

5.3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFUGE FUNCTIONAL BRIEF

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. notes the extensive consultation and community support underpinning the recommendations in this Domestic and Family Violence Refuge Functional Brief; and**
- 2. adopts the Brief which sets out a proposal for the facility and operational requirements suitable for supported accommodation needed to fill a gap in services for vulnerable members of the Douglas Shire; and**
- 3. resolves to use this document to advocate to State and Federal governments for a purpose built Domestic and Family Violence Refuge for Douglas Shire as recommended therein.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Repeated evidence of the need for a domestic and family violence refuge to be located in the Douglas Shire impelled the inclusion of initiative 1.2.1 in Council's Operational Plan 2016-17: 'In partnership with relevant state agencies develop a functional brief for the establishment of a domestic violence refuge' to provide the missing link between an often discussed gap in support for vulnerable people and the ability to deliver long-term, successful outcomes for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence in Douglas.

Pursuant to this initiative, this functional brief sets out the gaps in current support service delivery to victims of domestic and family violence, and identifies the model of facility required to best address the absence of a crisis shelter or refuge in the Douglas Shire.

The design detail provided herein will be used to pursue funding and operational partnerships with State and Federal Governments and can be utilised to inform further concept planning and facility design.

BACKGROUND

The Douglas Shire has among Queensland's highest rates of reported domestic and family violence, second only to Mt Isa, but has no crisis or transitional accommodation options to assist victims and their children. Douglas also has a high proportion of populations vulnerable to barriers restricting access to existing support services: a high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents; small, discrete 'rural and remote' population centres; a lack of affordable public transport, affordable housing, and specialist domestic violence services. Without appropriate, long-term accommodation and support most women trying to break the cycle will return to their abuser.

Domestic and family violence has long-term and far-reaching consequences. Women who experience domestic violence face poor overall physical and psychological health and wellbeing outcomes, and children who witness family violence are subject to psychological and behavioural impacts, health and socioeconomic impacts, and the intergenerational transmission of violence and re-victimisation. The effects of domestic and family violence then reverberate through the whole community.

Police and community service providers in Douglas work conscientiously and collaboratively to assist women and their children escaping violence but are compelled by a lack of alternatives to place victims temporarily in motels or refer them to refuges in Cairns where demand for supported accommodation consistently outstrips supply and which necessitates victims leaving their support networks, their jobs and their children's schools.

This service model is inadequate and ineffective at affecting long-term change against a complex and pervasive social problem.

COMMENT

The functional brief is a key element in the successful outcome of a capital works project. It should establish the optimum solution for the requirements, and outline the scope of functions and activities to be accommodated.

Domestic and family violence is the most common cause of homelessness among women in Australia but the type of facility provided to victims escaping violence is just as important as having a roof overhead. Perpetrators of family violence control their victims over extended periods, affecting their autonomy, ability to make decisions, self-esteem and identity. A domestic and family violence refuge should provide an environment that helps victims develop or regain the life-skills and independence necessary to break the cycle and move past their traumatic experiences. A well-designed facility will create an environment for residents which is empowering, facilitating the development of personal life-skills and creating a strong foundation for the operational elements of domestic and family violence support services.

This functional brief was developed to detail the model of refuge best suited to the needs of the Douglas Shire both financially and in client outcomes, after consultation with Queensland Police Service and representatives of local government and non-government service providers, specialist domestic violence services in the region, and research into Australian and international best practice domestic and family violence accommodation responses.

The process of agency consultation determined that the priority target groups for the facility should be families with several children, rural and remote women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It is noted in the brief that these are not the only groups to suffer domestic and family violence in the region: service providers advised that they also dealt with male victims of spousal abuse, and unaccompanied teens made homeless by family violence. The populations that constitute the majority of local victims and those most vulnerable to barriers to breaking the cycle of violence are those targeted as priorities in this project.

The model of refuge identified as the most appropriate through this process to address the needs of the Douglas Shire is a cluster of three self-contained, co-located units. A cluster model offers flexibility in a region of small, disparate populations and provides the ability for longer tenancies than in a crisis shelter, enhancing the development of independence and living skills necessary for the long-term recovery of residents.

PROPOSAL

The design detail provided herein will be used to advocate for funding and operational partnerships with State and Federal Governments and can be utilised to inform further concept planning and facility design.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications for Council arising from this brief. Council's role in this project is to advocate for the delivery of a suitable accommodation facility to fill identified gaps in services.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is no risk to Council emanating from this report but, with one Australian woman killed by her current or former partner every week, the risks to the community of not providing best practice responses to women and their children escaping from domestic and family violence are greater than the risks associated with installing a domestic violence refuge in the shire.

The operational risks associated with a refuge for women and their children escaping violence will be ameliorated through incorporating best practice measures throughout the design and implementation phases of the facility and service.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Domestic and family violence is estimated to cost Queensland \$3 billion a year. Facilitating the provision of best practice services to assist vulnerable residents will lessen this impost on the community.

Environmental: Providing resources locally will require less travel from people needing to access accommodation and support services from other regions.

Social: The social implications of domestic and family violence include negative psychological and behavioural, health and socio-economic outcomes, and impact upon victims, perpetrators, their children and the wider community. Ensuring best practice support services provide an environment that helps victims break free of a cycle of violence contributes to greater wellbeing for victims and the community.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

- 1.2.1 - Advocate for state and federally funded services in identified areas of need.
- 1.2.4 - Network, advocate and partner with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes.
- 1.3.1 - Take a proactive role in supporting the provision of improved facilities and services directed at assisting and caring for vulnerable groups in our communities.

Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

- 4.2.2 - Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.

4.2.3 - Work with regional, state, national and international stakeholders to promote beneficial partnerships to support strong, resilient and sustainable communities.

Operational Plan 2016-2017 Actions:

1.2.1 - In partnership with relevant state agencies develop a functional brief for the establishment of a domestic violence refuge.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Facilitator Bringing people together to develop solutions to problems

CONSULTATION

Internal: Consultation with Mayor and Councillors was undertaken at a workshop on Tuesday 16 May 2017.

External: This Functional Brief has been prepared with input from:

- Interviews with Queensland Police Service and representatives of government and non-government agencies responding to domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire
 - Apunapima
 - Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku
 - Douglas Shire Community Services Association
 - Energy and Water Ombudsman
 - Goobidi: Jawalkunna Family Services
 - Mossman District Hospital
 - Mossman Elders Justice Group
 - Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre
 - Mossman Police
 - Mossman Youth Centre
 - Port Douglas Community Service Network
 - Port Douglas Police
 - Uniting Care Community Family Support Services
- Interviews with specialist domestic and family violence service providers involved with domestic violence refuges and crisis accommodation in Far North Queensland
 - Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service
 - Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
 - Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
 - Innisfail Youth and Family Care
 - Tablelands Women's Centre
 - Women's Centre Cairns
- Literature search of Australian and international best practice domestic and family violence accommodation response
- Workshop with Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Support, and Douglas service providers comparing models of accommodation currently funded by the Department

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Due to the specialised and operational nature of the input sought for the development of the Functional Brief, consultation with the wider community was not sought. This proposal will fall within the 'inform' category of Council's Community Engagement Framework.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Domestic Violence Refuge Functional Brief **[5.3.1]**

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE REFUGE

Functional Brief

For the establishment of a supported accommodation refuge for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire in partnership with relevant State agencies and local service providers.

