

# *Keeping Victorians connected*



2015 Annual Report

*Relationships Australia*<sup>®</sup>

VICTORIA

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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 peoples should be aware that this Annual Report may contain the images of people who may have since passed away.





A young girl with long blonde hair is shown in profile, smiling and looking towards the left. She is wearing a light blue shirt. In the background, other people are visible but out of focus, including a man with a beard and a woman. The image has a soft, warm color palette and is overlaid with a white circular graphic element.

We know that positive, safe and respectful relationships are fundamental to health and wellbeing.

## President's foreword

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) continued to provide high quality services to Victorians. We strengthened our counselling and family dispute resolution (FDR) programs while focusing on services in areas of family violence prevention, support and recovery, child and family, and mental health.



The issue of family violence in our community gained increasing attention this year following the announcement of Rosie Batty as 2015 Australian of the Year, and the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria).

Nearly one third of women aged 15 years or older have experienced physical or sexual violence<sup>1</sup>, while an estimated one in four women and one in seven men have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner<sup>2</sup>.

Given these statistics and the frequency that family violence is encountered in RAV's work, we welcomed the announcement that our Specialist Family Violence Services (SFVS) funding would be reinstated, after a previous announcement that it was to be discontinued.

Unfortunately, we did not receive annual indexation on a substantial proportion of our core funding; however, we were pleased to receive additional funding for a Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS), and child and parenting services. These new services further validated RAV's strategic decision in 2012 to increase its focus on child, family and mental health services.

In keeping with our strategic planning processes, the Board met with RAV managers in May 2015 to review and update the *Strategy Plan*, the organisation's blueprint for the future. The *Strategy Plan 2015 - 2019* maintains our focus on relationship services, including counselling

and FDR, while committing to emerging and developing areas of service delivery.

Building on our strong foundations, we will strengthen and enhance our child and family, and mental health services. With family violence one of the most frequently encountered, complex issues for our clients, RAV will enhance and expand its family violence prevention, support and recovery services using a whole of family approach. As Australia's population ages, we will evaluate the service delivery needs of senior Victorians, their families and the community to deliver funded, targeted and effective services.

The *Strategy Plan* includes a new vision and focus, and updated organisational values. This will ensure an accurate representation of the work we do now and will do in the future. Recognising the importance of positive, safe and respectful relationships, our focus is on providing effective services to strengthen relationships and social connections for individuals and families, and in schools, workplaces and communities across all life stages.

In October 2014 we bid farewell to Judi Anderson, who resigned from the Board after 19 years of dedicated service. Her involvement with RAV included her role as Chair of the HR Committee, Chair of the Strategy Committee and, importantly, seven years as Board President. Judi contributed to the organisation in a wide range of areas, particularly organisational development, change management and HR. On behalf

of the Board I thank Judi for her significant and committed service to RAV over almost two decades.

We welcomed Janine Bush and Rosemary Kelada to the RAV Board in May 2015. Janine joins us with a wealth of experience in both the public sector, and health and community sector in areas of workforce development, health and violence prevention. Rosemary Kelada has a strong background in working with cultural diversity in our sector, in addition to expertise in business, accounting and strategic management of not-for-profit organisations.

At the end of my first year as Board President, I would like to thank my other Board colleagues for their support. In particular I would like to acknowledge Peter Gome for accepting the role of Board Vice-President, in addition to his role as Chair of the Audit Committee and member of the Governance Committee.

In the face of funding constraints, RAV has delivered a positive financial result while maintaining high quality, effective services for clients. My thanks go to CEO, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, his senior management team and all RAV staff for their continuing commitment to the organisation and the professional work that they do.

**PROFESSOR LYN LITTLEFIELD**  
President

In 2014/15 our services helped to relieve the suffering, distress and helplessness of vulnerable and disadvantaged people so as to enhance their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Total income

**\$19,225,326**

Children seen

**2,630**

Clients seen

**19,596**



## CEO's review

Despite funding challenges, 2014/15 was a successful year for RAV with a number of key achievements. Over 19,500 clients accessed services at one of our 12 centres, or through telephone counselling, community programs and outreach locations this year.



The number of clients we saw increased by almost nine per cent on the previous financial year. This was the result of a suite of newly established services and the way the organisation absorbed funding cuts while minimising the impact on service delivery.

We were successful in tendering for \$750,000 of new services, with our *early matters* program being developed to promote and strengthen healthy family relationships in western Melbourne and Ballarat through early intervention child and parenting funding. We also established *Compass Support Services*, a free information, referral and support service for people affected by forced adoption.

Following significant preparation, RAV applied for and was granted classification as a public benevolent institution (PBI). This recognition will assist us in retaining our high quality, professional staff and continue relieving the suffering, distress and helplessness of vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Part of our contract requirements saw us undergo an audit by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), State Government funders of our family violence services. In addition to meeting the DHHS standards, we were assessed and consequently achieved ISO Quality Management Standards accreditation, which recognises the organisation's commitment to quality service provision and continuous improvement. This important achievement enables us to continue to provide essential family violence services and positions us well for future service opportunities.

Our Board President, Professor Lyn Littlefield, has already announced the development of our *Strategy Plan* for the next four years. This provides our staff, clients and the sector with a clear outline of the direction in which RAV is heading in the next four years. Along with child and family services, mental health and seniors relationship services, a key focus of our *Strategy Plan* is family violence prevention, support and recovery services.

As you would be aware, there has been an increasing focus on family violence by the media, community and the sector. With over 65 years' experience supporting Victorians, RAV has been acutely aware of the impact and prevalence of family violence in our community for many years. While highly concerning, the frequency that family violence is being reported comes as no surprise to our organisation. It is pleasing, however, that the issue is now receiving the attention it deserves. This has intensified the demand for services, making family violence programs such as ours even more vital.

Therefore, we welcomed the decision to reinstate our federal SFVS funding for a further two years, having been previously notified that it was to be discontinued.

Our organisation continued to advocate for greater community understanding and awareness of family violence, and supported the sector in its endeavour to provide more integrated, targeted and effective prevention, support and recovery services.

We strengthened and further developed our *I like, like you* healthy relationships program for schools, an important part of our family violence prevention work.

The program has been well received by both students and school staff, and is now provided at both primary and secondary schools.

For the second consecutive year, a lack of indexation on our funding from the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) effectively resulted in a three per cent funding cut. Restructures within several Central Office departments were undertaken while operational line management changes commenced last year continued.

Importantly, despite these constraints, RAV was able to maintain critical frontline services and develop new programs to support individuals, couples, families and communities in Victoria. Should the AGD, continue its proposed indexation freeze for a third successive year however, it will not be possible to maintain the levels of service delivery that have been provided throughout 2014/15. At a time when demand and need for our services continues to escalate, this is a significant concern.

Finally, I would like to recognise the valued contributions of RAV's staff who are committed to the organisation and to providing high quality services to their clients. With this dedicated workforce and support from the senior management team, Professor Littlefield and the Board, I am confident that RAV will continue to be a valued provider of effective specialist family and relationship services in Victoria.

