



2019

**VERITAS HOUSE
ANNUAL REPORT**



Contents

Chair's Report..... 2
 CEO Report..... 3
 Operations Report –
 Permanency Support4-5
 Operations Report - Youth
 Homelessness and Early
 Intervention..... 6
 Clinical & Consultation Services 11
 Finance Managers Report..... 12
 Corporate Services Report..... 13
 People and Culture Report..... 14
 Business Development
 Report..... 15
 Supporters..... 19

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 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).



Board of Directors



Rosemary Hailstone
– Chair



Ben Jenkins
– Treasurer



Geoffrey Hastings



Ronald England



Kerry Silverson



Tim Dalla



Jennifer Polk



Amanda O'Brien



Peter Rohr
(retired)



Peter Sutton
(retired)



Mary Housler
(retired)

CHAIR'S REPORT



2018 – 2019 financial year has once again seen Veritas House continue to grow and deliver a wide range of services to children, young people and their families, across several local communities.

Veritas currently delivers seven NSW Family and Community Services funded contracts; Permanency Support Program, Youth Specialist Homelessness Services

in Orange and Bathurst, Homeless Youth Assistance Program, Targeted Earlier Intervention, Premiers Youth Initiative and the Non Placement Support Service. Veritas also receives funding for the Bail Assistance Line through the Department of Juvenile Justice. To support these services Veritas has increased the workforce to 87 employees across six sites in Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo.

On reflection, the Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2019 was aspirational, however the goals have been achieved or exceeded. Some of the strategies successfully completed include the continued growth of the organisational and management capability and the expansion of services to other communities in the Central West, such as Dubbo and Orange, while remaining client centred and values driven.

One of many other achievements for the year included, The Office of Children's Guardian renewing the accreditation of Veritas House as a designated agency for a period of five years, under clause 49(1) of the Children's and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012.

The Veritas staff are to be commended for their commitment to the delivery of services, upholding the core values of

the organisation, and their ongoing work in building and sustaining a positive culture and practice improvement.

The Board has worked alongside Jody (CEO) and Veritas staff to develop the strategic direction for 2019 – 2022. The new Strategic Plan includes the agencies values and positive culture as the foundations for future growth. I would like to thank Jody, the staff, and Board Members for their commitment to supporting the ongoing governance, and input into the strategic direction of Veritas House throughout the year.

During the year we acknowledge the significant contribution made by Board members, Peter Sutton and Peter Rohr, who now contribute to Veritas in a different way. We also said farewell to Mary Housler who has been an integral member of the Veritas House community for over 10 years. The Board has welcomed new members, Kerry Silverson, Jennifer Polk and Amanda O'Brien, all of whom bring a diverse range of skills and knowledge that will further support the governance process and duty of care responsibilities of the Board.

Finally, on behalf of the Board I would like to thank the Chief Executive Officer, Jody Pearce, for another successful year leading Veritas, with an ongoing commitment to maintain the core values of the organisation and keeping the positive culture alive. Jody has successfully lead the staff to meet the deliverables of the Business and Strategic Plans and continues to develop the foundations for future growth, based on compassion, inclusiveness and culturally competent practice.

Rosemary Hailstone
Board Chair

CEO REPORT



The 2018/19 financial year symbolised a year of significant achievement at Veritas House. We witnessed the agency's strategic goals come to life and continued to grow and mature as a vibrant and responsive non-government organisation. It was my privilege to be Veritas House CEO during this reporting period.

What strikes me when I reflect on our achievements this year is the power of collaboration. By working together our staff, supporters, funding bodies, foster carers, children, young people, families and more importantly the communities we serve achieved better results than any of us could have achieved alone. This report focuses on these achievements. When I reflect it's really hard to nominate a single example so I encourage you to read our annual report.

Highlights

After a period of consolidation, I'm pleased to report that Veritas continued to grow and diversify during the reporting period with annual revenue increasing by 13% in 2018/19. The agency now has office locations in Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo with our workforce numbers reaching 87 staff and over 70 foster carer households. Working across our 9 different Veritas services, we supported over 800 children, young people and families during the year - it's impressive what people can achieve when they come together through the work of Veritas.

Throughout 2018 Veritas worked hard to prepare for accreditation renewal with the Office of the Children's Guardian. This involved a number of onsite audits and the submission of our indirect policy evidence to meet the NSW Standards for Permanent Care. In December 2018 Veritas House received the news that we were awarded 5 years Children's Guardian Accreditation. As many of you know the rigors of OCG accreditation are far reaching and intense so for Veritas to achieve 5 years is a significant accomplishment for a smaller regionally based NGO. Well done team!

In March 2019 we launched our new Clinical and Consultation Service which is an exciting new direction for Veritas. We believe the integration of a new clinical services department into the organisational structure of Veritas is prudent given the demand for clinical support and therapy services across the agency and wider Community.

After extensive consultation, the Board of Directors endorsed the Strategic Plan 2019-2022. The plan aims to take Veritas House to the next level of sophistication and consolidate its position as a critical service delivery partner for community services in Central West NSW. This plan seeks to galvanise our client centred approach as the best way to meet demand and assist children, young people and families with the support they need.

At a broader industry level it would be safe to say that the past year has tested the resilience of the sector, as so often happens during times of reform. The NSW Government is to be congratulated on its focus on achieving permanency for children and young people, and while debate continues on what this actually looks like on the ground, at least we can all agree on the intent. While the rolling over of foster care contracts helped avoid unnecessary disruption for children, young people and families, the tendering of new Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) contracts and subsequent delayed implementation has created ongoing challenges for the most vulnerable cohort of young people in the residential care system. Veritas will continue to support this cohort through our new Supported Independent Living (SIL), Premiers Youth Initiative (PYI), Youth Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and as an exiting residential care provider. We will also continue to be an advocate for the many young people in Western NSW who, despite the many reforms to Out of Home Care, do not have permanency or a safe place to call home.

In 2018/19 as part of its comprehensive child protection reform package, the NSW Government also invested in new

preventative and restorative programs aimed at either keeping children out of the care system or reuniting children to family. The move has attracted the widespread support of a sector that is wholeheartedly committed to these dual objectives. However, as a note of caution, we need to be clear about the legitimacy of evidence-based programs and whether imported models are always 'fit for purpose' in the NSW context. Veritas will always support evidence based programs but will also continue to raise the importance of localised co-design of programs that is in line with Community need and localised responses.

To the Board with whom I have had the pleasure of working with during the reporting period, I extend my appreciation to you all. I also want to acknowledge the expertise and commitment of our Chairperson, Rosemary Hailstone who is stepping down from the Board after 4 years of dedicated service. During her time on our Board Rosemary has assisted to navigate Veritas through a period of rapid change and growth whilst also serving as a key advisor and support to me as CEO and Principal Officer. Thank you Rosemary for your significant contribution to Veritas and we wish you well in your future endeavours.

