



babymum
AUSTRALIA

Babymum Australia

Annual Report 2015-2016

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Our Vision

Babymum is a vibrant, creative community for teenage mums and their babies to belong, find support, celebrate the present and be equipped for the future

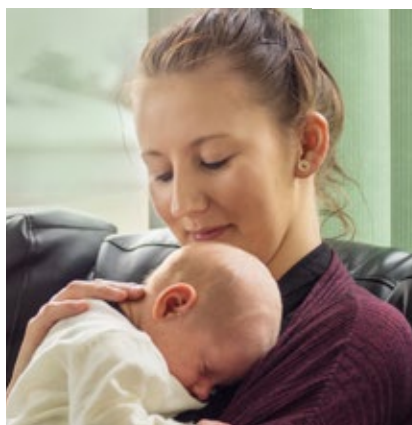
Our Mission

To provide a safe supportive environment for teenage mums and their babies, through:
Holistic Emotional, Physical, and Social Support
Education Support
Mentoring and life coaching
Parenting and Social Skill Development, and;
An Online Community

Our Values

Faith
Hope
Love

Education
Community
Friendship



Strategic Plan

1. Community

To facilitate connections for expectant and parenting teenagers and their babies, within a welcoming and supportive environment that encourages the growth of safe, stable, nurturing families where both parent and child has the opportunity to reach their full potential. To:

- provide connection and support
- provide individual and responsive mentoring
- foster healthy relationships
- encourage effective parenting skills
- provide access to community human resources
- develop collaboration with external service providers.

2. Education

To provide a supportive space to enable young mothers to engage in formal and informal education through:

- one-on-one tutoring in subjects undertaken through eSchool, Flexible Learning, UTAS or other formal learning situations.
- liaison with the Department of Education or private schools to encourage young pregnant or parenting mothers to continue with education as long as possible or to enable new pathways for re-engagement
- a rich learning space for the children of young mothers to grow and learn in our Babymum Playaway program whilst their mothers are engaged in formal learning, enabling mothers and their children to stay connected
- vicarious learning opportunities through the Life Choices Program
- access to computers, Internet and printing needs
- assistance with life coaching

3. Sustainability

To develop a sustainable income stream for Babymum Australia through:

- Enterprise products (designed to celebrate mother and child)
- Fundraising and Promotions
- Intentional Marketing
- Grants
- Regular Donors

To facilitate sustainable Human Resources through:

- building a supportive Governance Board
- enabling a vibrant, creative Management Team
- nurturing and supporting a growing team of volunteers
- providing a network of support Professional Resources and Advisors

4. Future planning

To develop a replicable model for nationwide implementation

To be an inspiration to others

Our people



Ro Blaney
President and Education Co-ordinator



Kesni Burton
Vice President



Maryann Midson
Treasurer



Jennifer Howell
Secretary



Noelene Booth
General Board Member



Alice Cordwell
General Board Member



Elizabeth Verhay
General Board Member

Structure & management



President's report

Another year has flown by and Babymum has changed. We have a new President – me. And it was not my greatest wish as I cannot fill the shoes left behind by Noelene Booth. Nor would I try as Noelene was a visionary and an inspiration to us all. She founded this amazing voluntary community organisation and I am very pleased to be a part of it.

However, when Noelene decided her family needed to move to Queensland, she assured me I would be 'the best person for the job' and, just for now, that is possibly true. I have been with Noelene and Babymum since 2004 when it was known as Mireya House (House of Miracles) and we began our research into accommodation and education for young mums, programs, strategies, policies, missions, strategic plans, documenting outcomes, forming boards and finding finance. I have watched dreams and ideas grow and change and I have helped achieve many things but still we have many things yet to be done. The ground work for Babymum was laid long before the official launch in 2011 but things that are worthwhile take time to grow and all good buildings need solid foundations. We have a strong base on which to continue to build our organisation and, although we have struggled through some difficult changes in 2015 – 2016, I believe we are making good progress in developing a new board of management, effective working teams, creating a greater awareness in the community and are working hard to meet the constantly changing needs and interests of the world around us.

I would not be the President of Babymum without Jen Howell as the Secretary because without her knowledge of business, her creative technological ability and many, many hours of committed hard work we would not have been able to go on. When an organisation, that is totally dependent on volunteers, undergoes so many changes in a 12 month period through losing the support of its visionary leader, its secretary, its administration manager, a financial advisor, three of its main mentors, moves its main residence twice and grieves the loss through death of a very dear mentor and volunteer, it may never recover its balance.

