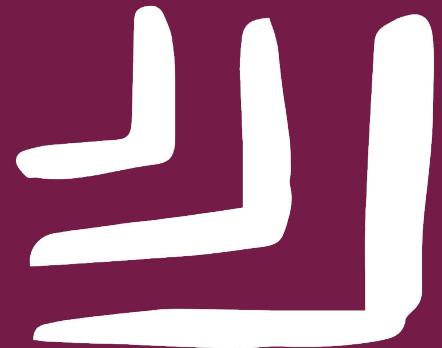


# **KWINANA REFUGE**

## **Summary of Co-Design Findings**

April 2020



# Background

# Background

The WA State Government's Stopping Family and Domestic Violence policy includes a commitment to establish two additional women's refuges. One of these refuges is the Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Women's Refuge Kwinana (Kwinana Refuge) which will include a focus on women with disabilities, older women, women from Aboriginal or culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, and women with larger families, including older boys.

In order to capture further insights relevant to the Kwinana area and the target cohorts listed above, co-design activities were conducted by Innovation Unit specific to the Kwinana Refuge. These activities were conducted in March and April 2020, involving 35 participants across interviews and a workshop.

# Background (continued)

The two key activities were empathy interviews with former FDV service users and an online facilitated co-design workshop with service providers and peak body representatives.

It is important to note the social climate of COVID-19 within which the Kwinana Refuge co-design activities occurred. The co-design activities were limited to only one engagement with peak body representatives, community service sector providers in consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on their time and capacity, and three interviews with women with lived experience.

The co-design activities for the Kwinana Refuge drew on findings from the Peel Refuge co-design process to provide additional insights to improvement of the current FDV refuge service model, and service design for women with disabilities, older women, women from Aboriginal or CaLD communities, and women with larger families, including older boys.

# **Findings & Recommendations**



## **Service User Interview Insights**

- [Key Findings](#)
- [Ideas](#)

## **Enabling Conditions**

- [Cultural Intelligence](#)
- [Diversity & Inclusion](#)
- [Partnerships](#)
- [Workforce](#)
- [Policies & Procedures](#)
- [Monitoring & Evaluation](#)

## **Service Components**

- [Referral, Awareness & Access](#)
- [Initial Assessment](#)
- [Healing Journey to Recovery](#)
- [Programs & Activities](#)
- [Family & Community Connection](#)
- [Support for Children & Young People](#)
- [Transition Out of the Refuge](#)
- [Beyond the Residential Component](#)
- [Facilities](#)

# **Service User Interview Insights**



## Service User Interview Insights - Key FindingsJ

Interview Details	Key Findings
<p>1.</p> <p>This interviewee had experiences in multiple refuges in different states, including WA. She stayed in refuges with her male children on some occasions.</p>	<p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More lived experience involvement in workforce/ services is needed.</li><li>• Staff support is needed to ensure they can manage (or avoid) compassion fatigue and burnout.</li><li>• Religious faith is really important to this interviewee, however, she was never asked about this by FDV service providers.</li><li>• Women and children need more time, especially upfront, to heal. They need to be welcomed and cocooned into a safe environment.</li></ul> <p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Took me two years to remember the music that I liked. It takes time to regain who you are. The strength is there, the capacity is there, but you need space to heal and recover.”</li><li>• “I want it [the cycle of domestic violence] to stop.”</li></ul>

These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.



## Service User Interview Insights - Key Findings\* (continued)

2.

This interviewee had experiences in multiple refuges across metropolitan and regional WA. She stayed in refuges as a child herself and was accompanied by her own children as an adult.

Themes:

- The desire for easy-to-access outreach services giving ongoing support to families is needed.
- Some women only access refuge services for short stays i.e. three days.
- Men's FDV programs needed, work should not only focus on the women.
- Women want services that work with families not only the women experiencing FDV.
- Practical services (shopping, transport, medical appointments) reduce stress and are helpful for families.
- Indigenous workers understand the challenges Indigenous people face and know how to talk to us.
- More things for mothers to do in the refuge, including activities to do with their children.
- Staff are needed at the refuge 24 hours a day.

Quotes:

- "Everyone needs help no matter if they are male or female"
- "The refuge is there to help the family not just the women"
- "She [a refuge worker] is Indigenous herself from New Zealand, she understands life is not perfect"

\*These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.

