



# ANNIE NORTH INC.

Annual Report 2024–2025

Celebrating 35+ Years of Annie North



## Acknowledgements

Annie North acknowledges that our services, our business, and our workforce are proudly based and delivered across the unceded lands of the Djaara people of the Dja Dja Wurrung Djandak (Country). Annie North recognises the Dja Dja Wurrung Djandak and the Djaara people are the Traditional Owners of these lands, skies, and waterways we meet upon. It is with deep sadness and sorrow that we acknowledge the impact of Western ways and colonialism has come at a spiritual and cultural cost to many First Nations people.

We commit to leading an organisational journey towards cultural humility, we pay our respects to Elders past and present, to the Aboriginal Community and the Children who bring hope for all future generations to allow healing. The children remind us of the joy and gentleness of the Aboriginal people and will become the future Elders of this land. This is, was, and always will be traditional Aboriginal

land and we acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

We support cisgendered and LGBTIQ+ women and those who identify as non-binary, from all ages, race, ethnicity and ability. We support children with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

We acknowledge the victim/survivors of gender-based violence past, present and in the future.

Annie North is a not-for-profit organisation that is primarily funded by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). Annie North also receives grants and donations from other sources.

Annie North complies with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) Act 2012.



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**Reports, stories and commentary: Annie North staff members and Annie North**  
**Committee of Management**  
**Annual Report compilation by: Bree Cox**

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“ We know the transformation that can happen for women and children in refuge. When they start to feel safer, when they start to feel ‘de-frost’ and open up, when they can sit in the garden or play in the playground without fear, that’s when you notice that they are regaining their confidence to make decisions – even tiny ones. When they begin to feel like themselves again, they start to remember who they were before the violence – this is when you see people’s courage and their determination shining through.

They are reclaiming their life and their identity and this is a very powerful thing. It's such a privilege to witness. Despite what they were told, they are worthy. Despite what has happened to them, they are valuable.

Excerpt from Lisa Elder's speech – Upstander fundraising event, Castlemaine 8/2/2025





## Chair Report

It is with pleasure that I, on behalf of the Annie North Committee of Management, present the 2024–2025 Annual Report.

Together, we celebrate more than 35 years of dedication, building on our strong foundation to deliver high quality services, strengthen collaborations, and influence system change. Our report highlights how our variety of safe accommodation and crisis responses aid, empower and transform the lives of women, children and young people experiencing family violence – that they are worthy, that they are valued.

It has been my honour to serve as Chair of the Committee of Management in this time of transition, as we prepare for the retirement of our longstanding CEO Julie Oberin AM. While Julie continues in the role for a little while yet, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Julie for her amazing local and nationwide contributions across 35 years of dedicated service. In this time of transition, our purpose and commitment are unwavering, proudly serving women, children and

young people, including First Nations people, those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those experiencing disability. We are deeply grateful for the numerous donors and supporters that enable this work, and the extraordinary level of dedication shown by the executive, client services and administration team day in, day out.

I am truly appreciative of our committed and highly skilled Committee of Management – women with diverse personal and professional experience who volunteer their time to ensure robust strategic governance and risk management oversight. The Committee of Management are a critical component of the ecosystem that allows for the intensive work of ending family violence against women, children and young people. It is with gratitude and cultural humility that we support their healing and recovery.

**Claudia Meyer**  
Chairperson,  
Annie North Inc.



## CEO Report

This will be my last report as I am retiring from work after more than 35 years associated with the organisation.

It is a bittersweet moment for me, as you can imagine. I have loved my time working at Annie North and have seen it grow from a small Collective of part-time workers and community members to the strong, robust, innovative and exemplary organisation it is today.

I am proud of what we have achieved. Over the years we have had many dedicated and skilled staff and Committees, who have shared the passion for unwavering best practice responses to the women and children we support, and the fire in the belly to do their bit towards social change and preventing this human rights violation against women and children that we want to see an end to.

Annie North is a site of resistance in itself. We remind others that violence against women and children remains at epidemic proportions, that the violence and abuse cause untold harm to these families through no fault of their own,

and that transformational social change is required to stop and prevent this preventable structural abuse and violation of human rights.

Annie North staff are social change activists. They do the very best they can for every woman and child that walks through our doors. At the same time, they work on how to make the system better for the next women and children who will need our services and support. I am so proud of the work we do and have done since we established in 1989. I will look back on my time here with pride that we did the best we could but there is still much more to do.

I wish to thank our current staff and volunteers, the front line team and the back of house team that supports our critical work. Continue the amazing work you do and thank you for supporting me in leading this incredible organisation.

I also thank my Committee of Management for their strong governance support again over the last year. Organisations like ours require strong feminist governance to enable the

specialist work we do that recognises the gender based violence we are dealing with.

Thank you in particular to Helen Horgan, who has been my Executive Assistant for the last 10 years or so and who is also retiring this year. Thanks so much for all your support Helen.

Thank you also, to our many stakeholders, partners, funders and donors. Every bit of community support we receive is gratefully received and goes towards improving resources for the women and children we support.

I am heading off to a well-earned retirement soon, doing some travelling and then settling down the Bellarine Peninsular for a sea change to be near family and my grandchildren. Please stay in touch and thank you for the privilege of being a part of this incredible organisation.

**Julie Oberin AM**  
CEO,  
Annie North Inc.



# Strategic Objectives

The first year of our Strategic Plan (2024–2025) focused on consolidation. We committed to a series of internal reviews and began streamlining and improvement projects designed to strengthen our operational systems. Several of these initiatives are outlined on the following page, aligned with each area of the Strategic Plan.

As we celebrate more than 35 years of service to the community and move into the next financial year (2025–2026), one word stands

out: **continuity**. It reflects our commitment to building on the progress achieved, maintaining momentum, and ensuring stability as we move toward our strategic goals.

Continuity signifies an uninterrupted connection and aptly describes Annie North’s journey over more than three decades. We have provided support and stability for hundreds of women and children, steadily grown our organisation, and navigated challenges and change as a stand-alone refuge. The

strategic goal “building on our strong foundation”, is especially meaningful this year as we reflect on 35+ years of service, farewell long-tenured employees, and prepare for the retirement of others, including our CEO Julie Oberin (AM).

Continuity brings a shared sense of strength and optimism to what is both a bittersweet moment and an exciting period of transformation. It reminds us that while change is inevitable, our purpose remains constant.

1

**Delivering**  
high quality services

2

**Strengthening**  
collaboration

3

**Influencing**  
systems change

4

**Building**  
on our strong foundation

**Delivering**

Improvements to our qualitative feedback system to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services to women and children.

Incorporating the lived experience of our clients into tailored services that are well documented.

Sustained focus on cultural safety for various groups we support such as women and children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, First Nations people, older women, mothers with infants, LGBTIQ+ people and women without permanent residency.

Navigating reform and changes to our operating environment such as the introduction of the Social Services Standards.

**Strengthening**

Creating a user-friendly system to capture our extensive collaboration with our local partners and those from further afield is one of the larger scale projects that will continue into the next financial year.

We also aim to create a fully integrated stakeholder feedback system, including compliments, complaints, suggestions and evaluation of our inter-agency projects, to inform our work alongside feedback from clients and staff.

These initiatives will strengthen transparency and accountability across all our partnerships, ensuring that insights from every interaction are captured and acted upon.

**Influencing**

Community education and wisdom sharing are now part of the annual performance review process. Staff with skills or interest in public speaking, content creation, or community events can participate across the organisation.

As a member of the Loddon Consortium for Gender Equality & Violence Prevention, Annie North is part of the Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Network, promoting consistent messaging and resource sharing.

Reflecting a sector-wide focus on social impact, Annie North continues engaging in activities to understand who we impact, where and why. This will culminate in creating an impact strategy or statement for the organisation.

**Building**

We’ve made significant progress in this area, particularly in strengthening our staff team by filling key roles that have been planned for many years.

We are now fortunate to have a Client Services Practice Lead, an important senior role, creating a new level of leadership and conduit between the client services practitioners and the Executive Management Team.

Also joining the team is Annie North’s first ever People and Culture Lead, an exciting addition focused on the individual staff member employment journey but also on whole of agency culture and wellbeing.



# What We Do

Annie North provides crisis and transitional support and refuge accommodation to women and children who are escaping domestic and family violence. Annie North has a statewide catchment and is based in Bendigo within the Loddon region.

Our services are accessible to:

- Women with or without children
- Women with disabilities
- Women from all cultural backgrounds including women with immigration status difficulties or without income or permanent residency
- LGBTIQA+ women and people who identify as non-binary
- Women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds
- Women with mental health issues
- Women with alcohol and other drug misuse issues

## Our Guiding Principles

Clients in our refuge are the expert in their own journey.  
We respect their rights to identify and express their culture in ways they choose.

We respect their right to dignity and privacy.  
We work in a non-judgmental way and focus on strengths.  
Risk management and safety planning is always at the centre of our work.

All Infants, children and young people will be considered clients in their own right.

Annie North offers a variety of safe accommodation and crisis responses:



The Loddon Family Violence After Hours Program provides a crisis response to women, children and young people across the region every evening, weekend, and public holiday.

Annie North clients are provided with:

- Intensive and collaborative case management
- A variety of therapeutic supports
- Tailored support and advocacy for their unique situation
- Risk assessment, risk management and safety planning
- Specialised children's support
- Information about their rights
- Specialist family violence psycho-education
- Support with police, legal and court issues
- Referrals to other specialist and community services
- Links to culturally specific support
- Assistance with storage and removal of belongings
- Targeted brokerage and referrals to financial assistance
- Support to exit into safe and affordable housing

## Intensive work aiming for long term outcomes

We provide specialist family violence psycho-education to situate women, children and young people's experiences in a broader structural context of male privilege, entitlement and control. At the same time, a client-centred approach empowers our clients to begin to process trauma and understand their unique experience of family violence. Equipping people with the tools and knowledge to assert their rights leads to a prevention of future violence.

### Family Violence Case Management

- Our specialist client support has always taken a feminist approach.
- Using a structural lens and providing systemic as well as individual advocacy.
- Safety oriented and often very practical, task based work, tailored to needs.
- A focus on dignity, human rights modelling non-violence in our support relationships.

### Therapeutic Support

- A range of responses focused broadly on health and wellbeing.
- Mental-health planning and support with trauma.
- Special focus on mother-child connection, and infant mental health.
  - Referrals and support to attend appointments and navigate the community.

## Our Vision of Healing & Recovery

Our integrated model includes therapeutic support from the very beginning for ALL family members

### Benefits for our workforce

- Close collaboration with colleagues is expected and built into our internal structures.
- Feeling of belonging to one larger team has importance for staff wellbeing.
- Shared team wisdom, tasks and resources.
- Space for reflecting on cultural humility.

### Benefits for our clients

- Plans are adaptive, tailored, and holistic and have the potential to meet more needs at once.
- A focus on long term healing and recovery aims for sustainability of outcomes, not quick fixes.
- We use a broad definition of 'safety'.
- Feeling seen, asked and listened to.

## Challenging victim blaming narratives, stereotypes and systems

We challenge beliefs which minimise gender-based violence against women, children and young people, and which also excuse the perpetrator. The responsibility for the abuse lies solely with the perpetrator who is fully accountable for the choice to use violence. We also support clients to assert their needs through challenging abusive systems and structures that perpetrate inequality within our society.



# Client Services

## Business Hours

Every client and family entering Annie North is supported by both a case manager and a therapeutic practitioner. Together, they provide coordinated care tailored to individual needs.

We offer flexible therapeutic options to promote recovery from trauma. This collaborative approach within our team is strengthened by partnerships with community services, ensuring clients receive holistic support.

