

NSW Women's Refuge Movement Working Party Inc.

Formerly known as the NSW Women's Refuge
Referral & Resource Centre Inc.

Annual Report

2005/2006



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The NSW Women's Refuge Movement Working Party Inc is the peak body of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement. The NSW Women's Refuge Movement is the statewide representative body of refuges for women and children escaping domestic violence.

1. OVER-ARCHING PRINCIPLES

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement operates within the framework of a feminist philosophy.

Domestic violence must be understood in the context of unequal relations of power between men and women and children. In the patriarchal structures of our society, men have greater access to power than do women or children.

Domestic violence is the result of this unequal power relationship and it also reinforces it. Those who perpetrate domestic violence often believe they have a 'right' to control and coerce women and children.

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement operates within a collective framework for decision making.

Historically the NSW Women's Refuge Movement has maintained a commitment to encourage all refuges to participate in the decision making process. This is achieved through regional and state conferences and the NSW Women's Refuge Working Party, Indigenous, NESB, lesbian and Child Support Groups.

Women's Services for Women

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement supports the policy and practice of women managing and operating refuges within a feminist framework for women alone and women with children escaping domestic violence.

Domestic Violence includes all types of violence

Domestic violence includes physical, verbal and emotional abuse, stalking, abduction and confinement, deprivation of cultural and spiritual rights,

humiliation, harassment, intimidation, denial of access to money and resources, isolation from support, sexual abuse and assault including rape and incest, threat of or actual abuse, and, as part of the continuum of violence, murder.

Domestic Violence occurs in all types of relationships

Domestic violence can occur within all relationships of a personal nature, including heterosexual or lesbian, marital or defacto, extended families and ex-relationships.

Domestic Violence-Power Disparities based on Cultural Background

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement acknowledges the disadvantages experienced by women and children as a result of discriminatory policies, practices and attitudes in our society based on cultural background.

Domestic violence is a breach of Human Rights

Domestic violence is a violation of human rights. It is a crime against the individual and against society. Domestic violence is a problem for the whole of society and not just an individual or private problem.

Domestic violence is a crime

Domestic violence is a crime and must be responded to as such. The perpetrator is solely responsible for domestic violence.

Domestic Violence requires a comprehensive response

A comprehensive response to domestic violence must involve government and community and include:

- Advocacy for the rights of individual women and children as well as for society as a whole;
- Change to the patriarchal structures of our society as they are reflected in the political, legal, economic, and social systems and as they occur in institutions and government departments
- Removing barriers to women and children's safety and empowerment wherever they occur.

Children experiencing domestic violence have particular needs

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement recognises that children have some needs that are separate to their mothers. Providing specific support for children is a crucial component of an effective response to domestic violence.

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement is committed to breaking the cycle of violence through providing effective support for children who have experienced domestic violence.

Access & Equity

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement values diversity. The Movement is committed to promoting access to and equity of, services for *all* women. This includes Indigenous & Torres Strait Islander women and children, women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds, lesbians and their children, women and children in rural and isolated areas, older women, young women and women and children with disabilities.

Representation of Women of Indigenous/Lesbian/non-English speaking backgrounds

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement promotes decision making processes that involve diverse groups in the community. This includes promoting the involvement of Indigenous women, immigrant women and lesbians in staffing and management. The Movement also supports the development of policies, which ensure appropriate and sensitive support and responses to domestic violence.

Indigenous Issues

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement recognises that domestic violence experienced by Indigenous women and children must be understood in a cultural and historical context, acknowledging that they remain a disadvantaged group due to discriminatory (overt and covert) structures in our society. The NSW Women's Refuge Koori Support Group, now called *Walan Jineras* (strong women), was formed by Indigenous women in the NSW Women's Refuge Movement as a support network to ensure issues relating to Indigenous women and children remain on the agenda.

Migrant, non-English Speaking Background Issues

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement recognises that migrant, non-English speaking background and refugee women and children in our society, face many barriers to accessing services. The Immigrant Refuge Support Workers Action Group, now called *NESB Support Group*, was formed by women from a non-English speaking background as a support network in the NSW Women's Refuge Movement to ensure issues relating to non-English speaking background women and children remain on the agenda.

Lesbian Issues

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement recognizes that lesbians and their children experience particular difficulties and barriers when trying to access services.

The Lesbian Support Group was formed by lesbians in the NSW Women's Refuge Movement as a support network to ensure issues relating to lesbians and their children remain on the agenda.

Women and Children with Disabilities

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement recognizes that there are a wide range of barriers which impede women and/or children with disabilities from accessing services and has a commitment to addressing these issues.

2. ROLES OF RESPONSIBILITY

Chairperson:	June Wilson/Trish O'Donohue
Vice Chairperson:	Jill Evans/Marilyn Fogarty
Secretary:	Alex Ayrton/Rosemary Larkin
Financial Officer:	Sally Steele
Book Keeper:	Brenda Roberts
Public Officer:	Elwyn Ried

3. MANAGEMENT AND WORKING PARTY MEMBERS

The WRRC is unique in that it is the only Women's Refuge Resource Centre in Australia to have a representative body of regional groups of refuges from across the state, as well as Indigenous, NESB, Lesbian and Child Support Group representatives as the management committee; the NSW Women's Refuge Working Party (WP).

