

Impact Report

FY 2025



Safe Steps



Our Mission

We provide evidence-based support and services for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence by creating pathways to safety through collaborative partnerships.

Our Vision

Creating safety, support and respect for all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

Acknowledgement of Country

Safe Steps acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, 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 People's right to self-determination and to their continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Safe Steps recognises and respects 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.



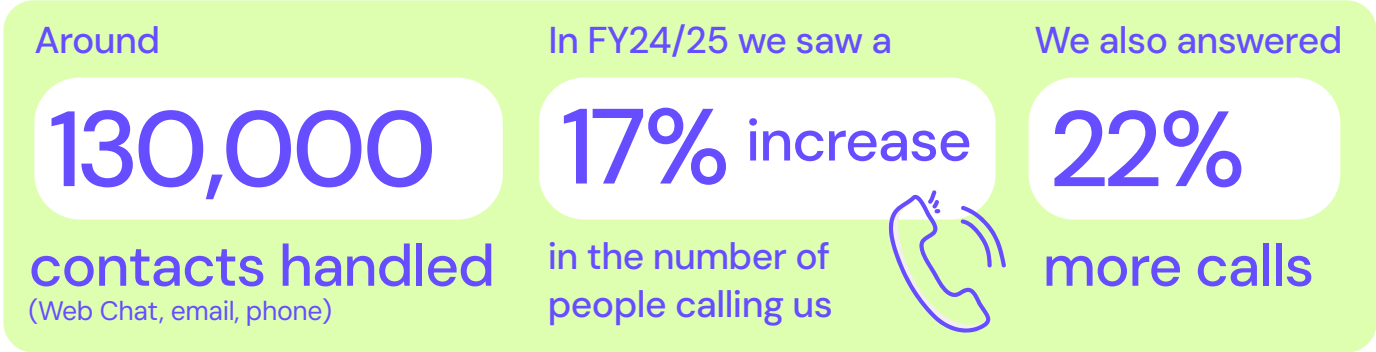
'You didn't just listen, you heard me, you believed me. And that made all the difference.'

Safe Steps client

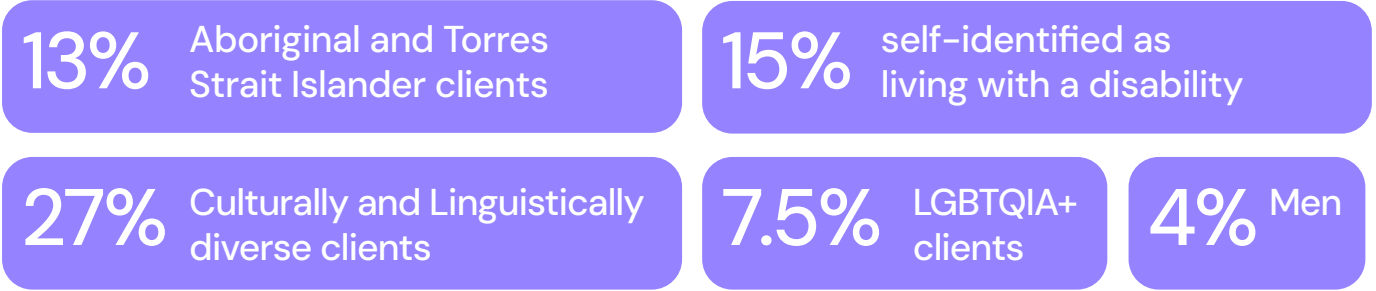
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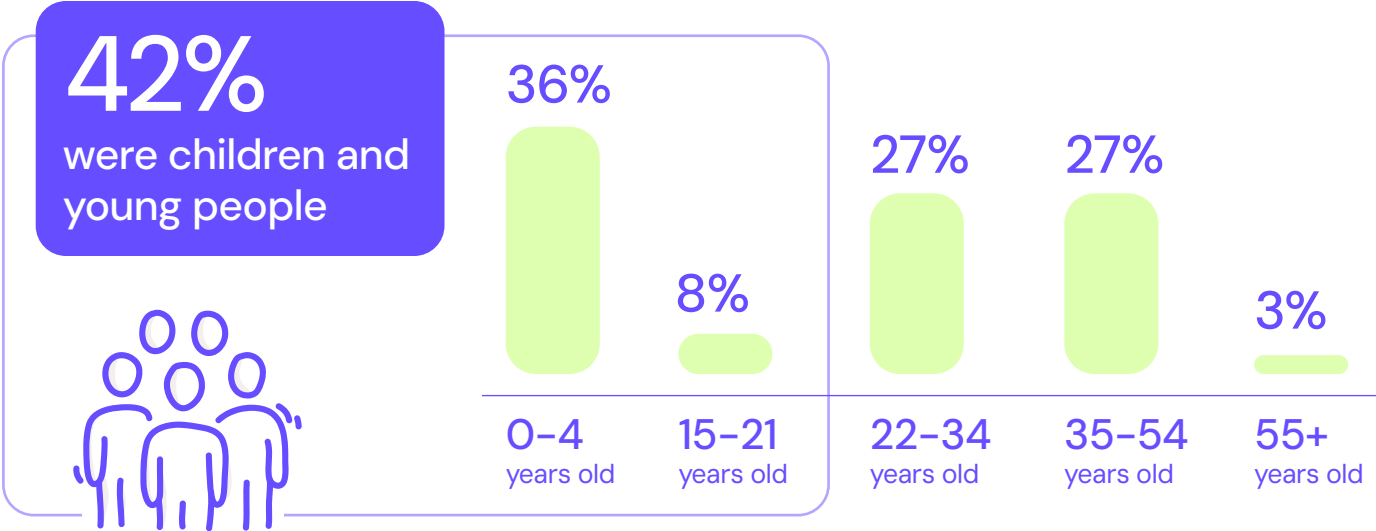
Our Growing Impact from 2024-2025



