



ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

ALICE SPRINGS WOMENS SHELTER

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Chairwoman's Report

As we approach the final 6 months of our 3 year strategic plan it is with pleasure that the ASWS Board reflects on the work undertaken and the progress made by those at the service.

The ASWS Board of Governance has this year seen a great change. We welcomed several new members, Angelique Glasson, Rebecca Glen, Melinda Edwards and Sharon Austin. They joined the existing members Anna Yffer, Louise Blacker and myself.

This year we also saw the establishment of a Deputy Executive Officer role at ASWS. This role goes a long way to ensuring the sustainability and strength of the service and we welcomed the appointment of Dianne Gipey. We also pay homage to Dale Wakefield, the CEO of ASWS for the last 8 years, who has shown great commitment to the development of the Service and to highlighting the impact of domestic and family violence in Central Australia.

In 2014-15 ASWS provided services for over 1500 women and their children, from 85 different communities and across 4 different states. 34% of the residents at the crisis accommodation were children under the age of 9 years. In 2014-15 there were 2000 occasions in which demand exceeded our capacity.

Within our Outreach Service, encompassing court support, counselling, Family Safety **Framework and Men's Behaviour Change there were an additional 800 occasions of service.** We have consolidated our Court Support Officer with 285 occasions of service and many women now self-referring to the service.

The numbers and the demographics reflect the complexities and intricacies of working with



Chairwoman's Report: (cont.)

In addition to direct service work the ASWS has been involved in the provision of innovation and contemporary projects highlighting domestic and family violence, its impact on our community and the survival stories of many. One such project is the collaboration between ASWS, NTAHC and Brothers and Sisters NT. This collaboration has seen the creation of an advocacy and support group **for gender, intersex and sexuality diversity, in particular there has been a theme of 'Stronger Safer Together, Safer Stronger Together'.**

A second project has is the 'Stitch in Time', aimed at collecting the stories, prevention and intervention knowledge of women throughout Central Australia. The stories have been turned into quilts that are then used to raise awareness about the effects of Domestic and Family Violence and the strong nature and resilience of our women.

In 2014 we saw the introduction of a number of complementary services to ASWS. One of these is **the Men's Behaviour Change Program, a collaboration between Tangentyere Council, Jesuit Social Service and the ASWS. ASWS are tasked with supporting the partner's of men entering the** program. Another such introduction is the establishment of a Remote Outreach Service, this is an exciting development for ASWS, a step towards ensuring that women are safe in their homes and their communities.

ASWS have continues to share their knowledge, skill and experience with the broader community. ASWS provide Secretariat support to CAFVSAN and have co-facilitated **** Family Safety Framework training sessions and ***DV 101 in the Central Australian Context, reaching over **** participants. The ASWS have also facilitated national speakers, for example Maree Crabbe and her **training 'It's Time we Talked: Young People and Pornography' and 2015 Australian of the Year Rosie Batty.** Our CEO Dale Wakefield has been very influential in the NT and national realms in the discussions regarding family and domestic violence, with representations to COAG, Our Watch and the United Nations.

ASWS have reached the end of our 3 year strategic plan, the Board is grateful for the commitment, innovation, advocacy and diligence of those within ASWS. As a Board we look forward to working with all in the service, and our partners, to ensure that the work continues in eliminating violence against women and children. We are excited at the prospect of continuing this work and look forward to the launch of the ASWS 2016-2020 Strategic Plan in March.

Larissa Ellis

Chairperson

Treasurer

I present to the members of Alice Springs Women's Shelter Incorporated the audited Financial Report prepared by Perks Audit and Assurance
Overall the ASWS had a modest surplus of \$52,419

Please note the major change from last year's financial statement's is that there has been a significant increase in Cash & Cash equivalents from the 2014 audit. This is due to receiving \$1,550,000 funding in advance for the outreach and community programs.

All budgets have been expended as anticipated.

All accounts represent a true and accurate record of the current operational costs of the ASWS.

During the year we changed our financial services to Deloitte. This process was more complex than anticipated which accounts for the increase in accountancy fees. However we are confident that increased efficiencies and new procedures such as a finance committee that meets monthly will reduce accounting and auditing costs in the coming financial year.

Thank you

Angelique Glasson

Treasurer

Alice Springs Women's Shelter

29 November 2015



Executive Officer Report

When we look back on 2015 will we be able to pinpoint it as the year that we as a country decided to take violence against women seriously? Only time will tell. The national conversation lead by such inspiring advocates as Rosie Batty , Natasha Stott Despoja, - **campaigns such as Destroy the Joints'** Counting Dead Women and new organisations such Our Watch (focussing on prevention) and ANROWS (developing our knowledge base) has been inspiring for us as frontline workers. We hope it is the start of meaningful and sustainable steps forward towards ending violence against women.

