

Reaching out

A close-up photograph of a Black woman with a warm, joyful smile. She is wearing a vibrant, patterned shawl in shades of orange, red, and brown. Her hair is pulled back, and she is wearing large, dark, circular earrings. The background is softly blurred, showing a wooden surface and a white object, possibly a cup or container.

Relationships Australia

VICTORIA

Annual Review 2009/10

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Members of the Traralgon community created an 'Everyone Belongs' sculpture at an event organised by RAV in conjunction with the Traralgon Neighbourhood House for Harmony Day.



President's foreword

The 2009/10 year ended with uncertainty about the level of future funding from the Australian Government.

The Government's 2010 budget announcement about reduced funding for family counselling and dispute resolution, could have an impact on our ability to deliver services from July 2011 at the same level as in previous years.

Like other community-based providers in the sector, Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) experienced strong demand in the past financial year, with waiting lists for services at most of our centres.

We have conveyed our concern about the proposed changes through the sector's peak body, Family Relationship Services Australia, and will make our own representations in coming months.

The Board was also disappointed that our federal CPI funding increase for 2010/11 was only 1.4%, 0.8% less than expected. The cut will require us to implement cost-saving initiatives, and place a greater emphasis on pursuing opportunities to grow revenue.

The budgetary situation in the next 12 months will be tight. However, the Board is confident that with the support of management, our dedicated and capable staff will continue to place a high priority on meeting the needs of our clients and the community.

The Board reviewed the organisation's strategic priorities during the year, which among other things, reaffirmed our strong commitment to provide services to diverse client groups.

The organisation increasingly supported people from other cultures with differing values and traditional family structures.

We established strong and collaborative relationships with multicultural community groups and agencies, migrant resource centres, and other service providers.

These invaluable partnerships have enabled many of our centres to develop programs that are helping members of established and emerging migrant communities.

At the end of 2009, we farewelled Michael Wootten, who resigned from the Board after five years of outstanding service. On behalf of my colleagues, I thank Michael for his exceptional contribution - especially in his role as Chair of the Audit Committee. The Board also welcomed a new member, Peter Gome, whose strong finance, marketing and business skills have added depth to our deliberations.

My thanks to all Board members for their continuing commitment and support. I also commend CEO, Michael Hunt, the senior management team and RAV staff for their unwavering focus on the wellbeing of our clients.

Judi Anderson
President



CEO's report

RAV completed another challenging yet productive year, which saw us help nearly 24,000 clients across Victoria.

The range of services included relationship, gambler's help, drought and bushfire counselling; family dispute resolution; family violence prevention; and relationship education.

In addition to providing these core services, RAV implemented initiatives to broaden our reach to different client groups.

With funding from the Victorian Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD), we began developing a pilot for an innovative and exciting project called Realives, which could see RAV become a provider of online counselling services in the future.

Realives will centre on establishing an online community of practitioners and clients, where traditional means of counselling, dispute resolution and training will be integrated with innovative web and social networking on computers and potentially smartphones.

The Realives project is being undertaken in partnership with Helpful Partners, an Adelaide-based communications company. If successful, it will help people who are geographically isolated or otherwise excluded from traditional face-to-face counselling.

RAV also partnered with Berry Street Victoria on its Open Place initiative, the support service for the estimated 500,000 people, and their families, who grew up in institutional and foster care in Victoria up until 1989. Open Place is being funded by the Victorian Government through the Department of Human Services (DHS).

RAV successfully tendered for the Forgotten Australians support service in partnership with Berry Street, the lead agency. During the year, RAV's involvement in Open Place included clinical supervision and professional development for the service's staff.

Our Melbourne Family Relationship Centre (FRC) passed the quality audit by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), being judged as compliant in all standards assessed.

The excellent report card demonstrated the diligence, hard work and commitment of our centre management and staff, who achieved this result while continuing to maintain the daily high standards to clients.

The coming year again will be challenging, as we tighten our belts in response to the reduction in our funding. Management and staff will respond as they always have by ensuring that our focus remains on delivering quality services.

