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# LILLIAN'S 2018 – 2019

## ANNUAL REPORT LILLIAN HOWELL PROJECT INC

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We gratefully acknowledge funding from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services

We acknowledge the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora nation on whose country we are meeting today and their elders past, present and emerging

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# MINUTES OF AGM 2018

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**2018 Annual General Meeting  
Erskineville Town Hall 104 Erskineville Rd Erskineville  
8th November 2018**

Present: Helen Campbell, Ann Watchirs, Karen Lindley, Naomi Crago, Nicole Graham, Victoria Bell, Vivian Stavis, Danielle Collard, Ingrid Umutoniwase, Elena Indiano

1. Open, welcome and Acknowledgement of country – Helen
2. Apologies: Jan Christie
3. Acceptance of minutes of 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Motion to accept the minutes of the 2017 AGM  
moved; Karen, seconded; Ann; carried

4. Chairpersons' report and managers' report

Helen presented the chairperson's report and thanked the residents and staff for their remarkable achievements and Ping and Victoria for their efforts managing the financial statements.

Vivian presented the managers' report and also thanked residents and staff and reflected on some of the achievements over the last year including increasing revenue, renovation of Lillian's and support from corporate organisations.

5. Treasurers report and adoption of Audited Financial statements

Victoria presented the treasurers' report and audited financial statements.

Motion to accept the treasurers' report and audited financial statements;  
Moved; Helen; seconded: Ann; all carried

6. Presentation of Strategic Plan

Lillian's Strategic Plan was presented for the next 5 years detailing the direction for the organisation.

Motion to accept the Strategic Plan;  
Moved; Nicole; seconded: Helen; all carried

7. Service users report

Ingrid and Elena gave a report on their experiences as resident's at Lillian's and then in transitional housing through Metro Housing.

8. Election of new committee

Nominations were delivered to all eligible members by email on 19th October 2017. Nominations closed on 6th November.

The following committee were elected unopposed:

Helen Campbell (President)

Lucy Watchirs-Smith (Vice President)

Victoria Bell (Treasurer)

Ann Watchirs (Secretary)

Naomi Crago

Jan Christie

Karen Lindley

Nicole Graham

**AGM closed at 7.30 pm**

# MANAGER'S REPORT

Vivian Stavis 2018 - 2019

*It has been another exciting and busy year for Lillian's team and board. We have exceeded target numbers in all program areas, servicing a greater number of young women than the last financial year. We continued building our partnership with Youth off the Streets. LOFT – Lillian's Opportunities for Tomorrow by working more collaboratively to support girls and young women.*

*This year Lillian's supported 118 young women. We provided 20 accommodation stays and provided an outreach case management service to 98 young women combined of low, medium and high effort. Our ongoing relationships with other organisations, refuges, schools and FACS ensured that we received the referrals required to achieve and even exceed the numbers needed for our service agreement.*

*This table shows service provided in age range:*

<i>10 - 14 years</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>15 years</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>16 years</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>17 years</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>18 - 19 years</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>

*Our girls are the reason we keep working as hard as we do, they inspire and motivate us with their achievements! These include re-engagement to school and maintaining attendance, completion and graduation of HSC, enrolment into Community services, Apprenticeship through MEGT in Hospitality (Chef), enrolment into Makeup and Beauty. Work includes, Part-time work in retail, a bakery, make up artist and McDonalds. 3 girls got their Learner drivers license. One resident originally from Sierra Leone became an Australian Citizen and we celebrated many 16<sup>th</sup> birthday's and had celebrations here at Lillian's for them. One resident received a scholarship through the Soroptomist's of \$1000. She travelled to East Timor as part of a school English program for 10 days in the school holidays and she had an amazing experience using the money from the scholarship to go and 1 of the girls attended a business camp at Macquarie University in the school holidays and we were so proud of all these achievements.*

