

Australia's longest running women's refuge



50
YEARS





Beryl Women Inc.

A specialist domestic and family violence service that provides crisis accommodation and support.

Office hours

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BERYL WORKS ON NGUNNAWAL AND NGAMBRI LAND



We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri 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.

Supported by



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Overview



1974

First meeting called of interested women of the Canberra Women's Movement to establish emergency accommodation for women and children in the ACT. Canberra Women's Refuge Committee is formed from that meeting (June)

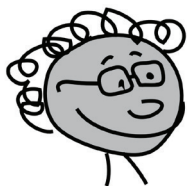


1975

The Department of the Capital Territory grants the Canberra Women's Refuge Committee the use of a three bedroom house in Watson, and \$4,000 as an establishment grant (March)

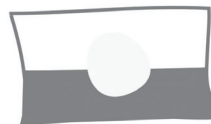
Canberra Women's Refuge (now Beryl Women Inc.) opens officially and refuge begins operation immediately (8 March)

The Collective is offered the use of a house in Kingston for medium term accommodation (July)



1979

The Refuge is renamed Beryl Women's Refuge, in honour of Beryl Henderson.



1991

The Coordinator's position becomes an identified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander position, although it was not until 2005 that the position was filled by an Aboriginal woman

Beryl Women Inc. is honoured to be recognised as the longest-running specialist domestic violence refuge in Australia. On 8 March 2025, International Women's Day, we proudly celebrated 50 years of continuous service — a remarkable milestone and testament to the strength, courage, and commitment of the women who have built and sustained this organisation over five decades. We acknowledge and honour the countless women and children who have accessed our

services over the past 50 years. Your courage, resilience, and strength in the face of domestic and family violence have inspired and guided our work. It is your stories, your journeys, and your determination that have shaped Beryl into the supportive, empowering, and safe space it is today. We thank you for trusting us, and we remain committed to standing alongside all women and children in their pursuit of safety, healing, and hope.



HONOURING THE WOMEN WHO CAME BEFORE US

As we reflect on this milestone, we acknowledge the women who came before us — the founders, activists, and volunteers who had the vision and courage to establish Beryl in 1974. At that time, domestic violence was rarely spoken about publicly and there was no government recognition or dedicated funding for crisis services. These women stepped forward in uncertain times, creating a safe space with little more than determination, solidarity, and a deep belief that women and children deserved safety and dignity.

The service was sustained through voluntary effort, community goodwill, and shared resources. In the absence of formal funding, women opened their doors, gave their time, and worked tirelessly to keep Beryl alive. Their courage and persistence laid the foundation for the feminist movement against domestic and family violence in Australia and ensured that future generations would have access to support, advocacy, and refuge. Today, their legacy continues to inspire everything we do.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT

Since those beginnings, Beryl has grown into a strong feminist organisation, led by women for women and children. We remain steadfast in our mission to provide safe crisis accommodation, therapeutic interventions, and holistic support to those escaping domestic and family violence. Our work is grounded in justice and equality and shaped by a deep respect for cultural diversity. We stand alongside women, amplifying their voices and advocating for lasting change.

Our services include domestic and family violence information and support, risk assessments, safety planning, crisis accommodation, financial and material aid, court support, and advocacy. We are committed to ensuring these supports are inclusive, culturally safe, and accessible to all women and children who need them.

We also acknowledge that some groups — including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities, and women with diverse sexual orientations and

Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2024–25



gender identities — experience higher rates of violence and face unique barriers when seeking help. Meeting the needs of these groups is central to our vision of equity and inclusion.

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REFLECTING ON THE PAST YEAR

This report highlights our work over the past year: the number of women and children we have supported, the services delivered, and the challenges faced.

Over the past 12 months, we have provided safe and secure housing, food, clothing, emotional and practical support, while also raising awareness of domestic, family, and sexual violence in the community and advocating for stronger protections for women and children.

We are proud of what has been achieved and deeply grateful to our staff, Board, volunteers, and supporters for their dedication. We also recognise that much remains to be done. Domestic, family, and sexual violence continues at epidemic levels across the country, with women and children disproportionately impacted.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we mark 50 years of service, we honour our past while looking to the future. Beryl Women Inc. remains committed to standing strong — guided by the resilience of the women and children we serve and inspired by the vision of the women who came before us. Together, we will continue to provide safety, advocacy, and hope, working towards a future free from violence.



50TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



Beryl 50th Birthday-Guest Speaker Rosie Batty AO 2015 Australian of the Year



Beryl 50th Birthday - Singer Songwriter Sam Buckingham



Beryl 50th Birthday Panel with MC Justice Louise Taylor, Beryl CEO Robyn Martin, and Founding Collective Members left to right Biff Ward, Pamela Oldmeadow, Marilyn Chalkley, Christina Ryan



Beryl 50th Birthday -Hit & Miss Drumming Group



Beryl 50th Birthday -Hit & Miss Drumming Group



Beryl 50th Birthday-Guest Speaker Rosie Batty AO 2015 Australian of the Year



“When we tell our stories, and boldly write the next chapter for ourselves, we give others permission to do the same”

Sam buckingham

MEDIA

BERYL WOMEN INC MARKS 50 YEARS OF ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

23 February 2025 | By Hannah Sparks

Join the conversation



Beryl has helped hundreds of women and children escape domestic violence. Photo: Unsplash.

On 15 March, Beryl Women Inc will mark a momentous occasion – its 50th anniversary. This milestone represents not only half a century of advocacy and support for women and children escaping domestic violence but also the resilience and growth of an organisation that’s been at the heart of the Canberra community since 1975.

“Media Coverage Region Canberra”

‘AS CRITICAL TODAY AS IT WAS IN 1975’: A NOD TO THE WOMEN WHO PROTECT US

Canberra’s first women’s shelter, Beryl Women Inc, turned 50 years old this year.

For half a century, Beryl has protected vulnerable women and children in the capital from domestic violence and homelessness.

Angie Piubello is a specialist child and youth support worker at Beryl Women Inc, Australia’s oldest service for women escaping domestic violence (2024).

The community-led, women-led, and Aboriginal-led service is Australia’s longest-running women’s refuge, and for good reason.

From the culturally safe, trauma-informed services provided by tireless staff led by Robyn Martin AO, to the ‘70s women’s rights activists who started it all, countless victim-survivors have benefited from Beryl’s work.

It all began when a collective of Canberra feminists met with English suffragette Beryl Henderson.

“I’ve been waiting for you women all my life,” she told them, founding member Pamela Oldmeadow said.

In the ‘70s, most options for crisis accommodation were not ideal for single women, First Nations women, refugees, or women with children.

Ms Oldmeadow said people were required to leave shelters during the day and could only stay for a maximum of three days.

“When I look back, I can see concerned men at Labor Party meetings at St.Vincent de Paul saying, ‘Do you really think we need this?’” she said.

Through letters, meetings and evidence-based activism, the collective was finally granted a three-bedroom house in Watson for the Canberra Women’s Refuge.

It opened on March 8, 1975, and was eventually renamed after Ms Henderson.

Although they achieved their goal, the challenges evolved.

Another member, Marilyn Chalkley, still remembers she latched onto the bonnet of a revving car outside Beryl’s eight-bedroom Kingston location.

It was to stop a man threatening to crash into traffic if his wife didn’t come out of the refuge.

Ms Chalkley said the rest of the team were talking him down when someone managed to snatch the keys.



‘As critical today as it was in 1975’: a nod to the women who protect us.

“I still remember the heat from the car on my legs,” she said.

