyn Twycross**

Yes Changemakers

- Sam**
- Boh**
- Hunter**
- James**
- Riyn**
- Emily**
- Makayla**
- Josie**
- Sophie**
- Bonnie**
- Mia**



Chairman's Report

At its core, Yes Unlimited has always been an organisation committed to ending homelessness. Despite the significant growth in our size and the scope of our activities over the past four years, we have never wavered from our vision of "Future generations without homelessness by 2050". What has changed significantly in the past twelve months is how mainstream the conversation about homelessness has become. We are seeing acknowledgement at all levels of government that we are in the midst of a housing crisis, and while we welcome the additional focus on solving the issue, I fear that we are still some way from implementing the structural changes that will be required to ensure that every Australian has the security of a safe home.

The housing crisis that we are experiencing in Australia at present is a result of decades of policy settings that have favoured housing as an investment vehicle rather than a home, combined with a declining investment in public housing. This has been exacerbated by a lack of additional rights or protections for renters, many of whom have been priced out of home ownership. The rental market across Australia has very low vacancy rates and rapidly increasing prices, a situation that we are not immune to in Albury. The reduction in individual support payments compared to previous years' Covid response has also highlighted the direct effect that poverty has on homelessness.

As a result of the housing crisis we are now supporting clients who previously would have been easily able to participate in the private market, and we are also faced with added difficulties in finding accommodation options for clients who are ready to exit our supported accommodation. I am proud of the staff at Yes Unlimited who have continued to work tirelessly for our clients even in the face of overwhelming difficulties caused by the present situation.

A number of the pilot programs that we have been a part of, such as Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing, The Albury Project and Together Home, have given us much greater scope to support our community and we hope that these will move to become ongoing programs in the near future.



We genuinely appreciate the way that Albury City has engaged with us on their Local Housing Strategy and hope that it will lead to creative ways to increase the amount of social and affordable housing in our area. Yes Unlimited will continue to advocate for systematic changes aimed at reducing homelessness in our local community, and across Australia.

Yes Unlimited's work on improving support for people escaping domestic violence has continued this year and our goal of providing a core and cluster model has been validated by the NSW Government's decision to fund construction of new refuges across the state. With our partner, Housing Plus, we await the decision on whether we will be one of the successful tender applicants for the new funding. As a part of our application, we have undertaken extensive consultation with community groups in our area to ensure that we will be providing a culturally safe environment for our service users. We thank Member for Albury Justin Clancy for his ongoing support of Yes Unlimited and our work. He has been a wonderful advocate not only for us, but for highlighting homelessness as an issue.

Thank you to our board of directors for your role in enabling the organisation to move towards its lofty goals. I would like to particularly acknowledge Janet Osborne and Di Sutherland who have both ended their terms on the Yes Unlimited board of directors. Both Janet and Di have been model directors and made wonderful contributions to the board, and Yes Unlimited overall. Their insights, knowledge and passion for our organisation's mission will be missed.

I would like to acknowledge the staff of Yes Unlimited who spend every day living our values as they work to provide support and hope to our clients who are so often presenting to us with complex needs and traumatic experiences. Every one of you is greatly valued and we know that your efforts are making a significant difference in people's lives. I would particularly like to thank Di Glover and the executive team of Jon, Kira, Tam and Bec for their efforts in supporting our growing team, and for helping keep the board connected to the organisation.

The current housing crisis will not be resolved in one budget cycle, or one term of parliament. It will take sustained effort from all levels of government and a cultural shift that prioritises homes for everyone over the embedded privilege of the status quo. I hope that the current conversations around homelessness turns into actions, and I have no doubt that Yes Unlimited will place itself in the midst of that activity. The foundations that are being laid now in response to the crisis will be part of what helps us to move towards our 2050 goal of a future without homelessness.

Dave Gaukroger
Chair



In many ways writing this report at the end of 2022 feels like emerging from an all-consuming Covid-19 tainted fog, slightly dazed from our recent experience but thankfully, optimistic about what's coming next. Priorities have been necessarily fluid during this time of disruption, and yet with hindsight we can see that we have achieved many of the goals we set ourselves, despite the difficult circumstances. It is with great pleasure that we present the 2021/2022 Annual Report, and our reflections on the last two years of work towards "future generations without homelessness."

It would not be hyperbolic to describe the experience of recent times as a collective trauma deeply effecting our teams, the people we work with and our community. As a trauma-informed organisation, we know that operating from this place can put us in a state of hypervigilance, make future thinking difficult, and generally lead to more reactive tendencies. People are tired, we continue to struggle with a severe lack of affordable and available housing options and the reprieve provided by the temporary increase to welfare benefits was disappointingly short-lived. While the crisis of the pandemic subsides, the unacceptable conditions of poverty, homelessness, domestic and family violence and disadvantage persist, and much work remains to be done.

Fortunately, the significant investment made over several years in organisational culture, our Model of Practice and tuning our 'trauma-informed lens' provided the organisation with a protective foundation for weathering this difficult time. Yes Unlimited maintained a staff retention rate of 95% (turnover of 5%) during the pandemic, which is notable given the staffing challenges afflicting almost all industries. We introduced a new leave policy, providing above award conditions for domestic and family violence leave, personal wellbeing leave and paid parental leave, in recognition of the additional pressures our people are facing and the need, now more than ever, to keep the good people that we have. Our annual staff satisfaction survey reported 95% of staff enjoy our organisational culture, 98% find the work meaningful and 90% felt encouraged to 'self-care'.

At the heart of Yes Unlimited are the good, caring, and passionate people who choose to work in this organisation. We extend a sincere thank you to our staff who have stuck with us, steadfastly upheld our values, and continued putting 'Clients First' even when things have been hard.

In thinking about the wide-ranging efforts we've undertaken over the last two years, a few things stand out:

Systems Work

We believe one of our unique offerings as a service is our focus on creating better systems underpinned by solid partnerships. Systems work is complex, it takes time, leadership and lots of committed people working towards the same vision. It's also what we think really makes a difference and we've invested heavily in it over the period of this report.

The Albury Project entered its fourth year of operations working as a community of schools and services and it very much feels as though as we are hitting our stride. Early outcome indicators for young people are promising (*The COVID-19 Pandemic in Albury: Weathering the Storm' article page 51*), the relationships between partners are strong and we are hopeful that collective work we have done will justify the Project's extension beyond the current pilot funding.

People who are rough sleeping only make up 7% of the more than 116 000 people who are homeless on any given night in Australia. However, their situation is often characterised by extended periods in and out of homelessness, coupled with other complex vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, the more pressure on housing availability, the more likely people are to be pushed into this situation. While early intervention through good service design and adequate investment in social housing is where long term solutions are to be found, it's critical that the needs of this very vulnerable group are attended to. Recently we've established a local taskforce with Housing NSW, Carevan, Albury City Council, Wellways, and Albury Police. This group is focused on coordinating our outreach responses, ensuring a consistent, persistent and low-pressure offer of support for people who, in many instances, have been let down by services and systems in the past.

Alongside this we were delighted to provide the service delivery component of the Together Home program, with our partners Homes Out West (Community Housing Provider) and Housing NSW. This program is NSW's first state-wide investment in delivering the evidence-based

Housing First model that has been so successful in other countries, achieving real outcomes for people who have experienced chronic periods of homelessness. Though initially rolled out as a post Covid response for two years, we join the sector in advocating for its adoption as a permanent fixture to the homelessness service infrastructure.

We were heartened to see the leadership taken by Albury City Council in developing a Local Housing Strategy and the wider community conversation that has emerged expressing a constructive discontentment with Albury's current housing situation. We've always said that 'homelessness is everybody's business', and it would seem that recognition of this is increasing when we consider the engagement of schools, local government, other NGOs, and community members in elevating the issues that preoccupy us as a homelessness service. We imagine channelling these collective efforts will continue to be a priority for us, as the ongoing housing situation continues to push the issue into the mainstream.

Domestic and Family Violence

In 2021, Yes Unlimited in collaboration with the Albury-Wodonga Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Committee commissioned the "A Case for Change" research project, examining the Albury service response to DFV, cross border issues and the communal model of crisis accommodation we currently provide through Betty's Place Women's Refuge. The report articulated much of what we have suspected and have been working on for some time now:

- The local DFV service system reflects the disjointed funding model that underpins it. Various state government departments fund varying components of the DFV service response and there is insufficient investment in shaping service delivery at a systemic level. In this context service integration and collaboration is fragile and based on goodwill and relationships, rather than systemically embedded through structural design.



- Betty's Place has provided a critical service for many women since Betty and Bob Maclean first began accommodating women in their own home in the 1970's. The communal model of accommodation, where residents share cooking facilities, bathrooms and living spaces is outdated and it's time to evolve. Women and children would be better served by the modernised 'Core and Cluster' model, where independent self-contained units are co-located with onsite support and communal facilities.

As a result of this period of learning and consolidation, the better part of 2022 has involved significant work on a locally driven reform agenda for service delivery and, excitingly, a Core and Cluster Women's Refuge for Albury. With serendipitous timing the NSW Government announced \$426 million for new core and cluster developments at the end of 2021. We have since partnered with Housing Plus, a community housing provider based in Orange, who developed the first purpose-built core and cluster in NSW, in preparing a bid for this funding.

It's an ambitious project, and while we are optimistic about potential government funding for the bricks and mortar, we want this new 'Betty's Place' to feel extra special.

Community consultations are well underway, with women and community groups telling us they want children's play areas, relaxation rooms, computer rooms, massage chairs, lush furnishings, an Aboriginal Yarning Circle, and tranquil gardens - a place where women and children can heal, feel safe and get ready for a life free from violence. It is with this in mind that we are appealing to the community to help us 'Make Betty's Better' and aiming to raise \$1 million over the next two years.

Re-gearing for Growth

Yes Unlimited is a much bigger organisation than it was just a few years ago, and we were excited to finally catch up with the growth with a significant re-structure/development of our middle leadership level. This process has seen the introduction of several new coordinator/senior roles and a more equal distribution of leadership across our youth and adult spectrums, with the intention of carving out greater capacity for the executive level leadership to continue the strategic work of the organisation. A big congratulations and welcome to all those in the new roles: Serena Kent - Homelessness Coordinator, Jacqui Devlin - Bettys Place DFV Coordinator, Elizabeth Cattell - Senior Intervention Specialist Broughton House, Kate McGrath - Early Intervention Coordinator and Michelle Milligan - Community Engagement and Hive Coordinator.

In a similar vein, Yes Unlimited made the decision to outsource our accounting and financial management to Breakthrough Accounting, a specialist not-for-profit accounting firm. Breakthrough provide end-to-end financial management systems, business advice and reporting directly to the Yes Unlimited Board through the CEO. We've been thrilled with the quality of their work and the systems and process improvements they've introduced and feel well positioned for future growth with this addition to our business infrastructure. Welcome to the Yes team, Breakthrough.

What's Next?

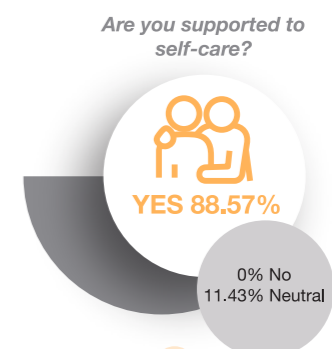
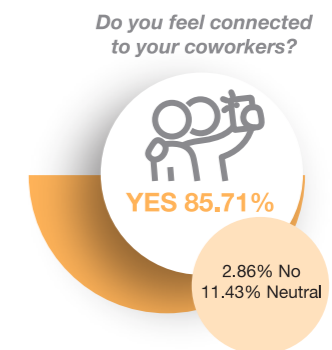
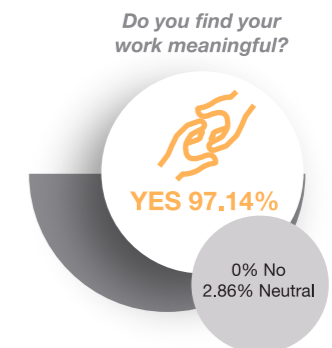
Yes Unlimited is entering a new strategic planning cycle and will be spending the early parts of 2023 outlining a detailed plan for the next few years. The Betty's Place development, securing ongoing funding for our Sustaining Tenancies, Albury Project and Together Home programs, and finalising our ASES accreditation process will all be important components of the work ahead of us. Yes Unlimited has committed to a Reconciliation Action Plan and are excited to begin a 12 month deep dive into growing our connection to, and understanding of, our local Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal people we work with.

Finally, we'd like to thank the people who make our work possible. Thank you to our Board of Directors who volunteer their time and energy to provide the organisation with stable and forward-thinking governance, empowering the organisation to navigate the risks and capitalise on the opportunities that present along the way. Thank you to our Youth Change Makers, funders, donors, volunteer mentors, supporters, and the community members whose commitment to the organisation simultaneously legitimises and enables the work we do. A special mention to Brad Wotton, David Mackenzie, Tammy Hand, Samantha Donnelly, Justin Clancy MP, and the remarkable Traverse Alpine Group team led by Rosy Seaton, who have graciously contributed their skills and influence towards our common agenda of ending homelessness together. A big congratulations to long-time superstars Jo Campbell from our Centralised Intake team and Director Heather Downey on their 10-year anniversary with Yes Unlimited.

Our most important thanks go to the people who our services exist for. No one should have to experience the trauma and pain associated with homelessness or domestic and family violence. Despite this, the people we work with consistently inspire us with their courage and resilience and we acknowledge the great privilege it is to be a part of their story. We'll be working hard in 2023 to continue providing the kind of services you deserve.

Di Glover
CEO and Jon Park, Client Services Manager

Staff Satisfaction Results



2022 Changemakers profiles

Changemakers is Yes Unlimited's youth reference committee, a group of local young people who meet regularly to discuss youth related issues, inform our organisation on how to respond to these issues and work to achieve social change on the things they care about.

Sam

2nd year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "being involved in a group, opportunity to have a say, impact a lot of young people that attend the Hive."
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "involvement in a group, gives me something to do and commit to after school"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "vaping; have posters available to young people with addiction support numbers, not just information about what's in them"



Hunter McDowall

5th year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "opportunity to show dedication and leadership, help people when I can, make a difference"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "take on more of a leadership role to gain more experience, public speaking skills, working in groups, sense of achievement"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "would like to work towards drug and alcohol use with young people and youth homelessness, as I've been seeing more of it lately"



Boh

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "want to work with more young people, meet new people, make better opportunities for everyone"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "improved wellbeing, new friends, be more inclusive"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "inclusivity/diversity; community can be more engaging, more access to events held for young people in community"



James

2nd year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "Opportunity to change and improve the community, feeling of wanting to contribute to society"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "Food, personal benefits, experience, knowledge, meeting new people"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "vaping; young people are taking it up due to peer influences, not thinking about long term impacts. Stereotypes in school/workplace"

Makayla

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "Help out little kids and be a good role model to my sister, help out the community, good thing for me to do"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "Help with my anxiety"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "Littering – it's very harmful to environment, looks bad when it's everywhere"



Riyn

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
- A.** "Impact the community in ways to help create a more welcoming community for everyone"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
- A.** "Build communication and understanding skills"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
- A.** "Prejudice against LGBTQI+ community; saying 'you're welcome here' when they're not – opinion based"



2022 Changemakers profiles

Changemakers is Yes Unlimited's youth reference committee, a group of local young people who meet regularly to discuss youth related issues, inform our organisation on how to respond to these issues and work to achieve social change on the things they care about.

