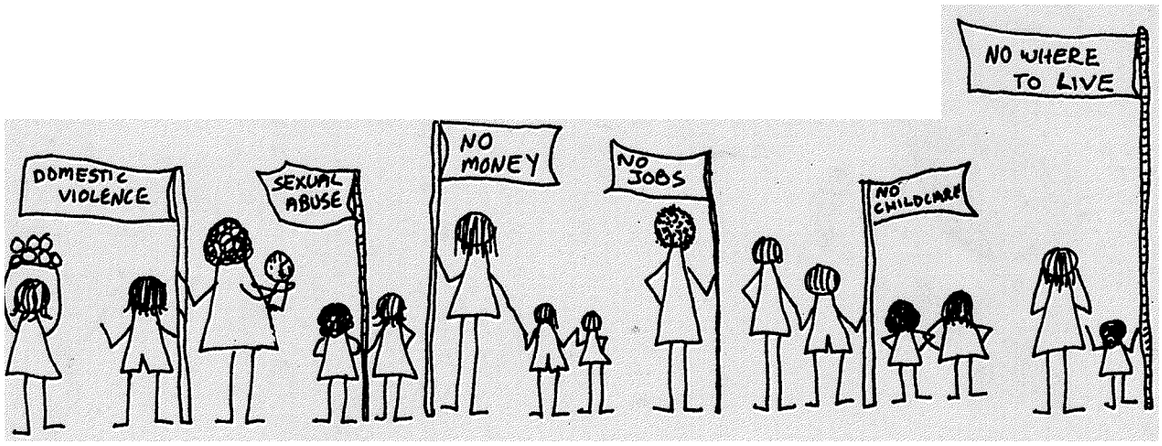
WOMEN IN CRISIS



Evaluation of Women's Refuges

in N.S.W. 1982

AN EVALUATION OF THIRTY SIX WOMEN'S REFUGES IN N.S.W. AND CANBERRA:

COMMISSIONED BY WOMEN'S REFUGES

WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM

THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND

COMMUNITY SERVICES, N.S.W.

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What is a Women's Refuge?

"When I found out that refuges existed, I was told that they were places where women could go with their children to escape from violence and where there would be other women to help. I'd put up with bashings for 10 years, thinking there was no way out for me and my children. Other than the above I knew very little so what I found a refuge to be was quite a surprise.

A friend drove me and my children to a refuge about 300 km away from the town where we were living. I didn't want my husband to know where I'd gone. I was frightened he would force me to go back.

We arrived at night and were welcomed by a worker, given a cup of tea and helped put the kids to bed. The worker then filled in a few details on a card and told me all about the refuge. It was a house that was shared by other women in the same situation as myself and the workers would help me organise financial help, sort out legal problems like custody, save money for a bond etc., establish the children in school and within about 6 weeks help me find a house and get settled. The workers would be there to talk to and tell me who to see, but it was my responsibility to get all these things organised."

(Ex-resident of a Country Refuge)

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FOREWARD

The importance of evaluating a service that had been in existence since 1974 was recognised jointly by the Women's Refuges Movement of N.S.W and the Department of Youth and Community Services.

The New South Wales Women's Refuge Conference in Coffs Harbour in November 1980 was the venue for the initiation of the evaluation project. All refuges in the State were in favour of a study to look at women's refuges' aims, future direction, areas of need, funding inadequacies, quality of care and to establish that refuges are a vital service in the community.

The evaluation was further designed to benefit direct service to refuge residents in that the process is self-evaluative for refuge workers, as well as being a statistical and analytical project.

A Working Party consisting of refuge representatives from all regions of New South Wales was set up as a planning body, in January 1981. The duties of the working party were to plan the criteria of the evaluation, the funding, the employment, duties of evaluators and finally to set up a steering committee.

The Evaluation Steering Committee commenced meeting in July 1981. It included Working party members from eight regions of N.S.W., the evaluators and representatives from the Department of Youth and Community Services, the Housing Commission and Health Commission. Meetings were held monthly and decisions were made by consensus.

Members of the Steering Committee

Chris Burke	City West
Jean Martin	City West
Marcia Payne	Northern Region (Coastal)
Cathy Tate	Central Coast - Hunter
Mary Barker	Bathurst
Yvonne Wilson	Griffith/Albury/Wagga
Diane Night	Inner City
Veronica Poynting	Northern Region (Inland)
Pat Pellatt	City North
Robin Stevenson	Health Commission
Edith Warburton	Housing Commission
Helen Donnison	Youth and Community Services
Mary Waterford	)
Jo Perry	) Evaluation Team
Erst Carr	)

The Steering Committee wishes to acknowledge the dedication the Evaluation Team has shown by the many unpaid extra hours worked.

We appreciate their commitment to the project in times when funding was uncertain. We also appreciate that the task has been a difficult one in that it is the first evaluation of its kind in Australia of such a unique programme as Women's Refuges.

THE EVALUATION STEERING COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 1982.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO WOMEN'S REFUGES PROGRAMME

With the resurgence of the feminist movement in the late sixties and early seventies came a new awareness of the lack of choices available for women who were victims of domestic violence. Social welfare, health and judicial systems were unable to offer effective assistance. Women fleeing intolerable domestic situations had to counter primitive and judgemental attitudes, an unsympathetic housing market and lack of knowledge about their economic alternatives.

The need to provide a woman and her dependent children with a refuge from physical and psychological abuse was seen by the founders of Women's Refuges to be of primary importance. A woman's safety was traditionally not even considered by the welfare, legal and medical professions - let alone guaranteed.

A Women's Refuge, as well as providing a safe place, was attempting to provide a wider set of information and support services than those offered by existing agencies.

Those who established the first Women's Refuges were motivated by ideas about the position of women in society, the nature of family life, the position of women within marriage and the need to provide continuing support to combat a woman's isolation.

The emergence of the Welfare Rights and Self Help Movements, with their strong flavour of anti-professionalism also influenced their ideals. These movements heralded a move away from traditional service delivery into new areas of advocacy, information, community education and social action.

The influence of this philosophical base on the operation of Women's Refuges clearly demonstrated their difference from other emergency accommodation services provided for women and children operated by more traditional welfare agencies.

CURRENT SITUATION

This evaluation involved thirty six (36) Women's Refuges. These were the thirty three (33) refuges funded under the New South Wales "Women's Refuge Programme", the two (2) single Women's Refuges which are funded by the "Proclaimed Places Programme", and a Women's Refuge in Canberra funded under the Department of Capital Territory, Health Commission. The thirty five (35) Refuges in New South Wales are funded by the Department of Youth and Community Services. Of the thirty three (33) Refuges funded under the "Women's Refuge Programme", twenty eight (28) Refuges receive additional funding for child care from the Office of Child Care, Department of Social Security. The remaining five (5) are funded totally by the New South Wales State Government and receive no Federal child care funds.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S REFUGES

Women's Refuges operating within the framework of the Policy Guidelines of the New South Wales Women's Refuge Programme should be characterised by the following factors, which were drawn up and accepted by Women's Refuges and the Department of Youth and Community Services.(1)

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(1) Both the characteristics of Women's Refuges and the Policy Guidelines are taken from the paper "The Women's Refuge Programme - A Response to Domestic Violence: The Policy of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services.

"Self help and mutual support rather than professionalism. A Women's Refuge operates on the premise of women supporting other women rather than professionals helping clients to find solutions to problems.

There is a non-institutional approach whereby a woman is encouraged to take active responsibility for her own welfare. No-one is in charge. The woman's active involvement in making decisions about the policy and operation of the refuge is seen as one way of providing her with this opportunity.

The experience of mutual support is not confined to the Refuge but continues after the woman has left.

An organisation operating a Women's Refuge should actively demonstrate its accountability to the residents through involving them in the running of the refuge.

A Women's Refuge should be run by women for women. While this does not preclude men from participating in the operation of a refuge, this statement recognises that an important principal of refuge operation is that policy decisions should be made, and day to day support provided by people best able to understand the resident's situation.

The level of Government funding shall not require the use of volunteers to meet minimal staffing requirements. Neither shall it require voluntary donations of either cash or equipment.

A Women's Refuge must be concerned not only with providing a direct service, but must assist all women either individually or collectively, in the refuge and in the community to gain the knowledge and skills they require to manage their own lives. The emphasis should be on providing an environment in which women can assist each other to learn the skills they need to cope with living in the community."

Within the framework of these characteristics each refuge operates autonomously.

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE FUNDING OF WOMEN'S REFUGES

To be eligible for funding under the New South Wales Women's Refuge programme a Women's Refuge must:

1. Meet the demands of women in crisis situations generated by economic, social and physical circumstances, which make the present living conditions intolerable, by providing non-institutionalised short term emergency accommodation for the women and their dependent children, as well as continuing support for their own welfare.

2. Aim to raise public awareness in ways considered appropriate by the refuge, about the status and needs of women and children in relation to health - welfare - child care - sexuality - finance - employment - discrimination - ageing and other diverse aspects of society that effect women and children, and are highlighted by the existence of Women's Refuges.

3. Where the necessity is determined by the refuge, promote public awareness designed to make health, housing, welfare and legal services more relevant to the needs of women.

4. Cater for the needs of the women and their dependent children through its own resources and those of other relevant agencies.

5. Where the necessity is determined by the refuge, achieve an integration of its services with other health, welfare, legal, housing and community agencies.

6. Provide an environment for the interchange of skills, ideas and information in which the women can assist each other in working through their crisis with support from the refuge workers.

7. Provide continuing support for ex-residents and their children.

8. Provide continuing access to information and resources in relation to issues of vital concern to residents, ex-residents, refuge workers and women in the community.

9. Actively encourage the involvement of residents and ex-residents, and their children in the running of the refuge.

10. Actively involve women working in the refuge (paid and non-paid) and women using the refuge in policy-making, overall and day to day.

11. Be operated by a non-profit organisation which has a constitution and is capable of responsibly administering funds. The organisation should be registered as a non-profit company, a co-operative society or a charity or must be actively seeking such registration or incorporation.

12. Furnish an audited statement of expenditure annually to the New South Wales Government.

METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

The collection of data and material for this evaluation was undertaken in the following variety of ways:

1. Questionnaires : five (5) sets of questionnaires were designed to obtain relevant information. These questionnaires were directed to:

   (a) Management structure e.g. Management Committee or Collective and all workers.

   (b) Individual paid workers e.g. general workers and child care workers

   (c) Unpaid workers.

   (d) Residents and ex-residents.

   (e) Community groups who had dealings with refuges.

   Copies of these questionnaires are shown in Appendix D.

2. Visits to Refuges were conducted between August and December 1981. Each of the Women's Refuges in New South Wales were visited for a period of up to two (2) days by one or two members of the team. During this period evaluators talked to management committees, collectives, workers (paid and unpaid), residents and ex-residents.

3. Description of Sample - There were thirty six (36) refuge management bodies interviewed during the evaluation . They ranged from Collectives to Boards of Directors. The management questionnaire was filled in by workers and management committees combined, where management was a separate body.

   Two hundred and five (205) paid refuge workers filled in questionnaires and took part in discussions when the evaluators visited refuges.

Four hundred (400) residents and ex-residents completed questionnaires and were involved in discussions with the evaluators. One hundred and forty one (141) were a random sample of women staying in refuges. The remaining two hundred and fifty nine (259) were ex-residents who had either kept in touch with the refuge or who had kept the refuge aware of their whereabouts. Because these women were still in contact with the refuge, the Steering Committee and the evaluators recognised that this was a biased sample. Ex-residents were invited back to their refuge for one day of the evaluation team's visit. During the course of this day they participated in discussion with the evaluators, taped interviews and filled in questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed in a way so that they were not intimidating to the women who filled them in.

One hundred and five (105) community groups filled in questionnaires. Refuges were asked by the Steering Committee to approach various welfare organisations in the community with whom they had dealings. Groups who filled in questionnaires included, Department of Social Security, Youth and Community Services, Community Health Centres, Social Workers, Chamber Magistrates, Police, Lifeline and Hospitals. All refuges felt that because of the nature of their services and the demands of time, it was impossible to meet with these groups on a regular basis, therefore, feedback from these agencies by way of answers to questionnaires was important.

4. Taped Interviews - were made at a number of refuges to obtain information on day to day running of refuges. Residents and ex-residents, workers (paid and unpaid child care and general) and members of management committees participated.

5. Statistics - which were collected from the thirty six (36) refuges evaluated for the period May 1980 to June 1981.

6. Information from the 1981 Report of the New South Wales Task Force on Domestic Violence concerning refuges has been used in this report.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION:- The concept of a Women's Refuge was originally established by feminists. The policy guidelines drawn up by the Women's Refuges and the Department of Youth and Community Services (Y.A.C.S.) have an underlying feminist philosophy. The evaluation is set within this framework.

BASIC FINDINGS

Information gained from questionnaires, discussions and interviews with those who use and work in Women's Refuges established that refuges fulfil an essential role for women and children in need of emergency accommodation. Refuges aim to offer accommodation and assistance to women and children in crisis. In reality it was found that they generally offer a much broader range of supports including information, child care, advocacy, friendship and the opportunity to become involved in the day to day running of the refuge.

4,916 women and 6,308 children passed through the thirty three (33) funded refuges (in N.S.W. and A.C.T.) in the twelve months from June 1980 to May 1981. There was a total of 151,044 bednights covered in this period.(2) The three (3) refuges funded since that period accommodated 301 women and children from July to December 1981.

Domestic violence and homelessness were found to be the main reasons for women and children needing refuge, though other reasons were significant. All of the sample of four hundred (400) women who were interviewed during the evaluation had benefited from the experience. Most had been given emotional and practical support by workers in refuges, as well as other residents, to enable them to determine the future direction of their lives.

The work done in Women's Refuges was found to be extensive and unique. Other community agencies and women using refuges saw the services as being different to those offered by other forms of emergency accommodation and welfare organisations.

However, the work conditions for refuge workers were found to be inadequate on the whole and in some cases extremely poor, especially in relation to wages.

Most refuges have had to include in their service child care, follow up and accommodation for women with special needs, such as women with severe emotional problems, migrant women, aboriginal women and women without children. Although refuges have received some funding for these areas it is generally insufficient. Specific funding is urgently needed to allow adequate follow up programmes for women and children leaving refuges.

Other issues, such as women with drug and alcohol problems, women visiting relatives in prison, women and children suffering from sexual abuse, and the housing and financial problems facing refuge ex-residents, have been highlighted by the existence of Women's Refuges. Workers and management bodies have attempted to raise public awareness about these issues through various means, including approaching relevant ministers and local government agencies.

The Women's Refuge Movement has had to develop a range of methods of communication for solidarity in campaigning and lobbying for funds and in raising public awareness about all the issues which will improve the position of women and their children.

Despite the general support and recognition of the work done in Women's Refuges by the community they are still poorly funded in light of the range of services they provide. They are a cost effective service; the average cost per person per night is $19.00, this is a mere pittance in comparison to other Government funded accommodation.

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(2) This represents the total number of beds occupied in that year.

CHAPTER ONE:

BACKGROUND RESEARCH INTO THE REASONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF WOMEN'S REFUGES



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

> ".....daily and within the supposed safety of their own home, women in Australia are being battered, bruised, attacked with weapons, having their eyes blackened and their teeth and bones broken. Sometimes they are killed. Sometimes they die later from injuries they have received. Their assailants are their husbands, lovers and friends....." (The above is a statement from Anne Deveson's book "Australians at Risk" (1978), which is based on the findings of the Royal Commission into Human Relationships).

Awareness of the widespread nature of violence against women, in the home, has increased dramatically over the last few years. Still it is difficult to assess the real incidence of assaults because cases go unreported(1) and even if reported to say, police or doctors, are often not taken seriously or followed up. It is generally up to the woman to do her own reporting, at a time when she is probably least able to do so.

Despite the low rate of reporting there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the incidence is too high to be ignored.(2), (3) Furthermore,

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(1) O'Donnell and Saville (1979) found that of 145 women they contacted, 30% had not approached any institution for help prior to leaving the relationship. This is supported by Dobash and Dobash (1979) who claim that most assaults go unreported - of the 109 women they interviewed, only 2% of their total assaults had been reported to police and 3% to a doctor. A study by Braithwaite and Biles (1980), with a sample of 18,694 Australian men and women, found that only 19.9% of assaults on females were reported to police. Reasons given were, e.g. "they thought it was private, not criminal", they were "too confused or upset to notify police."

(2) A study carried out in England by Borland (1976) tried to contact as many "battered women" as possible in Colchester (population 72,000). Because of the secrecy surrounding the subject, figures were finally estimated at between 1:200 to 1:100 marriages. From U.S.A. Maria Roy (1977) states that "while statistics reveal that in New York State in 1973 there were almost 5,000 rapes reported, almost three times that number of wife abuse complaints went to Family Court" (p. 72). Klein (1981) claims that "contemporary U.S. studies estimate that violence may occur in up to half of all intimate relationships, with women receiving the brunt of the abuse" (p. 75).

(3) In Australia various researchers have attempted to assess the incidence of domestic violence. The N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics (1975) found that in the period from mid April-end June in 21 N.S.W. courts, 184 cases of domestic assault were documented. O'Donnell and Saville (1979) found that of 4,500 who attended a Women's Health Centre over 3 years, 3.5% were counselled or helped with regard to domestic violence. They also noted that an inner city legal aid handled 680 domestic cases, of which 150 involved violence (90% of these against women).

the severity of the attacks cannot be taken lightly.[4] Too many women are seriously injured or even murdered because until recently domestic violence has been kept "behind closed doors".

The link between domestic violence and homicide has been explored in Britain and Australia and found to be relevant in many cases.[5] That is, if a man is regularly beating a woman over an extended period of time it is quite possible that she will be killed, or will kill her husband/lover or herself.[6] Alternatively, the woman could have a nervous breakdown and/ or be forced to put her children into "care", if she feels unable to take any action.

"Why do women stay"? is an often asked question. If fear of being killed, committing suicide or killing one's husband, or of insanity, is constantly in many women's lives, what does this say for the institution of marriage and the family? Finally, what options does a woman have to change the situation?

The reasons that force women to stay in a violent relationship are many and varied. However, some common explanations are: perceived or real economic dependence on the man and lack of information about alternatives, together with lack of confidence about being able to financially support and house the children as a single parent.[7] This is not unrealistic; society does not make it easy for a lone woman with children. Low cost housing is almost impossible to find (see following section on Housing) and if the woman's only income is going to be the pension she will be living below the poverty line. If she is lucky enough to find a job she will then have to pay exhorbitant child care costs.

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(4) Pizzey (1974) and Johnson (1981), quote innumerable horrific descriptions, in the words of the women themselves, of intolerable living situations. The N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (1975) found that 75% of women assaulted were punched repeatedly "mostly about the head and upper parts of the body". Dobash and Dobash (1979) found that the majority of women they interviewed had been attacked at least twice per week. The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) found that the most violent relationships had lasted for between 1-5 years but that a significant proportion had lasted for over 11 years! The most common abuse they found to be verbal/mental (80.8%) followed by violence to the body (51.7%) and head (42.7%). 33% of their sample had been assaulted with a weapon at least once.

(5) Dobash and Dobash (1979) refer to studies by criminologists which reveal that a large number of murders by men are wife murders. In the 1950's in England and Wales, 41% of all women killed were killed by their husbands and in 1962, 63% of murdered women were married to their murderer. Bacon and Landsdowne (1981) in Sydney, investigated 36 women homicide offenders who were either convicted or found not guilty by reason of insanity from July 1979 and March 1980. 17 of the women had killed their husband or boyfriend and in most cases had been subjected to extreme violence over many years.

(6) Deveson (1978) refers to a study of women staying in Sydney's first Women's Refuge where 22% had taken overdoses prior to coming to the refuge.

(7) O'Donnell and Saville's (1979) study found that the main reasons women remained in the relationship were economic and emotional dependence on partner as well as difficulty finding alternative accommodation. Meade-Ramrattan, Cerre and Porto (1981) found similar reasons, as well as "concern for emotional and material well-being of children."

In the past researchers have looked at individual cases of domestic violence as "aberrations" from the norm. This is often the approach taken by the agencies women go to for help, and has led to the common misconception that women have a "pre-disposition" to tolerate violence (e.g. have experienced it as a child or in other adult relationships). The evidence does not support this.(8) Another misconception is that domestic violence is a working class phenomenon. Again evidence contradicts this and, in fact, demonstrates that it occurs in most classes and cultures.(9)

Similarly alcohol, often thought to be a cause of domestic violence, has been found to be present in the same proportion of domestic violence situations as in the population at large.(10) Thus while alcohol may exacerbate domestic violence it does not necessarily cause it.

The problem is obviously too broad to be attributed to "psychological" factors or individual marriage breakdowns. It is far more realistic to look at a broader societal explanation of male violence against women. Historically men have been in a position of power in relation to women. For example, Roy (1977) refers to numerous quotes from the Old Testament which condone cruelty toward women. Scutt (1979) and Klein (1981) offer evidence that women were legally regarded as possessions of their husbands and that acts of violence against them by husbands were not punishable by criminal law. Despite so called "equal rights", this position is basically unchanged, the power of the patriarchy still remains. Even today, the law is totally inadequate for protecting a woman or child against a brutal husband or father. If anything, it protects the family "unit" at all costs, rather than the members within it. The family is not a "blissful" institution for those women and children who suffer violence at the hands of a "loved-one". Nor is marriage. As Dobash and Dobash (1979) state - it is often the perceived or real challenge to the man's authority, control or possession or the woman's inability to be the perfect stereotype which leads to violence. It is the inequality of power in the male/female relationship which encourages a man to use physical violence to control "his" woman. What options then are open to women caught in this situation?

Before the existence of Women's Refuges, (the first in N.S.W., "Elsie", was established in 1974), women with children who needed to escape from a violent situation virtually had nowhere to go. As mentioned previously, women are often reluctant to seek asssistance after an assault. They invariably are very upset, feel frightened and ashamed. Even if they did seek help they were unlikely to get it. Doctors generally try to treat the symptoms and the closest they get to the cause is to prescribe tranquillisers and send the woman back to the same situation. Police will not arrest unless they see blood or bruises and even then they are hesitant because so many women "change their mind" the next day.(11) It has to be

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(8) O'Donnell and Saville (1979) found that only 9.6% of their sample fitted this description. Dobash and Dobash (1979) quote examples of children who do not want to repeat violence.

(9) Borland (1976), O'Donnell and Saville, Roy (1977) all provide ample support for the contention that domestic violence can be found in any "class" in society. The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) found that skilled occupations (not traditionally considered "working class") were the most frequent for men and women in their sample.

(10) O'Donnell and Saville (1979)

(11) The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) claim that women were most likely to go to doctors or police first. Dobash and Dobash (1979) observed that there is often a "conspiracy of silence" between doctor and patient and that police are unlikely to arrest when the offender is the husband of the victim (16%) compared to a stranger (75%). Munsen (1980) examines the reasons why police are reluctant to respond to a woman's plea for help and to arrest in a domestic violence situation, in the U.S.A. (pp. 593-597).

proven beyond reasonable doubt that an assault has been committed (Section 493 Crimes Act), and the police have discretionary powers as to whether to charge. If the police do not charge, the woman can do so herself by going to the local chamber magistrate where she has to bear the cost of legal representation herself.

No wonder a woman "changes her mind" - not only does she have to go to great lengths to prove she has been assaulted, but she then has to face the husband or boyfriend when he returns, if he is arrested, (generally he is only held for a matter of hours). If she wants to leave the place she lives in, and is economically dependent on the man, she may have nowhere to go for immediate emergency accommodation - if there is no women's refuge. Many women are reluctant to burden relatives or friends, especially if they have several children.

If the woman prefers to stay at the place she has been living in she will have no effective legal protection from the man who attacked her. Hearings are often weeks or months away and the man will not be kept in jail for long. The law does offer "injunctions" or "restraining orders" which are aimed at keeping the man from further harassing the woman. However, if the injunction is from the Family Court (Federal) the N.S.W. state police will not act and if it is from a magistrates court they still tend to only arrest if something is happening (virtually "after the event"). Again, sentences tend to be light and may only be a fine. One woman who had been at a Sydney refuge had a restraining order to enable her to give her violent husband access to the children in "safety". One day she was five minutes late in bringing the children to him so he bit off half her ear! The police charged him with "serious assault" and released him the next day. Six months later he was fined $300 - a useless gesture since the woman still had to face him weekly to exchange the children.

If a woman wants to take action for the man breaching the injunction she has to apply to court and must employ her own solicitor. Thus the time and costs are prohibitive, as is the prospect of having to take children to police stations or courts or, alternatively, find and pay for child care.

It is often the effects the violence is having on the children that will force a woman to leave the situation, despite the difficulties.(12) The N.S.W. Women's Refuges Child Care Report (1979) notes that even if the children have not been abused themselves they have internalised the trauma and tension of the situation and are also in a state of crisis. Obviously, the community must provide safe emergency accommodation for women and children escaping violence, until permanent housing is found.

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(12) Dobash and Dobash (1979) quote a woman who said: "if I had stayed I would have put a knife in his back because the children were really, well, I'll say nervous" (p. 142). They found that many violent husbands did not necessarily treat their children brutally; in some instances they were even "protected" from the knowledge that it was happening - though in other cases the children were made to witness their mother's "punishment". Deveson (1978) refers to the Elsie study where 38% of the children who stayed at the refuge had been attacked by their fathers. Roy (1977) reports that 43% of domestic violence questionnaires indicated violence to children. Pizzey (1974) noted the high incidence of incest among children staying at Chiswick Women's Aid. The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) discovered that frequent child abuse occurred in 11% of their sample and occasional child abuse in 31% of cases.

In a patriarchal society it is to be expected that domestic violence will not be taken seriously, except by women, since for so long it has been assumed that a man (as head of the household) has every right to beat his wife and children. If not for the Women's Movement there would still be no real alternative for "battered women". As it is, the Women's Movement perceived the need for Women's Refuges and in N.S.W. the first was established in 1974. Now there are 35 in this state and they are the only practical solution, in the short-term, to an intolerable situation for many women, both in the home and in the community.(13) It is important that Women's Refuges be recognised as an essential community service, be adequately funded and supported, and remain autonomous centres run by women with an understanding of women's position in society. It is only in a non-institutional, non-threatening environment that women and children escaping violence will have the opportunity to begin to control their own lives.

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(13) The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) found that of those women in their sample who sought assistance from a women's refuge, 71.3% had found the experience useful. The next most useful service was "social worker/counsellor" who were considered useful by only 48.1% of those who had sought their help.

HOUSING

> "The establishment of Women's Refuges was one response to the housing needs of lone mothers. Refuges concentrate on the need for immediate housing and support for women in crisis following the breakdown of previous domestic arrangements." ("Women in Last Resort Housing", 1980).

Although refuges were primarily established to offer support to women and children who are victims of domestic violence, the fact that these women are also homeless, demonstrates the dual role refuges play in assisting women in crisis and offering them accommodation for the initial crisis period, which may be up to 3 months.

Before Women's Refuges were set up in N.S.W. there was nowhere for abused women and children to go. Their alternatives were to stay at home in the same violent situation, seek assistance from family and friends or find alternative accommodation on the private rental market and find employment to support themselves and their children.

By staying at home in the same situation, many women were daily exposed to repeated violence and abuse, often living in fear of being eventually murdered by their husband/de facto. That fear and intimidation was increased by the fact that many women lived in total isolation with no social contacts or knowledge of their rights or the economic, legal and housing alternatives available to them.(14)

Women who had family or friends were reluctant to approach them for fear of involving them in their domestic situation and exposing them to possible violence and harassment. This reluctance also extended to feeling that they would be causing additional stress to their families by imposing an economic burden, and living, if only for a short time, in overcrowded conditions.

> "I had already moved ten times since the boys were born in 1978 including staying with my family, I could not possibly impose another time." (15)

There was also some degree of shame felt by women about their situation and a feeling that the responsibility for the breakdown of the relationship was partly theirs. "After continual harassment one reached a point of complete lack of self confidence. There must be something wrong with me or else I would not be treated this way."(16) Migrant women who wished to leave violent domestic situations had even more difficulty. Those who left their husbands were socially ostracized and denied access to relatives, friends and other support figures. Aboriginal women found themselves in similar circumstances.

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(14) O'Donnell and Saville's (1979) study found that isolation and lack of knowledge was a contributing factor to the reasons women stay at home in the same situation. The Domestic Violence Task Force (1981) supports this by the fact that more than 10 of the 57 letters received in their survey saw isolation as one of the reasons women were unable to escape from violent relationships.

(15) Comment by resident of a Sydney refuge.

(16) Response from Domestic Violence Task Force survey (1981).

Aboriginal communities in both city and country areas were so economically depressed, that any additional burden placed on either family or friends was likely to increase tensions.(17)

Before refuges existed, it was extremely difficult for a woman to leave home with her children and find suitable accommodation, employment and child care. How did she secretly save enough money to re-house herself? How did she organise an income for herself? How did she deal with landlords and real estate agents who considered her to be a "high risk tenant"? How did she find a house for a reasonable amount of rent? How did she find employment and who would look after her children while she was at work?

Saving enough money for re-housing costs while still economically dependent on a male breadwinner was almost impossible. Those costs were not only restricted to rental, gas and electricity bonds but also included clothing, furniture, electrical goods and household necessities. To actually find a house was difficult. Houses or flats which were advertised were in great demand, particularly if the rent was reasonable. There were long queues to look at houses, and women who had no access to a telephone and car were at a definite disadvantage. There was no way to initially ring for information about the property or to then inspect it and be interviewed by prospective landlords. Women were discriminated against firstly because they had no male breadwinner and secondly because they had children.(18)

Prior to the existence of Women's Refuges there was little recognition by the Housing Commission of N.S.W. that women and children, who were victims of domestic violence, were in need of out of priority housing. Women who made applications to the Housing Commission were placed on waiting lists of up to 5 years and had to arrange alternative accommodation in the meantime. It was only after repeated refuge delegations that the Housing Commission was made more aware of the special housing needs of lone women with children.

The problems of finding suitable, reasonably priced accommodation were not restricted to women with children. Single women, particularly those whose only income was Unemployment Benefits, had great difficulties. Rents were simply too high and the Housing Commission made no provision for single women unless they were eligible for aged or invalid pensions.

The housing shortage and high rents extended also to country areas and although most women found they had to leave the country for the relative anonymity of the city, those who wanted to stay found they could not find adequate low cost accommodation or suitable employment. "I wanted to stay in C where my family and friends could help me, but I couldn't find a job and there were no pensions then. Houses cost a lot but without a job I couldn't afford to rent one. I had to move to Sydney where there were more jobs and more houses." (19)

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(17) "Report on Aboriginal Women & Domestic Violence", Pat O'Shane, Domestic Violence Task Force (1981).

(18) Victorian Women's Refuge group (1979) found that discrimination against women by real estate agents and landlords was common. This was supported in Australian Housing Research Council's "Women in Last Resort Housing" (1980) who discovered that a large proportion of refuge ex-residents indicated that they had encountered objections to children and a smaller number had been asked for a male guarantor before a lease would be agreed to.

(19) Interview with a refuge resident who had left her husband in 1972. She subsequently returned to the marital home and left again 9 years later.

The only forms of emergency accommodation available to women in N.S.W., before the initiation of the Women's Refuge Programme, were the Salvation Army's Hostel for women and children at La Perouse and Ashfield Infants Home. The services offered by these organisations were restricted because they had to rely on the inadequate funding of their governing bodies. The Benevolent Society of N.S.W., only offered accommodation to women who had pre-school children while La Perouse was restricted in the numbers of women and children they could accommodate.

Women with "no fixed abode" often ran the risk of having their children put into care. This meant that children could be separated from each other in state institutions, put into private children's homes or fostered. For a woman to regain her children after they have been made "wards of the state" she not only had to find reasonable, permanent accommodation but also face court cases to prove she was a "fit" parent.

Women and children had few housing alternatives before refuges were set up in 1974 and there have been few changes since that time. The housing shortage has reached crisis levels, rents are still rising, re-housing costs are still increasing and women are still subject to discrimination on the open housing market. These and other relevant issues will be illustrated at greater length and in more detail in further sections of this report.

CHAPTER TWO:

REASONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF WOMEN'S REFUGES



As stated previously, Women's Refuges were initially established by feminists who were aware of the extent and seriousness of domestic violence, and its effects on women and children. They recognised that the only practical, short-term solution for "battered" women and children was a safe, supportive place to stay which also provided information and alternatives. Refuges were also set up in response to the desperate housing situation of many lone mothers and single women who were just "existing" below the poverty line.

Because there was no public recognition of the abuse many women and children suffer in their own homes, or of the numbers of women and children in need of emergency accommodation, there was no funding available to set up refuges. The collective of women which set up the first Women's Refuge in N.S.W. were forced to squat in some empty government houses and run the refuge on voluntary labour. Now there are thirty five (35) funded refuges in this state and the purposes of this evaluation include examining the work being done in these refuges and whether they are an essential community service, funded at an appropriate level.

To examine whether domestic violence and housing problems are the main reasons that women come to refuges we asked the management of each refuge and a sample of four hundred (400) residents and ex-residents (from all areas of N.S.W.) to indicate primary reasons. The results (see diagrams 1 and 2) show clearly that domestic violence is the major reason that women come to refuges. In the responses from the residents and ex-residents (in the women's questionnaires) domestic violence was the single highest category (38%), which together with physical abuse to children (10%) and sexual abuse to children (2%) includes half the sample (diagram 1). One of the women interviewed explained her reasons for going to a Western Suburbs Refuge:

> "I've been here twice. My husband was an alcoholic. When he was drunk he was quite violent. I put up with it for sixteen years - don't ask how - I think basically because I had nowhere to go. I had heard of refuges, but I had no idea how to contact them or anything.
>
> One bad night I called the police. They brought me here .... The experience of being here was really quite remarkable. I was always a very quiet person - didn't make waves. Usually standing up for myself got me a beating anyway. I'd gotten to the stage where I was totally useless, both to myself and to the children. I was living from day to day. It wasn't even living - it was existing. I am really surprised how I can survive on my own now.
>
> The children are 14 and 16 (the boys) and a daughter of 12 and a daughter of 11. They're totally different too. They were fairly normal during the day when I was living with my husband but they would pretend to be asleep when he came home. They used to feel as though they had to tiptoe around him - he was incredibly volatile. He used to pick on one of them in particular". (ex-resident)

In the statistics provided by the refuges themselves, again domestic violence was the major reason for women and children coming to them (39.5%). Sexual abuse to the woman or child was a factor in 4.1% of situations. These statistics were gathered from thirty three (33) refuges for the period from June 1980 - 1981. Single Women's Refuge (a recently funded refuge for women without children) found that 85% of the women who stayed in their refuge (over a six month period) had experienced sexual abuse. At Women's Place (also recently established, particularly for single women with drug and alcohol problems) 82% of the women had been raped at least once, 18% by a family member.

Although 13.6% of the women were said to have come to refuges because of a relationship breakdown not involving violence (eg. desertion by husband or boyfriend) many of these women would have been in need of emotional support and information about housing and finance, before being able to establish themselves in adequate long-term accommodation.

Thus, at least half of the women and children who use refuges are in a state of emotional crisis, when they arrive at the refuge, because of domestic violence or domestic problems. Those who have been in an economically dependent relationship with a man usually have very few material possessions and are virtually homeless. Temporary homelessness is the other major reason that women come to refuges. Of the sample of residents and ex-residents, 30% stated that they had "no money and no where to go" (diagram 1); 14% had been evicted from their homes. 107 (27%) of the 400 women had suffered from domestic violence and had no money and nowhere to go. For example, one woman wrote:

> "There was nowhere else to go. I had been in a ..... refuge in May 1979 and was followed by private detectives ..... - my mother was also very frightened by my husband and would have told unknowingly. I had tried seeking help from friends, priest, doctor - my terror lasted long after I left this refuge". (from an ex-resident of a country refuge).

Diagram 1

Reason for coming to refuge (Women's Questionnaire, n = 400)

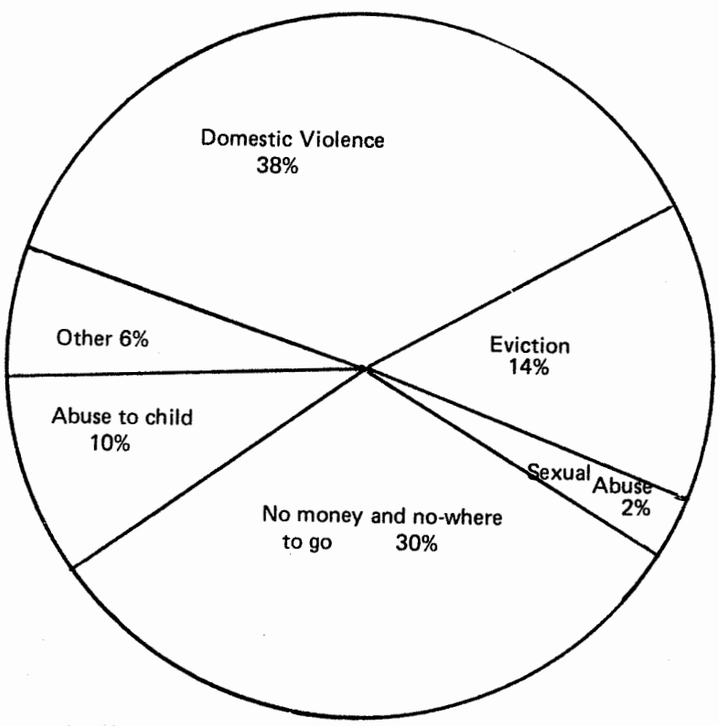
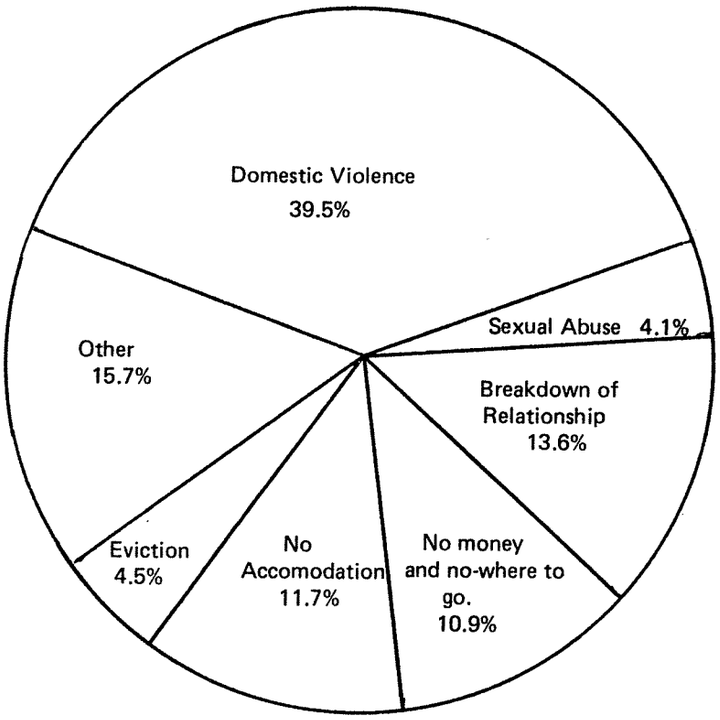


Diagram 2

Main reason for women coming to Refuge
(Management Statistics n = 4916)



(g) Other:

visiting institution	(3.9%)
coming from institution	(1.6%)
coming from another refuge	(3.3%)
travel	(2.7%)
other	(4.2%)

The statistics provided by the refuges demonstrate that financial and housing problems forced 27.1% of the women to come to their refuges. That is 10.9% had no money and nowhere to go, 11.7% had no other accommodation and 4.5% were evicted from their previous homes (diagram 2).

Women coming to refuges with no money and no accommodation and several children to support are in a crisis situation. All are disadvantaged on the open housing market. In fact, if it was not for Women's Refuges many women and children would be in a desperate situation, either continuing to suffer physical or sexual abuse, or wandering the streets attempting to find accommodation. As previously noted in the housing section, many women do not want to burden family or friends - especially if there are likely to be repercussions from a violent husband or boyfriend. At least at a refuge women have some opportunity to save for some of the basic requirements for setting up a new house or flat. They also have the opportunity to apply for Housing Commission homes, something they may not otherwise find out about, especially if they are migrants with no English. They are also likely to establish friendships with the other women staying at the refuge who are in the "same boat" as themselves. In the words of a woman who stayed at a country refuge ... "in the refuge you are with people that all have problems and it is a lot easier to cope knowing you aren't the only one with troubles".

Of the 400 women interviewed in the course of the evaluation 168 said that, if there had been no refuge to come to, they would have had a nervous breakdown, 84 that they would have had to stay where they were and 73 that they would have wandered homeless (see table 1). Some individual responses were as follows:

"I probably would have ended up in a hospital with a breakdown".

"I honestly don't know. If I went to other family members my husband would have caused scenes which my family could not cope with".

"Killed myself"....

"I would have gone "mad" and bashed my kids"....

"Stayed where I was and get belted, probably to death".

Table 1 Response to the question "What would you have done if there was no Refuge?" - Some women responded more than once.

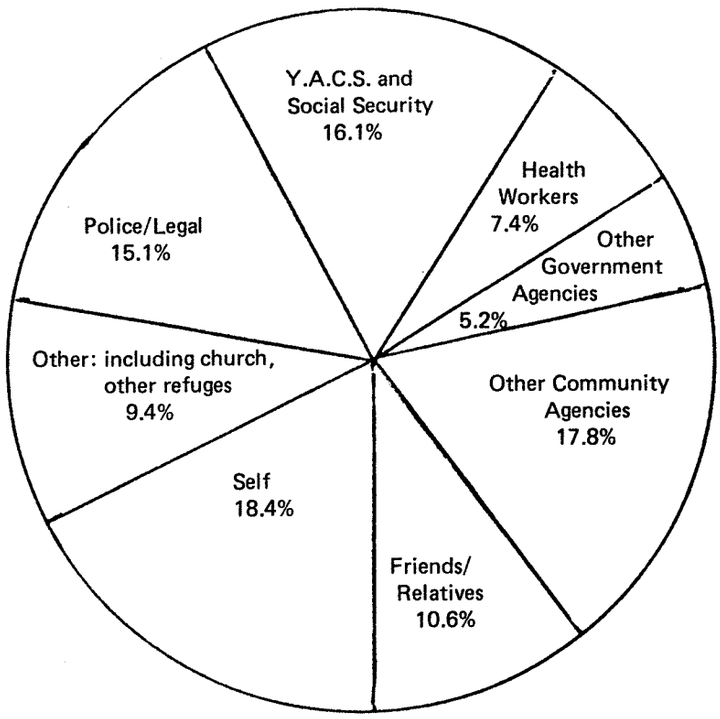
	Response	No. of Women
a)	Stayed where they were	84
b)	Sought help from government or community agency	72
c)	Moved in with relatives or friends	72
d)	Found house or flat	36
e)	Had nervous breakdown	168
f)	Children put into "care"	36
g)	Gone to psychiatric hospital	16
h)	Wandered homeless	73
i)	Other (including suicide)	20

It would seem that the reasons for which refuges were set up were valid and are still relevant now, though women also come to refuges for reasons other than domestic violence and temporary homelessness. Some of these include sexual abuse to women and/or children, visiting friends or relatives in gaol, drug and alcohol problems, severe emotional problems and chronic homelessness. Some of these women are referred to a refuge because there is nowhere else for them to stay, and the institution referring them recognises this. These other reasons will be discussed in more detail in the chapter of the report entitled "Wider Issues." However, it is important to realise that Women's Refuges were not originally set up to cope with all of these problems. The extra strain placed on them, by government and other agencies using refuges as a "dumping ground" for women they cannot place elsewhere, often causes excessive overcrowding. It also limits the amount of real support refuge workers can offer to individual women staying in the house.

It is clear that refuges play a vital role in the community since they receive referrals from a wide variety of community groups and government agencies (see diagram 3). Most referrals (61.6%) come from government or government funded agencies (eg. Youth and Community Services, Department of Social Security, Police) and 9.4% from church and charity groups. Only 29% of referrals come from individuals in the community (including the women making enquiries themselves). According to the answers from the women's questionnaires 73 women were referred by "Lifeline" or other crisis counselling, 72 by a community social worker and 70 by YACS. These were the most frequent referral sources and are all community services which obviously recognise the essential role played by refuges in accommodating women and children in crisis.

Diagram 3

Referral sources, based on the statistics offered by refuges, n = 4916



(The relationship between refuges and other community services is examined in more detail in a later section of the report).

Women's Refuges also exist because there are no other welfare or government agencies that offer the same service to women and children. Some women stated:

> "A refuge offers a woman a place to recuperate and get herself back together. She is able to do this at a refuge because if she wants help it is there all the time and if she doesn't the staff just leave you to do what you want to do". (country refuge resident)

> "This refuge gave me somewhere to live and remain independent, emotional support and the badly needed company of other women! Help with my child and breathing space to sort myself out...." (country refuge resident)

> "....a safe place to stay, where you are not accessible to be abused by husband..." (city refuge resident)

> "No other welfare organisations offer accommodation, safety, support and counselling all under the one roof. The refuge also offers ongoing support after women and children have moved out". (city refuge resident)

Later sections of the report will look at the aims of refuges which clearly differentiate them from other welfare and government services. Briefly, the essential difference is that refuges aim to offer a

non-institutionalised, non-professional environment in which women and children can work out for themselves what they want to do next. This means providing more than emergency accommodation. It includes emotional support, information and alternatives. The refuge is "home" for the women and children while they are there and refuges make every effort to create that kind of atmosphere. They try to involve the women in the day to day running of the house and, in refuges with particular structures (see Chapter on "Structures, Policy and Practices"), the decision making processes.

78% of the four hundred (400) women in the evaluation sample thought that the refuge was different from other forms of emergency accommodation and welfare services.

As some of the women stated:

> "The refuge is more of a home-type situation, and you can develop a close relationship with the workers". (from a country refuge)

> "The workers really care about you as a person. They don't treat you as a number, a nuisance or a beggar". (from a city refuge)

Because refuges aim to offer a self-managed supportive environment where the woman makes her own decisions about where to go next, it is essential that if she decides to return to the same situation, and it does not work out, she will be welcome to come back to the refuge. Particularly for women who go back to situations involving violence, the door must always be open (if not at that refuge then at another). Many women, especially migrants, find it necessary to leave several times before they are really confident about living away from the man they have been dependent on - no matter how brutal he is.

A woman from an outer suburban, feminist refuge stated:

> "I was not made to feel badly about coming back here a second time. Many women have to go through it all twice and more times. I think that point is made if you decide to go back - maybe it will work out, but if not maybe you're just not ready yet".

Another woman from an inner city refuge explained:

> "I come from a background of marital violence. The initial time I came here I'd come from very violent circumstances and I brought my 4 children with me (my husband was only violent towards me, not towards the children). I returned to him because the economic situation forced us back together again (I'm on tertiary allowance). The violence stopped but he used all sorts of psychological violence to try and make me give up university, admit my "failure" (that the whole exercise of coming here was a waste of time) and that he was the only one who could help me. So this time I decided I'd learnt from my mistake. I used to wonder why refuges allowed women to come back again and again - but you don't work it all out the first time. It takes a long time to sort out a new life style". (taped interview)

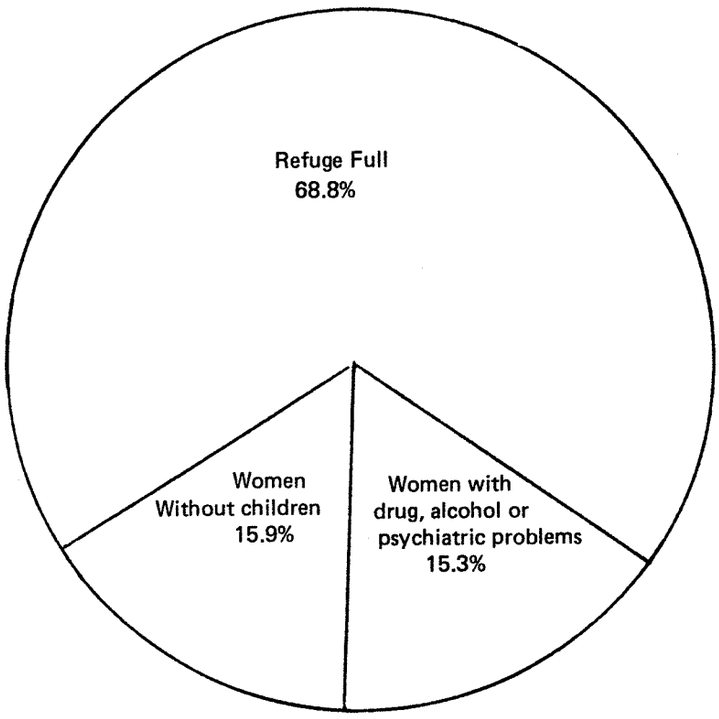
Of the residents and ex-residents we interviewed, 31% (124/400) had been to the same or another refuge before. Even if a woman and her children branch out and try to start a new life for themselves, continued violence from the man they have left can force them back to a refuge. For example: "My husband found out where I was living and harassment began. On one particular night he tried to strangle me and I could not stay there any longer. I was welcomed back here even though they were full". (from a woman who stayed at a northern suburbs refuge).

For the one hundred and twenty four (124) women who had been to a refuge more than once, domestic violence was the main reason that they returned to refuges (this was the case with 51 women), followed by housing problems (40 women), financial difficulties and loneliness, or a combination of these.

As mentioned in the N.S.W. Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981), Women's Refuges were found to be the most useful community service for women suffering from brutality in the home. They also provide a useful service to women and children in a variety of other emergency circumstances. In the financial year from June 1980 to June 1981, thirty two refuges in N.S.W. and one in A.C.T. housed 4,916 women and 6,308 children. The total beds occupied in that year (bednights) was 151,044. In the same period of time only twenty three (23) of those refuges turned away 1,413 women and 2,070 children (the others did not keep figures). The main reasons given for turning women away were that the refuge was full (68.8%) or that the referral was inappropriate for that refuge, for example, a woman without children, a woman with drug or alcohol problems or severe emotional problems. See diagram 4 for details. Most refuges give priority to women with children who are escaping domestic violence or who have no accommodation. This varies because of the crisis nature, policy, alternatives available and the circumstances in the refuge at the time.

Diagram 4

Reasons women were turned away from refuges 1980-81 financial year (n = 1413)



Two newly established "special needs" refuges in Sydney are offering more suitable accommodation to some of those women turned away - single women and drug and/or alcohol dependant women. In the six months from June to December 1981 Single Women's Refuge supported and housed 113 women and turned away 180 because the refuge was full. Women's Place accommodated 162 single women with drug and/or alcohol problems in five months. There are no such facilities in country areas.

There is still a desperate need for a Women's Refuge which offers non-institutionalised care to women with emotional problems who have not benefited from the existing psychiatric system or who are in need of emergency half way housing.

Obviously the Women's Refuges in N.S.W. fulfilled a need for the 11,224 women and children housed last financial year (plus the 275 single women and 10 women and their children housed in the newly established refuges). Based on the total level of funding for the same period (see Appendix) it is clear that N.S.W. Women's Refuges are a cost effective service for the government at the rate of $19 per woman or child, per day. In comparison, if those women and children had no alternative but to be accommodated in government institutions, the costs would be far greater. For instance, it costs between $69-120 per day to keep a woman in a psychiatric hospital(1) and an average of $329 per week to keep a child in residential care ("Residential and Alternate Care Task Force Report", 1982).

RECOMMENDATION:

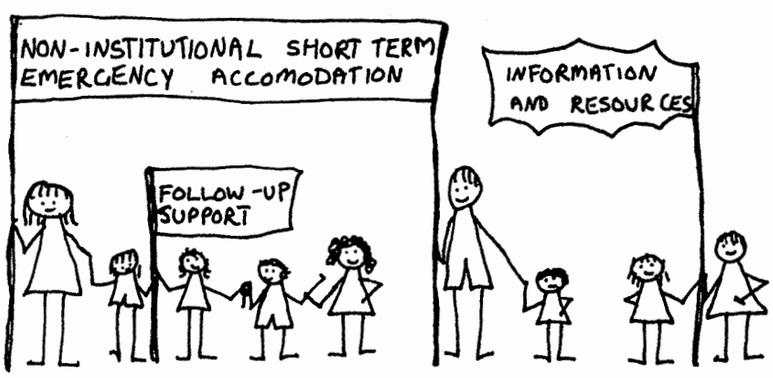
R.1 That refuges be recognised as an essential community service and be funded at realistic levels taking into consideration the broad range of emergency services they provide for women and children who are escaping intolerable domestic situations.

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(1) The variation in this amount depends on whether the patient is considered "chronic" or "acute". These figures were obtained from the N.S.W. Government Gazette, No.23, 12 February 1982, p. 617. They are based on the daily inpatient costs for hospitals in N.S.W. e.g. Gladesville ($69.78), Parramatta Psychiatric Hospital ($79.88), Rozelle ($119.70).

CHAPTER THREE:

HOW THE AIMS OF WOMEN'S REFUGES ARE ACHIEVED TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR N.S.W. WOMENS REFUGES



The 36 Women's Refuges in New South Wales and A.C.T. (including Single Women's and Women's Place) all have the common aim of providing emergency accommodation for women and children in crisis. Even though examination has confirmed this common purpose, (main questionnaire responses), refuges have autonomy to operate in whichever manner suitable to them, so that for most, the provision of emergency accommodation for women and children in crisis, is a minimal aim. Most refuges attempt to offer much more. One refuge has very comprehensive aims which include:- "the provision of shelter and immediate physical protection, support and counselling; information on all issues relevant to women; the opportunity for discussion in an atmosphere where women and children can share experiences and consider alternatives; the opportunity to gain self confidence to enable women to determine their own futures and a service of mutual support for women in the community." (Original submission). In contrast, another refuge stated that its main aim was the "rehabilitation of women into good wives and mothers". (Interview with Management Committee).

GUIDELINES

In November 1979 the Department of Youth and Community Services, in consultation with the funded Women's Refuges of N.S.W., drew up a set of policy guidelines for Women's Refuges. These guidelines stated that refuges must attempt to provide an optimum level of service. Both the funded refuges and Youth and Community Services (on a Departmental and Ministerial level) agreed to these guidelines. Refuges undertook to attempt to work according to the guidelines, taking into consideration their funding constraints. The policy guidelines are the criteria for the setting up and funding of present and future refuges. Many groups have since applied to the Department for funding and have been refused because they were not willing to operate within these guidelines. Some refuges have conflicts in working within the guidelines because they have governing bodies, such as church groups, with very different policies.

As stated in the Chapter "Background to the Reasons for Existence of Women's Refuges", the first Women's Refuges in N.S.W. to be set up were based on a feminist philosophy. One western suburbs refuge defined feminism in their "Welcome to the Refuge" handout - "feminism means (briefly) that we believe in a woman's right to be independent, self determining (make her own decisions) and be a strong individual". This philosophy is reinforced throughout the policy guidelines with an emphasis on self help and the involvement of residents and ex-residents in the running of refuges.

Guideline 1 states that refuges must meet the demands of women in crisis situations generated by economic, social and physical circumstances, which make the present living conditions intolerable, by providing non-institutionalised short term emergency accommodation for women and their dependent children, as well as continuing support for their own welfare.

The majority of refuges consider the demands of women and children to be:- accommodation, shelter, non-judgemental support, information on legal, health and pension issues, financial assistance, housing information, assistance with child care for residents, opportunity and time to think about their future, counselling, friendship, food and clothing, advice and information concerning services in the local area and follow-up. Most refuges aim to meet all these demands but none can meet them totally because of inadequate funding to employ workers. The majority provide shelter, a supportive atmosphere, food, information on relevant issues and child care. Every refuge provides a 24 hour service, eight (8) refuges employ permanent live-in workers/housekeepers while the remainder have

either night workers who stay overnight or workers who are on call for emergency or crisis situations. The provision of child care for the children of residents is considered to be a priority by all refuges (except the single women's refuges and one refuge in the Riverina area) but the four which are funded totally by the State Government receive no funding from the Office of Child Care, and therefore must subsidise any child care programmes from their general funds or tap into established community resources.

Refuges have difficulty coping with the demand for follow up. All refuges stated that follow-up was a vital service which they should be providing but, only one refuge has obtained funding to initiate a specific project ("Shifts in Emphasis" chapter).

As the Women's Refuge programme has developed, refuges have become more aware of the needs of women and children in crisis, so in addition to providing the above services, refuges offer a much wider variety including emergency child care, outings for women and kids, drug and alcohol counselling, adult education, accommodation and transport for women whose husbands are in prison and the opportunity for residents and ex-residents to become involved in the running of the refuge. Not every refuge provides all these services but most have become more aware of these issues (See chapter "Wider Issues").

This policy guideline also states that a refuge must provide non-institutionalised accommodation. There are no other alternative services in the community where women in crisis can stay with their children and be offered the same range of alternatives in a supportive atmosphere. Of the four hundred (400) women who answered the questionnaire, responses generally were that refuges were different to other welfare organisations which provided accommodation because they offered "non-judgemental support and help to start a life of my own". One resident stated "I stayed at a hostel for handicapped people and there they were bossy and less understanding and treated people like vegetables".

An ex-resident felt that the refuge was "less institutional, less structured and more realistically participant oriented. The refuge was run according to the needs of the women staying there and rules made by those involved rather than externally imposed".

Some refuges are run along institutional lines and this is a result of their management structure and policy and the physical characteristics of their buildings. Workers and women on these refuge can have very little power in decision making either about the day to day running or the policy of the refuge. Some of the buildings now used as refuges were originally institutions, and as a result of the planning and physical layout of the accommodation it is difficult to provide a non-institutional environment.

<u>Guidelines 2 and 3 deal with refuges aiming to raise and promote public awareness about issues relating to women e.g. health, welfare, child care, alternative life styles, sexuality, finance, employment, discrimination, ageing, legal services, the oppression of women, child abuse, drug and alcohol problems, homelessness, domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment.</u>

Information gained from responses to the main questionnaire indicate that all but three refuges attempt to make the community aware of these issues. The main reasons refuges find this area difficult are lack of funding, and having to both live and work in a conservative community.

More than half the refuges stated that to adequately achieve this aim they would need higher funding levels which would ensure more staff and therefore more available time and energy.

Feminist refuges have stated (main questionnaire) "that apart from offering supportive services to women, it is necessary to make some changes in a patriarchal, capitalistic society which oppresses them". The inadequacies of services for women in the community contributes to their oppression.

> "A large number of women who come to the refuge have very little knowledge of matters like contraception. Because of this lack of knowledge, quite a lot of the women who come here are pregnant and seeking abortions. We feel that part of our role as refuge workers is to give women information on contraception, abortion and to facilitate discussion on alternatives to previously oppressive heterosexual relationships. Issues like lesbianism, celibacy and masturbation are discussed freely so that women can, often for the first time in their lives, explore their own sexuality."
> (Refuge Worker)

Feminists recognise that women's sexuality is closely related to the sterotype of the "beautiful, slim woman" who must at all costs continue, as she gets older, to remain attractive. They find that they are constantly dealing with women in the refuge who have very little self esteem because of the pressure of society for them to comply with this stereotype. Feminist refuges aim to make women aware of the ways they are oppressed not only by violent abusive male partners, but their oppression as mothers, their oppression in the workforce and their oppression by the health and welfare sector of the community.

Child care is seen as the total responsibility of mothers and there is very little recognition of the amount of work and commitment of women to maintain this responsibility. Women who come to refuges have often never "had a break" from their children.

> "I had total responsibility for my 5 kids for 13 years and the longest I was ever away from them was about 3 hours and once overnight. When I got to the refuge, I was going crazy, thank goodness for their child care workers. I think they saved my life and my kids lives."
> (Resident City Refuge).

> "My husband would come home from work and insist that the kids be in bed by 7.00 pm so that HE could have some peace, cause he'd had a hard day at work. He didn't have any idea what I'd done all day with 3 kids under school age. That wasn't real work."
> (Ex-resident taped interview).

Refuges recognise that women who need to work for economic reasons are also oppressed. Migrant women particularly, are often forced to work in factories in intolerable conditions for well below award wages because they have language difficulties, few work skills and little or no knowledge of their rights as workers.

> "My first job was with Leyland Tractors, it was heavy work but all I could get. There wasn't much opportunity to talk at work, and the workers - mostly migrants, were keen to keep their jobs and get ahead, so we put up with bad conditions. The foreman and the mechanics were all men. We were migrants with little education and were only suited for these jobs. When I got sick for a few days I was terrified I might lose my job and didn't understand about doctor's certificates. I had heard about unions because someone had come around to collect money and had told us that if we didn't pay we would lose our jobs, but I had no idea of what it was for." (Refuge resident)(1)

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(1). "The Last Resort" - The Homelessness of Women". - Johnson 1981)

As an alternative to the traditional medical services, some refuges refer women to Women's Health Centres. There are four in the metropolitan area and three in country areas of New South Wales. These refuges have found that women are generally mystified by the medical terminology used by doctors and hospital personnel and are reluctant to question decisions on either treatment or prescriptions. Large numbers of women who come to refuges are, or have at some time been, prescribed sedatives to cope with emotional problems instead of dealing with the factors which cause these problems. Instead of following traditional medical methods of prescription of medication, Women's Health Centres look at using alternatives like relaxation, group discussion and herbal remedies for the relief of stress.

Refuges situated in country areas find it extremely difficult to meet these guidelines 2 & 3. Their communities are often very conservative and refuse to recognise the importance of any of these issues. A worker at a country refuge gave an example of this conservatism - "A local Alderman was reported to have said at a Council meeting, that Child Care Centres were infiltrated by communists who encouraged women to use these facilities so that they could go to work and neglect their motherly duty to their children". This statement was challenged only by a few people in the community and was accepted by the majority. Such narrow minded attitudes to a generally accepted service like child care indicates the problems faced by women who attempt to raise these issues. Another instance in the same area was the Council's refusal to replace the community social worker. The refuge and all the other welfare organisations in the area recognised the need for this position and initiated a campaign to encourage the Council to employ a replacement worker. The Council saw that the provision of a "community development" component in local government was a waste of money and that "roads, rates and rubbish" were the only acceptable issues for them to recognise. The refuge and other groups continued to lobby Council for a year but they refused to change their position and no social worker was employed.

