



*All
relationships
matter*

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Relationship services

To enhance and evaluate our established relationship services

Child and family services

To consolidate our position as a quality provider of services for children, young people and families, and develop a suite of new, innovative, effective and evaluated services

Our vision is for positive, safe and respectful relationships for couples, families, schools, workplaces and communities.

ABN 51 263 214 677

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.

Family violence prevention, support and recovery services

To strengthen, extend and evaluate the outcomes of our family violence services

Mental health services

To enhance our range of mental health support services, and entrench the organisation as a mainstream supplier of family and relationship mental health services

Seniors relationship services

To deliver targeted and effective funded services to senior Victorians aged 65 years and older, and their families



President's foreword

RAV experienced ongoing funding constraints and saw significant changes within the family law, family violence and mental health service areas. Despite these challenges, RAV's income increased to more than \$19.5 million as a result of strong governance and increasingly diverse services.

In addition to significant changes within the family law, mental health and primary health care arenas, there were also important changes within the family violence area, including increasing recognition, changes in responses to and management of this devastating issue.

RAV commended the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria) for its report and recommendations, which provide for reform across the areas of family violence prevention, support and recovery. We understand the pervasiveness and impact of family violence, with 40 per cent of our clients in 2015/16 having needs related to family violence addressed during service delivery.

We know that family violence strategies need to incorporate early intervention and prevention approaches, as well as support and recovery services. We were pleased, therefore, that the report recognised this and included specific recommendations for therapeutic interventions for children and young people, and for the introduction of respectful relationships education within schools.

We applauded the Victorian Government's commitment to implement all 227 recommendations in the report, and we look forward to working with the Government and the sector to improve integration and service delivery, and put a stop to family violence in our community.

As a provider of family dispute resolution (FDR), Family Relationship Centres (FRCs), family violence, counselling and other mental health services, RAV is affected by all of these reforms. We are the largest provider of family law services in Victoria, and the fourth-largest provider in Australia.¹ We are also the largest provider of men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs) and family safety contact services in Victoria. With this extensive experience, we are uniquely positioned to respond to and adapt to the reforms being implemented.

Our Board, management and staff remained committed to our vision for positive, safe and respectful relationships for couples and families, as well as in schools, workplaces and communities. Strategies to achieve this, which we began implementing five years ago, continued to help strengthen RAV and its services. Despite a real reduction in funding, with the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) withholding indexation on program grants for a third consecutive year, our income increased by three per cent. We continued to diversify our range of services and received additional

funding for family law, family violence and mental health services, while remaining focused on providing high quality relationship support services.

We estimate that more than one third of our clients have incomes of less than \$25,000, demonstrating the importance of our work in relieving the suffering, distress and helplessness of vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community who may not otherwise be able to access services.

The Commonwealth Government is demonstrating an increased interest in client outcomes and the evaluation of funded programs and services, and RAV supports this focus. We have a strong commitment to and history of research and evaluation, and we welcome the opportunity to provide the Government with valuable and compelling data on the effectiveness of the services we provide.

I would like to acknowledge the Board's support and guidance in 2015/16, and welcome Kaye Frankcom as a member. Kaye is an endorsed clinical and counselling psychologist, and a leader in the mental health sector. She joined the Board in May 2016.

In October 2015 the Board bid farewell to Michael Shaw, whose contribution to both RAV and Relationships Australia (RA) National is truly remarkable. Mike's involvement with RAV spanned more than 25 years, including as Board Vice-President for 17 years, Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, and member of the Strategy Committee. Mike was a committed Board member and helped the organisation to be the effective, valued provider of family and relationship support services that it is today. On behalf of the Board I thank Mike for his dedicated service and wish him well in the future.

I would also like to farewell and thank Rosemary Kelada, who retired from the Board in April 2016.

Finally, I wish to recognise CEO, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, and the senior management team for their leadership, and RAV's professional and valued staff for their unwavering commitment to providing Victorians with high quality, effective relationship services.

Lyn Littlefield

Professor Lyn Littlefield
President

1. KPMG. (2016). *Future Focus on the Family Law Services: Final Report*. Submitted on behalf of the Attorney-General's Department on 22 January 2016. Commonwealth Government of Australia.





Total income

\$19,850,755

Clients

23,957

↑ 22.2%

Total

4408

↑ 67.6%

Children

499

↑ 99.6%

Seniors

CEO's review

We provided 23,957 clients with a broad range of services in 2015/16. While maintaining our focus on relationship services such as counselling and FDR, we diversified our programs, particularly in the areas of mental health, family violence and child and family services.

RAV continued to manage funding constraints, necessitating ongoing management restructures and organisational efficiencies. Despite this significant challenge, however, we focused on our core services and emerging areas of service delivery, and the number of clients we saw increased by 22 per cent.

In keeping with our Strategy Plan 2015–19, we expanded our services for children and young people, with a 67 per cent increase in clients aged 18 years and under. We extended our *I like, like you* schools program, providing early intervention relationship education to 2782 students from 27 schools to promote the connection between healthy relationships, and emotional health and wellbeing.

I was delighted to announce our successful tender for the headspace centre in Bairnsdale. The centre, which is due to open in December 2016, will promote wellbeing and provide early intervention mental health services to young people aged 12 to 25 years in the East Gippsland area.

Family violence continued to be an area of considerable need and attention, particularly following the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria) summary and recommendations report. We strengthened our services to meet these needs, and with an understanding of the importance of providing systemic responses, we developed a Family Safety Model of practice to work with all family members affected by family violence.

RAV significantly increased provision of our MBCPs as a result of \$950,000 of funding contracts with Corrections Victoria and the Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). These contracts have enabled us to deliver critical MBCPs and family safety contact services to an additional 450 participants, with further services to be provided throughout the remainder of 2016. RAV is now clearly established as the largest provider of MBCPs in Victoria.

We saw an increase of almost 100 per cent in clients aged over 65, reflecting our commitment to providing targeted and effective relationship services to senior Victorians.

We expanded our contract with the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (FCC) to deliver property mediation services throughout Australia. This highly successful service assists

the court by diverting clients to dispute resolution and enabling scarce court resources to be directed to those cases that need judicial resolution.

With an understanding of the importance of building and maintaining relationships with our stakeholders, sectors and the community, we participated in more than 140 networks, partnerships and groups. We contributed to ongoing discussions on service outcomes, evaluation and quality improvement across the child and parenting, mental health, family law, senior services and family violence areas, including as a member of Domestic Violence Victoria and the No To Violence Board.

Building upon our long history of formal research into and client evaluation of our services, we initiated a dedicated data and evaluation project to provide a strong evidence-base and demonstrate the outcomes of our services.

We implemented a new system for assessing and reporting client outcomes. Evaluations revealed that more than 98 per cent of counselling and FRC clients, and 95 per cent of FDR clients felt that after receiving services, they were better able to deal with issues they sought help for. These significant results demonstrate the benefits to clients beyond the direct service delivery period.

RAV successfully completed a maintenance assessment of our family violence programs' accreditation against the DHHS standards and ISO 9001:2008 Standard.

We undertook an internal Climate and Engagement Survey this year, with results revealing that our staff feel engaged, supported and positive about the work that they do. This is remarkable given the significant financial pressures and changes within our organisation.

I would like to thank all RAV staff for their professionalism and commitment to providing effective client services. With this dedication, and the support of the senior management team, Professor Littlefield, the Board and our funders, RAV is well-placed to continue strengthening relationships for all Victorians.



Dr Andrew Bickerdike
Chief Executive Officer





● Female 51% ● Male 49%

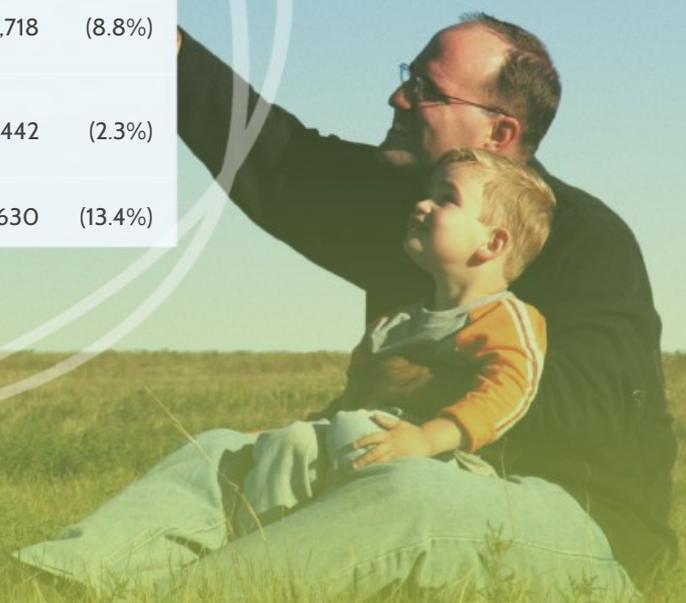


● 0-18 18.4% ● 50-65 9.8%
 ● 19-34 23.6% ● 65+ 2.1%
 ● 35-49 46.1%



● Separated 24.2%
 ● Married 19.2%
 ● De facto 11.0%
 ● Single or never married 9.6%
 ● Divorced 6.6%
 ● N/A person aged under 15 years 0.9%
 ● Widowed 0.3%
 ● Other relationships 2.3%
 ● Not stated 25.9%

	2015/16		2014/15	
Total clients	23,957		19,596	
Females	12,217	(51%)	9,988	(51%)
Males	11,738	(49%)	9,608	(49%)
Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	2,409	(10%)	1,718	(8.8%)
Clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds	902	(3.8%)	442	(2.3%)
Clients under 18 years of age	4,408	(18.4%)	2,630	(13.4%)



Relationship services

With the knowledge that safe, positive and respectful relationships are fundamental to wellbeing, we provided services to strengthen relationships and social connections for couples and families, and in schools, workplaces and communities in Victoria.



