

WESNET



*The Women's Services Network
Annual Report
2005-06*

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I am pleased to report that member services continued their support for WESNET over the last 12 months. It is with this support that WESNET has continued representing the interests of members at every opportunity. Our membership continues to grow with 19 new services joining this year. This is very gratifying as so many other forces such as competitive tendering, under funding and the lack of time and resources can isolate us from each other and it is very import for our feminist services to collectivise our experiences and to stay connected with each other.

This year we have been involved with the new campaign by The Body Shop, '*Stop Violence in the Home*'. This campaign included a short community attitude survey. The survey results will be available later this year. It is fantastic that an organisation like The Body Shop tackles domestic violence issues and includes WESNET in their work.

WESNET and the members along with AFHO were involved with monitoring the Commonwealth/State negotiations for SAAP V and raised numerous issues around adequate funding to cover the real costs of services and for funding to cover the costs of children who accompany their mother to refuge. Our concerns were not taken up and subsequently we are now locked into a 5 year agreement with no growth and no support for services to meet the increased costs of wages and operating a domestic and family violence service.

Several conferences were attended over the year, and papers presented, as follows,

"Refocusing Women's Experience of Violence", Bankstown NSW September 2005; 10th International Women & Health Meeting, New Delhi, India, September 2005; and the Queensland Women's Health Network AGM, Townsville, December 2005.

As a peak body it is important that we meet the needs of the members and this is mostly done through the connections and networking activities of the State and Territory Representatives as they carry out their work in their services and for WESNET. All the representatives have enormous experience with the issues of domestic and family violence and provide these skills and knowledge to the task of influencing policies and systems in order to enhance the safety of women and children in our society by providing adequate funding for the services needed and by legislating appropriate laws. Their passionate commitment to stopping the violence against women is such an important asset for our community. The National Committee for 2005-06 included Representatives and their Proxies, as follows:

ACT: Penny Becker and Winsome Willow.
Indigenous: Shirley Slann and Marilyn Fogarty.
NESB: Fauziah Varusay and Annabelle Allimant.
NSW: Monica Mazzone and Cat Gander.
NT: Sue Brownlee and Max Schulte.
Queensland: Lindy Edwards and Jane Doyle.
SA: Vicki Lachlan and Julie Felus.
TAS: Terri Francis and Chris Drew.
Victoria: Julie Oberin and Fiona MacCormack.
WA: Kedy Kristal and Arina Aoina.

We wish to thank and farewell Elba Cruz who resigned as ACT Representative earlier this year.

As we all well know the whole climate we are operating within is very challenging. WESNET believes that it is important that the voices and experiences of women and children in domestic violence and the connections with homelessness, are heard strongly in the sector. WESNET is one of the founding members of the homeless peak body the Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations. WESNET provides 3 representatives to the AFHO Board and during the past year the underpinnings of AFHO have been reviewed and many changes have been made to the management structure and function of AFHO as the Federation of three National peaks, WESNET, NYCH (National Youth Coalition for Housing) and CHPA (Council for Homeless Persons Australia).

Lastly, we have been fortunate to have Sira Nicholas who plays such an important role in the cohesion of WESNET as the Coordinator. Being an employer in the current climate is challenging, it is important to WESNET that our values about respect and empowerment of women is translated in all our collegial relationships.

ACT Women Service's activities

The ACT women's sector has become a strong and united network over the past 12 months and is currently working to strengthen relationships between workers and services. The network is reestablishing its aims, policies and procedures and is planning for a broader representation on the network in the next year. Everyone has welcomed this direction.

Pathways project

One of the significant developments in the women's sector over the past few months has been the commitment by women service's to the development of a service system for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the ACT, titled the 'Pathways project'. The services traditionally referred to as the 'women's sector' and related agencies are committed to developing this service system which aims to benefit the women and children who need support and/or accommodation. The aim of the proposed system is to provide:

- a range of options for support and accommodation;
- a streamlined pathway through the system with minimal points of contacts;
- consistency in the response to women throughout the system;
- consistent practices and understandings in the response to children throughout the system; and
- flexibility to meet the needs of women and their children.

At this point services are developing a common assessment and referral form as the next phase of the implementation plan. Services believe that this approach is necessary and is also possible, particularly in a city with a population of approximately 350,000.

Impact of ACT budget on community housing and homelessness sector

The impact of the ACT Government's financial plan on the community sector is significant. Community housing providers and services being provided to people experiencing homelessness across the Territory is the substantial reductions to their funding levels, commencing 1 July 2006. These reductions affect the funding levels for a number of the SAAP funded services including those providing services to women and children. Additionally, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DDHCS) who manages SAAP in the ACT are requiring considerable reforms within organisations with an emphasis on the development of integrated service systems. While the need for reform is accepted the degree of change required has created great anxiety and fear within the workforce across the sector. The organisations that are affected in the ACT are Centacare, Anglicare, St Vincent de Paul, Toora Women Inc and Beryl Women's Refuge, all of whom manage SAAP services, some for women.

Transitional housing program

The DDHCS has established a Transitional Housing program that will make properties available to the SAAP sector that will enable the crisis services to have a housing exit point for some service users. This has resulted from crisis services no longer providing crisis accommodation and support due to the lack of housing exit points, resulting in an inability for services in the ACT to provide any form of crisis response. This project will provide short

term accommodation for people who are ready to move to more independent living and are not in need of the intensive support provided in the SAAP accommodation system. There is the potential for SAAP services to utilise long term vacant, hard to let and marked for redevelopment public housing properties for transitional accommodation. The aim of this program is to reduce pressures on crisis accommodation by providing an appropriate accommodation alternative for people with low support needs or those with a fixed waiting period for an identified housing option.

The sector has many questions about the suitability of this approach however are working with the DDHCS to ensure that it is established and managed in the best possible way.

Restorative Justice

The ACT Government has made a commitment to introducing Restorative Justice processes for family violence and sexual assault. Currently RJ processes are used for juveniles in the ACT and although a review of this is being undertaken, it is expected that phase II, concerned with serious crimes against a person involving adult offenders, will be implemented by mid 2007.

A number of concerns have been raised at senior bureaucratic and government levels around the complexities of using RJ processes for adult offenders in relation to these crimes by a delegation from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Women's Legal Service and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council.

Women and Prisons Working Group

A number of ACT women's services have come together to consider issues for women in prison due to the fact that the ACT Government is currently building a new facility. Whilst the group understands the need to allow prisoners to be incarcerated closer to home and support networks, there is generally a view that women do not belong in prisons.

The group has been consulting with ACT women who are currently incarcerated in NSW prisons in relation to the development of a "Sisters Inside" type group to advocate and lobby for the rights of women in prison. The group is currently working with corrective services around the development of a women's health policy for the new prison. It is as yet, an unfunded group and the government seem reluctant to commit any funds for community services to be able to provide any services at the prison.

Many thanks go to Veronica Wensing for her assistance with this report

Many of the issues that have been reported last year are still current, notably service viability, continuing unmet demand that cannot be addressed within current funding levels and lack of affordable and appropriate exiting housing for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Recent data on the extent of DV in NSW¹ has found that:

- Domestic violence assaults account for 35-45% of all assault incidents each year; in 2004 the NSW police recorded 68,984 incidents of assault. Of these 25,761 (37.3%) were domestic assaults.
- Since 1997, the rate of recorded domestic assaults has increased by 39.5% in the Sydney Statistical Division and 50.7% in the rest of NSW.
- In 61.8% of reported incidents of domestic assault the offender was a current or previous intimate partner of the victim.
- The majority of victims are female (71.1%) and the majority of offenders are male (80.4%).

Note: In the above, 'domestic assault' includes any people living in the same household or residential facility and relatives.

There has also been an increase in calls to the Domestic Violence line and in the taking out of AVOs.

