

Women's refuge to remain open

ARMIDALE-based Pathfinders Ltd will take over the management of the Inverell Refuge Centre after the centre missed out on state funding under the Going Home, Staying Home reforms for homelessness funding.

The Pathfinders service already operates three offices within Inverell: Inverell and District Family and Youth Support Services (IFYSS), Tenterfield, Inverell and Glen Innes Youth Support (TIGYS) and Pathways Out-Of-Home-Care.

The Inverell Refuge has operated for 35 years. It was founded in 1979 by local physician Dr Theo Verbeek and Ted McLachlan of the Salvation Army to give shelter to women escaping domestic violence.

The refuge currently offers safe shelter for women and women with children all day, every day.

The staff and board also

provide outreach support to women in dire straits throughout the district.

Inverell Refuge manager Vicki Higgins met Pathfinders chief executive officer Alan Brennan about the transition late last week.

"The outcome of the meeting was, we want to work together, transition from one management to the next, and to make sure that the clients are transitioned smoothly, so no one misses out," Ms Higgins said.

"Just to make the process as smooth as possible so that there's no disruption to anybody."

Provision of support at the refuge will be funded from a \$604,000 package submitted by Pathfinders for the tender process.

The reforms are driven by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

The department was contacted for comment, and a spokes-

person for FACS reiterated that the Inverell Refuge would remain in operation.

"It is a vital component of the new service system, and will continue to be delivered by the new provider, Pathfinders.

"The package is funded at \$604,000 and continues our commitment to providing services that support people experiencing homelessness and women and children escaping domestic and family violence in Inverell," the spokesperson said.

"This new service targets young people, women, men, and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women and children escaping domestic violence.

"It provides holistic homelessness support services including a focus on prevention and early intervention, rapid rehousing, crisis and transition responses, and intensive responses for people with complex needs."