
As we draw towards the end of the year, we reflect upon the successes and challenges of the past 12 months, the connections made and the women whose lives have been positively impacted.

We also have our sights set on our future direction, increasing access so more women

can be linked into mentoring, and recruiting more mentors.

Do you know someone who'd make a great mentor?

Read on to find out more.

The WAMily

Although it's an invented word, for us it embodies the underlying thread and essence of what we are all about. WAMily. It's a word that has become part of our vernacular and it has become a source of strength, a reference point for decision-making, and it describes our values and the way we work.

Our WAMily is made up of all the people who are connected to us. Our team, our mentors, our lived experience peer advisors, our skilled volunteers, our supporters, our Board, our women.

This year we have seen a 20% increase in the number of referrals, and we are expecting this to continue to rise as we build our networks, expand our reach, and raise awareness of our work across the health justice sector.

In contrast, there has been a 10% decrease in the number of criminal incidents recorded by Victoria Police to June 30, 2022, compared to the same period last year. However, it has been reported that despite this, the number of women on remand is increasing. Data from Corrections indicates that [more than half](#) of the women in Victoria's prisons are being detained on remand, without facing charges.

Interventions like mentoring engages women at critical junctures. Women come into the program often at the time of being charged and preparing for court, on community corrections orders or on parole, when they have significant fine debt with a warrant for their arrest. More recently, we have seen women on bail who are seeking to connect with services that will provide the community support they need.

We know that our mentoring program works and has positive outcomes for the women involved. Throughout the course of the year, WAM engaged and supported almost 50 women in mentoring relationships. Twenty-one women 'graduated', meaning their mentoring relationship came to a

formal end as they had achieved their goals, felt more in control of their lives, and had created a life away from the justice system.

Our mentors play a big role in our work, providing the support and connection to women engaged in our mentoring program. With three volunteer training rounds this year, we have been able to recruit and onboard 26 new volunteers. **We will need to increase that three-fold to meet demand for 2023.**

This year our collective efforts to raise awareness of our work has resulted in securing four years of government funding that now sees our program expand across greater Melbourne. With an additional grant from the Percy Baxter Charitable fund, we are now in Ballarat, and we have our sights set on making our mentoring program accessible to more women across Victoria.

Our Peer Advisory group contributed to the Sentencing Advisory Council's review of Adjourned Undertakings, as well as the Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System. The group may be small, but they are very much looking forward to welcoming more members next year, and focusing on more ways to advocate for women impacted by the legal system.

Despite the challenges of funding uncertainty, our team have been able to continue to deliver our mentoring program without missing a beat. They have been remarkable in a tough year. And with your support we have been able to provide additional material aid in a challenging year to many women.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank our WAMily who made 2022 a year of positive achievements and I look forward to what 2023 brings.

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



WAM Movie Nights that share the simple joys of life

This year we held a couple of movie nights to bring our community back together and generate some additional fundraising. Our guests had the option of purchasing movie tickets to pass on to our matches. With the generosity of our supporters, we were able to provide 4 matches a double pass to go to the movies together.

Recently, Paula and Stacey* took up this opportunity, and they've written a few words below:*

I first met my mentor at the courthouse. A wonderful lady came to me and asked if I needed anything or whether she could help with anything.

This wonderful lady was named Paula, and she asked me if I had anyone to support me. I told her no one was coming. I then went on telling her why I was there and explained a bit of my past, and then she said that she worked with WAM, and that they help women like me.

Would I be interested? she asked. I then said, 'Yes that would be fantastic!'. Soon after we both met with a lady from WAM, and we were matched as mentor and mentee in October last year and we are still catching up regularly.

Recently, WAM gave us tickets for my mentor and myself to go to a movie. I hadn't been to a movie for a long time. Lack of funds and social anxiety prevented it.

Since I have been with WAM I have gained so much from the help I have received. I was able to get my licence back through encouragement and assistance. I have a little bit more confidence and have more understanding of myself. Paula has helped me to achieve so much. She has helped me to write letters to authorities to advocate for myself. This has not just been for me but for my children.

My ambition is to be able to help other women who have been through a lot in their life. I would love to one day be able to work with WAM. I couldn't do all that I have done without the help of my WAM mentor.

Thank you so much Paula for being there for me and being able to help guide me and get the support I need.

