

Women's Services Network

WESNET Annual Report
2004-05



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Pauline Woodbridge, North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (Townsville)

Thanks to the continued support by member organisations, WESNET has continued its role as the peak body for domestic and family violence services across Australia. The secretariat function has continued and the WESNET office is efficiently managed by Sira, who does an enormous job on very few hours every week. I personally thank her for her support and commitment to the WESNET Committee, the membership and the executive.

The fantastic 10th birthday celebration held last November and the 10th Anniversary Memento are achievements, of which WESNET can rightly be proud. Both these examples and the levels of support from the field and others demonstrate the importance of the WESNET peak body function.

My first year as Chair has been challenging. Along with the many achievements listed below, there have been other opportunities and activities that have been missed or not responded to. However, the State and Territory representatives and the proxies are all active in responding to issues, disseminating information and collaborating widely to get the best outcomes for the women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

One highlight is that throughout 2005, work on the project "Making Children Count: Children, Violence, Homelessness and the Law", has resulted in what will be a fantastic resource for the domestic and family violence sector. This was conceptualised by Julie Oberin, content contributed by WESNET representatives, collated and developed by Purple Kangaroo and Julie, and designed and formatted by Delene White. Many organisational tasks were done by Sira and there was much editing, commenting and deciding done by all the representatives.

Over the period, WESNET participated in the following activities:

- The research project, "Examining Accommodation & Outreach Options for Women" was completed. WESNET continues to wait for publication of the project report by the Commonwealth Office for Women.
- For most of this year WESNET has been responding to concerns regarding Lifeline's performance as the National Helpline in the Federal Government's advertising campaign on domestic violence and sexual assault. This has included participating in consultations as part of the evaluation process of the project.
- The Body Shop approached WESNET for support for their 2005 domestic violence campaign. WESNET were consulted during the development of the campaign materials. Julie Oberin and myself attended the campaign launch in Melbourne, August 2005. This campaign involves the lobbying for properly funded domestic and family violence services for children, through a post card campaign, a facts card and a booklet on respectful relationships.
- Marie Claire Australia approached WESNET to assist with their domestic violence campaign aimed at raising awareness of the damaging effects of emotional abuse.
- WESNET's work was recognised by ACT Senator, Kate Lundy, in her speech to the Senate marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 2004).
- A submission was provided to the Attorney General's Department in response to the discussion paper "A New Approach to the Family Law System" (January 2005).
- Discussions were held amongst WESNET members to perform the event "The Vagina Monologues" as a fund raiser. Due to lack of PBI status, WESNET was unable to continue. Work has since commenced on obtaining this.
- WESNET were approached by a New Zealand group, "Preventing Violence in the Home", to form a partnership for fundraising by selling women's nightwear. However, this was not deemed consistent with WESNET's purpose, but did highlight the need for the development of relevant ethical policies.
- Lobbied for the continued funding of the National Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. WESNET also partnered with the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) lobbying for the Australian Centre for the study of Sexual Assault Clearinghouse to continue. Both these have now been re-funded.

- Assisted with information dissemination on the Australian National Plan of Action to address violence against women, on behalf of Amnesty International.
- Lobbied against the X-Box game, "Fable - beat your wife for stats points" (April 2005).
- Issue of various media releases, one of which responded to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report that showed Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered than non-indigenous women (December 2004).
- On-going lobbying of Federal and State governments around SAAP MKV funding.

I would like to thank the Committee, the membership and Sira for their work and commitment to WESNET, and especially JulieO, who generously gives her experience and support to the work of WESNET

WESNET also presented papers at the following conferences:

- "Home Truth's", Melbourne, September 2004
- "Challenge, Change and Cha Cha Cha", Brisbane, October 2004
- 5th Women's Health conference, Melbourne, April 2005

The State/Territory representatives along with the Indigenous and NESB representatives and proxies continue to prove the efficacy of the WESNET model. Closely linked with the field and highly networked, these members who take on the extra responsibility on behalf of the members, are remarkable in their commitment. Because of the election process and because busy women move on, there have been changes to the line up. Over the year, we have thanked and farewelled the following women:

- Maria Hagias, Central Eastern Domestic Violence Service, Adelaide, (Chairperson)
- Lyn Mills, Northern Domestic Violence Service (SA representative)
- Laura Klobucar, Toora Women (ACT representative)
- Angela Nesci, Working Women's Health, Melbourne (NESB representative)
- Ginny Wadlow, Centacare Murraylands Support & Accommodation Service (SA representative)
- Jane Doyle, Women's Information & Referral Centre (QLD representative)

As you will see from their reports, these women have been active in representing your interests. I urge you to stay in contact with your representative to enhance the flow of information and also to consider yourself in the role as a representative as the election cycle occurs in your area.

Canberra is passing a very difficult time in relation to crisis accommodation. In ACT, the average length of stay for both SAAP and non SAAP services, is twice that of the rest of the nation (last national SAAP data report). Exposing the lack of exit points has been the major issue. The length of stay in a service is at least 12 months and there is no chance of things getting any better. Women can access services by referral or self referral by phone. It is extremely rare to obtain accommodation for a family in distress. Support and counseling is usually offered over the phone, and in some cases, meetings are held in an office, or at a coffee shop.

The following is a snapshot of some of the services in the ACT.

Beryl Women's Refuge

Beryl Women's Refuge celebrated 30 years of service to the Canberra community on 14 March 2005. Beryl is a refuge for women and children leaving domestic violence, that can accommodate up to six families. Beryl has changed some of their programs, expanding from shared accommodation to accommodating single families. Currently the Refuge is waiting for another three houses. One of the houses is very large so that the house can be shared. Beryl also supports ten families through outreach programs.

Doris Women's Refuge Inc

Doris Women's Refuge is a SAAP service providing short to medium term support and accommodation for women and children leaving domestic violence. Seven properties form the main complex, in which the office is also located, and two more properties are based elsewhere. Single accommodation and outreach support is also provided. Outreach support is provided to former as well as prospective clients. Women and children have access to individual support in various areas and to a number of activities.

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

The Centre is available to any women or children who have experienced any form of

sexual violence (adult rape, childhood sexual abuse, ritual abuse, or sexual harassment). The Centre currently has a waiting list of approximately three months after the initial appointment.

YWCA of Canberra, Housing Support Unit

This service has a few housing programs, one of which is the Family Housing Outreach Service (FHOS), which has been in operation since 1996, and was originally a pilot program for young families. Supported accommodation is offered in seven individual homes. In December 2004, FHOS received a five bedroom house as a swap for a three bedroom house in order improve services for extended and blended families. Also in 2004, YWCA successfully tendered to run a families homelessness program, Families Experiencing Accommodation Transition (FEAT), as part of the ACT Government's 2004-07 plan to commit \$13.4 million to new homelessness services. FEAT has received three fully equipped houses, and are currently awaiting three more.

Caroline Chisholm Women's Refuge

Caroline Chisholm is a SAAP service, governed by St Vincent de Paul, and has operated for over 30 years. They provide crisis, medium and long term accommodation for women with their children that are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. Each client lives in a communal setting, where up to four families (around 14 people) share the one residence. To improve living standards, the Refuge has applied for additional housing. The average waiting length for ACT housing is 12 months; about a year ago it was 8 months, and two years ago it was 4 months.

Women's Information & Referral Centre

The Women's Information and Referral Centre (WIRC) is an ACT Government service which has been providing information and referral on any issue to women and their families for over 25 years. Women can access the Centre by phoning, emailing, visiting the website, making an appointment or walking in. This service provides a domestic violence support group which runs 3-4 times a year, there are also information sessions run at the centre and through various women's groups. This service is in contact with women in sector on a regular basis to exchange information.

In the ACT region, the Centre contacts 600-700 women in any one month. Over January-March 2005, the Centre received 122 enquiries about accommodation, and 176 enquiries relating to domestic violence. The staff from the Centre are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with this situation. Increasingly, women have to move away from the ACT to access both emergency and long term accommodation.

