

Safe Steps

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

November 2023 – November 2024



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



Safe Steps

FAMILY VIOLENCE RESPONSE CENTRE



Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Victoria, the land on which our services are delivered. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture, and Elders, past and present. We acknowledge the First Peoples' right to self-determination and to continuing their connection to lands, waters, and communities.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre recognise and respect people of all genders, sexes, and sexualities. We are committed to improving access and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual people seeking our support and are dedicated to ongoing improvement in being a safe and inclusive service and workplace for those in the LGBTIQ+ community.

Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia **Inaugural Reflect RAP**

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types - Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate - allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia



Statement from CEO

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

Safe Steps is a 24/7 crisis response service delivering support and pathways to safety for all people experiencing family violence. Our expert team of experienced professionals use best practice approaches to respond to survivors according to their unique situation and needs.

The Safe Steps Reconciliation Action Plan contains a range of practical activities to build better understandings, meaningful relationships, and stronger self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The RAP sits alongside our strategic plan which highlights Safe Steps strong commitment to inclusions and diversity and to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are survivors of domestic and family violence. Safe Steps is committed to improving access to our services, the way we engage and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as clients, colleagues and in communities.

Safe Steps' vision is creating safety, support, and respect for all victim-survivors of family violence. During our journey of reconciliation, we will continue to support and guide our staff and volunteers, encouraging them to develop cultural humility, culturally responsive practice, meaningful relationships, sharing culture, and supporting clients in culturally safe ways. Safe Steps is also committed to being a great place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to work, and an organisation that supports and empowers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services across the sector.

Safe Steps embraces an intersectional approach to supporting and respecting all victim-survivors of family violence regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, and ability. Safe Steps especially acknowledges the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are survivors of domestic and family violence, and we stand in solidarity with them, now and always.

It is an honour to release the Safe Steps Reconciliation Action Plan 2023 - 2024.

Dr Chelsea Tobin

CEO

Safe Steps



Our business

Safe Steps is Victoria's 24/7 family violence response centre, providing a state-wide entry point for all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, providing a state-wide entry point for all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. We acknowledge that most of our work is dedicated to the needs of women and children. This reflects the gendered nature of domestic and family violence. We also acknowledge that domestic and family violence does not discriminate and can affect everyone regardless of social and cultural background.

Safe Steps provides services to all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. Safe Steps currently provides services to approximately 13% of clients that identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Our services include:

- 24/7 crisis response and support.
- Risk assessment and management.
- Safety planning.
- Crisis accommodation.
- Referrals.

We also work with other specialist services to ensure our clients receive the safest and most suited support that meet their individual needs. As the only state-wide, 24-hour, seven day-a-week family violence response service, Safe Steps also plays an important role in sector development and reform which is why we advocate heavily for both policy and law reform as well as social change.

In 2015, Safe Steps presented a detailed written submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, outlining a comprehensive vision to keep women and children safe. One of our most recent policy submissions includes feedback on the Consultation Draft for the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children in February of 2022.

Our work is informed by the lived experiences of victim-survivors of family violence. We ensure that their voices are at the heart of all reforms and our practice frameworks. We provide a specialist support service that is client-centred, and research based. We implement this by gathering data that reflects the lived experience of victim-survivors. Safe Steps explores and highlights the complex social structures that create barriers for women and children's safety and independence.

Such explorations include research into the lack of housing options and permanent residency for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. We also utilise evidence-based practice influenced by the best, most up-to-date, local, national, and international research. We also fund a lived-experience advocacy group that informs practice.

Our previous advocacy priorities included calling on government to address the national housing crisis and enabling an increase in perpetrator accountability across the family violence response system. We highlighted the inequity of victim-survivors carrying the consequences of violence, resulting in lost income, education insecurity for children, and homelessness.

