



Resilience and Renewal: after crises

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Featured Artwork

Artwork featured in this newsletter is from the 2020 'Powerful Together, Uniquely Different' International Women's Day exhibition and the finalists in the 2019 Department of Education and Training and Gippsland Women's Health 'Challenging Gender Stereotypes' Respectful Relationships school student 'Design on a Bus' competition.

Cover Image: Bee, Jacqui Swan.

Photo: Lindsay Roberts, courtesy Gippsland Art Gallery



About us

We are the lead organisation for gender equity, women's health, prevention of violence against women, and family violence system leadership in Gippsland.

Our Vision

An equal and respectful Gippsland for all women.

Our Purpose

To improve women's health, wellbeing and freedom of choice by advancing gender equity and working to prevent violence against women.

Our Story

Inspired by changing times and the need for a women's health service for women by women in Gippsland, consultations took place across Gippsland in 1991 under the banner of the Gippsland Women's Health Project. This led to the funding and establishment of Gippsland Women's Health Service 1992.

From small but mighty beginnings Gippsland Women's Health continues to be the lead organisation for gender equity, women's health, prevention of violence against women, and family violence system leadership in Gippsland.

We proudly acknowledge the Gippsland Aboriginal communities and their rich culture. We acknowledge the Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the custodians of the land and water on which we live, work and play.

Gippsland Women's Health acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



Our Campaigns



Make the Link

Highlighting the importance of addressing gender inequality to end men's violence against women
www.makethelink.org.au



Are You Covered?

A safesex project promoting consent and the installation of 30 condom vending machines across Gippsland.

This newsletter is designed to be informative and educational. The statements or opinions expressed in this newsletter are not intended to replace advice from your health practitioner and do not necessarily reflect the views of Gippsland Women's Health. © GWH 2020

Editors: Andrea Hall and Lynette Teese

An update from our Acting CEO



Welcome to the winter 2020 newsletter 'Resilience and Renewal: after crisis'. Traditionally winter is a time to seek the warmth of home. As the days grow shorter and colder, the winter months are usually a time for quietness allowing us to rest our bodies and minds. This year, we find ourselves navigating strange and challenging times.

Since the very beginning of 2020, Gippsland found itself in uncharted territories. From the devastation of the summer bushfires in East Gippsland and Far East Gippsland through to the wide reaching impact of COVID-19 which has changed everything about how we live and go about our lives. For many of us, life has been upended and we now live with the uncertainty of what the future will look like.

During times of crisis, messages of strength and courage are so important. Within these pages you will find women sharing their journeys of resilience and renewal; celebrating and sharing their gender, culture

and identity through language and art, adding their voice to campaigns for change, forging new paths of opportunity for our children through a "legacy of change" and encouraging us to reflect on who we are and what is meaningful.

Maya Angelou said:

"I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it".

At Gippsland Women's Health we 'champion and celebrate' the women of Gippsland. We stand beside these bold and courageous women, valuing their voices, stories, strength and resilience as we move closer to a time of recovery and renewal.

Melanie Brown
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Changing how we work

Due to COVID-19 GWH are working remotely. Our office and Wig Bank will be closed until further notice. Our office phone line (03) 5143 1600 will remain open or please contact us via our website.

The Wellington McGrath Breast Care Nurse is available for consultation. Please call us to arrange an appointment.



GWH members tour Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale Nov 2019

A New Structure.

“We believe it makes us more relevant into the future and better able to achieve our vision of an equal and respectful Gippsland for all women”

There is no doubt that the twelve months from the winter of 2019 until the winter of 2020 have been a time of reflection, review, challenge, change and renewal for Gippsland Women’s Health (GWH). Our new branding has given us a bright and modern uplift and our new website provides a simpler, cleaner and more accessible way to communicate with the women of Gippsland, and our partner and funding organisations.

Ticking away in the background during this time was an important piece of work lead by the GWH Board. The GWH Review and Refresh was initiated by the Board in July 2019 as a final action from the Board’s strategic priorities and planning process. It has resulted in a newly organised, refreshed structure and positions in GWH and has seen the establishment of new positions and new ways of working together.

The Board wanted to make certain through the Review and Refresh that GWH has the right positions, is organised in the right way and with the right people to deliver on our strategic priorities for the women of Gippsland. The Board wanted a structure that achieved strong integration of our work, enhanced collaboration, reflected distributed leadership and shared responsibility across the organisation for leadership and decision making. The structure needed to enable career progression, strength based performance development and succession planning. Overall the Review and Refresh needed to support the long term sustainability of GWH, including a more robust business structure and stronger business acumen, expanded administration capacity and a greater strategic focus.

Change always brings a range of opportunities and possibilities. Our need to be courageous in reflection, to be brave in seeking a new shape for our organisation, and to be flexible and adaptable to find new ways to work, has made us uncomfortable some days. In the end however, we believe it makes us more relevant into the future and better able to achieve our vision of an equal and respectful Gippsland for all women.

Sue Barker
Acting Board Chair

Fiona Owen
Chief Executive Officer

New Branding

September 2019 saw a new look for Gippsland Women’s Health with the launch of our bold new logo and brand.

The new colours and geometric design reflect our work in shaping and advancing a Gippsland for equality and respect.



New Website

Our new website was launched in March featuring our strong new colours and modern design.

It is easy to navigate and tells you everything you need to know about our work, with downloadable resources, publications and information on support services.

We welcome your feedback.

Wig Bank celebrates 10 years.

Monday 2 August 2010 was a momentous day for Gippsland Women's Health. The Wig Bank was officially opened on 31 July, with wigs made available for borrowing on Monday 2 August.

Following his successful exhibition 'Local Women', Gippsland artist Ken Roberts donated funds from the sale of his paintings to GWH in memory and honour of his mum, with the express wish that the money be used in such a way that would benefit women undergoing cancer treatment. Ken's mother Jean was a survivor of cancer so firsthand knowledge of the cancer journey was well-known to the Roberts family. Ken's donation was used to establish the Wig Bank that continues to be a significant resource for the women of Gippsland.

The Wig Bank continues to be funded by donations and has expanded now to house more than 100 wigs of all colours, styles and lengths. Wigs are borrowed for as long as they are required and can be exchanged for a different wig if desired.

Ken, his sister Joy Landy and Jean's sister Betty Flint, were in the building recently to see how his donation has grown to be a significant entity for the women of Gippsland.



Marg Centra, Mcgrath Breastcare Nurse, Lynette Teese, GWH, Betty Flint, Ken Roberts and Joy Landy
Photo: ABC Gippsland

"It's very humbling that my donation that began the Wig Bank in my Mum's, Jean Roberts, memory continues to help Gippsland women and I thank and congratulate Gippsland Women's Health for making it possible"

- Ken Roberts

Annual General Meeting.