Emily

2nd year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
A. "Enjoyed Changemakers last year so wanted to reapply, opportunity to participate in the community, recent experience with unstable housing and had people supporting and encouraging me so now I want to do the same"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
A. "skills to be able to talk in groups, problem solving skills, want to see the bigger picture; not just see the problem, meet new people"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
A. "young people not knowing where to go to get support; advertise Hive as a safe space where someone will listen, what services young people can access e.g. Headspace, Mental health triage line"



Mia

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
A. "help youth, advocate for Changemakers, help where I can, showcase what I can provide"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
A. "Help people, support people with what they're going through, improve communication, leadership, social in community"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
A. "Available resources and services for young people to come to if trying to seek support, a place to hang out/feel safe"



Joesie

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
A. "opportunity for young people to have a say in decisions, will be fun, chance to share my ideas"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
A. "build confidence as I struggle with public speaking"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
A. "the way people treat each other; bullying, social judgement/standards"

Bonnie

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
A. "Ensuring young people have safety"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
A. "experience with others, leadership skills and experience"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
A. "more acceptance with diversity, safety in community"

Sophie

1st year in Changemakers

- Q. What does being a Changemaker mean to you?**
A. "important, be able to have an impact, strive to make people's days better, encourage others to do the same"
- Q. What do you hope to get out of participation in Changemakers?**
A. "Confidence, leadership skills, good public speaking skills"
- Q. What's an issue that impacts young people that you would like to change?**
A. "More inclusive and open, help us grow together; not feel confined, sense of belonging"



Program Manager Report

The last couple of years can be best described as a whirlwind of change, growth and learning for the Youth Team. There has been a dominant theme of re-building, as we come back together after a disrupted couple of years. There has been a lot to navigate, both externally with Covid-19 restrictions, a tight Real Estate market and funding reforms, as well as internal team and leadership changes. This context and a growing demand for services has put a lot a pressure on the team. Despite this, I am so proud of how they have all continued to show up for young people and families with a real steadiness, optimism, and creativity.

With many things settling down this year, it has been great to get many of our plans and initiatives back on track. We have been delighted to have our group work programs up and running again this year. We have recommenced our Mentoring program and are excited to be running programs and events in schools and the broader community. We have made progress on many of our practice goals, which has seen us complete and formalise our Spectrum Intervention Design Tool, implement a revised Case Review process and embed Demand Management practices across the team. We have come out the other side of the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) reform, which funds The Hive Youth Resource Centre, with a clearly defined program logic, articulating how and why we work with young people in the way we do.

We can only do this work when we do it together, and we greatly appreciate all of our partnerships with local schools and services. One area that I continue to be excited about is the level of collaboration we have in the Albury Project. We have seen the School Based Team, comprised of Yes staff from all program areas (Albury Project, The Hive and Broughton House) as well as school staff, CAMHS, and headspace come together regularly, forming an integrated and single response for young people. This integration allows all roles to be doing the work that they are best placed to do. Now we have had this experience, it is hard to imagine working any other way!

We continue to look at the issue of reach and access across the team. This is in part a response to recognising how much work the Youth Team is doing with schools and ensuring that we continue to reach young people and families who are disengaged. With restrictions easing, we have begun investing again in opportunities to expand our presence and visibility in the community.



We know young people who come to us for support are diverse and bring a wide range of complex life experiences and challenges. On top of this we know that the impacts of Covid-19 on young people have been substantial. There has been noticeable increase in demand around youth mental health and we are seeing a growing need for increased specialised mental health services. Although difficult, particularly when the local system is under immense pressure, this doesn't come as a surprise for those working in the youth sector. In Mission Australia's Annual Youth Report, Australia's largest online youth survey, mental health was highlighted as a leading issue for young people. Aside from the numerous reports highlighting the need for greater investment in this area, young people themselves continue to tell us this is a key challenge and priority for them, and we need to listen.

Whilst the housing crisis is being experienced by our whole community, its impact has been felt acutely by young people whose options are already limited, often lacking a rental history, and relying on the chronically insufficient Youth Allowance. With housing products we have grown to rely on, such as Rent Choice Youth no longer working, we have faced significant moments of struggle. We have seen extended refuge stays, as young people struggle to take the next step into other longer term options. Youth Homelessness continues to be a national issue, with young people representing the highest cohort in the past 3 census'.

Our team has embraced the organisational work commencing on our Reconciliation Action Plan. Our work to improve access and outcomes for Aboriginal young people and families continues to be a priority. Over the last few years, we have invested heavily in maintaining connections with local services and networks, celebrating Aboriginal Cultural activities and having an Aboriginal Youth Worker work across all school-based teams, positioning us to provide more culturally appropriate responses.

We are excited by the work we have done on our leadership structure. After several years of growth and refining, it feels like we are in a strong position to respond to the needs of the team and organisation. I welcome Elizabeth Cattell into a senior role in our Youth SHS team, who will be working alongside Kate McGrath in the Early Intervention Coordinator role based at Broughton House. Our Hive team will now report to Michelle Milligan, our Community Engagement Coordinator.

Our Youth services team is a diverse mix of people, dedicated to investing in young people and their families. I am so grateful to be a part of this team and to lead this resilient, dynamic, and passionate bunch of professionals who are united by the common goal of seeing young people and families THRIVE. I am really proud of the results and outcomes achieved over the last 2 years and I can't wait to see the exciting work we do in 2023!

Tam Quinn

Program Manager Youth Services



Broughton House Youth Refuge is a Specialist Homelessness Service that provides crisis accommodation for young people, alongside a comprehensive support program including individualised case management, wellbeing support and living skills development. Broughton House has four bedrooms, as well as two self-contained semi-independent units onsite. Broughton House staff work with both residents within the refuge and on an outreach basis with young people in the community.

Operating a 24/7 Youth Refuge throughout the last few years has presented some unique challenges. Staff have played an important role holding young people through the uncertainty of Covid-19, managing Covid restrictions in a communal refuge environment, whilst also navigating the familiar but tricky dynamics of shared living. Frustratingly, while the world returns to normal the housing market continues to be a hostile place for young people. The rental market is increasingly unaffordable, vacancy rates are low and the more competitive application processes have meant for many young people independent living is no longer a viable option. Stays in crisis accommodation and support periods have grown longer, creating bottle necks for our service, where young people who have done all the right things simply can't access a safe and secure place to call home.

Although working in this context has been tough, the team has made a concerted effort to celebrate the wins and keep a sense of optimism for the young people who are struggling. We also decided to pivot our focus, supporting young people to be as competitive as possible when putting applications forward by developing living skills, and improving employment and education prospects. This is showing some positive outcomes, particularly with an increasing number of our young people

entering the work force, though it does not negate the reality that holding down a job with nowhere to live is very difficult.

The team has been thinking 'outside the box' and have started looking at creative and alternative approaches for addressing youth homelessness. We are exploring a variety of models, such as Home Share. This model is underpinned by the value of reciprocity and aims to unlock existing housing in our community by matching young people with older homeowners, who have a room to spare. Furthermore, we are looking at different approaches to shared living and reviewing models operating elsewhere, such as family-reunification based models, informal foster care and Kids Under Cover style programs.

We continue to see great outcomes from the medium-term units onsite at Broughton House. Whilst the model for these is still evolving, having the option of a supported 'stepping stone' that is closely linked to employment and education goals is demonstrating very successful outcomes. Our data is showing that on average young people are staying for around six months, and almost all leave the units having gained employment and a longer-term suitable housing option. The success we continue to see in this space has renewed our energy to explore Youth Foyers models, which would really strengthen our local youth housing spectrum.

"When I came to live here, I was really scared to open up, but now I feel like I can talk to everyone. I also don't have to hide my feelings. I am grateful for what we have and that we have learnt the things that we have here from everyone at Broughton House"

Resident Female 18

I have enjoyed my time here at Broughton House as it makes me feel safe, it has taught me responsibility and has taught me how to live in a shared environment.

Resident Female 16

Unsurprisingly, mental health is a primary issue for young people entering our youth homelessness services, with 67% of young people having received a mental health diagnosis. This is an increase of 15% on the last financial year, and a general increase from pre-covid times. We recognise that this is not unique to Broughton House, with youth services across the state reporting similar increases. We extend a sincere thank-you to our partners, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and headspace for their work alongside us.

"I have a nice warm bed and the workers are nice, I feel extremely supported and very safe, the workers are caring and kind which is very helpful."

Resident Female 17

It is with much excitement that we have welcomed the Albury Project team to the Broughton House site. The opportunities for a co-located integrated Youth SHS team have us brimming with possibilities, which we are already seeing, with more seamless access and support to Albury Project clients requiring a crisis response. We are also 'brimming' in a literal sense, with an office refurbishment on the cards for 2023 to accommodate our growing teams. Our lens for therapeutic environments has guided conversations about enhancing our outdoor spaces, which are well overdue for some upgrades. In consultation with the team and young people, and the vital knowledge and skills from our new community partners, Rotary Albury North, we are looking forward to working together on these upcoming projects. Watch this space!

This Year At Broughton House:



57

People accommodated



5301

nights of accommodation



18

Stays in medium term housing



39

Crisis stays

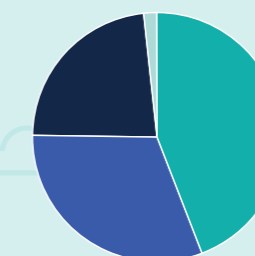
People Using Youth Homelessness Services:

Total Young People

114

28%

identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander



- Under 16 years
- 16 to 17 years
- 18 to 19 years
- 20 to 24 years



The Hive Youth Resource Centre



The Hive Youth Resource Centre aims to create a safe, accessible, and welcoming space for young people to attend and participate in a wide range of recreational, educational, therapeutic, and developmental activities. The Hive provides young people with 'Somewhere to Go, Something to Do and Someone to Talk to'. The Hive is open to young people for Chill Out after school hours Wednesday to Friday - a facilitated space in which young people can engage in recreational activities and receive support, information and referrals, if required. The Hive runs several structured therapeutic group work programs, which change per term based on needs and trends. A free School Holiday Program runs at the end of each term, and combines recreational activities such as rock climbing, laser tag etc. with educational and developmental activities such as Sexual Health, and Employment workshops.

It has been a tough, yet productive year at The Hive, with a big focus on rebuilding and reconnecting after a few disrupted years, impacted by frequent closures and many restrictions on client work, group work and community activities. Although

this has been incredibly challenging for staff and young people who are frequent users of The Hive, the team have put in an amazing effort and have continued to achieve strong outcomes.

A lot of effort has gone into refining our Youth Resource Centre model, inspired by the concept of creating a local 'Market Place' for young people, acting as an accessible, youth friendly and well-integrated access point to the broader youth service spectrum. We look forward to some opportunities in the new year to start connecting with and learning from other centres around the state. Our Chill Out program continues to grow, and although many young people present just to have fun and join in on activities, we often see this become a pathway for accessing more intensive support.

Our work on our model has led us to implement a Welcome Worker in the front space. As the name suggests, this is all about giving warm welcomes to young people attending for Chill Out, and assessing what has brought them in. Somewhere to go, Something to do, Someone to talk to. It's been wonderful to welcome back our external partners, Community Health and Personnel Group, to provide services for young people from the space. We continue to look at growing the broader



The Hive Youth Resource Centre

accessibility of our Youth Resource Centre by expanding the opening hours and programs, to ensure we are meeting presenting needs and getting optimal youth participation in the centre.

Reach and access will be the core focus over the next 12 months and making sure we are reaching the young people in our community who most need it. In doing this work we have strengthened relationships with Lavington Square and security guard staff, working together to provide proactive support to young people they may come across in the shopping centre. We have been working closely with Albury City on their Community Connect Program, which brings stakeholders together for a 'Pop up Style' day in the park with a BBQ and games, aiming to promote community cohesion and providing an opportunity to reach families in the safety of their community, who we might not see coming through the door.

Something we missed the most during Covid was our work onsite in schools and we've been thrilled to reboot our wide range of group work programs, like RAGE and Feeling Fantastic, as well as more specialist and targeted groups such as Art Therapy and Al's Skate Park skateboarding program. We have worked closely with Kandeer, offering a range of group work and lunch time activities and are seeing this convert to students attending The Hive and accessing the broader Youth Spectrum.

A highlight is the Aboriginal Weaving Group made up of young people across the three public high schools. The need for some cultural connection for Aboriginal girls was raised across all school-based teams earlier this year. The Hive worked with Yes Unlimited Aboriginal Welcome Worker Davina, local Elder Aunty Margaret, and young people to roll out a weekly weaving group. Most young people attended every week, allowing for the group to develop a high level of trust and safety with not only the facilitators, but also The Hive staff. There was so much pride in the group, and a lovely sense of connection for the people involved. We were pleased to see many of these young people become more frequent users of The Hive and services, as well as seeing some of these participants apply to become Yes Changemakers.



Our Work - The Hive:

Young person (Female 14) started attending Chill out after school to hang out and have some fun. As she began building her relationship with staff, it was quickly identified that there was a lot going on for her away from The Hive. She had started disengaging from school and her family, who were all reporting increases in challenging behaviours and absconding from home. Staff worked hard to engage the family and young person in targeted sessions, focusing on getting things back on track. This included supporting her to re-engage in alternative education, targeted therapeutic sessions on healthy relationships, and referrals for NDIS support. Throughout this process, staff strengthened the relationship with the young person's family and became a key support in helping the family access other support services. This is one family that we would never have reached with traditional methods, and is one of the many examples of how the low-pressure engagement opportunities of Chill Out can be a platform for further support access for hard to reach young people and families.

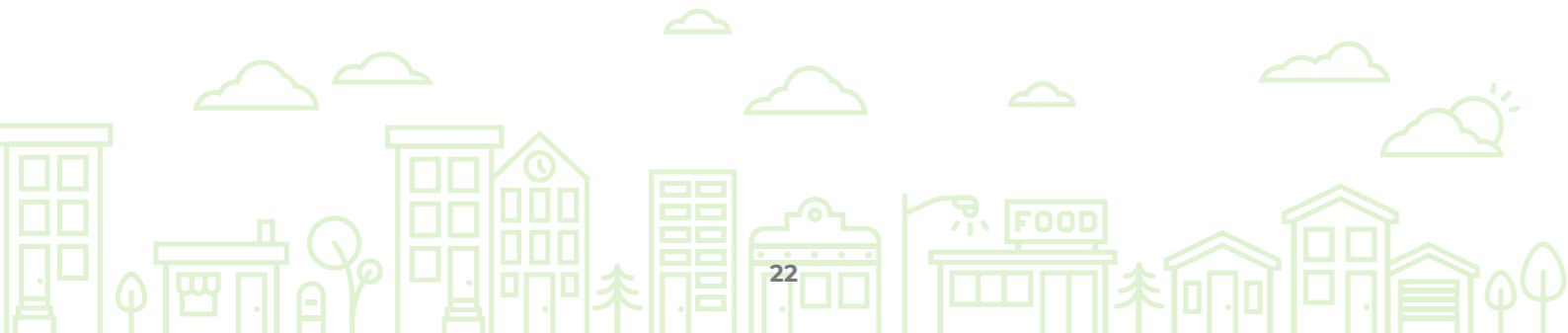
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Kandeer is a school for Specific Purpose, with many of the students coming from complex trauma backgrounds or living in Out of Home Care. At the start The Hive was attending our school weekly, with a focus on filling our lunch time with low pressure engagement activities and games. This has grown to delivering a mix of targeted group work, awareness raising activities with students, as well as targeted case management and family support. We are now seeing that many of our students attend The Hive after school. The Hive's engagement with Kandeer has had profound positive impacts on the Kandeer school and students, and we hope this continues into the future."

