

Blue Mountains Family Support Service Inc. (t/as Thrive Services)

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



Thrive | Blue Mountains

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Thrive | Lithgow

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Our Mission

Through collaboration and support we empower children, families & community to *thrive*.

Our Vision

An inclusive, engaged community where everyone can reach their full potential.



Our Team 2019-2020

Board of Management

- Catriona Swan (Chairperson)
- Debra Brown (Vice-Chairperson)
- Leah Godfrey (Treasurer)
- Shelley Oliver (Secretary)
- Deonne Kinney
- Catherine Hungerford
- Andrew Macarthur

Management & Admin

- Angelique Sasagi (CEO)
- Jaime Mack (Coordinator)
- Jenny Reid (Program Manager)
- Lynne Pritchard (Finance)
- Cornelia Gartner (Admin.)

Direct Service

Targeted Earlier Intervention Family Worker team—Blue Mountains

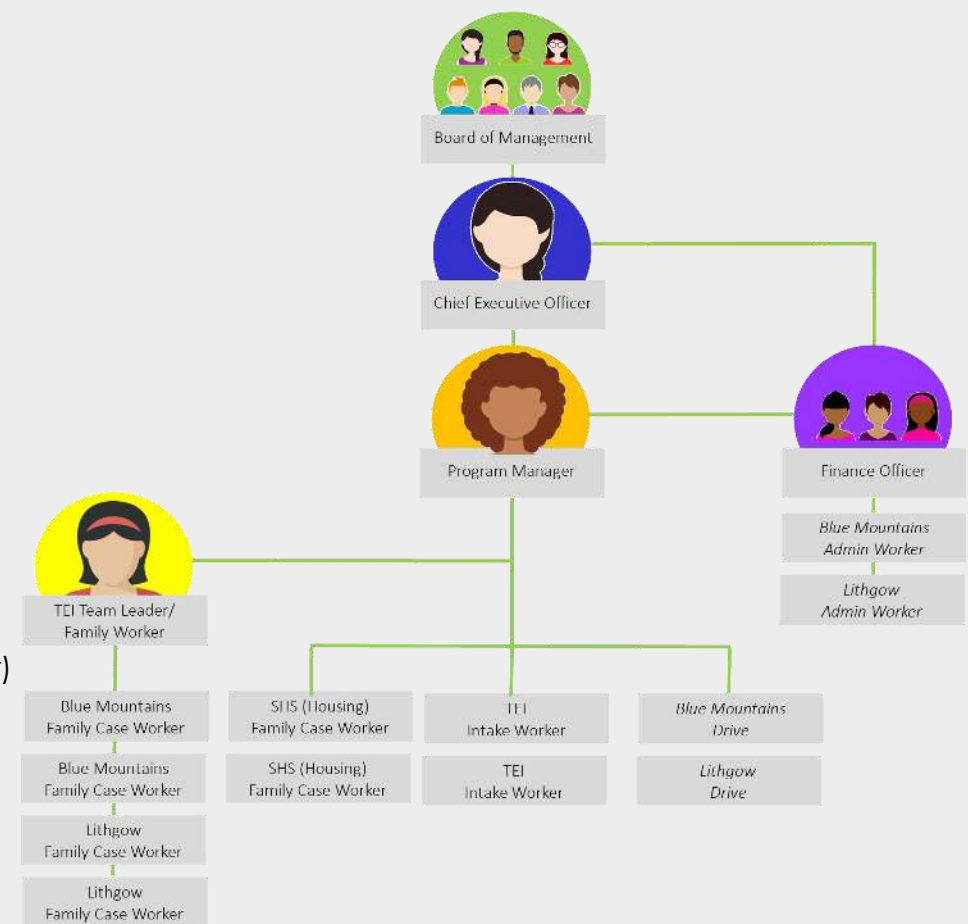
- Johanna Webster (Team Leader)
- Heather Easton
- Kylie White
- Selina Vrsaljko

TEI family work team—Lithgow

- Sheree Elliott
- Tracy Vanderhaar

Drop-in & Intake

- Laura Collins



- Shona Cameron
- Suzy Swanson

Specialist Family Housing & homelessness team

- Emma Schofield
- Jennifer Stockley

Drive Program & admin support

- Mary Cant (Blue Mountains)
- Tiphane Athans (Lithgow)

Volunteers

- Sally Harman
- Robyn Collins
- Peter Corbett
- Keith Lawson
- Peter McDougall
- Annabel Swan (Duke of Ed.)
- Darcy Roberts (Duke of Ed.)