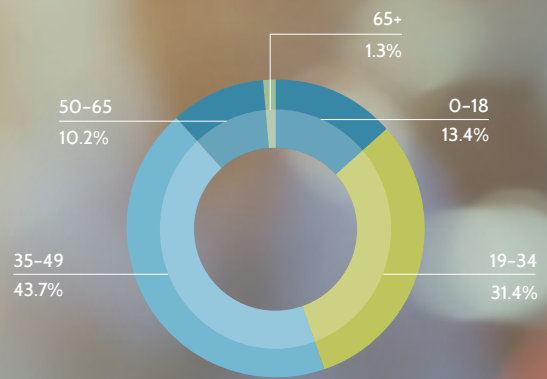
**DR ANDREW BICKERDIKE**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our clients

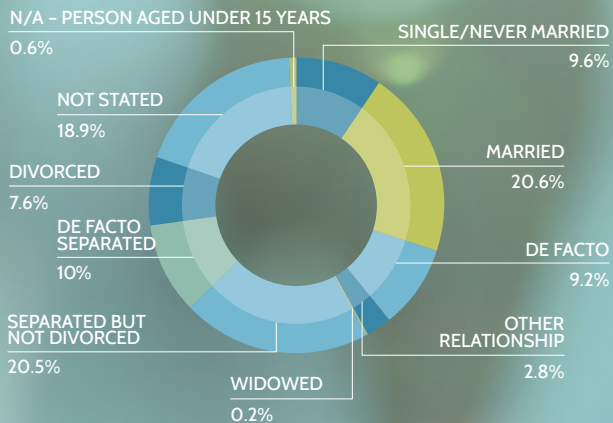
CLIENTS BY GENDER



CLIENTS BY AGE

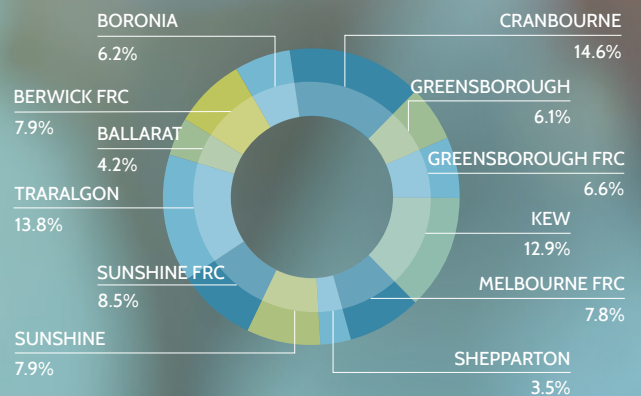


CLIENTS BY MARITAL STATUS



CLIENTS BY CENTRE\*

\* includes group and community development work



## Connecting with

# Victorians – strengthening our services

**In 2014/15, 19,596 clients accessed services at one of our 12 centres, or through telephone counselling, community programs and outreach locations.**

We provided high quality and comprehensive counselling, FDR, relationship education and groups, which focused on relieving the suffering, distress and helplessness experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians.

Services were underpinned by RAV's core belief that healthy and safe relationships are fundamental to the health and wellbeing of couples, individuals, families, organisations and communities.

### ISSUES THAT CLIENTS MOST COMMONLY PRESENTED WITH INCLUDED:

FAMILY VIOLENCE

PARENTING

DEALING WITH RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

FAMILY SEPARATION

CONFLICT

GRIEF/LOSS

TRAUMA

DISTRESS

### SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

There was continued strong demand for counselling services. Our counsellors adopted a whole of family approach, working across the life cycle. In addition to supporting couple relationships, we provided counselling for men, women, children and families. Telephone counselling provided support for Victorians unable to attend one of our centres due to geographical, physical or personal reasons.

Clients most commonly sought help for issues relating to family violence, parenting, dealing with relationship difficulties, family separation, conflict, grief and loss, trauma and distress.

The number of counselling sessions attended varied, with counsellors delivering multiple sessions to many clients, and also offering single goal-oriented counselling consultations.

### RESOLVING DISPUTES

We worked with couples and families experiencing relationship breakdown, separation or divorce through our FDR services and information sessions.

More than 2,300 clients accessed FDR, a service to help separating couples resolve their family law disputes. Where appropriate, we used child-inclusive and enhanced child-focused FDR to ensure that the experiences, thoughts and feelings of children involved in conflicts were considered. An additional 5,017 clients accessed services through our Family Relationship Centres (FRCs), including our FDR service.

*Parenting After Separation*, a one-day seminar run by our Berwick and Melbourne FRCs, informed separated parents about the impact of separation on children and how to help them adjust.

The two centres also offered *Building Connections*, an educational seminar that encouraged parents to be aware of the impact of entrenched parental conflict and to support their children to maintain relationships with both parents.

In partnership with local legal services, Berwick FRC provided a series of free seminars on common legal issues including *Self-Representation in Court*; *Understanding Consent Orders*; *Grandparents – Know Your Family Law*; and *Children, Adolescents and the Court Process*.



5,903

counselling clients

5,017

FRC clients

2,367

FDR clients

The Melbourne FRC hosted a monthly *Family Law Property Information Session*, presented by a solicitor from a specialist family law firm. This session advised and informed clients of their options in resolving property settlements.

The Sunshine FRC operated a booth at local community centres to provide information on its FDR services.

As a member of the Shepparton Bendigo Family Law Pathways Network, we attended a *Children in the Midst of Family Breakdown* conference, organised by the network for the local community. We took part in a panel discussion during the conference, that explored the impact of family breakdown, and the intersection with the family law and other relevant services.

Throughout the year, Melbourne FRC continued its program of hosting international family law visitors.

Delegations included:

- judges and staff from the Supreme Court of Japan
- judges, magistrates and community organisations from Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands as part of the Pacific International Women's Access to Justice in Family Law group.

## PROVIDING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUPS

We offered relationship education programs and groups to help couples connect with others and learn new skills.

- *Prepare Pre-Marriage and Pre-Commitment Programs* are for couples intending to marry or commit to focus on the future and plan their lives together.
- *Relationship Rescue* offers help for couples experiencing difficulties to improve their communication, manage conflict and collaborate to make their relationship last.
- *Understanding Ourselves: Managing Relationships* is a six-week education group on self-awareness of relationship patterns, family influences, personality styles and dealing with conflict.
- *Making Relationships Work* is a free information session based on the latest research on what makes relationships succeed and fail.

*Good Connecting Online* remained popular, with almost 400 registrations during the year. This free course helps couples to keep their relationships happy and stable, with information, self-assessment quizzes and practical suggestions provided through eight topics.

We continued our successful association with YMCA Victoria's *DadsLink*, in partnership with Life Is... Foundation. *DadsLink* is a hands-on program that strengthens relationships between fathers and their children through activities

including a community Father's Day barbecue, and adventure camps for dads and kids. The program also held two writing workshops for fathers, providing an opportunity for them to share their experiences of fatherhood to support others.

In partnership with CatholicCare Sandhurst, we supported grandparents who either have care of, or no contact with, their grandchildren through the *Shepparton Grandparents Group*.

The Kew Centre ran *Positive Parenting and Family Wellness*, a program focusing on developing good communication, effective ways of dealing with children and enhancing family wellbeing.

Stepfamilies in south-east Melbourne attended Berwick FRC's *Stepfamily Survival Strategies Workshop*, which helped stepparents to manage expectations and navigate how and when to become involved.

The Kew, Greensborough and Sunshine centres offered post-separation courses and groups with specific groups for men and parents such as *Men Finding Their Way*, *Breakthrough* and *Parenting After Separation*. Topics included managing change, reducing conflict and helping children adjust to separation.

We also provided our counselling and FDR services, as well as *Breakthrough* to hearing-impaired clients, supported by Auslan interpreters.

## Connecting with

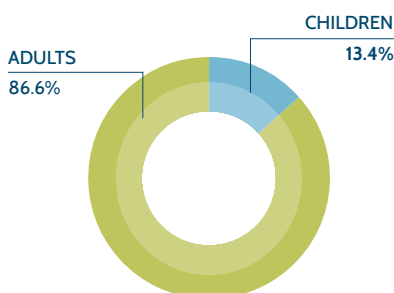
# Children and young people

As part of our strategy to strengthen our support for children and young people, RAV offered a diverse range of services to meet the needs of this group and their families.

Focusing on a whole of family approach, we provided counselling for individuals, couples and parents, as well as support for relationships between parents and their children at different life stages.

