Whitsunday Counselling & Support

Our Annual Report

2026

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the custodians of the land where we are lucky to live, learn and rest – the Ngaro, Juru, Gia and Birriah people. We also wish to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women: the women who have fought for themselves, for their children, for their families and for their communities. The women who have survived, the women who have lost their lives, the women who have led this work for generations, often with little recognition. What we can do in return is listen well, and do this work properly and respectfully.

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From the CEO

As I reflect on my first year reporting as CEO of Whitsunday Counselling and Support, one phrase comes to mind: **it took a village**. This year has been one of growth, challenge, learning, innovation and transformation. While there have certainly been hurdles along the way, there has also been an incredible amount of progress, made possible by a dedicated team, a supportive Management Committee, valued corporate partners, and most importantly, the clients who place their trust in us each day.

Building Strong Foundations

Over the past twelve months, WCS has focused heavily on strengthening the foundations of our organisation to ensure we remain sustainable, compliant and ready for future growth. A significant achievement was our successful HSQF Audit, confirming our compliance across all standards and providing certification through to 2029. While we have always known the quality of our work, having that quality independently verified is a testament to the professionalism and commitment of our entire team.

This year also saw substantial progress in governance, with the development of a comprehensive policy framework in partnership with Neat Co. The project included the creation of supporting forms and registers, ensuring our systems align with best practice and HSQF requirements.



Investing in Systems and Technology

A major focus throughout the year has been modernising our technology and operating systems. We welcomed NBN fibre-to-the-premises connectivity across all sites, implemented a new phone system, strengthened cyber security through firewalls, cloud backup solutions and Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR), and continued our transition away from NUCS to more modern cloud-based systems.
The implementation of Employment Hero, upgrades to Microsoft 365 capabilities, and continued exploration of CRM solutions have improved efficiency while positioning the organisation for future growth. We have also invested significantly in staff technology, mobile devices and laptops to ensure our workforce is equipped with the tools needed to provide quality services.

Planning for the Future

This has been a year of defining who we are and where we are heading. The development of our new 2026-2030 Strategic Plan has provided a clear roadmap for the organisation's future, while our brand and logo uplift and refresh better reflects our identity, values and aspirations. Together, these initiatives have allowed us to tell our story to our community with greater clarity and confidence.

Alongside strategic planning, we undertook an organisational restructure, creating clearer pathways for leadership development, succession planning and operational efficiency. We have embraced opportunities for staff to act in higher-level roles, participate in cross-training and expand their leadership capabilities.

Supporting Our Workforce

Recruitment continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing our sector. Throughout the year we explored new approaches, including visa sponsorship options, engagement with recruitment providers and innovative workforce planning. We have also continued to backfill roles across locations wherever possible and strengthen collaboration between teams.

Just as importantly, we have continued to build a culture where people feel supported, valued and encouraged to bring their whole selves to work. Our partnership with Pinnacle Impact Consulting supported an extensive culture program which introduced initiatives such as our Weekly Wins and Worries. This simple but powerful process has created opportunities for honest conversations about the realities of our work, personal wellbeing and the importance of maintaining boundaries in a caring profession.

The investment in staff development has been significant, with training delivered across areas including first aid, cultural diversity, sexual harassment prevention, child safe organisation mandatory reporting, trauma-informed practice, de-escalation, supervision, AI and ethics, non-fatal strangulation, subpoena upskilling and the PASE supervision model.



Service Growth and Funding Success

This year WCS secured several important contracts and funding opportunities, including Mental Health funding and additional grants supporting emergency relief, outdoor improvements and furniture upgrades for our supported accommodation options. We were also successful in securing ongoing contracts for the Whitsunday and Bowen Embedded Worker Programs and Bowen Family Intervention Service and Bowen Family Support Service contracts.

These investments have enabled improvements across our facilities, including a furniture refresh and upgrade in all our supported accommodation options, new appliances, repainting projects and continued upgrades to service environments to ensure they remain welcoming, functional and safe for clients and staff alike.
Community Connections.

One of WCS's greatest strengths continues to be its relationships within the community. This year, WCS has worked tirelessly to increase our presence in our community. Throughout the year we actively participated in and contributed to a wide range of community initiatives, including attendance at Whitsunday Suicide Prevention Network meetings, Prosperine State High School Careers Expo and Health and Wellbeing Expo, at the TAFE student engagement activities, Whitsunday Chamber of Commerce industry awards and information sessions, Domestic Violence Prevention Councils and the Qld State Government community forums.

Child Protection Week was embraced wholeheartedly and was our biggest CPW to date! We celebrated with activities including library visits, school presentations, Party in the Park, our inaugural partner appreciation morning tea, culminating in the Main Event – the Colour Run. These events provided valuable opportunities to raise awareness and strengthen connections with the community we serve.

Our commitment to community education and awareness was further demonstrated through events in both Bowen and Cannonvale such as Reclaim the Night, Candle-lighting Ceremonies, R U OK? Day activities and the commencement of Wander Woman mental health initiative. We were grateful to partner with the Bowen DVAG (Domestic Violence Action Group) for our Bowen events, and further strengthen community relationships.

Partnerships That Matter

The achievements of this year have been strengthened through collaboration. I would like to acknowledge the many organisations and individuals who have supported WCS, including community partners, funding bodies, elected representatives, referral agencies and local businesses. A special thank you goes to the trusted colleagues and partners I have had the privilege of working alongside, particularly Carolyn Richardson of Carolyn Richardson Creative, Adam Paroz of Pinnacle Impact Consulting, Zonta International Woman of the Year for Whitsundays, Peta Franklin representing both SEAD Collective and Red Rose Foundation and Robbie from Yooribaya Cultural Experiences. This year also saw the beginning of several valuable new partnerships with Cara from Neat Co, and Mandy from CURE Human Systems to name a few. Their knowledge, support, and commitment have made a significant contribution to a number of key projects, helping us achieve outcomes that would not have been possible alone.

