



Lithgow Community
Projects Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

An in-depth look at the workings, finance, staff and performance of Lithgow Community Projects Inc.

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LCP MISSION STATEMENT

OUR AIM IS TO ASSIST PEOPLE TO EXPLORE OPTIONS, DEVELOP THEIR OWN GOALS AND CONSCIOUS DECISION MAKING PROCESSES AS WELL AS TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICES WHICH IMPROVE THEIR AWARENESS OF BROADER SOCIAL ISSUES AND HOW THIS MAY IMPACT THEIR LIFE AND CHOICES.

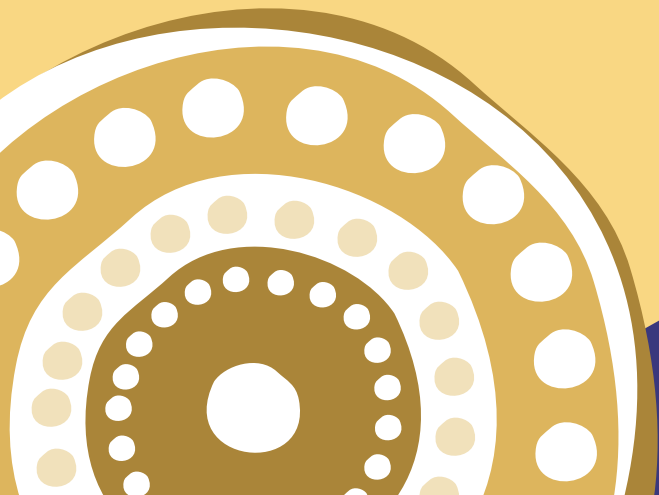
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Lithgow Community Projects acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Lithgow Community Projects is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

WHO ARE WE

Lithgow Community Projects Inc (LCP) is a community based not for profit organisation managed by a local volunteer management committee. Core funding is received via Department of Communities and Justice Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program to deliver the Lithgow Housing and Homelessness Support Service.

LITHGOW COMMUNITY PROJECTS INC. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



MANAGER'S REPORT

As I take some time to sit and ponder on the year that has been, a variety of themes jump to mind and I'm happy to report that not all of these are COVID related. What stands out for me primarily is the collaboration and support across the service system, the solidarity amongst staff and management, the resilience of the people we support and the sense of spirit of our local community. It has been these things that have kept us energised and inspired during these uncertain times.

As the year progressed the consensus of staff had been that the sense of demand was far exceeding capacity, and there was an increasing complexity in the work. Having focused on our data collection process and methods during the past 12 months our data supports this experience of staff and indicates a significant increase in recorded referrals into LCP by 65% from the previous year.

This increase is consistent with the accompanying data that demonstrates a 11% increase in support periods provided and a 28% increase in those referrals that were recorded as unassisted, for example those who did not accept a service, or where LCP were unable to meet the identified need.

Dee Kinney
Manager, LCP



Balancing the competing demand for service along side the need for long term case work to assist clients achieve their future goals has required LCP to review a number of our processes including: intake and assessment, triaging and allocation, and our case review practices, to ensure that we are supporting people in a safe and meaningful way and providing the foundations for clients to continue a journey of growth beyond LCP support.

With these capacity management strategies in place we have seen a reduction of the average support period length by 26%.

With a focus on LCP developing and implementing an outcomes based reporting system to align with DQJ's Outcome Based Framework we chose to participate in the Industry Partnership Client Satisfaction Survey.

This was also seen as an opportunity to measure the impact of some of the changes we had made to our systems on peoples service delivery experience and the flow on effect to their overall wellbeing.

LCP achieved benchmark results or higher for the majority of areas including 100% for understanding peoples needs, making people feel accepted, and treating people with respect.

The two key areas that LCP rated more than 10% under the benchmark was the areas of improved educational and employment outcomes for those we support.

A number of key factors may influence these responses including the impact of COVID on accessing face to face education, challenges in obtaining and sustaining employment and the pre existing concerns of declining tertiary course options available within the Lithgow area and a below state average employment rate.

When considering the potential influence that LCP support has contributed to peoples wellbeing it was pleasing to see that people reported improvements in the areas of, feeling safe, an improved standard of living, feeling part of the community and future security.

As a service, we are extremely pleased with these results given the funding constraints and service capacity available. We have demonstrated that while we are a small service, quality and quantity are not compromised. In fact we consider being a place based service, that has our roots in the Lithgow LGA our main strength. We have established ourselves over the past 30 years as a trusted, credible service with skilled staff.

We are connected to our community and believe our community is connected to LCP. This is evidenced by 49% of new request for service being informal referrals eg people accessing the service directly or referred via a friend or family member.

Additional funding to recognise and meet the above demand was requested during contract re-negotiations with DQJ for the continued delivery of the Lithgow Housing and Homelessness Support Service and DVRE program.

While we were successful in being granted an additional 3 years funding contract, no additional funds were available within the district to meet increased service delivery.

Current contracts are in place until 30th June 2024 with a number of milestones to be achieved, including: achieving ASES accreditation and successfully implementing the DQJ Outcomes Based Framework into service delivery and reporting processes.

During the recommissioning process we were able to renegotiate some of the terms of our agreement including consolidating the DVRE program into our base level funding. Due to changes in sub-contracting requirements LCP also made the decision to negotiate with Thrive Services to end our partnership of purchasing 12hour per week of Family Worker support and deliver this service inhouse moving forward.

This decision was informed by the increasing compliance and governance requirements of subcontracted agencies. LCP were able to negotiate an employment contract directly with the same worker to ensure the continuity of support and expertise.

With a commitment to providing a trauma informed service, grounded in best practice, staff participated in a range of staff development opportunities during the year.

This included LCP continuing to embed the principles and practice of the Safe and Together model via additional staff accessing specialised training. To support the ongoing implementation of this model into practice staff also completed an ‘Engaging men who use violence course’.

This was invaluable in expanding our practice of supporting women by inviting men who use violence to consider the impact of their violence and the effect this may have on their relationships, their children and family functioning.

We look forward to the year ahead and expanding this further via a partnership with Housing Plus to act as the partner agency in their delivery of an accredited Men’s Behaviour Change Program in Lithgow.

Working collaboratively towards common goals has resulted in enhanced safety and better outcomes for those accessing LCP support.

New service relationships have been consolidated during the past 12 months with a number of services such as Housing Plus in the provision of Domestic and Family Violence support to women and children, Providential Homes in supporting people accessing DQJ funded temporary accommodation, Barnardos Family Connect and Support Service co-locating in LCPs new shop front office space and Rapid Relief Team via a monthly

allocation of food hampers for distribution to people who are experiencing food insecurity.

We also said a reluctant farewell to a Beverly Wiggins in her role as Wentworth Community Housing Manager (formerly Lithgow Community Housing and now known as Link Wentworth).

While Bev continues as a member of the LCP Management Committee, within her role as Housing Manager she was a champion of providing safe and affordable housing for vulnerable members of our community, always advocating strongly for her tenants, people experiencing homelessness and for additional resources for Lithgow.

We have missed her friendly smile, her incredible work ethic and collegial support, and wish her well in her retirement.

Finally, I need to pay homage to the staff and management of LCP, without this consistent and unwavering support LCP would not have been able to embrace the challenges of the past year and continue to provide quality support to those most vulnerable members of our community.

Together this year, we have laughed a lot, we have shared our disappointments with systems, and concerns for those we work with and for each other. We have built a strong ethos of collective care amongst our small team and this is what sustains the service to continue despite the complexities, global pandemics and other natural disasters that 20-21 had to offer.

The year ahead is bright and already has us working on exciting new projects and continuing to cement and expand existing ones. The year will see us having more of a focus on exploring new funding opportunities to meet the ongoing needs of women and children in obtaining safety and to support achievable housing outcomes for all.

Dee Kinney
Manager

“COMING TOGETHER IS A BEGINNING. KEEPING TOGETHER IS PROGRESS. WORKING TOGETHER IS SUCCESS.”

HENRY FORD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LCP would like to acknowledge the local network of services and individuals who support us, our clients, and the community.

