

The Advocate

New patron – new era for Christchurch Women's Refuge

Joanna Nicholls-Parker didn't think twice when asked to be the Patron of Christchurch Women's Refuge (CWR). Nor did she hold back in doing her homework on the status of women in the 21st century before picking up the reins.

'When Annette Gillespie (CWR manager) approached me, I immediately considered my personal appreciation of life and my own journey, and the journey that other women may be on right now,' says Joanna. 'I also saw this as an opportunity to re-educate myself in a way that would allow me to position myself within Refuge.'

Joanna sought the views of women with influence – Pamela Gerrish-Nunn, her fine arts and gender studies lecturer at the University of Canterbury, Lynne Puddy-Greenwood, editor of *Women Today*, Yvonne Martin, editor of *Avenues*, and New Zealand Human Rights Commissioner Joy Liddicoat.

She has no intention of becoming the anonymous patron. Her first instinct was to get to know the people who work within Refuge, to understand how they work, and ... to pick up her camera.

'I wanted to photograph the women within Refuge, as a way of contributing to Refuge's 35th anniversary celebrations at the

Christchurch Art Gallery.'

Our Mission

Christchurch Women's Refuge works with women and children providing crisis intervention, education and support that allows them to develop strategies for living fulfilled lives free from violence.

Annette Gillespie, manager of Refuge says: 'Joanna will bring a new face to our organisation which is not what people will expect. In the past it would have been a risky venture aligning oneself with Women's Refuge. I love that Jo is prepared to take the leap anyway. The synergy is that we are in very similar stages in our development and she will be a very interactive patroness.'

'I feel a kindred spirit with Annette Gillespie,' says Joanna. 'I work only with people I like and Annette thinks outside the box. It is great to find people liberated in their own journey. I hope we complement each other as well as work in close intellectual proximity.'

'Being in my late 30s, I personally feel at a similar age to many of the women experiencing problems today. Often the women who need help from Refuge are seeing their children growing up or leaving home, and are experiencing the breakdown of romance. There is a synergy in age and personal development here.'

'I am also in a position where opportunities can be found and put in the hands of the people who can implement them. It is important to say that Refuge already has good interactions with Council. I share an office with the Manager of the Communications Unit, so these will be easy conversations to have, however such opportunities need to be utilized in an appropriate way.'

'To me, media and marketing are hugely important. Refuge has twice been accepted



Mayor and Mayoress of Christchurch, Bob and Joanna Parker

as a finalist in the Champion Canterbury Champion Charity Awards – the definition of a successful business - and we need to honour that level of achievement more publicly.'

Growing up as the eldest daughter of three and attending an all-girls school, Joanna learned very early on that if she was going to be an individual she had to 'run like crazy'. 'I used sports to liberate myself from the ultimately female paradigm,' she says. 'This has continued all my life. I am a natural escape artist!'

'I have lived a life of maintaining an individuality at the expense of being financially well off, of having marriage and children. It hasn't been easy. I lead by example in the ability to liberate.'

Christchurch has always led the way. Kate Sheppard. Votes for women. The first woman in Parliament. The first Women's Refuge in the country. And now, the Mayoress of Christchurch as Patron. We welcome Joanna to Christchurch Women's Refuge.

35 years' service to Canterbury women and children

Two hundred guests gathered for the 35th anniversary of Christchurch Women's Refuge at Te Puna o Waiwhetu Christchurch Art Gallery on 26 September for an evening of art, entertainment, and charity chaired by the legendary voice of racing, Reon Murtha.

Speakers included Jenny Harper, Director of the Christchurch Art Gallery, Annette Gillespie, Manager of Christchurch Women's Refuge, Hon Ruth Dyson, Minister for Social Development, and the Mayoress Jo Parker, Patron of Christchurch Women's Refuge.

Exhibits included an interactive time tunnel that captured the major events, milestones and the initiatives since Christchurch Women's Refuge opened its doors as a safe house in 1973. Highlighting achievements against a backdrop of important advances in women's rights in New Zealand, guests were able to capture 35 years of leadership and strategic direction towards ensuring the safety of women and children in Canterbury.

Much has happened in those 35 years. From one safe house, CWR now has three community offices and a programme offering parallel services for both women and children. CWR has moved from a collective base decision-making structure to a governance-and-management structure. Critical collaborations have also been forged with non-traditional partners to build broad-base actions that change attitudes and behaviour towards preventing family violence.