Stronger partnerships have been a priority this year, and we are grateful for the support and collaboration of Mackay Women's Services, The Salvation Army, Headspace, Bravehearts, Bowen Neighbourhood Centre, and QCOSS. As a standalone regional organisation, these relationships have provided trusted networks of expertise, advice and support when needed. They have strengthened our capacity to respond to the needs of our community and reinforced the value of working together to achieve better outcomes for those we serve.

I would also like to acknowledge both outgoing Manager of Administration and Manager of Counselling Alison Rosemond and Sharon Parker for their service, support and commitment throughout what has been a transformative period for the organisation. The service wouldn't be where we are today without their contributions.

Recognising Success

This year WCS was honoured to receive the Community Champion Award through the Whitsunday Chamber of Commerce. While it may be our name on the award, it truly belongs to everyone involved in WCS, our Management Committee, staff, volunteers, partners and clients. It is recognition of the collective effort required to support individuals and families across our region.









Looking Ahead

Financially, the organisation remains in a strong and stable position. Throughout the year we have deliberately invested in infrastructure, technology, staff development and service improvements, while maintaining a careful focus on long-term sustainability. As both a CEO and CPA, I understand the importance of balancing ambition with accountability, and I am proud of the position WCS finds itself in as we enter the next chapter.

This year has often felt like a year spent in the learning pit. We have been stretched, challenged and tested, both individually and as an organisation. There were moments of uncertainty, difficult decisions, and opportunities that pushed us well beyond our comfort zones. Yet it is through these experiences that we have grown. We have emerged stronger, more resilient, more connected, and better positioned to meet the evolving needs of our community.

I am incredibly grateful to walk this journey alongside a talented Senior Leadership Team of exceptional women who are experts in their respective fields. Their commitment to the WCS vision, willingness to embrace change, and ability to navigate complexity with professionalism, compassion and integrity have been instrumental in our success this year. Together, we have continued to build a culture of collaboration, accountability and continuous improvement, and I am deeply appreciative of their expertise, wisdom, friendship and unwavering support. Their belief in our vision and willingness to navigate challenges together has made this year not only successful, but genuinely rewarding.

Perhaps the greatest growth we have witnessed this year has been in our people. WCS has continued to expand, not only in the number of staff joining our team, but in the depth of knowledge, confidence and leadership across the organisation. I have had the privilege of watching team members step into new opportunities, develop new skills, embrace challenges and grow both personally and professionally. Their willingness to learn, adapt and support one another has strengthened not only our services, but our culture.

At its heart, WCS is nothing without its people. Policies, strategies and programs are important, but it is our team who bring our vision to life every day through their compassion, expertise and commitment to those we serve. They are the reason our clients feel supported, our partners trust us, and our organisation continues to grow. Their collective contribution is the foundation upon which every success of WCS is built.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to our Management Committee for their stewardship, support and unwavering belief in both our organisation and the communities we serve. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Margaret and Karen for their exceptional support this year. Their guidance, presence on interview panels, willingness to listen, and confidence in the vision and future of WCS have provided both reassurance and encouragement throughout a year of growth and change. Their genuine belief in who we are, what we stand for, and the impact we create in our community continues to inspire us.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to our clients. Every day, we are privileged to witness extraordinary courage, resilience and determination. Whether taking the first step towards seeking support, navigating complex circumstances, or working towards a brighter future for themselves and their families, our clients continually remind us why this work matters. Their trust in our organisation is something we never take for granted. Every program we deliver, every partnership we build and every improvement we make is ultimately in service of supporting people to achieve safety, wellbeing, connection and hope. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside them and humbled by the strength they demonstrate every day.

On a personal level, this year has reinforced the importance of connection, partnership and community. It has been a year of learning, growth and shared achievements, reminding me that none of us succeeds alone. I am incredibly grateful for the people who have supported, guided and walked alongside me, and for the collective passion and purpose that continue to drive WCS forward.

As we look to the future, I am filled with hope and optimism. I know there will be challenges ahead, but I also know we have the people, partnerships and purpose to meet them. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to WCS this year. Together, we will continue to create safer, stronger and more connected communities across the Whitsundays.



Kirsty Gillett

Chief Executive Officer



Our Purpose

Empowering individuals, families and the community through education, counselling and support.

Our Vision

A respectful, safe and caring community.

Whitsunday Counselling & Support

Our Values

Safe & Empowering
We offer a safe space to seek support, guidance and the resources to empower our clients to rebuild their lives.

Respect, Dignity & Compassion
We treat everyone and every situation inclusively with respect, dignity and compassion. We approach all situations, whether it be internal communication, external engagement or client services with these values so that everyone feels seen, heard and safe.

Trustworthy & Accountable
We operate with authenticity, confidentiality and transparency so that we can earn and maintain the trust of everyone in our community. We honour our word and give confidence that we can be relied upon.

Community-Driven
We put our people and our community at the forefront of all that we do. We give back, we support one another, we celebrate the wins together and embrace those around us in times of need.

Child-Focused
We put children first, to keep them safe and protected, physically and mentally. We foster and nurture healthy relationships, boundaries and give all children the opportunity to thrive.

Strong enough to hold you.

From the President

It is again a great honour to present the President's Report for Whitsunday Counselling and Support 2025-26 Annual Report.

This year has been one of reflection, planning and continued commitment to the important work our organisation undertakes in supporting women, children and families experiencing vulnerability and hardship.

