



Dear Women,

The past year has had the flavor of innovative and creative change. I have witnessed each of you embody a generosity of spirit towards the ongoing changes and this is a credit to all of you. Many have displayed compassion toward those who need time to process change and in doing so have supported the amazing transformation of Toora Women Inc. I am truly grateful to all for embracing the new way forward. I know many of you are also excited at the potential of the year ahead. Thanks everyone!

Love Jacky

annual report 2009–10

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Chair's report

2009-2010 was a time of renewal and revitalisation for Toora Women Inc. Members faced numerous challenges and opportunities with strength and enthusiasm, drawing on Toora Women Inc's strong feminist values and principles.

A major focus during the year was on the commitment to seek accreditation through the QMS process. This provided the opportunity to check where the organisation was in terms of its management and operations and to consider how members wanted the organisation to develop over the next few years, as well as to meet its obligations in terms of funding contracts. The process of seeking accreditation meant an increase in the workload of staff in particular, and Board members have been extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism shown by staff during this busy period.

The Board established a Governance Committee, composed of Board and staff members, which worked closely with staff to look at the present structures of Toora Women Inc, and to consider what changes could be made that would lead to a better organisation—without pushing for 'change for change's sake'. One example of how the organisation can work to address governance matters was through involvement with the

committee itself. While most staff members were unable to attend the meetings, they were involved through regular emails and reports. Advice and feedback from staff, both individually and through the Advisory Forum, have led to changes that we believe will ensure a secure and professional organisation able to meet future challenges.

Professional and financial issues have been managed well and Toora Women Inc has been able to pursue its aims and objectives of a feminist organisation that provides the highest quality of service for women.

Following resignations of Board members Felicity Rafferty and Vera van de Velde, the Board decided to advertise through community organisations and some newspapers for expressions of interest. This process proved extremely successful, with a large number of applications from highly suitable women. We recruited three new Board members, Sarah Logan, Jo Schumann and Gillian Frost and also invited Kylie Mullins to participate in our discussions. We also saw some change in Advisory Forum representation, when Vivienne Pearce took over from Tai Sullivan. Current community Board members are Karen Lenihan, Gabrielle Sledge, Jo Schumann, Gillian Frost, Sarah Logan and myself, while current Advisory

Forum members are Vivienne Pearce and Yasmin Elferkh. I believe that this mixture of both experienced and new members has provided the Board with a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm which has clearly benefitted Toora Women Inc.

I would like to thank all Board members, including Vera and Felicity, for their hard work and ongoing commitment to Toora.

The Board would like to thank all Toora Women Inc staff for their professionalism, enthusiasm and ability to look at new ideas, consider the best way forward for Toora Women Inc and accept that while change can be threatening, it can also lead to great improvements for the organisation. In particular, the Board thanks the Executive Director, Jacky Cook for her excellent leadership and vision during this challenging year.

Elizabeth Kentwell

Toora Chair

Executive Director's report

Dear Women,

It can easily be said that there is never a dull moment at Toora Women Inc. This year has been no exception—in fact the theme of this year appears to have been innovative change and a new look for Toora Women Inc. To the credit of all workers, coordinators, management and Board members the changes and innovations are moving along quickly, with energy and excitement shared by all.

Two years ago, Toora Women Inc. signed up for accreditation under the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) through Quality Management Services (QMS). This process put every aspect of Toora Women Inc. under review and has involved many hours of work. The process began with the creation of our quality journal, which outlined what we do, how we do it and what evidence is available to back this up. The next step in the process was an external audit and review by two QMS Auditors, who spent a week reviewing all of our documentation and evidence, interviewing service users, staff, management, Board and invited stakeholders. I would like to offer a big thank you to all who participated in the interview process. Your feedback was incredibly valuable. The audit

resulted in a number of reconditions for change and we anticipate achieving accreditation by February 2011.

As part of the Toora Women Inc. Strategic Plan, a number of sub committees have been established to work on improving specified areas. These committees are the Employment Subcommittee, Governance Subcommittee, the Clinical/Intervention Subcommittee, and the Reconciliation Action Plan Subcommittee.

The Employment Subcommittee was established in October 2009 to negotiate the new Multiple Enterprise Agreement (MEA). This was successfully negotiated and signed by the 1st January 2010.

The Governance Subcommittee was created to review and negotiate a new Constitution for Toora Women Inc. This is now complete and the proposed new Constitution has been given to all members of the Association in preparation of the Annual General Meeting in November. The committee is also overseeing the creation of a risk management plan and policy, though the work on this has been primarily conducted by leadership and staff. The subcommittee is also reviewing the

Strategic Plan, as well as the governance, delegation and communication policies of the organisation.

A Clinical/Intervention Subcommittee was established to create a structure that oversees the clinical, therapeutic and crisis intervention models of service delivery within Toora Women Inc. This mechanism will ensure that Toora Women Inc. practices and policies are consistent with best practice models and are in line with current research.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Subcommittee was established in line with our strategic plan to commit to our role in a creating a reconciled Australia, where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy the same quality of life as other Australians.