An auction of art, wine, memorabilia and a weekend in Hanmer Springs raised \$11,000. Christchurch entertainers *The Outwits* kept everyone amused. A successful evening enjoyed by all!



Annette Gillespie, Manager of Christchurch Women's Refuge, and Jenny Harper, Director of the Christchurch Art Gallery



Guests mingle in the atrium of the Christchurch Art Gallery



Hon Ruth Dyson



The time tunnel captured major events, achievements and initiatives in the 35 year history of Christchurch Women's Refuge



Joanna Parker's photographic exhibition of the women of Christchurch Women's Refuge

'Thirty-five years ago the first Women's Refuge was established here in Christchurch. It was appropriate this happened in Kate Sheppard's home town, a city that has for over 120 years been at the forefront of women's rights. Due to the advocacy work carried out by the Refuge there has been a sea change in New Zealand society. It is now widely recognized that domestic violence is not okay. The Refuge has gone from being a fringe group to an established, accepted and respected part of society. We now work with the institutions, organizations and communities we once lobbied and as a result the number of services we provide has grown. I ask that you join with us in celebrating our successes and walk with us in our journey towards a nation free of fear and violence.'

Annette Gillespie,
Manager,
Christchurch Women's Refuge

Domestic violence prevention centre planned

Plans to build a multi-purpose domestic violence prevention centre will see barriers to services offered by Christchurch Women's Refuge come down.

Unveiling the plans for a \$10 million capital programme, CWR manager Annette Gillespie says it's time to come out from behind the doors of a discreet central city office.

'The multi-purpose centre will have a street frontage and will house both prevention and emergency services,' she says.

The centre will also include 11 suites for women and their children, as well as counseling and education services.

'The need for safe houses is declining as women now reach out for help much earlier and are often given support to stay in their relationship and at home.'

After establishing the first safe house in the country 35 years ago, Christchurch Women's Refuge intends to continue paving the way in response to family violence.

'Family violence is something that happens behind closed doors,' says Annette. Moving away from the safe house model and into an open location reflects the research that supports our experience that family violence doesn't happen in public.

Christchurch Women's Refuge intends launching its campaign to raise the \$10 million to purchase a 2000 square metre central city site on which the proposed Centre will be built next year.

'We hope the project will be completed and ready for opening within three years,' says Annette Gillespie.



CANTERBURY FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTRE
An Initiative of Christchurch Women's Refuge

Did you know?

That Christchurch Women's Refuge works with the elderly?

Retailers in line for toolkit

Retailers and manufacturers are to be the first among Canterbury employers targeted in a campaign to combat family violence. The campaign is part of the *Igniting Change – Act to Prevent Family Violence Project*, a Safer Christchurch initiative implemented by Christchurch Women's Refuge last year.

'Our study has revealed that the business community is ready to intervene in family violence,' says Raijeli Nicole, Refuge's contract services team leader.

'Employers are saying they want to address this issue, particularly given its impact on workplace productivity and performance.'

Five ways in which employers can address family violence are highlighted in a new 24-page *Family Violence Employers' Toolkit* which will be offered to the business sector over the coming months. The Toolkit highlights the importance of creating a respectful and creative workplace charter and policies, as well as training to enable managers, supervisors, human resources personnel, and health and safety officers to respond. Also highlighted are ways to

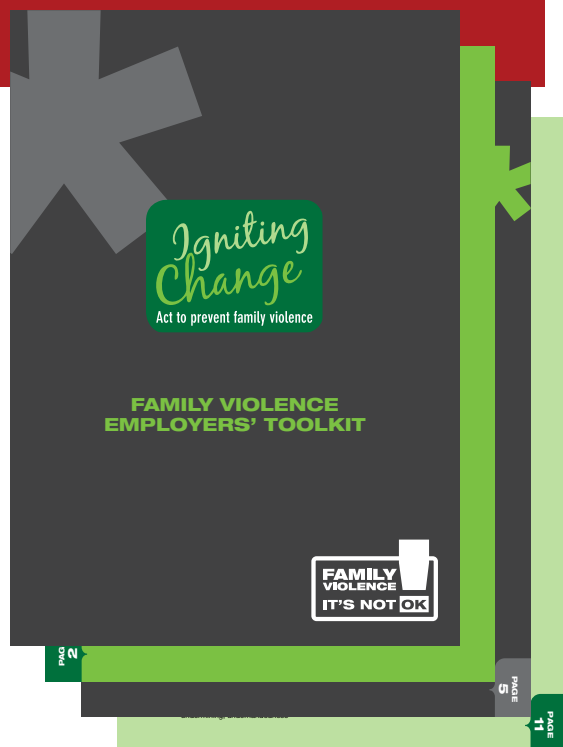
ensure the message that violence is not OK is promoted within the workplace.

