



# Our story: Working for women past, present & future

Since 1973, Women's Refuge has been groundbreaking in the work of improving the lives of women and children affected by domestic violence.

This timeline shows the milestones in our history:

## **1973 The first women's refuge established**

The first New Zealand women's refuge was established in Christchurch after a group of women came together with a common interest in providing a safe haven for victims of violence. It was called Christchurch Women's Refuge. The women's refuge movement (both here in New Zealand and internationally) started in a socio-political environment that denied the reality of family violence, and especially the existence of gender-based violence. The latter part of the 1970s was a period of tremendous growth for women's refuges, with groups forming and safe houses being established all over New Zealand.

## **1981 National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges established**

The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) was established, and became an incorporated society. It was formed to support the movement, assist with and administer funding, and to provide advocacy services at a national level.

A significant source of financial support since 1981 and continuing today is the valuable contribution of the JR McKenzie Trust. Sir Roy McKenzie arranged a meeting with Women's Refuge workers from Wellington and Upper Hutt and the Minister of Social Welfare at the time, Sir George Gair. At the meeting he agreed to privately fund a nationwide study if the government agreed to consider state funding for Women's Refuge when it had the research findings.

The resulting document, *Attitudes to Violence – A Study Across Cultures*, was published in 1988 and was the largest national study of family violence



at the time. It was also unique in that Māori, Pakeha and Pacific Island perspectives were represented equally. As a result, the government agreed to partly fund Women's Refuge through the Community Funding Agency.

## **1982 Domestic Protection Act 1982 passed**

A significant piece of legislation in the history of women's rights in New Zealand, the Domestic Protection Act 1982, was passed to protect victims of domestic violence. The object of this act was to facilitate efforts to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and made at least four significant changes to the Crimes Act.

## **1985 Women's Refuge Code of Ethics adopted**

The NCIWR Code of Ethics was adopted by the national organisation. It outlined a commitment to principles of feminism, women's empowerment and self-determination, lesbian visibility, anti-racism, living Te Tiriti o Waitangi, being non-judgmental, collectivism, and sisterhood between refuges. In practice, this meant that the refuges should be run by women, for women and their children.

In this year also, section 28(3) of the Crimes Act (1961) was removed, finally making it illegal for a husband to rape his wife.

## **1987 Māori Women's Refuge established**

Te Whakaruruhau, the first Māori Women's Refuge, was established in Hamilton. Later that year Te Whare Rokiroki opened in Wellington. There are now 14 Māori Women's Refuges throughout the country, all operating in accordance with kaupapa Māori.

## **1989 Tangata Pasifika Women's Refuge established**

In Auckland, the first Tangata Pasifika Women's Refuge was established. The commitment of NCIWR to provide culturally appropriate services for tauwiwi (non-Maori) has seen the development of two Pacific Island Women's Refuges, both in Auckland, one of which is affiliated.

## **1990 Parallel development adopted**

The model of parallel development was adopted as an accepted process for refuge management and delivery of refuge services at national and local level.

The first Lesbian/ Wahine Takatapui Refuge Advocates Hui was held.



Lesbian women were pioneers in the refuge movement and in the late 1980s they began to confront prejudice within NCIWR and the wider community.

NCIWR also lobbied for review of the domestic protection legislation.

## **1991 Lobbying the Family Court about domestic violence**

NCIWR lobbied the Family Court on the special needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence, and the need for specialised training on domestic violence for judges.

## **1992 Training of police recruits**

NCIWR first trained police recruits at the Police Training College in Porirua.

## **1993 Training of child advocates**

The first Women's Refuge Child Advocate's training was held in Wellington.

## **1994 Lobbying for review of domestic protection legislation**

## **1995 Domestic Violence Act 1995 passed**

The Domestic Violence Act 1995 was passed, rectifying some of the flaws of the 1982 act. The significant changes were:

- A new definition of violence. As well as physical and sexual abuse the new act included psychological abuse; e.g. intimidation, harassment, damage to property and threats of violence. Psychological abuse also includes situations where a person causes or allows a child to see or hear violence.
- The replacement of nonviolence and non-molestation orders with a new Protection Order that would be valid whether a woman left her abuser or continued to live with them.
- An increase in the range of applicants who can apply for a Protection Order; e.g. flatmates, lesbian and gay couples, extended family and whānau members.
- Compulsory programme attendance for the violent person and optional programmes for protected persons, including children.

