

Australia's longest running women's refuge



WOMEN INC.

Annual Report

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Beryl Women Inc.

Specialist domestic and family violence accommodation service.

Office hours
9am–5pm Monday to Friday

A PO Box 355 Dickson ACT 2602
P 02 6230 6900
F 02 6247 3511
E admin@beryl.org.au
w beryl.org.au

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

A rectangular metal plaque with a double-line border. The text is embossed in a serif font, centered on the plaque. The plaque is mounted on a dark surface with four corner fasteners.

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 2016–19

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 holding a profile in the ACT community as a feminist organisation offering high quality services
- strongly identifying and holding a profile 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)
- being an organisation that encourages a learning culture and is innovative in its response to support women and children escaping domestic violence.



"Without Beryl's support, I wouldn't know where I'd be today or if I'd be still alive. Linda has gone above and beyond for me with transportation, supporting my meetings, helping with food and accommodation and clothes and toiletries. I think that Beryl are helpful in so many ways and would say they are the best support people in the community".



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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Australian women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a person they know than a stranger.

– (ANROWS)

Report from the Chair



At a time where the #MeToo movement has amplified urgent and important global conversations on gender, sexual harassment and sexual violence, Beryl Women Inc.'s longstanding leadership as a feminist, frontline service is a reminder that the fight for change has been happening for decades at the grassroots level. Writing this report as the current Acting Chair for Beryl Women Inc., I have been reflecting on how essential the work of our organisation is in changing the lives of women and children in our own community.

While the renewed public focus on violence against women has raised awareness of the challenges faced in Australia and around the world, the statistics remain stark. Approximately one quarter of women in Australia have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner. Women are much more likely to experience violence by someone they know than by a stranger. On average, one woman a week is killed by her intimate partner.

Against this backdrop, Beryl staff and board members share a passion and commitment to ensuring that Beryl continues to deliver high quality, domestic violence specific services to women and children in need of support. This has been evident across our service delivery, community relationships and public advocacy activities, with a number of significant achievements over the past twelve months.

Trauma-informed support for women and children

Within a tight operational budget, Beryl Women Inc. supported 112 women and children escaping domestic violence this past year. Beryl continues to be a leader in providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children (21% of clients) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and children (46% of clients). Our innovative approach to ensuring the service remains inclusive and accessible for all women was recognised by an ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Award for our women's safety booklets in November 2017.

A critical development in the past year that will underpin our support to children in the service was the ACT Government's announcement in the June 2018 Budget of an additional \$100,000 per year for our Children's Program. This ongoing funding will provide much needed certainty going forward and followed our submission to the ACT Budget Consultation and ongoing engagement by the service.

Growing community fundraising and volunteering relationships

Beryl continues to strengthen relationships in the Canberra community, including through major events such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and 16 Days of Activism.

Board and staff members spoke at a number of events in 2017 and have benefited from generous donations from a range of federal and ACT government agencies. We have also advanced our strategic approach to building volunteer relationships, with a successful and highly valued partnership with the ACT Government Parks and Conservation Service a fantastic example of what is possible.

Advocacy at the local, national and international level

As Australia's oldest women's refuge, Beryl Women Inc. has historic significance that means it has an important role to play in national conversations about domestic violence and its impacts on women and children, feminism and frontline service delivery. We take this responsibility seriously and have undertaken a broad range of advocacy activity over the past year. Our Manager Robyn is serving on the Steering Committee for the *Our Booris, Our Way* review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT child protection system, who are represented in child protection at more than 12 times the rate they are represented in the community generally. We have contributed to the discussion on the future of women's refuges in the Council to Homeless Persons' March 2018 edition

of *Parity Magazine*, an important national platform for the sector. On social media, Beryl's Facebook account has been complemented by a new Twitter Account (@BerylWomenInc) that is engaging with decision makers and influential advocates. Beryl has also stepped into international advocacy, with one of our Board members, Lavanya Kala, attending the 38th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva as an Australian civil society representative.

Looking forward, the year ahead will be another big one for Beryl. We have new staff and board members as part of the team, our strategic plan will be due for review and we will continue our everyday work to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and children escaping domestic violence. In finishing my report, I would like to pay special tribute to our Manager, Robyn Martin, for her leadership and the assistance she has provided me as Acting Chair. I also extend a heartfelt thanks to members of the Board and staff for their continued work to build on the legacy of Beryl Women Inc. and ensure Beryl remains a vital voice and source of support for women and children.

Barbara Klompenhouwer

Acting Chair – Beryl Women Inc.



"Young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault."

– (ANROWS)





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"I know I had dramas over the house rules but I understand why they are there, and I am sorry for the dramas I caused but hold no hard feelings towards Beryl am very grateful they let me stay even after the breach, being able to have my dog stay would have been nicer though. It's hard when separated from part of our family when trying to keep us as together as possible."

Report from the Manager

Staff and Governance Board

I would like to thank all the staff members who have worked at Beryl Women Inc. over the past 12 months for the amazing work done by you all, your diligence, self-motivation as well as your dedication have been a source of inspiration to me.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors for their contribution over the last 12 months and I look forward to working with you all in 2019.

Beryl Women Inc. continues to focus on achieving the objectives and goals highlighted in our 2016-19 Strategic Plan, which will be updated to provide a guide for the next three years until 2022.

While we continue to provide specialist domestic violence crisis accommodation to women and their children, we have also had a greater focus on our children and youth during 2017–18.

We were successful in one-off grants from St. George and the Commonwealth Banks, children and young people being the focus of both grants, which has complemented our existing Child Support program.

One of the special highlights of the year was that Beryl was a recipient of an ACT Violence Prevention Award – winner of the Community award for the multi-language safety booklets that were developed with the assistance of a grant from the Office of Women.

I hope you enjoy reading the rest of my report. As you will see, the service has been extremely busy, with our biggest challenge navigating various systems that create additional barriers for women and children escaping domestic/family violence. Staff have found innovative ways in which to do this—a credit to them in finding ways in which to ensure client needs are being met.

Robyn Martin

Manager – Beryl Women Inc.

nyūc & mukpath



الوعي والسلامة



concienciación
y seguridad



information booklet



awareness & safety



Our booris our way

Steering committee—Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people known to child and youth protection services.

On 15 June 2017 Minister Stephen-Smith announced the ACT Government's review into the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children known to the Child and Youth Protections Services (CYPS) in the ACT (the Review).

