

Annual Report 2024/2025



CHANGING LIVES.
One Step At A Time.



womensspiritproject.org

WORDS FROM THE CHAIR





This has been a very busy year for the Women's Spirit Project Team and we have delivered more programs than ever before, including:

- Three Spirit of Transformation programs,
- Five Catch Up and Connect Walks,
- An amazing Frank to Schanck 60km three day walk and
- Four Women's Circle gatherings.

Demand for our work is growing, with many women prepared to show up for themselves despite the challenges they have faced and it is our privilege to support them on this journey. This amount of work takes a village to make it happen and we have an amazing community behind us.

Our supporters

Mornington Peninsula Women in Business, Soroptimist International, Mornington Peninsula Group and the Sorrento Sailing Couta Boat Club supported us with special events that raised essential funds.

Sorrento Rotary and the Uniting Church in Mt Martha and Frankston raised funds through sausage sizzles, community talks and fete contributions.

Pressroom Philanthropy has continued to support our work over many years with funding and resources to tell our story. We have also had support from local government during this period – thank you to Frankston City Council, City of Kingston, City of Casey, and the Mornington Peninsula Shire. Additional support from the South East Metropolitan Primary Health Network and the Department of Health was essential to our success in expanding our programs across the South East.

Raw Travel provided essential support to the Frank to Schanck walk in November 2024, working alongside Birte Moliere, to deliver what many said was our best one yet. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with many looking forward to the next Frank to Schanck in 2026. I had the great pleasure of witnessing all of the emotions at the start of the walk in Frankston and the finish line, 60 km and three days later at the Cape Schanck Lighthouse.



Our team

We also welcomed our new Managing Director, Suzanne Murphy, who hit the ground running in January and quickly became an essential part of our team with her energy, commitment and leadership.

A big thank you to Lynn Holt for leading our team through from June to January while the search for our new Managing Director was underway. Lynn remains a part of our team, and we are so fortunate to have her.

Since our beginning in 2019, Juanita Sanger continues to lead our Spirit of Transformation programs with such enthusiasm and commitment, leaving a lasting impression on all who participate in the program.

Support from behind the scenes from Mel Flores makes it all happen from promotion to delivery with a smile and a hug, and Birte Moliere, who coordinates the sharing of our impact & outcomes to the wider community.

With the introduction of our Train The Trainer program, our co-facilitator team has also grown with Fiona Goodwin, Theresa Credlin, Louise Dunne and Claire Merrick during this period.

A special shout out to Louise Dunne who has been the heart behind our Women's Circles that bring us all together throughout the seasons. Our photographer Norman Krueger and creative designer Greer Watson continue to share their professional skills to visually showcase our work.

Our volunteers are next level and I would like to acknowledge my sister Directors Catherine Baird, Rachel Rice and Helen Beeby, who have spent many hours ensuring good governance for our organisation. Our bookkeeper Kate Park, cultural advisor Kerry Strickland, our ambassador Jackie Galloway, our mentors, event support team and our catch and connect walk team led by the wonderful Emma Rigby, have delivered many hours of support for women over this period.

I am proud to say that I am part of this community we are building; where women and men from all different walks of life share a commitment to inspire, empower and support women to transform their lives.

Kathy Heffernan Chairperson



Stepping In and Standing Beside an Incredible Team

Reflections on my first six months as Managing Director and the shared spirit that continues to empower women, strengthen community, and shape the future of the Women's Spirit Project.

It is with great pride and deep humility that I write my first introduction as Managing Director of the Women's Spirit Project. Since joining in January 2025, I have been deeply inspired by the extraordinary dedication, courage, and resilience that define every part of our community.

In my first 90 days, I made a commitment to walk alongside our participants, mentors, facilitators, volunteers, and supporters — to see and feel the impact of our work firsthand. What I discovered was a community united by integrity, care, and compassion. Across our Spirit of Transformation programs, Women's Circles, Catch Up & Connect Walks, and the Frank to Schanck trek, one powerful theme shines through: connection, healing, and empowerment. When women are given the tools and support to believe in themselves, transformation becomes possible.

