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# FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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**equality**families**justice**education**violence**work**safety**power**leadership**training**communities**health

## Introduction

***Achieving quality of life for the population of New South Wales means balancing social, economic and environmental progress.<sup>1</sup> It has been widely accepted that the best way to solve social, economic and environmental problems, or to make progress, is by using 'community-wide' solutions. This chapter reports on government activity at a family and community level that is improving the quality of women's lives.***

Women's lives are multifaceted and constantly changing. For example women's increased participation in paid work impacts on their social role as a carer of children or older family members. To help manage their multiple roles, women rely on community services such as child care, nursing homes and residential care services. Government agencies that have information about such interrelationships in women's lives are more likely accurately to estimate the impact of their decisions about changing to services or community resources.

This chapter illustrates some of the social, economic and environmental needs and interrelationships in women's lives, including:

- ◆ access to different community services at various stages of their life cycle, for example health services during pregnancy, menopause, old age; support services during bereavement, separation, divorce; and housing services;
- ◆ time for unpaid work, work in the family and at home, paid work, recreation, education or training and social activities;
- ◆ changes in patterns of caring by women (for example elder care and child care) and implications for government support services;

- ◆ changes in family structures – structure, size and living arrangements;
- ◆ support services to help women manage caring responsibilities;
- ◆ social networks are available to women at different life stages offering social inclusion and informal support;
- ◆ quality volunteer services for themselves or other family members;
- ◆ safe public spaces for socializing; and
- ◆ accessing frequent, safe and affordable public transport so women can work, socialize and join in community activities.

Community can mean family and friends, neighbourhood or local groups. 'Local communities' can mean the places where people live and increasingly communities are 'communities of interest', spread across states or the country, or they may be spiritual, advocacy, political or cultural groups. Communities may also be based on kinship relationships among people living in different parts of the state. Virtual communities may be women using email groups and websites to share a common interest in sustainable farming practices.

Women are active in communities in varied ways. They are community decision-makers and leaders of economic, social and cultural developments. They work with government, business and community organisations to create communities that work well for girls and women. They also contribute through paid employment and artistic endeavours.

Various government departments work with local people on community solutions. For example the Premier's Department offers a *Strengthening Communities* program and the

Department of Housing coordinates a *Priority regional communities* program. Planning NSW funds the *Regional Urban Assistance Program* for communities undergoing change and related stress.

The Department for Women works with other government agencies to ensure women's needs and interests are part of the information used to make decisions. For example the Department for Women analysed social plans from 50 councils to see how councils understand women's needs, how they consult directly with women and how they plan for women.

### Relevant state government policy

The ***New South Wales Social Justice Directions Statement*** provides some principles for government agencies to improve the way communities work for women and men. The principles suggest:

- ◆ giving a fair share – distributing resources fairly and giving people fairer access to the economic resources and services that they need to have a good quality of life;
- ◆ getting a fair go – recognizing and promoting individual and group rights; and
- ◆ having a fair say – giving people accurate information and involving people with government in decisions affecting their lives.

The principles are put into action by:

- ◆ promoting more inclusive communities (for example, working on Aboriginal reconciliation and meeting the needs of a diverse community);
- ◆ planning and delivering services for families and

communities (for example, integrated and innovative service delivery and strategies, and preventive care);

- ◆ creating environments where everyone can take an active role (for example, encouraging public debate, dialogue and consultation, and devolved decision-making).<sup>2</sup>

***Improving Women's Lives***<sup>3</sup> includes these election commitments relating to women, families and communities:

- ◆ Continue to fund projects through the *Women's Grants Program*, which will benefit indigenous women and their communities, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and women with disabilities.
- ◆ Continue the work of the *Partnership Against Homelessness* project.
- ◆ Promote the *Integrated Housing Model* as an example of self-managed, purpose-built community housing. This model helps to meet both the housing and community support needs of low-income older women. It is an innovative housing concept where residents can either be purchasers, part purchasers or low-income tenants.
- ◆ Maintain commitment to funding high quality and affordable children's services.
- ◆ Maintain the *Schools as Community Centres Project* as part of the *Families First Initiative*.
- ◆ Implement *Positive Parenting*, a community awareness program designed to give parents helpful information on positive parenting practices and inform them of support available from the Department of Community Services.
- ◆ Increase the network of rapid bus only transitways connecting north and south Western Sydney. By 2010 the

government will have built 90 kilometres of rapid bus transitways connecting Liverpool, Parramatta, Blacktown and Castle Hill. The Liverpool to Parramatta transitway will be the first such route and by 2003, buses will run every five minutes in peak time and ten minutes during off-peak.

- ◆ Continue the State Transit Authority driver education program, which educates drivers to be aware of the traveling requirements of the elderly, the disabled and women with babies and toddlers.
- ◆ Provide essential infrastructure and support for communities such as roads and houses through the *Aboriginal Communities Development Program*. Training, employment and management opportunities will ensure lasting change.
- ◆ Act on the recommendations in the action plan for NSW women in agriculture and resource management: *Making a Difference*.
- ◆ Promote the Women's Information and Referral Service's free call service to rural women to improve access to information for women living in isolated areas of the state.
- ◆ Maintain the commitment to the *Country Web* project. This newsletter is produced three times a year and is distributed free of charge to 20,000 rural subscribers.
- ◆ Investigate the development of a *Women's Information Technology Access Program* to encourage women's use of information technology and improve women's access to electronically delivered government information and services.
- ◆ Commission a *NSW Women's Year Book for 1999–2000* in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to include information across a range of areas including population characteristics, employment, health, income support, business, leisure and sport.

- ◆ Increase funding for the *Women and Arts Fellowship* to bring it into line with the writer's fellowship and the history fellowships.
- ◆ Support the documentation of women's histories and domestic collections in museums in rural NSW.
- ◆ Continue funding Playworks – National Centre for Women Performance Writers.
- ◆ Continue supporting galleries and initiatives, which create opportunities for women artists and involve local women in their programs.
- ◆ Explore the potential for establishing a mentoring program in the arts for indigenous women.

This chapter shows that:

- ◆ Women's contributions increase when a broad base of government and community services are available
- ◆ Informal carers are becoming increasingly important to the community and government
- ◆ Women are taking their communities in new and positive directions
- ◆ Accessing community resources can make a difference to women's quality of life
- ◆ Quality public housing is important for many women's quality of life
- ◆ Women who are homeless have distinct needs
- ◆ Improving access for women with disabilities is an expectation of government
- ◆ Rural women are being heard and their needs understood
- ◆ Women volunteers are community builders

- ❖ Women's needs for information about government services changes over their life cycle
- ❖ Information technology and telecommunications can be adapted to benefit women's day to day routines
- ❖ Women artists make unique artistic and cultural contributions to the life of communities

### Women are half the population in NSW

- ❖ 6,642,900 people were living in New South Wales in December 2001, nearly one third of Australia's population.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Women are slightly more than half (50.63 per cent or 3,226,300 persons) of the state population.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ Women and men are fairly equally distributed across all age groups. The exception is in the 65 years plus age group where women account for 56.3 per cent (469 311 persons) of the population, a difference of 104,641 people.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ The median age for women is 36 years and for men 35 years.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ Life expectancy for non-indigenous women in Australia is 82 years, among the highest in the world.<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ 119,865 people in New South Wales identified as indigenous (1.9 per cent of the total population) in 2001.<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ Indigenous women are 50.3 per cent of the indigenous population (60,294), outnumbering men (59,571).<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Life expectancy for indigenous women is 63 years, around 18 years less than the life expectancy for all women.<sup>11</sup>

## Government initiatives for women

### WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS INCREASE WHEN A BROAD BASE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IS AVAILABLE

Child care services are a high priority for both working and non-working women. Without child care services, it is more difficult for women to work, undertake training or education courses, run their own businesses, gain respite from carer duties or join in community projects.

Child care workers support women who are parents by providing assistance with child development and child rearing as well as referral to family support and health services. Children attending child care are able to access age appropriate development programs and socialise with other children. Child care professionals have the capacity to detect developmental delays and take action before serious problems eventuate, benefiting women and their families over the long term.

The Office of Child Care in the Department of Community Services coordinates a program called the *Child Care Assistance Scheme*, a state wide network of child care services. The scheme operates through grants to child care providers as well as setting out guidelines and licensing requirements for child care service providers. In 2001/2002 the Department of Community Services allocated \$105.1 million to the *Child Care Assistance Scheme* which supports children aged from birth to 12 years and their families by providing:

- ❖ over 35,000 places for children 3 to 6 years,
- ❖ 11,000 places for younger children,
- ❖ 12,000 places for school age children during vacation periods,

**The way families operate has changed remarkably since the beginning of the twentieth century. The increased participation of women, especially married women, in employment is described as ‘one of the most significant dimensions of social change in recent years’.<sup>12</sup>**

In the 1930s, 6 per cent of married women of all ages participated in the labour force. In 2002 women are 43.9 per cent of the state work force.<sup>13</sup> The participation rate of women of working age is 53.6 per cent compared with a rate of 70.6 per cent for men. In 1996, married women aged 20–54 years of age participated at rates ranging from 63 per cent and 73 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

A significant change has been the increase in employment for women with children under five, with almost 50 per cent being in paid work and one-third working full time in 1998. Approximately 10 per cent more women sole parents with dependent children are employed than in 1984. In particular there has been a strong upward trend in part-time employment rates for women sole parents. Increases in full time employment for this group are not as great as the increases by women in couple families.<sup>15</sup>

◆ 586,000 women are in couple relationships with children 0–14 present. In this group, 362,400 women are employed and 223,600 women are unemployed.

