



Family Violence
Response Centre



Annual Report

2018-2019



We are pleased to present the **safe steps** Annual Report for 2018-2019.
This report describes **safe steps**' performance over the 2018-2019 Financial Year.

Contents

Overview	3
From the Chair	4
From the CEO	5
Board of Directors	6
safe steps 3 year Strategic Plan 2017-2020	7
Survivor Advocate - Geraldine	8
Crisis Response 2018-19 at a Glance	9
Our Clients	9
Crisis Response	10
1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling Program	12
Safe House Supported Accommodation program	14
Crisis Response Client Demographic	16
People and Culture	17
In the Community - Events	18
In the Community - Partnerships	20
Financial Summary	22
Acknowledgements	23



Disclaimer – in some instances names have been changed and stock images have been used to protect the privacy of the women and children we support.

Who we are

safe steps is Victoria's specialist crisis response service for women and children experiencing family violence. **safe steps** has been responding to women and children at risk for over 45 years.

What started as a telephone support service with only a handful of volunteers has now grown to become the only Government funded state-wide crisis response service for women and children escaping family violence. As a first response service, **safe steps** delivers critical and immediate responses to women and children escaping family violence.

What we do

safe steps delivers programs at a State and Federal level. Our role is to assist women and children anywhere in Victoria at any time by providing the support, resources and protection they need to live their lives free from violence and abuse.

How we do it

Respond

- Supporting those at highest risk within our community escaping family violence by providing a 24/7 first response phone line.
- Arranging immediate accommodation for women and children in crisis due to family violence.
- Empowering women and children experiencing family violence by providing a comprehensive range of support services that includes risk assessment, crisis accommodation, safety planning, case management, pathways to refuge and temporary housing, and much more.
- Referring to local specialist family violence services and legal services such as The Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS), a program that provides legal and social support services to people affected by family violence in the Family Law Registry in Melbourne and Dandenong.
- Connecting women (including anyone who identifies as female or transfeminine) and their children with specialist support workers who can help explore options and access supports that allow them to live safe from family violence.

Recover

- Providing specialist trauma counselling (offered through 1800RESPECT), Australia's national domestic and family violence and sexual assault support service. **safe steps** is proud to be a joint provider of specialist counselling to 1800RESPECT callers.
- Empowering victim survivors through the Survivor Advocate Program.

Prevent

- Delivering community and professional information initiatives as well as awareness campaigns.
- Advocating for policy reform, government taskforces and sector committees.

Why we do it*



- On average, one woman a week is killed by her current or ex-partner in Australia.



- Approximately one in four women have experienced violence by an intimate partner.



- Two in five people aged 18 years and over have experienced an incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 15.



- Family violence is the leading contributor of death, disability and illness in women aged 14 to 44.



- More than one in three Australians have experienced violence by a male perpetrator from the age of 15.



- One in four women reported experiencing emotional abuse by a current and/or previous partner from the age of 15.



- In Australia, there are 2.5 million adults who have experienced abuse during their childhood.



- 40% of those who experienced childhood abuse witnessed violence towards their mother and/or father by a partner before the age of 15.

*Australian Bureau of Statistics,
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

From the Chair

DR JANINE BUSH

It has been three years since the Royal Commission into Family Violence tabled its report in Parliament. Since 2016, the Victorian Government has led major systems reform and made a substantial investment into preventing and responding to family violence. As the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor stated in November 2018:

“We’ve come a long way. We’ve got a long way to go. Ending family violence will take a generation or more.”

safe steps has delivered its frontline services during a year of review, reflection and transformation. During the past year, whilst guided by our overarching strategic directions, the Board has had an internal focus on continuous improvement, the provision of quality services, strong leadership and effective governance.

After leading many of these changes, our Board Chair, Candy Broad, retired from the Board in February 2019 after nearly three years in the position. In addition, five board members—Wendy Steendam, Joan Richardson, Gayathri Paramasivam, Gayle King and Christine Gibbs—reached the end of their terms during the year.

The Board acknowledges the contribution of Candy and the departing Board members during a period of substantial reform.

Mary Barry stepped into the role of interim Board Chair and continued to lead and progress the Board’s work in transforming the organisation.

The Board and I thank Mary for the substantial contribution she made in her time as the Board Chair. In addition to my appointment, in 2018-2019 the Board appointed four new directors—Belinda Bales, Penelope Cottrill, Nicole Lee and Cristina Wolters.

In October 2018, Suzanne Dvorak assumed the interim CEO role whilst the Board undertook its search for a new CEO. Suzanne led the review of the **safe steps** service delivery model and its corporate structure, resulting in strengthened systems and processes. The Board acknowledges the important work that Suzanne contributed to the organisation.