Within our FDR services, our child-inclusive and enhanced child-focused FDR allowed children to talk to a trained child consultant about how they were managing and what was important to them.

### RAV CLIENTS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE



### I LIKE, LIKE YOU

We delivered *I like, like you: A healthy intimate relationships program for schools* to more than 1600 students from years 7 to 10, across 20 schools and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) programs.

This preventative initiative promotes the connection between healthy intimate relationships and emotional health and wellbeing. With a strong emphasis on violence prevention and mental health promotion, it concentrates on knowledge, skills, attitudes and integration of program information.

*I like, like you* has been well received by both students and staff, with positive feedback from participating schools.

One of the program's key strengths is its ability to be adapted to different age groups, developmental stages and communities. As such, we developed *I like, like you UP*, a circus-themed adaptation for upper-primary school students using a mixture of circus activities, games and experiential exercises.

*I like, like you* was also tailored for students with a mild intellectual disability, young people from Indigenous backgrounds, and students who live in out-of-home care.

### EARLY MATTERS

We introduced our *early matters* program, which seeks to promote and strengthen healthy relationships, and to prevent families from entering a stress pathway at critical transition points. The program works with families in four regions across western Melbourne and Ballarat:

- after the birth of a new baby – post-natal/post-partum relationships;
- with kindergarten children preparing to start school; and
- with children in middle to late primary school and transitioning to high school.

*early matters* involves educative groups for children and parents, mainly delivered in community health centres, kindergartens and primary schools. Families requiring extra support are referred to our home visiting service that helps them to assess needs, identify areas for change and use their strengths to restore or repair their relationships.

We extended the model and activities of *early matters* to the Shepparton and Cranbourne centres, with plans to implement the program in other centres in the future.

**early matters**

2,630

clients aged 18 years and under

1,633

I like, like you students

“Close and intimate relationships influence us throughout life and play a crucial role in growth and development.”

## GOOD SHIPS

RAV established *Good Ships*, an initiative to help children address the difficulties they commonly face in the context of important relationships, through a series of books and resources. Under the *Good Ships* banner, we published the first book, *Cassie the upside down koala*, written by Amaryll Perlesz and illustrated by RAV practitioner Mina Shafer.

As a children's picturebook, *Cassie* can be read by children and parents purely for enjoyment. The book's focus on themes of difference and belonging also enables parents, teachers, therapists and other professionals to use *Cassie* as an educational tool. The book can help to promote acceptance of difference and encourage children to talk about and reflect on their own experiences.

## MY PARENTS 'N' ME

The Greensborough and Sunshine FRCs ran *My Parents 'n' Me*, a four-week program supporting children after family separation.

The program helped children build resilience, develop coping strategies, and share their experiences with others in similar situations. Two separate groups were run for children aged 6 to 10 years and 10 to 12 respectively.

## SEASONS™

*Seasons™*, a loss and grief program developed by *CatholicCare*, was provided by our Traralgon and Sunshine centres.

The program supports children and young people experiencing grief and loss resulting from separation, divorce, death or knowing someone with a life-threatening illness.

*Seasons™* is unique in that children and young people aged 5 to 18 years can share their story, value memories and support each other through a peer support model.

## EARLY LEARNING HUBS

Through *Communities for Children* funding, the Shepparton Centre partnered with two early childhood services to provide a suite of support services and interventions for vulnerable children and their families.

A RAV family support officer worked within the services to enhance the capacity of centres, parents and carers to support children transitioning to kindergarten and primary school.

The support aimed to meet priority needs, address health and wellbeing issues and support language and literacy development. Activities included a weekly evening meals program, health day, access to a *Foodshare* program and the strengthening of referral pathways.

## KIDS UNDER CONSTRUCTION; DADS AT WORK

We began development and assessment of *Kids under construction; dads at work*, a seven-week group program for fathers and father figures of children five years of age and under. This early intervention program includes topics such as how fathering has changed, parenting goals, problem solving and understanding how children think.

## CONNECTEDSPACE

In October 2014, RAV launched *connectEDspace*, a new website dedicated to providing young people with information they need to deal with the things they go through each day.

*connectEDspace* offers help for difficult events and tough issues such as bullying, violence, conflict, grief and loss, stress and mental health. It also includes tips on how young people can look after themselves in relation to friends and family, emotions and healthy minds, identity, school, and alcohol and drugs.

As well as information, tip sheets and useful links, the interactive site includes quizzes, a connect-up game and the opportunity for young people to ask us a question or share their story.

## CONNECTEDSPACE

The website can be accessed at [www.connectedspace.com.au](http://www.connectedspace.com.au)



## Connecting through

# Mental health support services

**RAV consolidated and extended mental health support services during the year, with the continuation of existing programs and the establishment of new ones through additional funding.**

### I-CONNECT

*i-Connect*, a Family Mental Health Support Service, continued to support children and young people aged 18 years and under in East Gippsland who are at risk or affected by mental illness. Incorporating case management, referral and outreach services, the program worked holistically with children, young people, families, schools and the community.

Through *i-Connect*, RAV has established strong relationships with the local Aboriginal community and Indigenous services, with 25 per cent of clients identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

A range of programs and services were offered as part of *i-Connect*, including:

- **SMILES** - a strengths-based program for children focusing on life skills, run in partnership with Latrobe Community Health Service;
- **Play 2 Learn** - a supported playgroup co-run by RAV and Good Beginnings. This group aims to strengthen family attachment and offer a safe, welcoming environment to families at risk of isolation;

- a school program providing activities to strengthen students' self-esteem and connections to school;
- an equine therapy program for children who have experienced trauma; and
- support and case management services for families that are victims of crime.

### HEADSPACE CENTRES

As a consortium partner, RAV continued to work collaboratively with the headspace centre in Hawthorn. headspace, the national youth mental health foundation, supports young people aged 12 to 25 years with problems such as depression, anxiety, bullying, and alcohol and drug issues.

RAV participated in the centre's Management Committee, and the Quality and Risk Sub-Committee, taking an active role in monitoring and strengthening risk processes, quality standards and outcomes. RAV also delivered direct services including counselling, trauma therapy and parenting support to headspace client families.

We were also pleased to announce our involvement with a new headspace centre to open in Greensborough in early 2016. As a consortium partner, RAV will provide therapeutic counselling services to headspace clients and their families from northern Melbourne.

### RECLAIM SUPPORT SERVICES

For the second year, survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, or those affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, accessed our *Reclaim Support Services*.

*Reclaim* offers free counselling, information, advice and support to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, as well as their families and employees of institutions or organisations where abuse took place. Demand for services doubled this financial year, with a 100 per cent increase in the rate of referrals.

RAV has been active in all aspects of Royal Commission support service delivery. With a strong emphasis on recovery while recognising the impact of trauma, *Reclaim* provides therapeutic support to individuals and communities across eight centres in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

We participated in public forums, including the Royal Commission Victorian Aboriginal Forum, and maintained a presence at the Royal Commission public hearings in Melbourne and Ballarat.

Through *Reclaim* RAV consolidated its strong relationships with Aboriginal services. We chaired the Victorian and Tasmanian Royal Commission Support Services stakeholder group, which has assisted in the effective implementation and coordination of Royal Commission support services.

507

*i-Connect clients*

1,458

*hours of Reclaim Support Services*

We also continued to develop our national networks through engagement with the Royal Commission, funders and other service providers.

## ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUPS

The Traralgon Centre co-facilitated support groups for those in Gippsland affected by adoption. Three groups were offered:

- for adopted persons;
- for adopted persons and mothers; and
- for mothers, facilitated by ARMS (Victoria) with RAV's assistance.

VANISH ran specialised training for RAV facilitators and counsellors supporting these groups and clients.

