

Combined Women's Refuge Group

May 2015

© Copyright 2015, Combined Women's Refuge Group SE QLD (CWRG), Brisbane
Written and compiled by Suzi Quixley

The CWRG is made up of women's refuges from throughout South-East Queensland. For over 30 years, the CWRG has advocated for the interests and needs of women escaping domestic and family violence, and the services which provide them with information, referral, accommodation and support. For further details or a copy of this *Report* contact: cwrg_seqld@hotmail.com

Our thanks to the following domestic violence refuges which funded and contributed to this project:

- Gareema, Save the Children Australia
- Ipswich Womens Shelter Inc
- Jebb, Save the Children Australia
- Koolkuna/Kalparrin, Uniting Care Communities
- Koongoora Inc
- Macleod Accommodation Support Service Inc
- Madonna House, Ozcare
- Mary & Martha's, Lutheran Community Care
- Maybanke Association Inc
- Parmenie, Boystown
- Windana Support Centre Inc
- Women's House Shelta, Women's Community Aid Association

Notes:

1. The abbreviation DFV is used throughout this paper to refer to all forms of *domestic and family violence*. *Domestic violence* is the term most commonly used within the sector in Queensland, however according to *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022: Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners*. This may include *physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse* (COAG n/d:2). Accordingly, this paper uses both terms: women's refuges in Queensland provide services to women and children affected by all these forms of violence.
2. The word *refuge* is used in preference to *shelter* throughout this paper, because it is the term most commonly used within the DFV sector in Queensland. It also better reflects the diversity of services, beyond accommodation alone, which characterises service provision in women's refuges.

Contents

Executive summary	2
List of recommendations	5
Addressing the gendered nature of DFV	7
Women’s refuges in Queensland – <i>best practice</i> in action	9
Accommodation alone is ineffective and inefficient	10
Specialist women’s refuges are effective and efficient	17
The importance of a holistic, customised approach	18
Long term financial and housing security is fundamental	21
Continuing support is a social investment	24
Avoiding multigenerational impacts of exposure to violence	26
The importance of collaboration, coordination and partnerships	28
Adequately resourcing women’s refuges – an economic imperative	29
Conclusion	32
Bibliography and references	33
Appendices	35
Appendix 1 - <i>Snapshot Day</i> : Referrals (DVConnect)	35
Appendix 2 - A brief history of women’s refuges in Queensland	36
Appendix 3 - Survey methodology	38
Appendix 4 - <i>Service Mapping</i> Questionnaire: Key findings	40
Appendix 5 - <i>Snapshot Day</i> : Support services provided	44
Appendix 6 - Coherent support service provision: case management	47

Executive Summary

In Queensland alone, approximately 23 women are killed by their intimate partner each year. The most dangerous time for women and children attempting to leave a violent situation is during, or immediately after, the time of separation. Approximately 30% of Australian women killed by male partners are killed after separation.

The vast majority of domestic and family violence (DFV) involves violence perpetrated by men against women. Many women in Queensland are living in terror, being persecuted by persistent violence, and threats of violence. The DVConnect *Womensline* receives over 4,000 calls every month from women who are in fear of, or in immediate threat of danger from, DFV.

An understanding of the gendered nature of DFV is therefore essential to the design of an effective response. DFV is not a series of one-off violent incidents: it generally reflects a sustained, systematic pattern of controlling behaviour and coercion. Over many years, refuge workers have learnt from the women and children who have used services that men who perpetrate domestic violence can be highly manipulative and persistent. As a result, women and children often present at women's refuges with multiple and complex needs.

Women's refuges provide the immediate security and safety which saves lives. Many women have survived DFV for long periods and have exhausted their options with family and friends. Women's refuges provide a critical pathway out of a violent setting – often, well-distant from the geographical location of the perpetrator.

However, women and children escaping DFV need *refuge* in its widest sense, rather than temporary accommodation alone. Permanently leaving a violent relationship and constructing a sustainable, violence-free life is complex and difficult for most. Women's refuges in Queensland provide more than just a safe place for women and children who are at immediate risk of violence to go: they provide practical, emotional and specialised support and advocacy for women, and dedicated services for children, who are trying to rebuild their lives. Provision of this case management is critical to sustained outcomes.

The contribution of women's refuges to reducing DFV over the past 40 years has been widely documented – within Queensland, Australia and internationally. This position paper explores the critical success factors which drive the design and implementation of women's refuges, and examines the relationship between women's refuges in Queensland and recognised *best practice*. It draws together evidence from national and international literature, 2 surveys of Queensland women's refuges conducted during 2014, and the documented experiences of women who have used these services; and recognition of the veracity of this data through government reports, policies, protocols and practical resources.

The evidence overwhelmingly recognises that women are not an homogenous group, therefore a *one size fits all* approach cannot effectively address the complex and varied needs of women and children escaping from DFV, recovering from DFV and establishing a violence-free life. This is addressed, in part, through the variations seen in women's refuges nationally, and internationally, which are reflected across services in Queensland. However, some principles are common to *best practice* in provision of refuge services. Key principles which have been consistently supported by the literature over many years are:

1. Provision of accommodation alone is an inefficient and ineffective means of responding to the needs of women and children escaping DFV.
2. Specialist women's refuges are a particularly efficient and effective immediate response to women and children survivors of DFV.
3. A holistic, customised approach to support service provision is essential to effective practice with women and children recovering from DFV.

4. Financial and housing security is a critical determinant of women and children's capacity build an independent, violence-free life.
5. Continuing support for women and children optimises their capacity to build a violence-free life.
6. Dedicated support for children reduces the risk of multigenerational harm as a result of DFV.

Women's refuges and refuge workers have listened to and supported many women over many years. As a result, they have an intimate knowledge and understanding of the realities of the nature of DFV. Workers are acutely aware of the inherent dangers that these women and children face every day. Women's refuges in Queensland understand the many and varied barriers to living a life free of violence, and have the specialist competencies required to support women to overcome these multi-faceted issues. Refuge workers have a unique capacity to understand the specialist services required to enable women and children to re-establish their lives.

Women typically leave violent settings with a variety of practical needs such as transport, money, medical assistance and food, and are at risk of returning to DFV if these are not met. All require emotional support to overcome the psychological impacts of violence, including access to refuge workers at times of crisis (whether or not this occurs during business hours), and many gain strength through group work alongside other women escaping DFV. Each woman faces her own specific challenges and may need assistance to access legal services, housing, interpreters, safety planning, specialist cultural or spiritual support, immigration support, financial counselling, mental health support, substance abuse services and/or help dealing with child protection authorities. Children's lives, too, are highly disrupted and a failure to provide direct support for children, and assistance with accessing childcare or education, can cause long term harm.

Without this specialist DFV support, women and children are less likely to leave abusive relationships and far more likely to return to situations of violence. Consistent with the findings of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, we call on the Queensland Government to invest in women's refuges which have a specialised focus on DFV and the varied services required to meet women and children's diverse needs. Women and children need services with a sophisticated understanding of the nature and impact of violence – in particular, the gendered nature of DFV. They need refuge workers who are able to respond in a tailored way to the specific and often complex and changing physical, practical and emotional difficulties they face, through a coherent case management approach.

It has been estimated that DFV costs the Queensland economy between \$2.7 and \$3.2 billion annually. In this context, the progressive funding reduction (in real terms) for women's refuges over recent years does not make economic sense. There continue to be insufficient places available in women's refuges in Queensland to meet demand. As a result, too many women and children are forced to stay in motels, without access to the emotional, practical and specialised support essential to recovering from DFV and building a new life. Too many women and children return to violent settings, because they cannot access the integrated accommodation and case management services they need. Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, immigrant and refugee clients have been particularly impacted by this reduced funding.

Women's refuges in Queensland already make a significant economic contribution. Studies have estimated the return on investment in women's refuges as between 1:3 and 1:18. Increased expenditure on women's refuges in Queensland could be expected to achieve an impressive social and economic return. Conversely, failure to meet clients' immediate needs leaves some women with little choice but to return (with their children) to violent settings – resulting on both short and long term cost pressures on other budget areas such as the police, criminal justice, housing, child protection and health systems.

Funding should be increased to women's refuges as a matter of urgency – and economic good sense.

Women's refuges have *stood the test of time*, in Queensland, nationally and internationally. In recent years developments such as perpetrator removal and outreach support programs, have provided home-based alternatives for women facing DFV. However, until rates of male violence are reduced, many women and

children in crisis will continue to need move away from unsafe settings to the safety and support which can only be provided by specialist women's refuges. Regardless of funding levels, the benefits of investment in DFV should be optimised through allocation of funds to evidence-based, effective services. Women's refuges in Queensland reflect world best practice. In particular, this paper demonstrates their capacity to closely align services to the complex needs of women and children recovering from DFV. Provision of accessible, flexible, responsive, customised, women-centred support services beyond accommodation alone is critical to these families' long term prognosis. It is essential that funding is not reallocated to large generic providers who focus on short term beds alone, without the specialist knowledge, skills and experience to provide the requisite support services.

Retention and further enhancement of existing effective women's refuges is essential to achieving a significant reduction in DFV against women and children in Queensland, and the associated savings in human and economic costs.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Queensland Government adopt a comprehensive response to DFV involving collaboration with victims/survivors, women's refuges, domestic violence services, health workers, police and the criminal justice system in order to develop safe, meaningful and effective programs for a diverse range of victims/survivors. Further, that a particular emphasis be placed on resourcing collaboration in rural and remote Queensland.

Recommendation 2: That the Queensland Government:

- Recognise that the structural, economic and cultural values of our society give power to men, making women more likely to be victims of domestic violence.
- Acknowledge the gendered nature of DFV and the overwhelming evidence that best practice approaches are based in a gendered analysis.
- Actively support best practice approaches to both DFV intervention and DFV prevention strategies.

Recommendation 3: That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to provide a variety of additional refuge beds to provide safe accommodation and support to women and children escaping DFV. The two 72 hour refuges recommended by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence and subsequently announced by the Queensland Government will assist to relieve the pressure on women waiting in motels for a refuge vacancy, but without also increasing the numbers of refuge beds, there will still be no vacancies to accommodate these families after the 72 hour period.

Recommendation 4: That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide mobile support to women and children placed in motels by DV referral services whilst awaiting a refuge placement. Additionally, that the Queensland Government ensure that the two 72 hour refuge services recently announced, be adequately funded to ensure that they are appropriately staffed to provide the necessary support to these extremely vulnerable women and children during this crisis transition.

Recommendation 5: That the Queensland Government provide adequate funding to specialised women-only refuges to enable skilled, professional, specialist support workers to provide extensive case management support to women and children escaping DFV. Furthermore, that additional funding be extended to existing refuges that have not received adequate funding increases to match wage increases for many years.

Recommendation 6: That the Queensland Government recognise the centrality of a gendered analysis to best practice DFV service provision, and the critical role that feminist organisations and women-only services play in an effective DFV response.

Recommendation 7: That the Queensland Government continue to explore and adequately resource models of integrated service delivery across both DFV and non-DFV agencies working with women affected by DFV, including expansion of the current Gold Coast pilot program.

Recommendation 8: That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally-specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping DFV, and provide adequate funding to enable services driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to provide specialised accommodation and support.

Recommendation 9: That the Queensland Government recognise the right of women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to communicate in their own language, and guarantee women's access to interpreters at all stages of the legal process, including all interactions with police and the court system. Further, that the Queensland Government provide adequate funding for women's refuges to be able to provide interpreting services to their clients free of charge.

Recommendation 10: That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally appropriate services for women and children from CALD backgrounds, and provide ongoing funding for the Immigrant Women's Support Service and the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service. Further, that the Queensland Government provide new funding to enable provision of specialist CALD services throughout Queensland.

Recommendation 11: That the Queensland Government liaise with the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection to prioritise permanent residency applications for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Recommendation 12: That the Queensland Government act to ensure that women escaping domestic violence do not incur debts resulting from DFV (such as damage to property), and make perpetrators solely responsible for these debts. Further, that the Queensland Government implement the necessary policy changes to ensure women's access to priority public housing whilst this process is undertaken.

Recommendation 13: That the Queensland Government ensure that women and children without Australian permanent residency are eligible to access Community Housing properties whilst their residency applications are pending. Additionally, that the Queensland Government consider the needs of women and children with New Zealand residency who are escaping domestic violence in Australia, and are not eligible for an income from Centrelink, to allow these families to access Community Housing.

Recommendation 14: That the Queensland Government provide additional funding to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide extended support, as required, to women and children following their refuge stay.

Recommendation 15: That the Queensland Government restore funding to the Tenancy Advocacy and Advisory Service, which provided vital support to women and children escaping DFV dealing with tenancy issues.

Recommendation 16: That the Queensland Government recognise the immediate and long term impact of DFV on children, and provide additional funding for the reinstatement of a dedicated children's support worker in each women's refuge.

Recommendation 17: That the Queensland Government recognise the economic value of the services provided by women's refuges, and lobby the Australian Government to fund research for a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis to quantify the contribution of women's refuges to the Australian economy.

Recommendation 18: That the Queensland Government made a dedicated, increased investment in existing, specialist women's refuges, which is protected from competition by large, generic, homelessness service providers.

Addressing the gendered nature of DFV

In Queensland alone, approximately 23 women are killed by their intimate partner each year (Queensland State Coroner cited in DVConnect 2013). Between 80 and 100 Australian women die at the hands of their male partners every year – and a woman in Australia is more likely to be killed in her own home by her male partner than anywhere else or by anyone else. (ABS Personal Safety Survey 2006 cited in DV Connect 2013)

The vast majority of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) situations involve violence perpetrated by men against women. For example, the DVConnect *Womensline* receives over 4,000 calls every month from women who are in fear of, or at immediate threat of, danger from DFV (ibid). As detailed in [Appendix 1](#), on the single *Snapshot Day*, a total of 159 women called the DVConnect *Womensline* (compared with 18 *Mensline* callers). A total of 81 women (with 42 accompanying children) were taken on as clients. 27 women (with 33 accompanying children) were assisted to leave their home: of these, 23 sought refuge. (The balance were provided with other services, including counselling, safety planning, information and referral.) Many women in Queensland are living in terror and fear, being persecuted by coercive and persistent manipulation and control.

The most dangerous time for women and children attempting to leave a violent situation is during, or immediately after, the time of separation: approximately 30% of women who died at the hand of a male partner in Australia were killed after leaving the relationship (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland Government 2012:16). At this point in the relationship there is a shift in the balance of power, passing from the perpetrator to the woman which makes her and the children more vulnerable as the perpetrator fears loss of control over the family. For these women and children at risk, women's refuges are an essential service: they provide the immediate security and safety which saves lives.

Permanently leaving a violent relationship requires much more than this first step. The role refuges play in supporting women and children to construct lives free of violence in the longer term is vital. Over many years, refuge workers have learnt from the women and children who have used their services that men who perpetrate domestic violence can be highly manipulative and persistent. Typically, violent men use a wide range of behaviours to gain and maintain domination, power and control over their partner, and will shift their tactics according to what will work in a given situation. Common tactics include threats and intimidation; physical and sexual violence; threatening to have children removed from women's care; threatening to kidnap and/or kill children; threatening to have women sent back to their country of origin; and threatening to commit suicide.

Most women's stories make it very clear that the intent of their partner was to ensure that she was compliant and submissive to his wishes and demands both domestically and sexually; that the violence is intentional, purposeful and goal oriented. Women report an ongoing and systematic process of intimidation, terrorisation, undermining, degradation and domination. DFV is not a series of one-off violent incidents: it generally reflects a sustained pattern of controlling behaviour. This includes perpetrators frequently acting to isolate women from their family and friends.