1 June 2017

DOUGLAS SHIRE
COUNCIL

*Engaging, Planning, Partnering
Muruku Kirraji - Eastern Kuku Yalanji
Nganyji pina ngunda-lum ... Ma:lnyjirri-yngku - Yirrganydji*

Domestic and Family Violence Refuge Functional Brief

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1. Executive Summary

Domestic and family violence is a canker that infects us all: victims, responders, perpetrators and community. Its victims are old, young, rich, poor, black, white, women, children and men. Its effects are felt long after the violence occurs. Women who experience domestic and family violence face poor overall physical and psychological health and wellbeing outcomes including increased risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance misuse, homelessness and suicide. Children who witness family violence are subject to psychological and behavioural impacts, health and socioeconomic impacts, and the intergenerational transmission of violence and re-victimisation. This project was undertaken against a backdrop in which one Australian woman is killed every week by her current or former partner, where the number of domestic violence incidents reported in Queensland is increasing annually, and where high profile and tragic occurrences are in the media nearly every week.

The Douglas Shire has one of the State’s highest rates of reported domestic and family violence coupled with a high proportion of the population especially vulnerable to barriers restricting access to support services. Douglas has a high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. The region consists of small, discrete ‘rural and remote’ population centres, has a lack of affordable public transport, affordable housing, specialist domestic violence services and no crisis accommodation. The response for women escaping domestic violence is a referral to agencies in Cairns where demand for supported accommodation consistently outstrips supply. One half of all victims seeking shelter in Australia are turned away because of a lack of available refuge beds, and without access to safe and secure accommodation many victims of domestic and family violence will return to their abusers.

As important as having a roof overhead, is the type of accommodation service provided to victims escaping domestic and family violence. Perpetrators of family violence control their victims over extended periods, affecting their autonomy, ability to make decisions, self-esteem and identity. A domestic and family violence refuge should provide an environment that helps victims develop or regain the life-skills and independence necessary to break the cycle and move past their traumatic experiences.

The Douglas Shire requires a facility to provide crisis and supported accommodation services to women and their children escaping domestic and family violence. The current practice of service organisations referring victims to refuges is Cairns or attempting to temporarily place victims in unsupported accommodation in motels, is inadequate and ineffectual. This Brief sets out the gaps in current service delivery and identifies the model of facility required to best address the absence of domestic and family violence refuge in the region.

2. Introduction

“Each and every Queenslanders has the right to feel safe, and be safe, especially in their own home. Domestic and family violence is a violation of this basic human right.” Queensland Says: Not Now, Not Ever. Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016 – 2026.

2.1. Purpose of the functional design brief

This functional brief sets out the infrastructure requirements and service considerations of a Domestic and Family Violence Refuge to service the needs of women and their children escaping domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire.

The design detail provided in this brief will be used to inform concept planning and facility design. It will also be used in the development of the project’s business case documents and to advocate for full or part funding of the project.

2.2. Overview of the project

The following report provides:

- Evidenced need for a crisis accommodation response to domestic and family violence in the region
- Alignment with existing government policies and priorities
- The best practice model for a shelter to suit the needs of this region
- Design and operational requirements for the facility

3. Project Background

The Douglas Shire covers an area of 2,445 km² from Cairns Regional Council and Ellis Beach in the south to Wujal Wujal and the Cook Shire in the north. Douglas Shire has an estimated population of 11,661 residents as at 30 June 2015; 70 per cent of whom live in the two population centres of Port Douglas and Mossman, with other urban populations in Wonga, Newell and Cooya Beaches. Douglas is a decentralised region with communities scattered along the 100 km stretch of coast road and rainforest or tucked into small rural townships. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compose 8.5 per cent of the community compared to 3.6 per cent of the overall Queensland population. The Douglas Shire has a slightly older population than the State in general and a higher proportion of families with young children.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies 93.7 per cent of the Douglas population as ‘Outer Regional’ and the remainder as ‘Remote’ or ‘Very Remote’ according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia classification. Women in rural and remote areas face greater challenges in reporting violence and seeking support including tyranny of distance, isolation, a lack of transport, financial insecurity, fears about confidentiality and a lack of services within the area, especially in affordable housing options. Where there are no accommodation options, women are more likely to remain trapped in violent situations.

3.1. Domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire

The Douglas Shire has high rates of reported domestic and family violence. In 2013-14 rates of domestic violence applications per 100,000 persons in the Far North Queensland region were 946, second in the State after Mt Isa, and 190 applications higher than the third region, Capricornia.¹

¹ Special Taskforce Queensland. 2015. Not Now, Not Ever.

Far North Police Data ²		DV Applications			Contravene DFVPO Occurrence Count		
Rank by highest % per population of DV Applications		Population at 2011 Census	2014-15	2015-16	% per population	2014-15	2015-16
12	Mossman	1732	69	64	3.70 %	49	60
36	Port Douglas	3205	25	28	0.87 %	23	18

This data does not come close to representing the true extent of the problem as much of domestic and family violence occurs in private and goes unreported.

3.2. Current service response

There are currently no emergency or crisis accommodation facilities and a lack of affordable housing in the Douglas Shire. The current response for victims escaping domestic and family violence is to refer them to a shelter in Cairns or to arrange a motel in the short-term.

Dependence upon refuge space in Cairns is not adequate or appropriate for the needs of women and their children as:

- Cairns often lacks enough refuge space for their own needs
- Transporting people to Cairns requires time and resources lacking in Douglas
- Victims are required (and often reluctant) to leave their support networks, schools, jobs

It's too far from their supports and community or it's too hard to get there. As soon as they find out it's in Cairns, they're just not interested.³

"[T]he practice of placing women and children escaping violence in hotels, motels or caravan parks because there are no available refuge beds, verges on system neglect."⁴ Without access to support services or longer term accommodation, it is very difficult for victims of domestic and family violence to break the cycle of violence.

Service provider concern about the lack of facilities caused a group of agencies led by the Port Douglas police to instigate a committee, DVEAF (Domestic Violence Emergency Accommodation Fund), to raise donations to fund emergency motel accommodation for victims of domestic and family violence. Reliance on donations is not a sustainable response to the accommodation needs of women and their children escaping domestic and family violence.

We recently worked together with Mossman Community Centre to help a woman in her 60s move into shared accommodation with five other people. All the long-term support we could give her is unfunded: clothing, food, toiletries, referrals to legal advice, volunteers giving her English lessons as English is a second language, cooking lessons, going to CWA for socialisation and sewing. The Neighbourhood Centre does unfunded stuff because, how can you not?⁵

3.3. Vision for the project

To achieve a facility with the capacity to provide emergency and transitional accommodation for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire with specialist support

² Statistics provided by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

³ Port Douglas Police

⁴ Weeks and Oberin 2004. Women's Refuges, Shelters, Outreach and Support Service

⁵ Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre

services and links to the broader service providers in the region, to negate the need for victims of violence to choose between leaving the region or staying with violence.

