



Annual Report 2016/17



Contributing to the creation
of a socially just and caring
community in which
every person is safe,
secure and valued.



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Veritas House acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we operate, the Wiradjuri Nation and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

Veritas House Inc. is accredited by the Office of the Children's Guardian and is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

Management Committee



Mary Housler
– President



Rebecca Nunan
– Treasurer



Beverley Vickers
– Secretary



Geoffrey Hastings



Anthony Thurling



Diane Lowe



Rosemary Hailstone



Ronald England

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The 2016-2017 financial year has been another successful year for Veritas House seeing more change and growth, but most importantly, providing vital services for the vulnerable young people in our community.

The organisation welcomed a new executive team consisting of Jacquie Ashleigh as Operations Manager, Sharron Carter as People and Culture Manager, Narelle Stocks as Business Development Manager and Maureen Markwick as Corporate Services Manager to assist our CEO, Jody Pearce in the everyday running of the business. The successful integration of this team has allowed Jody to focus on the strategic growth plan in conjunction with the Management Committee.

Our organisation has grown to operate over five sites in Bathurst and Orange and now employs over 70 people within those areas. Veritas has operated in Bathurst for over 30 years and we see a huge opportunity to expand our services in the Orange footprint and beyond as we grow, provide professional help to those in need and achieve economies of scale to operate more efficiently with the funding contracts provided.

This next year we will see more growth and change in the ever-changing funding and regulatory landscape that we operate in. One of our major projects will be to transition the organisational structure of Veritas House from an Incorporated Association to a Company Limited by Guarantee which is a more appropriate structure to take us into the future. This will have no bearing on the excellent services that we offer and Veritas will continue to thrive and help those in need.

We have been fortunate to welcome several new members to the Management Committee bringing with them a diverse range of skills and a fresh enthusiasm to guide Veritas House into the future. I would like to personally thank all of the committee members for volunteering their time to not only attend meetings but actively participate in the governance of Veritas House and drive the strategic direction which is needed.

Our thanks goes to our Chief Executive Officer and all the staff for continuing the excellent provision of services with dedication, commitment and professionalism which makes Veritas House the unique organisation that it is.

Mary Housler
President





CEO REPORT



The 2016/17 year represented a year of bedding down change and of continuing to focus on the most important part of our organisation's work: the people involved with Veritas House, be they children, young people, staff or the wider community. I am proud to report that in the past year Veritas continued to strengthen its position as a leading not-for-profit provider of child, youth and family services in Western NSW.

A key theme of 2016/17 has been the agency's ability to respond to change. There is constant transformation and change with clients, governments, funding, technology and evidence-based practice, and one of Veritas' key attributes is our ability to move with and navigate this changing environment. I think too often it is believed that an organisation's capacity lies within the amount of financial or human capital it possesses. However, as the sector continues to change, it is evident that the most valuable thing an organisation can have is the ability to adapt to change.

The success of the past year can be attributed to the great work of our management committee. I would like to express my appreciation to the committee who provide a pillar of support to not only myself, but to the organisation as a whole. The committee has invested a wealth of time, knowledge and resources into ensuring the sound governance of Veritas and will undoubtedly continue to do so next year as we embark on the transition to a new company structure.

One of the privileges of leading such an amazing organisation is working alongside some of the sector's finest staff and managers. The expertise, commitment and passion the Veritas team exhibits is of paramount importance. They are the driving force behind the successful programs and services delivered each year. A key competitive advantage of Veritas is that the staff put the interests of their clients at the centre of their decision-making and that staff "live the values" of Veritas House. Retaining the organisation's values has been a key focus and great achievement this year through a period of growth and change, and has helped frame the direction for future growth and sustainability.

Key Achievements

As identified in our strategic plan, a major scope of work in 2016/17 was filling the gaps inevitably created by unprecedented and rapid growth over the past few years. This year we have invested heavily in building the necessary infrastructure, management capability and workforce capacity needed to support a much larger and growing agency.

In November 2016 we transitioned a new executive team into our organisational structure. The executive team has successfully enhanced our capability in the areas of people and culture, operations, business development and corporate services.

Achievements of the executive include:

- The streamlining of our financial and operational systems through improved IT and an investment in more robust procedures.
- A greater focus and enhanced resources allocated to the training, development and supervision of our staff to ensure they are well supported and skilled to perform their roles.
- Reviewing and updating our policy, procedure and accreditation frameworks to ensure we reach compliance milestones and contractual obligations.
- An emphasis on the marketing and promotion of the agency. This has resulted in increased service utilisation rates due to broader community awareness of the services we offer. Our enhanced business profile has also led to a greater capacity to secure new business and community donations and support.

