

**Sept 2022**

**WARM BLANKETS FOR EVERYONE**

**Latest News & Updates**

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| **OPENING ADDRESS**  ﻿Hello to all Warm Blankets volunteers,  Thank you for being part of this wonderful team, a team of two in March 2020, to over 100 volunteers today.  It's been a wild and exciting ride.   A vision to make blankets for those in need within our community, and further afield, has come to fruition and more!  This must be accredited to the great support of the volunteers who have 'stepped up to the mark' and helped the charity to grow.  The accompanying reports and testimonials, will give you an over view of the extent of the Warm Blankets outreach.  What a team!  Sue Bardsley Co-founder WBFE |
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| **TEAM LEADER REPORTS** |
| **Monday (Sue Bardsley)**  The 'Preppers' is the newest team at Warm Blankets, meeting once a month on the first Monday for three hours.  To date we have had two sessions, which are working to plan. The 'Preppers' job is to prepare the 'toppers' to the correct size, ready for the 'pinners' to add to the fleece.   Some fabric just needs to be cut, some needs 'borders added', which is then put aside for the 'sewers'.  Paul recently added height to the additional tables, which is a great benefit to all teams, preventing back aches for the volunteers. There are about 8 volunteers who have shown interest in this group.  As it is a new team and time, we are still 'building'.  So far, so good.   Many thanks to those who have joined this team. |
| **Tuesday (Rebecca Wett)**  We are all working very well together. The Tuesday morning group has just recently grown from 3 volunteers to now 5 volunteers.  We welcome Carolyn & Gillian to our Tuesday group. It is wonderful to have Carolyn & Gillian cover for me when I go on holidays.  Kay helps out sewing tops but also helps us when we need extra work, like adding extension pieces to tops or extra fleece required.  Sandra and I start at about 8am in the morning pinning blankets. We have a great system going.  We average about 12 to 13 blankets a session.  We all take a morning tea break at about 10.30am and we sit down and catch up on what’s been happening. |
| **Wednesday AM (Julie Farquhar)**  We have enjoyed looking at the variety of fabrics that people have used to make the blanket tops. Where the fabrics come from is usually a mystery and where the blankets end up is also one. Each piece of fabric would have been purchased with a project in mind.  Some of the projects were completed and we have been able to recycle the leftovers. Those pieces that remained in cupboards untouched have now found their way to a new home as a project of ours.  The members of this excellent team enjoy the cutting, sewing, sorting and pinning of these fabrics; they enjoy the many discussions on current affairs, new books or podcasts and the shared laughter that is always lurking just around the corner |
| **Wednesday PM (Christine Gill)**  Wednesday afternoon group is made up of six diverse people with the same aim i.e., to give comfort to those in need by hand making them warm blankets. The social aspect of getting together and working for a common cause cannot be underestimated. We have all made new friends, had lots of laughs and been there for support.  We all work well together slotting into our roles with ease...making blanket toppers, pinning fleece to toppers and sewing on labels to donated blankets. There is always a job to do and always someone willing to do it.  Also, on Wednesday afternoon many volunteers drop off work and donations...and pick up more kits to work on at home. So many enthusiastic people ready to volunteer their time and expertise!  Last Wednesday a group of ladies who work at sewing for many organisations called in to find out about what goes on in the workshop. A very energetic and enthusiastic group, they are keen to help Warm Blankets by sewing toppers!  The support just keeps on coming! |
| **Thursday (Roberta Hodgson)**  Thursday afternoons 12.30-3.30 pm are running well. We have a good team of girls who work together well and are multi-tasked. Dot, Ruth Chez and I pin when required. Ruth and I can overlock if asked. We can all sew when necessary. Julie puts things together beautifully, very creative with borders and piecing and adding pieces to make tops the right size. Meg is learning - has made her first quilt top joining squares and has learnt strip piecing as has Dot. Meg also sews labels on blankets. Dot does a lot of unpicking uniforms and other things, helping where necessary and she and Meg take turns in getting us all afternoon tea. They are both good cooks. I enjoy my Thursdays |