◆ 684,100 women are in couple relationships with dependents 15–24 present. In this group 433,100 are in the labour force and 251,100 are not presently employed.

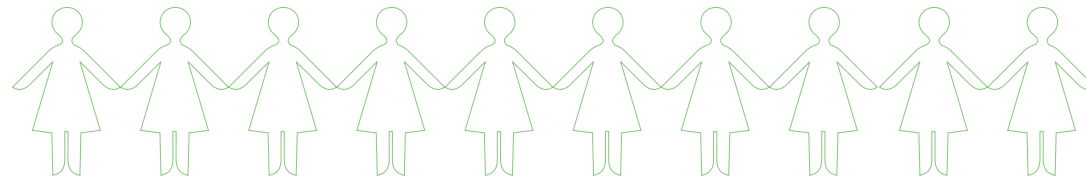
◆ 1,594,200 women in couple relationships have neither children nor dependents present. Of this group, 816,100 are in either full or part time work and 778,100 are not in the labour force.

◆ 128,500 women not in couple relationships have children 0–14 present. 69,600 of these women are employed and 58,900 are not employed.

◆ 152,900 women not in couple relationships have dependents present and 89,000 of these women are in the labour force while 63,900 are not.

◆ 160,000 women not in couple relationships do not have either children or dependents present.<sup>16</sup>

Women’s increased participation in employment has been paralleled by a steady increase in part-time work, relative to full time work. In 1966 for every nine full time working women there was one woman working part-time.<sup>17</sup> In 2002 there is a decreasing difference between numbers of part-time and full-time workers—there is one woman part-time worker per 1.34 full time women employees.<sup>18</sup>



- ◆ 10,000 places at reduced fees for low income families,
- ◆ additional support for 9,000 children with special needs,
- ◆ plus funding for toy libraries, playgroups, peak and resource services.

The government funding helps to keep over 1,700 services operating. The Department also licenses over 3,000 services and monitors the services to ensure they comply with a standard of care that meets community expectations. Specifically during 2001/2002:

- ◆ \$2.554 million was allocated to 327 services to improve affordability for low income families using pre-school services and to sustain services in small rural towns.
- ◆ \$320,000 was allocated to support 33 playgroups, toy libraries, non-mainstream children's services and local resource and support services.
- ◆ \$1.25 million was allocated to the development of resources to improve practice, and on training and research activities. For example, the Child care curriculum framework document; the *Health Promoting Early Childhood Settings* report; research into the effects of carer duties on grandparents as well as impact of shortages of qualified staff; assistance for service staff and committee members to attend conferences.
- ◆ \$3.6 million was allocated to relocating services to new facilities, refurbishment of existing facilities, expansion of service provision and in helping services meet licensing standards.
- ◆ \$770,000 was allocated to establishing a *Supporting Children with Additional Needs* scheme to deliver improved supports for children with a disability, children from a non-

English speaking background and Aboriginal children.

- ◆ Funded services received a 2.2 per cent increase to their funding levels to help offset increases in CPI movements.
- ◆ 17.5 new Children's Services Advisers were employed to improve licensing and monitoring processes.

In April 2002 the Minister for Community Services launched a curriculum framework for child care services. \$400,000 was allocated to the development of the framework which was overseen by a steering committee of early childhood specialists. It also drew on extensive community consultation and a draft document was tested in a number of child care settings. The curriculum framework was distributed to all licensed children's services in June 2002. A training program is to be conducted later in 2002. This fulfils a government election commitment to develop support materials on practice issues for early childhood services.

The Office of Child Care in the Department of Community Services funded \$1 million of research into a range of issues related to early childhood services provision. The Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre and the Centre for Community Child Care were funded to investigate flexibility in the provision of child care, any barriers to the provision of flexible services, ways to address any barriers, and possible flexible service models. The research arose out of earlier multi-care research commissioned by the Office of Child Care showing that many families rely on a 'patchwork' of care arrangements to meet their child care needs.

The research report into flexible child care services recommends piloting new models within existing services as well as new

services. The research provided further support for the approach adopted in the NSW Early Childhood Services Policy, of moving to a system of services based on quality and responsiveness.

In recent years the government has recognised that supporting families during children's younger years provides long term benefits for women and their families. The *Families First* program is a support network for families of children aged 0 to 8 years. The program relies on government departments working together to deliver appropriate services. The program is coordinated by the Cabinet Office and is delivered by Area Health Services, the Departments of Ageing, Disability and Homecare, Community Services, Education and Training, and Housing and by funded non-government organisations.

- ◆ While all other household types across Australia increased over the year to June 1998, families with two adults and two children contracted by 1.13 per cent (14 628).<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ There are 1,654,583 families in NSW, including families headed by same-sex couples.<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ Of these, 791,475 (48 per cent) are families with children and 577,401 are families without children (35 per cent).<sup>21</sup>
- ◆ One-parent families account for 15 per cent (255 859) of families.<sup>22</sup>
- ◆ The proportion of one-parent families in NSW is below the Canadian rate of 22 per cent and the US rate of 33 per cent.<sup>23</sup>
- ◆ 83.5 per cent of one-parent families have a woman head of family.
- ◆ Two thirds of one-parent families have dependent children, most likely with a woman head of family.<sup>24</sup>

*Families First* targets families with very young children, identifying which services a child needs and helping families connect with the services early in a child's life to prevent long term problems. It also enhances parenting skills. Activities coordinated under *Families First* fall into four areas:

- ◆ supporting parents expecting or caring for a new baby;
- ◆ supporting parents caring for infants or young children;
- ◆ assisting families needing extra support; and
- ◆ strengthening the connections between families and communities.

The Department of Community Services contributed \$12.9 million to *Families First* in 2001/2002 to support existing local services networks. From 1999 to 2003 \$54.2 million has been allocated to the strategy. Other government agencies are also significant funders of the program, such as NSW Health.

Since 1999, 110 new services have been set up through *Families First* in the Far North Coast, Mid North Coast, Hunter, Orana Far West and Sydney South West to complement existing services. 400 volunteers have been trained to work with families and 308 children attend *Families First* supported playgroups.

The new services include: 22 volunteer home visiting services, 38 family worker projects, 26 supported playgroups, four parenting educators, two parenting centres, one parenting resource service, thirteen *Schools as Communities* centres, three community development projects and a toy library.

Specifically, women can access:

- ◆ professional family workers in the Hunter, inner western Sydney and Dubbo;

- ◆ In 2000 there were 86 440 births to women residents of NSW. This produced a fertility rate of 1.8, the third highest in Australia.<sup>25</sup>
- ◆ The median age for women giving birth in 2000 is 29.8 years.<sup>26</sup>
- ◆ Married women give birth later (median age 30.6 years) than women who are not married (median age 26.3 years).<sup>27</sup>
- ◆ Indigenous women have a higher fertility rate than women in the general population at 2.1 births per woman compared to 1.8 births per non-indigenous woman.<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ In NSW, 3 853 babies (4.5 per cent of all births) were born to teenage mothers (19 years of age and less) in 2000.<sup>29</sup> More than 90 per cent of the teenage mothers were from English speaking backgrounds while 10 per cent of all teenage girls were from language backgrounds other than English.
- ◆ The teenage birth rate in NSW is higher than in Sweden and France, on par with Canada, and lower than the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>30</sup>

- ◆ a parent support centre in Fairfield;
- ◆ four Aboriginal family workers and one multicultural family worker in the Hunter region;
- ◆ access to professional services including referrals through school based programs (*Schools as communities centres*) in Windale, Cessnock, Anna Bay, inner western Sydney;
- ◆ volunteer home visitors to assist first time parents, young parents and families with special needs in Muswellbrook, Raymond Terrace and Cessnock;
- ◆ and a Home Start service in Mudgee and Rylstone.<sup>31</sup>

In 2002–2003 new services are planned for the Nepean area, inner western Sydney, southern highlands, central coast and central west.

A research unit has been set up in the Cabinet Office to evaluate the *Families First* strategy, gather and analyse data and report on the impact of the program.<sup>32</sup> Information about *Families First* is available at [www.parenting.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parenting.nsw.gov.au).

## Identifying women's education and health needs through playgroups

### Supported playgroups are offered in many areas under the Families First program.

While the playgroups offer children the chance to socialise, they also provide a gathering place for women, offering social supports as well as a chance to meet with professionals who can assess their needs and services appropriate to them.

