

Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service

Annual Report 2010





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 (NESB) and their children.



Queensland Government





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Chairperson's Report

First I would like to acknowledge the previous Chairperson Zoe Rathus, who worked extremely hard on this management committee and provided clear strategic direction to the organisation. Zoe Rathus resigned from the management committee in March 2010, due to personal reasons. We saw her departure as a sad event as we lost an incredible advocate, passionate feminist and a great lawyer.

I accepted to be the chairperson for the remainder of the year and I must admit I did not think it would be such a challenging task. Returning to MWESS Inc after many years has been exciting and at times challenging. However the main priority for me as the Chairperson was to continue to contribute to the standing of this organisation in the non government and government sectors without losing the main perspective of the organisation, that is to provide support and services to women (and their children) from non-English speaking background experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence.

This year has seen many challenges particularly as a result of the pay equity decision. The organisation has historically been in a healthy position and therefore has been able to manage the increase in salaries without much reduction to its service delivery.

This certainly will be an issue in the coming years as the salary increases continue until 2013. This is an area on which I believe the incoming management committee needs to focus its energies.

The introduction of the Award and the changes in the industrial arena has meant that MWESS Inc will re-draft its certified agreement to reflect those changes without losing its previous conditions. Again, I believe this is a priority for the incoming management committee and the relevant staff.

Governance has been a delightful topic we have had to deal with and there is certainly much work that needs to be finalized. The most important aspects in my view have been the diversity of approaches to this very dry topic

The issues of interpreters and access to justice for women of non-English speaking backgrounds experiencing domestic and sexual violence have continued to be high on the agenda of the organisation. The involvement in key stakeholder meetings with non government and government agencies is very much part of the work of key staff and at times with great successes. The expectations are ever increasing, however the funds are static and I believe this is another great challenge for the organisation as a whole.



Regarding the funds received from government two major issues are a constant, one being the lack of growth funds in the SAAP funded program and the lack of future planning from Queensland Health about the sexual assault program. MWESS Inc sexual assault program was recently notified that the funding has been extended for another 12 months. This short term funding approach makes any long term planning difficult and it creates instability for the relevant staff. I believe this raises industrial issues for the organisation that require serious consideration.

This year, Annabelle Allimant and Stephanie Anne left the organisation and on behalf of the management committee I take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution to the organisation and wish them luck in their new ventures.

To my colleagues in the management committee, Angie, Donna, Elvan, Mitra, Meeta and Nera I thank them for their energy, commitment and support. It has been a pleasure working with such a diverse group of women.

I would also take this opportunity to make special mention of the work and commitment that Marguerite Cameron gave to MWESS Inc during many years. Marguerite was the elected Treasurer and

due to personal reasons she resigned from the management committee. Our gratitude for the many hours she spent in her role of Treasurer.

Thanks to all staff who day after day support and assist women and their children escaping from domestic and /or sexual violence.

A warm welcome back to Cecilia Barassi Rubio who after many years in Legal Aid Queensland and the Department of Communities returned to MWESS Inc in the position of Director.

My final words are to the women and children who have endured domestic and/ or sexual violence, my admiration for your resilience and courage and my hope that you find safety and justice.

Raquel Aldunate

December 2010





Management Committee Profiles

Raquel Aldunate Chairperson

Raquel is originally from Chile. She graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Social Work in 1988. She is currently employed as Director at the Refugee and Immigration legal Service (RAILS). Prior to this she worked at Women's Legal Aid, Legal Aid Queensland; the Violence Prevention Team, Department of Communities and at the Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS).

Raquel has participated in many committees at community, State Government and Commonwealth Government levels including the Qld SAAP CAP Ministerial Advisory Arrangement (MAA), the Queensland Domestic Violence Council, the SAAP Ministerial Advisory Committee, and the Commonwealth National Council of Violence Against Women.

She has authored numerous papers, some of which have been published. Raquel's involvement with IWSS dates back to the origins of the organisation. Raquel was the Coordinator of IWSS for approximately 14 years between 1988 and 2002.

Angela Mackay Vice Chairperson

Angie moved to Australia from South Africa with her family in 1992. She then moved to Brisbane to study and became a social worker in 2008. Angie has been working as a social worker in various Centrelink offices since July 2009 and before she commenced work at Centrelink she was employed at Children by Choice.

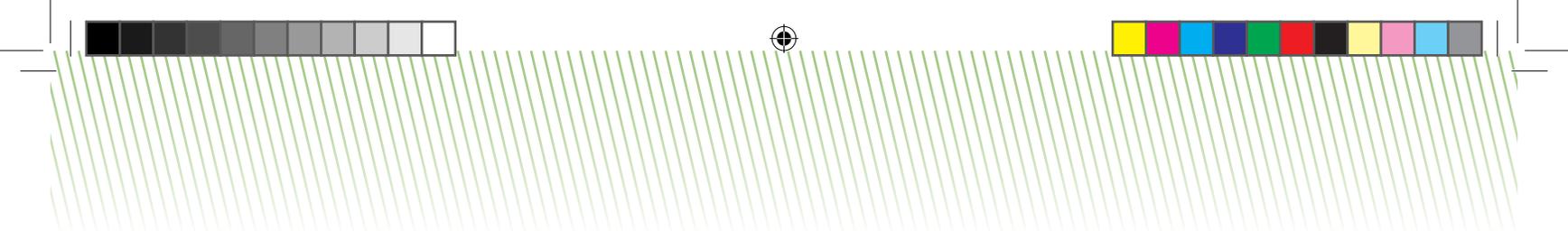
Angie is passionate about women's rights and working with people experiencing domestic violence. Angie is interested in creative therapies such as music therapy, and hopes to do further study in this area. Angie loves travelling and hopes to do a lot more of it soon.

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 and 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.



Donna Justo Treasurer

Donna has been the Director of the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Inc for the past four and a half years, is a current member of the Qld Domestic and Family Violence Strategy and Implementation Group, and is the Convenor of the Qld Domestic Violence Services Network. She first began working in the refuge movement in Qld in the late 70's before paid work in this area. As part of her working career she has managed agencies working alongside women with mental health, alcohol and drug and domestic violence/sexual violence related issues, and children having children. She has learnt much from these women, and the women she has worked alongside.

Donna is a feminist author and activist and has worked extensively in Australia, in Cape York and the Gulf country; the UK, Africa and South America. Donna has attended the last three International Congresses on Women, (Nairobi, Beijing and New York) including representing WWDA – Women with Disabilities Australia at the UN in New York in 2000.

Her formal qualifications are in the humanities, community service management and training areas. It is from this experience and practice wisdom that she co-authored the recent publication by Federation Press entitled, 'Domestic Violence: Working with Men Research, Practice Experiences and Integrated Responses'.

Nera Komaric Member

Nera is a Bosnian woman born in Croatia simply because the hospital was on the other side of the river. Nera settled as a refugee in Australia in 1994 due to the war in Former Yugoslavia where she worked as a lawyer.

Upon completing an Advanced Diploma in Community and Human Services and a Masters degree in Population Health, Nera worked in the area of refugee health (QPASTT, Social Work School UQ and Psychology Department Griffith).

Nera returned to Europe in 2001 to work on the development and implementation of policies and strategies against trafficking in human beings especially women and children for sexual exploitation. This work involved travelling between many countries and working closely with European Commission, European Women's Lobby, OSCE, USAID, government departments and other international and national organizations.

Nera is currently working for the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) as the state-wide Chronic Disease Coordinator for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities funded under the Queensland Health Strategy for Chronic Disease 2005-2015.





