

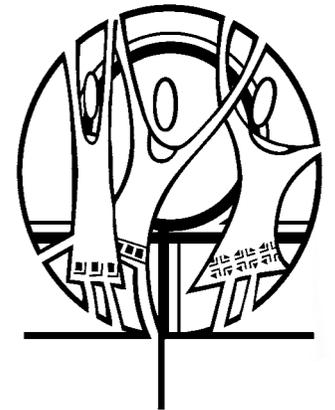
Annual Report 2007

Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service

“DESERT MIRAGE” - Cover

The story of this painting begins when I was on the run in the desert. I had just escaped from the military after four days of rape and torture. I did not think I would survive, I was not sure I wanted to. This face came to me and she gave me strength I did not know I had. With her image in my mind I did survive, I managed to escape and reproducing her image has become part of my healing process. I now think of her as my inner strength. She allows me to remember my past by my strengths and not by the actions of others. When I think of her image, I can think of my future.

Artist



MIGRANT WOMEN'S
EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICE
Annual Report 2007



Staff Profiles

Staff qualifications at the **Immigrant Women's Support Service** include social work, social sciences, psychology, accounting, office or business management, health promotion, women's studies and public relations. **IWSS** core staff currently speaks Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Croatian, English, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Pidgin English, Polish, Russian, Singhalese, Spanish and Turkish. Throughout 2006–2007 other staff members at **IWSS** spoke Afrikaans, Bosnian, German, Hindi, Malayalam, Spanish, Tamil and Zulu (Basic).

All **IWSS** staff are experienced in cross-cultural work and working with interpreters.

Management Committee Profiles

Deborah Mitchell *Chairperson*

Deb came to Australia, on a post graduate scholarship six and half years ago, from the USA. Deb has an ongoing interest in woman's issues, more specifically, the systemic treatment of women and other marginalised groups. Her post graduate work explored treatment issues with "African American Woman," and "Treatment interventions within the indigenous, predominantly female Aboriginal Community."

Deb is a practicing social work clinician who enjoys working with people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In addition to clinical work, her interests includes teaching, providing supervision, and assisting with program development.

Elvan Turak *Secretary*

Elvan was born in Turkey. She gained a scholarship entry to the extremely select Science Lycee and at graduation was offered places in many European and American universities. She studied Engineering at University of Ankara. In the final years of her degree studies and during her Master's she wrote articles in various political magazines, mainly on women's rights and gender equality. She migrated to Australia after the 1980 military coup. Worked for 10 years at CSIRO in Sydney as an engineer and established and managed a testing and research laboratory for building materials. She also participated in various scientific, engineering and environmental research projects and tutored at Macquarie University. She was awarded an APRA

Industry scholarship to conduct research at QUT towards a PhD. She was at the same time lecturing in Chemical technology and Mechanical Engineering at QUT. After 5 years of workplace bullying and working at nights to avoid the bullying at QUT, Elvan decided to change professions. She now has NAATI professional accreditation and works as a translator and interpreter.

In 2003 Elvan wrote her bullying experiences at QUT as a play. The play "This Is A Success Story" was staged by QUT drama department during October 2003.

Marguerite Cameron *Treasurer*

Marguerite has been working in the domestic violence sector since 1999 and is a graduate of QUT. Marguerite obtained her degree in the Social Science - Human Services area as a mature age student on a merit based scholarship through the Q-step program.

This year Marguerite ended her employment with Chisholm and has taken up the challenge of consultant/contract work.

During the past three years Marguerite has held the position of Treasurer for IWSS and also a director position on the CEO Challenge Board.

Marguerite enjoys time with family and friends and continues to promote whenever possible that violence against women is NOT OK.



Chairperson's Report

Dulcinea Hernandez *Member (resigned at the beginning of 2007)*

Dulcinea has worked in the multicultural sector for the past six years. Dulcinea has recently finished her masters in Human Resource Management at Griffith University aside from her qualified background in psychology. She is currently manager of Organisational Support Services at Multilink Community Services.

Dulcinea is originally from El Salvador and arrived in Australia, fleeing from persecution, with her family.

Dulcinea has an interest in social justice and human rights specifically for women and children who are the most disadvantaged in the world. She has advocated for this cause by ensuring that women have the freedom of choice and the opportunity to keep their voice in the community.

Dr Jennifer Osmond *Member*

Jenny has over fifteen years experience as an educator, researcher and practitioner in social work. She currently works at the School of Human Services, Griffith University.

Jenny's doctorate examined the tacit and explicit knowledge use of social workers employed in child protection area, making an important contribution to knowledge and contemporary debates about evidence-based practice and critical thinking. Dr Osmond has published in several quality national and international peer-reviewed journals and has recently been awarded the 2006 Norman Smith Award. This prize is awarded annually to the research based article published in Australian Social Work that makes the most significant contribution to professional practice.

She has also co-authored (Tilbury, Osmond, Wilson and Clark) a book entitled 'Good practice in child protection' which was published in 2007.

Her expertise is in improving service delivery through effective knowledge dissemination techniques and facilitating critical enquiry of practice. Her current research interests include: out-of-home care, knowledge use in professional practice, critical thinking, tacit knowledge and permanency planning.

In 2006 IWSS celebrated 20 years of operation with a festive Forum which took place at the Bardon Conference Centre. It was attended by many organisations that have contributed to IWSS growth and sustainability through the years. It was lovely musing over IWSS history and remembering how IWSS has sprung from providing basic services to women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and progressed into an evolved organisation comprised of two core programs – Domestic Violence Crisis Response and the Sexual Assault Counselling and Community Education Program. The work undertaken at IWSS continues to aim at ensuring safety, good mental health and well-being for women from NESB and their accompanying children.

Interesting panel discussions explored issues such as Female Genital Mutilation from a historical and global perspective, challenges faced by sex workers in Australia, and the issue of serial sponsorship among many other local and international issues facing women. The Forum was an opportunity to gather past and current clients, founding members, and past and current IWSS staff. The discussions provided an opportunity to get a fresh perspective of the organisation's future direction while identifying the challenges that may arise along the way.

Increased workload

Ongoing lobbying with relevant funding bodies has been necessary to raise awareness of the increased workload for the SAAP funded Domestic Violence Program. Within the first two and a half months of the current year IWSS received over 120 new referrals, these new referrals were in addition to an existing caseload of

approximately 100 clients managed by three part-time crisis support workers and a full-time team leader. Many phone calls and meetings were held with the Department of Communities and other key stakeholders to address the identified gaps in high case-load for workers (with several detailed reports outlining some of the challenges also being provided). A strategic plan has been developed specifically to address the rapid increase in service demand in order to accommodate the human resources and client needs accordingly. To date, these discussions continue within the service. IWSS Management Committee continues to seek viable alternatives towards the short and long term resolution of this issue. The ongoing lobbying strategies undertaken appeared to have some success in that Minister Warren Pitt gave a verbal undertaking that additional funds would be provided on a re-current basis to improve levels of pay within the SAAP program thus ensuring recruitment and retaining of skilled staff. This is an issue that IWSS needs to meet given the levels of skills and competencies needed to ensure that culturally appropriate, timely and effective service provision is maintained. At the time of writing this report IWSS has not received the said additional funds offered by Minister Warren Pitt, however, as the Chair of IWSS I look into the future fulfilment of the financial offer with a sense of relief and hope that IWSS issues of capacity are being acknowledged by the Department of Communities. Needless to say, these types of ventures (government lobbying) take their toll, thus, many thanks should be offered to all IWSS staff for their perseverance in providing quality support for women from NESB under such challenging circumstances.



