



**YWCA** | HUNTER  
REGION INC



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

103RD  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

YWCA Hunter acknowledges the original custodians of the land we operate on, the Awabakal and Worimi peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the First Nations peoples of Australia.

# About YWCA Hunter



**Our mission is to support, empower, and connect women and families for a stronger community.**

Strengthened by Christian heritage and enriched by worldwide membership, YWCA Hunter is part of a global membership-based movement of women and girls that promotes women's leadership and gender equality.

The World YWCA is one of the world's largest and oldest women's organisations with a global reach of 25 million women and girls in over 125 countries. It advocates for peace, justice, human rights and care of the environment, and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women for over 150 years. The World YWCA develops women's leadership to find local solutions to the global inequalities they face.

Within Newcastle and the wider Hunter region, YWCA Hunter has been supporting and working with women and families for over 100 years. Commencing operations in 1921, the YWCA offered club rooms, a cafeteria, classes and a variety of activities open to all people. In moving with recognised community needs, YWCA Hunter currently provides services that address needs in the community.

As the community grows and changes, YWCA Hunter looks toward continuing to nurture emerging needs in partnership with other aligned organisations to support, empower and connect women and families for a stronger community.

# Our Values



## **RESPECT**

We demonstrate respect in all interactions and behaviours. This includes the acknowledgment of the traditional owners of the land and our commitment to Indigenous recognition and reconciliation.



## **INTEGRITY**

We are honest, open and transparent in our communications and behaviour.



## **EMPOWERMENT**

We envisage a world where women have the power to act on their own authority in a self-determined manner; to exercise their rights and to be full and equal members of society.



## **CONNECTION**

We aim to contribute to the building of a strong community that is inclusive, accepting and appreciative of diversity.



## **EQUITY**

We endeavour to ensure that personal or social circumstances such as gender, sexual identity, ethnic origin, family background or disability are not obstacles to participating in our programs and services, and that all are given the assistance they require to find enjoyment and success in their participation and interaction with YWCA Hunter.

# Executive Director's Report

2025 has been a transformative year for YWCA Hunter Region a year defined by renewal, resilience, and reconnection with our community. We've breathed new life into The Y, revitalising our branding, programs, and presence to better reflect the vibrant, inclusive, and empowering organisation we are proud to be.

Listening deeply to our community has been at the heart of our approach. In response to feedback, we've expanded our weekly timetable to offer a diverse range of classes and community events, Monday through Friday. This commitment to accessibility and relevance has seen the return of ENCORE in the Hunter stronger and more impactful than ever. As custodians of this life changing program, we are proud to ensure its continued growth and accessibility across the region, supporting women through their breast cancer recovery journey.

Our partnerships with local sporting groups and schools have flourished, with court hire remaining strong throughout the year. Despite the challenges posed by the East Coast flooding, Y Hunter remained a steadfast presence our doors stayed open, providing a safe and welcoming space for all.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Natalie Smith our Operations Manager, a cornerstone of our team, whose unwavering dedication, passion, and "can-do" spirit have been instrumental to our success. We look forward to celebrating Nat's 10-year anniversary with Y Hunter in January 2026 a milestone that reflects her incredible contribution.



**CAZ O'BRIEN**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

In August, we welcomed Tracy-Anne Mulder to the newly created role of Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator. Tracy has already made a significant impact, bringing fresh energy to our Walk for ENCORE initiative and driving forward our brand visibility and fundraising efforts as we look ahead to 2026.



Our ENCORE Facilitators, Community Class Facilitators, and Volunteers are the heart and soul of Y Hunter. Your generosity, commitment, and passion are the threads that weave our community together thank you for showing up, time and again, with purpose and heart.

To our members, program and class participants, tenants, and court hirers thank you for choosing to stand with a long-standing, local not-for-profit. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected Hunter Region. Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to our corporate partners, donors, and grant providers including Good Things Foundation, Newcastle Racecourse, ARTC, Grill'd, Go Kindy, Yancoal, Leah Jay, and Salt Property for your belief in our mission and your investment in our community.