Board of Management & CEO
 Back (L to R): Angelique Sasagi (CEO) and board members Catherine Hungerford, Dee Kinney, Catriona Swan (Chair) , Shelly Oliver (Secretary), Leah Godfrey (Treasurer), Andrew Macarthur and Debra Brown (Vice-Chairperson).

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

Blue Mountains Family Support Service Inc. (t/as Thrive Services) is a registered not-for-profit association and public benevolent institution based in the Blue Mountains and Lithgow in New South Wales.

Board of Management
 As an incorporated association our formal management responsibilities are fulfilled by our Board of Management, whose role is to control and manage our affairs, and to ensure proper management is undertaken to meet our constitutional, funding and legal obligations.

Chief Executive Officer
(formerly Executive Officer)
 is responsible for overseeing the overall operation of the service, including the implementation of the strategic direction and ensuring accountability and funding requirements are met.

Program Manager
(formerly Coordinator) is responsible for overseeing service delivery and responsibilities, direct-line supervision of the Intake & Housing teams, and supporting our CEO around accountability and program planning.

Finance Officer undertakes financial and budgetary tasks ensuring our service meets all accountability and reporting requirements.
TEI Team Leader provides a combination of family & group support, as well as providing leadership and guidance to our early intervention family worker team.

From the Board | *First and foremost we would like to thank our staff and management for the great effort, adaptability and resilience shown during an unprecedented and difficult year. Without this commitment we would not have seen the great outcomes and services provided for our clients & community. This year also saw numerous staffing changes at Thrive. While this causes temporary disruption it is also a great opportunity for positive change.*

We were delighted to welcome Tiphane Athans to the Drive Lithgow program, Johanna Webster (FY 20-21) to the TEI Family Work team and Jenny Reid (FY 20-21) as our Program Manager.

With gratitude for their service and significant contributions to Thrive we sadly farewell Cornelia Gartner (Admin.), Selina Vrsaljko (Family Work team), Jaime Mack (Coordinator), Heather Easton (Family Work team) and Suzy Swanson (acting Intake Worker).

We look forward to a more stable 2021 where staff, management and board embrace greater opportunities for professional development, diversification of skills and improved workplace practices that meet the needs of our community in a challenging & changing world.

From the Chairperson | *I would like to personally thank the entire board for their commitment and extra efforts that have been required to steer us through this difficult year. With a stable Board membership through 2020 we have been able to strengthen our governance of Thrive and respond with appropriate policies & procedures to guide us into the future.* **Catriona Swan**

From the CEO | 2019-2020 has been an incredibly challenging year with many in our communities impacted by bushfires and then the COVID-19 pandemic. What I am proud of is that we responded rapidly to these trials with flexibility and commitment to assist our community during a time when many services were closed. A way we approached this was by dividing our workers into teams to ensure that if the worse case scenario that should COVID-19 impact any of our staff that we would be able to continue to provide services during any absences. The strategy saw us go through a difficult process of separation but our team rose to the challenge with creativity and fun, connecting with through Zoom meetings and a friendly in-houses rivalry. We have had a number of staffing changes throughout the year and welcomed new team members Jenny & Johanna but I'd like to acknowledge those that have moved onto new adventures: Cornelia Gartner, Selina Vrsaljko, Jaime Mack, Heather Easton and Suzy Swanson, who filled our Intake Worker role for 3 months during the year.

I would like to thank our Board of Management for their commitment and leadership throughout the year. Being on a board is a big undertaking when considering this is a volunteer role but in such challenging times it makes you truly appreciate the strength and expertise that they bring to govern and support our service, staff and community.

And finally I'd like to acknowledge our funders, partners and community champions for their support—without whom we would not be able to provide the range of services and programs that support the children, families and others in our Blue Mountains and Lithgow communities. **Angelique Sasagi**



SERVICE DELIVERY IN THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES ...

