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2019 has been a year achieving many of our goals.

We made a difference to the lives of 42 women in new and existing mentoring matches.

Community support is growing with 80 referrals received and 36 new mentors screened and trained.

Our program is available to vulnerable women presenting at 6 different courts across Melbourne.

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At the end of each year we often take stock of our successes and challenges and make plans for a brighter and more prosperous year ahead.

We started the year with strategic planning where we articulated our future of continuing to work towards reducing female incarceration and recidivism and promoting social inclusion.

One of our objectives is to look for innovative ways to reduce women's contact with the criminal justice system. So, when we were approached to expand our service provision to include vulnerable girls, we recognised a significant opportunity to amplify our work in the early intervention space.

Our 'Positive Futures in Frankston' project aims to disrupt the trajectory of young women and girls being exploited and in conflict with the justice system. Instead we'll provide an opportunity to develop a connection to someone who can support them to improve their life outcomes. You can read more about this on the next page.

**Justice for all... just not women** as part of Law Week highlighted the detrimental impact the changes to bail laws have had - and continue to have - on vulnerable women. We are now seeing a huge increase in women on remand. We know that short remand stints can be harmful to women, disconnecting them from their families, and preventing access to support services.

We have developed and sustained many partnerships, with 80 referrals coming in from Legal Aid, the Courts, Corrections, Court Network, and an additional 8 community agencies.

We've enjoyed financial and community support from the Legal Services Board, Ian Potter Foundation, Bennelong Foundation, Bank of Melbourne Foundation, Community Underwriting, the Victorian

We hope to make 2020 just as impactful, and we invite you to be a part of the #WAMily.

Please consider donating a gift of \$30 or more this Christmas to support more vulnerable women in your community. [Donate here.](#)

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Women's Trust, West Waters Entertainment Complex, Igniting Change and Frankston City Council. Our two movie nights and being selected as one of Grill'd Frankston's Local Matters charity has also contributed to our social and fundraising events.

Throughout the year, we have also spent considerable time continuing to raise awareness of our program through State Government, with cross-party support.

Although there has been some commitment to diversion programs for women in conflict with the justice system from the State Government this year, we would encourage greater investment in a suite of programs that are aimed at early intervention - that is, stopping women from reoffending, and breaking those cycles of resistant circumstances.

Crime prevention initiatives can produce long-term social and economic benefits - preventing future offending, addressing root causes that lead to offending and building protective factors. There is little data to suggest that **locking people up** is an effective deterrent, and yet we continue to punish rather than prevent criminal behaviour.

Evidence demonstrates the importance of holistic support for women, and WAM's mentoring program looks to address criminogenic risk factors, to reduce the risk of negative and antisocial behaviours. Having a secure attachment to a caring person can help build self-esteem and confidence, support them to reengage positively with education or employment, and improve their future.

**We are really excited about what 2020 brings - new projects, partnerships and initiatives. We'll be relying on our WAMily to support more vulnerable women.**

-Tricia Ciampa, Executive Officer  
[tricia@womenandmentoring.org.au](mailto:tricia@womenandmentoring.org.au)

### Positive Futures in Frankston

There is demand from local health & justice networks in Frankston to extend our mentoring program to work with 15-18-year-old females who are often reported missing. Many of these young women are known to Child Protection and have contact with the Police/Youth Justice.

In Frankston-Mornington Peninsula over 100 individual girls aged 10-17 are reported missing each year – without intervention their needs become entrenched. Common characteristics for this cohort of young women are:

- Disengagement from school or minimal /disrupted attendance;
- Child Protection or Youth Justice involvement;
- Lack of positive adult role models
- Significant intergenerational issues such as familial drug/alcohol misuse, domestic violence, and mental health disorders
- Associating with known male offenders
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Vulnerable to exploitation

In relation to the broader context of women in contact with the criminal justice system, we know that theirs is a unique pathway to offending, often relating to risk factors including: homelessness, family violence, mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, social isolation, trauma from abuse, and low education attainment. Currently we are also seeing a significant increase of women on remand, having an adverse impact on their housing, mental health, safety and the future of their children.

Positive Futures in Frankston is an early intervention strategy designed to meet the needs of young women aged 15 to 18 (and even up to 25 years of age). It will work with vulnerable young women referred to WAM by partner organisations including the Living Free project, youth justice, and other local community agencies.

While not all young women presenting with these issues are offending, vulnerable young women are by



far victims of their environment as well as perpetrators of crime. Often the criminal justice system misses the social context in which offending takes place – and doesn't address the underlying causes.

The provision of a formal mentoring relationship empowers young women with limited access to positive role models to employ better emotional regulation strategies and develop impulse control. The aspect of a volunteer mentor is attractive, as often this cohort of young women may already have contact with 'workers' and the role of a WAM mentor is of someone who is there of their own choice.

With support from the Bank of Melbourne Foundation, The Prue Myer Sub-Fund of the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust, and Community Underwriting we have been able to launch this pilot project and we look forward to reporting on the outcomes at the end of 2020.



You can make a donation towards Positive Futures in Frankston by clicking [here](#)

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Our next [Volunteer Information session in Frankston](#) will be on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January, at 5.30pm in the Frankston library. We will specifically be looking for potential mentors who would have the time and capacity to engage with a vulnerable younger woman for a year.