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Serge Sztrajt

Chairperson Report

It is with great pleasure and a great honour on behalf of the Board to again present this report. This particular year has been one of challenges that none of us could have imagined. The pandemic has had an impact on all of us but none more so than those homeless and at risk of homelessness. The very people whom Wombat works so hard to support. This was made particularly vivid when Wombat's neighbours in the high rise in Flemington/North Melbourne were locked in.

Wombat programs and work practises had to be radically changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff and management coped wonderfully well, working from home, always being safe when working with highly vulnerable clients and providing services second to none. Wombat's staff at all times complied with safety protocols and no staff were affected by the virus. The details of the work done by Wombat are set out in in the rest of the annual report.

I would only like to highlight some matters.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, Wombat again went through the complex accreditation process which it again passed with flying colours. Wombat has engaged in producing programs that are an example to others and likely to be taken on by the whole housing sector. For a small organisation this is a magnificent and wonderful achievement that has only been possible due to the dedication and commitment of the management and staff.

The Board and management are cognisant that the demand for low income housing is going to increase without the required commitment from government for an increase in funding and or the legislative changes requiring private developers to build sufficient low-income housing in their developments. Wombat's financial position remains healthy although we will need to consider how to obtain further funding to deal with some of this anticipated increase in demand due to the lack of appropriate housing.

The Board, with the aid of technology, has had the requisite meetings over the past 12 months including half day planning and reflection meetings. Over the last 24 months there have been a substantial change in Board members. Notwithstanding this, the Board has continued to work in a harmonious and committed way and the input from the newer Board members has been invaluable. I would like to thank all Board members both old and new. It is with great pleasure and enjoyment that I have had the privilege of being its chairperson. The Board consists of volunteers who all work, many in employment that is stressful and some as well have families. Despite this, the Board members all

contribute massively for the benefit of Wombat's clients and Wombat. I cannot thank them enough.

None of the above would be possible without the magnificent staff and management of Wombat. As said previously all have worked through difficult and dangerous conditions for Wombat's clients. Management led by Rebecca has planned and implemented programs and ensured that all Wombat clients received adequate support and assistances as was required. The planning by the management team has been huge and the implementation of such is a credit to them and the staff. As well we would like to particularly thank Rebecca for the Board reports and for always answering the numerous queries made by the Board. The Board has nothing but admiration for the way staff have coped with the difficulties and their first concerns being their clients rather than themselves.

Finally, again on behalf of the Board I would like to thank all Wombat staff for their inspiring work and achievements. They all should take pride in what they have been able to do over the last 12 months

Meet The Board



Serge Sztrajt Chairperson

Serge joined the Board in 2008 and has more than 25 years of service to Victoria Legal Aid under his belt. Previously with the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) and holding the position of acting Principal Solicitor at Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS). Serge once again finds himself working with Legal Aid 3 days a week.



Brianna Davidson Vice Chairperson

Brianna is a senior communications and advocacy manager currently working with the Department of Education and Training Vic. She has 10 years experience developing strategies for domestic and international for purpose organisations including: International Women's Development Agency. Foundation for Young Australians and Anglicare Victoria.



Shorna Moore Secretary

Shorna is the Director of Policy and Engagement at the Federation of Legal Centres. With a passion for social justice, Shorna is the chair of Smart Just for Women and sits on several other reference and advisory groups. Shorna is also involved in a number of local community projects addressing youth homelessness and housing. Shorna joined the board in 2014.



John McCarthy Treasurer

John is the Investment Manager for Spotlight Group Holdings with a focus on equity investments. John has over 15 years of financial services experience across domestic and international banks working predominantly with ultra high net worth clients including charities, not-for-profit organisations and private ancillary funds. He joined the Board in October 2018.



Sascha Surgey Board Member

Sascha has many strings to her bow. She has worked for the Department of Health and Human Services, focusing on disability and other areas. She has more than 20 years of experience in human services and education sectors, as well as extensive experience in community housing. Sascha is also a secondary school mathematics teacher. We are grateful that she also manages to dedicate her time to the Wombat Board.



Mark Baldwin Board member

Joining the Board in 1998, Mark is Wombat's longest serving Board Member. He is a local resident and respected architect, with projects focused heavily on environmental sustainability. Mark pioneered 'earth sheltering' which is the most ecologically sustainable approach to domestic and small-scale architecture. Mark brings a unique perspective to the ever-changing housing landscape.



Ilana Jaffe Board member

Ilana has over 15 years experience working in homelessness, family violence and health services. Ilana received the Melbourne award for services to the community and was an expert witness on two panels in the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Ilana now works for Family Safety Victoria.



Rebecca Cleaver

Executive Officer's Report

In a year like no other

So much has changed in 12 months. We now accept social distancing, hand sanitizing and wearing masks as 'normal' behaviour. Home schooling, working from home and lockdowns are new experiences that we have adapted to.