3.4. Project objectives

- Demonstrate the need for a domestic and family violence refuge to cater for residents of the Douglas region
- Identify the most appropriate model of domestic and family violence refuge for the Douglas Shire
- Detail the design requirements and support service considerations necessary to deliver such a resource

4. Project Scope and Context

The purview of this project was to:

- Examine the
 - Extent and specifics of domestic and family violence, and organisational response to support victims, in the Douglas Shire
 - Potential of various models of domestic violence refuge to address the crisis accommodation needs of the Douglas Shire
- Develop a Brief
 - Describing the infrastructure design requirements of a best practice, fit for purpose, facility
 - Detailing the evidence of need and justification for described model of refuge to be employed in the development of a business case and advocacy for funding contributions for the implementation of the project

4.1. Domestic and Family Violence definition

Domestic and family violence occurs when one person in an intimate personal, family or informal carer relationship employs an ongoing pattern of violence or abuse to maintain power and control over the other person.

Under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 (Qld), intimate personal relationships include married and de facto spouses; parents of a child; people who are, or were engaged; and people in couple relationships, including same-sex couples. Family relationships exist between two people who are related by either blood or marriage, including extended or kinship relationships where a person is regarded as a relative. Informal care relationships exist where one person is or was dependent on another person for help with essential daily tasks, where care is provided other than on a commercial basis.

The Act defines the conduct of domestic violence as including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse or any other threatening, coercive, or controlling behaviour which causes the victim to fear for their safety or wellbeing, or that of someone else.

4.2. Victims of domestic and family violence

Although domestic and family violence can occur within any form of relationship and towards any person regardless of personal, cultural or economic standing, individuals belonging to certain groups are more vulnerable than others.

Men can be and are victims of violence and coercive control but statistics tells us that the majority of sexual, physical and emotional abuse is committed by men against women and understanding the gendered nature of domestic and family violence is vital in designing and delivering an effective response.⁶

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, the elderly, people with a disability, people in rural and remote communities, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), and children “are all at significantly higher risk from the incidences and impacts of domestic and family violence.”⁷ People from these groups may experience violence in a different way to others and face additional challenges when attempting to get protection and support.

Other groups also face extra challenges accessing services: women with substance abuse or mental health issues, grandparents who parent children of violent partnerships, families with pets and women with several, or older male, children.

While incorporating best practice elements pertinent to the majority of these populations, this project targeted those groups which most frequently come to the attention of local agencies as needing assistance and most vulnerable to barriers blocking access to services necessary to escape the cycle of domestic and family violence.

4.2.1. Target Groups

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
 - Experience high rates of domestic and family violence and constitute the majority, but by no means all, of victims of domestic and family violence seen by police in Mossman
- Non-Indigenous women
 - Service providers report male victims of domestic violence but the vast majority are women
- Families with children
 - Most of these women have children with them when seeking assistance, often more than three
- All locations in Douglas are considered ‘rural’ or ‘remote’
 - Presents additional challenges to accessing services

4.2.2. Groups identified as needing a different model of assistance

- The majority of reports of domestic violence from the Port Douglas area involve couples holidaying in the town from elsewhere
 - Temporary, emergency accommodation is generally procured from Accommodation Providers in Port Douglas
 - Further assistance is best offered and received in their place of permanent residence
 - Not a priority target group of this project as immediate crisis accommodation needs can be met through the existing response model: process improvements are currently being expedited by Port Douglas police and service providers
- Douglas services reported several unaccompanied minors homeless from escaping family violence

⁶ 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey. Queensland Government 2016. DFV Prevention Strategy.

⁷ Special Taskforce Queensland. 2015. Not Now, Not Ever.

- It is acknowledged that unaccompanied minors are a very vulnerable group for whom gaps in services in this region should be further investigated

4.3. Methodology

This brief uses an evidence-based methodology to explore options for a best practice model of refuge to suit the needs of the Douglas Shire both financially and in outcomes for victims and the broader community.

- Interviews with Queensland Police Service and representatives of government and non-government agencies responding to domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire
- Interviews with specialist domestic and family violence service providers involved with domestic violence refuges and crisis accommodation in Far North Queensland
- Literature search of Australian and international best practice domestic and family violence accommodation response
- Workshop with Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Support, and Douglas service providers comparing models of accommodation currently funded by the Department

Due to the vulnerable state of domestic and family violence service recipients, it was not possible to interview past or current residents of refuges and this research relies on input from service providers and precedent studies.

It is not within the scope of this report to consider strategies for the prevention of domestic and family violence or strategies for early intervention responses. The report notes that the vast majority of women affected by domestic and family violence do not access crisis accommodation but “make their own way through the trauma of the violence and the housing system, or stay with friends or relatives.”⁸

See appendix for a list of consultations with key stakeholders.

5. Strategic Policy and Direction

5.1. National context

Improving the way we respond to domestic and family violence is a prominent theme in our national discourse with one Australian woman killed every week by her current or former partner and high profile criminal trials appearing regularly on our nightly news.

- The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022 was endorsed by COAG and targets both domestic and family violence and sexual assault.
- The White Ribbon campaign, Australia’s CEO Challenge, the naming of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year in 2015 all contribute to the momentum for culture change to keep women and their children safe from domestic and family violence.

5.2. Queensland Government

Since the Queensland Child and Family Reform initiatives developed in response to the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry in 2013, Queensland has focussed on improving responses for children and their families affected by domestic and family violence.⁹

⁸ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

⁹ Queensland Government 2016. DFV Prevention Strategy.

- Beginning in 2014, nine Regional Child and Family Committees have been established to “monitor and implement domestic and family violence reforms at the local level”
- The Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland released its report ‘Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland’ in 2015, with 140 recommendations for government
- ‘Queensland says: Not Now, Not Ever.’ Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026 aims, among other things, “to recognise the victim’s perspective, prioritise their safety and reduce the onus on them to take action or to leave”¹⁰

There have been a range of reforms in Queensland domestic and family violence policies and procedures since the Bryce Report including an increased localisation of services and investment in regional areas including perpetrator programs in Cape York; the Local Support Coordination Initiative and the planned 2017-18 roll out of High Risk Teams in Cairns as part of an integrated response.

6. Options for Domestic Violence Refuge and Crisis Accommodation

Domestic and family violence is the most common cause of homelessness among women and is a widespread and increasing problem. Domestic violence related homelessness is different from other forms of homelessness because many women return to the perpetrator, cycling in and out of homelessness and crisis accommodation as they try to rebuild their relationship with their partner. Women who escape from domestic and family violence may also not have the life-skills to sustain a tenancy in the private market without sustained supports.

For the purpose of this brief, the following models of crisis accommodation have been examined for the Douglas Shire:

6.1. ‘Safe at Home’ models

To increase security and implement processes to allow the removal of the perpetrator and for the victim and her children to remain at home is the ideal model of response but only practical in a limited number of individual situations.

6.2. Communal Shared Living

A residential house divided into self-contained apartments or one bedroom per family, with or without ensuites, with shared lounge, kitchen, bathroom and laundry; staff office within or attached.

- High security facilities; often with undisclosed address.
- Considered particularly desirable for sole women with drug/alcohol or mental health issues or young women, to assist in breaking down isolation.¹¹ Suitable for women at high risk of further violence
- Unable to accommodate women with several children or male children over 12; women have been asked to split up their children or leave a child in care
- Police in the Douglas Shire expressed concern about the potential for conflict within a refuge between cohabiting residents and/or families.

¹⁰ Queensland Government 2017. End Domestic and Family Violence.

¹¹ Weeks and Oberin 2004. Women’s Refuges, Shelters, Outreach and Support Service.