In some cases women who have not completed secondary school qualifications and who are attending the playgroups are given assistance to enroll in local TAFE courses. In Foster, a partnership between Home Base Youth Service and North Coast Institute of TAFE led to some women achieving accreditation towards a certificate of Child Care. The course was provided through the playgroup, and women were able to have their children cared for while they attended classes. Home Base has incorporated this successful partnership with TAFE into Families First playgroup projects.

Playgroups have also helped to create bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Macksville. Originally two distinct playgroups were offered. Following a joint Christmas gathering and a discussion among the women, the two playgroups combined in 2001. This saved resources and created a basis for reconciliation work in the local community. The local bus company offers free transport for women attending the playgroup.

The Department of Community Services offers practical parenting information to women, families and communities. In 2001 a magazine called *The Teenage Years – new edition* was available for parents of adolescents. Work also commenced on a parenting magazine for the Arabic community. Similar information for Aboriginal parents is available through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parenting calendar.

The Department of Corrective Services supports women in detention who have children through the *Mothers' and Children's Program*. This program enables women inmates at Emu Plains and the Parramatta Transitional Centre to have their preschool children living with them and also releases certain offenders under intensive community supervision to spend time with their children. \$12,000 was allocated to this program which can cater for up to 21 women on a full time residence program and up to 26 women on occasional care programs.

The *Mothers' and Children's Program* reduces the emotional stress experienced by children of women in custody. It also promotes parenting skills and fosters bonds between women in custody and their children, encouraging women to take responsibility to limit future harm to their children through criminal and other antisocial behaviour. Ensuring the best interests of children is the paramount issue when considering applications for participation in the program. A program is planned for Kempsey and Bolwara House, and the Department is considering making it available to inmates on long-term remand and Periodic Detention Orders.

The Department of Corrective Services *Community Grants Program* funds community organisations assisting women, inmates and their families, prior to and upon release from

custody. The support is offered to help ex-offenders break the cycle of institutionalisation and to move to independent living.

Funding for 2001–02 was allocated as follows:

- ◆ \$139,606 to Guthrie House to provide supported accommodation for women offenders and ex-offenders;
- ◆ \$530,846 to CRC Justice Support to provide support services to offenders, ex-offenders and their families, including a family transport service to correctional centres;
- ◆ \$59,237 to Yulawirri Nurai Aboriginal Corporation to provide post-release services for Indigenous women;
- ◆ \$70,000 to Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates establish and strengthen their families links; and
- ◆ \$252,804 to Children of Prisoners Support Group to deliver services to support children of offenders.

The Department of Health allocated \$800,000 over five years for parenting programs for parents of pre-school aged children. Area Health Services will implement and evaluate evidence-based parenting programs. Staff will be trained in delivering and evaluating accredited Triple P Parenting programs.

Women with children are primary users of public transport. The Department of Transport recognises women's usage patterns and in September 2001 the hours that taxis fitted with baby capsules operate were considerably extended. The specialist taxis are now available outside the hours of 8 am to 6 pm on weekdays and weekends. The new service offers women round the clock access to taxis that are safe for babies.

- ◆ In the 2001 census, 2,581,840 people reported themselves as married (52 per cent of the state's population).<sup>33</sup>
- ◆ Slightly more men (1,291,145) identified as married, compared with 1,290,695 women.<sup>34</sup>
- ◆ 153,196 women (4.7 per cent of the total number of women in NSW) identified as being in a de facto marriage for the 2001 census. This was 11.4 per cent of all registered marriages and partnerships.<sup>35</sup>
- ◆ More women than men identify as separated (91,206 women compared with 75,750 men).
- ◆ More women than men identify as divorced (204,900 women compared with 156,836 men). The total per centage of divorced people in the NSW population is 7.2 per cent.
- ◆ Considerably many more women (258,594) than men (64,065) are widowed.
- ◆ 1,564,627 people have never been married (31 per cent of the state's population – 855,025 men and 709,602 women).
- ◆ The rate of marriage has declined gradually since 1991, falling by 4 per cent as a proportion of the total population (121,533 people). Divorce figures have increased by 1.8 per cent as has the proportion of people separated by 0.5 per cent. 2 per cent more people have never been married, increasing this population group to 31 per cent.<sup>36</sup>

#### INFORMAL CARERS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO THE COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT

The government recognises that carers help elderly people and people with disabilities live independently in the community, avoiding premature and/or inappropriate admission into residential care facilities. For example, older people living in

households are significant recipients of support from family members. 86 per cent of older people (65 years and over) receiving assistance were helped by family or friends.<sup>37</sup>

#### The responsibility for caring for family members falls disproportionately on women.

Of all carers in NSW, 57 per cent are women. There are 162,200 primary carers in NSW and 73 per cent of them are women.<sup>38</sup>

Women take responsibility for 71 per cent of all primary care<sup>39</sup> and are more likely than men to take primary responsibility for parents (96 per cent) and children (75 per cent).

Primary carers gave a number of reasons for their role including wanting to provide better care (48 per cent), family responsibility (48 per cent) and emotional obligation (40 per cent). Significantly, 25 per cent said they had no other choice.<sup>40</sup> As the population ages, it is anticipated that the number of informal carers will increase.

\$5.1 million of recurrent funding was allocated to the *Care for Carers* program, jointly administered by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare and Services and NSW Health. As the majority of primary carers, women benefit directly from respite, case management and early intervention services under the carers program. Other initiatives include a *Young Carers* project and projects to support carers of people with mental illness.

Respite care services are particularly important for women who need time out to attend health or other appointments for themselves or to have a break from intensive care situations. In 2001/02, approximately \$25 million was provided for centre-based respite and a further \$25 million in flexible respite

services under the *Disability Services Program*. An additional \$49.5 million was provided for respite through the *Home and Community Care Program*. Nearly \$2.7 million was available for dementia Care and Support in 2001/02 which assisted with an expansion of dementia advisory services.

*Reaching Isolated Carers*, a two-year research project funded by the Australian Research Council Linkages Program, is being carried out by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales in partnership with the Departments for Women, Health, Community Services, and Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and Carers NSW. The project will identify carers across NSW who may not be aware of, or using, government services available to them. In particular, the project will provide insights into ways of assisting the most disadvantaged carers who are socially or geographically isolated in their role as carers.

Stage one of the project will identify the characteristics of carers most in need of information and support. Stage two will trial innovative strategies to increase carers' access to appropriate information, programs and services particularly in areas with low rates of referral. The final stage will evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot strategies. As the majority of primary carers are women, this project will benefit women by linking women to services (such as respite care) that influence their quality of life, health and capacity to continue effectively in the caring role.

Women who are carers of developmentally disabled children and who live in the Campbelltown, Wollondilly and Ingleburn areas are gaining new advocacy skills through a program funded by the Department for Women and run by

*Families in Partnership* a non-profit organization. The group received \$14,790 of *Women's Grants Program* funds to train a core group who then work with other women in a similar situation in disadvantaged and isolated regions. Thirteen women have completed the first stage of the course since February 2001. An advocacy resource kit will be developed, including a booklet of the mother's stories and special hints for advocates.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care is responsible for a number of programs that have an impact on women's day to day well-being. For example the Home and Community Care (HACC) program offers support services for frail older people, younger people with disabilities and their carers who live in the community. Support includes food services; community transport, home modification and maintenance, personal care and respite care services. In the first quarter of 2002 women were 71 per cent of all users of Home and Community Care Program (HACC) services.

The HACC program budget in 2001–2002 was \$318 million, compared with \$270.2 million in the previous financial year. There are approximately 120,000 clients across the state, with nearly 70 per cent aged 65 or older. Women rely on HACC as users of the service and as primary carers of older family members and children with disabilities. HACC services help to delay or prevent inappropriate or premature admission of family members into residential care.

A government funded Community Transport Scheme operates for people who are isolated because of age, disability or location, or who have limited access to private or public transport. In 2001/02 \$14.5 million was allocated to 136 Government and non-Government organisations under the Home and Community

Care Program, the NSW Community Transport Program and the Area Assistance Program. The transport services help women and men access recreation, shopping, education, medical care, social services and social networks. On average, community transport providers performed 85,560 trips per month assisting 24,633 disadvantaged people. A significant number of the recipients are women.

### WOMEN ARE TAKING THEIR COMMUNITIES IN NEW AND POSITIVE DIRECTIONS

*Yarn Up 2: Growing up our leaders* attracted over 600 seniors and young Aboriginal people, predominately women, in Wollongong in June 2002. It was presented by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in partnership with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare, the NSW Reconciliation Council, the Premier's Department, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.<sup>41</sup>

At the first *Aboriginal Seniors Yarn Up* in May 2000, participants stated that one of the most important issues for many seniors is their love and concern for young people. Equally, participants recognised that young people need to be listened to and given the opportunity to learn from the wisdom of older people and the richness of their culture.