This year has been one of both challenge and progress. Despite funding pressures and growing demand, our small but mighty team — supported by a network of passionate volunteers — has delivered with excellence and heart. Together, we've begun strengthening systems, refreshing volunteer pathways, and building a more sustainable fundraising model through new initiatives such as our Raisely platform and innovative community engagement programs.

Our progress would not be possible without the generosity of our partners and supporters. My heartfelt thanks go to our volunteer Board, committee and staff, who lead with professionalism and purpose, and to Pressroom Philanthropy for their \$30,000 donation and creative support, which have amplified our voice and impact. We also extend our gratitude to Raw Travel, our local councils, community groups and donors who continue to walk beside us.

Although my time with WSP so far has been brief, the impact I have witnessed has been profound.

As we look to the year ahead, we prepare to celebrate through our Gala Fundraising Dinner, the next Frank to Schanck in 2026, and — most importantly — our national expansion with the Virtual Spirit of Transformation program.

Together, we'll continue to build hope, connection and possibility — ensuring that every woman, no matter where she lives or what she's faced, can find her spirit, her voice, and her path forward.

Suzanne Murphy Managing Director

OUR WHY

FACTS THAT INFORM OUR WHY

The mental health of Australian women is at a critical point.

In 2025, more than one in two women (54%) experienced some form of mental health issue — and one in four (25%) are living with severe, long-term disorders that have persisted since 2022.

Women and girls have specific health needs across their lifespan. Access to safe, affordable and appropriate mental health support is essential — yet for many, it remains out of reach.

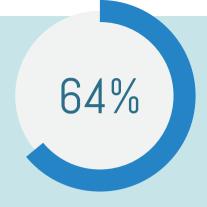
Depression, anxiety and body image concerns remain the top three mental health challenges affecting women in Australia. Yet only three in ten know exactly where to go for help, and one in three cannot afford the support they need.

A key barrier for many women is believing their issues are not "serious enough."

In addition, women experience unique mental health challenges linked to hormonal and reproductive changes — from adolescence through to menopause.



more than one in two women have mental health issue in 2025



significant body image concerns

Social isolation and loneliness have been strongly linked to mental illness, distress, suicide risk, poor sleep, and physical inactivity. Young women are the most affected — with one in four females aged 15–24 reporting high levels of loneliness.

Body image struggles are also rising sharply. Among teenage girls (14–19), 64% now experience significant body image concerns.

Worryingly, these issues are also increasing for older women — from 22% to 31% in those aged 50–59, and 17% to 29% in those aged 60–69 — showing that body image pressure does not diminish with age.

Everyday pressures also take a toll. Social expectations, unpaid household responsibilities, work demands, financial stress, and safety concerns all contribute to declining mental health for women. These pressures are compounded by inequality in pay, workload, and access to resources.



National Context

1 in 2 Australian women (54%) experienced a mental health issue in 2025

1 in 4 are living with severe, long-term mental health disorders

Only 3 in 10 women know where to seek help — and 1 in 3 can't afford it

64% of teenage girls (14–19) struggle with body image — and rates are rising for women over 50

1 in 4 young women (15–24) report feeling lonely — the highest rate of any age group

34% of female ill health and premature death could be prevented by reducing lifestyle risk factors

Overall, 34% of ill health and premature death among women could potentially be prevented by reducing exposure to key risk factors such as tobacco, obesity, poor diet, and high blood pressure.

Women in Our Region Face Greater Disadvantage

Across the Frankston, Kingston and Mornington Peninsula communities, the Women's Health Atlas highlights deep inequities:

- Self-harm hospital admissions for women are two to three times higher than for men.
- Reports of family and intimate partner violence continue to rise at alarming rates.
- Nearly 40% of local women experience anxiety.
- Local women report higher psychological distress than the Victorian average.
- Female-headed households are more than double the state average.
- Women experience significantly higher levels of social disadvantage than the Victorian average.
- Barriers to physical activity and sport persist for disadvantaged women, limiting access to connection, confidence and community.

