



**THE FACES
OF STARICK**
1985-2015
A celebration of
Starick's
30th anniversary



A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT



As the WA Minister for Child Protection and Family Support I am acutely aware of how domestic violence can erode the very fabric on which our society is built.

Through my work with the myriad of amazing professionals and organisations, such as Starick, I know only too well that there is no one solution to this complicated problem.

All levels of government, community service providers and the wider community have a role to play in working towards making the perpetrators accountable, making the victims safe and changing entrenched attitudes. Organisations like Starick are integral in this equation.

I applaud Starick for the support they have provided in the south east metropolitan corridor for the past 30 years, offering support and refuge to the victims of family and domestic violence.

In some ways it is a sad indictment that Starick have walked this journey for 30 years and their services are more in demand than ever before. This government is committed to working with agencies like Starick to change this.

**Minister for Child Protection and Family Support,
the Hon Helen Morton MLC**

"I applaud Starick for the support they have provided in the south east metropolitan corridor for the past 30 years."





"It takes a village to raise a child."

African proverb

Starick is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support services in Perth's south-east metro area to women and children affected by family and domestic violence.

It was 30 years ago that Starick House opened its doors for the first time to women and children escaping family and domestic violence.

Today, our services include two refuges for women with children. Starick House is in Gosnells and Mary Smith House is in Bentley, each accommodating six women and their children. We also offer court support, advocacy, children's programs, community outreach services and a busy "op shop" in Love Street, Cloverdale run entirely by volunteers.

Starick receives grants from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Lotterywest and other one-off funding sources. However, financial and material donations are always welcome, and help us offer a wider range of non-essential but vital services – art therapy, holiday programs and camps, specialist counselling, baby massage and yoga.

If you'd like to contribute in any way to the important work we do, we'd love to hear from you – please visit our website www.starick.org.au or telephone our office on (08) 9478 5300.

In this our 30th year, we shine a spotlight on some of those who have quietly and steadfastly contributed to the important work we do – our supporters, our volunteers and our trained, compassionate and dedicated personnel, some of whom – as you will see in the stories that follow – have experienced domestic violence themselves.

If you'd like to contribute in any way to the important work we do, we'd love to hear from you – please visit our website www.starick.org.au or telephone our office on (08) 9478 5300.



Henrietta Starick – the true face of domestic violence and survival



*"As tears fall from her face she begins to sway
Love shouldn't hurt this way."*

Diana Rasmussen,
Snow White Darkness

The name Starick commemorates Nurse Henrietta Starick (1851-1941), who worked as a Registered Maternity Nurse in the Gosnells area from 1905 to 1935. Nurse Starick represents the true face of domestic violence and survival. Her work as a midwife extended throughout the areas of Maddington, Gosnells, Cannington, Southern River and Canning Vale and she covered many kilometres on foot, tending to her patients. She was extremely proud of the fact that she never lost a mother in all her years of working as a maternity nurse.

Nurse Starick had 12 children of her own, and was herself a victim of severe domestic violence, sometimes escaping her husband by taking trips in a small dingy to transport her children and herself down the Canning River to a safe place. Several of her grandchildren still live in the Gosnells area.

Mary Smith – concerned citizen

In 1975 – the International Year of Women – concerned citizen Mary Smith and a group of women from the International Women's Year Committee initiated the Night Shelter project. An Advisory Committee was formed, a property leased and the Association was incorporated in 1976.

The Mary Smith Night Shelter in Bentley opened its doors in 1978 to women and children escaping family and domestic violence, experiencing mental health issues and homelessness.

Mary was passionate and committed to the protection of women and children throughout her life. She was also involved in the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence and other committees relating to domestic violence.

Mary didn't receive a wage, yet donated her entire

time to working at her refuge. She became a well-known and respected community figure in the City of Canning and deservedly earned awards and recognition for her commitment to these causes. She passed away in 1997, at 72 years of age.

In 1999, Starick took over the management of the Mary Smith Night Shelter and continues to manage it today.



Kay Hallahan, AO – the first Patron



"We are in a state of domestic war, the battlefield is in the home."

Sara Niles, *Torn From the Inside Out*

Kay Hallahan AO was Starick's first Patron. As she explains, her ties with domestic violence go back a long way.