The impact of violence on women's lives can be devastating. Many women have survived DFV for long periods, and as a result have exhausted their options with any family and friends with whom they have maintained a relationship. As a combined result of both this isolation and the sustained messages they have received from the perpetrator, women often blame themselves for the violence they have experienced and find themselves alone, without the support of friends and family. Women and children often present with multiple and complex needs.

The women victims and survivors of DFV provide unique perspectives on the realities of living with and escaping from DFV. They collectively offer a unique insight into what women need in order to be able to

build a sustained, violence-free life for themselves and their children. Client input has played a central role in the development of refuge services throughout Queensland and beyond, over the past 40 years. It is essential that the wisdom and experiences of these women also inform the development, implementation and continual improvement of DFV interventions more widely, including interventions by the legal and health systems.

Refuge workers have listened to and supported many women over many years. As a result, they have an intimate knowledge and understanding of the realities of the nature of DFV. Workers understand the inherent dangers that these women and children face every day. They understand the many and varied practical and psychological barriers faced by women and children seeking to re-establish their lives. As a result, they understand the critical role of a gendered analysis in effective service delivery to women and child victims and survivors of DFV.

Women and children's access to safety and support in Queensland has progressively diminished in real terms over the past 3 decades. Since the 1980's women's refuges have been increasingly required to provide services to larger numbers of women and children. This has placed enormous pressure on refuges to reduce the amount and type of support available to each family. The needs of women and children presenting to refuges have steadily become more complex and the resources available to respond to these needs have progressively reduced. In particular, the (historically typical) 3 month limit on stays in women's refuges is no longer an adequate period of time during which to find housing in the current market and services are no longer funded to provide dedicated support services to children. ([Appendix 2](#) further details the history of women's refuges in Queensland since 1975.)

Despite this diminishing commitment from the Queensland Government, for over 40 years women's refuges across Queensland have sought to provide the many and varied services needed by women and children escaping DFV. Whilst their capacity to provide the full suite of services required has been constrained by the available resources, women's refuges have always listened to the voices of their clients and sought to provide the services needed by women and children. This is reflected, for example, in the major structural change in women's refuges over the past 40 years – changes in models of refuge accommodation. Some needs have not changed: in particular, a multi-faceted service response continues to be essential to women's recovery from DFV and their capacity to build a violence-free life for themselves and their children.

Without specialist DFV support, women and children are less likely to leave abusive relationships and far more likely to return to situations of violence. According to the report from the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, titled "Not Now, Not Ever":

Understanding the gendered nature of domestic and family violence is vital in designing the response model and identifying reforms to provide better support to victims and measures to change the culture. (ibid:7)

Accordingly, the Taskforce recommended that:

The Queensland Government undertakes an immediate audit of services to ensure adequate resources are available to meet demand for specialist domestic and family violence services, including perpetrator intervention initiatives and specialist shelters. (Recommendation 71)

Consistent with this recommendation, we call on the Queensland Government to invest in women's refuges which have a specialised focus on DFV and the diversity of services required to meet the variety of needs faced by victims and survivors of DFV. Women and children need services with a sophisticated understanding of the nature and impact of violence. They need refuge workers who are able to respond in a tailored way to the specific and often complex and changing physical, practical and emotional difficulties they face. They need all service providers who impact on their lives at this critical time to understand the

gendered nature of DFV, and the importance of a gendered analysis as an essential underpinning of an effective service response.

Recommendation 1: That the Queensland Government adopt a comprehensive response to DFV involving collaboration with victims/survivors, women's refuges, domestic violence services, health workers, police and the criminal justice system in order to develop safe, meaningful and effective programs for a diverse range of victims/survivors. Further, that a particular emphasis be placed on resourcing collaboration in rural and remote Queensland.

Recommendation 2: That the Queensland Government:

- Recognise that the structural, economic and cultural values of our society give power to men, making women more likely to be victims of domestic violence.
- Acknowledge the gendered nature of DFV and the overwhelming evidence that best practice approaches are based in a gendered analysis.
- Actively support best practice approaches to both DFV intervention and DFV prevention strategies.

Women's refuges in Queensland – *Best practice in action*

Those affected by domestic and family violence typically have complex needs. Responses to domestic and family violence need to draw on a broad range of services to be effective. Knowledge of the particular needs of those affected by domestic and family violence is key to the appropriate design and resourcing of response and support services.

(Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence 2015:11)

Women's refuges across Queensland provide a rich tapestry of support, informed by a gendered analysis of domestic and family violence (DFV), as well as accommodation, information and referral services for women and children escaping DFV. This support is essential to women's recovery from DFV and their capacity to build a violence-free life for themselves and their children.

The diverse and trustworthy forms of knowledge that contribute to reliable evidence in DFV work, include not only quantitative findings but also qualitative studies, descriptions of lived experience and practice wisdom. In particular, practitioner knowledge and professional judgement can play a critical part in generating formal, valid evidence to underpin best practice. (Breckenridge & Hamer 2014:1)

The following overviews the literature on *best practice* in service provision to women and child survivors of DFV. It draws together evidence from local, national and international studies and documented practice wisdom; and recognition of the veracity of this data through government policies, protocols and practical resources. It places women's refuges in Queensland in the context of recognised *best practice*.

This position paper also draws on comments from the clients of women's refuges and 2 studies conducted by the Combined Women's Refuge Group SE Qld (CWRG) during 2014 – a largely qualitative *Service Mapping* exercise and a largely quantitative survey of referral and support services provided on a single *Snapshot Day*. The majority of women's refuges and other DFV services in Queensland participated in these studies. The methodology used is detailed in [Appendix 3](#), findings of the Service Mapping questionnaire are in [Appendix 4](#), details of referral services provided on the Snapshot Day are included as [Appendix 1](#) and details of support services provided on the Snapshot Day are included as [Appendix 5](#). Collectively, this data provides a picture of the demand for DFV services, the realities of day-to-day work in a women's refuge, and the impact of this on women and children escaping DFV in Queensland.

The evidence overwhelmingly recognises that women are not an homogenous group, therefore a *one size fits all* approach cannot effectively address the complex and varied needs of women and children escaping from DFV, recovering from DFV and establishing a violence-free life (KPMG 2009:69; Lamont 2000, Laing et al 2013, and Ife 2010 cited in Breckenridge & Hamer 2014:3; Women's Aid Federation of England 2013:7). This is addressed, in part, through the variations seen in women's refuges nationally, and internationally, which are reflected across services in Queensland. These include differences in accommodation styles, organisational philosophy, entry points, length of stay, staffing, services available and refuge rules (Chung et al 2000:6). Most recently, this has been recognised by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence:

A one-size-fits-all approach to designing and delivering integrated service responses across Queensland will not work. Challenges faced by victims and service providers in rural and remote communities are significantly different from those faced by victims in metropolitan communities, which in turn differ from those in Indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Integrated, holistic and timely responses to domestic and family violence are needed, tailored to the specific needs of each of these communities. (ibid:12)

However, some principles are common to *best practice* in provision of refuge services. Key principles which have been consistently supported by the literature over many years are:

1. Provision of accommodation alone is an inefficient and ineffective means of responding to the needs of women and children escaping DFV.
2. Specialist women's refuges are a particularly efficient and effective immediate response to women and children survivors of DFV.
3. A holistic, customised approach to support service provision is essential to effective practice with women and children recovering from DFV.
4. Financial and housing security is a critical determinant of women and children's capacity build an independent, violence-free life.
5. Continuing support for women and children optimises their capacity to build a violence-free life.
6. Dedicated support for children reduces the risk of multigenerational harm as a result of DFV.

Accommodation alone is ineffective and inefficient

Speedy provision of safe accommodation is undoubtedly an essential element of beginning to build a violence-free life. Whilst home-based interventions may be helpful for some women, a significant proportion of women and children require the safety of housing in an anonymous location, well distant from the geographical area in which the perpetrator lives and works. Women's refuges provide this type of safety.

In terms of accommodation style, the cluster of independent units with onsite office which is the dominant model in Queensland was identified as the strongly preferred model in *Home Safe Home* (Chung et al 2000:65). However a variety of accommodation models is important to addressing the varied needs of different women. For example, Weeks & Oberin (2004:114) found that communal housing tended to be preferred by young women, whereas older women preferred dispersed independent units. At this purely structural level, women's refuges in Queensland reflect *best practice*, however given the high demand on services, women are not afforded these choices (ibid).

Recommendation 3: That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to provide a variety of additional refuge beds to provide safe accommodation and support to women and children escaping DFV. The two 72 hour refuges recommended by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence and subsequently announced by the Queensland Government will assist to relieve the pressure on women waiting in motels for a refuge vacancy, but without also increasing the numbers of refuge beds, there will still be no vacancies to accommodate these families after the 72 hour period.

Rebuilding a life after DFV is not achieved merely by moving away from the perpetrator. Homelessness is an outcome, rather than the cause, of DFV. A focus on *houselessness* alone cannot address the complex causes of DFV. This is reflected in the problems associated with an accommodation-focused response to DFV.

Data collected from more than half the DFV refuge and referral services in Queensland through the Service Mapping and Snapshot Day surveys demonstrate the sophisticated variety of models of service and approaches to service delivery implemented by staff in DFV refuges and referral services across the state.

The single most notable finding is that **only 5% of women and children who accessed refuge services on the Snapshot Day utilised accommodation alone on that day.** This highlights the critical role of other forms of support to women and children's capacity to recover from, and move beyond, DFV. Whilst all but one participating service (a non-refuge service) provided accommodation, the substantive focus of women's refuges is on providing the support needed to build this capacity.

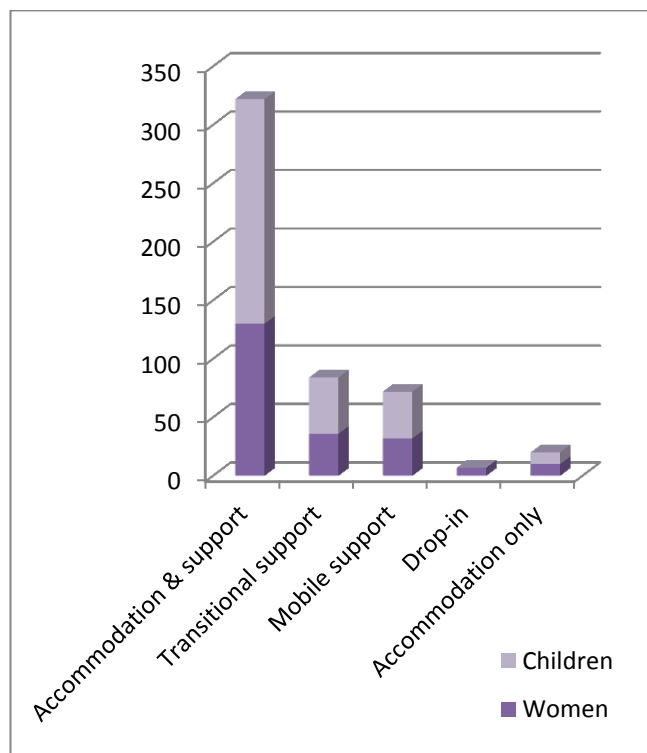


Diagram 1 – Types of support provided on Snapshot Day

Provision of accommodation alone can even cause further harm

Leaving a violent partner or home situation is a difficult step for a victim. If a victim does not know where to go, or does not feel understood or supported by a service, or worse, if there is no service for the particular need, the victim may return to the violence and not try to leave again.

(Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence 2015:12)

The adverse effects of accommodating women and children away from a service where they *feel understood or support* - in hotel or motel rooms, caravan parks or boarding houses - has been widely critiqued (Amnesty International Australia 2008:37; Hulse & Spinney 2010 & Novac 2006 cited in Spinney 2012:25; Weeks and Oberin 2004:125; Tually et al 2008:46). One study found that this form of accommodation can be *isolating and frightening* (Hulse & Spinney 2010 cited in Spinney 2012:25), adding to the trauma of DFV. A large national study proposed that **an accommodation-only response to women and children escaping DFV is so inappropriate that it verges on system neglect** as a response to the socio-emotional impact of DFV (Weeks & Oberin 2004:125).

In 2003-4, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that 48% of women and children escaping DFV were turned away from women's refuges in Australia (cited in Amnesty International Australia 2008:37). With reduced funding in real terms to Queensland women's refuges, particularly over the past decade (detailed in Appendix 2) and the growth in population (particularly in South East Queensland), it is reasonable to expect that unmet demand has increased:

The Taskforce heard repeatedly that there was an inadequate number of refuge placements in Queensland and that there have been no new funded refuges in Queensland in the past 20 years.

DVConnect has reported that on any given day, they place 10-20 women in a motel while they await refuge space. This is concerning as motels may lack the confidentiality and security of a refuge. In addition DVConnect reports that of those women placed in a motel last year, 37% returned to the perpetrator of violence. This is possibly to be due to lack of support networks, counselling and referrals. (Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence 2015:241)

Data from the Snapshot Day suggests the possibility of a further deteriorating situation. On this day alone, 23 Queensland women sought refuge through DVConnect, but only 4 (with 4 accompanying children) were able to be accommodated in women's refuges, and a further 10 women (with 9 accompanying children) were accommodated in motels (Appendix 1).

Too many women and children are living in isolation, without access to the support essential to recovering from DFV and building a new life.

Recommendation 4: That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide mobile support to women and children placed in motels by DV referral services whilst awaiting a refuge placement. Additionally, that the Queensland Government ensure that the two 72 hour refuge services recently announced, be adequately funded to ensure that they are appropriately staffed to provide the necessary support to these extremely vulnerable women and children during this crisis transition.

The critical role of support services

Repeated studies have found that provision of support services beyond accommodation alone is essential to enabling women to build a violence-free life for women and their children. Champion et al (2009:9,16) cites numerous client studies which have found that nurturing support services are *pivotal* to a successful transition to safety for women and their children, and another major study identified provision of support as a *key issue* in responding to DFV (Chung et al 2000:67).

An understanding of the central role of support services is reflected in the (then) Department of Families' *Practice Standards for Working with Women Affected by Domestic and Family Violence* (2002) which details a myriad of non-accommodation functions required to effectively meet the needs of women escaping DFV. *Opening Doors*, Queensland's strategy for reducing homelessness, also recognises the importance of support services:

Homeless people or those at risk require a range of services to address the factors that have led to their homelessness or that have put them at risk. These include access to appropriate accommodation and support. Once support and housing is established, people are better able to take up education, training and employment opportunities that can assist people to get ahead and experience a better quality of life and greater independence.

(Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services 2011:11)

These sentiments have been reinforced by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence:

Those affected by domestic and family violence typically have complex needs. ... Knowledge of the particular needs of those affected by domestic and family violence is key to the appropriate design and resourcing of response and support services. (op cit 2015:11)

The variety of support services women and children need

Women's refuges offer far more than simple *information provision*, *formal counselling* or *skills development*. Some women are already aware of information about DFV. Some have already participated in DFV counselling. Some have attended decision making, or parenting, programs.

The provision of support services takes on new meaning for women within a refuge context. It is only when women can enjoy the experience of living in a safe environment for a few months that these functions can take on genuine meaning in their lives. Women's refuges provide an environment in which women can have conversations in which they *have a voice* with someone: where they feel respected and valued. These conversations can occur at the time of the woman's choosing, rather than being slotted into a formal counselling appointment. Many women do not trust their ability to make decisions having not been able to do so for so long, and having opportunities to *bounce issues around* with someone is what makes a change in their lives.