Our vision is to provide safety, support, and respect for all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. To achieve our vision, we conduct research into barriers to safety for those affected by domestic and family violence; provide evidence-based support that is also informed by the lived-experiences of victim-survivors; build community awareness and challenge social biases; advocate for policy and law reform; and are one of the leading organisations in conducting Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) frameworks.

Our work is guided by Safe Steps core values of integrity, empowerment, and diversity. Through these values Safe Steps promotes inclusivity and diversity amongst the workforce and when working with clients.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre is located in Melbourne, on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the Boonwurrung people of the Kulin nation. The state-wide service employs 96 staff across the organisation with 2 staff identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.



Our RAP

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of this land, Australia. Safe Steps affirms respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples self-determination and recognises the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in responding to family violence. At Safe Steps we are committed to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. We are committed to providing culturally responsive services and acknowledge family violence is not a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Through our reconciliation journey we hope to empower and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples voices and communities. We also hope to establish positive connections and partnerships with specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and communities and be considered a culturally safe organisation. Our Reflect RAP is one of many actions that contribute to our commitment to improve our responsiveness and cultural competence as an organisation.

Safe Steps understands that self-determination is a guiding principle for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Safe Steps' commitment to self-determination acknowledges First Nations people are the experts in their own lives and therefore want to ensure their knowledge guides our culturally safe practice. We also recognise and respect the strength and diversity of First Nations peoples. Safe Steps has a current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Rights, Choice and Cultural Safety policy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors currently make up approximately 13% of Safe Steps clientele. Safe Steps recognises that this is an under-representation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who experience domestic and family violence in Victoria. With that acknowledgement, it is understood that there are barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors accessing our service. We intend to address those barriers through client and staff feedback processes as well as partnerships with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agencies.

The Executive Manager of Inclusion and Diversity will be responsible for the Reconciliation Action plan throughout its stages. These include but are not restricted to championing the RAP and embedding cultural safety throughout the organisation and dispersing RAP information internally.

In February 2023, Safe Steps established an Inclusion and Diversity Group which has since transitioned to become the RAP Working Group. Its sole focus is now on the RAP deliverables and implementation across the organisation.

The Working Group consists of staff members with diverse experience across the organisation who are passionate about building cultural capability throughout the organisation. Two of the members identify as Aboriginal and are key contributors to the decision-making process of the Reconciliation Action Plan. Currently meeting fortnightly, it is expected that the group will begin to meet monthly as the Plan progresses.



Our approach to implementing the RAP

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre is led by a Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and Management team who are equally passionate about embedding cultural capability in the organisation.

Safe Steps formed their RAP Working Group in February 2023 which agreed upon a Terms of Reference which outlined the group members responsibility for overseeing the development, approval, and implementation of the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan for Safe Steps.

To ensure active and engaged implementation occurs, the RAP Working Group also manages an active action register.

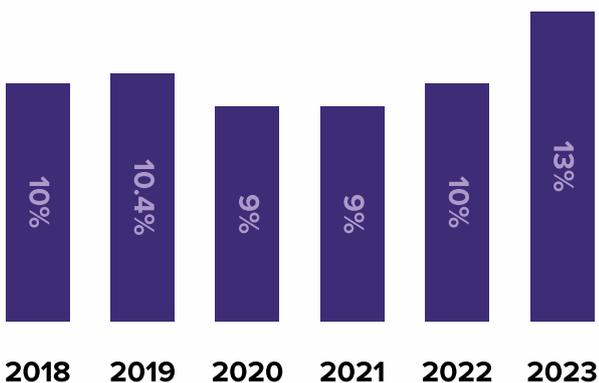
The RAP Working Group has a diverse mix of staff from all levels of the organisation including front line delivery, directors and executive management.

Our reconciliation journey to date

With its beginnings as a community grassroots service, Safe Steps was founded to support women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. Fifty years later, the organisation continues its vital work, extending its accessibility to anyone experiencing domestic and family violence as one of two state-wide entry points for victim survivors and remaining Victoria's only 24/7 domestic and family violence crisis support service.

