

2022-2023

# Annual Report





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**Our mission is to create opportunities that foster safety and security for young people, enhance family harmony and promote supportive communities – enabling all young people to reach their full potential.**

Youth workers are often called upon to 'use our powers.' We hear this plea every so often, typically in times of crisis. Once we've intervened, we may be told we are superheroes. I'm not going to argue against this. Why would anyone suggest we are less than super? I'll confess: these powers are just honed youth worker skills, and we can all develop them. To the untrained eye, they look miraculous. For youth workers, it's just Tuesday.



Curiosity and  
New Ideas



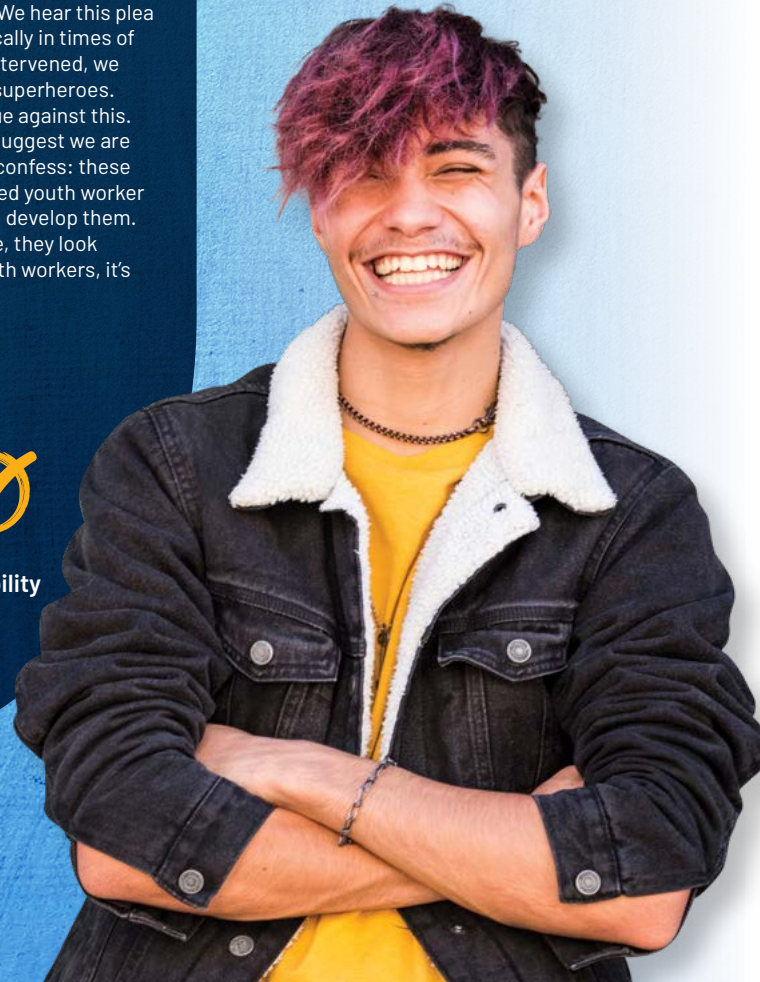
Diversity;  
Collaboration  
and Collegiality



Connection  
and Reach



Flexibility



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# President Report

Georgia Linton

Every year I am always pleased to be able to reflect on so many wonderful achievements for The Bridge Youth Service (TBYS) and our staff.

As I wrote my report last year, it was a week or so before the floods that devastated our region. There was so much uncertainty ahead of us, so many unanswered questions. Though, never was there a question as to how the communities we operate in would band together in support and pull through what was continually reported as "unprecedented" water levels. A term we have heard far too often since February 2020.

The weeks that the water had visible impact in our communities, and in the months afterwards where relief and recovery work were so important, saw new challenges and opportunities for TBYS. Our staff showed up for young people, but also the broader community. I am so proud of the way our staff and the organisation responded to the unfolding crisis and continue to support recovery efforts.