## COMPASS SUPPORT SERVICES

RAV extended adoption services in February 2015 through the establishment of *Compass Support Services*, providing support to people affected by forced adoption in Victoria. Funded by the Australian Government, this service complements and enhances existing services to improve access to peer support, professional counselling, and records and family tracing.

*Compass Support Services* uses a trauma-informed and recovery-oriented approach to focus on the best outcomes for clients. It offers support to mothers, fathers, adopted persons, partners and extended family members affected by forced adoption using a therapeutic case management model. This includes providing information, referral and support via a dedicated 1800 21 03 13 telephone number.

RAV worked actively to develop relationships with key stakeholders as part of the program. *Compass* representatives attended the National Archives in Canberra to coincide with the second anniversary of the national apology by former prime minister, Julia Gillard, on behalf of the Australian Government, to people affected by forced adoption policies. RAV participated in meetings with the Forced Adoption Implementation Working Group and funders, viewed the *Without Consent: Australia's past adoption practices* exhibition, and attended a public forum on the issue of forced adoption.

**COMPASS**  
*Support Services*

## EXTREME CLIMATIC EVENTS PROGRAM

The Traralgon Centre secured funding from Medicare Local for an *Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS)* program to provide free counselling and support

services to Gippsland residents affected by an extreme climatic event such as a bushfire, flood or drought.

The centre offered free individual, couple or family counselling and group work in East Gippsland, Yarram, Morwell and Traralgon, with a home-visiting program and services provided via telephone and video facilities. Residents were given the opportunity to talk about past extreme climatic events, past trauma that might have been triggered, or concerns about future events such as upcoming bushfire seasons.

As an extension of the outreach program, the centre introduced a *Cuppa and a chat* service, through which a counsellor and community liaison officer met with individuals, or families, in their homes to informally discuss any issues or concerns.

Other initiatives included:

- free *Taking care of ourselves and our community* seminars to help residents understand the impact of, and how to manage events like the Hazelwood Mine fire;
- a workshop providing information and resources on resilience, communication and conflict resolution to adults affected by extreme climatic events;
- support for the beyondblue Road Show in Gippsland; and
- attendance at the enquiry and workshops relating to the Hazelwood Mine fire.

# Family violence prevention, support and recovery services

**Family violence is one of the most frequently encountered, complex issues for clients attending our services. While clients may not immediately disclose the presence of family violence, independent research indicates that 80 per cent of our FDR clients have experienced some form of family violence and abuse.**

RAV remained a key provider of family violence prevention, support and recovery services through counselling, dispute resolution, education services, partner contact work and support programs. During the year, we took part in community engagement initiatives and strengthened our commitment to increase awareness of family violence.

We made a written submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria), which will inquire into and provide practice recommendations on how Victoria's response to family violence could be improved. We also met with Royal Commission representatives in our capacity as a provider of SFVS and an organisation that intersects with the Family Court.

Through our Shepparton Centre we participated in a Victoria Police Family Violence Panel, which provided Victoria Police with information about services available for perpetrators of family violence, and those affected by it, following an incident requiring police intervention.

As a member of the Goulburn Valley Family Violence Prevention Network, RAV supported a *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Responding to Family Violence in Multicultural Communities* practice forum on relevant legislation and key support services.

The Melbourne FRC was involved in workshops in the *360 Turn Around Project*, a family violence prevention initiative in Flemington. The workshops explored what a respectful relationship is and how to share this knowledge with others through creative activities such as doll making, applique and the spoken word.

The Berwick FRC ran a family violence information session at the AMES Men's Retreat, which was a weekend event for refugees and asylum seekers from various cultural backgrounds. The session defined family violence and its legal implications, and explained Protection Orders. Participants were able to discuss the topic, ask questions and clarify expectations in Australian society.

In partnership with local legal agencies, the centre also offered a series of free information sessions relating to family violence and safety.

The information sessions included:

- *The Safety of Children and the Family Law System*,
- *Applying for Intervention Orders and Legal Aid for Family Law Cases*,
- *Men and Intervention Orders*.

The Traralgon Centre ran *Purple Hearts*, a six-week family violence prevention program with monthly follow-up groups, for women with an intellectual disability.

We again supported White Ribbon Day, a nation-wide campaign to stop violence against women, with centre staff attending the annual Walk against Family Violence.

## BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

RAV offered Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs) at our Boronia, Cranbourne, Kew, Shepparton and Sunshine centres for men wanting to end the use of violence and other problem behaviours in their relationships.

Our MBCPs consider the use of all types of family violence: physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, financial, social and spiritual. They give men the opportunity to stop using violence and take responsibility for their actions, learn to express their thoughts and feelings respectfully, and share their experiences with other men.



“In relationships we need to show respect and listen to each other.”

Participant of 360 Turn Around Project.

2,594

hours of SFVS

1,271

SFVS clients\*

\* in addition to counselling and other services

Our *Men Taking on Responsibility (MenTOR)* program continued, enabling men who have completed an MBCP to continue to receive support and change their behaviour. Our Boronia Centre ran *Keeping the Change Alive* to help men maintain their changed behaviour following completion of an MBCP.

Recognising the unique language and cultural barriers that might prevent Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) men from attending MBCPs, we ran a program for Vietnamese men in Sunshine.

This program, which includes sessions on pre-migration experiences, provides culturally specific opportunities for men to make changes in their behaviour towards partners and children.

Following the success and learnings of the Vietnamese MBCP, we began developing a group for Arabic men in northern Melbourne as part of a CALD reference group involving organisations.

The Kew Centre ran *Women Managing Anger*, a course to help women understand their emotions and manage anger in healthy and appropriate ways.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

In addition to the *I like, like you* family violence prevention programs for children and young people, RAV offered a range of support groups to women who have experienced family violence.

Over eight weeks, our *Opening the Doors* group gave women the opportunity to express themselves, learn about family violence and hear from others through the creation of art.

The Kew Centre ran an eight-week educative, therapeutic and supportive group called *Women making choices*, which encompassed topics such as understanding family relationships, safety issues, self-care and parenting.

*Women standing together* supported women in abusive relationships who were dealing with low self-esteem, depression, anger or pessimism about the future. The group focused on assertiveness, the effects of abuse, communication, relationship skills and links between the past and the present.

We again offered *Merindie - Beautiful women* at the Shepparton Centre. This 10-week group supported women hurt by family violence who wanted to be free of abuse.

Over two days, the Boronia Centre ran *Rediscovering parenting piece by piece*, which provided women affected by family violence with parenting skills support.

## PRESENTATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

RAV provided presentations on identifying and responding to family violence to various groups, such as school staff members who support student wellbeing.

As part of our Professional Development Workshops Series, we designed training for those who work with clients affected by family violence.

*Asking the hard questions: Creating a safe place to respond to family violence* provided participants with family violence-related knowledge and skills, and the opportunity to practise and enhance their skills in discussing family violence with clients.



Image: A doll created as part of the 360 Turn Around Project workshops.

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

**RAV continued to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through engagement, participation and community support.**

RAV was pleased to have Andrew Jackomos, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Victoria), as the special guest speaker at our 66th Annual General Meeting.

We maintained our involvement with several Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups, where we contributed to the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria) in relation to specific issues that have an impact on Aboriginal people.

Through the Greensborough Centre and Greensborough FRC, we remained involved with the Northern and Whittlesea Local Indigenous Networks (LIN), and attended the state-wide LIN organised by the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. We also participated as a member of the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group and attended a variety of events in the area including a reconciliation dinner and a City of Whittlesea event to mark Sorry Day.

Our staff and centres recognised NAIDOC Week through their participation in activities and events in Ballarat, Dandenong and Sunshine. NAIDOC Week is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievement. Held in the first week of July, it recognises the contributions of Indigenous Australians. RAV's Central Office staff joined in *Wayapa*, an Aboriginal mediation and spiritual connection practice based on a deep connection to country, developed and provided by Jamie Thomas. In addition, RAV representatives attended the NAIDOC March, NAIDOC State Ball and the Eastern Metro Region Annual NAIDOC Ball.