18 July 2029 - 30th June 2025 A YEAR IN REVIEW

Participants Engaged

328

Volunteers

60

Volunteer Hours
Contributed

5812

Funds Raised

\$268,217

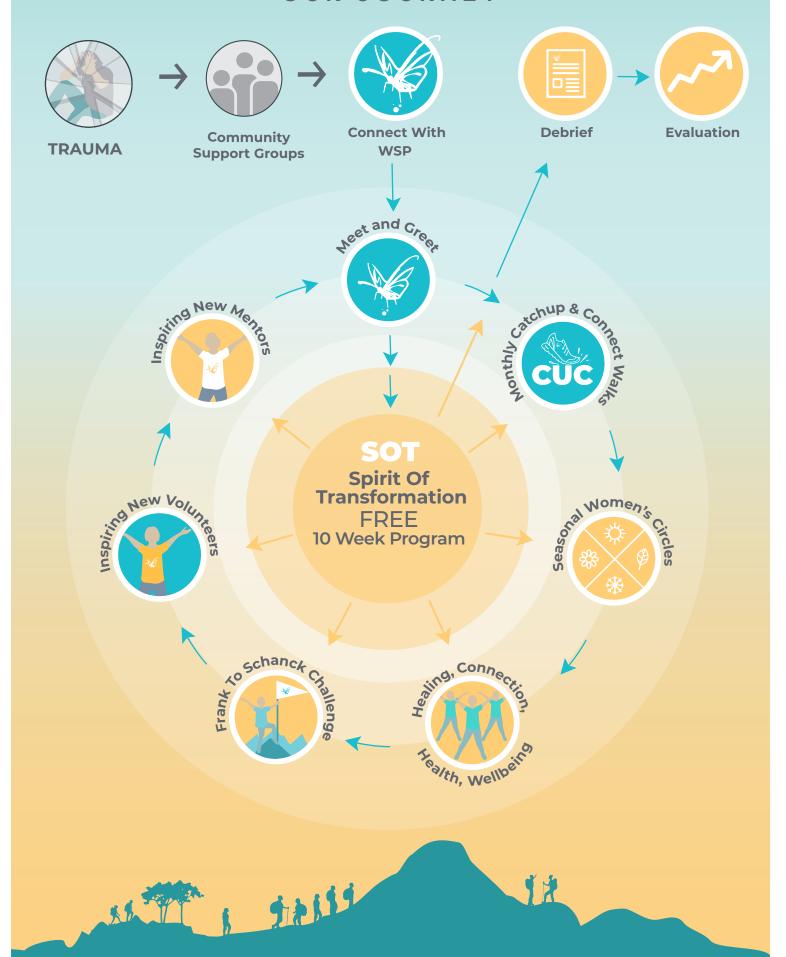








OUR JOURNEY



1st July 2024 - 30th June 2025 A YEAR IN REVIEW



SPIRIT OF TRANSFORMATION: 10-WEEK FREE PROGRAM **30 WOMEN + 10 MENTORS**

SOT #5 - Mornington Peninsula: Sept to Nov 2024

SOT # 6 - Casey: March to June 2025

SOT #7 - Frankston/Kingston: May to July 2025



CATCH UP & CONNECT MONTHLY FREE WALK

5 x Sunday morning walks for 30 women each walk

21/07/24, 18/08/24, 15/09/24, 4/05/25, 01/06/25



WOMEN'S SPIRIT CIRCLE SEASONAL EVENTS

14th Sep 24: Spring Circle

16th Nov 24: Summer Celebration

1st Mar 2025 - Embracing 2025 with Confidence & Flow

21st Jun 2025 – Winter Solstice



FRANK TO CAPE SCHANCK

60 KM WALK - 15TH TO 17TH NOV 2024



TRANSFORMING LIVES APPEAL - NOV 2024

LEADERSHIP INSPIRATION EVENING - FEB 2025



Across 2024–2025, we proudly delivered three Spirit of Transformation (SOT) programs — in the Mornington Peninsula, Casey, and Frankston/Kingston regions — providing life-changing opportunities for **73 women** and **29 volunteer mentors** to reconnect, rebuild confidence, and reclaim their sense of purpose.