Last year the homeless sector in the West and North advocated strongly for safe appropriate emergency accommodation for the many that required it. This work highlighted the appalling housing conditions many people endure in crisis accommodation. In addition, the long waiting list for public housing and the unaffordability of private rental is well documented.

Many more people became homeless after tragic fires in Victoria, which again highlighted the need to build safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

COVID-19 came to our doors in February 2020 and the restrictions from the health response affected the whole community, those with housing and those without. Again a home was essential.

COVID-19 has exposed a broken system and highlighted the importance of having a home.

What a strange bonus to have hotels empty of tourists able and willing to accommodate homeless people. In addition, an increase in Centrelink payments and reduction in rental costs gave others the opportunity to access long term housing. More

homeless people have been accommodated than ever before, the homeless sector saw a light of hope.

The staff at Wombat responded quickly to those in hotels, with phone support and delivery of essential items while still assisting people to find and maintain long term housing and supporting those who were isolated. The workload has been huge and I wish to thank staff for their resilience, energy and compassion.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the kindness and generosity of those in our community.

The community has been remarkable in providing donations of money, food, masks, toys, beanies, hand sanitizer etc. From the woman down the road that made masks and dropped them at our door, to Freemasons Vic & Old Scotch Collegians Lodge for their donation to assist people moving out of hotels, the support has been varied and welcome.

In addition, thank you to DHHS for funding our programs and providing support and guidance as we have adapted our service provision during the year.

The Board have volunteered many hours to ensure that Wombat is both managing and responding to the presenting challenges. I thank the Board

for their encouragement, advice and continued commitment to Wombat.

The Management team have worked with unflinching determination to adapt the work environment while protecting and informing staff and continuing to provide a high standard of service delivery. Thanks to Mark, Carmelo and Steve for their collaboration and leadership, and to the Team Leaders for exemplifying good practice and flexibility.

We have worked so hard along with our partner agencies and DHHS to support all those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness under a health threat that remains ongoing.

During all the above, we also successfully passed Accreditation in June, demonstrating the hard work and professionalism of Wombat.

We have adapted to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and will continue to meet the needs of our clients as we work towards the end of 2020 and onward into 2021.

A group of four people (three men and one woman) are standing on a wooden rooftop deck. In the background, there are several multi-story apartment buildings and some trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The people are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire. The woman is wearing a long grey coat over a patterned top and dark trousers. The men are wearing jackets, sweaters, and button-down shirts. There are potted plants on the deck, including a large one on the left and a smaller one on the right. The overall atmosphere is professional yet relaxed.

Steve Maher

Rebecca Cleaver

Carmelo Maccarrone

Mark Rayner

Management Report

In January we were distributing masks to staff and vulnerable clients due to the thick blanket of smoke that descended on Melbourne from the horrific bushfires. In April we were distributing them due to something even more insidious. As a relatively small agency we've always had to be nimble and adaptive, but let's be honest, 2020 tested us. In some ways we were more prepared than most. We're constantly changing, constantly innovating, constantly looking for new and better ways to work, to support our clients and help them reach their goals. It's a whole of agency approach because the best ideas come from staff, from clients, and sometimes even from management. Our clients are some of the most marginalised people in our community, often with traumatic histories and few housing options. Whilst HEART provided a welcome response to homelessness, during the lockdown longer term housing exit options diminished considerably. Rooming houses weren't accepting referrals, there were no private rental inspections, even the public housing towers were closed for new occupants. Yet against these odds we still found a way. And we always will.

We focus on the everyday work we do with clients; creating a safe supportive alliance to find and (or) keep housing. Wombat staff are alternatively problem solvers, taxi drivers, counsellors, Google search engines, coaches, cheerleaders, advocates, magicians, and so much more as they patiently guide our clients to achieve their goals, mask or no mask.



Our Mission

Wombat supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to attain and maintain suitable housing in and around Melbourne's West. Wombat will continue to deliver high quality, well regarded services and take a leading role in sector improvement.

Wombat Values

Wombat's organisational values guide our approach to service delivery, decision making and our engagement with service users and external bodies.

Responsiveness

We endeavour to respond to the individual need of people seeking our support and provide a flexible approach where possible.

Authenticity

We place high value on being honest, genuine, and communicating as directly and as clearly as possible.

Connection

We foster connection, warmth, and good humour within our organisation and in our dealings with others.

Accountability

We endeavour to be open, transparent, and accountable to each other, to the people who use our services, to government and to the wider community.

Innovation

We are open to new ideas and embrace change. We will continue to explore new and innovative service delivery models and advocacy strategies.
We acknowledge success and failure to learn from both.

