



# Cranbourne Information & Support Service



## 2017-2018 Annual Report

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## Mission

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:** Kevin Bradford  
**Vice-President:** Debbie Dodd  
**Secretary:** Di Mainwaring  
**Treasurer:** Jan Bland

## Staff

**Executive Officer:** Leanne Petrides  
**Administration Manager:** Cathy Willmott  
**Manager of Volunteers:** Michael Cooney  
**Roster Support:** Sharon Mills  
**CfC Outreach Worker:** Ann Proud  
**CfC Outreach Worker:** Flora Warren  
**Support Worker:** Doug Thompson  
**Advocacy Support:** Jenny McGowan

**Ordinary Members:**  
 John Lewis Sue Hopkins  
 Maree Cullinan Simon Walliker  
 Josef Horvath Sue Owen  
 Nicola Naughton

**Counselling Team:** Joan Cavanagh  
 Doug Thompson  
 Kathryn Sandercock  
 Natalie Waring  
 (Child & Adolescent)  
**Financial Counselling:** Robyn Shepherd-Murdoch  
 Jenny McGowan  
 Max Smart



*Volunteers and Staff*

## Volunteers

Susan Adam	Rosemary Code	Matthew Hine	Laurie Living	Sharon Mills	Sonia Ruiz
Eva Anderson	Tony Dickinson	Susan Hopkins	Di Mainwaring	Linda Notman	Jennifer Seefeld
Pauline Andrews	John Durrant	Kylie Jamieson	Anne Manning	Sue Owen	Julie Symons
Susan Arlove	Robin Dzedins	Julie Jones	Melissa Matthews	Mary Paget	Judith Tapscott
Gwenda Bunting	Marzia Hamza	Ros Larke	Una McGuire	Carmen Pedrola	Heather Vaughan
Ana Cantonjos	Anne Haylock	Gabriele Lindemann	Anne McKeown	Teena Staib	Dawn Wilson

## Services

### Information and Referral

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

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 and services. 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. CISS also provides on-line resources and information via our website and Facebook page.

Document Support Assistants are available by appointment, supporting clients with practical assistance including completing paperwork, writing letters, and accessing on-line information via a public access computer.

An outreach information and referral service is provided by our Infolink team (funded through Windermere's Communities for Children) at key sites in Cranbourne including the Department of Human Services (Centrelink), Monash Health, and the Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre.

### Crisis Support

A support service is provided for people in crisis. This can include a 'listening ear', practical assistance, information, and referrals to appropriate specialist support services. 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 and petrol vouchers, Myki Day Passes, Telstra vouchers, nappies, baby food/formula, and pharmaceutical needs. Guidelines and eligibility criteria apply, and a 'holistic' rather than 'bandaid' model of service delivery is used.

### Advocacy and Negotiation

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



## Services (continued)

### No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

The 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. Loans can be provided to approved applicants for goods such as fridges, washing machines, furniture, health aids and educational expenses.

### Education Assistance Program

Throughout the year, CISS provides assistance to low income families struggling with the costs of education. Emphasis is placed on the Back to School (BTS) program, which is delivered between the months of November and March each year. The program has three primary aims - to directly provide financial assistance to families in need, to liaise with local schools regarding poverty, and to provide relevant information and referrals to families to ensure ongoing positive engagement with their schools.

### Tax Help

Volunteers are trained by the Australian Taxation Office to assist people complete simple tax returns on-line. This service is offered to people on low incomes, the aged, people with disabilities, people whose primary language is not English, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, young people, pensioners, unemployed, and people with literacy or numeracy difficulties.

### Counselling and Financial Counselling

A generalist crisis intervention and counselling program is provided, with individual, couple, and family counselling offered. CISS also has a child and adolescent counsellor who works at CISS two days per week. A financial counselling service is provided from Tuesday to Thursday, and an outreach financial counselling service is provided by Casey North CISS three days per fortnight. The CISS counselling services are free, and available to individuals, couples and families who live or work in the Casey South area.

### Volunteer Program

CISS volunteers undertake an extensive training program, including a nationally accredited course - "Community Support Work", 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.

### Co-located Services

In order to provide a one-stop-shop of service delivery, CISS has a number of co-located services that we work with to provide a holistic service to clients. These include WAYSS and SECASA.



