



# Laurel Times



Hello to all from the team at Laurel House and Laurel place. There has been a lot going on here over the past few months and I hope you enjoy reading about just a few of those activities in our last newsletter for the year.

As 2015 comes to a close it provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the passing year and to ponder the year to come. There have been many challenges during 2015 that have been met with courage and determination and as always hope for a positive 2016 and beyond.

We at Laurel House and Laurel place would like to wish all of our clients, supporters and our communities' happiness and peace during the festive season as we continue to work toward Communities Free of Sexual Violence.

## Local Aboriginal artist presents artwork to Maroochydore

A highlight for the Maroochydore office was the acquisition of a commissioned artwork by local Aboriginal artist, Paula Wootton. The artwork, which now hangs proudly in our waiting area, was unveiled following a morning tea to thank Paula, which was attended by staff and some of the local Indigenous service providers.

Paula is a Tharawal woman from the Woollongong / Shoalhaven Heads region in NSW, who has lived in Imbil for the past 16 years.

The painting incorporates traditional Aboriginal art symbols to represent healing and the connection between the community and the support that Laurel House provides.



## Clients complete mindfulness based stress reduction group

A number of participants have recently completed the first Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction group program offered to clients of Laurel House.

The practice of mindfulness has been shown to effectively reduce symptoms relating to a range of presenting concerns and issues, and can have significant benefits for people who have been impacted by trauma. At its core, mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment with non-judgemental acceptance.

The 8 week group program assists participants to cultivate this ability and change the way in which they relate and respond to their thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, through a combination of formal and informal mindful meditation practices. It is anticipated that mindfulness-based groups will be offered to clients of Laurel House on an ongoing basis.

Our offices in Maroochydore and Gympie will close from 12pm Thursday 24th December 2015 and reopen 9am on Monday 4th January 2016.

Our office in Murgon will close from 12pm Thursday 24th December 2015 and reopen 9am on Wednesday 6th January 2016.

The Sexual Assault Helpline service is available 7 days from 7.30am to 11.30 pm on 1800 010 120

## Laurel Place



*from Gympie & Murgon*

**It's hard to believe that we're near the end of 2015 already, and the last 6 months have been a whirl of activity for Laurel Place Gympie and Murgon! Community engagement news...**

- In September we had the honour of partnering with local Gympie artist Chris Hardwick, who is renowned for his passionate commitment to addressing the issue of violence against women and children through his artwork. All who attended the morning tea hosted by Laurel Place were treated to an art showing not to be missed! Thank you Chris!!
- In October, as part of Sexual Violence Awareness Month, Laurel Place was very excited to finalise a project that has been close to our heart for some time, the distribution of awareness-raising posters and coasters to local schools, hotels, and shopping centres. These specifically targeted the issue of CONSENT, a very important, but not always understood, topic, with slogans such as: 'Silence means no'. One of the refreshing aspects of this campaign is that it places the onus of responsibility where it should be! A big thanks to all staff who made this happen!
- Laurel Place Gympie and Murgon also enjoyed participating in other community events, including the 'All About You' Women's Health Event, and the 'Kids Day Out' in Gympie. Whilst in Murgon we joined Police and other community agencies for a white ribbon release, hosted by Graham House, as part of awareness-raising around domestic and family violence. As well, we've been pleased to continue our ongoing attendance at Cherbourg Council Interagency meetings, and also enjoyed participating in an agency visit to Dept Child Safety in Kingaroy.

### Staff news...

- Recently we've had the pleasure of being joined by new staff member Deidre in the Gympie office, who is currently filling in a locum role. Deidre comes to us with many skills and is a valuable addition to our team. Welcome Deidre!
- Murgon/Gympie Team member Bec has been hard at work for some time in developing a special groupwork program to work with children to increase their safety and provide knowledge about protective behaviours. Bec's efforts have finally paid off and Laurel Place is proud to note that her program manual is ready and available, with referrals now open for children to access this service. Good on you Bec!!