Homelessness Week

I AM Art Exhibition

In August 2019, Wombat Housing Support Services in collaboration with Melbourne-based social enterprise HoMie & Apollo Cafe were proud to present an art exhibition showcasing the vast array of talent amongst those at risk of, experiencing, or who have experienced homelessness. The 'I AM' art exhibition was created for Homelessness Week 2019, "Housing Ends Homelessness" to raise awareness of homelessness and to share those experiences in a supportive and safe environment. The exhibition's intention was to bring the community together and have a conversation about the current lack of affordable, stable accommodation options in Melbourne. Participating in the 'I AM' art exhibition provided a creative way for the artists to voice their lived experience of homelessness through their stories and quotes. This facilitated a connection with the wider community and resonated with individuals on a deeper personal level. The artists were recognised as a person, like anyone else with hopes and dreams for the future; not just simply stigmatised as a 'homeless person'. Some of the art displayed was created by young people who took part in stencil art session with Blender Studios as part of an art therapy workshop. During this workshop HoMie created a video in collaboration with the young artists showcasing the creation process which was shown on opening night. Katie Hall, State Labor MP for Footscray officially opened the exhibition which was a huge success! Each artist sold their artwork & 100% of sales went directly to the artist.



Homelessness Week

We would like to thank the following for a successful event:

Apollo Café – Thank you to Russell and Cassie for being so supportive of the idea from the first moment that we met. It's an amazing space and we thank you for your generosity and time. We are proud to have built connections with such a supportive local business that cares about the local community.

HoMie – Who hung out with the artists during one of their stencil art session, gifting them HoMie shirts, and creating a fantastic video to raise awareness.

ManOfDarkness aka George (Blender Studios) – For his stencil art workshop which was so much fun for all involved!

Weekend Notes -Thank you Olga Junek for your lovely review write up in Weekend Notes

Mojo News – Thank you for your media coverage of the exhibition and your kind attention to our artists that you interviewed.

Awesome Foundation – For providing a grant for art supplies.

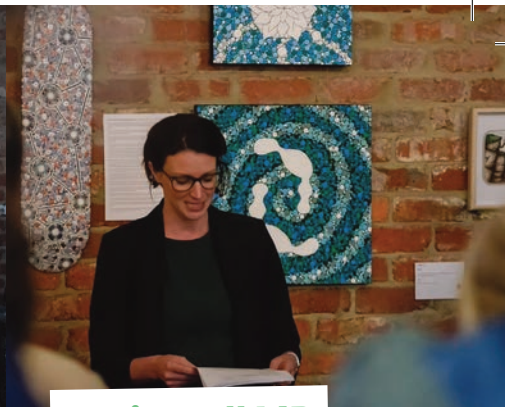
Katie Hall, State Labor MP for Footscray – Thank you for taking the time to chat with the artists and officially opening the exhibition on opening night.

Emma North – For her artsy knowledge and assistance with curating the exhibition.

Wombat Artists - All the artists that took part.

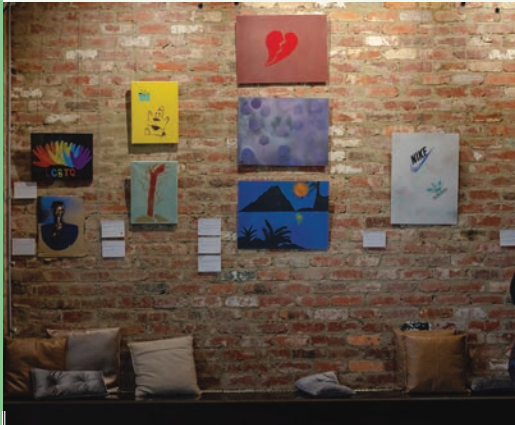
Jolu Ortega (insta: @joluortega) – Thank you so much for volunteering to be our photographer on opening night!

The community – Thank you to all that attended and purchased artwork. This has been a confidence boost for many of the artists.



Katie Hall MP

“*I don't want to be judged as a homeless person.
I'm more than that - I matter.*”





Moving on...

Miss H and her five children accessed the Family Program when she obtained transitional housing after escaping severe family violence. She used our support to enhance her drive to reclaim her life and be a source of strength to her children. Miss H's steadfast determination and a collaborative, emotionally supportive case management approach enabled her to complete a challenging Victims of Crime process, and with advocacy from their case manager, the older children gained access to tertiary and TAFE education, enhancing their self-esteem and employment prospects. As a result of having secure housing, support, and time to actualise her plans, Miss H formalised her passion for cooking and baking via a vocational training and food handling course and registered her own business. Miss H recently took the brave step to decide, during COVID-19, to leave the security of transitional housing and move on to private rental accommodation, no longer requiring the support of the homelessness service system.

—NAMES AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION HAVE BEEN CHANGED



HEART

Homelessness Emergency Accommodation Response Team


In early April, Wombat responded to a call from our local homelessness access point Unison to support the large number of homeless people who they were suddenly able to house in city hotels due to an increase in government funding and a new found willingness by the hotels to accept our client group. We developed a model in a week and a half and quickly went to work. Due to the lockdown we supported clients remotely, though also ran a daily outreach program dropping clients essential material aid generously provided by Hotham Mission and Christians Against Poverty.