Case plans follow the state-wide Case Management Program Requirements (CMPR) and address six life domains:

- Justice and Legal
- Employment and Education
- Family, Social and Community Connections
- Financial, Material and Transport
- Health and Wellbeing
- Housing

Plans are co-created with clients to ensure their voice is central.

Our commitment to clients in refuge:

- You are the expert in your own journey. We will support you to make choices that lead to long-term safety and freedom from abuse.
- Your culture, dignity and privacy are respected.
- We work in a non-judgemental, strengths-based way.
- We ask questions rather than assume, so we can understand how best to support you.
- Family violence risk management and safety planning are always at the heart of our work.
- Infants, children and young people are recognised as clients in their own right and receive support for their emotional and physical wellbeing.



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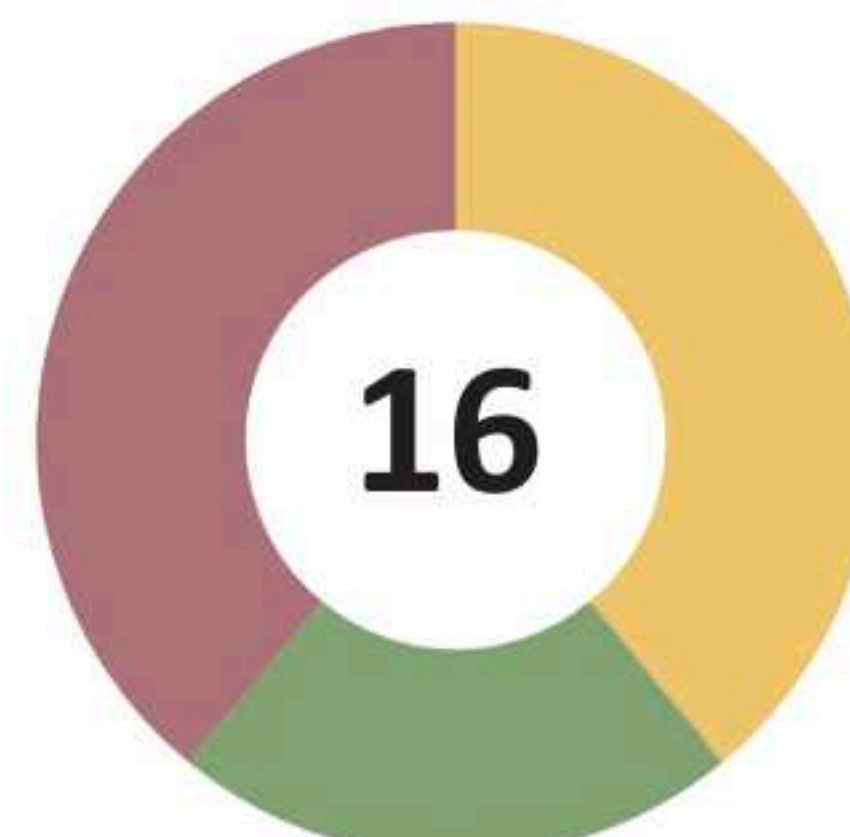
Number of households at Secure Women's Refuge Facility (SWRF)



3

Number of households at Annie's Place

### Exits from SWRF and Annie's Place



● Exit to Transitional Housing Management (THM)  
● Exit to Office of Housing (OoH) or Social Housing  
● Exit to other

## After Hours

The After Hours Team works collaboratively to manage the safety and security of clients at the Core and Cluster, outside of standard business hours.

They also deliver the Loddon Family Violence After Hours Program, coordinating crisis responses across the Loddon-Campaspe region. This support for women and children typically includes risk management, safety planning, emotional support, family violence education, emergency accommodation and material aid.

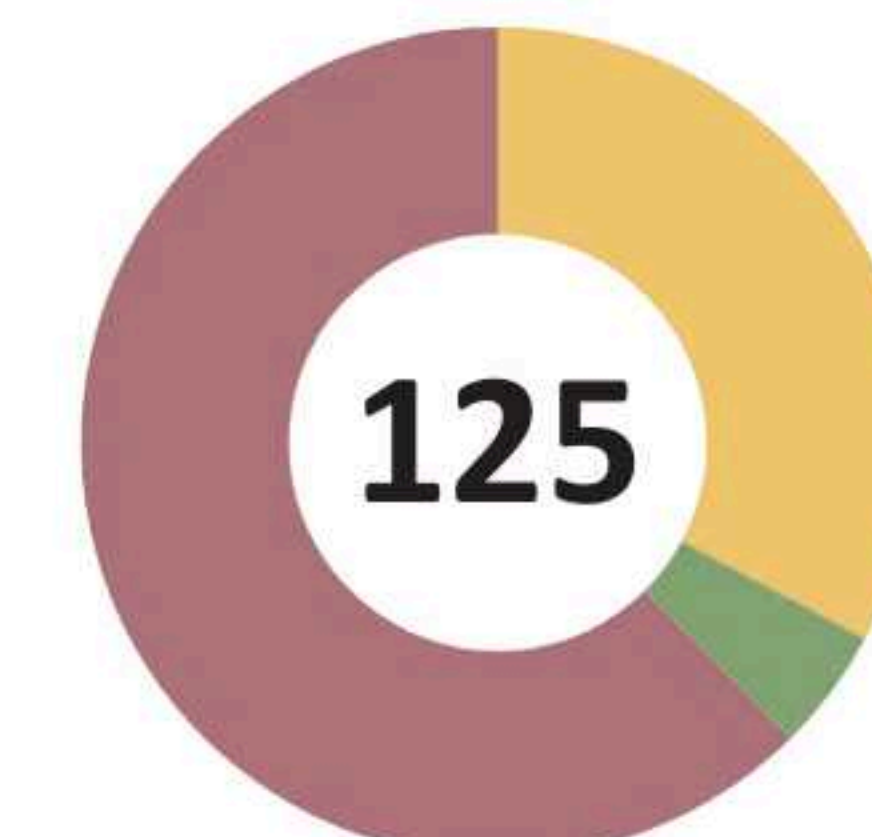
Our coordinated response would not be possible without the invaluable contribution of our on-call workers. Over the past year, they have provided exceptional support and advocacy for victim/survivors at hospitals and police stations. They deliver material aid, offer emotional support, transport clients and assist with settling women and children into emergency accommodation.

Our data shows:

- On-call workers were dispatched for 28% of all After Hours referrals.
- Motel accommodation was provided in 37.6% of cases.
- In 88% of referrals, the person using violence was a current or former partner.

The After Hours Team continues to support victim/survivors impacted by a range of co-occurring issues, including alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and both physical and intellectual disabilities.

### After Hours Response demographics



● AH First Nations ● AH CALD ● AH Other



35

Number of times on-call staff were dispatched



125

Total after hours responses



40

Number of after hours responses with children present



# Therapeutic Services

Our therapeutic team consists of skilled practitioners trained in a range of modalities. Accessing therapeutic support while in refuge helps remove barriers for clients and their children.

Every client, child and young person is introduced to a therapeutic practitioner upon arrival. Practitioners take a flexible approach to help women and children process and recover from trauma. Support may be provided individually, to siblings, or to children, young people and their caregiver together.

Therapeutic support can include:

- Art activities
- Gardening or outdoor experiences
- Craft projects
- Counselling
- Strength cards
- Understanding family violence and its impacts
- Strategies to regulate strong emotions
- Child led play sessions
- Reading stories
- Mother/baby bonding activities
- Supported excursions

## Children's Support

Annie North takes a whole of organisation approach to ensure every interaction with children, young people and their caregivers is safe and welcoming.

Family violence can have a profound and lasting impact on children and young people. Those who have experienced trauma often need additional support to reach developmental milestones, regulate emotions and engage in education.

Refuge offers not only physical safety but also the opportunity to begin the process of trauma recovery for mothers, children and young people.

Each family member is supported by both a therapeutic practitioner and a case manager. Children and young people are welcomed into refuge in ways that are age appropriate and sensitive to their needs.

This year, Annie North staff attended:

- ANROWS Conference

2025 – Listen, Learn, Act: Centring children and young people to end violence

- Adolescent Violence in the Home training
- International Childhood Trauma Conference

“Thank you so much for everything your love, support, caring and help. Because of you guys we are having a beautiful xmas and new year for the first time in my life. We have no words to express how happy we are and heaps of thanks.

Annie North client

## Women's Group

The Women's Group offers a nurturing space where women come together to heal after experiencing family and domestic violence. It's a place to feel safe, supported and understood.

Through sharing stories, women foster resilience and

empowerment. They remind each other that they are not alone and that healing is possible.

This year's program included a range of themes and activities:

- **Mental Health Challenges**  
We explored topics such as anxiety through heartfelt conversations and gentle strategies that supported understanding and healing.
- **Education on Family Violence**  
We discussed relationship red flags, empowering each other to recognise unhealthy patterns and reclaim our stories.
- **Self-Care Activities**  
Restorative sessions like meditation and mindfulness offered gentle ways to reconnect with ourselves and nurture our wellbeing.
- **Cultural Cooking Sessions**  
We gathered in the kitchen to share not just recipes, but the warmth of our cultures. Each dish told a story, building connection and celebrating our diverse backgrounds.



Photo: Women and staff members celebrate the end of Ramadan together



# A Story of Hope

**Amaya\*** married **John\***, an Australian citizen, in 2018 and moved to Australia on a spousal visa the following year. Leaving her close-knit family behind was difficult, but John promised they could visit soon. COVID-19 border closures made that impossible.

At first, Amaya appreciated John working from home during the pandemic. She was lonely and welcomed the company. She dismissed his occasional outbursts as stress. When Amaya became pregnant in 2021, John was pleased but increasingly controlling. He insisted she not leave the house alone, claiming it was to protect her and the baby.

After their daughter **Lani\*** was born, Amaya hoped John's temper would improve. He seemed loving toward Lani, and Amaya was excited when the Maternal and Child Health Nurse (MCHN) invited her to a new mothers' group. John agreed she could attend but monitored her movements via their shared phone tracker and criticised her for prioritising socialising over Lani's routine.

When Amaya was invited to a mothers' group dinner, she asked John to care for Lani. He initially agreed, but when she dressed up, he exploded, accusing her of seeking male attention and going through her phone. Lani woke during the argument, and Amaya, frightened, stayed home. John

didn't speak to her for three days, later claiming the group was a bad influence and asking her not to return.

Amaya grew increasingly isolated. When she asked if her family could visit, John instead brought his mother to stay for three months. She was critical and reinforced John's belief that he was the head of the household. When Amaya asked her to leave, John slapped her. His mother said nothing.

By the time she left, Amaya's confidence was shattered. John's affection had turned to constant criticism and escalating violence. Lani, now three, showed signs of developmental delay and distress. She had limited speech, behavioural outbursts and was not toilet trained. John called her "stupid like her mother." Lani became silent when he raised his voice and Lani would scream and hit Amaya when he wasn't home.

At Lani's three-year check-up, the MCHN asked Amaya how things were at home. Amaya broke down and disclosed her fear of John. With support, she contacted Safe Steps and was offered emergency accommodation. She turned off her phone, suspecting John monitored their security system, and was given a safe phone through the Wesnet Safe Connections program. The Escaping Violence Payment helped her start over. After a week in emergency

accommodation, Amaya and Lani moved to Annie North refuge. She was supported to apply for a Family Violence Intervention Order and relocate to regional Victoria.

At first, Amaya was embarrassed by Lani's behaviour, but staff reassured her it was a normal response to trauma. Therapeutic play helped them reconnect. Amaya gained confidence in her parenting and found hope through the women's group.