*14 girls moved out of Lillian's this year. They either moved into independent living/transitional housing, the private rental market or back into the family home. We had a total of 3 girls transition into our transitional properties, 3 into other transitional housing through SHS, 5 moved back into the family home and 3 exited*

*to other refuges due to breaking house rules or unsafe behaviours towards other residents.*

*We maintained and ran many new programs and workshops for our girls, these include: Our partnership with Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) for the tutoring program continued and they have provided a total of 3 tutors to date for our girls who need assistance in Maths and English. This is an ongoing program, which has assisted our girls immensely.*

*We continued our partnership with MYRC Girls club where girls are provided with assistance and group work on various self-help techniques. Lillian's has provided Case work to many of these girls.*

*We signed an MOU with Good Shepherd to provide counselling onsite at Lillian's for resident's every Wednesday afternoon. Counselling started on the 16<sup>th</sup> January and Sal Consulting conducted Attachment Style Interviews with the current residents.*

*We also ran many workshops; the workshops are provided to build the emotional capacity of the girls that live at Lillian's. This is done through the provision of Psycho-educative material and self-reflection from week to week. These include: Play Therapy, Boxing Fitness, Baking workshop, Stress management, Crafternoon, hair dressing and grooming and Self Care strategies.*

*Heaps Decent Music workshop - Music workshops ran for 6 weeks facilitated by trained musicians. The workshops were about song writing and making beats together as a group.*

*We also had many House Outings. House outings give the young women at Lillian's an opportunity to form attachments and bond with each other through shared experiences which helps them to affiliate and attune to each other. These include mini golf in Newtown, Ice-skating, Taronga Zoo and Luna Park, "All about Women" photographic exhibition at the Opera House, filming of the "Voice" at Fox Studios, seeing live shows Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Jack and the Beanstalk at Capitol Theatre. Lillian's with MYRC participated in "Girls Day In" run through Inner West council.*

*The management of Mental Health issues such as Anxiety, Depression and Personality disorders was achieved through partnerships with Camperdown Adolescent Outreach Service (CAOS), Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA), Marie Bashir Short Stay Unit and Marrickville Community Health Centre. Headspace, Youth block and Poets Corner provided counselling that works alongside the management of Mental Health issues.*

*We had many supporters who made many donations for our girls, the Beauty Bank, Share the Dignity, Zonta Club, Sephora, Body Shop, These donations were used as Christmas, Birthday and "Welcome to Lillian's" presents. Thank you to Erskineville Family Medical Practice (for always making time to see our girls), Erko Dentist, Gift of Bread and Cook4good started supporting Lillian's by bringing Bread donations and delivering cooked meals. As well as the ongoing support by OZHARVEST. All of these people have enriched the lives of our girls with their kindness and generosity and have also helped with our bottom line!*

*Lillian's had a makeover! The refuge got painted, new carpet laid and all bathrooms were upgraded. Renovations were done through FACS housing and SR Construction and the refuge looks amazing.*



*The backyard was also overhauled and the space has been completely redesigned.*



*Lillian's Facebook page was developed and launched, the NBN was installed and we completed our Strategic and Operational Plan for the next 5 years.*

*Our staff team had supervision once a month at Sal Consulting and training in many areas of work including 2 staff starting a Diploma in Child, Youth and Family Intervention. All staff completed the ELMO training Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct, Reportable Conduct and Mandatory Reporting. Staff attended the ASI (Attachment Style Interviewing) training and the Recharge Conference on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March*

*There were no staffing changes over the year, this is a testament to the dedication of the staff and a strong team culture of inclusivity and valuing individual strengths. Staff have been brilliant in supporting me through the growth and development of Lillian's with their awesome ideas and their expertise on working with girls and trauma. We have all worked tirelessly, cohesively and collectively to achieve all that we have this year and I'm so proud to have you all as my colleagues.*