During the organisation’s transformation, **safe steps** has appreciated the broad support of the family violence sector, and the positive working relationships with both Family Safety Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services.



Moving forward, the Board will be looking strategically to determine **safe steps**’ future directions. Our Strategic Plan 2017-2020 concludes in June 2020 and the Board will lead a process to identify our strategic priorities for the three years ahead. We will engage with our sector partners to inform this process.

I welcome our new CEO, Rita Butera, who started in her role in May 2019. Rita brings extensive experience in the women’s sector and in the prevention of family violence. Rita will work with the Board to progress its new strategic directions and engage with our sector partners through this process.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the staff at **safe steps** for their commitment, professionalism and expertise in delivering our critical services to the courageous women who contact **safe steps** seeking our support at a critical time in their lives.



The Crisis Response team responded to an average of 1,700 calls relating to family violence per week.



safe steps crisis response team provided emergency accommodation, made referrals to outreach and legal services, and provided advocacy, information and support.



In October 2018, **safe steps** achieved its first anniversary of the 1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling program, a collaborative agreement between the Federal Government, Medibank and partnering specialist family violence services across Australia.

From the CEO

RITA BUTERA

It has been a year of transformation and opportunity for **safe steps** as it has embraced the Department of Health and Human Services performance review and with that, a period of remediation.

I would also like to thank the Interim CEO, Suzanne Dvorak in conjunction with the Board, Government and all the **safe steps** employees for their collective contribution to creating a stronger, healthier and more determined organisation.

Crisis Response

Having sat with the Crisis Response team I learned that similar to an emergency department, our specialist staff operate as first responders to assess and triage women and children needing urgent assistance, including risk assessments, support and referrals to refuges and accommodation. This is often challenged by the absence of adequate crisis accommodation or affordable housing options.

Over the past year there were 86,638 calls for assistance and an average of 63 women and 54 children accommodated every night. The growing demand for crisis accommodation for women and children escaping family violence continues to place a strain on refuges and affordable housing. In partnership with a number of women's housing services, 2020 aims to be a year that sees us come together to address this concern.

safe steps Refuge

The **safe steps** refuge accommodated 89 women and 107 children last financial year. This important, trauma informed service is often faced with challenges due to client complexity such as a lack of permanent residency. We look forward to the completion of the much needed new Core and Cluster refuge and we hope to be operational by mid-2020.

Specialist Trauma Counselling

In 2018-19, **safe steps** appointed twice the number of 1800RESPECT Specialist Trauma Counsellors, which has enabled us to become a lead provider of specialist confidential telephone counselling. In 2018-19 the **safe steps** 1800RESPECT service answered 18,297 calls, providing specialist trauma counselling nationally.

This 24/7 over the phone, trauma informed counselling and support service is breaking new ground with work from home trials and the continuation of the three-way partnership between the Federal Government, Medibank and **safe steps**. Spending time with this team has highlighted the importance of a free 24-hour professional and trauma informed counselling service for all victim survivors impacted by family violence and/or sexual abuse.



Lastly, I would like to thank all the staff at **safe steps** and the family violence response sector for welcoming me as a newcomer. They are an inspiration, leading by their professionalism, dedication and commitment to make a difference to the lives of women and children escaping family violence, and doing this in an often challenging, under-resourced and changing service system. I would also like to thank the women in our Survivor Advocate Program for their dedication and commitment in sharing their stories to increase awareness.

Together with the new Chair, Janine Bush, and the dedication of all Board members, I look forward to the year ahead as we embark on the 2020-2023 strategic plan, working closely with our sector partners to strengthen relationships and improve the impact of our collective work across the service system.



In late 2018, land for construction of the new Core and Cluster refuge was acquired by the Director of Housing and the supported accommodation team provided input into its design.



In June 2019, **safe steps** 1800RESPECT specialist counsellors responded to 1,807 calls, 53% more than one year prior.



Clients accommodated by **safe steps** that were under the age of 18 accounted for 44.8% of the clientele.

Board of Directors

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre is an Incorporated Association governed by a Board of Directors who are responsible for ensuring strategic direction, implementation of governance policies, adherence to regulatory obligations and oversight of performance and management activities.



Dr Janine Bush, Chair

Janine has held Executive and CEO roles in both the public and not-for-profit sector. As an Executive, she worked with the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Parliament of Victoria, and the Office of the Public Advocate. She was CEO of peak organisations, Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association (VAADA) and Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic). Janine served as a Non-Executive Director on the Relationships Australia Victorian Board and was a Board Member of community organisations, Fitzroy Legal Service and Women's Information, and Support & Housing in the North (WISHIN).