Each 10-week program, delivered free of charge, included over 16–20 structured sessions, plus interviews, mentor training, and working group meetings, totalling more than **6,000** collective volunteer and participant hours dedicated to personal growth and community connection.

The Spirit of Transformation is designed to empower women who are facing barriers such as mental health challenges, low self-esteem, social isolation, family violence, or underemployment.

Across all three programs, the most common risk factors included mental health barriers (experienced by over 80% of participants), low self-confidence, and loneliness or isolation. Despite these challenges, the women demonstrated immense courage — many balancing work, study, caring responsibilities, or volunteering while completing the program.

Sept to Nov 2024 - **Mornington Peninsula**: 27 Participants + 8 Mentors

March to June 2025 - Casey: 19 Participants + 8 Mentors

AN



"The activities pushed me out of my comfort zone, but in such a positive way — reminding me that growth happens when we try new things. Most of all, I experienced a renewed sense of hope, connection, and belonging."

Assunta - Frankston SOT 7 -2025

In **SOT 5 (Mornington Peninsula), held September–November 2024**, 27 participants and 8 mentors undertook 19 sessions focused on self-discovery, wellbeing, and goal-setting.

In **SOT 6 (Casey), from March–June 2025**, 19 participants and 8 mentors engaged in 18 sessions designed to rebuild confidence and community.

And in **SOT 7 (Frankston/Kingston), held May–June 2025,** 27 participants and 13 mentors completed 16 sessions, focusing on resilience, employment readiness, and connection.

Each program culminated in a powerful celebration where participants shared their journeys and achievements — stories of courage, growth, and hope. The outcomes were profound: increased confidence, improved wellbeing, strengthened networks, and a renewed belief in their own potential.

The Spirit of Transformation continues to be the heart of WSP — a program that not only transforms individual lives but strengthens communities through the ripple effect of empowerment.



"I was looking for ways to support my mental health, continue learning new things, and avoid feeling isolated given I lived on my own. What I found was a warm, welcoming space where I could rediscover myself and connect with others in a meaningful way."

D - Casey SOT 6 - 2025



5 walks: from July 21st 2024 to June 1st 2025

Our monthly Catch Up & Connect Walks continue to be a cherished way for women to stay connected, active, and supported throughout the year.

Led by our dedicated **Walk Leader, Emma Rigby**, these guided nature walks bring together around **30 participants each month** to share conversation, laughter, and the simple joy of moving in nature.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, five walks were delivered across some of the Mornington Peninsula's and South East Melbourne's most beautiful natural spaces — from the rugged trails of Mt Eliza Quarry and the peaceful waters of Devils Bend Reservoir to the reflective Suicide Prevention Walk in September, and the stunning Cranbourne Royal Botanic Gardens and Sweetwater Reserve circuits in 2025.

Each walk offered more than exercise — it was an opportunity for connection, reflection, and community. Women shared stories, encouraged one another, and found solace in nature's beauty.

Together, these walks embody the spirit of the Women's Spirit Project: building wellbeing, resilience, and belonging, one step at a time.





Our Women's Circles are at the heart of connection and reflection within the Women's Spirit Project. Held seasonally across the year — in alignment with Summer, Autumn, Winter, and Spring — each Circle offers women a sacred and welcoming space to pause, recharge, and reconnect with themselves and one another.

Grounded in themes of renewal, balance, and self-awareness, the Circles draw inspiration from nature's cycles to help participants reflect on what they are ready to release, embrace, or grow into.

Through guided meditation, gentle movement, storytelling, and open sharing, women are encouraged to tune into their inner wisdom and set meaningful intentions for the season ahead.

Beyond self-care, the Circles nurture community. They bring together women of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate their shared experiences, support one another's growth, and strengthen their sense of belonging. These gatherings have become a cornerstone of the WSP community — a space where women feel seen, supported, and inspired to continue their journey of transformation.