## Service User Interview Insights - Key Findings\* (continued)

3.

This interviewee had experiences in multiple refuges in different states, including WA. Although experiencing FDV from a young age, she did not access services until the age of 36.

Themes:

- She couldn't call the Police as the person using violence against her would have killed her. Lived in a very remote community.
- Differences in what is seen as a mental health issue or cultural phenomena (i.e. being sung) by Aboriginal people. This can be difficult to navigate.
- The fear of being re-traumatised prevents people from pressing charges.
- Don't realise until years later how bad it was.
- Someone to help you walk through every step of the way would help.
- Sometimes their own family supports the perpetrator.
- Access to mental health services is difficult and a long process.

Quotes:

- "Saw it in high school but nothing was done to help people."
- "Housing not always wanted - didn't want to commit financially and wanted to be able to move from place to place."
- "...made to feel like it is always my fault."
- "If she would call [police] he would kill her before they arrived."

\*These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.

## Service User Interview Insights - Key Findings\* (continued)

Enablers (additional to those identified in the Peel Refuge co-design process):

- Acknowledgement and support for practicing faith.
- Workforce including/involving people with lived experience.
- Time and space upon entry to refuge to heal and feel safe (before answering questions, linking to services, etc.).
- Acknowledgement of effects of trauma upon entry of refuge (e.g. 'brain not working properly').
- Separate rooms/spaces for families (especially upon entry).
- Access to counselling.
- Consistent, relevant training for FDV staff across the sector.
- Support for staff to reduce/eliminate compassion fatigue and burnout.
- When women and children have 'good reasons to leave' the refuge.
- Good links and partnerships with other services, e.g. police, medical professionals.
- The approach/attitude of 'post-traumatic growth' rather than PTSD.

\*These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.

## Service User Interview Insights - Key Findings\* (continued)

Barriers (additional to those identified in the Peel Refuge co-design process):

- Restrictions on age of (male) children, even though policy includes up to 18.
- Resourcing for changing name and identity.
- Lack of financial support (this is sometimes the hardest part - getting 'back on your feet').
- Culture focused on competition and cost-cutting in services (e.g. in relation to NDIS).
- Reliance on 'safety measures' such as cameras/surveillance when still in the home - these don't work a lot of the time.
- Judgment of faith/religion.
- Women and children entering a refuge where others are withdrawing (it's terrifying and overwhelming).
- Children being 'used' throughout the process.
- Refuge experiences that increase boredom and re-traumatisation.
- Facing an overwhelming amount of questions and solutions upon entry to a refuge.

\*These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.

## Service User Interview Insights - Ideas\*

Idea	Related Element
Staff chosen by lived experience.	Workforce
Staff including people with lived experience.	Workforce
Staff support and training to ensure trauma-informed practice, and reduction in compassion fatigue and burnout.	Workforce
Start measuring data on injuries as well as deaths to capture full extent of any harm	Monitoring & Evaluation
FDV services within police run by women specifically for this purpose.	Partnerships
Better "alert" systems through nurses and doctors when the woman is in a 1:1 in a hospital. This is one of the few times where a woman is without her partner. Need an opportunity to signal for help and ask for support without calling the police. Might be that you ask for it in 2 weeks as "now" is too risky.	Referral, Awareness & Access
Support workers alongside police but based in community.	Partnerships
Bespoke, individualised services that take into consideration holistic needs - trauma, mental health, physical health, etc.	Healing journey to recovery
More things for mothers to do when they are in the service - arts and crafts, activities to do with kids, make slime, movie nights and the like on the weekend for children - relaxation for the kids and chance for the mums to connect.	Programs and activities

\*These findings represent the personal experiences of women and children who have accessed FDV refuge services.

# **Enabling conditions**

## Cultural Intelligence

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in general.
- Space for clients to connect with other members of the community who have experienced similar circumstances would help to build resilience and connection.
- It is possible that many people who do not access the system because of the lack of Cultural Safety.
- It is vital that Aboriginal women can feel culturally safe in refuges; that means refuge workers need a clear understanding of cultural rules and norms.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- We cannot underestimate the importance of informal support and elders/leaders providing support for services and women accessing refuges.
- Cultural safety is important for Aboriginal women and their children. Cultural awareness of staff is vital. Do not include CaLD with Aboriginal people as their needs are not the same.
- Will people come from the Kwinana region only? If so, ensuring culture is respected and understood, including Indigenous workers is essential.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<p><i>All recommendations above are relevant to Aboriginal women and children.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the cultural needs of women and children during assessment and referral processes, including consideration for large families.</li> </ul>

