

Annual Report

2016-2017



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In some instances, names have been changed and stock images used to protect the privacy of the women and children we help.

Our vision is to eliminate family violence



safe steps Family Violence Response Centre is Victoria's statewide first response service for women, young people and children experiencing family violence. We are committed to ensuring all women and children are able to live free from abuse, and our ultimate goal is the elimination of family violence. We work towards this through a respond-recover-prevent framework, which is underpinned by our three strategic pillars of empowerment, influence and sustainability.

RESPOND: We empower women, young people and children experiencing family violence and secure their safety through our 24/7 phone response and specialist support services.

PREVENT: We work towards a community free from family violence through education, system reforms and by fostering social change initiatives.

RECOVER: We support survivors to overcome trauma so they can thrive in their communities and continue to live free from violence.

safe steps' core values inform all that we do. We are:

- Courageous
- Empowering
- Respectful
- Feminist
- Ethical
- Reflective

What is Family Violence?

- Family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of age, culture, sexual identity, ability, ethnicity, religion or socioeconomic status.
- It involves an ongoing pattern of threatening and violent behaviour in a current or former domestic, intimate or family relationship.
- It includes not only physical assault, but also threats, verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, abuse of systems, economic abuse and control and social abuse and isolation, cultural or spiritual abuse, all of which cause a person to live in fear.
- Family violence is most likely to be perpetrated by men towards women and children – this makes family violence a gendered form of violence

Fact: 4 out of 5 women who were assessed by safe steps reported that they had been harmed or threatened with harm

Chair Report

Candy Broad



For an organisation to be successful in its mission it must be flexible and adaptable enough to meet the changing needs of key stakeholders and follow a well-planned, steady course that focuses on specific strategic goals and outcomes.

As Chair of the **safe steps** Family violence Response Centre Board, I am proud to say that in 2016/17, as always, **safe steps** remained committed to continuous improvement and development in the rapidly changing environment that is the family violence sector. The strongest illustration of this is that the Board undertook the planning, development and implementation of the new organisational Strategic Plan 2017-2020 at the same time as **safe steps** directly assisted 9,071 women and their children who were seeking help to live free from family violence.

The aim of the previous Strategic Plan- covering 2013-2016 - was to deliver statewide immediate responses that informed, protected and connected women and children to keep them safe, as well as capturing and promoting the voice of women and children to influence research, policy, service provision and the wider community to eliminate violence.

The previous Plan served **safe steps** well, consolidating our role as the statewide first response service and setting the foundations for the immense growth the organisation has undergone over the past four years.

Although it had only been three years since the inception and implementation of the previous organisational strategic

plan, both the world and the sector in which we now operate is very different to that in which the previous plan was devised due to an immense shift in government and community attitudes towards family violence.

Not only did we see the watershed Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015 - momentarily followed by the Andrews' Government's pledge to implement all 227 of the Commission's recommendations - but we also witnessed a groundswell movement from a Victorian public wanting to see an end to the horrors of family violence.

As the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations have progressed throughout the past year, **safe steps** has been intrinsically involved with the design and rebuild of a new Victorian family violence system. The organisation has provided expert advice and information to, as well as having representation on, many of the post-Commission taskforces and subcommittees. We remain committed to effective systemic improvements to further enhance the sector and improve outcomes for women and children.

On the back of the awareness and changes brought about by the Royal Commission, has been the huge rise in the number of women seeking help to live free from family violence, or otherwise wanting advice about their situation. **safe steps** alone has seen a 131 per cent increase in the number of calls to our service since 2013 when the previous strategic plan was unveiled.

We are grateful that increased government funding and support over the past 12 months has enabled us to meet this increased demand, enhancing **safe steps**' capacity to respond to more women and children in need of help.

It was against this backdrop, that the **safe steps** Board embarked upon building a new strategic framework for the organisation, ensuring it was as definitive, future-proofed and all-encompassing as possible. As a community leader and driver of social change, we knew it was imperative we continue to improve our responsiveness to women and their children, strengthen our community partnerships, and highlight and address systemic gaps that further disadvantage women and children.

The strategic planning process comprised a series of facilitated workshops and discussions involving all Board members addressing key questions such as: Where are we? What do we have to work with? Where do we want to be? How do we get there?

What resulted was a comprehensive, future-facing, strategic blueprint for the organisation to take it into the next three years and beyond, as we work towards the elimination of family violence once and for all.

It could be argued the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 extends beyond the reach of previous organisational strategic plans. Under the pillars of Respond, Prevent, Recover, it outlines a plan to cement our position as Victoria's statewide specialist family violence service, as well as extending our work in some areas, including early intervention and prevention of violence, as well as exploring more holistic responses to address the needs of women and children who have experienced violence.

Our overriding aim remains the same - to ensure women, young people and children are safe, supported and thriving in their communities living free from violence, abuse, and control.

Of course, the Strategic Plan outlines the higher level vision and goals of the organisation. An operational Business Plan and team level work plans have subsequently been developed which specify exactly how the strategic goals will be achieved.

There is no doubt this is a time of hope for specialist family violence services such as **safe steps** as we strive to achieve safety, security and wellbeing for women and children who have a lived experience of family violence and deserve a service system that works for them.

I sincerely thank my Board colleagues for their time, expertise and commitment to developing the strategic vision of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre, as well as so ably providing governance for the organisation over the entire year.

As the sector continues to evolve and develop, and demand on support services increases, safe steps will always strive to do what it does best - keeping women and children safe and championing their rights for a better future.

People and culture are the backbone of this work. The support and safety given to women and children would not be possible without the skill and dedication of CEO, Annette Gillespie and her impressive team of staff. I take this opportunity to thank management, staff, students and volunteers who are behind the delivery of the critical services to women and their children.