Comments which are levelled at refuge workers also reflect the community's narrow minded attitudes:-

> "I was labelled a lesbian, a man hater and someone who encouraged women to be the same, because I worked in a refuge and supported women who made the decision to leave their violent husbands and because I gave them information on their legal, economic and social rights". (Worker Country Refuge).

These attitudes make it impossible to raise awareness in the community about issues relating to women. A country refuge in the northern area has been the subject of constant attack and harassment for the past two years and is still working at changing the attitudes of the community to the refuge. The workers find that all their time is taken up defending the refuge to the community and justifying its existence. It has been extremely difficult for them to maintain the day to day running and operation of the refuge, which is constantly full of local women fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

Refuges which have attempted to raise and promote public awareness, find that the amount of time they have to spend at meetings overlaps from paid work time into their own time. As the process involved in attempting to create awareness and change attitudes is generally a lengthy one, most refuges, although they recognise the need, find it almost impossible. Funding for more workers would enable refuges to meet this guideline without the additional strain to existing workers.

Guideline 4 states that refuges should cater for the needs of women and children through its own resources and those of other relevant agencies.

All refuges use a combination of their own and other resources to most effectively help their residents. When a woman first comes to a refuge there are a number of practical problems with which she needs assistance. Refuge workers go with her to Social Security to arrange financial assistance usually Supporting Parents Benefit, or Unemployment Benefits. Legal assistance is often sought in relation to custody, maintenance and property, and a refuge worker who has a basic knowledge of the legal system, goes with the woman to see a solicitor. When she first comes to a refuge, a woman may also need to visit doctors or hospitals for either herself or her children and needs a refuge worker to go with her. Refuge workers also refer women to other agencies in the community which have additional resources.

Guideline 5: Where the necessity is determined by the refuge, achieve an integration of its services with other health, welfare, legal, housing and community agencies.

The integration of the services of refuges and those of other health, welfare, legal, housing and community services is another guideline which refuges find difficult, because of the amount of time this requires. A refuge worker may attend 2-3 meetings per week in endeavouring to achieve this guideline:

> "I resent the time I spend at meetings, although I know they're necessary, because it takes away from the time I spend with the women at the refuge. There's always a meeting on about something, I feel that the refuge should be represented, because it is an important issue, so one of us goes. Someone from the refuge is on almost every Committee in town".
>
> (Worker at a country refuge).

Some of the committee meetings refuge workers can attend are, Interagency, Community Child Care Group, Emergency Accommodation organisation, Neighbourhood Centre Committee, Community Youth Support Scheme Committee, Local Council Social Development Committees and Women's Resource Group. These meetings are in addition to Refuge Movement meetings which include, pensions, housing, legal, child care, funding and domestic violence campaigns.

Most refuges aim to meet this guideline but the problems are similar to those faced by refuges in meeting other guidelines, particularly for refuges situated in country areas. In a later section of this report (Relationships with Community Groups) these problems will be dealt with at greater length. The reasons for some refuges being able to meet this guideline and the failure of others to do so will be examined by using responses from the main questionnaire, answered by all refuges and the community groups questionnaires which was distributed to and filled in by large numbers of organisations who deal with refuges in relation to the health, welfare, legal and housing needs of women.

Guideline 6: Provide continuing support for ex-residents and their children.

This guideline will be examined in detail in the "Shifts in Emphasis" section of the report.

Guideline 7: Provide an environment for the interchange of skills, ideas and information in which the women can assist each other in working through their crisis with support from the refuge workers.

Guideline 8: Provide continuing access to information and resources in relation to issues of vital concern to residents, ex-residents, refuge workers and women in the community.

Guideline 9: Actively encourage the involvement of residents and ex-residents, and their children in the running of the Refuge.

Guideline 10: Actively involve women working in the Refuge (paid and non-paid) and women using the refuge in policy-making, overall and day to day.

Guidelines 7, 8, 9 and 10 deal with the environment, services and resources provided within the refuge and their policies on involving residents and ex-residents in the running of the refuge. In most refuges women live communally, sharing household tasks like cooking and cleaning. House meetings with residents and workers are held so that problems can be solved. Women are encouraged to help each other in an atmosphere of mutual support. The management structure of each refuge determines whether or not these guidelines are followed. Some refuges do not believe that residents should be involved in the running of the refuge at any level. A number of refuges who employ housekeepers/housemothers do not encourage communal cooking, the housekeeper cooks the meals and is at the refuge in a supervisory capacity to ensure that the house is clean and that rules are adhered to.

Feminist Refuges which are run as a collective (i.e. a group of women working together where no one is boss, and everyone has equal responsibility) have a philosophy of self help and independence and maintain this principle by encouraging women to take an active part in the running of the refuge, both on a day to day household level and an operational and policy making level. Residents and ex-residents are encouraged to attend house meetings and collective meetings and are given an equal voice in the decision making of the refuge. Skills, ideas and information are interchanged and residents and ex-residents support each other in working through their crises with assistance from workers.

ORIGINAL AIMS AND CHANGES

Before the guidelines were drawn up in 1979, refuges worked according to the aims defined in their original submissions. Their aims have changed and broadened since that time. Many refuges stated that, since they were originally set up they had become more aware of the position of women in society, of the necessity to work with the community in addressing the problems of single women who have children, women who have drug and alchohol problems and women isolated in rural areas. As this awareness has developed so has a realisation that the back up resources in the community are totally inadequate. (See "Wider Issues" Chapter).

Refuges were originally set up to cater for women and children who are victims of domestic violence and were homeless (see "Reasons for Existence"). The expansion of aims has necessitated refuges looking at issues like homelessness, child care , the need for specific follow up programmes and the need for women to be more involved in the running of the refuge. One refuge has changed its aims from employing professional women as workers to employing a majority of ex-residents as paid workers. The reasons for this change were to give women a better opportunity to learn new skills and to become more independent with an improved chance on the open job market. The ex-residents at this refuge also felt that it was important for the women who used the refuge to be able to relate on an equal level to the workers, as women who had been through similar experiences.

Quite a few refuges, particularly in country areas, were originally established as emergency accommodation centres for a wider range of people in the community. A few refuges in country areas were set up by local Health and Welfare Councils, recognising the needs of homeless people in their area. Their aims included the provision of emergency accommodation for runaway adolescents, stranded travellers, itinerant men and women elderly people unable to remain at home or with relatives, and people from surrounding districts who needed to stop over in town for legal or medical attention.

A number of refuges, when they were first established, included men in their management committees, which made the decisions on the running and operation. Quite a few refuges still have men on their committees but this issue is constantly being examined by the Refuge Movement as a whole.

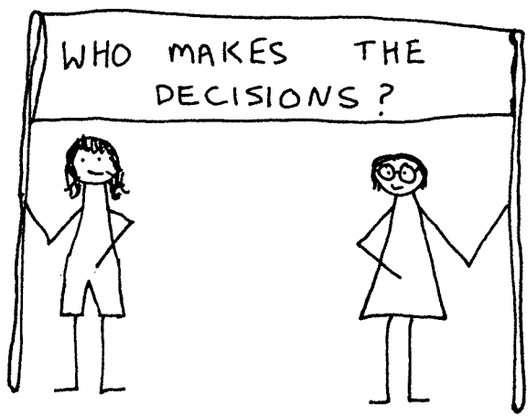
One of the characteristics of Women's Refuges (see "Introduction") drawn up by refuges and the Department of Youth and Community Services at the same time as the guidelines states "A Women's Refuge should be run by women for women. While this does not preclude men from participating in the operation of a refuge, this statement recognises that an important principle of refuge operation is that policy decisions should be made, and day to day support provided by people best able to understand the residents' situation". A south coast refuge supports this with a statement in their original submission:- "The refuge must be run by women because women in crisis situations are usually escaping from men. The experience of the Women's Movement has established quite clearly that women can only relax and begin to cope with their problems in a guilt-free, sympathetic environment of women". This issue will be dealt with further in later sections of the report (e.g. "Structure").

CONCLUSION

Although the aims of Women's Refuges have broadened and in some instances changed completely since 1974, there have been few allowances made for these changes, when funding levels are considered every year. The evaluation will highlight the range of services refuges provide and the inadequacies of other resources in the community.

CHATPER FOUR:

STRUCTURES, POLICY AND PRACTICES OF DIFFERENT WOMEN'S REFUGES



As this chapter is concerned with the form of management structure used by different refuges, it is relevant to concentrate specifically on the policy guidelines concerned with the running of the refuge.

These guidelines state that refuges should:

9. Actively encourage the involvement of residents and ex-residents, and their children, in the running of the refuge.

10. Actively involve women working in the refuge (paid and non-paid) and women using the refuge in policy-making, overall and day to day management, and operation of the refuge.

11. Be operated by a non-profit organisation which has a constitution and is capable of responsibly administering as a non-profit company, a co-operative society or a charity or must be actively seeking such registration or incorporation.

Each refuge is an autonomous unit which decides on its own form of organisational structure and its staffing system. Within the limitations of the Youth and Community Services Women's Refuge guidelines this allows for a wide range of management structures in the Women's Refuge Movement.

Some refuges organise their management and workers as one group, that is, as a collective. This is a deliberate attempt to put self-management by the workers and the women using the refuge into practice. Others have found it necessary to have the support of an active management committee or board of directors to run the refuge. In some of these refuges it is the management committee or board of directors who assume administrative and financial responsibilities to relieve the workers of this task. Finally, another group of refuges are governed by the policy of an umbrella organisation. In this last group there is usually an intermediary board or management committee to whom staff are accountable.

The evaluation examined these different forms of management, the effect they have on policy and practices in the day to day running of the refuge and the effect on women and children using the refuge. The latter will be dealt with in more detail in the next section. It should be noted at this point that the type of management structure adopted at any one refuge does not necessarily relate to the legal constitution chosen by that refuge. For instance, since there is no legal structure which adequately covers a "collective" there are collectives which have formed companies, co-operatives or charities, depending on which is most suitable to their needs. All refuges have, or are working towards achieving, a legal constitution. All are operated by non-profit organisations.

COLLECTIVES

The first Women's Refuge to be established for women and children escaping domestic violence was run by a collective. Now 14 of the refuges in New South Wales and Canberra are run by feminist collectives, some with an active management committee and others with a nominal board of directors or committee which hands over their power to the working collective. The latter will be looked at first.

As explained previously, a collective is a group of workers who are self-managed. They are answerable to each other and assume equal responsibility for the work to be done. There is no hierarchy in the form of supervisors or co-ordinators and no distinction in status between workers. Generally speaking all the members of the working collective are paid the same hourly rate of pay and work the same number of hours per week.

The most important principle of collectivity is that all the members of the collective (in some refuges this includes residents and ex-residents as well as workers) are involved in the decision making processes. All members of the working collective are expected to attend weekly or fortnightly business meetings, to take part in both policy decisions and business decisions eg. attending to maintenance or repairs of building, food stocks, finances. These meetings are also a time when problems with women or children in the refuge are discussed, as well as difficulties collective members may be having with each other. The latter is considered to be necessary because the belief that collective members should have equal power is not always easy to put into practice and work relationships need to be assessed regularly.

Collectives employ a method of decision making which allows for every member to have an equal voice. This is known as consensus and is based on the belief that if everyone expresses their opinion, some agreement can be reached which will ultimately satisfy all concerned. This may mean many hours of discussion. It may also mean that a conclusion is reached where a minority of people will agree to disagree. However, it is a method which, unlike the procedure of voting, allows for a greater degree of flowing discussion and the potential satisfaction of all members.

Currently collectivity is the form of management which appears to be in keeping with the idea of women gaining control over their own lives, and this is an important aim of refuges for women who have suffered from domestic violence. The belief in equality amongst the collective members carries over into the relationship between the workers and the women in the house. Collective managements make a conscious effort to treat the women in the refuge as equals. The women are encouraged to be involved in decision making and in taking responsibility for the day to day running of the refuge.

Collectivity has as one of its aims the sharing of power and skills amongst all members. One practical method for doing this is seen as "job rotation" or the sharing of skills and knowledge. Refuges run by collectives often divide up the tasks to be done as equally as possible amongst the workers. This includes all aspects of refuge work such as child care, ex-resident follow up, housing and legal problems. It is assumed that the person taking responsibility for a particular area of work will also relate freely to the women and children in the house and refer any problems in other areas to the worker/s concerned.

After a period of time, say 6 months, an effort is made to rotate these areas of work to maximise skill sharing. That is, the worker who has been responsible for helping residents find housing, for instance, may want to learn about legal problems women staying at the refuge have to cope with. She would pass on the information about housing to another worker and learn the relevant legal information from whoever is responsible for that area of work.

A structure that five feminist collectives have introduced to avoid a situation developing where one worker gains excess power through knowledge and experience, is that of a time limit for employment at the refuge. One worker from a country refuge explained the reasons for this as:-

> "We have a three year maximum employment period to
>
> 1) prevent stagnation
> 2) avoid workers having nervous breakdowns
> 3) prevent hierarchies forming."

Commitment to the sharing of skills and knowledge goes beyond paid workers, in a refuge run by a feminist colective. It is also extended to the women in the house. There is a conscious effort made to encourage residents and ex-residents to be involved in, for example, learning office skills, going to Court or government departments with other women staying at the refuge. Obviously, this is more likely to happen when residents are feeling comfortable at the refuge and have experienced some of these things themselves. A worker in a Sydney suburban refuge described how the workers in the collective encourage residents to be involved with the running of the refuge:-

> "by them making the house rules and rostering duties and running the house, by involving them in office procedures and meetings and taking them on buying trips."

Another collective states that:-

> "the women are responsible for running the refuge when paid workers have gone home"
> (though paid workers are still "on call" overnight).

Since collectivity is a non-traditional form of management, and a learning process for those involved, the evaluation questionnaire asked workers in those refuges to explain the advantages and disadvantages of working collectively. Some common kinds of responses for <u>advantages</u> were:-

> "Equality, honesty, openness, having to learn new skills, being made to confront yourself."
> (from a city refuge)

> "Our residents benefit greatly in growth by being able to participate in basic office procedures, political and legal matters. It's nice not to be retarded by position, scales etc., encourages natural growth in us all."
> (from Sydney's western suburbs)

> "Everyone has a say in decision making. No-one has the right to have power over others. This is particularly good for residents who may never have had a say in their life direction."
> (inner city)

> "1) Pooling of different experiences, skills, empathies for the basis of decision making.
> 2) Shared decision making is often more thorough and self-examining than with an individual making those decisions.
> 3) Shared work load, i.e. tasks and representations.
> 4) Constant learning situation."
> (from a country refuge)

Some of the <u>disadvantages</u> included:

a) Work having to be passed on to other workers and the subsequent inefficiency

b) workers not wanting to rotate jobs

c) the fact that no legal structure is adequate for the collective form of management

d) difficulties of communication, both within the collective and with other groups

e) the difficulty of terminating employment if a worker is unsuitable.

Some workers wrote in their questionnaires:

> "None apparent, though of course it lengthens discussions until consensus is reached, where as if it was structured under a boss, decision making would be easier but less satisfying."
> (from the western suburbs)

> "No avenue for the termination of employment of unsatisfactory workers. This becomes an emotionally traumatic and draining process."
> (another western suburbs refuge)

> "Women who have had little experience in speaking in front of a large group find it very difficult to have their say. This is especially true of the residents."
> (inner city)

> "Collective meetings can be a little stressful at times, especially when we have 'truth sessions' with everyone revealing their feelings. This can be destructive and taken too personally although it may not necessarily be meant that way."
> (western suburbs)

Most collectives are aware of the disadvantages of their form of management and are constantly trying to overcome them. To ensure that they are regularly evaluating themselves, most of the collectives which have a nominal board of directors or management committee have the support of a "broader collective." This generally includes not only residents and ex-residents but ex-workers and, in some cases, previous management committee members where the committee was once active but is no longer. These people can be called on in an emergency or for feedback and information about certain issues.

ACTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

The evaluation revealed that this form of management divided broadly into three categories.

1. Seven refuges, which work as collectives, have an active unpaid committee or board. The committee or board members at these refuges are seen as a "support group" who may be involved in the regular decision making meetings but who, as unpaid workers, are available in emergencies or are important links with the local community, eg. working at a Health Centre, Community Youth Support Scheme. One management committee is made up entirely of ex-residents who are available to help out when needed.

   One worker described her refuge's management situation as follows:-

   > "We run as a collective but as we are a registered charity we have trustees and a management committee. They aren't involved in the

> day to day running of the refuge. We meet with management every three months to discuss the past quarter's financial transactions and activities and consult on any pertinent matter."
> (from a western suburbs refuge)

Another worker from the same refuge commented that:-

> "management has always responded when needed. Otherwise they have remained in the background."

Because of the distinction between paid and unpaid workers in these collectives, sometimes problems develop. At one refuge the paid workers complained that their management committee members were too out of touch with the day to day running of the refuge to fully appreciate some of the difficulties experienced by paid workers. This can sometimes influence policy decisions and financial decisions. In another similarly structured refuge a worker stated that:-

> "the management committee is composed of extremely articulate and publically aware women - they overawe me."
> (from a coastal refuge)

These differences put some strain on the collective ideal of equality amongst members. However, because of community pressures or the kind of structure the refuge opened with, it is sometimes difficult to overcome inequalities of power in these collectives. In other refuges which consider themselves a "collective" there is a structural hierarchy between workers - eg. one worker receives higher wages and/or has the position of "co-ordinator" - something which negates equality. The ideals of collectivity are more difficult to achieve in these situations.

2. Refuges which have an active, supportive management committee but do not consider themselves a collective are often committed to many of the same feminist ideals as the guidelines. For instance, a worker from a coastal refuge explained:-

> "Since this refuge opened in 1976 I have seen a lot of changes - from an entirely voluntary organisation to one with a board of management. The ideal of residents/workers/board all working together for the benefit of women and children in crisis is better described as an aim or goal .... It is my opinion that most people concerned try to achieve these aims as best they can."

Sometimes there is conflict between the committee and paid workers but if the committee members are generally supportive this can be overcome. One worker in a northern suburbs (Sydney) refuge described how she copes with ideological differences between her and the board of directors:

> "Sometimes I blow my stack. Usually I talk about it... I have a sense of humour and people seem to like talking things out with me."

Another worker from a similarly structured refuge explained how she coped with conflicting ideas in meetings between management and workers:-

> "In the past I avoided possible areas of conflict."

Refuges that are not run by collectives are less likely to involve residents and ex-residents directly in overall decision making processes, although this is contrary to the policy guidelines. However, the residents are generally involved in the day to day running of the house. At one such refuge this is demonstrated:-

> "...by the very fact that they run the house themselves. They each sort out which jobs they will do every day, e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing up, and organise the house as if it were their own home. We have a "house" meeting each week and encourage the resident women to voice their opinion on how the refuge is going and how they see us."
>
> (from a worker in a northern suburbs refuge)

From another refuge with a supportive committee a worker wrote:

> "we try to explain to the women that it is their house for a short period and to treat the house as if it was their own, try to share cleaning jobs etc."

3. There are refuges with active management committees or boards of directors who are in conflict with the paid staff. This occurs when management and paid staff have different attitudes toward the residents, and especially if workers' priorities in areas of work differ from those of management. A paid worker in one country refuge felt that she was forced to:-

> "...try to ignore the committee as much as possible and operate as independently as possible. On occasions confrontations with individual committee members has occurred."

At another country refuge a paid worker complained that a stressful work experience for her was:-

> "....negotiating with a management committee who are out of touch with the Refuge and also fairly personally insensitive."

In these refuges residents are not involved with the policy decision-making at all, and sometimes only minimally with the running of the house.

As well as attitudinal differences toward the resident women and children another source of conflict is the lack of control paid workers have over funds. The difficulty with a situation where paid workers do not have direct access to finance is that they are frustrated in the day to day spending on such urgent items as food, furniture, repairs because they must first locate and consult with management. Some management committees have been known to be so out of touch with the needs of the refuge and the residents that they have returned funding, against the wishes of the paid staff. Paid workers in these refuges may be involved in policy decisions but basically have little control over them.

In the paid workers questionnaire the question was asked:-

> "What qualities do you think a good management person needs?"

Most responses included qualities such as "non-judgemental", "understanding", "awareness of the running of the refuge" and "concern for women and women's issues". One worker wrote:-

> "flexibility - an awareness of the rights of residents as people, not as 'unfortunates' receiving charity - recognition of workers' skills."

Workers in 16 refuges thought that some members of their management committee did not have these qualities. Many of these refuges were either in conservative communities or controlled by umbrella organisations.

The traditional form of management is one which is chosen by some refuges because it is one which gives the refuge credibility in the community. Board or committee members are often well respected local people who can offer useful skills and knowledge to residents at the refuge. However, it is the traditional management structures which are more likely to change in the direction of non-traditional structures.

UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS

There are seven refuges in New South Wales which operate under various religious or charitable umbrella organisations. It is the organisation which decides the policy and practices of those refuges, and "management" that ensures that staff carry them out.

In one group of refuges, a member of the umbrella body is appointed "manager" and the other employees are responsible to that person/s which can be a welfare worker or a live-in husband and wife team. The manager makes all the decisions with regard to day to day running of the refuge, for example finances, and the situation is reviewed annually by the umbrella group. Paid staff are not always members of the organisation, though these workers tend to perform more "peripheral" tasks, such as child care. They are generally in agreement with the ideals of the organisation and are employed for that reason. One worker's perception of the structure was:-

> "management is from the ...(umbrella group) and workers are not involved."

Residents and ex-residents are not involved in policy development or decision making, nor do they have much say in the running of the house. This is in direct conflict with guidelines 9 and 10.

One explanation offered by a staff member for these contradictions to the guidelines was:

> "although the accepted profile for refuges is management by house residents, I firmly believe that women in crisis should be relieved of as many decision making items, that do not relate to their problem or family, as possible. This gives time for their own personal needs."

However, it has been found in other more self-managed refuges that the more involved women are in the running of the refuge the more they gain control over their own lives and confidence in themselves (see chapter on "Effects on Women and Children").

Other refuges run by Umbrella groups are also hierarchically structured. The board or managmeent committee is usually composed of volunteers who are dedicated to the religious or charitable ideals of the organisation. They make policy decisions and some are very involved in the day to day running of the refuges, including control of the finances. Therefore the smooth running of the refuge is entirely dependent on the co-operation of the committee/board and staff. There are situations where staff members can rarely go to or have an effective voice at management meetings. It is very difficult for them to express their views and dissatisfactions, or those of residents.

There can be considerable conflict between management and workers. This may be because volunteers have difficulty understanding the day to day problems of the women and children at the refuge, due to their irregular contact with them, but mostly it is because of attitudinal differences. Management committee or board members often have more conservative values than the paid workers and can be out of touch with the needs of residents. For instance at one of these refuges a worker was dismissed because she gave abortion counselling to a resident.

The workers in these refuges are restricted in the way they can relate to residents, both by the management group and the ideals of the umbrella organisation. If they oppose decisions made by management they are likely to lose their job, since the management committee or board control both employment and termination of employment.

One worker from a refuge run by an umbrella organisation felt that:-

> "it would be more useful to be involved in the decision making process about the actual running of the refuge, and to have more contact with other people running refuges."

Sometimes staff are not permitted to go to Refuge Movement conferences; in a later section the value of meeting other refuge workers at conferences is discussed.

Another worker in one of these refuges felt that she did not have the freedom to work in the best interest of the women and children using the refuge because there were:-

> "too many rules, restrictions and limitations put forward by those who are not involved in the day to day running of the refuge."

Yet another worker had been "told by the committee that a particular resident had to leave when she (the worker) was trying to achieve a certain goal" with that woman. She claimed that "similar situations occurred about once a month - but now there is agreement with the committee that residents are not asked to leave without discussion and agreement with the worker." A child care worker had conflict with the management but found that "as a child care worker (she) was not directly challenged with the differences." For her, "avoidance is the main way of coping."

Thus, workers in these refuges do not have much control over their work conditions or the way they relate to residents. This adds to the stress of the job and is only beneficial to residents when key management/board members, with whom workers have most contact, are compatible with the aims of staff.

Hierarchy also exists between workers in these refuges because generally employees are qualified (Social Workers or certificated Welfare and Child Care Workers). They are paid according to qualifications and some refuges

have co-ordinators who are actually "in charge". These refuges also employ "housemothers" who either live-in permanently or spend several nights a week at the refuge. These women are generally chosen for their empathetic qualities and either cook meals and clean the refuge or supervise the residents to do these jobs. However, housemothers sometimes assume power over residents because of their position. For instance, in one refuge the housemother controls the keys to the front door and residents must have her permission to come and go, especially outside office hours. She also controls the key to the larder [1].

Having a live-in housemother or family can lend an institutional feel to a refuge. The refuges run by umbrella organisations tend to be the more institutional, and as such are in conflict with the first guideline. Apart from live-in workers they sometimes do not allow the residents to do their own cooking, something which is accepted by most refuges as an activity which encourages women to feel "at home". Other refuges have an institutionalized atmosphere because of the layout of the building (see Chapter on 'Effects of Environment'). For instance, two of these refuges were not originally set up as Women's Refuges but as "homes" for destitute, unmarried mothers or for foundlings. Also the fact that most of the umbrella organisations have a traditional religious base creates an institutional feel in these refuges, e.g. some insist on residents saying grace before meals. However, if women have some choice in the refuge they go to, or are at least informed of the policies of the refuge, this situation may not be problematic. A few women prefer to go to a Refuge where they receive the support of their religion.

RECOMMENDATION:

R.2 That all refuges inform residents of the policies of their refuge and, if necessary, give assistance with finding alternative, appropriate accommodation, thus enhancing the women's freedom of choice.

CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Those refuge workers who have attitudinal conflict with their management are often in a situation where the community contacts and skills to be found amongst board or committee members are helpful for women and children using the refuge. Sometimes the workers will overlook differences because of this, but in certain situations this may be impossible.

For instance, if a refuge is set up by a conservative community group, and workers begin to feel very restricted in the way they must relate to residents, it may become necessary to change the structure. Confrontation can become so great that it is impossible for that original committee and the paid workers to continue working together. One country refuge was

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1. The position of housemother is one way of coping with a 24 hour service. Eight refuges have housemothers. Other refuges try to avoid this "power" situation, which is increased by the fact that residents are given very little say in the running of the refuge. Some have night roster workers who are part of the collective, either paid or unpaid, others have paid workers rostered to be on call and the women in the house contact them if there are any problems. Some refuges give their workers', or management members', phone numbers to "Lifeline" or other crisis counselling for referrals of after hours emergencies. One Sydney refuge has caretakers who live on the premises in a self-contained flat.

forced to become autonomous from its original committee in 1979 because of extreme attitudinal differences. The values of the committee were far too conservative for the workers. They are still undergoing a struggle to establish their right to the refuge premises and constantly face eviction by the original committee who claim to be "landlords" for the property. A worker from this refuge advises other refuge workers not to have a management committee outside the refuge "because they don't know what it's all about. Only the workers and residents are capable of managing a refuge."

Another refuge which had a traditional structure is attempting to become a collective, something they have been working toward since the refuge opened. The following is a brief description of the changes in management structure at this refuge, based on the discussion with paid workers during the evaluation:-

> "the refuge was initially set up as a charity with a management committee, and all workers were volunteers. At this stage they called themselves a collective. They were operating for one year without funding. Then when funds came through they paid an administrator, and the idea of collectivity went by the board. When the administrator (who became very powerful) was finally forced to leave, the remaining workers wanted to become a collective again. The collective then consisted of paid workers and unpaid workers, in the role of management committee. They were not without problems. In 1980 the workers were dissatisfied with the management committee because they were so divorced from the day to day running of the refuge - yet they handled funding. They were often requesting insufficient funds to cover essentials including wages. Now there is a nominal committee which is made up of concerned volunteers. Day to day decisions are made by paid workers, either on the spot or at weekly collective meetings."

One worker at this refuge wrote in her questionnaire:-

> "we are working very hard in order to become a collective. We still have a long way to go but I feel we are getting there. We used to have a committee which was too structured/hierarchical and which alienated residents and ex-residents. Workers could not vote - too inflexible. Now residents and ex-residents are involved in decision making. We are at least all talking to each other."

Sometimes these structural changes involve changing the legal constitution of the refuge - something which can be complicated and time consuming for the workers. It is preferable for a new refuge to have access to information regarding structure and its relationship to legal constitution, and the effects on workers, before it opens.

EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE ON POLICY AND PRACTICES IN REFUGES

Some of the effects of the type of management structure on policy and practices in the different refuges has already been discussed. However, it is necessary to look at some aspects in more detail.

EMPLOYMENT OF WORKERS

One of the characteristics of Women's Refuges is that there is an emphasis on "self help and mutual support rather than professionalism. A woman's refuge operates on the premise of women supporting other women rather than professionals helping clients to find solutions to problems."

Feminist refuges deliberately do not employ qualified professionals since this creates an immediate, obvious inequality between the worker and resident. Sometimes the residents (and where possible ex-residents) are involved in choosing new workers, as part of the collective. The tendency is to employ women who have an awareness of women's issues, who have some understanding of collectivity and the reasons for the refuge's existence. For instance a western suburbs collective looks for "personal qualities, awareness of domestic violence, flexibility, gut reactions, life experience and positive energy" when choosing new workers. Another includes "liking kids" as an important quality for general workers as well as child care workers. Termination of employment is also decided by the collective. (See Appendix "Job Contract").

Nine refuges consider that women who have lived in a refuge, and who have suitable attitudes and qualities, should be given priority when choosing employees. There is a commitment to extending the principle of resident and ex-resident involvement in running the refuge, as well as to increasing future employment opportunities for refuge users. One feminist collective is predominantly composed of ex-residents.

A coastal refuge (with a supportive active management committee) stated that the qualities they looked for in a new employee were:-

> "empathy to women's needs, caring and ability to communicate with others, willingness and ability to be supportive and non-judgemental to women and children in crisis."

This refuge also claimed that "where possible an ex-resident displaying the necessary skills would be given priority." One ex-resident is currently employed at that refuge. However, at this refuge residents are not involved in choosing new workers, they are chosen by the board in conjunction with the paid co-ordinator. If a worker is not suitable the co-ordinator and workers decide on termination and the board implements this.

In the more hierarchically structured refuges, e.g. under umbrella groups, there is an emphasis on employing qualified social workers or welfare workers and trained child care workers. The only employees who do not need qualifications are housemothers. There is a basic acceptance of professionalism in these refuges. Workers roles are usually clearly defined and structured. One such refuge stated that when employing staff (who are chosen by the supervisor) they looked for "experience, caring people who were Christians with high morals; family orientated mothers with plenty of commonsense; tolerance; patience and a genuine concern for women and children." Another management committee actually stated, in the discussion for the evaluation, that they looked for "good servants". In these refuges the board or management committee terminates the employment of staff.

INVOLVEMENT OF MEN IN THE RUNNING OF THE REFUGE

The fifth characteristic of the guidelines of the Women's Refuge Programme states that "a Women's Refuge should be run by women for women. While this does not preclude men from participating in the operation of a refuge, this statement recognises that an important principle of refuge operation is that policy decisions should be made, and day to day support provided by people best able to understand the resident's situation." The main reason for this is that women escaping from domestic violence situations are in a state of fear and are often distrustful of men.

It is generally accepted in the Women's Refuge Movement that residents respond more positively to women workers and feel more comfortable in an all female environment. Feminist collectives are also committed to the ideal of refuges being a service for women run by women. They are aware that it is encouraging for residents to see women organising something themselves, without any direction from men. In these refuges women are employed for maintenance jobs wherever possible.

A small number of feminist collectives do employ male child care workers for various reasons. One reason given was that it was considered important to demonstrate that men can be responsible for child care and enjoy being with children. Another refuge employed male child care workers only for the weekly collective meeting to release the women child care workers for the meeting. These male child care workers are generally not part of the collective, though they are involved in decision making for child care.

Those refuges with an active management committee do not employ male workers as a rule (other than trades - people) though there may be men on the committee. Often this is because the people who set up the refuge were a mixed community based group. According to management questionnaires there are fourteen refuges with men involved at management level.

However, there are three refuges with male workers, other than child care workers, and these are refuges run by umbrella groups. In each situation it is the male worker who is the highest paid and has the most powerful position of the staff, such as co-ordinator or manager. This situation has caused conflict at Women's Refuge conferences (see section on the role of the Women's Refuge Movement) because conferences are for paid refuge workers. The vast majority of paid workers are women (in our sample 200 of 205), most of whom believe that Women's Refuges should be completely run by women.

Eleven (11) refuges reported accepting voluntary help from men in the community. For some this would be at management level, for others as maintenance and repair workers, child care or, in one case, just to be "around" for "security" and to talk with residents. Apart from the problems involved with having men at Women's Refuges, where many residents are escaping from domestic violence, there are the added difficulties found when volunteers come to refuges (see chapters on "Role of Worker" and "Work Conditions"). For instance, they may only come to work at the refuge once a month, which does not give residents time to build up the necessary level of trust in them.

HOUSE RULES AT THE REFUGE; WELCOME TO THE REFUGE AND DAILY ROUTINE

Most refuges have some house rules to facilitate the day to day running of the house, especially with regard to the aim of residents living communally and supporting each other through their crises. Feminist collectives tend to have a minimal set of rules in their refuges. Most commonly these are:

NO	MEN
NO	ILLEGAL DRUGS
NO	ALCOHOL
NO	VIOLENCE

The reasons for these rules are obvious, since many women and children have come from a situation where they have lived in fear of a violent, and often drunken, man. Sometimes, to avoid tensions arising within the household further rules are added, at times by residents themselves, e.g.: NO RACISM, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSEWORK.

The more structured refuges have more complex sets of house rules, which may include bed times for children, curfews or smoking restrictions. One such example comes from a country town refuge with a supportive management committee.

HOUSE RULES

1. Drugs and Alcohol Forbidden.
2. No male visitors on the premises.
3. Refuge and personal washing to be done every day.
4. No dogs or cats allowed.
5. No smoking in the bedrooms - for safety reasons.
6. All cleaning and cooking must be shared by all residents.
7. Refuge must be kept clean at all times.
8. Children are not to go to refrigerator unless under supervision.
9. Children are to be in bed by 9 p.m.
10. All food to be eaten in dining room.
11. No physical or verbal abuse to be used by anyone.
12. All disagreements to be discussed at the house meeting.
13. House meeting Tuesday morning at 10.00 a.m....all expected to attend.
14. If leaving the refuge at any time, please tell the supervisor on duty.
15. All medical history should be given to supervisor at the time of arrival. Medication, valuables and money to be kept in the office.
16. If adults wish to drink milk, they are expected to supply their own.
17. Residents and children are not to answer the door.

HOUSE RULES (Cont'd)

18. For the convenience of everyone, meal times have to be set.

    They are as follows.....Breakfast 8.00 A.M.
    Lunch 12.30 P.M.
    Tea 5.30 P.M.

19. Everything, (food etc.) is supplied during stay. However, we do not supply personal items such as soap, toothpaste etc.

20. You will be asked to pay a contribution of $25.00 p/w adult
    $5.00 p/w per child

N.B. These are not meant to be restrictive rules, but to help function as smoothly as possible, they must be followed.

* IF THESE RULES ARE NOT FOLLOWED, YOU MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE

(This particular refuge receives an exceptionally low budget and thus is forced to ask for some rent from residents. Others ask for a nominal rent and some refuges are free. This seems to be more dependent on the refuge's financial situation than its structure).

The following is an example of a set of house rules from a refuge run by an umbrella organisation.

HOME RULES

DRESS:	All residents are asked to be suitably dressed at all times.
MEALS:	All residents are expected to be present and on time. Each family is expected to sit as a unit at a table, and are responsible for their own washing up. NOTIFY STAFF IF DUE TO BE ABSENT FROM MEALS.
PHONE CALLS:	Consider others, don't "HOG" Red phone, limit the length of calls.
LATE ENTRY:	For security reasons this is not acceptable. Why do you need emergency accommodation if you go out late at night? Consider your children.
ALCOHOL:	Those under the influence of/or bring the same on the premises will be asked to leave immediately.
VISITORS:	Must first make their presence known to Staff. No men allowed in the womens'building. No visitors after dark. There is an interviewing room available for privacy.
SMOKING:	No smoking in any rooms for the sake of fire and health. Allowed ONLY in passageways and outside the building.

HOME RULES (Cont'd)

CHILDREN: ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MOTHERS AT ALL TIMES.

That is, in conduct, habits, cleanliness and toilet requirements. We ask that they be kept out of the kitchen. They are requested not to enter the T.V. room without an adult present.

SLEEPING AWAY: Why the need for emergency accommodation if you are able to do this? Permitted only with a valid reason. Contact the management.

ROOM PREPARATION: On vacating room please leave it as you would like to find it. That is, with linen washed, beds re-made and cleaned ready for new occupants.

LAUNDRY: Coin operated washing machines and dryers available for women. The laundry is closed on Sundays.

ACCOMMODATION DONATIONS:

As you are able to receive a supporting Mothers Pension, etc., it is expected that you make a donation towards your cost of accommodation.

The way in which new residents are approached when they first come to a refuge determines how quickly they are likely to feel at ease and begin to sort out their life's direction. Some refuges have a handout explaining what is done at the refuge and generally welcoming new women and children. A sample from a feminist refuge is as follows:

"Our Refuge was set up by a concerned group of people from the ..... area in December 1977. We provide shelter for women and their children who have been exposed to violence, physical and emotional, and living in situations which have become intolerable.

We are funded by the State and Federal Governments through the Department of Youth and Community Services.

You can stay in the house for up to six weeks or more if necessary, in which time money can be saved, decisions about your future can be made, legal proceedings can be initiated and alternative accommodation can be found. You may just need time to think about things and get some peace and quiet! The choice is yours.

The collective are a group of feminist women who are rostered daily to work at the refuge. We share equal responsibility for the day to day running of the refuge. We are here because we care about women and children and are willing to give you support and friendship and any information which may be useful to your situation.

If you want to you can share with us any of your needs, fears or hopes, with absolute safety, or if you just need someone to listen, that's O.K. too.

Feminism means (briefly) that we believe in a womans right to be independent self determining (make her own decisions) and be a strong individual. How you choose to live your life is your right, separate from what your friends or husband may think!!!

Child care workers come to the refuge daily for the children. They will provide activities, outings and offer support and friendship for your children. Please feel free to approach them with any difficulties you may be having with your children.

If you need a break from your children, or are having any problems with them, once again feel free to discuss this with child care workers and you can make some suitable arrangements.

You are still responsible for the care of your children e.g. dressing, toileting, meals, putting to bed etc.....

It would be appreciated if you would like to join in and help or just have some time with the children and child care women.

Night phone roster: a member of the collective is on call each night for emergencies. Please contact us in the evenings for important things only and feel free to do so.

Personal washing: there is a coin operated washing machine outside for your use. All the sheets, towels and pillow slips will be washed weekly at the laundromat.

This is your home: the cooking, cleaning, and jobs around the house are done by the residents living here. Your name will be put on the roster and you are expected to do your share each day and clean up after your own children.

Donation for food: a contribution is asked of $10 per week for women, $5.00, for children $2.50 for children under five. Babies are free. There is a $30.00 maximum charge.

Do not worry if you don't have money when you first arrive at the refuge, it is possible for you to borrow some money and wait till you receive your first cheque before you pay board etc...

About the red phone - it is for your use + please limit your calls to 10 mins. It is in your interest and in the interest of other women staying at the refuge that the phone number, location of the refuge and the names of the women staying in the refuge be kept strictly confidential. Should you answer the phone just say hello, ask who is calling and give no other information till you check to see if the person wishes to speak to the caller.

Important ..... no alcohol, no illegal drugs, no male visitors are allowed at the house. You may be asked to leave the refuge if this is not respected.

If you wish to go out at night you must be home by midnight or you will turn into a pumpkin!!!!! and make arrangements with the women in the house to look after your children.

There are house meetings during the week which we would like all women to attend.....

You are responsible for your own valuables but you may leave them in the office for safekeeping.

We hope you will get what you want from staying here and that you are able to make the changes that you want to. Please take your time to relax and if you need any help with anything please ask....."

An example of a "Welcome to the Refuge" from a refuge run by umbrella group contrasts with this:-

Welcome to..... and we hope we can help you during your stay. Guests intending to stay out at night in extreme circumstances notify the staff on duty, otherwise re-admission will be refused.

Meal times must be adhered to i.e.
8.00 a.m., 12 noon, 5.00 p.m.

Inform Matron or Committee when you will be absent from meals.

Room to be kept tidy and accept any duties as allocated to you by the Committee or Matron.

Please see Social Worker as soon as possible - she will help you.

Generally supervise the behaviour of your children.

Children must always be with the mother and not left in the care of another.

The mother must accompany small children to the bathroom and toilet at all times.

No smoking in bed please for safety reasons.

T.V. is not to be operated by children. Selection of programs to be on a roster basis and controlled by Matron.

No alcohol to be kept on premises.

Visitors must not enter bedrooms.

Guests must be in at 9.00 p.m. Doors locked at 9.00 p.m.

Linen and towels to be handed in when leaving.

Guests are not to answer door or telephone.

Because this is a .....Home no guest will be counselled and any guest seeking an abortion must find other accommodation. Special supportive help is available to all expectant mothers during their stay with us."

The daily routine varies from refuge to refuge, but is generally fairly flexible. For instance, in many refuges women and children get up when they want to. They have breakfast and the women do whatever chores they have rostered themselves to do. Children go to school or are cared for by child care workers for some, or all, of the day. The women are then free to tend to their own needs, such as obtaining benefits from the Department of Social Security, finding accommodation, talking with workers or other residents about their situation. Everyone comes together for the evening meal which is cooked by one or two of the residents.

In a refuge with a more structured management the routine is generally less flexible. For example:

HOME ROUTINES

Monday to Saturday

7.00 a.m. - Get up bell (Sat. 7.30 a.m.)
Mothers expected to organise own children.

7.30 a.m. - Breakfast (Sat. 8.00 a.m.)
Mothers responsible for own family.

8.00 a.m. - Morning prayers (Sat. 8.30 a.m.)

8.30 a.m. - Morning duties (Sat. 8.45 a.m.)

12 noon - Midday meal.

4.00 p.m. - Activity group on activity days.

5.00 p.m. - Evening Meal (Eastern Standard Time)

5.30 p.m. - Evening Meal (Daylight Saving Time)
and on activity days.

9.30 p.m. - Lock up for safety.
Turn off excess lights.
THOSE WATCHING T.V. TILL LATER ARE EXPECTED TO BE ON TIME FOR BREAKFAST.

Sunday

7.30 a.m. - Wake up and breakfast.

9.00 a.m. - Sunday Morning Chapel.

9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. - Kitchen closed.

9.30 p.m. - Lock up and lights out, etc.

The type of management structure of a refuge does have some effect on the length of time residents stay. For instance, feminist refuges have tended to encourage women to stay until they have organised themselves adequately to begin a new life, if that is what they have chosen to do. They believe that the more time a woman spends saving money and forming ongoing relationships with workers and other residents, the more chance she has of being able to cope with her life after she leaves the refuge. However, the housing situation has also effected the length of stay and this is independent of the type of management structure at refuges.

CONCLUSION:

While it is clear that the guidelines drawn up by Youth and Community Services and the refuges do allow for a variety of management structures within the Women's Refuge Movement, there are some structures whose policies and practices conflict with those guidelines. The most conflict occurs in refuges with boards or management committees who have more decision making power than the paid workers (especially in the case of umbrella organisations). Workers' autonomy to relate to residents freely is restricted in these refuges. Furthermore, there is little involvement of residents in the day to day running of the house.

Most of these refuges defer to the policies of their umbrella groups, while those without umbrella organisations are more likely to question their form of management. One country refuge (in its management questionnaire) stated that an advantage of working with a powerful management committee was "efficiency." However, they noted that a disadvantage was that "it can get too authoritarian, having voting and not consensus" at meetings.

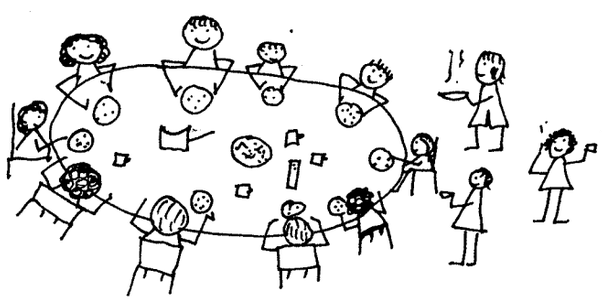
The evaluation concludes that the collective form of management is most in keeping with the guidelines. It allows more worker autonomy to work in the best interests of the women and children staying at the refuge. It also encourages the residents to be more involved in the running of the refuge and in determining their life's direction. Collectives are also more aware of the need for regular self evaluation. This is incorporated into their meetings by assessment of work relationships, and policies and decision making structures.

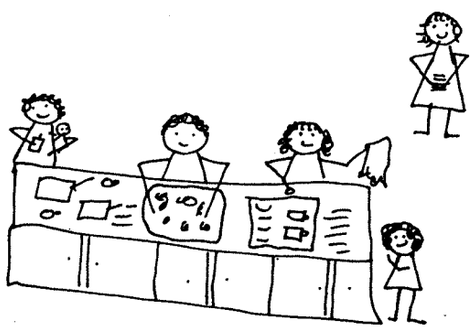
RECOMMENDATION:

R.3 That Women's Refuges should adhere to the guidelines established by Refuges and the Department of Youth and Community Services, in an effort to allow workers the maximum opportunity to work in the best interests of the women and children using the service.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE EFFECTS OF STAYING IN A REFUGE ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN - AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF CARE





This chapter of the evaluation report is primarily concerned with the perceptions of women and children using the services offered by Women's Refuges. The information is based on responses to the Women's (residents and ex-residents) Questionnaires, taped interviews and discussions.

IMPRESSIONS:

The initial impression women and children gain of a refuge can very much influence how comfortable they feel during their stay at that refuge and, to some extent, how beneficial the experience will be. Below is a description by an ex-resident from a refuge in the western suburbs of the impression the refuge made on her.

> "I had no idea where I was going. They brought me to this run down house - I was terrified. I couldn't tell the children where we were going because I didn't know. We arrived on a Saturday afternoon - that meant there weren't any workers on till Monday. There was a roomful of women and kids. Then my children started to cry because they were extremely upset about the violence the night before. The women in the house just took over - talked to the children, calmed them down and took that burden off me anyway. I simply didn't know what to tell them. The women were just marvellous. I knew nothing about refuges before I came here - that was a very, very strange situation for me."
>
> (from a taped interview).

One of the older children from a similar refuge in the inner city described his initial impressions of the refuge.

> "I've been here 3 weeks. It was scary at first, but when you get to know people it's alright. It took me a couple of days."
>
> (from a taped interview)

A more long lasting impression of a woman's stay at a refuge is gained from responses to the question "What do you expect a refuge can offer you?" (in the Women's Questionnaire). Answers included statements such as -

> "A place to live until you sort things out."
> (Inner City refuge)
>
> "Protection and peace of mind."
> (Far West refuge)
>
> "A refuge is here to help us find our footing in life again."
> (Southern Suburb of Sydney)
>
> "Shelter for you and your children, advice when needed. Opportunity to get yourself together again."
> (Central Coast)
>
> "A home where you feel you are understood and not judged. It's a haven of safety and encouragement to take your life into your own hands and make what you can out of it."
> (Western Suburbs)
>
> "Safety and security - no worries from men harassing and tormenting you. Understanding from the people working here."
> (Southern N.S.W.)

> "First of all I didn't know. All I know is I had to get away from home as I was a complete mess. When I got here I got all the help I ever needed and I never knew they were here."
>
> (North Coast)

> "A shoulder you can't find anywhere else. Somewhere to turn when the world falls around you. People who understand what you and your children are going through. A place where you know you are wanted, loved and cared for. A place where you can sort yourself out without any more pressures placed on you."
>
> (Far North Coast)

> "I did not expect anything at the time. I found myself feeling worthwhile again. I also found many new and wonderful friends."
>
> (Western Suburbs)

These statements speak for themselves. Women from many refuges perceived that a refuge can offer them security, protection, support and information. This was obvious from questionnaire responses and discussions with residents and ex-residents.

EFFECTIVENESS OF AIMS:

(a) Support offered by refuge workers:

As already stated, the primary aim of most refuges is to offer accommodation and support to women and children in crisis. Most refuges also attempt to provide a non-institutional environment and information sharing with an emphasis on self-help, rather than professional help.

To examine whether residents and ex-residents perceived this approach, they were asked (in the Women's Questionnaire):

> "Do you think the refuge is different from other temporary accommodation such as hostels, guest houses, hotels?"

310 (78%) women saw refuges as being different, 57 (14%) felt there was no difference, 21 (5%) said they "didn't know", and 12 (3%) did not respond. Some of the reasons given for the perceived difference included comments such as "friendlier; more caring; non-judgmental; supportive; workers more interested; all women; non-institutional."

More specifically, women wrote:

> "Because you are well looked after and treated as someone special." (a resident from a Northern Suburbs refuge)

> "In the refuge I found objective emotional and physical help. I was helped to see all the options that were open to me. I experienced loving support and my self-esteem began to grow through this." (an ex-resident from a Western Suburbs refuge)

> "There are people at the refuge to whom you can talk about your problems and, at the same time, you can get rid of some of the frustration and hurt that has built up in you." (resident from a Riverina refuge)

> "The refuge offered peace of mind as well as physical shelter; also the chance to see other people's problems gave me a better insight into my own." (ex-resident from a refuge in the Central Coast area)

The question immediately following this was:

> "What is the difference between the refuge and other Welfare services you have used (e.g., Dept. of Youth and Community Services, Legal Aid, Smith Family)?"

Some responses to this question revealed that women using refuges perceive that not only do refuges offer emergency accommodation, but that refuge workers have a different approach toward service users. For example, common responses were:

> "Just being people - human element rather than a set procedure to follow with every case." (an ex-resident from a North Coast refuge)

> "I was destitute and, having two children to care for, I found that being with other women who were in the same situation, made me feel more secure and able to cope. The refuge is a home away from home, so to speak, a warmer feeling because you have all the workers pulling for you all the time and helping with all sorts of problems. Therefore, you know you will reach your goal whatever that may be." (ex-resident from a refuge in the south of N.S.W.)

> "For one, homeliness and understanding I have never had before from anyone. In the past, I have known rejection in many ways, but never once have I had it from the women who run the refuge." (an ex-resident from a South Coast refuge)

In providing a non-institutionalised "home like" environment, refuges aim to give women and children a mental and physical space where they can work out what they want to do. A measure of the effectiveness of this aim is the responses to the question:

> "Do you feel comfortable in the Refuge?"

350 (87.5%) of the residents and ex-residents interviewed answered that they did feel "comfortable" at the refuge, 35 (8.7%) did not feel comfortable and 15 (3.8%) did sometimes.

While it is acknowledged that this sample of 400 users of the service contains a bias, this is only the case for the 259 ex-residents who generally would have some positive feeling for their refuge because they made the effort to come to the "ex-resident day".(1) However, the 141 residents who filled in questionnaires were a random sample of women staying in refuges. 120 of those women felt "comfortable", 10 did not and 7 did "sometimes". 4 women did not respond.

Some of the reasons given for feeling comfortable at the refuge included security, friendliness, acceptance and meeting women in a similar situation.

For instance, women wrote in their questionnaires:

> "My husband can't get me." (Central Coast area)

> "My body is sheltered, the food is good, the people are nice, my bed's comfortable and my baby is happy." (Far West)

> "..... because of the peace I got there that I didn't get at home." (Far West)

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(1) See "Methodology" section in the Introduction.

"..... because we are all women with the same problems and we can talk and help each other." (Inner City)

"I feel protected and do not need to worry about every day problems while I sort out my major problems." (Inner City)

"..... because everybody's made really welcome and the people that run the place really help you get your problems off your chest." (Riverina)

"When I had problems I thought I was on my own but, since I've been at the refuge, I know I'm not alone as there are so many in the same boat. We can talk about our problems whereas before no one wanted to know." (South Coast)

"I feel comfortable because I know that I am safe here and also if I have got any problems there is always someone to talk to and if I need help there is always someone to help me." (Central Coast)

"When you are just about "in the gutter" and you come to a place like this, it is like all your Christmases have come at once. Then you know there is an end in sight to your problems." (Western Suburbs)

"Because it is like one big happy family." (Western Suburbs)

"Yes, it has made me a stronger person to handle life's problems." (Northern Suburbs)

"It is free of pressure here and nobody forces you to do anything you don't want to do." (Newcastle area)

"The people that work there make it their business to make you feel comfortable." (A.C.T.)

"I feel comfortable because I can be myself." (Inner City)

"They show your kids love and they show you how to cope and how to go on living alone." (Central West)

"It isn't institutionalised." (Southern N.S.W.)

Some of the reasons given for not feeling comfortable were:

"Sometimes I felt uncomfortable because single people do not cope so well with children around and that is when conflict arises." (Inner City)

"I don't think you could actually feel comfortable in a refuge but it does provide a feeling of safety and security which, at the time, is more important." (Central Coast)

"I didn't feel comfortable as such, but do feel security and a non-judgmental attitude helped me to obtain a measure of comfort even though the living conditions are far from what I was accustomed to." (Central Coast)

(b) Support between residents:

It is obvious from many of the above statements that women who stay in refuges are often very appreciative of the support they are given. While much of this support comes from the workers at the refuge, there is also a high degree of mutual support among the residents themselves. This is aided by the communal living situation in most refuges.

When asked the question - "Have you lived communally before (i.e., with other people not counting your husband/boyfriend or children?)", 40% of the women answered "yes". (Table 1) This high percentage is possibly due to the fact that 25% of the sample had been at the refuge before (see "Reasons for Existence"). When asked: "Do you like living communally at the refuge (i.e., sharing cooking, housework and living space?)", 58.5% women said "yes" and 18% said "sometimes."

Table 1

Have you lived communally before?	No. Women:	Percentage:
Yes	160	40
No	240	60
Total:	400	100

Do you like living communally?	No. Women:	Percentage:
Yes	234	58.5
No	94	23.5
Sometimes	72	18.0
Total:	400	100.0

One of the mechanisms employed by refuges to enable communal living to be as smooth running as possible is that of house meetings. House meetings are a time when women in the house and often workers, get together to discuss problems residents may be having with each other or with being at the refuge, as well as to draw up job rosters. House meetings provide an effective mechanism for encouraging the residents to talk about the tensions effecting the smooth running of the refuge. Not only can problems be resolved but many residents have the chance to learn that to express their feelings publically does not bring wrath down upon them but rather enables them to develop confidence.

28/36 refuges stated in their management questionnaires that they have house meetings at the refuge. Three (3) refuges hold daily house meetings, seventeen (17) refuges hold weekly meetings and the remainder hold house meetings fortnightly, monthly or "as needed".

In twenty seven (27) of those refuges paid workers attend the house meetings as well as women residents; in five (5) refuges members of the Management Committee attend; in twelve (12) refuges unpaid workers attend; in seventeen (17) ex-residents are able to attend and in fifteen (15) refuges children attend house meetings.

The sorts of tensions that were said to cause conflict amongst the residents were summarised as follows:

> "Women from different cultures/racism; women with different lifestyles; conflicts between children; differences in child-rearing practices; fear of other residents who are in extreme distress; personality clashes."

The majority of residents and ex-residents in the evaluation sample perceived that they were required to attend house meetings, even if only sometimes. There were four refuges where the women clearly thought that they were not required to attend house meetings. (The inconsistency of these findings with the statements made by refuges could be due to confusion by some women in the sample as to the meaning of "house meeting".)

One ex-resident explained how she felt about house meetings:

> "The house meetings were amazing. It was the first time I had ever confronted people. Normally I would ignore things and walk away, but you couldn't do that here. You had to stand up for yourself. You learnt that confronting people didn't have to mean losing their friendship. After a housemeeting the tension was just gone - everyone would feel just so much better. You would have cleared the air of all the tensions of the day. It was something new to me."
>
> (from a taped interview)

310 (77.5%) of the sample of women perceived that there were tensions in the house, at least sometimes. These were mostly due to children (106 responses); misunderstandings (77); housework (58). Others were more specific to the situation, eg., racism (8). Tensions were mostly sorted out by the women themselves and often through the house meeting structure (Table 2).

Table 2

Are there tensions in the house?	No. Women:	Percentage:
Yes	100	25
No	90	22.5
Sometimes	210	52.5
Total:	400	100.0
How are they resolved:	**No. Women:**	**Percentage:**
House meetings	84	21.0
Workers intervene	58	14.5
Ignored	23	5.5
Women resolve them	99	25.0
Other	18	4.5
No response	118	29.5
Total:	400	100.0

Due to the communal living situation, where the living space is shared by all residents, it is natural for women and children to talk with each other and offer each other support. Women were asked (in the questionnaire), "Do you often get together with the other women in the house to talk about your situation and to help each other?" 345 (86%) answered "yes"; 27 (7%) answered "no" and 28 (7%) answered "sometimes". The time when this was most likely to happen was when children were in bed or with child care workers.

173 of the 259 ex-residents (67%) felt they had formed ongoing friendships with both workers at the refuge and women staying in the house. This indicates a high level of support for women using refuges. Children also form friendships while they are at the refuge and these can be ongoing after they leave. For instance, a 14 year old girl who was resident at a western suburbs refuge said, in a taped interview:

> "I hope we'll be friends after we leave the refuge. Francene can come and stay at our place and I can go and stay with her, as long as we're not too far away."

(c) Ongoing support to ex-residents:

The other major aim of most refuges is to offer ongoing support to women and children after they leave the refuge. Ex-residents were asked:

> "What kind of support have you and your children had from the refuge since you left?"

Forms of Support	Number of Women
Emotional	164/259
Assistance in Moving	129/259
Finding Furniture	106/259
Information re local area	68/259
Help with child care	80/259
Financial assistance	66/259
Pre-school enrolments	31/259
Other forms of support	24/259

Many ex-residents had received more than one form of support from the refuge. The difficulties involved in "follow-up" (from the refuge's point of view) are discussed in the chapter on "Shifts in Emphasis".

The fact that ex-residents perceive the refuge as being able to offer them information as well as support is further evidenced by responses to the question:

> "Have you contacted the refuge for information since you left?"

161/259 women said "yes" and 98/259 said "no".

Of the 259 ex-residents in the sample many (123), felt that they would need further assistance from the refuge. For instance, 66 women indicated that they wanted ongoing friendship/support from the refuge workers; 54 women believed they could need further information or advice.

ROLE OF WORKER:

(a) General Workers:

To some extent the women's perceptions of what a refuge worker should do will reflect what they see being done by the workers at the refuge they use. Whether the women find the work being done of value, will depend on their needs at the time and the attitudes of workers as well as management.

The main question asked about the role of worker was:

> "What sort of things do you think a refuge worker should do? Please tick any of the following you think are suitable, even if your refuge workers don't do them."

A summary of responses includes the number of refuges where half or more of the residents and ex-residents considered the task suitable for a refuge worker. Not all questionnaires were filled in adequately, which may mean results are somewhat depressed.

	Type of Work:	No. of Refuges:
a)	Accompany you to -	
	Youth and Community Services or Department of Social Security	25
	Solicitors	22
	Court	25
	Doctor	12
	Look for a house (rented or Housing Commission)	22
b)	Give information on -	
	Housing	33
	Custody	32
	Divorce	27
	Maintenance	27
	Pensions	34
	Work	24
	Health	29
	Contraception	18
	Pregnancy	24
	Adoption	23
	Abortion	26
	Children and child care	31
	Community resources	29
	Drug and alcohol problems	23
c)	Comfort you when you are upset	34
d)	Mind your children when you need a break	31
e)	Work with your children in an educational way	21
f)	Come with you to get belongings	29
g)	Help you move	29
h)	Be there if someone threatening rings or comes to the refuge	30
i)	Interpret for any woman who cannot speak English or arrange for an interpreter	26
j)	Cook for everyone at the refuge	2
k)	Clean the refuge	1
l)	Help sort out tensions between residents	33
m)	Sort out problems with the local school	18
n)	Be someone to talk to	34
o)	Refer you to other community agencies	24

The tasks that most refuge users do not consider part of the role of the refuge worker are cooking for everyone at the refuge and cleaning. Another question in the questionnaire -

"Who does the housework?"

revealed that in most refuges the women staying in the refuge do the housework. This was the case for twenty eight (28) refuges, though in twenty two (22) of those refuges workers were also seen to do housework.

Another task considered inappropriate for workers was accompanying women to the doctor (the majority of women in only twelve (12) refuges accepted this role). Many women are intimidated by the medical profession but are, none the less, quite used to going to doctors alone. Some refuges offer support in this area, if women want it.

While in eighteen (18) refuges, (half of sample), women did not consider it appropriate that workers should provide contraceptive information, it is possible that "information" is being confused here with "advice". Refuge workers in most refuges believe that women everywhere should have access to contraceptive information, but that it is up to the individual to choose what form of contraception she will use, if at all.

Responses from residents and ex-residents also indicated that in 18 refuges the majority considered it inappropriate for refuge workers to "sort out problems with the local school". It is again possible that this task was misunderstood. While it would be inappropriate for refuge workers to interfere in the relationship between ex-resident children and their local school, it is considered necessary by some refuge child care workers to offer support to resident children if there is discrimination occurring at the school local to the refuge. It is not uncommon amongst school children, who are very quick to notice anything "different", to harass refuge children though often the staff at the schools near refuges are very supportive.