5975

counselling clients



6331

FRC clients



2452

FDR clients

We delivered high quality, effective services to 23,957 clients in 2015/16. Our diverse range of programs included counselling, FDR, relationship education and services to support those affected by adverse life experiences or those wanting to enhance their relationships. We continued to use client-directed and family-inclusive approaches in our work, which enabled us to consider the needs and goals of all family members when talking about issues, challenges or experiences.

Counselling services

Once again, there was strong demand for our counselling services, which supported Victorians with all relationships at all stages of life. We provided services to children, young people, men, women, couples and families through our centres, outreach locations and via our state-wide telephone counselling program.

We received referrals from the community, government services and other organisations to undertake specialist work with children, parents and families affected by complex family law, mental health and family violence issues.

In addition to short- and longer-term counselling, our practitioners worked flexibly to incorporate aspects of a Single Session Family Consultation model of practice in their work with clients. This brief or single-session approach is evidence-based, client-directed and family-inclusive, and can be a convenient option for families.

Clients sought counselling for a diverse range of life events and issues such as relationship difficulties, experiences of family violence, separation and divorce, parenting concerns, communication difficulties, depression and anxiety, and grief and loss. We provided counselling at our Berwick, Sunshine and Greensborough FRCs to support clients using the centres' FDR services.

We also ran a number of specialised counselling programs.

In partnership with Berry Street through Open Place, a support service for Forgotten Australians, we offered specialised counselling for people who grew up in institutionalised care in Victoria prior to 1989, and their families.

Our Traralgon Centre worked with Gippsland Dairy to support farmers, agricultural workers and residents of rural or remote locations in Gippsland. We participated in group work and community events including social and emotional wellbeing workshops, and provided counselling in Traralgon and Bairnsdale, and through telephone and video conferencing.

Supporting separating couples and families

In 2015/16, 2452 Victorians who were in conflict took part in our FDR service, also known as mediation. With the support of trained, impartial mediators, FDR helped separating couples and families to communicate with each other and reach agreements about family law disputes relating to child care, financial arrangements and property settlement.

As part of FDR, we supported parents to develop parenting plans to clarify and informally record practical issues of parental responsibility. We utilised child-inclusive and enhanced child-focused FDR if and when appropriate. These processes recognise the importance of focusing on the needs of children during and after separation, and the value of consulting them during FDR. They enable children to express their views to a person independent of the conflict in their family.

We also supported separated individuals, parents and their children through a range of seminars, information sessions and groups.

Building Connections, a half-day seminar run by the Berwick FRC, helped separated parents to learn how to care for themselves and their children, and to improve their relationship with their ex-partner.

Parents gained an understanding of the impact of separation and divorce on children through our international research-based post-separation parenting program. A number of centres conducted the three-session program, which included strategies to establish a working co-parenting relationship and help children adjust to separation.

The Cranbourne Centre helped fathers to explore separation and parenting issues through its four-week *Men, Separation and Parenting* program. Program topics included



the separation process, children and fatherhood after separation, managing relationships with ex-partners, legal issues and preparing for the future.

The Kew Centre ran a four-session group for recently-separated individuals. *Moving on after Separation* offered support and an opportunity to learn about self-care, new ways to manage intense emotions and building self-confidence.

Also at the Kew Centre, men in deteriorating or separated relationships participated in the four-week *Men Finding Their Way* group to gain a better understanding of their responses and reactions.

The Berwick FRC partnered with local community legal centres to provide free family law information sessions. *Grandparents - Know Your Family Law* was run in collaboration with the Casey Cardinia Legal Service for grandparents engaged in the family law and child protection systems. The Springvale Monash Legal Service presented *Self-representation in Court* to provide information on preparing documents and the stages of a hearing, and an understanding of the risks and benefits of representing yourself in court.

Relationship education and support

We worked to strengthen and enhance family relationships through a range of programs for individuals and couples wanting to understand their relationships better.

Couples 'at the crossroads' attended our one-day *Strengthening Relationships* workshop to develop and practise strategies to improve and enhance their relationship.

Over two days, the Kew Centre's *Good Connecting* course focused on the latest research into what makes committed relationships succeed, and strategies for extending or repairing relationships. *Good Connecting Online*, a free course based on the face-to-face program, continued to be well-utilised and supported couples to maintain happy, healthy relationships.

The Cranbourne Centre presented *Making Relationships Work*, a free information session on maintaining successful relationships, also based on the latest research.

The Kew Centre provided *Understanding Ourselves - Managing Relationships*, a six-week program to improve participants' self-awareness and give them a deeper understanding of themselves, their expectations and relationships.

"I was hesitant and nervous to attend, but I am so glad that I did. I learnt a great deal about myself and gained some useful strategies to deal with my situation."

- Building Connections participant

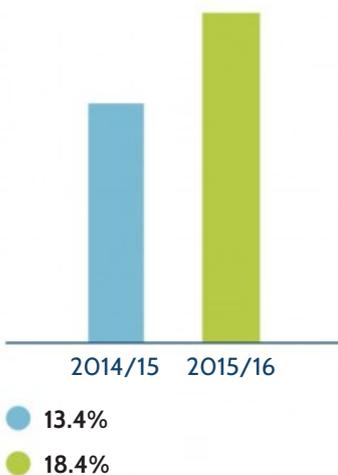
Most common presenting needs of clients

- Family violence
- Interpersonal conflict
- Communication issues
- Dealing with relationship difficulties
- Gender equity
- Relationship breakdown/ family separation
- Post-separation parenting
- Stress

Child and family services

We extended and enhanced our range of quality services for children, young people, parents and families, using a client-directed and family-inclusive focus.

Clients under 18 years of age (%)



“A wonderful way for parents, teachers and counsellors to explore with children how to embrace and celebrate what makes some of us different.”

– Associate Professor Dorothy Scott (AO) on *Cassie the upside down koala*

We offered programs across the spectrum of service delivery. Our primary prevention programs were provided to communities through universal services such as kindergartens, schools and child and maternal health centres. These included *I like, like you*, our family violence prevention and mental health promotion program, detailed on page 11 of this report. Early intervention services were designed to help individuals and families maintain healthy relationships and good emotional health. Individuals and families affected by social and wellbeing issues accessed our tertiary programs, which offered intensive therapeutic and case management responses.

Recognising the impact of transitions and experiences on relationships within families, we provided counselling to help families assess their needs, identify areas for change, and use their strengths to restore or repair their relationships.

We partnered with EACH Social and Community Health to deliver family therapy to the Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges communities. The service has experienced increasing demand since it commenced, and has supported children, adolescents, couples and families.

The use of our connectEDspace website continued to grow. Now in its second year, the website provides information, resources and interactive elements to help young people manage frequently-encountered issues and problems. It can be accessed at www.connectEDspace.com.au.

Parenting support

The Kew Centre offered the opportunity to learn effective parenting strategies and communication skills to enhance family wellbeing in the three-week *Positive Parenting and Family Wellness* group.

Over seven weeks, the Boronia Centre ran *Kids under Construction; Dads at Work*, a parenting program for fathers of children five years and under.

RAV continued to support groups for grandparents run by CatholicCare in Shepparton and Anglicare in Traralgon. The monthly groups provided information and support for grandparents who were caring for, or without access to, their grandchildren.

We renewed our partnership with YMCA Victoria and Life Is... Foundation to deliver *Dadslink*, a program that recognises the importance, needs, impact and value of dads, and the challenges they face in their relationships with their children. Program activities included monthly peer support gatherings, a Father's Day brunch and activities day, a *Men and Meaning* day retreat and a weekend adventure camp to help dads and kids connect with each other.

Programs for children and young people

We consolidated and extended our *early matters* service, which promotes and strengthens healthy family relationships and good mental health in an early childhood context. *early matters* provided a range of preventative programs in universal services for children and parents at key transition points in their lives. These programs were enhanced by brief family consultations that were offered to parents via our home visiting service.

Programs included:

- *I like, like you UP* – a healthy close relationships program for upper primary school students.
- *Confident Kinder Kids* – an early intervention program for kindergarten children preparing for primary school, to increase emotional awareness and regulation, enhance interpersonal and social skills, and promote confidence and resilience.
- *ATTUNE* – a program facilitated in maternal and child health centres for new parents to provide parenting and couple support, and help to maintain good emotional and relationship health.
- *Tuning in to Kids* – an evidence-based parenting group that assists parents to understand emotions and emotional regulation, and strengthen problem-solving skills.

Through *early matters*, RAV has established strong relationships within the community, particularly with local family support and family violence networks. The program is being extensively evaluated, with preliminary findings due in early 2016/17.

DRUMBEAT, a program that explores the connection between making music as a group and the development of healthy relationships, was facilitated by a number of centres.

- The Sunshine FRC partnered with the Royal Children's Hospital's Sunshine Mental Health Service to run the program with students from five local primary and high schools.
- In partnership with the Traralgon and Rosedale Neighbourhood Houses, the Traralgon Centre supported young people aged 16 to 21 and low-income community members, with the program focusing on communication and combating peer pressure.
- Through our *early matters* program, the Shepparton Centre provided *DRUMBEAT* to children at an early learning centre.