"When I was a child, my father managed a timber mill for Bunning Bros. I remember sitting at our kitchen table one evening when some very distressed children from one of the mill families came to our house saying 'Come quickly, dad's belting mum!' Dad got up from the meal table and went with them to sort it out, so that all members of the family were safe. I had great respect for the way my parents helped others."

Before Kay got into politics, she was a Woman Police Constable. She remembers only too well how anything reported as "a domestic" got dropped to the bottom of the list for action. "Women in danger were reporting in, calling out for help and being largely ignored and unsupported. I can tell you I didn't feel at all happy about that!"

"Back in the early '80s I was living in Lesmurdie and had become very involved with the Labor Party," she remembers. "Our Electorate Council included Perth's south-eastern suburbs, and we were all very concerned that the community was offering an inadequate response to women suffering domestic and family violence."

In 1982, Kay attended a public meeting with representatives from Armadale and Gosnells City

Councils, to discuss the need for a women and children's refuge in the area. Over 80 concerned members of the public attended, and a steering group was formed.

"It's important to remember that up until this point, there was no crisis accommodation down the south-east corridor other than at Cannington. But ultimately good people made it happen, with both councils strongly supporting the move."

At the 1983 state election, Kay won a seat in the Legislative Council as part of the Labor Government. Two weeks later, a Federal Labor Government was elected. There had been a rising tide of concern about community services and Labor, particularly its women, went about addressing some of these deficits.

"It was a very busy, stimulating time," remembers Kay. "We were frenetically busy getting community services in place, supported by both the state and federal governments. We'd never had that before. It led to Commonwealth State funding for Childcare and the Home and Community Care Program, as well as the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme – SAAP – and ongoing funding for refuges."

In 1985, Starick House opened as a purpose-built

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Wishing on a Star(ick)

Domestic and family violence is an area of social need often overlooked when it comes to public donations.

So we asked our refuge staff what they think would improve the lives of the women and children they work with.

The result: a poignantly and tellingly simple list of day-to-day items that most of us take for granted...

- Baby massage lessons for the mums. ("It's good for attachment between mum and child, good for the family bond and benefits baby development.")
- Re-introduction of art therapy. ("It benefitted the children so much.")
- Programmes for women and children on nutrition and cooking nutritious meals on a budget.
- Self-defence courses, including how to stay safe in the home ("We did this once before and the women loved it!")
- Gym memberships.
- Resurrection of Starick's annual client art exhibition.
- Basic facilitation aids ("Things we can do around the table to help the women plan their future – vision boards, art and craft, that sort of thing.")
- A new 10-12 seater bus. ("Our van seats six and once you get the kids' car seats in, it's a bit of a squash! A bigger bus would also mean that everyone could go on outings together.")
- Storage space for donations of large items like furniture, so this can be available when women are leaving the refuges and establishing new homes.
- Start-up packs for women establishing new homes – kitchen utensils, linen, etc.
- Plants for the refuge gardens – to make them more shady and pleasant, and to provide the families with edible herbs and vegetables.

"Our van seats six and once you get the kids' car seats in, it's a bit of a squash!"

The new Patron – Anne Banks-McAllister

Anne Banks-McAllister knows exactly why she was approached to be Starick's new patron.

"I've been in the women's sector for many years, I've built up good networks, I'm a bit known around the place. Hopefully I can make a difference."

Anne comes to the role with excellent credentials. She's the former CEO of the Shire of Peppermint Grove and is involved with the WA International Women's Day (IWD) collaboration, which manages the annual WA Women's Hall of Fame.

For eight years, Anne sat on the national board of UN Women Australia, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women. She was also the inaugural chair of UN Women Perth.

As Starick's new patron, Anne sees fundraising as a major focus. "Most of the funding we receive is for the delivery of specific services. I want to increase its non-tied funding so that they can do some of the things they dream about – non-specific services and innovative new programmes that support mothers and children."

Anne's a strong believer in economic diversification, and a skilled strategist with much experience in culture change programmes. She's planning to help Starick find innovative ways to assist its clients, and cites several programmes that currently don't receive funding but would enrich and improve the lives of women and children affected by domestic violence.

"Baby massage therapy sessions would teach mothers who have come out of a domestic violent situation how to massage their children. Babies in particular have a physical reaction to the physical violence and massage goes a long way to helping children deal with or get over the trauma."

Anne is also keen to see Starick re-introduce regular art therapy sessions as a means of helping children overcome trauma. "It's such a powerful tool, such a great way to help them express themselves in a non-threatening way."

