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MISSION STATEMENT

CRANBOURNE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE INC

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide an independent, free, impartial and confidential information, referral and support service to all members of the community.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSES

To assess the needs of people who access the service seeking assistance.

To provide direct aid and assistance for the people of Cranbourne and District who are in need of relief from poverty, sickness, distress, misfortune, destitution, homelessness or helplessness.

To provide people with information about, and referral to the services they require.

To provide a volunteer program which enables personal growth and a high standard of service delivery.

To coordinate a local network of community information providers.

To facilitate the provision of counselling services.

To facilitate the activities of local people and organisations who wish to contribute their time and/or resources to community service.

To pursue donations and subscriptions from benefactors, benevolent societies, philanthropic trusts and like organisations as a means of providing relief and services to people from Cranbourne and District.

To inform Government and the Community about the need of the local community of Cranbourne and District, in order to obtain, maintain and improve services.

To pursue funding from Government, Corporate and Community sources to obtain, maintain and improve services in response to local needs.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

President:	Ros Larke	Ordinary Members:
Vice-President:		Una McGuire Dawn Wilson
Secretary:	Judy Symons	George Nicol Louise Morgan
Treasurer:	Julie Jones	Margaret Ferguson

VOLUNTEER STAFF – 2008/2009

Anne Haylock	Sharon Mills	Gabriele Lindemann
Sue Hopkins	Una McGuire	Jo Ferns
Judy Symons	Susan Arlove	Margaret Ferguson
George Nicol	Kevin Bradford	Lisa Bevan
Ros Larke	Dawn Wilson	Julie Jones
Di Mainwaring	Anne Manning	Louise Morgan
Viv Rea	Oscar Hernandez Jr	Lyn Kranjec

STAFF – 2008/2009

Manager:	Leanne Petrides
Counsellor:	John Lewis
Counsellor:	Joan Cavanagh
Counsellor:	Jenny Hyland
Counsellor:	Kaye Jones
Administration Officer:	Cathy Willmott
Support Worker:	Doug Thompson
CfC Outreach Information:	Ann Proud
CfC Outreach Information:	Flora Warren

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As the president of CISS, I am proud to present my report for the financial year, July 2008 to June 2009. As always, this has proved to be a varied and extremely busy period. The hard work, devotion and commitment of all who work for CISS, whether as volunteers or paid staff, really deserves the highest praise, especially as we operate in such cramped quarters! Indeed, we look forward to continuing to work with the City of Casey to find a solution to the shortage of office space we are experiencing. This will lead to an even more efficient service delivery, and a broader range of services that we will be able to deliver to our clients.

Our Manager and leader, Leanne Petrides, as always juggles all her commitments in her usual inimitable way, a source of wonder to us all. She is our support and back-up, never lets us down and none of us know what we would do without her. A very big thank you Leanne, you are terrific.

CISS would not be able to operate at all without ongoing funding and in this the City of Casey plays a vital role. On behalf of the Committee of Management I do thank them very much for their continuing generosity.

The recession over the past months has hit those on fixed or low incomes especially hard. Accommodation has become increasingly difficult to get and keep, and rent increases mean that food and other necessities have to come out of what is left. As volunteers we know these problems only too well. However, we can be sure that food vouchers, chemist scripts and Met tickets do help lighten the load and a "listening ear" can make all the difference. Thanks to additional funding and generous donations, extras like Christmas cakes and meat vouchers are much appreciated. So too are our Back to School Support and NILS programmes.

I should like to say what a joy it is to serve as President of CISS, ably helped and supported by the fantastic Committee of Management. I want to give them and indeed everyone who works at CISS, a heart-felt pat on the back for a job well done!

Ros Larke
President

MANAGER'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I write my eleventh annual report as Manager of the Cranbourne Information and Support Service. This year marked our thirtieth anniversary of delivering much-needed services to our community, and celebrating that milestone presented a significant opportunity to reflect on the years that have passed, and to focus on issues for our community and areas of development for our agency.

As you will see from the statistics presented throughout the report, we continue to see more and more people requesting information, support and assistance. The amount of people presenting for emergency relief in particular has risen substantially. The global financial crisis has certainly impacted on the residents of the Casey South community, with many reporting loss of work hours or even jobs. The increased demand for financial counselling, advocacy and negotiation services and counselling, can also be linked back to mounting financial pressures. At the same time, the dearth of affordable housing has placed an even greater burden on individuals, families, and agencies in our community. A large percentage of people accessing our services are experiencing housing stress – paying more than 40% of their income on rental or mortgage payments. This has resulted in many previously “middle class” families falling into the formerly unknown position of seeking aid from agencies like ours.

