



SOUTH WEST COUNSELLING INC.

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

- Lao Tzu

Every step on this colourful staircase is like a step in the counselling journey, sometimes challenging, but ultimately leading to personal growth.

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Our Partners & Supporters

South West Counselling (SWCI) thanks the agencies listed below for their support during this financial year. Without these partners we would be unable to provide the valuable services we do to the communities of the South West region.



**Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities**



South West Counselling acknowledges we are on Noongar Country and feel privileged to share this land with its traditional custodians. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and to their Elders; past, present and emerging.

Our Partners & Supporters



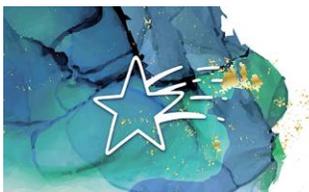
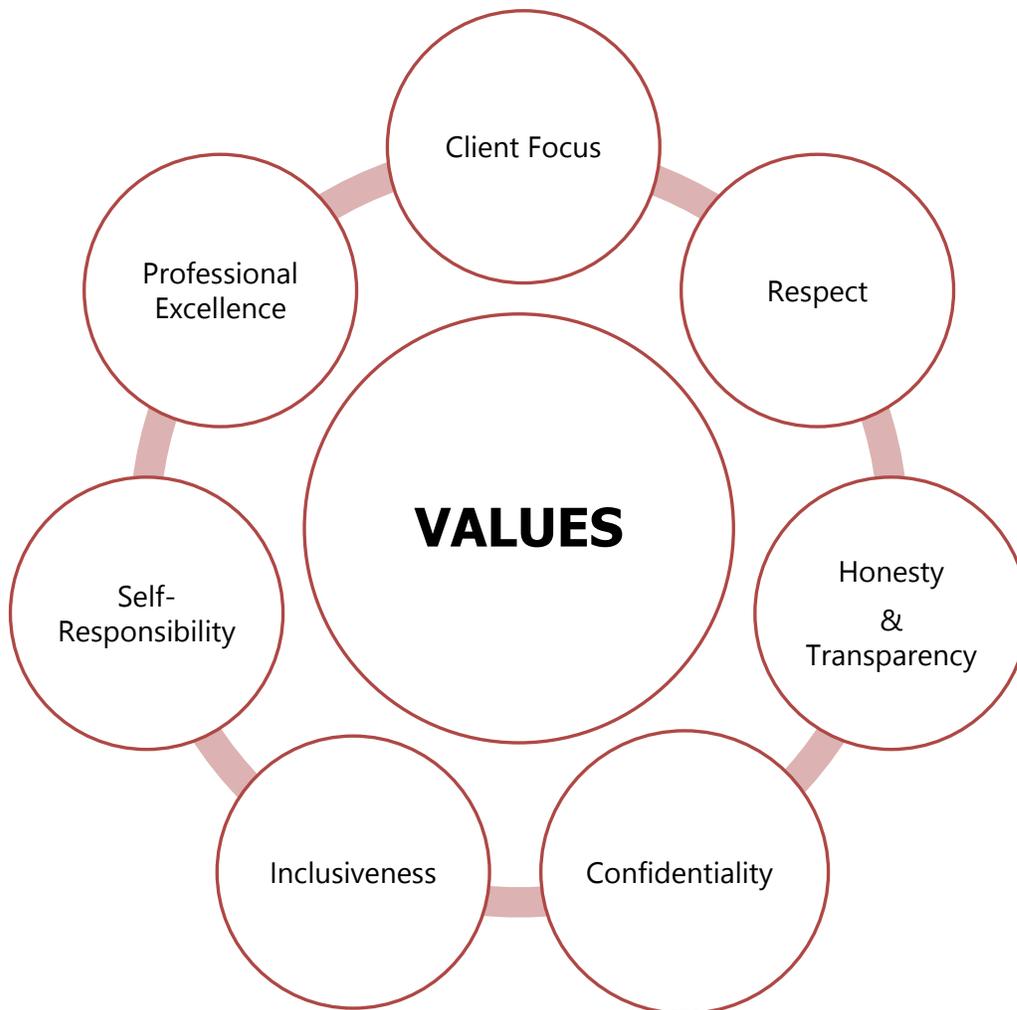
Armstrong & Associates Pty Ltd



ECU acknowledges and respects the Noongar people, the custodians of the lands upon which our campuses stand and operate. CRICOS Provider No. 00279B

Our Purpose

To enhance the wellbeing and safety of individuals, families, and children in the South West Region of Western Australia.



