

Australia's longest running women's refuge



beryl
WOMEN INC.

Annual Report

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Beryl Women Inc.
Specialist domestic and
family violence accommodation service.

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Beryl works on Ngunnawal land

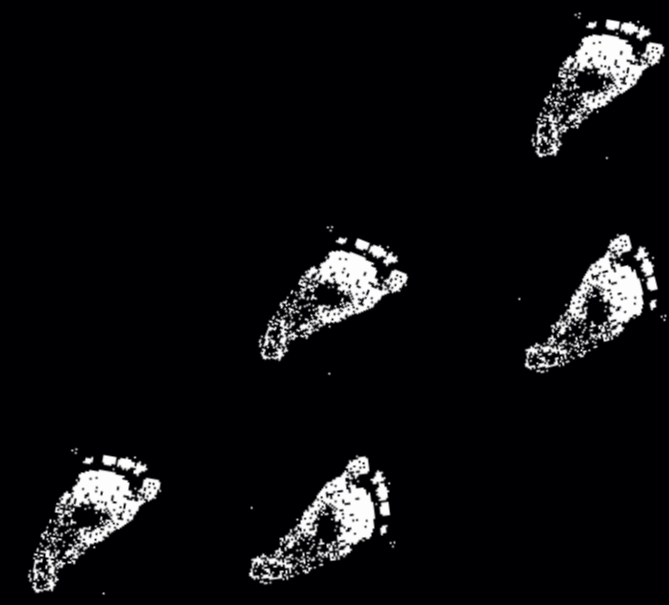
We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal
people as the traditional custodians of the
land we work on.

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

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Vision

Creating a society free from all forms of domestic violence, discrimination and abuse of power against women and children by challenging systems and structures and empowering the women and children we work with, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Mission

To provide a professional, accountable, trauma-informed specialist domestic violence service that is based in the principles of intersectional feminism, social justice, and reconciliation, and recognises and fosters cultural diversity.

We do this by advocating to bring about change in structural inequalities and racism by ensuring that all women and children from all backgrounds are empowered to have a voice about their lives and future.

Our Mission this year has continued regardless of the external and environmental challenges that we have faced and despite the barriers that may exist in our systems. Our Mission is embedded in our day-to-day practice, always keeping the women, children and young people we support central to our work.

Overview

Beryl Women Inc. is the longest running specialist domestic violence refuge in Australia, marking it's 46th anniversary on 8 March 2021. Beryl Women Inc. is a strong feminist organisation run by women for women and children and has a strong reputation and identity as a courageous service providing crisis accommodation and therapeutic interventions and support to women and children escaping domestic violence.

Beryl women Inc. works to end violence against women and children, including Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and children. We achieve this through providing intervention and education to women and children in the prevention of intergenerational domestic violence and trauma. This year has been a significant year nationally and locally with the rights of women and girls at the forefront of the community mind and in the media.

This year particularly has highlighted the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on women and girls in the country, and the need for action from our political leaders and community to address these impacts. The Women's March4Justice Campaign in March 2021, the appointment of Grace Tame as the 2021 Australian of the Year and the case of Brittany Higgins, have highlighted the plight of women and the detrimental outcomes that inequality in Australia has for women from all backgrounds. These events also shed light on the change that is still needed across Australia to improve the rights of women and children and why a gendered lens is necessary for cultural change.

Over the past 46 years, Beryl Women Inc. has, and continues to stand strong and committed to its fundamental core principles of a feminist service run by women for women.

In Australia on average, eight (8) women per day are hospitalised after being assaulted by their spouse or partner

Source: AIC Statistical Bulletin 28, 2020
https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf

For over 20 years, the service has been led by CEO, Robyn Martin, a respected Kamillaroi woman and leader in the community. Her dedication and commitment to Beryl is paramount in its standing and impact in the ACT community as a strong specialist domestic violence service. As a trusted service it is well known in the Aboriginal community, as a safe haven and a culturally sensitive service.

In the current political climate small specialist feminist services face many risks but are an important and crucial voice in our communities. Standing up to end violence against women and children and ensuring those seeking refuge receive the support needed to rebuild their lives after trauma and violence is as important as ever. Beryl strongly believes we will not end violence against women and children without looking through a feminist intersectional lens.

Over these 46 years we have seen many societal changes driven by community attitudes and government but sadly we recognise that there still is a long way to go before we can say we have ended violence against women in this country. Specialist services such as Beryl Women Inc. are central to ensuring cultural change happens and the voices of women and children who have experienced violence are heard in the community.

The Beryl staff come from diverse backgrounds and have been actively involved in community sector development, awareness raising and advocacy, while providing high quality trauma informed children's programs, womens programs and wellbeing support. We support all women at all stages of their journey to find safety and rebuild their lives.

We have supported the most vulnerable women and children in our community through an extraordinary period of bushfires and pandemics.

The Women's March4Justice Campaign in March 2021





49 women



and 71 children

were supported
by Beryl Women Inc.

During this financial year we have supported 120 women and children: 49 women and 71 children. Of these families 30% identified as Aboriginal and 42% identified as being from a culturally linguistically diverse background.

This year has seen extensive work supporting Aboriginal women and women from culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds with complex legal support involving legal matters that involve multiple agency advocacy and collaboration over a long term. This work has been case intensive and important in ensuring that the systemic barriers our clients face, do not undermine their capacity for self determination, empowerment and justice.

The strength and determination of these women and their children in the face of serious risk of harm, isolation, systemic racism and abuse is incredible to see and is why the work we do is so critical and vital to ensure the voices of these women and children are heard.

Sector wide attention to the issue of coercive control and identifying this in the pattern of domestic violence has also been a high priority this year with a high number of our clients that have accessed Beryl's services during 2020-21 having suffered an increase in this form of abuse during pandemic lockdowns.

We have had many offers of community support this year in response to the increase in education and awareness surrounding the many forms of domestic violence that women and children experience. These events have provided the opportunities to talk about the day to day work we do and share the rich and varied stories of the Beryl journey so far. The community response to the work we do is always very positive and is a reminder of how Beryl's services are valued and appreciated by the broader community.