Staying in a refuge provides the opportunity and time to be able to start healing. Often, this healing process is based in informal interactions with workers, rather than formal counselling sessions.

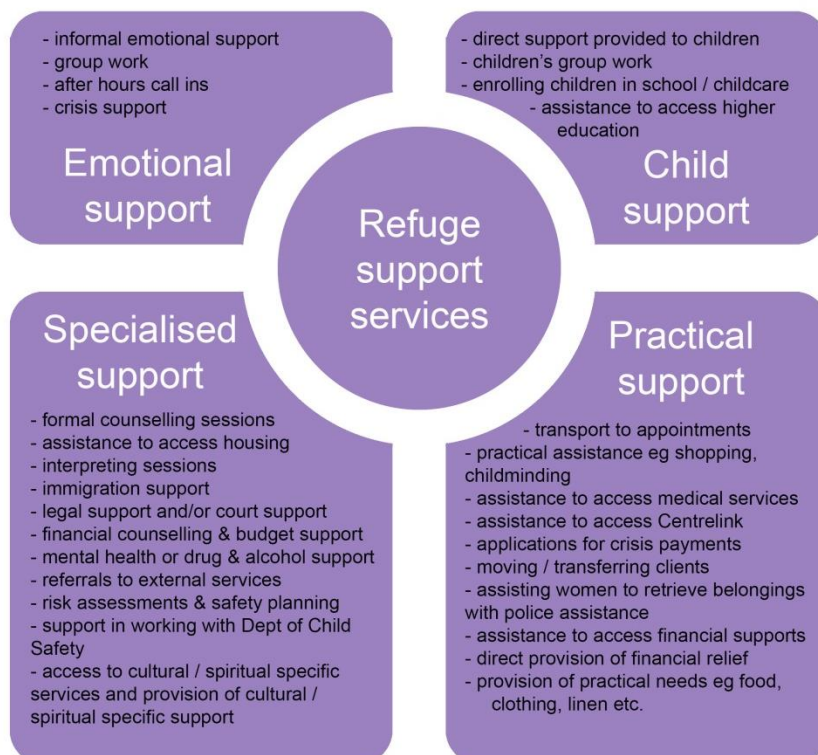
I will be forever grateful. You've helped me through a very difficult time in my life. I will remember this place of peace and as a time of re-strengthening as I begin my new journey.

(Women's refuge client)

The balance between security and freedom and help and encouragement to independently seek (my) own requirements is brilliantly executed.

(Women's refuge client)

Women's refuges in Queensland provide a sophisticated variety of services beyond accommodation alone, including:



The 95% of women clients who made use of support services on the Snapshot Day accessed a combination of formal and informal support services. This reflects both women's need for support services and the commitment of Queensland women's refuges to addressing this critical element of *best practice*.

On the Snapshot Day, women and children accessed a wide variety of support services. 23 of the 53 women's refuges and referral services in Queensland participated in the Snapshot Day survey, so actual levels of service provision would have been significantly higher than the quantum detailed below. Nonetheless, the level of service provision on this single day clearly indicates the central role of support services in women's refuges.

As detailed in [Appendix 5](#), on the Snapshot Day alone, a total of 503 support sessions were provided to women and 208 sessions to children on that single day – in all, 711 episodes of support. Of the support provided to women clients:

- **Emotional support:** 175 (35%) episodes of service focused on emotional support, including informal support with 120 clients (24% of all episodes of service that day) and 16 after hours call-ins for crisis support.
- **Practical support:** 131 (26%) episodes of service involved practical support.
- **Specialised support:** 160 (32%) episodes of service focused on specialised support.
- **Cultural/spiritual support:** 22 (4%) episodes of service involved providing cultural or spiritual support.

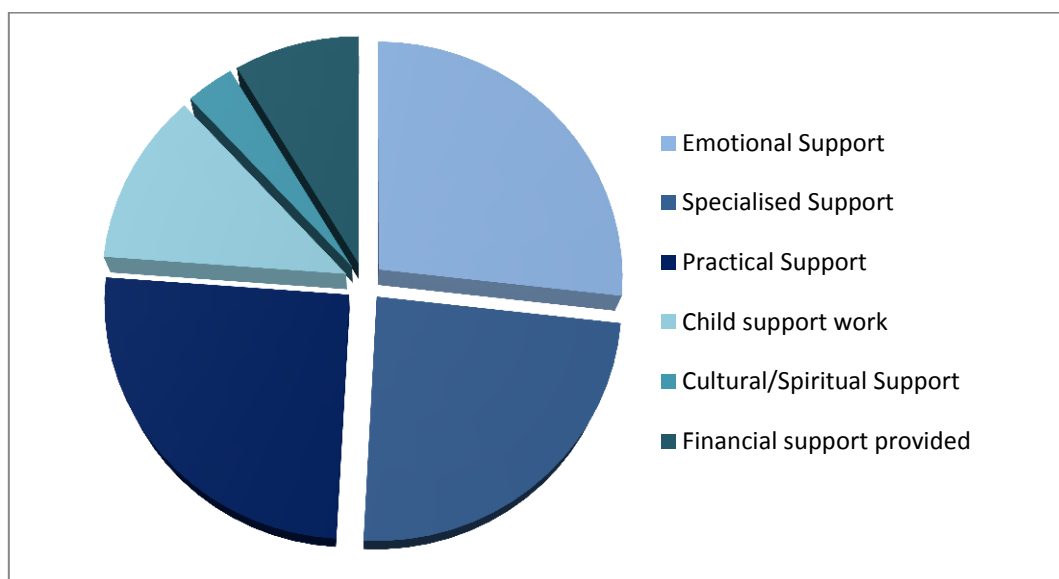


Diagram 2 – Variety of support (case management) provided on Snapshot Day

In addition:

- A total of 70 women received direct **financial assistance** to the value of \$4,460, including provision of food to 38 clients.
- A total of 74 sessions of support were directly provided to **children**, including 25 episodes of individual support, group work with 46 children, and assistance to access higher education with 3 young people.
- A total of 15 women received parenting support.
- Staff travelled 2,259 km in the course of direct service delivery to women and children.

Most women and children escaping DFV arrive at a women's refuge in a traumatised state – many having experienced long term violence and trauma. **Emotional support** is skilled work with intended outcomes. Providing women with emotional support increases the likelihood that they will not return to violent relationships, improves their ability to recover from experiences of trauma, enhances their capacity to support their children, and helps their children to recover from experiences of trauma. Emotional support is most effective when provided in response to the client's needs, including the time at which they need it. This includes a willingness to provide informal, albeit purposeful, support.

Practical support, including direct **financial assistance**, is essential to many women and children's immediate survival. Many women and children escaping DFV arrive at a women's refuge with little other than *the clothes on their back*. They may not even have the personal documentation essential to accessing most services. Most arrive shaken; some arrive with physical injuries. Within the first few days, accessing healthcare, income, food and clothes are often the immediate priorities. Women must focus, particularly during the first few days at a refuge, on meeting their own and their children's survival needs and accessing some form of income.

With over 50% of the women using refuge having little or no income, and at least 18% not qualifying for income support or subsidised medical services, practical support is critical. Services provided by women's refuges can include providing transport to enable clients to access health care providers, legal appointments, court, school or childcare. They can include assistance to enrol children in school or childcare, helping women retrieve their belongings (often with police assistance) or helping families move house. Or, practical support can include assistance with shopping or child-minding; or help accessing Centrelink or applying for crisis payments. Critically, some women require help with writing/completing forms, and many need urgent financial assistance to access food, travel, health care or pharmaceuticals. On the Snapshot Day, for example, women's refuges in Queensland provided almost \$4,500 in direct financial assistance to 70 women.

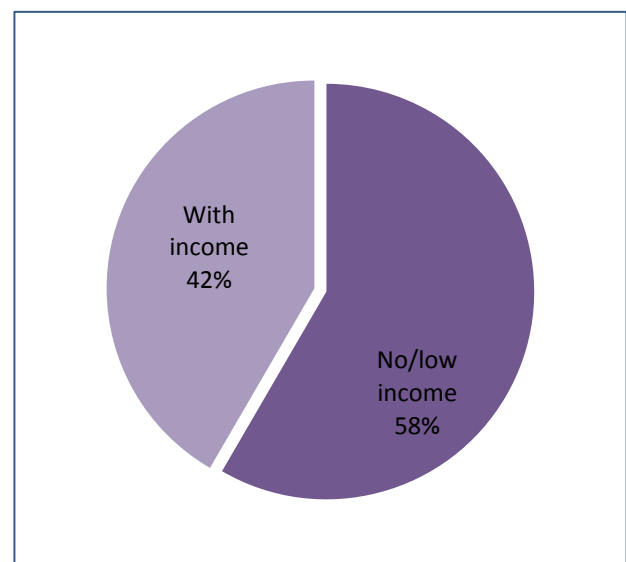


Diagram 3 – Income of women refuge clients on Snapshot Day

The **specialised support** required by women and children varies enormously from family to family. This type of support involves everything from formal counselling, to help accessing housing, to cultural/spiritual support (e.g. interpreting, immigration assistance, culturally appropriate food), to legal support (including court support), to financial counselling/budgeting support, to mental health or drug/alcohol support, to risk assessment and safety planning, to child protection support (particularly, support in dealings with the Department of Child Safety).

Case management: a coherent system of support service provision

Women and children's experiences are all different. In order to respond to these varied needs, workers in women's refuges are required to hold expertise across a range of fields and disciplines. Staff must also access external services and provide *warm referrals* – that is, a referral which is client-driven and supported for as long as needed for that referral to *stick*. This may mean attending multiple appointments with a woman until she feels confident on her own. This intense support and advocacy currently provided by Queensland women's refuges enhances the longer term outcomes for women and children. Refuge staff

can work with multiple services and agencies on an ongoing and regular basis, leading to strong relationships between services and collaborative practice.

However, provision of support services is not an *ad hoc* activity. Whether delivered in a formal or informal manner, providing support to women and children is purposeful work which requires high order competencies of refuge workers. The nature of services can vary enormously, according to the situation and needs of each family.

Appendix 6 provides one example of support services for women and children in a coherent case management system. This process clearly demonstrates the sophisticated, specialist competencies required of refuge workers – the complexity of which has been recognised by the Special Taskforce on Family and Domestic Violence (2015:11).

Clients typically have different needs during 3 stages of their involvement with a women's refuge:

- **Phase 1: Referral, entry and intake** - The goal of this phase is to provide a timely, sensitive and comprehensive first response to the immediate needs of women and their children. A key issue for workers during this phase is to complete the initial assessment required, with sensitivity to the physical and emotional state of the women, children and young people upon entry. This phase tends to focus on immediate practical, financial and emotional support needs.
- **Phase 2: Protection, support and advocacy** - The goal of this phase is to provide the advocacy and support required for women, children and young people to have their full range of needs met. Support is provided both within the refuge and via referral. This phase tends to focus on specialised and cultural/spiritual support, with the focus of support varying significantly according to each client's particular needs. In order to provide this support, refuge workers must have up-to-date knowledge in all areas of specialised support and sound cross-cultural competencies.
- **Phase 3: Transition, exit and follow-up** - The goal of this phase is to support women, children and young people in their decision-making about life when exiting refuge and to ensure preparation and support for the transition. Follow-up work is conducted on an *as needs* basis (requested by the client) and may occur months after the family has exited the service. This short term intervention works to reduce the likelihood that families will require crisis support in the future. It is effective because of the existing relationship between the refuge and family and prevents the family from having to repeat their story to a new service provider.

It should be noted that resource constraints limit the capacity of some refuges to provide ongoing support to families exiting refuge. In addition, the safety of some women and children depends on appropriate and timely responses from police and magistrates that act to protect them and consistently hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their behaviour. Clients' capacity to remain safe after transitioning from refuge and not be forced to re-enter the crisis service system is dependent on these responses.

Recommendation 5: That the Queensland Government provide adequate funding to specialised women-only refuges to enable skilled, professional, specialist support workers to provide extensive case management support to women and children escaping DFV. Furthermore, that additional funding be extended to existing refuges that have not received adequate funding increases to match wage increases for many years.

Specialist women's refuges are effective and efficient

Specialist women's refuges are a particularly efficient and effective immediate response to women and children survivors of DFV. Women and children escaping DFV typically feel extremely anxious about their safety. Given the gendered reality of most DFV, a women-centred refuge environment plays a key role in women and children's immediate sense of safety, and therefore, their capacity to begin to recover from DFV. Consistent with the exemptions allowed under Section 91 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Queensland Government 1991), all workers in Queensland women's refuges are women. Findings from the Snapshot Day demonstrate the high level of unmet demand for specialist women's refuges in Queensland.

In its' *Good practice principles: Places of safety*, the Council of Europe's Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women highlights the value of feminist organisations in responding to the needs of women and children escaping DFV in a sophisticated and informed way. The Council explicitly recommends *acknowledging the decisive role played by NGOs, and choosing NGOs with a feminist outlook to manage the centres* (women's refuges) (cited in Amnesty International Australia 2008:39).

The importance of a recognising the gendered nature of DFV has been recognised by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence (2015:7). Similarly, the Queensland Department of Families *Practice Standards* highlight the important of underpinning service delivery with an understanding of the fundamental drivers of DFV:

A woman's capacity to heal fully will be enhanced by an informed response which places domestic and family violence in its socio-political context. That is, that domestic and family violence is an exercise in power and control. (Department of Families 2002:5)

Further, the *Practice Standards* recognise the central role of women's expertise in DFV service provision:

The response in Queensland to domestic and family violence depends on the expertise, experience and commitment of workers in the field who deal daily with the realities of women escaping from violence. (Department of Families 2002:2)

The *Practice Standards* further highlight principles of service delivery which can best be provided through specialist women's refuges including a sense of safety; a culture of respect; equitable access to services; empowerment (particularly through education and self-determination); a non-judgmental approach; confidentiality (within clearly defined parameters); an appropriate service environment; and the provision of quality services by appropriately skilled workers. As Queensland women's refuge clients have said:

Being here I learnt I am really worth it. The people who work here feel what we feel ... they are women. All the activities and support was the best ... a very organised system.

I would like to thank you (worker name) for your support and listening, and being there for me. I feel I can tell you everything, and you never criticise me ...

The staff were just their (sic) to listen and give me assistance when I needed it, and did it with a smile on their face 'cause they care.

A study of the effectiveness of women's refuges across 3 countries (Scotland, Portugal and Ireland) highlights the critical role of specialist women's refuges:

Asked what they would have done if they had not been able to come into refuge, 19% of the women stated that they would have stayed home, and the majority reported they would have been in some

way homeless (e.g., sleeping on the streets, staying with friends). A full 14% of the women reported not knowing what they would have done had refuge not been available, and tragically, 6% reported they would have killed themselves. (Sullivan et al 2008:300-301)

A key NSW study on the post-refuge lives of former residents found that the level of connection between women and refuges directly impacted their ability to develop a violence-free life. This was reflected in the fact that most women had remained in contact with the refuge and accessed further support as required, and some had volunteered at the refuge. The study found:

... refuges addressed the needs of women and their children by offering a welcoming environment, a holistic response, committed service and advocacy without prejudice or judgement.

(Champion et al 2009:22)

Similarly, international research has found that increasing domestic violence survivors' access to resources in an empowering way results in greater well-being and reduced abuse over time (Bybee & Sullivan 2002 & Sullivan & Bybee 1999 cited in Sullivan et al 2008:297).

