

2. Organisational overview

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Acknowledgments

The Organisational Overview section has been written using a number of manuals as source material. We gratefully acknowledge this input. The resources used include:

Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge Inc 2002, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Amberlys Single Women's Refuge 1999, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Kulkuna Cottage Women's Refuge Ltd, *various forms*

National Case Management Working Group 1997, *Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services, Section 4*

Upper Hunter Community Services Policy Group 1999, *Policy and Procedure Register*, Muswellbrook Shire Council

Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Service 2001, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

2.1 Purpose/mission statement

Shoalhaven Women's Refuge (herein called Rosa Refuge) is a non-profit community organisation that provides a safe, supportive environment for women (*with dependent children*) who are experiencing domestic violence.

Rosa Refuge does this by providing: (*refuges to select relevant services from below or add others in*)

- supported accommodation for a period of up to six weeks
- a child support program
- information and support
- appropriate referrals to other services
- access to community resources
- outreach
- brokerage
- community development
- group work
- structural advocacy.

Rosa Refuge's eligibility criteria is non-discriminatory. All women are eligible to use the service regardless of cultural background, fluency in English, religious or cultural beliefs, whether they have a disability, whether they have an income, sexual preference, sexuality, geographic location, employment status, (undecided) residency status or HIV status. Blanket exclusions on the basis of particular characteristics will not be made.

Option

Rosa Refuge also provides short-term accommodation for women who have become homeless and who have limited alternative accommodation options. Short-term crisis accommodation for homeless women with limited alternatives will be provided for a period of up to (*insert time period*).

2.2 Philosophy and principles

Rosa Refuge operates under the over-arching principles of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement and agrees to abide by the NSW Women's Refuge Movement's access and equity resolutions. (Refer to the Background section of this manual for details.)

2.3 Aims of (*Insert name*) Refuge

Rosa Refuge aims to:

- Provide temporary, supported accommodation for women and children in times of crisis caused by domestic violence.
- Create a safe, non-institutionalised environment for women and children that is conducive to their emotional and physical well-being.
- Inform and empower women and children to make active decisions about their lives and encourage them to seek alternatives and options using a participative case management approach.
- Create an environment where women, children and families can share skills, ideas and information and, with support from refuge workers, help each other to work through their crisis.
- Make its services available to all women who can self-manage and care for their children regardless of their age, sexuality, cultural or linguistic diversity or whether they have a disability or mental illness.
- Work in partnership with other appropriate support services to ensure that a woman experiencing domestic violence who is not able to self-manage can get the support she needs to escape domestic violence.
- Cater for the needs of all families through its own resources and those of other relevant agencies.
- Advocate on behalf of women and children experiencing domestic violence, ensuring they have access to resources and can live their lives safe and free from fear.
- Liaise with and coordinate the services of health, DoCS, legal, housing and community agencies.
- Raise awareness in government, other services and the community about domestic violence and the impact it has on women and children.
- Engage in structural advocacy to improve service and legal responses to

women and children experiencing domestic violence.

2.4 Statement of access and equity

This policy and procedure is an overview. Specific strategies mentioned have been also been included in general policy and procedures where appropriate.

Primary responsibility

All staff and management

Policy

- In accordance with the NSW Women's Refuge Movement overarching principle on access and equity, Rosa Refuge values diversity. Rosa Refuge is committed to providing equitable services to all women, including Aboriginal & 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 with a disability and their children.
- To promote access and ensure equity, Rosa Refuge will abide by the access and equity resolutions endorsed by the NSW Women's Refuge Movement in 1999. (Refer to the Background section of this manual for a list of resolutions.)
- Rosa Refuge adopts the NSW Women's Refuge Movement's definition of access and equity. Namely, that access refers to the process of being accepted into the refuge (including making sure women know about the refuge) and equity refers to the treatment and opportunities clients receive once the refuge has accepted them.