We're committed to being
a child safe organisation



Environmental Commitment

We are deeply committed to our environmental responsibilities, a commitment that goes well beyond compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Our focus is on reducing our environmental footprint, guided by a comprehensive Environmental Policy that serves as the foundation of our commitment to sustainability. This policy undergoes an annual review to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

Our Environmental Policy commits SWCI to:

- Follow all applicable environmental regulations.
- Pursue continuous improvement and careful monitoring of our environmental performance.
- Actively reduce the organization's environmental impact.
- Integrate environmental considerations into decision-making processes.
- Increase awareness of environmental issues among employees.

We strive to make environmental performance a core element of our strategic and operational practices. We actively encourage our clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders to adopt similar environmental values. To uphold accountability, a designated team member oversees the implementation and adherence to the Environmental Policy.

We have also implemented a range of practices to reduce our environmental footprint:

- Printing service brochures, business cards, and appointment cards on recyclable paper.
- Equipping the Busselton office with energy-efficient LED lighting.
- Establishing a policy to turn off lights and electrical equipment when not in use.
- Thoughtfully adjusting heating and cooling systems to minimise energy consumption.
- Prioritising the purchase of environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products.
- Fostering a culture of reusing and recycling across the organisation.
- Using eco-friendly cleaning materials.
- Maintaining a compost bin for organic waste disposal.
- Ending the use of plastic bags.
- Transitioning to fully digital client information management, eliminating paper client files.
- Adopting a paperless approach for Board meetings through the exclusive use of electronic devices.
- Prioritising local sourcing whenever practical to reduce transportation impact.

These practices underscore our enduring commitment to environmental sustainability, as we work towards reducing our impact and promoting eco-friendly practices within our community.

SWCI Patron



Wilhelmena (Willi) Smith

Chairperson's Report

As Vice-Chairperson of South West Counselling Incorporated (SWCI), I am honoured to present this 2024 Annual General Meeting report in the absence of Chairperson Gloria Ross, who is currently on extended leave.

First, I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to our CEO, the counselling team, and the administrative staff. Their professionalism, dedication, and willingness to meet every requirement are what allow SWCI to run so effectively for the benefit of our clients and, ultimately, the community.

The Board's role is to provide oversight of SWCI's operations, support the CEO, and work collaboratively with the entire team on strategic direction, policy development, professional governance, and business planning. Additionally, the Board is tasked with reviewing and monitoring risks, financial and operational performance, and ensuring accountability to all stakeholders.

The Board recognises the importance of supporting consistently high-quality internal practices and processes that drive excellent outcomes. A significant challenge we face is the limitations of government funding, which has not increased over time, though we are expected to deliver the same results with fewer resources. This constraint limits our ability to innovate in service delivery. Nonetheless, SWCI continues to uphold the high standard of care and service that has earned us our strong reputation within the community.

Our CEO holds monthly meetings with staff, providing an invaluable platform for team members to raise issues or insights with the Board. This process fosters transparent, two-way communication, building trust and confidence across the organisation.

Looking ahead, I am optimistic about SWCI's resilience. As an integral part of our community, with a Board rooted in mutual trust, respect, and a shared commitment to supporting our CEO and staff, SWCI is well-positioned to continue thriving in the coming year, funding permitting.

The current Board consists of Gloria Ross, the Hon. Libby Mettam, Michael Brown, Cr. Jodie Richards, Elizabeth McGovern, Dr. Tess Martin, and myself, Jennie Parrin, as Vice Chair. Our collective backgrounds span finance, accounting, insurance, community service management, education, counselling, senior public service, and politics. Additionally, we have access to a family law advisor. This diversity of expertise ensures our decisions are informed by a broad array of professional insights and a strong commitment to community welfare.

Through this year we have also farewelled two long-term Board members: Steve Carr and Arvind Pillay. Both provided valuable contributions to the Board and to SWCI over a number of years and their absence at meetings is notable.

