

Freedom of Information Request – [REDACTED]

Documents – Schedule 20 – Class Campaign Letters

Folio number	Date	Document name	Status	Reason for Exemption
1	6/12/2013 – 9/12/2013	45 class campaign emails sent to Chief Minister	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
2	10/12/2013	20 class campaign letters sent to Chief Minister (M-13/2371)	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
3	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
4-5	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
6-6a	11/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
7-7a	10/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
8	10/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
9	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
10	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
11	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
12-12b	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
13	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
14	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
15	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
16-16a	10/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
17	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
18	9/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
19	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41

Folio number	Date	Document name	Status	Reason for Exemption
20	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
21	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
22	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
23	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
24	6/12/2013	Complaint email	Partial release	FOI Act, s41
25-32	Undated	WIRC letters received by CM and draft response	Partial release	FOI Act, s41

Elsey, Melissa

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:23 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC

Categories: Bulk, CSD, to do

For response

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:06 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I am calling on you in your capacity as Chief Minister to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre. The Centre has been operating as a vital and effective hub for women in the ACT for over 35 years. Almost 12 500 women used the Centre last year and 3 205 of them did so face to face. As of 13 December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC provides a range of free and very low cost services to women in the ACT including telephone, drop in or email access to information and/or referral to appropriate services. Women can use the Centre's free library, access the computers, take a personal development course or join a support group. WIRC is the only place that offers personal development courses specifically for women on self-esteem, assertiveness and many other topics. It coordinates services with Carers' groups, Indigenous health services and others and works in a myriad of ways to increase the health and well being of women in the ACT.

WIRC also has a critical role to play in supporting and increasing community safety. It is the only place in the ACT where women can access domestic violence support groups, where the focus is on supporting them to move on from the cycle of violence, to increase their self-esteem and to be able to build respectful relationships in their future, thus aiming to prevent the inter-generational transmission of the cycle of family violence.

This is particularly important given the Canberra Times article on Sunday 27 October 2013 which outlined that the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service has experienced a 50% increase in demand for its services and is desperately struggling to keep pace with this demand.

The same article also highlighted that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is calling for more resources for long term follow up programs to assist those experiencing violence to break the cycle of violence. They are unable to provide these programs themselves and it appears that the loss of WIRC will remove the only service providing these critical support programs for women. All of which has the potential to diminish the safety of women and children in the ACT.

I understand that a recent KPMG review found WIRC to be the service which has the highest reach per capita and which offers the most number of programs of the women's services reviewed. The same report highlighted WIRC as one of the most cost effective community information services in Australia. I also understand your government is committed to continuing to fund services with a proven effectiveness for women. So I cannot understand your decision to close the Centre.

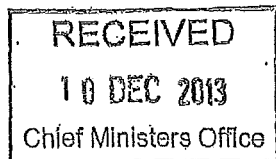
Perhaps our first female Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce said it best in her recent Boyer lecture when she spoke of her time as the Coordinator of the Women's Information Service in Queensland – a sister service to WIRC. She detailed how she '...felt a serious responsibility to ensure that the concerns of women ...were accurately recorded and presented as compelling testimony to decision makers in government. What these women said mattered at last.' To lose the

Women's Information and Referral Centre is to lose a place for the voices of ordinary women to be heard, to be valued and to be counted.

Please Chief Minister at a time when your government can find \$2.6 million to tell people about Brand Canberra please find the necessary resources to maintain the Women's Information and Referral Centre as a safe and empowering place for women.

Yours Sincerely

u



gallagher@act.gov.au

Chief Minister
Katy Gallagher
ACT Assembly
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gallagher

I am calling on you in your capacity as Chief Minister to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre. The Centre has been operating as a vital and effective hub for women in the ACT for over 35 years. Almost 12,500 women used the Centre last year and 3,205 of them did so face to face. As of 13 December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC has a critical role to play in supporting women in our community. In addition to the many programs and services it offers, it is the only place in the ACT where women can access domestic violence support groups, where the focus is on supporting them to move on from the cycle of violence, to increase their self-esteem and to be able to build respectful relationships in their future, thus aiming to prevent the inter-generational transmission of the cycle of family violence.

Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Places like the Women's Information and Referral Centre bring women's human rights to life in a real and meaningful way. Eleanor Roosevelt, the Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights Commission said in 1948 said that human rights begin "in the small places close to home... so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world... unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere." To close the Women's Information and Referral centre is to remove from the map one small but clear home for the human rights of women in the ACT.

Perhaps our first female Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce said it best in her recent Boyer lecture when she spoke of her time as the Coordinator of the Women's Information Service in Queensland – a sister service to WIRC. She detailed how she '...felt a serious responsibility to ensure that the concerns of women ...were accurately recorded and presented as compelling testimony to decision makers in government. What these women said mattered at last.' To lose the Women's Information and Referral Centre is to lose a place for the voices of ordinary women to be heard, to be valued and to be counted.