As we look forward to what is next for TBYS there is a lot to be excited about. For a number of years, the Board of Management have monitored the growth of the organisation and watched our employee numbers increase.

The office that we have called home for more than a decade is too small, not able to accommodate the long-term vision for TBYS. The next 12 months will see us search for a new home that will allow our staff and organisation to flourish well into the future.

Our board has been strengthened with the appointment of three new members; Nathan Quinlan who took on our Treasurer role, Shannon Balfour and Gemma Parkinson. They have embraced our vision and plans effortlessly. I thank all the Board members for their participation in meetings throughout the year, and the clarity around what TBYS can and should do to support our community.

With The Nest continuing to progress, I hope that when I write my update next year the project will be completed, and we will be starting to see the reality of many years of hard work come to life. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Property Industry Foundation for the commitment over the last 12 months to raise funds for Haven Home: The Nest. Their members have raised significant funds to ensure this project comes to life.

Already, it feels like the next year will be another big one for TBYS. But really, does the organisation know any other way? I don't think so. And I think that is another reason to celebrate - we are dynamic and responsive to the needs of our communities and never back down from a challenge to show up for our people.

**“ If there is anything to know about the next year, it is that TBYS will continue to think big and meet the needs of our community with innovative solutions and big hearts.**

# CEO Report

Melinda Lawley

Our focus this year was on preparing ourselves to implement quality processes to engage more with our community. We developed a community engagement framework, focused on what we could do to provide safe services to LGBTQIA+ community members, and committed to reconciliation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. All staff completed training with the Diversity Project in Shepparton, and all members of the leadership team attending the Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference. This commitment was reflected by the launch of our Respect RAP which we were pleased to have students from ASHE join us. We are keen to implement the actions within our plan over the next 12 months and beyond.

We listened to our community and responded to demands by extending the age group for our services. We lowered the age group to 10 years old and removed the age restriction for our Integrated Family Services and Flood Recovery services. Another opportunity eventuated in October when the whole of Shepparton, Mooroopna and much of Seymour were impacted by heavy rains and flooding. We saw the opportunity to assist recovery through working in partnership with other locally-based services in the Goulburn Flood Recovery Service, and extra targets in Integrated Family Services (IFS). Other new programs included a group program in Wallan and Seymour and Putting Families First pilot with Rumbalara.

Whilst our service agreements generally only ask for our targets, we value the outcomes young people achieve and revel in their ability to improve the situations they find themselves in.

**“ We celebrate the barriers they (young people) overcome and the growth they demonstrate.**

We are looking forward to the opportunity The Nest will bring to young mothers. This year the focus was on fundraising for our three self-contained units for young, homeless mothers which is to be developed in Mooroopna. The Property Industry Foundation has held many events for the construction industry who have been very generous with their large donations for our housing development. A key event was the Steps for Homeless Youth walk around Albert Park in Melbourne. A \$100,000 donation from Homes for Homes was a highlight of the event.

All of this could not go as smoothly as it did without our dedicated and talented people. We have great staff delivering quality case management, while our growing administration team finds innovative and clear processes to assist our service delivery staff. I would like to thank Jenny Cook and Leigh Nash for their continued management of all these processes so competently, and to Linda King and Renae Ford for their consistent focus on how we can best assist young people to be safe, secure and resilient.

# The Nest Update

1C Toolamba Rd,  
Mooroopna

**Jan 2021**  
The Bridge Youth Service purchased land in Mooroopna



Future **2024**  
The Nest

**Nov 2021**  
The Nest launched at The Bridge Youth Service AGM.



**May 2023**  
Steps for Homeless Youth

**\$100k raised**



Melinda Lawley  
CEO  
The Bridge Youth Service

**Nov 2022**  
Property Industry Foundation (PIF) Fundraiser.

**\$170k raised**



**April 2023** Working Bee planting trees on site.



Key funders:



The Jack & Ethel Goldin Foundation



The Felton Bequest



The Wood Foundation

mercy foundation®

Homes for Homes

The Flora & Frank Leith Trust



# Diversity and Inclusion



Everyday we strive to make sure our organisation and supports are safe and inclusive, where everyone feels welcome and respected. This is especially important for LGBTIQ+ young people.