My thanks to Board President, Judi Anderson, and other Board members for strongly supporting me and the senior management team throughout the year. I also thank all RAV staff for their continued commitment and valuable contribution.

Michael Hunt
CEO

Providing diverse services to Victorians

RAV's 12 centres provided a diverse range of services and programs throughout 2009/10.

Getting people talking

Our Shepparton Centre ran two programs, which focused on building relationships through encouraging people to talk.

It again sponsored the 'People Talking' program in partnership with the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOTAFE) Multicultural Unit. Run through the Shepparton Art Gallery, the program encouraged cross-cultural relationships, while developing art skills.

Art-led activities allowed participants to talk to others while they explored themes and created art, at the same time providing opportunities for non-English speakers to work alongside English-speaking adults.

The Centre's new 'Men Talking to Men' program introduced participants to the skills necessary to build healthy relationships.

It used the themes and concepts of RAV's innovative *Renovate your Relationship: A Manual for Men* booklet, focusing on the need to build good foundations and apply maintenance principles to relationships.

The inaugural program proved very successful, with participants acknowledging the value of speaking with other men about relationship issues and sharing ideas.

Working with family violence

A number of centres provided group programs to support people who have experienced violence and abuse.

The Cranbourne Centre's family violence prevention group programs for men were well attended, attracting participants from the City of Casey, Greater Dandenong and the Shire of Cardinia.

The Centre partnered with other providers in the Southern Metropolitan Region to improve access to men's behaviour change programs.

Every week, a male worker from the Centre attended the Dandenong Magistrates Court to talk to men about their use of violence, and provide options for them to stop. The court and the police have welcomed this initiative.

The Kew Centre expanded its family violence program by increasing counselling and group work services for men. It also created a new Partner Contact role to contact and support female partners of participants in the men's behaviour change program.

The Centre continued to collaborate with local service agencies and networks including Boroondara Family Violence Network, Manningham Family Violence Reference Group and Eastern Men's Behaviour Change Consortium.

The Sunshine Centre ran a successful program, 'Opening the Doors', for women who experienced family violence. The program offered a supportive, educational group experience with a focus on healing through art. It was open to the partners of men who attended the behaviour change program, women attending other RAV programs, and women referred from external services. Feedback has been very positive, epitomised by the following comments from some of the program participants:

"The art therapy worked on such a deep level to allow me to accept that I was in an abusive relationship and my children too."

"I feel more hopeful about my future, I will be OK and I am totally capable. Art therapy enabled me to express myself in a way that words could not."

The Centre has developed strong partnerships with other agencies in western and northwestern Melbourne to boost the range of family violence services.

One such partnership led to the establishment of a Vietnamese men's group, and another to a group for fathers from men's behaviour change programs who want to rebuild trust with their children.

The Greensborough Centre continued its work with the Mandated Men's Behaviour Change Group, a program it has supported for the past five years and one of two pilot programs in Victoria in this area.

Due to the group's cultural and ethnic diversity, the focus has been on developing a program that is pertinent and appropriate to the needs of individuals.

The program involved both group and individual work, supporting the men to take more responsibility for their behaviour in relationships with their partners and children.

Reaching out to the CALD community

The Traralgon Centre established strong links with the Sudanese community, the most recent migrant group to settle in Gippsland.

It co-facilitated a weekly Sudanese women's sewing group in Morwell in response to a concern about the need for a gathering place and opportunity to participate in a group activity. Run in partnership with Latrobe Community Health Service and Gippsland Multicultural Service, the service aimed to prevent depression and isolation by providing access to counsellors.

The Centre also ran a Sudanese men's group in partnership with the Gippsland Multicultural Service. The group met fortnightly and provided information on accessing employment and other services.

In March 2010, RAV sponsored a Sudanese business dinner attended by 100 people. The event was designed to create networks for Sudanese people with local businesses, addressing the issue of unemployment for newly-arrived migrants.

