



Cranbourne Information & Support Service



2018-2019 Annual Report

Table of Contents

Mission and Statement of Purposes.....	1
Committee of Management	2
Volunteers	2
Staff.....	2
Services	3
President	5
Executive Officer	6
Program Manager	7
Counselling	8
Financial Counselling	9
Support Work	11
Back To School and Education Assistance	12
Cranbourne and District NILS Program	13
Cranbourne 'Infolink'	14
Co-located Services.....	15
Statistics Snapshot	17
40th Anniversary	19
Emergency Relief - More than a band-aid	21
Acknowledgements	22
Financial Reports	23

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: Simon Walliker
Vice-President: Kevin Bradford
Secretary: Di Mainwaring
Treasurer: Matthew Hine

Staff

Executive Officer: Leanne Petrides
Program Manager: Cathy Willmott
Administration Officer: Jessica Davis
Roster Coordinator: Sharon Mills
CfC Outreach Worker: Ann Proud
CfC Outreach Worker: Flora Warren
CfC CALD Worker: Marzia Hamza

Ordinary Members:
 John Lewis Sue Hopkins
 Maree Cullinan Jan Bland
 Josef Horvath Sue Owen
 Nicola Naughton

Support Worker: Doug Thompson
Advocacy Support: Jenny McGowan
Counselling Team: Joan Cavanagh
 Doug Thompson
 Natalie Waring
Financial Counselling: Max Smart
 Jenny McGowan



CISS Volunteers

Volunteers

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

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 'band-aid' 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

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, child, adolescent and family counselling offered. A financial counselling service is provided from Tuesday to Thursday. 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 - "Assess Co-existing 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.

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, SECASA and South East Community Links.



President

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to write this report in my capacity as President of the Committee of Management of the Cranbourne Information and Support Service Incorporated, affectionately referred to as CISS.

Like an older sister who looks out for its younger sibling, CISS has now been supporting Cranbourne and its surrounding areas for over 40 years - in fact celebrating that anniversary in November 2018. 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 40 years of such experience that highlights our recently articulated core values: Inform - Support - Empower.

On behalf of the association, 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.

Some of you will have seen some significant changes, following on from last year's 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, last year's team, and this year's team who have all contributed to ask the hard questions and come up with some significant answers. Based on this work, next year looks to be one of greater change for the better, and for this I would like to thank the Committee of Management for their efforts.

I have been on the front line of this organisation as a volunteer and am now privileged to serve as its president. I have laughed and cried with many of these amazing and dedicated staff and volunteers who in many cases have been around for decades. Among them I would like to particularly recognise Executive Officer Leanne Petrides and Program Manager Cathy Willmott who lead our team. The counselling team, the support workers, the financial counsellors, and our outreach team all work well in conjunction with the volunteers and our co-located services to provide a holistic service to clients in need.

These are wonderful people who continue to serve our community with respect integrity and service and I am honoured to be in their company.

Simon Walliker
President



Simon Walliker - President

Executive Officer

I am proud to present my twenty-first annual report for the Cranbourne Information and Support Service, and I am awestruck at how far we have come, and excited at what still lies ahead.

CISS opened its doors in November 1978 and was one of the first CAB's in Victoria, opening for just seven hours a week with just a few volunteers and very basic services.

Fast forward to 1989, and records show that the agency was open for three days, had 12 volunteers, and serviced just over 2,800 requests for information or support with funding of just over \$8,300.

Another decade on, in 1999, and the name of the organisation had changed, and the agency moved around the corner from its location in the Old Post Office into part of the old Cranbourne Library. It was in January 1999 that I started work as the Coordinator. In that financial year, we had 28 volunteers, opened every day from 10am to 3pm, and serviced approximately 8,000 requests for information or support with funding of not quite \$90,000.

Two more decades to 2019, and we serviced almost 35,000 requests for information or support with generous funding and 40 volunteers. CISS now delivers an extensive range of services via a one-stop-shop model of service delivery ensuring that we remain responsive, and deliver meaningful, effective services that have the capacity to impact positively on the lives of our clients. It is fair to say that the work undertaken by our entire team has become more and more complex over the years. When I reflect on my last two decades with CISS, one of the defining features for me is our people. Eight of the

volunteers who were here when I started are still here today, and our counsellor in 1999 is now on our Committee of Management! As each new worker joins the agency, they bring new perspectives, knowledge and skills, and our team keeps on adapting, evolving and growing. There are very few places to work where people genuinely feel they make a difference, and where they also enjoy spending time with the people they work with.

