

Connecting people and communities



Relationships Australia
VICTORIA

Annual Review 2010/11

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President's foreword

The past financial year has been one of the most challenging in recent years as the organisation dealt with the implications of a significant reduction to our federal funding in 2011/12.

After several years of strong growth, we prepared for the cuts in funding to Family Relationship Centres (FRCs), counselling and post-separation services announced the previous financial year.

Confirmed in May 2011, the cuts will reduce our annual income by nearly \$1 million, and will require us to achieve cost savings across many areas of our operations. In addition, our federal CPI increase of 1.75 per cent was well below the inflation rate for the second consecutive year, a disappointing result.

Despite the difficult funding environment, the Board remains firmly committed to growth to ensure the organisation's long-term future.

We are working closely with senior management on strategies that will enable us to remain relevant in a changing sector, diversify our revenue sources and implement measures that minimise the impact of the reduced funding on our services to clients.

The past financial year saw the departure of two experienced and long-serving colleagues – former CEO Michael Hunt and Board member Paul Staindl.

CEO for eight years, Michael retired in October 2010 after 33 years with the organisation.

Under Michael's strong leadership, RAV reinforced our position as a leader in the sector in terms of service quality and delivery, professionalism and research. His drive and energy brought about considerable change and significant growth in recent years, all the while maintaining an absolute focus on

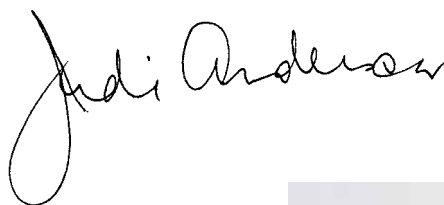
ensuring the best possible outcomes for clients, staff and the organisation.

The Board appointed Dr Andrew Bickerdike as Michael's successor. Andrew joined RAV as a counselling intern in 1991, subsequently holding a range of positions including counsellor, mediator, Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) program leader, Manager at the Kew Centre and General Manager Operations.

He is widely recognised in the community sector for his many achievements, particularly in the research area, and brings to the CEO role his vast experience in counselling, dispute resolution, research and operational and strategic management.

We also bade farewell to Paul Staindl, who resigned from the Board in March 2011 after 12 years' service. On behalf of my colleagues, I thank Paul for his exceptional contribution to our deliberations, particularly in the area of his specialty, family law.

My sincere thanks to all Board members for their strong support. Thanks also to Michael Hunt, Andrew Bickerdike and all RAV staff for their continuing commitment to the organisation's important work during such uncertain times.



Judi Anderson
President



CEO's report

RAV ended 2010/11 on a relatively positive note, with confirmation of continued federal funding, albeit at a reduced level, and anticipation about potential new opportunities that may come as a result of the Australian Government's sector reform.

Nearly 23,000 clients sought assistance from one of our 12 centres in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, slightly down on the previous year.

The reduction reflected a shift to more complex cases as we addressed the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable Victorians in line with sector reform.

In particular, we continued to implement a comprehensive program to increase our capacity to respond more effectively, in a culturally sensitive manner, to the relationship support needs of multicultural and Indigenous communities.

To that end, we worked closely with multicultural groups and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, building further the wide range of partners with whom RAV already has strong and productive relationships.

These include Australian and State Government departments and agencies, FRC consortium partners, and Victorian universities.

We also continued to work extremely well with other service providers, creating a very strong network of committed community organisations focused on the needs of Victorians.

During the past year several years, we have monitored the external environment to ensure we kept pace with change.

By doing so, we have been able to respond to legislative and other reforms in the family services sector without drawing attention away from our core focus of building the healthy relationships that are essential to the wellbeing of children, families, individuals and communities.

We have also met the challenge of maintaining the quality of our services in an environment of change and reduced funding.

Despite our tight finances, we are optimistic about the future and our ability to meet the needs of our clients and funders.

I wish to thank President, Judi Anderson, and other Board members for their assistance and support to me and the senior management team since my appointment as CEO in late 2010.

I also commend RAV's highly skilled staff for their willingness to adapt to change, and thank them for their great contribution. I am proud that they remain committed to our work and continue to achieve good outcomes for clients.



Dr Andrew Bickerdike
Chief Executive Officer



Connecting with Victorians through a diverse range of services

Over the past financial year, RAV provided a range of support services and programs to clients across the State from 12 centres, including four FRCs.

Working with family violence

Some of our centres ran programs to help men who have a problem with violent, controlling and abusive behaviour, as well as programs to support those who have experienced violence and abuse.

Sunshine Centre's holistic approach had three levels of group programs for the men, consistent partner contact for the women, and a *Women's Opening the Doors* group.

A number of clients stayed with the programs for some time, reflecting the reality that maintaining respectful, non-violent relationships required ongoing commitment. Group participants formed strong relationships with each other, contributing to reducing isolation and keeping families safe.