The past year has been very active for women's services in NSW, with a number of issues on which to lobby, as well as dealing with the long term issues of lack of exit points and under-funded services. The sector has also developed and/or participated in positive and innovative events and initiatives to improve appropriate responses to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

The sector has invested a lot of energy into lobbying for an increase in funding for SAAP V. While negotiations are still in progress (at the time of writing), it does not look like there will be even the 15% increase necessary to keep services viable, not to mention any increase to address unmet demand. NSW also stands to gain very little from the Investment Fund as currently envisaged. NSW is already more than dollar matching the Commonwealth and is extremely unlikely to contribute any more than the share currently contributed.

The sector is deeply worried about the number of women and children that are currently turned away due to services being full. A snapshot survey of the 55 member refuges of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement found that 11 (or a fifth) of these refuges alone were forced to turn away 367 women and 436 children in the two month period February–March 2005. The number of turn aways is likely to increase as viability continues to be eroded.

Moreover, services have clearly indicated that without an increase in recurring core funding to meet viability, they will be forced to reduce hours of service, or staff hours or to cut down/cancel innovative programs that they are currently offering to their clients and to the community in general. Programs that may be cut include counseling and support groups for women and children either in refuges or in the community who have experienced domestic violence, as well as preventative and community awareness raising programs.

Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model (DVCIM)

The NSW Attorney General has established DVCIM. Two pilots will start in May and

September in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown (respectively), with the aims of enhancing safety for victims of domestic violence offences in contact with the criminal justice system, and to hold perpetrators of domestic violence offences accountable for their actions.

The pilots are looking at decreasing the number of domestic violence offences where charges are dropped or dismissed, (by better evidence collection and better brief preparation) improving support for women in court, implementing protective measures to improve women's safety both in court and at home (if they choose to stay), improving trust in police response, and decreasing re-offences (by perpetrators programs and pro-charge pro-arrest policy by Police). The Courts will deal with domestic violence offences and applications for ADVO if accompanying applications are before the court at the time. Applications for ADVOs for other survivors of domestic violence will continue to be dealt with on the AVO list day.

Fatality Review

The Attorney General has also started a process to explore the feasibility of establishing a fatality review process in NSW. A literature review report has been completed by the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse to provide information and options on setting up a Fatality Review team in NSW.

Acceptable Behaviour Agreements in Public Housing

The NSW Government has introduced changes to the Residential Tenancy Agreement to deal with antisocial behaviour in public housing. These changes introduce renewable tenancies for all public tenants, and Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA) for tenants that have engaged in antisocial behaviour. The breach of an ABA may lead to the termination of their tenancy.

The agreements may relate to the behaviour of any member of the household living at the address. There are concerns in the sector regarding how this will impact on women experiencing domestic violence. It is extremely difficult for a woman in a situation of domestic violence to control the behaviour of the perpetrator. A woman may not have disclosed the

violence to the Department and may risk being evicted due to damages to the premises, noise, or other behaviour over which she would have no control. This means that women may risk losing their tenancy through no fault of their own.

ABAs pilots have started in Wagga Wagga and Newcastle. The sector has advocated strongly against this policy applying to women in domestic violence and was able to obtain that the policy for the pilots excludes cases where domestic violence is present and the perpetrator of domestic violence is creating the situation that gives rise to the ABA. Hopefully this exclusion will remain when ABAs are rolled out in all NSW. However there are still concerns that the woman may not identify the situation as domestic violence, and therefore may not be screened out.

Family Law

The NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre developed a presentation on domestic violence for the Goulburn St Family Law Court training day. Given the statistics of 66% of all cases seeking a final judgment in the Family Law Court involving serious issues of domestic violence and the high rate of non-disclosure to professionals (70%), the focus of the presentation was to argue that domestic violence should be assumed in each case, unless proven otherwise. The presentation was extremely well received and some recommendations have already been acted on.

A Children's Cases project was piloted in Sydney and Parramatta Registry. Unlike formal court proceedings, the hearings are not bound by complex rules of procedure. Rather than the traditional structured question-and-answer format, the judge can converse directly with the parties, witnesses, and children. The rules of evidence have also been relaxed for convenience. Both parties need to consent to their case being referred to the Children's Cases project. An evaluation of the programs is in process, but preliminary findings suggest feedback from parties involved in the programs has been generally positive. However it is not clear how issues of domestic violence or child abuse are dealt with within this process.

Staying Home Leaving Violence Pilot and Crisis payment

Bega Women's Refuge is running a "Staying Home Leaving" pilot project. The project assists women to stay safely in the home, with the perpetrator being removed. In the last 6 months the local Court has issued over 50 exclusion orders. One of the issues faced by the pilot is that recent changes in the Crisis Payment eligibility means that men who are excluded from the home because of their violence can access Crisis Payment, but women who remain in the home cannot, even if they face a range of financial hardships. The sector is lobbying Centrelink to make women who stay at home and have the perpetrator of violence removed from the home, also eligible for the Crisis Payment.

NESB Women and the Law

The Attorney General has reconvened the Quarter Way to Equal Taskforce, to look at improving migrant and refugee women's access to the legal system. The Taskforce will identify continuing gaps in access to the legal system and consider the needs of new and emerging communities in accessing it. The original Quarter Way to Equal Report (1994), identified domestic violence as an area where migrant and refugee women had difficulties accessing services and support. The Women's Legal Centre is researching the same topic.

Ombudsman Report

Following the Ombudsman Report on exclusion in SAAP services, the 3 homelessness peaks in NSW are sponsoring a Client Risk Assessment Tool that will assist services in carrying out individual risks assessment of potential clients.

The project should produce a set of general guidelines to be adapted by each service, and a 2 step tool, including an initial set of trigger questions and more detailed questions if a potential risk is identified, to assess the level of risk posed and the service's capacity to deal with the risk. The Risk Assessment Tool has been developed and is currently being piloted.

Another response to the issues raised in the Ombudsman Report was the Homelessness and Exclusion Forum, held in Sydney on 1 June 2005. The Forum highlighted the systemic issues behind homelessness and was very well attended.

Sexual Offence Taskforce

The NSW Attorney General established the Criminal Justice Sexual Offences Taskforce in December 2004, with the aim of identifying opportunities to improve criminal justice responses to sexual assault.

The Criminal Justice Sexual Offences Taskforce will:

- evaluate alternate models for the prosecution of sexual assault offences;
- evaluate proposals for legislative and procedural change for sexual assault prosecutions in NSW; and
- identify areas of possible reform in relation to the provision of services for sexual assault victims.

The Taskforce will report to the Attorney General in December 2005, with recommendations about the feasibility of improving criminal justice processes in relation to sexual assault.

Conference: “Refocusing Women’s Experience of Violence”

The domestic violence sector has organised a 3 day conference to be held in Bankstown, Sydney over 14- 16 September, focusing on women’s experience of violence and on strategies that support a woman’s right to safety and security.

Telephone Interpreter Services (TIS)

In order to guarantee fee free interpreting services to non-government organisations after 30 June 2005, the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) has established a scheme so that they will pay the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) for interpreting services provided to DoCS funded services at no cost to these organisations.

As a result of the SAAP extension until the end of September 2005, DIMIA will continue to provide fee-free interpreting services to SAAP services until that date. On conclusion of negotiations, DOCS will determine if SAAP services will also access this scheme.

As I review last year's report for the Northern Territory, it appears that we are still dealing with similar issues. Bureau of Statistics data once again reveals that we have extraordinarily high rates of domestic and personal violence. Aboriginal women living in remote locations are more likely to be assaulted with a weapon, and less likely to have support services to which they can turn¹. The ability to remain safe is further complicated by a desire to stay in the community and with family networks.