What will the next decade bring? I know that we will continue to advocate on behalf of those in our community who are disadvantaged in some way. Every day we see people struggling with rising costs of living, and we are committed to working with them to provide the services they need. We also remain committed to speaking out against poverty and injustice in an attempt to raise awareness and redress the imbalance in some way.

In particularly exciting news, the City of Casey, in a move led by the Mayor, Cr Amanda Stapledon, is committing a significant sum of money to revitalise the site where we are located in order for CISS to extend our capacity to deliver much needed services in 2020.

I would like to officially recognise the continuing hard work and dedication of our wonderful staff - volunteer and paid – and our Committee of Management.

Leanne Petrides
Executive Officer



Leanne Petrides - Executive Officer

Program Manager

After fourteen years employment in an administrative role with Cranbourne Information & Support Service, it is now my privilege to be writing my first Annual Report in the capacity of Program Manager.

Following the 2017 Strategic Review and the retirement of Michael Cooney in June 2017, the Committee of Management resolved to restructure the role of Manager of Volunteers to the broader Program Manager. During the first six months of the year, Sharon Mills stepped up and managed the day to day volunteer support in addition to her duties as Roster Coordinator. I thank Sharon for her dedication and support, not only during this period but also over the following six months as I transitioned between roles.

I started as Program Manager in January 2019 and have found working closely with the volunteer team rewarding and at times humbling. CISS volunteers dedicate their time as well as their heart and soul to providing a quality, professional service with empathy and compassion in a safe, non-judgemental space for the community's most vulnerable people.

CISS is fortunate to have 40 volunteers, many working in multiple or specialty roles covering not only Community Support Work but also reception, document support, data entry and quality control, NILS, information provision, food pantry, sorting donated goods, sourcing and sorting donated clothing and the less recognised tasks of garden maintenance

and recycling. There are teams of volunteers working throughout the year in preparation for our successful Christmas Support Program, sourcing and wrapping donated gifts, packing beautiful Christmas hampers as well as ensuring the Christmas Toy Room is organised and stocked throughout the program.

Without all of these wonderful, quiet achievers working tirelessly behind the scenes, it wouldn't be possible for CISS to provide these essential services to those people most disadvantaged and needing our help.

Continued training and development of our is essential to a high quality, professional service delivery. Quarterly staff meetings and access to additional training opportunities through CISVic or other providers, ensures our volunteer staff are equipped with the latest information and skills to best assist them to meet the needs of their clients.

I look forward to the following year of challenges, as we strive to continue to develop new and improve our existing programs and continue to serve our local community. My job would not exist if not for our team of dedicated volunteers and paid staff, the unwavering leadership of our Executive Officer and a supportive Committee of Management - Thank you.

Cathy Willmott
Program Manager



Cathy Willmott - Program Manager

Counselling

The CISS Counselling Service offers a professional service to clients of CISS, and to people who live, work or study in the Casey South community and their families. All counsellors are professionally qualified and eligible for membership of a relevant professional Association and must abide by a Code of Professional Conduct.

There have been changes to the Counselling Team this year. Kathryn Sandercock left CISS but we welcomed (and benefited from) the increased hours provided by Natalie Waring who is also conducting an outreach program at Cranbourne West Primary School. This service has proved to be a successful initiative providing support to vulnerable children and their families. This service is offered on a weekly basis at Cranbourne West Primary School with the support of Debbie Dodd. It is anticipated that this outreach counselling service will extend to another site in Lynbrook shortly.

CISS also benefited this year by a grant provided by the City of Casey via the Lynbrook Hotel Community Contributions Grant to provide counselling for gambling related harm and to purchase multiple copies of Allen Carr's "The Easy Way to Stop Gambling". We are able to give the book free to our clients who are struggling with a gambling problem.

Gambling related harm continues to be a major problem in our community despite the fact that it is not always the primary presenting issue for some clients. Clients may present with issues like loneliness, boredom, isolation, abuse or unresolved childhood trauma and have underlying gambling problems and vice versa.

