

# 2024 Annual Report



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## ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND



*Wyong Neighbourhood Centre acknowledges the Darkinjung people, the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we live and work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.*

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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*Rylie Hopkins*  
- Manager

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the 2024 Annual Report for Wyong Neighbourhood Centre Inc. (WNCI)

WNCI stands as a vital organisation committed to enhancing the quality of life in our communities located in Wyong and Gosford, and the surrounding suburbs. As we present our 2024 Annual Report, we take this opportunity to reflect on a year filled with significant achievements, challenges, and innovations in our service provision aimed at meeting the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

## OUR MISSION AND VISION

At the heart of WNCI's operations is our mission to empower individuals and foster a supportive environment that promotes social inclusion, overall well-being, and resilience. We envision a community where every individual has access to essential services and resources that contribute positively to their social, emotional, and economic health. Through our dedicated programs, services, and community engagement, we strive to transform this vision into reality.

## OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

In 2024, WNCI has continued to excel in providing essential services that address the pressing needs of our community. Our primary funding areas include:

1. Emergency Relief
2. Targeted Early Intervention - Community Hubs
3. Targeted Early Intervention - Youth Services
4. Financial Counselling for Problem Gambling

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

The success of WNCI can largely be attributed to the strong partnerships we have forged with local stakeholders, residents, and other organisations. Collaboration is a cornerstone of our approach, allowing us to leverage shared resources and expertise to effectively serve our community.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we conclude this year, WNCI remains steadfast in our commitment to serving the Wyong and Gosford communities. The insights garnered over the past year will be instrumental in shaping our planning for 2025 and beyond. We are eager about the prospects for growth and new initiatives that will further enhance our service offerings and strengthen our impact.

Our commitment to sustainability and inclusivity will guide future initiatives. By promoting environmentally friendly practices within our operations and actively encouraging the community to engage in sustainable habits, we hope to create a healthier environment for all. Furthermore, we plan to enhance our efforts to ensure that our services are accessible to everyone, irrespective of their background or circumstances, thus fostering inclusivity.

## CONCLUSION

The Wyong Neighbourhood Centre Inc. takes pride in its role within the lives of our community members. Through our unwavering commitment to service excellence, effective collaboration, and advocacy, we are dedicated to fostering a stronger, more inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our stakeholders, partners, and the community for their ongoing support as we move forward together into 2024 and beyond. Together, we can cultivate a more resilient and cohesive community, paving the way for a brighter future for all.

*Monique Cardon*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Includes Acting Treasurer's Report

Welcome to Wyong Neighbourhood Centre's annual report. Once again, it's been a busy year for the organisation, with an increase in people using our services and still no change in funding.

As a Board we went through some changes with the welcome addition of Rachael Glasson, Heidi Richards and Adrienne Kadwell joining the team throughout the year. They joined existing Board members Lea-Anne Edwards, Samantha Frost and myself. Volunteering your time to a not-for-profit Board and understanding all the compliance, governance and strategic imperatives facing a Neighbourhood Centre, in your spare time, can be daunting. I know it's tough when there are competing priorities, and I am deeply appreciative of the time given to us by these individuals during the 2023-24 financial year.

Kylie Hopkins has once again ensured that the organisation has provided the support needed by our community members and has been instrumental in attracting student volunteers to WNCI and maintaining vital partnerships with key stakeholders. The organisation's reach in the Wyong and Gosford areas and surrounding suburbs is crucial in addressing the need for emergency relief funding, financial counselling and programs and spaces for youth and the broader community. Access to essential services such as those provided by WNCI helps cultivate community resilience and cohesion and empowers individuals to achieve stability and wellbeing in their lives.

The Hub in Gosford is a vibrant and connected service that is thriving under Kim Pemberton's strong leadership, and I thank Kim and her team for their commitment. I would also like to acknowledge Carly Robinson for her work with Financial Counselling clients with a focus on Problem Gambling. She is also based at the Gosford Hub. Similarly, the Phoenix Youth Service under the leadership of Chris Dryden and hard work of Helen Drury, has supported so many young people this year and is continually refining their service approach to best meet the needs of their clients. At the Wyong Hub itself, I thank Kylie Hopkins, Sarah Walters and Megan Maher for their dedication and commitment to supporting people through challenging times in their lives. Together, the entire team will continue to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people in our community. A big thank you is extended to the volunteers, many of whom are students, for their dedication to our programs. They really are the backbone of the many services offered by WNCI to the community.