| **Friday (Helen Clarke)**  Our team consists of 8 members; one has recently decided to work from home as she is needed there but will be coming in to see us every fortnight to pick up some work (can’t seem to leave those blankets). We have very much enjoyed having her with us and will love her visits.  We are doing our best to get some law and order into our day and make it a profitable one. Organizer me has set up rosters for cleaning up after us at the end of the day and “who likes what” for our morning tea (now this is very important – you must keep the team happy).  Our group has many different talents, and we use them all. Making tops, cutting backs, sorting wool, sewing, overlocking, welcoming visitors or people collecting goods; trimming back and being a dog’s body (that’s Sue). We need Sue to find bits and pieces for us. That is because we are lazy as Sue has the place looking pretty good with places for everything.  We had a night out on the 19 August to get to know each other better – no shop talk as partners came too and we didn’t want to bore them to tears when they are so supportive to their partners in this project. We had a very pleasant night, and some have asked that we do it again.  Signing off: The Big Friendly Giant (BFG -Victor) and the 7 dwarfs. |
| **FUNDRAISING REPORT (Rebecca Wett)**  **Warners Bay Market Stall (April 2022)**  While the weather caused a not so successful day for some, our products sold well, and we took $890 on the day.  We had the use of the site for free. The site location wasn’t the best as it was off to the side of the main path.  The rain ruined the afternoon of the markets. It forced us to move everything inside the Marquee, so it was very crowded. The strong winds of the southerly change would have blown the Marquee away if each of us hadn’t grabbed a corner post and we all held on tight. Some stalls either lost their Marquee or had it damaged, they were forced to pack up and leave.  The items that sold well included: coat hangers, aprons, mug cosies & mats, kitchen handtowels, bowl cosies, teddy bears, table runners & quilts.  We had some learnings from the experience that will make us better prepared in the future.  Most importantly, I would like to thank all those volunteers who made goods to sell, who helped set up our stall, those who manned the stall (and help stop the Marquee blowing away) and finally to those that helped pack up our stall and store our goods.  **WBFE High Tea (July 2022)**  A very successful day, made possible by our wonderful volunteers, was held at St Luke’s Uniting Church Hall Belmont. We made over $4,500 on the day which is absolutely fantastic.  Our generous sponsors gave Gift Cards or Donations. The sponsors were: Bunnings Bennett’s Green, Zen Beauty Massage, Coles Belmont, Coles Mt Hutton, Coles Warners Bay, Woolworths Belmont, Woolworths Mt Hutton, BWS Mt Hutton. WBFE Volunteers donated food for the 2 High Tea Raffle Hampers  Sue Bardsley spoke about WBFE. Lucky Door prizes and the raffles were very well supported.  We were very fortunate to have been entertained by Sing Australia Belmont Choir.  Once again, I want to thank our tireless volunteers for helping to make this event such a success and run so smoothly.  *More information on these events including photos are on the WBFE Website ( wbfe.org )*  *Detailed Reports on both events have been provided.* |
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| **GUEST SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS & WORKSHOP VISITS**  Following all the radio and print media engagements WBFE has become very popular and in high demand. This is very important as it both promotes the excellent work that the Group does and acknowledges the wonderful work done by all the Volunteers.  **May**   * Sue did a guest speaking engagement at Belmont and District Regional Action Group.   **June**   * Sue and Paul spoke at the Belmont Rotary weekly meeting at Pelican.   **July**   * Sue, Di & Dave presented to Belmont Probus. Following the presentation, we gained a couple of ladies to do knitting and crochet from home and a delivery driver.   **August**   * A group of Salvation Army ladies came to the workshop for a tour/morning tea & learning all about us. * A Patchwork group of 9 came for a tour of the workshop in August.   They will work off site for us. * Following the presentation in July, a group of Belmont Rotarian's (10 -15) had a tour of the workshop. This resulted in the free use of their storage unit at Bennett’s Green and advice on O.H. & S. and fire safety requirements. We gained five extra sewing/knitting volunteers. * Sue, Di & Dave presented to Toronto Probus. The ladies donated woollen blankets and crotched and knitted ones. * Sue, Di & Dave presented to Belmont CWA. The ladies donated quilts, crochet blankets and fabric. |