Cristina Wolters – Treasurer

Cristina has over 20 years experience with Australian Corporate Taxation and is currently working with Transurban, leading the team responsible for all global tax matters including risk and governance. Prior to this, she was a corporate tax adviser with PwC (Australia and Brazil). Cristina was previously a Board Member and the Treasurer for Women's Health Victoria.



Penelope Cottrill – Director

Penelope is a Principal at Nous Group, a leading management consultancy. She consults on strategy, organisation, workforce and leadership. Penelope has also held voluntary advisory roles in health and education.



Nicole Lee – Director

Nicole Lee is a family violence survivor. Through her appointment to Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, she is able to speak for those who have suffered family violence and specifically for those who have a disability and suffered at the hands of a perpetrator.



Cora Clough – Director

Cora has over 20 years' experience in the banking sector where she supported Executives to deliver a *Diversity and Inclusiveness* strategy and undertook a secondment role at the Centre for Workplace Leadership within the University of Melbourne.



Jen Allen – Director

Jen has provided workplace coaching for over 13 years and is the Executive Director of Victorian Institute of Counselling and Coaching (VICC). She developed a workplace training tool '*Working Against Violence Education*' and is a published author on the construct of resilience and capacity building for children. Jen was one of the first **safe steps** media advocates and has worked with McAuley Community Services for Women, White Ribbon, Vic Health, Victoria Police, the AFL, Federal and State Governments.



Pam Newton – Director

Pam is the Manager Family Youth and Children at the City of Port Phillip. She is a practicing psychologist and has been a member of the Australian Psychological Society for three years. Pam brings extensive experience in managing human services within Local Government and not-for-profits.



Belinda Bales – Director

Belinda is a lawyer within Victoria Police and works within the Legal Services Dept. She has worked in several areas of Victoria Police including the Prosecutions Division, incorporating several metropolitan courts and in the Coronial jurisdiction. She managed the Specialist Summary Sex Offences Prosecutions Team and holds a position on the Therapeutic Treatment Board of Victoria and the Child Witnesses Services Advisory Committee of Victoria. Belinda has also worked in other Federal Govt legal Departments including most recently at Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency.

safe steps 3 year Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Our Vision - To eliminate family violence

safe steps is the Victorian state-wide not for profit response service for women, young people and children experiencing violence and abuse from a partner or ex-partner, another family member or someone close to them.

We provide a free 24 hour response line, risk assessment and safety planning, emergency accommodation, outreach services, advocacy and referrals, as well as information and support services to enable women, young people and children to become – and stay – free from violence.

We promote the voices of women, young people and children who are affected by family violence in order to educate the public on issues of gender-based violence, influence government policy, inform legislation and promote social change.



Values

Courageous

Feminist

Empowering

Ethical

Respectful

Reflective

Survivor Advocate

GERALDINE

My name is Geraldine, and I am a family violence survivor. In February 2015, I left my abusive partner. I had spent five years loving and living with a man who I should have felt secure, safe and happy with. But by the time I left, I felt broken, depressed and riddled with anxiety.

It's hard to explain what it feels like to live with, and love someone, who you are scared of. His temper was explosive, and my daughter and I lived our lives walking on eggshells, carefully choosing our way so as not to cause arguments or set him off.

On 1 February 2015 this man – a man that I loved - assaulted me in front of our two year old daughter. He threw me through a doorway – while my daughter watched before running to the bathroom. By the time I managed to scramble to the bathroom, I found her hidden in the bath tub, crouched in a ball, hiding. It broke my heart in a way I can't ever explain.

I felt in many ways I had failed her, the person I loved the most in the whole world, and I knew at that moment that she and I deserved so much more. Over the next few hours I tried to leave with my daughter, and was subsequently assaulted again in front of her, leaving me with a black eye.

I finally convinced him to take me to a 24 hour medical centre. I limped in, my daughter in my arms, with him beside me. There was a security guard at the door - and once inside I screamed 'he did this to me'. He fled. The hours that followed that night involved hospital, police, and my family.

I had found the strength to leave. But my daughter and I were left with nothing but the clothes we were wearing. The next morning I had to face my abuser in a court room,

dressed right down to my underwear in my mother's belongings. It was the most humiliating experience of my entire life. The events that followed that court room were traumatic.

Despite having an intervention order granted I was harassed and stalked, both in person and online, and even run off the road in a vehicle. I began to feel like I may not even make it out alive. It was terrifying.

In the midst of all of this, while my family were rallying around me to help, I reached out to **safe steps**. My family was my greatest support, but they were grappling to keep us safe, and provide the emotional and practical support I needed.

I am forever grateful for the long telephone conversations and information I received from **safe steps**. I wore the pain my abuser had inflicted on my face for three weeks, but it took much longer for the emotional scars to heal. In the times when I felt completely broken, I picked up the telephone and could simply speak with someone at **safe steps** who would understand what I was going through.