The Cranbourne Centre continued to work in partnership and collaboration with the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and the Springvale Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association of Victoria to provide group family relationship programs for Vietnamese, Sudanese and Afghan men.

Towards the end of 2009/10, the Sunshine FRC re-established ties within the Vietnamese community in the western suburbs, with progress made on forming a new Vietnamese Advisory Group.

Steps were taken to build a relationship with the region's Arabic community, with assistance from the Victorian Arabic Social Services.

The Centre also developed a program in partnership with the Latino-American Women's Association in Victoria Inc, entitled 'Strengthening Relationships for Intact and Separated Spanish Families' to be presented in English and translated into Spanish.

The Greensborough FRC developed a range of programs promoting access and equity for its culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.

One element has been staff training in cultural competence, along with undertaking research to identify cultural issues or difficulties that might emerge when CALD clients need a family relationship service.

The Centre worked closely with the Somali community, with considerable time spent listening, identifying community needs, and clarifying how the Centre's services could be relevant. Meetings held with elders enabled the Centre to work with the Somali women.

The Somali women's group requested parenting assistance and advice; these sessions were well attended with many questions emerging from the group about managing children growing up in a Somali-Australian context.

A reference group comprising eminent men and women from the Somali community, and staff from the Centre, had its inaugural meeting to identify ways of working together for mutual benefit.

Focusing on dads

Brimbank Council provided the Sunshine Centre with a \$35,000 grant to run its popular Fun

for Kids program in kindergartens across the municipality through the Brimbank Best Start initiative.

Fun for Kids was established in 2001 to boost men's confidence in relation to fathering, and to help men form positive relationships with their children and partners.

The Best Start funding will deliver six programs by December 2011, with a focus on literacy and numeracy.

The Centre and Hobsons Bay Maternal and Child Health service combined to run father inclusive new parents programs.

The programs provided new dads with an opportunity to learn and talk about how to deal with their babies, gain some confidence, and share the experience with other men.

The Cranbourne Centre's Men Separation and Parenting and Pit Stop group programs supported many fathers in the important role they play in the lives of their children.

RAV continued to support the DadsLink program, run in partnership with YMCA Victoria and the Life Is Foundation.

Activities in 2009/10 included a Father's Day brunch at Riversdale Park, Camberwell; an adventure camp at Phillip Island Coastal Discovery camp; the annual Dad's Day Out at the Quarantine Station at Portsea; and an environment camp at an eco farm on French Island.

Including grandparents

The Berwick FRC team developed an action research project on the needs of grandparents.

As part of the project, practitioners recognised that forms and letters needed to be more inclusive so that grandparents felt that the service was relevant to them.

During group supervision meetings held throughout the year, they considered case studies and reflected on what interventions could be used to achieve better outcomes for grandparents.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has requested updates on the research project, which in the coming year may include focus groups on grandparent issues and promoting the research to other community organisations.



Members of the Sudanese women's sewing group in Morwell.

Helping problem gamblers

Gambler's Help Grampians, run from our Ballarat Centre, continued to offer counselling and support to people impacted by gambling.

Counselling staff operated from two locations - Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh - working with clients, as well as conducting education sessions across the sector to ensure that practitioners were proficient in screening for problem gambling and aware of referral processes.

Gambler's Help won funding from the Department of Justice for a project that will look at two treatment models for addressing underlying trauma that could lead to problem gambling. The project will be evaluated by the Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre.

The Gambler's Help team again took part in Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, a joint, state-wide initiative between state and local governments, the gaming industry and the community sector.

Partnering with the legal community

Melbourne FRC formed a partnership with Victoria Legal Aid, Women's Legal Service Victoria, and Family Law Legal Service to deliver legal services to clients at the Centre.

The services are information sessions to parties participating in Family Dispute Resolution (FDR), FDR with legal assistance, and legal advice sessions.

The information sessions involved lawyers explaining the family law process, and the FDR practitioner providing information on the process of separation and the impact of separation on children.

