

Caretakers Cottage

Annual General Meeting October 2020



Entity



Options

Caretakers Bondi



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Agenda

Attendance

Apologies

Previous minutes

Reports

Chairperson Sarah Barclay

Treasurer Tomas Rowlandson

CEO Laurie Matthews

Program reports

Bondi Crisis Alike Filis

Entity Julie Booter

Options Angus Megarrity

Election

Nominations received a)

The President

b) The Vice President

c) The Secretary

d) The Assistant Secretary (Optional)

e) The Treasurer

f) The Assistant Treasurer (Optional)

g) The Public Officer

h) Five other Board Members

i) Two Ex-Officio Members

j) A Client Representative (optional)

Meeting concludes Next AGM 20th October 2021

A quorum was present and the meeting opened at 6:28pm. Sarah Barclay appointed meeting Chair.

1. Acknowledgement of Country – Sarah acknowledged Country.

2. Attendance

Laurie Matthews	CEO
Aliki Filis	Manager, Caretakers Crisis Refuge
Angus Megarrity	Manager, Options Youth Support
Sarah Barclay	Member, Chair
Tomas Rowlandson	Member, Treasurer
Andrew O'Brien	Member
Kirk Darby	Options
Jane Tucker	Options
Wayne Evans	Observer
Damiya Hayden	Minute-taker

3. Apologies

Christina Hough	Member
Tim Counter	District Commissioning and Planning Officer, DCJ
Natalie Bradbury	Member
Julie Booler	Manager, Entity
Michelle Zeltzer	Member

4. Minutes of 2018 AGM

Tomas moved to accept the minutes, Sarah seconded. Minutes accepted as a true record of the previous AGM.

5. Chairperson's report – Sarah Barclay **6. CEO Report – Laurie Matthews** Angus moved to accept the report, Andrew seconded. Report accepted.

7. Treasurer's Report – Tomas Rowlandson

Tomas gave a verbal report. Sarah moved to accept the report, Andrew seconded. Report accepted.

8. Timothy Counter, Commissioning and Planning Officer, Sydney, SES & Northern Sydney District, DCJ

Timothy sent his apologies. Laurie reported on relationship with DCJ and future discussions.

9. Election of Board

Damiya appointed Returning Officer. All positions spilled.

Nominations received:

Chairperson: Sarah Barclay

Treasurer: Tomas Rowlandson

General Members: Natalie Bradbury

Andrew O'Brien

Christina Hough

Results: Sarah elected Chair. Tomas elected Treasurer. Natalie, Andrew and Christina elected as general members of the Board. 3 casual vacancies remain on the Board.

10. Company limited by guarantee

Motion - That the proposed resolution to transition to a Company Limited by Guarantee is endorsed by this AGM.

Proposed resolution

The proposed resolution to be considered and voted on at the general meeting as a special resolution is as follows:

“That for the purposes of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW), the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) (Corporations Act) and for all other purposes:

(a) Subject to approval of resolution

(b) The Association’s application for transfer of registration as an incorporated association under the NSW Act to a company limited by guarantee (Company) under the Corporations Act be authorised; and

(c) With effect from the date of registration as a company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act:

i. The proposed name of the Association as a Company be ‘Caretakers Cottage Limited’; ii. The existing Rules and Objects of the Association be repealed; and iii. The new constitution (including the new Objects) be adopted as the constitution of the Company in the form set out in a template constitution.’ Motion moved by Sarah, seconded by Andrew. Resolved.

11. Other business

Angus thanked the Board and fellow managers & staff.

Meeting closed 7:02pm

Chairperson Report Sarah Barclay

It is my pleasure to introduce the Caretaker's Cottage 2019 to 2020 Annual Report and what a year it has been. I'm sure no-one could have predicted the extraordinary events we have experienced over the past year. From November to February the NSW skies were filled with smoky haze during an unprecedented bush fires season that saw fires burning out of control across NSW.

Then early in 2020 the emergence of a virulent respiratory virus, COVID-19, led to the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organisation and ensuing lockdowns within most countries across the world, limiting public movement and closing businesses with a devastating economic impact.

The true impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is probably yet to be seen, although the lockdown period in Australia has highlighted the vulnerabilities in our marketdominated society, amplifying the social isolation and loneliness faced by the more vulnerable in our communities and leading to an increase in reports of domestic and family violence. Added to an extreme affordability crisis and increasing pressure within households and families, the impact of COVID-19 will be felt by many long beyond the immediate challenges of the lockdown.

I have been immensely proud of our team's strong response to the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 in delivering homeless and out-of-home-care services to vulnerable children and young people in need. Utilising our Business Continuity Plan during the initial hard lockdown, the crisis refuge worked well with a group of young people who were very understanding and cooperative from the outset. As Bondi was a major hotspot there was heightened awareness which helped to manage the situation. We have become quick Zoom adopters and build a longlasting capacity to engage with clients online, adopting safe working practices to ensure we could continue to work on a rostered basis and remain open to deliver the specialist homelessness and crisis refuge services we are contracted to.

Our program development has been to see our residential Out of Home Care (OOHC) program transition to an independent Supported Independent Living program. Funding has been a significant issue as we move into a fee for service model, and we continue negotiations with the Department to establish a core base funding. This is critical should the department not fill at least 15 of our 20 placements. Our negotiations have been positive to date though not yet resolved.

We have commenced renewal of our Out of Home Care accreditation with the Office of the Children's Guardian. Our fourth accreditation renewal is a learning experience for both the Guardian team and us as our independent living program does not fit neatly into the structure. The emerging primary role of Entity is to prepare young people to exit care with the skills and supports necessary to continue to thrive. The staff have adapted to an outreach model where they are providing considerable time onsite to deliver a living skills program. The residential property in Sylvania has been retained to be the staff base and a share household for up to four young people

where some initial assessment can be made as to the appropriateness to move into a tenancy.

Caretakers and Options are commencing an accreditation process; the homelessness programs have not previously been accredited so this will bring about some cultural change with greater focus on governance. It will be interesting to see if red tape and focus on governance impacts our direct client work.

The Board had seen some reduction in size this year though it is anticipated that new members will be joining the Board at this AGM. As compliance obligations increase, we require a Board who can lead the organisation's strategic vision while sharing the responsibility for oversight with senior management. Attracting new members though a strong and vibrant organisation is a satisfying opportunity to support one's local community, and to gain experience at a director level. I am truly grateful for the input and support the current Board Directors provide and look forward to welcoming our new members.