DRUMBEAT aims to build resilience by enhancing protective factors such as self-esteem, social connection, social skills and emotional control.

We developed and facilitated a healthy relationships program for Gippsland primary school students in response to an identified community need. The program was based on *I like, like you UP*, and focused on protective behaviours to support healthy relationships and sexual development.

The Traralgon Centre provided half-day workshops to students with disabilities at Federation Training, with an emphasis on healthy relationships and the provision of support service information.

The centre also partnered with Berry Street and other agencies to support *Morwell for Kids*, a strategy to improve the wellbeing of children in Morwell in Gippsland. The initiative aims to enhance opportunities for children and encourage residents to help create a community that is more inclusive of children.

We published a second book under our *Good Ships* initiative, which seeks to help children address difficulties they face in the context of important relationships. *Zoe's Choice*, written and illustrated by RAV senior clinician Mina Shafer, is designed to help children reflect on their own experiences and promote healthy ways to overcome fear.

We developed a suite of supporting resources for parents, teachers and professionals to support the educational use of *Cassie the upside down koala*, the first book in the *Good Ships* series.

Work started on a third children's book, which will focus on children and families experiencing family violence.

2495
early matters clients

"I learnt more about my own child. Now we're after the same goals, and it's opened up a whole new level of communication between us."

- *Tuning in to Kids* participant



Family violence prevention, support and recovery services

RAV knows that family violence affects everyone in the community and that responses to it must provide support for all family members, including children and young people. In 2015/16, we offered whole of family programs to Victorians across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention and tertiary response.



Family violence affects everyone in the community, and it's essential that responses to family violence provide help for all family members.

We welcomed the State Government's commitment to implementing all 227 recommendations from its landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria). These recommendations will lead to reform across the areas of family violence prevention, early intervention, support, perpetrator accountability, response coordination and evaluation.

We strengthened established links within the family violence sector through participation in relevant boards, committees and reference groups, including membership of the No To Violence Board, Domestic Violence Victoria and state-wide representation on regional family violence committees.

RAV participated in national roundtable discussions and provided input into the development of the Third Action Plan, under the Federal Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

We accepted an invitation to join the Southern Risk Assessment Management Panel, which aims to improve responses to serious and imminent threats to women and children by enhancing safety, reducing the threat posed by perpetrators and increasing perpetrator and agency accountability.

RAV was also involved in a range of discussion panels, conferences and events. We presented on the critical role of the general practitioner in responding to family violence to more than 2800 delegates at three Annual Women's Health Update seminars across Australia, with two further seminars scheduled.

We participated in the Walk Against Family Violence, and our centres held a number of internal events to mark White Ribbon Day, a male-led campaign to end men's violence against women.

Family Safety Model

We continued to encounter significant presentations of family violence across our services. In line with our Strategy Plan 2015–19, and with an acute awareness of the importance of providing systemic responses to the issue of family violence, we developed a Family Safety Model of practice.

The model is based on the key principle that it is safer to provide services for all family members in a systemic, whole of family and integrated way. The model requires that all clients assessed as affected by family violence are referred to a specialist family violence case coordinator who proactively prioritises the safety of partners, ex-partners, children and family members.

We commenced a pilot of this model with our MBCPs, which involved engaging family members early to provide family safety contact services to those affected by family violence. These services included counselling, FDR, needs assessments, and programs with a parenting, parent-child relationship and recovery focus.

Men's behaviour change programs

The largest provider of MBCPs in Victoria, RAV significantly expanded our delivery of programs across all elements of the system. MBCPs assist men who commit violence to take responsibility for their behaviour and relate in respectful ways. They also work with women and children to manage and respond to safety concerns.

With a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, we delivered:

- high quality MBCPs through our centres
- programs for Corrections Victoria across five metropolitan and regional locations
- court-mandated programs in Melbourne's southern region.

We commenced as the sole provider of family safety contact services for Corrections Victoria's *Changeabout* program. *Changeabout* is delivered in prisons and community correctional settings to target family violence-associated criminogenic factors such as drug and alcohol use.

In western Melbourne the MBCP continued for Vietnamese men, particularly refugees and immigrants. It gave participants an understanding of Australian laws, rights and culture, with the key message that violence against women and children is not tolerated. The program is unique in that it is delivered in Vietnamese.



Curriculum and group programs

Victorian students benefited from *I like, like you*, our primary prevention healthy relationships program for schools. The whole of school program introduces adolescents to the knowledge, practical skills and attitudes that promote healthy, equitable and respectful relationships, with a strong emphasis on violence prevention and mental health promotion. *I like, like you* is provided as a healthy intimate relationships program for secondary school students and a healthy close relationships program for upper primary school students.

I like, like you is distinct in that it includes both program and curriculum objectives to provide a more integrated support service through strong partnerships between schools, health and community agencies, parents, families and young people.

While maintaining the core idea of the connection between emotional health and healthy relationships, we adapted the program's curriculum to meet the needs of different groups of young people. This included students who speak English as a second language and asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors in community detention.

Following community requests, we developed a teacher training program and manual for *I like, like you*, and facilitated a "train-the-trainer" program in Shepparton.

The Traralgon Centre ran a six-week *Purple Hearts Women's Group*, to help women with intellectual disabilities develop practical skills and strategies to avoid being at risk of violence and exploitation. Ongoing education and support was provided following completion of the program.

Men who had completed an MBCP participated in *Repair-enting*, a structured 10-week group for dads who had used violence in their relationships and wanted to redevelop a relationship with their children. Having been provisionally accepted onto the Australian Institute of Family Studies' (AIFS) evidence-based child and parent list, we commenced work to have the program accredited as an evidence-based program.

We developed *Dads 4 Your Kids*, a new play-based program for fathers who had used violence. The group works with those who need to develop a safe attachment relationship with their child, and includes an extensive assessment involving the father, mother and children in a family.

Women affected by family violence participated in a range of six- to eight-week support groups, including:

- *Women Making Choices* – a program at the Kew Centre for participants to share experiences and learn about healthy relationships, safety and available support services

- *Women Enhancing Better Selves* – provided in partnership with VincentCare Victoria and Primary Care Connect for women in the Shepparton region who had recently left a violent relationship
- *Opening the Doors* – an educational support group in western Melbourne that focused on strengthening self-esteem.

The Kew Centre ran *Women Managing Anger* which helped participants explore, understand and manage their emotions.

**“Acknowledge others more.
Listen to what they have
to say. Treat them the way
I would like to be treated.”**

*– I like, like you
participant's learnings*

2782

I like, like you participants

Mental health services

RAV recognises the impact that mental and emotional health difficulties can have on family relationships. As part of our mental health strategy, we continued developing services for families experiencing mental health difficulties, and extended our range of preventative and early intervention mental health services for individuals, couples and families.

Victoria's 10-year mental health plan, which aims to guide investment and drive better mental health outcomes for Victorians, was launched in November 2015. Following our participation in the public consultation, RAV accepted an invitation to join the DHHS Innovation Reference Group, to provide advice on and support the plan's implementation.

Informed by this state plan and the latest national mental health plan, RAV developed a consumer participation and co-production framework for our services. This framework seeks to strengthen our service design and improve outcomes for our clients by providing them with meaningful opportunities for feedback and participation.

We supported the implementation of a range of internal and external mental health training and family-based clinical activities. As part of our commitment to working collaboratively with other health and allied services, we partnered with the Austin Health's Mental Health Service to pilot a family-inclusive Single Session Family Consultation model of practice. This brief, strengths-based intervention model helps to enhance mental health treatment plans by supporting family relationships. Our practitioners worked collaboratively with case managers to assist clients, including young adults who had experienced

mental illness, and children of a parent with a mental illness.

headspace

RAV strengthened our involvement with headspace, the national youth mental health foundation.

We successfully tendered as the lead agency for a new headspace centre in Bairnsdale, due to open in late 2016. RAV will work in partnership with a consortium involving a diverse range of primary and mental health care, youth and Aboriginal service providers to support the centre's establishment and operation.

We maintained existing consortium partnerships in the Hawthorn and Greensborough centres, and established an association with the Knox centre.

In Hawthorn, RAV was represented on the Management, and Quality and Risk Sub-Committees. The Kew Centre provided regular trauma-informed counselling and an outreach family therapy service that recognised the value of family and friends in facilitating recovery.

We participated in the Hawthorn centre's SAFEMinds Forum for parents and teachers, to promote their awareness and understanding of mental health issues



affecting young people. The event was well-attended, with RAV represented on a panel of mental health providers to discuss issues and answer audience questions.

RAV practitioners also joined headspace Hawthorn staff for training in *Tuning in to Teens*, a six-week evidence-based program for parents of teenagers.

The Greensborough headspace centre opened in April, with an official launch held in June. RAV participated in consortium member meetings and provided therapeutic counselling services to support clients and their families in northern Melbourne.

As part of a longstanding collaborative partnership with EACH Social and Community Health, we joined the Knox headspace centre's Family and Relationships Stream Reference Group to support new approaches to service delivery in the region.

i-Connect

Our *i-Connect* Family Mental Health Support Service continued to support children and young people aged 18 and under at risk of or affected by mental illness in East Gippsland. Through case management, referrals, programs and outreach services, *i-Connect* supported clients to stay connected and engaged in education and learning. We engaged with significant adults to help them to support the child or young person's wellbeing, resilience, and self-esteem.

i-Connect's programs and services included:

- *I like, like you UP*
- a targeted program for primary school students focused on bullying and assertiveness
- equine and canine therapy programs for children who had experienced trauma.

