



# Growing together

Annual Report 2016/17

Relationships Australia<sup>®</sup>

VICTORIA

# Our focus

Providing effective services to strengthen relationships and social connections for individuals and families, and in schools, workplaces and communities across all life stages.

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ABN 51 263 215 677

Relationships Australia Victoria acknowledges the funding support it receives from the Australian and Victorian Governments. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this Annual Report may contain the images of people who may have since passed away. Photos for illustrative purposes only.





# Strategic priorities



## Relationship services

Relationship services with real, measurable and enduring benefits to clients.

## Child and family services

Innovative, effective and evaluated services for children, young people, parents and families who are affected by family law, family violence and mental health issues.

## Family violence services

Whole-of-family early intervention, prevention, support and recovery services for people affected by family violence.

## Mental health services

Mental health prevention, early intervention and support services for individuals, couples and families.

## Seniors relationship services

Targeted and effective services for senior Victorians aged 65 years and older, and their families.

# President's foreword



**For the first time in our 69-year history, our income reached \$23 million, enabling us to support more than 26,000 clients in 2016/17 through a diverse range of services.**

Changes within the areas of mental health, family violence, family law and family services continued this year.

The Victorian Government commenced implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria). The resulting reforms and funding opportunities have driven, and will continue to drive, growth and change in the family violence service area. We welcome these changes and look forward to contributing to the reform process over the next decade.

The Australian Government remained strongly focused on evaluation and client outcomes. The Department of Social Services has emphasised the importance of data collection to measure key performance indicators. These indicators, which include a variety of efficiency, effectiveness and targeted client group measures, are designed to enable comparisons between organisations in the sector.

There is also increasing consideration of the importance of providing coordinated, whole-of-family services with an early intervention or prevention focus.

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is responding to these changes and shifting priorities.

We are well-placed to meet increased evaluation requirements, with our strong history of evaluating and demonstrating the outcomes of our services. We initiated a range of evaluation projects in 2016/17, detailed on page 34 of this report.

The organisation provides a suite of interrelated services ranging from early intervention and prevention programs to tertiary services, with all services utilising a whole-of-family approach that considers the needs and goals of all family members.

We have committed Board members, managers and staff who focus on ensuring that the organisation provides high-quality services and delivers positive outcomes for our clients.

In April, our Board and management team came together to plan how our organisation will deliver the services that Victorians will need in the future. In addition to reaffirming our commitment to relationship, mental health and family violence services, as well as services for children, families and older Victorians, we also sought to identify emerging areas of need and new service delivery opportunities.

I would like to thank my Board colleagues for their support, and volunteering their time and effort. I welcome David Colliver, who joined the Board in May. David is a Chief Financial Officer and General Manager, with extensive experience in the corporate sector and in government, as well as on commercial and not-for-profit Boards and Committees.

I also wish to acknowledge our CEO, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, who alongside his leadership team has ably led the organisation through this year of significant growth.

Finally, I would like to recognise all RAV staff for their skill, professionalism and dedication to their clients.

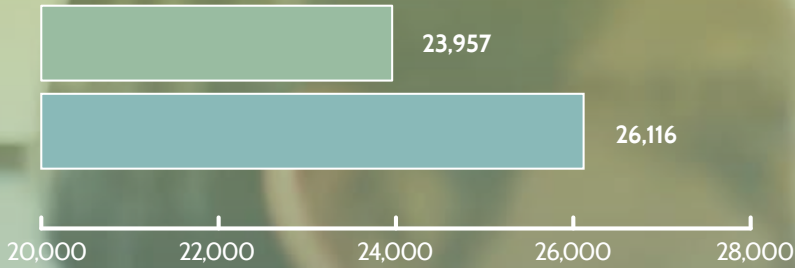
*Lyn Littlefield*

**Professor Lyn Littlefield OAM**  
President

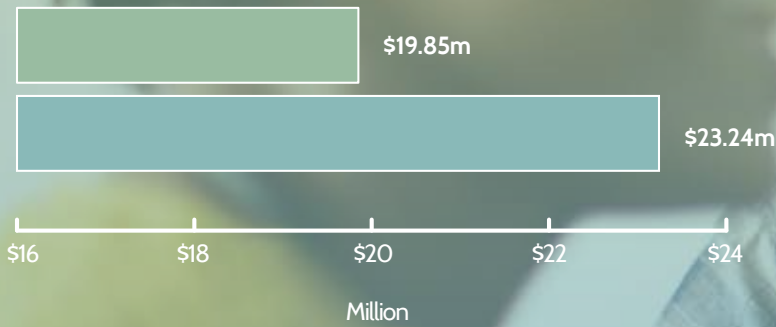


# Snapshot

## Clients



## Income



## Workforce



2015/16 2016/17

26,116

clients

14

centres

313

employees

\$23,241,307

income

# CEO's review



**In 2016/17, our staff, management and Board focused on enhancing core services, securing additional funding and implementing new, innovative services.**

RAV experienced significant growth in this year, as a result of grant, funding and service delivery opportunities. This growth is demonstrated by our client numbers, income and workforce size, as well as a diverse range of new services.

We were awarded a new, two-year Department of Justice and Regulation contract to provide LINC'S educational workshops that support offenders to comply with community corrections orders and reintegrate into the community.

As part of a collaboration with local Aboriginal organisations, we received a three-year Kaka ("come") Wangity ("listen") Wangin-Mirrie ("hear") grant from Corrections Victoria, to provide a range of cultural programs for Aboriginal offenders.

We were successful in tendering to be the sole Victorian provider of Family Safety Contact Services for Changeabout, a family-violence focused intervention for offenders funded by the Department of Justice and Regulation.

Additional funding enabled us to provide much-needed increased family violence prevention, support and recovery services to Victorians, including Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs), Family Safety Contact Services, and counselling and group programs.

Within all of these programs and across RAV, our priority, first and foremost, is the safety of all family members. This priority is reflected in our Family Safety Model, which this year was recognised by the Family Law Council as an example of an effective coordinated services approach to working with people affected by family violence (2016).

In March 2017 we officially launched a new headspace centre in Bairnsdale, which provides free or low cost, confidential mental health support services to young people aged 12 to 25 years.

We welcomed announcements that contracts for a number of our existing services, due to end in 2017/2018, had been extended. Our Reclaim Support Services for survivors of child sexual abuse or people affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will now continue until June 2018, while our Compass Forced Adoption Support Service has been extended until June 2021. Our i-Connect Family Mental Health Support Service in East Gippsland has also been extended until June 2020.

While growth in these areas is welcome, it brings with it challenges in the form of workforce, infrastructure and resource pressures. Therefore, RAV must be and is focused on ensuring that all growth is sustainable, managed appropriately and relevant to our expertise and strategic plans.

The 17 per cent increase in our income in 2016/17 was achieved despite ongoing funding constraints. For the fourth consecutive year, we did not receive indexation on funding we receive from the Attorney-General's Department to provide the majority of our counselling, family dispute resolution (FDR) and Family Relationship Centre (FRC) services. Effectively, this indexation freeze equated to a funding cut of approximately \$400,000 in 2016/17.

It has been challenging for our organisation, along with many others in the sector, to manage this funding shortfall. We have been committed to doing so though, without compromising the delivery of the much-needed services that we provide to our clients.

This commitment is demonstrated by the results of Standard Client Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) evaluations of our core services this year. Over 98 per cent of our clients were satisfied with the counselling, FDR and FRC services they received, while more than 98 per cent of clients reported they felt better able to deal with issues that they sought help with.

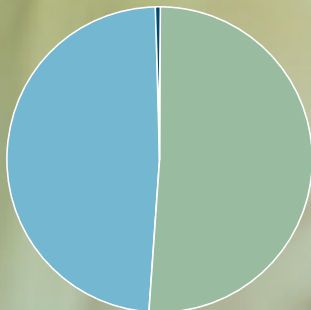
I am pleased to say that our organisation passed an assessment audit against ISO quality management system standards, and our funded Department of Health and Human Services programs, including MBCPs. Our Registered Training Organisation also passed a re-registration audit, enabling us to continue as a Registered Training Organisation for a further five years.

At the end of what was a very busy year, I would like to recognise RAV staff who have so ably adapted to the growth we experienced. Their skill and hard work ensures that RAV's valued services promote, strengthen and support healthy relationships, and improve the overall wellbeing of our clients.

**Dr Andrew Bickerdike**  
Chief Executive Officer

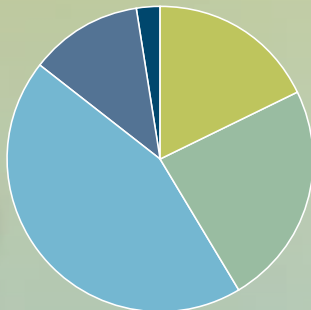
# Our clients

## Gender



Female	51.0%
Male	48.7%
Not stated	0.3%

## Age range



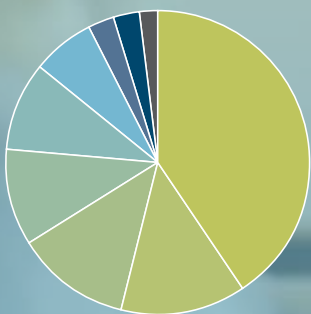
0-18	17.8%
19-34	23.8%
35-49	44.0%
50-65	11.9%
65+	2.5%

## Marital status



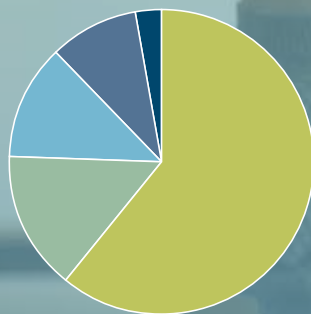
Married	26.0%
Separated	17.8%
De facto	15.1%
Single or never married	13.5%
Not stated	13.5%
Divorced	7.8%
N/A person aged under 15 years	3.2%
Other relationships	2.8%
Widowed	0.3%

## Referral source



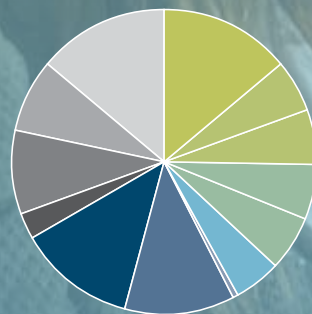
Self-referral	40.0%
Family or friends	12.9%
Other	12.1%
Not stated	12.0%
Legal agency	9.2%
Community service or other agency	6.6%
Other agency	2.7%
Medical practitioner	2.6%
Internal referral	1.9%

## Employment status



Employed	60.9%
Not in the workforce (stay at home parent, volunteer, not looking for a job)	14.8%
Not stated	12.3%
Unemployed	9.3%
N/A - person aged under 15 years	2.7%

## Service location

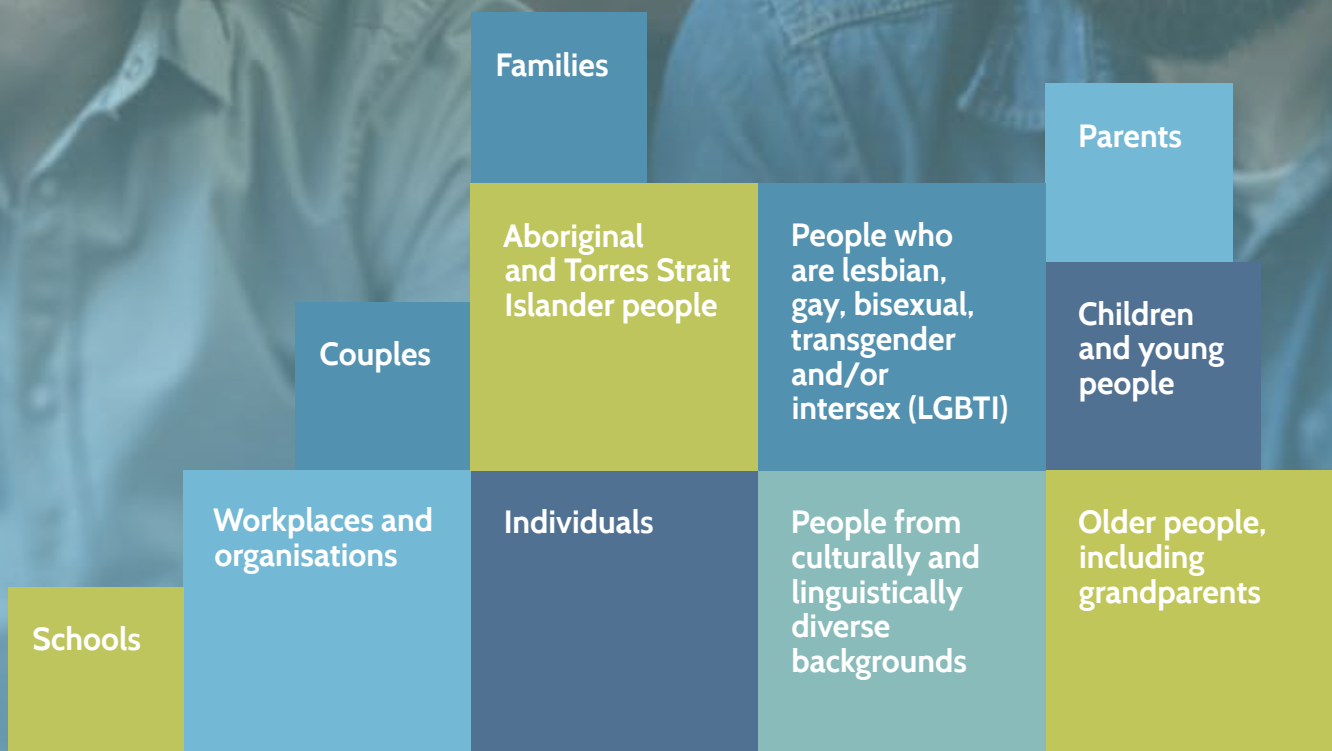


Ballarat	14.0%
Berwick FRC	5.5%
Boronia	6.0%
Cranbourne	5.8%
Greensborough	5.8%
Greensborough FRC	5.0%
headspace Bairnsdale	0.5%
Kew	11.8%
Melbourne FRC	12.4%
Shepparton	2.8%
Sunshine	9.0%
Sunshine FRC	7.6%
Traralgon	13.8%