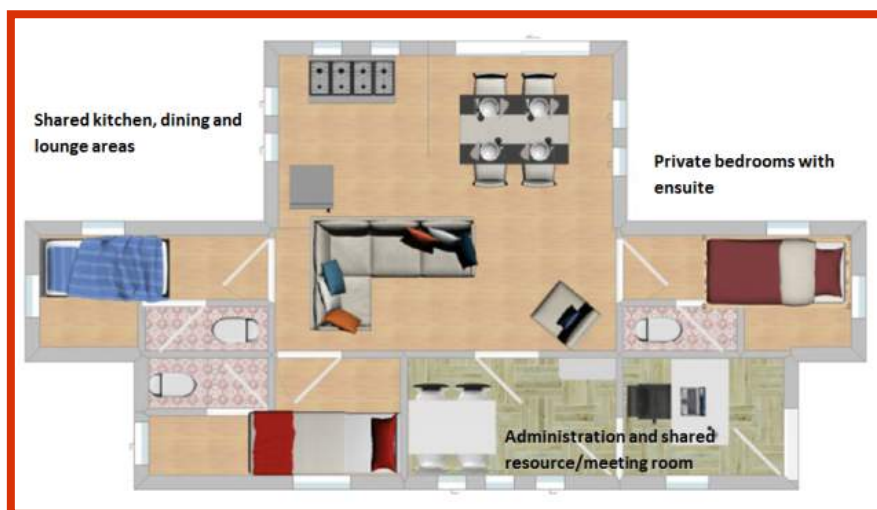


Figure 1: Plan of a communal refuge. Separate bedrooms with ensuites or shared bathrooms and shared kitchen and lounge facilities. Admin and resource room attached.

- The Australian Government, Office for Women’s report of 2004, and the recent Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, recommended moving to alternative models of crisis accommodation such as cluster or independent units as the communal model may further traumatise victims by forcing women who are already fragile into tightly regulated shared environments.

6.3. Cluster Model

Fully self-contained units co-located on one block of land with an administrative/resource hub. Office can be onsite or a shopfront elsewhere.

- Vary from studio flats to 2-3 bedroom units
- Extra space for families allows more privacy and “a better quality of life at this difficult time”¹².
- Self-contained units allow more natural family behaviours and the development of self-sufficiency skills
- Cluster and dispersed models have more flexibility to respond to needs of individual women and their children: older male children; women with complex needs; pets



Figure 2: Cluster Model. Self-contained units with Admin and shared meeting room; communal outdoor space.

¹² Weeks and Oberin 2004. Women’s Refuges, Shelters, Outreach and Support Service.

- Regions with larger populations may have mixed facilities: a communal refuge and self-contained units co-located or separate sites.

6.4. Dispersed

Dispersed houses and / or units distributed throughout the community: administration from shopfront elsewhere.

- Increased flexibility about how the properties are used: can change according to need
 - Provides stable accommodation for a family from crisis intake to transitional housing. The property function changes with the addition of a lease, rather than the woman having to relocate again
- No dedicated infrastructure required. Properties can be purchased or leased through private market

6.5. Safe House

“Safe houses’ in the Australian context refers to the Indigenous concept of a ‘place where women can go before or after crisis, and stay for a time, without actually “leaving” their partner’”.¹³

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are, by no means, the only victims of domestic and family violence in the Douglas Shire
- Only offer short term respite and, if longer term services are required and not available in the region, Aboriginal women still need to leave town and their community and supports
- Lack of privacy and security as safe houses must be located within the community
- Must be linked to an existing organisation offering support services

An alternative for Emergency Safe Spaces may be developed in locations like motels, churches or medical centres to provide temporary physical protection and accommodation to women, and should be linked with longer-term support services.

7. Recommended Facility Profile for Douglas Shire

Option 1: A cluster facility of three fully self-contained, co-located units with common spaces.

Option 2: Dispersed model of three fully self-contained house/units.

A model with great flexibility is needed in a region with small but disparate population groups. The numbers in Douglas are not high but a refuge will need to respond to very different target populations. While most commonly associated with intimate partner violence, shelters may also provide safe accommodation and services for women escaping other forms of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence and this proposed facility will be the only crisis accommodation in the region.

Independent supported accommodation units offer women escaping domestic and family violence greater privacy, reduced noise and less embarrassment than communal living. Privacy offers women quiet time and the ability to set boundaries. Women feel secure and in control away from being constantly watched. Independent units allow a refuge to operate with fewer rules which allows women to regain control of their lives and make their own decisions.

Security and support services are easier to provide in a cluster than in a dispersed model.

¹³ Weeks and Oberin 2004 in Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

7.1. Client demographics and specific needs in consideration

7.1.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families comprise nearly 9 per cent of the population of the Douglas Shire. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience high rates of domestic and family violence and face specific barriers seeking help and accessing appropriate services to break the cycle of violence.

- Normalisation of violence from high rates of domestic and family violence and the role of intergenerational trauma and fear of ‘payback’ if they report
- Situational factors of poverty, unemployment and drug and alcohol use
- Language barriers, lack of culturally responsive services, limited knowledge and understanding of Queensland laws, and distrust of police and government authorities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are overrepresented among users of homelessness services but usually stay in crisis accommodation for much shorter periods of time than other cultural groups. Crisis accommodation is used for time out or respite or as a means of avoiding known peaks in family violence
- Reluctance to leave community land and support networks
 - Police and local services reported a reluctance or outright refusal from Aboriginal women to be transferred to a refuge in Cairns

Last year the Elders and Shelly helped a young woman in vicious DV cycle escape to Cairns. We were in contact with her every day but we knew she would end up back here because this is where all her supports are. Sure enough, she is now back living in the same situation.¹⁴

7.1.2. Older women and rural women

Older women and rural women are less likely to report abuse because of shame and a culture of ‘suffering in silence’. A modern refuge should not look or feel like a refuge.

7.1.3. Women with children

More than half of women with domestic violence related homelessness who present to services have children with them but there is a lack of services with the capacity to cater for:

- Women with several children or boys over the age of 12 years old
- Women trying to regain custody of their children who may not be eligible for a family refuge but need to prove they can adequately accommodate their children
- Young women with children can face extra challenges. Many have experienced lifelong abuse and may lack reliable family networks, parenting and life skills.

“Losing children to the welfare system is a major concern for many women affected by domestic and family violence.”¹⁵

7.1.4. Tourists and travellers

Police reported that the majority of domestic violence incidents in Port Douglas occur between couples holidaying in the region without the local support networks to provide emergency accommodation.

¹⁴ Mossman Elders Justice Group

¹⁵ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

Police reported that several incidents involved people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations but these were mainly European English-speakers.

- Accommodation providers may be able to relocate the victim within the facility.
 - Requires facility with 24 hour reception
 - Requires vacant room
 - Large enough to provide a discreet location away from the perpetrator
- Require emergency accommodation only; return to place of permanent residence for longer-term assistance

7.2. Activity projections

7.2.1. Bed and bed equivalent projections

Bed requirements for the facility were calculated using population benchmarks from similar regional locations with domestic violence accommodation services and statistical data from Douglas police and service providers on women seeking accommodation assistance to escape from domestic and family violence.

Based on the projected demand for services, Douglas would require crisis accommodation for up to three women and their children concurrently.

Family apartments with bedroom arrangements which can be expanded and contracted to suit the size of a family, can be adapted to provide accommodation to both women with several children and single women without leaving space unused and thereby reducing the capacity of a shelter.



