



Ruth's Women's Shelter Cairns Inc

*Together with the collective voice of an aware community
we work to end domestic violence*



Annual Report 2019/20



Ruth's Women's Shelter Cairns acknowledges the Yirrigandji & Gimuy Yidinji People as the traditional owners and custodians of the beautiful lands on which we are based. We acknowledge their peoples' special spiritual connection to these lands and waterways, and we pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Our purpose

- To provide a safe environment for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Our aspiration

- To support women who seek our services as they explore their individual options, drawing on their strengths and our strengths as advocates.

Our Vision

- A world where women and children can live in safety, free from all forms of abuse. Together with the collective voice of an aware community, we work to end domestic violence

Our Values

- Act with integrity and honesty
- Make a difference
- Be non-judgmental
- Respect Others

President's Report



2020 has certainly been a trying year on many levels. Thankfully we have also had many positive experiences this year too. Firstly, we welcomed Shelly as the new Manager at Ruth's Women's Shelter with many innovative ideas and a great passion to help the women of Cairns. We were very proud to be inducted into Queensland's inaugural Domestic and Family Violence Honour Roll. We also welcomed Lauren and Michelle as the Customer Service Assistants of Ruth's Hub which is an amazing space for our community. Lauren's and Michelle's inspiration in these roles has already brought many positive changes to the lives of women and children in our region. Ruth's Hub is funded to June 2021. Our focus for the coming year will be to secure the future of the program which is the first of its kind in FNQ. We will be reaching out to the community and partners for ideas on how we can make this happen.

In the last year, we have introduced a new Facebook Page for Ruth's Hub, and our use of social media for both the Shelter and Ruth's Hub has proved to be very successful in connecting with the local community.

The Committee would like to thank the hardworking staff of the Shelter and the Hub, who have worked tirelessly to provide outstanding service, care and compassion to our clients. The increasing workload and the need to remain current with trends and changes in society is demanding and challenging, especially in these unprecedented times of COVID-19. The staff are constantly networking with other agencies to support clients with a broad range of matters. They have also undertaken various professional development opportunities to upskill and give the best possible services to our clients.

President's Report

I would also like to thank our dedicated committee members who give up their personal time as volunteers to ensure the efficient and successful running of the shelter. This past year we also welcomed Bronwyn Lindner to the Management Committee.

I would like to acknowledge our generous donors who continue to support us each year; and each and every member of the community who has assisted the Shelter in any way. We are grateful for all the donations of items such as toiletry bags, shopping vouchers, gratitude boxes as well as the volunteers who have been working at Ruth's Hub. We thank all of you for your continued support. It simply is not possible to mention everyone, but please refer to our Annual Report for a list of donors in 2020.

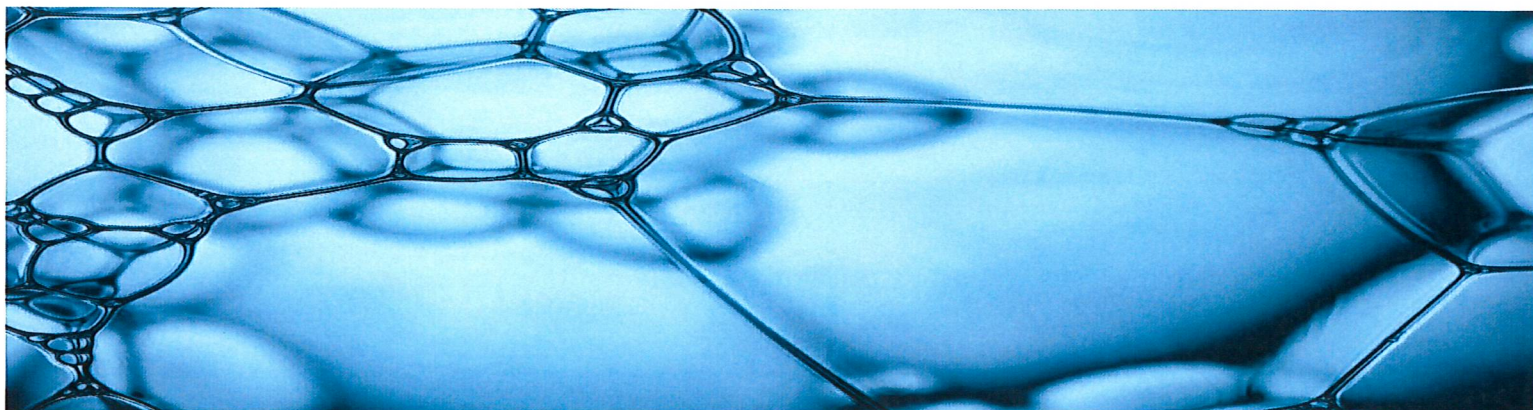
Personally, I would like to thank the staff and committee members for their continued support whilst in my role as President of the Management Committee.