'We are Rural Women, We are Diverse'

GWH's Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 21 November 2019 at the Port of Sale. We held an engaging panel discussion titled 'We are Rural Women, We are Diverse' guided by ABC Gippsland presenter Amber Irving-Guthrie and guest speakers were Erin Matthews, Dr. Sybille Dobber, Yumna Ahmed, Ivy Yarram and Susanna Pain (pictured above).

Prior to the formalities of our Annual General Meeting, Erin Mathews, Curator of the Gippsland Art Gallery hosted a tour of the gallery. This was a wonderful opportunity to learn about the amazing new space and the current exhibitions.

Membership

We welcome as members all women living, working or studying in Gippsland. To become a new member please complete the membership form included in this newsletter or via our website.

A reminder to existing members that membership must be renewed each new financial year to remain current.

The impact of COVID-19 on women.

COVID-19 reduces women's economic security. The financial impact of COVID-19 has been greater for women and this reflects the financial gender inequity that already exists.

The gender pay gap in Australia is 13.9% (Workplace Gender Equality Agency) and this demonstrates women's greater representation in lower paid jobs including cleaners, early childcare workers, hospitality and retail workers. Women's unemployment has increased fivefold since the pandemic and 55% of job losses were jobs held by women. The majority of the casual workers unable to access JobKeeper payment are women.

In addition to the changes to the women's paid work there has been an increase in women's unpaid roles. \$205 billion is the value of unpaid labour by Victorian women (Deloitte Report 2019). This would have increased during lockdown as women were supporting children's education at home during school closures.

Accessing superannuation is one way to bridge the financial insecurity of the pandemic. However women are depleting their superannuation at a higher rate than men when withdrawing emergency COVID-19 funds.

“COVID-19 is an opportunity to rebuild our lives and economy with gender equality at the heart of everything we do. Recovery must lead to a more equal world.”

This is concerning as it adds to already depleted women's retirement savings with an average of \$90,000 less than men and an income gap of 39%.

A gender equal economy is a human right, but it is also essential for prosperity. Research from across the world has shown gender equity delivers greater productivity, higher profits and economic growth. It prevents violence against women and girls and diminishes corruption. Societies that value women and men as equal are safer and healthier.

Economic security means having a stable income, affordable shelter and income for food and basic living expenses. It also means having opportunities to thrive through education, training and employment.

COVID-19 is an opportunity to rebuild our lives and economy with gender equality at the heart of everything we do. Recovery must lead to a more equal world.

COVID-19 IS A GENDERED PROBLEM

The majority of essential workers have been women and are in the **lowest paid jobs.**

CLEANERS **TEACHERS** **EARLY CHILDCARE** **RETAIL WORKERS**

A GENDER EQUAL RECOVERY REQUIRES GENDER EQUAL SOLUTIONS

G+V GENVIC

Recommendations for gender equal recovery and resilience:

Endorse the GenVic Joint Statement on Gender Equality and COVID 19

Get gender equality investment back on track through a significant stimulus injection in the State Budget and the introduction of gender responsive budgeting.

Intervene and stimulate the economy in a gender equal manner by:

Stimulating jobs in industries that employ women. Nation-building infrastructure investment must include social infrastructure as well as bricks and mortar so that women and men benefit equally from job creation and recovery stimulus.

Creating a statewide Gender & Disaster Workforce to support recovery at a local level in communities impacted by COVID-19 and the Summer Bushfires

Building a personal protective equipment manufacturing sector to guarantee supply to the entire essential service workforce

Providing wage subsidies and other supports to workers, including women in casual jobs

Closing the gender pay gap through legislation

Guaranteeing superannuation contributions while on maternity and paternity leave

Retain universal free childcare in a way that is sustainable for early childhood educators and providers, to support workforce participation.

Provide recognition and support to carers and educators at home. This may include increasing maternity and paternity leave provision, a government funded 'carer credit' in the form of superannuation payments or pension top-ups in recognition of savings to the budget delivered by women and initiatives to encourage shared care between men and women.

Collect, analyse and publish sex and gender disaggregated data on the impact of COVID-19 to ensure policy, planning, investment and communications are nuanced for gender.

More information at https://www.genvic.org.au/focus_areas/advocacy/gen-vic-campaigns/gender-equity_womens-organisations-unite-on-covid19-disaster/

“Women in rural and remote areas of Australia experience different health and wellbeing outcomes than those living in urban areas due to lack of access to health services, shortages of health professionals and infrastructure. Rural women experience financial insecurity, social isolation, complex barriers to equal participation and are greatly impacted by climate change and disasters.”



Along with almost 100 other organisations, GWH has endorsed the Gender Equity Victoria Joint Statement on Gender Equality and COVID-19.

Learn more and download the Gender Disaster and Resilience: Towards a Gender Equal Recovery Factsheets at www.gwhealth.asn.au/news/gender-equality-covid19/

Mindfulness for resilience and renewal after crises.



Drought, bushfires, climate change, COVID-19 including isolation and school learning from home, lost jobs, inequality and family violence and racism have certainly raised our collective anxiety in 2020.

Fostering resilience has never seemed more important. Mindfulness can help us maintain hope in the face of so much challenge.

The most important thing to understand about resilience is that it is a state not a trait, which means that our environment is critical. Our resilience is everchanging and dynamic, it is not a fixed character or personality trait. We can move in and out of resilience because it depends on two things:

1. Our own internal skills, our personal resources and our ability to use them effectively
2. The external environment around us

For instance, if you were affected by the January bushfires your energy might have been quite depleted when we entered lockdown in March. Your resilience might have been quite different to other times in your life. If you did experience the bushfires and found resources within yourself that you didn't know you had, and experienced a strong sense of community connection, you might have felt more resilient than you expected.

This state of personal resilience is individual and depends on our inner resources and our interaction with the world around us. It is much more than bouncing back. Resilience comes from learning how to respond to our internal and external environments in useful ways, so that we can stay focused on what truly matters in our lives.