Figure 3: Facility design enabling flexible bed capacity within a communal setting.¹⁶

¹⁶ Image from: Matijevic and Riddel. Architecture against Domestic Violence.



Figure 4: Flexible furniture and furnishing options allow accommodation of extra children.¹⁷

7.2.2. Length of stay

For women unable to stay at home, a continuum of housing and support is required from crisis tipping point and response to safe and affordable permanent accommodation.

The permitted and expected length of stay should take into account:

- Immediate need for safety for a woman and her children escaping domestic and family violence
- Support necessary for a woman to develop the life-skills (manage finances, household, employment) and capability (trauma recovery) necessary to break out of the cycle of domestic and family violence
- Availability of stable and appropriate long-term accommodation into which she can transition and the importance of minimising the number of times women and their children (changing schools, leaving support networks) must move before they are permanently housed
 - The Douglas Shire has an identified lack of transitional, public, and affordable private housing options

The crisis shelter model does not offer a long-term solution for recovery. Traditionally refuges were designed for stays of up to a couple of months but a lack of exit options has affected the flow and speed of movement through and out of refuges and transitional housing. After crisis accommodation a woman must go back through the trauma of moving to transitional housing. This is when most victims will choose to return to the familiar violence of their abuser rather than face the unknown. The continuum of support must include a pathway into permanent, safe and affordable accommodation. “Lack of second-stage shelter facilities forces a significant percentage of women who have escaped domestic violence to return to their homes and violent situations.”¹⁸

Police and service providers in the Douglas Shire rely heavily on the Mossman hospital and motels to provide immediate ‘place of safety’ accommodation for women escaping domestic and family violence. Services are in the process of formalising arrangements with motels for accommodation for one or two nights.

Self-contained units provide the flexibility to cater for women who need short-term crisis accommodation and for those who may need longer to secure appropriate permanent accommodation.

¹⁷ Images from: Supermami.net and 2.bp.blogspot.com curtain-room-divider-ideas- with-traditional-nursery-beds

¹⁸ Gierman and Liska et al 2013. Shelter for Women and Girls at Risk.

Our clients are already on the waiting list for housing which takes weeks or months already. Sometimes they are not even on Centrelink so have absolutely no income and no ID. It takes several weeks to set them up with birth certificates.¹⁹

7.3. Location

Several location options were considered in discussions with local police and service providers.

7.3.1. Secret urban location

Used in high security facilities to protect residents from their perpetrators

Not a viable option for the Douglas Shire where the largest urban area has a population of 3,500 people

7.3.2. Remote area

Considered more difficult for perpetrators, especially in the heat of the moment, to access

Several areas were suggested from the very remote Wawu Dimbi, to Rocky Point, and the industrial area of Craiglie just outside of Port Douglas

Requires women to move away from support networks and may be difficult for women to access schools, job, services, especially considering the dearth of affordable public transport options in the Douglas Shire.

7.3.3. Open suburban location

Newer models of domestic violence refuge are less concerned about an undisclosed or inaccessible location, especially in rural areas such as services in the Tablelands and Cassowary Coast. Forgoing the secret location facilitates community involvement and support for the program and individual residents. Feeling a part of a community can promote healing, especially for children.

“... [A] highly visible refuge in a rural area that advertised on local television and accepted women who just turned up at the door. This service pointed out that 70% of their referrals were after-hours, and it was their high visibility that protected them because of community and police support.”²⁰

- If a woman escaping domestic and family violence is considered at high risk of further violence, police and service providers would continue to refer her to a refuge in Cairns or out of the region

Mossman is considered more appropriate to situate an accommodation facility for women and their children as it is closer to family, supports and services for victims in the majority of reported domestic and family violence incidents.

Considerations to be taken into account when finalising location:

- Access to groceries, schools, appointments
- Access to community and recreational facilities
- Is the area pedestrian friendly?
- Will the neighbourhood feel safe, especially for women walking?

¹⁹ Mossman Elders Justice Group

²⁰ Weeks and Oberin 2004. Women’s Refuges, Shelters, Outreach and Support Service.

7.4. Summary of staffing requirements

A service model of medium term accommodation encouraging the development of independence and life-skills requires only on-call staff to handle after hours intake and admission, and support-services staff to provide outreach to residents.

8. Key Design Requirements

8.1. Facility design objectives

The key design objectives for this facility are:

- Safe, empowering, resident-centred accommodation
- Equity of access
- Facilitation of best practice models of care
- Minimise the need for rules and restrictions on resident behaviour
- A spatial environment that is contemporary, flexible and adaptable to individual needs

8.2. Operational principles and design

Facility objectives are to provide for the immediate safety of women and their children escaping domestic and family violence, enable time and room for support services for women to develop the capacity/life-skills to break the cycle of abuse and transition to longer-term housing. The principles that underpin these objectives are:

- The physical environment must facilitate
 - A variety of spaces for different resident needs
 - Home-like atmosphere for residents
 - Privacy for families inside and out
 - Independence and control regarding normal activities of daily living
 - Empowerment and identity formation
 - Communal areas to allow for social interaction and support
 - Connectivity to natural environment
 - ‘Spiritual’ spaces
- Design features that facilitate safe and equitable access for people with disabilities and complex needs
- Design that maximises use of positive elements related to natural light, colour, access to fresh air
- Access to visual arts and music

8.3. Resident environment / unit configurations

“Disenfranchisement from home occurs long before women leave.”²¹ Victims of domestic violence do not only need somewhere safe to stay, they may need assistance to rebuild/develop the life-skills to be able to maintain a tenancy on their own. One aspect of this is the need to transcend the physical definition of home to recognise the spiritual and emotional meanings of home.

Residential units will be fully self-contained and enable independence in activities of daily living. Unit design will facilitate resident privacy and dignity; enable residents to feel in control of their environment, precipitate focus and relaxation.

²¹ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

Unit configuration should include:



Figure 5: Open plan kitchen and living space with good sight lines of outdoor play areas

- Open plan and good sight lines
 - Allow residents to feel comfortable and aware of their surroundings to counteract concerns about their own and their children's safety
 - Increase ease of navigation
 - Facilitate supervision of children by women who may be very protective and reluctant to leave children alone, without having to be in the same physical space
- Use of natural light and views of nature to increase wellbeing



Figure 6: Views of nature improve wellbeing outcomes. Design can make the most of natural light.²²

- Design will maximize daylight with windows/skylights to build connectivity between inside and outside, while maintaining feelings of security
- Adjustable blinds to provide resident control of light and visibility
- Linoleum floors instead of carpet
- Blinds instead of curtains
- Noise-reducing finishes reduce stress and improve sleep

²² Images from: <http://www.liveinbushey.com/39/> and <https://hometriangle.com/add-more-natural-light>

- Appropriate lighting reduces depression and increases overall wellbeing
 - Subdued in quiet spaces
 - Not dim in lively spaces
- Child safety features such as power point covers
- Furniture should look residential rather than institutional
 - Include cushions, book cases and other home-like touches



Figure 7: Home-like and comforting touches to a Shelter; use of throw cushions art to make a room look comforting.²³

- Opportunities to personalise space to encourage residents to express or form an identity away from their abuser
 - Doors and living spaces can be personalised with notice boards or black boards
 - Bedroom door signs
 - Spaces for residents to place meaningful objects: e.g. bedside tables, occasional tables, shelves



Figure 8: Shelves and blackboard allow families to add personal touches. Corkboards don't have to look like office furniture.²⁴

- Safe and inviting spaces for children of various ages
 - Children who have experienced domestic and family violence are often vulnerable and may require quiet areas for solitary activities within their play

²³ Images from: Amarillo Globe News and <https://www.houzz.com.au/pro/rikkisnyder/rikki-snyder?irs=US>

²⁴ Images from <https://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/farm-burger-play-area1920> and <http://www.laurenliess.com/pure-style-home/womens-shelter-makeover>

- Zones for various activities can all both play and quiet times
- Different sized furniture and a variety of equipment to suit children of various ages

8.3.1. Bedrooms

Units will be designed with two bedroom capacity to allow space for a woman and two children as standard and include the furnishings to accommodate extra children as necessary e.g. bunk and fold-out beds.