She began participating in group activities, sharing her culture through food and dance. With support, she secured a full Intervention Order, Centrelink payments and childcare subsidy. Lani began attending childcare, and Amaya started volunteering and joined local multicultural groups. She even enrolled in swimming lessons, something she never had the chance to do in her home country.

Amaya is also learning to drive. She and Lani continue to attend Annie North's women's group, where Lani plays with other children under the supervision of staff. Amaya is now one of the women offering encouragement to new arrivals, reassuring them that, in time, they too can feel safer and more hopeful.

**\*Not their real names. Some events and details changed to preserve anonymity**

# Cultural Support in Refuge

During the past 12 months, over 31% of Annie North secure women's refuge facility (SWRF) clients were women who were born overseas. 85% of their accompanying children were born in Australia.

Many of the women have been denied access to English classes, social networks, and finances by their partner.

Some of the women we support are on temporary visas. This means they are not eligible for Centrelink payments and have no access to childcare subsidies.

The Family Safety Victoria brokerage for women without income has been a welcome initiative. Through this brokerage, women can buy groceries and receive essential services. Two women had e-bikes purchased, enabling them to get to and from their education provider.

Housing options are very limited for women on temporary visas and without income.

Women and children are supported to practice their culture/faith as they choose. This may include times of fasting, dietary requirements, acknowledging significant days or connecting with community groups to join festivities.

We work closely with InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, Refugee Immigration legal centre, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS), and Bendigo Community Health Settlement Services to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.

Annie North, Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria (CASA CV), and LCMS collaborated on a new project to improve family and sexual violence support for local multicultural communities.

## Good news stories for Annie North families who identify as CALD:

- When L came to Annie North in 2023 she was on a temporary visa. L now has Permanent Residency and is living in long term housing with her child. L is working in the health sector.
- While in refuge, M completed English classes and obtained Permanent Residency. M has now enrolled in university and is both volunteering and working.
- J has reconnected with family, made local friendships, is attending English classes and learning to drive.

**\*Not their real initials.**

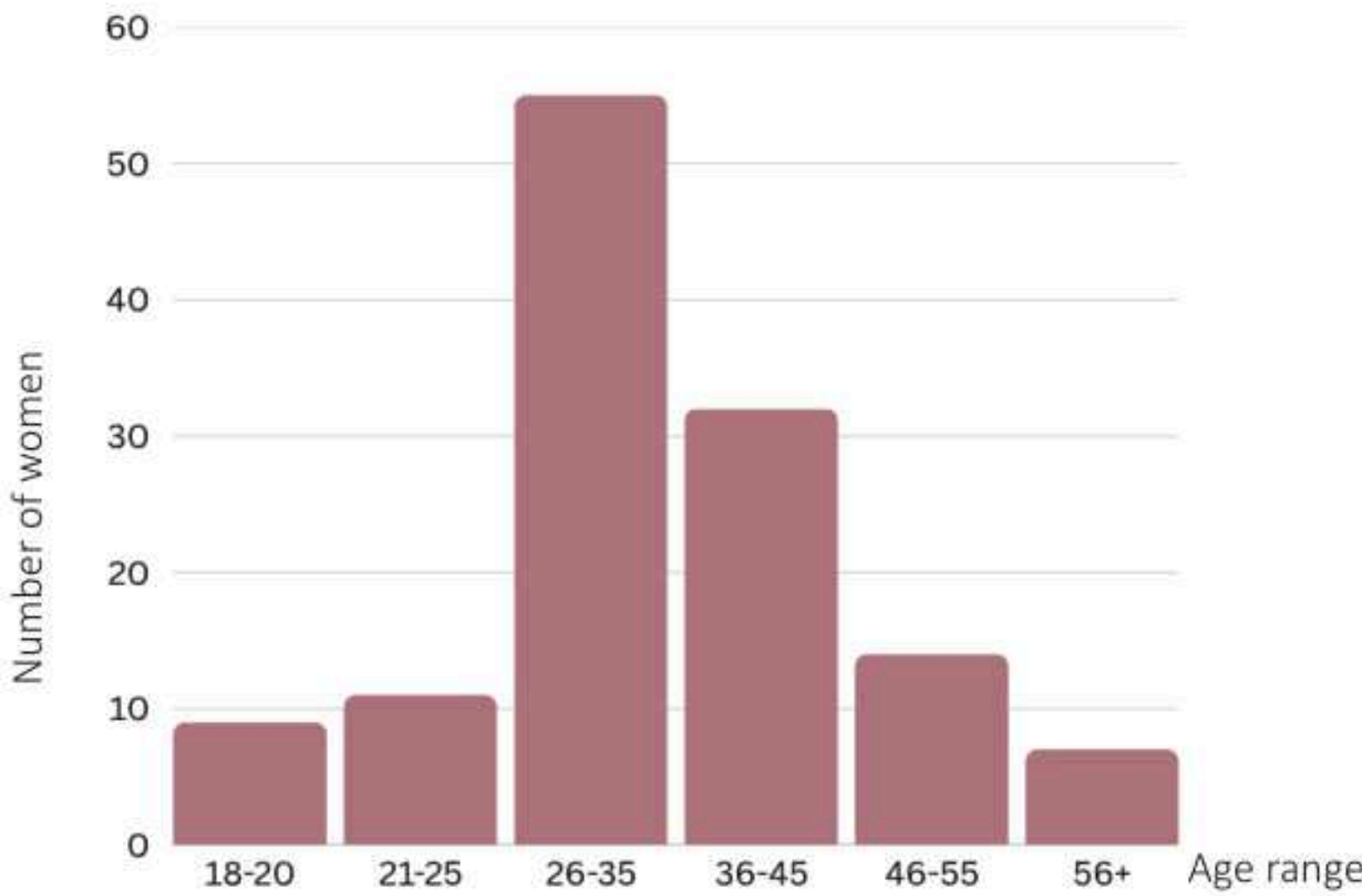




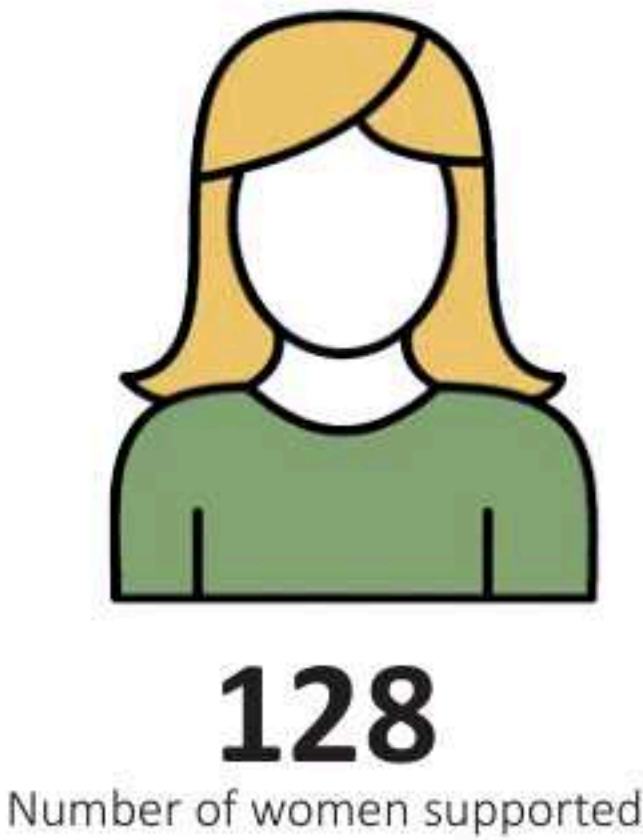
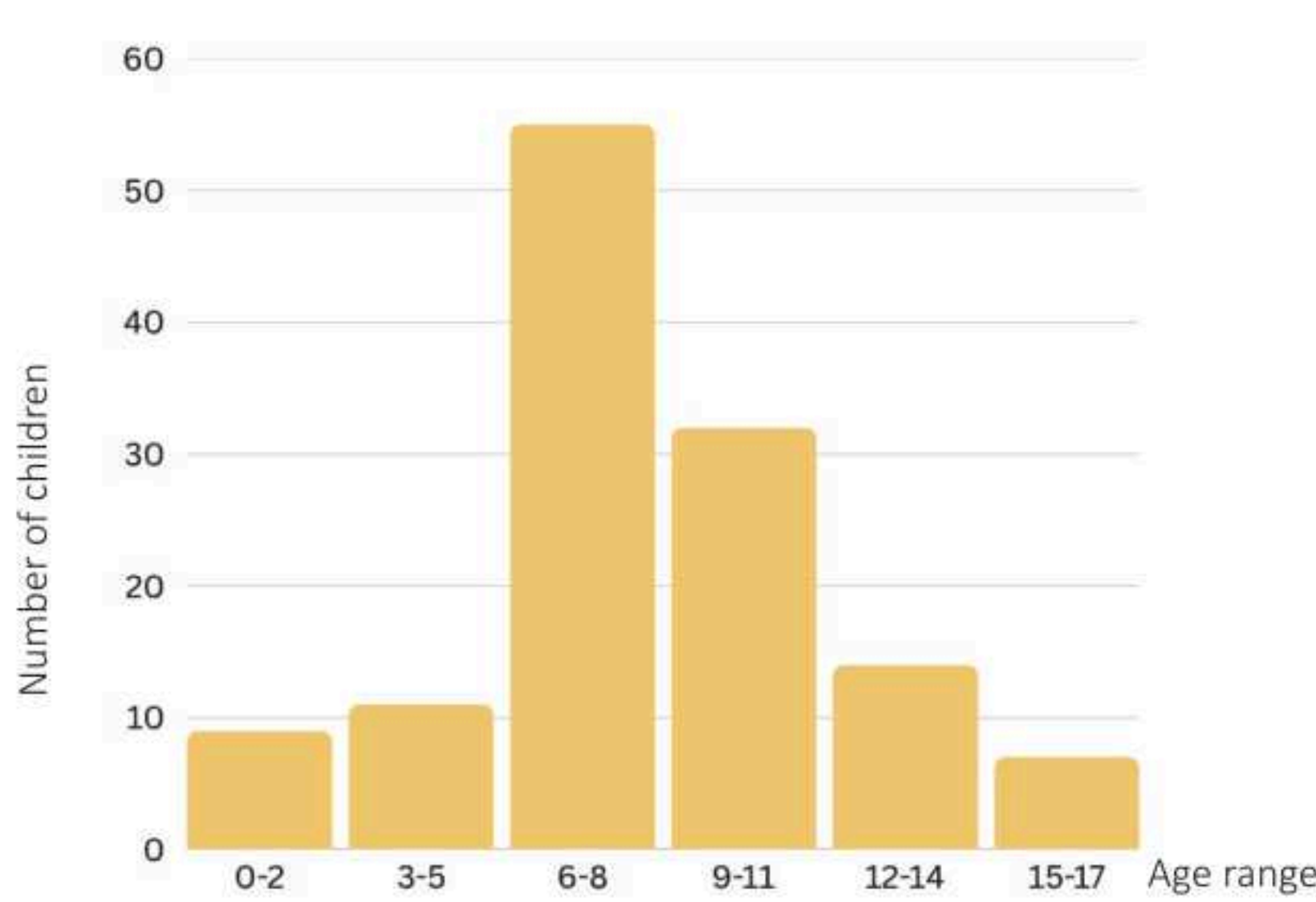
# Making an Impact

