



Annual Report **2022**

Acknowledgement of Country

Desert Blue Connect respectfully acknowledges all First Nations Australians and the Southern Yamaji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which we use our energy, passion and enthusiasm to empower and enrich the community. We recognise the continuous connection which First Nations Australians have to homelands, waterways and country.

Desert Blue Connect acknowledges the strength and determination of the past and present Traditional Owners of this land and acknowledge the youth in our community - for they hold the dreams and vision for a better future for all people regardless of status, culture, age, gender and ability. We pay our respect to the past, the history, the dreamtime and the songlines.

Desert Blue Connect strives to maintain the relationships we have with the Southern Yamaji Peoples by providing culturally sensitive and safe services and education programs. We courageously use innovation, awareness and prevention strategies to stop inequality, family and domestic violence, coercion and gender stereotypes in our community. We authentically stay true to the values of respect, integrity, courage, and passion.



**Painting by Wajarri Artist
Destiny McIntosh**

Painted as part of the Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program 'Black Hands in White Paint' session. The artwork captures what it is like, as a First Nations women, to live in a world that sits between the 'Indigenous' world and the 'Western' world.



Contents

Our Impact.....6

Our Purpose8

Our Values8

From the Chair9

From the CEO..... 10

Our Objectives Are 11

Community Initiatives 12

Women’s Health Support 18

Desert Rose First Nations Women’s Resilience Program..... 22

Family and Domestic Violence Support 24

Chrysalis House Women’s Refuge 28

Sexual Assault Support..... 30

Men’s Support..... 32

Rural Support..... 34

Statement of Financial Position 36

Statement of Profit and Loss 37

Main Expenses..... 38

Funding by Source..... 39

➔
The paddle out ceremony
that was part of the WAVE —
Walk Against Violence event



Our Impact

Community Initiatives



655

youth attendance of respectful relationship, sexual violence prevention, family violence prevention education sessions.



97

respectful relationships, sexual violence, family violence prevention education sessions delivered to youth and school groups.



361

women have increased knowledge and skills to address health challenges from our support groups and education sessions.



117

women have improved health 6-12 months after attending our women's health community activities and events.



184

women feel more connected to support services through engaging with our women's health community activities and events.

Women's Health Support



395

women's health counselling sessions and nurse consults.



94%

of people reported improved health and wellbeing after using the women's health service.



175

people supported by a women health nurse.



220

people supported by a women's health counsellor.



1030

women's health counselling sessions.



27

women supported by a counsellor for an unplanned pregnancy. 100% of the clients who used this service reported a greater understanding of their options directly after.

Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program



24

women and girls participated in the Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program.

Family and domestic violence



1107

survivor victims supported by the domestic and family violence team – this number reflects support for 961 women and 146 children.



62

Aboriginal women survivor-victims supported in the Barndimalgu Court.



Chrysalis House Women's Refuge

128 + 125

women and children escaping family violence accommodated at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge.



1851

nights of sleep provided.



80%

of the people who stayed at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



50%

of the people who stayed at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge are children.



Sexual Assault Support

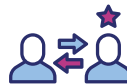
120

child abuse cases supported by a child sexual assault counsellor.



328

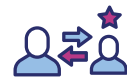
adult sexual assault cases supported by a sexual assault counsellor.



Men's Support

114

men supported by a men's intervention counsellor.



37

young men and boys under 25 supported by a men's intervention counsellor.



Rural Support

140

people supported by a rural based counsellor.

Our Purpose

Desert Blue Connect provides holistic wellbeing and safety services for women, men and families which includes women's health services, rural support, family violence response, crisis accommodation for women and children, sexual assault support, men's intervention, and primary prevention of family violence.

Our Values

Respect

We treat each other with respect regardless of status, gender, culture, and ability.

Integrity

We do what is right, not what is expected.

Courage

We have strength and determination to challenge, initiate, educate, and prevent.

Passion

We use our energy, passion, enthusiasm to drive our purpose and make a difference in the community.

From the Chair

Firstly, thanks to Russell and all the staff at Desert Blue Connect. The Board sincerely acknowledges the hard work of all the team. Desert Blue Connect are an independent, community based not for profit providing services that include health, family violence response, primary prevention and crisis accommodation for women and children in the Midwest region of Western Australia. The work is complex, emotional, and of vital importance, and the team works tirelessly each day to make our community a better place.

Desert Blue Connect also works with many partners across the region, and it is critical that this collaboration across service delivery continues. Particular appreciation to the Government of Western Australia Department of Communities, Department of Justice and Department of Health, the WA Police, Geraldton Family Violence Court – Barndimalgu, WACRH, SHINE, Geraldton Aboriginal Sporting Corporation, Mission Australia, A Glassy Day Surf Coaching, Jean Hailes for Women's Health and HRC.

Over the past year the Board have continued their focus on governance and corporate strategy. Our Board of Directors are voluntary, and I thank them for their commitment, wisdom and expertise that they bring each month to the Board meetings. This year, the Board has welcomed four new Directors which has enabled us to continue to strive for best practice corporate governance. I would like to acknowledge all existing Directors – Anne Pekaar, Travis Bate, Karen Chappel and Sandra Carr – and welcome Karin Grima, Angie West, Jasmyn Williams, and Melissa Myers to the Board of Desert Blue Connect.

Desert Blue Connect continues to secure and diversify its funding streams to ensure the highest quality program delivery across our region. I would like to acknowledge the State Government of Western Australia and our Philanthropic partners that continue to support the critical work we do. There are also many generous donors around Geraldton who regularly provide valuable personal items and goods to the Desert Blue Connect team that can be provided to those in need. The Board again acknowledges this generosity and wonderful community spirit of our region.

