

Thank you to our wonderful supporters who donated to our Lived Experience Peer Mentor group in June. We have raised over \$15,000 to pay for training and provide material aid. The group are now calling out for more members to join in.

Want to get involved?

Volunteer opportunities now open for mentors and Board Members.

Or come along to our next Movie Night

Read on to find out more.

Mentoring is good for your health

It is estimated that the world's human population will hit 8 billion by mid-November 2022. Yet despite this colossal statistic we are experiencing significant rates of isolation, with loneliness cited a critical issue of our time.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, one in four Australians reported feeling lonely, one in two sometimes or always felt alone, and 30% of adults say they don't belong to a friendship group. Lockdowns over the past 2 and a half years may have exacerbated the feelings of loneliness and social isolation and it has become a significant social, health and economic issue.

In this same period that we were dealing with a public health crisis, the proportion of adult Australians doing voluntary work decreased from 36% in late 2019 to 24% in April 2021. The impact of the pandemic significantly disrupted volunteering. Despite the introduction and transition to modified forms of volunteering – WAM adapted to remote mentoring so that crucial connections between participants and mentors could remain intact – there still remains a tentative return to civic engagement and volunteering.

It has been reported that people who stopped volunteering were far more likely to say that they felt lonely at least some of the time in the previous four weeks than those who continued volunteering.

Loneliness has been linked to poor physical and mental health and general dissatisfaction with life; whilst social isolation has been linked to mental illness, emotional distress, suicide, the development of dementia, premature death, and poor health behaviours.

Conversely, we can expect that having positive social connections are important to a happy and healthier life. Protective factors against loneliness include having paid work, caring for others, maintaining sporting and community activities, and demonstrably engaging in

volunteer work. These safeguards are also associated with reduced social isolation.

Without wanting to draw too long a bow, we can surmise that volunteering will actually be good for your health. We know that having meaningful social connections protects us from poor health outcomes and builds our networks within our community.

So, we invite you to consider volunteering with WAM!

We are always pleased to hear from women and non-binary people who are interested in finding out more what it means to be a mentor. Our next information session is coming up soon. We also inviting expressions of interest in three Board Vacancies, and you can find out more [here](#).



Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank the support of Minter Ellison who recently hosted WAM's strategic planning day. Our board and team were capably led by Mollie Tregillis, Amber O'Meara and Anna Lyons who spent time getting to know us, our mentors and our participants, to inspire conversations that will culminate in ensuring more women have access to mentoring and support, to build a life away from the justice system.

- Tricia Ciampa, Executive Officer

tricia@womenandmentoring.org.au



Pro Bono [Latin: prō bonō, for the public good]

Some years ago, we had a photography session to get some shots to use on our website and in our publications. The whole session was provided by pro bono supporters of WAM: the studio, the photography and someone to do our hair and makeup. We took shots of staff, Board members and some mentoring pairs, and one of my favourite photos from that day was of one participant and her mentor. They were both smiling, and you could really see the strength of the relationship that they had formed. But that shot was hard for the photographer to get, because the participant was reluctant to show her teeth.

We know that a person's teeth can be a strong indicator of social advantage or disadvantage. They may show an inability to afford regular dental care, or maybe an unawareness of the importance of good oral hygiene. And there can be damage to teeth as a result of past violence, which is too expensive to have repaired.

So, one of the really great pro-bono services that we can offer to our participants is provided by [Brunswick Dentist](#). They offer free examinations, relevant x-rays, cleaning, fillings and extractions. If the woman then needs other services like root canals, dentures, crowns or bridges, WAM can sometimes contribute some of the costs via donations from our corporate partners.

Recently, one of our participants made use of the service. She had low confidence because one of her teeth was broken at the front and she had been unable to have it fixed for years. She used the free service first, and then



saved her own money to pay for the repair work. This has made her so happy.

Apart from these examples of the photo shoot and the dentistry, we also have pro bono support in many other areas. Our annual external audit, help with establishing our risk management framework, legal advice, use of meeting rooms and others. All things that are incredibly valuable to WAM, but are often outside of our budget.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our pro bono supporters. We truly appreciate all that they give.

And to ask anyone reading this who thinks that they may be able to bring a new pro bono service to WAM to please make contact. What you can help us do for the women in our program is nothing short of amazing.

- **Mary Latham, Operations Manager**

mary@womenandmentoring.org.au

The Quiet Girl ~ WAMily Movie Night

Join us for our WAMily Movie Night on Wednesday 21 September at 6pm at the Kino Cinema.

The Quiet Girl is an award-winning Irish language film about a young girl, Cáit, who is sent to live with distant relatives whilst her parents cope with the arrival of a sixth baby. Withdrawn Cáit starts to thrive in the care and kindness of these strangers. However, in this house where there are meant to be no secrets, she discovers one painful truth.

Based on the renowned story [Foster](#) by Claire Keegan.



Gather your friends and book your tickets [here](#) as places are limited.

Be sure to pre-book your drinks and movie snacks too.

Not sure? Watch the [trailer](#)



You can never have enough support: Lucy and Sandra's story

**Content warning: mention of intimate partner violence*

I met with Lucy (participant) and Sandra (mentor) one morning to catch up on their match so far. Lucy and Sandra have been matched for almost 14 months and we had a lot to celebrate over coffee and bagels. Lucy had her little one with her briefly before Lucy's mum picked her up, sitting in Sandra's lap calmly watching over the table, 6 months old and healthy as can be.