Our *i-Connect* staff strengthened relationships with local Aboriginal community members and services including Aboriginal-Controlled Organisations. This focus is reflected in the clients using the program, with almost a quarter of clients identifying as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Support for Gippsland residents

Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) funding enabled us to continue offering free counselling, group work and community events to individuals, couples, families and communities affected by extreme climatic events in Gippsland. Broader eligibility criteria extended the program to residents on low incomes, living in a rural or remote locations, from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, or experiencing mental health issues such as peri-natal depression.

The *ATAPS* program was run in Bairnsdale, Morwell and Traralgon. It incorporated telephone and video conferencing, and additional outreach services such as an innovative in-home counselling service to cater to the needs of those living in remote locations. By invitation, we also visited residents in their homes through our 'cuppa and a chat' service, providing gourmet gift baskets and the opportunity to discuss experiences informally.

Reclaim Support Services

In the third year of our *Reclaim Support Services*, we provided survivors of institutional child abuse, or those affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with free counselling information, advice and support.

The Royal Commission has been very active in Victoria, reaching its halfway mark early this year. It held public hearings in Melbourne and Ballarat, provided ongoing private sessions and completed the Inmate Engagement Strategy to provide eligible prisoners with access to private sessions with commissioners. These activities resulted in increased service demand, particularly from people participating in private sessions.

RAV remained involved in national networks, participating in the Royal Commission Support Services (RCSS) National Roundtable meeting, and chairing the Victorian and Tasmanian RCSS Stakeholder Group. In conjunction with drummond street services we funded the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to enhance their RCSS.

Forced Adoption Support Services

Compass Forced Adoption Support Services (FASS) entered its second year of operation. It supported people affected by forced adoption using a therapeutic case management model. The program provided information, telephone support and referral to enhance and complement existing supports. Demand continued to grow, with a diverse client group accessing services through a range of referral pathways.

RAV has established strong relationships with local and national stakeholders. We participated in the quarterly Victorian Adoption Information Services Forum and the FASS National Roundtable Meeting, and partnered with the Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self-Help (VANISH) to support record searching. In conjunction with other FASS, we worked closely with AIFS and the Department of Social Services (DSS) to develop Forced Adoption National Practice Principles.

Through two small grants application rounds, we funded initiatives to enhance support and build capacity for people affected by forced adoption. Projects undertaken include support groups, information sessions and the establishment of a memorial. We began developing a range of website information and resources to support those directly affected by forced adoption, as well as the broader community and professionals.

In addition to *Compass*, we continued to co-facilitate support groups for Gippsland residents affected by adoption, in partnership with VANISH and the Association of Relinquishing Mothers.

Most common needs addressed of mental health services clients

- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Adult surviving childhood sexual abuse
- Dealing with relationship difficulties
- Grief/loss
- Anger
- Stress
- Survivor
- Identity

Senior relationship services

We are committed to providing targeted and effective relationship and wellbeing services that address the needs of senior Victorians and their families.

In response to an increasingly ageing population, RAV strengthened our capacity to provide services that meet the needs and interests of clients aged 65 years and older by developing new programs and enhancing existing ones.

Elder relationship services

As part of the RA federation, we launched a 12-month counselling and mediation pilot program at the Kew Centre to support families negotiating complex issues and managing conflict related to ageing.

The counselling service helped families to prevent or resolve family conflict, have difficult conversations, plan for the future and make decisions that protect the interests, rights and safety of families.

In addition to counselling, we offered elder mediation to assist with advanced decision-making regarding financial and medical issues, and resolve disputes within families, or between families and aged care providers or services.

Staff training and capacity building

RAV staff undertook a broad range of specialist training focused on broadening knowledge of ageing, elder abuse, ethical dilemmas surrounding consent, relevant legislative and rights frameworks, and age-appropriate service design. Staff also acquired micro-skills in managing family mediation that involves multiple parties, including elderly clients. Training programs undertaken included:

- Elder Mediation Training
- Working with Older Adults: Mental Health, Cognitive Impairment, and Addressing Behavioural Challenges
- Victorian Government Elder Abuse Prevention Online Training
- University of Tasmania Understanding Dementia MOOC.

Responding to elder abuse

Elder abuse, which is any act of harm to an older person within a relationship where there is implied trust, is emerging as a significant social issue. RAV actively engaged in raising awareness of and responding to elder abuse through workforce training and screening, and assessment within our service delivery and participation in relevant networks and events.

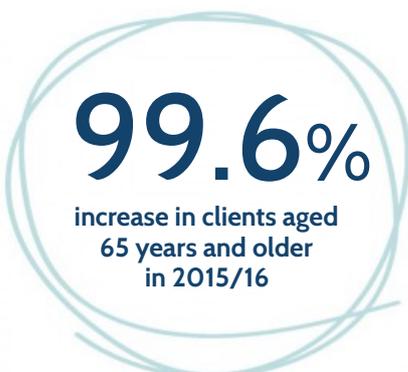
We participated in the Eastern Elder Abuse Network, which aims to raise awareness, advocate for policy change and build effective collaboration around responses to elder abuse.

We attended the 4th National Elder Abuse Conference held in Melbourne in February.

We attended a forum for services, stakeholders and community members to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June. We presented on our elder relationship services pilot program and joined a panel of service providers including Victoria Police, Eastern Domestic Violence Service, and the Eastern Community Legal Centre. The panel aimed to help the audience better understand elder abuse, and broadly discuss sector collaboration and service gaps.

It is projected that one in four Australians will be 65 years or older by 2056.

- ABS (2008), *Population Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2101*, ABS Publication 3222.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.



\$950k

of additional funding to provide MBCPs, family safety contact services and support for families affected by family violence



- Sunshine 16.0%
- Traralgon 13.6%
- Kew 11.9%
- Melbourne FRC 8.9%
- Ballarat 8.1%
- Greensborough 8.0%
- Cranbourne 7.1%
- Sunshine FRC 6.8%
- Berwick 5.6%
- Boronia 5.6%
- Greensborough FRC 5.2%
- Shepparton 3.2%

Specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

RAV continued our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families to help strengthen family relationships. We provided culturally-relevant counselling, FDR and group programs, and participated in events to enhance and extend our relationships with communities.

www.deadlyRAV.com.au

Our dedicated website for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria.

We endorsed and adopted a RAV Statement of Commitment, which aims to promote cultural awareness and respect, and strengthen the organisation's provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities in Victoria.

RAV's involvement with Indigenous communities was further extended through the work of our Liaison Officer – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, a well-respected Elder and member of the Koori community.

We continued to promote our dedicated website for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria, available at a new address, www.deadlyRAV.com.au.

RAV staff, community workers and practitioners attended our one-day workshop – *The Tree of Life: an approach to working with vulnerable children, young people and adults*. The Tree of Life is a valuable resource for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, using a narrative therapy approach to help people talk about their lives in ways that do not re-traumatise them.

We participated in Indigenous Family Violence Regional Advisory Groups which work holistically to strengthen communities and reduce the incidence of family violence.

The Greensborough FRC remained involved with the Northern Metropolitan and Whittlesea Local Aboriginal Network (LAN), and participated in the state-wide Local Indigenous Network/LAN consultation.

Similarly, we continued our association with the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group, participating in a range of Reconciliation Week events including an awards dinner and the launch of the Community HART Award, which recognises the work of Victorians in local reconciliation initiatives.

Staff from our Greensborough FRC attended an annual walk and reconciliation fire ceremony to mark National Sorry Day.

We attended a number of events to mark NAIDOC Week, a celebration of the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Events included:

- a flag-raising ceremony and morning tea hosted by the Wyndham City CEO
- the annual NAIDOC Ball at the Melbourne Town Hall
- a graduation ceremony for participants of the RAV-supported *Warran Warran Maar* (boy to man) traditional cultural mentoring program
- the official launch of the NAIDOC Aboriginal Art Show in Laverton.

Our Sunshine centres joined together to participate in *Wayapa*, an Aboriginal wellness and connection practice.

As part of Wurundjeri Week, which celebrates and acknowledges the traditional Aboriginal land owners of Melbourne, our staff joined a Wurundjeri Council walk that highlighted historical and significant sites in Abbotsford.

RAV participated in events for The Long Walk, a charity that aims to raise awareness to improve and support the health, wellbeing and life opportunities of Indigenous Australians. We attended the annual The Long Walk Women's Luncheon and engaged with the community through our stand at the We Walk Together community event at Federation Square.

We continued to support the annual Koori Christmas Party – the largest Aboriginal community event in the City of Whittlesea. Greensborough Centre staff provided a number of family-friendly activities, including badge-making, African drumming and a popular photo booth.

We participated in a range of other events and initiatives in 2015/16, including:

- *Dreaming on the Edge* – a hope and healing retreat for Aboriginal men and women in Healesville
- *Women's Business Means Business Cultural Healing Camp* – a camp in western Victoria focused on health and wellbeing, and family violence awareness and prevention.



Women's programs

RAV maintained our long association with *Sisters Day Out (SDO)*, a program of wellbeing workshops that engages with Koori women to help prevent family violence. We sponsored and attended *SDO* workshops in Bairnsdale, Deer Park, Caroline Springs and at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, as well as the milestone 100th *SDO* in Carlton.

We also attended An Evening with Sisters Day Out, a celebration of Aboriginal women and the *SDO* program's success.

We participated in *Nan, Aunty, Mum - You are a Treasure to our Family*, a new collaborative project that aims to increase Indigenous women's awareness of and participation in breast screening.