It is a priority for us to become a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation, and we are working hard towards this. We have a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion working group to make sure we are accountable and on track to achieve Rainbow Tick Accreditation.



Collaborating and participating in community events with other local youth organisations is always a highlight for us. We have loved being a part of local events and celebrations such as IDAHOBIT International Day Against LGBTIQ+ Discrimination and Wear it Purple Day. We held a staff Wear it Purple Day Bake Off – all the delicious purple baked goods!



# Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Progress



We are now 6 months into our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Time to share some of the commitments we have completed and what we are working towards.



## Actioned:

- ✓ Hosted a community event as part of National Reconciliation Week
- ✓ Reconciliation and how TBYS will contribute towards it is a priority area and made a standing agenda item for all levels of the organisation, including Board of Management (BOM) and Leadership
- ✓ Connection and partnerships made with local First Nations organisations to ensure we are being guided and informed by the voices of community
- ✓ Investigations into Supply Nation membership, supplier diversity and procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses
- ✓ Connecting with external stakeholders to engage with on our Reconciliation journey
- ✓ Respecting and observing cultural protocols such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and ensuring staff understand their meaning and significance
- ✓ Ensuring our organisation and staff are consistently engaging with a range of cultural education and learning, building this into our annual priorities and PD cycles

## Working towards:

- Developing a 2 year Innovate RAP (our second RAP)
- Developing a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation, thereby improving employment outcomes by increasing recruitment, retention and professional development
- Reviewing our job descriptions, key selection criteria and interview processes to reflect organisational expectations of knowledge of the Traditional Owners, organisations in the areas in which we operate and understanding of our commitment to Reconciliation
- Developing a business case for ongoing procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated businesses

[Click here to view full plan](#)



# Parenting Programs

## Young Parents Group (YPG) Shepparton & Lower Hume

Experienced facilitators provide parenting education, activities for the children, support and advice on the health and wellbeing of their children. Facilitators role model appropriate play, parenting skills, and responses to behaviour during group sessions.

Young Parents Group provided the opportunity for social connections with other parents and children. Activities like swimming, library visits, picnics, singing nursery rhymes, reading stories, baby yoga and visits from other services have allowed building of engagement and connection to community. Activities include our annual trip to the Melbourne Zoo which was a wonderful success this year providing many beautiful memories for families.

## Antenatal Community Education Program

Our antenatal program is delivered in partnership with Rosewood Midwifery at GV Health. It encompasses evidenced based programs complimented by Baby Makes 3 and Bringing Your Baby Home, funded by Communities for Children.

The 25 young women that attended built strong connections with each other and group facilitators. This connection has fostered progression into other group programs including Youth Mother's In Mind and Young Parents Group.

42 percent of participants were additionally supported in Family Services Programs.

The connection made with each other has seen relationships form and continue outside of The Bridge Youth Service.

## Options and pregnancy decision counselling

Young women requested support through pregnancy testing, options counselling and referral pathways.

With strong connections within the community and our own Antenatal program we were able to provide a smooth referral pathway for the young women.

## Young Mothers In Mind

Funded through Nexus's Harnessing Hope FV, Young Mothers In Mind is a mother and child group designed specifically to meet the parenting needs of mothers who have experienced trauma, such as family violence, childhood abuse, or sexual assault and have children under the age of 12 months.

Group sessions focus on attachment and bonding, healthy relationships, child development and milestones in the first 12 months.

Local Services including Centrelink, Marion Community, Maternal and Child Health and Shepparton Council have attended groupwork sessions to provide information and education to the young mothers. This has resulted in positive connections being made with local organisations and services.



This year saw  
25 families attend  
YPG in Shepparton  
and 24 attend  
the Wallan/  
Seymour YPG.