Finally, we acknowledge with gratitude the ongoing funding SWCI receives from the Department of Communities, which enables us to continue this sometimes challenging yet profoundly rewarding work.

Jennie Parrin
Vice-Chairperson



Chief Executive's Report

Delivering counselling and other support services in today's environment demands not only continuous commitment to our clients, but also our commitment to continually improve the way our services are delivered. This unwavering dedication has seen the past year be one of increased collaboration and growth.

During this period, 939 individual clients engaged with our services. This is an increase of approximately 20% on last year. This figures includes the attendance of 162 children and young people aged under 18-years. 2,222 client sessions were offered throughout the period, an increase of 25%.

Our approach at SWCI is guided by a commitment to support individuals and families. We have seen many people affected by the rising cost of living, which places significant strain on essential areas like housing, healthcare, education, and basic necessities. Many families are facing serious financial challenges, resulting in ongoing stress and a pervasive sense of helplessness. This financial strain is affecting relationships, as reflected in our client data, which shows a rise in family separations, conflicts between parents and children, family & domestic violence, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health issues.

Unfortunately, despite the growing demand for our services, we face limited resources, which restricts our ability to assist those in need. This constraint has led to consistently high waiting lists—a challenge faced by most community service organisations and further compounded by the South West region's expanding population.

We believe that collaboration among service providers is also essential to achieving best outcomes for clients. These partnerships benefit not only the clients but also their families and the wider community. We prioritise cooperation with other organisations to offer a comprehensive approach that addresses the varied needs of our clients. I would like to express our thanks to the government and community agencies we have worked with on a regular basis throughout the year.

The introduction of income-generating programs last year to support our sustainability has seen these programs continuing with success.

- Counselling for individuals, including children, couples and families
- Mental Health Care Plan for Psychological counselling via GP referral
- Single Session Crisis-Counselling
- NDIS Self-Managed or Plan-Managed Counselling and social worker support
- Social Worker Advocacy
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Community Engagement talks and workshops
- Mother-Baby-Nurture Peer Support Groups

At our team Planning Day early this year we used some time to refine these initiatives and identify specific professional development requirements to equip the team with the necessary skills to expand these programs. As a result, throughout the year our staff engaged in various workshops and training sessions, details of which are included further in this report.

Our Social Worker Advocacy program has been particularly helpful to clients throughout the year. This program successfully separates advocacy needs from therapeutic interventions to provide clients with added support for complex needs. By integrating advocacy within a counselling context, clients have gained a stronger voice, better access to vital resources, and reinforcement of their rights. This approach not only benefits individuals but also has the capacity to contribute to systemic change, fostering more inclusive and supportive environments.

SWCI's current Service Agreement with the Department of Communities was extended in March 2024 to the 30th June 2026. While we are always grateful for any extension to our ongoing funding, we continue to operate on a Service Agreement initially signed off on 1st April 2012. These ongoing additions to the Service Agreement continue to provide some uncertainty for the future of the organisation in the longer-term.

Clients who attended our service have been extremely fortunate to have exceptional counsellors, psychologist and social worker available to them throughout the year. In addition, tertiary counselling and social work students have well-supported clients during their placements with us.

Our Client Services team remain the hub of SWCI, and we could not operate without them. Thank you all for your motivation, commitment and dedication to clients, to each other, and to the organisation. A special mention to Bev, Shantell and Renae. Your support of me and other team members is valued and appreciated.

I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation for the support and guidance of all Board members, particularly our Chair Gloria Ross. I am grateful for this support. Thank you all.

Finally, this year has been a particularly challenging one for our staff and board members. We have faced the loss of loved ones and navigated individual hardships. On a personal note, I received a cancer diagnosis, which has undoubtedly impacted not only me but our entire team in various ways. Despite these challenges, the unwavering support, compassion, and resilience of everyone in this organisation have been nothing short of inspiring. It's a powerful reminder of the strength and unity that makes SWCI so special.

Karen Sommerville
CEO



Human Resources



We are governed by a committed and highly competent Board which places significant emphasis on good governance and sound financial practices.

