

Australia's longest running women's refuge





### **Beryl Women Inc.**

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

### **Office hours**

9am–5pm Monday to Friday

PO Box 355 Dickson ACT 2602

P 02 6230 6900

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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

In 2023–24 Beryl Women Inc. supported **104** total clients



69 children



35 women

**49**

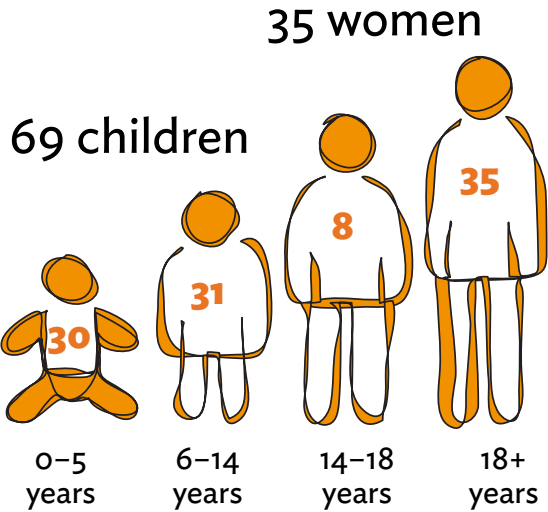
Beryl is Australia's longest running specialist domestic violence service with 49 years in Canberra.

**B**eryl Women Inc. is a strong feminist organisation led by women for women and children. We are proud of our reputation and identity as a courageous service providing crisis accommodation, therapeutic interventions and support to women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

We remain committed to providing a professional and accountable service that is based on justice and equality, while recognising and fostering

cultural diversity within the service and the broader community. We work towards this by empowering women and children with care, respect, and acceptance. Everything we do is driven by the women for the women.

Support provided to women who access our service includes domestic and family violence information and support, risk assessments, safety planning, crisis accommodation, financial and material support, court support and advocacy.



44 clients (42%)  
identified as  
Aboriginal or Torres  
Strait Islander

30 clients (29%)  
identified as  
Anglo Australian

We recognise that particular groups (including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and women with disabilities) experience higher rates of domestic and family violence and face additional challenges and barriers to accessing support services. Beryl Women Inc. is committed to providing services to individuals experiencing marginalisation is critical for creating inclusive services that meet the needs of the whole community.

This report provides an overview of our work over the past year, including the number of women and children we have accommodated and supported during this time, the services we provided, and the challenges we have faced.

# Vision, mission

A series of dark, textured footprints are scattered across the top right corner of the orange header area, suggesting a path or journey.

**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

A single, dark, textured footprint is located on the left side of the white section, partially overlapping the text area.

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 Women Inc., 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 organisation values cultural diversity and lived experience, recognising 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 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.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

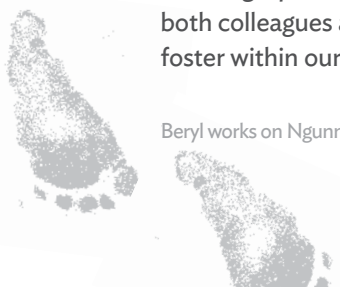
## RESPECT

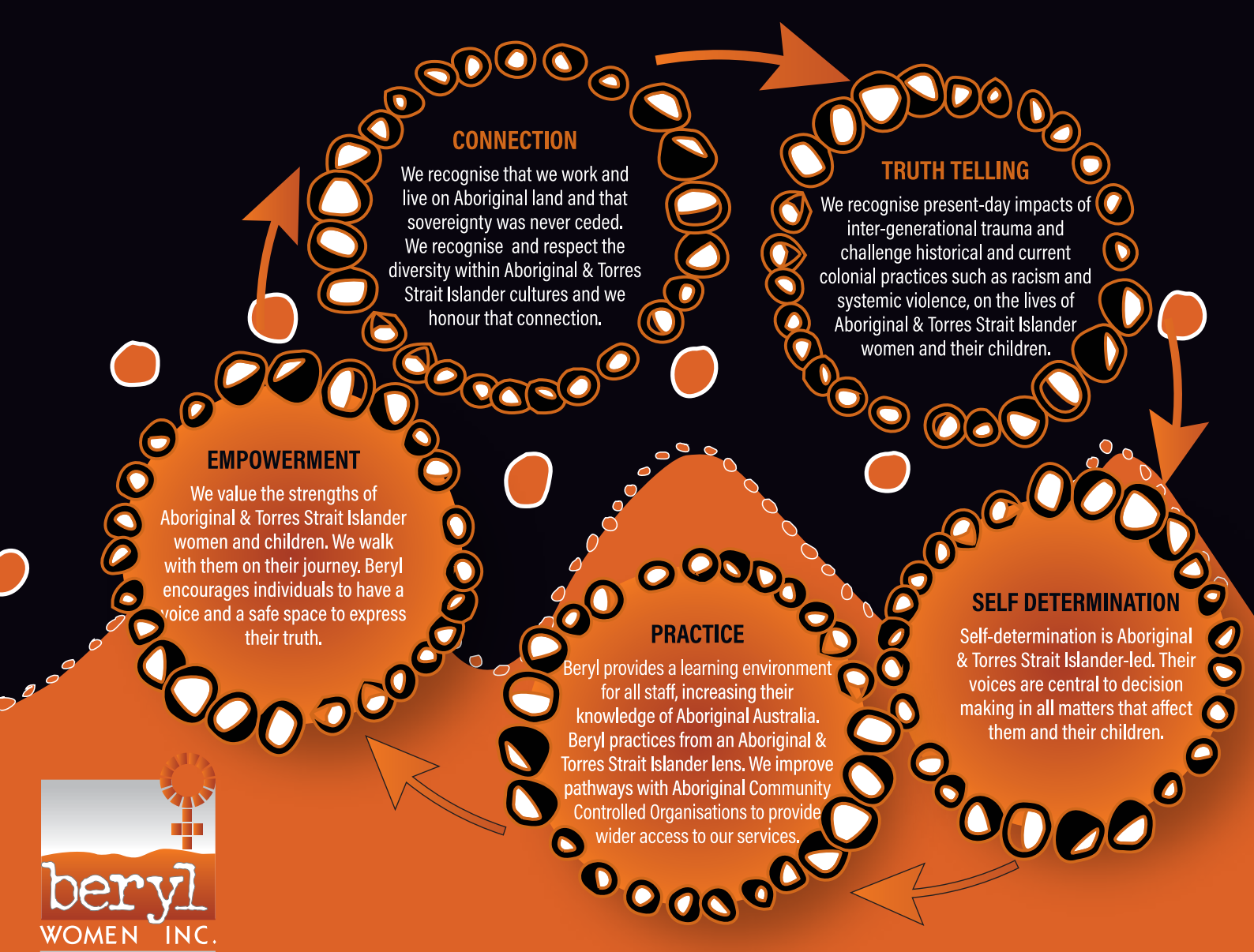
At Beryl Women Inc., we value clear and respectful communication among staff, clients, and external agencies. We believe in active participation in team meetings and ensuring the safety of our services by upholding privacy, discretion, compassion, and integrity without judgment or bias. Our staff understand 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 are committed to delivering their duties with utmost dedication, recognising the profound impact they have on both our organisation and clients. We foster a culture of transparency and honesty, encouraging our team to openly address any challenges or problems they encounter. Additionally, we prioritise proactive identification and management of conflicts of interest. Our commitment to best practices extends throughout all aspects of service provision. Furthermore, adherence to Beryl'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 organisation, professionally and respectfully within the broader community at all times.

Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2023-24





## CULTURAL SAFETY CHARTER

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal/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 the hopes of Aboriginal Australia. We remember that the land we work on was and always will be traditional Aboriginal land.

**VISION** Beryl strives to amplify the voices of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women and children.

**VISION STATEMENT** Beryl has its Vision, which is delivered by its Mission which is carried out and underpinned by Beryl's "Cultural Practice" through Connection, Truth Telling, Self Determination and Empowerment.

**VALUES**  
Respect  
Diversity  
Integrity  
Equality  
Compassion.

# Chair's report



**I**t was a privilege to step up as Chair of the Beryl Women Inc. Board at a time where headlines in Australia increasingly focused on the rising cases of violence against women and the devastating resulting fatalities. I am grateful for the opportunity to guide a passionate Board of strong, highly skilled women. The personal, professional and lived experience of our members proudly reflects Beryl Women Inc.'s commitment to feminist principles, fostering cultural diversity and women's leadership.

Over the past year, we have experienced tremendous growth, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to creating safe, healing, and empowering spaces for women, led by women.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge our former Chairs, Karen Parter and Siobhan Hobbs, and thank them for their dedication and governance.

With a majority of new Board members, focus this year was on building capability and cohesion, creating positive and productive relationships in ways that align with the founding principles of Beryl.


We engaged Annabel Rattigan from the Institute of Community Directors Australia to provide financial literacy training to our members. We also benefited from the expertise of Mary Kirk AM whose

mentorship supported us to identify priorities for policy and process improvement.

The Board has appreciated opportunities to connect with the staff at Beryl Women Inc., taking time to meet outside of regular Board meetings, share a cuppa and a chat, and celebrate the incredible, unassuming work the staff accomplish every day.

We were excited to attend the launch of the Safe and Strong Van, alongside MLAs and sector and community supporters. Beryl Women Inc.'s annual NAIDOC event combined the launch of the Cultural Safety Charter by member Karen Parter and a thought-provoking panel conversation. Members celebrated International Women's Day and joined the march to Parliament House in support of the National Rally Against Violence.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to express gratitude to our primary funding body, the ACT Government, and recognise the invaluable advocates within. We are sincerely appreciative of our patrons, including those from across the community, who provide support through program sponsorships, financial donations, in-kind assistance, and volunteer efforts. Thank you to all who have contributed to the continuation and growth of Beryl Women Inc.'s services.



A significant achievement this year was updating the Beryl Women Inc. Constitution to align with new Model Rules in Schedule 1 of the Associations Incorporation Regulation 2023, which took effect on 1 February 2024. Success of this task was made possible through the collaborative efforts and input of the Board, CEO and staff. Our commitment to feminist principles, recognition of the greater impacts experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse women and children in the ACT, and our Cultural Safety Charter are now proudly safeguarded in Beryl Women Inc.'s Constitution.

The October 2023 referendum was a deeply significant moment for First Nations peoples in Australia. Beryl Women Inc. supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and endorsed its call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament to be enshrined in Australia's Constitution. During this period, we acknowledged people are diverse and had differing aspirations, beliefs and views on the First Nations Voice to Parliament. We remain committed to listening respectfully to those views.

For many First Nations Australians and their allies, the outcome was a source of profound grief and disappointment. The referendum represented not just a political issue, but a symbolic step towards acknowledging the long-standing exclusion and marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As an Aboriginal-led organisation, Beryl Women Inc. Board and staff uphold a commitment to providing culturally safe

services and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children through connection, truth telling, empowerment, practice, and self-determination.

We are incredibly fortunate to have Robyn Martin, Chief Executive Officer, leading the Beryl Women Inc. team. On 27 April 2024, Robyn celebrated 25 years of service to the organisation, starting as an Aboriginal Support Worker in 1999, moving to Manager of the service in 2005, and standing up as CEO in 2014.

Robyn is deeply respected across the community sector and leverages her influence, building partnerships to enhance Beryl Women Inc.'s impact. Robyn's tireless advocacy is a reflection of her selfless commitment to making lasting change. Her dedication goes beyond professional responsibilities – she brings her whole heart to this work, ensuring that every decision is made with integrity and empathy. Her leadership is not only outstanding but truly compassionate, grounded in culture and a genuine care for the women and children Beryl Women Inc. works to empower.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Robyn for her generosity, activism and guidance. An inspirational and remarkable woman, Robyn continues to model and champion feminist values that sit at the core of Beryl Women Inc.'s mission.

**Jess Scott**  
Chair – Beryl Women Inc. Board

# Treasurer's report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Beryl Women Inc. Financial Year 2023-2024 Treasurer's report and associated financial statements; prepared in accordance with appropriate accounting standards.

Throughout the year, Beryl Women Inc. has successfully ensured its financial position continues to support women and children seeking domestic and family violence crisis accommodation, whilst maintaining sufficient funds to enable our clients to access additional outreach programs.

As such, I am pleased to report that for Financial Year 2023-2024, our gross revenue was \$1.5 million, an increase of 5.5% from the preceding year. This comprised of:

- 71% Core funding
- 5% Rental income
- 16% Grants
- 7% Donations
- 1% Other income

Beryl Women Inc. demonstrates a consistent ability to maximise the impact of its resources, as highlighted throughout this annual report.

At Beryl Women Inc., we value transparency, and as such share our financial statements so that our community of supporters can see that their contributions have been used to the greatest effect.

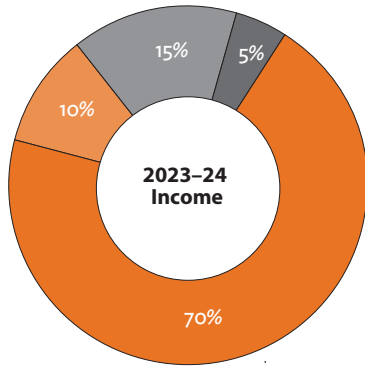
This transparency assists us to measure our impact, improve our services and earn trust across the sector to which we contribute.

I would like to acknowledge the commendable efforts Beryl Women Inc. staff have contributed to our financial success. They continue to raise the Beryl Women Inc. profile and increase the ACT community's awareness of domestic and family violence. As a result, the increase in support we have received over the past 12 months has enabled us to continue to focus on prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing – core elements fundamental to what we do. On behalf of the Board, we are thankful for the incredible partnerships and generous support from foundations, the private sector, community sponsors, donors and ACT Government.

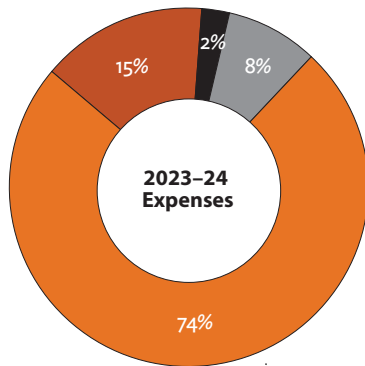
As we move into 2024-2025, the financial outlook for Beryl Women Inc. remains positive. However, as we know, short-term funding cannot create the long-term transformation required. For effective primary prevention, sustainable financial commitments are required, to call out for a change in deeply rooted attitudes, values, behaviours, and social norms. Beryl Women Inc. continues its appeal to government, socially minded foundations, partners and donors, to help us co-create a future, free of gender-based violence. Additionally, Beryl Women Inc. will seek new funding opportunities and carefully manage the resources we have available.