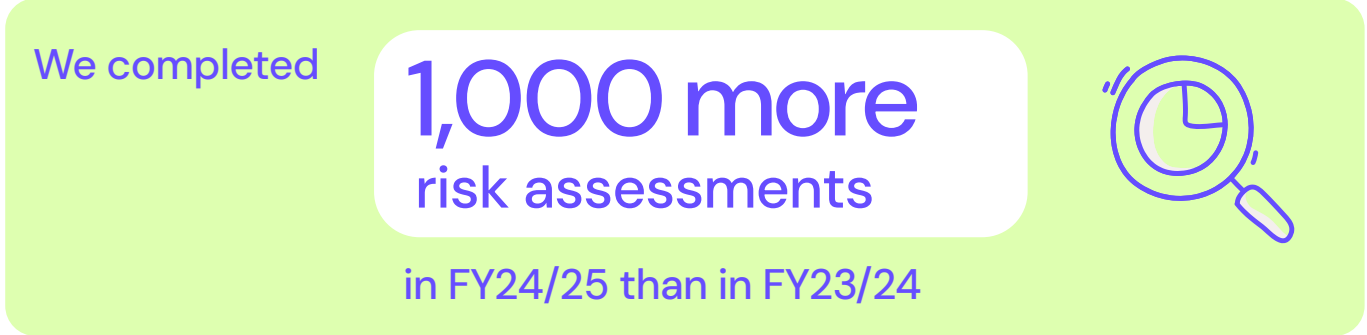
Of the adults supported in FY24/25



Of the people we supported in crisis accommodation in FY24/25



Our Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Frameworks (MARAM) trend



Strengthening Support, Expanding Impact

Update From Our CEO



Over the past year, delivering a steadfast, sector-leading response for all people experiencing family and domestic violence remained our core priority. Throughout FY25, average monthly calls for help rose by 9%—a clear reminder of the escalating demand for crisis support across Victoria. In response, we expanded and strengthened our services to meet this need, ensuring support was available 24/7, every day of the year.

Over the past year, we responded to more than 130,000 contacts and expanded our Live Chat service to operate 24/7—ensuring help is available whenever it's needed. These numbers represent more than just data; they reflect lives reached, safety restored, and hope rebuilt. Our **Sanctuary Model**, now implemented across all our residential sites, continues to achieve strong outcomes, with 97% of clients exiting into safe, sustainable pathways and not re-engaging with our crisis services.

Our success in being awarded a grant under the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Inclusion Round), funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, will see the Sanctuary Model expand further—delivering 102 new safe places for women and children. Featured as the gold standard by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's Rapid Review Panel looking at prevention approaches, the Sanctuary Model has proven to be both cost-effective and life-changing.

This financial year we marked the beginning of our work with **1800RESPECT** to provide Australia-wide 24/7 counselling support for people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence. Our senior counsellors operate across a 24/7 roster responding to phone calls, webchats and text messages, offering trauma-informed counselling, information and referrals. This partnership strengthens our ability to understand and respond to the broader landscape of family, domestic, and sexual violence across Australia.

We have continued elevating Safe Steps' national profile—contributing to over 400 media stories and speaking at more than 11 sector conferences and events. I gave evidence at South Australia's Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, and facilitated a meeting between the

Victorian family violence sector and Royal Commission staff who came to Melbourne to hear about our experiences post-Victorian Royal Commission.

We remain deeply committed to inclusion, accessibility, and the voices of lived experience. This year we are proud to share that we achieved Rainbow Tick Accreditation, a significant milestone in our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and affirming environment for LGBTIQ+ clients, staff, and communities. Our expanded client services are designed to serve all people, with 8% of calls coming from cisgendered men and individuals identifying as LGBTIQ+. These diverse needs are reflected not only in who we support, but in how we shape our services—guided by our Lived Experience Advisory Group, whose insights are embedded into every level of decision-making.

With a team that speaks over 35 languages, we are able to meet people where they are, ensuring that support is culturally responsive, inclusive, and truly reflective of the communities we serve.