Emma Hawkins
Student Support Officer, Kandeer

681
occasions of advice, information & referral



Using a Community of Schools and Services model, The Albury Project supports young people to respond to factors in their life that could increase their chances of one day becoming homeless or leaving school early. The project is a locally driven, systems-based response that surveys almost 2000 high school students a year, looking for indications that they may need some extra support. Embodying true early intervention, The Albury Project aims to pull schools and services together in an integrated matter, proactively identifying young people requiring support before risk factors escalate, or a crisis of some kind occurs.

The Albury Project finishes 2022 in a pleasingly strong position, given the categorical rollercoaster we've experienced during the four-year pilot period. We always knew this kind of collective approach to local systems change would be a process, however little did we know some of the hurdles that would eventuate along the way! Our work in the first year was very much dominated by early program rollout issues. Timelines were pushed out as we worked through a cross-departmental Memorandum of Understanding, a Privacy Impact Audit and negotiated an appropriate contractual framework for a community driven approach, that was somewhat unfamiliar to government funders. Just as this was resolved, we received the follow up blow of a global pandemic, which drastically limited our ability to be onsite in schools, and like the rest of the world, disrupted all the usual ways we do things.

This year however, the Project has absolutely hit its stride and we can see the benefits we all hoped to achieve begin to emerge. As you can see in the following Parity article early outcome indicators are promising, showing a reduction in school disengagement since the project commenced, and for young people who were identified as 'at-risk of homelessness in any year', after support through the Albury Project, about half were no longer at-risk 12 months later.

Fundamental to all of this is the relationship between the three schools; James Fallon, Albury and Murray High, and the services involved; headspace Albury Wodonga, Community Mental Health and Albury City Council. Our school-based teams have done all the heavy lifting, meeting fortnightly to coordinate and plan our collective responses for young people.

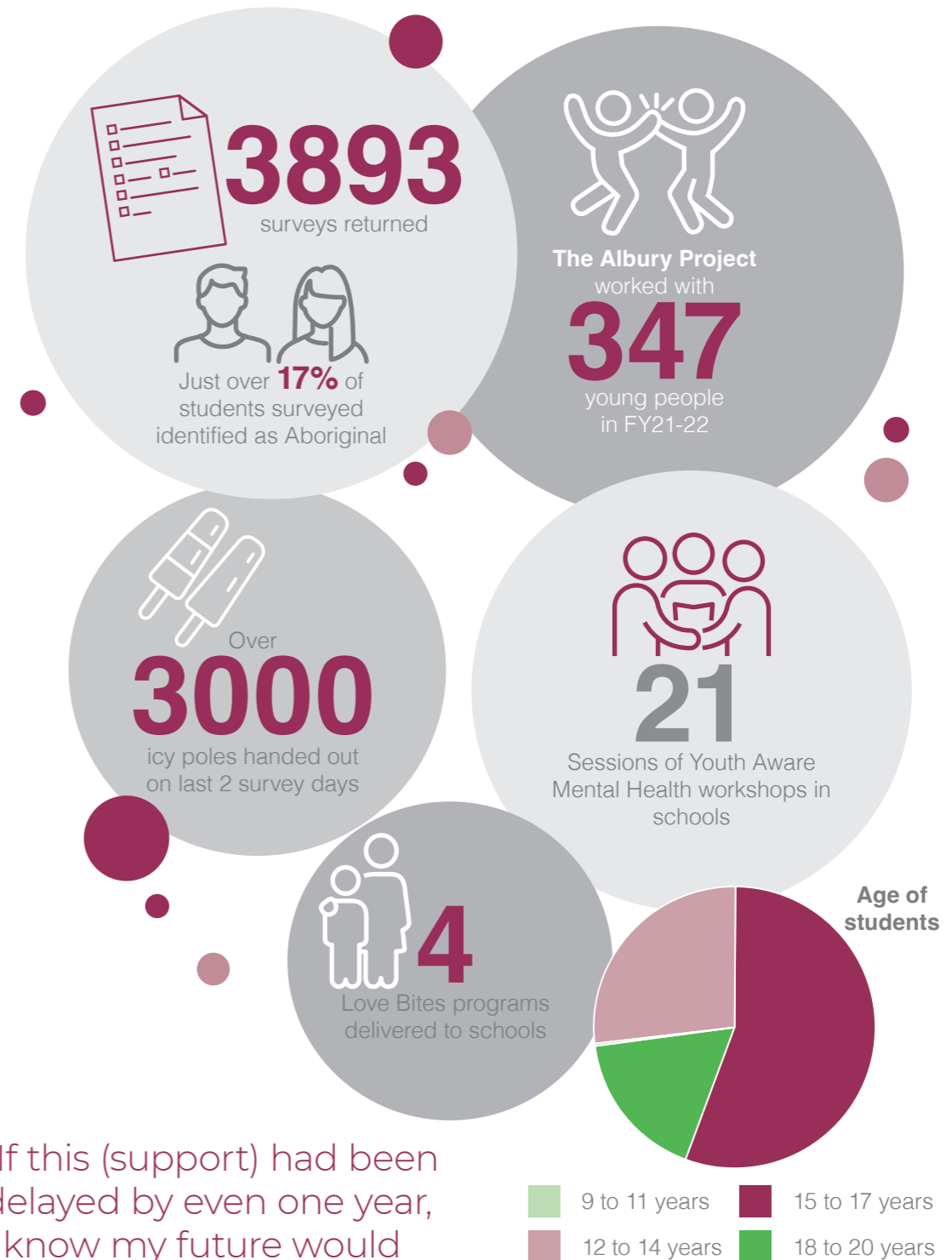
Defining and refining process has been a major area of recent work as we learn how to make this approach work on an operational level.

More people and more partnerships are more complex, but together we are undoubtedly more effective! There is something unique about this way of working that is difficult to describe, the high levels of trust, coupled with a mutual commitment towards our common objective is special and it very much feels like the schools and the services are working as one team. A sincere thank you to our partners who have hung in there and made it all possible.

Working in this way has also allowed us to see and understand the gaps and issues experienced by young people in the school environment with greater perspective. Following a strategic planning session with the Project partners in the middle of the year we have identified a few important areas of work moving forward:

1. We need the Albury Project to continue and a commitment from the NSW government for sustainable funding. The gains of over five years of work cannot be lost and we'll be advocating hard for the future of the Project.
2. Mental health needs are increasing and responses for school aged students are inadequate, and we believe the Albury Project provides the perfect scaffolding to maximize additional mental health resources.
3. The Albury Project partners are beginning to develop a collective understanding of how 'trauma' as a dynamic is very much present in schools, and that schools are fundamental in containing much of the distress, mental ill health, and general struggles of a community. We want to build a trauma informed community of schools and services that is proactively addressing this rather than reacting to it.

"The Albury Project has been an invaluable initiative that has brought our school and services together in a streamlined and cohesive manner, the benefits to students and their families has been life changing."
Cara Ross, Youth Outreach Worker/Student Support Officer Albury High School.



"If this (support) had been delayed by even one year, I know my future would have been very different"

Albury Project Participant





Program Manager Report

Thinking about the past two years, I'm drawn to two overarching themes; reconnecting with the work and increasing our practice excellence.

We have progressed some important areas of work, and achieved really positive outcomes together with our clients, community and partners, despite the challenges of a pandemic, an increasingly tight rental market, and the ever-growing cost of living alongside stagnant wages. I'm grateful that our strong foundation of Values, Culture and our Model of Practice allowed us to navigate this rapidly changing landscape.

The impacts of the national housing crisis have been felt in Albury and there has been significant pressure on our local housing system. We have seen the demographic of people seeking support expanding to include people who would have previously been successful in obtaining private rentals. The flow on effect of this has been fewer social housing properties available for vulnerable people and families, skills shortages locally as people can't find accommodation, a lack of safe options for women leaving domestic and family violence situations, and exacerbated overcrowding.

The complexity of this context has given us plenty of opportunity to learn, be creative and flexible in responding to the diverse needs of people seeking support. Across the adult's spectrum in 2021 and 2022 we have supported over 2500 clients. In a

localised response to an increase in rough sleeping during this time, we worked closely with partners to create the Rough Sleeper Network, which provides assertive outreach and follow up support to a number of people across the Albury area. There was a renewed focus on creating a specialised response to supporting children in a refuge environment, and we also invested in growing our knowledge and practice around Housing First principles.

We have continued to grow our specialisation and confidence in the domestic and family violence (DFV) space, developing a clearer perspective on system challenges identified in the 'A Case for Change' research project, and a more rapid and comprehensive response to people in DFV crisis, to fill a gap in the system.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the amazing people and organisations that we regularly work with. We are truly grateful to have so many dedicated, experienced, and knowledgeable people in our local service system and we appreciate the genuine 'in it together' vibe. A special shout out to the Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Service - Linking Communities Network, who we are lucky enough to co-locate with and provide a genuinely integrated response alongside. Thank you to the team at the Women's Centre for Health and Wellbeing, and to all of the incredible staff at our local Housing NSW and Homes Out West offices. We do not take for granted the strong sense of partnership and the amazing relationships that we have built over the years. To the team at AWAHS, thank you for being so open to leveraging each other's strengths and for always striving for the best outcomes for the people who we support. Thank you also for your generosity in providing your time and cultural expertise. There are many more services that we have worked closely with over the past 2 years, including the amazing organisations who provide outreach services from the Hub, we are so appreciative of all the great work happening in our community. Ending homelessness, as well as domestic and family violence, can only happen when we work together.

I can't wrap up this report without an enormous show of gratitude to the staff in our Adults and Families team - talk about A-team! Thank you for bringing so much passion and energy to the work. All the curve balls of the last two years have only strengthened our resolve and determination to provide the best responses for clients that we can. Bring on 2023!

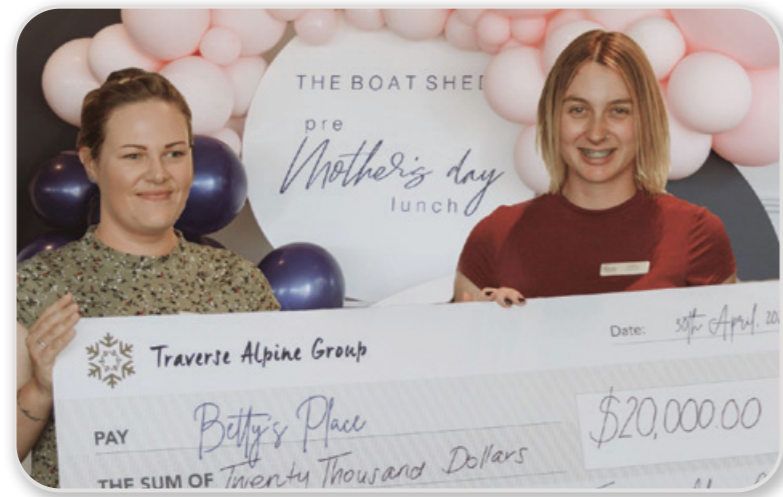
Kira Pace
Program Manager Adults and Family Services



Staying Home Leaving Violence and Betty's Place Women's Refuge

Betty's Place Women's Refuge provides crisis accommodation combined with a comprehensive program that includes individualised case management and wellbeing supports. In addition, case managers provide outreach support to families, in particular women and children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and those experiencing domestic and family violence in our local community.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program based at Betty's Place focuses on supporting women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence (DFV) to remain in their own home if they choose to, or find alternative housing quickly, as well as providing support that enhances their sense of safety and stability. It is an intensive, needs-based case management model that works with key agencies such as the Police, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS), health services, Housing NSW and other services as part of a collaborative response to DFV.



Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is an urgent and critical social issue damaging our community and individuals who experience it. In the last 12 months alone, Yes Unlimited provided DFV support to 258 women. In 2021 there were 404 incidents of domestic and family violence responded to by police in the Albury LGA. This ranks us as 22nd in the state out of 128 NSW's LGA. We know this is just the tip of the iceberg as many women will never report DFV and are not included in these figures. As DFV becomes more socially recognised and prevalent, we are seeing a pressing need to increase specialisation and integration across the sector.

As part of our ongoing growth, we have created a specialised training schedule and have been refining our case management tools and practice to ensure consistent quality and responses. Organisationally, we are confident in our knowledge base, practice wisdom and service responses and with more growth projected in this area over the next few years, we will continue to invest in both our organisational response, as well as the local DFV system. There has been a particular focus on the experience of children in the refuge and creating a more therapeutic and culturally appropriate refuge environment, which was supported by a Border Trust grant. We also invested in our staff attending the Australian Childhood Foundation Conference and have since introduced a number of new 'child focused' processes and spaces in the refuge.

Like the rest of the community, the biggest challenge we have faced is the lack of affordable housing, resulting in longer refuge stays for clients and unnecessarily long case management periods. In 2021, in partnership with the Albury Wodonga Border Domestic Violence Network, Yes commissioned a research project 'A Case for Change: Domestic and Family Violence in Albury-Wodonga' to evaluate the cross-border service responses to DFV and review the existing communal refuge model of Betty's Place.

Historically, Betty's Place has served an important purpose for our community. The research highlighted the need for evolution, and to acknowledge Betty's legacy by setting Betty's Place up well to meet the changing needs of women and children. The evidence base around the 'core and cluster' model of crisis accommodation has been rapidly growing in Victoria. By the time the NSW Government announced their own core and cluster funding, we had already commenced the work to develop a new refuge for Albury, based on Samantha Donnelly's best practice design guide, in consultation with staff, clients, and partner services. Additionally, the 'Making Betty's Better' campaign was launched, with a goal to raise \$1million in donated funds to support the redevelopment.

The other component of 'A Case for Change' focused on local service responses. Throughout the research process, we heard over and over from the women who use our services, as well as people working in the sector and clients, that the DFV service system is clunky and difficult to navigate. This was especially true in Albury, given the absence of a governmental framework for service provision. We have multiple funding streams and ad hoc programs without any mechanism for cohesion, and by necessity are relying on relationships and goodwill to create an integrated system. The project highlighted local reform agenda, geared towards designing a coordinated systems response to DFV in Albury outlining the following recommendations.



The Together Home program is a \$36.1m investment by the NSW Government that was established to support people rough sleeping across NSW during the COVID-19 pandemic into stable accommodation, linked to wraparound supports. Based on Housing First principles, its key aim is to transition people away from homelessness and into long-term, stable housing, whilst improving overall personal wellbeing. Local community housing provider Homes Out West provides access to private rental properties through a 'head leasing' arrangement and partners with Yes Unlimited to provide intensive, trauma informed support to clients, to address the underlying factors that may have contributed to their experience of homelessness.