The centre has established strong links at all levels with regional agencies and women's and children's services, strengthening service integration and referral options. Department of Human Services feedback, following a quarterly review, stated that the Sunshine program was robust and responsive to community needs.

The centre's *Vietnamese Men and Family Violence* program was consolidated with a generous grant from the Legal Services Board. The reference group was expanded and an evaluation process established.

The Cranbourne Centre remained committed to its family violence prevention program, and its collaborative approach to delivering men's behaviour change.

As a member of the Outer South Peninsula Integrated Family Violence Partnership, it continued to develop strong relationships across the sector as part of an integrated response to family violence throughout the Cities of Casey, Greater Dandenong and the Shire of Cardinia.

Kew Centre ran *Inroads*, a behaviour change program for men that involved participation in both open and closed groups.

Among other things, the program provided participants with an opportunity to learn to take responsibility for their actions, to feel more in charge of their lives, and to share time with other men rather than be alone in dealing with the problem.

Supporting community recovery

The Traralgon Centre continued to support those affected by the 2009 bushfires in Gippsland.

Having rebuilt their homes, many families experienced mental health issues and financial hardship, with parents concerned about the effect of post-traumatic stress on their children.

The centre also provided support to those families who have been unable to rebuild their homes, and are still living in caravans or sheds.

The focus has been on helping to rebuild community spirit in the bushfire recovery phase. The centre offered free counselling and organised a range of free camps, events, workshops and pamper days. Such events included a family camp held at Karoonda Park with Gippsland Rural Outreach Workers Network (GROWN), offering parenting courses and self-care workshops for more than 80 people from bushfire affected and remote, rural communities.

A Men's Adventure Challenge weekend – held at Licola in partnership with the Salvation Army and the Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice – gave participants the chance to bond while experiencing new activities. Canoeing, rock climbing, archery and high ropes were popular, and were complemented by social time, during which the men could talk about their past experiences and their sense of a 'new normal'. The group comprised men affected by the 2009 bushfires, as well as those who were isolated and facing financial hardship.

Community pamper days – including one at the Traralgon South Community Hall attended by more than 200 people - offered a 'chill out room' where counsellors provided emotional support, as well as information, resources and relaxing activities.

More than 70 couples from Morwell and Warragul were treated to a night of dinner and the movies, allowing them to have a rare night out together, away from the everyday stresses and issues associated with trauma recovery.

In conjunction with the Salvation Army, the centre offered gardening workshops at which teachers from Community College Gippsland provided advice on fire retardant plants and trees, as well as tips for creating herb and edible gardens.

Helping problem gamblers

The Ballarat Centre continued to provide Gambler's Help services as part of a consortium in the Grampians region.

Its Gambler's Help counsellors took part in an Innovations project using two modalities, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprogramming (EMDR) and Be Set Free Fast (BSFF), with problem gamblers, funded by the State Department of Justice.

Research has shown that problem gamblers are more likely to suffer symptoms of unresolved trauma, and these two modalities are thought to be effective in addressing such symptoms.

Counsellors from the centre and Grampians Community Health undertook training in BSFF,

EMDR and Schema Therapy (a third-stage cognitive-behavioural therapy used to identify targets for the Energy Modalities). A smaller group travelled to Perth at the end of March for advanced EMDR training.

In working with clients, the counsellors will look at the prevalence of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms among problem gamblers, and the effectiveness of the modalities in relieving symptoms and reducing re-emergence of problem gambling behaviours.

During the year, RAV came out in support of the Australian Government's proposed gambling reforms, which could see the introduction of a mandatory pre-commitment scheme.

We publicly criticised the Australian Hotels Association's campaign against the proposed reforms, describing it as grossly misleading, self-serving and out of kilter with the reality faced by thousands of Victorian families affected by problem gambling.

New homes for two centres

The Ballarat and Croydon Centres relocated during the year, with minimal disruption to their operations.

In December, more than 50 people attended the official opening of the Ballarat Centre at its new location in Sturt Street by the Federal Member for Ballarat, Catherine King MP.

Ms King, who has a background in social work, spoke about the wide range of services that RAV has delivered to the Ballarat community over the past 30 years.

Centre Manager Sue Yorston provided a window into the centre's work by sharing a number of client feedback stories received through cards, letters and personal notes.

Guests at the opening included the centre's consortium partners, members of the legal community and the Family Law Court, local service providers and RAV staff.

In March, the Croydon Centre moved to a new location in Boronia, after outgrowing its former premises. The new centre will be more accessible to residents of the eastern suburbs.



In other developments, our Greensborough Centre negotiated a three-year lease extension with Banyule Community Health Service, further consolidating its presence in Melbourne's northern region.

It closed the Whittlesea outreach service, which had been operating for more than two years.

Art the path to healing

Our increasingly diverse client base benefitted from a range of art programs that promoted healing and self-discovery through creative pursuits.

The Shepparton Centre introduced *Journey of the Sisters*, a workshop in which local Indigenous women expressed their feelings and beliefs through art.