We hope with the continuing hard work and dedication of the Ruth's Women's Shelter Staff, the Ruth's Hub Staff and the Management Committee we can continue to raise community awareness and educate future generations in a hope to eliminate domestic violence from our society.

'Together with the collective voice of an aware community we seek to end domestic violence.'

Kerry Carrington

President



Manager's Report



My first year at Ruth's has been eventful and filled with new experiences. Shortly after I joined the team, we said goodbye to Lynelle Dabelstein, the previous manager. I would like to acknowledge Lynelle's long association with Ruth's and her commitment and compassion for the work that we do.

In July I celebrated 35 years in the sector, and each day continues to present me with opportunities. After spending some years working with the remote Aboriginal communities in South Australia, Ruth's provided me with an exciting new adventure.

I want to thank Ruth Thompson and the other women who were instrumental in setting up the shelter and I will ensure that their vision is kept alive and continues in the work that we do at Ruth's.

I want to thank Heather, our chairperson tonight, for her long and committed association with Ruth's and for paving the way for me as our previous manager.

The staff, volunteers and committee members at Ruth's all bring something different to the organization, with great passion and dedication. I would like to personally thank them all for their commitment to the organization.

Manager's Report

The women and families who have stayed at Ruth's Women's Shelter, or who have visited Ruth's Hub, never cease to amaze me with the strength and resilience they show, no matter what challenges life presents to them. It has been a pleasure to work with them all and an honour to hear their stories.

During 2019/20 Ruth's Women's Shelter welcomed women from a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. 91 identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islanders. We accommodated women from Australia; China; Congo; Japan; Laos; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Scotland; Tonga; and Vietnam. We accommodated 73 children under 18, and 90 adults.

Thankfully we managed to get through the COVID 19 pandemic with no clients, workers or volunteers contracting the virus. It has been, and continues to be a challenging time for everyone, and I am grateful for the commitment, support and strength of character shown by the team during such a difficult time. Throughout the pandemic, the team continued to provide shelter and support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to women and children who have been abused. As essential workers, we were determined to ensure that our services continued to be available despite the pandemic.

Manager's Report

Throughout the year, as always, we have received great support from the local community. That support has come in many forms including financial donations, material donations, discounts on goods, volunteers, fund raisers, provision of services and many inspiring words of support. Every bit of support we receive from the community makes a difference. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, on average, in Australia, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. In my career, 15 of my clients or previous clients have been murdered by a current or former partner. I remember them all and my memory of them will always remain alive.

This is not acceptable. Never was and never will be, and through the work that we do together, we will ensure that domestic and family violence is no longer someone else's problem. It is an issue for the whole community and as a community we will stand together and make it known that domestic and family violence is not ok. Not in this community, not in any community. Not now and not ever!

Shelly Purvis

Manager



Staff Report

A lot has happened this year in our work space. 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone and it has certainly presented us as a team with a vastly different and changing work environment.