## **Gemma Bawden**

Treasurer – Beryl Women Inc. Board



Core Funding	1,057,654
Rental	71,175
Grants	224,115
Other Income	152,588
<hr/>	
	\$ 1,505,532



Employee Costs	1,065,379
Rental Expenses	118,299
Depreciation	34,097
Grants and Operating expenses	213,577
<hr/>	
	\$1,431,352

social media post



**January 26th**, the day we recognise it as Invasion Day, also known as Survival day, is tomorrow. This is a day of mourning for First Nations Australians. Let's join at Tent Embassy, Aboriginal Tent Embassy, King George Terrace, Parkes ACT, Australia.

Rally/event happening throughout the country, look for an Invasion Day event/ rally near you/your city/town through <https://www.amnesty.org.au/events/invasion-day-2024/>

#InvasionDay #January26 #SurvivalDay #NoPrideInGenocide



# CEO's report

This past year has been a significant period of growth, reflection, and resilience for our organisation. The ongoing challenges faced by women and their children experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence have highlighted the critical need for services like ours to be adaptable, compassionate, and innovative in our approaches.

## NEW STAFF AND RESIGNATIONS

As Remi King, our Specialist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Support Worker, steps away from her role, we would like to extend our thanks for her incredible contributions during her time at Beryl Women Inc. Remi brought a wealth of expertise, particularly in supporting our clients and advocating for their unique needs. Her skills in policy writing have left a lasting impact on our organisation.

We wish Remi all the best in her future endeavours and are deeply grateful for the meaningful difference she made here.

Another staff member, Angie Piubello celebrated 16 years at the Service during the year, I would like to take a moment to recognise and express my sincere appreciation for Angie, who is an invaluable member of our team. Her dedication, hard work,

and commitment has significantly contributed to the success of our projects and service delivery.

We continue to be deeply committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for those affected by domestic and family violence. Through our tailored programs, such as child-led play therapy and emotional regulation support for children, we have empowered women and children to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to offer trauma-informed care, ensuring that every woman and her children we support feel seen, heard and respected.

A key focus this year has been strengthening our partnerships with community stakeholders and enhancing our service delivery to ensure holistic, wrap-around support. We've also undertaken important policy reviews to align with industry standards and maintain our commitment to best practices.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to advocating for systemic change, expanding our services, to help ensure that every person affected by domestic violence has access to the care and support they deserve. Together, we will continue to stand strong, providing hope, healing, and a pathway to a safer future for all.



Morning Tea at the Lodge for International Womens day

In 2025, we will proudly celebrate 50 years of providing vital domestic violence crisis accommodation services to women and children. This milestone will represent five decades of unwavering support, accommodation, care, respect to women and their children during their most vulnerable moments. Since our inception, we have been a safe haven for those escaping violence, offering refuge, care, and hope for a better future. Over the years, we have evolved to meet the changing needs of our community, yet our core mission remains the same empowering those affected by domestic violence and working towards a future free from abuse. As we mark this significant anniversary, we honour the resilience of our clients, the dedication of our staff, and the generosity of our supporters who have helped shape the legacy of this essential service. Together, we look forward to continuing our work in building safer communities for the next 50 years.

On a personal note, as a First Nations woman, I am deeply disappointed by the outcome of the Referendum held in October 2024 on the Voice to Parliament. This result marks a missed opportunity for Australia to embrace a future grounded in unity, equity, and reconciliation with First Nations peoples. The Voice was more than a proposal for constitutional recognition; it represented a genuine chance to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities a say in the decisions that affect our lives.

While the outcome is disheartening, it is essential that we remain committed to the journey of reconciliation. This setback does not diminish the need for meaningful change. We must continue to work together to foster understanding, address systemic inequalities, and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard and respected in all areas of policy and governance.

Now is a time for reflection and for reaffirming our collective dedication to building a future where all Australians can share in the benefits of an inclusive and just society.

Following is a more detailed report on how Beryl Women Inc. performed over the past 12 months.

**Robyn Martin**  
Chief Executive Officer



Rally at Parliament House

# 2023/24 Overview

This year, Beryl Women Inc. has continued to maintain strong and meaningful partnerships with a wide range of services in Canberra, emphasising the importance of collaboration in addressing the complex and intertwined issues of domestic, family, and sexual violence, as well as homelessness as a consequence within our community. By bringing together our collective resources, expertise, and compassion, we are making positive strides toward supporting and empowering women and their children affected by these challenges.

Our relationships with ACT Government agencies have deepened, particularly in connection with the commissioning of the ACT homelessness sector, the Family Safety Hub, Victims of Crime, and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. These partnerships have allowed us to play a pivotal role in supporting community safety and wellbeing.

We have also developed relationships with the following private and not-for-profit organisations and thank them for their support:

- Clayton Utz
- Accenture
- DV Collective – NFP.

## CONSULTATIONS/PUBLIC SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Over the past 12 months, we have actively participated in several consultations and public speaking engagements, significantly raising our profile within the sector, with government stakeholders, and within the broader community. This increased visibility has not only strengthened our reputation as a trusted advocate but has also led to a rise in donations. These additional funds have enabled us to support our clients in meaningful ways that extend beyond the scope of our core funding, enhancing the overall impact of our services, some of those include the following:

- **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Social Club** to present on November 28th, where our CEO spoke on Beryl Women Inc.'s feminist approach and trauma-informed practice.
- **CEDAW Project Participation** Researchers from the Thomas More Law School at the Australian Catholic University invited Beryl to participate in a research project focusing on Australian NGO involvement in proceedings before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This project aimed to identify barriers to participation and recommend ways to improve the process.

- **Sexual Offences Court Roundtable** We attended a roundtable chaired by the ACT Attorney-General, which discussed the potential establishment of a specialised sexual offences court in the ACT, the discussions, provided insights into opportunities, risks, and challenges of implementing such a court.
- **Workshop on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Led Services.** Beryl Women Inc. participated in a workshop aimed at supporting and growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led domestic, family, and sexual violence services. Although Beryl Women Inc. is not an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, we were invited due to our culturally safe and Aboriginal-led practices. This workshop, hosted by the Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Office and the Aboriginal Services Development Branch of CSD, was crucial in shaping future responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.
- **Examining Domestic and Family Violence Accommodation Design.** We have also been involved in research conducted by a PhD student from the University of Cambridge, focusing on the design of domestic and family violence accommodations. Our CEO and staff provided insights, sharing perspectives from a caseworker and service delivery point of view.



## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT FEMINISM

### Myth

Feminism is about fighting men, hating men, and eliminating men.

Only women can be feminists.

To be a real feminist, a woman cannot be feminine or demure.

### Fact

Feminism is about challenging systemic inequalities and does not portray men as the enemy.

Any person who believes in gender equality is a feminist. Many men are feminists and proud to be so.

Feminism is found in the substance of a person's opinions and not her form. A woman's love of nice dresses or high-heeled shoes does not make her less of a feminist.



STAY CONNECTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT MYTHS AND FACTS OF FEMINISM





## OTHER CONSULTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS:

Beryl Women Inc. has actively participated in various sector reviews and consultations throughout the year, including:

- Sector Sustainability Project
- Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- University of Canberra's Mental Health Atlas Project
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan consultations with the Department of Social Services and Indigenous Advisory Council
- Meetings with the Community Services Directorate and Community Sector
- Family Safety Hub consultation on Draft National Principles to Address Coercion and Control.