In August of this year, the Board approved the development of a Women's Wellness Centre. The centre will provide a range of important bulk billing services to woman and girls, and we are very pleased to see the development of this important community service. The Women's Wellness Centre has long been a vision for many past board members and staff and after years of hard work it is wonderful to see this new service progressing. It is expected the new community facility will be open by mid-2023.

This financial year, the Board also commenced the review and development of the Desert Blue Connect Strategic Plan. We expect the plan to be completed in mid-2023 and are excited about our renewed vision and purpose which will see Desert Blue Connect hone its focus and expand services.

Luke Bayley
Chairperson



From the CEO

The end of the year approaches and a chance for many people to reflect on the past 12 months and begin preparing for the next. In truth, for most people and organisations this is an ongoing process. Reporting and evaluation is never contained to a single season and nor is planning and implementation.

For Desert Blue Connect recent progress and growth is easily identified. The Women's Wellness Centre has taken very real steps in converting from words in paper in a strategic document to a real, client focussed program. With the recruitment of doctors and the commencement of the fit out in the building right next door to our main office – the realisation of a lot of hard work and planning is readily visible. We are so excited that the clinical staff are already servicing clients and can't wait until we can operate from the expanded building before taking aspects of the service into the regions that we service as well.

Other exciting opportunities include the Stand By You Pilot program designed to de-escalate violent incidents and the growth of the Men's Community Intervention Service.

We were fortunate this year to significantly refresh Chrysalis House Women's Refuge with interior painting, new beds and furniture, better lighting and several children's resources all being provided with support from the community. This augmented the work done on the drainage system required when heavy rains resulted in calf high water flowing right through the building. The team did a great job directing the water outside and then commencing a massive cleaning and drying project, all whilst arranging alternative accommodation for our clients.

Our staff make a difference. This year, with very little additional Human Resources nearly every program expanded the impact that they are having, generally seeing more clients, or providing additional services. One staff member in particular retired this year, after 38 years of working at the refuge. That institutional knowledge, memory and experience is hard won and not easily replaced.

I have no idea what the future holds, however, if the last few years have taught us anything it is that challenges will be presented. I am confident that the team we are building at Desert Blue Connect is well positioned to meet those challenges, and not just meet the challenges, but to thrive while doing so.

I hope everyone is able to have a refreshing break at some stage over the holiday season and can approach 2023 with some excitement and confidence.

Russell Pratt
CEO



Our Objectives Are



Research, design, develop, deliver and promote specialist domestic and family violence and health and wellbeing services, that are confidential and appropriate to the needs of women, children and men.



Provide direct services that are accessible and affordable to the benefit of all women, children and men, provided in a non-discriminatory basis and with a commitment to gender equity principles.



Provide safe and secure short-term accommodation to women and their associated children who are escaping domestic and family violence or who are at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence.



Enable clients to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed choices in all areas of their health and wellbeing and develop strategies to enhance their safety.



Provide prevention and early intervention strategies through comprehensive health promotion, community and health education practices and innovative programs.

Community Initiatives

Desert Blue Connect provides several community initiatives and programs that focus on health promotion, women's health education and information, child protection and abuse prevention.

Empowering Women with Health Knowledge

This year our community initiatives team helped 361 women increase their knowledge and skills to address health challenges. Furthermore, 117 women felt that they were continuing to make healthier choices and had improved their overall wellbeing 6-12 months after attending one of our women's health activities or programs.

The team facilitated five separate women's support groups which focused on providing evidence-based health knowledge and empowering women to be the experts in their own health and wellbeing journey. Some of the group programs ran all year round and some were provided in the form of short programs that were offered several times throughout the year.

The community initiatives teams also expanded to include two Aboriginal Liaison Officers, which created new opportunities to provide culturally secure and trauma informed workshops for First Nations women and youth.

Our Women's Support Groups

Women's Social Group

An inclusive support group, that focused on connection, self-acceptance and learning valuable skills and education to further social and emotional wellness.

Mum's Group

Focused on supporting mother's health mentally, physically and emotionally after birth.

Women's Wellness Group

A 6-week program that focused on improving health and overall wellbeing.

Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program

A 4-week culturally safe life skills program that helped guide First Nations women with reconnecting to culture, regaining cultural identity, inner-healing and empowerment.

Desert Rose First Nations Women's Support Group

Provided on-going support to the graduates of the Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program.

Programs like these allowed our community initiative team to help 184 women this year to feel more connected to women's health support services.

Surf to Smile

This year Desert Blue Connect developed a formal partnership with A Glassy Day Surf Coaching to provide our Women's Wellness Group and some of our family violence client's access to the local initiative Surf to Smile – a program that provides free surfing lessons to people in the Midwest who are dealing with trauma or mental illness.

Through learning to surf, the program provided our clients with several benefits including gaining self-awareness, clearing the mind, improving mood, providing a sense of belonging, increasing levels of the serotonin, helping to alleviate depression, relieving stress, and boosting daytime energy.

361

women have increased knowledge and skills to address health challenges from our support groups and education sessions.



117

have improved health 6-12 months after attending our women's health community activities and events.



184

women feel more connected to support services through engaging with our women's health community activities and events.





"I love how we have all connected and are now friends outside the group as well."

Anonymous Participant of Social Group



↑
Midwest Community
and Employment Expo.

↗
Our Women's Wellness
Group participating in the
Surf to Smile program, in
partnership with A Glassy
Day Surf Coaching.

→
Midwest Early Year's
Network Family Fun Day.

Working with Youth to Prevent Abuse

This year Desert Blue Connect had a significant increase in the number of requests for respectful relationship education from high schools and community youth programs.

We are proud to report that this year our community initiatives team facilitated 97 respectful relationships, sexual violence prevention and family violence prevention education sessions to school age children – totalling 655 student attendances. This goes a long way in equipping our local youth with the information, tools and education needed to help prevent abuse from occurring.