The Review will inform systemic improvement that can be implemented to fully realise the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles, as defined by SNAICC, by reviewing case planning for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person known to CYPS. The review will seek to identify opportunities where improvements to outcomes for children might be made.

The commitment of the ACT Government is that the review, its governance, terms of reference and methodology will be co-designed with community representatives. The Steering Committee has developed and endorse a review methodology that will allow changes to be made as soon as they have been identified, rather than waiting for final recommendations at the close of review.

I have been invited to participate in the review, which I have accepted as this is an issue that I have raised several times over the past several years. This Review is unique in that we are already identifying and advocating for immediate change. We are not waiting until the final report to communicate clearly that this situation must change for the future of our community. We expect to see change in the child protection system for the immediate benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across the ACT.



Because of her we can

Continuing the conversation

The service commenced planning to host an event in September 2018 that would showcase the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made on every level.

The theme for NAIDOC Week 2018 is 'Because of Her, We Can'. Celebrations have focused on the invaluable contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made – and continue to make - to our communities, our families, our rich history and to our nation. Since its inception, Beryl has supported many Aboriginal women and their children, this year's NAIDOC theme provides an opportunity for Beryl to be at the centre of celebrations in the ACT. It will allow us to share our story and experiences as well as highlight the voices of Aboriginal women.



Indigenous women are
32x more likely to be
hospitalised due to
family violence than
non-indigenous women.



– (Website: Hall and Partners Open Mind. (2015). The Line campaign. Summary of Research Findings. Melbourne: Our Watch, retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Cd105c>)

Parity article

Understanding the challenges facing Australia's longest running women's refuge

Beryl contributed an article in Council to Homeless Persons magazine, Parity. The focus of the edition was "The Future of Women's Refuges" and the following is a small snippet of our article.



"I had no hassles, I have the upmost respect for the workers and what they do. I felt really bad for putting them in a position where they had to ask me to vacate."

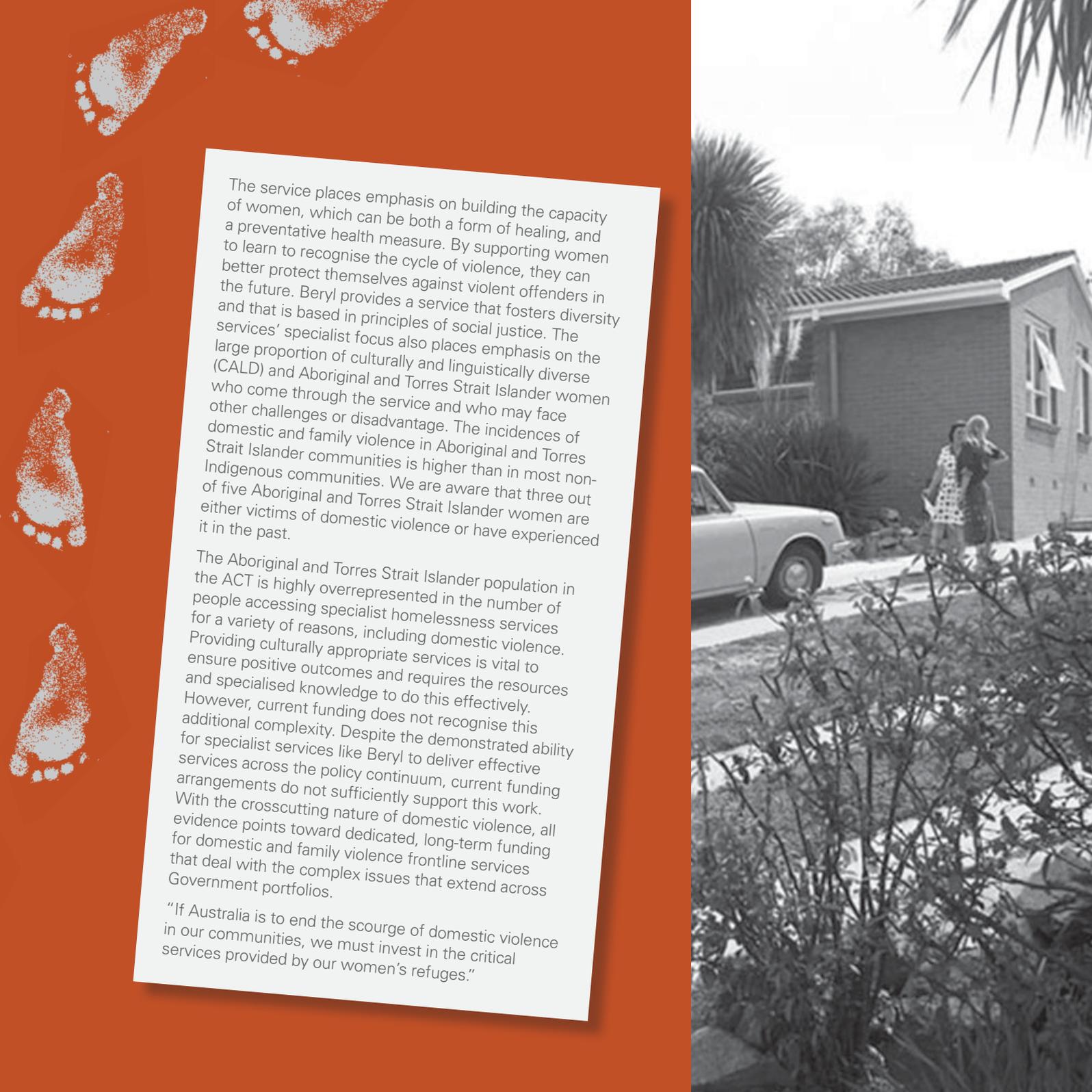
– Client

Domestic violence (DV) must be recognised as the single greatest threat faced by women in Australia. Violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights, and one that Australia has an obligation to prevent under international law. Despite this reality, current funding arrangements do not consider the complexities of domestic violence, and the central role of women's refuges in providing transitional support, case management and crisis accommodation.

The experiences of Beryl Women Inc. (Beryl) provide an important case study when considering the future of women's refuges. Beryl is now Australia's longest running women's domestic violence refuge, and one of only two specialist domestic violence accommodation services in the Australian Capital Territory region.