At Safe Steps, we recognise that reconciliation is a journey, and as an organisation, we have only just begun our journey.

Snapshot of our journey providing a service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors:



As part of Safe Steps goal to improve culturally appropriate responsiveness, the organisation reached out to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Djirra. With a desire to develop greater awareness and responsiveness for First Nations clients contacting Safe Steps. These relationships continue to evolve with VACCA and Safe Steps now meeting monthly to discuss opportunities for improvements in the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are supported.

In 2019 Safe Steps developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Right, Choice and Cultural Safety policy. This was then reviewed and updated in 2023. The policy outlines key themes such as, the right to self-determination, upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, choice and cultural safety, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, all staff cultural capability training and feedback, monitoring, and evaluation.

Since 2020 Safe Steps has supported clients navigating the court system. As part of this program, the organisation developed relationships with Aboriginal specialist services to provide culturally appropriate support for First Nations clients.

In 2023 Safe Steps developed an Inclusion and Diversity working group and started drafting its first ever Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. This working group has since been transitioned and is the RAP working group and will solely focus on embedding cultural safety and the deliverables across the organisation.

Our approach to crisis response and intervention

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre aims to provide critical support services to all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. We adhere to the Human Services Standards, in line with funding requirements providing the frameworks for diversity and inclusion.

As an organisation funded by the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing, Safe Steps is also committed to the Dhelk Dja partnership and adhere to the six guiding principles of self-determination, collaboration and partnerships, strengths based cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches, safety and accountability, transparency, and honesty of all parties.

Our approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Safe Steps developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Right, Choice and Cultural

Safety Policy. The policy informs cultural safety practice when working with First Nation people. The policy places emphasise on the unique status of First Nation people as the Traditional Owners and ongoing Custodians of Australia. The policy supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right to self-determination, upholding their rights, choice and cultural safety, recruitment, training for all staff, and feedback, monitoring, and evaluation and embeds culturally safe practice within the organisation.

We also aim to provide culturally safe crisis accommodation to meet the needs of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors.

Safe Steps has an internal LGBTIQ+ Inclusion, Equity and Diversity framework. The framework recognises the importance of embedding diversity, inclusion, and equity throughout the organisation. The framework is broad and inclusive and provides examples of specific terms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identifying as part of the LGBTIQ+ community.



Building meaningful partnerships and programs

Safe Steps continues to build cultural capabilities through the following activities and partnerships.

Reconciliation Activities

- Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we work and live features in all official documents including email signatures and social media. Acknowledgements are also made at events and meetings, both internal and external. Official events, including the Candlelight Vigil, will seek an Elder of the country on which we stand with close relationships built with direct descents of Willam Barak, the last traditional Elder of the Wurundjeri - Willam clan.
- Safe Steps continues to play a central role in Victoria's family violence sector, working with our colleagues to achieve a more integrated and coordinated response. Partnerships include the Aboriginal Community led organisation Djirra who work primarily with Aboriginal women experiencing family violence and VACCA, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.
- Development of a Complex Case Panel. The purpose of the Complex Case Panel is to provide a senior level advice and consultation group. The Complex Case Panel addresses cases that may be high risk or problematic and are seeing positive outcomes through the normal case management frameworks. The Complex Case Panel provides a cultural lens on Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander victim-survivor cases.
- To maintain the high level of knowledge and understanding required in the complex cases that the panel addresses, members include independent clinicians, Practice Leads, people with lived experience, policy specialists and management team including the CEO. In addition, Family Violence Crisis Specialists and Senior Practitioners are brought in as required.”
- Safe Steps has developed an in-service clinical practice training calendar for all staff. One of the sessions was about cultural capability and was delivered by the Clinical Services Director, Tammy Wallace who is a proud Jirrabal woman. Safe Steps has also reached out to The Orange Door to provide an in-service session on working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors.
- Clinical Practice Training covers a range of topics including Cultural Capability, delivered by Clinical Services Director and proud Jirrabal woman, Tammy Wallace. In addition to the training, the Director provides clinical and cultural consultation to the Intake and Assessment and Brief Intervention teams working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Safe Steps continues to reach out to other organisations including The Orange Door to share our knowledge in this space and provide their staff an informed understanding on working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors.
- The development and launch of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework designed to support our staff and to reinforce a welcoming, safe and respectful service we strive to provide for our clients.
- The creation of pathways to safety through collaborative partnerships and evidence-based responses for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.
- Development of an accessible Inclusion and Diversity Calendar highlighting key dates for recognition and celebration. Collateral is created and communicated through social platforms, internal communications, and events. Dates include all culturally significant dates for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	June, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	June, 2024	Clinical Services Director
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity with People and Culture consultation
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	November, 2023	People and Culture