Thank you also to our supporters, funders and partners without whom we would not be able to continue doing our vital work. It's because of your tremendous ongoing support and generosity that thousands of women and children are able to live free from violence and abuse.

Most importantly, I'd like to thank the women who show tremendous courage, strength and resilience in contacting **safe steps** for help or advice. Women from all backgrounds and demographics. Women who are mothers; women who are elderly; women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities; women who identify as LGBTIQA. Women who have one devastating thing in common - they have all survived the trauma of family violence.

To the women who make that call I say, please know that we recognise just how hard reaching out for help can be. We understand that you are likely frightened, confused and may feel very alone. Please be assured, the team at **safe steps** are here to help you in whatever way we can.



Vale Minister Fiona Richardson

The Honourable Fiona Richardson, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, tragically died on 23 August, 2017.

Minister Richardson was a true champion for women's rights and survivors of family violence. She dedicated her life to improving the lives of women and children with a lived experience of abuse both through systemic and social change.

We, at **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre, feel privileged to have worked closely with such a courageous leader who was unwavering in her commitment to ending family violence.

Minister Richardson made Victoria a better place – a safer place – for all women and children.

There is no doubt her enduring legacy will be the lives of hundreds of women and children saved.

For that, we cannot thank her enough.

CEO Report

Annette Gillespie



“Violence is a gendered crime. It’s based on power and control and a sense of control men have and ownership of women and their children and their surrounding environment.”

Annette Gillespie, The Age, 28 April 2017

In 1973, the telephone service that was to become **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre opened to provide information and referrals for women in crisis. Today, over 40 years later, **safe steps** works with women and children across the full spectrum of family violence experience, including those women and children at the highest risk in Victoria.

We are very proud of our organisation’s innovation and continuous improvement history - a history that has been built on the experiences of the women and children who have used our service. In many ways, more than ever before, the 2016/17 financial year was very much a year of expansion and evolution for **safe steps**.

The release of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in March 2016 put family violence squarely at the forefront of Victoria’s collective consciousness, and, as the only 24/7 statewide provider for women and children experiencing family violence, **safe steps** faced an unprecedented demand on our service.

Calls to our response phone lines, already at record high levels in 2015/16, grew again, bolstered in part by a series of awareness raising television advertisements produced by the Victorian Government. It is hard to know how many at risk women these advertisements may have reached, but a total of 91,057 calls were made to the **safe steps** response phone lines – a 46 per cent increase on the 2015/16 financial year.

This is testament to the fact that the number of women needing support to escape violence in the home only continues to climb. It seems as we as a community make a cohesive, concerted push to eliminate family violence and demand that men stop their violence against women, men who feel entitled to have power in their relationships are lashing out at those around them more frequently and in even more brutal ways.

Fact: On average, on any given night in 2016/17 safe steps accommodated more than 80 women and children in emergency accommodation.

This is starkly illustrated by the fact that almost half of the women who called **safe steps** between July 2016 and June 2017 required immediate protection – meaning they reported having recently experienced serious acts of violence such as strangulation, threats with a weapon, stalking or sexual assault – and were deemed to be at high risk of serious injury or death.

Consequently, numbers of women and children in need of accommodation to escape family violence also rose substantially. Over the 2016/17 financial year, we provided 16,003 bed nights in emergency accommodation for thousands of women and children who had been forced to flee their homes.

Overall, during this period, **safe steps** was able to help more women and children than ever before – assisting 9,071 women plus their children with information, emergency accommodation or other supports.

with a lived experience of family violence move from a position of utter vulnerability and risk, to a place of inner strength and safety.

This philosophy has led to a number of new partnership projects launched in the 2016/17 period, including the Family Advocacy and Support Service, whereby a full-time **safe steps** specialist family violence worker is stationed at the Melbourne Family Law Court to provide much needed support to family violence survivors while at court.

Over the past year, **safe steps** was once again honoured to be entrusted to partner with the Victorian Government on key life-saving programs and projects to improve outcomes for women and children experiencing family violence.

We continued to assist women and children to leave situations of abuse safely, feeling confident their pets will also be safe and secure through referrals made via our Pets in Crisis program.

Empowerment

At **safe steps**, our central role is to help women and children at risk via our 24/7 first response phone line, however, we are committed to helping all survivors have the ongoing support, resources and protection they need to live their lives free from violence, abuse and control.

Our aim is to empower and encourage women so they can make informed decisions about their lives and choices for their future. In doing this, we seek to design and implement systems, programs and projects to help women and children

“It would seem more Victorian women than ever before are feeling strong enough - and supported enough - to leave violent relationships.”

Annette Gillespie, The Age, 28 April 2017





In December 2016, **safe steps** hosted the launch of the digital L17 Family Violence Portal to replace the manual faxing of L17 family violence referral forms from Victoria Police to family violence agencies such as **safe steps**. The new platform provides a streamlined, efficient way of electronically receiving and collating thousands of faxed referral forms containing highly sensitive and confidential information about survivors of violence. As a result, it greatly enhances the safety of the thousands of women and children who use our service each year.

The first half of 2017 saw **safe steps** partner with the Victorian Government to facilitate the development and implementation of a new, real-time digital register of refuge accommodation places allowing for a snapshot of bed availability across Victoria at a glance. Previously, frontline family violence workers had to telephone Victoria's many refuge providers each day seeking vacancies for women and children in desperate need of immediate crisis refuge accommodation.

Under the new Family Violence Response Register, beds are allocated efficiently, and available resources fully utilised, allowing for an easier pathway to safety for women and children at highest risk and in the greatest need.

In addition to this, **safe steps** was the only Victorian statewide specialist family violence agency chosen to administer and allocate the Victorian Government's Family Support Package brokerage to directly assist women and their children to relocate, or take other essential at-home measures to stay safe from family violence.