Please Chief Minister find the necessary resources to keep the Women's Information and Referral Centre a safe and empowering place for women operating.

Yours Sincerely

Beaton, Richard

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:23 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC

Categories: CSD

For response

-----Original Message-----

From: ⁴¹
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:10 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I plead with you not to close WIRC. Clearly, this is a valuable facility. Our vulnerable female citizens, and often their children, need this support.

41

Beaton, Richard

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 10:07 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: offer on WIRC
Attachments: Offer from Capital Executive Centre.doc

Categories: CSD

For response please

-----Original Message-----

From: Margaret u1
Sent: Thursday, 5 December 2013 5:49 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: offer on WIRC

Dear Chief Minister

Attached is an offer from the Capital Executive Centre regarding the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

I do hope that you will consider this offer as an option until there can be further discussions on the proposed closure of the Centre.

As this is a rather urgent matter it would be appreciated if you could let me know by noon on Monday 9 December if you are interested in discussing this offer.

Yours sincerely

u1

Offer from Capital Executive Centre to House the ACT Women's Information and Referral Centre

The Women's Information and Referral Centre (WIRC) is due to be closed on Friday 13 December 2013. There has been a significant community outcry and a strong desire to see the Centre, which has been open for 35 years, continue to operate as a stand alone Centre and offer its services to women in the ACT and region. It appears that the catalyst for the closure of the Centre is that the lease is due to expire at the end of January 2014. The current rent is around \$75,000 per year.

The National Council for Women is located at the Capital Executive Centre (CEC) in Deakin West and has approached the CEC about the possibility of hosting WIRC. CEC is delighted to be able to offer a proposal to provide office accommodation to the staff and clients of WIRC at approximately half the current annual rent paid on the premises for WIRC at London Circuit.

The Capital Executive Centre is located at Unit 2/39 Geils Court in the high profile, and high traffic, area of Deakin, within the concentration of associations, opposite the Deakin West Post Office, convenient to parking and public transport facilities. The office has a number of rooms that can be used as offices, a small meeting room and confidential interview facilities. The office is ~~fully computerised~~ computerised and networked, with appropriate hardware, software, laser printers, full photocopying facilities, e-mail and Internet capabilities and secure storage. It requires no additional fit out to host WIRC staff and clients.

The CEC has been in existence for over 15 years, operating as a 'hub' – and it already hosts the National Council for Women of Australia and a number of other community and professional associations, and this along with the location would offer the opportunity to develop and extend the networks of WIRC within both the non-government and business sectors.

This offer would allow the much loved and extraordinarily valuable Women's Information and Referral Centre to continue to operate as a stand alone Centre and to deliver its range of programs and services which provide vital and much needed support to women in the ACT and region.

For further information contact:

6

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Wednesday, 11 December 2013 3:12 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Keeping WIRC open for business

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: 41
Sent: Wednesday, 11 December 2013 12:40 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Keeping WIRC open for business

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I am calling on you in your capacity as Chief Minister to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

My personal experience...

3 years ago my marriage - with 2 pre-school age children - broke down. Recovery has been tricky and slow but I'm glad to say things are very much on the upward trend now. During the early stages I sought any service that could help the children and I recover and manage and eventually to thrive. At that time I used the WIRC many times. Now that we are thriving again, I have been accessing the WIRC in a different way ...giving back. This has been in the form of moulding my skills and experience to take part as a Presenter in their Thinking Thursday series. So whilst I am aiming to give something to the WIRC clientele, I am also developing useful workplace skills for my return the workforce. Through this transition (which has not been trouble free) I have found the WIRC to be particularly understanding whilst still being clear about their own needs as an employer - a win win situation for reality and support at the same time.

I'm often pleased and impressed to see the broad range of WIRC services and course for many marginalised groups of women.

I understand that budgeting is tricky in any situation but I honestly believe finding a way to keep the WIRC open would be the best outcome for ACT women.

I have been disappointed to see other services upon whom I relied upon heavily in the early stages of separation be de-funded - **Parentline** and **Canberra One Parent Family Support Service**.

More broadly...

The Centre has been operating as a vital and effective hub for women in the ACT for over 35 years. Almost 12 500 women used the Centre last year and 3 205 of them did so face to face. As of 13 December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC provides a range of free and very low cost services to women in the ACT including telephone, drop in or email access to information and/or referral to appropriate services. Women can use the Centre's free library, access the computers, take a personal development course or join a support group. WIRC is the only place that offers personal development courses specifically for women on self-esteem, assertiveness and many other topics. It coordinates services with Carers' groups, Indigenous health services and others and works in a myriad of ways to increase the health and well being of women in the ACT.