*Lillian's had 8 students complete their work placements. Studying for qualifications include Diploma Community Services, Diploma Youth Work and Bachelor Social Work. Students have been an integral part of Lillian's staff team and we will continue to provide placements as it's a beneficial collaboration.*

*Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the Management Committee and their fantastic support and dedication to the running of Lillian's and providing the guidance that has sustained us this year. I couldn't have done it without your support.*

*We thank you for your continued support of Lillian's and hope you enjoy reading the annual report 2018 -19.*





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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Helen Campbell 2018 - 2019

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Lillian Howell Project Inc. is committed to preventing youth homelessness; we do this by building the capacity of girls and young women through our accommodation and outreach case management. This year Lillian's supported **118** girls and young women. We provided **20** accommodation stays and provided an outreach case management service to **98** young women combined of low, medium and high effort. Well done Team!

During 2018 – 19 the organisation has continued to thrive. We have seen the growth of our service delivery and I would like to acknowledge and thank our partners Youth off the Streets (YOTS), and sector partners in our shared responsibility to end youth homelessness and to provide the best support we can.

Due to the unwavering commitment of the staff, our girls, management committee, as well as our community partners, as Vivian will report, we are now stronger than ever. Our fundraising has been a massive effort and we secured donations from the community, which has seen Lillian's own funds grow from year to year.

The Management Committee has been brilliant in their dedication to the governance of Lillian's. Thank you to Naomi, Ann, Karen, Victoria, Jan and Nicole. Our committee has gone from strength to strength and I'm confident they will continue to provide their positive contribution, expertise and guidance as Lillian's continues to grow. Thank you to Ping and Victoria for overseeing the financial management of Lillian's and for doing such an amazing job in managing the budget.

And finally, thank you Vivian, Danielle, Carlene and to everyone of the staff for all that you have contributed; and most of all, a big thank you to our girls for your remarkable inspiration, resilience and achievements.

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# TREASURER'S REPORT

Victoria Bell 2018 - 2019

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I'm pleased to present the audited financial statements for Lillian Howell Project Inc. covering the financial year 2018 – 19.

This financial year, we received funding of \$496,629 via our subcontract arrangement from Youth off The Streets (YOTS) through Family and Community Services (FACS)

They show that we experienced an operating loss of \$34,800.00 on funding from FACS. This was attributable to an increase in staffing expenses with our staffing expenses being \$489,611.91, which is 95% of our overall budget, that is even with the engagement of staff on Full and Permanent/Part-time contracts with casual staff required minimally. The staffing expenses are high but necessary as it's best practice to staff the refuge accordingly.

We continued in our efforts to fundraise through our Give Now donations page and Good2Give campaign. Our fundraising efforts have been very successful, and with continued community support, we secured \$41,330 in donations. Through all this effort and support, Lillian's total revenue for this financial year was \$81,806.

Good governance practice as always, has been adopted and our bookkeeper Ping, works at Lillian's fortnightly to review and prepare monthly financial statements. These are tabled at monthly management committee meetings. An annual budget is established at the beginning of each financial year and actual income and expenditure reviewed against that budget. Ping has done an excellent job balancing the books this financial year and thanks to John G. Oehlers chartered accountants and staff for doing an amazing job at auditing our financial records.

The equity position of Lillian's is sound in absolute terms, as it represents one year of ordinary services expenses, which the management committee considers prudent for an organisation of Lillian's type.

In conclusion, we enter our next financial year with all accruals and provisions in the bank and \$146,500 in equity.

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# AUDITOR'S REPORT

John Oehlers 2018 - 2019

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## Lillian Howell Project Incorporated

ABN 22 465 606 851

Committee's Report

For the year ended 30 June 2019

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Your committee members submit the financial accounts of the Lillian Howell Project Incorporated for the financial year ended 30 June 2019.