Developing robust and responsive processes to ensure packages were delivered to clients in a comprehensive and timely manner, **safe steps** distributed over 90 Flexible Support Packages to assist women and their children to establish new lives free from family violence in the six months the program ran during the year.

Women identified and requested a broad range of items and services to give them and their children a fresh start in which they feel safe, secure and comfortable with requests including home safety and security upgrades; relocation to interstate, regional or safer metropolitan locales; transport needs; furniture; clothing and education essentials.

Influence

Historically, **safe steps** has first and foremost always been a front line, primary response service. However, central to our mandate is promote the voice of women, young people and children who are affected by family violence to educate the public on issues of gender-based violence, influence government policy, inform legislation and promote social change.

"This is about pushing through cultural change. It's not easy work. It's not for the faint-hearted."

Annette Gillespie, The Age, 28 April 2017

Fact: 4 out of 5 women who contacted safe steps experienced at least one of the indicators that increase the risk of serious injury or death: threats to kill, strangulation, sexual assault, threats with a weapon and stalking

In short, prevention, awareness raising and advocacy underpins all we do.

The past year saw us bolster our internal capacity to advocate for political and legal reforms that will hold offenders to account and ensure that women escaping family violence do not have to bear the onus of ensuring their own personal safety.

We have campaigned and advocated for improvements to family violence policy and practice through evidence-based written submissions and consultations to government, statutory and judicial Commissions and Inquiries. Highlights include a submission to the Victorian Government's Information Sharing Legislative Reforms (August 2016), and a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into a Better Family Law System to Support and Protect Those Affected by Family Violence (May 2017).

safe steps also undertook to share our unique frontline-informed insights and data with both the family violence services sector and the wider community, including presenting at the "STOP Domestic Violence Conference" in Brisbane in November 2016 and the Overcoming Indigenous Family Violence Conference.

Of course, we believe it is imperative that the needs of women and children are at the centre of continuing reforms and system improvements, particularly as the Royal Commission Recommendations continue to be implemented. To this end, **safe steps** is represented on key Victorian Government taskforces and steering committees in every area of the system design and implementation process, as well as being an active participant in all relevant stakeholder groups, including the Social Services Taskforce, the Family Violence Steering Committee, the Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce, the Family Violence Industry Taskforce and the Child Protection Steering Committee.

In October 2016, **safe steps** was honoured to be invited to be part of the Victorian delegation invited to the inaugural COAG Family Violence Forum in Brisbane.

safe steps continued to foster influential partnerships at a state and national level. We convened the Council of Women's Services, a cross-sectorial organisation committed to maintaining and growing specialist responses and sharing knowledge; and on a national level continued to auspice SafeNET Australia, a national network of crisis phone services with a shared vision of enhancing responses to women and children who are experiencing family violence.

At a community level, many of our specialist family violence workers gave awareness and prevention talks and presentations over the year to schools, community groups, universal service partners, corporate groups and medical professionals. While, as an agency, we provided professional development in the form of family violence awareness training to workplaces, held community awareness-raising events such as the Candlelight Vigil and the SAFETea for Women and partnered with other agencies to organise the Walk Against Family Violence.



Sustainability

We were extremely heartened over the past year by the Victorian Government's great responsiveness and leadership in pledging resources to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women and children with a lived experience of family violence. In particular, a resource boost for direct response and prevention work was both timely and essential in helping meeting unprecedented demand on family violence services such as **safe steps**. As a consequence, **safe steps** has been able to boost its service capacity and extend our comprehensive responses for women and children in need.

Given the demand-driven growth of the organisation over the past several years, in August 2016, **safe steps** underwent a tenancy expansion, as well as expanded the leadership capability allowing us to both broaden and refine our services. Most importantly **safe steps** enhanced the capacity to help women and children escape family violence.

Our organisation also took action to bolster its internal training capability by investing in a Learning Management System that will enable much of **safe steps** training to be put online. This initiative is creating space for face to face training to reinforce online learning through role play and other interactive methods.

Perhaps one of the highlights of the past year from an organisational point of view, was the release of the new **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Strategic Plan – a future-facing blueprint for the coming three years outlining how we will work to eliminate family violence. Operating under the three pillars of Respond, Prevent and Recover, we will:

- **Empower women, young people and children experiencing family violence and secure their safety**
- **Work to prevent family violence by fostering social change and system reform**
- **Support survivors to thrive in their communities and continue to live free from violence**

Fact: Almost half of clients accommodated by safe steps were under the age of 18. Of those, 50% were aged five or younger.



As we move forward we will, as always, have women and children at the centre of everything we do.

I would like to thank all of the women who make up the **safe steps** team. The expertise, diligence and sheer-willed determination they bring to work each day has ensured countless women and children experiencing family violence now have options for a safer, more secure future. The work they do is never easy, but they face its challenges with great selflessness, skill and enthusiasm.

I would also like to thank the Board of **safe steps** for their courageous commitment to leading social change; our community partners for the work they do in local areas to empower and protect women and children; all of our tenacious volunteers and supporters who are doing their bit to help eradicate abuse in the home; and the Victorian Government for listening to women's voices and providing much needed support and resources to specialist family violence services such as **safe steps**.

Most importantly, I would like to thank and acknowledge all survivors of family violence whose voices continue to inform our work and whose experiences motivate us to strive even more fiercely to create a community, a state, a world, free from family violence.

Hadzira's Story



When Hadzira split up with her abusive husband and moved out of their house, she thought she and her two boys would finally be living in safety and security. But soon a familiar feeling of fear returned to her.