Family violence is also increasing as a presenting issue, with the greater understanding of what constitutes DV (issues like financial control, isolation from family of origin and emotional abuse), contributing to more people seeking support.

Other presenting issues this year have included grief and bereavement, elder abuse, pornography addiction and trauma related issues.

The CISS Counselling team individually maintain external, professional supervision, and have also established a peer supervision group which meets weekly. This group is open to personal and financial counsellors from CISS as well as SECASA and WAYSS workers and provides an opportunity to discuss difficult cases and to debrief.

Challenges for the future include issues associated with the increase in people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and how we best cater for their needs including overcoming language barriers and understanding cultural differences.

As always, we would like to express our appreciation for all the workers at CISS - the work undertaken by volunteers, staff and co-located services supports our clients and the work we do.

Joan Cavanagh, Doug Thompson and Natalie Waring
Counsellors



Financial Counselling

The Financial Counselling team has seen a significant number of people presenting with complex issues, including loans and credit card debt, and debts that have progressed to collection agencies. More clients are presenting with mortgage debt and stress even though interest rates are very low. Any future rise in interest rates, especially if the rate of under-employment and unemployment remain stagnant or rises will see an increase in serious mortgage stress and even defaults. Many clients present with a range of complex debt issues that require intensive intervention and the team often spend many hours outside scheduled appointments dealing with creditors, advocating and negotiating, writing letters and completing paperwork. In addition, many clients attend with further, complicating matters such as mental health issues or family issues that further add to the complexity of case work.

During this financial year, a total of almost \$400,000 has been waived for clients in extreme hardship and who are unable to pay their debts any time in the future.

Most clients we see are having financial difficulties due to low income. They are usually in receipt of a Centrelink payment because of unemployment or under-employment, or may be employed but receiving low and inconsistent wages. Wage increases have been minimal over the last five years and living expenses, including food, utilities and housing, have increased, further limiting people's capacity to make ends meet.

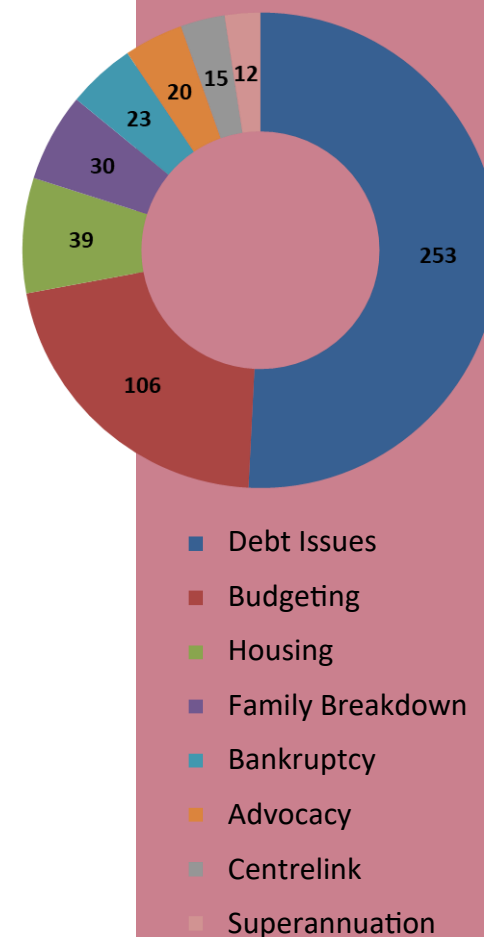
Centrelink payments are taking longer to commence even when applications are correct and this can leave clients with several weeks of no income which can put a family into crisis when they have been used to having a healthy income.

While some of our clients recognise that they are under financial stress and are self-referring, and we receive referrals internally from the volunteer team, we have also seen an increase in the number of people being referred from utility retailers, banks and other agencies.

We would like to recognise the value of working as part of a multi-disciplinary team of paid staff and trained volunteers who can provide additional support services to clients and who can recognise and then triage to the financial counselling team for specialist para-legal support. The fact that clients can access all our services under one roof reduces their stress and makes our work easier.

Max Smart and Jenny McGowan
Financial Counsellors

Primary Presenting Issues



Financial Counselling (continued)

Case Study

Donna was referred to a Financial Counsellor following a visit to CISS for Emergency Relief. Her husband Andrew had suffered a stroke two months prior at the age of 37. He had been working as a cook and though he was undertaking rehabilitation it was not known if he would be able to return to his job. Donna had been studying at TAFE with the intention to return to work when their son started school in the following year.