- The Domestic Violence Line in 2003-04 received a total of 22,192 calls, compared to 10,831 when statistics were first recorded in 1996.
- In 2003-04 a total 12,607 children were involved in calls compared to 8,843 in 1996, this is a 43% increase in eight years.
- In 2002, 18,926 (285 per 100,000 population) Apprehended Violence Orders were granted. This has increased to 20,013 (297.3 per 100,000 population) in 2004.
- In a 2004 survey of rural NGOs conducted by NCOSS, demand for domestic violence and sexual assault services was reported as under increasing pressure over the last five years.

In contrast to this background of increased demand, there has not been a corresponding increase in resources. Following is a brief update on relevant issues in NSW

SAAP V

In the lead up to the new SAAP V agreement, NSW services campaigned strongly to have funding for the program increased in line with the findings of the SAAP IV national evaluation. However, the final agreement reached in late September 2005 provides no increase (other than indexation) in base funding for the program in NSW.

The Innovation and Investment Fund money cannot be used for core funding; as a result services will be put at risk and may have to reduce programs or number of staffed hours. This is of great concern for the sector.

SaCS Award

The increase in the SaCS award, while very welcome, will also put additional financial stress on the sector. The NSW Industrial Relations Commission awarded a 3.5% increase in award wages for SACS workers each year for the next three years, payable from the 1st of July in 2006, 2007, 2008.

The NSW Government has agreed to provide an increase of 3.3% in 2006-07 to NGOs in Commonwealth-State funding programs for the portion of the program that is funded by the State. The NGO sector is lobbying the Commonwealth to match the 3.3% State contribution, however to date there is no increase in funding for this portion of the award increase.

DoCS New Funding Policy

The NSW Department of Community Services (DOCS) has developed a new funding policy for all its funded services. In the case of SAAP, the funding reform is linked in with the SAAP V Bilateral Agreement.

The policy will link funding levels to service outcomes through a shift to performance-based contracting. The policy also advocates more flexible funding options ranging from contestable Expression of Interest processes to direct allocation of funding. There are concerns in the sector that as a result smaller services will be squeezed out of the sector by big organisations/charities. As a part of the funding report DoCS is also establishing a performance Monitoring Framework, which will provide the basis for monitoring and managing all DoCS' renewable contracts.

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) Update

With TIS withdrawing fee free services for funded services, in NSW DOCS has included SAAP services in the Interpreter Scheme which has been put in place for funded services. Interpreting services are therefore continuing.

Risk Assessment Tool

The Risk Assessment Tool was developed in response to the Ombudsman Report on exclusion in SAAP services. The tool assists SAAP services in carrying out individual risks assessment of potential clients and where possible managing risk. The tool was piloted last year and evaluated very successfully. It is currently being rolled out across NSW with intensive training made available by DoCS for all SAAP services.

Implementation of the Magellan Project in NSW

Initial implementation of the Magellan Project commenced in October 2005. The DoCS Helpline began receiving reports, limited for the moment to the Sydney Registry of the Family Court and restricted to cases where children and young people reside in the Metro Central Region of DoCS.

This arrangement will be in place for at least 12 months so that DoCS can assess resource implications, as well as the outcomes achieved for the children and young people concerned in these cases. Following this 12 month period, DoCS will review the Project to consider a state-wide roll out to all DoCS offices across New South Wales.

Ombudsman Investigation into Police Responses to Domestic Violence

The NSW Ombudsman is conducting an investigation into the effectiveness of the policing of domestic violence, focusing on:

- major issues and concerns identified by key stakeholders in relation to the quality of the police response to DV and how this impacts on victims;
- compliance with and adequacy of domestic violence standard operating procedures;
- the role of the Domestic Violence Liaison Officers;
- positive initiatives implemented in individual commands both in NSW and other jurisdictions; and
- the capacity and quality of corporate oversight and monitoring of the state-wide police response to domestic violence.

The Ombudsman expects to report his findings and recommendations later in 2006.

Domestic Violence Committee Coalition

A new Domestic Violence Committee Coalition was formed which includes the 83 domestic violence committees across the state of NSW. The Coalition has held a number of actions, including flower laying ceremonies outside NSW Parliament, to acknowledge women who have died in the context of domestic violence and to call for the establishment of a domestic violence homicide review team. To date 11 women and 2 children have died in NSW this year. These actions have received media coverage and positive response from MPs. The Coalition will continue lobbying in the run up to the NSW elections.

Reshaping Public Housing

The NSW Department of Housing is proposing to implement reforms to the public housing system in relation to access, allocation and tenure. These reforms will make public housing harder to access for clients without complex and multiple needs and security of tenure will not be guaranteed, as the clients' situation will be subjected to review and if their circumstances change and their income increase they may have to leave public housing.

The sector is concerned on the effects of this reform on women and children escaping domestic violence, given that it is already difficult for them to obtain public housing and given that the rental market is largely unaffordable. Moreover, insecurity of tenure will impact on women and children recovering.

Sexual Assault Taskforce

A recent report² by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research shows that only one in ten of the more than 7,000 sexual and indecent assault incidents reported to NSW Police each year result in someone being found guilty in court. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reported that more than 90 per cent of reported rapes did not result in convictions and only 17 per cent ended up in court.

In 2004 the NSW Government set up a taskforce, which included judges, barristers, counsellors and academics, to try to raise conviction rates for sexual assaults, which are among the lowest for any crime. The taskforce has made more than 70 recommendations aimed at avoiding delays, boosting convictions and reducing the trauma for witnesses giving evidence against alleged attackers. The sexual assault taskforce has recommended that specialist courts for rape cases should be set up to assist victims and reverse low rates of convictions for sexual assaults and that prosecutors be specially trained.

¹ NCOS (2005) Closing the Gap: Social and economic priorities for a fair and sustainable community. 2006-2007 State Budget.

² Fitzgerald, Jacqueline. (2006) *The attrition of sexual offences from the New South Wales criminal justice system* in Crime and Justice Bulletin No 92, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Family Relationship Centres

Relationships Australia and Anglicare Resolve were successful in their joint bid to establish a Family Relationship Centre (FRC) and are partner agencies in delivering services associated with the FRC in Darwin. Centacare will be providing early intervention programs and contact centres in Darwin, Palmerston, and Alice Springs. Although the presence of family violence provides an exemption from participating in the mediation process, there are clear indications from the Commonwealth that there is an expectation of 50/50 shared parenting and FRCs are expected to provide an alternative to the court process. 2006/2007 will provide a clearer picture of the impact of FRCs on women and their children escaping violence.

Support for Children

Since our last report, Centacare in Darwin has been funded to provide counseling and/or other appropriate therapeutic support for children who have experienced directly, or been exposed to, domestic and/or family violence. At the time of reporting, the position is funded two days per week. This is clearly insufficient to meet the needs of clients in the Darwin and Palmerston region, and leaves begging the question of children located in remote areas.

Exit Points

Exit points for women and their children leaving shelter remain an ongoing and ever more difficult situation. Territory Housing are not building new family homes, and are selling off older larger houses, thereby diminishing access to public housing stock further. Although women are able to apply for bond and rent assistance, access to the private rental market remains difficult due to high rents and/or screening out processes by landlords or agents.

Antisocial Behaviour (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2005

The passing of this Bill through the NT Legislative Assembly has made it possible for Territory Housing to require public housing tenants to enter into 'acceptable behaviour agreements'. This agreement is in addition to the usual lease signed by tenants. The tenant must agree to not engage in antisocial behaviour, including vandalism, littering and the emission of excessive noise, and extends to the behaviour of other people who are at the premises with the consent of the tenant.

The decision to request a tenant to enter into an acceptable behaviour agreement is made by individual employees who screen on the basis of the history of the tenant's lease, or the history of any previous public housing lease in the Territory, including debt. If a tenant refuses to sign the agreement after being requested to do so, any existing tenancy agreement may be terminated by the Local Court.