Men's programs

In partnership with VACCA, RAV again supported an Aboriginal dads' and kids' activity group in south-east Melbourne. The program focused on positive parenting strategies, and gave dads and kids the opportunity to spend time together yarning and exploring their culture.

Our Shepparton Centre co-facilitated *Men's Toolbox* with Yitjawudik, a residential rehabilitation centre for Aboriginal men with alcohol and/or drug dependency problems. The program centres on understanding and learning new skills to maintain healthy, rewarding relationships. It is underpinned by MBCP principles related to family violence

and taking responsibility for choices and behaviour.

We remained committed to *Brutha's Day Out (BDO)*, a family violence prevention program that builds resilience and self-esteem.

We continued to develop *Marrin-ing Koolin-Boolook* with the Aboriginal Centre for Males. This program increases the capacity of young Aboriginal men to manage their relationship issues, whether currently in or aiming to be in a committed relationship.

Our Traralgon Centre facilitated *DRUMBEAT* with Indigenous men in Gippsland at the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place. The drumming program provided a way to connect and discuss values, respect, tolerating differences and different ways of communicating and connecting.

Working with young people and children

The Greensborough centres and Sunshine FRC, in collaboration with the Koori Youth Services Team at the City of Whittlesea, also provided *DRUMBEAT* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in northern Melbourne.

The Shepparton Centre supported a Family Fun Health Day for local Indigenous families. The day comprised a range of activities as well as hearing, dental, vision and development health check-ups for children approaching school age.

We attended the Koori Youth Summit, an annual state-wide gathering that aims to connect and inspire young Aboriginal people to help create positive change in their communities. The event gave us the opportunity to share information on our support programs, and strengthen our relationships with Indigenous young people and youth organisations.



Specialist services for multicultural Victoria

RAV understands the different needs of Victoria's CALD communities. During the year, we strived to strengthen relationships with these communities and meet their needs through culturally-appropriate services and relevant participation in events and programs.

In 2015/16, RAV offered services and programs to clients born in more than 130 countries, including India, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, South Africa, Malaysia, Iran and Sudan.

With our diverse staff group who speak 25 languages other than English, we recognise that individuals and groups from non-English speaking and CALD backgrounds can face access and participation barriers. As a result of this understanding, we enhanced the knowledge and capacity of our staff to provide culturally-appropriate and inclusive services through ongoing cultural awareness training.

We adapted the way we delivered our services, including counselling and FDR, to ensure they were accessible and responsive to CALD clients. This included extended session times, the use of accredited interpreters, the provision of plain English document translations and being aware of clients' different cultural norms.

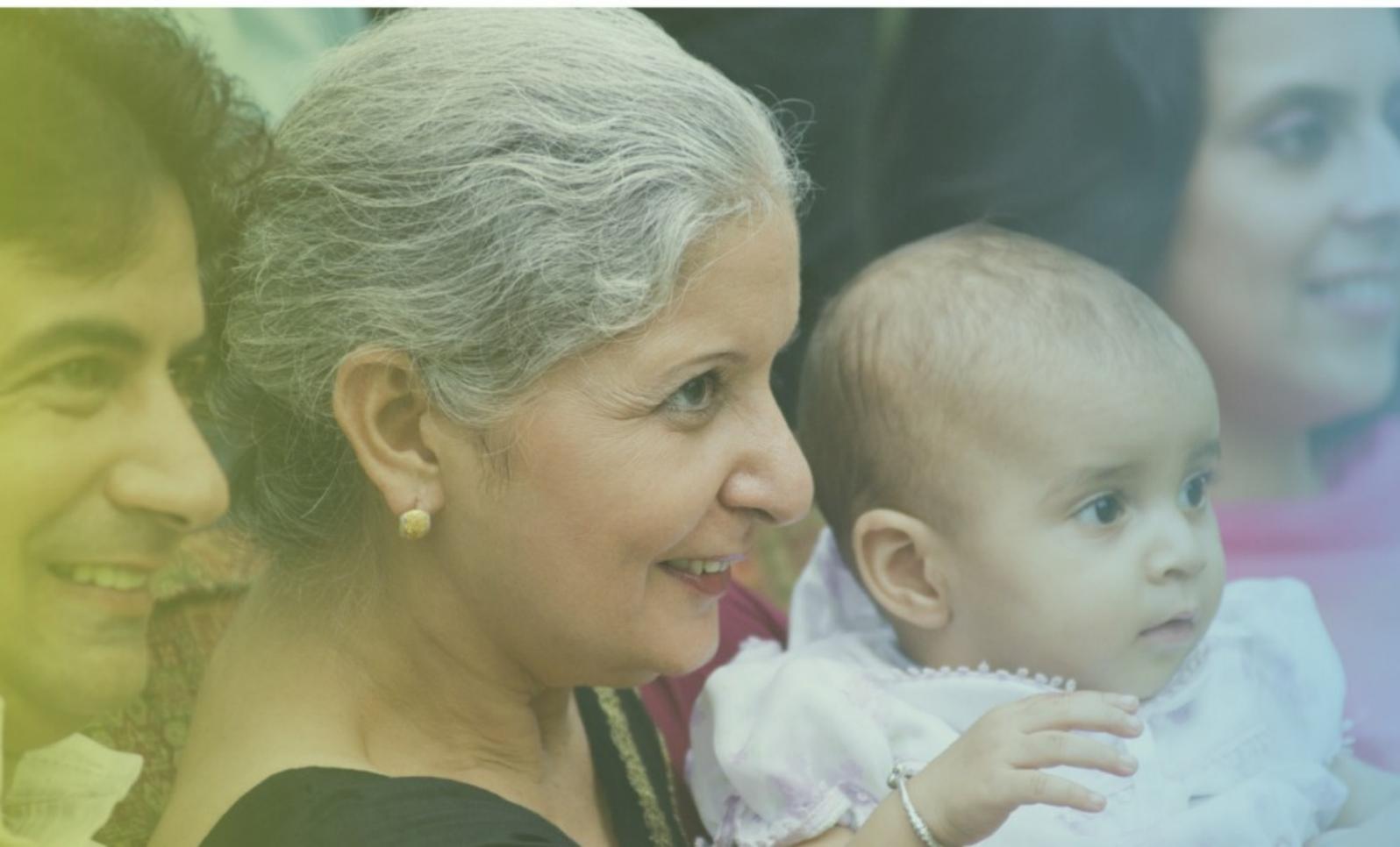
Our centres worked collaboratively with a broad range of organisations, actively participated in local networks to improve referral pathways and processes, and

enhanced our understanding of diverse communities and local needs.

Several of our groups were provided or co-facilitated in the participants' first language and we designed other programs to meet the needs of specific CALD and migrant groups.

In partnership with the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley, we presented a one-day workshop for Islamic families in Gippsland. The workshop focused on strengthening communication and conflict resolution skills. It involved an individual skills session for children, followed by a joint session for children and parents to practise new skills through group activities and discussions.

The Melbourne and Sunshine FRCs delivered workshops on healthy relationships to school communities in Flemington, Deer Park and St Albans. The workshops were designed to improve access to support services for students, parents and families from CALD backgrounds, including newly-settled families.



In conjunction with the City of Melbourne, the Melbourne FRC co-facilitated the *Tuning in to Kids* program with mothers of young children living in public housing in Carlton. The participants came from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali and Iraqi.

RAV continued to support *My Culture is African, my Child is Australian*, a free camp for African dads and kids run by CatholicCare. Through a range of activities and discussions, the weekend camp acknowledged and celebrated the importance of fathers in the lives of their children.

We participated in a range of events and shared activities to demonstrate our respect for and celebration of Victoria's cultural diversity, as well as to ensure the community understands that RAV is an inclusive and approachable organisation.

- Our Greensborough, Sunshine and Ballarat centres marked Harmony Day with a number of staff lunches that celebrated the organisation's diversity.
- We supported the 12th annual Harmony Celebration, a free, family-friendly festival in Carlton organised by the Carlton Local Agencies Network, of which we have been a member since 2013.
- In partnership with the Greater Shepparton City Council and local organisations, we helped to launch Cultural Diversity Week in Shepparton. The event was held at a vibrant activity playground and featured a range of food and activities including a RAV mask-making activity.
- The Shepparton Centre also took part in the Converge on the Goulburn family festival during Cultural Diversity Week. RAV provided a drumming activity and craft station to engage children and young people.

We joined more than 180 members of the Samoan community at a family day in Keilor East. RAV supported a raffle on the day, which featured a wide range of sports events.

We remained a member of the Yarra Settlement Forum, a network of agencies providing services for refugees, asylum seekers and newly-arrived migrants. For the second consecutive year, the Forum hosted an informative Yarra Refugee Week Q&A Panel, featuring presentations and discussions on international, national and community issues and performances of Australian Sudanese music.

We attended the City of Whittlesea's Welcome Expo, which aims to engage new residents, including refugees and migrants, and help them to connect with the community and services in their area.

The Melbourne FRC welcomed a number of international family law visitors to Australia. The centre hosted a Japanese Family Court Judge and Family Consultant, and a delegation of 20 international social services staff members from the USA, Canada, the UK and Hong Kong.

Supported by the Family Court of Australia, a Melbourne FRC practitioner attended a 10-day training program in Japan. The training focused on Japanese cultural awareness and on The Hague Convention, of which Japan is a recent signatory.

The Greensborough Centre participated in a family violence preventative committee, the Jagriti Forum. The committee contributed to the development of *Happy Families, Happy Communities*, a manual designed to provide the Indian community in the western region with information on family violence and support services.