I would encourage other women to get in contact with WAM. They are wonderful, helpful women who put themselves out to help other women. (Stacey, program participant)



I have been a mentor with WAM for over a year now. The person I am mentoring has developed and achieved so much in that time.

Stacey's life has really changed, and she has plans to continue and do more in the future. She is so grateful for the support she has received from everyone at WAM.

We attended a movie together a little while back and you would have thought she had been given the world. She commented that she had not been to a movie "for ages". Her financial status does not allow such luxuries and it was so special to be able to do this together. For this, I wish to thank everyone who has donated to WAM as this is what makes these simple joys possible. It is beautiful to see the joy given by such simple things as going to a movie.

I too have gained so much from my experience with WAM. There is such personal satisfaction from being able to help someone and to see the changes take place in that person's life. As well as developing a knowledge of what is going on in your community, being able to help others, and meeting so many lovely people along the way. (Paula, WAM mentor)

Thank you to our wonderful supporters. We look forward to holding Movie Nights again in 2023.

**names changed to protect their identity*



Put some Self Care & Quality Time gifts under our Christmas Tree this year.

This Christmas, we are asking for donations to buy vouchers so our women can spend some time on themselves and with their families. The luxury of a haircut, a pedicure or even a movie ticket is something our program participants just can't afford or even consider. Some of our women would love to take their children out for the day over the school holidays to Luna Park, attend the RONE exhibition, or try a bubble tea!



\$30 will help a woman feel special with a mani or pedi

\$60 will treat a family with a trip to the Zoo and ice cream for the kids

\$100 can cover the cost of a haircut and blow wave for Christmas

\$200 can give a woman and her family a day at Luna Park and lunch.

As much as we usually promote free or low-cost activities, sometimes it's nice to be able to do something special and we'd love your support in giving our women and their families a little treat this Christmas

[Click here to Donate Today](#)

Fill Your Cup in 2023 by Becoming a WAM Mentor

As the demand for mentoring increases, we are seeking more volunteers to join the "WAMily".

WAM mentors empower women to improve their life outcomes. Each mentoring pair is unique as are the outcomes for each woman, but through meeting regularly, offering practical assistance and non-judgemental support, they work together on goals identified by the woman to create positive change.



Mentoring is built on the values of integrity, respect, belonging, and social justice.

Mentors are screened and trained for their role to provide appropriate support to program participants and attend regular supervision and professional development with our WAM Coordinators.

We are seeking women and non-binary people who have some availability during the week to meet up and provide support on a regular basis.

Mentors are good listeners, non-judgemental, and come from diverse backgrounds who are willing to support another woman in their community.

Our Next Volunteer Information Session will be
Thursday 2nd February at 12.30pm
(via Zoom)

TARGET AREAS: Living in or near Frankston, Dandenong, Rowville, Keysborough, Bayswater, Box Hill, Heidelberg, Craigieburn, Sunshine, Melton, Laverton & Ballarat.

We especially welcome First Nations women and women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Register your interest today by emailing: volunteer@womenandmentoring.org.au



WAM in the news

During the year, one of our mentoring pairs provided responses to The Advocate, an online news service, for an article about WAM. It was lovely to read the responses from Amelie and Kyra about their mentoring experience.

From Amelie:

WAM worked with me, in the beginning, to match me with someone to suit my personality and needs and followed up from time to time to ensure I was happy with the match.

My mentor and I bonded from the first meeting and now it is like we have been friends for many years. I enjoy and look forward to seeing my mentor each week and talking through what has been going on in my life and she always listens and responds respectfully without judgment and in a very supportive nature.

Kyra offers advice and helps out with finding the information I may need or require. I first met my mentor as I was finishing parole as my parole worker saw a need for post-sentence emotional support as at that time, I wasn't quite ready to be left to my own devices.

Having my mentor was a godsend. I have since gone back to work, got my driver's licence back, no longer have child protection involved and generally feel like my life is back on track and I am in a fantastic place mentally and emotionally. I now feel ready to help others in difficult situations and I believe my lived experience can help others with the difficulties they may be facing.

From Kyra

Most of the time I'm really surprised by what the [participants] have gained as I don't feel that I have necessarily done that much. I think it is just committing the time each week and being someone that they can bounce things off / ask for advice or support / share experiences with and spend some time with. We often fill a gap when the woman is estranged from family and have a diminished friendship group after prison. I was the first person Amelie called when she got her driver's licence back!

