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**Women's
Health
Tasmania**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023/2024**



The Women's Health Tasmania team are based on muwinina country. We respectfully acknowledge the palawa and pakana communities as the Traditional Owners of this land, and lutruwita's islands and waters. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, especially the women. Sovereignty has never been ceded; this was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Portrait photos by Karen Brown.
Printed on 100% recycled paper.

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Message from Chair and CEO

Women's Health Tasmania turned 35 this year. We're not an Elder yet, but we're not early career either. We have maturity and strength, and we can feel it.

Women's Health Tasmania began as a small, short-term project to educate Hobart women to recognise female heart attack symptoms. From that little project grew the Hobart Women's Health Centre. What began as a community-based women's health centre grew, and 35 years later we are a statewide organisation running allied health services, health promotion services and working as a peak body for women's health.

Over the last 12 months we have broadened our focus on abortion access and care pathways to include better abortion care practices and better abortion care experiences (read in the report about our Abortion Peer Workers, Abortion Access Advocacy Workshops and the *Termination of Pregnancy: A good practice guide for Tasmanian care providers*). That we can move the conversation from fighting for access to working towards best practice patient care shows a welcome maturity in the discussions about abortion care.

Our policy focus over the last year has been on maternal health. We decided to do this work in response to the stories of women's experiences in the Tasmanian health system, and gaps we saw emerging, particularly during the COVID years. Our deep research dive happened to coincide with a broadening national conversation about women's birth experiences. We see our role as bringing forward the voices of lived experience in this discussion. You can read more about our research in this report.

In the last year we have said goodbye to some longstanding Board members. Thank you to Justine Barwick, Nadia Ayliffe and Jess Shill for your commitment to delivering on our mission in the very best way we can, for your acumen and sharp contributions, and for your kindness and support for the organisation.

And we'd like to welcome Casey Garrett, Lauren Yates-Jones, Vikki Iwanicki, Ari Magalhaes and Sue Mallett onto our Board. They are a new crew with lots of enthusiasm, who are already making big contributions.

To our donors and supporters, our Membership, our partners, our Board and our wonderful team – thank you for your work and your commitment. Nothing would be achieved without this collaborative effort across community and health systems. You are legends.



Naomi Bryant, Board Chair
Jo Flanagan, CEO





Our work

We want to see Tasmania become a place with empowered individuals, supportive communities, and equitable systems. We believe we play a unique role this state, as lutruwita/Tasmania's leading voice in advancing women's health and wellbeing.

In our work we centre the lived experience of Tasmanian women and draw on best practice in health promotion to

Create strategic and sustainable development

We ensure we have the right reach and connections to make a difference for the people we serve.

Build positive culture

We create welcoming and safe spaces.

Work in health promoting ways

We are the peak body for women's health promotion, delivering programs and policies that create positive outcomes.

Have influence

We create change in systems and society to ensure that individuals are valued.



Opp: Lauren, Board Member

Our values

Equity

We are kind and fair, and make sure everyone has opportunities to speak and be heard.

Choice

We uphold informed choices, and adhere to a feminist perspective in all that we do.

Impact

We make a difference by listening, collaborating with others, using evidence, and being innovative and adventurous.



Our impact

Women's Health Tasmania has been making a positive impact on Tasmanian health care systems, services, culture and consumer experiences for over 30 years. In addition to our core functions in health promotion, information, counselling and referral, we play a key role in developing good practice and policy.

Recent work includes establishing the Pregnancy Choices website; releasing the *Talking to people about terminations of pregnancy in Tasmania* research report and associated resource *Termination of pregnancy: a good practice guide for Tasmanian care providers*; co-chairing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Collaborative Group; coordinating the Mental Health Professionals Network on perinatal mental health; hosting a Migrant Mother and Baby Playgroup; delivering statewide workshops on menstrual health, menopause, pregnancy choices and reproductive coercion; and delivering new health research, multi-lingual resources and podcasts on key health topics for women.