An example of discrimination at a local school to a refuge was described by a High School student who was staying at a western suburbs refuge:

> "The school was hard at first, but I knew Joy so it was O.K. I quite like it but we get embarrassed getting a lift home in the Kombie because the kids all call it the "Spastic Bus". We don't tell anyone we live in a refuge."
>
> (taped interview)

This example further illustrates the poor status of refuges in some communities which, in turn, effects the women and children using refuges.

(b) Child Care Workers:

The above list of tasks includes those generally carried out by child care workers. That is, provide "information on children and child care"; "mind your children when you need a break"; "work with your children in an educational way"; "sort out problems with the local school". (See chapter on "Role of Worker" for more information about child care work in refuges).

No specific questions were asked of women, in the women's questionnaire, regarding child care. However, in discussions with residents and ex-residents, it was obvious that the women appreciated the fact that child care was offered. A taped conversation with some residents at a refuge in the Central Coast area reveals this:

Resident 1: "I've got 5 kids and it's really good that they have child care after school because it gives you time to do your work and cook tea."

Resident 2: "You do need a break, you need to do shopping and things."

Resident 1: "When I first came here, I didn't realise they had child care and I went shopping with my 5 kids. I could have sat down on the footpath and cried because each one was running in a different direction. I didn't know where I was. The cars were going everywhere. I'd just come from a country town - there's not even traffic lights there."

Taped interviews and discussions with children at various refuges revealed that they enjoy the activities provided by child care workers. Many appreciate the support child care workers give them. For example, a teenager at an inner city refuge described her feelings about child care workers:

> "We talked to two of the workers yesterday and I didn't expect them to listen to me, but they did."

Another resident child expressed an emotional response common to many children at refuges and something which child care workers are well aware of:

> "Even though Dad was bad to us, us kids still miss him."

Child care workers often need to share the emotional upset of children staying at refuges and this can be very exhausting. One refuge worker reported her most "stressful experience" as one which involved trying to support a child experiencing the pain of separation.

> "One day I picked up three children from their father's place after he had had access. One of the children was so distressed. I couldn't resolve the situation - or his agonising over it. He was (as the other 2 were, but their expression was different) unable to accept his mum's decision to "never live with dad again". Trying to get the whole abstract concept across to him was impossible. His hurt was so great and tearing him apart and nothing could resolve that pain."
>
> (from a worker at a Northern Suburbs refuge)

A 12 year old boy staying at one refuge had something positive to say about the child care workers, and some constructive criticism.

> "The kids workers are great, but I think there should be more than one on after school - one for smaller kids and one for bigger kids, because we don't like to do the same things. You can't do candlework with little kids around." (from a taped interview)

Another 15 year old girl stated:

> "I'd like to keep in touch with the workers when I leave here." (from a taped interview)

When younger children were asked -

> "What do you think of the child care workers/children's room, etc.",

they mostly answered "good". Observation of them playing or relating to child care workers generally indicated that this was so. However, in situations where there are too many children and not enough child care workers, some children miss out on the attention they often desperately need.

(c) Male workers:

The majority of residents and ex-residents in eleven (11) refuges perceived that there were men working there. Discussions during the evaluation indicated that most refuge users would prefer not to have men working at the refuge, though some considered suitable male child care workers to be appropriate.

One refuge worker (female) referred to her observation of some boys in the refuge reacting postively to a casual male child care worker:

> "The boys who are missing their father and/or older brothers were so negative in their attitude to other workers. It was great to see their positive response to him." (from the Central West)

One resident at an inner city refuge stated:

> "I believe men inhibit women a great deal, but I think the man who works here is good at his job - I don't feel inhibited by him. But, in general, I don't think men should work in places like this." (from a taped interview)

(d) Volunteers:

Discussions with residents revealed that, often, volunteers only came once or twice during a resident's stay and that it was too difficult to get to know them and establish some trust. A minority of residents, however, appreciated being able to talk to someone who they did not see very often, as this afforded them some privacy.

One resident in a city refuge, which has many volunteers, described how they effected her:

> "The volunteers are more upper middle class - they get up my nose. I don't think there is a place for volunteers. They can't relate to our situation. I can relate to any one of the women here because we're all in the same boat, in a sense. You have to be in this situation to understand how little you have." (from a taped interview)

Of the 112 residents and ex-residents who perceived that there were "voluntary or unpaid workers" at their refuge, 41 (37%) said there was a difference between them and paid workers.

(e) Ex-resident workers:

The majority of residents and ex-residents in sixteen (16) refuges perceived that there were ex-residents working in their refuge. Most did not think there was any difference between ex-resident and non ex-resident workers. Some, however, felt that to have been a resident in a refuge was useful in terms of understanding what residents are experiencing. For instance, a woman from a New England refuge wrote:

> "Ex-resident workers have been through a trauma and sometimes find it easier to cope with many problems."

Another woman from a Northern Suburbs refuge wrote:

> "Ex-resident workers are a bit more understanding of the problems."

A resident from a Western Suburbs refuge wrote:

> "I feel they are closer to the women because they've been in the same situation once."

An ex-resident worker explained her reasons for wanting to work at the refuge in similar terms:

> "I was a woman who had experienced many years in a crisis." (from a Western Suburbs refuge)

Another ex-resident worker explained the effect that working in a refuge had had on her life:

> "My job opportunities have changed greatly. I am learning to type and am getting pointers on book-keeping and other skills I would never have learned if I'd stayed at home." (from the Central West)

However, being an ex-resident worker is not without problems.(2) One ex-resident who is working at a refuge with mostly non ex-resident workers explained her feelings about the situation:

> "I have difficulty expressing things in meetings. I don't always get to finish what I'm saying and someone else on the management committee can say the same thing and be listened to..... If residents were more involved in the day to day running of the refuge, they would be more confident to apply for a job at the refuge." (from a taped interview).

The idea of a refuge completely run by ex-residents has been mentioned before. Some ex-residents expressed an interest in working for the refuge, as did some residents. One resident commented on the concept of an ex-resident run refuge:

> "I think it is an excellent idea. Not that simply staying in a refuge is enough 'qualification' to work in one. Though, if someone was unsuitable, the residents would soon let them know. You'd have to be able to cope with anything." (from a taped interview)

Another resident believed that ex-residents "could do a better job because they wouldn't be on the outside looking down".

EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF REFUGE ON RESIDENTS AND EX-RESIDENTS:

To examine whether residents and ex-residents perceived the structure of their refuge similarly to those who work there, a question on the women's questionnaire asked:

> "Who runs your refuge?"

Excluding the 33 women who responded that they "didn't know", the perceptions of who ran the refuge were roughly in keeping with the way refuges would describe themselves. That is, the majority of women in twelve (12) refuges answered that the "collective" ran the refuge. In seven (7) refuges, the majority of women thought that the board of directors or management committee ran the refuge (three (3) of these are under the control of umbrella organisations), and in three (3) refuges the majority of women thought that the refuge was run by "another" organisation (namely, an umbrella group). The remainder were seen to be run by some combination of board of directors/management committee and workers.

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(2) Typical problems ex-residents face in working in a paid capacity for a refuge, particularly on a "permanent" basis, include child care (16/41); transport (37/41); feeling as though they don't know what is expected of them (29/41). 41 women of the sample of 400 had worked for the refuge and been paid for this.

Those women who stayed in a refuge run by a collective were asked:

"What do you understand by the word 'collective'?"

Answers included concepts such as equality, shared work and shared responsibility. For example:

"A group of women taking responsibility for the running of the refuge." (a resident from an A.C.T. refuge)

"There are no bosses, everyone is equal." (a resident from an Inner City refuge)

"A group of women who include residents, ex-residents, if they choose, workers (paid and unpaid), and any other interested women to make all decisions jointly." (ex-resident of a southern N.S.W. refuge)

"A group of women workers; no bosses; no hierarchy." (ex-resident from a western suburbs refuge)

"A group of people who all put in their suggestions and ideas." (resident from an Inner City refuge)

To further examine where the women using refuges felt decision making power lay, especially with regard to their own status, they were asked:

"If a woman is causing tension, who decides that she leaves?"

In five (5) refuges the majority of residents and ex-residents felt the decision would be made by the board or committee. In ten (10) refuges the majority of women felt the decision would be made by the board/committee in consultation with workers. In eight (8) refuges the decision would primarily rest with the workers, and in eleven (11) refuges with workers and women in the house. In one refuge the women felt that they would make such a decision. Seventy (70) women did not know.

It would seem that, in general, one basic aim of refuges, i.e., to involve women in the running of the refuge, is largely put into practice. When asked:

"Are you encouraged to take responsibility for the running of the house at your refuge?"

233 (58%) of women answered "yes" and 100 (25%) answered "sometimes" (Table 3).

Table 3

"Are you encouraged to take responsibility for the running of the house at your refuge?"

Response:	No. of Women:	Percentage:
Yes	233	58
Sometimes	100	25
No	61	15
N/R	6	2
TOTAL:	400	100

The three (3) refuges, where more than half the women who had stayed at the refuge felt they were not encouraged to be responsible for the running of the house, were run by umbrella organisations.

More specifically, the women were asked about their involvement in the day to day housekeeping decisions. 277 (69%) perceived that they were involved and 123 (31%) that they were not. There were six (6) refuges where the majority of women perceived that they were not involved in decision making on a day to day level and four (4) of these were under the control of umbrella groups or management committees who do not agree with this principle.

Some of the day to day tasks in a refuge that residents and ex-residents have taken responsibility for are - answering the office phone (151 in this sample); taking women to solicitors or court (39); taking women to relevant government departments (69) and looking for a house/flat with another woman at the refuge (98). Only 41 women had been paid for any of this work.

140 (35%) of the women in the sample perceived that they were involved in making policy decisions at the refuge. Most of these women were from 10 refuges, seven 7 of which are run by collectives. In these refuges the women in the house, as well as ex-residents, are encouraged to come to meetings and discussions.

The differences in attitude of management to residents is, to some extent, reflected in the women's responses to the question:

> "What effect has the refuge had on your and your children's lives?"

Some of the responses from women who stayed in refuges run by umbrella groups or conservative boards of directors/management committees included the following:-

> "It has given me the chance to think about what is best for me and my children, and the opportunity to start a new life."
>
> "I'm stable here, my baby's secure and healthy and happy."
>
> "Thanks to the refuge for helping me to face life and believe in God. I will not forget the help they gave me."

Responses from refuges with supportive, active management committees/boards of directors included:

> "If I hadn't been able to come to the refuge, I would have had to stay with my ex-husband. I was close to a nervous breakdown.....and my children would have been put into a home. I felt safe at the refuge. I got the help from them that my family wouldn't give me - they didn't want to know what was happening to myself and the children."
>
> "My son coped well in the refuge and has continued to do well in the school he was sent to by the refuge. I feel the community support was there from the start."
>
> "By making me feel I can be independent, and not having to put up with violence in the home, I have peace of mind and therefore am giving the children a happier environment."
>
> "They've made myself and my kids more independent and we're able to be more self-supportive, which is very important to our new way of life."

Some of the responses from refuges run by collectives were as follows:

> "The refuge has been a great help to myself and my son's life. It has given us encouragement to do things for ourselves, to relax and realise that there are women and children who have had a worse deal than ourselves. Plus, it has given back our self respect."

> "When I came here, I felt the lowest thing on two legs, with no rights, no self-confidence, etc. The workers and women initially built up my confidence and gave me a little bit of self worth back, which has continued to grow since I left."

> "It has given me a better outlook on life. I am more aware of my children's and my needs. I feel more able to cope with anything that arises. I have confidence in myself. I like myself."

While, in essence, all of these women are expressing positive feelings about the effect of living at a refuge, it is evident that those who stayed at refuges run by management structures which allow greater resident involvement emphasise a growth in their self-confidence and independence. This theme was noticeable in other questionnaire answers and discussions.

Many of the comments, both in questionnaires and discussions about the refuge experience, were positive. Women and children who are desperate for a roof over their heads will appreciate accommodation and a break from the economic fight for survival. However, the benefits of staying in a refuge are potentially beyond the economic.

Refuges also aim to give emotional support and practical information.

While all refuges offer cheap accommodation, the quality of care offered is differentiated on the issues of emotional support and information. In a society where an increasing number of women and children are escaping unsatisfactory domestic situations, emotional support needs to include an opportunity to discuss and question why the residents needed refuge. It also should include encouragement of self-growth and independence amongst residents. This cannot be done in an atmosphere where residents feel inferior, "second class" citizens, or society's problems.

As stated previously, (chapter on "Structures, Policy and Practices"), a refuge with a management structure which allows for resident and ex-resident involvement in the running of the refuge is encouraging responsibility and growth in independence.

The type of information offered at a refuge is dependent on the management structure, among other things. Those refuges which are under the control of umbrella groups, or boards of directors/management committees with conservative attitudes, and where workers have minimal decision making power, offer limited information. For example, some do not have information available about contraception, abortion or maintenance. When the range of information available is maximal women can make their own choices.

Some criticisms women made of refuges were applicable to all refuges regardless of management structure. For instance, common criticisms were overcrowding (66 women); tensions in the household (48 women); untidy house (11 women).

For example women wrote in questionnaires:

> "Have to ask for linen; things are locked away."

> "Because I don't know how to speak English they always pick on my children."

Many women (139) had no criticisms to make.

The following selection are taken from specific structures but some apply to other refuges.

For example, from refuges with more conservative management structures came criticisms such as:

"It feels like Fort Knox"

"Rules are too strict"

"Specialist treatment for some, everyone's not equal".

"Can't leave children with anyone other than child care workers, except in an emergency".

"Women just bear with it, they don't expect any better. They are seen as someone with a problem".

"We should have house meetings because there is lots of back stabbing and talking behind others backs, instead of saying it to their face".

"Can't talk to workers like you can to the other women in the house, even though they are friendly".

"Not being able to stay for very long and needing some times to run the show yourself".

"Not allowed out after 9.00p.m. No incoming or outgoing phone calls between 5.00p.m. and 6.30p.m. It would be good to have a red phone to save us asking for the key".

"Permission needed to stay out overnight".

One child who stayed at one of these refuges stated: (in a taped interview)

"(The refuge) had too many rules - you had to be in bed early. The kitchen was locked and the matron had to come and get you milk and stuff. They only had one child care worker. It seemed like prison because they locked you in."

From refuges with committees or boards who support the aims of workers and those established in the guidelines (see chapter on "Aims"), came criticisms such as:

"Not being made aware of things you can't do"

"No smoking"

"Curfew"

"Lack of week-end workers"

"Lack of privacy"

"Crowded kitchen etc., but this can be overcome by seeing the humour in the situation and accepting it as an unavoidable temporary situation".

"Some workers have judgemental attitudes"

Criticisms that were made by residents and ex-residents at collectively run refuges included the following:

> "Lack of kid's space"
>
> "Noise and kids"
>
> "Stealing"
>
> "Women and kids get used to eating food they can't afford when they leave"
>
> "External pressures, husband hassles, situations that need police protection etc., and situations which we are not qualified to cope with e.g. potential suicides, threatened violence".
>
> "Coping with your children in the refuge, with so many children together, can be a problem".

One child, who was talking about a collectively run refuge, stated that -

> "They were vegetarian. Mum had to take us out to get meat and that. There were too many people there - you didn't get to talk to workers much."

Some women, from various refuges, expressed negative feelings about their refuge experience. Often the reasons for this are societal and a product of conservative community attitudes, rather than a product of judgemental attitudes within the refuge itself. For example:

> "I feel ashamed for being here and will never come to one again hopefully. But the refuge has opened my eyes to all the problems marriages have."
>
> "This was a place I should never have needed. I'd rather forget why I had to come here. My husband and I are very sorry and would rather forget the place <u>but not the people</u> ."
>
> "The overall experience was degrading. It was good for me but not for the kids. We made a lot of friends, like an extended family, but it's even more degrading living in a Housing Commission flat - I am worried that my kids will grow up hoodlums."

However, despite criticisms, there were many positive statements made about the refuge experience by women and children interviewed during the evaluation. These were generally applicable to most refuges, and included concepts such as the following. Again this was an open ended question which some women answered in detail and others very briefly, if at all.

Concepts	Number of Women
Security	76
New friendships	76
Friendly workers	68
Always someone to talk to	66
Cheap food/rent	53
Ex-residents can drop in	40
Child care	35
Support	35
Acceptance	34
Atmosphere	33
Living with other women	31
Information	26
Encouragement to make your own decisions	23
Flexibility	12

Individual women considered positive aspects of refuge life, as being "freedom, caring, no men, relaxation, chances for a new life and equality." Others wrote in questionnaires that:

> "During my stay at the refuge I became more aware of my legal rights, which made me feel more confident and secure. I was given accommodation for as long as I needed it."

> "Peace of mind. You can relax with the fact that you have a roof over your head. I've been bashed by police on 2 occasions and they tried desperately in 2 court cases to take my child. Only the workers at the refuge helped me."

> "I am not very good at explaining myself but I owe the the refuge my life for the support they have given me for some years. I have had mental and physical abuse from my husband. I never had any family or close friends to go to. I feel that without the workers at the refuge I would still be with him and who knows what would have happened? I may have done him harm or he, I. For this I am very grateful to the workers at the refuge as they gave me hope I never had when I was with my husband. I never thought I would manage on my own, but they gave me the confidence and independence I needed to go on. If I have any problems at all I know they are there to help me, like they have done in the past..... When I had nowhere to go and no money they never once looked down on me, or said we can't help you. Even though they were strangers they gave me the help and support I needed when I thought no one cared."

CONCLUSION

It is clear that women and children benefit from the experience of staying in a refuge regardless of management structure. This is reflected in the fact that 364 (91%) of the women wanted to keep in touch with the refuge after leaving and 20% wanted to be involved in working at the refuge in some way. As one woman wrote in her questionnaire:

> "Since I've been in the refuge I have become involved in helping in any way I can. Also I feel that if the refuge can give support to me, I can, in some way, return that support."

However, in terms of encouraging a growth in self-confidence and independence amongst residents, those refuges which maximise resident involvement in the running of the refuge offer greater quality of care. The women and children who use such refuges leave them better equipped to cope with a new life.

Women and children who are escaping domestic violence or homelessness should not be regaded as outcasts of society and in need of rehabilitation. Their plight is the product of a society where increasing economic hardship forces its victims into a cycle which is often difficult to break. Thus, it is essential that Women's Refuges offer residents a real opportunity to take control over their own lives.

Residents and ex-residents must be seen as the best judge of the value of Women's Refuges. While all women and children gain benefits from refuges, it can be seen from the comments they offered that those who stayed at refuges which are non-hierarchical in structure gained greater opportunity for growth in independence and personal strength. The communal living situation, together with house meetings, a broad range of information and involvement of residents in the running of the refuge are important aids to this process. However, the effects of the attitudes of management and workers is an undeniably significant factor in terms of the benefits of the refuge experience for residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.4 That all Women's Refuges offer a communal living situation with open house meetings as an aid to mutual support amongst residents;

R.5 That all Women's Refuges offer a broad range of information to enable residents to make their choice of a future life for themselves and their children;

R.6 That all Women's Refuges provide an opportunity for residents to be involved in the running of the refuge (in keeping with the guidelines), in order to allow for women to take responsibility for their own lives before they leave the refuge.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE EFFECT OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



"Immediately I came here I felt comfortable and protected. The kids and I had a big bedroom and the other three families each had theirs. The living area was really homely - well worn but colourful with posters, a few books and toys for the little ones. The kettle was boiling all day as everyone made me welcome. For the first time in years I felt at peace and looked forward to planning a new start".

(Country refuge ex-resident)

Ideally, a Women's Refuge is a place where women and children feel "at home" and comfortable. It provides a warm friendly environment and offers security from previous violent situations. Refuge workers and women in similar situations welcome new residents and attempt to familiarize them with the day to day organisation. Facilities and services such as telephones, washing machines, donated clothes and information, are available to help each family get themselves ready to face Social Security, new schools, solicitors. Child care workers assist each child to know the layout of the refuge and what toys and activities are available. Each new woman will quickly learn her role in the smooth running of the household including what she is expected to contribute. Within a few days most new residents will feel at ease in the refuge and ready to resolve the crisis in their lives.

Several facets of the refuge environment influence the benefits women and children can gain from a women's refuge. This chapter will examine the physical environment of the refuge: location, buildings, overcrowding, state of repair, childcare and general facilities with particular consideration of the effect of these factors on residents and workers.

LOCATION

The location and surroundings of a refuge can be quite important to the overall environment. Refuges which are surrounded by concrete and busy roads find it more difficult to create the relaxed atmosphere of say, some beachside refuges. These inner city refuges also tend to be more prone to over-crowding, a further disruption to a calm and friendly house. Smaller sized refuges are best able to promote the "at home" atmosphere necessary for women and children to feel comfortable. However, it is the attitudes of the management, collective and workers which is the most important factor in this. (See Chapter "Effects on Women and Children").

REFUGE BUILDINGS

Women's Refuges are generally large 'suburban' houses. They usually have between three and six bedrooms, a bathroom, living area, kitchen and laundry. The refuge will probably have a large yard for drying clothes and for children to play. Most Women's Refuges aim to be non-institutionalised, by being homelike and comfortable with everyone contributing to housework and upkeep. The Women's Refuge Movement has long recognised the advantages of many refuges accommodating small numbers of women and children rather than big buildings which might house fifty but discourage individuals from feeling "at home". Refuges housed in buildings which were originally designed as institutions e.g., children's homes, often seem cold and unwelcoming to new residents.

Some refuges have had houses built for them by the Housing Commission. These buildings have been designed with assistance from refuge residents and workers and thus provisions have been made for extra space such as additional bathrooms toilets, storage and childcare rooms; facilities which are lacking in many other refuge houses.

The design and size of many refuge buildings have created problems for residents and workers. Twenty-two refuges referred to these problems on the management questionnaires. They related to several areas:-

(1) living space is too small (7 refuges)

(2) bathroom insufficient for large numbers (8 refuges)

(3) space for children indoor and/or outdoor inadequate (11 refuges)

(4) kitchen too small (5 refuges)

(5) office space too small and intrudes into the house (3 refuges)

(6) no storage space (21 refuges)

(7) laundry inadequate (9 refuges)

(8) no area for women to withdraw from the noise and demands of children (12 refuges)

In response to questions relating to space, twenty nine percent of residents (118/400) commented on insufficient space to hang out and dry washing, twenty one percent (84/400) on inadequate space to play with their children or for them to play, and twenty two percent (89/400) on lack of space to relax with other women.

A women's refuge must attempt to achieve a balance between having enough living space for its needs and not being so large that it becomes institutionalised. Often the problem of inadequate space occurs because of overcrowding in the refuge. Refuges suited to accommodating four families will frequently be forced to accommodate seven or eight, thereby creating chaos in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and other areas.

OVERCROWDING

This is a problem common to almost all women's refuges. It is virtually impossible to avoid because of the ever increasing demand for emergency accommodation for women and children. Most refuges attempt to limit the numbers they accommodate at any one time but they are reluctant to turn away a woman in desperate circumstances. Because of this, families are continually forced to share bedrooms, living rooms are often converted into sleeping areas and facilities become inadequate due to the numbers of people using them. Privacy becomes a luxury at a time when it is crucial to the well being of each person, many of whom have never lived communally before.

Table 1 - Women's Questionnaire

	Total	Yes	Sometimes	No
Is your refuge often overcrowded?	400	163	65	172
Do you feel the need for more privacy?	400	181	33	188

"We need much more funding for renovations. We have six bedrooms but only one bathroom, washing machine, stove and fridge. We have as many as thirty residents at one time. The women have found it difficult at times to manage and tensions get really high".
(Country Refuge Worker)

111 of the women interviewed (28%) shared a bedroom with five or more people at the refuge. This overcrowding is problematic for both women and children.

"I feel uncomfortable here because I have to sleep in a room with four people and because my baby is only seven months old he gets easily disturbed when trying to sleep and it mucks up the routine I have set for him".
(Inner City Refuge Resident)

"I got support and help and caring at (western suburbs refuge) but at the other refuge I stayed at I feel I didn't get the help I needed as it was overcrowded".
(Refuge Ex-Resident)

Overcrowding creates strains on the refuge environment. The noise level is heightened and tensions arise from such things as distribution of housework and the numbers of children.

"One of the problems I had at the refuge was the kitchen space and kids always under your feet while you were cooking - we'd laugh about it but it created friction".
(Coastal Refuge)

The effects of overcrowding are also felt by refuge workers. They are forced to extend their support and energy to accommodate the needs of extra people while their work conditions deteriorate because of the additional untidiness and noise. As household tensions rise, workers must attempt to maintain the warm relaxed atmosphere, often mediating between residents.

"When we're overcrowded it puts more strain on the women and kids and that usually comes back onto me. I feel like I'm sitting on a time bomb!" (Inner City Refuge Worker)

"Overcrowding makes the kids hysterical, violent and distressed. It makes the kids, the women's and my life a misery".
(Childcare Worker, City)

"When you're working night shift, overcrowding means you sleep in the kitchen. It also causes tension amongst the women and kids - you don't expect much sleep.
(Country Refuge Worker)

STATE OF REPAIR

Refuges buildings, when they are well designed and constructed and have maintained grounds and facilities which are in good order, are in an easier position to give comfort and reassurance to women and children in distress.

Most refuges are in buildings which are rented; either from a government department, a local council, a church group or a private owner. Only six refuges own their own building. One refuge is housed in a building which ordinarily would be condemned for residential use. This house is owned by the local council, which charges them fifty two dollars per week rent.

The repairs and maintenance of all refuge buildings creates some problems, particularly given low levels of funding and high levels of usage. Constant upkeep is necessary to maintain a house where up to thirty women and children are living at any one time. Many refuges are forced into a position of "making do" with temporary repairs due to lack of resources, others rely heavily on voluntary handipersons.

> "It's a continual struggle to keep the refuge in good order. If we had the money we'd just completely renovate the kitchen and bathroom but as it is, we spend little bits of money every few weeks unblocking drains and fixing cupboards to keep the place going. Over the years we have spent enough to pay for a proper job but we've never had the complete sum to do it. We need capital money for renovations".
>
> (Country Refuge Worker)

> "Repairs to the bathroom, toilet and laundry are constant. It leads to inconvenience, tensions and extra discomfort that is hard to cope with when we are all already stressed".
>
> (Resident of Northern Suburbs Refuge)

The state of repair of a refuge has an underlying effect on the morale of workers and residents. On-going maintenance to a building which is in poor condition means constant input of energy and funds and distracts from the main function of a refuge i.e., accommodating and supporting women and children through a crisis situation.

Buildings in poor repair also attract criticism from neighbours and community groups, who are often not aware of the restraints on the refuge budget. This again effects the workers' and residents' morale.

CHILDCARE AND THE REFUGE ENVIRONMENT

Childcare workers make a significant contribution to the refuge environment. They give direction to children's energy with child centred activities within the refuge. They take the children out of the refuge to give them the stimulus and space to explore new territory. They give their mothers and other women time to relax among themselves.

Facilities for children vary from refuge to refuge. A small number have a kids' room equipped with a range of toys and books where children can go at any time. Others have a kids' room which must be supervised because of its position in the house, lack of lock up storage and the sheer numbers of children using the refuge. This often means that the room is only open for use when there is a childcare worker present. Some refuges do not have the space to set aside a room specifically for children to play and are forced to attempt to rent a building outside, a process which is time consuming, expensive and insecure in tenure.

"There is nowhere inside for the kids to play, which makes life difficult when its cold and wet".
(Country Refuge)

"When things are in a mess and disorganised it gets depressing. In childcare, cramped and inadequate space is particularly frustrating. It doesn't worry me if the house is in a mess but when we are constantly cleaning up the backyard and play areas it really gets you down.
(Country Refuge)

FACILITIES

Women's Refuges provide a wide range of services and facilities for each woman and child to assist their day to day living and their re-organisation into new housing situations. These facilities are as follows:

Facilities	No. of refuges providing facility (n 36)
(1) 24 hour care:	36
- workers rostered each night (14) - workers on call (14) - live-in workers (8)	
(2) Food - all (33) - basic only (2) - emergency only (1)	36
(3) Linen and blankets	36
(4) Washing machines etc	36
(5) Phone for residents use	33
(6) Childcare	32
(7) Access to donated clothing	33
(8) Accompaniment to Social Security, solicitors and others if required	33
(9) Assistance with furniture	28
(10) Quiet space for women away from children	16
(11) Indoor and outdoor space for children	29
(12) Housemeetings	32
(13) Films (for discussion)	10
(14) Library at refuge	15
(15) Emergency transport	31
(16) Emergency money	30
(17) Follow-up support	36
(18) Half-way housing	12

Some refuges also offer additional services for residents and ex-residents. These include emergency childcare, social outings for women and children, adult education, a Women's Resource Centre, arts and craft activities, workshops.

Women's Refuges also have information on many issues pertaining to women using refuges. Where necessary they refer women on to organisations which are set up to help with specific problems.

This information relates to the following issues:

(1)	Housing	: available at	36 refuges
(2)	Pensions		36
(3)	Legal		36
(4)	Health		36
(5)	Pregnancy		32
(6)	Contraception		29
(7)	Abortion		28
(8)	Rape		30
(9)	Child Abuse		31

Some refuges also offer information on a wider range of issues such as drug and alcohol dependencies, discrimination, budgeting, employment, sexuality, child behavioural problems.

Details of the facilities available at each refuge was taken from the management and women's questionnaires. In some cases there were discrepancies between what the refuge offered and what women perceived to be offered. For instance, twenty eight refuges state that abortion referral is available from their workers yet residents and ex-residents of only twenty of these refuges were aware of this. It is important that the availability of all facilities, especially information, is freely known to residents.

Kitchen and bedding facilities are available at all refuges. However, in many cases, the condition of these facilities is variable and inadequate. This is due to constant usage and low levels of funding for renewal.

Table 2:

(A) Are there enough of the following at your refuge? (responses categorised by refuge)

		Yes	No
(a)	crockery	30	6
(b)	cutlery	30	6
(c)	cooking utensils	29	7
(d)	blankets	31	5
(e)	linen	30	6
(f)	pillows	33	3
(g)	garbage bins	32	4
		(n 36)	

(B) What kind of condition are they generally in? (responses of women)

Good or very good	281
Poor	18
Varies	101
	(n 400)

Women perceived the condition of these facilities differently but in six refuges they were consistantly seen as poor or variable. These refuges were the more overcrowded inner city and outer western suburbs refuges.

Once again it is important to the physical environment of a refuge that facilities are in good order and plentiful supply. The effect on the morale of workers and residents of insufficient and poorly maintained facilities, such as linen and kitchenware, is energy depleting and depressing. The cost of the inevitable renewal of such goods often means that refuges must continually scrounge donations and haunt second hand shops; in both cases sources are unreliable, and items of variable condition.

CONCLUSION

While the non-judgemental and supportive attitudes of workers and management are crucial to the atmosphere of a refuge, the physical environment is also important. The effects of overcrowding, and the subsequent increased repairs, maintenance and renewals costs, clearly show the need for more refuges accommodating smaller numbers of women and children. This need can be seen more particularly in the inner city and the outer western suburbs.

Within existing Women's Refuges, the need for more adequate indoor and outdoor space for children has also been demonstrated. With such large numbers of women and children living in one house, it is essential that provisions are made for specific areas to be set aside for children to play and for women to withdraw from their constant noise and demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.7 That more Women's Refuges be funded so that existing refuges can accommodate the numbers for which they were established.

R.8 That new Women's Refuges consider, in their choice of buildings the need for childcare space, adequate privacy for each family and space for women to withdraw from the demands of children.

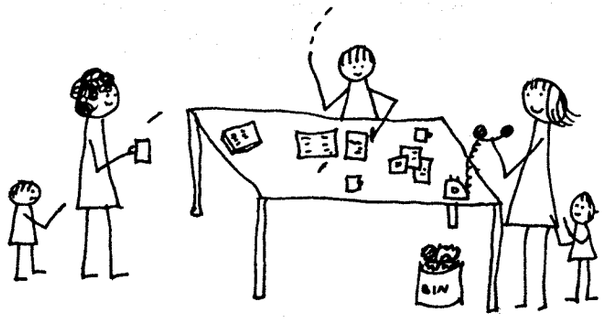
R.9 That capital funds be made available to enable existing Women's Refuges to purchase buildings, renovate and improve their space facilities.

R.10 That funds be made available for the renting of refuge buildings and be indexed to the market rent for that locality.

R.11 That the funds allocated for "repairs, maintenance and renewals" be increased to ensure that refuge buildings and facilities are kept in reasonable order.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ROLE OF
A REFUGE WORKER



Because refuge work has to date remained undefined and the community generally has little idea of its complexity, the evaluation has attempted to examine its role in as much detail as possible. The jobs a refuge worker performs are stated in the policy guidelines in general terms, for example, meet the demands of women and children in crisis, provide a non-institutional environment, raise public awareness on issues relating to women in society, provide continuing support for ex-residents and their children, provide an environment for women to interchange skills, ideas and information, achieve an integration of the refuge services with other community agencies and actively encourage the involvement of residents and ex-residents in the running of the refuge. Because the guidelines only look at refuge work in general terms, the evaluation has attempted to describe the realities of day to day refuge work. This section has purposely been written in a more descriptive form so that all the issues are clearly illustrated and the presentation is more understandable and readable.

> "To try to define my role as a refuge worker would be impossible without writing an endless list of the jobs I do every day. I see my role as one of supporting women both while they are at the refuge and after they leave. To achieve this support I have to be a "jill of all trades". I have to deal with any situation that comes up (usually having no time to consult with other workers), I am called out in the middle of the night to deal with prowlers, irate often dangerous husbands or boyfriends, I am a walking information file on all issues which affect women and I am becoming a community liason expert. I can do the books, drive a bus full of noisy children, talk to bureaucrats, move furniture and most importantly, accept the decision a woman has made about her life, whether I think it's right or wrong." (refuge worker)

The many and varied roles and duties performed by over 250 refuge workers in N.S.W. cannot be compared to any other job. Because there are no other facilities in the community which provide the same services as refuges, the role of a refuge worker is unique. The evaluation will be examining the role of general and child care workers, ex-resident workers and the role of unpaid or volunteer workers in the day to day running and the policy making of refuges. Responses to the "Paid Workers" questionnaire, "volunteers" questionnaire, women's questionnaire and taped interviews will be used to illustrate these roles. "A typical day in the life of a refuge worker" was compiled from previous experiences of the evaluators as refuge workers and from discussions with workers at all the refuges visited by the team. This has been used to illustrate the role of general workers.

Even though these roles have been categorised into four areas of refuge work for the purposes of this report, the roles constantly overlap because of the emergency and crisis nature of the refuge service. A general worker may be responsible at any time for the care of ten children, a child care worker could have to take a woman to Social Security or to Court or a volunteer may, in an emergency, have to pay the accounts.

> "Even though I was not paid to do child care, I often took a child home with me for the night or took a group of ex-resident kids out on the weekend. Sometimes, if a child care worker was doing something else, I would take the kids to the after school centre." (country refuge worker)

ROLE OF GENERAL WORKER

"POSITIONS VACANT.

Wanted, energetic superwoman to work in a women's refuge. Needs to be able to change nappies while writing submissions, have a broad knowledge and understanding of women's issues, be a public relations expert, have a strong stomach, know first aid and like kids. For further details please contact....."

To be a general worker in a refuge it is almost necessary to be a superwoman. Workers who are employed to work a 20 hour week often work an additional 15 hours in unpaid overtime. There are a large variety of types of rosters within individual refuges. The following is a sample of a roster worked by a country refuge employee.

Monday	-	9 am - 3 pm & 8 pm - 12 Midnight
Tuesday	-	11 am - 5 pm
Wednesday	-	9 am - 5 pm (morning staff meeting)
Thursday	-	Off
Friday	-	Off
Saturday	-	11 am - 3 pm
		one weekend per month
Sunday	-	11 am - 3 pm

The following is a list of the many and varied tasks performed by workers in most refuges. Although not every worker carried out all of these duties every week, workers demonstrated both in questionnaire responses and in discussions during the evaluation visits, that they had been involved to varying degrees in every job listed.

Household
- cleaner
- cook
- garbage
- washwoman
- grocery shopper
- furniture buyer
- nurse

Maintenance
- handiperson
- painter
- lawnmower
- car repairs (minor)
- plumber
- gardener
- carpenter

Childcare
- pre-school
- after-school
- evenings

Childcare
- extended holidays
- liaison with schools & other c/c resources
- car & bus driver

Driver, friend & advocate
residents going to:
- Y.A.C.S.
- Social Security
- doctors
- court
- hospital
- child welfare

"Counsellor"/mediator in person & by phone for -
- separation
- rape
- grief
- drug & alcohol
- domestic violence

Follow-up of ex-residents with
- removals
- resources
- interpreter
- advocate
- c/c referrals
- support
- dropping in for a 'cuppa'

Childcare (Cont'd)

- equipment organizer, buyer & scrounger
- substitute mother for extended periods
- babysitter
- excursion organizer
- sandwich maker
- bum wiper
- nutrition adviser
- crafts teacher
- submission writer & c/c funds budgeter

Officer worker
- book-keeper of
  - accounts
  - wages
  - petty cash
- answerer & filer of correspondence
- receptionist
- statistics

Refuge conferences
- travel
- meetings
- letter writing

Referral agent for
- employment
- psychiatric & other specialist services
- recreation facilities
- other -

Miscellaneous
- security guard
- rescue squad
- taxi service
- furniture removalist
- interpreter

Funding
- submission writing & follow-up
- budget planning
- meetings
- campaign work
- letter writing
- lobbying
- research
- banking & liaison
- liaisoning with auditor

Resource Person on
- nutrition
- contraception
- legal matters
- pensions & welfare rights
- obtaining furniture
- storing furniture
- other community groups & welfare system
- hire purchase & other contracts
- crafts

Referral agent for
- health centres
- Y.A.C.S.
- Social Security
- doctors, hospitals
- migrant services
- child care

Liaison
- public speaking
- Y.A.C.S bureaucracy
- student supervisor
- fundraiser
- defending refuge to community

Cuppa tea making & sitting around chatting

* For purposes of this report the term "counselling" refers to informal talks with women, either on a one to one basis or in a group "sitting round the table with a cup of tea". A few refuges provide formal counselling using professional techniques but most feel that allowing women the opportunity to talk with other women, (both residents and workers) in an informal relaxed atmosphere, is an important part of the refuges' service.

A large percentage of refuge workers (172/183)* felt frustration because of the amount of time taken up by duties like bookeeping, accounts, cleaning, shopping and child care, which left them limited amounts of time to spend talking with the women in the refuge. These workers considered that interaction between themselves and the residents was the highest priority area in their work.

* The remaining twenty two (22) workers did not respond.

Table 1
Jobs which are most time consuming and those which workers would prefer to have priority (Workers questionnaire)

Jobs	Time Consuming	Priority
Administration	43	1
Bookeeping	20	2
Cleaning/Shopping	21	6
Childcare	56	41
Talking to Women	92	172
Driving	24	1
Telephone etc.	22	0
Campaign work	8	18
Follow-up	17	39
Workshops	5	7
NO RESPONSE 22 (n=205)		

A "TYPICAL" DAY IN THE LIFE OF A REFUGE WORKER

"A typical day in the life of a refuge worker" was written to give the "feeling" of what it is like to work in a refuge. This does not mean that every worker in every refuge feels the same frustrations, but that there are common themes to which refuge workers can relate. It clearly shows the effect of underfunding and the diversity of the job and need for workers to give situations priority.

7.45am Phone rings - it's the refuge - "Can I come in early because there's a new woman and 3 children arrived last night and 2 of the kids will have to be taken to school a bit earlier so they can get all the 'headmistress stuff' over with."

8.30am Get there half awake, having half organised my own children to school and pre-school, had breakfast of a quick cup of tea and a "cigarette sandwich". Chaos here too - kids running around in varying degrees of undress, breakfasting and getting ready for school, a baby crying, rice bubbles all over the kitchen and women attempting to clean up lounge room, bathroom and bedrooms. I say "leave it till the kids are off to school and there's a bit of peace".

8.45am Talk to new woman and her kids and help with finishing touches of their dressing - all get into car and drive to school. The headmistress at this school is very sympathetic and realises that most of the time refuge kids are in crisis too. I talk to her about the woman's fears that her husband will kidnap the children and we arrange for specific workers to deliver to and pick them up from school. Thank goodness she understands and there's no need for the long explanations I've had to give sometimes at other schools. The kids are taken to respective classrooms and introduced to teachers and we go back to the refuge.

9.30am By now the rice bubbles are cleaned up and the house is clean and tidy. This is an organised household. Some aren't quite so conscientious about keeping the place clean and it's hard being in such overcrowded conditions 'cause it doesn't stay tidy or clean for long and tempers fray easily. Now I've got time to sit and talk to the women and have a cuppa but I'd better read the day book first.

Daybook entry from last night - Can whoever's on tomorrow talk to Julie (she came in tonite from E with her 3 kids) she needs to organise some money and wants to see a solicitor about custody. Also the car is making an awful noise when you put it in gear, think it should go to the garage, maybe a new one, those last bastards ripped us off. There's a woman coming to talk to us tomorrow at about 2, she's from the Health Commission, a new social worker (I think) and wants to find out more about the refuge. The toilet is blocked for some reason, I called the plumber but he can't come for 2 days (too busy), could you try another one? The women in the house also want a house meeting cause there's quite a few tensions (the person who is the centre of the tensions probably won't come to the meeting so don't know how you're going to sort that one out). The minutes from last weeks Collective meeting have to be typed up and sent out and there's a meeting at Y.A.C.S. about Child Abuse at 3 tomorrow and they want someone from here to go. I can't think of anything else I should tell you but there's probably heaps, will ring you if I think of anything. Thank goodness for 2 days off. See you when I get back. If I tell you to have a good day you'll never speak to me again. See ya. S.

10am Looks like I'm in for a day and a half and Margaret did have to pick today to be sick. Oh well the Child care worker will be in soon to take the little kids out -phew! Fancy me going to a meeting on Child Abuse - I can well understand why women bash their kids - mine drive me insane most of the time - they make so much noise, they want everything they see and they have no understanding of my needs - I feel like wringing their necks. Had better finish my tea and round everyone up for the House meeting.

There's someone at the door. That was the Housing Commission's Mr T. wanting to know why the lawn hasn't been mowed for two weeks. It's not even very long. (He should see mine, I have to fight my way through to find the clothes line). I tried to explain that the lawn mower had been pinched and we can't afford to buy another one. What does he expect us to do, get down on our knees with scissors? I'm sick of these bloody bureaucrats telling us what to do without having any idea of what a hectic chaotic place this is to work in and that our first priority is the women and kids who live here.

Now to get back to the house meeting - where did everyone go? - there were 6 women a minute ago and now there's only 3. Oh well 3's better than none. We'd better start. It seems that J is upset with everyone's kids (she hasn't got any kids) and everyone else is upset with J 'cause she is constantly disciplining, even hitting (?) all the kids 'cause they hassle her. But of course J just happens to have gone out as have M & N. How am I supposed to sort all this out? All the women in the house are pretty freaked out because M has been telling them all how violent her husband is and how, if he finds her he will shoot her and everyone else around too. I'd better tell her (when she comes back) to park her car away from the refuge. I try to calm everyone down by telling them that although most men talk like that, they are usually quite intimidated by a group of women and that the cops will come as soon as we call them. But I still remember the time I was on night roster and there was a man prowling round. I called the cops then, but, by the time they got here half an hour later, the guy (a resident's husband), had bashed the door in and was threatening me with a great hunk of wood. The residents (including the wife) were hiding under beds and in cupboards and all kids were awake screaming in terror. But I can't tell them that, they're freaked out enough.

"Now what else do we need to talk about - how's the roster for housework going? That's good, everything looks pretty clean. It's important when there's lots of people living here because kids can pick things up so quickly. We've had an outbreak of gastro here once or twice." (Hell they should see my place! I'll have to clean it up tonite) "Nothing else, if you think of anything write it down and we can talk about it on Wednesday".

11am — I'd better have a talk to Julie and then take her to the D.S.S. Hope that woman isn't on the counter who's usually there - she gives the women such a hard time - it's like the money is coming out of her pocket. I have to stand there and bite my tongue while she is rude and patronising to residents knowing that even after I get out of there I can't blow my stack about it to anyone 'cause it may blow the chances of women getting the money they are entitled to.

11.15am — Thank goodness Ellen's arrived now she can take the kids out - she's apologising profusely for being late but she worked an extra 2 hours last night because one of the kids were sick and had to be taken to Casualty. I feel guilty about my relief of her being here - don't know how she manages all those kids under 5 in the bus. Seat belts help but some of them still manage to get out and run around the bus. I wish we had the money to employ a 2 child care workers at a time so that one doesn't have that total responsibility alone. But again not many people, let alone funding bodies, really know what goes on in refuges. They think that by providing the funding to house women in emergencies, that that's all that matters, they don't realise how difficult it is for women. They have so few alternatives, they get stuck out in housing commission areas with barely adequate transport and no other services at all. I have a hard enough time of it on my own with the kids but at least I've got a job and some friends (even if they all work here and I never get time to meet new people).

12 O'clock — Took Julie to S.S. (there was a new woman on the desk who was a quite nice-phew!!) and she got a cheque straight away. Have made an appointment for her to go to Legal Aid tomorrow at 10am. Must note in the day book that she'd like someone to go with her. It must be time for another cup of tea and some lunch. Haven't got time to go out and get something so I'll make some toast and ring the plumber and type up those bloody minutes. Gawd how am I going to make head or tail of them when I wasn't at the meeting? Where was I?

12.30pm — Just got off the phone. Third phone call in a row. I'd just put the phone down and settled myself down at the typewriter and it rang again. Still haven't made that tea and toast. The first call was from the Hospital about Paul (the kid who Ellen took up to Casualty last night) he was admitted so they can keep an eye on him. They want to let us know that his mum can visit him anytime. I hope they don't carry on like they have at other times. There have been times when refuge kids were in hospital when the staff, particularly casualty staff, have been quite judgemental towards kids' mothers. Sometimes there have been inferences that the mothers have neglected their kids and little understanding of what it's like to have 24 hours a day, 7 day a week responsibility of a few kids especially when the mother is being belted up and abused. They don't realise that one of the results of constant violence and verbal abuse is lack of self esteem, self confidence and an inability of cope with even minor day to day tasks like housework and child care. A lot of the time when women come to the refuge they've never been away from

their kids, and they find that coping with their kids in the refuge situation is extremely difficult. There are incredible pressures on both women and kids because living in a refuge is a strange new situation. Most women who come to refuges have never lived communally before and most children have never had to share their living space with others. Tensions and arguments can be common and the most tension producing circumstance is conflict between children. The Refuge provides child care workers who work with kids to try to sort out these conflicts and provide a safe, secure environment for children. The child care workers also work with the mothers and show them alternative ways of relating to their kids so that when they leave things won't be as difficult.

The next phone call was from the new social worker who's coming at 2, to confirm the time. Hope she's more tolerant of the refuge than the woman who she replaced. The last social worker used to refer women who came to talk to her with problems, to the local psychiatrist who in turn would put them on anti depressants and weekly counselling sessions. Often the women would be hospitalised to establish this medication and the "so called" counselling sessions would take place when the doctor (who was the only psychiatrist in town, had a practice in a neighbouring town and went to Sydney about 3 times per week to work in one of the hospitals) called in about once every 4 or 5 days and chat for 5 or 10 minutes. Sometimes these chats would occur at 10 or 11 at night when the doctor was on his way back from Sydney and the patient had been sedated for the night. Refuge workers spent lots of time and energy talking to her about what sort alternatives the refuge could offer women, not that we felt we had all the answers, but we could at least offer women some time out, a chance to talk things out and child care, to enable women the space to make decisions about their future. Most of the time and energy we put into communicating with the former social worker was wasted and now we've got a new one to "train".

12.45pm Still haven't gotten around to food, the plumber or the minutes and Ellen has rung to be rescued, seems the bus has broken down and the N.R.M.A. card isn't in the glove box, can I find it and drive it out to her 20 kms away? She's stranded with all the kids in the bus. I'd better ring the N.R.M.A. from here and give them the location. I wish there was someone else here, if a worker is sick or on holidays we can't replace them and have to do the full load of 2 people's work alone.

1.30pm Got out to Ellen, the N.R.M.A. took ages and the kids were being a pain in the bum, they were a bit sick of sitting around in the bus, so I stayed till they came. The car was making THE noise when I changed gears, sounds like the gearbox is going to fall out on the road. Called in at a new garage to book it in to be fixed - can't do it till the end of the week so I hope it doesn't fall to bits in the meantime. Now for that cup of tea and the plumber.

1.45pm The plumber can come today but not till after he finishes work at about 6 - so my plans for getting home on time just went up in smoke. Had better ring the school and get my kids on the bus to the after school centre and organise someone to pick Jenny up from pre-school and mind her till I can get home. Don't have time to do the minutes now, they'll have to wait until after the Social Worker's visit and the Child Abuse meeting at Youth and Community Services. Damn! The phone's ringing again, it never seems to stop. When you have a busy day here it's certainly a busy day - too bad we only get $4.50 per hour and no overtime.

2.30pm Helen, the Social Worker just left, don't know if I handled it O.K. though. She's been involved with refuges before in the city so knows a bit about them. I didn't have to tell her much about what they are for, just the problems we have here in a country town. Talked to her a bit about previous problems we've had with Health Commission staff and their attitudes to the refuge and the women here. Also their attitudes to the workers. Refuge work doesn't seem, to the community, to be REAL Work. Because other organisations employ professionals and our philosophy is that we employ women who care about and understand the problems women face, we are always criticised. The women in the house often express the feeling that they don't want trained social workers or welfare workers in the refuge. They feel that the refuge is their home while they are staying there and that the workers should be there to talk to, to go with them to solicitors etc. and to provide them with the information they need to make their decisions, and workers don't need formal training to fulfil those roles. They often find that people with qualifications and training are intimidating and prefer workers to be women who have been through similar experiences themselves. We sometimes employ Child Care workers with training because we think that Child Care is an important part of the refuge service and we want workers who don't just babysit or mind children, who will organise educational constructive activities for the kids at the refuge.

It's very frustrating that our role as workers is so broad, we need to develop so many skills to cope with the job. I'd never written a submission before I worked at the refuge, I'd never done books, paid accounts or wages, I'd never dealt with the media, talked to bureaucrats or other community groups. I'd never had to encourage women to make it alone, I didn't know how difficult it was to be alone with kids in a world which makes few concessions for women. I can't believe that I've worked here for nearly 2 years, don't know what I'm going to do when I leave but I guess there are jobs in other welfare groups for which I have the appropriate skills. I'll certainly miss the refuge, working with women and for women.

2.45pm More phone calls and still no lunch - A woman rang - she wants to leave her husband and come here. She's from another town about 100 kms away. She says that she can leave tonight while her husband is at work (he's on night shift at the meat works), he leaves at about 9pm. Will have to ring around to get someone to come with me, last time I did this, the husband arrived in the middle of us loading the woman's stuff into the car and made her take it all back inside again, then stayed home from work for the next few nights so she couldn't leave. I just had to go - I felt so useless and so angry that the woman had to do what that bastard told her to. He pushed her around in front of me and she and the kids were obviously terrified of him. I left feeling that I should have done something but didn't know what. She eventually did get away from him and came to the refuge but she arrived at the station with her children and the clothes they were wearing - nothing else. If we'd been able to help her leave she would have at least had some clothes and basic household stuff to re-establish herself. Will have to take the bus tonite, I told the woman to start packing anything she wants to take as soon as he goes to work and we'll be there at about 10 and to try to be calm and act like nothing unusual is happening in front of him. Pretty tall order- be calm when you're doing such a difficult thing. I'll never forget the week before I left my husband, I was so tense and stressed that I could barely do the normal housework let alone try and pack in secret and appear as if nothing was going on. I thought I was going to crack up and when I arrived at the refuge in Sydney all I could do was cry. So I know what this woman is going through and my advice of keeping cool is pretty useless.

Rang every one of our volunteers to find someone to come with me tonite and finally talked Joan into it. Everyone else was too busy. That's the problem with volunteers, although we couldn't run the refuge without them because of funding inadequacies. They only work a few hours a week and don't have the time to commit themselves for after hours emergencies. Most of them are concerned about the women and kids at the refuge but can only be here for a limited time because of their other employment or family commitments. The other problem is continuity - because the population of the refuge is constantly changing, it is difficult for someone who is here for only 3 hours a week to get an overall picture of what actually happens here. That's why the day book is so important but it's hard for everyone to remember to write everything in it. I find that I have to write things down as I go because at the end of the day I can't remember much, I'm so frazzled. Other refuges have the same problems with volunteers. At the last state refuge conference, I heard one worker say that their refuge had 80 volunteers. It must be difficult for the women staying at the refuge, they'd never see the same worker twice the whole time they were there. The women here complain about having to tell their story over and over again but imagine a different worker every day!

That reminds me, the next conference is in about three weeks and we haven't decided who's going yet. This one's so far away, I don't think we can afford to send more than a few people. It would be good if one of the new workers could go and also a volunteer and someone who has been before. I won't go this time because I've been to the last three and it's good experience for new women to see how the refuge movement works.

It's good to meet women who work in other refuges and hear the same problems your refuge has, discussed. You learn how other refuges cope and get some good ideas yourself. It also is a learning experience - at my first conference I was too terrified to open my mouth - I found it difficult to concentrate on all that was happening. At my second one I was a bit braver and said a few things and at my third I went off my brain because I was angry about some other workers references to "those women", meaning the residents of their refuge. It was good to be able to express that anger and I gained quite a bit of confidence, now it's not so difficult to talk in front of large numbers of women and I'm not so terrified when I have to talk to community groups and schools.

4.30pm I was late for the Child Abuse meeting and it was awful, full of people who worked for government departments who wanted to do something about child abuse but didn't know how to get around the "it doesn't happen in our town" syndrome. The statistics show that the incidence of C.A. is quite high here but attitudes that it's the parent's fault were prevalent at the meeting. There was recognition, by a few, of the problems faced by people who abuse their children. I tried to talk about things like unemployment, poverty and lack of support services in the community as being contributing factors but no-one wanted to take this up as a discussion point. I also brought up the incidence of incest and child rape but although there was a brief discussion, no-one had any answers. There was a suggestion that any available literature or films on child abuse and incest be available at the Health Centre for the use of community groups and there will be monthly meetings to determine a further plan of action. Am glad that's over, I always feel that I'm walking a tightrope in those meetings, that if I say the wrong thing I'll fall off. You have to be so careful of what you say, careful not to put people off side and be really aware of the position of the refuge in the community.

5pm I still haven't typed those minutes so had better get on with it. Hope the phone will stop ringing for about half an hour so I can get it done. I'm such a lousy typist and make heaps of mistakes, thank goodness for liquid paper. I'm getting quite fast though - amazing for 2 fingers, and things that used to take me an hour now only take 1/2 hour and a 1/2 bottle of liquid paper.

5.30pm Got a phone call in the middle of the typing - one of the good things about working in a refuge - so far my day has been mostly bad - an ex-resident who has moved to Sydney rang to let us know how things were going. She seems to have gotten everything together for herself really well. She's living in a housing commission house, finally (after a battle of about 12 months) she's got custody of her kids, her husband is now leaving her alone and even though he's got regular access to the kids he's stopped hasseling her. She's even got a part-time job in school hours so she doesn't have to pay child care costs and has bought herself a cheapo car. She says she's still lonely but is free and loves the feeling of being able to do what she wants to do when she wants to do it. It's great to hear from women after they leave the refuge or the area and specially to know that the work you do is relatively successful. Unfortunately, we can't keep in touch with all the women who leave but we assure them that we'd love to hear how they are going and to ring or write regularly.

6.15pm Have finally finished the minutes - they now have to be run off on the gestetner and sent out - will leave a message for Penny for tommorrow. She'll have to take them up to the Information Centre to be run off. We should buy a Gestetner machine as soon as we get our next cheque - will have to bring it up at the next collective meeting. I don't like taking our stuff to the Info. Centre because of confidentiality. So many groups use the place and we often talk in collective meetings about issues that would be quite contentious in this narrow minded town.

6.30pm The plumber has just left - not only was there 2 rolls of toilet paper shoved down the toilet but it was also blocked up with sanitary pads. I wasn't game to go near it - my stomach's none too strong, same as Pat's. He wasn't too pleased about the pads, seems he's been called here before for the same reason. Another item for the agenda of both collective and house meetings. We need to buy a disposal unit for pads to save any further problems with plumbers.

6.45pm Had better go and pick my kids up from the After School Centre. I'm late again. How do I explain, yet again, refuge work, when other people with ordinary jobs finish at 5. I can't, even though I'm supposed to, because all these things crop up and there's no one else to deal with them. Had better ring them and try to explain and tell them I'll be there in 10 minutes. Just have to write up the day's disasters in the day book.

7.00 pm Day book entry

Had a shocking day, everything went wrong. Julie has a 10am appointment with Legal Aid and wants someone to go with her. The toilet's unblocked and now functional but haven't had time to give the bathroom a final cleanup. Went to the Child Abuse meeting but felt that someone else should have been with me. The car's booked into M & N garage for Friday anytime after 8am. The mechanic I spoke to assured me that it sounded like something simple and wouldn't cost much to fix, though he couldn't give me a figure. The noise doesn't sound simple to me, sounds expensive. Have to go to C. tonite to pick up a woman and 2 kids and her stuff and am taking the bus. Joan is coming with me. Hope there's no heavy stuff and that the girl next door can babysit my kids. They are resenting more and more the increasing amount of time I spend away from them. Must talk to them about it. Hope tomorrow is O.K. and not as rushed as today-at least there'll be 2 of you. See you Wednesday. Annie

P.S. I forgot - tomorrow ain't gonna be any better than today. Julie wants to have a talk to someone about custody and property stuff. The lawn has to be mowed - the housing commission's been prowling again. Don't know where you're going to get a lawn mower, beg, borrow or steal maybe!! Child care may be a problem cause there's 2 more kids coming in don't know their ages so, tomorrow there maybe 9 pre-schoolers. Also it might be a good idea to have another housemeeting - the tension level is pretty high at the moment and I've got a feeling the bomb's going to go off at any moment. It's all written up in the housemeeting book anyway so you'll know what's happening. Mandy has an appointment with the housing commission tomorrow arvo and someone should go with her cause they'll try and talk her out of applying. Paul's still in hospital, they're keeping him in so that they can keep an eye on him cause he's got a really high temp. His mum will probably need a lift up to the hospital. Have fun! Ha! Ha! (think I'm hysterical) Bye. A.

ROLE OF CHILD CARE WORKER

To the question "what do child-care workers do?" in the workers questionnaire, responses illustrate quite clearly the importance of the child care role in the operation of a Womens Refuge. Most refuges believe that the provision of a child care service allows both women and children a "much deserved break" from each other, enables women to spend time arranging practicalities like appointments and encourages children to pursue new social outlets and contacts.

Although, most refuges believe in the importance of child care, attitudes in individual refuges vary according to the management structure of the refuge. Some refuges believe that child care should be the total responsibility of the mother even while at the refuge and even though they provide child care workers, their involvement with refuge children is in a "minding, babysitting" role rather than in an educative, supportive, caring capacity. The opposite philosophy, held by the majority of refuges, is that the caring for children is a community responsibility and that mothers should not be forced to assume 24 hour care of their children. Child Care workers in most refuges, often take children home for the night, weekend, or on camping trips or holidays so that mothers and children can have a break and children can gain new friends and experiences.

Responses to "What do child care workers do" include:

> "Provide and supervise activities for all children. Try to initiate play experiences involving mothers. Relieve mothers of their child caring duties where needed and help them gain confidence in their own skills. Arrange appointments with doctors and other specialised care when nominated by the mother.
> Organise excursions. Liaise with schools and pre-schools."

"Try to support children through a crisis, working with mothers when possible. Try to identify any deep seated emotional problems. If there have been cases of physical/sexual abuse, attempt to win the child's trust and find out what her/his needs are."

"Defuse tensions by taking children out, to various forms of entertainment and amusement. This works two ways, providing women with time to themselves and giving the children a break in a relaxed atmosphere."

"Support and build trust relationships with kids. Encourage survival skills. Exposure to outside world, different sorts of stimuli. Encourage independence."

". Entertain children
. Organise outings
. Prepare submissions
. Buy equipment (play)
. Build equipment (play)
. Talk to mothers re kids problems
. Enrol kids at school
. Help solve problems with children at school and living within communal environment."

"We look after children to give mothers a break. We try to give children a sense of themselves, an avenue of expression of their own experience and affirm the integrity of their own experience."

"Take kids on outings, enrol out of towner's in school, befriend the kids, drive the bus and referee fights."

"Provide a consistent and positive support for the kids in a non-authoritarian way.
Do art and craft work in the kids room.
Take the kids out on an average of 2 days a week."

Table 2
Child care workers' involvements in the refuges (29 Refuges)

	No of Refuges
Child care meetings	11
Go the general meetings	29
Control own funds	17
Equal access to files etc.	26
Equal power to other workers	24
Distinct difference to other workers	13

Before the "Child Care in Women's Refuges Report" in 1979, there were only a few refuges which provided child care. As a result of this Report refuges received a grant of $12,000 ($10,000 salary, $2,000 equipment) from the Office of Child Care (Federal Government). The child care situation has changed since this grant.

Some comments on those changes:-

"We always claimed for child care wages before so the extra money provided as a result of the report has allowed for another child care worker. This gives more child care worker support. We can also now afford to buy good equipment which lessens the demands for constantly providing 10 different activities at once for 10 different age groups. We can also afford to have damages repaired and to make the child care environment more comfortable and home like. I also feel less isolated in my job now. Before, I used to feel like a mother, surrounded by screaming kids and no-one really wanted to come near me to help."