## Diversity & Inclusion

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Some refuges refuse to take on residents or clients because they have no income due to their immigration status.
- It is challenging and confusing to navigate interpreter services at present.
- Interpreters may be someone in their cultural community with links to the perpetrator, so consideration needs to be given to using the most appropriate interpreter and risk assessing this fully.
- Staff are sometimes not utilising interpreters for those with non-English speaking backgrounds and key messages are being missed or confused.
- The large increase in women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse families is quite alarming.
- It is possible that many people who do not access the system because of the lack of cultural safety.
- The NDIS is a challenge for most vulnerable communities. One of the challenges is the lack of awareness of the opportunity the NDIS can provide. Planning for this tends to be an afterthought.
- There is a lack of employment of people with a disability.
- Having an intellectual or physical disability can be quite challenging whilst parenting and additional support is required for these women and their children.
- Women who have a disability and are also experiencing domestic violence are being treated by the courts as the least best option for custody - and in some cases, have had the children go to the father's home who may be able bodied.
- Women who need support for their children with disabilities is a challenge in a refuge setting. Support workers who may typically work in the family home, are sometimes loath to work in refuges.
- FDV services currently do not have capacity or the funding to provide all that is required under 'best practice' frameworks for people with a disability.



## Diversity & Inclusion (continued)

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Space for clients to connect with other members of the community who have experienced similar circumstances would help to build resilience and connection.
- Multicultural staff and programs need to be provided.
- The physical development of refuges needs to physically and emotionally accommodate people with disabilities.
- Staff should be trained in dealing with people with diverse needs.
- Physical as well as intellectual disabilities need to be accommodated.
- Having someone to connect to - especially in the NDIS world is important - someone who can help people navigate the system, with an understanding of domestic violence and homelessness.
- It may be that special considerations should be put in place to support women with disabilities.
- With a large Sudanese population and CaLD populations, we need to make sure that respect is paid to other cultures, especially where older boys might take on roles within a family.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of translation services as required for women and children who speak different languages.</li> <li>• Spaces and support for cultural and spiritual practice.</li> <li>• Celebrate traditions and important days of recognition for different cultures and identities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The physical space should meet accessibility standards and needs of women and children.</li> <li>• Provision of translation services as required for women and children who have hearing or vision impairments.</li> <li>• Capacity for carers to be on-site in the refuge for women and children who need them.</li> </ul>

## Partnerships

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Partnerships tend to be enhanced when Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are expected and revisited often. A contractual obligation to formalise partnerships is important because sometimes services are so genuinely busy addressing immediate client needs, that building partnerships can be a nice to do, rather than a must do.
- Multi-agency and multi-funding supports are required.
- The interagency FDV committee is a great source for up-to-date service information.
- Business and corporates are becoming more committed to providing support.
- Generally, refuges are good collaborators and do their best to maximise good client outcomes.
- A collaborative, holistic approach that includes close working with AOD and mental health services is important so that refuges can work with people with multiple and complex needs but do not feel that they have to do it all themselves.

## Partnerships (continued)

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- A model of collaboration that ensures that there are no barriers to enable women and their children from having a choice that meets their needs.
- Partner with men's behaviour change programs.
- Build on partnerships with surrounding local government areas to identify the gaps and build on the assets within the community

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with aged care services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationships with youth services.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with multicultural services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationships with disability services for referrals.</li> </ul>
Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with Aboriginal organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships with state housing, housing groups, and rental agencies to support larger families.</li> </ul>

## Workforce

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Very passionate workforce that need to be supported with good workforce development and training opportunities.
- Some organisations have weekly supervision for their workers and critical reflection groups. This is key for the welfare of workers.
- Lived experience is common among the workforce which is a positive asset for empathy and understanding of the issues, however, could benefit from professionalising and expanding theoretical and systemic knowledge about FDV.
- Sector training is not provided to best practice standards.
- Wages are low, particularly the overnight rate. The sector needs a better pay scale to bring in experienced social workers, counsellors, psychologists.
- Community service students sometimes complete student placements for qualifications and quite a few become staff members. This is a great opportunity for them.
- In many remote and rural areas, it is not possible to get access to generalised counselling let alone specialist trauma and recovery counselling and therapy that is required. Getting access to a GP for a Health and Wellbeing Plan can take weeks to get an appointment.

