

Bridge President's Report 2015-2016

This past year has seen The Bridge Youth Service continue its sterling work with young people across our region. I am proud of the fact that in a time of economic uncertainty, belt-tightening and rapid social change, The Bridge staff have been able to maintain and extend the reach of their work. One way of achieving this is to collaborate with other agencies in tendering processes. One of our achievements in this regard has been securing the Navigator Program along with Berry Street which has been designed to support young people who have disengaged from education to return to school or education setting that is meaningful to them.

Another project which received funding has been a four-agency consortium which focuses on the "behind the scenes" operations of Not for Profits. The aim of the project is to determine how we can share tasks and operations between the organisations. For example improved technology which will enable The Bridge to provide services even more efficiently. Our partners in this project are: Connect GV, Family Care and Primary Care Connect. Each partner takes a lead. The part of the project we lead is capacity building to utilise 'Social Media'. At the southern end of the Region we are working closely with the Seymour Flexible Learning centre to enhance the educational support we can provide to young parents.

A further achievement was a clean bill of health from our accreditors. It is easy to think of accreditation as something that has to be endured rather than enjoyed but it does serve the purpose of an objective scan of the whole operation and a useful reminder, as if anyone at The Bridge would ever forget, of why we are here.

We have continued to give back to the Community from the earnings the very dedicated manager and her team of volunteers and part time staff at Revamp Op Shop generate. Some of the ways this has happened include using the funds to place a youth worker at Headspace one day a week, and to provide staff for our Young Parents Program. We continued to provide our 'Links' program to assist young people to link back to school or take on training or employment. We are exploring other ways of supporting the young people from the communities that supports us.

The Bridge continues its history of good staff retention, always an indicator of a positive place to work. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the CEO, the leadership team, the staff, the volunteers and other board members for their hard work, commitment and the results they achieve. It may be a cliché to say that people are what makes an organisation but it is true at The Bridge.

Financially, we continue to be viable thanks our funding bodies, chiefly the Victorian State Government. Our thanks also go to the City of Greater Shepparton, the many people who supported Father Pauls Ride for Youth in Seymour and the Eastern G.V Group CWA group for their continued support.

Charlotte Brewer
President

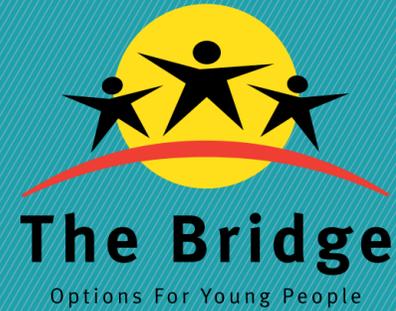
Melinda Lawley
CEO

Staff List 2015-16

Rebecca Andrea	<i>Creating Connections Worker</i>
Kathie Andriessen	<i>Admin Support Seymour</i>
Illana Ballerini	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker</i>
Julie Batey	<i>Admin Support Shepparton</i>
David Bennett	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker</i>
Natalie Bingham	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker</i>
Alex Bruinier	<i>Links Worker</i>
Paul Chainey	<i>Revamp Worker</i>
Jessica Chapman	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker</i>
Amanda Collie	<i>Cradle to Kinder Support Worker</i>
Jenny Cook	<i>Manager Young Pregnant & Parenting Programs (Shepparton)</i>
Sue DeBoer	<i>Admin Support Shepparton</i>
Fiona Down	<i>Manager Youth & Family Support Programs (Shepparton)</i>
Wendy Exton	<i>Admin Support Shepparton</i>
Melanie Formica	<i>Supporting Young Parents Worker</i>
Michelle Frost	<i>Cradle to Kinder Support Worker</i>
Amanda Hainsworth	<i>Supporting Young Parents Worker</i>
April Hayman	<i>Revamp Worker</i>
Sharon Hensgen-Smith	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Stephen Hunter	<i>Family Support Worker</i>
Amber Kelsey	<i>STAR Housing Worker</i>
Linda King	<i>Family Support Worker</i>
Melinda Lawley	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Alicia Lindsay	<i>Business Manager</i>
Fiona Martin	<i>Revamp Manager</i>
Deb Pepper	<i>Links Worker</i>
Rebecca Salau	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker</i>
Sharryn Smith	<i>Revamp Worker</i>
Vicky Vourgaslis	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker/Cradle to Kinder Support Worker</i>
Ashlee Walker	<i>Youth & Family Support Worker/Family Support Worker</i>
Bonnie Williams	<i>Manager Youth & Family Support Programs (Seymour)</i>

Board of Management 2015-16

Charlotte Brewer (President)	Sharon Hensgen-Smith (CEO)
Ayden Graham (Treasurer)	Helen Phillips
Mark Rumble (Vice-President)	Helen West
Felicity Dalle-Nogare (Secretary)	Megan Grey
Melinda Lawley (CEO)	



Annual Report 2015-16



Our Vision

Is a community where all young people have the opportunity to reach their full potential, where all young people are valued, and where families live in harmony.

Our Mission

Is to stand for opportunity and empowerment for all young people in the context of their families and communities.

The Bridge Youth Service is a dynamic, independent local organisation supporting young people throughout the Goulburn Valley, including the local government areas of Moira, Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mitchell and Campaspe Shires.

