

President's Report 2016-2017

This year has been one of growth for The Bridge Youth Service. We received an increase in funding through our role in the ChildFirst Alliance, enabling us to support more young parents and their children. In the education space we became the lead agency for the Navigator pilot. This enabled us to expand our services to support young people disengaging from school. In conjunction with our partner Berry Street, the support assists in overcoming such debilitating mental health problems as Anxiety and the effects of family violence.

We continued to provide services to the young people in greatest need in our region to support them through: reconciliation with families; acquisition of the skills, knowledge and confidence to become great parents, or to overcome whatever has been holding them back which could have been homelessness, drug and alcohol or mental health issues, recovering from bullying or family violence, lack of finances and/or struggling to stay in education.

There has also been growth in our partnerships. We continue to work with Family Care, GV Connect and Primary Care Connect in "backline" areas that will strengthen us all through the Shepparton Community Share project. Our partnership with Rumbalara Family Services continues to grow, with a consequent increase in the number of Aboriginal young people we see. Our Seymour team 'grew out' of the original offices after at least 14 years in the building. We now share a bigger office building in Tallarook St with Beyond Housing and Wellways.

The Bridge Youth Service has continued to fund additional support to young people who do not meet the criteria of any funded program, using funds earned by the wonderful staff and volunteers at REVAMP, our op shop. This support includes links to education and employment as well as general support.

We are proud of the fact that we are seen as the service of choice for many young people, with approximately 30% of our referral being self-referrals, suggesting that young people not only know of The Bridge Youth Service but are comfortable in contacting us, knowing they will be made welcome and receive a competent, supportive and non-judgemental service.

I would like to express our gratitude to our funding bodies: the Victorian government departments of Health and Human Services; and Education and Training. We would also like to acknowledge funding from the Shepparton Communities for Children and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust.

Thanks and appreciation also go to the staff and volunteers at REVAMP, our mentoring volunteers, to Melinda Lawley, CEO, and the leadership team that supports her so ably. Finally, a big thank you to the staff. It is the dedication combined with their specialist knowledge and skills that give The Bridge Youth Service its great reputation.

Charlotte Brewer
President

Melinda Lawley
CEO



The Bridge
Options For Young People

Staff List 2016-17

Rebecca Andrea	Creating Connections Worker
Kathie Andriessen	Admin Support Seymour
Illana Ballerini	Youth & Family Support Worker
Julie Batey	Admin & Finance Support Shepparton
Alex Bruinier	Navigator Coordinator
Paul Chainey	Revamp Worker – <i>(resigned February)</i>
Jessica Chapman	Youth & Family Support Worker
Jenny Cook	Manager Young Pregnant & Parenting Programs
Sue DeBoer	Cleaning
Fiona Down	Manager Youth & Family Support Programs <i>(Family Leave)</i>
Wendy Exton	Admin Support Shepparton
Maria Fangatua	Youth & Family Support Worker
Renae Ford	STAR Housing
Melanie Formica	Acting Manager Youth & Family Support Programs
Michelle Frost	Cradle to Kinder Support Worker
Stephen Hunter	Family Support Worker & Mentoring Coordinator
Tim Hunter	Youth & Family Support Worker
Amber Kelsey	Navigator Worker
Linda King	Family Support Worker
Jodie Keenan	Youth & Family Support Worker
Melinda Lawley	Chief Executive Officer
Alicia Lindsay	Business Manager <i>(Resigned December 2016)</i>
Fiona Martin	Revamp Manager
Rebecca Salau	Youth & Family Support Worker
Stacey Shields	Youth & Family Support Team Leader (Seymour)
Sharryn Smith	Revamp Worker
Vicky Vourgaslis	Cradle to Kinder (Indigenous) Support Worker
Ashlee Walker	Youth & Family Support Worker/Family Support Worker <i>(resigned February)</i>
Bonnie Williams	Manager Youth & Family Support Programs- Seymour <i>(resigned February)</i>