But there is no specific budget for many of the initiatives she wants to see introduced – and she says that's why the organisation needs to get sophisticated about fundraising.

"In particular, I'd like to see us get better at finding ongoing donors."

"We need people and organisations who become both advocates and regular funders for the really important work Starick is doing."



"Several programmes currently don't receive funding but would enrich and improve the lives of women and children affected by domestic violence."

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR OF GOSNELLS



Starick Services, from its early beginnings 30 years ago as the Gosnells-Armadale Women's Refuge, has played an important role in the safety of women and children in the City of Gosnells.

I commend Starick Services on providing an important service for women in the local area and for providing a safe environment for women and children suffering the impact of family and domestic violence.

The City of Gosnells has assisted Starick Services for the last 30 years because the service provides a valuable and unfortunately much-needed service within our local community.

Domestic violence is a terrible situation for anyone to find themselves in. I am proud that the City continues to contribute to a local refuge for many women and their children, across the South-East of Perth.

City of Gosnells Mayor, Dave Griffiths

THE CLOTHESLINE PROJECT

Back in 1985, Virginia "Ginger" Blackwell needed somewhere safe to go with her two young sons, having left her husband due to domestic violence. Starick House had opened only a few months earlier. Ginger stayed for three months before finding accommodation with the support of refuge staff.

A few months later, Starick approached Ginger to work at the refuge. The rest, as they say, is history. Ginger joined the organisation and, after 12 years, went on to complete a social work degree at Curtin University – not bad, as she says, "for someone who didn't even pass grade eight at school!"

Ginger has been with Starick for 29 years, and currently works part-time as the co-ordinator of the Clothesline Project – a US program started in 1990 to address the issue of violence against women.

"It's a vehicle for women affected by violence to express their emotions by decorating a shirt," says Ginger. "They then hang the shirt on a clothesline to be viewed by others as testimony to the problem of violence against women. With the support of many, it has since spread worldwide."

Every other weekend, Ginger loads her car up with paints and blank t-shirts and visits both of Starick's

refuges, offering the women a few quiet hours of contemplation. "They write things like 'I take back my life and my control' or 'Why me, what did I do?' or sometimes they simply draw a picture that articulates how they're feeling."

Ginger says her main focus is providing a safe space for women to open up and express themselves on their t-shirts.

"I see women arrive at Starick frail and scared, who go on to become extraordinarily strong and live a life free of domestic violence. That's why I do my job."



Detail of one of the t-shirts from The Clothesline Project.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR OF ARMADALE

On behalf of the City of Armadale, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Starick on its 30th anniversary.

Since 1985 Starick has provided emergency support accommodation and a safe environment for women and children in the southeast region.

Starick's teams provide vital support to vulnerable women and advocate on their behalf to ensure their needs are met.

Unfortunately, the need for crisis accommodation and specialised support services is increasing. More women and children in our communities are experiencing family and domestic violence that often leads to homelessness.

The City is proud to continue to assist Starick as it continues to work to achieve positive outcomes for the community.

My fellow Councillors and I wish Starick and its dedicated staff a memorable 30th anniversary.

Mayor Henry Zelones OAM, JP



A BUDDHIST MEDITATION



The Armadale Buddhist Society visits Starick House refuge once a month and runs meditation sessions for both staff and clients.

Various kinds of meditation are shared during these two-hour sessions, aimed at showing ways to relax and release stress.

During the mindful eating exercise, the women are guided through eating a sultana very, very slowly.

"The idea is that you can do it anywhere, anytime," says refuge employee Elena Naumovska. "You can do it washing up or walking to the shops."

Elena says she's noticed how this helps clients prepare for some of their more stressful meetings.

One lady told me it lifts her to another level in terms of her health and wellbeing."

DONATED MEALS

The TAFE students at Canning Vale College regularly donate meals to Starick House refuge.

"The students cook up the meals, freeze them and take them over to the refuge every three months or so," says Jodie Richardson.

"There's always a good variety of meals – lasagne, veggie curry, chicken curry, sometimes they make biscuits.

"The clients think it's fantastic. All they have to do is warm it up. They come in disposable containers you don't even have to wash up!"





"The children in our services are the next generation. By working with them, we hope to break the cycle of domestic violence. If we can do that, we are making a difference."

Shona Zuldorf,
Starick Chair

Shona Zuldorf – the Chair, Board of Management

After her children left home, public servant and strategic planning specialist Shona Zuldorf decided she wanted to contribute more fully to her community.