Recommendation 6: That the Queensland Government recognise the centrality of a gendered analysis to best practice DFV service provision, and the critical role that feminist organisations and women-only services play in an effective DFV response.

The importance of a holistic, customised approach

A holistic, customised approach to support service provision is essential to effective practice with women and children recovering from DFV. The importance of support service provision is highlighted by the evidence that many women return to violent settings due to difficulties accessing adequate and appropriate support (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2012:2). Women's refuges in Queensland provide a wide range of different types of support to women.

It is important that *best practice* is not seen to imply *a static end-point*, rather than *a set of responsive interactions capable of evolving to meet the changing needs of individual women* (Breckenridge & Hamer 2014:3). Women's refuges are an ideal location for delivery of flexible, responsive support services. The international evaluation of the effectiveness of women's refuges found:

More than four in every five women (85%) felt a lot safer and 81% felt much more protected from the abuser. Ninety-five percent felt either a lot or somewhat more confident about their decision-making, and 95% reported having more information that would help them. (Sullivan et al 2008:303)

So ... what was required to achieve these outcomes? What services do women and children escaping DFV need in order to build a better future? This international evaluation produced a page long list of services available to women in these refuges included everything from safety planning, to understanding DFV, to emotional healing from DFV, to legal and court support, to child-focused services, to future planning for economic independence: individual women and children variously made use of some or all of these options (Sullivan et al 2008:302). The composite of services provided by refuges in Ireland, Scotland and Portugal is not dissimilar to the areas provided by women's refuges in Queensland (see Appendices 4 & 5) and those available at women's refuges throughout Australia, the West and Europe (Weeks & Oberin 2004:56-59; Estep et al 2013:7; Women's Aid Federation of England 2013 & 2014).

The research consistently demonstrates that best practice in DFV service provision respects women's right to self-determination, including supporting and resourcing women to identify their own needs and make their own decisions. Australian research has commented on the importance of using empowering models of service and access to a wide selection of support services (Champion et al 2009:26-27; Weeks & Oberin 2004:10; Tually et al 2008:46). A number of studies have particularly highlighted the importance of court support (Chung et al 2000:4; Amnesty International Australia 2008:39) and dedicated services for children (Chung et al 2000:9; Spinney 2012:26). Ultimately, in terms of support services:

... it is imperative that accommodation and the range of support services required by women affected by domestic and family violence (counselling, health care, therapeutic services and income support) are well integrated, individualised, ongoing and open-ended. (Tually et al 2008:v)

The value of holistic support is widely recognised, and reflected at a policy level in Queensland and nationally. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has acknowledged that *economic and social wellbeing is critical for women and their children who have been victims of violence to rebuild their lives* (COAG n/d:23). The Commonwealth Government's Plan of Action to address DFV *recognises that women are not a homogenous group, so a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to battling the problem is not effective* (KPMG 2009:69). As a member of COAG's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* the Queensland Government agreed that, by 2013, it would: *Extend sexual assault services and domestic violence services' work with other agencies to provide flexible, innovative, inclusive and integrated services which recognise diversity* (COAG n/d:24).

Recommendation 7: That the Queensland Government continue to explore and adequately resource models of integrated service delivery across both DFV and non-DFV agencies working with women affected by DFV, including expansion of the current Gold Coast pilot program.

The capacity to flexibly respond to each family's different needs requires that women's refuge staff have a sophisticated smorgasbord of knowledge and skills. The Queensland Government's *Practice Standards* require women's refuge staff to:

1. Provide a diverse range of services and programs such as group work, individual support and outreach, and,
2. Provide specialised support, *in recognition of issues such as age, English language proficiency, disability, sexuality and prior victimisation*, and,
3. Assist women and children to equitably access mainstream services, *including health, housing, education, employment and legal assistance* according to their diverse needs (Department of Families 2002:17-18).

Best practice requires that staff participate in substantial training to understand all forms of diversity, participate in coordination mechanisms to enable interagency collaboration and referral, advocate for equitable access to services for clients, and ultimately meet the long list of specialist competencies required to work effectively with women and children escaping DFV (ibid:17-18,48-50).

The Practice Standards also require that women's refuges play an active role in DFV prevention – developing a *culture of intolerance* of DFV in individuals and communities. Service Mapping responses show that many women's refuges play an active role in wider community education and prevention. As detailed in Appendix 4, this is particularly reflected through partnerships with the private business sector (11 of the 18 services), philanthropic organisations (11 of the 18 services) and religious organisations (4 of the 18 services).

Culturally and spiritually customised practice

A woman's capacity to heal fully will be enhanced by an informed response which places domestic and family violence in its socio-political context. ... For women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, immigrant and refugee women, and women with disabilities, there are additional issues of colonisation, racism and discrimination which must also be raised and addressed to ensure an appropriate response. (Department of Families 2002:5)

On the Snapshot Day, 50% of all women receiving services from women's refuges came from non-Caucasian backgrounds. This clearly demonstrates the level of demand for DFV services amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women from other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

The closer the alignment between the cultural and spiritual background of refuge workers/agencies and clients, the better customised services can become. The more responsive services are to women's cultural and spiritual values and needs, the greater the likelihood that families will be able to establish a life free of violence.

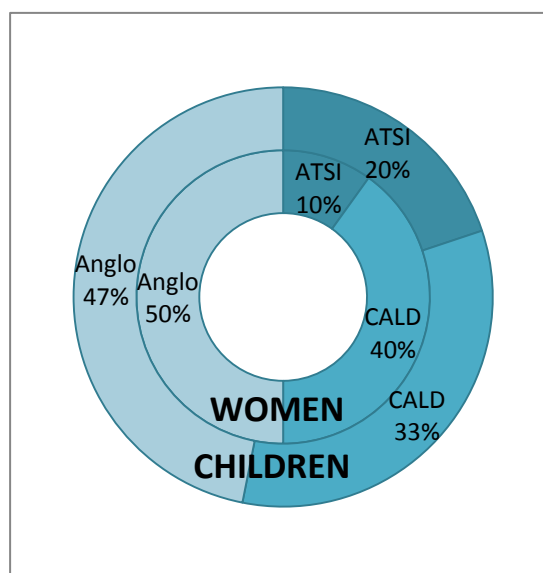


Diagram 4 – Cultural diversity of women's refuge clients on Snapshot Day

It is clear that there is sufficient market in Queensland for further services driven by, and targeted to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women from other CALD backgrounds.

Data from the Snapshot Day and Service Mapping exercises clearly demonstrate the commitment of Queensland women's refuges to try to provide culturally and spiritually response services. Participants in the Service Mapping exercise talked about the importance of providing access to cultural and spiritual support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. On the Snapshot Day, a total of 22 episodes of service explicitly related to provision of cultural/spiritual support. Of these, 2 involved helping women to access culturally or spiritually appropriate food, whilst there were 5 incidents of support to access culturally-specific or spiritually-specific services. Evidence from the Service Mapping exercise also shows the wide variety of networks, committees, meetings and partnerships engaged in by Queensland women's refuges in order to be able to meet clients' diverse information and referral needs. Several refuges report employing bilingual staff and staff with a variety of lived experiences, wherever possible. Others have highlighted the importance of using interpreters and accessing immigration support (particularly for women without Permanent Residency).

However, no amount of cultural and spiritual awareness can provide the same level of understanding of the complex relationship between gender, cultural background, spiritual beliefs and DFV, as workers/agencies with a shared cultural or spiritual background.

The Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence made frequent references to the *particular groups more vulnerable and at risk of being abused in a domestic or family situation, than others in the community* and the *unique challenges* they face (ibid 2015:7). These included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and people from CALD backgrounds, who were seen as being at *significantly higher risk from the incidences and impacts* of DFV:

Understanding the needs of these vulnerable groups is critical if we are to be successful in making cultural changes that will lead to safer homes for them. Effective support services and justice services cannot be delivered in isolation from a comprehensive understanding of their needs. (ibid)

and

A one-size-fits-all approach to designing and delivering integrated service responses across Queensland will not work. Challenges faced by victims and service providers in rural and remote communities are significantly different from those faced by victims in metropolitan communities, which in turn differ from those in Indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse

communities. Integrated, holistic and timely responses to domestic and family violence are needed, tailored to the specific needs of each of these communities. (ibid:12)

The Taskforce report makes it clear that *there is still room for further specialisation of services in regards to domestic and family violence responses to CALD, ATSI, disability, older persons, refugees, and children's services (ibid:217).*

In this context, the defunding of the Murri Sisters refuge in Brisbane appears illogical.

Recommendation 8: That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally-specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping DFV, and provide adequate funding to enable services driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to provide specialised accommodation and support.

Women without Permanent Residency (PR) in Australia are particularly vulnerable to abuse during the considerable time required to apply for PR. These women may not have access to any income, are frequently not entitled to government services and subsidies (including health and housing) and are at severe risk of exploitation. Abusive men may maintain control over women by giving them misinformation, such as telling them that they will be deported. Workers at a 2009 Brisbane workshop gave examples of women being told that they would be *beheaded* or *imprisoned*, by their violent ex-partners (Women's House Shelta 2009:22).

In the first instance, some basic services are required to ensure that this group of women and children have equitable access to safety, and are not forced to return to violent settings for lack of any other options:

Recommendation 9: That the Queensland Government recognise the right of women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to communicate in their own language, and guarantee women's access to interpreters at all stages of the legal process, including all interactions with police and the court system. Further, that the Queensland Government provide adequate funding for women's refuges to be able to provide interpreting services to their clients free of charge.

Recommendation 10: That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally appropriate services for women and children from CALD backgrounds, and provide ongoing funding for the Immigrant Women's Support Service and the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service. Further, that the Queensland Government provide new funding to enable provision of specialist CALD services throughout Queensland.

Recommendation 11: That the Queensland Government liaise with the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection to prioritise permanent residency applications for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Long term financial and housing security is fundamental

On an individual level, domestic violence creates complex economic issues for women and their children and disrupts their lives over the short and long term. Regardless of their prior economic circumstances, many women experience financial risk or poverty as a result of domestic violence. These difficulties hamper their recovery and capacity to regain control over their lives. Domestic violence directly affects women's financial security in key areas of life: debts, bills and banking, accommodation, legal issues, health, transport, migration, employment, social security and child support. (Phillips & Vandenbroek: 2014:20)

Financial and housing security is a critical determinant of women and children's capacity build an independent, violence-free life. It is very difficult for women to develop a picture of a better life whilst

they are pre-occupied with issues of basic survival for themselves and their children (Champion et al 2009:30). Multiple sources have recognised that many women and children return to violent settings due to poverty, long term financial insecurity, limited means to improve their income, an inability to find housing, fear of homelessness and/or actual homelessness (including: Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2012:2; Data Australia 2007 cited in Tually et al 2008:16-17; Landvogt 2011 and Spinney & Blandy 2011 cited in Spinney 2012:31). A workshop of DFV workers in Brisbane found:

With little guarantee of remaining autonomous and safe, men's use of violence and threats to hunt down and kill women, their children and other family members leave many women with no option but to return to the perpetrator. (Women's House Shelta 2009:20)

The national *Synthesis Report* identified provision of long term, safe and affordable housing as one of the 2 most critical types of assistance required by women affected by DFV (Tually 2008:v). Others have highlighted the importance of suitable housing, including a neighbourhood where women have a sense of belonging and the capacity to establish routines for their children (Champion et al 2009:20).

The shortage of safe, secure, affordable housing for women escaping DFV has been widely recognised. With reductions in public housing stock since the 1990's, women are increasingly dependent on the private rental market. Aboriginal women are particularly discriminated against in the private rental market (Smyth 2003:32). As early as 2004, Yates, Wulff & Reynolds found *current escalating cost of housing in the private sector, especially in the lower cost end of the private rental market where options are limited, competition for tenancies is fierce and costs are escalating* (cited in Tually et al 2008:45). In 2008, the Commonwealth Government identified *the major cause of blockages in the SAAP responses for women escaping domestic and family violence ... (as) the lack of exit points into social housing* and an ABC news report proposed that housing was *the most unaffordable in the 22 years since affordability records for home purchase and rental options have been kept* (cited in *ibid*:45).

Appropriate and affordable private rental housing is almost impossible to find for single women on Centrelink benefits in Queensland. For example, Anglicare Australia's *Rental Affordability Snapshot* on 5 April 2014 was based on the standard benchmark for affordability, that is, 30% of a household's income (Anglicare Australia 2014:4). It found literally no (zero) affordable and appropriate rental properties available to single parent families on Newstart or Parenting Payment in the whole of the Brisbane metropolitan area and only one in Cairns (*ibid*:35,52). Even for those women with secure employment on the minimum wage, few suitable rental properties are available. The Anglicare *Snapshot* found only 103 properties in Brisbane and one property in Cairns affordable and appropriate for single parent families receiving the minimum wage plus Family Tax Benefits A and B (*ibid*).

All these factors have been well-acknowledged in the findings of the Queensland Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence. Quoting Davis (1999), the Taskforce report finds that:

... any safety strategy that threatens a victim's income and ability to provide housing and basic requirements for themselves and their children, forces victims to make unreasonable choices, long-term poverty/homelessness or staying with their violent partner. (ibid 2015:247)

Submissions to the Special Taskforce advocated for the Queensland Government to address the lack of affordable permanent housing causing women's refuges *to become a bottleneck, with people not being able to exit to more permanent arrangements* (*ibid*:246). DFV is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children:

Without establishing pathways out of crisis accommodation into secure, ongoing accommodation, victims escaping violence are at risk of becoming homeless. (ibid:241)

This is reinforced by Recommendation 88:

The Queensland Government expands the range of responses to alleviate housing stress and homelessness for women and children escaping domestic and family violence including reducing the eligibility criteria on programs such as Rental Grants and Bond Loans. (ibid)

A further barrier to safe, secure, long term housing relates to women's responsibilities for debts. The Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence has highlighted perpetrators' exertion of financial control through making them party of property mortgages and other assets, and proposes a reduction in restrictive eligibility criteria for government rental assistance programs (op cit 2015:246).

At a 2009 workshop with DFV services in Brisbane, many refugees reported women being responsible for large Department of Housing debts for damage done by perpetrators, which precludes them from public housing. With Centrelink payments having not kept pace with increases in rent, the only private market housing option available to many women is share accommodation (Women's House Shelta 2009:19-20). This may be neither safe nor secure, leaving women and children vulnerable to further abuse or exploitation, and providing an incentive to return to a violence family setting.

The ACT Government has acted to make perpetrators responsible for the violence. In the ACT, a delegate of the ACT Treasurer *can waive all or part of a debt, where domestic violence is proved to have been a component of the accumulation of that debt and where repayment of that debt will cause undue hardship*. A prior debt with Housing ACT does not preclude creation of a new tenancy or a priority housing transfer where there are issues of safety for women and children (ACT Government Community Services 2013).

Recommendation 12: That the Queensland Government act to ensure that women escaping domestic violence do not incur debts resulting from DFV (such as damage to property), and make perpetrators solely responsible for these debts. Further, that the Queensland Government implement the necessary policy changes to ensure women's access to priority public housing whilst this process is undertaken.

Women without permanent Australian residency are particularly vulnerable to homelessness or return to a violent setting on the basis of economic necessity alone. In the ACT, sponsored migrants or refugees fleeing domestic violence may be eligible for housing assistance (ibid).

