

Annual Report **2018-19**

Funding Bodies 2018-19

ACT Health Directorate

- Women, Youth & Child Health Policy Unit

ACT Community Services Directorate

- ACT Women's Grants
- Office for Women

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The Women's Centre for Health Matters acknowledges that we live and work on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respect to their Elders – past, present and future - and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

About WCHM

The Women's Centre for Health Matters (WCHM) works to improve the health and wellbeing of women in the ACT and surrounding region, by researching, providing information and advocating about health and wellbeing issues and the social determinants of health which affect ACT women - with a focus on those who are marginalised or experience disadvantage.

We do this by providing local and accessible information to support women in their pursuit of health and wellbeing, by working to ensure that women can contribute to and are aware of the health choices available to them, and by encouraging the ACT Government, the health system and other services to be more responsive to the needs of women.

WCHM informs our work by listening to ACT women about their stories, attitudes, assumptions, experiences and views. We use the data and evidence, local women's views, and the stories of ACT women and their lived experiences to inform the social research reports which WCHM develops and to inform our work with services and policy areas in the ACT so that they can better meet ACT women's needs.

WCHM also advocates on behalf of ACT women through ACT Government AND national consultation and submission processes (including to ACT Legislative Assembly Committees), directly with ACT Ministers and ACT Directorate officials, and through representation on high level advisory committees. We use these opportunities to disseminate the findings from our work with ACT women about their needs in order to influence responses in the ACT.

SUMMARY OF WCHM 2018-19 STATS

wchm!
women's centre for health matters

COMMUNICATING OUR MESSAGE

6
reports were published

1
report was underway



ONLINE PRESENCE

1252
people like WCHM's facebook page

371
people subscribed to 12 editions of WCHM's newsletters



13,499

people visited the WCHM website



WCHM Websites:



Having a baby in Canberra



39,818 views

Borderline in the ACT



104,281 views

What to Say



2,975 views

3

Websites under development for release in FY 2019-20

WCHM 2018-19 STATS

SUMMARY OF WCHM 2018-18 STATS continued



IN THE MEDIA



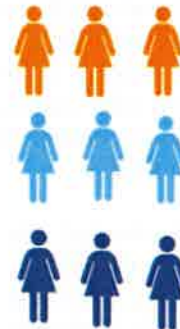
articles in the media
about WCHM's work



interviews on TV



radio interviews



11

events/forums
held

1

workshop/training
session for services
hosted by
WCHM

5

submissions to
government
inquiries

2

public hearings of ACT
Standing Committees



6

high level Committees
Councils and advisory
groups with WCHM
represented

20

new ACT plans,
strategies and
reforms informed
by WCHM

40

meetings/workshops
attended with MLAs/
committees or
directorates
officials

WCHM 2018-19 STATS

Chair's Report

It's been another busy and incredible year for WCHM in supporting the health and wellbeing for ACT women with diverse backgrounds and experiences. During 2018-19, WCHM has been leading the way in researching local women's health issues, and advocating for and giving a voice to women in the ACT and surrounding region on a range of issues, including but not limited to mental health, maternity services, safety in public spaces for women, and access to support for women in prison (to name a few).

We were pleased that Karen Redshaw (Deputy Chair), Jo Schumann (Treasurer), Gaylene Coulton Renee Dockrill, Cassandra Gandolfo, Melissa Hobbs, Nicole Mitchell and Lori Rubenstein continued on the Board for this financial year. Unfortunately we farewelled Marija Gutesa and Kathleen McLaughlin during the year. We will also be saying goodbye to Cassandra Gandolfo and Nicole Mitchell following the upcoming AGM. I would like to give a huge thank you to Cassandra, Nicole, Marija, and Kathleen for their contributions during their time on the Board.

This year the Board has been focused on ensuring that WCHM remains in a strong financial position. This is to ensure the organisation is resourced to produce the great outcomes we have seen over the past financial year. A particular focus has been on reviewing our governance policies and frameworks, and exploring options for diversifying our funds, including through considering an ACT women's

fund managed by Hands Across Canberra. We are at the early stages of this dialogue but are excited about the possibilities that the fund may bring.

WCHM has remained in a strong financial and operational position following careful management of our funds. Ensuring WCHM's financial

sustainability will continue to be a focus for our organisation. We are also keen to see how we can better reach out to and involve our WCHM membership to support WCHM's activities. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank WCHM's membership who have continued to contribute to and support WCHM's activities.

I would also like to congratulate the staff at WCHM for their fantastic work and innovative research into local women's health issues. In particular, I would like to thank Marcia Williams (CEO) and Emma Davidson (Deputy CEO) for their leadership and ongoing support to the Board.

Last, but not least, thank you to all the women who have shared their stories and provided their perspectives to WCHM throughout the year. Your contributions make WCHM's work possible and meaningful.

Farzana Choudhury, Board Chair

2018/19 Board Members

(at 30 June 2019)

- Farzana Choudhury (Chair)
- Karen Redshaw (Deputy Chair)
- Jo Schumann (Treasurer)
- Renee Dockrill
- Cassandra Gandolfo
- Nicole Mitchell
- Lori Rubenstein
- Gaylene Coulton
- Melissa Hobbs
- Marcia Williams (Public Officer)

WCHM farewelled Marija Gutesa and Kathleen McLaughlin as Board members during the year.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Women's Centre for Health Matters (WCHM) knows from our work for over 28 years that ACT women's health and wellbeing, and their ability to live healthy lifestyles, is affected by social and economic factors, so we work in the ACT across the social determinants of health for women.