It is pleasing to report that Veritas continued to grow the business by increasing revenue by close to \$2 million in 2016/17. This is a good result that demonstrates our commitment to the strategic plan objectives of ensuring Veritas remains strong and viable in a competitive funding environment. The growth has enabled Veritas to expand its portfolio of NSW Department of Family and Community Service-funded contracts to seven service streams. Our workforce has also increased from 55 to over 70 staff working across five service delivery sites. Due to the recent tender success in the Premier's Youth Initiative and Permanency Support, the agency's growth trajectory is projected to reach over 80 staff spanning across multiple locations in Orange, Bathurst and Dubbo in the coming year.

This year has also signalled another year of reforms in our Targeted Earlier Intervention, Non-Placement Support and Out-of-Home Care contracts. These contracts represent over half of the agency's business, therefore we have invested much time and effort into preparing for the changes to service provision and funding as a result of these reforms. It is widely agreed that more effort needs to be directed into two key reform areas: permanency reform for children and young people; and improving early intervention investment for children; and while these are both creditable policy aspirations, the devil as they say is in the detail. Unfortunately, in many instances the inconsistency of policy directions within and across government departments actively work against achieving these goals. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that we continue to be a regional voice for children and young people to ensure these reforms are meaningful and do not negatively impact on our client group or the broader sector that supports them.

Through the great work of our teams, Veritas supported more than 700 vulnerable children, young people and families in 2016/17. The year ahead will present many challenges for all of us involved in this vital work, but our belief and pride in our staff, partners, supporters and clients is stronger than ever. In the coming year we will continue to lead the way in meeting these challenges with innovation, with hard-won expertise and with real impact.

Jody Pearce
CEO

ACTING OPERATIONS MANAGER – Youth Homelessness and Early Intervention Report



Veritas SHS Team (Back L-R): Caity Whitelaw, Matt Gerrey, Greg Wilkinson, Clare Lewis, Dan Organ, Jack McKenna (**Centre L-R:**) Emma McIntosh, Sarah Luff, Melanie Driscoll, Genevieve Hall, (**Front L-R:**) Brenda Van Pelt, Sharon Jones, Danielle Davidson and Katon Crawford.

Absent: Georgia Brancourt, Jess Wade, Lizzie Daniels, Michelle Cole, Jess Stanley, Tamara Sefton and Shelly Cole

Specialist Homelessness Services for young people (SHS) and Homelessness Youth Assistance Program (HYAP)

VeritasHouse continues to provide support and accommodation to children and young people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness through our SHS and HYAP services based in Bathurst and Orange. The teams were very pleased when the news came in October that we won the tender for HYAP and that the program would continue with Veritas. I am proud to report that more than 350 children and young people were supported by SHS and HYAP during the 2016 – 2017 financial year. Over 100 young people and unaccompanied children were provided with a home-like environment to stay throughout the year.

Community Engagement & Service Partnerships

The SHS team are strong supporters of a community approach to addressing social issues and have been involved in a number of community events linked with Youth Week, Youth Homelessness Matters Day, National Families Week and Homelessness Week.

Increasing the connection young people feel to their local area and community assists to build confidence and pride about themselves and where they live. To achieve this, the SHS team has supported young people to engage in their community and community events, including: ice skating in Orange and at the Bathurst Winter Wonderland festival; day trips to the Blue Mountains; Picnics at Lake Canobolas; the Parkes Elvis Festival; movie nights in Victoria Park; and activities at the PCYC.

To achieve outcomes and meet the needs of children and young people accessing support through our SHS and HYAP programs, our teams work closely with and appreciate the work of other agencies working with our client group. Family and Community Services (FACS), Juvenile Justice, Headspace, CAMHS, Pinelodge, Housing NSW, Housing Plus, Skillset, Fusion, OCTEC, Sureway, Joblink Plus, Bathurst Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Orange Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Wattle Tree House, TAFE, Vinnies, The Hope Care Bargain Centre, Salvo's and local schools all work with the SHS and HYAP teams at Veritas for the benefit of young homeless people and the community.