*"Thank you  
for checking  
in on us"*

Antenatal  
participant





# Family Services

In November 2022, Shepparton and Seymour were tragically affected by floods impacting thousands of homes. This event contributed to further demand and instability of housing, deterioration of physical and mental health, disruption of power, transport and communication networks, closure of businesses, services and schools along with changes to our community's livelihood.

Overall, **163 families** were supported by our suite of Family Services Programs (IFS, FPR, 200hrs, PFF, Flood Response)

Flood photos supplied by Greater Shepparton City Council.

## Additional funding for flood affected families

Many families were impacted by the floods in October. The Bridge Youth Service received additional funding from Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to support affected families. This funding went on to support families in need.

**61 families were supported**

**including parents over the age of 25**



## Putting Families First (PFF)

PFF is a pilot program with a consortium that includes Rumbalara taking the lead, and TBYS working alongside with Family Care and Oz Child. The aim of the program is to intensively support young people who encounter both the Child Protection and the Justice systems to make sustained change in their families lives. The consortium has come together with a shared vision of achieving better outcomes for young people and their families. Practitioners work with an interdisciplinary team that supports housing needs, mental health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and Family violence.

## Family Preservation and Reunification Response Program

The past financial year has seen the growth and maturing of the Family Preservation and Reunification Response program. The intensive nature of the program allows many hours to be spent with families each week to support them to make and establish real change. Two years into the program we have seen many families reunified because of the intensive work done by the families and practitioners.

The suite of Family Services programs that have been on offer to families in the past year has meant that many families have been able to find the support they need. Practitioners have continued to work tirelessly, while also being flexible and creative in approaches, to provide the best support they can for the families in our community.



# Youth Services Programs



## Adolescent Support & Finding Solutions Programs

**Funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), these programs supported a total of 99 young people aged 12-17 years to reduce the need for ongoing protective services involvement.**

Support workers engage with young people from a strengths-based, person-centred and trauma-informed approach. Young people are supported to identify their strengths, the things that are going well in their lives, acknowledging the challenges they are facing and the needs they have as they develop from adolescence to adulthood. We aim to ensure young people strengthen their relationships with their families and community to lead healthy and violence free lives, and to have a safe and stable place to live.

## Homelessness Support Programs

The Bridge Youth Service offers support focused on assisting young people to move out of homelessness and equip them with the knowledge and skills to establish and sustain safe housing.

- ▶ 276 young people at risk or experiencing homelessness, were supported by the Youth Family Support team to engage in planned support
- ▶ 41 tenants were supported by the Sustaining Tenancies at Risk (STAR) program
- ▶ 18 young people were supported to reconcile family relationships

This year has continued to test our team's ability to be innovative, resilient, and resourceful in the face of scarce housing and lots of demand for the limited options available.

The Youth and Family Support (YFS) program works by developing tailored case plans, so young people have an opportunity to build their independent living skills, communication, address physical and mental health concerns, engage in education, training or employment and budgeting. The team also support young people to establish self-care skills, navigate and connect with community, build self-confidence and self-reliance to ensure they are equipped to maintain housing and flourish in the community.

The Sustaining Tenancies at Risk (STAR) program provides financial brokerage to address rent arrears and education about tenant rights and responsibilities.

The Bridge Youth Service supported young people and their families to reconcile family relationships. Support workers used mediation strategies with the young people and families to prevent risk of youth homelessness and worked towards reducing conflict within the home by developing healthy communication.

## Case Contracting & Targeted Care Packages

The Bridge Youth Service case contracted 5 young people of the 8 receiving support via a Targeted Care Package.

The Bridge Youth Service were presented with the opportunity to 'case contract' young people recipient to a Targeted Care Package. The objective of case contracting is to provide the most appropriate and effective case management to the child and their family.