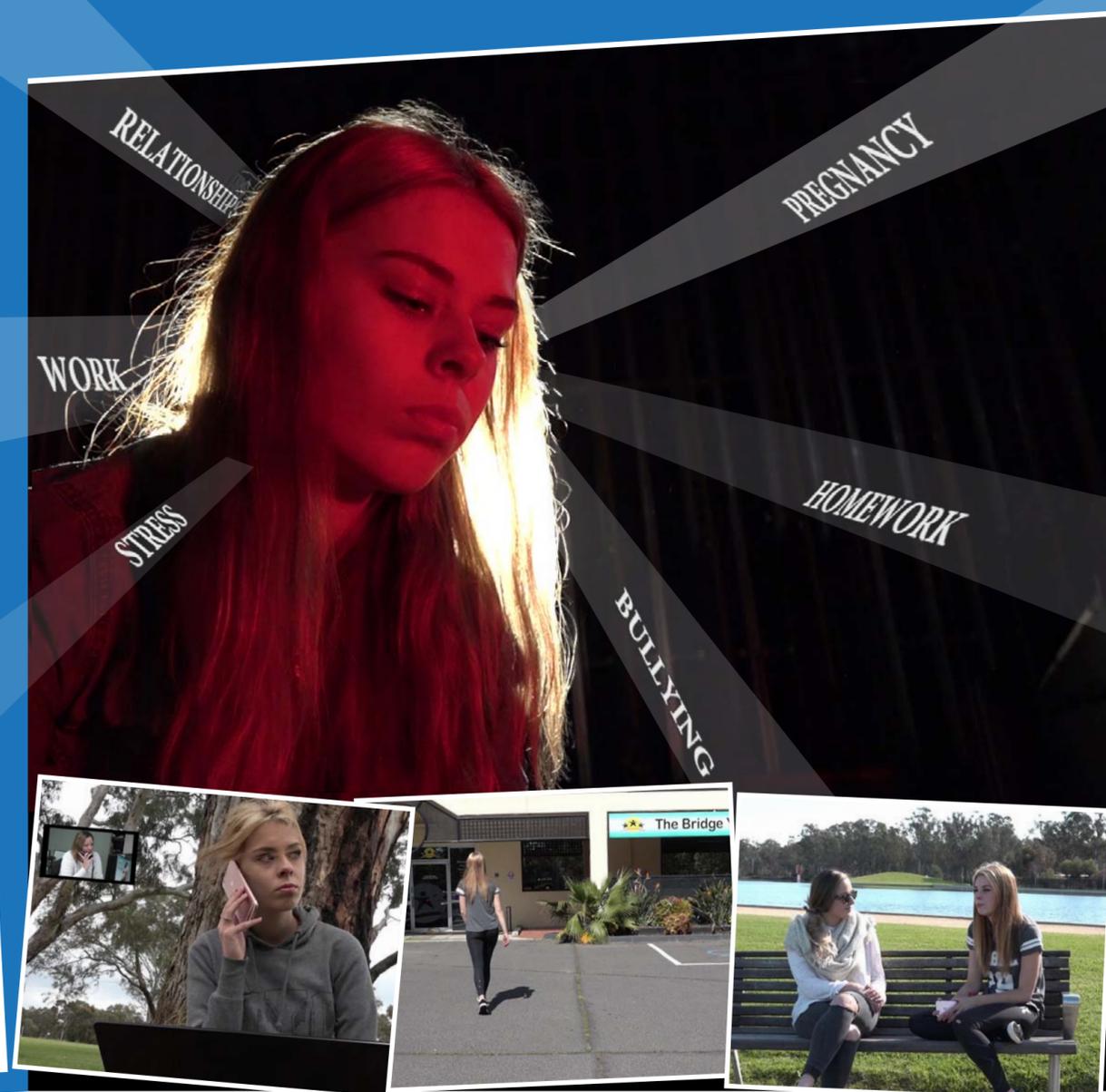
Board of Management 2016-2017

Charlotte Brewer (President)	Helen Phillips
Mark Rumble (Vice President)	Helen West
Josh Doxey (Treasurer)	Ross Wilkinson
Felicity Dalle-Nogare (Secretary)	Graeme Parish
Melinda Lawley (CEO)	Melissa Beaton



The Bridge
Options For Young People

Annual Report 2016-2017



Taking a leap into Social Media this year we launched a video on our website: "How Can I Access The Bridge Youth Service" Thank you to the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust for supporting this project.