"People who worked in the refuge before the report was done have spoken of the many pressures in the house and the difficult times for the women before we had child care staff. Having child care sessions every day seems to have alleviated this problem to a great extent. Day and night staff now have more time to spend on other duties which were not able to he done previously."

"We now have an annexe, equipment for kids, some workers (STILL NOT ENOUGH) and programme of child care which is stimulating and constructive".

"Our space has improved - we were initially working in a very cramped single garage*. Now we have an extra room which we can use when we have an overflow of kids and for evening child care or a women's retreat. Our equipment has improved and as a result of this grant we are able to provide a lot more outings and activities we wouldn't have been able to do before.

* We realise that this was a lot more than many refuges had."

"Even though our child care has developed and improved since the Child Care Report - it's barely adequate ($12,000 is not enough to provide a good programme). We find that we have to use general refuge funds to supplement child care funding and even then we are just providing the bare essentials."

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CHILDCARE WORKER

As with the section on "A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A REFUGE WORKER", the following has been written to capture a general flavour of what it is like being a child care worker in a refuge. The four recently State funded refuges do not receive the $12,000 grant from the Office of Child Care. These refuges have to fund child care activities from general refuge funds or tap into already stressed, existing community child care facilities.

8.30 - 9.30 - Get to refuge.

- Clean up garbage in front yard as I arrive, once again scattered by kids and stray dogs.

- Slip over in pool of soggy cornflakes in hall.

- Start counting heads for school - help cut lunches and tie shoelaces. Wipe faces.

- Change nappy of wayward 18 month old, as her mother collects school cases and excursion money.

- Answer phone 3 times leaving pages of messages in daybook.

- Walk 9 kids to school with new resident Jan. Go with her to see principal - he's always a bit cold with refuge transients but infants mistress gives us a cuppa while we wait to fill in details.

- Chat to Jan, about the refuge and kids - her middle child Joanne has started bedwetting because of trauma. Make note to get her a plastic sheet and assure her that lots of kids go through similar patterns but it usually settles down in a few weeks.

- Check to see that all are OK in new classes and back to refuge.

9.30-11.30 - Wendy and Roseanne, the other two workers have arrived and are waiting for me to take pre-schoolers so that housemeeting can start. Wish I could stay and be in on it but it's impossible with kids around - it's hard to keep in contact with women and other workers when everyone is always dying for you to get the kids out of their hair.

- Looks cloudy but the kids and I set off to the park in the station wagon. What a picnic - 7 kids, 3 in nappies, 1 not walking. Strap them in, 2 to a seat belt and amid screams of separation anguish from kids and relieved goodbyes from women we roll off into the traffic. Hell, it's hard to concentrate.

- 20 mins later we're at the park, nobody is crying, and the rain is about to start. Do up seat belts again, curse the lack of indoor kids' space at refuge and head for the airport - a wonderful place for refuge kids!

- Stop off at Pat's, an exresident, who takes one look at the circus in the car and asks me to call again some other time. Take Kathy, her 3 year old with us.

- At the airport. Kids going everywhere but mostly keeping in sight. One on my hip, 2 holding each leg and 3 rushing ahead we average 2 miles an hour up to the viewing area. Phew, a seat!

- Distribute apples and bananas, change nappies and answer 713 questions (I don't really know - why do aeroplanes stay in the air?)

11.30-12.30 - Time to go, meeting must be over by now and Tim looks a bit cold.

- Collect shoes and kids, counting heads all the way. Kylie's missing, no there she is climbing over those people. Won't come till I go pick her up - smiling painfully at her new found friends' curiosity about my "family."

- Back to car and seatbelting - a fight in the back just as we get going. Stop, yell, change position of 2 and set off again.

- Drop Kathy home and get back to refuge. Unload, cart in baby and 2 sleeping kids, clean out car - how it gets so bad in just a few hours beats me.

- Cuppa tea - great.

  3 phone messages, meeting at 2.00 at the Council, submission for childcare due Tuesday. Just give me 15 mins to recover.

- Fran has gone to YACS so I've got her kids till she gets back, everyone else is too busy or too anguished to take the extra load.

- Stopped raining but still too wet outside to play so Sue makes some play dough and Chris reluctantly says she'll make lunch. Wonderful.

- Return 2 phone calls, drink my now cold tea and try to read the day book to catch up on what's happening - new woman with 3 kids coming this arvo - where will they fit? Chris's leaving Friday for her new H.C. house but still we are full! full! full! 8 women and 19 kids!! No wonder no one wants to be on cooking roster.

- Must ring pre-school at M about Chris's kids, she'll need a bit of space to herself - 24 hours a day is just too much.

- Oh no, Kylie, Kris and Danny are playing with the gestetner - ink, paper and yelling everywhere. Bloody kids, can't leave them for a minute. Play dough's ready, come on kids, let's get into it.

12.30-2.00 - A half hour of "educational play" and just as they are losing interest, lunch. Woopee.

- Clean up table, hands and a few bums, telephone books on chairs and they're into it. Feed myself and Jason alternatively, coaching and encouraging spoons and mouths all over the place - how do women manage all day and night on their own?

- Chat to Fran, now back from YACS about Danny and Kylie - she's worried that she's too soft on them but feels she has to make up for the way Steve, their father, used to treat them. Jan tells us about her husband - never hit the kids, just her. She's scared he'll want custody and fight her every inch. We talk about the Family Law Court and Legal Aid.

- Yikes, time's flown and must get to meeting - at least it's now sunny and the kids can be shuttled outside. No car available, Wendy needs it to pick up new woman and kids, so it's good old public transport.

2.00-3.30 - Got to meeting, late as usual. A few glares, a few sympathetic smiles - not everyone thinks the refuge is as inefficient as we're always being told.

- Discuss prospective After School Centre - it will be great for our kids, though it looks as if it will be over the other side of the municipality.

3.30-5.30 - Get a lift back to the refuge and start organising to take the older kids out. Still no submission written, pre-school organised for Chris - leave that with Fran, Chris and Wendy.

- Welcome Paula, Michelle, Sharon and John, the new residents. Give Michelle and Sharon a quick tour and get them to come with school kids to park. Rush back upstairs to get rubber sheet for Joanne. Poor kid was a bit embarrassed but I promised to keep it a secret.

- 11 kids into car, where will we go? Park, beach (a bit cold maybe and I'll never keep them out of the water), Museum (traffic). - Park it is, "Boring" says older kids, but what can we do with no money and a crowded bomb car.

- Get to park and all out. Game of hide and seek. Then younger ones to swings and older kids to chat about a camp we have planned for Easter. Must organise tents - I think I can borrow three and the other workers might come up with two more - sleeping bags are a problem. Wish we could afford to buy camping equipment for the refuge - would save all this scrounging around for weeks.

- Sally is scratching her head a lot, must check her and get everyone to wash their hair in Quellada. Nits spread so fast around the refuge.

5.00 - Time to go, and a singalong to the refuge. Petrol and put spare tyre in to have yesterday's puncture fixed on the way.

- Back at refuge and Paul has left his shoes at the park. They are the only ones he's got, so back we go to search in semi-darkness. Got them, let's go.

- Tea's on its way, baths are in full process and time to go home at last. Talk to Fran and Chris about nits possibility and they take charge.

- Note in daybook to remind myself tomorrow:

  - submission urgent!
  - tents - numbers?
  - check nits
  - Joanne
  - Sharon and Michelle - school
  - see Maureen and kids
  - pick up spare tyre.

- Phone rings, it's Sue who moved out last week. Can I mind Leanne while she takes Peter to the Casualty. He's got a rash and fever. Sure, I'll pick her up on my way home and drop her back in tomorrow morning. Lucky I live with people who like kids.

- See you all tomorrow.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEER/UNPAID WORKERS

The 322 volunteers who work in the refuges in N.S.W. fulfil an important role in both their day to day operation and management. In some refuges the role of the volunteer is purely administrative but in most volunteers perform the same duties and functions as paid workers. Because refuges in N.S.W. are only funded for 138 workers (3.8 workers per refuge) and those 138 salaries are shared by approximately 230 workers, there is a need in most refuges to provide additional workers so that refuges can be effectively operated. Most refuges hold with the philosophy "that everyone who works in the refuge should be paid for the hours they work" but because of current funding levels for salaries, this is not possible and most refuges rely on a certain number of voluntary workers. The numbers of hours provided by unpaid workers and by paid workers in their time off is enormous and will be illustrated further in the Section on Work Conditions.

The main role played by volunteers is one of "counselling" women in the refuge.

> "One of the reasons I felt so comfortable in the refuge was the you didn't feel like you were being counselled. I'd had counselling sessions before with marriage guidance people and with social workers and they carried on with all that active listening stuff. Most of what they said was just repeating back to me what I'd said. It's different here - you feel free to talk about what's happened to you and how you feel about it because you can just sit around the table and talk. We often sit up all night with endless cups of tea just talking between ourselves or with the night roster workers. Most of us have bottled all this stuff up for years and now we can let it all out and feel O.K. about doing it."
>
> (resident city refuge)

The majority of volunteers who participated in the questionnaire stated that their main job was talking with and listening to the women.

> "I listen, provide a soft shoulder, a cuppa tea and a box of tissues".
>
> "I spend most of my hours talking to women either in person or on the phone".
>
> "I think it's important for women to feel comfortable enough to talk about their crisis, so often they've never had the opportunity".

Besides fulfilling the role of counsellor, volunteers, even though they work less hours than paid workers, play a similar role in the refuge. A volunteer at a refuge in the inner city defines her role as

> "Domestic, secretarial, administrative and welfare oriented".

A country refuge volunteer states that her role includes

> "attending fortnightly collective meetings, night roster when I can spare the time from my other committments, letter writing, attending state conference and other local meetings as a refuge rep., and being called out in the middle of the night to deal with emergencies and meet women who come to the refuge by train from other country centres".

A Sydney suburban refuge worker states

> "I am one of only 3 volunteers who work at the refuge and our role is "refuge dog's bodies" we do anything from the gardening and lawn mowing to attending meetings and are there to assist the workers make the refuge a "comfortable" place for women to stay in their time of crisis".
>
> "My job is the weekly food shopping and sometimes I relieve the Child Care Workers if they are sick or on holidays".
>
> (western suburbs refuge)
>
> "Answer phones, talk with women, sweep floors, cook etc., admit women and children to the refuge, listen, write referral letters and references, drive women to and from houses and flats, move furniture, order furniture and appliances for the refuge, arrange quotes, interview job applicants, general maintenance of refuge property - basically anything that needs to be done at the time".
>
> (worker at an inner city refuge)
>
> "My work at the refuge mostly involves driving - because we live in a country area - I usually spend lots of time picking up women who want to come to the refuge, driving backwards and forwards to Sydney for meetings and driving to State refuge conferences which are held all over N.S.W. So I've become a quite good driver since I started working here. I've also acquired a basic knowledge of mechanics because the car's always breaking down and I'm getting to be an expert on car noises. I still have to call the N.R.M.A. but usually have a fair idea of what's wrong and no longer throw my hands in the air in desperation and tell them "it won't go"."
>
> (country refuge worker)

An other important role of the volunteer is as a relief worker. Replacement costs for workers either on holidays on sick leave is an item which most refuges budget for in their annual submissions, but few receive as part of their allocation of funds. Because less than half the refuges in N.S.W. can afford to pay replacement workers, volunteers are often used in this capacity. Also, because refuges provide an emergency service, there is a need for workers to be available "on call".

A large percentage of refuges, rather than provide live-in workers, have an "on call" system, where residents in the refuge have access to a list of worker's phone numbers. In cases where an emergency or crisis does arise, residents can ring the worker who is "on call" for that period (usually nights or weekends). Volunteers are relied on by many refuges in this emergency capacity, often quite heavily.

> "Because I was the one who lived closest to the refuge, I got more than my share of night and weekend calls. One night I was called out 3 times for different things: a sick child, a prowler and a woman who attempted suicide. It was pretty heavy for me but would have been impossible for someone who had been working all day and had to work the next day too".
> (taped interview with volunteer at inner city refuge).

Apart from the positive, important role of volunteers within the refuge movement, the use of unpaid workers is not without problems. Volunteers usually only work for limited numbers of hours on either a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis so that each volunteer works an average of 14 hours per month. (59 respondents of volunteers questionnaire worked 829 hours per month). As refuges are an emergency service and the population is constantly changing, maintaining continuity is often a problem. Some refuges express the opinion that to provide the necessary continuity of service in the refuge it is best to employ a limited number of workers, enough to ensure an adequate service but not too many to make the operation of the refuge too unwieldy.

Residents in refuges where there are a large number of volunteers have expressed their frustration of having to relate their "story" over and over again.

> "While I was at the refuge there were different workers on everyday. The welfare worker and the child care worker were the same but volunteers who came in morning, afternoon and night shift were always different. Although they were understanding and sympathetic, I felt under a bit of pressure to tell them why I was there. After 6 weeks I'd told my story about 100 times to both refuge volunteers, and other welfare people (Social Security, St Vincent de Paul and Legal Aid). I was sick of it. For the last 2 weeks I was at the refuge I would talk but didn't tell them my story and the volunteers were worried that I was bottling everything up".
>
> (ex-resident coastal refuge)

Reasons stated by volunteers for working in a refuge include:

> "To try and assist women and children in crisis with 'real' help not just airy fairy ideas. To try and change my attitude and to help change community attitudes to women in crisis who are victims of the current economic order".
>
> "I feel I must support women who are subjected to violence and try and make the community aware of the extent of it".
>
> "There is a great need for women's refuges - the staff is overworked and underpaid and need all the extra help they can get".
>
> "I initiated the proposal for a refuge in 1974, assisted in survey work to prove the need for a refuge, helped take the new refuge through it's early stage of attack by local reaction and pioneered the formal establishment of it. Have been involved in the women's movement since 1935 and here as President since 1975.".
>
> "Empathy for women and kids in need of refuge - commitment to bettering the "lot" of women and kids - fulfills a need of mine to be doing something useful with my time without the commitment of regular hours, as in paid work - fulfills an educational role - I know enough and now feel confident enough to apply for paid work".

"to work with women and in a feminist collective"

"I find the involvement and friendship of staff and residents and volunteers extremely rewarding".

"Who would know"

"Job satisfaction"

"For love"

"Support women - help to independence"

"It helps me live, and cope with my family. It also gives me the opportunity to support others".

"I enjoy working with women, for women".

"Need to do something other than be a housewife".

"Live nearby, interest in women's movement".

"I am an ex-resident of the refuge and involved in feminist issues."

"Insanity - no seriously - a concern for the well being of women and children in crisis".

(all quotes above from Volunteers questionnaire).

There is the attitude of some volunteers of:-

"helping people less fortunate than myself".

"we aim to show the girls a better style of life"

"I have a lot of free time now that my family have grown so feel I have to do my bit to help those who can't cope with their lives".

These reasons reflect the judgemental attitudes of some refuge workers. They see the refuge residents as "non-copers" and that it is the woman's own personal problem that she can't cope. There is little recognition of the range of problems faced by women who are victims of domestic violence which render them unable to manage day to day tasks like home management and the care of children. Lack of self esteem and confidence and the feeling that they are useless, also leads women to being unable to manage their daily situation.

Some attitudes of volunteers demonstrated in to the women's questionnaire were that because they had free time, a supportive family and the middle class privileges of money and education they had to give time to helping "those poor women".

"One of the volunteers here drives a mercedes car wears a fur coat and lots of diamond rings. I can't relate to her 'cause she's rich and I'm poor".

A RELIEF WORKER DESCRIBES HER DAY

"Here it is a public holiday. Was looking forward to a day doing nothing with my kids, being a 5 day a week worker elsewhere.

The phone rings. It's the refuge. Can I relieve the relief worker whose kids have had an accident and are in Hospital?

Being on a refuge collective means you've gotta give some time.

So, I get one kid (bigger one) minded and take the little one, screeching 'cause she want to stay with the big one - and go to the refuge.

The kitchen sink's blocked. Every resident accuses the other of throwing tea leaves and fat down it. Who's done it doesn't matter much but who knows how to clear it? My stomach's as weak as piss I'm no help at unblocking, a brave resident wrenches out the sink ring, grabs a coat hanger and pokes and clears - and still it over flows when you let the plug out. I go and call a plumber. No can do - it's a Public Holiday. Write a message in the day book for tomorrow's worker.

I then gather up a resident and her kid and my kid. She needs a lift home to her parents' and we go and see an ex-resident and see if her kids want to come for a drive. They refuse to go without "mum". Usually they're fair little bastards to her or have been on previous outings. I'd really like some adult company on the way home though. All set to go. The bloody bus won't start and makes a fool of me at the garage - till the attendant has as much trouble as me. Hee! Hee!

Eventually get to the destination - some 150 kms away. No-one there to meet my passenger - I thought she'd teed it up? She rings further afield and comes back to say - "It's not much further." It turns out to be miles.

Finally get back to the refuge. Exhausted. Pick older child up and get home at 9.30 p.m.

Bleary eyed at my full time job the next day, the refuge rings and asks where is the washer from the sink? I didn't touch it. Seems that others think I did. All I can recall is dry retching some distance away in the toilet and certainly not touching anything.

Good thing about yesterday was that our busload of kids (even mine) were great, no whingeing, no whining on a trip that took 5 hours longer than it should and I certainly laughed a lot.

If you don't laugh you cry!!"
(Volunteer Relief Worker, Country Refuge).

CONCLUSION

While most refuges would rather operate without using the resources of voluntary labour, and a small number make a conscious choice to pay everyone no matter how small the wage, given current funding levels, it would not be possible to run without voluntary input. Those refuges which operate without the use unpaid workers find that their paid workers put in many more voluntary hours than those who use volunteers.

EX-RESIDENT WORKERS

Information received from the General Information Sheet initially distributed to refuges showed that 19/36 (52%) of refuges employed ex-residents as workers while the total number of ex-residents employed by refuges at that time (June 1981) was 34/249 (14%). More than half the Women's Refuges in N.S.W. feel that it is important to employ ex-residents as workers for two reasons. Firstly, because they recognise that women who use refuges relate well to workers who have been through similar experiences and secondly, because women, as a result of working in a refuge and developing skills and knowledge, have an improved chance on the open job market.

"When I came to the refuge, I thought I was unemployable. I had tried for a whole lot of jobs and didn't get any. The refuge, after I left, gave me a chance to do part-time work. I did that for a year (mostly the accounts and wages) and then got a job in a small office. I got a job that I like and can do part-time, and I'm learning more all the time."

Responses to the question in the Paid Workers Questionnaire, "If you are a non ex-resident worker, what are some of the advantages of working with ex-resident workers?" highlight the value of employing ex-residents to work in refuges.

"They possess a certain compassion and set of experiences which validates their status as workers."

"They tell you how they felt with different attitudes and expectations imposed on them when they came, how they think things should change and what things helped them. They are living examples of the effectiveness of the refuge and give you hope to keep going."

"Breadth of experience; quality of having 'been there'. They understand first hand problems women on their own endure."

"They can identify better with residents."

"Advantages:- eager committed and usually empathetic with residents."

"Ex-resident workers have first-hand experience of domestic violence and homelessness and this is valuable in terms of how I see my politics. Most of them are mothers, have a lot of insight and understanding of kids and their needs."

"First-hand specified knowledge of working through legal system."

"Working with ex-residents gives positive changes to women's thinking and awareness of feminism. This makes for better discussion and a broader perspective and range of ideas. A morale booster for women who are staying in the house to know that they can make their own decisions and run their own lives."

"Gut level politics that are realistic and meaningful."

"The actual experience of having been through a refuge and what the individual felt about that experience is extremely important knowledge for non ex-resident workers."

"It helps break down the power differences between residents and workers and facilitates real discussion on the issue. It leads to more insight and empathy on the day to day problems the residents have within the refuge. It gives the women who use the refuge the power to control their own service, sometimes for the first time."

"Ex-residents are often able to assist residents in re-setting their hopes and aspirations (often unattainable goals) into attainable goals."

Some of the difficulties working with ex-resident workers included:-

> "At times they lack confidence in themselves and their ability to cope with problems."
>
> "They lack self-esteem."
>
> "I can't think of any."
>
> "Often they still have unsolved hassles, which affect a clear-sighted perception into resident's problems; often literary skills are poor."
>
> "Usually have children, therefore commitments and sometimes family problems of their own, but this can also be an advantage in awakening the collective to these needs."
>
> "It takes time initially for ex-residents (as with all) to sort out the 'jungle' of the refuge which doesn't leave much time for sorting out one's self. We need more funding to employ ex-residents on a casual basis so thay can get the 'feel' of the refuge and feel O.K. about working full time."
>
> "There tends to be an instant identification with residents which sometimes may cloud the main issue."
>
> "You can sometimes feel that they are 'right' simply because they've been a resident and this isn't always so."
>
> "None."
>
> "Often women put themselves down, they don't recognise the value of their first-hand experiences. They feel sometimes that education and having your life under control is much more valuable because society values these things much more."

Ex-resident workers responses to the question "What are some of the advantages of working with non ex-resident workers" illustrates the issue that the experience of working in the refuge gives women the opportunity to learn new skills and thus enhance their future job opportunities.

> "Access to their knowledge and skills."
>
> "Working with non ex-residents has given me the opportunity to see things in a broader perspective. I have learnt to think in a more logical and rational way instead of thinking with my emotions and seeing everything as 'how it affects me'."
>
> "I've learnt so much since I've been working here. At first I was overawed by other workers (I was the only ex-resident), but finally realised that I had skills and expertise that no-one else had and also had the chance to learn many many more."

Some of the difficulties ex-residents found working with non ex-residents were:

> "Everyone knows the minute details of your personal life and problems. I sometimes feel the need for more privacy and anonymity as a worker. I don't know the personal details of other worker's lives and at times I resent them knowing mine."

"If I make a mistake or tell someone the wrong information, I feel people (other workers) make excuses for me because I'm an ex-resident and then I feel patronised."

"It took me a long time to talk in collective meetings because the refuge "jargon" was mystifying and I didn't understand half what was being said. It made me very aware of my "way of saying things" and my own tendency to use the same jargon once I'd learnt it."

"I felt I had to be more "pushy" than other workers, because I was an ex-resident. It's hard to explain but I felt I had to prove myself and because of this I worked longer hours and was always at the refuge."

"I often feel like a "resident resource file -" what did you feel when? This is difficult because everybody's experience is different.

An ex-resident further explains how she perceives her job opportunities to have changed since working at the refuge.

"Not only have I learnt lots of new things but my self confidence, self esteem and self worth have developed to an extent where I now feel employable for the first time ever. I know that I will have a reasonable chance of getting a job when I leave here, because the refuge gave me the opportunity of a job."

CONCLUSION:

Even though the percentage of ex-residents working in refuges is now quite small (14% June 81) there is a recognition by half the women's refuges in N.S.W. of the value for the refuge the residents, the workers and the ex-resident.

RECOMENDATIONS:

R.12 That refuges take into account positive input of ex-residents in the effectiveness of refuge operation.

R.13 That Government Departments take into consideration the "multi-faceted" role of refuge workers when funding levels for salaries are taken into account.

R.14 That Child care funding be increased so that refuges are financially able to provide an improved service for women and children, both resident and ex-resident.

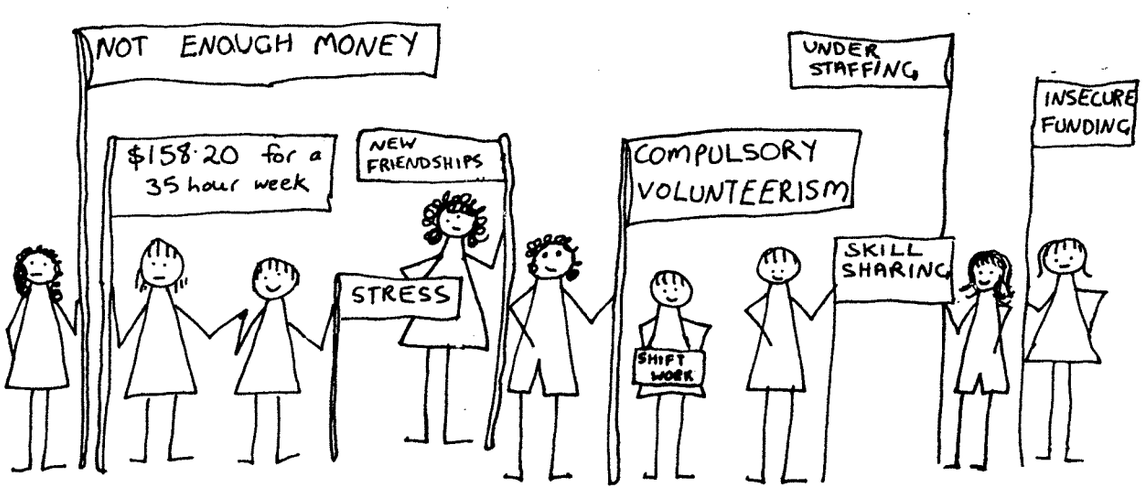
R.15 That the four state funded refuges be included in the Office of Child Care's Programme.

R.16 That refuges should not have to rely on the use of voluntary/unpaid workers for the provision of the refuge service.

R.17 That refuges who employ volunteers to ease the enormous load of refuge work, look more carefully at the attitudes of these people before choosing them to be involved in the most important aspect of refuge work "supporting women and children in crisis".

CHAPTER EIGHT:

EFFECTS ON WORKERS: WORK CONDITIONS, SALARIES, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE



As explained in the previous chapter, the role of a refuge worker includes many varied duties and responsibilities. The work requires a high level of personal and emotional commitment to women's right to have choice in their lives. This involves many hours outside of paid time because of the current funding situation, as well as the ability to switch from bookkeeping to cleaning to childcare to public relations.

The refuge environment, by its very nature of providing emergency accommodation to women and children in crisis, is conducive to a stressful and fast-paced atmosphere. Refuge workers are continually emotionally and physically drained by the demand to provide support services which do not otherwise exist for the high number of refuge users.

Thus work conditions for refuge workers should be at an optimum to guarantee high quality care for residents (and ex-residents when necessary) and a good service overall.

However, refuge workers in general have extremely poor work conditions. Factors of this are:-

- low levels of pay
- many unpaid hours
- poor leave provisions
- high staff turnover
- inadequate communications due to lack of time
- inadequacy and insecurity of funding
- many work situations which have stressful repercussions on workers' lives.

"My weekly wage is $120.00 gross ($5.00 an hour). For that my whole life has been swamped, taken over by chaos and anxiety. I'm only supposed to work three days a week but I've often gone eight without a break. I dread the phone ringing at home because it probably means more 'refuge'. When I'm there I seem to rush from laundry to Social Security to accounts, always fighting for time to sit and chat to the women living there. The refuge thrives on coffee, crowds and crises and the demand is never ending. Of course there's lots of good things too - loads of laughter with some very brave women who don't have much to laugh about, and seeing women occasionally come out on top beaming with confidence and self-respect. The women I work with are great too. It's been a real learning time for me".

(Refuge Worker).

There are now 251 workers in the 36 refuges evaluated. Recurrent funding is made available for full-time wages from the following sources:-

94 workers	-	Women's Refuge Programme, New South Wales, Department of Youth and Community Services
10 workers	-	Proclaimed Places Programme, ibid
28 workers	-	Office of Childcare, Federal Department of Social Security
5 workers	-	Canberra Refuge, Federal Department of Health
1 worker	-	Ethnic Affairs Commission, New South Wales

Total: 139 full-time wages available to be shared by 251 workers.

205 refuge workers completed questionnaires and participated in discussions for the Evaluation. The following is a summary of their work conditions and the effects of refuge work on their day to day living.

PAID AND UNPAID HOURS

Because of the stress associated with refuge work, most Women's Refuges employ workers on a part-time basis, rather than having them work a five day week. This provides the refuge with a larger workforce and information base, and also protects against exhaustion and 'burnout'. In addition it allows greater flexibility of time for workers, most of whom have children and other commitments. However, as can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, the experience of most refuge workers is a full working week on part-time pay.

Table 1 Paid Hours Per Week

HOURS WORKED		NO. OF WORKERS	AVERAGE OF HOURS X NO. OF WORKERS
Range	Average		
5-15	10	39	390
16-24	20	70	1400
25-34	30	40	1200
35-40	37	34	1258
40 plus	45	10	450
Total		193	4698
N/R		12	
Total		205	

193 refuge workers are paid to work 4698 hours each week. This means that each refuge worker is paid for an average of 24.3 hours.

Table 2 Unpaid Overtime Per Week

HOURS WORKED		NO. OF WORKERS	AVERAGE OF HOURS X NO. OF WORKERS
Range	Average		
Nil	-	5	-
1-5	3	49	147
6-10	8	72	576
11-15	13	27	351
16-25	20	23	460
26-30	-	-	-
31 plus	35	17	595
Total		193	2129
N/R		12	
Total		205	

A total of 2129 hours are worked unpaid by 193 refuge workers in an average week. This means they work for an average of 11 hours without payment each week

Table 3 Hours Worked Per Week (by Paid Workers)

Average paid hours worked	24.3
Average unpaid overtime	11.0
Average hours worked per week	35.3

The average working week of a refuge worker is thirty-five hours.

RATE OF PAY

The hourly rate of pay for workers in women's refuges varies from $1.86 per hour to $9.20. This huge discrepancy in time value is due to several factors:

(i) differing funding allocations to each refuge

(ii) those refuges which continually experience overcrowding tend to employ greater numbers of workers and are forced to divide their salaries component between a larger staff

(iii) the management bodies of some refuges value refuge work at a lower level than others.

Table 4 illustrates the range of hourly rates of pay for the 251 refuge workers.

Table 4 Hourly Rates of Pay

RATE PER HOUR		NO. OF WORKERS	AVERAGE RATE X NO. OF WORKERS
Range $	Average $		
Less than $2.00	1.90	9	17.10
$2.01-3.00	2.50	3	7.50
3.01-4.00	3.50	-	-
4.01-5.00	4.50	38	171.00
5.01-6.00	5.50	41	225.50
6.01-7.00	6.50	55	357.50
7.01-8.00	7.50	52	390.00
8.01-9.00	8.50	50	450.00
9.01 plus	9.20	3	27.60
TOTAL		251	$1,646.20
Average Hourly Rate			$6.55

$6.55 is the average hourly rate for women's refuge workers, $159.16 the average weekly wage. If unpaid work is taken into account this weekly income is actually only an hourly payment of $4.52 per hour, a rate which is clearly inadequate for the range of duties and responsibilities of refuge work.

The Australian Social Welfare Union, in consultation with the Women's Refuge Programme Officer and the Women's Co-ordination Unit, has estimated that for each refuge worker an allocation to the refuge of $23,623 is appropriate. This represents a base rate of $18,030 per year plus costs including leave, shift and on call provisions as well as the cost of replacing that worker while she is on leave. The current allocation is $13,040.

Many Women's Refuges have asked on their annual submissions for funding to pay workers at Australian Social Welfare Union rates. This has been ignored by government departments in their allocations over the past three years.

LEAVE PROVISIONS

In addition to poor rates of pay, many refuge workers do not have essential leave provisions:-

Table 5 Do workers at your refuge receive the following?

(Response in Refuges)
n 36

	YES	NO
Holiday pay	30	6
Sick pay	28	8
Part-time loading	6	30
Time in lieu	12	24
Overtime	4	32
Workers Compensation	36	-
Maternity leave	8	28
Holiday pay[1] - 4 weeks	25 refuges	
6 weeks	4 refuges	
8 weeks	1 refuge	

Refuge work is a particularly emotionally and physically demanding form of employment and it is essential that workers have entitlements to paid holiday and sick leave. The lack of provisions means that workers must take unpaid leave for holidays or when sick, which given their inadequate weekly wage, is unrealistic and unreasonable.

As evidenced in Tables 2 and 5, part-time loading and time off in lieu of overtime worked are not available to the majority of refuge workers. Those who do receive these provisions, in principle, commented that the day to day demands often does not allow for workers to actually take time off for hours worked, for instance, at evening meetings.

It has been suggested that a floating Maternity Leave fund be established for refuge workers. This fund could cover all refuges and could be drawn from as needed. Women who have worked for twelve months at a refuge and who take time off to have a child should be entitled to three months paid leave. This needs to be further examined by Women's Refuges and funding bodies.

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(1) The A.S.W.U. recommends that women's refuge workers receive five weeks holiday and two weeks sick leave.

SHIFT WORK

Eight Women's Refuges have live-in workers, with a total of 14 people sharing these positions. Six of these actually live at the refuge in self contained quarters, others live there for only part of each week. All live-in workers receive little monetary recognition of the added stress on their lives, the lack of privacy, inadequate leave provisions or the 24 hour responsibility.

14 refuges have workers which are rostered to stay overnight at the refuge on say, one night per week. For these workers an attempt is made to keep a "night roster room" aside to ensure a good night's sleep if all is quiet; however, this room often absorbs the overflow when the refuge is overcrowded and workers frequently commented on having to "camp on the lounge". Funding is not sufficient to pay shift rates so that workers are not compensated for the extra burden on their physical and mental health.

14 refuges have no regular overnight roster but have a worker "on call" should a situation arise needing assistance. This role is usually delegated among all the staff but it is frequently those who live closest and have cars and telephones who bear the brunt of the late night calls. Again there is no monetary compensation for the inconvenience of interrupted evenings after a long day's work and this further aggravates poor work conditions.

The crises which generate the need for Women's Refuges most frequently occur in the 5 pm to 9 am period of the day. The guidelines for the funding of Women's Refuges require that refuges offer a 24 hour per day, 7 days per week service. Without the allocation of sufficient funds to adequately pay for these hours, refuge workers must constantly struggle to reconcile bad conditions with poor rates of pay. This contributes to burn out and high staff turnover.

VOLUNTEERISM

"Women's Refuges began as a result of individuals becoming aware of the unmet needs of battered women and children, and organizing into groups to meet these needs. They have, therefore, developed from a voluntary base. They have, to a very great degree, continued to function on this basis. Governments have made this necessary by their consistent failure to fund at levels which take account of the 24 hour, 7 day week nature of the service. This strategy has relied, successfully, on the willingness of refuges to continue operating on the basis of unpaid labour, in the form of volunteers or paid workers who contribute many hours of unpaid but vital overtime. It is a flagrant breach of departmental guidelines, and is the cause of many of the difficulties experienced in refuge operation".(2)

In addition to the unpaid hours donated (usually without choice) by refuge workers, a further approximately 1,200 hours are contributed each week by 322 volunteers involved in 22 women's refuges.

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(2) Report of the New South Wales Task Force on Domestic Violence. op. cit. page 139.

Table 6 Total Hours Worked Per Week

Type	Average hours per week	Percentage
Paid Work	6,099	60.6
Unpaid Overtime	2,761	27.5
Volunteer Time	1,200	11.9
Total	10,060	100

This brings the total unpaid hours to an average of 3,900 as against an average of 6,000 paid hours. Thus almost forty percent of refuge work hours are unpaid.

Paid staff who are dependent on volunteers to help run the refuge on a day to day level sometimes find this a frustrating arrangement. The existing time pressures and commitments of these volunteers mean that they can only be available at set times, that they may be unreliable and that their presence at the refuge may be spasmodic (for instance one refuge has 72 volunteers on four hour rosters of once per month). There is generally a distinct difference in class background and life experience between volunteers and the women and children using refuges, and this may cause conflict resulting in a mistrust of the refuge service. In addition, volunteers can generally only be expected to do work which interests them or that they feel confident in tackling so paid workers may not necessarily have their work load lessened.

The Evaluation does not mean to suggest that there is no role for volunteers in women's refuges. However, as stated the Policy Guidelines for the Funding of Women's Refuges,(3) the essential 24 hour day, 7 day work load should be covered by paid staff. To date, the funding bodies have been guilty of blatant irresponsibility in their deliberate neglect of staffing levels in Women's Refuges.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE TO JOB REQUIREMENTS

> "Self help and mutual support rather than professionalism. A women's refuge operates on the premise of women supporting other women rather than professionals helping clients to find solutions to problems".(4)

Women's Refuges attempt to break down the power relationship between workers and users of the refuge by employing women with sympathetic, non-judgemental attitudes and involving the women using the refuge in its day to day operation. Workers emphasise the sharing of knowledge and experiences so that women are not mystified by language and bureaucratic procedures. They encourage women staying at the refuge to gain support from each other as well as from refuge workers. Some refuges employ ex-residents as workers in a further effort to ease the power barrier.

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(3) Policy Guidelines for the funding of Women's Refuges, principles guiding the NSW State Government involvement in this programme: "The level of government funding shall not require the use of volunteers to meet basic staffing requirements".

(4) Characteristics of Women's Refuge, New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services Policy Guidelines.

Refuges have deliberately steered away from specifically employing workers with professional training e.g., social workers. They argue that many women using refuges have had past experience with "professional helpers" and have felt intimidated and denigrated in the "client" role. This is backed up in the evaluation by residents' responses to the question "what is the difference between the refuge and other welfare services?"

> "You are treated as an equal and not as a sponger or inferior"
>
> "A social worker I saw made me feel like a "non-coper", now I see my problems as the result of problems in society".

As shown in "Role of Worker", the abilities of a refuge worker are not confined to training in one area but must encompass many. In order to function smoothly a refuge needs a team of workers with a wide range of skills and information. While the most important criterion for refuge work is sensitive communication with the women and children using the refuge, it is also necessary to have or acquire a working knowledge of a great variety of areas. For instance, bookkeeping systems; matters of State and Federal law as it relates to domestic violence, custody and separation; refuge constitutional procedures and requirements; government funding and structures; women's and children's health; welfare entitlements. The combination of this information is unique to refuge work and few new workers will arrive with previous experience in all these areas.

The gaining of these skills and knowledge is, however, recognised by refuges to be attainable by a wide range of women, regardless of their educational background or past work experience. Most refuges feel that the traditionally unpaid work of women gives them a background of abilities which has always been undervalued by society at large. For instance the bearing and nurturing of children, particularly as a single parent, is an experience which familiarises women with many of the practicalities of social welfare, childcare, budgetting and general survival.

Refuge workers who participated in the Evaluation had a multiplicity of work backgrounds and skills. Most common were a combination of the following: raising a family, factory, shop, office, community and health work, welfare qualifications and/or experience, teaching. Some had not done paid work before or in recent years and the refuge was an opportunity to gain new skills in a supportive and challenging environment. Some were ex-residents who had personal experience with many of the problems. They had in common a concern for the position of women and children and a dissatisfaction with existing services.

TRAINING OF WORKERS

As indicated in the examination of refuge structures, the selection of new workers is generally a planned and involved process. The training of these workers is, however, much more haphazard due to the crisis nature of the refuge work.

The following are typical responses by workers to "How do you train new workers?"

> "People learn as they go and hopefully feed us new ideas."
>
> (Country Refuge)
>
> "There is always a shortage of staff - court cases etc., - so you more or less throw them in the deep end. You have to be a specific type of person - work conditions in a refuge are not exactly ideal - its 'learn as you go'. You gain practical experience that way."
>
> (City Refuge)

"Rather messily and informally. Information is passed on here and there by the group and in one to ones. There is no set procedure, everyone is at a different stage. All I received was an example of others at work and answers to my many questions. For me this was adequate but it could be more difficult for some."

(Country Refuge)

"We have a two week intensive training session about the refuge and the effects of different drugs and alcohol. We employ workers in lots of five or so - the whole process is incredibly draining on everyone."

(A Women's Place.)

"Conversationally i.e., operation of collective, relationships with community groups, needs of residents and ex-residents. However, a lot gets missed out as some new workers get really lost in their first few weeks."

(Country Refuge)

"The staff turnover varies alot at our refuge - in the past three months we've had five new workers. This has offered new ideas and stimulation but it requires greater collective energy in sharing knowledge and establishing relationships with new workers. New workers have a six week pre-employment period -there's no structural training but they get the opportunity to work with every worker, to ask questions and learn by working rosters with another worker. 'Training' is an ongoing process - you are continually learning by experience."

(City Refuge)

"Although we plan and talk about ways of 'training' new workers, the refuge is always so hectic that really new workers just sink or swim each day till eventually they can manage - or at least can "tread water" till someone else shows them."

(City Refuge)

Inadequate training does not pose too much of a problem for refuges where the staff turnover is infrequent. There is always a core of workers who are totally familiar with the many areas of work and a new worker can have a period of gradually learning different areas such as legal, housing, administration, accounts. This is the case in the majority of refuges.

At the time of the Evaluation, over half of refuge workers had been working for over 12 months, and a significant number for over two years.

Table 7 How long have you been working at the Refuge?

Time	No. of Workers
Less than 6 months	42
6-12 months	45
12-24 months	45
24-36 months	28
More than 3 years	43
N/R	2
Total	205

For those refuges which tend to have greater numbers of users, poor work conditions and, in some cases, inadequate facilities and community support, staff turnover is a three to six monthly occurrence, and staff training is a problem area. The demands and pressures of day to day refuge work continue and new workers will often be forced into situations before they have the confidence and information needed. The planning and implementation of training sessions adds to the work load of existing staff, causing conflict with the urgent needs of residents. The resettling process is longer and may be again frustrated by further staff change over.

Refuges need to protect themselves from the loss of valuable skills and information through staff turnover. 14 refuges do this by rotating areas of responsibility on say, a six monthly basis, so that there is always a number of workers who are familiar with any one job. However, this is again problematic when the refuge is continually pressured for time to put skill sharing into practice.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Only 13/36 women's refuges reported supplying detailed job descriptions to new workers and only 4/36 provided employment contracts. This area obviously needs reviewing, however, without adequate funding and a government recognition of the need for 24 hour paid staff, contracts for work conditions will do little to improve the situation of refuge workers.

Sample job contracts, drawn up by two women's refuges, are shown in Appendix I.

COMMUNICATION

The day to day pressures of refuge work are further exacerbated by difficulties in communicating information between workers. Factors of this are inadequate funding to employ workers on overlapping shifts, lack of time, the diversity and number of issues relating to refuge work and staff turnover.

Communication between refuges is also a problem. It has been difficult for refuges to establish an effective system which ensures that each refuge has access to information on issues and events. Further to this, time and financial expense prevents many workers, particularly those in country areas, from participating in discussion and planning.

Staff turnover is also a source of information loss in the Refuge Movement.

These problems of communication add yet another frustration to refuge work conditions.

EFFECTS ON WORKERS

Satisfactions and Frustrations

Refuges workers generally reported a deep commitment to the ideals of the services of women's refuges. Despite the poor work conditions and the stress associated with the work, most workers felt that involvement with the refuge was a positive experience in their lives which had encouraged much personal growth and satisfaction.

The Evaluation, through workers questionnaires and discussions, gathered an overall picture of the least and most satisfying aspects of refuge work.

The most satisfying aspects, overall fell into several main areas:-

- working with women and children, showing them alternatives to intolerable situations, seeing them grow in confidence and self-esteem and gaining some control over their own lives.

- working in a flexible and challenging work situation where skills, information and ideas are exchanged and developed.

- forming friendship with other workers, women and children and the support and caring shown for each other.

- the stimulation of many people and life experiences together in one place and the testing out of non-traditional ways of working such as collectivity and skill sharing.

The following are examples of these satisfying aspects:-

"Being involved in something you believe in. Seeing women leave heaps stronger than when they came in. For me as a child care worker breaking through to a child who has put up barriers. Learning so much about the system, women's movement, handling difficult situations that you could avoid in other jobs. Going on "P.R." exercises and discovering how much support there is for refuges, e.g., recently I collected signitures for the funding petition. Seeing the house getting along well together because when it doesn't it seems as if the whole purpose is being defeated."

(Western Suburbs Refuge)

"Seeing women being able to share their experiences and retain a measure of humour. Seeing an impossible and violent situation replaced by one of relaxation, free of stress and fear. Helping someone to realise their worth as a person and achieve a goal perhaps for the first time in their lives."

(Coastal Refuge)

"Helping a woman rediscover that she is not worthless after she has believed what she has been told for years. The companionship of other women."

(Country Refuge)

"The support and love of the women I work with. It's great. Working with women who have learnt to be honest with each other. The occasional time when you know a resident really has benefited by being in the refuge. Helping a resident solve big problems and seeing them leave, able to stand up and cope with their life again. Feeling that I am of use to someone."

(Coastal Refuge)

"Being with women as they change and realise how oppressed they are. Feeling myself change and gain more confidence in the world. Working with wonderfully funny and at times incredibly exciting women. Change, Growth, Strength!"

(City Refuge)

"Combining a challenging and alternative work situation with a crucial resource for women and children"

(City Refuge)

The most commonly mentioned of the least satisfying aspects of refuge work was the frustration of the continual struggle for guaranteed funding in recognition of refuge work. Other areas were:-

- low rates of pay and compulsory volunteerism
- lack of time and money for follow-up
- working in a state of chaos and confusion due to the nature of refuge work and overcrowding
- inadequacies of housing, pensions, child care facilities in the wider community and the lack of alternatives for women and children outside the nuclear family.
- invasion of the refuge into workers own lives, particularly country areas where anonymity is difficult.
- community attitudes to the refuge and women using them.
- lack of protection for victims of domestic violence and the frustrations of the legal system.

Examples of responses to "what is least satisfying about refuge work?"

"Skimping and scrounging. All the unpaid hours, not because I begrudge the time (although I often do), but because it is a symptom of our society that women's services are expected to exist on the unpaid labour of women."

(Country Refuge)

"Knowing that very few women do come out on top. Encouraging and rejoicing with a woman who finally has a two bedroom inadequate flat for herself and four kids, which she can't afford. Knowing she's stuck in a poverty cycle that holds little hope."

(Country Refuge)

"- Watching women and children go back to be beaten again.
- not being able to get through the barriers of some kids.
- being exhausted after going to four meetings four nights in a row.
- not having enough time or energy for myself or to really explore other things in my life."

(Country City Refuge)

"- The continual battle for funding and the time this consumes.
- Uninformed people continually criticising Women's Refuges and giving everyone a hard time.
- Feeling guilty when I don't spend as much time with the women at the Refuge as I feel I should."

(City Refuge)

"Having to continually justify our existence to the rest of the community. Working in a community where housing, child care and facilities are inadequate, where public transport is non-existent, and pensions can't cover the cost of day to day living. Seeing women and children being continually pushed about by anyone and everyone that believes they have some authority. Seeing women and children beaten and sexually abused."

(Country Refuge)

STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES

Refuge workers were also asked to comment on their most stressful experience while working at the refuge. The experiences reported relate to a range of situations.

The most frequently mentioned and commonly occuring are illustrated by the following:-

"Midnightly phone calls from a new resident for a week's duration."

(Country Refuge)

"Taking out large numbers of children by myself. Sometimes kids have had behavioural problems that I can't control and with a bus load of kids, driving along in traffic.... it's a continuous nightmare."

(Inner City)

"Watching a woman return to her husband because she is being pressured by husband, children or family - this happens often, at least one in every six women."

(Western Suburbs)

"Working nine days straight."

(Inner City Refuge)

"Situations where the legal system does not offer adequate protection or justice for women so that often a woman staying at the refuge is afraid all the time of her whereabouts being discovered by a violent male. This constant fear is not only transmitted to other residents but is also very stressful on workers, especially if the refuge is overcrowded."

(Central Coast area)

"Talking to a woman who has been bashed frequently for six years and hearing her say she still loves him!!??, knowing she would go back to him (which she did)."

(Inner City)

"Fearing the removal of funding or premises creates most of the stress."

(Western Suburbs)

"A girl of 20 years with two children. She had been raped at 10 years and again at 17. Both her own and her kids' health bad, unable to cope but wanting to keep the children and no trust in society or family to help her. Difficulty in deciding how to help her and keep the family intact. Unfortunately this is not an uncommon situation except that it is usually different by degree."

(Country Refuge)

"Coping with the management committee."

(Country Refuge)

Some stressful experiences related are horrific. Examples of this follow:-

"I had been closely involved with a women whose husband, during access, murdered their two children and killed himself."

(Country Refuge)

"One of the worst experiences for me happened when the drunken husband of a resident come to the refuge asking to say goodbye to their seven week old baby. He refused to give it back and it wasn't until the next day, after much hassling, that the baby was returned."

(Country Refuge)

"When a father came to collect his children for access the mother just went crazy - it was very sad. She ended up in the mental ward of a local hospital."

(Country Refuge)

"A woman came to us 18 months ago. She had 6 children and had left a very violent situation. We were able to get her a house. She lived quite close to the refuge and came to see us often. In June this year her husband started hassling her. One morning he went to the house and set her alight, MURDERING her and, by mistake, died himself."

(South Coast Refuge)

Other stressful experiences recounted to the evaluation involved actual risks to refuge workers and their families lives - for instance,

"Chased by an irate husband with a gun."

(Inner City)

"Access exchange where the husband, who had a police record of violence, and met us to pick up the kids with three of his burly mates. He threatened me and was really abusive. The woman and I both felt that the situation was potentially too dangerous to continue so the court then arranged for him to come to the refuge to see them!!"

(City Refuge)

"Getting a woman and her childen past road blocks set up by her husband and his family (drug related case). This happens about 6 times a year! Bomb threats! (not common)."

(Country Refuge)

"I took an ex-resident home one night and luckily we noticed that the front door had been broken into. The police found her husband waiting inside with a meat cleaver. (He was charged but got off with a bond)."
(City Refuge)

"Being followed home by a man who had been ringing the refuge during the day threatening to "get us" if his wife was not returned to him."
(City Refuge)

EFFECTS ON HEALTH AND HOMELIFE

The day to day crisis nature of the refuge, coupled with emotionally traumatic experiences, wears down the mental and physical health of refuge workers. It can be clearly seen that refuge work is not a job which can be confined to paid hours and forgotten at 5.00 p.m. The crises which bring women and children to a refuge frequently flow over into different aspects of workers' lives.

The Evaluation asked workers about the effects of refuge work on their physical and mental health, homelife and relationship. The following comments are typical:-

Physical Health

"Tired nearly all the time - trouble sleeping when we're having traumas at work, lots of tension pain in my back and head."

"Overtired most of the time."

"I smoke daily 20 cigarettes. I have never smoked more than 10 per week before! I have gained weight, I have no fingernails - bad nerves etc!"

"At first I seemed to be sick all the time but my resistance (and antibodies) I have built up."

"Often among women and chidren who are physically ill - I feel I have many more colds since working at the refuge."

"Nits, gastric, scabies - I've had them all! And passed them on to my household."

Mental Health

"Stimulating yet exhausting. After particular heavy days I get huge mental blocks when my brain refuses to keep going."

"Sometimes find it hard to switch off when I leave."

"Find it difficult to sleep or relax totally because of worry about women."

"Get very drained and need more time alone."

"Often what has occurred, especially with ex-residents, goes round and round in my head all night."

"I am stronger willed and that's good."

"I've become more aware and open to other ideas - its been a mentally exciting experience for me."

Homelife

"Tend to bring problems home. Not a job that you can walk out of at a particular time and leave it till morning."

"I live on the premises and this makes it hard to have the privacy I would like at times."

"My husband resented my work at first, more understanding now but still slight underlying tension. I feel I'm a better and more vital person for my work."

"Subject to interruption at anytime due to being on call - this can mean being up all evening, caught up all weekend."

"A lot of stressful situations arise at home from my commitment at the refuge - especially if I'm called out without prior notice."

"My teenage sons resent my time and energy given to the refuge."

"Its made my family more aware of the needs of others and they have come to understand the work I do and are supportive."

"I never get any housework done but I'm not complaining."

"Taking kids home and working late - spontaneous decisions which effect other household members."

Relationships

"I've made lots of really close friends through the refuge, but am losing touch with older friends because of lack of free time and changing interests."

"I've become 'choosy' in my friendships - silly shallow uncaring people I used to tolerate now make me sick."

"My husband realises I have to work and if I'm tired he takes over the house work, something he never did before."

"Relationships that count have grown in strength and support."

"Strong feelings of isolation as, unlike in my previous job as a clerk, I find it hard to explain the job without having an argument defending the refuge."

"I have stronger opinions and more confidence to voice them - relationships are fuller and more volatile."

"Relationships - who's got time?"

"I find I tend to turn to fellow workers for friendship. Some old friends now seem shallow in their interests. At the same time I think I have gained more insight and tolerance in all directions. I have learnt not to talk about my work as my family resents my absorption in the refuge."

Workers in country areas also spoke of the effect of their refuge work on their relationships with friends, neighbours and the community generally. Their lack of anonymity and the conservative nature of most small towns can be a source of conflict when there is little public knowledge or awareness of the problems that bring women to refuges. These workers are continually constrained in the methods they can use to raise public awareness of these issues and are also forced to be "nice ladies" in order to keep community support.

Some refuge workers spoke of an increase in their consumption of stimulants while working at the refuge.

Table 8

TYPE	NO OF WORKERS WHO RESPONDED "YES"
Tobacco	58
Alcohol	27
Food	49
Sedatives	11
Other drugs	13
Other (caffeine most common)	21

This can be seen as a further indication of the stress related to refuge work, and its repercussions on workers' health.

FOLLOW-UP

The area of follow-up work is a source of tension in workers' lives. The constraints of lack of workers, time, energy and transport mean that follow up support invariably takes place in workers' own time.

Table 9 - Are you paid to do follow-up or does it happen in your own time?

TIME	NO OF WORKERS	PERCENTAGE	
Paid	27	16	
Unpaid	89	52	84
Both	54	32	
Total	170	100	
N/R	35		
Total	205		

Table 10 - Does this overlap into your home or social life? Is this a problem? (n 170)

OVERLAP	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
Homelife	86	37	47
Social Life	79	37	54
Problem	40	45	85

The needs of ex-residents overlap into many aspects of the majority of refuge workers lives. Some examples of the effects on workers follow:

> "Sometimes I might have promised my younger children I'll be home early and then I have to call and see an ex-resident and get caught up. I feel if we had another worker this wouldn't happen".
> (Country Refuge)

> "Phone calls from ex-residents who have taken my home number from the on-call roster. Usually they are asking for support because of difficulties. This is time consuming and inconvenient".
> (City Refuge)

> "Relief from the hassles of work is almost impossible. Ex-residents/ workers will be seen at shops, pubs, dances - anywhere in town. Often they will want to talk about their situation and are unaware that the work/leisure distinction is important to me. Nevertheless this could be improved by more workers and having the time to deal with things in work hours".
> (Country Refuge)

> "Its hard to watch women who are isolated and lonely when, for your own sake, you have to draw a line about how much time, energy you can afford to support them".
> (City Refuge)

> "You feel frustrated because you can't neglect the follow-up and you can't neglect your own life and you can't split yourself down the middle".
> (City Refuge)

Follow-up is crucial to the support service offered by Women's Refuges (see Chapter "Shifts in Emphasis", Follow-up). It invariably happens in workers unpaid time because of the demands within the refuge, staff shortages and the failure of funding bodies to allocate funds specifically for this area.

Conclusion

The work done by Women's Refuges has been shown to be the most effective service for women and children escaping intolerable situations.(5) It is also the most cost effectve (See Chapter "Reasons for Existence"). However, the cost to workers at Women's Refuges can be seen to be enormous. The work covers a multi-faceted range of duties and responsibilities. It involves a knowledge of a wide variety of complex areas. It is physically and emotionally draining, it effects all aspects of workers' lives and it can be extremely stressful and even dangerous.

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(5) Domestic Violence Task Force op. cit., Appendix 1, page 29.

Further to this, refuge workers suffer from extremely poor work conditions, the main features of which are low rates of pay, inadequate leave provisions and forced dependence on voluntary labour. Refuge workers must frequently defend their existence to funding bodies and the community, seldom receiving recognition for value of their work to society at large.

Government funding bodies have consistently neglected the rights of refuge workers to an adequate wage for a fair day's work. It is crucial to the continuation of the vital services of Women's Refuges that the areas of award wages and work conditions receive urgent consideration and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R.16 That the funding bodies, through the N.S.W. Department of Youth and Community Services, adequately fund refuges as 24 hour services so that the refuge is not dependent on voluntary hours or voluntary workers.

R.18 That refuge workers be recognised as skilled women whose knowledge spans a wide range of areas including welfare, legal, housing, health, childcare, accountancy, government and community structures.

R.19 That the diversity of skills and knowledge appropriate to refuge work be recognised as attainable by many women regardless of educational background.

R.20 That all refuge workers be paid according to Australian Social Welfare Union rates and work conditions with no loss to existing staff levels.

R.21 That Youth and Community Services consult with Women's Refuges on current staffing levels with the view to funding necessary increases in numbers.

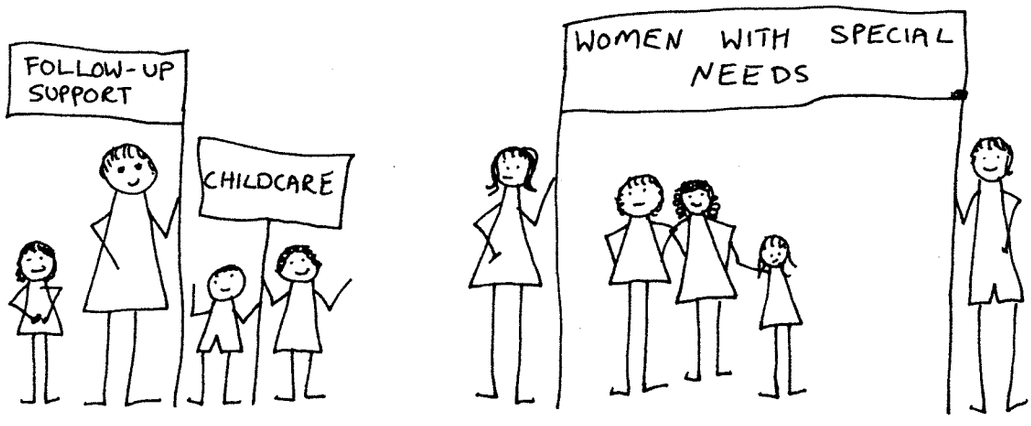
R.22 That funding should be guaranteed and reviewed on a triennial basis.

R.23 That funds be made available for the training of new workers. That each refuge should decide the most suitable process for this training.

R.24 That the Department of Youth and Community Services consult with Women's Refuges on the area of maternity leave.

CHAPTER NINE:

SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN EMPHASIS OF THE WOMEN'S REFUGE PROGRAMME



Women's Refuges were originally set up to provide shelter for women and their children who were escaping intolerable domestic situations or were temporarily homeless. A crucial part of this was the provision of a supportive and comfortable environment whereby each woman could work through her crisis with help and information from refuge workers. Refuges have had to broaden their original aims over the seven years since funding was made available, to accommodate:

(i) the need for this support to extend beyond the short period of stay at a refuge

(ii) the needs of children in refuges

(iii) the needs of women (and where applicable their children) of different cultures and backgrounds i.e. migrant women, aboriginal women, single women, women with severe emotional problems.

This evaluation has looked at each of these areas and set out to identify:-

(a) the extent of the need

(b) problems related to each area

(c) methods that some refuges have developed to ease these problems

(d) ways that refuges and funding bodies can ensure that each woman and child gets maximum benefit from a refuge.

Women's Refuges have attempted to expand their services to incorporate these needs but without back up funding or additional staff (with the exception of child care subsidies). Although funding has increased over the years, it has always been insufficient to keep up with the demands placed on refuges. Women's Refuges see the expansion of their support as an integral part of the service but, without adequate funding, as constantly falling below the standard of care necessary to enable each woman and her children to become fully participating members of a community.

FOLLOW-UP

Policy Guidelines for the Funding of Women's Refuges 7:

> "to provide continuing support for ex-residents and their children."

Most women and their children stay at a refuge from 6-8 weeks. In that time they must organise their income, housing, legal procedures (if applicable) and attempt to reconcile themselves and their children to the situation from which they have come. Their crisis is very seldom ended when they leave the refuge. Very often court proceedings are still pending; re-housing situations are inadequate due to cost, facilities and/or isolation; emotional crises are unresolved and they are in need of ongoing protection from their violent husband or boyfriend. More importantly, without the day to day companionship of the refuge situation, and the security it offers, most women leaving the refuge experience depression, isolation and despair. Follow-up support is crucial. It is important that it is the refuge which provides this service because of the special trust relationship established between refuge workers and women in crisis.

> "Without help from the refuge after I left I would have had a nervous breakdown."
> (ex-resident, City Refuge)

> "Without the refuge I would have put the kids in a home i.e. given up."
> (Inner City Refuge)

> "It was the follow-up that was important to me. I had emotional problems and needed help for a long time."
> (North Coast Refuge)

> "They haven't got the time to visit you and pay you the attention you would like. Sometimes you feel so completely isolated and you don't know what you can do and just to see them (refuge workers) makes you feel better - much better."
> (Western Suburbs Refuge ex-resident)

> "If the refuge workers hadn't come and visited me I'd probably be out in the street now with all my kids or still living with a man who I feel is insane and who probably would eventually have killed or maimed me and my kids."
> (Northern Suburbs Refuge ex-resident)

> "I needed someone to support me when I went to court. The workers were great. I would have been so scared without them."
> (Inner City Refuge ex-resident)

> "Without help from the refuge after I left, I would have gone back to his drinking and bashing."
> (Country Refuge ex-resident)

> "If a worker could visit all ex-residents on a regular basis it would certainly help us adjust. I was really depressed after leaving the refuge."
> (Riverina area ex-resident)

One Women's Refuge in Canberra, is funded to employ a worker specifically to do follow-up work. Other refuges attempt to provide continuing support within the constraints of their general refuge-work budget. Table 1 illustrates the different forms of this follow-up.

Table 1: Follow-up Support

(From workers' and Managements' questionnaires)

Type of Support	Number of Refuges
- Occasional visits	32
- Encourage women to visit refuge	36
- Phone and encourage women to phone refuge	36
- Occasional child care, emergency child care, kids outings and camp	17
- Ex-resident groups	9
- Food and money	7
- Outings for women	7
- Priority given to ex-residents in refuge employment	7
- Newsletters (see Appendix J for example)	4

Two thirds of the women interviewed for the evaluation had been back to visit the refuge for friendship, advice and information. Many of these women were supported through legal proceedings, child development problems, assisted with child care and given help in protecting themselves and their children from further threats and violence. Refuge workers also spoke of many situations where they could have offered assistance had their follow-up programme been more adequate.