Region	Delegates	Refuge	Refuges Represented
North Coast	Alex Ayrton/ Rosemary Larkin	Warrina/ Tweed	Grafton, Hastings, Kempsey, Lismore , Manning District, Tweed Shire, Warrina, Yinganeh Aboriginal
West/South West Metro/ Country	Sally Steele	Essie	Bonnie, Corner House, Essie's, Joan Harrison, Marcia, Mimosa House, Muslim, Pam's Place, Penrith, Wimlah and Jessie St DV, Arrunga
Hunter/Central Coast	June Wilson	Elandra	Carrie's Place, Eastlakes, Elandra, Faith Cottage, Jenny's Place, Muswellbrook, Tanderra, Warlga Ngurra, Woy Woy
Metropolitan	Trish O'Donohue	Amelie House	Amelie House, Bringa Women's Resource Centre, Delvena, Erin's Place, Marian Villa
Inner City	Caroline Burke/ Deb McEvoy- Herbert	Killara/ Butler Lodge	Butler Lodge, Dolores Single Women's, Elsie's, Jean's Place, Killara, Marian Centre
Riverina	Yvonne Wilson	Griffith	Forbes, Griffith, Wagga Wagga
New England	Debbie Smith	Tamworth	Armidale, Inverell, Ngala House, Tamworth
South Coast	Linda Evans	Moruya	Bega, Louisa, Lottie's Place, Moruya, Rosa Shoalhaven and Warilla
Orana Far West	Marcia Barker	Lightning Ridge	Barwon Cottage, Edith Edwards, Lightning Ridge, Nhuugka Muurpa-Naara Maara-Ma Kulyi, Ourgunya
Lesbian Support	Sue Cable/ Sharron MacKinnon	Woy Woy/ Jessie St DV	
Walan Jineras	Natalie Loy/ Marilyn Fogarty	Armidale/ Marcia	
Child Support	Jill Evans/ Ros Vincent	Jenny's Place/ Warrina	
NESB Support	Meryem Ali/ Liliana Reynaud	Elsie/ Killara	

NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre Annual Report 2005/2006

1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre (WRRC) would like to acknowledge and thank the WRRC subgroup/Management Committee for their commitment and the support they have provided to staff throughout the year.

The WRRC would like to also acknowledge the dedication and expertise of all the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Working Party members and their commitment to improving service delivery to women and children experiencing or escaping domestic violence.

The WRRC also acknowledges our funding body, the NSW Department of Community Services and the Commonwealth Government through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

We thank the Women's Refuge Movement (WRM) member refuges for their financial support towards the administrative position at the WRRC and for their participation in projects and initiatives coordinated by the WRRC.

The WRRC would like to thank the Body Shop and Vodafone for their generous donations that enabled the WRRC to employ the Children's Project and Policy Officer for a 6 months project.

And finally a big thank you to Publicis Mojo who worked pro bono with the WRRC to produce a powerful media campaign on domestic violence, aimed at raising funds for the WRM.

The WRRC, as the point of contact for the Women's Refuge Movement, receives numerous in-kind donations from the community that are passed on to WRM refuges. These donations, ranging from beauty products to books, music and furniture are very much appreciated by the women and children in the refuges, and we'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many members of the community that generously donate to the refuges through us.

We would also like to acknowledge the individuals who made financial donations to the WRRC to progress the work of the Women's Refuge Movement.

2. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S OVERVIEW

Once again the past year was a productive year for the WRRC. The staff worked on a number of ongoing projects and initiated a number of new projects and strategies. The WRRC continued to provide a secretariat role to the Working Party and kept members and the broader movement up to date on relevant issues.

The WRRC has also continued to represent the WRM in a number of consultations and forums, most recently by providing input into the NSW 10 year State Plan, in relation to homelessness and domestic violence issues.

A small but significant achievement in terms of input into Federal policy was the change to the Crisis Payment, initiated by the WRRC, that now allows women leaving a violent relationship but remaining in the home to get some additional assistance.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Women's Refuge Movement which enabled me to undertake a Churchill Fellowship and travel to the US, Canada, UK and Austria to investigate policies and programs that reduce the short and long term effects of violence on children.

Many of the ideas and projects started in 2004/05 continued to be progressed. Some of the major achievements of this year include:

- The completion of the Orana stage1 Project
- The employment of the Children Project and Policy officer and the development of the first draft of the *Foundations Towards Good Practices for Working with Children in Refuges* kit
- The completion of the Risk Assessment Tool project, which has been nominated for a WorkCover NSW Safe Work Awards
- The development of a media campaign together with Publicis Mojo

A number of new exciting projects have been planned or started and the WRRC is looking forward to continue working on them in the coming year. They include:

- The Family Law Court Assistance service for Women, which should commence operating by February 2007 and will provide assistance to unrepresented women in the Family Law Court
- Best Practice Forums to showcase services existing initiatives in providing pre and post crisis services as well as linkages with other agencies

- A research project in partnership with Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) on the role of housing in determining outcomes for women and children exiting refuges
- The setting up of a back office cost savings and bulk purchasing service for all WRM refuges
- Assisting with the piloting of the Performance Management Framework

The past year has been a busy one and a number of great results have been achieved. In closing, I would like to thank the fabulous staff team at the WRRC for their commitment, enthusiasm and undefeatable sense of humor when working under pressure.

Cat Gander
Executive Officer

3. BACKGROUND

The NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre (WRRC) is a community based service that has been operating since 1986. The Centre has historically filled a crucial role in assisting women and children escaping domestic violence to access refuges. It has also functioned as a women's information service. Currently the Resource Centre acts as a point of contact for the NSW Women's Refuge Movement (WRM). It provides resources and information on issues related to domestic violence and refuges. A focal point of the service is to promote government and community awareness on issues relating to the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence and to advocate for improved responses.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE WRRC

- To provide resources and information about issues relating to domestic violence
- To facilitate the interaction and networking between the NSW Women's Refuge Movement and other relevant services at both the state and national levels
- To provide resources for the NSW Women's Refuge Movement members on broader issues such as government policy, legislation and special projects
- To raise community and political awareness of domestic violence

- To advocate for a considered, effective response to the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence
- To liaise with the media on behalf of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement
- To undertake special projects, to coordinate consistent policies and approaches across a diverse range of service models.

