

**NSW Women's Refuge Movement Policy
Position Statement**

Staying Home Leaving Violence Programs



Purpose: The following position statement articulates the NSW Women's Refuge Movement's position on Staying Home Leaving Violence Programs (SHLV) within NSW.

About SHLV Models

Staying Home Leaving Violence programs seek to support women and children to remain in their homes; once the perpetrator of domestic and family violence has been removed. Some of the key components of the programs include:

- The removal of the perpetrator of violence through the use of exclusion orders in Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders;
- Specialist support workers to assess the safety and support needs of women and children;
- Brokerage funds to stabilize housing and to improve security in the home

The need of an integrated service system

Evaluations of both the Bega and Eastern Sydney SHLV pilots highlighted some of the key elements of service integration that were needed to make the broader use of such programs successful. These included; effective relationships between Police and SHLV providers (that do not depend on the goodwill of individual personalities); commitment from senior Police Officers; appropriate training of court staff and Police; development of MOU's and protocols with all relevant agencies; thorough risk assessment strategies; wide promotion of the SHLV option for women within project areas (via broad public awareness campaigns and/or promotion amongst mainstream agencies). Whilst both programs sought to address barriers to achieving these key elements, the evaluations ultimately recommended the development of an integrated service system to ensure the effective roll out of SHLV programs across NSW¹.

¹ Bega Women's Refuge, 2007, Executive Summary of the Evaluation of the Bega Staying Home Leaving Violence Pilot. p. 11 RPR Consulting, 2007, Evaluation of the Staying Home Leaving Violence Eastern Sydney Pilot: Final report, NSW Department of Housing, p.68.

Additionally NSW women's refuges have been providing SHLV options for women who request to stay in or return to their own home when leaving a violent relationship. However most of services are not marketing this service option. This is predominately due to the lack of confidence that refuges have in other parts of service system, that are vital to provide responsive support to women who wish to remain in their home.

Expansion of SHLV Models

Numerous policy frameworks at both the Commonwealth and NSW levels have supported the expansion of these types of models. Both the Homelessness White Paper: *The Road Home* and the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* have identified these models as a key component of addressing homelessness driven by domestic and family violence^{2,3}.

Over 2009 – 2011 a further 16 SHLV programs will implemented across NSW in addition to the first two SHLV program sites; Bega and South East Sydney⁴.

WRM Position on SHLV options

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement supports the rights of women and children not to become homeless as a result of domestic violence and their right to choose to remain in their home and have the perpetrator of violence removed. We support the ongoing development of SHLV programs in NSW as one component of a range of responses that should be available to women and children who are at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence.

Further to this the NSW WRM specifically supports the use of SHLV models when;

- Thorough risk assessment is undertaken and women are informed of the options available.
- It is the woman's choice to remain in the home.
- The SHLV programs are supported by an integrated justice and human service system.
- They are implemented as part of a suite of options available to women and children, without being the only option.

² Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, p. 33

³ NSW Government, *A Way Home: Reducing Homelessness in NSW: NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009 -2014*, p. 15

⁴ NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008, *Discussion Paper on the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework*, p.23