“We got the guy to hospital to be admitted into the psychiatric ward. Three hours later, he was released.

“Fortunately, we still had [his] keys.”

This spirit of sisterhood and teamwork has multiplied through the years, transforming Beryl into a mainstream organisation focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



A plaque stating Beryl women’s refuge was opened by Pat Bryant, wife of Gordon Bryant, the Minister for the Capital Territory in 1975. Picture by Karleen Minney.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare continually states that women from these backgrounds can find it harder to access services because of intersecting barriers, including racism, citizenship status, disability, poverty, and shame.

Such intersectionalities greatly inform the work of Ms Martin, Beryl’s award-winning chief executive,

who joined the organisation as a support worker 25 years ago.

Those in the ACT advocacy space not only know her as a devoted leader but also for championing culturally safe, holistic and flexible support for victim-survivors.

“Robyn has always understood Beryl is more than just a refuge. It is where women reclaim their power, children find safety, and community comes together to break the cycle of violence,” board chief Jess Scott said.

Remi King, says the only proper way to support her Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients is through culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed care (2024).

With an average of 11 family and domestic violence reports per day in Canberra, the words of Supreme Court judge Louise Taylor ring true: “Beryl remains as critical today as it was in 1975.”

And its work simply cannot be taken for granted.

“The US is f---ed”: Australian of the Year 2015 and domestic violence campaigner, Rosie Batty AO, spoke of Roe v. Wade at Beryl’s 50th birthday celebration.

“You would’ve never expected the reversal of what women fought so hard to achieve,” she told The Canberra Times.

“With more progress comes resistance ... I think it would be naive of us to assume [otherwise].”

Support is available for those who may be distressed.
Phone Lifeline 13 11 14; 1800-RESPECT 1800 737 732;
ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service 6280 0900;
Women’s Legal Centre ACT 6257 4377.

Vision, mission



Our vision is to create 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 people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our mission is to provide a professional, accountable, trauma-informed specialist domestic violence service through evidence-based principles of intersectional feminism, social justice, reconciliation, intervention & prevention, and recognise and fosters cultural diversity.

EQUALITY

At Beryl, we value the power of every voice. In team meetings, special gatherings, and strategic planning days, all perspectives are heard and respected. Each staff member holds an equal vote in decision-making processes. Trust, respect, and consensus drive our operations at Beryl. We strive to create a supportive environment where judgment is absent and understanding prevails. Recalling the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to self-determination.

Our sensitivity extends to cultural responsibilities of our Indigenous staff members through tailored management practices and support systems. Beryl is committed to being a warm, comfortable, and safe place for everyone - whether in person or within the community we serve. DIVERSITY At Beryl, we embrace and celebrate diversity in all its forms. We believe that by employing staff from diverse backgrounds and supporting clients with a range of experiences, we create a rich tapestry of perspectives. Our organization values cultural diversity and lived experience, recognizing the unique contributions they bring to our team and

clients. We are committed to learning from and alongside Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, fostering cross-cultural understanding as an ongoing journey towards reconciliation. Our staff's dedication to understanding trauma informs our service approach which focuses on strengths-based solutions. At Beryl, inclusivity is not just a goal but an integral part of who we are as an organisation.

COMPASSION

At our organisation, we prioritise a supportive and collaborative environment. Our staff truly embody the value of teamwork by sharing workloads and helping one another whenever possible. We understand that life can sometimes require flexible arrangements, which is why Beryl supports options like working from home and flexible hours to meet both organisational and personal commitments. Mental health is also a priority for us - our team members are mindful of their own well-being as well as that of others when discussing sensitive issues. Creating a positive and empowering workspace for both colleagues and clients is something we actively foster within our company culture.

RESPECT

At Beryl Women Inc., we value clear and respectful communication among staff, clients, and external agencies. We believe in active participation in team meetings and ensuring the safety of our services by upholding privacy, discretion, compassion, and integrity without

judgment or bias. Our staff understand the importance of balancing workloads to promote their own well-being as well as respecting the diversity and expertise each member brings. We embrace flexibility and accept that obstacles are a part of our work. Responsive teamwork and effective independent work are equally valued. Above all, we engage with trust and respect while empowering individuals to make choices aligned with their values and cultural beliefs for a fulfilling life journey.

INTEGRITY

At our organisation, we hold ourselves to a high standard of excellence. Our staff members are committed to delivering their duties with utmost dedication, recognizing the profound impact they have on both our organization and clients. We foster a culture of transparency and honesty, encouraging our team to openly address any challenges or problems they encounter. Additionally, we prioritize proactive identification and management of conflicts of interest. Our commitment to best practices extends throughout all aspects of service provision. Furthermore, adherence to Beryl Women's policies and procedures is paramount; this includes respecting privacy policies and adhering to our code of conduct. Lastly, we operate within a culturally aware, trauma-informed, feminist framework while actively seeking ongoing education in relevant areas - ensuring that every member represents our organization professionally and respectfully within the broader community when appropriate.

Chair's Report



On behalf of the Board of Beryl Women Inc., it is my pleasure to present this Chair's Report for the 2024/25 year. This has been a year of reflection, reconnection, renewal – and, importantly, celebration. As I write, I do so with humility, gratitude, and deep admiration for the women, children, staff, Board, volunteers and community partners who walk with us on this ever challenging but hopeful path.

One of the defining moments of this year the commemoration of 50 years of Beryl Women Inc. What began an act of hope, courage, and collective resistance has grown into Australia's longest running women's refuge. Still led by feminist purpose, still a place of strength and transformation, still holding space and safety for women and children.

Our celebration gathered past and present staff, survivors, community leaders, elders, allies and sponsors. Distinguished voices, including Rosie Batty and Justice Louise Taylor, honoured the legacy of this organisation and affirmed our commitment to the future. We heard from founding collective members and current staff, weaving together the threads of Beryl's history: of struggle, resilience, adaptation and hope. I was deeply moved by stories that spoke to the dignity,

courage and vulnerability of those Beryl serve. The celebration was more than a milestone; it was a united recommitment to walk forward with even more intention, clarity and collaboration.

As Chair, I felt the weight of that history and the privilege of being part of Beryl's next chapter. I am humbled to stand in the footsteps of those who built this service, and grateful to those who continue the journey.

We cannot reflect on this year – or on Beryl's longevity – without acknowledging Robyn Martin, our CEO, whose leadership is a foundational pillar of this organisation. Robyn has dedicated decades to walking beside women and children escaping domestic and family violence. The legacy she builds is one of kindness, cultural awareness, and compassion – one that will continue to shape Beryl and the broader movement for women's safety and justice for years to come.

Robyn has challenged and influenced local and national policy, taken Beryl's story to the world, and ensured the voices of women and children are not just heard, but centred. Under her leadership, Beryl has evolved and proven the strength of community-led, women-led, Aboriginal-led feminist action. It is an honour to serve alongside

her and to support the vision she holds for Beryl's future.

This year we said a heartfelt farewell to Gemma Bawden, who stepped down as Treasurer after years of dedicated service on the Beryl Board. Gemma's financial acumen, conscientious stewardship and generosity of spirit strengthened our governance, instilled confidence, and nurtured a culture of gratitude and integrity. We thank her sincerely for all she has contributed as member, ally and friend.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Aditi Malhotra as general member who stepped down from the Board this year. Thank you, Aditi, for your passion and support. At the same time, I have delighted in welcoming our new Board members, whose diverse experience, energy and commitment bring renewed strength to our governance table. I look forward to working closely with all our fabulous directors, as we sharpen our strategic priorities and deepen our impact.

