

MEDIA RELEASE
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Community comes together for renovation of Ballina Women's and Children's refuge

When Momentum Collective took over the running of the Ballina Women's and Children's refuge about 18 months ago, the building was in need of repair. Fast-forward to last week and the beautifully renovated and disability accessible refuge was officially re-opened.

The refuge team worked tirelessly, alongside many community supporters, to make sure the house offers a safe and welcoming space for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

The refuge opening began with a Welcome to Country from local Elder Aunty Nancy. Community Support Manger Michelle Teece said funding for the refurbishment of the refuge was made available after some strong advocacy. "I want to thank Sarah Dybing for her advocacy before she went on maternity leave and Steve Wenzel who has continued to support the cause. Ballina needed this refuge and the women and children who rely on our support deserve to have a space that is safe, comfortable and allows them to recover."

Michelle introduced the team of workers who will provide support and programs for women and children who access the service. The team includes: Senior Case Worker Christina Reynolds; Women's House Officer Cushla Johnstone and Clear Minds Case Worker Fiona Tate. "This team has advocated for every detail in the house. We had a wish list for the builders and we have ticked everything off the list," Michelle said.

"We have all been here helping out with painting and cleaning to make sure the house is ready to welcome clients. The refuge was not accessible previously, so an important part of the renovation was to make the entrance and rooms accessible for women and children who live with disabilities." The community members and organisation who assisted with the refurbishment of the refuge included, RizeUp, Ballina-on-Richmond Rotary, Carpet Call and a local organic skincare company. Michelle also thanked Adrian Wilsem our Community Support Manager at the Ballina Salvage Shed for helping to prepare the refuge for re-opening in his own time.

Momentum Collective CEO Virginia Walker congratulated the team for creating an amazing space that will support people recovering from trauma and assist them to rebuild their lives. "You should all be so proud. This is an incredible space that will help so many women."

Local Rotary President Dave Harmon attended the refuge opening and handed over a \$1500 donation that will be used to assist women and children when they leave the refuge and set up their own new homes.