## President

It is with great pleasure that I write this report in my capacity as President of the Committee of Management of the Cranbourne Information & Support Service Inc.

As always, and on behalf of the organisation, I would like to formally acknowledge the support we receive from our primary funding bodies - the City of Casey and the federal Department of Social Services (DSS) which provide the majority of funding to CISS. We are very grateful for this support, as it has enabled CISS to continue to provide excellent services to the Casey South community. At the same time, we could not provide the services we do without the philanthropic support and donations we receive from a broad range of individuals, organisations and community groups - please take the time to read the acknowledgements page in our Annual Report. I would also like to recognise Susan Magee and the other staff at Casey North CISS for the role they play in leading our Emergency Relief consortium - we continue to have a strong and effective working relationship.

Our organisation continues to focus on high quality service delivery to the community, and our staff pride themselves on being responsive and professional - crucial when they are often the first port of call for people who are experiencing crisis.

It is always appropriate that I take this time to acknowledge the tremendous effort of all involved within this organisation,

including the paid staff and the many wonderful volunteers who give of themselves to assist those most in need in our community. The counselling team, the support workers, the financial counsellor, the Manager of Volunteers, and our outreach team all work well in conjunction with the volunteers to provide a holistic service to clients in need.

This year CISS embarked on a comprehensive Strategic Review which saw staff, volunteers and key stakeholders interviewed, and which has enabled the Committee of Management to make some long term decisions for the organisation. I would like to acknowledge Mike Poulton for his hard work, insight and capacity to assist us think outside the square to envisage positive future directions for the organisation.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Committee of Management, our Executive Officer, Leanne, and our Administration Manager, Cathy Willmott. All of them work so hard to benefit the organisation and the entire community, and I look forward to an ongoing relationship with CISS .

**Kevin Bradford**

President



*Kevin Bradford - President*

## Executive Officer

This year marks the twentieth Annual Report I have written for CISS, and as always it presents a timely opportunity to reflect upon the work we have undertaken throughout the year.

Our mission is to provide an independent, free, impartial and confidential information, referral and support service to all members of the local community. It is my fervent belief that we do that well, and that the needs and well-being of our clients are at the centre of all decisions we make regarding service provision.

Without our wonderful team we could not deliver the extensive range of services we do. Our one-stop-shop, flexible model of service delivery ensures that we remain responsive, and deliver meaningful, effective services that have the capacity to impact positively on the lives of our clients.

The coming year is an exciting one for CISS as we celebrate forty years of delivering information and crisis support services to the Casey South community. I know that we will continue to advocate on behalf of those in our community who are disadvantaged in some way – whether socially or economically. Unfortunately, it appears as though the demand on services like ours will continue to increase as the gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing, and the people who struggle on limited incomes are trapped on a treadmill of survival. Every day we see people struggling with the rising costs of housing, food, education, and transport, and we are committed to assisting them with the services they need.

CISS volunteers are the mainstay and driving force of our organisation and they contributed over 12,400 unpaid hours to the community over the year, to an estimated value of over \$350,000 - a significant contribution to the Casey community. I would like to officially recognise their continuing hard work and dedication. As always, and without exception, our staff respond professionally, and with empathy and respect, to individuals and families in crisis. None of the work we do could be done without our wonderful staff - volunteer and paid - as well as our funding bodies and donors.

This past year saw our Committee work incredibly hard on a thorough strategic review of our organisation, guided by Mike Poulton. All of the staff, volunteers, and many of our key stakeholders contributed valuable information, which has been used to ensure that we continue to provide the best quality, and most relevant services that our growing population needs. At the heart of that, we need to ensure we do not lose our local place within our community or our passion for advocating for the most vulnerable within that community.

With a dedicated, hard-working team on board, and the benefits and insights that have come from our strategic review, I look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

***Leanne Petrides***  
Executive Officer



*Leanne Petrides - Executive Officer*



## Manager of Volunteers

Throughout 2017-2018, CISS continued to attract, train and retain high quality volunteers to provide the valued services expected by the local community. The current number of volunteers remains around 40. The services we provide are still many and varied. Of particular benefit during the year has been the partnership formed in March 2016 between CISS and DHS (Centrelink). On a fortnightly basis, clients are able to make an appointment with a DHS outreach worker who specialises in more complex income and application cases. Appointments for this service are in very high demand.