WNCI was recently nominated for the Synaco by Synergie Safety Award, a part of the prestigious 7NEWS NSW and ACT Community Achievement awards. We have recently been informed that we are 2024 semi-finalists. This is a huge honour and achievement for Wyong Neighbourhood Centre Inc.

As Acting Treasurer, I am pleased with the organisation's financial health under Kylie's stewardship. It is challenging to do as much as we achieve with limited funding, and it's pleasing to see other income in the form of donations, fee for service work, subletting space and room hire. I am confident that the organisation is well positioned to support its vision, mission and strategic goals for 2024-25 – but it is a tough ask, and we continue to call for a more sustainable funding structure.



*Congratulations*

You're a Semi Finalist in the Awards



COMMUNITY  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

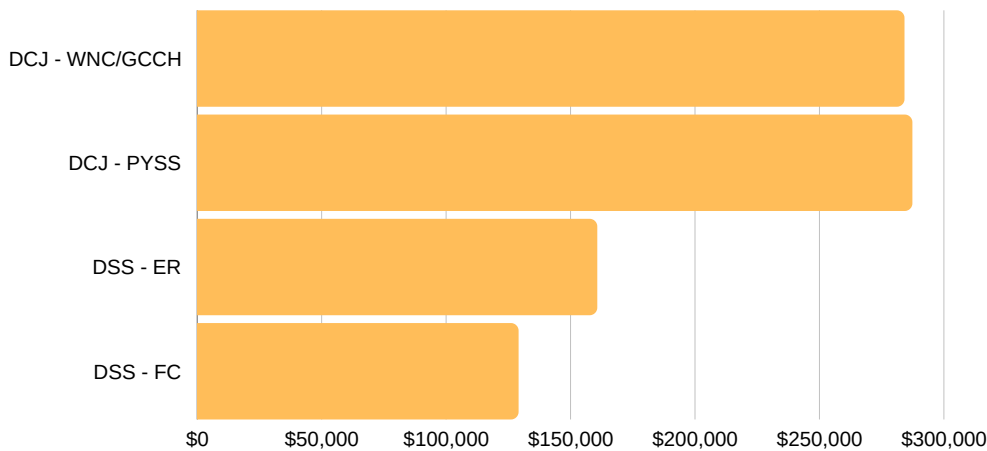
# FUNDING & OTHER INCOME

DCJ	Department of Communities & Justice
WNC	Wyong Neighbourhood Centre
GCCH	Gosford CBD Community Hub
PYSS	Phoenix Youth Support Service
DSS	Department of Social Services
ER	Emergency Relief
FC	Financial Counselling

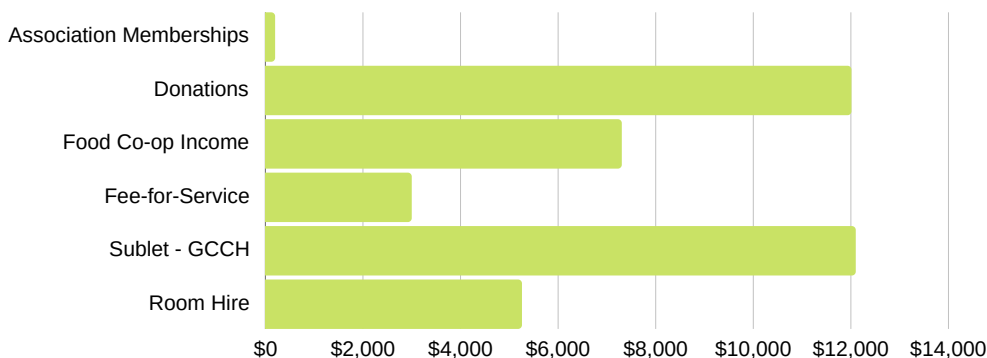
# \$901,103

## TOTAL INCOME FOR 2024

## SOURCES OF FUNDING (GRANTS)



## OTHER INCOME (COMPARED)



## STAFF PROFILE



**SARAH WALTERS**  
Financial Administration  
Assistant

**QUALIFICATIONS**  
Cert III Business  
Administration  
Cert III Accounting  
(including MYOB)

4.5 years of service at  
Wyong Neighbourhood  
Centre



# STAFFING REPORT

2023-24 has been a time of stability for our permanent staff. We've had a year of no change to our staffing base.

