

*"As one person I cannot change the world, but I can change the world of one person."*

*Paul Shane Spear*



Edition 2, April 2014

## WRISC News

### **A nervous wait** **- National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness -**

**It has been a busy few months for WRISC, with significant lobbying of Government, due to uncertainty surrounding the State and Federal Governments' homelessness funding agreement which is due to run out at the end of June.**

Welcome news came on Sunday 30th March, with the announcement by Prime Minister Tony Abbott to honour a pledge to end funding uncertainty for homeless Australians, with a pre-election injection of \$115 million.

Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews said "The National Agreement currently funds over 180 initiatives across Australia that helps those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These dedicated people provide critical support to help vulnerable Australians get their lives back together, as well as find affordable and sustainable housing."

WRISC's "Safe at home" program was at risk with the possible cessation of this funding. Although specific confirmation is still to be obtained in relation to the funding, WRISC is relieved to know the Government did hear the collective voice of social services in Victoria.

WRISC Executive Officer Jacinta Wainwright has been involved with the media coverage and lobbying, attending a media conference with other social service organisations, commenting on ABC local and ABC National radio, and The Courier newspaper.

Jacinta comments that *"This is really only a stop gap measure though. We were here at this point 12 months ago, and we will be here again in another 12 months. We really need a longer term plan and commitment from Government in relation to the funding of these vital services."*

Homelessness Australia spokesperson Glenda Stevens echoed Jacinta's concerns saying "A discussion about longer term planning between the Government and the sector is needed. Our main concern is frontline services. We have a crisis right now."



*Executive Officer Jacinta Wainwright, attended the Media Conference with other social service organisations on 6th March 2014*



#### **Facts about Family Violence**

- Violence in family and intimate relationships is mostly committed by men against women
- Violence and abuse is about power and control. The person using the violence is seeking to control their partner or family member's behaviour or choices. Using violence is always a choice made by the person using violence.
- Violence and abuse of any form is unacceptable and a breach of human rights.

## When is enough, enough?

### Thoughts from the Executive Officer

**Sadly in the news we continue to hear reports of women and children murdered by their partners or fathers in the context of male intimate partner and family violence.**

Most recently a woman was viciously attacked and murdered, in a busy street in Sunshine - her former partner later turning himself in to police. This was followed only days later by two young children allegedly murdered by their father in their grandmother's home in Watsonia over Easter. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the families, friends, communities and responding services as they come to terms with these tragedies.

These horrifying incidents prompt me to write about the unacceptable scourge faced by our community. It is men's violence against women and their children. What is alarming is that whilst not always the case, the vast majority of men's violence against women is perpetrated by a man known to a woman, usually her partner or former partner.

But back to why I feel compelled to share my concerns with you now. I am angry, I am concerned and frankly services like WRISC need your help.

Many of you will know the statistic that one woman every week is murdered by a male partner or former partner in Australia. This is unacceptable and sadly this is the pointy end of men's violence against women. Many thousands more women and children in Victoria live in fear because of family violence. We must ensure that when women and children reach out for help that we don't fail them as this woman and children were failed. Unfortunately we have a long way to go.

On the ground police, courts, women and men's services, corrections and child protection are doing their best but there are not enough resources, and services are overstretched. The service system also lacks much needed coordination, and the capacity to share information about dangerous men, in order to be able to support women and children's safety.

In practice I believe our overburdened police and justice system struggle to swiftly and effectively deal with breaches of intervention orders, criminal matters, and fails to keep dangerous offenders who pose an ongoing and unacceptable risk to our community incarcerated.

But let's bring this closer to home and consider the picture here in our own backyard. Family Violence incidents reported to police across the Central Highlands

region of Victoria are continuing to increase. Ballarat in particular is currently ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> highest municipality in Victoria for police family violence reports.

Family violence counselling and support services in Ballarat are struggling to meet demand. At WRISC we are not able to adequately assist many women and children who seek our help. Last financial year demand for our support services was 32% higher than our capacity and in our counselling services that demand was 75% higher. During that same period we had to turn away 62 women and their children in our support program due to no capacity. Fifty one of these women were provided some type of immediate assistance before turning them away while we were unable to offer any assistance at all to 11 of these women. Since July 2013 we have had to turn away over 77 women and their children.

