



Annual Report
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Beryl Women Incorporated Annual Report 2014–15
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Beryl Women Inc. receives funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), and/or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, which are jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments.

Supported by



Design by



beryl works on ngunnawal land

We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the land we work on.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal Australia. We remember that the land we work on, was and always will be traditional Aboriginal land.

THIS REFUGE WAS OPENED BY
MRS. GORDON BRYANT
ON
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
8TH MARCH 1975

Plaque presented at the opening of the Canberra Women's Refuge.



Mission

Beryl Women Inc. is committed to providing high quality support and safe accommodation to women and children escaping domestic/family violence. The organisation recognises that violence against women and children is prevalent in our society and that injustices such as sexism, racism, economic inequality and homophobia contribute to families living in crisis. To redress this, Beryl Women Inc. will provide a professional and accountable service that is based in social justice, recognising and fostering cultural diversity.

Organisational Aim

Beryl Women Inc. aims to contribute to the enhanced safety of the families who stay at Beryl, to their improved health outcomes and to provide opportunities to increase their skills and confidence to manage future crisis.

Goals of Strategic Plan

July 2013 – June 2016

To be a sustainable organisation that provides high quality domestic violence-specific services to women and children through:

- developing partnerships and collaborating with other community services and government agencies in order to be part of a holistic response to women and children escaping domestic violence
- strongly identifying and profiling in the ACT community as a feminist organisation offering high quality services
- strongly identifying and profiling in the ACT community as a service that is welcoming of, accessible to, and appropriately supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, and women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), and
- encouraging a learning culture and being innovative in response to support women and children escaping domestic violence.

At Beryl I have had a lot of support and I have learned how to change the way I think and deal with my emotions and problems and my kids in a very healthy way and I have got a great result out of this.

– Resident



Edna Ryan and Beryl Henderson on the steps of Glebe Town Hall, 15 December 1984.

Originally named the Canberra Women's Refuge, Beryl was established in a house in Watson in March 1975 with a grant of \$4000 from the Department of the Capital Territory. Volunteers, who ran a 24-hour roster, seven days a week, staffed the first refuge. In 1976 the service moved to a duplex in Kingston and sometime later funding was received for employment of a skeleton staff.

In 1976 the service changed its name to Beryl Women's Refuge, after Beryl Henderson. Beryl started the original trust fund for the refuge, which, outside of the \$4000 grant received from the government, was the sole means of supporting the cost of running the service. In 2005 the service changed its name again to Beryl Women Inc.

Beryl Henderson was an active member of the ACT Women's Liberation Movement and the co-founder of the Abortion Law Reform Association in Canberra. She also worked for Family Planning and the Humanist Society. Beryl taught languages on an Israeli kibbutz from 1960 to 1964 before coming to Australia. She returned to Israel in the late 1970s and died there in her 94th year. She will always be celebrated for her dedication and commitment to the cause of equality. Beryl Women Inc. is proud to carry Beryl Henderson's name as a daily reminder that those wonderful 'big sisters' who came before us, made possible the services we have today.

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Report from the chairperson

This has been another very challenging year for the staff at Beryl Women Inc. (Beryl) as they continue to support women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

This year has seen domestic violence hit the headlines more prominently than ever before with an increasing number of women who have been murdered as a result of domestic violence across Australia. As we are aware, a woman is more likely to be killed in her own home by her male partner than anywhere else and Canberra is no exception.

It has become increasingly more challenging for organisations like Beryl to provide support to the women who use the service while funding cuts are occurring across the community services more generally. But in spite of this Beryl continues to build on its reputation as a specialist service in the support it provides to Aboriginal women and children and also women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

As mentioned in previous reports, Beryl is still discussing the feasibility and appropriateness for a possible merger and/or partnership with other women's services that provide support to women and children escaping domestic and family violence. It is very important that Women's Services position themselves to have a stronger voice to ensure the appropriateness of services for women and children escaping domestic violence particularly in the ACT. Discussions are planned with other services in the near future.

It was an exciting time throughout the year with preparations being made towards Beryl's 40th birthday celebration. One of the committee members, worked very hard with a group of dedicated women to research, interview, and collate information for the book on the herstory of Beryl. The book leads you on a journey from the humble beginnings of Beryl back in 1975 in a small government house to the professional organisation it has now become.





ACT Minister for Women the Hon Yvette Berry MLA and the Hon Jenny Macklin MP launching Beryl's herstory.

The book was a big success and many copies were sold on the night. Proceeds from the sale of book were put towards the Children's program, which also received some start-up funding from the ACT Government. This funding will go a long way in providing support for the children at Beryl through weekly groups run for the children.

The book was launched by the ACT Minister for Women the Hon Yvette Berry MLA and the Hon Jenny Macklin MP at the birthday party held at Tilley's. Guests from the ACT and Federal Government, the community sector, past and present workers and residents of Beryl were invited to attend. It was a wonderful gathering and everyone had a great time meeting up with old and new friends and colleagues.

Beryl has made many changes over the years to stay in line with current trends and modern technology and one of the more recent changes has been the rebranding of the organisation.

The design of the brand incorporates the ides of approachable staff and housing for women. The design also features local landmarks in the background so it is very relevant to our region. The website will be refreshed with the new design along with new stationery for the organisation.

