

Christchurch Women's Refuge

20 January 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

New Year Brings Change in Premises and Leadership for Christchurch Women's Refuge

2011 brings major change to Christchurch Women's Refuge, which will farewell CEO of 10 years Annette Gillespie this week. That change will be followed by a move to new inner city premises in March, prompted by earthquake related damage to their existing community offices. Contact details remain the same.

Departure of Chief Executive Officer

Having tendered her resignation in December, Annette Gillespie left Refuge on Wednesday 19 January to relocate to Australia for family reasons. Long-serving staff member Lyn Boyd will become Acting CEO until a permanent appointment is made.

Annette has been a tireless champion in the struggle against family violence in New Zealand for the 15 years she been with Christchurch Women's Refuge. Annette has been in a leadership role within the agency for almost 10 years and during her time as Manager/CEO the agency's profile has grown significantly. It has increased in size, added new services, extended its operations to North Canterbury, moved from a collective to a business model, won a business award and become a highly regarded and visible advocate for women and children experiencing family violence.

Annette has also been instrumental in bringing Christchurch Women's Refuge and the issue of family violence out from the fringe. She has been a vocal campaigner regarding family violence and her departure will be a loss not only for Christchurch Women's Refuge, but for the wider Canterbury social services scene and the ongoing campaign to acknowledge and address family violence throughout New Zealand.

"I have been extremely privileged to be the caretaker of this groundbreaking agency for the last ten years" says Annette. "We have accomplished so much as an organisation in that time. Family violence is now openly talked about. We've come out of hiding and started opening doors, creating new limits and doing things differently, but we've never changed the core of what we do and the reason we do it. I leave knowing that together we have created change that really matters and I don't doubt that Christchurch Women's Refuge will continue making that change for the hundreds of women and children who reach out for support every year."

Move to New Premises

Following the Boxing Day aftershock Christchurch Women's Refuge's central city office was deemed unsafe and closed for the foreseeable future. All Christchurch community operations have since moved to the Safe House, where service has continued without pause. Christchurch Women's Refuge North Canterbury office continues operation as normal.

The agency has been very fortunate that their existing landlord had alternative premises which can be purpose-designed for Christchurch Women's Refuge and will still allow them to operate from the heart of the central city.

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The new offices will be on Hereford St, almost directly behind the agency's old offices, and they will provide a far better space for clients, staff and services. They also better support Christchurch Women's Refuge's commitment to bring its services and the issue of family violence out from secrecy and into the community.

Despite the changes occurring there will be no disruption or reduction of services. Acting CEO Lyn Boyd says "Christchurch Women's Refuge has been helping make and keep women and children safe for almost 40-years, and a key asset in that journey has been the agency's resilience and its ability to adapt. Our commitment to the families who need our support is always our first priority, no matter what change is upon the agency or wherever we operate from. We have a professional and dedicated team in place and a supportive Board, and we will continue to offer the same high standard of support and response people have come to expect from Christchurch Women's Refuge."

Contact details for Christchurch Women's Refuge and its staff remain unchanged and you can contact Christchurch Women's Refuge 24 hours a day on 0800 1 REFUGE, email enquiries@womensrefuge.co.nz or visit www.womensrefuge.co.nz

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Facts About Christchurch Women's Refuge

Christchurch Women's Refuge is the first Refuge established in New Zealand (1973) and the first established outside the United Kingdom.

Christchurch Women's Refuge offers its services from south of Kaikoura through to Ashburton - a total population of over approximately 436,000 people. It has a rural office in Rangiora to service North Canterbury communities.

Our services include:

Early Intervention Services

Support, advocacy, assistance with accessing essential services and professional referrals.
Creating or linking to inter-agency collaborations and networks

Prevention Services

Ministry of Justice approved ten-week women's and children's group, and women's individual, education programmes.
Community liaison, education and partnership
Research and service development

Crisis Management Services:

A free 24-hour crisis and support line, and emergency residential services in our Safe House.

Many women contact Christchurch Women's Refuge directly. However, Christchurch Women's Refuge also proactively contacts many more named on Police Reports of Family Violence.

Christchurch Women's Refuge is provided approved Ministry of Justice education and safety programmes. We are also a Child, Youth and Family approved provider.

Key Statistics

In the year 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 Christchurch Women's Refuge:

- responded to over 3940 calls on our Crisis and Support line
- assisted 81 women and 91 children with safe accommodation in our Residential Safe House.
- worked with 407 women and 569 children through our community-based services (group and individual)
- followed up more than 2,400 women named in Police Reports of Family Violence to ensure their safety and that of their children.