Donna had made contact with the bank to apply for hardship relief with their mortgage and had paid other bills with their savings but realised this was going to last long term. Both Donna and Andrew were eligible for Centrelink payments so they had some income for day to day expenses. Seeing the Financial Counsellor ensured that most of their debts were put on payments plans or hardship arrangements that suited their income.

Donna was most concerned about a personal loan that was in her name only. She had contacted the bank to explain the situation and had been allowed reduced payments but that arrangement was finishing shortly and she was worried she would not be able to start repaying the loan again at the previous amount.

The Financial Counsellor successfully advocated on Donna's behalf, explaining the family situation and that it was unlikely Andrew would be able to return to work in the foreseeable future. After providing supporting documents showing income and expenditure, and evidence from the doctor, a waiver for nearly \$30,000 was given.

This relieved a lot of stress and anxiety for the family and also demonstrated the responsiveness and flexibility that banks and other organisations can respond with when customers are in very difficult situations due to unexpected circumstances.



Support Work

The Support Work team has continued to see clients with many complex issues - there has been an increase in requests for assistance to complete Australian Citizenship applications, public housing applications, and assistance with utilities (payment plans and completing Utility Relief Grant applications).

Additionally, we have given assistance to several clients applying for suitable identification in order for them to receive Centrelink payments. For some, this has included applying for a copy of their birth certificate in order to then get a photo ID.

This year we have been better able to assist clients who do not have English as a first language following the employment of a CALD Caseworker who can act as an interpreter for appointments for utility relief, completion of forms, Back to School interviews and explaining the CISS Emergency Relief policy.

We continue to support the volunteers and provide support for the clients they refer who have difficult or long term issues and who require a more in-depth approach to their problems.

Doug Thompson and Jenny McGowan
Support Workers



Case Study

Mohammad and his family first came to our service for an appointment to see a housing worker. With the CISS CALD Caseworker interpreting, Mohammad explained that his wife Nafiza and nine year old son had joined him in Australia three weeks earlier after being apart for several years. Their son Ali has severe physical disabilities and is not able to walk. He was being pushed around in a pram which was too small for him and hard to manoeuvre for the parents.

During the eight month period they attended support work appointments at CISS they were assisted with a range of services, including a paediatric wheelchair (originally hired then purchased), referral to a local GP and Monash Health for assessment and diagnosis of Ali's health issues, English classes and assistance to create a MyGov account to connect to Government services.

Additionally, information was provided about driving lessons, an occupational therapy assessment, and assistance with energy retailer issues.

After a number of months and with Ali happily settled into school, Mohammad is working, and the family feels very much that Australia is their new home.

Back to School and Education Assistance Programs

As part of our undertaking to provide services to the most vulnerable members of our community, Cranbourne Information and Support Service once again delivered the Back to School Support Program from November to February. This program provides information and funding options to assist local families with items such as non-voluntary school fees, text books, stationery items, shoes and uniforms.

In previous years, Julie Jones had coordinated the program but decided to retire in August after 12 years of exceptional service in many roles, including positions on the Committee of Management and coordinating the NILS and Educational Assistance Programs. In October 2018, Matt Hine was appointed as the program coordinator with funding from the City of Casey Community Services Organisation (CSO) grant. Matt had been working with CISS as an interviewing volunteer for two years and has a wealth of experience in youth and child development operating a successful business in the education industry.

This year the program provided assistance to 258 families and comprised of students in all year levels, with the highest proportion in either VCE or Year Seven. Unfortunately many families were turned away at the end of the program due to lack of funds.

Of the families supported, approximately 50% were new to the program, and 98% were in receipt of Centrelink payments.

This year saw a significant increase in the number of appointments made and support given compared with previous years which saw similar funding provided to fewer clients. This year we were able to offer additional information and support, such as better computer pricing, more referrals to State Schools Relief Committee for uniforms, and a greater understanding of which stationery items would be required as a priority, and which could be held over. This helped families reduce their immediate expenses and reduced overall stress of educational expenses.