Our access to real estate is limited as the two community housing providers we work with have limited stocks to allocate to our programs so representations have been made to the Minister for Communities and Justice and the Minister for Housing to make allocations of housing to the Community Housing Providers identified for Specialised Homeless Services and OOH programs. This is a slow process however particularly with respect to our OOH program we have no other option but to secure 16 placements.

Our Managers have worked to keep their programs on track during this turbulent year. Julie in her Entity OOH role has done well to convert her residential program to an independent living program. Aliko has been managing two new programs, the Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP) and Family Outreach and Child Adolescent Service (FOCAS) both focused on restoration of young people with their families. The FOCAS Program is a brokerage model designed to engage external therapeutic services, this program is in its infancy and we are currently exploring the appropriateness of using external consultants in our refuge setting. The HYAP program is a very successful model in which a family counsellor and a social worker/counsellor work with parents and young people to reduce the number of young people coming into care or homelessness.

As we have been a long-term homelessness accommodation program we have made the decision to join the National redress scheme should issues come to light. Financially we are in a sound position, have budgeted to our funding and will have come out with a near zero balance, a great step forward for the organisation when compared to previous years.

Thanks to our partners Ted Noffs who deliver some of our crisis accommodation through our SHS contract, to SGCH and Bridge Housing, our Community Housing Providers providing tenancy management services for our crisis properties and to our local and district offices at the Department for their continued support and

collaboration. And our great friend at Jonson have continued to put on our annual Christmas party though this year covid has put paid to further celebrations.

Thank you to the Board for their continued efforts to provide strategic leadership and governance, and to Laurie and the staffing team for their continued commitment to delivering high quality support and accommodation, ensuring the young people who we work with have access to the same opportunities, experiences and stability we take for granted when growing up and learning to live independently.

Treasurer Report

It is with great pleasure I present the 2020 financial year results for Caretakers Cottage. Unfortunately, Caretakers declared a comprehensive loss of \$72,032 (2019: surplus of \$889,849) for the year ending 30 June 2020. However, Caretakers continues to remain in a sound financial position, with sufficient cash set aside to cover future contingences.

While there has been a net increase in cash of \$468,205, 38% is attributable to receiving government grants in advance.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the state government's pilot program Family Outreach Child Adolescent Service (FOCAS) did not proceed. Funds allocated to FOCAS were repurposed into a brokerage model to assist organisations purchase goods and services for clients to help negate the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Due to the funds being strictly limited to brokerage, Caretakers sought an exemption to hire a psychologist to provide inhouse mental health services to clients impacted by COVID-19. Unfortunately approval was not granted leaving Caretakers in a difficult position regarding how best to utilise the funds, given strict limitations and reporting requirements.

In the second half of the year, Entity commenced operations as a Supported Independent Living Service (SILS) provider. This change in service delivery has also introduced a new funding arrangement, whereby it has been difficult to secure sustainable base funding for Entity. At present, should Entity not be referred enough clients, Caretakers would operate at a loss unsustainable in the long term.

As outcome-based funding becomes more prevalent in the sector, I am pleased to report Caretakers continues to diversify income sources by being more proactive in investing surplus funds. This has resulted in an additional \$13,847 (2019: \$26,867) being gained from interest on term deposits.

In a year marked by global uncertainty and disruption, Caretakers is overall in an excellent financial position and I would like to thank all staff for their flexibility in continually adapting to the constantly evolving situation.

Tomas Rowlandson Treasurer

CEO Report 2020 Laurie Matthews

I would like to start by thanking those who have supported Caretaker Cottage and its programs during 2019 -20 and first are our ever understanding team of Tim Counter Mark Spruhan and Faith Masila our contract managers and conduit into the Department of Communities and Justice. Guiding us through program change, ensuring we are up to speed on our covid19 response and assisting us to sort out the multitude of complex child protection and organisational obstacles that confront us daily and of course enable the funding to flow to keep our services meeting the needs of local young people. Closer to home is our remarkable Board who patiently hear our concerns and do their best to keep the programs on track. Our governance response has certainly been enhanced with Tomas keeping us to task and Sarah being available and supportive as Chairperson for another year Christina and Andrew have learned more about our programs and contributed enormously to the strategic planning and service development.

Brent from the crisis service has left working full time for us though continues working casual shifts. Kirk has left Options to move to Dubbo with his partner and has job options in that area. Our star admin worker Damiya has left us for greener pastures and we have welcomed Sharon to the team. We have welcomed new team members George Tatch and Blake. We have remarkable teams in all of our programs who continue on to become long term workers which I can only put down to their involvement remaining rewarding and important, all of the program changes have been embraced though unfortunately covid has limited the capacity to have staff lunches at local restaurants. Our 3 managers Alikie Julie and Angus have held their teams together through covid and implemented major changes in program design whilst maintaining service provision and well functions teams.

Our Peak bodies Yfoundations and ACWA continue to represent the sector to government and ensure cohesion between the sector. The development of under 16s policy and the role out of the new Out Of Home Care model has been vital to ensure continuity and the Australian Services Union has been working to ensure at least some indexation this year.



COVID

This year has been dominated by covid19 with though I believe we have risen to the challenge and created safe programs for young people and staff to work. One aspect of the pandemic has been the overwhelming amount of information coming from NSW Health, Communities and Justice, the media and peoples' experiences. Covid plans have been written up for each program and rewritten as new information comes forward. We have been able to devise effective ways to enable clients to selfisolate if they are over 16 though serious issues arise for under 16 year olds as they must be in a fully supervised setting. We have reduced our intake of under 16 year olds to 2 young people at a time and they must come from the local district and be able to return to family should they need to isolate as our Bondi Rd building is not configured to enable safe isolation.

In the initial lockdown our young people handled the situation very well, Angus and the Options team received frozen meals cooked by Surry Hills group, the Too Good Company who supplied 100 meals a week for 4 weeks and have continued providing 20 meals per week for which we are truly grateful, this was supplemented with toilet paper (remember the shortages) and other cleaning and food stuffs. A great opportunity to bond more with clients. Similarly, the young people in the crisis refuge were so accepting of the situation and coped with the restrictions and the novelty of wearing masks and using hand sanitiser. We quickly set up more lap tops for young people and enabled home school work to begin as soon as their schools began providing class material and zoom workshops.