This year the committee says goodbye to one of our members, Beth and welcomed Sarah. Beth has made a wonderful contribution to the organisation through her role as the Treasurer. She managed to table the finance reports at each committee meeting and provided any additional details that were required for the committee to better understand the financial situation with the organisation. The committee wishes her well for the future. Sarah will be an asset to the organisation through her interest and knowledge around domestic violence and we look forward to working with her on the committee.

Once again I would like to thank all committee members for their work over the year and the staff at Beryl for the support they provide to women and children to access safe, appropriate and affordable housing. I would also like to thank Beryl's Manager, for the leadership she has provided to both the staff and the Management Committee through this period. Robyn has been a great inspiration to all the staff at Beryl and also the Committee. Robyn was recently awarded the ACT Women of the Year award, which was a great recognition of the work that she has done, particularly around domestic violence, over the past 15 years while working at Beryl.

Rhonda Woodward

Chairperson, Beryl Women Inc.

Staff and Governance Committee

As I write this and reflect over the past 12 months, I am reminded of how challenging it is to manage a small organisation like ours and I appreciate the enormous effort put in by staff and Committee members to ensure that Beryl Women Inc. continues to provide support to women and children escaping domestic/family violence within a trauma informed framework.

At the time of writing this Annual Report there have been 63 confirmed murders of women at the hands of their partner or ex-partner, leaving many children without a mother. This is all the more reason we need to take a moment, reflect and focus on the impacts of domestic/family violence on women and children, staff and the broader community.

Without specialist domestic/family violence services like Beryl, the options for women leaving a violent relationship are limited and their continued safety at risk.

Beryl provides a safe space for women and children to start the healing process with the support of a highly trained staff team who are non-judgmental and supportive of women's choices. The refuge provides a safe space for women to gain a feeling of control over their lives.

What a privilege it's been to be a part of such an amazing organisation filled with such remarkable women. The extra hours you worked while maintaining the standard of excellence that Beryl is known for in the community, has contributed to better outcomes for women and children.

Thank you for your dedication and remarkable work ethic.

Robyn Martin
Manager, Beryl Women Inc.



Painting 'Ocean Dreaming' by Maurice Shipp.



At the time of writing this Annual Report there have been 63 confirmed murders of women at the hands of their partner or ex-partner, leaving many children without a mother.

– Robyn Martin

Report from the Manager

This year has been a significant year for Beryl Women Inc. On International Women's Day, the service turned 40 years old, we launched our herstory book and re-branded. I was awarded the ACT Women of the Year award, which is a privilege and great recognition of the work that I have done at Beryl over the past 15 years.

Throughout this report, I have included quotes from former clients, Collective members, Staff and former staff and former Committee members taken directly from the book, following is the speech given at the 40th Birthday celebrations.

I too would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today, the Ngunnawal People and pay my respects to the elders, both past and present.

I have worked at Beryl Women Inc. for the past 15 years, nine of those years in the Manager's position. In this time we have supported 806 women and 1,546 children. As you can see, children represent over half the number of clients accessing the service. I have seen women and children re-entering our service, and years later, their children with their children entering the service in their own right. This is often referred to as third generational clients.

I want to pay tribute to the women who have accessed the service over that period of time. Women who found the courage to leave with their children, often not knowing or having experienced life in a refuge setting before. Not knowing what to expect when they first arrive, their trust in the service and workers is incredible. Their strength, courage and resilience is inspiring.

I have learnt a lot from these women, I've learnt that short-term crisis accommodation alone will not heal the trauma that women and children have experienced, I know that this type of intervention deals with the immediate

issue of safety and accommodation but that the long-term effects of trauma cannot be fully healed in such a short timeframe.

The impact of trauma as a result of violence, especially intimate partner violence, racism, poverty and homelessness cannot be met by short term crisis accommodation. Early intervention and prevention programs play a major part in the healing process and need to be supported by appropriate funding and support from the general community.

But just listening to, and learning from these women is not enough. So far this year 64 women have been murdered as a result of domestic violence in Australia. In fact, a woman is more likely to be killed in her own home by her male partner than anywhere else. My thoughts and prayers go to their families.

These numbers are appalling. What disturbs me even more, is that it's happening in a climate where governments are cutting funds and services are struggling to remain viable. This is forcing smaller specialist services such as Beryl to review how we deliver our service. We will need to reduce the level of practical support that Beryl has been known to deliver if current funding and staff levels continue.



Robyn Martin, Manager of Beryl.



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Beryl is funded through the ACT Government under their Social Housing and Homelessness Services through the Community Services Directorat. We are funded as a homelessness service but our business is supporting women and children escaping domestic and family violence—which means our priority is safety and security. We are dealing with women’s lives and this also impacts staff, in one month, we had three critical incidents where perpetrators of violence turned up at the refuge—one confronting a staff member. These situations remind us that we must remain vigilant when coming and going from the refuge.

One of the other incidents involved a women being tracked to the refuge through an electronic device. Men are using modern technology to track women across the country and we have supported a number of women moving from state to state just trying to stay safe.

