

Media Release

Northern Rivers rallies to raise another \$200,000 for women and children escaping violence

29 October 2026: The Northern Rivers community danced the night away in a show of solidarity against domestic and family violence, raising more than \$200,000 for Women Up North (WUN) and its local women's refuge, Bugalma Bihyn.

The annual gala has now raised more than \$600,000 since its inception in 2023, with this year's proceeds supporting Bugalma Bihyn Aboriginal Women's Refuge, which can accommodate up to five families at a time.

Held on Saturday, 24 October at Lismore Workers Club, the sold-out event saw more than 300 guests turn out in their finest 1920s attire for an evening of live music, dancing and fundraising.

Hosted by Women Up North and proudly supported by investment management firm Challenger, the gala brought together local residents, businesses and corporate partners to support women, children and young people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence across the Northern Rivers.

Funds raised will help cover essential running costs at the refuge, including power, cleaning and maintenance, as well as improvements to its outdoor spaces, including a new garden and playground for children and families.

WUN CEO Jillian Knight-Smith said: "This is not just a gala — it's a call to action. We are seeing more women and children in crisis than ever before and having somewhere safe to go can change everything."

"These funds raised by our community will help Women Up North create safe, calming outdoor spaces where children can play and families can begin to heal. Our vision is for Bugalma Bihyn to be a place of dignity, safety and recovery for women, children and young people who stay with us.

"Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we can continue providing that vital support while creating safe, calming outdoor spaces where children can play and families can begin to heal," said Ms Knight-Smith.

Nick Hamilton, Chief Executive of Challenger: "This year's gala was a huge success, and it's an event I look forward to every year. You can't leave without feeling moved by the generosity in the room and inspired by the extraordinary work the Women Up North team do for women and children across the region.

"Challenger is proud to be part of that journey. This year's proceeds will help in very direct and practical ways to ease the burden on those affected by domestic and family violence, and businesses have an important role to play alongside the community in helping create a safer and fairer society," Mr Hamilton said.



The funds were raised through community donations, raffles, auctions and sponsorships from local and national organisations, including AIA Australia, Global Ripple, Marsh McLennan, Shape, SovTech, Boardroom, Greencape Capital, Jarden, Northern Rivers Toxicology, Wavestone, Zenith, Accenture, CALI, Insignia Financial, Magenta Advisory, MinterEllison, Salesforce and the PGA.

This year's theme Glitz. Glam. Gala brought the roaring 20s to Lismore, hosted by iconic drag queen Hannah Conda. Guests enjoyed a heartfelt Welcome to Country from Jenny Smith, a performance by the Ninhi Nari Gali Bundjalung dance group, and entertainment from 42 Band, with local businesses donating raffle prizes and auction items to support the cause.

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About WUN

Women Up North is a Northern NSW service for women, children and young people who have experienced domestic or family violence or abuse. We are based in the Northern Rivers, working from Grafton to Tweed Heads. We work to support safe and healthy families in resilient communities.

About Challenger

Established in 1985, Challenger is Australia's leading retirement income business with a purpose to provide customers with financial security for a better retirement. We do this by helping Australians convert their accumulated savings into reliable and sustainable retirement income. At the same time, we provide income solutions for institutional investors through our leading credit origination capabilities, providing access to high-quality investment opportunities across public and private markets.

Challenger runs an APRA-regulated life company that provides income solutions to customers, and we are listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX).



