

Annual report

2017-2018

*Loneliness and the
transformative power
of relationships*

Relationships Australia®



Relationships Australia is honoured to have His Excellency the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia as our national patron.

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Chair's Foreword

This year marks 70 years since Relationships Australia had its beginnings in the aftermath of World War II. In 1948, Relationships Australia started out as the Marriage Guidance Council, a volunteer-based counselling service formed to respond to the rising need of re-united couples and families struggling to readjust to post-war life.

While we will be commemorating the work we have done over those years to help families and support people to live with positive and respectful relationships, we will also be turning our attention to an area we believe needs a broader community debate and government policy focus – loneliness.

Australia is in the midst of a loneliness crisis, with many in our population – particularly older Australians – experiencing a deficit of social connection. That is, they do not enjoy sufficient meaningful relationships in their lives to sustain and nurture them, particularly through difficult times.

Australians are increasingly time poor with many households having all adults in employment, and less time for community engagement and neighbourhood connection. Fewer people know and interact with their neighbours or are part of community groups. The circle of people we feel we can turn to when the chips are down is shrinking in all age groups.

This loneliness crisis is not confined to Australia. Rather, it is a recognised phenomenon in many western nations. Indeed, in 2017 the United Kingdom Parliament set up a national inquiry into the problem and subsequently established a Ministry for Loneliness.

Helping give people the skills to build and sustain the meaningful relationships they need is at the heart of what we do at Relationships Australia, and we believe this work is part of the answer to tackling our loneliness crisis.

As an active partner in the Australian Coalition to End Loneliness, Relationships Australia has been engaged in a growing community discussion on loneliness in recent years. Through our Neighbour Day campaign, we have been working to provide pathways for neighbours to connect, particularly with people in each neighbourhood experiencing vulnerability.

In our 70th year, we have chosen loneliness as the discussion theme for our anniversary celebrations and we will pursue solutions to the problem through new research projects, and policy and stakeholder collaborations. We hope to enhance our understanding of the underlying causes of loneliness and work with others to identify new practical solutions that might help address this community-wide issue.

Family violence remains a matter of considerable concern across Australia. Earlier this year, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare published a report, *Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia*. The findings of the report drew from a compilation of prevalence data indicating that, on average, one woman a week and one man a month is killed by a current or former partner. The report identified particular groups most at risk of experiencing some form of violence or abuse: Indigenous women, young women, pregnant women, women with a disability, women experiencing financial hardship, and people who had witnessed abuse as children.

Tragically, despite considerable focus on family violence over recent years, from organisations like ours and from governments, Australians continue to be killed by those with whom they once may have had a loving relationship. Every day, Relationships Australia's clients are affected by family violence, and every day our staff identify and support these clients. We can be proud of the work that we do, as researchers, service providers and advocates to call out family violence and to support the survivors. We are also proud to assist perpetrators to be accountable for changing their behaviours and adopt to healthy ways to manage conflict, regulate their own emotions and develop communication skills. This is a long-term investment of time and expertise, but one we know is worth making.

The Commonwealth Government has recently started consultations on the Fourth Action Plan 2019–2022 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (the National Plan) in partnership with state and territory governments. The Fourth Action Plan, due for release in 2019, is the final action plan of the National Plan. Relationships Australia welcomes the development of the new plan, and will continue to support families affected by family violence as long as is needed.

A key focus of our policy development over the past year has been responding to the review of the family law system by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC). The Commission is charged with reviewing the family law system to ensure it is responsive and in line with current social needs and expectations. Relationships Australia has submitted a response to the ALRC's issues paper, and we have met with Commissioners to discuss ideas and approaches to the review. We look forward to engaging with its discussion paper and playing a key role through expert and evidence-based advocacy for creating a more contemporary response to family breakdown and conflict.

Details of other submissions, and policy and advocacy work, stakeholder engagement, as well as our presentations and publications are included later in the report.

In a short note on this year's Annual Report, we will continue with our online and printed report that includes our key organisational information. This year, however, we are moving to enhance the way we present the stories that are at the centre of our work through the use of an online multimedia story-telling feature that uses creative images, video and audio to focus on how our services around the country have worked with people to address loneliness.

I hope you enjoy reading the report and our Year in Review.

Dr Andrew Bickerdike
Chair Relationships Australia

Reflections on 2017-2018

Highlights

This year we welcomed a three-year extension of funding for our family law services, extending our contracts with the Attorney-General's Department to 2022. This extension will allow the Government sufficient time to consider the findings of the ALRC's review into the family law system, due in early 2019.

The Department of Social Services also extended Family and Relationship Support funding for a further year while they review how families are best supported to achieve the best possible outcomes. We welcome the extension of funding and the invitation to participate in the review of the Families and Communities Programme.

Relationships Australia organised and hosted a two-day restorative practice workshop in Canberra in late February 2018, with guest speakers from the UK and New Zealand. Over 120 participants attended the workshop and provided very positive feedback. Most Relationships Australia organisations were represented at the workshop, along with a wide range of participants from academia, the education, justice and community sectors, and government.

Key policy engagements

Elder abuse

The Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department is working with states, territories and the sector to develop a National Framework for Elder Abuse. We are working with the department on this, and we welcomed the announcement of trials to investigate the most effective pathways to preventing and responding to elder abuse.

Relationships Australia continues to strongly advocate for funded services to support families with an ageing relative, to help them reduce conflict and build their capacity to deal with ageing related issues such as grief and loss, end of life care, retirement and inheritance, family violence and elder abuse.

Restorative practice

Following the two-day workshop in Canberra, Relationships Australia continued our participation in national discussion on how restorative practices can achieve greater benefits for vulnerable people. We follow with interest a model in Western Adelaide where Relationships Australia South Australia has joined with the South Australian Government in using a restorative practice framework for working with families experiencing vulnerability and risk.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

This year, the National Office continued to advocate for people who have been affected by institutional child sexual abuse. We made submissions to improve legislation that established a National Redress Scheme, and developed policy that could be used to increase the safety and wellbeing of children accessing our services across Australia.

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory

During 2017-18, Relationships Australia Northern Territory provided free support services to children, young people, their families and others impacted by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

Services included trauma-informed and culturally appropriate support, information on how to engage with the Royal Commission, and what to expect from the enquiry process. Face-to-face and telephone counselling were provided by qualified counsellors to those directly affected as well as their families.

Support was provided on legal processes including referrals to legal and advocacy services. Mentoring was also by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural advisors, and healing camps were conducted on Country.

Submissions

- Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission Review of the Family Law System.
- Submission to the Progress Report of the ACT Law Reform Advisory Council's Restorative Practices Inquiry Canberra – becoming a restorative city.
- Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2017 and related bill.
- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2018 and National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2018.
- A range of submissions to Commonwealth and state budget processes and government inquiries aimed at preventing elder abuse.

Key stakeholder engagements

We continue to feel privileged for our strong relationships with departmental staff, particularly in the Attorney-General's and Social Services departments, and with stakeholders in our traditional areas of work. Over the past year we participated in a range of departmental consultations, including those convened for program redesign and outcome measurement, and to increase access to services for vulnerable groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. We are also building relationships in new areas of interest to us as we look for more ways to support families to live well in their communities.

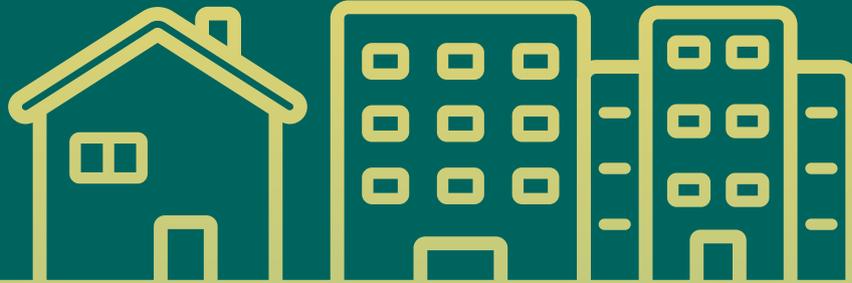
Monthly survey

Our monthly survey continued to remain popular, generating interest from a wide range of people, including those in the media and academia. Key topics ranged from loneliness and friendships, through to focussed issues such as organ donation, youth suicide and exposure to pornography.