RAV joined in The Long Walk celebrations, commemorating AFL player Michael Long's historic walk from Melbourne to Canberra. We attended The Long Walk Women's Lunch and ran a booth at Federation Square, providing organisational information and promotional items to many visitors.

Our Greensborough FRC supported the annual Koori Community Christmas Dinner in northern Melbourne, providing a popular photo booth, badge-making stall and African drumming activity. This community-based event engaged local Aboriginal families with the aim of increasing community involvement in local services.

We participated in other community events, including:

- the Koori Connect Service Expo and Activity Day in Dandenong,
- a Gippsland Women's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Day.

RAV facilitated a cross-cultural family camp in Licola, Gippsland, with 40 local community members from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, South Sudanese and other cultural backgrounds. The event aimed to support cross-cultural understandings between participants through a range of interactive workshops, cultural activities and celebrations.

## 442

Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander clients

## PROGRAMS FOR MEN

Three *Brutha's Day Out* programs were run this year in partnership with local Aboriginal-controlled organisations. The events in Gippsland, Ballarat and Melbourne's west were well attended and supported, providing a unique way to foster and strengthen Aboriginal men's networks.

We began developing *Marrin-ing Koolin-boolook*, a DVD program for men based on themes in the successful *Renovate Your Relationship* booklet produced by Relationships Australia (RA) and MensLine Australia. Funded by DHHS, through its Indigenous Family Violence Strategy, the program name translates as 'Improve Many Men' in Woi Wurrung language. It will feature well-respected Aboriginal men and elders discussing couples' relationship issues, such as trust and communication.

One-day sessions for Aboriginal men on community-based orders were provided at Wulgungu Ngalum, focusing on respectful relationships.

RAV supported dads and kids' activity groups aimed at strengthening relationships between Aboriginal fathers and their children through *Communities for Children* funding. Groups were provided by our Sunshine Centre in conjunction with the Aboriginal Centre for Males and by our Cranbourne Centre in south-east Melbourne in partnership with VACCA.

We auspiced Wayapa Wuurk to deliver the *Wyapa* program to young Aboriginal men in western Melbourne who were

disengaged from school or who had come, or were likely to come, to the attention of the justice system. The program involved participation in a camp and cultural learning activities.

## PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

RAV again supported *Sisters Day Out* (SDO), run in Horsham, through the provision of information and pamper packs. SDO aims to reduce family violence by engaging with Koori women to strengthen their resilience and self-esteem, raise awareness of family violence and reduce social isolation. RAV is proud to be a sponsor of the upcoming 100th SDO.

With funding from Nilimjak Kangoo (Eastern Region) Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group, we renewed our commitment to *Spirit Journey*, a healing program for Aboriginal women

affected by family violence. The program was run in partnership with Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association, Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and Eastern Domestic Violence Service. An integral part of this year's *Spirit Journey* was a camp where the women participated in activities and made individual possum skin cloaks.

The Traralgon Centre developed and provided *KYMS*, a six-week communication and conflict management program for young Kurnai mothers completing VCAL. The centre also provided counselling to Indigenous children in emergency housing.





## Diverse communities

**RAV continued to build capacity to respond effectively to the relationship support needs of CALD communities through a range of events and initiatives, in addition to existing programs and services.**

As part of Harmony Day celebrations we participated in a *Communities Sharing Ideas* day, bringing together leaders from community groups to learn how to best support their communities and address challenges. Leaders and representatives from Afghani, Polish, Somali, Ugandan, Congolese, Oromo, Sierra Leonean, Liberian, Harari, South Sudanese, Hazara, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese and Australian communities attended.

The Greensborough FRC joined in two successful community barbecues and a soccer game in West Heidelberg, in partnership with the Darussalam Society and Somali Women's Group. The centre was able to strengthen its relationship with the Somali community and provide information on our services.

We ran healthy relationships presentations for diverse audiences with the support of local community organisations and groups. Attendees included Indian elders, mothers and daughters from the Burmese community and Afghani women.

RAV launched *One suburb, one thousand and one stories*, a DVD providing insight into the world of migrant and refugee families who live in the Brimbank area. Produced through collaborative support and partnerships with Djerwarrh Community Education Services, VICSEG New Futures and Brimbank City Council, the DVD captures the thoughts and memories of storytellers to help preserve their culture for the next generation. Available to purchase from the Sunshine FRC, the DVD enables the community to learn about the culture in their suburb.



Image: DVD cover of *One suburb, one thousand and one stories*.

1,718

CALD clients

119

countries of birth as identified by clients

74

languages spoken at home as identified by clients

"I learnt that there are other mums like me facing the same challenges communicating with their teens. I learned to make time for my daughter and communicate more and to be patient."

Participant of *African Families in Action* program.

## REFUGEE WEEK ACTIVITIES

The Melbourne FRC was involved in the Yarra Settlement Forum, a local interagency network of settlement providers. As part of Refugee Week, this forum coordinated a well-attended Q&A panel that enabled participants to hear stories and ask questions of leading refugee advocates.

Another Refugee Week initiative was the *Sharing Hope Postcard Exhibition*, a collaborative project between RAV, African Communities Foundation Australia (ACFA) and the City of Greater Dandenong. The exhibition at the City of Dandenong Library displayed 240 postcards from local community members who had written or drawn messages of hope, personal experiences, or inspiring stories that reflected what it means to be a refugee.

## MOST COMMON COUNTRIES OF BIRTH AS IDENTIFIED BY CLIENTS

AUSTRALIA	CHINA
NEW ZEALAND	VIETNAM
INDIA	SRI LANKA
ENGLAND	PHILIPPINES
UNITED STATES	BURMA (MYANMAR)

## SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Mums and teenagers from the Eritrean community participated in two workshops in Flemington offered by the Melbourne FRC. The workshops aimed to bring together parents and young people through activities, discussions and role plays, aimed at improving understanding, encouraging communication and strengthening family relationships.

The centre also facilitated *Tuning into Kids*, an evidence-based six-week parenting program centred on the emotional connection between parents and children. Parents from the Moonee Valley Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), run by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, attended. They came from diverse cultural backgrounds including Pakistani, Somali and Eritrean communities.

## MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME AS IDENTIFIED BY CLIENTS

ENGLISH	DARI
VIETNAMESE	SPANISH
BURMESE	PUNJABI
ARABIC	SERBIAN
MANDARIN	PERSIAN

## WORKING WITH AFRICAN FAMILIES

In another community initiative, the Melbourne FRC co-facilitated an early intervention group for six- to eight-year-old African children in Richmond with funding from the City of Yarra. Delivered as part of a collaborative *African Families in Action* project with Mission Australia, New Hope Foundation and Victoria Police, the program focused on the children's social, emotional and behavioural development. Through a range of games, physical activities and story books, the group supported children to improve their ability to understand and express their feelings and get along with others. The program was well received by participants, helped to strengthen our relationships with other agencies and schools, and developed a 'whole of community' approach to social and emotional learning in Richmond.

We renewed our commitment to support and co-facilitate an *African Dads and Kids Program* camp with CatholicCare. Through a combination of group discussions and interactive activities, the camp explores issues such as the difference between parenting in Africa and Australia, respecting traditional cultures and a new way of life, and working as a team to meet new challenges.

Women from a range of African backgrounds attended a series of information sessions on children's development and parenting, provided by the Melbourne FRC and the Ecumenical Migration Centre. The workshops included parenting strategies, and how to support a child's development across difference stages through information sharing, interactive activities and discussions.