Our new manager Shelly has navigated us through COVID19 and the myriad of challenges that has presented to a communal living model like our shelter and it has been a challenge to find a solution that kept the shelter operating while maintaining the safety of staff and clients.

As well as a new manager we have also had some changes to the staff this year.

We have welcomed Bronwyn who shares the case management role with Virginia.

We have a new bookkeeper, Louise and we have four new support workers, Ange A, Ange S, Clare and Raylene.

We opened Ruth's Hub at Raintrees Shopping Centre in January and appointed Lauren and Michelle as the workers. Along with their wonderful volunteers they have become the public face of Ruth's.

This year we said goodbye to Megan who is currently on the Gold Coast and Marny who has taken a fulltime position at CRDVS. We are, as always, grateful for the ongoing commitment of the rest of the staff, Jayne, Marlene, Janice, Katherine, Sara and Emalee.

Domestic violence impacts every aspect of life for women and their children and we assist women to work through legal processes, housing, tenancy, migration, employment and health issues.

Ruth's commitment to professional development continues to offer staff opportunities for further education.

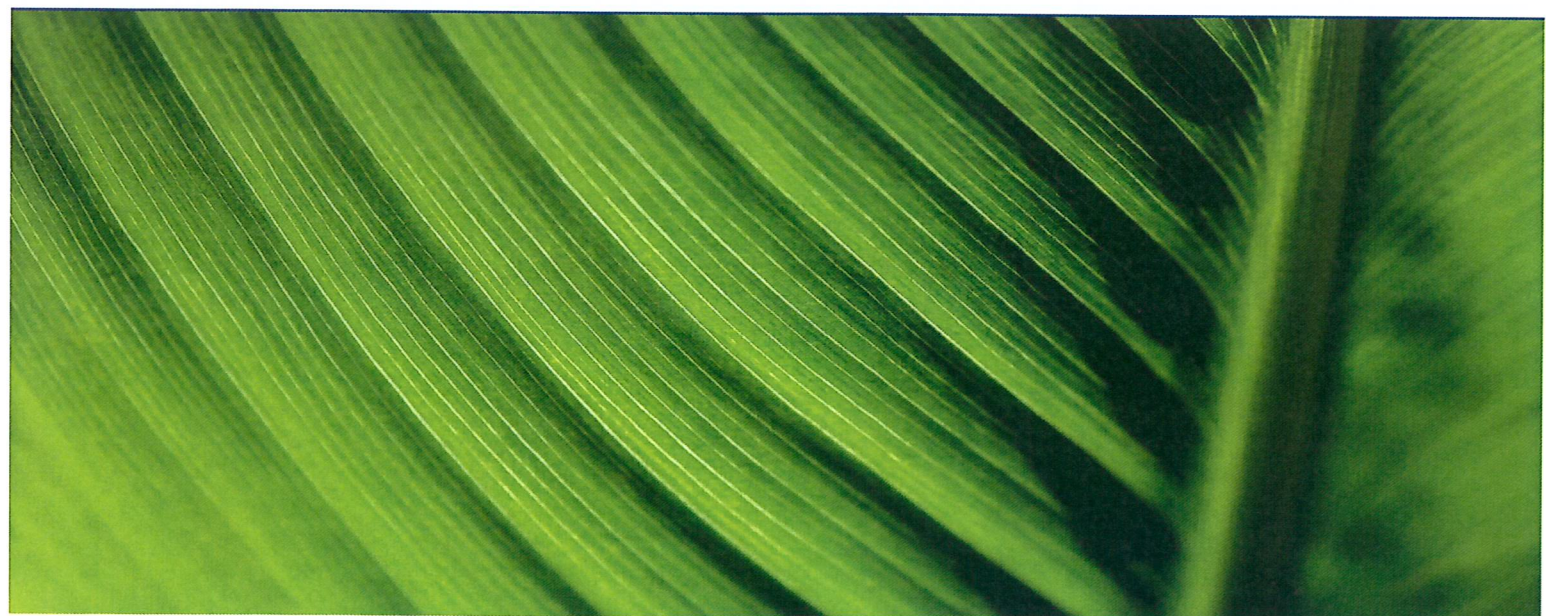
Staff Report

To affect change for women and children experiencing domestic violence it is important to understand the complexities and intersectionality's of domestic violence and to maintain and develop relationships with other service providers.