Working with Victorian communities

RAV enhanced relationships and social connections for Victorians through our community-based programs, engagement initiatives and participation in awareness days and events.

We participated in 143 networks, partnerships and groups across child, family and parenting, mental health, family violence, family law and senior services areas.

We shone a spotlight on men's emotional and physical health through *Pit Stop*, a program delivered at the Farm World agricultural show in Gippsland. With the support of local service providers and Federation University nursing students, we gave free, fun health checks to more than 220 men. Using a mechanical theme to liken health checks to servicing a car's engine, the program engages men who do not generally access health services, identifies health issues, and encourages men to visit their doctor regularly.

We supported two screenings of the documentary film *The Mask You Live In*, organised by YMCA's *Dadslink* program in partnership with Life Is... Foundation, Collective Shout and Melbourne Men's Group. Following each screening, RAV staff participated in panel discussions about the film's key messages around definitions of masculinity and the development of boys and young men.

The Sunshine FRC engaged with local parents and young people through two free community information sessions, provided at a local primary school and youth resource centre. The sessions detailed the centre's services and how they could assist separating families.

Buchan residents and business owners affected by bushfires in Gippsland benefited from a community workshop that provided information about resilience and preparing for and recovering from a natural disaster.

The Melbourne FRC, through the Richmond Local Area Partnership Network, participated in a collaborative project focused on the wellbeing of children, parents and families living in the Richmond Housing Estate. With funding from the City of Yarra, we helped to facilitate an eight-week program that enhanced children's social and emotional literacy through fun and interactive activities.

As a partner of the Gippsland Women's Forum, RAV sponsored *Connecting Women Across Gippsland*, a conference designed to inspire, empower, include, educate and connect women in the region. The event promoted women's strengths and encouraged participants to be active in the workforce and their communities.

The Traralgon Centre coordinated a rural community pamper day for East Gippsland

residents at which they enjoyed a complimentary lunch, massages, beauty treatments, craft activities and health checks. Tips for stress management and self-care were a feature of the event.

We celebrated the social, economic, cultural and political achievement of women on International Women's Day.

In conjunction with the Richmond Housing Office, Mission Australia, and the Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House, we participated in an event at the Richmond Housing Estate to recognise the community's diversity and strength. Women and children from a wide range of cultural backgrounds participated in the event's activities.

We also attended the Nillumbik Shire Council's Women without Borders International Women's Day event, which featured discussions on gender equality, violence against women and women's rights and health.

In recognition of Mental Health Week, a Victorian mental health education and engagement week, the Sunshine FRC joined the Australian Government DSS Personal Helpers and Mentors service (PHaMs) at an information stand in Sunshine. The organisations provided the local community with information and resources on good mental health, and the opportunity to discuss available support services.

To celebrate National Families Week, members of the *early matters* program facilitated a variety of activities and events in north-west Melbourne and Ballarat. These included a breakfast club, photo booth, drawing competition and presentations by clinical psychologist Andrew Fuller on *Building Resilience in Children*.

We participated in a family-friendly event in Shepparton, also as part of National Families Week. RAV provided a mask-making activity at the after-school event, held at a primary school with the support of local services and organisations.

Gippsland staff joined other local service providers in Lakes Entrance to mark National Youth Week, a celebration of Australian young people aged 12 to 25. We ran a popular photo booth, provided promotional products and spoke to parents and young people about our *i-Connect* program.

RAV's continued involvement in three annual festivals helped us to engage with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities, and promote the inclusiveness of our services.

- We supported the Midsumma Festival, a celebration of queer arts and culture in Melbourne's Alexandra Gardens. From the RAV stand our staff distributed rainbow-coloured lip balms, lollipops and pens, engaged with other organisations and discussed our services and programs.
- We participated in ChillOut Festival, a country queer pride event in Daylesford where we engaged with visitors, provided information and ran a popular create-your-own badge and fridge magnet activity enabling visitors to create their own imaginative designs.
- For the fourth consecutive year, we supported the Melbourne Queer Film Festival, a festival of LGBTIQ-themed films and documentaries. We welcomed the opportunity to talk about RAV at the screening of our sponsored film, *Portrait of a Serial Monogamist*.

The Traralgon Centre attended two exhibitions in Morwell for young people, children and their parents. With a focus on healthy relationships, we ran interactive activities for visitors and distributed information on our child and family support services.

The Traralgon Centre also had a presence at Federation University's Orientation Week, where we provided students and staff with information and tips on healthy relationships, conflict resolution and managing anxiety.

RAV once again supported Neighbour Day, Australia's annual celebration of community that encourages people to build better relationships with those who live around them, particularly elderly or vulnerable neighbours.

Neighbour Day 2016 officially began with an online virtual launch that promoted a single neighbourly message: The community you want starts at your front door™. The launch generated considerable interest on social media, with politicians, councils, community organisations, Neighbour Day ambassadors, Very Neighbourly Organisations and residents from all across the country engaging through shared photos, videos and posts.



While officially held on the last Sunday of March, Neighbour Day can be held on any day of the year. In 2015/16, Victoria celebrated through a range of events including lunches, barbecues, afternoon teas, street parties and festivals.

RAV participated in a number of local Neighbour Day initiatives:

- The Melbourne FRC joined residents and local agencies in Richmond at an event to help residents get to know their neighbours. The centre also supported a combined Neighbour Day and National Youth Week celebration in North Melbourne, which gave the opportunity to connect with young people in the area.
- Staff from the Ballarat Centre joined their neighbours for a lunch at the Ballarat North Neighbourhood House.
- The Sunshine FRC supported a Neighbour Day art competition held by a local primary school, for which year three students produced art to demonstrate what they love about their neighbours or neighbourhoods.



Professional training and workplace services

We continued to provide our accredited courses, extended our range of workshops and professional development opportunities, and delivered a range of training programs to organisations and workplaces.

75%

settlement rate through AccessResolve Property Mediation

97%

of professional development workshop attendees found that the presenter was engaging and responded to the audience

98%

of professional development workshop attendees reported that the training was relevant to their needs

Accredited training and professional development

Enrolments were strong for the five-month *Specialist Course in Couple Therapy/Master of Social Science (Couple Counselling)*, offered in partnership with Swinburne University. Participants gained theoretical and practical knowledge to effectively work in a counselling setting with couples in an intimate relationship. We offered course graduates the opportunity to consolidate and extend their skills through our clinical internships and live couple therapy consultation program.

Our *Graduate Diploma of FDR* remained popular. Participants included recipients of two AGD scholarships for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or CALD backgrounds to undertake post-separation services qualifications. We commenced preparations to revise the qualification to meet new training package requirements.

The training team conducted its inaugural summer school program – a five-day intensive *Mediation Short Course*. The successful program provided knowledge and skills of mediation, and how to apply these to dispute resolution in a variety of situations. The course meets the training requirements of the National Mediator Accreditation System, enabling participants to be assessed for registration as accredited mediators.

Our client services officers completed the *Graduate Diploma in Family Intake & Support/Certificate IV in Telephone Counselling*, which we ran with funding from the National Workforce Development Fund. The qualifications equipped frontline support staff with skills to communicate effectively with people in distress, respond holistically to client issues, refer appropriately, provide telephone counselling in crisis situations, and recognise and respond appropriately to family violence.

RAV conducted a broad range of professional development workshops in 2015/16, with a strong focus on the organisation's core areas of expertise – counselling, FDR and mediation, and family violence prevention, support and recovery.

The workshops gave health, community and education professionals the opportunity to develop and practise skills, and participate in group discussions. They included *Supporting Separated Families, Attending Court and Writing Reports, Assessing for Suicide Risk and Addressing Family Violence Through Child- and Infant-led Practice*.

Accredited FDR practitioners attended our series of three *FDR Refresher Training* workshops. The evening sessions explained legislative changes, updated areas of practice and discussed assessing for family violence in FDR.

Our Training Department also conducted a number of workshops tailored to the organisational and employee needs of workplaces. We provided *Nurturing your Relationships* workshops to carers of those with chronic health issues or disabilities. We also offered:

- *How to Conduct Effective Training*
- *Conflict Management in the Workplace*
- *Delivering Protective Behaviours Programs in Schools*
- *Strategies to Support Mental Health*
- *Promoting Resilience in the Workplace*
- *Systematic Approaches to Dealing with Critical Incidents*.

With a strong awareness and understanding of the impact that family violence can have on an individual's workplace, we developed two family violence training opportunities for organisations:

- *Responding to Family Violence in Workplaces*
- *The Impact of Family Violence on the Workplace*.

The tailored sessions aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of employees to better support their staff, clients and customers.

We designed and facilitated a two-day training program for Australian Government Department of Human Services staff. Social workers in Sydney and Melbourne received advanced training in identifying and responding to clients experiencing family violence.

Production of our regular training e-Newsletters continued, delivering spotlight news articles, course and workshop reviews, and updates on upcoming training opportunities to our 1500 subscribers.



AccessResolve Workplace Services

Our AccessResolve Workplace Services delivered an employee assistance program to more than 60 state and national organisations from community health, wellbeing, retail, real estate and manufacturing industries.

Our services included counselling through our centres, conflict management support and onsite grief and support counselling.

AccessResolve Property Mediation

We again provided property mediation services for the FCC on behalf of RA National. AccessResolve gave court-mandated clients a genuine opportunity to settle their property disputes and consequently avoid protracted and expensive litigation processes.