# President's Report

2025 has been a year of growth, change, and reaffirmation of the core values of YWCA Hunter. Decisions regarding programs, operational matters, and Board deliberations have consistently been grounded in our mission to support, empower, and connect.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Caz O'Brien, now in her second year, YWCA Hunter has continued to strengthen its operational foundations while advancing strategic priorities. Caz's stewardship has brought clarity, consistency, and a values-driven approach to our organisational culture. The appointment of Tracey Mulder as Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator marks a strategic investment in our capacity to engage stakeholders, diversify revenue streams, and amplify our visibility. Natalie Smith, our long-serving Operations Manager, continues to exemplify operational excellence and mission alignment, with nine years of service that reflect deep institutional knowledge and unwavering dedication.

This year, we proudly inaugurated our annual Walk for Encore - a signature fundraising and awareness initiative designed to raise the profile of our evidence-based Encore program for breast cancer survivors. The event not only generated vital funds to expand program accessibility across the region but also served as a strategic platform to enhance public engagement and reinforce our brand identity.



**LISA MATZANKE**  
**PRESIDENT & SECRETARY**

Board renewal has been a key focus in 2025, ensuring we maintain a diverse, skilled, and future-focused governance body. We welcomed Camille Anderson as Treasurer, alongside Angela Tapp, Jason Robson, and Amelia Atkinson as Non-Executive Directors. Their expertise strengthens our strategic capacity and commitment to strong governance.

We also farewelled Shannon Whyte, Candice Crawford, Audrey Brown, Sally Bingham and Brooke Arcia, whose voluntary service and leadership have contributed meaningfully to our governance evolution and community outreach. On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere appreciation for their commitment to advancing the mission of YWCA Hunter.

In alignment with our strategic intent, the Board and senior leadership team participated in a facilitated Strategic Planning Day led by Louise Holcroft of Winton Consulting. This session provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on our organisational trajectory, recalibrate priorities, and ensure our programs and services remain responsive to community needs. The outcomes of this session will inform our strategic plan and guide future investment decisions.

Stepping into the role of President in June 2025 gave me the chance to build a meaningful connection with our sister organisation, YWCA Canberra. Together with Caz O'Brien, I met with their CEO and President to strengthen professional ties and gain a deeper appreciation of the organisation's history. This engagement reaffirmed the shared values and collective purpose that unite us as affiliates of a global movement committed to gender equity and social justice.

It has been a privilege to serve as President of YWCA Hunter. I am continually inspired by the dedication of our Board, Executive Director, and staff, and deeply grateful for the support of our members, volunteers, corporate partners, and broader community. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain focused on strategic growth, impact measurement, and deepening our connection with those we serve.



# Our Impact

2024 - 2025



1,944

**Total attendances recorded across all sessions**

182

**Classes and sessions  
delivered to the community**



20,100+

**Individuals connected with YWCA Hunter online**

One of our most cherished initiatives is **ENCORE** which we have been delivering for over 27 years – a FREE, 8 week gentle exercise and wellness program designed specifically for women who have experienced breast cancer. **ENCORE** helps participants regain mobility, build strength, boost body image & self-esteem, relieve discomfort associated with surgery & treatment, and connect with others who share a similar experience in a supportive environment.

### ENCORE FACILITATORS



**YELA WILSON**



**CINDY CAWSEY**



**JODIE STANDEN**

### ENCORE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*The Experts behind ENCORE*



**DR CLAIRE  
TREADGOLD**



**PROF SANDI  
HAYES**



**PROF NEIL  
PILLAR**



**ASSOC PROF LOUISE  
KOELMEYER**



**HILDEGARD  
REUL-HIRCHE**

Following a national review, YWCA Australia made the difficult decision to discontinue the Encore program across the country. To ensure its continuation in our local community, YWCA Hunter took over ownership of the program, allowing Encore to remain available to women in the Hunter region.

Our Lived Experience Group was established to bring together a group of incredible women who have previously participated in the Encore program. These inspiring ladies play an important role in providing ideas for program improvement, helping to identify new locations, and were instrumental in launching our inaugural Walk for Encore. They continue to be our greatest advocates and supporters.