We are thankful that we have such a good network of service providers in Cairns and would also like to thank the Women's Centre, Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service, Department of Housing and Access Housing, North Qld Women's Legal Service, The Hub and many others and we couldn't do what we do without your help.

Virginia,

Staff Representative on the Management Committee





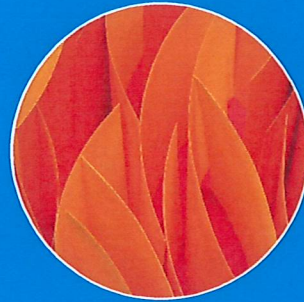
People and Culture

Attract and retain a skilled team
Develop a strong, motivated team
Create a positive, safe work environment for the team
Develop a team who have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the sector
Develop pathways which provide opportunities designed to meet the cultural needs of clients
Introduce new ways of acknowledging the contributions of our volunteers



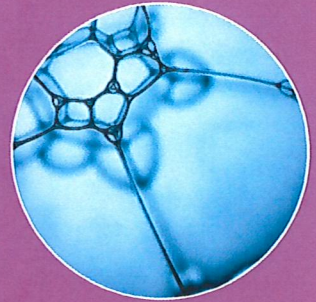
Service Delivery

Increase positive outcomes for clients
continue to increase client satisfaction levels
Offer a range of services to improve clients' safety and wellbeing
Increase access for clients from diverse communities and cultures
Improve our understanding of risk and safety management for clients



Innovation

Increase opportunities for staff to participate in sharing their ideas
Develop Ruth's position within the community as an innovative organization
Introduce ways of piloting ideas put forward by clients
Maximise opportunities for introducing new ideas and practices
Share and seek ideas for good practice with other organisations across Australia
Introduce innovation rewards for staff



Partnerships

Transition informal partnerships to formal ones where appropriate to acknowledge their importance
Increase the number of soft partnerships
Maximise the use of social media to create and maintain partnerships
Introduce new ways of acknowledging key partners
Introduce new ways of generating revenue with partners
Introduce new ways of delivering services to clients in partnership with others

Some of Our Highlights from 2019/20:

- **Significant Upgrade to our Sensory Garden at Ruth's Women's Shelter**
- **Opening of Ruth's Hub at Rain Trees Shopping Centre**
- **Maintaining our Certificate of Registration with HDAA (Human Services Quality Standards)**
- **Major Upgrade to Interior Decoration at Ruth's Shelter**
- **New Agreement with Access Housing to Transition Women and Children into their Callaghan Street Development**
- **Recruiting a worker from Thursday Island**
- **Continuing to provide crisis accommodation and support 24/7, uninterrupted, through the challenges of Coronavirus**
- **Placing Red Benches at Ruth's Women's Shelter and Ruth's Hub**

Social Media at Ruth's

Maintaining the long-standing reputation of Ruth's within the Cairns community continues to be a focus. Using technology to maintain and develop the organisational profile will be an ongoing priority. Using social media and other technology to bring the conversation about family and domestic violence into the public domain is something that Ruth's are committed to. During the last year, our website has undergone an upgrade, thanks to **Just Purple**, and now includes:

- A fast exit button
- A link to make donations on every page
- More information about how the community can be involved
- Information about Ruth's Hub
- Acknowledgements for Friends of Ruth's who have provided significant support to Ruth's over the year.

During 2019/20 the number of hits on Ruth's Website averaged 47,000 per month, with spikes in November and December. www.ruthswomensshelter.com.au

Facebook@Ruths

Ruth's Facebook followers increased from 773 in July 2019 to 1880 at 30th June 2020 which was an increase of around 240%. It is our aim to continue to develop the use of social media, with the introduction of a Facebook Page for Ruth's Hub in July 2020. Social media has provided a very effective platform to open up communication with the community about the issues surrounding family and domestic violence.