Some staff initially worked from home though are now essentially back at work in the office, we have set up more IT opportunities for the now common zoom meeting. Although zoom meetings have become the norm they do lack some of the familiarity that comes with a face to face meeting though we are learning what décor our colleagues have at home.



Focas / HYAP crisis

We have been participating in meetings with the Dept Communities and Justice and the Ombudsman to resolve a 20 year dialogue on the care and management of under 16 year olds. Some new initiatives like the HYAP program have been a great success in providing targeted early intervention and specialist family counselling. The central issue is who is responsible for the care of a child under 16. Till a Court makes a decision the parent is responsible however, if the parent is unable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibility to provide safety, housing and sustenance it becomes a child protection matter.

Our services do not have statutory responsibility so a legal question often arises from the mundane school excursion permission to more complex issues of who a child can live with particularly when their might be custody issues at play. A further complication is the funding we receive is 50/50 State and Commonwealth and the Commonwealth does not provide for the care of children, this is a state responsibility. A degree of politics comes into this as the State is always keen to shift financial responsibility to the Commonwealth and this has resulted in few services providing accommodation to under 16 year olds. Caretakers has a strong child protection grounding and a reputation for working with this cohort so we have been keen to continue with this group however, new models of service are emerging and we have been funded to provide a brokerage model of support to support more young people to remain in their family homes.

The FOCAS program is designed to fund specialist therapeutic support and some general brokerage to facilitate families to remain together. There is a covid aspect to this funding to enable better IT capacity so that zoom meetings can be continued with client and their families and to provide greater safety with providing phones and data to young people who would be assisted with this.

The HYAP program has been subject to an evaluation which is pointing to the need to redesign some elements of the program, particularly addressing the lower number of boy accessing the program and the needs of over 16's who appear to benefit from a HYAP responses. The report offers little with respect to the homelessness sector becoming a defacto child protection response to adolescent so it would appear there will be ongoing dialogue as to the role of HYAP and SHS



OOHC

Entity has been moving towards ending residential accommodation in June 2020 resulting from the recent Out of Home Tender process. We put forward an independent living proposal in which we will support young people transitioning from care to living in the community. Central to the model is the retention of our residential property in Sylvania where most clients initially settle to engage in a living skills program and the building remains the office base for the support team.

A casework team provide initial assessments to establish suitability for the referred young people are sufficiently skilled to live independently and then work through

case plans that address education employment and management of matters including NDIS applications. We continue to have a youthwork team though their roles have changed somewhat to the provision of independent living skills development, they visit clients regularly and assist with the day to day living experience, there is still a need for workers to provide overnight supervision in out residential house while our new residents are coming to grips with the responsibility of independent living. I am optimistic that this program will flourish and provide an effective way for many young people to transition safely from care.

We have signed MOU's with Bridge Housing and St George Housing to provide properties for up to 20 young people however these properties are often short term tenancies so representations have been made the Minister for Communities and Justice and the Minister for Housing NSW seeking allocation of properties specifically for young people in care. This would parallel the allocation that is made to the Specialist Homelessness sector.

The Department of Communities and Justice have needs that are beyond the capacity of a transitional housing program, there is little point in referring high needs clients who cannot safely live independently though they continue to be referred into the program. We are acutely aware of the pressure the departmental staff are under to find placements for these client however, there is a need for continued conversation to develop viable residential support for these young people.

Funding of our program is still not resolved as the Department decided that SILS programs should be funded on a fee for service basis, this does not work in a situation where relationships with clients need to be nurtured. Given that we have contracted to accommodate up to 20 young people we need a team of 3 caseworkers and 4 youth workers so should be funded for less than 15 young people the model is not viable; I am heartened that the Department are keen to resolve our funding to ensure stability.

A major effort was put into assisting another agency this year that was not continuing residential programs, a consequence of this change would have been that no residential programs would have been offered east of Blacktown thus leaving the east coast of the city without any providers, the prospect of a young person from the Eastern Suburbs being uprooted for school and all other supports to be placed 40 KMs across the city seemed to be a major loss. To follow through with this plan we would have had to cannibalise our new independent living program to fund this so we pulled out of what could have been a major development for Caretakers into the inner West. Currently we have a very small inner west footprint with our HYAP program. The Burdekin Association finally stepped in and have taken up this program.

Accreditation

The coming year will see a lot of work by staff and Board members so attain accreditation through the Office of the Children's Guardian for our new Out of Home Care supported independent living program, Entity. This process is in progress and has created some new issues with our change from a residential program to a supported independent living program. No other agencies provide just an

independent living program so the change of model to a completely new model is presenting some challenges to the accreditation process.

Julie and Jo have put in an incredible amount of work to modify policy and procedures to match the new program though we have not completed the process at this time, we are well on the way. This has been a learning experience for both the Children's Guardian and our team so one outcome will be the adaption of the accreditation process to suit this model of care.

Our Specialist Homelessness Services, Caretakers Crisis, Options and HYAP programs are entering into an accreditation process for the first time. This will be a big commitment from staff and the Board as all of our policy will need to be reviewed and actioned to generate evidence of use. Our organisation has really grown in a very organic way over the years as we have not had a prescribed model to follow so by the end of this process we will be able to equate ourselves with the best of organisations.

We will need to upgrade some of our IT processes including moving to a cloud based data management system, most likely Office 365. This goes hand in hand with our covid response for some staff to work from home as in this scenario workers need to be able to access systems and resources.

Caretakers Cottage has made application to be registered in the National Redress Scheme to ensure that should any abuse in care matters arise we will be well positioned and resourced to support any such victims. This is the right thing for our organisation to do.

Our Board of Management is going through some renewal this year so there will be a steep learning curve for some and some new insights and skills to guide us. The accreditation process is heavily geared towards the governance of the organisation ensuring all of the appropriate policies are in place and ore overseen with a new level of vigour. The Board this year has managed a considerable change in programs and have given much lea way to staff to explore growth options with DCJ and others. Our financial oversight has improved with budgets being close to actual outcomes and improved financial reporting. The Board worked through a strategic planning process with Sue Leahy.

The coming year will continue to provide opportunities for the Board to influence and shape our direction by participation in the accreditation process and helping to bed down our new procedures. There is scope for new subcommittees to be formed to address HR, finance and fundraising/PR but most importantly there will be the great task of ensuring we have a competent and capable organisation to address the needs of young people and their families who are struggling.