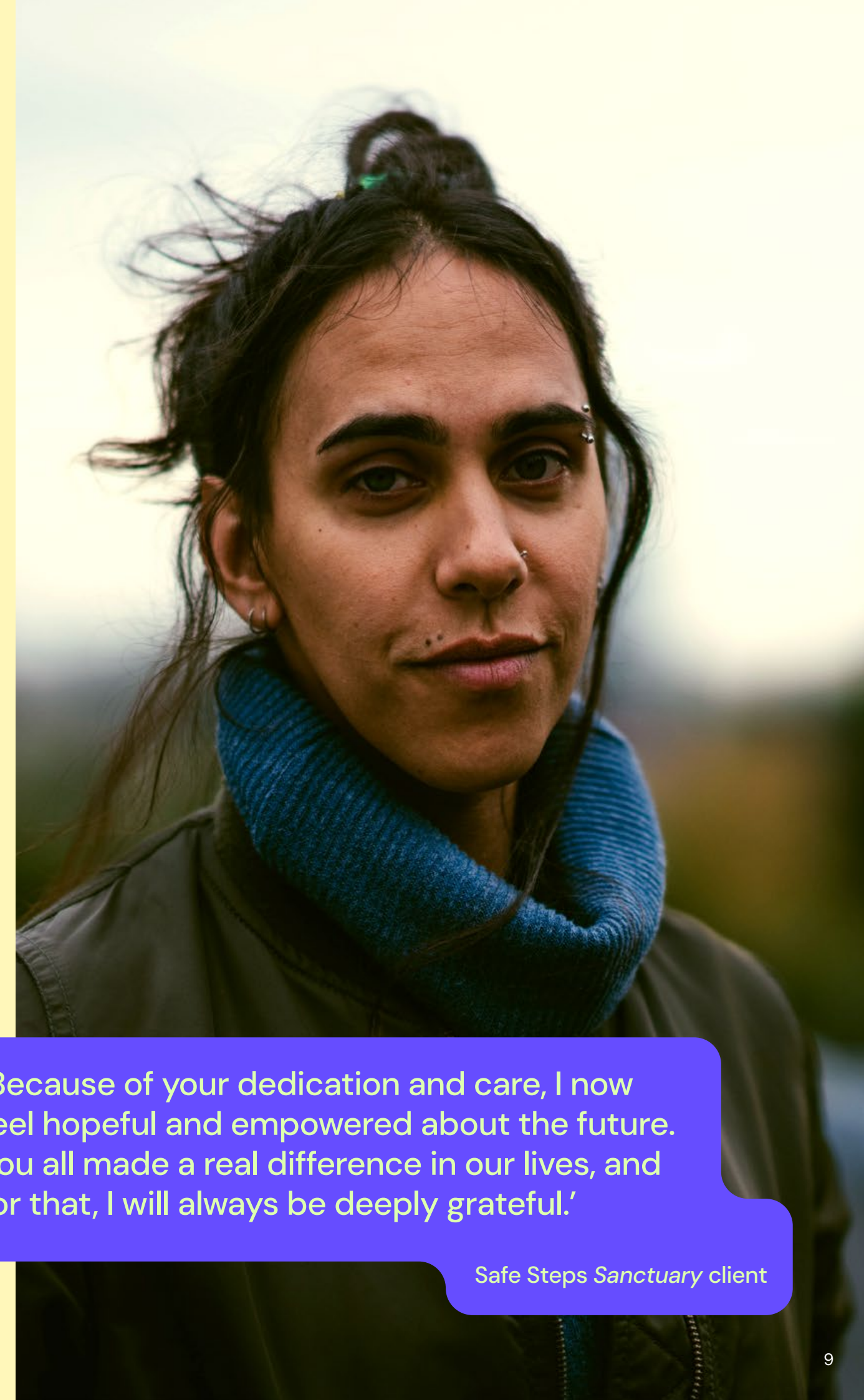
One gap in the family and domestic violence response system we cannot ignore is the lack of dedicated services for children and young people. Through a Churchill Fellowship, I travelled across Europe, the US, and Canada to explore global best practice. Our impact film **Unanswered Calls**, to date has screened nationally to over 1,600 people passionately concerned about the lack of services for children and young people – amplifying this urgent call for action.

As we move into the next phase of our Strategic Plan, I'm proud to report that all major objectives remain on track and we have increased income by 10% through diversified sources.

Safe Steps remains in a strong financial position, holding us in good stead to continue our important work and build on the progress made in serving more victim survivors.

To our supporters—thank you. Your generosity drives everything we do. Together, we are creating real and lasting change.

Chelsea Tobin, CEO, Safe Steps



'Because of your dedication and care, I now feel hopeful and empowered about the future. You all made a real difference in our lives, and for that, I will always be deeply grateful.'

Safe Steps Sanctuary client

Delivering Best Practice Support & System Change in FY25

Every day, across Victoria, people experiencing family and domestic violence reach out in moments of fear, courage, and hope. In FY25, Safe Steps was there to answer, protect, and walk alongside them.

We handled over **130,000 calls**, live chats and emails, providing over **31,000 nights** of emergency accommodation for people escaping family and domestic violence.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our client practice, completing more than **12,000 MARAM assessments**: an increase of 10% compared to FY24. This growth reflects our continued commitment to responding to the diverse and complex experiences reported by victim-survivors.

