

#Elsie

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

**ELSiE**

OF WOMEN'S REFUGES IN AUSTRALIA

# Conference Program

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15-16 March 2024

Hosted by  
University of Technology Sydney



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# Friday Program Great Hall, Building 1 (Tower), UTS

The Elsie Conference is chaired by **Professor Anne Summers AO**, Professor of Domestic and Family Violence, at UTS Business School.

9:00am - 9:30am	<p>Conference Welcome - <b>Professor Anne Summers AO</b></p> <p>Acknowledgement of Country - <b>Aunty Glendra Stubbs</b></p> <p>Conference Introduction - <b>Carl Rhodes</b>, Dean UTS Business School</p> <p>Video Welcome Address - <b>The Hon Anthony Albanese</b>, Prime Minister of Australia</p> <p>Address - <b>Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister</b>, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy and Senator for NSW introduced by Amy Persson, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice and Inclusion), Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, University of Technology Sydney</p>
9:30am - 10:00am	<b>The Elsie Story</b>
10:00am - 10:45am	<p><b>Opening Address: Journey to Justice</b></p> <p>with Christine Robinson, CEO Wurringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre</p>
10:45am - 11:00am	Morning Tea
11:00am - 12:00pm	<p><b>The History of Multicultural Services for Women in Need</b></p> <p>Conversation Convenor: Maha Abdo OAM, CEO Muslim Women Australia</p> <p>Panel: • Maria Dimopoulos AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yasmin Khan, The Bangle Foundation</li> </ul>
12:00pm-1:00pm	<p><b>The First Ten Years: Memory, Myth and Milestones</b></p> <p>What were the goals and the important issues for the first feminist refugees? A group of women active in the first years of three refuges discuss what mattered to them and if these same goals and issues are relevant today. This discussion will be continued in an open discussion workshop on Saturday.</p> <p>Convenor: Ludo McFerran AM</p> <p>Panel: • Vivien Johnson, Marrickville Womens Refuge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Di Otto, Half Way House, Victoria</li> <li>• Bobbie Townsend, Elsie Women's Refuge</li> </ul>
1:00pm-1:15pm	<p><b>Music Performance</b></p> <p>OUTLOUD – Respect Program</p> <p>Featuring Condell Park Public School</p>
1:15pm - 2:15pm	Lunch Break
2:15pm - 3:15pm	<p><b>Running a Refuge Today</b></p> <p>Panel discussion among today's generation of refuge managers, with audience Q&amp;A. Lessons learnt from the past and challenges for the future.</p> <p>Convenor: Delia Donovan, CEO Domestic Violence NSW</p> <p>Panel: • Janet Jukes OAM, Refuge Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julie Oberin AM, Annie North Women's Refuge</li> <li>• Leanne Barron, Starick</li> <li>• Sunila Kotwal, Immigrant Women's SpeakOut Association</li> </ul>
3:15pm - 3:45pm	<b>Interlude</b> - Commemoration of women killed by domestic violence
3:45pm - 4:00pm	Afternoon Tea
4:00pm - 5:30pm	<p><b>Keynote event: Expert Panel with audience Q&amp;A</b></p> <p>How has violence changed since 1974? Is it better or worse? How are we responding to coercive control and the newer, non-physical forms of violence such as financial abuse and technology-enabled abuse?</p> <p>Moderator: Virginia Haussegger</p> <p>Panel: • Dame Quentin Bryce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lauren Callaway, Assistant Commissioner Family Violence Command (Victoria)</li> <li>• Micaela Cronin Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner</li> <li>• Jess Hill, Author</li> <li>• Antoinette Braybrook AM, CEO Djirra</li> <li>• Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner</li> </ul>
7:00pm - 10:00pm	<p><b>Conference Dinner- with special guest Ray Martin AM</b></p> <p><b>Venue : UTS Aerial Function Centre</b></p>