PARTNERS:

- Thrive
- Wentworth Community Housing
(now Link Wentworth)
- Housing Plus

VISITING SERVICES:

- Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre (now Blue Mountains and Central Tablelands Community Legal Centre)
- Barnardos Family Connect Support Service
- Youth Justice Platform Youth Services - Homeless Youth Assistance Program
- Richard Gray - Psychologist
- LINC Adolescent and Family Counselling Service
- Disability Advocacy Service

DONORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

- LINC (food hampers)
- Rapid Relief Team
- Timber Fix
- Burnings Quota
- Share the Dignity
- Live Better
- Pied Piper
- Silverdale Pets
- Industrial Printing
- St Vincent de Paul
- Lithgow City Council
- Club Lithgow
- Zeida
- Louise Dean
- Lithgow Valley Storage

INTERAGENCY AND SECTOR PARTICIPATION:

Lithgow Cares:

A collaboration of local services whose focus is on building a positive community, strengthening families and enhancing the safety of community members by maintaining a strong commitment towards child protection and reduction of domestic and family violence.

Chierly LAC Safety Action Meetings:

Fortnightly meetings chaired by NSW Police of local service providers that aim to prevent or lessen serious threats to the safety of domestic violence victims and their children through the development of tailored, time-specific Safety Action Plans for victims at serious threat and their children.

Department of Communities and Justice Child Protection Allocation Meetings:

Monthly meeting coordinated by DQJ Community Services with community partners who focus on providing support to at risk families. The purpose of the meetings are to:

- discuss at risk families, who may benefit from service support from local agencies and intervention
- allocation for assessment responses and information sharing platform to ensure holistic decision making

Local Drug Action Team:

Core funding is received from the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to implement a Community Action Plan focused on promoting the prevention of alcohol and other drug issues in the local community.

Wentworth Healthcare Recognise Respond Refer Pilot Steering Committee:

Pilot program in Nepean Blue Mountains health district to provide integrated services to respond to domestic and family violence at a primary health care level.

SHS Industry Partnership Network meetings: A partnership of the 3 peak bodies, Homelessness NSW, DVNSW and Foundations the partnership provides training, resources and support to NSW SHS to help respond to current issues and to support the sector to deliver high quality services now and into the future.

2021 CHAIRPERSON REPORT

So 2 years into the Chairperson position for the Lithgow Community Projects Inc (LCP), and if we have learnt anything, it is that the world will give us a curve ball whenever it feels like it.

The committee this year welcomed Charlie Cross, who has been of great support and injected his knowledge into LCP, which has been very well received by all. 2021 started off in fine fiddle for LCP, with all staff embracing freedom of being able to work in the office and provide our services face to face to clients. Everyone felt we were back on track and looking forward to the year ahead. Until June!!!

We thought 2020 had given us all the challenges to deal with, but no, 2021 decided that this year we would have a longer harder lockdown. Where our staff would be working from home for much longer and trying to support all clients who were feeling the effects of this lockdown much harder than the previous year. To the credit of the wonderful Manager Deonne Kinney and her support team, Catherine Hungerford and Dorothy Allen, and then the fantastic staff of LCP, things feel into order to accommodate everyone to the highest ability possible. This including all staff, present clients and new clients that this difficult time bought to our services.

The board and myself have been extremely proud of how the staff have conducted themselves during this time. They have maintained professionalism to be able to provide the highest of support to all the services provided by LCP. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts and are extremely lucky to have such a highly trained, caring and willing support team for our community.

During this period of the year, which I think has been harder than last year, LCP had a larger request for support across all services.

This has been extremely unfortunate not only for us here in our community but nationwide, and to do this in such challenging times and to be able to accommodate to the restrictions, is highly noted and respected from the board. WELL DONE!

Heidi Hunter
Chairperson, LCP



Again this year we received additional funding to support our services, which was well accepted and put to great use to support the increase of services. Support from LCP to,

- **Youth Work** – Accommodation and support for young people at risk of homelessness.
- **Crisis centre** – A service that provides accommodation for women and children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with a focus on domestic violence.
- **DVRE** – Domestic Violence Response Enhancement, crisis accommodation and transitional accommodation support and counselling.
- **Support and counselling** – Responsive case work to all new service enquiries and drop in clients, specialised knowledge and awareness of trauma and domestic violence and homelessness.

• **Supporting projects and Partnerships** – Group work, Lithgow Cares, Local Drug Action Team, Thrive, Lithgow Community Housing, NBM Tenancy support, Wentworth Community Housing, LINC. This year LCP have progressed on achieving their accreditation against the Australian Services Excellence Standards.

The time frame for completion of this has been extended due to the circumstances of the year, but thanks to Catherine and Deonne and the team, LCP are in the process of acquiring the services of an assessor to help finalise and support LCP in these final stages.

Unfortunately LCP have not been able to do any fundraising again this year, which has been difficult. Last year we were very hopeful for 2021 to be able to engage in the community awareness and promote the organisation. We can only look forward to next year for this, but thank the community for all the support already provided.

Our staff base has remained consistent throughout the last 12 months with LCP being able to extend

Heidi Bauche fixed term contract to help support with the increased demand being experienced. I would also like to pass on my congratulations to Dot Allen who celebrated her 10 year anniversary with LCP.

Again it was a challenging year but we learnt a lot from 2020 and managed to excel in 2021 under the circumstances. The board mastered the zoom meetings after having no idea last year, well done. From the board, the biggest of thank you to Deonne and the staff for their support to us. Hopefully 2022 will bring us a better year and we look forward to supporting each and every one of you.

Heidi Hunter
Chairperson

FINANCE REPORT 2020-2021

Lithgow Community Projects Inc. is predominantly funded by Department of Communities and Justice NSW as a Specialist Homelessness Service provider, and also receives partnership funding from Link Wentworth under the Nepean Blue Mountains Tenancy Support Project.

In 2020-2021 LCP was fortunate to receive one-off COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Stimulus package funding from Department of Communities and Justice.

This additional funding supported the provision of additional worker hours to meet an increase in demand for our services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lithgow Community Projects Inc. is grateful for local community support.

During 2020-2021 donations were received from Club Lithgow and Burnings, and small grants from Lithgow City Council.

LCP recorded a profit of \$68,758 in 2020-2021 which included unspent SSTF grant funds of \$29,709 for expenditure in 2021-2022, and funds held under auspice agreement of \$10,427.



LCP recorded grant in advance at 30th June 2021 of nil, and revenue in advance of \$9,450 which included room hire fees received to December 2021. LCP recorded a net cash increase of \$71,421 in 2020-2021.

In the year ahead, LCP has committed additional funds to its compliance activities as it heads towards ASES accreditation. The challenge will be to adequately fund client services in an uncertain environment, when demand for these services continues to increase.

Dot Allen
Finance Officer

A copy of LCP audited Financial Statements can be accessed via the ACNC website by searching for Lithgow Community Projects: <https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity>

BREAKDOWN OF INCOME 2020-2021

Total income in 2020-2021 of \$1,125,599 compares with total income in 2019-2020 of \$967,135, an increase of 16%. This can be largely attributed to COVID-19 DTV grant and SSTF grants.

Lithgow Community Projects Inc - Income 2020-2021	\$	%
Department of Communities and Justice SHS & SHS DVRE	794,274	70.6%
Department of Communities and Justice COVID-19 DTV	100,870	9.0%
Department of Communities and Justice SSTF	40,000	3.6%
Link Wentworth Tenancy Support	91,364	8.1%
Other Grants	24,470	2.2%
Australian Tax Office - Cash Flow Boost	50,000	4.4%
Fee for Service and Room Hire	3,436	0.3%
Donations	2,000	0.2%
Fees from Clients	16,085	1.4%
Interest from Dividends	2,195	0.2%
Other Income	906	0.1%
Total	1,125,599	100.0%

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES 2020-2021

Total expenditure in 2020-2021 of \$1,056,841 compares with total expenditure in 2019-2020 of \$939,297.