WIRC also has a critical role to play in supporting and increasing community safety. It is the only place in the ACT where women can access domestic violence support groups, where the focus is on supporting them to move on from the cycle of violence, to increase their self-esteem and to be able to build respectful relationships in their future, thus aiming to prevent the inter-generational transmission of the cycle of family violence.

This is particularly important given the Canberra Times article on Sunday 27 October 2013 which outlined that the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service has experienced a 50% increase in demand for its services and is desperately struggling to keep pace with this demand.

The same article also highlighted that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is calling for more resources for long-term follow up programs to assist those experiencing violence to break the cycle of violence. They are unable to provide these programs themselves and it appears that the loss of WIRC will remove the only service providing these critical support programs for women. All of which has the potential to diminish the safety of women and children in the ACT.

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Perhaps our first female Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce said it best in her recent Boyer lecture when she spoke of her time as the Coordinator of the Women's Information Service in Queensland – a sister service to WIRC. She detailed how she '...felt a serious responsibility to ensure that the concerns of women ...were accurately recorded and presented as compelling testimony to decision makers in government. What these women said mattered at last.' To lose the Women's Information and Referral Centre is to lose a place for the voices of ordinary women to be heard, to be valued and to be counted.

Please Chief Minister at a time when your government can find \$2.6 million to tell people about Brand Canberra please find the necessary resources to maintain the Women's Information and Referral Centre as a safe and empowering place for women.

Yours Sincerely

7
Elsey, Melissa

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Tuesday, 10 December 2013 1:18 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Reverse the decision to close WiRC

Categories: Bulk, CSD, to do

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: Schembri, Karen
Sent: Tuesday, 10 December 2013 11:18 AM
To: GALLAGHER
Cc: BURCH; HANSON; JONES
Subject: Reverse the decision to close WiRC

Dear Ms Gallagher,

In your capacity as Chief Minister of the ACT legislative Assembly I am requesting that you reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

I have worked for WiRC over a number of years both as a group leader and supervisor and as a staff member. I know that it is imperative to have a team with combined wisdom, knowledge and expertise to provide this essential service to the women of Canberra - women from all social backgrounds (we all know that DV does not discriminate!). Point 4 of a person probably won't cut it!

The women who work at WiRC, the group leaders, the speakers at the information sessions are all dedicated to the empowerment of women. They work for WiRC because of it's good reputation, it's professionalism, and it's ethics, and it will be a sorry loss to the women of Canberra once this has gone. There has been mention of 'changing times'. WiRC has changed over the years in many ways and met the changing and emerging needs of Canberra women - and Government's forward plans. The unchanged aspect is it's integrity. Women feel very comfortable to use the service for the previous reasons and because of the

7a

confidentiality, the neutrality, the support, help, the understanding staff, the safety of an all-women environment and the trust they have in the Service.

I'm sure you've been told the numbers and the length of time this great service has been providing for the women of the ACT so I won't go into all of that. The numbers, reviews, evaluations, acknowledgements and accolades over the years can speak for themselves.

I would like to add this info from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women from their report on the 2010-2015 ACT Women's Action Plan.

Excerpt from Part II Pages 12 - 13

MACW commends the ACT Government on each of these initiatives, but wishes to bring to its attention a **number of broader, systemic issues** across government that are significantly hindering progress towards the social objectives of the Women's Plan and which are largely driven by inadequate allocation of resources through the ACT Budget. These include:

Mainstream Service Delivery

In an effort to save money and rationalise the delivery of core social services, ACT Government Directorates are increasingly moving towards a mainstream service delivery model. **MACW believes this approach fails to recognise the need for culturally specific, gender and trauma-informed services that respond to and meet the needs of those individuals and groups that access the services.**

MACW notes that gender-based and/or women-led services play a critical role in delivering sensitive and appropriate support for women in the ACT, for example for women experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, poor health, or legal issues following separation or as a consequence of domestic violence or assault. These services are crucial – women from disadvantaged groups expect that women from their own backgrounds will have a better understanding of their experiences and issues and greater empathy than men or women who do not share their backgrounds. **Evidence and experience nationally and internationally also shows that female survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault prefer to access services that are provided by women in a women-only environment.**

MACW is concerned that there may be a loss of gendered and specialist services in the ACT because of service reviews and tendering and contracting approaches. **While there is understanding in the current fiscal environment of the need to lower costs, this must be balanced against the need to maintain specialist expertise, skills and knowledge that has been developed over many years.** (My Italics)

What is the point of an Advisory Council if it is not listened to?