The years that have followed have been hard. I have felt let down and disappointed in the very system that I should have been able to rely on for safety and support. But every time I

have gotten back up, dusted myself off, and continue to fight for safety and happiness of myself and my daughter. When my daughter and I left, she was completely non verbal. I often say that it was when I found my voice that she also found hers.

This is a sad story, but I am so truly pleased to tell you that it has a happy ending. Today, you would not find a happier six-year-old than my daughter - or a happier 36 year old woman than me. Our lives are wonderful, and I am proud and grateful for all the beautiful aspects of it, as well as the most amazing people in it.

Someone told me back when I was first leaving "the best is yet to come". They were right. I have the best life, and to say my heart is happy is an understatement.

To be part of the **safe steps** advocacy program has been a very healing process in my life. Being able to share my story in order to help others and shed light on an issue affecting our country has bought meaning to my own suffering.

Thank you for your continued support **safe steps** and for the work we are doing together, supporting women and children to live and stay free from family violence.



Crisis Response 2018-19 at a Glance



86,638 Calls received.



3761 Women were provided case management and accommodation.



2802 Women provided with information and referral.



42,375 Emergency bed nights provided to women and children. Motels, supported accommodation and Safe House.



1098 Women supported and referred to other services and agencies.



116 Women and children in emergency accommodation on any given night.



8051 Total number of women and children that were provided direct assistance.



434 Court referrals following the FASS program.

Our Clients

safe steps 24/7 Crisis Response



Clients identified that the perpetrator:

81%	Has harmed or threatened to harm a victim
50%	Has tried to choke victim
61%	Has threatened to kill victim
23%	Has threatened to kill/harm children
31%	Has threatened to harm family member(s)



44.8% Clients accommodated by safe steps that were under the age of 18.



22% Clients supported by safe steps identified as being from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.



10.4% Clients accommodated by safe steps identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Crisis Response

safe steps Family Response Centre is Victoria's only 24/7 state-wide first response service for women and children escaping family violence. With over 40 years experience in crisis response, **safe steps** continues to empower and encourage women and children to live free from family violence.



Sector Reform

2018-2019 saw the Crisis Response team embrace the many opportunities afforded by the Victorian family violence sector reforms. A major focus has been to understand and align with the legislative requirements of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework and Information Sharing Schemes.

Implementation of a new clinical governance framework ensured that Crisis Response staff are supported in their challenging work which includes, debriefing, informal and formal one to one supervision and monthly external group reflective practice sessions.

In December 2018, **safe steps** appointed a Crisis Response Program Manager to lead culture and practice change, review the service model, establish a new leadership team and strengthen our work with partner agencies across the state.

A key initiative was the implementation of a new telephone system to improve call response times for clients and specific priority groups such as police and hospitals. Through the improved capturing of call volumes, call types and duration, the Crisis Response team now has the tools to respond in a more timely manner. The new system allows for collection and analysis of our response calls for continued quality improvement.

The projects and initiatives that commenced in 2018-2019 include:

- Establishing workforce analysis and forecasting against caller data to improve capacity.

- Strengthened relationships with housing services to assist women and children.
- Established intensive crisis case management responses and improved case coordination.
- A new Practice Lead role to support the implementation of legislated reforms and practice improvements.
- Increased training opportunities and coaching to support staff development.
- New on-boarding processes and induction training.
- Strengthened relationships with our Specialist Family Violence Service partners.
- An expert advisory group to support review of the service model and practice changes.
- Participated in Domestic Violence Victoria, Family Safety Victoria and Specialist Family Violence Services across multiple reform strategy meetings, networks and working groups.
- Contributed to the development of the new Code of Practice for specialist Family Violence services who work with victim survivors.

Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS)

Staff in our Crisis Response Team also provide the Family Advocacy Support Services for women experiencing family violence at the Melbourne Family Court. This service provided in partnership with court services, Victoria Legal Aid, Women's Legal Service of Victoria and Men's Referral Service has been so successful, it has been funded for a further 12 months.

Case Study

Last week the services of **safe steps** were requested by one of the Federal Circuit Court (FCC) Judges.

There was a history of significant physical family violence, including instances of the mother being hospitalised with broken bones. The child was in the mother's care and the father had made an application for parenting orders.

The mother had advised the court that she was wanting to entirely forfeit her parental responsibility. The Judge was not willing to accept this given the safety concerns for the child. The Judge said that if the mother were to do that, the Judge would make an urgent notification to DHHS and the child would be removed from the care of either parent.

At this point the Judge had **safe steps** intervene and provide support for the mother. Over a period of two hours Maxine of **safe steps** was able to unpack the situation and obtain information about why the mother was wanting to surrender the child to the father.