From a volunteer perspective, there have been many unexpected benefits. While working at CISS, volunteers often feel more connected to others and less absorbed by the stress of daily life. We have witnessed volunteers building their confidence and self-esteem, resulting in closer relationships, and in some cases, further education and employment.

Another initiative has been the recruitment of volunteers who are multi-lingual. Languages include Spanish, Arabic and Dari. This is proving to be a valuable resource in keeping up with the ever-changing demographics of Casey South.

As a Manager of Volunteers, I took the initiative to form the South East Volunteer Coordinators Group, whereby Managers and Coordinators of Volunteers of CISVic member agencies across the South East Region meet on a quarterly basis at a nominated agency. This group has been instrumental in sharing experiences and initiatives which have proved to be

invaluable in maintaining high standards of service delivery.

In keeping with our high standard of service, we ensure that the majority of our volunteers are multi-functional. This means that the volunteers are able to perform a range of duties, and are not limited to only one role, e.g. performing reception duties as well as interviewing clients. Additionally, the data input team works tirelessly in recording interview data within a 24-hour timeframe. The advantage of this timely recording is that information is current for the next business day. This commitment is integral to the effective functioning of our core activities.

Training remains critically important to maintaining the standards currently employed by CISS. We hold quarterly volunteer meetings where agenda items focus on current workplace expectations and new initiatives. These meetings are well attended and they generate much discussion.

We continue to explore and gain insight on how to provide a high level of training utilising technology, useful resources and being inclusive with our volunteers. We have found that this approach enables us to strengthen the skills and knowledge of volunteers, and recognises that the delivery of crisis support services needs professional volunteers who are well supported and trained to the highest professional standard of service.

**Michael Cooney**  
Manager of Volunteers



*Michael Cooney -  
Manager of Volunteers*

## Counselling

The CISS Counselling Service provides a professional service to clients of CISS, residents of the City of Casey (south of Pound Road), and to people who work or study in this catchment area and their families. All counsellors are professionally qualified and eligible for membership of a relevant professional Association and must abide by the Code of Professional Conduct of the member association.

In addition, each counsellor maintains an ongoing program of professional development and clinical supervision, both fully supported by CISS. The Counsellors continue to take advantage of courses provided through online providers as well as attending seminars and workshops. Training completed included Understanding Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Understanding Issues Around Ice Use, Couple Therapy, Responding to Acute & Chronic Suicidality, and Supporting Those Bereaved by Suicide Social Media.

CISS counsellors are able to provide therapy across a range of areas, but also have individual areas of expertise in which they have received specialist training including Couple Therapy, Child and Adolescent Therapy, Grief Counselling and Drug and Alcohol Counselling.

The Counselling Service has been fortunate this year to welcome Kathryn Sandercock to the team. Kathryn has brought with her a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. We are particularly fortunate to have her expertise in the areas of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, and Couple Therapy.

Presenting issues this reporting period include family violence, Ice use, elder abuse, pornography addiction and its impact on relationships, and trauma related issues. There has been an increase in secondary school age children presenting for counselling this year, as well as an increase in people seeking couples/relationship counselling.



### Counselling Success Story

*Beth has been a long term counselling client at CISS following her childhood experiences of extreme neglect, deprivation, abuse and trauma. She has also been bereaved through the death of an adult child. Beth previously coped with her trauma and grief by self medicating with food and gambling. Working full-time and raising her family, Beth never dealt with her past.*

*Now retired, and having established a trusting and safe relationship with her counsellor, many of Beth's distressing memories are surfacing. As well as ongoing personal counselling at CISS, Beth has been linked in with a grief support network to help her deal with the death of her adult child.*

*Through counselling, Beth is now able to identify those resilience factors which have helped her survive and is more able to contain distressing memories. Beth now maintains a healthy body weight, and she never gambles. Her confidence and self-esteem are improving, and her symptoms of anxiety and depression are abating.*

*Beth's case highlights the importance of the need to be able to work on a long-term basis with trauma victims. Long-term work allows the client to build a trusting relationship with the therapist, which is at the very core of trauma recovery. Fortunately, management at CISS understands this and provides the flexibility needed for this work.*

## Financial Counselling

During this reporting period, we welcomed Max Smart as a contract Financial Counsellor while Robyn Shepherd-Murdoch took a year off on unpaid leave. During her leave, Robyn accepted another wonderful position and we farewelled her permanently. Max, who had fitted into the CISS team seamlessly, accepted the permanent position.