Beryl is in a unique position to work holistically with vulnerable families due to the supported accommodation nature of the service. In this context, workers are provided with many opportunities to understand what is happening to/for the children. In this way we are better placed than other family support services who may only have contact once a week or so to offer ongoing support and guidance through difficult times.

Unique opportunities to engage families, build relationships that promote and enhance a family’s capacities and strengths, present themselves in our daily contact with clients.

Domestic and family violence remains a leading cause of homelessness. We know that it is the leading cause of injury to women and we also know that one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime.

Beryl women Inc.’s approach and philosophy, informs our practice. We are a feminist service and although not a collective in the true sense, collectivity is still practiced in my management style. We support women and children escaping domestic and family violence within a feminist trauma informed framework. This work cannot be rushed. We do not want to re-traumatise women by being insensitive and disrespectful, so we need to develop trusting relationships in order to support women and children through a healing journey. Still today, after 40 years, women and children still experience violence and oppression.

Over the past 15 years there have been a number of challenges that the service has faced; numerous funding cuts, reduction in staffing numbers, and changes from a collective model of governance to a committee governance to name a few. In spite of all the challenges, our longevity has allowed us to create strong relationships especially with other women’s services. Our relationship with the community has grown and as a result we have been the recipients of many donations – large and small. The flow on effect for clients has been huge. These donations come from many sections of the community, too many to name individually, but we thank you and appreciate the support.

One of the things that I love about working at Beryl, is its commitment to reconciliation and while not funded as a specialist Aboriginal service, the number of Aboriginal clients accessing the service during this time has been high. We work very hard at ensuring that the service is culturally appropriate. Women from culturally

and linguistically diverse backgrounds also receive specialist support specific to their cultural needs. Our reputation within the sector and community is that of a service with integrity and cultural sensitivity, and the feedback from women and children support that.

I have worked with many staff members over those years. They have been hard-working, passionate and dedicated to making the lives of women and children experiencing violence easier. I have learnt much from them and I thank them for their support and for sharing their knowledge and experiences with me.

I would like to acknowledge the many women who have been a part of the extended collective and committee. Your drive, commitment and leadership have ensured Beryl’s continued survival.

I would also like to acknowledge the current staff members of Beryl, Angie, Jen, Lina and Linda. Your passion, commitment and expertise leads to better outcomes for women and children who have and are currently accessing the service. It’s your team approach and dedication that makes a difference in the lives of women and children and that hopefully gives them the skills to move on to a life free of violence. I’ve always said that a good leader is only as good as the team standing beside them—you make me look good—for that I thank you.

And finally once again I would like to thank the Honourable Minister Macklin and Minister Berry for being present for our 40th Birthday celebration and launching the Opening a New Door — Herstory of Beryl Women Inc. book and to Farzana and the women who worked tirelessly to pull the book together.

Thank you.

Robyn Martin
Manager, Beryl Women Inc.

Acknowledgments

I would also like to specifically acknowledge the support of our funding body the Community Services Directorate and the Social Housing and Homelessness Services staff of the Community Services Directorate. Other partners we would like to acknowledge are DVCS, CRCS, Toora Women Inc. First Point Central Intake Service, Women's Services, ACT Legal Aid, Women's Legal Centre, Street Law, Centrelink Social Workers and Community Contact Officer, Office for Women, Northside Community Services, Relationships Australia and the many other services that directly or indirectly supported Beryl Women Inc. during the past financial year. We hope to continue to work in collaboration with you all in the coming year.

I would also like to acknowledge the 23 women who researched and wrote *Opening a new door: The herstory of Beryl Women Inc. 1975 – 2015*, the book documenting the Beryl story for the world. They were mostly volunteers from the public service and they care about combating domestic violence/family violence and promoting gender equality.

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Interview/surveys: Isabelle Burns, Priscilla Kan John, Marzieh Nowrouz Tafreshi

The book was funded by the Office of Women through the 2014–15 Participation (Women's) Grants Program.



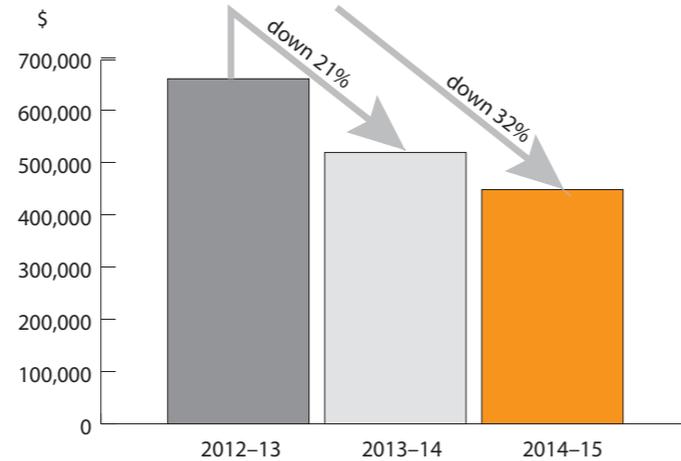
"Today was good because conversation showed me it's better to be with yourself than your partner. If I try to satisfy everybody I will lose my happiness! I realised I can reflect my feelings, I don't have to keep it to make everything better – thank you for awaken me."