Millions of dollars in brokerage funding was accessed to support people through our family and domestic violence support services.

This year, we provided more than 200 **Family Safety Packages**, a 10% increase from FY24—to help victim-survivors move from crisis accommodation into more secure homes with rental support and vital safety modifications.

With the growing threat of technology-facilitated abuse, our **Brief Intervention Team** conducted digital safety sweeps, educated clients, and upskilled staff to combat this invisible but devastating form of control.

Operating the **Victorian Family Violence Accommodation Register** (FVAR) was central in supplementing our crisis work, with hundreds of successful refuge referrals made, ensuring people escaping violence transitioned into safety and were protected from further harm across the state.

Our **Disability Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative** supported almost 600 families this year, a 95% increase compared to FY24, providing tailored, trauma-informed support to victim-survivors with disabilities. Alongside this, we delivered numerous capacity-building activities to strengthen sector responses. The program continues to enhance

Safe Steps' ability to provide accessible pathways to safety for all.

Launching our **Centre of Excellence** (COE) in February 2025 marked a milestone in our commitment to clinical excellence, data outcomes, and culturally responsive practice. Since then, we have introduced new best-practice policies and implemented clinical practice initiatives, to build on our existing Complex Case Panels and reflective practice.

Our recent Rainbow Tick Accreditation recognised our ongoing work to embed inclusive practices across the organisation – updating policies, staff onboarding and training programs, and external facing communication channels. Guided by our LGBTIQA+ Advisory Group, this accreditation reflects our deep commitment to creating safe and affirming services for all.

At the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, our **Family Advocacy and Support Service** (FASS) delivered services to more than 700 clients, before, during and after family law hearings. Our team completed risk assessments, safety plans, and advocacy that promoted dignity and protection through every step of the legal process.

Meanwhile, our **Pets in Crisis Program** ensured that no one had to choose between their safety and the wellbeing of their beloved animals. This year, we supported more than 100 clients by placing their pets into emergency accommodation and providing care vouchers. Many clients told us that knowing their pets would be safe gave them the confidence they needed to leave an abusive partner.

From frontline response to systemic improvement, Safe Steps continues to lead with compassion, collaboration, and the unwavering belief that safety is a right—not a privilege.

'Knowing my pet was safe and cared for made all the difference—from the moment I arrived until the day I left. It gave me peace of mind and helped me focus on rebuilding. I'm so grateful for this support—it meant the world to both of us.'

Safe Steps client

Miranda's journey

to a future free from violence

When Miranda, a 38-year-old pregnant mother of three, found herself in an increasingly dangerous and volatile situation, it was a vigilant childcare worker who reached out to Safe Steps.

Miranda's partner—once a long-time friend who had become romantically involved with her just six months earlier—was not the biological father of her children. As his behaviour became increasingly abusive, he began making violent threats—telling her he would kill her if she chose to terminate the pregnancy. Isolated and afraid, Miranda urgently needed support.

Miranda was encouraged by a childcare worker to speak to our **Intake and Assessment Team** while picking her children up from childcare. A safety check and comprehensive risk assessment were completed immediately. The person using violence had a known criminal history, and existing protective orders had not been enforced.

Feeling safe to do so, Miranda decided to stay home for the night to collect personal belongings. Our **Intake and Assessment Team** worked with her to quickly develop a tailored safety plan to help with this, planning for Miranda to call back the next day to assess her situation. Strategies put in place included avoiding high-risk areas like the kitchen or garage, maintaining an open escape route, and setting up a code word with trusted contacts. She was also advised to keep her phone charged, to disable location tracking, and to change all passwords.

The next morning, Miranda contacted our **Intake and Assessment Team** to check in, where we assessed that she was still facing a high level of risk. She was immediately placed in emergency motel accommodation and connected with both financial and practical supports. This included assistance with groceries and meals, access to medical care, and funding for a pregnancy ultrasound. Miranda was also referred to our **Disability Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative**, who provided technology support to ensure one of her children, living with a disability, could continue to access Apps that were vital for self-soothing and part of their mental health and wellbeing routine.

Miranda's case was then transitioned to a partner agency for ongoing, face-to-face support, while she was in the motel, and she was placed on the **Family Violence Accommodation Register**.

Miranda was deeply grateful for the immediate, responsive case management Safe Steps provided during her time of crisis. With our help, she had the space to process what she had experienced and begin planning a future free from violence. Today, Miranda knows she can rely on Safe Steps to be there whenever she needs immediate support.

'I came in with nothing, and just receiving something so thoughtful like a toiletry bag made me feel seen. It might seem small, but in that moment, it meant everything.'

Safe Steps client



Our Advocacy

Throughout FY24/25, Safe Steps continued its advocacy for policy change to drive improved outcomes for people who have experienced family and domestic violence.



Answering the Call: Innovation and Action for Young Victim-Survivors

Improving crisis responses for young people affected by family violence is a growing priority for Safe Steps. Our CEO embarked on a Churchill Fellowship, travelling through Europe, the United States and Canada to explore world-leading approaches to supporting children and young people experiencing adversity.