As the two CISS Financial Counsellors Max and Jenny, provide coverage each day to see clients by appointment (and occasionally clients who present with urgent financial crises). Both Financial Counsellors are qualified professionals who are trained to work with people who are experiencing complex financial problems, and their role often involves para-legal work.

Due to the demand in the City of Casey, an additional outreach service is provided to CISS by Casey North CISS, and Sue Deland is an integral part of our team. Her statistics are not reflected in this report, but are reported by Casey North Community Information & Support Service.

A total of 251 clients were seen by the team, with 139 clients being new to the service, and 112 requiring more than one appointment to reach a satisfactory conclusion. It is important to note that for each client seen, many hours of follow-up work are provided in the form of writing letters, completing paperwork, and engaging in phone conversations with various creditors, including banks, utility companies and Civic Compliance. Conservatively speaking, for each hour of client

contact, a further three hours of work would be undertaken on the client's behalf.

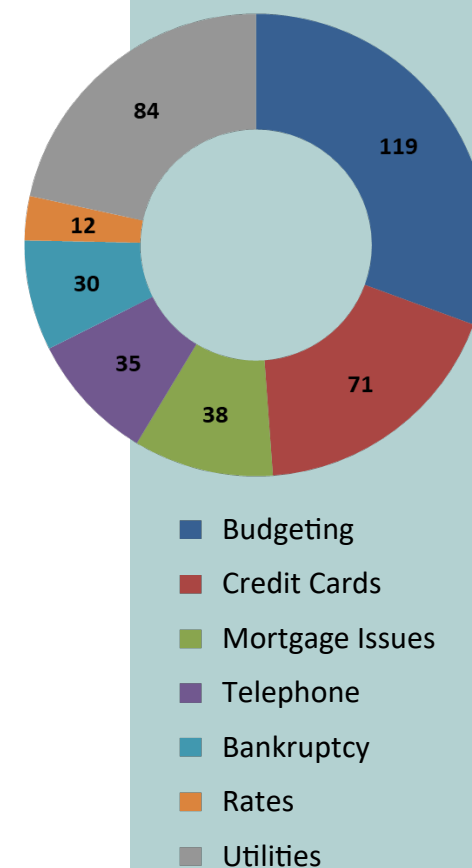
The vast majority of clients present with other complex issues in addition to their financial crises. These include mental illness, family violence and addiction. As a consequence, the Financial Counsellors work closely with other professionals in order to provide the holistic support often required.

Many clients have experienced mortgage stress due to loss of employment or due to their working hours being reduced, which then results in difficulties meeting even minimum repayments. Council rates and energy costs also add financial stress, and these bills are often paid on credit cards which are not paid by the time the next bill arrives, resulting in an ever-increasing debt spiral.

The team saw a number of clients who had received, or were in the process of applying to Centrelink for Disability Support Pension, and who had also applied for a Total and Permanent Disability Insurance pay-out. This is usually attached to their Superannuation and can be payable even after a person has finished work and the superannuation is not active. This has assisted many clients manage whilst going through the Centrelink application process. The team has had great success with debt waivers with almost \$200,000 worth of debt removed for some of our most vulnerable clients.

**Max Smart and Jenny McGowan**  
Financial Counsellors

### Primary Presenting Issues



## Support Work

CISS Support Workers, Doug and Jenny, provide coverage each day to see clients by appointment, to assist the ER volunteers with guidance and hands on support, and to assist in the Back to School Support Program (BTS).

They see a large number of clients who need more assistance than can be offered during an ER visit, which is generally shorter, and more crisis focused. As a result, many clients with very complex needs have been referred by the ER volunteers for this extended casework support.

This year CISS has been fortunate to have a multi-lingual student on placement with us. She has greatly assisted the support work team translate and communicate with people with limited English to discuss complex issues.

Additional assistance has been available for clients receiving Centrelink payments, with the fortnightly attendance of a Centrelink Outreach Worker at CISS. This has been most beneficial for people who find attending a Centrelink office difficult. Issues the Centrelink Outreach Worker is able to assist with include new claim applications, progress of claims, eligibility for new or additional payments, explanations of debts or changes to payments and advice on how to request a review of a debt, and she often works collaboratively with the CISS support workers.