Building on earlier women's programs, and funded by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy, *Journey of the Sisters* provided women with the opportunity to paint their journey while talking about who they were and the challenges navigated in dealing with loss.

Two Elders led the artwork component, and one of the centre's counsellors facilitated the group.

Our Sunshine and Shepparton Centres both found art therapy effective in their women's family violence support groups. In one activity, participants created collages of two faces – representing the self and others' perception of the self – on the journey to regaining a sense of identity.

At Sunshine, each group member produced her own personal Mandala, a colourful and spiritual piece of

work. One participant's comments on their personal outcomes from the program described the healing experience:

"The ability to express oppressed fear and grief, the ability to understand what and why things occur and the worker's compassionate approach and translation of my feelings."

Art also proved to be a successful medium for connecting parents and children, and deepening their relationships. In conjunction with the Shepparton Art Gallery, the Shepparton Centre continued to offer a relationship education program, *Rainbow Kids - Art for Small Hands*.

The popular course provided guidance for parents and caregivers on how to interact with their child, with both an artist and facilitator leading the group.

A big day out for women

The Boronia Centre recognised International Women's Day in March with an event: *A Big Day Out: Celebrating Womanhood*.

Held at the Wyreena Community Arts Centre in Croydon, this women-only event was designed to create a safe environment for women to discuss relationship issues, particularly family violence.

More than 30 women attended, with the age of participants ranging from 20 to 70 plus.



Centre counsellors traced the history of the women's movement and the journey to the present, where International Women's Day is celebrated each year in countries around the world.

They also outlined the services provided by RAV and other local agencies such as Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) and Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), whose representatives were present.

There were presentations on parenting and relationships, and other activities including art and dance therapy and yoga.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many hoping for another 'big day out' next year.

Community outreach in Gippsland

The Traralgon Centre worked collaboratively with a number of agencies in the Gippsland area to offer free relationship workshops and events. Such activities provide participants with a chance to discuss issues of concern, identify and deal with stressors in their lives, and forge relationships with others in their community.

In the past year, events included:

- a three-day women's retreat at Wattle Point, held in conjunction with Gippsland Rural Outreach Workers Network (GROWN), which gave more than 60 women the opportunity to experience time away from business, family and rural stressors

- family fishing days at the historic seaside towns of Corinella and Port Welshpool, held in conjunction with local clubs. The days offered dads an opportunity to spend quality time with their children, while learning about local support services available and participating in discussions about responsible drinking
- a reunion for women who had previously attended an RAV community event or camp, where they were encouraged to examine what strategies had worked for them and provide feedback on their emotional journey since the first meeting
- *PitStop* – a program giving men a 30-minute health check, encouraging self-care in relation to health and wellbeing.

Hearing Forgotten Australians

RAV continued to be a significant provider of counselling to Forgotten Australians through our partnership with Berry Street Victoria's Open Place initiative, which is funded by the Victorian Government.

The Sunshine Centre experienced an increase in the work with Forgotten Australians; individuals who grew up in institutional and foster care in Victoria up until 1989 and have little experience of a nurturing childhood.

The work with these clients involved respectful witnessing of the disclosure of a lost childhood through which some gained the courage to seek information about their biological parents.

Some had worked through previous trauma, finding a place to locate this in their lives, rather than it taking over their lives, while others had been dealing with relationship breakdown.

Most of all they have found a place where they were heard, respected and "walked with" in their journey.



Importance of being a dad

RAV delivered programs to assist men with their relationships and parenting.

Through its *Men, Separation and Parenting* and *PitStop* programs, the Cranbourne Centre supported fathers in the important role they play in the lives of their children.

Participants found the group programs reassuring and helpful because of the skills and strategies they learned, and the discovery that they were not alone in some of the dilemmas and difficulties they faced.

The Sunshine Centre's *Reconnecting* sessions, provided in its men's groups, gave men who have used violence the opportunity to explore ways of reconnecting with their children through play.

The sessions recognised that dads continued to play an important role in their children's lives, and that they need ways to safely rebuild these relationships.

The centre's *Fun for Kids* program was expanded into Brimbank, with support from the local council's Best Start funding program.

Fun for Kids delivered early intervention for families through activities which particularly engaged fathers.

Participants from a diversity of cultural backgrounds attended and built confidence with their young children, enabling the mothers to have a break.

Additional local government funding has been granted for development of a dad's kit for fathers and workers, which is to be made available through local early childhood services.

RAV was involved in the production and launch of a publication of Australian poems called *Dear Dad*.

The Australian Poetry Centre and Relationships Australia joined forces to produce the poetry collection about fathers, bringing to the fore the richness of such primary relationships in people's lives.

The booklet includes wonderful contributions from former Victorian Premier, John Brumby; TV personalities, John Clarke and Alan Brough; esteemed poet, Chris Wallace-Crabbe; and children as young as nine years old.