29 joined us for
Spring Circle Celebration
on 16th Nov 2024

75 joined us to
Embrace 2025 with Confidence
& Flow
on 1st March 2025

40 joined us for
Winter Solstice
on 21st June 2025



21 Volunteers

66 Participants

Ticket sales \$
Donations
Total \$

\$16,977.00 \$1,350.00 \$18,327.00





She Believed She Could, And So She Did.



In November 2024, over 100 women braved the 'Frank to Schanck' adventure from Frankston across the Mornington Peninsula to the Cape Schanck lighthouse.

Over 3 days, we covered 60+km across varied terrain and challenging weather.

After climbing Arthurs Seat in 30 degree heat on the second day, we reached the finish line in cold, rainy and windy conditions on day 3 – exhausted and exhilarated, proud of an incredible achievement. In true women's spirit, our walkers did not give up – demonstrating incredible tenacity, strength and empowerment.

Frank to Schanck is more than a walk.
It is a major transformational milestone for many women who've participated in the Spirit Of Transformation, resulting in significant lasting impacts:

Empowerment & Confidence: our walkers reported a major sense of achievement, many finishing with a feeling of "I can do anything" after completing a challenge they once thought beyond them.

Connection & Community: the walk built strong social connections and camaraderie amongst women who supported and cheered each other on to get to the finish line.

Health & Wellbeing: growing physical and mental strengths, connection to nature and self.

Goal Setting: completing the walk acts as a metaphor and practice for making other changes in life (eg employment, boundary setting and personal goals)

This walk would not have been possible without the support of our incredible volunteers: walk leaders, cheer squad, wellbeing crew, first aiders and problem solvers.

And our wonderful partners, in particular Neil Prosser, Dave and Mel Reynolds and their extended team from RAW Travel.

"I now feel like I can accomplish anything.
I feel connected and whole".

Participant 2024 Frank To Schanck Walk.

ABBREVIATED PROFIT & LOSS REPORT

This year, **The Motivation Project** income was approximately \$10,000 lower than last year, primarily due to receiving fewer grants. Despite this setback, our dedicated team stepped up, finding creative ways to raise the funds needed to continue delivering our impactful program.

We launched the **Transforming Lives Appeal,** and the **Frank to Schanck Walk** event was held this year, playing a key role in helping us reach our financial goals for the year.

Our costs did increase by around \$27,000, largely due to hosting the Frank to Schanck walk and restructuring roles within our core team.

These changes were essential to strengthen our capacity to transform the lives of many women—and we're proud of the progress we've made.

Rachel Rice, Director & Treasurer

01/07/2024 to 30/06/2025		
Income		
Grants	\$ 166,295	
Donations	\$ 54,619	
Interest	\$ 1,665	
Sponsorship	-	
Raffle, Event Sales, Merch Sales	\$ 45,638	\$268,217
Less Cost of Sales		
Grant Writing Expenses	\$ 25,830	
Event Expenses	\$ 12,222	
Trek Expenses	\$ 21,557	
Program Expenses	\$ 210,013	\$ 269,622
Gross Profit		\$ (1,405)
Less Operating Expenses		
Admin Support	\$ 15,296	
Business Overheads	\$ 1,518	
Insurance	\$ 5,592	
Marketing/Printing	\$ 719	
Software	\$ 4,490	
Volunteer Expenses - meals, meeting catering, gifts	\$ 1,139	\$ 28,754
Net Profit		\$ (30,159)



OUR PROGRAM TEAM

At the heart of WSP's impact is our Spirit of Transformation program — brought to life by a dedicated team of facilitators and mentors who guide women through a powerful 10-week journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Led by Program Facilitator Juanita Sanger and Co-Facilitators Louise Dunne and Claire Merrick and supported by fitness facilitators Theresa Credlin and Fiona Goodwin, this team embodies the true spirit of transformation.