Mitra Khakbaz Member

Mitra is the Executive Manager Community Engagement at Multicultural Development Association. Mitra has completed her Masters in Applied Linguistics, her Post Graduate Diploma in Community Development and Social Policy and her Masters in Social Administration with the School of Social Work at the University of Queensland. Prior to this role Mitra has been the Coordinator for the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development with the University of Sunshine Coast.

Mitra has worked in various positions both in the community and education sectors and has managed various projects across Queensland with diverse communities focusing on regional settlement, parenting across cultures, families and cultural interface, youth engagement, women's empowerment, delivering cultural competency and anti-racism training. Mitra has also been a director with DVConnect state-wide domestic violence services since 2002 and is committed to women and children's rights.

Mythilee (Meeta) Tjer Member

Meeta is a feminist of Indian background from Malaysia, who has worked for over 25 years in the struggle for women's human rights.

Meeta has worked in paid and unpaid roles in community, civil society and government roles in the areas of violence against women, women's health and women's human rights, including in the role of Director, Domestic Violence Resource Centre for 8 years. She has also served on a number of violence against women/ domestic violence advisory forums both at state and federal government levels in Australia.

She is a strong advocate on the rights of refugee and non-English background women and has also served as an Executive Council Member in the Association of non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia. Meeta has served in various capacities on the MWESS Inc. Management Committee for over 10 years cumulatively. She presently works in the Queensland Government

Zoe Rathus and *Marguerite Cameron* were Executive members of the Management Committee during the year and have contributed to the management of IWSS prior to their resignation in 2010. IWSS would like to thank Zoe (former Chairperson) and Marguerite (former Treasurer) for their dedication and support. We wish them good health and happiness.





IWSS Objectives And 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 (NESB) and their children. IWSS objectives are:

- To advocate for the elimination of domestic violence amongst NESB communities in Queensland through the provision of information, support, counselling, crisis intervention and social welfare services.
- To facilitate the empowerment of women from NESB particularly those in situations of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, through the provision of information, counselling, support and social welfare services.
- To increase cultural sensitivity and appropriateness of response within the community generally, and amongst service providers specifically, to NESB communities, particularly women.
- To work in accordance with feminist principles and to promote the concepts of cultural, racial, gender and class equality.

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 NESB 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 socioeconomic class, age, ethnicity, race and physical and intellectual disability.
- Women of NESB 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 can ultimately become self-sufficient with support, and can attain full participation in society.



IWSS Services

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 information, referral, crisis support, counselling, case management, advocacy, court support, emergency income relief, and practical and emotional support.

IWSS staff assists women and their children of NESB with access to:

- Safe, secure emergency accommodation;
- Income support and/or emergency relief;
- Health care and counselling;
- Legal information and representation, including specialist family law and migration law assistance; and
- English classes and further educational opportunities.

IWSS acknowledges the range of difficulties experienced by women and their children from NESB in accessing information and culturally appropriate services and in discussing the difficult subjects of domestic and sexual violence. IWSS operates with a holistic model in response to the diverse needs faced by women from NESB and provides advocacy and support to women to negotiate legal, immigration, housing, child protection and health care systems.

In addition IWSS undertakes community education and engagement on issues relating to domestic and sexual violence with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities. IWSS produces resources such as fact sheets and brochures in English

and various community languages to assist both service providers and CaLD communities.

IWSS has operated in Queensland for twenty four years and is a lead agency in providing specialist knowledge and advice in relation to culturally inclusive practice when responding to issues of violence against women from NESB. IWSS supports sector development to ensure culturally sensitive and responsive service provision to women from NESB through the provision of information, resources, community education and professional development training activities to community groups and service providers in Queensland.

IWSS operates on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday (Wednesday Closed) from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and 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



Staff Profile

The **Immigrant Women's Support Service** employs women from CaLD backgrounds who possess relevant qualifications and experience in the provision of support services to women and their children of NESB who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual violence.

IWSS core staff speak:

Arabic	Bahasa Malaysia
Cantonese	English
German	Hakka
Hebrew	Hindi
Mandarin	Polish
Russian	Sinhalese
Spanish	Tagalog
Vietnamese	

IWSS staff receive professional development, training and supervision that include cross-cultural crisis support work, counselling and community education; feminist practice responses to domestic violence and sexual assault; and working effectively with professional interpreters.

IWSS Domestic Violence Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAp)

Statistical Data from
1st July 2009 - 30th June 2010

Total Number of Clients	451
Ongoing Clients as of 1/07/2009	63
Number of New Referrals	388
Number of One-Off Assistance Provided*	269
Number of Accompanying Children	429

*One-Off Assistance is where detailed information and crisis support is provided to women in relation to domestic violence over the telephone. Domestic violence in CaLD communities is significantly under-reported. Women from NESB experience significantly more barriers in reporting domestic violence and in accessing relevant information, legal advice, and support services. Research also indicates:

- Women from NESB are less likely to receive appropriate assistance when they are trying to leave a violent relationship (Dimopoulos and Assafiri 2004); and
- Immigrant and refugee women are more likely to be murdered as a result of domestic violence exposing a heightened need for responsive service provision and effective legal protection (FaHCSIA 2009).

IWSS telephone assessments and the provision of accurate and relevant information is essential in ensuring women are able to make informed choices in relation to their experiences of domestic violence.

Main Presenting Issues:

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

Other Enquiries

Each year IWSS receives enquiries from other professionals, government and non-government organisations, media, and community members. The nature of these enquiries is often diverse and this year has included:

- Requests for information on IWSS services
- Domestic and family violence information
- Referrals to specific support services for women from NESB
- How to engage professional interpreting and translating services in particular interpreting in legal/Court environments
- Immigration and citizenship information
- Visa types and conditions
- Refugee and asylum seeker information
- Preparing statutory declarations
- Income support and Special Benefits
- Community information and social support networks
- Legal advice

- Court support
- Accommodation services/homelessness
- Health and mental health services
- Multicultural services
- Settlement support
- Torture and trauma
- Child support services
- Employment and training assistance
- Education and overseas skills recognition
- Volunteering
- IWSS resource orders
- Donations, and requests for emergency relief.

Clients of the Domestic Violence Program have come from the following countries:

Afghanistan	Argentina	Australia
Austria	Azerbaijan	Bangladesh
Brazil	Burma	Burundi
Cambodia	Chile	China
Columbia	Croatia	Democratic Republic of Congo
Ecuador	Egypt	Estonia
Ethiopia	Fiji	France
Germany	Guinea Bissau	Hong Kong
Hungary	India	Indonesia

Iran	Iraq	Japan
Kenya	Korea	Laos
Lebanon	Liberia	Lithuania
Marshall Islands	Mexico	Mozambique
New Zealand	Nigeria	Pakistan
Papua New Guinea	Peru	Philippines
Poland	Portugal	Russia
Scotland	Serbia and Montenegro	Singapore
Solomon Islands	Somalia	South Africa
Spain	Sri Lanka	Sudan
Syria	Taiwan	Thailand
Togo	Tonga	Uganda
Ukraine	United Kingdom	United States of America
Vietnam	Zambia	Zimbabwe

Professional Training Provided by Domestic Violence Program

- “Family Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations” at Multicultural Development Association – developed and delivered by IWSS and RAILS.
- Information session presented to Family Law solicitors at Legal Aid Queensland on:
 - Information about Immigrant Women’s Support Service (IWSS)



- Barriers for women from NESB in accessing services
- Use of professional interpreters in the legal and court context
- Cross cultural communication
- Role and limitations of support workers
- Solicitors and support workers working collaboratively
- Training session delivered in collaboration with IWSS Sexual Assault Program to the staff at the Children by Choice on topics:
 - Who are women from NESB?
 - Experiences of migration and settlement;
 - Barriers experienced by women of NESB;
 - Cross-cultural competence;
 - Identifying challenges in responding to issues of violence in a cross cultural context, and
 - Reflecting on feminism and its practice principles and empowerment.