– Resident

Service management

The Service has continued to undergo a change process during this financial year as a result of funding reductions. Many of the practical supports that the service provided to clients are no longer being offered as we do not have the capacity to continue with the practical support. Instead we have focused completely on supporting women and children within a trauma informed framework and ensuring that we are working within a cultural appropriate manner.

Figure 1. Funding reductions experienced by the service since 2012–13.



The women's groups are really helpful and enjoyable and you get to learn new things try new things socialise with the offer women try new skills and have fun.

– Resident

The Alliance Coming Home Program

This program commenced in 2010 as an alliance between Toora Women Inc., Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Beryl Women Inc., with Toora being the lead agency for the program.

The purpose of the Alliance was to provide holistic support to women exiting the prison system. The three agencies share a common goal of empowering women to overcome difficult life challenges.

This combined and collaborative endeavour took advantage of the wide range of skills, resources, knowledge and approaches of each organisation to work with complex, challenging and particular or specific issues experienced by women exiting the prison system.

This approach had the capacity to address housing sustainability and tenancy management, drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, sexual assault, trauma, mental health issues, children and parenting services, logistical support, life skills training, education and more. We believed that this shared action combined different ideas and approaches in order to attempt to achieve better outcomes and positive change for women exiting prison.

There have been many challenges faced by the three services. Beryl Women Inc. has undertaken several recruitment processes during this time as well as addressing a number of occupational health and safety issues and interpersonal issues.

Unfortunately at the end of this financial year the alliance was disbanded.

The good news is that the program is continuing and the staff member employed by Beryl Women Inc. has been offered continued employment within the program by Toora Women Inc.



Domestic Violence Christmas Crisis Program

Beryl Women Inc. again participated in this program from the 15th December, 2014 to the 27th January, 2015. The program is funded by the Community Services Directorate with a small number of specialist services providing support to families escaping domestic or family violence over the Christmas period. Accommodation was provided in the form of motel accommodation until longer term accommodation became available within the homelessness sector or women decided to return home.

Support provided to women included;

- safety planning
- assistance in applying for a Domestic Violence Protection order
- emotional support
- assistance with changing bank accounts
- new phones
- toys for the children
- court support
- clothing
- Centrelink support
- food vouchers
- transport, and
- accommodation within the service.

Donations

Beryl Women Inc. has continued to build strong relationships in the community and is very grateful to all the individuals and businesses that have provided support to the service.

We have received greater amounts of cash from individuals within the community which enabled the service to provide additional financial support to women and children. This money has been greatly appreciated.

I would like to formally acknowledge and express our thanks to all the people who have donated either money, furniture or other household items. Our clients have benefited greatly from this when moving into their new homes.

Due to a shortage of storage and staff wellbeing, we have made a decision to not accept donations of furniture anymore. We do not have the space to store large items and some of them — accepted sight unseen—were in poor condition and had to be disposed of by the service. The time associated with this and the staff's physical wellbeing in moving large furniture, assisted in the decision-making.

The service will continue to facilitate donations of furniture for clients when clients are able to access transport and storage if we receive offers at the same time that a client has been allocated a property.

Grants

This year we were successful in applying for numerous grants. These grants complement existing funding that the service receives from the Community Services Directorate, our main source of funding, and include:

- ACT Women's Grants – Beryl book
- Snow Foundation and Hands Across Canberra – Interpreting cost for women accessing the service with English as a second language
- Community Services Directorate – Participation Digital Communities
- Community Services Directorate – Provision of support for children and young people living with domestic violence.
- Commonwealth Bank – School Holiday Program

Training

We are committed to the ongoing training and development of our workforce, aimed at the provision of high quality services for our client group. In keeping with this commitment we have provided staff with a range of training options to enhance and build on their current skills. These include:

- Forced Marriage Workshop
- Women and Justice Forum
- The Neuroscience of domestic violence
- Working in Government/Community Sector Development Seminar
- How to spot a legal issue
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Women and Poverty
- Using Loss and Grief to attain Bi-Cultural Competency Between Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal Communities
- Ending Domestic Violence Improving primary prevention, early intervention and responses conference.
- Women and Poverty
- Understanding the Machinery of Government.



Collaborative Working Relationships in the Community

Beryl has been involved in a number of consultations within the ACT community. These ensure that the service is up to date with changes within the sector and importantly continues to maintain strong positive working relationships with Government and Community Services on issues related to domestic/family violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and women from a refugee background.

- Women's services
- Coming Home Program – Alliance
- Joint Pathways
- Sub-committee 2nd Implementation Plan on the prevention of violence against women and children in the act
- Snow Foundation – Morning Tea
- ACT Community Sector Multi Enterprise Agreement consultations with ASU and Jobs Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Whole of Government Agreement consultations
- Case conferencing with Care & Protection
- Meetings with DOCS - Queanbeyan
- Provided feedback on CSD's RAP
- Governance Group - 2nd Implementation Plan on the prevention of violence against women and children in the act
- Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation Program
- Focus Migration re immigration issues
- Street Law
- Snow Foundation
- DVCS
- ACT Police
- Red Cross
- Inanna Book launch
- ACTCOSS – Anniversary of the National Apology
- Companion House
- MARS
- Victims Support
- Centrelink
- U Migration Law
- Women's Health
- Legal Aid
- Reclaim the Night
- Candle Light vigil.