Additionally, third parties, for example, neighbours, may apply to the courts to have a tenant (both public and private) evicted if the person feels they have been adversely affected by 'unacceptable' behaviour.

There are several concerns expressed by advocates for women escaping violence. They include:

- the process adds an unnecessary bureaucratic layer to the already complicated method of applying for public housing;
- the request to enter into an agreement is discretionary upon the judgement of individual Territory Housing employees and therefore subject to variations in application;
- women and children escaping violence often have acquired debt for which they are not responsible;
- with a lease already in place, the agreement acts as a form of intimidation and sets women up to be responsible for the behaviour of people they may not be able to control; and
- neighbours may exercise their right to apply to the courts for eviction over trivial matters.

Women's services and NT Shelter have strongly argued that appropriate support for those having difficulties sustaining tenancies is a more appropriate response than the legislation as it stands.

Police and Restraining Orders

Police in the Northern Territory are now able to issue restraining orders outside normal court sitting hours, without having to consult an 'on-call' magistrate in the middle of the night. Orders are then confirmed at the first opportunity during usual court times. Services in remote locations report that this is working well for the women they support.

Review of the Domestic Violence Act

Discussion about a review of the Act has been taking place for some time. Various jurisdictions, most recently Tasmania, have recently examined and reformed their legislation, and the NT Department of Justice has drawn up a discussion paper for distribution in the coming financial year. Forums will be held throughout the Territory to seek input from as many people as possible on such things as whether children being exposed to domestic violence should be deemed a criminal offence; should emotional and economic abuse be included in the legal definition of domestic violence; should people be able to take out restraining orders against neighbours or other individuals, rather than only those with whom one has had a 'domestic' or personal relationship.

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

The NT Legal Aid Commission successfully applied for a grant from the Australian Government Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative through the Office for Women. The funding will be used to deliver an all day forum titled the Integrated Family Violence Justice Project. Workers from the Australian Capital Territory Family Violence Intervention Program will provide information about a coordinated approach to domestic violence that focuses on the criminal justice system and in which agencies work collaboratively.



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

Services across Queensland continue to experience problems with insufficient exit options for women in domestic violence shelters. There is a chronic shortage of accessible, affordable housing for women, rents have increased dramatically, and there is no increase in Department of Housing stock, so that even if accepted for priority housing, a family could be waiting months. The result of this in many areas, is that women are staying longer in the shelters and with no increase in the number of refuge places, there are many occasions when women and children are not able to access the safety of a shelter because of lack of vacancies. DV Connect, who run the State-wide domestic violence phone line, do have some funding to place women in motels overnight when no places are available, or transport them to another refuge in another town. Whilst this deals with the women's immediate need for safe accommodation, the concern has always been that there is no support for these women, and it is usually only an overnight solution. Because of concerns around the inadequacy of this as a solution, DV Connect and the Brisbane Domestic Violence and Advocacy Service, have funded a Project Worker to look at what the need is for support for these women, within the Brisbane area, and how this support could be provided.

As well as the problem of insufficient beds, refuges in Queensland are experiencing an increase in high risk and complex needs clients. This has implications, not only for the other residents, particularly in communal shelters, but also the safety of workers. Women with severe alcohol and drug issues are often unable to access shelters, because of previous behaviour, and this puts them at greater risk.

The issue of costs to refuges and other domestic violence services for the Telephone Interpreting Service has still not satisfactorily been dealt with. The Department of Communities have made available to services a one-off grant to cover their costs, based on the expenses of each service in previous years. They have indicated that there will be a further one-off grant for the next 12 months, but have made no commitment to develop a more permanent and satisfactory response. Understandably there are concerns in the sector as shelters are seeing an increase in the numbers of immigrant and refugee women and children needing safe accommodation. This is particularly the case in some of the regional areas, where there are very few specific services to support these women.

At a State-wide meeting of shelters and domestic violence services in 2005, a decision was made to use funds from The Body Shop for women in shelters without access to income. The funds have been administered by the Immigrant Women's Support Service, and available to refuges throughout the State. This has been of great assistance to the women and also the shelters whose resources are often stretched by these clients whose stay in the refuge is often a lot longer, because of their lack of access to income.

As in other states, the Family Relationship Centres have been starting up, and so far, as expected, the feeling within the domestic violence sector has not been positive. This is mainly because the funding in most cases has gone to large organisations that have made no effort to work with existing domestic violence services and shelters.

A major issue raised by services across the State, is the chronic worker shortage. The number of generalist and specialised workers cannot meet the current demand, particularly with the recent roll out of large amounts of funding to set up new services. Services are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and then to retain skilled professional workers, and new graduates who are applying for positions often appear to be ill-prepared with regards to

the recruitment process. The situation is compounded by the fact that current levels of funding, particularly in SAAP services does not reflect the need for increases to funding for wages. In Queensland there is inconsistency within the Department of Communities funding for wages to different programs, with SAAP services coming off worse. We were recently advised that the CPI increase for non-government organisations would be increased to 3.4%, but when the funding came through, SAAP services only received 2.8%, and other programs 3.4%. The only reasoning for this could be that SAAP is Federal as well as State funding!

On a brighter note, there has been a huge injection of funding for homelessness in Queensland, with at least 5 regions receiving funding for new services, with associated brokerage funds, and also some services receiving enhancement funding. Unfortunately, there has not been much increase in actual housing, or crisis beds, but in areas where there has been a large amount of brokerage funds made available to purchase accommodation or prevent people becoming homeless (rent arrears etc), this should ease the burden on existing under resourced SAAP services.

There are still plans to hold a state-wide conference of women's shelters and domestic violence services, in collaboration with women's health and sexual assault services. It is hoped to secure some funding for such an event from the Queensland Office for Women.

The Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services in SA is currently working on a number of projects which mostly compound the needs of women and children who've experienced domestic violence.

We are monitoring, and hoping to write up issues and case studies of the effect of the "Welfare to Work" legislation on women and children. The whole process appears to have a number of flaws or uncertainties for women. There are a number of other women's organisations who are keen to feed into any research done on the havoc this legislation will wreak on women and children's lives.

Although the Family Relationship Centres have only recently been implemented in SA, services are again performing a watching brief on the impact of the FRCs. SA services responded when asked to comment on the new Centres, but with no result.

The issues that women and children face are becoming increasingly complex. Workers require more training, and need to develop extensive networks to enable the appropriate assistance to women.

Despite the reconfiguration of the Department of Families and Communities, no extra resources appear to be provided towards housing options for those who are homeless, or alternative solutions as exit points from the SAAP sector.

Lack of affordable housing remains a huge issue in SA, and there is little private rental housing available especially in the lower end of the market. Public housing is diminishing and community housing is growing very slowly. Even with the generally lower cost of housing in SA, it is in such short supply and therefore unattainable for the women and children in need.

There is a bottle neck effect for both entry and exit points in SAAP services, accessed by women and children. SAAP services will soon undergo a review (which usually means 'cost' efficiencies) and there is much concern that our clients will be further disadvantaged in the future. Currently the women's SAAP services are concerned because many received either 1 or 2 year service agreements in the latest round, with no future guarantees given.

Another area under review by the Department is the entry points for crisis accommodation in the SAAP system. The possibility of having one generic service for all clients, rather than specific services working with victims of domestic violence, is now being questioned.

Consultative structures are not necessarily in vogue at present, and concern lies that grass-roots issues are not being listened or attended to. At a recent gathering for Indigenous women across the State, participants stated boldly they were sick of being 'consulted' without any positive outcomes. However with housing being one of the primary concerns for Indigenous communities, the recent devolution of the independent Aboriginal Housing Authority in SA will further their cynicism.