Staffing of the Domestic Violence Program

The Domestic Violence Program is staffed by three part-time Crisis Support Workers, a part-time Coordinator, a full-time Crisis Support Administrator, and is supported by the full-time Director of IWSS.

Crisis Support Administrator

The administrator undertakes all administrative duties including the receipt of calls to the service, identification of crisis matters and, where appropriate referral to outside agencies; maintain administrative records and reporting systems; maintain appropriate petty cash and financial systems; collect and collate

statistical data; maintain adequate levels of stationary, equipment and other supplies; and orientation of new staff members of office procedures.

Crisis Support Workers

Crisis Support Workers provide the majority of direct client work, case work and case management with women accessing the Domestic Violence Program. This support includes the provision of accurate and relevant information, crisis support, referral, case management, individual and systemic advocacy, limited court support, preparation of support letters and other documentation, support with immigration and other legal issues, and emotional support.

Coordinator of Domestic Violence Program

The Coordinator is responsible for the overall service delivery of the Domestic Violence Program. This includes but is not limited to, the provision of crisis support and complex case management with women; referrals to other agencies and services; supervision of staff and students on placement at IWSS; evaluation of service delivery; professional development of staff; development of resources and training; and ongoing monitoring of the program. The Coordinator undertakes some direct support work and case management with clients. The Coordinator also participates in key networks and is actively involved in systemic advocacy.

Director

The Director oversees the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs at IWSS as well as other projects. She is responsible for the overall human resource management, supervision of senior workers, financial management, and day to day management and leadership of IWSS.

IWSS Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program (SASP)

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 and over who are from 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.

Objectives of the 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 professional interpreting services.
- Provision of community education to community and CaLD 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 professional development and training activities 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 written information and resources to women and services in Queensland. IWSS resources are 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 from 1st July 2009 - 30th June 2010

Total number of clients	82
New clients	43
One-off assistance provided*	14
Advocacy Support**	67
Counselling support sessions provided	380
Community education sessions provided	75
Groups sessions	6

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

** **Advocacy Support** refers to advocacy activities that have required significant worker time and resources. This includes but is not limited to writing court reports and support letters, individual advocacy to ensure appropriate service responses, and general systemic advocacy where injustices have occurred. As a result of the many barriers that women from NESB experience when accessing Australian services and systems, advocacy is a necessary and integral part of the work undertaken by Counsellor/Advocates. The statistics provided here refer only to significant activities and do not include the many instances of individual and systemic advocacy that is undertaken by IWSS staff on a day to day basis in all of their interactions with women and the multicultural and mainstream service sectors.

Case management/counselling with women from NESB have included the provision of appropriate and accessible information regarding mental and physical health issues identified within the

support context. Counsellor/Advocates have regularly supported individual women with access to doctors, hospitals and/or specialist mental health services. IWSS Counsellor/Advocates have been employed as experienced and skilled in the appropriate use of interpreters in counselling and/or have received appropriate training in this area.

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 partner relationships. In fact, 13 of the 43 new referrals received, came from the Domestic Violence Program. Other referrals were received from Department of Child Safety, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Queensland Police Service, hospitals, multicultural services, women's shelters, migration agents, TAFE teachers, friends and clients themselves.

Clients of the Sexual Assault Program have come from the following countries:

Burundi	Cameroon	China
Columbia	El Salvador	Eritrea
Fiji	Holland	India
Indonesia	Iraq	Japan
Korea	Kuwait	Lebanon
Liberia	Lithuania	Malaysia
Nepal	Papua New Guinea	Pakistan
Philippines	Portugal	Russia
Spain	Sudan	Syria

Thailand	Uzbekistan	Vietnam
West Papua	Zimbabwe	

IWSS Women's Group

IWSS Women's Group is a core component of the service delivered by the Sexual Assault Program. The purpose of the Women's Group is to provide support to women from NESB who have experienced sexual violence and/or domestic violence. The aim also is to facilitate empowerment through provision of information delivered in an all-female environment, characterised by safety and trust. The group provide the space for women to share stories, build their social support networks and learn new skills. Furthermore, it is a space where women's voices and knowledge are validated and cultural diversity is celebrated. The group work also enables women to connect with other women, thereby reducing the sense of isolation and increasing opportunities for mutual support and social connection. This is essential as NESB women often have limited or no family and community support in Australia. Childcare, lunch and assistance with transport are provided where required.

The program delivered during last financial year was developed and delivered by an IWSS counsellor.

Reunion of the "Finding Beauty Within" Group

This group session was to facilitate a follow up and "catch up" opportunity for the women who participated in a group work program delivered in IWSS in the first semester of 2009.

"Confidently Myself" Group

The main theme of the women's group program for the second

semester of 2009 was 'confidence'. The group sessions were open to all women from NESB who have experienced DV and/or SA. There was no restriction and/or commitment required from women and they could come to any or all the sessions as desired. The open approach to participating was taken in recognition of women's situation and obligations that are unpredictable at times of crisis and often require women to attend various appointments.

Women's End of Year Party

The end-of-year party for all women who have been in contact with IWSS was held in December 2009 and was a great success with around 30 women attending and 20 children. This event is a wonderful opportunity for IWSS staff to spend some time with women who have accessed IWSS services throughout the year.

Outreach Community Education Activities

The community education strategy includes outreach to the Adult Migrant English Programs (AMEP) where newly migrated women from NESB learn English. This strategy allows for the introduction of the women services available in our community and provides an opportunity for constructive discussions around the concepts of equality in relationships, and information regarding sexual assault and domestic violence.

All community education content is developed and informed by an empowerment framework and has as its purpose to increase the capacity for participants to make fully informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

It is the IWSS experience of working with women from NESB for over 24 years that underlines the community education component as essential for immigrant women. This has been

recognised and upheld as crucial part of the Sexual Assault Program service delivery.

During the last financial year, the following Community Education (CE) activities were provided:

- One CE session was provided to 70 NESB women attending AMEP classes at the Bracken Ridge TAFE.
- Two CE sessions were delivered to 60 NESB students attending AMEP classes at Yeronga TAFE.
- One CE session was provided to 27 NESB students attending AMEP classes at the Brisbane North Institute of TAFE in Caboolture.
- One CE session was provided to 33 NESB women attending AMEP classes at Brisbane South Institute of TAFE at Alexandra Hills.

In addition to community education in different TAFE institutions, we also provided information to groups of NESB women accessing neighbourhood centres and other services.

- An information session was provided to six NESB women attending a group-work at the Maroochydore Neighbourhood Centre.
- An information session was provided to two NESB women attending Taiwan Community group for women. This session was organised in collaboration with Multicultural Centre for Mental Health and Well-being AKA Harmony Place.
- One CE session on the topics of sexual and domestic violence and the rights of women in Australia was provided to 12 NESB women at the Islamic Women's Association Queensland.



Professional Development and Training Provided by Sexual Assault Program

Working with CaLD communities, particularly women from NESB, requires workers to engage in continuing professional development to ensure the development of ethical, sensitive and responsive practices. IWSS is a unique organisation as we incorporate services for women on both sexual assault and domestic violence. This allows IWSS staff to develop and present training that addresses, in a holistic way, information on working cross-culturally to ensure an appropriate response to women from NESB who have experienced all forms of violence. Facilitators of IWSS training have demonstrable experience in cross cultural practice and feminist support work. They share some of the knowledge, skills, and practice wisdom gained over many years of service delivery to women in Queensland. Facilitators use multiple learning tools to engage participants in critical analysis, skill development and ongoing reflection on their work in responding to issues of violence.