5. WRRC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (formerly WRRC sub group)

The WRRC sub group has become the WRRC Management Committee to better reflect its role in providing a specific focus on the day-to-day operation of the WRRC. The Management Committee is made up of Working Party Delegates from both city and country regions and Support Groups. The Management Committee meets with the WRRC staff prior to the Working Party meeting each month and feeds back relevant information to the Working Party.

Delegates on the WRRC management committee during the 2005-2006 period have included:

Current members: June Wilson (Chair), Yvonne Wilson (Treasurer), Rosemary Larkin (Secretary), Sharron McKinnon, Linda Evans

Past members: Meryem Ali, Sue Cable, Alex Ayrton, Jill Evans, Trish O'Donohue

6. FUNDING

The NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre is funded by the Department of Community Services under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Refuges also pay a subscription amount to the WRRC to belong to the NSW Women's Refuge Movement. In 2005-06 the subscription amount was a percentile amount of 0.15% of the service's funding.

7. WRRC STAFF MEMBERS

Workers at the Centre for the 2005-06 financial year have included:

Catherine Gander	Executive Officer
Monica Mazzone	Project and Policy Officer
Kate Sawtschuk	Project and Policy Officer/Admin Officer
Brenda Roberts	Bookkeeper
Daniela Ritz	Children's Policy and Project Officer
Taryn Champion	Relief worker

8. HOURS OF OPERATION

The WRRC is open Monday to Friday from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. After hours an answering machine service refers crisis calls to the Domestic Violence line.

9. SERVICES PROVIDED

- The WRRC acts as a point of contact for government and non-government agencies, community groups, the media and women in the community who may need information regarding domestic violence, or contact with the WRM.
- The WRRC facilitates interaction, networking and linkages between the WRM and other relevant services at a state and national level.
- The WRRC also raises community awareness of NSW women's refuges, the WRRC and the issue of domestic violence.

The Centre provides information and resources on issues such as:

- ◆ The Women's Refuge Movement.
- ◆ Domestic Violence with regards to following issues:
 - ◆ Aboriginal
 - ◆ Lesbian
 - ◆ Children
 - ◆ Disabilities
 - ◆ Child Protection
 - ◆ Training
 - ◆ NESB
 - ◆ Legal
 - ◆ Older women
 - ◆ Mental Illness
 - ◆ Housing
 - ◆ Sexual Assault

Records and resources for the NSW Women's Refuge Movement are stored at the Centre.

10. RESOURCE FUNCTIONS

The Centre provides resources and information to refuges as well as other services, and to the general community. There are also students who access information on domestic violence issues.

The WRRC is responsible for recording and disseminating the NSW Women's Refuge Working Party minutes along with other information of value to refuges.

The Executive Officer also co-ordinates WRM responses and meetings regarding legislative changes, strategies and projects for the WRM.

This year the WRRC also carried out a role in resourcing the Working Party in relation to meetings and implementing our Business Plan.

The WRRC also contributed to the organising of the Bourke State Conference in partnership with the Walan Jineras.

11. REFERRAL FUNCTION

Although the role of the WRRC has moved away from organising crisis accommodation, the WRRC still receives many calls from refuges, organisations and the general community who require assistance with accommodation, or information on a myriad of issues, including legal, immigration, social security benefits and housing and who are referred appropriately. There is also a crisis counseling role on some occasions when women need support or information.

12. MEDIA, PUBLIC AWARENESS & ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT

The WRRC works hard to raise the profile of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement, advocating for the principles and policies that have been endorsed by the WRM. This includes participation in numerous consultations and meetings as well as media interviews.

The role of the WRRC in raising the issues and needs of women and children escaping domestic violence continues to be an important one.

Media interviews have been conducted with radio, print and television journalists on issues including refuges, domestic violence and its effects on children, SAAP V negotiations and homelessness.

The WRRC Executive Officer and Policy and Project Officer have carried out the following media work:

- Interview with ABC Radio regarding White Ribbon Day and the need for more resources for services
- Interview with Adele Horin for the Sydney Morning Herald on the lack of adequate funding for women's refuges.
- Interview in Italian by SBS radio on Domestic violence issues, including access to refuges, what refuges do and SAAP funding issues.

- Provided background information on Homelessness and DV to support the SBS program on Homelessness that coincided with the release of the AIHW report on homelessness.

- Interviews with the Green Left Weekly, "Well Being" magazine and the Sun Herald.

Press releases and letters to relevant ministers have also been written regarding current issues and concerns.

We have maintained strong links with the other NSW SAAP Peaks; Homelessness ACT.NSW and Youth Accommodation Assistance. The Peaks have worked together on SAAP V issues and on the Risk Assessment Tools for SAAP services.

The WRRC has continued to provide advice to government and other organisations on a number of issues impacting on women and children experiencing or escaping domestic violence and on refuge service provision, such as Family Law, Reshaping Public Housing, and input into the NSW State Plan.

The WRRC has also attended numerous meetings with the Department of Community Services on issues such as the Performance Monitoring Framework and the DOCS Costing Manual, as well as meetings with State and Federal Ministers and Minister advisors and MPs on a number of issues, including the Orana Project, SAAP funding, the NSW State Plan and Homelessness strategy.