It has been another busy and eventful year and one which provided many opportunities for WCHM to be involved in a very wide range of important social issues which impact on women in the ACT.

Our evidence-based research, and the stories from women with lived experience, have remained crucial to being able to get key issues for ACT women on the agenda in the ACT, and particularly the ACT becomes more affected by inequality.

The health and wellbeing issues that WCHM has been engaged in over 2018-19 have included women's sexual and reproductive health; exploring the health and wellbeing needs of women in the AMC, and influencing the responses needed in the AMC; the health and wellbeing information needs of younger women; consulting women about their access to maternity care and information; the health needs, barriers and gaps in access to health services for same sex attracted women in the ACT; the mental health needs of women in the ACT; violence against women and children; housing and homelessness; influencing the design of public spaces and public transport to recognise women's safety (or perceptions of safety); the hidden disadvantage for women in the ACT; and working as part of a co-design team to develop a contextual analysis to inform the next ACT Women's Plan and ACT Women's Summit.

Despite our small size, during 2018-19 WCHM:

- released six major reports, and worked on another which will be released in 2019/20;
- developed 3 new information websites for ACT women for release in 2019-20, and maintained 5 current information websites;
- participated in many ACT consultation forums;
- represented the views of women in the ACT as a member of many high level advisory bodies;
- contributed 6 submissions to Government;
- held several forums and expos for women; and
- shared the results from WCHM's research and from feedback from women to the relevant Ministers and MLAs; to various policy units within the relevant Directorates including ACT Health Directorate, the Community Services Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Transport and Municipal Services Directorate; to ACT Corrections and the Alexander Maconochie Centre; to the ACT Human Rights Commission and the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services; to the ACT Primary Health Care Network; to ACT service providers; and to other ACT public servants through funding and submission processes.

Our recent research confirms that ACT women still struggle with finding relevant and accessible information (including local ACT information) that meets their needs, so during the year WCHM maintained a focus on developing and delivering new sources of accessible information for women. And we are pleased that our older information websites - *Having A Baby In Canberra* and *Borderline in the ACT* - continue to grow and receive large numbers of visitors.

We are pleased to have had an increased presence in the media around the important issues for women in the ACT, with the Centre's work covered by print media, radio, and TV.

And our engagement with women through Facebook has continued to grow and for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, WCHM's Facebook page received 1,252 page likes – a large increase on our previous years.

We could not do the work we do without our community partners continued to work with us and provide their support. Their expertise and knowledge has been invaluable to our projects, our events and our advocacy and research work. Thank you in particular to Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Beryl Women Inc, CARE Financial Inc, ACTCOSS, the Snow Foundation, Hands Across Canberra, and the local maternity service network.

My thanks to the volunteer members of WCHM's Board, who are generous with their time, expertise, skills and ideas. They have shown a continued commitment to the organisation and its good governance; an understanding of the pressures in our operating environment that WCHM must be in a position to adapt and respond to; and have committed to exploring new opportunities and options for WCHM. For those who are leaving the Board this year thank you for your contributions and commitment, and best wishes for the future.

Thank you to our members for their continued support and their involvement in our research, forums and events. We look forward to working with you all in the coming year, and to having your support to continue our work.

And thank you to the funding bodies who have supported our work over the last year, to enhance women's health and wellbeing in the ACT.

And last but not least thank you to our small group of talented and dedicated staff. Their commitment to WCHM's social determinants approach, their diverse skills and interests, their innovative ideas, and their passions for the work we do, has been key to highlighting the issues that women in the ACT face, and to helping WCHM maintain position for the future.

Marcia Williams, Chief Executive Officer

2018/19 Staff (at 30 June 2019)

- Chief Executive Officer—Marcia Williams
- Deputy Chief Executive Officer—Emma Davidson
- Health Promotion Officer – Amber Hutchison
- Health Promotion Officer — Pip Courtney-Bailey
- Health Promotion Officer — Julia Tran
- Administration Officer — Sandra Wiens

Awards received

In July, Philanthropy Australia awarded the Snow Foundation and Women's Centre for Health Matters the Best Small Grant Award in the Australian Philanthropy Awards – for the Assistance Beyond Crisis scheme.

On International Women's Day, WCHM's CEO received an award from Minister Yvette Berry, recognising her "exceptional contribution to raising the status of women in the ACT".

Our Mission

Empowering women to enhance their health and wellbeing.

Our Vision

Women can choose and access responsive, women-focussed health and wellbeing services.

WCHM's Key Areas of Focus

The WCHM Strategic Plan focusses on five key areas to achieve our mission and vision – because women's health matters.

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.

WCHM involves women in all aspects of its work and our research to ensure that we are representing their issues and lived experiences in our work – these include the involvement of a diverse range of women in consultations, surveys and forums.

WCHM also focussed on facilitating the input of marginalised ACT women through forums and social research so that there is improved understanding about their experiences and barriers.

WCHM continued to maintain formal and informal networks with relevant organisations to ensure that information provided to women is accurate and up to

date, and that we tap into the feedback of women to those organisations.