The launch was held at Melbourne's Wheeler Centre, where Alan Brough and John Clarke gave personal and humorous insights into their own relationships with their fathers.

Centres of cooperation

Our traditional client centres in Sunshine and Greensborough joined forces with their respective local FRCs for the benefit of their clients.

The two Sunshine centres worked together more closely during the year, particularly in men's health week and on Aboriginal events. The building of staff relationships also enabled successful joint mediation work.

Similarly at Greensborough, the client centre provided in-house counselling for FRC clients.

This cooperation meant that clients did not need to go to another service for additional support and assistance. It also broadened what the FRC was able to offer directly to clients, while also assisting them to make more use of a family dispute resolution process by way of coaching.



Education boosts relationship skills

Our relationship education courses again proved popular during 2010/11.

The Kew Centre ran a total of 14 courses, including anger management groups for men and women, as well as *Relationship Rescue*, *Parenting* and *Coping with Separation* courses.

The Cranbourne Centre ran four *Making Relationships Work* seminars that examined the latest research on what makes relationships succeed and fail, together with some skill-building activities.

Attendance was high at all seminars, which were delivered in partnership with community centres at different venues throughout the City of Casey and Shire of Cardinia.

The Shepparton Centre ran a half-day workshop for men using a toolbox analogy to communicate information about relationship maintenance and improvement. Attendees received a valuable relationship guide entitled *Renovate Your Relationship: A manual for men*.

Disability and special needs

The Traralgon Centre ran a pamper day in conjunction with Gippsland Lakes Community Health, for parents of children with special needs.

While taking part in a relaxing craft activity, parents had the opportunity to discuss common issues, including self-esteem in children. Participants were also treated to massage and foot spas.

During the year, the centre also worked collaboratively with the Coinda Hill Disability Service on plans to develop a five-acre community garden.

Informative FRC forums

Sunshine FRC organised a lawyers forum designed to stimulate and encourage discussion on how the centre can work with lawyers in the western suburbs, and foster beneficial connections for effectively and proactively serving mutual clients.

The forum topic was *Lawyers and Mediators – Can this relationship last?* It covered current and future trends in family mediation and how these trends are changing family law practice.

In collaboration with the Victorian Family Pathways Network, the Berwick FRC hosted a forum on changes in the Children's Court involving the introduction of a new model for dispute resolution conferences intended to facilitate the early resolution of applications.

Federal Magistrate Maurice Phipps also provided an update on the highly successful Dandenong project, which is integrating the centre with other services in the area and the Federal Magistrate's Court in Dandenong.

Supporting a multicultural society

During 2010/11, RAV reinforced its commitment to diversity and social inclusion by implementing a comprehensive program of engagement and participation.

DVD for migrant families

A major project was the production and launch of *Building Strong Families*, a DVD for new migrants settling in Australia.

The DVD was launched in August at Parliament House, Victoria, by the former Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, the Hon Laurie Ferguson MP.

Other speakers were RAV President, Judi Anderson; former General Manager Operations now RAV CEO, Dr Andrew Bickerdike; and Federal President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Phong Nguyen.

The DVD is a candid, yet positive perspective on the challenges of settling in Australia, presented in the words of migrants who have already settled here, and the agencies that helped them.

Building Strong Families was produced in partnership with Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Adult Multicultural Education Services, Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association and Darebin African Resource Centre.

In producing the DVD, RAV also worked closely with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and other service providers in the community sector.

The DVD is being used by migrant resource centres and community-based services to assist families as they settle in Australia. DIAC also uses it as one of its resources in the Australian Cultural Orientation

Program (AUSCO) for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

Focus on diversity in sport

In November 2010, RAV and the Australian Sports Commission hosted a successful forum to promote cultural diversity in sport.

Held at AFL House, Docklands, the event was supported by collaborative partners – Melbourne Heart FC, the AFL and the African Resource Centre Inc.

About 60 people attended, including the Victorian State Director of DIAC, and representatives from FaHCSIA, local government, Victoria Police, other community sector service providers, state and national sports bodies, CALD community representatives, and local sports clubs.

The forum included presentations on family strengthening issues, the role of elite sport in the community, and the Soccer for Social Inclusion Project.

Participants discussed the barriers to participation, and ideas for moving forward, while making a commitment to continue promoting cultural diversity in sport.





Assisting Somali children through school

Greensborough FRC held a series of forums on understanding and assisting children on their journey through school for members of the northern suburbs' Somali community.

The forums were supported by principals from Olympic Village, Haigh St, Bellfield and Banksia secondary schools.

They aimed to build self-confidence in Somali students across years 7, 8 and 9, and provided guidance on ways to be successful through education.

Some themes raised reflected concerns as to how Somali culture and values would be supported and protected in normal school activities. Activities such as camps and swimming were of special concern, focusing on the need for separation of boys and girls, and the provision of Hallal food.