No drop policy

The 'no drop policy', that is the prosecution of criminal offences arising from a domestic violence incident despite a victim not wishing to cooperate or give evidence at a hearing, is still being reviewed by the NT Department of Justice. The review has learned that implementation of the no drop policy has resulted in a culture of accused persons pleading not guilty, with lengthy delays in hearings in Darwin. However, this is not the case in Alice Springs, where matters were listed to be heard within 4-5 weeks with sentencing discounts for early guilty pleas, rather than waiting till the day of the hearing or after the victim had given evidence. It is recognised by the Department and members of the Domestic and Personal Violence Protection Unit that there are times when pursuing prosecution, whether the original complainant wishes to cooperate or not, can place the victim in great danger.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Programs (SAAP)

Most emergency accommodation services for women in the Northern Territory are SAAP funded, and the NT Department of Health & Community Services has been engaged in negotiations with the Commonwealth about levels of funding under SAAP V. In the middle of discussions, the Territory government called an election, and so everything went on hold until the outcome was known and everyone settled back into their roles.

2004/2005 funding levels were extended to September 2005, which placed many services

and the sector generally under enormous financial and psychological pressure, given that costs were at 2005/2006 levels. Some organisations placed workers on short-term contracts, and there is still uncertainty about future funding levels. An NT Shelter survey conducted in February 2005 revealed that without an increase in funding, a large majority of organisations would have to cut back on service delivery in all the key areas identified by the Commonwealth as central to SAAP V.

Children

The lack of funded services for children remains an ongoing and very important issue in the NT. At Dawn House, 75% of all women who contact the service request counselling or some form of supportive intervention for their children. This usually relates to the impact of their children's direct exposure to violence, or to the effects of having been exposed to violence. As research now clearly shows, all children are affected by contact with domestic and family violence, yet there is no funded specialist counselling or therapeutic intervention services for children who have experienced violence in the Northern Territory. Appropriate and relevant intervention is required urgently. Crisis and accommodation services offer what they can in the way of short-term activities and groups. However, given that core business relates to accommodation and crisis intervention, such therapeutic activities are only available on an ad hoc basis dependent upon worker and funding availability. Lack of culturally appropriate, funded, specialist services is impacting negatively both immediately and in the long term on workers, mothers and children.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Once again this remains an issue in the NT. It has been commented by the Department of Business and Industrial Relations that advertising vacant positions in the community service sector attracts many inquiries, but few applicants. As the client group presents with more high and complex needs, support workers require skills and qualifications across a range of areas working with mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, crisis counselling, advocacy, court support, children's activities, housing information, cross cultural sensitivity, financial information and so on.

Further, the sector must deal with a high turnover of staff as people move through Darwin and Alice Springs on their way to somewhere else, and funding levels that pay \$15,000 per year less than the government sector for equivalent skill levels.

Family Relationship Centres

Darwin has been nominated as a site for the establishment of one of the new Family Relationship Centres (FRCs). Given that the rationale and researched comment made by women's services with regard to the FRCs has not been heard, we must now turn our attention to ensuring that women who have experienced domestic and family violence are screened out of the process and not put at further risk. Given the size of the NT non government sector and the generally respectful working relationships between services, it is hoped that a comprehensive and effective screening tool can be developed in collaboration with the organisation or organisations that win the tender for the Darwin FRC.

¹ Bolger, A (1991) *Aboriginal Women and Violence*. Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit, Darwin.



Lindy Edwards, Sera's Women's Shelter (Townsville)

Over the past 12 months, Queensland refuges and women's services, have continued to support the work of WESNET through membership.

It is almost two years since the domestic violence legislation in Queensland was extended to cover certain groups of people who experience non spousal violence. Understandably, this has resulted in increased workloads for most of the domestic violence services, only some of whom had their funding increased to provide more workers. Some of the services have reported an increase in the number of clients requesting assistance with spousal violence, as a result of the greater publicity and advertising around domestic violence generally, and have also reported an increased workload because of the complexity of many of the family violence situations.

Domestic Violence Prevention Month was held during May, throughout the State. This extension to a month has been viewed favourably by many services, enabling them to hold many functions and activities aimed at raising awareness of domestic violence.

In February this year, the Queensland Police Service introduced a new policy requiring police officers attending a domestic violence incident, to record the names of all children residing in the home, for forwarding to the Juvenile Aid Bureau, and then the Department of Child Safety. The sector, whilst pleased that finally witnessing domestic violence is being recognised as child abuse, have expressed concern about the implications of this new policy on women experiencing domestic violence. In particular, there was concern that this policy would act as a deterrent for women in domestic violence to call the police, and would give perpetrators a further opportunity to exercise their control over the women. Six months since the policy was introduced, there does not appear to have been a large increase in the number of women losing care of their children through "failure to protect" or a significant number of incidents of women not calling the police for fear of the Department's involvement. However, it is essential that workers in the domestic violence sector continue to work closely with police and child

protection workers, to ensure that women and children are not further victimised through this policy.

Earlier this year the CMC Report into policing of domestic violence in Queensland was released. The report looks at the challenges confronting police and potential strategies to improve their efficiency. The five recommendations made by the report were not fully supported by the sector, and it was identified that there were issues simply not addressed by the report.

All networks within the domestic violence sector collaborated on a response to the report which was presented to the Minister at a meeting in Brisbane, which also involved senior Police Officers. Unfortunately, the outcome of the meeting was disappointing, and it is uncertain if the issues raised will be taken on board.

In May, petitions were presented to the Queensland Parliament, requesting the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review process, which would review all deaths that occur as a result of domestic violence. Petitions from across the state were gathered and presented, in addition to the lobbying of state politicians on a local level.

In June, a Statewide meeting of domestic violence and women's services was held in Brisbane. It was a successful three days, with approximately 55 workers attending from all over the State. Unfortunately, it was not possible for services from the remote areas of Cape York and Mount Isa to attend, as there was no funding available, but through the various networks it is hoped these services will be able to be kept informed. As a result of this meeting, it is intended to plan a larger conference at some stage, involving workers from the sexual assault and women's health networks as well.

The Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services of SA continue to work across government, community and private sectors to highlight the needs of women, and children, experiencing domestic violence.

Earlier in the period in liaison with the SA Office for Women and Minister Stephanie Key, the SA Women's Safety Strategy was consulted on, written and then formally launched by the Premier, Mike Rann. We were then asked to comment on the development of the National Women's Safety Strategy – particularly from a rural women's perspective.

The State Housing Plan was finally launched in March 2005, after a very long and drawn out consultation and development phase. The plan has meant that the SAAP programs for SA has had a couple of bureaucratic moves, and it now sits under the Department of Families and Communities in the High Needs Unit. High needs are one of the key foci of the plan along with homelessness, and several others. Our government reiterates through the plan an emphasis on links with community agencies and the identified need of the consumer, and additionally, development of new alternative housing options. There is also currently a review being done of SA's whole housing system.

The serious lack of exit points from crisis services is also a key issue for the SA domestic violence sector. Our public housing entity is down-sizing, and the Women's Housing Association is one of the larger community housing organisations providing longer term housing for women and children. But we can never satisfy demand, and waiting times are lengthening all the time. Therefore there is a bottle-neck for women, and their children, at both ends of the crisis option – waiting to get into crisis services, and then waiting to get out of them into secure and stable housing.

The negotiations around SAAP V have finally been sorted, with SA currently working on the bi-lateral agreements. The SA Government has agreed to 'top-up' Commonwealth funding. Services are yet to discover what this means for the coming years.

The SA Office for Women has also funded a thorough consultation process on "Women's Futures" – strengthening and ensuring mechanisms within the government sector for achieving gender equality. WESNET's own Maria Hagias (Central Eastern Domestic Violence Service, Adelaide) is Chairperson of the Reference Group working to ensure that SA achieves a better level of representation of women across government at all levels.

Lastly, I want to thank members of the WESNET Committee and Sira for making me feel as welcome as a 'new kid on the block'. Being a representative not working within the SAAP sector has been a challenge, but also a very good learning experience for me

Once again I echo the issues as in previous years. Access to affordable housing is an ongoing issue. State housing in Tasmania continues to be difficult for women to access with a focus shifting to people with high and complex needs. The Affordable Housing Strategy is currently under review and a report to cabinet is expected in September. The private rental market has a vacancy rate of under 3%. Women on income support without children and women with one or two children are finding it increasingly difficult to afford the cost of private rentals. This has led to women being in emergency accommodation for longer periods of time. Lack of exit points to safe, affordable and stable housing is a crisis that continues in Tasmania. This crisis is echoed across all of the states and territories, with women and children on income support not being able to access housing at all in some cities. The basic right to housing and addressing the systemic issues that impact on women and children on income support needs to be taken up at a whole of government level, with realistic outcomes set and adequate funding to bring about changes in both affordability and equity of access to housing.