However, we have survived this time of change and are gaining strength in moving forward with a new strategic plan, new ideas for programs and strategies and new members who are bringing

encouragement, energy and skills to help us develop in the right direction. I believe Babymum continues to offer a caring, safe and supportive community environment where young mums and their children can be encouraged to grow and learn, where they feel welcomed, accepted and nurtured and are enabled to share their dreams and assisted to reach their goals.

There will always be times when we wonder what difference we are making, especially when the road is hard and challenges are many and our endeavours are often thankless. But I wonder how different that is from the role of the teacher or the parent who works hard to do their best for their children with little immediate reward or feedback, apart from that one smile or hug or one little voice saying thank you for helping me. And then years later an adult says you were my best teacher, you taught me so much, or thanks mum you always gave me the best advice, I never could have done this without you. If you were to ask one of our older Babymums from 2012 – 2014 she would tell you that someone in our Babymum team gave them a chance to be better, to do better, to find better skills, to learn something new, to be a better parent, to believe in themselves, to achieve something they thought not possible. Or maybe just a place to feel safe, welcomed and accepted. Perhaps we may never 'move mountains' but I believe we are making a difference to some.

And so I welcome and thank our new board members and our new team members, supporters and sponsors. I thank our continuing board members and our continuing team members, supporters and sponsors. It is your commitment and dedication that enable Babymum to succeed in its ventures and make a difference to the many young parents and their children who are connecting with us now and who are yet to come.

Ro Blaney



Program Objectives & Activities

Belly Up - belly casting

The purpose of the free belly cast is to celebrate the miracle of new life; foster a sense of creativity; begin a connection between a teen mum and Babymum.

Generally a belly cast is one of the first experiences a young mum-to-be will have with babymum. It's a beautiful gentle and nurturing way to welcome them into the Babymum community. It's an opportunity to help them to feel welcomed, accepted and cared for. It also gives them an opportunity for themselves to appreciate, accept and celebrate their pregnancy and their journey into parenthood. Another special moment with belly casting is when their family or partner can join in on the casting session. It's an honour to be watching such a special bonding experience between everyone involved. Naomi Matthews



Myday Friday

The purpose of Myday Friday is to offer a supportive space for young mums to connect with other young mums and develop friendships; to connect and develop relationships with mentors; to model supportive and positive parenting strategies; to provide a rich learning environment for babies and toddlers.

Our regular Friday social gatherings have continued at the Cottage with our young mums and their children coming to chat with each other and our Myday Friday team members over morning tea and a light lunch. We always have one or two team mentors available to discuss lives, issues and ideas in our sunny rooms. Our Babymum numbers vary from two to six with their children aged from 4 weeks to 4 years. Children old enough to play will happily engage with Playaway supervisors in the play areas and our play sessions often involve the mums joining in as well.

Our Myday Friday core team of Ro, Carmen and Steph has stayed strong with support as well from Jen. Steph spends her time coordinating Playaway with playdough, drawing, puzzles, role play and cooking. Carmen promotes our celebrations of birthdays and special occasions, plans craft activities, mentors and puts together the Myday Friday Gift Bags for every new Babymum arriving. We now celebrate birthdays at the end of every month by sharing a delicious cheesecake kindly donated by The Cheesecake Shop – that is one Friday never to miss! Our light lunches have been prepared by Kesni for most of last year, then Heidi became our chef for most of this year. Alas the call of paid work took them both away but we have recently found George who loves the kitchen and makes some mean scones! (Can't wait for his cherry pie!) We currently have two to four other team members who will be volunteering with our social group.

We have run a few specific topic areas of discussion on sign language, toileting, first aid and behaviour guidance and strongly feel this is a strength for our Myday Friday sessions, along with running parent-child craft, cooking and play sessions. From discussions with young mums, I believe our ongoing focus will be to run short courses on other days than the social group day and run more specific parent-child playgroups on another day as well.

Photography has always been such an important part of our social gatherings and now we have lovely Jan as our Myday Friday photographer – she has shown us all her wonderful way with a camera. Her photos are so beautiful.

The Babymum Membership Club has helped give our social group a new focus and several mums are now 'members'. They are keen to come along and be a part of the group receiving baby wall prints, their own photo collections and other incentives. Our community donations of clothing and toys are regularly accepted by the young mums and children and we have several tubs of good toys that we use in Playaway.

We have been professionally supported for several years by St Giles who funded a therapist to visit with us every fortnight to work with the mums and their children. This support has been invaluable for us and we have missed it this year when their community funding was not continued. We have, however, maintained contact with them for future referrals.