The mother explained that she had been experiencing prolonged harassment and threats from her partner's family overseas as a tactic to coerce her into giving up custody of their child.

When this information was presented to the court it resulted in the Judge making an order that the harassment of the mother cease, and that the child should remain with its mother, as the protective parent.

The mother was overwhelmed by this positive outcome and expressed her deep gratitude for **safe steps'** support. This FASS service has without doubt had an enormous impact on this child's life and future, as well as the mother's.

1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling Program

Early into the 2018-2019 financial year it became clear that demand for the 1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling program was not going to slow and that additional resources would be required to ensure callers affected by domestic, family and sexual violence across Australia were able to have their needs met.

In response to community need, the Federal Government pledged an additional \$64 million over two years to the 1800RESPECT service. Medibank began a tender process for new partners and **safe steps** was contracted to provide an additional 15FTE of specialist counsellors (from 16FTE to 31FTE). With the signing of this contract in April 2019 **safe steps** became a major partner in delivery of the Specialist Counselling component of the 1800RESPECT service.

Clinical governance and support

In 2018-2019 1800RESPECT Specialist Counsellors engaged in a range of practices to support them in their challenging work, including: daily debriefing and informal supervision provided by Senior Practitioners; monthly individual coaching; bi-monthly external supervision with sector leaders in trauma informed practice; monthly telephone based clinical group supervision with counsellors across the partners; and participation in a range of professional development workshops.

“No-one does trauma like 1800RESPECT - they saved my life”.
Caller - Anonymous

Training/workshops:

- **July 2018** South East Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA).
- **September 2018** "Walk in Her Shoes Tour" The Ringwood Magistrates' Court.
- **February 2019** An in-house training on service context, risk assessment, self-care.
- **April 2019** The 1800RESPECT Disability Awareness modules (in depth training) developed as part of the 1800RESPECT Disability Pathways Project.
- **May 2019** Mark Kulkens session exploring 'Working with men' in the context of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- **June 2019** Dr Peter Streker *Caring for frequent/familiar callers*. Reflective practice day.

Specialist Counselling Phone Calls

Total Calls	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June
2018-2019	11196	11467	11021	11553	11800	13260	13940	13499	17484	15669	15422	14705
Specialist Counselling partners*	3600	3687	3472	3598	3459	3413	3761	3733	4083	4199	4579	4731
safe steps	1184	1337	1141	1216	1164	1286	1457	1330	1513	1433	1622	1807
% of safe steps managed calls	33%	36%	33%	34%	34%	38%	39%	36%	37%	34%	35%	38%

* DVConnect, Women's Safety Services South Australia; **safe steps**



The year ahead

With the release of the Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022), further demand on the service is expected as a variety of prevention initiatives are rolled out. Such initiatives are aimed at changing the attitudes and beliefs that can lead to violence. With targeted campaigns (to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as, Culturally And Linguistically Diverse communities) there will be a need for Specialist Counsellor training and upskilling to ensure timely, culturally

and linguistically appropriate and respectful support is provided.

1800RESPECT is a service that has no limitations on access. Service users can make contact when and as they need. The Specialist Counselling team is able to meet them where they are at and assist with physical and psychological safety – always through a trauma lens. This is a unique service that has the power to make a meaningful contribution in breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma associated with domestic, family and sexual violence. We are excited about what we can achieve as a team over the coming year.

“I’m so proud to work in this role for the clients’ sake but what will keep me going is the support I’m surrounded with by the team here. They have so far proved invaluable.”

Sasha (new starter)

2018-2019 Milestones



October 2018

First anniversary of the 1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling program partnerships with Medibank, DVConnect, Women’s Safety Services South Australia and **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre.



February 2019

safe steps 1800RESPECT Specialist Counselling team opened up service delivery to callers identifying as male.



April 2019

Contract variation with addition of 15FTE taking program to 31FTE



May 2019

Bulk recruitment to meet service needs/growth



June 2019

Move into purpose built space to accommodate additional staff and meet the health and wellbeing needs of a workforce working with trauma in a 24 hour service.



June 2019

1,807 calls responded to by the **safe steps** 1800RESPECT Specialist Counsellors – the largest number of calls taken in any month since inception. This represents a 52.5% increase in calls responded to between July 2018 and June 2019.

Safe House

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM

Throughout the 2018-2019 financial year the Safe House team supported large numbers of women who are not permanent residents of Australia. Women without permanent residency face multiple barriers to finding safe, stable housing in which to recover from their experiences of family violence related trauma.

The Safe House team is proud to have worked alongside this diverse cohort of women to overcome some of these barriers and live free from family violence.

The 2018-2019 financial year saw a lot of change for the Supported Accommodation Program, including significant changes to the Safe House itself. Several construction projects were undertaken.