It has been a busy year for services this year with the implementation of the "Safe at Home" model. The sector has some concerns in the ability of the system to effectively respond to demand. There have been women who have been charged and arrested for not appearing in court to testify against the perpetrators. There has also been an increase in the number of women who are having restraining orders brought against them. There have been Family Violence Orders varied by judges after guilty convictions of assault. Whilst these have been isolated incidences there is concern as to how to protect victims from further abuse by the system. There is still some concern as to how women who don't need an immediate police response are able to access services. It is too early to say how the system will look in the long run. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service is now the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service. This service has retained the same amount of full time employment positions, extended hours of operation and still provides some practical support. The service is no

longer a crisis service but a medium counselling service although they are still able to provide a critical response to urgent requests after hours.

There has not been any increase in funds for service delivery beyond meeting pay increases. Services are under pressure to retain and recruit team members.

It is as always due to the amazing women who work in this sector with their passion, commitment and creativity that we continue to provide quality services for women and children under circumstances that at times feel challenging.

Significant legislative reform in Victoria has been the abolition of defence as a partial excuse to homicide as a result of the tragic domestic murder of Julie Ramage in Melbourne. The following is a summary of the other main policy developments over the last twelve months in Victoria.

Continued Development of the Peak Body, Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic)

DV Vic has had recurrent funding since July 2002. Development has continued since then. DV Vic's key directions are to:

- lead the policy debate and direction for domestic and family violence services in Victoria;
- provide leadership, advocacy and support in the provision of quality services;
- develop a communication strategy; and
- ensure DV Vic is accountable.

Through her role as Coordinator of DV Vic, Fiona McCormack is able to represent DV Vic membership and grass-roots issues at a state-wide level. She has participated in a range of committees and networks including:

- VCOSS
- State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence
- Family Violence Courts Reference Group
- Office of Housing Peak meetings
- Department of Human Services Partnership forums
- Strategic Directions in Homelessness Assistance
- Joint Peaks Network Meeting
- WESNET
- Regular meeting with the Ministers office to represent sector concerns

Reforming the Family Violence System

The Victorian Government announced funding in its State Budget for "Reforming the family violence system...to reform the response to family violence in Victoria through adopting an integrated, whole of government approach". This included:

- new and redesigned family violence

accommodation and support responses to women and children, involving outreach support in a range of settings and flexible accommodation response such as short term motel stays and support to link women to the private rental market, as well as more after hours services;

- new housing options for violence perpetrators, professional development and enhanced assessment of needs and risk, and intensive case management of those women at highest risk; and
- delivery of more robust women's and children's support programs, men's behaviour change programs and men's referral services.

Indigenous Family Violence

Additionally, an Indigenous Family Violence Strategy was released. This included:

- Healing and Time Out services to respond in culturally appropriate ways to the high levels of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Services would be delivered to respond to the particular needs of Indigenous men, women and children to help prevent, reduce and respond to family violence in Indigenous communities.

This Victorian budget was released in May 2005 in the context of a collaborative partnership relationship between the domestic and family violence sector and the government. It was only in September 2005 that the shock announcement that the 'reform of the family violence sector' meant defunding services and introducing a new funding formula which would result in cuts to service delivery and jobs, pay and conditions for workers in the services. This micro policy announcement came by surprise via the Department of Human Services as contract managers to our sector and appeared outside of the work of the government established State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence. However, the Victorian government must take responsibility for its departments.

State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence (SSCRFV)

As reported in previous years, the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence

(SSCRFV) was established in Victoria to develop an integrated, multi-agency response to family violence. Representatives from government, the police, courts and community organisations are represented on the Committee. Several representatives from the domestic and family violence sector are represented on the Committee – including DV Vic.

When the SSCRfV was established by the Victorian Labor Government, it was in the spirit of collaboration and genuine partnership with the domestic and family violence sector. During the 2004/05 financial year, the collaboration was felt to be genuine. This was a welcome relief after the previous Kennett Government which unsuccessfully attempted to put the welfare sector, including domestic and family violence services, out to compulsory competitive tender. However, it was with shock that in September 2005 the Department of Human Services unexpectedly announced that domestic violence outreach services and other family violence services would not have their funding agreement renewed on 1 July 2006, and instead would have to compete on the open market in a tender process for their existing service funding, as well as new funding. Services across Victoria are appalled. In the context of so called partnership and collaboration, at the same time as we become aware that 51% of potential service users are turned away because services are full, that domestic violence costs the Australian economy more than 8.2 billion dollars per annum, and that intimate partner violence is the greatest risk factor for burden of disease for women between 15 and 45, this unthought through policy decision is disgraceful.

We are in the process of attempting to reason with the Labor Government to reverse their policy. They cannot scapegoat the Department of Human Services as if it is external to the process of collaboration. If 'reasoning' fails, further direct action will occur. We hope that in next year's report we are able to inform you that the Victorian Government saw sense, that women's services were not defunded and the funding was not mainstreamed, and that the Department of Human Services re-thought its implementation of unit costing which would result in cuts to service delivery and cuts to staff.

Consequently because of the Department of Human Services' (DHS) shock announcement,

Fiona's role on the SSCRfV has, of late, consisted mainly of working in collaboration with other NGOs on the Committee to lobby government, the Department and the Committee itself in response to the release of the last funding specifications. Our aim is to ensure the implementation of new funding formulae does not jeopardise:

- a gendered approach to service delivery for women and children;
- integration work already achieved;
- the effectiveness of existing family and domestic violence services;
- appropriate and effective service delivery for women and their children;
- the need for immediate increases in funding for women's domestic and family violence services; and
- safety for women and children.

DV Vic has consulted with its members and comprehensively represented their positions on various aspects of Phase 1 and 2 DHS funding proposals and has persistently advocated that the expertise of women's Family and Domestic Violence services be heeded.

Productivity Cuts to the Sector

As previously reported, the Victorian Government had intended to pass on productivity cuts to our sector. We are pleased to announce that at this stage this has not happened. Again we remind all governments that the PAEC Parliamentary Inquiry conducted by KPMG, reported that the community sector could not absorb any more funding reductions. Additionally, the recent independent evaluation of SAAP IV confirmed that our services are working above capacity and require immediate additional funds. Another reason why it is shameful for Victoria to mainstream and cut funding to domestic and family violence services by putting them out to tender.

Codes of Practice

Police Code of Practice

This initiative has been rolled out by the Victorian Police. This strategy provides three options for police to respond to incidents of domestic violence – criminal, civil and referral. Training for police has occurred and Family Violence Liaison Officers have been appointed. There is varying consistency of approaches throughout the State with some police districts faring much better than others despite state-wide training and policy.

Domestic and Family Violence Sector Code of Practice

Developing a Code of Practice was always going to be a challenge given the diversity of services and models of practice however, the announcement of new family violence dollars in the state budget has translated to increased expectations of what the document can deliver, from a broadened range of stakeholders. DV Vic has been, and continues to work hard to ensure the integrity of the Code of Practice is preserved while still ensuring it retains relevance in a changing and changeable environment.

Other Government Initiatives

DV Vic has also provided feedback, informed as much as possible by consultation with the membership, to pending policy or legislation such as:

- Children's Bill and corresponding White Paper (which hardly mentions domestic and family violence);
- Proposed changes to the legal definition of family violence;
- Proposed professional development strategy;
- Victoria Police Family Violence resources;
- Human Rights Submission; and the
- No to Violence Campaign (another ill conceived campaign by the Commonwealth Government).

We hope that in next year's Annual Report we are able to report that the Victorian Government did not economically rationalise or gender-mainstream women's domestic or family violence services.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge Janine Bush, the previous alternate Committee member for her work during her term with WESNET. Fiona McCormack is the new coordinator of DV Vic (Domestic Violence Victoria) and alternate Victorian Committee member. DV Vic is now co-located with other women's services at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre in Melbourne City.

