

ACHIA NSW

CORE AND CLUSTER NEWSLETTER

January 2026



Message to our Aboriginal-led & Managed Women & Children's Refuges Across NSW

Reflecting on a Year of Strength, Leadership and Progress

Yaama colleague, as we begin a new year, we want to reflect on the strength, resilience and leadership shown across Aboriginal-led & Managed Women & Children's Refuges throughout the past year. 2025 has been a year of significant sector reform, major funding announcements, and continued growth for Aboriginal-led responses across the state.

Aboriginal-led Core & Cluster Services - Progress & Challenges

The past year marked a major expansion of Aboriginal Core & Cluster services, with some new Aboriginal-led refuges securing funding through the NSW & Commonwealth governments. While some services are now operational, we acknowledge that some Aboriginal Core & Cluster projects are still in the process of completing construction, fit-outs, recruitment, and service establishment.

These delays reflect broader infrastructure challenges, supply chain issues, and the need for culturally safe design processes. We recognise the pressure this places on communities and on frontline workers who are already managing high demand for refuge accommodation. We continue to advocate strongly for:

- More flexible timeframes
- Culturally-appropriate capital works requirements
- Dedicated operational readiness funding
- Workforce and governance support for new Aboriginal-led refuges

These services will play a major role in strengthening local responses for women and children on Country, and ACHIA NSW will continue to provide updates and support throughout 2026.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather and pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present.

We honour the strength, wisdom, and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – who have always nurtured, protected, and led their families and communities in the face of immense hardship.





Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in DFV and Homelessness Responses

Across NSW, we have seen powerful momentum towards Aboriginal-led service design, governance, and delivery.

This year has highlighted:

- The essential role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in shaping refuge models that truly reflect community needs
- Stronger partnerships between ACCOs, and other services
- Increased recognition that culturally safe practice cannot be an optional add-on. It must be embedded in the entire refuge system
- A shift toward funding, policy, and practice frameworks that centre Aboriginal self-determination.

Your refuges have continued to model best practice through healing-centred care, cultural governance, and wrap-around supports that honour family, connection, identity, and community.



Looking to stay up to date in the Sector?

Staying informed can be challenging when you are focused on supporting our women, children and communities every day. This collection of newsletters and podcasts brings together trusted sector updates, insights and conversations to help you stay across key issues, policy changes and practice developments, in a way that fits around frontline work.

- DV Alert - Follow this link for their newsletter
- Daaring Yarn Podcast by FNAAFV - [Listen on Spotify here](#)





ACHIA NSW Aboriginal-led & Managed Women & Children's Refuge Summit 2025

On 23–24 June 2025, ACHIA NSW hosted the inaugural Aboriginal-led & Managed Women & Children's Refuge Summit on Birpai Country in Port Macquarie, bringing together Aboriginal-led refuges, frontline workers, Elders and sector partners from across NSW.

The Summit created a culturally safe space for connection, shared learning and advocacy, with over 75 participants from Aboriginal-led refuges, Specialist Homelessness Services, ACCOs and allied sectors. Core and Cluster services funded through DCJ joined long-standing Aboriginal-led refuges, strengthening relationships and collective advocacy for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Summit Highlights

- Welcome to Country by Dr/Auntie Rhonda Radley
- Speakers and presenters including Aboriginal leaders, refuge workers, women with lived experience, and expertise in legal, health, wellbeing and justice
- Workshops to support a Community of Practice for Core and Cluster services
- Yarning circles and cultural art activities supporting peer learning
- Graphic scribing by Emma Shumack (NATSIHA)

ACHIA NSW extends its thanks to all participants for the generosity, honesty and leadership shared across the two days, and to DCJ, DVNSW and Homelessness NSW for their support.

This Summit marked the beginning of a stronger, more connected Aboriginal-led refuge network across NSW, grounded in culture, collective strength, and the shared goal of safety and healing for our women and children.

"This was an amazing experience and very insightful. Thank you to all the organisers and all the amazing effort that was poured into this event"

"I really got a lot out of this; I took in a lot of info that will help myself and my future work within the community"

"Need more of these – being able to talk with other long-term services and new ones just starting up. The wealth of knowledge and experience in the room was amazing"

"Great work on this event, this information kept myself interested, gain further knowledge, made me more aware of extra supports for my tenants and community, it's made me aware of the gaps in services locally".

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2026 REFUGES SUMMIT

Stay tuned in early 2026 for the Save the Date Announcement for the Annual Womens and Childrens Refuges Summit taking place later this year.





Launching a Community of Practice - Have Your Say

In response to the strong interest and momentum from the Summit, we are establishing a statewide Community of Practice (CoP) for Aboriginal-led & Managed Women & Children's Refuges.

This CoP will create a sustained space for:

- Peer support and learning
- Cultural governance and leadership development
- Sharing tools, challenges and best practice
- Workforce development, training, and mentoring
- Collective advocacy and system influence
- Strengthening cultural safety across the whole DFV and homelessness system.

We are now inviting Expression of Interest to help co-design the CoP. Your input will help shape its structure, priorities, meeting frequency and key focus areas. The CoP will only be meaningful if it reflects the needs, voices, and wisdom of Aboriginal refuge workers and leaders themselves.



Community of Practice Expression of Interest

You can fill in the form using the QR Code above or by clicking the link below:

[**Submit Here**](#)



Thank you from the Team

To every manager, frontline worker, caseworker, cultural support worker, night staff member, Elder, board member, volunteer, and community advocate working in Aboriginal-led & managed refuges: thank you.

Your commitment is saving lives. Your leadership is changing systems. Your cultural knowledge is healing families. Your strength continues to carry our communities forward.

In need of assistance?

If your organisation needs support or advocacy in responding to family and domestic violence, Eleanor is available to help. As part of the ACHIA NSW team, Eleanor works alongside Aboriginal-led and community organisations to strengthen responses, navigate challenges and advocate for better outcomes for women and children.

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