

ANNUAL REPORT



2015-2016

Women's Mental Health Network
Victoria

cover image
by Julie Dempsey

Women's Mental Health Network Victoria
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www.wmhmv.org.au

The Network is an organisation of consumers, carers and workers who aim to improve the lives of women with a mental illness by advocating for safe and effective services that are sensitive to women's needs.

Our Funders

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Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities

Bendigo Health

Drummond Street Services

E.A.C.H.

Forensicare

Knightstone

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Northern Area Mental Health Service

R.E. Ross Trust

St Paul's Anglican Church, Ringwood

State Trustees Victoria

The Alfred Hospital

The Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation

Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust

VicServ

WISHIN

Within Australia

Donations received \$ 7,000

NEW Members registered =24

Annual Report

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK VICTORIA

FROM THE CHAIR



The Network has been busy engaging with its traditional base of consumers and workers in the mental health sector over the last year through a variety of activities including submissions to Government, running programs and forums, advocacy work, and conference presentations.

Following on from last year's submission to the Family Violence Royal Commission we have continued to lobby in the Family Violence arena to highlight problems associated with the intersect between mental health, domestic violence, justice and community supports. Particularly stressing the specific challenges faced by women consumers navigating and experiencing the Family Violence sector with the extra burden of stigma and its negative consequences. Female

consumers are more likely to have a history of abuse, be perceived negatively in family violence situations and are at greater risk, or fear of, losing their children. The Network continues to provide voice for these women consumers by representing them on the Department of Premier and Cabinet 'Diverse Communities and Intersectionality Working Group', which consults on the government response to the Family Violence Royal Commission recommendations.

Another submission to Government has been in response to the Department of Premier and Cabinet request for comment on 'Gender Equality – have your say'. To the question of 'What are the most urgent areas of gender inequality that Victoria should tackle first?' we of course raised the issues of safety and providing a healing environment for women consumers in inpatient units by improving physical environments, like female only spaces, if not single sex wards, in combination with having a staff culture of effective gender sensitivity. These issues were further reinforced in the sector when we facilitated a workshop on Gender–

Sensitivity and Safety at the Alfred Diversity Conference late last year.



Leanne Beagley, Julie Dempsey, Minister Martin Foley

Another question addressed in our Gender Equality submission was ‘How do we encourage women and girls to take up leadership roles?’ to which our ‘Women Speak Out’ (WSO) and rural focused ‘Breaking the Silence’ (BST) programs are a natural fit. An assessment of these programs was completed earlier in 2016 and confirmed the usability and effectiveness of helping women into leadership roles and getting their voices heard.

The modules enable women to increase their confidence in speaking out in public and on committees fostering self-awareness and empowerment to project a more positive image of living with mental illness, and to provide hope to others. We continue to partner with other areas in the disability sector such as co-running the WSO program with

ADEC (Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities).

These themes of leadership, Recovery and the idea of empowerment through participation were reinforced in the Network presentation at the VicServ 2016 ‘Towards Recovery Conference’. Consumer and Mental Health professional members of the WMHNV Committee of Management spoke of the unique co-production style of Network functioning and project delivery. As well as how the combination of consumers and workers running and facilitating activities and network processes together has allowed the personal growth and leadership development of all involved. I believe this is an underpinning and key strength of the Network.

But perhaps the highlight of the year was the ‘Information for Women’ website launch. Feedback we had received from women, and as part of acquitting the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation ‘Survive and Thrive’ grant, we saw the need to develop a better communications platform to assist women consumers, especially in rural and regional areas, to have better access to information about Mental Health Services. Special thanks to our strong volunteer base for the months of hard slog getting this up and running.

We timed this with our high impact postcard mail out advertising the site. Partly because of these actions, and our continuing advocacy efforts in the mental health sector and broader community, we have had new member numbers growing steadily. I believe easy to navigate and readily available service information will become increasingly crucial as we move into the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) world where consumers have individual packages to access services but at the same time become more isolated from each other as a community. For those consumers that will fall through the funding gaps service information on a personal level and advocacy to receive appropriate services will become paramount. In 2016 the Network collaborated with VicServ on an NDIS advocacy submission to the Government, VicServ has been a strong advocate for consumers in this area.

