

Combined Women's Refuge Group South East Qld (CWRG)

Annual Report 2024



Chairpersons Report

Once again this year has flown past. We say this every year and every year it is true. This is reflective of the work we do, and the increasingly complex needs of the women and children we work with.

The refuge sector continues to be a vital and specialist component of the domestic and family violence sector, however a largely unrecognised one. I believe however, this is starting to change as refuges are expanding their work into the community with mobile support programs, providing outreach, imbedded worker positions and increased collaborating with other organisations.

We have seen the work being done to raise awareness around all areas of DFV, legislate coercive control and increases in funding to organisations. However, the basic need for safe places for women and children in crisis continues to be limited.

The most common estimate that was voiced for many years was, on average, one woman dies every week as a result of Domestic and Family Violence. In 2024 the most common estimate used is one woman dies every 4 days. In 2024, to be telling a woman experiencing violence, at risk of significant harm, that her choices are to remain in the unsafe environment or leave, risking homelessness for herself and her children is untenable.

I personally continue to say, often loudly, that it is becoming more difficult and challenging for women to leave an abusive relationship now than ever before. I don't say this as a deterrent to women leaving abuse, but more as a demand for more resources. The housing crisis continues to have an enormous impact on the lack of refuge vacancies, but also, processes within the housing sector could be improved.

The Dept of Housing transfer process has long been a challenge to women in refuge. In view of this, Chantal from Women's House wrote an advocacy letter and asked CWRG to join her in addressing the Department's process. This letter has initiated regular meetings between Dept of Housing representatives Regional Director Katherine Saffotti and DFV Integrated Response Worker Tracey Macintosh and CWRG reps to talk about transfers, exit points in general, any assistance packages they can provide to women in refuge and generally enhancing the refuge / Dept relationship. We now have a direct point of contact to advocate for our client's needs. Thank you, Chantal.

Regular meetings between DVConnect and CWRG have also begun this year. These meetings have proved to be extremely positive in strengthening the relationship between DVC and the refuge sector. We meet to discuss any specific issues and or positives about processes and programs. I believe both DVC and Refuge reps are learning more about the specific needs of both services through this enhanced communication. We welcome all member's input into these meetings and please contact Julia or anyone on the committee if you would like any particular issue raised. We hope that in working together we will improve outcomes for the families we work with.

Chairpersons Report continued

In 2025 we are excited to announce that CWRG is able to subsidise Shark Cage Training for member organisation staff. At the moment we are able to pay a portion of 2 staff member's registration from each service. We are using funds donated from the Premier's Not Now, Not Ever. Together. Breakfast event which Bernadette will mention in her report.

We are also looking forward to holding another support workers forum. The sharing of information and peer support in these events is invaluable and CWRG is happy to facilitate another morning so we can all get together. We will send out dates closer to the event. This will enhance the Support Workers meetings which have resumed this year. Thank you Chelsea Ham and Crystal Boardman from 54 Reasons and of course Julia our Secretariate for the organisation and facilitation of these valuable meetings.

I would like to take this opportunity to Thank our Exec Committee Members for the work they have done throughout the year. There is often a significant number of tasks that need to be completed over and above their normal working life and they are always willing to squeeze more time out of their day to make them happen. Our Secretary Julia, Treasurer Bernadette and members Kirsten, Deb, Emalee and Mel are always open to fitting in extra commitments and advocating for the needs of our sector.

ChallengeDV continues to provide funding for our Secretariate position which is absolutely invaluable. Julia is our Secretariate who manages our correspondence, liaising with other entities, arranging meetings and guest speakers and many many other tasks I cannot even name. I know that Julia fills so many more hours than the 3 paid ones which are allocated, so Thank you Julia for being our go to person in all things. Thank you all for everything you do every year to support CWRG, the refuge sector and the women and children we all work with.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the work you all do every day. Refuge is one of the most complex, holistic, challenging and rewarding areas of work in. It requires a high level of skill and a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the women and children we work with. Your work is noticed and does make a difference.