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	April, 2024	Clinical Services Director
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
6 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	November, 2023	Clinical Services Director
7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	March, 2024	Clinical Services Director
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	November, 2023	Clinical Services Director with People and Culture consultation
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	April, 2024	Clinical Services Director with Group Director Consultation
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain RWG to govern RAP implementation.	September, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Terms of Reference for the RWG to maintain relevant and reflect RAP development and implementation duties.	September, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	September, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	November, 2023	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
12 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June, annually	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August, annually	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	August, 2024	Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity



Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

The meanings behind the artwork

Artist: Emma Stenhouse

Camp	In the middle of the artwork is a camp, this represents the coming together of people, a row of children and then a row of adults – the people that we work with and for – they are at the center of all that we do.
Net	Below the camp is a net, signifying that Safe Steps is there to catch the people who need our help and keep them safe. The lines represent a cleansing, calming water, passing through the net.
Journey	The path that the people Safe Steps helps, are on, surrounded by support on both sides, the lines represent travel are moving forward, the circles acknowledging that it is important to take breaks and rest on the journey.
Mountains	On the bottom right are mountains representing challenge and struggle. Climbing a mountain can be tough, but it is worth it once you reach the top.
3 weaves	In the top right corner, you will see 3 weaves representing the 3 core values of Safe Steps. Traditionally, the coil weaves were made by women in groups with everything carefully and sustainably gathered from Country. The women would sit and weave together, during this time offering support, knowledge, and a safe space to share. Women are represented, sitting around the weaves, acknowledging the similarity of Safe Steps.
Links	Through the links, staff and families are linked together through services and support.
Bush Tucker	In the center of the camp, the bush tucker shows that when we care for Country, Country cares for us.
8 lines leading to the center	The coming together of people, a path to take.
River	Representing Country and connection to our waterways, but also the reflective practices of Safe Steps.
Footprints	The steps of the organisation and the people and families that it supports, taking steps forward on the journey. The steps have been painted closely together to represent that it is all about the small steps, and that each small step is important.
Candle	The candle represents the light of hope that Safe Steps provides. It also honors those who have had their lives taken as a direct result of family violence – they are not forgotten. Fire also represents cleansing in Aboriginal Culture.
Butterflies	Representing growth and rebirth – creating new beginnings.
Flora	Represents the connection to Country, the value of bush tucker for food and healing, and a reminder that comfort can be found by being in nature, and sustainable practices. Different plants have been used for their individual properties including the flowering gum blossoms, representing that we can all blossom after adversity and thrive in harsh climates.





Emma Stenhouse

Emma Stenhouse is a proud Ngarrindjeri women and a contemporary indigenous artist on a journey of self-discovery, deepening her connection with her family, exploring her heritage, and inspired by her love of Country. Emma encapsulates her knowledge in her story works formed by her deep relationship to land and guided by strong female role models in her community.





Safe Steps

Jade O'Reilly

Executive Manager Inclusion and Diversity

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

P: 0423 787 721

E: jade.o@safesteps.org.au