### Committee Members

The names of committee members at the date of this report are:

Helen Campbell - President

Lucy Wachins-Smith - Vice President

Victoria Bell - Treasurer

Anne Wachins - Secretary

Naomi Crago - Member

Jan Christie - Member

Karen Lindley - Member

Nicole Graham - Member

### Principal Activities

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were: The provision of a specialist Homelessness service providing medium to long-term 24 hour supported accommodation for young women and girls 13 - 17 years, that is trauma informed, reparative and empowering. As well as providing a safe and secure setting, Lillian's builds the capacity of the girls and young women and supports them in their transition to independent living.

#### Service approach includes:

- Intervening early to prevent homelessness by promoting awareness of the causes of homelessness and working closely with 'first-to-know' services (e.g., schools, housing providers, correctional facilities, domestic and family violence services, child and family services and other services) to identify people at risk of becoming homeless
- Providing a medium-term response by offering medium-term accommodation with 24/7 support in our refuge and transitional properties including ongoing case management
- Providing intensive responses for clients with complex needs through intensive, multi-disciplinary support to girls and young women at risk of chronic homelessness as well as assertive outreach

### Significant Changes

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

### Operating Result

The profit from ordinary activities after providing for income tax amounted to \$46,713.91.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Members of the Committee by:



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Helen Campbell - President

Dated: 13/09/2019

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**Lillian Howell Project Incorporated**  
**ABN 22 465 606 851**  
**Statement by Members of the Committee**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2019**

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The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the Income and Expenditure Statement, Statement of Financial Position, and Notes to the Financial Statements:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Lillian Howell Project Incorporated as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:



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Helen Campbell - President

Dated: 13/09/2019

**Lillian Howell Project Incorporated**  
**ABN 22 465 606 851**  
**Income and Expenditure Statement**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2019**

<b>FACS Grant</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Income</b>		
<b>FACS Grant</b>		
- Youth Off The Street	462,020.16	448,601.67
- SACS ERO	34,608.00	53,507.73
	<u>496,628.16</u>	<u>502,109.40</u>
Total income	<u>496,628.16</u>	<u>502,109.40</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
<b>Staffing Expenses</b>		
- Wages & Salaries	392,861.26	393,115.40
- Superannuation	37,759.91	37,668.37
- Workers Compensation	15,846.54	12,310.47
- On Call/First Aid Allowance	9,099.90	8,850.25
- Sleepover Allowance	16,879.57	16,500.84
- Travel Reimbursement	1,976.08	1,640.03
- Training/Conference	502.97	507.27
- Movement in Long Service Leave Provision	6,144.67	(1,034.00)
- Movement in Annual & Personal Leave Prov	8,541.01	1,848.85
	<u>489,611.91</u>	<u>471,407.48</u>
<b>Administration Expenses</b>		
- Accounting	7,312.50	7,350.00
- Audit Fees	2,000.00	2,000.00
- Administration Expenses	719.33	734.17
- Computer Expenses	0.00	1,812.73
- Consultant's Fees	1,289.91	0.00
- Insurance - Liability	1,166.09	1,045.00
- Postage, Stationery & Printing	569.80	1,726.46
- Telephone	1,475.39	1,922.64
- Travel	348.65	612.62
- Office Equipment & Furniture	0.00	109.09
- Subscriptions	718.18	1,033.75
- Supervision	2,040.73	3,850.00
	<u>17,640.58</u>	<u>22,196.46</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

**Lillian Howell Project Incorporated**  
**ABN 22 465 606 851**  
**Income and Expenditure Statement**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2019**