At CISS, as the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, we constantly struggle with the concept of providing emergency relief as a “band-aid” response to poverty, versus effecting real change. I like to think that we manage to cover a middle ground. We recognise that there are huge structural barriers that need to change for those who are most disadvantaged to thrive. We do that by keeping in constant contact with the people who can best achieve that change – our politicians and policy makers. The fact that we can also assist people on a one-to-one basis through the provision of emergency relief, backed up with high quality information, support and advocacy, means we are also able to make small daily differences in people’s lives.

Of course none of this could be done without the amazing partnerships and connections that CISS has within our community. We continue to work closely with our sister agency – Casey North Community Information & Support Service, and our joint projects - the Casey No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) and the low-income resource guide (now in its ninth edition) go from strength to strength. Our partnership ensures an approach that includes the whole municipality when developing programs, and delivering services. I would like to thank the Manager of Casey North CISS, Susan Magee for her invaluable support.

Our partnership with Windermere Child & Family Services, through the Communities for Children program funded by the federal government, has led to strengthened links not only with Windermere, but also with many other organisations thanks to the work of our Infolink team. In addition, we work very closely with The Salvation Army Cranbourne Support Services, particularly in delivering the annual Back to School Support program.

As well as delivering services to the community, we are committed to networking both locally and at a broader level. CISS has been represented on and involved in many local consultative committees, projects, and groups such as our peak body's Training Sub-Committee, the Westernport Regional Association of Community Information Centres, and the Cranbourne & District Community Services Group, which we coordinate. This financial year we have also been involved with the City of Casey's Volunteer Participation Steering Group, the Cranbourne Community Plan, a number of state government initiatives with the Department of Human Services, and the federal government's Emergency Relief State Consultative Committee.

As usual, we have a number of people and organisations to thank for their support throughout the year. It is never possible to mention by name everyone who supports our agency, so please take time to read the acknowledgements on the last page of our Annual Report. Every one of them contributes in meaningful ways to keeping CISS functioning well, and we recognise them all. A special mention must be made however, of a local resident, Fred Brooks, who has donated 100% of his wages this year to CISS. To 30 June, Fred has donated over \$1,100, with the promise of more to come, and the volunteers and I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank him for his support. I believe this community is one that is strongly connected, despite the contradictory statistics and stories we often hear. Fred's story is one of so many that exemplify the strength of this community and the commitment that is made by individuals and organisations, small and large, that donate to and support CISS and our staff and volunteers in so many ways. Indeed...the strength of CISS lies in the local community focus of our volunteers, and other staff and community based supporters. CISS is truly a grass roots service for the local community, delivered by and in the local community.

I would like to officially recognise the City of Casey and the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs for their continued funding and support of our staff and services, and thank them for their strong belief in the excellent work we undertake.

As always, I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Committee of Management for their continued vision, hard work, and support. I would like to take the time to acknowledge our counselling team – John, Joan, Jenny, and Kaye, as well as June, the financial counsellor, Doug, our Support Worker, and Ann and Flora, the Infolink team. Cathy, our Administration Officer, always deserves a special mention for her commitment and dedication.

All of them continue to work extraordinarily hard and their contribution to the agency, and their support of the volunteers and me has been invaluable.

Finally of course, my report could never be complete without recognising our wonderful team of volunteers. During the 2008-2009 financial year, volunteers at CISS contributed almost 7,000 hours to this community by delivering high quality information, advocacy, and support services, keeping our information and statistics up to date, brokering referrals to specialist internal and external support services, applying for grants and payment plans on behalf of clients, delivering the NILS and Back to School Support programs, providing emergency relief, and offering a welcoming response to clients in person and via the phone.

Even with more clients who are often presenting with increasingly complex issues and challenging behaviours, the volunteers remain calm, professional and committed. They have an unswerving belief in the right of all people to have access to affordable housing, education and food. While this is not always easy to deliver, the volunteers constantly endeavour to ensure that people are listened to, respected and supported. They also provide an enormous amount of support to each other, myself, and the rest of the paid staff. It is difficult to encapsulate precisely how crucial these wonderful people are to our agency and indeed our society. I would like to officially thank them for their dedication, good humour, and plain hard work.

I encourage everyone to take the time to read the rest of our Annual Report and I look forward to another year of working with CISS for the residents of Casey South.

Leanne Petrides
Manager

*“We ourselves feel that what we are doing
is just a drop in the ocean.
But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.”*
Mother Theresa

COUNSELLOR'S REPORTS

John Lewis

It is with pleasure that I present my twelfth annual report as a counsellor with the Cranbourne Information & Support Service.