While there has been increased media coverage and community discussion of what domestic violence is and how it impacts our community, the

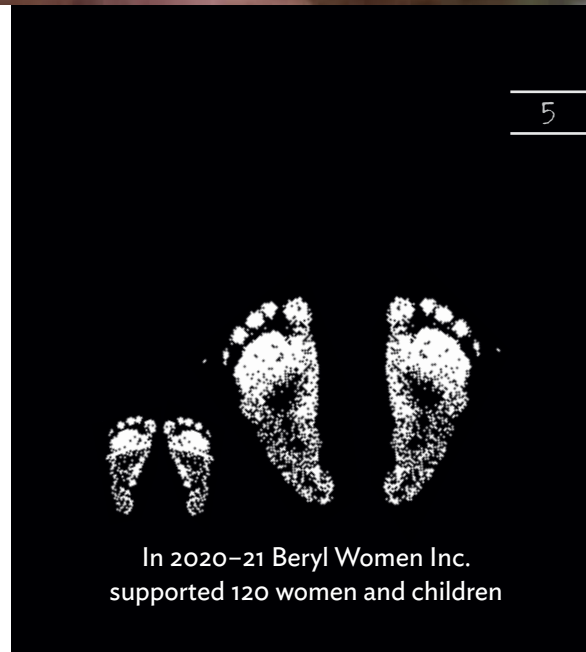


Weaving Workshop

numbers of women and children needing support and experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence and abuse has not decreased. Because of this, Beryl recognises there is more work to be done to address the complex issues and better understand how systems further impact the lives of women and children needing safety in our community.

Most of our clients have been victims of financial abuse while in their relationships. This leaves women responsible for debts and incurring long term damage to their financial health and wellbeing. Financial abuse has a devastating long term impact not only materially but also psychologically, subjecting women to feel trapped and unable to move forward in their lives and in some circumstances, experiencing further abuse even after leaving the threat of harm in the home and finding safe accommodation.

Sector collaboration has continued during lockdowns and the pandemic, with Beryl involved in advocacy across the community and government sector in justice, legal reforms, housing, women's health, children's wellbeing and social justice reforms for the Aboriginal community.



In 2020-21 Beryl Women Inc.
supported 120 women and children

This period has seen collaborative approaches with other women's services to house women and children that are unable to access crisis accommodation with Beryl. This is due to accommodated clients being unable to leave the service and find affordable housing in the ACT. High rent costs and limited access to social housing in the ACT for women and children in crisis accommodation not only limits the amount of safe space available to women needing to escape domestic violence but has a negative impact on families that are ready to move forward in their lives and live independently.

Federal funding and investment in social housing as a response to supporting women and children escaping domestic violence is important and needed at this time. If we are to ensure women and children in our society can live lives free from violence, provision of safe and affordable housing is critical.

Staff development and training has moved to online learning and the service has benefited from continued education and development through online platforms.



The Women's March4Justice Campaign in March 2021

Engagement with international research and best practice has strengthened the service to continue to develop its trauma informed approach to service delivery and future growth.

A property manager role was established this year to ensure the management and upkeep of our properties is to a high standard, and is already having a big impact on the women and children residing in the refuge, and the Beryl team. Our new property manager facilitates all maintenance, setup of properties for new families and keeps our garden and outdoor areas a safe and inviting space for children to play and families to enjoy. The welcome addition of our new property worker during this period has had a very positive effect on the workload for staff, freeing up much needed time and capacity for direct client work.

Finally, the level of grants and donations received in this period has been of great benefit to furthering the collective work of the organisation. It has been amazing to experience the generosity of the community spirit that surrounds Beryl and that supports the women and children we are committed to serve. ■



The Beryl Team.



Chair's report



"I had problems dealing with my daughter's emotional outbreaks and isolation, staff taught me how to deal with the situation and gave me the tools required to help my daughter when she has those outbreaks. This has been vital in our relationship and has brought us much closer than we were before."

Beryl Women Inc. client

Over the last year, Beryl Women Inc. has continued its critical work as Australia's longest-running women's refuge, supporting women and children escaping domestic and family violence in the ACT and surrounding region. This has been particularly important in 2020-21, as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the impacts of domestic and family violence – while creating additional operational challenges for services such as Beryl.

In addition, Beryl has made other significant contributions to the ACT community. For example, Beryl staff have run much-appreciated outreach sessions for inmates at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Beryl CEO, Robyn Martin has contributed to policy decision-making in the ACT through her membership of the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee, which is focused on systemic improvements to child protection systems, policies and practices.

In 2020-21, the Board has concentrated on further embedding the strategic, governance and financial foundations to position Beryl well for the years ahead. It has agreed on a 2021-26 Strategic Plan for Beryl, which focuses on creating a society free from all forms of domestic violence, discrimination and abuse of power against the women and children we work with, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People. This Strategic Plan is supported by a 2021-22 Board work plan to maximise the effectiveness of the Board's contribution.

The Board's Committees have also made key contributions to the organisation. The Finance and Audit Committee continues to strengthen Beryl's financial governance, through reviewing key policies, procedures and financial controls and supporting effective risk management.



Beryl 46th Birthday.jpg, Greens Minister Emma Davidson, Robyn Martin CEO, Labour Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith

The Human Resources Sub-Committee has retained its focus on strengthening Beryl’s organisational capabilities, most recently by overseeing the recruitment of three new highly-qualified Board members. In 2020-21 the Board established a new Fundraising and Communications Sub-Committee, which will support Beryl’s increased focus on diversifying its funding base.