During 2018-19 WCHM continued to develop strong relationships with other community sector stakeholders so that we can build our knowledge. And we worked closely with other 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 responses for women.

Nationally and locally many health studies and policies relating to health issues, access, barriers and needs focus on the broader population, or on specific disease areas or parts of the health system. Very few focus on local ACT data, and even fewer on data about the needs of women, the social determinants, gendered evidence about the impacts on women's health or their emerging health needs and barriers in accessing the health system.

So during 2018-19 WCHM has continued to focus on building an evidence base that includes the voices of women and their lived experience, as well as the collection of relevant national/ international research and local ACT data.

During 2018-19 several key areas were identified as priorities in relation to health and wellbeing, service planning and delivery, and issues impacting on health outcomes for women, including:

- the experiences and barriers that face women in accessing support and services for their health and wellbeing (especially women in the AMC and same sex attracted women);
- safety in public spaces for women;

- the sharing of intimate images, influencing urban design to meet the needs of women;
- maternity care;
- sexual and reproductive health, including abortion;
- younger women's experiences;
- the gendered nature of disadvantage in the ACT;
- the value of women only health services in the ACT; and
- domestic and family violence.

We also used a wide range of options to ensure that ACT women are aware of the health choices available to them, and, and where there are gaps identified by women through our research and consultations we work with women to design appropriate responses.

For example, a wide range of women have been involved in contributing to and advising WCHM about maintaining the content for our current information websites (such as the *Having A Baby In Canberra* website and the *Borderline in the ACT* website) and contributing their issues and ideas to the new information websites we have been developing during 2018/19 - *ACTTeenChoices*, the Women's Health Hub and a website for women over 25 about their sexual and reproductive health.

And WCHM held several health promotion events and forums for women to raise their awareness about their health and wellbeing, and to connect them to local services and responses in the ACT.

Social Research

Sexual and Reproductive Health Research
WCHM received completed responses from 510 women for this research and also sought the views of 54 women who participated in further focus groups and interviews to inform the survey results, and

to explore areas that WCHM wanted to understand in more depth.

Because of the low number of volunteers for the focus groups in the 15-18 year old age group and those 60 years and over, WCHM sought contributions from sexual and reproductive health service providers in the ACT about these age groups in the form of focus group, interviews and written statement. In total, 24 doctors and nurses participated.

The health and wellbeing needs of same sex attracted women

WCHM received completed survey responses from 359 same sex attracted ACT women (including both cis and trans women). There were also 32 attendees at focus groups, and 3 women were interviewed over the phone.

Physical activity and healthy eating promotion to ACT women: A guide to getting it right

Fifty two women participated in a WCHM survey to investigate how life stages, life roles, and the social determinants of ACT women's lives impact on their ability to improve and maintain healthy behaviours, and to identify possible options and actions. WCHM then conducted eleven focus groups and thirteen interviews with women some of those women.

The stories of ACT women in prison: 10 years after the opening of the AMC

Eleven women who were imprisoned in the AMC shared their stories with WCHM about their history and the experiences that led to their imprisonment, and their hopes for the future.

Exploring what makes public spaces safer for ACT women

The views from 363 reports made to WCHM's online Safety Map tool between 23 June 2016 and 21 August 2018, informed this research.

Exploring what ACT women value in women's health services

WCHM analysed 141 online survey responses from women about their views on women only health services, and conducted focus groups and interviews with 28 ACT women.

Exploring disadvantage in women in the ACT in middle income households

WCHM explored the risk of disadvantage for women with an equivalised household income of \$52,000 to \$103,999 per year using NATSEM gender based data.

Maternity access consultations

WCHM supported ACT Health by designing and conducting some independent consultations with groups of women and service providers to inform a model for an ACT Public Maternity Access Strategy.

Working with women in the AMC

A major area of focus has been working with women in prison in the ACT over the year to seek their input and get a better understanding of their needs. We focused on assisting the women with lived experience in the AMC to contribute their views on issues affecting them in prison, their need for services and supports and about their transition from prison into the community. We did this because we know from our experience that women with lived experience of prison are better able to identify the issues that affect women inside prison and identify barriers in connecting with them. Their experiences are unique and their contribution is unique because:

- they represent one of the most marginalised groups in our community;
- their offending and imprisonment is often closely related to women's poverty;
- they are disproportionately affected by homelessness, domestic violence,

sexual assault, mental illness, and substance abuse;

- Because of their gender, while in prison they have different health needs and they require care that addresses their reproductive health, histories of abuse and status as primary providers and carers of children;
- Research shows that women prisoners are more likely to self-harm, and experience a higher level of psychological distress in prison than men; and
- Aboriginal women are hugely overrepresented in prison.

WCHM also held 4 sessions with the women in the AMC to collect their feedback for a submission by them to the Healthy Prison Review – and to inform WCHM's submission.

WCHM also held a forum with community services to collect their feedback for a submission from services to the Healthy Prison Review.

Intersectoral collaboration

A key component of WCHM's work is also working across sectors to achieve change and participating in intersectoral collaboration. Again this year WCHM has cooperated across multiple sectors in the ACT including the community sector, philanthropists, health and mental health services, human services, urban planning, legal, justice, corrections, domestic violence and sexual assault, and government.