Another innovation taking place at Toora Women Inc. has been the remodelling of the homeless services model. In light of internal, funding, departmental and political changes to the homelessness sector, Toora Women Inc. is undergoing a restructure to our homelessness services. The Coordinators and Executive team are working hard on a new model and anticipate its completion by December 2010.

It is an exciting time for Toora Women Inc. and the commitment of all staff during this very

busy time needs to be commended. It takes great courage to look honestly at one's self and then change. It is in line with our feminist principle that you should never ask a women to do what you are not willing to do your self. In the same manner that we ask the women who access our services, Toora Women Inc. is having an honest look at herself and is now in the process of fantastic innovation and change. Well done everyone.

Thank you to all those who commit time and energy to Toora Women Inc every year; ACT Health, Department of Health and Aging, Department of Housing and Community Services, the Soroptimists, our dedicated Board members, staff and friends of Toora.

I wish to acknowledge the amazing women who walk through our doors each day. All are welcome.

Love Jacky.

Jacky Cook

Toora Executive Director

Deputy Director's report

This 2009/2010 year has been a time of challenge, change and growth for the organization. We celebrated Toora's 27th birthday with a focus on homeless women who use our services for support. These women shared their stories and touched our hearts with their openness and courage.

It is a well known statistic that 105,000 people are homeless on any given night in Australia. The latest data shows an increasing number of older people, women and children are represented in these statistics. Indigenous people are also, as usual, over represented.

The White Paper states that homelessness is everyone's responsibility. However, the White Paper's vision to halve the overall homelessness rates and to offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers by 2020 appears ambitious at this stage. There are three strategies mentioned as a response to homelessness:

- services to intervene early to prevent homelessness
- services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing

- people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with support, so that homelessness does not recur.

Toora Women Inc. has taken part in each of the different stages of the consultation process in this government initiative. Toora's homelessness services are currently in a process of change and restructure, in order to accommodate both the proposed strategies and the national framework to support quality services for women and their children who are experiencing homelessness (Housing Minister's Conference 2010). Toora Women Inc. is going through a process of accreditation through QMS, a process that is lengthy but of enormous assistance in evaluating all aspects of the organisation and its services.

Our Drug and Alcohol services, WIREDD and Lesley's Place have always worked collaboratively, but this year has seen this cooperation increase, with many projects supported by both services. Their involvement and cooperation with Toora homelessness services has also increased: this is evident in the joint forces response to assist women with housing issues, counselling and advocacy.

There have been some internal employment changes across the services, but other than

this, the work force has been very stable. We advertised externally for new relief workers only.

The implementation of the new Multiple Enterprise Agreement has improved workers conditions and increased in pay levels, also contributing to the stability and retention of valuable staff.

The completion of the Toora Women Inc. Policy and Procedure Manual is an achievement I am proud of.

Toora Women Inc. workers have always been proud of their commitment to quality service delivery/provision and their ability to respond effectively to service user needs. To achieve this high standard, Toora Women Inc. has for many years placed a lot of emphasis on the professional development and training for its workers. The Induction Training for new workers at Toora has been a success: thank you to all Toora workers, DVCS, Rape Crisis Centre, Sandi Plummer and all others who participated. Below is a list of training, workshops and conferences attended.

Workers across all Toora services attended:

- Induction Training -2 weeks training for new employees
- White Privilege training – Jacqui Pearce

- Self Harming training – Sandi Plummer
- Drug and Alcohol conference
- Women Health Conference
- Senior First Aid training
- Feminism
- Incidental counselling -Sandi Plummer
- Homelessness conference
- Mindfulness Training - Sandi Plummer
- Counselling Training - Sandi Plummer
- Trauma Training - two day's workshop
- OH&S Training
- First Aid Training
- QMS training and workshops
- Risk management workshop
- DBT Training
- Art therapy workshop
- Emotional intelligence training
- Family of Origin
- Association forum Conference

Individual Toora Inc services training attended:

Aleta:

- Human rights Workshop for community Sector

Toora House:

- Dealing with Aggressive and Violent Behaviour

- Report writing training
- SMART data training
- Aboriginal Cultural History Heritage training
- Mental Health First Aid
- Sisters Inside Conference
- Mental Health
- Effective support to people with antisocial behaviour, narcissism and borderline personality disorder conference
- Drug and Alcohol workshops

Lesley's Place

- Meeting with Standard 3.4.3 - Training and Development
- The Alcohol and Drug Certificate IV
- Senior First Aid Training
- Explorations of Healing
- Workers attended the Althea open day/launch at Directions
- Co-morbidity forum organised by the Youth Coalition
- Changes to Children and Young People's Act
- Bethel Retreat
- AMC Security Awareness Training
- CIT MQS participation
- Team building sessions
- Leadership mentoring

Wiredd:

- AMC Security Awareness Training
- Mindfulness training – Dr Sandi Plummer
- Community Inclusion Board: Through care and Aftercare
- Young women and leadership Training
- YWCA Young Women’s leadership Workshop.
- Translating evidence-based approaches to effective school drug education into practice
- Stepping stones Facilitation Training
- Reporting child abuse and neglect.