Lithgow Community Projects Inc - Expenditure 2020-2021	\$	%
Administration	23,804	2.3%
Advertising and Promotions	7,243	0.7%
Audit Fees	7,700	0.7%
Brokerage, Emergency Assistance, Client Expense, Cleaning, Consumables, Safety, Transitional, Property Management	26,681	2.5%
Consultancy/Contractor Fees	40,146	3.8%
Depreciation	22,488	2.1%
Insurance	12,309	1.2%
Motor Vehicle	10,177	1.0%
Rent and Utilities	40,383	3.8%
Telephone and Technology	26,850	2.5%
Wages, Employment and Training	828,901	78.4%
Total	1,056,841	100.0%

ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST 2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

LCP's activities during the 20-21 year has been informed and guided by 4 key pieces of work:

1. LCP Principles:

- Accountability
- Contextual Framework
- Collaboration
- Connection
- Equity and Fairness
- Awareness of power
- Self Determination
- Safety
- Teamwork

2. LCP Strategic Plan (2019-2023)

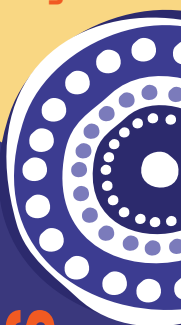
Outlines 6 priority focus areas that are consistent with LCPs Mission Statement and guiding principles:

3. LCP Operational Plan 2020-2021

Identifies 7 project areas that align with both the LCP Strategic Plan and DCJ Re-commissioning expectations for action during 2020 - 2021

4. DCJ Re-commissioning expectations

In preparation for contract negotiations DCJ had identified 5 key areas that all SHS services needed to demonstrate their progress against. The 5 areas of: working towards ASES Accreditation, Implement Outcomes Based Reporting, Enhanced Cultural Accessibility for Aboriginal people, Local Governance & Service Coordination and support the Premiers Initiative to halve street homelessness by 2025 have continued to inform the work undertaken within the Strategic and Operational Plans.



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 1:

To obtain quality feedback from clients in a manner that is client centred and trauma informed

Goal

To better obtain feedback on service delivery from adults who attend our service

LCP Principles

Accountability, Equity & Fairness, Empowerment

LCP Operational Plan projects

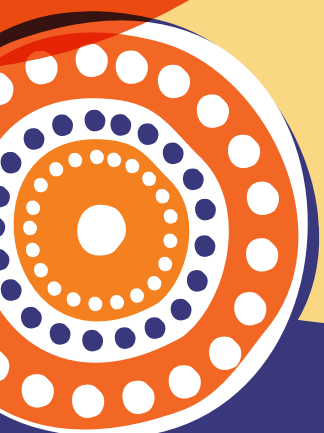
- Reporting: Develop systems for collecting and reporting relevant information from interagency attendance, training and updating on key events. Revise case conference format to include client strengths, dignity driven practice, focus on childrens needs, and incorporating client feedback.
- Assessment & Data Role: Develop new role to undertake assessment and collect base line client data. Develop systems for tracking both in and out bound referrals and to revise assessment processes to support new and emerging practice frameworks and outcomes based reporting.

Identified Strategies

1. Develop a system comprising of a range of tools for obtaining client feedback that is consistent with LCP aims and philosophies, is consistent with the Australian Services Excellence Standards and meets funding requirements in measuring outcomes
2. Develop systems to capture informal feedback including: documenting feedback in case notes, including client voices in monthly worker reports to the management committee and documenting in case reviews.
3. Implement systems to capture community experiences and feedback at events such as community BBQs, soup kitchen, family fun days etc
4. Undertake stakeholder feedback processes at least every two years.

LCP Achievements

- Assessment and Data role has been embedded into the LCP team with a focus on streamlining intake and assessment processes and forms ensuring that clients are assessed and triaged appropriately on initial contact supporting the collection of base line data
- Participation in the SHS Client Satisfaction Survey with a focus on, service experience, current situation, impact of service and demographic information. LCP received positive responses particularly in the areas of treating people respectfully, people feeling accepted and understanding the needs of people. The overall wellbeing index of those who participated was 63.8 (out of 100) with the state benchmark being 64.2.
- Regular case reviews undertaken with staff with a focus on bringing the clients voice into the discussion
- Regular case presentations to LCPs governing body to continue to build an awareness of the issues that impact service users to inform decision making



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 2:

Bring children's voices to the forefront of our work

Goal

To ensure the voices of children inform our practice

LCP Principles

Accountability, Equity & Fairness, Collaboration

LCP Operational Plan

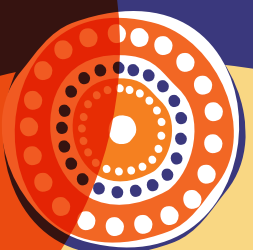
- Child Safe Organisation: Ensure LCP are implementing the Office of Children's Guardian Child Safe requirements and ensuring that children's needs are kept visible during case planning and review processes.
- DFV Specialisation: Review intake and case management processes for clients whose primary request for support is domestic or family violence related. Enhance relationships with other DFV services and investigate emerging best practice in responding to DFV

Identified Strategies

- Development of formal and informal child friendly feedback processes
- Accompanying children's needs to be assessed and documented in case planning processes
- Review children's needs as part of case review processes
- Undertake co-researching model for children's letter writing

LCP Achievements

- Intake and Assessment processes revised to capture additional information for accompanying children to identify their needs and ensure these are incorporated into case planning processes
- A total of 49 children were provided with direct support from LCP
- Children's needs have been incorporated into case review processes
- Continued partnership with Thrive to provide specialist parenting support to parents and children residing within the refuge setting.



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3:

Outreach to outlying areas of the Lithgow LGA

Goal

To build a recognised presence in the outlying areas of the Lithgow LGA

LCP Principles

Collaboration, Connection, Awareness of Power

LCP Operational Plan

- Homelessness Directory: Develop homelessness services directory for Lithgow LGA while also undertaking a needs assessment for outlying areas.
- Assertive Outreach: Review good practice guidelines with the view of developing a LCP specific response for identifying and responding to the needs of street sleepers.

Strategies

1. Form linkages with agencies / practices currently operating in the different villages
2. Gain service provider and community feedback to identify needs of specific townships
3. Develop and implement programs that are aligned with SHS funding parameters

LCP Achievements

- Participation on local interagency committees to support community education on key issues impacting LCPs target groups including: Lithgow Cares, Local Drug Action Committee, Safety Action Meetings, DQ Community Service Weekly Allocation Meetings, and Recognise, Respond and Refer meetings.
- Assertive outreach undertaken in response to those people who are sleeping rough within the LGA guided by SHS Assertive Guideline Processes
- Linkages made with Housing NSW Homeless Outreach Team and Platform Youth Service to support people connect with funded rough sleeper programs and products
- Provide alternative contact methods for working with people remotely including via a variety of digital technology e.g zoom and face time.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 4:

Strengthen stakeholder relationships and build our professional profile

Goal

To raise the professional profile of LCP as a trusted community agency and strengthen stakeholder relationships

LCP Principles

Collaboration, teamwork, connection

LCP Operational Plan

- Homelessness Directory: Develop homelessness services directory for Lithgow LGA while also undertaking a needs assessment for outlying areas.
- Assertive Outreach: Review good practice guidelines with the view of developing a LCP specific response for identifying and responding to the needs of street sleepers.
- Domestic and Family Violence: Review intake and case management processes for clients whose primary request for support is domestic or family violence related. Enhance relationships with other DFV services and investigate emerging best practice in responding to DFV
- Cultural Accessibility: Development of a LCP Reconciliation Action Plan
- Human Resources: Incorporate the SHS Capabilities framework into staff appraisals to develop and inform professional development plans for staff
- Child Safe Organisation: Ensure LCP are implementing the Office of Childrens Guardian Child Safe requirements and ensuring that childrens needs are kept visible during case planning and review processes.