The Domestic Violence Action Group is growing with both regional and specialist area groups joining the network, which is now becoming more co-ordinated. The DVAG will hold another two-day conference in Adelaide for workers in the field, as occurred last year.

There continues to be concern for the inability to either attract or retain good staff in SAAP services because of pay and conditions.

There will be a statewide SAAP conference in November, hosted by Homelessness SA, but the due to the unavailability of resources, positive outcomes are not expected.

Housing issues

Lack of affordable housing remains a major issue for Tasmanians. Housing affordability is at an all time low in 2006. Tasmania has seen constant rent increases and low vacancy rates in the private rental market. Private rent is 40-50% higher than 5 years ago. For the past 6 years the vacancy rate has remained below 3% and so it is a tight and competitive market.

There has been a large decrease in the amount of public housing with older properties being sold and not replaced. The number of public houses has decreased from approximately 14,000 to 11,500 in the last few years. These factors obviously impact hugely on women and children particularly when they have had to leave their homes due to domestic and family violence. The shelter system remains stretched in spite of the impact of Safe at Home initiative. The public housing list is over 3000 and so exit points from crisis accommodation services are very limited.

The State Government's Affordable Housing Organisation has been slow to start. This is the key initiative by the State Government towards affordable housing over the next 4 years. It will be funded for \$24 million over 4 years with access to \$35 million worth of Crown land for the development of affordable housing. The Government anticipate that around 700 newly constructed properties could be leased by the AHO but this is still in the developmental stage.

Legislation has now been passed for a Residential Deposit Authority (Bond Board) for Tasmania. It is hoped that this will commence early in 2007. This development is long overdue.

Proposed Tamar Valley Pulp Mill

There has been much public debate about the proposed pulp mill but in terms of housing issues, Shelter Tasmania has made a recent submission to the Resource Planning and Development Commission regarding grave concerns about the impact on the local community of the influx of large numbers of workers from interstate and overseas in terms of inflating rental costs and reducing the availability of low budget accommodation that is already in very short supply.

Although Gunns' Integrated Impact Statement includes a proposal to build temporary dwellings for 800 workers, it is estimated that over 3500 new workers will arrive in the Tamar Valley during the construction phase of the project. The pulp mill raises other huge issues about high levels of pollution, increased numbers of log trucks and other major health and safety issues too many to describe in this report.

Changes within the structure of DHHS

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services has undergone a restructure and this will mean that within the next month Housing Tasmania will take on responsibility for SAAP. The aim is to provide the opportunity to develop a continuum of service from homelessness, through emergency and transitional accommodation into long term secure accommodation. It will be interesting to see how this works out.

Safe at Home

This initiative appears to have passed the initial crisis phase and the government services that are integral to the system are becoming accustomed to the new ways of working. Overall the feedback from women is that the Police response is much improved with very few incidents resulting in no action from Police. Although if the risk is assessed as high, the Police can impose Orders against the wishes of the victim, in most cases, consultation with the victim will result in an Order that can range from basic 'keep the peace' conditions to eviction and full restrictions on contact. The key government departments meet every week to coordinate cases and there seems to have been an improvement in the mutual understandings of different ways of working. There is still much room for improvement of course.

The non government sector dealing with victims of domestic and family violence has unfortunately been left out of the information loop. A grant became available that has been taken up by Yemaya Women's Support Service to employ part time workers to consult with key NGO's to ascertain training and information needs to enable these services to understand the SAH system and to understand and fulfil any obligations under the new Family Violence Act. The project for the next year will also set up a State-wide peer support network for these key agencies. These include Shelters, counselling services and various services run by Anglicare and Centacare.

Sexual Assault Services Review

The State Government has recently released this report completed nearly a year ago. I have not had an opportunity to read the report but basically it was critical of inconsistencies between the 3 services in the State, the chronic lack of forensic services for victims of sexual assault and the lack of adequate funding to respond to the need for both counselling and community education. As a result, funding has been increased and we look forward to an improvement in these services.

General

Other than the above, services for women in Tasmania have not received any significant increases in funding other than indexation. We have also sadly lost the Working Women's Centre in Hobart. In spite of recent increases in the CSA Award, wage rates still fall far short of equivalent work in government services. Women's services remain undervalued and under resourced and still rely on the goodwill of workers committed to the fight to maintain and strengthen women's services and rights.

I wish to acknowledge and thank Pattie Chugg of Shelter Tasmania for her assistance with this report.

The last twelve months has seen significant reform in Victoria for the women's domestic violence sector – and not all positive. In last year's Annual Report, Fiona MacCormack and I wrote ... *"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"*. Shamefully, the Victorian Labor Government, led by Premier Bracks and driven by Housing Minister Candy Broad put all of the domestic violence outreach services, the outreach children's workers, the Family Violence Prevention Networkers and other family violence counselling and support services across the state up for public competitive tendering.

Interestingly the Government refused to call it a tender, stating that it was only an expression of interest submission process. However, the process was 'open' rather than 'select' tender and completely competitive on the 'open market'. The Government argued that they did not defund the outreach services because they had a chance of getting their funds back. Ironically, most did, except for one funded service in the Western metropolitan area - despite its apparent good 'performance'. It did not partner in the right consortia apparently. The services which did get their funding back have been funded at a reduced 'unit costed' rate with increased performance targets. The whole process was a fiasco and completely unnecessary. One has to ask how much of our valuable funding went into this exercise and how many clients suffered because resources in the way of extra time and resources had to go into the preparation of tender documents? If the Government had a problem with some services they should have 'performance managed' them. It seems simply that it was an exercise to mainstream our women's domestic violence services and rationalise their funding by introducing unit costing. In any one's eyes, it was a very clumsy way of cutting funding to services.

Even services which ended up being successful in winning funding back were not aware of whether they had been successful or not until just over a month before their money ran out and had to 'wind up' their operations. Some organisations were preparing to give their staff their 30 days notice of the termination of their employment. Some organisations were trying to see if they could get out of office lease contracts if they had to. All with very little notice from the Government that this was going to occur, and very late notice that services had been successful in their tender bid. If services managed their business as badly as the way the Victorian Government managed this exercise then mmm maybe they would lose their funding.

The tender process stipulated that the government wanted consortia tenders demonstrating integration but because the process was competitive most regions were in chaos and disarray. It was a debacle.

The ASU came in late to try and achieve damage control but wasn't able to stop the tendering. The tender specifications stipulated also an increase in skill and qualifications for workers which is an added unfunded cost to services.

All in all it is shameful that a Labor government suddenly did this in an environment of genuine partnership. Our sector had been sitting on the Statewide Steering Committee over the last 2 years working collaboratively on reform when despite the articulated 'whole of government approach' the Office of Housing decided to tender and thus rationalise and mainstream the women's domestic violence sector. So much for trust and partnerships with the Labor government. Pleas to the Premier and the other 4 Ministers involved, Mary

Delahunty, Minister for Women, Tim Holding, Police Minister, Cheryl Garbutt, Minister for Community Services and Children, and Rob Hulls, Attorney General, all fell on deaf ears unwilling to intervene because the 'whole of government' was complicit in the rationalisation of our services.

Along with the 'reforms' some positions became redundant.

1. The Family Violence Prevention Networkers are now redundant and the position reconfigured into a 'Regional Integration Leadership' position. Only one existing networker that I am aware of was going to be offered the new 'coordination' role, all of the others have been told they are redundant. The ASU has been lobbying for redundancy payouts but I'm not aware of decisions.
2. The dedicated domestic violence outreach children's workers are no longer funded and instead the funding mix says that all programs must meet 25% target of children.

There are some new programs with some new money.