WCS continues to provide an invaluable, life changing service to our community. The dedication of our team of counsellors, support workers and staff is central to the work we do, providing compassionate, professional and practical support to families and victim survivors of domestic violence.

Major Projects and Achievements

A significant achievement during the year has been the development and completion of our new 5 Year Strategic Plan and branding. This was a project that all staff were involved in and it was a joy for me to see how they all came together to contribute ideas. We can all be very proud of the output, owned by us all.

This plan provides a clear direction for the organisation as we look to the future, ensuring that our service remains responsive to the growing challenge of domestic violence in our community. It reflects our commitment to strengthening our service delivery, building organisational capacity and ensuring the long-term sustainability of WCS.

The strategic plan represents an important investment in the future of our organisation. It provides a framework to guide our priorities, inform decision making and support continued growth and development over the coming years.

Another key initiative has been the implementation of our Positive Workplace Culture Program. Our staff are at the coalface of the epidemic that is domestic violence. We recognise that the wellbeing, engagement and professional development of our staff are fundamental to the service we provide. This program reflects our commitment to fostering a workplace that is respectful, inclusive, supportive and collaborative.

Creating and maintaining a positive workplace culture is an ongoing process. We are committed to ensuring our staff feel supported and empowered in the important work they undertake.

We have also undertaken an internal restructure, away from the co-management model that had been in place. This has led to the appointment of Kirsty Gillet as CEO. Kirsty had previously been the manager of Administrative Services. It is hoped this new model will provide pathways for all staff to grow and progress within the organisation.

Awarded Whitsunday Community Champion of the Year

This year we were awarded the Community Champion of the Year Award at the Whitsunday Business Awards Ceremony. This was a magnificent achievement and well deserved. More importantly, this was acknowledgment of the years of hard work contributed by all our staff.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank all our staff for their unwavering dedication, professionalism and compassion to our clients, each other and the wider community. The work undertaken by our team is often complex, challenging and at times risky. Their commitment to supporting those in need is both admirable and deeply appreciated.

I also extend my gratitude to our Board members for their governance guidance and continued commitment to the organisation. Their contribution has been instrumental in progressing our strategic priorities and ensuring WCS remains focused on its purpose.

We are also grateful to our community partners, the Whitsunday and Bowen Police, Whitsunday Housing and other stakeholders and community organisations. The relationships we maintain within our community are essential to our ability to provide meaningful and effective support to our clients.

Looking Ahead

We look towards the next year with confidence and a strong sense of purpose. Our new Strategic Plan provides a foundation for continued development while our commitment to a positive workplace culture will remain central to our organisational values.

We will continue to strive for excellence in service delivery, strengthen our community ties and ensure that the needs of our clients and the community remain at the forefront of everything we do.

I am proud to be President of Whitsunday Counselling and Support Inc, and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to an organisation that makes such a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed to our achievements throughout the year.



Margaret Kennedy

Management Committee President

From the Refuge

Coordinator's Overview

Providing effective support to women and children impacted by domestic and family violence requires a skilled, knowledgeable and compassionate team, supported by strong leadership and a clear understanding of the complexities of family violence.

Our Refuge is committed to delivering a high-quality, trauma-informed service through a team with diverse qualifications, professional experience and specialist knowledge across the domestic and family violence, community services and broader support sectors. This experience includes counselling, court support, women's health and wellbeing, risk assessment, advocacy and working alongside families experiencing complex challenges. The service is further strengthened by an understanding of the systems and barriers that can impact women and children seeking safety.



Natasha

Refuge Coordinator







Our Practitioners – Experience & Commitment

Our Refuge team consists of three dedicated Case Managers: Andrea, Lucy and Kirsty. Together, they bring a diverse combination of professional experience, qualifications and specialist skills across domestic and family violence, human services, residential care, child and family support, youth work and community services.



Their combined knowledge and experience provide a strong foundation for supporting women, children and families experiencing complex challenges, including trauma, housing instability and vulnerability. The team also brings valuable experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, recognising the importance of culturally safe, respectful and responsive support.

Each practitioner contributes their own strengths and perspectives, allowing the service to provide flexible, informed and compassionate support that recognises the individual circumstances of the families accessing the Refuge.

Staff Culture, Team Development & Service Improvements

A positive and supportive team culture is essential to delivering consistent, high-quality support. Together, staff identified four core values to guide how we work with clients and support one another:

- Empathy – leading with compassion and respect.
- Humour – making space for connection and laughter, even on challenging days.
- Transparency – encouraging honesty, open communication and accountability.
- Staff Wellbeing – recognising the importance of looking after ourselves and each other.

Alongside strengthening our team culture, we have focused on improving day-to-day operations and creating an environment that supports quality service delivery. This has included restructuring the on-call roster, reviewing training and professional development needs, and designing a new staff workspace.

Significant progress has also been made in improving the Refuge environment. We secured $14,000 through the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety to upgrade furniture throughout the accommodation, creating more comfortable, welcoming and homely spaces for families.

A further $20,000 has been secured towards refreshing the outdoor area, comprising $12,000 from St Paul's Anglican Op Shop and $7,000 from Lions. This project will create a more inviting and child-friendly space for families to enjoy.

The next priority is a proposed $20,000 kitchen refurbishment. Funding is currently being pursued, with the aim of further improving the Refuge facilities once funding is secured.

Looking Ahead

Our ongoing focus is to strengthen service delivery, invest in our staff, improve the Refuge environment and continue building strong partnerships with external services. Through skilled practitioners, supportive teamwork and a commitment to continuous improvement, we aim to ensure the Refuge remains a place where women and children feel safe, supported and respected, with the opportunity to rebuild stability and work towards a future free from violence.