Some areas of concern have emerged over the year particularly in the care of young people with disabilities. Our team have learned a lot about the process of gaining assessments for the NDIS, this is complex and requires considerable commitment from both staff and clients as the system is geared very much towards compliant and willing participants. Access to NDIS does not assure the supports our clients require, there is no residential capacity, rather wrap around supports to assist clients live in the community, possibly suitable for a young adult though not at all suitable for a young person beginning the journey through psychosis or not having the intellectual capacity to fend for themselves.

The coming year will see the recommissioning of our SHS programs so this will be a good opportunity to rejig our funding to ensure Options has a greater case management and administrative capacity. We are moving into an outcomes funding model which on the surface seems reasonable however, it is not possible to employ staff on a casual basis to provide casework and consistent youthwork support.



Options Youth Support Annual Program Report 2019/20

While the 2019/20 financial year has been a challenging one for the world at large, the challenges it has presented have been exponentially increased for vulnerable young people and for the services supporting them.

Covid-19 has made it difficult for young people to gain or sustain employment, studies have shifted to online spaces requiring young people to be robustly digitally connected, volunteerism opportunities have all but ceased, and social and community connections have been disrupted for long periods. Young people have become isolated, disconnected from many of their regular supports, and more than ever, have been forced to fend for themselves while the world around them has been in turmoil and a state of constant flux. While these challenges in isolation are hard to overcome or to navigate through, they have also acted as compounding factors to the myriad mental health complexities a significant majority of Options clients already face.

As a service, Options has had to become more flexible and adapt to periods of remote working utilising digital connectivity to stay available in support of the client group. Once back on site, Covid-safe practices have had to be implemented and the team and the young people it supports have all actively engaged in keeping everyone safe from potential Covid transmission. Thankfully, over recent months, things have returned to a greater semblance of normalcy, but it is safe to say that this year has been one of the most challenging periods of the program's long history as a result of Covid disruption.

While many of the young people we support have faced increased mental health stressors this past year, it is a testament to their individual and collective resilience that there have been minimal major safety concerns among the client group.

I would like to personally thank every one of the young people Options have supported this year. It would have been understandable to have faced some extremely challenging client safety issues due to environmental stressors, but it is evident that everyone has done their level best to stay positive and to remain engaged with their supports through Options. For this, the Options team are extremely proud and grateful.

Of course, I must also thank the amazing case work team at Options for their commitment and hard work through the year. Alexis, Blake, Dafna, Jane and Kirk

have all worked extremely hard through some very challenging times and have done everything within their power to keep the program running as smoothly as possible and to ensure the young people within it have been as safe, healthy, happy and well as possible. Thank you all. You each did a great job.

Covid-19

The Options team have done an exemplary job of staying Covid-safe and continue to remain vigilant of the lingering risk of community transmission of Covid-19. Social distancing, daily cleaning routines, effective hand washing and hand sanitizing, face mask wearing and visitor sign in logs all remain active controls geared toward keeping the health and safety of all.

It is expected that the range of Covid-safe controls will continue indefinitely while there is still a present danger of community transfer. The Options team commitment to keeping everyone Covid-safe, deserves recognition.

My additional thanks to DCJ for the continuing information and guidance on Covidsafe practices in the SHS context, to the Caretakers Cottage Incorporated Board, CEO Laurie Matthews, Aliko Filis (Caretakers Cottage Crisis Refuge Manager) and Julie Booler (Entity Manager) for their ongoing support and contributions to our program level and organisational Covid-safe responses.

Continuous improvement and accreditation preparation

While focusing on supporting the delivery of 'business as usual', Options have continued to focus in on program refinement utilising client feedback, internal team reflection, data analysis, and industry reviews. These efforts have resulted in the development of several new policies, the review and refinement of many others, and the further refinement of the Options living skills program.

As the broader organisation heads into our SHS accreditation in the coming year and beyond, the work that has been conducted by the Options team in this space will prove invaluable and I hope, will buffer some of the increasing workload that rests with the organisations leadership team in preparing for and successfully completing accreditation.

Stakeholder relationships

Bridge Housing:

Covid-19 has caused a significant upheaval to Bridge Housings service provision and this has had a significant impact on the Options program due to the interconnectedness of the organisations in the delivery of the Options program. It has been difficult for our Housing Manager to be as present and accountable as they had prior to Covid-19 and this has created additional work for the Options team. Additionally, this has caused some additional challenges for clients in their interactions with Bridge Housing with Options needing to commit a large amount of our staffing resources toward advocating on behalf of clients on tenancy matters.

Despite these challenges, Options are thankful to our Housing Manager Rhona Jeyakumar for her efforts in this challenging time. Overall, Options experience in working with Rhona has been the best working relationship with a Housing Manager in several years and we look forward to continuing to work with Rhona and the rest of the Bridge Housing team and hope that they may be able to return to 'business as usual' sooner rather than later.

Two Good Co.

During the early global peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Two Good Co. reached out to Options offering to provide nutritious meals for clients on a weekly basis as part of their social responsibility model.

Two Good Co. provided 100+ meals per week for a month which Options coordinated to be shared with several other youth accommodation providers including St Lawrence House and Launchpad.



Subsequently, Two Good Co. have committed to providing 20 meals per week to Options for distribution to young people in need. The Options team and the young people it supports are extremely grateful for the generosity of Two Good Co. and we look forward to continuing to work together in support of vulnerable young people.



Client stories

In conversation with the team, we decided we would like to highlight a few client stories that help showcase some of the positive outcomes from the year in review. The following are some very basic examples of positive client outcomes during the 2019/2020 financial year.

Client story 1:

This young person left numerous other accommodation services with abandonment debts and with the housing providers holding his belongings. They had been in trouble with the law, had been diagnosed with Schizophrenia, and were misusing alcohol and other drugs to self-medicate.

Since being with Options, the young person has continued to consume some alcohol, but has ceased consuming other drugs, including cigarettes.

The young person has joined a gym and has lost weight, once of their primary goals. They have secured a job and continue to work which was another of their primary goals. They have stayed out of trouble with no further engagement with police or other criminal justice systems. The young person continues to engage well with their case worker, is maintaining their home to a reasonable standard, and is getting along well with their housemate.

The young persons case worker has utilised an assertive but trauma informed approach to case work and is proud of the efforts the young person has made in making some extremely valuable changes in their life.

Client story 2:

This young person lives with an acquired brain injury and struggles with executive function and decision making. Securing and sustaining employment and engaging with studies is a challenge for the young person. After having spent two years in the Options program, they aged out of Options program eligibility but finding safe and stable alternative which met the needs of the young person was proving difficult.