Throughout the year, Beryl Women Inc. has participated in workshops aimed at improving the efficiency of funding arrangements between the ACT Government and non-government organisations (NGOs). These discussions highlighted several key areas where improvements are needed:

- **Cultural Competency Investment:** Current service contracts lack adequate funding for investment in cultural competency, which is essential to improving service outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- **Fit-for-Purpose Funding:** Funding provided to community-controlled organisations is often not tailored to their specific needs and operational requirements.
- **Partnership Costs:** While partnership approaches are specified in funding requirements, the available funding does not cover all costs associated with establishing and maintaining effective partnerships.
- **Risk Management and Compliance:** Poor risk management practices lead to inappropriate cost-shifting and overly prescriptive compliance requirements, placing additional burdens on NGOs.
- **Indexation Formula:** The current indexation formula does not accurately reflect the true costs or increasing expenses of the 'basket of goods' purchased by human services NGOs.
- **Program Funding Adjustments:** There is no mechanism within existing funding arrangements to adjust program funding baselines in response to changes in the operating environment, community needs, demand, or population growth.
- **IT Underinvestment:** Insufficient investment in IT infrastructure leaves NGOs unable to meet government expectations for professionalism. For example, all documents are expected in PDF format, but NGOs often lack the funding for necessary PDF editing tools.

These insights will be critical for advocating for more equitable and efficient funding structures moving forward.

Our participation in these initiatives demonstrates Beryl Women Inc.'s ongoing commitment to advocacy, capacity building, and sector development to ensure that the needs of women and children are prioritized and addressed.

Looking forward, we remain dedicated to strengthening these collaborations and continuing to advocate for policies and practices that uphold the dignity and safety of all those affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

## ACT COMMUNITY SECTOR MULTI ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

Beryl Women Inc. is signed up to the ACT Community Sector Multi Enterprise Agreement (MEA), which expired in 2018. Negotiations commenced with the Australian Services Union (ASU) shortly after this in relation to renewing the document, stalled over a period of years which included COVID-19 periods. Since then, we have been steadily working with other community organisations who are also signed up to the MEA and our Workplace Relations Consultant.

There has been a number of amendments to the draft MEA which were agreed to however, we have now entered a Supported Bargaining process through The Australian Fair Work Commission, which was initiated by the ASU.

This whole process has been time consuming and although it has taken several years, we are committed to ensuring staff conditions meet the needs of staff and fit within our funding.

social media post



## 10 days DV leave Anniversary

One year ago today, Australia took a significant step forward with the introduction of 10 days of Domestic Violence Leave. This compassionate initiative not only provides a crucial support system but also acknowledges the importance of mental health in overcoming challenges. The perks are invaluable – survivors gain time to rebuild, seek help, and prioritize their well-being and many more. Today, we celebrate progress and the release of a heavy burden. Let's continue fostering environments of understanding and empowerment.

#DVLeaveAnniversary #BreakTheSilence #SupportHeals





Angie Plubello, left and Remi King are specialist domestic violence and child support workers at Beryl women's shelter. Picture by Elsa Kurtz.



Australia's longest-serving women's refuge is still supporting women and children fleeing domestic violence, as demand keeps growing—ABC news

## MEDIA

Over the past 12 months, our service has seen a significant increase in media engagement, enhancing our capacity to raise awareness around domestic, family and sexual violence. Through targeted media campaigns, interviews, and collaborations with key media outlets, we have amplified the voices of survivors and advocated for critical issues affecting our communities.

This heightened media presence has helped to inform the public about the complexities of domestic and family violence, support available to those impacted, and the importance of early intervention. By maintaining a consistent media presence, we have strengthened our role as a trusted resource and advocate, bringing attention to the services we offer and fostering a broader understanding of the urgent need for collective action in addressing these forms of violence. Some of the media opportunities we participated included the following:

- ABC Interview 7.30 Report
- Koori Radio – Sydney
- Canberra Times
- Canberra Grammer Girls
- 2CC radio
- RIOT ACT
- abc.net.au

## TRAINING

Beryl Women Inc. is committed to fostering the growth and effectiveness of its support staff and the organisation by prioritising training and professional development. This commitment ensures that team members working with domestic violence victims are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide compassionate, effective, and trauma-informed care. By continually improving their expertise, staff can better support women and their children, helping them navigate complex emotional and safety needs, while also contributing to the overall well-being and recovery of those affected by domestic violence. This focus on development also strengthens Beryl's capacity to deliver impactful services in the community.

As such, two Beryl Women Inc. staff participated in the Snow Foundation's 'Lead the Way' leadership program, designed for CEOs and senior leaders in the for-purpose sector. This immersive program focuses on enhancing leadership skills, fostering connections with other purpose-driven leaders, and strengthening impact-driven organisations.

The CEO and a colleague, attended an initial 2-day retreat, followed by bi-weekly 2-hour master classes. These sessions have provided us with practical tools to become empathetic, values-driven leaders, with a clear focus on creating lasting impact. We took part in a final 2-day retreat in Sydney in September 2024, marking the completion of this enriching leadership journey.

Following is a list of other training undertaken throughout the year:

- Ending gender-based violence
- Why Women's Services are critical to ending violence against women
- How to get your board on board
- Bystander action for gender equality
- Prevention in Practice
- Supporting victim survivors of family violence with family
- How to use statistics in primary prevention
- Family law act amendments
- Aboriginal Cultural awareness
- Taking minutes
- Ending family violence against first nations women and children
- Wiyi Yani U Thangani (womens voices) national summit
- Aboriginal mental health first aid
- DV-alert Aboriginal dv training
- Family violence foundations
- Wesnet – smartphones, survivors and safety
- Wesnet – Telstra phone activation and safety planning
- Creating a mentally healthy and safe workplace
- Managing flexibility in the workplace
- Safe and supported national framework
- Spotlight on psychosocial hazards
- Aboriginal storytelling in early childhood
- Dadirri – ancient aboriginal mindfulness
- Dissociation
- Embedding aboriginal perspectives
- First aid
- Social media and survivors
- Understanding stalkware
- Unpacking resistance.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

social media post



**Mindful Monday reflection:** In the fight against domestic, family and sexual violence, diversity is our strength. Beryl Women Inc. proudly supports women and children from all walks of life, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and their children. Our commitment is unwavering: to provide continuous support, compassion, and resources to those escaping domestic, family and sexual violence, empowering them to reclaim their lives free from abuse. Remember you are not alone.

Every woman and child, regardless of background, deserves safety and support.



Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2023–24

## POLICY REVIEW

At Beryl Women Inc., our priority is to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and their children impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence. To ensure that our services remain effective, trauma-informed, and responsive to the evolving needs of those we support, throughout the year, we have been slowly working our through the various policy manuals (Case Management and Operational manuals). Central to this review was our commitment to ensure alignment with best practices and current legislative requirements, integrate the latest research and insights on trauma, safety planning, and victim support, enhance our commitment to cultural competency, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, strengthen our organisational values of respect, empowerment, and collaboration and increase staff capacity to provide inclusive, sensitive, and impactful support. To this end, we have reviewed and created the following policies (this list is by no means indicative of all polices reviewed and/or created, rather an indication of some of the work undertaken this year).