What followed was a bold commitment to change. We made an impact film *Unanswered Calls*, in association with Minderoo Pictures and produced by Venn, highlighting the urgent need for better responses to young victim-survivors. Premiering in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide, the film sparked vital conversations and a national call to action. We acknowledge and deeply appreciate the courage of those who have shared their personal stories and experiences in this film.

Informing our work was an objective mapping of current services available to young people contrasted with the real-life experiences of young people seeking help, conducted by Prof Kate Fitz-Gibbon. Clear from

this work was evidence that suggested that despite substantial reforms following the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV, 2016), the service system remains predominantly adult-centric and often fails to recognise young people as victim survivors in their own right. Critical gaps persist in ensuring young people, particularly ‘unaccompanied minors’ – can access safe housing, specialist support, and clear pathways to safety.

This work allowed us to develop a proposal for a youth-focused digital hub—co-designed with young people, for young people—to ensure that when help is needed, it’s accessible, safe and trusted. This blueprint will support young people to find information, connection and care in their own time, on their own terms.

Together, these actions are shaping a more responsive, inclusive and youth-informed crisis system—one that listens, believes, and acts when young people reach out.

Advocating for a Safer, Cost-Effective Crisis Response: The Sanctuary Model

Crisis accommodation is a lifeline for people escaping family and domestic violence. Yet in Victoria, a chronic shortage of appropriate options means many victim-survivors are placed in motels, which do not provide the safety, support or stability they need.

Safe Steps developed the **Sanctuary Model** to offer a safer, more supportive alternative. Initially piloted at **Nic’s Place** and now operating across three sites, the model provides short-term, wraparound crisis accommodation with intensive face-to-face case management and access to therapeutic services. In FY25 alone, around 450 adults and 650 children were supported through the **Sanctuary Model** at **Nic’s Place**, **Trish’s Place** and **Virginia’s Place**.

An independent evaluation found that 97% of exits were safe and sustainable, with families moving into secure housing and not returning to crisis services. Residents overwhelmingly report improved feelings of safety, empowerment and support—particularly the emotional and practical care provided to meet both their own and their children’s needs.

‘Sanctuary gave me a voice again... without their help I would not have been able to make this much progress.’

Sanctuary resident

The Prime Minister’s Rapid Review Panel, examining best practice prevention approaches recognised Safe Steps’ **Sanctuary Model** as a leading alternative:

“The benefits of this approach are immediate... and more cost effective than accommodating victim-survivors in motels.”

Featured on **ABC 7.30**, **The Age** and **The Conversation**, the **Sanctuary Model** is changing lives and reshaping expectations of crisis accommodation.

We’re now advocating to ensure we are able to staff our expanded **Sanctuary Model**—because no one fleeing violence should be left with uncertainty in a motel room.

Safe Steps Leads Victoria in Honouring Lives Lost

Safe Steps is proud to lead Victoria’s annual **Candlelight Vigil**, an event dedicated to honouring those who have lost their lives to family and domestic violence and holding space for all victim-survivors. The Vigil is a moment for remembrance, reflection and collective resolve to end violence.

In May 2025, close to 400 people gathered in Melbourne for a powerful tribute led by courageous victim-survivors and advocates. Together with Ministers, Members of Parliament, members of

the Judiciary, Councillors, Victoria Police, sector leaders and supporters, we stood in solidarity to honour lives lost, share stories of resilience and call for lasting change. We are deeply grateful to the family and domestic violence victim-survivors who bravely shared their stories of pain, survival, and resilience. In a striking show of unity, iconic Melbourne landmarks—including **AAMI Park**, **Melbourne Town Hall** and **Federation Square**—were illuminated in purple.

Noura's Story

– The Power of Support in Crisis

Noura arrived in Australia from Iran in 2024 on a student visa, hopeful about building a safer, brighter future for her young family.

Noura and her husband were married in Iran and welcomed their daughter in 2022. When they arrived in 2024, they were expecting their second child. But soon after arriving, Noura's hopes began to unravel as her husband became increasingly controlling and violent.