It is a sad day for Canberra that this decision was made, it seems, merely to save money - and how much? - a pittance in the scheme of things. There seems to have been little consultation or even any forward thinking on the issues the closure of this Centre would incur. Surely the women of Canberra are worth more?

I hoping that you will find the courage to reverse this decision to close the Centre and let the women of Canberra know that they are valued.

Yours sincerely

41

Elsey, Melissa

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Tuesday, 10 December 2013 9:57 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Women's Information and Referral Centre

Categories: CSD

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
 t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: CH
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 5:25 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Women's Information and Referral Centre

Dear Chief Minister Gallagher

I am writing to ask you to reconsider your government's decision to close WIRC, which will deprive ACT women, especially low income women and women experiencing other disadvantages, of an essential service.

I am a long standing member of the women's health movement in this city. I know from experience in a number of organisations/committees that the services provided by WIRC are invaluable for women's health. I have served on the Board of SHFPACT, the ACT Women's Health Network, and participated in the work of the Women's Centre for Health Matters and the Women's Health Advisory Committee to the ACT government in the 1980s and 1990s.

One of the things that women are most need to keep them healthy is support services, especially at times of difficulty or crisis. Appropriate support services can mean the difference between successful management of difficult life events/situations and serious ill health including serious mental health problems.

Support services are in very short supply in a health system like ours, based as it is, unfortunately, on fast throughput private medical practice rather than comprehensive community health infrastructure. For decades, WIRC has helped to fill the huge gap that exists around the provision of support and information. No precise calculations can be made but it is certain that WIRC has played a very important role in preventive health, supporting countless women who may otherwise have ended up in the hospital and medical system, with all the unnecessary costs that that involves. AIHW research shows that there were 672,000 potentially preventable hospitalisations in Australia in 2011/12.

8 a)

Additionally, if WIRC is broken up and dispersed, the expertise and in-depth knowledge about the issues that are of most concern to women that has been accumulated over 35 years will be lost. Moreover, dispersion will make it more difficult for women to both know about the services and to access them. At the moment, the location of WIRC is well known women from all areas can get to Civic. Women under stress find it very difficult to ferret out information at the best of times, a situation greatly exacerbated by making the service less visible. How are already stretched community and government organisations to focus on the special needs of women in difficult situations?

the expertise and in-depth knowledge about what issues are of most concern to women accumulated by the Centre over 35 years will be lost. Women from all areas can get to Civic and a central location makes the service well-known. People under stress will find it hard to ferret out the information they need if it is dispersed and less visible. Moreover, community and government organisations are all financially stretched and a "mainstreaming" move such as this mean that the focus on the special needs of women facing readily identifiable problems will be abandoned.

WIRC's publication "What's on for Women" gathers together in one place information about community events, workshops, courses and group meetings in the ACT, an exceptionally valuable service, as is its library and its access to a computer and the Internet.

I urge you to reconsider the decision to close the Centre in the interests of the health of ACT women, especially those not doing too well as it is.

Yours Sincerely

41

Elsey, Melissa

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:43 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Women's Information and Referral Centre

Categories: CSD

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: 
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 5:45 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Women's Information and Referral Centre

Dear Katie,

The Women's Information Referral Centre has played a crucial role in my life, in keeping me connected when my partner went through a mental illness and we faced homelessness. Having a safe place to sit down, cry, feel listened to, and have use of the phone and access to a range of numbers of different services, was crucial for our family.

I feel really sad this Christmas knowing that so many families will be facing domestic violence and family breakdown this festive season, without WIRC to be there for them in the New Year.

Could you please explain where safe and effective crisis counselling is available in Canberra?

Could you please reverse this decision or find a way to ensure continuity of service through another government shopfront.



10
Elsey, Melissa

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:42 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Closure of the Women's Information and Referral Centre
Categories: CSD

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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-----Original Message-----

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 6:00 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Closure of the Women's Information and Referral Centre

As a former Federal Minister for the Status of Women I would urge you to reconsider the closure of this important facility

As you would be aware it was the Hawke Government which initiated the National Agenda for Women and key legislative reform to value the place of Australian women to participate in our community on an equal basis with men

Yet twenty five years later we find that a basic service for women in the National Capital is threatened with closure

Please re assess your priorities as I am confident the women of Canberra place a high value on maintaining the Women's Information and Referral Service

41

Sent from my iPad

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:32 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC closure concerns

Categories: CSD

response

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: Ch
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 6:47 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC closure concerns

Dear Ms. Gallagher,

I have recently found out about the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre (WIRC). I am writing in hope that you may use your position as Chief Minister to revoke the decision to close WIRC. I find this decision concerning for the welfare of women and their children across the ACT. The reasoning for my concerns are from personal experience and experiences of many women I know.

