

After nine years of being fortunate to rely on philanthropic funding to grow the WAM program, we are now seeking secure funding to ensure our program can continue beyond our 10th year.

It doesn't take much to help. Find out below how you can add your voice as we advocate for criminalised women to get the support they need.

Financial support is welcome, but we are also seeking your assistance with material aid and items for some of the program participants.

Our upcoming Movie Night is another way to show your support for the WAM community.

More details below.

WAM keeps women out of prison.

Whilst there is significant State funding going into rehabilitation programs, and essential supports for women exiting prison, WAM's focus has primarily been on keeping women out of prison in the first instance.

In most cases, participants engaged in the WAM program have avoided a custodial sentence. **Recidivism rates among participants are low (15%)**, and almost all of them successfully engage with services to address their complex needs.

Mentoring is considered a genuine means of reducing reoffending. A key aspect of social exclusion that criminalised women experience is a lack of strong, positive connections in their lives.

In matching participants with a female volunteer mentor, we create a connection that helps rebuild trust, provides role-modelling and supports women to participate in their community.

Through the provision of a formal mentoring relationship we can address criminogenic risk factors and reduce the turnstile effect of offending and re-offending. WAM mentors provide personal and practical assistance; help participants develop self-advocacy skills to find and use community resources; and support women to address complex issues at the fraction of the cost of going to prison.

It costs around \$117,000 per annum to keep a woman in a Victorian prison, and Community Corrections offender rates are approximately \$11,826pa.

WAM breaks the cycle of intergenerational offending and helps to reduce other social costs.

With access to the WAM program across metropolitan Melbourne, we will see less women in the justice system, vulnerable women better connected with therapeutic care options, and families remaining together to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Over the past 9 years WAM has grown from one small pilot project operating out of the Collingwood Neighbourhood Justice Centre, to working across five Magistrate court precincts.

We have matched and supported over 100 women in mentoring relationships, made numerous referrals, offered women social support, created positive change and helped criminalised women address issues that have led to their offending.

And we have done this all relying on grants, philanthropy and donations.

As a supporter of WAM, you know how effective our model is in keeping women out of prison, helping them navigate the justice system, and work towards achieving their individual goals to improve their life outcomes. Not only creating transformative change in their lives, but with flow-on effect for their children, their families and the broader community.

Our operational funding will run out next year, and the current Frankston program is only funded until the end of November. It is critical that the State Government recognises the value WAM adds to the sector, to the community and to the lives of vulnerable women.

Write to your local [State MP](#) to demonstrate your support for WAM; let them know how important this program is, and why it is a cost-effective response to stopping the cycle of women reoffending.

- Tricia Ciampa, Executive Officer
tricia@womenandmentoring.org.au

Frankston. A year on.

Wow, what an incredible year WAM has had in our first year in Frankston. We hit the ground running and haven't taken a breath.

We have been fortunate to have much interest in the volunteer mentor role with over 100 expressions of interest to date. We have trained 12 volunteers, made 10 mentor matches, received 27 referrals and have spread the word of WAM far and wide. We have matches and women accessing the program from Frankston and surrounding suburbs, all the way down to the far end of the Mornington Peninsula and out as far as Grantville in Gippsland.

Referrals have come through steadily as expected, from many agencies including Living Free, Corrections, Victoria Legal Aid, Frankston Magistrates Court, Maternal Child Health and Stepping Up. In the assessments conducted over the last 12 months with women in the region, significant trends and common issues include trauma, isolation, violence, mental health and substance use. These issues often exist in families and have done so over generations. It is evident that the women we work with have been victims themselves, and have been unsafe in life, often from a young age. It is the intergenerational social issues that lead women to the criminal justice system and the rates in Frankston are the second highest in Melbourne.

We have had some great outcomes in court for the women we work with in Frankston, supported by their mentor and WAM, who have avoided a custodial sentence and therefore are able to remain in the community, work towards their goals and improving their quality of life and wellbeing. Importantly the work we do with women has a knock-on affect to the children they care for and the wider community.

There is a real sense of the need for change in Frankston, to work in a different way, a way that recognises the complexities of the lives of many women in our community and a way that works to address these complexities in a supportive and therapeutic way. For many, there is a recognition that the traditional way of working just does not meet what's needed for many women with complex issues, making it very difficult to access the service system.

WAM works in a different space, one of connection, accessibility, positivity, belief in others and genuine



regard. I am also grateful that there are many community members and local services/workers in Frankston that also work in this way, and together we can assist the most vulnerable women in our community.

