



**20
23**

ANNUAL

REPORT

2023

Chair Report

As Always, when I run my thoughts over the past year, my immediate reaction is WOW it was a busy one. I know that I, and probably all of us, say this every year, but it is true. The refuge sector continues to be one of insufficient resources while dealing with increasing demand. Our work with women and children becomes more complex and our reporting requirements are constantly increasing.

Despite these challenges, I think we all love our work, largely due to the fact that we are aware that it is vital, that we are in a situation where we can work with women and children in such a unique and holistic way and have the incredible opportunity to see them move on with their lives to safety.

CWRG has been involved in several consultations this year while representing the refuge sector and the families we work with. The recognition of Coercive Control as a tool used by PUV's has been very welcome.

Kristin Micallef represented CWRG and 54 Reasons while participating in consultations around the legislation being developed to address these behaviours. Julia Dawson represented CWRG in consultations with the Housing for Women's Safety and Security Alliance, and provided an interview for a newspaper article to further advocate for women's need to access housing and their struggle to do so. Barb Crossing, also from Women's House, agreed to represent CWRG while sitting on the panel at the conference Listen, Connect Reflect. Debbie Bruford from UCC also represented CWRG by attending meetings of the DFV training and change management framework consultations & VAQ financial assistance review.

Many CWRG members have provided Input into the proposed DFV and/or Sexual Assault Peak. As a network we have connected with QCOSS and provided our support of their taking on the development of the Peak body with a view of it moving to an independent body in the future. It is still unclear if the Peak body will be a DFV Peak or if it will represent both the Sexual Violence and DFV sectors.

This year we saw 2 transitional housing services opening specifically for women and children leaving refuge. Peggy's Place and Hannah's Sanctuary are both welcome and positive organizations which will provide additional options to our clients.

The Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital Christmas Appeal took place again last year with funds raised providing children in refuge with Kmart vouchers so they could go to the shop and buy something special for themselves. This is a beautiful project which not only benefits the children in refuge but also raises the community's awareness that there are children in refuge.

This year, in August, our Secretariat Nancy resigned after 4 years in the position. Nancy has provided incredible support and advocacy to our sector and represented CWRG in many capacities. We would like to say a special Thank you for the hours of work and commitment Nancy has so generously provided in support of CWRG. We would also like to thank Julia for stepping in to take on the position as it demands so much work and commitment.

I would like to thank all of the Executive Committee, Bernadette, Cathy, Deb and Kristin for the work they provide. It is always a struggle to fit in meetings and the associated tasks with their core work.

Finally, Thank you all for the work you do and your commitment to the women and children you work with. Your work not only changes lives, your work saves lives.

Tracey Amos
Chairperson

Executive Committee 2023

Chairperson - Tracey Amos Koongoora

Vice-Chairperson - Julia Dawson Women's House Shelta

Treasurer - Bernadette O'Byrne Windana

Secretary - Catherine Johns Women's Crisis Support Service Inc.

Committee Member - Debbie Bruford Koolkuna/Kalparrin

Committee Member - Kristin Micallef 54 Reasons

Treasurers Report

Another year has passed for the Combined Women's Refuge Group and 2023 celebrates CWRG's 45th year of operation. These 45 years have seen much change in the domestic and family violence sphere including new legislations, more refuges, increased funding but still so many women and children seek refuge to ensure their safety. The Queensland Police Service report a significant rise in domestic violence incidents within the community in this financial year, rising from 138,928 in 2021/2022 to 171,750.

The current housing crisis is also affecting the refuge sector as rents become more unaffordable, competition between tenants vying for a limited number of affordable properties increases and the supply of social and community housing not keeping up with current demand. Women and children are staying in refuge for longer periods of time, creating a blockage for new referrals.

Challenge DV contributed a massive \$10,145.24 towards the cost of the Secretariat in 2022-2023 and this has greatly assisted the continued financial viability of the CWRG (SEQ). They also completely covered all costs to hold the Refuge Leader's forum in May this year which was a fantastic opportunity for all refuge managers to come together and discuss current issues and trends.

Memberships yielded a total of \$3,900. Social workers from the Royal Women's Brisbane Hospital raised almost \$700 to purchase gift cards for women and children in refuge and we received a further \$900 from the GiveNow platform. We greatly appreciate the thought and effort behind these very generous donations.

