



*Empowering women to  
enhance their health  
and wellbeing*

# Annual Report **2014-15**

## **Funding Bodies 2014-15**

### **ACT Health Directorate**

- Women, Youth & Child Health Policy Unit
- Mental Health Policy Unit

### **ACT Community Services Directorate**

- Disability ACT
- ACT Office for Women
- Community Participation Group

### **ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate**

### **ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner**

### **Mercy Foundation**

### **Sisters Of Charity**

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A screenshot of the new WCHM website

## A Summary of WCHM'S Achievements in 2014/15

### Listening to ACT women's voices

WCHM informs our work by collecting information and stories about the attitudes, assumptions, experiences and views of ACT women. This year WCHM undertook several social research projects to identify the needs of women in the ACT and surrounding regions:

- Understanding women's experiences of help seeking for domestic and family violence (DFV) in the ACT
- Transforming domestic violence support in the ACT: Improving accessibility for same-sex-attracted, transgender, intersex and gender diverse clients
- Women's experiences and perspectives on being diagnosed or labelled with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) in the ACT

### Empowering and supporting women

To ensure that women have access to local information so that they can make informed choices, WCHM also developed and launched several resources:

- Resources for financially vulnerable groups of ACT women called *Women's Money Matters*
- A guide for *Media Reporting on Violence against Women and Children in the ACT*

- *Cyber Safety for Older ACT Women – A Guide to Staying Safe Online*

### **Consultations and Submissions**

WCHM continued to advocate on behalf of ACT women through relevant consultation and submission processes, and to use these opportunities to disseminate the findings from our work with ACT women about their needs.

Throughout 2014-15, WCHM contributed the following submissions:

- A WCHM Submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry into Domestic Violence
- A submission on behalf of the ACT Women's Services Network to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry into Domestic Violence
- A submission to inform the ACT Government's 'Roadmap to enhancing our city's multicultural way of life'
- A submission to the Senate Select Committee on Health.

The WCHM Board also prepared a Submission to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's Exposure Draft Interpretation Statement on Health Promotion Charities.

WCHM was involved in informing and providing views and expertise:

- To the Justice Reform Strategy and Justice Re-investment approach in the ACT
- By participating in a consortium of peak community sector organisations to research housing and homelessness issues in the ACT
- By participating in a Reference Group for a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder project conducted by Mental Illness Education ACT
- By advocating as a member of several ACT committees, including the Domestic Violence Prevention Council,

Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, Governance Group for the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy, ACT Women's Services Network, and the ACTCOSS Justice Reform Group.

### **Chair's Report**

I expect none of you will be surprised to read that 2014-15 has again been a busy and productive year for the WCHM Board and staff.

Our Board has welcomed a number of new members this year - previous trainees, Louise Kearins and Kathy McFie, as well as this year's new Deputy Chair, Deslea Selmes, and our new Treasurer, Lynne Gray. All of these new members have made a significant and valuable contribution to the Board this year, for which I sincerely thank them.

This year's Strategic Planning day in January, attended by both the Board and staff, was focused on bringing our new Board members up to speed on the priorities of WCHM and, particularly, turning our attention to the changing external environment and how this impacts on women's health and WCHM. Consideration of external factors has continued to be a particular focus of the Board this year given there has been a new Chief Minister, Minister for Health, and Minister for Women; ongoing budgetary pressures at both state and Federal levels of government; and, ongoing reform processes, such as with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Our external environment will continue to change and evolve, and it is important that WCHM stays well-informed, prepared and equipped with the necessary capability to adapt and respond to both the risks and opportunities that will eventuate. This will be particularly important as we move to develop a new Strategic Plan for WCHM in 2015-16, that will come into effect in July 2016.

Furthermore, and taking into account the tight financial environments that currently exist, the Board has remained focused on

ensuring WCHM's financial viability and success. As will be outlined in the Treasurer's report, WCHM is in a very comfortable financial position at the end of 2014-15, however the Board will continue to monitor this and develop our capabilities to respond to external financial risks. As these risks continue to impact on others in the sector, WCHM may need to consider its role in important areas of work. This will need to be considered by the leadership and Board of WCHM in the context of our priorities, capacity and strategic directions.

The Board has again been focused this year on ensuring we are working as effectively and productively as possible, taking the decision early in 2015 to replace our Human Resources Sub Committee with an Engagement Sub Committee which will be focused on opportunities for enhanced member engagement, initiatives to better engage with the public through forums such as social media and, ensuring we have a strong framework for partnerships.

This year WCHM has again auspiced the ACT Women And Prisons Group (WAP) and Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT). Both groups have continued their important and excellent work to support women in the ACT.

The Board also again ran our successful Board Trainee program, for a slightly longer period this year, providing opportunities for ACT women to build their skills as co-opted members to the Board, and providing the Board with new skill sets. We congratulate and thank our trainees, Alyssa Shaw and Adele Perry for their enthusiasm and commitment during the program, and their considered contribution they have made to the Board.

Throughout the year we farewelled Samantha Davidson-Fuller who brought an incredibly valuable perspective to the Board from her work in the mental health sector, and Jennifer Dunkley who was one of our trainees. Unfortunately at the AGM we will also farewell Deslea Selmes.

I would like to sincerely thank Samantha and Deslea and all other members of the Board for all of their work and support this year. It is a wonderfully collegiate and cooperative group that I very much enjoy working with.

As always, I'd like to give particular thanks to WCHM staff, including a number of new members of staff we have gained this year, for all of their hard work over the last year, and particularly to Marcia for her enduring commitment, support, advice and guidance she provides to WCHM and the Board.

*Lauren Gale, Board Chair*

#### **2014/15 Board Members**

(at 30 June 2015)

- Lauren Gale *nee* Burke (Chair)
- Deslea Selmes (Deputy Chair)
- Karen McGilvery (Treasurer)
- Robyn McClelland
- Helen Swift
- Renee Toy
- Louise Kearins
- Kathy McFie
- Sue Salthouse
- Alyssa Shaw (co-opted trainee)
- Adele Perry (co-opted trainee)
- Marcia Williams (Public Officer)

#### **WCHM farewelled the following Board members during the year:**

- Samantha Davidson Fuller
- Jennifer Dunkley (co-opted trainee)

## WCHM's Governance

*The Board Structure*—The Board comprises 10 elected members, and up to three co-opted ex-officio non-voting Board members.