Our internal skills have developed as a result of our experiences in the world, our education, family, culture, history, our opportunities. The external environment can help or hinder our capacity to tap into our personal resilience. One of the keys is access to information,

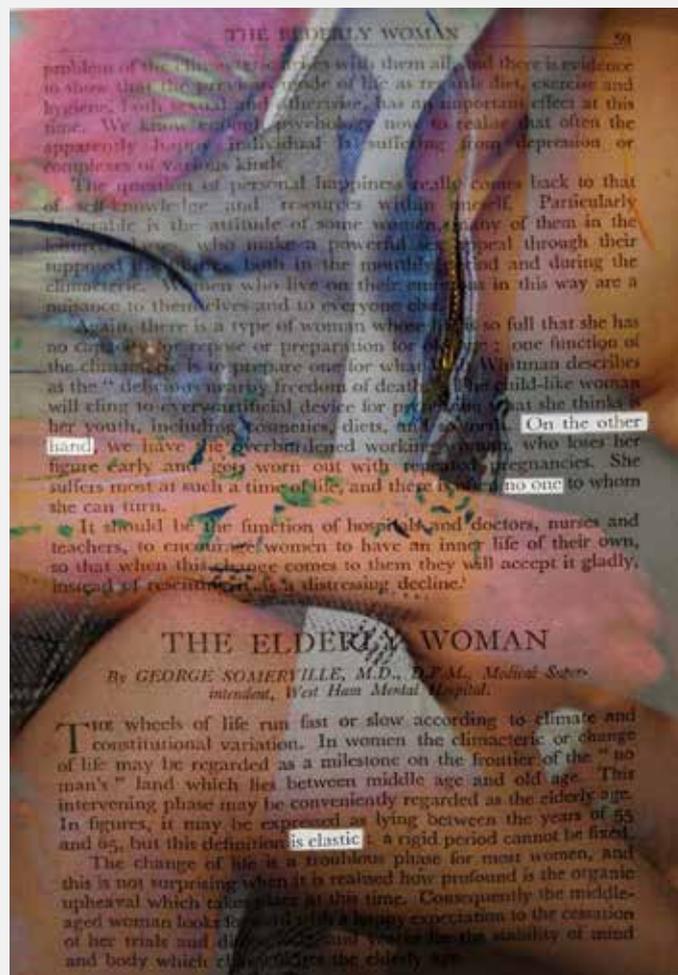
services and resources. For example, if information and resources are bound up in bureaucracy (external environment) it can hinder a person's individual resilience.

A person who is able to maintain their resilience is often able to do so by remembering that they have a choice and by focusing on what is within their control. A choice to speak or not to speak, a choice to stay or leave, a choice to ask for help or persist independently. In every situation in life there is a choice, at least about our attitude.

Societal structures and systems have unfortunately limited women's choices all too often, for many women this adversity has helped them build their skills of personal resilience. However, the environment has and continues to limit many women's capacity to express their resilience. Their resilience helps them keep going, to cope, but individual resilience can only take us so far in a hostile environment. Women really want to be able to express their resilience in ways that help them to flourish not simply survive.

The third skill of resilience is an ability to ask for help. Our recent isolation has meant that some of these help seeking avenues have not been available. Meaning that we need to be more creative, another skill of resilience. This also means that sometimes collective resilience is vital and this relies on the environment. Support groups and community assistance for reporting family violence during isolation, are examples of how the environment can enable individual resilience (choice).

Mindfulness helps people be more present to their internal and external worlds. The raised attention and awareness that mindfulness develops in people, fosters skill development.



A Modern Woman's Home Doctor Series' - Emma Hearnes

For example, if I have been developing my mindfulness skills, I will be more aware when my energy is depleted and my attention is poor. This will help me tune into my inner world and actively choose the mental strategies that will help me. I will be more attuned to what is within my control and what attitudes are helping or hindering me. I can actively tap into my resources, be creative about how to use them and be more courageous about seeking help. In other words, more resilient.

Mindfulness research consistently shows that these practices develop our skills in creativity, attention, clarity, curiosity, self-awareness and empathy. They also help us develop our self-compassion, which is essential to personal resilience over the long term.

Sharee Johnson

Sharee is a Gippsland Psychologist who works as an executive coach and a mindfulness teacher. She has a long history working with people who have experienced trauma, mental illness and grief. She believes everyone can learn the psychological skills they need for great long term health.

“Mindfulness can help us maintain hope in the face of so much challenge.”

– Sharee Johnson

Practice your resilience

1. Sit in the present moment noticing what you think and feel without judgement, let it all be present. Feel your body and let your mind do whatever it is doing for one minute. This is your mindfulness practice, don't expect to be an expert, simply be curious.
2. Write down everything you noticed, without judgement. Be a reporter or a curious scientist – everything that came up is valid and interesting.
3. Write down what you want – what really matters. What seems most important just now?
Ask yourself:
What do I need?
What is the best way to get it?
Who can help me?
Write the answers down.
4. Recognise there is a choice.
What do you want to do with what you have learnt in this few minutes?
What do you need so you can take action?
What resources do you have already?
How/Who can help you?
5. Recognise what is within your control and what is outside your control.
6. Ask for help. Tell someone you trust what you are doing and what you have learnt. Build community support around you by sharing and asking, this is how you can help make your environment more conducive to resilience.
7. Sit for 2 minutes and notice your breath, your body, your mind. Only noticing, you do not need to do anything else. You are enough.

Just Looking @Careers in Health.

Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal
Health in East Gippsland.



Ella Harrison wrapped in possum skin cloak. Photo Doris Paton.

My role as Chairperson of Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Health in East Gippsland (CEAHEG) is to continue to lead a legacy of change initiated by four Elders who recognised a need important to the future health of the community. Three of the Elders have since passed on.

CEAHEG is based at the Monash University, East Gippsland School for Rural Health Bairnsdale. Since the beginning in 2008, our goal has been to build the East Gippsland health workforce, and to do that, CEAHEG has focussed on primary and secondary school students and their families. In 2013 CEAHEG undertook a pivotal research project asking East Gippsland Aboriginal families what they believed their children could achieve, and what they thought was needed for them to complete schooling and go to university.

Based on the results of the research, in 2014 we organised a conference, inviting the Aboriginal Community, health services, schools and universities. Sixty people attended, and the outcomes reinforced the need for more support and encouragement for school students to think about becoming health professionals, and to complete school and to go on to university. Since 2016, our programs have focussed mostly at getting students interested in health careers. These include Camp Marook, Dala Mala Malung and Hands on Health.

Camp Marook is a two day camp held at Camp Coolamatong. The program focuses on giving students an introduction to health; they talk with Aboriginal role models in nursing, allied health, paramedics, community ambulance with practical instruction from medical students from the East Gippsland School for Rural Health and Interns from Bairnsdale Regional Hospital and across other hospitals.

They examine sheep's hearts and play act at having a broken arm or leg, so they learn about the work of occupational therapists and physiotherapists. They learn how to take the blood pressure of Elders and others present, and they listen to each other's hearts and lungs. They learn

cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and receive a Certificate of Achievement for CPR. Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association (LEAHA) and Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative (GEGAC) contribute activity sessions about oral hygiene and preventative anti-smoking.

Dala Mala Malung (little doctors) targets primary school children in a twelve week program looking at a similar program version of the two day camp with additional components of environment, bush medicine and basic hygiene. This program was also supported by Monash University, East Gippsland School for Rural Health and Malpa.