## Workforce (continued)

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- External Supervision needs to be standard practice.
- Workforce development is important, and this includes cultural awareness training; appropriate pay scales; passion; training in family domestic violence is critical and cannot rely simply on lived experience.
- Sector training is needed for all staff to operate from an evidence-based framework, for example Safe and Together.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase staff understanding of elder abuse and related strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific support for staff in understanding the developmental needs of young people and upskilling in order to work with adolescents.</li> </ul>
Aboriginal Women and Children	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are Aboriginal staff working with Aboriginal women and children, including from the referral stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff need training in understanding and supporting people with disabilities.</li> </ul>

## Policies & Procedures

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Refuges who are not staffed on-site 24 hours per day have a higher level of risk to residents. The fact that perpetrators have been found on site is an indication of the need for appropriate staffing.
- A specialist response would be useful to look at people who find the FDV system hard to reach, i.e. people experiencing homelessness relying on an abusive partner for their safety. This needs a targeted response.
- Policies and procedures are mostly comprehensive and reflect and support practice.
- The siloed responses of the government are not helpful (particularly when it comes to housing matters and child protection).

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Create policies and frameworks for practice related to homelessness, elders abuse, disabilities, and mental health.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create policies and a framework for practice related to elder abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain 'stay at home' funding option for older boys.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear understanding of culturally informed practice is integrated into every policy and practice at all levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create policies and a framework for practice related to disabilities.</li> </ul>

## Policies & Procedures (continued)

Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="278 297 869 394">• A clear understanding of culturally informed practice is integrated into every policy and practice at all levels.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="981 297 1572 357">• Policies need to be in place to support large families.</li></ul>

## Monitoring & Evaluation

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- The level of micromanagement can be onerous, and the reporting load is heavy.
- Confidentiality and privacy seem to be a barrier.
- We can always do better in relation to harnessing the voice and input of women to inform service provision models and quality of service.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Inter-agency committee could provide a suitable platform for evaluating the new refuges.
- Communities should engage with providers to develop monitoring and evaluation processes. Currently it is not consistent and/or evaluated.
- Independent evaluation will be useful.



# **Service components**

## Referral, Awareness & Access

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Some FDV units and community legal centres in Rockingham are working well for information and support.
- Referrals are working well in the current refuge model, and referrals are also functioning well coming from the refuge model into local services (specifically within the Southern Metro Corridor).
- The central bed count is great and reduces the need to ring around.
- Some referring agencies have less than professional approaches to their referrals to refuges, for example not disclosing issues such as existing psychotic episodes or current drug addiction, which can put the current staff and residents and their children at high risk.
- Some of the most vulnerable women may not be able to stick with the rules of the refuge (i.e. drug issues, contacting their partner, etc.) and can be evicted if the refuge doesn't have other ways to work with them.
- Depending on where they are located, refuges are often full so no beds and not an easy process for women in crisis to get into, there is no in between/holding type of accommodation; the referral process should be as simple but safe as possible.
- Access issues if women do not have their Centrelink details up to date or do not have their documentation in hand.
- Some women do not understand the advice and information provided to them in relation to FDV from the Department of Communities and local police.
- Women and children are usually engaging in the service when they have reached a crisis point, they are confused and not able to navigate the system.

## Referral, Awareness & Access (continued)

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Referral to a refuge is difficult when women have male children aged 12 and over. This is further complicated when the child has a trauma informed background (family violence, abuse and neglect, experience of torture and cultural displacement as a refugee) and has accompanying challenging behaviours or a disability and/or developmental delay. Refuge staff do not hold the required intervention and therapeutic skills to provide the support needed.
- There are many women from CaLD backgrounds with English as a second language.
- There is a lack of transitional services that provide wrap around support and build their confidence and resilience.
- The refuges try to engage clients with services, but with very few secondary support services are available within the community and this is a challenge in itself.
- A lot of referrals involve women who have been in many refuges and have been evicted and or left the services. It is very difficult for a woman to access a refuge if she has been recently evicted.
- Lack of beds on bed count and other crisis referral options is a huge cause or concern.
- Some refuges do not have a funded outreach or brokerage funds to provide other forms of support.
- Women without income and women with larger families face greater challenges in accessing refuges.
- Some women and children face issues with visas and funding.
- Zonta Houses Positive Pathways program has been a great referral point for refuges.
- Single beds in crisis care are suitable for older women.