We offered face-to-face mediation, as well as telephone and video conferencing facilities for clients in regional and remote locations.

Our program continued to prove effective in 2015/16. More than 290 mediations were undertaken with clients from 16 FCC locations in four states, achieving a settlement rate of 75 per cent.

“In both my business and my employment, I had underestimated how valuable this course would be. Certainly ‘intensive’ but every second engaging and interesting.”

- Mediation Short Course participant



- Counsellors 27%
- Psychologists 15%
- Youth, social and community workers 15%
- Family dispute resolution practitioners 7%
- Managers 7%
- Health and wellbeing workers 6%
- Family practitioners 5%
- Administrators 3%
- Psychotherapists 3%
- Other 12%

Practice development

The Practice Development Team focused on ensuring RAV's model of service and practice was reflective of current research, legislation, and strategic and sector developments across the areas of therapeutic services, mental health, family violence and family law.

Working closely with the RAV Practice Development Board Sub-Committee, the Practice Development Team (PDT) worked to develop, implement and support new programs aligned to RAV's strategic priorities. This included the elder relationship services pilot and Single Session Family Consultation service offered in collaboration with the Austin Health's Mental Health Service.

The PDT facilitated the delivery of high quality, evidence-based clinical services to our clients through direct clinical supervision of senior practitioners and the establishment of clinical supervision teams across the organisation.

It updated a range of policies, procedures and forms including the *Family Violence Intervention Orders Policy and Procedure* and clinical intake and assessment forms for our FDR and counselling services. These forms emphasise our client-directed and family-inclusive approach to service delivery, and incorporate refinements to risk assessments relating to family violence, mental health and child protection.

The PDT developed program manuals for *I like, like you, I like, like you UP* and *ATTUNE* to support the consistent and professional delivery of our child and family programs.

It provided and supported a range of professional development and training programs for staff:

- FDR practitioners undertook training in conflict coaching, and mental health and family violence risk assessment.
- VANISH provided a two-day training seminar for counsellors on working with forced adoption-related loss and trauma.
- Counsellors participated in *Working Therapeutically with Adult Survivors or Complex Trauma* – a two-day program facilitated by Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA). This interactive training provided the knowledge and practice framework to enable practitioners to establish safe, supportive, therapeutic relationships with people affected by abuse, neglect and/or attachment trauma and support clients' long-term recovery.
- Over two days, practitioners working within RAV's early intervention programs completed The Bouverie Centre's *Single Session Family Consultation* workshop, which focused on engaging with family members and attending to their needs in situations where the primary client is an individual.
- RAV managers undertook a *Change, Stress and Difficult Conversations* workshop and follow-up session, which provided an understanding of and framework for having effective conversations.



Conferences and publications

Conferences, seminars and presentations

- Bickerdike, A., *Alternative Dispute Resolution and Family Violence*, Australian Small Business Commission, December 2015.
- Bickerdike, A., *Fatherhood*, Victorian Parliament Men's Health Breakfast, August 2015.
- Curran, S., *Relationships Australia Victoria's Elder Relationship Services Pilot and Sector Collaboration*, Elder Abuse Awareness Forum, Melbourne, June 2016.
- McDonald, E., *Practice considerations working with young women affected by parental separation*, AUSMed, Melbourne, July 2015.
- McDonald, E., & Nield, J., *I like, like you: A healthy intimate relationships program for schools*, FRSA Conference, Brisbane, November 2015.
- Mclvor, R., *RAV working in the family violence area: prevention, training, early intervention in a tertiary context, response, cultural specificity and accountability*, Australian College of Applied Psychology, Melbourne, June 2016.
- Mclvor, R., *RAV working in the family violence area: prevention, training, early intervention in a tertiary context, response, cultural specificity and accountability*, Network meeting of representatives from the Victorian Commonwealth-funded alcohol and other drugs service delivery agencies, Melbourne, June 2016.
- Mclvor, R., *The critical role of the general practitioner in responding to family violence*, HealthEd Annual Women's Health Update, Sydney, February 2016.
- Mclvor, R., *Why CALD MBCPs?*, Australian College of Applied Psychology, Melbourne, June 2016.
- Mclvor, R., *Why CALD Men's Behaviour Change Programs?*, Family Violence Has No Boundaries Conference, Melbourne, October 2015.
- Mclvor, R., Nguyen K., & Bhandary R., *Effective Men's Behaviour Change Programs for CALD Men*, Ending Domestic & Family Violence Conference, Melbourne, October 2015.
- Mclvor, R., & Perry, M., *Creating a safe structure for participants in Men's Behaviour Change Programs experiencing individual trauma*, NTV Practitioners Forum, Melbourne, August 2015.



- Mclvor, R., with contributions from Elvery, S., *Bridging the gaps to ensure accountability*, Ending Domestic & Family Violence Conference, Melbourne, October 2015.
- Mills, S., *The crucial role of the general practitioner in family violence*, Annual Women's Health Update, Adelaide, May 2016.
- Mills, S., *The crucial role of the general practitioner in family violence*, Annual Women's Health Update, Melbourne, March 2016.
- Roberts, P., *Self-Care and Managing Anxiety*, AUSMED on Pathological Behaviours in the Workplace Conference, Melbourne, 2015.

Publications and peer-reviewed journals

- Cleak, H., Schofield, M.J., Axelsen, L., & Bickerdike, A., (2015), 'Screening for Partner Violence Among Family Mediation Clients: Differentiating Types of Abuse', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1–29. doi: 10.1177/0886260515614559.
- Power, J., Schofield, M.J., Farchione, D., Perlesz, A., McNair, R., Brown, R., Pitts, M., & Bickerdike, A., (2015), 'Psychological Wellbeing Among Same-sex Attracted and Heterosexual Parents: Role of Connectedness to Family and Friendship Networks', *Australian and New Zealand Journal Of Family Therapy*, 36: 380–394. doi: 10.1002/anzf.1109.
- Shafer, M., (2016), *Zoe's Choice*. Melbourne: Good Ships: Relationships Australia Victoria.

2800

delegates attended our presentations across Australia on the critical role of the general practitioner in responding to family violence

Research and evaluation

Building upon the organisation's strong experience, RAV's Board and management prioritised research and the evaluation of our services. We maintained our involvement in a range of collaborative research projects, and commenced a dedicated data and evaluation project to ensure our funded services have a robust evidence-base.

We initiated a dedicated data and evaluation project to measure the effectiveness of our services in meeting their identified goals. This three-stage project will involve a team of senior staff and researchers to evaluate and demonstrate measurable client outcome improvements within our core and specialist family relationship services. It will seek to articulate a program logic for all services based on our theory of change, measure service outcomes including long-term benefits where appropriate, and influence program logic to improve service quality.

As part of this project we received feedback from more than 4200 clients.

We commenced significant outcomes evaluation projects for our specialist child and family services and group programs: *I like, like you, early matters* and *i-Connect*. These evaluations are expected to contribute to a strong evidence-base of service delivery.

We began evaluating *early matters*, investigating service design, implementation, client feedback, the quality of service delivery and the immediate and longer-term outcomes for families in the program. It is anticipated that the evaluation will help to demonstrate the benefits of undertaking primary prevention work in universal services at critical transition points in families' lives.

We initiated an evaluation of *i-Connect* using a similar framework, to investigate the outcomes of early assistance for families who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

We collected more than 1000 pre- and post-program evaluations within the *I like, like you* and *I like, like you UP* programs. These evaluations indicated significant engagement of, and positive outcomes for students, including increased self-awareness, empathy and an understanding of strategies for healthy communication, behaviour and relationships.

As a result of new program performance reporting processes initiated by DSS, we implemented Standard Client Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) across all our programs and services.

SCORE uses a five-point rating scale to evaluate four service outcome components: circumstances, goals and satisfaction of clients attending a service, and the outcomes achieved through group and community work. Evaluations are undertaken pre- and post-service delivery to assess changes resulting from the service provided.

The new processes enable RAV to select preferred service outcome evaluation methods and tools, and report these outcomes in consistent and comparable ways.

Evaluations from over 3000 clients indicated that 97 per cent of counselling clients felt listened to and understood, with 98 per cent of FRC clients satisfied with the services they received.

We evaluated our training services through post-workshop evaluations, mid-course reviews and recording of informal feedback.

Our family violence programs underwent a maintenance assessment of the DHHS standards and ISO 9001:2008 Standard that governs RAV's Quality Management System. The maintenance audit took place following the successful accreditation of our family violence programs in 2014/15, and revealed that RAV was fully compliant with the required standards.

We commenced a significant research project to investigate the processes and outcomes of family law property mediation. In conjunction with and funded by the RA National FDR Network, RAV initiated a two-year service evaluation involving a large Australia-wide sample of FDR cases. The project is designed to illustrate the benefits of resolving family law clients' financial issues outside the court system, provide a robust evidence-base for property mediation and inform improvements to practice models.



4200

clients provided feedback
on our services



We undertook a literature review into the most current research on the efficacy of MBCPs. Preliminary results indicate the importance of holistic service delivery approaches in facilitating ongoing behaviour change in men. This review will be used as the foundation of a significant research project led by RAV and involving RA South Australia and RA Western Australia, to evaluate the effectiveness of MBCPs provided in those organisations' respective states.

As part of a joint research project with Swinburne University into collaboration within the mental health sector, a literature review was undertaken into the systemic, organisational and individual factors that optimise or impede effective collaboration. The second stage of the research will focus on the development of evidence-based guidelines for achieving effective collaboration, and the identification of knowledge gaps and areas for further research.