Professional Interpreters

IWSS continues to be involved in prolonged discussions and negotiations regarding access to translating and interpreting services for SAAP funded agencies, particularly IWSS and the refuge sector. IWSS received a one-off grant to meet the costs related to working with professional interpreters however, there is still much uncertainty with regards to the long-term solution to this fundamental issue of access and equity. This issue continues to take up significant time and resources as IWSS advocates for a sustainable response from the Department of Communities. It is noted that IWSS Sexual Assault Program received recurrent funding from Queensland Health to fund professional interpreters.

IWSS experiences difficulties in acquiring the services of interpreters for some community languages particularly for women from new and emerging communities. IWSS continues to work with female only interpreters and would often access interpreters from interstate over the telephone. However, such services often relegate whoever is available to interpret for them – perhaps a male or someone from the community that the women may know. This is highly inappropriate due to the nature of the information being exchanged in conversations. This inadequacy can potentially re-create added vulnerability for women already at risk.

Issues related to training and skills of interpreters in practising self care has been identified throughout the year. This situation has the potential to lead to secondary trauma which also becomes another “intervention” staff at IWSS has to be aware of.

IWSS continues to lobby and advocate on behalf of all organisations who value the principles of access and equity by promoting the effective utilisation of appropriately experienced and accredited interpreters.

Management Committee

IWSS ushered in a new management committee with some new faces – Dr. Jenny Osmond from Griffith University and Deb Mitchell as Chair. Elvan Turak and Marguerite Cameron, secretary and treasurer respectively, are both in their third year with the management committee. Although the management team is very small, members endeavour to tackle some pretty big “challenges.” I am very grateful to be surrounded by such competence. This committee has been an absolute joy, and it will be sad not to continue on next year as Chair. I have enjoyed working with the committee and the IWSS staff, but obligations do not allow for me to continue on in this capacity. I will continue to work with Annabelle and the organisation as a private member.

This year IWSS has had to confront resource issues and its potential impact on clients, as well as, financial and ongoing human resources for the organisation. The reverberations were huge with the service having to contemplate the temporarily closure of one day a week to manage workload. These limitations have been addressed politically and socially with numerous government agencies including the appropriate funding bodies and within the sector itself. IWSS staff and Management Committee greatly value transparent and accountable processes which have resulted in the continued prioritising of advocacy

and lobbying strategies for the organisation and for sector-wide changes and improvements.

Migration Issues

IWSS continues to provide ongoing financial and emotional assistance to support women with little or no income. The ongoing complexities involving globalisation and evolving migration patterns for Queensland continues to impact on IWSS service delivery in its effort to resettle women from NESB (and their children) as they escape violence.

Human Resource Management

The organisation has maintained a number of strategies in ensuring support to workers: thorough and continuous evaluation of the quality of work delivered to women from NESB; proactive measures to prevent potential vicarious trauma of workers; and maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace. Some of these approaches include regular supervision to all staff, staff performance appraisals, externally facilitated team reflection/supervision; regular in-house and external training pertinent to the work undertaken; regular cross-culturally relevant training; and as identified necessary various strategic planning activities at particular times of the year.

The staff and management committee continue to contemplate these issues and the future direction of the organisation; the management committee feels strongly that in order to invigorate the service, options such as fund raising, perhaps increase in membership fees, corporate memberships will need to be looked at as future resource possibilities.

Given all of the above mentioned challenges and limitations; IWSS does what it does best by overcoming obstacles and rising to the occasion of excellence, in late 2006, by becoming a finalist in the inaugural Ministerial Awards for Excellence in Workforce Development in the Culturally Inclusive Practice category. In my eyes, they are the undisputed winner.

The organisation owes so much to the multitude of talent it has within its walls; the women who give of themselves day after day with pride, humility and an unspoken resolve knowing that what they do transcends financial obligations. At the helm is Annabelle who continues to amaze with her calm but regal demeanour. The management committee wants to congratulate IWSS on another year of immense hard work, and an unrelenting passion of making a difference in the lives and circumstances of women from NESB and their accompanying children.

Deborah Mitchell

Philosophy

The **Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)** is a feminist organisation committed to providing services that recognise and promote the rights of women of non-English speaking backgrounds and their children. IWSS recognises that:

- Australia is a multicultural society but one which is male-dominated and has structural inequalities which perpetuate the disadvantages experienced by certain groups of people.
- Violence against women is a violation of human rights and is a crime against the individual and society. Therefore, the entire community and all levels of government must take responsibility for its prevention.
- Violence against women is both a consequence and reinforcer of the imbalances of power between men and women.
- Violence against women occurs along a continuum and includes domestic violence and/or rape and sexual assault. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, financial, emotional, social and racial abuse. Sexual violence includes any uninvited sexual behaviour which makes the recipient feel uncomfortable, harassed or afraid; unwanted touching or remarks; sexual harassment; any coerced sexual act; and rape with physical injury and threat to life.
- Women of non-English speaking backgrounds can be amongst the most disadvantaged in society: through experiencing a double power imbalance as women in a male-dominated society and as members of the non-dominant cultural group.
- The impact of violence against women is complex and has emotional, social, psychological, legal, health and political consequences.
- The impact of violence against women can be compounded by factors relating to socio-economic class, age, ethnicity, race and physical and intellectual disability.
- Women of non-English speaking background and their children have the right to live in safety and security and the right to access services and facilities to make their independent survival possible.
- Women and their children in need can ultimately become self-sufficient with support, and can attain full participation in society.

IWSS Core Functions

The **Immigrant Women's Support Service** provides confidential support and assistance to women and their children of non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual violence. The service has professionally qualified, experienced crisis support workers and counsellors who provide crisis intervention, counselling, needs assessment, information, support, advocacy and referral. IWSS staff assist with safe, secure accommodation; access to health care and counselling; access to legal information and assistance, including specialist family law and immigration legal assistance.

IWSS acknowledges the range of difficulties experienced by women and their children from NESB in accessing information and appropriate services and in discussing the taboo subjects of domestic and sexual violence. IWSS operates with a holistic model in response to the range of needs faced by women from NESB and provides advocacy and support to women through the legal and health care systems.

In addition **IWSS** undertakes community education about violence against women and their children and provides information, training and assistance to other service providers about working with women and their children from NESB. IWSS also produces resources such as fact sheets and brochures in English and community languages to assist both service providers and ethnic communities.

IWSS is funded to be open Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. This arrangement may change if additional funds are not available in the foreseeable future. IWSS can be contacted on:

Domestic Violence Program **(07) 3846 3490**

Sexual Assault Program **(07) 3846 5400**

E-mail **mail@iwss.org.au**

Web site **www.iwss.org.au**

Statistical Data

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

From 1st July 2006 – 30th June 2007

Total Number of Clients	570
Ongoing Clients as of 01/07/06	121
Number of New Clients	204
Number of One-Off Assistance Provided*	245
Number of Accompanying Children	406

* **One-Off Assistance** is where detailed information and support are provided to women in relation to domestic violence over the telephone. Telephone assessments and the provision of accurate and relevant information is essential in ensuring women are able to make informed choices.