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

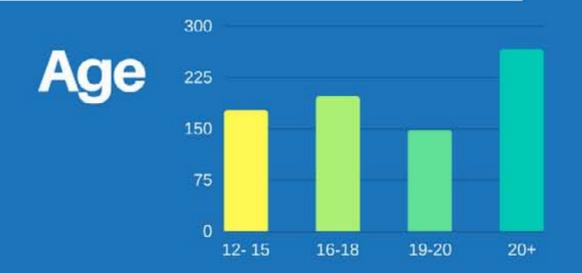
Is to stand for opportunity and empowerment for all young people in the context of their families and communities.

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 Murrindindi.

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.

Who have we assisted?

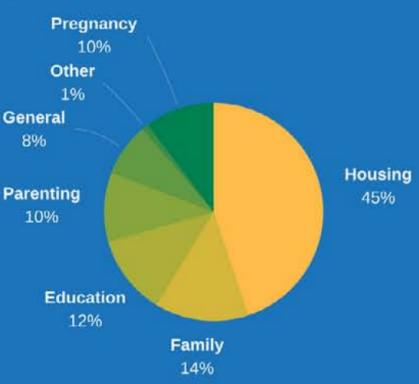


Youth from varied Cultural Backgrounds

In 2017 we assisted.....
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders - 81
Australian - 620
Other Nationalities - 18



Presenting Issues for Young People



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. This year there were 51 participants in this program.

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. 13 families were assisted throughout the year.

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 is a new program to The Bridge Youth Service and is based in Shepparton but also provides support to young people in the Mitchell and Campaspe Shires. STAR supported 93 youth during the 2016-2017 Financial Year.

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 provided 320 periods of support for 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 40 families. Assistance has been to re-establish positive relationships after family conflict within the family and reduce the need of housing support for young people.

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. 22 participants were supported this year.

Navigator

The Navigator Program (pilot) provides case management support to assist young people to re-engage in education. It works closely with secondary schools and aims to assist young people and families to link into health and wellbeing support and specialised services. Navigator focuses on the unique personal and education needs of the young person in developing a re-engagement plan with schools. The need and success of this program is highlighted by the 129 referrals that were received throughout this financial year (9 months).

The Links Program

The Links program (funded via the funds generated by Revamp) provides support to young people who are disengaged from education, who are at risk of not making a successful transition from school, and assisting 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. We had 20 participants this year.

Mentoring

The mentoring program works to build a positive, long-term, 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.

Our Mentors engage in regular contact with young people focusing on their needs and interests. A mentor offers support, friendship, encouragement and facilitates the development of an enduring, constructive relationship.

Revamp (Op Shop)

We could not operate Revamp without our valued Volunteers. 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 Goulburn Valley Health contributes significantly to the success of the community based Antenatal Care and Education Program. This year over 43 young women participated in the program.

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 and this year we had 40 new referrals into this program.

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. We work intensively with up to 8 young mothers at any one time. This program has been expanded this year to include Lower Hume.

Cradle to Kinder – specific to Aboriginal families

In partnership with Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, 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. We support up to 6 young mothers at any one time.

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. This program has been expanded this year to include Lower Hume, allowing us to engage with over 36 young families.

Options Counselling

Information is provided to young women relating to sexual health and pregnancy in a sensitive and non-judgmental manner in order to provide them with the opportunity to improve their health and well-being by making considered, informed choices and decisions. Pregnancy testing is made available to young women in a manner that is supportive and which respects their dignity. Options counselling is provided without judgement and with up to date information on options and to assist young women to make an informed decision.

The Bridge Youth Service is a QIP Accredited organisation



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. This is a valuable resource to the young people we support and a great asset to our suite of programs.

Why Youth Work Matters

Feedback received March 2017

Hi Melinda,

I am a recipient of The Bridge's services which assisted me when I was 16 and going through an incredibly rough time in my life. The "GAP" helped me with counselling, with finding subsidized accommodation and with finding a job.

I sincerely believe I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for the program and the people in it. I wanted to first offer my thanks as I likely never did back then - properly anyway. It's not easy for a 16yr old to articulate gratitude in the way a 37yr old can.

Thanks for responding.

Get involved #youthworkmatters