# Services and locations

We support all Victorians, in all stages of life. Our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

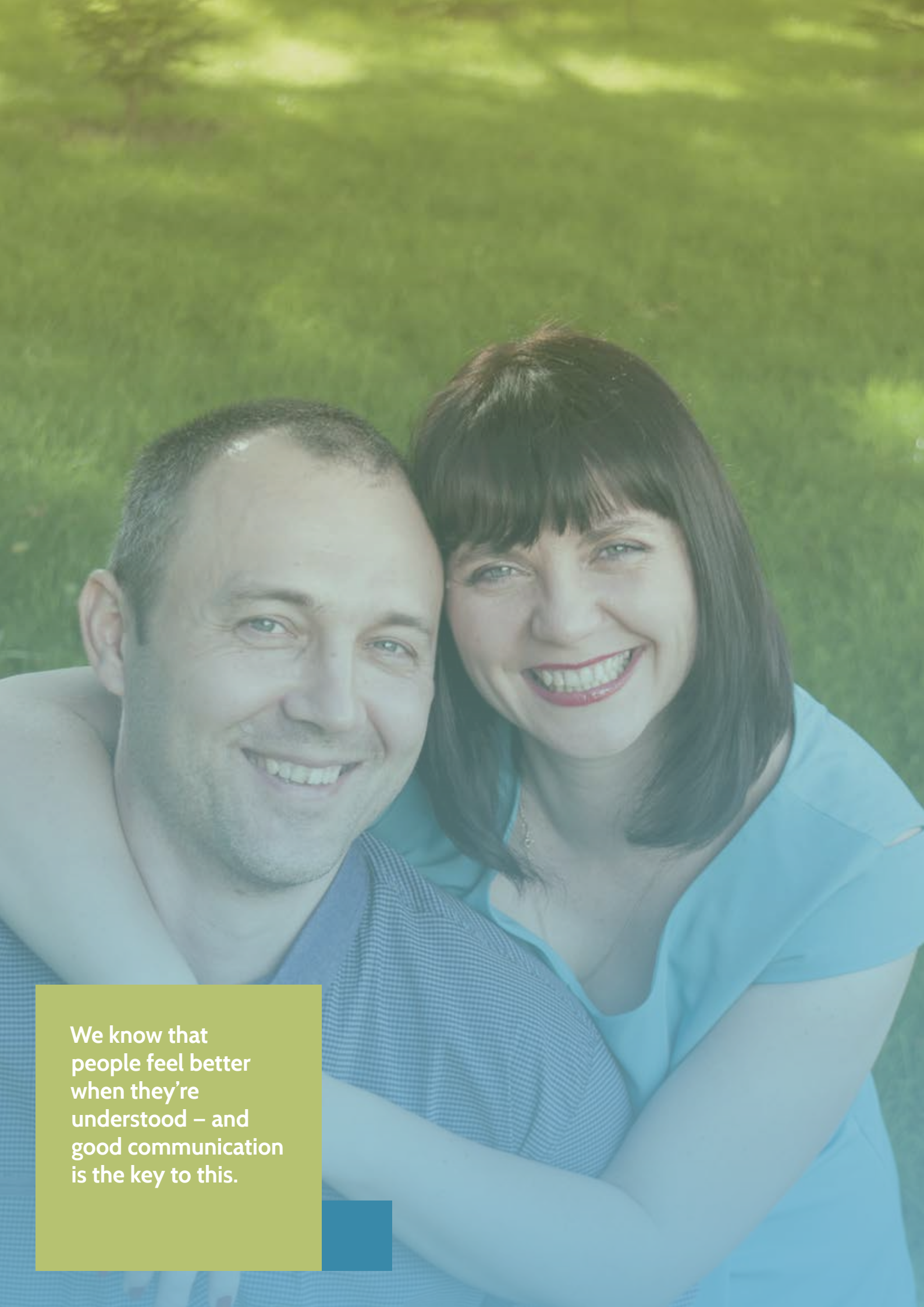






### Most common client needs addressed during service delivery

- Mental health
- Post-separation parenting and parenting plans
- Communication
- Family violence
- Conflict
- Dealing with relationship difficulties
- Relationship breakdown and family separation
- Children's wellbeing
- Stress
- Parenting
- Anger
- Grief and loss



We know that people feel better when they're understood – and good communication is the key to this.

With our vision for positive, safe and respectful relationships for all Victorians, we provided a diverse range of prevention, early intervention and tertiary services to 26,116 clients in 2016/17.

We worked flexibly to support Victorians at all stages of life, including with their relationships and through difficult life events, particularly in relation to family law, family violence and mental health difficulties. Our services included counselling, FDR, relationship education programs, groups and community engagement initiatives.

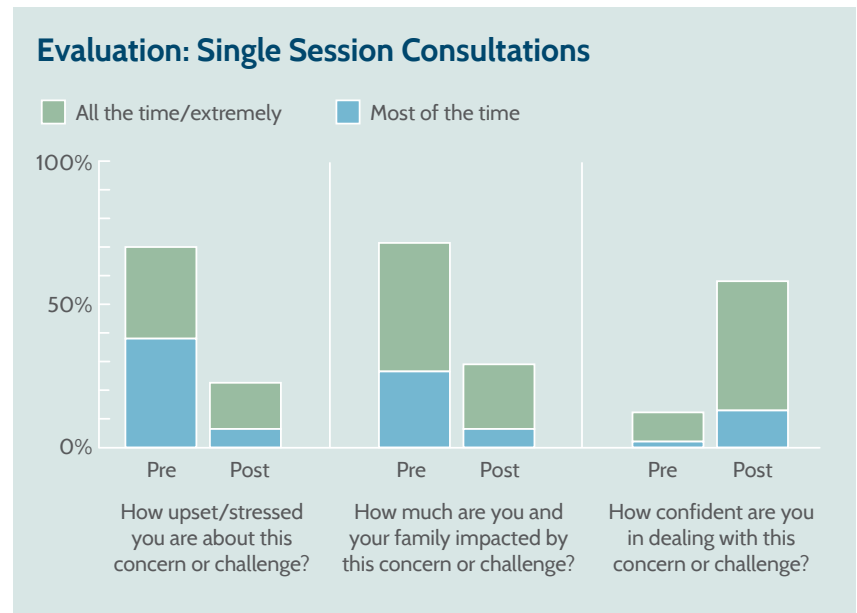
### Counselling services

Our counselling services help individuals, couples and families to talk about issues, difficulties or challenges they are experiencing, and to find positive ways to manage their situation. Our client-directed approach recognises and respects our clients' self-knowledge, enabling them to talk about the issues that they identify as most important.

Counselling services were delivered across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, including to clients attending our Greensborough, Melbourne and Sunshine FRCs for FDR. We also provided a statewide distance telephone counselling service for individuals who were unable to attend one of our other service locations.

Sessions were attended by clients on their own, with their partner or as a family, using a family-inclusive approach. Clients sought counselling for many reasons, including relationship difficulties, separation and divorce, mental health issues, experiences of family violence, parenting issues, child behavioural problems and managing emotions.

Through our centres and using teleconferencing facilities, we provided free counselling across Gippsland to farmers affected by the dairy industry crisis, and those impacted by fire, flood, drought or the Morwell Mine Fire. Counselling and psychosocial education programs were also provided at home to farmers, as part of the Farmgate Outreach service. We engaged in group work and community events including the Yinnar Farmer's Mini Expo, where we offered information, activities and health checks, and a Farmers' Pamper Day for women in Foster.



## Spotlight

### Single Session Consultations

We introduced dedicated Single Session Consultation services in our Ballarat and Kew centres. This evidence-informed, client-focused approach is collaborative and responsive, and can be used to help individuals, couples and families with many different issues.

As part of the process, a pre-session questionnaire identifies a client's greatest concern and goals for the counselling session. An extended counselling session then enables clients and counsellors to work together to identify strategies for change.

Although consultations are usually a client's first, and sometimes only, counselling session, attending the service doesn't preclude clients from accessing our other programs. Clients receive a follow-up phone call from their counsellor to discuss next steps and ensure they have access to further support if needed.

Evaluations of our Single Session Consultations indicate that the service helps to reduce clients' stress and increase clients' confidence in managing concerns or challenges.



## Support after separation

FDR, also known as mediation, and a range of information sessions, groups and seminars help to support couples who are separating or divorcing.

The FDR service, which can be a cost-effective, timely and professional alternative to litigation, helps couples to resolve their family law disputes and reach agreements about parenting, child arrangements, and property and financial settlements.

We offer an extended child-inclusive FDR service to separating parents, enabling children to talk to an independent child consultant about their experiences of separation and supports that might assist them. For parents of very young children, we provide enhanced child-focused FDR, which gives information on current research about children's stages of development and how parenting arrangements may work for children during these different stages. Both these services focus on the best interests of children.

In 2016/17, our Melbourne FRC partnered with the Royal Children's Hospital in Parkville to provide an outreach FDR service at the hospital for families of children in hospital for extended admissions. This focused, responsive service is designed for separated parents in conflict, including those experiencing family violence or with court orders in place. With a strong focus on safety and working to achieve positive outcomes in a timely way, it aims to support families with parenting issues, reduce conflict in the hospital setting, and consequently improve the wellbeing and health outcomes of patients. RAV is working closely with the hospital's Social Work Department, which facilitates referrals to RAV, with increasing demand for the service.

As part of a Relationships Australia (RA) national contract with the Federal Circuit Court of Australia, we provide legally assisted property mediation to court-mandated clients through our AccessResolve Property Mediation service. Demand for the service continued to increase in 2016/17. We undertook 340 mediations with clients from 19 Federal Circuit Court locations across Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland, with more than 74 per cent of these mediations resulting in settlements. Mediation is provided through face-to-face service delivery, and via telephone and videoconferencing, to give all Australians access to this valuable service, regardless of their geographic location.

Across many of our centres, group programs provided separated parents with information and strategies to support their children to adjust to family life after separation, and establish new co-parenting relationships. These Parenting after Separation and Post-Separation Parenting sessions are delivered flexibly to cater to the needs of different families.

At our Kew Centre, Moving On after Separation supported individuals in the early stages of separation. Topics included the impact of significant loss, managing emotions, building on strengths and moving on.

Men who had separated or were experiencing relationship difficulties attended our four-session Men's Talk group at our Kew Centre, to understand their reactions, learn how to manage their responses and gain a greater sense of autonomy for their future.

In partnership with local legal services, our Berwick FRC continued to support community legal education workshops, including Self-Representation in Court, which was facilitated by the Springvale Monash Legal Service. We hosted the Casey Cardinia Community Legal Service's Grandparents – Know Your Family Law session, which supported grandparents involved in family law disputes or whose grandchildren were engaged in child protection systems.

Berwick FRC also delivered a Step-Family Survival Strategies Workshop, to help parents navigate through the exciting and rewarding, but sometimes difficult, experience of being a step-family.

## Strengthening and repairing relationships

Recognising how important prevention and early intervention services are, RAV provides groups, workshops and programs to help individuals, couples and families to strengthen their relationships, and seek help early when needed.

"Prepare" provides couples planning to marry or formally commit with an opportunity to identify and build on their relationships strengths and explore ways to resolve conflict. The program focuses on enhancing communication skills, setting individual and shared future goals, and developing a financial plan. "Prepare" is also provided pre-marriage to couples with children from a previous relationship, to support planning for their new family structure.

Couples who wanted to strengthen their relationships attended our one-day, skills-oriented Future Positive: Good Connecting workshop at our Kew Centre. Participants learnt what makes committed relationships succeed and explored how to enhance the positives in their relationship, regulate the negatives and manage common relationship challenges.

Over six weeks, Managing Relationships provided individuals with a safe and supportive environment to better understand themselves and their relationships, including their relationship patterns, life goals, family influences and personality styles. Participants developed skills to deal with conflict, manage emotions, and communicate assertively and respectfully.

**6675**  
counselling clients

**6779**  
FRC clients

**2623**  
FDR clients

Our Traralgon Centre delivered a two-session Making Relationships Work workshop in Morwell, providing participants with strategies for good communication, healthy relationships and establishing safe friendships.

Our Kew Centre's one-day Relationship Rescue seminar supported couples "at the crossroads" to enhance and make their relationships last by developing communication, conflict management and other skills.

### Sharing our vision

With our focus on strengthening relationships and social connections, we use technology to share information and resources through our website, e-Newsletter and social media channels.

We produced quick reference cards and tip sheets on topics including healthy relationships, communication skills, conflict resolution and supporting children through separation.

We commenced development of a series of videos on common family and relationship issues, with the first video on good communication published online. Additional videos on parenting, conflict resolution, managing change and healthy relationships will be published in the second half of 2017.