At one of the forums, four young Somali men and women graduates, who were educated in Australia, spoke about time management and commitment; school friends and how they affected studies; communicating with parents and siblings; and subject selections for the future.

Parents were encouraged by this opportunity to hear from confident young Somalis who had become successful in the Australian education system.

Harmony Day highlights

In recognition of the importance of celebrating and promoting the benefits of cultural diversity, RAV increased its level of participation in annual Harmony Day events in March.

We played a lead role in a number of public events aimed at reinforcing the message 'Everyone Belongs', partnering with the State Government, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Ethnic Communities

Council of Victoria, local governments and community agencies.

A keynote event was a free festival in Dandenong, which was planned and implemented in conjunction with members of Maori, Sudanese and Aboriginal groups.

Other Harmony Day activities included:

- a mosaic-making project organised by the Traralgon Centre, involving representatives of the Sudanese community, the International Women's Group in Morwell and the Coinda Hill Disability Service
- a *Taste of Harmony* event in Shepparton, which brought together different cultures for a free morning tea, children's activities, train rides, music, dancing and a fashion parade
- a festival and soccer match at the Merrilands Community Centre, Reservoir, at which African and Aboriginal cultures were showcased
- a *Harmony for Everyone* event in Ringwood, showcasing multicultural sports and entertainment from Aboriginal and refugee communities in the eastern region
- lunch at the Sunshine FRC, attended by members of the local African, Arabic and Vietnamese communities and representatives of local service providers and agencies
- *Taste of Harmony* lunches at RAV workplaces.

Reaching out through partnerships

The Cranbourne Centre worked in partnership with the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and Youth Links on a program that aimed to understand and address some of the issues faced by Sudanese youth and their families in Noble Park, Springvale and Dandenong.

A number of meetings were held with different segments of the Sudanese community, culminating in a positive meeting between Elders and youth.

Both groups found the process to be very useful, and agreed to continue to find ways to connect and communicate more effectively with each other.

In partnership with the Springvale Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association of Victoria, the centre delivered its first mixed-gender Vietnamese group, focusing on relationship issues.

The centre and the Chinese Community Social Services Centre jointly ran a *Making Relationships Work* seminar in Chinese.

The Melbourne FRC strengthened its partnership with the Ecumenical Migration Centre, planning a series of information sessions for an African's women's group in the City of Yarra on topics including family relationship services, the legal system in Australia and communication skills.

The centre was involved in the Yarra Settlement Forum (YSF), a network of agencies and service providers that delivers settlement-support services for refugees and newly arrived community groups.

To mark Refugee Week 2011, the YSF presented *Refugee Realities, Walk a Mile in Someone Else's Shoes*, an interactive experience that gave a first-hand insight into the challenges faced by refugees displaced by war and conflict.

Following consultation with the local Vietnamese community, the Sunshine FRC established a Vietnamese Advisory Group.

The advisory group will enable the centre to maintain a focus within the Vietnamese community, and provide feedback and information on how it can engage the community in a relevant and culturally sensitive way.

In partnership with the Latino-American Women's Association in Victoria, the centre ran a series of *Strengthening Relationships* seminars for intact and separated Spanish-speaking families.

Topics covered were: improving marriages and partnerships; parenting; and working together in the best interests of the children.

The success of the seminars prompted an additional series on money management.

Similar seminars are planned for the Pakistani community in the coming year.

Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

During 2010/11, RAV placed a continued focus on developing services that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

This important work was in response to an Indigenous Audit we undertook in 2008, which showed there were some gaps in our service offering to these communities.

RAV worked with Aboriginal organisations and community groups to develop our capacity to deliver appropriate services. These relationships will build on our existing partnerships with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), the Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative, and the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC).

Our work was boosted by funding from the Australian Attorney-General's Department for an innovative event to give Aboriginal men in Melbourne's Eastern Metro Region (EMR) the opportunity to address their personal relationship issues in a culturally safe environment.

In collaboration with the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) and EMR workers, we

developed and implemented the *Brutha's Day Out* program, the first of its kind in Victoria.

Brutha's Day Out was held over two consecutive Sundays in June, with the aim of encouraging participants to work together on social issues affecting Indigenous men, their families and communities.

The program also sought to encourage the men to access information and referral pathways to support services, and empower them through opportunities that used their expertise and cultural knowledge.

Brutha's Day Out was conducted within a cultural framework developed by MMIGP, with RAV providing counselling, organisational and promotional support.

Activities included workshops on lateral violence, cultural safety, importance of identity, responsible gambling and men's behaviour change; sacred fire and food ceremonies; musical and cultural dance performances; and the development of a possum skin cloak from designs drawn by participants.

The project provided important opportunities for RAV staff to learn about Aboriginal culture and some of the many issues facing Aboriginal men and their communities.