- Chairperson** Gloria Ross
- Deputy Chair** Jennie Parrin
- Secretary** Arvind Pillay (resigned)
- Treasurer** Steve Carr (resigned)
- Treasurer** Elizabeth McGovern
- Member** Libby Mettam
- Member** Michael Brown
- Member** Jodie Richards
- Member** Tess Martin



- Chief Executive** Karen Sommerville
- Service Coordinator** Bev Atkinson
- Clinical Coordinator** Shantell McClenaughan
- Client Services** Renae Denness
Sharn Thompson
- Social Worker** Grace Brennan
- Counsellors** Renate Best
Liz Thomson
Jill Brighton
Annie West
Deb George
Kate Mitchell
Jess Schuller
- Students** Kristy Foster
Sally George
Ellen Lahti
Kristy Palmer
Vicki Martin
- Client Support** Harry





The Faces Behind Our Achievements



Karen Sommerville
Chief Executive



Bev Atkinson
Service Coordinator



Renae Denness
Client Services/Accounts



Sharn Thompson
Client Services



Shantell McClenaughan
Clinical Coordinator
Master of Counselling
BA (Psych)
Member ACA



Renate Best
Clinical Psychologist Registrar
Master Psychology (Clinical)
BPsySc(H1)
GradDipPsySc
Member APHRA



Debbie George
Counsellor
GradDipGestalt
30 years clinical experience
Member PACFA



Liz Thompson
Social Worker & Counsellor
Master of Counselling
BSocWk
GradDip Grief, Loss, Trauma
Member ACA





**Annie West
Counsellor**
Master of Counselling
B.Ed.Dip Nursing
Member ACA



**Grace Brennan
Social Worker**
BSocWk
Member AASW



**Jessica Schuller
Counsellor**
Master of Counselling
& Psychotherapy
BPsySc
Member ACA



**Kate Mitchell
Counsellor**
Master of Counselling
BSc (Psych)
Member ACA



**Sally George
Counsellor**
Master of Counselling
BAHons
Member ACA



**Ellen Lahti
Counsellor**
BA International Studies
Master of Counselling



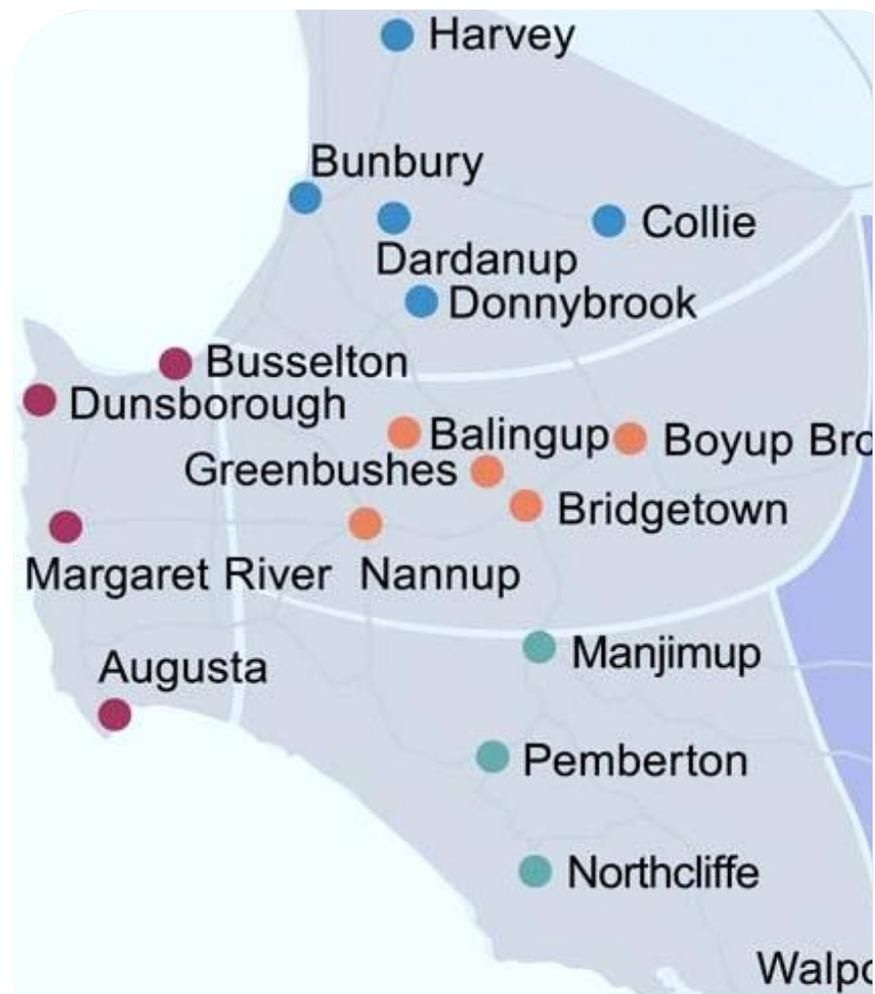
**Jill Brighton
Disability Consultant**
BA Pysch