Towards the end of 2015 one of our most devoted supporters, our Babymum Jill, became very ill again and her visits to Cottage were only occasional. On those days we engaged children in messy play, crafts, stories and songs and I loved her companionship very much.

Ro Blaney



Education Support

To provide a supportive learning space for studying teen mothers; to promote continuing educations as worthwhile; to provide supervised care for babies/toddlers in rich learning environment; to facilitate links with education providers.

Sarah's story...



Sarah contacted us through Facebook when she was 17 and about 28 weeks pregnant. She was a shy, reserved girl so it took many months of conversation to begin to get some of her story. She had been a kid in care, had looked after her dying father, had a tricky relationship with her drug dependent mother and was in a relatively new relationship

with the baby's father. She had a belly cast done by our team which helped connect her with her growing baby, celebrating the miracle of new life and new possibilities. A few weeks later, her free photography session started out with reservations, however soon she relaxed. The pictures of that day helped her to see herself, perhaps for the first time, as beautiful and powerful as she nurtured her baby.

Her baby girl was born a few weeks before Sarah's 18th birthday and she was in love with her little girl, head full of black hair and chubby right from the start. Sarah was an attentive, careful mother and baby Bella thrived.



As we grew to love Sarah and Bella, we learned more about her life before she found Babymum. She had dropped in and out of school from Grade 8 onwards, attending little of Grade 9 and almost nothing of Grade 10. She had found school difficult and had become her father's full time carer as he suffered from emphysema. She had been very quiet at school and didn't know how to ask for help. Her confidence in her own ability was very low.

One year after Bella was born, we began talking to Sarah about the possibility of her returning

to school. Through links Ro has with Launceston College, their social worker came and visited the Cottage, delivering information about Flexible Learning. Ro enrolled Sarah in English Applied and over the next 6 months, she worked hard, often at the Babymum Cottage after our group session with assistance from Ro or Jen. She found it very difficult at first, understanding the instructions and what the teacher expected of her. She persisted, however, in no small part due to the encouragement she found at Babymum.

At the beginning of 2015, she was feeling confident enough to enrol for Semester 2 at TAFE to study Certificate II in Animal Studies, a career path she had identified in one of our LifeChoices sessions on career pathway planning. She has now begun this course and is still working on the last units of English Applied. Sarah's journey has not been easy, having large gaps in her learning and low literacy levels. She has required a lot of encouragement and assistance from the Education team at Babymum and she would not have enrolled

or persisted if it had not been for the continuing support she found.



We are so proud of the hard work she has done and we see her as a

wonderful example of how, with the right support, girls can renew their focus and achieve their goals. Sarah, despite the surprise pregnancy, now sees her future as bright and worth working for as she wants to do her very best for her child. This is a change we often see in the lives of these young mums as they now have dreams for their children and their future. We want them to be given every opportunity, creating a better future for both themselves and their children, full of hope and possibility.

Other Reports

Outreach

This year we sent letters and promotional materials to all high schools and colleges, some community centres and doctor surgeries, Family Planning, Walkers House and some churches via the team, board and girls at MDF.

Launceston College has photocopied our Promotional materials for us and offers to do more. Pregnancy Counselling Line Australia (Victoria) contacted for materials to offer support when girls call them – they are also an independent online counselling service we can refer girls to. Rosanne has agreed to make connections with young mums at the LGH. Carmen and I took 6 Little Awareness Bags to Rosanne to give to any new young mum (under 21) when the baby is born. Also some promotional materials were put on display and given to others in their Midwife Team and to the Midwife from Ravenswood.

The Office Manager for Helen Polley has offered use of their office for copying at any time – to include their name as sponsors.

Two (senior) Babymums were very inspired, for a short time, to begin an online project to sell Baby Clothing Bundles from our extraordinary collection of community clothing giftings as well as offer our Myday Friday Welcome Gift bags as Baby Shower Gifts. This venture encouraged us to gather all our clothing and toy resources from storage and sort it again into clothing to sell, to give away and to use for raffles or similar ventures.

We have contacted the Playgroup Association in order to begin a Babymum young parent playgroup in the Holbrook Street centre. This should reach young parents in a different way and may help us to connect with Karinya, Mums and Bubs and PYPs.

Ro Blaney

Fundraising

We have undertaken a number of BBQs this year which always give our finances a much needed boost. A number of them have been at the Kings Meadows store which is generally less busy than the Invermy site. Thanks to Marty Howell, Paul and Kesni Burton, Nic Sands, George Greig, Ro Blaney and a few extra kids to help with the money. We'll be looking to do several in the coming financial year and are always very grateful for help. It is generally only a two hour shift somewhere from 10-3. Get in touch if you have some spare time. (Weekends)



Administration

This year has been a learning curve for me as I struggled to pick up aspects of the job. It was challenging moving from the Centre and setting up the office at the Cottage. With the loss of Ian from our Board, we also faced challenges in relation to policy and procedure, human resources and general wisdom!