IWSS training activities are developed to meet a range of different learning styles and often include both participative and presentation-style instructional techniques. 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. The following sessions provide a snapshot of customised sexual assault training delivered by IWSS Sexual Assault Program in this reporting period:

- An educative written response and resources were provided to the Victim Support Services in Western Australia on appropriate response in working with NESB victims of sexual assault.
- Two days training was delivered to six staff from Women's House Shelta. The training included: working with diversity; and cross-cultural communication: working with interpreters.
- Two training sessions were delivered to 19 staff from Women Legal Service. The training included: IWSS services; sexual violence and working with women from NESB; and working with interpreters.
- An education session was delivered to 16 students completing a Diploma of Community Services at the Bracken Ridge TAFE.
- A training session was provided to 40 Police Liaison Officers at the Upper Mount Gravatt police station.
- A training session was delivered to 15 Settlement Support Workers in Logan.
- Training and resources were prepared and distributed to a number of chambers in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution.
- Two days training was delivered to six workers from Mary and Martha's Women's Refuge. The training included: working with diversity; and cross-cultural communication: working with interpreters.
- An education session was delivered to 15 Service Providers from the Sunshine Coast Area attending the Cultural Connections meeting at Nambour.
- A training workshop was provided to 30 Service Providers on the topic: Using translated resources when working with women from NESB. This training workshop was part of IWSS new Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource launch in which over 50 participants attended.



Additionally IWSS staff has regularly provided more informal information and training to other service providers who call or approach workers for support and information in their cross-cultural work.

Staffing of the Sexual Assault Program

The Sexual Assault Program is staffed by two part-time Counsellor/Advocates, a part-time Sexual Assault Administrator, a part-time Librarian, and a part-time Coordinator, and is supported by the full-time Director of IWSS. All workers have experience in working cross-culturally and in supporting women in matters of sexual violence.

Sexual Assault Administrator

The Sexual Assault Administrator ensures that the administrative functions of the program are maintained to a level that ensures that the objectives of the Sexual Assault Program are able to be met by service delivery staff.

Counsellor/Advocates

Counsellor/Advocates undertake the important role of providing much needed support and counselling to women from NESB who have experienced, or are affected by sexual violence. Additionally, the Counsellor/Advocates provide community education and professional training to a range of professionals, community and multicultural groups.

Coordinator of Sexual Assault Program

The Coordinator is responsible for the overall service delivery of the Sexual Assault Program. The Coordinator oversees and coordinates all program activities, maintains the development of IWSS information resources and organisational policy, actively

engages in systemic advocacy, and ensures the Sexual Assault Program maintains its accountability obligations.

Director of IWSS

The Director oversees the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Programs at IWSS as well as other projects. She is responsible for the overall human resource management, supervision of senior workers, financial management, and day to day management and leadership of IWSS.



IWSS Networking

Networking is highly valued as an important component of raising awareness of issues for women from NESB who have experienced violence. IWSS staff, from both the Domestic Violence and the Sexual Assault Programs has taken part in a number of network opportunities with service providers, organisations and individuals representing various government departments. This has meant flexibility and ongoing prioritising of a wide range of important events. Networking provides 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.

During the last financial year IWSS has networked with over 60 services representing various sectors across Australia. IWSS wishes to extend its gratitude to all those services and their respective sectors for the learning offered, continual support and collaboration. A particular thank you is given to RAILS, DVConnect, WDVCAN, QSAN, QDVSN, MCPWG, CWRG, WLAQ, WLS, MDA and ACSSA for their unwavering support and dedication to work with NESB women who have experienced violence.

Protocols 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:

BDVAS	BRISSC
DVConnect	Domestic Violence Unit LAQ
RAILS	WLAQ
Windana	

- “Putting Safety First Forum” – Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) to examine interaction of domestic violence, family law and child protection legislation in Australia.
- Australian Law Reform Commission Family Violence Inquiry Round Table with Commissioner Rosalind Croucher.
- Consultation for the Review of the Domestic Violence and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 – Department of Communities.
- Consultation for the Review of the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 – Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group.
- Consultation for the development of the NGO Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Australia – YWCA and Women’s Legal Services Australia.
- Consultation for the Development of Legal Protection for Counselling Notes in Queensland – Queensland Attorney General.
- Victims Link Up to Victims Financial Assistance and Services Scheme (VFASS).

- Consultation for the Development of a Training Package for New Workers in SASPP Funded Services – Queensland Health and Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV).
 - Consultation for the Review of the KPMG Report – Spall and Watters and Queensland Health.
 - Consultation for the Review and Development of a Multicultural Action Plan – Department of Communities.
 - Community Forum on Responding to Child Safety Issues within CaLD communities – Multicultural Child Protection Working Group.
 - Consultation for the Review of the Queensland Government Multicultural Policy – Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ).
 - ‘Radio Stars’ for a day on Radio 4EB during the Women’s Profile to talk about issues of domestic violence within CaLD communities and its impact on women from NESB.
 - Consultation for the Development of a National Practice Model for Family Law Mediations in Instances Involving Domestic violence – Women’s Legal Service (WLS).
 - Integrated Skills Development Strategy (ISDS) Regional Workforce Development Survey.
- Braaf on financial barriers for women escaping domestic and family violence in Australia.
- “Promoting Safety – Embracing Diversity” – Brisbane Multicultural Summit.
 - “Changing Systems and Accountability for Women’s Safety” – Domestic Violence Symposium TAVAN Institute.
 - “Working Across Boundaries: Meeting the Needs of CaLD clients in SAAP” – SAAP Conference.
 - “Providing Practical Support to Women Who Are Temporary Visa Holders in Australia Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence” – DVCAN Statewide Conference.
 - “Interpreters in the Court: The Role of Interpreters in Court Settings; Issues Observed in Practice; and Using the Review of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 to Ensure Appropriate Engagement of Interpreters in Court and Legal Proceedings” – DVCAN Statewide Conference.
 - Multicultural Forum Day at Sunshine Coast. The event provided opportunity for raising issues for NESB women experiencing violence, reflection on principles of cross-cultural work and promoting IWSS services.
 - “Referral Pathways Project Working Party” – Office for Homelessness, Department of Communities.
 - “Family Wellbeing Partnership Forum” – Department of Communities.

Conferences/Forums

IWSS staff presented papers at the following conferences / forums during this reporting period:

- “Counting the Cost, Building Capacity” – Policy Forum organised by the ADFVC in Sydney. This was a formal presentation of research findings developed by Rochelle



Submissions

IWSS prepared the following submissions to State and Commonwealth Governments that are available to MWESS members on request:

- “Submission to the Queensland Government Review of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989”;
- “Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission Family Violence Inquiry”; and
- “Submission to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Assisting Temporary Visa Holders Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence in Australia”.

Resource Development and Distribution

IWSS Sexual Assault Program prints and distributes a number of different information resources for people in the community in a range of different languages. This includes:

- “Sexual Assault Information” palm cards in English, Arabic, Chinese, Serbian, Romanian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese.
- “Sexual Assault Information” brochures in English, Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Croatian, Farsi, Filipino, Japanese, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.
- “What is Counselling and How Can You Access It?” brochures in Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Farsi, Filipino, French, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese.
- “Information for Mothers Whose Children Have Been Sexually Abused” brochures in English, Filipino, Russian, Spanish and Thai.