Lawyers previously were not present at FRCs during the FDR process. All dispute practitioners and lawyers participating in this new program have undertaken the relevant inter-professional training.

Experienced family lawyers were available for appointments at the Centre to give advice to clients.

This initiative recognised the complex range of pressures and issues confronting separating parents, which could lead to protracted litigation unless specific advice was sought at the earliest opportunity.

Relating through education

Relationship education courses were held at a number of centres during the year, the main venue being the Kew Centre, which ran 11 courses.

Topics included parenting, making relationships work, managing difficult behaviour, coping with separation, and pre-marriage programs.

The Centre extended its program with seminars on 'Love, Money and Intimacy', 'Baby Makes 3' and 'Relationship Rescue'.

The Cranbourne Centre ran well-attended Making Relationships Work seminars for the Chinese community in collaboration with the Chinese Community Social Services Centre.

The Sunshine Centre offered the popular Good Connecting program for the first time to couples seeking to strengthen their relationships and resolve ongoing issues.

More than 1,000 people registered to undertake the online version of Good Connecting, published on the RAV website.



Leading the way in training

During 2009/10, RAV's registered training organisation (RTO), Training Ground, completed the subsidised accreditation program started the previous year, enabling Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners (FDRPs) to meet the Australian Government's revised accreditation standards.

By the conclusion of the program, Training Ground had issued more than 400 certificates.

As an RTO, Training Ground was able to conduct recognition of prior learning (RPL), enabling experienced FDRPs to gain the required qualification. RPLs were conducted for practitioners from Legal Aid, Centacare and other organisations during the year.

Seven people successfully completed the inaugural Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution course, graduating in December. A total of 29 participants enrolled in the two 2010 courses, with demand for a place in the course resulting in early enrolments for 2011.

Training Ground established two courses to bridge the gap between the three compulsory units required by the Attorney General's accreditation process and the full qualification of the Vocational Graduate Diploma.

RAV also began a process to become a Recognised Mediator Accreditation Body (RMAB) as part of our aim to be a state-of-the-art training provider in mediation and FDR. We expect this process to be completed in late 2010.

As in previous years, Training Ground offered consultation and training to many organisations. It conducted training and supervision for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute's palliative care team. It also undertook consultancies with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Odyssey House.

Training Ground developed a partnership with the Law Institute of Victoria to conduct regular training programs, including mediation training and a program titled 'Lawyers and the Language of Children' for professionals involved with children as part of their practice.

In 2009/10, a total of 34 people enrolled in the Specialist Course in Couple Therapy, which has strong links with Victorian universities. The course is an accredited component of La Trobe University's Masters in Couple and Relationship Counselling and Masters in Counselling and Human Services, and the University of Melbourne's Master of Social Work Clinical Degree.

As part of post-course training options, 12 clinicians undertook an internship, working with RAV clients for 12 months with weekly supervision.

A total of 24 people took part in the group supervision/study program, during which students working in groups of six had the opportunity to discuss a case from their work and the theoretical issues arising from the clinical practice.

The master video viewing program gave students the opportunity to watch master therapists working with a variety of couple presentations, using a range of different approaches.



Embracing cultural diversity

During 2009/10, we strengthened our commitment to provide services and support to members of CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We created two new positions to build internal cultural awareness, and facilitate delivery of culturally appropriate services to - and improved community engagement with - these communities.

Our commitment to CALD communities was further enhanced by the appointment of community liaison staff at some centres to build improved links with relevant community groups, government departments and agencies, and other service providers.

RAV established a social-inclusion staff-training program, highlighted by a professional development day for all staff in August 2009, which focused on working with cultural diversity. We engaged the Koorie Heritage Trust to roll out the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander component of the training.

RAV sponsored a number of events including the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) conference in Shepparton in October 2009 and the Diversity in Health Conference in Melbourne in June 2010.



RAV supported Harmony Day festivities for the African community in northern Melbourne.