Another significant farewell this year is the retirement of our Corporate Services Manager, the amazing Maureen Markwick after 5 years of service. I want to sincerely thank Maureen for her substantial contribution to Veritas and to the children, young people and families we support. Maureen will be very much missed by us all at Veritas House.

They say that an organisation is only as good as the people that work for it and I want to acknowledge the staff of Veritas in frontline, management and administrative positions for all their hard work, good humour, care and compassion. We truly have a wonderful group of people working here at Veritas. And to the executive team. I am really fortunate to have such a dedicated, dynamic and diverse team. I feel privileged to lead such a talented, cohesive and very hard working team who have achieved above and beyond what was expected of them - a big thanks to all the Executives at Veritas.

The theme of our new three-year Strategic Plan is 'Independence and strength through excellence in community centred practice'. It sets an exciting agenda for us to collectively make a difference to the community we serve. Under this plan, we have already experienced and continue to encourage continued growth while remaining committed to important projects that strengthen Veritas' governance, values, technology and processes. We continue to navigate significant sector change but Veritas remains true to its vision. In 2018/19, the continuum of care provided by our growing service portfolio highlights this commitment. But as always, it is what links us together - the real care and compassion for children and young people in need - that is at the heart of our organisation.

Jody Pearce
CEO



Members of the Executive Team: Jessica McKean, Peter Rohr, Maureen Markwick, Narelle Stocks, Joel Palmer, Sharron Carter, Sarah Luff, Leah Earle, Jody Pearce.



OPERATIONS MANAGER – Permanency Support Report



Foster care is providing a secure, safe and supportive home environment to children and young people who can no longer reside with their families. Children and young people enter into Permanency Support (Foster Care) for a myriad of reasons, but generally they have experienced a degree of trauma, neglect and abuse that required intervention and removal for their own safety and wellbeing. Foster Carers open their homes and hearts and assist these children and young people by providing homes with nurturing environments, that allows these children and young people to feel comfortable and supported so they can grow and develop in a happy and healthy way.

Foster Carers, Kinship Carers and Relative Carers play an essential role in:

- supporting children and young people in immediate need
- restoration as we work with families to return children and young people home safely
- providing vulnerable families with some time out to strengthen their parenting.

Increasingly, the role of Foster Care will be to provide a safe and loving home for children and young people while more permanent arrangements are explored.

The Veritas Permanency Support Program (PSP) team consists of the foster care case work team, the Residential Care team, the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team (CART), and the Non-Placement Support Services team (NPSS), totalling nearly 40 staff. Safe Home for Life reforms have continued to result in significant legislative and policy changes that impacted on our foster care and residential services in 2018/19. The new permanency support landscape places a greater emphasis on creating permanency for children and young people in the statutory care system through restoration, guardianship and adoption. Our Permanency Support team has been working hard to align our practice to the reform priorities.

2018-2019 has seen the PSP service grow and evolve into a much more embedded multidisciplinary statutory child protection service in Western NSW. 1 July 2018 was the launch of the new Permanency Support contracts by Family and Community Services (FACS). In support of this new program, FACS commissioned a new computer system 'child story' to improve communication and interface between funded service providers and FACS. The system commissioned by FACS is yet to be functional and has caused disruption and difficulties in management of children's details, placement management and funding. It was during this period of change in the child protection sphere that saw the Office of the Children's Guardian finalise an audit on the Veritas House PSP program to determine suitability for accreditation into the future.

The audit process used to provide foster care services is rigorous and some areas for improvement were identified in the first on-site visit in early 2018. A second on-site visit was arranged for July 2018 giving the PSP time to amend some practice issues, procedures and documentation processes. Participation in this accreditation process during the roll out of the new PSP program was extremely challenging for the PSP team and Veritas broadly. Staff across the whole of Veritas House pulled together in a tremendous display of dedication, commitment, and excellence – improving systems, practice, procedures and documentation. The hard work paid off -

resulting in positive feedback from the auditors and Veritas House receiving the maximum period of accreditation for five years! This is an indication of how much work went into the audit. Congratulations to all staff involved for the outcome achieved, especially during such uncertainty in the child protection landscape. Of special note, was Practice Specialist Heather Johnston as the primary interface with the auditors. Her assistance in the audit was vital in helping achieve 5 years accreditation; she deserves considerable recognition for her contribution. With such upheaval in the child protection realm and the resource intensive accreditation process, the PSP program primarily focused on ensuring stability, quality and adherence to compliance standards for 2018.

Other areas of focus in 2018/19 were:

1. Staff and carer training
2. Enabling positions
3. Recruitment and assessment of foster carers

Staff, carers and management have accessed training in such areas as:

- Therapeutic Life Story Work
- Positive Behaviour Support strategies
- Trauma informed care
- Guardianship and Restoration

The Carer Assessment and Recruitment Team (CART) and Business Development team made substantial efforts towards the end of the 2018 financial year to recruit and train a new cohort of carers that would facilitate the PSP program expanding its contract from 79 children and young people to 90. These efforts resulted in exciting promotions such as carer information nights, advertising through numerous media types and outreach into community events. The 2019/2020 financial year is expected to see the fruits of this labour with carer enquiry rates skyrocketing.



Veritas House Permanency Support Team: (Back L-R): Joel Palmer, Grace O'Meara, Melanie Hood, Emily Lynch, Amy Field, Shelly Cole. (Middle L-R): Rachel Prior, Ann-Maree Shaw, Meaghan Borg, Mary Ajok, Rosie Bradshaw, Linda Giddings. (Front L-R): Tayla Woods, Heather Johnston, Nicola Krahe, Angela Beard.

Carer awards

CART pulled together an exciting event to celebrate Carers Week for 2018. The 2018 Carer Awards saw Deb Green take out the Deb Elsley Memorial award for Foster Carer of the Year. The award was granted based on Deb's demonstration of the Veritas House values of compassion, innovation, inclusion, individualised care, cultural sensitivity and fairness and honesty. The ceremony was a fantastic opportunity for staff and carers to get together and forge stronger ties.



Deb Elsley Award 2018: Deb Green (C) was presented with the 2018/2019 Veritas House Foster Carer of the Year Award by CEO, Jody Pearce and Caseworker Kate Miller at The Veritas Foster Carer awards Ceremony.

Service Record System

Veritas House has invested in an electronic data management system called 'Service Record System' (SRS). The program went live in late 2018. This system is vital in ensuring the PSP program meets the extremely high standards for care as defined by the Office of the Children's Guardian – and will reduce the burden when the accreditation process begins again towards the end of the 5 year cycle. Renata Simpson as Compliance Officer has handled this project with extreme diligence and excellence. She should be praised for her outstanding work.