My concerns are because WIRC has been a point for women to turn to in times when they perhaps may struggle to think rationally or may just be lost as to where to go. I will use a personal story to emphasise the importance WIRC.

The first time I sought help from WIRC I was a 14 or 15 year old girl seeking support, advice, medical attention and a morning after pill for a best friend who had been raped. At the time it was 4:45pm on a Friday afternoon and I had \$12 to my name. My friend was terrified to let any "authorities" know yet and refused to go to the hospital or police. She was afraid of upsetting her family. I knew of nowhere else to go. WIRC staff ensured our safety and that my friend's needs were met by contacting the right support to help. It wasn't until seeking help in their old office as a scared young woman that I knew any of these services existed that afternoon.

11 a)

WIRC have been a point of contact and assistance for me as a young mother and a victim of domestic violence. Without the support and information provided by Women's Information and Referral Centre I may never have had the courage to leave dangerous situations and/or the welfare of myself, my friend or my child may have had very different outcomes.

I understand there are some other services of support that do great work. My concerns are for women to know how and where to access them. At times of stress when women may be at a loss as to where to access to the appropriate services and when extra support and encouragement may be needed to seek them WIRC should be there.

I hope you take time to really address these concerns and consider repealing the closure of the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

Kind Regards,

41

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:29 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Please don't close WIRC in ACT
Attachments: Letter support WIRE Dec 2013.docx

Categories: CSD

Cass

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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-----Original Message-----

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 8:47 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Please don't close WIRC in ACT

See letter attached

--

Warm regards

41

Minister Katy Gallagher
ACT

gallagher@act.gov.au

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I know the important role our Victorian WIRE and other services that assist women in very practical ways especially in the face of violence, abuse and fear play in our community and so am calling on you in your capacity as Chief Minister to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre in ACT.

The Centre has been operating as a vital and effective hub for women in the ACT for over 35 years. Almost 12,500 women used the Centre last year and 3,205 of them did so face to face. As of 13th December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC provides a range of free and very low cost services to women in the ACT including telephone, drop in or email access to information and/or referral to appropriate services. Women can use the Centre's free library, access the computers, take a personal development course or join a support group. WIRC is the only place that offers personal development courses specifically for women on self-esteem, assertiveness and many other topics. It coordinates services with Carers' groups, Indigenous health services and others and works in a myriad of ways to increase the health and well being of women in the ACT.

WIRC also has a critical role to play in supporting and increasing community safety. It is the only place in the ACT where women can access domestic violence support groups, where the focus is on supporting them to move on from the cycle of violence, to increase their self-esteem and to be able to build respectful relationships in their future, thus aiming to prevent the inter-generational transmission of the cycle of family violence.

This is particularly important given the Canberra Times article on Sunday 27 October 2013 which outlined that the ACT Domestic Violence

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Crisis Service has experienced a 50% increase in demand for its services and is desperately struggling to keep pace with this demand.

The same article also highlighted that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is calling for more resources for long term follow up programs to assist those experiencing violence to break the cycle of violence. They are unable to provide these programs themselves and it appears that the loss of WIRC will remove the only service providing these critical support programs for women. All of which has the potential to diminish the safety of women and children in the ACT.

I understand that a recent KPMG review found WIRC to be the service which has the highest reach per capita and which offers the most number of programs of the women's services reviewed. The same report highlighted WIRC as one of the most cost effective community information services in Australia. I also understand your government is committed to continuing to fund services with a proven effectiveness for women. So I cannot understand your decision to close the Centre.

Perhaps our first female Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce said it best in her recent Boyer lecture when she spoke of her time as the Coordinator of the Women's Information Service in Queensland – a sister service to WIRC. She detailed how she '...felt a serious responsibility to ensure that the concerns of women ...were accurately recorded and presented as compelling testimony to decision makers in government. What these women said mattered at last.' To lose the Women's Information and Referral Centre is to lose a place for the voices of ordinary women to be heard, to be valued and to be counted.

Please Chief Minister at a time when your government can find \$2.6 million to tell people about Brand Canberra please find the necessary resources to maintain the Women's Information and Referral Centre as a safe and empowering place for women.

Sincerely

41

12

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:29 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC Threat of Closure
Categories: CSD

Cass

response

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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-----Original Message-----

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 8:44 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC Threat of Closure

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I very strongly disapprove of the proposed closure of the Women's Information and Referral Centre and ask that you and your Govt reconsider urgently.

If we don't look after the women in a society, half the population is neglected!

Similar to the statement by Dr Sue Packer, Paediatrician, this year, when she stated that a place that takes good care of its children is a good place for everyone to live, I believe it is vital for all people of the ACT and Region to know that women's rights are respected and all women have the opportunities to grow personally, to learn and to be supported where necessary.