From the Counselling Coordinator



In 2026, I was honoured to be appointed as the Counselling Coordinator at Whitsunday Counselling and Support (WCS). This role builds on seven and half years of experience within the organisation, during which I have had the opportunity to work across several key positions, including Women's Resilience Practitioner at the refuge, Specialist Family Counsellor, Acting Manager of Whitsunday Counselling and Support and Counselling Coordinator.

These diverse roles have provided me with extensive experience supporting individuals and families affected by domestic and family violence, sexual violence, trauma, mental health concerns, and other life challenges. They have also given me valuable insight into the needs of our community and the importance of providing accessible, trauma-informed support services.

As Counselling Coordinator, I oversee the delivery and development of the following programs:

- Sexual Violence Program
- Women's Health and Wellbeing Program
- Mental Health Program

Each of these programs plays a vital role in supporting the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals across the Whitsunday region.

Over the past 12 months, Whitsunday Counselling and Support (WCS) has continued its commitment to providing essential support services to individuals and families across the Whitsunday region. Through counselling, advocacy, and case management, many people have been supported to navigate challenging circumstances, improve their wellbeing, and access the assistance they need.

WCS has delivered a range of community initiatives throughout Cannonvale, Bowen, and Collinsville, ensuring services, education, and support remain accessible across the region. These initiatives aim to increase awareness, build community resilience, and promote safety and wellbeing.

WCS has facilitated therapeutic workshops and group programs, including the Shark Cage initiative, Art Workshops for people with lived experience of sexual assault and abuse. These workshops provide a safe and creative space for participants to explore healing and recovery through artistic expression. Participants' work is being recognised through publication in a national QSAN program, helping to amplify the voices of survivors.

To help educate the community about sexual violence, WCS counsellors and practitioners provide information on how to recognise, prevent, report, and respond to sexual assault. Education is delivered through a variety of accessible methods, including social media campaigns, online resources, school presentations, community events, printed information, and interactive activities for children, young people, and adults.

WCS has also delivered programs within local kindergartens, schools, and community settings, focusing on topics such as respectful relationships, consent, and recognising healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours. These programs equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to build safe and respectful connections.

In August, WCS hosted a successful Child Protection Colour Run at the Club Whitsunday PCYC grounds in partnership with other community organisations. The event promoted child safety awareness and brought together a range of services, including Child Safety, Headspace, Queensland Police Service, and other community partners, highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches to protecting children and supporting families.

On 29 October 2026, Whitsunday Counselling and Support (WCS), in partnership with the Domestic Violence Action Group (DVAG), hosted Bowen's first Reclaim the Night event in eight years. The event was coordinated by the Bowen team and attended by 45 community members, including children and teenagers.

The evening focused on raising awareness of domestic and family violence through presentations that provided education on the facts surrounding violence against women, prevention strategies, and available support services for individuals and the broader community. As a direct outcome of the event, three attendees sought further support for themselves or on behalf of others.

On 30 October 2026, a second Reclaim the Night event was held in the Whitsundays, commencing in Airlie Beach and concluding at Shingley Beach, Cannonvale. The event aimed to raise awareness of violence against women and promote the message that women should be able to walk freely and safely without fear, encouraging communities to break the silence surrounding gendered violence.



The event was attended by Mayor Ry Collins, representatives from the Whitsunday Police Service, local service providers, and many members of the wider community. A powerful highlight of the evening was survivor Hannah sharing her personal story and describing her journey of recovery with the support of local services. Guest speaker Peta Franklin-Corbin delivered an inspiring presentation on the importance of Reclaim the Night, highlighting why communities must stand together to support survivors, challenge violence against women, and advocate for safer communities for all.

Collaboration remains a key focus for WCS. Staff work closely with police, the High Risk Team, hospitals, emergency services, and other community agencies to support individuals experiencing domestic and family violence, sexual assault, and other crises. This support may include assisting individuals following an assault, helping them access emergency or alternative accommodation, developing safety plans, providing advocacy, or accompanying and supporting clients throughout court processes.

WCS also contributes to community safety through engagement with school leavers' events, ensuring volunteers and participants are informed about available support services and referral pathways for anyone requiring assistance.

To ensure best-practice service delivery, WCS staff continue to participate in ongoing professional development. Training undertaken throughout the year has included trauma-informed intake and assessment practices, Shark Cage facilitation training, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), and mindfulness-based approaches. This commitment to continual learning strengthens the organisation's ability to respond effectively and compassionately to the diverse needs of the community.

Through strong partnerships, community education, specialised programs, and direct client support, WCS continues to play a vital role in promoting safety, recovery, resilience, and wellbeing throughout the Whitsunday region.

Women's Health and Wellbeing

The Women's Health and Wellbeing Program (WHW) provides ongoing support beyond counselling, assisting women to build their confidence and capacity to re-engage with everyday life. Support includes referrals to health clinics, self-defence courses, housing services and financial resilience courses, alongside assistance with visa applications for permanent residency and other practical needs.

Through this program, Whitsunday Counselling and Supports assists people throughout their journey of leaving domestic violence, accessing support and rebuilding their lives.



In 2026, 52 clients entered and completed the support program. Program delivery varies each year as women from different geographical locations access the service. A central focus is supporting women to recognise their achievements and develop confidence in their abilities, strengthening their resilience and personal resolve as they move forward in their lives.

Women's Health and Wellbeing Mental Health Program

In June 2026, Whitsunday Counselling and Support (WCS) introduced the Women's Health and Wellbeing Mental Health Program, expanding the support services available to women in the Whitsunday region.

The program supports women aged 18 years and older who are experiencing mental health challenges and/or substance use issues that directly affect their ability to engage with services and supports. Many of the women accessing the program have experienced domestic and family violence, sexual abuse, or sexual assault. Through mental health interventions and case management, the program aims to help women improve their wellbeing, strengthen their support networks, and work towards their personal goals. The program does not provide crisis intervention or 24-hour care. Women can access the service through either self-referral or referral from another service provider.