Recommendation 13: That the Queensland Government ensure that women and children without Australian permanent residency are eligible to access Community Housing properties whilst their residency applications are pending. Additionally, that the Queensland Government consider the needs of women and children with New Zealand residency who are escaping domestic violence in Australia, and are not eligible for an income payment from Centrelink, to allow these families to access Community Housing.

An inability to access appropriate and affordable housing means that many women and children must move multiple times between temporary housing. This housing instability often results in loss of material possessions, control and security, and particularly impacts on children's schooling (Champion et al 2009:28-29). The NSW study on post-refuge housing found that most women had multiple moves and, as a result, went back to violent partners (ibid:19). On occasion this contributed to a revolving door approach, with women later returning to a refuge and the crisis cycle repeating (ibid:9-10).

The typical expected length of stay in a women's refuge in Queensland is 3 months. A British study indicated that *on average, six months in refuge is most conducive to building resilience for independent living and to support recovery from abuse* (Bowstead 2013 cited in Women's Aid Federation of England 2013:8). The Council of Europe's best practice guidelines advocate that women's refuges should make provision for victims to stay as long as they require, regardless of their financial situation (cited in Amnesty International Australia 2008:39).

In Australia, an increasing number of authors have proposed the need for flexibility in the length of refuge stays in response to the local housing context (Chung et al 2000:7) and the option to remain in a single transitional property until appropriate permanent housing is found (Tually et al 2008:v). Insufficient time at a women's refuge has been identified as one reason women return to a violent partner:

Women sometimes go to refuges more than once because they are only offered a six week stay at a time, which is not long enough for an effective intervention. Interviewees reported that the longer the women stay in the refuge initially, the less likely it is that they will seek to return later, and that clients able to be supported for 12 months very rarely go back through the system, whether this support comes through staying in a refuge or through an outreach service. (Spinney 2012:36)

Ultimately, the long term prognosis for women and children is best if safe, secure, affordable housing can be found within a short time frame (Tually et al 2008:v). Women's refuges have noted the value of providing storage facilities so women's impoverishment is not further increased through surrender of furniture and other items of personal property (Women's House Shelta 2009:23).

The Queensland Government has recognised some of these problems. *Opening Doors*, for example, includes a commitment to a *housing first approach for people experiencing homelessness* (Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services 2011:1) and to ... *provide more flexible support options that match peoples duration, level and type of need* (ibid:18). The strategy acknowledges that:

... to 'break the cycle' of homelessness, many homeless people need help to move quickly into stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur. (ibid:11)

Similarly, the Queensland Government agreed to *increase the numbers of families who maintain or secure long term safe and sustainable housing post-violence*, by 2013 (COAG n/d:25)

Women's refuges in Queensland continue to focus on supporting women to access to safe, secure, affordable housing and income support. On the Snapshot Day alone, at least 40 episodes of direct support focused on accessing income support or housing for women, and at least 70 families were assisted financially. This commitment to achieving financial and housing security for women also reflects *best practice* by women's refuges.

Continuing support is a social investment

Developing a violence-free, independent life is difficult for survivors of DFV – particularly women and children who have lived with violence for many years, those whose quality of life is dramatically reduced, and those without a personal social and emotional support system. There is no *quick fix* to the multitude of issues and changes women and children must face. Too often, women are forced to return to a violent domestic situation in order to meet the housing or other basic economic needs of themselves and their children (or, indeed, to feel confident that they can remain in Australia with their children). Too often, women feel forced to return to a violent setting due to the overwhelming myriad of (legal, emotional, financial, child protection, cultural) issues and barriers they face. Too often, an inability to find services willing and able to meet these needs plays a central role in women and children's return to violent settings ... and so, the *cycle of violence* continues.

Women's refuges have the necessary skills and flexibility to provide these services and are uniquely positioned to respond to these needs. Again, reductions in real terms in funding over the past 30 years have severely curtailed refuges' capacity to provide support to former residents. Despite these constraints, on the Snapshot Day, support services were provided to a further 87 women (37%) and 101 children (30%). This included support to families in transitional housing, mobile support and support to non-resident women and children who visited the refuge.

Continuing to provide services to former residents after they leave a refuge could be viewed as *protecting an existing investment* in reducing DFV. Significant public and private funds have been dedicated to

providing women's refuges. It seems to make little sense to take away services' capacity to continue to support women and child survivors of DFV until they are *back on their feet*!

Continuing support for women and children optimises their capacity to build a violence-free life. The frequency with which women return to DFV settings in the *gap* between leaving women's refuges and securing appropriate permanent housing has been detailed above. Another reason women return to a violent partner is lack of peer support or long term intensive staff support after leaving a women's refuge (Spinney 2012:33; Chung et al 2000:21). A *crisis approach* to funding of DFV services was highlighted as a matter of key concern in the *Home Safe Home* report (Chung et al 2000:2). Enabling women's access to ongoing support services is both *best practice* and a means of securing the state's investment in refuge and other DFV services.

It is a myth that men's use of violence stops when women leave. Many women and children continue to face post-separation abuse, sometimes over several years. International studies have found that many *batterers* escalate their violence after the relationship ends (American Psychological Association 1996, Browne & Bassuk 1997 & Mahoney, 199 cited in Sullivan et al 2008:293):

In fact, women and children may be in greater danger after separation than before. This means that separation from an abusive partner does not always solve the problem of violence in the family. Instead, the nature and the focus of the violence may change and contact visits may well provide the opportunity for the perpetration and perpetuation of abuse.

(Rendell et al 2002 cited in Women's House Shelta 2009:21)

Similarly, an Australian study found that separation heightens the risk of escalation and the chance of serious assault and homicide (Humphreys 2007 cited in Tually 2008:17).

Ongoing violence may take many forms, including sexual, physical, financial and/or emotional abuse. One Australian study found that a large proportion of women experienced sexual assault and rape by their ex-partner, sometimes witnessed by their children: 76% of women stated that violence and abuse did not cease once they had left the relationship with 36% stating that it was continuing at the time of the study (Mulroney 2002 cited in Smyth 2003:27-28). The NSW post-refuge housing study found that some violent ex-partners exercised *financial abuse* through maintaining financial control, with women being *forced* to accept help from their ex-partner, which led to ongoing abuse (Champion et al 2009:19).

Studies have argued the importance of women continuing to have access to intensive support, at least until housing security is achieved (Tually et al 2008:v). In light of the impact of ongoing violence on women and children, the option of continuing to access intensive, individualised and open-ended support is equally important to both the speed of recovery and long term prognosis for many women and their children (ibid; Laing, Humphreys and Cavanagh 2013 cited in Breckenridge & Hamer 2014:2; Chung et al 2000:4-5). In fact, *Home Safe Home* identified ongoing support from a refuge worker as one of the 3 most important services women needed from refuges (Chung et al 2000:64).

Typical long term issues facing women survivors of DFV include financial hardship, isolation, managing child behaviours, violence and threats from ex-partner, difficulty with child access and handover, difficulty making decisions, difficulty obtaining housing, legal and family court problems, confusion about whether they should return to perpetrator, and, for some racism and racial harassment and/or immigration issues (Smyth 2003:29).

Several studies have highlighted the consequences of financial abuse. Some women have never had (been allowed) to manage their household and personal finances, or apply for or hold down paid employment (Bartholomew 2002 cited in Tually et al 2008:45). Others have reduced confidence in financial management (Landvogt 2011 cited in Spinney 2012:31) and support in these areas may be critical to their ability to live independently. Still others are competent to budget and manage money, but continue to be

forced into poverty through their ex-partner delaying property settlement (Women's House Shelta 2009:21-22).

Women may also experience hardship after they leave violent men as their need to stay safe may limit their movements, force them to move periodically and force them into further isolation as they have to keep away from places of work, school, family and friends. For some women and children, these hardships may be worse than living with abuse. (Women's House Shelta 2009:20)

It is in situations such as these that access to ongoing support becomes critical – sometimes to the very survival of women and children.

Queensland Government policies reflect some understanding of this need. The *Practice Standards* include a minimum standard that DFV services provide outreach and follow-up (Department of Families 2002:18), and Opening Doors recognises that:

Some Queenslanders who are homeless will get back on their feet quickly with targeted support. Others will need long-term and intensive support. Some people move in and out of homelessness for many years and when they do find housing, they are not able to sustain it for long. (Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services 2011:11)

In addition to sustaining permanent housing, women's capacity to maintain a life free of violence can be impacted by their access to continuing support from a trusted source, including support to address tenancy issues. The Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence has recognised the importance of ongoing support:

The Taskforce's review has highlighted the importance of programs that provide non-residential support to assist victims to live independently and not return to violent/controlling relationships.

(ibid 2015:248)

37% of women clients on the Snapshot Day were non-resident women, an indication of the commitment of Queensland women's refuges supporting women on an *as needs* basis. However, provision of these services severely stretches the resources of under-funded women's refuges.

Recommendation 14: That the Queensland Government provide additional funding to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide extended support, as required, to women and children following their refuge stay.

Recommendation 15: That the Queensland Government restore funding to the Tenancy Advocacy and Advisory Service, which provided vital support to women and children escaping DFV dealing with tenancy issues.

Avoiding multigenerational impacts of exposure to violence

Multiple studies have documented the immediate harm to children who have been exposed to DFV – on their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing; and their social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural development (cited in Laing 2000:7; Poole et al 2008:679; Department of Communities, Child Safety & Disability Services 2012:5; Price 2009:2). Specifically, 25% of children who have experienced domestic violence *display serious social and behavioural problems* (Weeks and Oberin 2004 cited in Spinney 2012:26). Moreover, *social learning theory suggests a strong likelihood of such impacts being transmitted inter-generationally in the longer term* (Holtzworth-Munroe et al cited in Price 2009:2).

Children are impacted by DFV at multiple levels. First, they live with the violence - 34% of women who reported experiencing partner violence in the 2005 Personal Safety Survey said their children had witnessed the violence (ABS 2005 cited in COAG n/d:23). Second, they move to an unfamiliar environment

- a women's refuge – often leaving behind much of their life, including their home, school, friends, familiar activities, pets, toys, clothes, father, and other family members including grandparents. Third, they are often moved many times between short term housing options (with commensurate changes in school, routines and lifestyle), usually live at a lower income level than previously, and often ending up living in poverty. Some have little prospect of a stable life, and are forced to move frequently in order to maintain their safety from a violent father. It is hardly surprising that this can have a profound effect on their immediate and long term life.

An increasing body of research suggests that childhood exposure to DFV has a long term and/or multigenerational impact on many children. In fact, one underlying cause of DFV is believed to be having witnessed, or been a victim of, violence as a child (WHO 2009 cited in Walden 2014:2), with Australian data suggesting that exposure violence or abuse as a child strongly correlates with violence against women (Phillips & Vandenbroek 2014:6-7). *Children can believe that domestic or family violence is inevitable or normal* (Cunningham and Baker 2004 cited in Spinney 2012:26) and repeated studies demonstrate that children who have experienced abuse are 1.5 to 3 times more likely (depending on the type of abuse), to experience DFV as adults (Mitchell 2011:7-8).

Repeated studies have found a correlation, too, between childhood exposure to DFV and adult homelessness (Joseph Rowntree Foundation cited in Spinney 2012:25), homelessness arising from DFV and adult homelessness (Australian Institute for Health and Welfare 2007 cited in Spinney 2012:27) and DFV and youth homelessness (several studies cited in Mitchell 2011:27). These can be expected, in the long term, to also impact areas such as employment, education, physical health and mental health (Mitchell 2011:24-25; Phillips & Vandenbroek 2014:18), resulting in adults and young people with complex multi-faceted needs.

Dedicated support for children

Many authors have argued the importance of dedicated, funded services for child survivors of DFV and the need to treat children as clients in their own right within DFV settings (Chung et al 2000:9; Amnesty International Australia 2008:38), including the importance of family support in breaking patterns of intergenerational homelessness (McDonagh 2011 cited in Spinney 2012:26). Similarly, in its' *Good practice principles: Places of safety*, the Council of Europe's Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women recommends that all women's refuges have *child-care services provided by qualified childcare personnel* (cited in Amnesty International Australia 2008:39). The Council of Australian Governments has acknowledged that *children need services to meet their needs in their own right* (COAG n/d:23). As a member of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the Queensland Government agreed to *build the capacity of domestic violence services to respond to the needs of children who are exposed to domestic violence* by 2013 (ibid:24).

The Department of Communities, Child Safety & Disability Services has recognised that the safety and wellbeing of a child affected by DFV will be increased by increasing the safety, and supporting the autonomy, of the non-violent parent (generally the mother) and enhancing their capacity to protect their child (2012:5).

Indications are that children are likely to be the majority of residents in women's refuges nationally (Smyth 2003:36): they were certainly the majority of both residents and total clients in Queensland refuges that participated in the Snapshot Day. Repeated studies since the 1970's have asserted the specific needs of children in women's refuges (cited in Smyth 2003:36-55). Over the past 35 years, a lot of work has been put into developing a sophisticated variety of models of support for children in women's refuges - including individual and group support/services for children of different ages, parenting support for mothers, and integrated mother/child support (Poole et al 2008:680-2).

Some women's refuges in Queensland report being limited in their capacity to provide dedicated services to children. In the 1980's, Children's Support Workers were routinely employed in women's refuges.

However, some services report continuing funding reductions (in real terms) and pressure to increase client numbers (particularly over the past decade) have severely hampered their capacity to provide *best practice* services to child survivors of DFV.

Despite severely curtailed resources to focus on children's needs, women's refuges continue to provide substantial services for children. On the Snapshot Day, a total of 89 episodes of support directly addressed the needs of children (see Appendix 5) and 9 Service Mapping participants detailed support services they provide for children and families (see Appendix 4). On the Snapshot Day, at least 74 episodes of direct support were provided to children (including group work with 46 children and individual support with 25 children) and 15 episodes of parenting support occurred with mothers. Further, on the Snapshot Day, at least 3 young people were assisted to access higher education.

Women's refuges provide a variety of services focused on the needs of children. Service Mapping participants identified many different types of group activities provided for children including Art Therapy, Music Therapy, play sessions, etc. In addition, children's needs are often integrated into group sessions with mothers focused on addressing changing patterns associated with living with DFV. Many refuges also provide joint activities for mothers and children designed to both meet children's support needs and enhance their mothers' parenting confidence. One talked about the value of Expressive Therapy with individual children, sibling groups and their mothers. Another highlighted the value of family group outings. Joint support for children and their mothers is also provided through activities such as child-minding; liaison with schools and childcare centres; assistance with enrolment; and transport to school or childcare. In addition, some refuges form partnerships with other services to provide support to older children.

Studies have raised concerns about the risk of harm associated with provision of *one size fits all* programs to children, particularly traumatised children, and the dangers associated with short term, incomplete intervention which cannot be maintained if a mother suddenly leaves the refuge (Poole et al 2008:49-51). This highlights the importance of continuing support services for children as well as women, particularly once the family is settled into permanent accommodation.

Recommendation 16: That the Queensland Government recognise the immediate and long term impact of DFV on children, and provide additional funding for the reinstatement of a dedicated children's support worker in each women's refuge.

The importance of collaboration, coordination and partnerships

Concurrent with dealing with the emotional impact of domestic and family violence (DFV) and the change of lifestyle for themselves and their children, women escaping DFV generally face a myriad of practical issues and needs. These commonly include establishing income support, dealing with legal and child protection issues, addressing physical and mental health needs of themselves and their children, seeking permanent housing ... and managing threats, or a fear of violence, from their violent ex-partner. It is inefficient, ineffective and potentially harmful, to send women on an *agency run around*. At this time, more than ever, women survivors of DFV need efficient, well-informed, concrete, *supported referral*.