For more information on the work that we do, visit Relationships Australia's website at relationships.org.au or call us on 02 6162 9300.

115

Venues



2,099

Staff



191,349

Clients



9,659

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients



16,656

Culturally and Linguistically diverse clients





Neighbour Day

Relationships Australia sees Neighbour Day as an ongoing opportunity to remind people about the importance of community connection. We believe that getting to know your neighbours helps to develop good relationships with others who live nearby and transform communities.

Relationships Australia is responsible for Neighbour Day, a year-round campaign to promote and support the importance of relationships in communities. Through Neighbour Day, we encourage people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood.

Officially, we celebrate Neighbour Day on the last Sunday in March – in 2018 it was on 25 March – and this year we focused our campaign on encouraging all Australians to support children and young people in their neighbourhoods to help them feel included and safe.

We know that children thrive in an environment of supporting, caring relationships, and that having a whole community of care enables its members to truly flourish, particularly its children. Research tells us that children who know their neighbours and are aware of somewhere safe to go when their parents are not at home, feel happier and safer in and around their homes.

Through our 2018 Neighbour Day campaign, we asked residents across Australia what their neighbourhoods could do to provide a safe, child-friendly place where children are truly welcome and free to imagine, play, learn, navigate, negotiate, explore and create.

The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) joined Neighbour Day in 2018 as a Very Neighbourly Organisation and got on board with our theme, providing a useful resource for neighbours of children and young people that was widely shared on our social media channels.

Snapshot: Neighbour Day 2018

In early March, the ACT Government in partnership with Relationships Australia launched the territory's Neighbour Day. Special guest speakers included the ACT Minister for Community Services, Social Inclusion and Disability, Children and Youth, Rachel Stephen-Smith; and the ACT Commissioner for Children and Young People, Jodie Griffiths-Cook, with special guest Constable Kenny Koala.

The national launch of Neighbour Day was hosted in the Northern Territory a week later by the Alice Springs community at the Sadadeen Primary School, with the support of Relationships Australia and Neighbour Day Ambassador and Natalie Ahmat of NITV/SBS television. The Alice Springs community was presented with the first Very Neighbourly Community Award for their active engagement with Neighbour Day for many years.



In 2018, 3115 Neighbour Day events were promoted and hosted around Australia by individual neighbours, community groups and businesses, in workplaces and by all levels of government – particularly local councils. The most popular events were morning and afternoon teas, BBQs, street parties, and ‘bring and share’ food gatherings, with almost 50 per cent of events open to the public. Other Australians chose to leave calling or connection cards with messages of support and their contact details, in case their neighbour ever needs a hand.

Many supporters tell us that because Neighbour Day is a nationally-recognised campaign, it serves as a gentle and non-threatening reason for them to initiate contact with their neighbours. Event hosts surveyed after Neighbour Day said it was a useful tool or mechanism to connect with their neighbours (89 per cent) with 85 per cent indicating that they would host an event again. A suite of free downloadable resources available on the Neighbour Day website were popular, as in previous years.

Of those who previously hosted a Neighbour Day event or took some neighbourly action, 90 per cent told us that this resulted in ongoing connection throughout the year. The most popular forms of continued engagement were regular visits, checking in on neighbours, regular neighbourly get-togethers or joining a volunteer activity. There were also many other neighbourly activities ranging from a smile and a wave, through to one neighbour’s life literally being saved.

We believe that Neighbour Day is an effective and positive mechanism to raise awareness about the importance of social connection for individual and community health and wellbeing and as a catalyst for action. We are working to bring like-minded people, resources, and organisations, to grow stronger, better-connected communities so that we can all live in places that are welcoming, kind and supportive.

National Research and Evaluation

The Relationships Australia National Research Network (the network) was formed in 2011 with the goal of supporting national research collaboration among Relationships Australia state and territory organisations around the country, to inform and improve client services. The network supports research and evaluation projects carried out within the Relationships Australia (the federation) and undertakes independent research on our behalf.



In 2017–18, there were more than 30 separate research projects underway within the federation. The majority were undertaken in partnership with universities, including: Griffith University, the University of Queensland, the University of Sunshine Coast, Central Queensland University, Deakin University, the University of New South Wales, Southern Cross University, La Trobe University, the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Melbourne, Victoria University, and Monash University.

These research projects are primarily designed to assess the process and outcomes of a diverse spectrum of Relationships Australia services and issues that our services work to address, including family violence prevention, loneliness, gambling, childhood trauma, family dispute resolution, family counselling, parent education, couples counselling, same-sex parenting, fathering, Aboriginal services and social media.

Many of these projects have already resulted in publications in peer-reviewed journals and conference presentations (see following pages). The findings also influence the design of models of practice within Relationships Australia organisations and more broadly in the Australian and international family service systems. Our significant research efforts are supported and driven by Relationships Australia as we strive to learn from, and improve services and outcomes for our clients.

The Relationships Australia Family Dispute Resolution Outcomes Research Project

In 2018, the network continued to implement and manage large and significant research project funded by the federation. This project is designed to generate evidence on the outcomes and efficacy of family dispute resolution services in both parenting and property disputes. The study employs a longitudinal survey design with quantitative data collection at multiple time points, to meet one of the project's aims of assessing durability of outcomes achieved in family dispute resolution.

The first client survey was conducted between May and November 2017 with 1,800 participants who were recruited to the study and completed the Time 1 survey. Around 800 participants completed a second questionnaire three months after receiving the service. In addition to client surveys, the study design also incorporates semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of participants to further investigate the positive outcome of experiences and perceptions of the dispute resolution process. This third and final stage has now commenced and will continue until November 2018.

The research team will analyse data for parenting and property clients separately, so that we can address research questions that are specific to each group. Preliminary results from the study, which were reported at the Australian Institute of Family Studies conference in July 2018, show strong evidence for the efficacy of the federation's family dispute resolution services. In addition to the majority of clients reaching agreements on their parenting and property matters, significant improvements were also found across a range of emotional and psychological measures including anxiety, parenting stress and adjustment to separation variables.

With the family law sector as a whole, and the community-funded family law services in particular, currently under scrutiny as the federal government considers significant reform, it is vital that services are safe, effective and affordable. The federation's Family Dispute Resolution Outcomes Research Project will provide crucial and timely data to inform this reform process.

Our Work

Support for Fathers

Relationships Australia Victoria is leading a national project to support young men and fathers in their role as parents and partners.

The two-year project has commenced with Australia-wide consultations with young men, fathers and service providers, and engagement at professional forums and conferences, to receive feedback on fathers' current and future resource needs, and how they can be better supported.

The aim of the project is for young men and fathers to:

- better understand the importance of their role as parents and partners
- have access to evidence-based tools, strategies and knowledge
- improve their confidence as both parents and partners
- develop, maintain and role-model healthy and respectful relationships with family members
- enhance access to social and practical supports and resources.

The above aims will be delivered under a primary prevention approach (Preventing violence before it occurs, 2007).

It will seek to provide options for men to explore their role as fathers, and how they interact with family and community. For example:

- Exploring fatherhood role options, such as being a *caring father*, a *remembering father* or a *responsible father* in addition to being a *provider/protector father*. These role options can support fathers to feel more confident in their parenting and be flexible in their family relationships (*Introduction to working with men and family relationships guide*, 2009).
- Connecting fathers with other men and fathers in the community, and exploring how men engage with other men and what they want from their interactions. This will provide insight into how to combat social isolation that some men experience, particularly when they become fathers.
- Providing support service workers with options to positively engage fathers, and develop and implement successful programs (*Practitioner's Guide to Men and Their Roles as Fathers*, 2014).