Main Presenting Issues (in order of demand on the service)

Domestic Violence	Family Law
Sexual Assault	Counselling
Immigration	Child Protection
Emergency Accommodation	Criminal Justice Proceedings
Emergency Relief	

Other Enquiries

Each year IWSS receives enquiries from other professionals, both in government and non-government organisations, media, and community members. The nature of these enquiries are often diverse and this year has included: requests for information on IWSS services; working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities; support groups; mental health and multicultural services, legal information; interpreting and translating services; domestic violence matters and applying for a Domestic Violence Protection Order; divorce proceedings; court support; access to resources and referral to relevant agencies; housing and settlement support; use of IWSS intellectual property in resource development in another region; preparing Statutory Declarations; and employment.

Clients have come from the following countries

Afghanistan, Africa, Austria, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, El Salvador, England, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Samoa, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, West Papua, and Zimbabwe.

IWSS Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

Consultations

“Accredited Training – Course on Responding to Domestic and Family Violence” – As a Training Advisory Committee member, IWSS informed and supported the development of a comprehensive, appropriately accredited training course to enable more effective and coordinated responses to domestic and family violence. The course is managed by Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) and will be relevant to workers in a wide range of government and non government agencies in Queensland. IWSS input and contribution in this resource included cross-cultural aspects to be considered.

Centrelink (Stones Corner) – IWSS participated in a meeting to discuss the new welfare to work requirements; available exemptions for participation; crisis payments and special benefits; and the role of refuge services and IWSS in supporting and advocating for women who have experienced domestic violence. This meeting was organised by Women’s House Shelta.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)

1. IWSS organised a meeting to raise discussion and inform DIAC around the issues currently being experienced by women accessing the Domestic Violence Provisions under the Migration Regulations and to develop strategies to address income support for women awaiting determination of their residency status. The meeting was attended by workers from DIAC, Centrelink, Welfare Rights, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS) and IWSS.
2. IWSS attended a meeting to respond and inform DIAC’s Managers about an increased number of DIAC referrals to the ‘Independent Expert’ (Centrelink) and emerging issues pertaining to the process of reviewing visa applicant’s claims of domestic violence. This meeting was attended by workers from DIAC and RAILS.

Research on “Eliminating Violence against Women: Qld Government Initiatives in Theory and Practice” – IWSS contributed to the research which was conducted by two members of Amnesty International.

Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation – As part of its Responsible Gambling Communication Strategy – CALD Research, IWSS met with a Researcher from Cultural Partners Australia to provide data for the development of a Responsible Gambling

Community Awareness Campaign. The campaign aims to inform directly to Queensland’s culturally and linguistically diverse population.

Family and Domestic Violence Resources, DV Prevention Unit – IWSS was invited to provide feedback on resources developed that are being translated into Arabic, Tagalog and Vietnamese. This is a project of the DV Prevention Unit and the Department of Communities Marketing branch as part of the Department’s Multicultural Action Plan.

Ministerial Roundtable April 2007 – This consultative process allowed IWSS, along with other SAAP-funded agencies, to present issues to Director General Linda Apelt and Minister Warren Pitt from the Department of Communities. The IWSS coordinator presented issues affecting the organisation’s capacity for service delivery and potential closure of the service for one day.

Office for Women (OFW) – IWSS attended a meeting where Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ), Scarlett Alliance, and other interested parties were represented. This meeting explored the trafficking of women in Queensland and the need to represent possible identified issues. OFW attends a national strategy in relation to the subject.

Queensland Council of Social Services (QCROSS) Future of the Sector Roundtable – This was a consultation, coordinated by a collaboration of state-wide peaks and networks. IWSS attended as a member of Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN).

Vulnerable Person Policy, Department of Justice and Attorney General (JAG) – IWSS provided feedback on the draft of this policy in a community forum by advocating for the improvement



of services to women from NESB accessing the criminal justice system. This policy provides framework and principles to improve services to 'vulnerable people'.

Tweed Shire Women's Service – Assistance was provided in preparing an article on domestic violence in CALD communities.

Roundtable discussion with the Governor of Queensland – Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland invited a number of services working with women, who may experience homelessness issues. IWSS presented some of the issues and challenges the organisation encounters in working with women from NESB experiencing domestic violence.

Networking

Networking is highly valued as an important component of raising awareness of issues for women from NESB. IWSS staff from the domestic violence team has taken part in a number of network opportunities with service providers, organisations and individuals representing government departments. This has meant flexibility and ongoing prioritising of a wide range of important events. These provide significant opportunities for IWSS to:

- Develop referral pathways and protocols;
- Highlight best practice in responding to domestic and/or sexual violence;
- Identify emerging trends and issues;
- Organise collective action and advocacy;
- Raise awareness of issues impacting on women from NESB; and
- Share information and community resources.

The following is an overview of these networks:

- Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (BDVAS)
- Centrelink, Mt Gravatt and Stones Corner
- Combined Women's Refuge Group (CWRG)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Aged Care Services Network
- Department of Communities
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)
- Domestic Violence Court Assistance Network (DVCAN)
- Domestic Violence Police Liaison Officers Network (DVLO)
- DV Prevention Unit
- DVConnect
- Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ)
- Family Law Cultural Diversity
- Family Relationship Centre, Strathpine
- Griffith University
- Homelessness Unit
- Kinnections
- Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ)
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ)
- Multicultural Development Association (MDA)
- Office of Anna Bligh MP
- Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR)
- Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN)
- Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre (QTMHC)
- Queensland Women's Housing Network (QWHN)
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
- University of Queensland

- Working Against Violence Support Service (WAVSS)
- Women's House Shelta
- Women's Legal Aid Queensland (WLAQ)
- Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET)
- Zonta Breakfast Club
- Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre

Community Education and Training

“Domestic Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations”

This training was developed and facilitated in partnership with RAILS and was delivered to workers in Brisbane, Maroochydore, Southport, Logan and Toowoomba. The training aimed to ensure that workers throughout the South East Queensland region had access to: relevant information on the Domestic Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations; opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities and barriers that may be experienced by women from NESB in accessing the Domestic Violence Provisions; and practice wisdom in writing Statutory Declarations.

“Support Work”

IWSS organised and facilitated a two day training workshop to assist workers from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds in their support work with women from NESB in addressing issues of domestic and sexual violence. The training workshop provided opportunities for participants to: develop a deeper understanding of the complexities and barriers that may be experienced by women from NESB in accessing support services; improve and reflect on cross-cultural communication skills; and support

reflective practice in working with issues of violence and women from NESB.

IWSS received positive feedback from the 21 participants who attended.

Information Session to Staff at DVConnect

This information session was designed to assist staff in understanding the role of IWSS services; barriers experienced by women from NESB in reporting their experiences of domestic violence; improving service responses and engaging with interpreters.

Staffing of the DV Program

The DV Program is staffed by three part-time crisis support workers, one full-time crisis support team leader, and one full-time administrator, and is supported by the full-time coordinator of IWSS.

IWSS Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program (SASPP)

This program is funded through Queensland Health under its Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program. The service provides sexual assault counselling and support to women aged 15 years and over who are from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and who have experienced past or recent sexual assault, or whose children have experienced sexual abuse. The program also provides information resources and community education and training to other service providers and community/ethnic groups around issues relating to sexual violence and its impacts on women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The program employs two part-time counsellor/advocates who undertake the role of providing much needed support and counselling to women from NESB who have experienced, or are affected by sexual violence. The sexual assault counsellor/advocates also provide community education and professional training to a range of professionals, community and multicultural groups. The part-time administration worker ensures that the administrative functions of the program are maintained to a level that ensures that the primary objectives of the Program are able to be met by service delivery staff. The service employs a part-time senior worker who oversees and coordinates all program activities, undertakes systemic advocacy, inputs into the development of IWSS information resources and organisational policy, and ensures the Program maintains its accountability obligations in consultation with the Coordinator. In the past year the cultural backgrounds represented by staff of the Program have included Anglo-Australian, Bosnian, Chilean, Colombian, Filipino, and Polish.