Our organisation has had an interest in Housing First principles for many years, closely watching the success of the model in countries such as Finland where they have essentially achieved 'functional zero' homelessness. Housing First is an internationally recognised model that prescribes safe and permanent housing as the priority for people experiencing homelessness. Whilst models vary, the key foundational principle of the Housing First model is that safe and secure housing is provided prior to, rather than conditional upon, participation in more intensive supports. This approach frames housing as a human right and posits that it is only with a stable and secure sense of home that a person can really begin to address some of the bigger issues they may be experiencing.

We were so excited about the opportunity to put some of this thinking into practice through the Together Home program. We have seen some of our most vulnerable clients successfully obtain properties with no tenancy breaches, gain employment, address longstanding mental health struggles, reconnect with their children and community, and link in with all the right supports to begin to live independently. None of this would have been possible without the incredible partnership between Homes Out West and Housing NSW - Department of Communities and Justice. Without these partnerships and the collective commitment to the Housing First principles, the program would not have been so successful.

To complement the program, we were able to secure several High Needs Packages which provided over \$75k in additional funding. Some of this has been allocated to extra program support worker time, which meant that we could increase the intensity of support being provided. We have also been able to assist clients to access psychological

assessments and personalised mental health care plans, in-house support to work on living skills and one client was even able to secure a new car to support her independence.

These successes don't come without some challenges. With the lack of housing stock available to social and community housing providers, we have not been able to give a true housing first response to some of our clients. This impacted the capacity of the program to increase the number of support packages locally, because without housing options, it is impossible to provide a housing first response. This has been a real shame for the Albury area as we have been able to identify a number of clients who would greatly benefit from a housing first approach.

Whilst there has been an announcement for funding of the Together Home program, we are not aware of what it will include, and the future of the Together Home program is unclear. What we know is that a housing first approach has been extremely beneficial for our most vulnerable clients with complex situations throughout the Albury area. Seeing the smile on Cheryl's face in the following story is enough to convince us that Housing First needs to become a central part of our ongoing response to homelessness in Australia.

Cheryl's Story Working with Together Home

We recently had the pleasure of conducting interviews with clients who had been supported in the Together Home Program, to learn about how they experience our work together and reflect on the progress they felt they had made. Cheryl graciously agreed to share some of her reflections.

"At first... I was a bit hesitant because I didn't want to become a failure. I didn't want to feel like I was a failure if I, um, set up too many high expectations. Sometimes I'll fail, cause I'm not ready yet. I was a bit worried about that. You got me to do little steps, that helped."

"I didn't want to be a failure to myself or anyone else, but as it progressed, I was okay. And being back on medication helps. And my health has been better, so I'm happy with that."

"I like to do... I'm not a quitter, but sometimes I will quit if it's too hard. But then I'll try again, get a second bearing, give it another go".

When Cheryl was highlighting how she felt she had gone in the program, she highlighted the changes in her life since participating in the Together Home program.

"Hmmm... a lot. My self-respect is back. Even though people might put me down cause of my past, I know what I've achieved. They only say that cause they're jealous cause I have achieved, and they're still in the rough areas."

"Hu-hum. And I'm starting to trust the right people now, where before I didn't know that I was worthy of their friendships, you know. Cause the right people don't judge your past, cause we've all got a past."

"I've always said it's the little things in life that make me happy. But if I'm not happy within myself, it's not gonna work out. You've got to be happy within yourself first."

When asked what she felt about the support from Yes Unlimited and Homes Out West:

"Perfect. I wouldn't be here otherwise. They could help me pay the bills (laughs)... They don't judge me."



Transitional and CAP

Yes Unlimited medium-term Transitional and CAP (Crisis Accommodation Program) properties are available to Specialist Homelessness Service case-managed clients for up to 6 months. These properties are intended to provide a period of stability while clients are supported to address the issues that have led to their current housing situation. Transitional and CAP housing properties are managed by Homes Out West (Community Housing), who take care of the tenancy and property, coupled with SHS case managers who provide the support to maintain the property and work on any other issues identified in the client's support plan.

The transitional program can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand it provides an option for accommodation, while on the other, it keeps the person in a situation where they are technically homeless with a temporary tenancy. It does, however, offer the opportunity for people to begin to stabilise and prepare for whatever comes next, when long term options are in such short supply. Most referrals into the transitional program come from a refuge setting, couch surfing or other temporary accommodation, and pleasingly the majority have exited the transitional program into long term housing options.



Client Story – CAP

Client was previously renting a private property owned by her mother. Her mother sold the property after family breakdown, leading to the client couch surfing for 12 months. The client was unsuccessful in applying for private rentals as she did not have any formal references, and the strong competition in the rental market. The client was nominated for a CAP property under a head leased property with Homes Out West for a five month period. Given she was such a great tenant, the real estate agent agreed to allow her take over the lease in her own name, and she now has a rental history and a secure tenancy.

"I am just so grateful for the opportunity and for someone to give me a fresh start".

Client Story – Transitional

A young woman who was caring for her two younger sisters had been couch surfing for nine months and had to leave her employment due to homelessness. Her sisters had also disengaged from education due to a lack of a fixed address and the instability of their situation. The client was approved for a transitional property and after commencing the lease, she was able to regain employment. Further, the stability provided through the program meant that both her sisters became re-engaged in school and are utilising the Hive. She has reconnected with family and culture, is volunteering with a local organisation and they are now well positioned for an offer of long-term housing.

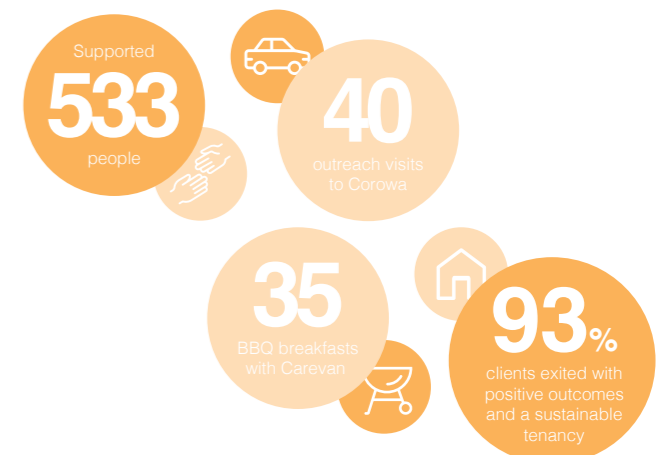
Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing

The Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing (STSH) pilot program works with people living in social housing to provide support around a range of issues that may have an impact on their tenancies, with the aim of preventing people from needing to enter the homelessness system due to losing their social housing tenancy. Supports provided vary widely and include practical and financial assistance, assistance to navigate social housing processes, referrals to more specialised services, and general supports to improve people's wellbeing. Yes Unlimited provides the service directly in Albury and sub-contracts to partner agency Linking Communities Network in Griffith. The program is funded for a four-year pilot period, and we've recently received a 12 month extension.

When we first heard about the Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing (STSH) pilot program, we weren't sure exactly how it would look, but were excited by the prospect of working with people who regularly presented to our homelessness services, before they had actually lost their tenancy. We know how difficult it can be for someone to access social housing again after a failed tenancy, and often the tenancy has ended due to factors outside of the person's control, or from a lack of awareness of services and support options that could have assisted them to stay in their home. The cost of tenancy breakdown is significant, not only financially, but also personally, in terms of wellbeing and broader social outcomes.

The four-year pilot period has been a journey, and we are proud of the learning, development and ultimately the contributions that we have been able to make to shape what we believe is a fantastic program. In the beginning we found we were seeing the 'pointy end' of client need – people close to crisis point who had been managing or surviving through substantial adversity and complex support needs, which inevitably put pressure on their housing. The support that we were able to provide at this time was limited due to the complexity of need, alongside incredibly high caseload expectations, meaning that we were not able to deliver the level of intensity that we would have liked.

We could see this tension early on and identified that the kind of resourcing available through STSH could be maximised by working with clients at earlier points in their tenancy. We worked closely with the team at Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Housing to develop processes around engaging people in the program earlier and advocated that the program structure reflect this, with reduced case load targets and a clearer early intervention focus. Supports provided vary widely and include practical and financial assistance, assistance to



navigate social housing processes, referrals to more specialised services (health, mental health, aged care, NDIS), and general supports to improve people's wellbeing.

While the practical aim of this program is to maintain tenancies, the 'therapeutic task' is to support people to feel comfortable, proud and happy in their homes. There is also a focus on strengthening the relationship between tenants and DCJ Housing, and we are lucky to work with a tenancy team who are so committed to collaboration. The housing system can be frustrating and investing in relationships between tenants and DCJ Housing has immediate benefits that will potentially continue for many years.

This year we celebrated the end of the STSH pilot with the team at DCJ Housing. The future of STSH is not entirely concrete at this stage, but we are optimistic that the results speak for themselves. The program has since been rolled out in additional sites across NSW, with many improvements and adjustments that were recommended by the Yes Unlimited team. This is a credit to the amazing case managers who have all been with the program from the start. It has been so rewarding to see the passion, investment, effort, and impact that this work has resulted in!

Centralised Intake, Assessment and Brief Intervention

Centralised Intake, Assessment and Brief Intervention

Our Centralised Intake, Assessment and Brief Intervention (CIAB) team is based at The Hub on 562 Macauley Street, providing the first response for people experiencing homelessness and related issues in Albury and surrounding areas. This is a unique, 'one-stop-shop' approach to simplifying service access and taking the burden of service navigation away from the client. CIAB aims to offer a warm and welcoming environment where people can stabilise after an initial crisis, provide immediate short-term support and facilitate easy access to the wider service system as required.

As the local access point for homelessness support, the impact of the housing crisis has been magnified for the Hub team, with many of the people presenting for support never having needed it before this current situation. It's been a frustrating time for the team, working in a system that in ideal circumstances is designed to move people quickly out of homelessness, into stable, secure and safe housing. We work hard to do whatever we can for the people we are here for, but without housing we cannot end homelessness.

While this has been a challenging time, it has also provided countless examples of the local service system pulling together, and we greatly appreciate the efforts of Foodshare and Carevan in working with us to provide emergency assistance. We've made a specific effort to invest in our relationships with local real estate agents, with CIAB specialist Jo Campbell meeting with agents regularly and providing a contact point when private tenancies may be in trouble. It has been important, now more than ever, to save an existing tenancy whenever we can.

We've worked closely with our partners to create a localised response to people rough sleeping, in and around Albury. The Rough Sleeper Network consists of local 'first points of contact' including Albury City Rangers, Carevan and NSW Police, along with housing and support services. It has meant that we have been able to create a coordinated plan to engage people with persistent and low-pressure response. There have been some great outcomes working in this way, with a number of people engaging with our service after many years of mistrust in services.

Our demand management framework became invaluable in enabling us to navigate pressure on our local systems. One particular strategy has been the integration of the Staying Home Leaving Violence case managers into The Hub access point. The case

managers were positioned to respond to complex and time-sensitive domestic and family violence situations. This has filled a gap locally around urgent and brief case management support and allowed us to provide a faster and more specialised response to people experiencing DFV. It also freed up space for our Centralised Intake and Brief Intervention Specialists to respond to the mounting pressure on the broader homelessness situation.

Our focus on creating a physical environment that is welcoming and containing was challenged during the initial period of the pandemic, and more acutely at the beginning of 2022 with an increase in Covid-19 numbers locally. The team implemented a variety of measures to manage the risks, trying to balance this with providing a sense of containment and therapeutic care for our clients. We have continued to navigate Covid-related restrictions and barriers, unfavourable rental markets, a vacancy rate that has remained low, alongside the winding back of extra support around Covid payments and provisions for people to isolate safely.

The CIAB response has adapted to the environment, learning and pivoting as we go. We have continued to offer flexible access options including phone and Zoom appointments and have noticed an increase in appointment follow through when we include these choices. Throughout this period however, it became increasingly clear to us just how irreplaceable face-to-face work is, particularly when people are distressed. We were very excited to re-open the doors and welcome back clients and our partner services to provide outreach from the Hub and again focus on our therapeutic environment, aiming to provide a space where people feel welcome, heard, and supported. It's definitely feeling like we have our 'old' Hub vibe back, something we are very grateful for.



Reflections from the Yes Unlimited Aboriginal Welcome Worker

The Earth has completed one more lap orbiting the Sun.

In orbit for 365 days, the Earth has completed just one lonely lap of the Sun. Each day during this journey in space the Earth will continue to spin around giving us both night and day, and not a single thought about it from us is required. It is continuous and we can be assured of that. There's a sense of confidence we experience from this, of being safe and secure. In some ways this is like the experience Yes aims to provide those we are entrusted to work with, a service safe to confide in, with a team of people to count on. How do we achieve this? How have we spent our time during this journey of Earth orbiting the Sun?

Looking back and reflecting on many memorable Yes moments, there's a couple deserving of a mention. Perhaps the biggest change was news delivered to me on return from some leave that Jade's role in the Youth Team had expanded to have a specialised focus on Indigenous young people.

I had known Jade was Indigenous, his mob is the Gamilaraay. Jade lives in Albury and has been part of the community his whole life. Already having this familiar footing, and with experience in the youth space, moving in this direction made a lot of sense. During previous years of working through lots of adjustments, supporting Jade in this role has been the most welcomed and easiest change to embrace. Aiming to complement the strengths and skills of each other, Jade and I can work collaboratively to support young Indigenous people in the Hive space, whilst Jade can also provide support across the Yes spectrum to Indigenous men. Jade also provides a pathway and connection to Indigenous youth services for the rest of our team, he has been a resource for colleagues who work with the parents of Indigenous youth and plays a pivotal element in supporting me in my day-to-day role.

My role has continued to strategically position me each Friday at AWAHS. This year Jade began attending alongside me each morning. We've made the most of being in an environment which has had cultural considerations embedded throughout its grounds, extending an invite to colleagues to stop

by, visit with us, walk through the spaces, feel, see and experience the atmosphere. It is different. An Elder shared their approval in watching me take a colleague around the grounds, encouraging me to bring more so that "they can experience what it feels like to be in a space and feel out of place, they won't know otherwise". It wasn't said with bitterness, it was said with hope. A hope that a willingness to immerse oneself in unfamiliar cross-cultural experiences will, after the period of discomfort subsides, provide the individual a learned understanding and respectful appreciation for the cultural needs, practices and societal challenges Aboriginal people endure every day. This invitation will remain open to staff, both old and new. It works so well that AWAHS is now the location new Yes staff are invited to attend when completing their Induction process. The facilitation of accessibility will always be one of the key drivers behind having an Identified Yes worker regularly on location at AWAHS. It has been utilised by AWAHS staff seeking secondary consultation for their own clients, community who require brief intervention and information about other services, and as an Intake and Assessment option to ease pressure in the CIA space at times. Relationships with the AWAHS Team have become trusted and comfortably familiar, and things look set to continue this way into the future.



Reflections from the Yes Unlimited Aboriginal Welcome Worker

Another essential relationship to the supportive client work Yes does is with Dwayne Broome, HNSW's Specialist Aboriginal Client Services Officer, who is an important connection for our organisation. Dwayne's professional insight, guidance and critical knowledge has been besought by many at Yes, seeking his input and collaboration around improving the housing situation of clients. Dwayne's involvement and partnership has contributed numerous times to the successful housing outcomes we have seen for our clients. So, when approached by VERTO for suggestions of a local NAIDOC event VERTO could financially support, the idea of hosting a joint Neighbourhood NAIDOC BBQ was created. It was brought to reality through the work of Rebecca Bryant from VERTO, Dwayne Broome and I. Our small consort braved the chill and did our best to grill sausages on a lukewarm hotplate for the tenants residing around Eastern Circuit Playground in East Albury. That week there were many NAIDOC Week celebrations held across Albury and Wodonga at various locations and Organisations.

