

# Christchurch Women's Refuge

**For Immediate Release**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **96,000\* New Zealand Children witness family violence every year.**

Ironically, that violence happens in the 'safety' of their own home.

This week Christchurch Women's Refuge and 160 volunteers take to the street to raise funds and highlight the impact of family violence on the lives of women, children and men in our community. "Family violence has a devastating impact on a person's life" says Julie McCloy, Marketing and Funding Manager at Christchurch Women's Refuge. "Whether it's a woman experiencing violence or children seeing and living in the aftermath of that violence, we believe everyone has the right and potential to live their lives free from violence – and that includes those who perpetrate violence. Family violence is a complex issue, but it can be overcome. It's hugely important to confront it if we're going to make a difference for future generations" says McCloy.

Christchurch Women's Refuge services support individuals and families to find a pathway away from violence, and it's the generosity of Cantabrians during the agency's annual appeal that helps fund the team of passionate professionals who provide these services. That generosity provides advocacy, advice and support for over 1,200 women and children each year; supports operation of a Safe House; runs a local 24hr Support and Information Line that assists over 3,400 callers each year; and helps provide family violence education programmes for women and children.

"Children are the nameless and powerless victims in family violence, holding on to this huge silent fear that they can't talk about. Giving them a voice is a hugely significant part of our work" explains McCloy. "Seeing their mother diminished or intimidated in their eyes throws a child's world into confusion. They can be left living with a broken family, a broken house, a broken mother, and all too often they try to make sense of violence by blaming themselves. The transformation we so often see in children who can undertake a family violence programme with us is phenomenal. They know they aren't alone in what they are experiencing and they can give their feelings a voice and begin to make sense of them."

#### **Post Earthquake trauma keeps Crisis Line running hot**

The Christchurch earthquakes raised awareness of family violence in 2011, with statistics spiking after each significant quake. Calls to Christchurch Women's Refuge's 24-hour Support and Information Line increased by 48% in 2011, and have remained at those same elevated levels as families negotiate their way through the ongoing stresses of life post-earthquakes. "Our 0800 number continues to run hot" explains McCloy. "And it's become even harder for women in violent situations to make a fresh start due to the diminishing pool of available housing and increased rents. Even if a woman uses a Safe House for short term respite, where does she go next? That's one reason Christchurch Women's Refuge is launching Auckland-based agency Shine's safe@home service in Canterbury. Safe@home will make it safer for women and children to stay in their own home when the abusive partner has either chosen to leave, or been required to do so via a court order. It's a service that we think just makes sense, especially for our stressed Canterbury families."

For any concerns related to family violence, please call our 24-hour free-phone 0800 1 REFUGE (0800 1 733 843). In an emergency always call 111.

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\*Police statistics 2010/11

# Christchurch Women's Refuge

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## **Christchurch Women's Refuge Appeal**

Christchurch Women's Refuge is an independent, Canterbury based refuge committed to providing the best possible services to women and children living with and recovering from family violence. All donations go to local services to support women and children affected by Family Violence, and also to support men in overcoming violence.

A street appeal will take place in Christchurch city, Kaiapoi, Rangiora and Rolleston on Friday 20 and Saturday 21 July.

## **The hard-hitting Facts on Family Violence in New Zealand**

In the last year (1 July 2011 – 30 June 2012) 1,237 Canterbury women and children accessed Christchurch Women's Refuge's professional services, with 139 taking refuge in our Safe House. 3,439 callers were supported via our 24hr Support and Information Line.

58% of all reported violent crime in New Zealand is family violence (2010/11)

Police attend a family violence incident every 6 minutes. They estimate less than 20% of incidents are reported

Half of all New Zealand murders each year are family violence related and on average one woman or child is killed through family violence every two weeks

The time of greatest danger is when a woman threatens or proceeds with a separation, especially if another man is, or is perceived to be, involved

Living with family violence leads to increased physical and mental health problems and increased use of social, police, legal and health services

Children are affected by family violence even if they are not physically hurt. Effects include psychological, emotional, physical and cognitive function problems that can result in sleeping disorders, physical pain, regressive, disruptive or violent behaviour, anxiety attacks, truancy or poor educational outcomes.

In older children this can include drug/alcohol problems and is also linked to youth suicide.

Over a quarter (96,630) of our children have witnessed family violence

Over three-quarters of the child homicides in the years 2002-2008 were children under-five and 39% of those deaths occurred before the child reached 12 months old (Family Violence Death Review Committee Report, December 2011)

New Zealand ranks third highest for incidences of child abuse out of 30 OECD countries; 70% of child abuse cases are within a family violence context.

Statistics from the areyouok.org.nz website unless otherwise stated