## Case Management Support

- ▶ Minimising the number of professionals involved in the day-to-day life of the child and their family
- ▶ Maximising the expertise and capability our organisation has developed in the provision of casework services to children and families
- ▶ Maximising the effectiveness of established relationships that the child or family has with us
- ▶ Preserving and strengthening a relationship that a child or family may have with us other than Child Protection





# School Re-engagement DET Navigator Program

**The Navigator program received 114 new referrals during the reporting period.**

Many of these young people present with a multitude of complex issues and the patience and persistence shown by the Navigator team to help address these issues is commendable. The building of trusting relationships which can take considerable time, are a vital component in the work undertaken by Navigator Case Managers. Navigator covers Greater Shepparton and the Shires of Moria, Strathbogie, Mitchell and Murrindindi.



## Case Study

Steven\* age 16

Steven's\* life was out of control. He was truanting from school and smoking cannabis. When he was at school, he was getting into fights, harassing teachers and regularly being suspended. He was angry and sad living with his grandmother, who struggled to deal with his behaviour and outbursts, and had no contact with his parents.

### Support provided

- ✔ Navigator worker spent time with Steven\* to get to know him and listen to his story
- ✔ Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) counselling
- ✔ Emotional Regulation and Impulse Control (ERIC) worksheets with support from Navigator worker
- ✔ Navigator worker contacted farms after Steven\* shared his interest farming, resulting in work experience supported by his school
- ✔ Steven\* impressed his employers and was offered a traineeship which his school supported by granting an exemption

### Outcome

Steven's\* life gradually became settled with his school attendance, behaviour and home life improving and he was happier. He went on to start a full-time agricultural traineeship on a farm, which he loves. His capacity to retain new things and positive attitude lead to his boss trusting him with training staff. He rides his bike to and from work but is saving to buy a car for when he gets his licence. Navigator played a role in changing the course of this young man's life.

\* name has been changed.

**Parent Feedback to Navigator worker:**  
*"You have been here for us every step of the way and without you my son wouldn't be where he is."*



# Early Intervention Programs (EIP)

This program works to assist young people who are experiencing distress as a result of poor mental health or substance misuse.

**phn**  
MURRAY

An Australian Government Initiative

It works by addressing this distress and improving emotional regulation and impulse control through assertive outreach, comprehensive assessment and access to treatment through TBYS on staff psychologist. The EIP also targets the gap where young people are not being supported due to access or complexity issues.

To access this program, the young person must not be supported by another mental health or alcohol and drug service. Funding for the program is provided through Murray Primary Health Network Youth Enhanced Services.

## 52 young people supported

- ▶ 14 in Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)
- ▶ 38 in Mental Health (MH)

## Service contacts

- ▶ 1,999 for AOD (target 1812)
- ▶ 529 for MH (target 612)

## 27 closures

- ▶ 11 achieved their goals
- ▶ 9 disengaged
- ▶ 2 declined support
- ▶ 2 other reasons
- ▶ 2 YP/family request
- ▶ 1 moved area

## Psychology clinic

- ▶ 22 Assessments
- ▶ 112 Follow up sessions

## 26 new referrals

### with majority from:

- ▶ TBYS internal
- ▶ Local Schools
- ▶ Family Care
- ▶ GV Health
- ▶ Self/Family
- ▶ Mitchell Shire Council

## 89 referral/secondary

### consults from:

- ▶ TBYS
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Family Care
- ▶ GV Health
- ▶ Child Protection

## 17 young people

### EIP surveys results

- ▶ 82% had a positive outcome
- ▶ 70% had improved DERS scores (Emotional Regulation)
- ▶ 58% had an improved K10 score
- ▶ 52% had a stable or improved AUDIT score
- ▶ 58% had a stable or improved DUDIT score

## Successes

- ✔ Regularly being at capacity and meeting our targets
- ✔ Seeing so many positive outcomes for young people
- ✔ We were able to provide outreach psychology appointments to young people who needed it

## Challenges

- ▶ Finding workers and mental health clinicians
- ▶ Not being able to support Young People due to geographical boundaries
- ▶ Lots of travel
- ▶ Seeing the complexity and severity of the Young People we support increase

## Wallan Clinic

We were lucky enough to pilot having a provisional psychologist in Wallan for 6 months in 2023.