The sessions were facilitated in a series of youth safety and wellbeing workshops, which was effective in building rapport to then approach more sensitive topics such as self-esteem, sexual health, prevention of family and sexual violence and pornography. We found that this approach helped students gain a more balanced understanding of prevention and healthy behaviours.

Some of the incredible local programs and organisations that we worked collaboratively with to deliver these sessions were SHINE, PCYC youth groups, Flexible Learning Centre, Stars Foundation, Future Pathways Program, Bluff Point Primary's Start the Dream program, Stronger Safer Sisters and Centacare's Connect Respect Arise program. We also provided an outreach program to students at Carnarvon Community College.

Donations from the Variety Midwest Ladies Luncheon

A particular highlight this year was being chosen as the beneficiary of the Variety Midwest Ladies Luncheon. More than 150 community-minded women came together over lunch to generously donate essential items for two of Desert Blue Connect's primary prevention programs. These programs are highly focused on child protection, early intervention, emotions, feelings, and building strength and resilience in children. We were overwhelmed by the generosity and the donations continue to be distributed to the children participating in these programs.

Helping Parents Support Their Children

In partnership with Ngala, our community initiatives team facilitated several support sessions for parents which offered protective behaviours education and information on how parents can support their children.

655

youth attendance of respectful relationship, sexual violence prevention, family violence prevention education sessions.



97

respectful relationships, sexual violence, family violence prevention education sessions to youth and school groups.





"It's a wonderful and welcoming space."

Anonymous Participant of Mum's Group



↑
Donations from Variety
Midwest Children's Charity.

→
Desert Blue Connect
Mum's Group.

Bringing the Community Together

This year the community initiatives team facilitated several well attended community events which all received excellent feedback from attendees and the community at large. Some of our highlight community events for 2022 include:

- A celebration of International Women's Day with a movie and pizza night. The movie Hidden Figures was screened, and the atmosphere was warm and comfortable. This event was well received with around 25 women in attendance. Some were also new to Desert Blue Connect and engaged with the service as a result.
- The annual Mum's Wellbeing Expo as part of Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Awareness Week (PANDA). The event was for new and expectant mums to meet local services and businesses that support perinatal mental health and wellbeing.
- The annual community Walk Against Violence event (WAVE) which remembered 15 men, women and children who lost their lives to family violence in WA this year. This year's theme was 'Strength and Resiliency: The Courage of Survivors' – with 130 community members participating in the walk.
- Two fantastic Women's Health Week events in partnership with Jean Hailes for Women's Health. In Geraldton we presented a menopause and pelvic health event and in Coorow we presented a mind and physical health morning tea event.

Our community initiatives team also attended several community events coordinated by partner organisations and community networks such as the Community Justice Network NAIDOC event and Reconciliation Week Walk, Child Protection Week Family Day, Midwest Community and Employment Expo, Midwest Early Year's Network Family Fun Day, Nagle Catholic College Mental Health Expo and The Local Drug Action Group Year 12 Leavers and Beyond Expo.

Community, Respect and Equality

The community initiatives team continues to lead the Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) project in Geraldton, a regional prevention project that facilitates a whole-of-community approach to garnering commitment and action to prevent violence against women.

This year, the CRE Coordinator role was only partially filled, but despite the recruitment challenges, all CRE key documents and resources were reviewed, updated and provided to our CRE Agreement partners through the re-launch of the CRE website portal.

The CRE Leading Lights Communications Working Group have continued meeting monthly to engage and support key communications staff in CRE organisations to create innovative content and approaches to disseminating messages focused on the primary prevention of family violence.

We are also celebrating a recent successful grant application that will fund an early year's gender equality project in Geraldton, due to commence in 2023.



Mum's Wellbeing Expo.

“Great to see so many Mums coming together in a safe space and not feeling like you have to be the perfect mum.”

Anonymous Participant of Mum's Wellbeing Expo



Women's Health Support

Desert Blue Connect's women's health team aims to improve and promote the health and wellbeing of women in our community, particularly vulnerable women at risk of poor health.

We do this by offering a range of free and low-cost holistic health and wellbeing services that support the physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellness of women.

Community Impact

This year our women's health team supported 395 women with counselling sessions and nurse consults, with 93.5% reporting improved health and wellbeing after using the service. 95% also reported an increase in knowledge and skills to address their women's health challenges.

Women's Wellness Centre

This year, our most significant women's health highlight has been the progression towards building a Women's Wellness Centre in the Geraldton CBD, located adjacent to the Desert Blue Connect main office. We excitedly anticipate the fit-out of the Women's Wellness Centre being finished and open to the community in early 2023.

The Women's Wellness Centre will provide low-cost holistic wraparound health services to women and will allow us to provide women with better access to doctors, nurses, counsellors, health education and resources.

Service and Team Expansion

This year our women's health service expanded its offerings, and the team has more than doubled in size, with the employment of two new women's health doctors and a further two women's health nurses.

Coming to the end of 2022, our women's health team consists of two women's health doctors, three women's health nurses and two women's health counsellors.

Doctor Service

This year Desert Blue Connect has been able to provide a low-cost and bulk billed doctor and GP service to women for women's health related issues. This is a major advancement for our local community and achieves a major organisational milestone for Desert Blue Connect. It has allowed Desert Blue Connect to largely expand our women's health service offerings and increases access to healthcare for vulnerable women in our community. It's success is proven by the service continuing to be booked to capacity upto two weeks in advance.

Appointments are available for a range of women's health issues including contraception, cervical screening, antenatal shared care, mental health care plans, perinatal anxiety and depression, menopause management, sexually transmitted infection treatment, breast examination, management of chronic conditions and post-trauma intimacy counselling.

395

women's health
counselling sessions
and nurse consults.