At our centres, we supported Diversity Week and Harmony Day in March 2010, with centre staff sharing food that represented their diversity, culture and upbringing. We also sponsored an African community gala and social soccer tournament in Reservoir on Harmony Day in partnership with Darebin African Resource Centre (DARC).

RAV translated a variety of publications and brochures, including: our corporate brochure translated into 16 languages; men's migrant support group brochures into Arabic and Vietnamese; the Greensborough FRC brochure into Somali; and the Brimwest Early Intervention Services brochure into Vietnamese.

Our centres undertook a variety of programs and activities to engage with and promote access to services for migrant communities (see the services section on pages 5-8).

Left: Senior Community Projects Officer - Diversity and Social Inclusion, Romany Amarasingham, with a selection of materials translated into other languages.



Migrant DVD project

A major initiative was the production of *Building Strong Families*, a multilingual DVD to help new migrant families acquire information and assistance on the range of family services Australia-wide.

The DVD covers many of the issues new migrants deal with, including disorientation, culture shock and its effect on families, and parenting in a cross-cultural setting. It also provides information about the wide range of services available to strengthen families, and offers advice for dealing with the agencies.

Building Strong Families was developed in partnership with Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Adult Multicultural Education Services, Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association and DARC. RAV also worked closely with the FaHCSIA, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and other service providers in the community sector to complete the project.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community focus

RAV's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activities increased during the year, following the appointment of a dedicated liaison officer and the establishment of a representative working group to promote and support the program within the organisation.

Our Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) sponsored a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at the Maya Healing Centre in Thornbury in March 2010.

The forum gave participants the opportunity to speak up about service delivery at the FRCs and other RAV centres. It resulted in the formation of an Aboriginal Women's Consumer Council to address the lack of culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal women in the Thornbury area.

In May 2010, RAV, the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC) and the Life Is Foundation sponsored 'Healing through Ceremony' workshops by Dr Lewis Mehl-Madrona, of Lakota and Cherokee heritage.

Dr Mehl-Madrona, Education Director of the Coyote Institute for Studies of Change and Transformation in Vermont, USA, was invited to GEGAC to speak about traditional healing methods and their potential use for the Aboriginal community.

The Ballarat Centre placed an acknowledgement plaque in its reception area in July 2009 as a further step towards strengthening its relationship

with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).

The plaque was manufactured in Geelong from Wautharong Glass, and incorporates the Aboriginal motifs for watering holes, rain and mountains.

Over the past six years, the Centre has worked closely with BADAC to ensure all staff members are aware of cultural issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to provide a timely and responsive service to the district's Aboriginal community.



Supporting community recovery

Dealing with drought

RAV again supported Victorians suffering from drought, with funding from the Australian Government.

Our Traralgon and Shepparton Centres provided free counselling and organised community development activities to support those affected by drought in the Gippsland and Shepparton regions respectively. Through the Ballarat Centre, Mallee Family Care received funding to help rural and remote communities in the Mallee region.

Twelve years of drought in Gippsland has resulted in stress, isolation, financial difficulties and relationship strain. In response, the Traralgon Centre provided a range of services for many residents and farmers, including:

- Farmgate Outreach - counselling for farmers and their families in their own homes, in partnership with the Regional Financial Counselling Service. This service reached a group that traditionally would not access office-based therapeutic counselling services. It also complemented the Centre's existing outreach services to those living in more remote areas of Gippsland.
- A men's rejuvenation weekend in November 2009, for isolated men. Combining counselling support with fun activities such as camp cooking and four-wheel driving, the weekend offered both physical activities and an opportunity to connect with others.
- A women's retreat weekend for farming women, helping them reconnect with the community, establish new friendships and gain confidence.



In partnership with Gippsland Rural Outreach Workers Network, RAV organised a family camp in Coonawarra to help strengthen drought-affected family groups.

Many women have not had a holiday for an extended period due to financial constraints placed on them by the drought.

