



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023-2024



***Women's Business – Artwork by Merryn Apma Daley***

Ruth's Women's Shelter is proud to be located on the lands of the Gimuy-Walubara Yidinji People. We acknowledge the connection to country through the lands, waterways; and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.



# CONTENTS

|           |                                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>04</b> | OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES    |
| <b>05</b> | OUR STRATEGIC GOALS               |
| <b>07</b> | OUR SERVICE                       |
| <b>08</b> | PRESIDENT REPORT                  |
| <b>11</b> | TREASURES REPORT                  |
| <b>12</b> | MANAGERS REPORT                   |
| <b>14</b> | STAFF REPORT                      |
| <b>16</b> | SERVICE DELIVERY - YEAR IN REVIEW |
| <b>17</b> | STRATEGIC GOALS IN ACTION         |
| <b>20</b> | OUR GRATITUDE                     |

## RUTHS MISSION

Ruths will provide a safe environment for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence

## RUTHS VISION

To end violence against women and their children

## OUR VALUES



### RESPECT

Honouring each individual with empathy & dignity without judgement recognising their inherent worth



### SAFETY

Providing a physically & emotionally secure & inclusive environment where clients & staff feel supported, safe & free from all forms of abuse



### EMPOWERMENT

Build pathways to improve the capacity of clients & staff by empowering them with the tools and resources for self determination



### INTEGRITY

To act with honesty & professionalism by upholding the values of our organisation



### COLLABORATION

Working collaboratively with stake holders, clients & staff to develop & achieve common goals

# STRATEGIC GOALS

Ruth's Womens Shelter is actively working towards achieving goals in line with our Vision, Mission and Values



## WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS

Increasing support to staff & improving service delivery

Improved communication delivery, training, enhanced supervision and the creation of a Team leader role.

Continuous improvement of case management tools, resources & client support.



## PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Influential relationships enhancing the service to our clients & community

Building relationships & securing MOU's for formality. Advocating & collaborating with partner services & collectives through meaningful relationships



## EXPANSION OF SERVICE CAPACITY

Increasing service delivery to marginalised groups, increasing capacity & minimising current risks

Increase of service delivery through capital purchase of specific independent living options.

Increase current transitional property portfolio



They are angel from heaven, they help me in the most difficult season in my life. Hope there more of them. I love to help them in any voluntary help.

*Client Feedback - Sep 2024*

It was nothing less than perfect. It was home for my son daughter and I and it was hard and sad to leave. The staff were amazing and went to the ends of the earth for myself and my children, the words thankful and blessed are not enough to describe how I felt whilst there.

*Client Feedback - Aug 2023*



# OUR SERVICE

Ruth's Womens Shelter has a rich feminist history. In September 1977 Ruth's was founded by Patricia O'Hara, Jean Bleyerveld, Ruth Thomas and Joan Trewern.

## FUNDING

Ruth's is funded by the Department of Justice and Attorney General for delivery of Shelter to our clients.

Emergency Relief Funding for clients within the service is provided by Centacare.

On as needs basis, grant funds are received from Community Gambling Fund.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Ruth's is proudly compliant and registered through HDAA in accordance with the Human Standards Quality Framework (HSQF).

Ruth's upholds a registered charity status with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits commission (ACNC).

## SERVICE

Ruth's provided crisis accommodation in a communal setting. Funding is provided for 6 rooms ranging from a single bed and cot to 4 single beds and cot. Facilities are shared including two communal kitchens, playroom, lounge areas and outside areas. All clients are case managed.

## OUR PEOPLE

Ruth's is governed by a long standing and supportive Management Committee.

Ruth's is operated by a Manager, Team Leader, Finance Officer, Case Managers, After Hours Support Workers and an Admin Service Support Worker.



Department of  
Justice and Attorney-General



# PRESIDENT REPORT

2023/2024 has been a successful year for Ruth's Women's Shelter, marked by significant milestones and positive developments that have advanced our mission of supporting women in need. Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening our services, expanding our reach, and deepening our community impact, all while ensuring that the safety and well-being of the women we serve remain at the heart of everything we do.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and growth, we are scheduled to review our strategic focus in February 2025. This review will allow us to assess the progress of our goals and determine the next phase of our expansion, making sure that we stay aligned with the needs of our stakeholders and the ever-changing landscape of our sector.