Whilst continuing to support our previous clients, our size and agility ensured we could provide an immediate response to a growing community need which felt good during a pretty scary and uncertain time for all of us.

After about a month and a half, our program morphed into HEART, which united Western homeless support services, working together to support many of these clients, often for the first time. It's been fantastic to be part of such an innovative and collaborative sector response. Strangely enough, a by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic has been for the first time, all homeless people have received a response. Let's hope we can find a way for that to continue.

HEART Statistics

From April 2020 to June 2020

 As part of the
HEART model,
Wombat supported
67 individual clients
or family groups



 We secured alternative accommodation for **37%** of the HEART clients we supported







Wombat Programs


At Wombat we have a range of diverse programs aimed at delivering specialist services to everyone from young people to adults, many with multiple and complex needs. We also offer advocacy, build capacity and develop innovative new tools for the sector.

 **Family Program**

 **Housing Readiness for Young People (HRYP)**

 **LGBTI+ Project**


 **Maribyrnong Youth Accommodation Program (MYAP)**


 **Pathways to Independence (PIP)**

 **Single Adults Program (SSP)**

 **Support For Families at Risk (SFAR)**

 **Tenancy Plus (TP)**

 **Western Homelessness Network (WHN)**

 **Youth Justice and Continuing Care Programs (YJCC)**

 **Youth Support Program**



Family Program

The family program provides outreach case managed support for families who are homeless or in transitional housing, where parents are aged over 25 years.

"Homelessness. A serious problem, but not something I have to worry about. Or so I thought, I went to a private school, university educated, and was managing a bank when my most basic sense of security was threatened. Suffice to say domestic violence is often perpetuated after you leave a relationship. With my 10 year old son in constant fear that his father would take him from school, I was forced to leave my job and home-school him. A temporary measure. Until things settled down. Only they didn't. With the money I had I purchased a caravan on the other side of town. I was displaced, away from the community I was well-known in. A short-term adventure I thought. Then the caravan park was sold and every single resident was again starting down the desperation of homelessness. Our life changed the day the Salvation Army knocked on our door. Through Unison my son and I were placed in transition housing. There, I re-enrolled him in school. Our housing support worker was incredible, I looked forward to her visits, the support was echoed when we were assigned to Wombat Housing Support Services. With the support of Wombat, I enrolled in a course, my confidence and dignity was restored. Three years of transition housing and we finally have the security of permanent public housing. This year my partner and I created a not-for-profit youth organisation and I am finally able to give the best of me in the service to the community."

—A FAMILY PROGRAM CLIENT



37% of Wombat
clients have been
supported for
over **52** weeks

—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020



Housing Readiness for Young People (HRYP)

Evaluation and re-design of Wombat's Living Skills Tool for young people

Wombat has worked in 2019/2020 on an evaluation and re-design of the Housing Readiness for Young People (HRYP) tool. The original tool was developed in 2016/2017 in conjunction with the Out-of-Home Care and Continuing Care sector.

The evaluation of the tool focused on obtaining feedback from young people and workers who have been using it over the past 12 months. We received comments and feedback from 15 young people and 40 workers on changes to be made to the tool to make it more appropriate, usable, efficient, engaging and effective.

We are in the process of moving the tool to an interactive online platform that allows workers and young people to work together to understand a young person's strengths, create a customised goal template, monitor progress and plan for independence. Importantly, the new tool supports workers to use other resources in the Out-of-Home Care sector such as the "Looking After Children 15+ Care and Transition Plan" and the "Better Futures (Advantage Thinking) Practice Framework". The result is a significant step forward in the integration of tools and resources to assist care leavers.

The re-design is in its final stages with a planned launch of the new tool expected in October 2020. A huge "thank you" to all of the individuals and organisations who have taken the time to provide invaluable input throughout the evaluation and re-design process

Everyday LIFE SKILLS



Young person assessment



Initial Assessment



David James

[Go to Young persons record](#)

[View Summary Charts](#)

[View Strength Charts](#)

[View Things to work on Charts](#)

Your progress

67% to complete



Assessment Info	Food	Money	Housing	Education
Employment	Health and Well-being	Personal Hygiene	Transport	Legal Rights and Responsibilities
Relationships	Community Connections	Safety and Emergency Planning	Pregnancy, Parenting, Childcare	Assessment Completion





57% of our clients
were female

—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020

LGBTI+ Project

The LGBTI+ project was established to build the knowledge, skills and capacity of homelessness and family violence sectors in Melbourne's North West, through the development of resources and training.



In September 2019, after a successful pilot year that provided training to the Western Metropolitan region, the LGBTIQ+ project was given a further nine months of funding from Family Safety Victoria to develop resources for workers in the housing and homelessness sector across the state.