The Options team, in concert with CEO Laurie Matthews were able to work collaboratively with the Bridge Housing Pathways team to assist the young person in securing safe long term housing with Housing NSW and the young person is now living independently with ongoing support from HASI and is able to live secure in the knowledge that their housing situation is no longer precarious or a lingering stressor.

Client story 3:

This young person experiences complex mental health challenges and was hospitalised multiple times over the past 6 months due to paranoid thoughts and suicidal ideation. The young person had been self-medicating with alcohol and marijuana and Options staff were concerned for the young person and worried that the young person's support needs were becoming too high for the Options program.

The Options team, with support from Bridge Housing, made the decision to move the young person from their share property to a single unit to minimise ecological risks

for the young person and their housemate, and to provide further opportunity for the young person to continue to be supported through the program and with their case worker whom they have formed a positive working relationship with.

Since moving into their single unit, the young person has reconnected with key family members, reduced their alcohol and marijuana consumption, has engaged with a counsellor, and is working toward re-entering the workforce.

Client story summary:

Collectively, the Options team see a commonly identifiable trend among many of our clients wherein they shift from striving to thriving. The team see young people beginning to understand and address their complex trauma, maladaptive coping strategies, and other barriers to higher level skills development. Improved selfregulation, the growth of interpersonal skills, independent living skills and an increasing sense of confidence are frequently seen among the client group.

On a very positive note, the 2019/20 financial year saw the highest ever number of young people exiting Options into the private rental market of any year of the program's long history. This is a testament to the hard work of the young people we have been working with, and to the efforts of the Options team.

I am grateful to the case work team for their professionalism, passion and care for the young people we are entrusted to support.

Key program statistics

Number of young people accommodated	77
Number of young people supported (including via accommodation, referrals, advocacy, etc)	191
Number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people supported	45 (included in the above statistic)

Age breakdown of young people supported	(0-5 years)	4
	(15-17 years)	19
	(18-20 years)	89
	(21-25 years)	75
	(25+ years)	4

Caretakers Cottage Crisis Refuge 2019-2020

Overview

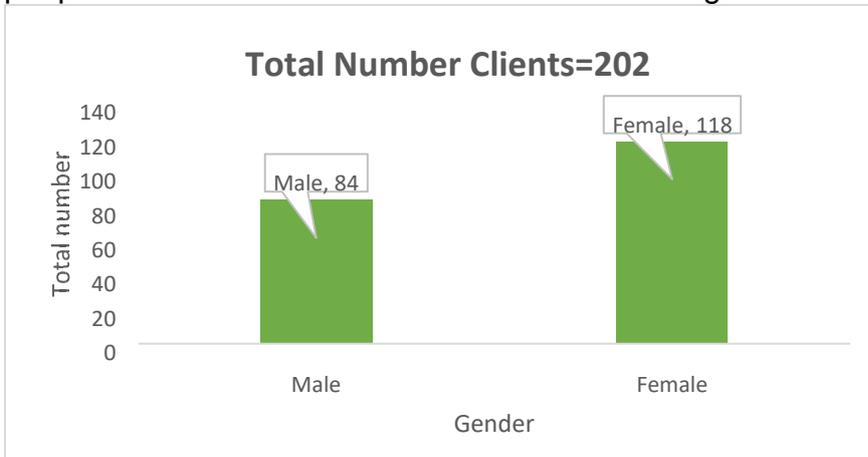
Caretakers Crisis Refuge strives to support young people aged 13 years and over who have already become homeless or whose families have reached crisis point/breakdowns and these teens are about to become homeless.

Our role is to support these young people and their families, and to develop comprehensive strategies to assist them to break the patterns contributing to their homelessness. For some of these clients, we provide a crisis bed, for others, intensive outreach support and or family therapy, or alternatively we provide short term respite breaks whilst we work on family dynamics.

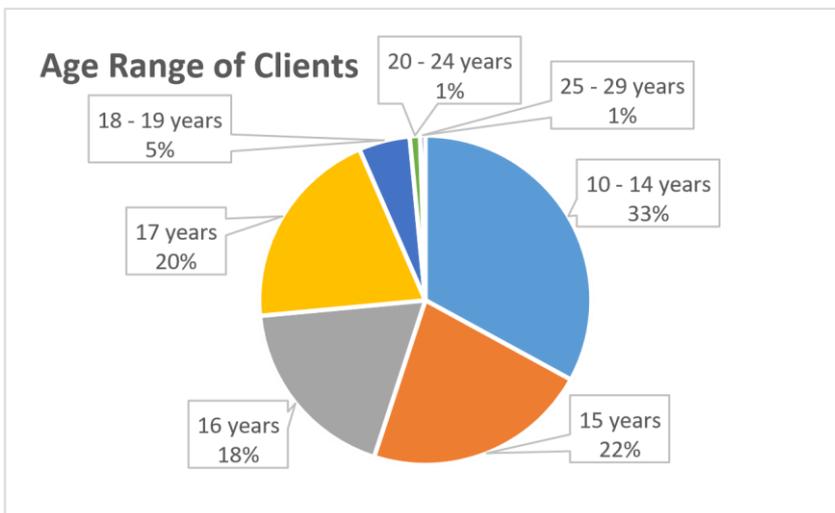
There have been additional challenges over the past year because of COVID, however, staff have risen to the challenge to continue providing a safe quality service despite the restrictions. All services provided are essentially completely back to normal now though with added safety measures.

Over the past year, Caretakers Crisis has again grown and now includes a Youth Crisis Accommodation Service, a HYAP outreach service focusing on young people under 16 years of age, an outreach Family Therapy Service, and the recent addition of the FOCAS program which includes highly specialised intensive assessment, intervention and mentoring supports for individuals as needs arise.

Over the financial year Caretakers Crisis Refuge supported a total of 202 clients. Of this total 131 were provided either crisis accommodation or short respite accommodation whilst the remaining 71 were outreach clients exclusively. On average we worked intensively between one and three months with these young people to stabilise and move them to the next stage of their lives.



A high volume of 10,112 separate units of work were undertaken by staff at Caretakers Crisis Refuge for clients over the financial year 2019-2020 .