In collaboration with beyondblue and On the Line, we updated our popular *Men and Separation: Navigating the Future* and *Women and Separation: Managing New Horizons* booklets. These practical resources, which can be downloaded free of charge from our website, provide support to individuals going through separation or divorce. The booklets include information on experiences of separation, formal arrangements, children after separation, self-care and moving forward.

RAV was pleased to continue as a content partner with Better Health Channel, a Victorian Government website that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities with health and medical information. Through this partnership, we contribute to a range of family, relationship and support services topics.

We engaged with radio, online and print media on a broad range of topics, including family violence, regional support services, the impact of technology on relationships, and common relationships issues.

Across our centres, staff and management participated in networks, committees and partnerships to strengthen collaboration in the sector and ensure client needs are met holistically. These included a national RA FDR Network, Victoria Family Law Pathways Network and Network Steering Committee, Victoria Legal Aid Partnership and RAV's Lawyers' Panel. The Lawyers' Panel meets regularly with FDR practitioners to discuss family law and FDR-related issues and developments, and provides a legal resource for FDR clients who require legal advice.

Our staff represented RAV at a number of conferences and events in 2016/17, including on "The Language of Children in Mediating Family Disputes" at the International Centre for Family Law Policy and Practice Conference, "Using Restorative Conferencing Practices as New Ways to Repair/Restore Family Relationships in High Conflict Battles"; and the function of internships in developing mediators at the National Mediation Conference.

"I was nervous to come as I didn't know what to expect, but I have actually learnt a lot, have clarification on some things and feel confident moving forward. Thank you."

- Relationship Rescue participant

# Child and family services

In 2016/17, we consolidated our position as a quality provider of services for children, young people, parents and families. Our prevention, early intervention services and recovery-oriented services supported people through difficult experiences and life transitions. We enhanced and evaluated existing programs and continued to develop innovative, effective services.

## Resourcing children, parents and families

For a second year, we provided family therapy to families in outer-eastern metropolitan Melbourne from our Boronia Centre and an outreach location in Yarra Junction, in partnership with EACH Social and Community Health. The service uses a whole-of-family approach to consider a family's needs and goals, and develop a plan that supports all family members. Family therapy has supported families to improve communication, build problem-solving skills, reduce conflict between parents and young people, and support children and adolescents with emotional concerns.

At our Kew Centre, parents in our four-week Positive Parenting and Family Wellness program gained skills in good communication and effectively relating to their children. The course incorporated topics on problem-solving, values and goals, conflict, intimacy and developing parental leadership skills.

Our Kew Centre also introduced Tuning in to Teens, a program to help parents better understand and interact with their adolescent children. Over six weeks, parents learnt how to support their children to develop emotional intelligence: a key skill that can help them to manage their emotions, increase awareness, and develop more stable and satisfying relationships as adults.

At locations across Victoria, we delivered Tuning in to Kids, a six-week program to support parents to develop and enhance parenting skills, and strengthen relationships with their children. The program included topics such as managing challenging behaviours, the importance of self-care, routine and accessing support. Participants reported that the program helped to normalise their experiences of parenting and gave them practical tools to support their children to manage difficult emotions.

In western and north-western Melbourne, we delivered Seasons for Growth™, a program for children who have experienced significant grief, loss or change, including separation or a death in their family. Using small peer group and creative activities, participants in the eight-week program learnt to identify the emotions associated with change and loss, and develop healthy ways to manage these feelings.

In our “early matters” program, we use a whole-of-population approach to prevention and early

intervention responses to promote and strengthen healthy family relationships. We facilitate child and parent group programs in universal services, such as kindergartens, schools, hospitals, and community and health centres. These group programs also enable families who require extra support to access our targeted therapeutic programs through our home visiting service.

The “early matters” programs we delivered included:

- ATTUNE, an antenatal healthy relationships program, which was successful in engaging new fathers as well as mothers, with more than 90 per cent of participants in one program facilitated at a regional hospital attending as couples.
- Tuning in to Kids, which proved effective in engaging families to seek help early when needed. Eighty-five per cent of families whose kindergarten-aged children participated in the program sought further early intervention support through our home visiting service.
- Confident Kinder Kids, a three-session program that supported the social and emotional development of three- and four-year-old kindergarten children. A range of activities helped children to recognise and manage different emotions, and learn skills for developing and maintaining healthy friendships.

Our Sunshine FRC again delivered DRUMBEAT with upper primary school students, in collaboration with the Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service in Sunshine. This well-regarded drumming program focuses on developing healthy relationships and increasing resilience through enhanced self-esteem, social connections, social skills and emotional control.

DRUMBEAT was also provided to secondary school students in regional Victoria as part of a school wellness day.

**“Highly recommend it. Tuning in to Kids should be in every primary school and kindergarten – I wish I'd learned this approach when my children were younger.”**

– Tuning in to Kids participant





**17.8%**  
of our clients were  
aged 18 years  
and under.

## Spotlight

### “I like, like you”

We continued to work closely with primary and secondary schools across Victoria through our “I like, like you” family violence prevention and mental health promotion programs.

“I like, like you”, which RAV has provided since developing the program in 2014, is premised on evidence that being in a healthy intimate relationship is a strong predictor of improved health and wellbeing (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007).

The program’s unique design incorporates both a prevention curriculum and a broader early intervention model of service. It introduces children and young people to the knowledge, practical skills and attitudes that promote healthy, equitable and respectful relationships, to prevent unhealthy relationships, family violence and mental health issues. Using a whole-of-population approach and through

strong connections between RAV centres and local schools, “I like, like you” also gives children, young people and families opportunities to seek help early without feeling stigmatised.

In 2016/17, we extended “I like, like you” to be provided from all our centres, with more than 2300 children in 22 different primary and secondary schools participating in the program.

We conducted an evaluation of “I like, like you UP” – the upper primary school program – detailed on page 34 of this report.

We presented on our “I like, like you” program at the 2nd Breaking the Cycle of Domestic and Family Violence Conference. We also welcomed an invitation to present a series of interactive workshops on healthy, respectful relationships, based on our “I like, like you” program to students at the Boroondara Youth Forum.

## Working with the community

For the third consecutive year, our Melbourne FRC supported a collaborative initiative aiming to enhance wellbeing of children, parents and families in Richmond. With funding from the City of Yarra, RAV joined with other local agencies to facilitate an eight-week early intervention Kids Club program, which focused on developing the social and emotional skills of local primary school students. Activities enabled the children to explore different emotions, strengthen their toolkit of friendship skills, and practise newly learnt skills in fun and interactive ways. The project is a valuable opportunity for RAV to build partnerships and relationships with other services, schools and families, and contribute to a whole-of-community social and emotional wellbeing initiative.

Also in the City of Yarra, our Melbourne FRC was one of 24 services invited to participate in the new Communities That Care initiative. RAV has committed to delivering Tuning in to Teens, and other child and parenting programs to promote the healthy development of children, young people and families.

With funding from the Greater Shepparton Communities for Children Initiative, the Shepparton Centre joined with a number of other local organisations to provide Exploring Together, a 10-week interactive, collaborative pre-school program that supports parents of children who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. The program involved separate sessions for parents and children, as well as joint sessions, to help strengthen families, enhance children's self-esteem and reduce problematic behaviour.

# 2314

primary and secondary school students participated in "I like, like you".

# 97.1%

of ATTUNE participants found the information in the session was relevant to them.

**"Loved it ... Feel as though I can actively connect with my teen without tiptoeing around them."**

- Tuning in to Teens participant

## Providing information and resources

Through our Good Ships initiative to support children with commonly faced difficulties through the power of storytelling, we published a third children's book, *Behind Closed Doors*. The book invites families to explore their shared experience of family violence. Readers are able to empathise with the book's characters and identify strengths, feelings and coping skills that can be used in their own lives.

The Good Ships books and accompanying resources for parents, teachers and therapists have been instrumental in developing structured therapeutic and educational workshops and groups for families and schools.

We commenced work on a new website to provide children with age-appropriate information and to support them with issues relating to family law, family violence and mental health. The website also aims to normalise children's thoughts, feelings and worries, and will complement connectEDspace, RAV's existing website for young people ([www.connectEDspace.com.au](http://www.connectEDspace.com.au)).

Staff across our centres engaged in a range of child- and family-related networks, groups and events. These included the Father Inclusive Practice Network, Youthlink Network, Statewide Parenting Educators Network, Brimbank Family and Child Expo, and Communities for Children Network and conference.

We presented on our "early matters" program at a number of conferences, including the 2017 ChildAware Approaches Conference and the 2017 Parent Engagement Conference Australia.

**"I loved the program because you guys help me. After hearing about other people's feelings I don't feel so alone."**

- Seasons for Change™ participant

# Family violence

## prevention, support and recovery services

Family violence affects people from all walks of life. In 2016/17, we worked to help end family violence in our community, by providing services to those who use violence, and those who are affected by it, including partners, former partners, children and family members.

### Collaboration and information sharing

With our understanding of the need for integrated, systemic services, we welcomed the opportunity to contribute to key reforms including the Victorian Government's Department of Premier and Cabinet sector consultations on support and safety hubs, service mapping for service providers in contact with perpetrators of family violence, and family violence-specific information-sharing legislation. RAV participated in the Department of Premier and Cabinet Community Conversation on a Victorian system for those experiencing family violence and in statewide consultations on the No to Violence MBCP minimum standards.

We also provided feedback in areas of expertise relating to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Bill 2018 and the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission Guideline: *Family Violence and Accommodation*.

RAV was involved in key family violence networks and partnerships across Victoria, and participated in a range of conferences and events.

At the Annual Women's Health Update seminars in Perth and Brisbane, we presented on the crucial role of general practitioners in relation to family violence and integrated responses. We attended the statewide Youth Refuge Forum, providing a presentation on identifying and working with family violence perpetrators.

RAV was well represented at a number of events to mark White Ribbon Day, a male-led campaign working to prevent men's violence against women. Staff attended a local march, breakfast and community dinner in Shepparton, and hosted a stand at the City of Boroondara's White Ribbon Day Forum. An RAV stall at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre's White Ribbon Day Conference provided prisoners with family violence and relationship-related information and support.

We joined more than 1000 sector colleagues and members of the public at the annual Walk against Family Violence, where we also hosted an information stand.

Our Traralgon Centre supported No Excuses!, a free community event that raised awareness of family violence and support services, through our involvement in a health and wellbeing tent, photo booth and badge-making activity.

We revised our *Safe from Violence* booklet, designed to help women to understand violence in relationships and guide those who are leaving a violent relationship.

In May 2016, RAV joined the Dandenong Multidisciplinary Centre to deliver timely, coordinated interventions to perpetrators of family violence through proactive, assertive engagement. RAV's specialist family violence practitioners participate in case coordination and undertake telephone contact at the centre, while further case work is completed from RAV centres. The aim of this service is to prevent further violence by identifying current risks and psychosocial needs and providing support information, while ensuring that the centre remains a safe and confidential environment for victim-survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

RAV welcomed Victoria Legal Aid's invitation to participate in the new Family Advocacy and Support Services pilot project at the Family Court of Australia in Dandenong. The partnership provides for an RAV family violence men's support worker to be based at the court from 1 July 2017. This worker will support men who have been violent in their relationships to safely engage in family law processes and access other relevant supports, such as accommodation, and drug and alcohol support services.

As well as providing counselling for those experiencing family violence, we delivered individual counselling to family violence perpetrators engaged in the justice system, including to clients who were unable to participate in MBCPs due to learning impairments.

# 42.2%

of our clients had a family violence-related need addressed while using our services.



## Focusing on safety

Following the successful introduction of our Family Safety Model with our MBCPs in 2015/16, we began piloting this model within the FDR service at our Melbourne FRC. The model uses an integrated, cohesive whole-of-family approach to provide services and support to all family members who are affected by the violence. This includes individuals who use violence and those who experience it, including partners, former partners, children and family members.

Through the model, MBCP clients and FDR clients at our Melbourne FRC who are assessed as being affected by family violence are allocated a specialist family violence case coordinator, who proactively prioritises safety by providing key safety elements. These elements include a safety, risk and needs assessment, case plan development, provision of coordinated services and warm referral pathways to support clients to transition between services.

We were pleased to have our Family Safety Model recognised in the Family Law Council's Families with Complex Needs and the Intersection of the Family Law and Child Protection Systems report.

## Men's Behaviour Change Programs and Family Safety Contact Services

As the largest provider of MBCPs and Family Safety Contact Services in Victoria, RAV is committed to providing high-quality, evidence-based programs that support safety and respond to broad changes in the family violence sector. In response to such changes, we developed and implemented a new MBCP curriculum.

The new curriculum is structured to support a pathway to change, through a range of core and elective components that facilitate engagement, insight, empathy and knowledge of how to relate safely. Facilitators can tailor individual MBCPs to meet the needs of different client groups. The curriculum also includes comprehensive evaluation processes designed to demonstrate the outcomes of our MBCPs, for users of family violence, and women and children affected by family violence.

MBCPs are designed to help men to end their use of violence and other problematic behaviour in their relationships. In the 2016/17 financial year we received new funding to deliver additional MBCPs to help meet the strong demand from men seeking behaviour change services. We facilitated the programs across metropolitan Melbourne and in regional Victoria, including in the areas of Hume, Goulburn, Barwon and the Grampians.