Considering the future, the Network has exciting times ahead. We will be looking at how to diversify our funding streams to ensure the sustainability of the organisation, as well as targeting new organisational memberships and developing our training arm as a source of income. We will also be outreaching into the Mental Health Community Support Service sector and the Alcohol and

other Drugs fields, to deliver Gender-Sensitive training and facilitate a safer more supportive culture for women consumers at all stages of their service and Recovery journeys.

As we lead into the year we will be developing a new strategic plan and reassessing our priorities; I do hope you can make the journey with us. Just as I have spoken about leadership we must never forget our grass-roots base, the reason we exist, and our successful mechanisms of working collaboratively.

Julie Dempsey

Chair

FROM THE COORDINATOR MARCH-SEPTEMBER 2016

During 2016 we employed a Coordinator for a time limited period (6 months) to maintain our staffing levels during an upheaval experienced in our Network. The part-time role aimed to support the ongoing day to day management of the Network operations with a specific focus on our Survive & Thrive Project (funded by the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation).

We wish to thank her for the contributions, commitment to our cause and support to our advocacy aims.

COORDINATORS REPORT



Time certainly has flown since I began my contract as Coordinator of the Women's Mental Health Network in March this year! Getting to know the Network's previous accomplishments and progress made in my time here has been deeply satisfying and inspiring, with a sense of having built solid ground.

The role of coordinator involved a myriad of tasks that needed attention during a period of transition.

Sitting in the Coordinators chair, I have enjoyed engaging with our individual and organisational Membership through the Winter Newsletter and sharing news about a highly successful presentation at the VICSERV "Towards Recovery" Conference in May, as well as highlighting poetry by Julie Dempsey and Sandy Jeffs.

Attending the Australian Health Policy Consortium's Roundtable Discussion on Investing in Women's Health in April, saw The Network draw on the importance of collaboration between

women's organisations to advocate as a collective voice for urgent and systemic policy change that addresses women's Mental Health across the life span .

I was fortunate to be involved with the organisation and consumer participation in our Network Forum held in July, exploring Women Consumer's "Hospital Experiences". Planning and running the Forum, I was inspired all the way by the dedication, humour and creativity of COM member Sandy Jeffs, the enthusiasm of the Network's Committee of Management, and the generosity and dedication of consumers to speak out about their experiences of Inpatient Care. Four consumer speakers addressed the Forum, after which attendees discussed their stories in small groups, but importantly, shared ideas for improvement of services.

Our research has shown that women consumers and carers who live in rural and regional Victoria need better access to information, especially when it comes to local services. In response – the Network website launched a number of Information pages to help increase women consumer's access to information via web search engine tools. The Women's Mental Health Network Victoria is keen to help consumers and carers to navigate the complex mental health information

systems available. This website is a way forward for signposting information that is targeted at women living in rural and regional areas of Victoria; including support groups and service providers – while allowing access to all women in Victoria.

A postcard campaign was also launched in tandem with the new web information to ensure the message got out to relevant stakeholders. There with 4,500 postcards mailed out to various community health centres, psychiatric inpatient units, medical and specific mental health sector partners. We have experienced a large amount of webmail as a result of this advertising highlighting the importance of getting relevant information sources out to women.

Overall, the past six months working with the Network has been inspiring and as the year progresses, I wish them and all members the very best success, especially in the Gender Safety and Sensitivity Training I am reminded that working through Committee, as a non-State funded organisation, presents its own challenges, but that what is unique about the Network is its unfailing commitment to placing the Consumer experience and ideas at the fore, providing women with a voice to be heard outside of the restrictive frames that can at times try to contain them. As the African proverb goes, 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'

Nilmini Fernando PhD

Coordinator

Women who gave us feedback say.....