The Bridge Youth Service recognises challenges facing young people and has a team of qualified, experienced staff capable of responding to and supporting young people from many different backgrounds and cultures.

The Bridge Youth Service is an accredited organisation with a commitment to continuous quality improvement. All employees are encouraged to demonstrate this commitment through the implementation of quality improvement strategies, evaluation and research.

Programs

Young People

Adolescent Support Program

Staff at The Bridge Youth Service deal with some of the most complex and challenging situations in working with young people aged 12-17 yrs who are at significant risk of Child Protection involvement. Through the Adolescent Support Program the Bridge Youth Service supports at least 15 young people at any one time with the aim of maintaining the young person's place in the family home, or assisting the family to resolve issues so that the young person can return home as soon as possible.

Finding Solutions

Family mediation plays a key role in this program and involves staff responding quickly to situations where family breakdown is imminent. Finding solutions provides a creative response for young people and their families including the use of mediation to reduce tension in the family, strengthen the family relationship, and reduce the need for out-of-home-care.

STAR Program (Sustaining Tenancies At Risk)

The STAR Housing program focuses on early intervention and prevention to keep young people in their private rental property and out of homelessness sectors. This program is based in Shepparton but also provides support to young people in the Mitchell and Campaspe Shires.

Specialist Homelessness Services

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires an informed response and professional support from staff who utilise strategies aimed at dealing with multiple and increasingly complex issues. This year The Bridge Youth Service has supported over 297 young people, who were experiencing various degrees of homelessness; such as having no where to stay, living daily with the risk of eviction; couch surfing or living in unsafe or high risk situations.

Family Reconciliation support has also been provided to more than 67 families where assistance has been to re-establish positive relationships with family and reduce the need of housing support for young people due to family conflict.

Supporting Young Parents Program

The Supporting Young Parents Program provides case management and support to young women who are pregnant or parenting and either homeless or at risk of homelessness, with the aim of supporting them as parents and assisting them to access sustainable long term housing.

The Links Program

The Links program role provides support through case work to facilitate initial support to young people who are disengaged from education, who are at risk of not making a successful transition from school, and support with pathways to education and employment. Initial generalist support is also provided where The Bridge Youth Service is unable to support in other program areas.

Mentoring

The mentoring program works to build a positive one-to-one relationship between a young person (under 25yrs) and a mentor. Through this relationship the aim is to assist the young person to develop a positive sense of self and connection with their community. Mentors engage in regular contact with a young person to focus on their needs and interests. A mentor offers support, friendship, encouragement and facilitates the development of an enduring, constructive relationship.

Revamp (Op Shop)

A huge thank you to the staff and volunteers at Revamp. As The Bridge Youth Services' primary fund raising project, Revamp makes an amazing contribution to our work with local young people including on-the-job training. Well done and thank you!

Young People and Parenting Antenatal Care and Education Program

The Bridge Youth Service's partnership with GV Health contributes significantly to the success of the community based Antenatal Care and Education Program. This year over 40 young women participated in the program.

Options Counselling

Sexual Health and pregnancy information is provided to young women in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner.

This assists them to make informed decisions which support their health and wellbeing.

Future Parenting Program

Utilising a group-work approach this program provides education, information and support that assists young parents to develop their parenting skills. The aim of the group is to assist young parents to reduce the feelings of isolation, connect them to their local community, contribute to positive relationships and provide guidance for family health and wellbeing. The group meets weekly on a Thursday during school terms.

Cradle to Kinder

The Cradle to Kinder program provides case management to vulnerable families for up to four years. This ensures that from pregnancy through to kinder, young parents and their children are provided with intensive parenting support.

Cradle to Kinder – specific to Aboriginal families

This case management program provides culturally sensitive support to vulnerable indigenous families within the Shepparton area. It provides support for young indigenous women and their families from pregnancy through to when the child is four years old.

Integrated Family Services

This voluntary service provides case management to assist vulnerable children, young people and their families to; strengthen parenting capacity, support family connections to the community, and assist parents to develop skills to maintain positive relationships. This is done by providing a responsive and flexible service tailored to each family and linking with other community services.

Visiting Services

Youthlaw (Young People's Legal Rights)

A significant number of young people have utilized the free legal service offered by Youthlaw and a number of excellent outcomes were achieved particularly in the areas of discrimination and illegal eviction. Appointments with a Youthlaw lawyer are available at The Bridge Youth Service with initial interviews generally made with a Melbourne Youthlaw lawyer via Skype services provided by The Bridge Youth Service. This is an important part of youth support and advocacy.

Centrelink Community Engagement Worker

Working from The Bridge Youth Service part time, the Centrelink Community Engagement Worker provides accessible on-site support to young people in regards to any Centrelink or Government benefit issues.

The Bridge Youth Service is supported by the Victorian Government



FEEDBACK FROM THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS, May 2016

"The Bridge prides itself on the strong reputation it has within the community. This was supported by feedback from young people who spoke about a holistic service response."

"The Bridge puts considerable effort into establishing and maintaining engagement with a cohort that can be difficult to engage."

"The Bridge's strengths lie in their 'flexibility, engagement and innovation' working with vulnerable groups."

"The Bridge provides a non-judgmental, welcoming environment which was highly regarded by young people."

"Stakeholder interviews confirmed that the Bridge is a major player in the delivery of youth services."

Accreditation Report, May 2016

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