Christmas party

The 2018 PSP Christmas party was another success this year thanks to the amazing efforts of staff across Veritas House. There was an abundance of pizza's, presents for all, a visit from Santa, and everyone welcomed the water fight at the end of the event.



Casework presence in Orange

This year PSP has extended its reach into Orange with establishing a permanent casework position in the Orange office. Thus far, Veritas House has maintained casework positions based in Bathurst, having staff based in Orange is exciting as it allows children and carers to receive local support and reduce time spent on travel. The Orange position also allows for servicing of areas further West such as Molong. We also invested in another Aboriginal Identified case work position to help us better support Aboriginal children, young people, carers and families within our service.

Relationships with CSCs

The PSP team have made efforts to cement relationships with the newly designed Permanency Coordinator Position, the Bathurst and Orange FACS Community Service Centres, as well as the Child and Family District Unit (CFDU) through monthly meetings. The meetings have allowed closer collaboration on shared cases and speedier information exchange for the benefit of the children we serve.

These FACS teams have been supportive of Veritas through the uncertainty during the PSP program roll out.

Non-Placement Support Services (NPSS)

The NPSS team has stayed strong throughout the 2018-2019 financial year. There was a reduction in external services purchased with FACS rolling out the PSP program- yet this was absorbed to a large extent by an increase of internally purchased work. The NPSS program has applied for a new tender released by FACS aiming to replace the program with a 'Casework Support Service' in late 2019 calendar year. This retendering has left the NPSS team feeling uncertain about the future direction – however, it must be clarified Veritas House will always need support for children and young people in accessing Family Time, being transported, and having mentoring services provided.

Residential Services

The Veritas House residential care house Melaleuca has faced a difficult year. In 2018 FACS rolled out the newly designed PSP program before its establishment of Intensive Therapeutic Services designed to replace 'residential care' services. This caused a gap in the transition period, creating turmoil in the child protection environment and uncertainty for the staff working in the residential services. Strikingly, the staff have maintained consistent care and support for the young people in the program and deserve praise for the difficult role they fill in the uncertain landscape. I would like to acknowledge the parenting team at Melaleuca House for their commitment to young people within the service and their focus on service delivery.



The Veritas House Residential Care Team Back: Jess Anderson, Georgia Brancourt, Lisa Wright, Emily Lynch, Jarred Portegies, Shelly Cole (Coordinator). Front: Hollie Menzies, Anthony Nougher.

Heather leaving team

It is with sadness that the PSP team farewells Practice Specialist Heather Johnston from our ranks. Fortunately, Heather is not leaving Veritas House wholly – rather she has moved into the Clinical and Consultation Team to utilise her vast wealth of knowledge across Veritas in a broader sense. Heather has been a mainstay in the PSP team and helped it achieve its current success to date. She will be missed by the team – however she will still be utilised to her maximum ensuring quality interventions for children and young people with her innovative and caring approach.

And finally, I would like to thank the whole PSP and NPSS teams for their commitment, expertise and determination this year, they have again proven their ability to place children and young people at the centre of their practice. The team often work at the cutting edge of the child protection system and I applaud all of them for their resilience and compassion.

Joel Palmer
Operations Manager – Permanency Support



OPERATIONS MANAGER – Youth Homelessness and Early Intervention Report



Veritas House Homelessness and Early Intervention services consist of variety of accommodation and support programs providing support to over 450 children, young people and their families per annum. Our HEI services are staffed by over 26 individuals who recognise the importance of working with people from a person centered and trauma informed perspective

ensuring dignity and respect is maintained whilst providing holistic support. The importance of connection to and participation in local communities is recognised with benefits for both service users and providers through the building of stronger relationships, communication skills, confidence and social capital.

Our HEI teams were involved with in range of awareness raising and community events throughout the year.

Highlights included;

- Youth Week Activities - The onsite Veritas House Youth Week BBQ bonanza celebrations held in Bathurst and Orange
- Activities for Youth Week in Dubbo, attended by members of our PYI team who assisted with the Blunside skate competition.
- Homelessness Week 2018 in Bathurst and Orange
- Bunnings BBQ raised
- The annual Fusion 'Sleep in your car' event
- Bathurst Family Fun Day
- Antipoverty week in Oberon
- RUOK day in Orange
- NAIDOC week celebrations in Bathurst and Orange

These events bring much to our teams, the children, young people and families we support and the communities in which we live and work. Our appreciation goes out to the many and varied organisers, services partners, service users and communities whose support and involvement in these events is imperative to their success.

Interagency meetings allow our HEI teams to work collaboratively, understand the range of services available to our service users as well as take part in local community events and initiatives. The Bathurst Aboriginal Interagency is

currently chaired by Katon Crawford who is a much valued Bathurst SHS staff member.

2019 saw the planning of Western Homelessness Connect to raise community understanding of homelessness and the services available in Western NSW to support our community members experiencing hardship in their lives. Western Homelessness Connect is scheduled to take place in August 2019 during Homelessness Awareness Week. This event is the first time a Homelessness Week event to this scale has been planned for a taken place in Western NSW.



Veritas House Staff during NAIDOC March Services Day in Orange.



Veritas House Information Stand at the Bathurst Family Fun Day.



Katon Crawford Bathurst SHS.



Homelessness week information stand.



Veritas House Specialist Homelessness Services Bathurst Members L-R: Caity Whitelaw (HYAP), Dan Organ, Diane Cranston, Emma McIntosh, Sharon Jones, Katon Crawford, Brent Van Pelt.

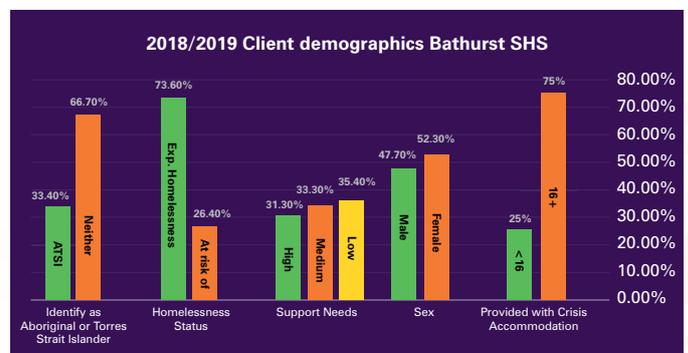
To support quality service provision, ensure best practice and compliance with industry standards, review of Veritas House procedures to meet the needs of our HEI services has been undertaken during 2018 - 2019. These reviews have informed the creation of new templates and ensured our services users and team members are able to access and are informed and contemporary services with strong practices and tools. Bail Assistance Line involvement has led to further review and creation of procedures and templates to meet the requirements of the Office of the Children’s Guardian Voluntary Out of Home Care accreditation. Further feedback from the OCG regarding the outcome of our application is eagerly awaited. Practice sessions with HEI teams are occurring to support staff to implement any new or altered procedures.