I would like to thank our CEO Robyn Martin, who has served over 20 years with Beryl and continues to make a valuable contribution within Beryl, and in the wider community through key governance committees in the ACT. I also extend my thanks to Beryl’s staff, whose commitment to supporting clients through some of the most difficult points in their lives is key to assisting them to recover from violence and trauma. In addition, I thank the Board and Beryl’s other volunteers, whose dedication to Beryl’s governance embed the effectiveness and sustainability of the service and contribute to Beryl’s positive organisational culture.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to all the organisations and people whose funding and donations make Beryl’s work possible – in particular our major donor the ACT Government, and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, which has supported Beryl’s COVID-19 response.

These people and more have made it possible for Beryl to continue the important work it began when it first opened its doors at the Canberra Women’s Refuge in 1975. It has been an honour to serve as Chair of Beryl over the past year, and contribute to this remarkable organisation.

Karen Parter
Chair – Beryl Women Inc.

Treasurer's report

This report covers the 2020–21 financial year which commenced with Beryl in a strong position with a cash balance of \$919,312.

Beryl's delivery of core services was impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic health protocols. Additional Covid 19 specific grants and rent relief from the ACT Government allowed the Organisation to review and revise its work processes to ensure safety for its staff and clients; improve IT capabilities for remote working and client contact; and address Organisation governance and risk processes.

The volunteer Board and its various sub-Committees (and working parties) continued to work through their set activities for the period, with the Finance & Audit Committee achieving most of its Priority Schedule in conjunction with the CEO. This included:

- Completion of an Insurance review commenced in the prior period
- Reviewing and implementing an improved Chart of Accounts and Reporting Structure
- Implementation of CALXA for more detailed budget, grant and cashflow reporting
- Review and revision of the Fixed Asset Register including depreciation
- Review and revision of key Governance and Finance Policies
- Annual review and revision of the Risk Management plan

The work over this period highlighted the risk to the Organisation, which was dependent on the CEO and the volunteer Board and Committee availability to progress these critical issues. This has been recognized and the 2021–2022 budget includes an organisation restructure to include an internal senior Finance position.



I love seeing
women move on
and get past it.

Beryl Specialist DV worker

A full copy of the 2020–21 Financial Statement is available on request or from the ACNC website.

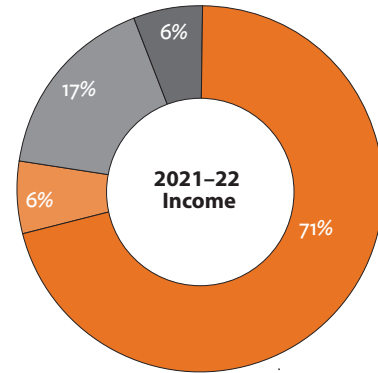
Income for the year was \$1,125,427
 Expenditure \$ 975,266
 Surplus \$ 150,161

The 2021–22 budget remains conservative with Beryl’s reliance on the ACT Government’s commissioning of its Domestic and Family Violence services for Women and Children, which due to the pandemic has been extended as it is until June 2023.

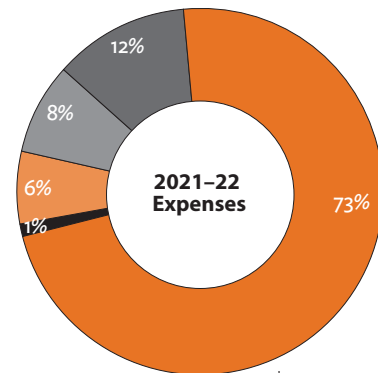
Beryl continues to welcome grants and donations from its existing supporters and new supporters.

The cash balance of \$1,251,304 at 30 June 2021 does not accurately reflect the many challenges met and overcome by the CEO and her team over the year, however it is welcomed as providing further financial stability to Beryl’s staff delivering a high standard of services to the community; the ability to add a new internal financial position in its structure; while the Organisation prepares for the deferred commissioning process.

Kim Sinclair
 Treasurer – Beryl Women Inc.



Core Funding	769,670
Rental Income	67,833
Grants	189,043
Donations	70,106
<hr/>	
	\$ 1,125,427



Salaries and wages	708,738
Grant	115,230
Office	79,134
Core Funding	62,156
Loss on Disposal	10,008
<hr/>	
	\$ 975,266

Chief executive officer's report



In Australia intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor (greater than smoking, alcohol & obesity) for women aged 25-44

Ayre et al, 2016

COVID-19 crisis impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching impacts across the organisation for both staff and clients throughout the year. It has posed increased challenges to our usual busy crisis driven work, and ensuring the physical safety and security of our clients. The organisation has been responding to these challenges with a flexible approach to service delivery and client engagement. Providing timely and regular communication to clients has proven a preventative measure to ensure mental health and wellbeing of women and children is supported and client needs are prioritised in an environment with many competing demands both on management and operational matters. The service has not only managed through the pandemic but has continued to strive to find new and innovative ways to provide a service of exceptional quality to our families and the broader community.

For the Beryl team, COVID-19 has carried increased reporting requirements and extra measures to ensure the health and safety of the team and our clients. Work from home policies have been effective in managing the workspace at times of lockdown, and to protect staff and clients from risks.

As a buffer to the difficulties we have faced this period the service has had the financial support from the Community Services Directorate of the ACT Government, the ACT Government Rapid Response funding to Community Organisations, The National Partnership on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children and The Paul Ramsay Foundation.



The Women's March4Justice Campaign in March 2021



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These additional funds have helped to support families and additional COVID-19 related costs such as IT Upgrades, COVID-19 deep cleaning, extra food support to families, and extra relief staff hours.

COVID-19 also presented an opportunity for the service to assess and review its current IT practices and future needs, moving forward through the pandemic. A new NBN connection was installed at both of our shared accommodation properties, ensuring women and children in share accommodation are not excluded from accessing the internet for learning and social activities. An upgrade to safety cameras at Beryl and purchase of IT equipment for staff for working from home were also positive improvements put in place during this financial year.

In recognition of the extra work and load on staff due to lockdown and the pandemic, the Board approved an additional week of leave for

staff, which aligns with our trauma informed practice by ensuring staff are supported by the organisation. Worker wellbeing is significant in reducing the impacts of vicarious trauma, the service has addressed these needs by accessing regular team supervision through Blue Knot Foundation, a national centre of excellence for complex trauma.