Hands on Health is an ongoing program for year nine and ten secondary students in conjunction with the Gukwonderruk Unit at Monash University Clayton and East Gippsland School for Rural Health. These students engage in hands on health activities conducted in the skills laboratory training facility at East Gippsland School for Rural Health. Their instructors include medical students and other allied health professionals from Bairnsdale Regional Hospital.

CEAHEG is not a funded organisation. We have memorandum of understanding agreements with Monash University East Gippsland School for Rural Health, Dr Jane's Place, and Cunninghame Arm Medical Centre. We have ongoing support from the Gukwonderruk Unit Monash University, Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESO's), Bairnsdale Regional Health Services, LEAHA, GEGAC, Rotary Sunshine and Ambulance Victoria.

Dr Doris Paton,
Senior Lecturer Gukwonderruk Unit,
Monash University.

Make the invisible, visible.

Women in Gippsland launch the 'Put Her Name On It' Campaign

Women's names, stories and achievements must be represented equally in public places. Historically, women's stories and experiences are not afforded the same attention, recognition and documentation as men's.

That's the message behind Women in Gippsland's 'Put Her Name On It' (PHNOI) campaign, which calls on local councils and the Victorian government to make the contribution of historic women visible through equality in the naming of public places across the state.

While women make up 51% of the population, it is thought only about 3% of streets, landmarks, parks, buildings, statues, and monuments are named after women in Australia. This alarming underrepresentation of women in public place recognition is a clear example of gender inequality and sends the dangerous yet subtle message that women and their contributions are not as important as men.

"Women in Gippsland seeks to increase the recognition of women in public places as a way to address systemic gender inequality"

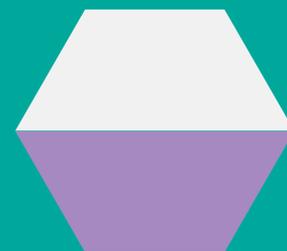
The campaign calls on state and local governments to make their place naming policies gender balanced, including streets, parks and statues, to 'make the invisible, visible', improving gender equality in our community.

Add your voice...

Help the campaign by demanding gender equality in place naming. Ask your local councillors to commit to gender equality through place naming policies and submit an application for a place to be named after a notable local women.

Campaign postcards and stickers are available via Women in Gippsland. Postcards can be mailed to Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews, while the stickers can be used to identify existing public places that could be named or changed to recognise notable women; take a photo and share on social media. Tag Women in Gippsland (@womeningippsland) and use #PutHerNameOnIt and #WomenInGippsland hashtags

Visit @puthernameonit Instagram for more details.



The campaign asks...

The Victorian government to:

- Measure the ratio of place names dedicated to women across the state and municipalities

- Fund a database of notable Victorian women for place name usage

- Prioritise the addition of women's names to public places until equality is achieved

- Update the place name 'guidelines' under the Geographic Place Names Act 1998 to include gender equality.

Local governments to:

- Audit place names for gender

- Acknowledge the gender-gap

- Amend place name policies to support gender equality

- Accumulate a list of notable local women and their stories

- Act to ensure gender balance in place names.



*Women
in Gippsland*

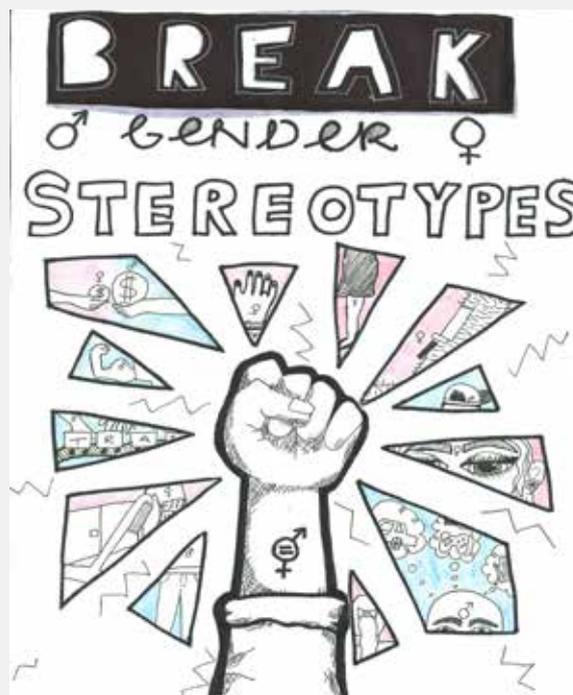
Slowing down and connecting during COVID-19.

Lockdown forced many of us to slow down; to spend more time with our families, to learn new skills and to step back from the busy-busy of everyday life.

During lockdown, I made a basket. I foraged strands of Lomandra from my local nature reserve, dried it for a week or so and wove it together using scraps of wool from my craft stash. I inhaled the aroma of the drying grass as my hands twisted and wrapped the grass and threaded a needle in and out of the layers. I thought about Indigenous cultures that have thousands of years of traditions and cultures steeped into practices like this, and how not so long ago similar skills would've been considered part of daily life, rather than a 'crafting' activity. As I sat and felt the muscles in my hands work, I reflected on how long it had been since I'd stopped to really create something – to enjoy the process and the outcome. Truthfully, it had been a while.

This urge to use my hands was re-inspired by a book called *Radical Homemakers* by Shannon Hayes. Primarily, the book explores the shift in our lifestyles away from being self-reliant and productive to being consumers and workers outside the home. It looks at why and how this change took place in the context of women's emancipation and the industrial revolution. But the book also challenges how much we have disconnected ourselves from actively participating in our homes and lifestyles, relying heavily on our ability to purchase things ready-made, grown and cooked. Many elements of our current lifestyles encourage disconnection. Television, long hours at work, individual transport, large houses built and lived in by small families within suburban neighbourhoods; our society often encourages a path of passive consumption. The lifestyles we are sold through advertising, social norms and consumerism lead us to work long hours, compromise our health and relationships and to lose sight of the small joys and the bigger meanings in life.

According to radical homemakers like Hayes, the key to responding to this shift is to rebuild connection. Connection with each other; with our neighbours, community, friends and family. Connection with our food systems and nature; what we take and what we give back, how we understand the deeper impacts of our lifestyles and our lives upon the land.



'Break Gender Stereotypes' by Tali, Gippsland Grammar

We need to rebuild connection with our skills, our curiosity, our joys and what we have to share with others. We also need to rebuild a connection to the future and in deciding what that looks like; for ourselves, for our children, for Gippsland and for our world.