The project developed a professionals' toolkit for service providers, and resources for young men and fathers, to facilitate enhanced social connections and access to support services.

Support for Fathers is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

References:

1. VicHealth, (2007), *Preventing violence before it occurs*, Carlton South, Victoria: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
2. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Affairs (FaHCSIA) (2009), *Introduction to working with men and family relationships guide*, Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
3. University of Western Sydney (2014), *Practitioner's Guide to Men and Their Roles as Fathers*, Penrith, NSW: Men's Health Information and Resource Centre.

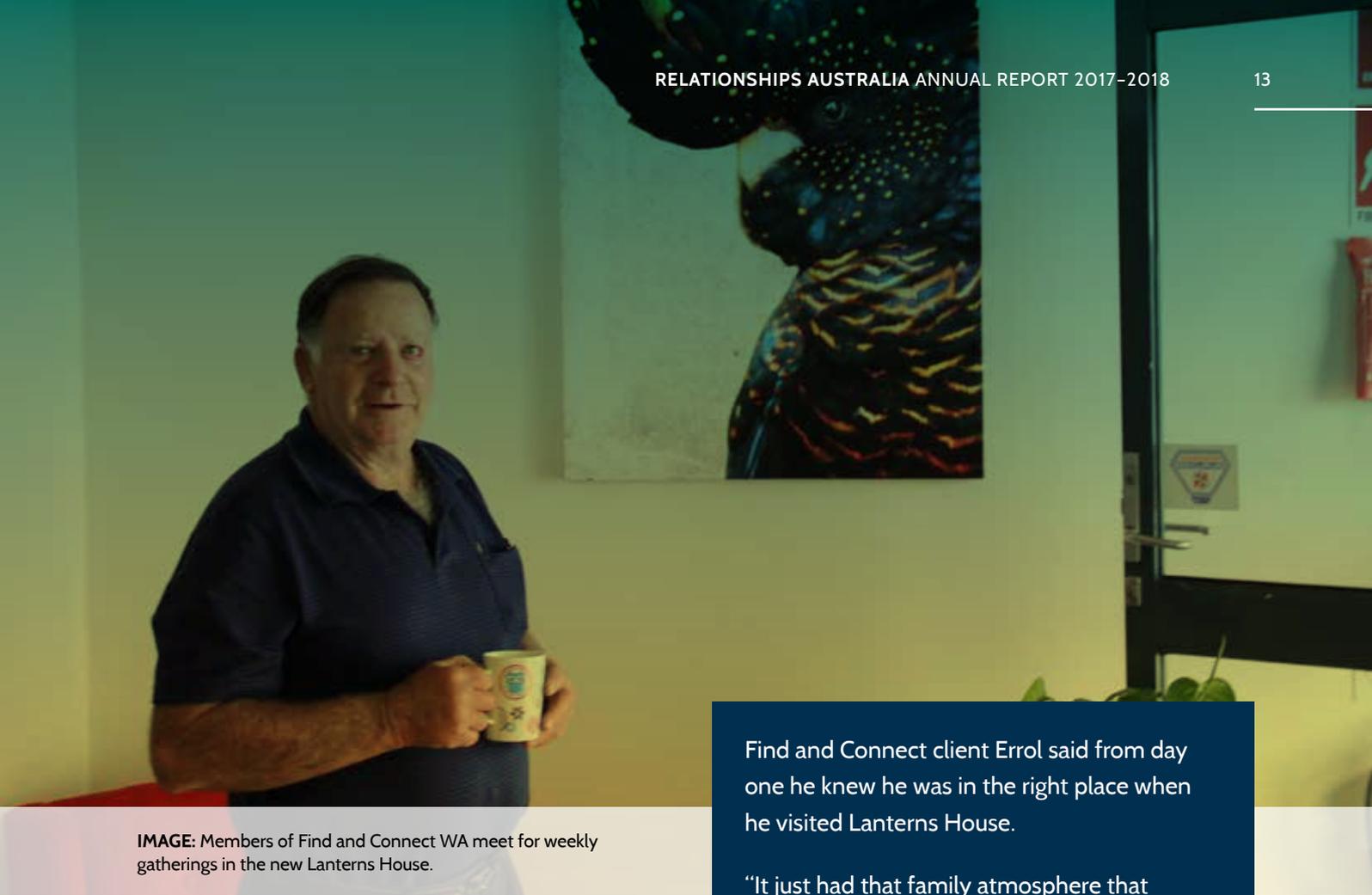


IMAGE: Members of Find and Connect WA meet for weekly gatherings in the new Lanterns House.

Find and Connect client Errol said from day one he knew he was in the right place when he visited Lanterns House.

“It just had that family atmosphere that I never had,” he said.

Forming new friendships

As a result of growing up in out-of-home ‘care’, many Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are at higher risk of social isolation and loneliness, and may experience difficulties in forming relationships in their adult life.

Relationships Australia Western Australia provides a Find and Connect service, providing long term specialist support and social connection for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

The service is based at Lanterns House, a name chosen by clients, providing a welcoming drop-in space and family atmosphere.

With the service now attended by an increasing number of people, Lanterns House recently relocated from West Leederville to Belmont in order to provide a more accessible and comfortable space for social gatherings.

For these people, who have previously been socially isolated, Lanterns House often provides an opportunity to speak to another person face to face, rather than over the phone.

The program organises weekly therapeutic social activities for clients, followed by a morning tea or lunch. Past sessions have included Tai Chi, Reiki, drumbeat and mindfulness.

In order to further increase the opportunity for social connection for our Find and Connect clients, a monthly community outing is arranged, which has helped reduce previously held social anxieties.

Thanks to these regular social gatherings new friendships have been formed, and continue to flourish, outside the environment of Lanterns House.

Another important role of Find and Connect Western Australia is supporting family searches and reunion assistance, which aids with the sense of identity and connectedness.

In March, a professional genealogist ran a six session workshop called 'Discover Your Family History', helping clients put together a map of their family, learning more about their ancestors and the missing information about their past.

Find and Connect WA is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

The Forgotten Australians Aged Care Project

In Australia, an estimated 500,000 children and young people experienced institutional care during the last century, many of whom suffered physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse. Now, faced with the possibility of going into care a second time around, or accepting care into their homes, many are deeply troubled by what their future may hold.

Elm Place, a service of Relationships Australia South Australia, began the Forgotten Australians Aged Care Project in mid-2016 to address these concerns. The project aims to increase awareness about the needs of all aging Australians who were harmed in institutional care during their childhood. This includes Forgotten Australians, care leavers, former Child Migrants, and the Stolen Generations.

This year, a group of Forgotten Australians has undergone lived experience peer advocacy training. Partnerships were formed with Aged and Community Services, COTA SA, Aged Rights Advocacy Service and Helping Hand to encourage systemic change within the sector. During this time, two community education sessions were held at Red Cross and COTA.

The Forgotten Australians group attended the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference, where they spoke and provided written submissions to the South Australian Parliament Joint Committee inquiring into matters relating to elder abuse in South Australia. Their input highlighted the need for the group to be included as a key stakeholder when addressing elder abuse.

More recently, Helping Hand secured funding to continue the project by appointing a project officer and running seminars. Going forward, the project stakeholders will develop a position statement to assist the aged care sector to support this group, and to share these learnings more broadly across the aged care sector, thereby ensuring that this group's aged care experience is a positive one.





These animals – cats, dogs, kangaroos and even buffalos – provide great comfort and companionship to clients and we welcome domestic pets into our offices and to social events to encourage client participation, understanding and acceptance.