> "A woman who had stayed at the refuge moved out to Minto to a Housing Commission house. We never did make it out to see her and the kids. Months later we heard she'd given the kids to her husband who'd been hanging around and she was in a psych. hospital."
>
> (Worker at inner City Refuge)

> "This woman I'd been friendly with while she was at the refuge ended up putting her kids into foster care 'cause she couldn't cope with the isolation after she'd left the refuge. I know if she'd lived closer we could have helped with child care and visited her and she wouldn't have been driven to it."
>
> (Worker at Northern Area Refuge)

Follow-up support is particularly important for women who are allocated Housing Commission Homes in the outer western suburbs of Sydney or isolated areas of country towns. This usually leaves a woman and her children without adequate transport, child care, job opportunities and removed from support networks built up at the refuge. Often these women have previously lived in very different geographic areas (e.g. inner city, country town) and the move also cuts their contact from other friends and family.

> "It takes me two hours to get in and visit my mother - by the time I get the kids off to school and clean up and get the baby and me to the train and in and to.....we've only got an hour or so before I have to leave to pick up Shane at 3.00."
>
> (from a taped interview, ex-resident of City Refuge)

The inadequacy of the Supporting Parents Benefit and the cost of private rental housing leave these women with no option but to accept the constraints of these houses. The prospect of ongoing support from the refuge is thus very important in settling into their new houses and developing new networks and friendships. It very often means the difference between a woman adjusting to living on her own with her children and complete despair.

> "Without the visits of a refuge worker I would have felt abandoned all over again."
> (outer Western Suburb ex-resident)

One response to the enormous need for supportive resources for these women is the Wash House project, initiated by Essie Women's Refuge. The Women's Activities and Self Help House, to be situated in the outer western suburbs of Sydney, will begin operation in late 1982. It will provide resource information, educational and referral services and child care so that women can participate in activities of the centre. Because of the high percentage of refuge residents who are rehoused in Housing Commission homes in the west, the Wash House will be a valuable resource for all refuges in the metropolitan area and may be used as an extention of their follow-up work.

Most of the women interviewed would have preferred to get housing nearer to the refuge. This would make follow-up support a much easier task; Refuge workers and ex-residents could exchange visits more frequently and without the costs of transport, distance and time. However the Housing Commission homes available in Sydney are mostly in the outer western suburbs (isolated from regular transport systems), and the cost and scarcity of private rental houses means that women are forced to seek them outside the area they may choose to live. Public transport in country areas is almost non-existent, and few women can afford to buy and run cars.

The inadequacy of current funding levels of Women's Refuges has meant that follow-up work invariably is done by workers in unpaid hours or not at all. Over 2,400[1] hours per week of refuge work is done in workers unpaid time and most of this is consumed by follow-up work. This is not to say that follow-up is given low priority in the work load of a refuge but that the existing pressures allow for little leeway in time commitments. The issues of distance, transport, time and energy, lack of funding and workers were continually mentioned by workers as problems constraining adequate follow-up support.

> "Young women with kids who have been granted Housing Commission homes in areas like Claymore, Bidwill etc. are so excited and full of themselves - but you know they can't cope because of isolation, lack of community facilities and support, lack of time from us to visit. So you wait and know they're crumbling.....that's society, it's devastating."
> (Worker at Western Suburbs Refuge)

> "Least satisfying: seeing an ex-resident who needed help and because she asked for none, received none i.e. the lack of follow-up. It seems we take for granted that someone is coping if we don't hear from her, and they aren't and we don't find out till its gone <u>too</u> far. Our visits and contact dwindle to nothing if women don't contact us, which is unrealistic and destructive."
> (Worker at Northern Suburbs Refuge)

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(1) For more details see "Work Conditions" Chapter.

> "I would like to do more follow-up, especially with the kids, as sometimes we get through to them and are getting on great and they leave. That's the last we see of them unless we do it in our own time which I have been doing. (More funds needed and time)."
>
> (Worker at North West Country Town Refuge)

> "It's awful worrying about a woman who has moved to Minto or somewhere and hasn't got the phone and you can't spare the time for a letter let alone go and see her and the kids. It would be so much better for all of us if we could employ follow-up workers, otherwise we're always only half doing the job."
>
> (Inner City Refuge Worker)

It has become clear in the course of the Evaluation that the funding of follow-up workers is crucial to the support service that refuges offer to women and their children. The task of follow-up cannot be absorbed into the everyday functions of a refuge without specific allocation of funds. Follow-up is too important to depend on voluntary hours and commitment.

Further evidence to support this can be drawn from the evaluation of the pilot funding of follow-up work at a Women's Refuge in Canberra. This research(2) looked at time spent with ex-residents of this refuge and at N.S.W. Women's Refuges. It demonstrated that

> "There is important work to be done in follow-up care of ex-residents. This work is not done by other agencies and only to a limited extent by refuges not funded for follow-up. However, when funded, a refuge can supply a service which has a preventive as well as supportive function. The funding of follow-up work could bring about a change of emphasis from crisis management to community work and prevention based in women's refuges."(3)

Each refuge should be allowed to decide whether funding for follow-up is best used by the employment of one or two specific follow-up workers or by all workers sharing responsibility for this task and employing extra staff to balance the work load.

CONCLUSION

Follow-up work has been recognised through the Women's Refuge guidelines as an essential part of the refuge support service.

RECOMMENDATION

R.25 That each refuge be funded at least one extra wage for follow-up of all ex-residents in need of ongoing support.

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(2) Jill Sutton: Family Support Services Scheme 1980.

(3) Jill Sutton, ibid.

CHILD CARE

This is another area that has been shown to be a crucial part of the support offered by refuges. 6,308 children stayed in Women's Refuges in the twelve month period studied, an increase of more than forty percent on the figures gained 2 years previously (4,480).

In the early years of funding, most refuges had little awareness of the needs of children as separate from the needs of their mothers using the refuge. Those refuges which did recognise the need were constrained by lack of funds for child care and equipment and only a few were able to specifically set aside moneys to cater for this. In 1978 Women's Refuges commissioned a study into the needs of children in refuges.(4) This study documented existing child care facilities and set out recommendations of minimum resources to meet the needs of refuge children.

These were:-
- Specifically designated child care wages
- Space
- Special purpose funds for exceptional needs eg. extra worker if numbers were high
- Equipment Allowance
- Operating Costs
- Suitable vehicle for transporting children
- Emergency funds for short term care at home eg. if a child's mother was in hospital.

As a result of this study, the Office of Child Care (Department of Social Security) made funds available for the twenty nine NSW Womens Refuges who were then funded jointly by the State and Commonwealth Governments. This amounted to ten thousand dollars for each refuge for wages and two thousand for equipment, to be renewable each year by submission. This money has had a marked effect on the child care these refuges have been able to provide and has been of great assistance to many women, children and workers. These refuges have now attempted to provide pre-school, after school, weekend and school holiday activities, play equipment and outings, occasional care for ex-residents, emergency short term care for children whose mothers need a break from them, one to one caring for withdrawn and distressed children.....a whole range of services to children and their mothers to support each child through a crisis in their lives and help them cope with the stress of the refuge situation.

Child care has three functions in a refuge:

(i) it takes a child out of an often overcrowded situation and gives her/him the opportunity to do different child-centred activities, visit places, be involved with other children, develop independence from her/his mother and relate to other adults who are interested in her/his ideas and problems. It also allows the child to work through feelings about the crisis which brought her/him to the refuge.

(ii) it gives the mother the chance to have a break from her children with the knowledge that they are being looked after by caring and responsible people. She can relate to other residents and workers without the interruption of children, visit doctors, solicitors and the Housing Commission, and think through and discuss her situation in comparative quietness. Child care also gives her the opportunity to relate to her children in a non-threatening child-centred environment and to discuss ideas with other adults who are also involved with her children.

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(4) Hounslow, Saville and Stephenson: Child Care Needs in NSW Women's Refuges, June 1979.

(iii) it allows the refuge to operate more smoothly. Housework, office work, house meetings and 'cuppa tea chats' are all much easier and more efficiently organised without children present. Workers in refuges without child care have a much more difficult job.

One refuge does not recognise the need for, and advantages of, child care for its children, mothers and workers. The evaluation feels that this attitude needs to be more closely examined by the management committee of this refuge.

Women's Refuges provide care for children over a wide range of age groups:

Table 2

(June 1980 - May 81)

Age	Number of Children	Percentage
Under 2 yrs	1721	27.3
2 - 5 yrs	1961	31.1
5 - 10 yrs	1647	26.1
Over 10 yrs	979	15.5
TOTAL	6308	100.0

Many women using refuges have more than one child requiring full time care.

From the sample of women interviewed:

Table 3

No of children	No of Women	Percentage
0	57	14
1	100	25
2	105	26
3	70	18
4 or more	68	17
TOTAL	400	100

The area of largest demand for child care is the pre-school group. Lack of child care in office hours of a refuge place great strains on the refuge workers and on the women they are assisting. It is essential to the atmosphere of the refuge to have workers whose specific role is to cater to the needs of children, whether by taking them on outings, providing activities such as painting or developing a caring relationship with an individual stressed child. The numbers of children[5] and the variety and extent of their needs require that each refuge have a minimum of two child care workers at peak times i.e. morning, after school, weekends and school holidays. (The range of roles in which a child care worker is involved is discussed in an earlier chapter - "Role of Workers").

Many refuge buildings have not got adequate space for child care and these refuges must attempt to rent a space outside the refuge. Funding bodies have consistently ignored this need which places additional strains on existing funding and resources. An inner city refuge which accommodated 731 children in the period studied (the largest number of all 36 refuges evaluated) explains its space problem:

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(5) Some refuges accommodate up to thirty children at a time.

> "We are currently looking for a new house for an annex as the one we have been using (the fifth in seven years with lots of gaps in between) is too far away and constantly vandalised. We have some facilities for kids within the refuge - shed out the back, blackboard, broken wooden structures in yard. But these are inadequate."

Child care facilities in the community have always been insufficient and are particularly scarce in these times of economic cutbacks. Some refuges have been forced, by the lack of adequate services within their community to open their resources to children outside the refuge. This is with no additional funding to relieve the strains on the mothers of these children. For instance, one refuge, in the northern suburbs of Sydney, operates a play group which is daily attended by thirty to forty women and their preschool children who live in the area. This is in addition to children living at the refuge. These women and children are often ex-residents or potential refuge users, have no other options for child care and need the support of this non-threatening child centred environment. They are often referred to the playgroup by government agencies such as Health Centres, Youth and Community Services and community workers. They are able to use the space and equipment, share the company and skills of each other and refuge workers and break out of isolation of high rise housing. However, without sufficient funding or community back-up, the strain on the refuge resources is again overtaxing the main functions of the refuge.

Most refuges also offer occasional child care to ex-residents. This may be for a few hours while a woman attends an appointment or for a few days or weeks while a women is in hospital. There are not the services in the community to take up this role and once again refuge resources are used to fill the gap.

The Office of Child Care funding has not been increased since it was introduced in 1979. With the growth in the numbers of children using refuges and inflation this has meant that the real value of this funding has been reduced to less than half. In the 1980-81 and 1981-82 financial years the State Government, recognising the desperate situations that most refuges were experiencing, provided additional funds to cover child care needs. This was distributed according to need and enabled some refuges to employ a second child care worker, others to buy much needed equipment. However, the 4 newly established (1980-81) State funded refuges have only had $6,000 each for child care, barely enough to set up child care resources. These funds from the State Government have been very much appreciated by refuge workers, residents and children. However these moneys are considered by the Government to be "one-off" grants and are not automatically renewable each year. Thus, child care in refuges is insecure and child care worker jobs are constantly unstable, dependent each year on what additional funds may be available for each refuge.

It is imperative that Government funding bodies look at the child care demands placed on women's refuges. The recommendations of the "Child Care Needs in Women's Refuges" must be re-examined and implemented. The children using these services are already disadvantaged in many ways and women's refuges must be funded to adequately cope with the range of needs for which they are providing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.14 That the Office of Childcare allocations to Women's Refuges be increased to cover the range of costs associated with the needs of children in crisis, including childcare wages, equipment, space and outings.

R.15 That the four state funded refuges be included in the Office of Childcare Porgramme.

WOMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Women's Refuges were set up to provide shelter and support to any woman who found herself in a crisis situation regarding her present living circumstances. Over the years of providing that service, refuges have looked to broadening their support to allow women with particular needs the ideal environment within which to work through their crisis.

Migrant women, aboriginal women, women without dependent children and women with severe emotional problems are four groups which Women's Refuges have recognised as needing special consideration. A description of the needs of these women follows, along with an explanation of demands by refuges for more adequate funding to support these needs.

RELEVANT STATISTICS

Table 4: Nationality of Refuge Users

(June 80 - May 81 Women staying in Refuges)

Nationality	No of Women	Percentage
Anglo - Australian	3169	64.4
Aboriginal	504	10.3
Migrant	1243	25.3
TOTAL	4916	100

Table 5: Nationality of Sample (n 400)

(Women Interviewed August - Dec 81)

Group	No of Women	Percentage
Migrant	61	15.25
Aboriginal	47	11.75
Single Women	57	14.25

MIGRANT WOMEN

"It is difficult enough for Australian women to take their children and leave home to escape violence. The problems for migrant women are multiplied several times over" (6)

USE OF REFUGES BY MIGRANT WOMEN

1,243 migrant women stayed in 31 Women's Refuges during the year June 1980-May 1981, representing 25.3% of refuge users for that period. These women come from the following cultures:

Table 6 Nationality as defined by refuge statistics

(7)

Nationality	No of Women	Percentage
Greek	212	17
Yugoslav	184	15
Sth. American	114	9
Lebanese	112	9
Italian	103	8
N.Z. (predominately Maori)	74	6
Vietnamese	26	2
Other Asian	70	6
Middle European	67	5
Turkish	52	5
Maltese	31	2
Arabic	21	2
Fijian & Other Is.	23	2
British and other English speaking	123	10
Other	31	2
TOTAL	1243	100

These women stayed at any one of the 33 refuges which were functioning over the period. Some refuges, because of locality and reputation, accommodate and support larger numbers of migrant women and their children. These are 4 refuges in the inner city, 3 in the western suburbs, 1 in the northern suburbs and 1 on the South Coast.

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(6) "Report of N.S.W. Task Force on Domestic Violence." 1981 pg 157.

(7) These statistics come from figures provided by thirty three of the refuges studied, some of which did not keep accurate record of nationality thus could only estimate from other details. 5 refuges did not keep statistics on nationality at all.

PROBLEMS FACED BY MIGRANT WOMEN

Migrant women face essentially the same problems as all other women in our society but they are aggravated by language and cultural differences. Breaking the marital oath is viewed very severely in many migrant communities. A woman wishing to leave a cruel or violent husband faces both the fear of bringing shame on herself and her family and ostracism by her community. She faces the very alien prospect of living on her own with her children and being separated emotionally and physically from all that is familiar to her. Her friends may not be allowed talk to her, her children will probably place pressure on her to return home and very often her family, though aware of the violence she has suffered, will use many methods to persuade her to return to her "responsibilities".

> "Now what I have to cope with is my family tradition that says there is this thing called marriage and no matter how bad it is you must stick with it. I am not used to having any individual rights"
> (migrant resident, inner city refuge)

Religion is often of great importance to a migrant woman. Her husband, family and community, including church officials, are likely to use this as another method to reunite the marriage.

WITHIN THE REFUGE

Even within the refuge a migrant woman is under great pressure. The problems of a multicultural, multilingual communal household are at the best of times enormous. There are differences in standards of cleanliness, in food choices, in methods of performing basic household tasks, in disciplining children and so on. These differences create tensions under any circumstances, let alone when the people involved are also at a crisis point in their lives. With English speaking women, some of these tensions can be aired and resolved at house meetings. However it is difficult for a migrant woman, with little confidence in her English, to participate effectively at these times or generally communicate with other residents who often overlook the problems she has in expressing her needs. Refuge workers are not always aware of the cultural factors which influence a migrant woman's approach to a situation and this can result in discrimination.(8) Problems due to language and cultural differences continually arise. They could often be avoided if there were migrant workers on the spot to discuss and iron out issues as they occur. This would also ease the alienation experienced by women from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds.

Migrant children also have greater needs in a refuge. A child learning English requires great patience and understanding. When a child care worker is with a dozen or twenty children it is often the migrant child who misses out on special attention. Health problems such as hearing, speech and learning difficulties which are manifested through language may be overlooked by the worker. On the other hand, notwithstanding their problems with the English language, children are often used as interpreters - which can be distressing for the child and embarrassing for the adult. This can also allow the child to manipulate the situation to suit her/his own needs, which may well be to return home, despite the threat of further violence to her/his mother.

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(8) Of the 61 migrant women interviewed, 18 felt that their cultural background made a difference to the way other residents treated them, and 8 felt a difference from workers.

Migrant women and refuge workers express dissatisfaction with relying on outside interpreter services i.e. Telephone Interpreter Service (T.I.S) and ethnic community workers. This is mainly due to the sensitive nature of domestic violence and, in many cases, ignorance about refuges and their functions. In some cases, T.I.S. interpreters have been found to have judgemental attitudes, in others it has been difficult to maintain a continued counselling relationship with the same interpreter. Due to cultural disapproval in many ethnic groups, women leaving intolerable marriages, cannot use existing interpreter and support services within their community, especially in country areas. Confidentiality is also at stake in these situations.

Thus the needs of migrant women and their children place great demands on the resources of a refuge. Their problems briefly summarise as:

(i) language and communication
(ii) cultural differences in food choice, preparation and eating habits etc.
(iii) feelings of alienation from other women
(iv) burden placed on children
(v) lack of understanding and acceptance by other residents and sometimes workers.

The growing recognition of these problems led to the establishment of the "Working Party on Migrant Women in Refuges" in November 1979. This is comprised of refuge workers and representatives of relevant Government departments who meet monthly. It was basically set up to get together those working with migrant women and to make information on refuges more accessible to these women.

Its first task was the publicising of Women's Refuges through the printing of 10,000 posters in seven languages and the setting up of a roster for receiving calls. A Diverta Box has been installed so that, from the one phone number, a woman can speak to one of four rostered refuges, eventually together with an interpreter by means of a three way phone.

The Working Party is now aiming at improving the Interpreter Service and improving the communication between health workers and women's refuges.

While all Women's Refuges attempt to overcome these difficulties and make migrant women welcome, one Women's Refuge gives specific attention to their needs. The collective of this refuge aims at providing an environment which supports the cultural differences of women and discourages racism. A grant from the Ethnic Affairs Commission ($9,000 in 1981-82) helps pay the wages of two part time multilingual workers and some other collective members are also migrants. This refuge is in an area of a multicultural population and has always had many migrant women residents and workers. Their experience has shown that when they are able to maintain a household of a majority of migrant (regardless of nationality) and black women, cultural tensions are eased. Australians, whether through ignorance or intention, have often absorbed racist language and attitudes. Brought into daily contact with women of different backgrounds, sharing meals and life stories, allows Australian women to consider their racism and acknowledge and learn from other cultures.

> "They think migrants a bit strange. I mean, we are strange from Australians because we don't eat the same food, speak the same and we have the culture - whatever you call it - everything's opposite. But that doesn't mean we don't feel too, we are not persons. After they understand there was nothing wrong with us, because we are migrant, we been really good friends. I never forget that, I was really happy to make person understand, you know, that a new Australian is another one of them. It is hard but I think more you talk you understand each other. I mean, that's what it should be."
>
> (ex-resident, city refuge)

As illustrated in the follow-up section, support from the refuge is important to the readjustment of women into a new community. This is particularly so for migrant women and their children. They encounter renewed difficulties in communication, and much racism and indifference on moving into largely Anglo-Australian communities. Assistance with learning the local area, transport routes, schools and other services is basic, along with ongoing contact with a familiar person to deal with problems as they arise.

Follow-up workers would also enable migrant women to meet other women in similar situations. There would be ongoing support through Court cases etc., One refuge has currently a submission under consideration by the Department of Immigration for three part time workers. If funded, these women would spend much of their time with migrant ex-residents and their children. Other refuges with high numbers of migrant residents and ex-residents also expressed this need.

The allocation of Housing Commission houses to migrant women needs to be examined. Many refuges expressed the view that migrant residents of inner city refuges should be given priority in inner city housing as they are already disadvantaged by language and isolation. The added stress of geographic distance from support can be intolerable.

CONCLUSION

Women's Refuges attempt to support women of all cultural backgrounds. At present the needs of migrant women and their children cannot be met due to the lack of resources to meet their specific cultural and language difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R.26 That there is a clear case for the funding of migrant workers for those refuges accommodating signficant numbers of women of non-English speaking backgrounds. In many cases these workers could be ex-residents of a refuge, whose experience is similar to that of new residents. Migrant workers need to be involved in all aspects of refuge work including follow-up and child care.

R.27 That information about the refuge and other services should be translated into predominant languages for use in each refuge.

R.28 That refuges with many migrant residents be funded to provide special resources to alleviate the alienation of migrants e.g. cooking utensils, music, books, posters etc. suited to a whole range of other cultures and languages.

R.29 That the Housing Commission attempt to rehouse migrant women in the close vicinity of the refuge.

ABORIGINAL WOMEN

The special needs of aboriginal women is another issue that warrants consideration by refuges and funding bodies. This study found that over 10 percent of refuge users are aboriginal. While all Women's Refuges attempt to make aboriginal women welcome, some refuges in particular accommodate large numbers. One Women's Refuge is run by and for aboriginal women, ninety five percent of its residents are aboriginal. Thirteen other refuges also accommodate large numbers. These are generally refuges near black communities.

PROBLEMS FACED BY ABORIGINAL WOMEN

There are many issues involved in the position of aborigines in our "white" society which contribute to the particular needs of aboriginal women using refuges. This evaluation cannot go into these issues in any depth. However, in order to look at their position in refuges it is essential to understand the history of white oppression of aboriginal people; the erosion of traditional support structures and the resulting depression amongst their communities.

Almost 200 years of white rule has equalled mission institutionalisation, forced assimilation into European schooling, denial of traditional land ownership and the loss of survival and cultural skills. Aboriginal communities are now faced with huge problems of unemployment, alcohol dependence and are alienated from both white society and their traditional values and lifestyles. It must be recognised that support services aimed at redeveloping aboriginal dignity and self determination must be within a context of aboriginal involvement, values and support networks.

Domestic violence, homelessness, eviction (i.e. reasons for women coming to refuges) are as prevalent in aboriginal communities in N.S.W. as in our society at large. However, aboriginal women are often reluctant to use most women's refuges because of cultural differences and shyness. They will often prefer to stay with friends and relatives thereby creating overcrowded conditions for these families as well. Aboriginal women are easily overawed by a predominance of white Australians. Their culture, value systems, lifestyles, relational networks, while in themselves distinct and profound, are very different from those of white Australians. Among themselves they can be truly comfortable. There is a great need for aboriginal women to be with other aboriginal women, to talk aboriginal talk, to reinforce themselves as people, to re-establish their identity and hence self respect, confidence and resolution to start again.

WITHIN THE REFUGE

The Aboriginal Women's Refuge was set up in 1978 by a group of aboriginal women who were concerned about these issues. They could also see a disturbing breakdown of aboriginal families due to economic and social factors. Over-representative numbers of aboriginal children are in child welfare institutions, church homes and, foster care; adults in prisons. They aimed at, and have achieved, support for aboriginal families and reductions of the number of children in institutional care. Since opening, this refuge has given shelter and support to large numbers of aboriginal women and their children from all parts of Sydney and country areas, including other States. However, for both geographic and resource reasons, they cannot give this to all aboriginal women who are in need of refuge.

The great demand for more Aboriginal Women's Refuges must be met. These should be based (1) in the inner city, and (2) in country areas, particularly in the north and south coast regions. The inner city and coastal areas are settling places for many aboriginal families and those refuges which have attempted to welcome aboriginal women have not the resources and are already overcrowded with needs. This recommendation is also made by the Domestic Violence Task Force which investigated this issue at some length. (9) These refuges must be run by aboriginal women.

It is also important that those refuges which accommodate aboriginal women in smaller percentages develop an understanding of aboriginal culture and create an environment which consciously encourages an awareness of aborigines as the traditional land owners and dwellers of our now multicultural country. The employment of aboriginal women as workers should be given priority. One refuge spoke of an incident which supports this recommendation. An aboriginal woman, because of the enormity of her needs, appeared to be given preferential treatment by the workers. Other Anglo-Australian residents resented this and ostracised this woman. "White" workers attempts at counter racism are not the solution. An aboriginal worker in this situation would (1) bring greater awareness of aboriginal needs to residents and workers and (2) alleviate an individual aboriginal women's feelings of isolation. Crucial to the employment of aboriginal workers is that they are given full responsibility as workers, and that they do not feel that they are a token gesture against racism, isolated in an otherwise "all white" work team.

Refuges have found that aboriginal women very often need to stay longer at a refuge than usual. The refuge is often an opportunity to attend to their own and their children's health problems and to obtain practical information to deal with them in the future. It is also a time to sort out financial difficulties, with non-judgemental advice from refuge workers. Many of these women have come from Missions where their exposure to white society has been limited. Others have come from a situation where their community is strongly developed. The prospect of living on their own with their children is very frightening. Aboriginal women, in general, cope much better with the communal living atmosphere found in most refuges. They do not feel the need for space and privacy as strongly as most other women, as the philosophy of shared responsibility is consistent with their culture.

FOLLOW-UP

Some refuges spoke of the need for follow-up of aboriginal women and their children over an extended period. Often aboriginal women give off an air of being "tough and self reliant" so that workers, already stressed from over-commitment, do not give priority to this area. Nevertheless such follow-up is crucial to overcome the tremendous isolation women experience after moving from the refuge. Aborignal women are totally dependant on state housing due to discrimination on the private rental market. aboriginal women who gain housing in areas where few other black people live become extremely self-conscious of their colour and appearance. They encounter problems which are often the result of different cultural values. For instance, aboriginal children are accustomed to communal ownership and wanting to play in other peoples back yards may cause conflicts with neighbours' concepts of personal property. The Aboriginal Women's Refuge has recommended to the Housing Commission that aboriginal women be granted houses within easy access to their support systems to ease this isolation. They have found that some women come back to stay at the refuge because of the lack of support, and sometimes hostility, in their new community. Funds for more follow-up workers are essential.

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(9) Domestic Violence Task Force, ibid pg 154-55 and appendix pg 123.

CONCLUSION

Aboriginal women have special needs which greatly constrain their opportunity to use the benefits of their stay at a refuge. The atmosphere of a refuge, the company of other aboriginal women (as workers and residents), the length of stay and the follow-up support afterwards are all very important factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.30 That the establishment of Women's Refuges run by and for aboriginal women, in the inner city and in country areas, be given urgent consideration by the Federal Department and N.S.W. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the N.S.W. Department of Youth and Community Services.

R.31 That all Women's Refuges look at ways of giving maximum support to aboriginal women and their children.

R.25 That funds be made available for follow-up.

R.29 That the Housing Commission allocate houses to aboriginal women within the vicinity of their support systems.

SINGLE WOMEN

Single women seek accommodation and support for many of the same reasons as women with children - domestic violence, sexual abuse, eviction, homelessness, no money, etc. While most Women's Refuges originally accommodated women with and without children, some refuges, because of overcrowding and their soaring turnaway rates, have decided to give priority to women with children, who are seen as having greater demands.

Women with children have been seen to have differing needs to single women. Children demand some routine of meals and bedtimes; clean and quiet space is needed for babies; both require uninterrupted sleep and tolerance of their early rising habits and noisiness. Their mothers must co-ordinate their own routines to accommodate this. The lifestyle of single women is very different; their hours are more flexible, they are more likely to go out at night and sleep later in the morning. This can produce tensions in terms of rostered housework and cooking. These conflicts of lifestyle create problems in a household where stress is already present from the personal crises women are undergoing and the new experience of communal living.

As for all oppressed groups, drugs and alcohol provide a ready made short term solution to the problems of poverty, homelessness and low self-esteem. This way of coping is perhaps easier for women without children and leads to further household tensions. Again the problems of different lifestyles result in disruptions of the routine each group might desire.

After much experience with these conflicts of needs and overcrowding, many Women's Refuges (particularly those in Sydney) have developed a policy of giving women with children priority in refuge accommodation. This has meant that single women must complete in the private rental market or face sleeping in the streets, parks, or prostitution. Youth refuges have accommodated many young women. However, past experience of sexual abuse or other forms of domestic violence, make mixed accommodation uncomfortable and intimidating for some of these women.

The awareness of this situation led women involved in Women's Refuges to lobby for refuges specifically for single women. After several years of research, submission writing and delegations to funding bodies, two single women's refuges have been established, one which caters for any homeless single woman and another which works at helping women confront and resolve drug and/or alcohol dependences. This evaluation felt that it was important to look at these refuges because they grew out of the recognition by refuges of the needs of single women and are considered part of the Women's Refuge Movement.

They have the status of proclaimed places, under the Proclaimed Places Act, 1979, to provide overnight accommodation for single women with drug and alcohol problems, or who are homeless.

In the June - December 1981 period 275 women were accommodated at these refuges. Appendix F gives a detailed account of the diversity of the problems these women have encounted.

Single Women's Refuges offer many things to an enormous variety of women. They provide a safe, comfortable environment for women of all ages for periods ranging from overnight to several months. They give support and information aimed at breaking the cycle of homelessness; assistance to make real choices about their future. Support and information takes many forms, both practical and general, around such issues as work, education, housing, pensions, legal rights, rape, addiction and health. They offer the opportunity to learn survival skills such as reading, driving, self-defence, preparation for job interviews, household management (e.g. shopping) and office skills. Most importantly the workers at these refuges offer friendship in the form of companionship, social outings and networks.

Half-way housing is an integral part of the support system. Many of the women using these refuges have never lived independently of their parents or an institution before and need continuous reinforcement to manage communally or on their own.

> "Before I moved into the half-way house I'd never had a front door key"
>
> (ex-resident)

> "It will take us a while to work things out. None of us have had to manage a house before this. We have to get used to not having someone telling us what to do all the time. There's a few fights about washing up, cooking and shopping. But we'll get there."
>
> (ex-resident)

The Single Women's Refuges need additional workers to maintain support for ex-residents, a few of whom are in halfway houses, and countless others.

Of course the problems are ongoing. After they leave the refuge, most will still be unemployed and have only the dole to support themselves. For some even this is impossible because of lack of stability (i.e. a fixed address), self-esteem or confidence in the right to an income without the label of "bludger". The Housing Commission does not recognise single women as eligible for low cost accommodation although they are currently examining widening their criteria. Refuge workers encourage women to share houses and helps them to organise bond money. They also help with Real Estate agents, references, furniture. Most importantly they try to help women to detach their self-worth and well-being from the "material success" ideal.

Without an adequate income these women will always be on the bottom rung of the housing market. The work of the refuges is continually frustrated by the reality of the socially acceptable roles for women, employment impossibilities, high rents and low benefits.

CONCLUSION

The necessary social changes required to allow these women an adequate and independent existence cannot be fully examined in this report. However, given the mammoth obstructions to this ideal, and the consequent crisis faced by many single women, the need for more refuges geared specifically to their needs is urgent. Only two such refuges exist in the whole state of N.S.W. The overflowing demand forces many women to street living or staying in intolerable situations.

With such limited options the most common socially acceptable individual response is found in marriage and/or children - which may well be a contributing factor to the reasons for the existence of Women's Refuges. The socially inacceptable response is clearly evidenced in a large increase in prostitution. Despite these trends, services for homeless people remain overwhelmingly geared for the homeless male.

A greater public awareness about the pressures and lack of options open to homeless single women is badly needed. At present covert (and sometimes overt in the media) social distain is a strong influential factor in maintaining the well known stereotype of women as "damned whores or God's police." Without adequate housing, employment and opportunities this limited social role is literally forcing increasing numbers of women into penal and psychiatric institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.32 That more funding be made available for specific Single Women's Refuges under the Women's Refuge Programme.

R.25 That funds be made available for follow up workers in the existing Single Women's Refuges.

R.33 That low cost housing be made available by the Housing Commission for women without children.

R.34 That government bodies give support to co-operative (i.e. shared) housing for single women.

R.35 That more half-way houses, and workers to help run them, be made available to help single women through the stage between living in a refuge and living independently.

WOMEN WITH SEVERE EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Before the existence of Women's Refuges, women who were victims of physical/sexual abuse and isolation in the home, and were unable to cope with it, often found themselves in a psychiatric hospital labelled "mad". Recently a N.S.W. Health Commission evaluation of selected psychiatric admission wards[1] found that marital and family problems were frequently mentioned in relation to patients being "disturbed".

The authors of that study quote some of the patients they interviewed as saying: for example,

> "marital problems - my husband hits me - he gambles." (This patient was diagnosed a chronic paranoid schizophrenic with sixteen previous admissions).
>
> "I was raped a couple of nights ago and had nowhere else to go." (This patient was diagnosed as having a personality disorder with one previous admission).
>
> "I'm feeling a bit run down, tense, trying to give up smoking; the child welfare officer said he would take away my children." (Diagnosed neurotic depressive with suicide attempt; no previous admissions).
>
> "Two years of problems with my husband; extra-marital affairs etc. I thought an overdose was the best way out." (No diagnosis given - no previous admission).

The connection between domestic/marital problems and emotional "breakdown" in women needs to be explored more closely, especially as socio-economic conditions are deteriorating - rising unemployment, inflation, decreasing housing opportunities. No longer can the woman who is scheduled, or admitted voluntarily, into a psychiatric hospital be considered the problem. The situation must be seen in its wider societal context.

Women's Refuges have long been aware of the difficulties faced by women who have experienced the psychiatric system. These women have often become institutionalised and/or have developed drug dependencies.[2] In general psychiatric institutions fail to assist in re-establishing these women in the community after discharge. Most women who have been in psychiatric hospitals have very low self esteem and little independence. They have often lost custody and access to their children in the process.

Thirty refuges reported that they had received referrals of women with severe emotional problems, in the period from June 1980 - May 1981. In 27 of these refuges, 71 women were accommodated who had been referred from institutions, 20 who were suffering from mental abuse, 20 who were under "social stress" and 5 who had clearly defined "psychiatric" problems.

One inner city refuge claimed recently that over the past few months it has had many referrals of ex-psychiatric patients from Rozelle and Gladesville State Psychiatric Hospitals. The workers at the refuge believe this is because of the desperate shortage of suitable accommodation for these women.

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1. Laurie Young and Ingrid Reynolds: "Evaluation of Selected Psychiatric Admission Wards", Vol. 1, Division of Health Services Research, January, 1981, pp. 70-73.

2. Young and Reynolds (1981) found that, during the first week of admission, 87% of the patients in their sample were administered one or more drugs.

The needs of women with severe emotional problems are different from someone who, though in a state of crisis, has decided to take some control over her life and alter her situation. Often, because of the effects of hospitalisation, women who have been treated for "madness" require more time and energy from workers and other residents. The amount of tension already present in a refuge, especially if it is overcrowded, can increase the already difficult task of providing support for women with severe emotional problems.

One worker, from a western suburbs (Sydney) refuge, described her most stressful work experiences as:

> "dealing with women who are extremely emotionally distressed or suicidal as there are limited resources for them, other than psychiatric hospitals. This occurs as often as 1:10 or 1:20 women who come to our refuge."

Another worker from an inner city refuge wrote that her most stressful work experience was:

> "trying to find the best re-housing situation for a woman who was chronically unbalanced. I felt total frustration at have no "alternatives" to offer this woman. This situation is happening more frequently."

A worker from a northern suburbs (Sydney) refuge stated that:

> "women with severe mental problems cause me most stress. I think it's because they are so unpredictable and could be violent. These women are released from psychiatric hospitals with no where to go, and no one really cares. We have had dozens of these women sent to us. Night staff know we won't get any sleep, we dare not in case something happens to upset them."

Existing Women's Refuges are not able to cope with women who are in a state of extreme emotional stress. They have been forced to turn away women who are referred from psychiatric hospitals, sometimes because they are already overcrowded. 23 of the refuges turned away 1,413 women in the year from June 1980 to May 1981. Of these, 217 (15.3%) were not accommodated for reasons such as drug, alcohol and emotional stress problems (see diagram 5 in the chapter Reasons for Existence). Many of this group were referred directly from psychiatric hospitals.

Since 19 September 1978,[3] Women's Refuges have been campaigning for government and public recognition for the need for hostel type accommodation for women who were "subject to chronic psychiatric illness or who were intellectually handicapped." One refuge stated, in the submission on "Women in Limbo", that they have approximately 18% of residents with a chronic psychiatric illness and 15% who are intellectually handicapped. Letters and delegations to Ministers have been unsuccessful. By November 1981 there was no commitment from the Health Commission, which bears primary responsibility for women with psychiatric/severe emotional problems.

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3. See "Women in Limbo" - framework for submission (Appendix G).

Refuges have begun to realise that of equal importance is the establishment of a "special needs" refuge for such women. As was commented on in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981, p.141) "it is apparent that traditional services are not necessarily meeting the needs of those women whose emotional crisis stems from their social and economic environment." The Refuge Movement (according to discussions, management questionnaires and the 1980 conference at Coffs Harbour) recognises the need for a special Women's Refuge for women suffering from extreme emotional distress.

The Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981) continues with a brief description of "one group which has developed a proposal to help these women. This collective want to provide emergency and short term accommodation for 10 women (with or without children) experiencing emotional breakdown. Within a non-institutionalised environment, help will be given to women who wish to break cycles of emotional crisis, drug and alcohol dependency and to develop self supporting coping skills." The emphasis in this situation would be encouraging women who experience "madness" to find the healing within themselves - on building self-esteem and independence rather than perpetuating passivity and dependence.[4]

The Task Force recommends that this refuge be funded under the Women's Refuge programme. This evaluation endorses that recommendation, and suggests that this should be done as soon as possible and without funding loss to any existing refuge.

RECOMMENDATION:

R.36 That a refuge for women with severe emotional problems be funded, immediately, without funding loss to any existing refuge.

R.37 That two pilot projects be funded to house women who are subject to chronic psychiatric illness and women who are intellectually handicapped, as illustrated in the "Women in Limbo" submission, and that the Departments of Health and Youth and Community Services jointly develop policies for the establishment and staffing of alternate means of care for these groups of women.

R.38 That more research be undertaken into the relationship between emotional breakdown and domestic crisis, and that the criteria for admission to psychiatric centres be reviewed.

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4. The Louisa Lawson House Collective has obtained premises, through the Emergency Accommodation Unit, at 112 West Botany Street, Arncliffe (phone 59 4251). At present they are existing without funding, forced to rely on voluntary donations of time, energy and materials. They offer classes in relaxation, self-help therapies and support groups. They also anticipate offering opportunities for acupuncture treatment and yoga.

CHAPTER TEN

WIDER ISSUES THAT HAVE BECOME EVIDENT THROUGH THE EXISTENCE OF THE WOMEN'S REFUGE MOVEMENT



Since Women's Refuges have been operating, refuge workers have become increasingly aware of the inability of the community at large to offer support to women and children who have suffered from domestic violence, to single parent families and to women, with or without children, who have neither accommodation nor money.

The wider issues that have become obvious to refuge workers fall roughly into two categories:

(A) Those which effect women and children when they leave the refuge, and which became noticeable soon after the establishment of Women's Refuges. They include:

(i) Housing problems;
(ii) Inadequacies in the legal system to protect women from further violence;
(iii) Financial difficulties;
(iv) Lack of employment opportunities;
(v) Inadequate child care facilities;
(vi) Lack of community resources and subsequent isolation of women with children.

(B) Those which have been highlighted through the existence of women's refuges, and are indications of the extent of the problems of our society at large. In many cases refuges were not set up to cope with such problems, but have been forced to because of lack of adequate facilities in the community. Women seeking support from refuges include:

(i) Women with drug or alcohol problems;
(ii) Women and children visiting their husband/boyfriend/ relative in prison;
(iii) Women and/or children suffering from sexual abuse;
(iv) Women and children with health problems.

Each refuge management was asked:

"What wider issues have become evident by the existence of your refuge?"

Since this was a very open ended question the responses varied a great deal. The following is a broad summary of multiple responses.

WIDER ISSUE	No. of Refuges (n=36)
1. Need for low income housing	32
2. Inadequacies of pensions/benefits	21
3. Inadequate public transport	20
4. Inadequate child care facilities	19
5. Inadequate community resources for women	16
6. Need for more contraceptive information e.g. F.P.A. Clinics	12

7.	Lack of back up for women with psychiatric problems	11
8.	Inadequate legal backup for women with domestic violence and/or custody problems	10
9.	General oppression of women and children	9
10.	Inadequate services for women with drug and alcohol problems	7
11.	Sexual abuse of women and children	7
12.	Child abuse	6
13.	Problems refuge workers and residents have dealing with Government departments	6
14.	High unemployment	5

Some of the same issues are also revealed in the responses of ex-residents to the question:

> "What are the main problems you have faced since leaving the refuge?"

The following is a summary of responses. Women were able to include more than one response.

Problems		No. of women (n=259)
1.	Financial	152
2.	Loneliness	133
3.	Poor transport	84
4.	Lack of child care	61
5.	Ongoing harassment from husband/boyfriend	45
6.	Housing	39
7.	Not ready to live alone	38
8.	Problems sharing accommodation	21

SECTION A

(i) HOUSING

Women and children who come to refuges know that they can only be offered short term emergency accommodation. Whether they have come from a violent domestic situation or have been forced to leave their home for other reasons most will need secure long-term housing, within their financial means, after they leave a refuge. It is the most difficult problem to be solved in terms of starting a new life. In many instances unsatisfactory housing forces women and children to return to an intolerable domestic situation, or to the refuge, where the whole process begins again. The housing situation, which is worsening rapidly due to economic recession and poor town planning, has destroyed the attempts of many women to take some control over their lives. It is this aspect of refuge work which most frustrates workers in Women's Refuges. Whether women move into privately rented accommodation or Housing Commission homes there are difficulties. The evaluation looked at these two areas of housing, examined why they are problematic and has made recommendations aimed at improving the situation for women and children leaving refuges. Refuge workers have already tried to raise public awareness about these issues by campaigning for better housing conditions for single women (with or without children).

> "A woman leaves a bad situation to come to the refuge, she then applies for a pension which is inadequate, moves into a house which is too dear (but she has no choice because Housing Commission waiting list is 2 years) and is stuck out in the middle of never never. So again it's a bandaid job." (Comment from a worker's questionnaire at a refuge in the west of N.S.W.).

> "In our area, as in most, the need for low cost housing is really highlighted by our sometimes fruitless attempts to get our residents housed within their means - so that they have got a choice regarding their own and their children's futures; and are not driven, by lack of housing and money, to return to their often impossible former positions." (Comment from a worker in the New England area of N.S.W.).

> "The waiting list with the Housing Commission is approximately 2 years. Low cost accommodation is almost NIL. This forces women to go back to their original problems" (from a worker in a refuge in the Central Coast area.)

> "Housing is especially a problem; women go to live with 'mum' or a relative or back to a violent husband; all of which may end in shelter at the refuge again. Women are demoralised by lack of self-sufficiency." (This was written by a worker at a South West Area refuge).

> "The cost of housing is so high I have sought housekeeping in return for rent situations, but both were disastrous. Now I am back in a rented flat - leaving very little money out of my pension to try to regain my former lifestyle." (This was written, in a woman's questionnaire, by an ex-resident of a refuge in the far north coast of N.S.W.).

According to the statistics provided by 32 of the refuges, 19.4% of women and children who stay at refuges return to an unchanged situation (see Table 1). 17.8% find accommodation on the private rental market (excluding caravans) and 15.2% gain Housing Commission houses or flats. The remainder move into a variety of accommodation situations including, returning to the same situation but with changed conditions, e.g. "improved" domestic relationship or the husband having moved out; moving in with relatives or friends; moving to another refuge or a refuge halfway house (explained below). 16.5% were recorded as having moved to an unknown address, but this included hospital and psychiatric referrals, live in jobs and women who had moved away from the area.

Table 1 Accommodation when women leave a refuge. (Based on statistics from 32 refuges)

Accommodation	No. of women	Percentage
1. Unknown	788	16.5
2. Housing Commission	724	15.2
3. Private Rental	852	17.8
4. Caravan	101	2.1
5. Friend/Relative	388	8.4
6. Halfway house	60	1.2
7. Another refuge	231	6.9
8. Unchanged situation	929	19.4
9. Changed situation	461	8.7
10. Husband/boyfriend moved out.	182	3.8
TOTAL	4,771	100.0

The sample of 259 ex-residents interviewed during this evaluation showed a higher percentage of private rental housing (42.4%) and Housing Commission housing (24.3%) than the refuge statistics indicated. This would be because the ex-residents who filled in questionnaires would have been easier to contact, due to a stable housing situation. See Table 2 for details of accommodation for this sample.

Table 2 Accommodation of sample of 259 ex-residents.

Accommodation	No. of women	Percentage
1. Unchanged situation	22	8.49
2. No husband but same house	17	6.36
3. Rented house/flat	110	42.4
4. Housing Commission	63	24.3
5. Shared flat/house	16	6.7
6. Halfway House	11	4.27
7. Another refuge	7	2.70
8. Hospital	1	0.38
9. Caravan	10	3.63
10. Other (including live-in situations, squatting)	2	0.77
TOTAL	259	100.0

1. Private Rental Market:

In terms of housing opportunities, women who come to refuges are severely disadvantaged on the open market. The availability of houses or flats is diminishing while rents are rising astronomically.(1) The same discrimination against lone women, with or without children, exists as did before refuges were established. Furthermore, women who are on pensions or benefits are in the lowest income bracket, yet are forced to pay a large portion of that income for the worst accommodation on the market.

As one ex-resident from a Western Suburbs refuge wrote:

> "I live in a relic house over 100 years old and in the throes of being condemned. The rent is $50 per week, plus injuries from falling through floors and damage from leaks."

During the time a woman stays at a refuge she needs to save approximately $500 for bond, rent in advance and gas and electricity deposits. Since many women and their children arrive at refuges with no money and only the clothes they are wearing, they also need to save for equipping themselves to live in their new home. They may receive donations of clothing and bedclothing from the refuge, St. Vincent de Paul, Smith Family and others. They may even receive donations of furniture as well. However, though these donations are extremely helpful, they rarely cover everything and the outlay for electrical appliances, kitchen utensils, cleaning necessities, floor coverings is often way beyond the means of most refuge ex-residents.

Refuges have found that real estate agents and landlords are reluctant to rent premises to women who are receiving pensions or benefits because they do not consider this to be an adequate, therefore reliable, income. The reverse is often true. Although pensions/benefits are below the poverty line they are a steady income. Thus, despite the fact that most ex-residents are desperate to find suitable housing to ensure a secure environment for their children, agents and landlords still discriminate against lone women with children.

The main reasons given for this discrimination are that there is no male "breadwinner" and that children "damage property" and increase the noise level. The latter especially applies to flats and units where neighbours are in close proximity and soundproofing of walls is inadequate. It is unfair that women should have to suffer rejection on the private rental market, or sub-standard accommodation, because of prejudices beyond their control. For example, a woman who is now renting for the first time in her own name seldom has references or proof of identity.

One ex-resident from the far north coast wrote of her experiences:

> "I searched for a house for 7 weeks. This was the only house I could find to rent. No-one would rent a house to me because I was a single mother."

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(1). See Sydney Morning Herald, "Hard times coming for renters", April 3rd, 1982.

An inner city resident stated, after looking for a house:

> "I have four kids and no landlord wants you."

An ex-resident from the New England area wrote:

> "Agents and owners won't let houses to single women with children and we can't afford the astronomical rentals."

An aboriginal woman who was staying in a refuge on the far north coast wrote in her questionnaire:

> "I can't get housing because of racial discrimination."

A worker from the Riverina wrote of the frustration of "seeing the women's faces when they come back after going after a house or flat, only to be told NO CHILDREN."

(a) Effect on Length of Stay

The difficulty of finding housing on the private rental market, especially in country areas where Housing Commission waiting times are 2-5 years, often means women are forced to stay for longer periods at refuges.

A worker from a central coast refuge wrote in her questionnaire that:

> "housing is hard to get and pensions aren't enough to cover high rents. Women stay longer at the refuge and get irritable and downhearted."

A western suburbs worker also stated that:

> "housing is particularly frustrating - there's a shortage in the area anyway and real estate agents attitudes don't help. The cost of bonds and weekly rents means our length of stay is increasing and so are the numbers of people we have to turn away."

Alternatively women return again and again to refuges, because of unsuitable accommodation situations. As one worker from a central coast refuge wrote, the least satisfying aspect of refuge work for her was:

> "seeing people having to return a number of times because of accommodation problems etc., high cost of rent or unavailability of suitable housing."

Of the 110 ex-residents in our sample who were renting a house or flat on the private market (see table 2), 39 (35%) complained that one of their main problems since leaving the refuge was an unsuitable place to live.

(b) Alternatives e.g. Shared Accommodation:

While some assistance with bonds and moving costs is available through local departments of Youth and Community Services, refuges have found that the availability of these moneys depends very much on the attitudes of the staff in the local office. (The chapter on "Community Groups" will look at the relationship between refuges and government departments in more detail).

There is no other financial assistance available to lone women with children renting on the private market, although it has been suggested that interest which accumulates on moneys lodged with the Rental Bond Board could be used to assist women renting in the private sector.

The only alternative for women who cannot afford high rents are either squatting, which is fraught with insecurity and danger, or sharing accommodation. Refuge workers try to encourage ex-residents to share houses and flats. This is not only for the financial benefits but because women living together can be supportive of each other and share child care, cooking. However, if the women don't know each other well, or the children are not compatible, sharing can be very difficult.

A resident of an inner city refuge described her feelings about sharing in a taped interview:

> "I enjoy having people close, but not too close. I'm a bit of a loner I suppose. I have thought about living with a woman I met here (at the refuge) because bonds cost so much. We both know it's not going to be a permanent accommodation situation. If I had enough money I'd move into my own place."

An ex-resident of a coastal refuge described her shared living situation:

> "The woman I live with was at the refuge when I was there. She was on a Special Benefit and couldn't afford to get a flat on her own. Neither could I, but I did manage to get a job. So we decided to get a flat together. It's working out really well, though we knew it was only temporary because she was having a baby...."

Communal living is not a familiar experience in our society. Refuge workers have found that not only is it difficult for residents to adapt to communal living at the refuge, especially as most are in a state of crisis, but also in more long term situations when women leave the refuge. However, the women generally appreciate the extra support and financial benefits of sharing accommodation.

2. Housing Commission:

"The prime objective of the Housing Commission of N.S.W. is to provide homes for needy families in the low to moderate income groups".(2)

The standard of Housing Commission housing is reasonably high and, to date, rentals are 80% of the market value. Further subsidies are available according to income and, in principle, this never exceeds 1/5 of one's income. The evaluation considers that this situation should continue for Housing Commission policy to be consistent with the above objective.

Eligibility of applicants for Commission homes is based on the following:

(i) Applicants must have a need for improved accommodation;

(ii) be suitable potential tenants; and

(iii) lack the resources to solve their need from other sources.

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(2). Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981), Chapter 7.

Most women staying in refuges are eligible for Housing Commission accommodation though waiting periods can be from 2 - 5 years. Refuges have sometimes found that women are deemed ineligible for reasons beyond their control. For example, a resident in an inner city refuge explained:

> "I don't qualify for Housing Commission because I have some property, which is no good to me because my husband owns it too and he won't sell. It's where my parents live, so I can't put them on the street."

Women staying in refuges can also apply for out of priority housing through the Special Allocations Committee of the Housing Commission. It has taken some time, and numerous delegations of refuge workers, for the Commission to recognise that many refuge residents are in need of out of priority housing. In the year from June 1980 - May 1981, 15.2% of women accommodated in 32 refuges in N.S.W. were housed by the Housing Commission. Again the figure is higher from the sample of ex-residents, 24.3%, because the sample was biased toward those who were easiest to contact, and Housing Commission accommodation is relatively stable. (See Tables 1 and 2). For that same year the total figure for applications for out of turn housing (including refuges and crisis centres) was 270, from which 179 (66%) were approved.(3)

Refuges in country areas have long been aware that out of turn housing is a rarity for women staying at their refuges. Although there are committees to which applications for out of turn housing can be made in country areas, there seems to be little recognition of the plight of a single woman and her children, including those who are victims of domestic violence.

Refuge workers have also observed that when an application is refused unjustly it is possible to appeal against this decision. The evaluation endorses the recommendations in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981) concerning out of turn housing which call for changes in the structure of the committees and the appeals system.

Although refuge workers in Sydney are generally impressed with the increasing numbers of residents who gain out of turn housing, they have become aware of other difficulties which are unable to be ignored. The majority of allocations are to western suburbs areas such as Mt. Druitt, Penrith, Campbelltown and allocations to the inner city are minimal. For residents of inner city refuges, who have built up a support network of friends at the refuge, being allocated a home in the western suburbs means isolation and loneliness. Very few ex-residents can afford to make the long trip back to the refuge even for a visit.

To complicate matters, many of the newer Housing Commission estates are without reasonable transport facilities, shops are literally miles away and childcare and health/welfare facilities are poor or non existent. An ex-resident of one inner city refuge explained:

> "I have to catch a bus to even go and buy a stamp. With Jenny and Billy it takes hours to get anywhere, doing the shopping is a long slow process. It takes us all day."

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(3). Report of the Special Allocations Committee for the 12 months ending 30 June 81.

The Housing Commission, in some areas, is attempting to alleviate this situation by providing houses for resource/childcare centres. It is up to the residents and groups in the area to organise the staffing through other funding bodies. For women who have little confidence, skills or experience in such activities this can be a daunting prospect.

Refuge workers, for some time, have recognised the need to give extra support to women and children who move into distant Housing Commission areas, but find it extremely difficult because of distance and lack of staff for follow up.

One inner city refuge worker wrote that a frustration in her work was that it is:

> "hard to maintain any sort of support for women and kids who use the refuge if they move to Campbelltown or some other place that's far away."

For another it is frustrating to:

> "offer a temporary supportive environment to women but not resolve the environmental and societal pressures which they move back into, e.g. moving into a Housing Commission home and feeling isolated and depressed, and struggling economically and facing community and bureaucratic attitudes which denigrate women as single mothers."

Thus, despite the benefits of a higher standard of housing and lower rents than would be available to them on the private market, ex-residents are sometimes so isolated and lonely or unable to cope that they leave Housing Commission accommodation to return to a refuge or sub-standard private housing nearer to the refuge and other supports. It is essential that the government provides adequate community facilities in new Housing Commission areas, from the beginning. It is also essential that, wherever possible, inner city refuge residents be allocated housing closer to the refuge support network. Furthermore, refuges should be funded adequately to enable them to provide the ongoing support women need when they move to isolated areas.

The Housing Commission has made several attempts to improve this situation - (i) joint tenancy, (ii) the Emergency Accommodation Unit, (iii) halfway housing.

(i) Joint Tenancy

It is possible for two un-related women and their children to share a Housing Commission house on a short term or long term basis. They may share while one woman is waiting for her allocation to come through or over a longer period of time. Both women must be eligible for Housing Commission housing and both contribute rent.

Refuge workers have had to lobby for some time for this policy to be accepted by the Housing Commission and a pamphlet on joint tenancy was produced by the Housing Commission. The evaluation endorses the recommendations about joint tenancy in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981, p. 121).

(ii) Emergency Accommodation Unit

An interdepartmental task force prepared a report on medium term accommodation in 1980. They recommended the establishment of an Emergency Accommodation Unit to provide crisis and medium term accommodation to victims of domestic violence as well

as other people in need of crisis accommodation (e.g. young homeless people). The buildings to be made available for this purpose were government surplus properties. It was found that there were many unused government buildings which could be used for crisis and medium term accommodation. An Emergency Accommodation Unit was established in the Housing Commission of N.S.W. in 1981.

(iii) Halfway Housing

Refuges have been lobbying the Housing Commission for a number of years to provide halfway houses. As a result of this action the Emergency Accommodation Unit have made available a number of properties to be used by refuges for this purpose. Refuges considered that there was a need to provide longer term accommodation for women and children leaving the refuge. By providing medium term accommodation the refuge would still be available as a support system to women and children. The women using halfway houses are usually waiting for Housing Commission houses and while living in the refuge halfway house have the opportunity to become more established financially, are able to experience communal living and still have close access to the resources of the refuge.

Halfway houses are also used by women who want to rent a house on the private rental market but do not, after their time at the refuge, have the necessary capital. The time at the halfway house allows a woman to save more money and experience having to budget. Another of the advantages of halfway housing is for women who want to live communally, either in a joint tenancy with the Housing Commission or in a house rented on the private market, to experience it. Women can for a time live communally in the halfway house with their children and the refuge can assist with any problems.

Most refuges, although they agree in principle with halfway housing as a medium term solution to a woman's housing problem, have difficulty providing this service. A refuge in the western suburbs has documented these difficulties for inclusion in this report. (See Appendix H)

The problems fall into five categories:

(1) High turnover of residents

(2) The gap in rent payments when someone leaves the halfway house

(3) Lack of staff to cover the administration of the halfway house

(4) Neighbours

(5) Responsibility for maintenance and repairs with no subsequent funding for this purpose.

3. Chronic Homelessness

Single women on low incomes who have never had the opportunity to settle into low rental, reasonable accommodation with security of tenure, can become chronically homeless. For some this is directly a result of domestic violence or domestic problems. For others it is the result of years of institutionalisation and subsequent discrimination by landlords. Women without children are only eligible for Housing Commission accommodation if they are on invalid or aged pensions.

Many chronically homeless women who come to refuges spend their lives wandering the streets, sleeping in hostels and/or parks at night. No longer is this situation applicable to older women only, there are also many younger women who could also be regarded as chronically homeless.

Thirty one refuges in this state recorded in their management questionnaires that they had had chronically homeless women referred to them. Twenty three of those refuges felt that they were able to cater for these women, and then only in the short term. When these women leave refuges there is still very little suitable accommodation for them, though refuge workers do attempt to help the women find housing.

One refuge felt that it was able to refer chronically homeless women to adéquate accommodation, and another could refer women to a "rehabilitation unit".

Ten refuges stated that there needs to be more accommodation for chronically homeless women. Two refuges specified that there is a need for old people's accommodation, at reasonable rental, in their area. One suggested suitable employment was needed for women who were unable to survive on benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.39 That there be an end to discrimination, by Real Estate Agents and landlords, against single women (with or without children) seeking accommodation on the open market. This means the continued existence of the Anti-Discrimination Board and greater public awareness of the situation.

R.40 That a proportion of the interest moneys from the Rental Bond Board be used to assist women with rental rebates.

R.41 That the Department of Youth and Community Services guarantee "resettlement grants" (of up to $400, as recommended by the N.S.W. Domestic Task Force Report 1981, pg 109) to women leaving refuges on low incomes whether or not they have children.

R.42 That the Housing Commission of N.S.W. continues to recognise that most women in refuges are in need of out of turn housing, and that this recognition be extended to country areas.

R.43 That the relevant government departments recognise and act upon the need in new housing areas, for adequate shopping, transport, child care and community facilities.

R.29 That women from refuges be allocated Housing Commission housing close to their support systems.

R.44 That the Housing Commission continues its present policy concerning rental levels, considering the ever rising cost of living.

R.45 That the State government recognise the need for public housing for women (with or without children) who have become chronically homeless because of poor accommodation opportunities.

R.46 That refuges develop a firm policy on the issue of halfway housing and they approach relevant agencies to implement this policy.

R.47 That the Housing Commission and other relevant government departments, act upon the recommendations in the "Housing Section" of the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981).

(ii) LEGAL ISSUES

The legal system has been found to be an inadequate service for women and children who have been assaulted by the man with whom they were living.(4)

Through the existence of Women's Refuges there is a growing awareness, among refuge workers, of the inadequacy of the legal system to "protect" women who have been victims of domestic violence from further assault and harassment. The legal system offers no effective protection to women after they leave a refuge, either in their new homes or when they have to deliver children to a violent man, if he has legal access.

The evaluation briefly examined these aspects of the legal system and, through discussions with refuge workers and residents, the effects they have on women and children using refuges.

1. Assault

A woman who has been assaulted by her husband or boyfriend has the choice of either prosecuting him herself, and thus bearing the responsibility and costs, or convincing the police that "beyond reasonable doubt" an assault was committed. The police will generally not charge a man with assault unless they witness it or see the woman shortly after the assault and she is physically injured.

If the man is arrested he can be released on bail within a few hours, even if it is obvious that he will return and harass the woman. If he is not arrested the woman is left to cope with the situation as best she can. All too often police disregard phone calls from women who are being beaten. If they do respond they can refuse to enter the home because of the uncertainty of their right of entry - a matter which should be clarified by the lawmaking process.

The Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981), found that the police were rated as one of the least useful community services that women turn to for help after an assault. They were rated useful by only 27% of the women who had approached them.

The report concludes that "some of the reasons for such a poor measure of satisfaction with the police are possibly related to police unwillingness to intervene in domestic matters and their lack of training in this area".(5)

The report recommends that changes are necessary within the law to allow police the right of entry into a home where a domestic assault has occurred. However, it is essential that any changes do not infringe on civil liberties. Another set of recommendations relate to the education of police and other legal staff in issues relevant to domestic violence. This evaluation has concluded that police attitudes toward victims of domestic violence must change and that it is because of these attitudes that such victims receive little satisfaction when they contact the police.

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(4). See chapter "Background to the Reasons for the Existence of Women's Refuges".

(5). Domestic Violence Task Force Report, 1981, "Domestic Violence - A Survey of Attitudes Towards Available Services," p.31.