She and her boys had moved a short drive from their old home – Hadzira was reluctant to move further away because her boys had already changed schools once and she didn't want them to have to do so again. She also had family and friends living nearby that she wanted to stay close to.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for her ex-husband to discover her new location. He would frequently wait at the boys' school, or park out the front of Hadzira's house in breach of the intervention order she had against him. He then started leaving notes in her letter box, accusing her of seeing other men and threatening to hurt her and the boys. Hadzira informed the police of the intervention order breaches but they could do little more than reprimand him.

Then one day, Hadzira arrived home and found her back door had been forced open. She called the police who searched the house and found a small listening device hidden on the back of Hadzira's bedhead. A spare house key was also missing. The Police advised that Hadzira should leave the house, at least temporarily, and gave her the **safe steps** number, telling her to call it to arrange accommodation.

Hadzira called and spoke to a **safe steps** Support Worker who listened to her story. The Support Worker suggested that, short-term, she and her children could stay in a motel where her ex-husband wouldn't be able to find them. She also explained that there were other safety measures that could be put in place to ensure Hadzira and her children were safe in their home.

Hadzira, relieved that there was a solution that didn't involve having to relocate, agreed to the installation of a surveillance camera and motion sensors at her unit. Their **safe steps** Support Worker also arranged for new locks to be installed, had the back door replaced and provided Hadzira and her boys with personal safety alarms. All of this was done through a Victorian Government Flexible Support Package so came at no cost to Hadzira.

Less than ten days later, she and her boys were back in their unit with all the safety measures in place. They also had a new safety plan (devised with the assistance of their **safe steps** Support Worker) designed to keep the boys safe at school and Hadzira safe at her workplace.

The new measures have discouraged Hadzira's ex-husband from his stalking behaviour. His car was seen out the front of her house on one occasion when no one was home and was caught on tape by the security cameras. Hadzira was able to provide the footage to the police who charged him with breaching his intervention order. Since then he has not returned.

Hadzira and her boys still have to take certain precautions to ensure their safety – for example, when visiting relatives they always drive, never walk, and have to alter their routes in case they are followed. But overall, they are happy to be living safe and supported in the area where they are close to family and friends.

Strategy and Development



The past year saw a continued rise in the demand for **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre's services flowing from the 2015 Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

safe steps and the sector at large is on the journey to implement the 227 Victorian Royal Commission recommendations adopted by Government. To be responsive to the reforms and manage growing demand over the past 12 months, **safe steps** evolved its Community Development area into a Strategy and Development team. This team supports **safe steps** to develop as a sustainable organisation positioned to amplify the lived experience of women and children who have, or are currently, experiencing family violence.

A key enabler for this team was the launch of the **safe steps** three year Strategic Plan 2017-2020. The Strategic Plan outlines the organisation's focus on response, prevention and recovery, which will be delivered through three strategic pillars – empowerment, influence and sustainability.

A key component of the 'influence' pillar is our advocacy and policy development. **safe steps** regularly engages

with the sector on discussion papers and working parties relating to the 227 recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, and our recommendations continue to inform and shape the delivery of these landmark reforms. We continue to reach out to sector partners to strengthen our relationships and opportunities for collaboration.

“Let us not fool ourselves that the job is done. It is not...We simply cannot rest until every single Australian feels safe from family violence.”

Annette Gillespie

Fact: Two-thirds of all women assessed by safe steps required immediate protection.

In addition to this ongoing role, **safe steps** made a number of major submissions in the 2016/17 Financial Year including the Victorian Government's Information Sharing Legislative Reforms (August 2016) and the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence (May 2017). This second submission also resulted in the **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie, and a **safe steps** Survivor Advocate appearing face-to-face before the inquiry panel.

safe steps also continues to play an important role in national advocacy for women and their children who experience family violence by auspicing SafeNET – a national network of crisis response organisations across the country. SafeNET's annual meeting for 2016/17 took place in Adelaide in May.

safe steps' reach into the community as part of our prevention focus continues to grow, from the Candlelight Vigil and SAFEtea for Women events, through to a growing number of requests from across the community to talk at schools, hospitals and to the corporate sector about the work we do and what all Australian's can do to end Family Violence.

Under the strategic pillar of sustainability, **safe steps** embarked on a range of projects to become more effective at what we do. This includes the development and launch of an electronic Family Violence Accommodation Register to provide state-wide visibility of refuge places. This project was a strong example of the collaboration between **safe steps** and refuges, DHHS and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. This register automates the previously manual search and booking process for refuges and is helping the sector reduce refuge vacancy rates.

We continue to be progressive and strive for better outcomes for all families living with violence. In keeping with this, **safe steps** has also embarked on the Rainbow Tick Accreditation – and the development of an Impact Framework. The Rainbow tick is a year-long project to ensure that our organisation is safe and responsive to the needs of LGBTIQ clients and staff. The Impact Framework will assist us to determine whether our organisation is delivering the intended impact and that our impact is measured, monitored and continuously improved.

Another example of innovative partnerships was the initiation of a pilot project to scope the use of video conferencing capability in our services. The results of the pilot will be known in the next financial year but we are excited about the potential to enable face to face connection between case managers and clients to support our phone based work.



Fact: Women in Australia are three times more likely than men to experience violence from a partner.

Tina's Story



26-year-old Tina had never been in a relationship when she started dating Dani, who was ten years her senior. During the first two months their relationship was wonderful, so much so that Tina agreed to move in with Dani who kept saying that it would make more sense for them to live together rather than both renting separately.

But, a couple of months after they started living together, Dani became increasingly controlling. She would call Tina constantly demanding to know where she was and who she was with, she would accuse her of cheating, become jealous and sullen if Tina spent time with friends, and would constantly put her down, saying she was stupid and childish. If Tina tried to rationalise with Dani, Dani would usually start yelling and throwing objects. Then Tina would end up apologising just to calm her down.