We were awarded the 18-month, statewide contract to be the sole provider of Family Safety Contact Services for the Department of Justice and Regulation Changeabout program, an offender-specific intervention that targets a wide range of criminogenic factors associated with family violence. The aim of these Family Safety Contact Services is to reduce the increased risk of family violence when male participants' stress is heightened during participation in the program. The Changeabout service involves regular communication between RAV practitioners and family members of MBCP participants, as well as RAV practitioners and Department of Justice and Regulation service providers.

**“I now identify when I am upset and am able to calm down before engaging in difficult discussions.”**

– MBCP participant

The key principle of our Family Safety Model is the belief that when people are affected by family violence, it is safer to provide, coordinate and track our work for not only the person using violence, but for all family members. This may be undertaken together or separately, but it is always systemic.




## Spotlight

### **My Mum and Me**

We developed a new seven-session recovery program for children and their mothers who have been affected by family violence. The My Mum and Me program, which is the accompanying program to our Repair-enting group and a component of our Family Safety Model, involves both group work and separate activities for mums and kids.

Using parenting resources and experiential exercises, the mother's component focuses on the importance of self-care, emotional regulation, empathy, attuning to children, healthy parenting skills and repairing following family violence. Children learn about insight, empathy and how to form healthy relationships and seek help through play, experiential exercises and creative art. The program, which uses RAV's children's book *Behind Closed Doors* as a core resource, allows children to tell their own story and have it heard by their mothers.

**All relationships can have everyday, normal, unhelpful moments, but at the end of the day, you should always feel safe in your relationship.**



“I can’t thank you enough for this course. I gained so many insights and I believe it has affected me profoundly and will turn out to be a real turning point in my life.”

– Women Making Choices participant

## Group programs

We delivered a range of family violence early intervention and prevention programs and services, including “I like, like you”, detailed on page 13 of this report.

Our Traralgon Centre provided Purple Hearts, a series of workshops for disability support workers, parents and carers of women with intellectual disabilities. The six-week educational program imparted information and strategies to increase safety and prevent violence and exploitation.

We also delivered programs and services to support recovery after family violence, including group programs that focus on parenting and parent-child relationships.

We introduced and evaluated Repair-enting, a 10-week program for fathers who have used violence in their relationships, have completed an MBCP and want to parent their children safely. Repair-enting focuses on being a more effective parent, strengthening or repairing relationships with children, and supporting children to recover from violence and abuse. Program topics focus on developing parenting goals, being a role model for respectful behaviour, supporting and respecting mothers, and listening to children’s experiences. Repair-enting also involves a separate information session for mothers, which provides information on parenting styles, non-abusive discipline and effective co-parenting.

Women who were affected by family violence attended a range of group programs:

- Our Kew Centre delivered Women Making Choices, a free, educative and therapeutic program that enables participants to share experiences, gain a greater understanding, and offer and receive support.
- Our Sunshine Centre offered Opening the Doors, an informative, activity-based program that allows participants to identify strengths, enhance self-esteem and learn about practical resources.
- Our Traralgon Centre’s Survival 2 Strength DRUMBEAT program supported participants to move forward and find practical solutions to concerns about searching for employment and returning to work.

We again partnered with the Springvale Monash Legal Service to host information sessions on Family Violence, Intervention Orders and Family Law, with separate sessions for respondents and affected family members.

We also delivered Women Managing Anger, a seven-week supportive program for women to explore how to manage their anger in healthy and appropriate ways.



# Mental health services

In 2016/17, we supported Victorians with issues affecting their mental health through a range of new and existing programs, including through our core relationship services and dedicated mental health services.

## Working with the sector and in the community

As a member of the Statewide Innovation Reference Group for the implementation of Victoria's 10-year mental health plan, we worked to identify practice and service gaps for families affected by mental health difficulties, to improve mental health outcomes.

We presented at the Grampians Mental Health Conference and the Western Victorian Family Law Pathways Network Quarterly Forum, on "Supporting Clients with Undiagnosed Mental Illness in Negotiating their Family Law Matters". We hosted a stand at the Generation Next Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People Seminar, where we showcased our "I like, like you" program, mental health services, and services for young people and families.

With our commitment to supporting children and families affected by serious mental illness, our Greensborough Centre continued to provide Single Session Family Consultations to clients of the North East Area Mental Health Service through the North East Community Mental Health Service. This outreach service is designed to enhance clients' mental health treatment plans and support them with their family relationships.

In Traralgon, we hosted two community workshops to support men to strengthen their relationships, reduce stress and anxiety, and improve resilience and wellbeing. The two one-day Put Your Hand Up sessions focused on strategies to manage difficult times, including how to seek help when needed.



**34.3%**

of our clients had a mental health-related need addressed while using our services.



>120

young people accessed headspace Bairnsdale's services in the first three months of operation.

## headspace centres

In addition to our role as lead agency in headspace Bairnsdale, we remain involved in the headspace centres in Hawthorn, Greensborough and Knox.

As a headspace Greensborough consortium partner, we provided counselling services to headspace clients through our centres in Northern Melbourne.

We participated in the Family and Relationship Stream Reference Group for headspace Knox, which contributes to the centre's strategic and service development to address local needs.

In Hawthorn, we were represented on the Management Committee, which oversees strategic planning, and the Quality and Risk Sub-Committee, which focuses on maintaining quality clinical practice and responding to risk.

In conjunction with headspace Hawthorn, our Kew Centre developed and facilitated RIGHT NOW, a six-week therapeutic movement and rhythm group for young people who have experienced interpersonal trauma. We established a warm referral process between headspace Hawthorn and our Kew Centre, and continued to deliver whole-of-family, family therapy for headspace clients.

## Spotlight

### headspace Bairnsdale

We were excited to open a new headspace centre in Bairnsdale in East Gippsland, in early 2017. It provides early intervention mental health services to young people aged 12–25 years in East Gippsland. We know how important early intervention mental health services are and we have had a presence in East Gippsland for more 12 years, including through our i-Connect Family Mental Health Support Service, which commenced in 2014, and we welcomed the opportunity to be the lead agency for headspace Bairnsdale.

The centre offers young people free or low-cost, confidential mental, general practice and sexual health services as well as education and employment, and alcohol and other drug support services. The comprehensive suite of services also includes therapeutic and financial counselling, psychiatric consultations, case management, vocational guidance, help with job seeking, and health and wellbeing services for Aboriginal young people.

headspace Bairnsdale is supported by contract manager Gippsland Primary Health Network and operated in partnership with a consortium of

diverse local services. Through this partnership, we focus on making a meaningful difference by supporting young people to seek help early, achieve their goals and reach their potential.

An enthusiastic and energetic Youth Advisory Group was established to ensure that young people could contribute to the development of the centre and that services are relevant, welcoming, supportive, accessible and inclusive.

headspace Bairnsdale has connected with and delivered information to the community through a dedicated website, Facebook page and school presentations. headspace staff have also engaged with young people at community events, including the Dye Hard Colour Run, Bairnsdale Careers Expo and as part of the National Youth Week arts workshop and music event that the centre hosted.

The local community has demonstrated significant interest in and support for the centre, with the official launch well attended by young people, local community leaders, headspace staff, consortium partners and other local service providers.

## i-Connect

Our i-Connect Family Mental Health Support Service worked to provide flexible and responsive services to children and young people affected by, or at risk of, mental health difficulties in East Gippsland. Funding for the service was extended for three more years, which will enable i-Connect to continue to keep children and young people engaged in learning and education, through case management and programs, outreach services, referrals and practical support.

Key i-Connect activities included:

- Delivering the “I like, like you UP” program to students at a rural primary school, where bullying had been identified as an issue. The program helped year five and six students to identify and celebrate their peers’ qualities and strengths, understand healthy relationships and recognise that bullying is detrimental to healthy friendships and a healthy school environment.
- Supporting access to an equine therapy program for clients who have experienced trauma, to help increase trust, connection, self-esteem and self-care.
- Access to sport, gymnastic and yoga programs to help children who have been socially isolated to connect with the community and develop healthy relationships, and to reduce anxiety and depression.
- Attendance and participation in planning Colour Fest, a youth-focused activity held as part of National Youth Week. i-Connect joined headspace Bairnsdale to host a photo booth and stand at the event, where visitors could informally chat to staff about mental health issues and support services.

We also undertook prevention work and mental health promotion activities in the community and in schools, and participated in the Family Mental Health Support Services Victoria and Tasmania Network.

## Reclaim Support Services

Survivors of child sexual abuse and those who engaged in or were affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse accessed our Reclaim Support Services.

There continued to be strong demand for Reclaim, which provided specialist counselling, information and advice. We supported clients before, during and after they engaged with Royal Commission private sessions. We also helped clients choosing to explore options for redress.

We experienced an increase in service requests from inmates in Victorian prisons, as a result of the Royal Commission’s Inmate Engagement Strategy. We responded sensitively and promptly to these enquiries, with brief, targeted, telephone-based

interventions that highlighted the importance of offering flexible therapeutic services. These included debriefing and symptom management-focused interventions for clients who could not be resourced through face-to-face services.

With the Royal Commission due to conclude in late 2017, registrations for survivors to attend a private session with a Commissioner closed and the final public hearings were held in 2016/17. We recognise that these events and the conclusion of the Royal Commission’s work may be challenging for many survivors, their friends and families, and the wider community. RAV remains focused on providing timely and tailored support to all clients while helping them to explore their options for support once the Reclaim service concludes.

## Forced Adoption Support Services

We welcomed the extension of funding for our Compass Forced Adoption Support Services, which enables us to continue to support people affected by forced adoption policies and practices until June 2021. Using a therapeutic case management model, we provide information, telephone support and referrals to mothers, fathers, adopted persons and extended family members.

We developed a new suite of resources (available on our website) on topics including searching for or making contact with family members, self-care, relationship support, and accessing support groups and services.

We participated in an Australian Psychological Society webinar panel, which used a fictional case study to discuss best practice principles for working with clients affected by forced adoption.

As well as direct service provision, Compass funded projects designed to build capacity and enhance support for those affected by forced adoption. Two grant application rounds resulted in nine funded projects, including an art therapy course catering to the needs of adopted persons. We also helped to fund a memorial in Sale, Gippsland, to mark the National Apology for Forced Adoptions and subsequent Victorian Government apology to people affected by past forced adoption policies and practices.

**“The i-Connect program has gone above and beyond what we could have hoped for with the family, with support in providing food, education and counselling. This makes our role so much easier when we know that your team are caring for the children in our community.”**

– Support worker



# Seniors relationship services

With the number of Australians aged 65 and over expected to more than double between 2015 and 2055 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015), RAV is committed to providing effective services that address the needs of senior Victorians and their families.

In 2016/17, we introduced a Charter of Rights for Older Adults accessing our services, which recognises the importance of prioritising older people's choices and preferences in relation to their wellbeing and support.

We continued to develop innovative service responses that improve the wellbeing and fulfilment of older Australians by strengthening relationships, facilitating social connection, and reducing loneliness and isolation. Building on our core counselling, FDR and relationship education expertise, existing programs were adapted to include and respond to the needs of older adults.

## Partnerships and collaboration

We entered a partnership with Swinburne University of Technology's Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults to develop two services that will be delivered and evaluated in community settings.

- Reminiscence Activity Groups are based on emerging evidence that participating in reminiscing activities, such as sharing stories, can positively affect cognition, mood and self-esteem, and help to strengthen social connections.
- Digital Storytelling uses technology to capture older people's personal life stories in digital form, with research indicating that this process can positively affect older adults in the areas of mood, emotional regulation, cognitive function and capacity to engage in relationships.

We strengthened relationships with several local councils in northern and inner eastern Melbourne, through which we focused on developing strategies to increase social participation of older residents.

## Working against elder abuse

Building on our reputation and expertise in providing family violence services, we continued to respond to and help to prevent elder abuse.

We worked to increase community awareness of the issue and empowered older people with information on legal and financial rights and relevant support services. As a result of a State Trustees Australia Foundation grant, we developed Steering the Right Path workshops and presentations. The free, interactive and educative sessions focus on planning for the future, preserving relationships and autonomy, and preventing conflict and elder abuse.

As an active member of the Eastern Elder Abuse Network, we contributed to a submission on elder abuse to the Australian Law Reform Commission, as well as making an independent RAV submission. We contributed to local councils' plans to support older people in the Banyule and Manningham areas.

## Education and information sharing

We developed a suite of tip sheets on age-related topics, including *Elder Abuse*, *Becoming an Elder Carer*, *Moving into Residential Care*, and *Ageing and Wellbeing*.

We welcomed Sunil Bhar, Associate Professor of Psychology and Chair, Department of Psychological Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology, as the guest speaker at our 68th Annual General Meeting. Associate Professor Bhar gave an engaging presentation on the university's Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults living in residential care, and challenges associated with defining old age, the changing age demographics in Australia and the need for geropsychology training for healthcare professionals.

At the 2016 Family and Relationship Services Australia conference, we presented on the strong link between robust social relationships and a range of health and wellbeing outcomes for older adults.

We also presented on issues and services relating to older people to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Seniors Rights Victoria, the Eastern Elder Abuse Network and the Victoria Police Elder Abuse Forum.


## Building capacity

We focused on building staff capacity through targeted professional development courses and groups, including Reminiscence Approaches in Counselling Older Adults, Elder Mediation, Elder Abuse, Advance Medical Directives and Understanding Powers of Attorney.

RAV staff also attended a range of conferences and events, including an Advance Care Planning Seminar, the 4th National Elder Abuse Conference and Swinburne University of Technology's Dignity Therapy: An Introduction workshop.

502

of our clients were aged 65 years and older.



As the elders of our communities, you have a right to be treated with equality, dignity and respect.