Since 1975, Beryl has provided safe, specialist, and high-quality support for women and children escaping domestic violence. Beryl emphasises the endemic nature of domestic violence in Australia, especially men's violence against women, and intimate partner violence. In Australia, intimate partner violence contributes to more deaths, disabilities and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor. For over 43 years, Beryl has been working towards the elimination of domestic violence, providing specialist domestic violence support, advocacy, case management and safe housing for women and children. The organisation practices from a feminist framework and aims to empower women and children to live a life free from violence and abuse, fulfilling a range of functions across all aspects.

In the ACT, the homelessness system is experiencing increasing demand for accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence, exceeding the availability of accommodation. It is evident that the demand is so high that many women and children are sleeping in their cars, as they do not have access to safe accommodation. Beryl Women Inc. works within a trauma-informed framework. The services provided in the refuge aim at improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of clients, as well as developing client capacity in a range of areas. This includes responses to the immediate crisis faced by clients and empowering women to increase their skills and confidence to ensure their own safety well into the future.



The service places emphasis on building the capacity of women, which can be both a form of healing, and a preventative health measure. By supporting women to learn to recognise the cycle of violence, they can better protect themselves against violent offenders in the future. Beryl provides a service that fosters diversity and that is based in principles of social justice. The services' specialist focus also places emphasis on the large proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who come through the service and who may face other challenges or disadvantage. The incidences of domestic and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is higher than in most non-Indigenous communities. We are aware that three out of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are either victims of domestic violence or have experienced it in the past.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the ACT is highly overrepresented in the number of people accessing specialist homelessness services for a variety of reasons, including domestic violence. Providing culturally appropriate services is vital to ensure positive outcomes and requires the resources and specialised knowledge to do this effectively. However, current funding does not recognise this additional complexity. Despite the demonstrated ability for specialist services like Beryl to deliver effective services across the policy continuum, current funding arrangements do not sufficiently support this work. With the crosscutting nature of domestic violence, all evidence points toward dedicated, long-term funding for domestic and family violence frontline services that deal with the complex issues that extend across Government portfolios.

“If Australia is to end the scourge of domestic violence in our communities, we must invest in the critical services provided by our women’s refuges.”





HRC38 participation

Australian Civil Society Participation 38th Session of the Human Rights Council

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was able to support the attendance of two Australian civil society representatives at the 38th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC38) in Geneva, Switzerland (18 June-6 July 2018). While the Human Rights Council meets three times a year in Geneva, the June Session of the Council is focused on fostering gender equality, promoting women's rights and protecting civil society participation.

As part of my participation, I represented Beryl Women Inc., Australia's longest operating women's refuge, and my civil society colleagues, and considered the human rights activities and mechanisms of States in relation to gender, women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights and violence against all women and girls, and LGBTQI people. It was an incredible opportunity and included working on the text of UN resolutions, attending negotiations, listening to discussions, attending numerous diverse side events and meeting with leading practitioners in the field of gender equality and women's rights, UN experts, diplomats and civil society.

There were advances made with the passing of a number of UN Resolutions, including:

- elimination all forms of discrimination against women
- accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts
- elimination of female genital mutilation
- human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS
- Civil Society Space: engagement with international and regional organisations.

The Council adopted the ground-breaking resolution on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. This resolution is a significant advance for sexual and reproductive rights, with the text including references to bodily autonomy and safe abortion. This resolution also includes the strongest affirmation of comprehensive sexuality education in a resolution on discrimination against women to-date. It was very positive that Australia showed strong support of this resolution and co-sponsored.

The resolution on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital context was also adopted. This resolution calls upon states to take immediate and decisive action to prevent, respond and protect victims and survivors of violence.

It was fantastic to attend several side events hosted by both civil society and States, covering a range of thematic issues. Two Australian side events on 'Access to Justice' and 'Indigenous women's participation, economic empowerment and best practice inclusion for women's voices', covered very different thematic areas to many other side events. The 'Access to Justice' side event was insightful, with speakers looking at barriers to accessing justice for people with disability, Indigenous communities and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse people. Panellists identified that to achieve progress we must ensure that the justice system is inclusive, accessible, that we have adequate investment and look at preventative measures.

While I was supported to attend the Human Rights Council, it was fortunate that the 70th Session of CEDAW coincided at same time as this Council Session. I had the incredible opportunity to be a part of the NGO delegation and deliver a statement on gendered violence in Australia to Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, where Australia was being reviewed. The statement covered the endemic nature of domestic and family violence, the impact on culturally and linguistically diverse communities, specialist domestic violence services, family law and the intervention of the migration experience with domestic and family violence. During the CEDAW NGO public briefing I also had the opportunity to raise the issue on gender neutrality, the mainstreaming of services, the need for specialist domestic violence services (such as Beryl Women Inc.), and why there is a need for funding across the policy continuum.

Lavanya Kala

Board Director, Beryl Women Inc.



UN Web TV, Informal meeting with NGOs and NHRIs - 1601st Meeting 70th Session Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, <http://webtv.un.org/watch/informal-meeting-with-ngos-and-nhris-1601st-meeting-78th-session-committee-on-the-elimination-of-discrimination-against-women-/5804716999001/#t=11m11s>

Submissions

Beryl has submitted three submissions during this financial year, each with a focus on funding:

- ACT Budget Consultation 2018/19
- ACT Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence
- 2018–19 Pre-Budget.

Service management

Volunteering

We were contacted by the ACT Government's Parks and Conservation Service, who were in the process of undergoing White Ribbon Accreditation and wanted to support a women's organisation in some way.

They also wanted to host an event around the 16 Days of Activism and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Their aim was that on the 24th of November there would be two events going at once; a team of their staff volunteering at the refuge, plus a morning tea event at their offices in Dickson.

Prior to the volunteer team work happening on site of the refuge, we needed to consider privacy and confidentiality

issues. It was decided that only staff with a working with vulnerable people check, who had also signed Beryl's confidentiality policy, could come on-site, and they could do a blitz of the children's playground area. All women and children were also relocated off site for the day.

This has been the first time the service has allowed a group of mixed genders onto the premises to do volunteering due to the confidential nature of the service. The experience has been very positive and will lead the way to continue our relationship with the Parks and Conservation Service and potentially other groups of volunteers.