The main NAIDOC event held at the Gateway Island was, from all reports, the biggest NAIDOC celebration Albury Wodonga has seen. Yes decided to show support by attending on the day, and in addition made a financial commitment of being a Silver Sponsor of the local NAIDOC event. The Hives latest giant game of Guess Who was laid out on the grass for the first time, with a quick impromptu changing of the Guess Who characters from the standard European boardgame characters to coloured indigenous prints displaying native Australian animals, which proved to be popular with families throughout the day. Connect Four kept the crews from the fire and emergency



services occupied, and the bean bags provided a comfortable place to relax in between enjoying the live entertainment and browsing the stalls.

Opportunities for collaborative partnerships like these that engage the Indigenous Community continue to provide a way of offering safe places for individuals to develop trust in presenting Services and allows Services to interact with the people they want and need to hear direction from. Stepping outside the office and being among the Community provides some of the greatest sources of information and knowledge available, and recent consultations held with local Aboriginal Women's Groups and the CALD community for the Making Betty's Better campaign are testament to that.

One action that demonstrated Yes understands the responsibility it has in influencing society to seek a genuine reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, and the one I found most touching, was the firm support shown from the organisation during Reconciliation Week. All staff were encouraged to attend and be present for the Albury City Councils Reconciliation Day Flag raising Ceremony at QEII Square. This expression of the commitment by Yes choked me up a bit. I won't try to act tough, it still does as I write and reflect on it today. It illustrated to me a real and authentic position Yes has favouring reconciliation and truth as an important priority of the Organisation, and I feel fortunate to be a part of the process.

The next year won't be without challenges, no year is. But with perseverance and dedication, challenges can become celebrations and moments to be proud to be a part of.

Completion of one singular lap orbiting the Sun might not seem like a big achievement over the course of a whole year. Yet it is the trusted continuous progress and the action of consistent and reliable spinning that brings upon us both night and then day that accomplishes the biggest achievement, providing a constant reliable experience of safety and containment, which Yes strives to provide year after year, all whilst orbiting lap after lap.

Big achievements can sometimes be small things.

Davina Jackson
Aboriginal Welcome Worker

I am so proud to present the 2021/2022 Community Engagement report this year. Even though we have had some disruptions and the work in this space has looked different in this time, we have remained really connected to our community and continued working with a variety of people and groups, on a range of local initiatives. I am so proud of the genuine sense of collaboration we have with our wonderful community, it feels like we have a strong team working with us on achieving our purpose of Investing in People, Building Better Communities. Although there is lots to celebrate, some of the key achievements include:

New Ways Of Promoting Our Service

We have been doing a lot of thinking about our service reach and how we can raise awareness, particularly of our domestic and family violence services (DFV). With this in mind, we were excited to partner with the Regent Cinema to develop two cinema advertisements. The first ad aims to educate the community about DFV, highlighting that DFV violence can affect anyone, anywhere, in many ways. The second ad showcases The Hive, as a talent focused, early intervention space for young people in Lavington. We have also had the opportunity to advertise our DFV services creatively and discreetly, on the back of purchase receipts at several well-known shopping locations across Albury Wodonga. Alongside this we have commenced a partnership with Albury City, where we are attending Pop Up events in the community, this is providing invaluable opportunities to connect with people in the safety of their neighbourhoods and talk about not only the range of services we provide, but also local concerns and issues.



Awareness Building

We've worked hard to raise awareness on issues important to our work at Yes Unlimited. During lock downs we held many virtual events including:

- R U OK? Day
- Wear It Purple Day
- Genes for Jeans Day, teaming up with Housing NSW Albury for a fundraiser
- World Suicide Prevention Day, where we joined in with virtual activities with Wellways

We have continued our collaboration with Westend Plaza, where we created an interactive display for Homelessness Persons Week. As things have returned to normal, we have re-commenced working with a number of partners and groups on upcoming events and fundraisers.

Developing Stronger Partnerships With Charity Groups

With so many community supporters we were often finding ourselves inundated with donations of goods such as clothes and furniture. Although we value these contributions, the volume being offered to Yes Unlimited was unsustainable in terms of the workload associated with storage and distribution of donated goods, which was taking away from our day to day support work with people. We have done some solid work on building partnerships with organisations and groups who are already well placed to manage these donations and we offer a huge thanks to Uniting Care Albury, Tots 2 Teens and Carevan for collaborating with us on this and working with us to ensure we are all doing the work we are best placed to do.

Financial Donations

We are so grateful for the ongoing financial donations, support and interest from our community. Whether big or small, it all contributes to the work we do and allows us to do things that are a bit out of the box, ensuring we can offer a truly personalised response to our clients, based on what they really need.

What's Next?

One of the big things on our radar is the launch of the Making Betty's Better campaign. This is receiving so much support from the community and I'm so excited to be involved in the big plans to raise the 1 million dollars we need!

We are so excited by all of the opportunities coming our way. We have lots of community events coming up, and as we get back out there, we have many ideas about how promotional items, and new and engaging pop-up gear will increase our presence, so watch this space!

Michelle Milligan

Community Engagement Coordinator



WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Solution lies with everyone

Government and community must collaborate: Albury MP



“No one could have predicted that we were going to go through a pandemic and there would be such a significant increase in homelessness in the region. It is a crisis that is not going to go away overnight. We need to work together to find a solution that works for everyone.”

Albury MP, **Mark Latham**, has called for a new approach to homelessness, saying that the current system is broken and that a new model is needed. He says that the government and the community must work together to find a solution that works for everyone.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Animals the silent victims



“It's awful... these people are just lost birds.”

Animals are the silent victims of the homelessness crisis, says Albury MP Mark Latham. He says that many animals are being abandoned by their owners and are left to fend for themselves on the streets.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Virus takes out candidate

Too many workers face

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will not be running in the upcoming election. He says that he has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and that he is not fit to campaign.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Crook left cops a vital clue

Siblings funeral

A car thief has been caught after a police officer noticed a suspicious license plate. The thief was caught in the act of stealing a car from a parking lot.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

The Border Mail

Safeguard young lives



Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to safeguard young lives. The bill aims to provide better support for young people who are at risk of homelessness.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

'I wouldn't be here today'

How this project saved a young life



A young man who was once homeless is now thriving thanks to a project in Albury. He says that the project gave him a chance to start a new life and that he wouldn't be there today without their help.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

We weren't brave, we found a way

20 years a lesson from violence

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help victims of domestic violence. The bill aims to provide better support for women who have been abused.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Wodonga team 'shovel ready' and willing

Back to Melbourne

A team of volunteers in Wodonga is ready to help with the homelessness crisis. They are offering their services to anyone who needs them.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Branch out in safe space

MAJOR SAFETY REVIEW

A major safety review has been conducted at a homelessness service in Albury. The review found that the service is safe and effective.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Flash mob shimmering for a good cause

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be organizing a flash mob to raise awareness of the homelessness crisis. The flash mob will take place in the city center.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

To thrive, not just survive in this life

JOIN THE TEAM

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people thrive in their lives. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Suffering from Spider Veins?

RECOGNISE NOT DENY

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people suffering from spider veins. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

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Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people suffering from spider veins. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Looking for staff with digital skills?

Your time is now

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people looking for staff with digital skills. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

JOIN THE TEAM

KEEPING AUSTRALIA MOVING

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people join the team. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

JOIN THE TEAM

KEEPING AUSTRALIA MOVING

Albury MP Mark Latham has announced that he will be introducing a new bill to help people join the team. The bill aims to provide better support for people who are struggling.

BOOST FOR AGED CARE | FURY OVER TOWER SITE | MICK DEFIED THE ODDS

The Border Mail

NO HOME, NO HOPE

The Border and North East is facing a homelessness crisis on a scale never previously seen. Overwhelmed support services are struggling to cope with a dramatic increase in homelessness. From the workers who are reporting a 'whole new level of homelessness' with professionals and those with long term mental health issues, to the increasing number of people being found in the streets, the crisis is real.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

'I need to be given a chance'

IF YOU ASKED anyone who has experienced homelessness, they would tell you it's a life-changing experience. For many, it's a struggle to find a place to call home, a place where they can be safe and supported. The crisis is real, and it's affecting more and more people every day.



Support no help without housing

It's like groundhog day, I'm not going to get that place, wake up, do it again.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Forced into 'unsafe living'

FOR MANY, the struggle for a safe and stable home is a constant battle. The crisis is real, and it's affecting more and more people every day. The situation is dire, and the need for support is urgent.



Hope springs: Site for new women's refuge

There is a glimmer of hope for women seeking a safe and stable home. A new women's refuge is being established, providing a safe haven for those in need. The site is being developed, and the hope is that it will provide a better life for many women.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Jobs but no spare houses

THE CRISIS of homelessness is a complex one, involving a combination of factors. While there are jobs available, the lack of affordable housing is a major barrier. The situation is dire, and the need for support is urgent.



Jobs but no spare houses

It's a huge frustration for many people who are struggling to find a place to live. They have jobs, but they can't find a spare house. The situation is dire, and the need for support is urgent.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Not enough housing a policy fail

EDITORIAL: The current housing policy is a failure. It has not provided enough housing for the growing population. The situation is dire, and the need for support is urgent.



Letters to the Editor

Many readers have expressed their concerns about the current housing situation. The letters highlight the need for more affordable housing and better support services.

The Diary

A collection of local news items and community events. The diary provides a snapshot of life in the region.

HEARTBEAT AUSTRALIA SPECIAL REPORT

The Border Mail

REFUGE REVAMP

AS COUNTY'S AS YOU

EasyShed 02 6025 9948

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Jobs but no spare houses

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NEWS

A refuge from fear and pain

AS COUNTY'S AS YOU

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Jobs but no spare houses

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NEWS

\$3m bid to make Betty's better

AS COUNTY'S AS YOU



WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Too many left in the cold

AS COUNTY'S AS YOU




Too many left in the cold

It's a heartbreaking sight to see so many people struggling to find a place to live. The situation is dire, and the need for support is urgent.

WITHOUT A PLACE: NEW HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Hope springs: Site for new women's refuge

AS COUNTY'S AS YOU



Hope springs: Site for new women's refuge

There is a glimmer of hope for women seeking a safe and stable home. A new women's refuge is being established, providing a safe haven for those in need. The site is being developed, and the hope is that it will provide a better life for many women.

Dealer's time in prison is reduced

A local news item reporting on a court case. The dealer's time in prison has been reduced.



TORY

ANY VOICES



Jon Park
YES UNLIMITED CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER

We don't need more crisis services to pick up the pieces, we need federal, state and local governments to come together in developing a coherent national housing strategy that results in the tangible availability of more affordable housing. Our governments pulled out all stops in response to COVID-19, are Australians with nowhere to call home not equally deserving of this kind of response?



Amanda Finnemore
WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT ADVOCACY SERVICE - MURRAY RIVER MANAGER

Women and children experiencing domestic and family violence may decide they have no alternative but to remain in a violent relationship due to the lack of options to secure long-term safe housing ... it is unacceptable that women and children wishing to live their lives free of violence have little or no alternatives to achieve this.



Amanda Greenhow
WELLWAYS ALBURY CO-ORDINATOR

The current lack of access to safe and stable accommodation across our region is undeniably impacting on people with mental health and wellbeing concerns. It limits their ability to progress their recovery and live a happy and connected life.



Macky Cusick
YES UNLIMITED - YOUTH CHANGE MAKER

There are so many young people who face or have faced homelessness every day. Many young people don't get the opportunities to finish their schooling, which means many more will face the effects of homelessness well into adulthood, and will struggle into later life.



Jacki Eckert
GATEWAY HEALTH - POPULATION HEALTH, PERFORMANCE AND PLANNING GENERAL MANAGER

Many people recognise that homelessness is a serious problem but may not really understand how much it is often linked with other issues - family violence, addictions such as drugs, alcohol and gambling, as well as insecure employment and poor physical and mental health. It's only when people have a secure roof over their heads that they can begin to tackle the other issues in their lives more effectively. To make real progress we must have a lot more social housing in regional areas and strengthen the collaboration between health services and housing services.



Edwina Willet
ALBURY-WODONGA VOLUNTEER RESOURCE BUREAU - SETTLEMENT CASE MANAGER (WODONGA)

Since arriving on humanitarian visas from predominantly Africa and Asia, the families I support arrive with such ambition and focus to make their new life great in Australia. It is distressing that so much is now about negotiating with property managers and supporting families with housing issues. Currently I have three families who need to find a new home since eviction laws in Victoria were lifted.



Darryl Ward
ALBURY HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

In the last year we have seen worsening homelessness and its effects on local families and independent students, with some students having more difficulty engaging in their studies, and in more incidents related to mental health and domestic violence. We have increased our support of students, from mental health needs to practical assistance for meals, books and uniforms. This is a significant community issue and I strongly support initiatives to address it.



Stuart Baker
HEADSPACE CONSORTIUM CHAIRPERSON

The housing crisis is a complex and sorry situation that will require a compassionate whole-of-community response in the short term.



Cliff Jones
HOMES OUT WEST CEO

Access to affordable housing is critical to rebuilding people's lives. We need more!

... ONE CRISIS



Felicity Williams
THE CENTRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CEO

It is heartbreaking to hear that 70 or more people can be competing for one rental property in our regional centres. Many of them are 10 out of 10 rental propositions - yet they are unable to win the rental housing lottery. This housing crisis absolutely requires multiple novel, holistic and innovative community-based approaches to help resolve it.



Nicole Netherwood
WESTPAC ALBURY PERSONAL BANKING ASSISTANT & HEADSPACE VOLUNTEER

The lack of social housing has an enormous carry on effect through the indignity of sleeping rough or even couch hopping. Dignity and self-respect can be affected, leading to mental health issues.



Tracey Fraser
THE PERSONNEL GROUP (EMPLOYMENT AGENCY) CEO

You need stable housing to keep a job, you need to keep a job to have stable housing - it's a vicious cycle. There's a lot of stigma associated with being homeless; our staff are working with people who don't identify as homeless because they're sleeping on someone's couch. It's definitely a silent problem.



Lucie Shanahan
ALBURY-WODONGA HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS SERVICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Young people need safe and secure housing to engage in mental health recovery.



Leah Waring
NESAY CEO

Together we can create communities that are safe and provide what our young people need to thrive. A place to call home that is safe and affordable is a basic right and a critical factor to this success.



Celia Adams
BEYOND HOUSING CEO

Everyone should have a safe, secure and affordable home and the support they need to access it. The housing crisis in this region underlines how fundamental housing is to your wellbeing, dignity and opportunity. Housing is a human right, it is critical that, as a community, we demand action for more social and affordable housing. Housing ends homelessness.



Tamara Cikaitoga
HUME YOUTH RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION MIND AUSTRALIA TEAM LEADER

If there is no change to the availability of affordable, safe and secure housing within our local area we will continue to see a decline in mental health recovery for vulnerable young people and we can also expect it to have a domino effect throughout all aspects of their lives.