This combination of frontline service delivery and population peak functions (sector development, research and policy development) is unique in Tasmania. Supported by a multidisciplinary team that includes health workers and allied health specialists, social workers, a psychologist and researchers, we deliver health service information, coordination, referral, monitoring, counselling and advocacy that is person-centred, responsive and trauma informed. Our use of physical outreach and online modalities cater to Tasmania's largely regional, largely dispersed population and emphasise the creation of safe and welcoming local spaces.

Here are some recent examples of feedback from Women's Health Tasmania service users.

Very welcoming private space, affordable – the programs and activities. A rare place that actually is there for all women. Especially those needing support and a place where every women can get referrals, time with other women.

Inclusive, non-judgemental information and support offered.

The communication, the vibrancy and the positivity. The consistency of this and the humour has been excellent.

It is a safe place for all women of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances in the way it provides services and information.

At Women's Health Tasmania we hear consistently from women that there is simply nowhere else in Tasmania where health support, advice and referrals are freely available and where the response is unequivocally knowledgeable, kind, judgement-free, trauma-informed and inclusive. In the context of Tasmania's overstretched health system and ongoing GP shortage, this model of responsive, person-centred health care is the exception.





Highlights 2023-24

119

women dropped into our North Hobart office to get crisis support or use our shower

463

women rang the Women's Health Information Line



720

more pairs of Undies were distributed to low income menstruators

1,067

women attended webinars, workshops or training

285

women received support from the Women's Health Fund to access abortions or contraception

317

women accessed counselling – face to face or using telehealth services



2,075

attendances at face-to-face classes

9,432

attendances at online classes

99%

of Tasmania's Local Government areas are represented in the people that accessed our services

15,785

occasions of service to Tasmanian women and gender diverse folk

Our work this year

A first-of-its-kind abortion care resource

Women's Health Tasmania launched *Termination of Pregnancy: A Good Practice Guide for Tasmanian Care Providers* in July 2023. The Guide is the first Australian resource to combine contemporary practice expertise with lived experience to support high quality and consistent abortion care practices.

Motivation for the new resource came from our 2022 research report *Talking to people about terminations of pregnancy in Tasmania*, which found that while some Tasmanians had positive abortion care experiences, this mostly reflected a single practitioner or provider that stood out as going 'above and beyond' rather than a general standard of care.

The Guide identifies six principles and eleven features of good practice abortion care and includes a checklist of practice indicators against which abortion providers can self-evaluate their services. Designed to be used as an adjunct to clinical guidelines, the Guide is relevant to all staff involved in the provision of abortion care, including GPs, obstetricians, nurses, pharmacists, sonographers, pathology providers and health administrators.

In addition to its practical value, our new Guide proudly contributes to the destigmatising of abortion by recognising it as a common health care intervention deserving of the same attention to quality of care as any other procedure. The Guide is available to download free of charge from the Women's Health Tasmania website.

Women's Health Festivals

Women's Health Tasmania became a travelling roadshow this year, with Lucy, Heidi and Jen bringing a women's health 'festival' of goodies – yoga classes, self-care workshops, positive period talk, reproductive justice sessions, abortion access information and much more – to key locations across regional Tassie.

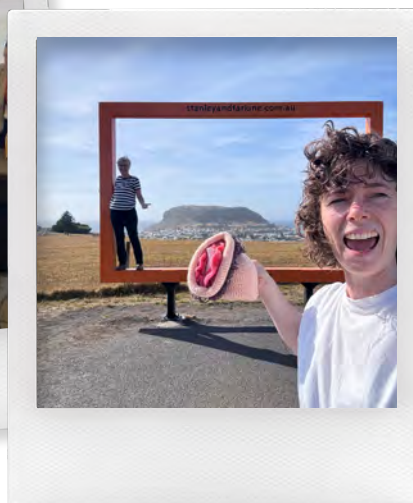
The festival landed in Scottsdale in May, Queenstown in June and Smithton in July, with WHT's enthusiastic road-trippers stopping in at neighbourhood houses, high schools, pharmacies, and community centres to meet with health workers, Aboriginal health navigators, practice managers, sustainability advocates and educators, to talk all things women's health.

The festival team also met with community members ranging in age from young teens to women in their 60s and beyond, hearing about what matters to their communities, local health issues and health care access, and learning from many wonderful local initiatives.