Human Services Quality Standards

In June 2020, HDAA completed a quality audit of the organization and the certificate of registration was renewed, confirming that we were compliant with all the requirements of the Human Services Quality Standards.

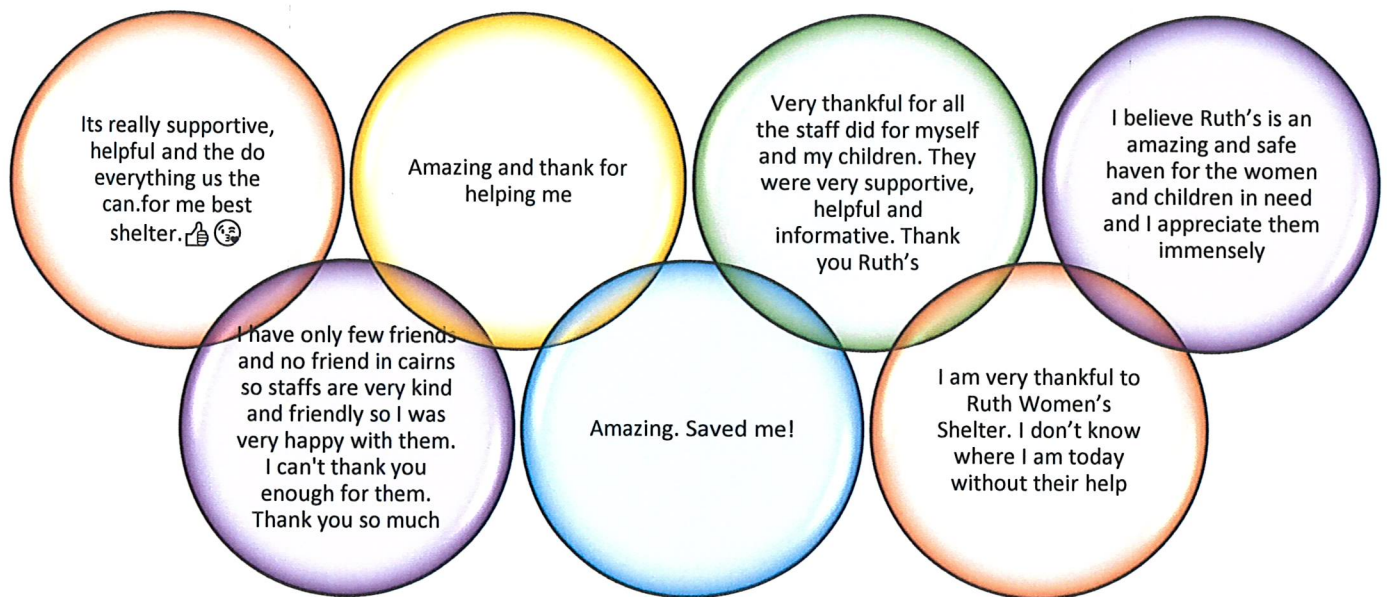
Our People and Culture

At Ruth's we recognize that our greatest assets are our employees, many of whom have been part of the organization for many years. We are proud of their commitment and loyalty and in our Strategic Plan 2020 we have introduced a strategic pillar specifically around People and Culture to ensure that we continue to provide opportunities for our employees to develop and grow in their roles at Ruth's.

Ruth's Hub

Ruth's were successful in applying for Community Grant Funding from the Department of Social Services, and Ruth's Hub opened for business in January 2020. Funding has been awarded to 30th June 2021. Under the direction of Ruth's Hub Sub-Committee, the project has been huge success. A combination of volunteers and 2 workers, Lauren and Michelle have provided the perfect space for women and children affected by domestic or family violence to access information and guidance. The Hub provides a place where people can meet up and support each other, and where they can make new connections. It is also a space where people can volunteer and where community groups can be facilitated. From January to the end of June Ruth's Hub provided assistance to women on 542 occasions, despite social distancing requirements as a result of the Coronavirus. Ruth's are excited at what the future holds for Ruth's Hub and the possibilities are endless.