Caretakers Crisis Refuge also saw a high percentage of high needs clients over the year. A high 52% of our clients were under the age of 16 years. Younger clients normally have higher complexity and require much higher levels of intervention because of fundamental factors such as developmental stages, maturity and so on. Our clients also included roughly 18% young people from an ATTSI background, which is another group often requiring fairly specialist intervention to ensure success of outcomes. 33% of our clients also had a pre-diagnosed mental health issues and a further 7% of our clients were young people who were in various types of Ministerial or Other Care, such as those whose foster placements or kinship care placements had broken down.

We also saw an increase in highly complex NDIS clients over the past financial year. Our NDIS clients have been surprisingly successful despite the difficulty in bringing together such a wide range of government and non government players who are required to work closely to achieve positive results.



Rosie (now 18 years)*

Rosie arrived at Caretakers when she was 16 years of age with multiple significant diagnosis including ASD, Mild Intellectual Disability, AOD and DV (both as a victim and perpetrator) and an extensive history of child protection and has been our client either residential or on outreach ever since. Only through our extensive collaboration with Area Health, DCJ, Local Police, Legal Aid, Disability advocates, Education and various community agencies, she has now gained access to the NDIS with very high wrap around supports, and has also aquired permanent community housing. This has been a very successful outcome given the complexity of her case.

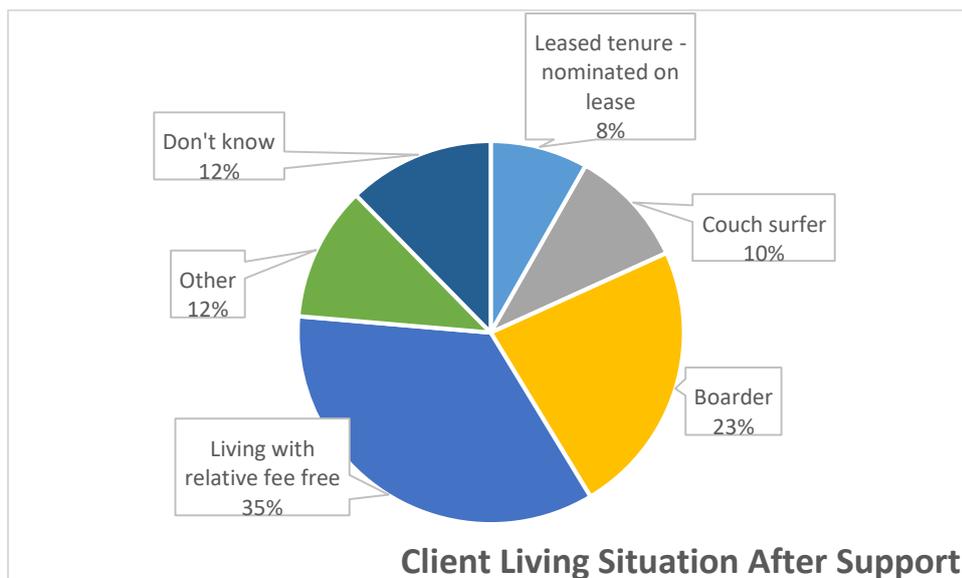
Our collaborations with all relevant services, and particularly our local services, have been strong over the year. We have continued to work closely with our mainstream services partners, including DCJ, Health and Police YLOs, as well as with a whole variety of other specialist services as varied as WAYS, Barnardo's, Tribal Warrior, Key College, other SHS and transitional services. It is only through such intensive collaborations, that successful outcomes can be achieved for our clients because of the complexity of their presenting needs.

The level of intervention varies markedly with each client and is based on client assessment and need. Although most of our clients can be stabilised and moved to the next stage within a 3 month block of intervention, a small proportion continue to require very long term involvement that can span the entire year, and in fact can be ongoing in spurts over many years.

Millie* (now 18 years)

Millie arrived at Caretakers several years ago when she was 14 years following a family breakdown. We initially provided Millie with crisis accommodation, but have been assisting her as an outreach client ever since. When she became homeless at 14, she faced an uncertain future because she was not a citizen and not eligible for financial support. This has affected her ability to access accommodation, vocational training and other supports. Caretakers, has successfully advocated for DCJ to support her in her citizenship application, in providing financial assistance for her access to transitional accommodation, and to support her to access vocational education at TAFE. She is also now engaged in therapy to address her early childhood trauma and mental health needs and still attends dinners and some of our social outings to ensure she feels connected at least with Caretakers in the absence of any other family ties.

We have also seen some strong outcomes over the year. By the end of the financial year, 35% of clients were living with a family member and 8% were either in a transitional or private rental property. 23% were still in some type of SHS emergency accommodation. Given all our clients are referred to us because they are at either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the very near future, this is a good result.



Programs

Family Therapy Program

The family therapy program at Caretakers Cottage has had a very busy but very successful story. The program works collaboratively with young people, their parents and other services. It assists with creating communication pathways and building stronger and healthier relationships between the young person, their siblings and caregivers.

The family therapy program works quite closely with the Caretakers HYAP program, here focusing on family restoration. We have seen a rise in the amount of under 16s returning home, and also a rise in this restoration being permanent. The program works in tandem with a case worker who focuses solely on the young person.

One of the major positives of the program, is its ability to give time to our clients. Case work and youth services are by definition focused on the practical and everyday tasks; family therapy offers the opportunity where young people and their families are able to stop, reflect and learn together. There has been quite a demand from the community and other services for this program. It is forecasted to continue growing and enriching our community.

Over the last financial year, we have worked with 34 families, these have been predominantly for youth under 16 (23 being 14 and 15 years old). The majority outcomes have been successful; this is either in the form of restoration or engaged with more appropriate family services. The duration of engagement has been from 1 – 12 months long, showing continuity and flexibility in service provision. The program has engaged youth from diverse sexualities and genders.

Laura* (16 years)

Laura, 15 years, presented to Caretakers Cottage looking for accommodation because she was asked to leave home due to aggression with increasing police involvement. Laura was at risk of disengaging from school and there was concern she was engaging in risk taking behaviour. She lived at home with her ailing mother and 2 siblings. Instead of accepting Laura as a resident, Caretakers instead began providing outreach family therapy to the family. The family engaged, and after 6 months, the mother reported that the conflict in the home had greatly reduced and was now rare. The family dynamic had improved and they recently also went on holidays together and this was a positive experience. Laura has reengaged with school, is not engaging in risk taking behaviour and never left the family home during this entire process.

HYAP: Program

The HYAP program has overall been quite successful in the understanding of the young people and

their family's needs. Having the ability to support the young people within the home

has not only

allowed us to obtain a better understanding on the current needs of the client but avoid the young

person experiencing homelessness. Caretakers Cottage has then been able to be offered as respite while we provide support within the home.