There has been high demand for assistance completing complicated forms including Centrelink, Department of Housing, Australian Citizenship as well as applications for birth, death and marriage certificates. Many government forms are changing to online only or via MyGov. This often makes it difficult for those clients who are not computer literate, are unable to afford an internet connection or an electronic device, and we provide extra support in these instances.

**Doug Thompson and Jenny McGowan**  
Support Workers

## Case Study

*Bruce is a young husband and father of three young children. He had been the main wage earner of the family until he was injured at work and placed on Workcover. He recently picked up an infection which has led to complications requiring major surgery. Workcover payments were stopped as the infection was not work related.*

*A hospital social worker referred him to us for additional assistance, and Bruce attended reluctantly and anxiously. He had always been able to provide for his family and was embarrassed to ask for help.*

*His frequent medical appointments had led to an increase in petrol usage, and the cost of hospital parking was significant. His car registration had expired and he had little food or formula for his infant son.*

*After a session with a CISS Support Worker, we paid 3 months registration, provided vouchers for petrol and food, as well as baby formula which alleviated the immediate crisis. Advice on how to contact bank and utilities about temporary hardship on accounts was also provided.*

*The Support Worker advised Bruce and the hospital social worker of the requirements for applying for Special Childcare Benefits in order to facilitate enrolment in a child care centre to allow some respite for the parents.*

*Bruce left CISS feeling a lot less anxious about his immediate situation and with a concrete plan for the future.*

## Back to School and Education Assistance Programs

The Cranbourne Information & Support Service, in conjunction with The Salvation Army Cranbourne Community Support Services, have delivered the 13th Back to School and Education Assistance Program for the thirteenth year. Both of these programs have relied on generous donations from philanthropic organisations, local business and community groups. The R.E. Ross Trust has supported these Programs for the past ten years, with annual support of \$25,000. This year, a very welcome \$10,000 was donated from the Cranbourne Commonwealth Bank towards the 2019 BTS Program.

Education costs continue to rise, and arrive earlier each year. We are presented with many new and challenging issues from families seeking our assistance. Stress on low income families is already high, with rent, food and utilities costs taking a huge proportion of the family budget. Parents are aware of educational costs approaching each year, but low or irregular incomes mean that they are often unable to save in advance for these expenses.

With our triage approach to handling enquiries we can discuss and, in most cases, reassure families that assistance is available for them. We work holistically with schools and other community groups in the area to educate and deliver this support. We also inform families of what other support options are available, in addition to providing assistance from our program as required.

We encourage clients to speak to their child's school Principal or Wellbeing Officer first, to not only build a relationship with them, but to find out how they can assist. The schools have many options that they are able to offer families, such as the Camp, Sports, Excursion Fund (CSEF), State Schools Relief Committee referrals, Prep and Year 7 Uniform Packs, payment plans, Centrepay options and second-hand uniform and textbooks.

During the 2017-2018 reporting period, we assisted 172 families with 482 children through our BTS program, and a further 29 families through our Education Assistance Program. Over \$40,000 was provided to support these families.

Following our process in previous years, we have focused the funds distribution towards the senior years of 10, 11 and 12 (incorporating VCE, VCAL and VET) as this may enable these students to stay in school and achieve their goals by overcoming and breaking the generational poverty cycle.

Educational costs remain one of the biggest barriers to breaching the poverty gap for low income families.

**Julie Jones**

Back to School Program



## Cranbourne and District NILS Program

In 1981, Good Shepherd Sisters in Collingwood started the now very successful NILS Program which celebrated 35 years in 2016.

The Cranbourne and District NILS Program continues to provide eligible individuals and families with some financial stability and certainty while on low incomes, by providing them with access to safe, fair and affordable credit for household items, education, medical expenses, car repairs and registration and even council rates.

These loans provide an opportunity to improve clients' circumstances, providing an opportunity to get back on their feet. No Interest Loans break the cycle of financial exclusion to people on low incomes, and take them away from the "fast cash" options of payday lenders or rent-to-buy schemes which have high interest payments.