Kangaroos and buffalos – how we connect and support our clients

Relationships Australia Northern Territory's Find and Connect Support Service provides case management, advocacy, counselling, records searching and family tracing to people affected by institutional care prior to 1990.

The service provides specialised trauma-informed support to people who identify as Forgotten Australians, the Stolen Generations and Former Child Migrants.

Our Northern Territory service is different from those run in other states and territories as the majority of our clients choose to live a rural, remote or isolated lifestyle.

Those of our clients who choose not to attend our office are offered support by telephone. This isolated lifestyle can encourage withdrawal from the community, and as our clients age, fear and loneliness can impact on their lives and impair their health and wellbeing.

We help clients to develop a range of different strategies to manage the negative aspects of living in isolation. These strategies take into account physical remoteness, the different ways clients live and their financial circumstances.

We encourage clients to engage in social activities and/or support groups where people are active participants, and foster the inclusion of animals into clients' lifestyles.

Online social interaction is also used with clients to improve social inclusion and reduce their feelings of loneliness. Online interaction is particularly meaningful when clients are frail or other life changes start to impact their quality of life.

Considering the uniqueness and physical isolation of our clients, we have successfully implemented and delivered a flexible, trauma-informed and inclusive therapeutic approach to deliver a quality state wide service.



Wattle Place – loneliness

Wattle Place is a service offered by Relationships Australia New South Wales and operates as both a service and a community.

Wattle Place is for people who have been impacted by systemic trauma and abuse. It provides support to people affected by past adoption practices, people whose lives have been adversely affected in childhood by 'care' in institutions, orphanages, children's homes and foster homes, and people who have been impacted by institutional childhood sexual abuse.

Wattle Place functions as both a therapeutic space and a community space that enables a sense of belonging. The community has a voice through a consultative committee and is regularly invited to provide feedback.

The group work program has a gentle therapeutic lens and incorporates social inclusion and acceptance, mitigating loneliness alongside contributing to self-worth and self-esteem.

The program also delivers social events and programs, including marking significant anniversaries and regional events.

People often tell us that at Wattle Place, they feel like they 'fit'. It's a place where they feel, and are, safe and connected, they don't have to talk about the past, and they know the people around them understand.

One community member in regional NSW travelled over an hour to attend an event despite having experienced agoraphobia most of their adult life.

They said it was important to attend as they were isolated and lonely in their community where no-one understood their experience and they felt judged. At Wattle Place events, they felt understood and experienced a connection to others.



Identity, belonging and bridging the gap between the cultures

When children are adopted from one country to another, they lose everything they know – their previous caregiver/s and/or family, their familiar environments, and the sights, smells, and feel of their home countries. As children's capacity for learning is strongly connected to their personal, psychological, and social well-being, our Post Adoption Support Services Mentor and Adoptee Group (MAG) supports adopted children aged 7-17 years learn and adjust to their new home in Australia.

Beginning in 2010, MAG has grown and changed along with the adopted children. In this time, MAG has engaged a total of 150 young people and 28 volunteer mentors, and have held 53 group sessions.

The MAG activities are tailored to the developmental needs and interests of each child. Activities include art therapy workshops, indoor rock climbing, cooking, and mindfulness sessions, as well as opportunities for children to learn about their countries of birth and talk about their adoption experiences.

Importantly, MAG activities create a place for adopted young people's issues and concerns to be noticed and, where needed, link them up with other support services. Peer support is central to this program's success, as the young adoptees forge valuable connections, not only with each other but also with older local and inter-country adoptees.

As the children and families who participate in MAG activities continue to shape and influence the design of the program, MAG has become an effective way to support adopted children learn about and flourish in their new community.



Case Study

Offering opportunities for children to keep their first language and meeting individual children's needs

“Hola Carlos & Hola Lucia.”

Carlos came to Australia when he was adopted from Chile at age 7. His world had completely changed. While he was competent in expressing himself in Spanish, he did not have any English language skills. Despite every effort of his adoptive parents to help him make sense of this life-altering transition, his communication difficulties meant he struggled to understand what was happening.

A little over a year ago, one MAG volunteer, Lucia, who is from Chile and fluent in both Spanish and English, paired with Carlos to assist him during activities. As Lucia approached Carlos, she greeted him in Spanish with a cheerful, “Hola.” His eyes lit up with surprise, and he happily started to converse in Spanish to her. It was obvious that the two clicked, and Carlos felt more in control of his environment when he could communicate easily.

Communication is a vital tool for engaging with one another. With Lucia’s support, Carlos’ first experience with a MAG activity was a positive one. While he no longer has difficulty speaking English, his connection to his birth country and language is important to him and, through continuing to talk to Lucia in Spanish, we have been able to provide a space for that special connection to be maintained.

The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development has contributed funds towards this program.

The full article was published in Association for Childhood Education International Childhood Explorer online publications acei.org/childhood-explorer

For further information about the service, please visit: rasa.org.au/services/couples-families/post-adoption-support-services-pass

Touchstone – Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service

Over the past year, more than 420 people have been assisted by the Touchstone Adolescent Family Therapy Mediation Service run by Relationships Australia New South Wales.

Adolescents and their families have been supported by dedicated, skilled family therapists to address complex and often life-threatening issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, family conflict, self-harm, suicidal ideation, depression and the devastating impacts of bullying – especially cyber bullying.

Underlying most of these issues is a consistent theme of loneliness and social isolation.

Today's young people appear more 'connected' through social media. While Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook provide online 'cyber friends', alongside the potential to bully and shame, they also fail to deliver real relationships. Adolescents often feel they are 'observing' others having fun, resulting in them feeling more isolated.

Touchstone sees many families where adolescents present with the symptoms of loneliness, with self-harming and suicidal ideation are often the result of lost hope in a future. Through our services, we support and empower families and adolescent to make changes that address the causes of their loneliness.

In the past year, our Touchstone therapists have:

- run healthy relationships seminars at Albion Park High School for 800 students, providing resources and referrals for support services
- attended Rainbow League groups to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer young people
- run seminars for 100 refugees/new arrivals at the Multi-Cultural Youth Conference
- run seminars attended by 130 students at Smith's Hill High School on how to access help and how to protect and reconsider cyber friendships and develop healthy relationships
- provided a chill out area at the Sundown Festival by the Lake where young people could gather and talk with the team.

Community Based Mental Health Care Service

The Community Based Mental Health Care Service (CBMHCS) supports people of all ages experiencing mild to moderate mental health concerns.

Funded by Primary Health Tasmania, the service is accessed via a referral from a person's GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician, with ongoing communication between CBMHCS and the referrer being an important aspect of the program.

In order to best meet a client's needs, flexibility in the delivery of CBMHCS is key. In addition to providing help at our Head Office located in New Town, outreach sessions at Bridgewater and Oatlands operate at high demand, allowing for more communities to access the service.

Our clients face a number of difficulties and mental health challenges and diagnoses of depression and anxiety are commonly noted.

Indeed, Tasmania-wide, the estimated population prevalence of these disorders is significant. The Tasmanian Population Health Survey (2016) revealed that 30 per cent of adult Tasmanians reported having a past or present diagnosis of anxiety or depression¹.

We recognise that the nature of anxiety and depression can lead people to experience feelings of isolation – either by feeling alone in their mental health struggle, or by physically and emotionally withdrawing and distancing themselves from the people around them.

A sense of loneliness and isolation can emerge, even for those who have previously drawn strength and happiness from being with others.

Clients in our CBMHCS service show strength and resilience in facing these challenges and in seeking help to improve their wellbeing.

By building connections with friends, family and community, it is possible to reduce loneliness and associated hopelessness that can be pervasive when experiencing mental health challenges.

Improving mental health through focused therapies and support is proving valuable for Tasmanians accessing the Relationships Australia Tasmania's Community Based Mental Health Care Service.

¹ Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania 2016, *Report on the Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2016*, Hobart.



ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service

The secrets people keep about gambling often make them feel lonely and increase their shame. Shame means people have to hide parts of themselves from their partner and their relationship begins to spiral downwards.

'When you tell your first lie – is when loneliness starts in a relationship.'

The ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service is delivered in a partnership between Relationships Australia Canberra and Region, Care Financial Counselling service, and Relationships Australia Queensland. It is funded by the ACT Racing and Gaming Commission.

In 2017-18, the ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service provided services to 234 people in the ACT.

Gambling sometimes increases when couples separate and is used as a way of coping with the loneliness and stress.

Financial stress can bring on feelings of isolation and the shame of failing to cope like 'everyone else'. The hope of winning is a short suspension from the stress.

For some, challenging or traumatic experiences drive the desire to gamble because the gambling can block everything else out and make you feel good.

The ACT service reconnects people with their strengths and resources – such as their family.

Working together makes it easier to challenge the role that gambling plays in a person's life and the harm it causes, as well as to put in place strategies for moving away from problematic gambling and reconstructing a life that is connected to family and relationships.

ACT Coronial Counselling Service

When a person close to us has died, we grieve the uniqueness of that relationship and there can be a sense of loneliness that sits with the loss.

Many people may grieve the loss of the same person but each attachment with that person is unique.

The finality of death takes the experience of loneliness to another level as there is no hope for restoration.

An opportunity for people to share their stories of grief can help them move from a sense of profound loss and loneliness to re-integration and new hope.

The ACT Coronial Counselling Service provided by Relationships Australia Canberra and Region is funded by the ACT Department of Health. In 2017-18, 190 people accessed the service.

Counsellors work with each person to understand how to experience the pain of the loss and they assist people to adjust to life without the relationship they have lost and to integrate the memories of the deceased with their current and future life.

Feeling the pain of the loneliness and honouring the loss is a strong foundation for reconnecting with hope for a stronger future.



Connecting young people to mental health services

Mental health is one of the biggest health issues facing young Australians today, yet only a quarter of young people with mental health issues receive professional help (Slade, 2009).

Like many living in regional and remote areas, young people in Busselton face particular challenges in accessing age-appropriate mental health services. Up until recently, the nearest specialist service was headspace Bunbury, located over 50km away, where Relationships Australia WA (RAWA) has been lead agency since 2014. This distance was one of the concerns that prompted RAWA to launch a headspace satellite in Busselton on 13 June.

The satellite gives young people access to vital mental health support services, addressing the ongoing problems of long distances and service disadvantage in the area. Set up with support from Forrest MP Nola Marino and funded by the WA Primary Health Alliance, the service operates from Yonderup House, the RAWA Busselton office.

Headspace programs and services are driven by youth participation and engagement, and Busselton youth will now join the existing Bunbury Youth Reference Group (YRG). The YRG ensures headspace remains youth focused, and assists connecting young people by planning events and activities, including headspace Day during Mental Health Week in October.

The headspace Busselton Community Engagement Officer (CEO) is also working with the Busselton Youth Precinct drop-in centre. Attending weekly, the CEO is building relationships with young people, which assists in breaking down stigmas about mental health to ensure they feel more comfortable accessing headspace's services.

These initiatives will complement other services to help provide a range of positive outcomes and new relationships for young people in the Busselton area who are experiencing emerging or existing mental health issues, improving their quality of life.

References:

Slade, T., et al., The mental health of Australians 2: Report on the 2007 national survey of mental health and wellbeing. 2009, Canberra, Australia: Department of Health and Ageing.

Non-Violent Resistance parenting groups

If loneliness means feeling separate from others, then joining with a group of people who share a common problem is a powerful antidote.

Feeling like you are an incompetent parent can induce feelings of shame and loneliness. Sometimes our behaviour, and the behaviour of children, can be confronting to others, causing us to self-blame, and feel like 'bad' parents.

These feelings can then disconnect us increasingly from our family and friends.

Families are involved in many social systems such as health, education, sport and recreation, and the justice system. These complex systems do not easily adapt to all the unique and diverse needs of young people and families.

Families themselves are complex webs of many dynamic relationships.

Challenging behaviour used in the home by young people against other family members can be an expression of the complexity of these relationships within the large social systems and within the family's system.

Blaming the parents or the children for this behaviour is the least likely strategy to effect a positive outcome.

'Loneliness is people not understanding what I am experiencing.'

Coming to a group where parents are supported to speak openly about their struggles to be good parents stands as a protective factor against shame and subsequent loneliness. Children and parents feel less singled out, different, judged and lonely.

Relationships Australia Canberra and Region conducts Non-Violent Resistance parenting groups based on the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, that help parents to take a stand against the difficult behaviours of family members by approaching others – friend and community members.

We have adapted our program so that it is culturally safe for parents from Aboriginal communities.





The Wheel of Well Being

Queenslanders are a healthy lot, with more than half the population (55 per cent) reporting very good or excellent physical health. When it comes to mental health, however, it's a different picture – just one in seven (15 per cent) report their mental is excellent or good.

Relationships Australia Queensland is working hard to improve rates of mental health through a range of innovative strategies funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission.

One of those strategies is the health promotion program, Wheel of Well Being (WoW), originally developed by the National Health Service in the United Kingdom in 2008, and now used globally. WoW is based on positive psychology and backed by research that shows particular practices in daily living enhance personal wellbeing and resilience.

The WoW program was implemented by staff at Relationships Australia Queensland in 2016, predominantly in Logan and the Southern Moreton Bay Islands. Since then Relationships Australia has focusing on spreading the WoW program throughout Queensland, including training and supporting practitioners in a range of sectors.

Since April 2018, the program has been expanded to include presentations to community members and service providers, and re-establishment of the Logan WoW practitioner support group. The program now also incorporates research projects in partnership with Griffith University that will contribute to the evidence base underpinning the program, and allow for quality improvement and refinement in the future.

Through the program, trained practitioners raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing, to ensure that everyone has what they need to flourish. This includes:

- information and activities on the six dimensions of wellbeing emphasised in the program (body, mind, spirit, people, place and planet)
- a sense of control, and
- equitable access to money, power and resources.

The program has received widespread support, including from a Griffith University evaluator who commended Relationships Australia and their partners for conducting 'gold standard' community development, alongside community members.



Circular Head Aboriginal Centre Outreach Service

Distance and isolation mean that people in rural and remote communities often have greater difficulty than people in major cities accessing suitable support and services.

Relationships Tasmania is working to ensure that people in the far north west coast – particularly in one of the most remote areas of the state, the Circular Head municipality, don't miss out on the support and assistance they need.

Funded by the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, Relationships Australia Tasmania is providing a range of outreach services and support to the Circular Head community.

Working out of the Circular Head Aboriginal Centre (CHAC), our practitioners provide mental health support to clients as well as support for relationships, family breakdown and drug and alcohol use.

Our practitioners recognise that a core determinant of the success of outreach services is due to the strong relationships built with not only clients but also with other allied health professionals and referral partners in the area.

Strong relationships with the CHAC Medical Centre generate the majority of referrals to our program.

Outreach is offered at no cost to community members, ensuring income and the financial situation of residents does not exclude them from benefiting from the service.

Supporting Northern Territory children through the Royal Commission

During 2017-18, Relationships Australia Northern Territory provided free support services to young people and families affected by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Danila Dilba Health Service, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress were invited to partner and offer their expertise in the delivery of the service.

Program partnerships were established that determined the scope and edges of the different services which allowed for pooling of resources, staffing and vehicles essential for innovative programs to operate.

A unique model of counsellors and Aboriginal and Islander Cultural Advisors working side by side with each client to promote, two-way learning and prioritised cultural support alongside clinical interventions.

Flexibility was required to engage clients referred to the service, providing them with a choice in the type of service they received.

Trauma was present in all our work; every client had a trauma history as did their mums, their grandmothers, and their fathers.