Professional networks assist the team to build knowledge and relationships with other services in the community; and this in turn leads to better outcomes for all involved. Over the past 12 months Veritas has participated in The Partner Facilitation Group to support the Youth Private Rental Subsidy, Housing Network meetings, the FACS Estate Management Unit, and AFAM; while Interagency meetings have included the Youth Interagency, Child and Family Network and Aboriginal Interagency – all of which provide the opportunity to work in collaboration with a wide range of services in supporting children and young people.

Research shows that when young people experience time in Youth Justice Centres they are more likely to re-offend. To reduce the risk of recidivism the SHS team work with Juvenile Justice through the Bail Assistance Line to provide a safe bed and support to young people who will be refused bail because they do not have a safe home.

Community Donations and Support

The SHS team was thrilled to receive donations from students at Blayney High School in the past year who diligently raised funds for those in need. The students from Year 9 are a credit to their families, school and community. In addition, two SHS team members provided an information session as part of our involvement with the wonderful community of Blayney High.

Veritas staff were honoured to be able to support a kind-hearted community member who spent much time organising a Coat Drive to assist people feeling the chill of the Central West's winter. These coats were collected at various donation points in Bathurst including Veritas House, then disseminated through the BCCC food bank.

The YOUTH MATTERs forum held at Charles Sturt University in November and organised by Headspace Bathurst Youth Reference Group was another initiative Veritas SHS staff were proud to be involved in. Staff facilitated Rent-it-Keep-it workshops to young people in attendance.

The fantastic work of StreetSmart allowed for the team to assist young people build their cooking skills and knowledge of nutritional eating, as well as provide young people with kitchen packs to take home. Birth Certificates and Opal cards were also provided to young people through the support of the StreetSmart grant, to assist with gaining ID and travel.





The SHS team in Orange teamed with the Orange branch of Fusion Australia and spent a night sleeping in their cars to raise awareness about the experience of being without a home and to raise funds as part of Homelessness Week.

Quality Improvement, Training and Development

YFoundations held the biannual ReCharge conference this year with three members of the SHS team in attendance. This was a great opportunity to attend best practice workshops and interact with other youth SHS organisations from across the state.

Recognising the importance of continuous improvement and quality service provision, a self-assessment process was undertaken to measure the compliance of Veritas against a number of SHS service standards. Reviews of practices and process have taken place leading to the development of new SHS Induction packs, updated information for children and young people, production of new promotional material and work to update a number of policies and procedures.

In line with this ongoing focus on continuous improvement, the SHS team engaged in numerous professional development opportunities throughout the year. The SHS team received training in responding to Domestic and Family Violence, Understanding Complex Trauma, LGBTI Inclusion, Guided Incident Response Training, Introduction to Positive Behaviour Support, Safely Fitting Car Seats, Keep Them Safe, CIMS Foundations data collection, Self-harm information, Suicide response and Bridges out of Poverty.

Upgrades to our Crisis Accommodation houses included new carpet at the Bathurst Crisis Accommodation and new blinds throughout the Orange Crisis Accommodation house. We are currently in the process of organising further upgrades to the Bathurst Crisis Accommodation gardens and Orange Crisis Accommodation bathroom and laundry areas.

The SHS teams look forward to building on their practice and capacity to provide quality services with outcomes which benefit not only the children, young people and families we work alongside, but the entire community.



Graham Palmer: Adolescent and Family Counsellor

Youth and Family Support

The Youth and Family Support service works with vulnerable children and young people aged 12-18 years and their families in the Bathurst and Oberon areas. Our service provides appropriately targeted youth and family support services to reduce the likelihood of children and young people entering or remaining in the child protection and out-of-home care systems.

These services are provided along a continuum of family and community needs – from lower-level parenting and youth support, to intensive family and youth interventions to prevent children and young people from coming into care.

Our service aims to provide families with the specialised early intervention support needed to sustain and strengthen family relationships. It is pleasing to report that between our counselling and case work teams we delivered services to 139 clients in 2016/17. Among the services we provided were counselling, conflict resolution, information and referral, transport, court support, brokerage, case management and evidenced-based parenting programs inclusive of the Teen Triple P program and Young Mums and Bubs support group.

In the coming year, the Youth and Family Support service will prepare for the changes proposed through the NSW Government's Targeted Earlier Intervention Reform. This will involve the reconfiguration of our service model to better address reform priorities and local community need.