Dani would say sorry too, claiming she only acted that way because she loved Tina so much, saying all lesbian relationships were emotionally volatile and that she'd kill herself if Tina ever left her.

Their relationship continued like this for more than a year, until Dani's increasingly controlling behaviour led Tina to reach out to **safe steps**. She called and spoke to a Support Worker about what she was experiencing. The Support Worker listened closely and gently clarified that Dani's behaviour wasn't normal or healthy.

At first Tina did not want to end her relationship with Dani, she felt if Dani just knew her actions weren't normal she would start acting differently. The **safe steps** Support Worker provided Tina with information about family violence in same-sex relationships and assisted her to develop a safety plan to ensure she remained safe while living with Dani.

But, over the coming months, it became clear to Tina that Dani's behaviour wasn't changing – she decided she had to leave the relationship. She again called **safe steps** and her Support Worker was able to help her establish a plan for separating and moving out safely.

Tina moved back in with her parents. During the weeks after the break up Dani would call Tina repeatedly, sometimes up to 50 times a day, and came to her work demanding to speak to her. During this period, Tina was continuously in touch with her **safe steps** Support Worker who offered practical assistance, advice on staying safe and emotional support. Tina was so grateful for **safe steps** support that, several months after separating from Dani, she emailed to say thank you and let the team know that she was happy and mentally healthy.

Violette's Story



When Violette first arrived in Australia from Mauritius with her husband and young son, she thought her life would be one of stability and simple family enjoyments. But less than two years after moving to Melbourne, she found herself living in isolation and in fear for her life.

Violette was enduring daily physical and sexual abuse at the hands of her husband, who would often berate her and strike her in front of their six-year-old son Ryan*. Her husband strictly controlled her access to money and threatened to kill her and Ryan if she told anyone what she was experiencing.

Being unfamiliar with Australian laws and unaware of support services for women experiencing family violence, Violette remained in the abusive household until one day a new neighbour, having overheard a violent verbal outburst the night before, asked Violette if she was okay. Violette initially denied there was any cause for concern but the neighbour gave her a **safe steps** flyer and told her she could call the number on it if she ever needed help.

The very next day, Violette called and spoke to a **safe steps** Support Worker who listened to her story and determined that she was in need of immediate help. The **safe steps** Support Worker arranged for Violette and Ryan to move into a motel and organised for an outreach family violence counsellor to visit them. **safe steps** also provided them with care packages, including clothing and school supplies, much of which they had had to leave behind when they fled their home.

It was difficult to find longer term accommodation that would accept Violette and Ryan, because neither held permanent Australian residency. But their **safe steps** Support Worker was eventually able to find a refuge that would take them. Their Support Worker also helped Violette apply for a restraining order against her husband and a bridging visa which would allow her to work. Both of these were granted over the coming months.

Now Violette and Ryan are living in a subsidised rental property while Violette looks for a job. With ongoing support from outreach family violence services that **safe steps** connected Violette with, both mother and son are happy, safe and starting to build a new life together free from violence.

Fact: 1 in 5 clients supported by safe steps were identified as Culturally or Linguistically Diverse

In the Community

We would like to thank all of our wonderful supporters for your assistance in raising much needed funds and awareness to assist the work of safe steps. Without you we could not continue to provide all of the 24/7 services and support to women and children experiencing violence that we do.

Survivor Advocate Program

Since the **safe steps** Survivor Advocate program began in 2007, more than a 120 women have been trained to share their personal experiences of family violence, as well as to counter many of the commonly held beliefs around family violence and misconceptions and stereotypes about survivors; and to provide first-hand insight into the systems and structures set up to help women living in an abusive relationship.

Our Advocates have been part of hundreds of media, public relations and public speaking opportunities, with input into many community-based events, consultations, Local Government primary prevention initiatives, State Government Victoria Against Violence events, and coverage in national, state and local print, television, radio and digital media.

During these speaking engagements, and in their dealings with the media, **safe steps** Advocates have covered topics from family violence leave in the work force, people's attitudes towards violence against women, relationships, sex and gender equality as well as providing feedback and consultation around processes, systems and structures. Each time they go out into the community to speak, our Advocates have the voices of tens of thousands of women behind them. Their stories may vary in detail but their experience is common.

The courage and resilience shown by our Advocates over the years as they have shared their personal stories time and time again is simply awe inspiring. Not only have they helped raise awareness, but they have helped change the attitudes and beliefs in society that fuel and enable violence against women and children.

On November 7-8 2016, **safe steps** held two days of training for prospective Survivor Advocates, with 10 women in attendance. The training included modules on family violence, gender inequality and media training. The two days were both uplifting and inspirational and **safe steps** received wonderful feedback from those who attended.

'I found that the two days training to be a wonderful experience, just talking to other women who have been in similar circumstances to me was priceless, made me feel less isolated.' – Fiona

'Heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to participate in the Survivor Advocate training days. The safe environment, supportive structure, talented presenters and generous hospitality set the scene for our important internal and group work.' – Katie



Survivor Advocates and Board members

Events

Every year, **safe steps** runs, or takes part in, a number of events to raise awareness about family violence and how to seek help if needed.

Other events are designed to raise funds to support our vital work helping women and children escaping family violence.



At the Walk Against Family Violence

Walk Against Family Violence

safe steps Board members, staff, Advocates and volunteers joined over 3,000 people to send the message that we will no longer tolerate family violence at the annual Walk Against Family Violence at Federation Square on 25th November.

Attendees heard inspirational speeches from the late Minister Fiona Richardson, Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner/**safe steps** Board Member, Wendy Steendam, and MC, Clementine Ford. On the day, the **safe steps** marquee was visited by many women seeking information about family violence.