Four months into the program, we are already seeing encouraging outcomes. One initiative, the Wander Women Walking Group, promotes regular exercise, social connection, and improved wellbeing for women experiencing mental health challenges. The group provides a safe and supportive environment where participants can build confidence, reduce isolation, and enjoy the benefits of physical activity.

The program has also partnered with a local high school to promote self-care and mindfulness activities. As part of this engagement, WCS worked with students to create a wellbeing playlist featuring songs and messages that help them feel grounded, present, and less stressed. This innovative project encouraged young people to reflect on positive coping strategies and share what supports their mental wellbeing.

Although still in its early stages, the program's potential is already evident. We are seeing meaningful and life-changing impacts for the women who have engaged with the service, and it is exciting to witness the positive changes taking place. I look forward to seeing how the program continues to grow and support women across our community over the next year and beyond.

Felicity

Counselling Coordinator

From the Families Coordinator

This year has been one of growth, collaboration, and positive outcomes for the families we support across our Specialist Family Counselling, Intensive Family Support, and Tertiary Family Intervention Service programs. Working collaboratively across these programs has allowed us to provide more coordinated and responsive support to families, ensuring they receive the right assistance at the right time.

One of the most encouraging outcomes we have seen this year has been an increase in families successfully closing their support periods with all case goals achieved. These outcomes reflect the hard work and commitment of both our staff and the families we walk alongside. Through a strengths-based and family-centred approach, we have seen families make meaningful and sustainable changes in their lives, leading to improved safety, wellbeing, and stability.

The introduction of the Families Coordinator position has provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen collaboration across programs and gain a broader understanding of the family journey throughout our service system.



Niamh

Families Coordinator

As this role has developed, we have been able to see firsthand the positive impact that coordinated service delivery has on families and the way our programs complement one another. It has been incredibly rewarding to watch families thrive in different areas of their lives and achieve outcomes that once felt out of reach.









Within Intensive Family Support, we have seen significant positive growth in families remaining safely together without requiring statutory intervention. This is always our ultimate goal and represents a positive outcome not only for children and families but for our broader community. By providing early intervention, practical support, and parenting capacity building, families have been empowered to make lasting changes that promote the safety and wellbeing of their children.

This year has also seen positive growth within our workforce. For the first time, our Families Team reached full staffing capacity, allowing us to strengthen service delivery and better meet the needs of our community. Having a complete team has enhanced collaboration, reduced pressures across programs, and enabled us to provide a more consistent level of support to families.

Community engagement has continued to be a strong focus throughout the year. We have been fortunate to work alongside an incredibly supportive community that continually demonstrates its commitment to local families. Whether through donations, sponsorships, practical support, or collaborative initiatives, our community has positively contributed to the lives of the families we support.

It has been a particularly strong year for raising awareness of our services and engaging with the broader community. One of our newest community partnerships has been with Club Whitsunday, who have generously included our organisation in their community raffles. This partnership provides valuable opportunities to connect with community members, increase awareness of our services, and promote the support available to local families. Club Whitsunday also generously donated the use of their space for our annual Colour Fun Run during Child Protection Week.

The Colour Fun Run was once again an overwhelming success, continuing to grow each year with the support of additional sponsors and community partners. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, we are able to provide a free and inclusive event for families across the region. We would like to acknowledge ARS Whitsundays, All Whitsunday Electrical, Paddy's Shenanigans, Club Whitsunday, and Good Souls Media for their support. Their contributions help create a fun and meaningful community event while reinforcing the important message that protecting children is everybody's business.

An important focus of the event continues to be encouraging local businesses and organisations outside of the community services sector to learn more about the work we do and the supports available within our region. Through these connections, we continue to strengthen community understanding, increase awareness of family support services, and build a shared commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and families.

To our staff, thank you. You are truly the backbone of our organisation. We would not be able to deliver the quality of support we do without your commitment, professionalism, compassion, and dedication. Every day you show up for children, families, and each other, often navigating complex situations with care, empathy, and determination. Your passion for making a difference in the lives of families is evident in everything you do. Thank you for your incredible work ethic, your unwavering support of one another, and for making our Families Team such a positive, skilled, and dedicated group of professionals.

To our clients, thank you for trusting us with your stories, your challenges, and your successes. It is a privilege to walk alongside you during important times in your lives. While we may provide guidance, support, and encouragement, it is you who undertake the hard work required to create positive change. We are continually inspired by your resilience, strength, and determination, and we are incredibly proud of the growth and achievements we have witnessed throughout the year.

As we look ahead, our goal is to continue building on the strong foundations established this year. We will continue striving to provide the highest quality service to families, strengthen our community connections and partnerships, and ensure our programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of our region. We look forward to continuing to support children and families to thrive, while raising the bar in all that we do to create safer, stronger, and more connected communities.



From the Domestic Family Violence Team

It has been another demanding year in the DFV space, with our programs continuing to operate at peak capacity. Our daily work aligns with the Queensland Government's Safer Families, Safer Communities—A domestic and family violence reform strategy for Queensland, released mid-2026. Structured around whole-of-community responses, integrated services, equitable statewide access, and quality data performance, the Strategy seeks to create safer homes and communities where DFV is prevented before it begins. Grounded in primary prevention, early intervention, perpetrator accountability, and recovery, it emphasizes a shared responsibility across government, community groups, and local sectors to foster a safety-first approach.