Strategies

1. Undertake a number of key events during each year to promote LCP and key issues impacting LCP clients
2. Develop roster for LCP workers to visit local agencies.
3. Develop LCP script to be used consistently to promote LCP and its services
4. Identify emerging practice frameworks and initiate locally based training programs to encourage consistent inter-sectorial case work e.g Safe and Together training, Follow My Lead

LCP Achievements

- Standardised LCP PowerPoint developed to promote LCP and its services
- Maintain collaborative relationships with services in both formal and in formal arrangements including: Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre, LINC – Child Youth and Family Counselling Service, Housing Plus, Barnardos – Family Connect Support Service, Link Wentworth and Providential Homes
- Participation in SHS sector network meetings and webinars to draw on industry knowledge and resources to guide LCP's service delivery and governance
- Staff Appraisals conducted with all staff drawing on the SHS Capabilities Framework
- Upgraded IT equipment to support flexible service responses and maintain connection to industry and community partners in response COVID restrictions

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 5:

Strengthen positive relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in the provision of just, equitable and, meaningful services

Goal

Create and implement a Reconciliation Plan that formalises LCP's commitment to reconciliation and to develop respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

LCP Principles

Self Determination, Safety, Awareness of Power, Contextual Teamwork

LCP Operational Plan

- Cultural Accessibility: Connect with local Aboriginal organisation with the goal to develop a LCP Reconciliation Action Plan
- Human Resources: Use the SHS Capabilities framework to undertake staff appraisals and incorporate regular cultural awareness training for all staff into LCP's training schedule.
- Assessment & Data role: Ensure intake and assessment processes are culturally sensitive

Strategies

1. Engage with representatives of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to gain feedback to inform effective and relevant service delivery
2. Undertake self assessment process to identify areas for improvement
3. Review case work, tools and practice to ensure cultural appropriateness

LCP Activities

- Service delivery increased by 4.5% to those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Continued development of working relationships with representatives of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to inform service delivery and assist in the development of the LCP RAP
- Cultural awareness activities incorporated into LCP staff development days including: Uluru Statement of the Heart reading, flax weaving and cultural excursion to Malyngu Marragu
- Obtained conditional endorsement for LCP's Reconciliation Action Plan
- RAP art work commissioned and used as a window privacy screen for new shop front

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 6:

Deliver a specialised response to people who experience domestic and family violence

Goal: Improve the delivery of trauma informed service delivery to women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence

LCP Principles: Contextual, Safety, Connection, Awareness of Power, Teamwork

LCP Operational Plan:

- Domestic and Family Violence: Review intake and case management processes for clients whose primary request for support is domestic or family violence related. Enhance relationships with other DFV services and investigate emerging best practice in responding to DFV
- Assessment & Data role: Ensure intake and assessment process are trauma informed and prioritise safety

Strategies:

1. Promote emerging practice initiatives to the local service system e.g Safe & Together, Power Threat Meaning and Follow My Lead
2. Deliver services consistent with the Safe & Together Domestic Violence Informed Continuum of Practice competent and proficient standards
3. Enhance the local service systems response to domestic and family violence by promoting a greater orientation towards perpetrator accountability

LCP Activities:

- Continued participation in training and conference events including Safe & Together Model, Nepean Blue Mountains DV Forum, and Working With Men Who Use Violence, and incorporated these into LCP's practice and case planning and review processes
- Participated on the Nepean Blue Mountains DV Forum working party to assist in the organising of Industry expert Dr Susan Howard-Belle to be deliver a presentation on the foundations of the Safe and Together model
- LCP acts as the auspicing body of Litigov Cares and provides administrative support and facilitate monthly meetings
- Revised intake and assessment processes to support responsive casework in identifying the safety needs of women and children
- 40.5% of referrals to LCP identified DFV as a reason for accessing support. This is an increase of 10% from the previous year
- Continued to build relationships with new and local services to support the needs of local women experiencing D&FV including exploring a partnership with Housing Plus to provide partner support for the accredited Men's Behavior Change Program
- Continued participation on the Chifley Police District Safety Action Meetings with a view of preventing or reducing serious threats to the life, health and safety of people experiencing domestic and family violence.
- In partnership with Link Wentworth a submission was prepared to re-develop the crisis centre to provide 5 x individual units with multi purpose spaces to facilitate connection and support of residents. While the Safe Places application was not successful, the extensive work undertaken can be used for future grant opportunities.



LITHGOW COMMUNITY PROJECTS INC. SERVICE MAP

LITHGOW COMMUNITY PROJECTS INC.
 Operating in accordance with:
 Department Communities and Justice Human Services Agreement

YOUTH WORK
 Accommodation & support to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

CRISIS CENTRE
 Accommodation & support for women and any accompanying children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. DV focus DVRE - Out of normal hours enhancement project.

LCP
 Support to assist single adults and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Counselling - DV focus Tenancy support - project to assist clients maintain current housing

ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT

ALL ACCOMMODATION SERVICES TO BE LINKED TO A CASE PLAN
Crisis Centre: 4 bedroom property for women and children who are homeless due to domestic violence or other life crisis
6 x transitional properties: for use across all target groups
Crossroads Accommodation Program: Fee for service arrangement with Link Wentworth Housing

SUPPORT

Responsive Case Work: Responses to all new service enquiries and undertakes immediate responsive casework to drop in clients
Case Management: Client centred support that is purposeful & outlines agreed goals and how these will be achieved
LCP Counselling Service: Specialised knowledge and awareness of the impacts of interpersonal violence and trauma as they impact on safety & homelessness

SUPPORTING PROJECTS / PARTNERSHIPS

Group work projects, Auspicing body of Lithgow Cares and the Local Drug Action Team, Participation on various interagency committees.
Visiting Services: Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Service, Platform Youth Service, Barnardos

PARTNERSHIP WITH LINK WENTWORTH VIA PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

NEPEAN BLUE MOUNTAINS TENANCY SUPPORT PROJECT

Lead agency: Link Wentworth Housing.
LCP partnership: Provide support to clients in Lithgow through to the upper mountains.





CURRENT OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

LCP is the lead agency delivering the Lithgow Housing and Homelessness Support Service (LHSS).

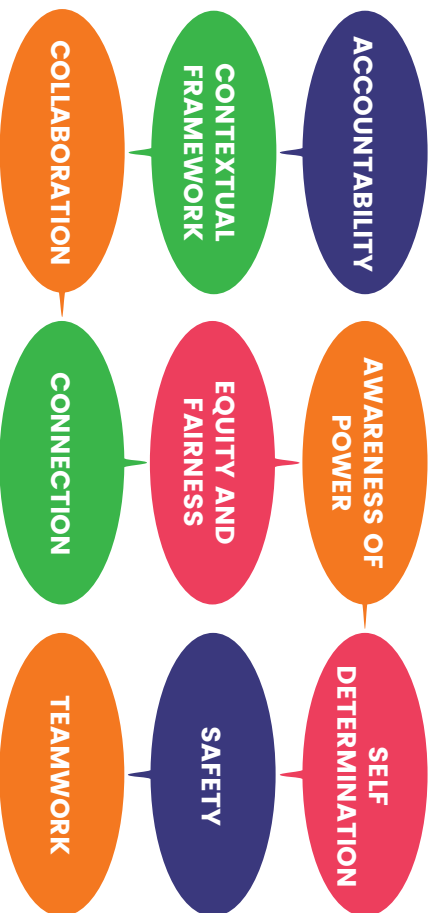
The package delivers three core responses to homelessness and housing in the Lithgow area.

1. Prevention and early intervention
2. Rapid re-housing
3. Crisis and transitional Housing support

LCP is funded to provide support to the following target groups:

- Young people
- Single adults
- Families (with or without children)
- Women and their accompanying children who have experienced domestic or family violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

To meet our contractual obligations LCP has access to a multi-disciplinary team which has the experience, expertise and specialist capabilities to deliver services across the specified target and priority groups. To ensure the wellbeing and safety of clients, service delivery is provided by the following distinctly identified services, teams and locations.



UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES



LCP HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SUPPORT

WORKERS:

TIAH GIBBS, HEIDI BAUCHE, ERIN ELLERY

The LCP Homelessness and Housing Support project provides client focused case work support, information, referral, brokerage, advocacy and accommodation support to those clients who's needs are best met by a generalist service response. Within this project sits the Responsive Case Work role that provides a drop in service for all new and existing clients of LCP.

LCP strives to provide services that:

1. are easily accessible and provide a timely, person centred, and coordinated response
2. are inclusive and individually tailored for self / family
3. assist clients in the development of the required skills and capacity to obtain and maintain safe and appropriate housing
4. foster positive connections to family and community
5. improve general health and wellbeing resulting in personal, social, and community benefits



TENANCY SUPPORT PROJECT

WORKER: NATALIE BISHOP

Working in partnership with Link Wentworth, as the lead agency for the Nepean Blue Mountains Tenancy Support Package, LCP are contracted to provide tenancy support in the Lithgow and Upper Blue Mountains. The service is primarily focussed on assisting tenants who are at risk of eviction to sustain their tenancies or to transition quickly into new accommodation.



GROUP WORK PROGRAMS

IN PREVIOUS YEARS LCP HAVE PROVIDED A NUMBER OF SOCIAL GROUPS THAT ARE FOCUSED ON FOSTERING INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CONNECTION. TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF ALL, LCP HAVE PLACED GROUP WORK PROGRAMS ON HOLD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ARE HOPEFUL OF COMMENCING THESE AGAIN WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

COUNSELLING

WORKER:

CATHERINE HUNGERFORD

Grounded in a Trauma Informed Care framework, LCP provides a specialist counselling service for those who have experienced domestic and family violence in our community. The role works in collaboration with all LCP projects, the local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Scheme, the Safety Action Meeting Network and local health and welfare services.