Service Area

SWCI continues to be an integral community service organisation in the South West. We have a reputation for excellence in service delivery and for providing quality, confidential, accessible, and affordable counselling, support and advocacy services to communities across this extensive region.

Offices are currently based in Busselton and Margaret River. Locations are reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to provide maximum benefit to local populations. All services are available by face-to-face, zoom or phone contact.



Service Provision

We continue to see clients from a wide geographical area across the South West. Counselling interventions, advocacy, group work, and other supports are provided to individuals, couples, and families, including specialised counselling for children and young people.

Client referrals come from a variety of sources including GPs, government departments, schools, community service agencies, workplaces, and self-referrals. It is estimated that at least 60% of clients access SWCI because of earlier contact, or at the suggestion of a friend or colleague.

We believe there are several reasons clients return or refer others to us:

- Partnership – a client approach that is based on mutual trust & respect.
- Depth of knowledge of local regions.
- Appreciation of client needs.
- Subject matter expertise and experience.
- Affordable counselling.
- Regional & rural locations.
- Options of zoom, phone or face-to-face counselling contact.
- Social Worker support.



Continuing Programs:

- Department of Communities funded counselling.
- Employee Assistance Programs.
- Mother-Baby-Nurture Therapeutic Group.
- SWCI Counselling.



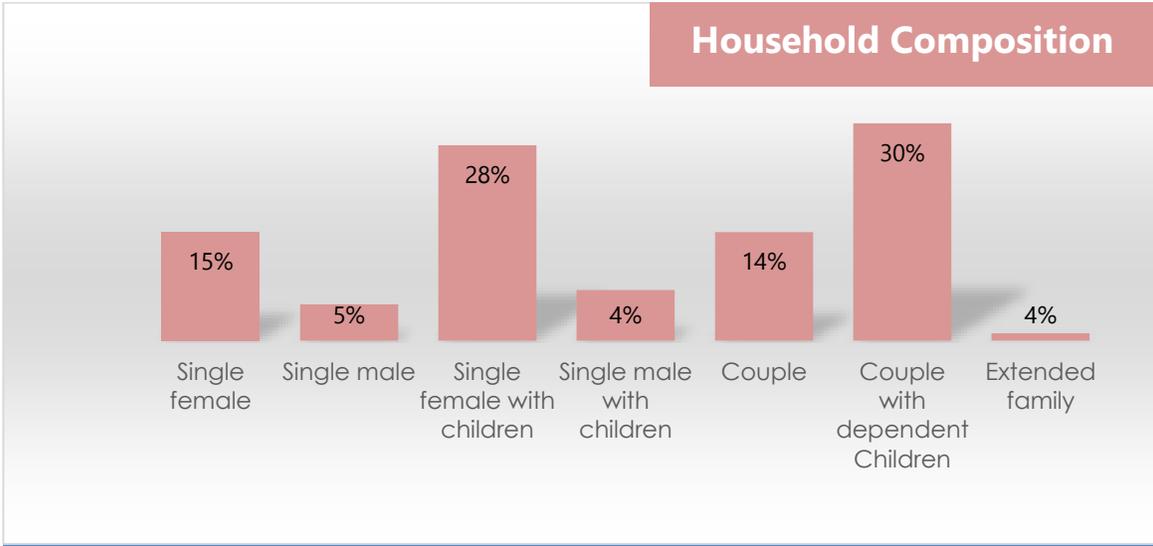
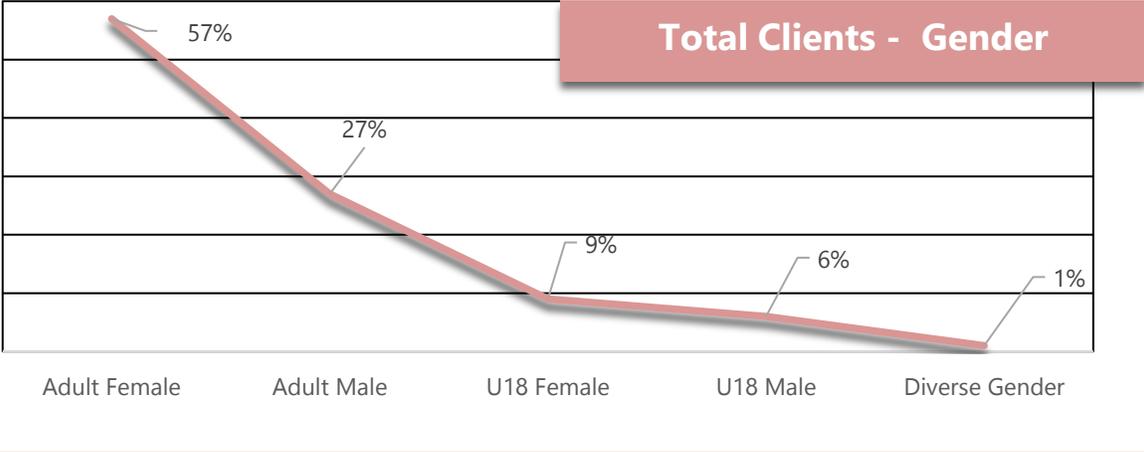
New Programs implemented this year:

- Mental Health Care Plan Counselling through GP referral to SWCI Psychologist.
- Single Session Counselling.
- NDIS Self-Managed or Plan-Managed Counselling.
- Social Worker Advocacy.
- Clinical Supervision.
- Mother-Baby-Nurture Peer Support Group.
- SWCI *Choir of Allsorts* (Karaoke).



Service Provision

1 July 2023 – 30 th June 2024	Clients
Number of Counselling Sessions	2,222
Total clients	939
Clients aged under 18 years	136
Clients presenting with Depression/Anxiety	415
Clients attending due to Trauma	181
Clients presenting due to Parent & Child relationships	213
Clients presenting for Couple relationship counselling	223
Clients presenting due to Family Separation	155



Service Activities

Networking, Agency Promotion and other attendances

- Department of Communities
- City of Busselton
- Capes Region White Ribbon Day event
- City of Busselton Youth Network
- Lotterywest Grant Information Clinic
- Thirrili – Indigenous suicide postvention service
- Raising the Vibe Festival
- SWAMS
- Waratah
- Tuart House
- Cyrenian House Nannup
- Legal Aid
- Jobs South West
- Accordwest
- Relationships Australia
- Richmond Wellbeing
- Headspace
- Safe Space Busselton
- Busselton Senior High School
- Roses in the Ocean
- Evolve Psychology
- Busselton Hospice
- Radiance Network South West
- Capes Region White Ribbon Day event
- Choir of All Sorts – hosted by SWCI
- International Women’s Day Lunch
- Busselton Chamber of Commerce and Industry - BA5 events
- Busselton Chamber Commerce Industry Budget Breakfast
- Margaret River Men’s Shed Mental Health event
- Suicide Prevention Forum Margaret River
- Busselton Early Parent Groups Presentations
- Dunsborough Early Parent Groups Presentations
- Margaret River Early Parent Groups Presentations
- FDV talk to Certificate IV students at Bunbury TAFE
- Busselton Community Grants Expo
- DoC Sector Information Session and Q&A
- Community Services Commissioning and the Authorising Environment
- Lotterywest Crisis and Emergency Relief | Overview of Approach and Outcomes Measurement Process

Regular Meeting Attendance

- Busselton Community Services Network
- Augusta Margaret River Community Health Network
- Mental Health Consortium
- Margaret River Community Network
- Mental Health Professionals Network
- Holistic Health Network
- Cape to Cape Network
- Capes Early Years Network
- Radiance South West Network
- Capes Region White Ribbon Committee



Jane Kelsbie MLA
(Member for Warren-
Blackwood) presenting a
Lotterywest grant
certificate for us to
provide Emergency Relief
funds to our local
communities. This is
much needed support
during this cost-of-living
crisis.