"I believe in give and take," she says. "Once the kids had gone, I felt it was my time to give back."

So in 2009 Shona joined the Starick board. "I had a list of things that were important to me – women, children, the indigenous community, migrants and refugees. Starick ticked every one of those boxes."

A year later, Shona took on the role of Chair of Starick's Board. She has gone on to build up a strong team of professionals who guide the organisation's policy-making, fundraising endeavours and ethos.

"The children in our services are the next generation. By working with them, we hope to break the cycle of domestic violence. If we can do that, we are making a difference"

"I'm not sure my fellow board members understand what a privilege it is for me to work with them," she says. "I love that they invest in making Starick the best it can possibly be and want to know how they can make a difference."

"We as a board also think very highly of our new CEO, Leanne. She understands government, but manages with heart. She is a huge asset."

Every time Shona attends an official event for Starick, she is reminded of the important work her organisation does.

"One of our clients gave a speech and said 'This is the first time I've had my own healthcare card and bank account, and I want to thank you'."

"Then there was the African lady with three children who said 'For the first time in my life, the lives of me and my children are safe.' That's a really big deal. It's a salient reminder of how lucky I am and what other peoples' lives are like. It's why we do what we do to help."

In Starick's 30th year, Shona's goal is to differentiate the services offered by changing the lives of children who experience domestic violence.

The board is also focusing on maintaining the organisation's financial viability, pursuing fundraising initiatives, applying for grants and generally getting smarter about finance.

"These are tough economic times, and I have no doubt that some organisations like ours won't be here in the future. So that's our aspiration – to be here in five years' time, still pushing for change, still helping those that need it."

"To make a difference, that's the important thing to do," she says. "We all just need to do our little bit, and this is my little bit."

Leanne Barron – the CEO

In some ways, Starick CEO Leanne Barron feels like her professional life has come full circle. “My first jobs in the non-government sector were in housing, homelessness and domestic violence,” she says. “Since then, my career has been focused in social services, mostly in advocacy and policy roles.”

Leanne was already well aware of Starick before joining the organization, and had great respect for how the organisation grew in response to new issues and ways of working.

“That was something I wanted to continue when I came here – to ensure that we are responding to the needs in the community, and that the needs of women and children are always at the forefront of whatever we do.”

At the same time, Leanne has worked with Starick’s Board to strengthen the governance of the organization, and to meet new requirements and community expectations about accountability for not-for-profit organisations. She admits that at times this has been a challenge, particularly given new service requirements and budget restraints.

Leanne has huge respect for her staff and the work they do. “It takes a lot of spirit and resilience to work in this space. Starick staff see a side of life that many of us don’t have to face.”

As the organisation celebrates its 30th anniversary, she says it’s important to recognise the history of not-for-profit organisations like Starick. “We are an essential part of the infrastructure of the community. It’s also important that we see where we’ve been and where we are now, and to celebrate our contributions.”

As to the future, Leanne says the next 12 months will see Starick become a lead agency in the delivery of a new refuge service system model, providing an emergency response to women and children who are at very high risk of harm. Starick will also work collaboratively with other refuges in the eastern metro corridor.

Leanne is also keen to build up Starick’s children’s program. “Finding new ways to connect with children, and with other organisations that can offer



specialist programs to Starick clients is a key part of how we can work to help stop the cycle of violence.”

Looking back on her first two years with Starick, Leanne says she has particularly enjoyed the way that her family, friends and networks have rallied around the service – supporting events, volunteering and dropping off donations.

“There is a lot of community support for services like ours, and we couldn’t survive without it.”

“It takes a lot of spirit and resilience to work in this space. Starick staff see a side of life that most of us don’t have to face.”

Leanne Barron,
Starick CEO



"There is a lot of noise out there drowning out quiet voices...lots of folks have put their hands over their ears to drown out the suffering."

Shane Claiborne,
The Simple Way

The former CEO – Arina Aoina

When Starick opened its doors on 30 June 1985, there was just enough funding to employ four workers and co-ordinator Arina Aoina, who would continue to lead the organisation for 28 years, her role evolving into that of CEO as the organisation grew and extended its services.

Arina remembers those early days. "When I started, there were no staff, just a brand new building with one secondhand desk and a chair!"