- ▶ 21 Staff consults
- ▶ 3 Assessments
- ▶ 10 Follow up sessions
- ▶ 11 DNAs
- ▶ 17 Education sessions

# Feedback

*"That you guys have been absolutely amazing, and I wouldn't be here without you guys."*

*"In terms of engagement, Ryan would be lost without you".*

*"I think it's a very good service, with workers who are experienced and have background and they care a lot."*

*Matt advised that the EIP was useful as he was able to work on himself and felt he went back to his normal self with all the work put in by himself and support workers.*





# U-Krew

U-Krew is an after-school program that works in an early intervention model aiming to prevent at risk young people, aged 12-17 years in the Mitchell Shire area, entering the criminal justice system.

Funded through Safer Communities, the program works with young people to further develop their life skills and connection to community and employment. This is done through targeted skills building with the ERIC model, resilience building, learning about healthy eating and living, meeting and engaging with community mentors and through engaging in healthy risk-taking activities.

Young people who regularly engage in the program can participate in holiday activities such as ice-skating, horse riding, paintball and graffiti art workshops. Groups are delivered in Wallan and Seymour on a weekly basis with transport provided.



## Stats

- ▶ **63 Referrals overall:**
  - 25 for Seymour
  - 20 for Wallan
- ▶ **Sessions completed:**
  - 26 Sessions for Seymour
  - 19 Sessions for Wallan
- ▶ **4 Holiday activities:**
  - Ice skating
  - Horse Trail Riding
  - Gnarly Neighbours Graffiti Day
  - Inflatable World

## Challenges

- ▶ Getting off the ground, it's always hard starting a new group
- ▶ Getting Young People to complete surveys

## Successes

- ✔ Seeing the friendships, the young people have made
- ✔ Seeing the how much Kristy and Shannen enjoy running the group and how passionate they are
- ✔ Having so many young people engaging in the program and the beautiful feedback they provide

# Feedback

## Young Person provided:

"I'm not supported at home. I don't feel important to my family. I am the last to know everything. That's why I come here; this is the only place I get support".

## When asked is there anything you do not enjoy at U-Krew?

"No way, nothing at all. My favourite things are cooking and going to the aquatic centre".

## Parent advised facilitator:

"The U-Krew program is having a positive impact on their son who has struggled to make friends or engage in any positive activities within the community."

I can come here and feel like I matter.

Young person feedback

## Feedback from young person's mum expressing their thanks for our program and facilitators.

Their son experienced a challenging two years and has childhood trauma. U-Krew is the first and only positive program/group he has engaged with in years and willingly chooses to not miss a week. Since attending the U-Krew program he has established relationships, social skills, increased self-esteem and has a positive attitude on life.



# Statistics

## Early Intervention

**52** young people supported

- 14** Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)
- 38** Mental Health

**63** referrals to the U-Krew program

- 25** Seymour (26 sessions)
- 20** Wallan (19 sessions)
- 4** Holiday activities

## Family Relationships

**61** flood affected families supported

**12** families supported in the Family Preservation Reunification Response Program

**4** 200 hours intensive

**8** young people supported in the Finding Solutions Program

**5** of the 8 young people receiving Targeted Care Package support

**86** families supported with Integrated Family Services

**61** flood affected families were supported with additional funding

**95** attendees in the Adolescent Support Program

## Pregnancy, Parenting & Family Services



**49** young people attended Young Parents Group

**25** Shepparton  
**24** Seymour/Wallan

**25** young women attended the Antenatal Community Education Program

**7** young women requested support around pregnancy testing and options counselling

**21** young mothers attended Young Mothers in Mind

## School and Education Support



**114** DET Navigator program new referrals

Support provided across these 5 regional areas; Greater Shepparton, Moria Shire, Strathbogie Shire, Mitchell Shire and Murrindindi Shire



## Housing Assistance

**41** tenants were supported by the Sustaining Tenancies at Risk program

**18** young people were supported to reconcile family relationships

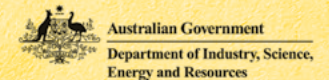
**276** young people at risk or experiencing homelessness, were supported by the Youth Family Support team to engage in planned support

Thank you to our funders!