Small pockets of additional funding have helped us to employ some casual staff for busy periods over Christmas, New Year and towards the end of the financial year when staff take leave or when reporting/accountability tasks are frequently taking primary staff away from client-facing work.

We would like to acknowledge the work and assistance of past students who have taken on paid working roles for temporary or short-term periods.

These staff have been invaluable to service delivery and the overall morale of our permanent staff team. We hope to continue to engage these wonderful workers in future:

- Mellissa Johnson
- Navpreet Kaur
- Stephen Patterson
- Beck Mackenzie
- Sharon Robinson

## TERTIARY STUDENT PLACEMENTS

- Akash Tanwar - Gosford Hub
- Ashley Rostron - Wyong Hub
- Aytou Phu - Gosford Hub
- Beck Mackenzie - Wyong Hub
- Brooke Jones - Wyong Hub
- Caleb Gorringer - Phoenix Youth Support
- Chandani (Chai) Shrestha - Wyong Hub
- Chelsea Dickson - Financial Counselling
- Chloe Ferrington - Phoenix Youth Support
- Heidi Richards - Financial Counselling
- Hope Keegan - Wyong Hub
- Jesse Sekoa - Phoenix Youth Support
- Julia Webb - Wyong Hub
- Katrina Pringle - Wyong Hub
- Karamjit Kaur - Wyong Hub
- Karanvir Singh - Wyong Hub
- Karlee Heilmann - Wyong Hub
- Kelly Musters - Wyong Hub
- Liam Camilleri - Phoenix Youth Support
- Lisa Jeffrey - Wyong Hub
- Mellissa Johnson - Wyong Hub
- Miles Stanton - Financial Counselling
- Michele Bannister - Wyong Hub
- Mingyu (Mia) Zu - Gosford Hub
- Natasha Ball - Wyong Hub
- Navpreet (Nav) Kaur - Wyong Hub
- Rachelle Slade - Gosford Hub
- Ryan Conaghan - Wyong Hub
- Siobhan Wilby - Gosford Hub
- Stephanie Purvis - Wyong Hub
- Steven Patterson - Wyong Hub
- Vicki Fairbrother - Wyong Hub

## CURRENT STAFF

- Kylie Hopkins**  
Manager
- Sarah Walters**  
Financial Admin Assistant
- Megan Maher**  
Community Referral Worker
- Kim Pemberton**  
Hub Coordinator
- Christopher Dryden**  
Phoenix Team Leader
- Helen Drury**  
Youth Worker
- Carly Robinson**  
Financial Counsellor

## SECONDARY STUDENT PLACEMENTS

In addition to our tertiary students, we also hosted 20 high school students from various local schools...

- St Peter's College (10)
- Mackillop Catholic College (4)
- TLSC The Entrance Campus (5)
- St Joseph's Catholic College (1).

## CURRENT VOLUNTEERS

- Mark Harland**  
**Paul Fuller**  
SECONDBITE
- Diane Castner**  
**Annette Slater**  
**Jenny Cenere**  
**Laurelle Louch**  
**Lee Huizer**  
**Ben Murdoch**  
**Judy Greentree**  
FROZEN MEALS PROGRAM
- Carolyn Hay**  
**Craig McGregor**  
**David Harris**  
**Elyse Gough**  
**Paul Conolan**  
**Lyn Edwards**  
GCCH Food Co-op



## STAFF PROFILE

**KYLIE HOPKINS**  
Manager/Executive Officer

**QUALIFICATIONS**  
Diploma in Community Services

7 years of service at Wyong Neighbourhood Centre Inc.

## GOSFORD HUB ACTIVITIES REPORT

The Gosford CBD Community Hub has evolved from being considered a new service to a well-established support centre, marking its third year of operation. The Hub has become a vital lifeline for residents across the local area and surrounding suburbs. With the ongoing cost of living and housing crisis, the hub has been busy. Providing crisis food hampers and some basic material aid that can include, children's clothing packs, nappies, toiletries, household cleaning items, adult clothing and shoes, blankets and pet food.