– RAV Charter of Rights for Older Adults

“It gave me an opportunity to articulate difficulties and problems in a supportive and controlled environment. Both mediators were extraordinarily patient and their questions non-judgemental and helpful.”

– Elder relationship services mediation client, aged 77

## Spotlight

### Elder relationship services

As part of a 12-month national RA pilot project, our Kew Centre delivered elder mediation and counselling for older people, their families and service providers. We supported clients experiencing issues such as uncertainty about an older person's capacity, judgement and care needs; adult children's concerns about their parents' care and finances; and when older people were estranged from their children.

The services were tailored to meet the needs of individual clients. They were delivered flexibly, enabling older people to attend by themselves, with their partner, with their children or as a family.

While the pilot project concluded in January 2017, RAV continues to provide elder mediation and counselling through our core service delivery.

We also developed a course to help couples plan for and enjoy their retirement, and an information session to increase understanding of care plans, advance care directives and powers of attorney.

“It really helped me with my concerns. It was a comfortable space and I felt listened to. The meeting helped me to think more clearly and calmly, and work out my next steps.”

– Elder relationship services mediation client, aged 47

# Specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

**We worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support and strengthen relationships for individuals and families.**

In 2016/17, we embraced our Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Victoria. Our organisation-wide campaign is increasing awareness of and ensuring engagement with this commitment to provide a culturally safe and supportive environment for all Indigenous people who access our services, and to processes that support inclusion, respect and understanding.

In consultation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaison Officer, RAV provided culturally appropriate counselling and FDR. We value working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Victoria, and continued to do so in 2016/17, including through the collaborative provision of, and involvement with, group programs.

## **Supporting men, women, young people and families**

We partnered with a driving school in western metropolitan Melbourne in Drive Away Family Violence, an innovative pilot program supporting Aboriginal women who are recovering from family violence to gain their driver's licence. The program, funded through the DHHS Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group, is designed to empower women by increasing independence, resilience, self-esteem and opportunities to participate in the paid workforce. It includes individual driving lessons with a female Aboriginal driving instructor, a group program that supports women to prepare for the learner permit knowledge test and information on support services.

RAV continued to participate in Nan, Aunty, Mum: You Are a Treasure to Our Family, a collaborative Women's Health West and BreastScreen Victoria project that encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to participate in breast screening, through information and cultural activity-based sessions, which RAV attended.

We supported Sister's Day Out wellbeing workshops in South Morang, Cranbourne and Traralgon, through event sponsorship and providing information, giveaways and support. The one-day family violence prevention events engage with Koori women and are a culturally welcoming, safe place for them to enjoy pampering activities and join in celebrations of Aboriginal culture. Workshops focus on building

self-esteem and identity, and reinforcing women's rights to feel safe and secure in their roles as nurturers and leaders in community. We also participated in a modified version of the program, Sisters Day In, which was delivered in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre with women prisoners.

RAV collaborated with Women's Health West to deliver Sacred Sistas, a sexual and reproductive health program for Aboriginal women and girls. Using art-based activities, participants came together to yarn, seek advice and showcase their creativity. We participated in Sacred Sistas workshops in Werribee, Melton, Hoppers Crossing, Queenscliff and at the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre in Parkville.

In partnership with the Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, we began developing a drumming program for women and children affected by family violence. The three-session program focuses on healthy families and relationships, emotions and feelings, and teamwork in families.

Through the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place in Gippsland, Koori men on a community correction order were able to participate in our Connecting Workshop. Using the DRUMBEAT model and a yarning circle, the men discussed how to improve their connections with family, community, support services and themselves.

We were privileged to again offer Brutha's Day Out, a unique program that strengthens Aboriginal men's connections to improve their self-esteem and health outcomes, and fosters healthy family relationships. The event was delivered by the Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, with funding that RAV received from the Eastern Metropolitan Region Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group. Through participation in the program's cultural activities, including spear and boomerang making, RAV was able to engage with men about our services in the local area.

An annual Family Fun Health Day in Shepparton allowed us to engage with the local Indigenous community, including families. The activity-filled day involved a range of health checks and community activities for children preparing to start school.





**993**

of our clients were  
Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait  
Islander people.

**“It had a great mix of  
cultural experiences,  
and opportunities to  
discuss issues ranging  
from family violence  
to personal health.”**

**– RAV staff member at Brutha's Day Out**

We also facilitated DRUMBEAT with Koori adolescents aged 10–14 who were living in kinship or foster care and participating in the City of Whittlesea's Youth Services program. Over 10 weeks, participants gained confidence and self-awareness, with parents, carers and other significant people in the children's lives attending the final session to see a demonstration of their newly learned drumming skills.

In Greensborough, we ran a short drumming workshop at the annual Koori Christmas BBQ, a community event promoting reconciliation, community participation and access to local support services. RAV staff delivered information from a stand at the annual Healthy Happy Deadly Aboriginal expo in Sunbury.

### Strengthening relationships

We gave funding to support Deadly Kitchen Elders Gatherings – community lunches designed to reduce the risk of isolation for Elders in western Melbourne. Through this program, RAV has established strong relationships with the local Aboriginal community and shared service information.

Our staff participated in a range of events and activities to engage with and support Indigenous communities, including the 12th Annual Long Walk Women's Luncheon, celebrating women's achievements.

In July, we joined in NAIDOC Week celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements, and recognised Indigenous Australians' contributions to our country and society. RAV was well represented at the annual NAIDOC Week March and 2016 Victorian NAIDOC Ball, and we attended community flag-raising ceremonies, workshops, lunches and dinners in Melbourne and regional Victoria. As part of Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service's celebrations, RAV helped to fund a well-attended event that incorporated a morning tea, smoking ceremony and tour of the service's facilities. We were honoured to accept a plaque recognising our contributions to, support of and partnership work with the centre.

We also attended events to mark National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day.

**“We were able to watch these children overcome some of their fears about performing and witness them taking risks in a safe and supported space. It was a privilege to be a part of this.”**

– DRUMBEAT facilitator

## Spotlight

### Bagung ba Wadamba – gather and heal

Through a collaborative partnership with the Aboriginal Centre for Males, Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service and Wayapa Wuurk, RAV successfully tendered for a three-year Kaka (“come”) Wangity (“listen”) Wangin-Mirrie (“hear”) Aboriginal Cultural Program Grant, funded through Corrections Victoria. The program framework recognises the importance of connection to culture as a protective factor for Aboriginal offenders in prison or on community corrections orders.

Through the grant funding, we developed and commenced delivering Bagung ba Wadamba, which means “gather and heal” in Woi Wurrung language. This cultural program includes Elders, who are pivotal as keepers of knowledge, in passing on culture, and in supporting connection to community. RAV is the lead agency for Bagung ba Wadamba, providing clinical support during the three programs detailed below.

- Brutha's Day In provides a safe space for men to learn and yarn about a wide range of topics important to Aboriginal men, including respectful relationships, health and wellbeing, and care for country.
- Women's Spirit Journey is a culturally safe, healing-focused program that reconnects women, many of them victims of trauma and abuse, to places of spiritual significance, and develops their understanding of the importance of healing from grief and trauma.
- Growing up Kids is a whole-of-family parenting program that incorporates the Aboriginal view of community to reconnect parents and children whose relationships have been impacted by their involvement in the correctional system. It supports parents to develop culturally appropriate parenting practices to ensure that children are protected and provided for, with the overarching framework focusing on strengthened culture and kinship.



# Specialist services for a diverse Victoria

RAV celebrates and supports cultural diversity. We are committed to supporting all Victorians, including those from multicultural backgrounds.

Through effective community engagement in 2016/17, we connected with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, developing new services and providing existing services in culturally appropriate, responsive and inclusive ways, including through the use of translators and extended sessions.

## Meeting the needs of diverse communities

We tailored a number of programs to meet the needs of different cultural and language clients and groups:

- With funding from DHHS, we facilitated MBCPs with Vietnamese men in western Melbourne. The 15-session programs, which incorporated Family Safety Contact Services through our Family Safety Model, were delivered in Vietnamese to reduce language barriers and the need for interpreters. In addition to core curriculum modules, the MBCPs involved additional sessions related to migration, displacement, cultural conflicts and integration, and the impact of these issues on relationships. Sessions also focused on culture, the role of gender and family responsibilities.
- In north-west Melbourne, our “early matters” team facilitated our “I like, like you UP” program with primary school students, many of whom

were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and spoke English as a second language. Our Traralgon Centre also delivered a two-hour program session based on “I like, like you” curriculum with young women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, as part of the Centre for Multicultural Youth’s Girl Space program.

- We delivered Tuning in to Kids with parents from a range of backgrounds, including Vietnamese, Macedonian, Italian, Greek, Maltese, Lebanese and Timorese. The program helped parents to strengthen their own and their children’s emotional competence. Program feedback indicated that participants valued talking about their experiences and developing new skills to understand and respond to their children’s emotions.
- In collaboration with the Vietnamese Women’s Association, we facilitated Confident Kinder Kids with Vietnamese parents.
- In Flemington, young Eritrean mothers attended information sessions, facilitated by our Melbourne FRC, that provided information on children’s emotional and brain development, communication and how to manage challenges.

# 74

languages other than English were spoken by our clients.

# 112

countries of birth were represented by our clients.

# 13.1%

of our clients were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**“I am more in control now. I take my time out ... I was not like this before being here.”**

– Vietnamese-specific MBCP participant

## Spotlight

### Welcoming new funding

We were successful in tendering for pilot funding from the Attorney-General’s Department to deliver legally assisted and culturally appropriate FDR. The Safe Resolutions service, which commenced in June, is delivered in partnership with the Australian Vietnamese Women’s Association, Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre, WEstjustice and Women’s Legal Service Victoria.

It provides support for Vietnamese families experiencing separation and family violence, by enhancing access to proactive, educative and early intervention services including FDR, education sessions and family violence support. The services are presented in welcoming and accessible ways, by engaging with Vietnamese-speaking program facilitators who understand cultural differences and translators who have been trained in family law issues.

RAV was also awarded the Department of Justice and Regulation contract to provide culturally specific family violence initiatives that are responsive to the culturally diverse cohorts within Victoria’s correctional system, in partnership with the InTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, Kildonan Uniting Care and No to Violence/Men’s Referral Service.

The consortium will develop family violence information sessions and resources, MBCPs for Arabic and Vietnamese men, and family violence programs for African and Pacific Islander men. Cultural guidelines for delivering offence-specific family violence and intervention programs for prisoners and offenders will also be developed.





**“In our culture we do not talk about emotions. But my husband and I are here as we want to talk more about them.”**

- Tuning in to Kids participant

**Vietnamese  
Arabic  
Mandarin  
Hindi  
Spanish**

Most common languages other than English spoken by our clients

**India  
England  
New Zealand  
Vietnam  
Sri Lanka  
China  
Philippines**

Most common countries of birth of our clients, other than Australia

### Working with the community

We invited members of the public to participate in our diversity-themed Community Mosaic Project, which saw Gippsland residents visit our centre and contribute to a mosaic that will be permanently displayed in our Traralgon Centre.

Our centres enhanced referral pathways, shared information, helped to inform practice and strengthened relationships with other services providers by participating in a wide range of local multicultural networks.

We also supported or provided funding for a range of community-based programs and events to build and strengthen relationships, promote social inclusion and support access to RAV services.

- Cook Chat Talk was a series of multicultural lunches for parents with young children living in the Richmond public housing estate, including parents from diverse multicultural backgrounds.
- Gippsland residents celebrated the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan through the family-friendly Gippsland Eid Festival. More than 300 people attended the activity-filled day, which was designed to be an inclusive, whole-of-community event enabling culture to be shared in a positive and welcoming environment.

- Members of an African women’s group in Richmond participated in an educational school holiday excursion to Scienceworks.
- Young families, teenagers and older residents from Turkish, Chinese and Horn of Africa backgrounds, who live in the Carlton public housing estate, enjoyed a family-friendly community excursion that was organised in partnership with local agencies.
- Somalian young people, families and community leaders came together with students and local families for an activity-filled Family Fun Day at La Trobe University.

RAV also was a sponsor of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria’s 2016 Statewide Conference, designed to lead public discussion on the changing face of multiculturalism in Victoria.

Across Victoria we marked Harmony Day, with lunches that celebrated cultural diversity, and through our support of a free community concert in Carlton. We presented a badge-making event at the Shepparton launch of Cultural Diversity Week and at the annual family-friendly Converge on the Goulburn community festival, which celebrates multicultural and Aboriginal communities.

Community is everywhere. In 2016/17, we undertook community engagement initiatives and extended our service delivery to new communities through a range of outreach services.

## Outreach services and community-based work

Our centres in Kew and Greensborough established outreach services at community service hubs in Heidelberg and Epping to meet local community need. These hubs enable RAV to engage with the community, impart information and deliver conveniently located services, including FDR and parenting groups. Participation in the hubs has also supported RAV to establish and strengthen relationships with local community organisations, councils and health services.

Recognising that men are much less likely to visit the doctor than women, we shone the spotlight on men's health at the annual Farm World agricultural show in Gippsland. Over 200 men accessed free, fun health checks that used a mechanical theme to liken maintaining good health to servicing a car's engine. The checks, which were provided with the support of Federation University nursing students and volunteers, helped to identify undiagnosed health issues and encouraged men to regularly access health services.

As part of National Families Week celebrations, our Traralgon Centre co-hosted a stand in a local shopping centre, to raise awareness of RAV services and encourage families to connect with each other.