Research into the effect of social media engagement on relationship satisfaction was completed, with the project's findings prepared for publication. Conducted in partnership with Victoria University with support from the university's Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing, the findings illustrated that relationship satisfaction is impacted by how, rather than how often, social media is used. As a result of the study, we commenced discussions to initiate a supplementary research project on relationship types and the quality of these relationships.

We continued to participate in a collaborative four-year *Fathering Challenges* project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

The research, involving multiple universities, governments and a consortium of non-government organisations, aims to increase knowledge of fathering in the context of domestic and family violence, to improve practice standards and consequently the parenting experiences of children and women.

Outcomes from two other major ARC-funded research projects were disseminated.

A third peer-reviewed research paper was published in relation to our four-year study with La Trobe University into the impact of family violence on FDR. The paper, published in the renowned international *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, detailed the profile and prevalence of family violence presentations in FDR, and highlighted the need to address financial abuse. At a time when the interface of family violence and family law services is under intense scrutiny, the outcomes of and recommendations from this research are attracting national and international attention. This project continues to inform and influence FDR practice, particularly in relation to the assessment of family violence within family law processes.

The results of the *Work, Love and Play in Diverse Australian Life* project helped to inform practices and the sector to provide improved culturally-appropriate services to same-sex and transgender parent client groups. The project was run in partnership with RA National, the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and The Bouverie Centre, and involved a longitudinal survey and two qualitative studies focusing on the health and wellbeing of parents.



Financial overview

Summary statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 (\$)	2015 (\$)
REVENUE		
Government funding	16,644,834	16,152,534
Client fees	2,149,162	2,372,218
Other income	1,056,759	700,574
Total revenue	19,850,755	19,225,326
EXPENSES		
Employee costs	13,954,818	13,186,299
Occupancy	1,830,223	1,871,212
Depreciation and amortisation	38,926	150,108
Other operating costs	3,430,007	3,831,600
Total expenses	19,253,974	19,039,219
SURPLUS	596,781	186,107
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
Net gain on revaluation of non-current assets	-	1,164,000
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	596,781	1,350,107

Summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2016

	2016 (\$)	2015 (\$)
Current assets	13,324,447	10,626,662
Non-current assets	3,077,304	3,116,230
Total assets	16,401,751	13,742,892
Current liabilities	6,596,282	4,739,391
Non-current liabilities	655,759	450,572
Total liabilities	7,252,041	5,189,963
NET ASSETS	9,149,710	8,552,929

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 2016 and the Summary Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2016 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 27 September 2016.

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 Australia



Brock Mackenzie
Partner

Melbourne
27 September 2016



- Employee costs 72%
- Operating costs 18%
- Occupancy 10%



- Federal Government 78%
- Client fees 11%
- State Government 4%
- Training 2%
- Interest 2%
- Other grants 2%
- Other 1%

Our Board



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 at 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 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 roles with mid-tier companies in the oil, transport, and printing and construction project management industries. He has just concluded his most recent role as the CEO of Football Federation Victoria, the governing body for soccer in the state. Peter blends his strong leadership and finance background with strategic 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 Parliament of Victoria, the health and community sector and academia. As Director of Committee Inquiries, she has led 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 ARC linkage projects. Janine joined the Board in 2015.



4 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 joined the RAV Board in 2016.

5 Ms Debra Goldfinch

Deb has had an extensive career in the not-for-profit and 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 places emphasis on the people within organisations, develops improved organisational culture and is able to develop strong teams around her. Deb has participated as a member of 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 also on the Board of Early Childhood Intervention Australia at the national and state levels. Deb joined the RAV Board in 2013 and serves as chair of the Governance Committee.

6 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 and a member of the RA Lawyers' Panel. She joined the Board in 2011.



7 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, introduction of 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.



Senior management team*



Dr Andrew Bickerdike
Chief Executive Officer



Shiranthi Sivarajah
Chief Financial Officer



Michael Muldoon
General Manager Operations



Erika Owens
General Manager State Services

Carl Beeston
Senior Manager ICT

Mark Caldwell
Senior Manager Southern and Eastern Melbourne

Simon Curran
Senior Manager Kew and Business and Service Development

Sharon Greenhill
Senior Manager Human Resources

Jo Huggins
Senior Manager Gippsland

Suzanne Ichlov
Senior Manager Centre Operations

Emily McDonald
Senior Manager Practice Development

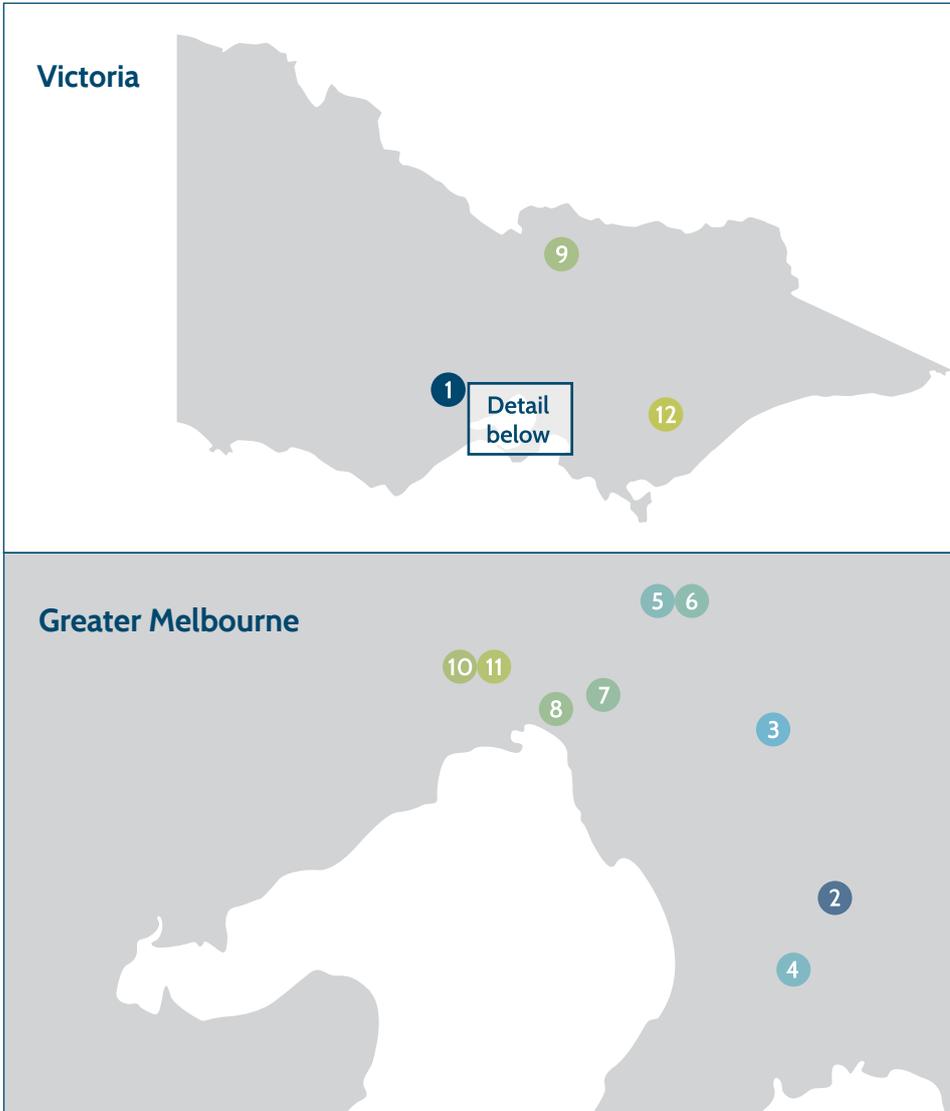
Robyn McIvor
Senior Manager Family Violence Service Development

Fiona White
Senior Manager Western Region

Sue Yorston
Senior Manager Quality, Compliance and Diversity

*As of 30 June 2016

Centre locations



- 1 Ballarat**
1025 Sturt Street
- 2 Berwick Family Relationship Centre**
38 Clyde Road
- 3 Boronia**
83 Boronia Road
- 4 Cranbourne**
2/199 South Gippsland Highway
- 5 Greensborough**
Banyule Community Health
3/25-33 Grimshaw Street
- 6 Greensborough Family Relationship Centre**
79 Grimshaw Street
- 7 Kew**
46 Princess Street
- 8 Melbourne Family Relationship Centre**
379 Collins Street
- 9 Shepparton**
634 Wyndham Street
- 10 Sunshine**
1st Floor, Harvester Centre
4 Devonshire Road
- 11 Sunshine Family Relationship Centre**
1 Clarke Street
- 12 Traralgon**
59 Breed Street

Acronyms

AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies	DJR	Department of Justice and Regulation	RA	Relationships Australia
ARC	Australian Research Council	DSS	Department of Social Services	RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
ASCA	Adults Surviving Child Abuse	FASS	Forced Adoption Support Service	RCSS	Royal Commission Support Services
ATAPS	Access to Allied Psychological Services	FCC	Federal Circuit Court of Australia	SCORE	Standard Client Outcomes Reporting
AGD	Attorney-General's Department	FDR	Family dispute resolution	SDO	Sisters Day Out
AICD	Australian Institute of Company Directors	FRC	Family Relationship Centre	VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
BDO	Brutha's Day Out	LAN	Local Aboriginal Network	VANISH	Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self-Help
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse	LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer		
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	MBCP	Men's behaviour change program		
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services	PDT	Practice Development Team		
		PHaMs	Personal Helpers and Mentors Service		



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