Throughout the year our hub has actively engaged with children and families experiencing vulnerabilities and hardship. We have clients travel from as far as the Peninsula to Ourimbah to access our services. The hub has assisted many of our clients with successful referrals that has impacted their lives in a meaningful way and created measurable positive outcomes. Helping individuals and families, to find permanent long-term housing, access trauma counselling, gain employment, information on how to access NILS loans, food vouchers and EAPA support. We regularly support clients living in temporary accommodation with no cooking facilities. Linking parents into local supported playgroups, parenting programs & family support service providers.

The Gosford Hub Food Co-op receives no direct emergency relief funding from the Department of Social Services. We are self-funded through the small amount of profit that our onsite food co-op generates, small cash donations from the general public, generous food donations from an anonymous community member and donations generated by other agencies. We are so grateful for our charity partners that are Food Bank, Second Bite, Oz Harvest, We Care CONNECT and Share the Dignity.

We continue to strengthen our partnership with Chertsey Primary School by our ongoing support of their breakfast club and recently facilitating a weekly Parents Connect Group. Other collaborations we have participated in this year has been partnering with Pacific Link Housing to facilitate an after school children's activity program at their Dunbar Way Community Centre, located in North Gosford. During the September and April school holidays, Kim facilitated culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art workshops at the Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation, located in Ettalong. These workshops are always well attended and are a wonderful opportunity to connect and support with our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, in a positive and fun filled environment.

The Gosford CBD Community Hub attended some large-scale events, the multi-cultural expo at Erina and the Nunyara NAIDOC event at the Wyong Racecourse.

The Hub has a small but reliable team of long-term volunteers who are truly the backbone of the centre. Their commitment and enthusiasm are appreciated every single day. With only one paid staff member, three out of the four days a week we are open, they make the world of difference.

We have mentored and supported a number of University students studying Social Work and Social Science. Along with TAFE students studying Community Services. Our students are also greatly appreciated and contribute immensely to delivering a professional and caring service to our vulnerable clients.

Lastly, we re-arranged our compact space to create an activity room that has allowed us to offer small onsite group activities and workshops targeted to our local families and their children.

### STAFF PROFILE



**KIM PEMBERTON**

Gosford CBD Community Hub

### QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Fine Art

6 years of service at  
Wyong Neighbourhood Centre





## PHOENIX YOUTH REPORT

Phoenix Youth Support Service has had an amazing year with many major changes to service provision and exciting new partnerships to help support our most vulnerable young people.

Due to contract guidelines, PYSS has moved away from the Rent Choice Youth program (Specialist Housing Service) and focused more on creating partnerships and providing services within local schools to achieve greater Targeted Early Intervention outcomes.

PYSS had an incredible year for case management and saw a record number of young people who participated in both personal case management and Skills Based Education.

PYSS have seen an increase in family-based support and are proud to have been a part in the process for so many young people and families beginning to function in more positive ways.

Phoenix Staff created new and exciting ways to engage with local young people and stakeholders in market stall and information booth settings with the development of games and data collection tools.

With the relocation of the PYSS service to the WNC building, there has been many overlapping opportunities for both WNC and PYSS staff to collaborate and share experiences, ultimately contributing to greater learning for everyone on staff and we are delighted to have had the opportunity to work more closely with our colleagues at WNC.

WNC has made it possible for PYSS to support young people and their family in new and helpful ways including access to Emergency Relief and food hampers more readily which has ensured a more holistic set of supports.

PYSS have received compliments on the consistency of service and furthermore the data that has been reported to our Funding body which has served as evidence of a more thorough approach to the work we do with our young people.

## STAFF PROFILES



**CHRIS DRYDEN**  
Senior Youth Worker

**QUALIFICATIONS**  
Cert IV Community Services  
(Youth work)

19 years of service  
at Wyong Neighbourhood Centre  
and Phoenix Youth Support  
Service



**HELEN DRURY**  
Youth Worker

**QUALIFICATIONS**  
Cert IV Community Services

4.5 years of service at Wyong  
Neighbourhood Centre and  
Phoenix Youth Support Service



## WYONG HUB ACTIVITIES REPORT

Over the past financial year, the Wyong Hub has been dedicated to supporting our community despite growing challenges. We've been busy providing emergency relief and other essential services to a large number of people, reflecting the rising need due to the increasing cost of living. We delivered over 5500 sessions of emergency relief to almost 1000 individual community members, including food, rent assistance, clothing, and toiletries. In addition, we offered information, advice, and referrals to those in need. Our services have become even more crucial as more people face financial difficulties and the added stressors that come with this.