Objectives of the IWSS Sexual Assault Program include:

- Provision of support, information, counselling and advocacy to women from NESB who have experienced or whose children have experienced sexual violence. This service includes the provision of free and professional interpreting services.

- Provision of community education to community and ethnic groups addressing topics relating to sexual violence, the law in Australia and related health, legal and welfare services available to women from NESB.
- Provision of training to a range of service providers and professional groups on topics related to cross-cultural work with women survivors of sexual violence.
- Development and provision of printed information and resources to women and services around Queensland. IWSS currently has resources available in 17 community languages in addition to English versions.

In all areas of service provision the Sexual Assault Program seeks to work collaboratively with other service providers.

Statistical Data Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program (SASPP)

From 1st July 2006 – 30th June 2007

Total number of clients	58
New clients	27
One-off assistance provided *	4
Face to face counselling sessions	246
Telephone counselling/support	162
Advocacy Support **	83

* **One-Off Assistance** is where information, support and referral are provided to women accessing IWSS Sexual Assault Program even though women may not want to access on-going counselling services.

** **Advocacy Support** refers to advocacy activities that have required significant worker time and resources. This will include (but not be limited to) writing court reports and support letters, individual advocacy to ensure appropriate service responses, and general systemic advocacy where injustices may have been identified. Resulting from the multiple barriers women from NESB experience when accessing Australian services and systems, advocacy is necessary and an integral part of the work undertaken by counsellor/advocates. The statistics provided in this report refer only to significant activities and do not include the many instances of advocacy – individual and systemic – that is undertaken by IWSS workers on a day to day basis in all of their interactions with women, the multicultural and mainstream sectors.

It is noted that this year the number of referrals coming to the IWSS Sexual Assault Program has halved in the period covered in this report – from 54 in 2005/2006 to 27 in 2006/2007. In considering this data it is also worthwhile to note that the total number of clients remained high at 58 for the year; and that only 4 of the new referrals for 2006/2007 required one-off assistance; as compared to 14 the previous year. Taking these considerations into account then, the number of women accessing on-going support at IWSS remained the same for both years – 54.

This is reflected in the number of counselling appointments – both face to face and telephone – which also remained consistent across the two years.

Counsellor/advocates identify that there has been a significant increase in the level of complexity of issues for women accessing counselling at the IWSS Sexual Assault Program. For example, in January and February of 2007 five women accessed IWSS seeking support to make formal complaints to the police.

The Sexual Assault Program collaborates closely with the IWSS Domestic Violence Program with many of the referrals for counselling resulting from sexual violence within the context of intimate relationships. 18 of the 27 new referrals, received by the IWSS SA program came from the IWSS DV program.

Clients in the Sexual Assault Program came from the following countries

Bangladesh, Colombia, China, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Vietnam and West Papua.

IWSS Women's Group

Group work was undertaken throughout the 2006/2007 period covered in this report. The primary aim of Women's Group was to provide information and support to address the impacts of violence on the lives of participants. To this end the group has been very useful in supporting NESB women affected by sexual and domestic violence to strengthen their social support networks. Women's Group allows women from diverse cultural backgrounds to come together to share their experiences in a non-threatening and culturally appropriate manner. It has the important function of providing opportunities for women to connect with each other and form social support networks.



This is an important function as many women from NESB who have experienced various forms of violence are often extremely isolated. Taking the initial step to healing the wounds of violence and trauma, the women tackled issues like self-esteem, letting go and discovering how to be true to oneself through the following groups:

'Forgive, Forget and Forward' (August – September 2006)

'Finding the Beauty Within' (October – November 2006)

'Collaborating with your true self' (April – June 2007)

The groups carried out at IWSS are regularly evaluated considering women's expressed views; perceived effectiveness and capacity of the program to deliver the activities. A cross-cultural framework is used when delivering the Women's Groups activities.

End of year celebration (December 2006) Women and children received presents, shared a meal, interacted with other women and re-connected with old friends during this event that has already become an IWSS tradition. About 50 women and children attended the celebration. The Body Shop provided gift packs for the women and The Lord Mayor's Community Trust Fund donated age-appropriate toys for the children.

Yeronga Young African Women's Program (March 2007) IWSS participated in a collaborative effort with services that included: Zig Zag, Othilas, QPASTT, ISIS and Yeronga SHS through the facilitation of three sessions of a 12 week program for young African women at Yeronga. The senior Sexual Assault worker presented with Zig Zag on the topics of "Healthy Relationships and Sexual and Domestic Violence." Approximately 18 young women attended each of the sessions and the feedback for the entire program was very positive.

Outreach Community Education Activities

IWSS Sexual Assault Program continued its role of providing community education to English language (AMEP) classes funded

by Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for all newly-arrived migrants and refugees. A total of 14 sessions were provided to approximately 885 students at the following locations: Ipswich TAFE – Bundamba campus, Bayside TAFE, Yeronga TAFE – Chelmer and Yeronga campuses, Moreton TAFE – Alexandra Hills and Mt Gravatt campuses, Brackenridge TAFE – Northpoint campus, Logan TAFE – Browns Plains campus, Southport TAFE and Milperra State High School.

The topics covered during these education sessions included information about services provided by IWSS, the rights of women and children in Australia, healthy relationships, definitions and Australian laws relating to sexual and domestic violence.

Training and Support to Other Service Providers

Workers from the Sexual Assault Program collaborated with other service providers to develop and present professional training on a range of topics to over 200 service providers and other professionals in southeast Queensland. IWSS is a unique women's organisation in that it incorporates services for women who have been subjected to both sexual and/or domestic violence. This allows workers from the IWSS Programs to develop and present training that addresses, in a holistic way, information relating to working cross-culturally ensuring appropriate response to women from NESB who have experienced violence. IWSS training events are developed to meet a range of different learning styles and include both participative and presentation-style instructional techniques. The following training sessions were custom-developed and facilitated to meet specific training needs:

- 'Working with Interpreters' with 4 workers at the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service.
- 'Cross-cultural work and working with interpreters' with 10 members of the University of Queensland Union.

- 'Understanding domestic and sexual violence and responding appropriately' – 2 sessions with 9 workers from Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT).
- 'Working cross-culturally' – 2 sessions with Family Planning Queensland. One of these sessions was presented to 18 health and bi-cultural workers and the other to 14 doctors and registered nurses.
- 'Issues and challenges when working with children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds' – presentation to 35 welfare and social work students at Griffith University.
- 'Women from NESB and sexual violence' – session presented to 21 participants from women's services at IWSS two-day cross-cultural training event.
- 'IWSS Sexual Assault Program' – presentation to the IWSS Forum participants (approximately 90 people).

This provides an overview of the formal training events facilitated by the IWSS Sexual Assault Program. Throughout the year staff has regularly provided informal instruction to other service providers who call or approach workers seeking support and information in their cross-cultural work.

Consultation / Networking

IWSS SA Program Open Day – IWSS Sexual Assault Program held an Open House Event during Sexual Violence Awareness Month in October. The event was well attended with approximately 30 service providers.

Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN) – IWSS Sexual Assault Program prioritised its involvement in QSAN in 2007. The senior sexual assault worker has attended each meeting, facilitated one day of the two day statewide meeting in March. The network provides an excellent opportunity to coordinate intra-sectorial collaborations and awareness raising activities, to highlight and discuss significant issues among peers, and to promote

services and activities. It is important for IWSS to have a voice at this forum to raise awareness around issues for women from NESB who have experienced sexual violence and to advocate for more accessible services and resources.

Multicultural Centre for Mental Health and Well Being (Harmony Place) – IWSS met with a project worker from Harmony Place to discuss and exchange ideas in relation to good practice models for the provision of community education to newly-arrived migrant and refugee communities.

Southern Area Health – A new position of Area Sexual Assault / Domestic & Family Violence coordinator for Southern Area Health has provided opportunities for IWSS to meet with Kate Gimson, who was informed about the work of IWSS. Discussion about the overlap of Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence, assessments, protocols and guidelines were also touched on.

Resource Development

The IWSS Sexual Assault Program continued to distribute widely information brochures and palm cards. In the 2006/2007 period the IWSS Sexual Assault Program distributed approximately 2300 brochures. This included 1000 Working with Interpreters brochures that were delivered to Queensland Police Service for distribution to all the participants of "Investigating Sexual Crimes" training held throughout 2007.

IWSS Sexual Assault Program reviewed and reprinted three IWSS brochures including the IWSS Service brochure and the brochures 'Working with Interpreters' and 'Myths and facts: women of non-English speaking backgrounds and violence.'

IWSS Sexual Assault Program received 1000 copies of 2 posters developed by Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN). IWSS contact details were affixed and the final product sent to over a hundred multicultural groups and organisations around Queensland.



"Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: A Human Rights Framework to Address Violence against Women"

*This year marked the organisation's **twentieth year of service delivery for women from non-English speaking backgrounds**, thus, providing a great opportunity to recognise the challenges and stories of resilience for women in breaking and voicing their experiences of violence in Australia. We were made witness by our past and present clients in their triumph over systemic, cultural and individual hurdles. It was also an opportunity to acknowledge the challenges experienced by IWSS over the years.*

The wisdom brought about by two decades of experience in the sector has also enabled IWSS to understand that the struggle against domestic and sexual violence against women from NESB has a long journey ahead. It was in this spirit that IWSS decided to have a celebration with a difference, where organisations and individuals within and beyond the women's sector could examine and discuss the issue of violence against women through a human rights framework with the aims of delivering practical resolutions to the acknowledgement of diversity in practice.

The forum entitled "Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: A Human Rights Framework to Address Violence Against Women" was held on the 9th and 10th of November 2006 at the Bardon Conference Centre with an attendance of up to 120 individuals. The event, funded by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, successfully mediated constructive discussion about issues that matter while engaging participants with a myriad of options such as prayer and reflection rooms, photo montage presentations and multicultural entertainment such as belly dancing and Ga ya geum performances.

IWSS would like to extend its sincere gratitude to all the individuals and organisations who contributed in ways that made this event as special as it has become.

Happy 20th birthday IWSS!

Emerging and Ongoing Issues for IWSS

Increased Workload

This has highlighted the need for ongoing discussion around case management, reflection of practice, issues of ongoing supervision and support for all workers. The complexity of the cases coming to the service is particularly noted. The added complexity tends to stem from changes to Family Law, access to support from the DV Unit at Legal Aid Queensland.

Complex Support Work

Supporting women who have experienced severe and on-going trauma throughout their lives continues to place pressure on the resources of IWSS. This is identified in the time required to support women and, recognising the potential impact on workers therefore, the resources required to provide opportunities to address these.

Within the counselling context, emerging issues have included the provision of support around very complex issues around child protection and family courts, critical and on-going safety concerns, and managing the impact of severe on-going trauma.

Women from NESB who have experienced violent trauma often have complex health needs – both related and unrelated to the violence they have experienced. They are also often isolated in Australia without the support of family or close friends, and may not have English language skills. Complex medical information is notoriously difficult to understand and doctors may not communicate thoroughly with patients. This experience is compounded significantly for women from NESB, making it difficult for women to make important decisions regarding their own health and well-being. At times, the advocacy role required to support women with complex health needs becomes a significant part of the support role that IWSS workers play in women's lives.

IWSS often supports women who are negotiating multiple interconnected legal processes, for example: applications for domestic violence protection orders, family law matters, criminal matters (assault) and immigration matters concurrently. IWSS workers observe multiple barriers experienced by women from NESB in negotiating legal processes in Australia. The role of IWSS workers is to seek to reduce these barriers by ensuring that women have access to appropriate legal advice and representation, and related court support when capacity permits. The complexity of legal issues in addition to recognised language, cultural and systemic barriers highlight the need for considered service delivery models to ensure equitable access and favourable outcomes and experiences with legal processes for women from NESB.

Emergency Crisis Accommodation

IWSS has observed an increasing number of SAAP funded domestic violence services in Brisbane that refuse to provide emergency accommodation to women and their children from NESB escaping domestic violence. Services are generally being refused in the following instances:

- Women without income or with limited income (e.g. Special Benefit);
- Women who do not have proficient English language skills and require interpreting services;
- Women with or without children; and
- Where women are requiring emergency accommodation after hours.

The role of advocacy is heightened for workers at IWSS as significant time and energy is invested in securing emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. One incident required up to 9 hours in advocacy before IWSS successfully secured accommodation. SAAP funded domestic violence services often report that they have limited resources available to employ



professional interpreters; house women without income and appropriately resource large families. IWSS continues to promote access and equity for women from NESB and the development of service protocols with domestic violence services. IWSS recognises that issues of adequate resourcing is impacting on the whole of the Domestic Violence sector and consistently advocates for due recognition by funding bodies.

Serial Sponsors and Sponsors of Concern

From data collected during service provision IWSS occasionally identifies Australian citizens or permanent residents who have been a Partner Visa sponsor on more than one occasion and where visa applicants are known to IWSS to have accessed the Domestic Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations.

IWSS recently learned that DIAC is introducing 'Sponsor of Concern' initiatives which would enable them to consider the criminal history of potential sponsors. Visa applicants currently undergo rigorous police and character checks prior to their visa being granted however to date there have not been any criminal or character checks on potential sponsors. These initiatives have the potential to restrict Australian citizens or permanent residents who have any criminal convictions in relation to child sex offences from sponsoring partners and children. This is a child protection measure in response to a relatively high number of paedophiles sponsoring women with children to come into Australia on a Partner Visa.

IWSS welcomes the introduction of the 'Sponsor of Concern' initiatives and we strongly advocate for their expansion to include those potential sponsors who have a criminal history in relation to offences against women such as sexual assault, assault, and domestic violence. This would not only afford greater protection to women but would reduce the possible incidence of child abuse as the link between domestic violence and child abuse is well documented.

Availability and Quality of Professional Interpreters

The availability of suitable interpreters in a number of languages has been low or non-existent including Fijian-Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Portuguese, Sudanese Arabic and Swahili. Quality of interpreters is extremely important when providing on-going therapeutic support in particular, but not restricted to, where there are often complex (and abstract) emotional, political and cultural issues. For some languages there may be only one interpreter available and this interpreter may not have the appropriate skills, or understandings of violence and its related trauma to adequately interpret. This makes counselling difficult and more resource-intensive but, more importantly, this may also impact on outcomes for the women we support.