Quality Control

Maintaining Best Practice

To ensure best practice in service delivery and good governance Board members and staff participate in regular meetings.

- Board meetings (Board & CEO)
- Finance Committee meetings
- Team meetings
- Clinical meetings
- Clinical presentations
- Case management meetings
- Meetings with the Clinical Coordinator
- Clinical Supervision with external provider
- Clinical Discussions
- Annual Team Planning Day

Internal clinical development training:

- Family Violence – best practice re assessment, disclosures and therapeutic support
- Child Therapy best practise
- Introduction to Couples Therapy
- Best practice for supporting clients with a disability
- In house SWC training day for children and adolescent counselling

Presentations, Workshops and Groups

- Early Parent group talks in Margaret River, Dunsborough & Busselton
- Mother-Baby-Nurture Groups
- Family & Domestic Violence talk at Southern TAFE Bunbury
- Mother-Baby-Nurture Peer Support Group

Professional Development

- *Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples* – EFT Core Skills 1, live and online.
- Emerging Minds – *Supporting children’s mental health when working with separated parents’* online seminar.
- Pride Week *Opening Closets Workshop* – presented by Living proud (LGBTIQ+ support).
- Workshop offered by the South West Autism Network on *Understanding eating disorders*.
- *Suicide Bereavement Forum*.
- Emerging Minds – *Children with ADHD* online seminar.
- CTRI *Critical Incident Training* online seminar.
- 9-week online *DV Assist Training*.
- *Yourtoolkit.com Online Resource* – 60min “Lunch and Learn”
- *Windows Through Grief: Helping Children Manage Loss* online seminar.
- *EMDR group consult* - live, online seminar.
- *Separation and the law* online seminar.
- *Social entrapment and coercive control* online seminar.
- *Conversations between and within – Who am I and who am I with you?* online seminar.
- *Relationship counselling – Pitfalls and Antidotes* online seminar.
- *Attachment & Dissociative Disorder* online seminar.
- *Working with men in disrupted and distressed intimate partner relationships* online seminar.
- *Your Supervision Question* online seminar.
- *Supervision Maximising your sessions* online seminar.
- *Child Safe Organisations Forum*.
- *Gestalt Therapy Training* – 2-day intensive, face-to-face.
- *Emotionally Focused Therapy for couples* – 4 day ‘Externship’, online seminar.
- *Sand tray Therapy: Not Just for Children* online seminar.
- *Managing Social Anxiety with Children and Young People* online seminar.
- *Advanced EMDR Training* (2 days)
- *Gestalt Training workshop* (2 days)
- *Emotion Focused Therapy for individuals* (4 days)
- *Rise Up Supervision Training* (4 days)
- *FVRO/Shuttle Conferencing-Magistrates Court-Walk in Their Shoes Tour*
- *Introduction to Filial Therapy* (10 hours)
- *The role of the body in couples therapy* – Mental Health Academy online seminar.
- *The neuroscience of suicidal ideation and behaviour* – Mental Health Academy online seminar.
- *EFT session 1* – Mental Health Academy online seminar.
- *EFT session 2* – Mental Health Academy online seminar.
- *Understanding Autism* – online seminar.

Client Feedback

97% of clients report beneficial outcomes from their contact with SWCI.



2023/2024

**Together,
We Make the Difference**



Some of our team & Board members December 2024 celebration

Our Team: Masters of Multitasking and Office Snacks



Nothing like a good workplace busy bee to freshen up the premises!

Various Community engagements throughout the year.



Chamber of Commerce BA5



Mental Health Week 2023



International Women's Day Busselton Chamber of Commerce Lunch



Team Away Day 2023 – 10 Pin Bowling



Renae was quite chuffed with this shot!



Deb & Grace developing strategy!



Jill did like her bowling shoes!