- Counselling for women and for children – a small amount of dollars. This includes one on one counselling as well as group work.
- Intensive case management for women with complex needs and multiple police interventions – very small targets.
- Private rental brokerage program which had been successfully piloted.
- Small amounts of funding for women's accommodation and men's accommodation vouchers to enable perpetrators to be accommodated if they leave the family home.
- Increased after hours money but with unit costing and hugely increased targets so services won't be able to meet targets. Services have been told that if they don't meet their targets they have to give the rest back or have it reduced next year so that is effectively a large funding cut for these services.
- The Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service in Melbourne has received some extra funding to help with after hours responses.
- Men's Behaviour Change Programs were also funded for the first time across the state.
- Additionally a statewide risk assessment framework and tool is being developed by private consultants KPMG.

The Government claims it is investing \$35.1 million over 4 years, however, as governments are inclined to do, a large proportion of this is 'old' money which was historically allocated to the domestic violence outreach services but recounted as if it is a new injection of funds. At the same time they announce an unexpectedly high budget surplus of \$825 million as they go into election mode for November 25th.

Indigenous Family Violence.

The Indigenous Family Violence Strategy is underway. This includes:

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

It aims to deliver services to respond to the particular needs of Indigenous men, women and children to help prevent, reduce and respond to family violence in Indigenous communities.

In 2002, the Victorian Government released the Framework for the development of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy: a partnership approach between Indigenous Communities and Government (the Framework). The Framework outlined a three stage process to develop and implement an Indigenous Family Violence Strategy in Victoria.

- Stage One involved establishing an Indigenous-led Task Force to provide the Government with advice about how to effectively address family violence within Indigenous Communities.
- Stage Two requires the Government to respond to the recommendations of the Task Force.
- Stage Three will see the development and implementation of the Indigenous Family Violence Plan.

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 the state-wide training and policy.

Domestic and Family Violence Sector Code of Practice.

A Code of Practice for domestic violence services neared completion. As we said last year, developing a Code of Practice was always going to be a challenge given the diversity of services and models of practice. Domestic Violence Victoria 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.

Accreditation and Registration.

As the dust settles from the tender process all domestic violence service providers are now preparing for accreditation, to be achieved by December 2008 otherwise funding will be withdrawn. Those organisations which also provide housing such as refuges and domestic violence outreach services will also have to meet rigorous housing registration criteria. In my view, the Government is hoping that our sector will give our refuges, three-quarter way houses and other crisis properties over to large mainstream housing organisations which have housing as their core business.

It is hard not to be negative when such massive reforms occur unnecessarily and without appropriate resourcing for an already over stretched sector. No funding has gone into evaluating the effects of these reforms and rationalisations on service viability, skilled worker retention or client outcomes.

In February 2006, WA had a change of Premier and in the resulting Cabinet reshuffle, David Templeman was made Minister for Community Development, Seniors and Volunteering, Youth, and Minister assisting the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

In the 2005-06 Budget due to the highly organised and sustained *More Than a Bed* campaign, the Government announced the first increase since 1989 to core funding for SAAP services. Each SAAP service will receive 10% increase to the State Government's contribution (approximately 40%) to their 2005-06 funding level.

The Government also committed to funding \$4.5 million over four years towards a new women's refuge in the outer northern suburbs of Perth. However the crisis in exit point housing from crisis services continues. There has been a 30% increase in house prices in WA in the last year. Private rental prices have significantly increased and the number of available houses is very low.

The Minister has announced a functional review of the Department for Community Development (DCD) after concerns about the abuse of children in the departments care and DCD staff taking industrial action over lack of resources and over whelming case loads.

The Women's Council for Domestic & Family Violence Services (WCDFVS) has partnered with the Family Violence Unit again to hold the 16th Annual Silent Memorial March. There have been 17 deaths since the last march, 17 cardboard coffins were displayed with a red rose on each which was very visually moving. This year the March included pets to highlight the connection between pet abuse and domestic violence in homes. Two refuges have developed up small projects to start addressing this issue in WA.

WA has a new Children and Community Services Act and Working with Children (Criminal record checking) Act. The Working with Children Act will phase in criminal checks for paid and voluntary workers in all areas where children are involved. The checks provide a valid card for three years and employers are liable if they employ staff without a current card.

The WCDFVS held a round table discussion with Tanya Plibersek in March to respond to National Australian Labour Party policy discussion paper on Women's Affairs and the National Women's Safety Plan.

The Family Violence Unit reviewed the 17 regional domestic violence committees late in 2005-06 to assess the effectiveness of the model in protecting women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. The review identified a need for a stronger focus on the safety of women and children through improved agency coordination and service provision. The review recommended the establishment of a Regional Coordination Response to Family and Domestic Violence models. The RCRFDV service groups will replace the previous RDVC model.

The review has reduced the number of committees to 14. This has increased funding to those committees that remain and significantly increased the Perth metropolitan committee's range of agencies to coordinate with only a small increase in funding.

The WCDFVS held a remote gathering over 17-18 May in Broome for northern WA refuges, funding for this gathering came from The Body Shop campaign. Refuge managers from Kununurra, Broome, Derby, Newman, and Tom Price met with the Council's Executive

Officer and three Perth based refuge managers. The two day meeting which included training on the second day was a great success. The Women's Council will compile the recommendations into a checklist to assist with ongoing lobbying to increase the funding and support need by refuges in remote areas.

The first WA Family Relationship Centre based in Joondalup started in July. The Centre is managed by Anglicare in consortium with a community legal centre, Ngala (early parenting service) Citizens Advice Bureau and Edith Cowan University. Anglicare also secured the tender to provide domestic violence services to women, children and men in consortium with the Pat Giles Centre and Ngala. Anglicare also won the tender for the new children's contact centre in the northern suburbs.

The amendments to the Restraining Orders Act that came into effect in 2004 and included the new police orders are being reviewed as to their effectiveness. The initial indications are that despite some minor problems with the legislation the ongoing issues continue to be attitudinal within the court system and police service.

National Indigenous Women's Gathering

Addressing Indigenous family violence is a shared responsibility between all levels of government and the community. There is high-level consensus that violence is adversely and dramatically affecting the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

The nature and extent of family violence in Indigenous communities has been increasingly recognised as an issue of serious concern. There is also substantial evidence that Indigenous women are much more likely to be victims of violence within the family, and to sustain serious injury, compared to non-Indigenous women.

At the September 2005 MINCO (The Commonwealth, State, Territories and New Zealand Ministers Conference on the Status of Women), Ministers directed the National Women's Safety Taskforce (the Taskforce) to develop a National Action Plan for Addressing Indigenous Family Violence, that included national and international best practice models for addressing Indigenous Family Violence. The Taskforce was required to consult with Indigenous women and develop a range of community based, local solutions for family violence, to be presented to the Indigenous Women's Gathering in 2006.

The National Indigenous Women's Gathering was held in Adelaide on 21st – 22nd September 2006. I was very honoured to be invited by Hon Julie Bishop, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues to attend the Gathering as an Australian Government delegate. Louise Manas from the Torres Strait Islands was also selected as an Australian Government delegate. There were four Indigenous women from each state and territory selected to attend the Gathering. All Indigenous women that attended the gathering brought along their own wealth, knowledge, and experience from their own communities and states and did a fantastic job in representing their state. It was also a good opportunity to network and talk and discuss with other Indigenous women the issues that they are facing in their own areas. Each state representative did a presentation on what was happening in their area. Two of the objectives of the Indigenous Women's Gathering were to discuss the future of Indigenous Women's Gatherings and also to discuss Community Led Solutions to Addressing Indigenous Family Violence.

The final recommendations of the gathering were made following the principles laid down by COAG (The Council of Australian Governments) that overcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples disadvantage will only happen when they are fully empowered and supported to control their own lives.

1. That MINCO continues to support the NIWG by:
 - Progressing NIWG recommendations
 - Implementing recommendations
 - Reporting back to the NIWG regarding outcomes of recommendations to each of the NIWG delegates every three months.
2. That MINCO legitimise its statement of commitment to the empowerment of all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women. This commitment entails providing funds and autonomy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to make their own decisions for the solutions in their respective communities.