# Community engagement

As one of Victoria's leading providers of specialist family and relationship services, RAV recognises the importance of engaging with the community.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During the year, we continued to strengthen our relationships with other service providers and agencies, local government, community groups and individuals all with the aim of building community capacity.

In addition, we provided high quality advice and service information to the community on key issues such as healthy relationships, family violence prevention and support, and health and wellbeing through our websites, mainstream media, and social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter.

RAV actively participated in a range of community events in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The Sunshine FRC and Brimbank Youth Services joined to hold a free community barbecue to thank the Sunshine community for their support. Feedback was positive, with visitors appreciating the barbecue and the information provided on local services available to young people.

RAV was invited to present a workshop to parents from the Glen Eira area on the effect of separation on teenagers and young adults. The Melbourne FRC facilitated the interactive *Supporting young people through family separation* session, providing key information on FDR, reducing parental conflict, how to identify stress in teenagers and adult children, and communication strategies.

Following our successful involvement in 2014, RAV held a stall at the carnival as part of *Midsumma Festival*, Melbourne's annual queer celebration. As well as providing information on our services, we gave away a range of promotional items including rainbow pens and crayons, and offered people the opportunity to participate in our family photo booth. The Sunshine FRC represented RAV at the festival's *Light Up Sunshine*, a family-friendly movies in the park twilight event featuring a range of free activities.

RAV was again pleased to be involved with the annual *Melbourne Queer Film Festival*, the oldest queer film festival in Australia. We sponsored *Limited Partnership*, a documentary sharing the moving story of Australian Tony Sullivan and his husband, Filipino-American Richard Adams, and their ground-breaking crusade to be together.

We supported the *OUTintheOPEN* festival, a celebration of community diversity designed to strengthen the inclusivity of Greater Shepparton and address inequalities faced by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTIQ) community. The Shepparton Centre held a stall on *Carnival Day*,

Image: Canvases created by visitors to RAV's stall at the annual *ChillOut Festival* in Daylesford.





# 12,000

Victorians participated in *Neighbour Day*

# 122

registered Victorian  
*Neighbour Day* events

“I was struck by the kindness of my neighbours and the miracles that can be achieved when neighbours work together.”

Kerrilyn, Viewbank

where members of the community shared their most important aspects of healthy relationships.

For the third consecutive year, we supported Daylesford's annual *ChillOut Festival*, a celebration of the LGBTIQ community in regional Victoria. More than 2,000 people visited the festival, and visitors to our stall were invited to place painted handprints on canvases and describe in one word what the word 'relationship' meant to them.

These four festivals enabled us to promote our support for the LGBTIQ community, and the inclusiveness of our services for all types of relationships and family structures.

The Kew Centre participated in three soccer clinics, sponsored by Melbourne Heart Football Club. The clinics helped to engage international students from Swinburne University's Hawthorn and Prahran campuses, and to inform them of support services available to them.

In partnership with the Springvale Community Aid & Advice Bureau, our Cranbourne Centre ran a *Strengthening Family Relationships Group* for new migrants from the Burmese community, particularly those arriving from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds. The program explored the laws, cultures and systems new to the participants, and the changing role of family dynamics.

As part of National Families Week, the Shepparton Centre participated in a family fete in conjunction with Family First Alliance and other local services. The centre ran a craft activity where children and families decorated masks, with families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds participating.

The Traralgon Centre co-ordinated the *Pit Stop Men's Health Checks at Farm World*, one of Australia's largest agricultural shows. *Pit Stop* takes a light-hearted approach to men's health by encouraging them to look after their health in the same way as they look after their cars. More than 200 men visited the stations including Shock Absorbers (coping, stress and anxiety), Oil Pressure (blood pressure checks), Fuel Additives (alcohol consumption) and Head Lights (eye health).

Almost 200 women and a few men attended *The Comedy Hour* in Traralgon, an event to bring women together in a safe environment through comedy. Organised by the Gippsland Women's Forum, of which RAV is a partner, the inclusive event featured five national and international female comedians and a special performance by Auslan interpreters.

Local Gippsland residents participated in RAV's *Family Fishing Day* in Marlo with support from local businesses and groups. The day provided mums, dads, grandparents, carers, aunts, uncles and children with the opportunity to spend quality time together.

## NEIGHBOUR DAY

In its second year as custodian, RA supported *Neighbour Day*, Australia's annual celebration of community on Sunday 29 March 2015.

*Neighbour Day* was founded in Melbourne in 2003 after the remains of an elderly woman, forgotten by her community, were found inside her suburban home two years after her death. The widespread local and national media interest that followed prompted the launch of *Neighbour Day*; the perfect day to say thanks for being a great neighbour, connect with new neighbours and feel part of your community.

*Neighbour Day* aims to bring together people, resources and organisations to grow stronger, well-connected communities. While it is officially held on the last Sunday of March every year, the philosophy of *Neighbour Day* can be celebrated all year round.

This year an estimated 12,000 Victorians participated in 122 events registered on the *Neighbour Day* website including breakfasts, morning teas, lunches, barbecues, street parties, picnics and local festivals. RAV celebrated *Neighbour Day* by participating in a barbecue in Sunshine run by Brimbank City Council, hosting a morning tea and attending the *Mernda Community Fair* attended by community members, other service providers and local businesses.

# Training and workplace services

In 2014/15, we developed new training opportunities and consolidated existing courses in couples counselling and FDR. We supported organisations and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (FCC) through our AccessResolve services.

## ACCREDITED TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Building on our seminar series from the previous year, we introduced a series of professional development workshops designed for those working in the social services, health and education sectors. Successful workshops included *Dealing with difficult adult behaviours*, *How to conduct therapeutic groups* and *Depression – towards a holistic understanding*. We customised and delivered *The accidental counsellor* workshop for a group of state school assistant principals from eastern Melbourne.

We continued to offer the Specialist Course in Couple Therapy/Master of Social Science (Couple Counselling), with the latter qualification delivered in partnership with Swinburne University. We remained focused on ensuring that course materials were current and consistent with best practice.

Enrolments in our Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution were again strong. The Graduate Diploma provides individuals with a background in law, psychology, social work or dispute resolution with qualifications to progress a career in the FDR field. We introduced an online learning management system, giving students greater accessibility and flexibility to access resources, submit assignments and interact with fellow students while delivering environmental and administration efficiencies.

Supported by the National Workforce Development Fund, we delivered the Diploma in Family Intake and Support/Certificate IV in Telephone Counselling to our client services officers. These joint qualifications are for individuals in roles

that support therapeutic and clinical work within the social services sector.

We expanded our consultancy services in areas such as supervision and supporting relationships, to a diverse range of organisations including community, council, prison and court agencies.

The training team began producing a new regular e-Newsletter featuring the latest news, professional development and training information from RAV.

## ACCESSRESOLVE WORKPLACE SERVICES AND PROPERTY MEDIATION

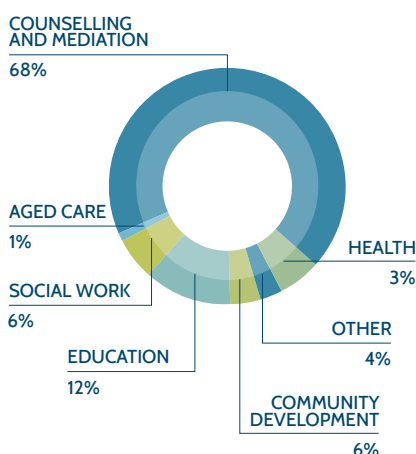
RAV provided AccessResolve Workplace Services to 46 organisations from a variety of different industries and sectors. Services included Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselling, management consultation, mediation and team facilitation.

We also developed and delivered workshops on issues such as stress management, mental health and wellbeing, conflict resolution and family violence.