Jody Pearce

A/Operations Manager - Youth Homelessness & Early Intervention

SHS 2016-17 ACHIEVEMENTS

BATHURST

Number of clients: 183

Crisis Accommodation bed nights: 1492
(54 people accommodated)

Transitional Accommodation bed nights: 2562
(16 people accommodated)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients:
39.1% of clients

ORANGE

Number of clients: 132

Crisis Accommodation bed nights: 1182
(39 people accommodated)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients:
36.7% of clients

HYAP

Number of clients: 53



Veritas SHS team members Tiffany Stonestreet, Sharon Jones and Sarah Luff experienced two inspiring days learning from nationally renowned speakers and sharing experiences and best practice approaches with other organisations who support vulnerable young people at the Yfoundations reCHARGE conference.



Orange SHS team members Tiffany Stonestreet, Jack McKenna and Matt Gerrey rugged up and ready for a cold night as participants in the Sleep In Your Car event.

Bathurst Specialist Homelessness Service staff Katon Crawford, Sharon Jones and Dan Organ promoting a petition to call for a national plan to end youth homelessness as part of Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2017.



StreetSmart Australia generously provided Veritas House with a grant to support young homeless people in Orange. The grant enabled Veritas to purchase birth certificates, Opal Cards and cooking packs for use in our living skills program and to provide to each young person at the completion of the workshops. This was the second grant in two years Veritas has received from StreetSmart to support young homeless people in Orange. The previous year we purchased vouchers for haircuts and independent living items packed into washing baskets which contained cleaning products, self-care products and non-perishable food.



OPERATIONS MANAGER – Permanency Support Report



Veritas House OOHC Team (Back L-R): Jacqueline Ashleigh, Bronte Emanuel, Emma Crago (Front L-R): Toneya Carr-Smith, Kayla Cox and Kate Miller. Absent: Ann-Maree Shaw, Renata Simpson, Ria White, Tarren Carr-Smith, Tom Hopkins, Jarred Portegies, Haylee Lepaio, Katie Carlton.

Out of Home Care (OOHC)

Veritas House currently provides support to 71 children and young people in OOHC across Bathurst and Orange. We provide a range of services including long and short term care, kinship care, respite and emergency care. In October 2016 we also set up a residential service called "Melaleuca House" which provides around-the-clock support to two young people in our care.

All of these services are supported by an amazing team of casework staff, parenting support workers and carers who strive to be innovative, child-focused and collaborative in ensuring that these children and young people have the same opportunities as other children and young people in reaching their full potential in life.

Many of the children and young people Veritas supports, present with complex needs. Over this past year, Veritas has continued to invest in building capacity within our OOHC team to support their needs by ensuring that all caseworkers and members of our residential parenting team have as a minimum training in Trauma-Informed Care, Guided Incident Response Training, First Aid and OOHC Case Management and OOHC fundamentals. Staff have also had opportunities to participate in training in-house on Section 82's and 90's, Self-harm, Emotional Intelligence and the National Disability Insurance Scheme interface with OOHC. We have also reviewed our induction process for new staff and have embedded regular supervision for all staff in our casework and parenting teams.

Our residential unit, Melaleuca House has undergone two onsite audits by the Office of the Children's Guardian as we work toward our residential accreditation. All standards assessed so far have been met, which is a credit to the casework and parenting team. A huge amount of work goes into preparing for an audit so this was a huge achievement for the team.

One of the auditors captured perfectly the strength of our OOHC team when they said:

"It is evident that the Veritas team work hard to bend and mould a system rather than kids and that staff have worked hard to stabilise and support individualised care of these young people."

Veritas is committed to supporting the active participation and right of children and young people in care to have a voice; and for the first time since offering OOHC services Veritas sponsored one of our young people to attend the CREATE forum held in Sydney. CREATE Foundation is the national peak body representing the voices of children and young people

with an out-of-home care experience. Our young person was introduced to the CREATE representatives for the Central West who are keen to involve her in future activities when the team venture out this way. The CREATE forum allowed her to explore opportunities available to her as she plans for leaving care. When asked by her caseworker what was the key thing she got out of the forum her response was:

"Never be afraid to speak up or to be who you are."

Veritas have been working toward driving more proactive relationships with key partners in the OOHC space as this is critical in getting the best outcomes for our children and young people. We have initiated a series of regular meetings with partner organisations including Family and Community Services (FACS) Community Service Centre teams and the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health team, and will continue to build on these partnerships with other stakeholders in the coming year.

We have begun to review our measures for quality practice and compliance and have reviewed our internal compliance Dashboards and are currently undertaking an extensive review of all client files. With the recent establishment of the Permanency Support Operations Manager and Practice Specialist roles, we are building capacity to support the implementation of the new OOHC reforms and accreditation renewal; and support a quality practice framework and compliance in the new Permanency Support Space.