The Women's Refuge Group is now the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WCDFVS). This new model will retain a feminist perspective on family violence while seeking to broaden its membership base to include all family violence services in West Australia.

WCDFVS recently undertook research into the increasing cost refuges are experiencing, that has resulted in several metropolitan refuges moving from being staffed 24 hours a day to reduced staff hours and a pager system implemented at night.

WCDFVS' key findings were:

- refuge services are currently experiencing increased cost and increased client demand;
- current funding levels are limiting the quality of service delivery;
- refuge staff are committed to ensuring service standards for all clients but are constrained due to lack of funding;
- refuge staff suffer from burnout due to pressure and constraints resulting from a lack of funding; and
- a need for more funding and resources towards outreach services and children's services within refuges, as well as administration and cleaning costs.

The State Domestic and Family Violence Strategic plan for 2004-08, "A Balanced Approach: Prevention, Protection, Provision", has been released. The plan has yearly action strategies which are to be developed in conjunction with the non-government sector. The Family Violence Unit will coordinate the cross government commitments from each department and produce an annual checklist of what is achieved.

The plan for this year focuses on 3 main areas:

- improved Government/non-government coordination;
- strengthening regional domestic violence committees; and
- children's issues.

The Family Violence Unit has responded to the Gay and Lesbian Community concerns about same sex intimate violence, with a grant to provide training to the government and non-government sector agencies who respond to family violence.

The new Domestic Violence Restraining Order legislation came into effect in December 2004. It will:

- increase the penalties for assaults and breeches of Restraining orders if children are present;
- enable Police to issue Violence Restraining Orders for 24/72 hours, without the consent of the person to be protected;
- increase police powers to enter a property if they have a reasonable suspicion an act of domestic violence was committed prior to their arrival;
- increase the penalty for breeches of VRO to \$6,000.00 or imprisonment for 18months, or both;
- remove the defence of consent to a charge of breaching a restraining order;
- provide life long restraining orders in cases of violent personal offence; and
- broaden the definition of what constitutes domestic violence to include property damage, injury and death of pets and emotional abuse. (The legislation does not currently define emotional abuse).

Interim restraining orders will be held in a closed court, and affidavit evidence is to be accepted. The applicant may have a court approved support person near by and where respondents are not represented the court *may* make an order preventing the respondent from directly cross-examining a person with whom they have had a domestic relationship.

The WA police service has utilised the 24/72 hour orders with enthusiasm. By end of January 2005, police had attended 2043 domestic violence incidents across the state (double the usual number) and had issued 500 police orders to remove men from the home. Under the Violence Restraining Order legislation, there is no defence to breaching a VRO charge, and a number of women have been charged with breaching VROs where they have "allowed" ex partners to see children or have contact with them. The Domestic

Violence Legal Aid Unit is actively working with the Department of Public Prosecutions to address this problem.

Family Court of Western Australia

The final evaluation of the Columbus Project has been released as a public document. From 1 July 2004, the Court introduced the Case Assessment conference format as the first 'event' all parties initiating matters in the family court will attend. The Case Assessment conference provides parties with an early opportunity to settle their dispute with the aid of a Registrar and/or court mediator/counsellor. Even if parties have lawyer this conference will take place.

The conference will:

- provide for the opportunity to reach agreement;
- assess the main issues and facts and where appropriate recommend other services which might assist the parties to settle their dispute; and
- explain the next steps (where agreement is not reached by the Court). This may include listing in the normal court system, referral to the Columbus project, or to an Alternative Disputes Resolution process.

Where family violence is a factor, the conference *may* be held in separate rooms.

In March 2005 the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence held the Annual Domestic Violence Memorial march. The Minister for the Department of Community Development spoke to a crowd of 400 people. Other speakers included Michelle Steck, a survivor; Jordan Fogarty, a 14year old Scotch college student who committed a years fundraising against domestic violence; and Sanchia Neate of the The Body Shop, who presented the Women's Council with a cheque for \$20,872.18.

The Industry plan for the non-government human services sector Statement of Partnership was signed off in December 2004 by the Premier, seven Ministers with relevant portfolios, and 21 non-government peak body representatives. The plan will be monitored by the Industry council (the 21 non-government peak representatives) and in phase 2 focus on governance, financial management and accountability, human resource management and development, leadership and policy

development, service delivery and evaluation, information technology, and managing industry change. The non-government sector has prevailed upon the unit directing the plan to slow down the process and allow more consultation before new models are decided.



Shirley Slann, North QLD Domestic Violence Service (Mt Isa)

Over the last 12 months, many things have changed regarding Indigenous Affairs. We have now seen the abolishment of ATSIC and ATSI. The Government's Indigenous programs are now administered by mainstream agencies, but under a whole of government approach.

In the States, Territories and regions, multi-agency Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) have been established, managed by an Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) within the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA).

The Attorney General's Department have funded another 13 Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Units. The units now total 26 across Australia. Over 4 years, \$22.7 million has been committed to double the number of Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Services programs.

The 19 Indigenous coordinators and committee members from across Australia involved in the major expansion of Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, are participating in an accredited program run by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AIRC) in Canberra, with support from the National Network for Indigenous Women's Legal Services and the Attorney General's Department. Participants attending the Course are hoping to graduate with Certificate IV in Indigenous Leadership. The course commenced in June 2005 and participants will complete their final block of study in November 2005. The participants will be the very first to graduate from the AIRC with a Certificate IV Diploma in leadership.

I have recently been appointed as the North Queensland Representative on the Queensland Government's Ministerial and Advisory Council for Domestic and Family Violence. There are 14 members throughout Queensland and the position is a 2-year appointment.

Issues still facing rural and remote communities are around the lack of funded services. Communities who are lucky enough to have a service provided, have difficulties in

recruiting staff with the appropriate skills required. I believe that if funding is provided to a community, funding should also be provided for a mentor/ trainer to visit them, and assist with the provision of skills and support to manage and run their own organisation. Unless this happens, badly needed funded services will collapse. Indigenous communities need to be empowered and supported in maintaining their own community. This will only happen if they are fully supported and guided along the way. It's not about providing a shelter or a service. The building is a shell and without skills and training given to workers in rural and remote communities, those communities aren't given a chance from the beginning.

Unfortunately, statistics still show that about 90% of domestic and family violence incidents reported to the police are Indigenous women as victims. There have been a number of discussions and meetings across Australia where Indigenous women are still pushing for services to assist male perpetrators. As a service provider and as an Aboriginal woman, I believe that until services are provided for men, we will continue to band-aid solutions in relation to supporting the female victim. However, the cycle of violence will not be broken until society insists that the violence against women and children must stop, and the perpetrator is made accountable for his actions. Services must be available to assist men in changing their behaviour and change in behaviour is up to the perpetrator. The safety of women and children is up to all of us. Domestic and family violence is not part of our Aboriginal culture and we want it to stop!

Non-English Speaking Background

Fauziah Varusay, Multicultural Women's Advocacy Service (Perth)

I was co-opted in November 2004 to represent non-English Speaking Background (NESB) issues for one term, pending the official nomination and election in November 2005. As the NESB representative I attended the face-to-face meeting in May 2005 (Melbourne), which was a fantastic and valuable experience, providing me with an opportunity to be part of a national team to discuss various domestic violence and related issues at the national level.

Admittedly, over the last six months, I have been overwhelmed by the extent, complexity and dimension of the domestic violence agenda from a national and local perspective in general, and in particular, even more so from the view point of the NESB community. I do not profess to be the expert on NESB issues as they relate to domestic violence nationally, nor am I the voice for all NESB and domestic violence issues within Western Australia. As manager of the Multicultural Women's Advocacy Service (MWAS), a small metropolitan-based program of the Women's Health Services in Perth, that provides advocacy and support to women from NESB experiencing domestic violence, I can only speak about issues that I have been exposed to in the last three years in the domestic violence sector, and in particular in Perth. Fortunately, in the last year, I have also been a member of the State Advisory Committee for SAAP in WA, and chair of its culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community working party. It was only end of last year, after organising a consultative forum aimed at highlighting current issues facing SAAP services working with CALD clients and to find ways to address them, that I gained a better understanding of some of the main general issues affecting SAAP services in WA.