- “Consenting Sexual Activity in a Relationship or Marriage” brochure in English, Chinese, Filipino, Serbian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese.
- IWSS service brochure in English and includes information in Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Russian, Thai, Farsi and Filipino.

The Sexual Assault Program continues to widely distribute information brochures, palm cards, IWSS poster and other written resources. This reporting period IWSS distributed over 2900 brochures, 24 IWSS posters and 28 manuals on “Working with Women of the Sudanese and Burundian backgrounds: Practise Reflections”.

IWSS has a website (www.iwss.org.au) where access to printed brochures in a number of different community languages is provided. Additionally IWSS staff have participated in the development of the following resources:

- New Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource available in English and 15 community languages.
- “Women from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds: Considering the Impact of Violence on Health and Settlement” article prepared by the Director of IWSS for Women’s Health Network Newsletter.



IWSS Library

During the past year the library resources were once again well utilised by IWSS staff and students on placement with IWSS, and training in the use of the library and the on-line catalogue were provided to newcomers.

There are currently over 2,500 catalogued items consisting of books, annual reports, conference proceedings, articles, and a small number of videos, audiocassettes, CDs, CD-ROMs and DVDs. There is also a small periodicals collection consisting mainly of newsletters from various organisations. The main focus of the collection is on domestic violence and sexual abuse, particularly in relation to women, children and young people from NESB. There is also material dealing with cross-cultural issues, counselling, multiculturalism, feminism, family relationships, housing and legal matters.

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

The library resources are available to the following:

- IWSS staff and committee members
- Staff of women's refuges and domestic violence and sexual assault services in Qld
- Students and other interested persons

IWSS staff can access the collection at any time, but others must make prior arrangements as the library is staffed by a librarian on Thursdays only, from 9am to 1pm.

A selection of resources available in the library can be found online at: www.iwss.org.au





Professional Development and Training Of JWSS Staff

External Training

- Advanced Narrative Therapy – Lighthouse Resources at Kyabra Community Association.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).
- Children’s Issues in the Context of Family Law – Cooper Grace Ward Lawyers.
- Effective Advocacy Skills and Strategies for Advocacy – Australian Women’s Coalition.
- Family Law – Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ).
- Narrative Therapy – Lighthouse Resources at Kyabra Community Association.
- Project Plan to Empowerment – Ricky Hunter.
- Responding to People in Crisis Using a Strengths Approach – Lighthouse Resources at Kyabra Community Association.
- Supervision: Facilitating Conversations of Learning – Lighthouse Resources at Kyabra Community Association.
- Tenancy Law Training – Tenants Union of Queensland.
- Tongan Cultural Information Session – Multilink.
- Working with Complex Torture and Trauma – QPASTT
- Traumatic Attachment and Affect Dysregulation – Delphi Centre
- What’s Love Got to Do with It: Trauma and Attachment Theory in the Context of Domestic & Family Violence, Integrating Theory, Practice and Experience – Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service (CRDVS).

In-House Training / Presentations

- Special Benefits for Women on Provisional Partner Visas – Centrelink.
- CCP/CAS Program– International Organisation (IOM).
- Islamic Religious Principles and Beliefs and Working Appropriately with Muslim Women in Relation to Issues of Violence – Shaima Khan.
- Advocacy with Women within the Child Safety System – South West Community Legal Service.
- Trafficking of Women and Children – Australian Federal Police.
- Working with Women on Issues of Suicide and Self-Harm – Zig Zag Young Women’s Resource Centre Inc.
- Australian Services Union, Wage Equity Campaign and Membership – Queensland Services Union (QSU).



Staff and Team Reflection

IWSS staff participated in 8 formal staff reflections facilitated by an external facilitator, Jenny Gilmore. We would like to thank Jenny for her ongoing support throughout the year. In addition, the DV Program participated in 6 structured and planned team reflections facilitated by the Coordinator of the Domestic Violence Program. These peer reflections have provided opportunities for workers to examine and reflect on the following topics:

- Enhancing access and equity.
- Feminist practice within a cross-cultural context.
- Complex case management with women from NESB.
- Assisting temporary visa holders whose visa falls outside the scope of the Family Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations.
- How to meet the increasing need for ‘Competent Persons’ statutory declarations and migration assistance.
- The impact of globalisation on women: changing migration trends.
- Enhancing worker safety and security in responding to issues of violence.
- Managing change within an organisation.
- Maintaining a supportive and reflective work environment.
- Reflection using the “Group as a Human Body” activity.
- Review of IWSS objectives and philosophy.

Conferences Attended by IWSS Staff

- “Changing Systems – Saving Lives” –TAVAN Institute.
- “Challenging the Silence” – Peakcare.
- “Reclaiming the Agenda: How Will Women’s Voices Be Heard in Courtrooms across Queensland in 2010?” – DVCAN 6th Statewide Conference





New Multilingual Domestic Violence Resources

IWSS are proud to announce the recent launch of our new multilingual domestic violence resources. The Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource includes information/diagrams on:

- [What is Domestic Violence?](#)
- [Cycle of Violence](#)
- [Power and Control Wheel](#)
- [Equality Wheel](#)

These resources were developed and translated into English and fifteen community languages that include Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, French, Hindi, Japanese, Juba Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese. IWSS recognise that there are a vast number of languages spoken across Queensland and were constrained in selecting only fifteen languages when translating this resource. IWSS would like to acknowledge that domestic violence can be observed in all communities and the selection of languages here does not reflect the incidence of domestic violence within these specific communities.

Using translated resources in working with women from NESB who may be experiencing domestic violence requires some specialist knowledge, cultural consideration and skills to ensure that information is contextualised and appropriately disseminated. IWSS has developed and delivered a training workshop to promote best practice in using the Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource. It is important to note that this resource was designed specifically for workers to use when engaging in dialogue with women from NESB on the subject of domestic violence. IWSS advocates for workers to utilise sound cross-cultural frameworks that support a gendered analysis of violence against women and children in working with these translated resources.

IWSS has observed significant interest from both non-Government and Government agencies in acquiring copies of the Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource and are already exploring avenues to obtain further funding for reprinting as we expect to fully distribute our printed stock soon. Copies have also been provided to the State Library of Queensland, Queensland Parliamentary Library and the National Library of Australia. IWSS intends to make some minor adjustments and upload the Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource onto our website at a later date.

If you would like to order copies of the Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource or to enquire about training on using translated resources with women from NESB please contact IWSS on telephone: [\(07\) 3846 3490](tel:0738463490) or email: mail@iwss.org.au

IWSS would like to acknowledge funding for the Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource project provided by the Department of Communities: Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month Initiative. We would also like to thank the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre and Multicultural Families Organisation for their generous permission to utilise and adapt existing domestic violence resources. Thank you also to John Garnsworthy and Associates for the effective graphic design and printing. Additionally IWSS would like to acknowledge the artist Rachel Apelt for granting us permission to use the beautiful image by copyright found on the cover of these resources. This image was previously provided by contract to IWSS to utilise for our award winning service poster.