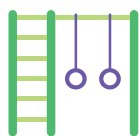
Renovations to the Safe House include:



In June 2018 a complete renovation of our fence, improving site security and enhancing the look of our yard.



In late 2018 some much-needed maintenance was completed as well as brightening up the bedrooms with a fresh coat of paint thanks to the generosity of Bunnings.



Early in 2019 our outdoor space was vastly improved thanks to the generous donation of some new furniture and play equipment.



In May of this year the house security system received an upgrade.

During the year, practice changes were also implemented. Most notably, the Supported Accommodation Program transitioned from a zero-tolerance drug and alcohol policy to one of harm minimisation.

Residents can now work alongside Family Support Workers to discuss their drug and alcohol use, and where necessary, develop AOD safety plans, which aim to minimise the negative impacts of alcohol and drug use during their stay. The program is now better equipped and able to accept referrals for these clients, and to uphold its commitment to supporting all victim survivors in the community.

Further practice improvements included:

- The development of new children's induction and therapeutic play resources.
- The shift to a strengths and wellbeing focus in case-planning.

Adopting a strengths-based approach has enabled the team to celebrate the inherent strengths of individual residents, families and children.

Throughout 2018-2019, the Supported Accommodation Program housed 89 women and 107 accompanying children. Of that, roughly 80% of the client group did not hold permanent residency, and only 15% were born in Australia. These numbers speak to the lack of affordable social housing options available to women who are not residents or citizens of this country.

The team have developed expertise in the provision of case management support to women without permanent residency and their children. Many have become specialists at navigating the intersections between family violence, immigration law and cross-cultural practice. Many working hours have been dedicated to the preparation of applications to the

department of immigration, referrals to specialist migration agents and advocating for this vulnerable client group.

Finally, and perhaps the most exciting development for the Supported Accommodation Program in 2018-19, was the commencement of the 'Core and Cluster' Refuge. This development is part of state-wide refuge redevelopment project overseen by Family Safety Victoria.

Throughout 2018-2019 **safe steps**, Family Safety Victoria (FSV) and DHHS North Division worked together on the development of a Core and Cluster model refuge and in late 2018, the Director of Housing acquired land for its construction. The Supported Accommodation team were invited to add their input to the design for the site.

This new facility will offer self-contained units for use by residents rather than the communal style of living of the Safe House and will also include new premises for staff.

The team is absolutely thrilled to have the opportunity to work at the site and are looking forward to embracing the positive changes to the practice that will come with the transition to a more trauma informed, comfortable style of living for our residents.



Case Study

In 2018, the Safe House accommodated a 23-year old Vietnamese woman, who entered the service following a serious assault and hospital admission. This woman had overstayed her tourist visa. She held no valid visa and was living in shared accommodation with the perpetrator of family violence, to whom she was pregnant.

The woman was accommodated by **safe steps**' Safe House from October 2018 to January 2019 due to her multiple vulnerabilities, including pregnancy and childbirth, post-natal depression compounded by complex trauma, and her lack of access to income.

The Safe House team supported this woman to apply for a protection visa on the basis that her having a child out of wedlock made it unsafe for her to return to family in Vietnam. The team were also able to assist her to apply for an intervention order, access necessary health care for herself and her baby, and access income in the form of immigration status resolution support payments.

This woman's path to independence was a long one, however once her support payments commenced, the woman and her baby were accepted in longer term family violence refuge.



Crisis Response Client Demographic

Age of women and children supported 2018-2019



	0 - 2 years	10%		18 - 25 years	9%		> 55 years	2%
	3 - 5 years	11%		26 - 35 years	22%		Unknown	1%
	6 - 11 years	14%		36 - 45 years	17%			
	12 - 17 years	7%		46 - 55 years	7%			

People and Culture

Employment type



Training

Professional development is crucial to attracting and maintaining engaged, skilled and motivated employees. In 2018-2019, **safe steps** provided increased opportunities for staff to engage in formal learning and development programs as well as coaching and mentoring.

With revised induction and orientation procedures through to competency-based training opportunities, **safe steps** has worked to integrate practical experience into professional development opportunities.

Workplace and Employee Benefits

At **safe steps** we recognise the important role that all our staff play in the provision of our services and in recognition of their ongoing commitment, we have worked to ensure that our employees are recognised, rewarded and have the ability to maximise their personal and work commitments. We have achieved this through the provision of:

- Salary packaging
- Free employee assistance program

- Job share arrangements
- Paid parental leave
- Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave
- Flexible work initiatives
- Purchased leave
- Professional development initiatives
- Leave entitlements above Fair Work requirements
- Portable Superannuation

In the Community

EVENTS

Every year, **safe steps** organises and participates in a number of events in the community to raise awareness about family violence.