<b>FACS Grant</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Residents Expenses</b>		
- Education & Amenities	32.18	214.38
- Activities & Entertainment	1,787.26	2,108.68
- Residents Personal Living Expenses	1,451.46	1,918.82
- Food & Housekeeping	11,898.74	12,027.35
- Other Expenses (Xmas, Birthdays, etc)	0.00	1,437.35
- Travel	260.47	104.55
- Brokerage	212.20	54.18
- Household	1,080.69	1,384.30
- Other Project Expenses	1,368.18	0.00
	<u>18,091.18</u>	<u>19,249.63</u>
<b>Property Cost</b>		
- Electricity	3,229.44	4,990.84
- Repairs & maintenance	1,691.26	2,164.86
- Insurance - Contents	1,166.09	1,045.00
- Other Property Expenses	0.00	181.82
	<u>6,086.79</u>	<u>8,382.52</u>
Total expenses	<u>531,430.46</u>	<u>521,236.07</u>
<b>Profit (loss) from ordinary activities before income tax</b>	<u>(34,802.30)</u>	<u>(19,126.67)</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

**Lillian Howell Project Incorporated**  
**ABN 22 465 606 851**  
**Income and Expenditure Statement**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2019**

<b>Lillian Howell Own</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Donations	41,330.84	14,023.70
Dividends - Franked	132.78	79.56
Interest received	1,045.35	1,374.98
Admin Fee Income	2,265.70	5,521.94
Sundry Income	560.37	163.28
Rents received	36,471.00	35,575.10
Total income	81,806.04	56,738.56
<b>Expenses</b>		
<b>Administration Expenses</b>		
- Administration Expenses	27.26	0.00
- Bank Fees	262.57	228.75
	289.83	228.75
Total expenses	289.83	228.75
<b>Profit from ordinary activities before income tax</b>	<b>81,516.21</b>	<b>56,509.81</b>

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The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

**Lillian Howell Project Incorporated**  
**ABN 22 465 606 851**  
**Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2019**

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash assets	2	276,102.30	238,006.49
Current tax assets	3	393.83	1,259.59
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<u>276,496.13</u>	<u>239,266.08</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<u>276,496.13</u>	<u>239,266.08</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Payables	4	19,256.89	29,287.14
Financial liabilities	5	1,341.98	2,191.33
Current tax liabilities	6	6,898.00	8,767.41
Provisions	7	79,453.39	82,332.91
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<u>106,950.26</u>	<u>122,578.79</u>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>			
Provisions	7	23,020.32	16,875.65
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>		<u>23,020.32</u>	<u>16,875.65</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<u>129,970.58</u>	<u>139,454.44</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<u>146,525.55</u>	<u>99,811.64</u>
<b>Equity</b>			
Retained profits		146,525.55	99,811.64
<b>Total Members' Funds</b>		<u>146,525.55</u>	<u>99,811.64</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.



**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF LILLIAN HOWELL PROJECT INCORPORATED  
ABN 22 465 606 851  
(Continued)**

**Audit Qualification**

It is not always practicable for the Association to establish accounting control over all sources of fundraising appeal activities prior to receipt of these funds by members of the Association and accordingly it is not possible for my examination to include procedures which extend beyond the amounts of such income recorded in the accounting records of the Association.

However, based on my review of the internal controls, nothing has come to my attention which would cause me to believe that the internal controls over revenue from fundraising activities by the Association are not appropriate.

**Qualified Audit Opinion pursuant to the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991**

In my opinion, except for the above qualifications:

(a) the accounts give a true and fair view of the financial result of fundraising appeal activities for the financial year ended 30 June 2019;

(b) the accounts have been properly drawn up, and the associated records have been properly kept for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and Regulations;

(c) money received as a result of fundraising appeal activities conducted during the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 has been properly accounted for and applied in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and Regulations; and

(d) there are reasonable grounds to believe that Lillian Howell Project Incorporated will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

**Qualified Audit opinion on the financial accounts**

In my opinion, except for the potential effects on the financial accounts of the matters referred to in the qualification paragraph, the financial accounts of the Lillian Howell Project Incorporated are properly drawn up:

(a) So as to give a true and fair view of:

(i) the state of affairs of the Association as at 30th June 2019 and,

(ii) the result of the Association's activities for the year ended on that date

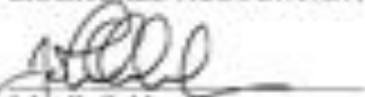
(b) in accordance with the provisions of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009,

(c) in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards.