One of our strategic goals at Ruth's Women's Shelter has been the expansion of our services to meet the growing and diverse needs of the women and families we serve. I am excited to share a major development that will play a pivotal role in helping us achieve this goal. This year we were successful recipients of the Safe Places Federal Grant from the Department of Social Services. This grant will provide Ruth's with funding to build four 2-bedroom units, significantly expanding our capacity to serve those in need.

This opportunity will enhance our service delivery by offering specific independent crisis accommodation options, allowing us to better support women and children experiencing domestic violence. We have named this project "Ruth's Safe Place".

We have partnered with James and Sarah Mort of MiHaven, a social enterprise with a proven track record of success in project management and development. MiHaven will be leading the project management and construction of our new facility, which will serve as a dedicated space for women in crisis, offering shelter, safety, and a range of support services.

This collaboration is a natural fit for Ruth's Women's Shelter, as MiHaven's expertise, values, and experience align perfectly with our mission. Their commitment to social impact and sustainable community development makes them the ideal partner to help us realize the vision for "Ruth's Safe Place".

We continue to strengthen our partnerships with various services to provide our clients with a holistic approach. These collaborations enable us to offer comprehensive support, addressing a wide range of needs and ensuring that our clients receive well-rounded assistance.



This year, we bid farewell to two valued members, Sue Wells and Julie Hosking, who have retired from the committee. Their contributions to our committee have been immeasurable, and we are grateful for their dedication and service. While they may be stepping back from their roles, we look forward to seeing them around and hope they will continue to share their insights and support with us.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our two new members, Tracey White and Llana Hills. Their experience and expertise will be invaluable to our committee as we move forward. We are excited to have them on board and look forward to their contributions in enhancing our initiatives and overall impact.

I would like to express my gratitude to our wonderful staff, management committee members, and dedicated volunteers. Their commitment, energy, and skills continue to make it a great privilege to be a part of Ruth's work in the community. Together, we are making a meaningful impact, and I look forward to our continued success.



*Tegan Hicks*

# INNOVATION AWARD 2024

In 2021, it was decided that we would recognise innovative contributions to the organisation.

**noun: innovation**

**the action or process of innovating.**

**"innovation is crucial to the continuing success of any organization"**

Innovation is a key driver of success, particularly in an organisation like ours, where adapting to the changing needs of the women we serve is essential to our impact. This year, we are proud to recognise Emalee Anstee, Ruth's manager, as the recipient of the 2024 Employee Innovation Award. Emalee's creative thinking, dedication, and leadership have been instrumental in helping Ruth's Women's Shelter continue to evolve and thrive.

Emalee played an integral role in securing the grant that will support the expansion of our services and further our mission. Her deep understanding of our organizational needs, coupled with her ability to think outside the box, ensured a successful application process. Emalee's efforts in this area are a testament to her commitment not only to Ruth's Women's Shelter but also to the broader goals of innovation that we strive to uphold.

Even as we move forward with the implementation of the grant, Emalee will continue to play a key role in guiding this project to completion, ensuring that it aligns with our strategic goals and maximizes its impact on the women we support.

Congratulations to Emalee for this well-deserved recognition.

# TREASURER REPORT

The 2024 financial year has passed swiftly, and our incredible team at Ruth's has been more dedicated than ever, ensuring a safe haven for women and their children facing domestic and family violence.

Over the past 12 months, the cost-of-living crisis has impacted everyone, leading to an increase in client expenses. Despite these challenges, we are fortunate to report an uplift in grant funding this year, totalling \$1,082,181. This marks a 13% increase from last year's \$956,029.

Our primary source of grant funding continues to be from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General amounting to \$928,833. Additionally, we received \$103,848 in Enhancement Funding. We are also pleased to announce we received a one-off grant of \$49,500 from the DFV Rent Assist program, which will help us provide further assistance.

In addition to grant funding, we have been blessed with generous donations from our community. These include:

- Kenfrost: \$15,000
- Wheelbarrow Race through the Sisterhood of the Travelling Wheelbarrow team: \$12,730
- GiveNow Donations from our website: \$8,854

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our generous donors for their unwavering support of our cause.

Your contributions make a significant difference in our efforts to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Throughout the financial year, our commitment to the training and development of our staff has remained a top priority. We have invested in various professional development programs and workshops to enhance the skills and knowledge of our team. This ongoing focus on training ensures that our staff are well-equipped to provide the highest level of support and care to the women and children we serve. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, we are better positioned to meet the evolving needs of our clients and maintain the high standards of services that our community relies on.