On behalf of RA National, we provided property mediation services to rural and regional Australia on behalf of the FCC through our AccessResolve Property Mediation program.

This property mediation model gives clients the opportunity to negotiate early settlement in a conciliatory and respectful environment while supported by their lawyer. The service provided a timely and efficient alternative to litigation for Australians regardless of geographic location, achieving a settlement rate of almost 70 per cent in 2014/15.

## PARTICIPANTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS BY FIELD



“The skills and knowledge gained today are instantly applicable in my work. I really got so much from this workshop – it made me self-aware and reflective of my own practice.”

Assistant Principal participant of *The Accidental Counsellor* workshop.

## Our people

**Our focus remains on conducting research that informs practice to deliver enhanced services to clients.**

### RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND PUBLICATIONS

Following the completion of three major projects funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC), we began writing, presenting and disseminating research outcomes through conferences, seminars and journals.

A four-year study with La Trobe University into the impact of family violence on the processes and outcomes of FDR has provided crucial insight into the profile and prevalence of family violence presentations. The research demonstrated that FDR practitioners were effective in detecting and screening for family violence. The findings also influenced a significant revision of our FDR assessment procedures and identified the need to specifically address issues of financial abuse. Two peer-reviewed journal articles and a conference paper have been published on the research, with analyses and reporting of this large data set continuing. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the research will continue to influence practice development in the future.

*Work, Love and Play in Diverse Australian Life*, a project focusing on same-sex parenting and children's outcomes in partnership with RA National, the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and The Bouverie Centre, helped to inform practice through the development of guidelines and standards.

Informed by an ongoing four-year project, *Fathering, family and domestic violence and intervention challenges*, RAV amended its family violence intake and assessment processes, with an increased focus on

a whole of family assessment of risk. Led by the University of Melbourne and collaborating with universities, governments and NGOs across Australia, the project also resulted in a whole of family approach to RAV's family violence work. We have provided input in relation to our work with Aboriginal men, MBCPs and fathers.

As part of a larger research project by Victoria University into how social media is changing the way Australians communicate and engage, RAV partnered with the university's Centre for Cultural Diversity & Wellbeing to investigate what motivates men and women to participate in online dating. Results indicated that men and women tend to engage in online dating differently, and for different purposes. While men may use online dating as a means to save time, women are more likely to participate as a means to find a life partner, and, consequently, are willing to invest time and effort in the process.

We initiated a research project in partnership with Swinburne University on collaboration in the mental health sector. Inter-agency and inter-disciplinary collaboration is an important aspect of achieving effective outcomes for clients affected by mental health issues. Problems of service fragmentation and a lack of coordination are commonly recognised as major impediments to accessing help that is required. The project is designed to improve understanding about what contributes to and impedes effective collaboration in the mental health sector, across a number of functional domains.



## Our people (continued)

We undertook an annual client evaluation process, where our programs were evaluated by clients attending services over a four-week period. FRC, FDR and counselling and relationship education clients surveyed reported satisfaction rates above 96 per cent. Furthermore, in an evaluation of our SFVS, 97 per cent of clients indicated that they had new skills and knowledge to use in their relationships.

RAV's family violence programs underwent a DHHS audit and achieved accreditation against both the DHHS Standards and the internationally recognised ISO 9001:2008 Standard, governing the organisation's Quality Management System.

### National conferences, seminars and presentations

- Bickerdike, A, Curran, S & Corvan, J, *Court Ordered Lawyer-Assisted Property Mediation and Conciliation*, 13th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, July 2014.
- Farnell, A, *From child-inclusion to child-informed FDR - Rationale and practice challenges*, National Mediation Conference 2014, Melbourne, September 2014.
- Grant, J, *Ethical issues in Family Dispute Resolution Practice*, ADR Ethics Symposium for ADR Practitioners, Melbourne, June 2015.
- Grant, J, *Mediating in the Family Context*, La Trobe School of Law, Melbourne, April 2015.
- Grant, J, *Family Dispute Resolution*, Melbourne University School of Law, Melbourne, August 2014.
- Halley, L & Rosenberg, L, *Couple counselling: how to assess the need for couple counselling and when to refer*, The Rabbinical Counsel of Victoria, Melbourne, July 2014.
- McDonald, E, *My parents aren't together anymore: promoting emotional and relationship health for young women*, AusMed - Teenage Girls - Promoting Health, Melbourne, May 2015.
- McDonald, E, *I like, like you: A Healthy Intimate Relationships Program for Schools*, Marriage and Relationships Education of Australia Conference FRSA, Adelaide, November 2014.
- Pezzutto, B, *Far Out - Reaching remote and rural communities in Gippsland*, Cross Sector Collaboration Conference, Melbourne, August 2014.
- Shaw, E & Szarski, L, *The Language of Children*, National Mediation Conference 2014, Melbourne, September 2014.
- Stern, F, *My anxieties have anxieties - Dealing with mental illness in mediation*, National Mediation Conference 2014, Melbourne, September 2014.

### Publications and peer-reviewed journals

- Cleak, H, Schofield, M & Bickerdike, A 2014, 'Efficacy of family mediation and the role of family violence: study protocol', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 14, no. 57.
- Petch, J, Murray, J, Bickerdike, A & Lewis, P 2014, 'Psychological distress among clients seeking counselling and mediation services', *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 28-36.
- Power, J, Brown, R, Schofield, M, Pitts, M, McNair, R, Perlesz, A & Bickerdike, A 2014, 'Social connectedness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents living in metropolitan and regional/rural areas of Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 42, no. 7, pp. 869-889.
- Schofield, MJ, Mumford, N, Jurkovic, I, Jurkovic, D, Chan, SP, & Bickerdike, A 2015, 'Understanding profiles of couples attending community-based couple counselling and relationship education services', *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, vol. 14, pp. 64-90.
- Von Doussa, H, Power, J, Brown, R, Schofield, M J, Pitts, M, McNair, R, Perlesz, A, & Bickerdike, A 2015, 'Building healthcare workers' confidence to work with same-sex parented families', *Health Promotion International*, pp. 1-11.

96.6%

FRC clients \*

97.8%

FDR clients \*

97.7%

counselling/relationship education clients  
\*satisfied with the service they received

## PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT

The Practice Quality Unit (PQU) was restructured following a review and consultation process with staff, and senior and centre management.

With an increasing focus on therapeutic and counselling work with families and children, RAV established a Manager Practice Development position supported by practice development specialists (PDS) in family law and family violence respectively, and an assistant PDS.

We maintained our emphasis on continuous improvement resulting from research, evaluation and the ongoing development of staff knowledge and skills.

As such, we reviewed, revised and implemented updated assessment forms and screening tools for our FDR services following involvement in research into family violence and FDR. The tools focus on safety, violence, and screening for anxiety and depression.

We completed an evaluation of family violence services, with the distributed report identifying themes used to inform the content of our 14-week MBCP, including patterns of family violence, and strategies to prevent it. The report also identified the benefits of increased self-awareness and self-regulation.

Other clinical initiatives for family violence services included:

- the development of a manual for SFVS, with translations of commonly used materials into other languages,
- the introduction of standardised assessment forms,
- the review of case and file review processes, with revised processes being piloted for FDR services.

The PQU assessed competencies and annual clinical observation processes for counsellors and FDR practitioners, with subsequent updates to supporting materials and a literature review of clinical supervisor competencies.

Practice-related policies and procedures were revised and developed including documentation on Case Notes and File Management, Counselling and Group Work (Children and Young People), Access and Equity, and Client Complaints. We also completed policy work in relation to Client Safety, SFVS, Reporting Child Abuse and Sexual Offences, and Family Violence Intervention Orders.

PQU staff were significantly involved in the development and implementation of new and existing services including *Compass Support Services*, *Reclaim Support Services*, *early matters*, *connectEDspace* and the *I like, like you* program.