The HEI on call system has been reviewed with new procedures, training packages and IT to support staff respond to afterhours crisis situations. August 2019 will see implementation of this system with a review to be conducted six months after implementation.

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) for young people, Bathurst provides accommodation and support to young people between 16 and 24 years who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the Bathurst and Oberon LGA’s

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Crisis (16 -18) and Transitional (17-24) Accommodation
- Rapid Rehousing
- Intensive responses for Complex Needs

Our Bathurst SHS teams operate from the **Russell St office** with outreach services provided. Accommodation options consist of a **6 bed Crisis Accommodation** house (Youth Refuge) and **5 transitional Accommodation properties**.



15 YOUNG PEOPLE BENEFITED FROM TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION IN BATHURST

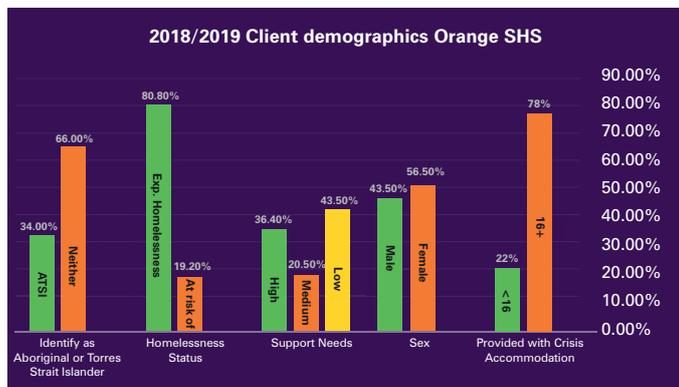
Specialist Homelessness Services for young people, Orange provides accommodation and support to young people between 16 and 24 years who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the Orange, Cabonne and Blayney LGA’s. Services provided cover 4 core areas listed below;

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Crisis (16 -18) and transitional (17-24) Accommodation
- Rapid Rehousing
- Intensive responses for Complex Needs

Our Orange SHS team operate from our **Sale St office** with outreach services provided. Accommodation options consist of a **6 bed Crisis Accommodation** (youth refuge) unit staffed 24/7. A recent **MOU signed with Housing NSW** will allow the team to pilot the provision of Transitional Accommodation.



Veritas House Specialist Homelessness Services Orange Members L-R: Liam Travers, Scott Connell, Karren Skelton, Clare Lewis, Sylvia Doolan, Ty Mosten.

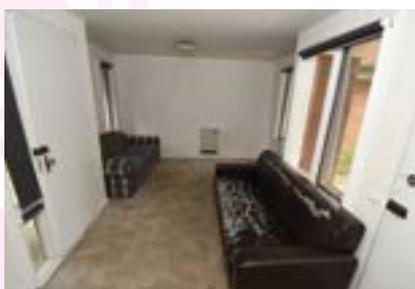


Homeless Youth Assistance Program provides support for unaccompanied under 16 year olds at risk of or experiencing homelessness across the Central Western areas of NSW including; Weddin, Blayney, Oberon, Cabonne, Orange, Cowra, Forbes, Mid-Western, Bathurst, Lachlan and Parkes LGA's HYAP supports children to;

- Rebuild relationships
- Support to access Education, training and employment
- Assistance to access health and mental health services
- Connect with community
- Access safe accommodation (if there are a lack of family or other options and it is safe to do so 14 & 15 year olds are able to access our 24/7 Crisis Accommodation. 12 and 13 year olds can be considered for 1 nights' accommodation if safe and appropriate)

Staff from our HYAP service are located in our Russell Street and Sale Street offices with outreach services provided.

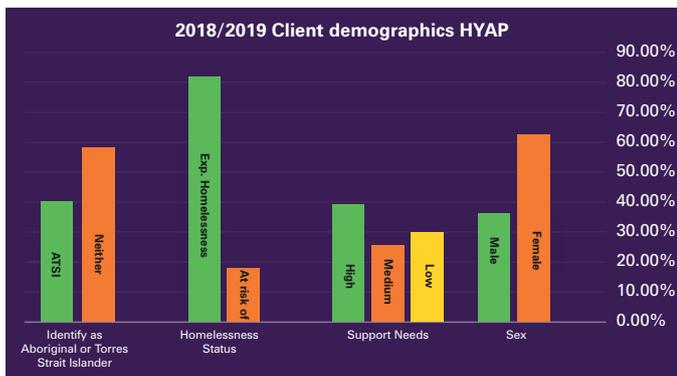
The 2018 – 2019 saw our SHS and HYAP teams take part in the filming of the 'Foot in the Door' project facilitated by YFoundations. This training package was developed to provide real estate agents with valuable information about young people, the support available to young people & real estate agents and the benefits of providing young people a chance to become valued tenants and enter the private housing market.



Before and after photos of renovations completed at a Veritas House Transitional Youth flat. The work was possible thanks to the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation and with the support of local businesses such as JCB Carpentry & Building.



Veritas House Premiers Youth Initiative Members L-R: Drew Churches, James Ostini, Jules Bardon, Toneya Carr-Smith, Haylee Lepaio Rebekah Evans.



A MOU has been negotiated with Housing NSW to provide the opportunity to trial Transitional Accommodation for young people in Orange. Many years of advocacy in a tight housing market has led to this trial with the Orange SHS team excited to provide this opportunity see the outcomes for young people in our community.

A grant received from Newcastle Permanent has allowed Renovations to a transitional flat in Bathurst. This opportunity is greatly appreciated as is the hard work of the Veritas teams and tradespeople involved. The flat is tenanted proudly by young people who have transitioned from homelessness via our Crisis Accommodation Services and will continue to provide an opportunity for young people which would have otherwise not existed.

The SHS Industry Partnerships Client satisfaction survey was implemented across our SHS services in Bathurst and

Orange. The results of this survey were extremely positive and demonstrate that the young people our SHS teams work with feel safe and valued within our services.

Our HYAP teams have received training into and begun implementing Tuning into Teens. This group based parenting program provides the families we work with a range of strategies to understand and respond to the emotions of the young person in their lives. Tuning into Teens recognises that one size does not fit all and each family is provided with the opportunity to select strategies that work for them when it comes to managing emotions leading to a calmer home environment.