The women are the primary carers of the children in most families. The more women who have access to services like WIRC, the better it is for children as well. I believe we need more promotion of WIRC, not closure.

Please save the dollars somewhere else!

Yours sincerely,

41

14

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:25 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Women's Information and Referral Centre WIRC - please do not close
Categories: CSD

Cass

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: 4
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 10:19 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Women's Information and Referral Centre WIRC - please do not close

Dear Ms Gallagher,

I am calling on you in your capacity as Chief Minister to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre. The Centre has been operating as a vital and effective hub for women in the ACT for over 35 years. Almost 12 500 women used the Centre last year and 3 205 of them did so face to face.

As of 13 December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC provides a range of free and very low cost services to women in the ACT including telephone, drop in or email access to information and/or referral to appropriate services. Women can use the Centre's free library, access the computers, take a personal development course or join a support group.

Please re-consider the decision to close this Centre.

Yours sincerely

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Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 9:08 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Don't close WIRC - please

Categories: CSD

Cass

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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-----Original Message-----

From: ⁴¹
Sent: Saturday, 7 December 2013 3:46 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Don't close WIRC - please

Dear Katy,

I can't believe that WIRC is going to be a casualty of funding cuts in the ACT. Years ago I was a very grateful user of it's services and have recommended its services to other women needing a reliable source of information and direction relating to sometimes critical moments of decision in their lives.

First, it is so important to have a one-stop shop of this kind instead of women in sometimes desperate situations having to field enquiries to different area, never being sure whether they have covered all the areas suited to their situations.

Secondly, sometimes it is absolutely essential to consult a real person, face to face, or voice to voice.

Third, it can be critical to an enquiry's outcome to encounter someone specifically trained in, aware of and sympathetic to the particular issues, or the way women find themselves in dealing with them.

I hope that the ACT Labor government will revise its decision on this matter and keep the doors of the Women's Information and Referral Centre open for its 12,000 or more contacts each year.

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Tuesday, 10 December 2013 9:07 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: please retain WIRC
Categories: CSD

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister
 t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: 41
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 7:36 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: please retain WIRC

Dear Chief Minister Katy Gallagher,

Congratulations on your gay marriage legislation. I am writing now to ask you to retain another significant social justice initiative.

I am calling on you to reverse the decision to close the Women's Information and Referral Centre. Almost 12 500 women used the Centre last year and 3 205 of them did so face to face. As of 13 December these women, who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and who just want and need a safe and welcoming place, will have nowhere to go.

WIRC is the only place in the ACT where women can access domestic violence support groups, where the focus is on supporting them to move on from the cycle of violence, to increase their self-esteem and to be able to build respectful relationships in their future, thus aiming to prevent the inter-generational transmission of the cycle of family violence.

Perhaps our first female Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce said it best in her recent Boyer lecture when she spoke of her time as the Coordinator of the Women's Information Service in Queensland – a sister service to WIRC. She detailed how she ‘...felt a serious responsibility

16 a)

to ensure that the concerns of women ...were accurately recorded and presented as compelling testimony to decision makers in government. What these women said mattered at last.' To lose the Women's Information and Referral Centre is to lose a place for the voices of ordinary women to be heard, to be valued and to be counted.

Yours Sincerely

41

17

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 8:39 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC - PLEASE DON'T CLOSE IT!

Importance: High

Categories: CSD

Cass

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: 41
Sent: Saturday, 7 December 2013 11:15 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC - PLEASE DON'T CLOSE IT!
Importance: High

I am a young woman from Canberra and I have used WIRC - which is an essential service for women within our community. Being a client of the service has been beneficial to me reconnecting with education and the workforce and improving my overall life outcomes. It has helped me be a survivor.

Keeping the WIRC IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO!

Sincerely

41

12

Beaton, Richard

From: Schembri, Karen on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Monday, 9 December 2013 8:15 AM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Don't close the WIRC

Categories: CSD

Cass

Response please

Regards

Karen Schembri | Office of the Chief Minister

t: 620 50840 | fx: 620 53030 | karen.schembri@act.gov.au | www.chiefminister.act.gov.au

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From: '..... 41'
Sent: Sunday, 8 December 2013 6:36 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Don't close the WIRC

Dear Chief Minister

I get fiscal restraint. Many of us necessarily live lives of fiscal restraint. But it's a question of priorities. You have spent huge amount of money on the Centenary and "Branding" Canberra. It doesn't make any sense to lose this valued, experienced and accessible service for the sake of very small savings. Please think again about this.

Regards

41

19

Beaton, Richard

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:42 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC
Categories: CSD

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:41 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC

Dear Chief Minister,
If it is at all possible to keep WIRC open please do.