- Bedside tables and lamps to encourage feeling comfortable and relaxed
- Wardrobes for storage of clothes and personal belongings
- Power points should be plentiful to enable charging of electronic devices
- Bedrooms should allow space for personalisation e.g. display spaces for artwork, to assist residents to (re)develop personal identity
- Children's bedrooms will include a desk to encourage goal-setting and decision making
- Bedroom design should create feelings of safety and security: personal rooms should be lockable to allow residents to feel in control of their environment



Figure 9: Children's bedrooms should feel inviting and personal while allowing room for several children²⁵

8.3.2. Kitchen

A kitchen is an important place for people learning or rebuilding independence. Kitchens are places of decision making and where individual preferences and cultural or religious traditions may be enacted. Kitchens are also places about family and routine: deciding what a family eats and when.

Kitchens will be designed to encourage and enable collaboration and sharing

- Floor and bench space for more than one person at a time without congestion, to facilitate parent/child bonding
- Fully supplied with basic, quality appliances
- Open plan to allow communication with, and supervision of, children
- Storage for plenty of food. A stocked pantry reduces feelings of scarcity and encourages homeliness
- Several power points to allow for individual configuration

²⁵ Images from: Katrina Rutledge Interior Design and msexta.com luxury furniture



Figure 10: Open plan kitchen allows parental supervision of both yard and living room. Utilising both bench and dining tables gives extra separate spaces.²⁶

8.3.3. Family Space

- Units should be open plan to encourage communication but furnished to provide spaces for private time
 - Open plan allows visibility making supervision of children easier and encouraging feelings of safety in both children and mother
- Dining table and chairs to allow a family to eat, share and play together. Reclaiming meal time as a family time can assist healing and bring normalcy to a child's life
- Lounge space should facilitate quiet space for relaxation, reading with nooks, separate sitting areas or room dividers
 - Encourage parent/child bonding
 - Study/homework
 - Separate space for teens or children. Often those who have experienced abuse can become overwhelmed in groups
 - Quiet spaces are beneficial for women attempting to make large decisions or set life goals



Figure 11: Different spaces for different ages or activities can be provided in innovative ways.²⁷

- Furniture should
 - be flexible/adaptable: tables that can be separated and lounge chairs instead of long couches
 - provide a sense of comfort and control

²⁶ Images from: decoratingideas.adrienpetrucci.com and Nedgis.com.

²⁷ Images from: Better Homes and Gardens, www.yourkidscloset.com/ikea-family-room and Planos Low-cost

- be durable so it remains in good condition and alleviates parental concern about damage

8.3.4. Outside

Design will ensure a balance of spaces for exercise and relaxing; to suit varying ages and activities. Reduce anxiety and stress by creating a multi-sensory environment.

- Garden and path design to encourage play by children
 - 'Purposeful movement experiences' i.e. paths instead of square of concrete
 - Connections to nature
- Ground markings and landscaping can be used to differentiate areas for play, sport, gardening or relaxing, and to differentiate between private and shared space
- Shelters or shade cloths to be included to allow outdoor use year round
- Screened from the street and surrounding buildings



Figure 12: Landscaping used to delineate separate activities, with purposeful movement, child friendly paths and spaces²⁸

8.3.5. Bathroom

Each unit will contain a fully self-contained bathroom.

A private bathroom

- Supports parental regimes including getting ready for school or bed
- Is very important for people recovering independence and control

8.3.6. Laundry facilities

Each unit will include a self-contained laundry

- A well appointed laundry is important for families with young children. Residents may be washing every day
- Will allow supervision of children while doing laundry
- For program sustainability, laundry machines will be water and energy efficient

8.4. Staff environment

Onsite staff facilities are not integral to this model of supported accommodation. Support staff can be co-located or provided by an existing service provider.

Secure office/storage space will be required to maintain client confidentiality and privacy of communication with residents and guarantee integrity of secure record storage systems.

²⁸ Images from: earthscape design and build, letthechildrenplay.net and playathometeacher.com

If support staff are located off-site, they will be required to undertake 'home' visits to residential units, design of which will need to consider appropriate space for support staff/resident interaction: separate rooms/play space to allow mothers to talk without children present; acoustically and visually separated space for private conversations and consultations.

8.5. Communal areas and shared space

A community meeting room or outdoor gathering space open to the public enables residents to gather with family and friends; reconnect with community to break the isolation of abuse. Interaction with the wider community helps remove stigma, provides neighbourhood surveillance and builds connections with residents.

- The placement of a community accessible space should maintain the privacy and security of the residential units: be part of the complex but visually and physically separate

Units should face internally onto a common space to promote a community environment among residents.



Figure 13: Units grouped around shared space builds community.²⁹

8.5.1. Interior

- Service design will incorporate space for the provision of programs of activities e.g. arts and crafts, therapy sessions, education
- A communal space allows residents to socialise and find support from each other without sacrificing privacy
- Library and information nooks to allow residents access to information in relative privacy
 - Include books and information for adults and children
 - Ability to borrow and leave books for others: encourages choice and identify formation
- Modular furniture allow for flexible usage of a space for communal and private activities

²⁹ Images from: Charles Young Aged Care Allity.com.au and Hawksbury Gardens Aged Care Facility



Figure 14: Modular furniture accommodates those who want company and those who want solitude³⁰

8.5.2. Outside

- Landscaping to include both private and group areas



Figure 15: Landscaping spaces for a variety of activities.³¹

- Children's area with play equipment and seating
- Table and chairs in garden with spaces to encourage sitting and congregating
- Gardens to incorporate herbs or fruit trees to encourage feelings of control, self-sufficiency and connection to nature

Design will allow residents to see into communal areas to ascertain who is already there before entering.

³⁰ Images from: <http://www.kmsdc.org/images/patio-furniture> and <http://www.btooffice.co.uk/boardroom-furniture/modular-tables>

³¹ Images from: Earthscape Design and Build and www.designrulz.com/modern-pergola-designs



Figure 16: Innovative design and CPTED principles allow vision into a space while retaining privacy³²

8.6. Amenity

An environment where people feel acknowledged and welcomed facilitates healing. Partnering with local organisations to create and maintain outdoor spaces is a cost-effective way of increasing amenity and community investment in the well-being of residents.