Energy efficiency

The Actsmart, Sustainability Programs, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate made contact with us following on from the Parks and Conservation Service volunteering at Beryl and have conducted energy assessments on all our properties. A full report will be provided to Beryl which will provide us with information on any recommended upgrades and what supports they can give to the service in regard to those recommendations.

Draught proofing has been completed on all properties, the majority have also had "split systems" installed and solar panels installed at the refuge site. All properties have been scoped for solar panels and a planned schedule for installations will occur.



"Thank you for being a friend, support, stressed out, ear to listen to, having gone through this was not something I ever thought would be possible – you are amazing."



– Client



On average, one women a week is murdered
by her current or former partner.

– (Bryant, w. & Bricknall, S (2017) homicide in Australia 2012–2014: National Homicide Monitoring Program report, Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Retrived from:<https://bit.ly/2ozctbxh>.)

Training

Beryl Women Inc. values ongoing training of staff as we recognise its importance to ensuring the continuous improvement of the services provided by Beryl Women Inc. The service will, within the constraints of funding, ensure that staff have adequate opportunities to attend training, and other professional development activities. Unfortunately there has been limited time for staff to attend training due to the complexities of client support needs.

Training attended in 2017–18:

- ACTCOSS Budget submission process information forum
- DV Trauma Informed practice
- Uncomfortable Conversations
- SNAIC training
- She Leads in Conversations forums
- Working with Complex Clients
- Stronger Safer together training – Two staff members attended this training, Beryl would like to embed a number of the principles into our case management practices for all clients. Tools will be trialled and reviewed to see how they work for our clients.
- National Forum on Child Protection – Darwin.

7th National Conference–Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander child care (SNAICC)

The 7th SNAICC National Conference was held in Canberra from 12–14 September 2017. As the largest conference of its type in the southern hemisphere, the SNAICC Conference provided the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, policy makers, researchers, government representatives, other non-government organisations and industry representatives to gather and make renewed commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The conference provided a powerful and inspiring learning experience for attendees.



Collaborative working relationships in the community

Beryl Women Inc. has been involved in a number of collaborative practices involving a wide range of services. We have participated in sector development activities that meet the needs of clients to raise issues & barriers on a broader level in relation to gaps in the sector. Collaborations include

- Participating in the Family Safety Hub Co-design process (several meetings)
- Family Law Pathways meetings
- Membership of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, attending monthly meetings, providing data and information to DVPC submissions
- Meetings with Yvette Berry MLA, regarding service provision and feedback in relation to funding for the Children's Support Program
- Attendance at the Housing and Homelessness Summit
- Met with Bridie Doyle, Education Directorate, to participate in their review of education services in the ACT
- Attendance at Women's Services meetings;
- Participation in Reclaim the Night
- Attendance at the Hands Across Canberra luncheon & participated in the program of meeting potential service supporters
- Membership & attendance at Joint Pathways
- Met with Louise Guilding, Executive Director of Housing ACT to discuss barriers and service gaps for clients
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership Caucus
- Membership on the steering committee "Our Booris Our Way" Out of home care review
- Attendance at the YWCA event "In conversation with Celeste Liddle"
- Arrows Consultation – DV Principles
- Emma Husar MP – service visit
- Briefing "Change the Story" Our Watch
- WACT Women's Awards
- IWD Breakfast – Northside Community Services
- Victims Charter Consultation
- Responding to Homelessness in the ACT Consultation
- Budget Briefing
- Multi Disciplinary Panel member – Housing ACT
- DVCS 30th Birthday celebrations
- DVCS – National Day of Remembrance
- Zonta Club Afternoon tea – donation
- Family Safety Hub briefing
- Family Safety Hub – Generate Ideas
- DVPC - Extortionary forum – Needs of children and Young People
- WCHM Launch
- Christmas Crisis Program wrap up
- ACTCOSS – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention project
- Closing the Gap Refresh
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Elected Body consultation – Child Protection Consultation
- Family Group Conferencing
- Launch – Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Organisation – Functional Family Therapy

Service visits to Beryl Women Inc.

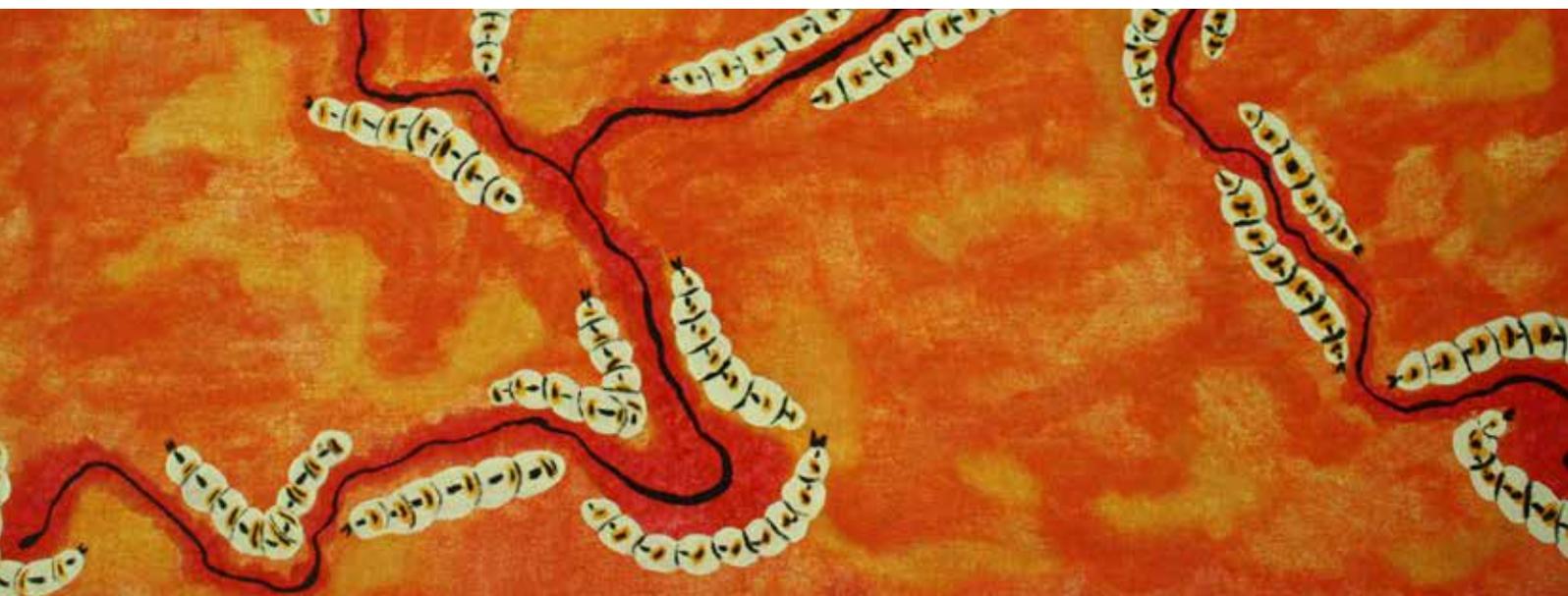
- Northside Women's Housing
- Jo Wood – Coordinator General Family Safety
- Restorative Justice
- Official Visitor for Homelessness
- McKellar Cottage Childcare – sponsorships
- Volunteering and Contact ACT
- Social Housing and Homelessness Services
- Belconnen Community Services
- Reconciliation Day staff event – Essie Coffey "My Survival as an Aboriginal" film
- Aunty Janet Phillips – Smoking/cleansing refuge site
- Barnardos Service visit to discuss shared referral pathways
- Snow Foundation service visit to discuss options for grants to clients and to the service
- service visit for the team to meet with the new Centrelink Community Officer
- Onelink Service visits twice in the reporting period to discuss referral processes and pathways.