Michelle Fell
JUNCTION SUPPORT SERVICES CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER

Unless we invest in early intervention and housing stock, we will continue to see significant proportions of our community forced into homelessness.



Dr Heather Downey
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY SENIOR SOCIAL WORK LECTURER

Without access to affordable housing how can students fully commit to study and realise their potential? They are already juggling multiple commitments and housing stress is an additional pressure.





Doing it together

At Yes Unlimited we live and breathe our value of 'doing it together', and would like to acknowledge all of our partners for their continued commitment and contribution to our collective work to improve outcomes in our community.



We wish to acknowledge the many organisations, groups and individuals in our community for the time, effort, money and services donated over the past two years. We sincerely hope that those who prefer to remain anonymous are aware of our appreciation on behalf of our clients.

Yes Unlimited

- Albury City Central Church
- Albury Tigers Club Hey Sisters Lunch
- Alessi Mazda
- Annabelle Lowe
- Braden Oliver
- Brett Presnell
- Border Trust
- Commercial Club (Albury) Ltd
- DC ATO Sports Council & Social Club – Albury Charity Group

- Findex Community Fund (*donation to The Albury Project*)
- Diane Davey
- John & Janet Greenfield
- Kaye Ellis
- Lauren Blair
- Lauren Clarke
- Mitta Golf Club Ladies Committee
- MPSC Australia on behalf of Tallangatta Meat Processors

- Other Birds Agency (*previously Dutch Media*)
- Peter Tobin
- R & M Builders
- Roy Morgan Research – Hilda Living Australia
- Stuart and Belinda Lingham
- Susan Owen

Betty's Place

- 5 Ways Fishing & Social Club
- Albury Croquet Club
- Albury Wodonga Connected Communities
- Albury Wodonga Ionian Club
- Alessi Albury
- Alessi Australia
- Alessi Mazda
- Anna Cameron
- Brady's Social Club Golf Club
- Brodie Clarke
- Citigroup
- Commercial Club (Albury) Ltd
- F45 Albury Gym
- Findex Community Fund
- Greg Nightingale
- Hockey Albury Wodonga

- Holbrook R.S Women's Bowling Club
- IGA East Albury & Springdale Heights
- Inner Wheel Club of Wodonga
- Jen O'Neill
- Kotzur
- Lions Club of Lavington
- Marcella Larson-Banks
- Maree Petrow
- Mrs Elaine Mann
- Myer Centrepoint Plaza
- Nancy Farmer
- Phyllis Hodge
- Red Hat Society
- Rotary Club of Holbrook
- Service NSW Albury
- Shimmy Mob
- Sonia Gianvill

- Squad Employment & Training
- Stuart & Belinda Lingham
- The Hon. Susan P Ley
- The Shed
- Thurgoona Golf Ladies Committee
- Toyota Material Handling Australia
- Watters Electrical
- Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre
- Zoe Steers

A heartfelt thanks to the Traverse Alpine Group and all sponsors of the Betty's Place Mother's Day fundraising event.



Yes Unlimited
ABN: 63 002 580 681

Concise Financial Report
For the year ended 30 June 2022

Contents	
Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income	2
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Changes in Equity	4
Statement of Cash Flows	5
Notes to the Concise Financial Report	6
Directors' declaration	10
Independent auditor's report to the members	11

1

Yes Unlimited
Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income
For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue	2	5,873,336	5,151,326
Employment costs		3,969,373	3,608,069
Client Support Services		1,150,573	1,161,806
Depreciation/Amortisation		231,695	211,834
Motor Vehicle		16,454	10,271
Insurance		46,825	36,193
Interest		36,905	30,152
Rent		22,171	15,879
Other		409,846	517,212
		<u>5,863,842</u>	<u>5,991,405</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) before income tax		9,494	(440,079)
Income tax expense		-	-
Net surplus for the year		9,494	(440,079)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		9,494	(440,079)

2

Yes Unlimited
Statement of Cash Flows
For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities			
Cash receipts in the course of operations		333,767	532,589
Government and other funding received		5,499,111	5,368,753
Cash payments in the course of operations		(5,716,120)	(5,730,108)
Interest received		6,794	19,585
Interest paid		(26,905)	(30,152)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		96,647	160,667
Cash Flows from Investing Activities			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(27,913)	(28,960)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		1,205	338
Payment for investments		(7,753)	(141,181)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(34,539)	(169,823)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities			
Repayment of lease liabilities		(46,106)	(41,612)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from financing activities		(46,106)	(41,612)
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and cash equivalents held		16,002	(50,768)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		376,465	427,233
Cash and cash equivalents at the End of the Financial Year		392,467	376,465

5

Yes Unlimited
Notes to the concise financial report
For the year ended 30 June 2022

Note 1. Summary of significant accounting policies

Basis of preparation of the Concise Financial Report

The concise financial report is an extract of the full financial report for the year ended 30 June 2022. The concise financial report has been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standard AASB 1039: Concise Financial Reports.

The financial statements, specific disclosures and other information included in the concise financial report are derived from and are consistent with the full financial report of Yes Unlimited. The concise financial report cannot be expected to provide as detailed an understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of Yes Unlimited as the full financial report. A copy of the full financial report and auditor's report will be sent to any member, free of charge, on request.

Note 2. Revenue

The company has recognised the following amounts relating to revenue in the statement of profit or loss:

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue from Grants		
Recurrent government grants	3,820,492	3,302,322
Non-recurrent government grants	1,474,362	1,438,894
Grants - Other	387,528	72,075
	<u>5,682,378</u>	<u>4,813,291</u>
Other Income		
Fees for service	232,857	200,990
Interest	6,794	19,585
Rent	45,836	41,908
Fundraising Income	104	104
Donations	104,480	36,629
Other revenue	994	41,978
Profit/(Loss) on sale of assets	(807)	(1,155)
Total Other Income	390,758	338,035
Total Revenue	5,873,336	5,151,326

6

Yes Unlimited
Statement of Financial Position
As at 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	392,467	376,465
Trade and other receivables	82,652	46,728
Investments	1,702,850	1,695,097
Other current assets	13,805	31,544
Total Current Assets	2,191,974	2,149,834
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	542,620	702,236
Right of use assets	330,528	387,339
Total Non-Current Assets	893,148	1,089,565
Total Assets	3,085,122	3,237,399
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	221,114	293,124
Lease liabilities	50,970	46,106
Employee provisions	515,576	444,619
Other current liabilities	199,228	336,427
Total Current Liabilities	986,888	1,110,276
Non-Current Liabilities		
Lease liabilities	375,696	376,666
Employee provisions	14,627	52,060
Total Non-Current Liabilities	390,343	428,726
Total Liabilities	1,377,231	1,539,002
Net Assets	1,707,891	1,698,397
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	1,550,838	1,541,344
Donations Reserve	157,053	157,053
Total Equity	1,707,891	1,698,397

3

Yes Unlimited
Statement of Changes in Equity
As at 30 June 2022

	Retained Earnings \$	Donations Reserves \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2020	2,004,136	134,340	1,388,985
Net surplus for the year	(440,079)	-	(440,079)
Transfers to & (from) reserves during the year	(22,713)	22,713	-
Balance at 30 June 2021	1,541,344	157,053	1,698,397
Net surplus for the year	9,494	-	9,494
Transfers to & (from) reserves during the year	-	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2022	1,550,838	157,053	1,707,891

4

Yes Unlimited
Notes to the concise financial report
For the year ended 30 June 2022

Note 2. Revenue (continued)

a. Disaggregated revenue

The Company has disaggregated revenue into various categories in the following table. Revenue is disaggregated by timing of revenue recognition.

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue recognised at a point-in-time		
Fees for service	232,857	200,990
Interest	6,794	19,585
Fundraising Income	104	104
Donations	104,480	36,629
Other revenue	994	41,977
Profit/(Loss) on sale of assets	(807)	(1,155)
	<u>344,922</u>	<u>296,126</u>
Revenue recognised over time		
Recurrent government grants	3,820,492	3,302,322
Non-recurrent government grants	1,474,362	1,438,894
Grants - Other	187,524	72,075
Rent	45,836	41,908
	<u>5,528,414</u>	<u>4,855,199</u>

Note 3: Events subsequent to balance date

No events have occurred since the end of the financial year that have significantly affected, or may significantly affect the operations of the Company, the results of those operations or the state of affairs of the Company in the ensuing or any subsequent financial years.

Note 4. Analysis of Financial Report

The discussions and analysis is provided to assist members in understanding the concise financial report. The discussion and analysis is based on the Yes Unlimited financial statements and the information contained in the concise financial report has been derived from the full financial report of the Yes Unlimited for the year ended 30 June 2022.

Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2022, a surplus of \$9,494 has been recorded. The reported surplus was based on Total Revenues of \$5,873M. Comparative figures for the prior year, 2020/2021, were a deficit of \$440,079 and Total Revenues of \$5,151M.

Operating income for the reporting year, including operating grants and fees for service was \$5,715M which was higher than the prior year of \$5,014M, an increase of 13.98%. Operating Grants, including recurring and non-recurring grants in 2021/2022 total \$5,482M compared with the 2020/2021 year operating grants of \$4,813M. Operating grants represented 93% of total operating income. Other operating income for 2021/2022 of \$490,758 including fees for service increased by \$52,723 from 2020/2021.

Revenue from outside operating activities for the 2021/2022 year totalled \$157,801 compared to \$137,045 in 2020/2021. Donations and Rental income increased by \$67,851 and \$3,928 respectively. In 2021/2022 there is a loss on sale of assets of \$307, this compared to a loss in 2020/2021 of \$1,159.

7

Yes Unlimited
Notes to the concise financial report
For the year ended 30 June 2022

Note 5. Analysis of Financial Report (continued)

Operating expenses for the 2021/2022 year totalled \$5,863M compared to \$5,991M in 2020/2021. The 4.87% increase in Operating Expense in 2021/2022 over the previous year came as a result of an increase in employment costs of \$365,304 due to award pay rate increases and hiring of new employees.

Depreciation expense in the 2021/2022 year was \$221,695 compared to \$211,834 expensed in the prior year. Asset additions totalled \$27,913 in 2021/2022 being made up of \$16,242 in Furniture and Equipment purchases, \$6,659 in leasehold improvements for the purchase of the solar panels and \$3,090 of purchases in Buildings. Depreciation of right-of-use assets was consistent with 2020/2021 as no new leases commenced during the financial year.

Consultants were hired in 2020/2021 to conduct an analysis into the service provision and gaps in the Albany-Woodage Region regarding response to Domestic and Family Violence costing \$120,000. In 2021/2022 Consultant Expenses decreased by \$89,972. Insurance Expense increased \$10,632 in 2021/2022 compared to the previous financial year. All other expenses were comparable to 2020/2021.

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2022, Net Assets were \$1,707M, compared to \$1,698M as at 30 June 2021, an increase of 0.56%. Current Assets including Cash and Cash Equivalents, trade and other receivables and investments amounted to \$2,192M at the end of 2021/2022 year, compared to the corresponding total of \$2,150M at the end of prior year. Trade receivables at 30 June 2022 included a total of \$41,305 invoiced to the Department of Communities & Justice and \$39,701 invoiced to Homes Out West.

Property, Plant and Equipment at the end of 2021/2022 amounted to \$893M, at written down value, which represented a decrease of \$194,417 when compared to 2020/2021 balance of \$1,087M. The decrease is due to the depreciation for the year amounting to \$221,695.

Current Liabilities decreased to \$987M at the end of 2021/2022 compared to the 2020/2021 closing balance of \$1,110M. The change of \$123,388 is due to a decrease in Deferred Government Funding of \$127,195. Current Employee Provisions increased by \$70,958, mainly due to an increase in Current Long Service Leave Provision of \$59,365.

Non-Current liabilities decreased to \$390,343 in 2021/2022 from \$428,726 last year. The decrease mainly represents a fall in lease liabilities for right-of-use assets recorded under AASB 16 Leases.

Statement of Cash Flows

During 2021/2022 operating, investing and financing activities generated a net increase in Cash Held of \$16,002 compared to a decrease of \$50,768 in 2020/2021. Total cash inflows from operating activities were \$96,647 in 2021/2022 compared to \$160,667 in 2020/2021. Cash outflows from investing activities fell from \$169,823 in 2020/2021 to \$34,539 in 2021/2022. Payments for investments fell by 65%, as no additional investments were added during the financial year. Total financing outflows were \$46,106 in 2021/2022 due to the repayments of lease liabilities from right-of-use property and equipment leases held, compared to \$41,612 in 2020/2021.

8

During the reporting period Yes Unlimited has published several articles in Parity, the Australian Council to Homeless Persons magazine. Parity is Australia's leading national homelessness publication. Following are two articles published about The Albury Project.

Yes Unlimited
Directors' declaration
For the year ended 30 June 2022

The directors of Yes Unlimited declare that the concise financial report of the Company for the year ended 30 June 2022:

- complies with Accounting Standard AASB 1039: Concise Financial Reports; and
- is an extract from the full financial report for the year ended 30 June 2022 and has been derived from and is consistent with the full financial report of the Yes Unlimited.
- The full financial report is available free of charge, on request to the entity.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the directors.

David Gaulinger
Chairperson
David Gaulinger

Jennifer McCrum
Treasurer
Jennifer McCrum

Albury
25 October 2022

9

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Independent auditor's report to the members of Yes Unlimited

Report on the concise Financial Report
The accompanying concise financial report of Yes Unlimited comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022, the statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income, statement of equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended and related notes, derived from the audited financial report of Yes Unlimited for the year ended 30 June 2022. The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards.

Auditor's opinion of the Financial Report
In our opinion, the concise financial report Yes Unlimited for the year ended 30 June 2022 complies with Australian Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports.

Basis for Opinion
We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the registered entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Directors' responsibility for the concise Financial Report
The directors are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the concise financial report in accordance with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports, and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the concise financial report, the directors are responsible for Yes Unlimited's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibility for the Audit of the Financial Report
Our objective is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the concise financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the concise financial report.

Achieving goals together

10

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Johnson MME Audit & Assurance Services Pty Ltd
ABN 71 617 683 028

The COVID-19 Pandemic in Albury: Weathering the Storm

Kate McGrath, Rebecca Glen, Elizabeth Cattell, Maggie Pain and Kelsea Brosolo, Yes Unlimited, with David MacKenzie and Tammy Hand, Upstream Australia

The COVID-19 pandemic immediately followed the terrible 2019-20 summer bushfires that burned around the Murrumbidgee and Albury. Albury-Wodonga was impacted significantly when the border between Victoria and New South Wales (NSW) was closed, and the states were locked down in 2020 as a response to the pandemic. Many people live on one side of the state border but work on the other side, and the pandemic was a major disruptor of school attendance, community life, and the practices of community agencies to support young people and families through direct human interaction in case work. Reports of increased mental health issues due to the bushfires were already a concern in Albury, and then came COVID-19!

partners, including Albury City Council, headspace, and Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Additionally, the project has benefited from strong support from senior officers in the local area offices of both the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and the Department of Education (DoE). Population screening, a core foundation of the COSS Model, has been successfully implemented annually for over three years, despite the pandemic. The Albury Project workers were designated as essential workers by the partner schools and were able, within the safety guidelines, to continue to operate, bringing an impressive degree of creativity to their work under difficult circumstances. This shows how the COSS work was valued in the schools and community. The recognition of community workers as 'essential workers' able to work with and in schools and with families in Albury has been a major achievement for The Albury Project.