13. OTHER ACTIVITIES

13.1. SAAP V

The WRRC was very involved in the campaign for adequate funding for SAAP V in 2004-2005. The WRRC has continued its involvement in the SAAP V Campaign with the other homelessness peaks Youth Accommodation Association and Homelessness NSW.ACT and the Council of Social Service NSW (NCOSS).

A comprehensive campaign kit was produced and was sent to WRM member refuges and loaded onto the WRRC website. There was some media coverage during the National Homelessness Conference. Unfortunately there has been no increase in core funding for SAAP services under the SAAP V agreement.

The WRRC has been working in collaboration with the other peaks and with the Department of Community Services to assist and monitor the implementation of

the Performance Monitoring Framework by DOCS, under the SAAP V bilateral agreement.

13.2. FAMILY LAW

The WRRRC wrote a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee Inquiry into the *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005*.

The submission focused on the risk that the "false allegation" provision, the changes to the definition of domestic violence and other provisions in the Bill will create a further barrier and disincentive for women disclosing domestic violence and child abuse.

13.3. CENTRELINK CRISIS PAYMENTS / STAYING HOME LEAVING VIOLENCE

Last year, the WRRRC drafted a policy proposing that women should be entitled to the Centrelink Crisis Payment where they have left a violent relationship but remain in the home and there is an order that the perpetrator of the violence be denied access to that home. The WRRRC continued progressing this policy at a Federal level, and we are pleased to report that women staying home leaving violence will be able to access Crisis Payment from January 2007.

In the last Federal budget, the Government announced that it will provide \$2.8 million over four years to extend the Crisis Payment to victims of domestic violence in severe financial hardship who choose to remain in their home. Eligible recipients will receive a payment of approximately \$230 claimable up to four times a year.

13.4. RESPONSE TO THE NSW DRAFT STATE PLAN: NSW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The WRRRC together with YAA, HomelessnessNSW.ACT and NCOSS proposed a NSW Homelessness Strategy as a joint submission to the State Plan.

A document was produced detailing the need for the NSW Government to develop a ten year homelessness strategy that is based on building a system (as opposed to projects) to respond to homelessness. The strategy should be developed in partnership with the NGO and driven by the Premier's Department. The document includes appendices about system policy failures that currently impact on homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, including women and children escaping DV. The WRRRC highlighted that the number of people homeless as a result of DV in NSW is not decreasing under current strategies and

suggested priority areas for preventing, reducing and addressing the needs of women and children becoming homeless as a result of domestic violence.

The WRRRC also attended the State Plan community leaders forum in August and raised issues around domestic violence and homelessness including child protection and housing.

13.5. RESHAPING PUBLIC HOUSING

The WRRRC prepared a written submission on the implications of the changes proposed by the Department of Housing to tenure arrangement and eligibility to public housing for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Concerns were detailed regarding changes to eligibility and changes to security of tenure that will make it harder for women escaping domestic violence to obtain and maintain public housing. This may jeopardise the recovery process for women and children, which require stable and secure accommodation.

13.6. FAMILY LAW COURT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In 2004-05, the WRRRC produced 2 presentations on the issues facing women and children escaping domestic violence going through the Family Law Court, one for Family Law Court staff and one for Family Law Lawyers.

Arising from these presentations and from continued participation as a member of the Family Law Court Reference Group, a need was identified to provide support to unrepresented women in the Family Law Court. Support when going through the Family Law process is crucial for many women who have experienced domestic violence and are unsupported and often unrepresented.

As a result, the WRM has undertaken to develop and coordinate a Family Law Court Assistance service for Women as a one year pilot in the Sydney Goulburn Street registry.

The aim of the project is to provide non-legal support for women attending the Goulburn St. Registry of the Family Court in relation to separation, with a particular focus on women and children who are separating from a partner who is violent or abusive.

As there is no funding for this project at the moment, the court support workers will be trained seconded refuge workers. Initially the project will operate one day per week. A very positive response was received from refuge workers to a call for an expression of interest to participate in the roster for the project.

Free comprehensive five day training has been developed and will be delivered in October and November 2006. It is hoped that the project will be operational by early 2007.

13.7. CHILDREN'S PROJECT AND POLICY OFFICER

The Children's Project and Policy Officer was employed for 6 months in 2006 with funding donated from the Body Shop's *Stop Violence in the Home* campaign and Vodafone to develop an educational kit for management and refuge staff on the effects of domestic violence on children.

The kit, tentatively titled *Foundations Towards Good Practices for Working with Children in Refuges* is based on a "strengths model" and focuses on the opportunities refuges have to improve outcomes for children.

The Children's Policy and Project Officer worked with the WRM Children's Policy and Project Reference Group and conducted research using national and international resources. She also developed a questionnaire to seek the input of support workers working with children. The information obtained from the questionnaires has provided valuable insights for the project.

A first draft of for the kit was completed and the Reference Group will work to progress the kit with input from the learnings of the WRRRC Executive Officer Cat Gander's recent Churchill Fellowship trip.

13.8. EXIT OUTCOMES PROJECT

The WRRRC has been working in partnership with the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) to develop a research project on the role of housing in determining outcomes for women and children exiting refuges.

A small pilot study is being developed that will interview women on 3 locations. Depending on the outcome of this pilot, there may be the possibility of applying for a research grant a much bigger and longer study.