"It's good to have a space where we can come together as women to talk about this," said one woman.

A local who participated in the Self Care Superwomen workshop said she now sees that "self-care isn't just about filling my cup so I can be of service to others. It's also for me, because I am a human and I have value in and of myself".

The festivals have been a valuable exercise in grassroots relationship-building and we look forward to doing it again soon.



'Talking about having a baby' research

In mid-2023 Women's Health Tasmania commenced a research project to hear about women and birthing people's experiences of having a baby in Tasmania – the latest in our 'talking to' qualitative research series that investigates lived experience perspectives on key health topics for women.

Research participants spoke for an hour with WHT psychologist Kelly Madden about their pregnancy, birth and postnatal care experiences. Despite the diversity of the participant group and the extremes of experiences reported – from health care described as "just amazing" and "the best I could have hoped for" to "traumatic" – there was surprising consistency across the aspects of care that 'worked well' and that 'could have been better' for women and birthing people in Tasmania.

Of the conclusions we can draw from the research, the clearest is that currently not all people living in Tasmania have equal access to pregnancy, birth and postnatal care. The project also highlighted the gap between the strategic intentions for pregnancy and birth care named in Australian practice guidelines and the lived experience of women and birthing people in Tasmania, particularly in relation to inclusion and trauma informed practice.

The forthcoming project report 'Talking about having a baby in Tasmania' will be a timely contribution to the ongoing conversation about the safety, quality and consistency of maternal health care in Tasmania and nationally, from a lived experience perspective.

Menopause goes gangbusters

The Women's Health Tasmania menopause workshops have been a smash hit with community groups, cultural groups and workplaces around the state, proving so popular that our workshop team were booked out by the middle of the year.

The workshops create a light-hearted space for a candid conversation about perimenopause and menopause, demystifying 'the change' and sharing strategies to stay healthy and well during this time of transition.

Topics discussed include: What is menopause? Is it awful? Are there good things about it? How will I know when I'm there? How does my body change with menopause? Are there thing I can do to feel better with these changes?

Feedback from the workshops has been overwhelmingly positive and suggests it's not just the practical information shared during sessions that is meaningful, but the conversations themselves.

Women tell us that intergenerational conversations with older people about what their experience of menopause was like, and also talking with people who are going through it the same time as them, are invaluable.

The menopause workshop series has proven to be a powerful 'normaliser' of this very normal –yet frequently hidden – life transition, and a source of joy and solidarity for all the fabulous women we have met along the way.



Workshops with migrant women

Thanks to a Community Support Levy Grant from the Tasmanian Government, Women's Health Tasmania has recently completed a highly rewarding co-design project with migrant and refugee women, focused on the critical issues of problem gambling and family violence.

Lead by our indomitable project coordinator Margie and supported by the Multicultural Council of Tasmania, Red Cross, and the Migrant Resource Centres North and South, the project involved running a series of workshops with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to hear how their communities are affected by these issues.

Women told us that the pressures on their communities that could put them at risk of developing problem gambling were ongoing stress, loneliness and poverty. With their help, we developed written and audio resources addressing these topics, in community languages.

The workshops also opened up valuable discussions about women's health (what else?), leading to the development of additional resources on key women's health topics, such as self-care, contraception and periods.

The project resulted in the development of 40 resources in a variety of formats in Farsi, Nepali, Tigrinya and Chinese languages. What an outcome! The new resources are accessible via the Women's Health Tasmania website.

Abortion Peer Workers

Women's Health Tasmania has recently employed three Peer Workers who are – we are proud to say – Australia's first specialist abortion peer workers.

Kate, Abi and Bea have all been through the experience of having an abortion in the Tasmanian health system and have undertaken professional training to use their personal experiences and insight to support others who are accessing abortions.

This may involve talking through what to expect medically from the experience with someone seeking an abortion or providing a safe and supportive debriefing opportunity to someone who has had an abortion and wants to talk about it.

A client giving feedback on the new Peer Worker service said, "I thought I was the only person who felt this way. After talking to Kate I realised my feelings were normal".

Having the Peer Workers on board is a chance for us to build what is called 'lived experience advocacy' into all our work in this area. They will also help us deliver training to health and community sector workers on best practice abortion health care.