Within 24 hours, the refuge had its first family. A few weeks later, a few more families had moved in. The refuge has been full, give or take a day or two, ever since.

Under Arina's management, Starick became a new type of refuge; one where the women were treated as equals, and where children were considered to be as important as their mothers. "Starick led the way in this new approach," remembers Arina.

Starick also became the lead agency in the area of co-ordinated community response to family and domestic violence. This saw refuge workers, police and the justice system working together toward the same goal: protecting women and children.

Anne Muir was one of the first people to be trained in the new system and continues her work for Starick today. Another key player in this challenging but exciting time was Senior Sergeant Fred Hill at the Armadale Police Station.

"Without Fred, the integrated services approach wouldn't have worked so effectively," says Arina. "He gave us an office and sent his policemen over to the refuge for two hours a week to take a look at what the women were going through, with the aim of building a stronger relationship between us and the police."

"When I started, there were no staff, just a brand new building with one secondhand desk and a chair!"

MEET THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATE

Anne Muir

Anne Muir has been employed by Starick for 29 years, and was the first non-government domestic violence advocate in Australia to be based in a police station.

The legal component of dealing with domestic violence really interested Anne, and eventually she became a court support officer. A regular at Armadale Courthouse, she developed a strong working relationship with police prosecutor Sergeant Phillip Tonkin.

In 1998, Phillip suggested Anne approach the Officer In Charge at Armadale Police station to see if he'd make an office available for a domestic violence advocate.

"Phil's a great person," says Anne. "He supported me then and he continues to support me now".

Until Anne's placement at the station – part of the integrated community response approach to domestic violence introduced by Starick – there had been very little love lost between refuge workers and police in Perth's south-eastern corridor.

"Basically, we were mistrustful of each other," says Anne with a laugh. "Those of us who worked with abused women were always bagging the police, while they thought we were a bunch of hairy lesbians just getting on the man-hating bandwagon!"

It took a few years, but eventually both sides learned to trust each other, recognising they shared the same goal.

Anne's work sees her talking to women from all walks of life who are experiencing domestic violence and offering them choices.

She is at pains to clarify that she's an advocate, not an advice centre. "I'll be their voice and generally take the pressure off when they don't have the physical or mental energy to do it for themselves, but it's not my job to tell them what to do."

Anne attends court when the women apply for restraining orders, and responds to referrals from various agencies to provide support.

Anne often gets frustrated when clients see themselves rather than their partners as the cause.

"They'll say 'he's a good father and provider and only gets abusive when he's been drinking or had a bad day at work', or 'he hit me because I didn't have his dinner on the table at the right time', or 'he got angry because I'm such a useless mum and I don't keep the house clean'.

"All the nights of listening to my mother scream and things breaking. Of holding my brother and sister and listening to them cry and begging me to stop it."

Emily Andrews,
*The Finer Points of
Becoming Machine*

She says many of the women stay with the perpetrator because they believe it's safer. "She thinks if she has the tea on the table at the right time and makes sure the children are clean and ready for bed, perhaps he won't get angry and they'll all get a good night's sleep. This is her way of resisting the violence."

Working in such a highly stressful field takes its toll, and Anne has devised strategies to remain sane.

"I've learned how to leave my stuff at the office, to process and let it go. I spend a lot of time reflecting and I go to the gym. Mind you, every now and then a case still gets to me."

Anne says she's got another five years in her before she retires. "I've been working in domestic violence for 31 years now, and they reckon five years is the burn-out rate!"

Until then, she'll keep doing what she does best – providing women with options to enable them and their children to live a life free of domestic violence.



When victims are surprised to be believed

Kathleen Brand's clients are often surprised that she believes their stories. "After all, they've spent a lifetime being told they're making it all up or exaggerating, or that it's really their fault," she says.

Kathleen has been working with women and children experiencing family and domestic violence for eight years, and currently spends one day a week at each of Starick's services counselling women.



"I do not assume to know what and how my clients feel or the pain they are going through. But by offering a place of safety for them to talk and with a little bit of theory thrown in, I hope I can help in some way."

Some women come just the once, while others visit regularly, she says.

"It all comes down to what they need to navigate their way through the crisis they

find themselves in. We are there to help them on that journey."

Kathleen helps her clients take responsibility for themselves and their children, but puts the responsibility for domestic violence squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrator.

"I am living in hell from one day to the next. But there is nothing I can do to escape. I don't know where I would go if I did. I feel utterly powerless, and that feeling is my prison. I entered of my own free will, I locked the door, and I threw away the key."