This included seeking information from other sectors about women's health and wellbeing needs, and understanding the health consequences of policy decisions and service practice.

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.

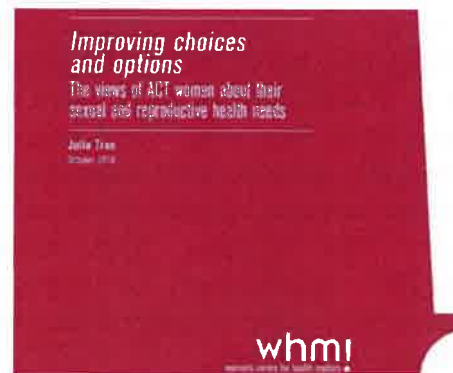
The results from WCHM's research and from feedback from women have been disseminated widely this year, and have been used to inform local consultations, meetings, advocacy and Committees that WCHM has informed.

Results from all WCHM research and from feedback from women through specific forums, have also been disseminated to the relevant Ministers; to various policy units within the relevant Directorates including ACT Health Directorate; the Community Services Directorate; the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Transport and Municipal Services Directorate; to the ACT Primary Health Care Network; to ACT service providers and to other ACT public servants through funding and submission processes.

Reports launched

WCHM released the following social research reports during 2018/19.

Improving choices and options - The views of ACT women about their sexual and reproductive health needs



This report documented ACT women's views about their sexual and reproductive health needs; and explored which information and services ACT women accessed for their sexual and reproductive health including contraception, STIs, access to health screening, and termination of pregnancy; their knowledge and what was working and not working for them.

The findings in this report highlighted that women's barriers in this important area of their health include availability, affordability, and the accessibility and appropriateness of health services, supports and information, including the low number of bulk-billing GPs. And that women's work and caring responsibilities can impact on their ability to organise their time to focus on their sexual health and wellbeing. And because women in the ACT come from diverse backgrounds they require a range of sexual and reproductive health options to cater to their different needs.

ACT women told us they wanted access to accurate, reliable and up to date local

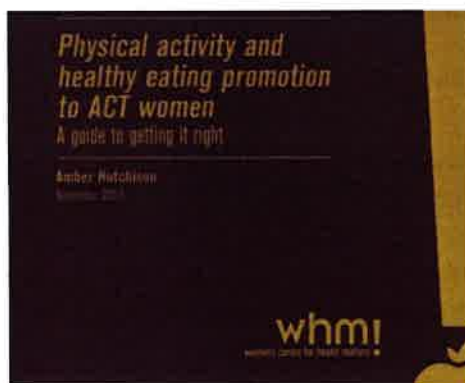
information about their options so that they could choose and be informed about options which are most suitable for them. But the research showed there was a lack of access to reliable local information to inform their choices.

And ACT women told us that the way that the health care system is organised can create barriers for women for them in being able to access effective health care and support when they need it, including the location of services with many of the specialist services located in the city or Woden. The feedback from women highlighted opportunities for improving access to sexual and reproductive supports in the key town centres.

The research also highlighted that the affordability of contraception and the lack of knowledge by doctors about the wide range of contraception options can impact on ACT women's choices.

These findings helped to fill the gaps in our knowledge about equity of access and choice in sexual and reproductive health for women in the ACT and surrounding areas and show that there is still more work to do if we want all women to have the right choices for their circumstances.

Physical activity and healthy eating promotion to ACT women: A guide to getting it right

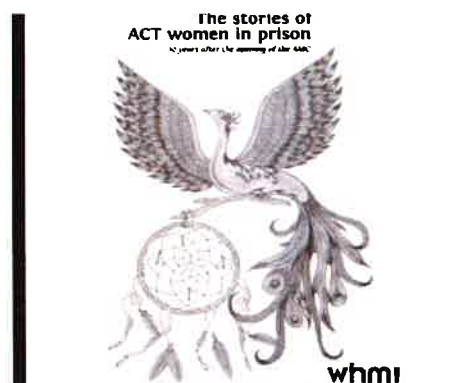


This WCHM research explored the experiences of a range of ACT women about maintaining healthy eating and physical activity, and what impacted on their ability to do this. And how women felt about messages in the media and campaigns about healthy behaviours, to understand what works and what doesn't. The research was undertaken because women are busier than ever, and health messages can often be confusing or conflicting.

The report highlighted the factors that influence women's ability to participate in healthy eating and physical activity, and how to improve the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns for ACT women.

Every year, government and community organisations put significant resources into health promotion campaigns that encourage people in the ACT to eat healthy and exercise regularly, so the results of this work will help inform the promotion of healthy behaviours in better ways for women in the ACT.

The stories of ACT women in prison: 10 years after the opening of the AMC.



The AMC began taking prisoners on 30th March 2009. At that time the Women's Centre for Health Matters published *Invisible Bars: The Stories behind the Stats*, which aimed to provide insights into

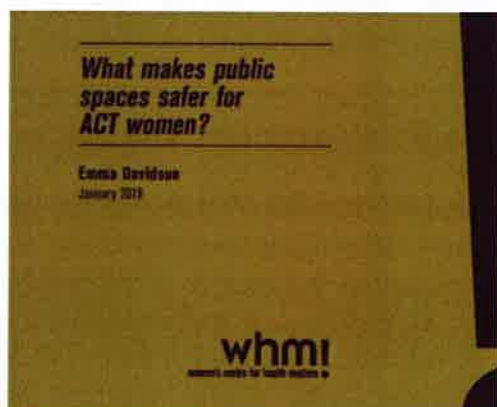
the impact that imprisonment and institutionalisation has on women.