## Referral, Awareness & Access (continued)

Recommendations for the New Refugee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision for pets to be taken care of, and systems in place for contact to continue with them.</li> </ul>	
Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts	
Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make information and navigation easy for older women (i.e. considerations for online communication technology).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased choice of options for older boys.</li> <li>• Avoid treating older boys as perpetrators or potential perpetrators.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural organisations to be utilised during referral pathways.</li> <li>• Access to interpreters where required.</li> <li>• Ensure awareness and understanding of services available to those with non-English speaking backgrounds through multicultural provisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build more relationships in the referral system with disability services, including providing education and awareness of FDV to disability agencies.</li> <li>• Communicate a positive message to women and children with disabilities: "you are welcome, we can support you and accommodate you".</li> <li>• Build extra time into referral forms and procedures.</li> </ul>

## Referral, Awareness & Access (continued)

Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure there are Aboriginal staff available to work with Aboriginal women and children at the referral stage.</li><li>• Record not only Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, but also what region/nation they belong to.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Units need to be available to accommodate large families to stay together in a refuge, sometimes up to eight people.</li></ul>

## Initial Assessment

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- CRARMF framework is a good guide for assessing level of risk for victims prior to entry to a refuge. At times other information is disclosed once the women and children are in the refuge through the case management process. Some of the issues that arise include: history of debt; inability to secure alternative housing options; and the need for interpreters that are safe.
- There are often up to five women already awaiting the telephone assessment process.
- Lack of sector training is an issue as all services should have a minimum standard and best practice guide for good quality, trauma informed assessments.
- It is extremely difficult for FDV staff to be faced with assessing and referring women survivors and their children on to other non-specific FDV services because there are no available refuge beds. This is particularly the case in remote and rural WA. Turn away numbers are increasing each quarter and are compounded by unprecedented events such as COVID-19. This is particularly so for FDV staff juggling demands for refuge beds by families and not having capacity to accommodate single aged women especially single aged women with older sons with disabilities, mental health and AOD concerns and for which they have primary care responsibilities.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- We need a central assessment process for refuges to agree on that fulfils the needs of contacts and organisations needs.
- The whole service system requires a Centralised Intake System.
- The CRARMF needs to be revised and the lead 24/7 form should be updated for all refuges to use as a tool to assess quickly. The SA frameworks is a model to consider for Risk Assessments.
- Use visual aids and diagrams about the process, rather than extensive literature.

## Initial Assessment (continued)

Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts	
Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available a brief assessment option for older women as they usually do not come with children to the refuge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to customise assessment for older children, recognising that a teenage boy may be experiencing conflict or identity issues if their 'role model' is violent.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpreters made available for all assessments.</li> <li>• Use of advocates and supports in the assessment process.</li> <li>• Consider cultural priorities and needs during assessments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use translators where required.</li> <li>• Staff training to ensure they can assess and support people with disabilities.</li> <li>• A disability should not be used as a reason to exclude women and children from a refuge.</li> </ul>
Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Aboriginal worker should be available to conduct assessments for Aboriginal families.</li> <li>• Consider the timeliness of the assessment, gauging when is the best time to complete the assessment in response to family needs.</li> <li>• Include a cultural assessment of the family.</li> <li>• Ensure the wording on assessment forms is culturally appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure the spelling and wording written on forms is correct, as if an error is made it could cause upset.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient time and resources need to be allocated for assessing large families, considering the needs of all the children as well as the mother.</li> </ul>

## Healing Journey to Recovery

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Very short stays and time limited, so there is constant turnover of clients. Some clients come back several times.
- Expectations for women and children to flee their houses, their support network and their lives.
- Case management needs to be multi-dimensional and multi-organisational. Problems occur where a single organisation is responsible for the running of the refuge and a particular woman or family may break the rules and feel they are not given a fair chance to provide 'right of reply', as the people they are dealing with have already formed a bad opinion of them.
- Case management is not offered by all refuges and not all clients are willing to engage in case management. Therefore, information sharing is limited.
- Lack of sector outcome measurements is an issue that needs addressing. Case management must be holistic and driven by the women not the service providers.
- The ability to provide effective case management is often challenging as the refuge is designed to keep the family safe and the transition out of the refuge appears to be lacking.
- If women and children spend limited time at the refuge, this can be problematic unless the service has longer term supports built into it, such as outreach, 'safe at home' and counselling. This also relies on strong networks in the community with other services such as Department of Communities, police, legal, health and housing, so ongoing work can be achieved.
- There is a focus on the women, but not the children.
- Further expectations placed on women who are traumatised.
- Case Management Frameworks for women who are looking for a break can be a real challenge, especially when, without strong reflective practices and an empowered structure, workers can prioritise their work over the much more real healing journey of the family.