Walk Against Family Violence

The Walk Against Family Violence takes place annually, coinciding with the United Nation's Annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November, which also marks the beginning of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence – an international campaign galvanising action to end violence against women and girls around the world.

safe steps was the lead agency organising the 10th Walk Against Family Violence in 2018 joining forces with Emerge – Women's and Children's Support Network, The Salvation Army and the City of Melbourne. Other sector involvement on the day included Ashurst Australia, Brimbank City Council, Broadmeadows Family Relationship Centre, City West Water, City of Stonnington, Envato, Essential Services Commission, Infoxchange, Medibank Health Solutions Telehealth, North Western Melbourne PHN, No To Violence, South East Water, Respect Victoria, Yarra Valley Water and the Victoria State Government.

Around 3,000 people took to the streets of Melbourne CBD and marched in solidarity from Federation Square on Friday 23 November 2018. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp led the procession along with thousands of women, men and children as they showed their support for eradicating family violence. Writer, commentator and activist Van Badham was the MC. Key presentations included an address by the Lord Mayor and a Survivor Advocate from **safe steps**.



**Number of people involved:
approximately 3000.**



**Radio interviews on Fox FM, 3AW and
3RRR. Broadcast news coverage on
Channel 7, Channel 9 and ABC.**





We recognise the amazing women in our Survivor Advocate Program who are passionate and committed to supporting us in increasing awareness of the impact of family violence in our community.

safe steps' Movie Night Fundraisers

In 2018-2019 **safe steps** held two movie night fundraisers, one at the Kino Cinema in the CBD and the other at the Rooftop Cinema.



Monies raised: over \$12,000



Engaged over 200 new supporters.

Survivor Advocacy Program

This initiative is now in its 11th year and strives to empower women who have a lived experience of family violence to safely share their stories publicly. The voices of our Survivor Advocates have proudly resounded through community corporate speaking engagements, and government and judicial consultations.

By engaging women from diverse backgrounds, **safe steps** demonstrates that family violence can happen to anyone and is different for everyone. These stories also communicate the different types of abuse that constitute family violence.

In 2018–2019, our Survivor Advocates engaged in over **30 speaking engagements** across our state. The Survivor Advocate Program has shared lived experiences of family violence with the following organisations and community groups:



Various hospitals and healthcare providers including: The Alfred Hospital, Barwon Health, Forensicare, Frankston Hospital, Mercy Health, Monash Health, Northern Health, NorthWestern Mental Health and Peter Mac as part of their Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence (SHRFV) initiatives.



The 10th annual Walk Against Family Violence



The Brookfield/Multiplex Barefoot Bowling International Women's Day event

In the Community

PARTNERSHIPS

safe steps continues to build and strengthen ongoing relationships with organisations, community groups and key stakeholders. Highlights include:

Brookfield Multiplex

In 2018-2019, the leading international construction contractor Brookfield Multiplex announced **safe steps** as their charity partner for the development of 405 NAB Bourke Street building. This multi-year partnership is aimed at raising awareness of the issue of family violence whilst raising funds for **safe steps**.

Brookfield hosted a **Barefoot Bowling fundraising event** on International Women's Day 2019 along with key stakeholders including NAB.



**Monies raised for safe steps:
over \$40,000**

Yarra Trams and London Benchmarking Group (LBG) presentation

safe steps was invited by Yarra Trams to showcase the success of the 2018 Community Partnerships campaign at the London Benchmarking Group Conference 2018. The campaign gave eight community groups (including **safe steps**) a share in \$1 million worth of free advertising on Yarra Trams. **safe steps** presented alongside Yarra Trams on the success of the Partnership. The three-month campaign sparked an increase in calls, donations and online enquiries for **safe steps**.



**Advertising on Yarra Trams to
promote safe steps services: Free**

NAB corporate volunteers

safe steps welcomed 18 employees from NAB into the **safe steps** office to volunteer. They assisted with sorting donations, clearing out our storage units and packing starter packs for women and children. This opportunity came about through our existing partnership with Brookfield/Multiplex.



Number of NAB volunteers: 18





Trusts & Foundations

In 2018 - 2019 **safe steps** implemented a number of key projects that supported women and children escaping family violence. These projects would not have been possible without these financial contributions.

In addition, the continued support of our Survivor Advocate Program, our Safe House, and Crisis Response Service has enabled **safe steps** to create an even greater impact on the community.



Monies raised: \$137,029

Gifts In Kind

Over the 2018-2019 financial year, **safe steps** continued to receive generously from the community to ensure that women and children escaping family violence have everything they needed to feel comfortable. **Over \$160,000 worth of necessity items were donated**, including but not limited to shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

safe steps also received ongoing support from brands such as Aesop and L'Oreal.