LITHGOW WOMEN & CHILDREN'S CRISIS CENTRE

WORKER: KIM WILKINS

SUPPORTED BY: CATHERINE HUNGERFORD & DEE KINNEY

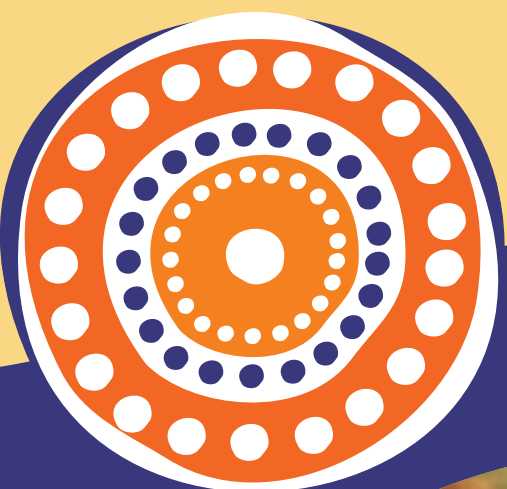
The crisis centre is a specialist residential based service for women and children who are unable to remain in their homes due to domestic violence or other life crisis. A range of accommodation and support options are available including: temporary accommodation, short and medium term supported housing, risk assessments and safety planning for women to remain safely in their homes, domestic violence education, referrals and advocacy to work with other support agencies, case management support to assist clients identify goals and the steps required to achieve them and emotional support.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE ENHANCEMENT

WORKER: KIM WILKINS AND TRACY VANDERHAAR (THRIVE SERVICES)

The focus of the program is to provide out of hours case management support to both accommodated residents of the Women and Children's Crisis Centre and those women and children who are escaping domestic and family violence and staying in other forms of accommodation. As a sole worker position LCP have worked on creating systems that support the safety and wellbeing of staff while providing targeted out of hours services for women and children.

LCP contract a proportion of the program to Thrive Family Service to provide support to mothers and their children to settle quickly into the crisis centre and to help reduce the stressors and isolation of residential living. From July 2021 this aspect of the program will transition back to being provided directly by LCP.



LITHGOW YOUTH WORX

WORKER: MICHELLE RINGIN

Youth Worx provides accommodation and support services to young people aged between 16 and 24 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Case work is undertaken from a holistic perspective giving consideration to the following areas: access to safe and stable housing, living skill development, educational and employment goals, physical and emotional health needs to support growth and development, and development of family and community connections. An emphasis is placed upon fostering rapport and maintaining an effective client / worker interaction, as it is acknowledged the quality of this relationship is a major contributor to achieving sustainable client outcomes.



LITHGOW CARES

A collaboration of local service providers whose focus is on building a positive community, strengthening families, and enhancing the safety of community members by maintaining a strong commitment towards child protection and a reduction of domestic and family violence.

“ TOGETHER THE MANAGEMENT TEAM HAS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING A STRONG GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK “

LOCAL DRUG ACTION TEAM

LCP acts as the auspice body for the Lithgow LDAT committee.

Funding has been received by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to develop a Community Action Plan and deliver approved projects with the primary purpose to promote informed understanding and prevention of alcohol and other drug issues in the local community.



LCP MANAGEMENT

LCP is managed by a volunteer Management Committee consisting of members who possess a broad range of skills and many years of experience in the welfare and community management sector:

- Chairperson – Heidi Hunter
- Vice Chairperson – Beverly Wiggins
- Treasurer – Sharon Morley
- Secretary – Melanie Jones
- General Committee Members: Tracy Gillard, Alisa Fordham, Charlie Cross

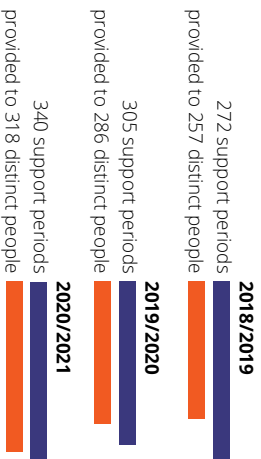
Project management for the service is undertaken by the Service Manager’ Deonne Kinney who is supported by Catherine Hungerford in the capacity of Project and Compliance Coordinator and Domestic and Family Violence Counsellor. Financial administration is the responsibility of the Finance Officer Dot Allen in conjunction with the Management Committee. Together the management team has focussed on developing a strong governance framework to ensure that LCP has processes in place that support transparency and accountability and that the underlying principles and aims of LCP are embedded into the service, our work with clients and the community.

DATA AND INSIGHTS 20/21

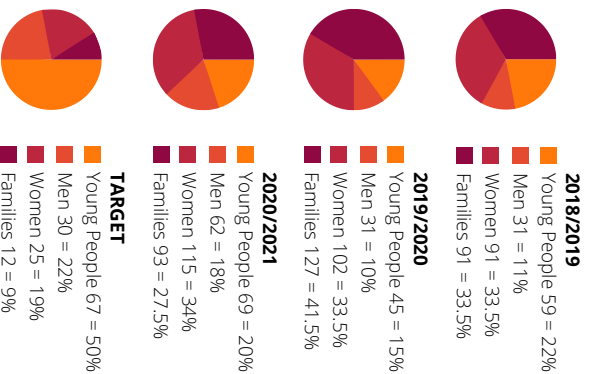
Lithgow Community Projects Inc. (LCP) is a community based not for profit organisation managed by a local volunteer management committee. Core funding is received via Department of Communities and Justice Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program to deliver the Lithgow Housing and Homelessness Support Service.

TOTAL SUPPORT PERIODS

Lithgow Housing and Homelessness Support Service



TARGET GROUPS



* May not total 100% as some information not recorded

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE ENHANCEMENT



36 PEOPLE
TARGET - 30

INDIGENOUS STATUS OF PEOPLE ACCESSING SUPPORT



24.5% of people accessing support identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (5.8% of the Lithgow population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)

AVERAGE LENGTH OF SUPPORT

2018/2019 - 110 days
2019/2020 - 120 days
2020/2021 - 88.5



UNASSISTED CASES

2018/2019 = 69
2019/2020 = 25 recorded
2020/2021 = 88



The main reason service was not provided:

1. Person did not accept service
2. Agency had no accommodation available
3. Agency was in the wrong area

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUND

3.5% of people accessing support identify being of a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background (5% of the Lithgow population identify as CALD)



GENDER

Male 34%
Female 65%
Other - 1%



HOUSING OUTCOMES

Housing status	Month prior to presenting	End of support period
Sleeping rough or in non-conventional accommodation	39	19
Short term or emergency accommodation, due to lack of other options	162	85

REASONS FOR SEEKING ASSISTANCE

Reason	LCP
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	41%
Domestic & family violence	40.5%
Relationship/family breakdown	30%
Financial difficulties	25%

Conditions of occupancy	Presenting	End of support period
Leased tenure -	60 (17.5%)	91 (35%)
Couch surfer	43 (12.5%)	24 (9%)

(*Multiple responses possible - will not total 100%)

SOURCE OF REFERRAL



49% - no formal referral (self referred or on the suggestion of friends or family)

15% - Other agency (Government or non government)

6% - Family and domestic violence service (non SHS)

QUICK SNAPSHOT

Reason for closing support period:

Persons immediate needs met / case mgt goals achieved – **42%**
Person no longer requested assistance – **25%**

Mental Health status

39% of people identified having a mental health condition with approx half currently receiving service

Period of homelessness

24% of clients have been homeless for longer than 6 months prior to accessing support from LCP

WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

LCP has consistently over delivered on the contracted minimum targets that we are funded to provide. For example, in 2019-2020 LCP provided services to 11.3% more clients than in the prior year. In 2020-2021 LCP provided services to 11.2% more clients than in the prior year. In 2020-2021 LCP exceeded its minimum target for support periods to clients by 137%.

LCP can demonstrate at least a 28% increase in unassisted clients when comparing data from 2020-2021 to data from 2019-2020.

Traditionally LCP data has indicated that 20% of people who access a service from LCP identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We have experienced a 4.5% increase over the last 12 months which is consistent with the overall increased demand for LCP and may also be indicative of the impacts of COVID and associated compounding / cumulative traumas including experiences of D&FV, housing related stress, financial stress etc.