One of the most significant collaborative achievements of the year has been the successful Beryl Stakeholder Survey Report, a process that engaged staff, clients, partners and community members in giving voice to our strengths, opportunities and future direction. The results and reflections have already begun to inform our future focus.

I wish to thank Mia Swainson for her outstanding role in facilitating not only the stakeholder survey but also our annual Staff-Board Strategic Planning Day. Mia's careful listening, inclusive

style and capacity to draw forth both candour and constructive energy have been instrumental. Thank you, Mia, for holding those spaces so generously.

I would also like to recognise the Beryl staff's leadership throughout both processes. Their transparency, expertise, and guidance have contributed to meaningful and credible results. These achievements reflect a truly collaborative effort, and the Board deeply values the contributions of such skilled and dedicated colleagues.

As we move forward, we do so with renewed clarity about both the magnitude of the task ahead – and the strength of what we have built together. The 50-year landmark is not a resting post, but a call to renewed courage. We must be nimble, ethically bold, financially sustainable and deeply relational.

We will continue to refine our governance, amplify the voices of women and children in our community, strengthen our partnerships, and advocate for the systems-level change necessary to prevent violence before crisis.

To our donors, supporters, volunteers, partners, community allies and funders: your belief in Beryl's mission makes this work possible.

Jess Scott
Chair, Beryl Women Inc. Board

Treasurer's Report



On behalf of Beryl's Board, I am pleased to present the Beryl Women Inc. Financial Year 2024-25 Treasurer's Report.

In the year Beryl achieved its 50th year of providing much needed services to women and children seeking domestic and family violence crisis accommodation, it is a delight to report that Beryl continues to be financially stable. Beryl's balance sheet is in a strong position with cash reserves increasing by 7.3% to \$1.6 million. This stability provides Beryl with the ability to focus decision making on clients.

Core funding through the ACT Government of \$1.1m continued to be our main income source. We were also able to continue to provide our clients with outreach programs through our successful grant programs which increased by 62.6%.

Our much-appreciated supporters continued to make their generous donations to us which remained steady over the year. These funds assist us in continue to provide healing and recovery where it is needed most.

I would like to thank the ACT Government, grantors, and donors for their ongoing support and financial support.

The 2025-26 financial year will have Beryl continue to focus on using our financial resources to maximise the impact we can bring to our clients and community. We will continue to manage rising cost of living standards, whilst, hopefully, seeing a finalised ACT Community Sector Multi Enterprise Agreement through a Supported Bargaining process with the Australian Services Union and Fair Work Commission, outcomes for our staff and maintaining a workplace culture that values the health and wellbeing of our staff.

I would also like to express my gratitude for our outgoing Treasurer, Gemma Bawden and Chief Finance Officer, Gabriela Budilova. Their service has been key to Beryl's financial health and wellbeing.

Rachel Harris
Treasurer



Rudy_Graphics

Beryl 50th Birthday – Beryl Women Inc. Board Members 2024-25

Left to right: Myra Patil Director, Tia Lau Secretary, Jess Scott Chair, Gemma Bawden Previous Treasurer, Emma Phillips Director, Lew Ching Yip Deputy Chair, Ursula De Ruyter Director

CEO's Report



This year has been an extraordinary milestone in our organisation's history as we proudly celebrated 50 years of service. To reach half a century is no small achievement — it is a testament to the courage, commitment, and vision of the women who came before us, and the determination of those who continue to carry the work forward today.

When Beryl Women Inc. first opened its doors in 1975, it was run entirely by volunteers, with little to no funding, in an environment where the concept of domestic violence as a social issue was barely recognised. The women who founded this service did so with determination, resilience, and a deep sense of justice. They worked tirelessly, often in uncertain times, to create a safe haven for women and children escaping violence. Their advocacy and grassroots activism built the foundations of what we are today — the longest-running specialist domestic violence refuge in Australia.

Our 50th birthday has been more than a celebration; it has been an opportunity to honour the past, acknowledge the struggles and triumphs along the way, and look to the future with renewed vision. The stories shared throughout our anniversary highlighted the strength of the women and children who have walked through our

doors, and the unwavering support of our staff, community partners, and allies who have stood alongside us.

Today, we continue this legacy as a strong feminist organisation, led by women, grounded in the principles of safety, dignity, and empowerment. Our service has grown and adapted to meet the changing needs of the community, while never losing sight of the values that have guided us since the beginning. We remain committed to ensuring that women and children experiencing violence are heard, believed, and supported.

As I reflect on this milestone, I also recognise the road ahead. Domestic and family violence continues to impact too many lives, and the demand for safe, culturally responsive, and inclusive services remains urgent. Our commitment is to build on the legacy of the past 50 years and to continue leading with vision, advocacy, and courage into the next generation.

I would like to thank our dedicated staff, our Board, our partners, and most importantly the women and children who place their trust in us. This milestone belongs to all of us, and together we will continue to create pathways of safety, healing, and hope.

REFLECTION OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS

This report provides an overview of our work throughout the past year — the women and children we have supported, the services we have delivered, and the challenges we continue to face.

This year has been one of both change and challenge for our organisation. We welcomed new staff members whose skills and fresh perspectives have strengthened our team, while also farewelling valued colleagues whose contributions remain part of our legacy. These transitions brought both opportunities for growth and the natural challenges that come with change in a small and specialised service.

We want to take a moment to thank the staff who have moved on from the organisation this year. Your hard work, kindness, and commitment have made a lasting difference to the women and children we support. You'll always be part of our story, and we wish you all the very best in your next chapter.

Operating a domestic violence refuge continues to present complex realities. Our staff are faced daily with the urgent and often multilayered needs of women and children escaping violence. The demand for safe accommodation and holistic support remains high, and our team works tirelessly to balance immediate safety needs with longer-term pathways to recovery and independence.

This year also brought the additional challenge of navigating a changing political landscape. Following the most recent ACT elections, we have worked to build relationships with new Members of Parliament and advocate for the voices of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. While these conversations are critical, they also highlight the ongoing difficulties of securing reliable and sustainable funding in a sector where demand continues to outstrip resources.

Despite these pressures, our organisation has remained resilient and committed to its mission. We have continued to provide safe refuge, practical and emotional support, and advocacy, ensuring that women and children in crisis are met with safety, dignity, and respect.

In the last 12 months, we have offered safe and secure accommodation, essential items such as food and clothing, and both emotional and practical support to women and children in need. Alongside direct service delivery, we have continued to play an active role in raising community awareness about domestic, family, and sexual violence, and in advocating for stronger protections and systemic change.

These outcomes have only been possible through the commitment of our staff, Board, volunteers, and supporters, whose efforts ensure that our service continues to respond effectively to the needs of women and children. While significant progress has been made, we recognise that domestic, family, and sexual violence persists at epidemic levels across the country,

disproportionately affecting women and children, and that continued vigilance and advocacy are required.

I also acknowledge that First Nations women experience the highest rates of domestic and family violence in Australia, including disproportionately high rates of deaths as a result. Beryl is committed to ensuring that our service is a culturally safe space where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children feel supported and respected.

We are proud of the progress we have made and deeply appreciative of the commitment shown by our staff, Board, volunteers, and supporters. At the same time, we acknowledge that the work is far from over. Domestic, family, and sexual violence remains at epidemic levels across Australia, with women and children bearing the greatest impact.