*Yarn Up 2* brought together Aboriginal seniors and young people to exchange information, and create support/guidance networks between old and young Aboriginal community members. *Yarn Up 2* had a number of workshops, enabling Aboriginal people to talk about their concerns and give advice on how the issues could be addressed. The workshops covered: capacity building, working with government and the media, getting into politics, starting a business, turning Community

Development Employment Programs into businesses, mental health, family violence and dealing with community factionalism.

The *Yarn Up 2* report will be available on the Department of Aboriginal Affairs website [www.daa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au) in October 2002. A free video of *Yarn Up 2* has also been produced, which is also available from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

In 2001–2002 a Partnership Project managed by Shopfront at the University of Technology Sydney and funded by the Department for Women was completed. The \$100,000 project analysed what women can bring to sustainable development. Women generally have limited opportunities to be involved in the development and planning of their communities, yet carry significant responsibility for the sustainability of their families and community. This project involved women in Dareton, Nowra and Miller.

In Dareton, a partnership was established between the Dareton Aboriginal Women's Network (DAWN), the Department for Women and UTS Shopfront. The Dareton Aboriginal Women's Network develops proposals for economic and cultural development projects, raises issues impacting on the well being of Aboriginal women in the community, and identifies pathways to enterprise development, training and building sustainable outcomes for women and the community.

The Department for Women allocated \$7,000 for a twelve-month training and mentoring program for members of DAWN to build on their skills and knowledge in organisational management and leadership. The project is an example of work being carried out under the Coalition of Australian Governments' priorities for Aboriginal women, on women in leadership and women's economic status.

Through continued work in partnership, it is expected that outcomes of the project will include:

- ◆ increased confidence among and refining the skills of Aboriginal women to manage their own projects and organisations;
- ◆ a training program including skill development in arts and cultural production; and
- ◆ enhanced capacity for representation in local decision-making, planning and program development.

Women on the south coast are giving their opinions about future government plans for Ulladulla at community forums. The forums are part of the *Ulladulla Women's Vision for Economic and Cultural Development* project, which commenced in March 2002 with \$64,600 funding through the Premier's Department Regional Service Delivery Plan. The program is auspiced by the Illawarra/South East Regional Coordination Management Group. The Department of State and Regional Development is the lead agency in partnership with the Department for Women.

Earlier work by the Department for Women and UTS Shopfront on sustainable development for women identified a strong commitment by local women in Ulladulla to building a dynamic future for the town and community. Women in small business and from community organisations want to work out ways in Ulladulla to:

- ◆ extend the small business skills and capacity of women;
- ◆ extend the economic and cultural base of development;
- ◆ enhance the participation of women in strategic planning for the future of the town;

- ◆ create opportunities for women to make significant and concrete contributions to the future of Ulladulla; and
- ◆ to integrate environmental, cultural and economic planning with gender analysis and women's leadership.

A number of small projects were initiated in Miller in south-western Sydney, including the design of Miller Square and the enhancement of safety for women in the public environment. The imagery of women's lives in Miller was used as a basis for a media project with young women, together with the development of a proposal for a production house for film and photography.

A significant outcome of the Partnership Project is a set of principles and a model for sustainable development for use by communities across the state and nationally. The principles and model were launched in April 2002. In summary the principles are:

- ◆ Communities rather than individuals need to be centre of projects.
- ◆ Embracing different points of view strengthens community projects.
- ◆ It is important to identify community strengths and pleasures as starting points.
- ◆ Communities will work differently because of people, culture and history.
- ◆ Having ongoing talk and negotiation helps to keep community work moving.
- ◆ Community work will go through flat periods, periods of failure, changes in focus affecting the pace of the project.
- ◆ Community power relations need to be identified and considered.

- ◆ Individuals need to be responsible for outcomes, processes and directions throughout the project.
- ◆ Activities that start from the ground and are not imposed by external groups are much more likely to be supported and carried out.

For a complete set of the principles and other information including a model of sustainable development, refer to *Women, Partnerships and Sustainable Development* at [www.women.nsw.gov.au](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au).

Clarence Valley Community Programs Incorporated received a grant of \$62,150 to run a *Young Women's Project*. The project focuses on young Aboriginal women aged between 12 and 18 years in the Clarence Valley. A group of older women across seven communities will be trained to lead small groups of young women through an educative process covering leadership, budgeting and money matters, communication, police issues, the emotional costs of early motherhood and employment issues.

The training will be delivered to the group leaders by professional staff from local services including Northern Rivers Area Health Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, and Clarence Valley Community Programs Incorporated. The project will work with an Aboriginal Reference Group of Elders from seven communities to enhance relationships between young women and their communities.

To build on the Department for Women's social and economic renewal work in Kempsey since 1999, Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation received \$20,000 in the 2001 *Women's Grants Program* to work in partnership with Aboriginal community organisations and Aboriginal women to develop and pilot an appropriate training program.

A mentoring program, women's network and/or other support structures will be developed to support Aboriginal women.

#### ACCESSING COMMUNITY RESOURCES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO WOMEN'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Annual community grant programs are opportunities for women to gain funding for local projects which they have designed, are willing to lead or implement and which address their concerns about their communities. A range of government agencies provide grants annually to projects targeting women. These and other agencies also provide resources in the form of information and in-kind support, that is providing expertise for free. Some of the community resources accessed by women are discussed below.

The *Area Assistance Scheme*, set up and funded by Planning NSW, is a community grants program targeting communities undergoing urban growth and the stresses of change. The scheme is part of the NSW government community building program.

In early 2002, Planning NSW approved funding nine projects specifically targeting women. The projects, receiving a total of \$201,758, cover a range of issues and groups of women, including:

- ◆ volunteer carers (predominantly women) of a Southlakes refuge;
- ◆ life skills, assertiveness and self defence skills for women with physical and intellectual disabilities in the Macarthur region who are at risk of sexual and physical abuse;
- ◆ employing a domestic violence project worker to liaise with south-east Asian community leaders and women;

- ◆ a women's advocacy, support and community education service for women with intellectual disabilities in the Mt Druitt area;
- ◆ an intergenerational arts and craft program for women that provides child care, mentoring and a local social support network; and
- ◆ multi-lingual information packs about domestic violence for women from diverse cultural backgrounds and provide support training to community organisations.

The Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation in Brewarrina has been working on a successful community project called *Images of Murdi Women in Bre'*.

This project collected and collated photographic images of Aboriginal women in Brewarrina by working with six Community Development Employment

Women over 25 years involved in the 10–12 month project received training in photography, developing creative skills, working collaboratively with a team of photographers and making group decisions culminating in an exhibition. The final photographic exhibition *Mukatinj Ngari* (meaning Women: now in time, here in place) is scheduled to be held from 3–17 October 2002 at Brewarrina's local gallery and the photographs will also be exhibited during NAIDOC week. The community photographic archive will also be extended and the opportunity to create a small business developed.

Burnside Family Support Service, based in Coffs Harbour is offering a playgroups support program for women in isolated areas. Funded by the Department for Women (\$19,983) women will be trained as mentors to run supported playgroups

in isolated areas. An accredited Vocational Training and Accreditation Board group work facilitator will provide the course and women will then go on to manage the program locally, linking in with local services to create a service to meet their needs. Eight women have completed the mentor training and three playgroups are now functioning independently.

The Department for Women supports women's community organisations with minimal resources by providing event management, networking skills and consultation processes. Projects supported by the Department include the Muslim Women's Association strategic business planning process, the YWCA Health and Wellbeing Luncheons, the National Council for Women Youth Forum and Australia Day Awards, the UNIFEM IWD Breakfast Organising Committee, the Women in Film and Television World of Women Film Festival. This additional resourcing helps women's organisations achieve greater reach through their own activities.

In addition to grants and facilitating capacity building in organisations, the Department for Women provides expertise in analysing gender issues to other government agencies. For example, the Department helped develop a policy on treatment services for problem gamblers and their families. The Department's input helped to highlight the different patterns and risk factors of women gamblers. This policy exercise highlighted the need for research to develop a profile of women gamblers and the specific issues affecting them, including the impact of problem gambling on families, for example domestic violence and child abuse. Another contribution the Department for Women makes is assessing grant applications for community projects and services under the Casino Community Benefit Fund.

This fund addresses social issues stemming from or causing gambling problems. The Department offers expertise to help identify projects that would make a positive impact on women's lives.

Under the Casino Community Benefit Fund Program, managed by the Department of Gaming and Racing, funds totaling \$343,530 were allocated in July 2001 for five projects and services targeting women and girls:

- 1 The Dubbo Women's Housing Program was granted \$99,992 for work on access to legal representation and court assistance for rural and remote women and their dependent children.
- 2 The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association was granted \$98,800 to provide women and children from non-English speaking background counselling and advocacy services, information and education about issues relating to domestic violence and child abuse.
- 3 The Kempsey Family Support Services was awarded \$32,249 to provide information and education for women who have been exposed to domestic violence.
- 4 The St Vincent de Paul Society – Our Lady of The Way was awarded \$45,500 to provide an immediate counselling service for women who have experienced and left a violent domestic situation.
- 5 The Women's Activities and Self Help House was awarded \$40,000 to provide education, awareness, support groups and a referral service for victims of domestic violence.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has a community grants program that has funded projects targeting women. For

example, during the financial year 2001–2002, a one-off sum of \$40,163 was allocated to a program specifically targeting Aboriginal girls between the ages of 11 and 15 years in the Walgett region. The funds were used to set up four three day camping excursions to provide a supportive environment to enable girls to talk about their lives and needs. The project offers the Aboriginal girls skills to help prevent sexual assault and family violence and encourage cultural healing.