## Client Demographics

Age Range of Women

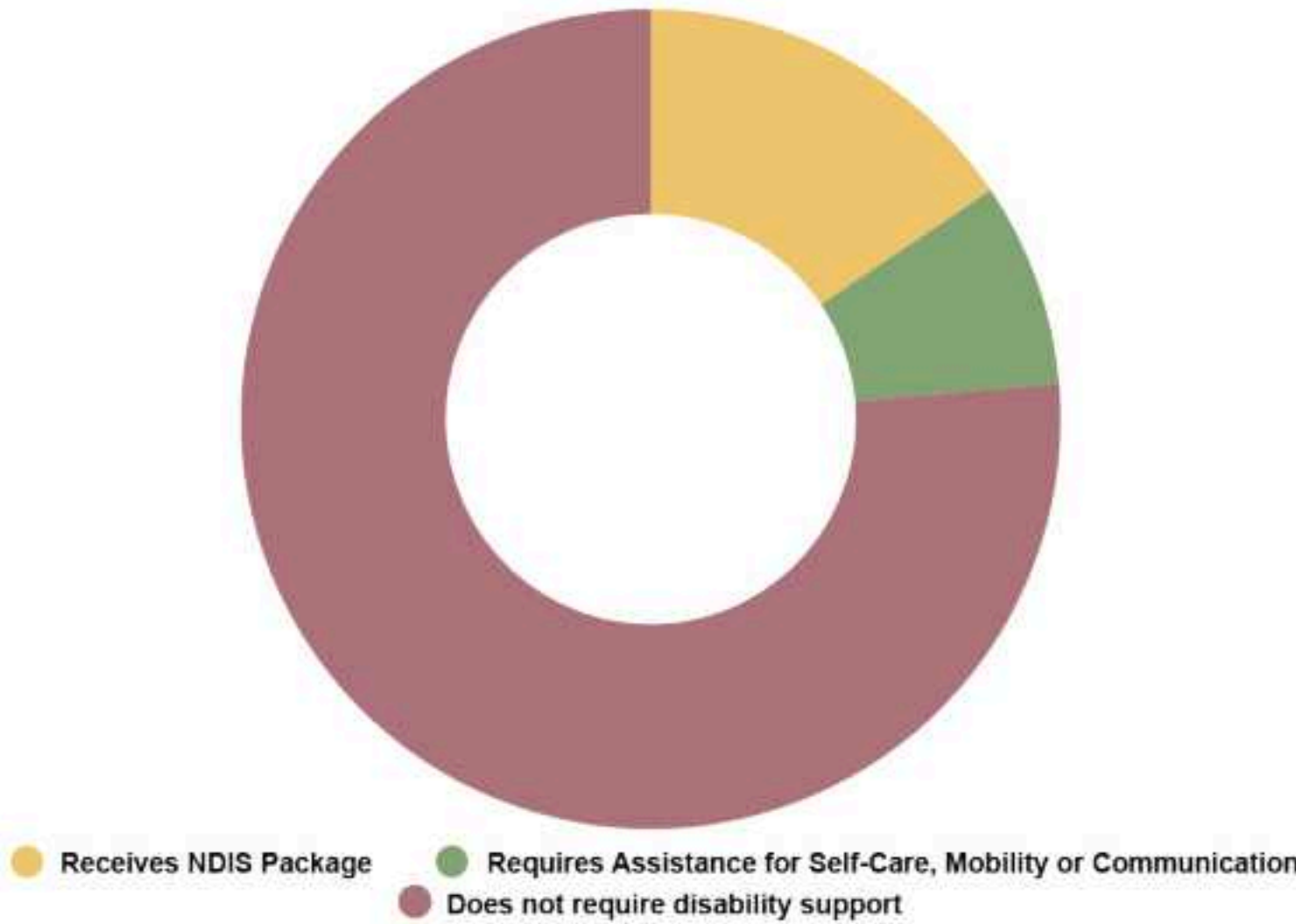


Age Range of Children and Young People

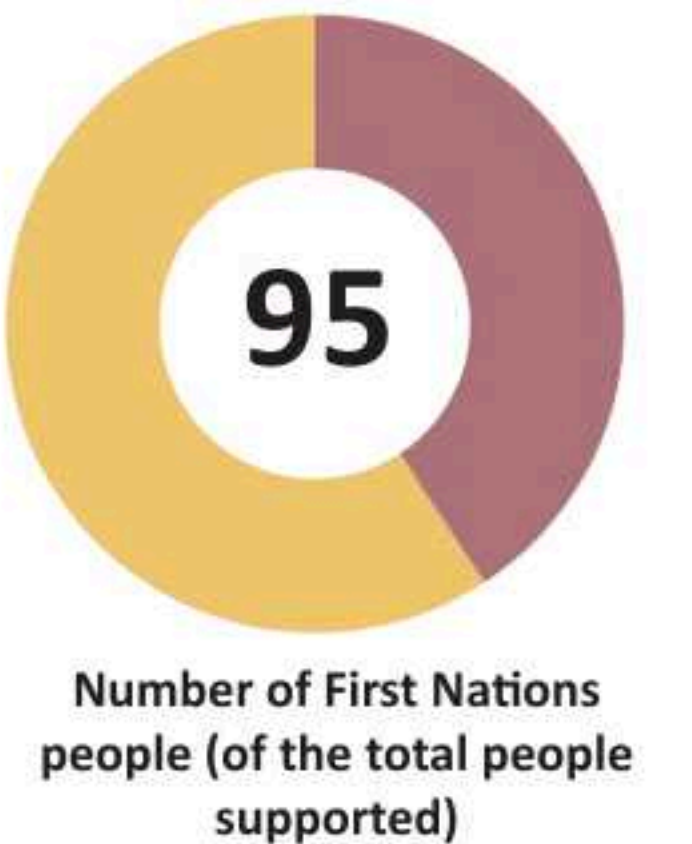
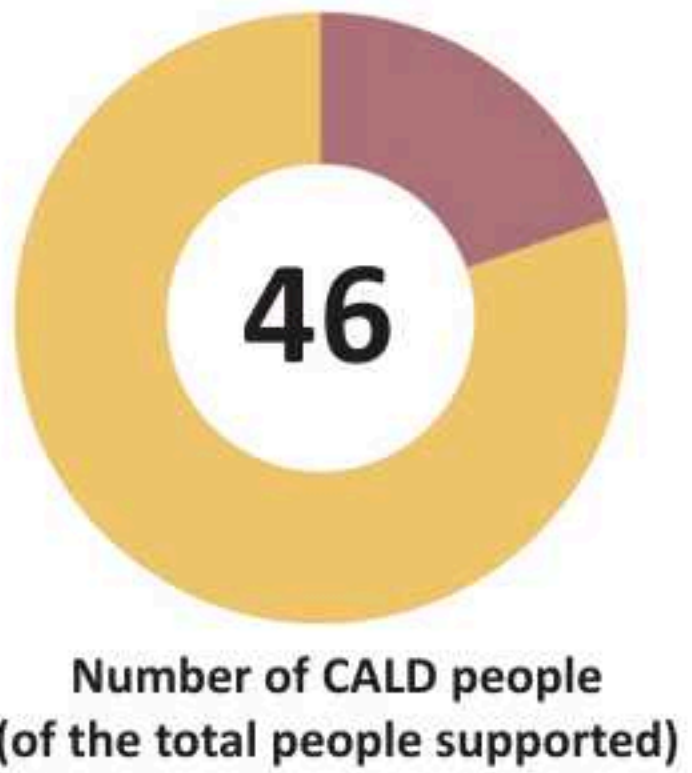


## Disability Support

% of supported women, children and young people requiring disability support



## Supported Accommodation







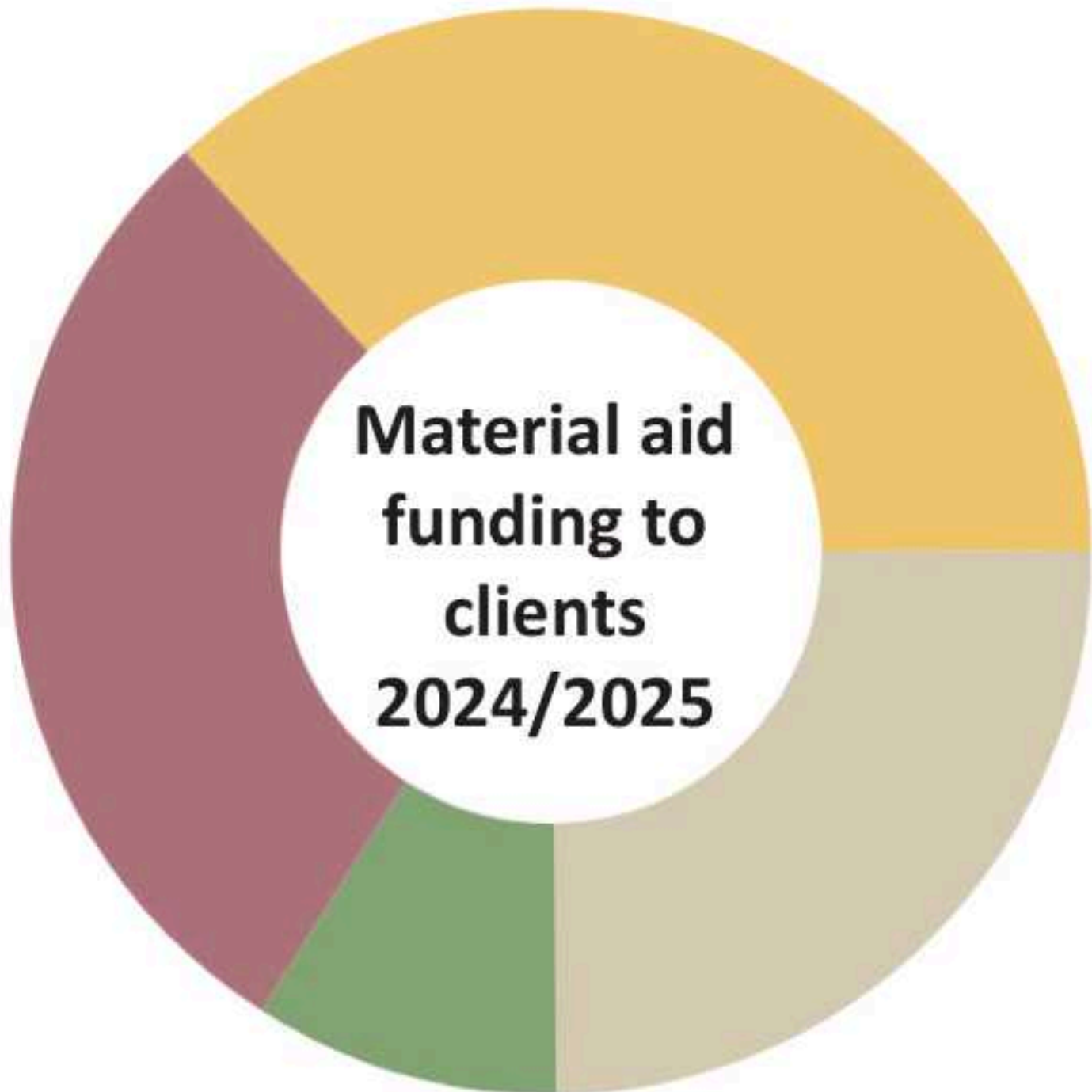
\$129,416

Total brokerage payments made to clients for essential needs



3,139 hours

Total recorded contact time with clients not in SWRF



\$11,721

Flexible Support Packages



\$37,356

Family Violence Crisis Brokerage



\$47,146

Victim/Survivors in Refuge Without Income Due to Temporary Visa Status



\$33,193

After Hours Family Violence Support Brokerage

Most of the women accessing our service are aged between 26 and 35, followed by those in the 36–45 age bracket. This year, we recorded a 40% increase in clients born outside Australia and a significant 64% rise in First Nations clients, while the proportion of CALD clients declined by 4%. Additionally, the financial year saw a 20% reduction in the percentage of accompanying children and young people supported by our service.