Robyn Martin
Chief Executive Officer



Review of the year that was

NEW STAFF

We have welcomed 4 new staff members, 2 young Aboriginal Case Workers, a Senior Finance Officer and recruited a Property and Maintenance Officer, we also said goodbye to Gabriella Budilova, and Colleen Lupton during the year. We acknowledge and thank the staff who have left the organisation during the year for their valuable contributions. Each played an important role in supporting our mission and delivering quality services to women and children. We extend our sincere appreciation for their dedication and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and genuine engagement, we recently conducted a stakeholder survey with clients, including children, who have accessed our service over several years. This process provided a meaningful opportunity for us to hear directly from those with lived experience about what has worked well, where improvements are needed, and how our service has impacted their lives.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants shared that the support they received was life-changing and empowering.

Children offered valuable insights into the ways our programs helped them feel safe, built confidence, and begin to heal from trauma. Clients expressed appreciation for the culturally safe, respectful, and responsive care they received.

These reflections not only affirmed the importance of our work but also offered practical ideas for future service enhancement. We are deeply grateful for the honesty, trust, and time given by all who participated and will continue to centre their voices in our planning and advocacy.

We would like to acknowledge Mia Swainson of Mia Swainson Consulting who Beryl Women Inc. acknowledges and thanks for their expertise in delivering our recent stakeholder survey project. Her professional approach, clear analysis, and commitment to capturing the voices of our stakeholders have provided us with meaningful insights to strengthen our service delivery and advocacy. We deeply value her contribution to this important body of work.



STAFF PLANNING

In February this year, staff came together to review the previous year's workplan, celebrating the many achievements and milestones reached. The team also identified areas that required more time or attention, ensuring these priorities were carried forward into the 2025/26 workplan so they remain a strong focus for the year ahead.

As part of the planning day, a number of policies were reviewed, including a significant discussion on the long-standing No Pets policy. While the organisation has maintained this policy for several important reasons, we recognise the difficult choices some women face when leaving unsafe situations. To support women in these circumstances, we continue to advocate for pet foster care options through the RSPCA and other partner organisations.

The day also provided an opportunity to discuss and plan upcoming priorities for the year ahead. These included preparations for our annual NAIDOC Event, participation in the 5th International Women's Conference and securing funding to enable staff attendance, as well as a strong focus on staff wellbeing and addressing psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

Communication within the organisation was also highlighted as a priority, alongside identifying specific projects and programs that will strengthen our service delivery and community impact throughout the year.

Overall, the planning session was highly

constructive, allowing the team to reflect, problem-solve, and set clear goals for the year ahead. Staff left the day feeling focused, valued, and confident about the direction of our work in 2025/26.

CASE MANAGEMENT PLANNING DAY

In April this year, Case Workers came together for a Case Management Planning Day with the purpose of reflecting on our current practices and identifying what continues to work well, along with areas requiring amendment or change. Throughout the day, case workers engaged in workshops and discussions that focused on aligning our work with the organisation's values, clearly defining our approach to case management, and clarifying roles and responsibilities within the team.

Key areas explored included managing client expectations and setting appropriate boundaries, reviewing the risk assessment process, developing effective case plans and exit strategies, and strengthening emergency response protocols. Considerable focus was also placed on embedding culturally safe and trauma-informed practices, with particular attention to best practice when working with First Nations women and children and ensuring responses are appropriate for high-risk situations.

The day was highly valuable, providing both experienced and new staff with a stronger shared understanding of our practice framework. New staff in particular reported feeling more confident

in their roles and better equipped to deliver safe, consistent, and culturally responsive support to clients.

Overall, the planning day was an important step in strengthening our team's practice and reaffirming our commitment to delivering the highest quality of care.

Training and professional Development

This year, we continued our commitment to building a skilled, knowledgeable, and adaptable workforce through ongoing training and professional development. By investing in our staff, we strengthen service delivery, embed best practice, and ensure our organisation remains responsive to the complex needs of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Staff undertook a wide range of training, including governance and leadership development, cyber and online safety, suicide prevention, de-escalation strategies, mental health protections, manual handling, grant writing, and first aid.

Opportunities such as the Snow Foundation's Lead the Way program, specialist WESNET safety training, and participation in national forums and conferences further enhanced our capability and connections within the sector.

These professional development activities not only improve staff confidence and performance but also directly enhance client outcomes through safer, more effective, and more innovative service delivery.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLBEING

As a specialist domestic violence service, the safety and wellbeing of both clients and staff remain our highest priority. While operating with limited resources, we continue to maintain a healthy, safe, and compliant workplace through careful planning and adherence to WorkSafeACT guidelines. This year saw practical improvements to staff workspaces, including upgraded monitors, additional lighting, and ergonomic setups, supporting a safer and more comfortable working environment.

Staff wellbeing has been further strengthened through regular supervision sessions with Karin El Monir, Noreia Consultancy Space providing valuable mental health support and opportunities for reflective practice. Ongoing conversations around psychosocial safety reflect our commitment to building a trauma-informed and sustainable workplace culture.

In addition, a two-day Wellbeing Workshop was delivered, focusing on understanding burnout, building self-compassion and self-care practices, setting healthy boundaries, developing tools for regulation and renewal, and fostering a supportive work culture.

These initiatives not only enhance staff resilience and wellbeing but also strengthen our capacity to provide safe, trauma-informed care for women and children.

Staff were also offered the opportunity to engage with the Quest for Life Foundation, including

access to courses such as Moving Beyond Trauma, with a full staff team day planned for the coming year

Board Engagement In April, the Board and staff participated in a Strategic Planning Day. The morning session, for the Board only, focused on roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Board members.

Staff joined for the remainder of the day to contribute to discussions on working effectively as a Board, understanding our context, future directions, and building the 2025/26 Strategic Workplan. Key outcomes included agreement to develop a Board Charter, pursue service growth through additional accommodation for women and children, and secure ongoing funding for the Safe and Strong Van Program.

Staff also attend Board Meetings providing the Board with a report based on our case management practice and working with women and children, this is a two way passing of knowledge as staff are also developing skills in leadership and understanding governance from a Board perspective.

GOVERNANCE MANUAL REVIEW

Terri Jenke and Company have completed a review of Beryl Women's Governance Manual, casting an Aboriginal lens over these policies, providing tracked amendments and recommendations. The review highlighted areas where additional information could clarify policy intent, and Beryl Women has added further comments to address these gaps. Some policies are recommended for full revision to meet appropriate compliance standards—a substantial but necessary task. Over the coming months, these recommendations will be implemented, which will also streamline the Governance Manual.

Core policies where responsibility lies solely with the Board, such as Financial Management, Evaluation and Planning, Legal Compliance, Board Member Expectations, and Staff Attendance at Board Meetings, will be retained.

COMMUNITY SECTOR MULTI-ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT (MEA) & SUPPORTED BARGAINING

Since 2021, Beryl Women Inc. and other ACT community sector employers have been engaged in negotiations with the Australian Services Union (ASU) to establish a new ACT Community Sector Multiple Enterprise Agreement (MEA). This process has been supported by the Fair Work Commission under a supported bargaining authorisation and has now been underway for five years.



A central challenge in finalising the MEA has been the inclusion of additional terms — such as extra family violence leave, extended parental leave, and increased superannuation — which require ACT Government funding.

Despite extensive efforts and previous commitments, no further funding has been allocated in the ACT Budget to support these important provisions, although this was a Budget commitment in the recent election.

As a result, staff across the sector remain employed under an agreement that expired in 2018. We recognise how frustrating and wearing this is for our workforce. Employers and the ASU now face a critical decision:

- Finalise the MEA without the additional (unfunded) terms, allowing staff to access a range of other new benefits sooner; or
- Delay finalising the MEA in the hope of securing future government funding, with no certainty of success and the likelihood of further delays.