**Basis of Accounting**

Without modifying my opinion, I draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Lillian Howell Project Incorporated to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act of New South Wales 2009. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

JOHN G. OEHLERS  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT



John G. Oehlers  
Registered Company Auditor

Signed at Parramatta

Dated this 13th day of September 2019.

*Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation*

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# RESIDENT'S COMMENTS

2018 - 2019

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We received an email on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 from an ex-resident who lived at Lillian's from May 2015 – July 2016:

*"Hey I just wanted to thank you girls for all the help it's been a long time, but if you remember me I just want to say thank you to everyone, thank you for all the support and help you girls gave me at a difficult time in my life, there's not a day that goes by that I don't think of how much you helped I miss you, since gone I've managed to finish school I now have a beautiful daughter and one day I'll tell her about all the angels of Lillian's, I miss you all" xxx*

We received an email on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 from an ex-resident who lived at Lillian's from May 2012 – December 2014 (refugee 1 year and transitional housing):

*Hello ladies! New and old! Dan, Viv, and whoever else is still there now. I Wanted to say hi! And check in with everyone and send you an update - I now live in Scotland (I know crazy right, who would have thought - it's warmer than I expected) and I am sitting in my humble little home just appreciating what I have here and my find my mind drifting to days where I had a lot less and was technically declared homeless. I wanted to pass on my eternal and most gratuitous thanks to all who supported, cared for and looked after me whilst I was living there and for all you ladies continue to do. Your efforts make all the difference and you make a home for people when they often have none and honestly, even now I'm so proud to have been there and known you all and it just means the world. I will be forever grateful! Sending all the positive vibes and love. Hope the place is holding up nicely and one day I promise to come back and finish the mural haha PS - the ikea makeover looks fab - am sure the girls there now love it! <3*

Hi there, I'm Jess

I'm honoured to have been chosen to be one of the girls from home to speak here.

To begin, I would like to tell you about me as it's only polite. I am about to be 17 years old. I was born in Thailand and am half greek and proud of my cultures. I am a year 12 student at Randwick Girls High School. I became homeless at the age of 15 due to issues at home, I had an abusive father and a mother who became neglectful and not present. The day I had to leave home, I was so frightened and terrified, I could not even comprehend what was happening to me. I moved into in a Crisis Refuge and lived there for 6 months before becoming apart of the Lillian Howell Project. I felt dependant on my self, at times the immense pressure caused me to miss out on opportunities and life itself.

Life in the crisis refuge was hard, but I did make some great friends throughout my stay. About 3 months in I heard about Lillian's and my case-worker said she thought it would be the best fit for me and that I would love it there. Hesitant at first, I went in for my Interview this is where I met the amazing Viv. She showed me around and explained all the house rules to me. Overwhelmed I was hesitant but I had a feeling I'd like it over time, and I was right.

I have lived and been apart of Lillian's program for almost a year now, and have loved absolutely every second of it. Never would I expected for this house to become or feel like a home. I feel so fortunate and blessed that every day I get to come home to some really good friends and amazing staff that feel like family. My perspective and attitudes have completely changed, with the extra support from the staff I feel completely capable and confident to achieve my goals and dreams.

During my stay, I've achieved so many things I am proud of, at school, I have been elected part of the Student Representative Counsell, elected sports house captain for 2019 & 2020 and participated in the UBS finance and innovation academy. At home I have settled in nicely, I've managed my mental health very well.

I am thankful to have been asked to be here to tell my story.

Thank You

Hi, my name is Carolina and I have been living at Lillians for the past two years as of the 29th of October. Before I begin, I'd like to thank Viv for giving me the opportunity to come and speak to you all here today. I'm quite the talker and have been waiting for this moment for some time so needless to say I am very excited.

