

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Community Services
Minister for Women
The Hon. Linda Burney MP



Wednesday 21 October 2009

TRAINING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ORANA FAR WEST SAFE HOUSES RECOGNISED

Minister for Community Services Linda Burney, the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) and the NSW Women's Refuge Movement will pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of the workers of the five Safe Houses in the Far West of NSW at a Graduation dinner on 22 October.

Many of the Safe House workers have successfully completed a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health through ECAV while continuing to work full time to improve the safety of women and children in their communities through the Safe House services.

In March 2008, staff from the Safe Houses commenced the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) Certificate IV course – Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection). The training is a component of the larger Orana Far West Safe Houses Project and it aims to strengthen the Safe Houses' capacity to respond to domestic and family violence in their communities.

The Safe House project is a partnership between the five Orana Far West Safe Houses, the NSW Women's Refuge Movement, NSW Community Services, Housing NSW and the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

"The commitment of these women to successfully complete the ECAV course while continuing to provide safety and support to women and children in their communities must be applauded," said Catherine Gander, Executive Officer of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement Resource Centre.

Ms Burney, who will meet with workers at the graduation dinner, also offered praise for their achievement.

"The commitment these workers have shown to the Safe House project is amazing. Successfully completing this training is a significant achievement that, I have no doubt, will serve to benefit many vulnerable women and children in the Orana region."

In the twelve months from July 2008 to June 2009, the Safe House project has provided accommodation services to 344 women and 334 children. A further 1,569 women and 881 children have also received support and assistance across the five Safe House communities.

"It is no exaggeration to say that the Safe Houses can be the start of a woman's journey away from family violence to a better life for herself and her children," Ms Burney said.

"A vital ingredient of this project is the creation of a safety plan for these women that looks at their safety and wellbeing into the future – as well as considering their immediate needs for shelter and emotional support.

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“The ECAV course undertaken by the Safe House workers will be a great asset as they continue to provide this essential support.”

The Certificate IV will further strengthen the valuable work of the Safe Houses in their communities. The innovative Aboriginal specific course recognises and explores the impact that domestic and family violence, child abuse and sexual assault has on community development. The experience and skill of the Safe House workers has also been acknowledged by ECAV staff who say they will incorporate some the assignments completed by the Safe House workers in future ECAV courses.

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