Ruth's financial position remains robust, reflecting our prudent management and strategic planning. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Emalee and her dedicated team at Ruth's. Their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in supporting clients facing domestic and family violence have been truly commendable. The team's dedication not only ensures the provision of essential services but also fosters a safe and nurturing environment for those in need. Their hard work and compassion are the cornerstones of our success, and we are deeply grateful for their continued dedication to our mission.



Nicole Power

# MANAGER REPORT

I am now in my third year of service as the Manager at Ruth's, and I feel immense gratitude everyday for the position i hold and the daily commitment i have to the role. All the staff at Ruth's over the past 12 months both past and current, have worked tirelessly in 2023/2024 with so much to be proud of. It is evident that there has been many changes to our service, the sector and the wider community, I want to thank all of you for being resilient in times of change.

The 2023/2024 year was an extremely busy, productive, and evolving period for Ruth's as a service and a team.

- Continuous improvement remains a focus of Ruth's, enhancing and evolving the service to clients, support to staff and the daily operations.
- A grant application was made in early 2024 for the service funding of the Mossman Shelter, however Ruth's were not successful.
- Patimah and the Case management team have worked hard on the case management processes, risk assessment, safety planning, policies and work practices including the implementation of weekly case reviews. This is a vital part of the work we do and therefore imperative to continue the focus in this area.

- Later this week we have our HSQF Audit – our reaccreditation for another 3 years and the hope for a clean report for Ruth's.
- In October 2023, a grant application was submitted for the Safe Places Accommodation Grant funded by Australian Government Department of Social Services Australia, which we were grateful recipients of. As Tegan mentioned this is a milestone project for Ruth's which will enhance the current service to meet gaps and expand capacity. I want to personally thank James and Sarah Mort from MiHaven for their ongoing support, knowledge and professionalism throughout this project, Ruth's Committee and staff for their trust, support and passion to the vision.
- A piece of work that has been developed is around the psychosocial support for staff and understanding and practicing self care. In an industry where burnout rates are high it is vital we are supporting staff to maintain a stable and skilled workforce.

I want to personally thank Patimah for 12 months of service as Ruth's Team Leader. Your implementation and overhaul of policies and work practices has not gone unnoticed. Your focus on the continuous improvement and support for staff in line with the Workplace Solutions strategic goal, has provided clear, positive frameworks for the service and staff experience. I'm looking forward to the next 12 months living and breathing all the hard work of the past 12 months.

Over the past year the service has maintained client capacity with the level of complexity of cases requiring the increase of our Case Management Team. Later this year after 13 years of dedication to Ruth's we will see Virginia resign from her permanent role of case manager and step into our casual pool. Her many years of knowledge, expertise and support for many staff has been so valuable to Ruth's and it will be missed. I want to personally acknowledge the long standing staff who have embraced the continuous improvement of practice and welcome the newer members of the team who we are delighted to have on board. It is evident through client feedback that our work is of a high standard with staff operating within our organisational values ensuring women and children's experiences are positive and full of hope.

Nurturing and enhancing our community partnerships is vital to the growth and support of our service. I wish to acknowledge the professionalism and support that is offered through our network, sharing of knowledge, expertise and leadership is invaluable – so thank you to The Women's Centre, Warringu, Cairns Regional DV Service, the High-Risk Team, Access Housing and NQ Women's Legal Service. In line with Ruth's mission of providing a safe environment for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence we are so proud to be a vital piece in the recovery and healing process of keeping women and their children safe.

We know that the cases of Domestic violence are not decreasing, with breeches to DVO's at record high numbers. We know that through media and political avenues Domestic and Family Violence is high on the agenda, however changing and shifting focus to societal norms and values is where the real work needs to happen. We show up, advocate with passion, dedicate our time and energy to the work and live in hope along with our clients that the narrative will change.

*I admire the courage of all women who take the leap into Shelter.... "Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength" Theodore Roosevelt*



*Emalee Anstee*

# STAFF REPORT

2023 to 2024 saw many changes and movement to the workforce.

We said goodbye to Bronwyn, Emiline, Janice, Nat, Maria, Emily, Carly, Marlene and Holly.

And we welcomed onboard Lee to the Finance Officer role, Erin in the Case Manager role, Razele, Sandi, Andrea, Malika and Christine to the After-Hours Support Worker team and Rachel in the Admin Service Support role.

We thank all of those who have contributed to the work we do over the last 12 months. Thank you for your commitment, dedication and willingness to change and innovate.