Beryl celebrated it's 46th Birthday this year on International Women's Day, with the support of MLA Emma Davidson at the legislative assembly. The celebration was an important event to mark the achievements of the organisation and the impact of the work we do for the greater Canberra community. We thank Emma and her team very much for organising this event and acknowledging the Beryl team for their hard work and commitment to women and children in the ACT.

I would like to acknowledge the staff team at Beryl, for their incredible work and the support they continue to provide vulnerable women and children escaping domestic and family violence during these challenging times. The staff have performed additional work and found solutions to problems that are far outside the box. This innovative thinking has seen great results and outcomes for the women and children we serve. The positive impacts for these women and children in terms of care and respect has been exceptional.

I would also like to thank the Board, current and past members, who continue to guide the organisation to grow in strength and which is a testament to our longevity - 46 years and still going strong.

And lastly, I would like to acknowledge the women and children who have accessed the service over the past 12 months. Your strength and resilience continues to amaze me.

Robyn Martin
CEO – Beryl Women Inc.

Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2020–21



Amnesty International Domestic Violence
During COVID-19 International Women's Day Event
Beryl works on Ngunnawal land



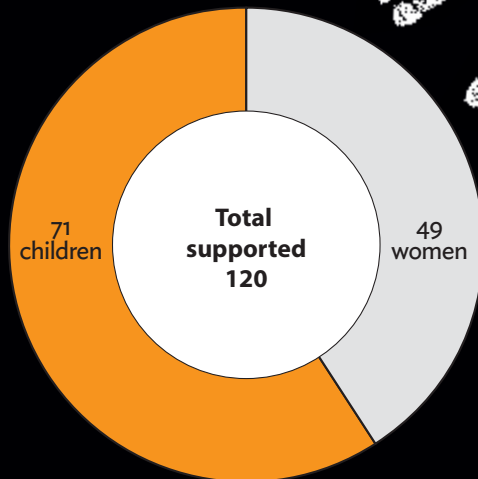
Beryl making a difference

Service Demographics

During 2020-21 Beryl supported 120 women, children and young people.

Of these 120 Clients

- There were 49 families (includes one adult as a presenting head of family, with or without children) this included one woman with 6 children, and a woman with 7 children and their grandmother
- 3 Grandparents
- 10% were 40 years or over ((12 women)
- 28.4% were five years or under (34 children)



Cultural Breakdown

- 30% identify as Aboriginal (36 clients)
- 42% identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (50 clients)
- 28% identify as Anglo Australian (34 clients)
- 17% were Born overseas (20 clients)
- 21.7 % identify as South Sudanese and speak Dinka (26 clients)

Support provided

- There were 133 support periods with 13 clients having two support periods
- 43% (57 of the 133 support periods) had financial issues
- 45% (60 of the 133 support periods) had mental health needs

Outreach

- 47.5% were provided outreach only (not accommodated) in this financial year (57 clients)

Support days

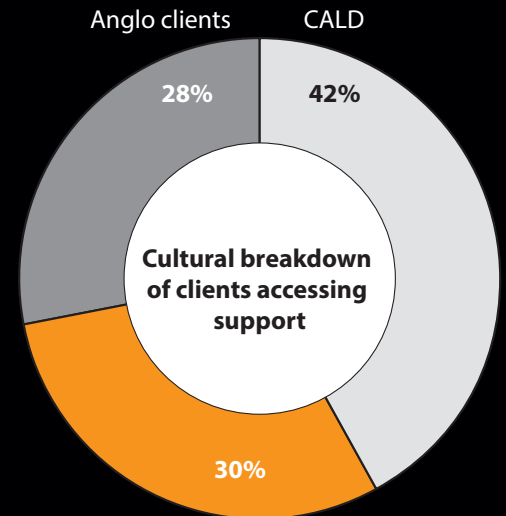
- Crisis accommodation 6,385 bed nights (47 clients)
- Medium term accommodation 4,312 bed nights (16 clients)
- Preventative outreach 10,358 days

Length of stay

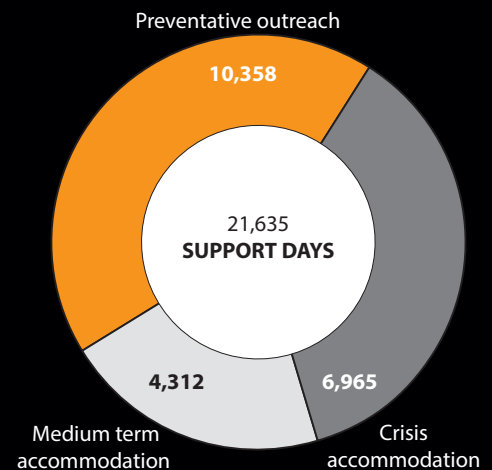
- 3 Families were accommodated over 200 nights.
- 4 Families were over 297 nights.
This is due to very limited exit points.

Housing outcomes

Of the 19 families accommodated at Beryl, two (2) successfully secured ACT Housing and 1 moved to transitional housing at another service.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients





Strong Women's Program

We were successful in applying for two Safety and Participation Grants with the ACT Office for Women. These grants are provided to support women in addressing independence and safety in their lives.

One grant was used towards driving lessons and learners courses and the second was used to implement our Strong Women's Group Program which was postponed from 2019 to 2020 due to the pandemic.

The purpose of this group program is to engage women escaping domestic violence in group activities that build their self-esteem and resilience to recover from the trauma experienced because of domestic and family violence. The group enables women to develop and build on their sense of hope for their future to live healthy happy lives free of violence and trauma.

Women fed back to us that they enjoyed meeting other women with lived experience, it helped them develop relationships outside of their circle. They heard stories of resilience and recovery from their peers.

The women learnt about the support services within the community to provide information, advice, and advocacy for them to regain their financial independence post separation, what their entitlements are, and information about support provided by Victims of Crime, and Legal Aid.