Beryl Women Inc. remains committed to advocating strongly for the rights and entitlements of our staff, while also ensuring timely access to improvements that can be delivered within current resources.

PROPERTIES AND MAINTENANCE

Over the past year, the organisation's property management work has remained focused on maintaining safe, welcoming, and well-equipped homes for women and children. Managing multiple properties continues to be a complex task, with staff working closely together to ensure that each property meets the needs of incoming clients while maintaining high standards of care and presentation.

Over the past 12 months, there were a number of client turnovers across several properties. While some clients transitioned into longer-term housing, others moved for personal reasons such as proximity to schools or family needs. In a few instances, evictions were required due to breaches of occupancy agreements, resulting in additional cleaning, repairs, and coordination before new intakes could occur.

A significant focus this year has been the replacement and upgrading of furniture across all properties. This initiative has greatly improved the comfort and functionality of each home, ensuring that new clients are welcomed into a fresh and well-maintained environment. These upgrades required considerable logistical coordination, including furniture procurement, delivery, and assembly, as well as scheduling cleaning and garden maintenance services.

Each property turnover involved strong teamwork between maintenance staff, caseworkers, and external contractors. The process of preparing homes for new residents often requires attention

to detail, flexibility, and practical problem-solving, particularly when clients were unable to vacate properties to standards due to complex personal circumstances.

Despite challenges such as repair delays, limited contractor availability, and the need to coordinate multiple service providers, the property management team successfully ensured that all homes were ready for occupancy as quickly as possible. Their efforts continue to reflect the organisation's commitment to providing safe, supportive, and well-maintained environments for women and children rebuilding their lives.

PREVENTATIVE OUTREACH SUPPORT

Not all women supported by the organisation enter through refuge accommodation. Many receive assistance through **outreach services**, which provide vital support to women still living in the community — including those who may remain with the perpetrator due to safety, financial, or family considerations.

This outreach work is a critical component of our service model. It allows staff to **meet women where they are**, offering advocacy, emotional support, and safety planning even before they are ready or able to leave a violent situation. By maintaining consistent contact and working alongside women in their current environments, Staff assist them to identify risks, access practical resources, and make informed decisions in their own time.

“

‘I love everything about this place. It’s perfect. It’s in a nice, quiet, neighbourhood and is a beautiful place. It’s the right size for my family.’

– Beryl Client

“

‘OMG, I am still in shock, I think this is incredible, not only are there items that I suddenly have a full house, but it is all so gorgeous, such beautiful furniture in amazing condition. I am feeling incredibly lucky.’

– Beryl Client

This approach recognises that **leaving is not a single event but a process** that unfolds differently for every woman. Immediate separation can sometimes heighten danger, increase isolation, or lead to financial instability. Through outreach, staff build relationships grounded in empowerment and trust rather than pressure or expectation. Women are supported to explore their options safely and without judgment, ensuring that their choices remain central to every decision made.

Ongoing **risk assessments and safety planning** are integral to this work. Staff assist women in recognising patterns of abuse, identifying early warning signs, and developing realistic safety strategies suited to their circumstances. Each conversation, check-in, and plan developed helps strengthen a woman's sense of agency and readiness for change — whether that means preparing to leave, setting personal boundaries, or finding safer ways to navigate daily life.

Ultimately, outreach ensures that women experiencing domestic and family violence are **never alone** in their journey. It offers hope, connection, and a clear message of support — that help is available, and that safety and freedom are possible, whenever they are ready to take that step.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES

The children and young people's program at Beryl is central to supporting families recovering from family and domestic violence. We recognise that children are not just witnesses but victims, and we approach our work in a therapeutic and holistic way. As children and young people's workers, our role is diverse, practical, and deeply relational.





MEETING IMMEDIATE NEEDS

We begin by addressing children's immediate needs so that they can feel safe and supported in their new environment. This often involves:

- Providing clothing, toys, cots, beds, linen, and other essentials (sourced through **Roundabout**, donations, Pams pantry, or other networks).
- Supporting school enrolments by liaising with schools, assisting with financial requests, uniforms, orientation, and advocacy where issues such as trauma, bullying, or developmental delays arise.
- Assisting with childcare enrolments, funding applications, inductions, and referrals through both CSS and OCYFS.
- Delivering birthday presents, kids in care bags, sometimes electronic items and other supports that help children feel included and valued.

REFERRALS AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT

We make a wide range of referrals tailored to each child's needs, including:

- **Therapy and counselling** – speech therapy, play therapy, trauma counselling, developmental support, and other referrals made as required.
- **Health and development** – MACH nurse appointments, pregnancy and family planning support, and assessments for developmental delays when required.
- **Specialist services** – liaison with CYPS, Child Protection Services, Bernardo's, and other children's programs, providing advocacy and emotional support for both children and their mothers.
- **External and internal** – referrals have been made to external activities such as circus, art therapy, swimming lessons, gymnastics and access to equine therapy. We also make warm referrals to the Van program.

SUPPORTING GROWTH, PLAY AND CONNECTION

A core part of our role is to create opportunities for children to grow, play, and connect with others:

- **School holiday programs** – planned, resourced, and facilitated in-house and externally to provide safe, fun, and enriching activities for school aged children and mothers and children. (kids only days and family inclusive days). Activities have included Movies, eating out, bowling, vouchers, museum, arts and crafts and many other activities. Often it is the first time many children have these experiences.
- **Play time** – spending time with children and supporting play learning.
- **Community connection** – enrolling children into sports, arts, or cultural programs, including supporting families with grant applications and financial assistance.

CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE EVALUATION



‘Keep doing what you’re doing at Beryl!’

– Several Beryl clients in separate interviews

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

ADVOCACY AND CASE PLANNING

Children’s workers play an active role in advocacy and case planning:

- Attending school meetings and advocacy with Child Youth and Families.
- Observing parenting styles and offering education, guidance, and referrals to support healthy family dynamics.
- Liaising with services around safety concerns, including situations where children have experienced sexual, physical, or psychological violence.
- Providing 1:1 support time with children to build trust, listen, and offer stability in a safe environment.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Our work with children cannot be separated from our work with their mothers. By addressing both practical needs and therapeutic healing, we help families stabilise after crisis and build foundations for the future. We are often involved in sourcing housing items, supporting families with transport, linking women with financial and legal supports, and collaborating in case planning to ensure the needs of the whole family are met.



Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2024–25

THE IMPACT OF THE SAFE AND STRONG VAN

The Safe and Strong Young People's Van has been a game-changer. Having a counsellor embedded in the service has allowed warm referrals to be made immediately, removing barriers such as long waiting lists, transport difficulties, and unfamiliar environments. Donna has been able to provide one-on-one counselling at a pace that suits each child. The mobile nature of the van program has also enabled children to access other therapeutic support such as equine therapy. Her role has complemented and strengthened the children's program at Beryl, ensuring children receive both the practical and therapeutic support they need.

The children's work at Beryl is grounded in the belief that every child deserves safety, healing, and the opportunity to thrive. By combining practical support with therapeutic care, advocacy, and community connection, we walk alongside families as they rebuild their lives after violence. Our work is not only about addressing immediate needs but also about fostering long-term resilience, hope, and empowerment for children and their mothers. Looking ahead, we remain committed to strengthening our programs, deepening partnerships, and ensuring that every child who comes through Beryl feels seen, valued, and supported on their journey toward recovery and growth.