This is an exciting leap forward for abortion care practices in Tasmania and we are very grateful to the philanthropist who has made this project possible.





AAA workshops

Women's Health Tasmania is now mid-way through delivering the Abortion Access Advocacy (AAA) workshop series, a key component of our Abortion Supportive Communities Project.

Developed in co-design with community members for local community audiences, the workshop tackles abortion stigma and awareness by sharing information on Tasmanian abortion rights, care pathways and supports in a safe and welcoming forum.

The initiative promotes three key messages that workshop participants are asked to take away and share within their own communities: that abortions are legal in Tasmania; that abortions are available in all regions of Tasmania; and that financial assistance for abortions is available.

Co-facilitated by WHT health workers and our abortion peer workers, the workshops also equip participants to talk about abortion safely, offering skills in deep listening, understanding and overcoming communication barriers.

So far, this grassroots initiative has been received warmly in every community it touches and we can't wait to see its impact in full, as abortion-supportive messages trickle further into Tasmanian communities.





Our team

TEAM

Amirah Onwuegbuzie

Playgroup Coordinator

Barb Smith

Playgroup Coordinator

BJ Hook

Intake/Health Worker

Elinor Heard

Policy Officer

Heidi Morton

Social Worker

Jen Van-Achteren

Health Worker/Yoga Teacher

Julie Cooper

Finance Officer

Jo Flanagan

CEO

Kelly Madden

Psychologist

Lucinda Shannon

Deputy CEO

Letty Galorosa

Cleaner

Margie Law

Project Manager

Maree Ransley

Intake/Health Worker

Rosemary Kerrison

Breast Cancer Support
Group Facilitator

Sophie Wood

Admin Officer

Venus Acuzar

Cleaner

Zoe Elliot

Admin Officer

Health Promotion Activity Providers

Valerie Cameron

Jean Gilbert

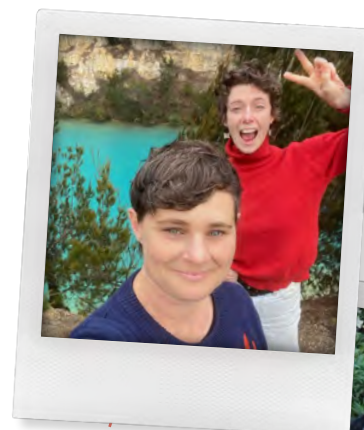
Wendy Hartshorn

Volunteers

Lilli-Sassafras Baird-Gibson

Kath McLean

Frances Williamson



Our Board

Naomi Bryant, Chair

Mediator

Dr Rebekah McWhirter, Treasurer

Associate Professor, Health Law and Ethics, School of Medicine, Deakin University

Rachel Andrew, Deputy Chair

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist

Lakshmi Sundram, Public Officer

Prosecutor, Safe at Home, Tasmania Police and Legal Practitioner, State Litigation Office

Emilie Linscott

Manager, Office of the Deputy Secretary (Parks and Wildlife Service), Department of Natural Resources and Environment

Dr Meredith Nash

Director - Sexual Harassment & Gendered Violence and National Lead, Respect@Work, KPMG

Casey Garrett (joined Oct 2023)

Corporate Affairs and Logistics Manager, Tas Oysters

Lauren Yates-Jones, Secretary (joined Oct 2023)

Head of Communications, Procreate

Vikki Iwanicki (joined Dec 2023)

Centre Leader, Queenstown Child and Family Learning Centre

Ari Magalhaes (joined Dec 2023)

Economist and Business Strategist, Managing Director, OmniStrategic

Dr Sue Mallett (joined April 2024)

Clinical Director, Launceston Women's Health Centre

Justine Barwick, Secretary (resigned Dec 2023)

CEO, The District Nurses

Nadia Ayliffe (resigned Sept 2023)

Brand Marketing Advisor, University of Tasmania

Dr Jess Shill (resigned April 2024)

General Practitioner







Opp: Zoe, Administration Officer

Our partners

Thanks for your help and support with events, workshops, online forums, group work and resource production.