WAITING TIME FOR SERVICES

For most of the year the demand for services remained consistent, but perhaps because of Relationship Australia moving to Cranbourne, there have been some quiet periods.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I am currently receiving Supervision fortnightly, from Eddie Gallagher. Joan, Jenny, Kaye and I have a weekly peer supervision meeting, which now includes the CASA workers from next door on a monthly basis.

On November 19th and 20th, I attended professional development training. Led by the dynamic Dr Scott Miller, it was titled "Supershrinks: Learning from the Field's Most Effective Practitioners". Looking at "what works" in mental health and substance abuse counselling. As usual it was hard work but very rewarding, so thanks to the committee for allowing me to attend.

STATISTICS

During the last financial year, 452 counselling sessions were provided, which, when adjusted for sick leave, was a reduction of 1.6% from last year. There has been a 3% increase in Cranbourne clients and a concomitant decrease in other areas.

During the year I have seen 38 new "clients", where a couple or family counts as one "client". There has been a 5% increase in the number of individuals and a 6% decrease in couples.

Four hundred and fifty two counselling sessions were provided to 573 people.

Contacts, by Location.				Counselling sessions, by client location.		
Cranbourne	578	71%	(71%)	322	71%	(68%)
Hampton Park	53	7%	(8%)	39	9%	(11%)
Casey South	69	9%	(10%)	65	14%	(16%)
Outside Casey South	81	10%	(11%)	26	6%	(5%)
TOTALS	781	1.6% less than last year.		452		

Note: All figures in brackets refer to last year's percentages.

Client Contacts by Type.			
Individuals	628	80%	(75%)
Males	342	55%	(49%)
Females	286	45%	(51%)
Couples	54	7%	(13%)
Families	31	4%	(4%)
Consultations with other professionals	68		

Note: Continuing high number of male clients ('normal' ratio 66% female, 33% male).

Counselling Sessions by Income of client.			
Pension or Benefit	288	64%	(57%)
Up to \$20,000	33	7%	(10%)
Between \$20,000 and \$30,000	37	8%	(12%)
Between \$30,000 and \$40,000	43	10%	(9%)
Between \$40,000 and \$50,000	21	5%	(1%)
Above \$50,000	28	6%	(11%)

Note: 79% of sessions were provided to clients with incomes below \$30,000.

ISSUES RAISED, in order of frequency: -

- Personal Issues
- Relationship Issues
- Family Issues
- Family Violence
- Separation Issues
- Drug & Alcohol
- Sexual Abuse
- Divorce

Note that 'issues' are categorised by their most significant characteristic, normally of course clients come with a complex range of issues; these could include grief, depression, isolation, addictions, anger problems, child/adolescent behaviour problems, sexual and other abuse, and so on.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again my thanks to all the people who have helped and supported me during another year, including the Monday night crew (Gabriele and Leanne), Joan, Jenny and Kaye, the Committee of Management, all the volunteers, and especially Leanne.

Working at CISS can be both challenging and satisfying, but it is the support I receive from a wonderful group of people that make it particularly rewarding.

John Lewis
Counsellor

Joan Cavanagh

It is with pleasure that I present my ninth Annual Report to the AGM of the Cranbourne Information and Support Service. I am currently still working 10 hours per week (on a Monday).

It is always a pleasure to come to work at CISS. The work continues to be challenging and rewarding but, like other years, the working environment at CISS helps make the work worthwhile mainly due to the level of support the counsellors receive from the Committee, Manager, fellow staff members and volunteers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I continue to participate in weekly peer supervision with John Lewis, Jenny Hyland and Kaye Jones. I also receive external supervision with Ingrid Sturmeay who is Director of Counselling at Relationships Australia.

Professional development programs I have attended this year include:

- Clients who have been sexually assaulted - run by SECASA.
- Working with those experiencing the grief of separation and divorce – with Rosalie Pattendon
- Surviving Traumatic Bereavement - with Twanny Farrugia.
- Current trends in Relationship Counselling - run by Australian Association of Relationship Counsellors.

STATISTICS

During the last financial year 180 counselling sessions (compared to 168 last year) were held with 209 (227) clients being seen. As well, in excess of 200 appointments were made, and there continues to be a problem of clients not attending appointments or/and not giving notice of cancellation.

As in other years the majority of my clients (69%) were female.

Waiting lists remain short with clients usually being seen within a week or two.