- Alternative Public Holidays Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Employee Assistance Program Policy
- Client Exit Support Plan
- Service Philosophy and Model
- Client Feedback Forms
- Client Assessment (Emergency contact) Policy
- Working from Home Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Property Management Policy
- Critical Incident Report Policy
- Salary Packaging Policy
- Service Rules
- Strategy on Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Access and Equity Statement
- Feminist Policy
- Feedback from staff to Board on Beryl Women Inc.'s Constitutional changes
- Code of Conduct
- New Mobile Therapy Van program policies
- Cyber Security Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Healthier Work Program Policy.

social media post



## Celebrating Success at the Elsie Conference!

Last weekend, the Beryl Women Inc. team had the incredible opportunity to attend the Elsie Conference in Sydney, and what an unforgettable experience it was! From engaging panel discussions and dinner on day 1 to insightful workshops and an inspiring award ceremony on day 2, we gained a wealth of knowledge and inspiration to fuel our mission of empowerment and support for women and their children escaping domestic violence. A special highlight of the event was witnessing our very own CEO, Robyn Martin, being honoured with an Elsie award! Robyn's dedication and passion for serving our community for nearly 25 years as both CEO and a support worker have been truly remarkable. Her leadership and commitment continue to inspire us all.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the organizers of the Elsie Conference for providing such a valuable platform for learning and growth. We return to our work at Beryl Women Inc. with renewed energy and enthusiasm, ready to make an even greater impact in the lives of those we serve.

#ElsieConference #Empowerment  
#CommunitySupport #BerylWomenInc.



Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

## ELSIE CONFERENCE – 2024

All staff attended the Elsie conference which was hosted in Sydney on the 15-16th March 2024. Elsie's Refuge was the first women's refuge established on the 16th of March 1974 where a group of feminists broke into two adjoining vacant houses in Glebe, Sydney.

The rise of women's refuges in Australia in the 1970s marked a pivotal moment in addressing domestic violence and supporting women in crisis. Inspired by international movements and the success of refuges like Elsie's Women's Refuge in Sydney (established in 1974), women across Australia took action to create safe havens. By the end of 1975, 13 women's refuges had been established nationwide, offering crucial support to those fleeing abusive environments.

Federal government funding soon followed, recognising the importance of these services in the community. This funding helped sustain the operations of the refuges and ensured that women and children had access to the support they needed.

One of these early refuges, Beryl Women Inc. (originally known as Canberra Women's Refuge), also began its operations in 1975. Beryl Women Inc. became a vital service for women and children escaping violence in the ACT, offering not just shelter but also advocacy and empowerment. The emergence of these refuges laid the foundation for more comprehensive domestic violence services across the country, setting a precedent for the broader recognition of women's rights and safety.

Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2023-24



Beryl CEO Robyn Martin receiving the Elsie Award

Beryl Women Inc. is still operating today, 49 years later, now the longest running women's refuge in Australia and still operating within a feminist framework.

Our CEO, Robyn Martin, was awarded an Elsie Award for her dedication to Beryl Women Inc. This award recognised her leadership as a beacon of empowerment and support for women and children, drawing on her deep roots in Aboriginal communities as a proud Kamilaroi woman.

## STAFF PLANNING

In March, we held our annual staff planning session, where we reviewed the progress of our strategic workplan and identified key achievements and areas for further development. I am pleased to highlight several significant milestones we have reached:

- **Domestic and Family Violence Training Package:** We have successfully developed and plan to roll out a comprehensive domestic and family violence training package in the 2024/25 period, enhancing our team's capacity to support individuals affected by domestic and family violence.
- **Social media planning:** We have made strides in our social media strategy, ensuring our messaging remains consistent and effective across all platforms.
- **Fundraising objectives:** Internally, our team has made significant progress towards our fundraising goals, working independently of the Fundraising & Communication Committee's efforts with the Board. This approach strengthens our capacity for long-term sustainability.

- **Cultural Safety Character:** The creation and implementation of our Cultural Safety Character is complete, supported by an engagement strategy that fosters inclusivity and respect for cultural diversity.
- **Feminist Policy review:** We continue to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into our feminist policy, aligning our work with a broader commitment to equity and justice.
- **Policy review:** Several of our existing policies have undergone a thorough review and update to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with best practices.
- **Service philosophy:** Our service philosophy has been updated to include delivery policies for gender-diverse individuals, with ongoing revisions to ensure inclusivity for all clients.
- **KPIs and commissioning:** We have set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the context of commissioning. However, we recognise this as a dynamic process, adapting as outcomes evolve.
- **Therapy Van project:** We are progressing well with the Therapy Van project, which addresses key needs for children as outlined in our strategic plan.

These achievements reflect Beryl Women Inc.'s dedication and the collaborative spirit that drives the organisation's mission forward. We remain committed to ongoing improvement and to providing exceptional services to the women and children who need them most.



## PROPERTIES AND MAINTENANCE

Over the past year, we successfully took possession of two replacement properties, a milestone that has been in the pipeline for several years. These two standalone, recently renovated properties, both located in the same suburb, mark a significant upgrade in our housing assets.

The exchange was strategically planned and executed swiftly. However, during the transition, we faced the logistical challenge of paying rent on both the old and new properties simultaneously, until the keys were returned to Housing ACT. Despite this overlap, we are confident that the long-term benefits of these newly secured properties will outweigh the short-term financial strain. These properties will better serve our community and provide improved living conditions for our tenants moving forward.

## ABORIGINAL JUDGE FOR ACT SUPREME COURT

Earlier in the year, Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury announced the appointment of Magistrate Louise Taylor to the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory.

A Kamilaroi woman, Magistrate Taylor brings to the Supreme Court a wealth of knowledge and expertise, having represented the most marginalised members of our community in complex matters.

Having served as a Magistrate of the ACT since 2018, Magistrate Taylor has spent the past five years exhibiting her proficiency in both civil and criminal law matters, displaying a commitment to fairness, impartiality, and open-mindedness.

Magistrate Taylor is the first Aboriginal woman to be appointed as a judicial officer in the ACT and the first Indigenous woman to become a Supreme Court judge in Australia. We were privileged to be invited to the swearing in of Magistrate Taylor in August 2023, an amazing women and a friend to the service.

## COMMISSIONING

Beryl Women Inc. continues to participate in the ACT homelessness sector commissioning process and has provided crucial opportunities to address the complex needs of individuals requiring high levels of service support, identified key service gaps and explored new ways to deliver services for people with high and complex needs.

Parallel to this, the 2023-28 Sector Sustainability Program has commenced, co-led by the ACT Government and Capital Region Community Services. This initiative responds to the sustainability challenges outlined in the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) report, Counting the Cost: Sustainability Funding for the ACT Community Services Sector.

The 2023-28 Sector Sustainability Program aims to align funding with the real costs of service delivery and better understand the impact of rising demand.

As part of this effort, our CEO has joined the Sector Sustainability Program Sounding Board, contributing to ongoing conversations about how to make the sector more sustainable and resilient.

Additionally, Beryl Women Inc. have been actively engaged in the development of the Community Intake and Referral Service, a centralised service intended to connect individuals in need with the appropriate support programs. This initiative holds great potential to benefit various sectors, including Homelessness and Child, Youth, and Family Support Services (CYFSP), as well as Child Protection Services (CPS). Our work in this area continues to evolve through public consultation and review, with the aim of creating a more responsive and effective intake and referral system.

These initiatives reflect our unwavering commitment to addressing homelessness and supporting vulnerable people including women who are escaping domestic, family and sexual violence by fostering collaboration, innovation, and a shared responsibility for creating long-term solutions.