This report was launched because it has now been 10 years since the ACT's Alexander Maconachie Centre (AMC) was opened, and WCHM wanted to contribute to a better understanding of the backgrounds and circumstances of the women in our ACT prison, and of their needs as women - as real women with families and complex backgrounds, not the stereotypes often portrayed in the media.

While there were many common themes that had led to their incarceration, these were individual women with unique stories to tell. They are real ACT women with complex and varied backgrounds, experiences and aspirations, who have different needs to the mainly male population of the AMC.

But their experiences are also common for many women in prison and reflect the common elements in the literature that is already out there about the nature of, and the contributors, to women's pathways into the prison system.

What makes public spaces safer for ACT women?



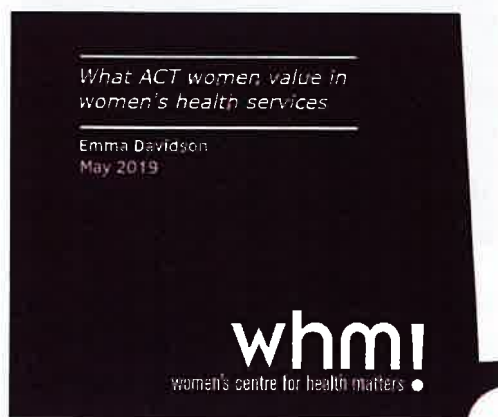
This report was released because, at a time when Canberra is undergoing a shift to higher density and population levels,

there is a gendered difference in whether people feel safe in a public space that is not always built into planning processes. While perceptions of safety in a public space do not necessarily correspond with crime statistics in the same space, the report confirmed that they do impact on whether and how women use a public space.

The report confirmed that women and men used public spaces differently, and had different ideas about what makes them feel safe or unsafe in those spaces. While we know that women are more likely to experience physical violence in their home by someone known to them, the results showed that the fear of sexual assault by strangers in public spaces does affect women's willingness to be in public spaces.

Poor lighting and visibility were important factors for women and areas with visibility issues reduced their feeling of safety. Women also felt less safe in areas that were isolated or lack passive surveillance, with comments indicating that they were concerned that there would be nobody who could help them if they were attacked in that area.

What ACT women value in women's health services



Over the past three decades, a constant theme from ACT women has been the value that women place on women only

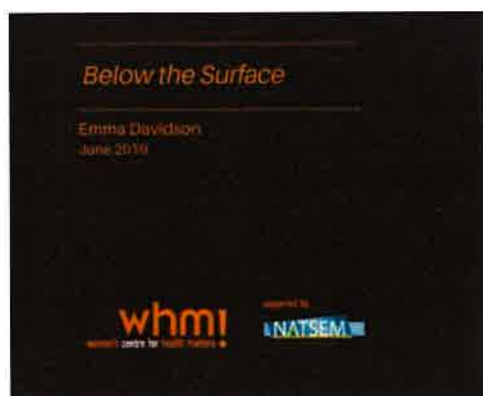
health services that listen with empathy to their needs, who understand their lived experiences as women, and who provide trauma informed and women sensitive care.

WCHM released this report to support the Women's Health Service (WHS) in it's planning and to inform our work in the ACT about access to health services for women.

It summarised ACT women's current views about the value of women only health services in the ACT, and their understanding of the WHS and it's services. And also provided an overview of the findings from WCHM's research between 1990 to 2017 about women's experiences of accessing health services and what they were looking for in a women's health service.

The report reinforced the consistent views of women in the ACT over nearly three decades about the value they place on women only health services.

Below the surface



From our work WCHM knows that women experiencing economic difficulty in the ACT are not confined solely to the lowest income households. Canberra is well known for its high average income levels and those high averages mask pockets of disadvantage within the ACT. So we wanted to use NATSEM data to explore the

findings for women living in middle income households in the ACT, and their potential characteristics of disadvantage, because these may be hidden.

We found that this is the case for women in the ACT: the higher average income levels mask the lower income for most households in which women and girls live.

While the proportion of women living in middle income households in the ACT was higher than the Australian greater capital cities average, 46.4 per cent of those women were likely to be reliant on the income of parents or partners to remain in that income category.

Many women living in the ACT were living in either low or middle income households.

Many of these women had low personal incomes, and were reliant on parent's or partner's income for their middle income status. Because these women are dispersed across most suburbs in the ACT, their situation was masked by high averages, and their need for support may not be obvious to the community.

These women and girls would be at risk of living in poverty if family relationships break down, or the primary income earner experiences a loss of income. Death, disability, domestic violence, divorce, or decreased work income can happen to anyone.

But when it happens to a woman in a middle income household in the ACT, particularly if she is then single with children and on a lower income, it can lead to homelessness, pressure to cut costs on other necessities, or increased debt to avoid homelessness. It is important that we understand that these women are everywhere in the ACT, and that suburbs where socioeconomic disadvantage is not noticeable do have women who need support.