CART - Support for carers

Currently Veritas supports 58 carer households across the Bathurst, Lithgow, Orange and surrounding areas. The commitment to care for vulnerable children requires compassion, flexibility, strength and perseverance and the team at Veritas are constantly in awe of the dedication of our wonderful team of carers. The program has been led by a coordinator and part time carer support worker over the past 12 months.

To explore ways that Veritas House could better support carers we rolled out an online survey earlier this year to identify what, if anything, we could be doing better. A number of opportunities were identified including more training and better dissemination of information around our processes for reportable conduct and complaints. A carer newsletter is also currently being developed.

An exciting development from this survey has been the establishment of a Veritas House carer reference group called the "Kids in Care network" which meets monthly at Veritas House. The group has developed their own terms of reference and has identified a number of functions ranging from mentoring and supporting new carers, identifying training needs; and a consultancy role for the Veritas Executive and staff.

Carer recruitment and training have been ongoing all year with several promotional stands and information sessions hosted at shopping centres and Services Clubs in Lithgow, Bathurst and Orange. These have been followed by our carer training



Bathurst Foster Care Info stand - The Carer Recruitment and Support team conducted a range of activities throughout the year to attract Foster Carers.

workshops, Shared Stories which have begun to be accessed by other Non-Government Organisations for training of their carers.

Veritas has also partnered with Fostering NSW as part of a state-wide recruitment strategy for foster carers and is currently exploring a partnership with ACWA to partner in the evaluation of their new Carer Development Plan which is a tool for supporting carer capacity.

CART has successfully reviewed and streamlined some of their internal processes such as the alignment of carer payments to a fortnightly system, the implementation of several new templates to evidence-based decision making around carer authorisation variations, requests for respite and carer contact. This is a continued scope of work as we move into the implementation of the OOHC reforms.

The upcoming reforms have also highlighted the need to build capacity within our current CART team as we anticipate significant growth in this area over the next year. We have recently reviewed our service model to separate the two specific functions of the CART program, recruitment and support.



Veritas House Non Placement Support Service Team (Back L-R): Amy Field, Meaghan Borg, Shellie Marino, Georgia Brancourt, Jo Thompson, Hannah Vaughan, Tayler McBrien (**Front L-R:**) Sarah Nagy, Kacee Cubis, Grace Day, Jessica Quinn, Bridget Tracy, Rachel Prior and Ian Jones.
Absent: Jordana Kissell, Jasmine Rae and Julie Urban.

Members of our Kids in Care Network (below) – a group of Veritas' dedicated Foster Carers who meet regularly to discuss a range of matters, including communication; networking and events to support one another; and skills and training needs of carers.



Non-Placement Support Service (NPSS)

Our Non-Placement Support Service (NPSS) is a fee-for-service program providing contact, transport, mentoring and more recently motel supervision to children and young people who are in OOHC. The aim of the program is to support children and young people who are living in OOHC, to interact with their parents and families in a safe and supportive environment. The program is supported by a coordinator and a team of flexible, dynamic and committed contact workers.

In addition to providing services to our own OOHC team, NPSS provides services to several FACS offices and has travelled as far as Perth in service delivery.

Earlier this year the Executive coordinated an internal Service Review of the NPSS service. Twenty four recommendations focusing on business development and quality improvement were identified and continue to be implemented across the service.

One of the exciting developments in the NPSS program is the expansion into Orange and the establishment of an Orange NPSS team who are based and work from our Lords Place premises. This has been a smooth transition and over the coming year we will continue to work toward building this business.

We continue to build capacity within the NPSS team and have provided core training in trauma-informed care, supporting contacts, writing contact reports and car seat installation. With the increasing demand for motel supervision we have also embedded Guided Incident Response training.

Our current focus on quality services involves a review of our current contact processes and development of a policy that aligns with the new permanency support goals. The NPSS team is gearing up for the OOHC reforms and what it will mean for service delivery in the coming year.

Jacqueline Ashleigh
Operations Manager –
Permanency Support



PEOPLE AND CULTURE MANAGER'S REPORT



2016-17 has been an exciting year for the people of Veritas House. Growth of the leadership team, changes to how we recruit and train staff, the introduction of a new Human Resources Information System (HRIS), and our ongoing commitment to a strong, values-driven culture have helped prepare us for an exciting phase of growth.