The challenges that we have faced in less than an year has had major impacts on us all in different ways. Considered an 'essential service,' due to many of the programs we provide, we made a commitment to remain open to provide assistance to our communities throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Whilst always considering safety and responsibility to our team and others we immediately prepared and planned on how to continue providing support services with the minimal amount of disruption possible.

Pandemic and COVID-19 policies, continuity planning, health & safety procedures, training and adapted service delivery were developed and strictly followed. Although we decided to restrict access and face-to-face interactions due to social distancing and other considerations, we were able to remain open to provide practical assistance such as emergency food cards, food parcels, utility bills and other material aid by pre-packing of goods, teleconferencing, limiting physical interactions, etc.

Our family, children and housing programs saw telephone contact, Zoom groups and remote activity packs being undertaken using recorded activities, and gradually we have recommenced safe visits and 'contacts'. It hasn't been an easy time and there have definitely been struggles along the way and with the future firmly in our sights we are committed to continue to do what we can to provide support to our community.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2020

| Strategic planning allows our board and staff to come together to plan strategy and direction of priorities for the service. This year we decided on a 1 year plan due to pending funding agreements as we wanted to ensure outcomes that were achievable and measurable.

Now with new funding agreements we aim for our next planning to focus on short, medium and long term focus areas that benefit our families, community and sustainability of our services in the Blue Mountains and Lithgow.

Focus area 1

SERVICE DELIVERY

Through our services we make a positive & measurable difference in the live of those with whom we work.

Focus area 2

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

A strong, innovative, sustainable organisation that demonstrates good practice across all areas.

Focus area 3

BRAND AWARENESS

Thrive is acknowledged by our key stakeholders as a consistently successful provider of high quality support and capacity building services.



Working together

Partnerships & Collaborations are so important in allowing us to work together to provide quality programs and outcomes to children, families and others in the Lithgow and Blue Mountains communities. We look forward to working together in 2021.

- Benevolent Society (Bathurst)
- Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre
- Blue Mountains Coalition Against Violence & Abuse (CAVA)
- Blue Mountains City Council
- Blue Mountains Consortium
- Blue Mountains Coalition Against Elder Abuse
- Blue Mountains Tibetan Coordination Group
- Department of Communities & Justice
- DC&J Women's NSW
- Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR)
- Gateway Family Services
- Hub at the Top (HATT)
- Lithgow Cares
- Lithgow Community Projects
- Lithgow Information & Neighbourhood Centre
- Mission Australia
- Mountains Community Outreach Services
- Mountains Community Resource Network
- Mountains Multi-Cultural Interagency
- Nepean Multicultural Association

- Stronger Families Alliance
- Sydney Water
- Wesley Mission
- Westfund
- Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre

Our **Community Champions** generously donate goods, funds or their time to help us in our support of our communities. Our work would be that much more difficult to the vulnerable in our community without your assistance.

- Aaron & Kirstie Blabey
- Blue Mountains Food Cooperative
- Blue Mountains TAFE (Natalie with Students and Staff)
- Commonwealth Bank
- Community Smiles
- Mission Possible—Food Solutions
- Penrith Panthers—Glenbrook
- Ray White Blackheath
- Rotary Club of Central Blue Mountains
- Share the Dignity
- The Christadelphian's
- The Knitwits
- Wentworth Falls Community Hub @ Holy Trinity Church
- & to the many other individuals and groups that provide support throughout the year.

SERVICE DELIVERY 2020

To ensure safety of our clients, families and staff we altered the way we provide services to the community.

We restricted access to our buildings, limited food and other handling of emergency parcels, used teleconferencing and technology more and got introduced to the wonderful world of Zoom, MS-teams and Facebook live.

Lots of lessons have been learned along the way and we hope when a little 'normality' arises we can blend together the best of pre and post service delivery across our programs.



"I'm a very proud person. It's incredibly difficult for me to ask for help ... When I eventually made the appointment and spoke to the staff at Thrive I felt more powerful and in control of my life."