In November 2017, Good Shepherd changed the way NILS was delivered across Australia. As a result, the Cranbourne and District NILS was accredited as a "NILS Client Support Provider". Our role is to engage effectively with clients - to respond to all initial enquiries, interview clients, gather relevant documentation, and submit the loan applications to a Loan Provider which then assess the loans for approval and organises payments.

This has involved an entirely new process of electronic submission, and as such, the team has experienced a steep learning curve, rising to the job admirably. Under this new model of service delivery, our program has successfully delivered 50 loans during this reporting period.

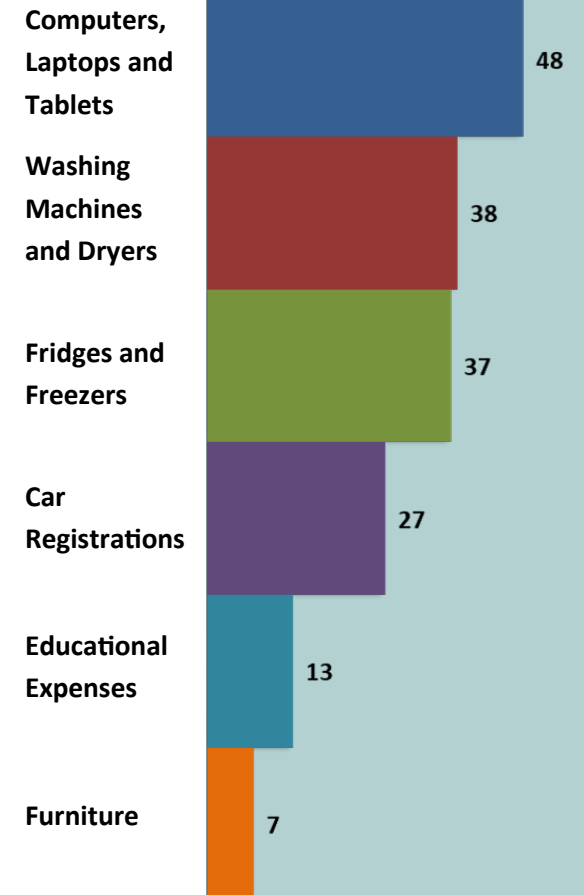
The NILS Program is continually growing and changing to suit the increasing and varying needs of the community, with increased enquiries for educational expenses, such as electronic devices.

The NILS Team would like to thank the Back to School and Education Assistance Program workers, CISS staff and volunteers for all their hard work supporting our program.

**Julie Jones and Sharon Mills**  
Cranbourne and District NILS



## NILS Enquiries



## Cranbourne 'Infolink'

The Cranbourne Infolink Project was originally funded by the Federal Government in 2006 under the Communities for Children (CfC), Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, and CISS has been delivering it since that time.

The CfC initiative was funded to enrich the lives of children aged 0-12 living in Cranbourne, and give them the best start in life by supporting their families. Infolink's aim is to reach at risk or vulnerable families, and increase their knowledge of, and connection to specialist, mainstream, and universal services. The project is funded through, and facilitated by Windermere Child & Family Services Inc.

As the two original workers, we continue to provide a much needed service with our regular outreach presence at local outlets where the community attend. Once again we have been welcomed back to Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre, Monash Health, Bunnings and DHS Centrelink Cranbourne. In the financial year 2017-2018, we delivered 102 outreach sessions and provided information, referral or support services to 759 people and families.

Infolink has established a beneficial working partnership with the Cranbourne Women's Friendship Café and we are reaching a number of mothers from the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community through this program. CISS and Infolink have auspiced the Women's Friendship Cafe with funding applications, and partnered to

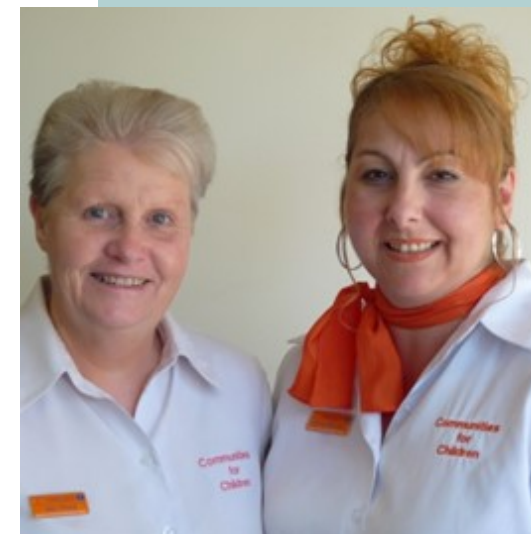
deliver some key activities to the women who attend each week.