Their compassion, energy, and lived experience create a safe, inclusive space where women can rebuild confidence, reconnect with their purpose, and take the next step toward brighter futures. Alongside them, a team of 10 volunteer mentors in each program provides encouragement, accountability, and personal support. Without this incredible delivery team, the heart and soul of WSP simply wouldn't beat as strongly.



Juanita Sanger



Fiona Goodwin



Theresa Credlin

OUR CREW

With just 1.2 full-time equivalent positions, our small but mighty operational team continues to punch well above its weight. Each member brings passion, professionalism, and deep personal commitment to the Women's Spirit Project's mission — delivering transformative programs and community initiatives that change lives.

Together, they span the full breadth of our operations: from strategy and planning to fundraising and partnerships; from program delivery and participant recruitment to storytelling, branding, and marketing that amplify our impact across Melbourne.

The team's collective tenacity and teamwork are the heartbeat of WSP. Despite limited paid hours, they contribute countless volunteer hours — evenings, weekends, and whatever it takes — to ensure that every program, walk, circle, and fundraising event runs seamlessly. Their dedication reflects a shared belief in the power of connection, resilience, and purpose.

Since January 2025, under Suzanne Murphy's leadership as Managing Director, the team has built stronger foundations for sustainable growth and national expansion. From a shared vision, a combined fundraising plan and regular collaboration, the consistency of delivery allows for more programs and bigger impact.

Birte Moliere's focus on brand and impact, Juanita Sanger's leadership in program delivery, Louise Dunne's mentoring and facilitation expertise, Lynn Holt's skill in grant writing, and Melissa Flores' coordination and project management combine to form an extraordinary team. They don't just deliver programs — they deliver transformation.



OUR BOARD

Our Volunteer Board of Directors provides the strong governance and strategic direction that ensures the Women's Spirit Project continues to grow with integrity and impact.

Led by Chair **Kathy Heffernan**, Vice Chair **Catherine Baird**, Treasurer **Rachel Rice**, and Director **Helen Beeby**, this group of remarkable women volunteer their time and expertise to oversee the organisation's mission, operations, and long-term sustainability.

Their commitment goes far beyond the boardroom. Each member attends monthly Board meetings, quarterly committee meetings, and represents WSP at events, graduations, and community gatherings throughout the year. They bring diverse professional experience and deep care for the women we serve — ensuring that every decision aligns with our values and strengthens the foundation for our future.

The Board's collective guidance, stewardship, and advocacy underpin every success we celebrate. Their tireless support ensures that WSP continues to deliver with purpose, transparency, and heart.



OUR COMMITTEE

Our founding and ongoing Committee Members have been the backbone of the Women's Spirit Project since its inception. From the earliest days, they have offered their skills, networks, and wisdom to help WSP evolve from a grassroots idea into a respected community organisation.

Led by Founder **Jodie Belyea**, joined by the Crew, the board of directors and supported by dedicated contributors including Bookkeeper **Kate Park**,

Catch Up & Connect Walk Lead Emma Rigby,

Volunteer Coordinator Melanie Peterssen,

Cultural Advisor Kerry Strickland,

Graphic Designer Greer Watson,

and Ambassador **Jackie Galloway** — each brings passion, accountability, and fresh ideas to the table. Their consistent involvement ensures WSP remains community-led, purpose-driven, and deeply connected to the women it serves.









OUR CUMULATIVE 7-YEAR IMPACT

Since launching our highly successful pilot project 7 years ago, the Women's Spirit Project has made a powerful and lasting impact on our communities. Our trauma-informed, strengths-based approach has inspired and empowered hundreds of women to transform their lives.

Every year, our one of a kind Spirit Of Transformation program, wellbeing activities and thousands of kilometres of walking continue to improve our participants' sense of empowerment, resilience and community connection.