94%

of people reported
improved health and
wellbeing after using the
women's health service.



↗
Early construction of the
Women's Wellness Centre.

→
Desert Blue Connect
Women's Social Group.



“Very understanding and felt comfortable sharing. Thank you.”

Anonymous Client



Nurse Consults

This year our women's health nurses supported 175 clients. While statistics may appear to be lower than previous years due to COVID-19 related impacts, we have identified that the level of complexity of the clients has intensified. Where appointments were previously half an hour, many appointments are now requiring an hour or more due to the diversity of the clients' needs.

Looking After Mum's Program (LAMP)

Our Looking After Mum's Program provides support to new and expectant mums in Geraldton who are diagnosed with, or at risk of developing mental health issues during pregnancy and in the first post-partum year.

Client numbers for this service continued to grow this year and recognition of the service within the community has led to a constant flow of clients being referred to the service from local GP's, child health nurses as well as self-referral.

Women's Health Counselling

Desert Blue Connect provides low-cost and confidential counselling services for women to assist with a variety of issues including anxiety, depression, stress, self-esteem, grief and loss, family issues, personal, emotional and relationship issues.

This year Desert Blue Connects' women's health counsellors supported 220 women and conducted 1030 individual counselling sessions.

There was an overall increase in women's counselling in the context of the pandemic as women sought counselling due to the various stressors that relate to COVID-19.

Unplanning Pregnancy Counselling

Desert Blue Connect provides confidential counselling and non-directional information on all unplanned pregnancy options – abortion, adoption and parenting. We use a pro-choice and woman-centred approach.

This year we provided 27 women with evidence-based information on their options and provided them with tools and support to make the decision which was best for them. We believe that women are the experts in their own lives and are the person best placed to make a decision about whether or not to continue with a pregnancy. 100% of the clients who used this service reported a greater understanding of their options directly after.

Health for First Nations Women

Desert Blue Connect is increasingly utilising our Aboriginal Liaison Officer to interface with the women's health programs to increase the confidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women seeking health assistance with us, as well as ensuring that our women's health service is culturally safe and appropriate to the needs of First Nations women.

175

people supported by a women health nurse.



220

people supported by a women's health counsellor.



1030

women's health counselling sessions.



27

*women supported by a counsellor for an unplanned pregnancy.
100% of the clients who used this service reported a greater understanding of their options directly after.*



"[Women's health nurse] has been an amazing help during a stressful and challenging time. Appreciate meeting with her and getting perspective and reassurance."

Anonymous Client



↑
Pelvic health and menopause event in Geraldton as part of Jean Hailes Women's Health Week.

→
Cervical screening awareness.

Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program

The Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program is a culturally safe life skills program designed for First Nations women by a First Nations woman. It is a journey of reconnecting to culture, regaining one's cultural identity, inner-healing and empowerment.

This year the Desert Rose program supported 24 First Nations women and First Nation girls under the age of 16.

Program Inception to Meet Community Needs

The program originated from a need within the Indigenous Midwest community to support partners or family members of offenders participating in our local Barndimalgu Court. It provides relief to Indigenous Australians who have suffered trauma from exposure to family and domestic violence, grief and loss of kin and country, and loss of identity.

Program Design

The program was designed to address four key areas:

- Cultural safety
- Holistic wellness and healing
- Empowerment and building resilience
- Strengths-based approaches and self-determination

"For Australian First Nations people, mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing are all intertwined and reliant on a strong connection to country and culture".
Yarran, M.

Development for Best Delivery

The program was first developed and successfully piloted in 2021 and received great responses from graduate participants and the Midwest community. This year Desert Blue Connect trialled condensing what was originally developed as an 8-week program into 4-weeks and found this was a better form of delivery for facilitators and it increased participant completion.

First Nations Women's Support Group

We also introduced a support group for graduates of the program to keep relationships that were formed in the program strong and provided on-going support to the graduates. The support group met weekly and ran off a self-determined program.

The Vision

The vision for the program includes further development for it to be delivered in other areas of the Midwest community. This includes school-based programs, workplaces, and prison systems. Work has started in this area by having developed and delivered the first school-based version of the program to at-risk school aged girls in partnership with Deadly Sister Girlz from Waalitj Foundation and Flexi Learnings Mobile Engagement Program.

24

women and girls
participated in the
Desert Rose First Nations
Women's Resilience Program.



Desert Rose First Nations Women's Resilience Program Graduation.

Yarning circle set up for the Desert Rose program.

Basket weaving.

Desert Rose program activity.