Huraki Murakami,
1Q84

Kathleen is quick to clarify that her role isn't to cure anyone. "It's really the women that do all the work. We can help but they have to make that journey themselves, recognise their own dreams, start a new life."

Kathleen's newest role is as Manager of SPEARS (Support, Prevention, Education, Advocacy Referral Services), which has given her further insight to just how dedicated the staff are at Starick.

"Starick's advocate role in the police stations, court and outreach are essential for women's safety," she says. "It has saved many lives."

"It's our job to walk beside these women"

Danita Walter began her career with Starick 25 years ago, while she was still at university. She took over as manager at Mary Smith Refuge in 2009 and says she loves the challenge. "It's a job that changes from minute to minute in response to the situation. It doesn't get boring!"

Part of Danita and her team's role is to offer emotional support to their clients. "It's about active listening, empathy and giving women and children the chance to share whatever they want to share, and knowing it's a safe place to be able to do that without any judgement."

Like Starick House, there are six family units at the Mary Smith refuge. "And we are always, always full," says Danita. "You might get one day when a unit is unoccupied, then we're full again."

She loves working with women and children, and giving them the opportunity to start a new life.

"You can see their potential, but they can't reach it because of circumstances."

"We're here to give them as much support and information, as many resources and access to as many networks as they need to make informed decisions."

"It's our job to walk beside these women and work together on their goals and priorities; it is a team effort."



THE CHILD ADVOCATES – “Children are my passion”

Fei Qu (top) has worked with Starick for four years and is the Child Advocate at Mary Smith refuge.

Chermila Dookee (below) is the Child Advocate at Starick House refuge and has worked with children all her professional life. “They’re my passion,” says the bubbly former pre-school teacher from Mauritius.

Every fortnight, Fei runs a kid’s movie club and uses the films as a way to discuss domestic violence. “For instance recently we watched the movie Brave,” she says. “Afterwards we talked about what it means to be brave. I asked them if they thought it was brave for dad to hit mum, and we discussed relationships and their feelings about domestic violence.”

Mums and children often arrive at the refuge with just the clothes they’re standing in. Often the mums don’t know how to tell their children what’s going on and where they’re going, and they arrive traumatised and confused.

Each child is given a buddy bag – a backpack containing essential items such as toiletries, pyjamas, socks, underwear and a pillowcase, as well as comfort items such as a book, photo frame and teddy bear.

The bags are provided by The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, a national charity set up to support children experiencing violence. “Restoring a sense of safety and security into children’s lives during a traumatic time is one of the first steps to recovery,” says a foundation representative. “Buddy Bags help to make this transition a little easier. Buddy Bags are something children can call their own, no matter where they go.”

Fei remembers giving one little boy a buddy bag. “He said ‘this teddy bear is my first friend’. That made me very sad.”

After women’s advocates interview the mother, it’s Chermila and Fei’s job to talk to the children and try to uncover any issues, as well as work on feelings of safety.

On a more practical level, many of the children have moved school several times and, understandably, struggle with homework. Child Advocates assist by talking to principals and teachers to explain the situation, as well as helping the children settle into school and making sure they’ve got uniforms, school bags, stationery and water bottles. They also check the children’s health generally and ensure the babies are up to date with their immunisations.

Building up trust is a big part of the job of a Child Advocate. “We do free play, art and craft, games to help them open up,” says Chermila. “Some will talk in two days, some take a week, others need longer.”



When it comes to job satisfaction, Chermila and Fei say it’s a no-brainer.

“I get so much pleasure working with the children, seeing them blossom in a safe environment,” says Fei. “I plan to be here for many more years.”

“When the children start to smile again and tell me they’re feeling better, making friends, getting happy. That’s when I know it’s all worth it,” says Chermila.

Women's advocates take time to build relationships



Jodie Richardson (above left) and Aorangi Te Huia (above centre) share the role of Women's Advocate at the Starick House refuge. Heather Stuart (above right) is based at the Mary Smith refuge and shares the role of Women's Advocate with three others. She has worked with Starick for 17 years.

When a new family arrives at either refuge, staff carry out an initial assessment to make sure the women have what they need for the first 24 hours. The family is given an emergency shopping voucher and staff take them to the local supermarket. For families who have fled home empty-handed, clothing and other necessities are often sourced from Starick's op shop.