The first resource that was created was a Practical Guide. The project worker collaborated with Zoe Belle Gender Collective to develop a brief but comprehensive document that acts as a refresher on the LGBTIQ+ best practice for workers to access as they need. The guide also included a terminology guide and example scripts for asking sensitive questions around sexuality and gender identity. The second resource was a set of two videos; the first was aimed at staff across a wide range of community services sectors, with a particular focus on homelessness, family violence and mental health amongst LGBTIQ+ young people. The second was aimed at providing young people with a snapshot of support options and information. These were created with Rory Blundell and Elvis Martin, two young queers with work experience and/or lived experience in the LGBTIQ+ family violence, homelessness and mental health spaces. Both the guide and the videos can be found on the Wombat website. In June 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services for the Western Metropolitan region re-funded the project for a further 12 months, with a focus shifting to care and protection services. This third iteration of the project will include introductory and advanced LGBTIQ+ training, resources targeted to this workforce that build on existing resources from previous stages, and a forum that will provide care and protection workers the opportunity to hear from a panel of experts and young people.



3% of our clients
identified as Aboriginal
or Torres Strait Islander

—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020

“

Thank you for your support over the years. To my worker thank you for all the hard work, effort, and long hours you have sacrificed to help us. We appreciate everything you have done! Thank you for your kindness, your patience and support.

—WOMBAT CLIENT

Maribrynong Youth Accommodation Program (MYAP) / Youth Support Program

Support for young people aged 16–25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. MYAP has a specific focus on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse young people.

An orphaned sibling group of four were referred to the MYAP program via Unison (Western Homeless access point) for case management and housing support due to a relationship breakdown with their care givers. The living environment was negatively impacting on their study and mental health. As a result the siblings experienced homelessness and were placed in crisis accommodation. One of the biggest fears for the sibling group who were very tightly bonded together was that they would have to be separated. Through advocacy by Wombat, the sibling group were accepted for a Transitional Housing Management (THM) vacancy together. The MYAP case manager empowered, guided and assisted each sibling towards individual goals and housing exit options. Throughout all that was happening, the siblings maintained their education. The case manager was able to assist with linking in with other support services accessing school supplies, linking in with the L2P program, after school support group, tutoring and living skills through their individual case plans. After 2 years of case management support the siblings were successful in obtaining a four bedroom private rental property. All the siblings have now gone on to further studies and employment.



“What I value most of all when supporting clients is the conversations and emotional support I can provide whilst guiding them through their journey towards reaching their goals.”

– WOMBAT CASE MANAGER



Pathways To Independence Program (PIP)

The PIP Program is a shared short-term transitional housing program for young people who are exiting or have recently exited statutory care, offering a pathway into longer term housing such as head leased private rental.

“

Being able to feel safe at home, to feel at home, is something that I cherish dearly and it is all thanks to PIP. In these unprecedented times when most students are forced to study at home PIP has provided things like a study desk and chair which I found key to being able to feel comfortable and confident when studying online. PIP has also helped me by giving myself skills to help me further in life especially with money/budgeting. PIP really helped me with my confidence in the sense that I live and feel comfortable.’

—WOMBAT CLIENT



Single Adults Support Program (SSP)

The Single Support Program offers outreach case managed support to single adults over the age of 25.

Win is a man in his 50's of Burmese background. He came to Inner Western program via Unison, our homelessness access point, as they were able to offer him transitional housing. Win's homelessness began when he lost his employment rendering him unable to maintain payments towards the private rental he was living in, and the housing broke down. Due to being isolated within the community and having limited support, he had no other accommodation options. The transitional housing and its provision of support from SSP enable him to get back on his feet, regain employment and build on some living skills related to managing a tenancy. He has now gained access to permanent accommodation via a community housing provider, where eligibility includes low income employment, ensuring he has housing security and affordability. Win's offer of permanent housing was made during the early stages of the pandemic, when we had just changed our service delivery practices. There were extra challenges securing the tenancy given social distancing restrictions, particularly where the use of interpreters were required and the sign up process was complex, however we worked as a team with our client to gain this positive outcome, and he continues to enjoy his home and move forward with his life. We are confident that Win will remain independent, without need to reconnect with the homelessness system, but he knows he can always contact us if he needs to.

—NAMES AND IDENTIFYING DETAILS HAVE BEEN CHANGED

“I appreciate all the support that Wombat has given me and my siblings. Life changing service. Genuine desire to help. Made me feel welcome, valued and that I was heard. Consistency and follow through. My worker exceeded all my expectations.”

—WOMBAT CLIENT



Support For Families At Risk Program (SFAR)

SFAR provides intensive early intervention and case managed support to at risk families in social housing and private rental.



“

I've had experiences with other services and haven't felt able to talk so openly, but with Wombat I was able to talk with people I haven't even met. It's not about the service it's about the people. They were genuine, caring and went above and beyond, even if I hadn't been able to access the transitional housing in the end. It was about me and my mental health at the time, and if it wasn't for the worker to talk to, things would have been different. It was only a few weeks, but I felt like I had known my worker forever.”