Research project

Beryl has participated in a research project with the Women's Centre for Health Matters (WCHM) to undertake a research project that will also involve DVCS, CRCC and Inanna. The research will look at:

- pathways of women seeking support for domestic violence in the ACT
- meeting the needs of women no matter what choice they make, and
- understanding key decision points for women seeking help for domestic violence.

The research will have a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

ACT domestic & family violence death review

Beryl participated in the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Death Review earlier this year. The ACT Attorney-General requested that the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) review closed cases of death in the ACT that occurred within the context of domestic violence since 2000. The review forms part of the ACT Government's commitment to the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010–22 and the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–2014. The review aims to provide a robust and independent picture of domestic and family violence in the ACT, inform government decisions about domestic and family violence mechanisms and assist in identifying issues that point to legislative, policy, practice and service changes across the government and community sectors.

Bougainville Women's Federation

Staff of Beryl met with Ms Barbara Tanne, Executive Officer of the Bougainville Women's Federation, Florence Naina, also with the Federation and a representative from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The purpose of the meeting was to share Australia's experience with promoting women in leadership, in business and in the community and to provide a network that these women may draw on in the future.

Both women had expressed a particular interest in meeting with women alliances, women's shelters and to learn more about long term legal assistance provided to women who face domestic violence.

We recently had contact with the organisation at which time they said that "it was a wonderful time learning from your experiences. BWF is a young learning organisation and your sharing is very much appreciated. I affirm to you all that this meeting has enriched us in a lot of ways."

Wesnet/Telstra safe connections program

As part of the WESNET/Telstra Safe Connections Program, Beryl has been provided with a number of smart phones that will enable clients experiencing domestic/family violence to remain connected with family, friends and service providers. Beryl has already distributed a number of these phones to women accessing the service. One of the criteria for participating in this program is to not just provide the phone but to also provide safety information and planning around possible technology abuse and to show women some basic tips on using smart phones more safely.

Submission – Finance and public administration reference committee

On 26 June 2014, the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate

Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 October 2014. The committee invited submissions from individuals, organisations and government departments.

The terms of reference were as follows:

- the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Australia as it affects all Australians and, in particular, as it affects:
 - women living with a disability, and
 - women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

- the factors contributing to the present levels of domestic violence
- the adequacy of policy and community responses to domestic violence
- the effects of policy decisions regarding housing, legal services, and women's economic independence on the ability of women to escape domestic violence, and
- how the Federal Government can best support, contribute to and drive the social, cultural and behavioral shifts required to eliminate violence against women and their children; and any other related matters.

Beryl Women Inc. provided a submission with a focus on 'women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds'. As a result we were invited to give evidence at a public hearing of the Finance and Public Administration References Committee's Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia.

A copy of the submission has been posted on our website.

Media and raising community awareness

Beryl Women Inc. has been involved in a number of awareness raising activities through media and some of those include;

- ABC interview Re: Cyber stalking
- Profile piece – Canberra Weekly
- Canberra Times
- Chronicle interview
- Presentation to Angilcare Staff during Reconciliation Week around White privilege, and
- One Million Stars Art Project.

Client Services

Beryl Women Inc. honours the organisations long history that provides a strong basis for moving forward into the future. The work of the organisation is based on feminist analysis of violence against women and children that includes:

- safety for all women and children
- continuous learning and improvement
- empowerment and self-determination
- respect
- honesty and integrity
- compassion
- diversity, and
- equality.

Beryl supports women within a trauma informed frame-work and we strive to not cause further trauma in women's lives, All women entering the service have one thing in common and that is they are escaping domestic/family violence, however, no two stories are the same. Each woman and child has their own story and experience that belong to that story. At Beryl we acknowledge that, and work with the woman where she is at—we do not impose our own opinions or judgements. Every woman's story is validated and she is treated with respect and care as are her children.

Beryl provides a range of support services to women and their children who have experienced domestic/ family violence. We assist women and their children to remain safe, minimising risks wherever possible, so that they can start a journey of healing free of violence, while also addressing their emotional and practical needs and issues arising from the violence

Initially, women are provided with intensive case management as they are generally experiencing a multitude of complex issues. Staff work with a number of other agencies, provide advocacy and coordinate the women's case in order to ensure she is being provided with the best service possible to meet her needs. At all stages of her stay at the refuge, she is kept informed and all decisions/choices are hers to make.

The service provides culturally appropriate support to women from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to women from culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds. The staffing structure reflects the makeup of the client group, so clients have a choice of whether they wish to work with a specific staff member based on their cultural background.

Client Functions

A number of events have been held during the year involving client participation, including:

- Harmony Day Celebrations
- NAIDOC Week celebrations
- Sorry Day Bridge walk
- Cleansing ceremony of one property and clients living in the property
- Mother's Day High Tea
- End of Year Celebrations, and
- Refugee Week Celebrations.

Women's Group

Beryl continues to create a therapeutic environment that encourages a sense of community and connectedness for women and children. We do this in a number of ways including various service functions and a Women's Group held weekly during the school term.

Inviting services to attend the Women's Group allows clients to become familiar with other services available to them within the broader community. It starts a relationship and enhances connection, giving them the confidence to re-contact that service if needed in the future. It eliminates any barriers women may be experiencing about a service and enables them to deal directly with services once they leave Beryl.