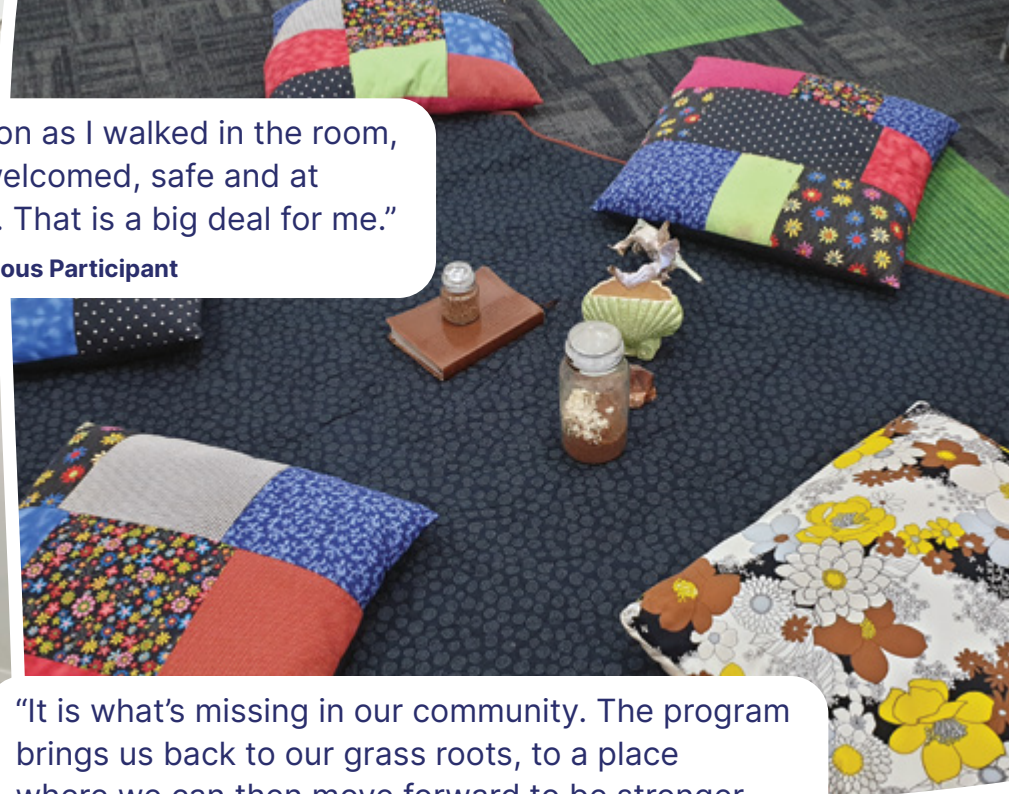


"As soon as I walked in the room, I felt welcomed, safe and at peace. That is a big deal for me."

Anonymous Participant

"I tried other agencies and programs for help with my depression. [I] didn't trust anyone because of PTSD which stemmed from DV. [The program] is a trusting, safe, confidential, environment with other women who have drowned in the same waters of life."

Anonymous Participant



"It is what's missing in our community. The program brings us back to our grass roots, to a place where we can then move forward to be stronger and to give us hope to have a better future."

Anonymous Participant



Family and Domestic Violence Support

Desert Blue Connect's domestic and family violence support team provides simple and complex interventions and support for survivors of family and domestic violence from a current or former intimate partner or family member. The priority is always a survivor's safety.

The team provides risk assessments and safety planning, assistance with family violence order applications, court support, development of case plans, home visits, advocacy and liaison with other specialist stakeholders.

Community Impact

This year the domestic and family violence team supported 1107 survivor victims – this number reflects support for 961 women and 146 children.

The Team and A New Outreach Service

The support roles each provide a suite of services that are tailored to the nature of a survivors' needs. The new Mobile Outreach Initiative was an additionally funded service to the program last year. The Mobile Outreach Initiative predominantly assists women who have had either had previous contact with Chrysalis House Women's Refuge, exited the refuge or who have made attempts to access accommodation with the refuge. The service continues to provide ongoing intense support in areas identified by the client that they feel would benefit them in their journey as a survivor.

Support for Animals

Animal cruelty is a high-risk factor for a survivor of family violence. Many people fear having nowhere to go with their pet or that the pet will be harmed if they leave the relationship. The domestic and family violence team have partnered with the Animal Rescue Collective and The Pet Barn Foundation who have provided essentials such as pet food, blankets, bowls, and treatments. The team can also provide short term pet boarding for clients if required.

Family Domestic Violence Response Team

The success of the domestic and family violence support team has been heightened by involvement of Geraldton Police who are based with the Family Domestic Violence Response Team. The Family Domestic Violence Response Team consists of Police, Mission Australia, and Child Protection Family Support who work in partnership Desert Blue Connect to keep high to medium risk clients safe from potential harm. These collaborative efforts and strong rapport between service providers ensure that survivors have the highest level of protection available to them. The Police have been supporting the domestic and family violence support team by attending meetings regarding the wellbeing of survivors, speaking to survivors about the importance of their safety and wellbeing, and being proactive within the community by carrying out visits to survivor's homes.

1107

survivor victims supported by the domestic and family violence team – this number reflects support for 961 women and 146 children.



↑
Annual WAVE –
Walk Against
Violence event.

↗
Beautiful handmade rugs
donated to Desert Blue
Connect for our clients.

↗
Making up basic care
packages for some of our
more vulnerable clients.

→
Donation from Animal
Rescue Cooperative to
support animal victims of
family violence.

→
Donation to support animal
victims of family violence.



"Staff were brilliant in giving me my voice back."

Anonymous Client

"I felt heard, seen, safe and everything thoroughly explained. Support from [worker] has been a HUGE HELP, giving me hope to continue speaking up against abuse. Thank you."

Anonymous Client



Barndimalgu Court

Family Violence Intervention Service

Desert Blue Connect provides support to Aboriginal women victim-survivors of family violence whose partner or ex-partner have been referred to the Barndimalgu Court. Barndimalgu means 'to fix things, make good' and this is the foundation of our work with the Barndimalgu Court — to acknowledge the impact of violence on families and children, provide support for the victims and to help families connect with each other.

Culturally Safe and Appropriate

We are proud to be part of the Barndimalgu Court, the only Indigenous family violence court of its kind in Australia and to represent the voice of the victim-survivors of family violence in the Geraldton community. We place great of importance on supporting our clients in a culturally appropriate and safe way.

Our Support

This year we supported 62 Aboriginal women survivor-victims of family violence going through the Barndimalgu Court system.

We supported victim-survivors both in the court and externally. We provided our clients with the information they needed, their options, advocacy, case management, risk assessment and safety planning, and helped them to lodge victim impact statements.

Conferences

This year, our Family Violence Intervention Officer presented at the 5th Asia Pacific Safe and Together™ Model Virtual Conference and the No to Violence Conference 2022: Shifting the Burden. Our presentation was titled "Victim Advocacy in the Barndimalgu Court — Challenging Victim Blaming and Misidentification".