—WOMBAT CLIENT



*“It feels safe and like home,
people listen.
Wombat opened my eyes
to people and services.”*

—WOMBAT CLIENT



50

Tenancy Plus Program (TP)

The Tenancy Plus program offers early intervention and case managed support to social housing tenants at risk of losing their tenancies.

A family was referred from a social housing provider due to the tenancy being at risk with a possibility of being evicted. The family, with a one month old infant, had rental arrears of over \$1,000, and the social housing provider had been granted an Order of Possession. The family did not appear at the VCAT hearing as they felt overwhelmed and had no supports. Rent was being charged at full market rate. We assisted the client to lodge a review hearing at VCAT which was successful, and assisted with the rebate form which reduced the rent. The family also entered into a rental repayment plan. The family fell into arrears again as the parent did not have Parenting Payments in place and Family Tax Benefit had been reduced to \$1 per fortnight due to a Centrelink robo-debt of close to \$10,000. We assisted the family to enter into a payment agreement to reduce the debt and helped them gather documents and apply for parenting payments. We also referred the family to legal aid regarding the robo-debt and a payment of over \$8,000 was credited back to them.

Recently the family's entire building was placed into hard lockdown due to COVID-19 risk. We were able to provide support during this difficult time with advice and information on emergency payments as our client's husband could not leave the building to attend work. Housing and income are now stabilised and tenancy is no longer at risk.



40% of our clients
were born outside
Australia

—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020



Western Homelessness Network (WHN)

2019: The Year of Advocacy

2019/20 began positively for the WHN, with powerful advocacy and fantastic responses from State and Federal Members of Parliament. The campaign, with the Northern Homelessness Network (NHN), about the appalling nature of the emergency accommodation in Victoria continued with a boycott of the worst providers. The Victorian Homelessness Network, comprised of each of the nine regional Networks, adopted this campaign as a key priority for 2019/20.

The Network lodged a submission with the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system, and a submission into the State Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness. In response to feedback in the 2018 Annual Consumer Survey, the Northern and Western Homelessness Networks created the 'Every Victorian Should Have a Home' campaign, which was launched in Homelessness Week 2019.

Network members met with 13 Members of Parliament, Ministers and Advisors following Homelessness Week, culminating in a Homelessness Roundtable involving State and Federal Members of Parliament and representatives of Local Councils in Melbourne's West and in a meeting with the Shadow Federal Minister for Homelessness. The level of interest in addressing homelessness in Melbourne's West was heartwarming. The WHN resourced the Roundtable with a report, Ending Homelessness in Melbourne's West. The Network would like to thank Katie Hall MP, Member for Footscray, and Stephen McGhie MP, Member for Melton, for establishing an MP Homelessness Working Group. State and Federal Members of Parliament and Network representatives now meet quarterly to develop strategies to end homelessness in Melbourne's West.



Western Homelessness Round Table, Victoria University.

From left: Bill Shorten MP, Federal Member for Maribyrnong, Katie Hall MP, State Member for Footscray, Sarah Connolly MP, State Member for Tarneit, Tim Watts MP, Federal Member for Gellibrand, Daniel Mulino MP, Federal Member for Fraser, Ingrid Stitt MLC, State Minister for Workplace Safety, State Minister for Early Childhood, State Member for Western Metropolitan, Stephen McGhie MP, State Member for Melton

Western Homelessness Network Continued

2020: The Year of the HEART

2020, on the other hand, has been as challenging for the WHN as the broader community. Prior to the pandemic, the homelessness sector was overwhelmed by the numbers of people seeking homelessness assistance in Melbourne's West. The Sector only had sufficient capacity to support a fraction of those.

COVID-19 caused an increase in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in the West and numbers have continued to grow. A highlight of the pandemic was the increase in Housing Establishment Funds, enabling the Sector to purchase hotel accommodation for far higher numbers of people with nowhere to live than ever before. By the end of 2019/20, the West had accommodated 666 households in hotels. Homelessness Emergency Accommodation Response Team (HEART) support agencies were assisting 39% of households still in hotels by 30th June 2020, with some additional support provided through allied health services.