At the Walk Against Family Violence



At the Walk Against Family Violence

Candlelight Vigil

The **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil was held on Wednesday 3rd May at Federation Square in remembrance of lives lost due to family violence, as well as to bring the community together and show solidarity to those still living in an unsafe home environment.

The Vigil – **safe steps**’ annual flagship event – was attended by more than 1,000 people who, following a Welcome to Country by Auntie Carolyn Briggs – heard moving speeches from **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie; Liana Buchanan, Commissioner for Children and Young People; and family violence advocates, Tarang Chawla and Katie. Celebrity designer, Shaynna Blaze acted as MC, while Kate Ceberano, and her backing singers, provided a beautiful musical tribute to conclude the evening’s proceedings.

Perhaps the most poignant moment of the night was the playing of the Honour Roll on Federation Square’s giant screen, with Amber Ives from the Victoria Police Pipe Band marking the moment with an emotional bagpipe tribute. Before her, as she played, were hundreds of candles lit in remembrance of the thousands of women and children who have been killed as a result of family violence.

It was particularly heartening to see so many schools taking part in the Vigil with students from schools across Melbourne attending this year’s event.

“It was wonderful to hear from the powerhouse behind safe steps and how much your service is helping women and children all over Australia, but also so harrowing to watch that honour roll list name after name of the devastating ending these lives came to.” – Vigil Attendee

“We must shift from seeing the needs of children affected by family violence as merely an extension of those of their caregiver. Children’s needs are often deeply connected to those of their mothers but children also need specialised attention.”

Liana Buchanan, Commissioner for Children and Young People



The Candlelight Vigil



The Candlelight Vigil



The Candlelight Vigil

Beyond 16 Days of Activism

The **safe steps** 'Beyond 16 Days of Activism' event was held in the Federation Room at Parliament House on December 10, 2016.

The event acted as a close to the Victorian Against Violence – 16 Days of Activism Against Gendered Violence campaign. The theme of the event being, *'Why it is so important that we, as a community, continue the activism and resistance against gender inequality over the other 349 days of the year – particularly as gender inequality is a driver of family violence.'*

Speakers included Mary Crooks, Director of the Victorian Women's Trust, the late Honourable Fiona Richardson MP, and **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie. A special presentation was made to those **safe steps** Survivor Advocates celebrating either five or 10 years of service.



safe steps Board Chair, CEO and the late Minister Fiona Richardson

SAFEtea for Women

The second annual SAFEtea for Women was held at The Westin on Sunday 25th June.

Attendees were treated to an amazing afternoon tea, a huge array of beautiful silent auction and raffle items, and were thoroughly entertained by the incredibly talented Jo Stanley as MC and singer, Maxon.

One attendee summed the SAFEtea up in saying, "It was a gorgeous afternoon and great to catch up with our **safe steps** friends".

"The SAFEtea for Women was truly awe inspiring! See everyone next year!" – SAFEtea Attendee



SAFEtea for Women



MC Jo Stanley at SAFEtea for Women

"The reality is that sexual assault and family violence is highly gendered... the overwhelming majority of sexual assault and family violence perpetrators are male. Women know intimately how they order their lives to reduce the risk of male violence that stems from an unhealthy and anti-social masculinity that depends on entitlement, intimidation, domination and control."

Mary Crooks, Director Victorian Women's Trust



Information resources

Fact: Over 1 in 5 clients supported by safe steps were born overseas

Communications

Beyond our frontline work with women and children, **safe steps** is staunch in its commitment to family violence prevention and awareness-raising wherever we can.

In the past year alone, we have distributed over 30,000 information brochures and posters around the state to schools, hospitals, Government services and others in the sector and broader community.

Not only have we invested time and resources to reach new audiences through social media, as well as working hard to strengthen relationships with mainstream and new digital media.

In July 2016, we ran an outdoor media campaign with giant posters displayed at bus and tram stops across greater Metropolitan Melbourne dispelling common myths peddled by perpetrators of family violence.

New Day Box Initiative

2016/17 saw an amazing number of boxes filled with donated cosmetics and toiletries delivered to women in emergency accommodation as part of the New Day Box initiative, led by **safe steps'** corporate partner, Envato.

Envato organised and inspired supporters to donate enough pamper items to fill over 3,000 shoe boxes of special gifts.

The New Day Boxes were distributed by **safe steps** across the state through our accommodation partners, to give women in emergency accommodation some essential items over the holiday season.

Tremendous thanks to Envato for their wonderful work making the New Day Box initiative such a huge success.



New Day Box Initiative

Fact: In 2016/17, safe steps provided over 29,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children escaping family violence

Microsites for children and young people

In May 2017, **safe steps** launched two new websites created specifically for youth; **safesteps4children.org.au** (for children aged 3-7) and **safesteps4youth.org.au** (for young people aged 12-18), to provide additional assistance for children and young people experiencing family violence.

safesteps4children.org.au is an interactive, simple to navigate site designed to assist young children who have experienced family violence and are entering safe house or refuge accommodation. It features colourful imagery, simple information and stimulating play activities that introduce and explain the concept of family violence to children in an age-appropriate way, while also helping them feel comfortable in a safe house or refuge setting.

The children's site also provides information for parents and specialist family violence support workers, including how family violence can affect children emotionally and behaviourally, how to create a safety plan that includes children, and how to help children who have witnessed violence start to recover and heal.

safesteps4youth.org.au features information specifically relevant to teens who may be experiencing family violence or dating violence. Clearly signposted sections explain what family violence and dating violence are, how to get help if you feel unsafe, advice on technology safety and answers to frequently asked questions submitted by school students.

“National data tells us that children are present in 61% of family violence situations. Children who’ve witnessed family violence are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, behavioural issues and learning difficulties. Educating our youth about family violence is key in breaking the cycle of violence for the next generation.”