We have managed to make progress, however. We have streamlined our intake procedure to ensure we are getting all the relevant information for our clients and working with that responsibly. We continue to work on building the Safety Management Online program, Childsafe, to better service the needs of Babymum. We have ensured that we have met the requirements of the Australian Charities Not for Profits Commission. Our website was completely rewritten and launched in May this year and we have been working towards increasing our exposure on social media networks.

Jen Howell

Babymum Photography

Since I have been involved in Babymum photography - first as an assistant and editor for Noelene, then as temp. on Myday Friday, while Noelene is away - I have discovered a whole new experience in photography. What a joy it is, and a challenge too! It's a privilege to be able to capture the beauty of young expectant mums, or the tender moments between mum and baby, and the lovely innocence, liveliness and cuteness of babies and toddlers. I am always surprised by the amazing varieties of personalities and emotions of my subjects. And it's so rewarding to see the delight in their eyes when I share the photos with them.

My aim is to be as inconspicuous as possible (not always achieved!) while I capture natural interactions between mothers and babies, or the little ones while they are just being themselves....moments in time captured for the future, creating happy precious memories.

Jan Greig



Treasurer's Report

Maryann Midson has continued as our Treasurer this past 12 months, working closely with Kesni to keep our finances in order. After some delay from our previous accountant, Maryann and Jen worked to generate all our records into the new Xero system for 2014-2015, adding to the current year, which was a big job, relying on Ciona from MDH Accounting to save us when we pushed the wrong button! Being able to have reports on different activities is a huge help when budget time comes around. It's wonderful to have the support from MDH to streamline and simplify our financial procedures. Our 2015-2016 Financial Statement is available by request.

One of our new Board members: Alice Cordwell

"I had my first child 3 months after turning 17 years old. I had no close family for support, so realise the importance of having someone to touch base with for a multitude of reasons. I have also worked in a management position in an industry that employed mainly women for the last 20 odd years. I realise the importance of supporting women of any age to reach their full potential. I joined the Board this year to provide what support I could to Babymum, in going forward."

We are so please to have both Alice and Libby as our newest Board members. They have brought energy and positivity and a wealth of knowledge.

Tribute to Jill Williams

Towards the end of 2015 one of our most devoted supporters, our Babymum Jill, became very ill again and her visits to Cottage were only occasional. On those days we engaged children in messy play, crafts, stories and songs and I loved her companionship very much. Playaway was more special with Jill, her cuddles and hugs were such family moments, the children loved it when she took them on her lap and read them stories and they especially loved it when she brought out the shaving foam!

She was inspiring for us all as her love was unconditional and she came to visit and help even when she was obviously unwell. Her chats were honest and caring and her laughter and positivity in the face of hard times kept us feeling we could face anything! She always had a twinkle in her eyes and her short breads and cream biscuits and slices were unbearably good to eat.

When Jill passed away this year her Funeral Gift to Babymum raised \$800 which was kindly donated to us by her husband Collin and daughter Jann. We have created Jill's Library in honour of Jill and filled a bookcase with lovely books for the mums and children and team to borrow.

We thank Jill for loving our babymums and their babies and for sharing her life with us all. She was a loving and generous part of our babymum family for a long time and she is sadly missed.

Ro Blaney



Acknowledgments & Thank You's

Heidi Sands - a valued member of Myday Friday who left us to start full time work.

MDH Accounting - for ongoing assistance with the Xero financial software, thanks particularly to Ciona.

Riverbank Church - ongoing support

St Giles (Hayley) - for connections for mums which children with special needs.

The Cheesecake Shop - for providing yummy morning teas.

Launceston Girls Home - for a very generous lease agreement and support over the last 5 years

Sharon O'Neill - advice

Margret Cullen - advice

Donors of clothes and baby items over the year

Ongoing financial donors

How you can help

Babymum is only able to operate due to the time and effort our volunteers put in loving our babymums and their little ones. It's a job that we love and we are always looking for more volunteers to help out. We would love to invite people with a heart to see lives changed, particularly if you have skills or professional experience in social work, child protection, counseling, advocacy, administration or legal and accounting skills. Whatever your area of passion, Babymum would benefit from your help.

Contact us

info@babymum.org.au

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