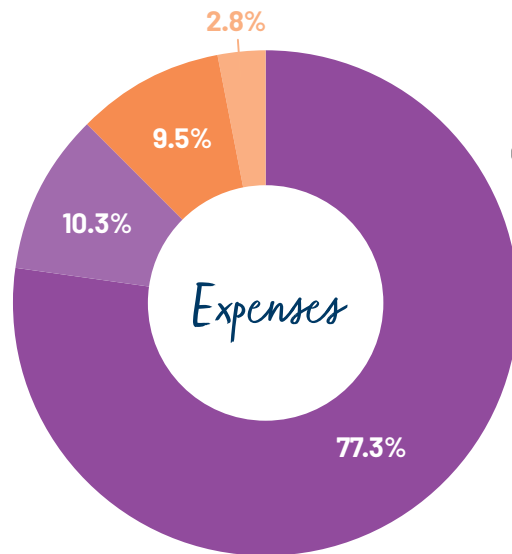
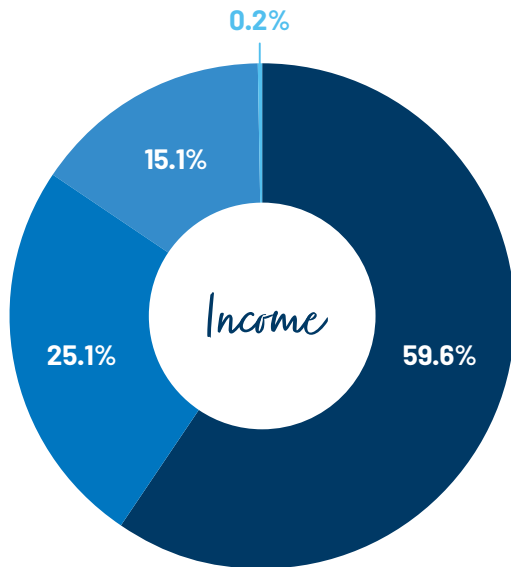
Communities for Children