## THE THERAPY VAN PROJECT: STAYING SAFE & STRONG MOBILE VAN

Beryl Women Inc.'s innovative Kids & Young People, Safe & Strong Van Program was launched in April 2024. The project was the inspiration of children's case worker, Angie Piubello, who on top of her usual work, chipped away and securing funding, acquiring the van, and researching best clinical practice to inform recruitment and resourcing. It was a labour of love that all Beryl Women Inc. staff shared, so it was exciting to see the program come to life.

The program was launched on a sunny afternoon at Corroboree Park in Ainslie. The launch was attended by ACT Ministers Yvette Berry, Emma Davidson and Rachel Steven-Smith, as well as representatives from the sector, who were all interested to see the van, and learn how the program would help fill a gap in the community. Significant interest from the media followed, which may have contributed to the increase in donations received.

Finding the right person for such a unique role was one of the challenges faced, but we were happy to welcome our child and family therapist, Donna Spillman, to the Beryl Women Inc. team in early March 2024. After the launch, she began providing counselling sessions to the children residing in Beryl Women Inc.'s accommodation, and the families that Beryl Women Inc. provides outreach support to. The joy expressed by the children when they first saw the van was delightful.



The response from parents was equally encouraging, most saying how reassuring it was that their children would now have someone to talk to about their experience of domestic and family violence, and the difficulties of leaving family, friends and schools to seek safety.

Whilst there is only ten weeks of operation in this financial year to report on, the program is showing excellent uptake from families and is looking as promising as we had hoped.

In the ten weeks from the launch until the end of the financial year, six young people between the ages of 4 and 17 began counselling sessions, with a total of 25 child sessions being provided. The model of therapy includes a focus on parent engagement, so a further 12 sessions were provided involving the child's mother for at least part of the session.

The program was initially funded for 12 months, however the ACT Government has extended that funding to keep the program active for at least three years before evaluation.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

social media post



**“Gaslighting”** is a form of emotional and psychological abuse in which a victim is driven to doubt their sanity. It can look like a victim being told that they “imagined” previous incidents of violence, are irrational, are overly-emotional, or crazy.

Gaslighting can cause serious harm to victim-survivors - but help is available.



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## OUTREACH SUPPORT

Our outreach support for women affected by domestic and family violence is dedicated to building safety, healing, and empowerment. We understand that every woman's journey is unique, and we strive to meet them where they are, providing confidential and compassionate assistance. Our services include emotional support, practical help, and referrals to safe housing, legal aid, and counselling. We believe in fostering independence and resilience by assisting women access the resources they need to rebuild their lives, regain their confidence, and break free from cycles of abuse. Through this outreach, we are committed to creating a future where all women live free from fear and violence.

Beryl Women Inc. has nine women receiving outreach support at any time. This is both early intervention or ongoing preventative support for women with or without children.

Some of the women receiving support had been accommodated in our crisis accommodation and then have secured independent housing, usually with Housing ACT.

Support continues after leaving the accommodation service as required. It can take some time to feel safe in a new area, be reconnected with community, kids enrolled and connected with new school or childcare, mum feeling safe and connected within the new location. Having safety up grades done to the property can increase safety and security.

Other women who are in our outreach program may have been former clients of Beryl Women Inc., who for whatever reason are again requiring support. This is usually related to their experience of domestic and family violence, maybe due to family court, issues with children's behaviour, safety issues, or numerous other concerns.

Other women who come to Beryl Women Inc. for outreach support are dealing with domestic violence and still have safe accommodation. Often these families have dealings with Child Protection Services or family court, requiring support to get Protection Orders in place or issues with Centrelink, including debt due to being unable to verify care arrangements for children.

These issues with Centrelink are common. Many times, women who should be receiving parenting and family tax payments are not and this is due to pressure from their ex-partner, who is often the perpetrator of violence. Family tax should be paid to the parent for the amount the child is in their care. Often this is not the case and, due to the domestic and family violence experienced, women receive less income than entitled to just to keep the peace.



## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS:

Our offerings included a school holiday program, playroom time, childcare services, and one-on-one support based on individual needs. All children residing at Beryl Women Inc. are welcome to attend the school holiday program, which featured diverse events such as NAIDOC celebrations, tennis, swimming, BBQs, movie nights, arts and crafts, and more. Additionally, we provided vouchers to families, allowing them to choose how to spend them, whether on meals or family activities.

**Playroom open option:** Every Thursday morning, children whose mothers attend group sessions are invited to the playroom to play and explore, fostering social interactions.

**Childcare services:** New childcare services during school holidays were introduced in response to requests from mothers attending work experience or legal appointments. This initiative not only provides mothers with essential breaks but also benefits children by encouraging social play and development.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

**Participation of children:** The school holiday program is exclusively for school-aged children, with participation varying by event. Despite fluctuations, we consistently offer these opportunities. Mothers and children are encouraged to participate in activities such as arts in the park, ferry rides, and

picnics at Reconciliation Park and other family outings as part of the school holiday program. All children of varying ages can attend these events.

Our children's program aims to enhance education, cultural awareness, and community involvement, providing mothers respite while allowing children to engage in diverse activities and build connections.

The end-of-year celebration fostered inclusivity by uniting clients from both in-house and outreach programs, offering gifts, vouchers, and hampers, while community partnerships with local organisations, schools, and childcare services enriched program offerings. Volunteer contributions, through collaborations with initiatives like Pam's Pantry, out-of-home care, Roundabout, and Good to Give, were invaluable. Despite facing challenges such as transportation barriers for mothers, staffing shortages, and shifting family needs, we see opportunities for growth by reassessing our programs to better meet client needs, informed by feedback, service capacity, and available funding.

The children's program has been instrumental in supporting our young clients, providing them with a safe and nurturing environment to learn, play, and heal.

Through engaging activities, the program fosters emotional development, resilience, and social skills. However, we recognise the need to continuously adapt to meet the evolving needs of the children and families we serve.



Feedback from participants and caregivers has been positive, highlighting the importance of maintaining this support while identifying areas for enhancement, such as offering more tailored services and ensuring access for all children, particularly those with transportation or other accessibility challenges.

Our future plans include launching new workshops, expanding community partnerships, and continuing our emphasis on cultural education to further enrich our children's program.

We are committed to fostering participation and diversity by engaging staff in discussions on how to best deliver these services. The positive impact of the program is reflected in participant feedback, and we encourage mothers and children to join us to enhance their experiences and strengthen community connections.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to mothers, community members, and sponsors, whose invaluable support has contributed to the success of our program.



Beryl Women Inc. Annual Report 2023-24

social media post



## Honouring Mabo Day Today!

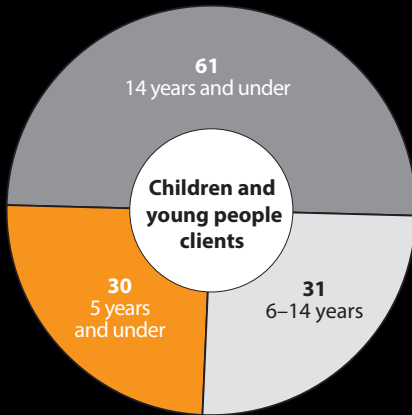
This significant day commemorates the historic Mabo case, a landmark legal battle for Indigenous land rights in Australia. On 3 June 1992 the High Court of Australia recognised that a group of Torres Strait Islanders, led by Eddie Mabo, held ownership of Mer (Murray Island). In acknowledging the traditional rights of the Meriam people to their land, the court also held that native title existed for all Indigenous people.