Statement of Income

for the year ended 30th June 2023

Income

Donations	\$1,693.06
Memberships	\$3,900.00
Corporate partnerships	\$10,145.24

Total Income **\$15,738.30**

Expenses

Bank fees	.28
Wages and salaries	\$10,145.20
Event expenses	\$4,040.51
Zoom costs	\$217.62

Total expenses **14,403.61**

In Appreciation

In August this year we said farewell to Nancy who has been the Secretariat of CWRG since 2019. Her contribution to our organization has been outstanding and her organizational skills, competency and hard work have contributed so much to the success of the CWRG. The position of Secretariat can be challenging with too few hours to respond to many emails and requests and Nancy has gone above and beyond and we say thank you.

We welcome Julia Dawson who has put her hand up to be the Secretariat. Julia has spent years working in the domestic and family violence sector and comes with a broad range of skills and experiences. We look forward to working with her.

I would also like to say thank you to all members of the CWRG who work so hard to make the lives of women and children better. I would particularly like to say thank you to the CWRG members who stepped up to be part of the Executive Committee for 2022/23.

This includes: Tracey (Chair); Julia (Vice Chair); Cathy (Secretary); Debb and Kristin (general members). You have worked hard to ensure that the CWRG remains a strong and viable organization that continues to meet the needs of women and children escaping violence.

I hereby certify that the Combined Women's Refuge Group (SE Qld) keeps financial records in a way that properly records the association's income and expenditure and dealings with its assets and liabilities.

Bernadette O'Byrne
Treasurer

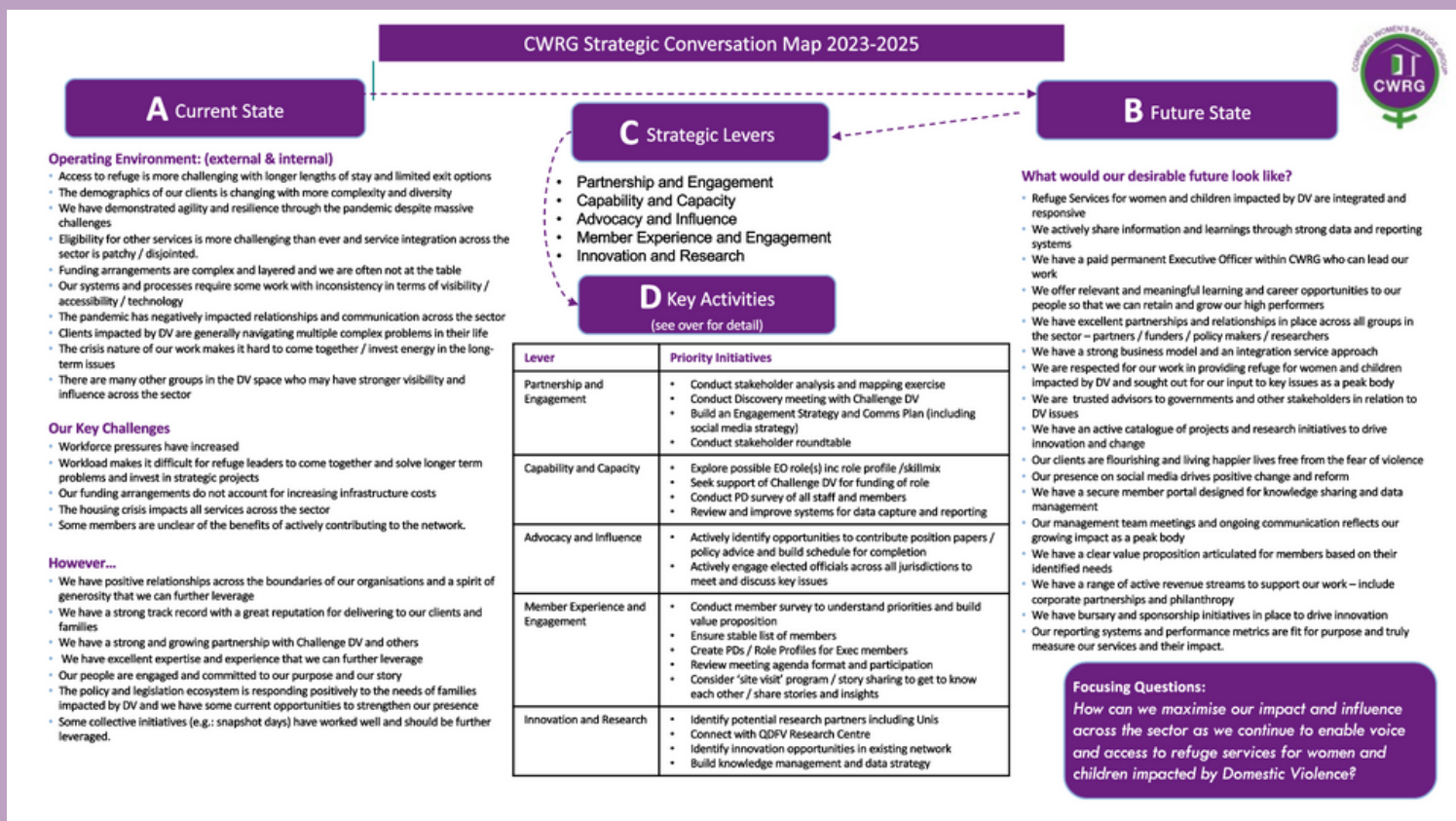
Strategic Planning Day

To amplify the voice of women and children impacted by Domestic Violence and provide refuge, collective advocacy and influence to break the cycle of violence.