The Women's Refuge Movement is at present working toward raising public awareness about matters arising from the Task Force Report. It is particularly concerned with the fact that domestic assault is not treated by police as is any other criminal assault, and that a violent man should not be allowed bail if it is suspected that he will return and harass the woman.

2. Fear of Further Assault

If a woman fears further violence and harassment from a man, either while she is at a refuge or after she leaves, she can undertake a criminal action or a family law action. The latter is only available to married women.

The criminal action is called "apprehended violence" (Section 547 Crimes Act). The woman must take out a summons for apprehended violence through the Chamber Magistrate at the local Court of Petty Sessions. It is not necessary to prove an actual assault, but violence over a period of time or threats of violence. If the magistrate finds that there is apprehended violence then the man is required to enter into a bond (recognisance), to keep the peace for up to six months. If the man will not enter that bond, he can be jailed for up to three months.

If the woman is threatened by the man at the address stated, then she must contact the police and prove the breach "beyond reasonable doubt". The police then initiate a summons and charge the man with breaching the bond. If this is proven then the magistrate will require that the amount of the bond be forfeited. A man does not face imprisonment for breach of this bond unless it was specifically stated in the terms of the bond.

The police often will only take action if a further assault has been committed or if they see the man breach the bond themselves.

The family law action is in the form of an injunction to restrain the husband from assaulting, molesting or interfering with the woman or her children (Section 114 Family Law Act). Any application for an injunction must be accompanied by an affidavit by the woman setting out the reasons why she needs it.

The husband must agree to the injunction being issued for there to be no hearing. If he contests the application there will be a hearing and the woman must prove on the balance of probabilities the allegations of violence or threats. Hearings take time and the length of time depends on many matters which are out of the control of the parties to the proceedings, including the overloaded courts which in most areas are understaffed with insufficient financial resources within the community to cope with the increased volume of litigation. Meanwhile, the husband is at liberty to harass the woman.

If the husband breaches the terms of the injunction, the woman can call the police. She must produce a copy of the order and then the police will attempt to deter the man. They choose how to do this, which may mean they instruct the man to go away. In this regard the problem lies with the inadequate legal remedies available for the protection of women and the lack of directives and clarification as to the rights and powers of police to cope with situations involving domestic violence. There is no power of immediate arrest, so if the

matter goes any further it is up to the woman to initiate action by applying to the court. If she wants a solicitor, she must employ one herself. The husband is dealt with for contempt and if this is proven the Court can then fine him up to $1,000; imprison him for any period; suspend punishment; punish on terms or require that the husband enter a "good behavior bond". Imprisonment on the first breach of the injunction is most unusual. The husband is more likely to be reprimanded and referred to counselling.(6)

Refuge workers have observed that, in practice, some police do not respond seriously to a woman who fears ongoing harassment or violence from a man. When a woman has a family law injunction, NSW police are likely not to intervene because it is a Federal matter and "should be dealt with by Federal police". This is used as an excuse by State police when, if an assault has occurred, they have a duty to proceed under the provisions of criminal law. Even while women are resident at a refuge, police have been known to give the address of the refuge to violent husbands/boyfriends.

Many women who have left a violent man live in constant fear that he will find them and further assault them. This fear is somewhat alleviated while the women are at a refuge because of the support and security a refuge offers. However, when the women move into their new homes (or the marital home, if the family law Court so decides), they are alone and vulnerable. The complexities of the legal system are overawing for most women and ineffective in matters of domestic violence, sometimes due to police attitudes. This leaves a "battered woman" in a situation where the only safe place for her and her children is a refuge. Unfortunately, refuges cannot offer long term accommodation and, due to inadequate funding, nor can they offer the amount of ongoing support that these women need.

3. Custody of Children

Women who fear further violence from their husband or boyfriend often also fear that he will try and take the children. Many of them apply for an injunction and for custody at the same time.

a) Under the Family Law Act (1976), until an application for custody comes before the court it is presumed that both parents have joint custody, while the parent with day to day control is said to have "care and control" of the child. Due to fear of the possibility of the parent without "care and control" attempting to kidnap the child, most parents with care and control will, at some stage, make an application for sole custody, in order to protect the status quo. The decision as to who gains care and control is in the hands of the judge. The decision is based upon evidence from solicitors representing both parents and reports from court counsellors, who interview the parents and children in different group combinations (e.g., children alone, with one parent). The decision is theoretically made in the best interests of the children. Access may be left to the parents to work out ("reasonable access") or, if there is threat of violence or abduction,

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(6). Women's Advisors Conference on Domestic Violence: Conference Papers, November 8 & 9, 1979, p.5.

the Court may define the hours and place of access. This situation is unsatisfactory because of the continuing fear of assault from the man on the occasions when access is exercised. The Family Court is very reluctant to take responsibility for supervising access, as are the police or community groups. Refuge workers have found themselves with the responsibility of accompanying women to access situations because the women are so afraid. Some refuge workers have been assaulted by the irate husband themselves on such occasions. One worker from an inner city refuge recalls her most stressful work experience:-

> "We arranged for me to do access because she didn't want to see her husband (he had been violent). He agreed to let me drop the child off and pick him up again at 5p.m. Then when I went back at 5 the father refused to hand him over. Next thing the police were there (they - the father and his sister - had rung up and said we were outside banging on the door and trying to break in). The cops asked me: 'Are you the child's mother?' I said "no" but explained that I had her permission to pick up the child and that it was pre-arranged. The police said the child had to be handed over to the mother. Then they asked me for my name and address. I wouldn't give it because the father and his sister were standing there and would remember it. So they put me in the paddy waggon and took me to the police station. They charged me with "entering enclosed lands without permission." (From an interview).

Such experiences have led refuge workers to the conclusion that "men who have been violent to their families should not have access to their children following separation".(7) The evaluation endorses recommendations made in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981) concerning the establishment of "Access Centres", though these would not solve the problem if the mother of the children has to take them to the centre.

The Court procedure is extremely stressful for both the parents, especially for the woman who fears the possible retaliation of her husband if she gains care and control. Threats from husbands over this issue include death threats. These obviously cannot be taken lightly as the murder of Family Law Court judges attests - husbands who lose in Court may take it out on the wife or the person they perceive is responsible for their loss of children. Custody cases reduce children to property and, traditionally, men have "owned" their wife and children.

One country refuge worker commented on custody hearings:

> "It's like the old-style divorce case - both parents try to discredit the other and prove that <u>they</u> are the best parent. After a woman has been through years of beatings, it is too much for her to suffer another emotional trauma in court."

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(7). Women's Refuge Newsletter Vol.1, No.4, 1982, p.3.

b) De facto situations

Custody of an exnuptial child is governed by State laws and the State Courts. Parents of an exnuptial child can make application for custody either in a Court of Petty Sessions or in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court.

Traditionally, the mother of an exnuptial child has been regarded by the Courts as having a greater claim to the custody of the child than the father. Since 1976, the father has a right to custody. Again, the law regards the child's welfare as the paramount consideration. However, there are no family counsellors available to make comprehensive reports on those concerned - though a report may be ordered from the Department of Youth and Community Services or other bodies. It is unfortunate if these reports tend to focus on material conditions which, especially if she is existing on a pension, is likely to disadvantage the woman.

Whereas, under the Family Law Act, a wife who is required to stay at home to care for children is entitled to maintenance for the children and herself, this is not so in a de facto separation. The father of an exnuptial child must pay maintenance for the child, unless he can disprove paternity, but is only required to pay maintenance for the woman two months before and three months after the birth of a child.

4. Property

A woman leaving a de facto situation does not have the same rights to property as a woman leaving a marriage situation. She must prove financial contribution, unless property is owned jointly. Under the Family Law Act a woman's contribution of looking after the family is considered equal to a man's financial contribution.

A woman leaving a marriage must be divorced (and this takes twelve months), before the property can be settled through the court system. It can be settled by mutual agreement between the two parties and their solicitors, prior to divorce. She may have to lodge a caveat at the Registrar General's Office to prevent her husband from selling the property.

A woman leaving a de facto relationship should have the same property rights as a woman leaving a marriage.

5. Legal Aid

Unless a woman is on a Commonwealth pension or benefit and is, thus, entitled to aid from the Australian Legal Aid Office, she is not entitled to legal aid for criminal actions.

Any married woman is entitled to legal aid for an action (other than an application for dissolution of marriage) under the Family Law Act, provided that she passes the means test. This again discriminates against women leaving de facto husbands.

Refuge workers have sometimes found the legal profession to be remarkably unsympathetic to women who are fleeing domestic violence. However, other refuges have found very sympathetic solicitors who will do all that they can to help such women and children.

6. Effects on refuge workers and residents

Obviously, if one resident is anxious about her violent husband/boyfriend finding her at the refuge , it will increase the tension at the refuge. If she has to go to Court or to give access of children to their father, and is afraid, she will need someone to accompany her. Refuge workers generally consider this a part of their role. As mentioned above, this can be dangerous for the worker as well as the woman.

In the majority of country areas refuge residents and workers have to travel long distances to attend Family Law Court hearings.

Women who use the legal system to try and protect themselves and their children, or to gain custody of their children, generally find the process intimidating, as well as unsatisfactory. One western suburbs refuge ex-resident explained:

> "Every time he has access you have to see him. That's when he gets to you. Last time he pretended to be drunk - that made me mad. I've got 3 kids. Every fortnight he gets access. He wants custody. The solicitor said it's going to be hard going and I don't know if I can cope with counselling, going to Court. Courts are so negative. It's made me start thinking about giving up my kids.....I've been left for seven months." (From an interview)

Children suffer in the process. Some suffer anxiety because of the violence their mother fears when they are exchanged with the father. Others simply cannot cope with the separation, no matter how their father relates to their mother.

In a taped interview, a worker from an inner city refuge described how she felt about Court proceedings in general:

> "In Court, the people are really powerless - it's so removed from them. The lawyers are speaking for them and they don't even know them. The judge makes the decision for them based on reports from a counsellor who doesn't really know them.
>
> .....If you've got a clever lawyer you win - and that depends on how much money you can pay. It also depends on how the judge likes the lawyer.
>
> .....Cultural things are really lost in a courtroom. The lawyers, judges, barristers are generally all anglo-saxon and male."

Another worker stated that one thing that frustrates her work with the women is:

> "Gaining of Court Orders (such as Restraining Orders and access to children), which are ineffective when police won't act on them or offer support."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.48 That the recommendations in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981) concerning police practices, "cooling off" period in cases of domestic assault and access to children be seriously considered by the relevant legal and other bodies.

R.49 That the legal profession evaluate its attitudes to domestic violence.

R.50 That the same rights apply to de facto relationships as apply to legal marriages.

R.51 That "Access Centres" be established to enable women to exchange children with their father in relative safety.

(iii) FINANCIAL PROBLEMS - INADEQUACY OF PENSIONS/BENEFITS

Many women and children arrive at refuges with no money and few possessions (30% of the evaluation sample stated they had no money), especially if they have left a domestic violence situation in haste. Refuge workers generally assist women to apply for a pension or benefit, whichever is suitable, even if this is a temporary measure before the women attempt to gain employment.

Most women who come to refuges have children and are thus entitled to Supporting Parent's Benefit. The basic rate for this benefit is $148.30 per fortnight plus $20.00 per child. There is a further $16.00 per fortnight available for children under 6 years, known as a "guardian allowance." Rent allowance of up to $16.00 per fortnight is also available. However, this means a lone woman with one child is entitled to a maximum of $200 per fortnight, considerably less than the basic wage.

When housing costs, transport and food costs are taken into account, this leaves lone women with children very little money for anything else. Even buying clothing can be a problem. Refuges and charity groups can assist with clothing and some furniture donations. Youth and Community Services offers some women a once off "resettlement grant" when a new house is being set up, though in practice this is rarely enough to cover bond costs. (See "Housing" section, this chapter).

However, such assistance does not solve the financial problems for lone women trying to support children, in a time of economic crisis in the community at large. Twenty one refuges specifically mentioned inadequate pensions/benefits as an issue that has become obvious since the establishment of their refuge. This includes women without children who are living on the $116.20 per fortnight available to the unemployed.

152 of the 259 ex-residents interviewed during the evaluation recorded that they had experienced financial difficulties since leaving the refuge.

> In the words of an ex-resident of a north coast refuge:
> "By the time you pay rent and buy food for yourself and the kids there's nothing left."

Refuge workers have noticed that many ex-residents live in poverty. A worker from the western suburbs of Sydney wrote.

> "How do you shovel people out into a community which doesn't give a damn about them, provides insufficient child care and a miserable "pittance" to live on? How do people learn "managing" and "budgetting" skills on a pittance?"

Another worker in a north coast refuge wrote, in her questionnaire:

> "Women are threatened by the lack of money. It makes them scared of independence. It is difficult to achieve independence when living in poverty."

If ex-resident women want to find employment to try and improve their financial position, they are faced with high unemployment, possible lack of skills to earn a decent wage and lack of child care facilities. Many women and children who leave refuges have no option but to remain dependent on State handouts for survival.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.41 That the Department of Youth and Community Services guarantee "resettlement grants" (of up to $400, as recommended in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report, 1981, p.109) to women leaving refuges on low incomes.

R.52 That pensions and benefits available from the Department of Social Security be increased to a realistic level within the present economic climate.

R.53 That until pensions/benefits are raised, recipients be entitled to earn greater amounts of money than they are at present, to bring their weekly income to at least the level of the basic wage.

(iv) UNEMPLOYMENT/EMPLOYMENT

It is well established that there is a high level of unemployment at present and that this affects employment opportunities for all women. Refuge ex-residents who are single parents, are often further disadvantaged by lack of child care facilities in the community. Some lack training/skills relevant to employment because they have had a family at a young age and, have spent most of their working time child rearing.

Those who do find work, so that they can increase their income and release themselves and their children from poverty, are often forced into accepting low wages (though still in excess of pensions) and unrewarding, routine work eg. in factories. This is especially the case for migrant women who are unable to speak much English.

Finding work does not solve an ex-resident's problems. She will probably have to find child care for her children, something which is a limited community resource now in a time of welfare cutbacks.

Ex-resident women without children are also in a difficult situation if they are seeking employment but have few job related skills or opportunities for gaining skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.54 That the Federal government recognises its responsibilities with regard to the rising unemployment rate and act upon this.

R.55 That the Anti-Discrimination Board continues to function, at least at its present funding level, in order to relieve the discrimination against women in employment.

R.56 That the relevant government departments and other bodies offer more retraining courses to women who have few employment opportunities.

R.52 That Unemployment Benfits be raised to ensure a reasonable standard of living.

(v) INADEQUATE CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Women who have decided to live alone and start a new life are not only faced with housing and financial difficulties but also have to care for their children 24 hours a day, alone. While this is an accepted role for women, it is a difficult one, especially if the woman becomes ill.

For many ex-residents of refuges, the only support network or "family" is the refuge, since they may have had to leave their previous situation secretly. This means that, until friendships are established in the new area they move to, they have to take responsibility for their children without assistance from any adult. The majority of women who use refuges have children under 5 years of age (58.4%). This means that if they want a break from their children, eg. to go shopping, visit doctors or even have time to themselves, then they need access to occasional child care or pre-school.

Refuge workers are aware of how difficult it is for women leaving refuges to tap into community child care facilites, which are effectively being cut back year after year as they fail to receive increased funding.(8)

Workers in the refuges wrote about the difficulties women face when trying to find child care:

> "Low cost child care needed. Centres need to be in major isolation areas."
>
> (Western suburbs)

> "Community child care facilties for younger children have improved in the last year or two, but still are far from adequate for the numbers needing the services. On many occasions our time and energy is spent organising other "out of hours" child care to meet needs.
>
> No after school or 24 hour child care in the community except by arrangement with individual families or the Children's Home (usually used as a last resort)."
>
> (Far North Coast)

Some women who use refuges fear that they may lose their children to "Welfare" homes (97/400). This fear is alleviated while they are at the refuge and some women even spoke of how the refuge helped them to realise they were "good mothers" and should not constantly fear having their children taken away by the government.

For example women wrote in their questionnaires of how the refuge experience made them "less afraid" of losing their children.

> "The refuge helps you to gain your independence and realise you can and will be able to support your children."
>
> "The refuge workers assured me that as long as you feed and clothe and look after your children that the welfare doesn't want them and I do all this."

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(8). Child Care in Refuges Report, 1979.

"By letting me know I am a good mother."

"Helped me to have faith in myself as a person who can cope"

"I have gained confidence in my own ability to cope."

However, it is often necessary for single mothers to have a "break" from their children and, at present child care facilities are inadequate, according to the management questionnaires from 19 refuges.

Some of these refuges have attempted to offer occasional care to ex-residents and at times very successfully. This places a lot of extra strain on the refuge and the child care workers, and is not covered in the funding from Office of Child Care ($12,000 per year per refuge). Refuge workers, in some refuges will even take children into their own homes to relieve the mother for short periods. This type of emergency child care is not funded for, apart from a small amount of state government funding in the last few years.

A worker in a western suburbs refuge wrote in her questionnaire:

> "I'm aware of some ex-residents who are "managing" by not eating as well as they should and the child care in the area is hopeless, with child care it has got to the stage where we have offered to take in a few kids."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.57 That the government recognise the need for community child care facilities is far greater than that which is provided, particularly in new growth areas such as Sydney's Western suburbs.

R.14 That Women's Refuges receive an increase in the funding provided by the Office of Child Care, to develop programmes to cope with the child care needs of ex-residents of refuges as well as residents.

(vi) LACK OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SUBSEQUENT LONELINESS/ISOLATION

Women who leave refuge to live alone with their children are in need of ongoing support from the community, as well as refuges. 133 of the 259 ex-residents in the evaluation sample responded that "loneliness" was one of the main problems they had experienced since leaving the refuge.

16 refuges complained of inadequate community resources for women such as Women's Resource Centres, Women's Health Centres, Information Centres, Community Health Centres, Neighbourhood Centres.
20 refuges referred to the inadequacy of public transport, particularly in new growth areas. This information was gained from management questionnaires.

Individual refuge workers wrote of the isolation they have observed that ex-residents experience and how this undermines much of the positive work that has been done at the refuge. For example:

> "The lack of facilities and services, and the difficulty in obtaining them, places stress on many of the women and makes them dependent on the refuge and also apathetic."
>
> (Inner Western Suburbs)

> "Women and children are isolated in little boxes."
>
> (Inner Western Suburbs)

Stressful experiences for some refuge workers included:

> "Seeing women isolated in Housing Commission flats or houses, particularly in areas like Campbelltown."
>
> (Inner City)

"Seeing the women move out to Housing Commission isolation."

(Western Suburbs)

As was explained in the "Shifts in Emphasis" section on "Follow-up", refuges are committed to offering ongoing support to women after they leave the refuge. The funding for follow-up work is inadequate and this places extra strain on the refuge workers, who often do follow-up in unpaid time.

One western suburbs refuge has initiated its own resource for women which, it is hoped, will help alleviate the loneliness and isolation for the ex-residents of refuges who move to that area. This is to be a resource centre for women called the "Wash House" (see "Shifts in Emphasis" for further details). However, this will not overcome problems of poor public transport, lack of public telephones and child care facilities, which are the responsibility of the relevant government departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R.58 That the State government improve public transport facilites in new growth areas.

R.25 That Women's Refuges be funded for adequate follow-up of all ex-residents who need ongoing support.

R.59 That community facilites, such as Information Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Community Health Centres and Women's Resource Centres and Women's Health Centres be funded in new growth areas, and put emphasis on the development of community networks.

SECTION B

(i) WOMEN WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS

Of the thirty six (36) refuges who participated in the evaluation, eleven (11) stated that one of the issues which had become evident since they were set up was the increase in numbers of women who came to the refuge with drug and/or alcohol problems. These eleven (11) refuges found that they could not offer the special care and support needed by these women. A Proclaimed Place for women was set up in 1981 to offer appropriate services for women who had specific problems in this area. There had previously been no facilities to cater for the special needs of women in relation to their drug and/or alcohol addiction. Other Proclaimed Places were in existence but their priority was male alcoholics and only a small percentage of their beds were set aside for women, and then they were only separated from the men by either partitions or curtains.

Even though the Department of Youth and Community Services, by funding A Women's Place, has recognised the special needs of women who have drug and/or alcohol problems, this is currently the only service of its kind in N.S.W. Some Proclaimed Places in country areas of N.S.W. provide beds for women and recognise their needs for privacy by accommodating them in separate rooms, some with their own bathroom and toilet facilities.

As facilities and resources for these women are so few, some refuges are still providing a drug and alcohol accommodation and counselling service, which makes conditions in the refuge at times explosive. One of the main aims of the Women's Refuges in N.S.W. is to provide a safe, secure, supportive environment for women and children in crisis and most refuges have found that having to accommodate women who are drug and/or alcohol dependent, and who often display violent, noisy, aggressive behaviour, increases the tension in the refuge household thus making this aim difficult to achieve.

Refuges are forced to provide accommodation and support for women in these circumstances because there are so few other alternatives for them in the community.

Responses from the main questionnaire to the question "are women with the following special needs referred to your refuge - women with drug and/or alcohol problems?" indicated that 29/36 refuges had women with drug and alcohol problems referred to them. Of those 29 refuges, 19 refuges stated that they provide accommodation for these women but felt that they could not offer appropriate services because of the lack of experienced staff. They explained that these women needed too much individual support, the refuge was too small and that alcohol or drug induced behaviour was frightening for the other women and children who were already facing personal crisis. 10 Refuges referred women with drug and/or alcohol problems on to other services as soon as they were referred to the refuge. These services included the Health Commission's Community Health Centres, other Drug and Alcohol resources in the community, Alcoholics Anonymous or A Women's Place, the only women's refuge in N.S.W. which deals specifically with the needs of women who have drug and alcohol problems. Other referral sources for refuges are hospital and psychiatric hospitals.

Many refuges state that there was nowhere within their immediate community and geographic area to refer women. Country areas in particular made this complaint and demonstrated that their local resources and facilities for women with these problems were nil.

Their only alternatives were to take them into the refuge and "hope for the best". If the behaviour of these women interfered too much with the smooth running of the refuge, then the refuge's only alternatives were to refer them either to the local hospital or psychiatric hospital - very severe action for women who often have no control over their drug/alcohol dependence or addiction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.60 That Youth and Community Services funding levels to existing and planned Proclaimed Places, be increased to provide more than just token beds and facilities for women.

R.61 That more funding be provided for the establishment of special purpose refuges specifically for women with drug and alcohol problems, and that these be run under the same supportive guidelines as Women's Refuges.

R.62 That the funding level of "A Women's Place" be increased to enable realistic wages for workers.

(ii) WOMEN AND CHILDREN VISITING HUSBANDS/RELATIVES IN PRISON:

The percentage of women who are accommodated by refuges while visiting husbands/boy-friends or relatives in prison is 3.9%. Although this overall percentage appears to be relatively small, the percentage of women who stay in individual refuges is high. Three refuges in New South Wales have high percentages of women visiting Bathurst, Grafton and Long Bay prisons (14%, 4.9% and 34%). One refuge's percentage of these women is higher than the percentage of women who come to the refuge for domestic violence (21%).

These refuges are all situated within close proximity of jails and women often travel long distances to visit their husband, children or boy-friend. The emergency accommodation alternatives in these areas are few, therefore refuges are forced to fulfil an additional role which is contrary to their funding guidelines.

One refuge has approached their local Department of Corrective Services representative with a suggestion that the Department provide a wage for an additional refuge worker to take over this obviously necessary function. The Department refused initially, but negotiations are continuing with a hope that they will recognise that the responsibility for funding is partly theirs.

Another refuge, where although the percentage of women visiting the prison or local prison farms is not so high (14%), have noted several problems. The prison farms in the area are situated 30 and 40kms from the refuge and are inaccessible to women who have no transport. The refuge provides overnight and week-end accommodation, transport to and from the jail and to and from prison farms. In addition, it provides a support service to these visiting women who are, in some cases, in crisis. The refuge has made approaches on several occasions to their local Department of Corrective Services through the regional branch of the Council for Civil Liberties to provide a transport service for women visiting prisoners. In a submission to that Department for the provision of hostel type of accommodation for these women, the refuge made the following points:-

1. That the women visiting prisons are usually not in crisis so that accommodating them is not within the Youth and Community Services Guidelines for funding;

2. That preference must be given to women and children in crisis and women visiting prisoners cannot be guaranteed a place at the refuge for visiting times;

3. That because the women only stay at the refuge for a few days, they do not feel a sense of responsibility for the daily household tasks undertaken by the refuge "community", therefore creating tensions amongst longer term residents.

To date, there has been no response from the Department of Corrective Services on this submission.

Because refuges situated in close proximity to goals provide an accommodation, transport and support resource to women visiting their husbands/boy-friends or relatives, they believe that it is important that the Department of Corrective Services either relieve them of this responsibility by providing alternative services (Bathurst), or supply funding to assist the refuge in the provision of these services.

In the words of a worker at one of these refuges:

> "I feel very strongly against having to accommodate women, on week-ends, who come to visit gaols. I feel we are not set up for

this purpose. Having these women coming every week-end causes a lot of tension with residents. I think that the Department of Corrective Services should be able to do something about accommodating these women."

(iii) WOMEN AND CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

It has become evident that increasing numbers of women come to women's refuges because of sexual assault to themselves or their children.

30 refuges reported sexual abuse as a reason for women seeking refuge. For approximately 4% of refuge users, this is their primary reason for coming to the refuge. 8 of the women who answered questionnaires stated that the sexual abuse of their child was the main motivation for leaving their previous situation.

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of women and children who have been victims of incest, rape and other forms of sexual abuse. As evidenced by research, this subject is taboo, in most cases not reported or discussed, especially within families. However, often within the safety and warmth of the refuge environment, residents will talk, sometimes for the first time, of past traumatic experiences involving sexual abuse. Refuges do not generally keep statistics on this, however as discussed in the chapter on "Shifts in Emphasis", the single women's refuges have found that up to 85% of residents have been victims of incest, rape and/or other sexual abuses.

Refuge workers have become very concerned about this problem. Women and children who have suffered this abuse need intensive specialized, ongoing emotional support. Given the other urgent demands on workers time and energy, often some of this support is sought outside the refuge, through the Rape Crisis Centre, Help centres in hospitals and community counsellors. Many refuges, particularly in country areas, do not have any resources to help them in this role and refuge workers are committed to giving support without adequate experience or confidence in handling this problem. This can be extremely taxing on these workers, as shown in the following examples of stressful experience.

"Over the past year we have had two cases of incest involving fathers and young teenage girls. I felt confused, angry and helpless among other emotions. I did not know how to deal with it at all and felt stressed for sometime after. I became suspicious of my daughters' father (for no reason) and of other males that my children spend time with. I still wouldn't know how to deal with this on an emotional level if it happened again."

(Country refuge)

"knowing that a child was being sexually abused but not being able to prove it."

(Country refuge)

"Women or child sexual abuse particularly disturbs me. We find this is quite frequent. It's always distressing. I find the other workers that have been here for up to 5 years never get "used to" this aspect of refuge work."

(City refuge)

"...a case of incest where the mother had been aware for 5 years (incest taking place for 8). The daughter was 13. Mother felt powerless to do anything about it. I had to work with them and found it extremely difficult."

(Country refuge).

RECOMMENDATIONS

R.63 That the community at large, and specifically funding bodies recognise that sexual abuse is a common experience among women and children using refuges. Funds must be made available to allow workers to take time off to gain information and training in order to support these women and children effectively.

R.64 That funding for the Rape Crisis Centre must be continued and extended so that they are a resource for refuge workers and women and children who are victims of rape and sexual abuse.

R.65 That legal bodies examine the inadequacies of the law which fails to protect victims of rape and sexual assault.

R.66 That resources be made available to provide adequate training to members of the legal and medical professions so that they are sensitive to the needs of victims of sexual assault.

(iv) HEALTH PROBLEMS

Women's Health

A large percentage of women who come to refuges are in a poor state of physical health. Contributing factors to this are that many women arrive at refuges after suffering extreme physical abuse and need immediate medical treatment. Often women, during the course of their lives, have given their own health a low priority, preferring to attend to the health needs of their husband and children. The traditional nurturing role of women in society demands that women give "all" to their families in the first instance and their own physical and emotional needs become secondary. Poverty, unemployment and domestic violence are all issues which prevent women from considering their own health needs.

Refuges consider that part of their role is to assist women to improve the standard of their health while at the refuge. Some refuges have a sympathetic doctor who visits the refuge on a regular basis and who attends to the health needs of both women and children. Other refuges have found, "by trial and error", supportive General Practitioners and Gynaecologists to whom they can refer women. Many refuges use the services of Women's Health Centres who have the overall philosophy of educating women about their bodies, and teaching them self help, health techniques. Because there are few Women's Health Centres in country areas, 20 women's refuges in N.S.W. fulfil this educative role by making available pamphlets, films and information and by facilitating discussions between residents and workers about health alternatives for women. Refuge workers also assist women by going with them for doctors' or specialists' appointments for themselves and their children. This role, refuges feel, is important because often women are reluctant to ask questions of a doctor, are mystified by medical terminology and often accept prescriptions for sedatives and tranquilisers which may not be necessary. Many refuges are making available information on alternative treatments to women's health problems e.g. diet, herbal or vitamin remedies, massage, chiropractic treatment, and acupuncture as alternatives to traditional medical services.

Children's Health

Many children who come to refuges are also in a poor state of physical health. Before arriving at the refuge they have very often lived in conditions of poverty with little access to medical help. Most refuges stated that their role in the improvement of the health of refuge children was vital. Many refuge workers give women assistance with information on diet and nutrition as part of their daily role. Doctors and Baby Health Centre Sisters visit a few refuges on a regular basis and many refuges have spent large numbers of hours liaising with doctors, hospital staff and Baby Health Centre Staff about the health of refuge children and the factors which cause their health problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.67 That the Health Commission provide funding for more Women's Health Centres so that women have access to educational and supportive health care.

R.68 That refuges continue liaision with medical resource staff to improve the health care available to children.

CONCLUSION

Workers in Women's Refuges have attempted to raise public awareness about these issues, as well as the issue of women and children as victims of domestic violence. They have written letters to ministers, approached them in delegations, approached the media, been part of task forces and the like. The following is a summary from management questionnaires of how refuges have attempted to raise public awareness.

Method	No. of refuges
Talks and P.R.	15
Media Coverage	14
Approaches to Housing Commission	12
Submissions	10
Demonstrations	10
Local Committees	8
Task Forces	6
Delegations	30

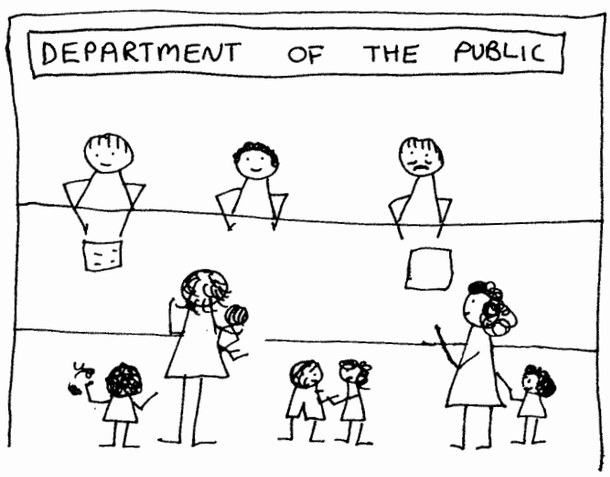
Some of the workers in refuges described these in more detail:

> "Continued awareness through (umbrella group) to the community generally and members of Parliament both State and Federal."
>
> (Inner City)

> "Raise public awareness through seeking local support. More could be done if not limited by lack of time and energy resources."
>
> (Western Suburbs)

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS



In the examination of the role of support and other groups and their relationship with Women's Refuges, the Evaluation attempted to clarify the support offered to refuges by groups in the community and how those groups perceive the services offered by refuges. Some refuges have good relationships and support within their local community, others have found that both Government Departments and other local welfare groups are particularly unsupportive to the refuge and the women and children who use its service. One of the Evaluation's aims is to provide a document which will give community groups, and Government Departments, a detailed picture of what refuges are, how they are run, the services they provide and the quality of care given to the users. Community support and adequate referral resources are important to the provision of "quality" care in refuges.

To examine the role of the refuge in the community, questionnaires were distributed to a wide variety of welfare organisations and Government Departments. These questionnaires were distributed by the refuges to groups with whom they had regular contact, therefore producing a biased sample. It was impossible, due to the time and funding constraints of the Evaluation, to obtain information and statistics from groups who had no contact with refuges. Community services who participated in the study included Government Departments e.g. Youth and Community Services, Social Security, Commonwealth Employment Service, Housing Commission, and Health Commission, Local Government participation included responses from Council Social Workers. Other organisations who filled in questionnaires were: Police, Legal Aid, Solicitors, Doctors, Hospital Staff, Psychiatric Hospitals, Churches, Magistrates, Lifeline, Salvation Army, Youth Refuges, C.Y.S.S., Neighbourhood Centres, Baby Health Centres, Child Care Centres, Women's Centres, St. Vincent de Paul, Smith Family, Family Workers Schemes, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Family Life Movement.

These community services were all in regular contact with the refuges in their area and all saw the service provided by the refuge as necessary. Of the 105 respondents of the community groups questionnaire 29 groups saw the service provided by the refuge as excellent, 21 saw them as very good, 23 as good and 18 as satisfactory, 14 gave no response.

The following are quotes from the community groups questionnaire in answer to the question "what type of services do you understand refuges provide?".

> "Provide support and direction to stressed clients. I consider the use of ex-clients as workers to be an excellent concept".
> (Y.A.C.S. Resident District Office, Central West Area.)

> "Short term accommodation, continuing support after leaving refuge, referral and advice on issues ranging from Social Security to general survival information".
> (C.Y.S.S. Project Officer, Central West Area.)

> "Accommodation, sympathy and food".
> (St. Vincent de Paul Volunteer, Riverina Area.)

> "Safe accommodation, re-settlement counselling, referral to legal and medical help".
> (Drug and Alcohol Counsellor, Riverina Area.)

> "Emergency accommodation, re-settlement counselling, referral to legal and medical help".
> (Welfare Officer, Social Security, Northern Suburbs.)

> "Accommodation, counselling, material assistance, referral for legal assistance".
> (Police, Northern Region.)

"Counselling, support, accommodation for women and children. Child care, information on parenting skills, referrals to medical services as required".
(Smith Family Worker, Riverina Area.)

"Crisis accommodation, support, follow-up, referral to outside agencies, child care".
(Baby Health and Family Support Centre, Northern Region.)

"They provide an otherwise unavailable community service".
(Senior Detective Inspector, State Rail Authority, Hunter Region.)

"Immediate accommodation and support for disturbed wives and mothers".
(Catholic Presbytery, Riverina Area.)

"Crisis Care for women and children".
(Psychiatric Ward, A.C.T. Hospital.)

"General support to women and children. Time out situations for families. Community awareness of the problems of domestic violence and an education of the community to support women and crisis".
(Y.A.C.S. District Officer, Western Area.)

In answer to a question on the reasons groups refer women to refuges, responses included:

"Crisis break-up of family, for protection, ongoing help to rebuild family life after initial crisis".
(Community Health Centre, Northern Suburbs of Sydney.)

"Clients approach us for information on how to proceed when they can't cope with intolerable situations, e.g., physical or verbal abuse which has often been long standing. We let them know about the refuge".
(Citizens Advice Bureau, Western Suburbs.)

"For accommodation when husbands have abused them or put them out of their home. When a separation is indicated for a woman to resolve her marital problems".
(Smith Family Worker, Central Coast.)

"For shelter and general management of acute crisis situations".
(General Medical Practitioner, North Western Region.)

"So that a woman can be somewhere safe while she works out her crisis in a supportive, non-judgemental environment. So that she can effectively plan her future life for herself and her children in an atmosphere where there is no pressure".
(Legal Aid Solicitor, Inner City, Sydney.)

"Because there is no where else. No other organisation provides even remotely similar services. Before there were refuges women just had to "grin and bear it", they put up with horrific abuse because they had few alternatives".
(Community Social Worker, North Coast.)

The community groups who responded to the questionnaires had a reasonable knowledge of the role of the refuge in community welfare and they were mostly supportive of the refuge in their area as providing a necessary community service. There are, however, organisations within the community who have little knowledge of the services refuges provide. These groups have in some cases had previous dealings with the refuge in their area but no longer have contact. Reasons for this cessation of contact can be varied. The refuge may have had unsympathetic and unsupportive dealings with the group, the group may have not agreed with the aims and philosophies of the refuge or that the refuge service is so unique that there is little understanding of the practicalities of refuge function. A few refuges have found that some community groups have preconceived ideas about the refuge as a result of unfavourable press coverage and attempts to liaise with these groups have been unsuccessful because of these attitudes.

Refuges stated, in answer to questions on their relationships with community groups, that "other agencies necessary for meeting the needs of women and children who come to the refuge are": Youth and Community Services, Social Security, Housing Commission, Legal Aid, Police and Community Health Services. These agencies exist in most communities and give only basic support and assistance to women while they are at the refuge and after they leave. The majority of refuges expressed the need for additional facilities, e.g. Family Planning Services, Low Income Housing, De-Tox Units, Rape Crisis Centres, Women's Resource Centres, Child Care Centres, Employment Services, Drug and Alcohol Counselling Centres, Halfway Housing and Interpreter Services. Refuges situated in urban areas have access to most of these agencies but again the country refuges have to accept limited support services which can be unsympathetic to the needs of refuge women and children.

Table 1. Groups to whom residents and ex-residents were referred and if they were unhelpful.

(Responses from Women's Questionnaire)

	Referred	Unhelpful
Health Centre	110	1
Legal Aid	172	3
Housing Commission	211	5
Y.A.C.S.	213	1
Social Security	207	9
Pre-school	75	1
Community Social Worker	95	2
Migrant Services	24	1
Aboriginal Services	41	1
Drug and Alcohol Services	48	1
Family Counselling	66	1
Rape Counselling	28	1
Hospital	91	1
Magistrate	76	2
Police	49	5
Other	16	-
n 400		

Multiple answers were given to this question.

Even refuges situated in city areas complain of either inadequate or unsupportive services, comments from the main questionnaire on the adequacy of community agencies included:

"Services are limited, so is understanding by them of the problems faced by women and children".
(Northern Region Refuge)

"Those that exist provide the bare minimum, e.g. pensions. Other agencies are overworked because of problems of the area e.g. Family Crisis Service".
(Western Suburbs Refuge).

"Apart from Rape Crisis Centre none of the Inner City agencies we deal with have an orientation to women. Hence these agencies are dominated by and geared towards the problems of homeless young men."
(Proclaimed Place for Women, Inner City).

"Adequate but not always helpful".
(Inner City Refuge).

"Once again there isn't enough time and demands are too great to provide an effective service".
(Inner City Refuge).

"Youth and Community Services inadequate, other non-Government agencies are as adequate as funding allows. Family Support Service are inclined to be conservative and narrow minded".
(North Coast Refuge).

"Depends on staff attitudes, most have potential".
(Central West Refuge).

"Need for more availability of Community Health and Youth and Community personnel and more supportive attitude from the Housing Commission".
(Riverina Area Refuge).

"In this area, reasonably good, except for the women who have psychiatric problems and those who are intellectually handicapped. Interpreter service inadequate".
(Western Suburbs Refuge).

"Reasonably adequate"
(Central Coast Refuge).

"All could be extended"
(North Western Region Refuge).

"Very helpful"
(North Western Region Refuge).

"Varies" (A.C.T. Refuge).

"Just O.K. very judgemental now, this is a recent thing (last 3 months) probably due to changes, in workers and only applies to voluntary agencies".
(Northern Suburbs Refuge).

"Good but understaffed".
(Inner City Refuge).

"All co-operative".
(Southern Sydney Suburban Refuge).

As a result of the above statements by refuges the evaluation concludes that the services provided by community groups varies according to both geographic position and the number of services which are available to the refuge. Although most refuges realise the necessity and importance of community liaison as an integral part of the service they provide, the time taken by this aspect of refuge work increases the existing stress on the workload of the refuge. Refuges who have worked extremely hard at developing their relationships with community groups and promoting awareness of the refuge in their area, still have complaints about the inadequacies of relevant services and the judgemental attitudes of workers employed by some agencies. Comments by residents and ex-residents about these attitudes include:

> "You feel like you have to beg for crumbs and you are treated as a number rather than a person by Social Security".
> (ex-resident, Central West Refuge).

> "Everyone I had to see was O.K. except for the estate agents when I was looking for a house, they didn't want to know me because I had kids and I was on a pension, I had to find a job to supplement my pension so that they would take me seriously".
> (ex-resident, Central Coast Refuge).

> "The Chamber Magistrate told me before I went to the refuge that I should go back home and be a good girl and then my husband wouldn't bash me any more. I felt that I deserved to be beaten".
> (Inner City Refuge, resident).

> "The police didn't help me much, they would come if I called them and my husband was prowling around but wouldn't do anything unless he did something first. The prowling and harassing was more terrifying to me because I never knew what he would do and I imagined all sorts of horrors happening to me and the kids. The police could help with obvious harassment and physical abuse but couldn't do anything about my fears of that happening".
> (Ex-resident, North Coast Refuge).

Even though all refuges had attempted to gain the support of their local community, refuge workers, residents and ex-residents were given varying amounts of support and respect by local organisations. From responses to questionnaires and lengthy discussions at refuges the indications were that the more public relations undertaken by the refuge within their communities, the more sympathetic and supportive the agencies. To ensure this support and respect refuge workers often need to "play down" their politics and talk to groups strictly about the nature of the immediate refuge crisis service rather than their broader concern for a range of issues relating to women and their position in society. Refuges which are managed by religious organisations expressed opinions that both their workers and residents were given appropriate respect and support from community groups but the responses to questionnaires and discussions with residents and ex-residents were conflicting. Some had no complaints but many expressed criticisms of being "treated as second-class citizens, non-copers and bludgers" when they approached agencies and Government Departments for assistance with either pensions, housing, food and clothing. The women who participated in the evaluation who had no income when arriving at the refuge, felt as if they had to "beg" for those material necessities. Many expressed feelings of relief when they received a pension (a permanent if inadequate income) and established themselves and their children in permanent accommodation no matter how derelict or expensive. To be able to be independent (even if poor) often for the first time in their lives, increased their self confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Some community groups stated that they had difficulties dealing with the refuge in their area. Most of these problems centred around communication issues. Complaints from agencies about the need for more regular contact with the refuge were frequent in questionnaire responses. Most of the organisations who participated in the evaluation, stressed that communication between themselves and the refuge was very important. There was a need for an improvement in the existing channels by which information is communicated, for example, more regular meetings to discuss issues which are of concern to all community groups, including refuges.

GROUPS WHICH SUPPORT REFUGES

Six refuges (16.6%) stated that they received full support from their community and that they were satisfied with their position as an integral part of their local welfare community. The remaining 30 refuges (83.3%) had reservations that, although they had support of some organisations, there were still some groups which did not give the refuge, its workers and its users the assistance they needed. 15 refuges (41.6%) reported that the amount of support they obtained depended on the attitudes of individual workers in the agencies they dealt with e.g. the refuge may have a good relationship with Social Security on a departmental level but have problems with individual staff members i.e. counter staff. Another example of these conflicting relationships is explained in an example of dealings with their local police.

> "Generally we have a good liaison with the police and they are usually very co-operative when we need to use them but there have been occasions when the attitudes of individual officers have been overtly unsupportive. They have told us that we are over-reacting to situations where we feel women are in extreme danger and have stated openly that they don't agree that the refuge is necessary. When asked what they would do with all the women who come to them after suffering extreme abuse and violence, an officer stated to me that he "would send them all back home where they belong" (Country Refuge Worker)".

Similar situations were related by refuges of liaison with various community agencies but an "overall picture" gleaned from refuge questionnaire responses from management worker and user levels, discussions with these same groups and responses from community group questionnaires enables the evaluation to conclude that relationships of refuges with groups in their local area is mainly good. Most refuges have working relationships with the Government Departments to which they refer women, e.g. Youth and Community Services, Department of Social Security, Housing Commission and Legal Aid, even if these relationships are not "good" working relationships. Relationships with other "helping" agencies vary according to the attitudes of workers in those organisations.

UNSUPPORTIVE GROUPS

The main group which refuges saw as unsupportive was Real Estate Agents. Of the 36 refuges surveyed 25 (69%) stated that Estate Agents were overtly unsupportive to refuge residents who were mostly lone mothers with children and whose only income was Supporting Parents' Benefits. Refuges often find that estate agents blatantly discriminate against women who supported their children alone. Because of the current housing shortage and the high demands on the private rental market, lone women and children are seen by estate agents as "high risk" tenants and given low priority for available housing. One country refuge, in an attempt to establish better liaison with their local estate agents invited the eleven agents in the community to a combined meeting with refuge staff. Of those eleven, two attended the meeting. The refuge felt that this attendance was indicative of the lack of concern and support which those agents demonstrated towards the refuge and its residents.

In the paid workers questionnaire, workers were asked if they and residents were given appropriate respect and support by the following agencies: Youth and Community Services, District Officers; Health Commission Social Workers; Housing Commission, Social Security, Police, and other community groups. Responses are illustrated in the followig table.

Table 2. Respect and support received by residents and workers from other Agencies.

(Responses in refuges)

ORGANISATION	YES	NO	TOTAL
Youth and Community Services	24	7	31
Health Commission Social Workers	23	8	31
Housing Commission	18	13	31
Social Security	23	8	31
Police	21	10	31
Other Community Groups	25	6	31

5 Refuges gave an overall response of YES to this question.

Thirteen refuges stated that the Housing Commission were unsupportive. Of these thirteen refuges nine were situated in country areas of N.S.W. Criticisms of the Housing Commission in these country areas were stated in discussions at refuges as being that the Housing Commission counter staff try to "talk women out of" applying for housing through the Commission by exaggerating the waiting time. These refuges when approaching the Housing Commission for information were not given adequate details of the services provided to lone women and children. For example no information was given to these refuges of the existence of Special Allocations Committees and few "out of priority" cases presented by refuges before the Housing Commission were considered. These nine refuges also commented on the length of time it took for the Housing Commission to effect repairs on Commission properties rented by ex-refuge residents.

> "I've been in my house for 4 years, and 6 months after I moved into it ("a new house") tiles started falling off the bathroom wall into the bath. I notified the Housing Commission and they sent inspectors out to have a look, but no-one ever came to fix it. I made regular complaints to the Commission for 2 years and was told each time that "there wasn't enough money for repairs" so I gave up and learnt to live with the threat of the whole wall falling in on whoever's in the bath, at any minute".
>
> (Country refuge ex-resident).

Refuges who considered that their workers and residents did not obtain appropriate support and respect from Youth and Community Services District Officers (7), Health Commission, Social Workers (8), Social Security (8) and Police (10), mainly had complaints about the attitudes of individual workers rather than the attitude of the organisation as a whole.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBOURS AND IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY

Refuges have varying relationships with their neighbours and immediate community. Some refuges were treated with open hostility and others commented on their favourable image within the community. The differences in these relationships are illustrated by the following comments from refuges' responses to the Main Questionnaire.

"There have been complaints from neighbours about the noise of our kids".

"We are seen as a useful service because we offer child care to neighbours' kids".

"As an integral part of the social needs of the community".

"With hostility, they get upset with the refuge kids".

"No objections".

"Bad relationship, we are treated with suspicion".

"They see us as a bunch of noisy weirdos who have ruined the neighbourhood and are to be avoided at all costs".

"Fulfilling a need".

"Highly regarded".

"We are very well accepted and have a good relationship with neighbours".

"A worthwhile service, many local women recently applied to work at the refuge".

"Very good support".

"Mixed feelings - a lot of local men don't like us".

"A social necessity but not in our neighbourhood".

"Good relationship except when a worker ran over next door's tree".

"We are tolerated".

Many Women's Refuges were treated with suspicion when they were first established in the community, but most neighbours when approached by the refuge workers and the function of the refuge was explained to them, recognised the need for the service and accepted the refuge. Refuges' relationships with neighbours tend to fluctuate between acceptance and tolerance, irritation when there are problems with refuge children and open suspicion and hostility when there is no understanding of the service the refuge provides.

REFUGE IDENTITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Refuges are generally accepted within their community as providing a worthwhile and necessary crisis service. 20 refuges (55%) stated that their community identity is positive. 5 refuges (13.8%) recognised that their identity is negative. 4 refuges (11%) reported mixed relationships within their local community. 3 refuges (8.3%) spoke of their refuge not being well known in their local area. The benefits of this anonymity are that the refuge retains a degree of privacy and gives the women who use the service an increased feeling of safety and security. Disadvantages seen by these refuges, of not being well known in the community, were that the refuge was not completely accessible to all women. 5.5% of refuges (2) related that the refuge was becoming more accepted by the community as a result of more communication by the refuge with both their immediate community and with the community at large.

CONCLUSION

Supportive relationships between refuges and agencies and services in the community are very important for the provision of a "quality" service for women and children. Although refuges need additional support within their community, most refuges have problems with other groups as a result of either their attitudes to the refuge or the attitudes of individual workers in those organisations to the women and children who use refuges.

Because of the constraints of refuge funding and their present inability to provide adequate follow-up services, refuges need the additional support of community resources to assist in the provision of follow-up for refuge ex-residents and their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R.69 That both Government Departments and welfare agencies provide appropriate non-judgemental support and practical assistance to refuges and their users.

R.70 That the Department of Youth and Community Services continue to increase expenditure on advertising the existence of Women's Refuges.

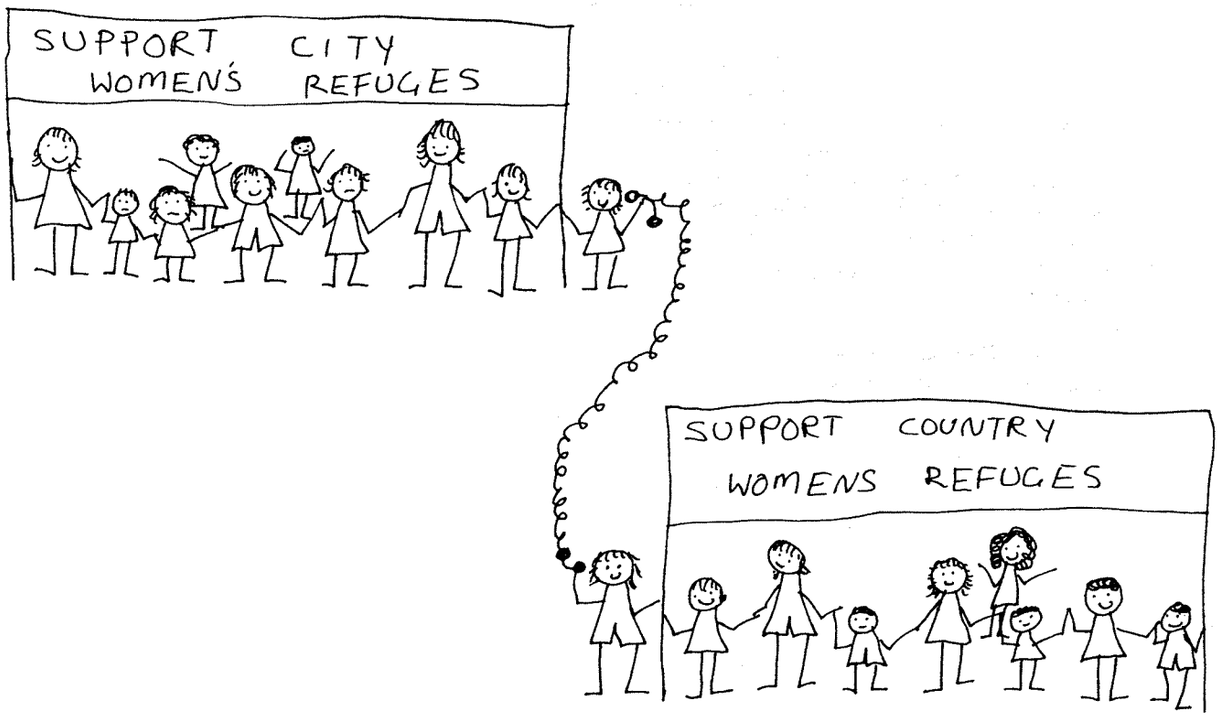
R.71 That the Department of Youth and Community Services recognise the value of communication between refuges and groups within the community, and include a funding component for this important aspect of refuge work.

R.72 That refuges continue to give priority to the necessary function of improving relationships with agencies and groups in the community.

R.73 That the Housing Commission of N.S.W. develop training programmes to ensure that its "front line" staff are sensitive and informed with dealing with issues relating to Women's Refuges.

CHAPTER TWELVE:

THE WOMEN'S REFUGE MOVEMENT



The Women's Refuge Movement consists of a group of people who are involved in Women's Refuges and are committed to providing a safe environment and practical assistance to women and children in crisis. It is based on the ideals of giving women the opportunity of taking control over their own lives by sharing the knowledge, skills and resources of its members. The movement is conscious of its role of raising public awareness about all issues which affect women and children. This makes the movement unique and thus creates a need for ongoing communication amongst members.

This chapter attempts to evaluate the Women's Refuge movement and its communication networks, by examining the role of State Refuge Conferences and their organisation, conflicts and differences in ideologies within the movement, the special communication problems of country refuges and the multifaceted communication links which have developed since the establishment of the first women's refuge in 1974.

CONFERENCES

State Women's Refuge Conferences are been held at three to four monthly intervals since the first conference was held in Bathurst in February 1979. Before this time refuges had been meeting as a group concerned about specific issues relating to women e.g., housing, health, child care and pensions. The organisation of refuges as a movement came about as soon as a few refuges were established. Those refuges were concerned that inter-communication and solidarity as a group were important; firstly because refuges were, at that time, a unique and unusual service, secondly because they faced a great deal of community opposition and thirdly because there was a need to lobby as a group for increases and improvements of existing services related to women.

As the numbers of funded refuges increased so did the need for improved communication networks. All refuges faced similar problems in their delivery of service, all refuges faced similar funding inadequacies and all refuges recognised the value of working effectively together as a group rather than working as scattered, isolated individuals.

Refuges, before 1979, organised campaigns for funding, housing and pensions and successfully acheived many changes in relation to these issues.

Country refuges in particular found it difficult to take part in these campaigns because of distance from Sydney, lack of adequate funds for travelling and the difficulty for workers to leave their duties at the refuge and spend one or two days in Sydney at a meeting or a delegation.

Quarterly refuge conferences held in different locations greatly improved communication between refuges, relieving some of the isolation faced by refuges situated in country areas. "Telephone Trees" were set up at a further conference held in Grafton in November 1979, to enable refuges to exchange information and ideas and to pass on notice of pending campaign and lobby action. There were many complaints in regard to this system; country refuges found that they still did not receive adequate information to enable them to play an active role in the action of the refuge movement.

A more effective regional system was then devised and each refuge had a "sister refuge" to which significant information was communicated and then passed on to another refuge. Communication links became considerably more simplified and information could be passed on to all refuges in a minimum amount of time. This regional system still operates but is not without problems and country refuges again suffer from the communication breakdowns.

The attendance of regional representatives committed to monthly Evaluation Steering Committee Meetings has greatly improved communication networks.

A further avenue for inter-refuge communication has recently been developed. A monthly refuges newsletter is compiled by a representative group of refuges using articles and significant items of information, contributed by all refuges is N.S.W. The newsletter is a forum for refuges to obtain details of pending meetings, campaigns and informative results of those which have already occurred. The newsletter has to date worked well as an addition to the Women's Refuge communication network.

Apart from being a basis for the interchange of information and ideas, conferences are beneficial to give refuge workers increased insight into the operation and management of other refuges. Workers saw some of these benefits as being the meeting of other workers, hearing other views, discussing common problems, feeling less isolated and participating in workshops, therefore learning more about specific issues.

Problems and difficulties at conferences were seen as: never having enough time to get through lengthy agendas, faction arguments, conflicting philosophies, domination by an articulate few, inadequacies in the travelling/communication component of funding and the failure of city refuges to understand the problems faced by country refuges. Although there are both ideological and organisational problems at conferences, many refuge workers expressed feelings of:

> "The fellowship, sisterhood and acceptance of others which is usually (not always) present at conferences. I like the sharing of plans, problems and experiences".
>
> "It good to meet the women you usually only talk to on the phone. They become people and often friends not just voices".
>
> "Even though there are lots of hassles, there are lots of good feelings and laughter amongst women".
>
> "I find that I learn so much at conferences, much more than I do in my day to day work at the refuge. I've learnt that acceptance of women who may not have the same ideas as I do, is important because we are all women working to improve "the lot" of women".
>
> "I was scared stiff at first to say anything in case it sounded stupid. I've get more confidence now to say how I feel about certain things and its not so hard, being articulate is just knowing how you feel, and practice".

Many refuges believe that it is important for as many of their workers to attend as many conferences as possible, because of the value of the learning experience, and make a conscious effort to encourage their workers to attend. Responses to the Paid Workers questionnaire indicated that a large majority of refuge workers would like to attend more conferences i.e. 184/205 workers. Problems which prevent them from attending were stated as: expense of getting to conferences 168/205, time 170/205 (conferences are usually attended in workers' unpaid time), lack of adequate child care 126/205, lack of interest 35/205 and lack of information about coming conferences 77/205.

Some refuges do not encourage workers to attend conferences and believe that participation is the responsibility of the management committee, whose members are often removed from the day to day work of the refuge and do not recognise that conference attendance is a valuable part of refuge work. A group of refuges run by an "umbrella" organisation sends a representative of that organisation and workers in refuges run by the organisation are not allowed to go to conferences, even though some of these workers expressed in questionnaire responses that they would like to attend.

Other refuges, rather than encourage all workers to attend conferences, send the same workers to every conference therefore making a valuable learning experience inaccessible to new workers.

A few refuges, who are committed to the idea of involving residents and ex-residents in all aspects of refuge operation, encourage both to attend conferences with workers. Although it is difficult for ex-residents and residents to participate in conferences on the same level as refuge workers, it gives them a clearer insight into how refuges are run, the differences and the common ideals of refuges and an overview of the operation of the refuge movement.

CONFLICTS

Examples of conflicts at conferences were stated (in questionnaire responses and discussions at refuges) as being: the organisational mechanics of conference structure, the attendance of men at conferences and attitudes of individual workers to many of the day to day issues of refuges.

Another of the conflicts within the refuge movement is different methods of lobbying. City refuges are able to be much more radical in their political action than country refuges or those who work in conservative communities. Some refuges express the opinion that the status quo should be accepted and refuges should not have to fight to obtain funding increases or improved services in the community. The majority of refuges maintain that lobbying for a better deal for refuges and auxillary services eventually improves the situation for the women who use refuges but the conflict occurs about the different methods used by refuges. Some refuges prefer to lobby through existing channels of the bureaucracy while other refuges prefer to use an approach of direct action, having already found the use of existing channels to be slow and ineffective. Direct action has in the past included methods like demonstrations and sit-ins and these have attracted much unfavourable publicity and sensationalism from the media. Television coverage of recent refuges' action only highlighted the worst aspects of the demonstration. It was filmed to give the image, to the television audience, of the women involved initiating violence, rather than the reverse of an initially peaceful demonstration which was disrupted. The violence perpetrated by the police was not shown.

As a result of the media's sensationalised portrayal of these gatherings, refuges who have worked hard in their community to obtain support and acceptance, have been criticised and identified as being supportive of the refuge workers who demonstrate. City refuges do not have the same problems, their workers are able to remain in relative anonymity where they live, but workers in country refuges are easily identified in their small community and have to appear more "respectable" in their methods of political action. Because country refuges have to face the media induced "backlash" about demonstrations, there are conflicts within the refuge movement concerning this issue. While most refuges support the need for several different types of political action, it is difficult for those refuges who are affected by the "backlash" to be supportive of the action of those refuges who choose to demonstrate.

The evaluation does not attempt to provide solutions to the conflicts and problems of the refuge movement but only to state that, as with any movement or organisation, conflicts do exist and become evident when the refuge movement meets as a group, at conferences.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Conferences are held at three to four monthly intervals and are hosted alternatively by city and country refuges. The hostess refuge usually asks for advance contributions to the agenda and the Ratification of the Agenda takes place at the Conference first session. The Chairperson of each session is a worker or management committee member of the hostess refuge and Guest Speakers (if applicable) are invited by that refuge.

Conferences usually proceed according to the decided agenda but often sessions run over time because each issue takes so long to discuss. Agenda items may be changed around if too much time is taken up by one item and conflicts can arise as a result e.g.,

> "I went to the conference for the Child Care session in particular but it was cut short because Housing took up extra time. I was angry because I had come so far and child care is my work therefore my main interest". (country refuge worker)

To date decisions at conferences have been made by consensus rather than by voting. An issue is discussed until an agreement is reached and every one is "happy" with or "agrees to disagree" with the result. This method of decision making can be both time consuming and conflict producing but the reason it is adhered to is that it is seen to be the most democratic means of making decisions by allowing full discussion of an issue where "everyone has an equal say".

COUNTRY REFUGE PROBLEMS

Because refuges situated in country areas are geographically isolated they can also be isolated from the mainstream activities of the refuge movement. (Sixteen refuges are situated in Sydney suburbs). Distance from Sydney often prevents country refuges from being involved in all the refuge campaigns, meetings and activities which are constantly occurring. Refuge funding includes a "travelling component" of approximately $1,000 per refuge and while this may be adequate for city refuges whose only travel expense is to conferences, it is totally inadequate for refuges situated great distances from Sydney, where often the only viable means of transport is air travel. Travelling by air is very expensive for all refuges but almost inaccessible to refuges situated in places like Albury, Broken Hill, Lismore and Inverell. Broken Hill has an inadequate air service and is serviced by only three flights per week so not only are their fares beyond the reach of the "refuge pocket", but there are limitations as to the times they can travel.