ASWS is proud to be a strong voice for remote and rural women experiencing domestic and family violence. We have participated in many consultations, provided written feedback to many committees, lobbied and been a strong and consistent voice to ensure that Central Australia is part of this national conversation.

Alice Springs as a community has always supported our service. This year the community has continued to step up and support not only us but the issue of domestic violence. 220 people turned up to a Friday night dinner run by the Chamber of Commerce to hear Rosie Batty speak. In a small town it is



an extraordinary number and shows this is an issue that our community cares about.

Providing Central Australians with services that respond flexibly across their personal journey through domestic and family violence has been central to all of our work in 2014 –2015.

This year we have worked in partnership with Tangentyere Council and Jesuit Social Services to deliver a **best practice and innovative men's behaviour change program. The first of it's type ever run in the Northern Territory** and we believe an important addition to the suite of services that are required to eliminate violence.

Executive Officer Report

Moving into the 2015-2016 year we will be delivering outreach support to four remote communities Ntaria, Papunya, Yuendumu and Ti Tree as well as a project focussed on young women.

In 2015-2016 for the first time the community based teams- who are focussed on supporting women and children to remain safely in the community whilst holding the perpetrator of violence to account— will

be funded to the same level as the crisis accommodation. We believe this is an important moment in the history of ASWS as we move to being just somewhere to flee to, but a service that can provide a **range of supports that are responsive to and driven by women and children's individual circumstances** and specific risks.

The diversity of the women and children we are providing support for continues to expand. We saw more clients from ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse communities. We also saw many women and children from a wide range of first nations with women from 85 different communities across 4 states accessing the service. This highlights the unique position our service holds having a significant national reach due to our geographical location as a service hub to such a large region.

As we enter into the 40th year of operation at ASWS I am personally never ceased to be amazed by the courage and grace of the women and children who access the service. Working at ASWS you often sit alongside women and children at what they would consider their most vulnerable or difficult time in their life. Yet what we as workers witness such enormous strength and hope in the same moment. It is an honour to work amongst such an amazing group of workers and have this shared privileged experience.

We will be launching a new Strategic Plan in 2016 with a focus on ensuring that ASWS remains a strong and vibrant part of the Central Australian community as long as it is required . By ensuring we remain focussed on innovation and responsiveness we will remain a strong voice and place of strength for Central Australians.



Dale Wakefield

Executive Officer

Community 2014-2015

ASWS runs a range of community education and engagement activities which included in 2014-2015 **facilitating women's support groups, community education projects and events; provide secretariat support for the Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network (CAFVSAN) and run specialist Domestic Violence training.**



Women's Support Groups are an opportunity for women to participate in a range of creative, therapeutic or cultural activities and have a yarn together.

Groups are a place where women can share their personal stories; discuss any concerns about community safety they may have and request support in terms of advocacy, referrals to social services and legal justice. The focus is individual and community well being.

Some of the things women have done to enhance well being have been dying hair and nails; painting; recording stories and conversations; cooking kangaroo tails; hunting bush onions and jewelry-making.

16 Days of activism against gender-based violence is an annual international campaign that begins on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends 16 days later on International Human Rights Day. For the past few years, ASWS has been coordinating the calendar and media for local events and running our own community events.

For 16 Days this year, the Shelter launched our 100 Voices digital story telling resources (<http://www.100voices.com.au>); hosted in-house staff and interagency training on **“participated in the White Ribbon Day March with our Clothesline Project stall; provided facilitation and secretariat and support for the CAFVSAN annual Strategic Plan; and organised a public discussion panel on how networks can influence policy, using the example of the CAFVSAN informing the Integrated Response to Domestic and Family Violence in the NT.**



The Myer Foundation supported us to bring Maree Crabbe to town to deliver *Reality & Risk Pornography, young people and sex*. **Toolkits for conversations with young people**; the training was for professionals working with young people and how to facilitate conversations about pornography and young peoples interaction with it. We are very proud as this is our first collaboration with the Myer Foundation and we thank them for their contribution.

Community 2014-2015

ASWS Diversity Project in partnership with Sisters and Brothers NT (S&BNT) began with research, consultation and risk assessment with local and interstate individuals, community groups and organisations on the types of violence, discrimination and barriers to accessing safety, services and basic human rights that people experience who are intersex, gender or sexuality diverse, specifically in Alice Springs and the NT.