## **1996 Official report on the economic cost of domestic violence published**



The then Ministry of Social Welfare commissioned a report on the cost of domestic violence in New Zealand, written by Susan Snively. The report found the estimated economic cost of domestic violence was between \$1.2 and \$5 billion per year.

## **1997 Shakti Asian Women's Refuge established**

Shakti Asian Women's Centre was founded in Auckland in response to the rate of domestic violence in the Asian migrant and refugee communities in New Zealand. Food and shelter are provided along with culturally appropriate counselling, advocacy, and medical and educational services. Shakti staff and volunteers speak 16 different languages, and the service is now nationwide.

## **1999 Report identifying how domestic violence affects the employment of Māori wāhine published**

Shakti Asian Women's Centre became an associate member of NCIWR.

Tania Powhare wrote the report *Māori Women and Work: The effects of Family Violence on Māori Women Employment Opportunities*.

## **2003 Tamariki Programme set up**

The Women's Refuge Tamariki Programme was launched.

## **2004 Family Violence Clearing House established**

Women's Refuge established the concept of a model for a 'clearing house' to contain key resources, research and information on domestic violence and family violence. It's now known as the Family Violence Clearing House.

## **2005 New Zealand Family Violence Taskforce established and domestic violence training delivered to WINZ staff**

NCIWR, in conjunction with Preventing Violence in the Home, developed, designed and delivered a Ministry of Social Development Family Violence Intervention Programme which trained Work and Income New Zealand staff throughout Aotearoa in how to understand the impact of family violence internally and with members of the public.

The New Zealand Family Violence Taskforce was formed with Women's Refuge as an inaugural member.

## **2006 Hau Pūrea Māori Unit established**

The Hau Pūrea Māori Unit within NCIWR and the Māori Growth Strategy and subsequent resources were established.

### **2007 First National Child Advocacy hui and Te Kōwhai launched**

The first National Child Advocacy Hui invited child advocates from different organisations throughout Aotearoa to network and voice their experiences and knowledge. It was identified that a practical child advocate manual was required.

Te Kōwhai – New Zealand Family Violence Training & Research Institute was launched.

### **2010 Police Safety Orders become law, and Mokopuna Kit, Speaker's Kit and Child Advocacy Training developed**

A law was passed allowing police officers to issue a Police Safety Order for up to five days to protect a person at risk from violence, harassment or intimidation. Police Safety Orders are unusual in that they can be granted without the permission of the person at risk and marked a shift in responsibility for safety from the victim to police.

The Mokopuna Child Advocate Toolkit was launched for Women's Refuge child advocates, including a manual with practical tools for children, their parents and child advocates.

A Speaker's Kit designed to help independent affiliated refuges to carry out informative public presentations supported by multi-media resources was produced.

### **2013**

Christchurch Women's Refuge (non-affiliated to NCIWR) changed its name to Aviva.

### **Today**

Nowadays, Women's Refuge operates throughout New Zealand providing a wide range of services and programmes delivered by both paid staff and a large network of trained volunteers.



We provide:

- safe houses
- a 24 hour, 7 day a week Crisisline
- online help at [www.womensrefuge.org.nz](http://www.womensrefuge.org.nz)
- safety plans and support
- advice about Protection Orders
- women's programmes (including parenting support)
- advocacy and support for children and young people
- education/public awareness
- childcare
- relocation (both within New Zealand and internationally)
- connections for women with other service providers such as lawyers, doctors, welfare agencies and counsellors, and support for women through these processes.

*At a national level, NCJWR is focused on working closely with other community agencies and government departments to promote non-violence, and improving the responsiveness to women and children experiencing violence and families and whānau at risk.*