Client artwork

The program provided for activities such as Keeping Calm with Clay classes, gym membership, haircuts, massage and basket weaving workshops facilitated by local weaving artist and Aboriginal woman Angela Patulo. By providing the women with these activities, it supported the importance of maintaining wellbeing and self-care and how important it is in trauma recovery.

Children's program

The service provides a child and young person wellbeing program. This program is primarily aimed at ensuring the wellbeing and support of children from infancy to late teens. Each child or youth client is considered an individual in their own right and provided support and opportunities to thrive after living with domestic violence. The program is delivered by two child/youth specialist domestic violence case workers and provides parenting and education to mothers and case management, referral and advocacy, holiday programs and group work to children and young people.

The children's program faced many challenges with lockdowns. However, we were able to implement new creative school holiday programs and continued to respond to the individual needs of children and young people with advocacy in areas such as education, childcare, therapeutic support and provision of financial support for physical activities and health and wellbeing. Development of a Children's Framework commenced with the support from our Flinders University Workplacement Student. The Framework will ensure that Beryl Women Inc. continues to provide effective trauma informed service delivery to children and young people in line with the The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

IT resources were able to be provided from our Commonwealth Bank Community Grant which is in its final year of funding. This grant has been very beneficial in the provision of IT equipment and helped our children and young people to stay engaged with their studies with online learning and stay connected to loved ones during lockdown periods.



School Holiday Program art work



"Beryl has broken
the cycle of
violence for me.
How grateful we
are for you. My
children thank
Beryl and staff
everyday when mum
asks them what
they are
grateful for."

– Beryl Women Inc. client

Beryl works on Ngunnawal land

Intersectionality, feminism and system gaps

Intersectionality and feminism are at the core of our work at Beryl Women Inc. and the ongoing advocacy we do to address systemic gaps, on behalf of the women and children we work with.

Working within these frameworks demands an extensive knowledge of the systems we work within and places women, children and their voices central to client directed work. Beryl has provided a high level of case management and advocacy support to our clients from Aboriginal and CALD backgrounds. This year 72% of our clients identify with these groups and experience high and complex needs throughout the time of their support.

To address these needs, this work not only requires additional advocacy at a systemic level but relies on a sensitive, holistic and culturally appropriate approach when providing support to families escaping domestic violence. For many women systemic barriers have a compounding effect on already complex situations when for example multiple areas of support such as mental health, migration and family law are needing to be addressed.

Across all areas of government these women and children face many forms of systemic barriers to addressing their needs such as systemic racism, language barriers, and discrimination. We continually see the detrimental impacts on women and their children when repeatedly faced with these barriers in their journey to move forward in their lives. Much of our time and work is spent listening and responding to the impacts that these systemic barriers create for women.

As a small specialist domestic violence service we are constantly under pressure to educate the broader areas of government of the impacts that these barriers have on enabling women to access safety and not be further impacted by systemic failures in addressing these barriers. Particularly in the area of child protection, women are still being held accountable for men's violence and not heard in the responses from systems.





Beryl Mother's Day

Acknowledging that the one same approach does not work for every individual experience ensures that each family is treated with respect and recognises the unique challenges and barriers that women and children have in moving forward from violence in their lives.

In the case of long family court processes, and immigration matters these barriers can be reduced by ensuring effective case management provision that is flexible and not limited to certain time frames. Beryl has worked with women over a number of years in varied capacities so that women are able to have the best possible outcomes for them and their children.

The following excerpt describes what it means to work from an intersectional approach and the importance for it in supporting women and children fleeing violence.



An intersectional approach to feminism acknowledges that while women share similar experiences of discrimination, harassment, sexism, inequality and oppression on the basis of their sex and gender, not all women are equally disadvantaged or have equal access to resources, power and privilege. An intersectional approach to feminism requires analysis and action that is not only gendered, but considers how other forms of systemic oppression and discrimination – such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or ableism – can intersect with and impact on women’s experiences of gender, inequality, discrimination, harassment, violence or abuse. In the context of addressing violence against women, an intersectional approach recognises that the way women experience gender and inequality can be different based on a range of other cultural, individual, historical, environmental or structural factors including (but not limited to) race, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability or class. This approach also recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of violence women experience can be compounded and magnified by their experience of other forms of oppression and inequality, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, or facing barriers to support and safety that other women do not experience.

https://www.dvrcv.org.au/sites/default/files/DVRCV_Guiding_Principle_1.pdf

A graphic of several dark, textured footprints of varying sizes, arranged in a path that leads towards the right side of the page. The background is a solid orange color.

Advocating for Change (External)



Beryl Aboriginal Community Advocacy

Beryl CEO Robyn Martin has continued the important and critical work of representing Beryl Women Inc. at numerous Aboriginal community focused forums, advocating for change and improvements for Aboriginal women and children in the ACT. This work addresses the ongoing systemic injustices that Aboriginal people in our community experience especially women and children living with intergenerational trauma and domestic violence.

Our Booris Our Way Oversight Committee

The Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee has been established to provide advice and hold the ACT Government accountable for the implementation of all recommendations from the review. The Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee is committed to: reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care; improving their experience if they are in care; and increasing opportunities to exit care through restoration to their families. The Committee continues to meet with the Government on a monthly basis with a view to progressing the recommendations from the findings from the Review which was handed to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, in December 2019. The Oversight Committee issued a press release to call for increased action to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in care. Following is an excerpt from the press release.



The Our Booris, Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee has been working closely with the ACT Government on the implementation of the recommendations from the review. We are advocating for immediate changes so that we can uphold our children's rights and cultural security.

We are tired and frustrated by the lack of progress and feel disappointed that 18 months after the final report not one recommendation has been fully implemented. We are particularly disappointed that key recommendations from the final report that addressed the need for targeted support programs have not been delivered.

We know systemic change takes time; this has taken too long. We need radical change and urgently need every person who works with our children in our community to know that we need their help to maintain our children's right to be kept together with family and to be raised strong in culture.