# Saturday Program Building 8 (Business School), UTS

## Session 1 9:00 – 10:00

<p><b>Safe and Respectful Workplaces</b></p> <p>Floor 2 Room 5 (2.05)</p>	<p>This session will discuss workplace responses to DFV. DFV has commonly been understood as a 'private' matter and has fallen outside the scope of regulation and policy governing the workplace. While there has been a long campaign to bring awareness to DFV as a workplace issue and enshrine protections, progress remains. This session will bring together leading researchers and activists to discuss the journey in securing domestic violence leave, corporate responses to DFV, and ways to design more safe and respectful workplaces.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ludo McFerran AM</li> <li>• Ramona Vijayerasa (Associate Professor, UTS)</li> <li>• Helen Westwood AM, Director, Australian College of Community and Disability Practitioners)</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mihajla Gavin (Senior Lecturer, UTS)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lived Experience in Policy Development and Research</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 10 (4.10)</p>	<p>There is growing recognition of the importance of involving those with lived experience in research, policy, and law reform. This panel looks at how this is done, and how people with lived experience have been included, heard, and supported. It will examine the need to share power, transform practice, prioritise marginalised groups and think deeply about what listening means. Lisa Wheildon and Sarah Ailwood discuss recent academic research. Lula Dembele discusses her experiences in policy and research initiatives.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lisa Wheildon (Researcher, Monash)</li> <li>• Sarah Ailwood (Senior Lecturer, University of Wollongong)</li> <li>• Lula Dembele</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane Wangmann (Associate Professor, UTS)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Building Access-creating safer services for people with disability</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 2 (5.02)</p>	<p>This session looks at research conducted with the Building Access Project. It is an initiative enabling DFV services to better suit women and children with disability. Women with disability experience violence at rates 40% higher than women without disability, yet often don't access DFV services due to the barriers they face. This session will look at these barriers and ways for DFV services to make their service safer and more available to women and children with disability</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joanne Yates (Senior Manager NSW Policy, People with Disability Australia)</li> </ul>
<p><b>The critical role of specialist women's services in ending violence against women</b></p> <p>Floor 3 Room 4 (3.04)</p>	<p>This session gives an overview of the sector, including its roots in feminist activism, international underpinnings, and the current framework in the new National Plan. It will look at the things that make women's specialist services unique and discuss the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance Good Practice Principles, noting the centrality of trauma-informed and women-centred practice.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen Bentley (CEO, WESNET)</li> <li>• Julie Oberin AM (Board Member, WESNET)</li> <li>• Leanne Barron (Deputy Chair Member, WESNET)</li> <li>• Elise Chapman</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preventing and responding to vicarious trauma and burnout</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 6 (5.06)</p>	<p>This workshop will help participants address vicarious trauma and other stressors experienced while supporting victim-survivors, offering strategies for identifying, processing, and mitigating these impacts. It also explores tools for managers and workplaces to prevent and respond to vicarious trauma, fostering safe environments.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tara Hunter (Director of Clinical and Client Services, Full Stop Australia)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bringing a new shelter model to life: Decade of Women's Community Shelters</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 9 (4.09)</p>	<p>This session will discuss how the WCS model has worked with communities around NSW to establish ten new shelters with more in the works, and how this model has influenced the conversation around DFV in NSW.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annabelle Daniel (CEO, Women's Community Shelters)</li> </ul>

# Saturday Program Building 8 (Business School), UTS

## Session 2 10:15 - 11:15

<p><b>Regional and Remote Refuges</b></p> <p>Floor 2 Room 5 (2.05)</p>	<p>In this session, two Aboriginal refuge workers in regional and remote communities across the country will present on the unique challenges for providing domestic and family violence services faced in these communities.</p> <p>This panel will look at the different approaches to providing shelter and engaging with their communities, as well as the history of these different services. It will also discuss providing services after natural disasters, such as the floods in Lismore.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Ronayne (Manager, Wilcannia Safe House)</li> <li>• Karen Dini-Paul (Warringu Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Corporation)</li> <li>• Maryanne Brown (Lismore Service Provider)</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by: Dixie Link-Gordon (Advocate for Safer Communities)</p>
<p><b>Children and Young People</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 10 (4.10)</p>	<p>This session discusses the challenges of centring the experiences of children and young people.</p> <p>The conversation will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of exposure to violence on children</li> <li>• Identifying and addressing children's experiences</li> <li>• The complexities of representing young people and children in these situations</li> <li>• Historical changes and future improvements needed.</li> </ul>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kate Alexander (Executive Director, DCJ NSW)</li> <li>• Fiona Buchanan (Senior Research Fellow, University of SA)</li> <li>• Elena Campbell (RMIT)</li> <li>• Rae Kaspiew (Australian Institute of Family Studies)</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by: Celina McEwen (Senior Researcher, UTS)</p>
<p><b>Financial Independence No matter who you bank with</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 2 (5.02)</p>	<p>CommBank Next Chapter is a bank- wide commitment to help end financial abuse and support long-term financial independence.</p> <p>CommBank have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnered with other services to help those affected access the right support</li> <li>• Jointly established the Financial Independence Hub</li> <li>• Collaborated with experts to increase understanding of financial abuse</li> <li>• Developed leading technology to block abusive transactions</li> <li>• Created resources to help workplaces support employees</li> </ul>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gunjan Pagare (Executive Manager Community Investment, Commonwealth Bank)</li> <li>• Louise Allwright, (National Program Manager- Financial Independence Hub, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domestic Violence in the LGBTQ+ Community and Refuge Responses</b></p> <p>Floor 3 Room 4 (3.04)</p>	<p>People who are LGBTQ+ experience specific forms of family violence. Refuge Victoria will present on the work so far to develop a specialist LGBTQ+ response, including the model, accommodation types, learnings so far, and relevant case studies. ACON will unpack the unique ways LGBTQ+ people can be impacted by violence, including the barriers faced when seeking support and will discuss how to create safer spaces.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Janet Jukes OAM (CEO, Refuge Victoria)</li> <li>• Hamish Whelan (Sexual Violence Consult Service Lead, ACON)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Modern Slavery &amp; Domestic Violence</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 6 (5.06)</p>	<p>This presentation will explore the intersection between modern slavery (trafficking, forced labour and forced marriage) and domestic violence. We can benefit from working together to better identify the indicators of modern slavery and provide holistic support to women.</p> <p>This will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What modern slavery looks like</li> <li>- The available supports</li> <li>- How modern slavery intersects with FDV</li> <li>- Key refuge considerations for survivors of modern slavery</li> </ul>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monique Bolus (Anti-Trafficking Response Program Officer, Australian Red Cross)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workplace issues in the women's sector</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 9 (4.09)</p>	<p>The ASU is the union that represents workers in the community services sector, the women's refuge sector and the women's services sector. Many ASU officials were involved with establishing women's refuges and other women's organisations.</p> <p>This session will look at workplace issues that are confronting the women's sector and the challenges that employees in the sector are facing.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan Primrose, Deputy Secretary, ASU NSW ACT Services Branch</li> </ul>