I was asked to speak about my experience as a homeless youth, my life before Lillians and my life now and thereafter I made the decision to leave home. But I think it's important to note that I am just one of the many young women who have passed through this program. My story is just one of them and consequently cannot holistically represent those of all these other girls.

As I reflected upon my life for the purpose of composing this speech, I realised the process of speaking about such things isn't exactly an easy one. I found it extremely difficult to write these next words I am about to share with you because they are mine and because they are important. As a recipient or client if you will, of such an amazing and crucial program I wanted to be able to really highlight the wonders it has done for me over such a long period of time so I hope I do it well.

I was born the daughter of a 64 year old Australian man and 18 year old Timorese woman. The early years of my life were not as I believe they should be for anyone, life was incredibly difficult as my Mother was not kind and loving as Mothers should be. I last saw her nine years ago in the winter of 2010. The physical elements of abuse and neglect faded quickly with time, unfortunately I cannot say the same of the psychological and emotional aspects. I slowly forgot the seriousness of my past with her as everyone typically forgets what does not serve them. It wasn't until I reconnected with my DOCs now FACs worker, Kelly, at this years Beauty Bank Christmas in July event that I rediscovered how bad things really were. Kel had been looking after me from the age of 5 to 7, I was her youngest client, but her kindness and compassion has stayed with me almost a decade later. The effect of kindness and compassion is so complex yet simple, but more importantly it is something we can afford to give.

It was just me and Dad against the world, we had no family, no friends to support us; and at first it was fine, it was liberating to be free of Mum, Dad was happier and less stressed. But slowly the toll of years of abuse, poverty, old age and the task of single-handedly raising a little girl, dealing with her own trauma, took a toll on him. We were no longer the Dad and daughter who did everything together, we stopped watching the footy, instead we were two people living in a house that didn't feel like a home. He was a broken man, tired, sick and fundamentally unequipped to look after me. I slowly realised that things weren't going to get better, that I needed to grow up fast, make an adult decision and choose to find another home. Leaving him was the hardest, bravest thing I have ever done.

After discussion with my counsellor at the time, she mentioned a place called 'Lillians'. I'd never heard of it before, I certainly had never heard of refuges but apparently it was a safe space for people like me. When I went for my first intake interview, I was on the verge of simultaneously vomiting and crapping my pants. To be completely honest I was pretty apprehensive about the whole thing. It wasn't until I sat down for dinner with the other girls and Dan, that I realized just how special this 'Lillians' was. I had never been at a dinner table with more than anyone than just my Dad, I had never eaten my meal without watching TV, I had never been asked about my day by so many people who genuinely wanted to know what I had to say. I felt special, I felt respected, I felt happy, I felt safe but most importantly I felt at home. I moved in when I was 14 years old, pimple faced, innocent, shorter. In these past two years I have done a lot of growing, in all senses of the word. Lillians gave me routine, it showed me how life can be and should be. Lillians gave me a home, magical Christmas, birthdays and freedo ice cream cakes. I learnt how to clean, how to cook and not make a mess, how to compromise and the importance of respect, I learnt more about myself and my strengths, what I'm capable of as a young woman. Lillians gave me a safe place to make mistakes, multiple shoulders to cry on when I got it wrong over and over. Lillians gave me a home, and for this I cannot be more grateful because there is nothing more special than a home that feels like a home.

I am now 16, in my final year of highschool. I'm now a much more mature, much more capable and much more confident Carolina. I have a job at a bookshop in Newtown which I think is awesome, I go to school and am looking forward to what lies ahead of me academically. I don't know what the future holds for me, but I now know that I can safely say I will face it with hope and courage.

I'd like to thank all the workers for putting up with me for so long, and I'd like to thank the board for keeping this organisation afloat despite external pressures which I hope to thoroughly unpack in my Society and Culture major work.

I am eternally grateful for what you all do for girls like me in ways that I can't express.

So thank you.