Access by Women who are Refugees

IWSS Sexual Assault Program does not, by and large, receive referrals of women seeking support around their experiences of sexual assault within the refugee context for example sexual assault and/or rape that occurs during war, or is state-imposed or politically motivated, or that occurs during a woman's flight as refugee from her country of origin. Although IWSS Sexual Assault Program often works with women from refugee backgrounds, these women generally access IWSS for issues relating to their experiences of sexual violence *since settlement in Australia*. In some instances, where a trusting therapeutic relationship has been formed, refugee women may eventually raise issues of trauma experienced prior to arrival in Australia with their IWSS counsellor. Often they do not.

IWSS acknowledges that there may be many reasons why there are few referrals for women with experiences of war-related and/or politically motivated sexual assault. The issue does highlight the need for additional resources that target the special needs of women who are from refugee backgrounds and have experienced

'torture and trauma'. This is especially true when one considers the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Women at Risk Program. This Program was introduced in 1989 to meet the urgent resettlement needs of vulnerable women and their children who are without the traditional male head of household. Currently the quota for this program is approximately 10% of the total number of humanitarian entrants. Although there are some limited resources in Australia for responding to the support and counselling needs of survivors of torture and trauma, it is unclear how many refugee women access such services for gender-based violence and whether there is an acknowledgement of these women's special needs.

Database Development

There is a need for the development of a database that will offer extensive data collection and access to relevant information and statistics for IWSS and broader sectors. This identified need is still in its planning stage however, IWSS recognises the significant contribution such system will make in reporting for example client demographics.

Emergency Relief

IWSS managed the Body Shop Emergency Relief Funds for CWRG which are now expended. IWSS internal emergency relief funds are limited. This has in part, contributed to issues relating to emergency housing as refuge services have relied on access to the aforementioned funds and ongoing assistance from IWSS when providing accommodation to women without income. Women without income and women with limited income continue to be prioritised in allocating emergency relief. This assistance is often used to provide ongoing financial assistance to cover rental costs and providing packages of food.

Housing

Challenges are faced when assisting women to access medium to long term independent housing that is safe, secure and affordable. Transitional housing is scarce and women face lengthy waiting lists when accessing community rent schemes or other housing options. Women awaiting determination on their applications for permanent residency are no longer able to access Department of Housing or community rent schemes. Case management informs us that private rental is increasingly difficult for women to access due to the following factors: competitive selection processes for tenancy; high rental costs; lack of tenancy history; large families and discrimination against women from NESB.

Reduction of Service Delivery Hours

IWSS has undertaken a significant lobbying campaign to obtain appropriate levels of resourcing to continue to operate the Domestic Violence Program five days per week. Each year IWSS has seen a dramatic increase in the number of referrals to the service and in the complexity of issues experienced by women and their children from NESB escaping domestic violence. This year IWSS had to plan for the possibility of reducing service delivery hours in the event that additional funding could not be obtained.

An initial impact questionnaire was designed, distributed, collected and analysed to determine the possible effects of this change on key agencies and stakeholders. IWSS will be undertaking a regular survey of services upon any implementation of the aforementioned changes.

This year we met with key areas within the Department of Communities, including the Homelessness Team, the Violence Prevention Unit, Regional Management, the Director General Linda Apelt, and the Honourable Minister of Communities Warren



The Library

Pitt. Furthermore IWSS met with key stakeholders including representatives from Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ), the Ethnic Communities Council Queensland (ECCQ), the Domestic Violence Services Sector, and our local MP, State Treasurer and (as this document goes to print) recently appointed Queensland State Premier Anna Bligh.

IWSS recently learned that the Department of Communities may provide necessary funds to maintain current award wages for existing staff on a recurrent basis. This has been a significant achievement in our lobbying efforts and recognition of the valuable and complex work undertaken by staff in the DV Program. While this increase in funding will maintain current staff levels within the DV Program it has not addressed the increase in demand for the service (as evident in our annual statistics) and the ongoing issues of capacity for staff who manage an unsustainable workload.

IWSS is the only service in Queensland specifically funded to work with women from NESB who have or are experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence. Our geographical catchment is the wider Brisbane area however, we regularly receive referrals from women throughout the state. Additionally we receive frequent requests for the provision of information, resources, and professional training and development from services that are assisting women from NESB in relation to domestic and sexual violence throughout Queensland. The SAAP funded DV Program does not receive additional funding for these activities.

We continue to appeal to the Department of Communities for appropriate levels of funding to continue to provide quality support services to women and their children who are escaping domestic violence, and to effectively resource and support other services in responding appropriately to women from NESB.

The library resources were well utilised throughout the year by IWSS staff, students on placement with IWSS and project workers. There were also several requests for information or loans from other services working with domestic violence and sexual assault issues.

There are currently approximately 1,900 catalogued items consisting of books, annual reports, conference proceedings, articles from periodicals, books or the Internet, and a small number of videos, audio cassettes, CDs, CD-ROMs and DVDs. There is also a small periodicals collection of approximately 40 titles consisting mainly of newsletters from various organisations.

The main emphasis of the collection is on domestic and sexual violence particularly in relation to women, children and young people from NESB. There are also resources on multiculturalism, feminism, and social, health, legal, and human rights issues. Some recent resources reflect the organisation's interest and involvement in community development issues.

The country profiles collection which gives background information on many countries, as well as information on social, cultural and religious practices and women's issues, continues to be expanded.

A selection of resources in the library is available on the

Web at: www.iwss.org.au

The library is staffed by a librarian on:

Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Projects/Activities/Recognition

Inaugural Minister's Awards for Excellence in Workforce Development

IWSS was a finalist under the Excellence in Community Service – Culturally Inclusive Practice category. This timely recognition was made shortly after IWSS celebrated its 20th year anniversary of service to women from NESB.

IWSS maintains and supports an organisational culture that recognises its importance at all levels within the organisation. This includes management committee; affirmative action within the staff at IWSS; cross-cultural competencies; organisational policies and ongoing cross-cultural supervision and training of all staff.

Capacity Building Strategy

In 2006/2007 the organisational priority has been lobbying and advocacy efforts to ensure that the appropriate funding bodies and key stakeholders have been kept informed of the many and varied challenges for IWSS. The project worker has worked closely with the coordinator in this regard. A verbal assurance has been made by the Minister for the Department of Communities that the pay levels for workers in the Domestic Violence Program SAAP funded will be addressed as soon as possible. Although this should minimise staff recruitment and retention concerns, an acknowledgement and a resolution to the increasing caseloads of workers remains the organisational priority for IWSS as vicarious trauma and burnout of staff are a real threat.

The project worker continues to look at alternative ways to raise additional funds to meet the ongoing needs of women from NESB and their accompanying children and the significant increase in workloads. Other roles include enriching the organisational profile among relevant stakeholders.

Healthy Family Relationships Project

The 2006/2007 period saw IWSS enter into a collaborative partnership pilot project with ACCES Services Inc and Youth and Family Services in Logan. This collaboration is to develop and deliver a service to families of Sudanese and Somali backgrounds living in the Logan area over a two year period. The project in itself is a new initiative and looks at developing a model of practice in working with families

from these communities experiencing or being at risk of experiencing relationship issues.

IWSS input into this pilot project varies across different roles including member of the steering committee, advisory group and peer support in relation to cross-cultural practice and working with the issues of domestic violence. Another significant focus of IWSS contribution is to work with the Sudanese and Somali women in four women's groups over the two years.