## Session 3 11:30 - 12:30

<p><b>Technology-Facilitated Abuse</b></p> <p>Floor 2 Room 5 (2.05)</p>	<p>This session will look at the growing form of violence that is technology-facilitated abuse. It will dive into the ways that different technologies can be, and are being, used to intimidate, stalk, harass, monitor, control, threaten, and attack women.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen Bentley (CEO, WESNET)</li> <li>• Nicola Henry (Professor, RMIT)</li> <li>• Angie Piubello (Beryl Women's Refuge)</li> <li>• Chelsea Tobin (CEO, Safe Steps)</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary-Ann O'Loughlin (UTS)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Follow-Up Discussion: The First Ten Years</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 10 (4.10)</p>	<p>Following on from the panel discussion on Friday about the memories, myths and milestones of the early years this open discussion will give all those attending the conference a chance to discuss and develop the issues raised.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ludo McFerran AM</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finding Employment after Violence</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 2 (5.02)</p>	<p>Women who have experienced violence face complex barriers to employment. In this session, the CEOs of Banksia Academy and Arise Foundation and a diverse panel discuss the issues and opportunities around employment and financial independence.</p> <p>Banksia Academy offers a haven for survivors to rebuild their self-confidence, increase skills, and be work-ready for the digital economy.</p> <p>Arise Foundation provides skills development and job placement for women who are recovering and healing from DFV.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melanie Greblo (CEO, Banksia Academy)</li> <li>• Fariha Chowdhury (CEO, Arise Foundation)</li> <li>• Tasnia Alam Hannan (COO, Arise Foundation)</li> <li>• Daniell Mifsud (Community Manager, Banksia)</li> <li>• Princess R Lakshman</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increasing Our Impact on Children's Healing from DFV</b></p> <p>Floor 3 Room 4 (3.04)</p>	<p>This session looks at DV West's Children's Domestic Violence Specialist Program. Much research is on the impacts of violence on children but little on what mothers can do to help children's recovery. <i>The Children and Young Person's Framework</i> guides how to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for children and help</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cat Gander, (CEO, DV West)</li> <li>• Terrienne Hughes, (Aboriginal Manager, DV West)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Heart to Heart</b></p> <p>Open Area, Level 3</p>	<p>This unique session offers attendees the opportunity to engage in candid discussions, share personal experiences, and connect on a deeper level with fellow participants.</p>	<p>Organised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annabelle Daniel (CEO, Women's Community Shelters)</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to Support Women Who Use Substances in Refuges</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 9 (4.09)</p>	<p>This session details the collaborative initiative between VAADA and the family violence refuge sector in Victoria, aimed at integrating harm reduction principles to address the intersection of family violence and substance use.</p> <p>This session will share insights into the project, how the meetings and training worked, the challenges encountered, and the strategies used to overcome them. It will also discuss broader implications of this work for the refuge sector.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jess Moretti (Specialist Family Violence Advisor, Uniting)</li> <li>• Louise Kennedy Young (Family Violence Advisor, La Trobe Community Health Service)</li> </ul>