The length of stay in refuge is not simply reflective of Annie North’s work ethic or a family’s capacity to improve their situation and

move on. The complexities of family violence support mean that every family’s situation is unique and providing tailored case management requires adequate time for deep listening and spending time with people.

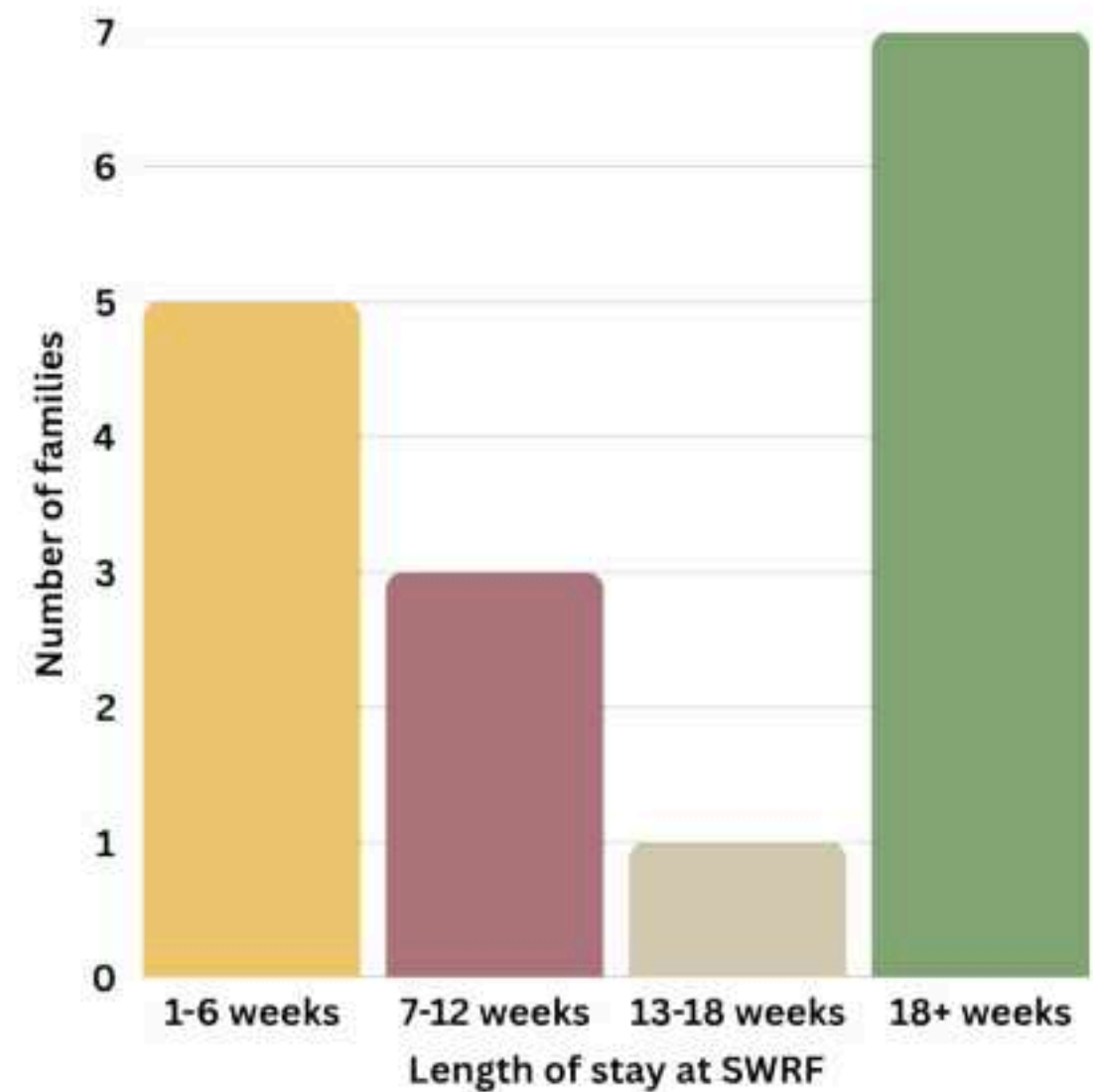
The time spent in the SWRF can be further compounded by factors such as Victoria’s housing and rental affordability crisis; delays in other institutional systems and bureaucracies; or waiting for adequate justice responses to ensure it is safe to live in the community again.

The data shows that the majority of families stay more than 18

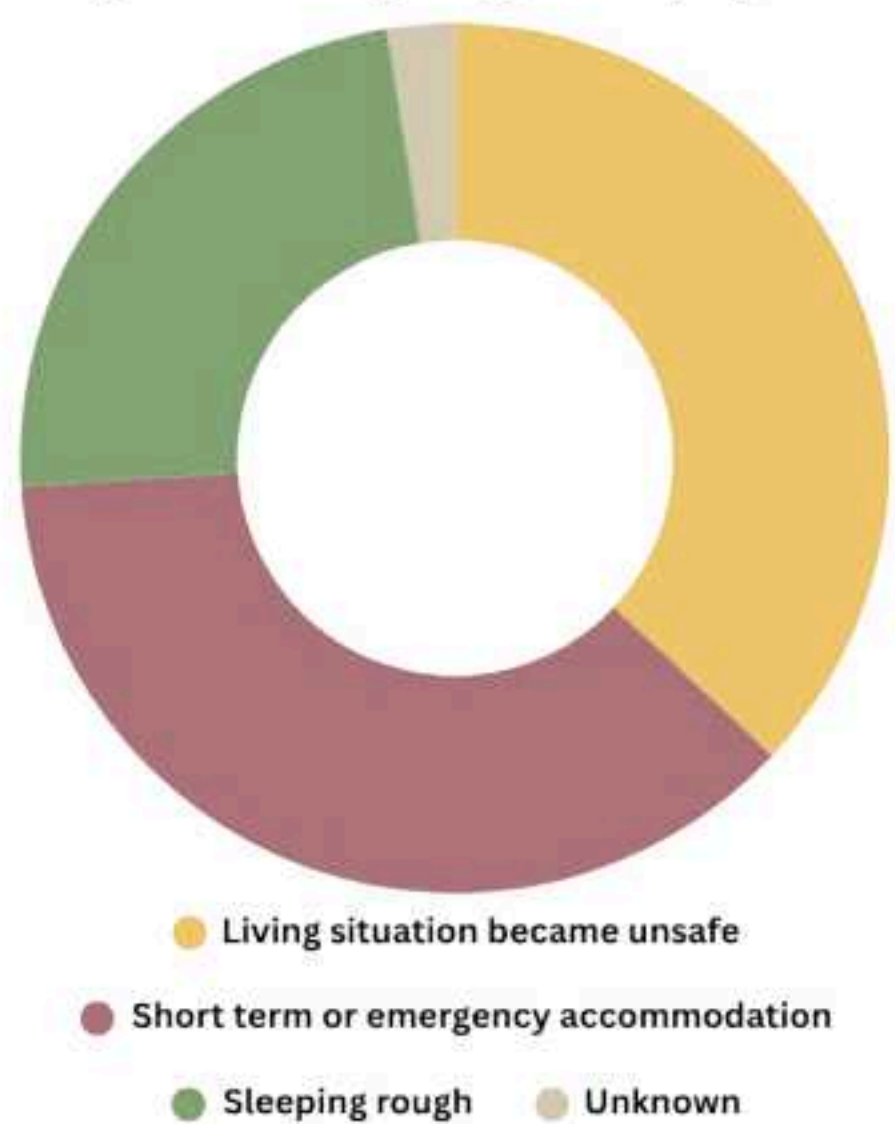
weeks. Of these 7 families, 2 stayed for the entire year (52 weeks), while another 3 stayed for between 20–30 weeks. The average length of stay in the SWRF during 2024–2025 financial year was 17.9 weeks.

The stark reality of the housing crisis and need for more refuge beds is never far from the minds of Annie North staff. The number of our clients recorded as “sleeping rough” prior to entering an Annie North service continues to increase. There is also a large proportion of women and children who are already residing in emergency accommodation before they come to Annie North.

Length of stay at SWRF



Previous situation of new clients to AN refuge or AH program (%)





# Celebrating 35+ Years of Annie North

## New women's refuge for Bendigo area

Substantial funding for a wide range of community health projects was revealed by the Community Services Minister, Rose Mathews, during a tour of the Loddon-Campaspe region yesterday.

Mr Mathews visited Kyneton, Castlemaine and Bendigo and announced allocations for new or expanded services in each centre.

A major project announced for the Bendigo area was the opening of a new women's refuge.

Mr Mathews said the new facility was being funded under the Joint Federal and State women's emergency support program and \$114,614 had been allocated for the refuge this year.

The refuge would offer support and accommodation to women who had experienced domestic violence, and were escaping from intolerable circumstances.

"The emergence of women's refuges has meant that women living in impossible domestic situations have somewhere to go," he said.

"Often when the danger to themselves and their children is just too great, they leave the family home in great haste with very little in the way of resources."

Mr Mathews also announced funding for a new Community Residential Unit (CRU) in the Bendigo area for people with intellectual disabilities.

CRUs were an alternative form of accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities who were presently living in institutions or with families.

The house is to be managed by the Central and Northern Association for the Accommodation of the Intellectually Disabled and funding for CRU support staff has also been provided.

He said the State Budget provided for a total of 13 CRUs and each unit would provide accommodation for five people with intellectual disabilities.

The cost average for each of the extra units was \$181,000 and funding for one of them had been allocated to the Bendigo area because it was "in particular need of suitable accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities."

Mr Mathews also revealed funding of \$11,345 for six additional neighbourhood houses in the Loddon-Campaspe region.

He said the Bendigo Youth Community House, with salaries on youth, was unique to the region and an extra \$100,000 had been set aside to increase the coordinator position from 10 to 21 hours per week.

Funds had also been provided for coordinator positions at neighbourhood houses to be established at Woodend, Maldon, Kyneton, Pyramid Hill and Lancelfield.

A further allocation of \$111,611 announced by Mr Mathews for its Home and Community Care (HACC) projects in the region.

One project establishes a new adult day activity and support service at Maryborough. Four others expand or maintain existing programs, and the sixth funds a new forum for providers of the service in the region.

The projects are in Bendigo, Daylesford, Maryborough, Murrumbidgee and Eimeo.

Mr Mathews also announced funding of \$11,978 for a worker to provide support and assistance to Castlemaine's homeless.

"The worker would assist the homeless to find suitable accommodation to seek at the different options that were available and to provide other support as needed."



## Public Forum for

## WOMEN

THE WOMEN'S REFUGE PROJECT IS LOOKING AT COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO A REFUGE BEING Sought FOR BENDIGO.

WE URGE YOU TO ATTEND THIS FORUM AND EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS AND CONCERNS, SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES.

THERE WILL BE:

- \* A SPEAKER FROM A COUNTRY REFUGE
- \* A VIDEO ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- \* SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

LUNCH AND CHILD CARE ARE PROVIDED AT NO COST.

LET US KNOW YOU ARE COMING. RING CATHY SULLIVAN ON 425 417 OR JOCKIE HUGHES ON 435 465.

Saturday May 16

10.30 am - 3 pm

465 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo, Phone 435 465.



We celebrate the incredible people who have shaped Annie North throughout the years – including our dedicated employees, volunteers, and committee members. Each has contributed their time, energy, and heart to create an organisation that stands as a beacon of support and empowerment. Annie North is not just a name; it's a community built on compassion, resilience, and collaboration. Thank you to all who have contributed for making this place what it is today—a safe, supportive, and inspiring refuge for those who need it most.