At each Annual General Meeting five Board members are elected for two-year terms. Each elected Board member holds office from immediately after the Annual General Meeting at which they are elected until the second Annual General Meeting of WCHM after their election. No members of the Board may retain their position for more than three consecutive terms.

A replacement Board member may be co-opted to fill a vacancy, and they serve until the Annual General Meeting following their appointment or until the Board deems that their involvement is no longer required (whichever comes first).

Once elected the Board selects from its members, by a majority vote, a Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer.

*Board Role*—Board members serve on a voluntary basis and do not receive remuneration. The Board is responsible for:

- Setting the policies and strategic directions for the organisation
- Approving and monitoring the annual budget, and establishing the overall financial delegations
- Monitoring overall organisational performance
- Ensuring the organisation meets its regulatory and statutory requirements

*Board Meetings*—The Board is required to meet at least six times in each calendar year, but generally meets more often to conduct the business of WCHM. This year the Board met nine times during the year, including one day focused on training and planning.

*Board Committees*—Where necessary the Board sets up committees to conduct various aspects of organisational operation and management. There were three sub-committees of the Board:

- Governance Sub-Committee
- Finance Sub-Committee
- Human Resources Sub-Committee until April, when it was replaced with the Engagement Sub Committee

*Board Training*—New Board members receive an induction and a comprehensive series of fact sheets, training and access to a Board members' secure page on the WCHM website to access all the core WCHM documents.

*Board Performance*—Board performance is assessed annually, through a Survey of Board members. This is used to evaluate the Board's effectiveness. This helps to highlight priorities for further focus and improvement.

## Executive Director's Report

What another big year for WCHM!

This year we were very pleased to have our hard work recognised at a national level. Firstly, when the Summer of Respect campaign received a Certificate of Merit in the 2014 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards! In awarding the Certificate of Merit to WCHM and our partner Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the committee described Summer of Respect as, "a unique initiative targeted at raising awareness about sexual violence amongst young people" and commented that it "demonstrates an impressive capacity to deliver a range of messages that can help protect a wide range of potentially vulnerable young people from sexual violence."

And secondly, when the national organisation Our Watch—which was established to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children—approached WCHM to adapt the Media Guides that we had developed locally so they could use them on their website.

In the ACT during the past year, and nationally, violence against women has been widely reported and commented on

in the ACT, and this has meant a lot of people are talking about this issue. This is important because as long as domestic violence is seen as being a family matter, a personal issue or as the victim's fault, change is not going to happen.

Because domestic violence is complex, and needs a coordinated and committed response from all parts of the ACT, a large part of WCHM's focus for this year has been about this issue! We have been part of open and honest conversations about how the ACT Government and other stakeholders could strengthen and improve responses to this issue. We have helped to inform the ACT response to domestic violence, and conducted research about the experiences of women in the ACT, and worked with the services that support them, to inform our views. We have undertaken research to understand the different perceptions, experiences and needs of vulnerable groups, such as the same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse community in the ACT. We have identified ways to engage with the private sector and to try and educate and involve them—starting with the media.

And we have advocated at both the national and the local level so that the ACT issues are understood.

Apart from the work on prevention of domestic and sexual violence against women and children, we have also had the opportunity to work again on a diverse range of projects—mental health, housing and homelessness, safety, financial issues for women, disability and justice.

The Women of Canberra online photographic documentary which we launched on International Women's Day has proven to be a new and innovative way of showcasing the diversity of women in the ACT and engaging people about their stories and experiences. Thank you to all those women who have participated in it, and to the three young women photographers who have been able to showcase their skills.

My thanks goes to:

- Our members for their feedback, their support and their contribution to, and involvement in, our research, forums and events
- Our partners who provide the expertise and knowledge to support our projects, our events and our advocacy and research work
- The funding bodies who supported our work (and the work of our auspiced organisations) with financial grants over the last year, which has enabled us to continue our work to enhance women's health and wellbeing in the ACT

But none of the work would be possible without the skills, passion and ideas that the team of women who work here at WCHM bring to the Centre and its work. I am continually amazed that we have continued to attract amazing new women to join us who bring with them new creativity and experiences—this adds to the diversity of WCHM again.

And of course WCHM is in good hands with the skilled and passionate group of volunteer members on WCHM's Board. They also bring a wide range of skills, experiences and views to WCHM. I especially thank them for the time that they contribute, and their continued commitment to the organisation and its good governance, and for their support of the staff. For those who are leaving the Board this year thank you for your contributions and commitment, and best wishes for the future.

And last but not least in February we heard the sad news that elite triathlete and marathon runner, Jackie Fairweather, had died suddenly. Jackie was also a WCHM Board Member over the period 2010 to 2013, and made a very strong contribution to the Board and to the Centre and its work.



As Executive Director I remember her knowledgeable and insightful contributions to conversations, and her skills in relation to governance, finance and human resource matters. But I also remember that she brought with her a deep understanding from her experiences with depression, and reminded us of the importance of continuing to focus on women's mental health issues. In the words of one of her friends: "She had a really tough battle with herself, she fought so hard." We remember her and miss her.

*Marcia Williams, Executive Director*



*Bess Harrison and Annelise Roberts*

### **2014/15 Staff**

(at 30 June 2015)

- Executive Director—Marcia Williams
- Administration Officer—Margaret Ross
- Health Promotion Officer—Angela Carnovale
- Health Promotion Officer — Jenni Gough
- Health Promotion Officer— Mel Greenhalgh
- Health Promotion Officer — Jane Wang
- Community Development Officer (WWDACT)—Nicole O'Callaghan
- Principle Policy Officer (WWDACT)—Emilia Della Torre
- Temporary Project workers — Adele Perry, Mel Tulloch, and Jocelyn Perry

### **WCHM farewelled the following staff during the year:**

- Annelise Roberts
- Bess Harrison





## **The Key Areas of Focus**

The WCHM Strategic Plan focuses on five key areas for 2012-2016 to will further our work in supporting ACT women to make informed health and wellbeing choices, and to assist health related services and policy to be responsive to ACT women's needs.