STRONG AND SAFE MOBILE VAN PROGRAM

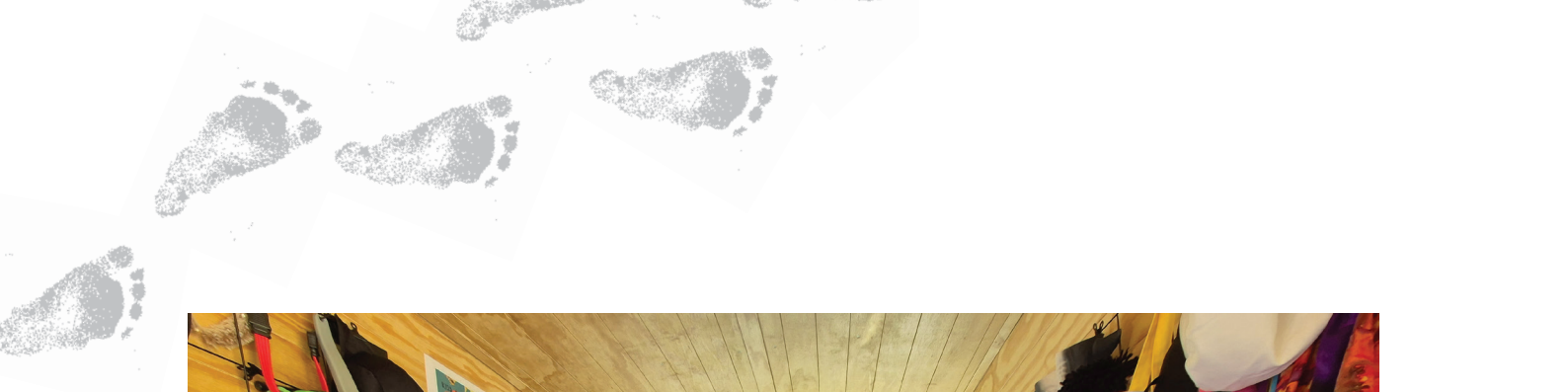
After our first full year of operation, we are really heartened by how warmly the Safe & Strong Van has been welcomed by children, families, and the community. The van has made it possible to take counselling directly to where children feel safe — whether that's at school, in community, or near their homes — and this has meant children who may never have been able to access support are now receiving regular, therapeutic care

CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE EVALUATION



'I wouldn't be here, if not for Beryl. I have a house. I have a job. Now I am in a very good job and am buying a house. I have a car. I have financial independence. I think that my life wouldn't be like that without Beryl.'

- former Beryl client



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

279 counselling sessions were delivered this year, supporting 32 children and families.

12 joint sessions-Mum and child

50 sessions with Mums, this involved 16 Mums

217 child sessions-26 children and young persons

Most children were aged 4-11 years, an age where early support makes the biggest difference.

3 young people aged between 18-24

Included were 3 Aboriginal families, 8 from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and 2 from LGBTIQ+ communities.

WHAT WE'RE MOST PROUD OF


- The van has become a safe, welcoming space for children, where they get the support they need in the way that works best for them.
- Families from Aboriginal, CALD, and LGBTQIA+ backgrounds have been supported in a way that feels inclusive and culturally safe.
- The therapeutic framework has evolved, growing through experience and observation of what is working best.
- Parents have described the service as “a lifeline,” noticing their children are calmer, more confident, and enjoying school again.
- Supporting People with Intersecting Needs
- The service supported children navigating



279 counselling sessions were delivered this year


 **32** children and families


12 joint sessions - Mum and child


 **50** sessions with Mums this involved **16** Mums

217 child sessions
26 children and young persons
Most children were aged 4-11 years, an age where early support makes the biggest difference



 **3** young people aged between 18-24

 **3**
Aboriginal families

 **8**
from culturally and linguistically

 **2**
from LGBTIQ+ communities

complex trauma, housing instability, neurodiversity, and parental mental health challenges.

- Therapeutic work was adapted for children with developmental delays, ADHD, and anxiety, often in close collaboration with educators and allied health professionals.
- The safe, non-clinical environment of the mobile van helped to reduce anxiety, making it easier for children with additional needs to engage in therapy.

STORIES OF CHANGE

This year we have seen children arrive in the van carrying heavy worries — fears about school, separation from family, memories of violence, or struggles with confidence. Over time, those same children have started to show us very different sides of themselves: laughing during play, proudly sharing their artwork, walking into school with courage, and making new friends. We've also seen mothers breathe a little easier, knowing their children are being supported in safe and consistent ways. Many tell us their children are more settled at home, sleeping better, and finding calmer ways to manage big feelings. These changes may look small from the outside, but for families who have lived through fear and uncertainty, they represent powerful steps toward safety, resilience, and hope.

LEARNING AND GROWING

Our counsellor has undertaken a wide range of training to strengthen the service — from cultural storytelling and disability-focused counselling to trauma therapies such as EMDR, Theraplay, and working with technology-facilitated abuse. This investment has made the van not only a safe place for children but also a service that is responsive to the many different needs families bring with them.

WHAT'S BEEN HARD

Like many new services, we've had our share of challenges. Keeping regular appointments has sometimes been difficult — partly because families are navigating housing moves or court matters, and partly because as a one-counsellor service there have been natural breaks when time was needed for report writing, program development, training, annual leave, or making space for new families arriving at the refuge.

Despite this challenge, we continue to adapt and remain committed to making the service as accessible, consistent, and supportive as possible.





LOOKING AHEAD

We are grateful for the strong partnerships that have grown around the van, and for the trust families have placed in us. The first year has shown us that a mobile, child-centred, trauma-informed counselling service really can make a difference. We look forward to building on this foundation, reaching more children, and continuing to offer a place where they can feel safe, strong, and hopeful about their futures.

SERVICE GAPS AND BARRIERS

Over the past year, the service has faced several barriers impacting its ability to respond effectively to demand. Property vacancies have at times been prolonged due to necessary cleaning, repairs, and unsuitable referrals, delaying placements for families in need. The organisation's no-pet policy also remains a limitation for some women and

children seeking refuge. Additionally, the need for greater office space has created operational pressures, requiring the acceptance of new properties to remain compliant with funding agreements.

Most significantly, extended client stays in crisis accommodation highlight the ongoing shortage of safe and affordable housing. Prolonged stays can negatively affect women's recovery, mental health, and sense of stability, while children experience disruption to schooling, social connections, and emotional wellbeing. Shared living arrangements, combined with the uncertainty of not knowing when permanent housing will become available, can compound trauma and hinder the healing process. These challenges reinforce the importance of strengthened referral pathways, adequate infrastructure, and long-term housing solutions for women and children escaping violence.

RISKS FOR CLIENTS, STAFF, AND THE ORGANISATION

Over the past year, our service has continued to manage a range of risks that impact client safety, staff wellbeing, and organisational stability. Ongoing complaints from a neighbouring property have created additional stress for women and children already navigating trauma and have placed pressure on staff working to provide safe, supportive care. We remain committed to constructive resolution while advocating for our clients' right to safe shelter without discrimination.

A serious incident involving a perpetrator attending one of our properties further reinforced the ever-present risks faced by women and children escaping violence. While swift action and adherence to safety protocols minimised harm, the incident caused significant distress and highlighted the ongoing need for secure crisis accommodation, effective safety planning, and coordinated responses with law enforcement and partner services.

Shared accommodation continues to present challenges, with tensions arising from differing routines, parenting approaches, cultural backgrounds, and trauma triggers. These dynamics can impact the wellbeing of clients and the stability of the household, requiring staff to intervene, mediate, and in some cases relocate residents to reduce risks of escalation.