Ruth's continue to support staff in their professional development, industry awareness and self-care practices. Staff were offered and undertook the following training and development opportunities:

- Vicarious Trauma
- LGBTQ DV Awareness Training
- Self-Care and Mental Wellbeing
- Unpacking Circle of Security
- DFV Work Practices
- Mental Health First Aid
- De-Escalation Training
- Non-Lethal Strangulation Symposium in Brisbane

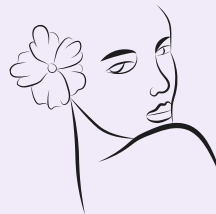
- In house training and workshops on policies and work practices
- As the staff representative I attended the Better Boards Conference in Sydney

December brought with it a cyclone and rain. A number of our staff were affected (directly and/ or indirectly) by this event. Staff who were affected were provided flexibility around their work arrangements and were kept in close contact.

EAP was part of these conversations with affected staff. The Business Continuity plan was updated and put into action where needed, as a response to the event.

Staff who were involved in significant incidents during this period were supported through debriefing and offered external support options, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Ruth's focus has been on developing policies and supports around psychosocial hazards in the workplace and the understanding and practicing of self-care. This is part of the wider approach to Ruth's care and retention of employees. Staff also participated in some team building time like lawn bowls and a cinema event.



Patimah Singe





I wanted to mentioned that i realised that today is my independence day. Its been a year since i left my house. Although i am still struggling to find a peaceful life, i feel that i am definitely mentally stronger than i was a year ago. I would not have been able to accomplish this without your help, everybody in the shelter is very nice and helpful to me. Thankyou so much once again.

*Client Feedback - November 2023*

My experience in the shelter was different every time I went through emotional roller coasters and they supported me every time I returned! I felted ashamed returning back but the comforted me and told me everything was going to be all right. I am so blessed to have this women's shelter in cairns and the all the staff there go above and beyond for your needs and mental health. I love them all so much and I honestly will never forget them and how you have helped me and my daughter out of a horrible situation. If there were somehow I could pay it forward the love and care I would. Thankyou so much

*Client Feedback - Feb 2024*

# SERVICE DELIVERY

## 2023-2024

**38**  
**Women**



**51**  
**Children**

**61%**  
**Identified as**  
**Aboriginal or**  
**Torres Strait**  
**Islander (ATSI)**

**16%**  
**Identified as**  
**Culturally and**  
**Linguistically**  
**Diverse (CALD)**



# STRATEGIC GOALS IN FOCUS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

## Workplace Solutions

### 1. Improved Communication delivery, training and enhanced supervision

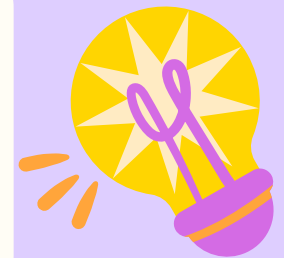
- Professional development identified and actioned through supervisions
- Regular Staff Meetings in person and on teams
- Staff Survey conducted seeking feedback on improvements and changes
- Communication channels through TEAMS and Email, acknowledgement and response to ensure effectiveness
- Team Building and Social Activities, including Christmas Social.

### 2. Continuous Improvement of Case Management tools, resources and client support

- Extensive work on Risk Assessment tools, intake, and identification of imminent risk
- Extensive work on Safety Planning, physical, emotional and social
- Development of region and organisation specific profile for benefit of 'knowing the service'. Shared with DV Connect to improve referrals into shelter
- Improvement and enhancement of client room folders, intake and case management resources, information and referrals

### 3. Increased Support to Staff and Improved Service Delivery

- Improvement and Implementation of Monthly Supervision, Annual Performance Appraisals and Probation policies and practices
- Improvement of Employee Orientation Process
- Development of Psychosocial Hazards in the workplace policies and work practices
- Development of 'Understanding and Practicing Self-Care' resource for staff
- Vicarious Trauma Training
- Improvement of the Case Management work flow including training, weekly structured case reviews, enhancement of policies and practices



# STRATEGIC GOALS IN FOCUS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

1. *Influential Relationships enhancing the service to our clients & community*
2. *Advocating & Collaborating with partner services & collectives through meaningful relationships*