The annual population screening methodology provides for a longitudinal measure of risk but also a longitudinal measure of outcomes. In terms of current practice, three key indicators on the Australian Index of Adolescent Development (AIAD) Survey² are used routinely: At-risk of homelessness Indicator, Disengagement from school indicator; and the Kessler 10 scale for identifying psychological distress or mental health issues.

Adolescent Mental Health Issues
Older Australians are particularly vulnerable to serious health impacts from contracting COVID-19, which, depending on their state of health, can be life-threatening. For young Australians, the pandemic has been more likely to impact their mental health, disrupt their education, and contribute to educational disengagement, social isolation, and other adverse impacts on their pathways into employment. In terms of COVID-19, young

The Albury Project commenced in 2019 as one of two funded Community of Schools and Services (COSS) pilot sites under the NSW Homelessness Strategy. The other pilot was in Mt Druitt. Prior to receiving pilot funding, the Albury community had a history of questioning the effectiveness of the local youth, family, and homelessness services systems. A leader amongst this local discontent was Yes Unlimited, headed by CEO Di Glover, which is the major youth services organisation in Albury. In late 2017, constructive discontent crystallised into a positive initiative — Yes Unlimited rallied a group of local stakeholders to develop a COSS Model in Albury well before any funding was on the table. The story of how The Albury Project came to be was published in April 2020 in *Parity*.¹

The Albury Project has been led by a strong collective comprising the three Albury public secondary schools, the lead COSS agency, Yes Unlimited, together with other



Artwork courtesy Libby Crayton, Frontyard Youth Services

Independent auditor's report (continued)

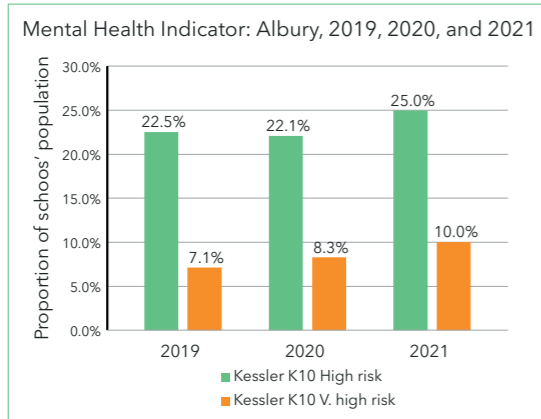
A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: <http://www.aasb.gov.au/Home.aspx>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

John Johnson
John Johnson
Director

Albury
26 October 2022

11





Graph 1

people themselves identified mental wellbeing as a major concern,³ and parents reported high rates of mental health impacts on their children.⁴ Ian Hickie (University of Sydney) warned that COVID related lockdowns and isolation have adverse mental health consequences and that the mental health system needs to be able to respond.⁵

The Kessler 10 is a widely used, validated, self-report measure for psychological distress that can be used to identify those in need of further assessment for anxiety and depression, but the scale does not provide diagnostic information about specific mental health conditions. Mental health issues are known to exacerbate other adverse issues in the lives of young people. Graph 1 shows the population profile across the three participating Albury schools from 2019 to 2021 in relation to identified mental health risks.

The commonly stated clinical range of the K-10 is a score of 30 to 50, which, as shown in Graph 1, is between 25 and 30 per cent of the entire participating schools' populations. In practical terms, the more useful range is the very high-risk range of 40 to 50, which has increased from 2019 to 2021. This result is consistent with other findings of increased mental health issues due to COVID-19.

A troubling additional finding is that for this cohort of young people (K-10 range: 30-50), nearly one third had never sought or received any form of help for their mental health; and for the high-risk cohort (K-10 range: 30-39),

about half (53.6 per cent) had not ever sought or received assistance.

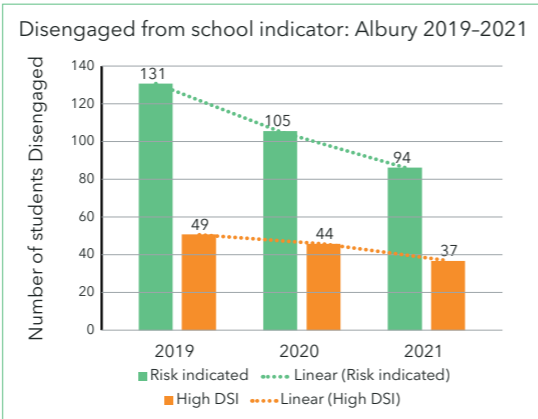
School Disengagement

There is quite an extensive international literature that explores the effects of COVID-19 and other disasters on student engagement with learning.^{6,7}

The Disengagement from School Indicator (DSI) used in the AIAD survey identifies students at-risk of disengaging from school. Student disengagement is usually evident from behaviours such as increasing absences from school without good reasons, challenging behaviours at school, or decreasing performance in various subjects. The DSI is useful in confirming known cases that require an immediate response, and also identifies hidden cases that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Graph 2 shows that, during the pandemic, the proportion of students identified as disengaged or disengaging from school has decreased from 2019 to 2021.

For both risk indicated and high-risk categories of DSI risk, the trend has been a linear decrease from 2019 to 2021. This trend has occurred despite the effects of the pandemic and the bushfires in and around Albury in the summer of 2019-2020, and during a time when improved response rates and implementation practices might be expected to find more disengaged students. While it does not necessarily indicate that fewer students were feeling



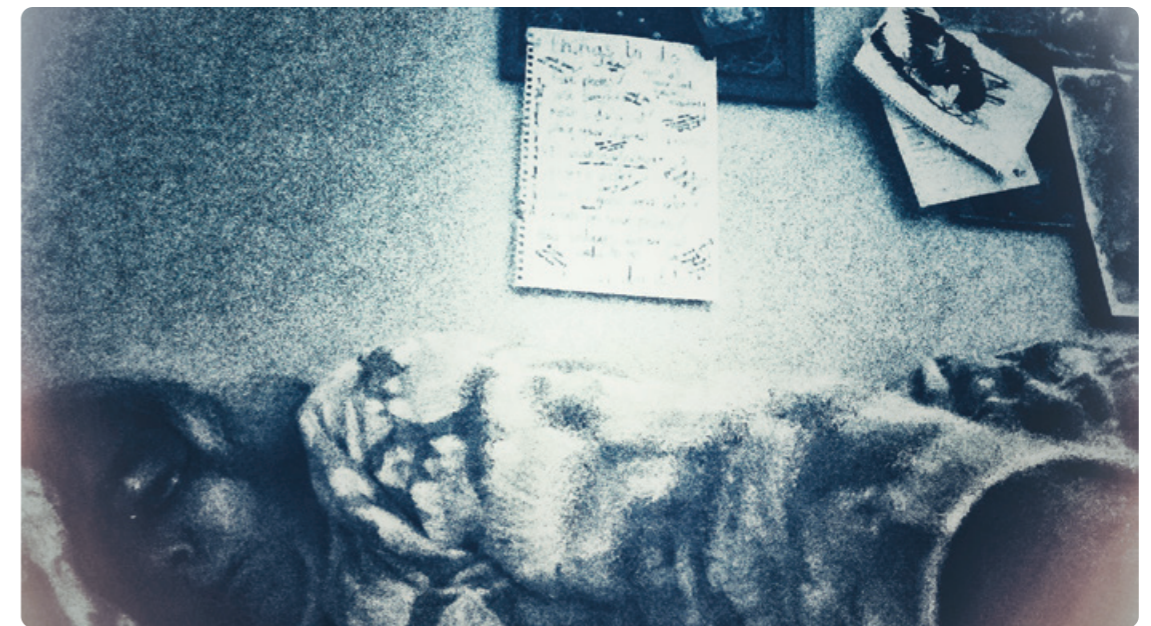
Graph 2

disengaged, this finding is counter intuitive. The commitment by each of the participating schools to maintaining strong, connected wellbeing systems, of which the Albury Project is a part, and collective practical efforts within the schools appears to have yielded a positive outcome over this very difficult time. Many commentators have argued that disengagement from school has increased and that appears to be the case more generally.

The Dynamics of Early Intervention

Annual population screening not only identifies risk, but the indicators also provide some important measures of outcomes. Longitudinal AIAD data allows for comparisons across time and trend analysis. What happened for young people identified as at-risk of homelessness in 2019? Are they still at risk in 2020 or 2021? Diagram 1 provides some answers to these questions.

Using matched records of young people identified as at-risk, Diagram 1 shows the dynamics of risk for students screened through the Albury Project. For the young people identified as at-risk of homelessness in any year, after support through the Albury Project, about half of these young people are no longer at-risk 12 months later (downward green arrows, Diagram 1). This is a reassuring finding. The following inferences are suggestive of significant outcomes being achieved during a very difficult time.



Artwork by Christine Thirkell

Some Comments on the Data

Firstly, there is evidence that mental health issues in the community have increased, but school disengagement seems to have been held down and even reduced.

Secondly, the vast majority of students who completed the AIAD in 2019 and had a low/no risk of homelessness remained at this low/no risk assessment level in 2020. Only about 4.5 per cent of those students' status had changed to indicate a risk

of homelessness (upward red arrows, Diagram 1). The results for the 2020 cohort remained similar. Changes in family situations from year to year are not unexpected — 'life goes up and down'. Some students who do not show up one year as at-risk will show up with identifiable risk a year later. This is why an ongoing stream of data on risks and outcomes to inform practice is so important.

Lastly, for the students identified as at-risk of homelessness in any

one year, after support, about half were not at-risk a year later (that is, under the risk of homelessness threshold). This is one measure of the outcome of reducing the risk of homelessness and suggests the likelihood of finding a reduced flow of young people into the Specialist Homelessness Services system which has yet to be confirmed.

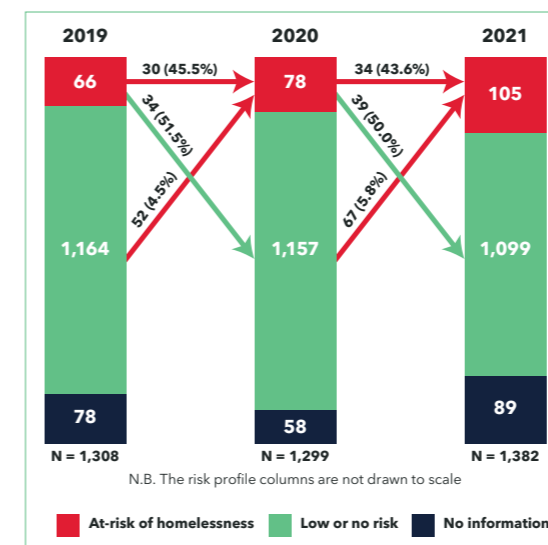


Diagram 1: Risk dynamics from 2019 to 2021, The Albury Project

Endnotes

1. Park J, McGrath K, Glen R and Quinn T 2020, 'The Albury Project Story: From Collective Discontent to Positive Action', *Parity*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 69-72.
2. The Australian Index of Adolescent Development survey is administered to all secondary school students in the COSS communities as part of the population screening process. For more details see: Hand T and MacKenzie D 2019, 'Data matters: Using data in a collective impact research and development project and the backbone role of upstream Australia', *Parity*, vol. 32, no. 7, pp. 16-17.
3. UNICEF Australia 2020, 'Swimming with sandbags: The views and experiences of young people in Australia five months into the COVID-19 pandemic', August 2020, yourtown and Australian Human Rights Commission 2020, *Impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people who contact Kids Helpline*, September 2020.
4. Royal Children's Hospital 2020, *National Child Health Poll: August 2020*, available from <https://www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/covid-19-pandemic-effects-on-the-lives-of-australian-children-and-families/>.
5. Hickie I 2020, 'As "lockdown fatigue" sets in, the toll on mental health will require an urgent response', *The Conversation*, 4 August 2020.
6. Drane C, Vernon L and O'Shea S 2021, 'Vulnerable learners in the age of COVID-19: A scoping review', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 48, pp. 585-604.
7. Social Ventures Australia 2020, 'Identifying and taking action for students at risk of disengagement from school during phases of the COVID-19 response', *Evidence for Learning Insights Paper*, October 2020.



The Albury Project — From Schools' Perspective

Darryl Ward, Principal of Albury High School,
Jennifer Parrett, Principal James Fallon High School,
Norman Meader, Principal of Murray High School
and Donna Glass, Head Teacher Welfare.

Albury is a regional city about as far as it is possible to be from the centre in Sydney, and conjoined with Wodonga, our Victorian sister city just across the Murray River on the New South Wales-Victorian border. The Albury community has learned to be self-reliant and assertive about the needs of its young people. The Albury Project (TAP) is about a bottom-up collective effort. The bottom-up approach has been critical to our success. As a collective of schools and the lead agency, we have driven this work. We own the Albury project ... it is not just another program. Together we faced up to the challenge that things were not working well enough for our young people, and we have actively sought to change this, to find a better way.

As principals of the three participating Albury Project schools, we have taken the opportunity in this issue of Parity to share our experience of some of the challenges and successes of our implementation of the Community of Schools and Services (COSS) Model in Albury.

The COSS Model

The COSS Model brought us the architecture and methodology for making many of the changes that we so needed and wanted in our community. It gave us the 'how to do it'. Without the COSS Model we would be nowhere ahead of where we were three years ago.

The research and data component of the COSS Model has been important. The research and data approach means that we are using data to drive and inform what we are doing with our most vulnerable students and their families, and also to measure our progress. We receive useful reports from Upstream Australia as part of this data and

research component. We use these reports beyond practice; for example, we have used these reports to support requests for additional funding and resources. The TAP reports give us a greater sense of what is going on in our schools and with our young people. The fact that we have skilled researchers working with us and with our data has been a key component of our success — it has become a fundamental component of the work.

Schools-agency: Practice and Learnings

We have been fortunate to have a passionate lead community agency (YES Unlimited) to work with, which is a big win. The agency works with us. We (the schools and the agency) have come together to create new expectations and practices for service delivery.

The willingness of both schools and agencies to communicate and to have 'hard conversations', when necessary, has enabled us to get where we are today. It has been a challenge, but we are in a good place now.

A key driver for our joint practice and desire to work together is that we are all working to the same goal - we all want to achieve better outcomes for your young people and the system and practices that were in place before the Albury Project were not working.

Different Roles

It took a while to define our respective roles.

As schools, we are in many ways the first responders, dealing with young people as they present with crisis issues and family issues. But as educators our core business is teaching and learning. Of course, we care about the students and want

to support them, but our business is not care and protection nor is it responding to crises. We also need to be clear that in-school welfare is limited in many ways to inside the school-gate — which is not where most young people need this type of support.

Clarifying our roles has involved articulated that community agencies and schools do things differently — down to basic understandings that agency workers and school workers have different awards, different roles, different rules — and this is not only okay, but in our case is now complimentary.

This clarity has enabled us to work together in a more integrated fashion to better meet the needs of young people and families.

Different Cultures

There are many differences between school and agency culture.