3. That a working group elected by the Indigenous Women's Gathering be involved in discussions, deliberations and decisions regarding a sustainable model for the Gathering.
4. That the elected working group from the 2006 NIWG and WAM (Women's Advisory Meeting) meet to finalise a sustainable model for the NIWG in three months.
5. That secure, ongoing funding be provided to the working group to engage, consult, disseminate, collate, report back as part of decision making processes.
6. That each State and Territory establishes permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's consultative and representative mechanisms and that these groups be provided with operational funding.
 - 6a. That the Indigenous Women's Congress of WA be given ongoing support and resources to enable the Congress to be a representative body for Indigenous women in WA.
7. At the conclusion of the 2006 NIWG that the MINCO receive and respond to and endorse all the recommendations within the specified three months.
8. Community led solutions must be funded in a sustainable way that provides both human resources and infrastructure. This must be part of a community engagement process. Both COAG and MINCO must take a lead from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to address disadvantage, poverty, oppression and illiteracy.

The Ministers agreed that future Indigenous Women's Gatherings will continue. Staff from the Office for Women did a great job in supporting the Indigenous Women who attended the gathering.

Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month (May 2006)

This year the Queensland Government focused on men as perpetrators with the production of all the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month resources. North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (Mount Isa) was the winner of the Indigenous category. The NQDVRS produced posters, stickers, rural and remote booklets focusing on men as perpetrators. The posters and booklets showed the effects of domestic and family violence on the whole family. The resources have been well received from all over Australia although they have been specifically designed for North West Queensland region.

Women's Health

More Australian women are at risk of health problems associated with violence than they are at risk of any other. The United Nations released a report last year damning Australia's record on combating violence against women. The State of the World Population report (2005), released by the United Nations Population Fund outlines that the single biggest health risk to Australian women is abuse. The report also outlined impacts to the economy, supporting an Access Economics report which stated violence cost Australia more than \$8 billion per year. Unfortunately, statistics still show that about 90% of domestic and family violence incidents reported to the police are women as victims.

Male Perpetrator Programmes

Unfortunately statistics are not decreasing in regards to domestic and family violence. Government has to start funding services to assist male perpetrators of domestic and family

violence. If this does not happen, nothing will change. Women's services still need to be funded, however there needs to be funding available to assist the men that are committing domestic and family violence against women and children to stop the violence that is happening. The perpetrator needs to be accountable for his behaviour and there needs to be services available for men to stop any further violence from happening. The safety of women and children is paramount.

Although domestic and family violence is a major issue throughout Australia, it affects everyone regardless of nationality. However, statistics show that although Indigenous people only make up 2% of the population as a whole, domestic and family violence statistics show that Indigenous women are 45 times more likely to be a victim of domestic violence than non Indigenous women.

Domestic violence has many forms. However, the responses and the situations are not all written in black and white. The issues facing Indigenous women compared to non Indigenous women can be very similar or very different. Issues for women living in rural and remote communities compared to women living in suburbia are completely diverse. Domestic and family violence affects men, women and children and the community as a whole. Unless we come together to discuss the many issues, the cycle of violence will never be broken.

Non-English Speaking Background

Annabelle Allimant, Immigrant Women's Support Service (Brisbane)

I am writing this report in my role as the proxy for non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) representative. This follows Fauziah Varusay's resignation in her position as the National WESNET NESB representative. I am the Coordinator of Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) in Brisbane and have held the position of proxy in WESNET for the last 12 months. It is however, an opportunity to share the collective experiences of working with women from NESB and continue to raise awareness about some of the challenges experienced by marginalised women in the community. It is also a chance to voice the myriad of challenges organisations, not adequately funded, encounter and struggle with to ensure women from NESB and their children are provided with levels of service commensurate to their needs. I use the term NESB and CaLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) however, a person from NESB experience is marked by their inability to negotiate and know systems, access information about their rights and legislative processes as a direct result of language barriers. CaLD is used in most current policy documents as a result of a review of previous terminology like NESB that was considered to contain negative connotations and a focus on a deficit in these communities. The term CaLD is considered more inclusive. On the other hand, it is argued that this terminology is part of a move towards mainstreaming diversity and minimises the complexity of impact of differences connected to language barrier.

I have consulted with sister organisations around Australia and colleagues working with CaLD communities, in various capacities, in Queensland in writing this report. I thank them for their contribution and support.

Bilingual / Bicultural Workers

The success of working with bilingual / bicultural workers has, once again, been identified. Consideration of employing bilingual/bicultural workers is relevant for new and emerging communities as well as more established CaLD communities. The engagement of workers who have valuable knowledge and understandings of their community's cultural and linguistic issues is tremendously valuable in organisations. However consideration needs to be given to adequate remuneration of these workers; appropriate levels of training which includes dealing with issues in their own communities, consideration of safety, boundaries, handling disclosures/social interactions to name some. Additionally, adequate support processes are critical for these workers to ensure their professional development and ongoing mentoring in their role is ensured.

The direct service implication are that it requires additional resources both financial and in time which are often not available. The nature of employment involves few and irregular hours and low pay. This makes recruitment and retention of bicultural / bicultural workers as well as sustainability difficult as the conditions do not appeal to many individuals.

CaLD Children in SAAP

Children from CaLD backgrounds have the additional challenge of living in two different cultures ie. the home culture and the mainstream culture. Nationally, there are not enough appropriate services to work with CaLD children which are SAAP funded.

The experience in Queensland is that there are no CaLD specific services for children who have experienced and/or witnessed domestic violence and require counselling. This makes referrals difficult when assessments identify a need. Main-stream services have waiting lists that make urgent access a lengthy wait. Additionally mainstream services may not have the

necessary frameworks, including cross cultural skills and sensitivity, for working appropriately with children from CaLD backgrounds.

CaLD Communities in Remote and Rural Areas

Humanitarian entrants are being settled in remote or rural areas where there aren't enough services for CaLD communities. This has resulted in additional isolation to families and in particular women who are subjected to domestic violence. Some of the issues such as that of appropriate interpreters is exacerbated; housing is critical and overall support mechanisms are restricted. Mainstream services have not always been adequately resourced or have appropriately trained staff to provide optimum services to new arrivals.

Domestic Violence Provisions

Women from NESB accessing the domestic violence provision under the Migration Act and other immigration issues continue to be noted. These cases are generally very resource intensive as significant time is taken in the preparation of relevant documents. This is specifically related to genuineness of the relationship, and women having to prove domestic violence through Statutory Declarations if they don't obtain a Domestic Violence Protection Order or Apprehended Violence Order. Women sponsored as fiancé / spouses find themselves in difficult financial hardship. It is recognised that women without income or limited income place significant stress on refuges, and the case management of such cases where workers need to support women to seek financial assistance in other welfare organisations. There are situations where women rely on financial assistance from overseas help while waiting for jobs or because they have a visa that prohibits them to work as well as reliance on financial assistance agencies in Australia.

Another group that appears to be emerging is that of women on the Sub Class 457 visa (accompanying partners of skilled temporary migrants) where they cannot access the Domestic Violence Provisions for permanent residency. Hence these women and children have little or no recourse except to stay in the situation unless they are prepared to risk being asked to return to their former country (a situation many find impossible) by DIMIA. They often need to seek legal advice on migration status and whether they have skills to obtain a temporary visa in their own right. This is a risk many are too afraid to take. Women in this category are not eligible for any assistance from Centrelink or Healthcare support if they separate from their partners. This group is increasing as more migrants are entering Australia on this visa.

Funding Fee-free Interpreters

In October 2005 the SAAP V was signed and the 'fee-free' interpreter policy was withdrawn. SAAP funded services were not formally advised of this change by either the Commonwealth or State Departments that signed the Agreement. This was very poor business practice and services have felt sabotaged and excluded by the process undertaken.