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| **DISTRIBUTIONS (Di Ebert)**  The Distribution Team comprises 5 packers and 10 drivers. These wonderful people take the blankets to the Organisations that support the people in need. Without them what is achieved by the WBFE team would not be possible.  The Deliveries are a combination of both regular deliveries and on an “as required basis”. Since February this year WBFE has supplied over **1,720** blankets to **24** Organisations. That’s nearly 60 blankets each week.  The Organisations supported include Refuges, Homeless Support Groups, Crisis Centers, and Rehabilitation Program Centers. The excellent quality blankets that WBFE supply are always greatly appreciated.  The 5 Organisations that we provide ongoing regular Blankets deliveries to are:   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Survivor’s R Us**  Supports Homeless and domestic violence | Weekly | 10 – 15 Blankets |  |  |  | | **Food Not Bombs**  Support for the homeless | Weekly | 10 – 15 Blankets |  |  |  | | **STRAS Belmont Hospital**  Supports patients transitioning to Aged Care | Monthly | 10 Crochet Blankets |  |  |  | | **Mum’s Cottage**  Family Support organisation | Monthly | 30 Blankets |  |  |  | | **We Care Connect Wyong**  Support for children living in poverty across the Central Coast & Hunter | Monthly | 40 – 50 Blankets |  |  |  | |
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| **VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK**  **Ruth Dewar** joined Warm Blankets this year, after a chance meeting with one of our volunteers, Carolyn at Spotlight (of course).  This is her story:-  **What Warm Blankets Means to me:**  After retirement, I spent a while trying to find my place.   After a chance meeting with a lovely lady in Spotlight, she told me about the group.  I chased it up and was welcomed.  It is such a supportive, happy, fun filled group. I enjoy the fact that I can help others in need without having rooms filled at home with half-finished projects. An afternoon at warm blankets is like a warm hug. It is full of laughter, shared stories and an appreciation of each other's talents. People happily share their skills, and I have enjoyed learning new skills and reviving long forgotten ones. I am impressed that whatever talent you bring to the group, they will find a use for. Our fabulous leader Sue pulls it all together effortlessly! (well, you know how much work goes into making it look that way)  I am so glad to have found this happy, supportive, and committed group that I get to enjoy twice a week. |
| **FEEDBACK FROM ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED BY WBFE**  **Mums Cottage**  Thank you so much for your wonderful donation of blankets. They are a valued gift to the Cottage.  Mums' Cottage is a “Not for Profit” organisation that provides a free service to those in need. Our work of service is funded by donations and sponsorship. The wonderful blankets are given to families in need. One example is when several of the blankets were given to a needy family with nine young children. That family and many other families have benefited from the generosity of the volunteers at WBFE.  Many thanks  Sister Helen Anne  **We Care Connect WYONG**  For the past 2 years We Care Connect has been visiting The Sewing Basket located at Kincumber Central Coast, to pick up donated fabrics, craft items that We Care Connect can utilise when making bags to fill with clothing, books or craft items.  Fabric such as fleece along with wool is also picked up at the same time, being brought back to We Care Connect's Wyong's warehouse.  On a regular basis the fleece and wool donated from The Sewing Basket at Kincumber, plus other materials not suitable for We Care Connect but are suitable for WBFE are transferred to Belmont's warehouse.  These materials are then re purposed by volunteers into beautiful blankets many of which are then donated back to We Care Connect, to give to vulnerable families in need. These families live on the Central Coast, Hunter and also in the Newcastle areas. The packages are given to families via caseworkers.  Both We Care Connect and Warm Blankets for everyone, besides helping the community with much needed blankets are also reducing their "footprint" by being more sustainable, in that we both are recycling items and reducing the fuel consumption by utilising 1 vehicle instead of 2, with the pickup of materials from Kincumber.  Any items that cannot be utilised by WBFE but may have a value in being utilised by We Care Connect for distribution to families in need are also received and appreciated.  