# An organisation’s greatest strength lies in its people





# Learning Environment



4

Student placements

## Supporting Staff to Study

**As a feminist organisation which promotes the success of women, Annie North supports staff members to balance study and work. We encourage lifelong learning and new experiences.**

Zoe (After Hours FV Practitioner) is studying Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Annie (After Hours FV Practitioner) commenced her Social Work degree.

Joni (FV Therapeutic Practitioner) is undertaking studies in Family Therapy.

Madeleine (Client Services Manager) is studying Diploma of Governance.

## Pathways to Employment

Eliza who undertook her Social Work placement at Annie North in 2024, went on to become an After Hours On-call staff member.

## Hosting Student Placements 2024–25

Annie North continues to be a proud supporter of education providers, hosting 4 local students this financial year. Megan from Bendigo TAFE completed her Community Services placement in July 2025.

Brittany and Eliza from Bendigo La Trobe undertook 3 month Social Work placements in late 2024.

Renee from Bendigo TAFE completed a Community Services placement in early 2025.

## Student Feedback

*From the first moment that I entered the building and was shown around – I felt so welcomed and at home.*

*I feel privileged to have been able to be a part of this organisation, even for a snippet of time. You have a fantastic group of women on staff who all contribute and collaborate together with the centre of their work always being what is best for the client.*

*I have worked in various work places throughout my life, all in different*

*sectors with different people, and never have I ever experienced a more positive, empowering and well-rounded team. The way in which all of these women collaboratively advocate for their clients, honestly at times moved me to tears. All of the skills that they hold complement one another – and it was such a fantastic experience to see all staff work together to workshop how to best positively impact their clients. Management was consistently on ground level with the staff working with the case managers and therapeutic workers whenever needed to ensure that they always felt supported – and provide guidance when required.*

*It is rare to find an organisation create such a steadfast and true bond with the staff and clients. I believe that the beautiful work culture and refuge model that you have created at Annie North, has and will continue to positively impact the lives of many clients, staff and future students for years to come.*

*Thank you all for taking the time to impart so enthusiastically your knowledge in this sector to me. I can confidently say, that you have positively impacted my future career trajectory – and shown me the kind of woman I aspire to be.*

Meg – Community Services Student

# Disability Inclusion

Annie North works closely with other organisations in the sector to support women and children with disabilities. The local Family Violence (FV) Practice Lead co-locates monthly to provide specialist expertise and advocacy.

Safe Steps provides brokerage for disability support when women, children and young people enter refuge. Annie North have been part of Safe and Equal's Statewide Disability Inclusion Community of Practice since 2020. This has strengthened Annie North's knowledge and capacity in supporting our clients with disabilities.

Annie North have proactively created partnerships with local Allied Health professionals to facilitate access to assessments. Many women have had traumatic brain injuries from family violence but never had a diagnosis.

Children and young people may not have had the opportunity to be assessed for neurodiversity and instead been punished by the person using violence for their behavioural issues. Refuge provides an opportunity to safely engage support

services. Case Managers support clients to apply for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or to refer to local NDIS supports. This is often complicated by the person using violence having access to NDIS plan activity. All case management activities must consider risk management strategies.

Our practitioners adjust case management to meet the needs of women, children and young people with disabilities. This may mean using visual resources, slowing down the pace of information and providing practical support.

Some of the professional services who have provided outreach support to refuge clients in last 12 months:

- speech pathologists
- occupational therapists
- disability support workers
- cleaners
- mental health support workers

Children and young people with neurodiversity have been provided with sensory resources such as indoor trampolines and sensory toys.

Girl aged 4 now attends child

care with her own education support. This enables her mother to attend her own studies.

Boy aged 3 has developed a good day and night routine. When he first came to refuge he was awake until early hours of the morning. His speech is improving since seeing the speech pathologist.

One woman obtained a diagnosis which helped her understand her own learning challenges. She now uses both medication and strategies to manage tasks and has commenced study.

“Time seems to fly by these days, but I wanted to reach out and remind you all that you truly saved my life. You gave me a new start, the opportunity to be independent and happy, and I'm thriving now thanks to you.

Annie North client



# Systems and Development

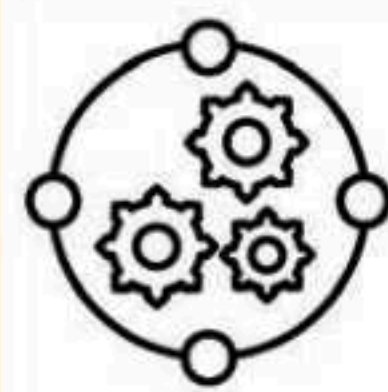
The Systems and Development portfolio at Annie North is broad-ranging and encompasses the entire organisation, with both an internal and external focus. It plays a key role in strengthening organisational foundations while contributing to sector-wide initiatives.

Our work centres on making sense of complexity, streamlining operations, and creating efficiencies that support sustainability and growth. We also provide essential support to Governance, Administration, and Client Services, fostering collaboration and clarity to deliver high-quality outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

This work includes the following aspects:

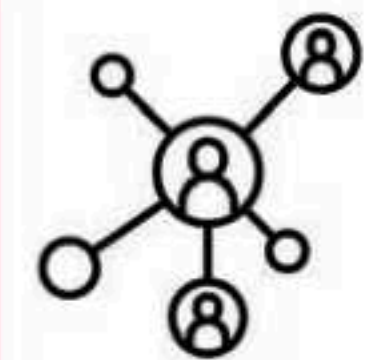
- Quality and compliance
- Efficiency and improvements
- Sense making for staff – creating user-friendly processes and documents
- Information gathering, concept mapping and problem solving
- Change management and organisational design
- Stakeholder engagement and sector participation
- Documenting Annie North's work and story – both past and present
- People and culture services

## We are developing:



### Internal Systems & Processes

- Staff
- Clients
- Resources



### Collaborative Relationships

- Inter-agency projects
- Local groups
- Communities of Practice



### Local & Broader Family Violence Sector

- Collective advocacy
- Sharing our wisdom
- Contributing to policy review and reform



### Special Family Violence & Adjacent Workforce

- Student placements
- Mentoring program
- Education for medical students and registrars

# People and Culture

## A Catch-Up With the New People and Culture Lead

I don't use the term "dream job" lightly, but when I saw the People and Culture position at Annie North, I knew instantly – it was the dream job for me. Having previously worked as a social worker in the family violence sector before retraining in Human Resources, I deeply understand both the challenges and the importance of the work our practitioners do. It was an honour to be offered the role as Annie North's first-ever People and Culture Lead, and I've felt incredibly welcomed by the team in my first few months.

Every day, I witness the unwavering commitment of all of our staff – from our CEO to client services, and from finance and admin to systems development – who go above and beyond to support women and children impacted by family violence. Their shared values and dedication bring Annie North's vision to life: that all women and children live free from domestic and family violence.

I also want to acknowledge the resilience of our staff. They often walk alongside victim survivors through uncertainty

and trauma, offering strength and compassion. I am committed to supporting these remarkable professionals by fostering a safe, healthy, and empowering workplace – so they can continue their vital, inspiring work.

## What drives Annie North's culture?

With the word "culture" in my title, I think about what culture is – and what it means – every day. It's not always easy to define, but if you ask any worker, they'll likely be able to describe the culture of their workplace, both the good and the challenging.

At its core, workplace culture is about the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that shape how people interact and work together within an organisation.

At Annie North, our culture is deeply influenced by the work we do and the women and children we support. Every day, I witness a culture of dedication – staff working cohesively to support our clients, united by shared goals and passions. We celebrate our clients' wins and walk alongside them on their journeys. We stand up for each other and the work we do,

while also creating safe spaces to debrief and reflect on the emotional impact of our roles.

I've embedded this culture into every level of my work. We recruit with intention: seeking candidates who align with our values and vision. We support our staff with practices that go above and beyond, using a feminist lens to understand how gender roles shape workplace experiences.

Most importantly, I see a culture of leadership by example – through the language we use and the victim-blaming ideologies we challenge. Whether it's on a micro level, in the wider community, or on national and international stages (with our staff and CEO presenting at the 5th World Conference of Women's Shelters in Sydney in September 2025), we advocate for change.

No workplace has a perfect culture, but Annie North's is one I'm proud to be part of. It's a culture that continues to grow, adapt, and evolve with the times – and one that I'm committed to nurturing into the future.

**Emma Spindler**  
People & Culture Lead



# Volunteers



## 143

Hours volunteered

This year, our Gardening and Maintenance Volunteers were coordinated by Sue McCormick, Property and Administration Officer, until her retirement in December. Emily Milwain, Property and Administration Assistant, then stepped into the role.

The volunteers' commitment and teamwork in keeping our outdoor spaces welcoming and well-maintained is greatly

appreciated. These dedicated individuals play an important role in creating beautiful, safe and tranquil gardens for clients and staff to enjoy.

### Rotary Club of Bendigo South volunteers:

- Clive H
- George E
- Heather N
- Jan P
- Merlyn Q

- Paul G
- Paul S
- Philip L
- Tony P
- Trevor H

We sincerely thank our volunteers for their generosity and the positive impact they make every day. Annie North is proud to acknowledge their contribution and the difference they bring to the lives of those we support.



Photo: Our amazing Rotary Club of Bendigo Volunteers taking a well earned break after working hard in the gardens.

# Donations

## We sincerely thank our donors and supporters for their generous contributions during 2024–2025.

We are deeply grateful to the anonymous donor who has supported us for the past five years, contributing \$60,000 this year and bringing their total donations to \$270,000. This funding enables us to deliver essential therapeutic support to women and children affected by violence and abuse, helping them on their path to recovery.

Our thanks also go to the Sandel Foundation for their ongoing commitment, and to the Godfrey Go Well Charitable Trust for their generous donation. We acknowledge the outstanding fundraising efforts of Upstander and Girton Grammar Parents Club.

We appreciate the many community groups, clubs, businesses, and individuals, both regular and new, who provide financial support or donate goods for the women and children we support. We also have a long list of individuals that provide us with one off or regular monetary donations, or donate goods, that we have not listed. Your contributions make a real difference.

### Goods and Services:

- ADVIA
- B4VK
- Bendigo Community Health
- Bendigo Pottery
- Bunnings Warehouse Kangaroo Flat
- Central Line Marking Pty Ltd
- Curious Women
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Good Start Strathfieldsaye
- Impact for Women
- My Vet Strathfieldsaye
- Share the Dignity
- Stonemans Bookroom
- Sunshine Bendigo
- Two Good Co.
- Zonta

### Cash Donors:

- AFS & Associates Chartered Accountants
- Australian Trauma Support Centre
- Be.Bendigo Women Connect
- Bendigo Senior Secondary College
- CWA Axedale Branch
- CWA Golden Night Branch
- CWA Harcourt Branch
- Dr John Gault
- Eye Spy Surveillance
- Girton Grammar Parents Club (Girton's Got Heart)
- Godfrey Go Well Charitable Trust
- Holloway Air & Electrical
- Inner Wheel Club of Bendigo
- Kennington Ladies Social Tennis Club
- Lions Book Club Greater Bendigo Branch
- Maitri Wellbeing
- Millduck
- St Andrews Masters Calisthenics Group
- The Rest
- The Sandel Foundation
- Upstander
- Water Industry Operations Association of Australia
- We Empty Rooms



Photo: Annie North staff receive a generous donation from CWA Axedale Branch



# Our Committee



## Claudia Meyer – Chair

Claudia joined the Annie North Committee of Management in 2022. With lived experience of gender-based violence and subsequent support services, she strongly believes in feminist-based services and a feminist lens on mainstream health and aged care services. She holds several university adjunct positions and currently serves as the President and Chair of the Board of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG), and on the Board of Dhelkaya Health. Claudia is passionate about the rights of older women, listening to and acting on the voices of lived experience. Her purpose is to empower older people, particularly women, to participate fully in life with dignity and autonomy, gently reminded by her favourite quote that: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." (Maja Angelou).