Counselling Sessions by Location

	Number	Percentage
Cranbourne	118 (145)	65.55% (86.30%)
Hampton Park	36 (10)	20.00% (5.95%)
Casey South	3 (1)	1.67% (0.60%)
Outside above areas	23 (12)	12.78% (7.15%)
TOTAL	180 (168)	100%

Counselling Sessions by Income of clients

Pension or benefit Income up to \$20,000	75 (89)	41.66% (52.97%)
\$20,000- \$30,000	5 (8)	2.77% (4.76%)
\$30,000- \$40,000	15 (25)	8.36% (14.88%)
\$40,000 - \$50,000	30 (24)	16.66% (14.30%)
Over \$50,000	55 (22)	30.55% (13.09%)
TOTAL	180 (168)	100%

While the highest percentages of clients accessing our services are in the lowest income bracket, a significantly higher number are represented in the highest bracket. It is unclear why this is so but there may be a need to redefine income levels to get a clearer picture of our demographics. (\$50,000 is no longer considered to be a high income with the Australian average weekly earnings being more than this amount).

Client Type	Number	Percentage
Total Number of Clients	209 (227)	100%
Males	64 (63)	31% (28%)
Females	145 (164)	69% (72%)
Number of couples	59 (72)	16% (35%) of total sessions

ISSUES RAISED, in order of frequency: -

- Personal (trauma, grief, personal development, stress management, Alcohol and drug dependence etc)
- Relationship
- Family Issues
- Separation/Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Crisis Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks as always goes to Leanne, John, Jenny, Kaye, Doug, Ann, Flora, Cathy, Volunteers and to the Committee of Management for their role in supporting our work and for creating and sustaining a positive working environment. A special thanks must also go to June Blamires, financial counsellor, as she has been a tremendous support to me this year.

The counselling team continues to work well together. I am always grateful for our Monday meetings which are vital for good communication, good clinical practice and mutual support.

Joan Cavanagh
Counsellor

Jenny Hyland

I am pleased to present my fifth annual report to the AGM of the Cranbourne Information and Support Service. I continue to work a total of 15 hours a week (Mondays and Fridays) and enjoy the challenge of a diverse range of issues presented by CISS clients. My clients continue to present me with challenges and opportunities to increase my knowledge and awareness of issues that are part of the human experience, and my skill as a counsellor.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I continue to receive monthly supervision from Leni Foster, a psychologist who has her own practice in Emerald called Mind Body Therapies. The CISS counsellors continue to meet once weekly for peer supervision. This provides an excellent opportunity to receive guidance with difficult cases, to share ideas and to catch up. Robyn Breheny and Jan Bland, SECASA counsellors, are attending our peer supervision sessions once a month. This provides a valuable opportunity to network and to discuss relevant cases involving sexual abuse and trauma. At Chisholm Institute, where I also work, I am responsible for the coordination of the peer supervision program for the personal counsellors. We meet once a month and follow a structured format which includes guest speakers, counselling videos and case studies presented by the counsellors.

During the past year I have attended the following professional development sessions either through CISS or Chisholm:

- Meaning-Breaking, Meaning-Making: Grief Therapy as Narrative Reconstruction – Robert Neimeyer, Centre for Grief & Bereavement
- Working with Those Experiencing the Grief of Separation after Divorce – Rosalie Pattendon, Centre for Grief & Bereavement
- Where is My Home Now? Shared Care: Issues & Challenges - Melissa Brown, NALAG

STATISTICS

During the last financial year 304 counselling sessions were provided to 227 clients with a total of 340 contacts. The demand for counselling services has been steady with a waiting period of approximately 2 weeks, shorter than previous years during my work at CISS. Overall the needs of new clients are being met in a timely fashion. The number of sessions attended by clients in the \$50,000+ income range has increased when compared with previous years. These statistics do not necessarily reflect a large increase in the actual number of clients in that income range but rather the ongoing nature of the counselling process with the same clients over an extended period. New clients not showing up for their first session continues to be a recurring theme even though many have contacted the centre in great distress initially. There has been some improvement in this trend by confirming the counselling session with the client. I believe that overall, the needs of clients are being met in a timely fashion.