When is enough, enough? Women need access to services that are resourced and coordinated to help them stay safe. Men who use violence must take responsibility for their behaviour and stop using violence, intimidation and abuse or face harsh penalties. These penalties must be adequate in the eyes of the community and keep all members of our community safe. We absolutely need more direction and resources from Government to have any chance to stop men's violence against women and children. We need greater investment in support services and we need investment in programs that seek to stop violence before it occurs. As a community we also need to take more responsibility to stop this violence. Private business and individuals can contribute both financially and in-kind to needed services and be part of initiatives that seek to stop violence before it occurs.

Do you also think enough is enough? If you do please call or visit our website to find out more about this problem and what you can do to ensure that women and children get the help they need to stay and be safe.

Thank you.

*Jacinta Wainwright*  
Executive Officer.





## International Women's Day event a great success

The Ballarat Family Violence Prevention Network hosted its annual International Women's Day Event.

This year it was held at the Ballarat Bowling Lanes and was entitled "Strike Out Violence Against Women". The event was attended by approximately 170 people.

It was a great opportunity for the community, as well as family violence services to have a fun event to celebrate the capability and strength of women, to recognise the significance of women in our community, and ultimately to eliminate violence against women.

Several community leaders were interviewed throughout the day, sharing their passion, support and commitment to women in our local community.



Above: Sarah & Taz from Power FM Broadcasting live at the event



Above: The amazing organising committee & volunteers!

## Ballarat to Bolivia

**One of our WRISC family is leaving. Although we are sad to see Juelz Sanders leave the organisation, it is with great pride that we let her go.** Juelz and her family are about to embark on an exciting and very purposeful journey. Juelz, her husband Ben and two children Ruby & Max, are heading to Bolivia in South America to work as volunteers for 2 years.

Juelz is hoping to use the experience she has gained from WRISC in Ballarat to assist women and children affected by family violence, in Bolivia. Juelz says *"domestic violence is a major issue in Australia, with 1 in 3 women affected. In Bolivia it is astronomical, with 70% of women affected."* Juelz also explains that the other major challenges or differences with domestic violence in Bolivia compared with Australia is the lack of services available to assist women, inadequate laws and protection for women, and the culturally ingrained "acceptability" of domestic violence.

Ben will be illustrating for a children's curriculum project (The Tarpuy Project), and Ruby & Max will be attending a local Bolivian school (& playing LOTS of soccer!).

WRISC will be keeping in contact with Juelz and her family, and will continue to keep you informed of their great work, via this newsletter and our website.

If you would like to contribute financially to the "Sanders in the Andes" you can make a one off donation or monthly pledge via their sending agency *Pioneers Australia* ([www.pioneers.org.au](http://www.pioneers.org.au)). Alternatively, you can make a contribution to the specific resources they need to take with them, via their *mycause* page ([www.mycause.com.au/page/68538](http://www.mycause.com.au/page/68538))



## Thank you to our recent donors/sponsors

Kind and generous donations from organisations, private philanthropists and various grants enable us to continue to service the increasing number of requests for help. We sincerely thank our loyal and generous supporters.

### **Ballarat South Rotary Club**

A very generous donation to assist the general work of WRISC.

**Ordinary Women's Laughter (OWL)** and the Ballarat Community, through the production of The Vagina Monologues. WRISC is very grateful for the donation of all proceeds from the ticket sales of the production.

### **StreetSmart**

A grant to assist with the children's counselling program

### **61Design**

Contribution to the general work of WRISC.

### **Country Women's Association (CWA)**

Two separate branches of the CWA have provided donations to the work of WRISC.

## Can you help?

If you would like to make a contribution, our bank details are:

BSB: 063-507 Acct: 10042491 Name: Central Highlands Women's Collective

OR send a cheque (payable to Central Highlands Women's Collective Inc) to: PO Box 1044, Bakery Hill Vic 3354

**Donations of \$2 or more to WRISC Family Violence Support are tax deductible.**

## WRISC - Spreading the message

WRISC have recently had the opportunity to speak at various locations in the last few months. These have included:

- Rotary Club of Beaufort
- Opening Closed Doors conference
- 3BA local radio & Power FM- International Women's Day event
- ABC local radio - in response to NPAH funding uncertainty
- The Courier - in response to NPAH funding uncertainty

If you would like WRISC to speak at your club, with your employees or management, or for a specific event, please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Officer at WRISC on 5333 3666.

## WRISC to present at the Warrior Whispering forum

Two WRISC Indigenous workers will be heading to Mackay in Queensland to present at the 10th Annual Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum - hosted by Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research.

Ange & Asha will be presenting as part of the *Yarning Circle* and will share their insights into the issue of adolescent violence in the home.

The forum will be held on Wednesday May 7 and Thursday May 8, 2014