Aesop donation: over \$75,000 worth of product



L'Oreal donation: 45,000 care packages for women entering the safe steps service

These care packages were shared with all organisations supporting women throughout Victoria. **70 partnerships were formed** to get these packages out to those women in need!

Total Donations



Over \$388,000 was donated to help support women and children during the 2018-2019 financial year.



**Donations received - \$188,947
Bequest income - \$101,400
Community fundraising - \$98,065**

Financial Summary

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income for year ended 30 June 2019

	2019 (\$)	2018 (\$)
Total income	13,811,582	11,926,575
Expenditure		
Client Direct Relief	4,570,912	4,654,121
Operating costs	10,570,634	7,199,860
Total expenditure	15,141,546	11,853,981
Surplus / (deficit) for the year	(1,329,964)	72,594
Other comprehensive income Unrealised gains / (losses) from financial assets	54,440	13,115
Total comprehensive income for the year	(1,275,524)	85,709

Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2019

	2019 (\$)	2018 (\$)
Current assets	6,447,740	6,081,724
Non-current assets	316,496	259,841
Total Assets	6,764,236	6,341,565
Current Liabilities	3,151,159	1,560,644
Non-current liabilities	147,387	39,707
Total Liabilities	3,298,546	1,600,351
Net Assets	3,465,690	4,741,214
Equity		
Financial Asset Reserve	75,377	20,937
Accumulated Surplus	3,390,313	4,720,277
Total Equity	3,465,690	4,741,214

Independent Audit Report safe steps Family Violence Response Centre Inc. ABN: 86 138 521 643

Independent Audit Report to the Members of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Inc for the Year Ended 30 June 2019.

Report on the Summary Financial Report

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises the Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2019 and the Summary Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year then ended, are derived from the audited financial report of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Inc for the year ended 30 June 2019.

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that financial report in our report dated 25 September 2019.

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission Act 2012*. Reading the summary financial statements, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Inc.

Management Responsibility for the Summary Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation of the summary financial report.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the summary financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the summary financial statements derived from the audited financial report of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Inc for the year ended 30 June 2019 are consistent, in all material respects, with that audited financial report, on the basis described in Note 1.



Peter Shields

Partner
Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants
Blackburn VIC
25 September 2018.



Acknowledgements

The continued support of the Victorian state government, community, donors, volunteers, schools, businesses and corporations are fundamental to **safe steps'** ability to deliver much needed quality services to women and children.

We would like to sincerely thank all of those who have generously contributed to **safe steps**. We would like to acknowledge the following supporters for their ongoing commitment against family violence:



- Aesop
- Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Break up Boss – Zoë Foster Blake
- Bunnings
- Charles David Fund
- City of Melbourne
- Commonwealth Bank
- Envato
- Fair World Foundation
- Financial Ombudsman Service
- Grill'd
- Hesta
- IMPACT for Women
- Jetstar
- Korowa Anglican Girls School
- London Benchmarking Group (LGB)
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

- L'Oreal
- Mantra
- Marcus Thomas Family Foundation
- Medibank
- Myer
- Myer Community Fund
- NAB (corporate volunteers)
- Optus
- Pandora
- Pfizer
- Pierre Fabre Australia
- RACV

- Rado Family Foundation
- Ralph Lauren
- Sandown Greyhound Racing Club
- Shaynna Blaze
- Sidney Myer Fund
- Telstra
- The Body Shop
- The Chrysalis Foundation
- Victoria Police
- Westpac
- Westpac Foundation
- Yarra Trams

“Our vision is to eliminate family violence.”

For confidential support and information call **1800 015 188** at any time.

To find out more about **safe steps’** programs to help women and children affected by family violence, please visit **www.safesteps.org.au**



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www.facebook.com/safestepsFV



Follow us on Twitter
[@safestepsFV](https://twitter.com/safestepsFV)



Connect via LinkedIn
www.linkedin.com/company/safe-steps-family-violence-response-centre



Follow us on Instagram
[Instagram.com/safestepsFV](https://www.instagram.com/safestepsFV)

safe steps respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and pays its respects to their Elders, children and young people of past, current and future generations.

safe steps is committed to assisting all women and children in the community experiencing family violence. We are an organisation that values inclusivity, diversity and intersectionality.

We are committed to helping women and children, trans and gender diverse individuals of all ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, religions, ages and physical abilities.

Post: GPO Box 4396 Melbourne Victoria 3001

Email: admin@safesteps.org.au

Office Phone: (03) 9928 9600

ABN: 86 138 521 643

للدعم والمعلومات مع مراعاة السرية، إتصلوا هاتفياً بالرقم
- بكلفة مكالمة محلية.

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Ph: 1800 015 188 (24/7)



**Family Violence
Response Centre**