Counselling sessions by location	Number	Percentage
Cranbourne	227 (253)	74.67% (83.22%)
Within our catchment	30 (17)	9.86% (5.50%)
Outside our catchment	47 (34)	15.46% (11.18%)
TOTAL	304 (304)	100%

Counselling sessions by income	Number	Percentage
Pension or benefit Income up to \$20000	30 (89)	9.86% (29.27%)
Between \$20000 and \$30000	57 (75)	18.75% (24.67%)
Between \$30000 and \$40000	42 (51)	13.81% (16.77%)
Between \$40000 and \$50000	32 (37)	10.52% (12.17%)
Over \$50000	143 (43)	47.03% (17.10%)
TOTAL	304 (304)	100%

Client type	Number	Percentage
Total number of clients	227 (253)	100%
Males	60 (86)	26.43% (33.99%)
Females	167 (167)	73.56% (66.00%)
Number of couple sessions	41 (44)	13.48% (14.47%) of total sessions
Number of family sessions	3 (7)	0.98% (2.30%) of total sessions

ISSUES RAISED, in order of frequency: -

- Relationship
- Family
- Personal
- Domestic violence
- Separation/Divorce
- Anger management
- Loss and grief
- Sexual abuse

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Leanne, the volunteers, counselling and support staff together form a very balanced and skilled team at CISS. I very much appreciate the counsellors' support and constructive comments regarding the occasional complex case which I have presented during our weekly supervision meetings. Kaye Jones has been very generous and creative in the creating of some new administrative forms which have helped the counselling service run in a more efficient and organised manner. Thank you also to the Committee of Management for the financial support and encouragement regarding the counsellors' professional development needs. As always, Leanne works tirelessly and does a great job at ensuring CISS remains a happy and welcoming workplace. The contribution of the volunteers and other paid staff also contribute to this special work environment

Jenny Hyland
Counsellor

Kaye Jones

I am pleased to present my third annual report to the AGM of the Cranbourne Information and Support Service. I continue to work a total of 20 hours per week spread over Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Working as a Counsellor at CISS is continually challenging and rewarding. Many of the clients we see within this Centre have very complex issues and working with them is often a real test of knowledge and resources. However, I enjoy being able to help clients to improve their lives and, whenever possible, to achieve their goals.

Over the past year I have represented CISS at quarterly meetings of the Family Resource Centre Community Reference Group, held at Windermere in Narre Warren. The guest speakers have covered a variety of useful topics, including mental health, working with indigenous clients, family law, etc. It also provides an opportunity for networking within the local community.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

My ongoing monthly professional supervision from Hans Schmidt in Knoxfield is invaluable in helping me to enhance my professional skills and knowledge.

I also participate in our weekly peer supervision group with my fellow counsellors Joan Cavanagh, Jenny Hyland and John Lewis.

With regard to professional development, I have attended two seminars, both presented by international leading authorities in their respective fields. A one-day seminar by Robert Neimeyer was entitled Meaning-Breaking, Meaning-Making: Grief Therapy as Narrative Reconstruction and a two-day seminar by Reid Wilson covered Strategic & Provocative Treatment of the Anxiety Disorders. I am grateful to the CISS Committee for enabling me to participate in these very worthwhile seminars.

STATISTICS

In this past financial year 424 counselling sessions were provided to 236 clients.

Counselling sessions by location	Number	Percentage
Cranbourne	336 (335)	79.3% (78.8%)
Hampton Park	24 (18)	5.7% (4.2%)
Lynbrook	8 (30)	1.9% (7.0%)
Pearcedale	3 (0)	0.7%
Devon Meadows	0 (4)	0.0% (1.0%)
Blind Bight	7 (5)	1.6% (1.2%)
Outside our catchment	46 (33)	10.8% (7.8%)
TOTAL	425 (49)	100%

Counselling sessions by income	Number	Percentage
Pension or benefit Income up to \$20000	247 (238)	58.3% (56.0%)
Between \$20000 and \$30000	67 (36)	15.8% (8.6%)
Between \$30000 and \$40000	39 (38)	9.2% (8.9%)
Between \$40000 and \$50000	16 (41)	3.8% (9.6%)
Over \$50000	54 (72)	12.7% (16.9%)
Unknown	1 (0)	0.2%
TOTAL	424 (425)	100%

Client type	Number	Percentage
Total number of clients	236 (231)	100%
Males	64 (94)	27.1% (40.7%)
Females	172 (137)	72.9% (59.3%)
Number of couples	17 (52)	14.0% of total sessions
Number of families	2 (0)	3.0% of total sessions

ISSUES RAISED, in order of frequency: -

- Personal
- Relationship
- Separation
- Anger Management
- Drug and Alcohol dependency
- Childhood Sexual Abuse

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would, as always, like to express my gratitude to Leanne Petrides, my fellow counsellors, the Committee of Management and all other staff and volunteers for their ongoing support and assistance. It is a privilege to be part of such a dedicated and caring team of people.

I would also like to thank June Blamires and Robyn Breheny of Southern Health for their co-counselling of several clients.

Kaye Jones
Counsellor

SUPPORT WORKER'S REPORT

The past 12 months had been productive and rewarding for both CISS and myself. The number of clients seen was fairly constant, with the October – December period quieter because of holidays and the Back to School (BTS) program.