We reflected together on the mentoring journey from where Lucy began till now. I thought about when I first met Lucy at a small café, and it was bucketing down with rain and how she had braved the weather to meet a stranger to discuss her experiences with me. Lucy is a survivor of intimate partner violence from multiple partners, experiencing physical, psychological, emotional, and financial abuse. The biological father of her little one had also perpetrated violence against her, resulting in incarceration and Lucy having sole care.

When Lucy was matched to Sandra, COVID-19 was still new and one of our longest lockdowns came into effect only days after the three of us met to set some goals and more notably, where Lucy shared that she was pregnant.

Lucy wanted to be healthy for her pregnancy and the baby, she wanted a positive court outcome and to feel supported through the court process. Lucy had identified that she wanted to get her licence back for her agency and understand more about child protection involvement with her other daughter who was living with Lucy's mother.

Lucy and Sandra maintained contact and between lockdowns and when restrictions eased, the two met at a nearby park and talked about anything and everything.

Lucy said, "[I like] having that social connection outside of family, getting out of the house to meet someone, it was really therapeutic for me. I get support from Sandra and she's always in my corner... Sandra is the perfect fit".

Lucy reflected on some of the changes she's noticed, "I've noticed a lot of changes. I have a totally different mindset than before (prior to matching). I'm thinking



more in general and being more mindful about things like finances – I have bills to think about. I used to be scared, like I was a small person. Now I speak up and make calls and I get places."

Lucy also spoke about her own self-advocacy and reaching out for support, "I learnt things from Sandra about self-advocacy and not being afraid to ask questions. I've learnt you can never have enough support people. During my pregnancy I had like 10 support people, including hospital staff, and it was great because I knew everything was taken care of. It was encouraging and I had routine".

Sandra reflected on her role as a mentor as well, "I've learnt that life can be difficult and it's often out of people's control. I've learnt how fortunate I am and about determination and the importance of asking for help."

After discussing the goals Lucy had set out for herself and how much she had achieved, it was clear she worked through an awful lot for just 14 months!

Not only had she received a positive court outcome with Sandra's support, but she had also gained her licence and moved into a new property that she loved. She had got important dental work done that was bringing her confidence and she had advocated for herself strongly in the reunification process with her other daughter. Lucy said, "I'm proud of myself", and Lucy – we're all so proud of you too!

-Phaedra Thain, Intake & Assessment Coordinator

Young Women & Girls mentoring program

In collaboration with partner agency, Taskforce, we are working with young women aged 12-24 in the South-East metro region, who are at risk of becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system. By providing mentoring support, we will be part of a local response and intervention to support young women and girls who may

be known to youth justice or child protection, or identified as being at risk of being involved in the justice system. Contact our Young Women's Coordinator [Katharine Spencer](#) for more information, to make a referral or if you are interested in mentoring.

Volunteer Mentors Needed

As the demand for mentoring increases, we are seeking more volunteer mentors 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 participant to positively change her life.



TARGET AREAS: Living in or near Dandenong, Maroondah, Wyndham, Melton, Hume, & Ballarat.

Our program 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 participate in regular supervision and professional development with our WAM Coordinators.

We are seeking women and non-binary folk who have 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.

Our Next Volunteer Information Session will be:
Wednesday 28th September at 6pm
 (via Zoom)

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

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

Lived Experience Peer Mentoring Group – Making HerStory

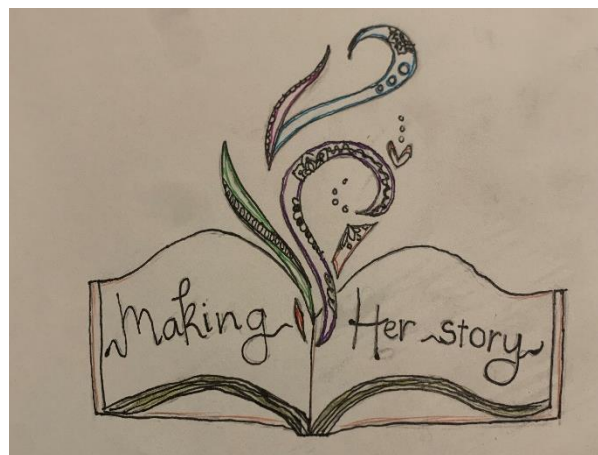
Calling all strong caring women who have lived experience of the justice system!

If you are a woman that would benefit from a supportive mentoring team on your side, then this group is for you! Reach out no matter where you are on your journey and have a caring support system that works with you. Our mission is to keep women out of the justice system by offering peer support and understanding.

We meet fortnightly online (usually Wednesdays at 11am or 7pm) and we cover a range of topics like housing, mental health, positive relationships, getting back into work, and general life matters.

I have learnt and grown so much personally from being a Mentor – it has given me confidence, resilience and educated me by having the opportunity to look at situations through other’s eyes.

Personal growth from mentoring is my biggest achievement and one I am proud of. Mentees join WAM as vulnerable women but what they too have to offer is priceless.



We are all equal members and together we live, learn, strive and rise above the challenges put in our path. This path is one of stepping stones, that we move forward together one at a time – some days slow and some days at a standstill. Then there are sometimes the steps backward. But we are together always and learn new ways to doing things.

You can’t change your history, but you can create your own future. To find out more please get in touch by email: admin@womenandmentoring.org.au

-Cathy and Jaimie, Peer Mentors