In May, we proudly supported Domestic Violence Prevention Month by hosting our annual Candle Lighting Ceremony—joining communities across Queensland on the first Wednesday of the month to honour those affected, raise awareness, and highlight vital local support services. These moments of collective reflection mirror the core drivers of our daily frontline and coordination work. Under the 2026 theme—Together Queenslanders can prevent domestic and family violence—we are reminded that creating safe, respectful communities is an ongoing, shared responsibility. Three of our leaders were lucky enough to attend the Premier's breakfast at Parliament House for the 2026 Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month followed by attending the Domestic and Family Violence Forum hosted by Belinda Drew, The Director-General of the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.









WCS



Our Embedded Worker programs at the Whitsunday and Bowen Police Stations have continued to grow this year, further strengthening our collaborative foundations and enduring partnerships with the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Regular meetings with Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) and Officers in Charge ensure a seamless approach to supporting individuals who attend police stations to report DFV. This frontline role integrates closely with our broader multi-agency response, supporting those at imminent risk under Section 5a information-sharing legislation. Through consistent monthly collaboration, we continue to drive coordinated pathways that prioritise the safety and recovery of victim-survivors.

Court support at both the Proserpine and Bowen Courts has remained a steady, vital presence each week. We are immensely grateful to have a dedicated long-term volunteer supporting our work in Proserpine, helping us manage the weekly juggle. Despite navigating multiple changes in magistrates and police prosecutors over the year, our team has remained steadfast—continuing to show up week after week to ensure continuity of care for those navigating the DFV court system.

Welcoming new faces to our team this year has brought fresh enthusiasm, innovative ideas, and profound compassion to our DFV programs. We look forward to continuing to grow and strengthen our team in the coming months. Above all, while our team evolves, our core commitment remains absolute: driving the prevention of DFV and championing safety right across the Whitsunday community.





Charlotte

DFV Coordinator

From the Administration Team



This year has been one of significant growth, change and development for the Administration Team.

I joined the organisation in February as a team of one and quickly found myself immersed in a long list of projects, system improvements and onboarding activities. It became clear early on that, with so much planned for the organisation, additional support would be essential to ensure we could maintain day-to-day operations while continuing to move important projects forward.

In March, Meleeta joined the team, bringing valuable support and allowing us to tackle multiple priorities simultaneously. Having a dedicated administration team enabled us to progress key initiatives more efficiently, while also strengthening the support available to staff across the organisation.

As our understanding of organisational needs grew, it became evident that a dedicated reception and communications role would further enhance our capacity. That led to the appointment of Marlee, who now manages reception and our social media presence. Marlee is often the first voice or face people encounter when they reach out to us, and that first contact matters. Her warmth, professionalism and genuine care help create a positive experience from the very first connection. Having dedicated support at reception has also allowed Meleeta and myself to focus on the broader administrative, operational and project work that underpins our services.

With reception now fully staffed, all members of the Administration team have completed Accidental Counsellor training. This has strengthened our ability to respond appropriately and compassionately to people contacting the service, recognising that for many, their first conversation with us may be during a difficult time in their lives.

Throughout the year, the Administration team has contributed across a broad range of areas. We have supported the recruitment and onboarding of new staff, ensuring team members have the tools, systems and information required to successfully commence their roles.

We have also undertaken the implementation of a new payroll system, designed to streamline processes, improve efficiency and strengthen organisational compliance. Behind the scenes, we have worked to improve our physical workspaces, beginning the process of decluttering and reorganising storage areas throughout the organisation. While not always the most glamorous task, creating organised and functional spaces has improved accessibility, efficiency and made room for future growth.

This year I also completed supervision training, enabling me to provide formal supervision and support to members of the Administration team. This investment in professional development strengthens our capacity as a team and helps ensure staff receive the guidance and support they need in their roles.

In addition to our day-to-day responsibilities, we have played a significant role in coordinating the organisation's major events and community activities. From marketing and promotional materials to catering, registrations and event logistics, the Administration team has worked closely with staff to help bring these important events to life. Whether visible or behind the scenes, these events provide valuable opportunities to engage with the community, raise awareness and support the organisation's mission.

We have also provided ongoing administrative support to our counselling and support services, assisted with emergency relief programs and worked closely with staff across all areas of the organisation to ensure services continue to operate smoothly and effectively.

While much of our work happens behind the scenes, administration plays a critical role in supporting the delivery of frontline services. Strong systems, organised processes and responsive support allow our practitioners to focus their time and expertise where it matters most, supporting individuals and families affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

We are proud to have grown from a team of one to a team of three, each with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Together, we have laid important foundations that will support the organisation's continued growth and sustainability into the future.

Thank you to everyone for your support, encouragement and patience as we established new systems, implemented new processes and settled into our respective roles. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our systems, support our colleagues and contribute to the important work of Whitsunday Counselling and Support in the year ahead.

Angela

Administration Coordinator

Defining a safe & empowering workplace

Since June 2026, I have had the privilege of partnering with the Whitsunday Counselling Services team to strengthen organisational culture, enhance collaboration, and build the foundations of high-performing teams. This work has been anchored in three key pillars: Common Understanding, ensuring clarity of individual and collective roles and their contribution to organisational success; Psychological Safety, fostering an environment where team members feel confident to share ideas, raise concerns, discuss challenges, and learn from mistakes without fear of judgement or repercussions; and Pro-Social Purpose, helping individuals connect their unique strengths and contributions to meaningful outcomes for both colleagues and clients.

As part of this journey, the team has undertaken a significant piece of work to define their own shared values and commitments to one another. Distinct from organisational strategic values, these commitments represent the behaviours and standards the team chooses to uphold every day.

The values identified by the team are Respect, Integrity, Safety, Encouragement, and Connection. Together, these values support a collective vision of creating “a workplace where everyone feels respected, valued, empowered, enjoys coming to work, and is striving towards common goals.”