For 37% of these households, this was the first time they have experienced homelessness. Approximately 75% of consumers are

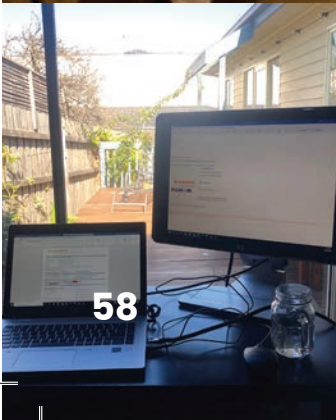
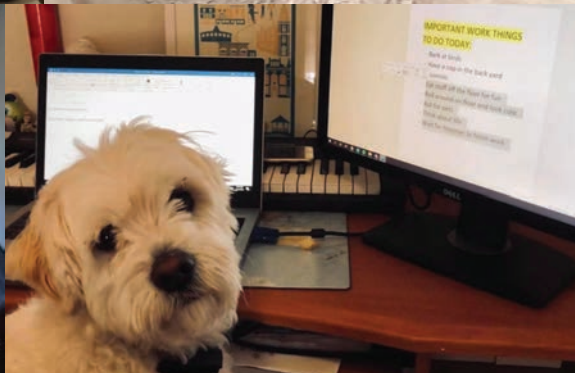
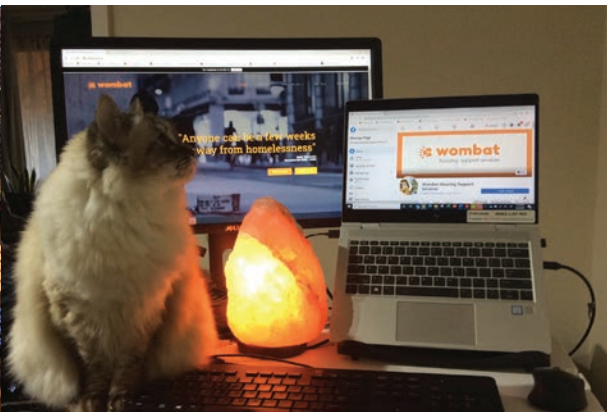
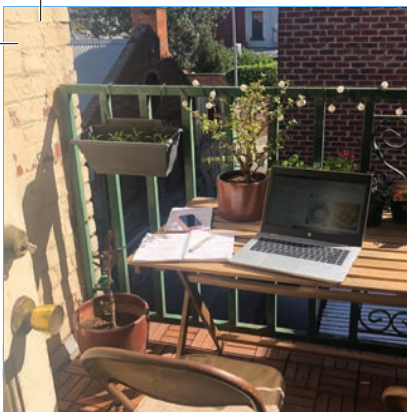
experiencing mental health issues (frequently resulting from the stresses of homelessness). Approximately 24% of consumers were managing health issues and 22% of those accommodated had experienced family violence.

At the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, Homelessness services in the West came together to establish HEART. The HEART was established so nimbly, while service providers themselves were shaping and re-shaping their services in response to the ever changing nature of the environment. The work of the HEART has been a wonderful example of collaboration and commitment to responding to the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This collaboration has been central to the agency capacity through this time – services have supported each other and problem solved responses to consumers (i.e. how do you get furniture for someone to furnish a new home when all the op shops are closed; how do you purchase underwear for consumers at short notice during lockdown?), sharing ideas, strategies and resources (and the odd laugh).



27% of our clients
were under the
age of **18**

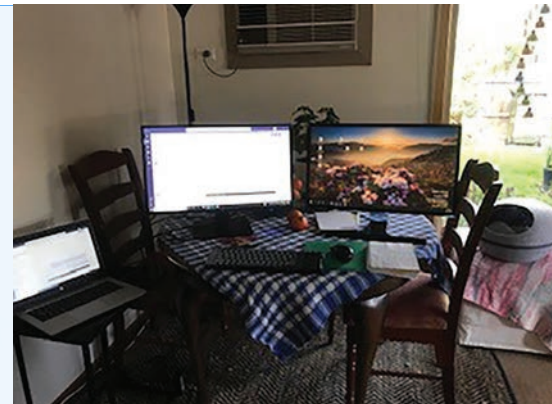
—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020



“

Its been a really weird year with so much change. We've had to support clients from our homes and work out how to do everything online. We've also got to know our colleagues in ways we probably never really wanted to – by peeking into their lounge rooms.”

—WOMBAT STAFF MEMBER



Youth Justice and Continuing Care Program (YJCC)

The Youth Justice and Continuing Care provides intensive case managed support to young people leaving care or on a youth justice order.

Before her 18th birthday, Goldie moved from Residential Care to a Wombat Continuing Care Transitional Housing (THM) property. At the time of referral, Goldie had limited independent living skills, which included not knowing how to pay a utility bill or budget for food. At this time Goldie was also struggling due to isolation and lack of family connection. Whilst living in the THM, Goldie was supported by a Wombat Continuing Care worker to establish a routine, shop for food and other essential items, familiarise herself with her local area and engage with other support services as needed. During her support with Wombat, Goldie has been able to develop meaningful and respectful relationships with other services and individuals. Goldie has re-engaged with education and is completing her VCAL certificate. More recently, Goldie has moved from the THM into long term community housing. Goldie has facilitated the move to her new accommodation independently (including packing, researching furniture, organising the lease sign-up, connecting her utilities etc). During Goldie's duration of support with Wombat, she has grown and developed into an independent young person who feels more confident and secure within her own abilities and more connected to the community.