There are two types of grants. Discretionary grants (up to \$4000) are available throughout the year to alleviate social disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal women, men, children and elders. Larger grants (up to \$45,000) are available for projects delivering long-term benefits to Aboriginal people. Preference is given to projects submitted by Aboriginal individuals and Aboriginal organisations, and/or projects that have a state-wide or regional focus, are sustainable and/or involve partnerships with other community, corporate and/or government agencies. In 2001/2002 major grants were available for programs focusing on language, culture and heritage as well as on prevention of sexual assault and family violence.

NSW Government established the *Strengthening Communities Unit* to work closely with other NSW Government agencies, such as the Community Relations Commission, the Department for Women and with local and Commonwealth governments, community, business and professional groups. Its role is to lead and facilitate major projects related to strengthening communities.

In 2001/2002 the Premier's Department coordinated a number of initiatives to help communities deal with local challenges and

needs. Some of the projects that are particularly relevant to women's needs are described below.

*Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy* committees have been formed in Miller, Nowra, Brewarrina, Kempsey and Redfern-Waterloo. The committees involve government agencies, local councils, community groups and police, who are focusing on service arrangements between government and non-government domestic and family violence service providers, improving physical amenities and public spaces, and initiating community leadership and mentoring programs.

\$490,000 has been allocated to *Strengthening Local Communities Strategy* projects in Windale, Booragul-Bolton Point, Moree, Wentworth, Airds, Port Kembla, Mangrove Mountain, Canterbury-Bankstown, Boggabilla, Crookwell. Projects in these areas are targeting community health, family support, and children's services, local domestic violence services, creating new employment opportunities, including new social enterprises and reviewing the use of existing youth, arts, sport and community services.

In Port Kembla \$50,000 is available from the state government and \$80,000 from Wollongong City Council and local contributions to fund community renewal and safety project activities which:

- ◆ provide safe and community acceptable options for street sex workers,
- ◆ initiate local enterprise development, and
- ◆ establish new human services outlets.

The *Capacity Building for Non-Government Organisations Project* is a state-wide project analysing the major development

challenges facing non-government organisations. Women are a substantial proportion of employees in not-for-profit community organisations in NSW, as well as continuing to constitute the majority of volunteers engaged by these organisations.

The Premier's Department also sponsors specific projects in single communities, for example the *Safe Chix Project* which is co-ordinated by Manly Council, helping young women to develop relationship skills to increase the likelihood of entering healthy and safe relationships, and the *Spiked Drinks* public awareness campaign in Wollongong informing young women about sexual assault perpetrators spiking drinks in public hotels and clubs.

#### QUALITY PUBLIC HOUSING IS IMPORTANT FOR MANY WOMEN'S QUALITY OF LIFE

60 per cent of households in public housing are headed by women, making women a key client of the Department of Housing. 65.4 per cent of the total number of the Department of Housing tenants are women and 34.6 per cent are men. Of the total number of application for housing claiming their source of income as 'sole parent payment', 92 per cent were women and 8per cent were men.

10,562 applicants were allocated public housing in the 1999/2000 financial year, up from 9217 in the previous year. In 61 per cent of successful applications, a woman holds the lease. 27 per cent of all new tenants each year are women sole parents. Approximately 15 per cent are single women, 11 per cent of who are elderly.<sup>42</sup>

- ◆ More women are living alone with the current figure projected to double by 2021, climbing from 294,000 in 1996 to 545,000.<sup>43</sup>
- ◆ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a third of Australians will live alone by 2021. The trend is caused by an aging population, rising divorce rates and more people delaying or choosing not to marry.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1999/2000 financial year, the Department of Housing spent in excess of \$550 million in providing support to over 400,000 people in need.<sup>45</sup>

The Office of Community Housing funds long term affordable housing for people on low incomes by providing funds and resources to not-for-profit organisations to be direct housing providers. The office leases properties to housing providers who rent them to people on low incomes and other people unable to access appropriate housing in the private market. The office also provides recurrent grants to housing providers for the same purpose.

In 2002, two housing providers were funded under the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) to provide housing specifically to women. The Women's Housing Company, a community housing association specialising in housing for single women, was allocated the management of a further five leases and thirty-one properties on redevelopment sites for general community housing. The company has a record of managing 234 capital properties owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation including a number that are leased (108 short term leases and nine long term leases) in metropolitan Sydney as part of the Community Housing Leasing Program.

Additionally, ten properties on a redevelopment site and two leases were allocated to the Women's Housing Company in partnership with the Muslim Women's Association to provide housing and support to young and older Muslim women.

Western Suburbs Community Housing was also allocated two properties on redevelopment sites to provide supported housing for single young parent families with complex needs, in partnership with Anglicare Youth Services.

These partnerships have been successfully established and are working well to provide supported housing targeted to women.

Another section of the Department of Housing that makes a difference to women living in public housing is the Community Renewal Unit. It makes a difference by:

- ◆ Improving housing management, safety and security through eight *Intensive Tenancy Management* projects in public housing estates, for example Bidwill and Minto. Over the next two years, \$5.5 million will be allocated to support the establishment of another eleven Intensive Tenancy Management projects focusing on safety and security as well as community consultation and counselling services for families and young people.
- ◆ Providing \$180,000 to fund *Community Development and Resourcing Grants*, some of which specifically targeted women, including \$5,500 to the Kathleen York House in Glebe for Life Skills Project for women living in public and community housing seeking to learn skills and maintain a drug free lifestyle; and \$3,300 to the Gordon Centre Sewing Group in Orange, to purchase sewing machines and materials to run classes for the special target group of Aboriginal women.

- ◆ *Tenant Employment and Training*, for example Community Contracts. During the reporting period, 119 full/part time and casual employment outcomes were created from 10 Community Contracts across NSW. Women gained approximately 33 per cent of the employment outcomes.

Women who are public housing tenants, particularly on large estates, are the beneficiaries of other social and economic projects, such as:

- ◆ the *Kidspeak Project* (Department of Housing (Central Sydney Region) and the University of New South Wales) an outreach program targeting the families of children aged 5–12 years who do not access support services;
- ◆ an *Internet Cafe* where women living on the Cranebrook estate in western Sydney are able to access information technology training, information and skills to increase their employment opportunities;
- ◆ *safety audits* within public housing regions in partnership with police to promote safe parks, streets and homes for the local residents; and
- ◆ the *Residential Aged Services Pilot* which is gathering gender information about trends and issues specific to women, via individual face to face surveys by the local Aged Care Assessment Team. Insights gained from the pilot will be considered when making decisions about how to improve services for public housing tenants.

Other areas of Department of Housing operation that improve the quality of services provided to women include:

- ◆ a domestic violence policy to ensure that women and their families who are victims of domestic violence or abuse are appropriately housed or re-housed;

- ◆ partnerships with appropriate support agencies;
- ◆ local agreements developed for case management of clients with complex needs;
- ◆ the Joint Guarantee of Service with the Department of Health for people with a mental illness;
- ◆ policy about providing services to refugees and asylum seekers to respond appropriately to clients who hold temporary protection visas;
- ◆ a Nuisance and Annoyance Project to improve the way the Department and tenants deals with disturbances such as domestic violence, harassment and intimidation;
- ◆ reviewing the role of Senior Client Service Officer specialists to find out whether clients with special and complex needs are getting the best assistance;
- ◆ a Good Neighbour Policy which provides a new process for referring tenants to the Community Justice Centre;
- ◆ Guidelines for Information Exchange influencing, amongst other things, what information the Department and Police can request from each other; and
- ◆ referral of mutual clients between government agencies working to implement the Better Service Delivery Project.

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations received a large grant to conduct a short course for women executive officers in community housing associations. The course funded by the Department of Women, was held over five days at the University of Technology Sydney. One woman manager who completed the course commented:

*'The course contents and appropriateness of the subject matter were essential for our growth as managers of changing*

organisations. *The networking and sharing of knowledge that occurred was invaluable*.

The Department of Community Services

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au> administers the Commonwealth/State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program to assist women escaping domestic violence and their accompanying children, single women, young women and women with children/families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The Department is providing \$36,252,535 in 2002/03 to assist women and their children escaping domestic violence including single women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. An estimated 11,550 women were assisted in 1999/2000. 144 agencies provide support to women. These agencies provide a range of support services, including emergency and longer term accommodation, counselling, general support and advocacy, referrals to specialist services, domestic violence support, linkages to income support and education, training and employment services, child care and liaison with kindergartens and schools.