### **1. KNOWING WHAT MATTERS!**

### **2. COMMUNICATING WHAT MATTERS!**

### **3. INFLUENCING WHAT MATTERS!**

### **4. EMPOWERING WOMEN IN WHAT MATTERS!**

### **5. DOING WHAT MATTERS!**



## The Year in Review—

### Our progress against our Strategic Plan

#### **Key Area 1: KNOWING WHAT MATTERS!**

Work with women in the ACT (especially those who are vulnerable to disadvantage and marginalisation, or who have specific gender-related needs) to:

- Gain knowledge and evidence about the economic, social and environmental issues affecting women's health and wellbeing in the ACT
- Understand the lived experience of women and the way this impacts upon their health and wellbeing
- Identify the health and wellbeing services and support available
- Identify new and emerging issues in women's health that are not adequately responded to by current policies and services

**Our strategies and actions** include: the use of research, forums and consultations with ACT women; working with networks, service providers and peer led groups to identify emerging issues; gender analysis; safety audits; attending conferences; and using gender based data from other sources to inform our work.

Feedback from a range of women and women's groups informed WCHM's projects over the year.

WCHM also continued to develop strong relationships with other community sector stakeholders in order to build our knowledge and to influence policy and service design and to advocate to create change where needed. In particular we work closely with ACTCOSS, members of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the ACT Women's Services Network, the ACT Women And Prison group, Women With Disabilities ACT, Shelter ACT, the ACT Youth Coalition, Health Care

Consumers ACT, the justice reform sector, mental health consumer organisations and the mental health community sector peak bodies to raise the profile of issues relating to women and to develop approaches to working together in relation to services and programs for women.

#### **Social research: Women's experiences of finding help and support for domestic and family violence in the ACT**

This research project explored women's experiences of help seeking for domestic and family violence in the ACT. In particular, the research was designed to gain insight and understanding into:

- The type of help women seek
- The points in their lives that they seek this help
- The reasons they seek help from the places they do
- How they seek the help that they do
- Why they seek it in this way
- The outcomes of seeking this help
- What, if anything, they would change to ensure that they would be able to access the help they need, when they need it
- The ways in which experiences of help-seeking are unique for women who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, immigrant or refugee, or having a disability

The style of the research was narrative, and while the sample size was small, and so limits the ability to extrapolate results to the entire population of women in the ACT who seek help for domestic and family violence, qualitative studies like these provide a depth of understanding of women's lived experience. And, when we view the results in the context of other

quantitative and qualitative studies, we will be able to build a picture of what helps and hinders women seeking help for domestic violence.

The final aim is to contribute ACT women's voices—through documenting their experiences—to inform the ACT service system response for domestic violence.

Sixteen interviews with women have been completed. The interviews are an important element of stage one of this project and the stories are a very powerful way of telling the stories about the issues. Stage two (later in the year) will use a wider community survey to explore the issues raised in more detail.

While the coding and detailed analysis of the information are still being finalised, there are already some common insights from the women:

- In the medium to longer term women were looking for access to more flexible support that is directed by their needs rather than being prescribed by pre-conceived notions of what funding should be available for or spent on.
- 'Everybody let me go back to him so easily'—women felt that it would be valuable if police, friends and family were more unequivocal in encouraging them to consider the violence as serious.
- While the ACT definition of domestic violence includes intimidating, coercive and controlling behaviour, the experience of women pursuing an AVO through the courts may not reflect this.
- Women with previous experience of a DFV relationship have heightened fear and in subsequent relationships may call police early for support—but are judged as wasting time and not taken seriously—no links to information about the victim and their previous history.
- Support for men was not available early, and later help was not consistent and proactive.

The interim results will be presented at the WCHM AGM in September, and the final report will be launched in December.

**Social Research: *Transforming domestic violence support in the ACT: Improving accessibility for same-sex-attracted, transgender, intersex and gender diverse clients***

The objectives of this research project were to analyse the barriers, gaps and strengths in service delivery for the ACT's lesbian, transgender/transsexual, bisexual, intersex, and queer individuals and communities (LGBTIQ) who have experienced domestic and family violence (DFV).

The project was supported by an Expert Group comprising representatives from the LGBTIQ Ministerial Advisory Council; the Domestic Violence Crisis Service; the AIDS Action Council; A Gender Agenda; the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre; Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT; and Northside Community Services who:

- Provided knowledge, expertise and information relevant to the development of the project and its products
- Assisted WCHM to promote the project and link to other relevant stakeholders
- Provided feedback on the design of key elements of the project, as required
- Supported the involvement of community members with lived experience of domestic violence at key points of the project, as required

To achieve this, a mixed methodology was used. A review of relevant local, national and international literature related to the barriers and best practice in domestic violence for LGBTIQ communities who are

victims of domestic and family violence was conducted. A community survey and one-on-one interviews were then conducted with LGBTIQ people in the ACT who had experienced DFV directly or had supported someone who identified as LGBTIQ. The survey contained questions which collected both qualitative and quantitative data, and participants were asked to complete an online survey consisting of nineteen multiple option and/or open ended questions. This survey asked questions about respondent's experiences, how they came to realise they or the person they were supporting was experiencing domestic and family violence, their motivation and reasoning for not seeking assistance and for those who had sort help what the experience was like and how they came to choose the service provider. Finally respondents were asked to reflect on what could be done to better support LGBTIQ people who are experiencing domestic and family violence in the ACT.

The survey was promoted through WCHM's networks and membership, Facebook page, Weekly newsletter, website, ACT Community Development Network and other networks within the ACT. The service providers engaged in the project also distributed the survey throughout their own networks.

The survey/interview findings have been grouped into six key sub themes:

1. Identification of Domestic and Family Violence
2. Barriers to intervention
3. Helpful Service Responses
4. Unhelpful Service Responses
5. Impact of being LGBTIQ
6. What will make a difference?

These key themes also reflected the findings of the literature review and—although the sample was small—the themes identify that as a service system, there is a need to further develop the service response in the ACT to take into account the differences for same-sex

attracted, intersex and gender diverse groups within the Canberra community.