In April, we came together with the support of Dr Catherine See who helped us navigate a robust and interesting conversation on our current and future based priorities. It led us to consider our mission as a network and what our collective roles are, to increase the conversation on the need for refuge across QLD.

Already, we have been busy talking throughout the sector with partners such as DV Challenge on how we expand our reach and achieve our strategic goals.

Kristin Micallef
Committee Member



CWRG NETWORKING DAY

CWRG Networking Event was held on 6th of June 2023 at the Logan Central- Library. The event was attended well with over 42 members attending representing refugees from across SE Queensland.

The first session of the morning, refugee members broke into discussion groups and shared their ideas on current key issues and trends in refugee work, suggestions for meeting guest speakers 2023-24, ideas for sharing training costs and other resources.

Discussions were robust with the housing crisis (limited exiting options and affordability), child to parent violence, extended wait time for mental health support, supporting no income women and turnover of staffing identified as key issues identified by the sector. Workers identified Department of Housing, NDIS, Department Child Safety, Legal Aid and Vulnerable Persons Unit, Self-Care specialists and Department of Immigration as potential guest speakers.

Training needs identified across the refugee sector:

- Technology - GPS tracking, social media
- Parents Programs - trauma, circle of security
- Love Bytes - healthy relationships
- Cultural competence
- Shark Cage
- Circle of Security
- Mental Health First Aid
- Strangulation and coercive control
- Strategies to manage behaviours of traumatised women and children. Child behaviour and mental health support
- Cultural competency
- Safe and Together
- Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs

One of the highlights of the day was the self-care presentation done by clinical psychologist Dr Samantha Brown. Dr Brown captivated her audience, discussing self-care strategies minimising the risk of vicarious trauma and reinforced the importance of looking after ourselves. Additionally, Dr Brown brought along a therapy dog who received lots of petting and attention.

Next attendees broke down to smaller working groups and brainstormed ways to reinvigorate the Refugee Support Worker Meetings, this was thoroughly supported by the workers present and it was agreed our next step was to survey all members to determine the future direction of these important meetings.

Lastly representatives of the Executive Committee promoted refugee worker participation in working groups facilitated by CWRG executives. Participants were encouraged to become part of a working group where their thoughts and ideas could be shared with the wider DFV sector.

The event was declared successful event with all members feeding back that the opportunity for face-to-face conversations, connections and peer support was highly valued.

Cathrine Johns
Secretary

CWRG NETWORKING DAY



Statewide Refuge Leaders Forum

In May this year, ChallengeDV facilitated the first QLD State-wide Refuge Leaders Forum. The forum was held over 2 days at Minter Ellison and was attended by approximately 40 members, representing over 25 refuges, travelling from Cairns, the Gold Coast and everywhere in between.

Day one began with a walk down memory lane for the refuge sector and led into some passionate discussions about how refuges can stay relevant in the domestic and family violence sector. Following on from this we discussed length of stays in refuge, had a presentation from DV Connect and then moved into afternoon discussions around First Nations Women and Children in refuge. The afternoon concluded with a fun activity of creating a “home” through art and craft, followed by some drinks and nibbles to connect with each other.

Day two focused on the housing crisis, support for CALD families in refuge, Police responses and High Risk Teams, and peer support. The afternoon involved an enthusiastic planning session where working groups were established for the following projects:

- Progressing partnerships
- Advocacy for change
- Networking
- Profiling refuges
- Blue book
- Data collection
- Affordable housing campaign

Through the support of Challenge DV, refuges from all over Queensland were supported to attend this event. Being able to spend two days as a group, discussing ways to overcome sector challenges, learn from each other, build new connections, all while being fed delicious food with an amazing view, was incredible.

The forum was a resounding success, filled with enthusiasm and excitement for the future. In addition, connections have been strengthened within the refuge sector and a number of North Queensland refuges have been attending the monthly CWRG meeting. CWRG is hoping that this will become an annual event.

Debbie Bruford
Committee Member



Statewide Refugee Leaders Forum