The Back to School program is an essential service that CISS offers to the community. In a period of only three months, we see many clients in short 30 minute meetings. The staff follow a brief procedure to determine the clients need and their ability to source support before allocating an amount of funding to assist them with their crisis.

Overall, the program was a success and we delivered more than \$45,000 in funding to the Casey South community. The families were very grateful to receive the assistance from us and along with the advocacy support, we believe the families are now better educated on the processes around this often stressful time of year.

Matthew Hine

Back to School Program Coordinator



Matthew Hine - BTS Coordinator

Cranbourne and District NILS Program

In 1981, Good Shepherd Sisters in Collingwood started the now very successful NILS Program, which celebrates nearly 40 years of service delivery.

The Cranbourne and District NILS Program continues to provide eligible individuals and families with options for 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 them with 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 and fees, and which thrust people into even more financial disadvantage.

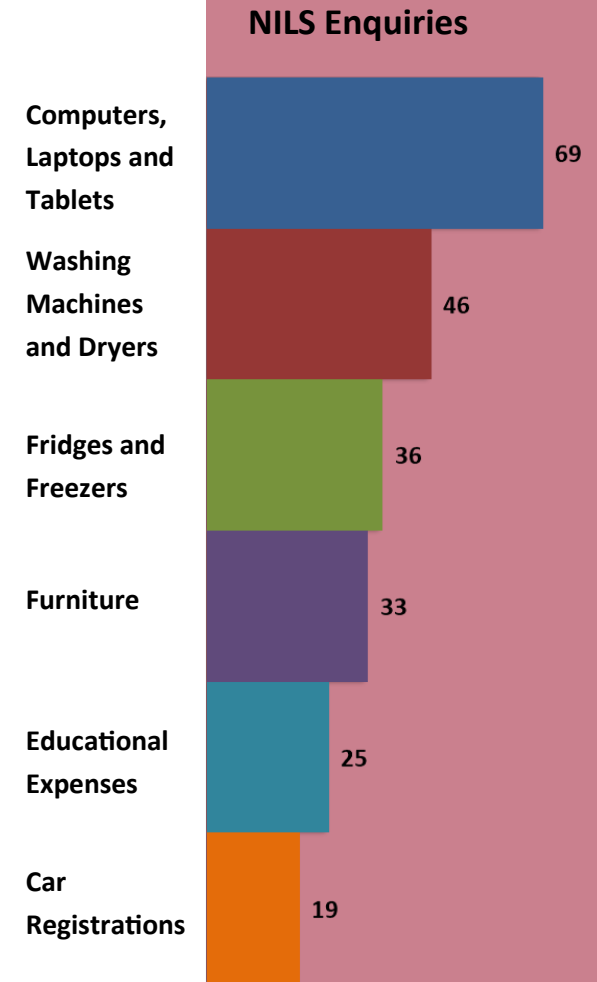
In November 2017, Good Shepherd changed the way NILS was delivered across Australia. As a result, the Cranbourne and District NILS was accredited as a "NILS Client Support Provider". Our role is to engage effectively with clients – to respond to all initial enquiries, interview clients, and gather all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

allows for clients living out of the Casey area to apply for loans at CISS. This has increased the number of enquiries and loan applications, and as a result, Linda Notman has joined the NILS team as a volunteer one day per week.

The Cranbourne NILS volunteers have adapted to the new system admirably and exceeded expectations with loan applications. During the reporting period NILS received over 325 enquiries (an increase of 39% from the previous year). Forty one loans were approved to a total value of \$52,455.

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

Sharon Mills and Linda Notman
Cranbourne and District NILS



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.

We continue to support the Cranbourne Women's Friendship Cafe held at the Cranbourne Library each week. Most of the women who attend are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and this year, with additional funding from Windermere and CISS, we were able to employ a CALD Caseworker for two days a week. Marzia speaks five languages and her work with Infolink assists many families from CALD communities. She provides interpreting support at outreach locations and casework services for families requiring more intensive, specialist support. Marzia's employment has extended the support we have been able to offer, and has also strengthened the services offered by the broader CISS team.

We continue to maintain our established connections with DHS Centrelink Cranbourne, Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre, Cranbourne Bunnings, YMCA (Casey Race) and Monash Health Cranbourne where we provide on-going information & support to the community. In the financial year 2018-2019, we delivered 117 outreach sessions and provided information, referral or support services to 1059 people and families.