40.5% of referrals to LCP identified D&FV as a reason for accessing support. This is an increase of 10% from the previous year.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

During the past 3 years LCP have also experienced a decrease in the average length of support that people are provided when accessing LCP.

A comparison of average days of support provided per client in 2019-2020 with data from 2020-2021 shows a decrease of 26%.

This can primarily be attributed to LCP implementing a range of capacity management strategies to balance the need of existing clients with the increased demand of new request for services.

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY:

LCP participated in an independent client satisfaction survey that was conducted by the Community Housing Industry Association NSW (CHIA NSW) on behalf of the Homelessness Industry Partnership.

The aim of the survey was to:

1. Establish levels of well-being of service users and their experiences
2. Benchmark the results for each service provider
3. Inform future service delivery improvements

The survey was open between 29th March to 21 May 2021. People could complete the survey via a tablet or desktop or a pen and paper option being completed independently or with staff assistance. The questionnaire sort to gain information in relation to: service experience, current situation, impact of service and demographic information.

LCP received 116 responses.

See pages 36-37 for summary of LCP benchmarking results.

BENCHMARKING

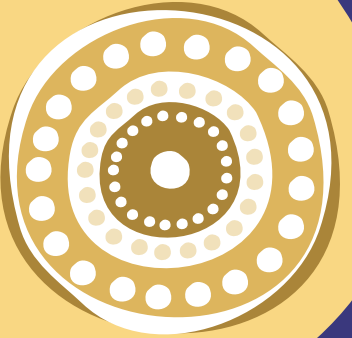
The following graphs compare the scores received for Lithgow Community Projects Inc. to the client aggregated dataset for the key indicators.



TOP AND BOTTOM PERFORMING AREAS

We have identified the top three scoring items for Lithgow Community Projects Inc., and alongside them the items with the lowest scores

- ➔ Staff treated me with respect (100% positive)
- ➔ Staff have made me feel accepted for who I am (100% positive)
- ➔ Staff understood my needs (100% positive)
- ➔ Your employment opportunities improved (20% positive)
- ➔ Your educational opportunities improved (27% positive)
- ➔ Your connection with others improved (53% positive)



LCP DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT

LCP's Domestic and Family Violence support includes provision of emergency accommodation at the Lithgow Women and Children's Crisis Centre; after hours crisis support via LCP's Domestic Violence Response Enhancement program; access to free trauma informed counselling; holistic client-led case and safety planning; and advocacy and liaison with other services including legal, housing, financial, and children's services.

Our aim is to provide services that increase safety, uphold dignity, support recovery from trauma and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

SNAPSHOT:

Domestic Violence Response	Lithgow Women and Children's Crisis Centre	DFV Counselling & Case Work
Enhancement 37 clients received after hours support (including risk assessment, intake, outreach, brokerage and safety planning).	Provided 1387 emergency bed nights to 27 clients in safe/secure environment. Case management and support to secure housing on exit.	Face to face and phone counselling, case coordination, external meetings, correspondence/liaison with external agencies, and advocacy, Lithgow Women and Children's Crisis Centre provided 1327 emergency bed nights for 2 clients management and support to secure housing on exit.

Support for experiences of domestic and family violence continues to be one of the primary reasons clients contact LCP. AIHW annual

completion of LCP data shows that 40.5% of LCP clients indicated that they were seeking assistance due to domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault. **This is a 10% increase over the previous year.**

LCP staff note that the prolonged COVID pandemic on the back of catastrophic bushfires and drought appear to have both exacerbated and intersected with the other causal indicators of domestic violence and abuse and may explain the increase in identifying DFV as a reason for seeking assistance (when safe to do so) and the serious nature of abuse reported by the time victim/survivors are engaged with the service.

While data is still being compiled in relation to the most recent COVID-19 lockdown, an online survey conducted by Australian Government (*Australian Institute of Criminology Bulletin 28*) in May 2020 found that:

"For many women, the pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse.

Two-thirds of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former cohabiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic said the violence had started or escalated in the three months prior to the survey. Many women, particularly those experiencing more serious or complex forms of violence and abuse, reported safety concerns were a barrier to help-seeking."

"Although a significant proportion of women did seek help from police, government or non-government agencies and informal sources, many were unable to because of safety concerns.

This is consistent with the concerns raised by many in the support services sector that they found it difficult to engage with women during this period of social distancing.

It also helps to explain why the number of domestic violence incidents reported to police has not increased (Freeman 2020b)."

SECTOR COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

LCP has increased our participation in inter-agency safety and case planning over the last year and we continue to invest in positive working relationships with organisations that support the safety and recovery of people impacted by domestic and family violence. Client-led service delivery and respectful sector collaboration underpin LCP's domestic and family violence response.

Safety Action Meetings (SAM)

Since July 2020, LCP has maintained membership to the Chieflly Area Command Safety Action Meetings. Safety Action Meetings are fortnightly meetings of local service providers that aim to prevent or lessen serious threats to the safety of domestic violence victims and their children through targeted information sharing.

The principle behind the Safety Action Meeting is that formalised, cooperative action and information sharing between service providers supports better outcomes for the safety of victim/survivors and closer monitoring of perpetrator behaviour.

Safety Action Meetings bring together representatives from key government and non-government agencies that provide services to victim/survivors and perpetrators in the local area, including Police, Community Corrections, Child Protection, Health, Court Support, Housing, Education, and DFV services.

Central West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (CWWDV/CAS)

LCP works closely with the Central West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (CWWDV/CAS) to increase our clients' safety and understanding the AVO and criminal justice process including support before, during and after court matters.

In the last financial year, CWWDV/CAS reported that they have supported 138 clients from Lithgow (postcode 2790).

Of those clients 135 were intimate partner relationships, 2 child/parent relationships and 1 non intimate other relative.

36 clients were clients assessed at Serious Threat, and escalated to the Chieflly SAM.

Men's Behaviour Change Partner Support

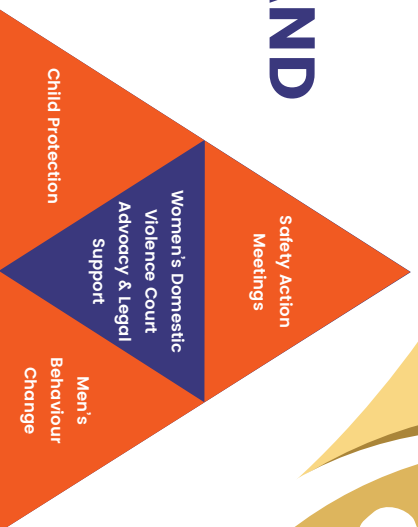
Building on the close working relationship established with the Central West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service managed by Housing Plus, LCP is in the process of partnering with Housing Plus to be the Partner Support provider for Men's Behaviour Change Programs.

Key staff have undertaken training with NSW Health Education Centre against Violence to prepare for the program that is hoped to be delivered in Lithgow in late 2021/early 2022.



OTHER KEY SERVICES AND INITIATIVES

LCP continues to enjoy collaborative working relationships with local services to increase safety and wellbeing of our clients.



These include Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre, Link Wentworth Community Housing, Banardos Family Connect, Department of Communities and Justice

Child Protection and Housing services, Lithgow Court House, NSW Health, and Thrive Family Support.

and child protection interagency and sits on the Steering Committee of the Nepean Blue Mountains Public Health Network Recognise Respond Refer Pilot Program in the local Health

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We continue to explore emerging and best practice so that we are able to respond sensitively and effectively to clients requesting support for experiences of DFV.

In this space, LCP are hopeful about the increased understanding of dignity driven, client led responses to domestic violence, the increased awareness and understanding of the impact and risks of coercive control; increased use of common risk assessments to increase contextual understanding and increase safety of those experiencing DFV; and increased availability of programs aimed at holding perpetrators violence and abuse accountable for their actions.

LCP's training and development of staff continue to be informed by:

- DV NSW Good Practice Guidelines
- Safer Pathway
- Insight Exchange
- Safe and Together
- Blue Knot Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery

LCP have refined their intake, assessment, and referral documents to explore risk and invite conversations, to gain a fuller picture of client experiences of safety and abuse.

Catherine Hungerford
D&RV Counsellor/Coordinator



**** Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document contains names of people who have passed away.**

THE STORY OF LCP'S RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

This year has seen LCP undertake work on a service Reconciliation Action Plan – RAP.