There are a lot of big questions to answer about how we collectively move forward from 2020. Individual responses won't be enough for many of the questions about our economy, our political system and the world we want to live in. But if I've taken anything away from Hayes's book and from our time in COVID-19 isolation, it's that our individual choices do matter. Lockdown forced many of us to slow down; to spend more time with our families, to learn new skills and to step back from the busy-busy of everyday life. It was challenging in unexpected ways, but it also provided an opportunity to stop and reflect. How disconnected have our lifestyles really become? How much can we contribute to a meaningful future if we don't make time to really connect with our present?

Radical Homemaking isn't something that will appeal to everyone, but I believe that everyone needs connection. As we emerge from the quiet of our isolation, I'm committed to connecting to the small things. I want to slow down and reflect on the skills, creativity and energy I can share with the world around me. Even if it's something as small as a handmade basket.

Sarah Smethurst

Further reading: *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture*, Shannon A Hayes, 2010.



'Girls can be strong and boys can be gentle' by Tylah, Grey Street Primary School Traralgon

Searching for Identity.

Eliza William

A right of passage is the forming of my identity
 Of who I am as a person and of who I could be
 Of the world all around me and the world in which I live
 Of what I could aspire to and that which I could give

Growing up, I should have felt supported, safe and protected
 Identity instead is negatively affected A journey of discovery, growth and understanding
 Learning of family, within which my social standing

Throughout childhood, experiences of trauma have their say
 Any knowledge of who I am appears to flow away
 Identity, formed and deformed, shaped and torn apart
 Desperate to escape, with such a vulnerable heart

Belief in his protection, I jumped into his outstretched arm
 Bringing into my life many different forms of harm
 Unaware I'd leapt from the frying pan into the fire
 Years of escape futile, when lured back into the mire

Bit by bit he destroyed me while moulding me to serve his will
 Fears of losing my life if I continued standing still
 Sucking out my very soul, leaving just an empty shell
 Knowing it's now or never to escape this form of hell

Throughout adulthood, experiences of trauma have their say
 Any knowledge of who I am never appears to stay
 Identity, formed and deformed, shaped and torn apart
 Desperate to escape, with nothing but a shredded heart

No feelings of safety within my extended family
 Condemning my feelings of childhood trauma openly
 Their so-called "support", is nothing more than an illusion
 Their demeaning, heartless comments once caused such confusion

Only now, I see it for what it is, how it's always been
 Standing behind my feelings, I risk to remain unseen
 My identity, fashioned to conform to their belief
 Flashes of my identity continues to be brief

Throughout my life, experiences of trauma have their say
 Any knowledge of who I am seems to float away
 Identity, formed and deformed, shaped and torn apart
 Desperate to learn of myself, but don't know where to start

Searching for my identity seems a never-ending task
 As any loss of self-confidence, I have learned to mask
 An internal battle rages, one I fight every day
 Hoping all conditioning could easily to go away

Drawing on resilience, values and the strengths of which I know
 The pathway that leads to healing will surely help me grow
 Forging past all hurdles, my identity I will find
 As with all the forms of trauma, I try to leave behind.

Not every person knows where they come from or what Tribe/Mob/Nation they descend from.

Engraved.

Wunman Njinde,
Ngaju yardaman, ngetal
makthar Hollie Johnson.
Ngaju dardee Gunnai Kurnai il
Monero Ngarigo woorcat.
Ngaju galamdah
Brayakouloong Gunnai Kurnai
wurk wurk il galamdah bunjil.



My grandmother holding my grandfather's clapsticks
Source: Hollie Johnson

Do not ask what percentage we are.

"I'm not a racist but..." is the same as "I don't mean to offend you but..." - just don't do it.

We don't all know each other and we don't know everything about our People and Culture. | We may all identify differently, so just ask.

I was born and grew up on my Grandparents' Country. I know where my People are from and the work my family have done. I've been privileged enough to have grown up learning this, to be able to carry the strength and pride of my Elders and Ancestors with me in life, for they walk alongside me, beneath me and above.

I was fortunate to learn my grandparents language, it is one of over 36 in Victoria and an overall of more than 250 languages with many more dialect varieties in this continent called 'Australia'. With two years undertaking a Traineeship at Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages I got to explore this more and attended workshops, travelled, studied and taught language to preschoolers. A pause to pursue a dream of Photography at RMIT, that took longer, but with the support of friends I now call family, I graduated.

Now home on Country working for Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, I get to see the students thrive off learning knowledge about their people, for them to see and know that they can do and be anything in this world. With Year 12 or equivalent attainment increasing to close the gap in education by over 12% in the last decade¹, to learn the local language and the true history of this land. To see the students stand at the front of the class with pride in their eyes as they speak about their people is continuously stuck in my mind, this is what needs to be happening more.

Where to start can be hard and only speaking from a personal perspective these are just a few of the many important sources that should be implemented:

- Always follow protocol, consult and involve the Traditional Owners, Elders and community.
- Have all flags flying at the schools or businesses.
- Teach the meaning and representation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.
- Perform Acknowledgement of Country and pronounce the language/s correctly.
- Learn about and have the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) map of Indigenous Australia present.
- Look into and support Indigenous owned and run organisations and businesses.
- Discuss and teach the true history and Black excellence of Australia.

Each person is different, as Indigenous People we are all trying to navigate this world just as you are, on top of Caring for Country, our People and Elders during this time. Trying to continuously connect to Country, looking after our health, development and wellbeing as we navigate two worlds, being stereotyped and dealing with racism on a daily basis. I do not speak for other First Nations People but I do speak as a strong, proud Gunnai Kurnai, Monero Ngarigo black woman. There is a need and a want for this, we are the longest, continuous living culture in the world. It's your turn to step up for this, always was and always will be.

Hollie Johnson

¹ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2018/education.html>

Stories of Influence.

These hidden histories may challenge our pre conceptions, our truths.

Since its first incarnation as Stories on the Hill at Nowa Nowa seven years ago, Stories of Influence has invited storytellers to share stories that have been hidden away, under the bed, in letters, diaries, reports and hearts and minds. These hidden histories may challenge our pre conceptions, our truths.

People speak of ‘unlearning’, stripping back what they knew and starting again, creating ways for us to rethink new ways we can be Australian.

This year’s event builds on foundations laid in earlier events. Attracting note worthy speakers and performers from a diverse range of disciplines, this three day gathering of writers and storytellers is sometimes confronting, often entertaining and always affirming.

This year includes stories of survival and healing of the land from Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison; of planting and caring for Yam Daisies (Murnong) by Aunty Aileen Blackburn, giving us insights into local culture and history. Leah Purcell has recrafted Henry Lawson’s short story “The Drover’s Wife”, a regular bed time story read to her by her mother, a drover earlier in her life, into a play through an indigenous lens. A personal story with a wider appeal, she has also written a book, The Drover’s Wife, and now a film, The Drover’s Wife: the legend of Molly Johnson.