Health promotion information sessions for women in prison

Working with the women in the AMC, WCHM was able to identify opportunities for working with others to create better access for them to information and services in the community.

From the feedback, WCHM organised health promotion sessions for the women on key topics that they identified they needed, and that might inform a better understanding for the women of how to maintain good health and wellbeing.

This was supported by other services who work with women – like the Women's Health Service, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Beryl Women Inc, CARE Financial Counselling and BPD Awareness ACT. The sessions which were delivered included:

- Budgeting and managing finances;
- Sexual and reproductive health and menopause;
- My Health Record and how it works with Capital Health Network;
- Safety planning for domestic violence;
- Managing emotional and mental health (giving the women some mindfulness skills, and techniques for self soothing, distraction etc); and
- What does domestic violence look like.

Online support/information for women

Facebook



With health promotion days occurring regularly relating to women's health and wellbeing WCHM also uses Facebook to highlight health information from trusted sites, women's health news and research, highlighting quality health sources and awareness raising during key health promotion dates.

Online peer support forums

WCHM knows from our research with ACT women that social isolation in people with mental health issues can be common and has a significant impact on their wellbeing, recovery and community participation. Social networks, even when online, can provide emotional support, companionship and opportunities for meaningful social engagement.

That is why WCHM partnered with SANE and hosts SANE's online forums on our website. WCHM agreed because this smart use of technology enables women to tap into peer support for mental health issues using online peer support which is run in a safe, moderated and respectful way. The Forums are anonymous, professionally moderated 24/7, and supported by a comprehensive Duty of Care Framework. They were developed with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, using user-centred research and design through extensive consultation with people with lived experiences and, or in a carer role. Women can also access these via all devices and there is also an app that can be downloaded in the App Store and Google Play.

Media

WCHM maintained links with local media and had significant coverage this financial year which highlighted the issues affecting ACT women and their health and wellbeing.

Health promotion events

Several health promotion events were also held.

Photoart day

In November WCHM hosted a photoart day for women with chronic mental and physical disease. The women who attended had the opportunity to work with Margaret Kalms, a Canberra photographer, known for her photographic art with women with endometriosis depicting how they see and feel their pain and illness. See her work at Endowomanart.

Margaret was able to create a safe space for the women to share their stories and thoughts to bring to life ideas to make expressive photoart.



The women were grateful for the experience and learnt a lot about photography and editing.

BPD Awareness Week and Mental Health Week

WCHM developed many articles and shared information about resources for BPD Awareness Week and Mental Health Week which had a successful following on social media and saw the information disseminated quite widely throughout our networks and membership. WCHM wrote a series of articles for BPD Awareness week 1-7 October and Mental Health Week 7 – 13 October to shine a light on women's

mental health and why it matters. We also contributed a story on Riot-ACT about supporting loved ones who have BPD.

Women's Health Week

And during Women's Health Week WCHM maintained a focus on sharing information and raising awareness for women about the importance of creating and maintaining good health.

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 submissions; 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.

WCHM shared the results from WCHM's research and from feedback from women to the relevant Ministers; to various policy units within the relevant Directorates including ACT Health Directorate; the Community Services Directorate; the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Transport and Municipal Services Directorate; to the ACT Primary Health

Care Network; to ACT service providers; to other ACT public servants; the Human Rights Commission, and the Inspectorate of Correctional Services; through funding and submission processes; and through media.

And we continued to focus on advocacy to encourage the Territory, the health and wellbeing system, and other services to be more responsive to the identified issues and to incorporate them into policy, planning and service design.

During 2018-19 WCHM has contributed to and influenced a wide range of discussions in the ACT and we have engaged with the ACT Health and Wellbeing Minister, the Minister for Domestic and Family Violence, the Minister for Mental Health/ Corrections and other MLAs.



WCHM staff have been involved representing the issues for ACT women in many workshops including:

- the Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan Consultation Forum;
- the ACT Multicultural Summit;
- the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services to provide feedback on our local findings from women;
- an ACT Government Roundtable on the Housing and Support Needs of people leaving detention in the ACT;
- a Roundtable with the Chief Minister's Directorate to inform the development of a set of Wellbeing Indicators for the ACT;
- two codesign workshops as part of consultations by the Office for Mental

Health and Wellbeing for the development of a Territory-wide vision for mental health and wellbeing in the ACT;

- a discussion with Transport and City Services about the new transport integration and bus route timetable changes, especially for people experiencing the greatest transport disadvantage;
- influencing urban design in the ACT through consultations such as the *Moving Canberra: Integrated Transport Strategy* and the *Braddon Place Plan*;
- a consultation workshop on the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services;
- The annual AWAVA (Australian Women Against Violence Alliance) meeting;
- A Family Safety Hub challenge event on *preventing financial and housing crisis for people experiencing domestic and violence*; a Domestic and Family Violence Common Risk Assessment Working Group for the Family Safety Hub; and
- two Commonwealth and ACT Government Consultations to develop the Fourth Action Plan 2019-2022 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

WCHM's CEO was part of a delegation of 7 local ACT community members who attended the second National Summit on reducing Domestic and Family Violence with State, Territory and Federal Ministers, which was held in October.