What Our Clients Said on Survey Monkey



Volunteers

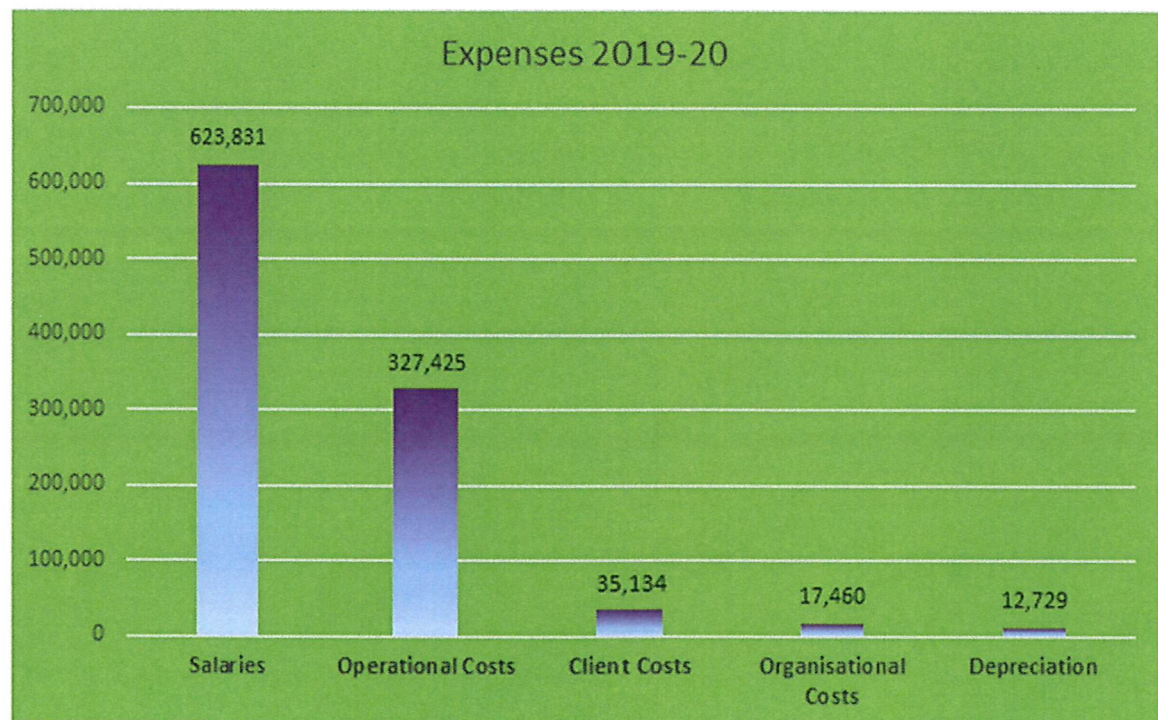
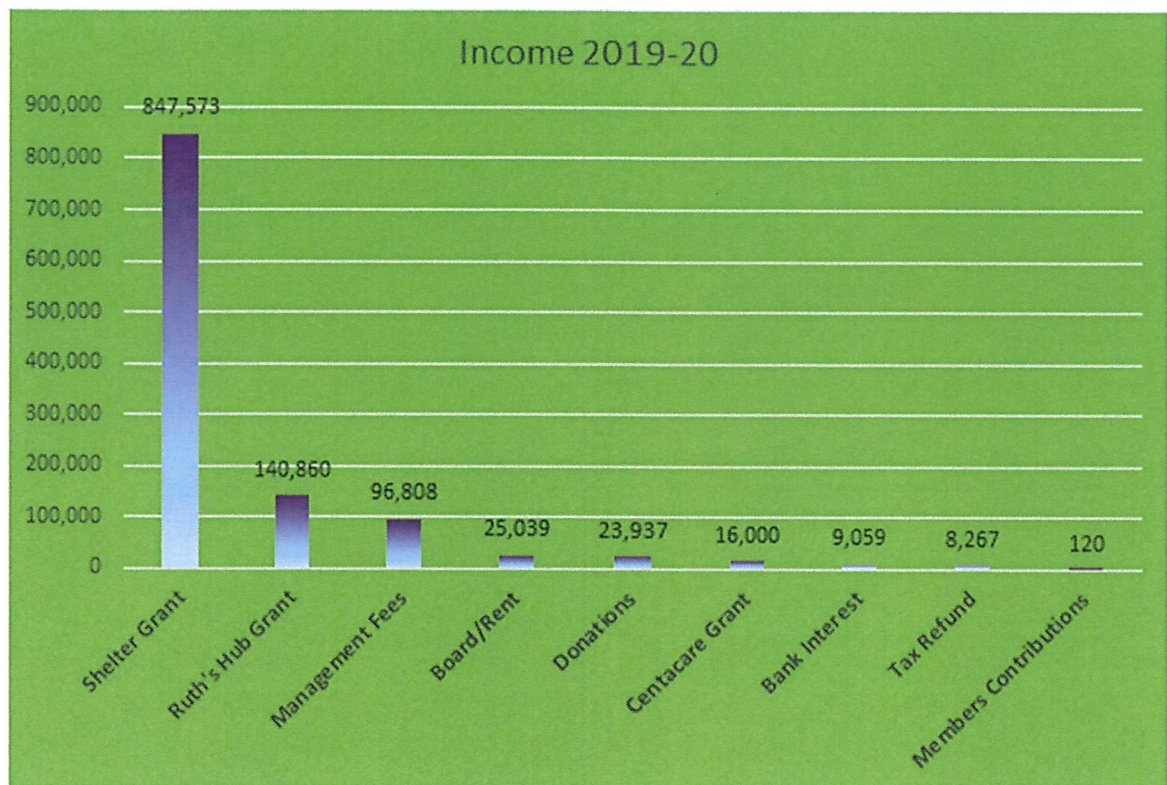
Since January 2020, 33 people have volunteered to work at Ruth's Hub. Volunteers are essential to the