Lee McGowan and Fiona Crawford’s Never Say Die: 100 Year Overnight Success of Women’s Football opens our

eyes to experiences of women playing sport in Australia and Scotland. Local women Claire Flynn sums it up in her story of a gap of 30 years in playing the game she loved on YouTube Equal P(l)ay.

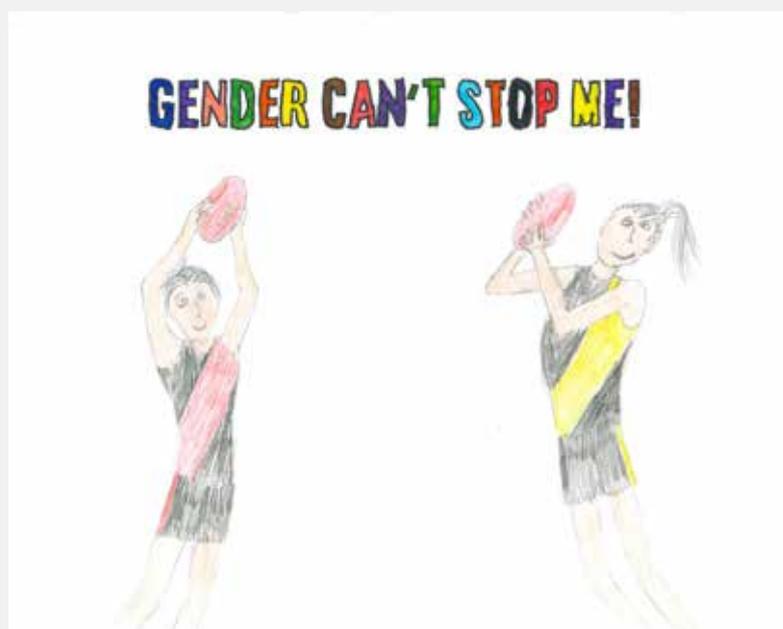
There are Gippsland women’s stories with the launch of The Art Beat of the Country, edited by June Alexander and Sarah Cannata. Stories of cooperation that can be applied during challenging times today.

Singer-songwriter Neil Murray, whose music, stories and poems convey a long engagement with issues of dispossession of people and damage to landscapes, is keen to join this year. Stories is a space for thinkers to come together, to walk, talk and create new partnerships, new community connections, and to share their own stories.

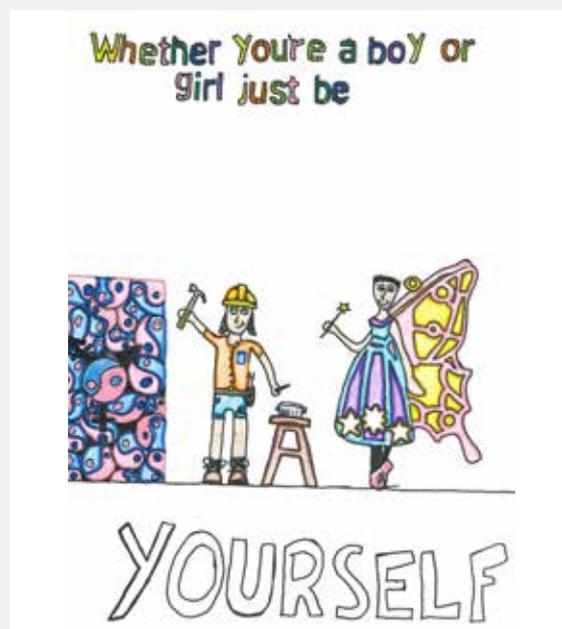
Melbourne City of Literature now recognises Stories of Influence as one of its regional presenters. With new layers of uncertainty this year due to COVID-19, our program is still evolving, face to face gatherings may be limited and some sessions may be zoomed. Now it is time to reconnect. Come and join our gathering in person or online.

For further information call Helen Sheil 0400 193 283 or Leanne Flaherty 0488 090 353. or

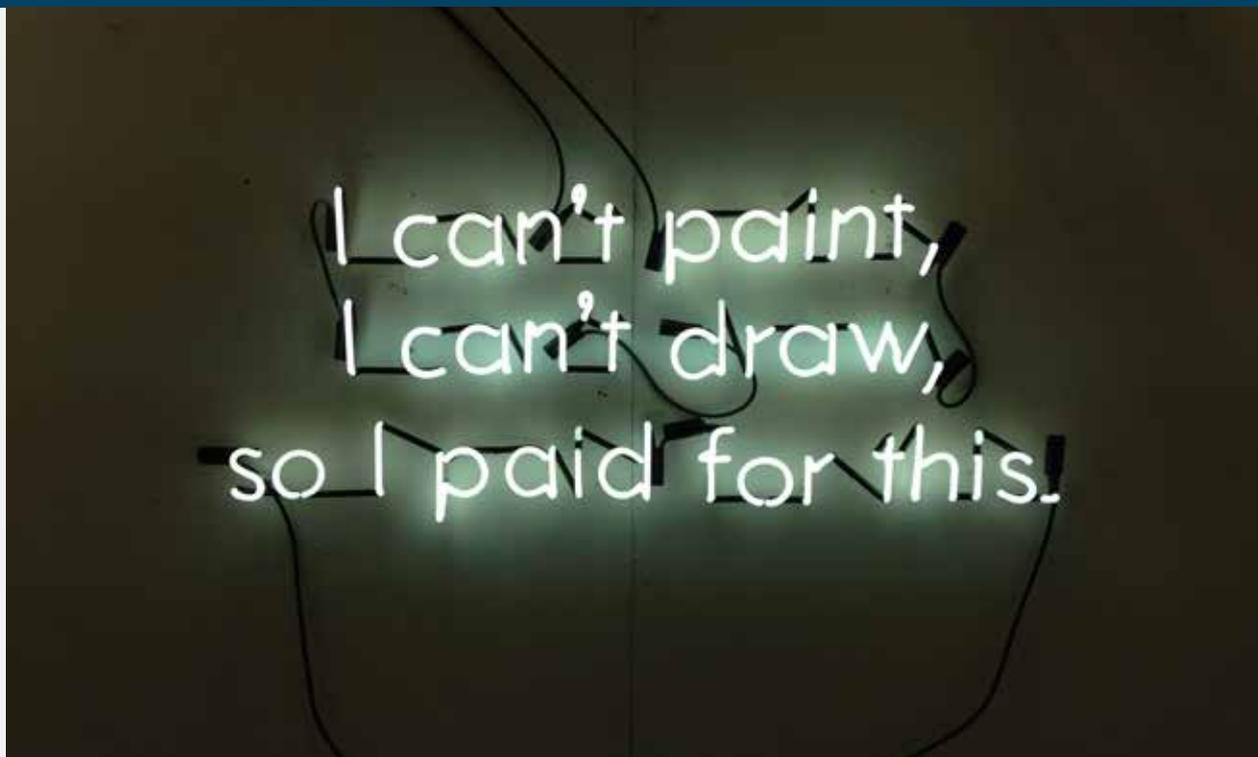
Find Stories Of Influence on Facebook or visit www.ruralcommunities.com.au/stories



‘Gender can’t stop me’ by Jayden, Baringa School



‘Whether you’re a boy or girl just be yourself’ by Ripley, Foster Primary School



Neon Piece, 2016 - Clare Marston, glass tubing and Neon gas. Purchased by the Nicholas Foundation 2018. Permission to reproduce given by the artist.