ACT Policing forum – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities

Beryl attended an ACT Policing community forum called by Justine Saunders, Chief Police Officer, ACT Policing. The forum discussed increased rates of apprehensions amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in the Territory, and suggestions of racial profiling and discrimination by members of ACT Policing, as reported in Canberra media.

This forum gave community members the opportunity to talk about how ACT Policing can serve the community better into the future.

The forum was well attended, and many issues raised. There was good will on both sides, however trust issues were evident from the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities. ACT Policing made a commitment to continue engaging with the community and plans on a number of these forums happening into the future.





Media and advocacy

The service has been involved in several events focused on raising awareness of domestic and family violence within the ACT Community, as well as several media interviews. This has included:

- interviews with the Canberra Times and a series of articles published
- an interview with the RiotAct and an online article published
- speaking at the Department of Social Services for the International day of the Elimination of violence against women
- participating in the DVPC/DVCS Panel discussion for the International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- speaking at an event for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service for the International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- speaking at and running a stall for the weekend at the Ultimate Women's Weekend event to raise awareness of the service and of domestic and family violence in the community
- speaking at a meeting of the Probus Friendship Club to raise awareness of the service and of domestic/family violence in the community.

Grants

Beryl Women Inc. has been successful in several grants during this financial year:

- St. George Bank – this grant supported our Children's Program
- Commonwealth Bank – this grant supported school age children and young people with tech backpacks project
- Women's grants – driving lessons to support clients gaining independence
- Community Services Directorate (ACT Government) Community Support and Infrastructure
- Community Services Directorate (ACT Government) Children's Program
- Community Services Directorate (ACT Government) Install Digital Antennas
- Hands Across Canberra – IT Upgrades.

Beryl Women Inc. would like to acknowledge and thank the providers of the grants listed above. Without this financial support, Beryl Women Inc. would not have been able to provide the wrap around service to our clients that the funding supported. All grants have had a positive impact on clients and for this, thank you.

Client services

The principles underpinning our service response:

- Trauma Awareness: the need to incorporate an understanding of trauma into the work of staff, including providing staff training, introducing practices such as trauma screening, assessments of safety and ensuring there is an emphasis on staff self-care;
- Emphasis on safety: practices that work towards building physical and emotional safety for both service users and providers. There is the need to reflect on trauma dynamics, and systems built that ensure clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries. Privacy, confidentiality and mutual respect is paramount, as is the need to respect cultural differences and diversity;
- Opportunities to rebuild control: there is a need to emphasise the importance of choice for clients and create predictable environments where individuals are able to rebuild a sense of control over their lives. This should include involvement of clients in the design and evaluation of services; and
- Strengths-based approaches: these approaches work with clients to identify their own strengths and enhance their own coping skills. These service settings focus on the future and utilise skills-building to further develop resilience.

Beryl Women Inc. works to ensure that clients working with the organisation experience:

- increased safety
- increased control
- increased understanding
- increased empathy
- work that enables recovery to begin
- decreased risk of secondary trauma
- decreased likelihood of re-traumatization.

The organisation actively works with staff, clients, funders and stakeholders to:

- promote trauma understanding
- manage barriers to recovery and accessing support services
- establish strong relationships by managing engagement safely, providing clear boundaries, and clear role expectations
- provide choice, control, and predictability in providing Trauma Informed Care – especially in managing crises and recovery-interfering behaviours
- engage in ongoing service improvement and evaluation.

The complexity of client needs can also be demanding and challenging for service providers who specialise, or are funded in, one area, as their efforts to support clients with complex needs may be directly related to or dependent upon another service's work with that same client.

Once a referral is received at Beryl, we undertake an assessment process with the prospective client. Questions asked during this process are focused on her experiences of domestic violence and what does this look like e.g. was it physical, verbal emotional, sexual violence, level and frequency, stalking, did this include using technology, whether the children were present. Questions like this give us information on how dangerous the perpetrator is, possible risks for her and the children when leaving, risk for the service, other women in the service and staff and allows us to put a safety plan in place prior to the women and her children leaving as we know that this is one of the most dangerous times for women and their children.

Once a woman and her children enter the service, we work with her in developing a Case Plan. Women's case plans are usually focused on the therapeutic supports needed to recover from domestic violence, justice processes, and long-term housing.

They are reviewed at staff meetings, and outcomes are measured by clients receiving support to engage with relevant health services, legal services & referrals and ongoing progress in regard to housing.

Beryl strives to support women and their children in a culturally safe manner. Referrals have been made specifically to CALD services with the client's consent, there are several clients who also prefer to access "mainstream" services as it adds another layer of safety and confidentiality.

Establishing social connections is a major issue for these families as they often have no supports from their communities. This is something that Beryl does really well - we have women who have left the service over several years ago who continue to see Beryl as a major support for them and they continue to engage with the service, either through our groups or with direct support from a worker.