The project is to be delivered over two years and has been divided into four parts where service is delivered to two groups of families from Sudanese backgrounds and two groups of Somali backgrounds. The program for the groups' sessions has been developed in consultation with the communities themselves and is to be externally evaluated and revised after completing each part.

IWSS has already delivered ten sessions to the first group of participants and has taken on the learning from the project as well as the participants' feedback. This feedback will be incorporated in the next group.

“Justice, Equity and Diversity – The criminal justice response to sexual violence in diverse communities”

In 2006 IWSS participated in the gathering of data for this research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) with funding from the Federal Office for Women. During the 2006/2007 financial year the project worker continued to provide input into the first and second drafts of the report and extensive feedback to the AIC regarding their process in the use of the data collected and AIC cross-cultural analysis in interpreting the results. IWSS participation in this project provided significant learnings around the importance of thorough cross-cultural frameworks in research. It has also reinforced and highlighted the highly competent framework IWSS continues to build on in relation to work with women from NESB experiencing violence.



“Building Links: Women in Motels” Project

Over 800 women and 971 children escaping domestic and/or family violence were placed in motels in 2005/2006 due to a lack in available emergency refuge accommodation. It was assessed that these women were very isolated and had limited access to support, counselling and information/referral services. This pilot project aimed to improve support to women who are placed in motels and was directly supported by DVConnect, BDVAS, Women’s House Shelta, Murri Sisters and IWSS. This project was externally evaluated by Dr Yvonne Brunetto (Griffith University) and Gillian Marshall (Project Coordinator). An evaluation report is now available. IWSS involvement in this project was crucial given the difficulties women from NESB experience when placed in motels. Our experience informs us that women are more likely to return to unsafe homes when placed in motels for any period of time.

West and Central African Women’s Project

With funding from the Brisbane City Council in 2006, IWSS undertook this pilot project. Its overall aim was to achieve more accessible services for women from West and Central Africa. It was hoped that this could be achieved through building the cross-cultural capacity of three mainstream non-government organisations and therefore facilitating greater access and equity in human service delivery to women from non English speaking backgrounds, in particular women from West and Central Africa. It was hoped that this would be achieved through capacity building activities within the three participating mainstream agencies. The tasks of the project included cross-cultural auditing, cross-cultural training, building of connections with communities, and the provision of group-work services within the participating agencies for women from West and Central Africa.

This West and Central African Women’s Project was successful in many ways with organisational cross-cultural auditing and training occurring. Unfortunately the limited time available for

the project made the formation of relationships between African women and the mainstream agencies difficult to achieve. This Project highlighted the necessity of undertaking thorough community development principles when undertaking the work of increasing access and equity for new and emerging communities. The well-anticipated project report was finalised in June 2007 and is available on request.

WESNET

Annabelle Allimant is the national NESB representative and attends WESNET meetings. IWSS’ involvement in this network informs the representation of issues for women from NESB, in particular those experiencing violence, and the individual and/or systemic barriers these women encounter.

Student and Work Placements

Two students have completed their placements at IWSS. A Community Welfare student from Moreton TAFE completed her nine-week placement and a third year Social Work student from The University of Queensland completed her seventeen-week placement. Both women participated in multiple activities within the Domestic Violence Program and demonstrated great enthusiasm, awareness, and self-reflection.

Protocol Development

IWSS promotes the development of service protocols with other agencies to assist in identifying and responding to barriers that may be experienced by women from NESB when accessing services. This year IWSS has met with the following agencies to develop and/or review service protocols:

- DVConnect
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)
- Working Against Violence Support Service (WAVSS)
- Women’s Legal Aid Queensland (WLAQ)

IWSS continues to foster a learning culture where staff is encouraged to further develop their knowledge and practice through participation in conference, information forums and training. This is achieved within the limited resources of the organisation. The following events were attended:

External Training

- ‘Burundian cultural seminar’ organised by Multilink.
- ‘Chinese Perspectives on Mental Health’ presented by Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre.
- ‘Countering the critics – A Seminar for the Women’s Community Sector.’
- ‘Family Law Forum’ presented by Dr Elspeth McInnes (National Council of Single Mothers and their Children) and Marie Hume (Abuse Free Contact Campaign).
- ‘Family Law and Domestic Violence’ presented by Womens’ Legal Aid and the DV Unit (LAQ).
- ‘Indian Perspectives on Mental Health’ presented by Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre.
- ‘Trauma Model Therapy – Treatment Techniques for Borderline Personality, Psychosis and Disassociation’ presented by Dr. Colin A. Ross.
- ‘Working with Dreams in Therapy’ presented by the Gold Coast Sexual Assault Service.
- ‘Working with Women with a Hearing Impairment’ presented by Deaf Services Queensland. Organised and hosted by Murri Sisters.

In-House Training / Presentations

- ‘Child Safety – Stage Three Amendments to Child Protection Act 1999’ presented by Sunni Dawson (South West Brisbane Community Legal Centre).
- ‘Cross Cultural Practice’ presented by Rashida Joseph.

- ‘Natural Therapies’ presented by Bronwynne and Stephanie (IWSS), demonstrating the role of natural therapies and their use in assisting women following trauma.
- ‘Responding to Women Who Disclose Experiences of Sexual Assault’ presented by the Sexual Assault team at IWSS.
- ‘Trafficking of Women’ documentary film ‘Trafficked’ by Luigi Acquisto, which featured Chris Payne (former Australian Federal Police) and examined the Australian Government’s appalling response to two Thai women who had been trafficked into sexual slavery in Australia, one of whom died in Villawood detention centre.
- ‘Welfare to Work Changes’ presented by Dung Yung Tran and Faith Dawson (Centrelink).
- ‘Women in Papua New Guinea (PNG)’ guest speaker Mary Soondrawu current president of the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW) in Papua New Guinea. Mary provided insight into issues affecting women in PNG and the strategies employed in addressing issues of violence, education, health and economic development for women in PNG.

In-House Staff and Team Reflection

All IWSS workers participated in seven formal staff reflections facilitated by an external facilitator – Jenny Gilmore. In addition, the Domestic Violence Program participated in eight structured and planned team reflections facilitated by the Crisis Support Team Leader. These peer reflections have provided opportunities for workers to reflect on the following areas:

- Communication and conflict within staff team.
- Complex trauma and intergenerational violence.
- Critical incidents – responding to women who engage in abusive or violent behaviour towards workers.
- Ethical issues in relation to giving and receiving gifts from women; dual relationships and contact with women outside of work; and ethical concerns arising in support work with women with complex health issues.



Publications

- Family law changes – compulsory mediation, role of relationship centres, and exemptions where there are allegations of domestic violence or child abuse.
- Immigration changes – the introduction of the ‘Independent Expert’ and review process for doubtful claims.
- Strategies for managing high workload and organisational change.
- Suicide and Self Harm – responding to women who disclose suicidal ideation and/or self harming behaviours; assessment processes and reflecting on emerging issues for workers in this area.
- The role of individual and systemic advocacy.
- Vicarious trauma and self care.
- Working with diversity in cultural practices in relation to parenting/child rearing.

Conferences Attended

- ‘Child Protection and Domestic and Family Violence Forum’ which showcased presentations from Prof. Chris Goddard and Dr Jennifer Smith on the impacts for children in living with intimate partner violence.
- ‘From Tolerance to Respect: Cultural Competence in Practice’ organised by the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association and National Ethnic Disability Alliance.
- ‘Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: A Human Rights Framework to Address Violence against Women’ a forum organised to celebrate IWSS’ twenty years of service.
- ‘Poverty, Prosperity and Progress: Ensuring the Inclusion of All Queenslanders’ QCOSS Conference.
- ‘Protect All Children Today (PACT) Conference’ – Key note speakers included Dr Caroline Taylor, Professor Freda Briggs, and Judge Kerry O’Brien.