As an employer of choice committed to maintaining and improving service delivery, RAV provided staff with quality professional support and supervision throughout the year. Professional development was provided on *Single Session Training*, *Risk Screening* and *Effective Conflict Management*. FDR staff undertook training in *Family Violence Screening*, *Mental Health Screening*, *Property* and *Child Safety*.

With further development of our services for children and young people, training was delivered on topics including *Adolescence Violence*, *Confident Kids* and *Problem Sexualised Behaviours for Children*. Adults Surviving Child Abuse provided *Working with Trauma* training to all counsellors.

The national initiative for Children who have a Parent with a Mental Illness ran training in *Family Focus*, an evidence-based practice offering a stage-based systemic response to parents, children and their relationships.

# Our Board



## 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 Development Committee and was Vice-President from May 2013. Lyn has been President of the RAV Board since October 2014.



## MR PETER GOME

Vice-President

Peter is an experienced Chief Financial Officer (CFO) with an international career spanning over 30 years. He spent the majority of his career at BP with roles in Australia and internationally, including the UK. His last roles at BP were as CFO for various business units including exploration and production, and marketing. Subsequently, he has held a number of Australian CFO and Chief Operating Officer (COO) roles with mid-tier companies in the

oil, transport, and printing and construction project management industries. He is currently 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 memberships 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.



## DR JANINE BUSH

Janine's diverse career spans 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 Australian Research Council linkage projects. Janine joined the RAV Board in 2015.



## MS DEBRA GOLDFINCH

Deb Goldfinch 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 18 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, Victoria. Deb joined the RAV Board in 2013 and serves as chair of the Governance Committee.



### 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 in her career 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 also a member of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia and is a member of the Lawyers' Panel at RA. She joined the RAV Board in 2011.

### MS ROSEMARY KELADA



Rosemary has more than 15 years' experience in senior management roles in the not-for-profit sector, and holds a Master of Business (Accounting), and a Strategic Management of Non-Profit Organisations qualification from the Harvard Business School. As CEO of Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre from 2008 to 2014, she was responsible for

all aspects of leadership and organisational operation. Rosemary combines financial expertise and commercial acumen with a strong understanding and knowledge of the not-for-profit, government and community sectors. She has experience advocating on behalf of organisations and the community, particularly in the multicultural sector. Rosemary is a member of the AICD. She joined the RAV Board in 2015.

### MR JOHN LOVELL



John Lovell 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.

### MR MICHAEL SHAW



Michael is an investment banker with the private investment-banking firm, Bristow Shaw & Co. Michael also serves as a principal adviser to Kennedy Needham Pty Ltd and Lavelle & Co., Chartered Accountants and is a member of the Finance, Investment and Audit Committee

of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd. Michael previously served as President of RA National (1994 and from 1998 to 2001); chaired RAV's Audit Committee for 11 years and was RAV's Vice-President from 1990 until 2007. He joined the Board in 1990 and currently chairs RAV's Future Development Committee.

# Financial overview

## Summary statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2015

	2015 (\$)	2014 (\$)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Government funding	16,152,534	15,369,526
Client fees	2,372,218	2,471,229
Other income	700,574	879,762
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>19,225,326</b>	<b>18,720,517</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Employee costs	13,186,299	13,239,859
Consortium costs	563,232	964,531
Occupancy	1,871,212	1,605,532
Depreciation and amortisation	150,108	127,216
Other operating costs	3,268,368	2,513,123
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>19,039,219</b>	<b>18,450,261</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>186,107</b>	<b>270,256</b>
<b>OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>		
Net gain on revaluation of non-current assets	1,164,000	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>	<b>1,350,107</b>	<b>270,256</b>

## Summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015

	2015 (\$)	2014 (\$)
Current assets	10,626,662	9,212,069
Non-current assets	3,116,230	2,200,605
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>13,742,892</b>	<b>11,412,674</b>
Current liabilities	4,739,391	3,842,223
Non-current liabilities	450,572	367,629
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>5,189,963</b>	<b>4,209,852</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>8,552,929</b>	<b>7,202,822</b>

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

We have audited the summarised financial report of Relationships Australia (Victoria) Inc. comprising the Summary Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2015 and the Summary Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2015 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 21 September 2015.

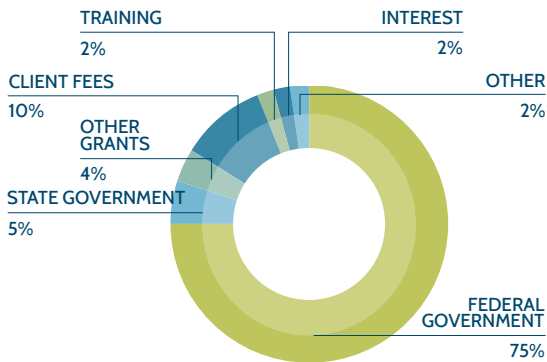
For a better understanding of the scope of our audit, this report should be read in conjunction with our audit report on the annual financial report.

**GRANT THORNTON AUSTRALIA**

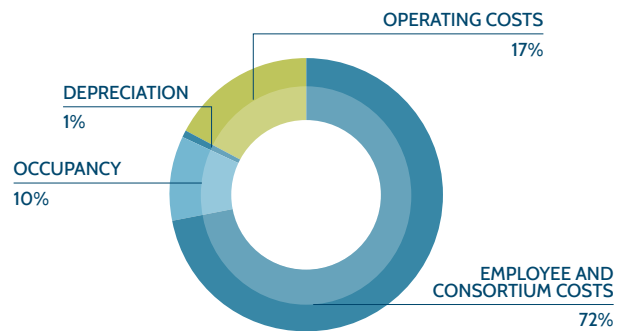
**BROCK MACKENZIE**  
Partner

Melbourne  
21 September 2015

SOURCE OF INCOME 2014/15



SOURCE OF EXPENDITURE 2014/15





# Senior management\*



**DR ANDREW  
BICKERDIKE**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**DR IAN LAW**  
Chief Operating  
Officer



**SHIRANTHI  
SIVARAJAH**  
Chief Financial  
Officer



**MICHAEL  
MULDOON**  
General Manager  
Operations



**CARL  
BEESTON**  
Senior Manager  
ICT Operations



**SIMON  
CURRAN**  
Senior Manager  
Kew and Business  
and Service  
Development



**SHARON  
GREENHILL**  
Senior Manager  
Human Resources



**ERIKA OWENS**  
Senior Manager  
Southern and  
Eastern Melbourne



**PETER  
ROBERTS**  
Senior Manager  
Training



**SUE YORSTON**  
Senior Manager  
Western  
Melbourne

## Centre locations



<b>BALLARAT</b> 1025 Sturt Street	1
<b>BERWICK FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRE</b> 38 Clyde Road	2
<b>BORONIA</b> 83 Boronia Road	3
<b>CRANBOURNE</b> 2/199 South Gippsland Highway	4
<b>GREENSBOROUGH</b> Banyule Community Health 3/25-33 Grimshaw Street	5
<b>GREENSBOROUGH FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRE</b> 79 Grimshaw Street	6
<b>KEW</b> 46 Princess Street	7
<b>MELBOURNE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRE</b> 379 Collins Street	8
<b>SHEPPARTON</b> 634 Wyndham Street	9
<b>SUNSHINE</b> 1st Floor, Harvester Centre 4 Devonshire Road	10
<b>SUNSHINE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRE</b> 1 Clarke Street	11
<b>TRARALGON</b> 59 Breed Street	12

*Relationships Australia*<sup>®</sup>  
VICTORIA

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Camberwell VIC 3124

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/RelAustVic](http://www.facebook.com/RelAustVic)  
Twitter: [@RelAustVic](https://twitter.com/RelAustVic)