IWSS Capacity Building Strategy

IWSS Capacity Building Project Worker continues to increase organisational capacity through obtaining financial and in-kind support. This was made possible with significant assistance from various organisations equally committed to the issues for women and children from NESB escaping domestic and sexual violence. IWSS would like to acknowledge the generous support of the following organisations and/or network groups for the following projects/initiatives:

- The Body Shop through Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service for 20 pamper packs.
- Brisbane Basket Brigade for donating and delivering five Christmas hampers to IWSS clients with limited or no income.
- Caboolture and Redcliffe Multicultural Forum and Moreton Bay Regional Council for the successful funding of training: “Responding to the Needs of Non-English Speaking Background Women Who Have Experienced Violence”.
- Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service, Multicultural Families Organisation, Violence Prevention Unit Department of Communities and John Garnsworthy and Associates for the successful funding, development, production and launch of a Multilingual Domestic Violence Resource in fifteen community languages.
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) for funding a computer system upgrade, a community education kit (laptop, data projector and screen), and a new photocopier for the service.
- IBM Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs for the donation of a ThinkPad which is being used for community education and professional development training provision.
- Logan Multicultural Uniting Church for donating Target items and gift cards through the Target Uniting Christmas Appeal.
- Lord Mayor’s Community Trust Fund (LMCTF) for children’s toys, Food bank vouchers, and \$2,000 for transport and telephone cards through the LMCTF Christmas Appeal. IWSS also received \$ 5,000 for Emergency Financial Relief under the LMCTF General Grant category.
- Redlands City Church for donating 20 large Christmas hampers for IWSS clients with limited or no income.
- Ross Divett Foundation for funding IWSS brochure reprints.
- United Way Qld for granting Community Partner status which registers IWSS to be a financial beneficiary of this fund.



For reliable ongoing support to the women and children IWSS work with, we would like to especially acknowledge the following groups:

- Department of Families Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) for ongoing funding for Emergency Financial Relief. These funding also increased for this reporting period until 2011.
- Givlt and individuals who donate their own resources through this website for directly responding to the needs of IWSS clients in crisis situations. Thank you so much donors!!! And thank you to Juliette who has invested so much time in creating an innovative way of linking donor and recipient through established charities.
- Zonta Breakfast Club of Brisbane for their monthly in-kind donations to the IWSS Women's Cupboard and for continuously contributing towards Emergency Financial Relief in this period.

The Project Worker position description was reviewed and modified during this reporting period, which resulted in the renewal of the fixed term contract for a further six months from 1st July 2010. The position will continue to seek funding opportunities specific to Emergency Financial Relief; however, a new function includes more involvement in IWSS lobbying and advocacy strategies. The Project Worker also engaged in networking activities with an intention to identify sector development opportunities where IWSS can assist in equipping and empowering first-point-of-contact or mainstream service providers in supporting women and their accompanying children from NESB on issues relating to violence.

Inadequate funding remains a critical issue for IWSS and we continue to develop creative alternatives for the provision of quality services to women from NESB and their children. An online fundraising tool for Emergency Financial Relief allows donors to view IWSS appeals and donate online. Please visit <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/iwss> to view the appeal.



Projects

Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Research Project

IWSS provided further assistance to Rochelle Braaf (ADFVC) in a research project titled “Financial Barriers for Women Escaping Domestic and Family Violence in Australia” that was finalised this year. This research examined the financial barriers for women escaping domestic and family violence in Australia. The ADFVC convened a policy forum in Sydney to present the findings of the research in March 2010 where IWSS presented the financial barriers and issues for women from NESB in particular women on temporary visas in Australia. The research report will be available soon at the ADFVC website.

IWSS Computer Upgrades Project

IWSS was successful in obtaining funding through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to upgrade our computer system and purchase a new photocopier, and laptop, data projector and screen for community education and professional development and training activities. IWSS would like to acknowledge the Gambling Community Benefit Fund for their financial assistance and thank Duncan Withers our IT specialist for his expertise, generosity of time, and ability to promptly respond to our IT needs.

Legal Aid Queensland Referral Pathways Project

IWSS participated in the successful pilot ‘Referral Pathways Project’ developed by Legal Aid Queensland to facilitate access to legal advice for women who have experienced violence. The Pathways Project was informally evaluated in 2009 and found to positively address disadvantage and improve access and equity. The Pathways Project continues to be a successful strategy in ensuring that women from NESB are able to access timely and appropriate legal advice and representation in matters including domestic violence, family law, property settlement, child protection and criminal justice (assault). IWSS would like to thank Lorna Goldring and all of the solicitors at LAQ for their continued commitment to ensuring the success of this project.

Point of Departure Project

IWSS has provided further assistance in the ‘Point of Departure Project’ as a member of the Expert Advisory Committee facilitated by the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health in Victoria. This special project seeks to build knowledge and capacity of NGOs and individuals to advocate on key issues affecting migrant and refugee women in Australia through the development of the National Advocacy Toolkit and relevant recommendations. IWSS has specifically advocated on issues pertaining to the development of cultural competencies including the appropriate use of professional interpreters; and responding to violence against women and children from NESB. The Advocacy Toolkit is now being utilised in a series of workshops for migrant and refugee women across Australia.



Queensland Sexual Assault Services Report

IWSS was an active member of the Reference Group in the development of a Report titled: “The Right to Choose: Enhancing Best Practice in Responding to Sexual Assault in Queensland” and its addendum titled: “Limiting Choices: Critical Analysis of Proposed ‘Hub’ Model”. This project was commissioned by 12 non-Government Sexual Assault Services to develop a formal response to the “Review of Queensland Health Responses to Adult Victims of Sexual Assault” by KPMG. The Report calls for appropriately funded holistic responses to victim/survivors of recent and past sexual violence and highlights the importance of sexual violence prevention and education activities across the state. IWSS would like to acknowledge Suzi Quixley from ESSQ Community Services Consultancy for her mindful consultation with SASPP services and in compiling this Report.

The CWRG Brochure Project consisted of a review and reproduction of an essential community resource titled: “Women’s Refuge: Questions Women Ask About Refuge”. This new resource was translated into 12 community languages, and was launched to coincide with CWRG’s 30th birthday. IWSS provided ongoing advice and support to the CWRG Brochure Project as a member of the Steering Committee and IWSS was an organisational auspice of the payroll for the project worker. The launch was officiated by the Honourable Minister for Communities, Karen Struthers, at Minter Ellison, Waterfront Place. IWSS has also taken on the role of widely circulating the resource order form through our many networks and assisted CWRG in the distribution of this important community resource.





Emerging and Ongoing Issues for IWSS

Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program Funding

Since July 2009, IWSS and 29 SASPP funded non-Government services have received 3 short term extensions on existing service agreements as opposed to a renewed three year contract as Queensland Health considers the findings of their commissioned review into service responses to adult victim/survivors of sexual assault in Queensland. This impact of short term funding arrangements has been felt by all services as information regarding the direction of Queensland Health has been limited. We are relieved to announce that all services have received a further extension of funding until 31st December 2011 however the future direction for state-wide sexual assault prevention policy and service delivery remains unknown. The Queensland Sexual Assault Services Report titled: "The Right to Choose: Enhancing Best Practice in Responding to Sexual Assault in Queensland" and its addendum titled: "Limiting Choices: Critical Analysis of Proposed 'Hub' Model" provide clear recommendations to the Queensland Government in responding to sexual assault and can be accessed from the following websites:

[http://www.communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Right to choose final pdf with covers.pdf](http://www.communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Right_to_choose_final_pdf_with_covers.pdf)

[http://www.communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Limiting choices final pdf with covers.pdf](http://www.communitydoor.org.au/sites/default/files/Limiting_choices_final_pdf_with_covers.pdf)

Counselling with Women who have Experienced Sexual Assault

Emerging issues within the counselling context have included increased need for provision of support to NESB international

students who are survivors of sexual assault experienced in Australia; the provision of support to refugee women with experiences of multilayered trauma; and support to NESB mothers whose children have been and/or are at risk of experiencing sexual abuse. Consequently, advocacy and support was intensified in the direction of immigration issues, health issues, child protection and the family courts, critical and on-going safety concerns, and managing the impact of severe multilayered and on-going trauma. Individual women's circumstances need to be taken into account and outreach counselling was provided to the Gold Coast and Brisbane North. The Sexual Assault Program extends its gratitude to the services in those areas for providing venues and additional support.