Women's Advocates work with women from many different nationalities, cultures and ethnicities, some of whom don't have their own bank accounts or any formal identification.

"These women haven't been allowed to do things for themselves," says Aorangi. "We give them guidance and support, but they make their own decisions about what they want and need."

Staff and clients often hang out together in the refuge common rooms, and it's here that some of the best discussions happen.

"We have a lot of fun," says Heather. "Cooking days, and other activities that will help the women re-develop their confidence and build self-determination."

"You'll get women teaching each other new recipes and feeling proud at being able to share their knowledge," says Jodie. "We also use it as an opportunity for the women to share information about nutrition and budgeting, and sometimes we just have a good laugh."

"It opens the women up, and builds rapport between the women and with staff."

Heather says it often takes a long time to build a relationship with women. "I love when the light goes on, when they realise they can survive this, maybe fix their relationship, maybe not, but that they can survive alone if they need to."

Case-planning is an essential part of the advocacy role. "We look at things like housing, finances, legal aspects, health and children's programmes," says Jodie. "We help them find information and resources so that their goals can be achieved."

Starick also provides in-house counselling referrals and makes referrals to other specialist counselling services.

Women at both refuges participate in the LOVE and HURT programmes. "LOVE is about understanding what a healthy relationship is," Aorangi explains. "HURT is an interactive website designed to raise awareness about domestic and family violence and sexual assault, confronting the shame and investigating the issues from the perspective of those involved."

Aorangi has experienced domestic violence, and is passionate about helping women in a similar situation. "I feel a deep level of respect, compassion and honour for my clients," she says.

Jodie watched her own mother experience domestic violence, and spent much of her childhood staying at refuges. "I ran away once. For someone to come here is a hard thing. I get that."

Heather says she loves the ethos and community feel of Starick's refuges. "To be honest I never really wanted to work anywhere else."

A sense of community at the Starick Op Shop

After Dawn Campbell (top right) retired, she moved into a home two streets from Starick's Cloverdale head office.

"I was going past one day and I saw this little op shop," she says. "Once I found out about Starick's work with women and children experiencing domestic violence, I filled in an application form to volunteer. I started work two days later!"

That was four and a half years ago. Today Dawn manages the shop on a job-share basis with fellow volunteer Mary Sherwood (below right).

Mary started volunteering at the Starick op shop eight years ago, and was amazed at how many people donated goods. "Looking back, we've grown one hell of a lot since my early days," she says.

Christmas is a special time at the op shop, says Mary. "We get busy because a lot of people come in to do their Christmas shopping, especially those who don't have any money."

Dawn loves wrapping parcels for those staying at Starick refuges. "It cheers them up during what is a very sad time," she says. "We stay back and wrap and wrap and wrap! I enjoy all that."

Dawn and Mary are always ready to help when Starick clients move out of the refuge to set up their own homes.

"Some of the mothers who seek Starick's help have fled their home or hospital with nothing, so we help find them clothes," says Dawn. "It touches my heart when they come into the shop with their children. You know they've been through trauma."

"Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more."

H. Jackson Brown Jr.

"We hold onto items like baby baths and other items for the mums – bedding, furniture, that kind of thing."

Refuge clients always get first dibs on the bigger items, and word is beginning to spread about Starick's work as donations of clothing, toys and new items continue to arrive.

"Our donors often bring in something they've bought specially to give us – make-up, hand lotion, all the female things. They know our mums don't have that stuff, that they have to start again."

There's a lovely sense of community at the Starick op shop. "It's a bit like a social event, a bit of a laugh," says Dawn.



"We have a few chairs out the front for the staff, and the locals stop there to have a rest and a chat."

Now all Dawn wants is some weekend volunteers. "If we could open at weekends, we'd be able to bring in more money for Starick's work."

The 71 year old doesn't see herself moving on from her volunteer work with Starick anytime soon. "I love coming to work here," she says. "You feel like you're doing something, helping people. Everything I do in the shop, everything I sell, I know it's for a good cause."

As for Mary, she began at Starick when she was 58. Now retired, she continues her good works at the op shop as well as putting in volunteer hours at the library and with a local aged facility. "I do it because I love it," she says. "I like meeting people, making a difference."



"We're all for helping people who aren't in the limelight. We don't care if they're black, white or brindle."