## ***Partnerships and Community Engagement***



- Regular Service visits to DV Specific organisations including Warringu, CRDVS, Womens Centre, RAQ
- Regular participation in the Cairns Collective DFV Impact Group
- Regular attendance to Red Rose Rally's to acknowledge lives lost to DFV
- Participation and facilitation of collective Case Management across services including Child Safety, Act 4 Kids, HRT
- Executive Member of Combined Women's Refuge Group (CWRG)
- Active member of NQ Women's Service Network
- Active collaboration with JCU Dental
- Active social media pages providing awareness and connecting community
- Formal partnership with Donna Cahill realestate

# STRATEGIC GOALS IN FOCUS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

1. *Increasing service delivery to marginalised groups, increasing capacity & minimising current risks.*
2. *Increase of service delivery through capital purchase of specific independent living options.*

## *Expansion of Service Capacity*



- In October 2023 Ruth's applied for a Safe Places Grant funded by Australian Government Department of Social Services.
- This grant proposed the expansion of Ruth's with the aim to build 4 x 2 Bedroom units in a central location.
- The aim is to provide safe places for women and their children who are not able to access service due to the current communal model.
- In June 2024 Ruth's were advised of the successful grant application.
- MiHaven – James and Sarah Mort have been amazing partners in this entire process, from the grant application, through contract phase, to settlement of land to build which is due to commence prior to the end of the year.
- This opportunity will increase service delivery providing specific independent crisis accommodation options.
- The project is due for completion late 2025.

# RUTH'S COULD NOT ACHIEVE WHAT WE DO WITHOUT THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY

Ruth's works tirelessly to build community partnerships and support networks. The clients benefit greatly from the ongoing community support be it clothing, material items, cash donations, vouchers or fundraising. All efforts are appreciated.

Accor Hotels – Pullman  
Adam Prociw  
Adi Erez  
AFL Cairns  
Alex Macqueen  
Alicia Rowe  
Amanda Klien  
Amber Vallance  
Andy Behrndt  
Anne-Marie Carlson  
Annette Beaumont  
Annette Lennox  
BOQ Cairns City  
Bed Bath and Table  
Bently Park College  
BIG W Giving Tree  
Billys Coffee  
Brad Luders  
Brothers Leagues Club  
Cairns Golf Club Donations  
Cairns Penny Bank  
CRC – Mayors Christmas  
Appeal

Cairns Tourist Information Centre  
Cazalys Cairns  
Charity Ball 2023  
Containers for Change  
CPO Redlynch  
Cross Fit Kantok  
Dakota Freeman  
Diocese of Cairns  
Donna Worth  
Edge Hill State School  
Eleanor Speare  
ESCABAGS  
Fantastic Furniture  
Felicity Agnew  
FNQ Motor Group  
FNQLA – FNQ Law Association  
Frances Barber  
GDA Constructions  
Gillian Vastenhout  
Girl Guides Qld Donation  
Harper and Macy Galeano  
Hayley Obersky

Holly Green  
Hunt Reality  
Jane Arnold  
Jarrah Healy  
Jasmin Weakley  
Jenelle Gil  
Jennifer Jones  
Jerry Tucker  
Jo Harris  
Joanna Taylor  
Joanne Culanti  
Kate Adams  
Kelsey Bakkum  
Kenfrost (1987) Pty Ltd  
Kerri Griffiths  
Kerry Sorokleous  
Kieran Wong  
Kirsty Dixon  
Krystal Pollock  
Kuranda State College  
Lara Biggs  
Lars Nauheimer

Lexi and Hayden Wirght  
Lynette Binder  
Marius Booyesen  
Mark Seles  
Maureen Wicks  
MiHaven  
Milla Cameron  
Myer Cairns  
Nick Masasso  
Nicole Coffey  
NRMA Cairns Holiday Park  
Patrick Donald  
Patrick Johnson  
Perhaps Book Club  
Peter Flatman  
Piccones Community Fund  
Piccones IGA  
Qantas Cairns  
QAS  
Raelene Haratsis  
Richard Galeano  
Rosemarie Rowe

RSL Mothers Day donation  
RW In Honour of BPD  
Seth Yelland  
Share the Dignity  
Sharnee Glatthor  
Sisterhood of the Traveling  
Wheelbarrow  
Smithfield Shopping Centre  
St Johns Community Care  
Steve Tatt  
Sue Healy  
Suzanne Rath  
Tamara Grey  
Tammy Rogers  
Tara Loudon  
Thomas Leeman  
Van and Huxley Hammacott  
Weber Brothers Circus  
Wellness Embodied  
Women in Construction  
Yew Ming Tan  
Zephyr  
Zoe Bakkum