

Supporting non-profit, community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For more than two decades the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) has invested in social service groups working towards strong, sustainable communities.

Administered by the Local Government and Community Branch of The Department of Internal Affairs, COGS has distributed \$225 million – some 50,000 grants – since 1986.

It's a community-driven, government-funded scheme – an example of the community and voluntary sector and government working together to provide strong social services.

In 2008 / 09, \$14 million of COGS funding will be distributed to more than 3000 community organisations.

Most grants are for \$3000 or less, and contribute to ongoing running costs (such as rent, travel, volunteer and administration expenses), to hosting hui, fono or community workshops, or toward project development costs.

COGS also encourages communities to set their own funding priorities through 37 Local Distribution Committees.

Committees are made up of volunteers nominated and elected by registered community organisations and serve for a term of three years.

They consider and make decisions on grant applications from groups within their area according to local priorities.

In 2007, COGS committees considered almost 4000 applications. Of those organisations considered, 91% received a grant.

Priority for the allocation of COGS funding goes to

- Projects responding to a locally identified community need
- Community groups and organisations with limited access to other government funding
- Projects and services initiated by local community groups
- Projects and organisations working with one or more COGS priority sector.

Applications open on 1 June and close on the last Friday of July each year. Online applications are available through www.cdgo.govt.nz.

More information on COGS is available at www.dia.govt.nz or by freephone 0800 824 824.

Heretaunga Women's Centre
Promoting wellbeing and connecting women in Hastings

There's a safe place for women of all ages, stages, ethnicities and ambitions at the historic Hastings Women's Rest.

Home of the Heretaunga Women's Centre (HWC), the historic landmark is run with an open to all philosophy. The Women's Rest was the first purpose-built facility for women in Australasia, made possible by the fundraising efforts of local women.

The Women's Rest is a central place for women to develop skills and strength – or just get together. "Women have a safe place where they know they can be heard by someone who may be able to help," said Manager Pamela Hollows.

For several years, HWC has received a COGS grant of around \$4000 to pay staff wages. The grant is a core part of their annual funding.

The Centre's origins date back 20 years to when a group of women set about raising awareness of women's health issues. It first operated out of the back of a van – then from a derelict building – before a permanent home was found at Women's Rest.

Its core service is low-cost counselling and psychotherapy. Last year six volunteers provided around 650 hours of therapy.

Pamela said services have expanded to meet the needs of the community's diverse cultural and spiritual mix. HWC runs an interfaith group and ESOL tuition for ethnic, refugee and migrant women.

"Sometimes a woman may just need advice or referral to another service, and having someone to make initial contact with can be the difference between solving a problem and suffering in silence," Pamela said.

She recalls one migrant woman arriving at the Centre in need of low-cost dental care, but didn't know where to go. "She just needed someone to act as a go-between, a referral service, and was hugely grateful for what we could do for her," she said.

Once that initial contact has been made, many women return to make the most of other services. Yoga, pilates, art therapy and programmes for self-esteem and communication, a support group for single mothers, and one for survivors of sexual abuse all run out of the Women's Rest.

Pamela sees firsthand the positive difference the Centre makes in the lives of numerous women – and in one case that came very close to home. Pamela's mother's transition into a resthome was not smooth.

"The home catered more for dementia care than aged care, and mum found that difficult. So I started bringing her along to the Centre where there is lots for her to do."



Above: Centre Manager Pamela Hollows outside the historic Women's Rest

Right: HWC volunteer Judith Ryan and Shirley Christensen (front)