Mental and physical health concerns remain a significant factor for many women and children accessing our service. The complex interplay

of trauma, chronic illness, visa status, and child wellbeing often requires specialist external referrals beyond our scope of service. While we work closely with healthcare providers and community partners these needs continue to place pressure on staff and highlight systemic gaps in access to holistic and culturally safe care.

Collectively, these risks underscore the importance of maintaining strong safety protocols, supporting staff wellbeing, and advocating for increased access to secure housing, specialist health services, and flexible accommodation options. By addressing these challenges, the organisation remains committed to providing safe, trauma-informed care while safeguarding the dignity and recovery of women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE EVALUATION



'Beryl has been life changing for me and my girls. They provided us with safety and support. They allowed us some freedom and space to heal.'

- Beryl client

Reflections from staff



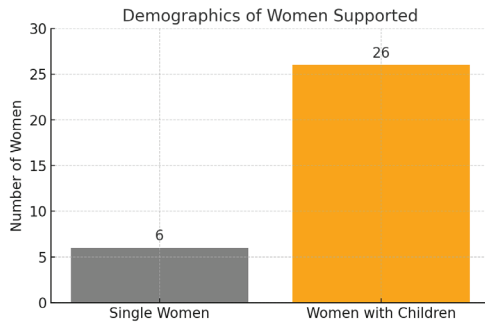
Working at Beryl, we witness firsthand the profound impacts that crises have on women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. Each crisis represents not only immediate danger and trauma but also complex emotional, psychological, and practical challenges for those we support. As staff, we often see the ripple effects: fear, uncertainty, and heightened stress that can persist long after the immediate crisis has passed.

From a staff perspective, responding to these crises requires resilience, empathy, and adaptability. We are constantly reminded of the importance of trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, and individualised care. While it can be emotionally demanding, our work is also deeply rewarding. Being able to provide support, stability, and advocacy during these critical moments highlights the vital role Beryl plays in fostering safety, healing, and hope for women and children.

The ongoing nature of crisis work also impacts staff wellbeing. Managing high-intensity situations, witnessing trauma, and navigating complex systems can create emotional strain, making organisational support, reflective practice, and team collaboration essential. Despite these challenges, staff remain committed to ensuring that every woman and child feels heard, valued, and supported in their journey toward safety and empowerment.

Service Demographics

During 2024/2-25, the service supported 96 women, children & young people, including:
6 were single women (17.6%)



Of the 96 clients, 64 were children

- 22 (22.9%) were 5 and under
- 35 (36.5%) were 6 to 14 years
- 57 (54.4%) were 0 to 14 years

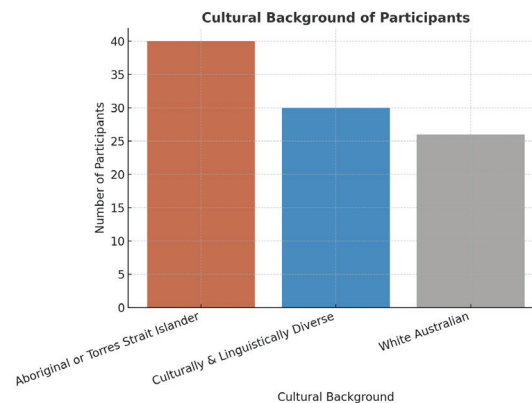
CULTURAL BACKGROUND

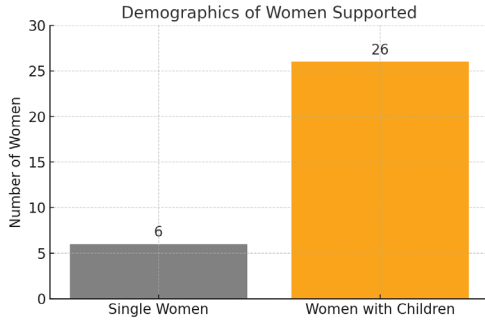
40 (41.7%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

30 (31.3%) identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

26 (27%) identified as White Australian

18 (17.3%) were born overseas





Crisis beds – 4963

Medium – 2856

Preventative Outreach = 9789 support periods

Total = 17608 Cultural Background

Supported Accommodation Summary

**Total Days Provided:
8,825**

Average Length of Stay:
118.5 days

Beryl Women Inc.

CALD Clients



THE IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN

Domestic and family violence has devastating impacts on all women, but for those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds the layers of harm are often intensified by social, cultural, and structural barriers. Violence not only undermines immediate safety but has far-reaching consequences for health, independence, and the wellbeing of children.

Many CALD women already live with chronic health conditions or the stress of resettlement, migration, or separation from family supports overseas. When violence and control are added, these pressures can lead to worsening physical and mental health outcomes, exacerbating conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or depression.

Abuse can also prevent women from seeking timely medical care, leaving chronic health issues untreated and compounding their vulnerability.

Damaging stereotypes of CALD women persist across many systems, leaving their voices unheard and their experiences minimised when they seek

medical support.

Financial vulnerability can further limit access to essential healthcare, including medical appointments and specialist allied health services such as physiotherapy and wellbeing support. To address these barriers, organisations such as Beryl Women Inc. provide critical advocacy and financial assistance, ensuring that women's health and recovery are prioritised as part of their healing journey from domestic and family violence.

Language barriers further deepen isolation. Limited English proficiency can restrict access to critical information, legal protections, or health services. It can also make it harder for women to advocate for themselves, understand their rights, or feel confident navigating complex service systems. Perpetrators often exploit these barriers, using control over communication, visas, finances, or access to interpreters as tools of coercion.

At the heart of domestic and family violence is the erosion of independence.

CALD women may face additional challenges due to migration status, community stigma, and lack of financial autonomy. This disempowerment not only undermines confidence and self-determination, but it also places children at

greater risk, limiting a mother's ability to protect them or make decisions about their future.

Specialist domestic and family violence services play a vital role in responding to these intersecting needs. Services grounded in a feminist lens place women's experiences at the centre, recognising the gendered nature of violence while addressing the specific barriers CALD women face. These services do more than provide crisis support: they empower women to rebuild control over their lives, navigate legal, housing, health, and migration systems, and develop pathways to safety for themselves and their children.

By providing culturally safe, trauma-informed, and language-accessible support, specialist services create spaces where CALD women are believed, respected, and supported to make informed choices. This empowerment not only enhances immediate safety, it strengthens long-term independence and wellbeing, ensuring women and their children can move beyond violence towards lives free of fear and control.



Beryl Aboriginal Community Advocacy

NAIDOC -PANEL

This year's theme, "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud," celebrates the resilience and unyielding spirit of our communities, inviting all to stand in solidarity and amplify voices that have too long been silenced. Our NAIDOC event, held again in September, continued this important conversation through meaningful dialogue.

The event is designed to be small and intimate, with a focus on discussion among panel members. The seating arrangement encouraged engagement, with panellists seated in a semi-circle facing semi-circle rows of audience members, creating a listening circle that fostered connection and reflection. All panel members are female

As with previous NAIDOC events, the gathering took place at the Yarramundi Cultural Centre. The evening began with a Welcome to Country by Selina Walker. Justice Louise Taylor served as MC, and panel members included Robyn Martin, Ginibi Robinson, and Julie Tongs.

This NAIDOC event was one of our most successful to date, attracting the largest audience we have ever hosted. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting the event's value in deepening their understanding

and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and history. Significantly, the majority of participants were non-Aboriginal, reflecting our success in educating and raising awareness within the broader community sector in which we work about Aboriginal Australia.