Champion and Celebrate.

Are you wondering where all the amazing female artists are?

Women have always been present in art. Well, they have always been the subject of art. Look at any art history book, any gallery around the world, and you'll see the vast majority of works are by men, with their gaze ever so often focused squarely on women. If you're like me, you're wondering where all the amazing female artists are? Turns out, they're everywhere! It's just a matter of showcasing these artists and their work in the male-dominated art world.

Throughout my days at art school I was always left wondering about the presence of women within the considerable history of art. Surely there were women creating works at the same time as their acclaimed male counterparts? Moving through university education and into internships in galleries and museums I learnt more about the smattering of women who benefited from being written about.

However for every one female artist that was known and celebrated there have been millions of women out there throughout history

who were never included in textbooks, taught about in classes, or featured in galleries and museums.

This intrinsic lack of representation within the art community is why I am passionate about showcasing the unstoppable and incomparable female artists of Gippsland and beyond, and championing them and their unique voices. It is up to all of us, whether you're in the art world or just enjoy popping into a gallery every once in a while, to support and champion our female artists. To celebrate their skills and work. To comment on and like their social media posts. To buy their work and display it proudly. To discuss and critique and write about the works. We owe these talented artists our attention, which is so rightly earned and long overdue.

Erin Mathews
Curator, Gippsland Art Gallery

Know your breasts.

Check your breast every month.



Today in Australia, one in every seven women can expect to receive a diagnosis of breast cancer by the age of 85, with 53 women diagnosed every day and 19,371 women being diagnosed in 2019. Breast cancer affects people of all ages, so it's important that all people check their breasts regularly to pick up any changes. Breast checks are important because if you know how your breasts normally look and feel, you're more likely to notice a change if it develops.

Breastscreen

More than 75% of breast cancers occur in women over 50 years of age. Regular breast screens are the best way to detect any changes early and should be practiced along with regularly checking for changes in your breasts yourself. Women between the ages of 50 and 74 should have a free mammogram every two years. If you are in your 40's or over 74, speak with your doctor to see if screening is right for you.

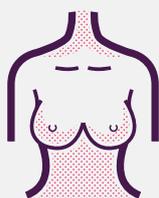
What if I find a change in my breast?

First of all, don't panic. Most changes in the breast are not related to breast cancer, so chances are you'll be fine. However if you do find a lump, or notice a change in your breast, it's important to visit your GP immediately. Remember, the sooner you see your GP after finding a change in your breast, the better. Your GP will recommend what further investigation you require.

Book your appointment at Breastscreen on 13 20 50.



Follow these three simple steps to check your breasts and remember to repeat each month



Look – at the shape and appearance of your breasts and nipples in the mirror with your hands by your sides. Raise your arms above your head and have another look.



Feel –all of your breasts and nipples, looking for anything that isn't normal for you. Feel from your collarbone to below the bra-line, and under your armpit too.



Learn – what's normal for you! Breasts come in all different shapes and sizes, so get to know your normal. See your doctor if you notice any changes.

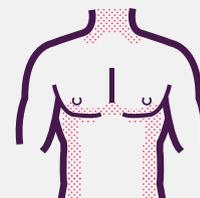


Image source: If you grow them know them postcard, McGrath Foundation, 2020.



It's in our hands - Dawn Stubbs

Concerned Artists Resisting Extinction.

We believe our precious wildlife needs all the help we can give.

I am a passionate advocate for the preservation of Australia's unique flora and fauna. My husband Chris and I were the directors and owners of The Australian Wildlife Art Gallery on the Princes highway, Munro for over 30 years. As we have reached a time in our life where we thought it was high time to wash out the brushes and slow down, we decided to close the gallery. Over those 30 odd years we have become more and more aware of Australia's loss of native plants and animals.

As a grandmother of seven, I have been worried about the assurance of their future, as well as whether they will experience the wonderful creatures that share our land that my generation took for granted. After painting our local birds and animals for so many years, I am always hopeful that the language of my art may turn an audience to think about the plight of our dwindling wildlife and ecosystems. I would like to see stronger leadership from Federal and State Governments on this issue.

Last year my work took on a more immediate and thought provoking message. After speaking to like-minded artists and realising they were also feeling alarmed, Concerned Artists Resisting Extinction (CARE) was born. Gathering over 100 artists, we aim to hold exhibitions that tell the story of Australia's shocking species loss through the prism of art. We aim to appeal to and bring awareness to the immediacy of this emergency.

Since CARE formed in November 2019, seven artists accompanied a large Dodo egg to Federal Parliament in Canberra. The egg held 42 mini art works inside by 42 artists depicting endangered species and was presented to Gippsland MP Darren Chester and Minister for the Environment Susan Ley. It was hoped that this might persuade Canberra's power brokers into action. The Dodo egg stayed for a time in the Minister's office and is now safely back in Gippsland and will go on show later in the year.

Saturdays for Wildlife

Is a group of artists painting endangered species fridge magnet in public places and local festivals. Funds raised are donated to local wildlife carers, as well as supporting upcoming exhibitions. We believe our precious wildlife needs all the help we can give.

Emergency – Species Loss Exhibition

Our main event will be at the East Gippsland Art Gallery, 11 September to 10 October, with over 50 artists exhibiting. Telling the many stories about our threatened species, we hope this project educate the community to the breadth of wildlife loss.

Dawn Stubbs, Gippsland Artist

Find CARE on Facebook



Fiona Owen, GWH Chief Executive Officer

Challenging Gender Stereotypes through Art.

We partnered once again with Gippsland Department of Education and Training to run the 'Challenging Gender Stereotypes' school student Design on a Bus competition. The launch was hosted by Wellington Shire Council at the Port of Sale in November 2019.

520 students from 23 Gippsland Respectful Relationships schools entered the competition with the theme of challenging gender stereotypes. 376 posters were received. Seven finalists' were selected and their artwork was displayed on the side of buses in Wellington, Latrobe and Baw Baw thanks to funding from the Latrobe Health Assembly, Wellington Shire Council and Baw Baw Shire Council.