–NAMES AND IDENTIFYING DETAILS HAVE BEEN CHANGED





Adapting to Change

It's an understatement to say that 2020 presented a few challenges. Many of the tried and tested ways of supporting vulnerable people were no longer possible for us. Suddenly we were doing case work from our loungerooms and reliant on phone, email and zoom for engagement. It's hardly a substitute for face to face, to "being there" and "doing", but our entire team worked hard to find a way. Our COVID-19 experience has been a continuous period of learning, invention, and of developing new ways to ensure our clients can still get what they need from us to achieve their goals. And it's been heartening to see so many amazing life changing outcomes for many people across all our programs- which is a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of Wombat staff.

It's also been amazing watching the ways we've come together to keep our spirits high and continue to feel connected and support each other. From Pictionary, to scavengers hunts, to ridiculous zoom backgrounds, the way we've all adapted and pitched in has been a testament to the resilience and good humour of our staff.





23% of our
clients had no
income when
we met them

—WOMBAT DATA 1/7/2019 TO 30/6/2020

Financial Reports

Wombat Housing Support Services Statement of Profit or Loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
INCOME		
Grants- Federal and State Government	3,328,483	3,062,967
Donations	220	800
Interest	6,828	11,924
Government Subsidies-Cashflow Boost	50,000	-
Other Income	40,038	190,065
Profit on Sale of Assets	1,655	4,336
	<u>3,427,224</u>	<u>3,270,092</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	2,853,265	2,589,664
Operating Expense	362,357	470,847
Depreciation	69,515	70,550
Relief Payments	162,456	125,331
	<u>3,447,593</u>	<u>3,256,392</u>
Surplus/(deficit)Before income tax	(20,369)	13,700
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) after income tax	(20,369)	13,700
Other comprehensive income for the year net of income tax	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	<u>(20,369)</u>	<u>13,700</u>

Wombat Housing Support Services Statement of Financial Position as of June 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	1,066,046	774,805
Receivables	36,527	150,777
Financial Assets	<u>500,000</u>	<u>500,000</u>
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>1,602,573</u>	<u>1,425,582</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, Plant and Equipment	<u>1,887,353</u>	<u>1,902,364</u>
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSET	<u>1,887,353</u>	<u>1,902,364</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>3,489,926</u>	<u>3,327,946</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors and accruals	274,443	188,686
Amounts received in advance	574,147	500,243
Provisions	<u>620,950</u>	<u>584,316</u>
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>1,469,540</u>	<u>1,273,245</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	<u>37,832</u>	<u>51,778</u>
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>37,832</u>	<u>51,778</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>1,507,372</u>	<u>1,325,023</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>1,982,554</u>	<u>2,002,923</u>
MEMBERS FUNDS		
Retained profits	1,337,010	1,357,379
Reserves	<u>645,544</u>	<u>645,544</u>
TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS	<u>1,982,554</u>	<u>2,002,923</u>

Thank You



Our thank you's feel more important than ever this year. We've always relied on our partnerships and relationships. But never have we felt more a-part of the community, in both providing and receiving support. As lockdown hit we braced ourselves for "who knows what?" We knew we wanted to ensure our clients were safe, supported, had access to food and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). As everyone was scrambling, we received generous donations from local community members Candice Monique Butler and Zoe Crawford offering to make reusable masks for our clients. We also partnered with local charities Christians Against Poverty and Hotham Mission to ensure regular food deliveries to our HEART clients. We were even able to drop off some beautiful scarves, beanies and mittens donated from Joining Threadz and Our Kitchen Table. It was truly a community response to a community problem.



“

Although I don't have much support from my family, I am grateful for the support I receive from organisations like Wombat, Thank you.”

—WOMBAT CLIENT



It doesn't just take a pandemic for people to step forward. Each year we receive generous donations of food vouchers and toys for our clients at Christmas. We even received home made Christmas trees that we could pass onto clients. The generous support of organisations like StreetSmart, Gandel, Freemasons Victoria, Our Kitchen Table, Joining Threadz and Old Scotch Collegian's Lodge have enabled Wombat to think creatively about the work we do, fill service gaps and continue to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our community.



Our Partners

Without our partners we wouldn't be able to do all the great work that we do. We'd like to acknowledge the following partnerships:

Department of Health and Human Services

Unison

Salvation Army

Berry Street

Jesuit Social Services

YSAS

VICSEG

LAUNCH

Haven Home Safe

Phoenix Youth Hub

Family Safety Victoria

Home Share

HoMie

St Kilda Mums

180 Degrees Consulting RMIT University

Freemasons Foundation Victoria

Old Scotch Collegians Lodge

City of Melbourne

Orygen

Christians Against Poverty

Hotham Mission

WERN

Kennards Self Storage Flemington

Magistrates Court of Victoria

Streetsmart

Gandel Philanthropy

Share The Dignity

InfoXchange