Standing Left to Right- Justice Louise Taylor MC, Robyn Martin Beryl CEO, Panellist Ginibi Robinson, Panellist Julie Tongs.



OUR BOORIS, OUR WAY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Our Booris, Our Way Oversight Committee continues to meet monthly with the Community Services Directorate (CSD) to progress the implementation of the Our Booris, Our Way Final Report recommendations. While there have been moments of frustration and thoughts of resignation due to the slow pace of change, the Committee remains committed to the process. After six years of dedicated work, members acknowledge that while some headway has been made, the journey toward meaningful systemic reform continues to be challenging and requires ongoing commitment from all partners.

As a result, the Committee, in partnership with Community Services Directorate (CSD), developed a Partnership Agreement to strengthen shared decision making and accountability. Prior to this, the Committee and CSD came together for a Healing and Restoration Ceremony held on 3 March 2025, providing an important opportunity to reset, reflect, and ground all attendees on Country. The ceremony and subsequent yarning session, led by Ngunnawal and Kamilaroi custodian Richie Allan, reflected the values of the Partnership Agreement by privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing to begin the day in a culturally safe way.

Since the signing of the Partnership Agreement, both parties have continued to reflect on the importance of curiosity, respect, and openness to different ways of working together. Facilitated by shared decision-making consultant Kristal

Kinsela, the yarning session demonstrated the Agreement in action—promoting shared learning, transparency, and collaboration.

The Partnership Agreement is guided by six shared values:

- Relationality
- Self-Determination
- Genuineness
- Truth-telling
- Two-Way Knowledge Sharing
- Accountability and Transparency

These principles underpin all collective discussions and decision-making processes between the OBOW Committee and CSD. The ongoing yarning sessions provide a safe and respectful space for both parties to share progress updates, celebrate achievements, and identify collective barriers to implementing the Our Booris, Our Way recommendations.

The Committee also participated in national discussions, including the National Aboriginal Child Safety and Domestic and Family Violence Conference in South Australia, and engaged in deep-dive workshops to strengthen shared governance and improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

A number of recommendations currently sit in the monitoring phase, with several remaining high-priority areas of focus and others receiving medium-level attention, reflecting the ongoing commitment to accountability, transparency, and cultural safety in the work ahead.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION COUNCIL (DVPC) - EXPERT ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REFERENCE GROUP

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) meetings have been temporarily suspended for the remainder of 2025 at the direction of Minister Patterson. This pause is intended to ensure that Council members have the capacity to actively contribute to ongoing consultations on the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) Strategy and other key areas of work, including the finalisation of the new governance model.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Reference Group (ERG) has continued to meet during this period and recently held a planning day to discuss its workplan for the remainder of the financial year. The ERG also focused on the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, identifying a further three recommendations from the Long Yarn report to be put forward to Government for consideration.



Beryl wrote a Public Submission in relation to- Our Ways-Strong Ways-Our voices - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan, our submission covered the following areas

- Culturally Same and Community led approaches
- Holistic Strength based support
- Traum informed care and healing
- Prevention and Early intervention
- Strengthening legal and justice responses
- highlight the importance of ensuring the plan covers

We are committed to working collaboratively with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who work across our sector to ensure the best possible outcomes for the individuals and families we support. We believe that building strong, respectful partnerships, we can share knowledge, resources, and expertise that enhance the quality, accessibility, and continuity of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Collaboration allows us to respond more effectively to the complex needs of our clients, reduce duplication, and advocate with a stronger collective voice. Ultimately, this shared approach strengthens our services and helps create safer, more supportive communities.

Collaboration/Increased relationships



Collaboration with Community, Government, and Private Sector Beryl Women recognises that effective collaboration is essential to supporting women and children escaping domestic, family, and sexual violence. Working closely with housing providers, healthcare professionals, legal support, mental health services, and other agencies ensures holistic support, enhances safety planning, and promotes long-term recovery for survivors.

Over the year, Beryl Women engaged with a diverse range of partners, including Housing ACT, Our Booris Our Way Oversight Committee, Domestic Violence Prevention Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Reference Groups, SNAICC, national and local forums, legal services, and therapeutic programs.

When working with other services in relation to client outcomes within a domestic violence service, collaboration is essential for providing holistic support. Partnering with external services such as housing providers, healthcare professionals, legal support, and mental health services enables a multi-faceted approach to addressing the complex needs of survivors. These partnerships enhance safety planning, ensure access to critical resources, and promote long-term recovery.

These partnerships strengthen client outcomes, foster shared practice, and reinforce our commitment to culturally safe, trauma-informed support.

- Parker Coles Curtis Lawyers
- Multi-Disciplinary Panel member (Housing ACT)
- DV Pilot Project to be setup and in place at Child and Family Centre
- Consultants Developing Shared Practice at Beryl
- ACT CYF Family Response and Engagement domestic and family violence pilot.
- Candle Vigil
- Child First Forum
- ACTCOSS CEO Forums
- Minister Paterson – Prevention of Violence
- Women’s Legal Centre
- Karinya House
- Karralika Therapeutic Community Adult Program
- Doris Women’s Refuge

- Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation
- Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation
- Attended the 17th Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations hosted by ACTCOSS.
- Our Booris Our Way
- DVPC Aboriginal Expert Group
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce forum
- Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm launch
- SNAICC – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander National Family Safety Plan.
- National Sorry Day Webinar
- Reconciliation Bridge Walk



Recognizing our supporters

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

We would also like to acknowledge the Snow Foundation for their ongoing support both financially and through partnerships they have with other philanthropic funders.

Other partners we would like to acknowledge include:

- ACT Legal Aid Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Access to Justice Program
- ACT Legal Aid DV Unit
- ACT Office for Women
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
- Community Liaison Unit-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers
- Centrelink Social Worker
- Companion House
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Doris Women's Refuge
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation

- MARS
- Mulleun Mura Care Inc.
- Northside Community Services
- OneLink
- Pam's Pantry
- Quest for Life Foundation
- Roundabout Canberra
- Relationships Australia
- Uber Rides & Telstra Safe Connections Program
- Victims Support
- Women's Centre for Health Matters
- Women's Health Service
- Women's Legal Centre
- Wesnet
- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service

And the many other services that have directly or indirectly supported Beryl Women Inc. during the past financial year, we hope to continue to work in collaboration with all in the coming year.

We would also like to acknowledge the following Donors:

- A & P Leemhuis Builders
- ACT Rural Fire Service & ACT State Emergency Service
- ActewAGL,
- Attorney General Women's Network
- Canberra Grammar
- Canberra Quilters
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Families ACT
- Gerald Slaven
- Hands Across Canberra
- Next Electrical Technologies
- Wesnet / Uber Rides & Safety phones
- Staff @ Department of Health
- The Country Women's Association
- The Snow Foundation
- Zephyr Education Inc

And the many workplace giving contributors and individuals who donated via our website, thank you all! Your generous donations are very much appreciated.



How you can help

If you are reading this work and would like to offer a financial support to Beryl Women Inc. there are several ways how you can donate. The simplest most convenient way is to scan the QR Code below.

This takes you to our website where you can make a one-off or a recurring donation.

www.beryl.org.au/donate/



Here you can also find our bank information for direct electronic fund transfers and other options such as via **Hands Across Canberra** <https://handsacrosscanberra.org.au/donate> or set up a workplace giving with **Good2Give** <https://good2give.ngo/giving/donors>



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