During this reporting period, Infolink commenced an outreach program at the YMCA (Casey Race) to provide information and referrals during the school holidays. School holidays are ideal as we see more parents attending the swimming pool with their children. Ann Proud, and Ellen Wachter (Project Officer Communities for Children) provide this essential program.

The ADHD Support Group is still the only support group of its kind in the South East of Melbourne, but attendance is prioritised for Cranbourne parents. Ten groups are delivered each financial year, and this year we had 32 clients attend. These groups provide a safe, confidential and welcoming opportunity for the parents/carers of children who are diagnosed with ADHD to voice their inner most concerns around their child's condition, gain support, and learn new skills and strategies.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the CISS staff for their support throughout the year, as well as the staff from Windermere Child and Family Services CfC Program.

**Flora Warren and Ann Proud**  
Cranbourne Infolink Project



*Ann Proud and Flora Warren -  
Infolink Team*

## Co-located Services

In order to provide a one-stop-shop of service delivery, CISS has a number of co-located agencies that we work with to provide a holistic service to clients. Many agencies utilise our offices on an ad hoc basis providing services to clients requiring support with mental health issues, addiction, legal matters and many others. We are regularly approached by organisations wishing to co-locate with CISS, but space restrictions have so far prevented this.

Wayss and SECASA have permanent offices in our building, and we are pleased to present reports from them for the first time. They are integral services in our community and having them co-located with CISS means that clients can access a range of essential support under one roof, and in a place they feel comfortable.

### Wayss

Over the past 2017 -18 Financial Year, Wayss has continued to respond to people within the local community who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Wayss clients have benefited from the service being co-located in the centre of Cranbourne at the Cranbourne Information and Support Service (CISS).

The close working relationships between CISS, Wayss and other agencies located at CISS have benefited clients accessing services. Clients are regularly able to walk through the door

seeking a service response relating to one area of their life and then find they are able to receive a referral, support or emergency relief for other issues impacting them.

Wayss operates from ten locations in the municipalities of Casey, Cardinia, Frankston, Greater Dandenong and the Mornington Peninsula. Over the past year Wayss has responded to thousands of families, young people and adults who are facing homelessness and/or family violence to address their housing and support needs.

Visit [www.wayss.org.au](http://www.wayss.org.au) to find out more.





## Co-located Services (continued)

### SECASA

The South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) provides sexual assault and family violence services to individuals and families in the South Eastern Metro area of Victoria. SECASA aims to provide a comprehensive service which responds to the needs of those who have been sexually or physically assaulted. Our services include crisis care, counselling, medical care and advocacy; information and education to raise community awareness of domestic and family violence; and prevention focused programs.

SECASA has operated out of Cranbourne for some 23 years and has co-located with CISS for the last eight years. We provide support to an average of about 350 families yearly. We currently have three staff members located in Cranbourne with CISS: Jan Bland, Ima Uko and Michelle Downs.

We have engaged in various programs for the local community including outreach into the local schools to provide protective behaviours education to primary school children, and sexuality and self-esteem enhancement groups to adolescent girls; body awareness group and art therapy group for women impacted by Family Violence and sexual abuse; and more recently, we co-facilitated a 'Beyond the Violence' support group for mums and their children who have experienced family violence.

Co-locating with CISS and other services provides a great community atmosphere which has given us the opportunity to meet and engage with a diverse group of clients and to find innovative ways of collaborating to address the complexity of issues that affect individual and families in our ever-changing South Eastern growth corridor!

Many of our clients tell us that this is safe place for them and this was particularly true for one client, a single mother, impacted by sexual abuse, family violence, homelessness, financial difficulty, alcohol and drug issues and social isolation. Over the years, she was supported in one way or another by all the services located at CISS. She told us she always felt welcome, treated with dignity and well-supported to overcome her challenges.

Our client's stories keep us mindful of the challenges in our community and motivated to make a difference!



# Statistics - a snapshot

## Food and Vouchers

For the most vulnerable in our community, our capacity to provide the most basic safety net with food parcels, or food and petrol vouchers often means the difference between eating that night or not.



**\$150,360**

food and petrol vouchers

**\$32,155**

food parcels provided

## Medical Assistance

With our support, people on low incomes are able to purchase baby formula, receive assistance towards the cost of specialist appointments, and essential medication for acute or chronic illnesses and diseases.

**\$9,979**

essential medication assistance

**1,114**

PBS scripts provided



## Education Assistance

We have a strong commitment to assisting families break the cycle of poverty by supporting children in education. This program can only survive with the support of philanthropic and community donations.



**205**

families assisted

**\$40,336**

provided

# Statistics - a snapshot

## Community Information

As one of our core services, CISS provides information, advocacy and referral services to all members of the local community.



**30,526**

enquiries answered

**2,988**

external referrals made

**274,373**

website visits

## Counselling & Support Work

With many people in need in our community, our specialist workers deal with complex issues including relationship breakdown, trauma, abuse, grief and loss, and depression and anxiety.

**405**

individuals, couples and families counselled

**24**

children counselled



## Financial Counselling

Our highly trained Financial Counsellors provide support to clients with complex financial and para-legal issues.



**251**

clients supported

**112**

clients seen on more than one occasion

**\$197,885**

debt removed



*"I am doing a lot better and I am not as angry. You helped me put things in perspective and break away from that mental oppression"*

*- Nigel F*

*"This message is to validate and appreciate all you have done for me. It is because of beautiful and caring souls like yourselves that life doesn't hurt as much"*

*- Shelley P*



## 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 Social Services (DSS)  
Casey North Community Information & Support Service  
Community Information & Support Victoria  
Windermere Child & Family Services  
The Salvation Army Cranbourne Support Services  
The R.E. Ross Trust  
Magistrates' Court of Victoria  
Techdeck Computer Service  
DHS Centrelink - Cranbourne  
Australian Taxation Office - Tax Help Program

**For donations to CISS Emergency Relief Fund:**

Commonwealth Bank Cranbourne  
Gold Bank Real Estate  
Blue Hills Rise Retirement Village  
Zagames  
Mark Guthrie and Staff - Ray White Cranbourne  
Grill'd Casey Central  
Zion Biblical Learning Centre  
Rotary Club of Cranbourne  
Balla Balla Community Centre  
Lions Club of Balla Balla  
Lions Club of Cranbourne  
Inner Wheel Club of Cranbourne  
Cranbourne Arthritis Support Group  
Cranbourne Chamber of Commerce  
Selandra Retirement Village  
Ulysses Club Shearwater Branch  
Country Women's Association Cranbourne  
Country Women's Association Dinner Branch  
Cranbourne West Primary School  
Hampton Park Baptist Church  
Robin and Arnis Dzedins  
Koo Wee Rup Presbyterian Church  
Share the Dignity  
Anonymous Donors



*Each year we like to recognise our donors, benefactors and supporters, as well as our amazing volunteers and paid staff. Without them we could not deliver our services to the community.*

*It is appropriate this year to acknowledge two of our long serving staff who left during the year. Michael was our Manager of Volunteers for six years and provided professional and personal support to the volunteer team, as well as peer support to other staff members. During his tenure as Manager of Volunteers, Michael trained and supported hundreds of volunteers across the Melbourne metropolitan area. He grew the CISS volunteer team significantly and ensured that only the highest quality volunteers were engaged. He oversaw initiatives including establishing the Managers of Volunteers Network Group, an outreach service to Lynbrook Community Centre, and the establishment of the CISS Document Support Program. Michael supported the volunteers with supervision, interviewing, and through our process of transitioning from a paper based records system, to a computerised database.*

*We also recognise Robyn Shepherd-Murdoch who was our Financial Counsellor for eight years. Robyn established our financial counselling program and it quickly became one of our most in-demand programs. Robyn assisted clients with everything from utility bills and budgeting, through to house and car repossessions and early release of superannuation. During her tenure, Robyn advocated strongly for her clients and managed to waive hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. She worked closely with the volunteers and the counselling teams, as the vast majority of her clients attended with extremely complex issues that required additional support.*

*We pay tribute to their hard work and dedication, and thank them for their years of service to our community as integral members of our staff team.*