It was clear the clients had been affected by the stolen generation policies, by abuse, domestic violence, exposure to child protection agencies and to youth justice agencies and detention environments.



RA Northern Territory had to be innovative in our approach. Mentors within the family were generally absent, and there was nothing keeping young people connected to culture.

“There’s therapy in culture, it’s been proven over thousands of years; we have our own ways of overcoming trauma. But how do you have culture resurface for these young people? When we started we found it to be a huge barrier,” Jeffrey, one of the advisors said.

To overcome these barriers, Jeffrey found similarities in cultures between clients. He said the Cultural Advisors would talk with clients about how important stories are in Indigenous culture and how they can look for messages in those stories so they could draw on that knowledge to resurface their identity.

“For my clients, if someone from their tribe can come in and talk about their identity, what their cultural responsibilities are, it outweighs all the other stuff that they’ve been through. It shifts their focus and responsibility somewhere else; it’s a way of getting them to understand, I have a purpose,” Jeffrey said.



IMAGE: National Empowerment Project, Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing participants and families, Cultural Outing to Boyagin Rock, Brookton.

Reducing social exclusion and disadvantage

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) was developed from extensive community consultations across eleven sites in Australia in response to high rates of psychological distress, self-harm and suicide within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As part of the project, Relationships Australia Western Australia has worked in partnership with local Aboriginal community organisations to deliver the Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program.

This program, delivered by Aboriginal facilitators to adult Aboriginal men and women, helps reduce social exclusion and disadvantage by helping participants feel empowered, and to form strong, supportive relationships with one another.

Healing and leadership sessions are an effective way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to begin to address the sense of powerlessness and disconnection from cultural, social and emotional wellbeing as a result of historical and social determinants.

“I have a better understanding of relationships for me and my family and since doing this program I’ve been able to find myself again which was very hard before.”

Support is also provided to participants after they have graduated, and culturally appropriate engagement strategies continue to help address social and emotional wellbeing of the graduates, such as life skills programs, planning community events, cultural activities and healing programs.

Funded by the Western Australia Primary Health Alliance, the 12 week free program has run at three locations in the Perth metropolitan area. Since its launch in November 2017, 46 people have graduated and participants at all locations are continuing to engage in a local community project.

Based on evaluations, the program significantly changed the lives of participants and their families, with many emphasising stronger cultural connectedness and reduced sense of loneliness.

The program is expected to continue in the future with many more community members accessing and benefiting from this valuable program.

To learn more about the National Empowerment Project visit nationalemPOWERMENTPROJECT.ORG.AU

Men Engaging New Strategies program

Men seeking assistance to change abusive behaviours are benefitting from the Men Engaging in New Strategies – MENS – program run by Relationships Australia Tasmania.

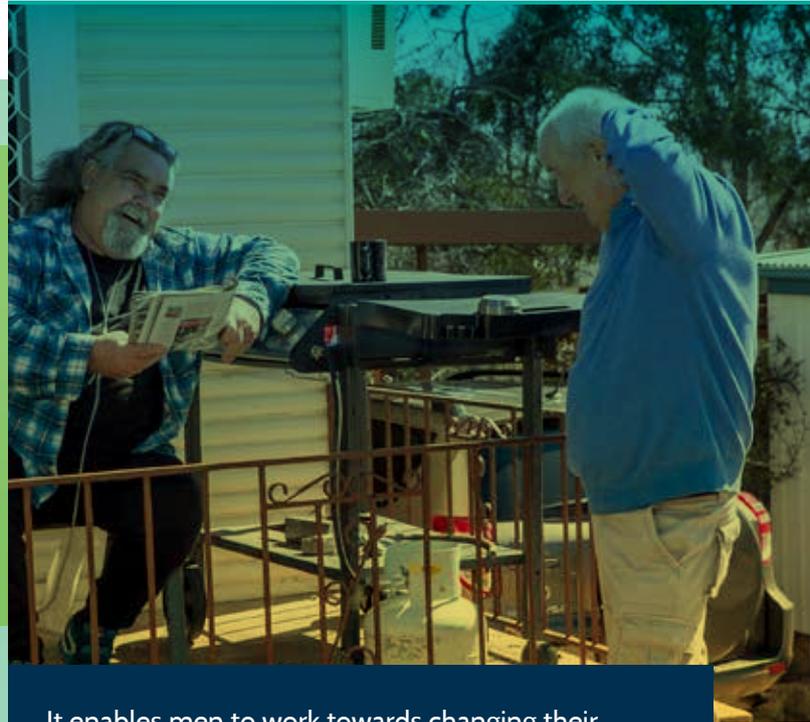
Funded by the Tasmanian Government since 2016, the program is the first funded family violence perpetrator program in the community sector in the state.

Heavily informed by the Relationships Australia Victoria 'No to Violence' training and Relationships Australia New South Wales 'Taking Responsibility' program, MENS is designed for men who are perpetrators of low-to-medium risk family violence and ready to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour.

The program engages men in four pre-group one-on-one counselling sessions, 10 weeks of closed group sessions and four post-group one-on-one counselling sessions, followed by a reunion.

It enables men to work towards changing their behaviours and receive support in gaining an understanding of issues that may be preventing change.

One man described the program as being 'a supportive environment' where he could talk about current issues and 'receive thoughtful and informed suggestions and strategies to help support him to change'.



It enables men to work towards changing their behaviours and receive support in gaining an understanding of issues that may be preventing change.

The program is co-delivered by male and female facilitators who work together to provide men with new strategies and understandings that assist them to behave safely and respectfully. This behaviour is modelled by the co-facilitators.

The safety of partners, women and children is central to this program, with practitioners ensuring women and children are safe from harm and abuse.

Current or former partners of the participants are provided with information regarding the MENS program, put in contact with family violence support services, and are given the opportunity to provide feedback about their ex-partner or partner's progress.

The Department of Justice also provides information of the participants family violence convictions.



Connecting with Others in Older Age is a research partnership between Relationships Australia Victoria and Swinburne University.

Connecting with Others in Older Age

Connecting with Others in Older Age is a research partnership between Relationships Australia Victoria and Swinburne University.

The project, supported by a grant from the Iverson Health Innovations Research Institute, is investigating the role that digital platforms can play in preventing and addressing loneliness in older adults between the ages of 65 and 75.

Drawing on the research, an interactive, multimedia-rich prototype website is being developed using a broad approach of active ageing and wellbeing, to help older people to plan for retirement and stay connected and purposeful from the outset of their journey, through retirement.

By taking a life course approach to ageing well, it will offer interactive information and wellbeing checkups, as well as tips and strategies for planning ahead. It will also provide resources for those experiencing, or at risk of, undesired social isolation and loneliness.

A 'salutogenic' (or a stress and coping model) approach will be adopted that will aim to integrate an understanding of the processes that move people towards, or keep people at, the health-ease pole as opposed to the disease or pathogenic pole.

This approach also seeks to take into account the way in which people make sense of the world, use the required resources to respond to it, and feel that these responses are meaningful and make sense emotionally.

Implementing a flipped health care approach using consumer consultations, a series of focus groups have been conducted with members of the target age group to gain insight into their experiences in transitioning into and through retirement. The opinions and preferences of the focus group participants will inform the website's structure, design and content.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Games Group

The Games Group at headspace Bairnsdale, for which Relationships Australia Victoria is the lead agency, offers a supportive space for young people aged 12 to 25 who have autism to relax, play board games, connect with peers and learn more about engaging with health services.

The Games Group commenced in 2017 after headspace Bairnsdale's Youth Advisory Group identified that young people with autism, including existing headspace Bairnsdale clients, lacked social supports in the Bairnsdale and greater East Gippsland area.

This service gap was contributing to increased isolation and loneliness, and with a significant proportion of young people in the area with Autism, the group was designed to meet this specific unmet need.