WCHM supported the Women's Health Service (WHS) who were undertaking a review of the nursing/ medical model of care that they have in place.

WCHM worked with other ACT peak groups as part of the ACTCOSS Peaks

Forum to ensure a focus on planning, provision and evaluation of services and programs.

WCHM has also been involved in informing options to address the lack of early intervention programs to support their children experiencing domestic and family violence.

WCHM was also on an Advisory Committee for a Centenary Hospital for Women and Children (CHWC) and Canberra Hospital Foundation, photographic art project.

WCHM has highlighted the results of our reports and the need for women sensitive approaches to legislative, policy and service delivery through membership on high level ACT advisory bodies, including:

- the Domestic Violence Prevention Council;
- the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women;
- the Core Design Group for the Family Safety Hub;
- a Working Group developing an approach to Common Risk Assessment for domestic violence in the ACT; and
- the ACT Justice Reform Group.

And WCHM works closely with the Capital Health Network to identify the issues raised in our consultations with women, and we are a member of their Community Advisory Council.

Submissions

As relevant opportunities arise, WCHM prepares submissions in response to issues impacting on ACT women's health and wellbeing.

WCHM has disseminated its findings from its work through the following submissions to consultations:

- Submission to the Inquiry into the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018 September 2018;

- Submission to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services: Inquiry into Maternity Services in the ACT January 2019;
- 3 Submissions to the ACT Healthy Prison Review (WCHM, Women in the AMC, and for women's services); and
- Submission to the National Women's Health Strategy.

The WCHM CEO appeared before the public hearing for the Health, Ageing and Community Services: Inquiry into Maternity Services.

Informing discussions on women in the AMC

Using the views provided by the women in the AMC and collecting national and international evidence and best practice WCHM has engaged with Minister Rattenbury about the needs for women in the AMC, with Minister Berry about the needs for women leaving the AMC including housing, with Corrections ACT about our findings and opportunities; with ACT Housing, the Coordinator General for Family Violence and ACT Health.

As a result WCHM's CEO accompanied Minister Berry on a visit to the women's area of the AMC so she could hear their views directly.

Informing discussions on access to sexual and reproductive health services

The findings from the research into sexual and reproductive health was used to inform ACT Health and relevant Ministers, MLAs and advisers about the design of responses to the provision of termination of pregnancy in ACT.

WCHM, with the support of Sexual, Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT), was been involved in several discussions to clarify and correct misconceptions and myths about abortions prior to the changes to legislation which were tabled in September to remove the requirement for

medical abortions to be delivered in a hospital environment.

Informing Urban Planning

WCHM continued to use the Safety Mapping Tool information and feedback from women to work with ACT planners about what makes certain urban areas safe and unsafe.



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.

We know from our research that ACT women still struggle with finding relevant and accessible information (including local information) that meets their needs, and so WCHM has been focusing on delivering on accessible information in some key areas.

WCHM has continued to work closely with the Women's Health Service, the Women's Services Network, the maternal health sector, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, ACT Health and others to look at how we can work with them and share our capacity and skills to complement their work.

Developing the capacity of women in the AMC

WCHM worked with the women to help them develop their capacity to provide input to and inform consultations. For example, WCHM worked with up to 30 of the women in the prison over many afternoons to support them to provide their input and views for a submission from them to the Healthy Prison Review which was being conducted by the ACT Inspector for Corrections.

Online information for ACT women

We use a wide range of options to ensure that ACT women are aware of the health choices available to them, and where there are gaps identified by women we work with women to design responses.

Websites

WCHM manages and maintains several websites so that women can access reliable, trustworthy and locally delivered information about their health and wellbeing:

- *WCHM's website* – which includes information about WCHM and our work, as well as connecting women to information and tools such as WCHM's the Women's Health Hub and WCHM's Safety Mapping tool;

- *Having a Baby in Canberra* – which provides information for women in the ACT and surrounding area about local services and support for pregnancy, birth, and the first six weeks after birth;
- *Borderline in the ACT* – which provides information and resources for women in the ACT and surrounding area with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), their family and friends, and service providers who work with people who have BPD;
- *What to Say* – which provides information for people on what to say and do when witnessing sexual violence, or when someone discloses their experience of sexual violence;
- *Women of Canberra* – this is an online photographic documentary by WCHM about the women who call Canberra home; and
- *Help Stop DV* – which provides local information for people who need to know how to help someone who has experienced domestic violence.

The statistics for those websites from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 were:

Website	Pageviews	Unique users
WCHM website	13,499	10,645
Having a Baby in Canberra	39,818	34,381
Borderline in the ACT	104,281	92,183
What to Say	2,975	2,605
Women of Canberra	2,126	1,882
Help Stop DV	1,317	1,044

Facebook

Facebook is used to provide regular and up-to-date information on women's health and wellbeing in the ACT and to raise awareness about issues relating to women's health and wellbeing; local events, activities and forums; WCHM's activities, women's health promotion information and events; link with 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); to promote more widely the work we do and our projects, research reports and findings; and to raise awareness around current issues.

For the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, WCHM's Facebook page received 1,252 page likes (an increase of 258 compared to the previous year), and had 1,154 page followers

Women make up 91% of those who like or follow our page, with 32% of those women aged 25-34 years, 25% aged 35-44 years, and 17% aged 45-54 years.