We've also been active in education over the past year, hosting 35 students, including those pursuing Diplomas, Psychology, Masters of Social Work, Social Work placements and High School Work experience. This not only helps their learning but also strengthens our ability to serve the community. We partnered with TLK Community College to provide free First Aid training, which was well-received and useful for many.

We successfully organized events such as the Community Connection and Family Day, which connected families with local support services and fostered positive relationships within the community. We also participated in various community and cultural events, including NAIDOC celebrations and Mental Health Awareness Day, which helped strengthen our connections and raise awareness on important issues.

Our Kidz Club program has continued to grow, offering a safe and supportive environment for children and families. We introduced initiatives like "Kidz Club currency" to promote financial literacy and positive behaviour among the children. The positive feedback given from the children and their parents/carers, shows the program is making a real difference. We are currently in the process of re-branding this program to allow for evidence based activities that include all family members.

In terms of support for individuals facing complex challenges, we provided intensive assistance to those dealing with mental health, domestic and family violence, housing, and legal issues. Notably, we helped a single mother and her children escape domestic violence and access necessary support services, demonstrating the effectiveness of our comprehensive approach.

Partnerships with businesses and organisations like ING, Dechra and GIVIT have been very helpful. ING's Impact Day allowed us to prepare and distribute nutritious meals through our frozen meal program, and Dechra & GIVIT's support helped us provide a Christmas lunch and gifts for local families, bringing joy in the lead up to Christmas. GIVIT has also supported our organisation by providing vouchers to contribute to our programs and activities.

The addition of facilities in our community shed, including a washing machine, dryer, and shower, has made a significant difference for many individuals in need. These resources offer essential services to those who would otherwise lack access to basic hygiene and laundry facilities. The availability of these facilities not only helps improve the quality of life for people facing hardship but also alleviates some of the pressure on Orange Sky Laundry, who visit our center every Tuesday. By sharing the load, we ensure that more people can benefit from these crucial services and maintain personal hygiene and dignity.

Our work is made possible thanks to the generous support of everyday people who donated to our centre along with several partnerships we have created. We are deeply grateful for the donations we receive from The Bikers Hand, Coast Hands, Second Bite, OzHarvest, and a local community member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Looking ahead, Wyong Hub remains committed to addressing our community's needs. Despite the challenges of static funding and increasing demand, we are focused on improving our services and finding new ways to support those in need.

### STAFF PROFILE



**MEGAN MAHER**

Community Referral Worker

#### QUALIFICATIONS

Diploma in Community Services

4.5 years of service at  
Wyong Neighbourhood Centre



### PEOPLE ASSISTED WITH SERVICES OR ACTIVITIES IN 2023-24

**1661**  
Information  
Advice  
Referral

Emergency  
Relief  
**992**

**1028**  
Other  
Programs &  
Activities

Christmas  
Activities &  
Hampers  
**100**

**9**  
Kidz Club  
attendees

Community  
Connect Days  
**129**





## FINANCIAL COUNSELLING REPORT

This last year, the program has noticed the cases have been more complex with business debts becoming more prominent and tax debts becoming more problematic due to the tax office aggressively recovering debts owed to them.

During the 2023/24 financial year the financial counselling service was able to work with creditors to help them understand individual situations compassionately and waive a significant amount of debt totalling: **\$460,992.90**

This free and confidential community service makes a great difference to people whose lives have experienced the negative impact of gambling and may have saved lives from the devastation of financial hardship as a result of gambling.

The service is available to any individual impacted by gambling as gambling can impact anyone regardless of gender, income, age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, spirituality or any other defining factor.

The Financial Counselling program has also provided financial literacy sessions to people in young parent programs and mental health services to help them gain more control over the financial situations and empower them to improve their lives and mental well being.

With stories such as these, the financial counselling service is making a real difference in the lives of those affected by gambling.