Workers allow for additional time and preparation when working with women and children from CALD backgrounds, as we know from our experiences of working with this client group that support takes longer. We are always aware that women and their children may have experienced other forms of trauma depending on their situations prior to coming to Australia. Depression and post-traumatic stress as well as the impacts of domestic violence add another level of complexity to their support needs.

Levels of support to families has been extensive their support needs have been very complex. As English is a secondary language, a majority of CALD clients required the use of interpreters and support understanding Australian culture and systems.

Systemic barriers have made supporting women and children even more challenging for the service and at times, the service as a whole has supported families rather than just one worker as their support needs have been such that it has required a whole of service response.

While Beryl Women Inc. articulates expertise around responding to the impacts of intimate partner violence on women and children, the service has developed expertise and experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the context of domestic and family violence and recognises and acknowledges the specific cultural needs of this group.

Beryl's work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples focuses on translating our commitment to reconciliation into our practice. We work within the cultural definitions of domestic and family violence that recognise the perpetrators of violence may include anyone with a close or family relationship (for example, a partner, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, in-laws as well as children and grandchildren), and may include any person who under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition is recognised as a relative.



"Children continue to make up the largest percentage of clients."

– Beryl Women Inc.

Systemic barriers/gaps

Clients are presenting with more complex issues, especially those where immigration processes are underway. The complexity of issues is putting stress on the staff team, and the level of resourcing to the service makes it difficult to provide the more intensive support required. The funding cuts of 4 years ago continue to have an impact.

Justice matters

Justice systems (Magistrates and Family Law Courts) do not talk to each other and Family Law over-rides any decisions made in the Magistrates Court. Women and children continue to be placed at risk as a result.

- It's been the experience of several women when reporting breaches to DVOs that the police do not respond in a timely manner. Their systems become an added barrier for clients and support workers when dealing with breaches to DVOs and poses risks to the safety and security of a woman and her children. The DV unit within ACT Policing is helpful, however, it takes some time & advocacy from the service for matters to be passed over to them from responding officers.
- Evidence required from the justice system (Magistrate and Family Law courts) and CYPS are an invasion of a woman's privacy. Some of the information being requested to build a case is from 5 to 10 years ago & is re-traumatising for the women. Text messages of threats are not seen as enough evidence, and when an order is being sought, the other party must agree (admit to the allegations). If they don't agree, then another, long and exhausting process takes place. There also seems to be a push for women to agree to an undertaking instead of a DVO; undertakings do not have the same protections as a DVO.
- Lawyers representing children are not sufficiently trained as child specialists and inadequate and culturally inappropriate interviewing processes are not hearing the voices of children in family law matters.
- Family court process are used by abusers to continue power and control and place children at risk of ongoing emotional and physical abuse. The family court does not consider the safety issues for women when making decisions on access and continue to place women and children at further risk.



"Respectful, moral, emotional support and safety for my son and myself. Amazingly understanding and very positive; understanding towards one's needs and also feelings."

– Client





"Supportive, friendly, compassionate, welcoming, amazing is one of the words that come to mind."

– Client

Therapeutic gaps

- Children and young people are unable to access appointments to external out of school counselling without transport support if parents are unable to drive.
- Funding for ongoing specialised psychological support for child trauma is needed to ensure such support is available in the community. Costs are unaffordable for families on low income or with residency issues, especially with more than one child needing support.

Child protection

- Thresholds for abuse are too high as children dealing with domestic violence are subject to ongoing mental and emotional abuse by abusers which has a long-term detrimental effect on recovery from trauma and stability.
- Insufficient court advocacy and support provided by CYPS in family law matters due to legislation and legal barriers.

Housing process

- Priority Housing's new processes that includes Preage, the next stage is then Triage and then the application goes onto the Panel. This process can often take 4–6 weeks as the panel only meets every two weeks, which now limits the number of applications going before the panel.
- The evidence required has increased and is often resulting in a frustrating collection process as Housing staff will only take DV evidence provided by Beryl, even though we have provided other information relating to the clients support needs.
- Process is now longer and more difficult and confronting for women. It reflects the perpetrators' use of coercion and control to gain private information and use it, there is no such thing as confidentiality and privacy, in our opinion, the level of information being requested is unnecessary.



Art therapy

Beryl has facilitated Art Therapy interventions to increase children's capacity. Small groups consist of between 6–8 children and take place at Ink Brush Studio. The groups focus on creative expression, safety, telling personal narratives with art making strategies, processing trauma and rebuilding lives. The aim is to provide a safe space for children to be creative, develop positive coping strategies and experiment with different ways of making art - within a structured art therapy format, using a peer support model.

Groups are facilitated by a Registered Art Therapist with support from a case worker from the service. Transport and ongoing client support is provided by Beryl Women Inc. Individual sessions have also been available, focusing on issues arising from surviving domestic violence, complex trauma and grief. Additionally, these sessions offer individuals a block of sessions in which to process and heal on a deeper level. This may increase their capacity to recover in a self-led and sustainable way.

The Facilitator and Beryl staff observed that the groups were both enjoyable and therapeutic for the participants. Some comments from the children included:

- I love coming here, doing art was the best thing about my day
- I wish we could do art therapy every day
- I liked painting and making slime
- Making my mask was the best fun and I made lots of colourful drawings with Bella. It was fun to go with Sandi to the studio.

The parents who dropped their children at the studio reported that their children looked forward to the sessions and arrived home excited to show off what they had made. One parent said, "My daughter loved coming to Art Therapy. Her confidence has increased, and she

made some interesting paintings, sculptures and a mask which was really good. She was always happy to visit the studio and would love to go back again."

Outcomes included:

- peer inclusion, engagement and interaction between different age groups
- an opportunity to improve and practice social skills in a structured environment
- creative expression and using art making strategies to illustrate and share personal narratives
- learning new skills including increasing emotional resilience and processing difficult feelings
- communication skills especially in the areas of listening, sharing ideas, following instructions and negotiating with peers.

Funding permitted, these groups will be offered to children of the service again, as well as women who have experienced domestic/family violence.