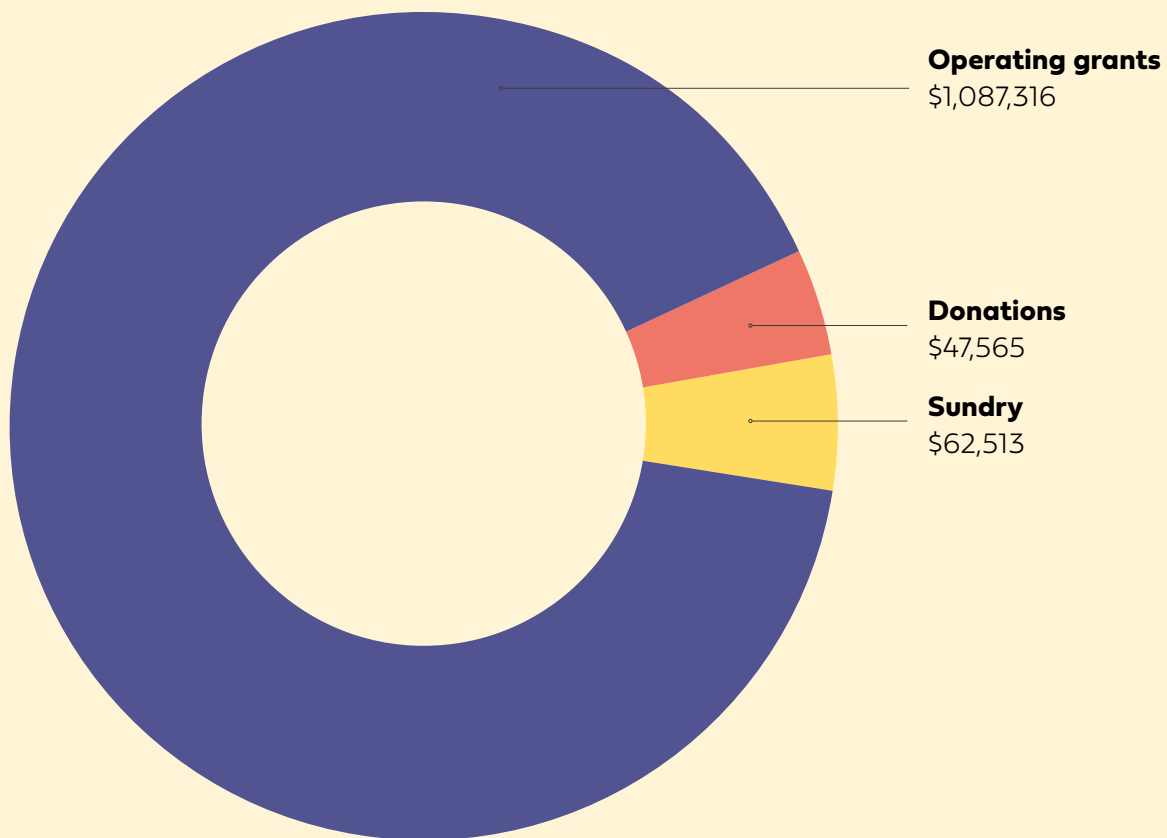
- Children by Choice
- Clarence Plains Child and Family Learning Centre
- Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation
- Circular Head Council
- Corumbene Care New Norfolk
- Dorset Neighbourhood House
- Engender Equality
- Family Planning Tasmania
- Health Action Team Central Highlands (HATCH)
- Health Promotion South – Tasmanian Health Service (THS)
- Hobart Women’s Shelter
- Kingston Beach Early Learning Centre
- Leprena Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Congress Church
- Mental Health Providers Network
- Migrant Resource Centre South
- Modibodi
- Multicultural Council of Tasmania
- Peacock Centre/Safe Haven
- SANE Australia
- TasCARHD
- Tasmanian University Students Association
- TasPorts
- Wayraparattee Child and Family Learning Centre
- Welcome Cultural Services
- Women’s Legal Service Tasmania
- Working It Out
- Uniting Family Support Workers