Other initiatives we undertook during the year included:

- a *Making Relationships Work* seminar for Koorie men from the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place run by the State Department of Justice. The workshop allowed the men – who were undertaking community-based orders – to explore intimate relationships, conflict resolution, communication and improving their relationships
- a *Sisters Day Out* for Koorie women in the Gippsland area, to help develop trust and relationships, while offering pamper activities,

beading and information on local support services and resources

- participating in the 50th *Sisters Day Out* workshops held by the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service
- contributing to a Women's Wellness Day at MMIGP.

We also developed promotional materials specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, featuring imagery that reflects the community's culture and connection to family and the land.

Professional training and development



RAV's professional training in couple therapy and FDR attracted strong interest and participation during 2010/11.

Specialist course for couple therapists

The past year was characterised by change, beginning with the departure of Carol Ride in July 2010.

Carol had a long association with RAV, including 10 years as a member of the training team. She made an enormous contribution in her development of the *Psychodynamic Theory and Intimacy and Sexuality* seminars, as well as her skilful facilitation of the *Case Discussion and Illustration* workshops. Carol's unique capacity was to make sophisticated ideas accessible in their application to RAV's work with couples.

A few months later, Penny Evans' resignation and departure marked the end of her 15-year leadership of

the Specialist Course in Couple Therapy. Penny's vast contribution included the establishment of university partnerships with the Melbourne University School of Social Work and the Bouverie Centre at La Trobe University. Penny has continued her teaching within the course as a consultant.

In January 2011, Linda Murrow was appointed as course coordinator, maintaining consistency in the training team.

A total of 31 trainees completed the Specialist Course in Couple Therapy in 2010/11. Their professional qualifications and experience ranged from child protection, disability support, family violence, and mediation, to nursing, psychosexual counselling and somatic psychotherapy.

The intern program operated with 10-12 Interns at the Kew Centre. Interns were also placed at Ballarat, Greensborough, Sunshine and Cranbourne centres. An event program was established to create opportunities for the interns and their supervisors to get together socially around their shared professional interest, and provide a sense of community.

There were nine participants in the monthly master-video viewing program, many of whom concurrently took part in the Clinical Internship Program. Readings supported the learning and discussion, with each session focused on a particular 'master' clinician working with a couple.

Members of the training team offered external supervision to course graduates who presented their clinical work with couples. A new supervision group was offered with places for six participants.

The five-year contract with the Bouverie Centre at La Trobe University expired during the year and was not renewed as a result of funding cuts and budget constraints within the University. Both RAV and La Trobe benefitted greatly from this professional partnership, and we expect to maintain our strong relationship with the Bouverie Centre in the future. All existing and past trainees were given the opportunity to complete the Masters before mid-2013.

Training Ground achieves results

Thirty-two people successfully completed the Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution through Training Ground, RAV's registered training organisation (RTO), with the current group of students commencing their placements at RAV centres and consortium partner locations.

The number of participants in the course was determined by the available placements. RAV was fortunate to have strong organisational support and

the willing co-operation of centre managers and senior FDR Practitioners (FDRPs), who assisted the interns in their placements. All the 2010 students gained employment at the end of the course, some before they had completed it.

Training Ground ran four courses to bridge the gap between the three compulsory units required under the Federal Attorney General's accreditation process and the full qualification. It also conducted two recognitions of prior learning, and the last-ever accreditation workshop under the previous rules, with five participants.

A total of 54 FDRPs have now attained the full qualification through the RTO.

Consistent with RAV's commitment to be a state-of-the-art training provider in mediation and FDR, we became a Recognised Mediator Accreditation Body (RMAB).

Training Ground established a partnership with the Law Institute of Victoria to conduct regular training programs, the first of which was a five-day mediation course. The 16 participants were able to register under the RMAB system. Two family violence workshops were also held, with a total of 20 participants.

Training Ground offered consultation and training to many other organisations. It conducted training and supervision for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute's palliative care team. Other consultancies were with the Victoria University Law Faculty, Mental Health Fellowship, Family Pathways network in Albury and Northern Territory, and Gordon Care. The RTO also ran three community workshops funded by Credit Union Australia and ad hoc training for regional FRCs at Mildura, Warrnambool and Wodonga.

Training Ground Manager Ena Shaw presented two papers at the 10th Mediation Conference in Adelaide in



September: *To differentiate or not differentiate: when do we proceed or sign a certificate* and *The Wild West, FDR in the underbelly*, on behalf of paper author, Lilia Szarski.

Program to boost property mediation skills

RAV developed a skills-based property mediation workshop program, *Gateway to Practice*, which included post-workshop options such as group and individual supervision, on-site clinics, and continuing professional support.

The program targeted:

- registered FDRPs who wanted to expand their skill base
- organisations looking to build their capacity to conduct property mediation, and
- legal practitioners seeking to develop specialised skills in this area.

Committed to practice quality

Our practice quality team was fully engaged in clinical supervision, policy development, professional development and service design activities during the year.

Existing policies were updated and new ones written on a range of subject areas including *Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, Supervision, Family Dispute Resolution, Certificates (FDR), Case Notes and File Management, Confidentiality and Privacy, and Referral of Clients*.