Whilst we are disappointed with implementation results to date, we will continue to work with the ACT Government and monitor their implementation of the recommendations.

ACT's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response work

On 29 March 2021, the ACT Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence Yvette Berry, announced the establishment of a Sexual Assault Prevention and response Working Group to coordinate the community, service sector, unions, and relevant stakeholders on responses to sexual assault in the ACT.

The ACT's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response work and Working Group were launched at an event on 28 April, attended by MLAs from all three parties, representatives from ACT Directorates, and a small cohort of non-government stakeholders including Beryl Women Inc.

Beryl has committed to participate in one of the Working Group's committees – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Committee.





Early Policy discussion on criminalising coercive control

Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, tasked the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) with consolidating an early policy position on the feasibility of criminalising coercive control in the ACT.

The Family Violence Act 2016 (ACT) currently extends the definition of family violence to include coercive behaviour, meaning that a family violence order can be made to address coercive control. However, the Advisory Board is of the view that further work is required to address the features of family violence that commonly escalate over time.

ACT Policing have released a discussion paper to show their preliminary research and stimulate discussion, several meetings have been held to date, this discussion paper has been updated various times and it will be presented to the Minister after the National Summit on the Prevention of Violence providing Minister Berry with a policy position.

Over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT justice system

This roundtable was organised by a number of MLA's as a result of advocacy from a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community seeking a detailed comprehensive and independent inquiry into the effectiveness of the justice system in their contact with and response to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In response, the then Attorney -General and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs committed to undertake a holistic review. Since this roundtable, the community met separately and are now calling for a Royal Commission into the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT justice system.



Domestic Violence Prevention Council Membership

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) is an independent statutory body established in 1997 under the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* (the Act). The Council's statutory objective is to reduce the incidence of family violence offences in the ACT. The membership of Beryl CEO as the Aboriginal Community member on the council was to expire in August, however, the CEO was asked to continue in the role as the Council is currently undergoing a review that has been delayed due to COVID-19. The CEO will continue as the Aboriginal Community member for the next 12 months.

The DVPC has been involved in the establishment of important reforms in the ACT such as the Family Safety Hub and the ACT coordinator General for Family Safety, ensuring a whole of government approach in reducing and responding to family violence in the ACT.

Harmony Alliance Consultation – National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women

Harmony Alliance–Migrant and Refugee Women for Change is Australia's national migrant and refugee women's coalition. They have held consultations with women from migrant and refugee backgrounds as well as service providers representing and supporting these women and children, to inform the development of the next National Plan to reduce violence against women. The current 12-year National Plan ends in 2022.

The purpose of the consultations is to ensure that migrant and refugee women's voices and perspectives are heard as part of this significant process.

Beryl Women Inc. participated in a consultation in which a number of issues were raised based on the experiences of women and service providers. These included:

- Threats of deportation
- Threats of cancelled visas
- Perceptions of violence
- Gender equality
- New and emerging communities
- Data
- Culturally responsive practices with mainstream services
- Staff own cultural bias.



Client artwork

ACT Policing and Community sector

The ACT Family Safety Hub convened a meeting for sector stakeholders to meet with ACT Policing to discuss particular issues that have been identified as well as suggestions for how we work together to improve safety of those who experience domestic and family violence. Issues discussed included:

- Service of interim Family Violence Orders
- Enforcement of Family Violence Orders
- Charging for breach of Family Violence Orders
- Charging for Family Violence Offences
- Role of the Family Violence Unit, ACT Policing.

There was a commitment to continue these meetings with a view to increasing connections between Police and service providers and to find a way to address the gaps identified that have impacted women who have not had positive experiences with Police when calling for assistance.



Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group

As part of the role of the CEO as the Aboriginal representative on the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, we held a three day community consultation with the Aboriginal community in October 2020 to discuss the recommendations from the We Don't Shoot Our Wounded (2009) and Share what you Know (2017) reports. The We Don't Shoot Our Wounded Report was acknowledged in a joint statement at the Legislative Assembly in 2019 by Ministers Berry and Stephen-Smith.

Since then, the Reference Group has received a small grant to engage with the community to check the recommendations from that report are still valid, and if so ascertain the priorities, and if not understand what has changed. The Reference Group prepared a report outlining the feedback from the Community and this report will be passed onto the ACT Government with a view to supporting the community in progressing the recommendations further through various funding options.

AMC Women's Prison Domestic Violence Group

In the ACT we have seen an increase in women entering the prison with many of these women having lived with childhood trauma and domestic violence. Nationally the female prison population increased by 64% (from 2,100 to 3,500) (ABS 2019b). Women in prison often come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with histories of poverty, domestic violence, social deprivation and childhood trauma (Hatton & Fisher 2009; WHO 2014).

As a response to female prisoners and supporting their wellbeing, Beryl Women Inc. has run Understanding Domestic Violence groups at the Alexander Machonochie Centre for women in partnership with Women's Centre for 'Health Matters Inc. The Groups are funded by the Justice and Community Services Directorate. We have so far had two groups and will be offering the third group after lockdown.

The group has been well attended and feedback has been positive. As the group has progressed the women who have attended has increased as the women have encouraged others to attend. This program has filled the gap in program delivery and also given the women the opportunity to show that they are taking genuine steps to address their domestic violence issues. To ascertain how the women in the AMC found the pilot program, Women's Health Matters conducted a short evaluation survey with the women who participated. Below is a snapshot of the results:

- 100% considered the topics covered in the program were useful and relevant to them
- 100% preferred the program about domestic and family violence being run by a women's community based organisation rather than Corrections
- 100% felt it would be worthwhile for this program to continue on a regular basis.

Increased collaboration and stronger relationships

Strong collaboration and relationships through difficult years such as this last pandemic year are so important and valuable to Beryl providing a service that can respond to the needs of clients from a client centred approach. We have built on our existing relationships with government through collaboration and a shared vision, and have had the opportunity to create new partnerships which has helped us to provide extra support to our client service delivery.