We Care Connect's Hunter Program is being launched very soon, to help even more families in this region.  Since We Care Connect started, we have been increasingly asked to support more Hunter families and our ability to do this from our Wyong operation was becoming unsustainable. With over 20,000 children living in poverty in the Hunter, We Care Connect was determined to find a way to provide access to everyday essential to these kids.  With the incredible support of the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation and The Honig Foundation, We Care Connect has spent the last couple of months setting up its operation base just outside Newcastle, recruiting, training volunteers, and stacking shelves with amazing community donations. This second branch will be opening in September 2022.  Thanks to Warm Blankets for Everyone, in early August they were able to donate a very large amount of warm bedding which is now on the shelves at our Thornton branch ready for distribution.  The wonderful prints that suit children up to 16 years of age, are a delight, and we are sure they will put a smile on the child's face when they see them.  Vicki Davidson  **Belmont Baptist Church Community**  My name is Rowena. I am currently affiliated and serve with the Belmont Baptist Church through the Belmont Baptist Community Care team. We currently partner with Warm Blankets for Everyone (WBFE). Part of what we do is supply blankets, linen, towels and toiletries and other means of support to the needy in the community, which is the woman’s refuge, homeless people and anyone who requires the generous service that WBFE provides.  On behalf of the Baptist Church, we would not be able to do this without the support of WBFE. WBFE have not only supported the community but have given of their own time to graciously give over and above of their time. Without this help they would not have been able to bear the cold in winter conditions and through hardship times that Warm Blankets have shown given and provided through their generosity.  I would sincerely like to thank all the volunteers that give this service to our community from the Belmont Community Care Team. With our deepest and upmost thankfulness and with a grateful heart. We thank you Warm Blankets for your giving hearts.  Sincerely Rowena. Belmont Baptist Church Community.  **Allambi Care**  Allambi Care is a Not- for- Profit multi-disciplined organisation and is a recognised leader in the Human Services Field working across Newcastle, the Hunter, the NSW Central Coast and Victoria. We are committed to supporting our community's most vulnerable people through tailored services and programs. These include, but not limited to, Residential Care for Young people, Disability Care, Foster Care, Education programmes for our clients not able to attend regular schools and Outreach services to families in the community. Our services are flexible and characterised by best practice, and we continue to be committed to empowering people to reach their full potential.  A recent supply of blankets donated to Allambi Care were given to a group placement in the Hunter Valley where temperatures are known to be quite colder than most of the region. Our participants use these not only to keep themselves warm, but it also stimulated and relieved their stress, anxiety levels and helped improve their sleep overall.  One participant now refuses to go to bed without his blanket.  These blankets although may be taken for granted by many have truly helped keep our participants warm, safe, and given them a greater sense of liberation and calm. As explained by one of our support workers, "Something so small can make a big difference."  Thank you again to your volunteers for their efforts in producing these blankets for our community.  Lyn Walsh Carer-Staff Support |
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| **REMEMBERING MERILYN**  We should take a moment to remember and acknowledge Merilyn's involvement with WBFE  Merilyn was a member of the original board for WBFE until ill health presented in August of last year.  Cancer was later diagnosed, and she deteriorated slowly.  She would come and visit the workshop whenever she was in the area, and still able to drive. We were distressed to see how ill she became.  Merilyn lost her fight on Friday 12th August 2022.  She was a beautiful embroiderer and made magic quilts. A lovely lady, with a real caring for others.  We have lost a good friend. |
| **GENERAL**  This year the Christmas Closedown period will be from **Friday 16th December 2022 to Wednesday 1st February 2023.**  This close down period will allow all the volunteers to take a well-earned break after a very big year and revitalise for an even bigger 2023. |