- Pamper days to help isolated women to strengthen social and support networks. Around 920 people benefited from various towns across Gippsland.
- Pit Stop, a program giving men a 30-minute health check, encouraging self-care in relation to health and wellbeing.
- A family weekend camp in Coonawarra in June 2010 to help strengthen family groups and establish new friendships. The camp involved workshops and fun activities, combining relationship education with social events.

Similarly, a range of events and innovative programs were implemented in the Mallee, including:

- Establishment of a local community op-shop, which became a focus for social interaction, and enabled informal counselling, information and referrals to be provided.
- Mental health training to raise awareness of mental wellbeing issues, including depression and suicide, in disenfranchised and unemployed youth.
- A forum to improve awareness of legal and advocacy services, and to seek community interest in developing a coordinated strategic response to regional legal issues.
- Information sessions on water irrigation.
- A 'girls' day out' attended by 120 women, which built social connections, strengthened networks, and improved awareness of local services.
- Development of a women's support group to share information, support and facilitate referrals for education and health.

The Shepparton Centre's drought program involved a number of initiatives:

- A succession-planning workshop near Euroa called 'Farming or What?' to help farmers approach, in a holistic way, the decision making process regarding whether to stay on the farm.

- Women's gathering workshops and dinners in Swanpool, Boho South and Bonnie Doon for women isolated or disconnected from the community, with the theme of sharing stories and celebrating womanhood.
- A men's night out, with a dinner and the opportunity to listen to local blokes who have come through their own health issues.
- A number of community events, such as an Australia Day barbecue, a bush dance, garden party and farmer's harvest dinner, all of which provided an opportunity to share stories and develop networks.
- A workshop to explore grief through art, and to develop skills to process grief in a different way.

Bushfire help for Gippsland

The Traralgon Centre continued to support the Gippsland community's bushfire recovery program, providing free counselling and a range of events and outreach services.

The Centre earned a Community Event of the Year award from the LaTrobe City Council for its Adolescent Recovery Action Day, held in Traralgon in October 2009 for bushfire-affected adolescents. Organised with other local agencies, the event provided attendees with practical strategies to cope with the impact of the fires on their lives and relationships.

Other initiatives included Making Relationships Work information sessions; kids recovery information sessions, organised by RAV and sponsored by the LaTrobe City Council; and pamper days.



RAV's Traralgon Centre received an Australia Day award for its Adolescent Recovery Action Day from the LaTrobe City Council.

Striving for professional excellence

RAV remained committed to maintaining the highest standards of professional excellence through our professional development, practice quality and research programs.

As part of our efforts to reach out to diverse communities, a professional development day was held for all RAV staff in August.

Presenting an array of ideas and strategies for working with CALD clients, the day featured a range of speakers, who gave important insights on the cultural differences practitioners could encounter. It included specific training for administration staff, management and practitioners respectively.

Practitioners were trained in the use of interpreters, with a focus on:

- The potential barriers, misunderstandings and/or issues that may be encountered when working with CALD clients in FDR.

- The ways our processes can be adjusted to allow for cultural sensitivities.

Regarding child development and child's best interests, professional development concentrated on how to incorporate and balance the advisory role of FDRPs with their facilitating role in helping parents to reach their own agreed arrangements.

The reconciling of child-development theories with individual children and family situations was also explored, as was additional training in property and financial settlement.

In December 2009, a review of child-inclusive practice provided further impetus for extending child-focused and child-responsive processes in FDR.

This new initiative provides both clinical support and child development consultancy for FDR programs.

Professional development in counselling concentrated on the developing clinical practice, with the opportunity for counsellors to explore evidence-based practice intellectually and practically.

Staff benefited from two training sessions over three days, in:

- What makes relationship counselling effective - according to the research.
- Emotionally focused therapy for couples - an empirically validated model.

RAV again partnered with the Victorian-Tasmanian branch of the Australian Association of Relationship Counsellors (AARC) to run the Work in Progress seminar series for counsellors and psychotherapists who work with couples and families.