### Group news...

Our DBT group Living Skilfully is currently on break as we gear up for Christmas. We are delighted to be able to offer this program in Gympie for another year, and will be inviting new and existing group members in January 2016. If you, or anyone else you know, is interested in knowing more about this valuable program, please give us a call on 5482 7911.

**SCSASV Inc acknowledges the Gubbi Gubbi people as the traditional custodians of the land on which Laurel House and Laurel Place are located in Maroochydore and Gympie, and the Wakka Wakka people as the traditional custodians of the land on which Laurel Place is located in Murgon.**

## The Yarnin' Circle



**Biddy Adams.**

**Liaison & Support Worker -  
Indigenous Program**

The year saw the establishment of a partnership with the Sunshine Coast Hospital Health Service /Community Integrated Sub Acute Services Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Team in Nambour that enabled the delivery of important developmental information to young males to be carried out in accordance with cultural protocols around men's business.

In a new and innovative approach to service provision, one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male health workers attended our service on a weekly basis for several months, to engage with two Aboriginal boys from the Children's Counselling Program in Maroochydore. Providing information around stages of physical development is an

important part of the counselling process with young people, and he was able to work with the boys in a culturally respectful and safe way to deliver the recommended information, and also to talk with the boys more broadly about what it means to be a healthy, strong young Aboriginal man. The feedback from the boys showed that they enjoyed the experience, and there is no doubt that they benefitted from their interaction with such a positive role model.

Laurel House is fortunate to have enjoyed a long association with the staff of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Team and we offer our appreciation for the opportunity to extend our relationship to enhance the counselling experience for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.





## People, pooches and prams -everybody ran, walked or pushed for freedom

2015 Sexual Violence Awareness Month activities once again focused on bringing the community together in a united stand for freedom from sexual violence in our communities and this year's Kawana Parkrun venue offered a great location. Also new to the event was the inclusion of children's games and activities. The face painting tent was a very popular attraction for many young people with other popular games including sack races and a 100 metre dash.

We've shared just a few of the photos from the day below - you can view them all on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010307880376>

Please support us in 2016!





## A Message from the Board

At our recent AGM a motion to change the organisations name to Laurel Place Incorporated was moved and accepted. As a Board, we made the decision to change our name from The Sunshine Cooloola Services Against Sexual Violence Inc as it has become increasingly apparent that we are well known in our communities as Laurel House (Maroochydore) and Laurel Place (Gympie and Murgon).

We believe it will simplify our status across the three areas we service if we are known as one entity, therefore, when all formal processes are complete our three offices will be known as Laurel Place Inc. After all – whether we are in a house, office block or shed in any town or location – we are one service that offers highly professional care and a safe haven for anyone in need of our support.

In keeping with the current climate of change, you may

have noticed that we have also updated our logo! We have retained the Laurel Tree which is symbolic of peace and protection for all those who have experienced sexual violence.



Overall it has been a busy year for the staff and Board and the organisation has yet again demonstrated its ability to respond to local and current needs whilst simultaneously meeting the high demand for counselling, support and intervention by those affected by sexual violence.

The Board would like to sincerely thank our dedicated team of professional women who continually meet the growing need without the benefit of increased resources and or funds. The Board is committed to exploring all opportunities to grow our organisation to more adequately meet the needs of our communities.

## HORSES HELPING TO HEAL

Laurel House now has a  
Certified Equine Assisted Psychotherapy  
practitioner on staff



Laurel House has been given the very exciting opportunity to provide Equine Therapy to clients funded by The Department of Child Safety.

A Laurel House counsellor has become a certified Equine Assisted Psychotherapy practitioner and has been able to complete these sessions with a locally based practitioner's herd of 4 horses.

These sessions have been successful



and have offered the client an opportunity to explore themes including boundaries, social skills and feelings such as fear and anger in a unique way.



### Sunshine Cooloola Services Against Sexual Violence Inc

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