At Beryl Women Inc., we stand in solidarity with our Indigenous sisters, recognizing their resilience, culture, and ongoing fight for justice. Let's use this day to amplify Indigenous voices, acknowledge their contributions, and commit to reconciliation and respect.



Beryl works on Gungahlin and Ngambri land

# Service demographics

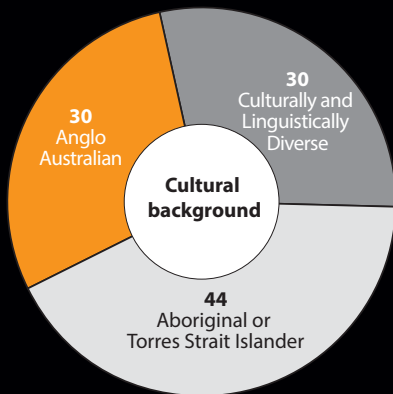


During 2023-24 Beryl supported 104 women, children & young people, including:

## Children and young people

Of the 104 clients, 69 were children

- 30 (29%) Child clients 5 and under
- 31 (30%) Child clients 6-14
- 61 (59%) Child clients 14yrs and under



## Cultural background

- 44 clients (42%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 30 clients (29%) identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- 30 clients (29%) identified as Anglo Australian

### Clients Born overseas

- 14 clients (13%) were born overseas
- 25 clients (24%) speak another language

### Support Periods

- Crisis – 6,018 days
- Medium-term – 2,867 days
- Outreach – 10,992 days

### Total number of support days provided

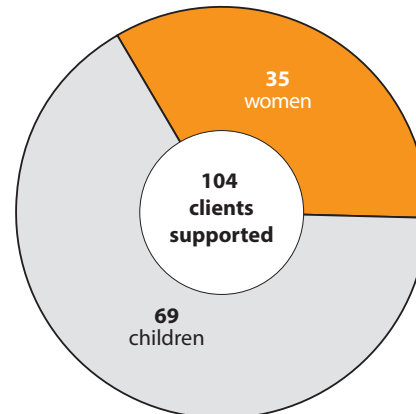
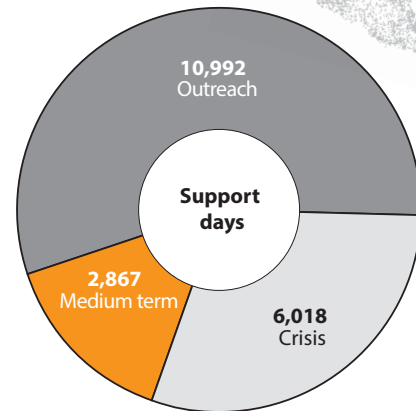
- 19,877

### Average Length of Stay

- Crisis – 134.5 days
- Medium-term – 254.3 days

### Reasons for seeking support

- 104 clients due to experience of domestic, family and sexual violence
- Of those 104 clients, 47% stated that they were experiencing financial difficulties
- 30.8% stated they had previously been diagnosed with a mental health condition



# Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families

**D**omestic and family violence is a pervasive issue that impacts individuals and families across all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families often face specific challenges that exacerbate their vulnerability and limit their access to essential support services. Despite the evolution of societal attitudes and support systems toward domestic violence, CALD families encounter additional obstacles that hinder their ability to seek help and recover from abuse. These challenges include language barriers, cultural stigmas, a lack of culturally competent services, and fears related to immigration status.

Effectively addressing the needs of CALD families requires a nuanced understanding of their diverse backgrounds and the implementation of tailored support mechanisms. Ensuring that these families have equal access to support services promotes social equity and justice, acknowledging the varied experiences and obstacles they face. It is critical to eliminate disparities in service provision, which can be achieved through culturally sensitive support that respects and values the unique cultural identities of families. This fosters trust and encourages individuals to seek help without fear of judgment or misunderstanding.

Tailored support services have been shown to lead to better recovery outcomes for victims of domestic violence, as interventions that consider the family's cultural and linguistic context tend to be more effective. Culturally competent services are not only more inclusive but also enhance the likelihood of positive long-term results for families affected by violence.

Beryl Women Inc. is an organisation dedicated to ensuring that the voices of women and children from diverse backgrounds are heard, and that their needs and hopes for the future are realised. Over the past year, Beryl Women Inc. has provided ongoing support to families, recognising the need for extended support over many years. This is particularly important given that women and children often face long and difficult battles in family court systems that may fail to fully recognise the lasting impacts of historical family violence on family relationships and the mental health of both mothers and children.

The organisation's work centres on addressing the present and future safety of women and children, ensuring they are protected from further harm. For CALD families, the provision of such long-term and personalized support is crucial, given the additional barriers they face when dealing with domestic violence and navigating complex systems.



## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

Limited proficiency in the dominant language can prevent CALD families from fully understanding the resources available to them, effectively communicating their needs, and navigating legal and social support systems. This language barrier can serve as a major impediment to their ability to seek help and access necessary services.

Creating an environment where CALD families feel safe, respected, and valued is essential for encouraging them to seek assistance. This involves not only ensuring privacy and safety but also demonstrating cultural sensitivity and fostering an inclusive atmosphere within support services. It is only in such environments that CALD families will feel empowered to share their experiences and seek the help they need.

At Beryl Women Inc., families have shared that the trust and commitment they receive from the organisation have made a profound difference in their lives. By offering culturally tailored and sensitive support, the organisation has been able to establish long-term relationships with these families, ensuring they have the ongoing help and resources needed to rebuild their lives after domestic violence.

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social media post



### Let's Celebrate Harmony Day!

Today, on Harmony Day in Australia, we celebrate our diverse and inclusive community at Beryl Women Inc.!

It's a day to embrace and appreciate the rich cultural tapestry that makes our society vibrant and unique.

At Beryl Women Inc., we believe in unity, respect, and understanding among all cultures and backgrounds. Let's come together to promote harmony, inclusivity, and belonging for everyone, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

Join us in celebrating #HarmonyDay by sharing your stories, experiences, and traditions that showcase the beauty of diversity! Together, we can create a world where every voice is heard, and every individual is valued.



Beryl works on Gungahlin and Ngambri land

# Beryl Aboriginal Community Advocacy

**E**ngaging with government on issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual's experiences of domestic and family violence is crucial to improving the lives of our clients and the broader community.

Through partnerships and advocacy, we aim to assist in shaping policies and services that directly address the needs of survivors, ensuring access to vital resources such as housing, legal support, and mental health services.

This collaboration also raises awareness and strengthens preventative measures, ultimately contributing to safer environments for families and creating lasting, positive change for future generations. The value of this engagement is reflected in the enhanced support systems that empower individuals and foster resilience within our community, some of those partnerships are reflected below:

## ACT COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE

We have recently been engaged in an initial consultation with the ACT Government Community Services Directorate (CSD) regarding their domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) projects, which aim to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. CSD has acknowledged the need to strengthen their support for Indigenous communities affected by DFSV and has initiated four key projects in response to findings from ACT-based reports:

- **Training:** Focused on building the capacity of service providers to deliver culturally appropriate, trauma-informed support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals impacted by DFSV.
- **Lived Experience Consultation Mechanism:** Establishing a process to ensure that the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are central to shaping policies and services related to DFSV.
- **Information Sharing:** Aiming to improve information sharing across agencies while maintaining cultural safety and privacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring that responses to DFSV are effective and coordinated.



