

AGM Report by CEO Simone Patterson

Retreat For Kids Inc/The Sanctuary Women, Children and Pet's Refuge

3rd September 2018.

Currumbin RSL Club 7pm.

Mission Statement

The mission of our focus at The Sanctuary Women and Children's Refuge, is holistic healing for those children and their families escaping domestic violence. These members of our community deserve our support, intervention and any opportunities we can provide for rehabilitation from this dreadful social evil. A child's positive wellbeing in particular is a positive social outcome, because it will improve the mental health of the mother, siblings and pets, if any.

We aim to provide opportunities for empowerment, education and emotional recovery through professional services, safety security and healing. Our records show that the women and children who have spent time with us, show: a demonstrable improvement in mental and social wellbeing, physical safety and health; psychological recovery from the anxiety associated with their previous trauma; a willingness to trust their peers and mentors; an improvement in their social skills, and a willingness to embrace opportunities for renewal.

Our mission is realistic. We cannot save the world. But if we can save one, or one hundred, from being killed by their partner, we will have fulfilled our mission.

Brief History

The Sanctuary began from a long held passion by me, to prevent social injustice. After 26 years of working in the welfare industry, I attended the Alison Bayden-Clay rally in Brisbane in 2015. This was a well documented case of Alison being murdered by her partner. Her family, plus the public at large were devastated by the court decision not to charge him with murder. Subsequently, the court's decision was overturned, and the issue of Domestic Violence became much more prominent nationally as well

regionally and locally. Rosie Battie's contribution to the cause has been significant.

Driving home, I had an epiphany. "This is where and how I am meant to make a difference. Domestic Violence is my issue". Subsequently, my husband Nigel and I privately purchased a rural property, which contained a large house and an even larger farm shed. Perfect for the security and safety needed for the healing of victims of domestic violence.

The work of the refuge is to rehabilitate women, their children and pets, suffering from homelessness due to domestic or family violence. We provide them with shelter, support and complementary services to keep them safe and re-awaken their self-esteem, so they can return to being contributing and valued members of the community. This is often a long process, and will be determined by the length of time these women and children suffered the psychological, emotional and often physical trauma. One part of the complementary services provided by the refuge is education - so as to better equip them for the future, specifically about relationships, and more generally about up-skilling their own qualifications if this is appropriate for their circumstances.

We at The Sanctuary still turn away at least 15 women per day, as our refuge is only a drop in the ocean, attempting to cater for hundreds of victims who are flying underneath the radar of publically funded welfare systems.

Currently there are facilities for 6 single women and 6 families. Each family unit can provide space for a newborn, plus two other children. Accommodation is temporary, ie up to 3 months, but the population is fluid at any time. Currently there are 9 women, 3 toddlers, 2 primary school children and one 13 year old boy.

The philanthropic business plan included a personal contribution of \$1.2m by the Patterson family. After that we factored in being able to obtain government/private funding to assist with the renovations needed to increase our capacity to house victims of Domestic Violence, but this has not happened. Governments of any persuasion have almost ignored us, except over compliance issues. Retreat For Kids Inc is a registered charity with DGR status. Basically, we have run out of personal philanthropic available funds. The mortgage is covered, but to extend our services to provide sanctuary to more victims of domestic and family violence, we need support from external agencies.

We have big plans in 2018/19 and beyond, for continued expansion and capacity building, with our great sponsors Fight Like a Pro, Bettermen and Symcorp Builders. Without these wonderful organisations we would not be where we are today.

A large grant from AMP, and their facilitation in providing me with a pitching platform through The Funding Network has enabled us to continue our services.

We have only just begun. We hope our legacy will continue providing support and inspiration to other charities to work for the betterment of our country. Our women and children are the foundation upon which we build. We need good men to continue to partner with us, in our endeavour for a more equal society.

Welcome to those in attendance:

S Patterson, A Craft, S Milligan, G York, S Kelly, M Pattison, J Gallo, K Kee, M Boreham, D Crowe, Amanda from Homeless Youth (Guest Speaker).

Apologies from N Patterson, K Simpson, M Gerard, M Evans

Welcome to country:

I would like to acknowledge the Bundjalung people, the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet; their elders past, present and emerging.

Overview of achievements for the financial year 2017/2018

- 118 clients, 40 children and 58 pets were successfully housed in 2.2 years.
- Friends With Dignity furnished 5 homes for our clients as they transitioned back into the community, empowered and grateful.
- 190 volunteers, work 450 hours pw to keep our refuge viable.
- 6 family units were completed and occupied
- Our sponsor list keeps increasing through our increasing networking and publicity.
- Our Administration Officer won the Environment Award for 2018, through the Heart of Women Awards, Tweed /Gold Coast Region.
- We were able to employ a plumber through a government mature workers grant for 6 months. Thanks Malcolm.

- An Eco Septic System was installed.
- Facebook donations included cash of \$1060 to fly a client to the Philippines to visit her dying mother, and \$833 to fly a stage 4 cancer victim to NZ to say goodbye to her family.
- 2 x second hand cars were donated to two of our clients.
- Interns became regular features almost every day of the week. They came from Griffith and Southern Cross Universities and Southport TAFE. This system of work placement will continue.
- The Funding Network pitch netted us \$94,000. The results will be aired on ABC Compass on 11/8/18. Thanks to Lynda Petterwood and the AMP mentor for their coaching.
- Induction sessions for volunteers began in Jan 2018. We now have two volunteers performing significant sections of this program, twice a month. Thanks to Disa and Kristy.
- We supported Stand Up to Domestic Violence sponsored by Radio 92.5 at Currumbin Boat Shed in November.
- Nigel and I attended Friends With Dignity High Tea. It was an amazing event. Natalie Hinton from the Tara Brown Foundation and Rosie Batty spoke with raw emotion to deliver strong powerful messages.