An outcome of the research has also been to develop a resource for services who provide domestic violence support in the ACT to enable them to be fully accessible to clients who are LGBTIQ.

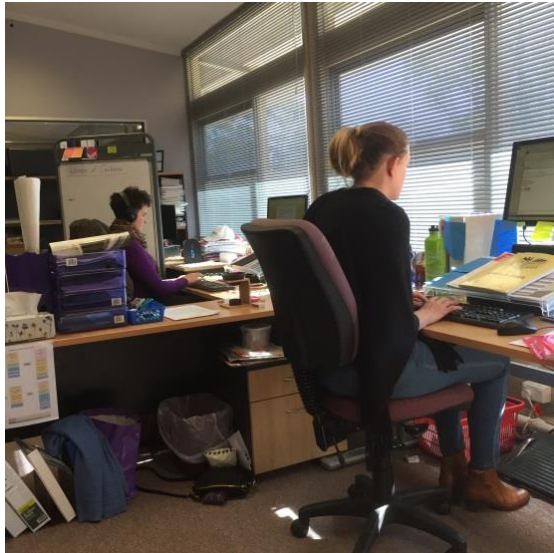
### ***Social Research: Women's experiences and perspectives on being diagnosed or labelled with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) in the ACT***

The need for this research was identified by women with lived experience and the ACT Women and Mental Health Working Group. This research sought to gather the views of women's lived experience and the experiences of service providers in the ACT who, within the context of their work, have come into contact with women diagnosed or labelled with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD).

The feedback from women was completed first, and the second stage of the research—a survey of service providers—was then undertaken with responses from mental health services, GPs, psychologists, as well as women's, youth, and other services.

There will be a completed report that will include the research conducted around women's lived experience and this research conducted around service provider experiences working with women diagnosed/labelled with BPD.

The interim results of the research will be presented at a forum during Mental Health Week in October 2015.



Jenni Gough hard at work

### Women, housing and homelessness

WCHM continues to monitor the results of changes to policy and funding for housing/homelessness crisis services and their impact on women (especially those escaping violence and sexual assault) and to work with ACT women and service providers to consider how to capture data and identify evidence of the issues for and impacts on women in relation to their housing needs.

WCHM was part of a joint housing policy consortium with ACT Shelter, the ACT Council of Social Service, and the ACT Youth Coalition, which aimed to conduct research projects to inform Government on issues and options that will:

- Meet demand for affordable housing in the bottom two income quintiles
- Reduce the number of people in Canberra who do not have a home to call their own
- Pool funds from across portfolios to maximise prevention of and early intervention in homelessness, reduce demand for crisis services, facilitate prompt access to and maintenance of stable, affordable, appropriate housing for people who have been homeless
- Ensure housing and homelessness support services can respond

effectively to meet current and emerging needs

The latest research projects involved researching and providing advice on strategies to increase the supply of housing that is affordable to key workers earning lower incomes (a lot of them women), students and older women.

WCHM agreed to undertake a focus groups with service providers who work with women, and a report was drafted describing the feedback from the forum.

Some of the feedback included:

- *"...the mum will go without buying certain clothes, they'll stretch the school uniform out as long as possible, as far as they can, they'll really downsize on the food. I hear a lot of mums say, you know, I'll feed the kids but, you know, they'll have less, so they'll make sure the kids have food and lunch, but they'll only have one meal a day kind of thing."*
- *"They're constantly trading off debt from week to week. In a lot of cases it's, sort of, 'ok so we're behind with our electricity, but we're further behind in our rent, so we'll pay the one that's the most red, and we'll just put that other one off for another day'."*
- *"They're having to make do with what they've got because they can't afford their electricity bill and they're doing that constant trade-off between the basic necessities, medication, and a lot of parents, like you say, are going without because they're trying to get the basic necessities to their kids and making a lot of sacrifices along the way."*
- *"The parent that's left with that mortgage might have a fairly well paying job, but it's not enough to cover all the expenses that they have, and they suddenly find themselves at risk of homelessness because they can't keep up with the payments and balance all the needs that they"*



## Women's Safety Assessment of the National Multicultural Festival

WCHM has previously used Women's Safety Assessments to involve ACT women in contributing to the design and location of safe, secure, and accessible public facilities through the use of safety assessments. This year WCHM provided feedback to the organisers of the National Multicultural Festival about the main points to consider from previous Women's Safety Assessments. The feedback was incorporated into the design of the Festival early in the process this time, and this meant a very positive result when WCHM participated in the final on site walkthrough which was conducted on 12 February 2015.



Women undertaking a safety assessment in Civic



Women of Canberra participants

## Key Area 2: **COMMUNICATING WHAT MATTERS!**

Communicate the evidence and insights gained from women in the ACT, particularly from our own research, but also from research conducted by other organisations to inform and educate others—including government—about ACT women's health and wellbeing needs.

**Our strategies and actions** include: developing/launching reports using evidence and lived experience; submissions and advocacy to consultations, committees, advisory groups and working groups; media releases about the issues and the evidence; support for specific sectors/services about the needs of women; training/awareness raising to build an understanding of the gender issues for services/sectors; supporting health literacy in women/groups of women; online support/information for women; health promotion events; providing information to women about policy/service changes; skills development/training of vulnerable groups of women; and awareness raising in the broader community about specific gender and equity issues.

### **Women of Canberra online photographic documentary project**

WCHM has developed a Women of Canberra (WoC) online photographic documentary project (inspired by the website 'Humans of New York'), which has involved a diverse range of ACT women participating in having their photos taken and telling their stories.

The WoC website was launched at the International Women's Day breakfast on March 13 2015 as a showcase of the first 25 participants, and is being expanded to feature 100 participants in time for WCHM's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in November 2015. Three emerging women photographers have volunteered for the project as a way of developing their capacity and skills.

### **Forum on *The financial impacts and costs on women living with and leaving domestic violence***

WCHM organised and jointly hosted with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, this forum held on 13 October 2014 to coincide with Anti-Poverty week. The week was chosen for this seminar because we wanted to highlight that poverty can be an issue for women in the ACT. In particular, that domestic violence can create unique circumstances of financial hardship for women living in and leaving a violent relationship, as well as in the longer term.