Clinicians and disability support workers at headspace facilitate the fortnightly group in inclusive and sensitive ways to meet group and individual participant needs.

They use clear and consistent routines, and use visual symbols instead of literacy-based forms and signage, to share information and engage with players.

In 2017–18, the group was very well-received, with regular attendance by participants, many of whom travelled long distances to engage with their fellow group members. Participants have provided positive feedback on the value of the group.



“The Games Group provides an opportunity for the participants to learn new social skills in a safe and supported environment, and have some fun at the same time. There has been significant improvement in the group members’ abilities to try new things and discuss their ideas with one another. The young people’s parents and carers have also expressed their appreciation for the connections this group has offered and the respite it provides.” – *Games Group Facilitator*

“Last week one young man was so excited as headspace had purchased the game he had requested. He was so happy to be going along that night. He seems to love the group.” – *Local community member*

Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Services

Elder abuse can be defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person'. It can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.

There is an increasing awareness throughout Australia of the high prevalence of elder abuse, an issue that has been gaining attention both at state and Commonwealth government levels.

At Relationships Australia, we identified various forms of elder abuse in our casework with families participating in a twelve-month national pilot of elder relationship services in six locations, including one in Brisbane's Moreton Bay area. We have been advocating on elder issues, including elder abuse, following the findings that were revealed in our pilot evaluation report.

In the past 24 months, state and territory governments are increasingly responding to elder abuse through a number of initiatives.

In 2018, Relationships Australia Queensland launched the Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service, funded by the Queensland Government.



The service is a client-centred service model, delivered in five locations across the state: in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. It incorporates the learnings from the national pilot and the skills and experience of our professional workforce in delivering services to vulnerable families.

The service allows the older person access, by phone or in person, to a dedicated case manager who will work to develop an individualised case plan and follow the older person's progress through various supports provided to meet their needs for safety, protection, quality care and, where possible, functional relationships with key people in their lives.

Case managers can also facilitate referral to our Legal Advice and Information Service, provided by our partnered community legal centres, to enable older people to access confidential and professional legal advice to assist them in making decisions regarding their individual circumstances.

Another key component of the service is to educate and inform communities about elder abuse, including the risk factors, the signs and impacts of elder abuse, and where to seek help when abuse or neglect is identified. The service aims to prevent elder abuse through empowerment and knowledge of protective actions that older people can put in place to improve their safety.



How we help clients shift from loneliness to connection

Life events and transition points can often put family members at risk of isolation and loneliness. At particular risk are couples and family members who experience family breakdown through separation and divorce.

When it comes to working with an individual client's experience of loneliness, RANSW employs four intervention strategies: improving social skills, enhancing social support, increasing social contact and addressing maladaptive social cognition.

Our practitioners tailor their approaches and strategies for each client rather than incorporating a one-size-fits-all solution for loneliness.

While practitioners will validate their clients' feelings of loneliness, they will also encourage clients to use those feelings to put into practice the skills they have learnt while using our services.

Focusing on the client's strengths, interests and efforts can break feelings of isolation.

Trish* was a divorced woman in her 30s. She came to our service after she had initiated a divorce upon realising she had strong feelings for another woman.

In addition to the loss and grief experienced in the dissolution of her marriage and the loss of connection to mutual friends, her feelings of isolation were amplified by homophobic attitudes and her experience of marginalisation and discrimination.

As she tried to form new relationships, Trish was also daunted by the prospect of knowing how to forge new links with the LGBTQI community and balancing her responsibilities as a single parent.

Our counsellor explored with Trish the idea of pursuing interests, rather individuals, and in her process of self-discovery, she realised she liked singing, theatre and reading, subsequently joining a choir and then a book club.

She began to enjoy her post-divorce life, feeling less lonely and more confident in social gatherings with new people.

**Names have been changed.*

Supporting vulnerable families in the first thousand days

A key initiative in redesigning the South Australian Child Protection system has been the development of new programs that provide integrated case management support for vulnerable new parents.

In partnership with the South Australian Department of Education, Department for Child Protection, Women's and Children's Hospital, and Child and Family Health Services, Relationships Australia South Australia was funded to establish the Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks (CFARN) in Western Adelaide. This has led to an effective interagency collaboration to strengthen parenting during the first 1,000 days of a baby's life.

We also have partnerships with Aboriginal leaders and organisations that assist us to enable young Aboriginal parents – who themselves have often been dislocated from their culture, community and family – to enhance the wellbeing of their infants.

In February, restorative practice leaders from Leeds in the United Kingdom provided training for the government and non-government workers involved with all CFARNs. The workers learnt about successful child protection reforms in Leeds based on restorative practice approaches, including interagency collaboration, family group conferencing, and a commitment to measuring outcomes.

In keeping with the restorative practice approach, our Western CFARN workers use the Family DOORS universal screening processes, which enables them to detect protective as well as risk factors. This ensures case plans build on family strengths, respond holistically to identified risk, and define measurable goals.

Reorienting and building a better system has led to significant improvements in child protection, ensuring our most vulnerable families are connected to services when they need them most.

Conferences, Presentations and Publications

International conferences

Mance, P. (2018, May). "I'm worried about mum": Findings from Relationships Australia's elder relationship services trial, 9th World Summit & Symposium on Elder Mediation, Bristol, United Kingdom.

National conferences seminars and presentations

Bailey, A. (2017). *What were we thinking! Doing seriously complex child inclusive work.* Paper presented at the Family & Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) Child Inclusive Practice Forum, Adelaide, SA.

Bailey, A., & Nesbitt, S. (2017). *Family Safety Navigation Model – pilot role.* Paper presented at the Partnership of Victorian Family Relationship Centres Conference, Docklands, Melbourne, VIC.

Belmont, N., Hatch, M. L., Fell, T., & Handy, F. (2017). *Schools and families working together – how to successfully navigate relationships.* Paper presented at the Parents Victoria Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Bickerdike, A. (2017). *Addressing Cultural Issues When Making Decisions in the Best Interests of Children* Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Association of Family & Conciliation Courts, Melbourne, VIC.

Bickerdike, A., Brook, A., & McDonald, E. (2017, August). *Relationships Australia's response to questions taken on notice.* Paper presented at public hearing - Parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence, Canberra, ACT.

Broady, T., & Gray, R. (2017, September). *Entrenched conflict between separated parents: Practice and policy implications of extreme emotions.* Paper presented at the 16th Australian Social Policy Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Broady, T., & Gray, R. (2017, October). *Entrenched conflict among separated parents: On the role of group programs in facilitating change.* Paper presented at the Institute of Group Leaders Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Broady, T., & Gray, R. (2017, December). *Group work as a means of addressing intersections between child protection and domestic violence.* Paper presented at the 3rd STOP Domestic Violence Conference Australia, Melbourne, VIC.

Curran, S. (2017, February). *Conflict resolution and interpersonal relationships.* Panel discussion with Q & A at the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Curran, S. (2018, February). *The role of counselling and mediation in responding to Elder Abuse.* Paper presented at the Boroondara Family Violence Network Meeting, Melbourne, VIC.

Curran, S. (2017, September). *Elder abuse, situational contributors, and prevention strategies.* Paper presented at the Swinburne University Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults Seminar, Melbourne, VIC.

Davies, F., & Dunn, M. (2017, November). *Raising the bar: Using a self-reflection tool to improve facilitation skills in relationship education.* Paper presented at the Marriage and Relationship Educators Association of Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Decrea, S. (2017, October). *New Way? Let us reclaim 'old way' – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.* Paper presented at the Australian Association of Family Therapy Annual Conference, Adelaide, SA.

Decrea, S., & Michelle, K. (2017, October). *Working Better With Nunga Kids.* Workshop presented at the Australian Family Therapy Conference, Adelaide, SA.

Elkington, L. (2017, October). *Including Children in Interdisciplinary Collaborative Practice*. Paper Presented at the Child Inclusive Practice Forum: We are all in this together, Adelaide, SA.