I have used the service myself and know others who have.

I found WIRC to be helpful, the services relevant and not available elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

41

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Elsey, Melissa

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:23 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Women's referral centre

Categories: CSD

-----Original Message-----

From: 
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:05 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Women's referral centre

Dear chief Minister, I can't imagine why you'd want to close the Woman's Referral centre. It does a good job in helping the vulnerable, & those who in turn themselves help the vulnerable. Pls refund it.

In unity 

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:22 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: Womens' Information and Referral Centre

Categories: CSD

For response please

-----Original Message-----

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:09 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: Womens' Information and Referral Centre

Chief Minister,

As someone involved in womens' issues since the mid-1970s, I can't believe that a socially progressive government would even consider closing such a basic community service.

If so-called 'duplication' is the issue, referral is all about steering people to appropriate services - not trying to duplicate them. Anyway, 'minimising duplication' are code-words, usually used by the political Right, to 'justify' closing socially responsible services.

It would be a disgrace for this service to be closed by a woman Minister and a woman Chief Minister.

Please ensure this does not happen!

41

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Beaton, Richard

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 3:00 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: FW: WIRC closure

Categories: CSD

For response please

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:49 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC closure

Dear Katy

Could you please reconsider the closure of this wonderful resource for women who have no voice and need assistance?

I have sent many women, some from poor socio-economic backgrounds, some fleeing domestic violence, many disadvantaged and unable to work out where to go for help. The Centre has dealt with them sympathetically and assisted them to be safe and to be independent to a point where they no longer were forced to stay in inappropriate circumstances, especially when children were involved.

WIRC has been a wonderful resource to redress unbalance and give women opportunities to be good, contributing citizens. Our ALP and human rights background confirms the relevance of such a resource in these times, as before. To say the resources will still be available, but dispersed through the community is nonsense. It is not budgeted for, there will be no resources, there will be no person to oversee the efforts or evaluate the results. And why try to reinvent the wheel when the existing one "ain't broke"?

The disadvantaged and desperate women will yet again be hidden from view and without a voice. I cannot believe Joy would be so shortsighted to instigate this closure. Please bring some good old fashioned Labor sense into this situation! We are talking about a small sum of money that makes such a difference.

Happy to discuss.

Thanks Katy

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23
Elsey, Melissa

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:32 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC
Attachments: WIRC - Katy Gallagher.docx

Categories: Bulk, CSD, to do

For response please

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:01 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC

Please find attached letter regarding the closure of the Canberra WIRC

Regards,

41

Beaton, Richard

From: Everitt, Gabrielle on behalf of GALLAGHER
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:23 PM
To: CMTD MLO
Subject: TRIM: FW: WIRC

Categories: CSD

For response

-----Original Message-----

From: 41
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2013 2:22 PM
To: GALLAGHER
Subject: WIRC

Dear Ms Gallagher

RE: CLOSURE OF WIRC

I am concerned about the imminent closure of WIRC. I was in the old Office of Women's Affairs when what is now WIRC was first set up prior to self-government so I have always felt a strong connection to the place. At the time, we were aware of large numbers of women who had difficulty working through the choices to find the service they really needed.

As the population has grown I assume that the number of women who need to access services has risen. I am also aware that you and your government have put in place systems to improve accessibility for people - particularly now that the internet means many of us seek our answers to the "where, what and how" of services we need, both inside and outside government.

I still however believe that a dedicated first point of contact is vital for women. WIRC has fulfilled that role and I consider that its retention, or a suitable alternative - but what is important is that it be an easy to contact central point that women, particularly disadvantaged women, can approach and be advised or assisted to access the services they need. I also consider that there should be some way of continuing the kind of service WIRC provided through training to assist women with assertiveness, self esteem and the practicalities of getting back into the workforce.

Whatever solution your government chooses, I think it needs to be one that meets the identified needs of women in this city.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely

41

Ross, Kathy

From: Beaton, Richard
Sent: Friday, 11 April 2014 3:47 PM
To: Ross, Kathy
Subject: FW: Wirc Letters

No.	Title	First Name	Surname	Street	Suburb/State/Code	Min No.
1.	?	?	?			M-13/2371
2.	?	?	?			M-13/2371
3.	?	?	?			M-13/2371
4.	?	?	?			M-13/2371
5.	?	?	?			M-13/2371
6.	Ms			41		13/3229
7.	Ms					M-13/3229
8.	Ms					M-13/2272
9.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/2342
10.	Mr				Email: _____	M-13/3229
11.	Ms					M-13/2274
12.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
13.	Ms					M-13/2371
14.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
15.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
16.	Ms					M-13/2334
17.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/2353
18.	?					M-13/2371
19.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
20.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
21.	Ms				Email: _____	M-13/3229
22.	Ms				Email: _____	M-