Heira:

- WCHM “Culture Specific’ training re CALD women
- Working with Clients who are Hard to Engage – workshop
- Financial Fitness training
- SMART data collection
- Dealing with aggressive and violent behaviour
- Report writing training
- Drug and Alcohol workshops
- Mental Health First Aid

Admin team:

- Diversity in Health conference
- Advanced Leadership Training

- OH&S for community sector
- Intensive OH&S training for Organisational Representative
- EXCEL training
- Taxation and Payroll training
- Portable Long Service Leave Training
- Negotiating skills for today

I would like to thank all Toora workers across the organisation for their ongoing commitment and hard work. Thank you to the lovely Admin team members, thank you to Lynne Major Blatch our Accreditation Officer, thank you to the Leadership team, thank you to all Coordinators and Acting Coordinators in the past period, a special thank you to the Executive Director Jacky Cook and many thanks to amazing women we have on our Board.

I would also like to thank our stakeholders: the women who use our services, the funding Departments: ACT Health, Commonwealth and DHCS for the ongoing support of our services to women. A special thank you to ACT Women Services Network for their exemplary collaborative work and support through the year.

Branka Trajkovski

Deputy Director

Toora House

Achievements

The past 12 months have been a time of changes and growth for Toora House. This has been exciting, both for us the workers and for the women we support at Toora House. All four programs: 24 hour crisis accommodation, the transitional program, outreach and the Day Refuge have operated at full capacity for most of the year.

In the past year, we have had a few staffing changes, but this has not affected the high standard of services delivered to the women. The Day Refuge has gone from strength to strength and we have worked collaboratively with the Health Centre. Thanks to the kind donations that we received from the Soropistmist, we were able to take the women, accessing Day Refuge on various different day trips. Basic cooking information was also offered, much to the delight of the women.

The “She Is” group has also been well attended, with women learning new craft skills like how to create hand bags, cards, earrings and other types of jewellery. We have also facilitated a workshop on dental health called “Smiles”, which gives women information on how to look after their teeth. In addition to

running this workshop, we have also helped some women to obtain dentures. The feedback for this service was very positive, with many comments about how their dental work has increased their self esteem and confidence.

As part of its services, the Day Refuge also offers counselling sessions to women affected by homelessness, crisis or trauma. Another group that was well attend was "WHAM": Women's Holistic Anger Management.

Another initiative present at the Toora Day Refuge has been the creation of a mini vegetable patch, which the women can maintain and use at their leisure.

DVCS, Mental Health During this year we have signed a MOU with Street Law, which has enabled women to access legal support and representation at court. Street law have been very supportive of Toora House and the Day Refuge. Street Law provides a flexible service that has been a great asset to the women we support.

Centrelink: For the past 6 months Centrelink has been attending the Day Refuge, which has been a wonderful source of support and enabled the women to access the staff at Centrelink in their own space.

AMC: Over the past 12 months Toora House has been working in close collaboration with the AMC. The referrals that Toora House receives have been sporadic: we either receive a large number of referrals at once or none at all over a certain period. We continue to support the women at AMC by attending case conferences, workshops, and the recommended training. Toora Women Inc. has contributed to the review of AMC by providing input in the various community workshops that have been organized.

PSU: We continue to work collaboratively with PSU and 2N. Just as in the case of AMC, we tend to have waves of referrals from the mental health sector and AOD services rather than a consistent, predictable stream.

Toora House currently has three transitional houses, which ensures that the women in these houses have a quieter and less hectic house to live in until their long term housing becomes available.

Toora House has worked collaboratively in this period, further building upon already productive working relationships with Lesley's Place, Heira, Aleta and DVCS.

We have also been particularly innovative in assisting women to investigate and link up with other services and supports. For instance, one of the immediate problems of women who use our services is a lack of access to healthy meals. Toora House views the provision of access to healthy food as a priority for our service users because something as simple as eating well can have a profound impact upon the physical and mental wellbeing of our women.

In recognition of the importance of this, we currently have a three fold strategy in place. A Woolworths food card is given to women on arrival at our services, if they have no income. We currently have an agreement in place to receive regular Oz Harvest food donations. Finally, we also have a Food Shop, where the

women are able to buy food items for half price. The service will continue to look at other ways to support women in this manner, both while they are in the service and when the return to independent living.

Trends

104 women that we have accommodated in the last twelve months, 42 were specifically accommodated in our emergency 24 hour bed and there were 9 further ongoing at the end of this period.

Due to a lack of exit points for women in our services, Toora House has been accommodating women for increasingly longer periods of time. The lack of exit points has meant that there has been a limited turn over in service users.

Toora House workers have noticed a pattern of having a full crisis house based solely on Mental health referrals or DOA referrals. At times, this can make the house unsettled. However, this has provided our staff with the opportunity to implement the skills that they have learned in training.

NATIONALITY	#	AGE	#
Caucasian	29	18-25	9
Chinese	2	26-34	8
Filipino	1	35-44	11
Indigenous	7	45-54	10
Irani	1	55-64	3
Samoa	1		

We have had 17 women accommodated in our transitional program with 4 on going. This was affected by having limited exit points as well as immigration issues.

NATIONALITY	#	AGE	#
Ethiopian	1	20-30	3
Samoa	1	31-40	4
Indigenous	1	41-49	1
Caucasian	7	50+	2

Outreach has been at capacity for the majority of this year with 23 women being supported in this time with 3 ongoing at the end of the period. This is the same as last year.

NATIONALITY	#	AGE	#
Caucasian	11	17-24	1
Indigenous	0	25-34	5
Filipino	0	35-44	4
Chilean	2	45-54	7
New Zealand	2	55+	1
Italian	1		
Spanish	1		
Uruguay	1		

We have provided support, advocacy, referrals, food, clothes, transport, bus tickets and many other forms of assistance to women.

These women have come to Toora House with a vast range of complex needs, which are often wide ranging and mutually reinforcing. On one level women may be dealing with issues of trauma and their consequences, which may range from incest, ritual abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault to pregnancy, custody and family issues and sexually transmitted infections. On top of this, women may also be struggling within a framework of housing, legal and medical issues. For instance, women may also be in the process of drug and alcohol recovery, struggling with eating disorders, may have income support and training needs or existing disability and mental health issues.

Finally, many of these women may already be wary, having suffered discrimination by employers on these grounds.

The problem with finding appropriate exit points for our women has meant that Toora House has been required to create a set of highly useful networks with other organisations.

Housing: Housing and Community services, ACT Shelter, Tenant Union, Heira, Aleta, Doris, Homelinx, Lesley's Place, Lowana, Marzenna, CEAS CHYPP

Drug and Alcohol Support: Directions, WIREDD, the Junction, Withdrawal Unit at Canberra Hospital, Richmond fellowship,

Mental Health: CATT Team, Mental Health Foundation, ACT Mental Health, Psychiatric Unit at Canberra Hospital, GROW

Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Trauma and Counselling: Companion House, DVCS, CRCC

Support Groups: St Vincent DePaul, Havelock House, Migrant Resource Centre, Catholic Care, Belconnen Community Centre, Barnardo's, Carers ACT, Gungahlin Community Centre, Marymead, Relationships Australia, Respite Care, Oz Harvest, IPA

Medical: St John's, Women's Health, Women's Centre for Health Matters, Family Planning Clinic Sexual Health Clinic, Southside Community Services Winnunga Nimmitjah

Legal: Welfare Rights, Women's Legal Services, Street Law

Finance: CARE Financial

Government: Care and Protection, Alexander Maconochie Centre, WIRC, Centrelink, Telephone Interpreting Service

Future directions

We would like to see Toora House having the ability to expand the support offered by the Day Refuge. At the present time, a number of former service users are accessing the Day Refuge. We are currently running several groups at the Day Refuge, including craft, cooking and walking groups. We are also looking into expanding these options in the future to accommodate more women in the community.

Thanks

Toora has welcomed a few new workers, including relief workers. Toora would also like to acknowledge the hard working and lovely women at all positions in Toora House. These workers navigate their way through the four different programs of Toora House and their many tasks and duties on a daily basis. Toora House workers have done an amazing job of maintaining Toora Women Inc's high standard of service delivery to ensure that women are supported.

Each worker has done a wonderful job and has offered her skills, kindness and commitment so that our house can operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We would also like to thank Branka for her ongoing support and kindness throughout this year, Jacky Cook for her flexibility, vision and passion for the organisation, the Leadership team for their direction and support, DVCS, Heira, Lesley's Place and Aleta for making working collaboratively for the women enjoyable, relaxed and focused.

We would like to say thank you to DHCS for their ongoing support with our programs.

We look forward to a busy, productive and full year of great things to come.

Kim Cartwright

Toora House Coordinator

Heira women's refuge

Achievements & trends

Heira's service delivery and case management is based on social justice principles and a strength-based service model. The focus is a client centred, holistic, continuum of care approach requiring intensive support and establishment of community support systems through collaborative practice, community networks and social inclusion. As part of our service all Heira residents have a case management plan developed.

In 2009-2010 Heira supported 68 women, with 27 of them in the residential program and in the outreach program. The age of women supported by Heira ranged from 19 to 60 years of age. The bed occupancy rate in this period was 99.8%.

Fifty five percent (55%) of women supported by Heira were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds, which included a great range of countries of origin, eg: China, India, Pakistan Afghanistan, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Greece, Brazil and Sri Lanka. This figure shows an increase compared to last year.

Some of the CaLD women accessing Heira service are women who arrive on a spouse/

fiancé visa but then, due to DV, have to leave the relationship. These women are usually not entitled to anything until their status is clarified or residency granted.

We noticed another rising trend: women who arrive in Australia on a student visa get married here, which results in them breaching their original visa. While they are still in a process of applying for a spouse visa, they become subjected to domestic violence and are forced to leave their husband. These women are not entitled to any income or any other support which is normally available for women on spouse visas.

Other trends are:

- Heira has had an increased number of residents without a permanent visa. They tend to stay with us for a long time and occupy our crisis beds; (Heira has no transitional properties).
- Some of our residents are working and are not eligible for public housing. However, being low income earners they find it unattainable to pay for the market rent in the private rental market. Thus, it takes them a long time to find appropriate accommodation.
- Lack of public housing properties.

□ The Heira Women's Crisis Service highlight for this year was the launch of Maryann Athaide's report 'A Case for Justice: Immigrant women's experience with Australian immigration law'. Some time ago Heira workers identified the issues faced by women coming to Canberra on prospective partner visas and then finding themselves in a domestic violence situation.

The well attended launch of the report took place in March 2010. The report was officially launched by Roslyn Dundas, Director of ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS). Guests speakers included Maureen Sheehan, Executive Director of Housing and Community Services with Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services; Maryann Athaide, author herself; and one of our service users - a woman with the firsthand experience of a migrant woman who was holding a fiancé visa but was forced to leave the relationship due to domestic violence. In her speech she expressed her gratitude to Heira for the support she received during the many months she spent in immigration limbo. She said: 'I was not entitled to any Centrelink benefit and was solely dependent on Heira for financial support for nearly 12 months until my permanent residency was approved. Heira provided me with food, bus tickets and a small amount of spending money each week...My

husband's family took me to court and due to my status in this country I was not entitled to any legal representation. My Heira worker spoke to the judge because I had no voice... I realised at this time that I simply did not exist in this country.'

The launch of the report caught the attention of the broader ACT community and was followed by an article publicised on the website of the School of Journalism at the University of Canberra. Furthermore, a Canberra Times journalist requested to interview our resident, who spoke at the launch of the report. As a result of the interview, an article with a headline: 'I was used as a slave, woman says' was published in The Canberra Times on Saturday 3rd of April 2010. In the article it was said that immigration and visa rules for women on a partner visa who are applying for permanent residency under the domestic violence provision 'make it highly onerous, costly and time consuming process that require the sort of emotional and financial resources most migrant women do not have'.

Toora Women Inc. management took this initiative a step further and presented the paper at the Diversity in Health conference in Melbourne, as well as at the Homelessness Forum in Canberra. The presentation was done by the author, Maryann Athaide, and our DD, Branka Trajkovski.

The report was acknowledged by other women's services in the ACT, since they are facing the same issues as the Heira service. In collaboration with other services Heira hopes that policy makers will take a notice and suggest changes to the immigration law.

DV Christmas initiative

Heira continued to participate in the DV Christmas Initiative program this year. The program emerged few years ago as a result of collaboration between SAAP Services, Housing ACT and DVCS acting in response to the higher number of crisis accommodation beds needed over the Christmas holiday period.

The feedback from Heira, as well as other services involved in the program, made the funding body aware of gaps in the program. As a result, the government decided to make changes to the program, so next Christmas it will be in a different form.

QMS

Heira team actively participated in the QMS process for a good part of the last financial year. The whole process was a learning and time consuming one. It was a chance for us to recognise our strengths as well as our gaps. I would like to thank each and one of Heira team for their participation in this complex process.

Collaboration / referrals

This year also Heira continued maintaining good working relationships with the number of services in the ACT including:

- Women's Health Services
- Women's Legal Service
- Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services ACT (formerly known as Migrant Resource Centre)
- Street Law which is an outreach legal service for the homeless
- Centrelink
- Companion House
- CARE Financial
- Catholic Care
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- Belconnen Community Centre
- YWCA
- TISS
- Inanna
- Beryl
- Doris
- Women's Centre for Health Matters
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
- Housing ACT
- OzHarvest
- Sexual Health Clinic
- Calvary Hospital & Emergency Department

- Karinya House
- Max Employments
- Gininderra Medical Centre.

Heira Women's Refuge would like to thank to all the women who accessed our service and worked with us while their lives were in turmoil. Thank you to all other Toora Women Inc. services, as well as to the Management and Admin team for their hard work and ongoing support throughout the year.

Quotes:

"I would like to say 'Thank you so much' for the fantastic support and concern I received during my first steps on the rocky road of recovery whilst I was a resident at Heira. I appreciated it greatly. Keep up the great work."

"Thank you for making me forget the stress, sadness and loneliness in my life, and make me feel loved in this universe."

"I couldn't believe that there was a place like Heira. I was in a domestic violence cycle for 10 years. Heira workers helped me to get out of it and become free. Now I have my own place. I know that if I need I can always call Heira and talk to the workers who will understand me and support me."

"I came from my first country and was hoping for best in Australia. But all my dreams suddenly went into peaces. I came to Heira. I was desperate and crying when another woman who lived in the house told me: 'Don't worry, there are very nice people in here, they will help you.' She was right. Staying with Heira helps me to see better future in front of me."

Mirsada Draskovic
Heira Coordinator



Aleta Outreach service for women

Aleta provides intensive outreach support to help women obtain and maintain safe, secure, affordable, independent long-term housing options, to increase awareness of and capacity to access ongoing education, community resources, and support networks.

The need for intensive outreach support service for women without accompanying children greatly exceeds what is currently available. Outreach offers an opportunity to interrupt the homelessness cycle. It also gives women an opportunity to rebuild their lives and build a community support network while living in their own home.

Aleta's service delivery model focuses strongly upon engaging and supporting women within a case-management support framework. This means working with and for women in order to provide appropriate support solutions to meet their needs. Aleta's service provision provides an emphasis on creating a safe environment that enable the women to make decisions and take more control in their own lives.

This provision can include the provision of information or advocacy services, assessment, financial resources, case management support and emotional support.

Aleta's direct service delivery works to provide women with tailored support solutions. These support solutions are three fold:

- Early intervention to support woman to resolve issue before crisis
- Crisis support solutions
- Post intervention support after an episode of homelessness to reduce likelihood of reoccurrence of homelessness

These solutions aim to resolve housing difficulties or crisis and enhance women's housing security, sustainability and opportunity for social participation.

Service Delivery

In this financial year Aleta workers provided 45 support periods to 43 women. Their age ranges from 17 to 75 years. 46.5% were over 50 years of age and of these 16% were over 60 years old. 40% of the women Aleta has supported were on a Disability Support Pension (DSP) with 9% of these securing DSP while receiving Aleta support. Women who accessed Aleta support were from many different cultural backgrounds 5% as Aboriginal, 44% identified as NESB and 51% identified as Australian. For NESB women 42% of these women English is second, third or even fourth language spoken.

Women without accompanying children face significant barriers in obtaining safe, secure

and affordable independent housing. Part of the reason for this is the limited housing stock available through Housing ACT that is situated in small complexes in safe areas. Often one-bedroom properties are located in large multi-story complexes, and these complexes are not suitable for the women that Aleta supports. A large number (40 %) of women accessing Aleta for housing support have disabilities and require specific housing: certain things like stairs, personal safety and social environment can create barriers. These issues can mean that women have to wait a longer time period for an appropriate property to become available.

Aleta works collaboratively with Housing ACT and 12 (28%) of the women that have been supported have secured housing with Housing ACT in this period. This process from beginning to end requires intensive advocacy, with external agencies, and significant time and emotional support for the women to be approved for Priority Housing.

Older women are at increased risk of homelessness due to a greater exposure to risks such as poverty, violence and relationship breakdown. Older women are less likely to access crisis accommodation even when homeless. The support Aleta provides to this specific target group has been increasing in the last few years.

Thanks

Aleta workers wish to thank all the women we have supported and wish to acknowledge how courageous and inspiring you all are. Linda and Jane feel privileged to have been able to walk with you as you journey through this part of your life. Thank you.

Linda Hayden

Aleta Coordinator

Toora's 27th birthday



Toora Rally



Lesley's Place

Lesley's Place is a Toora Women Inc. Drug and Alcohol service that provides outreach and residential recovery support for women and women with children.

We are committed to quality service provision to meet the needs of women and women with children whose lives are impacted by the harm associated with dependencies.

Service delivery statistics/demographics and trends

- Lesley's Place supported 79 women and children throughout the year in all its programs. This slightly lower number reflects the lack of availability of transitional accommodation, exit points, government housing, and community housing .
- The bed occupancy for both residential services for women was 87% over the previous financial year
- The average age of women at Marzenna was 30
- The average age for women at Lesley's Place was 32
- 78% of women at Lesley's Place identified as co-morbid - 95% of those women had received a diagnosis

- 67% of women at Marzenna identified as co-morbid - 50% of these women had received a diagnosis
- 83% of women at Marzenna disclosed sexual assault and 83% disclosed domestic violence
- 46% of women at Lesley's Place disclosed sexual assault and 65% disclosed domestic violence

Innovations – changes and implementations

The most significant changes in the past year have been our acceptance of women with benzodiazepine use and an increased effort to work flexibly with women who are lapsing and struggling to manage behaviours related to trauma and mental health. Significant treatment barriers have led us to more open policies at Lesley's Place, enabling us to assist women with limited support options.

The Quality Measurement Standards process has provided an opportunity to review our systems and work practices with women. We are upgrading and implementing systems to ensure they are evidence-based best practice models and are consistently applied throughout the organisation. The consolidation of this and other work at Toora Women Inc. is exciting for the future of our organisation and the women we support.

Systemic issues/sector development

Women and women with children still experience a number of barriers to treatment, both in the ACT and nationally. Gender specific barriers still occur as a result of having children, being on pharmacotherapy, benzodiazepine use and behaviours related to complex trauma such as self-harm and eating disorders. Lesley's Place is working hard to ensure women are able to access our service regardless of these issues and continue to negotiate and advocate on behalf of women to ensure access to appropriate services and support is not denied.

We are heartened to see Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the links to dependency as a focus in a recent 'Of Substance' issue. As gender specific Drug and Alcohol services, Lesley's Place and WIREDDD have been working with women and the trauma connections to their dependencies for many years. Dr Katherine Mills, the author of the article was recently brought in by ATODA to deliver training to the Sector. This is very encouraging and validates the work of Toora Women Inc.

Future plans

A Canberra University Masters student research project is taking place at Lesley's Place and will measure the impact and effectiveness of Lesley's Place services for

women. This will lead into a review of the service and the needs of women and women with children in the ACT and surrounding region. We hope to use this work to establish clear future direction for the growth of our service, and to continue to address the gaps for women in the ACT.

Thanks

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the Lesley's Place team and the important contribution of the women who make up our relief team.

Also, thank you to all Toora Women Inc. services, administration and management for their ongoing support, expertise and collaboration.

I would like to thank Dr Sandi Plummer for her continued expertise and time and acknowledge the positive impact of this for Toora Women Inc. and the women we assist.

And the ACT Department of Health Drug and Alcohol Policy Unit for the continued funding and support of our important program.

Natalie Liosatos

Lesley's Place Coordinator

WIREDD

WIREDD has had an extremely successful year in supporting women in our community. WIREDD has continued to provide high quality gender-specific information, support and referral for women facing issues relating to alcohol, drugs and other dependencies. These services include drop-in support, counselling, educational & support groups and outreach.

WIREDD is committed to actively ensuring that women's drug and alcohol issues remain on the national and local agenda. Even though we are only a small team, we continue to deliver quality services and advocate women's issues.

During the 2009-10 financial year, WIREDD has consistently worked towards strengthening its relationship with AMC, in order to provide the best possible support to women in incarceration. During the course of this year, WIREDD's team has supported 101 women and have made over 20 visits to AMC. However, due to lockdown procedures being in place at the time, our team has only been able to enter the prison on 17 occasions. Despite this, WIREDD's hard work and ongoing commitment to these women, has successfully established a good working relationship with AMC management.

Unlike either the Belconnen or Symonston Remand Centres, the opening of AMC has created new challenges for WIREDD. Unlike their male counterparts, incarcerated women experience a range of different, but equally complex needs. For instance, there is an ongoing need for support in gaining long term housing. Similarly, many women also require support to ensure adequate care and protection will be provided for their children and other practical domestic arrangements (pets for instance) will be taken care of. WIREDD provides assistance in these matters, but also helps by attending court with the women, providing them with support letters and advocating on their behalf where possible. WIREDD also helps to link the women with relevant services in the community. We have also recognised the particular needs of women who exit AMC with drug and alcohol issues. In these instances, we have built upon our already existing collaborations with ACT detoxifications, rehabilitation centres and refuges.

WIREDD has, over the course of this year, received wonderful feedback regarding the implementation of "Breaking the Ice". This has been a very successful new workshop, which works with the women themselves to discover why they use amphetamines.

After the completion of “Breaking the Ice”, WIREDD has been able to offer both in house training and training across the sector as to amphetamine use and its gender-specific implications. The response from the facilitation of this group has been outstanding and WIREDD looks forward to building on these successes to provide quality gender-specific training in the future.

WIREDD’s groups continue to support women in their recovery and help them to identify the systemic reasons for dependency and relationship breakdown. The Beautiful Me workshop challenges women to evaluate their journeys and acknowledge issues of body image which arise from systemic conditions such as culture, media, self-esteem and much more. Family of Origin helps women to uncover learned behaviours from dysfunctional families and broader society that lead to problematic behaviours such as drug use and dependency. The ongoing seven-week program, Relapse Prevention, provides support to women in recovery and focuses on gendered issues including self-esteem, stress and anger management, body image, relationships and support systems. The response from these groups has been overwhelming and demonstrates the absolute need to provide safe groups where women, particularly those with trauma, can openly

express themselves and receive support from other women.

Some of the feedback which WIREDD received after the completion of the groups:

Family of Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding the facilitation of the group: “Very supportive, safe and comfortable to be around. Very honest, open and non-judgemental. Professional, knowledgeable and validating” Regarding the lessons in the group: “The handouts made me realise a lot of things about myself I wasn’t aware of. Very positive, which reinforced the positive characteristics of myself, my knowledge and awareness”
Beautiful Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “This is an invaluable course which many have and will continue to benefit greatly from – I did!” Regarding what was useful about the group: “Hearing other women’s experiences and attitudes. Being able to talk about my own self-esteem problems and receiving positive feedback”
Relapse Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Even though I resisted coming it was good for me to be forced out of my shell and isolation and be around other positive women who want recovery. Plus the information was useful and made me more aware of things in my life and past” About what was useful: “Being connected with all the beautiful women. Being able to have somewhere and someone to turn to when you need it” Regarding what was least useful: “I wouldn’t change anything because I find the group fantastic and I feel supported and safe”

WIREDD consistently supports women by writing letters of support for housing applications, priority housing, transfers, debt recovery, court related support and Child Protection . Due to the current housing shortage and the opening of AMC, the demand for

WIREDD’s support letters have increased. This has placed an increased burden on WIREDD resources. WIREDD understands that it is necessary to support women with these letters and is working collaboratively with other services to make sure these needs are met.