The monthly ADHD Support Group continues to provide a safe, confidential and welcoming opportunity for the parents and carers of children diagnosed with ADHD gain support and learn new strategies around their children's condition. This 2018-2019 year we delivered 10 sessions with 40 attending clients.

Once again we wish to thank all the CISS staff for their continual support, as well as the staff from Windermere Child and Family Services CfC Program.

Ann Proud, Flora Warren and Marzia Hamza
Cranbourne Infolink Project



*Marzia Hamza, 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 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 2018 -19 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 to find out more.



Co-located Services (continued)

SECASA

The South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence service began in 1977 at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne as the first sexual assault centre in Victoria. The service later moved to Monash Medical Centre. Our mission is to reduce and ultimately eliminate, sexual assault and family violence through individual and social change. SECASA's approach is to empower survivors and to develop a diverse range of programs to assist their healing and to have services near to where clients live.

SECASA has provided services in Cranbourne for over 20 years and has been located with CISS for over 15 of those years. We provide services to children and adults, both male and female who have experienced sexual assault and/or family violence. An Art Group recently began at the Cranbourne Library for SECASA clients. Artist Anne Riggs facilitates the group, which produces artworks for the calendar each year, and a SECASA counsellor attends to support the clients.

Over the last year we saw over 300 new clients in Cranbourne, more than 75% were for sexual assault counselling and the remainder for family violence counselling. Sadly we farewelled colleagues, Ima and Michelle in recent weeks and we look forward to welcoming new workers Sisi and Mercy to this vibrant, friendly and caring environment within CISS.

Co-locating with CISS and other critical service providers enables us all to utilise a holistic approach to inform, support and empower the community.

We often share clients with CISS and they receive wonderful support from staff and volunteers. Many of my clients have glowing appreciation of the services they receive. One client was very ill and her doctor referred her to a medical specialist. However my client is a carer to her husband and adult son and was not in a financial position to pay the upfront costs. CISS was able to assist her financially to receive the medical care she urgently required.

The partnership between CISS, SECASA and other services on the site assists our clients' needs in a respectful and confidential manner. It is a perfect location for both clients and counsellors, and my practice is enhanced by the community within CISS.

South Eastern CASA
Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence



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.



\$201,000

food and petrol vouchers

1,200

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.

\$8,735

essential medication assistance

1,376

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.



258

families assisted

\$45,210

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.



34,393

requests for support or information

2,989

referrals made

195,187

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.

336

individuals, couples and families counselled

118

children counselled



Financial Counselling

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



252

clients supported

127

new clients

\$379,354

debt removed

Informing and Supporting our Community for Forty Years 1978-2018

The Cranbourne Information & Support Service celebrated its 40th anniversary on 23 November 2018.

On 27 February 1978, a Public Meeting was convened by Ray Perry and Joan Reid to form a committee to establish a Citizen's Advice Bureau in Cranbourne.

Following the training of eight volunteers, the Bureau opened for business on 23 November 1978 between the hours of 10am and 3pm on Thursdays, and 7pm and 9pm on Wednesdays in two partitioned rooms in the Old Shire Offices. Sadly, Ray Perry passed away before seeing his plans come to fruition, but his widow Avice, became a volunteer.

With the recruitment and training of additional volunteers, the Bureau was able to open Monday to Friday, commencing 1 February 1979.



Cranbourne Old Shire Offices - 1969

The suburbs of Casey South are some of the fastest growing in the state, and while the area may have had a small village flavour in the early days of the Citizens Advice Bureau, it is now a thriving mix of suburban and rural populations with very diverse needs. The name may have changed, but what has not changed in our 40 years of service provision, is the professionalism of all of our volunteers and paid staff, and the commitment CISS has to providing a best practice service delivery model to our community.



Informing and Supporting our Community for Forty Years 1978-2018

The Cranbourne Information & Support Service fielded nearly 35,000 requests for support or information in the last financial year, with issues as diverse as food assistance, counselling, housing, referrals, tax help, no interest loans, education assistance, outreach services, and advocacy services. The agency is primarily staffed by trained volunteers who give freely of their valuable time. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of our community, and without them, services such as this one would be unable to operate.