While some services namely Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria have managed to negotiate some arrangements with SAAP funding bodies the issue has not been fully resolved. This has resulted in generic SAAP funded services declining to take on women who don't speak English or not engaging with professional interpreters to ensure appropriate levels of communication and service delivery.

Humanitarian Entrants and Refugees

A number of issues are critical for humanitarian and refugee entrants, particularly for new and emerging communities that have few established networks amongst their community. Some of the issues identified include the following.

Domestic Violence - Domestic violence specific services continue to identify women who have come under the humanitarian program and refugees seeking assistance from domestic violence/CaLD specific services. This point has also been identified by settlement workers. Some of the key issues identified for these women are: understandings of their rights in this country; language barriers; access to appropriate interpreters particularly for new and emerging communities where particular dialects are not available; life skills; understandings of the definitions of domestic violence in Australia; cultural stigma associated with breaking patterns of violence; understandings of the legal alternatives around family law and domestic violence; and community isolation and over identification of those communities.

Housing - Accessibility of emergency housing, transitional and long term housing is an issue relevant for the whole of the community, but particularly for women and their children escaping violent households. Some of the specific issues however, for women from NESB and/or new and emerging communities, such as African groups, include women with several children and the impossibility to be housed adequately. This often results in women returning to unsafe environments. The issue of housing also places risks with Department of Child and Safety and leads to difficult financial hardship as expensive rents (with a number of rooms) is a condition from the Department needs to be met to ensure the return of children.

Language - Another significant issue that has been identified for new and emerging communities is that some languages and dialects are not available from Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). At times, if there are registered interpreters, females may not be an option.

Community Education - There needs to be concerted efforts to provide education and awareness on domestic violence to CaLD communities as a preventative measure. The levels of understandings of domestic and / or sexual violence, its legal, social and emotional implications are not properly understood. This aspect is of particular relevance for new and emerging communities. It has also been stated by settlement workers the need for community education to be appropriately delivered considering the limitations of the target group. Some aspects to be cognisant of include: levels of literacy, cultural considerations, educational backgrounds, appropriate use of interpreters or bilingual/bicultural workers, cross cultural competencies and broad understandings of working with CaLD communities.

Mental Health Issues

Some states have disclosed that mental health issues have been increasing in their target group of women from NESB and becoming a problem because the mental health system does not seem to be adequately equipped to deal with CaLD clients, particularly women in domestic violence situations who have identified mental health issues. It has been noted that some services may refer women to a domestic violence specific service and hence it is a CaLD domestic violence service issue. It would appear that there is a need to systematically recognise the impact of domestic violence on mental health and general well being as well as the interconnected and interrelated sequelae.

This presenting issue has highlighted the need for professional development of workers specifically relating to mental health and CaLD communities. The barriers associated with understandings of definitions and systems in Australia by women from NESB have led to impacting on the existing resources of services and ongoing monitoring of practice.

Family Relationship Centres (FRC)

The introduction of Family Relationship Centres has been well documented and controversial topic in Australia particularly for services working with women and their children subjected to domestic violence. Some of the specific ongoing concerns that need monitoring in their work with families from CaLD are: how these Centres are going to be promoted amongst families from CaLD communities; consistent and appropriate use of professional interpreters; development of internal well disseminated policies relating to access and equity; consistent training of its staff around cross-cultural practices addressing issues of culture, communication, specific barriers in environments where domestic violence may also be present; framework of inclusive practices; role of FRC in systemic advocacy on issues affecting CaLD families and adequate funding to ensure that these issues are dealt with in an ethical and professional manner.

Welfare to Work Changes

It is identified that there is a need to make clients and service providers aware of changes and how to assist clients from NESB. This is putting a lot of additional pressure on women who are already feeling isolated and confused and in crisis situations. Whilst we support the need for women to be ready, willing and able to obtain employment the work first ideology does not always allow for the individual's crisis to be taken into account. Often if an exemption is allowed it is only for 4 weeks and this is not sufficient time for the woman to have dealt with interim Domestic Violence Orders that are being contested.

In conclusion it remains to say that the issues highlighted above are, but a brief summary of the myriad of situations that women from NESB are confronted with in addition to domestic and family violence. Migration experiences have serious and lingering effects on settlement – all interrelated and interconnected in a woman's life. It is fitting to reflect on how policies are being disseminated at all levels of organisational structures both government and NGO's. We know that there are many policies related to access and equity yet individuals in CaLD communities continue to struggle for a basic level of service that includes the use of professional interpreters. Albeit, policies need to be adequately funded to ensure that decisions are not based on critical competing priorities, but rather a matter of course of access and equity to those who are marginalised due to language and cultural barriers.

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 2006 being the Balance Sheet, Income Statement, 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
31 August 2006

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 (resigned)
Penny Becker	Australian Capital Territory Representative (appointed)
Monica Mazzone	New South Wales Representative
Julie Oberin	Victoria Representative
Vicki Lachlan	South Australia Representative
Terri Francis	Tasmania Representative
Sue Brownlee	Northern Territory Representative
Lindy Edwards	Queensland Representative
Fauziah Varusay	NESB Representative

(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 facilities 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 2006 was \$21,825.

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



Dated this 31st day of August 2006.

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

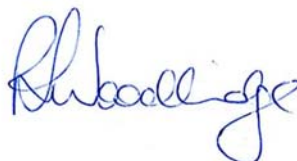
In the opinion of the committee the financial report as set out on the following pages:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of WESNET (Women's Services Network) Inc as at 30 June 2006 and its performance on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that WESNET (Women's Services Network) Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Members of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:



Committee Member



Committee Member

**Consolidated detailed statement of financial performance
for year ended 30 June 2006**

Income	2006	2005
Bank Interest	1,426	1,019
Memberships	33,886	34,727
Publication Sales	6,813	0
Other Income	929	1,328
AFHO Grant	8,409	11,909
PADV Grant	9,679	11,464
Unexpended PADV Grant	61,142	60,447
Expenditure		
Audit Fees	1,364	1,273
Bank Charges	121	202
Celebration Expenses	0	3,124
Consultancy Fees	3,500	3,500
Depreciation	2,102	1,158
Grant Expenditure - PADV	0	1,785
Insurance	896	943
Postage	1,249	672
Printing & Stationery	7,289	700
Salaries & Wages	16,430	17,645
Subscriptions & Memberships	186	141
Sundry Expenses	22	646
Superannuation	1,479	1,588
Telephone	713	706
Travel	3,441	578
Workers Compensation Insurance	525	519
	39,317	33,907
Unexpended AFHO Grant carried forward	0	8,409
Unexpended PADV Grant carried forward	0	9,679
	39,317	51,995
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	21,825	8,452
Accumulated funds brought forward	23,537	15,085
Accumulated funds carried forward	45,362	23,537

**Statement of Financial Position
as at 30 June 2006**

Members Funds	Note	2006	2005
Accumulated Funds Brought Forward		23,537	15,085
Surplus/(Deficit) for year		21,825	8,452
		45,362	23,537
Represented by :			
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank	2	42,131	36,664
Prepayments		904	896
		43,035	37,560
Non-current Assets			
Property, Plant & Equipment	4	3,027	5,129
		3,027	5,129
Total Assets		46,062	42,689
Current Liabilities			
Sundry Creditors		0	714
Income in Advance		700	350
Unexpended Grants		0	18,088
Total Liabilities		700	19,152
Net Assets		45,362	23,537

**Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 30 June 2006**

Cash Flows from Operating Activities	Note	2006	2005
Inflows of funds from operations			
Receipts		43,054	49,333
Payments		(37,587)	(34,946)
Net cash provided by operating activities	3	5,467	14,387
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		5,467	10,028
Add Opening Cash Brought Forward		36,664	26,636
Cash at the end of Financial Year	2	42,131	36,664