Procedure

- Ensure refuge services are available to all women and children, regardless of the cultural background, age, geographic location, sexual preference, religion,

HIV status, or disability, removing any barriers to entry as they are identified.

- Promote refuge services widely and include strategies that promote the service specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, non-English speaking background communities, lesbians and women with a disability.
- Whenever community consultation takes place, ensure that diverse communities are consulted.
- Use community language (including Auslan) interpreters whenever necessary.
- Make information for residents available in a range of languages and a range of formats (for example in print and on tape).
- Promote diversity among staff employed by the refuge, matching the staff mix with the community wherever possible.
- Ensure that all staff are trained in working cross-culturally and working with women with a disability or mental illness and are aware of issues for lesbians experiencing domestic violence.
- Ensure that all staff know how to book and use interpreters.
- Promote diversity on the management committee.
- When planning and budgeting, allocate sufficient resources to complete access and equity strategies.
- Provide an accessible physical environment for women with disabilities (*A&E Resolution 71*).
- Undertake a Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan and lodge it with Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (*A&E Resolutions 69 and 70*).

2.5 Operational overview

Legal structure of the Refuge

Refuges to insert short overview of legal structure, ie if Incorporated Association, Limited Liability Company or other.

For example,

Rosa Refuge is an Incorporated Association registered with the NSW Department of Fair Trading.

The business of the Refuge is managed by a committee that is elected from members of the Association, known as the Management Committee.

(Insert name) Refuge has a constitution that outlines the rules the Association abides by. This includes detail about who can become a member of the Association, how the Management Committee is elected, office bearers of the Management Committee, Annual General Meeting (AGM) requirements, legal requirements etc. (see appendix for a copy of the constitution). *(Refuges are to insert a copy of their constitution in the appendix of the policy and procedure manual.)*

In addition to the reporting requirements of the funding body, Rosa Refuge must provide the Department of Fair Trading (DFT) with an Annual Statement that includes a copy of financial reports. This must be submitted one month after the AGM. The Management Committee must also nominate a Public Officer and let the DFT know who this person is. It must also keep a Register of Members, though this does not have to be submitted to the DFT.

Under the *Associations Act 1984*, Rosa Refuge as an Incorporated Association is required to maintain a public liability insurance policy for at least \$2 million.

Refuge hours

Rosa Refuge operates on a 24 hour a day basis. (*A&E Resolution 6*)

It is staffed (*insert hours, for example 24 hours a day or between 8am and 6pm or 9am and 5pm etc*). A worker is then on call via (*insert method, for example a mobile phone*).
Refuge phones are diverted to the mobile whenever staff are not at the refuge.

Staff structure

Refuges to insert a summary overview of staffing. Also, include an organisational chart.

For example,

- As at (*insert date*), Rosa Refuge employs eight (8) staff members. Of these: 8 staff there are no workers employed full-time; 8 staff are employed part-time; and no staff are employed casually. We have one (1) relief worker.

Rosa Refuge operates with a collective structure. This means that all staff provide general support, child support, outreach and administration and are responsible for managing the service.

Management structure

Refuges to insert small paragraph about the management structure. This is just a brief summary as it will be dealt with in more detail in another part of the manual.

For example,

Rosa Refuge is managed by a management committee where members are drawn from ordinary members of the Association. At capacity, the committee has (*insert number*) members and meets monthly. Management committee is responsible for the overall running of the refuge and decisions are made by majority vote.

Or

Rosa Refuge operates with a collective structure and is managed by a broader collective of *(insert number of members)*. Staff meet with the broader collective monthly. All staff and members of the broader collective have equal right of participation in all decisions and decisions are made by consensus.

Or

Some other management arrangement.

2.6 Overview of services offered by Rosa Refuge

Refuges to insert description of the services they provide. The information below provides an example.

Short-term supported accommodation

For example,

Rosa Refuge provides refuge accommodation for up to *(insert number)* women with children escaping domestic violence for a period of up to *(insert time period such as four weeks or three months etc)*.