### WOMEN WHO ARE HOMELESS HAVE DISTINCT NEEDS

The *Partnership Against Homelessness* is a group of government agencies working together to prevent homelessness and improve services for people who are homeless. In March 2002, the Partnership Against Homelessness adopted a reference paper on *Women and Homelessness* developed by the Department for Women. The reference paper outlines how women's experiences of homelessness, needs and therefore solutions differ from those of homeless men.

The reference paper reported that women experiencing homelessness are more likely to be sexually or physically

assaulted than homeless men. They often have child care responsibilities, mental health concerns, or are dealing with domestic violence issues.

Women are a significant proportion of homeless people in New South Wales – 8,053 women were estimated as being homeless on census night in 1996, representing 32.7 per cent of the people counted as homeless. 83 per cent of these women were sleeping in public places, staying temporarily in other households or in crisis accommodation.<sup>46</sup>

The next stage of the *Women and Homelessness* project involves developing case studies showing how understanding the differences between men's and women's experiences of homelessness can improve service delivery. The first case study examines the development of the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan, starting with the development of an outreach service for women and men sleeping in public places. The project will gather informative data about women using the outreach service.

Specific initiatives managed by the Department of Housing include the Woolloomooloo Homelessness Project. The Department of Housing worked with ten government and community agencies to support homeless women and men into accommodation and to upgrade the public health standards and amenities and the safety of the area. The project included an analysis of the needs of women who are homeless in Woolloomooloo.

In Western Sydney, the populations of homeless people are changing, with an increase in the number of women, women with children, ex-prisoner families and ex-prisoners with mental

health problems. Single women, women with children and migrant women experiencing domestic violence are key target groups in the *Western Sydney Strategic Plan for Homelessness*. The Department of Community Services employed a project manager in January 2002 to develop a strategy based on community consultation.

The consultation process identified a number of critical issues confronting western Sydney, including:

- ◆ a lack of a peak regional homelessness structure leading to disjointed planning and delivery of services across the region;
- ◆ an absence of research on homelessness, particularly Aboriginal homelessness, in the area;
- ◆ the need to review the spread of services across the region;
- ◆ poor communication leading to limited referrals, inappropriate practices being used and limited chances to develop new strategies.

After analysing the critical issues, three areas of activity were identified for action, each of which impact on women directly:

- ◆ the closure of Sundowner Caravan Park in Parklea which houses up to 330 families with a large population of women and women with children;
- ◆ the review of *Supported Assistance and Accommodation Services* available in the Parramatta Local Government Area, especially services for women with children and women experiencing domestic violence; and
- ◆ setting up a mobile support team to service the area.

Including women as a target group in the strategic planning means their needs are more likely to be understood and addressed explicitly.<sup>47</sup>

The *Crisis Accommodation Program*, coordinated by the Office of Community Housing in the Department of Housing, is of particular importance to women during periods of considerable upheaval, such as domestic violence or during bouts of homelessness. Funds from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement are managed by the Office of Community Housing to acquire, build, lease, renovate and convert properties for people seeking crisis accommodation. The accommodation is managed by not-for-profit organisations on behalf of the NSW Government.

In 2001/2002, forty six properties (or 40 per cent of the total 2001/2002 Program supply) were allocated to community based housing and/or support providers who specialise in providing services for women. Of these properties, eight were allocated for crisis accommodation, 25 for exit and transitional accommodation, eleven replaced unsuitable properties, two properties were approved for reconfiguration and a feasibility study was approved for the future replacement or reconfiguration of another property. 29 properties were in the Sydney Metropolitan area, three in regional and 14 in rural New South Wales.

## Preventing homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic violence

**Domestic violence is a frequent cause of homelessness for women. An innovative research project is examining what prevents women and their children from staying in their residence, and exploring ways of housing the perpetrator of the violence elsewhere to help the women and their children who want to, to stay safely in their home.**

An investigation will be carried out in two rural locations to determine the range of services and support possibilities required by women. Information will be gathered from women who have attempted to remain in the shared accommodation, from workers, counsellors and other specialist with experience of domestic violence service delivery.

This project challenges expectations and practices that women should leave the shared residence, frequently leading to dislocation, distress and disruption to work and family education commitments. The research is being performed by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies University of NSW.

The project was funded in early 2002 by the Department of Community Services (\$88,660) and other government partners include the Attorney-General's Department and the Department for Women.

Further information of other programs aiming to reduce and prevent domestic violence can be found in the Access to Justice and Equality Before the Law chapter of this action plan.

## IMPROVING ACCESS FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IS AN EXPECTATION OF GOVERNMENT

Approximately 17 per cent of the population in New South Wales has a disability. Data from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare reports that 606,500 women (49.6 per cent) and 614,900 men (51.4 per cent) have some form of disability. Of the women, 40 per cent are aged 65 years and over.<sup>48</sup>

In 1998, 87 per cent of people living with disabilities received informal assistance from family and friends. Partners provided approximately 50 per cent of assistance. Children were the next greatest source of support (33 per cent) followed by other family (25 per cent) and parents (16 per cent). Parents helped in areas of communication, self-care, health care and mobility. Partners and friends took responsibility for property maintenance and housework.<sup>49</sup>

Funding of \$828 million is provided via the Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement for accommodation, support, respite, home care and information and advocacy services. \$550,000 was provided for advocacy for people with a disability involved in the criminal justice system, including a component for victims of crime.

*Deafinitely Mothers* is a support project for women who are deaf, managed by the Deaf Society of New South Wales and funded by the Department for Women (\$29,990) through the *Women's Grants Program*. The project will establish a Deaf Mothers' Support Network to meet the needs of mothers who have young children and who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as their preferred means of communication. The

Network will operate in a similar way to any mothers' groups organised by early childhood centres, acting as an educational forum as well as a support network. At the end of the project, an information/resource guide will be produced which modifies existing resources to suit the needs of first time mothers. The print material will be distributed to other mainstream and specialist children's agencies to promote the Deaf Mothers' Support Group.

Women with disabilities, elderly women and women with prams and small children will benefit from the State Rail Authority's Easy Access Program leading to 95 stations being modified by 2005. Forty-six stations have been modified and five more are under construction. This program brings public train stations into line with the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act.

A further 14 stations will be completed by February 2003. \$241 million has been spent on the Easy Access Program from 1993 to 2001, with \$31 million spent in 2001/02 and \$38 million budgeted in 2002/03.

To increase the number of accessible buses, State Transit is progressively replacing its fleet with low floor, wheelchair accessible buses. Elderly women, women in wheelchairs and women with prams or young children benefit from the changes, required under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act as well as the NSW Disability Policy Framework action plan. As at 31 May 2002 more than one fifth of all government buses were wheel-chair accessible (461 of 1929 buses). Up to January 2002, State Transit spent over \$160 million acquiring 439 wheelchair accessible buses. Budgeted expenditure for 2002/03 is \$24 million.

### RURAL WOMEN'S NEEDS ARE BEING HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD

Rural communities include regional centres, small towns, villages and places where there is a low population and primary production and mining are the key types of employment. Remote communities have low population and limited access to larger service centres and transport routes.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the issues of concern may be the same for women in metropolitan, rural and remote communities, the ways of responding to them may differ.

The *Women's Gathering* is an annual community based discussion about issues of concern for women in rural and regional NSW as well as an opportunity to provide training and support around these issues. The Women's Gathering is an initiative of the Rural Women's Network and is specifically provided for women who live and work in rural and regional areas.

At the gathering the Department for Women ran workshops on community leadership, information technology and accessing the *Women's Gateway*, securing positions on boards and committees, and community participation strategies. 500 women participated in the event held in Kempsey in 2001 and twenty Aboriginal women participated in a community leadership workshop.

In the first two weeks of May 2001, the *Women on Wheels* tour took government and non-government staff across some 10,000 kilometres, visiting 23 remote towns and cities in western NSW. Active participants in this combined outreach, consultation and information session program were the Police Service, State Transit Authority, NSW Sport and Recreation, NSW Fire Brigades, the Community Relations Commission, the Attorney

General's Department domestic violence specialists, FPA Health, Legal Aid solicitors and experts from Asthma NSW. The project was initiated and coordinated by the Department for Women.

About 30 per cent of women in New South Wales live outside the main urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, so programs such as *Women on Wheels* help create communication and exchange of information between women and service agencies.

The objectives of *Women on Wheels* were to:

- ◆ listen to the women of New South Wales and to consult to gain an understanding of local issues affecting women and their families;
- ◆ distribute information and promote Government services to women in the targeted communities; and
- ◆ to act as a catalyst for action for local communities.

The outcomes of the tour included building partnerships/capacity at a local level, establishing networks to feed into future activities, progressing the reconciliation process amongst women, as well as making government policies relevant to women, such as *Working together in stronger rural communities*.

In June and July 2002, a second *Women on Wheels* project was conducted with twenty Government agencies and more than ten community based organisations through the North Coast, New England and Northern Tablelands regions of NSW. Some 140 events were held in approximately 60 towns. Most events provided information about government and community services. In addition, a number of events provided skills development workshops around confidence, participation

and leadership, while others acted as a catalyst for business and professional women to network.

