



CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY

# WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE LTD

*Our Vision: 'A feminist health centre of excellence enabling Central Coast women access to holistic health care.'*

## The Way We Work

### **We take a women-centred approach**

At Central Coast Community Women's Health Centre our work is women centred. We talk about women and girls. We always focus on achieving improved outcomes for women.

We are a unique service and provide a safe space for women. All our services are provided by women for women.

We strive to hear the voices, experiences and needs of women – as individuals and collectively. In our work with other service providers and organisations we encourage others to recognise and respond to gender in order to provide services and activities that are useful and accessible to women.

***We are feminist – 'Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social and economic equality to men'.***

We have a desire to empower women, hear their stories and acknowledge their real, lived experiences. We see gender as implicated in violence, exploitation and oppression and recognise that women's power is also mitigated by their class, culture (dis) ability, religion and life experiences.

### **We use a social model of health**

Our work is premised on a social model of health. This does not deny medical or physiological aspects, but acknowledges that social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual factors also influence people's experiences of health, disease (dis) ability and illness.

### **We Work in Many Different Ways and aim for sustainable change**

Our work is complex and undertaken on many levels. It includes clinical services, therapeutic services such as counselling and groups, community development, training, resource production, research, advocacy, planning and evaluation. Processes and relationships are valuable in their own right.

### **We work in Partnership**

Our partners are service providers, local organisations and local communities. We model collaborative approaches and resource sharing, and facilitate the development of lasting and meaningful relationships. We offer a gender “lens” or approach that complements the skills and expertise of our partners.

We also work in partnership across our three centres. We have sub-committees established to achieve set pieces of work or to work on issues and we meet monthly in teams at each of our three centres and together as a whole of organisation group of workers monthly as well.

### **We endorse specialist women’s services**

Our reason for existence is that women need gender-specific services.

Australia’s diverse cultures are gendered. There are many subtle and not-so-subtle influences that shape and reinforce our gender identities: family and friends, education, media, marketing and systemic forces.

In most parts of Australian society, this gendering has harsh effects on women. They are more likely to be poor, to be unemployed, to be sole parents, and to work in positions which are poorly paid and which have few opportunities for advancement. They undertake most of Australia’s domestic labour, including most child-rearing. They are less likely to have access to positions of power and influence. They are many times more likely to experience family and domestic violence, rape, sexual assault or sexual harassment. Their bodies and their sexuality are exploited for power and profit.

In the health system, men dominate decision-making. Medical research traditionally uses male bodies as the norm, with findings then applied to women with little or no regard for their difference. Health practitioners are not immune to the ideology of our society and often have gendered attitudes and sexist behaviours. This means that most women find that the health system does not meet their physical, social, emotional or spiritual needs.

### **We evaluate what we do**

We believe that all of our activities must be evaluated to ascertain their usefulness, sustainability and replicability. We dedicate time to collective evaluation of our work.

*Source: The Central Coast Community Women’s Health has adapted the document ‘The Way We Work’ from the Women’s Health Goulburn North East, Victoria in development of this document.*