## Healing Journey to Recovery (continued)

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- There is a need to engage external services who can create an effective plan of engagement and connection for women and their children. It would be preferable if engagements are done at a local level which was based on the development of opportunities for a multi-faceted approach.
- Identify the strengths of the individual and their support system.
- Facilitate feedback between the referer(s) and refuge (where appropriate).
- Safety planning, including safety cards to be issued so that the family are aware of what to do in the future should they be at risk.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empowerment models to include re-skilling strategies for confidence and work readiness.</li><li>• Focus on independence, rather than interdependence, in the context of elder abuse.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased links to existing youth services.</li><li>• FDV specialist counselling services need to be available for adolescent boys.</li></ul>

## Healing Journey to Recovery (continued)

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use translators where required.</li> <li>• Identify and ensure support services are culturally appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use translators where required.</li> <li>• Consider and explore what funding opportunities exist, particularly with the NDIS arrangements in place.</li> <li>• Support in place for carers with a child over 18 who has a disability.</li> </ul>
Aboriginal Women	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and ensure support services are culturally appropriate.</li> <li>• Access to Aboriginal programs and a support worker.</li> <li>• For Aboriginal women and children who have traveled from another area, ensuring they feel welcome.</li> <li>• Goal setting that is culturally appropriate and achievable/realistic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of moving from supporting multiple small families, to supporting a small number of large families well through intensive support.</li> </ul>

## Programs & Activities

The Current FDV Refuge Model	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities are becoming more about mindfulness and self-awareness, which is positive.</li> <li>• Current refuges increasingly run programs for women and children.</li> <li>• Some Refuges have greater capacity than others to offer innovative and useful activities; some are funded through fundraising efforts, donations from businesses and individuals, or small grants.</li> <li>• Partnerships are used to provide opportunities for women and children to have access to culturally responsive programming but could also train staff and volunteers with the skills to deliver evidence-based therapeutic recovery programs.</li> </ul>	
Recommendations for the New Refuge	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include programs for re-skilling strategies and work readiness.</li> </ul>	
Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts	
Older Women	Women and Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there are programs and activities available suitable for older women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be services and activities suitable for older children/ teenagers.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare external facilitators for cultural considerations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare external facilitators for disability and access requirements.</li> </ul>

## Programs & Activities (continued)

Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provision of Aboriginal healing and other cultural healing opportunities.</li><li>• Culturally appropriate activities and programs designed by Aboriginal elders, community and women and children (where appropriate).</li><li>• Welcome to Country for women and children.</li><li>• Regular smoking ceremonies.</li><li>• Aboriginal facilitators for Aboriginal programs and activities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure sufficient and suitably varied programs and activities are available for children of different ages.</li></ul>

## Family & Community Connection

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- There is far too much for refuges to do for families with limited budgets.
- Parenting skills and support can be accessed through the Department of Communities, but it can be scary to access for some parents who are fearful.
- There is no funding for community education or FDV service and network coordination.
- Healthy family relationships are very complex to achieve and take more than one family member working hard.
- Refuges have a window of opportunity to do some of this work but need more investment.
- Stigma and fear of losing children is an issue.
- There is a lack of 'whole of family' support which works with them to identify their choices moving forward.
- Models of family engagement need high levels of resources.
- Grandmothers in caring roles are often a safety net for children from perpetrators.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Support/counselling for families who want to remain together and support for mums and children to work through together with support why they are residing in a refuge currently would be very helpful (and is not currently consistently offered).
- Utilise a family model where individualised youth workers and psychiatrists for individuals may be engaged, but support needs to be considered together in a 'whole of family' model.
- Access to other support services - schooling, family services, other support services - to build up family support options.