Rosa Refuge has a total capacity of 22 beds and can accommodate up to 5 families at any one time. However, if any families have more than *(insert number)* children over *(insert age)*, then less families can be accommodated.

In addition, there are *(insert number)* independent units each of which can accommodate a family of one adult and up to five children over two years of age.

Rosa Refuge *is/is not* equipped to accommodate people in wheelchairs.

Child support

For example, *(informed by Jenny's Place)*

Rosa Refuge recognises children and young people as clients in their own right. Rosa Refuge provides a child support program that addresses the effects that domestic violence has on children and young people.

Child support sessions are held for preschool and school aged children.

After an initial settling-in period, children are assessed and a case plan is

established. Activities are structured to address the case plan, either in a group setting or on a one-to-one basis depending on the individual child's needs.

Playgroups are organised for mothers with babies and toddlers, providing fun activities in a safe and supportive setting.

School vacation programs are provided in the school holidays, which may include child support sessions, outings and activities.

The Child Support worker works closely with mothers in an empowering and supportive way, bringing to their attention needs and issues that become apparent during their time at the refuge.

A follow-up program is provided to support and assist children when they leave the refuge and move to a new home.

Medium-term accommodation

For example

Rosa Refuge provides a medium-term housing/exit housing program for up to *(insert number)* families. Families may stay in this housing program for up to *(insert time period)*.

Eligibility for medium-term housing is based on *(insert eligibility criteria for medium-term housing)*.

Outreach

For example,

Rosa Refuge offers an outreach service to women and children who have experienced domestic violence and require support and information but not necessarily refuge accommodation. This service is provided in partnership with *(insert services, for example Women's Health or Family Support Service)*.

(*Insert name*) Refuge runs support groups for women in the community and ex-residents. There is no charge for this and childcare is provided by arrangement.

Brokerage

For example,

(*Insert name*) Refuge provides a brokerage service to women and children, helping them to access services or accommodation they would not otherwise be able to access.

Brokerage is offered to non-resident women and children free of charge.

Referral

For example

Workers at (*Insert name*) Refuge have a current working knowledge of health, legal, DoCS, housing and community services that are available to clients.

As part of the case management assessment process, workers will identify which of the clients needs (including those of the woman and her children) can be met by the refuge and when a referral to another service may be more appropriate.

Workers can pass on contact details to clients who can then make the contact themselves. Or, if the client prefers, the worker can make the initial contact on the client's behalf.

Follow-up

(*Insert name*) Refuge provides follow-up for ex-residents by (*refuges to select appropriate follow-up methods, eg phone, ex-residents groups, home visits, etc*).

Follow-up is provided for a period of (*insert time frame, for example one month, six months, indefinitely etc*).

All follow-up will be conducted within the guidelines of the Worker Safety policy. This means there will be no home visits if the woman has returned to the perpetrator.

2.7 Linking with local communities

Primary responsibility

All staff

Policy

- The Refuge will provide information about domestic violence to all women in the community, including Aboriginal women, migrant women, women with a disability, women living in rural and remote areas, lesbians and women with a mental illness.
- (Insert name) Refuge will provide the same service to all women, regardless of cultural background, fluency in English, religious or cultural beliefs, whether they have a disability, whether they have an income, sexual preference, sexuality, geographic location, employment status, (undecided) residency status or HIV status.
- Workers at (insert name) Refuge will build relationships and local networks with Aboriginal and ethnic communities, people with a disability, alcohol and other drug services, health and mental health agencies.
- Workers at (insert name) Refuge will take part in local community development activities and events as relevant.
- The Refuge will keep informed about issues of importance to Aboriginal and ethnic communities, lesbians, children, people with a disability and people with a mental illness.
- (Insert name) Refuge will subscribe to key Aboriginal, ethnic and disability publications.