Refuges have stated that it is ideal for two workers to attend meetings, thus doubling the cost of travel. Alternative forms of transport e.g., train or car are totally impractical for long distance travel to meetings. The train journey from the north coast to Sydney takes approximately sixteen hours and is a night trip, so workers using this form of transport would have to sit up all night, (sleepers are not available at short notice) attend a meeting next day and travel back to the north coast the same night with information from the meeting for their refuge.

Even refuges which are relatively close to Sydney have travelling problems. For example one refuge is 200 kilometres from Sydney and workers travel regularly to Sydney for meetings or delegations. The train journey takes about 4 hours while the car trip approximately 3. To get to a 10 am Sydney meeting a refuge worker at that refuge must either catch a train at 6 am or leave by car at about 6.30 am, often not arriving home before 10.30 pm. The stress produced by spending so much time travelling to and from meetings makes it extremely difficult for workers.

The attendance of meetings by refuge workers is quite often in unpaid time and, even if it is in paid time, workers often leave their co-workers a double workload, thus making the refuge service less effective and adding to the exhaustion of workers.

CONCLUSION

Women's Refuges in N.S.W. consider that inter-communication is vitally important for the movement to operate effectively as a group. To date the organisation of communication links has been an issue of concern for most refuges and many effective networks have been established.

RECOMMENDATIONS:-

R.74 The travelling allowance component of Women's Refuge funding be increased to realistic levels, taking into consideration the special problems of country refuges.

R.75 Funding for relief workers be provided to relieve the stress and double work load left at the refuge when workers need to attend meetings in Sydney.

R.76 All refuges encourage all workers to attend refuge movement conferences to give them the opportunity to benefit from the valuable learning experience of participation in conferences as part of their paid work at the refuge.

R.77 That funds be made available to the Women's Refuge Movement to develop a more efficient communication network. For example: The Community Services Fund Submission, September 1982, for travel expenses and replacement pay for workers from 10 country refuges and 7 city refuges to attend meetings every 6 weeks.

R.78 That additional funding be made available to country refuges for the purposes of telephone communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

R.1 That Women's Refuges be recognized as an essential community service and be funded at realistic levels taking into consideration the broad range of emergency services they provide for women and children who are escaping intolerable situations.
(pg 21)

R.7 That more Women's Refuges be funded so that existing refuges can accommodate the numbers for which they were established.
(pg 73)

R.16 That the funding bodies, through the N.S.W. Department of Youth and Community Services, adequately fund refuges as 24 hour services so that the refuge is not dependent on voluntary hours or voluntary workers.
(pgs 96, 114)

R.25 That Women's Refuges be funded for adequate follow-up of all ex-residents who need on-going support.
(pgs 119, 130, 133, 161)

R.12 That Government Departments take into consideration the "multi-faceted" role of refuge workers when funding levels for salaries are taken into account.
(pg 96)

R.18 That refuge workers be recognised as skilled women whose knowledge spans a wide range of areas including welfare, legal, housing, health, childcare, accountancy, government and community structures.
(pg 114)

R.20 That all existing refuge workers be paid according to Australian Social Welfare Union rates and work conditions with no loss to current staff levels.
(pg 114)

R.21 That the Department of Youth and Community Services consult with Women's Refuges on current staffing levels with the view to funding necessary increases in numbers.
(pg 114)

R.22 That Women's Refuge funding be guaranteed and reviewed on a triennial basis.
(pg 114)

R.23 That funds be made available for the training of new workers. That each refuge decide the most suitable process for this training.
(pg 114)

R.24 That the Department of Youth and Community Services consult with Women's Refuges on the area of paid maternity leave.
(pg 114)

R.71 That the Department of Youth and Community Services recognise the value of communication between refuges and groups within the community and include a funding component for this important aspect of refuge work.
(pg 177)

R.74 That the travelling allowance component of Women's Refuge funding be increased to realistic levels, taking into account the special problems of country refuges.
(pg 182)

R.75 That funding for relief workers be provided to relieve the stress and double work load left at the refuge when workers need to attend meetings.
(pg 182)

R.77 That funds be made available to the Women's Refuge Movement to develop a more efficient communication network. For example: The Community Services Fund Submission, September 1982, for travel expenses and replacement pay for workers from 10 country refuges and 7 city refuges to attend meetings every 6 weeks.
(pg 182)

R.78 That additional funding be made to country refuges for the purposes of telephone communication.
(pg 182)

R.9 That capital funds be made available to enable existing Women's Refuges to purchase buildings, renovate and improve their space facilities.
(pg 73)

R.10 That funds be made available for the renting of refuge buildings and be indexed to the market rent for that locality.
(pg 73)

R.11 That the funds allocated for "repairs, maintenance and renewals" be increased to ensure that refuge buildings and facilities are kept in reasonable order.
(pg 73)

R.30 That the establishment of women's refuges run by and for Aboriginal women, in the inner city and in country areas, be given urgent consideration by the Federal Department and the N.S.W. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the N.S.W. Department of Youth and Community Services.
(pg 130)

R.32 That more funding be made available for specific single Women's Refuges under the Women's Refuge Programme.
(pg 133)

R.35 That more half-way houses, and workers to help run them be made available to help single women through the stage between living in a refuge and living independently.
(pg 133)

R.36 That a refuge for women with severe emotional problems be funded immediately, without funding loss to any existing refuge.
(pg 136)

R.37 That two pilot projects be funded to house women who are subject to chronic psychiatric illness and women who are intellectually handicapped, as illustrated in the "Women in Limbo" submission and that the Departments of Health and Youth and Community Services jointly develop policies for the establishment and staffing of alternate means of care for these groups of women.
(pg 136)

R.41 That the Department of Youth and Community Services guarantee "re-settlement grants" (of up to $400, as recommended by the Domestic Violence Task Force Report 1981, p.109) to women leaving refuges on low incomes, whether or not they have children.
(pgs 148, 157)

R.57 That the government recognise the need for community child care facilities is far greater than that which is provided, particularly in new growth areas such as Sydney's western suburbs.
(pg 160)

R.59 That community facilties such as Information Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Community Health Centres, Women's Resource Centres and Women's Health Centres be funded in new growth areas, and that these facilities place emphasis on the development of community networks.
(pg 161)

R.60 That Youth and Community Services funding levels to existing and planned Proclaimed Places be increased to provide more than just token beds and facilities for women.
(pg 163)

R.61 That more funding be provided for the establishment of special purpose refuges specifically for women with drug and alcohol problems, and that these be run under the same supportive guidelines as Women's Refuges.
(pg 163)

R.62 That the funding level of "A Women's Place" and "Single Women's Refuge" be increased to enable realistic wages for workers.
(pg 163)

R.63 That the community at large and specifically funding bodies recognise that sexual abuse is a common experience among women and children using refuges. Funds must be made available to allow workers to take time off to gain information and training in order to support these women and children effectively.
(pg 166)

R.70 That the Department of Youth and Community Services continue to increase the expenditure on advertising the existence of Women's Refuges.
(pg 177)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO WOMEN'S REFUGES

R.3 That Women's Refuges adhere to the guidelines established by the Refuges and the Department of Youth and Community Services, in an effort to allow all workers the maximum opportunity to work in the best interests of the women and children using the service.
(pg 47)

R.6 That all Women's Refuges provide an opportunity for residents to be involved in the running of the refuge (in keeping with the guidelines), in order to allow for women to take responsibility for their own lives before they leave the refuge.
(pg 66)

R.4 That all Women's Refuges offer a communal living situation with open house meetings as an aid to mutual support amongst residents.
(pg 66)

R.5 That all Women's Refuges offer a broad range of information to enable residents to make their choice of a future life for themselves and their children.
(pg 66)

R.2 That all refuges inform residents of the policies of their refuge and, if necessary, give assistance with finding alternative, appropriate accommodation, thus enhancing the women's freedom of choice.
(pg 37)

R.13 That refuges take into account positive input of ex-residents in the effectiveness of refuge operation.
(pg 96)

R.19 That the diversity of skills and knowledge appropriate to refuge work be recognised as attainable by many women regardless of educational background.
(pg 114)

R.17 That refuges who employ volunteers to ease the enormous load of refuge work, look carefully at the attitudes of these people before choosing them to be involved in the most important aspect of refuge work, "supporting women and children in crisis."
(pg 96)

R.28 That refuges with many migrant residents seek funding to provide special resources to alleviate the alienation of migrants e.g. cooking utensils, music, books, posters etc. suited to a whole range of cultures and languages.
(pg 127)

R.27 That information about the refuge and other services be translated into predominant languages for use in each refuge.
(pg 127)

R.31 That all Women's Refuges look at ways of giving maximum support to aboriginal women and their children.
(pg 130)

R.46 That the refuges develop a firm policy on the issue of half way housing and that they approach the relevant agencies to implement this policy.
(pg 168)

R.76 That all refuges encourage workers to attend refuge movement conferences to give them the opportunity to benefit from the valuable learning experience of participation in conferences as part of their paid work at the refuge.
(pg 182)

R.8 That new Women's Refuges consider, in their choice of buildings the need for child care space, adequate privacy for each family and space for women to withdraw from the demands of children.
(pg 73)

R.68 That refuges continue liaison with medical resource staff to improve the health care available to children.
(pg 167)

R.72 That refuges continue to give priority to the necessary function of improving relationships with agencies and groups in the community.
(pg 177)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

R.14 That the Office of Child Care funding be increased so that Women's Refuges are financially able to provide an improved service for the women and children, both resident and ex-resident.
(pgs 96, 122, 160)

R.15 That the four N.S.W. state funded Women's Refuges be included in the Office of Child Care's Programme.
(pgs 96, 122)

R.20 That all existing refuge child care workers be paid according to Australian Social Welfare Union rates and work conditions with no loss to current staff levels.
(pg 114)

R.52 That pensions and benefits available from the Department of Social Security be increased to a realistic level within the present economic climate.
(pgs 157, 158)

R.53 That until pensions/benefits are raised, recipients be entitled to earn greater amounts of money than they are at present, to bring their weekly income to at least the level of the basic wage.
(pg 157)

R.57 That the government recognise the need for community child care facilities is far greater than that which is provided, particularly in new growth areas such as Sydney's western suburbs.
(pg 160)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION AND THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION

R.26 That funds must be made available for migrant workers in those refuges accommodating significant numbers of women of non-English speaking backgrounds. In many cases these workers could be ex-residents of a refuge, whose experience is similar to that of new residents. Migrant workers need to be involved in all aspects of refuge work including follow-up and child care.
(pg 127)

R.27 That information about Women's Refuge and other services be translated into predominant languages for use in each refuge and community groups.
(pg 127)

R.28 That refuges with many migrant residents be funded to provide special resources to alleviate the alienation of migrants e.g. cooking utensils, music, books, posters etc. suited to a whole range of other cultures and languages.
(pg 127)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. HOUSING COMMISSION

R.42 That the Housing Commission of N.S.W. continues to recognise that most women in refuges are in need of out of turn housing, and that this recognition be extended to country areas.
(pg 148)

R.29 That women from refuges be allocated Housing Commission housing as close as possible to their support systems.
(pgs 127, 130, 148)

R.73 That the Housing Commission of N.S.W. develop training programmes to ensure that its "front line" staff are sensitive and informed when dealing with issues relating to women's refuges.
(pg 177)

R.44 That the Housing Commission continues its present policy concerning rental levels, considering the ever rising cost of living.
(pg 148)

R.45 That the State Government recognise the need for public housing for women (with or without children) who have become chronically homeless because of poor accommodation opportunities.
(pg 148)

R.46 That the refuges develop a firm policy on the issue of half way housing and they approach the relevant agencies to implement this policy.
(pg 168)

R.47 That the Housing Commission and other relevant government departments, act upon the recommendations in the "Housing Section" of the Domestic Violence Task Force Report. (1981)
(pg 148)

R.33 That low cost housing be made available by the Housing Commission for women without children.
(pg 133)

R.34 That the Emergency Accommodation Unit give support to co-operative (i.e. shared) housing for single women.
(pg 133)

R.35 That more half-way houses, and workers to help run them, be made available to help single women through the stage between living in a refuge and living independently.
(pg 133)

R.43 That the relevant government departments recognise and act upon the need in new housing areas for adequate shopping, transport, child care and community facilities.
(pg 148)

R.59 That community facilities, such as Information Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Community Health Centres and Women's Resource Centres and Women's Health Centres be funded in new growth areas, and that these facilities put emphasis on the development of community networks. That the Housing Commission provide low cost premises for these facilities where possible.
(pg 161)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. HEALTH COMMISSION

R.36 That a refuge for women with severe emotional problems be funded immediately, without funding loss to any existing refuge.
(pg 136)

R.37 That two pilot projects be funded to house women who are subject to chronic psychiatric illness and women who are intellectually handicapped, as illustrated in the "Women in Limbo" submission. That the Departments of Health and Youth and Community Services jointly develop policies for the establishment and staffing of alternate means of care for these groups of women.
(pg 136)

R.38 That more research be undertaken into the relationship between emotional breakdown and domestic crisis, and that the criteria for admission to psychiatric centres be reviewed.
(pg 136)

R.64 That funding for the Rape Crisis Centre be continued and extended so that they are a resource for refuge workers and women and children who are victims of rape and sexual assault.
(pg 166)

R.66 That resources be made available to provide adequate training to members of the legal and medical professions so that they are sensitive to the needs of victims of rape and sexual assault.
(pg 166)

R.67 That the Health Commission provide funding for more Women's Health Centres so that women have access to educational and supportive health care.
(pg 167)

R.59 That community facilities, such as Information Centre, Neighbourhood Centres, Community Health Centres and Women's Resource Centres and Women's Health Centres be funded in new growth areas, and that these facilities put emphasis on the development of community networks.
(pg 161)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

R.43 That the relevant government departments recognise and act upon the need in new housing areas, for adequate shopping, transport, child care and community facilities.
(pg 148)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENTS (N.S.W. AND FEDERAL)

R.49 That the legal profession evaluate its attitude to domestic violence.
(pg 155)

R.50 That the same rights apply to de facto relationship as apply to legal marriages.
(pg 155)

R.51 That "Access Centres" be established to enable women to exchange children with their father in relative safety.
(pg 155)

R.65 That legal bodies examine the inadequacies of the law which fails to protect victims of sexual assault.
(pg 166)

R.66 That resources be made available to provide adequate training to members of the legal and medical professions so that they are sensitive to the needs of victims of sexual assault.
(pg 166)

R.48 That the recommendations in the Domestic Violence Task Force Report (1981) concerning police practices, "cooling off" period in cases of domestic assault and access to children be seriously considered by the relevant legal and other bodies.
(pg 155)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

R.30 That the establishment of women's refuges run by and for Aboriginal women, in the inner city and in country areas, be given urgent consideration by the Federal Department and the N.S.W. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the N.S.W. Department of Youth and Community Services.
(pg 130)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. DEPARTMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

R.42 That a proportion of the interest moneys from the rental Bond Board be used to assist women with rental rebates.
(pg 148)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE N.S.W. PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT

R.55 That the Anti-Discrimination Board continue to function as a means of relieving the discrimination against women in employment.
(pg 158)

R.56 That the relevant government departments and other bodies offer more retraining courses to women who have had few employment opportunities.
(pg 158)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

R.58 That the State government improve public transport facilities in new growth areas.
(pg 161)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

R.1 That Women's Refuges be recognised as an essential community service and be funded at realistic levels taking into consideration the broad range of emergency services they provide for women and children who are escaping intolerable domestic situations.
(pg 21)

R.54 That the Federal Government recognises its responsibilities with regard to the rising unemployment rate and act upon this.
(pg 158)

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIRECTED TO THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

R.69 That both Government Departments and welfare agencies as well as the community at large provide appropriate non-judgmental support and practical assistance to refuges and their users.
(pg 177)

R.63 That the community at large and funding bodies recognise that sexual abuse is a common experience among women and children. Funds must be made available to allow workers to take time off to gai information and training in order to support these women and children effectively.
(pg 166)

R.39 That there be an end to discrimination, by Real Estate Agents and landlords, against single women (with or without children) seeking accommodation on the open market. This means the continued existence of the Anti-Discrimination Board and greater public awareness of the situation.
(pg 148)

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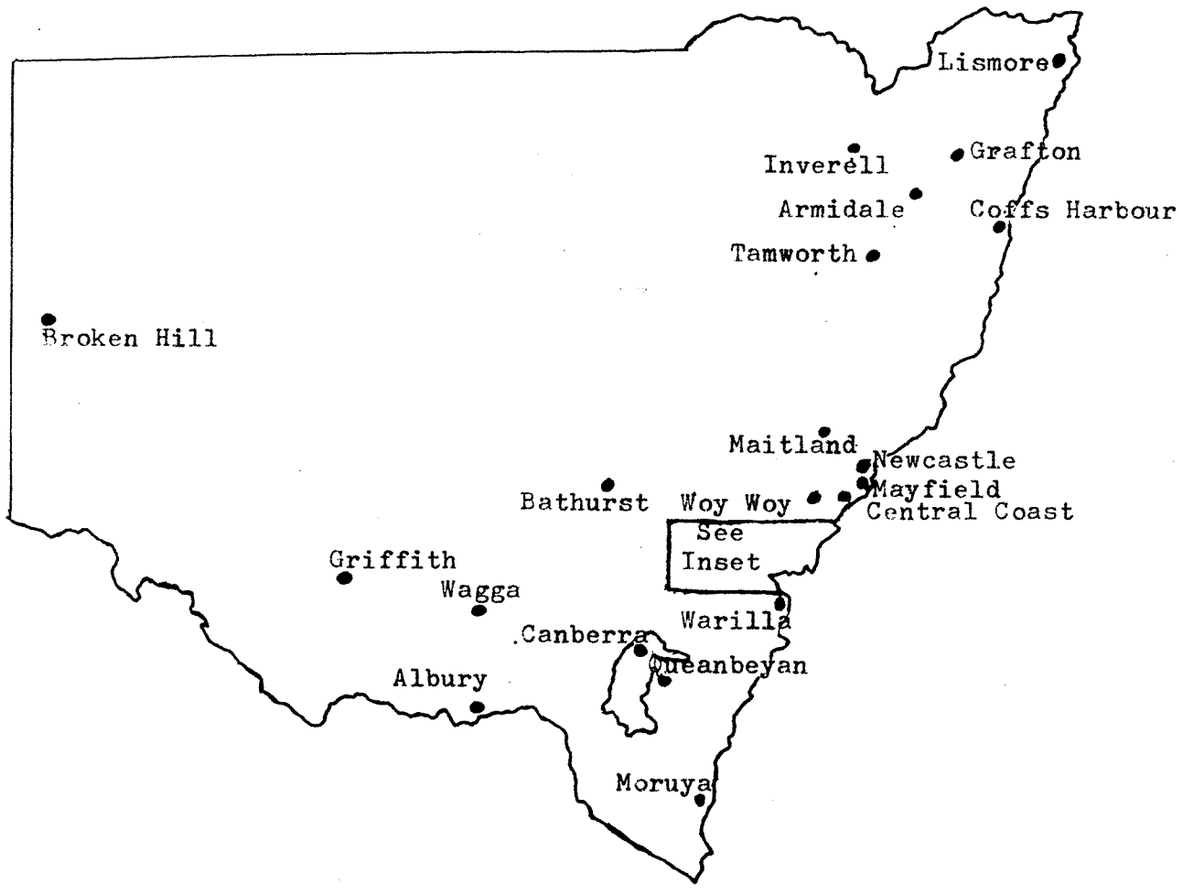
FUNDING TO WOMEN'S REFUGES - 1980/1981

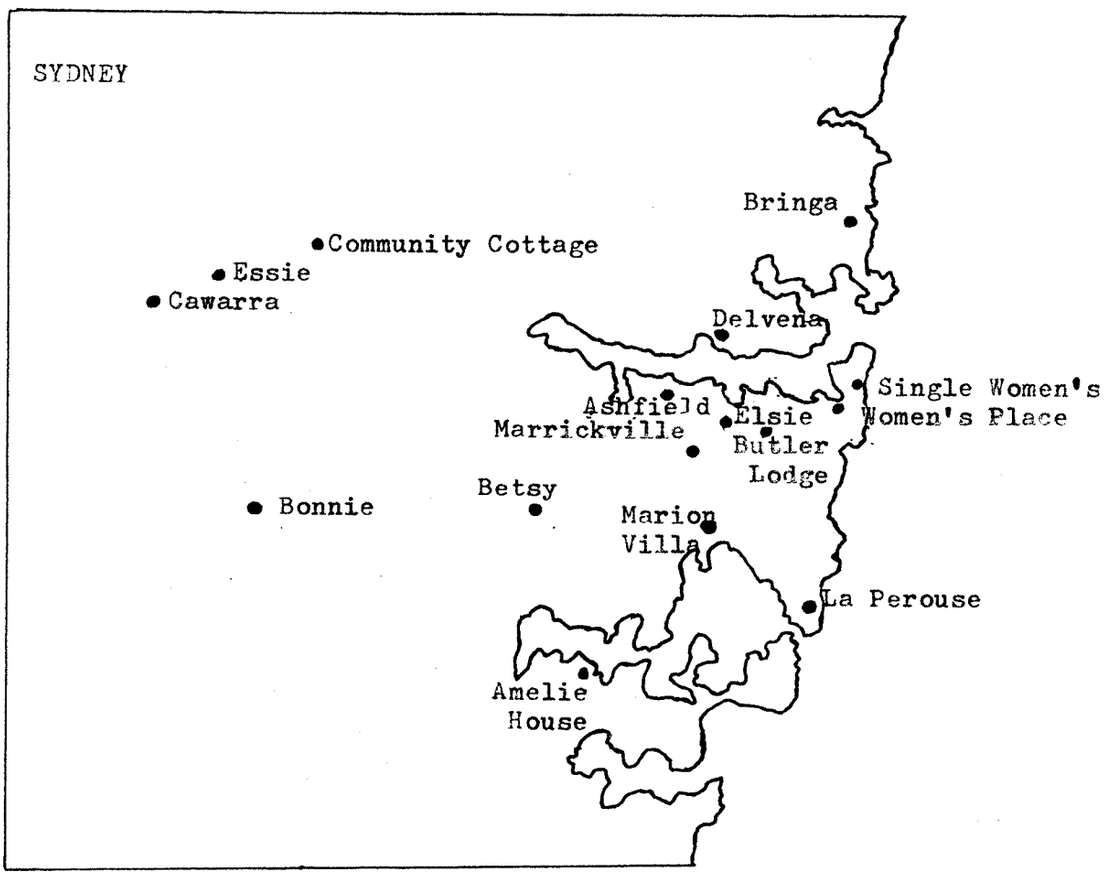
NAME OF REFUGE	COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMME			OFFICE CHILD CARE	ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS	GRAND
	COM.	STATE	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
1. ALBURY	29,132	9,708	38,840	12,000	18,700	69,540
2. ARMIDALE	33,968	11,256	45,224	12,000	22,940	80,164
3. BATHURST	36,908	12,304	49,212	12,000	30,132	91,344
4. BETSY	46,724	15,576	62,300	12,000	27,000	101,300
5. BLACKTOWN	38,388	12,796	51,184	12,000	25,715	88,899
6. BONNIE	54,336	18,112	72,448	12,000	15,000	99,448
7. BUTLER LODGE	28,632	9,544	38,176	12,000	24,500	74,676
8. CATHERINE HAVEN	11,988	3,996	15,984	12,000	23,000	50,984
9. CAWARRA	46,724	15,576	62,300	9,500	30,000	101,800
10. CENTRAL COAST	43,496	14,496	57,992	12,000	37,380	107,372
11. COFFS HARBOUR/WARRINA	44,124	14,708	58,832	12,000	19,000	89,832
12. DELVENA	40,500	13,500	54,000	12,000	28,940	94,940
13. ELSIE	87,704	29,232	116,936	12,000	38,360	167,296
14. ESSIE	62,828	20,940	83,768	12,000	22,600	118,368
15. GRAFTON	30,472	10,156	40,628	12,000	23,420	76,048
16. GRIFFITH	20,664	6,888	27,552	12,000	59,000	98,552
17. JENNY'S PLACE	39,944	13,316	53,260	12,000	19,250	84,510
18. LA PEROUSE	24,616	8,204	32,820	12,000	21,000	65,820
19. MANLY/WARRINGAH (BRINGA)	69,856	23,284	93,140	12,000	30,240	135,380
20. MARIAN VILLA	33,116	11,036	44,152	7,500	21,700	73,352
21. MARRICKVILLE	78,956	26,316	105,272	12,000	27,115	144,387
22. MAYFIELD	16,228	5,408	21,636	12,000	21,000	54,636
23. QUENABEYAN	46,724	15,576	62,300	9,500	15,550	87,350
24. RICHMOND (LISMORE)	41,884	13,952	55,836	12,000	82,830	150,666
25. TAMWORTH	21,436	7,144	28,580	12,000	53,600	94,180
26. WAGGA WAGGA	19,092	6,364	25,456	-	-	25,456
27. WARILLA	23,664	7,888	31,552	12,000	27,000	70,552
28. WOMEN'S STRESS CENTRE	42,008	14,004	56,012	12,833	17,700	86,545
29. WOY WOY	34,536	11,512	46,048	12,000	27,500	85,548
30. INVERELL (NEWLY FUNDED)	-	-	-	-	22,550	32,550
31. MAITLAND (NEWLY FUNDED)	-	-	-	-	21,500	31,500
32. AMELIA - (COMO) (NEWLY FUNDED)	-	-	-	-	20,950	25,950
33. MORUYA	-	-	-	-	55,000	55,000
34. CANBERRA	-	-	-	12,000	61,797[1]	73,797
35. SINGLE WOMEN'S	-	-	-	-	144,000[2]	144,000
36. WOMEN'S PROCLAIMED PLACE	-	-	-	-	144,000[2]	144,000
	1,148,648	382,792	1,531,440			

Notes: 1. Funding source was Capital Territory Health Commission for 1980-81 financial year.
2. Funding source was Homeless Persons and Proclaumed Places' Programme for 1982-83 (varying dates).

APPENDIX A

LOCATION MAP OF WOMEN'S REFUGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES





APPENDIX C

DUTIES OF EVALUATORS

The Evaluators will be responsible for:

Liaising in conjunction with the Steering Committee and all Women's Refuges in New South Wales funded jointly by the Commonwealth and State Governments and Refuges funded by State Government only for an independent evaluation as specifically set in the criteria.

To address the reason for the existence of Women's Refuges.

To clarify the aims of Women's Refuges and how these aims are achieved to the requirements of the State Policy Guidelines for Women's Refuges.

Evaluation of significant shifts in emphasis of the programme e.g. changes in goals, needs being shown by the programme, unanticipated outcomes of the programme etc.

Evaluating wider issues that have become evident through the existence of the Women's Refuges' Movement.

Evaluating the effects on the environment/space of refuges and the facilities available.

Evaluating the effect on workers; working conditions, salaries and the skills and experience appropriate to the job requirements.

Evaluating the role of refuge workers, including volunteers.

Evaluating the policy and practices of different Women's Refuges, e.g. Collectives and traditional management structures.

Evaluating the effects on women and children who use the service availability and quality of care.

Evaluating the role of the Women's Refuge Movement, and its communication networks.

Examine the role of other support groups and their relationship to the refuges. For example, Police, Magistrates, G.P.s, Community Health Services, the Department of Social Security and Youth and Community Services District Officers, Housing Commission, etc.

Collection of statistical information relevant to the Refuge Movement and its evaluation.

APPENDIX D

MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE: To be answered by Management structure (Collective or Management committee) and workers - together.

AIMS:

1) What are the aims of your Refuge?

2) In what ways, if any, have they changed since the Refuge was originally set up?

3) Are there conflicts between the aims of your Refuge and the Y.A.C.S. Guidelines? If so, what are they?

4) What does your Refuge consider are the "demands of women and children in crisis"? Please list.

5) How does your Refuge meet these demands?

6) Is there a time limit for women and children who stay at your Refuge?
YES NO

7) How long is it?

(a) Less than one month
(b) Less than two months
(c) Less than three months

8) To what extent do you enforce it - please give details?

9) On average, how long do women and children USUALLY stay at your refuge?

10) Does your Refuge provide any of the following; please tick and expand if necessary?

	(a)	24 hour care
	(b)	Child Care
	(c)	Follow up for women & children
	(d)	Going with women when they have to go to Court, Solicitors, Social Security, Doctors, Housing Commission, Real Estate Agents, Schools etc.
	(e)	Individual counselling, e.g's. - formal, on a one-to-one basis; informal, on a one-to-one basis; informal group - over coffee, etcetera.
	(f)	Phone counselling
	(g)	Child care for ex-resident's children
	(h)	Clothing
	(i)	Food
	(j)	Emergency money

☐	(k)	Access to information on health, housing, contraception, etcetera. Please list.
☐	(l)	Half-way housing
☐	(m)	Furniture removals and storage
☐	(n)	Regular house meetings
☐	(o)	Live-in workers
☐	(p)	Emergency transport from Refuge to Refuge
☐	(q)	Rape counselling/and or referral
☐	(r)	Child Abuse counselling/and or referral

11) Are there any other services that you provide not in the above?

12) Are there any of the above services that you consider are INAPPROPRIATE to your Refuge? If so, state why?

13) Are there any of the above services that you would LIKE to provide and don't? Please explain.

14) Ideally, how could you do more?

15) Since your Refuge has been operating have you made any attempts to raise public awareness about the following issues? Please tick.

☐	(a)	Health	☐	(b)	Welfare
☐	(c)	Child Care	☐	(d)	Housing
☐	(e)	Legal Services	☐	(f)	Finances - economic status of women
☐	(g)	Sexuality	☐	(h)	Employment
☐	(i)	Discrimination	☐	(j)	Discrimination
☐	(k)	Oppression of women in our society	☐	(l)	Child abuse
☐	(m)	Drug and alcohol	☐	(n)	Homelessness
☐	(o)	Domestic violence	☐	(p)	Rape
☐	(q)	Alternative lifestyles	☐	(r)	Sexual Harassment

16) Ideally, do you feel you could do more in these areas?

17) What additional resources would you need to achieve the above?

18) What "environment" are you able to provide in your Refuge, for women to exchange skills and information?

19) Ideally, how you do more?

20) What sort of "continuing support" does your Refuge offer ex-residents and their children?

21) Ideally, how could you offer more?

STRUCTURE:

1) What is your management structure and to what extent has it changed since the Refuge started?

2) To what extent are paid workers involved in policy-making of your Refuge?

3) Are unpaid workers involved in policy-making at your Refuge?

4) To what extent are unpaid workers involved in the day to day running of the Refuge?

5) To what extent are women who use, and have used the Refuge involved in the policy making of the Refuge?

6) To what extent are women who use, and have used the Refuge involved in the day to day running of the Refuge?

7) Do women who use the Refuge have house meetings?
YES NO

8) How often are house meetings held?

9) Who attends?

	(a)	Management committee		(b)	Paid workers
	(c)	Unpaid workers		(d)	Residents
	(e)	Ex-residents		(f)	Children

10) Are you legally constituted as

	(a)	Company		(b)	Co-operative
	(c)	Charity			

11) Are you under an umbrella organisation? If so please name it.

12) Who in your Refuge determines the amounts of wages paid?

13) Who decides number of hours worked?

14) Who draws up roster?

15) Briefly describe your roster system?

16) Who employs new workers? Paid and unpaid?

17) What do you look for when employing workers? - qualities? experience? etcetera.....

18) Do you give priorities to ex-residents when employing workers?
YES NO

19) Who in your refuge makes decisions re termination of workers jobs both paid and unpaid?

20) Why is your Refuge run the way it is e.g. Collective, Management Committee etc.?

21) What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of this method of operation?

22) Are men involved in your Refuge?
YES NO

23) If yes, at what level?

☐	(a) Management	☐	(b) Workers
☐	(c) Volunteers	☐	(d) Child Care

24) Do paid and unpaid workers hold combined meetings? If so, how often?

25) Do paid workers hold separate meetings? If so, how often?

26) Do unpaid workers hold separate meetings? If so, how often?

27) Does your Refuge have a process of self-evaluation? If so, how often does this happen?

28) Please give details of this process.

29) What does your Refuge consider to be the most important aspects of self-evaluation?

REASONS FOR EXISTENCE:

1) For what reasons did women and children come to your Refuge when it first opened?

☐	(a) Domestic violence	☐	(b) Homelessness
☐	(c) Deserted by husbands or defactos	☐	(d) Visiting friends or relatives in institutions
☐	(e) Sexual abuse of woman or her children	☐	(f) Other - please explain

2) Have the reasons women and children seek refuge changed noticeably?

3) Do you have a priorities system for admitting women and children to your Refuge? If so please list them and explain why.

4) Who refers women and children to your Refuge?

5) When was your Refuge set up and by whom?

6) Why is a Refuge needed in your geographical area?

7) What did women do before there was a refuge in the area?

8) Are there any other forms of emergency accommodation in your area?

9) Are the services they offer different from your own and in what ways?

SHIFTS IN EMPHASIS:

1) Have the services offered by your Refuge expanded or changed since it was originally set up? Please expain.

2) Are women with the following specific needs referred to your Refuge?

(a) women with severe psychological/emotional problems?
(b) women who are handicapped - physically or mentally?
(c) women with drug/and or alcohol problems?
(d) women who speak little or no English?
(e) women without children?
(f) chronically homeless women?
(g) women whose children have chronic behavioural problems?
(h) victims of rape or sexual abuse?
(i) other

3) Which of the above groups do you cater for (a,b,c - etc)?

4) Which of the above groups are you unable to cater for (a,b,c - etc), and why?

5) To what facilities in the community can you refer women from the above groups to?

6) Are there additional services needed in your area to cater for women from the above groups? Please specify.

7) How has the child care situation changed in your Refuge since the Child Care Report?

PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS:

1) Do residents and ex-residents of your Refuge have access to the following on refuge premises:-

Residents	Ex-residents
a) public phone	a) public phone
b) laundry facilities	b) laundry facilities
c) legal information	c) legal information
d) health information	d) health information
e) pregnancy information	e) pregnancy information
f) contraception advice	f) contraception advice
g) abortion referral	g) abortion referral
h) library	h) library
i) films	i) films
j) quiet space away from children	j) quiet space away from children
k) play area for children - indoor; outdoor	k) play area for childen - indoor; outdoor
l) linen	l) linen
m) furniture assistance	m) furniture assistance
n) food	n) food

2) Is the design and size of your Refuge adequate for your needs?

3) Is there room for improvement and in what areas?

4) Does your Refuge experience overcrowding?
YES NO

5) Does the design and size of the refuge have an effect on residents particularly when overcrowded? Please explain if necessary.

6) Who owns your Refuge (premises)?

7) Do you pay rent? If so, how much per week?

8) Has your Refuge had to change location? If so, how often and why?

9) If you do/could own your own refuge premises, what would you see as the advantages or disadvantages?

10) What food does your Refuge supply?

WIDER EMERGING ISSUES:

1) What wider issues have become evident by the existence of your Refuge e.g's low income housing, child care, increased pensions/benefits.

2) What have/could you do about these issues?

3) What information on these issues do you have available for women who use the refuge?

4) What are the most common conflicts between residents in your refuge caused by and how do you solve them? A few suggestions of possible causes of conflict are:-

a) differences in cultural backgrounds;
b) differences in lifestyles of residents - smokers and non-smokers, vegetarians and non-vegetarians, homosexual and heterosexual women, women who have lived communally and those who have not;
c) women who have children and women who don't and
d) women with children but who have left the children with husbands/defactos or in some other form of care

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS:

1) What other agencies do you consider necessary for meeting the needs of women and children who come to the refuge?

2) What agencies already exist within the community?

3) How adequate are they?

4) Do you consider that you and women who use the refuge are given appropriate support and respect by these agencies? Please give details.

5) Are there any agencies in your area that you don't use? Please specify if there are agencies you USED to use and NO LONGER do!

6) What local agencies are particularly supportive to your Refuge? e.g. police, Y.A.C.S., Dept. S.S., estate agents, child care centres, church organisations, service clubs etcetera. (media)

7) What local agencies are particularly unsupportive to your Refuge? e.g. policy, Y.A.C.S., Dept. S.S., estate agents, child care centres, church organisations, service clubs etc. (media)

8) Apart from offering emergency accommodation, how do the services your Refuge offers differ from those offered by other agencies?

9) How do you feel your Refuge is seen by neighbours and the immediate community?

10) How do you feel your Refuge is seen by the community generally?

CHILD CARE:

1) What types of activities does your Refuge provide for children?

2) What age groups are catered for by child-care workers?

3) Do the child-care workers provide excursions and activities away from the Refuge?

4) Who covers the cost of these activities?

5) Do you feel there is a need to take children out of the refuge environment? Please explain.

6) Up to what age can you accommodate children at the refuge?

7) Do you exclude male children over a certain age?
YES NO
Why?

8) What is the child-care worker's involvement with the mothers of children at the refuge?

9) What is the child-care workers involvement with mothers of ex-residents children?

10) How is significant information communicated between general workers and child-care workers?

11) What resources do you use to cope with children with emotional problems/needs?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) What would your Refuge recommend to improve its services?
e.g. bigger refuge, improved conditions etc.

2) Have you had any problems with Y.A.C.S. concerning funding?
If so, please expand.

3) Broadly speaking, how does the "Refuge Movement" express the opinions - attitudes of your Refuge? Conferences, etcetera

4) What does your Refuge want to see come out of this evaluation?

WOMENS QUESTIONNAIRE

These questions are not a test. They are going to provide us with information that will be put into a report for refuges to see how they are affecting you (and your children.) The more information you can give us the better the report will be and the more helpful it will be to the refuge movement. For those of you who have left the refuge - - the main part of the questionnaire refers to when you were living at the refuge. There is also a section at the back which asks questions about what has happened since you left the refuge. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire and all information you give is confidential. If there is anything on the questionnaire that you do not understand could you ask another resident or ex-resident of the refuge to help you.

Thank you for your co-operation
Erst, Jo and Mary
(Evaluation Team)

Age _____

Number of children _____

Resident or ex-resident _____

Refuge _____

1. Why did you come to the Refuge?
Please tick any of the following that apply to you:

a) physical or mental violence from your husband or boyfriend or any other person ☐

b) evicted from the house/flat you were living in ☐

c) no money and nowhere to go ☐

d) sexual abuse to your child from husband or boyfriend or relative or any other person ☐

e) physical abuse to your child from husband boyfriend relative, yourself or any other person ☐

f) any other reason (please explain)

2. How did you find out about the refuge? Please tick any of the following that apply to you:

a) Your local doctor ☐

b) Health Centre or Hospital ☐

c) "Lifeline" or other crisis counselling ☐

d) Police ☐

e) A community Social Worker ☐

f) Friend ☐

g) Ex-resident of a refuge ☐

h) Youth and Community Services ☐

i) Other (please explain)

3. How many refuges turned you away before you came here?
Why?

4. How long have you been at the refuge?

5. What would you have done if there was no Refuge?
Please tick any of the following that apply to you

a) Stayed where you were ☐

b) Sought help from a government or community agency. e.g. Department of Social Security ☐

c) Moved in with relatives or friends ☐

d) Found yourself a house or flat ☐

e) Had a nervous breakdown ☐

f) Had your child/children put into "care" ☐

g) Gone to a psychiatric unit/hospital ☐

h) Wandered homeless ☐

i) Other (please explain)

6. Do you think the refuge is any different from other temporary accommodation such as hostels, guest houses, hotels? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how is it different?

7. What is the difference between the refuge and other Welfare Services you have used (e.g. Department of Youth and Community Services, Legal Aid, Smith Family)?

8. Have you been to this Refuge before? Please tick Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, what sort of problems forced you to come back?

9. Have you been to any other Women's Refuge? Please tick Yes ☐ No ☐

10. What do you expect a refuge can offer you?

11. Does this happen here? (Give details)

12. Do you feel comfortable in the refuge? Why do you say this? Yes ☐ No ☐

13. What are the "good" things about the Refuge?

14. What are the "bad" things?

15. Which of the following are provided by your Refuge?

a) a phone for women in the house Yes ☐ No ☐

b) washing facilities Yes ☐ No ☐

c) food Yes ☐ No ☐

d) clothing for you and your kids Yes ☐ No ☐

e) health information Yes ☐ No ☐

g) legal information Yes ☐ No ☐

h) pregnancy information — Yes | | No | |

i) abortion referral — Yes | | No | |

j) assistance with furniture — Yes | | No | |

k) quiet space without kids — Yes | | No | |

l) films — Yes | | No | |

m) holidays — Yes | | No | |

n) a worker at the refuge all the time — Yes | | No | |

o) child care — Yes | | No | |

p) emotional support for you and your children — Yes | | No | |

16. Are there any of the above that are not provided that you would like to be?
Anything else you think should be provided?

17. Are there any of the above that are provided but you don't thing are necessary?

18. Do you often get together with the other women in the house to talk about your situation and to help each other?

When is this most likely to happen?

19. What is your cultural background? (eg. Greek, Lebanese, Aboriginal)

Does this effect the way other women in the house relate to you? — Yes | | No | |

If yes how?

Does this effect the way workers relate to you? — Yes | | No | |

If yes How?

20. Have you ever lived communally before (i.e. with other people, not counting your husband or boyfriend or your children)? — Yes | | No | |

21. Do you like living communally at the refuge?
Why?
or Why not?
(i.e. sharing cooking, housework and living space)

22. Are you encouraged to take responsibility for the running of the house at your Refuge? — Yes | | No | | Sometimes | |

23. Who does the housework?

Please tick

a) the women in the house [ ]

b) the women and workers [ ]

c) workers [ ]

d) housekeeper [ ]

e) other (please explain) [ ]

24. Are you required to attend house meetings at your Refuge?

Please tick Yes [ ] No [ ] Sometimes [ ]

Are there any tensions between women in the house? Yes [ ] No [ ] Sometimes [ ]

(Give examples of the sort of tensions)

How are these sorted out?

25. Do you intend to keep in touch with the refuge after you leave? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Please tick

Why? or Why not?

26. Do you pay rent at your refuge? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If yes, how much per week?

27. Do you share a room? Yes [ ] No [ ]
How many people sleep in your room (including kids)?

28. Do you feel a need for more privacy? Yes [ ] No [ ]
How do you think this could be achieved?

29. Is your refuge overcrowded? Yes [ ] No [ ]
(i.e. not enough space)

How does this effect you and your children and the relationships between the women (and kids) in the house.

30. Is your refuge in need of repair most of the time you have been here? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Please explain, if it is, and how this effects you (and your children.)

31. Are there enough of the following at your Refuge:

a) crockery Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) cutlery Yes [ ] No [ ]

c) cooking utensils — Yes [ ] No [ ]

d) blankets — Yes [ ] No [ ]

e) linen — Yes [ ] No [ ]

f) pillows — Yes [ ] No [ ]

g) garbage bins — Yes [ ] No [ ]

h) food (basics such as vegetables, fruit, meat, bread, milk) — Yes [ ] No [ ]

What kind of condition are they generally in?

a) very good [ ] b) good [ ] c) poor [ ] d) varies [ ]

32. Is there plenty of room to:

a) hang out and dry washing — Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) relax with the other women — Yes [ ] No [ ]

c) play with the kids or for them to play — Yes [ ] No [ ]

33. How do you think the space and facilities at your refuge could be improved?

34. Who runs your refuge?

a) Board of Directors [ ]

b) Management Committee [ ]

c) Management Committee and workers [ ]

d) Collective [ ]

e) Women in the house [ ]

f) Kids [ ]

g) Any other combination? [ ]

h) Don't know [ ]

35. If your refuge is run by a collective what do you understand by the word "collective"

36. If a women in the house is causing tension, who decides that she leaves?

a) Board of Directors ☐

b) Management Committee ☐

c) Managment Committee and workers ☐

d) Workers ☐

e) Workers and Women in the house ☐

f) Women in the house ☐

g) Any others? ☐

h) Don't know ☐

37. Do you feel you have been involved in making decisions about the running of the Refuge?

a) Day to day housekeeping Yes ☐ No ☐

b) Making overall decisions about the refuge Yes ☐ No ☐

38. Have you ever worked at the refuge (either while living there or after you left)? e.g.

a) Answering the phone in the office ☐

b) Taking women to solicitors or court ☐

c) Taking women to Youth and Community or the Department of Social Security ☐

d) Going to look for a house/flat with another woman in the refuge ☐

e) Working in the office at the refuge ☐

f) Helping a new woman to settle in ☐

g) Child care with or without the child care worker(s) ☐

h) Any other work you can think of (besides Housework?) Please explain

39. Have you been paid for any of this?

40. Have you ever been a "permanent" paid worker at the refuge? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what effect has that had on your life?

41. What problems have you had in working for the refuge? e.g.

a) child care for your kids ☐

b) transport to get there ☐

c) feeling as though you don't know what is expected of you ☐

d) any other problems (please explain)

42. What sort of things do you think a refuge worker should do? Please tick any of the following you think is suitable even if your refuge workers don't do them:

a) Go with you to:
Youth and Community (or Department of Social Security) ☐
Solicitors ☐ Court ☐ Doctor ☐

look for a house (rented or Housing Commission) ☐

b) Give you information on:

housing	☐	custody	☐	divorce	☐
maintenance	☐	pensions	☐	work	☐
health	☐	contraception	☐	pregnancy	☐
adoption	☐	abortion	☐	children and child care	☐
community resources	☐	Drug and Alcohol problems	☐		

c) Comfort you when you are upset ☐

d) Mind your childen when you need a break ☐

e) Work with your children in an educational way ☐

f) Come with you to get your belongings from the place you have just left ☐

g) Help you move to your new place ☐

h) Be there if anyone threatening rings or comes to the Refuge? ☐

i) Interpret for any woman who cannot speak English, or arrange for an interpreter ☐

j) Cook for everyone at the Refuge ☐

k) Clean the Refuge ☐

l) Help sort out tensions between women in the house ☐

m) Sort out problems with the local school ☐

n) Be someone to talk to ☐

o) Refer you to other Community Agencies ☐

p) Others you can think of? ☐

43. Are there any of the above that you think your refuge workers <u>should</u> do but don't?

44. Are there any of the above that you feel workers should <u>not</u> do?

45. Are there any men working at the refuge? e.g. child care, trades people Yes ☐ No ☐

How does this effect you (and your children?)

46. Are there any ex-residents workers Yes ☐ No ☐

Are there any differences between them and other workers? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please explain

47. Are there any voluntary or unpaid workers? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are there differences between them and the paid workers? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please explain

48. Has the refuge ever put you in touch with other services such as:

Health Centre ☐ Legal Aid ☐

Housing Commission ☐ Youth and Community Services ☐

Department of Social Security	☐	A pre-school	☐
A Community Social Worker	☐	Migrant Services	☐
Aboriginal Services	☐	Drug and Alcohol Counselling	☐
Family counselling for yourself or your children	☐	The local hospital	☐
Rape counselling	☐	Police	☐
A Magistrate	☐	Others (Please list)	

49. Have any of the ones you've had contact with <u>not</u> been helpful? Please explain

50. Are you afraid of having your children taken away from you by "Welfare"? Yes ☐ No ☐

Has the refuge helped to make you less afraid? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how?

51. What effect has the refuge had on your's and your children's lives?

EX-RESIDENTS ONLY

This section of the questionnaire is only for women who have left the Refuge.

52. How long is it since you left the refuge?

53. Where did you go when you left? e.g.

a)	Back to the same place	
b)	Back to the same place but without husband/ boyfriend or any person you had problems with	
c)	To a rented house or flat	
d)	To a Housing Commission house or flat	
e)	To share a house with others	
f)	To a half-way house connected to the refuge	
g)	Back to a refuge	
h)	Hospital	
i)	Wandered homeless	
j)	Any other situation (please explain)	

54. What kind of support have you and your children had from the refuge since you left? e.g.

a)	Assistance finding furniture	
b)	Assistance in moving	
c)	Information about your new local area	
d)	Help with child care	
e)	Assistance getting children into pre-school	
f)	Financial Assistance	
g)	Emotional support	

h) Other (please explain) [ ]

55. Have you formed ongoing friendships with

a) women from the refuge [ ]

b) workers from the refuge [ ]

c) both [ ]

56. What would you have done without any help from the refuge after you left?

57. Have you contacted the refuge for information since you left? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, what kind of information (give details)

58. What further assistance do you think you will need from the refuge?

59. What are the main problems you have faced since leaving the refuge.

e.g. Loneliness [ ]

Lack of child care [ ]

Poor Transport [ ]

Not enough money to live on [ ]

Ongoing conflicts with your husband or boyfriend or other problem person [ ]

Unsuitable place to live (please explain) [ ]

Feeling that you are not ready to live alone [ ]

Not being happy with whoever you are sharing a house/flat with [ ]

Lack of support from the refuge [ ]

Any others (please explain) [ ]

PAID WORKERS QUESTIONNAIRE

AIMS:

1. What do you personally think is the main aim of the refuge?

2. How have your personal aims (for your work) changed since you first became involved in the refuge?

3. What were your initial reasons for wanting to work at the refuge? (Briefly)

4. Have these reasons/expectations changed? How?

WORK CONDITIONS

5. What is your hourly rate of pay?

6. How many hours are you paid to work each week?

7. What is your wage per week?

8. How many hours per week, on average, do you work unpaid?

	Day	Evening	Weekend

9. Do you or workers at your refuge receive

			Weeks per year
holiday pay	Yes	No	
sick pay	Yes	No	
part-time loading	Yes	No	
time in lieu	Yes	No	
overtime	Yes	No	
workers compensation	Yes	No	
maternity leave	Yes	No	

10. Is there a time limit for working at the refuge? Why?

11. How long have you been working at the refuge?

12. How much longer do you intend working (approx.)?

13. What would be your reasons for leaving?

14. Approx. how often is there a change in staff (of one or more workers) at the refuge?

    How does this affect you?

15. Do you train new workers?

    How?

16. What was the training/orientation you received when you first started?

    Was this adequate?

17. What is an average weekly roster for you?

Day	Time from/to
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

18. How often does this change?

19. Do you have overlapping shifts for communication?

20. How is day to day information passed between workers?

21. What effect has working at the refuge had on your
    Mental health?
    Physical health?
    Home life?
    Relationships?

22. Has your consumption of any of the following increased since you began working at the refuge?
    Tobacco
    Alcohol
    Food
    Sedatives
    Other drugs
    Other
    Comment

23. Was there a written job description when you started at the refuge?

    Was there a job contract?

24. Do you live in at the refuge?

    If so, do you pay board?

    What provisions are there for time off from the refuge?

25. Who are your main supports in your work at the refuge?
    (e.g. other workers, women in the household, friends, management etc.)

26. Have you formed friendships with workers, ex-residents that you feel will continue after you finish working at the refuge?

27. If you are an ex-resident worker (i.e. if you have at some stage lived in a refuge) what are some of the advantages of working with non ex-resident workers?

    What are some of the difficulties?

28. If you are a non ex-resident worker, what are some of the advantages of working with ex-resident workers?

    What are some of the difficulties?

29. If you work with mainly ex-residents, what are some of the benefits?

    What are some of the problems?

30. How do you think your opportunities have changed through working at the refuge?

31. What is your work experience previous to working at the refuge? (please include having family, if applicable)

32. How well did this equip you for refuge work?

33. Do you think your wage is an adequate remuneration for your skills?

    For the time you work?

    Do you think refuge workers should be paid Australian Social Welfare Workers Union rates?

34. What do child-care workers do? (briefly)

    Is child care work rotated with general work?

    How often?

    Are you happy with this situation?

    Are you a child care worker?
    Now In the past

35. Were you involved in the refuge before the "Child Care Needs in Women's Refuges" report was done?

    How has child care changed in your refuge since then?

36. Do child care workers -

    have their own meetings?
    participate in general workers meetings?
    control their own funds?
    have equal access to files, petty cash etc.?

37. Do you think child care workers have as much decision-making power in your refuge as other workers?
    Would you like to see this changed?

38. Is there a distinct difference between child care workers and others?
    Comments:

39. Do you have major idealogical or other differences with other workers?

    How do you cope with this? as an individual
    as a collective or team of workers

40. Do you have major idealogical differences or other differences with your management committee or collective (please specify which you work with)

    How do you cope with this as an individual?
    as a team of workers?

41. The following is an attempt to list the range of jobs refuge workers are involved in. Please tick which jobs you have done and how often according to this key: A - more than once per week
B - more than once per two months
C - have done on occasion
also * - have major responsibility for this area
e.g. grocery shopping - A *

JOB	HOW OFTEN A	B	C
Household			
cleaner			
cook			
garbage			
washwoman			
grocery shopper			
furniture buyer			
nurse			
Maintenance			
handiperson			
painter			
lawnmower			
car repairs(minor)			
plumber			
gardener			
carpenter			
Childcare			
pre-school			
after-school			
evenings			
weekends			
extended holidays			
liaison with schools and other c/c resources			
car & bus driver			
equipment organizer, buyer & scrounger			
substitute mother for extended periods			
babysitter			
excursion organizer			
sandwich maker			
bum wiper			
nutrition adviser			
crafts teacher			
submission writer & c/c funds budgeter			
other -			
Office worker			
bookeeper of accounts			
wages			
pettycash			
answer & filer of correspondence			
receptionist			
statistics			
other -			

JOB	HOW OFTEN A	B	C
Driver, friend & advocate residents going to:			
Y.A.C.S.			
Social Security			
doctors			
court			
hospital			
child welfare			
other -			
"Counsellor"/mediator in person & by phone for -			
separation			
rape			
grief			
drug & alcohol			
domestic violence			
other - (please note over page query on your meaning of "counsellor")			
Follow up			
removals			
resources			
interpreter			
advocate			
c/c referrals			
support			
dropping in for a 'cuppa'			
Funding			
submission writing & follow up			
budget planning			
meetings			
campaign work			
letter writing			
lobbying			
research			
banking & liaison			
liaisoning with auditor			
other -			
Resource Persons on			
nutrition			
contraception			
legal matters			
pensions & welfare rights			
obtaining furniture			
storing furniture			
other community groups & welfare system			
hire purchase & other contracts			
crafts			
other			

JOB	HOW OFTEN A	B	C	JOB	HOW OFTEN A	B	C
Refuge conferences				**Referral agent** for			
travel				health centres			
meetings				Y.A.C.S.			
letter writing				Social Security			
				doctors, hospitals			
Miscellaneous				migrant services			
security guard				child care			
rescue squad				employment			
taxi service				psychiatric & other			
furniture				specialist services			
removalist				recreation facilities			
interpreter				other -			
Liaison				**Cuppa tea making & sitting around chatting**			
public speaking							
Y.A.C.S.							
bureaucracy				**Other** (please specify)			
student superviser							
fund raiser							
defending refuge							
to community							

42. What are the jobs which take up most of your time?

43. What would you like to have priority in your refuge work time?

44. What sort of counselling are you involved in -
e.g. formal one to one sessions
informal individual advice sessions
group discussions
cuppa tea chats around the kitchen table

45. What has been your most stressful experience while working at the refuge?
(How common is this situation?)

46. What recommendations can you make to improve the work conditions at your refuge?

for refuge workers as a whole?

47. What is most satisfying about working at the refuge?

48. What is least satisfying?

PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS OF THE REFUGE

49. Do you often get the opportunity to sit around and talk to the women at the refuge?

When is this most likely to happen?

What are your busiest times of day?
times of year?

50. How does the physical environment of the refuge affect you?

51. If the refuge often overcrowded?
If yes, how does this affect you?

52. Are there sufficient supplies of pens, office supplies etc. at your refuge?
If not, how does this affect your work?

53. Does your refuge have adequate floor coverings, cooking & washing facilities, eating space, kids equipment etc?

REFUGE MOVEMENT

54. Have you ever been to a refuge conference?

How many workers usually go from your refuge?
How many management?

Would you like to go to most refuge conferences?

		Yes	No
Why don't you go?	expense		
	time		
	lack of information		
	lack of interest		
	child care		
	other		

55. If you have attended refuge conferences, are you satisfied with the resolutions

satisfied	
neutral	
dissatisfied	

Why?

56. Do you feel that your views are adequately represented and discussed at refuge conferences?

57. Briefly what do you like about conferences?

Briefly what do you dislike about conferences?

58. How adequately do you feel the Refuge Movement as a whole represents your views and those of your refuge?

ROLE OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

59. Do you feel that you, and residents of the refuge, are given appropriate respect and support by - YACS D.O.
Health Commission social workers
Housing Commission
other community groups
Social Security
Police

60. Comment on your good experiences with community groups.

61. Comment on your bad experiences with community groups.

EFFECTS ON WOMEN AND KIDS

62. Apart from shelter and practical information, what do you think the refuge can offer (1) women who come to the refuge?

(2) children who come to the refuge?

63. Do you see the refuge as different from other welfare organisations?

If yes, in what ways?

64. Do you give continuing support to ex-residents and their children?

How?

What difficulties do you have in maintaining continuing support?

65. Are you paid to do follow-up work or does it often occur in your own time?

Does follow-up work overlap into your social life?
Does follow-up work overlap into your home life?
Does this overlap ever become a problem?

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

66. How would you describe your refuge's management structure? (i.e. do you run as a collective, or are workers separate from the management committee, or is there a combination of both or something else? Explain)

67. How has this changed/developed since you have been involved in the refuge?

Is this better or worse?

68. If you are a collective, who is involved in your collective? (e.g. paid workers, unpaid workers, community members etc. Please explain).

How many people are active members of your collective?

What are the advantages of working in a collective?

What are the disadvantages of working in a collective?

69. Who (eg. management committee, collective, workers and management committee workers, women in the house) makes decisions on -
policy
day to day running
household running
spending of money

staff hiring and firing
length of stay
political campaigns
what information is available at the refuge

70. Are the duties of each worker clearly defined?
Are they rotated? How often? (eg. every 3 months, 6 months)

71. Does one person oversee the funding or is this done by the whole collective/team of workers/management?

72. How do your encourage women living in the refuge to be involved in the running of the refuge?

73. If you have a management committee, what qualities do you think a good management person needs?

Do you feel your management committee have these?

74. Do you feel that you have free range to work in the best interests of women using the refuge?

WIDER ISSUES EMERGING

75. Have you been involved in campaign work/delegations for:

Housing issues		(please tick)
Pensions		
Legal		
Child Care		
Health		
Women's Issues generally		
Other (please specify)		

Has this been in paid time or unpaid time?

76. How has the recognition of these issues changed the emphasis of your work (1) in the amount of time that you have available to spend with the women in the house

(2) in the outlook of the whole refuge?

77. Do you think there are inadequacies in child care, housing, pensions (in general)?
If so, how does this frustrate your work at the refuge?

78. Is there anything additional you would like to say?

79. What would you like to see come out of this evaluation?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION! HOPEFULLY THE INFORMATION GATHERED HERE WILL BE OF GREAT BENEFIT TO ALL REFUGE WORKERS.

VOLUNTEERS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did you receive any training for working at the refuge?

2. What sort of work do you do at the refuge?

3. How many hours per month, on average, do you work at the refuge?
   day evening

4. Are you ever on call for emergencies?
   How often do you get called out?

5. Would you like to be a paid worker?

6. Are you involved in decision making on:
   policy YES NO

   day to day running while you are at the refuge YES NO

   spending of refuge funds YES NO

7. Would you like to be involved?

8. Have you ever lived in a refuge or been a victim of domestic violence?

9. What are your reasons for working at the refuge?

COMMUNITY GROUPS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does your refuge refer women and children to the Women's Refuge in your area? YES NO/ please tick.

2. If yes, for what reasons?

3. If no, why?

4. Does the Women's Refuge refer women and children to your organisation?

5. For what reasons?

6. To which services in the community did you refer women before there was a women's refuge in the area?

7. How did they compare with or differ from the services offered by the refuge?

8. What type of services do you understand refuges provide?

9. Do you see these services as

☐	excellent
☐	very good
☐	good
☐	satisfactory
☐	unsatisfactory

10. Please explain and give further details for the above answer.

11. What type of relationships or liaison do you have with the refuge?

12. Do workers of your organisation meet with refuge workers on a regular basis?

YES NO

13. Is there a forum for regular meetings in your area? e.g., Community Services Group, Interagency etc.

14. If you use the above forum, is this an effective liaison point? Please explain and give further details if necessary.

15. Taking into consideration your work load and the varied aspects of refuge work, do you think the liaison between you and the refuge could be improved? If so, how?

16. How do you see the role of a "refuge worker"?

17. How does this role compare with or differ from the role of workers in your organisation?

Should you need more space to complete answers, please use back of page and note number of question.

APPENDIX E

ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

The following tables are additional statistics gathered from the management (36 refuges), workers (205 people) and residents (141) ex-residents (259) (Total: 400 women) questionnaires.

A. Personal Details

Table 1 Age of Resident/Ex-resident Sample

Age	No. of Women
15-18	22
19-22	62
23-30	145
31-40	118
41-50	39
51 plus	14
Total	400

Table 2 Age of Workers

Age	No. of Workers
18-24	27
25-34	76
35-44	44
45 plus	47
N/R	11
Total	205

Table 3 Sex of Workers

Sex	No. of Workers
Female	200
Male	5

B. Length of Stay and Turnaway rates

Table 4 Time Limit on stay at refuge (Management)

Time Limit		No. of Refuges
None		7
Less than	One month	1
	Two months	13
	Three months	14
	Five months	1
Total		36

Table 5 Average length of stay (Management)

Time	No. of Refuges
Less than 2 weeks	4
2- 4 weeks	11
4- 6 weeks	10
6- 8 weeks	7
8-12 weeks	3
More than 12	1

Table 6 Length of stay (Sample 259 ex-residents)

Time	No. of Women
Less than 1 week	12
1- 4 weeks	68
4- 8 weeks	91
8-12 weeks	45
More than 12 weeks	43
Total	259

Table 7 Busiest Periods of Year (Multiple responses)

Period	No. of Refuges
All	5
Summer	13
School Holidays	25
Other	2

Table 8 Response to "How many refuges turned you away before you came here?"