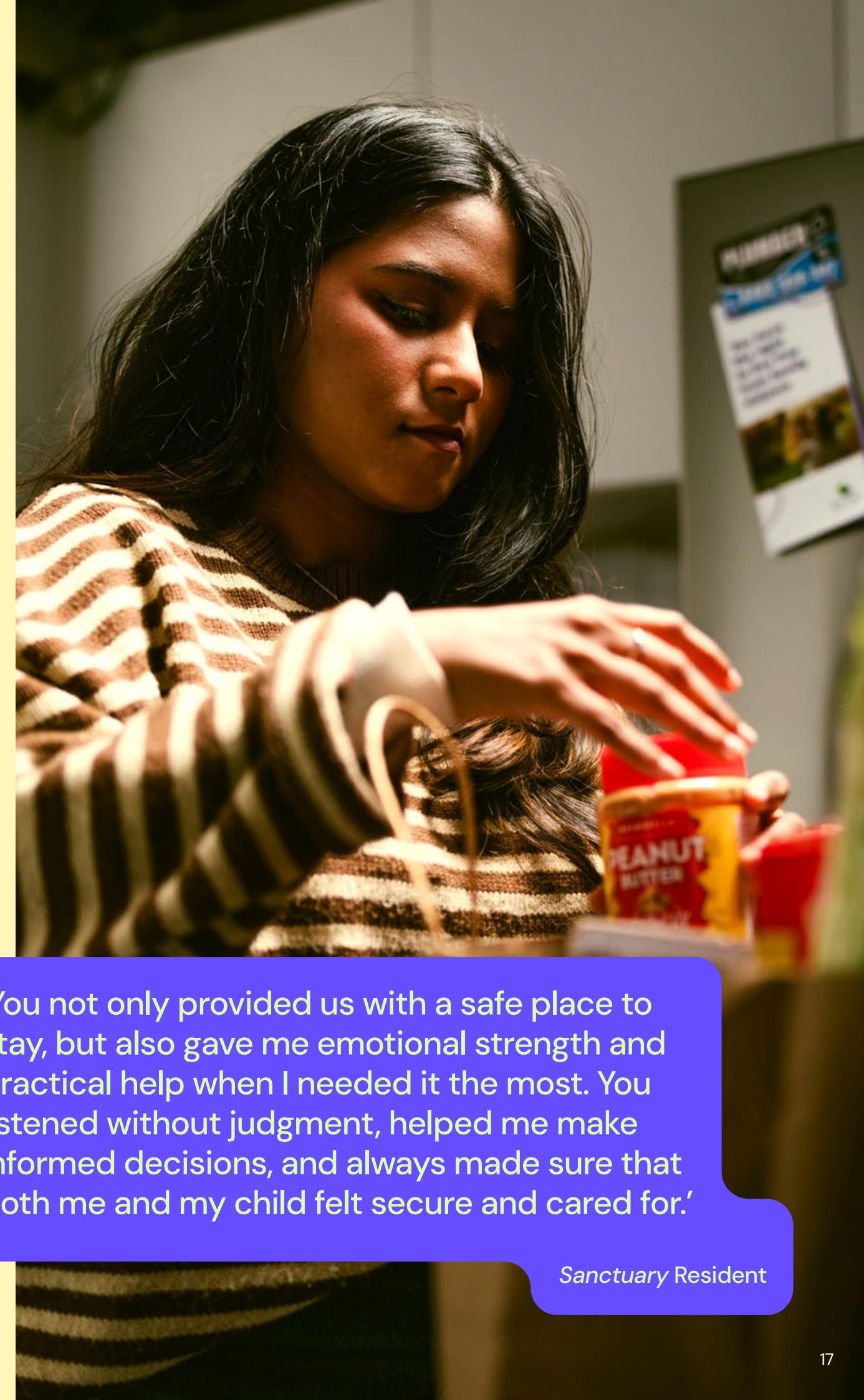
By the time she was seven months pregnant, Noura reached out for help following a terrifying escalation in abuse from her husband. Her husband had begun physically assaulting her and using her visa status as a tool of control—threatening deportation and saying he would “take her back to Iran and deal with her.” Emotionally abused, financially dependent, and terrified for her future, Noura felt trapped and alone.

A concerned support worker at the local neighbourhood house referred Noura to Safe Steps. During her initial call with our **Intake and Assessment Team**, it was assessed she was at serious risk—emotionally distressed, unable to sleep, and with no access to money or legal advice. Her pregnancy made the need for support even more urgent.

Noura was placed in safe, supported accommodation within the **Sanctuary Model**, where she received 24/7 wrap-around care. Medical staff monitored her pregnancy, while a maternal and child health nurse supported her toddler. Legal services provided advice on protection orders, and immigration specialists helped her explore visa pathways that didn't depend on her abuser.

Though still navigating trauma and depressive symptoms, Noura began to take brave steps forward. In the safety of **Sanctuary**, she could rest, ask questions, and begin imagining a future free from violence.

Noura and her child relocated to a Transitional Housing property, fully furnished by RizeUp whose additional support offered safety, dignity and a fresh start. During her time there, she gave birth to her baby. With ongoing case management, Noura continues to access vital supports and begin planning for life beyond family violence. Her story is still unfolding—but with safety, legal support, and care around her, Noura is beginning to rediscover her strength and voice, one day at a time.



‘You not only provided us with a safe place to stay, but also gave me emotional strength and practical help when I needed it the most. You listened without judgment, helped me make informed decisions, and always made sure that both me and my child felt secure and cared for.’

Sanctuary Resident

Empowering Healing Through Trauma-Informed Therapeutic Support

“For the first time in a long time, I felt safe in my body.”

– Sanctuary resident, after attending a trauma-informed Yoga session.

For people healing from the impacts of family and domestic violence, that sense of safety is not just powerful—it’s transformational.