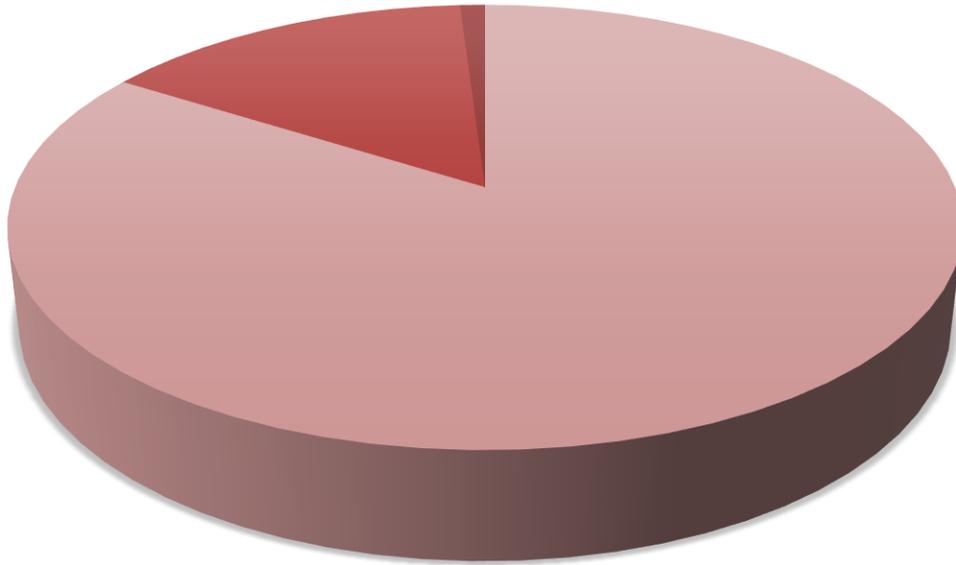


Jess watching the game, Renate not impressed with hers!

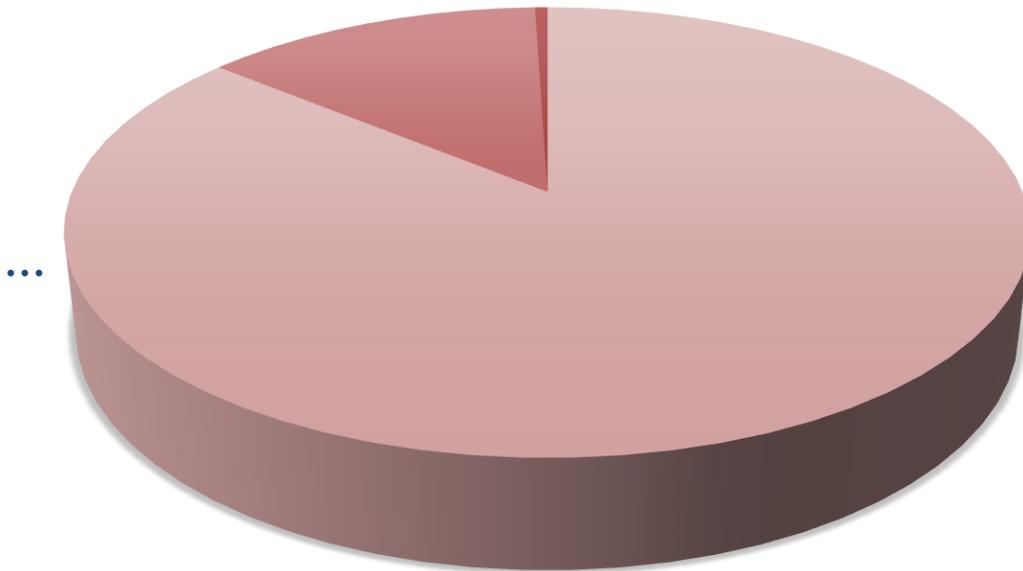
2023 Team & Board members Christmas Party with Secret Santa



Income for 2023-2024



■ Government Funds 84% ■ Counselling Fees 15% ■ Other Income 1%



■ Employee Expenses 86% ■ Operating Expenses 13.5% ■ Depreciation .5%

Refer to the ACNC website for the full reviewed financial report.

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity>