Tracey Amos

2023 -2024 Executive Committee

Chairperson - Tracey Amos

Treasurer - Bernadette O'Byrne

Secretary - Julia Dawson

General Member - Debbie Bruford

General Member - Kirsten Nicholson

General Member - Emily Anstee

General Member - Melanie Houghton



Left to Right: Julia Dawson, Tracey Amos, Kirsten Nicholson, Bernadette O'Byrne, Jacque Lachmund (Guest speaker), Debbie Bruford.

Treasurers Report

Another year has rapidly flown by for the Combined Women's Refuge Group and we have entered into our 46th year of operation. The biggest issue affecting the refuge sector over the past twelve months is the absolute lack of affordable housing options for women and children trying to leave shelter. Since the pandemic, interstate and overseas migration as well consecutive interest rates hikes has resulted in a shortage of available rental properties and rents have shot up accordingly. Whereas once we could encourage women to look for more affordable private rentals on the outskirts of Brisbane, properties in these areas are now over \$600 or \$700 per week.

We have had meetings with Department of Housing representatives, but they say they have been slammed by the sheer number of people living in tents and in hotels. Earlier this year the Premier stated that every Queenslanders on the cusp of homelessness will be found crisis accommodation, including hotels. Hotels across south east Queensland are at their limit and QCOSS states that there are 45,474 people on the social housing waitlist in Queensland.

This financial year we received an enormous donation of \$27,250.47 which were some of the proceeds from the State Government's Not Now, Not Ever breakfast. This event, held on the 8th December 2023, was a celebration of the actions that the Queensland Government has taken to deliver support services for victim survivors of domestic and family violence in Queensland and to hold people who use violence to account. This is a largest donation that the CWRG has ever received and it will give us the opportunity to implement some much needed professional development for the sector.

Financial Summary 2023-2024

Income

Memberships	5,100.00
Corporate Partnerships	10,228.96
Donations	29,644.00
Other grants	-

Total Income

44,972.96

Expenses

Project costs	-
Admin costs	2,290.19
Sector training & development	-
Brokerage	1,667.07
Employment Expenses	10,228.99

Total Expenses

14,186.25

Net Surplus (Deficit)

30,786.71

Treasurers Report Continued

Challenge DV contributed a massive \$10,228.99 towards the cost of the Secretariat in 2023-2024. This organization has greatly assisted in the financial viability of the CWRG with their contributions over many years and we are truly grateful for their efforts.

Memberships yielded a total of \$5,100. Social workers from the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital raised over \$1600 to purchase gift cards for women and children in refuge and we received a further \$727 from the GiveNow platform. We greatly appreciate the thought and effort behind these very generous donations.

In appreciation:

We say thank you to Julia for all of her efforts in the role of Secretariat over the past financial year. We know that the position of Secretariat can be challenging with too few hours to respond to multiple emails and requests. Your competency and organizational skills are exceptional and you have gone above and beyond and we say thank you. 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 2023/24. This includes: Tracey (Chair); Debb, Kirsten, Emalee and Mel.

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

A Message from Debbie Bruford

CWRG has been represented in the DJAG Women's Safety and Violence Prevention meetings throughout the year, along with other sector representatives. These meetings have a focus on national developments, state reforms and initiatives, sector reflections and ideas and an opportunity to discuss emerging issues in the domestic violence space. CWRG has provided feedback on the funding contracts with the recent 20% uplift funding and communication to the sector and participated in consultation meetings regarding the recruitment and development of a sustainable workforce. CWRG was invited to provide feedback on the creative concepts for the coercive control and sexual consent campaigns and has been involved in conversations regarding the new DFV Training Support and Coordination Service that will deliver foundational training to a broad range of government and non-government service providers. DJAG has made an ongoing commitment to involve the sector in reform-related discussions and CWRG is keen to continue this partnership.