13.9. RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

The WRRRC continued to participate in the Reference Group for the Risk Assessment Tool project. This project arose from the 2004 Ombudsman's Inquiry into Exclusion in SAAP services. In response, a project was funded by DoCS to develop and pilot a valid risk assessment tool that would enable NSW SAAP

funded services to make informed decisions about a person's appropriateness for acceptance as a SAAP client.

The project developed draft Risk Assessment Tool (RAT) and guidelines which were piloted in 20 SAAP services across NSW, of which 10 were DV services. The evaluation of the Risk Assessment Tool was very positive, with most services who participated in the pilot intending to continue using it or incorporating it in their intake procedures. The participants reported that they increased their skills in risk assessment and management.

The WRRC has been on the Reference Group for the project and has participated in meetings to progress the roll out of the RAT training, which took place in May and August 2006. Overall, there was positive feedback about the uptake of Women's Refuges using the assessment tool or strengthening their existing assessment processes.

This project has been nominated for the WorkCover NSW Safe Work Awards 2006.

The WRRC has met with the DoCS training unit to discuss a customized training strategy for the Orana. The training strategy has grown from the Risk Assessment Tool to a much more comprehensive training project for DoCS funded services in the Orana region, that will include the RAT but not be limited to it. The WRRC is currently working with the DOCS Training Unit to develop this training strategy, which will be delivered next year.

13.10. LONGITUDINAL SERVICE TRACKING PROJECT

The WRRC together with the other 2 peaks has continued to be involved in the Longitudinal Service Tracking project, with the aim to investigate the relationship between the funding of a range of SAAP services and the operation of these services over a five-year period, so as to document how funding issues will impact on service delivery.

The benchmark survey and explanatory information were sent out to all SAAP services in NSW belonging to any of the 3 peaks. All the data from the participating services was coded. There was a good participation rate, with 15 WRM refuges participating in this long term project.

Follow up surveys will need to be completed once a year for the duration of SAAP V to monitor changes that have occurred in the service, and over time these changes will be analysed for cause/effect relationships in the services.

13.11. WRM FUNDRAISING / AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Publicis Mojo advertising approached the WRRRC with interest in running a pro bono media campaign related to domestic violence.

The WRRRC worked with Mojo to develop a media campaign on behalf of the WRM to highlight unmet demand for women and children escaping domestic violence and to promote the work of the WRM.

The campaign consists of a series of photographs of houses with the windows and doors blocked to convey a powerful message. There will be a different statement at the bottom of each relating to women and children being turned away from refuges. This will be featured in several mainstream magazines and public spaces and is linked to the WRRRC website.

The first campaign image was published in mX newspaper on 21st July and other images will hopefully appear in a range of newspapers, magazines and public spaces soon.



13.12. WRRRC WEB SITE

The WRRRC has set up a donations function and a Member's photo gallery on the WRRRC website.

The donations function provides information on different ways to support the WRM through donations and bequests. It allows people to donate online.

A Member's Photo Gallery, accessible only to WRM members, has also been set up to display photos from WRM events, conferences and refuge projects.

13.13. CENSUS HOMELESS ENUMERATION PROJECT

The WRRC, along with YAA and Homelessness NSW.ACT, was involved in the Homeless Enumeration project for the Census, to improve the counting of homeless people both in and out of SAAP.

The project aimed at better counting the homeless on Census night, including both "Absolute homeless" (people sleeping on the street, cars etc) and "Relative homeless" (people in refuges, hostels and boarding houses or with family and friends). The Homeless Enumeration project also looked at strategies to make sure that clients in SAAP services are counted as homeless.

14. SPECIAL PROJECTS

14.1. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WRM BUSINESS PLAN

The WRRC continued working closely with the Working Party to progress the Implementation of the Business plan

This process started in 2004, when consultations with the movement were held and an external consultant was appointed to develop a Business Plan and Management Restructure Report and to propose models for the Restructure. At a WRM Working Party Special Issues Day in March 2005, the Business Plan and Self Sustaining Model were endorsed and supported for implementation. A full financial analysis was subsequently undertaken.

The endorsed Business Plan and Self Sustaining Model required set up funds and was submitted to DoCS. However, DoCS funding policy changed to a competitive tendering process and refuges under auspice by the WRM Working Party will go to tender.

The WRRC has been working closely with Working Party to develop an alternative staged Implementation Plan to establish the Business Plan and Self Sustaining Model. The WRRC has attended and coordinated meetings and planning days with Working Party and the consultant and prepared relevant documents for the Working Party.

14.2. BACK OFFICE COST SAVINGS AND BULK PURCHASING SERVICE

The WRRRC developed a funding proposal to set up a back office cost savings and bulk purchasing service that would be available to all WRM refuges. The back office savings/bulk purchasing service would be available for items such as: stationery, motor vehicle fleet, phones, security systems, furniture, play equipment, sanitary disposals, insurance and auditing services.

The service would become self sustainable after the set up funding terminates and would provide financial savings to refuges, as well as time savings in time spent on researching and purchasing items. Both financial and time savings could be redirected into service provision.

14.3. ORANA PROJECT

The WRRRC has continued working on the Orana project with the consultant and the Steering Committee. This project aims at strengthening the viability of the Orana Safe Houses and to identify a model that best meets the needs of Aboriginal women and children experiencing and escaping domestic and family violence and sexual abuse in each community.

Stage 1 started in August 2005 and is now completed. The consultant submitted the Final Stage One Orana Report, which has recently been released. The WRRRC has since continued to work closely with the Orana Steering Group to further the WRM recommendations from the Orana Report.

The project was launched in Bourke in December 2005 by Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Women as part of the celebration for NSW Stop DV Day in Bourke.