ASWS in partnership with S&BNT, wrote an anti-discrimination policy **and position paper for inclusion in women's services**; co-facilitated in-house and interagency training and co-created a series of resources, in partnership with S&BNT and the Northern Territory Aids and Hepatitis Council.

The resources were a first of their kind in Central Australia and included 6 posters produced in 5 languages and a 20 page booklet **"Voices From our Community"**, which have been distributed to services, individuals and communities in Alice Springs, Ntaria/ Hermannsburg, Amoonguna, Yuendumu and to interstate conferences and orgs.

To launch the joint resources, ASWS hosted a public discussion panel on Gender, Intersex and Sexuality diversity in Central Australia, which was officially opened via video link by Tim Wilson, the Australian Human Rights Commissioner.

ASWS has consulted other women's agencies on the processes of inclusivity at an organisational level and shared guideline resources for these pathways.

The Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network (CAFVSAN) is an



interagency network made up of government and non-government organisations and acts as a reference group and advocacy body for the domestic violence and sexual assault **sector. ASWS's CDT role provides** secretariat support for the network; organises monthly CAFVSAN meetings at our Outreach office; and disseminates relevant, important and urgent news and updates to the network.

The network provides a forum for the development of coordinated, cross-sector action-based responses to domestic and family violence and sexual assault issues in Central Australian communities.

COMMUNITY TEAM :

The complexity of the service sector that women and children experiencing violence need to navigate to receive support and a response to make them safe has been recognised as an issue across the nation this year. Rosie Batty has spoken eloquently about the difficulty she had accessing services as a white educated professional woman. Those barriers are even more substantial if English is your second language, you have few financial resources, or are disadvantaged in any way. Having support to navigate this system so you and your family can be safe is essential for all women negotiating this system.



For most of the almost 40 year history of ASWS we have been mostly only able to provide a service when women and children are at such crisis that they needed to leave their home. Since the commencement of the community based services at ASWS almost 5 years ago we have been walking with women through this complex and difficult service system. We continue to expand a range of services to support women through their journey through domestic violence.

OUTREACH TEAM:

The urban outreach team supported 486 women and children throughout the year. The majority of the women supported were aged between 18– 35 years old and lived in public housing. On average we supported women over almost a month period with the vast majority of women being permanent residents of Alice Springs.

Women sought support for a wide range of reasons and the support was driven by her specific set of circumstances. The vast majority of clients were referred to another service including legal services, housing services and other ASWS services such as the Victim Support Service based at the Alice Springs Courts.

VICTIM SUPPORT & ADVOCACY SERVICE (VSAS) :

The number of domestic violence matters dealt with at Alice Springs courts is extremely high. The Victim Support & Advocacy Service provides a range of supports to women who are victims of crime. The VSAS worker has an important role in explaining court processes, providing emotional and practical support



Since the commencement of this service it has become increasingly clear the level of understanding of court processes in the community is low and difficult to negotiate when you are placed in the middle of a complex system due to something done to you by another. This is exacerbated with the high number of service users who have English as a 2nd language and many who may have lower levels of literacy skills.

This can put women at risk of not understanding their responsibilities in the cut which may lead to them experiencing sanctions from the court. The most common scenario is women not understanding the difference between remanded in custody and sentencing which means they may not realise they have to attend court or being reluctant to attend court as their partner has already been in custody for a significant period.

Where possible the worker supports the woman prior to the court date which helps to relieve anxiety prior to the court date. 285 women were supported intensely by the service with approximately 50% of women having more than one contact with the court worker. The VSAS worker facilitates contact between the victim of crime and the prosecutor of the case providing context, risk assessment and maximise their safety throughout and after the court case. The support provided by the service is varied to meet the needs of individual women and their risk profile.



MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAM

This year has been the first year we have delivered the Men's Behaviour Change Program in partnership with Tangentyere Council & Jesuit Social Services. As men have been attending the 26 week program we have been supporting their partner.

This provides an independent check and balance to the program to ensure that the self report of the man in the group is reliable and also helps the services assess the risk level which may fluctuate during the group work process. We are proud of the partnership with Tangentyere Council and Jesuit Social Services. The model we have been using and developing is strongly focussed on the safety of women and children and is the first of it's type delivered in the Northern Territory. We look forward to the evaluation but anecdotally we have been receiving positive feedback from the women we are working with on the impacts of the groups.





CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

- 538 women and 411 children were provided support at the 24/7 crisis accommodation service in 2014-2015
- Women came from 85 different communities across 4 states.
- There were 1547 support periods (accommodation stay or casework) at the crisis accommodation in the year.
- 30% of service users came for support more than once during the year.
- 35% of residents at the crisis accommodation are children under 9 years old.
- Demand for accommodation dropped with 30% less bed nights provided compared to two years ago and reduction in the number of times we turned women away.
- Number of women & their children who are seeking support remained stable but we supported them in different ways with a crisis response rather than accommodation.
- On average we accepted over 4 referrals and turned away more than 5 people every day of the year.
- ASWS did not have capacity to support 627 individual women and children on almost 2000 occasions in 2014-2015
- 97% of residents identified as Aboriginal.

ASWS's Crisis Accommodation is entering into it's 40th year of operation and is one of the oldest women's shelters in Australia. Over that time there have been enormous changes in the service system around ASWS and our challenge is to continue to respond in a way that best meets the need of the women and children accessing the service.

Comparing the crisis accommodation statistics from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 financial year shows there has been a 30% drop in the number of nights of accommodation provided to women and children experiencing domestic violence. So whilst the number of women and children supported by the service remained almost the same (948 people in 2012 to 949 people in 2015) the type of support changed. Family stayed for shorter periods (average length of stay dropped by 1.6 days) or received a crisis intervention that did not include accommodation.

The 30% drop is similar to the drop in alcohol related physical assaults report by NT police during this period. Research would suggest that women are more likely to seek support from the formal service sector where they have required hospital treatment for physical injuries. This would potential explain the increase in the number of women contacting ASWS for support, but refusing accommodation

The number of times we were unable to provide a service to women and children also dropped significantly from around 3000 occasions in 2012 to 2000 occasions in 2014. This is due to the service being full on fewer occasions and a decrease in intoxicated women presenting to the service who we cannot accommodate.

The decrease in demand was sudden and coincided with the introduction to point of sale interventions by NT Police. The impact appears to have stabilised over the last few quarters with all crisis accommodation service in the first half of 2015 almost being identical to the numbers for the last 6 months of 2014.

The impact is what we would expect from our understanding of alcohol as a reinforcing factor of the core driver of domestic violence- gender inequality.

“However alcohol abuse increases the likelihood of violence perpetration for men who already hold attitudes and beliefs that condone/support violence, gender inequality or rigid gender roles. Men holding such beliefs have been found to use violence more frequently and with more severe impacts when they also abuse alcohol”

Our Watch 2015

Alice Springs Womens Shelter believes that the decrease in women seeking crisis accommodation is linked to a possible reduction in the severity and frequency of violence we would expect with the reduction of the amount of alcohol in the community. However it is important to note that we are seeing more women and children than ever in our community team which suggests that the rates of DFV in our community has not dropped. We will continue to monitor changes in presentation patterns over time.

We continue to provide services to women from across the Central Australian region. Women and children who attended the crisis accommodation during 2014-2015 were from 85 different communities across 4 states. To access services sometimes women need to drive for several days across some of the most remote parts of the country or be evacuated by other services. Each of those communities have different level of support and services available for women to return to or to remain in that service. For example some communities might have a medical clinic others may not. Some communities may not have a regular police presence. This makes safety planning for exiting the service extremely challenging.

We have completed the security upgrade at the crisis accommodation. The feedback from staff and women who use the service have been positive about the impact of the environmental measures on the service. Whilst we are focussed on women not requiring this level of support the reality is that there are and continue to be women in our community that will require high security crisis accommodation to remain **safe. The combination of risks from remoteness, housing shortages, high levels of intersectional disadvantage, inconsistent access to service systems and some the highest rates of reported physical violence in the country mean that domestic violence service delivery in the context of Central Australia needs to include a robust and flexible crisis response 24 hours 7 days a week.**



So many people have contributed to ensure ASWS has remained a strong and vibrant service as part of our amazing Alice Spring community.

Thank you to all of the people who donated goods, time, and energy to the service. It would not be possible without you

Thank you to:

Myer Foundation: support to provide training about Young people and Pornography.

Double Tree on Hilton for donating the proceeds of their Christmas Tree as well as various goods during the year such as piles of fabulous sheets

Lisa Perry and the team at Reality Bites for dropping off leftover delicious treats to the women and children (and night shift workers!)

Coles for donating food every week. The vegetables and fruit in particular have made a huge difference to women staying at the Shelter

Bunning Warehouse: for lots of support with goods and discounts throughout the year.

Alice Springs Baptist Church who every year make sure that women at the Shelter get a beautiful gift pack full of goodies to spoil themselves with

The Nappy Collective: brilliant use for those leftover nappies. It is a great campaign and we are more than happy to receive sooooo many nappies. It makes such a difference to women and their children.

Alice Springs Mothers to Mothers for such amazing gifts for women on Mothers Day.

Telstra for the donation of phones through the Safe Connections Program. Essential support.



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