The average number of clients seen per month had increased to 19.5, up from 18 last year. While financial assistance is high on the list of help given, the advocacy role is becoming an increasingly larger component of my work. Referrals to me this year have, again, come from a range of sources including the front line volunteers, our counsellors, schools and Centrelink.

During November – February I was involved in the BTS program with Julie and considerable time was devoted to this. The program increased this year to assisting 230 families (184 in the previous year) to the value of \$34,800 (\$23,000). Following on from this we now also have the Education Assistance Program, which again is delivered in conjunction with Julie. So far the EAP has assisted 38 families to the value of \$4,400.

STATISTICS (July 2008 – June 2009)

CLIENTS

	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	TOTAL
CLIENTS	10	13	12	2	7	4	13	14	16	13	16	18	138
SESSIONS	18	18	14	2	8	6	15	17	21	14	20	23	176
NEW	7	6	5	0	3	3	4	9	11	6	9	11	74

LOCATION

	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	TOTAL
3977	4	7	9	1	4	2	7	6	11	11	11	13	86
3976	3	5	2	1	2	1	5	7	2	0	3	4	35
OTHER	3	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	17

GENDER

	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	TOTAL
MALE	3	6	5	2	3	1	3	7	5	3	2	7	47
FEMALE	7	7	7	0	4	3	10	7	11	10	14	11	91

ISSUES PRESENTED: -

The main issues that are being presented are financial and housing problems, and there has been a significant time spent on advocating on the clients behalf.

The following are areas where assistance was given: -

Financial	Education
Housing – Rental/Mortgage	Immigration/Visas
Advocacy	Drug/Alcohol
Health Disability Issues	Child Support/Separation
Domestic Violence	Centrelink Problems
Legal	Bereavement
Employment	Assistance with Forms/Resumes

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the year I attended a number of courses, and also represented CISS at information sessions. These included: -

- Money Minded
- YACRO training
- Hardship Conference
- How to Care, What to Say
- Four Footprints (Palliative Care)
- Common Risk Assessment
- Identifying Family Violence training

Doug Thompson
Support Worker

*“Help one another; there’s no time like the present
and no present like the time.”*

James Durst, poet

CRANBOURNE COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

'INFOLINK' REPORT

It has been a busy and productive time for the Infolink Team in the Cranbourne community during the last twelve months.

It is our aim to provide outreach information to the community, raise awareness of the services that CISS can provide and refer to appropriate organisations in the area that may also be able to assist the client.

The most productive outlet to date to disburse this information is Centro Shopping Centre where, over the past twelve months, we have assisted 313 customers with 608 referrals/information enquiries. Regular "Behind the Scenes" tours of CISS offered to local organisations to better inform their workers were outstanding successes, with 31 workers attending from 17 organisations.

A total of 15 childcare centres have been visited this financial year and 1,276 information packs distributed to families who access their services. An additional 81 resources, books and helpful directories have also been handed to the centre Directors. To date, most of the childcare centres in Cranbourne have now been informed about CISS and therefore most of the correspondence is now made through emails and phone calls.

Our next focus will be on visiting all the playgroups in Cranbourne and forming a connection with the Facilitators and mums who attend. This will be done in the same way as the childcare centres have been visited. Primary schools and Secondary schools will be another focus for the year ahead with CfC already attending Cranbourne Primary School on a weekly basis since early 2009. The school has approached this venture in a positive and welcoming manner and it was well published in the school newsletter. Up take by families has been slow but on a more positive note, a presentation was given to 17 of the teaching staff who are now better informed about CISS and the Communities for Children project.

The updating and revamping of the "Who's Who" booklet, which was totally funded from the Infolink (Communities for Children) budget producing 5,000 colourful copies, is an invaluable source of reference to the local community.

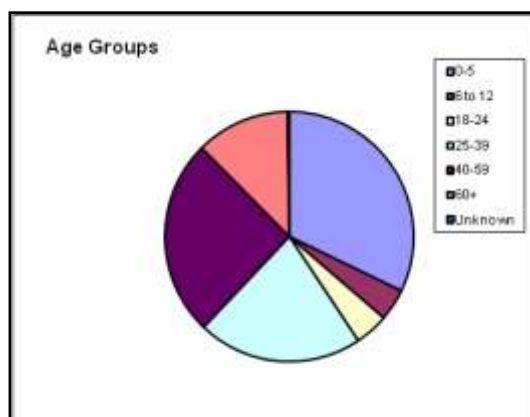
Our project has been refunded for a further two years and the scope expanded to include families with children aged 0-12 years. This will now provide an added opportunity to access and service families and children attending not only primary schools but secondary colleges as well.