Milestones

a) Completion of capital works

- Electric gates were installed through a grant at the entrance.
- As mentioned, the 6th family unit was completed through a Fight Like A Pro working bee.
- Fencing for the community garden was completed, Fight Like A Pro again, and a garden shed was erected on site. Thanks Nigel and Kim.
- The fenced children's playground was finished courtesy of softfall through a grant, and the equipment donated from Bunnings at Southport.
- The bus, donated by Surfside was refurbished as a children's play and art therapy area, as well as being able to host our meetings.

- An irrigation system and stand alone water supply is now functional in the community garden, and 150 bales of sugar cane mulch will eventually provide fertile soil for the vegetables and fruit to flourish.

b) Legal compliance issues passed

- Regarding compliance with the GCCC and Qld Dept of Housing. These matters have been dealt with, and are currently awaiting confirmation from both above named bodies.
- Risk Management and Conflict of Interest Policies have been developed, and the Policies and Procedures Manual has been brought up to date.

Donations

- Donations continue to come in huge quantities from across the demographic spectrum- at our drop off point, at the refuge itself, from Facebook requests, and through our own collecting of large items.
- Non-perishable donations are noted on a spreadsheet to be posted on our website. Thanks Melanie.
- Baby Give Back is another charity we partner with. They provide anything and everything to do with baby care and hygiene to our newborns and toddlers.
- Share The Dignity – another charity- provides all our women with sanitary products
- Currumbin Produce provides us with dry food for our farm animals and the family pets.
- The Elanora Woodwork and Craft Club provide us with sawdust and wood shavings for the chooks and ducks, as well as the compost bins. They also make crosses for DV victims, and will make anything we need.
- Woolworths provide us with day old fruit and vegetables for the farm animals
- Coles, through Second Bite, provide us with bread, vegetables and a range of tinned food and toiletries.
- The Paddock Bakery provide us with artisan bread and pastries

- Urban Farm Mix provides fresh fruit from the PBC markets.
- Oz- Harvest provides fresh fruit and vegetables. A special thanks to the Founder Ronni Kahn, who pursues the “war on waste”
- PCYC at Broadbeach donate their gym for free workouts and classes for the women
- Robina Rotary gave us a grant to build a Community kitchen in an outdoor setting. We are still awaiting GCCC building approval.
- The Good Guys at Tweed donated \$5250 worth of fridges.
- Opera Australia gave us ten tickets to see Aida at Coolangatta on the beach last summer. The women were most impressed.
- Most of the food donations are collected by volunteers. They do an amazing job
- Unwanted donations are re-distributed by The Anglican Op Shop in Robina. Unusable or broken donations are taken to the tip. In this last financial year, we did more than 200 tip runs!

Grants/ Donations / Fund Raising

1. During the 2017/2018 financial year, we received \$205,700 from grants. We asked for \$700,000 so we still have a lot of work to do to improve our strike rate. \$36,300 was from government sources.
2. Cash Donations were only \$3552
3. Fundraising, mainly through Bunnings BBQ's, netted us \$10,000. Small amounts were received through community organisations such as faith based ones, and smaller businesses such as Grill'd.
4. More extensive information can be had from the Treasurer's report.

Working Bees and Achievements

- Four massive working bees were conducted by Fight Like a Pro and Bettermen, with often up to 40 tradespeople on one day. They fenced, performed carpentry, gyprocking, rendering, electrical, plumbing, roofing, drainage and tiling miracles, as well as building proper housing for poultry and goats.
- Because of this massive effort by these wonderful men and often their children, we now have 12 complete units to house those women and children escaping domestic violence. We still need many more units.

- Three smaller working bees were held by the gardening gurus. Nominally called Nora's mob. Up to 10 of them weeded and seeded, mulched and manured, built compost bins, erected climbing frames, and generally spread good karma.
- Again, the dedicated work of this group has led to significant progress with the garden. One third of it is now under cultivation.
- On any one day over the last 12 months, there have been two or three volunteers and up to four interns. They are always busy, and are happy to assist with many menial tasks such as food distribution, donation sorting, or even manual labour.
- We have a therapy dog called Lola. A Great Dane with a beautiful temperament. She works well with the children and adults alike.

Thanks to Volunteers and Donors.

- Extraordinary thanks to Gavin Topp, his wife Michelle, and their children for all the time, effort and support they have offered us over this last year. Without Gavin, we may not even be still here. His organisation, Fight Like a Pro, and the affiliated group called Bettermen, have been our life line. Periodically if we need a single tradesperson, one of them will turn up at the refuge to help us out. Words are not enough to thank Gavin and his team.
- Symcorp Builders have also been remarkable in their support, as have Hutchinson Builders.
- Thanks to the Australian Trade College for providing a couple of apprentices at a crucial time.
- Because of the support we get from our donors, the women and children have a better chance of rehabilitation than most other victims of DV. They are offered some form of nurture almost every day. Monday was gym /boxing day, Tuesday was PCYC gym/yoga, Wednesday was yoga, and the day Dr Marian visits anyone who asks, Thursday is still Indian cooking class, Friday was group counselling, massage and community lunch, and Sunday has become a dog training session for the resident pets.
- Without the volunteers/interns there would be no refuge. I cannot thank them enough.

- The Management Committee has been overwhelmingly supportive. Treasurer Sharon, Secretary Anje, Medical professional Marian, Maintenance person Nigel, DV Lawyer Kathleen, general factotums Susan and Michelle, Marketing Mick and Administration Officer Gae – thanks, you have helped me make my dream come true.

Simone Patterson

3/9/2018.