Most women and children presenting at women's refuges have complex, interrelated needs. Every woman and child's needs are different and staff seek to respond to the particular needs of each client. In responding to these diverse needs, women's refuges rely heavily on other government and non-government agencies to provide the services that are essential to women building a violence-free life. The need for information, referral, advocacy and liaison with other service providers was particularly highlighted in Service Mapping responses. Here, 15 of the 18 refuges saw this as a key area of service

provision. Refuges assist women to access services on an equitable basis – in particular, advocating for equitable access to mainstream services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women from CALD backgrounds. This can include the need to advocate with other agencies at both an individual and systemic level to better meet women's diverse needs.

In order to be able to provide *supported referral*, women's refuge staff must maintain a current detailed understanding of exactly what other agencies can and cannot offer. To be able to assist women to negotiate systems effectively, workers must have specialised knowledge of the systems and services available, well beyond the general descriptions in most agency websites or pamphlets. This requires building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders - a fact that is recognised by the government's own *Practice Standards* for work with women affected by DFV (Department of Families 2002:6). The Practice Standards include a long list of different types of service providers with which services are required to build establish links (ibid:19): DFV services are also required to be part of community networks, and regularly liaise and network with a further list of organisations (ibid:29-30).

Collaboration, coordination and partnership are not time-neutral activities.

Achieving the *Practice Standards* and providing a quality service requires participation in a variety of interagency activities. It can require partnerships with other organisations to meet needs: this, at a time when women's refuges feel pressured to provide services to more women and children than ever before. Whilst one service said they had *150 partnerships*, women's refuges are generally necessarily circumspect about their interagency involvements, and make judgments about the most efficient way to participate in interagency activities.

Agencies that participated in the Service Mapping exercise (detailed in Appendix 4) were members of a total of 33 networks/committees/working groups. The majority of services' involvements were at a local or regional level – as members of DFV, homeless, housing, social services, multicultural and mental health networks. In addition, the 18 women's refuges maintained partnerships or regular meetings with a further 33 individual service provider agencies in the wide variety of areas impacting women and children escaping DFV.

Adequately resourcing women's refuges – an economic imperative

Women's refuges have faced significant reductions (in real terms) in funding over recent years. This perpetuation of DFV due to lack of services does not make economic sense.

It was estimated that in 2009/10 violence against women and children cost the Australian economy \$13.6 billion. It was further estimated that by 2021-22, without appropriate intervention, these costs will rise to \$15.6 billion, of which \$9.9 billion will be a direct result of domestic and family violence (DFV). Of this, an estimated \$8.1 billion will be due to violence against 4 groups – immigrant and refugee women (over \$4 billion), women with disabilities (\$3.9 billion), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (\$2.2 billion) and the child witnesses of violence (\$1.5 billion). (KPMG 2009:4,66; Phillips & Vandenbroek 2014:19-20) In light of reduced funding for women's refuges - a key intervention - this should be seen as a conservative estimate.

More recently, the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence estimates that DFV costs the Queensland economy between \$2.7 and \$3.2 billion annually.

On the other hand, studies have estimated the return on investment in women's refuges as between 1:4 and 1:18. A recent British study conservatively estimated a return of £3.54 for every £1 spent on DFV

refuges (Estep et al 2013:15), whilst an earlier American cost-benefit analysis found a return of between \$4.60 and \$18.40 for each \$1 spent (Chanley et al 2001:405). Increased expenditure on women's refuges in Queensland could be expected to achieve an impressive social return.

A failure to meet clients' immediate needs leaves some women with little choice but to return (with their children) to violent settings. This can be expected to result in both short and long term cost pressures on other budget areas such as the police, housing, child protection and health systems (Women's Aid Federation of England 2013:7; Phillips & Vandenbroek 2014:17-18).

Women's refuges in Queensland already make a significant economic contribution. This has been recognised by the Queensland Government at a policy level:

Investing in responses to homelessness improves the lives of people experiencing homelessness, but also makes sound financial sense for the community as a whole.

(Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services 2011:11)

The Special Taskforce has aptly recognised funding to assist women and children to escape DFV and establish a violence-free life as an *investment* (op cit 2015:241). As such, the Taskforce has recommended:

The Queensland Government develops a long term funding and investment model, informed by the audit on the best mix of specialist and generalist services, to be implemented, as a minimum, over the five year forward estimates commencing in 2016/2017, to meet needs and address any gaps.

(Recommendation 72)

Too often, funding for women's refuges (within Queensland, nationally and internationally) has been treated as a matter of *charity*, rather than an investment in the future of the state or nation. Whilst the logic of the economic imperative is periodically acknowledged, funding to women's refuges continues to diminish. It is critical that clear information about the economic benefits of this investment are articulated.

Recommendation 17: That the Queensland Government recognise the economic value of the services provided by women's refuges, and lobby the Australian Government to fund research for a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis to quantify the contribution of women's refuges to the Australian economy.

By comparison with the projected economic costs of DFV, the contribution of the Queensland and Australian Governments to women's refuges and other DFV services is modest. Nonetheless, the benefits of this investment should be optimised through allocation of funds to evidence-based, effective services.

According to *Opening Doors*, the current Queensland strategy for reducing homelessness:

Enhanced responses will take account of the specific issues and needs of key groups that are at high risk of homelessness across the policy, program and service delivery levels. ... The Queensland Government will work with community service agencies to improve the housing and homelessness service system to align it better with client needs. This will mean more effective supportive housing for people with complex needs, more supportive tenancy management models, greater capacity to deliver intensive case managed support services, better coordinated housing and support and more flexible support options that match people's duration, level and type of need.

(Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services 2011:18)

Sadly, the evidence demonstrates that demand far exceeds the number of places available in women's refuges in Queensland (as acknowledged by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence 2015:241). As a result, too many women and children are forced to stay in motels, without access to the emotional, practical and specialised support essential to recovering from DFV and building a new life. Too

many women and children return to violent settings, because they cannot access the accommodation and support services they need.

The English experience is instructive, here. Jurisdictions across Australia are increasingly adopting British models of funding for non-government services in the Community Services and Health Industries. Like England, funding reductions in Queensland have already forced a reduction in support provided to women (and, particularly, children); have reduced women's refugees' capacity to provide outreach and therapeutic activities; and have disproportionately reduced services to Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, immigrant and refugee clients. (Women's Aid Federation of England 2014:8 & 2013:5-6,10)

The pressure to provide fewer services to more women and children provides the illusion of increased service delivery. This is a *false economy*, given the significantly reduced outcomes (that is, number of families who permanently live a violence-free life) that invariably result. It is critical that Queensland does not follow the path taken by the British Government, with disastrous consequences, of awarding tenders to large generic providers who focus on short term beds alone, without the specialist knowledge, skills and experience to provide the requisite support services.

The Special Taskforce is sympathetic to these concerns and *supports a service delivery approach that continues to fund specialist domestic and family violence services to ensure that expert responses can be provided* (ibid 2015:217). In keeping with this commitment, the Special Taskforce has also recognised that:

Splitting portfolio responsibility between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and the Department of Housing and Public Works further complicates service delivery with potential for the differing priorities of the two government departments resulting in poorer outcomes for victims. ... (and the) Government's competitive tendering process threatens the viability of independent refuges and moves service provision from specialised domestic and family violence shelters to larger, more generic service providers.

(Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence 2015:242)

Further, that

The Taskforce agrees that these more generic services lack the skills and knowledge to provide women escaping domestic and family violence with the safety and support they require. (ibid:243)

Recommendation 18: That the Queensland Government make a dedicated, increased investment in existing, specialist women's refuges, which is protected from competition by large, generic, homelessness service providers.

Conclusion

Women's refuges in Queensland reflect world best practice. In particular, this paper has demonstrated their capacity to closely align services to the complex needs of women and children recovering from DFV. Provision of accessible, flexible, responsive, customised, women-centred support services beyond accommodation alone is critical to these families' long term prognosis.

Women's refuges have *stood the test of time*. This model remains the core response to women and children escaping DFV throughout Australia, the West and Europe. In recent years exciting developments, particularly perpetrator removal and outreach support programs, have provided home-based alternatives for women facing DFV. However, until rates of male violence are reduced, many women and children in crisis will continue to need to escape their home, and often their local geographical area, for the safety and support which can only be provided by women's refuges.

It is essential that Recommendation 71 of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence be implemented as a matter of urgency. That:

The Queensland Government undertakes an immediate audit of services to ensure adequate resources are available to meet demand for specialist domestic and family violence services, including perpetrator intervention initiatives and specialist shelters.

This can only support the recommendations in this report, for increases in the investment in women's refuges in Queensland.

Retention and further enhancement of existing effective women's refuge services is essential to achieving a significant reduction in DFV against women and children in Queensland, and the associated cost savings.

Bibliography and references

- ACT Government Community Services (2013) *Domestic Violence Policy Manual* at www.communityservices.act.gov.au/hcs/policies/domestic_violence_policy
- Amnesty International Australia (2008) *Setting the Standard: International good practice to inform an Australian National Plan of Action to Eliminate Violence Against Women*, Amnesty International Australia at www.amnesty.org.au/images/uploads/svaw/NPOA_report_-_Master_13June_opt_rfs.pdf
- Anglicare Australia (2014) *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot*, Canberra at www.anglicare.asn.au/site/rental_affordability_snapshot.php
- Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (2013) *Specialist Homelessness Services 2012-2013*, Cat. HOU 273, AIHW, Australian Government, Canberra at www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129545638
- Breckenridge, Jan & Hamer, Jen (2014) *Traversing the Maze of 'Evidence' and 'Best Practice' in Domestic and Family Violence Service Provision in Australia*, Issues Paper 26, May, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, University of NSW at www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/documents/IssuesPaperADFVC.pdf
- Champion, Taryn; Gander, Catherine; Camacho Duarte, Olga; Phibbs, Peter; Crabtree, Louise & Kirkby, Margaret (2009) *The Impact of Housing on the Lives of Women and Children – Post Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation: A study undertaken by the NSW Women's Refuge Movement and the UWS Urban Research Centre NSW*, WRM & UWS, NSW at www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/69590/Microsoft_Word_-_Finalreport.pdf
- Chanley, Sharon A.; Chanley, Jesse J. & Campbell, Heather E., (2001) *Providing Refuge: The value of domestic violence shelter services*, **The American Review of Public Administration**, December, Vol. 31 (4): 393-413, DOI: 10.1177/02750740122065018 at www.chanley.org/value_of_shelter_services.pdf
- Chung, Donna; Kennedy, Rosemary; O'Brien, Bev & Wendt, Sarah (2000) *Home Safe Home: The link between domestic and family violence and women's homelessness*, Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, WESNET and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, at wesnet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/homesafehome.pdf
- COAG - Council of Australian Governments (n/d) *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022* at www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf
- Commonwealth of Australia (1994) *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 – Section 5* at www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/saaa1994359/s5.html
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland Government. (2012) *Domestic and family violence and its relationship to child protection* at <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-domestic-violence.pdf>
- Department of Communities, Child Safety & Disability Services (2012) *Domestic and Family Violence and its Relationship to Child Protection: Practice paper* (revised) at www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/prac-paper-domestic-violence.pdf
- Department of Communities, Housing & Homelessness Services (2011) *Opening Doors: Queensland strategy for reducing homelessness 2011-2014*, Queensland Government at rti.cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2011/may/qld%20strategy%20for%20reducing%20homelessness/Attachments/Opening%20Doors_Qld%20strategy%20for%20reducing%20homelessness.pdf
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (2012) *Reducing the Need for Women and Children to Make Repeated Use of Refuge and Other Crisis Accommodation*, **Evidence Note No. 26**, Australian Government at homelessnessclearinghouse.govspace.gov.au/files/2012/11/EN-no-26-Swinburne-Domestic-and-Family-Violence.pdf
- Department of Families (2002) *Practice Standards for Working with Women Affected by Domestic and Family Violence*, Queensland Government at www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/communityservices/violenceprevention/practice-standards.pdf
- DVConnect (2013) *Domestic Violence Hotline - Facts and Statistics* at www.dvconnect.org/education-resources/public-awareness-campaigns
- Estep, Ben; Selsick, Aiden & Schifferes, Jonathon (2013) *Social Valuation of 'Refuge' Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence*, NEF Consulting Ltd., London at refuge.org.uk/files/Refuge-SROI-report-25-09-13-NCV2.pdf
- KPMG (2009) *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*, The National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women & Their Children, Commonwealth of Australia at www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf

- Laing, Lesley (2000) *Progress, Trends and Challenges in Australian Responses to Domestic Violence: A background paper to the Issues Paper series*, Issues Paper 1, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Partnerships Against Domestic Violence & The University of New South Wales at www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/issuespaper1.pdf
- Mitchell, Liesl (2011) *Domestic Violence in Australia: An overview of the issues*, Parliamentary Library background note, Parliament of Australia at www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/ViolenceAust
- Phillips, Janet & Vandenbroek, Penny (2014) *Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence in Australia: An overview of the issues*, Parliamentary Library Research Paper, Parliament of Australia at www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/ViolenceAust
- Poole, Ann; Beran, Tanya & Thurston, Wilfreda E. (2008) *Direct and Indirect Services for Children in Domestic Violence Shelters*. **Journal of Family Violence**, Canada, November, Vol. 23: 679-686.
- Price, Megan (2009) *Evaluating BoysTown Domestic Violence Service: Summary of the research findings*, BoysTown, Brisbane, Queensland at www.boystown.com.au/downloads/rep/BT-Evaluating-BoysTowns-Domestic-Violence-Service.pdf
- Queensland Government (1991) *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* at www.legislation.qld.gov.au/legisln/current/a/antidiscrima91.pdf
- Queensland Government (n/d) *For Our Sons and Daughters: A Queensland Government strategy to reduce domestic and family violence 2009–2014*, Department of Communities, Queensland Government
- Queensland Police (n/d) *Queensland Police Service Response to Domestic Violence* (webpage) at www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/dv/response.htm
- Smyth, Nancy (2003) *Impact 21: Innovative models promoting advanced concepts through the 21st Century*, NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre, Redfern, NSW.
- Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland (2015) *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, Queensland Government at <http://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/dfv-read-report-recommendation/index.html>
- Spinney, Angela (2012) *Reducing the Need for Women and Children to Make Repeated Use of Refuge and Other Crisis Accommodation*, Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne at homelessnessclearinghouse.govspace.gov.au/files/2012/11/Spinney-final-report-pdf.pdf
- Sullivan, Cris M.; Baptista, Isabel; O'Halloran, Sharon; Okroj, Lydia; Morton, Sarah & Sutherland Stewart, Cheryl (2008) *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Women's Refuges: A Multi-Country Approach to Model Development*, **International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice**, Vol. 32 (2): 291-308, DOI: 10.1080/01924036.2008.9678790 at vaw.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Evaluating-Effectiveness-Refuges-Shelters.pdf
- Tually, Selina; Faulkner, Debbie; Cutler, Cecile & Slatter, Michele (2008) *Women, Domestic and Family Violence and Homelessness: A synthesis report*, Flinders Institute for Housing, Urban & Regional Research, Flinders University, Adelaide, for Office for Women, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government, Canberra at www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/synthesis_report2008.pdf
- Walden, Inara (2014) *Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women*, Fast Facts 12, February, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, The University of New South Wales, Sydney at www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/documents/ADFVCFastFacts12_000.pdf
- Weeks, Wendy & Oberin, Judy for WESNET (2004) *Women's Refuges, Shelters, Outreach & Support Services in Australia: From Sydney squat to complex services challenging domestic & family violence*, Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services, Australian Government, Canberra at web.archive.org/web/20080718232207/http://www.wesnet.org.au/publications/reports/0511EAOWW_report.pdf
- Weis, Jennifer R. (2008) *Professionalizing human services: a case of domestic violence shelter advocates*, **Human Organization**, Society for Applied Anthropology, Summer, Vol. 67 (2): 221-233.
- Women's Aid Federation of England (2014) *SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives: Data report on specialist domestic violence services in England*, Bristol, England at www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=00010001001400130008§ionTitle=SOS%3A+Data+Report
- Women's Aid Federation of England (2013) *A Growing Crisis of Unmet Need: What the figures alone don't show you*, Bristol, England at www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=00010001001400130004§ionTitle=Growing+Crisis+of+Unmet+Need
- Women's House Shelta (2009) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Best practice from a feminist perspective*, Women's Community Aid Association Qld Ltd, Brisbane at wesnet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Domestic-Violence-and-Child-Protection-Shelta-2009.pdf

Snapshot Day: Referrals (DVConnect)

Services to Women

Total calls received on Womensline for assistance/support	159
Total outgoing calls to arrange support/accommodation	145

Total women & child client intakes

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	5	5	71	-	81	13	3
No. of accompanying children	-	-	-	42	42		

No. of women assisted to leave their home	27
No. of accompanying children assisted to leave their home	33
No. of women seeking refuge	23
No. of women referred to a DV refuge	4
No. of accompanying children referred to a DV refuge	4
No. of women accommodated in motel accommodation	10
No. of accompanying children accommodated in motels	9
No. of women transported	13
No. of accompanying children transported	20
No. of women provided with counselling/safety planning	35
No. of women provided with information/referral	24
No. of women assisted with calls related to sexual assault	5

Data not available/provided re:

- Number of total night spent by women in motels waiting for refuge vacancies
- Number of total nights spent by accompanying children in motels waiting for refuge vacancies

Services to Men

Total calls received on Mensline	18
Men assisted with face-to-face court assistance	15
Men assisted with calls related to sexual assault	0

A brief history of women's refuges in Queensland

Before the advent of women's refuges in the **1970's**, women escaping domestic and family violence (DFV) were forced to rely on non-DV specific hostels run by churches. In Brisbane, there was also OPAL, an Aboriginal hostel which, whilst not expressly targeting women escaping family violence, nevertheless supported many women and children in this situation.

The growth of the women's liberation movement during the **1970's** included an increasing focus on providing services and safe accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. Foremost amongst these was a response to the domestic circumstances of women, including women's (largely hidden) experiences of sexual and non-sexual violence in their own home. The first *refuge* explicitly focused on women escaping domestic violence¹ was established in Bowen Hills, Brisbane, by Women's House in 1975. Several other refuges were soon established *by women, for women* during the late 1970's (including a refuge in Townsville). Most were run by independent community-driven organisations with a sound understanding of gender issues, and specialising in domestic violence. Most services were based on a communal-style living model, with women and children from two or more families sharing a single house. During this period, the Combined Women's Refuge Group (CWRG) developed as a means for services to share their experiences, articulate the need for services to address domestic violence and advocate for establishment of more women's refuges.

The **1980's** saw significant expansion in the number and variety of DFV services in Queensland. With the establishment of SAAP² (a dedicated joint funding program by the Federal and Queensland Governments) in 1985, the number of women's refuges grew to 22 in South East Queensland, with refuges in other regional centres throughout the state. Some were auspiced by independent community organisations, whilst others were run by large non-government organisations (most Christian-based). Whilst the majority continued to offer communal living in large houses owned by CAP³, organisations progressively began to implement other models of service, including single family units. During this period, most organisations also began providing one or two transition properties for women leaving refuge. During this time refuges were sufficiently resourced to provide intensive emotional and practical support and advocacy. In addition to this most refuges had Children's Support Workers and activities for refuge residents, such as outings and camps, were a regular feature of most services: these provided valuable opportunities for relationship building and provision of support.

Use of CAP funds to develop purpose-built women's refuges characterised the sector in the **1990's**. It was during this period that a dominant housing model emerged in the sector – multiple separate units co-located on a single property (most commonly, with an office within the same compound), with transitional *spot housing* located throughout the community. Women and their children were typically allowed to stay in a refuge for 3 months: in the 1990's, this generally allowed sufficient time to access permanent housing in the public (or less frequently, private) sector. Meanwhile, the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* continued to highlight the central role of *support services*, as well as *supported accommodation*, in enabling homeless women and children *to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence* (Commonwealth of Australia: Section 5).

¹ During the 1970's, refuges focused on domestic violence – that is, violence perpetrated against women by their male partners.

² The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program aimed to reduce homelessness through providing transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who were homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence.

³ Capital Acquisition Program, Department of Housing

During the **2000's** pressure mounted on women's refuges to *do more with less*. The sector was fairly stable, with no new services being funded, despite significant population growth (particularly in South East Queensland). Early in this decade, SAAP wanted to introduce a more formulaic approach to service funding and proposed a *benchmark* – a requirement that services accommodate a certain number of women according to their level of funded positions, without reference to variations in the complexity of resident's needs. Whilst CWRG successfully argued against this approach, all services began to accommodate larger numbers of women and children, at least in part due to a fear of losing funds. This included refuges acquiring additional transitional properties without the provision of corresponding additional funding.

Over the same period, refuges were dealing with further pressures on multiple fronts. Demands on *back office* functions grew - particularly in terms of data collection and reporting requirements. Service delivery pressures also grew – most notably as a result of increasing numbers of immigrant women who were not eligible for Centrelink and other social services, and increasing frequency of intervention by the Department of Child Safety due to legislative changes which mandated police to report situations where children had witnessed family violence. The former drew heavily on the financial resources and support workload of services – with no increase in funding. The latter also significantly increased frontline workload, including an increased need for advocacy with women accused by the Department of Child Safety with *failing to protect* their children, and dealing with the consequences of women avoiding calling police out of fear of having their children removed. As the demands on refuges increased, services were forced to reduce the scope of support work they could provide.

In 2009, another significant change placed even greater pressure on the resources of refuges. In 2009, the Fair Work Commission recognised that the wages of Community Workers, a largely female workforce, had been unfairly undervalued. Whilst the resulting wage rises were essential in attracting and retaining staff, adequate government funds were not provided to cover the wage increases for existing refuge staff. As a result, services were forced to restructure and/or reduce staff hours which had a massive impact on service delivery to women and children. This has had a significant, adverse, impact on outcomes for women and children, reducing both the quantity and comprehensiveness of the services refuges can provide to their clients.

Most recently, during the **2010's**, it appears government policies are trending *full circle*. In a *back to the future* move, service agreements are now being expressed in standardised, gender-neutral terms which do not recognise the specialised nature of women's DV refuges. Management of funding for most women's refuges has been relocated within the Queensland Government – from the Department of Communities (specialising in community services - including the complexities of violence against women) to the Department of Housing and Public Works (specialising in *bricks and mortar* – that is, *houselessness*).

Overall, women and children's access to safety and support in Queensland has progressively diminished over the past 3 decades. Only one new women's refuge has been funded since the mid 1980's⁴ (in the course of writing this report, this refuge has lost its accommodation and now operates on a mobile support basis). Government requirements to provide services to increasing numbers of women and children have placed enormous pressure on refuges to reduce the amount and type of support available to each family. This, over a period when the needs of women and children presenting to refuges have steadily become more complex and the resources available to respond to these needs have progressively reduced. For example, demand amongst immigrant women (many of whom have limited English language skills and do not qualify for income support) has increased. In particular, the (typical) 3 month limit on stays in women's refuges is no longer an adequate period of time during which to find housing in the current market.

⁴ *Tiddas Meta* (later known as *Murri Sisters*) - a community-based service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Brisbane.

Survey Methodology

This paper draws on two surveys of women's refuges in Queensland conducted between March and July 2014. A *Service Mapping* exercise gathered largely qualitative data on the nature of services provided by agencies and organisational processes. This contributed to design of a subsequent largely quantitative survey to identify services provided on a single *Snapshot Day* (21 July 2014).

Participating Services

All 53 women's refuges and referral services in Queensland were invited to participate in both exercises. A total of 27 services, representing a cross-section of the sector, contributed. 18 services contributed to the *Service Mapping* exercise, and 24 completed the *Snapshot Day* survey. Geographically, approximately half are located in Brisbane (including 2 state-wide services) and half in a provincial city, rural town or remote community. Most are funded by the Department of Housing and Public Works and one receives no government funding (1 that responded, 1 other as well (of the DV specific refuges)). Most also rely on financial support from, and/or partnerships with, philanthropic organisations (including service clubs and fundraising groups), local businesses, religious organisations, fundraising/donations, other non-government organisations, government programs and/or government services. The size of services ranges from refuges with between 1 and 10 units of crisis housing; and between 0 and 15 transitional properties. Around half are part of large (mostly Christian-based) non-government organisations and the other half are run by independent, community-based organisations. Services employ between 1 and 8 staff.

Participating services came from throughout Queensland:

- 2 were state-wide services (based in Brisbane)
- A further 11 were in the Brisbane metropolitan area
- 10 were in provincial cities (Toowoomba, Redcliffe, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast & Cairns)
- 3 were in rural towns (including Kingaroy and Nambour)
- One was in a remote community (Cherbourg)

No.	Service	Snapshot Data Contributed		Service Mapping
		Support	Referral	
1	Ada's Haven Indigenous Women's Refuge (Relationships Australia), Toowoomba	✓	✓	
2	Chisholm Inc., Brisbane	✓		✓
3	DVConnect, state-wide		✓	
4	Gareema Refuge (Save the Children), Brisbane	✓		✓
5	Ipswich Women's Refuge, Brisbane	✓		✓
6	Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS), state-wide	✓	✓	
7	Jebb Refuge (Save the Children), Redcliffe	✓		✓
8	Koolkuna Kalparrin Women's Refuge (Uniting Care Community), Brisbane	✓		✓
9	Koongoora Inc., Brisbane	✓		✓
10	Kywong Women's Refuge, Kingaroy	✓		
11	Lions Emergency Accommodation Centre Inc., Nambour	✓		✓
12	Macleod Accommodation Support Service Inc., Gold Coast	✓		✓
13	Madonna House (Ozcare), Brisbane	✓		✓
14	Majella House Women's Refuge, Gold Coast	✓		✓

15	Manna House, Toowoomba	✓		
16	Mary & Martha's Women's Refuge, Brisbane	✓		✓
17	Maybanke Accommodation & Crisis Support Services, Brisbane	✓		
18	Mudjimba Women's Safe House, Cherbourg	✓		
19	Murri Sisters Assoc. Inc., Brisbane			✓
20	Najidah (SunnyKids), Maroochydore	✓		✓
21	Parmenie (BoysTown), unnamed rural town	✓		✓
22	Rosalie House, Ozcare, Toowoomba	✓		
23	Ruth's Women's Refuge Cairns Inc., Cairns			✓
24	Sonshine Sanctuary Assoc. Inc., Sunshine Coast			✓
25	Windana Support Centre Inc., Brisbane	✓		✓
26	Women Helping Women Inc., Sunshine Coast	✓		
27	Women's House Shelta, Brisbane	✓	✓	✓
Total		23	4	18

Methodology

Between March and May 2014, services were invited to complete a largely open-ended questionnaire – the *Service Mapping* Questionnaire. (See [Appendix 4](#) for compilation of the findings.) This, in turn, informed design of categories for the more quantitative *Snapshot Day*.

In relation to the Snapshot Day, services had the option of completing a *Support Services* and/or *Referral Services* data sheet. 23 services contributed support service data and 4 contributed referral data, with 3 services completing both data sheets.

The Snapshot Day was Monday 21 July 2014. Women's refuges and other DFV services were invited to quantify:

- The support services they provided to women and children (and some administrative data) for that day. (See [Appendix 5](#) for compilation of the data.)
- The referral services they provided to men, women and children on that day.

Completion of the *Referral Services* data sheets was inconsistent. In fact, most services which completed the *Support Services* data sheet cited referral as part of the support provided to women on that day. Further, there was some risk of duplication of data. Accordingly, only the data from DVConnect (which accounted for the vast majority of data collected) has been included in this paper (see [Appendix 3](#)).

Service Mapping Questionnaire: Key Findings

Total No. of Participating Services 18

Service Area

State-wide - Brisbane 10 Provincial City 6 Rural Town 2 Remote -

Funding Sources

Department of Housing and Public Works	12
Department of Communities	3
Joint Federal/State Government funding	1
Government (unspecified)	1
Service Clubs/Philanthropic Funds	3
NGO	4
Fundraising/Donations	4
Fully rely on government funding	10
Receive no government funding	1

Accommodation Provided

No. of Crisis Units per Service

1 unit	1 ^a service	6 units	3 ^b services
2 units	-	7 units	2 ^c services
3 units	-	8 units	-
4 units	3 services	9 units	-
5 units	7 services	10 units	1 service

^a communal house accommodating several women and children

^b one service includes communal-style living

^c both services include a mix of houses (large families) and units (smaller families)

Total number of units of crisis accommodation 90

No. of Transitional Properties per Service

0 properties	3	6 properties	2
1 property	3	7 properties	-
2 properties	3	8 properties	1
3 properties	1	9 properties	-
4 properties	1	10 properties	-
5 properties	1	15 properties	1

Total number of transitional properties 56

No. of Unspecified Properties per Service:

6 units 1

Total number of units of accommodation 152

No. of services with more transitional than crisis accommodation

4

No. of services with less transitional than crisis accommodation

11

Support Services Provided

Support Service	No. of Services	Details (<i>incl. provides details from one or more services</i>)
Accommodation	18	Safe/secure accommodation (1), comfortable/clean/ welcoming/well-maintained accommodation (1), immediate/supported (1)
Case work/ management/ coordination and counselling	17	Crisis counselling (6), domestic violence counselling/support/information (6), holistic framework/support (2), immigration (4), legal issues (3), safety planning – incl. accessing community facilities (3), work/education/economic stability (3), mental health/emotional wellbeing (3), physical health and wellbeing (3), budgeting (2), safe/nurturing parenting (2), support ante-natal health (1), short term emotional support (1), group work (1), re: post separation violence – incl. abuse of children during contact visits (1), respond to women with issues which compound their domestic violence – incl. drug and alcohol, mental health and intellectual/physical disabilities which make it more difficult to establish a violence-free life (1), client-centred approach (1), information/resources (1)
Writing assistance	5	Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) applications (4), family law matters – parenting orders (2), immigration/residency matters (2), rental applications – approximately 10 per adult client (1)
Support/referral/ advocacy/liaison with specialist services	15	Legal – DVPO's, family law, civil law (11), (long term) housing – incl. safe/sustainable housing; mainly private rental; RTA, Queensland Housing, Rentconnect, local NGO (9), health care – incl. access to GP (6), court support (6), Centrelink – incl. Crisis Payment advocacy and arranging ongoing income (5), immigration – incl. referral to immigration solicitor (5), mental health (4), multicultural/cross-cultural – incl. use of interpreters (4), Department of Child Safety – incl. advocacy where involvement is due to domestic violence (3), financial assistance - incl. advocacy for removal/mitigation of domestic violence-related debts (2), counselling services (2), drug and alcohol (2), tenancy support (2), interpreting services – through TIS (2), referral pathways (2), police – advocating for appropriate response to breaches of DVPO's (1), cultural (1), emergency relief (1), emotional/social support (1), employment services (1), education services (1), sexual violence (1), settlement (1), case managers (1), Indigenous legal aid (1), Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (1), local indigenous services (1), parenting education/support (1), support social security/Medicare/public housing ineligible women (1), advocacy for access to everything required for women to build an independent and violence-free life (1).
Cultural/religious support	3	Chaplain visits (1), Murri cultural and spiritual support (1)
Support/activities/ groups for children/family	9	Art Therapy (2), Music Therapy (1), up to 3 weekly children's groups (2), individual support/counselling (3), a lot of play (1), children's unit (1), outdoor play area (1), liaison with schools & childcare centres – incl. assistance with enrolment (3), play sessions (1), partnership with another service to support older children (1), brokered child care provided through fundraising (1), Expressive Therapy – individual, sibling groups and with mother (1), family group outings (1), early intervention (1)
Support/groups for women	6	Domestic violence education – group, prevention, healthy relationships, self-worth, boundaries, self-esteem, Love Bites (5), Parenting/family issues support/workshops/ groups (5), Women's groups (2), social outings – individual and group (2), ongoing multicultural group (1), C.A.R.E. (Children, Animals, Respect, Empathy) group (1), Art Therapy (1)
Practical support	6	Retrieval of belongings – incl. coordination with police (4), food – incl. Foodbank; SecondBite (3), financial (1), emergency relief (1), school/day care costs (1)
Post-accommodation follow-up support	4	1 month – based on need (1), short period (1), time-limited (1), in transitional units (1)
Community education	2	About domestic violence – incl. its individual/community consequences (2), lobbying for law reform and improved institutional responses to domestic violence – incl. Centrelink, Police, Immigration, Child Safety – which both ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability (1)