Newsletter

In the last year, IWSS produced one IWSS Newsletter that provided information on a range of issues relating to women from NESB and their experience of violence. Over 250 hard copies were distributed to individuals and services around Queensland, and an electronic copy was emailed through various multicultural and women networks. Topics covered in the newsletter included:

- A woman’s experience with IWSS
- Child Abuse Statistics and Myths & Facts
- Country Profile: Women in Papua New Guinea
- Organisational considerations for working with women /people from NESB
- Providing practical support to women on temporary visas experiencing domestic violence
- Service Profile: Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre

Report on West and Central African Women’s Project

A report was prepared for Brisbane City Council outlining project objectives, methodology, challenges and outcomes upon conclusion of the ‘West and Central African Women’s Project: Building the capacity of mainstream non government organisations to respond appropriately to the needs of Women from West and Central Africa who have experienced domestic violence.’ This report is available on request.

Brief Impact Survey

IWSS developed a brief impact survey to assess the perceived effects of reduction in service delivery. The results reflected a resounding response from the refuge and women’s sector indicating that IWSS service delivery reduction would impact negatively on the sector’s ability to access support for women from NESB experiencing domestic violence.

Coordinator’s Report

In 2006-2007 IWSS maintained continued commitment to quality service delivery through reflective and accountable case management, community education and training, individual and systemic advocacy, network participation and consultation with key stakeholders. The specific focus remains awareness-raising around issues for women from NESB and violence.

Opportunities of collaborative work saw IWSS engage in a two-year pilot project with ACCES Services Inc. and Youth and Family Services from Logan to deliver information around healthy family relationships to families from Sudan (in 2007). This project is funded by Community Renewal. IWSS undertook a project with West and Central African Women and three mainstream services funded by Brisbane City Council. IWSS involvement in these projects highlights the commitment to address identified needs in the community and creatively broaden opportunities to work with multicultural communities.

The experiences we came to appreciate much more intimately and can look at as a critical need is adequate funding for appropriate resourcing, training and support for cross-cultural practice. We know that cross-cultural competencies and adequate access and equity principles and practice can be resource-intensive to set up and yet as we know from direct service delivery, it is vital in ensuring sensitive delivery of services to people from NESB. It also points to a proactive management and leadership of inclusive practices at all levels of an organisation that ensures a culture of access and equity within. These considerations are crucial to ensure that people especially women from NESB have options of attending services if needed where their individual needs can be met appropriately. Another project involving IWSS was the “Justice, Equity and Diversity: The Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence in Diverse Communities” research. This project

presented an opportunity to utilise IWSS specialist expertise in working with women from NESB and violence.

The period covered in this report has been highlighted by an increase in workload for workers in the Domestic Violence Program in particular. Due consideration and recognition has also been given to the limited hours of service delivery for the Sexual Assault Program and the capacity of its workers to achieve much with limited resources. This ‘everyday’ reality for IWSS posed management challenges of identifying, planning and implementing strategies to ensure support for workers to prevent burn-out and untimely departure from the organisation. This aspect of the work undertaken coupled with external gaps such as limited access to emergency accommodation, refusal to access refuge accommodation, processing of immigration matters, at times with no access to adequate interpreters, and inappropriate response by government and non-government services, amongst others, have placed significant strain on IWSS resources.

IWSS continued to engage with Department of Communities, including Minister Warren Pitt, in relation to financial recognition of the workload undertaken by the Domestic Violence Program and an urgent need to address pay levels of workers to ensure recruitment and retention of skilled workers.

This aspect of my role of managing and leading IWSS has placed me in a professional quandary of struggles as due consideration were given to the myriad of complexities. These certainly gave a sense of overwhelming challenges as we maintained and ensured service delivery to women and their children escaping domestic and/or sexual violence.

2006/2007 period covered in this report has been a contradiction of events. On one hand, we saw IWSS celebrate 20 years of direct



service delivery to women from NESB and their accompanying children escaping or breaking patterns of violence; we saw IWSS be a finalist in the Inaugural Minister's Award for Excellence in Workforce Development in the Culturally Inclusive Practice category; as demonstrated by this report the work undertaken points to continued growth and flexibility of IWSS to work within multicultural, domestic and sexual violence sectors. Juxtaposition for this period has been marked by systemic challenges. This is clearly identified by the unresolved issues of funding for professional interpreters for SAAP funded programs and the lack of recognition of the increased workload of IWSS in view of community demands. I assert this informed by Queensland's population growth – as we all know it's not a well kept 'secret'. A percentage of this increase in population stems, partly, through off-shore migration as well as documented evidence of internal migration from other states into Queensland. Such patterns have an impact on the capacity of services to continue to deliver the same level of service delivery for more people.

Organisational processes ensuring ongoing professional development of workers have continued to be maintained. IWSS management supports an organisational culture of learning. This culture is fostered and supported through internal mechanisms as well as attendance to external training opportunities as identified.

The human resources during 2006/2007 remained consistent. I thank all IWSS staff who share their commitment, passion, enthusiasm, flexibility and reflective work ethics in the day to day service delivery. The laughter and light humour at moments of dire crisis is what continues to hold teams of women that push through the significant challenges IWSS has seen during this period. This period also saw Priscilla and Bronwynne for part of the year

working in the West and Central African Women's Project – your contribution to IWSS is acknowledged.

The management committee of IWSS, in their voluntary roles, deserve a vote of thanks for their contribution and participation during the year. This period included Elvan Turak, Marguerite Cameron, Deborah Mitchell and Jennifer Osmond.

I acknowledge the ongoing funding by Queensland Health, Department of Family and Community Services and Department of Communities (SAAP). Other financial assistance received included: The Gambling Community Benefit Fund for the IWSS Forum and a donation from Minister Cummins/Multicultural Affairs Queensland; The Australian Institute of Criminology provided funds for the "Justice, Equity and Diversity: The Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence in Diverse Communities" Research; The Ross Divett Foundation. The Brisbane City Council – the Lord Mayor's Community Trust provided financial assistance for women without income, Foodbank Queensland vouchers, Christmas toys and Easter chocolates; The Brisbane City Council provided a grant to work with women from West and Central Africa; The Body Shop provided gifts which were distributed to women at the traditional End of Year Party. Donations of non-perishable food and toiletries from Minter Ellison staff (via CEO Challenge) to support Domestic and Family Violence Prevention month; donations of good from staff from KPMG; a financial donation, non-perishable food and toiletries from the Zonta Brisbane Breakfast Club; a financial donation from Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc. and the Panel Christmas Wrap Ltd. I thank every contribution that IWSS has received over this period of time, without the continued support of such organisations IWSS could not adequately meet the needs of women and their children in crisis.

This annual report has been put together with the contribution and assistance of Angelica, Beata, Carol, Christina, Stephanie and Vera – thank you.

My gratitude to the artist for generously permitting IWSS to use her personal artwork. It is an amazingly intimate reflection shown on the cover of the IWSS Annual Report 2007.

I thank all women who have accessed IWSS services whilst escaping domestic and sexual violence. It is their resilience and ongoing determination that continues to fuel our commitment to raise awareness of violence in the community.

Annabelle Allimant



Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service

For women of Non-English speaking backgrounds
A Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Service

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