- Design will incorporate colours, imagery and references that are positive and welcoming
 - Bright colours and interesting shapes



Figure 17: Use of bright colours and art to create uplifting space without great expense.³³

- Interiors will be uplifting and feel like a home rather than an institution
 - Make use of natural light
 - Well maintained and adequate furnishings
 - Appropriate lighting

³² Images from: Katrina Rutledge and <http://behbg.com/idea/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design/>

³³ Images from: Downtown Women's Shelter photo by Bethany Neuart



Figure 18: Art and colour can be anywhere.³⁴

- Include art and decoration
 - Art can communicate welcome and affirm the values of the services provided
 - A resident of the YWCA Pierce County: "... we should start making shelters beautiful; because when it's beautiful like that it does something to you ... It does something wonderful to see all this beautifulness."³⁵



Figure 19: Even the most functional room can feel less institutional with the addition of art³⁶

- The site will feel friendly and relaxing due to
 - being well maintained
 - green and healthy garden areas
 - brightly decorated with e.g. mirrors, mosaic tiles, wind chimes

³⁴ Images from: Lincoln Barbour and <http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/4581326>

³⁵ Goodyear 2013. Fighting Domestic Violence with Architecture.

³⁶ Images from: <http://www.innovativeart.com.au/art-for-aged-care/>



Figure 20: Mosaics and murals can include cultural references as well as creating a warm, multi-sensory environment.³⁷

- Children will be well catered for with child-friendly and well resourced play areas
- Security features will be designed to make residents feel safe not imprisoned
 - Modern fence instead of wall
 - Windows safety screened instead of grilles or grills to incorporate art

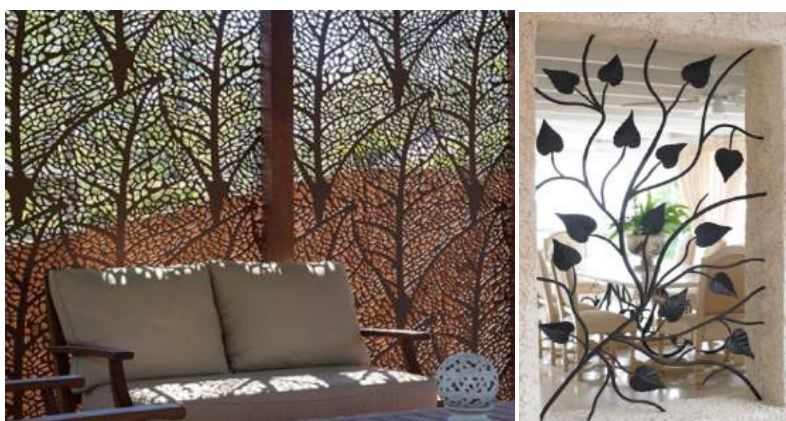


Figure 21: Even window grills no longer have to look like bars³⁸

8.7. Security

Refuges must be able to keep residents safe from potential retaliation by perpetrators. Design will support resident safety and feelings of safety by considering:

- Physical security
 - Single, secure entry point
 - Clearly defined boundaries between the shelter and surrounding community with limited visibility into the interior
 - No ground floor windows to directly overlook the street
 - Perimeter fencing
 - Landscaping according to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles
 - Lockable windows with screens
- Electronic security
 - Access through keypads/fobs is more secure than keys

³⁷ Images from: Pierce County Refuge and <http://www.surfgardenstudio.com/curriculum-vitae>

³⁸ Images from: decorativescreensdirect.com and jennyblanc.com

- Alarms/panic buttons
- CCTV
- Sensor lighting
- Telephone strategies
 - Contact telephones in each unit
- Access
 - Off street, gated and discreet car parking so passers-by are unable to identify cars parked at facility
 - Excellent visibility and lines of sight on access paths and approaches; no areas where a person could hide
- Police support
 - Ease of contact: duress alarms
 - Arrangement for quick response
 - Especially while attending court
- Safety policies, planning and procedures
 - Screening and risk assessment at intake undertaken by skilled workers (DV Connect)
 - Keeping administration separate from residences
 - Occupational and safety audits

8.8. Equity of access

Domestic and family violence refuges need to be accessible to people from across the entire community. Design should specifically address both physical and psychological ease of access for people who are in crisis and may be less able to easily negotiate organisations and facilities.

8.8.1. People with Disabilities

3.9 per cent of the Douglas population has a 'profound or severe' disability according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. People with disabilities experience domestic and family violence at much higher rates than those without disabilities and also face barriers to seeking help, including physical and economic dependence on the perpetrator.

Access to support services, refuges and the private rental market is limited for women who need assistance with communication, aspects of self-care, aids and appliances, or require modifications to their home.

8.8.2. Older Women

Barriers for older women accessing help include physical disability, diminished cognitive functioning, lack of awareness that their experience amounts to abuse and social isolation.

8.8.3. Women with complex needs including mental health or substance abuse problems

Refuges often lack facilities to cater for complex health needs.

8.8.4. Equitable Access

To ensure equitable access for all women and their children escaping domestic and family violence

- Facility design will comply with The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and appropriate Australian Standards
- Units and communal spaces will be fully accessible for people with mobility limitations e.g.
 - No steps or stairs
 - Wheelchair and Walker accessible ensuites and doorways

- Policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure appropriate referral and partnership with support services as necessary for aged and disability service providers, alcohol and drug services, mental health services.



Figure 22: All design features should be accessible and doesn't have to look institutional³⁹

8.8.5. Culturally appropriate safe space

Domestic and family violence is “destructive to the spiritual, social, economic, physical health and cultural identity” of victims.⁴⁰ It is imperative that the facility be seen as welcoming and appropriate for people of diverse cultures and identities.

Women from some populations are especially reluctant to report violence or seek assistance from services

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face a normalisation of violence in some communities as well as fear and distrust of police and ‘government’ services
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) victims may fear being ‘outed’ or experiences of discrimination, feeling unwelcome or other unhelpful service responses
- People from some Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) populations face language barriers and cultural expectations of relationships

The facility will encourage a sense of welcome and belonging by

- Design and decoration will incorporate culturally relevant imagery and references
- Take into account cultural and religious needs as practicable
- Support staff will be proficient in offering cross-cultural and inclusive support

8.9. Storage Facilities

Refuges do not have space to store furniture or large personal effects but, for people to begin to rebuild lives and identities, it is important that they are able to keep personal belongings with them. Families with children, if they are to maintain or regain ‘normal’ activities of daily living e.g. attending school, may require personal belongings including strollers, bicycles etc.

Self-contained units will need to incorporate storage space

- Built-in wardrobes
- Outdoor lockable storage spaces as practicable

³⁹ Images from: Image from Fisheye9.com and backhomesafely.com

⁴⁰ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

8.10. Future proofing and flexibility

The population of the Douglas Shire is projected to be 14,796 persons as at 30 June 2036 at an increase of 1.1 per cent per year over 25 years. This is a slower increase than the 1.7% projected for Queensland overall. Douglas has a slightly older population than the Queensland average.

Predicted population changes, future need, and changes to 'best practice' service delivery will need to be considered in service and facility design. A cluster model of self-contained units incorporates flexibility of use.