Procedure

- Distribute information about the refuge to community networks and

community organisations (include general centres as well as Aboriginal, migrant, disability, mental health and drug and alcohol specific services), schools, libraries, churches, respite centres, shopping centres etc.

- Attend Aboriginal, migrant and disability interagency meetings and any other community meetings identified as relevant by the manager/collective.
- Participate in local community events and festivals identified as relevant by the manager/collective or community, promoting the refuge's services to diverse communities and building relationships with the local community.
- Identify key Aboriginal, ethnic and disability publications and arrange subscriptions.

2.8 Eligibility criteria

When services will be offered

- The services of *(Insert name)* Refuge are available to all women over the age of *(insert age)*, *(refuges select - with dependent children/without dependent children)*, who are in crisis as a result of domestic violence. This includes violence perpetrated in the home by a husband or partner (of the opposite or same sex) or by another family member.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge's eligibility criteria is non-discriminatory. All women are eligible to use the service regardless of cultural background, fluency in English, religious or cultural beliefs, whether they have a disability, whether they have an income, sexual preference, sexuality, geographic location, employment status, (undecided) residency status or HIV status. *(A&E Resolutions 11 and 12)*
- Supported accommodation is available to all women *(refuges select - with dependent children/without dependent children)* who are escaping domestic violence and who can self-manage and manage to care for their own children, as vacancies permit. This includes women with a mental illness, women with a disability and women with alcohol or other drug related issues provided they are stabilised to the point of self-management.
- Where a woman is not able to self-manage or look after her children, *(Insert name)* Refuge will coordinate (where possible) with other services that can provide appropriate accommodation and provide domestic violence outreach support to the woman if appropriate.
- Where there is no vacancy at the refuge, *(Insert name)* Refuge will help women to find alternative refuge accommodation or provide outreach support if appropriate.

Refuges to select or amend the following:

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will accept women from any location, including women that live in the local area, provided the safety of the woman or other residents is not compromised by the proximity of the perpetrator (*A&E Resolution 14*).
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will accept all children, male and female, up to the age of 14 years. Where a woman is accompanied by one or more male adolescent children over the age of 14 years, *(Insert name)* Refuge will accept the children unless the behaviour of the children creates a threat to the safety of other clients or staff.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will accept women (*refuges select* - with dependent children/without dependent children) who are escaping domestic violence and do not have an income (for example, if their residency status in Australia is still unresolved). However, *(Insert name)* Refuge reserves the right to decide on a case-by-case basis depending on the number of women in this situation already being accommodated and the resources available at the time of application.

Options for refuges targeted to specific groups of women

- Priority will be given to (insert priority, for example Aboriginal women and children experiencing domestic violence or Muslim women and children experiencing domestic violence). This priority will be exercised by (insert way this priority works, for example the Refuge will always keep a certain number of beds available for women and children from the identified group. Other women and children will be accepted if vacancies exist outside this criteria).

Options - refuges to include if appropriate

- *(Insert name)* Refuge will offer short-term accommodation to a woman who is homeless and at risk of violence if there is a vacancy. However, priority will be given to women and children experiencing domestic violence (*or insert option here, for example one bed will be made available for homeless women if a*

vacancy permits).

Specific exclusions - when services will not be offered

(Insert name) Refuge will assess each woman/family individually. *(Insert name)*

Refuge may exclude a woman or family from the refuge if:

- A member of the family has a highly contagious disease, for example measles, chicken pox or mumps. (Please note, this does not refer to HIV/AIDS or any Hepatitis.)
- There is known conflict between the family and another current resident at the refuge.
- There is a history of violence towards workers or clients of the service and this is likely to occur again or create undue stress.
- The woman identifies (or the assessing worker identifies) that she or a member of her family would not be able to abide by the general guidelines of the service. For example the woman says she would find it impossible not to use drugs or alcohol while she was at the service or not to be violent towards other clients of the service.

Where a woman/family is not eligible for service, *(Insert name)* Refuge will help the woman to find alternative accommodation or offer outreach support as appropriate.