In November three new Executive Managers joined Veritas House in newly-created

positions: Jacqueline Ashleigh (Operations Manager), Narelle Stocks (Business Development Manager) and Sharron Carter (People and Culture Manager). The combination of new ways of thinking and working, along with the steady and experienced team of Maureen Markwick (Corporate Services Manager) and Jody Pearce (CEO), has given Veritas House an energetic, focussed and passionate leadership team capable of delivering on our objectives now and into the future.

Recruiting new people and offering opportunities to existing staff has provided the chance to build skills and retain really good people. We use a variety of methods to attract staff, including traditional media advertising in newspapers, on-line advertising through recruiting websites (eg Seek.com), the use of our social media presence on Twitter and Facebook, posting on partner and network websites, and word-of-mouth. Our good reputation has meant we have not had to readvertise a position – the quality of applicants applying to work with us is high and we have been able to establish eligibility lists of quality candidates to offer employment to when new positions become available.

Many existing staff have been offered secondments, giving them the chance to experience work in different fields and build their skills. This has been especially important for workers who have started with us in the casual pool, are young in their careers and looking to gain as much experience as they can. The opportunities they've accepted have helped them determine where their passions lie, and many have moved into permanent roles with Veritas House.

This year we moved away from having specialist casual staff employed in each of our services to having a casual pool trained to work across all our services. Staff are provided with the skills and experience needed to grow their careers within the organisation, while having the increased security of more hours and increased opportunities. Trained to do residential work in both SHS and OOHC along with contact, motel supervision and transport work with NPSS, they provide us with the security of having the right staff in the right place whenever needed to provide the best service to the young people using our services.

Early 2017 saw the first full internal audit of all People and Culture functions within Veritas House. The audit enabled us to review all existing policies, procedures, industrial relations compliance, staff files and other records to determine our people priorities for the next two years.

The audit identified the need for a Human Resources Information System (HRIS) to generate employee documentation and track and report on employee information. enableHR was selected as the most cost-effective solution. Developed by a law firm, it offers functionality to generate legally compliant documentation for all stages of the employee life-cycle, as well as track training, manage WHS requirements, electronically store employee information and report on key employment statistics.

Veritas House has a very active, engaged and interested WHS Committee. Members come from all services and locations of Veritas House, and meetings are held every two months. The Committee is committed to recognising risk and offering robust solutions to ensure the safety of all employees. Working closely with the Executive, the result has been no major workplace incidents and no work time lost to workplace accidents.

Training this year has focussed on further developing the practice skills and ensuring the currency of staff knowledge. Our strong partnerships with TAFE and specialist providers has allowed us to tailor courses to suit our unique needs.

The thing that really sets Veritas House apart is its strong, inclusive and values-driven culture. People chose to work at Veritas House because it offers a place where they can be themselves, work in an environment that encourages and supports them to be their best, and offers meaningful and engaging work that makes a difference in the lives of children and young people.

The culture allowed us to negotiate changes to some of the conditions of employment for staff and to introduce new systems in a robust and respectful way, with good outcomes for all. Staff were very willing to discuss paid and unpaid lunch breaks, hours of work and our time-keeping systems, and welcomed the introduction of Wellbeing Days and a change to our salary packaging provider.

The strong relationships that exist between staff and management, along with a unified confidence in our future, have created an optimistic and enthusiastic team ready to embrace growth and offer more services that allow us to fulfil our mission.

Sharron Carter
People and Culture Manager



CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT



Corporate Services team (Back L-R): Jillian Long, Maureen Markwick, Hanna Colley and (Front) Katrina Naylor. Absent: Ria White and Ben Jenkins.

The Corporate Services department was formally established in late 2016 and has quickly became the anchor that enables our teams to get on with the job of providing responsive services to our clients. Corporate Services encompasses two sections: Finance and Administration. While this is a small division of Veritas House, it is a key support area for the rest of the organisation.

Finance

The Finance section is responsible for all financial matters pertaining to the organisation. Staff have worked tirelessly towards streamlining processes to increase productivity within the section.

In addition to its business as usual function, over the last year Finance has:

- Introduced a computerised payroll timesheet program – Deputy. This system has cut payroll processing from two days to one day and, as employees and team leaders become more proficient, a further time reduction will be achievable

- Introduced a card system to reduce the need for petty cash
- Implemented a more robust financial delegation matrix
- Completed budget projections and financial modelling for 2017-2018
- Upgraded the Xero Finance Package
- Introduced comprehensive expenditure request procedures
- Advised on budgets for tender and grant applications
- Streamlined the invoicing and payable systems.