					13/2343
23.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
24.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
25.	Ms			Email:	M-13/2338
26.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
27.	Ms			Email:	M-13/2333
28.	Mr				M-13/2371
29.	Ms				M-13/2371
30.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
31.	Ms			Email:	M-13/2263
32.	Dr			Email:	M-13/2354
33.	Dr			Email:	M-13/2346
34.	Ms				M-13/2340
35.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
36.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229
37.	Ms				M-13/2318 (the Minister for Women will respond to this particular letter on behalf of the Chief Minister)
38.	Ms				M-13/2371
39.	Ms			Email:	M-13/2273
40.	Ms			Email:	M-13/2360
41.	Ms			Email:	M-13/3229

42.	Ms		Em' _____	M-13/3229
43.	Mr			M-13/2371
44.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2336
45.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
46.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
47.	?			M-13/2371
48.	Mr		Email: _____	M-13/3229
49.	?			M-13/2371
50.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2289
51.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
52.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
53.	Ms			M-13/2337
54.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2339
55.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
56.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
57.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2351
58.	Ms			M-13/2371
59.	Ms			M-13/2347
60.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
61.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
62.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
63.	Mr			M-13/2371
64.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2332
65.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/3229
66.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2344
67.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2352
68.	Ms		Email: _____	M-13/2332

69.	Mr
70.	Ms
71.	Ms
72.	Ms
73.	Ms
74.	Ms
75.	Ms
76.	Ms
77.	Ms
78.	Mr
79.	Ms
80.	Ms
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95.	Ms

41

	Email:	M- 13/3229
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	Email:	M- 13/3229
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	Email:	M- 13/2350
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	Email:	M- 13/2348
	Email:	M- 13/2355
	Email:	M- 13/2381
	Email:	M- 13/3229
	Email:	M- 13/3229
	Email:	M- 13/2345
	Email:	M- 13/3229
		M- 13/2371
	Email:	M- 13/3229
	Email:	M- 13/3229
		M- 13/2335
		M- 13/2275
		M- 13/2371
	Email:	M- 13/3229
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		M- 13/2371
	Email:	M- 13/3229
	Email:	M- 13/3229
	Email:	M- 13/2349
	Email:	M-

29

96.	Ms					13/2341
				41		M- 13/2271 letter of support
97.						

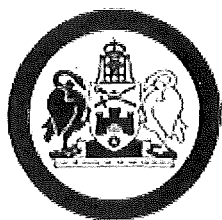
Richard Beaton | Senior Policy Officer, Office for Multicultural Affairs

Phone: +61 2 6207 5400 | Fax: +61 2 6207 0592 | Mobile: 0409 899 815 | Email: Richard.beaton@act.gov.au

Community Participation Group | Community Services Directorate | ACT Government

Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, Level 2, North Building, 180 London Circuit, Canberra

GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601 | www.act.gov.au



ACT
Government

Community Services



Katy Gallagher MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

MINISTER FOR HEALTH
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

Dear

Thank you for your correspondence about the ACT Government's recent decision to remodel the services provided by the Women's Information and Referral Centre (WIRC). While I appreciate your concern around the changes we have made, our decision reflects the need to continue to provide services, including new services, to a rapidly growing community with quite different needs to those of 1978, when the WIRC was established.

The government's strong commitment to providing support and advice for women across the ACT remains unchanged and we will continue to explore ways to make these services more accessible for all. A particular focus has been to provide equal access to government services for women suffering isolation or disadvantage, and those from culturally diverse backgrounds, who live in outer suburbs.

The Child and Family Centres in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and West Belconnen provide information, parenting, health and family support services in dispersed locations and in safe settings. In the city centre, the future service model for information and referral services will use elements of these centres and increase the use of existing community space in the centrally-located Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre.

The new model for information and referral services in the ACT will provide better reach to those most in need and make more efficient use of public resources. Given the large proportion – around 74 per cent – of WIRC services which are provided by phone, email and post, none of these services will end. The phone number for information and referral services is continuing to operate (02 6205 1075).

I encourage you to read more detailed information about the objectives of the new model for information and referral services in the ACT in the government's recent position paper at www.communityservices.act.gov.au/women/womens-information/womens-information-and-referral-centre-wirc-position-paper.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2601 GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601

Phone (02) 6205 0840 Fax (02) 6205 3030

Email: gallagher@act.gov.au Facebook: KatyGallagherMLA Twitter: @katyGMLA

100
CANBERRA

Between February and September 2014, the ACT Government will be consulting with the women's service sector about the new model of service delivery and I encourage you to engage with that process.

I thank you for your interest in this area.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister