

Relationships Australia

Annual Report 2006





Our vision

Positive and respectful relationships

Our mission

To build stronger relationships which enhance the lives of individuals, families and communities

Acknowledgements:

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LOCATION OF SERVICES

CANBERRA AND REGION

Bega
Canberra (FRC)
Cooma
Deakin
Goulburn
Wagga Wagga (outreach to Cootamundra, Griffith, Leeton and Tumut)

NEW SOUTH WALES

Bondi Junction
Bowral
Campbelltown
Gosford
Lane Cove
Maitland
Neutral Bay
Newcastle (Broadmeadow)
North Parramatta
Penrith
Penrith (FRC)
Raymond Terrace
Rockdale
Turramurra
Westmead
Wollongong

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Alice Springs
Alice Springs remote (phone counselling)
Darwin
Darwin (FRC)
Jabiru (phone counselling)
Katherine (visiting service/phone counselling)
Nhulunbuy (phone counselling)

QUEENSLAND

Airlie Beach
Atherton
Beaudesert
Bowen
Bundaberg
Caboolture
Cairns
Caloundra
Capalaba
Chermside
Clermont
Eight Mile Plains
Gladstone
Gympie
Hervey Bay
Ipswich
Kenmore
Lismore, NSW
Longreach
Logan
Mackay
Maroochydore
Mermaid Beach
Moranbah
Noosaville
Palm Beach
Port Douglas
Palm Island
Proserpine

Redlands
Rockhampton
Sarina
Sherwood
Southport
Spring Hill
Strathpine
Strathpine (FRC)
Thuringowa
Toowoomba
Townsville
West End/South Brisbane
Windsor

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Adelaide
Barossa (outreach)
Berri
Elizabeth
Elizabeth (FRC)
Gawler (outreach)
Hindmarsh
Marion
Mount Barker (outreach)
Murray Bridge (outreach)
Noarlunga (outreach)
Port Adelaide (outreach)
Ridgehaven
Salisbury

TASMANIA

Campbell Town
Devonport
Hobart
Hobart (FRC)
Huonville
Launceston
St Helens
St Marys
Scottsdale

VICTORIA

Ballarat
Croydon
Greensborough
Kew
Narre Warren
Shepparton
Sunshine
Sunshine (FRC)
Traralgon

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Bunbury
Busselton (outreach)
Cannington (outreach)
Corrigin (outreach)
Fremantle
Gosnells
Joondalup
Mandurah
Merredin (outreach)
Midland
Pilbara (outreach)
Pinjarra (outreach)
Rockingham
West Leederville

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President's Foreword



This year has been a momentous one for the family relationships services sector and therefore for Relationships Australia. The changes to the family law system that the Australian Government announced in 2004 are now being implemented. What is of great significance to us is not only the amendments to the Family Law Act, but also the fact that the Government is supporting its policies with the infrastructure required for the reforms to be translated into services available to the public.

I believe that opening shopfront services in the form of the Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) is a significant step forward for Australian social policy, and is a milestone internationally in showing how governments can assist families – particularly families in transition. The FRCs demonstrate that a fairer family law system is of little value without professional services on the ground to help reduce the tensions and conflicts so often associated with separation and divorce.

The FRCs are not 'divorce centres' as some critics have claimed. Far from it. They are resource centres where families can access high quality professional services to help them overcome difficulties and preserve their relationships, get relevant information, and obtain referrals to other services most suited to their presenting needs.

Relationships Australia is delighted with the outcome of the first round of FRC tenders. Naturally, as a sign of recognition that Relationships Australia services are respected and valued, I am extremely pleased that our organisation was successful in being invited to establish and manage over half of the first FRC roll-out. However, Relationships Australia is

also pleased to welcome new players in the expectation that they will bring diversity and fresh ideas to the family services sector.

The tender preparation process for the first round of FRCs brought with it the opportunity for our network of state and territory member organisations to collaborate with other agencies at the local community level. This collaborative process has encouraged us to think strategically about how we can further use this pooling of knowledge and resources to deliver the new services. In most of the successful tenders, our state and territory members will be working in consortiums with other agencies, and this cooperation will bring a diversity of perspectives and skills to the delivery of services to local communities.

Families in communities across Australia will benefit from the additional funding for the FRCs, Early Intervention Services, Children's Contact Services (CCS), Parenting Orders Programs and the broader Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP). Relationships Australia is looking forward to working with the Australian Government and our new consortium partners at the local level to ensure that this investment will provide more accessible and responsive services and, in the process, better outcomes for Australian families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ken Heyward'.

Ken Heyward

National President



National Director's Foreword



Family law reform has signalled another year of significant change for the sector, and for Relationships Australia. The introduction of the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act has brought about major changes to the way we provide our services to separating families.

Relationships Australia welcomes this process of renewal and the opportunity it gives us to review the ways we strive to meet the diverse needs of all Australians.

The aim of the diversity theme of this report is to share the way in which we aim to reach people in many walks of life and most importantly how we attempt to find genuine solutions with communities based on mutual respect and two-way learning.

We are pleased to have contributed to discussions that have informed the changes to family law policy, as well as changes to service delivery.

Relationships Australia is very optimistic about these changes to the family law system. They represent an important milestone in recognising community-based mediation as an effective, less litigious tool for reducing the conflict that is so harmful for all parties concerned in separations. We are particularly pleased to see that the new system embraces a child-focused approach in matters of separation, and we applaud the introduction of more culturally appropriate processes which will assist all Australians, in particular Indigenous Australians, in dealing with matters of separation. Finally, we are proud to have contributed to ground-breaking research that has highlighted the therapeutic benefits of child-inclusive practice in divorce mediation.

It has been a challenging year for all involved in the family law changes and the effect of those changes on service delivery and ultimately the Australian population. The competitive selection process provided an opportunity to be at the forefront of designing and developing a new type of service delivery. The success of Relationships Australia member organisations in winning a significant amount of the business was founded in no small way on the well established, high standard and best practice services that our organisations have been delivering for over 50 years.

Working collaboratively within the Relationships Australia National Organisation as well as externally with the consortium members provided the platform for high quality and innovative service delivery for the new services.

Over the next two years, as government funding to the sector continues to increase and subsequent service delivery to the Australian public continues to grow, we will need to be even more mindful of the importance of diversity and how we can best work with mutual respect with many new communities.

Looking back over the year, it was an incredible accomplishment on behalf of government, the Industry Representative Bodies and especially the community sector organisations in achieving and delivering on the infrastructure required to meet the ambitious goals of the family law changes. On that note I would like to congratulate all the Relationships Australia member organisations and their consortium partners for the Herculean effort they demonstrated throughout the year to enable the Government to enact its goals.

Congratulations!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Mertin-Ryan'.

Mary Mertin-Ryan

National Director



Facts and Figures

The number of clients assisted by Relationships Australia in 2005–06 rose to another record high of 91,761, of whom 44% were men. This total was almost 5% more than the figure for 2004–05. Almost three-quarters of our clients were seen as part of the Australian Government’s Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP) while the remainder were served through a diverse range of programs funded by Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and private sources.

Relationships Australia is proud of the growing diversity of its services and clients. Particularly significant is the ever expanding service reach of our state and territory organisations. We now have a total of 106 outlets across Australia, ranging from inner city and suburban to regional, rural and remote locations.

In 2005–06, the majority of Relationships Australia clients sought our services in order to prepare for an important relationship commitment, to enhance important relationships in their lives and to manage post-separation parenting transitions. However, while Family Relationships Counselling, Family Dispute Resolution, and Family Relationships Education remain key services offered by all eight state and territory organisations, they by no means represent the full range of services available.

Our services also include programs to assist Australians afflicted by issues as diverse as family violence, crime, child abuse, problem gambling, HIV, drought and natural disaster. Increases in client numbers in these areas have been quite sharp. For instance, the number of clients seen as part of problem gambling programs increased from 834 in 2004–05 to 2,792 in 2005–06, comprising a total of 12% of all non-FRSP clients in 2005–06. Similarly, the number of clients seen as part of family violence programs increased from 1,491 in 2004–05 to 3,474 in 2005–06, comprising 15% of all non-FRSP clients.

In addition, Relationships Australia continues to reach out to Indigenous communities and to communities with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A total of 2,024 of our clients identified as Indigenous, which represented 2.2% of all Relationships Australia clients in 2005–06 compared to 1.8% in 2004–05. Some Relationships Australia programs such as the programs for humanitarian entrants offered by

Figure 1: Sources of Income

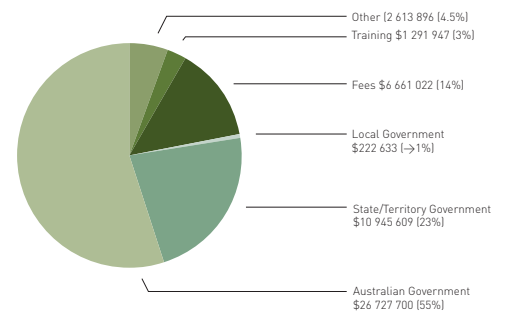


Figure 2: Client Numbers by Service Type (FRSP)

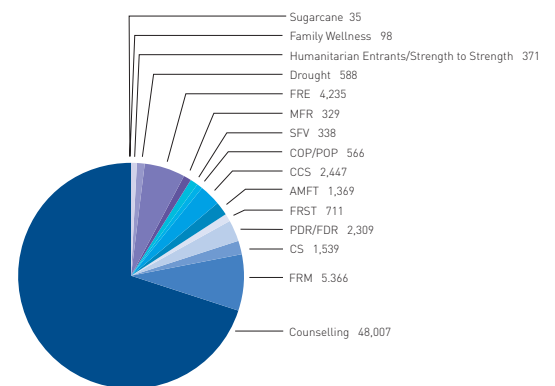


Figure 3: Client Numbers by Service Type (Non-FRSP)

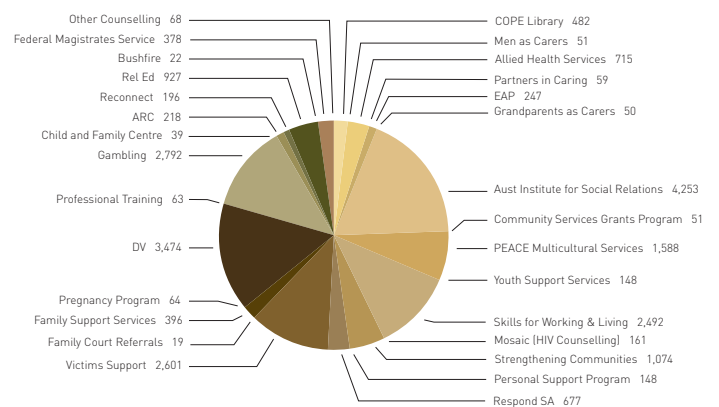
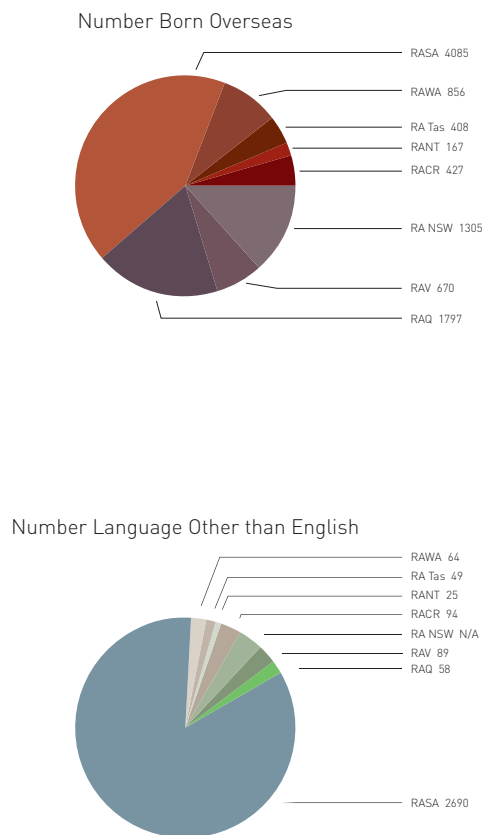
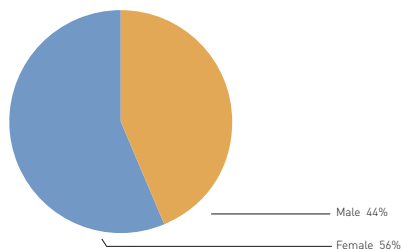


Figure 4: CALD Clients



NB RA NSW figures for language spoken are not available.

Figure 5: Client Numbers by Men and Women



Relationships Australia (NSW) and Relationships Australia (WA), and the Personal Educational and Community Empowerment (P.E.A.C.E) Multicultural Services offered by Relationships Australia (SA), are particularly targeted at Australia’s diverse migrant communities. In fact, 15% of all Relationships Australia (SA) clients speak a language other than English at home.

Relationships Australia continued to receive income from a mix of sources in 2005–06. Approximately 55% of our income was derived from the Australian Government – mainly through the FRSP. Income from State and Territory Governments increased from 20% of total income in 2004–05 to 23% in 2005–06. Client fees made up 14% of income, training services 3% and the remainder was derived from a mix of interest, bookshop sales, rent, donations and other sources.

The total income for Relationships Australia organisations in 2005–06 of \$48,462,807 was another record high. This was an 8% increase from last year and a massive 82% increase from just five years ago. These significantly increased funding levels reflect both the importance placed on our services by the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments and the greater diversity in programs and services that Relationships Australia offers to the community.

Figure 6: Indigenous Clients

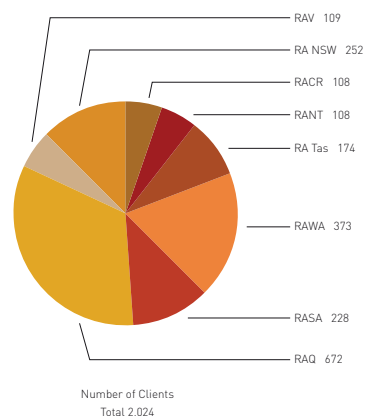


Figure 7: Services Provided by Source of Funding

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
FRSP – All Federally-funded								
Family Relationship Centres (FRCs)*	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Family Relationship Counselling	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Family Relationship Mediation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conciliation Services		■	■					
Children’s Contact Services	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
Parenting Orders Program			■			■		
Family Dispute Resolution		■	■	■				■
Family Relationships Education	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy	■							
Family Relationships Skills Training	■	■		■	■			
Men and Family Relationships	■	■	■			■	■	
Drought	■	■	■	■	■			■
Humanitarian Entrants / Strength to Strength	■				■			
Specialised Family Violence	■							■
Sugarcane			■					
Family Wellness					■			
Other Funded Programs								
Federal Magistrates Service		■					■	■
Personal Support Program				■				■
Relationship Education	■ ●		■					
Reconnect						■		
Aftercare Resource Centre	●		●					
Gambling		●	●	●		●		
Family Violence		●	●		●			
Family Support Services			■					
Victims Support			●	●				
Respond SA				●				
HIV and Hepatitis C				●				
Youth Support			●					
Community Services Grants Program (CSGP)	●							
Strengthening Communities				●				
Skills for Working and Living				●				
PEACE Multicultural Services				●				
Australian Institute for Social Relations				◆				
Grandparents as Carers	●							
Partners in Caring	●							
Men as Carers	●							
Employee Assistance Programs	◆				◆	◆		◆
Family Court Referrals					◆			
Pregnancy Program					●			
Professional Training					◆			◆
Allied Health Services					◆			
Child and Family Centre								●
Bushfire								●
COPE Library/Library/Bookshop				●				
Other Counselling								●

Funding Source

■ Federal

● State/Territory Government

◆ Client-funded

* FRCs due to open 3 July 2006



National Organisation 2005-06

RA Canberra and Region	RA New South Wales	RA Northern Territory	RA Queensland	RA South Australia	RA Tasmania	RA Victoria	RA Western Australia
<i>Helen Berry</i> President (July - Oct 05)	<i>Stephen Winter</i> President (July - Oct 05)	<i>Doug Gillanders</i> President	<i>Iyla Davies</i> President	<i>Franco Camatta</i> President	<i>Tim Maddock</i> President	<i>Ken Heyward</i> President	<i>Chris Lewis</i> President
<i>Nancy Miller</i> President (Oct 05 - present)	<i>Maryann Russett</i> President (Oct 05 - present)	<i>James Lamerton</i> CEO	<i>Andrew Davis</i> CEO	<i>Judith Cross</i> CEO	<i>Susan Holmes</i> CEO	<i>Michael Hunt</i> CEO	<i>Terri Reilly</i> CEO
<i>Mary Pekin</i> CEO	<i>Anne Hollonds</i> CEO						

National Office

Mary Mertin-Ryan
National Director

CEOs Committee

Judith Cross
Andrew Davis
Anne Hollonds
Susan Holmes
Michael Hunt
James Lamerton
Mary Mertin-Ryan
Mary Pekin
Terri Reilly

Elects

National Board



President	Vice President	Treasurer	National Director	Member	Member	Member	Member	Member
<i>Ken Heyward</i> (Oct 05 - present)	<i>Franco Camatta</i> (Oct 05 - present)	<i>Andrew Davis</i> (Oct 05 - present)	<i>Mary Mertin-Ryan</i>	<i>Doug Gillanders</i>	<i>Anne Hollonds</i>	<i>Susan Holmes</i>	<i>Chris Lewis</i>	<i>Nancy Miller</i>
<i>Iyla Davies</i> (July - Oct 05)	<i>Helen Berry</i> (July - Oct 05)	<i>Helen Berry</i> (Acting) (July - Oct 05)						



What We Do

Relationships Australia (RA) Inc. is a national body which aims to enhance human and family relationships, on behalf of its members, through representation, lobbying, promotion, research and social policy formulation.

RA member organisations provide relationship support services such as counselling, mediation, education and parenting skills to couples, families and individuals. It is a non-aligned, not-for-profit community-based organisation operating in each state/territory with services provided from 106 locations across Australia.

RA services are provided to all people regardless of age, religion, cultural background, gender, social or economic status or lifestyle choices. The organisation services, with its 800 staff, in excess of 91,500 clients each year and has revenues in the order of \$48 million.

The following snapshot of services and programs that Relationships Australia provides demonstrates the organisation's proven commitment to delivering family relationship services that are responsive to existing and emerging needs within the Australian community. The success of these programs is made possible by a culture of organisational learning that promotes ongoing critique and development of our work practices.

Snapshot of Services and Programs

Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy

Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy provides assistance to adolescents and their families where there are problems which might lead to family breakdown and result in homelessness. Specialist professionals assist with the following: extreme conflict, running away, juvenile justice issues, suicide attempts, drug/alcohol abuse, enhancing relationships.

Aftercare Resource Centre

This service provides counselling, support and practical assistance to those who have been children in care.

Children's Contact Services

These services facilitate the change-over of children between separated parents, and support and supervise contact visits for children of separated parents.

Drought Counselling

This program provides access to family relationship and personal counselling services in drought-affected rural and regional areas. Services are provided to individual clients, through workshops, group work and community education programs, including in primary schools. The program aims to help maintain family connections in the community.

Educating the Community

Relationships Australia actively seeks out speaking engagements at schools and to community groups, using targeted education as a form of prevention. This goes above and beyond our core services, demonstrating our willingness to be pro-active in our local communities.

Employee Assistance Programs

Managing relationships is seen as the key to creating a productive and stable workforce. In addition to Employee Assistance Programs, we provide organisation workforce profiling, team building, change management, alignment of staff and management aspirations, recruitment, workforce and change maintenance, dispute resolution, and repatriation and separation services.



Family Dispute Resolution

Family Dispute Resolution or Mediation services assist couples and families through mediation to resolve conflicts related to child care, maintenance, financial arrangements and property settlement; to reach agreements that are in the best interest of the children; and to parent cooperatively. Parenting plans or agreements are used to assist this process. It also provides mediation for workplace conflicts.

Family Relationship Centres

Family Relationship Centres are a first port of call when families want information about relationship and separation issues. Through information and referral the Centres help families strengthen relationships and deal with relationship difficulties. Where families separate, the Centres provide information, advice and dispute resolution to help them reach agreement on parenting arrangements without going to court. They also refer families to a range of other services that can help.

Family Relationships Counselling

Counselling services are available for individuals, couples and families, including separating families, who are dealing with issues and transitions that impact on their relationships.

Federal Magistrates Court Referrals

Relationships Australia provides services such as counselling, mediation and conciliation under contract to the Federal Magistrates Court.

Gambling Support Services

Responsible gambling support services are provided to help the increasing number of Australians dealing with problem gambling. The services include addictions, financial and family counselling; education; and therapeutic groups.

Grandparents Support Services

A range of programs provide resources and support to grandparents bringing up their grandchildren.

Humanitarian Entrants Program

This program provides family relationship support services for people who have recently arrived in Australia as humanitarian entry families.

Men and Family Relationships

The services provided under this program work with men to assist them to enhance their parenting and relationship skills and to manage a range of relationship issues, including transitions in their relationships with partners, ex-partners and children.

Parenting Orders Program

The Parenting Orders Program provides counselling, conciliation, education and support to separated parents to assist with resolution of difficulties arising from contact and residency issues. Our approach is child focused and child inclusive where possible and provides an opportunity to have children and young people's voices heard in the process.

Post-separation Parenting: 'Parenting Matters'

'Parenting Matters' is the umbrella name for the suite of services to help parents with parenting after separation. People are often referred to these services by the Family Courts.

Relationships Education

Relationships, family and life enhancement support courses are provided to the community in the form of pre-marriage education, relationship education, family skills and parenting, family violence prevention education and after-separation education.

Specialised Family Violence

The Specialised Family Violence program takes a whole-of-family approach towards minimising the incidence, severity and impact of domestic violence; ensuring safety for all family members; and assisting clients to achieve and maintain positive stable family relationships. Services focus on early intervention and prevention and are tailored to the needs of each family.



What We Did in 2005–06

Relationships Australia is one of Australia's largest providers of relationship and family support services in Australia.

We have been in operation for more than 58 years and provide services in 106 locations across Australia. Since our inception we have provided support for the changing needs of all Australian women, men and children, regardless of their age, religion, cultural background, gender, social and economic status, or lifestyle choice.

Our mission is to build stronger relationships which enhance the lives of individuals, families and communities.

Responding to the Needs of a Diverse Australian Community

Relationships Australia recognises that all Australians live within a cultural context, whether in urban, rural, remote or regional communities, and a diverse range of individual and communal experiences determine our lives.

Diversity within Australian society is represented through differences in ethnic or cultural heritage, religion, geography, demography, gender, or ability/disability. This rich tapestry of diversity is expressed daily through relationships, activities, practices and beliefs, and may be experienced as members of families, communities or as individuals.

Australia is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. However, Relationships Australia recognises that the dominant culture of Australia is Anglo European, and that this culture defines the structures and values of our legal and social systems, including mainstream service delivery.

Whilst Relationship Australia operates as a mainstream organisation, we recognise and respect diversity within Australian society. We do this by treating all people with

dignity and positive regard, acknowledging different cultural practices and beliefs, and understanding that mainstream culture is one way of being rather than the only way of being. We particularly acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of this land. We encourage staff to consider the influence of their own cultural norms on their professional practice and their work with clients. Our aim, as an organisation, is to provide culturally appropriate, safe and sensitive services.

This level of diversity across Australia creates a key challenge for the delivery of our services, and is increasingly reflected in the types of services and style of service delivery that we provide. To work respectfully with culturally different communities within Australia requires more than simply using different languages to communicate. At the local level, service delivery needs to be responsive to the diverse needs of communities. Relationships Australia has sought to do this by building genuine partnerships with communities, based on mutual respect, two-way learning, and an openness to find solutions together. As a result of these partnerships, new responsive programs have emerged. Through the development of programs and work practices that respond respectfully to diversity, the core programs of Relationships Australia are also enriched.

Some of the lessons and achievements of the many programs provided by Relationships Australia are highlighted in the following case studies which have been grouped under headings, including Indigenous Australians, professional development and training, training for the community, new arrivals, men, young women, cultural diversity and family dispute resolution.



1. Responding to the Needs of Indigenous Australians

Increasingly over recent years, Relationships Australia has worked in a more focused way to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous communities. In recognition of the need to better service Indigenous Australians we established a National Relationships Australia Indigenous Network in July 2005.

Relationships Australia National Indigenous Network

Relationships Australia WA sponsors the National Indigenous Network which provides a forum for all Relationships Australia member organisations working within Indigenous-specific programs to share experiences and discuss concerns relating to program development, delivery and ways of working. This is done on a monthly basis.

Since its inception the network has completed an audit template to identify the scope and efficacy of Relationships Australia services for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The National Indigenous Network will come together at a workshop in Queensland in September 2006. The task of the workshop is to develop a 'statement of service' that reflects Relationships Australia's commitment to the reconciliation process and to develop a strategic plan to increase the number of Indigenous Australians accessing our services.

The network faces significant challenges in that the current way we evaluate and gather data on our mainstream programs is not congruent with the model of service delivery we use for our Indigenous clients. The current data collection system measures 'successful outcomes' in a way that is not necessarily relevant to this particular target group. The network is working to address these challenges and to support Relationships Australia nationally to commit and direct services and resources to enhance Indigenous family and community life.

Other programs developed in response to specific needs are illustrated in the following four case studies.

Case Study: Collaboration with Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation – RA NSW

Relationships Australia NSW has been working collaboratively to support the work of the Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation, based in Redfern, for the past 5 years. Mudgin-Gal has traditionally been an Indigenous women's drop-in and support centre, funded through the State Government. Its areas of work have continued to diversify over a number of years.

RA NSW's contributions to Mudgin-Gal's work have been strongly informed by our core principles of respect, social justice and empowerment of Indigenous communities. We were initially invited to provide some short term assistance, then we asked what other forms of support might be useful for them. We have offered regular supervision for the staff employed by Mudgin-Gal, provided training in group facilitation, co-led an anger management group for young Aboriginal women, and assisted in the preparation of submissions for new areas of funding. In turn, Mudgin-Gal has provided the members of our Board and our senior staff with invaluable training in Indigenous cultural awareness.

In partnership, the two organisations were recently successful in securing FaCSIA funding under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy to offer a 3-year family mentoring program called Healthy Family Circles. Mudgin-Gal has now employed a project coordinator, Vicki Ashton. Vicki is currently in the process of recruiting and training Indigenous mentors from the Redfern Waterloo community. We look forward to further opportunities to strengthen Mudgin-Gal's work with their community.



Case Study: Moorditj Yarning – Indigenous Program in Western Australia – RAWA

Moorditj Yarning is an Indigenous-specific program introduced by Relationships Australia Western Australia (RAWA) about 18 months ago to make its services more accessible to Aboriginal clients.

Moorditj Yarning, an Aboriginal expression meaning 'good talking', involves a lot of just that. Talking, creating networks, engaging positively with people, and responding to what the community says it needs.

'Before counselling can take place, we need to develop a relationship and build trust', says Moorditj Yarning coordinator Jan Woodland.

'This may mean home visits, chatting over a cup of tea and other activities before people identify you as someone who is safe and who won't disappear after six months.'

'Another key to success is listening to what the community says it needs and responding accordingly. For example, one community identified the need for a therapeutic recreation program for primary school boys, while another has identified youth and school retention as a priority.'

Jan and her colleagues' involvement in community events, such as White Ribbon Day and NAIDOC celebrations, has helped them understand the local community, disseminate information and create strong links. These links have been further strengthened through formal and informal partnerships with local Indigenous organisations, such as housing associations.

'The result is we have a huge network, which is a key thing if you are to be successful working in this context', says Jan.

Case Study: Skills Share Training on Palm Island – RAQ

The Townsville branch of Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) has been working with the Palm Island Aboriginal community in North Queensland since March 2005.

Rebecca Wielandt (RAQ Manager) and Lynore Geia (RAQ Indigenous Services Development Officer) have been working in partnership with the main family support service providers towards developing a specific counselling and family support service for the community.

This year, after much consultation with service providers, we commenced Skills Share training on Palm Island with Bwgcolman Community School and Ferdy's Haven Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre.

This involves providing culturally appropriate training in family support skills and knowledge to the Indigenous Education Assistants at the school, and to staff and clients at the rehabilitation centre.

The shared objective of Palm Island and RAQ is to build the capacity and social capital of the community so that it can provide a better family support service to its members.

The training has been well received, with requests from participants for more workshops and positive feedback from community members who have observed a difference in the trainees.

We were delighted to hear that one of the women trainees from the school, normally a very shy and quiet woman, had stood up and spoken at a public domestic violence forum. She spoke so strongly and eloquently about domestic violence and family support issues that the other women at the forum were astounded. She told us that she felt empowered by the training she was receiving from RAQ, adding that other participants felt the same.

We are very pleased to be able to celebrate such success stories for Palm Island and for RAQ.



Case Study: Juvenile Diversion Program – RANT

The Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP) is structured to operate within the restorative justice paradigm. The key clients are juveniles in Alice Springs who have committed non-serious offences and have been diverted from the court system. Of these, 97% are Aboriginal and 80% are male. The program includes family conferencing, victim offender conferencing, community service, and other appropriate programs.

Structured programs include community service, letters of apology to victims, agreement to attend school regularly, and financial compensation to victims of theft where possible. A typical program runs for approximately 3 months.

Initial contact with clients is through the Northern Territory police (Juvenile Diversion Unit), who provide reports on juveniles to JDP staff. The JDP then locates the young people and makes a mutually convenient time for assessment. The assessment process may include contacting the education department, mental health professionals, and Family and Children's Services (FACS NT).

The JDU determines what program will be presented to the juvenile, and whether a victim offender (VOC)

or family conference (FC) is appropriate, based on the JDP assessment.

During the family conference or victim offender conference, the juvenile is presented with a program and juvenile family support. Where appropriate, the victims have to agree to the program.

On completion of the program, the juvenile is interviewed by JDP (RANT) and JDU (Northern Territory police) staff. If they agree that the juvenile has completed the program successfully, the juvenile avoids a criminal record.

The 3-month period is flexible and can be extended if the juvenile is experiencing problems.

Some common problems that affect the success of the program include locating clients, providing suitable adult support, motivating young people to complete the program, low literacy skills, and family dysfunction.

Many of our clients 'couch surf' – that is, living arrangements are very fluid and the juvenile may be residing with relatives and friends. Family support may include a parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, or friends.

The program has now secured funding for a further 3 years and will recruit an Aboriginal Youth Worker to help us access the many communities in and around Alice Springs.



Illustrations by Estelle from Townsville.



2. Professional Development and Training

Relationships Australia is recognised as a provider of professional development, training and supervision programs for professionals in the community service and health fields. The importance of community based relationship education programs has been recognised by the Australian Government, and these are now a key feature of the Family Relationship Centres. RA NSW and RASA are Registered Training Organisations delivering nationally accredited training to the sector.

Five Indigenous sector workers in RA participated in a series of FaCSIA funded Indigenous Training workshops – Bronwyn Penrith (NSW), Lynore Geia (Qld), Josie Branson (SA), Margaret Drayton (WA) and Deborah Barney (Qld). Participants were Indigenous workers currently working within the Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP) or those who were likely to be working in the program in the near future.

The training, which began in March 2006, included modules from Certificate IV, Community Mediation and Certificate IV in Indigenous Therapies. Deb Barney, one of the participants, commented that: 'The positive of this program has been in realising the collective knowledge and wisdom within the group of people with whom we study. The principles of mediation that we have learned are useful to me – not only in my everyday counselling practice, but are good general life skills.'

This targeted training for Indigenous FRSP workers was made available in response to the 2005 Urbis Keys Young Review of the Family Relationships Services Program, which identified that the program was not addressing the needs of Indigenous people and recommended that the number of trained Indigenous workers within the FRSP needed to be increased.

The following three case studies provide examples of ways in which support for community workers may be provided, and the learnings which will lead to more informed training in the future.

Case Study: Indigenous Youth Worker Training on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands – RASA

Since 2004, Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA) has provided training to youth workers in seven Indigenous communities on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, which are approximately 1100 kilometres from Adelaide. The program is funded by the South Australian Department for Families and Communities and trains youth workers towards achieving nationally recognised qualifications.

This year Respond SA, our Adult Childhood Sexual Abuse Service, was invited by youth workers to provide information about childhood sexual abuse as part of this training.

The first training session was held in Pukatja with youth workers from NPY Women's Council, Pukatja and Amata, together with Marla Police. The second session ran in Kalka where interested community members joined youth workers in men's and women's groups to talk about childhood sexual assault and what could be done to protect children and young people.

This program opened mutual learning opportunities for participants and Respond SA staff. Community members appreciated the opportunity to learn more about child sexual assault and to discuss the story shown in the video *Big Shame*. Training staff discussed cross cultural training and how to create positive learning environments. These ranged from examining whiteness and racism to flexible programming, shortening session times and providing food.

Creating and participating in learning environments which promote respect for diversity and cultural exchange takes time to develop. Respond SA and the participants benefited greatly from the strong relationships already built by the Aboriginal youth worker training project on the APY Lands.

Respond SA also provided sexual assault training to the RASA Aboriginal youth worker training program



in other rural areas of South Australia. Several RASA staff and Casper Mbatha (visiting from Narrative Foundation in South Africa) gave youth workers the opportunity to talk about what they could do to support young people who want to talk about childhood sexual assault and how to create safe youth environments.

Case Study: Multicultural Family Relationships Educators Group – RAV

This past year Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) was hired by another community-based organisation to train family relationships educators from five different communities to run parenting and marriage education and support groups. Participants came from African, Middle Eastern and Asian communities and were trained in the same group. The cultural differences between group members were pronounced, and the group included both men and women. Participants also had very different levels of proficiency in the English language.

This training approach was new for both RAV and the partner organisation and the results were mixed. Several participants dropped out of the training, particularly those with limited English language skills and those who already had experienced some training in parenting and marriage education. It became clear that more planning and thought is required when attempting to provide training for a group with such differences in language, culture, gender and skill base. On reflection, such a completely open, experimental approach would have benefited greatly from involving the relevant communities and the community organisations during the planning and delivery of the training.

RAV learnt a great deal from this process about the importance of being sensitive to the needs of different stakeholders when dealing with members of culturally diverse communities. We concluded that before being 'hired in' to present training to culturally diverse communities, RAV will need to spend more time understanding the issues that affect the communities, through the communities themselves, rather than simply through other service providers.

Case Study: Mega Day for Hobart's Front Line Family Sector Staff – RA Tas

The Hobart Family Law Pathway Group Network includes family law practitioners and non-government Primary Dispute Resolution (PDR) providers. It meets regularly to share knowledge and expertise about the various counselling services, mediation processes and information about other ancillary services.

On 12 May 2006 the Hobart Family Law Pathway Group held a successful Mega Day of training for frontline family sector staff in contact with separating families. Ten groups, comprising 82 attendees, attended two-hour sessions with two facilitators at each session. There were also 15 service provider stalls staffed all day.

The event was held at Centrelink offices in central Hobart. The participants came from a diverse range of organisations, including family law firms, Primary Dispute Resolution agencies, other legal groups, the Child Support Agency, Centrelink, Good Beginnings, Holyoake, KARADI (Aboriginal Women's Corporation), the Hobart Women's Shelter, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Hobart City Mission, Mission Australia, Salvation Army's McCombe House, and Huon Domestic Violence Agency.

Outcomes for participants included increased knowledge of when to refer and who to refer to; greater awareness of the various counselling services and other ancillary services; and better understanding of the processes through mediation. One of the outcomes for the group was a strengthening of the network. To continue broadening out the network to ancillary groups, an additional meeting will be held each year and a forum will be held in Launceston in November 2006.



3. Relationships Education and Skills Training for the Community

A major focus of Relationships Australia network of member organisations is the provision of relationships, family and life enhancement courses, seminars, workshops and activities for individuals, couples and groups, which often relate to transition points across the life cycle. Topics include pre-marriage education, relationships education, family skills, parenting skills, family violence prevention and post separation issues.

In November 2005 FaCSIA established the Family Relationships Education and Skills Training Reference Group (FRESTRG), as an outcome of the Family Relationships Education and Family Relationships Skills Training Workshop *Future Directions – Heritage and Innovation* held in June 2005. The key purpose of the reference group, which RA members participate in, is to advise the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department on program and policy issues relating to prevention of family breakdown and early intervention strategies to strengthen family relationships. The role of the reference group includes recommending innovative strategies and identifying current issues in family relationships education and skills training, and sharing information about new relationship education resources.

The Relationships Australia National Education Network (NEN) provides an opportunity for Relationships Australia members to share ideas and resources on program development within their respective states and territories. It is also an opportunity for members to update each other on relevant issues, such as the progress of the FaCSIA reference group on the development of a competencies framework for Family Relationship Services and associated FRSP funding. The network also facilitates the formation of national groups for specific programs, such as training for Relationships Australia education leaders to equip them to develop the sector in the use of Relationship Education Competency Standards.

Fiona McDonald, NEN Chair, commented that: 'The NEN has met regularly throughout the year and has been very useful for members to share ideas, learn from each other and develop goals. It has proved to be an ongoing support for

members especially those who are more remote. National programs, national competencies, draft qualifications, and performance framework, are some of the areas that members have found useful to discuss on the network.'

The following three case studies illustrate the responsiveness of Relationships Australia's training programs in meeting local community needs for relationship education.

Case Study: Muslim Couples Relationship Education Course – RAV

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) delivers a relationship education course for couples called Good Connecting. This two-day intensive course, is based upon the research of Dr John Gottman, an American counsellor and researcher who has studied the relationship patterns of thousands of couples over a 20-year period. The course helps couples build their positive connection with each other and regulate the negative exchanges that can cause a relationship to fail.

This year RAV was approached by a local Migrant Information Centre to work with Muslims from an Arabic-speaking background. A Sufi Muslim second generation, Arabic-speaking couple, who are leaders in voluntary welfare work and religious education, were invited to observe the Good Connecting workshop to see whether it could be adapted for their community.

The couple were enthusiastic about Gottman's work. They worked with RAV staff to come up with more appropriate Islamic metaphors and to adapt the practical exercises where necessary. They then led a group for all-Muslim participants, with RAV providing support, training and a background facilitator role.

The group was held at a local community health centre in four 2.5 hour weekly sessions, with a follow-up session 5 weeks later. It included prayer at the beginning and end and some religious teaching to support key points.



Participation and feedback from the group was enthusiastic. Participants, who were mostly second generation Australians from Arabic-speaking backgrounds, indicated that they appreciated being taught by a Muslim husband and wife in an all-Muslim group, and that the material brought together their own faith principles with the best modern research on how to have a good marriage.

Case Study: Religion and Family Harmony Project – RA NSW

This year RA NSW was invited to take part in the Religion and Family Harmony Project, a training project for religious leaders in NSW on family safety issues. The theme of diversity was very much at the heart of this project.

The training project is a part of the Violence Against Women Strategy in NSW and was the initiative of the project worker who was based in Western Sydney.

The working party for this project included workers from the Violence Against Women Unit, the Migrant Resource Centre, NSW Police Ethnic Liaison Officers and Relationships Australia. RA was invited to join because of our expertise in training and our reputation in providing family safety programs. The working party developed a pilot training program that was offered to over 20 religious leaders from about 12 different religious groups.

The aim of the training was to help participants better understand the complexity of family safety issues, and better equip them to respond appropriately to the experiences of their communities.

The training certainly reached the target and frequently resulted in some robust discussion. At the completion of the training, participants reported that their understanding of the issues had been expanded, that their leadership would be different as a result of the training, and that their interventions would be more attuned to the needs of families.

Case Study: Consumer Voice Project – RASA

In 2005 Relationships Australia South Australia's (RASA's) Break Even Gambling Rehabilitation Service initiated the Consumer Voice Project, which aimed to give a voice to people affected by problem gambling. Gambling consumers (people who have experienced problem gambling, and/or their partners) were invited to participate in a training program to develop their public speaking skills so that they could share their story with a variety of audiences.

The training covered topics such as adult learning, gambling in context, ethics, self protection strategies and handling difficult questions, and focused on respecting the diversity and uniqueness of each person's story. Participants were encouraged to clarify why they wanted to tell their story, and what support systems they would need as a public speaker.

There were many positive spin-offs from the project including:

- the development of a growing sense of self-confidence amongst participants;
- the participation of a diversity of consumers in the project, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and rural people;
- the strengthening of partnerships with other Break Even services; and
- positive feedback about the project from groups and organisations that have so far hosted the speakers, with comments such as 'invaluable', 'inspiring', and 'moving'.

To date, four consumers have told their story at a number of different speaking engagements and further speaking opportunities are being negotiated. Audiences have included other gambling consumers, members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, community services professionals and workers, government health department staff, and members of the gambling industry.

Future programs will focus on attracting even more consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse and rural communities. It is hoped that the project will also work with youth agencies to assist young people to tell their stories of problem gambling.



4. Responding to the Needs of New Arrivals to Australia

Relationships Australia recognises that taking up residence in a new country, for whatever reason, but particularly for humanitarian reasons, can be a very difficult, demanding and alienating process. In order to assist new arrivals to make the transition to settle more comfortably in local Australian communities, Relationships Australia's members have been developing innovative programs in consultation with representatives of newly arrived groups.

The following three case studies illustrate some of these programs for new arrivals.

Case Study: Pacific Families Program – RA NSW

Pacific people are often viewed as a homogenous group, which is a measure of how little the various communities of the Pacific are understood.

Differences between Pacific communities are often as wide as the Pacific Ocean that separates their islands.

One feature that they all do share, however, is that the whole community accepts responsibility for raising children. So, when Pacific families migrate to Australia they face not only the predictable tensions that arise between parents and their children as they encounter a new culture, but also dislocation from the community support upon which parents would usually rely.

Relationships Australia NSW's Pacific Families Program helps Pacific people with parenting problems, through a unique partnership with two Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) – Canterbury-Bankstown MRC and Auburn MRC.

The partnership has formed a team of bi-lingual family workers to service different Pacific communities in New South Wales. The workers are from Samoa, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga.

The strength of the program is that it combines the MRCs' expertise in connecting with the communities, with RA NSW's expertise in providing clinical back-up.

The Pacific family workers provide face-to-face family counselling at the MRCs and staff a parenting advice line for Pacific people throughout New South Wales.

For a variety of reasons Pacific people are reluctant to approach counselling services, so it is extremely important to be able to discuss issues in their own language. Another advantage of having workers from particular Pacific communities is that they know their community in Australia and how best to promote the service.

The clinical back-up that RA NSW provides to the Pacific families workers takes the form of weekly clinical supervision and training and 24-hour phone support for any urgent issues.

Below: Pacific Families Program workers and clinical supervisor

L to R: Janet Aslam, Bronwyn Hadife, Leba Warwick-Smith, Lyndal Power (RA NSW) and Liliy Teaua.



Case Study: Humanitarian Entrants Relationships Program – RA NSW

If you've ever moved house, you might argue that it's one of life's most stressful experiences, requiring months of preparation. If you've moved interstate or to another country, this experience is significantly intensified.

Now, imagine being forced to leave your home and your country without any preparation and planning, leaving family and friends behind without a chance to say goodbye, and leaving most or all personal belongings behind. Add to this a language barrier, significant cultural adjustments, qualifications being unrecognised in the new country of migration, loss of support networks, loss of loved ones, and experiences of imprisonment and torture and you begin to get an idea of the experiences of families migrating to Australia on humanitarian grounds.

It's not surprising then that humanitarian entrant families can face significant relationship challenges during their resettlement. Tensions may develop as children adapt more quickly to the host culture while their parents try to maintain the culture and values of their country of origin. Strains on husband-wife

relationships may appear as changes in traditional gender roles occur.

RA NSW's Humanitarian Entrants Relationships Program is an Australian Government funded project to assist humanitarian entrant families with relationship issues. RA NSW has partnered with two Migrant Resource Centres – Auburn MRC and Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta MRC – to draw on each organisation's strengths and expertise in providing humanitarian entrant families with a culturally and linguistically appropriate relationships support service.

The program team includes a full-time project coordinator, RAPS workers and four bi-lingual, bi-cultural family relationships workers based at the MRCs. Between them the team speak seven languages spoken by humanitarian entrants, including Dinka, Nu-weer, Sheluk, Sudanese Arabic, Arabic, Dari and Somali.

For RA NSW, the project has already taught us much about working with this population. It promises to be one of our most challenging and at the same time one of our most rewarding projects.

Below: RA NSW Humanitarian Entrants Relationships Program workers and Project Coordinator.

L to R: Marguerite Eskander, Nasren Nasrat, Gismalla Aboumtoic, Abeda Iqbal (RA NSW) and Satarala Said.



Case Study: Strength to Strength – Family Relationships Services Program for Humanitarian Entrants – RAWA

About 80% of families arriving in Western Australia under the Humanitarian Program come from Africa. Many have spent years in camps and experienced enormous disruption, trauma and loss. The Strength to Strength program provides culturally appropriate services to help humanitarian entrants to Australia deal with their past experiences, as well as the challenges of raising children and different gender roles in a new cultural setting.

The program delivered by Relationships Australia Western Australia (RAWA) in partnership with the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors also provides training to build skills within the humanitarian entrants' community.

A highlight of the program's first year was a Survival Skills for Healthy Families course, designed to teach



Above: Emotional intelligence classes in primary schools
– Strength to Strength facilitator and child.

parents, young adults and children the skills to speak respectfully, listen, and negotiate cooperatively with other family members.

'The atmosphere was one of fun, appreciation and encouragement. Many of the participants were single parents who felt they had lost the parental authority they had back in Africa and missed the support of the community', facilitator Ruth Taylor said.

Another exciting initiative was the introduction of 'emotional intelligence' classes for primary school students to help them recognise, understand and manage their feelings. Majella Catholic Primary School in Balga – a school of choice for African families – has made these early intervention strategies part of the curriculum.

Our challenge in delivering these services effectively has been to adapt our methods to suit the client group, for whom counselling is not necessarily part of their culture.



Above: Strength to Strength facilitators

L to R: Fiona McDonald (RAWA), Tabither Ater (ASeTTs), Abdul Mansaray (ASeTTs) and Ruth Taylor (RAWA).



5. Responding to the Needs of Men

The number of men seeking out Relationships Australia's services is increasing, with 44% of our clients in 2005–06 being men. This reflects a focus in Relationships Australia on providing programs that are responsive to the needs of male client groups. Services include counselling, parenting education, relationship enhancement programs, and groups for men of all ages, including fathers, grandfathers and youths. The following four case studies indicate the breadth of initiatives through which Relationships Australia works with men to assist them in building better relationships.

Case Study: Northern Suburbs Fatherhood Support Project - RASA

Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA), in conjunction with Kids N You (a Children, Youth and Women's Health Service program), supports a fatherhood network called the Northern Suburbs Fatherhood Support Project. This project aims to increase the interpersonal and parenting skills of fathers through mutual support and acquisition of skills and knowledge. The men meet weekly to discuss various topics and to organise social and recreational activities for themselves and their children.

Since the start of the project in June 2005, some 170 clients have attended sessions on topics such as relationships with children, communication, fathering roles, changing perceptions of self, stress and anger management, and physical and emotional well-being.

The fathers' group at Elizabeth Grove has now formed a Dads' Committee that oversees the group's activities and intends to hold bi-monthly events. The group also organised four social events, which were attended by 44 adults and 58 children.

These sessions and activities increase participants' personal and interpersonal development, while enhancing their relationships with their children, significant others and the general community.

Positive outcomes for participants include improvement in skills and knowledge, self-confidence, esteem, and quality of life. As a result of the group, participants have also become more motivated to assist other men, to be more mindful of their needs, and to be involved in community affairs.

Case Study: Successful Outcome for Tassiemale Group – RA Tas

Tassiemale is a service that has been offered by Relationships Australia Tasmania since 2000. The service works with men on a range of relationship and family issues.

This year Tassiemale ran a six-week group for men focusing on the changing role of men in society, and balancing work and family life and relationships. The group comprised 10 men ranging in age from 25 to 55, from diverse backgrounds and life situations. Some had been married for 20 years or more, others were recently separated, some had been married several times. Most had children, although some were estranged from them.

The group rapidly developed deep levels of disclosure and trust, with each participant able to share their struggles, challenges, successes, fears, hopes, pain and frustrations.

All men expressed that they had found the group very beneficial, with most of them never having attended a men's group before (outside of a pub, workplace or sporting group).

The participants were extremely keen to continue the group and organised to do this on their own, with ongoing support from Tassiemale and guidance and mentorship from another established men's group in Hobart. At last report, all was going well and they were opening the group to new members.

It was a great privilege to have facilitated and shared with a group of men who showed such commitment to strengthening their role in life.



Case Study: Pacific Families – RACR

This year Relationships Australia Canberra and Region (RACR) ran an 8-week Anger Management Group for young men aged 14–18 years, predominantly of Samoan and Tongan heritage, in the ACT Restorative Justice system.

RACR came to understand the cultural dilemmas faced by these young men, and how they felt caught between a traditional understanding of how differences should be resolved and a contemporary one.

In the facilitated group, the young men were given the opportunity to consider how effectively they had communicated the frustration they felt about their place within their community, which had generally been expressed through acts of random violence.

Strangely enough the young men did not cite racism as the cause of their frustration but more a sense that expressing any emotion other than anger or excitement would be considered unacceptable by their peers.

The group was given the opportunity to consider how respected individuals within their peer group were able to abstain from violence and still remain popular and 'cool' or 'mad'.

The feedback from the group suggested that the young men were now reflecting on options other than violence to maintain a level of social inclusion or local respect whilst enjoying the benefits of communicating their feelings to family and friends.



Above: RA Tas Bridges for African Men and Families Project
Service provider/stakeholder meeting.

Case Study: A Focus on African Men – RA Tas

In 2005 Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) considered how its strategy could better respond to the Australian Government's focus on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Strong links had already been made with members of African communities and bi-cultural health education workers. We found that one of the underlying difficulties for members of these communities in adapting to Australian society is culture shock, particularly for African men from Sudan, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Burundi and Sierra Leone.

RA Tas recognised that members of this target group needed access support for personal, relationship and family difficulties. Many of these men, whose traditional position in the family is the main provider, are shaken by the cultural differences they encounter in Australian society, such as their wives being entitled to receive Centrelink benefits in their own right and having their own bank cards. Such changes can lead to relationship problems, substance abuse and domestic violence.

These issues need to be addressed in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways. With its proven expertise in working in the family relationship area, and with men in particular, RA Tas took the lead in developing strategies to find solutions. We secured a small grant of \$1,400 from the Hobart City Council's (HCC) Community Development Grant Scheme, and additional support from Centacare, Anglicare and the Phoenix Centre.

In order to identify ways of engaging with men from African CALD communities, RA Tas facilitated a series of workshops with identified stakeholders, including representatives from African groups and other community groups and agencies who work with men's and/or trauma issues. Meetings have been held on a regular monthly basis since September 2005. These meetings have involved representatives from Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone communities and five to eight other service providers. They have allowed for broad dialogue between service providers and members of the communities.



The meetings have also been attended by agencies from different sectors, such as job agencies, which has enabled a broadening of understanding across sectors.

Outcomes to be achieved include the development of information brochures about relevant services, targeted at CALD groups and in different languages, and information for service provider organisations on ways to engage with African men in culturally appropriate ways, as developed from the workshops.

Case Study: Meetings with Burundi Men and Families in Tasmania

As part of a community development project to build multicultural links, a series of informal meetings was held with Burundi men and women at Relationships Australia, Clarence Health Centre, Lenah Valley Hall and the Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) TAFE in Hobart. The central locations of the meetings alleviated the access difficulties experienced by many migrants.

Initially Burundi men approached Relationships Australia Tasmania for relationship information. A useful dialogue has continued. It is also hoped that representatives from the Burundi community will join the regular CALD meetings.

From this project we have learnt that in order to develop mutual trust and to start to work effectively with these groups, we have to go at a slower pace than we had envisaged. Outcomes for participants so far have included the opportunity to talk about concerns and issues, finding commonalities of experience and thinking, and obtaining information and referrals to other relevant services.

It is hoped that the Burundi men project will be extended to include Launceston and to involve meetings between African community representatives and service providers. We will be relying on those involved in the project to promote it and to recruit their northern counterparts to these meetings. The Tasmanian CALD projects are utilising an Action Research model which inform solution focused processes.

6. Responding to the Needs of Young Women

Traditionally women have been more inclined than men to seek support through life cycle and relationship transitions. On average, 56% of Relationships Australia's clients are women. The following case study illustrates how local programs using client focused processes are assisting young women.

Case Study: Secret Girls Business Program – RAQ

The role of a Youth Support Coordinator can vary greatly, depending on the needs of young people and their families, schools, and the broader community. Participation in small groups can be an effective means of identifying and addressing issues that affect a particular group of young people.

This year our Youth Support Coordinator in the Mt Gravatt region initiated an innovative program to address the needs of young women at one of the schools in the region.

The 10-week program, called Secret Girls Business, was developed through discussion with the student support team, which identified some key issues for female students at the school.

The program was designed to address a number of issues seen to affect young women during their adolescent years and as impacting upon peer relationships:

- building positive friendships;
- communication;
- conflict resolution;
- creating positive impressions;
- avoiding stereotyping;
- believing in yourself;
- health and body image;
- sexual health and relationships.



The focus of the Secret Girls Business program is to assist young women in schools form positive relationships with their peers. The program is aimed at Year 10 students and will be delivered to schools later in 2006.

7. Responding to Cultural Diversity

Relationships Australia's network has worked at the local level in innovative ways with other service providers or local communities to meet challenges arising from cultural and linguistic diversity. The following case study illustrates how effective creative approaches can be in meeting such challenges.

Case Study: Narrative Theatre Approaches in Community Work – RASA

P.E.A.C.E Multicultural Services, a service of Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA), is increasingly using narrative ideas in its work with individuals and groups from multicultural communities. Narrative theatre provides a means to explore issues through the sharing of common stories. It enables people to become engaged in discussions around challenging or taboo topics, such as drugs, alcohol or problem gambling.

During January and February 2006, P.E.A.C.E Multicultural Services used narrative theatre with a number of Cambodian groups to explore issues facing young people, parents and others. The aim was to develop relevant stories which reflected their common concerns. The stories were acted out in front of an audience of 60 people, and the scenarios were then deconstructed and debated. The comments received on the day were extremely positive, and allowed participants representing community's diversity to explore and share their views from an equitable position.

8. Responding to Needs of Diversity through Family Dispute Resolution / Mediation

Relationships Australia is recognised as a leader in the provision of mediation services, now also known as family dispute resolution. This is well reflected in the number of new Family Relationship Centres the Relationships Australia network is now managing. For some years, the Relationships Australia Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) Network has been a cornerstone in developing mediation polices and practices at a national level for RA organisations.

8th National Mediation Conference

Relationships Australia is delighted to have been part of the organising committee of the 8th National Mediation Conference organising committee, through the input of Bill Field, Mediation Manager at Relationships Australia Tasmania, as one of the directors on the committee. The conference was held in Hobart on 3–5 May 2006 and was attended by approximately 280 delegates. The Relationships Australia Family Dispute Resolution Network and the Relationships Australia National Organisation provided sponsorship for the conference through the provision of delegates satchels.

The theme for the conference was 'No mediator is an island: Celebrating difference – learning from each other'. Diversity was the key premise underlying the conference theme. This was reflected in the topics of the papers which ranged from power in uniform, transformative mediation and the Tao, mediation in Indigenous communities, healthcare mediation and online dispute resolution, to the more traditional issues arising in mediation.

Relationships Australia was well-represented amongst the speakers who included Susan Holmes, CEO of Relationships Australia Tasmania ('Independence in ensuring the child's best interest – The Children's Contact Service'), Bill Hewlett of Relationships Australia Canberra and Region ('Using the children's voices to bring about change – Child inclusive practice') and Dr Andrew Bickerdike of Relationships Australia Victoria ('Mediator interventions: What do mediators do when the going gets difficult, and does it help?'). In addition, a number of the sessions were chaired by mediators from Relationships Australia Tasmania.





Above: 8th National Mediation Conference, May 2006 in Hobart
L to R: Susie Winter, Bill Field, Angie Robertson.

The following case studies illustrate the significant contribution that Relationships Australia has provided to the Australian and international community as a leader in the provision of family dispute resolution services.

Case Study: Towards a National Mediation Network in East Timor – RANT

Since mid-2004, Relationships Australia has been collaborating with East Timor’s Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) to establish a national system of mediation in East Timor. The project draws on PDF’s research into how traditional Timorese methods of dispute resolution can be used to develop a national system of mediation suitable for East Timor’s current needs at a time of conflict and an over-burdened and under-resourced judicial structure.

The partnership between Relationships Australia and PDF was crystallised in July 2005 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations. Under this arrangement, Relationships Australia has contributed \$20,000 of its own national funding (plus substantial staff resources) to assist PDF in the development of working models of mediation in East Timor. This funding has been supplemented through co-contribution from

ConocoPhillips in the form of free air travel from Darwin to Dili for Relationships Australia Northern Territory mediators who provide technical assistance cross-border for the project through a ‘two-way learning’ framework.

In this collaboration, Relationships Australia has advised PDF on international best practices in mediation and dispute resolution and assisted in training. This has included support in the development of a mediation model suitable to East Timor, support in the development of modules for Training of Trainers (TOT), and assistance with monitoring and evaluation. Before the recent 2006 upsurge in violence, the mediation model was piloted in the three districts of Dili, Baucau and Oecussi with the establishment of panels of mediators in these centres.

Children in Focus Research Program

The Children in Focus research program, funded by the Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department, is a collaboration between Family Transitions, Relationships Australia and the Australian Institute for Primary Care (La Trobe University). The study compares the outcomes of two different forms of child centred family law mediation for two treatment groups over 12 months, involving 150 separated families.

In March 2005 Dr Jennifer McIntosh, Family Transitions and Caroline Long, La Trobe University published a paper entitled ‘Current findings on Australian children in post separation disputes: Outer conflict, inner discord’. The paper discusses the development of the model, which was designed to operate in two phases.

In Phase 1, which was conducted from February 2004 to July 2004, the child focused mediation model was used. This group participated in child focused mediation, a commonly applied approach to mediation, which actively aimed to refocus parents on the needs of their children, but did not include direct consultation with the children to screen their needs or obtain their views. The first treatment group was drawn from separated and separating couples presenting with parenting related matters to Relationships Australia mediation services in three locations: Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra.



Phase 2, which was used between August 2004 and March 2005, used the child inclusive mediation model. Before the second treatment group was recruited, the mediation teams, including mediators and child consultants, were intensively trained in the child inclusive mediation model. The children in this treatment group were interviewed by child consultants, using tools developed by the Children in Focus research team, and the interviews were provided as feedback to the parents as part of the mediation process. The second treatment group was drawn from separated couples presenting with parenting disputes to Relationships Australia's mediation services in the same three locations as the first treatment group.

The two treatments are described in further detail in the article from which this summary is drawn.

In both samples, families were eligible for the study if their dispute included parenting matters, and at least one child was within the ages of 5–18 years. Voluntary and mandated cases were approached for inclusion in the study, and a broad range of conflict severity was sought.

Families in the study were to be followed up in person at 3 and 12 months after mediation, using a face-to-face interview and the same questions they completed at intake, when they began the process. Wherever consent existed for children to participate in the research, they were seen in a one-to-one play style interview at intake, with face-to-face follow-up interviews at 3 and 12 months after mediation.

Learnings for Relationships Australia Participants

The three Relationships Australia organisations involved found that both parents and children benefited from participating in the Children in Focus research project. They recommend that this model be conducted by practitioners with highly developed skills, with proper resourcing of appropriately trained staff, provision of supervision and administrative processes. For example, approximately four mediators, two child consultants and administrative support staff are necessary to manage a Child Inclusive Practice (CIP) in a small organisation.

Participating practitioners and managers developed skills very quickly, and staff who participated in training, supervision and debriefing were spurred on by the positive results for children that were evident very early in the project. Although the CIP processes took more time than other services, Relationships Australia participants found

that experienced practitioners could deliver a positive outcome for children with only a few hours more than the time it took using the child focused model. Participating in the project helped to strengthen and broaden the focus on children by Relationships Australia staff and clients.

Benefits of the child inclusive mediation model included the following:

- through a supportive and validating consultation, children's 'voices' and experiences were conveyed to parents, which in turn supported and assisted parents to re-establish a secure emotional base post separation for their children;
- early helpful interventions for children were developed;
- parents benefited greatly from the information they received about how their children were managing post separation, and were able to refocus on their children's needs;
- the child consultant facilitated the parent's discussion of the concerns and welfare of their children and their feedback was highly regarded by parents;
- project mediators and counsellors developed advanced clinical skills as a result of specialist training and supervision, tools and materials;
- other staff benefited from sharing with those working directly with children; and
- fathers were more satisfied with this process than with child focused practices.

The research found that violence was not a predictor of poor mediation outcomes. We did find that those cases that did not progress with the CIP intervention commonly had at their core a serious mental health issue in relation to one or both parents, together with seriously entrenched dispute. Current violence and poorly regulated behaviours by parents need to be considered when deciding whether to involve children.

Relationships Australia looks forward to the final report of this leading edge research, particularly as the Family Relationship Centres offer CIP in appropriate cases and through referral to the FRSP.



Case Study: Child Focused Mediation – RACR

Relationships Australia is a national leader in both training and promoting child centred counselling and mediation practices. Child focused mediation can be used with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a way to attend to their specific needs and challenges.

Before any negotiation takes place, child focused mediation encourages parents to consider the needs of each child and to explore their parenting ideas

and values. Relationships Australia Canberra and Region (RACR) has found that this format has enabled families where one parent is from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) to express a need for their child to learn a second language and learn about their culture in order to have a meaningful relationship with relatives. In several cases, the importance of the culture in the child's upbringing has been acknowledged and suitable agreements have been formed.

'Our mediators were thorough, professional and caring. A valuable process. Impossible without your input.'

Quote from father of one child, mediation client in NSW.

In summary

The case studies above demonstrate the range of ways that our members have worked to meet the diverse needs of communities in Australia. Our members use a reflective approach which applies insights and learnings to improve service delivery across all our programs.



Our Work, Our People

National Office

Key Personnel

Mary Mertin-Ryan, *National Director*

Deborah Durie, *National Policy Officer (from January 2006)*

Roger Smith, *National Research Officer*

Deb Nichols, *National Webmaster*

Josephine Ponsford, *National Projects Officer (from October 2005)*

Lauren Stewart, *Executive Assistant (from April 2006)*

Ginny Condon, *Administration Assistant (from January to April 2006)*

Josephine Ponsford, *Executive Assistant (to October 2005)*

Board Members

Ken Heyward, *President (from October 2005)*

Iyla Davies, *President (to October 2005)*

Franco Camatta, *Vice President (from October 2005)*

Helen Berry, *Vice President (to October 2005)*

Andrew Davis, *Treasurer (from October 2005)*

Helen Berry, *Acting Treasurer (to October 2005)*

Doug Gillanders

Anne Hollonds

Susan Holmes

Chris Lewis

Mary Mertin-Ryan

Nancy Miller *(from October 2005)*

Our Work, Our People

The National Office represents Relationships Australia members on national issues; promotes Relationships Australia as a national entity; provides leadership, particularly on national policy and research issues; and leads the national organisation in achieving its strategic goals.

During the year, the Australian Government's planned reform of the family law system began to take shape. The National Office helped ensure that the voices of Relationship Australia members and its clients were heard throughout this process.

We are committed to working with the Government and the community in ensuring that the family services are rolled out equitably. We are proud to have played a part in contributing the views of the Relationships Australia member organisations to this important initiative.

Family Law Changes

With input from across the organisation, the National Office made submissions to the House of Representatives and Senate Committees examining the Exposure Draft of the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005. In our submissions, we strongly supported the principle that an ongoing, meaningful relationship with both parents is important in a child's life. Mary Mertin-Ryan, National Director, Anne Hollonds, CEO RA NSW, and Tony Gee, RAV, gave evidence to the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on 21 July 2005.

Mary Mertin-Ryan and CEO RA Tas, Sue Holmes appeared before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee on 3 March 2006 to further reinforce these views.

The National Office facilitated several successful workshops for Relationships Australia member organisations in preparing for the round of tenders for the expanded Family Relationships Services Program, including the roll-out of the first 15 Family Relationship Centres.

The National Office has also sought to secure a place for Relationships Australia in the broader details of family law reform. In April 2006, National Office prepared a submission to the Family Law Council on the law governing the application of a separated parent to relocate. We supported retention of the current law in which parenting orders in relocation matters are determined by the best



interests of the child. The submission also noted the impact that parental relocation can have on children, child developmental factors, and the benefits of a child-inclusive approach in making relocation decisions.

We continued to participate in fora with our legal colleagues through the Family Law Forum and Australian Legal Assistance Forum. We also made a submission to the Family Law Council on their Draft Best Practice Guidelines for Collaborative Family Law Practice.

Review of the Industry Representative Bodies

For some time, Relationships Australia along with Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) and Family Services Australia (FSA) have each had a formalised consultative arrangement with the Australian Government as Industry Representative Bodies (IRBs).

During the year the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) commissioned a review of the IRBs. We will continue to represent RA member views during the review process and work in the best interests of the whole sector.

Work Life Balance

In October 2005 we submitted a response to the 'Striking the Balance: Men, Women, Work and Family' discussion paper issued by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Our submission highlighted our research findings on the difficulties faced by many families in finding time to nurture their relationships, and explored options available to government and industry to assist Australians better balance their life for the benefit of families and children.

On 29 May 2006 National Director Mary Mertin-Ryan and Janenne Hamilton, Senior Manager, RACR, appeared before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services' Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family to further elaborate on this issue.

Forgotten Australians Conference and Child Protection Forum

The National Office had planning input into two fora funded by FaCSIA led by Families Australia held in response to parliamentary inquiries into children in institutional care and child protection. Deborah Durie facilitated sessions at the

Forgotten Australians Conference, which explored options for assisting those who have suffered whilst in institutional care. Mary Mertin-Ryan facilitated a session on early intervention and prevention at the National Child Protection Forum which focused on developing a National Strategy for Child Protection.

Organisational Development

This year we began developing a new strategic plan, while undertaking a broader organisational review to revisit the role and functions of the national organisation and the National Board.

We are currently managing the redevelopment and design of the national website to provide internal and external information exchange (via the intranet and the RA Hub).

Human and Capital Resources

This year Relationships Australia National Office was finally operating with a full complement of staff, which enabled us to throw our energies into the debate on family and social policy. Tanya Brass and Bill Hewlett were seconded to the National Office from RACR while the position of National Policy Officer was being permanently filled.

In January we were delighted to welcome Deborah Durie to the position of National Policy Officer. Josephine Ponsford was promoted to the new position of National Projects Officer, and Ginny Condon temporarily filled the position of Executive Assistant before Lauren Stewart took up this role in April 2006.

Roger Smith, Deb Nichols and Edwina Exton continue to provide excellent service to the work of Relationships Australia National Office.

National Office Staff. L to R: Lauren Stewart, Mary Mertin-Ryan, Roger Smith, Deb Nichols, Deborah Durie, Josephine Ponsford.



Canberra and Region

Key Personnel

Mary Pekin, *Chief Executive Officer*

Janice Wickerson, *Deputy CEO*

Tanya Brass, *Director Mediation*

Gisela Pullen-Gordon, *Coordinator Mediation*

Janenne Hamilton, *Senior Manager*

Bill Hewlett, *Senior Manager*

Bernadette Post, *Manager – Wagga Wagga*

Serena Griggs, *Deputy Manager – Wagga Wagga*

Marelise Matthysen, *Manager CCS – Wagga Wagga (to October 2005)*

Alexandra Faulkner, *Manager CCS – Wagga Wagga (from October 2005)*

Jacki Lardner, *Finance Manager*

Ginny Condon, *Office Coordinator (to December 2005)*

Susanne Morton, *Office Coordinator (from December 2005)*

Susan Downie, *Reception Coordinator*

Board Members

Nancy Miller, *President*

Peter Bailey, *Vice President*

Val Albrecht, *Chair, Finance Committee*

Marilyn Chalkley

Jim Dunn

Sue Lyons

Anne Reese

Josephine Stevens

Steve Taylor

Lorraine Watt

Bernadette Post

Janenne Hamilton

Our Work, Our People

In the past year we consolidated our expertise in working with children. We are committed to incorporating children's experience into our therapeutic interventions with their parents. Our aim is to strengthen family relationships and to help parents reach agreement on issues that concern them. We have found that parents are able to move forward together more easily when they are more aware of the effect that their relationship can have on the mental health of their children.

We were very pleased to work in partnership with Centacare and Marymead Child and Family Centre to win the tender to manage the Family Relationship Centre in Canberra, which is due to open in July 2006.

Services

In Wagga, we co-located our Children's Contact Service with our existing services which include counselling, mediation and group work, thus enabling clients to access a range of services and workers under one roof. The seamless referral between programs means that people in stressful situations can access the most suitable service to address their particular issues at the time.

We have been developing anger management programs for men, women and young people. We continue to seek intervention structures that encourage and assist people to express anger in ways that do not frighten and intimidate their loved ones. We are pleased to have commenced work with staff in the ACT Government Restorative Justice Unit to offer a therapeutic anger management program for young people.

We were fortunate this year to work with Canberra Mothercraft Society in their support groups for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren as a result of the effects of drugs and alcohol on their children. The stories of these families, which are seldom heard, are a powerful statement of grandparents' commitment to their grandchildren and a testament to the central role they play in their lives.

Our counselling service to people affected by the 2003 Canberra bushfires continues. Although most people affected by the fires have relied for assistance on their own family or friendship networks and the strong community supports that are available in the ACT, some people needed



a counselling intervention. We found that some people, while seeming to be 'getting on with' their lives, have experienced reactions two years after the trauma.

We continued to strengthen links with Indigenous services in the ACT in a range of ways. We held anger management groups for Connections, a drop-in service for Indigenous people who use drugs. We have also worked with the staff of Winunnga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service in their professional supervision and debriefing program.

Organisational Development

Our strategic plan for 2006–09 emphasises the need to develop services that will assist a diverse community. Through research and development we aim to identify the most suitable relationship support services that we can offer people of varying ages, cultures, gender, income groupings and geographic locations. We will also continue to develop services to assist people before serious problems develop in their relationships. Encouraging people to use services before problems overwhelm them is a long-standing challenge for all health professionals.

Our board, led by Nancy Miller, has completed the RACR governance policy. We are confident that proper procedures are in place to assist the board to monitor and oversee organisational performance. RACR expresses its deep gratitude to all the board members who voluntarily commit their valuable time and energy to assisting this organisation in supporting the relationships of our community.

Human and Capital Resources

After 35 years of renting premises, we were finally able to purchase a permanent home for our Wagga services. Bernadette Post, our manager in Wagga, developed the successful proposal with the assistance of the Wagga Advisory Panel, particularly the Chair, Steve Taylor. This will allow us to build a

stronger base in Wagga, while continuing to provide outreach services to Gundagai, Tumut, Cootamundra, Leeton, and surrounding towns.

This past year we farewellled Janice Wickerson, our Deputy CEO, who has also managed our counselling and professional training programs for the past 7 years. She is a well-known and respected clinician in the ACT and region, as many couples and families will attest. Her expertise and support in supervision and training will be sorely missed by staff.

RACR also farewellled our Board President, Helen Berry. Helen was President for the past four years, National Vice-President for the past two years, and RACR Board member for the past 12 years. She provided strong leadership, incisive analysis and tireless effort in her support of Relationships Australia. The staff and board members of RACR express their sincere gratitude for her work.

RACR also expresses its appreciation to all its staff and managers, and the key IT support team of Colman Communication Consultants, for their hard work, good humour and team spirit. Without them, nothing would be achieved.

'Having an independent impartial counsellor was wonderful, a great help to filter issues that were most confusing at the time. A great service.'



New South Wales

Key Personnel

Anne Hollonds, *Chief Executive Officer*

Fiona Ashmore, *Chief Finance Officer*

Lyn Fletcher, *Director of Operations*

Pam Lewis, *Director of Client Services*

Gail Westcott, *Business Development Manager*

Denise Smith, *Manager, Illawarra Region (to 9 January 2006)*

Gary Hodson, *Manager, Illawarra Region (from January to 7 June 2006)*

Brian O'Neill, *Manager, Illawarra Region (from 7 June 2006)*

Eric Hudson, *Manager, West Region*

David Allan, *Manager, RAPS Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service and ARC Aftercare Resource Centre & Support Service*

Kerrie McFadden, *Manager, Relationship Education/Family Skills Training Program*

Ruby-Jo Hawkett, *Manager, North Region*

Gary Hodson, *Manager, South East Region*

Akivra Bouris, *Manager, Hunter Region*

Stephen Hackett, *Manager, Penrith FRC (from 15 June 2006)*

Board Members

Maryann Russett, *President (from 14 October 2005)*

Stephen Winter, *President (to 14 October 2005)*

John Seaman, *Vice President*

Sarah Fogg, *Vice President*

Edna Blanchard, *Hon. Treasurer (from 14 October 2005)*

Maryann Russett, *Hon. Treasurer (to 14 October 2005)*

Liz Adsett *(to 3 May 2006)*

Ian Harris

Sharon Pedersen

Jeanna Sutton

Ron Uttridge

Our Work, Our People

In the past year, Relationships Australia NSW (RA NSW) has focused on using partnerships to more effectively deliver services to a diverse range of clients and communities.

Our new 3-year strategic plan focuses on improving access to services across all areas of NSW, particularly through capacity building, training and collaboration. The plan has a particular focus on improving services for Indigenous communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, through partnerships with other organisations.

Services

We continued to provide a diversity of programs to support individuals and families with particular needs in the community. Many new or expanded services are made possible through strong partnerships with other organisations.

Through our Healthy Families Circle Project (FaCSIA Local Answers), in partnership with Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation, we have been able to develop closer ties with the Indigenous community in Redfern. In addition, Aboriginal workers have been sponsored to undertake our Diploma of Counselling and Groupwork and our Family Safety Program training.

In the past year we delivered a range of Australian Government and state funded programs in partnership with several Migrant Resource Centres. These included a program for migrants admitted to Australia on humanitarian grounds from Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq; and programs for immigrant Samoan, Fijian, Tongan and Maori families in Australia.

In partnership with the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, we delivered several relationship education programs for veterans and their partners, in rural and metropolitan areas across the state.

Our Tools for Parents Project, in partnership with Richmond Community Services and funded by FaCSIA Local Answers funding, will now run for 4 years. Demand for services in the Hawkesbury area in NSW has been very high and we are developing new creative initiatives to respond to these local needs.

Our state funded Aftercare Support Service for adults who were once in out-of-home care has developed new



strategies in promotion to clients in rural areas. Demand for the aftercare services on the Central Coast is also growing strongly.

Funds granted through the Drought Counselling initiative have allowed us to continue to consult and collaborate with rural communities, and to bring children's programs, parenting groups and worker support to areas such as Hay, Deniliquin and Lightning Ridge.

Our telephone and e-counselling services have expanded access to our services to a wider geographical area and are particularly popular in the Hunter region.

We were invited to provide the first of a series of seminars on domestic violence for religious leaders from different cultural backgrounds in Western Sydney. The seminar was delivered in association with the Violence Against Women Specialist Worker (based at the Baulkham Hills, Parramatta and Holroyd Migrant Resource Centre) and the Religion and Family Violence working party.

Two grants from NSW Health allowed us to offer relationship based programs to couples caring for children with special needs, and to men who are carers. Our partners in these programs were Carers NSW, various schools and Vision Australia.

Grandparents as Primary Carers is a collaborative project with local community groups in Western Sydney, which has delivered therapeutic, educational and recreational programs in a range of outreach locations.

As part of its core work, RA NSW continues to provide services to men and their families, through seminars, support groups and family camps such as Dads and Kids and Men as Carers. The Focus on Fathers project, a dOCS Families First initiative in partnership with Centacare, mapped services and developed new resources for fathers in Northern Sydney.

Our Adolescent and Family Program, RAPS, is piloting a state funded project, Keeping It Together, which uses a group work approach to assist adolescents and their parents. A key component of this project has been providing skills development for local professionals so that the project can continue in the community beyond the funded timeframe.

Our Sorting Out Separation (SOS) program for families experiencing separation and divorce has expanded across all our centres. This integrated program provides assessment,

case management and a range of services to court-ordered and voluntary clients in conflict over parenting matters.

In collaboration with UnitingCare Unifam, we hosted a highly successful national symposium called Safe Transitions, which brought together national and international practitioners and researchers to focus on improving services for high-conflict families after separation.

We are receiving increasing demand for Employee Assistance Programs from a diverse range of corporations. We have also developed new partnerships with sporting organisations including Rugby Union Players Association, the Australian Cricketers Association, and the Football Federation of Australia.

Our partnerships with the University of Newcastle, the University of NSW and Charles Sturt University continue in the area of teaching and research.

Organisational Development

We began to develop the new Australian Government funded services that form part of the new family law system. These included the establishment of Family Relationship Centres in Penrith and Wollongong, in partnership with UnitingCare Unifam. We are also developing a new Children's Contact Service in Penrith, and Early Intervention Services in Penrith, Wollongong and Maitland.

Our role as a provider of training and professional development was enhanced this year, through the accreditation of our Australian Institute for Relationship Studies (AIRS) as a Higher Education Institute and the appointment of a new Academic Head, in addition to our status as a Registered Training Organisation in vocational training.

Human and Capital Resources

The organisation made a significant investment in staff training and professional development, including the provision of organisation-wide training in post-separation work and the Family Safety program, and the provision of Working with Men training for new staff.

In response to growing demand, we have leased new and larger premises in the main street of Penrith. This has permitted the co-location of our integrated services with the new Children's Contact Service, across the road from the new Family Relationship Centre.



Northern Territory

Key Personnel

James Lamerton, *Chief Executive Officer*

Janet Muirhead, *Manager PDR and Relationships Education (to May 2006)*

Belinda Emmerson-Whyte, *Manager Counselling and Professional Training*

Gary Jones, *Juvenile Diversion Coordinator*

Christine Currington, *Manager Administration*

Board Members

Doug Gillanders, *President*

Christine Millowick, *Vice President*

Andrew Hemming, *Public Officer*

Christine Cakebread

Fiona Carter

Margaret Orwin

Julie Wells

'It was a healing process for the community. The families didn't want to talk about the deaths but because some important people shared their stories others could too. The stories let us empty ourselves and let healing happen.'

Quote about the process of constructing and compiling the 'healing stories' from the two East Arnhem communities involved in the 'Back from the Edge' course; a cooperative project involving the two East Arnhem communities of Yirrkala and Gunyanyara, RANT and the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide.

'Didn't just fly in and fly out and talk just to the workers; they came many times and talked to all sorts of people in the community.'

Comment from a member of the one of the communities involved in the 'Back from the Edge' project about the team who conducted the project.

Our Work, Our People

The past year has witnessed significant changes to Relationships Australia Northern Territory (RANT) with a new CEO, James Lamerton, joining the organisation on the first day of the financial year. James has a background of senior management in health, particularly Aboriginal Health, in both the Northern Territory and in Western Australia and has led the organisation, over the reporting period, through a period of consolidation and growth.

RANT, at long last, has moved on from the Woods Street premises in Darwin that had been our home for 16 years but was proving increasingly inadequate for our purposes. We are now located closer to the Darwin CBD in Cavenagh Street in a space almost twice the size of our previous premises.

Janet Muirhead, Program Manager, PDR and Relationship Education Services, has moved on from the organisation to take up a role in the NT Government. Janet had been with the organisation for 16 years. Her departure coincided with the opening of our new building so her farewell function was an occasion for both honouring the past and welcoming the future. From Janet's departure to the end of the reporting period, Justine Davis, a long time sessional mediator with RANT, ably filled the position of Program Manager, PDR & Relationship Education Services. The organisation is grateful to Justine for her exemplary efforts over the last four months.

RANT, in collaboration with Anglicare NT, was successful in its bid to operate the new Darwin Family Relationship Centre (FRC). The largest of the first 15 Family Relationship Centres to be established in Australia, the Darwin centre's footprint will cover the entire Northern Territory including Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs. Most of the Darwin centre's staff is on board and we eagerly anticipate its opening on 3 July 2006.



Client Services

Last year our Family Relationships Services Program counselling team supported nearly 1300 people, and demand for our services continues to grow.

We strive to ensure that our counselling service is responsive to the needs of both men and women and to people from different cultural backgrounds. We are pleased that a recent analysis shows that over 43 per cent of our counselling clients are men, and over 20 per cent of our clients are either Indigenous or come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

People receive professional support from us on a wide range of issues including relationship development/improvement, relationship difficulties, sexual concerns, domestic and family violence, separation, grief and loss, and individual growth.

A small yet important part of our counselling work this year has involved supporting youth who are part of the Police Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP), and their families. The JDP is structured to operate within the restorative justice paradigm and includes family conferencing, victim offender conferencing, community service and other appropriate programs. Structured programs for youth include community service, letters of apology to victims, agreement to attend school regularly and financial compensation to victims of theft where possible. This successful program has secured funding for a further 3 years and will recruit an Aboriginal Youth Worker to assist us access the many communities in and around Alice Springs.

We have also continued to provide workshops to various community groups and school students throughout the year.

A highlight for our staff was the innovative counselling training provided by Johnella Bird, who we convinced to travel from Auckland to Darwin despite temperatures of around 35°C and 70% humidity.

Other professionals in the community were invited to attend the training to offset costs. The event helped to bring together a network of practitioners in the community who are currently very active in a study group led by RANT.

Professional Training

An important training initiative this year has been our work with the NT Alcohol and Other Drugs Program. We were contracted to provide nationally accredited counselling training modules to assist in further capacity building of their staff to work with addictions. The training was delivered to groups in both Darwin and Alice Springs.

In another important development this year, our training team worked with the NT Family and Children's Services to offer a nationally accredited Graduate Certificate in Clinical Supervision and Consultation for a number of their team leaders across the Territory. In partnership with both RA NSW and RASA, RANT will begin the delivery of this training in August 2006.

Requests for the delivery of our nationally accredited courses have continued to exceed our capacity to deliver. We are currently taking steps to recruit new staff so that we can expand the program to meet demand.



Queensland

Key Personnel

Andrew Davis, *Chief Executive Officer*

Shane Klintworth, *Executive, Director, Client Services*

Gail Slocombe, *Executive Director, Practice and Training*

Judith Hunt, *Director, Finance*

Wil Alvarez, *Director, IT&C*

Sue Reade, *Director, Human Resources*

Steve Parker, *Zone Director North*

Noeline Young, *Zone Director Central*

Julia Arnold, *Zone Director Metropolitan*

Samantha Aldridge, *Zone Director Border*

Board Members

Iyla Davies, *President*

Nita Vogler, *Vice President*

Noel Milliken, *Treasurer*

Bruce Ballment

Peter Swarbrick

Marilyn Venus

Catherine Ketton

Andrew Davis (*Secretary and Chief Executive Officer*)

'Thank you for helping me to see all the positives in our relationship. We do really love each other; we are committed to our relationship. We were in a rut but now I feel like we have movement.'

'It (counselling) was able to help us to understand what we need to do to stay strong in our relationship. Issues were raised in a safe environment discussed and resolved. Many, many thanks; you helped us save our relationship.'

Our Work, Our People

Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) continues to grow. Growth brings its own rewards as clients receive a broader range of services and staff and supporters enjoy knowing they are involved in an organic service that is achieving its goals. But growth and change also bring challenges. The measure of the organisation is how well we have coped with those challenges.

In 2005–06 RAQ assisted more than 23,000 clients at over 40 locations. The range of services were provided to a diversity of clients and included Relationship Counselling; Gambling Help; Mediation; Conciliation; Primary Dispute Resolution (separation services); Relationship Education; Domestic and Family Violence Prevention; Ada's Haven (an Indigenous women's refuge); Indigenous Court Support; Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Services; Rural Family Solutions – Distance Counselling; Aftercare Resource Centre (ARC); Children's Contact Services; FOCCUS© – Pre-marriage education; Professional Training and Supervision; Employee Assistance Program; Men and Family Relationships; Victims Counselling and Support Services; Contact Orders Program; Drought, Sugar Industry and Fishing Industry assistance; Youth Support Coordinators; and Family Support Services.

RAQ's focus on social justice issues and disadvantaged communities resulted in a significant increase in a range of service delivery programs. For example, Family Support Services have been established in Bowen, Strathpine, and Palm Island. The Palm Island service is significant due to the level of interaction and involvement with the local Indigenous community. A mentor program is contributing to sustainable service delivery practices that are both culturally and clinically relevant. Links with the Queensland Department of Corrections have resulted in the establishment of a Men and Family Relationship program specifically for Indigenous men that are part of the corrections system, and a corresponding support system for their families. Services to young people were increased through the Youth Support Coordinator program.

A focus upon community capacity building has seen strong links forged with Neighbourhood and Community Centres, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland. The commitment to growing regional communities has resulted in RAQ opening service delivery venues in Longreach, Lismore, Thuringowa, and Maroochydore. Partnerships with community and



neighbourhood centres were enhanced with additional visiting services commenced in Clermont, Beaudesert, Innisfail, Kenmore, Mareeba, Moranbah, and Yeppoon.

Recent changes to the Family Law Act and the subsequent submission process have given RAQ the opportunity to establish one of the first 15 Family Relationship Centres in Australia, in the Pine Rivers region of Strathpine. RAQ was also successful in its bid to operate the Parenting Orders Program in Townsville and Mackay, as well as a Children's Contact Service in Brisbane.

A desire to further develop evidence based practice has resulted in the development of a strong partnership with the University of Queensland. Research projects relating to gambling addiction, mandated clients and parenting programs, and the Triple P program (Positive Parenting Program) are currently being undertaken.

This year we availed ourselves of some extraordinary opportunities that will lead to new services in the next financial year. Both the existing and the new services are helping RAQ to develop its profile in the community and to cement its place as a high quality premier counselling service in Queensland. RAQ thanks everyone who has helped us along the way.

Organisational Development

During the year, we completed a Strategic Plan for 2006–09. The main client outcomes relate to new program opportunities, children and young people, rural and remote families and communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and individuals, people who are traumatised and victims of crime. Other strategic directions relate to the way we go about our business (particularly IT&C, human resources, data management, finance and property).

Human and Capital Resources

Human resources highlights include traineeships to assist staff gain recognition of their skills through Certificate III and Certificate IV training, two administration traineeships offered externally, a focus on venue team building and planning days, coaching for managers in the implementation of internal program and venue audits, and increasing demand to provide employee assistance programs to both the profit and non-profit sectors.

The opening of a new Head Office and service delivery centre at Eight Mile Plains was our largest single investment ever. The move to Eight Mile Plains gave us the opportunity to concentrate on workplace health and safety and to interact with the community as can be illustrated through the involvement of the Hammond Village Artists, a local art group operating in an over 50s village who display and rotate original artworks in the offices.

We also invested heavily in our IT system, telephonics and in fitting out venues across the state. IT highlights include a better resourced department which targets the support of the Client Information System (4Discs) and day-to-day activities, an off-site tape strategy, a server room at Spring Hill for disaster recovery to provide business continuity for our data and phone systems, further investment in our infrastructure environment through the upgrade of our wide area network for improved site performance, and continued standardisation of equipment throughout the state. We have also developed an IT&C service desk.

Below: Opening of the Eight Mile Plains head office.



South Australia

Key Personnel

Judith Cross, *Chief Executive Officer*

Maria Callisto, *Director of Finance and Administration*

Ian Law, *Director of Community and Relationship Services*

Claire Ralfs, *Director of Community Education and Training Services*

Sandra Vallance, *Director of Corporate Services*

Heidi Ehrat, *Manager of Services, Central and Southern Regions*

Jen Hamer, *Manager of Community Education and Training*

Enaam Oudih, *Manager of P.E.A.C.E. Multicultural Services*

Jodie Sloan, *Manager of Respond SA, Adult Childhood Sexual Abuse Service*

Lorraine Baker, *Manager of the Family Relationship Centre, Salisbury/Elizabeth*

Mailin Suchting, *Manager of Education and Training, Working with Violence Programs*

Mario Trinidad, *Manager of Services, Northern Metropolitan and Riverland Regions*

Deborah Lockwood, *Manager of Work Force Development Projects*

Board Members

Franco Camatta, *President*

Harold Bates-Brownsword, *Vice President*

Geoffrey Kay, *Treasurer*

Kate Barnett

Peter Lee

Vaia Proios

Stephanie Ziersch

Judith Cross

Our Work, Our People

It has been a busy and exciting year for Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA), which has required an extraordinary contribution from our staff, management team and board.

There have been many areas of significant change where Relationships Australia (SA) has worked collaboratively with other agencies and government departments to ensure services which assist individuals and families to achieve positive relationships.

A significant area of work for RASA has been in contributing to the changes in family law. This has involved working collaboratively with other agencies on developing new directions for the Family Relationships Services Program, and working with the Family Court of Australia, our national office and other Relationships Australia members on other initiatives that will contribute to a new national culture to support families. In the coming year we are delighted to be involved in implementing this vision through the provision of the first Family Relationship Centre in South Australia.

Another area of significant work has been our collaboration with the State Government's Commission of Inquiry into Children in State Care, and the provision of services to adults who have been sexually abused as children.

We have also been active in developing training initiatives for General Practitioners on suicide prevention and mental health, and continuing our partnership with Indigenous communities in training youth workers and family day care workers.

Services

Our agency provides an increasingly diverse range of services – responding to the needs of individuals and families, working together with communities to support their members, increasing people's skills and life choices through community education, and helping workers to develop the skills they require to provide services to those in our society who are most in need. Our clients, therefore, are diverse and include not only individuals, but also communities, government departments, other agencies and their workers.

Family Relationship Services, funded by the Australian Government, continue to be our largest area of service delivery. These services include relationship counselling,



post-separation services, relationship education and a children's contact service. We continued to see high levels of demand in all of these service areas, and were very pleased to see the Australian Government's commitment to supporting families result in increased funding for additional early intervention and post-separation services.

We recognise that many people live with the effect of negative and distressing relationships where their trust has been abused. Our work with adults who have been subjected to childhood sexual abuse brings home to us the pain caused by abusive relationships. We respect our clients' courage and feel privileged that they are prepared to share with us their individual stories and engage with our counsellors in finding new directions in their lives.

We also work with many people and communities to improve well-being and community connections. Life skills education provides groups where people can learn and develop new skills in communication, personal health, parenting and relationships. Through our community development work we know that people live and thrive in positive and supportive community environments. In our state-funded Strengthening Communities program we provide community education programs to develop living skills, community networks and peer education programs.

Our work with people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, funded by the State Government, focuses on problem gambling and communicable diseases. This year, in collaboration with the SA Department of Health, we conducted an interagency health planning day to respond to the needs of refugees, particularly in relation to communicable diseases. We also developed specific programs to work with African communities, especially the Sudanese and Central and Western African communities, and increased our family support services to other culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Our training division, the Australian Institute of Social Relations, continued its work with Aboriginal communities, with a focus on providing accredited youth worker training to contribute to improved wellbeing in Aboriginal communities. We also collaborated with the Family Court of Australia on domestic violence risk assessment, and developed a training package for General Practitioners on mental health, suicide prevention and responding to domestic violence.

Organisational Development

A new focus for RASA this past year has been on working with other agencies to develop funding submissions for the provision of client services. We formed a consortium with UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide to provide the new Northern Adelaide family services, and a consortium with Anglican Community Care for the provision of Riverland services. In the Riverland we are also working in partnership with Mallee Family Care Inc. to provide Family Relationship Centre services from our Berri site. These formal partnerships go beyond collaborative service provision and have at their foundation shared values, beliefs and visions. By working together, we are able to share our strengths to achieve better outcomes for our clients.

Human and Capital Resources

RASA provides services from nine different sites and many more outreach locations. During the year we opened a new client services office in western Adelaide, and in the coming weeks we will extend our existing Elizabeth site, launch the new Family Relationship Centre to be provided at shopping centre sites in Salisbury and Elizabeth, plus additional outreach services to the Barossa, and finally develop a new site for our Berri office.

RASA currently employs over 160 people who bring considerable skills and commitment to their work. We seek to create a positive work environment that provides opportunities for people to improve their skills, collaborate with others and be part of a committed team. We appreciate greatly the contribution of our staff, and the many hours of voluntary work undertaken by our board.

Below: RA staff and partners. RA National Annual General Meeting, 28 October 2005, Adelaide.



Tasmania

Key Personnel

Susan Holmes, *Chief Executive Officer*

Debbie Evans, *Deputy Chief Executive Officer*

Graham Perkin, *Clinical Consultant*

Patrice Baxter, *Manager, Counselling Services – North*

Chris Street, *Manager, Counselling Services – South*

Tim Henry, *Manager, Family Services – North*

Michael Cross, *Manager, Family Services – South*

Brendan Griggs, *Corporate Services Manager*

Marianne Robertson, *Clinical Consultant*

Jill Morgan, *Executive Assistant*

Andrew Jackman, *IT Coordinator*

Wendy Meadowcroft, *Finance Officer*

Board Members

Tim Maddock, *President*

Norm McIlpatrick, *Vice President*

Penny Brown, *Secretary*

Robin Allardice, *Treasurer*

Peter Bamford, *North Western Representative*

Pat Fitzgerald, *Southern Representative*

Glenn Hay, *General Representative*

Robin McLean, *General Representative*

Janet Patford, *Northern Representative*

'People are coming here to find a good life but there can be pain. They want to find a good education, can't often find ways of discipline/control. There are both good and sad parts of being here.'

RA Tas new arrival client

Our Work, Our People

Following a review of our strategic priorities, the board of Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) endorsed our primary goal of providing relevant services to a more diverse range of clients. The seven strategies identified to support this goal have led to a busy year with many new developments in our client services.

Greater cooperation between organisations with common client groups has been a feature of the year. RA Tas with Anglicare Tas and Gambling and Betting Addiction Inc. held a community education event in Elizabeth Street Mall in the Hobart CBD, featuring the skeletal remains of a would-be jackpot seeker to highlight the futility of trying to win at gambling.

RA Tas, Anglicare Tas and Centacare Tas formed a consortium which was successful in the bid to operate the Hobart Family Relationship Centre. The centre will play a key role in implementing the family law reforms and delivering the services to families.

Services

This year both Education staff and Men and Family Relationship (Tassiemale) staff worked with the Cape Barren Island Indigenous community on some exciting initiatives. Initially we were invited to deliver education courses on parenting and dealing with conflict, which elicited extremely positive feedback from attendees. One participant summed up the positive response with the comment: 'the leader engaged in culturally respectful conversation with us at all times and it was fun, empowering, relevant and informative and we want a return visit'.

In January 2006 we were invited to return to Cape Barren Island to carry out a health and well-being needs assessment, which involved talking to everyone available on the island. The report will be used by the community in planning their use of a newly built Health and Well Being Centre. Staff are planning follow-up visits to continue this work.

As part of our outreach into the diverse communities that make up Tasmania, we also worked with a number of African communities. One project, which worked with men from the Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi and Sierra Leone, was aimed at encouraging community members to access support for personal relationship and family difficulties. This project



was assisted by a grant from the Hobart City Council. We have found such projects to be a mutual learning experience. Another project, involving Burundi men and women, helped our staff to identify new ways of working to achieve the best outcomes for diverse cultural groups.

The past year has also been one of celebrating some key achievements in securing the best outcomes for children whose parents have separated. RA Tas staff from a number of programs, but particularly Family Relationship Counselling, have been busy with the Tasmanian Way of Working project. Funded by the Office of the Status of Women, the project aims to improve outcomes particularly for women and children where there is violence, by improving staff skills and producing a training DVD for workers in this field.

The very active Family Law Pathways group, auspiced by RA Tas, produced two resources this year – a wallet-sized reference card and a resource directory – to improve referrals for families in the family law system.

The highlighted activities, together with our core work to develop and enhance personal, family and community relationships, reflect the passion and commitment of staff across the state. As the number of programs and projects grows, it seems so does the passion to achieve best practice and find innovative solutions in our work.

Organisational Development

This year we reviewed the management structure of the organisation. The resulting changes were made in response to opportunities to increase service delivery arising from new government initiatives and in recognition of the changing roles of senior staff. Although the review resulted in a smaller management team, the new structure will offer increased professional development opportunities for members and result in a skilled team better able to respond to a changing environment.

All staff have been involved in a review of the Quality of Work Life Survey methodology which has been used for the past eight years. The survey measures staff satisfaction and is one way we can monitor the characteristics that make RA Tas a preferred workplace.

Over the next year we will be using a fresh approach to help us identify the key factors that improve our positioning as an employer of choice, which will in turn increase our capacity to provide quality services.

Our new three-year enterprise agreement for permanent staff for the first time includes paid paternity leave, which is a reflection of our ongoing commitment to supporting the role of fathers in families.

The board's endorsement of ongoing professional development for its members reflects a culture that encourages people to continue to learn and develop.

Human and Capital Resources

On 6 July 2005 we were pleased to see the Attorney-General, the Hon Philip Ruddock officially open the Devonport Children's Contact Service. The service was set up in response to strong support from the community, including legal practitioners whose clients had previously been forced to travel to Launceston to access a professional Children's Contact Service. Although program funds were not available, the Executive Board of RA Tas endorsed the importance of making this vital service available to all three main population centres in Tasmania.

After 10 years of operation in a rented child care centre, the Hobart Children's Contact Service (CCS) finally has its own purpose-built facility. The facility was officially opened on 2 June 2006 by the Hon Senator Eric Abetz. It includes a large sunny play room for children on supervised visits with their non-residential parent, extra consulting rooms for counselling and mediation clients, wheelchair access and facilities for disabled clients. The new Hobart CCS will be able to offer expanded services to meet the great variety of co-parenting arrangements that families make.



Victoria

Key Personnel

Michael Hunt, *Chief Executive Officer*

Andrew Bickerdike, *Primary Dispute Resolution (PDR) and Research Leader*

Rosalie Pattenden, *Clinical Practice Leader*

Marisol Gormaz, *Finance Manager*

Jane Kelson, *Business Development Manager*

David Lee, *Information, Communication and Technology Manager*

Heather Roche, *Western Region Manager (to April 2006)*

Jane Vanderstoel, *Central Region Manager (to April 2006), Western Region Manager (from April 2006)*

Nicholas Bliss, *Eastern Region Manager*

Karen Weiss, *Central Region Manager (from April 2006)*

Jule Harris, *Sunshine Family Relationship Centre Manager (from May 2006)*

Lilia Szarski, *Eastern Region Manager (from 1 June 2006)*

Board Members

Ken Heyward, *President*

Michael Shaw, *Vice President*

Judi Anderson

Lyn Littlefield

Paul Staindl

Ronda Jacobs *(from October 2005)*

Mark Madden *(from October 2005)*

Andrew Maughan *(from October 2005)*

Michael Wootten *(from October 2005)*

Dianne Vale *(to October 2005)*

Our Work, Our People

In many ways, 2005-06 has been a year in which Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) has stepped strongly out of our counselling rooms and into the community. In doing so, we have built stronger relationships with our clients, community groups, governments, other service providers, and the media. We have commenced the first year of a regionalised management structure, giving more autonomy to managers at the local level to craft services which respond to the needs of their communities. We have also strengthened community connections by extending the membership of our board to include four new community members.

Services

Relationship issues have been high on the public agenda for the past 12 months, possibly due to the debate on the forthcoming Family Relationship Centres and media attention given to the break-up of celebrity relationships. One consequence of this for RAV has been a sharp increase in requests for media commentary and interviews, and a subsequent demand for public seminars and workshops. Our expanded seminar and workshop series during 2005-06 included:

- Relationship Rescue – a skills-based one-day weekend seminar for up to 15 couples, which was held in football clubs, RSL rooms, town halls and conference centres across Victoria;
- a monthly evening seminar series on topics covering single parenting; keeping dads connected after separation; and how to rebuild relationships ‘after the affair’;
- a series of well-attended family events in regional Victoria, including a pre-Christmas family event for irrigators affected by the drought in the Shepparton region.

While demand remained steady for all of RAV’s services during 2005-06, we became more aware of the complexity of client needs and more convinced that one organisation cannot meet all of a client’s needs. The increased funding for Family Relationship Centres and other Australian Government services (as well as increased Victorian Government family violence funding) presented RAV with the opportunity to meet client needs more comprehensively



through building stronger partnerships and collective models of service delivery with other organisations. The effectiveness of these partnerships can be measured by our successful bids to establish a series of new services from 1 July 2006, including:

- the Sunshine Family Relationship Centre in the West of Melbourne (with consortium partners Mackillop Family Services, Centacare Catholic Family Services, and Community West);
- additional family support services in Gippsland (with partners Family Mediation Centre, LaTrobe Valley Community Health, Quantum Support Services and Anglicare Victoria);
- the Family Relationship Centre in Ringwood in the East of Melbourne (with lead member Eastern Access Community Health and Regional Extended Family Services); and
- men's behaviour change programs (funded by Victorian Government), in the East of Melbourne, the West of Melbourne, the southern region of Melbourne, and the rural city of Shepparton, with five different consortiums.

Organisational Development and Human and Capital Resources

The more that RAV grows, makes new connections and develops new services, the more we appreciate the importance of good planning. During September 2005 RAV's board and managers developed a three-year strategic plan with four key themes:

- research and training;
- performance management;
- communications;
- information, communications and technology.

The strategic planning process was the first opportunity for RAV's management team to meet an expanded board that includes our four new community members. This consultative process revealed yet again the depth

of commitment to the organisation which is held by the board and staff. We are fortunate indeed to have people who are prepared to commit so much of themselves to our organisation.

We also took some time to carry out building improvements to many of our sites during 2005-06, including putting plans in place to relocate our Sunshine site in August 2006.

Two new management staff joined RAV in early 2006 – Jule Harris who has taken up the helm of the new Family Relationship Centre at Sunshine (which will open for business on 3 July 2006), and Lilia Szarski who will manage our Eastern Region services during the second half of 2006.

Finally, during the first part of 2006 we farewelled Heather Roche. Heather had been with RAV for 10 years, first as a clinician and then as manager of our Ballarat services and then Western Region services. Heather's energetic and passionate interest in client services has been enormously influential in the development of RAV's approach to regional service delivery. She was also a powerful contributor to Relationships Australia's national regional and rural working group and we wish her well as she goes on to pursue other interests.

Below: Gambler's Help Team, Ballarat.

L to R: Roger Pugh, Namita Trensky, Kathy Griffin and Claire Ryan



Western Australia

Key Personnel

Terri Reilly, *Chief Executive Officer*

Bert de Meyere, *Corporate Services Manager*

Marian Affleck, *Clinical Practice Manager*

Gary Bowler, *Branch Manager Bunbury (to February 2006)*

Fran Edmeades, *Branch Manager, Joondalup*

Frederika Davies, *Branch Manager, Fremantle*

Roslyn Paganoni, *Branch Manager, Bunbury (from February 2006)*

Bill Robinson, *Branch Manager, Mandurah/Rockingham*

Owen Robinson, *Branch Manager, Midland*

Sallyann Nevill, *Branch Manager, Gosnells*

Susan Visser, *Branch Manager, West Leederville*

Fiona McDonald, *Education Services/Professional Development Manager*

Mandy Flahavin, *Family Dispute Resolution Manager*

Michael Sheehan, *Family Services Manager*

Michael Thomson, *Human Resources and Corporate Projects Manager*

Board Members

Chris Lewis, *President*

Richard Wilson, *Vice President*

Tim Wise, *Vice President*

Sue Ash

Sue Booth

Rob Donovan

Brian Gluestein

Brian Krause

Our Work, Our People

Relationships Australia Western Australia (RAWA) has taken great strides during the year to make its services more accessible and relevant to a diversity of groups within the community. This year we have had the opportunity to work closely with refugee families from Africa, improve our links with Indigenous Australians, assist families in rural communities affected by drought, and focus on counselling for young children.

With new branches in Albany and Port Hedland set to open in August 2006, we look forward to tailoring our services to suit fly-in-fly out workers and families dealing with issues associated with isolation and working on the land.

At the same time it was a year of consolidation and steady progress for our core services which include couple and family counselling, group work, mediation, family violence intervention and training.

Our Services

Through the Indigenous-specific program, Moorditj Yarning, we have made important links with Aboriginal families and the local community by tailoring the delivery of our services to those communities. Meaning 'good talking', Moorditj Yarning offers an alternative to formal, appointment-based services. It recognises that issues such as family violence, substance abuse and conflict cannot be divorced from the broader impacts of colonisation. Moorditj Yarning has also developed an intercultural training package for RAWA staff to encourage practice that acknowledges historical context and cultural diversity. The program's success in the south-east metropolitan area during its first 18 months has prompted us to introduce it to other metropolitan areas, initially Joondalup.

During the year we launched Strength to Strength, a program for families who have recently entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program. By combining RAWA's expertise with that of the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Services (ASeTTS), the program provides culturally sensitive counselling, advocacy and mediation as well as training and community development. During the year, Strength to Strength assisted parents, young people and children to resolve past issues and increase their participation in Australian community life.



Family Wellness, a pilot program aimed at teaching survival skills for families, was delivered to a range of groups, including our Strength to Strength clients and families where violence is a risk. The variety of client groups, client numbers and modes of delivery involved in this program gave us the opportunity to evaluate the program's effectiveness in different circumstances and develop it further.

This year we were pleased to continue fully funded counselling for families affected by drought in the wheatbelt towns of Merredin and Corrigin.

For some years, General Practitioners in the Peel and Bunbury regions have been referring adult patients to RAWA for fully funded counselling under the More Allied Health Services (MAHS) program. This year, the MAHS program in the Peel region was extended to include counselling for children under 14. This innovative service, known as Leap Frog, has been delivered by RAWA and Allambee Counselling. Use of the service has been high and the trial will continue into 2006-07.

RAWA's involvement in programs funded by the WA Department of Corrective Services has grown steadily since the first group was provided in 1998. RAWA currently runs nine groups for perpetrators of domestic violence, who attend either as part of a community order or as a condition of parole. A further four perpetrator groups were held as part of the Family Abuse Integrated Response (FAIR) program, which has completed its second successful year. The FAIR program takes a whole-of-family approach to family violence and provides parallel groups for men, women and children. This valuable program addresses participants' immediate problems while assisting them to develop skills for future healthy relationships.

The Children's Contact Service continued to provide handover, supervised contact and therapeutic intervention services for separated families. The service enables children to maintain relationships with both parents without conflict, tension or violence.

RAWA's Primary Dispute Resolution team's expertise was formally recognised in 2005 when the Chief Judge of the Family Court of WA appointed four of its members as approved Court Mediators under section 59 of the Family Law Regulations.

For the third year, RAWA chaired and coordinated the Family Pathways Network to facilitate dialogue between providers in the family law system. The Network's Mega Training Day combined a services 'expo' with training exercises to help frontline staff from 40 different agencies improve their understanding of the family law system.

About 12,000 Western Australians benefited from our counselling and mediation services in 2005-06, and we delivered education programs on more than 20 topics, all aimed at facilitating people to gain more from relationships and life. We also provided professional training for business, government and other health professionals through our Professional Development Training Program.

Human and Capital Resources

As part of our commitment to maintaining high quality services, we conducted a review of our clinical policies, overhauled our management information systems, and made improvements in staff recruitment, orientation and performance management practices.

A highlight of our staff development program was the continuation of diversification training for clinical staff. The program explored the subtle nature of prejudices and encouraged awareness of individual biases and the development of helpful ways of dealing with them.

The strategic planning process, started last year, provided clear direction in the form of a new four-year strategic plan. The collaboration of the board and staff on this important project has had many positive spin-offs, including a closer working relationship between those who guide policy and those who execute it.

The purchase of a new building for our corporate office and West Leederville branch will provide ongoing stability for the organisation. We have also increased the size and services of our Gosnells branch and started developing new branches in Albany and Port Hedland.

RAWA expresses its deep appreciation of the commitment of our staff and the guidance provided by the board. Together, their hard work and unfailing spirits allow us to develop and deliver services which really make a difference.



Out and About

Conference Papers

International

Sleator, Lyn and Ciffolilli, Nicoletta (RAWA), 'A review of child centred practice in Western Australia 2006', Third Asia Pacific Mediation Conference, Suva, Fiji, June 2006.

Wojecki, Andrew (RASA), 'Should I stay or should I go: Who else can help engage early school leavers', International Futures of Schooling Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 5-6 June 2006.

Australia

Abbott, Judith and Griffin, Katherine (RAV), 'From advertiser to advocator – community education in Victoria 1995–2005', National Association of Gambling Studies, Alice Springs, NT, 11–13 November 2005.

Adams, G. and Hawkett, Ruby-Jo (RA NSW), 'Relationshiphelponline: A chat over the internet is now a viable option', Australian Family Therapy Conference, Sydney, NSW, September 2005.

Aldridge, Samantha (RAQ), 'Relationships survival guide for the modern woman', Woman's Forum for International Women's Day.

Allan, David, Power, Lyndal, Vosper, Anita, Dargan, Kellie, Imrie, Nicki and Israelstam, Tali (RA NSW), 'The conflict within: When couples present their adolescent as the problem', Australian Family Therapy Conference, Sydney, NSW, 2005.

Bickerdike, Andrew (RAV), 'New approaches to the family law system – Family Relationship Centres, parenting plans and compulsory dispute resolution', Lexis Nexis Family Law Masterclass, Melbourne, VIC, July 2005.

Bickerdike, Andrew (RAV), 'Mediation and family violence', Safe Transitions Conference, Sydney, NSW, November 2005.

Bickerdike, Andrew (RAV), 'Family mediator interventions: What do mediators do when the going gets difficult, and does it help?', 8th National Mediation Conference, Hobart, TAS, May 2006.

Bickerdike, Andrew (RAV), 'Risks, benefits and challenges of the new family law system and FRCs', Annual Family Law Conference, Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, Melbourne, VIC, June 2006.

Bourne, Anne (RASA), 'Strengths, skills, resources, inspiration: The SSRIs of living with HIV or Hepatitis C', Australasian Society for HIV Medicine Conference, Hobart, TAS, September 2005.

Callaghan, Shirley and Bremner, Narelle (RASA), 'Love bytes – meeting singles online', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Chen, Raylene (RAQ), 'Attentional processes in golf putting: Effects of task difficulty', World Congress of Sport Psychology, Sydney, 2005.

Ciffolilli, Nicoletta (RAWA), 'The application of mediation principles to public sector disciplinary processes', 8th National Mediation Conference, Hobart, TAS, May 2006.

Davis, Justine and Devlin, Jenny (RANT), 'Policy, practice and politics in peace-building partnerships: The story of a journey shared by Peace and Democracy Foundation and Relationships Australia', Third Asia Pacific Mediation Forum Conference, Suva, Fiji, 26–30 June 2006

Fletcher, Lyn and McFadden, Kerrie (RA NSW), 'Prevention and early intervention in program delivery', FACS Forum, Melbourne, VIC, 28 July 2005.

Fletcher, Lyn and McFadden, Kerrie (RA NSW), 'The competency cha cha – national competencies for relationships education – where are we up to?', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Gaffney, Irene, (RA NSW), 'Shall we dance?', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Gaston, Bill (RASA), 'Resilience', National Association of People Living With HIV/AIDS Australia National Conference, Adelaide, SA, November 2005.

Gilchrist, Anne (RA NSW), 'When dancing gets dirty and dangerous', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Hewlett, Bill and Pullen-Gordon, Gisela (RACR), 'Using the children's voices to bring about change', 8th National Mediation Conference, Hobart, TAS, May 2006.

Hollonds, Anne, Fletcher, Lyn, Munoz, Ebohr and McFadden, Kerrie (RA NSW), 'Managing relationships in the workplace', HR Summit, Sydney, NSW, 7 March 2006.

Hollonds, Anne (RA NSW), Keynote presentation: 'Relationships in a world of individuals', Tresillian National Conference, Sydney, NSW, August 2005.

Hollonds, Anne (RA NSW), Keynote presentation: 'Couple challenges in an age of individualism', Couple and Marriage Educators Conference, March 2006.

Hollonds, Anne (RA NSW), 'Putting relationships on the media agenda', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Holmes, Sue (RA Tas), 'Independence in ensuring child's best interest', 8th National Mediation Conference, Hobart, TAS, May 2006.

Holmes, Sue (RA Tas), 'Child's best interest in the service of child protection', National Child Protection Forum, Melbourne, VIC, June 2006.

Lewis, Pamela and Westcott, Gail (RA NSW), 'From drought to flood: the changing scene in family services', 26th Australian Family Therapy Conference, Sydney, NSW, 26 October 2005.

Lewis, Pamela and Douglas, Jennifer (RA NSW), 'Safety matters: Collaborating towards the protection of children in domestically violent separations', Safe Transitions Symposium – Master Class, Sydney, NSW, 23 November 2005.



McAlpine, Heather and McAlpine, John (RA NSW), 'Get your foot off my toe!', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

Lloyd, Kate (RAQ), 'Making the transition from couplehood and parenthood', Counsellor's Association Professional Development Program, QLD, 28 April 2006.

McAlpine, Heather and McAlpine, John (RA NSW), 'Turning two left feet into a tango', Marriage and Relationship Educators National Conference (MARENC), Sydney, NSW, 24 September 2005.

McFadden, Kerrie (RA NSW), Panel discussion: 'Best practice in working with men and fathers', National Men and Fathers Practitioners Network, Canberra, ACT, 13 October 2005.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'Cognitive behavioural and psycho educational approaches to sex therapy', Education and Training for Health Professionals: Family Planning, QLD, 6-7 August 2005.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'Relationships: the multifaceted and changing role of women in the 21st century', Women's World Day Community Programme, Biloela, QLD, 10-11 March 2006.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'Relationships: Nourishing in good times; building resilience in bad times', Women's World Day Community Programme, Biloela, QLD, 10-11 March 2006.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'Sexual discrepancy in intimate relationships: a multidimensional approach incorporating current research', Australian Psychology Association College of Counselling Psychologists Master Scientists Practitioner Series, Brisbane, QLD, 16 February 2006.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'The impact of prostate cancer and its treatment on the sexuality of men and their relationships', Proscare Education Cancer Fund, Gold Coast, QLD, 7 April 2006.

Misso, Karol (RAQ), 'Disembodied intimacies: the impact of computer mediated relationships', Australian Psychology Association College of Counselling Psychologists Master Scientists Practitioner Series, Brisbane, QLD, 20 April 2006.

Oudih, Enaam and Aviles, Lola (RASA), 'An introduction to narrative theatre', Break Even Services SA conference: Building on Ten Years of Practice Wisdom, Adelaide, SA, 2-3 August 2005.

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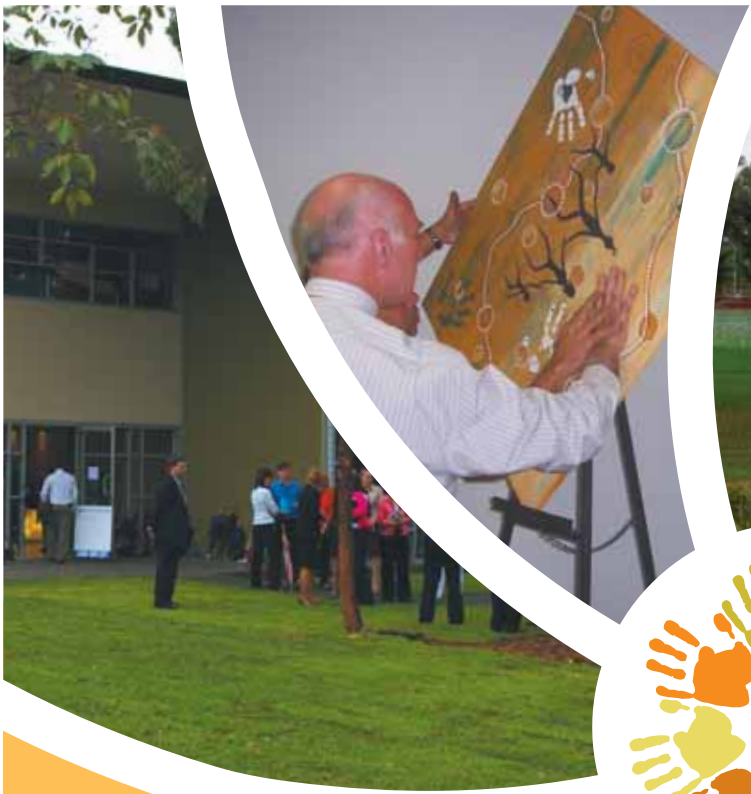
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Glossary

AIRS	Australian Institute of Relationship Studies	MAHS	More Allied Health Service
AMFT	Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy	MFR	Men and Family Relationships
ARC	Aftercare Resource Centre	MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	NEN	National Education Network
CCS	Children's Contact Services	PADV	Partnerships against Domestic Violence
CIP	Child Inclusive Practice	PEACE	Personal Education and Community Empowerment
COP	Contact Orders Program (forerunner to POP)	PDR	Primary Dispute Resolution (forerunner to FDR)
COPE	Centre of Personal Education	POP	Parenting Orders Programs
CS	Conciliation Services	RA	Relationships Australia
CSSA	Catholic Social Services Australia	RACR	Relationships Australia Canberra and Region
DC	Drought Counselling	RA NSW	Relationships Australia New South Wales
DOCS	Department of Community Services (NSW)	RANT	Relationships Australia Northern Territory
DV	Domestic Violence	RAPS	Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service (NSW)
EAP	Employee Assistance Program	RAQ	Relationships Australia Queensland
IRBs	Industry Representative Bodies	RASA	Relationships Australia South Australia
FaCSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	RA Tas	Relationships Australia Tasmania
FAIR	Family Abuse Integrated Response	RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
FDR	Family Dispute Resolution	RAWA	Relationships Australia Western Australia
FRC	Family Relationship Centre	Rel Ed	Relationships Education
FRE	Family Relationships Education	SC	Sugar Cane Counselling
FRM	Family Relationship Mediation	SFV	Specialised Family Violence Initiatives
FRSP	Family Relationships Services Program	TOT	Training of Trainers
FRST	Family Relationships Skills Training		
FSA	Family Services Australia		
JDP	Juvenile Diversion Program		
MCHS	Maternal and Child Health Service		





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