This has been a learning process as we had to start at the very beginning. This involved learning what a RAP actually was, what it involved and how this would benefit LCP as a service and our clients as a whole. We had to work out if a RAP was right for LCP, what the RAP development process was, the key steps for developing a RAP, what a Reflect RAP was as a starting point, who would be stakeholders in our Sphere of Influence and what a RAP Working Group entailed. So there has been a lot of learning that had to happen initially and prior to even starting.

The learning focused a great deal on working with Reconciliation Australia and working within their recommended good practice guidelines and a Framework for reconciliation action, including demonstrating inclusive and respectful language. Fact sheets (namely demonstrating inclusive

and respectful language) were distributed to staff members to start to create awareness and a platform where it opened the dialogue on what we as a team could do to engage with our RAP and better support our First Nations clients.

It would be amiss of us if we did not take this opportunity to make special note of Uncle John Patten and his lovely wife Margaret, and to express our sadness of their passing. Uncle John was many things to many people in our place, at LCP: as a community friend, teacher and liaison. His ongoing presence at the service became an institution in the most positive way. Uncle would come to read the Koori mail and have a cuppa. His warm and engaging manner invited everyone, without exclusion, into his arena, where he would share unselfishly and whole heartedly not just his rich life story, but his knowledge of culture and the old ways of things. On reflection we can view what Uncle and Auntie left for us workers as a legacy. We learnt how to stop, no matter what was happening and listen, learn cultural sensitivity, thoughtfulness, connection and above all this respect and humility. Your friendly faces are missed, but your stories live on. I was privileged, and extremely grateful to be able to have a number of conversations with Anthony (Tony) Flick, who works for Nepean Blue Mountains Health District, and his guidance was just so inspiring. He directed me to a number of similar RAPs to see the set out, the actions and deliverables, etc. He helped really get the idea cemented in my mind and set me on the path I felt comfortable with and found that it really took off from there. I was also invited to attend Platform RAP Working Group



(RWG) meeting to get an idea of how these were run, what was covered and the importance of the RAP in a service. I was extremely grateful to be invited and included in this meeting. The RWG invited me to speak about our RAP and the process so far. I spoke openly about our local community and the different groups that we have and how this was troubling me to incorporate it in to our RAP. One thing that was said to me was this: "At the end of the day, this is about Reconciliation. That's it. Reconciliation. Bringing people together, nothing more". This statement has truly stuck with me this whole journey and when I feel like I am slightly off track, I bring myself back to this. Reconciliation. Platform worker Flinn Donovan has also been incredibly gracious with his support, guidance and encouragement of my work

on this project. Mar-Lyn Elliot also gave some valuable input into the RAP and has also been commissioned for an artwork to be included in the RAP. Our local worker for Rural and Remote Mental Health, Sonia Cox has been my rock as she has been there on call whenever I needed help, support, guidance, picking up, encouraging... She has been there to help me engage with our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and has been a pivot point for which I have been able to use to help navigate the community and have them feel comfortable with our start. Reconciliation Australia has been a valuable resource for me to draw upon and I attended an online workshop over 4 weeks detailing how to start a RAP and what this involves. They have also been a fabulous help with going over our RAP and advising of

inclusions or exclusions. LCP staff had the valuable experience of a cultural excursion, guided by Bob Suttor (Numbahing Elder Bundjalung Nation, One Mob.A.C. Lithgow) whom we commissioned for an artwork for our RAP and our service. His artwork has been made into a large window print for our adjoining office space and has received loads of positive feedback. Bob describes the art work as follows:

This Art work represents the community coming together in support for those in need.





The Animals represent the different people and Cultures in our community, coming together as one sitting in the middle solving problems.

The wave of color symbolize the people and spiritual energies coming together for connection and healing.

We attended the culturally significant area of Malinyngu Marragu (previously known as Blackfellows Hands). Bob told us the story of the area, conducted a smoking ceremony and took us up to see the rock art and birthing place. This was an incredibly valuable experience for staff that helped to create an awareness of the importance of the heritage and significance of these areas to our local First Nations People.

OUR RAP TO DATE

So far LCP's RAP has been 'Conditionally Endorsed' by Reconciliation Australia. This means we have got our RAP to the point of it being a working document for LCP where we are in the process of including the Reconciliation Australia Logos and branding.

As a service we have worked hard to incorporate a number of new actions where we now do an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of every meeting and staff members are provided the opportunity to be given a NAIDOC shirt which we have done so for the past 2 years. A number of discussions have been held with our local Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander community and it has been well received and supported. We have engaged the support of a young local Wiradjuri woman who is happy to be a part of the working group and also contribute a number of other artworks for us. We are looking at establishing a Working Group in the very near future and we are continuing on our RAP actions and deliverables and making the service more welcoming and supportive of our First Nations Peoples.

On a bit of a side note, since we have embarked on this endeavor, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client support statistics have increased, which I believe is



testament to how we as a service have embraced this project. I can honestly and openly say I have enjoyed this project as a whole and I have gained a new respect for our Reconciliation journey and the opportunity to educate our other local community members on the importance and acceptance of this. I have taken this RAP on seriously and wholeheartedly and it has been an absolute pleasure to be involved with. I am excited for the future of the LCP RAP.

Michelle Ringin
RAP Champion



LCP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PROFILES

Similarly to staff, Management Committee members were asked to reflect on their experiences over the past 12 months and comment on what some of the challenges for the organisation have been and what has assisted to sustain LCP.

A common theme of the impacts of COVID-19 emerged throughout the responses acknowledging the challenges from a governance perspective and ensuring a safe environment was provided for all while continuing to provide the essential services LCP provide.

With the increased demand for services another challenge expressed by Management Committee representatives was ensuring that appropriate systems were developed to be responsive to the increase demand, manage staff wellbeing while operating within the budget constraints.

The flexibility and adaptability of staff has been noted as a significant strength of LCP during the past year along with the responsiveness of board members in working together to ensure the organisation continued to operate smoothly within the context of working remotely.

The following contribution was provided by LCP's newest board member Charlie Cross:

As a new board member to Lithgow Community Projects I was not aware of the specific work or range of services provided to the Lithgow community.

In my first year I have been privileged to be part of the Lithgow Community Projects Board and this has allowed me to understand from a management perspective and personal experience to more deeply understand the crucial role this organisation plays in assisting the most vulnerable and displaced parts of our society.

Funding

I have seen through monthly reporting of staffing hours, client contacts, contract metrics, financial and strategic planning and the outstanding level of professional diligence and commitment that this team undertakes. The organisation is extremely well managed with clear strategic and operational plans that align to current and future demands and have demonstrated agility



Tracy Gilard



Sharon Morley



Charlie Cross



Melanie Jones



Heidi Hunter



Beverly Wiggins



Alisa Fordham

requests for support, decrease their level of service and triaging client needs. If this were a used car lot then the impact could be based on pure business and financial management however the clients and customers of Lithgow Community Projects are some of the most vulnerable and a room to stay, a safe place free of domestic violence or a kind and supporting person who can advocate on behalf can be profound in the short and long term.

The team has double the demand for their services than their funding agreement and the board and the team are now in a position where the need to secure external funding will be a large focus. This will have the impact of taking time away from the team of their core business. However if the board and the team cannot secure long term additional funding it will mean that clients may be turned away, the service will not be able to fulfill its mission 2021/2022 and that is providing HOPE, SUPPORT, SOCIAL JUSTICE and CONNECTION.

The small team is able to manage external accreditation, multiple funding arrangements, details financial planning and reporting, undertake a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), complex industrial relations and support staff whilst maintaining their core services with an increased case-load and decreased funding envelope.

As a board member I understand that this level of commitment and work is unsustainable and LCP must obtain additional funding or readjust its working model to mitigate the risks of staff wellness and customer service in the short and medium term,

hence the board will make obtaining additional funding a key priority for 2021/2022.

Personal Impacts

As part of my role with LCP as a board member we have been given interviews or samples of what a typical client service is and we have had staff provide a case study to the board so that we understand what LCP support services undertake on a day to day basis. These case studies have provided clarity to the board and assist us gain an understanding of the complex needs of many of the clients LCP supports. As a board member I now understand the personal commitment that this team provides to each client and the caring and professional way they manage complex and difficult situations for the client. This can involve counselling, accommodation, transport, logistics, advocacy with tenant boards, legal support, assisting with telecommunications, referrals to other services and complex case management.