Three seminars were held at the Kew Centre in 2009/10:

- 'Recognising and going beyond our fears', presented by Ingrid Glenn and Ivan Wilson, of Ongoing Change Out of Violence.
- 'Attachment processes in marital and relationship therapy: Some considerations for treatment and practice', presented by Dr Coral Brown, Director of the Cairnmillar Institute.
- 'Working with gay couples in a hetero-normative society', presented by Trish Thompson, Acting Clinical Manager at the Victorian AIDS Council/Gay Men's Health Centre Counselling Service.

The study aims to:

- Map profiles of clients seeking family dispute resolution.
- Determine how family violence influences the processes and outcomes of family dispute resolution.
- Examine changes in a range of indices across the pre-mediation, post-mediation and six-month follow-up period, and the impact of the mediation process and mediation decisions on these indicators.

Work also started on a study titled: 'Work, Love and Play in Diverse Australian Family Life' with RA National, the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and The Bouverie Centre.

The five-year study's primary interest is in same-sex parenting and children's outcomes.

It is expected to provide a broad and in-depth examination of a variety of factors that can have an impact on child outcomes, such as:

- How parents balance their working commitments and domestic arrangements.
- The characteristics and quality of the parents' relationship and how they parent together.
- The family's social, financial and practical resources and social networks.

Study findings will be used to inform and improve service provision to this client group.



Research

RAV is involved in three major projects funded by the Australian Research Council, reaffirming our commitment to research to better inform our clinical practice and service delivery.

In partnership with La Trobe University, we were in the final stages of a three-year study investigating the effectiveness and long-term benefits of couple counselling and the Good Connecting course.

In addition to producing better outcomes for our clients, this significant study will also have a national and international impact upon the practice of couple counselling and relationship education.

Again in partnership with La Trobe, RAV started a major longitudinal study into the impact of family violence on the FDR process and outcomes.



Meet the Board

RAV is governed by a Board of volunteer directors, who are responsible for the organisation's strategic and policy direction, and ongoing sound management.

The directors bring their combined experience in psychology, business, finance, marketing, law, organisational development and IT.

The Board met six times during the year to review the organisation's financial and operational performance.

It also spent a full day reviewing RAV's strategy, with input from the senior management team.

The Board has established committees to consider specific issues and make recommendations to it. Committees that operated in 2009/10 were Audit, chaired by Peter Gome; Strategy, chaired by Ronda Jacobs; Practice Quality, chaired by Lyn Littlefield; and Business Systems and IT, chaired by John Lovell.



Judi Anderson - President

Judi is the Principal of Judi Anderson & Associates, a consultancy firm specialising in organisation development, change management, outplacement and career development. She has many years' experience in senior management, including key roles with Crittenden's Wine Merchants, Myer Stores and Myer Grace Bros. Judi was also Associate Director of the Waite Group's Career Centre for six years. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Australian Institute of Management, OD Australia, Career Development Association of Australia and the Australasian Facilitators Network. Judi has been a Board member since 1995 and President since October 2007.



Ronda Jacobs - Vice-President

Ronda is currently the Managing Director of Catalent Australia/South East Asia, a Melbourne-based contract manufacturer of vitamin and pharmaceutical products. She is President of the Complementary Healthcare Council. Ronda was nominated for the Telstra Business Woman of the Year in 2004 and 2006. Her business experience includes marketing, strategic planning and leadership. Ronda has been a Board member since 2005, and Vice-President since December 2007.



Peter Boehm

Peter is an experienced business leader with more than 25 years' local and international experience as a director and senior executive with listed public and private company subsidiaries. He is a chartered accountant with banking qualifications, and industry experience in banking, personal finance and insurance, commercial lending, property development, funds management and professional and business advisory services. Peter is a former chairman of a UK-based industry trade association and is a member of the Frankston City Council Audit and Ethics Committee. He joined the Board in May 2008 and is a member of the Audit Committee.