Complex Case Management with Women who are Temporary Residents

In this reporting period IWSS staff have identified a continued increase in temporary Partner Visa, Skilled Visa and Student Visa holders accessing IWSS services having experienced domestic violence in Queensland. Some women confronted by this situation may be eligible to apply for permanent residency under the Family Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations however IWSS has observed an increasing number of women whose visa class falls outside of the scope of these provisions. This includes women arriving in Australia on a temporary skilled visa, student visa, tourist visa, or those applying for a protection visa. Many women in this situation face the choice of remaining in a violent or abusive relationship or returning to their country of origin. The prospect of returning to their country of origin after separation is unfathomable to some women and is often accompanied by significant challenges and hardship. Some women face serious discrimination, rejection and even human rights abuses



in returning to their country of origin where they may be blamed for the breakdown of the relationship and/or for causing shame to their families.

Women who make the decision to leave a violent or abusive partner often experience significant challenges in surviving independently in Australia due to reduced or no access to services such as:

- Emergency accommodation and long-term housing;
- Limited or no income support;
- Limited access to health care (not eligible for Medicare);
- Adult education (not eligible for Adult Migrant English Programs); and
- Employment.

We are regularly seeing women forced to remain in violent situations due to their having no options to lawfully reside in Australia following separation and/or due to a lack of support services available to make their independent survival possible. We believe it is essential that appropriate strategies are developed to ensure equitable access to service systems and protection for people from CaLD backgrounds irrespective of whether they are temporary or permanent residents of Australia.

IWSS staff have undertaken extensive individual and systemic advocacy, lobbying and the preparation of documents such as statutory declarations and ministerial submissions. We have had many successes in complex case management with women gaining permanent residency in Australia. This has included high level assistance with women at review and/or ministerial stage and women facing deportation. Unfortunately the system does not always provide a favourable outcome and this year IWSS was

required to assist a woman and her three children to return to their country of origin having exhausted all legal channels trying to secure permanent residency in Australia. IWSS would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who generously provided financial assistance, totalling \$2000, which contributed to the costs of housing and essential items for this family on their arrival in their country of origin.

Women without Income

IWSS provides regular financial assistance to women with limited or no regular income. In the majority of cases women have no access to income support while their applications for permanent residency is being determined by either the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), the Migration Review Tribunal (MRT), the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) and/or the Minister of DIAC. Women may wait months or years to have their applications finalised without access to income support and in some circumstances without eligibility to work. This often involves significant resources and an increased role of advocacy from IWSS workers to negotiate for the provision of basic services such as housing, education, and health care in addition to providing assistance with complex legal and migration proceedings.

The demand on IWSS for Emergency Financial Relief for clients has also been consistently high with our financial assistance sometimes being the only source of money for women to access essential items such as food, clothing and medicine. IWSS continues to seek emergency relief grants to meet this increasing demand.

In response to the Palmer and Comrie Report Recommendations, DIAC have recognised the hardships experienced by certain visa categories, in particular those applying for a Protection visa

(refugee claimant) and/or those holding a Bridging visa who are awaiting determination of their residency status in Australia. DIAC have funded programs such as the Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme (ASAS) and the Community Assistance Program (CAS) formerly known as the Community Care Pilot Program (CCP) that provide regular income support and access to health care services through a community partnership with the Australian Red Cross. The CAS provides case management within DIAC and facilitates access to income support (equivalent to a Special Benefit), medical/health services, migration assistance and other practical support from the Australian Red Cross and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Whilst IWSS applauds these initiatives, the CAS does not currently include eligibility for some temporary visa holders (e.g. temporary Skilled Visa, New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship Temporary Visa, and Student Visa). We strongly urge DIAC to consider broadening the scope of the CAS to include all temporary visa holders who have been victims of violent crime in Australia and are subsequently facing an uncertain residency status in Australia and significant financial hardship. It is essential that migration support and early intervention service responses are appropriately funded to respond to temporary visa holders who have been victims of violent crime in Australia.

Legal Issues

IWSS often supports women who are negotiating multiple interconnected legal proceedings, for example: applications for domestic violence protection orders (DVPO), family law matters, criminal matters (assault) and migration proceedings concurrently. IWSS workers often observe multiple barriers experienced by women from NESB in negotiating legal processes in Australia

and we seek to reduce these barriers by ensuring that women have access to appropriate legal advice and representation, and related court support. 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 for women from NESB.

The Australian Law Reform Commission's Family Violence Inquiry highlighted the interface between domestic violence, child protection and family law. The ALRC final report "Family Violence – A National Legal Response" will be publicly released soon. IWSS prepared a submission to the ALRC Family Violence Inquiry which was presented in two parts:

Part One: A Public Submission that seeks to:

- Identify systemic and other barriers experienced by women from NESB in reporting experiences of violence and accessing information, legal and support services;
- Outline specific issues experienced by women who are temporary residents of Australia; and
- Provide key recommendations in responding to violence against women and their children within culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, and ensuring more equitable justice responses for women from NESB.

Part Two: A Confidential Submission of selected case studies relating to the following areas of law:

- Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld);
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld);
- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth); and
- Migration Regulations 1994 (Cth).

'Competent Persons' Statutory Declarations

The Family Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations afford protection to holders of certain visa types who have married an Australian citizen or permanent resident, and where they or a member of their family, are being subject to domestic and family violence perpetrated by that spouse. The provisions were introduced in 1991 in response to community concerns at the incidence of violence occurring in relationships within this context. Timeframes for supplying DIAC with appropriate documentation and evidence of domestic and family violence is often short (28 days) and extensions are at the discretion of the Case Officer and are not always provided.

This is particularly difficult in situations where women rely on non-judicial evidence in the form of 'Competent Person' Statutory Declarations. In these instances women must access two suitably qualified professionals who are prepared to write a Statutory Declaration within their existing workload and organisational constraints. Women may be required to wait weeks before appointments to specialist services can be made.

The availability of relevant people who can assist women in the preparation of 'Competent Person' Statutory Declarations is extremely limited especially for women living in regional and rural areas. IWSS staff spend considerable amounts of time sourcing and organising for competent persons to prepare statutory declarations for women accessing the Family Violence Provisions within the Migration Regulations.

IWSS has also assisted a number of women to access private migration agents who have required statutory declarations for other migration proceedings within a very short timeframe. This contributes to an increase in workload for IWSS staff as they try

to locate "Competent Persons" and negotiate extensions from DIAC as required.

Access to Professional Interpreting Services

IWSS workers continue to see a failure within the legal system to engage professional interpreters for police and court proceedings. We have observed that many women are being denied access to an interpreter because they have been 'deemed' to have sufficient English proficiency. Despite repeated requests by IWSS for interpreters, particularly for court proceedings, there is still a failure to appropriately engage professional interpreters. This has required greater levels of individual and systemic advocacy by IWSS staff.

IWSS is an active member of the Queensland Accessing Interpreters Working Group (QAIWG) which is a network advocating for the provision of access to free interpreting services for funded non-Government organisations; the implementation of culturally responsive service delivery; and ensuring sustainable quality and supply of professional interpreters in Queensland. The QAIWG have made steady progress since the launch of our report titled "Matter of Interpretation" in 2008. In this reporting period the QAIWG has reviewed and rewritten our Position Paper; prepared a submission to the Queensland Government Review of Multicultural Policy including the Language Services Policy; and continued to monitor the implementation of the Queensland Government provisions for access to free interpreting services for funded non-Government organisations. IWSS would like to thank Lalita Lakshmi and Lisa Toh (QCOSS) who have effectively convened the QAIWG meetings during this year.