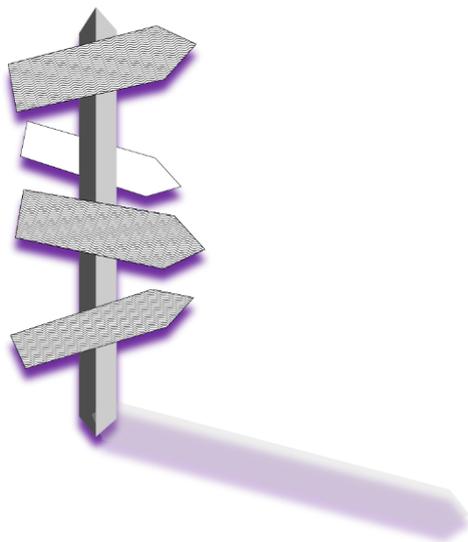
“Female-only spaces are so, so importantall I ever needed was somewhere 'safe' to retreat to.....”

WEBSITE: WOMEN– INFO FOR WOMEN – OUR WEBSITE CAN HELP YOU.....

THE NETWORK IS KEEN TO HELP CONSUMERS AND CARERS TO NAVIGATE COMPLEX MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION.

OUR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT WOMEN CONSUMERS AND CARERS WHO LIVE IN RURAL AND REGIONAL VICTORIA NEED BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO LOCAL SERVICES.

OUR WEBSITE IS A WAY FORWARD FOR SIGNPOSTING



INFORMATION THAT IS TARGETED AT WOMEN LIVING IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AREAS OF VICTORIA; INCLUDING SUPPORT GROUPS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS — WHILE ALLOWING ACCESS TO ALL WOMEN IN VICTORIA.

www.wmhmv.org.au

see page *info for women*

OUR PROGRAMS

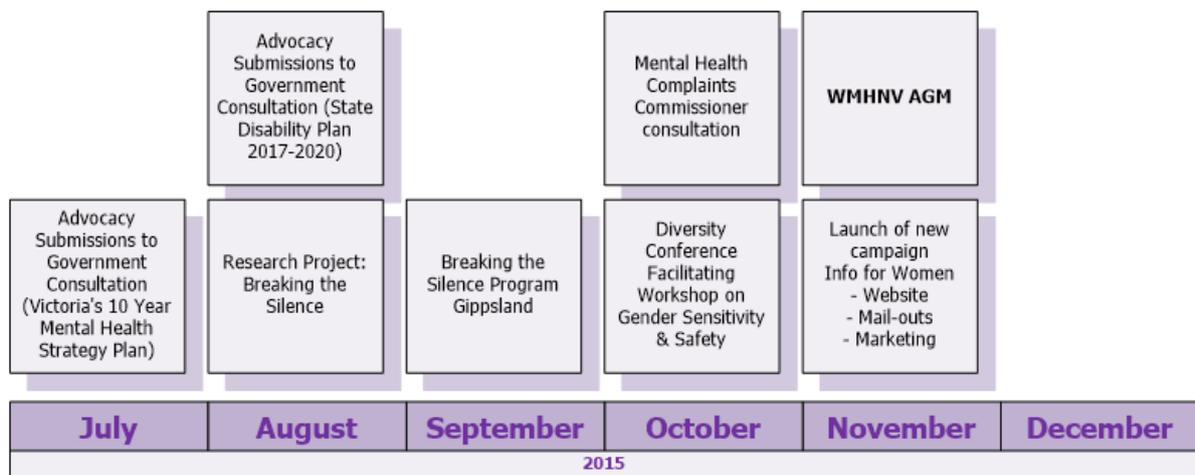
FOR Women Consumers

We Support Women with programs that capture the lived wisdom of consumers and staff.

Women Speak Out Program

Our ***Women Speak Out Program*** consumer advocacy training helps build confidence and skills, enabling women to actively participate in public forums or committees and services. Hearing the voice of women consumers can positively impact on how services are delivered, and can result in improved work practices in inpatient and community settings.

The ***Women Speak Out Program*** will help build a safe and gender sensitive mental health system for all women. The Network partners with individuals and relevant organisations to bring this program to women in the community.