2. Cash Reconciliation	2006	2005
Commonwealth Bank Day to Day A/c	11,471	14,873
Westpac Operating A/c	1,483	658
CCMT Investment A/c	29,177	21,133
Total Cash at Bank	42,131	36,664
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	21,825	8,452
Depreciation	2,102	1,158
Increase/(Decrease) in debtors and receivables	(8)	34
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors and accruals	(18,452)	4,743
Net cash provided by operating activities	5,467	14,387
4(a) Plant and Equipment		
Office Equipment		
- at cost	7,894	12,486
- less accumulated depreciation	(5,483)	(8,084)
Written Down Value	2,411	4,402
4(b) Furniture & Fittings		
- at cost	3,879	3,879
- less accumulated depreciation	(3,263)	(3,152)
Written Down Value	616	727
Total Property, Plant & Equipment	3,027	5,129
Movement in the carrying amounts for each class of property, plant and equipment between the beginning and end of the current year:		
Balance at the beginning of the year	5,129	1,928
Additions	0	4,359
Depreciation expense	(2,102)	(1,158)
	3,027	5,129

**Notes to and forming part of the Accounts
for the year ended 30 June 2006**

1. Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act of the ACT. The Committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity. The financial report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act and the following Accounting Standards:

AASB 1031: Materiality

AASB110: Events Occurring After the Reporting Date

No other Australian Accounting Standards, Urgent Issues Group Consensus Views or other authoritative pronouncements of the AASB have been applied. The financial report is also prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets. The following material accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this report:

inancial Members

Full

Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge NSW
 Alice Springs Women's Shelter NT
 Amelie House NSW
 Anawim Refuge WA
 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
 Bundaberg & District Women's Domestic Violence 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 Aboriginal Corporation NSW
 Centacare Murraylands Support & Accommodation Service SA
 Central Eastern DV Service (Dawn House) SA
 Chisholm Inc QLD
 Clarence River Women's Refuge & Outreach Service NSW
 Crisis Accommodation GOVE NT
 Cumberland Women's Health Centre NSW
 Dawn House Women's Shelter NT
 Delvena Women's & Children's Shelter NSW
 Detour House Inc NSW
 Dolores Single Women's Refuge NSW
 Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre VIC
 Domestic Violence Counselling Service NT
 Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT
 Domestic Violence Crisis Service SA
 Domestic Violence Service of Central QLD
 Domestic Violence Victoria VIC
 Doomadgee Women's Shelter QLD
 Doris Women's Refuge ACT
 Dubbo Women's Housing Program NSW
 EASE VIC
 Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service VIC
 Eastlakes Women's & Children's Refuge NSW
 Elizabeth Hoffman House VIC
 Elsie Women's Refuge NSW
 Emma House Domestic Violence Service VIC
 Erin's Place Inc NSW
 Esperance Crisis Accommodation WA
 Essie Women's Refuge NSW
 Eva's Project NSW
 Eyre Peninsula Women's & Children's Support Centre SA
 Family Resource Centre SA
 GippsCare Domestic Violence Outreach Service VIC
 Goldfield's Women's Health Care Centre WA
 Goulburn Valley Community Health Service VIC
 Gunyah Women's Housing NSW
 Hastings Women's & Children's Refuge NSW
 Health Outcomes International SA
 Hedland Women's Refuge WA
 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
 Kangaroo Island Health Service SA
 Kara House VIC
 Karinya Young Womyn's Refuge TAS
 Katakudu Women's Housing Program NSW
 Kempsey Women's Refuge NSW
 Killara Women's Refuge NSW
 Koolkuna Women's Refuge - Eastern Region DViolence Services Network 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 Hunter Women's Housing NSW
 Lucy Saw Centre Association WA
 Macleod Accommodation Support Service QLD
 Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre NSW
 MARCIA Women's Refuge NSW
 Margaret Tucker Hostel VIC
 Marian Centre NSW
 Marian Community VIC
 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
 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
 Murrane Women's Housing NSW
 Muslim Women's Support Centre 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
 Ngarangga Ngurra (Halls Creek) WA
 North QLD Combined Women's Services
 North QLD Domestic Violence Resource Service
 Northern Domestic Violence Service (Berry Street Victoria) VIC
 Northern Domestic Violence Service SA
 Northern Peninsula Area Women's Shelter QLD
 Northside Women's Supported Accommodation Program ACT
 NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre NSW
 Nunga Mi:Minar SA
 Oakley House NT
 OARS Women's Accommodation Support Service SA
 Olive's Place VIC
 Pam's Place Crisis Accommodation Resource & Referral Service NSW
 Pat Thomas Memorial Community House WA
 Patricia Giles Centre WA
 Pendle Hill Crisis Centre NSW

Quantum Support Services - Family Violence Programme VIC
 Redlands Domestic Violence Service QLD
 Regina Coeli VIC
 Rockhampton Women's Shelter QLD
 Rosa Shoalhaven Women's Refuge NSW
 Ruth's Women's Shelter QLD
 Samaritan House NSW
 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
 Starick Services WA
 Stepping Out Housing Program NSW
 Stirling Women's Refuge WA
 Summers, Anne NSW
 Tablelands Women's Centre QLD
 Tanderra Women's & Children's Refuge NSW
 Taree WDVCS NSW
 Tennant Creek Women's Refuge NT
 Toora Women ACT
 Toukley Women's Refuge NSW
 Tumut & District Women's Support & Housing NSW
 Vinnies EIP/Reconnect NSW

Associate

Albany Women's Centre, WA
 Alice's Cottages, NSW
 Anglicare Tasmania, TAS
 Armidale & District Women's Centre, NSW
 Bonnie Women's Refuge, NSW
 Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, ACT
 CASA House, VIC
 Central Violence Intervention Programme, SA
 City Women's Hostel, NSW
 Cooronya House, VIC
 Dept for Community Development, DV Unit (WA)
 Drug & Alcohol Women's Network, NSW
 Elouera House, SA
 Family Access Network, VIC
 Hanover Young Women's Intensive Support Service, VIC
 Huon Domestic Violence Service, TAS
 Laurel House (Northern Sexual Assault Group), TAS
 Madonna House, QLD
 Majella House QLD Mallee Domestic Violence Services, VIC
 Manna House OzCare, QLD
 Manning District Emergency Accommodation, NSW

Reciprocal

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

Waminda House Refuge WA
 Warrabee Women's Shelter TAS
 Warrina Women & Children's Refuge NSW
 Western Domestic Violence Service SA
 Whitsunday Women's Services QLD
 Wimalah Refuge NSW
 Women's Centre for Health Matters ACT
 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 SA
 Women's Housing Ltd VIC
 Women's Housing Outreach & Support VIC
 Women's Information & Counselling Service Pt Stephens NSW
 Women's Information & Referral Centre QLD
 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
 Yemaya TAS
 Yoorana Women's Domestic Violence Resource Service QLD
 YWCA Australia ACT

Marnin Bowa Dumbara Family Healing Centre, WA
 Mary & Martha's, QLD
 Mawarnkarra Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, WA
 Mission Australia, NSW
 No to Violence, VIC
 Northern Region Young Women's Accommodation Project, NSW
 Ruby Gaea - Darwin Centre Against Rape, NT
 Strengthening Families Brisbane North, QLD
 Tweed Shire Women's Service, NSW
 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide Inc, SA
 Wagga Wagga Women's Refuge, NSW
 Waratah Support Centre, WA
 WAYSS Domestic Violence Programme, VIC
 Wollongong Women's Housing, NSW
 Women Up North Housing, NSW
 Women's Health West, VIC
 Young Woman's & Children's Support Services Coalition, SA
 Zonta House Refuge Association, WA

The Women's Services Network

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