In April, Encore was launched in **Singleton** for the very first time, an exciting milestone made possible through the generous support of **Yancoal MTW**. The program achieved outstanding outcomes for participants, as reflected in the [2025 Singleton Outcomes Report](#).



## “The Encore Program was a lifeline.

Through the 8 week program of exercise, information exchange and social networking, my knowledge and confidence improved enormously. But it was the inclusive way that we all engaged with one another that was so very special.

Through these interactions and shared experience it was easy to see a way forward.”

Judy Wells, Encore participant

Encore was launched at **West Wallsend** in October and was fully booked shortly after registrations opened, demonstrating the strong community demand for the Encore program. This delivery was made possible through the generous support of our corporate partner, **Go Kindy**.



## Saturday 25 October 2025

We held our inaugural 3km **Walk for Encore** community walk to raise vital funds for **ENCORE** - supporting women as they rebuild strength, confidence, and connection after breast cancer.

**Date:** Saturday, 25 October 2025 | **Time:** 8:00 AM | **Starting Point:** Empire Park, Bar Beach  
**Route:** Walk to Merewether SLSC and return  
**Goal:** Raise funds to ensure ENCORE remains free and accessible to all participants  
**Amount raised:** \$19,536.32

Walk for ENCORE was more than a fundraiser—it was a celebration of resilience, recovery, and the power of community. Every step that was taken helped ensure that women in the Hunter Region can access life-changing support, free from financial barriers.



Walk for ENCORE was launched as our major annual fundraiser. Thanks to our corporate sponsors Salt Property & Leah Jay.



# SheStrength

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

Classes held: Mondays & Thursdays

Number of participants: 89

Attendances: 825

Number of classes held: 81

Started: October 2024

### Summary of program:

SheStrength offers an aerobic workout featuring a mix of hand weights, resistance bands, and body weight exercises.



**SheStrength has made such a difference - I'm stronger, fitter, and feel fantastic inside and out."**

**CATHY CASSIDY**

# Chair Yoga

## ENHANCE WELLBEING TODAY

Classes held: Wednesdays

Number of participants: 61

Attendances: 723

Number of classes held: 57

Started: October 2019

### Summary of program:

Chair Yoga is a perfect class for seniors or those who are less agile, as well as others who are active yoga participants. Also a great way to meet like-minded, active people in the community and form lasting friendships and healthy exercise habits!



**"My whole sense of wellbeing has improved, especially relaxing, flexibility and balance."**

**ANONYMOUS**



**“As a beginner, I find this class very inclusive and welcoming. Good for body and mind equally. Also, it’s amazing to see everyone’s progress over time, as even when we think we know a technique, then we start on the path to perfecting it, which we can see, and is very rewarding.”**

**STEVEN JENSEN**

# Tai Chi

## **DISCOVER BETTER BALANCE TODAY**

Classes held: Fridays

Number of participants: 43

Attendances: 363

Number of classes held: 32

Started: April 2023

### **Summary of program:**

Tai Chi is gentle enough to be practised by everyone, including people with limited movement, and is particularly effective in improving arthritic stiffness and developing better balance. We practice Sun Style tai chi – a higher stance, less kicking and punching, all movements have the same tempi, and a very strong Qigong emphasis making it more popular for mature participants.

## Digital Skills

### **INTERACTIVE SESSIONS FOR PEOPLE 50YRS+**

Sessions held: Thursdays, every six weeks

Number of participants: 12

Number of classes held: 3

Started: February 2025

### **Summary of program:**

The program includes a series of FREE digital mentoring sessions aimed at helping older adults build their digital skills and confidence.



 **Good Things**

 Australian Government

**Be Connected**  
Every Australian online.

# Open Social Sessions

We offer open social sessions for all ages. A fun way to stay active and meet new people! A variety of sessions are held throughout the year that endeavor to bring improved well being, inclusion and a sense of belonging.