No. of Staff

Services answered this question in so many different formats that it was not possible to compile coherent data. Some distinguished full and part time staff, some focused on role without commentary on hours of employment, some shared after hours work across core staff, others had discrete after hours staff, and a few expressed staffing in terms of total funded hours. The following reflects the most common format, and does not distinguish full and part time staff. Most organisations with 5 or more staff had a mix of full time and part time positions:

Core Staff

1	
2	1
3	1
4	
5	3
6	2
7	
8	1
Unknown	10

Relief/After Hours/Casual Staff

1	3
2	
3	1
4	1
5	
6	
7	
8	
Unknown	13

After Hours Access

	No. of Services	Comments
24/7	16	Referrals & intakes to 7 pm – 7 days (2), available to clients only (4), intakes to 8 pm only – Monday to Saturday (1), referrals to 9 pm only (1), accept referrals to 8 pm only (1), accept referrals 24 hours, since cut in funding only available for emergencies – no longer do after hours admissions (1), new clients must arrive by 7pm (1), one staff member lives on-site to deal with emergencies 24/7 (1)
Extended hours	2	On site to 8 pm/on call for remainder of evening (1), intake calls to 9 pm weekdays and 4 pm weekends (1)
9 – 5 only	0	

Mobile/Outreach Support

	No. of Services	Comments
Yes	13	Unfunded but provided where possible – incl. to DVConnect clients, limited outreach (3), unfunded but provide 6 weeks transitional support to clients(2), to previous clients only (1), to Indigenous women, family unit, community sector (1), limited (1)
No	5	

Key Partnerships

NOTE: Three organisations highlighted partnership areas, without naming specific organisational partners. These are cited in the left-hand column below:

- One service said: *150 partners across local businesses, large/medium/small philanthropists, government organisations and faith groups.*
- Another said: *refuges in regional areas have close links with all other support agencies as we are small in number and work closely together.*
- Another listed specific organisations then added: *plus a comprehensive referral base of (local) agencies.*

Private Sector Business (11 services)	CISCO IT company, volunteer counsellor, The Springs, Clayton Utz, Sesame Lane, Smart Services, Unity Water, RA Solicitors, Zephyr, Advanced Personnel Management, GDH, Dimension Data, Ana Borges Psychologist
Philanthropic Organisations - incl. Service Clubs, Fundraising Groups (11 services)	Second Chance Programme (5), Zonta (5), Assist a Sista (3), Soroptimists, Freemasons, Rotary, Lioness', Lions, Quota, Women in Tourism
Non-government Organisations (11 services)	CEO Challenge (6), IWSS – Immigrant Women's Support Service (2), St Vincent de Paul (2), Sandbag Community Centres & Services, SecondBite, Murri Medical, Foodbank, Nundah Neighbourhood Centre, Zillmere Community Centre, Clare Homes, INCH Housing, Animal Welfare League, Ozcare, Beaucare, RAILS - Refugee and Immigration Legal Service, DVASS – Domestic Violence Assistance Support Services, BRISSC – Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre, HART 4000, DVConnect
Government Programs/Services (6 services)	HHOT - Homeless Health Outreach Team (3), Brisbane City Council (2), DV Liaison Officer – Queensland Police, Centrelink Outreach Team
Religious Organisations (4 services)	Village Avenue Church, Catholic Women's Association, ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency

Networks/Alliances/Meetings

16/18 services identified as being involved with the CWRG – Combined Women's Refuge Group.

Regional or Local Networks/Working Groups/Committees	State-wide Networks/Working Groups/Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – BFVN - Brisbane Family Violence Network (3) – Brisbane Domestic Violence Network – BIRDV – Brisbane Integrated Response to Domestic Violence – Cairns Alliance of Social Services – Cairns Integrated Response to Domestic Violence and Family Violence – Cairns Supporting Family Alliance – CCR – Community Coordinated Response to Domestic & Family Violence (2) – DVLO – Domestic Violence Liaison Officer meetings (2) – Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response – Gold Coast Homeless Network (2) – ICR – Integrated Community Response – Logan City – Ipswich HCAP – Homeless Community Action Plan – Ipswich Housing Network – Logan Community Mental Health Collaborative – Logan Housing Interagency Meeting – Multicultural Network – North Queensland Women's Service Network – NAADV - Northside Alliance Against Domestic Violence (3) – Northside Interagency – Specialist Homelessness Services Network – Sunshine Coast Housing & Homelessness Network (3) – Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network – Under 1 Roof Ipswich 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child Support Workers Network – CWRG (2) – CHP – Council to Homeless Persons – Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group – DVAP – Domestic Violence Assistance Program Steering Committee – DVIR – Domestic Violence Integrated Response – Indigenous Police Reference Group – Project PRADO – Partnership Response at Domestic Violence Occurrences – QCOS – Queensland Council of Social Service – Q-Refuge
	Other Alliances/Meetings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service – Brisbane Domestic Violence Service (2) – Centrelink Service Centre – CEO Challenge – Department of Housing – Ipswich Independent Youth Service – Ipswich Women's Centre Against Domestic Violence – Ipswich Housing Support Service – Lady Musgrave Trust – Women's Legal Service

Snapshot Day: Support Services Provided

Total No. of Participating Services 23

Service Area

State-wide 1 Brisbane 10 Provincial City 8 Rural Town 3 Remote 1

Number of clients supported

Accommodation Only

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	-	4	9	-	13	8	3
No. of children	3	2	7	-	12	3 ^a	-

Accommodation & Support

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	14	54	69	-	137	79	26
No. of children	38	74	109	-	221	57 ^a	24 ^a

Transitional Support

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	4	22	15	-	41	17	8
No. of children	13	26	19	-	58	11 ^a	7 ^a

Mobile Support

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	2	10	23	3	38	18	3
No. of children	8	8	25	-	41	19 ^a	1 ^a

Drop-In

	ATSI	CALD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	2	4	2		8	7	2
No. of children	-	2	-		2	-	-

Total Clients Supported	ATSI	CaLD	Anglo	U/K	Total	No/low income	Non-PR
No. of women	22	94	118	3	237	129	42
No. of children	62	112	160	-	334	90 ^a	32 ^a
Total	84	206	278	3	571	219^a	74^a

^a These figures do not accurately reflect the number of children affected by no/low income or lack of permanent residency. Many services included only the number of women affected in their responses.

Direct service delivery hours provided

325.43

(18/23 services completed this data)

Service management/back office hours

127.35

(18/23 services completed this data)

Type of support provided

NOTE: Women and children may be counted in several areas if several types of services were provided on this day. Some agencies entered the number of women and children who received services, but not the amount of time spent.

Emotional Support

Informal emotional support

Group work

After hours call-ins – crisis support

TOTAL**Women**

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
120	93.8
39	10.7
16	9.75
175	114.25

Children

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
19	22.0
13	3.5
11	2.2
43	27.7

Practical Support

Tenancy management

Transport to appointments

Transport to school/childcare

Enrolling children in school/childcare

Practical support – shopping, child-minding

Assistance to access medical services

Assistance to access Centrelink

Applications for crisis payments

Moving/transferring clients

Retrievals (i.e. assisting women to access belongings, often with police assistance)

TOTAL**Women**

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
18	20.25
36	26.1
7	4.1
5	2.0
22	20.5
17	12.9
13	15.3
2	2
8	7.75
3	4.25
131	115.15

Children

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
2	-
6	1.2
17	3.5
13	1.8
27	10.5
6	1.3
2	1.0
-	-
2	-
-	-
75	19.3

Specialised Support

Formal counselling sessions

Assistance to access housing

Interpreting sessions

Immigration support

Legal support

Court support

Financial counselling/budgeting support

Mental health or drug/alcohol support

Referrals to external services

Women

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
16	13.4
25	18.2
11	9.25
10	7.5
18	16.25
2	4.5
12	13.7
11	5.6
27	11.0

Children

No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
2	2.0
4	1.5
-	-
2	4.0
-	-
-	-
-	-
1	0.5
10	1.0

Risk assessments/safety planning	18	18.5	4	0.5
Child protection support (i.e. support in dealings with Department of Child Safety)	10	17.8	8	6.0
TOTAL	160	135.7	31	15.5

	Women		Children	
	No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)	No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
Child support work				
Direct support provided to children ^b	- ^c	-	25	13.75
Children's group work ^b	- ^c	-	46	9.0
Assistance to access higher education	- ^c	-	3	0.25
Parenting support	15	8.75	-	-
TOTAL	15	8.75	74	23.0

^b Two services mistakenly placed their data related to services for children under "Women" – these were moved to "Children".

^c Only one service cited the number of mothers affected by work with their children: this data has not been included.

	Women		Children	
	No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)	No. of clients/ sessions	Time (hrs)
Cultural/spiritual support				
Access to cultural/spiritual-specific food	2	1.0	2	0.5
Access to cultural/spiritual-specific services	5	3.1	3	-
Cultural/spiritual support provided	15	7.4	-	-
TOTAL	22	11.5	5	0.5

(Direct) Financial support

	No. of clients	\$	
Food provided	38	2,041	
Gift cards/vouchers provided	15	650	
Travel assistance	11	215	
Financial assistance to access healthcare/pharmaceuticals	2	90	
Moving-on assistance	1	129	
Other financial assistance provided	3	1,335	Includes: shoes, underwear & household items (some funded following advocacy to external agencies)
TOTAL	70	\$4,460	

Distance travelled by staff

Direct service delivery distance travelled	2,259 km
Service management/administrative distance travelled	598 km

Coherent Support Service Provision – Case Management

Provision of support services within women's refuges is a purposeful activity. The following is a 3 phase system to articulate an effective response to women's support needs, throughout their involvement with a women's refuge. In each phase, ongoing needs assessment, planning, intervention and review is necessary.

Phase 1: Referral, entry and intake

The goal of this phase is to provide a timely, sensitive and comprehensive first response to the immediate needs of women and their children. This involves:

- Appropriate referral and information gathering
- Initial assessment of protection and support needs
- Attention to practical considerations e.g. preparation of accommodation, arrangements for transport to refuge, provision of food, clothing etc. as required

A key issue for workers during this phase is to complete the initial assessment required, with sensitivity to the physical and emotional state of the women, children and young people upon entry.

Phase 2: Protection, support and advocacy

The goal of this phase is to provide the advocacy and support required for women, children and young people to have their full range of needs met. During this period of stay in refuge areas of support may commonly include (but not be limited to):

- Safety planning
- Health (e.g. physical, mental, substance dependencies)
- Emotional wellbeing
- Parenting support
- Connection to culture and spirituality
- Living skills (where necessary)
- Developing an understanding of domestic and family violence in relation to women, children and young people (age appropriate)
- Women, children and young people's rights
- Finances (access to income, assets and managing finances)
- Legal and immigration matters (e.g. protection orders, Family Court, mediation, immigration status, criminal matters, tenancy issues)
- Retrieval of belongings (may require police assistance and/or court orders);
- Resolving existing housing issues (maintaining leases/mortgages or ending tenancies)
- Sourcing and establishing independent housing (including furnishings)
- Education (for all family members, including adults as necessary)
- Employment
- Child protection matters
- Focus on healthy family relationships.

Support is provided both within the refuge and via referral. Refuge staff have up to date knowledge which includes (but is not limited to):

- How to apply for a protection order, recovery orders, legal aid, accessing mediation and writing affidavits.

- Mental health: how to identify and respond. This includes suicide prevention.
- Substance abuse: identifying and responding
- Child development: including children's experiences of trauma and appropriate responses
- Child protection legislation and reforms to the child protection system
- DFV legislation and court processes
- Family Court legislation
- Cultural Awareness including accessing culturally specific information/support/services for diverse client groups including those who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Immigration system
- Centrelink services and payments
- Child Support
- Education
- Housing (public, private, TICA, NRAS, CRS)
- Thorough knowledge of domestic and family violence (including relationship dynamics and its impact on women, children and communities)
- Assessing risk

Phase 3: Transition, exit and follow-up

The goal of this phase is to support women, children and young people in their decision-making about life when exiting refuge and to ensure preparation and support for the transition. This involves:

- Planning and decision-making about options for living when exiting refuge.
- Assisting women and their children to access the formal and informal services required for ongoing safety and support and engaging these services in a relationship with the women, children and young people prior to exiting from the refuge.
- Transitional support provided as per refuge service agreements for the initial transition out of refuge.
- Follow-up work is conducted on an as needs basis (requested by the client) and may occur months after the family has exited the service. This short term intervention works to reduce the likelihood that families would require crisis support in the future. It is effective because of the existing relationship between the refuge and family and prevents the family from having to repeat their story to a new service provider, if they do not wish to.

Useful Contacts and Service Information

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, telephone the Police on	000
DV Connect <i>(DV Connect is the state-wide 24 hour, 7 day a week service to women and their children experiencing domestic and/or family violence.)</i>	1800 811 811
1800 Respect <i>(This is the national 24 hour, 7 day a week support line for domestic violence and sexual assault)</i>	1800 737 732
Queensland Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline <i>(This number is available from 7.30am to 11.30pm, 7 days a week.)</i>	1800 010 120
Brisbane Domestic Violence Service	(07) 3217 2544
Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)	131 450
Centrelink Multilingual Service	131 202
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)	131 881
Homelessness Person Information Queensland	1800 47 47 53
Housing and Homelessness Service	1300 880 882
Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)	(07) 3846 3490
Legal Aid Queensland	1300 651 188
Women's Legal Service	(07) 3392 0670
Refugee and Immigration Legal Services (RAILS)	(07) 3846 9300
Multicultural Families Organisation Inc	(07) 5571 0381

Combined Women's Refuge Group South East Qld
PO Box 589 Everton Park QLD 4053
cwrq_seqld@hotmail.com
ABN: 72 925 210 277