The seminar focused on strengthening local knowledge and understanding in the ACT about the links to poverty and hardship for women from living with and leaving domestic violence, including understanding what women experienced.

The seminar also provided information about what financial supports and services are available for this group of women. The feedback was very positive:

- 31.5 percent of the responses rated their knowledge before the seminar as low, 60 percent as high, and 8.5 percent as very high
- 95 percent of the responses rated their knowledge after the seminar as high or very high

### **Launch of *Women's Money Matters***

In October 2015 the Minister for Women officially launched WCHM's resources for financially vulnerable groups of ACT women, titled *Women's Money Matters*. These resources were tailored to particular population groups of women in the ACT vulnerable to experiencing financial disadvantage: women leaving domestic violence; women leaving prison; and older single women. The resources are a direct response to what ACT women told us they need from financial information: information that is written in plain English and does not require detailed financial knowledge to be understood;

advice about managing money through life stage transitions and/or relationship changes; information that is localised; and information that is tailored to their particular life circumstances.

The final products were jointly developed with CARE Financial Counselling Service. They were funded by an ACT Women's Grant. The guides are available on the WCHM website as a resource for women.

### **Launch of *Media Reporting on Violence against Women and Children in the ACT***

In September 2014 WCHM's new guides to help local media when reporting on domestic, family and sexual violence in the ACT were launched. The *Guides for ACT Media—Reporting on Violence against Women and Children in the ACT* were developed by WCHM and involved more than 18 months of work by WCHM, in consultation with local community expert partners such as Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Beryl Women Inc and in consultation with local journalists and media students from the National Press Club, University of Canberra Press Club and Media and Journalism Faculty at UC.

The guides cover domestic violence, sexual violence, child sexual assault and Indigenous family violence. They were funded under the ACT Participation (Women's) Grants. They are available from the WCHM website as a resource for media.

### **Adapting the ACT media guides for national use**

During July and August 2014 WCHM worked to adjust the media guides for use at a national level on the Our Watch website (previously the Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children).



A display of WCHM resources

### Digital mapping project

WCHM is developing an online digital mapping tool. This project is based on international research that shows that to provide equal access to public resources, urban design and policy needs to incorporate the needs of men and women equally—including considering the perceptions of safety that impact on women's and men's use of public spaces.

The digital mapping project seeks to further investigate these factors in the ACT, by allowing an examination of the contrast between how women and men use or experience spaces in the ACT in order to contribute to a better understanding how the fear of experiencing violence may influence and alter the decisions that women make.

### Anti-Poverty Week research

For Anti-Poverty Week, ACTCOSS and WCHM worked together to publish research on labour market trends in the ACT. We published two papers:

- *Creating Opportunity or Entrenching Disadvantage? Labour Market Trends in the ACT*
- *Creating Opportunity or Entrenching Disadvantage? ACT Labour Market Data*

WCHM agreed to jointly work on this research because the link to getting and keeping a full time job is the critical factor in getting out and staying out of poverty.

The data showed that outside of public sector employment, industries with growing employment opportunities that do not require degree-level qualifications offer low wage, mostly part-time work, meaning many workers struggle to earn enough to cover their costs of living.

In some industries (notably those where women are significantly over-represented), workers have comparatively low (full-time) wages and part-time employment is the norm.

### Summer of Respect

WCHM supported our partners, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, with the Summer of Respect campaign, which began with Reclaim the Night on October 28 and finished on International Women's Day in March 2015.

In November 2014 the Summer of Respect received a Certificate of Merit in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. Since its launch in 2011, the campaign has developed a number of initiatives to start informed conversations about sexual violence amongst young Canberrans, including last year's What To Say website and the animation S\*\*t guys say when they need to say something.



The AIC awards presentation

In awarding the Certificate of Merit to WCHM and CRCC, the committee described Summer of Respect as: "A unique initiative targeted at raising awareness about sexual violence amongst young people," and commented that it "demonstrates an impressive capacity to deliver a range of messages that can help



protect a wide range of potentially vulnerable young people from sexual violence.”

As part of this year’s Summer of Respect, WCHM developed and launched two new sections of the What to Say website. Initially the website focused on encouraging young men to think about the positive and safe ways they can identify and call out sexual violence with their mates. The site now includes sections for workplaces and women. These sections were designed to give women and co-workers the information they need to identify sexual violence, safe ways to respond and intervene if you experience or witness sexual violence, and advice on how to support someone who tells you they’ve experienced sexual violence. Each new section incorporates information about who to contact and included regular blog posts over the summer about issues like sexual harassment, dating, work parties and nights out.

### What can you do? website

WCHM launched a new website which posed the question What can you do? The site was designed to give information to members of the community to enable them to identify and speak out about domestic and sexual violence, and take action to intervene safely and confidently.



Screenshot of the website [www.helpstopdv.org.au](http://www.helpstopdv.org.au)

This was WCHM’s contribution—in partnership with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis

Service, and the Women’s Legal Centre—to instilling a sense throughout the community that responding to violence is everyone’s business. The website was launched on International Women’s Day by the Minister for Women.

### Improving awareness of domestic violence amongst workers in local community health and GP practices

Women and their children experience a wide range of physical and mental health issues resulting from domestic violence. The health system deals directly with the consequences of domestic violence, and so is ideally placed to play an important role in prevention, early identification and responding to violence.

WCHM received funding from the ACT Women’s Grants to undertake the development of a local resource which will aim to improve the awareness of workers in GP practices and community health workers by providing local relevant ACT information to assist them to identify the signs of domestic violence, and to know how to have the right conversations with women and children experiencing violence and what assistance they can offer them.

WCHM knows from our local knowledge that violence doesn’t necessarily present in an obvious way, and it may not be identified by the patient as their reason for presenting to a GP or health service. GPs are not the only ones that may interact with patients in a practice, as other practice staff and community health based practitioners may come into contact with victims of domestic violence.