9. Operational Considerations

"In terms of interventionist strategies, it is imperative that accommodation and the range of support services required by women affected by domestic and family violence (counselling, health care, therapeutic services and income support) are well integrated, individualised, ongoing and open-ended."⁴¹

9.1. Admissions, Access and Hours of Operation

- Intake interviewing to be conducted by DV Connect
- Admissions and discharges by on-call staff
- Continue and formalise the current process to utilising motels through Queensland Police Service for after hours emergency place of safety

9.2. Building maintenance services

Maintenance and repairs will need to be considered in service funding agreements

9.3. Linen/crockery

- Units will need to be furnished with basic supplies of linen and crockery
- Existing domestic and family violence supported accommodation services provide these through either funding or donations

9.4. Pets

"It's been known for a long time in the family violence services sector that harm to pets is one of the critical tactics that the perpetrator can use and it often means that women find it difficult to leave the relationship knowing their pets are likely to be harmed if they do."⁴²

- Operational consideration will have to be given to pets. It may be necessary for a service to
 - Assist with finding foster accommodation for pets
 - Allow small pets in a unit on a case by case basis

The RSPCA through their Pets in Crisis program can assist with pet fostering after a referral from DV Connect.

10. Relationships and interdependencies with external agencies

"Two types of assistance are clearly critical in terms of supporting women affected by domestic and family violence:

- Provision of safe, secure and affordable housing; and

⁴¹ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

⁴² Annette Gillespie from Safe Steps in Lusted, Peter. 2017. Domestic violence pet shelter program.

- Provision of a continuum of individualised and open-ended support, including outreach services, that wraps around women and their children in a range of areas (therapy, health, life skills, housing assistance et cetera) for as long as they need it.”⁴³

Services may need to include, but not be limited to:

- Medical treatment for immediate and long-term consequences of violence
- Counselling and therapeutic supports to develop survivor understanding of the dynamics associated with abuse and leaving situations of violence, as well as assistance to overcome the traumatic affects of it
- Financial and economic assistance to address difficulties resulting from perpetrators control of finances or economic opportunities
- Legal assistance
- Long-term housing support
- Educational and recreational programs

To enable provision of appropriate and effective services to a diverse range of client groups it will be critical for the service to work closely with all government and non-government organisations providing services in the Douglas Shire.

The nature of functional relationships may consist of funding partnerships or Memoranda of Understanding or less formal models of cooperation and referral.

11. Conclusion – Next Steps

The Douglas Shire has among Queensland’s highest rates of domestic and family violence yet lacks any crisis or transitional accommodation options for victims trying to break the cycle. Police and community service providers work conscientiously and collaboratively to assist women and their children escaping violence but are compelled to send victims to motels or refer vulnerable people away from their support systems to access assistance in the nearest regional city. This service model is inadequate and ineffective at affecting long-term change against a complex and pervasive social problem.

The recognition of the importance of a localised, tailored, flexible and integrated service response has been integral to the direction of Queensland practice since the Special Taskforce into Domestic and Family Violence reported in 2015. “A one-size-fits-all approach ... will not work. Challenges faced by victims and service providers in rural and remote communities are significantly different from those faced by victims in metropolitan communities, which in turn differ from those in Indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Integrated, holistic and timely responses to domestic and family violence are needed, tailored to the specific needs of each of these communities.”⁴⁴

The facility proposed, and infrastructure and service design recommended, to fill this identified gap in supported crisis accommodation in Douglas has been developed from a review of precedent studies and relevant literature, and in-depth consultation with both local and specialist domestic and family violence service providers to contribute more than ‘just’ a safe place for women who are at risk of violence. To give victims a chance to transcend the experience of their trauma it is necessary to provide services to help empower them to rebuild and develop the life-skills to become independent and not return to violence.

⁴³ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter 2008. Women, DFV and Homelessness.

⁴⁴ Special Taskforce Queensland. 2015. Not Now, Not Ever.

The connection between the built environment and the emotional wellbeing and recovery trajectory of residents of a domestic violence refuge is an important component of assisting victims to develop the skills needed to break this cycle of violence. A well-designed facility will create an empowering environment for residents, facilitating the development of personal identity, goal-setting and decision making; creating a strong foundation for the operational elements of domestic and family violence support services.

The Douglas Shire Council is committed to ensuring the provision of best practice support services for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence. The detail gained from this research and provided in this brief will be used to inform further concept planning and facility design to fill this identified gap in services. The next stage in the consummation of this project will be to utilise this information to develop business case documents and buttress collaborative links with local and specialist service providers and to advocate for State and Federal economic and service delivery partnership in the implementation of a facility to provide emergency and transitional domestic and family violence refuge accommodation in the Douglas Shire, to negate the need for victims of violence to choose between leaving the region or staying with violence.

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13. Appendix:

Consultations with Key Douglas Service Providers

Douglas service	Relevant services offered	Key comments and concerns
Apunapima	Health Services. Will be taking over the Gorge Wellbeing Centre May 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence against grandparents and between siblings A model with longer term intervention to break the cycle
Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku	Mossman Gorge housing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cooktown model has components we could borrow
Energy and Water Ombudsman	Assists people with bills, connection problems, rebates and assistance programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often see people with problems paying after a default by the Ex
Goobidi: Jawalkunna Family Services	Has DV funding; runs a men’s group; provides transport to get people to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two separate needs: crisis accommodation and longer-term transitional housing. People need a place to just rest but also need longer-term

	Cairns.	assistance otherwise the kids will keep living on the streets.
Mossman District Hospital		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often have women turn up at the hospital to escape their abuser • Police utilise the hospital as emergency accommodation for DV victims
Mossman Elders Justice Group	In 2017 has been allocated 3 year's DV funding to run programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to start a 'one stop shop' • Offender programs are a priority. There is nowhere to send people who are busted for breaking DV orders. Police have nowhere to refer men except to the Men's Helpline • It can be overwhelming for victims to even travel to Cairns for an appointment: there is no one to support them down there. • Often deal with homeless teens escaping DFV • Lots of elder abuse in this community
Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre	Counselling; Men's Group; Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is nothing local so the Wellbeing Centre has to keep ringing around to get them somewhere in Cairns. Have to try to get them vouchers from Mossman Community Centre
Mossman Police		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mossman and Port are definitely in need of a refuge because when it raises its head, there is nowhere to send them. Often when police phone a shelter in Cairns, they are full • Most of the police work in Mossman involves DFV
Mossman Support Services	2 year funding for a DV Counsellor beginning Jan 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If people are trying to escape dv, what's the point of keeping them in a refuge in Mossman because then you need to find them permanent housing
Mossman Youth Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See young people homeless because of family violence
Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre	Emergency Relief Funding. Family Support Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every week PDNC has clients present with DV • Motels are not a suitable response. Women don't get the support services they need and can't afford to stay in a motel and often return to their abuser.
Port Douglas Police		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2016 began DvEAF not-for-profit to raise funds for emergency accommodation for DV victims • Victims won't go to a shelter in Cairns because it is too far from community and supports or it's too hard to get there • Use of a motel requires 24 hour reception and room availability but still has no security
UCC Family Support Services	Family Support Services Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the reason victims are reluctant to leave DV situations is they have nowhere to go. • If they can stay in refuge longer-term, victims are empowered to get their belongings and arrange something more than a 'quick fix' respite.

Regional Domestic Violence Service Providers

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services	Funds State Government DFV services. Workshop with Douglas service providers on models of DV Shelter
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Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships	Liaising with Coen Women's Group, Department of Communities and Department of Housing about a DV refuge in Coen
Tablelands Women's Centre	8 Units of DV support accommodation in Atherton
Women's Centre Cairns	Services in Cairns and Atherton
Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service	Services in Cairns
Innisfail Youth and Family Care	One house and one duplex