Premiers Youth Initiative (PYI) is a pilot program providing support to young people who are leaving statutory care who may be at risk of experiencing homelessness. The PYI team is based in our Orange office and cover Western and Far Western NSW, close to 72% of the state. Support is focused on supporting young people to enable the building of skills to



PYI client receiving his Skills 4 Trade certificate from PYI partner Skillset.



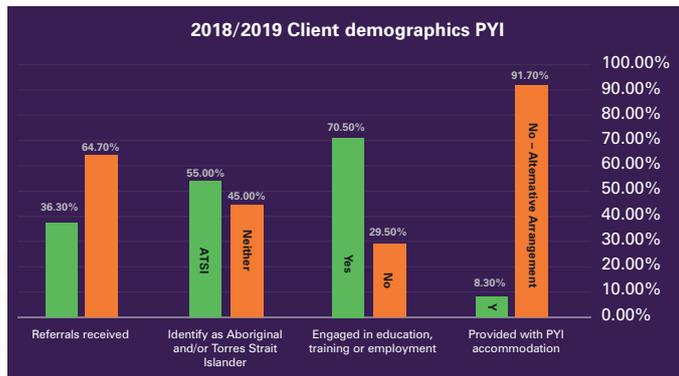
managing of the complexities of life and the ability to maintain safe and stable accommodation. Education and Employment Mentoring to support young people engage in and maintain opportunities to access education training and employment is provided through specialised services. This support is focused on improving educational outcomes and employment rates allowing young people to improve their wellbeing and general life outcomes. Young people are able to access subsidised accommodation provided through our partner agency MyFoundations, these properties are then transferred to the young person when their living skills indicate that they are able to manage with mainstream support.

Veritas House is the lead provider for PYI in partnership with MyFoundations and Skillset who provide the subsidised accommodation and Education & Employment Mentoring components of PYI.

Our PYI team are based in our Orange office and frequently utilise or Bultje St office in Dubbo and Russell St in Bathurst.

The 2018 – 2019 year saw our PYI team build relationships with sector wide services to meet the needs of young people and ensure a collaborative approach. Involvement in a variety of Interagency Meetings and activities has assisted to facilitate this in an area that covers approximately 72% of NSW.

Our PYI team have held the first of their Cooking Days, these days are designed to enhance the living skills and knowledge of young people around healthy eating, budget meals and food hygiene. The building of communication skills, and connection to community also occur during these days.



Veritas House Targeted Early Intervention team Katrina Naylor & Melanie Driscoll.



PYI team members Haylee Lepais & Ty Mosten at 2018 Homelessness week events.

Family Services provides Targeted Early Intervention support and parenting programs to families in the Bathurst and Oberon regions with a focus on increasing family wellbeing, improving family relationships, reducing family conflict and ensuring the needs of children and young people are met. The service has a focus on building on family strengths and abilities to assist families to develop and maintain healthy and positive relationships between each other. Our Family Services team are located in the Russell Street office with outreach and home visits provided.

The 2018 – 2019 year saw our TEI team participate in service redesign and complete Activity Mapping as part of the sector reforms. To complement our service redesign extensive training in evidence based parenting programs has taken place.

Our TEI team have begun offering Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) to young people in groups and in a one to one setting for those who are unable to participate in groups. RAP is an evidence based program designed to build resilience and promote positive development of young people. Training is in process for Resourceful Adolescent Parent Program (RAPP) and Parents Under Pressure (PuP), these programs will be offered in the coming year. Resourceful Adolescent Parents Program complements RAP and offers parents the opportunity to Parents to boost self-esteem and promote healthy development of the young people in their lives. Parents under Pressure works one to one with parents who are facing adversity to develop positive and secure relationships with their children, assisting both parents and children to regulate their emotions.

Bail Assistance Line provides a safe place to stay and support to young people who have come into contact with the justice system and are at risk of being held in custody because they do not have a suitable place to live while meeting conditions of bail. Police and specific staff working within the youth justice space are able to contact a central line to receive assistance. To continue to provide this service Veritas House has extensively reviewed and created policies and templates to meet the Voluntary Out of Home Care standards with a submission for VOOHC accreditation pending with the Office of the Children's Guardian.

CLINICAL & CONSULTATION SERVICES



This year has seen the exciting implementation of Veritas House's very own Clinical and Consultation Services (CCS) Department. CCS commenced in March 2019, enabling some valuable time for scoping and commencement of activity prior to the end of the financial year. In that time we managed to get a clear indication from Veritas House staff and management about some key areas of development

and growth that would help support the children and young people accessing Veritas. This was growth driven by an emphasis on quality and offering a more comprehensive level of support to our key stakeholders such as children, young people and families. Such an emphasis is a continuation of the Veritas House values which have shaped practice in the organisation over many years.

Some clear themes came through in early consultation, including strengthening the existing consultative culture of Veritas by adding a further clinical lens to our work. The capacity to support a portion of direct therapy services was welcomed by staff, enabling a more timely service to be offered to children and young people. Added supports are now available too which help us assess new carers, and provide more supports to them as they continue to support children and young people of Veritas House. CCS also enabled for the first time in Veritas House history the ability to offer professional (clinical) supervision in-house, giving staff better choice of supervisors who understood the complex work they undertake on a daily basis. Importantly, these aspects of CCS span across programs, helping to build the capacity in not just one program or area of work, but with the remit of supporting the organisation as a whole.

As Veritas House continues to work in a complicated sector across out of home care and youth homelessness, the complexity of children and young people is unlikely to reduce. The commencement of CCS has importantly built on the capability of Veritas House to effectively deliver supports to our most high needs children and young people. We now have strengthened capacity to assess the needs of young people, advocate with external partners and agencies where necessary, and to offer an evidence-based and therapeutically rich service which is so vital for children and young people with highly complex needs.

A notable example of the therapeutic evolution of Veritas House is the application of animal therapies and the role they hold in working with people with traumatic experiences. A particularly poignant demonstration of this is the commencement of Equine Therapy camps. CCS have helped develop a framework for the camps which is consistent with a key theory of trauma and development used within our programs. We have now successfully delivered two camps, yielding tremendous benefits for the participants, including young people and our staff. These camps have enabled an opportunity for core developmental strengths to be honed in a way these children may never have otherwise been possible. The structure of the camps also facilitates a very valuable connection between our casework staff and the young people they're working with.

CCS is still a new dimension to Veritas House. It will continue to evolve, and we can see immense possibilities to expand in staffing and supports that will offer further benefit to the children, young people, and families of Veritas House. This growth is intentionally planned and deliberate, always with a view of keeping the values of Veritas House at the heart of all that we do.

Peter Rohr
Clinical and Consultation Services Manager



Veritas House clients enjoying Equine Therapy camps.