### **Key Area 3: INFLUENCING WHAT MATTERS!**

Use the evidence to work with others to:

- Encourage services and systems to be responsive to women's needs
- Promote women's participation in decision making and management
- Promote health equity among women
- Build knowledge about gender, from a women's perspective
- Ensure that ACT policies and services are gender sensitive, from a women's perspective

**Our strategies and actions** include: advocacy and lobbying, awareness raising, and highlighting gender and equity issues in the design and implementation of policies and services; writing submission; participating in consultations; representation on committees, advisory groups and working groups; providing support to community sector in responding to any reviews or policy changes that impact on the delivery of services.

#### **Sexual and reproductive health access advocacy—access zones**

In March 2015 ACT Greens MLA Shane Rattenbury announced he was drafting a Bill to give a relevant Minister in the ACT the power to create a protected area around any approved health facility that provides termination of pregnancy services.

WCHM worked with Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT) on developing a community conversation about the access zone legislation for the ACT, that would include the views of women in the community, particularly those who have accessed services at the ACT Health Building and been subjected to the protest.

An article on the Her Canberra blog explored why an access zone should be considered in the ACT, and called on

women and workers who have views on the protest to contact WCHM.

In preparation, and to inform that discussion, WCHM also progressed work on a website which we could use for our advocacy efforts—[www.rightofway.org.au](http://www.rightofway.org.au). Through this website WCHM, in partnership with Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, will coordinate a letter writing campaign, a petition, and a mechanism through which individuals can provide feedback directly to WCHM to inform our submission.

#### **Preparing submissions and participating in consultations**

WCHM contributed a submission to the ACT Government's *Roadmap to enhancing our city's multicultural way of life* on behalf of the ACT Women's Services Network. The Submission highlighted that the availability of a free translating and interpreting service is essential for those women who need assistance to communicate, and without the support women and their children who may already be facing multiple challenges would not be able to access key and essential services. We advised that recent announcements by the Commonwealth Government about them terminating funding for TIS to government funded NGO's will impact on the ability of many of these services to provide the translating and interpreting service to CALD women who need it. Because many of these are small specialist services they cannot afford the cost and their ACT service funding contracts do not currently cover this cost.

WCHM prepared submissions to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee *Inquiry on Domestic Violence* in July 2014—a WCHM submission, an ACT Women's Services Network submission and a Domestic Violence Prevention Council submission.

WCHM was also invited to contribute to the ASIC and OFW's *Building Women's Financial Literacy and Economic Security*

Project, which is one of the projects that supports Priority 2 under the National Financial Literacy Strategy. One of the key project outputs is the design and development of a set of resources which are now available on ASIC's MoneySmart website. The toolkit is designed to help women find financial information that is relevant to them at times when they are experiencing significant financial impacts of various kinds (such as having a baby, experiencing illness, separation or divorce) and guide them towards various steps that can be taken. WCHM provided advice on the content and language of a prototype of the toolkit (based on what we knew from the development of our financial resources for vulnerable women) and committed to promote the toolkit using our existing communication channels, such as the WCHM website, social media, email, newsletters etc.

WCHM also contributed a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Health.

### **Public Hearing for Senate *Inquiry into Domestic Violence***

WCHM's Executive Director gave evidence at the public hearing held in Canberra on 15 October. She also provided this evidence in her capacity as the Chair of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council.

### **Representing the views of ACT women on advisory bodies, reference committees, and working groups:**

The WCHM team represented women in the following ways:

- Angela Carnovale represented WCHM as a member of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women (MACW)
- The Executive Director continued her role as the Chair of the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC), the ACT Ministerial advisory body responsible for providing the ACT Attorney General with advice on

preventing domestic and family violence in the ACT

- The Executive Director represented WCHM as a member of the Justice Reform Group, representing the issues for women in the prison and their access to services
- The Executive Director represented WCHM as a member of the Governance Group for the *ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy*
- The Executive Director represented WCHM as a member of the ACT Council of Social Services peak groups' forum

### **Supporting the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC)**

WCHM's Executive Director contributed to the ACT's Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) over the year by agreeing to undertake the role of Chair.

WCHM also supported the DVPC by designing, developing and maintaining their website, [www.dvpc.org.au](http://www.dvpc.org.au), and by organising and conducting two community consultations for them using Survey Monkey and distributing these widely. These were designed to inform the DVPC's advice on what should be the key items in the ACT's 2nd Implementation Plan which supports the ACT's *Prevention of Violence Against Women Strategy*.

As Chair of the Council Marcia was also heavily involved in coordinating an Extraordinary Meeting, which was held on Thursday 2 April 2015, to identify the key issues in the ACT relating to addressing domestic and family violence, including sexual assault. The Meeting gave attendees the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation about how the ACT Government and other stakeholders could strengthen and improve responses to this issue. The meeting was attended by a broad range of stakeholders, including MLAs and Ministers, community experts, frontline workers, first responders,

and importantly, people with lived experience of domestic violence.

Following the Meeting, the ED helped to draft the Report from the meeting on behalf of the DVPC to the Attorney-General outlining a number of recommendations for addressing domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT.

### **Consultation to inform the ACT Women's Health Service**

WCHM coordinated a consultation with a range of services to provide feedback on proposed changes to the Women's Health Service (WHS). WHS provides free trauma-informed nursing, medical and counselling services for marginalised women with complex health needs, many of whom have experienced interpersonal violence. They used the consultation as an opportunity to reconsider how to deliver a more responsive service to better meet the needs of vulnerable women and the services that support them.

WCHM organised the attendance of key service organisations who work with ACT women at risk of marginalization. This included providers representing: women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; women with disabilities or living with mental health issues; same-sex attracted or intersex women; women experiencing homelessness; women with substance abuse issues; and women experiencing financial disadvantage.

### **Maintaining relationships with the ACT mental health sector, including mental health peak organisations, to advocate for services that are women-sensitive**

The WCHM team continued this work in the following ways:

- WCHM attended Executive Officer meetings hosted by the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT to

continue to contribute a women-sensitive perspective

- The WMHWG and WCHM continued to identify and document existing and emerging issues for ACT women in the mental health system, with a particular focus on issues emerging from the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial

### **International Women's Day breakfast**

WCHM helped to coordinate and organise the annual Women's Services Network's International Women's Day Breakfast which was held on 13 March 2015. The theme was 'The Diversity of ACT Women'. At this event, the new ACT Minister for Women, Yvette Berry MLA, delivered the keynote address on the topic of social inclusion and equality, and how this impacts on women in the ACT. At the breakfast, members of the ACT Women's Services Network launched three new initiatives.