The feedback from the forum was grouped under five main headings -housing, immigration, service delivery, training, and resources. Over 20 representatives from SAAP and non-SAAP agencies participated in the forum. The feedback from this meeting was used to inform the workplan for the SAAP SAC CALD Working Party for the next couple of years. Participants felt that the meeting, held for the first time, was an excellent

opportunity to network solely on CALD issues in SAAP, and a chance to work more collaboratively and inclusively. Most of the issues raised at the forum require coordinated, strategic and consistent lobbying of relevant government agencies which the CALD Working Party agreed would take up as part of its role.

MWAS, as part of the WA Multicultural Women's Consortium (a partnership of the Transcultural Mental Health Centre, the Canning Division of General Practice and the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre), has been working very closely with the State Family and Domestic Violence Unit on its community project "Preventing family disintegration in CALD communities: a partnership approach". This project is aimed at working with new and emerging African communities to raise awareness and education on domestic violence. The project began as a pilot in 2003-04 to work with the Muslim and Ethiopian communities. It received a merit recognition from the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2004. The Unit then provided additional funding to the Consortium to continue this project for the year 2005-06.

Like my predecessors at WESNET, I am also in the process of developing a vibrant national NESB reference group in order to be informed and supported in raising issues relevant to NESB women for WESNET, both locally and nationally. Some significant initial steps have been taken towards this end when a small group of women representing the CALD and domestic violence sector had their first teleconference in September 2005. This move was initiated by Annabelle Allimant, of the Immigrant Women's Support Service in Brisbane. Others who participated in the teleconference were Milenka Vasekove from Adelaide's Migrant Women's Support and Accommodation Service, and Diana Orlando from Immigrant Women's Service in Melbourne.

Domestic Violence Provisions

The issue that prompted a teleconference on Domestic Violence Provisions was DIMIA's new policy on assessing "doubtful" claims of people accessing the Domestic Violence Provisions under the Migration Regulations. These changes were introduced on 1 July 2005 without any consultation

with key organisations in Australia. Services were not duly informed of the changes and there has been, to date, no formal process in this regard. It is not clear how “doubtful” claims will be determined and the concern of representatives at the teleconference was the impact on women (who are the great majority of applicants) of having to continue to prove their predicament. DIMIA had said that where there are reasonable doubts regarding the veracity of a non-judicially determined claim of domestic violence, evidence supporting the claim may be referred by DIMIA for re-assessment to an independent expert, gazetted by the Minister for this purpose. The independent expert will provide an opinion to DIMIA that domestic violence has or has not occurred, based on the evidence submitted by the applicant and any other evidence available, including a new interview. This new independent expert referred to by DIMIA would be a social worker from Centrelink. There has been confusion regarding this significant change in the Migration Regulation as different agencies have gathered diverse information from various states and territories. It is also unclear what criteria will be used in selecting the Centrelink social worker for this purpose. The group decided to write a letter to DIMIA to raise awareness of the concerns and to continue to network as a group.

Access to fee free interpreters by SAAP funded Services

There was also the issue of the defunding of the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) for SAAP funded services after the SAAP IV. Two states, NSW and Victoria, which were in this situation previously are now receiving assistance from their respective state governments. At the time of writing this report, the WA state government’s Department for Community Development also agreed to pay TIS costs for SAAP agencies; whilst in Queensland, unfortunately, this will not be the case. IWSS accidentally found out that as of October 2005, they are no longer able to access fee-free TIS services. Once again there has been no consultation or discussion as to how this critical component of service delivery will be addressed either by federal or state governments. There is still uncertainty with other service providers in other states as they have not yet been given any assurance on what would happen with SAAP V. Some agencies had already written letters to both the Commonwealth and State Ministers on this matter.

“Violence Against Women, Australia Says No” Campaign

Another concern has been regarding the federal government’s national domestic violence campaign. The \$23 million campaign included a helpline, television, cinema and radio advertisements and mail-out aimed at providing information for young people, parents and the community on identifying and avoiding abusive and violent relationships and where to seek help. The information at hand identifies that CALD communities were not adequately reached in this campaign as there were no advertisements in languages other than English. A common criticism across the multicultural domestic and sexual violence sectors was that it was irresponsible of the government to run a campaign without committing additional funding for SAAP V in order for services to be able to respond to the current demands as well the anticipated increase generated by the campaign. There was a common concern from the NESB sector for the lack of increase in funding for SAAP agencies in SAAP V. Recognition needs to be given to services already being stretched to their limits in meeting the resource intensive and complex needs of NESB women and their children.

New Emerging Communities

The settlement of new and emerging communities has placed significant stresses on the existing resources of services, and in particular CALD specific services. These include the capacity of services to provide adequate support, at times, to large families with complex, multi layered and interconnected needs in settling into a new country. Although there are programs meeting the needs of new arrivals, there is inadequate support to address the needs of this specific group in the longer term. One of the difficulties in working with this community is in accessing interpreters in dialects where there are no interpreters available. This extends to having limited female interpreters in those rare dialects. This leads to information about rights and responsibilities on arrival difficult to disseminate to members of new and emerging communities. Another consideration is that of settlement of families in geographical locations where there are limited or no services available specifically for them. There needs to be recognition of the added pressures and skills and resources required by organisations to ensure appropriate and effective services are delivered.

Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women in Australia (NIRWA)

In the past, the Association of non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia (ANESBWA) had operated for about 12 years and was de-funded in 1998. Since then the network functioned on the strength of friendship support and volunteer time, but it was felt by many that financial capacity was vital to achieve an effective national voice for immigrant and refugee women. Thus the current project, NIRWA, strives to re-vitalize that network. In 2004, the SA Migrant Women's Lobby Group (MWLG), and the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition, received funding from "WomenSpeak" to conduct a scoping project related to the establishment of a national network of immigrant and refugee women. The funds were administered by MWLG, which recruited a part-time, Adelaide-based project officer to help carry out this task.

Among the first steps taken was the development of a nationwide contact list to form a steering group and a nationwide survey to canvas views about the operation and structure of the new network. Much of the information received from this survey informed the planning of the first face to face meeting of NIRWA which was successfully held in May 2005, in Adelaide. 16 representatives from all States and Territories, as well as a number of MWLG members, attended. The proceedings were described as positive, with a future-oriented approach, and participants were particularly pleased to meet women from emerging African communities who made valuable contributions. Rosa Colanero from the MWLG gave a historical overview of women's policy developments. The meeting gave ANESBWA a dignified farewell and a unanimous welcome to NIRWA.

The formation of a solid foundation was seen as a priority at the conference. NIRWA representatives and interstate conference participants formed an Interim Council to work on a number of issues, including membership/incorporation, funding and a communications protocol. Small groups worked on a statement of purpose with a set of guiding principles for the network.

Other decisions taken were: the drawing up a network statement; a press release announcing the formation of the network; NIRWA to be based in South Australia for the

next 2-3 years; development of an interactive website; preparation of an information package; building relationships with relevant stakeholders and particularly with local MPs; and a network logo. In addition, NIRWA has committed to support the FECCA Women's group in its efforts to put gender issues on the agenda.

In concluding this report it is important to reiterate the tremendous political changes nationally and their implications in the past 12 months. As a whole, Australian CALD communities have been affected by policy changes and punitive systems that hold individuals unduly responsible and disadvantaged because of their social situations. Women's issues generally have dropped off the agenda in an environment that is reacting to fear and misinformation, but with little recognition to their implications in a multicultural society. Issues for women and their children from CALD or NESB remain a challenge as women continue to struggle with marginalisation within their communities and within systems in the broader Australia community. The changes in the Migration Regulation and defunding of TIS, for example, point to systemic changes that have the potential to return the rights and opportunities for people, particularly women, from NESB to less than optimum standards.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Annabelle and Milenka for their contributions to this report.