Delivered across Safe Steps’ **Residential Services**, the **Trauma-Informed Yoga Program** offers far more than physical movement and is one of the many programs and service supports available to our clients under the **Sanctuary Model**. Grounded in principles of safety, consent, and cultural sensitivity, it creates a restorative space where clients can reconnect with their breath, their bodies, and their inner resilience. Each session is thoughtfully designed to support nervous system regulation, emotional healing, and a renewed sense of agency.

The approach is invitational rather than directive—clients are encouraged to move in ways that feel right for them, with a strong emphasis on bodily autonomy. This fosters a deep sense of trust and empowerment. Over time, clients consistently demonstrate improved emotional regulation, with visible shifts into calmer, more connected nervous system states.

Many clients report a growing awareness of their breath and body cues, allowing them to remain grounded beyond the session. Attendance is

consistently strong, with participants often rearranging their schedules to prioritise the sessions—highlighting the value they place on this time for healing.

A unique and powerful aspect of the program is its adaptability for families. Some clients bring their young children, practicing mindfulness while tending to their needs. These moments of shared presence support co-regulation and connection.

Clients frequently describe leaving sessions with a sense of calm, clarity, and emotional relief. The **Yoga Program** is more than a wellness offering—it is a meaningful, embodied pathway toward recovery and resilience. Continued support will ensure this vital program continues to grow and transform lives.

The yoga program and other wellbeing supports at our residential services are provided through the generous support of a number of donors, including **The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust, Collier Charitable Fund, Nelson Alexander Foundation** and **Tomisich Family**.

‘I was scared before coming here, then I felt so loved.’

– Young person staying at Sanctuary

No One Left Behind:

Inclusive Family Violence Support For People With Disabilities

Safe Steps is committed to supporting people living with disabilities who experience family and domestic violence.

Through our **Disability Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative** (DFVCRI), we provided tailored assistance to individuals and children with physical, intellectual, psycho-social, or emotional disabilities, as well as those with chronic or temporary health conditions caused by violence.

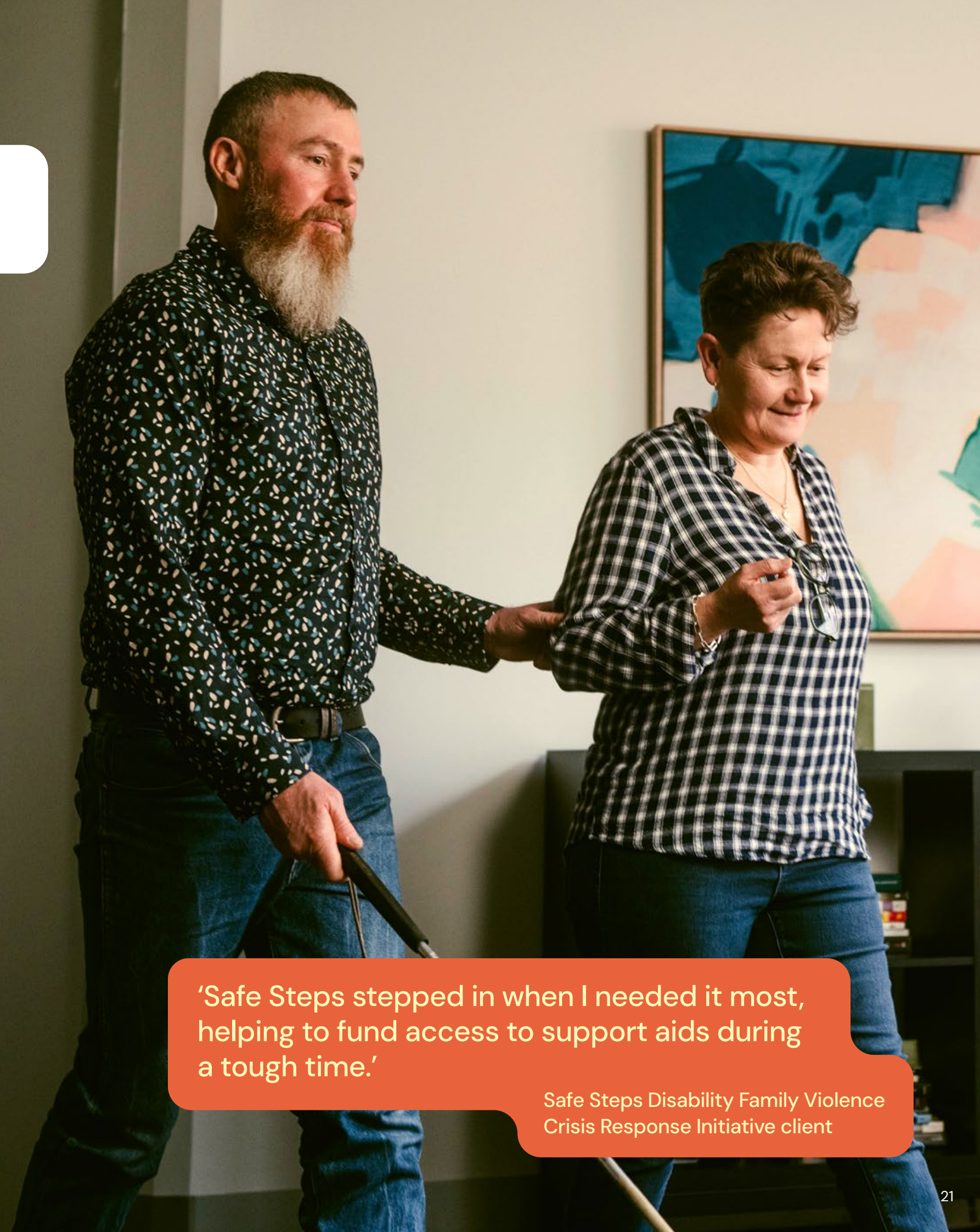
Our specialist Disability Liaison Officers worked closely with the case managers of victim/survivors with disabilities, to arrange accessible accommodation, provide mobility aids like wheelchairs, sensory tools and noise cancelling headphones, and to ensure assistance animals were cared for. We prioritised safety and dignity and assist to create personalised safety plans that address individual needs. Brokerage funding is available for essential supports, including personal carers and accessible transport, helping clients maintain independence and security.