Using a mix of internal and external presenters, we offered professional development in mental health, group facilitation, enhanced child-focused FDR, assessing and working with family violence, women and family violence, men's behaviour change and property (FDR).

In March, RAV ran a successful four-day course in Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) for Couples. This *Externship in the Fundamentals* course was led by Dr Veronica Kallos-Lilly, a registered psychologist, supervisor, and certified EFT trainer from Vancouver, Canada. It attracted wide interest, with a total of 45 attendees coming from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, regional Victoria and Melbourne.

Quality initiatives undertaken included the drafting and introduction of competencies for RAV counsellors and FDR practitioners, reintroduction of observing or taping of sessions, reintroduction of

student placements, and design work around both a counselling framework and enhanced child-focused FDR.

The Board's Practice Quality Committee met quarterly, continuing to provide valuable independent advice, critique and support.

Research informs practice and delivery

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

In partnership with La Trobe University, we completed 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 studied the impact of family violence on the FDR process and outcomes. The longitudinal 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 progressed on a study titled: *Work, Love and Play in Diverse Australian Family Life with Relationships Australia 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.

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



Meet the Board



Judi Anderson - President

Judi is the Principal of Judi Anderson & Associates, consultants in organisation development, change management, outplacement and career development to public and private sector organisations and individuals. She has many years' experience in senior management, including roles with Crittenden's Wine Merchants, Myer Stores and Myer Grace Bros where she was General Manager HR for its retail operations. Judi also was 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, the Career Development Association of Australia and the Australasian Facilitators Network. Judi has been a Board member since 1995 and President since October 2007.



Peter Boehm

Peter is currently Chief Executive Officer of National Workplace Training, a registered training organisation that provides a range of nationally recognised workplace and classroom based training programs. He 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. Peter is a chartered accountant with banking qualifications and has industry experience in banking and finance, 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.



Ronda Jacobs - Vice-President

Ronda was the Managing Director of Catalent Australia/ South East Asia, a Melbourne-based developer and manufacturer of vitamin and pharmaceutical products, for more than 10 years. She was also Board member of the Complementary Healthcare Council for six years and President for two years; and an elected member of the Australian Self Medication Industry Board for five years. Ronda graduated from the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2009, and was nominated for the Telstra Business Woman of the Year in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Her business experience includes marketing, strategic planning and leadership. Ronda has been a Board member since 2005, Chair of the Strategy Committee, and Vice-President since December 2007.



Lyn Brodie

Lyn's career has spanned both the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. Recent roles have included Chief Executive Officer for the Gandel Charitable Trust and Executive Director, Zoos Victoria Foundation. With extensive experience in operations, marketing, communications and business development, Lyn has worked with both national and international companies. A strong interest in measuring performance of not-for-profits led her to complete the *Governing for NFP Excellence* program conducted by the Harvard Business School. Lyn holds an MBA from Mount Eliza Business School and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She 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 roles in Australia and internationally including the UK. His last roles at BP were as CFO for various business units including exploration, production and marketing. Subsequently he has held a number of Australian CFO roles with mid-tier companies in the oil, transport, printing and construction-project-management industries. He blends his strong finance background with strategic and marketing skills/experience, and 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 and chairs the Audit Committee.



John Lovell

John has more than 25 years' experience in the IT industry both within Australia and internationally. His experience covers IT projects for the introduction of ATMs and EFTPOS within Australia, Pay TV systems, introduction of broadband services and other significant IT-related projects. Prior to returning to Australia, John was based in Hong Kong, where he was responsible for IT infrastructure for the Walt Disney Company across Asia Pacific. Currently, John is responsible for IT infrastructure and projects for the Parliament of Victoria. He joined the Board in 2008.



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, 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 and chairs the Practice Quality Committee.



Michael Shaw

Michael is an investment banker with the private investment banking firm, Bristow Shaw & Company. He serves as Chairman of the Strategic Life Sciences Fund and its manager SLS Managers Pty Ltd. He also serves as chairman of the Life Sciences International and Australian Venture Capital Managers. Michael is a member of the Finance, Investment and Audit Committee of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd. He has been on the RAV Board since 1990, and is a member of RAV's Strategy Committee. Michael was President of RA National (1994 and from 1998 to 2001); chaired RAV's Audit Committee for 11 years and was RAV Vice-President from 1990 until 2007.