Administration

- The Administration section is responsible for:
- Assisting with the many compliance requirements of the organisation
- Asset management inclusive of buildings ad including fit-out and leasehold improvements (six Sites); infrastructure; plant and equipment including office equipment; furniture and fittings; computers; and intangibles including computers and software
- IT and phone improvement and upgrading
- Site management and maintenance
- Management support and front reception duties
- Staging the implementation of the computerised Car Fleet booking system.

Deb Elsley left the organisation in September 2016 due to health reasons. Deb has been an important and much-loved member of the Veritas community and we wish her the best in the future.

Finally, the Corporate Services team consisting of Hanna Colley, Ben Jenkins, Katrina Naylor, Jillian Long and Ria White has worked hard throughout the 2016-2017 year and should be congratulated on achieving excellent results.

Maureen Markwick
Corporate Services Manager





BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER'S REPORT



It has been a busy eight months since joining the Veritas House team as the Business Development Manager. This role is a newly created position focused on identifying strategic opportunities and delivering on new initiatives; and with significant reforms and recommissioning taking place across the breadth of Veritas' services, it seems the timing for the position could not have come at a better time.

Highlights for the 2016-17 financial year included:

Business Development

- A comprehensive response to the Family and Community Services (FACS) Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) Recommissioning by Select Invited Proposal was completed.
- Completion of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to deliver Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) for FACS. Of 52 EOIs received, Veritas was one of 26 organisations to make it to the next stage of the tender process. ITC replaces Residential Care and is designed for young people with complex needs who cannot live with family or in foster care initially.
- A successful EOI and tender for the Premier's Youth Initiative funded through FACS. This is a pilot project in youth homelessness prevention targeting OOHC leavers in Western NSW who are likely to be homeless or at risk of homelessness upon exit from care. The service model has been designed to provide a Personal Advisor to all clients,

education and employment mentoring and transitional accommodation support similar to SHS supports through transitional accommodation linked to long-term accommodation. Veritas was awarded the contract as the lead agency of a consortium, including My Foundations Youth Housing as the Community Housing Provider delivering head leased accommodation services; and Skillset providing education and employment mentoring. The program will commence in late 2017 and will see Veritas extend its footprint, with an expanded office in Orange and a new office located in Dubbo.

- Successful grant applications for ClubsNSW grants for the Bathurst and Orange Specialist Homelessness Services. The grant for Bathurst will fund Skillset's LandWorks team to redevelop the gardens directly surrounding the Bathurst refuge which are overgrown, dying and unsightly. The Orange grant will purchase suitcases to enable the many young people who present to Veritas with their possessions in a garbage bag to leave with enhanced dignity created by having their possessions safe and secure in a suitcase, ready for the next stage of their lives.
- A successful grant application to fund TAFE to deliver a nationally recognised unit of competency on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural sensitivity to frontline staff.
- A thorough review of the NPSS service model was undertaken including staffing, systems, processes and invoicing, to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

Department of Education staff in Bathurst generously supported the 2016 Veritas Xmas appeal.
DEC staff (L-R) Peter Cole, Karyn Whalan and Roberta Lawson present their gifts to Veritas House Case Worker, Katon Crawford.



Communication and Marketing

- A review of the website was undertaken, with extensive copy updates completed; the introduction of a news page and newsletter subscription function; a feedback and complaints form and links to our complaints policy; and a supporters' page to profile supporters and a platform from which we can undertake fundraising.
- Development and distribution of two issues of the Veritas e-newsletter to stakeholders.
- Veritas' presence on social media increased substantially through the creation and ongoing maintenance of LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook pages.
- Production of a range of marketing collateral including brochures, banners and promotional material.

External Relations

- Our first 'Christmas Appeal' was launched through staff networks and via a media release and flyer calling for donations of unwrapped Christmas presents, goods & services and financial contributions towards the OOHC Christmas Party. The response was very positive, with significant support received in particular from The Department of Education, Bathurst Office; John Holland and Bathurst Public School P&F.
- Bathurst City Centre got behind Veritas on two occasions: calling on the community to donate non-perishable food and clothing to their Winter Appeal; and donating hot cross buns to our refuges over Easter.
- Staff from the Orange SHS service partnered with Fusion Orange for the 'Sleep In Your Car Orange 2017' event, to raise funds for Fusion and Veritas and increase awareness about youth homelessness.
- Implemented a range of Foster Carer recruitment strategies, including information sessions, shopping centre information displays, advertising and collateral material.
- Participated in a Youth Forum for Year 9 students organised by the Headspace Bathurst Youth Reference Group. Veritas SHS staff delivered workshops focused on 'Rent It, Keep It: What you need to know to prepare for moving out of home for the first time'.
- Finally, a special thank you to all of the staff, and the Executive Team in particular, for being so supportive of me during my first year with Veritas. It is inspiring to work with a group of people who are so incredibly passionate about supporting children, young people and families in our community and I look forward to being a part of extending the scope and reach of services we deliver in the year ahead.