- **Multidisciplinary Centre:** The creation of a centre that integrates various services, including legal, health, and social support, to provide a holistic and culturally responsive approach to addressing DFSV within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

These projects represent a significant step toward improving domestic, family and sexual violence services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT. We look forward to continuing our consultation and supporting CSD in implementing these vital initiatives, ensuring that they are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities.

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

This Reference Group has continued to meet over the past 12 months with a view to progressing the recommendations from the “We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded” and the follow-up report, “The Long Yarn” traction has been slow due to turnover of members and Cultural considerations, such as the occurrence of Sorry Business, which has also impacted the group’s ability to meet. However, the group remains committed to addressing key issues and ensuring its work aligns with the needs of the community.

social media post



**May** marks the beginning of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and at Beryl Women Inc., we’re dedicated to spreading awareness and support all month long. Join us as we share valuable resources, stories of resilience, and empowering messages to shine a light on this crucial issue. Our organization is here to support women and children in their journey to escape and heal from domestic violence. Together, let’s make a difference and create a world free from violence.

#DomesticViolenceAwareness  
#BerylWomenInc  
#EndTheCycle



## BERYL WOMEN INC. NAIDOC PANEL

This year's NAIDOC panel was our most successful to date—a truly remarkable night with an outstanding panel and MC. The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees.

The event started with a Welcome to Country by Ngunnawal leader, Selena Walker, which was very thoughtful including comments in relation to the Voice to Parliament referendum which happened in October.

Judge Louise Taylor once again generously MC'd the event.

Panel members included:

- Barb Causon - Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Advocate
- Telitha Elemes- Victims of Crime

- Papunya Connors – Every Man
- Robyn Martin – Beryl Women Inc.

One audience member shared:

*“Thank you so much for having me last night at Beryl's NAIDOC event. It was, as it was last year, such an important and powerful panel discussion. I was moved and inspired by the panel's generosity, strength, and wisdom—and was so grateful to listen to the stories and experiences of the panellists. Please pass on my thanks to the extraordinary panellists—and to your team for all the work that went into making last night possible. They did an amazing job!”*

We are grateful for the hard work and dedication that made this event a success, and we look forward to continuing to foster important conversations and celebrations around NAIDOC.



## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES - CULTURAL LENS

To strengthen our policies through an Aboriginal governance lens, we have engaged with Terri Janke and Company for guidance on securing a contractor with expertise in Indigenous governance. Terri Janke has confirmed that her firm can assist with a comprehensive review of Beryl's policy suite by 14 May, as well as provide governance training.

Further discussions will be held to finalize the scope of work and prioritise key areas to be addressed over the 2024/25 year. This initiative represents a crucial step toward embedding culturally informed practices into our organizational framework, ensuring our policies reflect the values and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The recruitment process for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner was successfully completed this year. Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts was appointed as the new Commissioner and commenced in February 2024.

The oversight committee have worked closely with CSD in relation to a number of recommendations from the Our Booris Our Way review and include the following;

- Reviewing the Oversight Committee's Terms of Reference
- Establishing new governance structure
- Continued consultations with various stakeholders in Canberra both in government, non-profit and ACCOs in relation to Child Protection



## SYMPOSIUM ON RAISING THE VOICES OF OUR BOORIS

On 10 October 2023, Our Booris Our Way partnered with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to hold an symposium to raise the voices of Our Booris (babies/ children) and address the pressing issue of the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the out of home care system. The event brought together key insights from ACCOs, fostering crucial discussions on how to create meaningful, positive change for the futures of our children.

Through these important conversations, the symposium highlighted the need for culturally informed solutions and community-driven approaches to ensure that First Nations children are supported in ways that honour their heritage, strengthen their identity, and provide them with opportunities to thrive.

Feedback provided was overwhelming positive and the community was appreciative of having the opportunity to give voice to their concerns.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

social media post



### Ever wondered about the link between the gender pay gap and violence against women?

Let's dive in. Studies show that economic dependence can trap women in abusive relationships, making it harder for them to leave. When women are paid less for the same work, financial independence becomes even more challenging to attain. Closing the gender pay gap isn't just about fairness; it's a crucial step in empowering women and combating violence. Let's work together for equality in every aspect of life.



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# Other...

## WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY

As a specialist domestic violence service, safety is at the forefront of our service. This of course extends to both our clients and our staff. Being a small organisation, our resources are limited, but thanks to rigorous planning, we continue keeping our organisation healthy, safe and compliant. This year, our staff benefitted from the much-needed upgrade of monitors, additional lighting and ergonomic workstation set ups. We follow WorkSafe ACT guidelines closely and continue improving our workplace practices to ensure the well-being of our staff and clients.

## ACCENTURE WOMEN'S NETWORK

Earlier in the year, we were lucky enough to start a relationship with Accenture Women's Network. Following a productive first meeting and brainstorm of ideas about how Accenture could support Beryl Women Inc., we settled on a project to assist us in redesigning our intake process and streamlining our documentation. This project is continuing to 2024-2025 and we feel extremely lucky Accenture Women's Network chose our organisation. Projects like these are often very much desired but unrealised due to lack of resources, ranging from time to funding. Being able to have a team of professional consultants reviewing our administrative practices without any disturbance to the day-to-day operations of the service is a privilege we do not take for granted.

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## INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF COMPANY DIRECTORS

Whilst the above two organisations are not directly connected with Beryl Women Inc., we would like to acknowledge the invaluable resource banks these institutions are. For a small service like Beryl Women Inc., having a free and reliable source of information pertaining to governance resources, policy templates and legislative updates is vital.

Beryl works on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land

# Collaboration/Increased relationships

We have provided responses to a number of reviews/consultations that include:

- Sector Sustainability Project
- Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- University of Canberra – Mental Health Atlas Project
- Consultation with Department of Social Service, Indigenous Advisory Council on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan
- ACT Aboriginal Housing project
- Community Services Directorate and Community Sector meetings
- Provide response to Family Safety Hub on the Draft National Principles to address coercion and control.

## RECOGNIZING OUR SUPPORTERS

### Partnerships

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.

Other partners we would like to acknowledge include:

- Accenture Women's Network
- ACT Legal Aid Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Access to Justice Program
- ACT Legal Aid DV Unit
- ACT Office for Women
- Buoy
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
- Care Inc.
- Clayton Utz
- 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.
- 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:

- ActewAGL
- Built
- Canberra Girls Grammar
- Canva Foundations
- CMDT Group
- Department of Education and Workplace Relations Graduate Fundraising Committee
- Department of Social Services (Staff)
- Grill'd
- Hands Across Canberra
- Hit n Miss
- Intelligent Foundation
- Jungheinrich Australia
- MYER Canberra Community Fund

- TID Social Club
- The Snow Foundation
- Weltverbesserungfund Foundation.

And the many workplace giving contributors and individuals who donated via our website, thank you all!

### **Special thanks to Snow Foundation:**

Over the years, The Snow Foundation assisted Beryl Women Inc. with many projects including upskilling our staff and, recently with an ongoing direct financial support for our client escaping domestic violence. With a generous contribution towards clients' brokerage funds, women and children can access additional funding for education, equipment and assistive aids, household items, medical services, therapy counselling, storage and removalists, utility bills and vehicle costs. This practical support is invaluable in the journey to recovery from the severe trauma domestic violence brings upon its victims.



# How can you 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 <https://www.beryl.org.au/donate/> where you can make a one-off or a recurring donation. 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>

social media post



We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, **we say sorry.**

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, **we say sorry.**

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, **we say sorry.**







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