Targeting specific sectors, with manufacturers the first to come on board, Christchurch Women's Refuge will be working alongside employers to assist in implementing workplace policies.

'Everyone has a role in the prevention of violence,' says Raijeli Nicole. 'This Toolkit is a resource for employers, and is backed up by our offer of training and support.'

'It is also hoped that our work with employers will allow us to further understand how violence is perpetuated, and to review the policies that are working and what needs to change.'

If you would like more information on how this toolkit can support your workplace, please contact Raijeli Nicole on (03) 353-7501 or email raijeli@womensrefuge.co.nz



Did you know?

That Christchurch Women's Refuge works with all ethnicities?

New contract services role

'Feminism' may be the one of the most misunderstood words in the English language, but it is a context within which Rajjeli Nicole lives her life.

It may have had something to do with being the eldest child of the family in Fiji, and having to look after everybody else while her siblings were going out and having fun.

'It took me until my 30s to be comfortable with whom I am,' she says. 'My journey has been about discovering how to say the things I want to say without offending people.'

Rajjeli Nicole joined Christchurch Women's Refuge as contract services team leader in March, having arrived in Christchurch in December last year and fresh from her role as the Executive Director of Isis International-Manila, an international feminist media organisation based in The Philippines. Prior to that, she worked with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and Oxfam NZ.

'I am old-fashioned in the sense that I still firmly believe in the women's movement. Feminist politics is very much alive in terms of the work that we do here in Christchurch Women's Refuge. For example, our referral process is infused with our feminist understanding of empowerment. Women have to call our crisis line to become a client of this organisation and they call us and access our services because they want to make a change in their lives.'

'It begins when a woman says 'I am worthwhile'. Our work is to offer her the tools to help her make those decisions, to enable her live with her dignity and integrity in place, and handle the issues as they arise.'

The core work of Christchurch Women's Refuge focuses on crisis, or what some term the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' services which are the crisisline (03-364-7306), the safe house, and prevention of family violence work. Our community education programmes and advocacy for women and children focus on addressing the inter-generational nature of family violence and on giving women and children handles for a life free from violence. Rajjeli is indignant when the agency is seen as just another service provider.

'This is an organisation that takes time to rethink its practices, to ask 'are our services really reaching the women we need to reach?,' she says. 'We are a political agency that is prepared to tread the ground no-one else wants to tread.'

Family violence prevention programmes need an inter-disciplinary approach, involving research and action into how core services can be delivered within the context of complex ethnic and social issues in the homes and surrounding communities.

A project currently under way in North Canterbury *Advocate for Children and Young*



Rajjeli Nicole, Contract Services Team Leader

Persons who witness Family Violence highlights how violence in the home affects not only women but also children. The project is more than raising awareness; it brings together networks of non-traditional partners such as Plunket, Stopping Violence Services, and Big Brother or Big Sister organisations.

'When I returned to New Zealand, I wanted to work in an organisation that is movement-based. When I saw the words 'social change' on the Christchurch Women's Refuge website and then at the interview, Annette Gillespie talked about an organisation that worked on social transformation of attitudes, systems and structures of society from milieu of the women's refuge movement, I thought 'Yes! This is where I want to work.'

Did you know?

That Christchurch Women's Refuge works with victims of sexual assault?

Christchurch Women's Refuge Inc.

P O Box 32-034, Christchurch. Tel (03) 364-7306. Fax (03) 379-1242. Email enquiries@womensrefuge.co.nz www.womensrefuge.co.nz

Our services are provided free of charge to the women and children who need our help. Please support our work with your donation today.

CUT ALONG THE LINE

Do we have your correct details? Please phone Derek on 353-7403 or email Derek@womensrefuge.co.nz

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