Vivienne Stewart

THE PHILANTHROPISTS

Vivienne Stewart and Mandy Loton

What motivates a person to become a philanthropist? For Vivienne Stewart (above left), it was a diagnosis of breast cancer.

While recovering from her treatment, Vivienne got to thinking about how she could help others. But why Starick?

"Domestic violence is no respecter of persons, it's all across society," says Vivienne's friend and fellow philanthropist Mandy (above right). "But as charities go it's not very fashionable, and I knew from my work as a fundraiser that very few people help. Instead they go for the more glamorous, high profile charities."

Mandy worked for the Department of Arts, one of Kay Hallahan's portfolios back when she was a minister. "We'd always been very fond of Kay," says Mandy. "She was a marvellous minister and is a wonderful woman."

So the pair had lunch with Kay and told her they wanted to "give away a few bob to mothers and children who were having a hell of a run," remembers Mandy. Kay pointed them in the direction of Starick.

But what to give and how? Vivienne had grown up on a farm in Broomehill, and every summer her family spent a month at their beach house in Albany. "We always had such a great time, and it felt so sad that some people didn't have the means to have an annual holiday," she remembers. "So I said to Mandy 'Let's arrange for an annual holiday for children and their mothers!'

And so Viva Vivienne camps were born. The first camp was held in 2005, and every year since then Vivienne and Mandy have funded an annual holiday for Starick's victims of domestic and family violence at Fairbridge Village, a heritage-listed townsite just north of Pinjarra.

"Fairbridge offers a lovely, safe environment, along with all that stuff we had when we were kids," says Vivienne with a big smile. A quick look at the activity programme reveals much that would delight children of all ages: a low ropes course, hay rides, arts and crafts, movie nights, karaoke, a giant swing, flying fox and visits to the local zoo.

Fairbridge CEO Mark Anderson has been involved since the word go. "The support of the women and children involved in the Starick programme is really important to us," he says. "We want them to be able to come away in a healing environment like Fairbridge, and to contribute by putting a little joy into their lives."

"We're all for helping people who aren't in the limelight," says Vivienne. "We don't care if they're black, white or brindle."

"A lot of people give money to overseas charities," says Mandy. "But I believe you should look in your own backyard first."

STARICK TIMELINE

1985	Official opening of Starick House
1987	Joint production with Curtin University of 30 minutes video to increase awareness of domestic violence (DV) in the community
1988	Inception of HOWIC (Housing of Women in the Community). Purchase of 3 units in the local area.
1991	Pilot of 10-week support groups with Stirling Women's Refuge
1993	Piloting of a DV Intervention Project in the Armadale police region.
1994	Official launch of Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project (ADVIP)
	HOWIC – purchase of two more properties
1995	SPEARS Court Support Program relocated to Armadale Police Station - first not for profit organisation in Australia to provide a DV outreach service within a police station.
1996	SPEARS funded by the Department for Community Development
1997	Commenced provision of counselling services to women experiencing family and domestic violence (FDV).
1998	Funded by Department of Housing and Works to renovate/build Starick refuge.
1999	Starick took over the management of Mary Smith Night Shelter
2000	Development of "Strengthening the Heart" Project
2002	Establishment of Outreach service under the SPEARS Program for families leaving refuges in the South East Metro Corridor.
2003	Family and Domestic Violence Advocate based at Cannington Police Station
	Family and Domestic Violence Advocate based at Gosnells Police Station
2004	Counselling services relocated to Gosnells Community Lotteries House
2006	HOWIC – securing of two more properties
	Agreement with Access Housing to provide accommodation and outreach services to the Eudoria Street Cluster Project
2009	New buildings added to Mary Smith Centre with funding from the Department of Housing
	Starick Services Inc. restructured into the Centre for Non-Violence, Centre for Community and Centre for Safety and Wellbeing.
	Funded by Department for Child Protection (DCP) to operate the Laverton Crisis Intervention Service
2011	Funded by DCP under the 'Reconnecting Rural and Remote' program to manage the Family and Domestic Violence Case Management and Coordination Services for the Murchison/Gascoyne, Goldfields, and West/East Kimberley regions.
2013	Refurbishment of Starick House with funding from Lotterywest
	Management of HOWIC transferred from Starick to Access Housing Realty
2015	Awarded funding by Lotterywest to undertake refurbishment of Mary Smith Centre
	Awarded funding by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support for the role of Lead Agency for the East Metro corridor to provide 24/7 response to women and children at imminent risk of harm