Veritas House Clinical & Consultation team: Peter Rohr and Heather Johnston.



FINANCE MANAGER'S REPORT



The focus for the Finance department in 2018/19 has been to consolidate and embed some systems, after a period of massive growth. There has been a strong focus on creating efficiencies within the organisation, whilst upholding and improving our strong internal controls.

Financially speaking, Veritas has had Revenue growth of 13% in the 18/19 financial year. Whilst our priority has been to use this past financial year as a time to embed and consolidate, this growth has naturally increased the support services required to deliver the services that Veritas has historically done very successfully

The finance team welcomed a new team member during the year - Amanda Richard has brought with her a wealth of experience from the finance roles she has held. She has complimented our team perfectly, and has allowed Maree Storey to focus on and improve the Accounts receivable function, and Hanna Colley to pass on her Payroll expertise and move into a more generalised Accounting field for Veritas. However the finance team support each other, the executive and the whole organisation in all finance and payroll related matters on a daily basis, regardless of their designated roles.

A priority of the finance department over the past financial year was to provide accurate and timely reports and information internally to our Board and Executive. In particular, the emphasis was and continues to be increase our knowledge base, and also to promote timely and more informed decision making within the agency. We have focused on bringing consistency to our monthly internal reporting deadlines and have seen significant improvements over the year. With that comes the refinement of internal procedures and process with the vision of creating a system that creates efficiencies to all

departments within Veritas, not just the Finance department. While this is a constantly evolving process, we have certainly made progress with the implementation and refinement of a few key functions:

- Receipt Bank, allowing end-users to upload credit card receipts, for real-time processing within our accounting system;
- The re-introduction and adoption of Entryless - an accounts payable invoice automation system
- Enhanced Child budget reporting

The above functions were a vital introduction this year, as due to growth, the amount of transactions and employees has increased significantly, and this has a direct impact on the Finance team. The number of employees has grown by 16% over the course of the year, which naturally increases the number of financial transactions to filter through the Finance team. In credit card transactions alone, we are processing 50% more transactions per month in June 2019 than what we were doing in June 2018.

It has been another dynamic year for the Finance team in terms of growth and change. Changes to our program reporting obligations, has imposed additional and more rigorous regulatory deadlines into our already busy monthly reporting calendar. The Finance team have adapted to these changes whilst maintaining internal support standards. I am very proud of what we have achieved in the past year, and excited about the changes we endeavour to make in the next financial year. Again we will be focusing on ways our expertise can assist the whole organisation to continue to offer the wonderful services we provide every day to children, young people and their carer's.

Leah Earle
Finance Manager



Veritas House Finance Team (L-R): Hanna Colley, Maree Storey, Amanda Richard.

CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT



Corporate Services have continued to provide high level administrative and operational support as the organisation continues to grow in the delivery of services to clients.

The Corporate division worked with Information and Technology providers to improve IT Services across all departments of Veritas House, including upgrade of Security with full disk encryption, deployment of SSL VPN to both make remote work easier and more secure. The Backup System has been updated and is now fully automated and stored offsite for three months. Weekly onsite support visits have been added to help with day to day troubleshooting and repairs. The organisation undertook a large-scale hardware upgrade to provide a more effective way of working, moving 95% of the workforce to laptops. IT support continued to be provided in the roll out of the Service Record System. Renata Simpson managed the SRS Project and completed quality work to achieve the introduction of the project. Work is continuing on Mobile Device Management which will improve the use of and the security of the organisations mobile phones and will form part of a standard on-boarding process, this will allow better control of Veritas owned mobiles along with giving Veritas the ability to remotely wipe and push new applications to phones. Corporate Services is currently working to introduce SharePoint. SharePoint is web-based collaboration and document management platform. Though highly flexible, it is primarily used to store documents, and communicate information across the organisation. With SharePoint, the organisation will create an intranet (or internal internet system) which works like any other website.

Training has also been introduced to help staff recognise possible cyber threats. This has provided the organisation with areas to work upon and the training has been effective.

In 2019 Veritas House have opened an Office in Dubbo and a second Office in Bathurst this enhances the services provided from the main office in Russell Street and the Orange office in Sale Street.

Day to day facility management has continued at all sites with the organisation of cleaning, mail deliveries, stationary ordering, IT support and all things office being undertaken. Corporate Services also manage security, equipment, phone, fire safety system, electrical, plumbing and air-conditioning maintenance of all eight properties owned or leased by the organisation. Management of the increasing Veritas Fleet has been a large volume of work. An improved booking system and an accurate recording of odometers has been followed through. A large amount of work has been put into recording services, road side memberships and cleaning of the vehicles.

Corporate Services oversaw the project management of the renovation of the accommodation unit owned by Veritas House. Thanks to the generosity of Newcastle Charitable Foundation the one-bedroom unit was transformed into a beautiful modern home for youth.

A comprehensive overhaul of insurance has been completed and the contracting of an insurance broker has been introduced which will streamline the claim systems and the annual insurance review.

Over the past months work has been undertaken to amalgamate the Corporate Services section and Business Development section. This change will commence in September 2019.

Congratulations and best wishes are extended to the current Corporate Services staff of Mona Harris, Joann Young, Michele Zarnow and Sue Bowden. They are exceptional members of the Veritas House organisation.

Thank you for the opportunity to have worked for Veritas House over the past years.

Maureen Markwick
Corporate Services Manager



Veritas House Dubbo.



Corporate Services Team Members: (L-R) Mona Harris, Maureen Markwick, Joann Young. Absent: Michele Zarnow, Sue Bowden.



Toneya Carr-Smith, Ty Mostyn, CEO Jody Pearce & Rosemary Hailstone at the Sale Street office opening in Orange.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE MANAGER'S REPORT



Our capacity to deliver services depends on our ability to continue attracting and retaining the most talented people. This is at the core of what People and Culture does at Veritas House. We work to make our service a place where good people want to work and each and every one of our people wants to do their best for our clients, every single day. In short, it is about making Veritas a great place to work.

This means having the right culture – one where our employees can flourish and one which makes us the kind of organisation our clients and partners love to work with. It also means treating people fairly and equitably, providing systems and training that support our staff and their wellbeing, rewarding them appropriately and celebrating their successes.

Positive Culture and Leadership

There is a deeply entrenched cultural idea in Australia that workplaces are fine; it's the employees who are the problem. But employers have a social responsibility not to harm the people who are working within their walls, either physically, emotionally or psychologically. Our people work on the razor's edge of social equity, with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in the region.

Our leadership team is hugely important in supporting their staff to do this important work. Apart from holding significant accountabilities to the children and young people in our care, they also need to coach and mentor their own teams on how to adapt in an organisation that is often driven by external crisis and subject to changes in Government policy and funding.