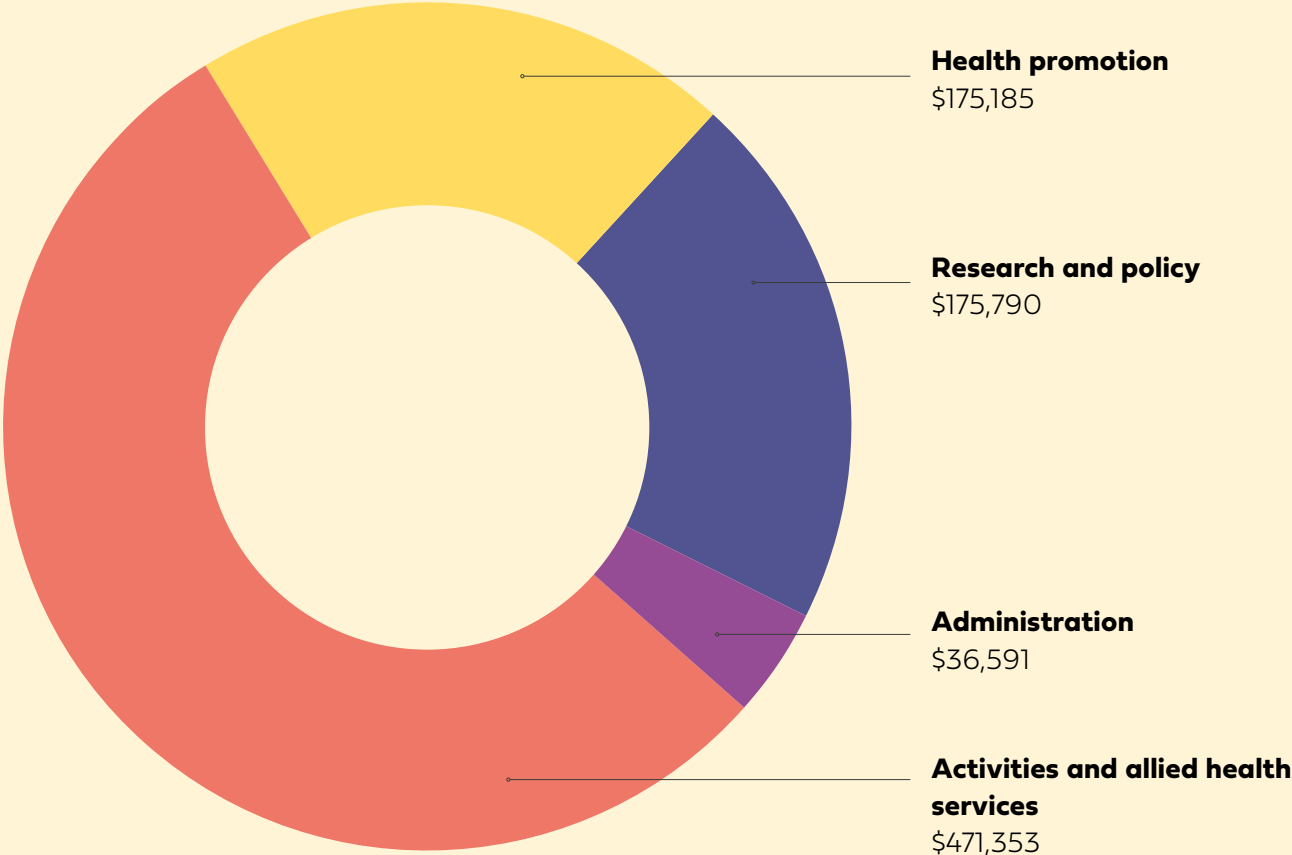
Finances

In this report you will find a summary of the Financial Statements for the year ending 30th June 2024. These reports are available in full on the Women's Health Tasmania website.


Income



Expenses





 Lakshmi, Board Member



Staff

Library
You are welcome to borrow from our library but please ask for assistance at reception desk before you browse

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Women's Health Tasmania

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North Hobart, Tasmania 7002

Open 9.15am–4pm Mon–Thurs

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Women's Health Information Line: **1800 675 028**

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www.pregnancychoicesttas.org.au

Fb: WomensHealthTAS

Instagram: whtasmania