Children, Young People & Parents

This year has seen us funded through the Department of Communities and Justice to provide **Targeted Earlier Intervention** with a 5 year contract. From 1 July 2020 the TEI program will replace our Families NSW and our **Blue Mountains & Lithgow** Child Youth Families Services (Early Intervention Placement). We have negotiated to include some of our support initiatives and services we were previously funded to provide previously such as drop-in, energy vouchers and material aid. This is very positive as it allows us to provide a bigger picture of some the other support service we provide in our communities that are provided with little or no funding.

Blue Mountains

A combination of individual family work and case management was provided to families that included advice & referral, assessment, goal planning, client focused work and home visiting. With some creative thought we provided group work around parenting (inc. 1-2-3 Magic, No Scaredy Cats, Keeping Children Safe), children's groups (Kraffy Kids, Litwits, anxiety groups, Rocket Man), creative activities (inc. Mother's Day, activity packs and Easter celebration) and supported playgroups (Blackheath at Blackheath Public School and Culture Club multicultural playgroup). We also partnered to assist with school transition programs and with MOCS for Parenting Young.

Lithgow

Lithgow experienced serious impacts of bushfires this year however our workers still focused on providing individual family work, case management, group activities and other support to children and families. Thrive Lithgow also provides programs to young high schoolers that include health & wellbeing workshops and activities. With partnerships at local schools including Coerwull Public we have been able to facilitate the Aboriginal Playgroup, Breakfast Club for young children, wellbeing workshops and Back to School cards (in partnership with DC&J, Coerwull School, FRRR and LINC). Our workers have also run children's groups (Litwits, Keeping Children Safe, Parenting with ADHD & so much more.

This year we also provided:

Family fun activities * school holiday activities * material assistance * Christmas hampers with toys * activity packs dropped to homes * arts & craft on-line activities * storytelling videos on Facebook live



Child Protection Week 2019

DROP-IN & PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Our valuable drop-in program provides information, advice & referral to relevant programs and services, advocacy, Linker & practical support through drop-in service in Katoomba or provided to our Lithgow families via their family worker. Although we had to adapt service delivery this year we continued to provide ongoing support throughout the year without closing but ensure safety and hygiene practices were adhered to.

Thank you to our major partners and champions for their ongoing support of donations and goods to help us help those in need in our communities.

Assistance provided included: Voucher assistance for gas, electricity, water usage & Telstra; Emergency Relief food cards; emergency food parcels; firewood vouchers (when available); Christmas hampers, Share the Dignity bags & women's sanitary products; 'homelessness' support with basic toiletry and bathroom items; fresh fruit, vegetables & bread (provided by WNC's fresh food program); blankets, clothing & knitted goods; FRRR back to school vouchers for students at primary & high school; and school packs.



Family Housing & Homelessness support

We have been fortunate enough to partner with **Mission Australia** to provide **Specialist Homelessness Services** (SHS) program for families in the Blue Mountains who are at risk or are homeless. With the Thrive Housing program we have been able to provide support through for families to maintain their current tenancy or other assistance such as support with housing providers, advocacy, practical aid, referrals and linkages with other service providers, etc. Our housing team also case manage families in our transitional properties and crisis property, and with diminishing housing stock available for our families our SHS workers continue to liaise and work close with local real estate providers & other housing support services to advocate for families and try to achieve the best possible outcomes for them and their children.

"The practical help and compassion the workers have given me is just priceless, especially my housing case worker. She has tirelessly advocated for me when I was too broken to advocate for myself."



The Drive Program aims to support and empower women who have or are affected by domestic or family violence &/or financially disadvantaged by helping them gain their provisional driver's licence, gain confidence & increase self-esteem and increase safety & independence for them and their family. We were fortunate to receive funding for Drive Blue Mountains from **Womens NSW**, and Drive was brought to Lithgow with funding by **DC&J** and we continue to receive ongoing support from Andrew & Cameron from **Blue Mountains Mazda**. However with the impact of bushfire, drought and COVID-19 our usual fundraising activities & more competitive grant opportunities have seen a decline in available funding which threatens Drive's future. Please contact us if you would to donate to help keep Drive support women & their families.