The topics of the Facebook posts which had the largest organic reach (ie seen by the most people without paid advertising) were:

- BPD Awareness Week;
- the ACT Health consultation for the Birth Centres;
- Women's Health Service event "Budgeting for Life";
- advice on supporting someone experiencing BPD;
- PANDA Awareness week;
- the National Day of Remembrance for those who have died as a result of intimate partner, domestic and family violence; and
- ABC news online reporting on WCHM's safety mapping tool.

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

The WCHM team prepared and released twelve editions of the monthly electronic newsletter during 2018—19. This 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.

Using the WCHM website and social media WCHM communicates 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 other matters that may be of interest to ACT women.

WCHM uses Facebook to complement our main channels of communication - the WCHM website, our quarterly e-Bulletin, and our use of media. Daily posts on Facebook are used to provide regular and up-to-date information on women's health and wellbeing in the ACT and to raise awareness about issues relating to women's health and wellbeing; local

events, activities and forums; WCHM's activities, women's health promotion information and events; links with other community events and campaigns; to promote more widely the work we do and our projects, research reports and findings; and to raise awareness around current issues.

We have steadily increased the page likes and reach over the last year on our Facebook page.

Feedback from our members and supporters

In May WCHM conducted a survey of our members, key stakeholders and supporters to seek their feedback on how they thought we were performing. The results were informative and very positive.

- 98% of the total respondents said they had a good understanding of what WCHM does and is trying to achieve.

'WCHM is doing fantastic work across a range of issues impacting women in the ACT Community.'

- 100% of the WCHM members who responded agreed that as a WCHM member they have a good understanding of what WCHM does and is trying to achieve.
- 90% of the members who responded agreed they said they were likely to renew their membership in the coming year.

I believe that WCHM is a great organisation, with good intentions and they help a lot of people. I have attended a couple events over the years, and have always enjoyed them, learnt something, met interesting people (including WCHM staff and members), and really benefited from the experience. I would love to continue doing this. :)

Our key stakeholders told us that what WCHM does is valued and useful to them with the following areas of WCHM's work rated as most useful to them in their role:

- WCHM's research and surveys with ACT women;
- Sharing the 'lived experience' of women in the ACT with stakeholders;
- WCHM's reports and submissions;
- WCHM's working with women experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation; and
- WCHM's collection of local evidence and data.

'Keep up the research- its invaluable having local research on the needs of women particularly women with diverse needs.'

'Doing hard work with really marginalised women - recording the stories where they normally wouldn't be heard.'

'Being a leader within the sector around what advocacy looks like in practice, as well as being responsive to issues identified by local women and being representative of those issues and women within the public space.'

'Pro-actively identifying issues for women that need visibility and policy attention.'

- And 100% of the respondents who subscribed to WCHM's newsletter said they were likely to continue to subscribe.

The issues are relevant to me. The newsletter is very informative about some issues I otherwise would not find out about.

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.

WCHM's Governance

The Board Structure

The Board comprises 10 elected members. At each Annual General Meeting, five Board positions become available for two-year terms. Each elected Board position 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.

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 had eight Board meetings during the year, and a Planning Day.

Board Committees

Where necessary, the Board sets up committees. There were three Sub-Committees of the Board:

- Governance Sub-Committee
- Finance Sub-Committee
- Stakeholder 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 and helps to highlight priorities for further focus and improvement.

Treasurers Report

The operating result for the financial year ended 30 June 2019 was an operating profit of \$23,531. This compared to a total operating deficit for the 2017/18 year of \$58,688. Total income for the year of \$652,573 represented an 8.3 % increase as compared to the 2017/18 year of \$602,699. Total expenditure for the year of \$629,042 represented a 4.9% decrease as compared to the 2017/18-year total of \$661,387.

The result reflected the Board's decision to carefully manage the organisations' funds in an environment of uncertainty about the future funding. This uncertainty was lifted during the financial year when the ACT Health Directorate confirmed that there would not be a competitive funding procurement for the next three years. This has provided the Board with funding certainty for the next three years, noting

that the amount provided by the ACT Health contract for 2019/20 is slightly increased - from \$577,853 to \$607,457. The ACT Health contract for 2019/20 has also been supplemented by several small one-off grants for specific projects.

Regardless of this the budget position for the coming financial year, as in the last financial year, is very tight. The issue for the organisation is that most costs are fixed. The ACT Government subsidisation for the Pay Equity Case (valued at \$104,560 in 2019/20) will end after 2020 when the Equal Remuneration Order will cease to apply, which will impact on WCHM.

The Board is considering options including some targeted fundraising which may assist to supplement the organisation's funds on an annual basis. We have been exploring this idea with some members. The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated at the first meeting has been fabulous.

The other option being explored by the Board, which was also met with enthusiasm by a small test group of existing and current WCHM members, is the concept of a Women's Fund for the ACT. Preliminary discussions have been held with Hands Across Canberra and JB Were on the logistics of establishing such a fund within the structure of the Hands Across Canberra Fund. While it is a long-term approach, potentially within a decade the Fund could assist WCHM to support women's groups and women's issues in the ACT with funding certainty beyond government. Conversations continue – the support of members with the fundraising elements would be critical to the success of any such a fund for the ACT.

Jo Schumann, Treasurer