## Rollerskating

### **EASY INDOOR CASUAL ROLLERSKATING SESSIONS**

Sessions held: Mondays  
Number of participants: 12  
Started: February 2025

#### **Summary of sessions:**

Our basketball court turns into a skating area for everyone, from beginners to experts. Inline and quad skaters are welcome.



## Pickleball

### **INCLUSIVE CASUAL & FUN PICKLEBALL SESSIONS**

Sessions held: Fridays  
Number of participants: 6  
Started: August 2025

#### **Summary of sessions:**

A fun way to stay active and meet new people! Pickleball is ideal for people of all fitness levels, including seniors. It's a fun, relaxed way to incorporate exercise into your day!

# Services

We provide affordable short term accommodation and basketball court hire at Dawson Street, Cooks Hill



## **Basketball Court Hire**

**Users:** 27 total – 17 regular hirers and 10 casual (one-off) users.  
**Location:** Cooks Hill.  
**Facility:** Full-size indoor basketball court.  
**Usage:** basketball, pickleball, yoga, dancing, tai chi and a range of other activities.  
**Pricing:** competitive hourly rates.



## **Accommodation**

**Location:** Cooks Hill.  
**Property Type:** Sharehouse.  
**Residents:** Five mature women.  
**Rooms:** Two small, two large, and one extra-large bedroom.  
**Facilities:** Shared kitchen, bathroom, and laundry amenities.  
**Features:** Convenient inner-city location, just one block from Darby Street.  
**Leases:** Short-term leases available for women of all ages.

# Support

Some of the financial support we have received this year...

We are very thankful to the NSW Government-Office of Sport for awarding us a Defibrillator Grant. Thanks to this support, we've been able to purchase a defib for our basketball court! 2024-25 Local sport Defibrillator Grant



We are very thankful to the Australian Government-Department of Industry, Science & Resources for awarding us an Energy Efficiency Grant. Thanks to this support, we've been able to replace our fluorescent lighting with energy-efficient LEDs. We now enjoy lower energy bills and are contributing to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Win win!

# Board Members

Our Board of Directors has a diverse background, ages and experiences who share a common passion for social justice and supporting women to fulfil their potential.

We also sincerely thank Sally Bingham, Brooke Arcia, Audrey Brown, Shannon Whyte and Candice Crawford for their dedicated service and valuable contributions during their time on the Board.

A special mention to Andrea Fernandes whose time on the Board has come to an end. Thanks for everything you've contributed to the Y Hunter over the past three and a half years. Your passion, insight, and commitment have left a lasting impact.



**CAZ O'BRIEN**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**LISA MATZANKE**

PRESIDENT & SECRETARY



**CAMILLE ANDERSON**

TREASURER



**ANDREA FERNANDES**

GENERAL BOARD MEMBER



**ANGELA TAPP**

GENERAL BOARD MEMBER



**AMELIA ATKINSON**

GENERAL BOARD MEMBER



**JASON ROBSON**

GENERAL BOARD MEMBER

# Our Team

What a great team we have – our wonderful staff, contractors and volunteers, who are dedicated, passionate, enthusiastic and hard working.



**CAZ O'BRIEN**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**NATALIE SMITH**

OPERATIONS MANAGER



**TRACY MULDER**

FUNDRAISING &  
MARKETING  
COORDINATOR



**YELA WILSON**

ENCORE FACILITATOR &  
CHAIR YOGA INSTRUCTOR



**CINDY CAWSEY**

ENCORE FACILITATOR



**JODIE STANDEN**

ENCORE FACILITATOR &  
SHESTRENGTH  
INSTRUCTOR



**DONNA LAVELL**

SHESTRENGTH  
INSTRUCTOR



**LORRAINE NORTON**

TAI CHI INSTRUCTOR



**CATHY CASSIDY**

VOLUNTEER

# Financial Statements

**For the Year Ended 30 June 2025**

YWCA Hunter Region Inc.  
ABN 72 582 209 745

**GoodCOM Audit & Assurance**

**Scan the QR Code to view**





**YWCA** | HUNTER  
REGION INC

**SUPPORT.  
EMPOWER.  
CONNECT.**



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