### STAFF PROFILE



**CARLY ROBINSON**  
Financial Counsellor

#### QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Social Work  
Diploma in Community Services  
(Financial Counselling)

4 years of service at  
Wyong Neighbourhood Centre



*Greg sought the assistance of the service as he had a range of debt acquired after the liquidation of his business which failed as a result of COVID. His son had bought the business in the liquidation & was gambling with the income from the business & this was impacting Greg's mental health. Greg was well into his retirement years & had no assets remaining to be able to pay his debts. He was essentially homeless living in a caravan that was unsuitable & did not meet his needs. We were able to resolve over \$268,000 of his business loans with personal guarantees & point him in the right direction to be assisted with priority housing. 'Thank you for everything you've done it is really appreciated. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you'*



*Robert\* sought the assistance of the service after being diagnosed with a brain tumour & was unable to work. He was not sure what the prognosis was going to be & was of retirement age so felt he should try to address some financial concerns he had before his income significantly changed permanently. He was married to his wife who was unable to control her gambling. Robert took out some loans to help payout the gambling debt she owed & unfortunately, she passed away a month or so after the loans were disbursed. Robert had been paying the debt for some years although with the change in his health he was unable to maintain the repayments. The service was able to support Robert to settle his debts with some savings he had so that he could put this behind him & helped save him \$22,332.66. 'I'm tremendously grateful to you, so many thanks'*

*Steve had many attempts of recovering from substance use & gambling addiction prior to seeking the support of the financial counselling service. He had some debt to address as a result of his addiction & the service assisted him to resolve the debts. Once we resolved his debts, the service provided weekly counselling to address his gambling & support him in his recovery. The service then transitioned him to a psychologist who could continue to support him with his recovery. Client has been in recovery for 10 months and is grateful to the service for the support stating: 'You've helped me more than anyone ever has before'*

81

PEOPLE  
ASSISTED

1024

SESSIONS  
CONDUCTED

We have a number of Board of Management positions vacant at present and we are actively recruiting suitable candidates. Please visit <https://www.wnci.org.au/membership/board-of-management-prospectus> for more details.

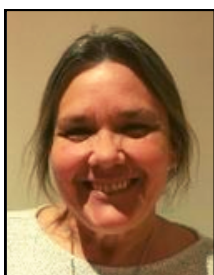
## CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

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**President/Chairperson: Monique Cardon**  
**MBA**

Monique joined the Board in a casual vacancy position in February 2022 and was elected President at the 2022 AGM. She has worked in the not-for-profit sector as a senior executive on the Central Coast for over 30 years. A management generalist, she has experience in governance, finance, HR, risk and compliance, marketing, and communications. Monique is currently the CEO of a women's alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation service.



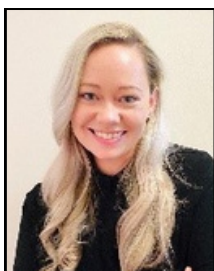
**Vice President: Lea Edwards**  
**Dip. Business Management, Business Compliance and Quality Auditing**

WNCI Member since 2017. Lea has skills in HR, staffing and payroll management from an employer perspective. She is a qualified Trainer and Assessor in Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Mental Health. Lea established her own community-based NDIS registered service based in Wyong. Lea is currently the CEO for another disability organisation here on the coast. She has a passion for compliance.



**Secretary: Adrienne Kadwell**

WNCI Member since 2023. Adrienne has worked in the NFP Disability sector for nearly 10 years in the role of Executive Assistant to the CEO. She currently works for People with Disability Australia in Surry Hills Sydney and is extremely passionate for the rights of people living with disability and advocate for them wherever she can. Adrienne volunteers in the local community and also with the Sydney Mardi Gras each year as she works in the predominately LGTBQ+ demographic area.



**Member: Samantha Frost**  
**BBus/LLB**

WNCI Member since 2020. Samantha has extensive experience working in corporate and not-for-profit organisations, and brings problem-solving and governance skills to the Board, as well as financial management and cyber awareness. She has experience in the NFP financial services and banking sector. She studied governance at the Governance Institute of Australia and is very passionate about the education of women and children. Samantha is practicing solicitor in NSW.



**Member: Rachael Glasson**  
**Bach. Social Science**

WNCI Member since 2023. Rachael commenced her career in Community Services after the completion of a Bachelor of Social Science at the University of Newcastle. She has experience across Specialist Housing Services programs, case management, domestic and family violence and managing multi-site programs and teams. Rachael is passionate about developing and maintaining a healthy and thriving workplace culture, which flows onto providing trauma informed support for all our clients.



**Member: Heidi Richards**

WNCI Member since 2023. Heidi is a risk and compliance consultant after a 30-year career as a financial services regulator in Australia and the United States. She is active in volunteering to support local community organisations. She has served on various boards including as secretary for local community organisations in Sydney and Central Coast. She is a risk and compliance specialist, accredited financial counsellor and graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors course.