Women in Rural and Regional Victoria

A pilot program, *'Breaking the Silence,'* has been funded by State Trustees and SNAP Gippsland (Within Australia), for women in rural and regional Victoria. It aims to help break down stigma and isolation and empower women to contribute to local community efforts to improve mental health.

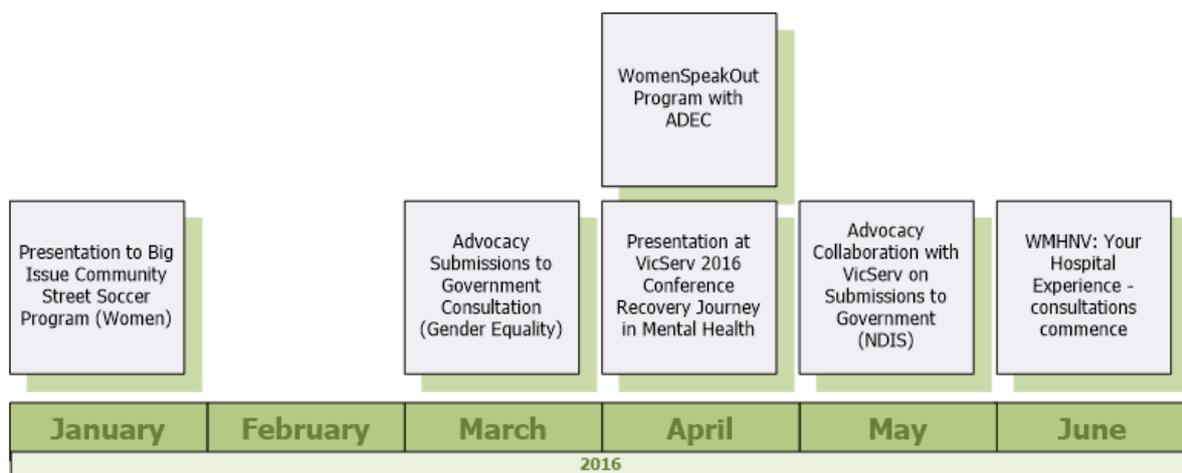
It is planned to put strategies in place to encourage women who undertake the program to support each other after the training has been evaluated. It is expected that over time the 'Breaking the Silence' program will be rolled out to other parts of rural and regional Victoria. We will continue to build on our learnings and develop this program further.

FOR Health Professionals

Training – Building Gender– Sensitive and Safe Practice

Funded and now licensed to the Network by the State Government, The Network developed a fee –for –service *Gender Sensitivity and Safe Practice Training Program* for all mental health services in Victoria.

The training modules have already been delivered to every acute mental health unit. To continue this work the training is available to the Mental Health Community Support Service Sector and Alcohol and Other Drugs services. The aim is to provide insight into what women consumers really need from mental health staff and services. Introductory information sessions are also available to services or community groups on request.



A RURAL /REGIONAL FOCUS



The Women's Mental Health Service Bendigo Health, services the Loddon Mallee catchment area. This past year, has seen a strong focus on Family Violence, and on Gender Sensitivity training.

Bendigo Health are in partnership with the Royal Women's Hospital, in a project titled *Strengthening Hospital Response to Family Violence*. This project seeks to enable both metro and regional/rural hospitals to better identify, support and respond to women experiencing family violence. It assists hospitals to implement specific policies and protocols, documentation, collaborative service delivery and referral, staff training, a sensitive enquiry model, and health promotion around prevention of family violence.

Regional and rural women experience specific risk factors in terms of family Both the latter workshops addressed diversity, and the specific risk factors and best practice, relating to being a

violence. Factors such as geographical isolation; limited access to services and public transport; sometimes a culture of "domestic business is private business"; lack of anonymity; perpetrators being key respected figures in small towns; service providers knowing perpetrators personal; poverty; cultural pressure from inter-generational family farm businesses.....all create unique challenges for rural women, and the local generic health providers seeking to support them.

In regard to staff training, our service continued to roll out Gender Sensitivity training, based on the Network's training package, to 14 different staff groups across Psychiatric Services.