As a service that relies on people, it is critical for our success that we create an environment where employees feel supported and equipped to do their best. We invest in developing the skills of our people through training, professional supervision and team collaboration, supported by a focus on wellbeing that is delivering high levels of engagement and performance. Some of our training this year has focused on Reportable Conduct, Child Protection, Trauma and Motivational Interviewing.

Our culture is supported by our commitment to ongoing employee engagement in decision-making and to working together to share information and ideas. This year we involved staff from all areas of the business in the start of a project to define our values, and contributing their thoughts as we developed our new Strategic Plan. We also listened when staff in PSP told us they needed more support, hiring a second Case Work Coordinator to assist with mentoring them in their work. The establishment of the new Clinical and Consultation Services department is another way we have shown support to both staff and our clients, allowing us to provide a service internally that was previously only available from consultants.

Ensuring we pay people appropriately for the work they are also crucial to retaining an engaged workforce. Each year Veritas conducts a wage analysis to ensure there is no gender based wage gap, and reviews our processes to make sure that any mistakes in how we pay people are quickly identified and rectified.

Diversity

We support our workforce with a diverse and inclusive culture. Focusing on diversity and inclusion is not only the smart thing to do for our service but also the right thing to do for humanity. We demonstrate diversity in our workplace by intentionally employing a range of individuals of varying

gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, and other attributes. In 2018/19 we created additional identified positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and will continue to do so as we grow our service.

Workplace Demographics

Our staff grew to 87 people this year (up 12 from last year). The increase was reflective of an increase in the number of children in foster care, the growth of our Premier's Youth Initiative Team, additional staff working in our residential programs and more casual staff providing supervision and mentoring to young people.

A snapshot of our people:

We have 87 people working across Bathurst and Orange

19 of our staff identify as male and 68 as female

36 people work full-time and 14 work part-time, with permanent hours and shifts

We have 31 staff working casually in our residential house, in NPSS and backing up our refuge workers

6 people joined us this year in short-term positions that enabled us to get some special projects off the ground eg. Western Homelessness Connect

We continue to demonstrate how successful a multi-generational workforce can be, with staff ranging from 18 to 62 years of age working together.

Turnover

Staff turnover can be divided into two main categories – voluntary (people choose to leave or fixed term contracts end) and involuntary (employment ends during or as a result of performance management).

During the 2018-19 financial year, our voluntary turnover rate was 14%, against an Australia-wide average of 22%. Many of the staff who left us were working casually, and were either absorbed into permanent work with Veritas or left to enter permanent work with other organisations.

While our voluntary turnover rate is acceptable in comparison to other organisations, reducing it to below 10% is a reasonable goal. We have begun to do this with a more targeted approach to hiring and inducting casual staff and ensuring they have the opportunity to train across different programs. This provides a higher level of income security and exposure to different potential career paths within Veritas.

WHS

A safe and healthy working environment is one of the best recipes for employee wellbeing and engagement. The WHS Committee at Veritas House is engaged and active, and really enjoys a fire drill! As an organisation that is evolving, we faced new WHS risks this year that we haven't experienced before and managing these has led to a more robust and proactive system to ensure the safety of our staff.

The future...

Every day I look forward to coming to work, inspired by the work our people do and the outcomes they achieve with our clients. I look forward to supporting them in the coming year with new initiatives focusing on wellbeing at work, further integrating our values throughout our people and culture policies, and refreshing our recognition systems so that staff feel truly valued.

Sharron Carter
People and Culture Manager

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER'S REPORT



The Business Development team doubled in size during the last financial year, with the recruitment of a fixed-term communications graduate to assist in organising a number of community events, and contracting Ascend Business Consultants to support marketing activities. The outcomes achieved by the team this year have been made possible

through their hard work, commitment and passion for Veritas House and the children, young people and families in the region that we support.

Business Development

A tender was prepared to continue to deliver Non-Placement Support Services (NPSS), to be known as the Casework Support Scheme, and it is hoped the outcome for this tender will be known early in the new financial year. The Business Development Manager managed the NPSS service for 6 months during this financial year to support the team to refine systems and processes. During this time a grant was also obtained to support staff to complete accredited training in Contact Work through TAFE, ensuring the team is ready to meet and exceed the new contract requirements if successful.

Our tender for the Department of Education 'Student Engagement and Attendance' Prequalification Scheme to support schools with support for students who have or are at risk of disengaging from school and their families was successful. We are excited about the opportunity to extend the knowledge and experience our teams have working with this cohort to support schools in our region.

Veritas was selected as one of seven youth agencies from across the state to be part of a 'Creating Access Project' run by Youth Action and People with Disability Australia (PWDA). The Project has been established to increase the accessibility of Youth Services in NSW for young people with disability. Representatives from PWDA conducted a review to identify barriers within Veritas to supporting people with disability such as inaccessible premises, inaccessible information, staff confidence in supporting young people with disability and policies and procedures that inhibit engagement with Veritas. The recommendations have been developed into an Accessibility Action Plan which is being implemented across the agency and over time it is hoped the focus will shift to include developing services that meet the gaps experienced by young people with disability in the region; supporting the disability sector in Central



Veritas House Business Development Team: Josh Morton, Narelle Stocks, Danielle Booth.

Western NSW to be more 'youth-friendly'; and giving young consumers greater choice and control over their supports through distribution of youth-friendly resources developed by the Creating Access Project.

Finally, following the endorsement of our Policies, Procedures and Templates by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) to obtain accreditation as an Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) designated agency; work was undertaken throughout this financial year to meet the OCG requirements to become Voluntary Out-of-Home Care accredited for the first time, encompassing the processes used by the Homelessness and Early Intervention areas of Veritas House. In addition, refinement of our new Customer Relationship Management system continued; and Quality Improvement Practice sessions designed to ensure consistency and quality of practice were rolled out on a monthly basis for the Permanency Support team and will soon extend to other areas of the agency.

Communication and Marketing

For the first time in its history, Veritas launched an advertising campaign during the past year featuring unscripted interviews with a local foster carer and staff in an effort to increase awareness of the need for foster carers. The Business Development team implemented a comprehensive marketing strategy designed to tackle some of the myths about foster care, with campaign elements including cinema, TV and radio advertising; Shop a Dockets; information sessions in a number of communities; extensive social media; and a host of community awareness activities, including information displays at the Bathurst and Orange Shows and local community events.

External Relations

Through the support of Family and Community Services (FACS), a prosocial skills project was conducted by Veritas utilising the expertise of not-for-profit agency, Desert Pea Media. Four Aboriginal young people aged 16-17 living in OOHC came together in Dubbo to write a song and produce a music video and short films about their unique journeys. The incredibly powerful films are in final stages of production, and it is hoped that once they are finished can be shown a case worker conferences and to other young people in care as a source of inspiration and motivation for the sector.