The artwork was also reproduced as posters and displayed across Gippsland during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to the 10 December (Human Rights Day). The designs help promote and normalise gender equality by challenging gender norms. The posters are available for download at our website.



Welcome to Country, Sandra Patton, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation



Finalists, Design on a Bus competition, Sale November 2019



International Women's Day 2020: Female Artists collaborate

'Powerful together, Uniquely different' celebrates women and women artists.

'The Big House' - Kate Shone and Cat Blamey,
 'Expectations' - Casey Miller,
 'Thank you for the content' - Claire Marston
 Photo: Lindsay Roberts, courtesy Gippsland Art Gallery

To coincide with International Women's Day on Sunday 8 March, Gippsland Women's Health in collaboration with six female artists, hosted an exhibition at the Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale to celebrate the diversity and unity of women in our community.

The exhibition highlighted and celebrated women in our society through a powerful display of artwork that emphasised women's unique stories. All pieces emphasised the gender based issues of the discrimination and violence women have faced through the centuries and continue to face today, and remind us of the importance of advancing gender equality.

The aim of the exhibition was to help increase the visibility of female artists in gallery spaces and included established and emerging Gippsland artists with diverse artistic styles from right across Gippsland. The artists were Kate Shone and Cat Blamey, Casey Miller, Claire Marston, Emma Hearnnes and Jaquie Swan.



Melanie Brown, Andrea Hall (GWH); Erin Mathews, Gippsland Art Gallery; Kate Shone, Claire Marston, Casey Miller, Jaquie Swan and Cat Blamey, First Friday's Gippsland Art Gallery, March 6, 2020. Photo: Lindsay Roberts, courtesy Gippsland Art Gallery

"The five artists participating in this exhibition have created outstanding artworks that speak directly to their experiences as women, and to those of the wider female community."

Erin Mathews,
 Curator Gippsland Art Gallery

Period Support

We put a call out, the result was amazing!

Andrea, GWH with Kon Karapanagiotidis, ASRC



We made a bold decision in January as we returned to the office after the Christmas/New Year break. With the fires still burning, and after years of drought and hardship, we said 'how can we, Gippsland Women's Health, contribute to the care of the women and girls in East and Far East Gippsland?'

We are all women, and if there's something we know about it's the constancy of menstruation. Whether it's convenient or not, we bleed at regular intervals regardless of what is going on around us. So what do we need as women – period products, in all their variety!

We put the call out. We had high hopes but moderate expectations. We thought it would be a 'local' response. Within hours of putting the word out we had a woman come through the door with a bag of products. We had enquiries from further afield asking if monetary donations could be made for the local purchase of pads and tampons. Within a week we had funds in the bank and products EVERYWHERE.

Distributors TOM Organic, Bamboo Babe and Libra donated pallets of product; Accalia donated 50 menstrual cups, Modibodi provided period underwear.

Share the Dignity and the Melbourne Period Project dropped off many bags, and Kon Karapanagiotidis, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) CEO made the trip to hand deliver a large supply. Celebration Day for Girls also provided us with a beautiful variety of reusable cloth pads.

Along with the many locals who regularly stopped by to drop off items, individuals made trips from locations further afield to deliver car loads of collected items. We were delighted to welcome Milly and Monika who arrived with a van full to the brim with items collected in Fitzroy and surrounds, Cara and her children made a long trip from Geelong to deliver items collected from her community. Boxes were posted to us from interstate. It's fair to say, we had pads and tampons in and on every spare space.

So now we continue the task of delivering and supplying free period products to anyone who bleeds monthly in East and Far East Gippsland. We have pick up points in many town and supplies can also be posted.

To request supplies, or if you know someone living in the east of our state who could use items, please call us on (03) 5143 1600 or make contact via our website.



Call out to the community

A community focused campaign by the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance is asking Gippsland organisations and businesses to display the STOP Family Violence cards and posters in public spaces. Their aim is to raise awareness that family violence services are open despite COVID-19 and to promote and improve access to Gippsland services and resources.

Along with some social media messaging, two infographics have been developed, one for businesses and one for community, as helpful guides on how to use the STOP Family Violence resources and how to support friends and family experiencing violence. Find out how you can join the campaign at www.gwhealth.asn.au

Membership Application

Any woman who resides, works or studies in the Gippsland region and supports the Statement of Purpose of Gippsland Women's Health (GWH) Inc. is eligible to be a member. All applications for membership are presented to the Gippsland Women's Health Board for approval at the first meeting following the application being received. Membership is confirmed only when the Board approves the application.



New Membership Membership Renewal

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

Has your address changed in the past 12 months?

Yes No

If yes, what was your previous address?

Individual membership enables you to vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and general meetings, stand for election as a member of the Board, receive invitations to special functions and be included on our mailing list

Do you wish to receive a print newsletter?

Yes No

Do you wish to receive the newsletter via email?

Yes No

Do you wish to receive periodic email updates?

Yes No

– Membership is for one year only and must be renewed annually.

– There is no annual membership fee.

I agree with the Statement of Purpose and wish to become a member/renew my membership of GWH Inc. for the financial year ending June 30,

20 (Please complete relevant year)

I accept that the Gippsland Women's Health Constitution requires a register of members be retained and that a list of member names will be available for viewing by other GWH members at the registered address in accordance with the Constitution and privacy legislation. In the advent of my admission as a member, I shall at all times comply with the rules of Gippsland Woman's Health Inc.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Please complete form and return to:

Gippsland Women's Health
Reply Paid 664, Sale Victoria 3850

Office Location:

56B Cunninghame Street, Sale Victoria 3850
Telephone: 03 5143 1600 or 1800 805 448
Email: admin@gwhealth.asn.au

Or complete online at www.gwhealth.asn.au

Advancing Equality and Respect

Enjoyed our
newsletter?
Pass it onto
a friend!

We welcome community contribution,
and would love to hear from you!

56B Cunninghame St
PO Box 664
Sale Victoria 3850

T (03) 5143 1600
www.gwhealth.asn.au

Monday
to Thursday
9am–4pm

Friday
9am–3pm



If you are in a violent or unsafe situation or know someone who is experiencing violence please refer to the specialist agencies listed below. Always call 000 in an emergency.

Gippsland Women's Health
is not a crisis centre.

1800RESPECT
National Sexual
Assault Domestic
and Family Violence
Counselling Service
1800 737 732

Safe Steps
Family Response
Centre
1800 015 188

1800MyOptions
Contraception,
pregnancy options
and sexual health
1800 696 784

Gippsland Centre
Against Sexual
Assault
1800 806 292

Triage
Mental Health
Emergencies
1300 363 322

Lifeline
13 11 14

Yarning SafeNStrong
1800 959 563

Kids Help Line
1800 551 800

Gambler's Help
1800 858 858