WCHM launched its social media campaign *Domestic and sexual violence in the ACT—Let's stop the 1 in 3! WHAT CAN YOU DO?* which was supported by a new website <http://www.helpstopdv.org.au>. The website was designed to provide community members with information to identify and respond to domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

The Women of Canberra website was also launched featuring the first 25 participants.



Women of Canberra participant

#### **Key Area 4: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN WHAT MATTERS!**

Support women and women's groups:

- To make informed health and wellbeing choices
- To understand how to access appropriate gender-sensitive services and information that support their health and wellbeing
- By providing capacity building and organisational support for small NGOs and peer-led support groups

**Strategies and actions** include: developing and delivering support for specific sectors or services about the needs of women; training and awareness raising to build understanding of gender issues for services/sectors; capacity building for small organisations; building health literacy in women/groups of women; information provision for women; online support for women; health promotion events; support for women to understand changes in the environment (changes to Medicare, e-health, NDIS); community sector planning, and training and support; skills development/ training of vulnerable groups of women.

#### **Informing women and their supporters about the impacts of living with endometriosis**

WCHM supported the Canberra Endometriosis Network by hosting an information night exploring the impacts of living with the illness endometriosis on Tuesday 26 August 2015. Attendees heard from endometriosis researcher Maryam Moradi, Dr Omar Adham and Melissa Parker from the Canberra Endometriosis Centre, and Katie Williams, member of the Canberra Endometriosis Network. These speakers addressed the questions: What are the personal impacts of living with endometriosis? How does endometriosis impact upon women's relationships with lovers, family, friends and work colleagues? How does society's

attitudes toward and understanding about endometriosis impact the women living with this condition? More than 100 women, partners, family members and friends attended the event.

The event was also an opportunity for local artist Margaret Kalms to launch her photographic project *Life with Endometriosis*.

#### **Cyber Safety for Older ACT Women: A Guide to Staying Safe Online**

This Guide was developed by WCHM to provide appropriate, local and targeted information for older women in the ACT about staying safe online. Older women in the ACT are increasingly using online technology to access information and services, manage finances and assets, communicate with family and friends, and access social networking and dating sites. Without the right knowledge, older women may be vulnerable to scams and cyber abuse.

The project utilised existing cyber safety resources and the expertise of local stakeholders to

- Adapt existing, and create new, cyber safety resources to make them relevant and accessible for local ACT women
- Make the resource available to local organisations for distribution and use
- Develop an online central hub so that older ACT women could locate targeted locally adapted information and relevant services including local services

The project was informed by women who had experience in teaching older people computer skills at Woden Seniors, as well as by a WCHM member who currently tutors in Cybercrime at a local university. Their feedback was very useful in adapting some of the content and affirming that it was comprehensive and valuable as an education tool.

The Guide is available on the WCHM website and contains straightforward



information about: how to protect computers from viruses and unauthorised access; how to protect privacy on social media web sites; where to get help if they don't feel safe online; and some of the most common internet scams and how to recognise them.

The content is listed under some key headings:

- The homepage (which contains a list of 10 handy tips for staying safe online)
- Identity Theft and Financial Scams
- Romance scams
- Viruses and hacking
- Privacy settings, social media and online bullying
- Where to get help

### **Auspicing and capacity building /organisational support for Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT)**

The WCHM team continued to provide administrative, IT and financial and reporting management support to WWDACT, day-to-day supervision for the two WWDACT employees, as well as recruitment and support of a temporary project worker.

WCHM maintained WWDACT's website as a sub-site of the WCHM website, which provides information about WWDACT, what they do and their achievements, and access to WWDACT submissions, reports and other documents relating to women with disabilities.



Nicole O'Callaghan Dittmar, WWDACT employee

WCHM also provided assistance to WWDACT to support specific projects.

### **Have Your Say**

The *Have Your Say* project featured a large face-to-face forum and six semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a wide diversity of women with disabilities, service providers, support workers, carers and family members. The goals of this project were to:

- Provide a space for women with disabilities in the ACT to contribute their voice about the shaping of policy, service provision and broader community relations
- Provide targeted feedback and women's stories and experiences to Government, policy makers, service providers and the community about the lived experience of women with disabilities in the ACT and how to better meet their needs
- Collect feedback directly from women with disabilities in the ACT with a focus on what is working effectively, what is in need of improvement and identifying practical and innovative measures which can be implemented to more appropriately cater to the needs of women with disabilities in the ACT

Both the forum and the interviews centred on the themes of: health and wellbeing; education and employment; community

participation; and housing, cost of living and poverty.

The results of the feedback are being finalised into a report to assist government, policy makers, service providers and the broader community to better meet the needs of women with disabilities in the ACT.

#### Women with disabilities and the NDIA

WCHM also supported WWDAC by recruiting and supervising a temporary project worker who undertook a small exploratory research project looking at women with disabilities in the ACT who had engaged with the NDIA and to hear their experience first-hand with the NDIA in the ACT.

Between March and June 2015, women with disabilities were invited to share their stories and interactions with the NDIA. This provided valuable insight into the individual women's sentiments and experiences during the trial phase and a report has been written outlining these journeys which will provide valuable feedback for the NDIA, and be used to inform further research in this area as the NDIS evolves and expands in the ACT.

A report has been written outlining these journeys and will provide valuable feedback for the NDIA. It will also be used to inform further research in this area as the NDIS evolves and expands.