62

*Aboriginal women
survivor-victims
supported in the
Barndimalgu Court.*



→
Raising of the flags at the
Community Justice Network
NAIDOC event.



Chrysalis House Women's Refuge

Desert Blue Connects' women's refuge, Chrysalis House, offers safe temporary accommodation for women and children who are escaping family violence or at risk of being homeless because of crisis.

This year Chrysalis House Women's Refuge accommodated 128 women and 125 children escaping family violence situations.

Providing Safety and Wellbeing

Chrysalis House is a safe place to stay where women are supported, empowered, and offered professional services to help them escape violence and make plans for the future. The team works hard to provide a sense of safety for the clients and support their holistic wellbeing.

"Thank you to all the ladies at Desert Blue Connect for taking me in and making me feel safe and reminding me that nothing that has happened to me is my fault and ensuring the support to get me back home to my family. I'm eternally grateful – Thank you all."

Anonymous Client

Community Support and Donations

This year, Desert Blue Connect received donations from community, businesses, and individuals to support the women who were staying at Chrysalis House. Desert Blue Connect received donations for Chrysalis House from: Inner Wheel Club of Geraldton who provided us with bathroom bags; Total Uniforms who donated new jackets at winter time; Rotary Club of Geraldton who donated winter rugs, clothing, sleepwear, toiletries and \$2000 cash; and Little Elves who donated wooden toys. We also received donations of clothing, bedding, and other useful items from the general public.

Chrysalis House also received a considerable upgrade thanks to funding from Rio Tinto and CBH. Their support allowed Chrysalis House to refresh the bedrooms with new paint, beds, bedroom furniture and wardrobes, update the bathroom, and enhance the children recreational facilities with a new table tennis table, foosball table, a cubby house and mud kitchen.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our immense gratitude for all the donations and funding received — they have all (big and small) helped to support the wellbeing and safety of the women and children in the Midwest.

Community Demand Exceeds Capacity

Challenges this year have been that the demand to stay at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge exceeds our capacity. We have particularly seen an exponential increase in women who are homeless seeking accommodation and clients who are unable to secure stable housing upon exit from the refuge.

128+125

women and children escaping family violence accommodated at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge.



1851

nights of sleep provided.



80%

of the people who stayed at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



50%

of the people who stayed at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge are children.





"The staff here at the house make a great team and make you feel like the house is your home during your stay."

Anonymous Client



"Amazing staff. Treated me and my children with so much love."

Anonymous Client

↑
Donation of warm jackets from Total Uniforms passed onto clients staying with us at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge.

↗
Visit from Minister Simone McGurk MLA to Chrysalis House Women's Refuge.

→
Donation from Rotary Club of Geraldton.

→
Donation of gift vouchers from The House Cafe Play Centre for families at Chrysalis House Women's Refuge.

→
Donation from Inner Wheel Club of Geraldton.



Sexual Assault Support

Desert Blue Connect provides counselling for survivors of recent or historic sexual assault and/or sexual abuse. This is a free service available to adults and children (over three years of age).

This year our sexual assault counsellors supported 120 child abuse cases and 328 adult sexual assault cases.

Our Approach

Sexual assault and sexual abuse can be extremely traumatic and can have an enormous impact on an individual's life. Our counsellors employ counselling interventions that are underpinned by a trauma-informed approach. We work in collaboration with each client to unpack their story and to assist individuals to develop healthy coping strategies and to heal from the impacts. Additionally, the counsellors provide psychosocial education in relation to sexual assault or abuse.

Networking and Relationships

This year Desert Blue Connect focused strongly on networking with other agencies across the Midwest region, which we believe was the driver of a significant increase in referrals to the service.

Shorter Wait Times

We can proudly report that in 2022, clients have not needed to wait more than five days to have a counselling session once a referral has been submitted. By not having lengthy wait times, we have found that clients are more likely to remain intrinsically motivated to engage in counselling.

Desert Blue Connect also worked in conjunction with other agencies (such as SARC and Allambee) to reduce their waitlists.

Adapting to Better Serve Clients

In 2021, COVID-19 safety precautions forced the delivery service of counselling services at Desert Blue Connect to change from face-to-face counselling to Zoom and/or phone counselling. This year, many clients have elected to continue using these mediums for convenience or safety reasons. Additionally, it also allows us to provide quality counselling interventions throughout the entire Midwest region (beyond Geraldton) and to clients who reside outside the Midwest region.

Desert Blue Connect continues to demonstrate its responsiveness towards survivors of sexual assault by expanding our service in 2022 to include Saturday appointments to clients who were unable to attend counselling sessions throughout the week.

Midwest Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Desert Blue Connect continues to offer clients 24/7 support through a local toll-free Sexual Assault Crisis Line. This service is available 24/7 to support people in the Midwest region who are survivors of a recent or historic sexual assault and/or sexual abuse.

"[Counsellor] has helped me more than I can describe. I'm very grateful that I have had her support through a really hard time I'm currently experiencing."

Anonymous Client

120

child abuse cases
supported by a child
sexual assault counsellor



328

adult sexual assault cases
supported by a sexual
assault counsellor



"Very kind and caring."

Anonymous Client

"This was my first session, but I am 100% positive that everything I was supplied with is going to help me and I look forward to my next session."

Anonymous Client



Yarns at Radio MAMA



Children's Play Therapy Room
at Desert Blue Connect

Men's Support

The Men's Community Intervention Service opened in September 2019. The service has evolved into an early engagement and specialist family violence intervention service with accountability mechanisms in place for men who use family violence.

The service offers long term, specialist counselling and trauma therapy for the men who are committed to change. What makes this service stand apart from others is that it is a non-mandated service – meaning referrals are made to the service, but it is up to the men to participate.

This year the Men's Community Intervention Service had 114 men over the age of 25 engaged with counselling and trauma therapy.

The Men's Community Intervention Service is an accessible and effective service for men who use violence. The service is continuous with no limitations on the amount of visits a man can access, as behaviour change is not instantaneous.

Flow On Effects

There are flow-on effects from the service including:

- Improved safety for women and their children following separation from partners who use violence.
- Improved safety for women and their children choosing to remain with partners who use violence.
- Diversion of low risk, first time offenders away from justice system.
- Decreased workload for police and justice by reducing instances of re-offending and family violence restraining order breaches by men.

Changed Behaviour and Lives

As a holistic service, the Men's Community Intervention Service assisted men in all areas of their lives, which culminates in restoring of self-esteem, learning new skills, and a reduction in abusive behaviours. For the past 12 months Desert Blue Connect has witnessed the success of this program by men returning to work, restoring relationships, enrolling in an Arts course at TAFE and one client commenced an engineering degree at university.

"MCIS is an outstanding service that has helped me make some dramatic changes in my behaviour and aggression. I found that they were friendly people that made me feel very welcome."

Anonymous Client

Caring Dads Program

Throughout 2022 the service also delivered the Caring Dads program, which is a 17-week commitment for the men who attend. The fathers develop skills to cope in healthy ways when situations are frustrating, and they come to understand how different fathering strategies and choices affect children.

The safe, non-judgemental group environment of Caring Dads has enabled men to self-reflect. Engaging with peers who have had similar lived experiences helps the development of trust and motivation to openly and honestly examine their experience of being fathered and being a father.

114

men supported by a men's intervention counsellor.



37

young men and boys under 25 supported by a men's intervention counsellor.



Rural Support

Desert Blue Connect offers free counselling to men and women who live rurally across the North Midlands shires of Morawa, Mingenew, Three Springs, Yalgoo, Carnamah, Coorow and Perenjori.

The rural support team operates from Desert Blue Connects' Morawa office and travel across the shires to provide counselling appointments, attend events and provide outreach from Desert Blue Connects' Geraldton-based specialist areas of health, wellbeing, prevention, safety and response services.

Rural Counselling

Our rural counselling service is very broad in scope and practice. We see both men and women and support our clients with tools that empower them to live their best lives and raise levels of personal functionality. We pride ourselves on providing a safe space where our clients feel heard and supported to explore any issue they are facing. We have helped support clients to explore aspects of their identity, spirituality, relationship with self or others, past experiences as a source of trauma, parenting, grief and loss, domestic violence and raising safety and awareness, child abuse, use of alcohol and other drugs, depression and anxiety. We also provided advocacy to help our clients access other available support services or to find resources.

This year our rural support counsellor supported 140 clients with counselling.

Strategic Framework

The Rural Support Services Strategy 2020-2022 developed through community and stakeholder engagement continues to provide the framework for how we work with rural shires and the part we play in the creation of strong rural communities where everyone thrives.

Networking and Relationships

This year Desert Blue Connect recruited a Morawa-based Rural Support Services Officer. This role had been vacant for several months due to the challenges of recruiting a qualified staff member based in the shires. During this time, there was turnover of key contacts in many of the shires, which was further impacted by COVID 19 and staff shortages restricting the flow of services into the shires.

Our new Rural Support Services Officer has worked hard to rebuild the relationships with key contacts in community resource centres, health clinics and sporting clubs to promote the counselling service, and conduct community needs analyses at events to direct outreach services.

Women's Health Week

A highlight this year was presenting a Mind Body Wellness event in Coorow as part of Jean Hailes Women's Health Week. The event featured a mental health presentation by Desert Blue Connect's Women's Health Counsellor and an improved movement talk by Carnamah based physiotherapist Alicia Rayner.

The event was attended by 29 women and was a success due to the strong promotion throughout the shires and our Rural Support Services Officer being able to drive a bus to transport women from Morawa, Carnamah and Perenjori to the event in Coorow. The event was also a featured highlight in Jean Hailes Women's Health Week national social media and email newsletter campaign.

Desert Blue Connect partners with Jean Hailes for Women's Health – a national organisation dedicated to improving women's health, to run women's health week events each year.

140

people supported by a rural based counsellor.





"The service has made a big change to the way I deal with my life."

Anonymous Client

"Thank you for your help. Things are getting much better."

Anonymous Client

↑
Mind Body Wellness event in Coorow as part of Jean Hailes Women's Health Week.

→
Our rural support team, Serina Ablett and Naomi Francis.

→→
Donation of toys from Imerys Talc Mine in Three Springs.



Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2022

Assets

Current Assets

Cash and Equivalents.....	\$1,968,335
Trade and Other Receivable.....	\$92,100
Total Current Assets.....	\$2,060,435

Non-Current Assets

Property, Plant and Equipment	\$347,543
Total Non-Current Assets.....	\$347,543

Total Assets	\$2,407,978
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Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Trade and Other Payables	\$621,450
Provisions	\$740,954
Tax Liabilities	\$50,524
Total Current Liabilities	\$1,412,928

Total Liabilities	\$1,412,928
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Net Assets	\$995,050
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Equity

Retained Earnings.....	\$895,017
Reserves.....	\$100,033

Total Equity	\$995,050
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Statement of Profit and Loss

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

Income

Donations Received	\$130,227
Events/Fundraising	\$1,831
Grants Received	\$3,751,487
Interest Received	\$1,864
Other Income	\$34,234
Transfer to/from Provisions	(\$310,996)

Total Income	\$3,608,647
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Expenses

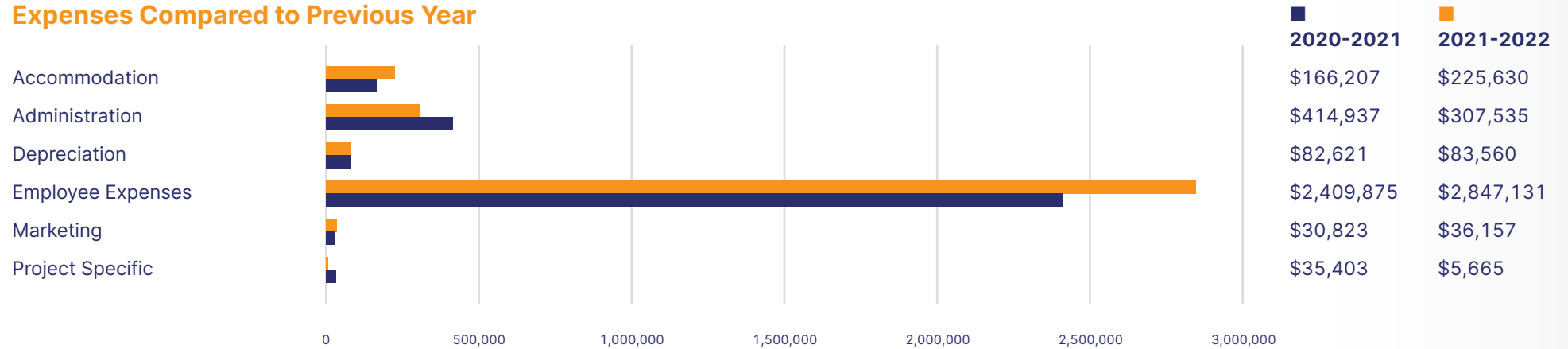
Accommodation	\$225,630
Administration	\$307,535
Depreciation	\$83,560
Employee Expenses	\$2,847,131
Marketing	\$36,157
Project Specific	\$5,665
Transfer to Sinking Fund	\$38,000

Total Expenses	\$3,543,678
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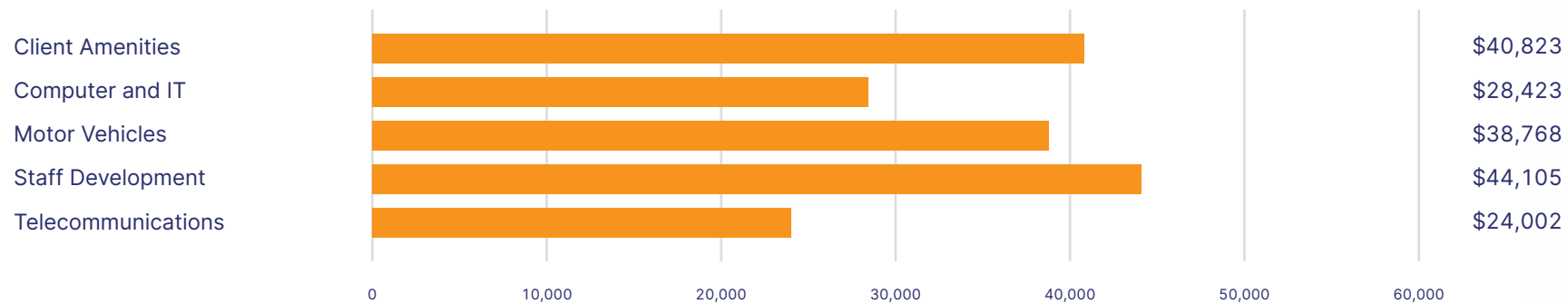
Total Comprehensive Income	\$64,969
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Main Expenses

Expenses Compared to Previous Year



Expenses Excluding Personnel and Premises

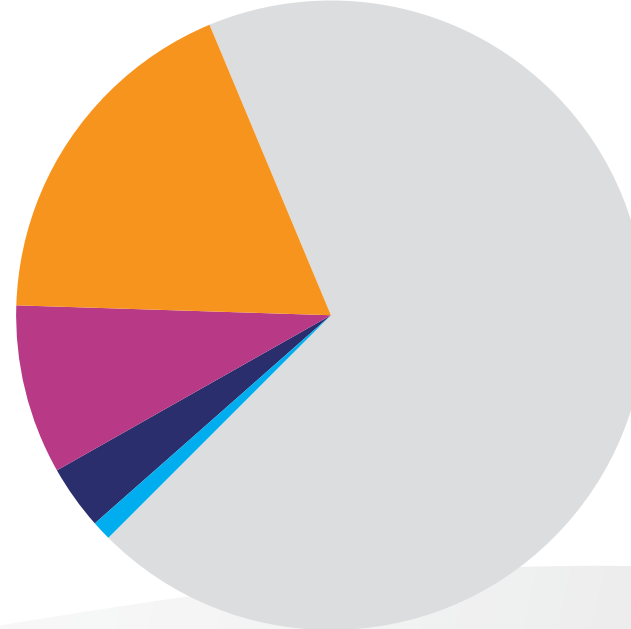


Funding by Source

Source Categories

Department of Communities Grants	\$2,697,140	68.8%
Department of Health Grants	\$713,601	18.2%
Department of Justice Grants	\$340,746	8.7%
Donations	\$130,227	3.3%
Other	\$34,234	0.9%
Events/Fundraising	\$1,831	0.05%
Interest	\$1,864	0.05%

Total Funding \$3,919,643



International Women's Day
#BreakTheBias.



Geraldton Head Office

Location: 25 Chapman Road, Geraldton WA

Phone: (08) 9964 2742

Chrysalis House Women's Refuge

Phone: (08) 9964 2173

Men's Community Intervention Service

Location: 98a Chapman Road, Geraldton WA

Phone: (08) 9937 9188

Rural Support Service

Location: Based in Morawa at 68 Gill Street

(Travels across the Midwest for clients in other Shires).

Mobile: 0419 348 006



Presentation as the beneficiary of the 2022 Variety Midwest Ladies Luncheon.