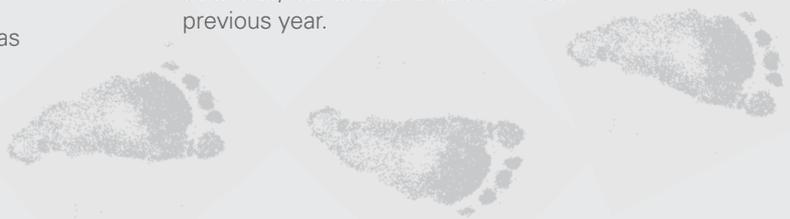
Service demographics

In 2017–18, we accommodated 39 women with 73 children, a total of 112 clients in total. This represents a slight decrease in clients accessing the service. There are several reasons for this decline. Length of stays within the service has increased due to a lack of exit points for families, and vacancies within the shared properties have also contributed as many women do not wish to share accommodation with another family that they don't know.

Changed processes within Housing ACT has had a direct impact on clients and the service. The average length of waiting time for clients' applications for priority housing has increased, as well as the length of time approval has been given that women must wait in order to be allocated a property, Public housing is often the only exit point from the refuge as the cost of private and affordable housing are not options due to the costs associated with this.

Families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds also stay for longer periods of time, particularly if there are residency issues in play. This process can take up to 2–3 years, with a previous client and her children residing in the refuge for just over two years. It is not mentally healthy for families to reside in crisis accommodation for these lengths of time as they cannot move on with their lives. Living in limbo has created impacts that the families struggle to cope with.

- 26 (23%) women received outreach support whilst remaining in their homes. Some were ex-clients who needed support for a short period of time, others were women struggling with systemic issues e.g. Family Court matters, Housing issues relating to transfers due to violence within complexes and neighbourhoods, and Centrelink relating to payments.
- 34 (38%) clients had a diagnosed mental health illness, this includes anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression. Domestic/family violence is responsible for more health issues in women's experiences of violence, including mental health.
- Eight (7%) women accessing the service were women without accompanying children, this is a slight increase from the previous year.
- 26 (23%) Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background clients were born overseas, this is an increase from the previous year.

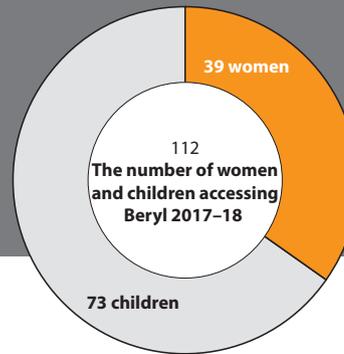




- 42 (38%) of clients' last permanent address was interstate
- Average length of stay at Beryl 109.5 days
- 48% of clients were under the age of 10 years old
- 12 clients were sleeping rough in the month before entering Beryl Women Inc. These clients were unsafe and sleeping in cars
- 67 clients were residing in short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options in the month before entering Beryl Women Inc.



Stats



Breakdown of women and children

The number of women and children accessing Beryl 2017-18

- 39 – women
- 73 – children

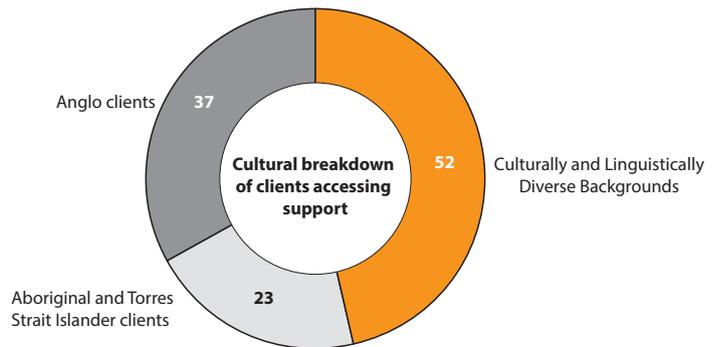
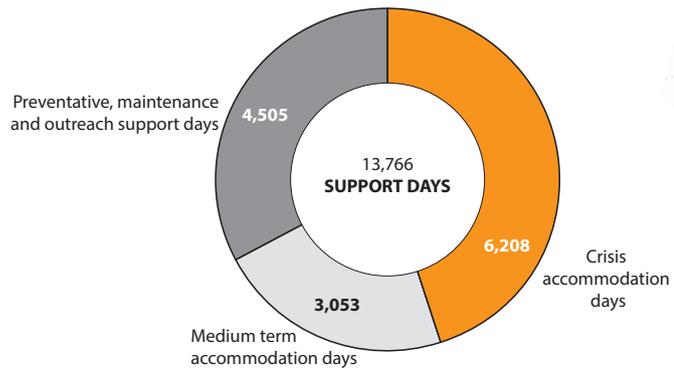
Cultural breakdown of clients accessing support:

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds – 52 (46%)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients – 23 (21%)
- Anglo clients – 37 (32%)

This year there has been an increase of women from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and a slight decrease in women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds accessing the service, with Anglo women making up only 32%.

Average number of support days provided to clients

- 6,571 – crisis accommodation days
- 3,067 – medium term accommodation days
- 14,130 – total support days.



Women's group

Women's groups allow an opportunity to work with clients as a group in areas that may not form part of their core case management. Women's groups have included:

- registered nurse from the Women's Health Centre coming to the refuge on a fortnightly basis to be available to clients in relation to women's health issues, and providing referrals to other health specialists;
- discussion and teaching around topics such as the cycle of violence, self-esteem, coercion and control tactics and looking at gratitude;
- CIT student support available at a group in the reporting period encouraging women to participate in further education;
- CARE financial service regularly attends to provide education around financial matters as well as programs available
- client outing – staff took all clients residing in the shared spaces on a day trip around Canberra on the day that volunteers were on site, the clients enjoyed this so much and have requested that this become a regular event for them
- trash and treasure is held on a regular basis where all donated items not needed for immediate support or service delivery are pulled out into the common area of the refuge and women/children (current and ex clients) can take whatever items they need.



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"Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and their children."

– (AIHW. (2017). Specialist Homelessness Services 2016–17. Canberra: AIHW. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2PJ3MMH>)

Child/youth support program

The Children and Youth Support Program has benefited greatly from the additional support over the past 12 months provided by the funding of a second child youth worker position. The position has worked across the program to respond to identified needs of families and the service. It has ensured a strong focus on children and young persons' needs and that children and young people see themselves as individuals in their own right, with involvement in social activities, psycho social groups and one on one case management.

The extra staff hours supported the program in implementing our St George Bank Grant to improve our properties and the outdoor play spaces with new outdoor play equipment, Art Therapy Program and sport activities to support children and youth in their development and healing.