Annette Gillespie



safesteps4children.org.au



safesteps4youth.org.au



About Us

Board Directors

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre is an Incorporated Association which is governed by a Board of Directors responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation.

Working closely with the Chief Executive Officer, the Board's primary role is to ensure the activities of **safe steps** are aligned with its values and directed towards achieving its mission to be the voice for the prevention and elimination

of violence against women and children. The Board ensures this mission is achieved in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The **safe steps** Board meets once a month and comprises three subcommittees - Governance, Finance and Risk, and Marketing, Fundraising and Communications.

The Board Members of **safe steps** bring extensive knowledge and wide-ranging skills to support the Chief Executive Officer to implement the strategic plan and monitor organisational performance against budget.



Candy Broad (Chair)



Gayle King (Treasurer)



Jen Allen



Christine Gibbs



Gayathri Paramasivam



Joan Richardson



Wendy Steendam



Cora Clough



Pam Newton

About Us

safe steps Management and Staff



Some of the staff of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre

The management and staff of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre comprise a group of talented, hardworking and committed women who are passionate about implementing effective family violence responses that support women, children and communities to be free from physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, economic and verbal abuse.

“As the sector continues to evolve and develop, and demand on support services increases, safe steps will always strive to do what it does best - keeping women and children safe and championing their rights for a better future.”

Candy Broad - Chair

The **safe steps** Executive Team assists the Chief Executive Officer in managing the daily operations of the organisation, as well as helping to implement the Strategic Plan.

Executive Team

In 2016-2017, the Executive Team comprised:

Annette Gillespie:

Chief Executive Officer

Georgina de Beaujeu:

General Manager Strategy & Development (from April 2017)

Jo Malcolm-Black:

General Manager Operations
(from April 2017)

Molly O'Shaughnessy:

General Manager Operations
(July 16 – October 16)

Christine Arthur:

Manager Corporate Services

Kristine Robertson:

Manager Marketing, Fundraising & Communications

Astrid Horter: Manager Client Services

Jenny's Story



When Jenny first contacted safe steps she was desperately distraught but adamant about one thing: she, her two children and her cat all needed to leave their home immediately. That very hour if possible.

Her partner had been psychologically, emotionally and physically abusive towards her for several years, but his violence had recently escalated – Jenny told the **safe steps** Specialist Response Worker she spoke to that, a few days before, he had choked her almost to the point of passing out. Even more recently than that he had pushed her eight-year-old daughter into a wall and threatened to kill their cat if she didn't stop crying. Jenny was determined to leave with her children and moggy before her partner returned from work.

The **safe steps** Support Worker assured Jenny that they would find a place for her to stay that evening. She texted Jenny a list of all the important things she should take before they left – the children's birth certificates, registration paperwork for her car, bank account details – and arranged for a policeman to come to the house, just in case her partner returned while Jenny was packing up a few personal belongings. The **safe steps** Support Worker also found and booked a pet-friendly motel. Less than three hours after Jenny rang the safe steps 24/7 response phone line, she, her children and her cat were all safely out of the home.

The next day, the same Support Worker called Jenny to check how she was going and what she needed assistance with. Jenny was concerned that she had left without her young son's car seat (which was in her partner's car at the time) and so the Response Worker provided her with a K-mart voucher so that she could buy another one.

Jenny also told the Support Worker that she planned to move to Western Australia as soon as she could. She had grown up

in WA and wanted to return so she and her children could be closer to her family and further from her partner. Jenny was so determined to relocate quickly that she had already found and paid bond for a unit close to her mother's home and was considering driving to Western Australia in just a few days.

Jenny's Support Worker felt it would be unwise for Jenny to embark on such a long drive, with two young children and a cat, while she was still recovering from the trauma of her partner's most recent violent outburst. But she agreed that it would be beneficial for Jenny and her children to be closer to supportive family and living in a new area where they felt safe.

The Support Worker told Jenny she would look into relocation options that wouldn't involve Jenny driving for three days. Within a week, the Response Worker had arranged for a moving company to transport the car from Melbourne to Perth. She also arranged flights for Jenny, her children and their cat, and ensured that the car would even be ready for them at the airport when they arrived. All of this was funded through a family violence support program so Jenny did not have to use her own savings to finance the move.

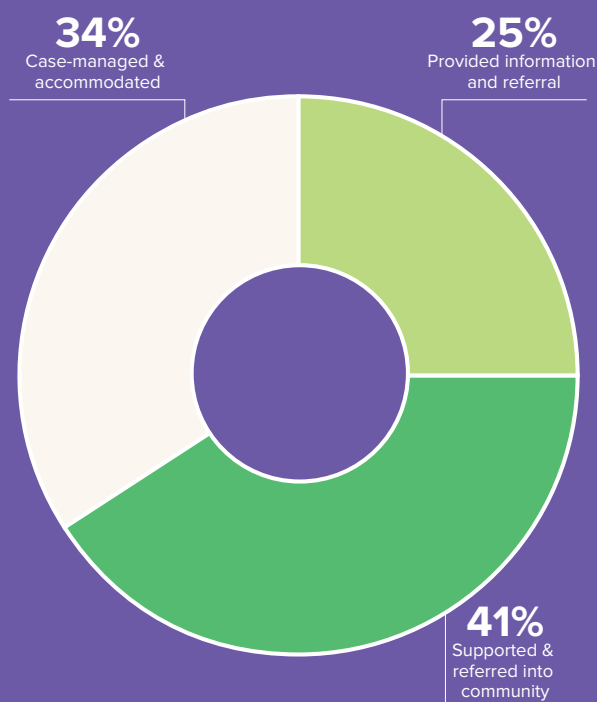
The Support Worker also connected Jenny to a local family violence service in Western Australia so she could receive ongoing support and assistance as she looked for a new job, furnished her house and found schools for her children. Establishing their new lives in Western Australia presented difficulties, but with the help of **safe steps** and assistance of other family violence support services, Jenny, her children and their beloved cat are now all living free from violence.