Personally, I also feel a real sense of success for WAM in Frankston over the last 12 months. The women we work with are connected to caring and supportive volunteers, who each come with their own life experiences and professional backgrounds. The wealth of knowledge in our volunteer group is amazing. The sharing of information and ideas at peer supervision is great to be a part of and wonderful to see.

WAM is a real collective effort, women coming together in support of each other and with a genuine interest in social justice and in caring for the most vulnerable and marginalised women in the community. If this is our aim, then we are well on the way in Frankston and I look forward to doing more, making more matches and addressing the current issues women are facing in the criminal justice system.

In October we are inviting 18 potential volunteers to an information session, and in November we are conducting our final volunteer mentor training for the year. I'm excited to see more volunteers recruited and trained and matched to participants in Frankston, and most importantly, I'm excited to see more positive outcomes for the women engaged in our program.

– Sarah Nyssen, Frankston Program Coordinator
frankston@womenandmentoring.org.au

Wishing Well

We are always grateful for financial donations to support our work, however sometimes we can do with donated items to support our matches.

Can you help? We are seeking:

- a small tablet/laptop for one of our participants who has a Trauma Brain Injury and would benefit from using a bigger screen to access the internet / email rather than her phone;
- 2 saucepans small or medium size for cooking meals at home;
- A sewing machine, as one mentoring pair are keen to share a dress-making skill;
- Vouchers to clothing store like Target, Lorna Jane or the like to assist a couple of participants to buy some activewear as they embark on a fitness program;
- \$220 dollars for a white card application so this participant can look for work on construction sites.

Donate today at: www.womenandmentoring.org.au/donate Or contact: admin@womenandmentoring.org.au

Relieving the burden of fine debt

Are you or one of your clients struggling to manage fine debt? WAM might be able to help you!

The Work Development Permit (WDP) scheme provides vulnerable and disadvantaged people with a non-financial option to address their fine debt.

WAM is an approved WDP sponsor organisation through Fines Victoria, and we have some activities that eligible participants can undertake to reduce their fine debt.

If a program participant identifies that they have fine debt, we can apply for a WDP on behalf of them. This means that the time spent engaged with WAM's mentoring program can reduce fine debt by a little under \$50 per hour.

This is part of an initiative provided by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.

You may be eligible for a WDP if you are affected by acute financial hardship, family violence, homelessness, mental illness, cognitive impairment and addiction (including drugs, alcohol, gambling and volatile substances).

When you have fines debt that you can't afford to pay, you might stop opening your letters and your health can spiral downwards.

By participating in a WDP, you can take responsibility by clearing your fines debt in a non-financial way and improve your life outcomes with our free mentoring services.

Friends of WAM Movie Night



Join us for WAM's Movie Night to see the Israeli film 'Working Woman' at the Classic Cinema, Elsternwick on **Thursday 24th October from 6.30pm.**

An Israeli drama from feminist film-maker Michal Aviad, Working Woman depicts the story of Orna, a mother of three young children juggling the return to work and family life, whilst battling unwelcome advances from her employer. In the time of #metoo, this film doesn't shy away from an uncomfortable truth.

[Purchase Tickets](#)

ANNOUNCING A NEW BOARD MEMBER

We're pleased to welcome another new director to our Board; Trieu Huynh. This is a new position, as we expand the board and bring in additional directors with appropriate skills to support WAM in achieving its mission.

Trieu is an experienced criminal lawyer having worked in both Prosecution and Defence. Currently, he is the Program Manager of Indictable Crime at Victoria Legal Aid, working with sector partners to ensure the delivery of high-quality legal services as well as a fair and efficient justice system. Legal Aid is a great source of referrals to our program.

Trieu is also a Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) Accredited Criminal Law Specialist and a member of the LIV Criminal Law Section Executive Committee. He brings a wealth of relevant experience to WAM and we welcome him to the team.



Trieu Huynh

"I'm humbled to be appointed a Director of WAM and I look forward to contributing to the organisation's strategic direction in providing early intervention, support and empowerment to vulnerable women as they navigate the criminal justice system."

Gambling Harm Awareness Week

REAL PEOPLE. SPEAK UP. ACT OUT.

WAM invite you to a FREE performance exploring the effects of gambling on the community. Followed by a Q&A and discussion.

Hear how WAM supports women in the justice system.

“ I'd tell anyone I'm an alcoholic before I'd say I'm a gambler. ”

When: Wednesday 9 October | 6:00pm - 8:30pm

Where: Ebdale Community Hub, 20 Ebdale St, Frankston

RSVP: By 4 October to Tricia Ciampa, EO
tricia@womenandmentoring.org.au or 0407 540 995

www.linkhc.org.au/three-sides-of-the-coin/



THREE SIDES OF THE COIN PROJECT

Using theatre to create change