While much work remains to be done, positive outcomes in terms of networking, support, additional (though still inadequate) funding and training opportunities are being generated for the Safe Houses.

In September 2006, DoCS announced that the NSW Government will invest an additional \$600,000 in the Safe Houses and develop broader domestic violence strategies in the Orana Far West region. Meetings with the Federal Government to explore possible partnerships to adequately fund the Safe Houses in the region are planned.

15. MEETINGS, CONSULTATIONS & CONFERENCES ATTENDED

15.1. Reference and advisory groups and Networking meetings

- 16 Days Of Action To Eliminate VAW Working Party
- AGL Warm in Winter
- Apprehended Violence Legal Issues Coordinating Committee (AVLICC)
- Arc Domestic Violence And Mental Health Project Advisory Group
- DoCS Partners Reference Group
- DV Coalition Committee
- Family Law Court Reference Group
- Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) Implementation Reference Group
- NCOSS SAAP Policy Advisory Group
- NSW Housing and Human Services Accord
- Ombudsman Child and Family Services Roundtable
- Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH) SAAP subgroup
- Peak Women's Organisations meetings
- Risk Assessment Tool (RAT) Reference Group
- Stay Home Leaving Violence Reference Group
- Supported Accommodation Advisory Council (SAAC)

15.2. Forums and consultations

- Family Law Forum
- NCOSS Forum for the UN Rapporteur on Adequate Housing
- NCOSS housing and homelessness consultation
- NCOSS SAAP pre-budget consultation
- NSW Audit Office consultation on homelessness
- Office of Community Housing Consultations
- State Plan community leaders forum
- Tanya Plibersek NSW Women's Consultation

15.3. Conferences and events

- National Housing Conference, Perth 2005
- Launch of the 16 days of Activism a
- Unifem Breakfast for International Women's day
- 2005 Violence Against Women Prevention Awards
- NSW Treasury Briefings
- AFHO conference March 2006

- Refocusing Women's Experience of Violence Conference
September 2005

15.4. Presentations

- Presentations at WRM State and Child Support Conferences
- National Council of Jewish Women

15.5. Committees

- NSW representative on WESNET Board

16. ABBREVIATIONS

ACWA	Australian Children's Welfare Association
ACOSS	Australian Council of Community Services
AFHO	Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations
AG	Attorney-General's Department
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASU	Australian Services Union
AVO	Apprehended Violence Order
CTS	Community Tenancy Scheme
DoCS	NSW Department of Community Services
DV	Domestic Violence
FaCSIA	Commonwealth Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FONGA	Forum of Non-Government Agencies
NCOSS	NSW Council of Social Services
NDCA	SAAP National Data Collection Agency
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SAAC	Supported Accommodation Advisory Council
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SACS Award	Social & Community Services Award
VAW	Violence Against Women Specialist Unit
WP	NSW Women's Refuge Working Party
WRM	NSW Women's Refuge Movement
WRRC	NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre
YAA	Youth Accommodation Association (NSW) Inc.

**NSW Women's Refuge
Working Party**

Annual Report

2005/2006

Working Party Aims and Objectives

- To provide representation of refuges across NSW through the inclusion on Working Party of endorsed regional delegates, as well as specific representation of Koori, NESB, Lesbian and Child Support Groups.
- To represent issues and implement decisions as endorsed at NSW WRM state conferences.
- To provide a unified approach to the development of Women's Refuge Services.
- To act as the Management Committee for the NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre.
- To co-ordinate special projects as agreed at state conferences.
- To ensure that the WRM policy of equal representation is reflected at Working Party and any delegation, representation, or sub-group Working Party may be involved in.
- To promote community awareness about issues related to domestic violence and the services women's refuges provide.
- To research and supply material to state conferences as requested by NSW Women's Refuges.
- To inform delegates, through skill-sharing and education, of the aims and goals of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement.
- To inform and educate the community of these aims and goals.

2. Working Party Structure

The structure of the Working Party can be endorsed to reflect changes as they occur. At this stage the Working Party is represented by nine (9) Regional delegates and four (4) Support Group delegates. At the State Conference held in Bourke 2005, the NSW WRM endorsed the invitation for a delegate to represent the Orana region; delegates are endorsed for an eighteen (18) month term.

Delegates meet in Sydney on the third Friday of each month, the exception being January when no meeting is held. To compensate for this, a two day meeting is held in February. Special meetings can be called outside these meetings to discuss urgent business as it arises and as funding allows. The Working Party meetings are held at the NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre (WRRRC) Elizabeth Street, Redfern.

Working Party delegates are required to:-

- Report back to refuges in their region each month on Working Party matters.
- Attend their regional meetings and give a report to these meetings and give feedback to Working Party.
- Take on tasks as allocated at Working Party meetings.
- Attend any relevant meetings as directed by Working Party on its behalf and adhere to the policy of equal representation.

Working Party is a representative management body that makes decisions between state conferences, as long as those decisions do not override those made at conference. The Working Party is accountable to the NSW Women's Refuge Movement and therefore presents a report to each state conference. For urgent non-policy decisions between conferences, each delegate will be contacted and refer the matter for decision to each refuge in their region.

3. WORKING PARTY FUNDING

The NSW Women's Refuge Working Party is funded by the Department of Community Services (DoCS) under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Funding covers the sitting fee paid to delegates, enabling refuges to pay a replacement worker in place of the worker attending the monthly Working Party meeting. Travel, accommodation and administration costs are also covered.

A Bookkeeper is employed to be responsible for the financial management of Working Party.

Other funding is applied for and received from time to time to fund specific projects.