The "early matters" team held events at four local primary schools to mark the week, with over 1000 students receiving an RAV gift bag, and enjoying school discos, photo booths, sausage sizzles and a "What Does Your Family Mean to You?" art competition.

Our Traralgon Centre also held a drawing competition at the Latrobe City Council Children's Expo in Morwell. The event was a valuable opportunity to build relationships with the community and promote RAV's child and family services in Gippsland.

We engaged with the community at a range of other events, including the launch of a new Community Information Centre in Richmond, a community festival and family fishing day in Churchill and a picnic for families affected by the closure of the Hazelwood Power Station.

## Engaging with LGBTI communities

We continued to engage with LGBTI communities and promote the inclusive nature of our services.

As a member of the RA national federation, we embraced the collective RA statement supporting marriage equality, which is based on our belief that all Australians have the right to access marriage, as a civil institution, with their partner of choice, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.

For the fifth consecutive year, we proudly supported the annual Melbourne Queer Film Festival, showcasing LGBTI-themed films and documentaries. We sponsored the well-attended Melbourne premiere of *The Intervention* and distributed RAV-branded rainbow pens to audience members.

We hosted information stands at the ChillOut Festival celebrating LGBTI pride in Daylesford and the Midsumma Festival's Carnival celebrating queer arts and culture. The events meant visitors could talk to us about our services and participate in a popular badge-making activity, and we could strengthen relationships with other agencies and community groups.

In Shepparton, we joined in celebrations of pride and community diversity through sponsorship of the OUTintheOPEN Festival Carnival Day. We gave visitors to our stand information about our services, a range of RAV-branded rainbow pens, crayons, heart-shaped notepads and lollypops, and the opportunity to participate in badge-making and mask-making activities.

Our headspace Bairnsdale Centre participated in the LGBTI Equality Roadshow, which aims to reduce discrimination and promote inclusion of LGBTI people in everyday rural and regional life. We attended the LGBTI Roadshow Inclusion and Oi! Challenging Everyday Homophobia and Transphobia workshops.

# 124

registered  
Neighbour Day  
events were held  
in Victoria.



## Spotlight

### Neighbour Day

For the fourth year RAV embraced Neighbour Day, Australia's annual celebration of community. Residents, community groups and local councils participated in the event, which in 2017 had the theme of "The Importance of Social Connection for the Elderly".

In partnership with Banyule City Council, we hosted a Music and Memories in the Mall event in Heidelberg West, where seniors, their families, friends and neighbours enjoyed morning tea, live music and activities that encouraged storytelling and reminiscing. RAV presented information on our services and RAV-branded tote bags, notebooks and pens, while Swinburne University of Technology showcased storytelling services provided by their Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults.

In Sunshine, we attended the launch of a Neighbour Day exhibition, featuring art work from local primary and secondary school students.

Neighbours are important because good relationships with others can, and do, change communities for the better.

Our Central Office celebrated Neighbour Day with a morning tea and quiz.

Our Traralgon Centre hosted a Free Cuppa & a Chat event, providing the opportunity for people living and working in the local area to enjoy a warm drink, meet and greet neighbours, talk to RAV staff and learn about our services.

While Neighbour Day is officially held annually on the last Sunday in March, the initiative's goal of strong, connected communities can be embraced every day of the year.



# Professional training and workplace support

We are committed to delivering best practice-informed training and professional development opportunities. In 2016/17, our Training Department delivered accredited courses, workshops and training that were tailored to meet the needs of workplaces and employees.

## Accredited training

Our Registered Training Organisation underwent a re-registration audit in 2016/17. Having successfully passed the audit and demonstrated our industry relevance and financial viability, RAV is able to continue as a Registered Training Organisation and provide the nationally recognised Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution.

As a result of industry consultation and standards, we replaced our Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution with a new, updated course, which was scoped by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. We welcomed the announcement of our eligibility to deliver the new graduate diploma, which enables students to undertake additional placement hours. RAV is the only provider of this qualification in Victoria, which directly delivers FDR services and is embedded in the FDR industry. We believe this positively impacts the quality of course delivery and student outcomes.

For more than 30 years, RAV's Specialist Course in Couple Therapy has provided counsellors with high-quality training in couple therapy. The course, which was fully subscribed this year, was again offered in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology as part of the Master of Social Science (Couple Counselling). The five-month course delivers theoretical and practical knowledge, through case discussions, live demonstrations, clinical practice workshops and experiential learning. Post-course options included an internship, supervision program and a Live Couple Therapy Consultation Program, which utilises technology to help students to develop their skills, and couples to reflect on issues raised during counselling. We strengthened our relationship with the University of Melbourne's Social Work Department, which pre-approved our internship program for recognition of prior learning.

For the second year, we facilitated a five-day intensive Mediation Short Course. The well-attended program imparted the knowledge and skills needed for structured and facilitated mediations that help clients to generate options, reach agreements and resolve disputes. A number of participants elected to do an additional assessment day, enabling them to register as an accredited mediator.

## Professional development

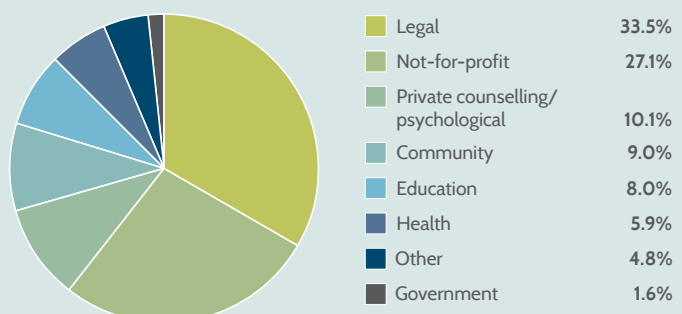
We offered a series of workshops for professionals working with families, children, parents and couples in the community, health and education sectors.

- FDR Practice – Why Think About Ethics? is a half-day workshop highlighting ethical dilemmas in FDR practice and how to respond to them.
- Borderline Personality Disorder – At the Edge provides principles for working with, and strategies to support clients with, borderline personality disorder.
- The Tree of Life is a narrative therapy approach to working with vulnerable children, young people and adults, which strengthens connections to history, culture and significant others.

We also provided workshops on Working with Perpetrators of Family Violence, Supporting Separated Families and Managing Challenging Behaviours.

We welcomed internationally renowned couples' therapist and clinical psychologist, Dan Wile, from the United States, who delivered a two-day workshop for therapists on the Collaborative Couple Therapy. Participants learnt the principles of this unique model, to move couples beyond a spiral of alienation and into a cycle of connection.

## Industries of professional development workshop participants



### Skills-based training

RAV was successful in tendering for a new two-year Department of Justice and Regulation contract to provide LINCS, an educational workshop supporting offenders serving community corrections orders (medium risk) to comply with orders and reintegrate into the community. The program is provided to participants from across Victoria from Corrections Victoria sites in Dandenong, Carlton and Broadmeadows.

It uses a straightforward, accessible and clear approach that acknowledges internal and life priorities, and the external resources, supports and opportunities that had not been previously identified. The workshop's four modules focus on improving participants' capabilities and strengths using skills-based activities, and highlighting the importance of the participants' capacity in relation to social supports, employment opportunities and access to education.

**“I can say, without hesitation, that RAV’s course was one of the most rewarding and stimulating aspects of my post-graduate education. Its organisation and structure was exceptional. The course provided excellent opportunities for reflection and clarification of the theories and techniques that were covered. The presenters themselves were thoughtful, energetic and supportive.”**

– Specialist Course in Couple Therapy student

## Spotlight

### Workplace training and support

In addition to our professional development workshop series, our Training Department offered on-site workshops that were customised to meet the needs of employees, managers and Human Resources (HR) staff within organisations, services, government departments and other workplaces. Workshops included Managing Mental Health in the Workplace and How to Deal with Everyday Conflict in the Workplace.

With our strong understanding of the prevalence of family violence and its impact on the workplace, we delivered family violence training to workplaces. Demand for these workshops increased in 2016/17, in part as a result of the introduction of paid family violence leave within many workplaces, and in preparation for the implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria). Our one-day Responding to Family Violence in the Workplace workshop introduces participants to skills and knowledge to help support staff experiencing family violence. This interactive session focuses on topics such as indicators of, and barriers, to disclosing family violence, as well as how to respond to disclosures of family violence and practise self-care.

We were also pleased to deliver two-day Advanced Family and Domestic Violence Training packages to

DHHS social workers. The “train the trainer” package was designed to help participants to appropriately respond to people who use and experience family violence. It was informed by current research and involved participants learning to critically reflect on their work with colleagues and during supervision.

Through our AccessResolve Workplace Services, we were contracted to deliver Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), conflict resolution and training to more than 78 state and national organisations from community health, wellbeing, real estate, sports, manufacturing and not-for-profit sectors. We responded to increased requests for workplace conflict resolution, as well as family violence safety planning consultations, where we assisted workplaces to implement policies and procedures to support employees experiencing family violence.

**“(The workshop provided) many opportunities to raise and explore issues, concerns and anxieties around what is a complex and sensitive issue.”**

– Responding to Family Violence in the Workplace participant



Professional development workshop attendees

97.6 %

agreed that the training was relevant to their needs.

98.6 %

agreed that the content was well structured.

99.3 %

agreed that the presenter was effective.

98.4 %

agreed that the training was engaging.

98.7 %

agreed that the training was well organised.

### Most common needs of EAP counselling clients addressed

- Relationship difficulties and breakdown
- Mental health issues
- Communication issues
- Employment issues
- Violence and abuse
- Conflict
- Stress
- Parenting
- Grief and loss
- Behavioural



# Evaluation, research and practice quality

**RAV is committed to providing high-quality services that have positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Our strong culture and history of research and evaluation demonstrates and supports this commitment.**

In 2016/17, we evaluated our services, undertook research and initiated projects to enable us to highlight issues, service gaps and areas for improvement, and measure the effectiveness of our services.

## Research and evaluation

Across our centres, we conducted our annual Outcomes Survey, which measures how our counselling service affects clients' wellbeing, family and relationships. The survey, which involved 230 voluntary client participants who had recently attended at least one counselling session with RAV, indicated positive service outcomes. Since presenting to RAV for counselling, 69 per cent of clients felt better about their situation, while 79 per cent had gained knowledge and new strategies to help them deal with their issues. Eighty-four per cent of clients reported that they knew where to go for help if issues arose. Over 90 per cent of clients reported that they planned to return to RAV.

We conducted a preliminary evaluation of our Repair-enting program, to measure its effectiveness in enhancing the insight, empathy and ability of parents who had used violence to relate safely. The results indicated significant positive changes in parents' skills and knowledge, including their capacity to emotionally regulate, ability to recognise their child's needs, understanding of the impact of violence on their child, and knowledge of how to safely engage with their child and their child's mother.

We also completed a second evaluation of our "I like, like you UP" program. The outcomes demonstrated that the program increased participants' ability to understand their own and others' feelings, and their knowledge of how to communicate in healthy ways.

Qualitative evaluation responses indicated that the program gave students new skills to seek help and manage their relationships. The evaluation also consulted teachers, who highlighted the value of the program in enhancing students' confidence and strategies for managing challenging issues.

We were pleased that, following submission of their respective evaluations, our Repair-enting and "I like, like you UP" programs both gained emerging program statuses on the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners Evidence-based Programme list with the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

We completed evaluations of our ATTUNE, Confident Kinder Kids, Tuning in to Kids and LINC'S programs, as well as our "early matters" Home Visiting and Single Session Consultation services.

A 15-month evaluation revealed that i-Connect clients experienced positive changes in areas relating to personal and family safety, family functioning, mental health, wellbeing and self-care, after engaging with the service. Following service delivery, clients also had increased skills, knowledge and access to information, and enhanced confidence in making decisions. The evaluation also indicated that the service is successful in meeting longer-term goals, including enhancing family wellbeing and resilience, and improving community engagement for at-risk or vulnerable families.

**81.82 %**

of fathers stated that their relationship with their child had improved as a result of completing the Repair-enting program.

**90.91 %**

of fathers who completed the Repair-enting program stated they had a good understanding of the impact of their use of violence on their children or family.

## Spotlight

### Theory of Change

We commenced a Theory of Change project that will investigate how RAV's programs create intended outcomes for clients and, consequently, positive social impacts.

The results of the project will be reflected in our clinical governance framework with coherent program logics for all core RAV services that support consistent and coordinated service responses.

Identifying our theories of change will also lead to development of a meaningful monitoring and evaluation framework that informs practice, improves service design and helps to demonstrate service effectiveness.

The Theory of Change project commenced with a series of consultative workshops that explored the change RAV's programs currently seek to create, and how program effectiveness is determined.

**“As a result of learning these things, I will listen to my feelings more often and I will investigate other people’s feelings as well. I know I will ask for help if I have a problem.”**

– “I like, like you UP” participant

We also evaluated our funded counselling, FDR and FRC services through SCORE. Evaluations from over 10,000 clients indicate that overwhelmingly these services support clients to feel listened to and understood, and work on and talk about what is important to them. Clients also reported significant satisfaction with the services provided.

Our Kew Centre participated in a nationwide Department of Social Services Data Exchange Client Survey pilot project, designed to independently measure outcomes for, and satisfaction of, clients in core funded services, through online client surveys. Responses and feedback from the My Service, My Story pilot project – including relating to survey content, client engagement and organisational resourcing – will inform the implementation of a longer-term evaluation project.