Cranbourne Public Library - circa 1980



Cranbourne Information & Support Service - 2011

On 23 November 2018, exactly 40 years after opening its doors, the Cranbourne Information & Support Service held a celebration at the Cranbourne Turf Club with the generous support of a number of organisations and businesses. A special guest was the Mayor of the City of Casey who presented CISS President and Executive Officer with a certificate commemorating 40 years of service to the community.



Emergency Relief - More than a band-aid (A Volunteer's Story)

On many occasions, our ER volunteers will see people who ask for assistance with basic needs such as food, medication or petrol. Our volunteers are trained, experienced and highly skilled in unpacking the underlying issues from the presenting problems, as the following case demonstrates.

Beatrice (47) and her son Daniel (19) had been referred by Centrelink, and attended CISS for the first time in order to request a fuel voucher. Daniel works, but recently lost his licence and needs his Mum to drive him to his job and pick him up every day. They were finding it hard to make ends meet as Beatrice had recently lost her job.

Daniel completed year 12 last year and stated that he does not want to go to complete any tertiary studies but talked about his passion for painting and interior decorating. Beatrice was worried that he was losing motivation, and Daniel mentioned that he may have a three day 'trial job' starting shortly.

While providing Beatrice with the fuel voucher she had requested, the ER volunteer chatted to Daniel about how much he knew about his passion and what opportunities there may be for him in exploring some study options. They discussed TAFE painting and interior decorating courses, and even what the future could hold.

At this point, Daniel was becoming really engaged – sitting up and making eye contact, and Beatrice was smiling and nodding in the background. The ER volunteer mentioned the phrase "knowledge is power" and drew a quick diagram about choices and consequences that seemed to really resonate with Daniel.

During the thirty minute interview, Daniel was provided with the "Making Ends Meet" resource guide to help him investigate the L2P program so that he could apply for a manual licence. This guide also has information about budgeting and managing his money, which he thought would be a good idea. Daniel also asked if he could keep the very rough diagram about making choices.

One week later Beatrice came in to thank the volunteer for the assistance provided the previous week. Beatrice told the volunteer that Daniel was sharing the "knowledge is power" saying with his mates. He is now working and his boss has stated that he is very pleased with his work ethic. Beatrice was especially pleased that Daniel was now speaking to her about enrolling in TAFE.



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:**

Rotary Club of Cranbourne
Zagames Berwick
Lions Club of Balla Balla
Lions Club of Cranbourne
Gold Bank Real Estate
Mark Guthrie and Staff -
Ray White Cranbourne
Brown Property Group
Cranbourne Arthritis Support Group
Inner Wheel Club of Cranbourne
Balla Balla Community Centre
Commonwealth Bank Cranbourne
Ulysses Club Shearwater Branch
Cranbourne West Primary School
Cranbourne Baptist Church
Hampton Park Baptist Church
CWA Casey Dinner Branch
Robin and Arnis Dzedins
Blue Hills Rise Retirement Village
Share the Dignity
Selandra Retirement Village
Beaconhills College
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.

RRAK Donations – For many years, CISS had a special relationship with a local woman and her family. Raelee Stringer would rally her friends, family and colleagues more than once a year to donate food and other items to CISS. Sadly, Raelee passed away in 2018 leaving behind a grieving family and extended community who loved her. Even throughout her illness, she inspired people to give to CISS and to many other causes after establishing her “Raelee’s Random Acts of Kindness (RRAK’s)”.

In lieu of flowers at her funeral, Raelee had organised for donations to be shared between CISS and the Cancer Council, and a year after her death, her husband Michael organised a memorial RRAK in her honour and he delivered more than 50 bulging bags of food that he had collected from Raelee’s friends and family.

Simon Dip 4 CISS – In winter this year, our President Simon Walliker stepped out into the freezing cold waters of the bay by the Frankston Pier to raise money for CISS. He swam the entire length of the 2.5 kilometre pier at 10pm at night in the pitch black wearing only his bathers and raised nearly \$1,000 for his efforts. Above and beyond the call of duty indeed!

Mystery Grocery Donor – Every Thursday, without fail, a gentleman pops into CISS after working a 6am–3pm shift. When he finishes work he goes grocery shopping and fills a huge bag with pasta, soup, pasta sauce and other essential food items. He comes in with a shy smile and a simple hello to drop them off and then leaves as quickly as he arrives.