The therapeutic groups are run on alternative weeks and focus completely on the impacts of domestic and family violence. We know that women and children who have been living with violence experience trauma as a result. We discuss the cycle of violence and brain washing and talk about the impact of this on them and their children.

Other topics covered by the service include:

- domestic violence cycle of violence
- child Development
- self Esteem
- self Care.

Services that have attended our Women's Group this past 12 months include:

- Streetlaw
- Return to Work grants — WIRC
- Care Financial
- Past Present Future — Women's Health Centre
- Legal Aid
- First Aid
- Centrelink Human Services Team
- YWCA – Energy Efficiency Program
- Heb C, and
- Bosom Buddiesw.

Critical incidents

In the later parts of 2014, the service experienced three critical incidents involving perpetrators of violence. On two of these occasions the service was forced to go into 'lockdown' as a means of keeping clients and staff safe until the Police arrived. The third incident involved tracking devices and also involved Police attendance.



Enjoy coming to meetings to socialise with other women in the same situation as myself

– Resident



I have been going through a very dark time and I very much appreciated not being forced to participate in support groups when I was feeling too low to be around people. I also appreciate the connection and honesty I received from my support worker. It has helped me find my back onto the path of life.

– Resident



Case study

The service has had a critical incident involving a family in our independent property. The incident involved the mother and her four children aged one, seven, 10 and 12, and the father of the youngest child—who is the perpetrator of violence the family were escaping from.

The perpetrator has had a history of using weapons to harm and had previously been imprisoned. The mother experienced numerous violent assaults including wounding from a firearm and an attempted drowning. Also the children have witnessed extensive and long term domestic violence from the father of the youngest child and the father of the three other children.

The perpetrator attended the property during the day forcing his way in while the children attended school. He would not leave the premises and made threats to the client so she would not call for help. The client was extremely distressed and in shock so attempted to respond to all requests of the perpetrator so as not to upset or aggravate him or cause alarm to the youngest child that was in her care.

The other children were picked up from school and brought back to the property which the perpetrator did not leave. The situation became increasingly volatile with the perpetrator's behaviour becoming increasingly agitated and aggressive.

He was verbally and physically abusive toward the mother until at approx. 8 pm when he attempted to leave the property and abduct the youngest child.

The children and mum were all involved in trying to stop the perpetrator from getting into his vehicle. The eldest child called police whilst the other two children were physically pushed and shoved out of the way by the perpetrator. Neighbours also contacted the police. They responded with numerous police vehicles and sniffer dogs attending the scene. The perpetrator was taken into custody for a brief time and then transported to Canberra Hospital for a psychiatric evaluation. He was kept overnight for evaluation and then released the following morning.

The service responded in key areas including:

- safety planning
- liaising with ACT Police and DVCS
- physical removal of family to temporary accommodation and unknown address,
- assistance with application for a DVO protecting mother and all the children
- debriefing the following morning
- referrals for Relationship Australia for Trauma Counselling, and
- ongoing emotional support for mum and the children. and referrals for Relationship Australia for Trauma Counselling.

Issues arising from the incident are heightened anxiety and re-traumatisation for children and the mother. Behavioural concerns such as sleeplessness, acting out, bedwetting, regression of toileting for the children, decreases in emotional tolerance levels and increase in fearful behaviours are just some of the impacts that the family are currently dealing with.

For the service, concerns were raised regarding delay and lack of information sharing from ACT Police in relation to critical incidents. The service will be engaging with ACT Police to ensure that we have appropriate and effective communication links with ACT Police in regard to these sorts of matters in the future.

DVCS were very helpful in supporting our agency during this incident and the Police that attended the incident were very supportive towards the mother and children. First Point was able to offer funding for temporary accommodation for a period of one week whilst the service moved clients from within other Beryl accommodation so that the family could still be accommodated within the service.



Child/Youth Support Program

The Beryl Child and Youth Program has provided comprehensive support including provision of school holiday programs, home visiting and case management for infants, children and young people. The program is underpinned by a trauma informed framework and aims to educate parents on the impacts of domestic violence and trauma on children and young people. It works to improve health and wellbeing for children and young people in the service through relationships and skills based support for children and parents.

The children's worker works collaboratively with the mother's case worker and other specialist services. This ensures that the needs of each child are assessed and provided for when accessing the refuge, during

their stay and post crisis, with preventative outreach provided to families with more complex needs.

The service is funded for one child support worker which limits the amount of 1:1 high level support the service can provide to clients. Referral to services that can engage with families longer term is vital to ensure clients receive the necessary support for recovery from trauma and mental health needs.

Breakdown across age groups:

- 40 Children five Years and under
- 14 Children Primary Age, and
- 12 Youth aged 14 and over.

Commonwealth Bank Grant

This financial year we were successful in applying for funding of \$10,000 from the Commonwealth Bank Community Grants for our school holiday program. We have tailored the program to suit the specific needs of children and young people. We facilitate experiences that encourage children to regain self confidence in their abilities and increase trust and connection with peers, family and community. These activities have been valuable in rebuilding a sense of safety that can then support clients to take steps in connecting with schools and support services.