#### **Auspicing and capacity building /organisational support for the ACT Women And Prisons (WAP) Group**

The WCHM team continued to support the WAP Group by:

- Sourcing funding to support the WAP Group members in providing peer-support to women who are incarcerated at the AMC and advocating on behalf of incarcerated women to AMC staff, the ACT Department of Corrections and other relevant stakeholders

- Managing the grant funding and also reports and acquits the funds on their behalf
- Maintaining WAP's website as a sub-site of the WCHM website, which provides information about the Group, what they do and their achievements, and access to WAP Group submissions, reports and other documents relating to women and prison

WCHM also supported Kathy, the primary WAP peer worker, to participate in and inform the ACTCOSS Justice Reform Group. This culminated in a Justice Reinvestment workshop on 17 June 2015, which drew on the combined knowledge, ideas and insights of people who work directly with people in the justice system and people who have lived experience of the justice system, to start to design and shape a justice reinvestment trial. Kathy and three other women with lived experience of the AMC attended and contributed their stories and experiences on the day. The feedback will help contribute to how funds might be spent differently (through reinvestment) to improve outcomes in terms of life chances to those who interact with the justice system.

WCHM was also contacted by Julie Stubbs, Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales, to help inform a project on Justice Reinvestment. They were keen to ensure that women, and especially indigenous women, are kept on the agenda, and had done some fieldwork in the US, where race and gender issues were rarely acknowledged or factored in to how Justice Reinvestment is playing. WCHM coordinated a discussion with organisations working with women and imprisonment in ACT (including WAP) about their ideas on Justice Reinvestment, and whether and how it could work in the interests of women.



## **Key Area 5: DOING WHAT MATTERS!**

Ensuring that WCHM:

- Represents a strong and diverse membership
- Is actively engaged with the women we represent
- Is a well governed and managed organisation with accountability and transparency for members, staff, funders and stakeholders
- Has controls in place which ensure compliance with its obligations and legislation

### **Using the WCHM website and social media WCHM to communicate with members and stakeholders about women's health and wellbeing**

The WCHM website is used to ensure up-to-date access to current news and information about events, services, programs, reports, consultations and all other matters that may be of interest to ACT women.

WCHM undertook a process of redesigning the WCHM website over the past six months. The primary purpose of the redesign was to migrate the content of the current site from an old content management system to a new Wordpress content management system, because the old system has been outpaced by Wordpress in recent years in terms of capability, responsiveness and user friendliness.

In addition we took the opportunity to redesign the template of the homepage and the subpages in order to not only reinvigorate the look of the website to be more in keeping with contemporary trends, but more importantly, to make the website responsive to the many platforms from which users now access it (eg. mobile, tablet, laptop, desktop).

The new WCHM website is in place and we have received positive feedback about the new look and feel.

WCHM has committed to exploring alternate innovative ways to communicate health messages and advice to women in the ACT, including beginning to scope a redesign of the Women's Health Hub space on the WCHM website.

The use of Facebook by WCHM also provides the Centre with a currency in the digital space that allows us to reach a different range of women. The WCHM Facebook page' has enabled WCHM to raise awareness about issues relating to: women's health and wellbeing; WCHM's activities; women's health promotion information and events; other community events and campaigns (eg such as important weeks for women and women's health, and Domestic and Family Violence campaigns with other organisations such as DVCS); and current issues. It has also complemented our main channels of communication—the WCHM website, the Weekly and Quarterly newsletters, as well as our use of media. With health promotion days occurring regularly and a steady flow of news, research and events relating to women's health and wellbeing this page is never short of items to post.

WCHM has also made use of linking articles as we have grown and developed our Facebook networks. Key agencies that we share articles from include DVCS, AIDSAction Council, Contact Canberra, SHFPACT, A Gender Agenda, Carers ACT, Health Care Consumers, HerCanberra, Mental Health Week Committee, NAIDOC Week Committee, and many more. Linking articles have also been shared from news sources such as The Canberra Times, Daily Life, Feminartsy and the Sydney Morning Herald. The final source of linking articles has been research from the major universities around Australia that are seeking the voice and input of women.

### **Maintaining the WCHM Website and Weekly and Quarterly publications**

Throughout the year WCHM staff worked to maintain the high standard of the WCHM website to ensure up-to-date access to current news and information about events, services, programs, reports, consultations and all other matters that may be of interest to ACT women.

The WCHM team prepared and released four editions of the Quarterly e-bulletin in 2014-15. This electronic newsletter provides an opportunity for WCHM members and supporters to be updated about issues affecting women's health and wellbeing in the ACT and nationally, be informed about upcoming WCHM events, be introduced to the WCHM staff and find out about WCHM projects.

The team also maintained the WCHM Weekly, which brings together relevant reports and articles from across the Social Determinants of Health that we think would be of interest to members and stakeholders.

### **Maintaining the highest level of professionalism**

The WCHM Board continues to maintain and review organisational policies and governance processes to ensure efficient, effective and accountable management practices.

## **Treasurer's Report**

The operating result for the financial year ended 30 June 2015 was a surplus of \$56,857 (surplus for 2014: \$12,292), representing an increase of 363% on last year. This result was consistent with budget expectations and is mainly reflective of the ability to undertake a significant number of projects within existing resources during the year. It is also reflective of decisions made by the Board and the Executive Director to capitalise on the ability to invest in the future and that as a small organisation,

this represents prudent financial risk management.

The revenue for WCHM decreased by 25% during the year, however this was offset by reductions in corresponding project expenses and promotion expenses, plus the inhouse capacity as already noted. During the year, we revamped the website in terms of structure and user experience, plus added more functionality.

As noted in previous years, our employee expenses continue to be our largest expenses. This remains consistent with the sector. We received the third year of funding from the ACT Government to supplement us for the impact of the equal remuneration pay increases and the resultant additional on-costs and this will continue for 2016.

We continued to provide auspicing arrangements to Women with Disabilities ACT and the Women and Prisons Group. The major sources of income continued to be received in the form of recurrent income from ACT Health Directorate and Disability ACT.

As this was my first year as Treasurer for WCHM I would like to thank our Executive Director, Marcia Williams, for her support and time in assisting me grow my understanding of the organisation and the environment in which it operates. I would also like to thank Angela Carnovale for her support whilst she was acting as the Executive Director. To the staff of WCHM, my congratulations on another successful year and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the quality work that they do and the passion and commitment that they display every day.

I look forward to continuing my role as Treasurer into 2016 and look forward to the exciting year ahead.

*Lynnere Gray, Treasurer*