Looking ahead to 2027, this work will continue to evolve as the team translates these values into practical, everyday behaviours and tools that reinforce a positive and high-performing culture. By embedding these commitments into daily practice, Whitsunday Counselling Services is investing in the ongoing development of its people, strengthening organisational performance, and ultimately enhancing outcomes for the clients and communities it serves.

Adam Paroz

Pinnacle Impact Consultancy









A new Strategic Plan & Brand Identity

It has been a pleasure to work with the whole Whitsunday Counselling and Support team on two major projects this year, the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan and the rebrand.

The commitment from every member of the team, from the initial survey all the way through to the in-person workshops, was truly inspiring. The values they uphold and bring to every gathering shows their dedication to a respectful, safe and caring community. Running workshops across Cannonvale, the Refuge and Bowen gave everyone, including WCS team members volunteers and Management Committee members the opportunity to have their ideas heard, and the themes that came through were remarkably consistent across all three sites.

A strategic plan gives an organisation something to point to, and for a service working across three locations it gives everyone the same direction to move towards. The plan WCS now has set out five clear priorities drawn from the team's own words, with measures attached to each one, so the Management Committee, stakeholders and the community can see what WCS has set out to achieve and follow its progress between now and 2030.

The rebrand mattered just as much, because WCS needed an identity it could be proud of, one that reflects the professionalism and seriousness of the work while feeling warm and safe to the people who reach out for help. For a service where trust is everything, the way WCS presents itself matters from the first moment someone sees a poster, opens the website or walks through the door, and the new brand gives the team something consistent and confident to put in front of their community.

Running both projects alongside each other meant they drew on the same conversations and the same values, so the plan and the brand are now aligned. That alignment is what will make both of them useful well into the future.

Both carry the same thing at their centre, the people WCS serves, the team who deliver that service and the community that surrounds it. Seeing that come through so clearly has been the highlight of my year, and I look forward to watching the plan take shape over the next four years and the rebrand rollout across other aspects of the organisation.

Carolyn Richardson

Carolyn Richardson Creative


BUNNINGS




PRIZE VOUCHER






Reclaim the Night
Sexual Violence Awareness




NO MEANS NO

















Our Programs & Services



Domestic & Family Violence Counselling and Court Support

Our Domestic & Family Violence Program offers information, support, counselling and court support in the Whitsundays to women and children affected by domestic and family violence.



Intensive Family Support Service

The Intensive Family Support Service provides support to children and families that have had previous involvement with, or are at risk of progressing into the statutory child protection system without support.



Specialist Family Counselling Service

The Specialist Family Counselling Service is targeted to provide counselling to children, parents and families affected by domestic and family violence, or who are at risk of neglect or abuse, or who have experienced child sexual abuse.



Women's Health & Wellbeing

This program provides tailored, holistic support to women who have been affected by domestic and family violence to achieve independent living and better wellbeing.



Our Programs & Services



Domestic & Family Violence Crisis Accommodation

Crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children who are escaping domestic and family violence and requiring support and subsidised housing.



Sexual Violence Counselling

The Sexual Violence Counselling service provides support to individuals who have experienced or are experiencing sexual violence or abuse. Support is also provided to their significant others.



Emergency Relief

Emergency relief is available to clients engaged with Whitsunday Counselling & Support for immediate financial crisis assistance.



Information, Advocacy & Referral

Support staff can provide a range of information for other appropriate services.



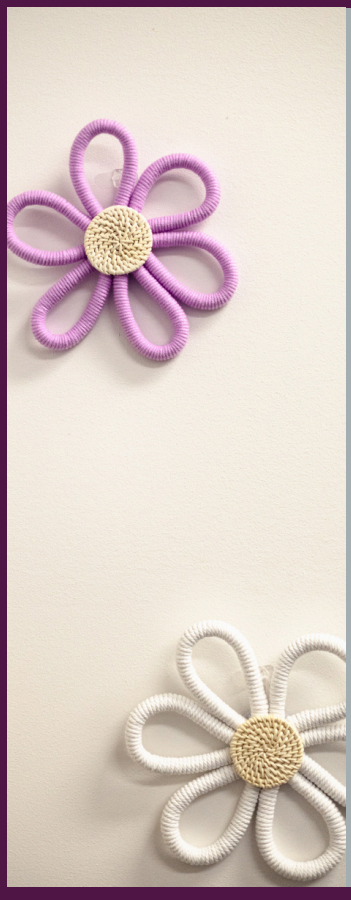
Our Programs & Services



Specialist Mental Health Program

Our Specialist Mental Health Program offers women aged 18 years and over who have experienced, are impacted by, or at risk of domestic, family and/or sexual violence (DFSV) a safe, supportive and confidential space to focus on their mental health and wellbeing.

Through individual counselling and tailored mental health support, we work alongside women to strengthen emotional wellbeing, build resilience, develop healthy coping strategies and improve everyday functioning. Whether you are navigating the impacts of violence, experiencing emotional distress, or working towards rebuilding your sense of safety and wellbeing, support is available.



Embedded Support Services at Bowen & Cannonvale Police Stations

Whitsunday Counselling and Support Inc. provides embedded specialist support services within both Bowen and Cannonvale Police Stations through a formal partnership with the Queensland Police Service.

Under this arrangement, a qualified Support Worker is co-located within each station to deliver immediate, confidential, and trauma-informed assistance to individuals and families affected by domestic and family violence, sexual assault, and related crises.

The embedded workers facilitate collaborative case management between police and support services, assist with referrals and safety planning, and contribute to enhanced victim support outcomes through integrated, community-based intervention.

This partnership aims to strengthen interagency coordination, improve service accessibility, and ensure timely, compassionate responses for victims of violence across the Whitsunday region.