Youth

Children and young people that have lived with violence may have had disruption to schooling, experienced isolation due to safety issues and moved through homelessness systems. The service advocates for schools to provide support to our families and this year we provided support through donated laptops and IT setup in homes. This ensured youth re engagement with learning and felt encouraged and supported.

Primary Aged Children

This age group has benefited from referrals to specialised learning disability services, NDCIS and Child Adolescent Mental Health Services. Family court support and contact and access support has also been provided to ensure children and young people have an active voice in parenting arrangements and are safe and protected from harm.

Five years and Under

An early intervention focus and parenting support has been provided for our younger children. Engagement with MACH nurse, Child Youth Protection Services and liaison with childcare services were needed to ensure healthy child development was supported and encouraged. It allowed respite for mothers that have limited social supports due to the impacts of violence on them and their children. The service also provides a supported weekly playgroup for children, so women can attend our Women's Group.



I would recommend Beryl Women Inc. to anyone who is separating from partner and is concerned for child safety"

– Resident

Service demographics

In this financial year we supported 100 clients with 105 support periods of accommodation and or preventative and maintenance support. This included 34 women and 66 children.

Beryl Women Inc. provided crisis and medium term accommodation to 78 clients consisting of 28 women and 50 children.

Last year we provided outreach preventative support to nine women with 16 accompanying children. Funding reductions to the service meant we had less capacity to continue with the same levels of support and this is reflected in the outreach preventive support reduced to three women with nine accompanying children.

Of the nine children, this includes six children in care where we are supporting mum with restoration. We supported women who left our crisis or medium term accommodation with outreach for a period of up to three months (sometimes longer depending on needs of the family). We continued to support three women and seven children who had been accommodated at Beryl in the previous financial year through follow-up maintenance outreach.

Two families had two separate support periods in the year. One family had initially received outreach support via the Christmas Crisis program and then had been

accommodated at another accommodation service. A few months later the family was referred to Beryl for accommodation because the perpetrator of the violence had found out where the family was living.

The second family was accommodated at Beryl and secured ACT Housing. This family had limited English and had been in Australia less than three years. Eight months after the original support period, the women re-accessed the service seeking support with complex interstate legal issues. These required intensive support and advocacy to resolve.

The average period of closed support including both accommodation and preventive outreach support was 249.3 days. The average length of closed accommodation periods was 123.9 days. In this period 49 of the 105 support periods were for six months or more. The average length of stay has increased due to women with immigration issues, family law matters and the complexity of trauma as a result of domestic/family violence.

At the end of the financial year nine of the 34 women were residing in Beryl Women Inc. accommodation. Of the 25, three received outreach preventive support. Of the remaining 22 (which had all been accommodated at Beryl):

- 16 (73%) had exited to Housing ACT properties
- three (13.6%) had gone to other social housing providers
- two (9%) had gone interstate to be with family, and
- one (4.5%) were unknown.

The way we receive referrals influences the cultural breakdown of clients accessing the service. We are contracted to accept referrals from First Point and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing this service is minimal. This is reflected in the stats for this cultural group being lower than last year. It shows this model of contracted referral does not meet the needs of these communities and is reflected in First Point's own statistics.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women often access services they are familiar with or ones families and friends have recommended. Trust by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in specific services like Beryl Women Inc. means that they continue to contact them directly.

First Point and homelessness services generally need to strengthen engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and be actively liaising with specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.



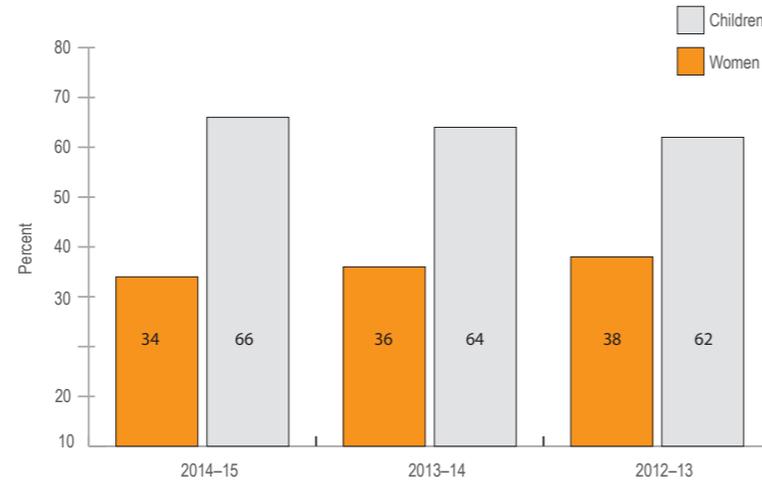
Beryl has helped me in so many ways. It's one of those moments when words are not good enough to express my gratitude. Beryl was a safe (emotionally and physically) place, where I felt very comfortable. I was helped a lot with my sickness, I came to Beryl with \$15.00, I was helped with food, accommodation and childcare. Thank you so much everyone, I will never forget you, lots of love.

– Resident

Breakdown of women and children

Accompanying children make up the largest percent of clients accessing the service as shown in Figure 1. These children have—directly or indirectly—been affected by the impacts of domestic/family violence and suddenly find themselves in a refuge. They are disconnected from friends, family and social networks, often having to start a new school. Often they arrive with few personal belongings. All of these issues can contribute to many of the children experiencing significant loss and grief.