## Narlinga Morgan – Deputy Chair

Joining the Annie North Committee of Management in 2023, Narlinga, a very proud First Nations woman, brings experience and passion in social justice and human rights, specifically working with First Nations communities and under-served communities and advocating for equality, better access to services and improved holistic health outcomes for all. She has held senior and leadership positions in State Government, not-for-profit community service organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled health services. Narlinga has led programs and projects in healthcare, justice, disability, aged care, community mental health and family violence sectors and is currently a director on the board of a community legal centre.



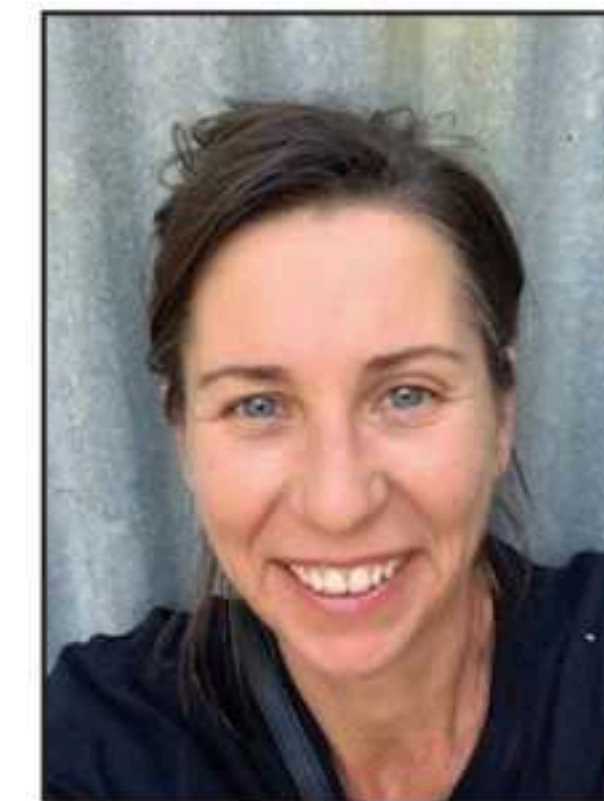
## Emma Fowler – Secretary

Emma joined Annie North as a Committee Member in 2017 and has previously served as both Secretary and Treasurer. Emma currently works with the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank in Regulatory Risk & Compliance. She is a qualified Lawyer with 14+ years post admission experience and has practised in both a private practice context and with a community legal organisation. Her previous legal roles within community legal organisations saw her located in a regional office. That position involved working directly with people of all ages that had suffered varying degrees of trauma. Emma is a passionate advocate of women's rights and as a Committee Member is aware of the necessity for good corporate governance as a crucial component of delivering accountable corporate performance in accordance with the goals, objectives and strategic direction of an organisation.



## Deanne Pointon – Treasurer

Deanne joined the Annie North Committee of Management in 2024. She brings more than 20 years of experience across the service industry, property, and large private enterprises and the not-for-profit sector. Her strong financial acumen, governance expertise, and commercial approach to business operations are valuable assets to Annie North. Deanne is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, holds a Bachelor of Business (Commerce), and is a member of CPA Australia.



## Lisa Levis – Committee Member

Lisa has been a member of the Annie North Committee of Management since 2017 and is committed to the work and values of Annie North. Lisa has previously served as both Chair and Treasurer. Lisa is an advocate and leader in the Family Violence sector. Working to address the drivers of family violence, Lisa has spent over 10 years working to make a difference in the lives of individuals and families impacted by family violence. She is a qualified Men's Behaviour Change facilitator and has a wealth of experience in the Specialist Family Violence and Refuge sector, system integration and feminist leadership. As a sector leader, Lisa's work has led to accomplishments, such as policy changes, increased awareness and improved services for victim/survivors. Lisa is known for influence, advocacy, empathy, and an unwavering dedication to supporting dignity in practice.



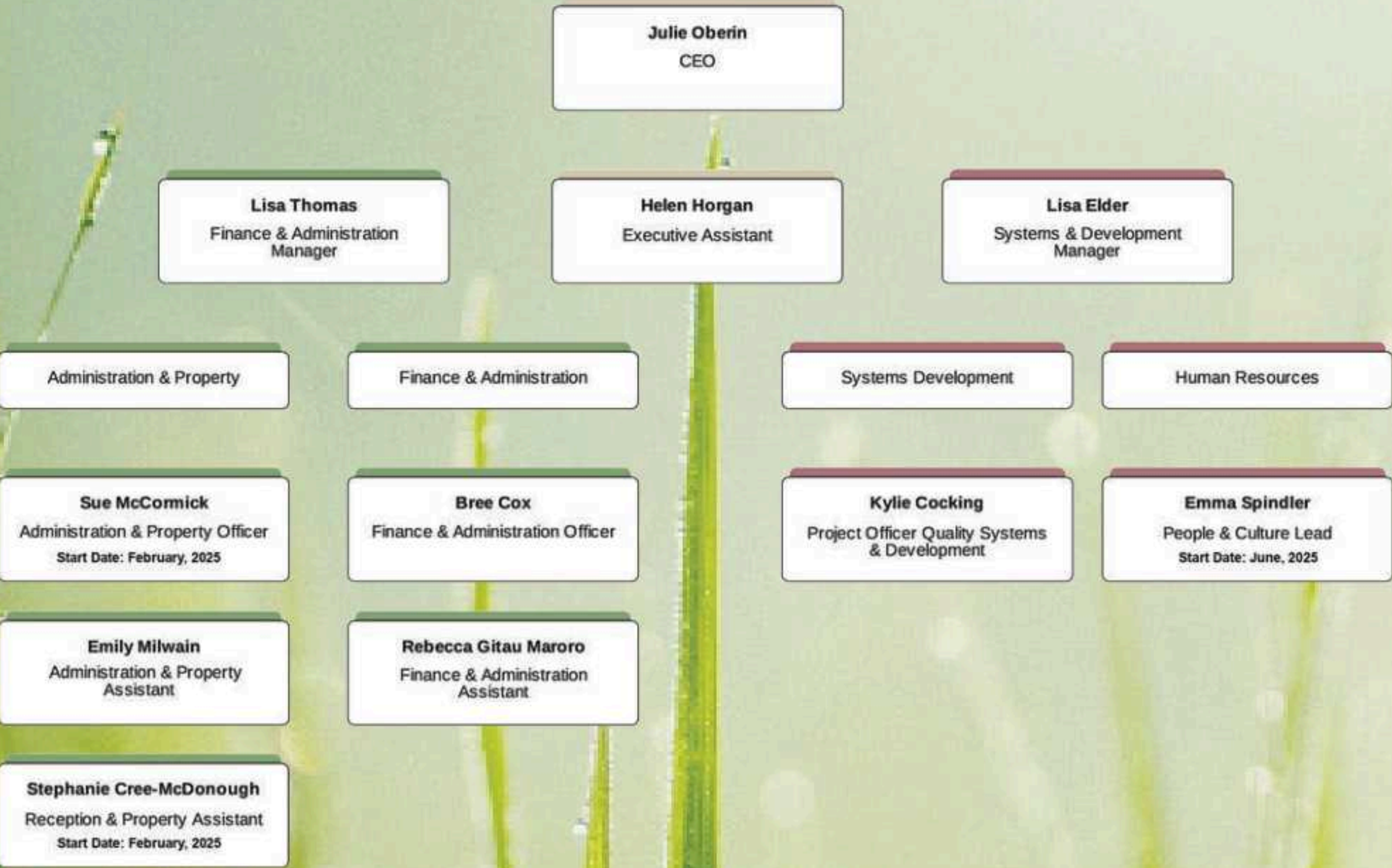
## Deborah McCormick – Committee Member

Deborah joined the Annie North Committee of Management in 2024. She has spent the past 30 years working in the family and domestic violence field in both New Zealand and Victoria Australia. Her work is predominantly in the Not-for-Profit sector as a practitioner, facilitator, trainer, service designer and in people management. Deborah's initial exposure to working in domestic violence was in the refuge movement in NZ in two refuges as well as facilitating Men's Behavioural Change programs, then in Victoria with Safe Steps and Annie North as the previous Client Services Manager. Deborah has worked for Government in NZ focussing on advisory and quality assurance for specialised FV programs across metro and rural southern region of NZ for the Ministry of Justice, and state government in Victoria involved in FV reform with Family Safety Victoria. Deborah is running her own FV consultancy specialising in family service design. Deborah is based in Castlemaine Victoria.

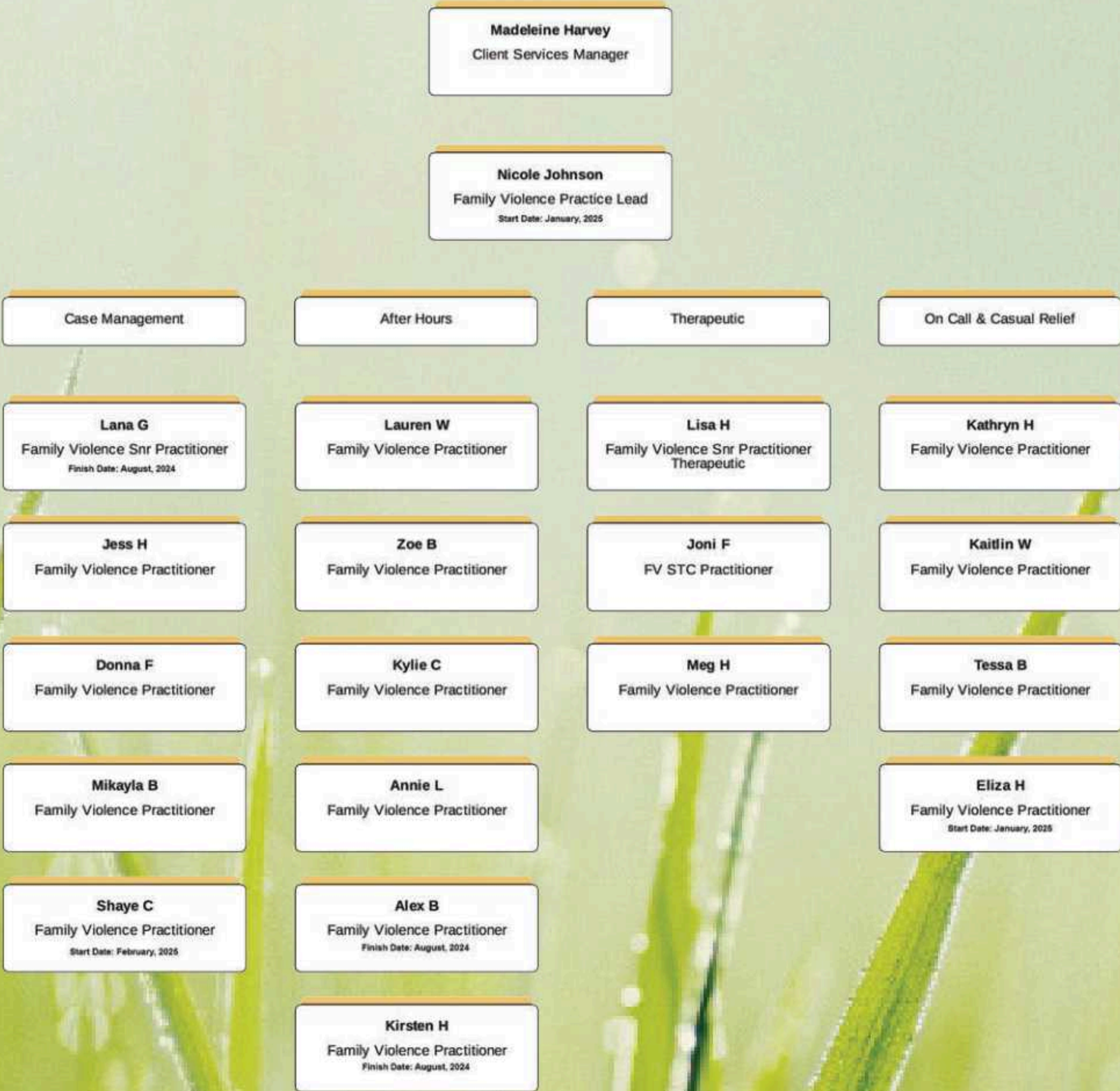


# Our Team

## Executive & Administration Team



## Client Services Team





# Treasurer Report



It is with pleasure I present the 2024–2025 finance report for Annie North Inc. to our members. Annie North Inc. finished the year with a sound Operating Profit result of \$301,367, with Auditors also giving the organisation a clear and unqualified Audit result. I would like to highlight the efforts of our management team and staff and their continued commitment to financial responsibility and service excellence.