In schools we need to move fast. Kids in crisis need a quick response and our resources are limited. We do our best and to support students with complex needs, often beyond our capabilities, but specialist support is often needed. Sometimes, we can be overwhelmed dealing with multiple issues on a number of fronts.

Agencies however don't generally work at this pace. They take time to work with young people to unpack their issues and address their trauma. Also, workers in agencies are probably better at taking care of themselves and have good practices for specialist supervision and support for themselves (something that we in schools should learn to do more!).

However, it took time for each of us to understand the other's culture. The COSS Model governance structures, in particular the regular operational meetings, have been fundamental to making this work. These meetings have created a space for discussions, for sharing, and for working out issues and there is community representation from health and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) that further helps the strategic planning for students in our care.

There has been progress as schools and agencies better understand each other's culture. We are now in a place of developing a new joint culture.

Better Responses for Our Young People

We love having the Albury Project staff working in our schools with our young people. They do things we can't do. They can work outside of the school-gate. A harsh reality is that some young people don't trust teachers. Sometimes young people don't want to work with teachers or school staff as there may have been issues with a teacher or a government department. We also need to face up to the limitations of our roles — we are educators, our hours are limited, we are not available during holiday periods. Our work conditions don't allow this flexibility. But through the Albury Project our schools are becoming well-being hubs - and we want this.

We have always wanted and needed to collaborate with external services but in the past, this has never been achieved sustainably and effectively in practice. Different departments just focus on their own issues, even if these issues are connected on some level. The Albury Project is the bridge that we needed to be able to work across departments, and between schools and agencies. The COSS Model means that we are doing in this in a consistent methodological way. It is the oil that makes the cogs work better.

As schools we have limitations to what we are supposed to do — our work is really limited to what we can achieve inside the school gate. Before the Albury Project, if we had an issue with a young person that required an 'outside of the school-gate' response,

we would make a referral to DCJ or some other agency. This was a slow process. Sometimes we wouldn't hear anything back.

TAP workers being based in the school — as part of the school — is crucial. This means that TAP workers are part of the schools' wellbeing teams. Our picture is now complete. We now have a seamless workforce with complimentary but different skills, roles, and abilities. We now have a workforce that can work both inside and outside the school-gate and with families and undertake roles and supports that are outside the purview of school staff.

Here are two case studies which illustrate what now happens:

Case Study 1

We had a young person who was suicidal. The young person went in an ambulance to the hospital for mental health support. There was family breakdown. The parent couldn't cope. The young person had multiple complex co-morbidities. The Albury Project worker accompanied and stayed with the young person to hospital and then supported the young person into appropriate accommodation upon discharge. TAP worker supported the family to work through their issues and successfully reconcile. In the end the young person was able to safely return home.

Without the Albury Project, a school worker would have needed to accompany the young person to hospital, even though we are not supposed to do that.

Through the Albury Project this young person and their parent received a seamless response.

Case Study 2

A young person with some family issues needed support to access a medical appointment. There was no family support.

As school staff we are not legally able to do this. Through TAP, the young person was able to access the medical support they needed.

Opportunities to Bring in more Partners

We would like to explore bringing DCJ 'care and protection' workers into our schools and the Albury Project. They are the workers who respond to mandatory notifications and often play a crucial role supporting families and students. Bringing them into the program has the potential to further improve communications and to better coordinate positive outcomes for students.

We also need a specialist mental health partner embedded with the Albury Project on a day-to-day basis. The increased demand on local mental health resources for youth has created long waiting lists for services. Being able to coordinate services again will result in better services by all concerned.

We know services are stretched, and resourcing is always an issue. There is also a cross-border issue. But we need to find a way to work past these issues. We need to build the mental health capacity and service options in the Albury Project. We need mental health outreach in our schools and more mental health group work with the young people identified through the COSS population screening process.

Conclusion

The Albury Project is a great example of how we, as a group, came together, thought differently, and then faced the challenge of acknowledging that the old way of doing things was not working well enough for our young people. We faced that challenge and though the COSS Model have begun to build something new. As one of us said while we were writing this article: *'this is the most important work that I have ever been a part of'*. We are succeeding. We are beginning to make a real difference. We don't ever want to go back to how it was before.

Overview and reform agenda

A Domestic and Family Violence Border Collaboration project

The 'A Case for Change' project aimed to identify and understand the systemic challenges to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) service delivery and client experience and safety that exist in the Albury-Wodonga cross-border service setting. It has found that whilst the Victorian side of the border is undergoing significant reform towards a more connected and collaborative DFV system and seamless client experience, the lack of a similar integrated system in NSW means that making things work in a cross border setting relies heavily on the informal efforts of individual workers and organisations. A risk of clients 'falling through the cracks' or receiving an inconsistent service response due to the complexity of navigating two distinct systems was highlighted throughout consultation. The 'A Case for Change' report provides recommendations and sets out a reform agenda to alleviate some of these issues at a local level, whilst recognising that broader systemic change can only be achieved through significant policy reform in NSW.

The project began in 2020 as a collaboration between the Albury-Wodonga Border Domestic Violence Network (BDVN) and Yes Unlimited. The work was funded through Yes Unlimited with a grant from the Department of Communities and Justice, as well as with funds provided by the BDVN. Yes Unlimited managed the project and consultants Serena Griggs and Ian Scott were hired to research and write the report.

Methods used to inform the report and its recommendations were:

Literature review:

- DFV policy history and reforms in Australia, primarily Victoria and NSW
- Cross border issues and solutions reports
- Refuge accommodation and service delivery models

Interviews and consultation:

- Women with lived experience of domestic and family violence and support services
- Key service providers in Albury-Wodonga
- Secondary service providers in Albury-Wodonga
- Managers operating refuge accommodation in other parts of Australia
- Local networks and forums

Recommendations arising from the project predominantly focus on ensuring the NSW side of the border is able to productively work with its Victorian counterparts, and fall into the broad categories of formalised, resourced collaboration; service alignment and streamlining; and advocacy for systemic reform.

A reform agenda for locally driven change arising from the A Case for Change project has been identified, with further explanation on the following pages:

1. A formalised agreement as a mechanism for collaboration
2. Allocated resourcing to facilitate collaboration
3. Coordinated centralised access point/s
4. Mechanisms for cross-border process alignment
5. Collective advocacy for greater departmental policy alignment

Reform agenda for locally driven change

1. A Formalised Agreement as a Mechanism for Collaboration

Why is this important?

While all services generally agree and work hard to foster collaborative practice, without a formalised structural mechanism underpinning this, collaboration will always be ad hoc, relationship dependent and inconsistent. There are three DFV focused services in Albury: Yes Unlimited, with an accommodation and case management focus, LCN WDVCS, with a legal and risk/safety management focus and the Albury Women's Centre with a counseling and health focus. Additionally, there are numerous other services that involve an element of work relating to Domestic and Family Violence such as the police, health services, and legal services. The 'A Case for Change' report has clearly highlighted the multifaceted needs of women and children experiencing DFV at the point of services presentation. Some need counseling, some need case management, some need legal support, some just practical assistance and most require a mixture of all these supports. With this in mind it is critical that differing components of support are highly integrated at both a systemic and practice level. Quite simply, isolated service delivery isolates clients; the exact opposite of what a trauma informed response should do.

What could it look like?

An initial high-level starting point would be an MOU or other type of agreement between the three key services articulating a commitment to working together, an agreed direction for local service delivery and an early outline for some kind of ongoing governance structure to underpin the partnership, such as Terms of Reference and set regular meetings. Ideally over time this would evolve to include coordinated intake arrangements, integrated service delivery, clear referral pathways and shared practice frameworks.

What would the outcome be?

A formalised agreement would position the three services to share a clear mandate for leadership in the DFV space and provide a platform for progressing a community-led reform agenda. Importantly, this would ensure collaboration

goes beyond arbitrary relationships, building a sustainable foundation for future work together. The agreement would set the scene for work on clearer referral pathways, integrated practice approaches, coordinated use of funding, and the continued development of a partnership-driven approach to DFV in Albury.

2. Allocated Resourcing to Facilitate Collaboration

Why is this important?

Collaboration is not resource neutral, particularly if the collaborative efforts are working towards genuine systems-level change. Too often 'collaboration' is presented as the panacea for complex systemic problems, without a recognition of the legislative and bureaucratic hurdles, time, energy and continued maintenance required to make collaboration work. As highlighted in 'A Case for Change', the Albury-Wodonga DFV system is particularly knotty, considering the cross-border context, multiple funding bodies, diverse range of stakeholders and the dynamics of the disjointed service design in Albury. Platitudes regarding collaboration are insufficient when considering this environment and a genuine investment is needed to navigate what needs to happen, how it will happen and who will do the leg work.

What could it look like?

The State-wide Homelessness Networks that operate in Victoria provide one useful example of how collaboration can be resourced effectively with its role of Regional Network Coordinators. Funded by the state government under the auspice of a locally relevant NGO, the Regional Network Coordinators work to:

- Provide an ongoing mechanism to facilitate consultation with primary regional homelessness service providers, secondary providers and the Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) and other stakeholders.
- Assist the identification of regional needs and contribute to planning, policy analysis, research and program development.
- Share information and promote a better understanding of homelessness within the community and across community organisations and governments.
- Coordination and reporting of the Homeless Emergency Accommodation Response across the southern region.
- Facilitate the understanding and knowledge of new services, programs and best practice.
- Encourage and maintain linkages with other relevant service providers and peak bodies, both at a regional and state level. (Launch Housing Position Description 2020)

A similar role focused on DFV in a cross-border context, the development work required in the Albury DFV system and the implementation of this reform agenda would be a significant step in moving us away from admiring the problems we are all familiar with, to progressing towards real solutions. There are a number of options for funding this role either by lobbying for additional funding to either state governments, a one-off grant or the pooling of existing funding from service

providers. Points to consider would include:

- The organisation that would be best placed to hold and lead the role.
- The interaction of this role and the local BDVN.
- The best way forward in terms of funding the role.
- The scope of the role.

What would the outcome be?

Resourcing collaboration positions the sector to get things done. Often, progress on collaboration and systems change stalls because services are so absorbed with crisis work and the priorities of day-to-day service delivery that big picture work is inevitably avoided or deprioritised. All service providers can relate to the experience of sitting in meetings where everyone has agreed that "something needs to be done", only to be met with silence when it comes getting a name locked in the 'actions' list. This isn't due to a lack of desire or commitment, just the reality of stakeholders who are already pressed for time and who recognise the scope required for this type of work to be done well.

3. Coordinated Centralised Access Point/s

Why is this important?

On a service delivery level, the feedback that has stood out most from both the women and service providers who shared their experience through the 'A Case for Change' project has been the disjointed access experience for DFV services in Albury. Women regularly report bouncing from service to service as they try and find the right response or piece together the different components of support they need to address their situation as a whole. Likewise, service providers are often confused about who to contact and where to send people. This inevitably exacerbates and unnecessarily extends the experience of trauma, displacement and anxiety already associated with an experience of DFV. If our service systems are going to be trauma informed, then access points need to be simple, predictable, reliable and consistent, regardless of how or where service contact is initiated.

What could it look like?

There are multiple ways centralised access points can be developed and a substantial evidence base exists on how these can be designed in different contexts. With a mechanism for collaboration (point 1) and resourcing for collaboration (point 2), the three Albury DFV focused services would be well placed to undertake and lead the work required, whatever form it may take. Some considerations for the design of Coordinated Centralised Access Points would include:

- Would a single site/ number system or a multiple site/number system with a coordinated process be more effective?
- If a single site model was implemented who would be best placed to do this?
- What service/program alignment would need to occur to facilitate a Coordinated Centralised Access Point?

- What side doors would there be to a Coordinated Centralised Access Point and how could they be closed or managed?

What would the outcome be?

Ideally the experience of women and children requiring DFV support would be that only one contact with a service provider was required to activate the entire local DFV service response. People would know the number to call, the location/s to show up to and coordination would begin immediately on presentation.

4. Mechanisms for Cross-Border Process Alignment

Why is this important?

As the 'A Case for Change' report has detailed, the cross-border environment has some unique challenges that are often a little nebulous when trying to describe. The broad sense is that the cross-border environment causes confusion, inconsistency and allows for service gaps that people can inadvertently fall through. This is particularly pertinent on the Albury side of the border, in contrast to the substantial systemic reform that has already occurred in Victoria.

What could it look like?

Cross-border work is often slow and difficult to progress, however there are a number of areas where change could be relatively simple. An issue that is tangible and could act as a springboard for further cross-border development is the alignment of the two legislated responses provided through the SAMS and RAMP processes. This could include a process for information sharing, opportunities for cross-border meetings as required, or a simple, formalised connection between the two lead agents of these meetings.

The Network Coordinator role, once embedded, could lead further discussion and potential cross-border development to explore:

- Low cost/no cost changes that could be implemented quite quickly
- Some cost/medium term changes
- Big picture legislative/systems change

What would the outcome be?

Realistically, the border and having similar sized cities on either side will always be somewhat problematic in terms of navigating two different state governments with varying legislative frameworks, funding priorities and programs. This being said, with locally driven collaborative efforts, there is the potential to create community based 'buffers' that mitigate some of these differences and ensure people accessing DFV services receive a consistent response, and that information, particularly in relation to risk, is shared appropriately to prevent people from falling through service gaps.

5. Collective advocacy for greater departmental policy alignment

Why is this important?

While much can be achieved at community level, 'A Case for Change' has clearly

highlighted the systemic roots of many of the issues identified in the DFV space. In NSW particularly, there is no clear departmental leadership or point of responsibility in delivering a congruent response to DFV. This is reflected in the ad hoc funding arrangements, siloed program delivery and the lack of coordination in how government initiatives are rolled out. If the service sector is to be sustainably integrated, it is critical that this is mirrored by the departments that fund and lead it. Long term collaboration needs to happen alongside the actions of government, not in spite of it.

What could it look like?

Our community's voice is most powerful when delivered as a unified front. While this is often hampered by the competitive and disjointed nature of the service sector, by placing women and children at the firmly at the centre of our work a consistent message to government can be delivered. A mechanism to develop our collective voice could include:

- A shared advocacy platform that key service representatives use in discussions with their relevant department, to articulate the issues in a consistent way.
- Shared submissions to government.
- Collaborative media campaigns to create pressure for change.
- Strategic responses to funding opportunities and government initiatives at a local level, i.e. agreements around who might be best placed to deliver something, or joint proposals for delivery.
- Demonstrating and telling the story of how a systemic response to DFV can work by implementing change at a community level.

What would the outcome be?

Ideally the multiple government departments that have a footprint in the DFV sector would be funding and managing service delivery in a more cohesive manner that supports the system to work as an actual 'system'. Consideration would be given to how programs 'fit' with each other, where gaps are and more attention would be given to systems design, than to the tendency to add more programs. Rather than relying on the fragile nature of collaboration based on community goodwill, programs would be structurally designed in a way that makes collaboration and integration the only option.

Where to from here?

A Case for Change has drawn out a tangible and informed roadmap for the work required in the DFV service space in Albury.

An immediate action will be the establishment of a small working group of key services to examine the recommendations, extrapolate on the practicalities of locally driven reform, and foster the environment of collaboration and leadership that is required for this level of change. This foundation, along with the commitment to reform being expressed by the local sector, will position us to successfully implement the recommendations of the report, and to deliver an improved and more connected response to women and children experiencing DFV.



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