

## **Archive No. 102**

### **Women's Refuge Referral Service**

From the time women's refuges were set up in Melbourne, starting with Women's Liberation Halfway House in 1974, the Women's Liberation Centre had acted, amongst other things, as a phone information, support and referral service for women who needed refuges. When the WL Centre closed down at the end of 1978 a group of women got together to provide a phone information, support and referral service for women, including referrals to refuges. Called Women's Liberation Switchboard, the phone service was set up at the Women's Cultural Palace at the beginning of 1979.

In order to be eligible for government funding, halfway through 1979 WLS became simultaneously also known as Women's Refuge Referral Service (WLS/WRRS) in response to the VWRG demand for a service to refer women and children to refuges without compromising the safety of the residents by having a publicly accessible address and phone number.

Once government funding was approved in 1980, it wasn't long before the service had two distinct sections: WLS was operating as an unfunded Women's Liberation information, support and referral line run by volunteers whereas WRRS was funded to refer women and children to refuges and run by paid workers. The WLS/WRRS worked from successive WL Buildings and in 1984, when the service was operating from 295 Victoria Street, West Melbourne, WRRS eventually became a completely separate, autonomously run and fully funded women's service.

WRRS applied for and received money to set up an Interim Refuge and towards the end of 1984 WRRS moved out of the WL Building in Victoria Street and moved into much larger premises to run a more comprehensive service. WRRS changed its name to the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria and was still operating a 24-hour emergency referral service for women and children in 2004.