The benefits of this support flow through to direct client support in many varied and creative ways ensuring our service delivery is strengths based to respond to the unique circumstances that each and every client is experiencing. Beryl is strengthened by these relationships that continue to grow and develop.

- ACT Family Safety Hub
- Family Violence Safety Action Pilot
- ACT Victims Crime
- ACT's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Work
- Specialist Homelessness Services
- ACT Office for Women
- Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- Restorative Justice Group
- MOU with Womens Health ACT
- MOU with The National Health Co-Op.
- DVPC Working Group on Criminalising Coercive Control.



Over 41,000 children with experience of family violence accessed specialist homelessness services in 2017–18.

Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, 2019, AIHW

Supporters throughout the year

Beryl Women Inc. has had a diverse group of supporters throughout the year from specific offers of philanthropic grant funding, a generous vehicle offer from an ACT community member, to special events in support of the organisation. Each of these varied types of support enable the service to provide a range of additional resources in addition to our existing contract funding. These supporters create new opportunities for engagement and new relationships with the broader community and to raise awareness for the work and the needs of specialist crisis services. We are always appreciative of all offers of support to continue our work ensuring children and women in the community live lives free from violence.



Paul Ramsay Foundation

The Paul Ramsay Foundation has been a major financial contributor to Beryl this period. This grant donation significantly impacted our ability to provide additional resources during the critical COVID-19 period.

The foundation provided targeted surge funding to specialist domestic violence services acknowledging the difficulties that the sector faces in managing the increasing costs to provide high quality service delivery to women and children escaping domestic violence.

The donation was invaluable for the service and more importantly for the clients and came at a time when COVID-19 was causing major panic across Canberra and more broadly the Country. There was great uncertainty on how Beryl Women Inc. would be in a position financially to provide the support clients required across a number of areas during the pandemic. Funding was able to be used quickly and flexibly across the organisation in areas identified such as extra staffing hours, emergency supplies, Technology upgrades and short term COVID accommodation needs.

Having the capacity to employ our casual relief staff when needed allowed the service to meet the higher need for emotional support and increased demand for material needs as clients experienced challenges to acquiring everyday household supplies and financial difficulties.

COVID-19 has presented many challenges for a specialist service and Beryl has faced these challenges with more ease and certainty due to the additional funds provided by the Paul Ramsey Foundation. The partnership we have established has ensured we can

meet the challenges of the pandemic and ensure our women and children experiencing violence and trauma receive a service that is effective and responsive to their needs.

Importantly through the work of the foundation it has shown the value of specialist domestic violence services and the critical need for their ongoing and sustainable funding into the future, as stated in their report Shelter from the Storm.

While the focus of this project – and this report – is on women’s shelters which largely operate at the crisis end of the service spectrum, it is hard to avoid the reality that these services are often the only services dedicated to supporting victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. While a range of other general services exist, such as public housing or mental health services, the lack of specialised, dedicated services designed to address the longterm drivers and implications of domestic violence on women and children is a conversation which needs to be had. The outcomes of the project and report can be found at Shelter from the storm.



About 2.5% of women with disability had experienced partner violence in the previous 12 months, compared with just over 1.3% of women without disability.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au>

Beryl works on Ngunnawal land



University of Canberra Nurses Society

The University of Canberra Nursing Society (UCNS) was a major fundraiser for the organisation this year with Beryl Women Inc. chosen as the annual UCNS Ball fundraiser recipient.

The Ball was held in May at the UC Conference Centre supported by and attended by guests from the University of Canberra, Vice Chancellor Nixon, MLA Guilia Jones and organised by the UCNS fundraiser committee. An enjoyable and fun evening was had by all and we are very grateful for the support of all involved in organising the night and for those who showed their support by attending the event.

Uber Rides and Telstra Safe Connections Program

This financial year the service has had the ongoing support of the Uber rides Program and WESNET Safe Connections Program. Both these programs through WESNET have been vital to ensure that our women and young people can access safe transport and safe mobile phones. This year Beryl worked in collaboration with other women’s services in the ACT to provide safety planning and tech support for women with disabilities, older women, mothers and teens with safety concerns and to women from culturally linguistically diverse communities.

Snow Foundation

The Snow Foundation have been an ongoing generous support throughout the year, assisting with individual grants to women in areas of need. These grants ensure that women and families that are already experiencing disadvantage and vulnerabilities are able to meet the costs necessary to rebuild their lives after fleeing domestic violence. Costs in areas such as mental health counselling, vehicle registration and urgent repairs, household bills, removalist and storage costs have all been provided by the Snow Foundation Grants.

Callida Indigenous Consulting

With thanks to the generous support of Callida Indigenous Consulting, the Children's program received additional funding this financial year which went towards alleviating the financial pressure for families over the xmas and Jan period. Funding and provision for family entertainment activities, sport and recreation and group outings enabled the children and mothers to connect with staff and enjoy fun and relaxing activities together. Return to school in 2021 after lockdown was relieved with financial support for clothing, shoes and book packs being able to be provided for. Targeted grants of funding from organisations such as Callida have a noticeable impact on families that are in crisis accommodation and help reduce hardship and stress for our families. Most importantly, children and young people living with a single parent escaping domestic violence experience high levels of poverty and disadvantage in our community and funding of children's programs is essential in addressing their health and developmental needs.

Quest for Life Foundation

Quest for Life Foundation continued to provide support to Beryl clients in 2020-21. The Foundation takes a whole-person, recovery-orientated approach which provides evidence-based practical strategies and tools to help women to heal the past, build resilience for the future and live in the present. Their courses are specifically designed for people moving through trauma and are highly valued by our women and staff. We are very appreciative of their ongoing support to the organisation.

Significantly, this year some Beryl staff also attended the Quest for Life Foundation –Moving Beyond Trauma program, a week-long program delivered on site in Bundernoon. Further staff have registered to attend in 2021-22. The plan is for all staff to participate in this program. It is seen as a vital staff development program that will assist staff in supporting clients within the service who have experienced trauma from domestic and family violence.