Audited Financial Statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WESNET (WOMEN'S SERVICES NETWORK) INCORPORATED

Scope

We have audited the financial statements of the association for the year ended 30 June 2005 being the Statement of Financial Performance, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flow and Notes to and forming part of the financial statements as set out on the following pages.

The association's committee are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and the information they contain. We have conducted an independent audit of those financial statements. Our audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. Our procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with applicable accounting standards and statutory requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with our understanding of the association's financial position and the results of its operations.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

In our opinion the accounts of Wesnet (Women's Services Network) Incorporated are properly drawn up:

- a) So as to give a true and fair view of matters required by subsection 72(2) of the Associations Incorporation Act to be dealt with in the accounts;
- b) In accordance with the provisions of the Associations Incorporation Act; and
- c) In accordance with applicable Accounting Standards.



PETER IRVING
Chartered Accountant
11 October 2005

CERTIFICATE FROM THE COMMITTEE

We, the undersigned, being two members of the Committee state on behalf of the Committee;

(i) That the members of the Committee during the year ended 30 June 2005 were

Pauline Woodbridge	Chairperson
Shirley Slann	Secretary, Indigenous Representative
Kedy Kristal	Treasurer, Western Australia Representative
Elba Cruz	Australian Capital Territory Representative
Monica Mazzone	New South Wales Representative
Julie Oberin	Victoria Representative
Vicki Lachlan	South Australia Representative
Terri Francis	Tasmania Representative
Fauziah Varusay	NESB Representative
Sue Brownlee	Northern Territory Representative
Lindy Edwards	Queensland Representative
Maria Hagias	resigned August 2004
Max Schulte	resigned August 2004
Lyn Mills	resigned September 2004
Angela Nesci	resigned November 2004
Laura Klobucar	resigned January 2005
Ginny Wadlow	resigned January 2005
Jane Doyle	resigned May 2005

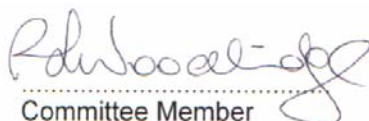
(ii) The principal activities of the association during the year have been those of a national non-party political independent organisation of women's services in Australia dealing with violence against women and related issues. WESNET is recognised as the national sector peak body by both the government and non-government sectors and has considerable expertise in the areas of policy development and the delivery of quality advice and information to government of issues impacting on women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence. WESNET promotes innovative models of practice and service delivery, undertakes community education, and conducts or facilitates research on the key issues around domestic and family violence and related issues for women and their children.

(iii) The net surplus of the Association for the year ended 30 June 2005 was \$8,452.

In our opinion, the attached accounts show a true and fair view of the financial affairs of the Association as at 30 June 2005.



Committee Member



Committee Member

Dated this 11th day of October 2005.

**Consolidated detailed statement of financial performance
for year ended 30 June 2005**

Income	2005	2004
Bank Interest	1,019	456
Memberships	34,727	29,764
Publication Sales	0	27
Other Income	1,328	603
Law Reform Campaign	0	1,135
AFHO Grant	11,909	0
PADV Grant	0	60,000
Unexpended PADV Grant	11,464	26,131
	60,447	118,116
Expenditure		
Bank Charges	202	273
Celebration Expenses	3,124	0
Consultancy Fees	3,500	0
Depreciation	1,158	1,015
Family Law Reform Campaign	0	630
Grant Expenditure - PADV	1,785	74,667
Insurance	943	881
Postage	672	430
Printing & Stationery	700	939
Salaries & Wages	17,645	12,557
Subscriptions & Memberships	141	252
Sundry Expenses	646	112
Superannuation	1,588	1,120
Telephone	706	381
Travel	578	0
Workers Compensation Insurance	519	559
	33,907	93,816
Unexpended AFHO Grant carried forward	8,409	0
Unexpended PADV Grant carried forward	9,679	11,464
	51,995	105,280
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	8,452	12,836
Accumulated funds brought forward	15,085	2,249
Accumulated funds carried forward	23,537	15,085

**Statement of Financial Position
as at 30 June 2005**

Members Funds	Note	2005	2004
Accumulated Funds Brought Forward		15,085	2,249
Surplus/(Deficit) for year		8,452	12,836
		23,537	15,085
Represented by :			
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank	2	36,664	26,636
Prepayments		896	762
GST Recoverable		0	168
		37,560	27,566
Non-current Assets			
Property, Plant & Equipment	4	5,129	1,928
		5,129	1,928
Total Assets		42,689	29,494
Current Liabilities			
Sundry Creditors		714	2,945
Income in Advance		350	0
Unexpended Grants		18,088	11,464
Total Liabilities		19,152	14,409
Net Assets		23,537	15,085

**Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 30 June 2005**

Cash Flows from Operating Activities	Note	2005	2004
Inflows of funds from operations			
Receipts		49,333	5,285
Payments		(34,946)	(93,453)
Net cash provided by operating activities	3	14,387	(18,168)
Cash Flows from Investing Activities			
Payments for Property, plant and equipment		(4,359)	-
Net cash outgoings from investing activities		(4,359)	
Net Increase / (Decrease) in Cash Held		10,028	(18,168)
Add Opening Cash Brought Forward		26,636	44,804
Cash at the end of Financial Year	2	36,664	26,636

**Notes to and forming part of the Accounts
for the year ended 30 June 2005**

1. Accounting Policies

A summary of significant accounting policies adopted by the association is set out in this note. This financial report which has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the ACT Associations Act and includes applicable Accounting Standards and, unless stated otherwise, are consistent with those applied in the previous year.

- a) These accounts have been prepared under the convention of historical cost accounting.
- b) Fixed assets are amortised on a straight line basis or depreciated on a diminishing value or straight line basis over their useful lives.
- c) The association is exempt from income tax under Section 23 (g) of the Income Tax Assessment Act. Consequently the principles of income tax effect accounting are not relevant.
- d) For the purposes of the statement of cash flows, cash includes: cash on hand and at bank.

2. Cash Reconciliation	2005	2004
Commonwealth Bank Day to Day A/c	14,873	23,411
Westpac Operating A/c	658	1,685
CCTM Investment A/c	21,133	1,540
Total Cash at Bank	36,664	26,636
3. Statement of Cash Flows		
(a) Reconciliation of Net (Deficit) / Surplus to the Net Cash Flows from Operations : -		
Surplus/(Deficit) of income over expenditure for the year	8,452	12,836
Depreciation	1,158	1,015
Increase/(Decrease) in debtors and receivables	34	(930)
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors and accruals	4,743	(31,089)
Net cash provided by operating activities	14,387	(18,168)
4(a) Property, Plant and Equipment		
Plant and Equipment		
- at cost	12,486	8,127
- less accumulated depreciation	(8,084)	(7,307)
Written Down Value	4,402	820
4(b) Furniture & Fittings		
- at cost	3,879	4,474
- less accumulated depreciation	(3,152)	(3,366)
Written Down Value	727	1,108
	5,129	1,928