There has been a significant demand in the community for under 16s who are experiencing family

conflict or are at risk of homelessness which has meant the collaboration between services has been critical in order to provide a holistic case plan. Over the year case conferences and case plans have been developed with positive outcomes due to the collaboration with services such as education,

Department of Communities and Justice, Juvenile Justice and health. This has allowed for more support to be given to the young person and clear communication on their needs.

Lloyd* (now 16ys)

Lloyd, came to Caretakers Crisis Refuge as a 15 year old indigenous boy, following a family breakdown due to his behaviours and significant daily alcohol drinking. No family members were willing or able to take Lloyd on. At Caretakers, over a couple of months, we managed to stabilize him, into a healthy routine and get his drinking under control. We moved him to a supported transitional house, got him back into mainstream school, and connected him to indigenous services to ensure his connection to culture and community remained strong. Most importantly, Lloyd is no longer drinking, is much happier, he is back on track and doing great!

Caretakers Cottage has also been able to have a Family therapist as part of the team and this has

helped to support the family and young person within the home. Due to under 16s being vulnerable

and at high risk, the family therapist has been able to focus on the needs of the family while the caseworker as focused on the young person giving them a voice within the home. The engagement

of young people is always difficult especially in outreach capacity. Although it is helpful focusing on

prevention and support within the community it can take a long time to build rapport and develop positive client relationships. This has also been a challenge due to the large catchment area where Caretakers covers both the Eastern Suburbs and Sydney District.



FOCAS

We have very recently implemented the new one-off FOCAS program at Caretakers Cottage. This is still in its infantile stage, but we are excited to already have onboard Mentors, Tutors, Attachment Specialists, Forensic Psychologists and relevant others who can provide highly specialised one on one assessments and/or support to some of our clients. The young people who we are initially targeting with these highly specialised resources are those under 16s who are often named as the most difficult in the District, and those who have been disengaged from school, community and family for years. Yoga Volunteers

We are also thrilled that our Yoga program has been going strong over the past few years. The dedication shown by the Yoga teachers, providing Yoga to our clients at Caretakers Cottage on a weekly basis has been extraordinary. During the very difficult months of COVID, all the Yoga program continued remotely, instead being provided via zoom on the big screen and this has continued to this day. Although both the Yoga teachers and Caretakers look forward to when Yoga can again resume onsite, this is unlikely to happen until safety issues can be well and truly resolved.

ENTITY 2019-2020 AGM

Well, it has been an incredibly big year for Entity. This past year has seen us complete renovations to the downstairs of the Sylvania house, transition from residential to a semi-independent service and begin our accreditation with the Office of the Children's Guardian.

After rigorous back and forth paperwork requests from Council for our building works, we were finally able to complete the renovations of the downstairs area into office and meeting space. While the building works have completed, there is still some work to be done to organize the storage and furniture into more comfortable space. There is now a fully functioning kitchen for staff to make their meals without impeding the space for the young people upstairs. There is office space and meeting area which are able to be closed off from one another by bifold doors.

We had a number of unsuccessful negotiations with DCJ to transition to a semi-independent living program before the end of financial year as a staged transition. DCJ continued to require residential placements right up until the end of our residential contract and would not approve for us to begin transitioning until the new contract came into place for semi-independent living. Being unable to stage the transition in steps to semi-independent living created some hiccups at the changeover of program and contract. However, we have been able to successfully transition through the minor hiccups and are now running a semi-independent program for young people. The Sylvania house is now a share house where young people who require a bit of extra support live for a period of time before transitioning into their own flat when they are more prepared. The transition required changes in rostering, job roles and created the requirement for staff to be rostered on-call. Staff have generally adjusted well to all the changes we have been going through.

We have been developing an intensive living skills development program for the semi-independent program since transitioning. This program is continuing to grow and develop while we support the young people in the program. We have been working with both Bridge Housing and St George Community Housing to meet the property needs of the semi-independent service. We have successfully housed a

number of young people with both Community Housing Organisations and hope to be able to continue this relationship into the future.

Covid of course caused a number of implications to the service and the running of the programs. We developed and implemented policy and procedures for staff in relation to theirs and the young people's safety during the pandemic. We managed to buy masks, goggles and gloves for staff to wear when on shift. Young people were resistant to following the social distancing and isolation rules, however extra precautions were put in for staff to follow in the case that young people presented with symptoms, and in generally managing young people who were continuing to go out during the pandemic.



We have begun the process for our accreditation this year. Due to Covid, we have been granted an extension of 12 months for our current accreditation, because the Children's Guardian were unable to complete on site visits to services for a period of time and hence delayed the process for renewing organisations' current accreditations. The second visit from the Children's Guardian will be in January and will focus on the organisational standard and a review of the client files since the last visit. Providing we meet the standards at that stage of the process, we will be granted another 5 years accreditation. If we are missing some sections of the

standards, we will be given a period of time to participate in continual improvement to meet any missing standards.

We have been able to expand our numbers to 13 young people, with a plan for increasing this to 20 over the coming months. We have spoken with some foster care agencies about visiting their staff meetings to explain the Entity program and source some appropriate referrals, however have been unable to complete these visits due to covid restrictions.

We have also been having regular meetings with DCJ to discuss the program and the requirements for young people being referred, as well as to discuss current and upcoming referrals. We have had a few situations over the last few months where we have declined referrals and then been told that the information in the referral is not current, been given a different picture of the young person, only to find that the issues that we had declined the young person for were still current and the young person is unable to appropriately manage a semi-independent placement. These situations have been a topic of discussion in our meetings with DCJ in relation to gaining more appropriate referrals for the program.

We have 2 young people that have been with Entity for approximately 5 years, transitioning from our residential program into semi-independent placements. They are both going to be exiting the program at the end of this year. These girls have grown up with Entity and consider us family.

One of the girls is about to complete her HSC exams and wants to become a cosmetic nurse and help people who have facial scarring and acne issues. During her time with us, she has completed high school, gained her driving licence and managed her own flat.