BEYOND HOUSING





# Income and Expenditure

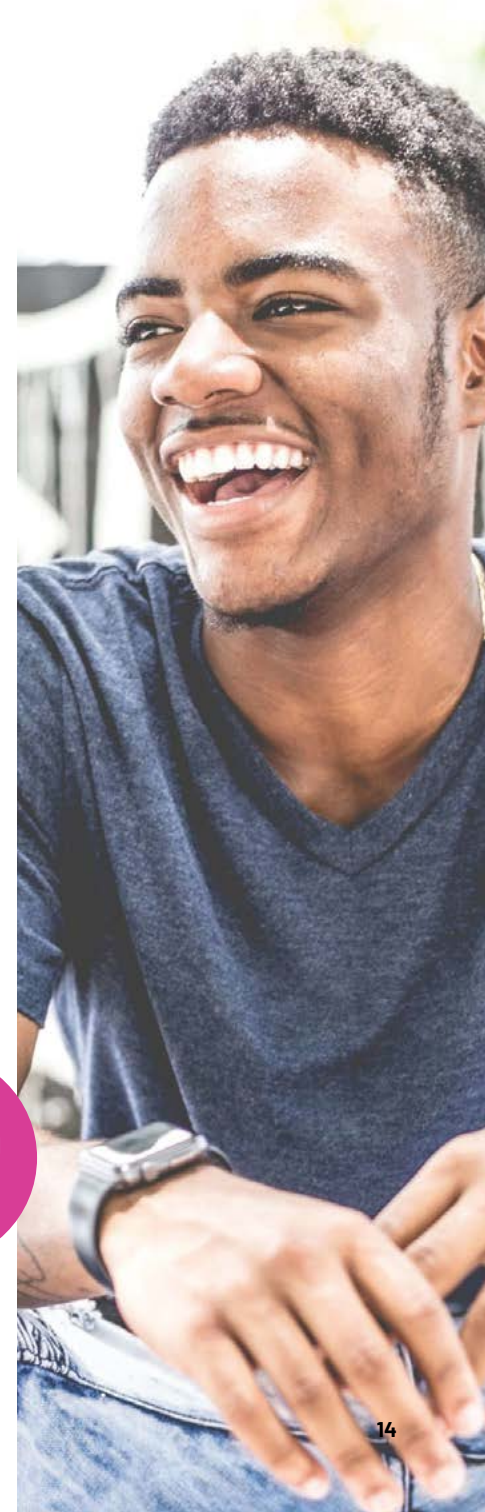
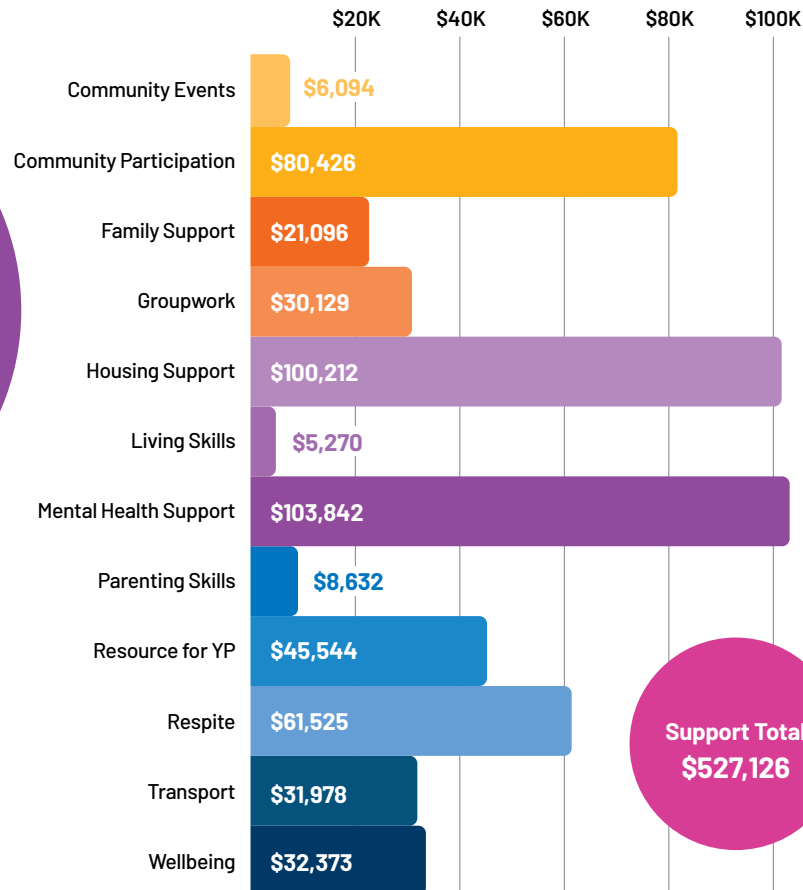


<b>\$3,439,323</b>	DFFH Funding
<b>\$1,450,441</b>	Other Government Funding
<b>\$869,270</b>	Other Non-Government Funding
<b>\$9,857</b>	Other Income
<b>\$5,768,891</b>	<b>Total</b>

<b>Assets &amp; Liabilities</b>	Total Assets	<b>\$4,827,323</b>
	Total Liabilities	<b>\$1,733,494</b>
	<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$3,093,829</b>

<b>\$3,961,625</b>	Employee Benefit Expenses
<b>\$527,127</b>	Young People Expenses
<b>\$489,113</b>	Operating Costs
<b>\$144,059</b>	Depreciation & Amortisation
<b>\$5,121,924</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>
<b>\$646,967</b>	<b>Total Surplus</b>

## How we supported





“ Thank you to our staff  
and volunteers for their  
commitment and dedication to  
our local young people.

Options for *young people*



**(03) 5831 2390**

127 Welsford St, Shepparton  
54 Tallarook St, Seymour  
119 Wellington St, Wallan  
[www.thebridge.org.au](http://www.thebridge.org.au)