inancial Members

FULL

Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge, NSW
 Alice Springs Women's Shelter, NT
 Amelie House, NSW
 Anawim Refuge, WA
 Anderson, Marjorie (Redlands Domestic Violence Service), QLD
 Annie Kenney Young Women's Refuge, TAS
 Annie North Women's Refuge, VIC
 Banana Shire Emergency Accommodation & Support Centre, QLD
 Beryl Women's Refuge, ACT
 Blue Gum, NSW
 Bramwell House, SA
 Brenda House, VIC
 Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, QLD
 Bundaberg & District Women's DV Service, QLD
 Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service, QLD
 Caroline Chisholm Refuge, ACT
 Caroline Lodge, VIC
 Catherine Haven Women's Shelter, NSW
 Catherine House, SA
 Cawarra Women's Refuge, NSW
 Centacare Murraylands Support & Accommodation Service, SA
 Central Eastern DV Service (Dawn House), SA
 Charmian Clift Cottages, NSW
 Chisholm Inc, QLD
 Dawn House Women's Shelter, NT
 Delvena Women's & Children's Shelter, NSW
 Dolores Single Women's Refuge, NSW
 Domestic & Family Violence Court Assistance Service, QLD
 Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre, VIC
 Domestic Violence Counseling Service, NT
 Domestic Violence Crisis Service, SA
 Domestic Violence Regional Service, QLD
 Domestic Violence Service of Central QLD
 Domestic Violence Victoria
 Doris Women's Refuge, ACT
 Dubbo Women's Housing Programs, NSW
 EASE, VIC
 Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service, VIC
 Eastlakes Women's & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Edith Edwards Women's Centre, NSW
 Elizabeth Hoffman House, VIC
 Elsie Women's Refuge, NSW
 Emma House Domestic Violence Service, VIC
 Esperance Crisis Accommodation, WA
 Essie Women's Refuge, NSW
 Eyre Peninsula Women's & Children's Support Centre, SA
 Family Resource Centre, SA
 Gipps Care Domestic Violence Outreach Service, VIC
 Goldfield's Women's Health Care Centre, WA
 Goulburn Valley Community Health Service, VIC
 GOVE Crisis Accommodation, NT
 Grafton Women's Refuge, NSW
 Hanover Women's Service, VIC
 Hastings Women's & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Hedland Women's Refuge, WA
 Heira House, ACT
 Hobart Women's Shelter, TAS
 Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, VIC
 Immigrant Women's Speakout Association, NSW
 Inanna Inc, ACT
 Ipswich Women's Shelter, QLD
 Jenny's Place, NSW
 Jireh House Association, TAS
 Joan Harrison Support Services for Women, NSW
 Joan's Place Women's Refuge, VIC
 Kara House, VIC
 Karratha Women's Refuge, WA
 Katherine Women's Crisis Centre, NT
 Kempsey Women's & Children's Service, NSW
 Killara Women's Refuge, NSW
 Koolkuna Women's Refuge, WA
 Kywong Women's Refuge, QLD
 Launceston's Women's Shelter (Magnolia Place), TAS
 Lillian's Medium Term Young Women's Accommodation Service, NSW
 Lismore Women & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Lotus House Indo-Chinese Young Women's Refuge, NSW
 Lower Hume Domestic Violence Outreach Service, VIC
 Lucy Saw Centre Association, WA
 Macleod Women's Refuge, QLD
 Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre, NSW
 MARCIA Women's Refuge, NSW
 Marian Centre, NSW
 Marian Villa Women's Refuge, NSW
 Marnja Jarndu Women's Refuge, WA
 Maroondah Halfway House, VIC
 Marrickville Women's Refuge (Jean's Place), NSW
 Mary Anderson Lodge, VIC
 Mary Smith Night Shelter, WA
 Mayne, Melinda, SA
 McCombe House, TAS
 Migrant Women's Lobby Group, SA
 Migrant Women's Support & Accommodation Service, SA
 Migrant Women's Support Service, QLD
 Molly's House, VIC
 Molonglo Women's & Children's Services, NSW
 Monaro Crisis Accommodation Service, NSW
 Moruya Women's Refuge, NSW
 Multicultural Women's Advocacy Service, WA
 Murrane Women's Housing, NSW
 Muslim Women's Support Centre, NSW
 Muswellbrook Women's & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Namoi House (Barwon Cottage DV Service), NSW
 Nardine Wimmins Refuge, WA
 NESH Women's Scheme, NSW
 Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, NT
 Ngala House (Moree Women's Refuge), NSW
 North QLD Combined Women's Services
 North QLD Domestic Violence Resource Service
 Northern Domestic Violence Service (Berry Street), VIC

Northern Domestic Violence Service, SA
 NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre, NSW
 Nunga Mi:Minar, SA
 Olive's Place, VIC
 Pam's Place Crisis Accommodation Resource & Referral Service, NSW
 Pat Thomas Memorial Community House, WA
 Patricia Giles Centre, WA
 Pat's Place, VIC
 Quantum Support Services - Family Violence Programmesme, VIC
 Regina Coeli, VIC
 Rockhampton Women's Shelter, QLD
 Rosa Shoalhaven Women's Refuge, NSW
 Ruah Refuge, WA
 Ruth's Women's Shelter, QLD
 Samaritan House, NSW
 Samaritan House, QLD
 Sera's Women's Shelter, QLD
 South East Regional Domestic Violence Service, SA
 South West Refuge, WA
 South West Women's Housing, NSW
 Southern Domestic Violence Service, SA
 St George Women's Housing, NSW
 St Kilda Domestic Violence Outreach Service, VIC
 Starick Services, WA
 Stepping Out Housing Programs, NSW
 Stirling Women's Refuge, WA
 Summers, Anne, NSW
 Survivors (Yemaya), TAS
 Tablelands Women's Centre, QLD
 Tanderra Women's & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Tennant Creek Women's Refuge, NT
 Toora Women, ACT
 Toukley Women's Refuge, NSW
 Tumut & District Women's Support & Housing, NSW
 Valerie House, VIC
 Vinnies EIP/Reconnect, NSW
 Waminda House Refuge, WA
 Warlga Ngurra Women & Children's Refuge, NSW
 Warrawee Women's Shelter, TAS
 Warrina Women & Children's Refuge, NSW
 West Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Service (Jacaranda), NSW
 Western Domestic Violence Service, SA
 Weston Creek Women's Housing Programs, ACT
 Whitsunday Women's Services, QLD
 Wimlah Refuge, NSW
 Women's Council for Domestic & Family Violence Services, WA
 Women's Domestic Violence Central Crisis Service, VIC
 Women's House Shelta, QLD
 Women's Housing Association Hunter Region, NSW
 Women's Housing Association, SA
 Women's Housing Company, NSW
 Women's Housing Ltd, VIC
 Women's Information & Counselling Service Pt Stephens, NSW
 Women's Information & Referral Centre, QLD
 Women's Liberation Halfway House, VIC
 Women's Place, VIC
 Women's Resource Information & Support Centre, VIC
 Women's Shelter Armidale, NSW
 Wonthella House, WA
 Woorarra Inc, VIC
 Woy Woy Women's & Children's Service, NSW
 Yawarra Meamei Women's Group, NSW

Yoorana Women's Domestic Violence Resource Service, QLD
 YWCA of Darwin - Domestic Violence Programmesme, NT
 Zena Collective (Barwon Women's Domestic Violence Service), VIC

ASSOCIATE

Albany Women's Centre
 Alice's Cottages
 Anderson, Barbara (Louise Lodge)
 Anglicare Tasmania
 Armidale & District Women's Centre
 B Miles Women's Housing Scheme
 Bathurst Women's Housing Programs
 Bonnie Women's Refuge
 Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
 CASA House
 City Women's Hostel
 Crossroads Sunbury Accommodation Service
 Domestic Violence Helpline (UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide)
 Domestic Violence Unit, (WA Department for Community Development)
 Drug & Alcohol Women's Network
 Eloura House
 Family Access Network
 Laurel House (Northern Sexual Assault Group)
 Madonna House
 Majella House
 Manning District Emergency Accommodation
 Marian House
 Marnin Bowa Dumbara Family Healing Centre
 Mary & Martha's
 Mission Australia
 No to Violence
 North Queensland Women's Legal Service
 Northern Region Young Women's Accommodation Project
 Orana Lodge
 Port Augusta Women's Shelter
 Ruby Gaea - Darwin Centre Against Rape
 Sacred Heart Mission
 Sexual Assault Support Service
 Sisters Housing Enterprise
 Tweed Shire Women's Service
 Waratah Support Centre
 WAYSS Domestic Violence Programme
 West QLD ATSI Corporation
 Wollongong Women's Housing
 Women Up North Housing
 Women's Health West
 Women's Information Support & Housing in the North
 Young Woman's & Children's Support Services Coalition
 Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre
 Zonta House Refuge Association

RECIPROCAL

ACT Shelter, ACT
 Children By Choice, QLD
 National Council of Single Mothers & their Children, SA
 Women With Disabilities Australia, TAS

Women's Services Network

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