The Business Development team also coordinated the first ever Western Homeless Connect event, through the support of FACS. This free community event was based on homeless connect events held in Sydney and the Hunter over the



Veritas House Staff were involved in a review of our physical, informational, procedural & attitudinal accessibility as part of the Create Access Project.



past decade and was designed to connect people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless with support services from across the Western region. 66 service users and 40 service providers attended the inaugural event, including education and employment providers, legal and financial aid, specialist homelessness services and private and public healthcare providers.

The team also organised two events as part of Youth Week to draw attention to Youth Homelessness Matters Day and the broader issue of youth homelessness. BBQ Bonanza events were held in the Veritas House car parks in Bathurst and Orange and featured live music performed by local young people, arts corner, games and information stands from local services. Bathurst Regional Council provided a grant of \$300 to assist with the costs associated with the Bathurst event.

Fundraising and donations

Continued growth in the volume of donations and grants received was again a highlight of the past year, growing by almost 400% from the previous year – significant given the previous financial year was a 600% increase. Not only did this enable our services to enhance the supports that could be provided to children, young people and families in the region; but reinforced to staff the value that the local communities place in the work that we do.

One highlight was a \$50,000 grant from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation to renovate a transitional youth housing property owned by Veritas in Bathurst. In just six weeks, the property was completely transformed with a new kitchen, bathroom and laundry; painting; and carpet completed by JCB Carpentry and Building and local suppliers at cost; and interior design and a commitment to furnish the property for free on an ongoing basis for future tenants by Inside Outside in Bathurst. As a result of the success of this initial project, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has announced a further grant of \$60,000 as a catalyst to kick-start a community fundraising appeal by Veritas to purchase a transitional youth housing property in Orange, with the Foundation's grant to be used to renovate the property once purchased.

In the past 12 months Veritas has also established an Education and Employment Fund to assist young people to purchase educational resources, such as books and laptops for students or work boots for apprentices so they can continue their education or enter the workforce. Veritas will invest all donations received towards this fund, with the income earned annually used to support local young people pursue their vocational ambitions.

Finally, Christmas Giving Trees were set up in the Bathurst and Orange offices and at Chiropractic Health and Wellness Centre in Bathurst and local residents were encouraged to come and collect a gift card for a child or young person and return a gift from their wishlist. A total of 110 gifts were received and distributed to clients through this appeal – an indication of the ongoing connection Veritas has with the communities in which we work and which extends more than 35 years to when Veritas was created by community representatives who recognised a local need.

As stated by Coretta Scott King, "the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members," and this greatness has been demonstrated extensively by the businesses and individuals who have supported us and by our dedicated Veritas staff throughout 2018-19.

Narelle Stocks
Business Development Manager



Youth Week Veritas Marquee.



Veritas House Project Officer Renata Simpson presents a Quality Improvement Practice Session (QIPS) to Staff.



Homelessness Awareness Week 2018.



SHS Team Leader Sharon Jones accepts a ClubGRANT from Bathurst RSL. The grant is used to purchase Independent Living Packs for young people transitioning from crisis accommodation to independent living.



Independent living packs – Bathurst ClubGRANT 2018.



Veritas House Business Development Manager Narelle Stocks (c) attended the presentation of the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundations grant.



Cafesmart 2018.



Sarah Luff, Joel Palmer & Jody Pearce attended the 2018 Bathurst Business Awards as Veritas House was nominated in the Not for Profit category.



Veritas House Easter egg guessing competition was held in Bathurst and Orange with the support of organisations such as Macquarie Skin & Day Spa.



Kindness Kits assist in reducing stress for children and young people coming into care, particularly when this occurs at short notice. The Kindness Kits are generously donated by Kindness Kits for Kids in Care.



Anson Street Angels - packs of hope.



Members of the community collected gift tags from Veritas House Christmas wishing trees and generously provided gifts for the local children and young people.

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 2018-19:

Adrift	Dr Glen Lehane	Katrina Nelson	Sally Foundation
Alison Shurmer	Dr Jesse Middleton	Kenny Spring Solicitors	Sally Shields
Alison Whalan	Edward Brown	Kerrie Ferguson	Sarah Charlton
Aon Charitable Foundation	Edward Zarnow	Kristy Donlan	See Saw Wines
Aprille Griffin	Emily and Theo Harris	Kristy Wallace	Share the Dignity
Ashcroft's Supa IGA	Emma Andres	Lauren Leer	Sharron Carter
Bathurst Correctional Centre Social Club	Epicurean Concepts	Lauren O'Brien	Specsavers Bathurst
Bathurst Regional Council	Erin Hogben	Libby Burrell	Stephen McAway
Bathurst RSL Club - ClubsGRANT	Farmgate Meats	Linda Justin	StreetSmart Australia
Belinda Ursa	Findex	Lisa Limbrick	Susie Williams
Ben Jenkins	Fusion Australia	Louise Ranshaw	Susie Wright
Bonnie Conway	Gavin Jeffries	MacKillop College	Sylvia Kilby
Brent Collins	Genevieve Broaker	Macquarie Medi Spa	Tenneile Jenkins
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Caroline Barrett	Greg and Lisa Smith	Massman family	The Blind Pig Bar and Café
Caryn Toohey	Ian Coppinger	McCormack Barber	Tina Robinson
Cathy Jeffery	Inside Outside	Community Chest	Tomra Collection
Central Western Daily	Jasmine Sonter	Michelle Stark	Valerie Tilney
Cherie Ferson	JCB Carpentry and Building	Moodies Pharmacy	Vicki Betts
Cheryl Fitzpatrick	Jean Evers	Narelle Stocks	Wai Elliot
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Ciralee Vincent	Jo Keown	Nicole Linnane	
Cosventure	Joanne Westcott	Nicole Meek	
CSU Mitchell Rugby	Jordan Collins	Officeworks Bathurst	
Danielle Booth	Julia Koko	Orange Ex-Services' Club	
Debbie McKean	Julie Bennett	Oscar Stocks	
Diane Burrell	Karol Coles	Panthers Bathurst	
Dimension Framing	Karren Skelton	Paul Beard	
Dr Chris Said	Kate Miller	Reliance Bank	
	Katrina Naylor	Robert and Carla Markwick	



Proceeds received from the 'Mixed Tape' event held at The Agrestic Grocer kicked off the fundraising appeal for a transitional youth housing property for Orange.



Sarah Luff, Peter McManus, Jody Pearce (CEO) and Angus Edwards (Kenny Spring) with the donation from the Winter Wills campaign.



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