The work that this team does within our community cannot be understated and the contribution that this makes to our society is immense and not understood by much of the community who is oblivious to the needs and service that LCP provides.

As a board member I have a duty to assist LCP through my advocacy and sharing of their role within our community and society so that the broader community and funding bodies, sponsors, philanthropic organisations can see the value in supporting LCP and their clients.

COVID

In the year that I have been involved with LCP as a board member I have seen the increased pressure and demand on the LCP team to deliver services and change their way of working.

The team have had to reduce staffed hours, decrease customer contact, minimise face to face contact during COVID to comply with national, state and department requirements and much of this has had to be constructed by the team with no external support.

The team has had to monitor all relevant agencies and their policies across two differing worksites, implement modified working from home arrangements, manage staff and client personal impacts, work with changed workplace interactions.

A small example is the closure of many face to face services that the many of the LCP clients would have utilised and the shift to online forms, telecommunication and online forms. The LCP staff immediately became the resource that assisted each client navigate this increased and complex arrangement and added an extra layer of service onto an already challenging landscape.

The team did this and many, many other modifications with the client at the centre of all decision making. COVID 19 also spotlighted the absolute need for increased funding and support and the dedication and adaptability that this team possess led through their Manager Dee Krimey, I am proud to have a small role in supporting Lithgow Community Projects and the work that they undertake every day.

STAFF PROFILES



The global pandemic of COVID has had such a significant impact on the sector that LCP operates in wi The global pandemic of COVID has had such a significant impact on the sector that LCP operates in with homeless people being identified as a high risk group due to the transience created from the lack of stable accommodation, coupled with the increased risk posed for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. It is therefore not surprising this is mirrored in staff reflections of the past year.

Staff were asked to reflect and compile a few sentences to the following questions:

1. The challenges faced in your role during the past year?
2. What has helped to sustain you in your role ?



HEIDI BAUCHE

CHALLENGES

Challenges faced included having to think outside the box to accommodate clients needs and working with other service providers for the best outcomes for clients whilst adhering to changing public health orders / regulations.

WHAT HAS HELPED

The support of co - workers and Management acknowledging difficulties in current circumstances, camaraderie between staff and of course a sense of humour!



ERIN ELLERY

CHALLENGES

Adapting and thinking of different ways to provide case work to my clients who were heightened with anxiety due to the COVID situation whilst also checking in with myself on my own anxiety. Working from home and "trying" to home school my 3 children with bad internet.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Being able to still come to work for 2.5 days gave me a sense of "normal" throughout these unnormal times. Knowing my co-workers would follow up anything I didn't get a chance to do in my days at work and being encouraged by management to look after our own wellbeing by being so flexible and understanding. And the most important thing that got me through this year is the little gifts/surprises we left each other.....sometimes funny, annoying, educational and disgusting though was something I looked forward to each week.



CATHERINE HUNGERFORD

CHALLENGES

By far the biggest challenge in my role was that the request for support continually exceeded our available resources. There has been a rolling approximately 4-week waitlist for counselling support throughout the year alongside a need to ensure availability to respond to immediate needs including clients at serious threat.

Given the isolation and limits on movement due to covid restrictions, some clients were unable to seek support until their situation was critical.

When safety, choice, control, trust and collaboration are the foundations of trauma recovery - the fear, limitations, uncertainty, hyper-vigilance, and isolation of the pandemic has made recovery even more difficult for some people.

Lack of housing, let alone safe/affordable housing, is at a critical low and is a major barrier to people's ability to leave an abusive relationship. No one should have to make a choice between possible homelessness or domestic/family violence.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Genuine support and collaboration with colleagues and other services to increase the safety and wellbeing of our clients. When people and services work together, clients see that their needs are important and their safety matters - that's what sustains me. Adaptability has been essential, compassion for self and others in these trying times, and kindness - a smile (you can tell if someone is smiling even if they are wearing a mask), an ear, a laugh, or an act of kindness, no matter how small, can make a big difference to someone's day - it certainly has for me.



NATALIE BISHOP

CHALLENGES

I have found that if I am not being mindful work can seem futile due to the limited availability of housing outcomes for clients. It sometimes feels like we are a housing service without housing! The last 12 months in particular has seen our local community experience a significant decrease in private rental opportunities in addition to a reduced turnover in social housing properties..... when communicating with DQ staff they indicate tenants are not vacating properties due to the awareness of how difficult it is to obtain alternative housing. As a result our interactions with clients can see them frustrated with the process and expectations when they are already in crisis due to their homelessness/risk of homelessness.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Feeling optimistic about exploring more creative approaches to housing provision for our clients. Personally the possibility of community partnerships and diversification from our traditional methods of sourcing accommodation is exciting and helps me feel hopeful that despite the challenges outcomes are still possible. In addition the "office shenanigans" and camaraderie between teams that was evident during our Covid workplace restrictions promoted a sense of teamwork even when we were physically isolated from our colleagues. Coffee and cake also provides a welcome distraction!

KIM WILKINS



CHALLENGES

Difficulty engaging with other services / stakeholder due to participants working remotely. Recognising change within work practices (zoom etc) and prioritising how to best arrive at a good outcome despite the above.

WHAT HAS HELPED

COVID safe protocols and following correct procedures put in place to keep staff and clients safe. Management supporting staff wellbeing and reiterating appreciation through out the year. Continuing to support clients with complexities to look at opportunities with a positive approach and work towards achievable goals.



TIAH GIBBS

CHALLENGES

One of the biggest and most ironic challenges this past year was literally having no housing options for our clients. It's quite difficult to be able to hold space for clients while remaining transparent about the reality of their limited exit options.

It was more important than ever this year to remain consistent for our clients whilst delivering a service at half the capacity due to a split team roster because of Covid. As an organisation, we did this well, which reflects in our referral numbers and demand for service. Again, this proved to be a great challenge, as caseworkers were at their max capacity for extended periods of time, unable to close their existing clients due to a lack housing options... leaving incoming referrals being managed through our drop-in service.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Working alongside a pretty mad crew played a major role in keeping me sustained during this crazy covid year, as well as turning up for our clients consistently during what is already a stressful time yet alone during pandemic.

TRACY VANDERHAAR



CHALLENGES

The past year has been a challenging time, with limited face to face contact. It's been harder to build rapport with clients, a lot of our clients have little or limited data, or struggle with technology/ making zooms etc. impossible, so a large majority of work has taken place through phone calls.

The past year has seen a struggle to engage with other service providers local and out of area with remote work taking place and split shifts finding the correct worker has taken many attempts to finally make contact.

WHAT HAS HELPED

What has helped to sustain me in my role has been amazing support and appreciation from co-workers and management, with the challenges covid has presented to us as a society and as individual families, to have a support network at work has made it easier to continue supporting our clients but also helped support me not only as a worker but as an individual who at times struggled with the reality of the situation and the impact it could have on our loved ones and community.

HOPE, OUR OFFICE COMPANION

Another year of having Hope by our sides, keeping us on our toes, but making us feel very loved at the office!

This year has seen us continuing to work on her wellbeing to maintain her health.

This year has seen some challenges for Hope in that Covid has somewhat impacted on her anxiety and her gut issues. During the first Covid lockdown, when we returned to the office there was a noticeable increase in her anxiety upon having an office full of people once again. This time round, we have worked on a wellbeing plan for Hope to ensure she comes back full time a happy, healthy dog that continues to provide much love and attention to each one of us here in the office.

Throughout the year we have continued with her training and also continued to watch her diet closely. We still do not let the clients feed her due to her sensitive tummy, but do provide her special treats for them to give to her. We continue with the commands in place for her and encourage visitors/ clients to the service to use these with her. These commands are also used in

MICHELLE RINGIN



CHALLENGES

The main challenges for me is the decentralization of services and loss of place based programs that are connected to and that know our community

WHAT HAS HELPED

Our LCP team has helped and also having Hope and Todd around through the day.



my home with her as well.

She has been attending a new groomers (Dee's Dandy Pets). She gets excited to arrive and is a much loved client of the service. Deidre does such a great job with her and always considers her anxiety and works with this.

Hope continues to be a very much loved addition to our team and provides a welcome bucket load of support to staff and clients alike! If you're in need of a hug or a loving lick up the cheek, just come call out to Hope! She will be more than happy to oblige!

Michelle

**LITHGOW COMMUNITY PROJECTS INC
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