Our participants report life changing impacts

- Feeling motivated and inspired
- Improvements in mindset, life-skills, confidence, self-worth and resilience
- A sense of purpose, ownership and belonging
- Improved physical and mental health

How it all started:

- The pilot program began in 2019 with 17 women in Frankston/Mornington Peninsula
- Over the past 7 years, our programs have grown in scale and reach across South East Melbourne
- Our impact on the lives of our participants and extended communities has been repeatedly evidenced by Monash University's program evaluation
- Powered by community: year on year we have increased our volunteer base. Our volunteer mentors and our extensive support crew give our programs wings
- We have expanded our program offerings: creating accessible, safe, non-judgemental spaces. Most offerings continue to be delivered for free or subsidised for women who are experiencing disadvantage. New low cost wellbeing events now support our financial sustainability via a 'pay it forward' model, featuring women's circles, leadership and mentor training and outdoor wellbeing activities

2019-2026

- Our governance and team: a highly skilled board of pro bono directors and a small talented team of contractors are making our programs possible
- Power in partnerships: we have gained the trust and support of sponsors and partners who are supporting us to spread our wings

Addressing a critical gap.

- We address a critical gap: women experiencing disadvantage often lack access to safe, inclusive well-being opportunities
- The connection between movement, nature, community and mentorship offered in our programs is one of a kind
- It contributes to prevention: improved mental health, resilience and reduced social isolation.
- The ripple effect -- we build social capital.
 Empowered women can change not only their own lives but influence families and communities.



Challenges & Growth areas

The many stories of transformation by our women confirms our model is working. We give women a powerful path to change.

Backed by our communities, our goals for the next chapter include expanding our reach, deepening and tracking long-term outcomes and securing our long-term financial sustainability:

- Ready to Scale: demand for our programs has grown exponentially. Many more
 women need our programs than there is capacity. We are working towards a model
 that enables national access to our programs.
- Financial sustainability: as a small non profit, our financial sustainability has been uncertain year-to-year. The activation of new partnerships and corporate funding streams are a key priority.
- Deepening and measuring long-term outcomes: we have powerful impact data showing the success of our programs in improving connectedness, motivation, health and mindset. Our next stage will build evidence on long-term sustained change.

We look forward to having you on this journey with us.

2024-2025



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Sustaining and scaling what we offer though fundraising and grant writing

Focusing on developing strong partnerships with community, government at all levels, business, and philanthropy

Undertaking a community consultation process to identify opportunities, gaps and areas for growth and development

Promoting our activities through various mediums including distribution of the I Am Enough documentary to create awareness and engagement across the state

Generating income by diversifying our offerings to include fee for service healing and recovery activities and programs

Qualified and experienced team members and volunteers to support the delivery of our vision and mission into the future

Continuing to strengthen our data collection processes and systems, to provide the necessary evidence of the impact of what we deliver and ensure continuous improvement.







COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND IN-KIND SUPPORT









Thank You. With heartfelt thanks to everyone who believes and powers our mission.

We sincerely thank our incredible volunteers, partners, sponsors and donors who have supported us over the past financial year.

Your generous support is what makes our work possible. Thank you for believing in our mission and backing us all the way. Thanks to you, we are making a powerful and lasting difference.

To our volunteers. Thank you to all the incredible women who -- week in week out -- donate their time to support our work behind the scenes and during our programs. You have made the past year a huge success.

A special mention to our board members. Your generous gift of time is invaluable and appreciated by all. Your passion, skills, expertise and leadership is what allows us to lift women up.

To our funders. Your financial contributions are the wind beneath our wings. Without you, the Women's Spirit Project would not exist. Thank you for letting us fly!

WE THANK YOU.



























What Can You Do?

Help us change lives, one step at a time

Support us to continue to inspire and empower women who have experienced disadvantage and are recovering from trauma.

Partnership & Donation Enquiries suzanne@womensspiritproject.org

Volunteer & General Enquiries hello@womensspiritproject.org

Support Our 2025/2026 Appeal - 'Help Her Change Her Story' 100% of funds raised will support women in our community to transform their lives.

DONATE HERE

Change Appeal



Website



Direct Tranfer

The Motivation Project trading as:

Women's Spirit Project BSB 633 000 ACC 165 746 876

The Women's Spirit Project is a registered charity. All donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.