The Financial Officer of Working Party, in consultation with the Working Party, administers and reports on all financial business.

4. WORKING PARTY SPECIAL PROJECTS

MANAGED SERVICES

This year the Working Party continues to be been involved in the management of a number of services including Delvena, Dolores, Elsie, Forbes, Kempsey, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Wimlah, and Woy Woy. These services have continued in this model since last financial year with all services reporting satisfaction with this arrangement resulting in the continued service provision for these regions.

The management of these services continues to been a major undertaking by Working Party. Other women from the Women's Refuge Movement have also been seconded onto management committees from time to time. Without the dedicated commitment of the Working Party Delegates and the seconded women it would not have been possible for Working Party to continue to assist the number of refuges that were experiencing difficulties.

The successful management would also not be as successful without the commitment of a number of Women's Refuges within the Movement who release their workers on a regular basis to allow them to participate on the management committee. It would not be possible for the Working Party to take on the number of refuges that they do without this support and the services of the Working Party's Bookkeeper, who has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth operation and transition of the financial matters of the managed refuges and has provided invaluable expertise to management members.

When Working Party agrees to manage a service, it is always at the request of the funding body. The initial assessment about the services method of operation is audited and depending on the circumstances, changes may be made and policies and procedures implemented to reflect the service delivery. There are often staff to be employed and upgrading of facilities to be completed and all of this requires a methodical approach to minimise the interruption to service delivery.

During this financial year of 2005/2006 three further services have approached the WRMWP for assistance and advice with regard to managing their services but as this report is compiled no other services are under the management of Women's Refuge Movement Working Party Inc. Consultation with refuges and DoCS in these circumstances is done through normal channels of communication but upon occasion a representation from WP can travel for a initial meeting between DoCS and a service in any given region. Often a mutual outcome is achieved in this process and does not always result in the management of a service. This consultative role of Working Party will continue to develop as

services face the challenges presenting in today's SAAP sector. One service was returned to community management in this financial year with another pending.

An enormous amount of energy and time was spent responding to events relating to the Tamworth management which resulted in a media strategy being developed to support the Working Party direction. The new management was required to travel to the service regularly and maintain constant communication with Local MP, ASU, Employer's First and staff in the refuge.

The new year heralded the joint response between Working Party and the Women's Refuge Resource Centre (WRRRC) to the DoCS Funding Policy. This new competitive tendering policy calls for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for services currently managed. Working Party will tender for all services currently managed except for Tamworth as there is a prior commitment to return this service to the local community. Two further tenders have been lodged for services not currently managed. A consultant was engaged to format this tendering process which included planning, implementing and data gathering to support the tenders. This was an informative process for all involved and required local knowledge and input from delegates and the WRRRC. The decision was also made to allow delegates to overlap their term on Working Party to allow for their knowledge and experience to be utilised in the tender process.

More detailed and full reports from all managed services are contained later in this report.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES

The NSW WRM Working Party has had an extremely busy year again, concentrating on our commitment to continue to manage refuges. This left us with considerably less time than we would have liked to devote to other projects. Working party has encountered a number of difficulties over the past year. The impact of managing so many refuges has stretched many of us. The need to put energies in areas beyond our control and constantly having to respond reactively to issues rather than strategically planning leaves less time to concentrate on core business.

There has been a large turn-over in delegate representation in the past year as delegates complete their eighteen month term in Working Party. Some delegates have completed more than one term and the loss of this resource and skill takes time to replace. Eight (8) new delegates have taken on the role this past twelve months. Each of these workers bring enormous energy and strengths with them but the loss of Working Party experience takes time to be replaced. Working Party would like to acknowledge the commitment, passion and dedication shown

by all the women who finished their term as Working Party delegates in the last twelve months.

Existing delegates and management members and their services are to be congratulated on their commitment in ensuring the level of quality services offered to women and children escaping domestic violence throughout New South Wales. Whilst the commitment shown is to be applauded this area requires ongoing monitoring to ensure that we are able to match our commitment with availability of personnel and resources.

5.1. Restructure:

The NSW WRM restructure sub-group met regularly to investigate the range of issues facing us as a Movement in regard to current and ongoing managed refuges. Following the announcement of DoCS Funding Policy the decision was reached to engage a consultant Judy Harrison, to revisit the restructure and to affirm the principles of the proposed model.

A financial analysis was done in consultation with the Bookkeeper and draft policies were developed over a period. This also involved a risk assessment of the model and proposed time frames for implementation. Templates were also developed for monthly reporting from managed services, management obligations to Working Party, storage and exchange of confidential information and grievance and complaints policy along with revising the code of conduct. Working Party finalised a submission prepared by the WRC to implement the "back office" component of the restructure.

5.2. Orana:

Continuing from last year the Steering Committee continued to work with Judy Harrison, the engaged consultant. State Conference was hosted by Working Party in conjunction with Walan Jineras (Aboriginal Support group) and WRC in Bourke with the launch of the Orana Project by Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Women. A delegate from the Orana region was endorsed at this Conference to attend at Working Party as a representative of this region.

Judy's report was completed in November and a meeting between DoCS and the Steering Group was held to seek their response to the reports recommendations that sought funding for the safe house model. Part of this brief entailed a detailed work plan to allocate tasks to further recommendations from WRM that came out of Conference.

5.3. Mandatory Reporting By Refuges:

From the Bourke Conference was a recommendation to clarify the directive that all children be reported upon entering a Refuge. This directive was given to a Refuge in the movement that sought support from the WRM for direction. The

WRRC collated data from across the state to look at DoCS response to these reports.