Young women under the age of 18 years

The refuge may be asked from time to time to accommodate or assist young women alone under 18 years (the refuge accommodates and assists young women of any age if they have children). Young women alone as a general rule does not fit the criteria, however, under some circumstances and due to their complex needs, vulnerability and lack of alternatives they may be supported and accommodated. Sometimes the young person may contact the service and request assistance and not be referred by another agency.

In certain circumstances the refuge may be requested to assist young adolescent girls less than 16 years of age. This group of young girls has particular needs and may be accepted on a referral from DoCS or other agencies that are willing to participate with the refuge in the case management of the young person.

Possible reasons for this required assistance may be if the young woman has no family or friends who may assist her and:

- the local support service has no beds available; or
- accommodation within a mixed service is not appropriate due to cultural reasons; or
- a sibling or partner who may be a perpetrator of violence or assault is residing at the nearest youth refuge; or
- the young woman is in late pregnancy.

Other reasons may occur and each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

When the refuge is requested to assist a young woman or it is a self-referral the staff member on duty will establish the following:

- the reason for the referral
- alternate options and support networks that may be in place, or that can be implemented/accessed as part of case management
- any special needs of the young woman.

The worker on duty when the referral is made will undertake an assessment against the above criteria.

2.9 Duty of care

Primary responsibility:

All staff and management

Policy

- *(Insert name)* Refuge acknowledges that the law imposes a duty of care on the refuge, the staff and management. This duty means everyone must take reasonable care to avoid injury to another person or damage to property as a result of their actions or inaction's, ie this is a duty not to be careless or negligent.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge understands duty of care to be as follows:
A duty of care is owed by one person 'A' to another person 'B'.
Harm has occurred to B or B's property.
A breach of duty of care may have occurred if the harm was a result of an act or failure to act of A, ie the harm was 'reasonably foreseeable' and A failed to take 'reasonable' steps to prevent it.
- *(Insert name)* Refuge will ensure it fulfills its duty of care to clients, volunteers and staff in all aspects of the services operation. Training on Duty of Care will be provided to staff and management as required.

Procedure

- Take all steps to avoid negligence, ie harm that is reasonably foreseeable.
- Gather all relevant information before making any decision, as it is not negligent to make an informed error of judgement. It would be negligent however, to make decisions in ignorance of or to disregard readily identified and relevant information.
- While staff have a duty of care to encourage clients to accept a service where

appropriate, it is the client's choice whether to accept or decline the service. If a client declines a service, note this on their file.

- Where a client will cause self-harm or harm to others by declining service, take action accordingly. The first priority is to ensure the safety of others.

2.10 Summary of funding

(Insert name) Refuge is funded by the State and Federal Government under the Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) guidelines. SAAP funding in NSW is managed by the Department of Community Services.

Each year, *(Insert name)* Refuge is required to submit an annual planning document, including an audit, to the Department of Community Services. This submission is necessary to receive continued funding.

Towards the end of the financial year, *(Insert name)* Refuge receives an Agreement of Funding that outlines the conditions and requirements the service is to abide by for the following year. The Chairperson and the Secretary are required to sign this Agreement on behalf of the Management Committee.

Each year, *(Insert name)* Refuge must submit a detailed annual budget to the Department of Community Services. If the budget is more than 10% over the proposed budget, the Minister for Community Services must approve it.

2.11 Legal requirements

The following information applies to Refuges that are Incorporated Associations. Refuges with a different organisational structure will need to amend information as required.

As an Incorporated Association and an employer, (*Insert name*) Refuge operates within the following legal and legislative frameworks.