Multicultural Child Protection

IWSS is an active member of the Multicultural Child Protection Working Group (MCPWG) which is a network advocating for best practice in developing cultural competence within child safety responses and service provision. This year members of the MCPWG met with the Honourable Minister for Child Safety, Phil Reeves, following the release of our Position Paper which included the following three recommendations:

1. A multicultural policy unit be implemented within the Department of Communities Child Safety Services to provide leadership and drive in addressing cross-cultural training, liaise with multicultural agencies, identify the needs of CALD communities, and provide on-going support and professional development to the sector.
2. A separate cost centre be implemented to resource the funding of interpreters rather than using child-related costs.
3. Child Safety Services mandate the collection of data regarding the country of origin, language spoken in the home, religious affiliation and immigration status of clients and their families.

The MCPWG have to date been successful in advocating for the following changes:

- As of July 1, 2010 funding for interpreters will no longer be taken from the 'child-related costs' cost centre. This has been an on-going concern for the MCPWG and so this change presents an excellent move forward towards equitable services for CALD families.
- The Minister has confirmed his interest and commitment to data collection for CALD individuals in the child safety

system and has agreed to maintain this item as a standing agenda for future meetings. The possibility of mandating this data collection, similar to that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait clients, is being examined.

- The Minister has also agreed to meet with the MCPWG on a quarterly basis or more often as needed.

These are issues that IWSS and members of the MCPWG will continue to monitor as we actively advocate for culturally responsive practice from Child Safety Services when working with CaLD families. The MCPWG Position Paper is available to MWESS members on request. IWSS would like to thank Kathryn Mettler (ECCQ) who has effectively convened the MCPWG meetings during this year.



Director's Report

It is with mixed emotion that I prepare my final Director's Report as I am now leaving IWSS after more than five years of employment; having held the positions of Director and previously Coordinator of the Domestic Violence Program. IWSS brings forth great commitment and dedication from all staff who walk with women and their children through an often difficult journey following their experiences of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Staff bring tremendous compassion, strength, optimism, and skill in their responses to these issues; and undertake the important role of advocacy to reduce the multiple barriers that women from NESB may face in accessing legal justice, housing, health services, income support and residency in Australia, to name a few. I have been blessed to work among such amazing women over the past five years who have enriched my learning, practice and knowledge. Each year as we collate our Annual Report I am impressed by the volume and quality of work undertaken with the limited resources that we have available. IWSS services are essential to address the needs of women from CaLD backgrounds in Australia and I hope that this service continues to attract further funding and support.

This year has been an incredibly busy year that has afforded us many opportunities as well as challenges. We have had the opportunity to participate in the review of the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 and the Australian Law Reform Commission Family Violence Inquiry. We anticipate that this law reform agenda may yield more positive developments for women and their children as they attempt to navigate the complex labyrinth (intersections) between domestic violence, child protection, family law and migration law.

A significant challenge for IWSS relates to the uncertainty in obtaining continued funding for our Sexual Assault Program as Queensland Health considers the findings of their commissioned review into service responses to adult victim/survivors of sexual assault in Queensland. This has provided us with a unique opportunity to develop a joint submission with other sexual assault services titled: "The Right to Choose: Enhancing Best Practice in Responding to Sexual Assault in Queensland" and its addendum titled: "Limiting Choices: Critical Analysis of Proposed 'Hub' Model" that provide clear recommendations to the Queensland Government in responding to sexual assault.





The experiences of women from NESB who access our service continue to inform and develop our understanding and strengthen our ability to actively participate in social and political change. Individual and systemic advocacy is an essential role of IWSS in ensuring the needs of women who are most marginalised and disadvantaged within our society are appropriately considered and addressed within areas of policy development, law reform, service provision and professional practice. This year we have provided representation at state and national levels through numerous consultation forums and reference groups. This work is often complex and resource intensive however these challenges have been met with considerable skill, grace and flexibility by all staff at IWSS.

We have seen some changes in staffing at IWSS over this past year and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Simone (Counsellor / Advocate) who has moved on to new endeavours. We have since warmly welcomed Michelle to our staff team and had the pleasure of also working with Vashi who successfully completed her final year Social Work student placement at IWSS this year. I would like to acknowledge and thank Beata, Belle, Carla, Caroline, Fadia, Meital, Ranjika, Su, Virginia, and Vera; and relief workers Beatriz and Katrina for your

continuing personal and professional commitment to the work of IWSS. Thank you also to Annabelle who has provided relief work to me in my role as Director during this reporting period.

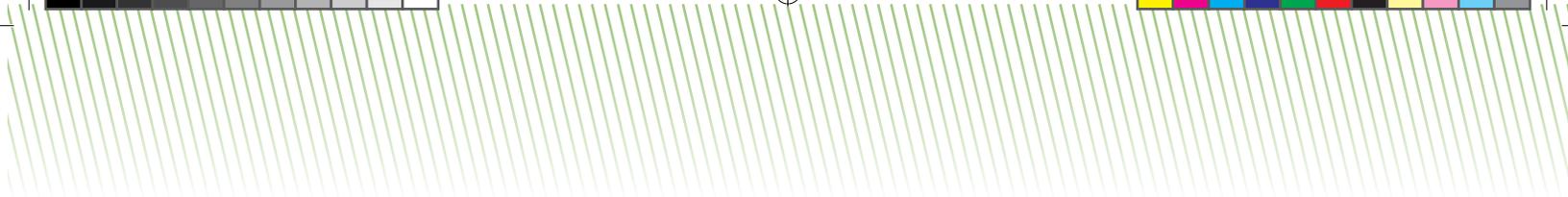
I would like to acknowledge the continued funding provided by Queensland Health, Department of Communities, and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. I would also like to acknowledge the generous support of many organisations and individuals who continue to assist the work of IWSS through financial assistance and in-kind support.

The future faces of IWSS may change however I firmly believe the need for our quality service and programs will continue to be high as we confront the reality of the pandemic nature of violence against women and children. To all staff and future staff at IWSS may you continue to find the strength, resilience, joy and support to continue this essential work!!

Stephanie Anne

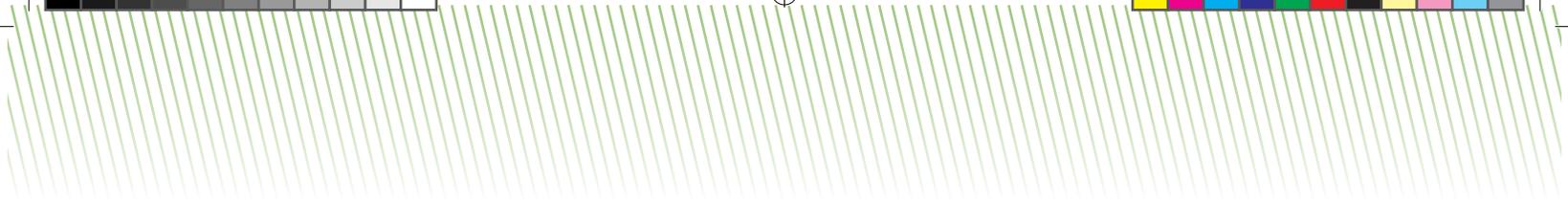
October 2010





Notes







Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service

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

PO Box 5490 West End 4101
www.iwss.org.au | mail@iwss.org.au

Domestic Violence Program

Phone: 07 3846 3490 | Fax: 07 3844 8467

Sexual Assault Program

Phone: 07 3846 5400 | Fax: 07 3844 5619