This in turn led to a meeting with Working Party, DoCS and the DV Line to clarify refuges position in relation to this. It also led into discussion on the revised version of Child Protection Guidelines and Family Law and the lack of DoCS involvement in this area. This direct consultation with the funding body is seen as a major component of Working Party Delegates role as this line of direct communication is then fed back to refuges in each region.

5.4. ASU:

This year saw us in conversation with the ASU more frequently than previous years. This is a direct response to our role in managing refuges particularly where conflict has driven the need for our intervention. This consultation was extremely challenging with the fallout from the Tamworth situation. Issues arising from this resulted in some very direct meetings that in turn lead to an agreement to develop a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate a respectful working relationship with clear communication and confidentiality components. There was also consultation and clarification on wording in the Managed Services Manual.

5.5. Articles of Association:

This continues to be a work in progress. Proposed changes to the Articles of Association were drafted over the twelve months. The consultant Judy Harrison, was directed by Working Party as part of her earlier brief, then given the task of refining, defining and streamlining the document to give clarity on membership, office bearers, continuity of wording and clearer definition. All proposed draft documents will be taken to the members of the WRM for endorsement.

5.6. Child Support:

The Child Support Working Group held meetings throughout the year to look at ways to better assist children escaping domestic violence. Once the new Child Support Policy and Project Officer was employed for her six month position and with direction from the Child Support delegate (newly elected to Working Party) a Steering Group was formed.

This Steering Group of Child Support workers from refuges across the state in consultation with the Policy Officer began work to develop a Child Support educational kit for use by Child Support workers in the refuge. This continues at time of this report and the first draft will be tabled at the next Child Support Conference in October.

5.7 Lesbian Support:

The newly elected Lesbian Delegate to Working Party along with members of The NSW WRM Lesbian Support Group attended Fair Day which was held in February, they distributed DV pamphlets and information on the day.

The group is continuing to plan the putting together of a training package for workers in refuges on lesbian issues. The group will also look at the possibility of an accreditation process i.e. if a service is a lesbian friendly refuge, some members of the lesbian support group will go and ensure that they have the appropriate resources, information and posters etc. A survey will be designed accordingly. If the service passes the accreditation, it would be eligible to use the specific logo on their letterhead. Bi-yearly two day meetings are also planned to welcome new members with one day open to non-lesbian women to share their insights and experiences of encouraging all refuges to be best able to support lesbian women experiencing Domestic Violence.

5.8. NESB Support:

The newly elected NESB delegate to Working Party has developed and distributed a questionnaire to all NSWWRM refuges to assess each service's ability to support clients from NESB backgrounds. Many of these clients have no income and place a strain on already strained services due to the complexity of their situation and lengthy stay with a service. The survey also looks at ways to develop/support clients moving between refuges.

The NESB delegate with input from other NESB workers is developing a resource for all refuges to use with their NESB clients. It will contain such information as a client's Centrelink rights, Immigration/Visa access, Interpreters contacts and culturally specific support groups in the community.

5.9. Koori Support:

This Working Party delegate represents Aboriginal workers in refuges across the state. They also meet bi-yearly under the banner of Walan Jineras (Strong Women). This group has made a proposal to Working Party for an Aboriginal Policy Officer to be employed at the WRRRC. The Working Party supports this in principal and a funding submission will be proposed at the next face –to –face Walan Jineras meeting to fund this role. Much work has been done on their Articles of Association to become an incorporated body in 2007.

5.10. Managed Services Manual

At the time of continued conversation with the ASU it was identified by Working Party that the Auspice Manual needed to be renamed to reflect the knowledge that services were in fact "managed". The Managed Services Manual as it is now known also required slight wording change but more importantly it needed updating to include knowledge gained from years of supporting services.

The challenges that arise through the managing of services need clear roles and responsibilities. Numerous issues were discussed at length to better develop the policies, procedures and practices in managing a service that has experienced conflict and is to be re-established. With the direction of DoCS in their Funding Policy and the EOI process it is paramount that this document be revised and reviewed to best reflect our ability and preparedness to manage services.

This manual is a major component of the tender process and must represent the Working Party and its abilities to manage new or existing services requiring support. Some of the issues addressed were grievance procedures, employment procedures, working with children check and conflict of interests. Anne Sillett continues to work on this Manual updating it as required through consultation with Working Party and the NSW WRM. The Auspice Manual continues to be presented to State Conferences.

5.11. Ongoing Working Party Roles:

- The Working Party has up to five delegates that meet as a sub-group with WRRRC each month prior to the Working Party meeting to manage and oversee their work. Recommendations are then taken to the full meeting of the Working Party.
- The planning for and involvement in bi-yearly Child Support and WRM Conferences
- Yearly audit on Working Party Delegates skills.
- Policy and Procedural documentation – recording historical and new policy development.
- Working Party was granted approval to fundraise under the NSW Dept of Gaming and Racing.
- Continue to work collaboratively with Domestic Violence Line to clearly outline intake guidelines.
- Delegates have been actively encouraging their regions and support groups, with constant practical support from the WRRRC team to take part in:

*The Unmet Demand Fax Campaign

*Police Response to Domestic Violence with the Ombudsman's Office

*Lobbying Tanya Plibersek regarding Labor's Policy Platform

*Lifeline and their referral process to refuges.

*SACS award and the funding campaign.

*Attend meetings as determined by Working Party to lobby, listen or inform such as:

- Communication Division Partners Reference Group
- Family Law Forum and Family law Court Support
- Stakeholders Meeting
- NCOSS
- Longitudinal Tracking Survey