Support to children was provided through direct case management and age specific group work.

Resources such as educational equipment, art materials, and sports equipment were purchased through the year to enhance engagement with all children and young people across all ages and developmental needs.

Group work is flexible based on a psychosocial educational model and is developed according to specific client needs. Some of the themes addressed included:

- what is domestic violence
- my safety plan
- bullying
- children's and young people's rights
- Self-esteem and self-care
- cyber safety
- mental health
- our upstairs downstairs brains.



50% of all children in
the service were under
the age of five years old.

– Beryl Women Inc.

Social connections are built and maintained with the ongoing groups that encourage relationship building and new connections to community to be formed.

Feedback from children and youth has been very positive and is provided at each group activity and at end of school holiday program to help inform the program of what's working and what's not. Children and young people feel that their needs are respected and valued which is also critical when they are dealing with the challenges of refugee life and changes to their family and social spheres.

Gaps identified in the program have been with children attending schools out of area to the refuge making it difficult for these children and young people to engage with group workshops. As a result of this gap, we have increased our home visit program to work 1:1 within a family context with mothers and children.

We also trialed a Supported Playgroup over this financial year. Unfortunately, women who attended were not interested in participating and used the groups as a means of networking with other mothers rather than participating in the supported playgroup, even to the extent of not supervising their children whilst at the refuge.

As a result, the supported playgroup will no longer be operating. Instead, the Child & Youth Support Workers have focused on providing doing more one to one support to individual children and young people in the service.

The additional worker in the program has enabled a more individualised and focused approach to working with children and youth in crisis to ensure that families with high and complex needs receive a timely response to support needs.

Challenges

The program works from a trauma informed practice and there is a focus on prevention of decline in wellbeing and mental health for children and young people due to their experiences of trauma and domestic violence. This brings challenges for workers responding to crisis that requires an emergency response and balancing this with preventative work such as psycho-education and case management support.

Children and youth in crisis were supported with schooling changes, family court and access issues, safety planning, mental health needs, legal appointments and social engagement.

Custody and Care

Children and youth that are having contact with an abusive father require an additional level of support due to the risks and effects of ongoing abuse they may be subject to.

This is a challenging area of support when families are subject to family court processes that disbelieve mothers and children's abuse without strong physical evidence.



Report from the Treasurer

Being treasurer of an organisation that is continuously asked to do more with less gets harder every day. I took over the role of Treasurer earlier this year and it has been confronting to accept just how little money Beryl Women Inc. has to run such a key service. Each year, we seek and rely on grants, government funding and donations to keep our doors open, building a budget which is based on uncertainty. An uncertain budget for a certain situation, one where women and children continue to rely on us to keep them safe from violent situations. I am a Chartered Accountant by profession and have done multiple reviews in the Federal Government to identify efficiencies and cost savings. In my role as Treasurer at Beryl Women Inc. I am always trying to apply my learnings from big organisations to help us do things more efficiently. This will definitely be a priority for the year ahead. This coupled with ensuring that we can continue to deliver on our core mission.

The sheer size of the domestic violence issue facing Australia is difficult to contextualise without statistics. Being a numbers person, this comes naturally for me, but can be confronting for those who are unaware what this actually translates into.

The cost of violence against women on the Australian economy is enormous, and whilst priorities remain in healthcare, infrastructure and education, it continues to surprise me on just how little is invested in something that costs the economy a whopping \$22 billion per year. This does not include the personal costs incurred by the women who are victims of domestic violence, not to mention the priceless trauma that they endure. Women also need to pay relocation, transport, accommodation and security fees. They undergo therapy, miss work, undertake self-defence classes, engage legal advice, move children and change jobs. All of this, without a home because domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. All of these costs are associated with a basic human right, to feel safe and to have shelter. It is not acceptable to me that on average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner (2017). We lose 52 women, mothers, daughters, sisters and wives to domestic violence each year. It is no surprise that domestic violence is a leading risk factor in Australia, contributing to death, disability and illness in women under the age of 50.



All of these factors make it difficult to advise the Board of Directors and the organisation on how best to provide services. With such limited resources and the rising costs associated with safe living, sometimes it feels impossible. However, I am a true believer of receiving good when good is given. That is evident in Beryl and its ability to always receive funds when it is needed the most. The graph below shows that whilst our expenses have been rising marginally (0.1%), our donation income has risen significantly (40%).

I'm humbled every time we receive support from all of the people we work with, speak with and educate about the services that we provide. There are so many people who volunteer their time and skills or donate money to give back in any way that they can. This includes our dedicated staff who work tirelessly in challenging situations to make a difference to the lives of all of our clients and go above and beyond to make sure that they are protected from harm and violence.

Whilst a challenging role, a small budget and a huge responsibility, I am thankful for the generosity of our donors and volunteers who make it possible for Beryl to make a difference in the lives of those who need it the most. Every human deserves to feel safe and every child deserves to enjoy their childhood. As we continue along this journey of doing more with less, and it becomes more and more challenging to keep women and children safe, I know that through the support of every dollar and every hour given, Beryl will continue to make life a little better for all those it comes in contact with.

Mariam Hafiz

Treasurer – Beryl Women Inc.

Acknowledgments and thank you

I would 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 Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, First Point Central Intake Service, Women's Services, Women's Centre for Health Matters, 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 thank the many members of the community who reach out to provide items, donations or other support; there are several individual members of the community who donate through Workplace Giving and who regularly donate via Hands Across Canberra.

We thank them and celebrate their spirit of community, support and generosity.

Donations and supporters

Beryl works with many organisations in the community to ensure we can effectively support women and children escaping domestic and family violence. Our partners provide financial donations and essential items for our families including nappies, sanitary items and household furnishings.

Ongoing partners include:

- US Embassy (Adrian Bellingham)
- GIVIT
- Hands Across Canberra
- Snow Foundation
- Myer Community Fund
- Share the Dignity
- Nappy Collective
- All Bids
- Eternity Church
- Canberra Quilters Inc.
- Country Women's Association Canberra Evening Branch.

ACT Community Services for Women 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.





PO Box 355 Dickson ACT 2602
P 02 6230 6900
F 02 6247 3511
E admin@beryl.org.au
w beryl.org.au

Beryl women Inc. is a specialist domestic and family violence service that provides crisis accommodation.