Elkington, L. (2018, May). *Including Children in Interdisciplinary Collaborative Practice*. Paper presented at the Greater Sydney Family Law Pathways Network: Doing it Differently; Improving outcomes for children, parents and professionals in family law matters, Sydney, NSW.

Elvery, S. (2018, February). *Assessment practice to optimise outcomes for Men's Behaviour Change Programs*. Paper presented at the Working with Men to End Family Violence Conference: Ensuring the safety of women & children, Sydney, NSW.

Elvery, S. (2017, October). *'I want what she is having' - Replenishment for group workers and their supervisors*. Workshop presentation at Institute of Group Leader's Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Elvery, S. (2017, October). *Perspectives from 'The only woman in the group'*. Workshop presentation at Institute of Group Leader's Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Garrett, M., & Hardwick, C. (2017, October). *From Psychoeducation to Multi Family Therapy*. Paper presented at the Institute of Group Leaders Conference: Compassion – Communication – Connection – Capturing Learning: Challenges in a changing world, Sydney, NSW.

Gray, R. T., & Elvery, S. (2018, June). *Finding from a research based evaluation of a domestic violence survivor group trialed in alcohol and other drug settings*. Paper presented at the NADA Conference, Exploring Therapeutic Interventions, Sydney, NSW.

Gray, R., Broady, T., & Mance, P. (2017, September). *How Australians find counsellors and engage in the work with private practitioners*. Paper presented at the Australian Counselling Association National Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Grant, J. (2017, June). *From the trenches: Using restorative conferencing practices as new ways to repair/restore family relationships in high conflict battles*. Paper presented at the Resolution Institute Webinar, Melbourne, VIC.

Flint, J., & Lee, J. (2017, October). *The DOORS App demonstration*. Demonstration at the Relationships Australia SA launch of the DOORS App, Hindmarsh, SA.

Flint, J., Lee, J., & McIntosh, J. (2017, November). *e-Screening as a tool for connecting the dots to learn about risks to family wellbeing*. Paper presented at the Family and Relationships Services Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Gray, R., Newton-John, T., Lee, J., & Ralfs, C.R. (2016, September). *From person to patient, and partner to carer: the transitions and transformations of couples affected by chronic illness*. Paper presented at the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Hamer, J., Gray, R., & Walker, T. (2018, June). *What's the best service response for sexually and gender diverse people experiencing violence and abuse in their intimate/domestic relationships?* Paper presented at the Pride of Place Mardi Gras 40th anniversary conference, [Symposium] Sydney, NSW.

Iqbal, A. (2017, August). *Lost in Translation: Embracing the challenges of working with families from a humanitarian background*. Paper presented at the Settlement Services International Cultural Shift Conference - Cultural Shift: From Settlement to Belonging, Sydney, NSW.

- Kelly, M., French, A., & Lee, J. (2017, November). *Universal Screening: The reasons why...* Paper presented at the Family and Relationships Services Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.
- King, A. (2017, August). *Engaging Men's Responses to Family Violence*. Paper presented at the Illawarra & Shoalhaven Families NSW Networks for Child & Family Workers Workshop, Kiama, NSW.
- King, A. (2017, August). *Multi-sensory approaches to boosting child visibility in work with men*. Paper presented at the Child-Centred Approaches to Ending Family Violence Conference, Melbourne, VIC.
- King, A. (2018, February). *Multi-sensory approaches to boosting child visibility in work with men*. Paper presented at the Working with Men to End Family Violence Conference, Sydney, NSW.
- Kelly, M., French, A., & Lee, J. (2017, November). *Universal Screening: The reasons why...* Paper presented at the Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.
- Kriaris, B. (2017, October). *You are not alone*. Paper presented at the National Suicide Prevention Conference, Darwin, NT.
- Kriaris, B., & Hanna, P. (2017, July). *You are not alone*. Paper presented at the SA Collaborative Projects Symposium: 'No one should have no one' - Campaign against loneliness and social isolation, Adelaide, SA.
- Lee, J., Muirhead, J., & McIntosh, J. (2017, October). *Universal risk screening as a tool to identify client vulnerability in family and relationship counselling*. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Family Therapy Conference, Adelaide, SA.
- Lye, C. (2018, May). *About Relationships Australia Victoria in northern Melbourne*. Paper presented at the Doctors in Secondary Schools Forum, Melbourne, VIC.
- Mance, P. (2017, November). *Elder relationship services trial evaluation: preliminary findings*. Paper presented at the Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.
- Mance, P. (2018, February). *I'm worried about mum*. Paper presented at the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, Sydney, NSW.
- McDonald, E., & Opoku, S. (2017, October). *Early matters: Strengthening families with an evidence informed framework*. Paper presented at the Outcomes Practice Evidence Network (OPEN) Child and Family Services Research Symposium, Melbourne, VIC.
- McPherson, M. (2017, July). *#TeamChatTY Schools Program - Combining Lived Experience with Practical Advice to Build Resilience in Young People*. Paper presented at the Suicide Prevention Australia Conference, Brisbane, QLD.
- Milic, J., & Lohan, A. (2017, November). *Evaluating the effectiveness of motivational interviewing in a community gambling help service*. Paper presented at the National Association on Gambling Studies Conference, Melbourne, VIC.
- Ndi, S., & Oudih, E. (2017, November). *Cultural Competency in HIV work and Community Mobilisation*. Paper presented at the Australasian HIV & AIDS Conference, Canberra, ACT.
- O' Callaghan, M., & Opoku, S. (2017). *I like, like you UP*. Paper presented at the Journey to Evidence Base for Programs with Wicked Issues Forum, Cardinia, VIC.
- O' Callaghan, M., & Opoku, S. (2017). *Repair-enting*. Paper presented at the Journey to Evidence Base for Programs with Wicked Issues Forum, Cardinia, VIC.
- Oudih, E., & Salih, N. (2017, November). *HIV Peer Support Model*. Paper presented at Australasian HIV & AIDS Conference, Canberra, ACT.

Pullen, J., & Curran, S. (2018, February). *Steering the right path – a prevention approach to elder abuse*. Paper presented at the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Ray, M., & O'Neil, K. (2017, November). *Better Second time around? How consumer's voices restore trust in institutions as Forgotten Australians age*. Paper presented at the Family and Relationships Services Australia Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Rahimullah, R. (2017, November). *Attrition in relationship counselling – Underlying factors*. Paper presented at the Family and Relationships Services Australia National Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Roche-Bolger, B. (2018, May). *Child Inclusive Practice*. Paper presented at the Greater Sydney Family Law Pathways Network: Doing it Differently; Improving outcomes for children, parents and professionals in family law matters, Sydney, NSW.

Ryder, A. (2018, June). *The Journey toward Holistic Aboriginal Elders Care and Connection to Community*. Paper presented at the University of Western Australia Leading Innovation through Diversity Research Forum, Perth, WA.

Ryder, A., & Gurgone, M. (2017, October). *Caring that enables our culturally diverse Elders to lead a meaningful life*. Paper presented at the Better Practice Rethinking Aged Care Conference, Perth, WA.

Shaw, E. (2018, May). *Mentoring or Monitoring – Impossible Bedfellows?* Paper presented at the Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) Inaugural Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Shaw, E. (2018, June). *Embedding Organisational Values*. Paper presented at The Ethics Alliance (The Ethics Centre): Embedding Values & Principles, Sydney, NSW.

Sheehan, M. (2017, November). *If you continue to raise your voice, we will have to ask you to leave! Whatever happened to compassion in mental health care?* Paper presented at the International Psychiatry and Mental Health Conference, Melbourne, VIC.

Sheehan, M. (2017, November). *If you continue to raise your voice, we will have to ask you to leave! Whatever happened to compassion in mental health care?* Paper presented at the National Mental Health Summit, Sydney, NSW.

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