Client Demographic Snapshot

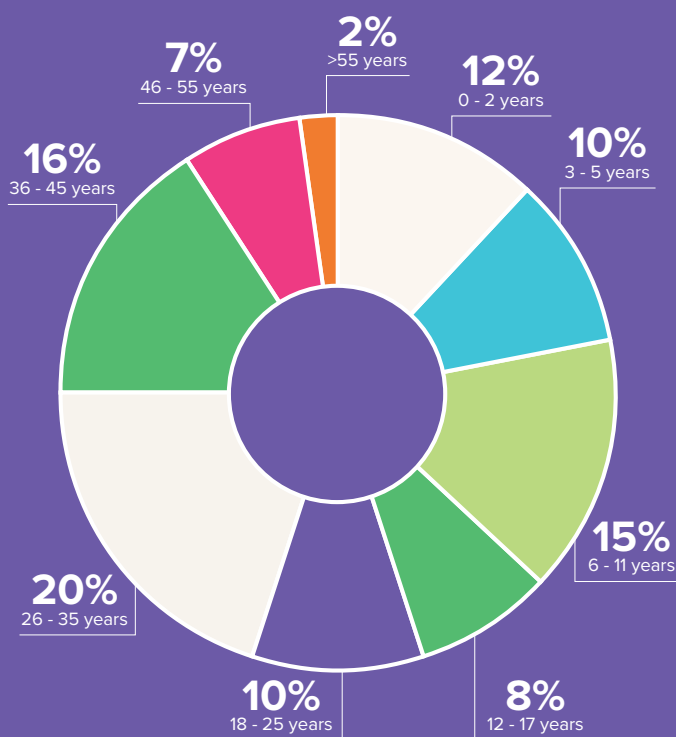
From July 1 2016 to June 30 2017:

- A total of 91,057 calls were made to the **safe steps** response phone lines – a 46 per cent increase on the 2015/16 financial year.
- **safe steps** provided over 29,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children escaping from violence
- **safe steps** was able to help more women and children than ever before – assisting 9,071 women plus their children with information, emergency accommodation or other supports.
- 16% more women and children were supported by **safe steps** in 1617 this year compared to 2015/16 year
- Of those not requiring accommodation, **safe steps** provided all with extensive assessment, safety planning and referral to community support.
- 4 out of 5 women who contacted **safe steps** experienced at least one of the indicators that increase the risk of serious injury or death: threats to kill, strangulation, sexual assault, threats with a weapon and stalking

Women and children assisted



Age of those supported



Assessed Level of Risk

Requires immediate protection	67%
Elevated risk	17%
At Risk	14%
Not at risk	2%

Fact: 16% more women and children were supported by safe steps in 2016/17 year compared to 2015/16

Financial Summary

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income

for year ended 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Total income	10,533,970	5,331,644
Expenditure		
Client Direct Relief	3,274,378	1,529,479
Operating costs	5,113,944	3,560,863
Total expenditure	8,388,322	5,090,342
Total comprehensive income for the year	2,145,648	241,302

Summary Balance Sheet

as at 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Current assets	5,282,022	3,161,611
Non-current assets	239,114	235,388
Total Assets	5,521,136	3,396,999
Current Liabilities	848,581	829,621
Non-current liabilities	17,050	57,521
Total Liabilities	865,631	887,142
Net Assets	4,655,505	2,509,857
Equity		
Retained earnings	4,655,505	2,509,857
Total retained earnings and reserves	4,655,505	2,509,857

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 2017.

Report on the Summary Financial Report

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises the Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2017 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 2017.

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that financial report in our report dated 19 September 2017.

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 2017 are consistent, in all material respects, with that audited financial report, on the basis described in Note 1.

Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants



Peter Shields

Partner

Blackburn VIC
19 September 2017

SAWARD / DAWSON
chartered accountants

Acknowledgements



We gratefully acknowledge the continued support and investment of government, community, donors, volunteers, schools, businesses and corporations which enabled us to continue to deliver much needed quality services to women and children.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the following for their ongoing support:

- The Victorian Government
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Vic Health
- Victoria Police
- Federation Square
- Magistrates Court Of Victoria
- Family Court of Australia
- Tink PR
- Bunnings
- Virage IT
- Classic Press
- Envato and New Day Box
- Nancy Bassett
- Norte
- The Body Shop
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Financial Ombudsman Service Australia
- Australian Women's Network
- Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
- AS Partners Certified Practising Accountants
- Jetstar
- Shaynna Blaze
- Kate Ceberano
- Jo Stanley
- Westin Melbourne
- Impact For Women
- Victoria Police Pipe Band
- Freemasons Foundation Victoria Limited
- The Marian & E.H Flack Trust
- Myer Distribution Centre, Altona
- The MRC Foundation
- The Chrysalis Foundation
- Mantra Group
- Anyone for Copy
- Zoe Foster Blake – Break Up Boss
- Entertainment Publications of Australia
- Riversdale Golf Club Women's Committee
- Monash MedRevue
- Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
- Korowa Anglican Girls School
- Methodist Ladies' College
- Union of Australian Women Victoria
- Westpac
- Lush
- Berwick Opportunity Shop
- **safe steps** Volunteers
- **safe steps** Survivor Advocates
- **safe steps** Staff
- **safe steps** Partner Agencies

“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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Post: GPO Box 4396 Melbourne Victoria 3001

Email: admin@safesteps.org.au

Office Phone: (03) 9928 9600

ABN: 86 138 521 643



Family Violence
Response Centre