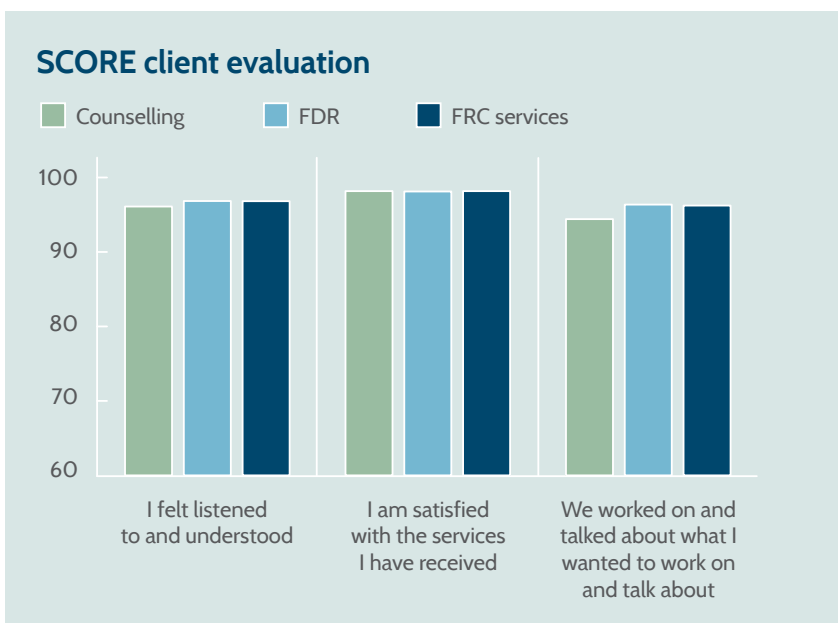
In partnership with RA Queensland, and in conjunction with the RA National FDR and Research Networks, we progressed an RA state and territory-wide FDR Outcomes Study. The longitudinal study, which commenced in May, involves surveying FDR clients at three different times, to determine the current issues in conflict, status of any agreements,

level of acrimony with former partners and the clients’ experiences of FDR. The project has been designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of RA FDR services in supporting clients who are seeking to resolve parenting or property conflicts, to achieve safe, enduring and effective outcomes. It will also highlight potential areas for service improvement.

As a member of the Partnership of Victorian FRCs, RAV joined in an FDR Outcome Measurement Trial, funded by the Attorney-General’s Department and Department of Social Services. The pilot project seeks to identify or develop a tool that measures the parenting outcomes of FDR, such as the development of parenting plans, increased parental awareness of the impact of conflict on children and a reduced need for litigation or the involvement of lawyers.

We engaged with RMIT’s Centre for Innovative Justice to undertake research on perpetrator interventions in the criminal justice system. This research will help the sector to better understand and establish an evidence base for interventions with men who use violence.

With Victoria University, we initiated a research project on the use and abuse of social media by couples and within families who are separating or separated. The research will identify the prevalence and types of communication between separated parents via social media, and make practice and policy recommendations to maximise the benefits of social media while minimising the opportunities for misuse. The project commenced with a comprehensive literature review, which illustrated how ill prepared the family law system is to deal with the rapidly escalating use of social media by separated parents, and how, too often, misuse of social media in these circumstances leads to ongoing abuse.



We also continued to participate in an Australian Research Council-funded Fathering Challenges project, which is designed to enhance knowledge of the interface between family violence and fathering, and improve the parenting experience of children whose fathers have used family violence.

The outcomes of our four-year study with La Trobe University into the impact of family violence on the FDR process continued to be disseminated and discussed, including through the publication of a peer-reviewed research paper in the Australian Institute of Family Studies *Family Matters* journal. The article highlighted research on family law reforms to address family violence, the prevalence and severity of family violence among separated families, and barriers to disclosure. It also discussed challenges associated with screening for family violence among mediation clients, and the need for appropriate assessment tools and processes that support clients to receive safe and effective family law services.

The research has attracted international interest, including from academic institutions and policy-makers, and it continues to influence models of practice for working with clients affected by family violence.

RAV also partnered with Swinburne University of Technology to investigate loneliness in older adults in residential aged care and community settings. The project, to be conducted through the university's Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults, seeks to better understand the prevalence of loneliness, and the predictors of loneliness and emotional wellbeing among older adults in Australia. It is anticipated that the findings will assist counsellors and other health professionals to develop more specific interventions to prevent the negative health consequences associated with loneliness.

## Practice quality

Our Practice, Quality and Evaluation (PQE) team works to ensure that RAV is at the forefront of quality, professional and contemporary service delivery. The team focuses on ensuring that services are designed to reflect knowledge of current research, legislation, funding initiatives and sector developments, including state and federal standards for the delivery of services to families affected by family violence and mental health difficulties.

In response to significant growth within the organisation, PQE worked to strengthen clinical excellence and build capacity in new areas of practice. There were quality improvement changes across the areas of risk management, as well as modifications to our program design, supervision and evaluation processes. Our clinical review and supervision processes were also reviewed, to ensure competent, ethical and reflective clinical practice, and continuing professional development.

Following the development of a consumer participation and co-production framework in 2015/16, this year we completed the RAV *Moving towards Consumer Participation and Co-Production* report, which identified the existing opportunities for clients to give feedback on how they want services to be delivered. The report highlighted how co-design practices improve client outcomes and included recommendations for future directions.

With responsibility for the organisation's clinical governance framework, PQE reviewed and implemented a range of clinical policies, procedures and forms in 2016/17. These included a Client Safety Policy and associated procedures, a Critical Incidents Procedures, MBCP Case Note Practice Guidelines and a Mental Health Risk Screening Procedure, which identifies mental health issues to ensure that services are delivered in appropriate ways and referrals are undertaken when required.

**“Family violence is a common presentation within family law services. The majority of clients attending FDR are affected by family violence. It is the normative experience, not the exception; therefore, professionals working with separating couples and their families need to be looking for evidence of the absence of family violence, and to be suspicious and sceptical if they find none.”**

– from “One Way or Many Ways”, *Family Matters* (Bickerdike & Cleak, 2016)



In 2016/17, our professional staff continued to focus on ensuring that our clients' needs and safety are at the forefront of everything we do. Our qualified, experienced and skilled clinical staff are effectively supported by strong administration and corporate support teams.

As an employer of choice in our sector, we promoted a healthy work-life balance, provided competitive employment benefits and supported staff to perform their roles efficiently, effectively and safely through a range of initiatives including:

- Provision of professional development and clinical supervision.
- Renewal of our employee EAP, which included free counselling to assist with issues affecting our employees and their immediate family members.
- Redevelopment of our induction process, including initiation of a project to introduce an induction program delivered through an online learning management system.
- Implementation of a suite of new HR and workplace health and safety policies, procedures and resources.
- Consolidation of annual performance planning and review processes, to enable opportunities for coaching, feedback and continuous improvement discussions.

In response to significant organisational growth, we undertook recruitment campaigns to ensure we have capacity to meet our contracts and continue to provide high-quality services.

## Learning and development

With our commitment to continuous improvement and quality service delivery, RAV invested in the professional growth of our staff. We gave staff a diverse range of learning and development opportunities to support ongoing skill and competency development, including in emerging models of practice, to deliver positive outcomes for our clients.

We supported staff to enhance their risk assessment skills and deliver best practice models of mental health support, through training in Risk Assessment for Suicidality Screening and the Common Risk Assessment Framework. Staff also gained an Introduction in Motivational Interviewing, as well as skills in facilitating our "I like, like you" and Repairing programs. We trained FDR practitioners in using Child-Inclusive Practice within family law services, and in Managing Challenging Personalities, to better understand and respond to challenging personalities presenting for FDR.

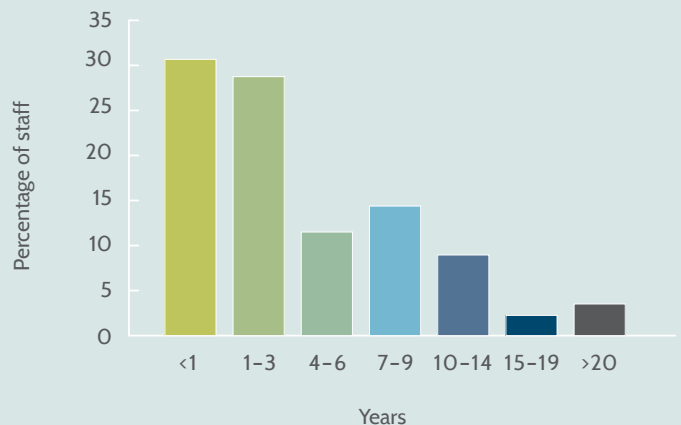
Other key professional development highlights included:

- A two-day Collaborative Couple Therapy workshop with US clinical psychologist, Dan Wile PhD.
- Management training in Difficult Conversations, Effective Performance Feedback and Reviews, Effective Disciplinary Action and The 7 Pillars of Management.
- A workshop on Responsive Interventions with Men Who Have Perpetrated Domestic Abuse, facilitated by Alan Jenkins.

We also supported five practitioners to undertake a Masters in Family Therapy.

Through our intern program, we gave students the opportunity to work alongside qualified, experienced clinical employees and gain invaluable practical experience to enhance their skills and prepare to transition into employment.

## Employee years of service demonstrating recent workforce growth





**Workforce  
development**

**30**

Graduate Diploma of Family  
Dispute Resolution interns  
were supported through 160  
days of student placement.

**Supporting  
workplace flexibility**

**51%**

of employees  
work part-time.

**24%**

work casually.

**Responding  
to growth**

**22%**

increase in our  
workforce in 2016/17.

# Leadership

## team



**Dr Andrew Bickerdike**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Shiranthi Sivarajah**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Michael Muldoon**  
General Manager Operations



**Emily McDonald**  
General Manager Practice, Quality and Evaluation



**Erika Owens**  
General Manager State Services

“What stands out for me at RAV is the wonderful support of colleagues in our workplace. At times our work can be pretty daunting but there is always someone available to give support when needed.”

– RAV employee



# Our Board

RAV's Board members are all volunteers who donate their time, energy and expertise to support RAV's work in the Victorian community. They are a group of highly skilled professionals, who play an important role in setting the organisation's vision, focus, values and strategies, and maintaining strong, effective governance. Like our staff, our Board members are committed to ensuring that RAV is well-placed to continue to provide effective, high-quality services to support Victorians.



## 1 Professor Lyn Littlefield - President

Lyn is the Executive Director of the Australian Psychological Society, the peak professional body for psychologists in Australia. Lyn was formerly Head of the School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University and Inaugural Director of the Victorian Parenting Centre. She is a clinical psychologist specialising in couple, child, family and group therapy, as well as conflict resolution. Lyn sits on a number of Federal Government expert advisory and reference groups concerned with mental health policy and service delivery. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and the Australian Institute of Management. Lyn has been a Board Member since 1993, chairs the Practice Quality Committee and was Vice-President from May 2013. Lyn has been President of the RAV Board since October 2014.



## 2 Mr Peter Gome - Vice-President

Peter is an experienced Chief Financial Officer (CFO) with an international career spanning over 30 years. He spent the majority of his career at BP with roles in Australia and internationally including the UK. His last roles at BP were as CFO for various business units including exploration and production, and marketing. Subsequently he has held a number of Australian CFO and Chief Operating Officer (COO) roles with mid-tier companies in the oil, transport, printing, construction project management and sports industries. He is currently the CFO of the Pacific Group of Companies involved in retail and commercial property investment and management. Peter blends his strong leadership and finance background with strategy and marketing skills and experience, and has lectured in the Master of Marketing and MBA programs at Monash University. He holds Fellow membership of both the AICD and CPA. He joined the RAV Board in 2009 and chairs the Audit Committee. Peter has been Vice-President since October 2014.



## 3 Dr Janine Bush

Janine's diverse career spans across the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Parliament of Victoria, the health and community sector, and academia. As Director, Performance Audit, she oversees performance audits of government departments across areas that include health, human services and education. As Director of Committee Inquiries, she led Parliamentary inquiries into matters concerned with the welfare of the community, including the welfare of the family. These include the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry on criminal child abuse in organisations and inquiries relating to mental health, disability, public housing and senior Victorians. In previous executive roles, Janine has worked with the Office of the Public Advocate and as CEO for peak organisations in the community sector, including Domestic Violence Victoria and the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association. Janine has served on management committees of community organisations and been involved with several Australian Research Council linkage projects. Janine joined the RAV Board in 2015.



## 4 Mr David Colliver

David Colliver is the CFO and General Manager, Corporate Services of South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network. He is an experienced senior executive and director, with a background in both large corporate organisations and government, including health, higher education, banking, insurance, professional services and manufacturing industries. David has held leadership roles in finance and operations, including technology and human capital in Australian and international companies.

He has extensive Board and Committee Chair experience in various commercial entities and not-for-profit organisations. He has previously been on the Board of Scope (Vic) Limited, The Children's Protection Society, The Foundation for Young Australians, Irabina Autism Services and Brainwave Australia. David joined the RAV Board in 2017.

## 5 Ms Kaye Frankcom

Kaye is a highly accomplished businesswoman and leader in the health sector. She is an endorsed clinical and counselling psychologist, consultant to the insurance industry, in-demand speaker and trainer, and has held national roles in psychology regulation and professional standards. She has operated a successful group psychology practice in Williamstown, Victoria for 17 years. Kaye is a well-known mentor and supervisor to early career psychologists. She was an appointee to the first Psychology Board of Australia. Her current appointments include Independent Chair of a Consortium Advisory Committee for four headspace clinics in western and northern Melbourne; Director of South West Allied Health Network, a voluntary coalition advocating allied health services in South Western Melbourne; and an appointee to the Melbourne Primary Health Care Clinical Governance Council. Kaye is also a member of the YMCA Redress Panel, which is responding to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Kaye joined the RAV Board in 2016.