There is always a bit of nervousness at first and wanting to make sure that I didn't say the wrong thing. So much of building rapport is just about sharing information, learning about each other, and listening. We very easily built rapport and trust and now we are in a great place to communicate well, and I can really support Amelie with working toward her goals.

To those considering mentoring- **Give it a go as long as you have the time to dedicate to the role.** It is not about doing things or solving issues for the woman. It is about providing support, advocating at times, and sourcing information to enable her to gain the confidence and ability to achieve her own goals. It is very rewarding & a privilege to be alongside these amazing women. It's fantastic being a WAM volunteer!

You can read the full article [here](#).

End of Year celebrations

We recently held our End of Year celebrations to thank our volunteers – mentors, skilled volunteers and Board members – who are all part of our WAMily. It was lovely to see so many of you and celebrate together to bring the end of the year to a close. We were joined by comedian Aurelia St Clair who shared some hilarious insights and gave us all a few giggles and belly laughs.

Thank you to our supporters who generously donated goodies for our gift bags:

Aesop
Pinchapoo
Good 360/ Booktopia
Smiggle



A message from our Board Chair

At this time of the year, every year, I get the feeling that someone has hit a 'speed-up' button on life. It's unsettling and fun, all at once. This year is the same... but different. There's something special going on, a sense of renewal, even excitement, in the air after two years of life in Covid suspended animation. There's a lot of change swirling around, that's for sure.

It's been no different for WAM and our WAMily.

WAM Board

Our fabulous Chair of five years, Sam Payne, stepped down from the role last month. Sam was our rock during the pandemic, guiding the organisation through a rollercoaster of highs and lows. She is one of those people you just know is always there, in the most gentle and thoughtful way, smoothing out the bumps with her calm hand. Board and staff members could always call on her wisdom and support, as she steered us through the uncertainty of distance-based delivery of our core work, keeping us all connected. Having been with us since 2010, first as a Mentor then as a Board member, Sam is truly part of the fabric of WAM and now a treasured WAMily elder. Luckily, she is staying on our Board, so we still get to tap her wisdom.

Sam has passed the baton to me, and I am honoured to follow in her footsteps. She has set a high bar!



This year has brought other changes to the Board. First, Victoria Police Superintendent Anne Rudd, appointed as a Director almost 5 years ago, stepped down. She has the best possible reason, the joy of welcoming gorgeous twin sons to her life. Anne has made an incredible contribution to WAM, bringing her invaluable expertise and insights from the world of policing. She will always be part of the extended WAMily.

We also bid farewell to Emily Porter who resigned from the Board in March 2022, but in her short time made a valuable contribution as a member of the Fundraising & Marketing Committee and the Nominations Committee.

So, we began a search for new Board members, and were excited by the depth of talent and experience we attracted. This has made selection a hard task. Appointment of two new Board members is underway and we will introduce them to you in the next newsletter.

I haven't yet mentioned the rest of the WAM Board – Amanda Thornton, Tracy Baylis, Trevor Irwin and Tamsin Mildenhall; a very inspiring group of people to work with. Their dedication, generosity, responsiveness, and readiness to be on-hand for all things WAM, big and small, is just fabulous.

Funding

Anyone who has followed WAM's story is familiar with the way we have navigated the uncertain world of patchwork funding for many years. WAM not only survived but evolved and grew. 2022 saw a huge change in the funding environment for us. Earlier this year the Victorian government recognised the value of our work and committed 3.6million dollars over 4 years to WAM. This certainly opens doors for us. We are now working on new ways to bring our services to more women across Victoria.

WAM Staff

We find ourselves at the threshold of a truly exciting new times for WAM. None of this would be possible without the outstanding achievements of WAM's small but mighty staff. Tricia Ciampa, Mary Latham, Phaedra Thain and Sarah Nyssen have worked tirelessly to bring us to this place of renewal and growth. This year they were joined by Emily Murphy and Amber Schmidt. Congratulations to this talented team.

2022

What a ride it's been! Thanks to you, our amazing extended WAMily, for your continuing belief in the work we do. We really value your support and look forward to sharing exciting times ahead with you.

From all of us at WAM to you and your loved ones, have a safe and happy holiday season. Bring on 2023!

- Su Robertson, WAM Board Chair