A summary of the key points from the 2024–2025 finance report:

- Our revenue for 2024–2025 increased slightly to \$2,975,537 compared to revenue for the previous year of \$2,668,602.
- Our expenses in 2024–2025 were also higher, at \$2,674,170 compared to \$2,461,034 in 2023–2024.
- The overall result for Annie North Inc. was a profit of \$301,367, with Employee and Professional Development expenses as always, reflecting a significant portion of the total expenses, and accounting for 84% of our total expenses for the year.

- As at 30 June 2025, Annie North Inc. had total assets of \$2,613,232 and total liabilities of \$520,566, resulting in organisational equity of \$2,092,666. This demonstrates that the organisation is financially stable and can meet all its liabilities and future contingencies.

Thank you to all our members, staff, and stakeholders for your continued support and dedication. On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to present this report and look forward to another successful year ahead.

**Deanne Pointon**  
Treasurer,  
Annie North Inc.

## Highlights of the 2025 Financial Year



Income



Current Year Surplus

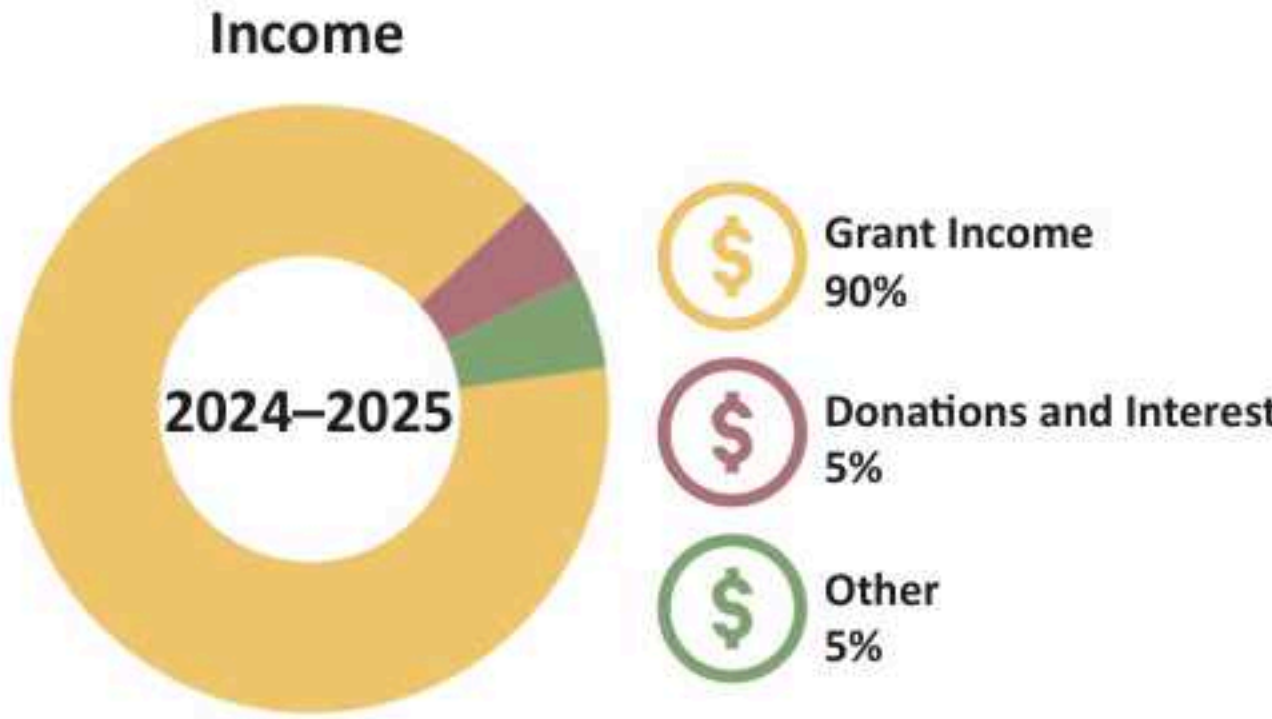


Salaries and Professional Development Expense

## FINANCE SUMMARY

Below is a summary of our audited financial statements.  
A full copy of the 2024-2025 financial statements is available on request.  
The audit of our financial records was completed in October 2025 by RSD Audit Pty. Ltd.

	2025 \$	2024 \$
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
<b>Cash Flows From Operating Activities</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	717,346	671,344
Net cash provided by operating activities	319,445	228,493
<b>Cash Flows From Investing Activities</b>		
Net cash used in investing activities	(322,946)	(182,491)
Net increase in cash held	(3,501)	46,002
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of financial year</b>	<b>713,845</b>	<b>717,346</b>
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
Revenue	2,975,537	2,668,602
Expenses	(2,674,170)	(2,461,034)
<b>Net current year surplus</b>	<b>301,367</b>	<b>207,568</b>
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets	2,550,442	2,185,835
Non-Current Assets	62,790	85,977
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>2,613,232</b>	<b>2,271,812</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current Liabilities	486,562	440,488
Non-current Liabilities	34,004	40,025
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>520,566</b>	<b>480,513</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>2,092,666</b>	<b>1,791,299</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>2,092,666</b>	<b>1,791,299</b>





# Staff News and Celebrations

## Length of Service



Photo: Madeleine H – 15 years of service.



Photo: Lisa H – 15 years of service.



Photo: Helen H – 10 years of service.



Photo: Kylie C – 5 years of service.



Photo: Donna F – 5 years of service.



Photo: Zoe B – 5 years of service.

Congratulations to Madeleine H and Lisa H for reaching an incredible 15 years of service at Annie North. We also celebrate Helen H for

her 10-year milestone, and Kylie C, Donna F, and Zoe B for 5 years of dedicated contribution. Your commitment and hard work creates a

lasting legacy, and we are proud to acknowledge these achievements.

## Celebrations

The 2024 footy tipping comp was a nail-biter from start to finish, and in true blockbuster style, it wrapped up with not one, but two champions! Seasoned campaigner Lisa T has done it again, etching her name onto the legendary “Something to Brag About Champions” trophy for the second time since the comp kicked off in 2019. Sharing the glory this year is rookie sensation Bec GM, who stormed onto the scene and claimed her spot on the cup as joint winner. What a season – and what a finish!



Photo: Bec GM & Lisa T – Footy Tip Winners 2024 Season.

Some of this year’s highlights included:

- RUOK Day which saw the team come together for an epic pot-luck lunch, swapping recipes and checking in on each other over plates piled high with homemade goodness.
- We were thrilled to welcome Billabong Ranch Animal Farm back for Children’s Week, bringing joy to kids and adults alike.
- Our families joined us for a beautifully organised end-of-year dinner at the Lake View Hotel, winding up the end of the calendar year and preparing for the holiday season and the new year to come.
- International Women’s Day brought a competitive twist with a word search showdown and quiz, plus inspirational posters of trailblazing women brightening up the office walls.
- Harmony Day had Emily stealing the show with a global feast that had us travelling the world one bite at a time, celebrating diversity and creating a beautiful space for staff members to share their cultural traditions, stories and flavours.
- We kept the momentum going with a learning lunch for IDAHOBIT, sparking conversations and sharing knowledge in a relaxed, welcoming space, reminding us why inclusion matters every day.

Of course, we also marked some major milestones. We farewelled long-time team member Sue Mc, who retired after an incredible 11 years of dedication. And in a truly proud moment, our CEO Julie Oberin AM was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women, recognising her outstanding contributions and lasting impact.





Photo: Harmony Day platters



Photo: Staff enjoy a culinary trip around the world for Harmony Day

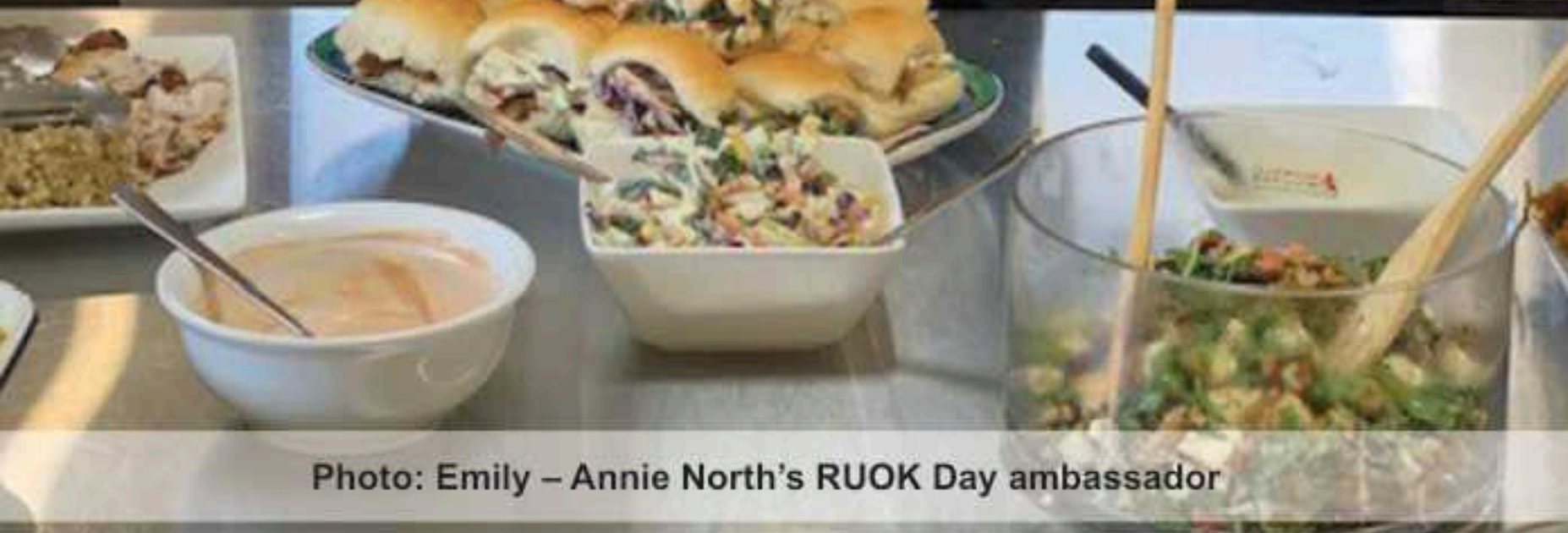


Photo: Emily – Annie North's RUOK Day ambassador



Photo: Billabong Ranch visits for Children's Week



Photo: 2024 end of year dinner



Photo: Julie being inducted to the Victorian Women's Honour Roll



Photo: Sue completing her last bit of maintenance before retiring



Photo: Staff joining in on International Women's Day activities





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