Senior management

Dr Andrew Bickerdike	CEO
Dr Ian Law	General Manager Client Services
Shiranthi Sivarajah	Senior Manager Finance
Max Wright	Senior Manager Practice Quality
Michael Muldoon	Senior Manager FSP Operations
Gai Campbell	Senior Manager FRC Operations and Special Projects
Carl Beeston	Senior Manager ICT Operations
Bronwyn Thwaites	Senior Manager Communications and Marketing
Paul Hodgman	Manager Human Resources

**As at 30 June 2011*

Back row: Ian Law, Paul Hodgman, Max Wright and Michael Muldoon
Front row: Bronwyn Thwaites, Gai Campbell, Shiranthi Sivarajah and Carl Beeston



Centre locations

Ballarat

1025 Sturt Street

Berwick Family Relationship Centre

1-2, 38 Clyde Road

Boronia

83 Boronia Road

Cranbourne

199 High Street

Greensborough

Banyule Community Health Centre

3/25-33 Grimshaw Street

Greensborough Family Relationship Centre

79 Grimshaw Street

Kew

46 Princess Street

Melbourne Family Relationship Centre

379 Collins Street

Shepparton

634 Wyndham Street

Sunshine

1st Floor Harvester Centre

4 Devonshire Road

Sunshine Family Relationship Centre

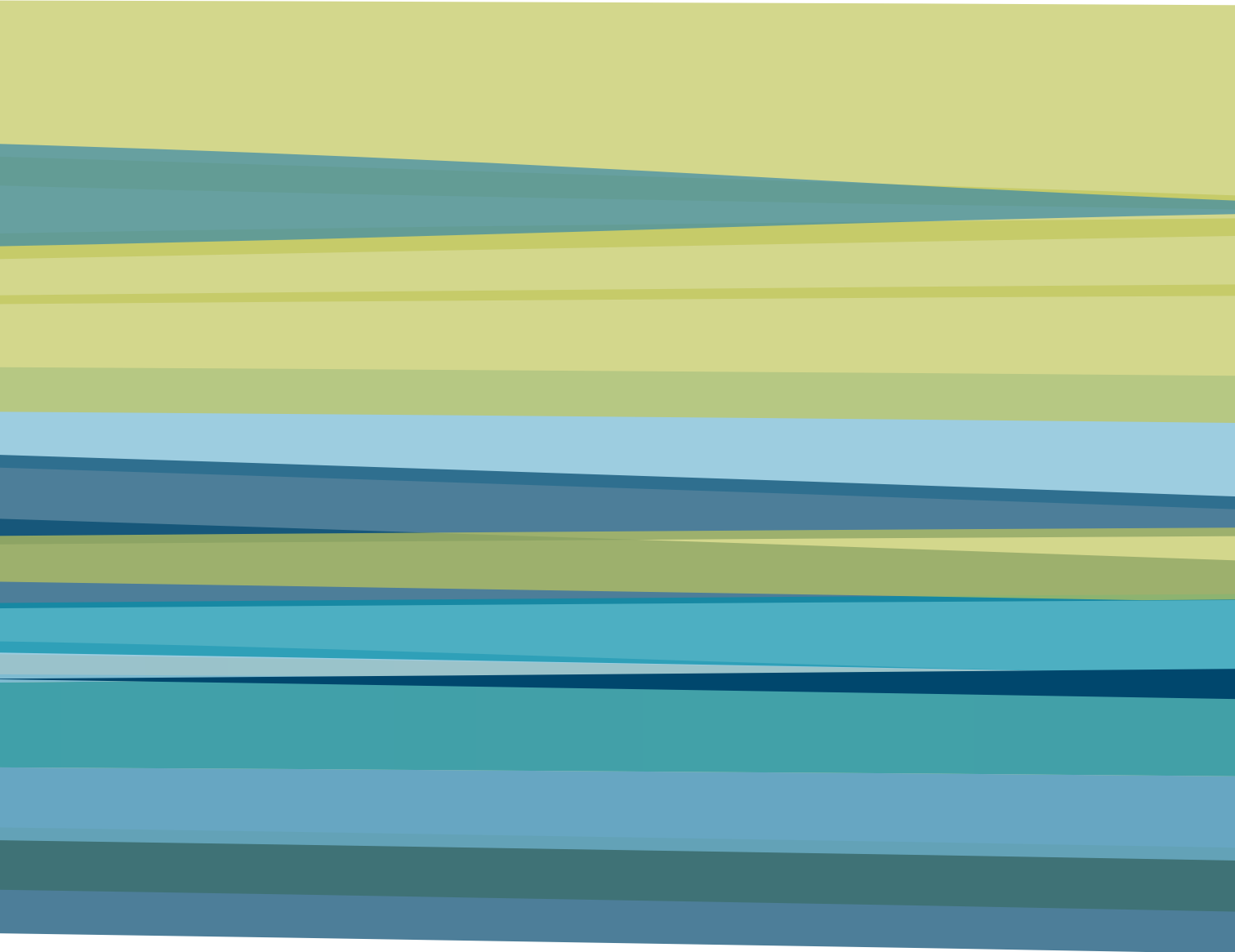
1 Clarke Street

Traralgon

1/42 Kay Street

Central Office

450 Burke Road, Camberwell



450 Burke Road, Camberwell Vic 3124
Telephone (03) 8573 2222
Fax (03) 9822 4584
Email: reception@rav.org.au
Website www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au