Turned Away	No. of Women
None	354
One Refuge	26
More than 1	20
Total	400

C. Reasons for Existence of Womens Refuges

Table 9 Specific Geographic Need for Refuge

Need	No. of Refuges
No other emergency accommodation	14
Housing shortage	7
High domestic violence	8
High migrant and aboriginal population	3
Isolated area	2
Near gaol	3
Economically deprived area	5
Resort area	3

Table 10 Changes in Reasons for Women Needing Refuge

Changes in Need	No. of Refuges
More homelessness	15
More young women	4
More referrals from psych. hospitals	5
More drug and alcohol problems	6
Aboriginal resettlement	1
Women visiting prisons	3
No changes noted	11

Table 11 Year Refuge Established

Year	No. of Refuges
1944	1
1974	2
1975	6
1976	9
1977	5
1978	5
1979	4
1980	3
1981	1

Table 12 Supports offered to women apart from shelter and information (most frequently noted) (Workers)

Support	No. of Workers
Help and empathy	130
New friends	49
Contact with women in similar situations	38
Self realisation	39
Alternative lifestyle	35
Time out	37
Safety	29
New start	25
Social network	19
Confidence	44
Break from children	19

Table 13 Supports for Children (Most frequently noted) (Workers)

Support	No. of Workers
New friends	56
Break from mother	25
Extended network	36
Chance to talk	48
Fun	89
Confidence	41
Safety	50
Love, respect, understanding	21
Independence	18

Table 14 Refuge Different from other Welfare Organisations (Workers)

Different	No. of Workers
Yes	169
No	4
No Response	32
Total	205

Table 15 Priority for Refuge Use (Management Questionnaires)

Priority	No. of Refuges
None	18
Women with children	11
Women escaping domestic violence	7
Homeless women	4
Single women	2
Women escaping sexual assault	2
Relatives visiting prisoners	1

D. Work Conditions

Table 16 Responses to "Do you think your wage is adequate remuneration for your skills?"

Response	No. of Workers	Percentage
Yes	82	40
No	115	56
No Response	8	4
Total	205	100

Table 17 Responses to "Do you think your wage is adequate remuneration for the time you work?"

Response	No. of Workers	Percentage
Yes	55	27
No	137	67
No Response	13	6
Total	205	100

Table 18 Responses to "Do you think workers should be paid Australian Social Welfare Union rates?"

Response	No. of Workers	Percentage
Yes	169	82
No	12	6
No Response	24	12
Total	205	100

Table 19 Sick Leave Provisions

Time	No. of Refuges
Nil	8
1 week	9
2 weeks	15
More than 2 weeks	3
As necessary	1

Table 20 Frequencey of Worker Roster Change

Frequency	No. of Workers
Weekly	25
Fortnightly	19
3 monthly	7
6 monthly	24
As required	79
Never	53
No response	7

Table 21 Method for passing on information (Workers-multiple responses)

Method	No. of Workers
Overlapping shifts	48
Daybook	141
Telephone	46
Personal contact	102
Other	9

Table 22 Workers Main Supports (Multiple Responses)

Support	No. of Workers
Other workers	165
Management	42
Residents	57
Friends/family	56
Collective	9
All	11
Other - Salvation Army	3
No response	10

Table 23 Workers' Friendships Established

Friendships	No. of Workers
With other workers	37
With ex-residents	16
With both	134
No response	18

Table 24(a) Previous Work Experience (Workers)

Work	No. of Workers
Raising family	128
Welfare qualifications/experience/ other professional work/skills	45
factory/shops/unskilled/ health/community work/ office work	58
Hadn't done paid work before/not for a long time	65
Ex-resident	28
Childcare	45
Other	9
	13
	26
	4

Table 24(b) Relevance of previous work experience to Refuge Work (Workers)

Relevance	No. of Workers
Very	74
Adequate	83
Inadequate	25
No Response	23
Total	205

Table 25 Types of Childcare (Management)

	No. of Refuges
Activities at refuge	29
Equipment	29
Separate space for children	9
Outings	26
Excursions	29
Craft	11
Emergency Care	6
No C/C funding	7

Table 26 Responses to "Is childcare work rotated with general work at your refuge? Are you satisfied with this situation?

Rotated	No. of Refuges	Satisfactory Situation	
Yes	11	Yes	7
		No	4
No	20	Yes	7
		No	13
Not applicable	5	-	-

Thus workers at 20 refuges would like childcare to be rotated with general work, and at 11 refuges workers would prefer non-rotation.

Table 27 Suggestions for Improvements in Work Conditions

Improvements	Workers	Refuges
Increased funding	70	23
More workers	58	23
Increased wages	64	18
Follow-up funding	149	27
Better communication	32	15
More refuges	38	17
Increased worker autonomy	8	6
Workshops	14	4
Paid overtime	9	3
Specialist Bookkeeper	3	3
Better facilities	8	6
Acceptance by Community	41	14

E. Women with Special Needs

Table 28 Referrals of Women with Special Needs (Management)

Women	No. of Refuges	
	Referrals Received	Cannot provide accommodation
Severe emotional problems	30	17
Physically or mentally handicapped	27	19
Drug and alcohol dependant	30	20
Little or no English	26	9
Without children	30	6
Chronically homeless	31	5
Children with chronic behavioural problems	30	3
Victims of rape or sexual abuse	30	4
Visiting gaol	5	2
Unemployed	2	-
Young mothers with new babies	3	-

F. STRUCTURE

Table 29 Management Structure (Management Qustionnaires)

Structure	No. of Refuges
Collective	14
Management Committee	4
Management Committee and Workers	11
Umbrella Group	7

Table 30 Legal Constitution (Management)

Constitution	No. of Refuges
Non-profit Company	10
Co-operative	5
Charity	20
Company and Charity	1

Table 31 Decision Making - Body for particular areas (Management Questionnaires)

Decision Making Body	No. of Refuges			
	Wages	Hours	Rosters	Employment
Board of Directors (MC)	9	2	3	13
Workers and MC	9	4	4	6
Workers	1	15	19	4
Collective	11	9	9	11
Umbrella Group	6	6	1	2
Total	36	36	36	36

Table 32 Decision Making Group in Refuge (Workers Questionnaires)

Group	Policy	Day to Day Running	House hold	Money	Staff	Length of Stay	Camp-aigns	Infor-mation Avail-able at Refuge
Collective	14	8	3	12	14	13	14	14
MC	9	2	-	8	8	5	6	6
MC and Workers	8	5	3	10	11	6	6	4
Workers	1	11	10	2	-	6	6	8
Workers and Residents	-	8	13	-	-	3	-	
Residents	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	
Umbrella Group	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	4
Total	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

Table 33 Jobs Defined and Rotated

Defined	No. of Refuges
Yes	22
No	14
Rotated	**No. of Refuges**
Yes	15
No	21

Table 34 Accounts and Funding Control

Person or Group	No. of Refuges
Controlled by:	
Treasurer	15
Collective	10
Worker	11
Rotated: Yes	15
No	21
Overseen by:	
Management	10
Collective	14
Management and Workers	11
Worker	1

Table 35 Workers involved in Campaign Work

Issue	No. of Workers
Housing	89
Pensions	43
Legal	56
Childcare	64
Health	55
Funding	87
Women's Rights	110

Table 36 Campaign Work: Paid or Unpaid Hours

Time	No. of Workers	No. of Refuges
Paid	10	2
Unpaid	64	12
Both	76	22
N/R	55	2

Table 37(a) Members of Collectives

Members	No. of Refuges
Paid workers	14
Unpaid workers	10
Ex-residents	9
Residents	7
Community members	4

Table 37(b) Numbers of active members of Collective

Number	No. of Collectives
6-10	2
10-15	10
15 plus	2

Table 38 Owner of Refuge Building

Refuge	7
Council	7
Housing Commission	5
Private	5
Umbrella Group	7
Government Department	5

Table 39 Rent Paid for Refuge Building

None or nominal	13
Less than $50	5
$ 50-$100	7
$100-$150	5
$150-$200	4
N/R	2

G. Refuge Conferences

Table 40 Refuge Conferences Attendance

Attendances at Refuge Conferences		No. of Refuges
(a) No. of refuges where most workers have attended conferences		28
(b) No. of workers who usually go from each refuge:	1	3
	2-3	20
	More	9
No. of Management Committee members who usually go to conferences:		
	1	9
	2-3	4
	More	-
(c) No. of refuges where neither workers or Management have attended conferences		4
(d) Factors which are problematic for attendance at Conferences		
- childcare		18
- expense		24
- lack of interest		5
- lack of information		11
- time		34
(e) Refuges where most workers would like to attend most conferences		29

Table 41 Satisfaction level from Resolutions at Conferences

	No. of Workers
Satisfied	80
Neutral	48
Dissatisfied	30
No Response	47
Total	205

Table 42 Representation of Views at Conferences

	No. of Workers
Adequate	90
Sometimes	45
Inadequate	23
No Response	47
Total	205

Table 43 Representation of workers views by Refuge Movement as a whole

	No. of Workers
Very well	42
Adequately	57
Inadequately	27
No Response	79
Total	205

APPENDIX F

SINGLE WOMEN

The following is an attempt by workers at both single women's refuges to sum up the diversity and extent of problems sufferred by homeless single women.

> "It is pointless to try and catagorise the sort of women that have used the refuge; common experiences blur any distinctions. There has been a great variety of women, so some broad descriptions may help, bearing in mind that any one woman may fit many of these descriptions.
>
> .....there has been a group of pregnant women, some have been thrown out by their families, or rejected by their boyfriends. Some have positively decided to leave situations they found intolerable.
>
> .....there has been a significant number of women who have experienced a disabling illness or disease, which has completely disrupted their lives. They are unable to find work. Their families have rejected them or they have rejected their families. Often the medical drugs they have been prescribed have created a dependency. They do not wish to be institutionalised, but they are offered no role in the community.
>
> .....a frightening number of women have been in psychiatric institutions, some for long periods, and in many different ones. They may have no family or community support to return to, and will be caught in a dependency on these institutions, compounded by heavy dosages of psychiatric drugs. Their families may also want to know nothing about them.
>
> .....becoming orphans or state wards has disrupted the lives of a number of the women.
>
> .....a large number of the women were put into correctional or psychiatric institutions when they were about thirteen.
>
> .....a number of older women have stayed at the refuge. Their lives have been a mixture of everything we have described, but common to them is that often they have had their children taken away from them. This too is common for a smaller number of young women, most particularly aboriginal young women. It has been very valuable for different types of women to mix together, learn from each other, and share experiences. It has broken down a lot of fear, for example about madness.

Class

We found there was no correlation between class background and the need to be in a refuge. This has also been the case at Australia other young womens' refuge, Annie Kenney in Hobart. The women came from a variety of class backgrounds. The only significant difference that we could find is that middle-class girls tend to be put in psychiatric institutions to be cured, and working-class girls tend to be put in penal institutions to be reformed. Whatever the class background, the process of homelessness is a levelling one.

Family Background

The women came from a complete variety of family backgrounds, including what are commonly described as 'normal, happy two-parent families' of any class, not, as popular myth would have it, from broken working class families.

We have described some of the variety in the refuge, and would now like to describe some of the things that are common to many of the women..... Common Experience.

.....all the women find it hard to survive on their welfare benefits. It is especially hard for those under 18. You do not eat less, or need less of a roof over your head because you are 16. All of them are finding it a nightmare finding accommodation of any sort on the private market.

Many of these women gravitate towards Kings Cross to escape boredom, frustration and hopelessness ensuing from unmet expectations, isolation, low self-esteem, poverty and the breakdown of family and other supports due to similar stresses. Their vulnerability often leads to exploitation by pimps and pushers. They are prime victims of the readily prescribed drug and alcohol panacea.

.....many of the women have come from the western suburbs. That surprised no one. We have all known for years that unless jobs, social and cultural facilities, transport, housing for single people etc. were provided in the west, there would be no future there for women. This situation can only get worse, as there is so little being done to remedy matters.

.....there are no jobs, and the few that are being offered are either deadly boring and monotonous, or are simply exploitative, such as the 'job retraining schemes'. Young women are being offered $15 on top of their dole to work on a production line for 40 hours a week. The job takes quarter of an hour to learn.

.....most women's educations were disrupted by problems in their early teens, but it is hard for many of them to consider a return to shcool. Literacy is a problems, so we have employed a remedial teacher with refuge experience to do a few hours a week.

.....most women are depressed about the few options open to them. Many are cynical about meeting 'Mr. Right' and settling down. Their own family backgrounds refute the myth. Also some of the women have lived with men, and have been abused by them. Few of the women have any long term plans or perspectives.

.....most of the women use alcohol or drugs, prescribed or otherwise, to fill some of the gaps. There is a certain romanticism about the drug sub-culture, and getting "out of it" relieves the hopelessness.

.....most of the women are very intelligent. They are frustrated and bored. They feel cheated. They are dissatisfied with what is being offered. Many are very lonely. Most have been in refuges or institutions for too long. The refuge is full of energy, and nowhere for it to go.

.....most women are not very healthy. There is physical damage from drugs and alcohol. There is also poor nutritional knowledge though it is hard to afford decent food on a benefit.

So far we have been essentially descriptive, not examining why so many single women from such varied backgrounds have ended up in a refuge. Most of them have had some traumatic rupture in their lives which has severed their family ties, their ties with their communities, disrupted their educations, and left them with a confused sense of self. We have found that there is a common trauma that affected many of these women as young girls, that of

Incest/Rape

We showed a group of 20 women at the refuge a film about incest called 'Just me and my little girlie'. There was the usual variety of women, including those from 'normal happy families'. After the film only three women said they had not experienced some form of sexual abuse by a male member of their family, usually the father. This was consistent with the numbers we usually find, about 85% of the women have experienced incest.

Most women are very reluctant to talk about it. They realise that they have been abused, but they feel dirty. In all the families there was complete silence about what was happening. Most of the women lack a context in which to understand what was happening. In retrospect many see their fathers (brothers, uncles) as somehow blameless. He was sick, he needed help. Or the abuse is reconstructed in the girl's mind into affection so that she can cope with it. It meant she lived with the knowledge, eating away at her, thinking she was the only one. Many of the women are hostile towards their mothers. They feel abandoned or betrayed. Some felt that their mothers should have kept their fathers happier, so that they did not resort to their daughters. Or there is a very strong feeling that their mothers did not protect them. There is little awareness that the mothers could have been under threat too, or so overworked that they only felt relief when daddy offered to take the daughter out. It is very common for the incest to have occurred when the mother was out at work.

So the mother and to some extent the daughter are seen as the guilty parties. Nearly all the women who had been put into psych. or correctional institutions by their parents had been raped by a male member of their families. Once in an institution, many women's lives followed the same depressing path of trouble with the police, drug addiction, an end to their education, further violence towards them, poverty etc. They all suffer from a low self-esteem, guilt, and self-destructiveness.

Violence

There has been a certain amount of violence in the refuge. Although it is a house rule that there is no violence, physical or mental, in fact it is fruitless to stick to this too strictly. Rather, we have tried to understand why some women are violent at some times, what forms it takes, and work out alternative ways of expressing anger.

The violence may be calculated, when women model themselves on a romantic image of a 'thug' and act tough. But usually the violence is an angry response to something that represents a woman's frustration with the world.

Violence has been directed towards workers when women have to leave the refuge. We think it is women reverting to methods they use for self-survival outside the refuge, and is also their reaction to what they experience as another rejection, because so far there has been nothing to offer them when they leave.

We feel strongly that the most important thing is not to repress this anger. It is a legitimate response to the abuse and rejection these women have experienced. We try to put this anger in a context, so that it is not turned on themselves or on other victims of this abuse, and also so that they do not feel guilty or mad to be feeling angry. So that they feel justified to be angry.

We encourage the expression of anger.....we have a punching bag, and an old shed where women can break old crockery; women can shout, argue, swear, talk bitterly.

We put mental violence on a par with physical violence. Sexist attitudes allow women to 'bitch', but we think both methods can be equally destructive.

Acknowledging that her anger is justified takes away some of the frustration that produces the anger. However, given this knowledge, if the community continues to deny these women a sense of self, and continues to abuse and exploit them, we are not sure where the violence will be turned in the future."

APPENDIX G

"WOMEN IN LIMBO" - FRAMEWORK FOR SUBMISSION.

1. BACKGROUND

(i) Concern and Experience of Women's Refuges

From their conception in 1974, the Women's Refuges of N.S.W. have been used as "halfway houses" for women being discharged from Psychiatric Centres, either suffering a chronic form of psychiatric illness, or a marked degree of retardation.

All refuges thus affected have registered their disapproval of the situation at a local level (e.g. to their local Member of Parliament, or to the nearest Psychiatric Centre) and in some areas, particularly the inner city where some semi-supervised home units are situated close to Psychiatric Hospitals, or where large boarding houses, offering various degrees of efficiency, provide for the needs of these two categories of disadvantaged persons, some relief has been forthcoming.

However, in country areas, such as Coffs Harbour, in the far western suburbs such as Blacktown and Mt. Druitt, and such suburbs as Ashfield and Dee Why, our refuges' pleas have fallen on deaf ears, simply because suitable housing for these people, outside of Psychiatric Hospitals, DOES NOT EXIST.

To compound the problem, many of these women, particularly the intellectually handicapped, have young children with them, are often pregnant, and already have older children in foster care. Women's Refuges are funded and staffed to accommodate women (with their children) who are homeless due to domestic crisis, to assist them in resolving some of their problems, and (at the end of 8/10 weeks) support them when they re-enter society with greater coping skills than they previously possessed.

Women with chronic psychiatric illnesses or who are intellectually handicapped are generally apprehensive within the refuge scene because they feel "different" or "inadequate", they are unable to respond to any great degree to the supportive/learning programs set up within the refuge, and at the end of their stay, are no more able to cope with the outside world than when they arrived. Their fear of again being homeless is often resolved by overdosing or slashing their wrists to gain re-admission to a Psychiatric Hospital - their only alternative to being "on the streets", or living as a prostitute at the lowest level of survival.

During their stay at a refuge, great strain is placed upon the other residents and their children, who are forced to share their bedrooms, and their household tasks, with women whose behaviour can be frightening, threatening, dangerous, infantile, unhygienic, and bizarre. Bearing in mind that all the residents and their children are already in crisis situations and finding it difficult to cope with their own emotional problems, it is quite unreasonable to expect them to bear the added burden of the two categories of women with which this submission is concerned. Women's Refuges are simply not established, nor equipped, for the specific needs of these two special groups of women.

(ii) Approach to the Premier

As long ago as 19 September 78, letters were sent from Blacktown Community Cottage Refuge (then under the direction of Blacktown Community Aid) to Mr R. Jackson, Minister for Youth and Community Services, to Mr K. Stewart, Minister for Health and Mr J. Ferguson (Deputy Premier), to the Medical Superintendent of Parramatta Psychiatric Centre, and to various local Members of Parliament, requesting urgent action for the provision of permanent hostel-type accommodation for women who were subject to chronic psychiatric illness or who were intellectually handicapped - a great deal of media coverage resulted, and in the Sydney Morning Herald on 29 September 78, Mr Jackson and Mr Stewart stated that they were, in fact, aware of the problem, and that it had reached crisis proportions. The State Opposition spokesman on Health, Mr Healy (I quote) "admitted yesterday that the problem was inadvertently brought about by the Liberal-Country Party when in power. He said the previous Government's well-intended policies - to take people out of the 'atrocious, incarcerated conditions of some psychiatric hospitals - had obviously backfired in too many cases'."

"This was made possible by the advent of new drugs which allowed the less expensive treatment of the mentally ill in outpatients clinics. 'Obviously that policy has backfired in all too many cases.....we didn't think the issue right through' Mr Healy said." Still.....nothing was done.

On 10 February 79, a detailed submission was presented by Blacktown Community Cottage Refuge (still under Blacktown Community Aid) to the Department of Youth and Community Services in conjunction with their "Green Paper", the specific area being "People with Special Needs". This submission was lodged, as requested, at a special meeting held by Y.A.C.S. in Blacktown on 16 February 79.

Still.....nothing was done. Women's Refuges still carried the burden of caring for the two categories of "Women in Limbo". Our Refuge sent follow-up letters concerning the Green Paper - we were advised that the matter was still under consideration.

At the N.S.W. Women's Refuge Conference at Newcastle on 16/17 February 80, Blacktown Refuge submitted a paper on Women in Limbo, and a working party was formed to lobby local members of parliament and to write to their State Ministers. This was done, in varying degrees, but without success.

On 9 December 80, our refuge attended a meeting in Blacktown with a Task Force on Personal and Community Services, and Part C (3) on our paper dealt again with the needs of "Homeless People with Specific Handicaps" (i.e. chronic psychiatric illness and retardation). Still.....nothing happened.

At the N.S.W. Women's Refuge Conference at Liverpool on 14/15 February 81, Blacktown Women's Refuge AGAIN presented a paper on the lack of suitable accommodation for women who are intellectually handicapped or suffer chronic psychiatric disorders, and bearing in mind that this is the "International Year of the Disabled", a new working party was formed, with Refuge Representatives from "Bringa" Refuge, Dee Why; Ashfield Infants' Home; Blacktown Community Cottage Refuge. From this

working party, letters were directed to Mr Stewart (Health), Mr Sheehan (Housing), Community Liaison Bureau of Y.A.C.S., and the Handicapped Persons Bureau, dated 16 February 81.

Mr Jackson contacted us, advising that a meeting should be convened between representatives from Women's Refuges and the relevant Government Departments, and this was done on 3 March 81, at Y.A.C.S. Building, under the guidance of the Community Liaison Bureau. A paper was presented from Blacktown Refuge setting out the extent of the problem as seen by the Working Party.

Between this date, and the date of our next meeting on 19 March 81, Margaret Cawley from Dee Why Refuge contacted Nigel Stokes, an Adviser in the Premier's Department, and he later contacted Blacktown Refuge, requesting a copy of their paper on the subject.

He intimated to both Dee Why and Blacktown Refuges that the Premier, Mr Wran, was aware of the problem and viewed it sympathetically, and would receive any reasonable submission provided it:

(a) Used existing premises, if located in suitable areas;
(b) Did not cost millions of dollars to house a handful of people, as had been the case with past submissions from private welfare groups.

(iii) Lack of Facilities for These Groups

Except for severely mentally handicapped people, who attend sheltered workshops and live in adjacent hostels, or those who are grossly handicapped and require complete care within an institution, there is very little alternative accommodation for intellectually handicapped persons, especially those with children.

Some manage with family support, but are left desolate when elderly parents die and families scatter. Others manage in the short term in Housing Commission Pensioner Units, but usually this breaks down, the children go into care, and the woman takes to the streets. Many form short-term homosexual or heterosexual relationships, and go from these to Psychiatric Hospitals, then to Women's Refuges, and so on, around in a cycle. They continuously produce children (usually perfectly "normal" ones), which subsequently go into care.

Women with chronic psychiatric illnesses who have regular admissions to hospital drift in a similar way - from family, into a marriage or sexual relationship, into a Psychiatric Hospital, into a refuge and so on....

Apart from a few half-way houses and supervised home units, mainly in city areas, they have no permanent home situation, and often look on their Psychiatric Hospital as "home", no matter how restrictive this may be.

As stated before, Women's Refuges do NOT have the staff or facilities to handle the needs of these women, nor were they established for that purpose.

(iv) Meetings and Formation of Committee

As stated earlier, a meeting was convened on 19 March 81, as advised by Nigel Stokes, an Adviser in the Premier's Department, and it was at this meeting that "Women in Limbo" (a term used by the press to describe these women two years earlier) was adopted as our official title - this adequately describes the situation of women caught up in both categories of concern.

A number of meetings have been held during the intervening months, with input from numerous concerned groups of people, and we have looked at possible empty premises which may be made available to us, at the type of people required on staff, the number, the general costing. Our Committee now mainly consists of a representative from each of the aforementioned Women's Refuges, the Health Commission, the Housing Commission, the Department of Youth and Community Services.

(v) The Size of the Problem

At any one time, most refuges would have at least one woman who is intellectually handicapped or suffering a chronic psychiatric illness, residing there. We have had as many as four at one time in our Blacktown Refuge - where we usually have 8 to 10 women and 14 to 18 children residing.

The approximate percentages are:

chronic psychiatric illness.....18%
intellectually handicapped.....15%

but this is seen as only the tiniest tip of the iceberg, when taken over all refuges and the community generally.

NOTE: Although the cost of setting up two pilot units to meet the needs of these separate groups of women may seem large (see Pt.3.5 under "Costing"), I must point out that the stark alternatives are:

(a) Committing both categories of women to life-long institutionalisation and committing their children to institutionalisation.

Costwise this is unacceptable, humanity wise it is unthinkable.

(b) Condemning them to a life of homelessness, degradation and sub-human existence, along with their children - as we do at the present time. This also is unacceptable, and I believe that Women's Refuges have been more than patient in the efforts they have expended and the length of time they have waited for Government action. These women are ill or handicapped HUMAN BEINGS, not criminals or animals - they deserve to live at an acceptable level of human dignity.

2. NEEDS OF WOMEN "IN LIMBO"

(i) Experience of Institutional Living

a) Intellectually Handicapped Women: Many are able to cope with routine household tasks, but as there is a high degree

of illiteracy, they require some assistance in shopping, reading instructions for use of household appliances, cookery, preparing baby formulas, administering medication to their children. Some require supervision with personal health and hygiene.

If they have been institutionalised for long periods, or sheltered by a caring family, they find it impossible to cope in the outside world without considerable assistance. Most enjoy the relative freedom of a Women's Refuge, and dread returning to an institution, but when their time at a refuge is over, they will resort to self-inflicted violence in order to return to the shelter of a Psychiatric Hospital rather than face the ordeal of the outside world alone.

b) Women with chronic psychiatric disorders have often reached a good standard of education and have been in a marriage situation, but because of emotional "explosions" and violent or bizarre behaviour, or numerous attempts to endanger their own or their children's lives, are on continuous medication and require at least minimal supervision, particularly when they can forsee that a breakdown in their health is imminent. Their children are usually (but not always) in the custody of their ex-husband, a family member, or a foster family. These women also appreciate the freedom of a Women's Refuge in the short term, and refuse medical advice to return to a Psychiatric Hospital for treatment, but then become so violent or self-destructive that they are re-admitted periodically in any case.

Long-term Supportive Accommodation

Two pilots need to be set up, because, as stated, both categories differ enormously. But both groups require a permanent place to live.

Both require at least minimal supervision and the opportunity to learn and to succeed in day-to-day living experiences.

Both require some form of direction regarding household duties, personal hygiene, health, or medication, etc.

Both require privacy - their own room - and the freedom to come and go, and to form personal relationships.

Both require love and care from staff members, and support while attempting steps towards independence. Some may achieve independence, others may not, but all need to be encouraged to achieve at their own level.

Though both groups of women may require firmness at times, neither require harsh judgmental direction or suppression, nor the type of institutionalisation they are trying to break free from.

ii) Special Needs of Children

The children of both intellectually handicapped women and women with chronic psychiatric illnesses are seriously disadvantaged. Most of these children are born with a normal IQ, but because of lack of stimulation, poor diet and poor health, and general

insecurity with constant changes of address and personal relationships, they soon become socially and emotionally handicapped. They also become prime targets for child abuse, both physical and sexual.

But, it is quite inhuman to accept that these women wander around at the mercy of any male who cares to pick them up, become pregnant, produce children, love their children, and then have to hand them over into care - again and again. If these women are supervised in shared housing, they should be able to rear their infants, keep them in good health, and with the assistance of Child Care Workers on the staff, the children's needs should be able to be met - pre-school play groups (including participation of mother), intellectual and physical stimulation, regular attendance at school, and assistance with reading, writing and numeracy skills after school, by the staff, should this be beyond the capacity of the parents.

The suffering of the children who are born to handicapped, homeless women is extreme, yet with a secure, homelike atmosphere (similar to an "extended family system"), a parent who is settled and whose emotional state is stabilised, and with friendly supervision, picnics and excursions arranged by Child Care staff members, these children could grow to their full potential and move out into the community as responsible citizens when they reach maturity.

This should not be considered as a favour to be granted to them, but as their God given right as citizens of this country.

APPENDIX H

12 February 82

REPORT ON HALFWAY HOUSES - from a Western Suburbs Refuge

History:

We took delivery of two Halfway Houses on 30 October 81, almost four months ago. The houses, owned by the Department of Planning and Environment, on land ultimately to be used for widening the road in that area, are five minutes from the Refuge. This short distance, together with our urgent need of emergency housing for women and children forced into the refuge because of high rents in the private rental sector, or of discrimination against them as women and pensioners, persuaded us to sign the leases for the houses on a trial basis.

The houses are functional although not in the best repair and have large backyards. For them we pay $58 and $60 per week respectively, and this includes the rebate from the Housing Commission which pays full market rent to the Department of Planning and Environment. The Emergency Accommodation Unit had expected us to house two families in each house but we decided to put three families (three women with children) in each house, if we could, to ease the rent burden on them. Each family pays $20 a week, plus $2 per head for electricity and a linen bond/key money of $20, refundable on leaving if a week's notice is given, and linen and key returned. Some women use their own linen and so only pay a small amount as insurance on the key.

We ask the women to pay rent at the Refuge once a fortnight in advance, which we in turn pay to the Housing Commission. Our child care workers pick up and drop children at the Halfway Houses as if they were still in the Refuge and we maintain contacts as closely as possible with the Halfway House Residents and are available to them there if they need us.

As we have an open Collective, the Halfway House women come to the Refuge each Tuesday for a collective meeting. At one of these meetings, they decided to run the Halfway House along the same lines as the Refuge with three main rules: no drugs, no men, no alcohol.

The houses were almost fully furnished by St Vincent de Paul in Liverpool, together with other small donations. We have had to use some of the refuge linen as many women do not have their own. To date, we have housed 16 women and 30 children at the Halfway Houses, in just under 4 months, which gives some idea of the high turnover.

Problems:

1. This high turnover is one of the main problems associated with the running of the Halfway Houses. When a woman leaves, often with no prior notice, we are still left with a full rent bill to pay.

2. The gap in rent money due to someone's leaving (or 3 people leaving at once), with no one to replace them, has to be made up by the Refuge from whatever source. This is the greatest problem. Originally, we paid 2 weeks's rent in advance ($120 and $116), and were forced to draw this from our Management Committee funds since we are not funded for rent of Halfway Houses. The second time we found ourselves short of the rent, we took $100 from our own Defence Fund which is made up of

money donated within the Refuge, and it has been depleted ever since. As a result of negotiations between Women's Refuges and the Housing Commission refuges now pay one week's rent in advance.

3. For financial reasons we have been forced to move some women and children into the Halfway Houses although they were not yet ready to leave the Refuge emotionally or financially. To ease this latter problem, we have included their last week at the Refuge where they pay less money, as payment on a first week at the Halfway House.

4. We have no extra staff to look after the Halfway Houses or collect rent, and the work has put an extra load on workers already overburdened. Refuge workers are being called on to play a role in many community activities as well as in running refuges but we do not intend to let refuges suffer as a result of this.

   We also now feel that we need to visit the Halfway Houses more often and talk to the women there and keep pace with what is happening.

5. Neighbours.....and the zoning regulations in various Council areas are another problem for Halfway Houses. We have had one complaint from a neighbour who complained of frequent comings and goings at the Halfway Houses. Our council informed us that legislation was pending which would allow hostel type accommodation in residential areas but that until this was passed, there was a problem. So far, we have managed to exist without trouble but have to be careful that we send no women to the Halfway Houses who are likely to have violent or drunken men following them. Not only are the women more vulnerable at the Houses (we have not been able to instal a Red Phone owing to technical delays and the changeover of red phones to 20 cents) but any callers are noted by neighbours and used as a weapon against the Halfway Houses. In turn, Council cannot defend them legally until the new zoning regulations are passed.

There have been positive results from running the Halfway Houses. We have managed to help many women and children already, and hope to continue this extension of the refuge. However, the rent problem may force us to give up one of our houses in the near future unless the problem can be overcome.

APPENDIX I

TWO SAMPLE JOB CONTRACTS

(1) AIMS OF .... WOMEN'S REFUGE

... maintains a feminist philosophy of providing women who are in desperate and intolerable situations, with an environment created and supported by women. The Feminist ideals of ... are basically that we believe women have a right to be autonomous, independant and self-determining. We encourage women to look at the effects of sexism and the conditioned female stereo-type roles.

The very nature of a refuge is political and there is a lot of ignorance and fear in the community due to the suspicion that we are home breakers. As a feminist refuge we believe in women reclaiming their lost power. Information is kept from women on every level of our lives. The refuge counteracts the partriarchal institutions that are oppressive to women. We see political involvement as an extension of our work.

WORK CONDITIONS

1) Workers Organisation

The workers of the refuge work as a collective. This means no hierarchy of power, decisions made usually by consensus at regular collective meetings and equal rates of pay.

All workers are employed on a permanent full-time basis - working a paid 20 hours a week.

Workers are required to work towards skill sharing and job rotation, as well as being actively involved in maintaining the constant communications and workings of the collective.

2) Hours

Full-time workers currently work a paid 20 hours a week. Work days are negotiable, but Wednesdays (workers meeting day) are obligatory. Full-time workers work three days/rosters per week.

Collective members who work additional hours are entitled to an equivalent amount of time in lieu (if agreed upon by the collective), and to be taken at a time agreed upon by the collective.

3) Roster

Workers work three rosters per week. The time of rosters worked is negotiable.

If a collective member is not going to be at the refuge when on roster, she is obliged to arrange for cover except when off sick or on recreation leave. Holiday cover is organised at collective meetings.

4) Salary

All workers receive the same hourly rate of pay. This rate is reviewed annually by the collective following notification of funding for the current financial year.

When funds allow, salary levels to be set using suggested A.S.W.U. salary scales as a guide.

5) Recreation Leave

All workers are entitled to six weeks paid leave, with a 17 1/2% loading on the gross salary for the period of leave - after 12 months employment.

Entitlement to annual leave shall accrue at the rate of 1 1/2 weeks for 3 months worked, commencing from the time of employment.

Leave to be taken at a time determined by the worker in consultation with the collective.

Payment of all monies due for the period of leave, including leave loading, shall be paid before the worker goes on leave.

Payment shall be made for untaken leave, including 17 1/2% loading (after 12 months employment) at a time of termination of employment.

Only 2 members of the collective can take recreation leave at any one time - priority being given to those with the most need as determined by the collective.

6) Sick Leave

All workers are entitled to 15 days paid sick leave annually for themselves, or for nursing sick "family" members.

Illness occurring during annual leave (where illness exceeds 3 days) shall be regarded as sick leave and an equivalent number of days added to annual recreation leave.

7) Public Holidays

These days will be worked, and pay to be regular pay.

Public holidays worked are to be rotated equitably amongst the collective members.

8) Unpaid Leave

Leave without pay is available provided ample notice is given to the collective. Workers can take up to 3 months leave at a time as recognition of "burn-out" and to allow the worker time to determine the option of continuing her employment.

Unpaid leave can be taken provided that:-

(1) They have worked at the refuge for at least 12 months.
(2) Adequate cover can be arranged.
(3) No similar period of unpaid leave has been taken in the previous 12 months.

The number of women taking unpaid leave at any one time, will be determined by the collective, priority being given to those with the most need as determined by the collective.

9) Compassionate Leave

Workers are entitled to compassionate leave on the occasion of a death, serious injury or critical illness of a close friend or relative. Period of time is negotiable and will be determined by consensus.

10) Maternity Leave

Workers are entitled to 3 months leave, provided:

(1) They have worked at the refuge for at least 12 months.
(2) Following leave, return to work for a minimum of three months.

There is no limit to the number of children for which maternity leave shall be granted.

Wages will be paid for maternity leave according to Clause 9 of the Women's Services Award.

11) Leave to Attend Meeting Relevant to the job.

Workers can, with the collective's agreement, have paid leave to attend any meetings relevant to their jobs.

12) Conference Leave

Workers can have paid leave, where applicable, and expenses paid, to attend conferences considered by the collective to be relevant to their work, provided funds are available and the refuge is adequately attended.

13) Study Leave

Workers can have paid leave and expenses to attend any course considered by the collective to be relevant to their work, provided funds are available and the refuge is adequately attended.

14) Examination Leave

Paid leave shall be granted to any worker to attend examinations related to courses referred to in Clause 13.

15) Jury Leave

Leave will be granted to attend jury service, where payment for such service is less than normal salary, the refuge shall make up the difference.

16) Long Service Leave

Long Service Leave will be in accordance with Clause 18 of the Women's Services Award.

17) Child Care

(1) At the termination of maternity leave, an employee is entitled to bring her child to work until the child is 6 months old.

(2) Any worker responsible for the care of a child over the age of 6 months may, with collective discussion, bring the child to work where this does not conflict with the worker's duties.

18) Civil Liability

..... Women's Refuge Ltd. shall be responsible for any civil action taken against a worker in respect of any action taken in the ordinary course of her employment.

19) Workers' Compensation

All workers are covered by workers' compensation which ensures against injury on the job, injury travelling to and from work, or incurment of any ailment or disorder for which work can be shown to be a contributing factor.

Any injury or ailment should be reported to the collective as soon as possible.

20) Union

The only union at present with an appreciation of feminist ideas and collective methods of work which can give us coverage is the Australian Social Welfare Union.

It is therefore obligatory for all workers to join this union.

21) Union Representatives

The collective will decide which worker will be the union representative for the collective, and allow her reasonable time within work hours to carry out the functions of a union representative.

22) Trade Union Training

Workers nominated by their union to attend trade union training courses during ordinary working hours can take up to one week's paid leave in any 12 months of service, provided the collective agrees and adequate notice is given.

23) Employment

New workers are subject to a "trial period" of 3 months during which time both the new worker and the rest of the collective take the opportunity to discuss conflicts, disagreements and work attitudes. After this 3 months period there will be a review and a decision made regarding the continued employment.

Any worker's contribution can be subject to review at any point in time by any member of the collective where it is felt to be necessary. After a collective discussion a trial period of one month commences in which time the worker takes the relevant steps towards change or decides to leave.

24) Employment of Replacement Workers

Workers employed to replace a collective member taking any leave specified in this contract shall be informed of the temporary nature of her employment and of the conditions relating to the leave being taken by the worker being replaced.

During the term of temporary employment the worker is entitled to all the conditions of this contract after they have worked in the refuge for a period of 3 months.

25) Termination of Employment

(a) The following procedure for terminating the services of a worker is to be taken only after repeated attempts to resolve the problem through collective discussion and reviews have failed.

(b) The service of a worker may be terminated only on a consensus decision by the collective at a meeting.

(c) At least 14 days notice of a meeting, unless otherwise arranged by mutual agreement shall be given to the collective at which a discussion is proposed, related to termination of services, specifying place, date and time of meeting.

(d) Notice and full details of any complaints must be given in writing to the worker concerned at least 14 days prior to meeting.

(e) The worker shall be entitled to speak and be heard upon such complaint at that meeting.

(f) Following a decision of the collective the worker must be given at least 28 days notice of dismissal in writing.

26) Resignation

Where a worker decides to terminate her services, 28 days notice of such resignation shall be given to the collective.

I have read and understood the above aims and conditions of work and hereby accept appointment as a refuge worker with ..... Women's Refuge.

Signed .....

Dated .....

This job contract is in accordance with the Award for Women's Services. All conditions not included in this contract are stated in the Award.

(II) JOB AGREEMENT FOR .... WOMEN'S REFUGE

1. TENURE

(a) On commencing employment a period of 6 week's will be allowed for both employer and employee to decide about suitability for the job. At least a week prior to the termination of that 6 weeks the employee shall discuss the job with the Collective.

(b) Employment may be discontinued if Government Funding is stopped or altered. Funding is annual from July to June.

(c) Employees are expected to develop their own skills in all area's required for the operation of the Refuge during employment. Participation in Collective Meetings and other meetings needed to futher skills and understanding are an expected part of this job.

(d) Employees are expected to carry out duties as directed by the Collective and as allocated amonst the staff.

2. WORKING WEEK

The number of hours is set out in the letter of appointment and can be changed by Government Funding or by the Collective.

3. SALARY

The salary will be .....
Payment will be made weekly.

4. OVERTIME

All overtime is unpaid, and done at the discretion of the employee.

5. PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Shall be worked as rostered ensuring that all workers take an equal share of the public holiday work. A record is kept of who works what public holidays.

6. RECREATIONAL LEAVE

(a) 1 week per 3 months of completed paid work.
(b) Leave shall be taken at a time determined by mutual agreement.
(c) When an employee leaves at the end of a period of employment they shall receive all moneys owing to them with a loading of 17 1/2%.

7. LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

(a) A maximum of 3 months (including recreational leave and leave without pay) can be granted on the agreement of the Collective. Any extension of this time would have to be negotated with the Collective at least one week before the end of the three months.

(b) All holiday pay will be made up on the day of taking leave.

(c) Short Leave-Short leave can be taken without loss of pay but the Collective will assess it at the time.

8. TERMINATION OF WORK

(a) The services of an employee may be terminated upon a resolution being passed by a majority of members at a Collective Meeting.

(b) Resignation - when an employee wishes to resign they are asked to give 4 weeks notice in writing.

9. TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE

Any member of the Collective or of the Company, paid or unpaid, can claim for the use of their own vehicle when used for refuge activities except for Conferences. The following conditions apply:-

(a) The refuge car is not available.
(b) The car claimed for has comprehensive insurance and an indemnity clause for use at work with Youth & Community Services.
(c) Full details are available for a Collective Meeting.
(d) Rates paid will be to current Public Service Board figures.
(e) For attendence at Conferences if your own car is used compensation will be paid.

10. CHILD CARE

A child care subsidy may be negotiated with the Collective in order to allow employees to lobby for free child care for all people. If receipts are produced by workers 50% of all child care costs will be reimbursed.

Signed .....

APPENDIX J

EXAMPLES OF REFUGE NEWSLETTER ITEMS

Four refuges regularly send out newsletters to people interested in the running of the refuge; other refuges have had newsletters from time to time.

The newsletter is generally prepared by residents, workers and ex-residents and includes items of general interest such as funding, day to day refuge organisation, poetry, community and refuge resources, experiences of living on a pension, budgeting, planned events and current campaigns. The purpose of the newsletter is to generally prevent isolation among ex-residents and help people to keep in contact with the activities of the refuge. The newsletter is distributed amongst ex-residents, ex-workers, others who are or have been involved in the refuge and community groups.

The following are examples of some items from two country refuge newsletters.

Depressed

Sitting in the corner,
Like that brat Jack Horner,
No play today,
That corner you will stay,
This feeling's strong,
I know it's wrong.

Gonna have a cuppa tea,
What's wrong with me?
The big rat on the door,
Why do people come here for,
S'pose I better answer it,
This person I could hit.

Come in you and sit down,
Why'd you come around?
Don't want no friends today,
I'm going to my room so keep-away.
Want a cuppa? get it yourself,
Coffee's on the shelf.

What's that damn noise?
Shut up you boys!
I said today,
You can't play!
I need a sleep,
My thoughts are deep.

To my friend I said,
I wish that I was dead.
What's wrong with me?
I'm all on edge as you see.
Help me find myself, please!
I'll even get down on my knees.

She said to me, "You're my friend
That will never end,
You need to steady down,
Or you'll end up in the ground.

Take it out on your kids, not,
They love you a lot.
Look at their face,
They don't know there place.
You love them this I know.
So for a walk you must go.

I'll mind them for a while,
While you change your style,
Off you go you silly girl,
And look around the world.
Well I went and then come back,
I realised something I did lack.

I was never alone,
In my home,
I have my kids.
They are like three lids,
On a pot of gold,
And I was told,

"They are all you need",
A lovely breed,
These children are,
For in life we'll go far,
Never again my nerves will drop,
Cause we got each other, so-there full-stop.

KIM

EX-RESIDENTS MEETING

An ex-residents meeting was held at ..... on Wednesday 25 March. Unfortunately, only five ex-residents attended, but even so, we feel we have accomplished quite a bit.

At Jean's suggestion, it was decided to look into the possibility of starting a furniture pool to help residents of the refuge who need help in setting up a new house or flat. If anyone has any ideas, or better still knows of anyone who might have some unwanted furniture, they would be willing to donate to help get this venture started, please let us know.

It was also suggested that a letter be written to the schools about the harassment of children for the non-payment of school fees, incorrect uniforms etc.

We would like to see a lot more of our residents and ex-residents coming along to these meetings and joining in on the discussions. The next one will be in a month's time, exact date yet to be fixed.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

ENTREE	Thick Vegetable Soup
MAIN COURSE	Curried Mince
SWEETS	Steam Pudding

SOUP: Thick Vegetable Soup

1 carrot	2-3 tomatoes	1 stick celery
1 onion	1 tablespoon rice	1 turnip
1 parsnip	1 tablespoon lentils	1 potato
salt and pepper to taste		

Dice all ingredients and place in a large saucepan, cover with water and simmer for 2 hours.

MAIN COURSE: Curried Mince

1/2 kg mince	1/2 cup beans	1 carrot
1 tomato	2 onions	1 tablespoon rice
1 desst. spoon curry powder	1 tablespoon cornflour	herbs for seasoning
salt and pepper to taste		

Fry mince till brown, add cut up vegetables, add enough water to just cover vegetables, simmer for 1 hour.
Make paste of curry powder and cornflour with a little cold water add to mince and let simmer for a few minutes.
This can be served with rice or mashed potato or served on toast.

SWEETS: Steam Pudding

(cake)	(sauce)
1 cup self raising flour	Place in saucepan
1 tablespoon mixed fruit	1 tablespoon margarine
1 tablespoon sugar	1 tablespoon brown sugar
milk for mixing	1 cup hot water

Place all dry ingredients in a bowl, add enough milk to make a soft dough, place into a greased oven proof dish.

Stir sauce mix till margarine has melted pour over cake mix, cook in moderate oven approximately 30 minutes.

WOMENS SURVIVAL SKILLS WORKSHOPS

After much discussion at our weekly House Meetings each Monday at 1 p.m., it has been decided to have weekly - WORKSHOPS - at the "Refuge Centre" every Wednesday commencing at 10 a.m. A finger luncheon will be provided at these workshops.

It is hoped that ex-residents, workers, volunteers, friends and anyone interested will attend ------ to make our Workshops the success we are endeavouring to achieve.

The Workshops will cover areas such as:

Cooking
Sewing
Woodwork
Crochet
Macrame'
Knitting
Gardening.

With speakers to talk on topices of interest such as:

Family Law
Marriage Guidance
Health
Child Care
First Aid
Children in Crises
Stress in Family
Drugs and Alcohol
Court Procedures.

WHERE MOTHER (WER WOLF)

She has never been born
the mother in me
she strains and stretches tight
and pleads for parturition
not inaugural abbrogation
of egg-bound flight.

She has flowed not generously
through willing mammary glands
nor chased her baby close and near
through the passage of the damned
nor has she shown the world
her face of fearless joy

Oh poor ineffable and faceless one
seeking birth of parenthood
of wisdom love and reassurance
crying calling swampily
of doves abreasting and athrob.
Oh enceinte udders oh
Oh multiparous fantasies of milky might
that weep into the hollows of the
uninhabited high.

KIDS LIB

Let's have some liberation for kids.
With it we can do anything.
With it we can go anywhere anytime.
With it we can and will destroy
all forms of adult oppression.
We will rule!
We must rule!

SIGNED, PRESIDENTS OF
OPERATION KIDS LIB.

Joey, Michael, Matthew, Robert,

Membership Payable to the Above.

WORKERS REPORT

Since our last Workers Report we have had many changes at the Refuge.

A Roster System is now in operation which enables the Refuge to be staffed between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, with an on-call shift between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. and over the week-end. The on-call shift has a back up of volunteer assistance.

House Meetings are held every Monday at 1 p.m.

The office has been completed and this makes the day to day running go very smoothly for the workers.

The new Answering Service is serving us well and the Red phone has been installed for use by residents for local calls.

Alice, Debbie, Jane, Carol and Mavis went to see Mr Howard at the Council Chambers. And were happy with the extended time he gave them, and felt that he gave our cause a fair hearing.

A bowls afternoon was held at the City Bowling Club. The profit of $139.10 was well received by the Refuge Centre.

A Regional Conference at Armidale was attended by Debbie, Jane, Mable, and Kim.

Reprint from Page 7 of the "Sydney Morning Herald" 29 March 1982

Staff at Women's Refuges throughout N.S.W. are on strike today and at least 25 refuges will be affected.....

The refuges say they are running out of money, but they have become the dumping ground for women turned out into the streets by other welfare cutbacks.

The crisis has been building up since the Federal Government ended it's direct 75% funding of refuges and health centres last year, passing the funding over to the States.

The crunch will come in June, when the Federal funding finally ends and the States are left with the full responsibility for the refuges.

The crunch has already come for the 'Single Women's Refuge', which was due to close today.....

The decision to strike was made at the N.S.W. State Refuges Conference at Ballina on 6 and 7 March.

It is proposed that today's strike will be followed by a series of rolling strikes.

At a time when refuges are running out of money they are expected to cope with a flood of people affected by other welfare cuts. "Elsie (in Glebe) has been full of ex-psych patients, particularly from Gladesville and Rozelle, in the past two months", said a woman at the Single Women's Refuge. "They have special needs and should be in a special place".....

One refuge worker commented: "Refuges were set up originally to mainly deal with domestic violence. Increasingly they are being used by women because they are homeless. What is particularly disturbing is the large number of women who use the refuges, initially because they are being bashed up, stay a couple of months, move out, and a few months later are back because they can't cope with high rents". The Single Women's Refuge report said that 85% of women seeking it's help have been victims of incest, yet only 2% are eligible for Housing Commission tenancy.

A worker at the refuge said that because of overloading and the immpossibility of finding cheap rental accommodation, refuges were "in a situation where we might have to turn away women being bashed at home because beds are being taken up".....

"To keep the refuges going staff are working many hours a week without pay".....

"I think that refuges now have to be accepted like hospitals and public transport, as an essential community service."

WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVIVAL KIT

Coping with Stress

We all have to deal with stress and tension, due to medications, chemicals (eg; preservatives in foods), poor nutrition, illness, surgery, fatigue, overwork, and emotional upsets. Also unemployment, poverty, housing problems etc, provide tension for many.

Women are especially vulnerable when powerless in a male-dominated society. Pushed into social roles; "housewife", "24 hour child minder", and often descriminated against in employment. This lack of control over one's own life, contributes to nervous tension and depression. There are many ways to tackle stress, other than addictive tranquillizers with their nasty side-effects.

Natural methods of fighting stress include; good nutrition, discussion groups, (friends), counselling, massage, yoga, relaxation, meditation, exercise, Tai Chi, sex acupuncture, chiropractic, and herbal-tranquillizers.

For any method to be of maximum benefit, one must begin with Good Nutrition!

Stress causes the body to use up enormous quantities of vitamins and minerals. This then leaves us tired, rundown, irritable and less able to cope. Vitamins particularly in demand are; Vitmanin C and the B Vitamins. Minerals are Zinc, Calcium, Magnezium, and Phospherous. They can be replaced by eating the right foods, or taking tablets, or medicinal herbs.

Generally; - Anything containing caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate), irritates the nervous system and interferes with the body's use of vitamins. Sugar also depletes the body of B vitamins.

The best diet to help cope with stress contains lots of fresh fruit and veges, nuts, wheatgerm, yeast, brown rice, dairy-products, fish, liver, eggs, and kelp.

Try to avoid tea, coffee, alcohol, white bread, sugar, cakes, biscuits, cigarettes, soft drinks and chocolate.

NOTE: Kelp, yeast, wheatgerm, vitamins and minerals, are available from health food stores.

Reprint from "Pink Pages" A Directory of Women's Rights in Australia.
by B Bishop and K Petersen

'Your Basic Rights When You Marry'

Changing Your Name: You do not have to take your husband's name though most women do. There is nothing in the law which requires it. Some women retain their own surnames; others add the two names together, like 'Smith-Jones', although this could become rather confusing for future generations. If you separate or divorce you can revert to your own name or continue using your husband's. The children of your marriage will be given your husband's surname and it cannot be changed without his consent or a Court Order, until they are adult.

Wedding Ring: This is a custom. The law does not require you to wear a ring or even have one at the marriage ceremony.

House: You are entitled to a share in family home if the marriage is dissolved. The courts often allow the wife to occupy the house, particularly when she has the care and control of the children.

Other Property: The question of ownership usually arises if you separate or divorce or have some major disagreement. Generally speaking you can expect to claim the following;

* Anything you owned before the marriage.
* Anything your husband or anyone else gives you, such as a car or jewellery. If there is some dispute it will be necessary to prove that it was a gift.
* A share in an account which is in joint names.
* A share in any asset acquired during the marriage if you can show that you contributed to it's acquisition in some way. The courts, however, have difficulty assessing non-financial contributions.

Income: Your earnings are treated separately from your husband's for taxation purposes, except -

* The health insurance levy.
* The housing loan interest rebate.

If you are dependent on your husband he is obliged to take health insurance to cover you and your children.

If your husband is dependent on your income then you claim a dependant spouse rebate from your tax.

Child Endowment: Is paid directly to you if the children are in your care. You should keep this money in a separate account in your own name.

Bank Accounts: You should always have an account in your own name whether or not you are financially dependent on your husband. It is also a good idea to have a joint account as well.

You have sole control over your own bank account, although your husband may claim a share in your deposits if you divorce. You have the same rights over your husband's account.

If you have a joint account that requires both signatures before any money can be withdrawn, the bank will not release any money or allow you or your husband to close the account until you have agreed on the distribution of the money.

If you have a joint account which allows either of you to sign you can, in theory, draw all the money out at any time. In practice, however, if you do this the bank may assume that you are closing the account and may "freeze" the funds until your husband is notified. Remember that if you get divorced the court has wide powers to vary property interests.

Children: You have joint custody of your children with your husband. To gain sole custody you must apply to the Family Law Court.

Contracts and Hire Purchase: Theoretically you have the same rights as single women to enter into contracts. In practice you may find that people you want to do business with, like T.V. rental companies or landlords, will demand your husband's signature, especially if you do not have an independent income of your own.

REPLY TO THE PARLIAMENTARY SPEECH OF THE HON. MEMBER FOR .....

Dear Sir,

We read with dismay the speech you gave in Parliament on 10 March 1982. What do you think Women's Refuges are, places where poor bored women go when they have nothing else to do. As for drop-outs and whatever else you called them, first let's get some facts straight. Since the inception of Women's Refuges and Shelters it has brought out the real problems in our society. When good clean thinking men like you decided there were no problems in our community, no battered wives, no battered children, no hardships whatever. Everything is wonderful looking through your rose coloured glasses but let us state things as they really are SIR.

There is a very high percentage of women who are constantly battered. It has been a relief to our Police Departments to have somewhere to place these unfortunate people - yes, human beings.

They cry out loud when baby seals are killed, but do they cry out when a woman who has been raped and battered by the man she chose to love, honour and obey? No, she can be thrown out in the street. But that doesn't happen in our wonderful society at all. There are no hungry children sleeping in the streets, no teenagers drunk on the streets of Sydney tonight either. Wouldn't it be lovely to be living in your world where you don't see human derelicts, where you don't see women so scared that they just stand and shake, where a woman who has suffered so much from her tormentor that she has taken a weapon to him.

Women can be assisted at refuges in a non-professional atmosphere to rebuild their lives and become useful people in our society. Of course there has been abuse of the system. It is a really small percentage in comparison to the total work carried out by Women's Refuges throughout out State.

The plight of Women's Refuges is the need for sufficient funding to carry on the work of providing needs for women and children of our society; those needs being emergency accommodation for people in crisis, whatever the crisis.

Unless there is a miracle to end domestic violence, there will always be the need for Women's Refuges.

Yours faithfully

Residents, ex-residents and workers at the ..... Refuge Centre.

BUDGETING

by Jane

"Hi" I'm Jane. As you know by now I do a bit of work on this newsletter - we were working out what we would do this time. There were few suggestions put around and guess who put their foot in it and said they would do a budget. So after it had been suggested we put this and that in I put it all (most all) together and came up with this. It was suggested that I do a Budget on a Mother with three kids, "as this seems average"..... I was a bit out of my depth there you see as I have six kids. Firstly, I had to find out how much you get on a pension with three kids..... $219.30. At first it sounds a lot, but its not much for a fortnight. So here is my attempt to do it. First I asked a Mum with three kids. She pays $100 per fortnight rent. I think its most important that you pay your rent first as it is most important to keep a roof over the kids head. You must shop around - do not shop in a hurry, make a day of it, look for specials - you can leave the kids at the Neighbourhood Centre while you shop. Try the recipes in our Newsletter, they are cheap to make, don't be afraid to try something new. A packet of spaghetti in a tin of tomato soup makes a nice meal, add a little cheese for extra flavour - you just put the spaghetti in a pot of boiling water, boil till it is soft, drain it, then add the soup and cheese.

So here we go - starting with a budget of $219.30 a fortnight.

Pay	$219.30
Rent	$100.00
	$119.30
Food	$ 60.30
	$ 59.00
Bills	$ 20.00
	$ 39.00

This is worked on a fortnight it doesn't leave much for clothing and extras. You can't have much of a social life, there is little to buy presents for the kids, it is very hard work to keep going "but life wasn't meant to be easy".....

P.S. I forgot to mention. It is best if you keep the child allowance for the light bill and other emergencies. Put it in a bank account if you can, what money you don't have in your hand you don't spend. "Please let me have any other suggestions you might think of."

WIMMINS SERVICES DEMO

Susan, Yvonne, Carol, and I went down to Canberra to protest - along with other wimmin from across Australia, about the Federal Governments planned cuts to wimmin's services.

It was cold and wet which was not conducive to tent living. Yvonne and Susan braved the wet tents pitched on the front lawn of Parliment House while Carol and I snuggled into a warm comfortable bed every night.

In the morning we went down to Parliment House and tried to gain interviews with the Liberal, Democrat, and Labour Parliamentarians, to no avail. All normal channels of access were denied to us. This was the final straw seeing that since the Canberra Conference, Refuges, Rape Crisis Centres, and Women's Community Health Centres have been lobbying extensively - by letters, submissions, and personal representation to our local members of parliment.

At 1.15 p.m. they closed the doors of Parliment House 'to the Public' initially only to wimmin from the tent city - later to tourists also.

At no time were we asked why we were there and what did we want. We were unceremoniously asked to leave. Naturally enough, no one wanted to leave until we'd been assured that the Federal government were not going to cut wimmin's services from the budget. What followed was the debacle seen on TV where the wimmin were thrown out.

Myself and Carol were on the outside- it was frightening to see the way police psyched themselves into fever pitch before going into Parliament House to remove the wimmin. It was quite obvious that they'd decided on a course of action and proceeded to follow that through. When it became obvious what was going to happen, as many of the wimmin with children as possible came streaming out through the back door. It was a shaken but determined group of wimmin that got back together at the tents and discussed the day's events.

When we left Canberra, rumour had it that the Federal Government was 'proposing' to write new legislation to fund all crisis accommodation... but rumours were flying everywhere since we were denyed entry to go in and find out for ourselves. With the end of Parliment sittings came the end of Federal funding for wimmin's services. The hundreds of wimmin who got together for the vigil were left with the feeling of strength we get from being together.... which we'll need to continue the fight for funding on a State level.

LIBERATION

I'm so glad that I've been Liberated,
That at last I stand equal with men,
Though I haven't quite grasped the advantage,
what with washing, and cooking, and then --
There's the housework, the children, the sewing,
The shopping, the menus to plan,
When I just get the time, I daresay I'll rejoice
In the fact that I'm equal to man.
I've lifted and carried, I've dragged and tugged
Kept the house in repair to the letter,
But then, I was one of the weaker sex,
How could I know any better?
But now that we're all on a level,
My life should be easy, no strain,
Just eight hours a day, and two tea breaks.
Oh! it's nice to be set free again.
Though there may be some snags to this ruling,
Things are bound to go wrong now and then,
Because some are more equal than others,
And we know who they are-- the men!

A W Hobson

IN THE BEGINNING

Here I sit in this refuge.
Eating this damned blessed food.
Feeling myself getting overweight; please could you move that plate?
With Bobby sitting on my knee, Oh! Hell, Jane has done a wee.

Come on Danny I'll wipe your snotty nose.
It's sometimes a comfort to hold them close.
I know its not their fault.
If my life has come to a halt.

With weepy eyes and runny mascara.
I try not to think beastly things about their father.

Then anger and torment flashes through my mind.

Suddenly I stop and smile for the first time.

Got no more pies and biscuits - and in times no more ugly weight that goes with it.
Here Jane I'll mop up your wee.
Right now I feel happy and carefree.

Now I'm independent of him.

Alright Danny I know your hair needs a trim.
Dear people of the refuge, am I making a mistake.
Or should I go home and face more heartache?
Could you please tell me what to do?

For I...I...I'm getting awfully confused.

On. No Bobby!

I've told you to use the pottie ..... Jean

MY MUM DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO DRAW ELEPHANTS

My mum makes the bed,
My mum washes the dishes,
My mum makes lovely custard and steak and kidney pudding
And when my dad hits her she locks herself in the toilet
and doesn't come out for ages.
My mum's got a nice face,
and hair like our dog,
All tangled and ratty.
Her stockings always have holes in them.
She doesn't wear lipstick.
My mum fetches me from school
and gives me bread and marmite
and lets me make bubbles in the bath
and draws me good horses.
My mum doesn't know how to draw elephants
In the night sometimes my mum runs away
But she doesn't take her toothbrush.
I don't think she goes to visit anyone
Or to stay by the seaside.
When she comes back, her clothes are all dirty
And her eyes are all red and funny.
But she brings us smarties,
And reads us a special story
And my dad goes down to the pub
And we have a nice time.

D. West, Government Printer, New South Wales—1982