Ann Proud & Flora Warren
'Infolink' Team

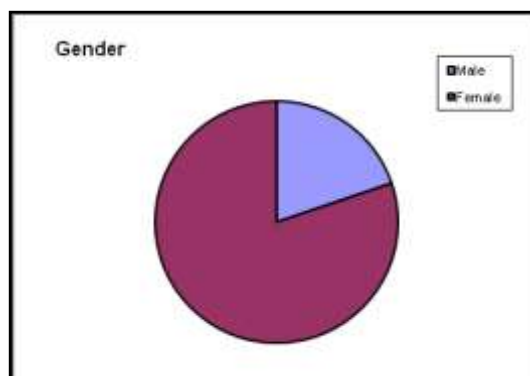
Cranbourne Communities for Children 'Infolink'

Venues Visited	4
CISS Tour Groups	17

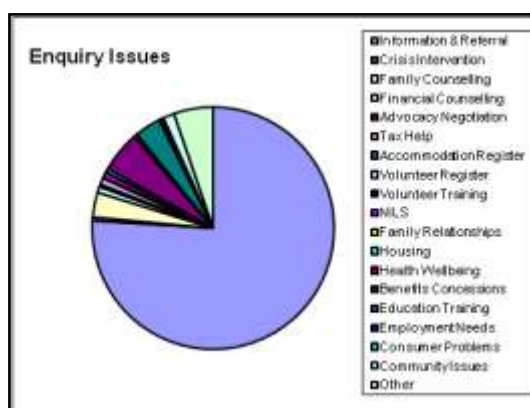
Age Groups	
0-5	140
6 to 12	18
18-24	19
25-39	93
40-59	111
60+	53
Unknown	1
Total Age Groups	435



Gender	
Male	62
Female	251
Total Gender	313



Enquiry Issues	
Information & Referral	462
Crisis Intervention	3
Family Counselling	20
Financial Counselling	5
Advocacy Negotiation	0
Tax Help	0
Accommodation Register	2
Volunteer Register	5
Volunteer Training	1
NILS	4
Family Relationships	1
Housing	3
Health Wellbeing	33
Benefits Concessions	3
Education Training	21
Employment Needs	2
Consumer Problems	2
Community Issues	9
Other	32
Total Enquiry Issues	608



SERVICES

Information and Referral

Information and referral services are the core activity of the agency, and are available on a wide range of subjects including:

- * Accommodation
- * Communications
- * Consumer
- * Education
- * Employment
- * Health
- * Legal
- * Support Services
- * Citizenship
- * Community Affairs
- * Economic Development
- * Emergency Aid
- * Environment
- * Income
- * Recreation
- * Transport

Trained volunteers provide information in person or over the phone. A current, comprehensive community information database, pamphlets, booklets, and manuals enable access to thousands of agencies, services and procedures. Data is maintained on National, State, regional and local agencies, and provides people with improved access to resources and services, and knowledge of their rights and responsibilities.

Crisis Support

An intervention service is provided for people in crisis. This can include a 'listening ear', support, practical assistance (such as filling in forms, or writing letters), information, and referrals to appropriate specialist supports. Demand for our crisis support service grows each year as increasing numbers of people present with complex needs and numerous issues.

Emergency relief is provided for people experiencing financial hardship, and includes food, food vouchers, gas and petrol, Met tickets, and pharmaceutical needs. Guidelines and eligibility criteria apply, and a 'holistic' rather than 'bandaid' model of service delivery is used.

Counselling

A generalist crisis intervention and counselling program is provided, with individual, couple, and family counselling offered; and specialist counselling is also available for adolescent and adult males. The service is free and available to individuals, couples and families who live or work in the Casey South area.

Advocacy and Negotiation

This is provided on behalf of clients with Government departments, service providers, utility companies, landlords, businesses, and neighbours, etc, with regard to issues including debts, services, complaints, and procedures. Emphasis is placed on the client developing these skills for future use.

Casey No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

The Casey No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) offers low-income earners an accessible source of credit for the purchase of essential household goods with an achievable repayment plan that does not compromise the household budget.

NILS is jointly operated by CISS and Casey North CISS, and commenced in April 2001 with a small amount of capital. Since inception, the program's capital has increased significantly, which has allowed us to respond more effectively to the need of the Casey community.

This scheme continues to grow, with many clients now on their second or third loans.