Over the past year, our Disability Liaison Officers provided 447 specialist consultations to other organisations to help them support clients with a disability, and directly assisted 138 people through the initiative. Part of the Safe Steps leadership position in delivering the DFVCRI is that we work across the sector to build capacity. On this front, we delivered a number of training sessions for family violence related workers. We also participated in important events such as the **Having a Say** conference, empowering people with cognitive disabilities, and the **2025 Brimbank Disability, Seniors & Carers Expo** to raise awareness and strengthen partnerships.

To ensure everyone can access vital information, we co-produced easy English resources with Reinforce, a self-advocacy group for people with cognitive disabilities. These materials clearly provide information about family violence, emergency accommodation, intervention orders, and safety planning. We've also developed tailored calendars to help clients manage daily tasks and remember appointments—supporting their independence and wellbeing every step of the way.

Our work spans a wide range of support: helping a mother of three access prescription glasses after eye surgery, replacing mobility aids left behind in crisis, and arranging specialist support for clients recovering from serious family violence injuries.

Our **Disability Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative** continues to deliver specialised, inclusive support, ensuring no one facing family violence is left behind.



'Safe Steps stepped in when I needed it most, helping to fund access to support aids during a tough time.'

Safe Steps Disability Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative client

Building Hope Together

Safe Steps + Mazzei Foundation Partnership



Safe Steps is proud to partner with the *Mazzei Foundation* in a powerful collaboration that mobilises the building and construction sector to raise awareness and create safe, supportive environments for people affected by family and domestic violence.

The Foundation's inaugural gala brought together over 700 business and community leaders, raising \$100,000 to directly support Safe Steps' 24/7 crisis services, safe accommodation, and the provision of essential care packages. The event was made even more inspiring by Rosie Batty AO, whose heartfelt speech and unwavering advocacy continue to motivate meaningful change across Australia.

Beyond fundraising, founder of the *Mazzei Group* Daniel Mazzei brings invaluable in-kind expertise in the building industry. He actively contributes to our work in expanding the Safe Steps *Sanctuary Model*, using his specialist knowledge to help design and build accessible, trauma-informed accommodation that meets the complex needs of people escaping violence.

Since 2011, the Mazzei team has inspired the construction industry and their community through

ongoing fundraising efforts, including participation in the Moomba Birdman competition, raising over \$1 million for family violence causes. The establishment of the *Mazzei Foundation* formalises their commitment to empowering survivors and fostering sustainable futures.

We express deep gratitude for the *Mazzei Foundation's* leadership, highlighting how both financial and practical support will enhance Safe Steps' capacity to provide safe housing and continuity of care—key to healing and independence.

This partnership exemplifies the potential of combining financial support, sector expertise, and shared values to create lasting impact. Together with the *Mazzei Foundation*, we are not just building homes—we are building hope, safety, and new beginnings.



Our Funders, Donors and Partners

In FY24/25, we received \$25.2M in revenue from our funder, the Victorian State Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and from donations, bequests and grants.

We expended \$24.9M to deliver our services, including safely accommodating and providing support services adults and children escaping family and domestic violence. Safe Steps audited financial statements are available on the ACNC website.

Safe Steps extends our heartfelt thanks for the generous financial and in-kind support received throughout FY24/25 and over the years.

Major Donors

AIA Australia

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Australian Communities Foundation

Brady Group Foundation

Carlton Football Club

Chrysalis Foundation

Collier Charitable Fund

Comhar Foundation

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Jodie Hickey

Malayalee Doctors of Victoria Inc

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The Nappy Collective

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Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre Inc.

GPO Box 4396, Melbourne VIC 3001

admin@safesteps.org.au

www.safesteps.org.au

ABN 86 138 521 643

Safe Steps acknowledges the support of
the Victorian Government.

24/7 domestic and family
violence crisis support

1800 015 188

Live Chat: safesteps.org.au

Email: safesteps@safesteps.org.au