On average, one woman 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. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ozctxh>.





"Making me believe that it's not my fault that caused my ex-husband violence towards me; helping build up my confidence to return back to normal life, look after my kids myself and helping me get more stronger to move on."

Beryl Women Inc. client

Beryl works on Ngunnawal land

Donations and grants received in 2020-21

Beryl works with many individuals and organisations in the community to ensure we can effectively support women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

We have received record donations during the year (?), including from:

- ACT Office for Women
- UC Nursing Society
- Freestyle Tattoo Studio
- MARRS Canberra
- Inner Wheel of Canberra
- Issabella Saure
- Goodwin Aged Care
- Canberra Quilters
- Dept Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Milestone Entertainment.

This year we would like to give a warm thanks and acknowledgement to Vin at St Vincent De Paul, as our longest ongoing xmas santa supporter. Vin works tirelessly each year and has shared the xmas spirit with all of our families for over 20 years. We are very appreciative for his efforts and kindness.

Ongoing workplace giving partners include:

- Department of Agriculture and water
- National Blood Authority
- Dept. Education Skills and Employment
- Good2Give
- Hands across Canberra.

Acknowledgments and thank you

We would like to specifically acknowledge the funding and support of the ACT Government, the Community Services Directorate and the Social Housing and Homelessness Services staff of the Community Services Directorate.

Other partners we would like to acknowledge include the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Victims Support, Tara's Angels, Doris Women's refuge, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, OneLink, Women's Health Service, Women's Centre for Health Matters, ACT Legal Aid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Access to Justice Program, ACT Legal Aid DV Unit, Community Liaison Unit- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers, Women's Legal Centre, Mulleun Mura and Street Law, Care Inc., Centrelink Social Workers, ACT Office for Women, Northside Community Services, Relationships Australia, Dharlung Yarra, Yarrung Murra, Snow Foundation, Quest For Life, Commonwealth Bank, Uber Rides and Telstra Safe Connections Program – WESNET, Gugan Gulwan, Winnunga Nimmitijah, Companion House, Roundabout Canberra, Early Childhood Community Coordinators, Built Canberra Xmas Hampers, Milestone Entertainment 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.

We would also like to thank the many members of the community who reach out to provide items, donations or other support. This includes McKellar House, Poetry in Flowers, RedFlag Canberra and Simply Giving, Givit, as well as several individual members of the community who donate through Workplace Giving or regularly donate via Hands Across Canberra.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were 32 times more likely to be hospitalised for family violence as non-Indigenous people.

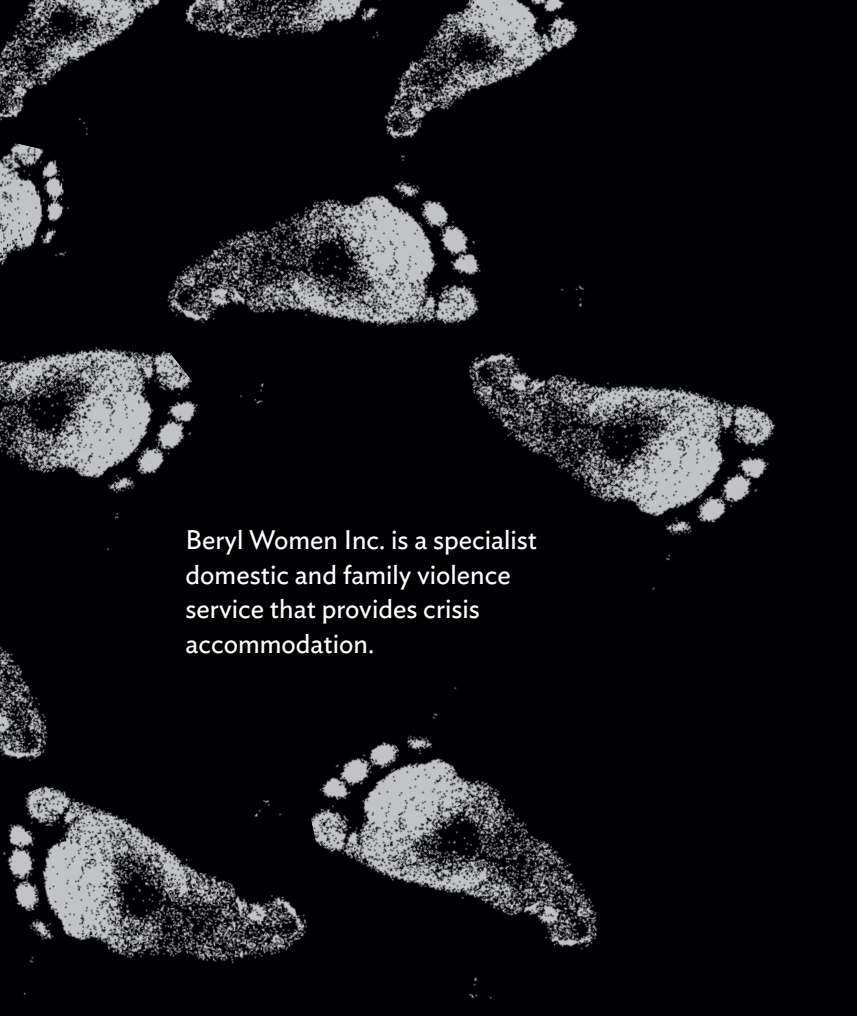
source: www.aihw.gov.au

How can you make a difference to Beryl?

The work required to support families fleeing domestic violence and address system improvements is vital and necessary but also highly demanding on a specialist service. Our highly skilled staff team and Board of Management have worked tirelessly this last year in ensuring that our service continues to address the inequities in our system that impact vulnerable families that are building lives free from domestic violence.

You can help us to continue this important work by going to <https://www.beryl.org.au/donations> and making a donation. All donations are welcome.

Workplace Giving is another option to help provide regular support that makes a real difference to our work. ■



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

Annual Report

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