operation of The Hub and during the coming year we will continue to provide opportunities for people from

the community to volunteer with us. At Ruth's we value our volunteers and appreciate all that they do.

Emergency Relief

Thanks to our partnership with Centacare FNQ, we have provided emergency relief on 159 occasions, providing essential food, material assistance and transport for women and children in crisis.





Ruth's Women's Shelter would like to acknowledge the contributions of:

Lion Australia
The Zonta Club of Cairns
Red Rose Foundation
Cairns German Club
Wasabi Barbie
Min Xu Photography
Myers Cairns
Bunnings Cairns
Specsavers
Piccones IGA
Rosalind Baker and the
Connoisseurs Luncheon Group
Just Purple
Reaston Drummond Law
MacDonnells Law
Carey Group
Status Signs
Cairns Airport
Mount Sheridan Plaza
Egg Plant and Poppy
Ella Bache Cairns Central
St Monica's College
St Andrew's Catholic College
Pullman Resort
Cath Slatyer
Community Grants Hub
Department of Child Safety,
Women and Youth
Paul Ramsay Foundation
Harvey Norman Cairns
Carly and Seamus Hit Radio
Oz Harvest
Donna Cahill Real Estate
Janet Wilson, Gardener
Centacare FNQ
Access Community Housing
Cairns Women's Center

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service
DV Connect
Cairns Security Monitoring
Future Computers
Telequip
Yolonde Entsch, EWEC
Rain Trees Shopping Centre Management
Cath Coombs Photography

Everyone else who contributed in any way.