Service delivery

Drop-in	WIREDD had 2,229 drop-ins over the financial year 8.2% of those drop-ins were done outside of the drop-in hours and 64 sessions (totalling 128 hours) were for intensive support. In addition, WIREDD has supported many women with children 3.5% were Indigenous women and 3.5% were Torres Strait Islander women
Phone calls	3,053 phone calls were taken over the financial year. Approximately 12% of these phone calls were counselling session and/or crisis phone support. 12% of these phone calls were intense counselling support
Counselling	Number of counselling sessions: 120 booked session, 64 non-booked sessions, totalling 184 sessions. 13 new women attended counselling Non-booked counselling remains the most preferable way for women to access counselling support. This is done on the spot and occurs mostly in crisis situations
Groups	Relapse Prevention was very successful in holding 42 groups and supporting 304 women and 10 children Family of Origin was held over 4 days and supported 27 women Beautiful Me was held over 4 days and supported 17 women
Outreach	Woden Canberra Withdrawal Unit: 30 visits and 83 women Arcadia House: 2 visits and 5 women Psychiatric Unit: 17 visits and 60 women WIREDD attended AMC 17 times and assisted with 101 episodes with individuals. On occasions WIREDD workers were not allowed into AMC due to lockdowns. Belconnen Remand Centre and Symonston Remand Centre

Network and sector participation

- Toora Day Refuge
- DIRECTIONS ACT
- Working with people at risk of or experiencing both mental health and alcohol & other drug problems (Workshop)
- Griffin Centre Meetings
- Conflict Resolution Training
- Meeting with Superintendent and Offenders Program Manager of AMC
- Co-morbidity Bus Tour
- Meeting with Helen Delaney
- Toora Women Inc Birthday
- Mindfulness Training – Dr Sandi Plumber
- Sisters Inside Conference
- YWCA Young Women’s Leadership Workshop
- Reclaim the Night
- Maysoon – DIRECTIONS ACT
- “Invisible Bars: the stories behind the stats” by Deb Wybron
- Translating Evidence-based Approaches to Effective School Drug Education into Practice
- WIREDD worked collaboratively with ACT Health and with ACT Alcohol and Other Drug services, included EO’s Meeting
- WIREDD actively participated in the ACT Police Intervention Programs
- We received referrals from CADAS, DODA, PED TRP

- AOD workers meeting and AOD forums
- Women and Prisons meeting
- Community Inclusion Board: throughcare and aftercare
- Street law
- AMC Throughcare Expo

Education and training delivered

- WIREDD provided a Train the Trainer program called “Breaking the Ice” on women’s amphetamine use to Toora workers and other sector services
- WIREDD delivered education programs for ACT schools and colleges. These include: Saint Claire College where WIREDD delivered a presentation about why women use in order to inform young women about the issues surrounding women using drugs, alcohol and other dependencies
- WIREDD attended the “translating evidence-based approaches to effective school drug education into practice” meeting in order to identify the best ways that services can support teachers to deliver effective alcohol and other drug education in ACT schools

- WIREDD participated in delivering training to Toora’s new relief workers. This induction training included harm minimisation and why women use, Co-morbidity, PTSD, adult children of dysfunctional families, co-dependency, safe sex, safe using, HIV etc
- WIREDD provided a self-esteem workshop for young women at Gungan Gulwan which 10 young Aboriginal women attended
- WIREDD’s coordinator provided the ADP Methadone Program to the Methadone team
- WIREDD was invited to give a presentation to Care and Protection about how we work with women and children

Service snapshot

36% of the responses to WIREDD’s May 2010 snapshot had accessed WIREDD’s counselling services. 90% of these women felt that they were treated with respect and responsiveness to their needs. 100% stated that WIREDD had been able to meet their needs and 45% said that their lives had improved because they had support from WIREDD.

Future directions

WIREDD looks forward to securing a stable funding arrangement in the next financial year so that the team will be able to continue providing support to chemically dependent women and women coping with chemically dependent family members. It will also enable WIREDD to continue providing resources (such as food) required to facilitate groups, counselling and outreach (such as PSU, AMC and detoxification units) while staying open for drop-in which is necessary for incidental counselling, safe spaces, crisis support and more.

Thanks

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all of the women who make up the team at WIREDD, including the relief workers who have supported us throughout the year. We as a team put our hearts into this service and truly care for each woman that walks through the door. We would like to thank the women for their courage throughout the year. Again; our deepest thanks to Dr Sandi Plummer for her amazing work and ongoing support to WIREDD. We would also like to thank ACT Health, the Commonwealth and especially Erika Munro for her support.

Vivienne Pearce

Acting WIREDD Coordinator