Share Accommodation Register

A register for people looking, or offering to share accommodation is available on site. Sharers are resourced with a "Sharing Kit", and staff can act as mediators in establishing share arrangements. Sharing can be an economical and practical way of finding accommodation in the local area, and this free service has enabled many people find suitable, affordable housing, and is a useful community resource.

Tax Help

Volunteer staff are trained by the Australian Taxation Office to assist people fill in simple tax returns. This service is offered to people on low incomes, the aged, people with disabilities, people whose primary language is not English, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, young people, pensioners, unemployed, and people with literacy or numeracy difficulties. CISS is the only agency providing Tax Help in the Casey South area, and the demand is such that some people cannot be assisted.

Volunteer Register

A register of service providers and community groups who offer opportunities for people interested in volunteer work is available on site.

Volunteer Program

CISS volunteers undertake an extensive training program, including an introductory Information Day, the nationally accredited course – "Assess and Deliver Services to Clients with Complex Needs", orientation, and a probationary period before becoming accredited community information workers. A focus on personal development enables volunteers to further develop particular skills or interests in fields such as public relations, information management, research, administration and computers, amongst many more.

*"You have not lived until you have done something
for someone who can never repay you."*

unknown

EMERGENCY RELIEF

Many of our clients are dealing with complex personal and financial issues that dominate their lives. Just over 15% of clients attending our agency for assistance with emergency relief are approaching us for the very first time, reflecting both the vast growth in population, and the number of families in our region living below the poverty line, and therefore increasingly dependant on the welfare system to survive.

It is important to note that all people accessing our service receive a comprehensive and holistic service, often receiving a range of support services in addition to material aid. Some people requesting emergency relief may only require assistance once, but generally, families in this area need further support during times of crisis or prolonged hardship. Requests for assistance with transport costs (both petrol and public transport expenses) remain high, as does the need for assistance with medical and pharmaceutical costs.

Once again, we are proud to acknowledge the support of many local organisations and individuals who donated to our Emergency Relief program throughout the year. We received donations from the Ulysses Club Shearwaters Branch, Cranbourne Arthritis Support Group, Cranbourne Anglican Church, Lawson Poole Daylight Lodge, Cranbourne Lions Club, Rotary Club of Cranbourne, Cranbourne Country Women's Association, Inner Wheel Club of Cranbourne, Curves Cranbourne, Mr Fred Brooks, Mr Bruce Greenland, Hazard Solutions (Mr Graham Smith), Trios Taberet, the City of Casey and Councillor Kevin Bradford. We were also successful in our application for a grant from the Hunt Club Community Fund for \$1,000.

During the last financial year, over \$140,000 was distributed in emergency relief, and this would not have been possible without the federal department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs and the Dandenong Magistrates Court, as well as additional support from local churches, donations from the Ritchie's Stores Community Benefit Card, and the afore-mentioned groups and individuals. We also received and distributed \$7,000 of Telstra vouchers.

STATISTICS

Please see the following graph for a breakdown of service provision. We received over 1,930 more requests for services in this financial year compared with the 2007-2008 financial year. As usual, emergency relief was our most utilised service, with almost 5,000 requests for assistance. This was an increase of almost 800 requests from the previous year, and translated to a total of 5,844 adults and 6,167 children who benefited in some way from our emergency relief service. The majority (55%) of people attending our agency were aged between 25-39 years, with a further 30% aged between 40-59 years. Nine percent of clients were under 24 years of age.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our thanks to the following individuals and agencies for their support, donations or assistance to clients and staff of the Cranbourne Information & Support Service:

City of Casey Councillors and Staff
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Department of Justice Victoria – Southern Courts Fund
Community Information Victoria
Woolworths Limited
Ritchies Stores Ltd – Cranbourne
Windermere Child & Family Services
The Salvation Army Cranbourne Support Services
The R.E. Ross Trust
St Vincent’s de Paul Society
Techdeck Computer Service (John & Derek)
Pharmore Pharmacy
Centrelink - Cranbourne
June Blamires - Financial Counsellor
Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation
Australian Taxation Office – Tax Help Program

For donations to CISS Emergency Relief Fund –

- The Hunt Club Community Fund
- Lawson Poole Daylight Lodge
- Ulysses Club Shearwaters Branch
- Cranbourne Country Women’s Association
- Inner Wheel Club of Cranbourne Inc
- Cranbourne Lions Club
- Rotary Club of Cranbourne
- Cranbourne Arthritis Support Group
- Curves Cranbourne
- Mr Fred Brooks
- Hazard Solutions (Mr Graham Smith)
- Mr Bruce Greenland
- Councillor Kevin Bradford
- Trios Taberet
- The Panel Christmas Wrap