It also hosted two specific training workshops, these being "Family Violence and CALD Women", and "Living LGBTI", which were attended by a diverse cross-section of workers from health and welfare, community services, Victoria Police, and hospital and allied health. All of these training events engaged staff well, and generated very positive, lively and reflective discussion.

woman from CALD background, or a woman from the LGBTI community. It highlighted that gender sensitive

practice requires us to be respectful and informed around the differences between women, and between genders, so that we can effectively respond to the needs and issues that flow from these differences.

I really value our ongoing involvement with the WMHNV, and it certainly informs and supports our practice as Women's Mental Health Workers in the Loddon Mallee. It is a great channel

for strengthening the voice of regional/rural women. We look forward to this collaborative relationship continuing to grow, as we seek to enhance the wellbeing and safety of women from diverse walks of life, and celebrate the shared journey.

Bridget Nutting

*Women's Mental Health Worker
Bendigo Health*

COM member WMHNV



*Thank you to all our volunteers
for your valued contributions to
The Network!*

GIVING WOMEN CONSUMERS A POWERFUL NEW VOICE



No-one can tell their story about living with a mental illness like a woman who has been there. And I have been there – battling a major mental illness since my late teens – and eventually finding a unique source of support and challenge when I joined the Women’s Mental Health Network Victoria nine years ago.

If you had told me early in my illness that I would be speaking at major mental health conferences and flying to Washington as a guest presenter at the 6th World Conference on Promoting Mental Health I would have doubted your sanity as well as my own. Yet, all of that has happened. And I have also spent a decade working as a Consumer Consultant in inpatient units in Monash and Dandenong hospitals and with groups in community settings.

Out of that experience I became part of developing and co-facilitating two innovating programs– *Women Speak Out* and *Breaking the Silence*; developed by The Network to help more women consumers experience the liberation of owning their illness and making an impact on how

mental health professionals and service providers understand women’s special needs. Women who have experienced the fear, the isolation and the deep sense of insecurity that are so often part of mental illness, can bring a new appreciation of what women go through to those in caring roles who share their journey.

Both programs are about building confidence so that women can share their experience of mental illness in their own words, without being overwhelmed by anxiety. It takes courage to stand up and share what is deeply personal, and it is this individual experience that our two programs work to capture. One of the strengths of this training is the supportive environment in which learning takes place and the emphasis on the unique value of each participant’s story.

We have delivered the *‘Women Speak Out’* program at several Melbourne venues, including a program focused on women of different cultural backgrounds, presented in partnership with Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC). The *Breaking the Silence* program, which is targeted at women from rural locations, was presented in collaboration with SNAP Gippsland (Within Australia) – requiring some geographical challenges to bring women together from considerable distances across Gippsland.

Finding women who are able and prepared to undertake and complete the training rests largely on the organisations hosting the training. Initially the program was delivered as five modules over six days. But we found that offering the modules as two sessions per day over three days appealed to more participants.

We are hoping to attract more participants in the New Year and would ultimately like to develop a Speaker's Bureau, to give women a focus for their training and opportunities to share their experience. I have seen staff, particularly psych nurses, reduced to tears when women tell their stories. I believe there is no more powerful way to change the treatment women receive than telling their story like it is.

Jude Stamp

Committee Member



Julie Dempsey, Jude Stamp, Sabin Fernbacher

'Waging War'

By Sandy Jeffs

A mind is a theatre of war

tanks rumble across the synapses

the light horse brigade charges through the frontal lobes

mustard gas poisons serotonin and dopamine

artillery barrages neurotransmitters.

The armies of reason and insanity face-off

dispatches from the psych wards report fierce fighting

the casualties are mounting

no prisoners taken.

What will the war memorials say?

They gave their sanity

we honour them

This is not the war to end all wars.

A mind wages perpetual war—

against itself.



COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Julie Dempsey (Chair)

Dr Sabin Fernbacher (Vice Chair)

Cheryl Miller-Yell (Secretary)

Wendy McManus (Treasurer from May 2016)

Shelley Anderson

Sandy Jeffs

Robyn Minty

Bridget Nutting

Jude Stamp

Michelle Swann

Lisa Wright (proxy Fiona Jessop)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK VICTORIA

ABN 39 597 342 174

Income and Expenditure Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Income		
Grants received		
The R E Ross Trust		10,000
Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust	20,000	20,000
Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust		7,000
Dep. of Social Services-Volunteer Grants	4,400	
	<u>24,400</u>	<u>37,000</u>
Donations received	7,032	28,475
Consulting and training fees		17,400
Membership fees	600	2,560
Interest received	2,065	2,643
Total income	<u>34,098</u>	<u>88,078</u>
Expenses		
Accountancy	1,000	800
Administration costs	813	636
Consumer sitting fees		149
Bank charges	8	
Bookeeping fees	300	
Depreciation - other	1,933	829
Donations		100
Employment expenses		
Employment expenses	250	502
Executive officer		35
Conference expenses	3,407	873
Wages	12,330	26,718
Superannuation	1,168	3,718
Telephone		720
Travel	189	100
Salary sacrifice benefit		14,370
Staff amenities	366	
	<u>17,710</u>	<u>47,036</u>
Flowers and gifts	145	629
DHGS GS Training Resource		
Printing & stationery		(150)
		<u>(150)</u>

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK VICTORIA

ABN 39 597 342 174

Income and Expenditure Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust		
Communication worker		82
IT development		301
Project worker	1,500	9,981
Materials	472	
	<u>1,972</u>	<u>10,364</u>
The R E Ross Trust		
Conference presentations attended		400
Printing		1,200
Regional rural forums		1,056
Materials	428	
	<u>428</u>	<u>2,656</u>
Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust		
Project worker	945	
	<u>945</u>	
Workers compensation	394	461
Meeting expenses	564	375
Membership subscriptions		320
Postage	210	
Subscriptions	305	
Travelling expenses		83
State Trustees	3,300	4,661
Consultancy		1,100
I.T expenses	515	324
Printing and stationery	469	559
Rent on land & buildings	2,250	
Total expenses	<u>33,263</u>	<u>70,931</u>
Profit from ordinary activities before income tax	835	17,147
Income tax revenue relating to ordinary activities		
Net profit attributable to the association	<u>835</u>	<u>17,147</u>
Total changes in equity of the association	<u>835</u>	<u>17,147</u>
Opening retained profits	96,728	79,581
Net profit attributable to the association	835	17,147
Closing retained profits	<u>97,563</u>	<u>96,728</u>

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK VICTORIA

ABN 39 597 342 174

Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2016

	Note	2016	2015
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Cash Assets			
Bank Australia #6758 S65		98,369	98,809
Load & Go Visa Card		252	
Petty Cash		21	
		<u>98,642</u>	<u>98,809</u>
Receivables			
Trade debtors		50	
		<u>50</u>	
Current Tax Assets			
GST Clearing		463	549
		<u>463</u>	<u>549</u>
Total Current Assets		<u>99,155</u>	<u>99,357</u>
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment			
Office Furniture & Equipment		3,945	3,945
Less: Accumulated Dep'n		(3,946)	(2,012)
		<u>1,933</u>	<u>1,933</u>
Total Non-Current Assets		<u>1,933</u>	<u>1,933</u>
Total Assets		<u>99,155</u>	<u>101,291</u>

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK VICTORIA

ABN 39 597 342 174

Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2016

	Note	2016 \$	2015 \$
Current Liabilities			
Payables			
Unsecured:			
Trade Creditors			2,004
			<u>2,004</u>
Current Tax Liabilities			
PAYG Clearing		1,592	2,558
		<u>1,592</u>	<u>2,558</u>
Total Current Liabilities		<u>1,592</u>	<u>4,562</u>
Total Liabilities		<u>1,592</u>	<u>4,562</u>
Net Assets		<u>97,563</u>	<u>96,728</u>
 Members' Funds			
Accumulated surplus (deficit)		97,563	96,728
Total Members' Funds		<u>97,563</u>	<u>96,728</u>

These financial statements are unaudited. They must be read in conjunction with the attached Accountant's Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.



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Image by Julie Dempsey

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