Donations & Acknowledgements

Every year the WCS Staff and Management Committee are overwhelmed by the generosity of people and organisations in our community. Without the ongoing donations our service would not be in a position to provide the little touches that are so welcoming for our families and women experiencing domestic and family violence.

The following mentions only a few of the many donations we receive from our community.

The ongoing support of our Whitsunday Community enables the lives of those who go through trauma to be enriched by the giving of others.



Financial

- Zonta club of the Whitsundays
- Whitsunday Property Buyers
- Lions Club Whitsunday
- Club Whitsunday – Raffle
- Sammut Bulow Bennett – SBB Partners
- Hamilton Island Enterprises
- St. Paul Anglican Op Shop
- Shirtfront Solutions
- Whitsunday Regional Council

Colour Run Prize Donors

- Big 4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort
- Cruise Whitsundays
- Hamilton Island Reef View Hotel
- Whitsunday Jetski Tours
- Mulligans Sports Bar – Airlie Beach
- Ocean Rafting

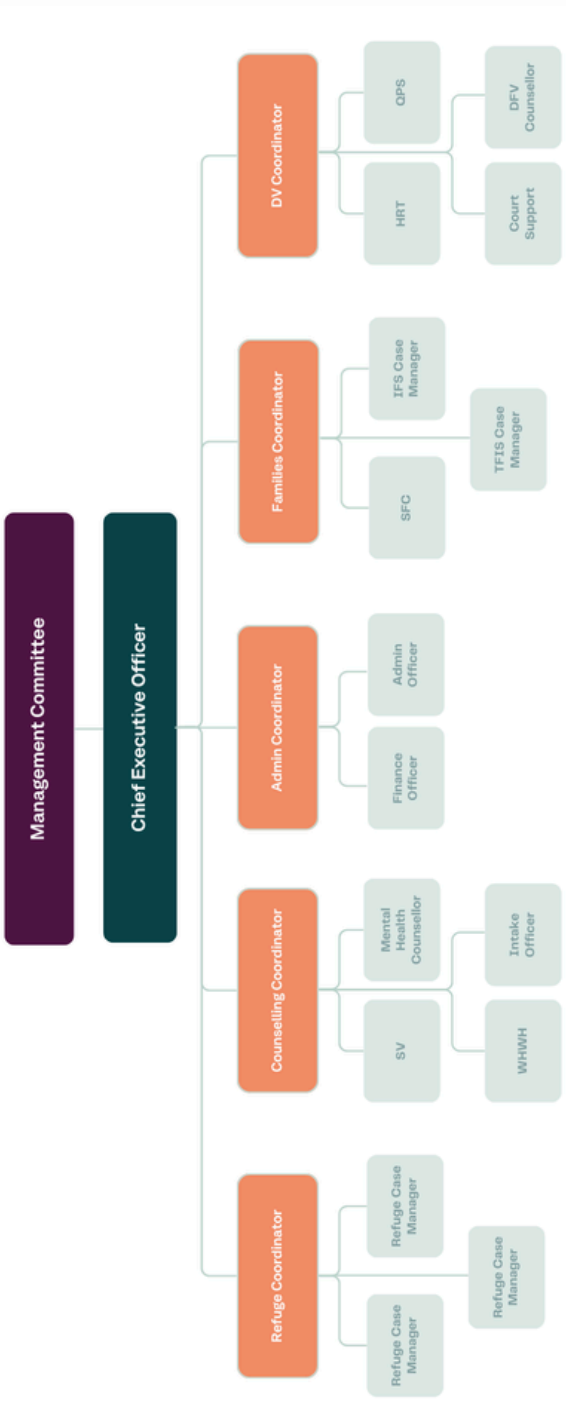
Colour Run Sponsors:

- Good Souls Media
- All Whitsunday Electrical
- Paddy's Shenanigans
- ARS Whitsunday
- Club Whitsunday / Whitsunday Sports Park

Friends & Supporters Register

- Neave McLaren (dignity bags)
- Stephanie (Easter baskets)
- Airlie Lingerie Shop (kids PJs and menstrual cups)
- Lions Club (Easter Eggs)
- Zonta Club (Easter eggs and kids activity baskets, mothers day gifts)
- Share the Dignity (period undies x 300, other period products)
- Rebecca Waghorn (baby clothes + blankets)
- Liberty Whitsunday Church, Proserpine (7 shopping baskets full of goodies – 7 coffee mugs with chocolates for the kids to give to mum for Mothers Day – 12 baskets of bathroom goodies)
- Zephyr Education Unlimited (school supplies)
- Proserpine Chat & Patch (Quilted baby blankets x 8)
- Skyline Attractions (ferris wheel tickets)
- Cannonvale Medical Center (dignity bags)
- Coastal Brush x *GOODWORKS (sheets + PJs)
- Woolworths (Bowen RTN food)

Organisational Chart



Contacts

EMERGENCY SERVICES	**000**
QLD Sexual Assault Service	**1800 010 120**
1800 RESPECT	**1800 737 732**

Lifeline	13 11 14
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
Men’s Line	1800 600 636
DVConnect 24 Hour Helpline	1800 811 811
Parentline	1300 301 300
Policelink	131 444
Homeless Hotline	1800 474 753

LOCATIONS

Whitsunday Counselling & Support's reach allows us to provide services to the greater Whitsunday region.

HEAD OFFICE
Shop 1, 157 Shute Harbour Road
Cannonvale Qld 4802

BOWEN OFFICE
Shop 1, 77 Herbert Street
Bowen Qld 4805

07 4946 2999 **** whitsundaycs.com.au

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM
Private Location

OUTREACH
Proserpine | Collinsville | Hamilton Island



WCS