Governing body	Legislation/ Guidelines	Workplace requirements	Reporting requirements
Department of Fair Trading (DFT)	<i>Associations Act 1984</i>	Refuge is required to: document membership, meetings and decisions provide financial statements hold public liability insurance have a Public Officer & Annual General Meeting notify DFT of changes to constitution, late AGM or change to Public Officer provide public access to certain documents, eg the Register of Members.	Annual statements to DFT including audited financial accounts and a certificate of public liability insurance.
Department of Community Services (DoCS)	<i>ENACT Prohibited Employment Act 1998 Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998</i>	Refuge is required to: make requests for assistance from DoCS if required report any child at risk of harm to DoCS (mandatory) report any unaccompanied minor under the age of 16 to DoCS conduct the <i>Working with Children Check</i> on all current employees conduct the <i>Working with Children Check</i> on all potential employees.	To DoCS as required.
WorkCover NSW	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 & OH&S Regulation 2001 Workers Compensation</i>	Refuge is required to: hold Workers Compensation insurance keep a copy of the Act on display at the Refuge develop a mechanism for consulting with staff about OH&S issues conduct a risk assessment of all tasks carried out in the Refuge develop policies and procedures to minimise risks ensure safe and healthy working environments keep an accident/injury/incident register investigate serious incidents maintain a first aid kit provide adequate training in OH&S to staff and management.	If, due to accident or injury, a worker is not able to carry out their normal duties for a period of at least seven days (including both working and non-working days), a WorkCover Accident form must be completed and forwarded to your nearest WorkCover office. Forms are

			available from the WorkCover office.
Australian Services Union (ASU)	Social and Community Services (SACS) Award	Staff of (Insert name) Refuge are employed under the SACS award. As such, the Refuge is required to: keep a copy of the Award at the Refuge use the hours, pay and conditions set out in the Award as minimum conditions of employment provide information to staff about Union membership.	
Department of Industrial Relations	<i>NSW Industrial Relations Act 1996</i>	Refuge is required to: keep a copy of the Act at the Refuge follow over-arching information and guidelines on employment, awards and enterprise agreements outlined in the Act keep records of staff, leave, wages and superannuation.	
Community Services Commission	<i>Complaints Appeals & Monitoring Act (CAMA) 1993</i>	(Insert name) Refuge must provide: a clear process for dealing with complaints documented investigation of serious matters a process of considering complaints with a view to improvement appropriate training and induction clients rights to: privacy and confidentiality adequate, accurate and accessible information about the Refuge human dignity and respect information about the complaints process the right to complain without penalty have their complaints treated seriously.	
Funding body Department of Community Services	Funding Agreement SAAP Standards	(Insert name) Refuge must: demonstrate provision of agreed services account for funds provide agreed reports/information provide appropriate training and induction.	
Privacy Committee	Data Protection Principles	(Insert name) Refuge must: collect and store information about clients provide clients with the right to access this information and to make choices about data collection and have access to their own files be publicly accountable for the records that are kept use client codes provide appropriate training and induction.	Details of the type of records kept.
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Anti-Discrimination Board	<i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW), Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Comm.), Sex Discrimination</i>	(Insert name) Refuge must: ensure there is no discrimination in any aspect of operations promote access and equity of diverse groups provide appropriate training and induction.	

	<i>Act 1986 (Comm.), Racial Discrimination Act 1976 (Comm.) Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1987 (Comm.)</i>		
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Legally required documents

Refuges to insert a list of all documents they are legally required to keep. For example:

As an Association, *(Insert name)* Refuge is required to keep the following documents:

- A Register of Membership of the Association (including names and addresses)
- Minutes of all committee and general meetings including attendance, apologies, decisions, change of office bearers
- All financial transactions
- Certificate of Insurance (public liability)

Other legally required documents include:

- Staff records
- Injury/Accident Register
- Investigations of health and safety incidents
- Risk assessment of OH&S at the Refuge
- Rehabilitation Plan for an injured worker (if required)
- Asset Register
- Copy of the SACS Award
- Summary copy of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001*
- Summary of the *Industrial Relations Act 1996*

- Proof of Workers' Compensation insurance policy
- Details of funding and funding agreements
- Constitution.