## 7 Ms Kimberly Hunter

A director of Clancy & Triado, Kimberly completed her Bachelor of Laws at Auckland University. She was admitted to practice in 1989 and decided early on to specialise in family law. During a six-month attachment to the Human Rights Commission, Kimberly researched and prepared a submission on Marital Status Discrimination. After living and working in London for five years, she moved to Australia in 1996 and joined Clancy & Triado. She became an accredited specialist in family law in 1999. An active member of the Law Institute of Victoria, she has served on numerous committees, including the Executive of the Law Institute of Victoria's Family Law Section, the Children and Youth Issues Committee and the Courts Practice Committee. She is a member of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia. Kimberly is also a member of the RA lawyers' panel. She joined the RAV Board in 2011.

## 6 Ms Debra Goldfinch

Deb has had an extensive career in the not-for-profit, health and community sectors with a focus on change management and working with people at risk. In Deb's 20 years as a CEO, she has implemented business restructures and developed corporate strategies to take organisations to their next level. She embraces and succeeds in responding to the challenge of appointing the right people; fostering strong, stable teams; and developing and improving the culture within organisations. Deb has implemented new, innovative programs within the organisations she represents, which continue to thrive and flourish, and positively impact the community.

Deb has participated as a member on a number of federal and state committees and boards relevant to the health, community and not-for-profit sectors. In addition to her current role as CEO of Irabina Autism Services, Deb is on the Board of Early Childhood Intervention Australia at the national and state levels. Her extensive experience and expertise includes risk management and good governance. Deb joined the RAV Board in 2013 and serves as Chair of the Governance Committee.



## 8 Mr John Lovell

John has more than 25 years' experience in the IT industry, both within Australia and internationally. His experience covers IT projects for the introduction of ATMs and EFT/POS within Australia, pay TV systems, broadband services and other significant IT-related projects. Prior to returning to Australia, John was based in Hong Kong, where he was responsible for the IT infrastructure for the Walt Disney Company across Asia Pacific. John is currently working within the education sector, assisting with the integration of IC&T and innovation to effect positive learning outcomes. He joined the RAV Board in 2008.



# Financial

## overview

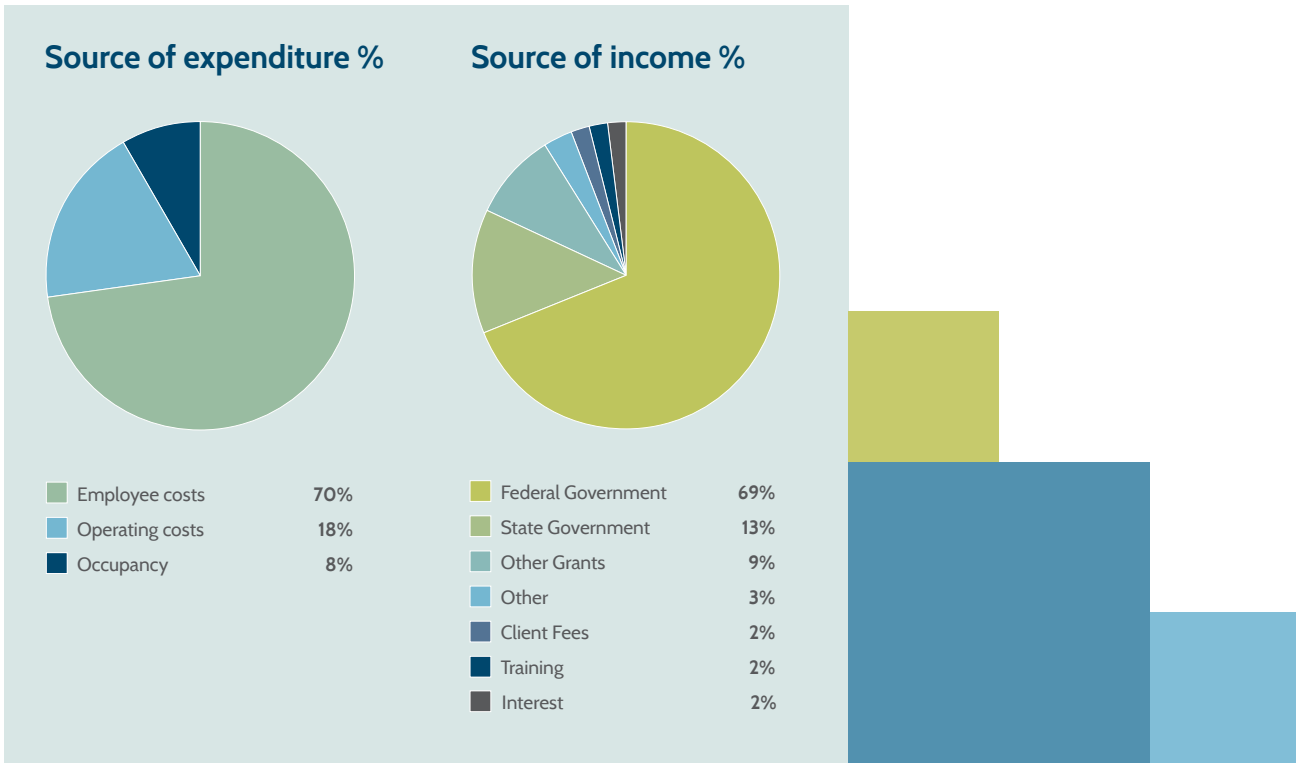
### Summary statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Government funding	19,384,681	16,644,834
Client fees	2,535,108	2,149,162
Other income	1,321,518	1,056,759
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>23,241,307</b>	<b>19,850,755</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Employee costs	16,322,064	13,954,818
Occupancy	1,821,907	1,830,223
Depreciation and amortisation	33,732	38,926
Other operating costs	4,080,582	3,430,007
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>22,258,285</b>	<b>19,253,974</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>983,022</b>	<b>596,781</b>
<b>OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>		
Net gain on revaluation of non-current assets	-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>	<b>983,022</b>	<b>596,781</b>

### Summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Current assets	13,512,979	13,324,447
Non-current assets	3,043,572	3,077,304
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>16,556,551</b>	<b>16,401,751</b>
Current liabilities	5,674,471	6,596,282
Non-current liabilities	749,348	655,759
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>6,423,819</b>	<b>7,252,041</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>10,132,732</b>	<b>9,149,710</b>





**Independent Audit Report to the Members of Relationships Australia (Victoria) Inc.**

We have audited the summarised financial report of Relationships Australia (Victoria) Inc. comprising the Summary Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2017 and the Summary Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2017 in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

In our opinion, the information reported in the summarised financial report is consistent with the annual financial report from which it is derived and upon which we expressed an unqualified audit opinion in our report to the members dated 25 September 2017.

For a better understanding of the scope of our audit, this report should be read in conjunction with our audit report on the annual financial report.

*Grant Thornton*

**Grant Thornton Australia**

*Brock Mackenzie*

**Brock Mackenzie**  
Partner

Melbourne  
25 September 2017

# Conferences, presentations and publications

## International conferences

Szarski, L. (2016, July). *The language of children in mediating family law disputes*. Paper presented at the International Centre for Family Law Policy and Practice Conference, London, United Kingdom.

## National conferences, seminars and presentations

Bickerdike, A. (2016, November). *I like, like you: A family violence prevention and mental health promotion program for schools*. 2nd Breaking the Cycle of Domestic and Family Violence Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Bickerdike, A., & McDonald, E. (2016, November). *The Family Safety Model: A whole of family approach to family violence services – an option for family law services reform*. Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference, Canberra, Australia.

Caldwell, M. (2017, February). *I like, like you: A healthy relationships program for schools*. Manningham Community Services Forum, Doncaster, Australia.

Curran, S. (2016, November). *Wellness and being in the age of longevity*. Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference, Canberra, Australia.

Douglas, J. (2016, August). *Forced Adoption Support Service best practice principles*. Australian Psychological Society Forced Adoption Webinar: Best Practice Principles, Melbourne, Australia.

Fallowfield, S. (2017, March). *early matters*. Grampians Mental Health Conference, Ballarat, Australia.

Fallowfield, S. (2017, May). *The results are in ... This works!* ChildAware Approaches Conference, Brisbane, Australia.

Fallowfield, S. (2017, June). *The results are in ... This works!* Parent Engagement Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Grant, J. (2016, August). *Family dispute resolution and family dispute resolution practice*. Melbourne University – Law Faculty, Melbourne, Australia.

Grant, J. (2016, September). *From the trenches: Using restorative conferencing practices as new ways to repair/restore family relationships in high conflict battles*. National Mediation Conference 2016, Gold Coast, Australia.

Grant, J. (2017, March). *Family dispute resolution and family dispute resolution practice*. University of Melbourne – Law Faculty, Melbourne, Australia.

Grant, J. (2017, April). *Family dispute resolution and family dispute resolution practice*. La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Grant, J., & Szarski, L. (2016, September). *Real world versus role plays, actors versus clients and the function of internships in creating real mediators*. National Mediation Conference, Gold Coast, Australia.

Hebb, A. (2016, October). *A variation on a theme: Legally assisted family dispute resolution*. FRC Best Practice Forum, Melbourne, Australia.

Hebb, A. (2017, March). *The intersection between mediation and law*. WEStjustice, Werribee, Australia.

Holmquist, C. (2017, March). *Family violence from a victim-centric focus in Men's Behaviour Change and Changeabout Program*. Corrections Victoria Offending Behaviour Programs Forum, San Remo, Australia.

McDonald, E. (2016, September). *Working with clients that present with mental health difficulties in a family law context*. Western Victorian Family Law Pathways Network Quarterly Forum, Ballarat, Australia.

McDonald, E. (2016, November). *Complex trauma and its impact on a child's neurobiological development: Family mental health support services*. Department of Social Services, Melbourne, Australia.

McDonald, E. (2016, November). *early matters: Aligning curriculum and service design, an evaluation*. Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference, Canberra, Australia.

McIvor, R., & Bhandary, R. (2016, July). *Innovations in men's behaviour change: Including culturally and linguistically diverse communities*. Ending Family Violence Masterclass Series: Best Practice and Innovation for Better Outcomes, Melbourne, Australia.

Mills, S. (2016, July). *The critical role of the general practitioner (GP) in responding to family violence*. HealthEd Annual Women's Health Update, Brisbane, Australia.

Mills, S. (2016, August). *The critical role of the general practitioner (GP) in responding to family violence*. HealthEd Annual Women's Health Update, Perth, Australia.

Mills, S. (2017, April). *Identifying and working with family violence perpetrators*. Statewide Youth Refugee Forum, Prahran, Australia.

O'Callaghan, M., & Harris, A. (2017, May). *Relationships Australia Victoria and Tuning in to Kids*. City of Casey International Nurses Day Conference, Berwick, Australia.

Owens, E., & Perry, M. (2016, November). *Marking White Ribbon Day: About family violence*. Parkville Juvenile Justice Centre, DHHS, Parkville, Australia.

Pullen, J. (2016, October). *Family violence services and referral pathways*. City of Boroondara Early Childhood Educators Workshop, Camberwell, Australia.

Pullen, J. (2017, May). *Relationships Australia Victoria's family violence services in Boroondara*. Family Violence Forum for Early Years Professionals, Camberwell, Australia.

Pullen, J. (2016, August). *Relationships Australia's Elder Services National Pilot, providing mediation and counselling services to older adults and their families*. Eastern Elder Abuse Network, Montrose, Australia.

Whitla, N., & Davis, E. (2016, November). *Delivering Men's Behaviour Change Programs in the prison context*. Department of Justice and Regulation, Melbourne, Australia.

#### Journal articles and books

Bickerdike, A., & Cleak, H. (2016). One way or many ways. Screening for family violence in family mediation. *Family Matters*, 98, 16–25.

Gutman, J., & Grant, J. (2017). Ethical conundrums facing mediators: Comparing processes, identifying challenges and opportunities. In L. A. Ojelabi & M. A. Noone (Eds), *Law in Context: Ethics in Alternative Dispute Resolution*, 35(1). Australia: The Federation Press and La Trobe University, Australia.

Shafer, M. (2017). *Behind Closed Doors*. Melbourne, Australia: Good Ships.

#### Films

Relationships Australia Victoria. (2017). *Good communication* | Relationships Australia Victoria [Video]. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrBfDEcwmvU>.

## Acronyms

AICD	Australian Institute of Company Directors	LINCS	Looking at Me, Identifying Priorities, Next Steps, Community Support Program
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services	MBCP	Men's Behaviour Change Program
EAP	Employee Assistance Program	NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
FDR	Family dispute resolution	PQE	Practice Quality and Evaluation
FRC	Family Relationship Centre	RA	Relationships Australia
HR	Human resources	RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex	SCORE	Standard Client Outcomes Reporting

## References

Commonwealth of Australia. (2015). 2015 *Intergenerational Report, Australia in 2055*. Parkes, ACT: Treasury.

Family Law Council. (2016). *Families with Complex Needs and the Intersection of the Family Law and Child Protection Systems: Final Report*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., & Newton, T. (2001). Marriage and health: His and hers. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 472–503.

Proulx, C. M., Helms, H. M., & Buehler, C. (2007). Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(3), 476–503.



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