Narelle Stocks
Business Development Manager



Bathurst City centre got behind Veritas through their Winter Appeal campaign.



Norm Mann from Bathurst Panthers and Ron Hollebone from Bathurst RSL Service Club presenting the ClubGrant to Bathurst SHS Coordinator, Sharon Jones.



Clare Lewis and Sarah Luff from our Emerge SHS in Orange were thrilled to accept a ClubGrant donation from Orange Ex-Services' Club. Many young people supported by Veritas arrive at the refuge with all of their possessions in a garbage bag. This grant will enable Veritas to purchase suitcases, so that when the young person leaves the refuge, they can leave with enhanced dignity created by having their possessions safe and secure in a suitcase, ready for the next stage of their lives.



John Holland staff Elspeth Morris, Christine Press and Megan Champion present Christmas Appeal donations to Kiri Armstrong from Veritas.



(L-R) Veritas Case Worker, Jordana Kissell accepts donations to the Xmas Gift Appeal from Bathurst Public School students Aislinn McBurney and James Hillsdon.



SUPPORTERS

Veritas House gratefully acknowledges the funding and support received from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

We would also like to thank the following generous individuals and organisations who have supported Veritas House in 2016/2017:

StreetSmart Australia
Blayney High School
John Nicoll
MacKillop College
Specsavers Optometrist - Bathurst
Ruth Bacchus
Nicki Halliwell
Rebecca Moffitt
Danielle Ranshaw
Jean Welsh
Wendy Hastings
Annie's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Parlour
Oscar Stocks
Bathurst Hockey Association
Tatem, Phoenix & Isaiah Hurst

Department of Education staff - Bathurst
Bathurst Public School P&F Committee
Paying it Forward Bathurst
Helpa Collective
John Holland
Woolworths Bathurst City Centre
First Grammar Bathurst
Anonymous knitting ladies
Byng-Emu Branch CWA
Carolyn Watson
Reliance Bank
Donna Butler
Bathurst City Centre
Téa Hamild





Veritas regularly receives donations of knitted and crocheted blankets to support children in OOHC or who stay at our youth refuges. The blankets are 'gifted' to the children and young people, so they can be comforted and warm during a difficult time, and know that their blanket is theirs to keep with them, wherever they go.



Pay It Forward Easter



Year 9 students from Blayney High School conducted a cake stall, raffle and BBQ raising more than \$1,200 for young people staying at the Veritas House youth refuges in Orange and Bathurst. Their efforts funded trips to Lake Lyell near Lithgow and to the Elvis Festival at Parkes, as well as the purchase of Christmas presents for the residents of the refuges.



Toni Wilson from Bathurst City Centre (R) shares the Easter spirit by donating hot cross buns for young people staying at our youth refuge to Veritas Operations Manager – Permanency Support, Jacqueline Ashleigh (L).



Entering into foster care for the first time is a daunting experience for any child. To help reduce some of this stress, one Veritas supporter has created 'Kindness Kits' - backpacks filled with essential toiletries, school supplies, toys, books and a comfort item. Kits come in four age groups: Babies, Toddlers, Primary and Secondary.

OUR VISION

Our Vision is to contribute to the creation of a socially just and caring community in which every person is safe, secure and valued.

OUR MISSION

Veritas provides innovative, accessible, responsive services to the community through the provision of care, support and advocacy. Our Mission is to:

- End the cycle of homelessness
- Empower people to reach their full potential
- Strengthen interpersonal, family and community relationships
- Work in the best interests of children and young people in Out of Home Care.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

The following core operating values influence the culture and public image of Veritas. They articulate ideals that the organisation aspires to hold itself accountable for and offers guidance about how the organisation behaves in carrying out its mission.

- Compassionate
- Innovative
- Inclusive
- Individualised
- Culturally sensitive
- Fair and Honest

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