## Family & Community Connection (continued)

- Opportunities for a childcare component - assisting with looking after children and providing support so that the mother can remain the head of the family and have that independence.
- Working with other agencies through the case management framework to support outreach work to transitioning.
- Networks or communities of practice to support the transitioning/exiting process.
- Lead time on the exit timeframe so other support services can be engaged.
- Looking at the whole issue on exit, for example the safety of the home environment.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure past elder abuse is considered when connecting older women with family and community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible age of access, including age limit of 18 for boys in the refuge.</li> <li>• Create positive opportunities for children to engage with males and peers.</li> </ul>
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be inclusive of cultural aspects to build healthy family relationships when in refuges but also after exiting. Access to culturally appropriate and safe programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the need to engage with carer(s) outside of the refuge.</li> </ul>

## Family & Community Connection (continued)

Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="266 297 904 389">• Involvement of elders, grandparents, and other supporting family and friends as required and appropriate.</li><li data-bbox="266 418 913 539">• Needs to be inclusive of cultural aspects to build healthy family relationships when in refuges but also after exiting. Referral to Aboriginal specific programs if the woman chooses.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="981 297 1605 361">• Capacity for large families to stay in the refuge (i.e. more than three children).</li><li data-bbox="981 389 1605 454">• Provision of sufficient access to childcare with consideration of women with multiple children.</li></ul>

## Support for Children & Young People

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Children have to change schools sometimes due to the risk factor and geographical area of the refuge.
- Adolescent violence needs to be addressed.
- It can be very difficult to recruit experienced child therapists to work in refuges.
- The focus is currently on the women and not the children in most cases.
- Child Advocates are often employed with little or no funding for counselling. Child Advocates often have 20 or more children who they are responsible for.
- Many interventions have been tried to support young people, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to engage in worthwhile activities, but we really need to look at fixing family and home first, as difficult as that is.
- Mentoring and education support should be a key area of focus which is not currently standard practice.
- There are resourcing issues for high-needs children staying in refuges.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Need a greater investment from the government to be able to provide Child Advocates and Child Support Workers for case management and therapeutic work.
- Create opportunities for meaningful work and support for young people and children (not just 'babysitting' activities like colouring-in) so that young people and children leave with better coping mechanisms and skills.
- Identify access for outside care, for example early learning centres and schools to maintain education and connection.



## Support for Children & Young People (continued)

Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts	
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural celebrations and activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for older children (including over 18) with disabilities whose mother is their carer.</li> </ul>
Women with Older Boys	Aboriginal Women and Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive male role models for teen boys.</li> <li>• Consider housing support for older teens to develop independence.</li> <li>• Discard the age cutoff of 18 years old for young people - some young people will still need additional support into their early 20s.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural celebrations and activities.</li> <li>• Link with Aboriginal elders and mentors where appropriate.</li> </ul>

## Transition Out of the Refuge

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- A lot of refuges are not funded for outreach.
- Some refuges have a push to exit without a full transition plan in place.
- Access to a social worker is constrained and limited.
- If women and children are 'starting over', it can be very difficult to access emergency relief funds to support relocation or new property.
- Little or no support for women once they leave the refuge unless they move to transitional properties due to funding restrictions.
- There is not enough funding to provide follow up support to all women who exit.
- The Department of Communities (Housing) has limited options but some are available.
- TAFE now has improved responses for students with FDV experience, including a policy for support.
- Applying and accessing suitable housing can be really difficult, especially for refugee or newly arrived migrant women.
- There are difficulties transitioning women into longer term housing such as those with current large debts or those waiting on visas.
- Long wait times for housing and now with COVID-19, many providers have closed referrals off completely.
- Need further assistance for gaining stable, suitable, safe housing.
- This is often the highest risk time for women and families, if they do not have a good support network, they are at risk of returning to their partner for support.
- Housing options can be limited - an increase in outreach services and support is needed - more impacted now by COVID-19, employment and rental issues.