Figure 2. The number of women and children accessing Beryl.



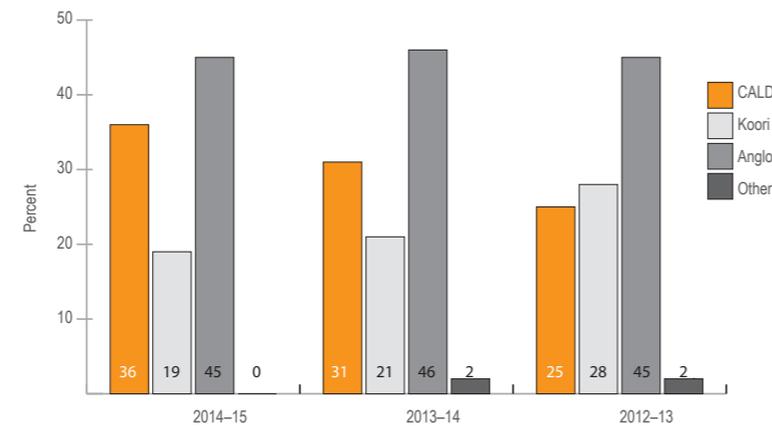
Cultural breakdown

This year's figures include:

- 36 (36%) CALD
- 19 (19%) Koori, and
- 45 (45%) Anglo

Overall this year there has been an increase of 5% in CALD families accessing support. Of these 36 clients (women and children), 67% were born over seas. An interesting stat is that 42% had been in Australia for three years or less. Many of these families required extra support because of their limited English and understanding of the Australian systems.

Figure 3. Cultural breakdown of clients accessing support.



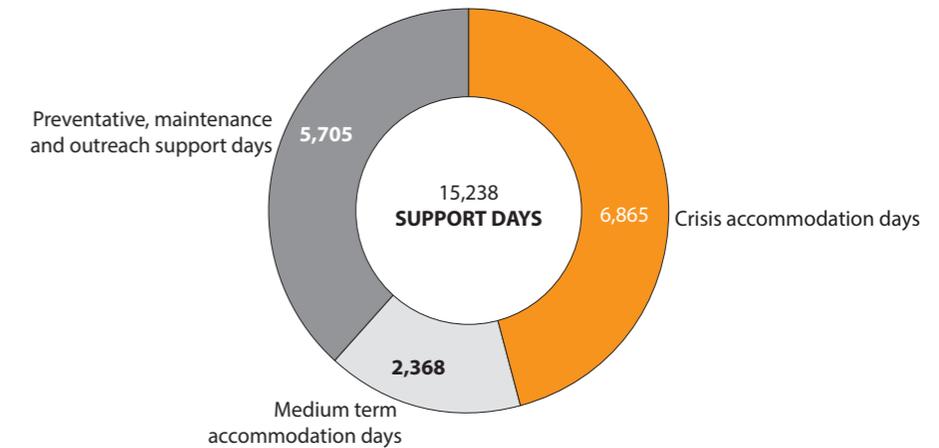
Support days

Overall Beryl Women Inc. provided 15,238 days of support which includes 6,865 days in crisis accommodation, 2,368 days in medium term accommodation and 5,705 days of preventative, maintenance and outreach support.

Preventative maintenance and outreach support is available to all clients who have been accommodated at Beryl and move on to independent accommodation for a period of around three months if required.

An interesting statistic is that despite the lower client total, there was an increase of 1,864 days of support provided. The complexity of support needs required longer client support periods.

Figure 4. The number of support days provided to each client.





34
women accessed the service



66
children accessed the service



40
children were five years or under



12
children were 14 or over



12
women were 36 years or older

interesting facts

Statement of Apology and Reconciliation

To all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, your families and communities.

We, non-Indigenous people of this land, apologise for the human suffering and injustice that you have experienced as a result of colonisation and generations of discrimination and marginalisation that has resulted from that.

We recognise ourselves as the beneficiaries of this colonisation process and we share with you our feelings of shame and horror at the actions and atrocities that were perpetrated against your people.

We acknowledge that the removal of children devastated individuals, families and entire communities and that the intention of those policies was to assimilate Indigenous children. We recognise this as a policy of genocide.

We collectively feel a sense of outrage, and feel a particular sense of responsibility around these racist

policies as their implementation required the active involvement of community welfare organisations.

We unreservedly apologise to the individuals, families and communities for these acts of injustice.

We acknowledge your human right to self-determination.

We commit to working in solidarity with you in ways that you choose and determine.

We work with many people who are affected by disadvantage, prejudice, poverty, violence, marginalisation, trauma and social circumstances out of their control. We understand the long-term damage to communities when these issues are unaddressed.

We recognise your leadership, we honour your visions and we join with you in your hopes for your future and for our futures together.



Beryl has helped me in so many ways. It's one of those moments when words are not good enough to express my gratitude. Beryl was a safe (emotionally and physically) place, where I felt very comfortable. I was helped a lot with my sickness, I came to Beryl with \$15.00, I was helped with food, accommodation and childcare. Thank you so much everyone, I will never forget you, lots of love.

– Resident



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