Since July 2001, *Government Access Centres* have been established in small regional communities of 1,500 to 6,000 people. The centres improve access to government information/transaction services in small regional communities. Consultations were conducted to identify community needs and the most common transaction services demanded by residents.

Evaluations indicated a high level of usage/acceptance of the centres in pilot locations and overwhelming community support for locally based *Government Access Centres*. The pilot centres are well used by their local communities. In Oberon and Kyogle for example, the total number of enquiries dealt with by centre staff were slightly more than the total population of the local government area. In Gilgandra the number of inquiries was more than double the total population of the Shire. In Dorrigo the total number of inquiries was three times the population.

### WOMEN VOLUNTEERS ARE COMMUNITY BUILDERS

The NSW government recognises and values the extraordinary effort and contribution of women who are volunteers. Volunteers are involved directly or indirectly in almost all community based, government funded programs. For example, the *Families First* program trains volunteers to carry out home visits to families of new babies.

The Department for Women, the Premier's Department, New South Wales Council of Social Services, the University of Western Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney, are in the second year of an Australian Research Council funded project on *The Experience of Volunteers in the Provision of*

More women than men give time to community work and volunteering. 23.4 per cent of women volunteer for community work compared with 16.2 per cent of men. Women voluntarily spend on average one and half-hours daily of unpaid help through community organisations. In total, women give approximately 69.2 million hours of their time doing things that benefit others. In particular women living outside cities in NSW give their time to others. In fact, approximately one quarter of these women make active contributions to their communities and philanthropic activities compared with 14 per cent of women living in Sydney.<sup>51</sup>

Women are highly represented in the formal human services volunteer sector, for example as carers, food services, visitors, family visitors and language instructors.

*Human Services in NSW: A Regional Perspective.* The two-year project addresses formal volunteering in human services - work that is unpaid, conducted within structured organisations and by choice.

This project canvases the experiences of women volunteers, agency coordinators and clients to identify the conditions that need to be in place for successful volunteering. This will help women volunteers match with agencies and suggest to agencies practices that work best for volunteers. Field work is being carried out in greater western Sydney and central NSW. Stage one of the project involving focus groups with volunteers is complete. Stage two (interviews with volunteers, coordinators and clients) is underway. Stage three involves identifying the conditions for people to receive volunteer services they are very satisfied with.

**In 1997 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that the value of unpaid work (91 per cent of which is unpaid household work), was approximately \$261 billion.**

This is equivalent to nearly 48 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product. Women contributed 65 per cent of the value of unpaid household work. When performing domestic duties, women spend 25 per cent of their time on food preparation and cleaning up, compared with 17 per cent for men. 14 per cent of their time is dedicated to child care while men gave 14 per cent of time to purchasing.<sup>52</sup> Paid work produces a decline in women's unpaid work but also their leisure time. This is not the case with men who maintain leisure time while in paid employment.<sup>53</sup>

From 1992 to 1997, women's time allocated to child care fell from 32.3 per cent to 30.5 per cent, while male child care rates rose from 18.7 per cent to 19 per cent. Voluntary work and care dropped for both groups.<sup>54</sup> In 1997, women participated in child care at a rate of 30.5 per cent (147 minutes daily) compared to 19 per cent for men (87 minutes daily).<sup>55</sup>

Men are doing more child care but women still do much more of the unpaid home and family work. Men's contribution to child care increased by 85 minutes per week from 1992 to 1997. If this rate of increase continued, parity in men and women's time spent on child care would be achieved in 25 years. Australian men do a lot more child care than men in the UK, more than men in the US and a lot less than men in Canada. Women still spend twice as much time on housework as men do, and three times as much time on children.<sup>56</sup>

*V is for Volunteers* is a community based project being managed by the Mudgee Shire Council Volunteers Committee. The project funded under the annual Women's Grant Program for \$29,154, will help organisations to identify potential

volunteers in the shire's isolated communities and link the volunteers to local organisations. A central electronic service will be a key outcome, linking volunteers and members of volunteer organisations to agencies that provide skills training. The database will include the skills, training, services, and memberships these organisations offer.

### WOMEN'S NEEDS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT GOVERNMENT SERVICES CHANGES OVER THEIR LIFE CYCLE

Information about government and community services is another important resource for women. There has been a limited amount of research, however, on how women seek and use information. The *Women's Information Needs Project* investigated women's information needs and information seeking behaviours, particularly in relation to government provided information.

Phase one of this research project, funded by the Commonwealth/State/Territories Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women's Activities Trust Fund and managed by the Department for Women, involved conducting national telephone polls and a series of face-to-face interviews with targeted groups of women. Phase two of the project involved interviews with government agencies to investigate how they provide information to women.

The findings of the project point out possible and preferred information pathways for women wanting government information. The recommendations particularly focus on information gathered from disadvantaged women, including Aboriginal women, Maori women, women from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Women seeking information about government services can make a free phone call to the *Women's Information and Referral Service* at the Department for Women. Its primary purpose is to refer women to appropriate government and non-government organisations for information and assistance. Prior to the establishment of the information and referral service, there was no central contact point for women needing information on a range of issues.

The Service operates 5 days per week from 9am to 5pm and has a free call 1800 number, a Teletypewriter (TTY) phone line and special conference facilities to access the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). The service is free, culturally sensitive and confidential. During 2001 WIRS received a total of 11,128 enquiries covering a wide spectrum of topics. Of a total of 10,141 referrals made in response to calls in 2001:

- ◆ 23 per cent were made to legal service providers,
- ◆ 21 per cent to health services,
- ◆ 19 per cent to support services.
- ◆ 12 per cent to accommodation services.

The remaining 25 per cent were calls regarding a variety of issues, including domestic violence, employment, education and equal opportunity issues. A total of 120 calls were conducted in community languages.

WIRS staff regularly holds information stalls at major multi-cultural and Indigenous events such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. WIRS also held stalls at community events such as the Women's Forum organised in response to the needs outlined by women in the Baulkham Hills Shire Council Social Plan 2000–2005. The service is also advertised in the Chinese,

Arabic and other telephone and community service directories. The staff of the information and referral service is developing a key referral guide for Aboriginal Women based on the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council Regions.

Online information about services for women is the core business of the *Women's Gateway*, an initiative of the NSW Department for Women, funded by the NSW Department of Information and Technology Management (\$128,000). Launched in 2001, the Department for Women continues to maintain and develop the site. In its first year of operation, the *Women's Gateway* received a commendation for best practice in eGovernment at the 2001 NSW Premier's Public Sector Awards.

The Gateway helps to enhance the information and referral services already provided to NSW women by the Department as well as provide a place for the sharing information on events and other news items. It also offers a pool of valuable information, referral and research tool to government and community organisations.

The *Women's Gateway* includes:

- ◆ a directory of nearly 3,000 NSW women's services and organisations,
- ◆ a capacity to do keyword searches on the internet for information from government, community and private websites on topics of interest to women;
- ◆ *Frequently Asked Questions* on topics of interest to women, with links to websites with detailed answers;
- ◆ a job vacancies page, featuring online resources to assist women to find employment;
- ◆ a News page, featuring current news items of interest to women; and

- ◆ an Events page, listing the details of coming events of interest to women.

The *Women's Gateway* attracted nearly 50,000 users in its first year. The community has posted 90 news and 251 events items via the Gateway. The user feedback has been very positive. The Gateway rates very highly for ease of use and likelihood that users will return. The site complements the Department's *Women's Information and Referral Service* a weekday service operating during business hours by providing its resource all day every day. The Gateway can be accessed at [www.womens.gateway.nsw.gov.au](http://www.womens.gateway.nsw.gov.au).

In 2001 work started to extend the *Women's Gateway* portal through a *Women's Lives Online* project. This project is researching the information women need during particular life events, such as pregnancy, separation and returning to work. Information relating to each 'life event' will then be grouped online. By providing highly relevant information, women's decisions will be supported and improved.

The Department of Fair Trading provides free information to women on a range of topics—for example tenancy advice and financial counselling services provided by community organisations. In 2001/2002 the Department of Fair Trading provided \$1.54 million for financial counselling services which received in 2001–02 and \$4.2 million for the tenant's advice and advocacy program. Approximately 62 per cent of this program's customers are women.

The International Women's Day (IWD) Week for Women is an annual event commemorating the history of women's achievements. The Department for Women makes use of the

event to expand women's awareness of information and contact people in different government agencies targeting women.

Each year the Department for Women allocates \$20,000 to supporting community activities, providing historical information about International Women's Day and other information about women's lives to schools, local councils and the general public, running a promotional and media campaign as well as a state-wide calendar of community events. This year more than 100 events were received and recorded on the calendar, which was distributed through *Womenspace*, the DFW website and in the mail. This is an increase of about 20 per cent on the events for 2001.

#### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAN BE ADAPTED TO BENEFIT WOMEN'S DAY TO DAY ROUTINES

Women participate at a lower level in personal computer use, computer studies and employment in the information technology and communications sector. For example, only 41 per cent of women are internet users compared with 46 per cent of men. Women are estimated to hold only 20 per cent of jobs in the information technology and communications industry.<sup>57</sup>

As income increased, particularly beyond \$40,000, so did the likelihood of adult computer and internet use. Location also affects technology uptake. 47 per cent of women living in metropolitan areas use computers or access the Internet compared with 37 per cent of women living outside metropolitan areas.<sup>58</sup>

*Initiatives for Women in Western Sydney* is a set of partnerships and projects, many focusing on women's use of information technology. For example, the Department for Women is working

with the Office of Western Sydney to develop information technology (IT) training for women in small businesses. The Department also supported the establishment of IT hubs or centres that give women access to IT in local communities.

The *Hands On* Information and Communication Technology project was offered to older women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as part of the Seniors Online Strategy. \$50,000 was provided for the project through the Department for Women's 2001–2002 Women's Grants Program for *Hands On* workshops in Parramatta, Liverpool, Holroyd, Fairfield and Auburn.

*Hands On* also increases seniors' access to and use of IT in rural and regional NSW. Older people are the least likely group in society to own computers or be connected to the Internet. Only 30 per cent of people aged 55 years and over own a home computer and while statistics indicate that older people are the fastest growing age group among internet users, their numbers are still low. The Local Community Services Association was the project sponsor and worked in partnership with over 30 organisations to deliver the program. The project ran thirteen courses and/or 'computer fun days', with 125 culturally and linguistically diverse women participating. IBM donated five community access computers and Microsoft suitable software. Six community access centres were established for women to have ongoing access to computers in their communities. The project delivered two small group training courses in partnership with Macarthur Community College. Twenty five women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds gained formal accreditation enabling them to run IT courses in either a paid or unpaid capacity.

A small resource *In Your Own Backyard* was developed containing ideas, contacts and resources to help community organisations plan IT and adult education projects, detailing information about what the women participants and facilitators thought helped people to learn in the various groups.

In 2002 the Department for Women is sponsoring a *Women in IT Start Up Award* as part of the *Western Sydney Information and Communication Technology Cluster*. This award will recognise a Western Sydney Woman's achievement in the Information and Communication Technology field and also encourage greater participation of women in the Industry.

The Department for Women also funded two e-Summer Schools at Mount Druitt and in Walgett. 15 students from years 9–11 attended each eSummer School and the tuition was delivered by TAFE staff in TAFE specialist ICT facilities. The students were provided with an ICT learning experience that aimed to encourage them to undertake further ICT study, learn more about ICT careers and show them that ICT is enjoyable.

In March 2002 the NewLinC website was launched. The website is for women in the New England region, encouraging them to develop new ideas that will create economic opportunities for women in the region. The website was launched by *Networking Women's Learning*, a non-profit organisation offering online learning for women. NewLinC grew out of the New England *Linking Communities* project, previously funded by the Department for Women under the *Women's Grants Program*. Women were offered training in basic IT tools such as email, on-line forums and discussion boards and helped to setup a virtual community for women. While the NewLinC service targets women's e-business needs, it also analyses the aspects of IT

women need to know more about and sets up a network to provide or locate the necessary information.

The internet is becoming an important means for women in rural and remote areas of NSW to access and share information. The *Rural Women's Network* internet site at [www.agric.nsw.gov.au/rwn](http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/rwn) provides useful links, monthly updates, media releases, and a calendar of events and resources. In the 12-month period to June 2000, the RWN site recorded 121,000 hits and hosted 23,000 user sessions, an increase on the previous period. The site continues to be refined to meet the information needs of rural women.

#### WOMEN ARTISTS MAKE UNIQUE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LIFE OF COMMUNITIES

The Ministry for the Arts provides direct and indirect supports for contemporary women artists, through grants, awards and ensuring the documentation of women's histories and domestic collections in museums.

Outcomes of the cultural grants program and awards in 2001–2002 include:

- ◆ the Bega Valley Historical Society received \$8,620 for the refurbishment of a textile display requiring researching and documenting textiles, which were largely works by women.
- ◆ \$2,000 was provided to Manning Regional Gallery for their project *100 Years of Australian Women's Suffrage*. Coinciding with the Centenary of Federation, the project will profile two women from each decade over the last 100 years who have contributed to the development of the Greater Taree region, NSW or Australia. The project will produce essays written by a team of five local writers. Ten

artists from the Mid North Coast will create artistic responses to the lives of the women they selected.

- ◆ A \$12,000 grant was given to the Bega Valley Regional Gallery for the exhibition *Now a River Went Out of Eden*. This exhibition features a new body of work by Ruth Maddison, a series of black and white photographs showing the complexity of issues relating to young people living in small, isolated rural communities. Grants like this are valuable professional development opportunities for women artists.
- ◆ The NSW Film and Television Office offers Industry and Audience Development Grants. In 2001–2002 Women in Film and Television NSW received \$7,000 for the WOW Film Festival and Regional tour. This visited Sydney and 5 regional centres (Taree, Lismore, Armidale, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle).

A series of traveling exhibitions helps to communicate women's lives and works. For example, *Anne Frank: A History for Today* dealt with fighting against prejudice, discrimination and oppression which distinguished this woman's life. On a different topic, the *Births of a Nation: Women, childbirth and Federation* exhibition explored women's experiences of childbirth at the federation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. *Women with Wings: Images of Australian Women* pilots celebrated the spirit and achievements of women pilots from across Australia.

The *Sourcing the Muse and Student Fashion: Three of the Best* explored exhibition recognises the work of some of Australia's most original and innovative fashion designers. Eight designers, including Rosemary Armstrong, Gwendolynne Burkin and Georgia Chapman, were invited to select garments, textiles and

accessories from the Museum's collection to use as inspiration for new works. Now in its ninth year, this exhibition features work from the top three final-year students of Sydney's leading fashion design schools: the Whitehouse Institute of Design, the University of Technology and the Fashion Design Studio at Sydney Institute of Technology.

Other awards include the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales annual International Women's Day Awards at Meroogal, Nowra. Meroogal is a financial sponsor and works in conjunction with the International Womens' Day Committee. Over half the recipients of the awards are older women. The Older Women's Network assists in the running of the event in a voluntary capacity. Over 130 people attended the presentation where 33 awards were presented to Shoalhaven women for diverse work, and included a special presentation to women involved in the battle to control the summer bushfires.

The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales also sponsors the Meroogal Women's Arts Prize. The award is for women artists of the south coast region and is open to women over the age of 18. Approximately 80 entries were received in 2001, and there has been a steady participation rate since the inception of the prize. \$10,000 was allocated for this initiative in 2001. The prize is awarded and exhibited initially in Nowra, and then tours to a range of south coast locations and to a Sydney venue.

In the south coast region unemployment is high and many women are trying to make a living from art and craft. Prizes such as the Women's Arts Prize provides opportunities for women to display their work, helping to raise the profile of art and craft in the local community and providing potential new markets for the artists.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales administers two bequests for women only. The John and Elizabeth Newnham Pring Memorial Prize is for the best landscape while the Viktoria Marinov capital fund purchases works of art for the permanent collection by women artists under the age of 35 years.

## The CEDAW promise

### Promoting women's rights – Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

This convention supports women's choices to participate fully in all spheres of life. It encourages governments to take all appropriate actions to change the social and cultural expectations of men and women that suppress women's ability to participate equitably. Governments that sign the convention agree to take steps to eliminate sex based prejudices and practices based on the belief that one sex is superior and the other inferior.

One of the key purposes of the CEDAW convention is to help people understand that bringing up children is something that both women and men are responsible for, and is not a role determined by sex. Governments work to help broaden the community's understanding and acceptance that child care is a shared responsibility of men and women.<sup>59</sup>

Government can broaden the base of caring in a community by introducing social services that support primary carers in families, for example establishing a network of affordable child care facilities.<sup>60</sup> Another way is to introduce legislation protecting carers from discrimination by employers.

Women in rural communities are a specific group noted by the convention. The particular problems faced by rural women and

the significant roles they play in the economic survival of their families, are to be supported by appropriate government, corporate and community measures. Rural women have the right to participate in decision-making and development planning at all levels. Their participation in community activities should not be restricted by sex. They should enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.<sup>61</sup>

The convention also requires government to ensure women have equal rights in the areas of ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, irrespective of their marital status and/or family situation.

#### LIST OF AGENCIES IN THIS CHAPTER

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- ◆ Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare
- ◆ Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- ◆ Department of Gaming and Racing
- ◆ Department of Fair Trading
- ◆ Department of Housing
- ◆ Department for Women
- ◆ NSW Health
- ◆ Ministry for the Arts
- ◆ Department of Agriculture
- ◆ Planning NSW
- ◆ Transport – State Transit and State Rail
- ◆ The Premier's Department
- ◆ Office of Western Sydney
- ◆ Office of Information Technology, Department of Information and Technology

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