## Transition Out of the Refuge (continued)

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Children needing to relocate to another area have a significant impact on their emotional and social connectivity as they move away from schools and friendships created within their place of abode.
- Lack of alternative housing options generally, particularly in the private rental market, although this can vary. A woman and her children often require longer term support if a violent partner continues to make threats coercive control tactics through the children and if a violence restraining order is in place.
- There is simply no transitional housing in remote and rural Western Australia and often women are nominated to return to extended family in overcrowded conditions which break down or result in violence again.
- A program piloted many years ago where a woman was set up for a year with a support worker to work with the woman on her personal development on whatever she needed as well as the children was highly successful and still cheaper than a hospital bed, foster care or prison beds for the woman and her children.
- Access to transitional housing is very limited and challenging for women or children with disabilities.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Women should be given the choice for ongoing short to medium term support from the refuge on exit.
- Have visibility of the perpetrator amongst victims' community networks.
- Transitional accommodation does not work. We need to consider what a real response would look like, a Housing First response, as evidenced as being successful. Otherwise, we are not learning, we are simply cycling people through painful journeys.
- There needs to be a strong engagement model in place for after exit from refuge care, that includes housing.
- The engagement to transition families should commence whilst the client is in the refuge, and a smooth referral pathway to engage in social and professional networks will enable a stronger sense of wellbeing and community connection.

## Transition Out of the Refuge (continued)

- Opportunities for inclusion in society and community participation, including place-based services for people who have been moved into a new area for safety reasons.
- Consider creating an MOU or service level agreement with housing developments to create 'in-between' housing.
- Ensure that there is a plan in place for managing the current (at April 2020) COVID-19 situation.

### Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts

Older Women	Women with Older Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure safe planning in consideration of possible elder abuse or co-tenant violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link with existing youth services to develop mental health, vocational, and social support avenues.</li> </ul>
Women with Larger Families	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider relationships with the whole family support network - with a larger family, everybody's input in the housing model is needed.</li> <li>• In considering long-term housing needs, larger families will need larger houses so additional time and support may be needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider and explore the transferability of a person's support plan, particularly if support services are from one region and mum moves to another.</li> <li>• Build relationships with providers of accessible housing options.</li> </ul>

## Beyond the Residential Component

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- There is very little funding for sustained follow up over a longer period. Funding tends to be aimed at crisis assistance.
- Safe at Home programs are very important to enable further case management and ongoing support after women and children have left the refuge; however, funding needs to be provided as resources are very limited especially regarding children.
- Women and children sometimes lack awareness of court information and support services.
- There is a lack of funding to provide additional engagement that works on system navigation (e.g. Centrelink, court and other services).
- Sustained ongoing support for transition into permanent housing is lacking.
- Outreach services alone do not cater to the support requirements of women and children's multifaceted needs, waitlists and funding.
- The Safe Places tender that recently closed is an exciting innovation of the federal government that will see some diversity from the communal living models, however, there is no mention of funding the support at this stage, although it is early days.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Properly funded safety and recovery in home and in community could support sustained opportunity for a meaningful life for families.

## Facilities

### The Current FDV Refuge Model

- Space for families, especially with COVID-19, is a real issue. Finding a site that works for all demographics is really difficult.
- The physical environment plays a real role in exacerbating the level of fear some people experience.
- There remains a question of how we can prevent NIMBY's and promote a connected community.
- Having some opportunity for design with participants is costly but essential for someone to be able to make it their home.
- Some existing refuges have moved furniture to accommodate adding in additional rooms to cater to the demand.
- Some women can feel overwhelmed by the space of the accommodation when very large compared with where they came from.
- The sector is inadequately funded to maintain and expand residential services within a contemporary and therapeutic context.

### Recommendations for the New Refuge

- Women and their children need the flexibility to configure sleeping arrangements to suit their family - i.e. whilst the idea of all children having their own bedroom may be great in theory, sometimes children and mums will want to sleep in the same space for safety and soothing.
- Play space for everyone is really important, also access to a good community is really important. Families should feel safe in their community.
- Access to adequate IT/ computers and WIFI is needed - particularly with the move to telehealth, and other online services.

## Facilities (continued)

Recommendations Relevant to Particular Cohorts	
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Women and Children with Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prayer room(s).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All facilities designed to meet access and disability requirements.</li></ul>
Aboriginal Women and Children	Women with Large Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aboriginal culture reference points.</li><li>• Yarning circle, fire pit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make opportunities for units greater than two rooms for large families.</li></ul>

## **Further Information**

Please send an email to [fdvrefuges@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:fdvrefuges@communities.wa.gov.au) or visit [www.communities.wa.gov.au/projects/two-new-fdv-women-s-refuges/](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/projects/two-new-fdv-women-s-refuges/) for further information.