## Session 4 1:15 - 2:15

<p><b>Economic Abuse and Financial Control - Panel</b></p> <p>Floor 2 Room 5 (2.05)</p>	<p>Economic and financial abuse are legally recognised forms of domestic abuse. Such abuse is very common in violent relationships and can take many different forms including controlling access to money and resources, or negatively affecting a victim's housing or employment security.</p> <p>This session will analyse the complex causes, behaviours, consequences, and experiences associated with this abuse and ways these forms of abuse can be addressed and mitigated.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan Breckenridge (Co-Convenor, Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW)</li> <li>• Catherine Fitzpatrick (Director, Flequity Ventures)</li> <li>• Rebecca Glenn (Founder, Centre for Women's Economic Safety)</li> <li>• Lula Dembele</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hannah Tonkin (NSW Women's Safety Commissioner)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Current Legal and Reform Issues</b></p> <p>Floor 4 Room 10 (4.10)</p>	<p>Legal responses to domestic and family violence are continually changing. This panel will provide an overview of some areas that have recently changed or will do so soon. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The moves to criminalise coercive control.</li> <li>• Recent changes to the Family Law Act around parenting orders</li> <li>• Potential changes around property division.</li> <li>• Intersecting areas of law that can sustain violence around trafficking and slavery and migration law.</li> </ul>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane Wangmann (Associate Professor, UTS)</li> <li>• Zoe Rathus (Griffith)</li> <li>• Marie Segrave (Melbourne Uni)</li> </ul> <p>Chaired by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delia Donovan (CEO, DVNSW)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Looking for Silver: Why Older Women Should Be Seen Too</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 2 (5.02)</p>	<p>This discussion will look at the ways older women experience violence, who the perpetrators are, and the consequences of life-long trauma which are not addressed. It will also provide some early insights into the sexual violence research being conducted by the Older Women's Network NSW with older women.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yumi Lee (CEO, Older Women's Network)</li> <li>• Amani Haydar (Advocate for Women's Health and Safety)</li> <li>• Kathryn McKenzie (Director of Operations, Ageing and Disability Commission)</li> </ul> <p>Facilitated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deborah Barndon (Coordinator, Hear Our Voices Project)</li> </ul>
<p><b>A South Australian Healthcare Response to Domestic and Family Violence</b></p> <p>Floor 3 Room 4 (3.04)</p>	<p>Cedar Health Service is a government funded healthcare service, designed to respond to the need to provide inclusive healthcare for victim-survivors. This session will outline the services provided as part of this initiative, including appropriate referral pathways, evidence based counselling by the Social Work team with expert assessments of domestic and family violence and strategic information sharing and support for healthcare professionals.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kristina Birchmore (Social Worker and Manager, Cedar Health Service)</li> <li>• Amber Oest (Manager, Multi-Agency Protection Service)</li> </ul>
<p><b>The History of Marrickville Women's Refuge</b></p> <p>Floor 5 Room 6 (5.06)</p>	<p>This workshop will explore the history of Marrickville Women's Refuge from its beginnings in 1974 - out of the same meeting from which Elsie was formed - to today – and our future plans. Marrickville survived the takeover of most NSW refuges by large charitable institutions and continues to operate as an independent women's service, with the earlier focus on culturally and linguistically diverse women now shifted to Indigenous women and children. This will include excerpts from a 1975 ABC documentary and be followed by questions.</p>	<p>Presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natasha Davies (CEO, Marrickville Women's Refuge)</li> <li>• Vivien Johnson (Former refuge worker)</li> <li>• Maria Girdler (Former refuge worker)</li> <li>• Birsen Kocak (Former refuge worker)</li> <li>• Chrissie Sylva (Former refuge worker)</li> </ul>

# Saturday Program Building 8 (Business School), UTS

## Session 4 1:15 - 2:15 continued

### Safe Families: Pet Inclusive Refuges

Floor 4 Room 9 (4.09)

This presentation will examine a case study of a pet-friendly refuge and the collaboration process with the RSPCA.

This will cover the benefits of pets in crisis accommodation and the process to set up a pet friendly refuge.

The RSPCA will also discuss this from the perspective of animals, including education about the animals' trauma, new environment and other elements to consider around pets in accommodation settings. are confronting the women's sector and the challenges that employees in the sector are facing.

Presented by:

- Suzy Pace (Team Leader, St Vincent de Paul Society)
- Sandra Ma (NSW Community Outreach Programs Manager, RSPCA)

## Closing Ceremony Great Hall, Building 1 (Tower), UTS

**Saturday 16 March 2:30- 4:00pm**

### **Closing Ceremony** (including presentation of Elsie Awards)

Hosted by

**The Hon Virginia Bell AC SC**

In the Conference Closing Ceremony, we will recognise the efforts of 50 'unsung heroines' of the refuge movement—the women who have worked, often in the background, to keep shelters running and save lives. We will come together to celebrate the winners of the awards and the legacy of women's refuges that they, and so many others, have worked hard to support.