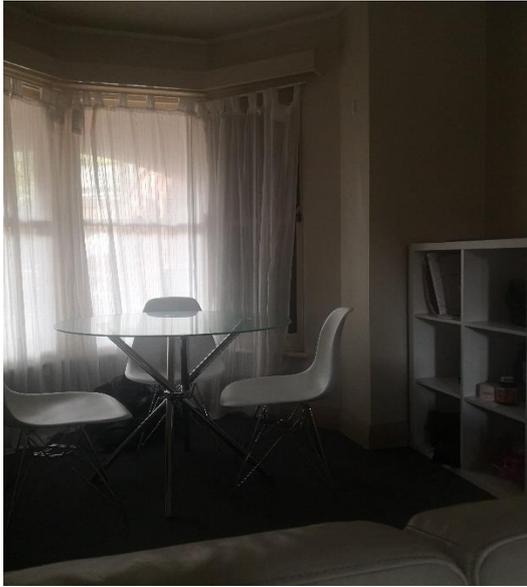
She was very disappointed that we were unable to attend her high school graduation ceremony in person due to Covid restrictions. We have been at her end of year

assembly since she came to Entity, so it was difficult for her knowing that we couldn't come this year. We were able to live stream the ceremony so we didn't completely miss out and she dropped in to see us after the event.



This young person has since moved out of her flat to live with her cousin and her brother. She will become part of our aftercare program after she finishes her HSC. We will continue to support her with her education and career goals over the coming months.

The other young person was struggling to maintain her schooling while she was in our residential program. We supported her to transfer to TAFE to complete a Certificate III in Nursing Assistance. During this period of time, she transitioned into her own flat.



After some work with the young person and her job network provider, she was able to gain employment with St Lukes Care, in their nursing home. She has continued to hold this job for the last 12 months. She is now applying for university to complete her Bachelor in Nursing and aspires to one day become a doctor. We are working on transitioning this young person into affordable housing, because she financially supports herself with her income from work and has not relied on Centrelink since she started working.

Client Update & Good News Story

One of young resident's that entered into our program Mid-June last year had recently celebrated their 18th birthday at Holy Moly and one their first ever mini putt golf game. The young resident was very grateful for Entity in celebrating her birthday, it meant a great deal to her as this young person was once a very shy young person, whom has now come out of the shell and blossomed into a young adult whom loves to now take photos and is thinking about their future goals.



This young person has continued to maintain their school grades even when sick at home, the young person has continued to do their studies at home and hand in their school work. And has made the achievement to sit the exam for her HSC and to hopefully enter university to become a social worker. This young person has made it their goal to make a better life than her family before her and this has been proven with this young person staying back at school to do after school tutoring every Wednesday afternoon, in addition to attending private English tutoring. This young person has achieved so much while being in the Entity program and is evident from teachers' school comments.



Subject: Business Services

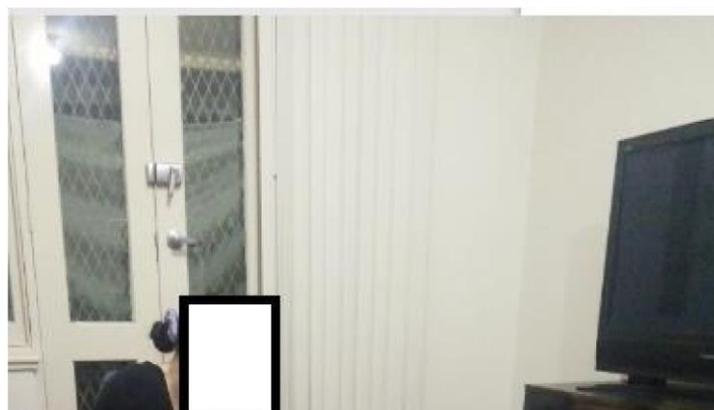
Teacher: Celina Silva Santos

Rank: NA

Assessment of Effort: 3



Units	Competent	Not yet Competent
Create and Produce Workplace Documents		
Organise Workplace Documents		



Aftercare has had a lot ups and downs this past year! Courtney Barlow

We have had two female clients have immediate family pass away, both by overdose on a suspected dose of contaminated drugs and both being treated as suspicious.

There is ongoing investigation and for one client who chose to record a statement against her siblings' partner, this has been a very difficult time as she feels that her safety is at high risk as a result. During this time Aftercare have maintained close contact with the client and liaised where needed with housing and other support services to ensure the client is safe in her home. We have also assisted the client in corresponding with the coroners to release more information about her death and attending coroners court since the incident.

Some ongoing support that we provide for this client is around contact with her children, as we have been involved with her from birth, she feels that we are very much a part of her children's lives. We generally attend contacts at random but always birthdays and support with decorations and making cakes for the children but we also coordinate with the foster service when the client needs to alter anything in the contact schedule, for example Negotiating more time or changing dates etc. We are generally the first point of contact for the client with most services and her next of kin given that she has no family support.

The second death is also being treated as suspicious however, took place in Queensland which makes it difficult for the client to be across. This client has a number of ongoing serious legal and health issues that we heavily support around particularly, her health matters as there are a number of other services that who need to be involved around this.

We took on a new male client this year but spent some months being involved prior to him turning 18 due to his lengthy legal matters. He is now on remand in an adult facility and have become his primary support due to DCJ (YJ) stepping back and being able to only support via phone calls to him and advice to us. We maintain weekly conference calls and have been working primarily on rehab referrals as a means to potential bail. He has also had some issue with obtaining legal support. The court in which his matters are heard is not serviced by Aboriginal Legal Service and given that he is Koori they are his preferred representation so this has been an ongoing enquiry as to how that can happen for him.

One female client is continuously working toward positive changes in her life is going very well! Just a few short years ago she was arrested and charged with Assault occasioning GBH – She used a knife as self defense and as a result of a scuffle the other person was stabbed. Since then she has worked on upskilling and securing a chefs position at a private college on a fulltime basis and has maintained a number of private rental properties where she has afforded to live on her own, she purchased a brand new car but most notably she was able to save up enough funds to take a trip to her home country of Ghana for 3 months and where she had not visited since being brought to Australia at 9 years old. She was able to catch up with family and meet new family and reports that she is extremely grateful for being able to make that trip. She and her partner had plans to marry this year however, they have since

separated and while this took a toll on her emotionally, she was still able to maintain her life without disruption. This client likes to catch up more often since the death of her previous foster carer with whom she had a strong bond. She has minimal

support in terms of extended family and a strained relationship with her mum and finds great comfort in having had the support of our service since she was 15.

As always, we have a number of other clients who contact Aftercare as they need. Sometimes for support around issues arisen and sometimes just for a catch up. Many of our clients have little to no support and enjoy catching up so that they are able to maintain a stable connection for which many have not had throughout there time in care.