Lyn Brodie

Lyn's career has spanned both the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. Her current role is Chief Executive Officer for the Gandel Charitable Trust. Lyn has extensive experience in marketing, communications and business development, for national and international companies. It was while working for an international organisation that she found her passion for corporate social responsibility, specifically corporate community partnerships. This led to her involvement with the not-for-profit sector, both on a voluntary and professional basis. Lyn joined the Board in 2008.



Peter Gome

Peter is an experienced CFO with an international career spanning over 30 years. He spent the majority of his career at BP with senior roles in Australia and overseas, including CFO positions in exploration, production and marketing. He has subsequently held a number of Australian CFO roles with mid-tier companies in the oil, transport and printing industries, blending his strong finance background with strategic business and marketing skills. He has lectured in the Master of Marketing and MBA programs at Monash University. Peter holds Fellow membership of both the AICD and CPA. He joined the Board in 2009.



Professor Lyn Littlefield

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 and specialist in couple, child, family and group therapy, as well as conflict resolution. Lyn has been a Board member since 1993.



John Lovell

John has more than 25 years' experience in the IT industry, both within Australia and internationally. His experience spans an array of significant IT projects, including pay TV and broadband initiatives. He also played a leading role in the introduction of ATMs and EFTPOS within Australia. Prior to returning to Australia, John was based in Hong Kong where he was responsible for IT infrastructure for the Walt Disney Company across Asia Pacific. Currently, he is responsible for IT infrastructure and projects for the Parliament of Victoria. John joined the Board in 2008.



Michael Shaw

Michael is an investment banker with private investment banking firm, Bristow Shaw & Company. He is executive chairman of Strategic Life Sciences Limited and SLS Managers Pty Ltd. He chairs the Shift Foundation Limited and Life Sciences International. Michael is a member of the Finance, Investment and Audit Committee of the Australian Psychological Society. He was President of RA National (in 1994 and from 1998-2001); chaired RAV's Audit Committee for 11 years and was RAV Vice-President from 1990 until October 2007. Michael has been on the RAV Board since 1990, and is a member of the Strategy Committee.



Paul Staindl

A member of the Board since 1999, Paul is an accredited lawyer specialising in family law, and is the Managing Director of Clancy & Triado. He has served on many committees in his professional capacity and also on a number of boards in the not-for-profit sector. He has chaired the Executive of the Law Institute Family Law Section. He also served on and chaired the Specialisation Board of the Law Institute for five years. He has published many papers on family law and participated in many seminars to the profession, the community and on radio.

Senior management*

Dr Andrew Bickerdike	General Manager Operations
Carole Baker	General Manager Projects
Edwin Lang	General Manager Services (to March 2010)
Max Wright	Senior Manager Practice Quality
Michael Muldoon	Senior Manager FRSP Operations
Gai Campbell	Senior Manager FRC Operations and Special Projects
Dr Ian Law	Senior Manager Business Development
Shiranthi Sivarajah	Senior Manager Finance
Carl Beeston	Senior Manager ICT Operations
Bronwyn Thwaites	Senior Manager Communications and Marketing
Sandy Hirschfield	Senior Manager People, Work and Culture (to March 2010)

*2009/10

Centre locations

Ballarat

1025 Sturt Street, Ballarat

Berwick Family Relationship Centre

1-2, 38 Clyde Road, Berwick

Cranbourne

199 High Street, Cranbourne

Croydon

8 Civic Square, Croydon

Greensborough

Banyule Community Health Centre

3/25-33 Grimshaw Street, Greensborough

Greensborough Family Relationship Centre

79 Grimshaw Street, Greensborough

Kew

46 Princess Street, Kew

City

Melbourne Family Relationship Centre

379 Collins Street, Melbourne

Shepparton

634 Wyndham Street, Shepparton

Sunshine

1st Floor Harvester Centre

4 Devonshire Road, Sunshine

Sunshine Family Relationship Centre

1 Clarke Street, Sunshine

Traralgon

1/42 Kay Street, Traralgon

Email: reception@rav.org.au

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