

*Everyone has the right to live
free from violence,
fear and
intimidation.*





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Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre is the Victorian statewide 24/7 first response service for women and children experiencing family violence. We provide intervention, support and advocacy for some of the most vulnerable and at risk women and children in our community.

Safe Steps has a proud 40 year history of offering an immediate family violence response that informs, protects and connects women and their children so they are safe and that their voices are heard.

Our values underpin the way we deliver services and engage with those who access support.

Safe Steps’ core values are:

- Non violent
- Empowering
- Feminist *
- Ethical and respectful
- Collaborative
- Authoritative and evidence based

* Feminism is the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, economic equality with men.

Our Services

From grassroots beginnings, **Safe Steps** has grown to become a leading service for women and their children experiencing violence and abuse from a partner or ex-partner, another family member or someone close to them.

We offer women and children access to professional support through a range of services to enable women and children to become – and stay – free from violence.

- 24/7, 365 days a year family violence response line
- Risk assessment
- Emergency accommodation
- Safety planning
- Support
- Information
- Advocacy
- Referral

Prevention of Violence

The prevention of violence against women and children is also a key component of the work of **Safe Steps** as a social change organisation.

We capture and promote the voices of women and children to influence positive changes in community attitudes towards violence towards women, increase sector funding, drive legal reform, create policy changes and improve systems development.

What is Family Violence?

- Family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of age, culture, sexual identity, ability, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic 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, sexual 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.

Co-Chair Report

"Our aims are to continue to improve the services we provide to help women and their children and to work with ...our stakeholders to help prevent violence against women..."

It is a tragedy that so many Victorian women and their children continue to experience family violence, and we are acutely aware of the enormity of the problem in our community.

As the state-wide crisis service, **Safe Steps** fielded more than 55,000 calls in 2014-15, a 58.7 per cent increase on the previous year. The number of women and children requiring high security accommodation from our service more than doubled. In all, we accommodated more than 7,600 women and their children to be safe during the period.

The issue of violence against women has gained extensive media commentary during the year largely due to the amazing effort of Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. We were pleased to support Rosie including with the establishment of the Luke Batty Foundation. We owe an enormous debt to Rosie for her courage and tenacity in providing a voice for women.

We want to recognise and congratulate the Victorian Government for the leadership shown in initiating Australia's first Royal Commission on Family Violence. As the desire for change gathers momentum, demand on support services such as those provided by **Safe Steps** increases. We were therefore pleased that the State Government responded to our request for additional funding to meet increased service demand.

During the year, the Board worked with our Chief Executive Officer, Annette Gillespie and her team to develop new systems and structures to ensure improved client service delivery, and to help ensure effective risk and financial management for the organisation's progress and sustainability. A significant amount of work was undertaken to

revise the presentation of financial statements led by our Treasurer, Gayle King. Seward Dawson continued to assist as auditors.

Two Board planning days were held to focus on governance, strategic direction, organisational priorities and the achievement of goals and objectives. Board representation at an Australian Institute of Company Directors course on financial governance for the not for profit sector was made possible through a scholarship sponsored by Perpetual Trustees. Board members took part in the Walk Against Family Violence and fundraising and awareness activities such as the candlelight vigil.

To share and exchange knowledge and expertise with international organisations, **Safe Steps** hosted delegates from Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare, Canada's Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, and the Pacific Island UN Women Ending Violence Against Women Knowledge and Learning Exchange Program.

We would like to thank Annette for her leadership and the **Safe Steps** staff and volunteers who are central to our role in providing a pathway towards a safer future for women and their children - to help them live free from violence and abuse. The Board is committed to providing career and development opportunities for **Safe Steps** employees. The CEO, for example, attended the Australian Institute of Company Directors graduate course and we look forward to being further informed of employee development strategies and to implementing feedback from the staff survey held during the year.

Safe Steps relies on working closely with a number of stakeholders including Victoria Police, Domestic Violence Victoria and the Magistrates Courts and we are keen to ensure that we foster

and encourage positive relations with them. In the coming year, **Safe Steps** will therefore be seeking feedback through a stakeholder engagement survey as we believe that collaboration is essential to the provision of client services.

The Board is especially grateful to all of those who have supported **Safe Steps** in the past year – our major funding source, the State Government, local government, philanthropic trusts and our corporate and community partners. A special thanks to our individual donors, who so generously support the work we do, and who never fail to respond to our calls for assistance on behalf of those we help.

As Co-Chairs we would like to thank our fellow board members, whose guidance, support and expertise have been invaluable. Toni Campbell and Lyn Lanham retired as Board members, both having made valuable contributions to **Safe Steps** through their extensive experience in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors and their commitment to social justice. We were delighted to welcome a new board member, Cora Clough, who brings extensive expertise to the Board through her professional role as a senior banking executive.

Our aims are to continue to improve the services we provide to women and their children and to work with Annette, her team and our stakeholders to help prevent violence against women - one of the most pervasive violations of human rights in our society.

Jen Allen and Christine Gibbs

CEO Report

The past year was a year in which both the immediate horror and terrible fallout of family violence was at the forefront of the public mind. It was heartening to see heightened media coverage, intensified government interest, and more community discussion around the issue of gender based violence in the home and in intimate partner relationships. What is tragic though, is that this renewed focus came about only after the senseless deaths of ever-increasing numbers of women and children.

In response to an ever increasing demand for our services, the staff of **Safe Steps** have worked tirelessly to ensure women and children are able to live free from fear and abuse. As the first line of defense for women seeking safety for themselves and their children, staff responded to more than 55,000 calls in the 2014-2015 financial year and supported 7,636 women and children who needed assistance to escape immediate risk of serious injury or death. While we welcomed the rising number of women seeking support, unfortunately, with greater awareness comes increased severity in violence, higher levels of risk for victims and relentless demand on our services.

Testimonial

"Thanks so much for the wonderful and passionate work you all do keeping women and kids safe with dignity and compassion."

Media Quote

"...For family violence to be present, there are two key attributes to it. One of them is that one party is in fear of the other. The other is that the abuser uses a planned, systematic approach to remove a person's confidence, support networks and independence in order to highlight their own power and control within the relationship."

Annette Gillespie, The Monthly, March 2015

In response to increasing complexity of presenting needs, **Safe Steps** has strengthened its response to family violence through the development of a new triage service system. Ensuring that the risk to women and children is assessed quickly, assessments are conducted comprehensively, and women are removed from further harm in a timely way. Once safe, women receive full case-management support that explores their options to remain safe and links them to housing, legal, financial and community services. It is also important to recognise the vital role that **Safe Steps** plays in the protection of Victoria's most vulnerable citizens – its children and young people - with 50.1 per cent of everyone accommodated by **Safe Steps** being under the age of 18 years.

Events

As the state-wide specialist family violence response service **Safe Steps** has a very long history of working towards social change in Victoria. While much of the work we do at **Safe Steps** is about providing immediate support to victims of family violence, we are also active in advocating for improvements to family violence policy and practice and helping to prevent violence against women through campaigns, the media, education and research.

On 6 May 2015, **Safe Steps** held Victoria's first Shine Bright Candlelight Vigil at Federation Square to pay tribute to the women and children who have lost their lives to family violence. It was very moving to hear from family members who have lost their mothers, sisters and children so senselessly to violence. However, that approximately 1,000 people from the community took part in the Vigil is testament that the community is no longer willing to allow family violence to continue unchecked.

In addition to the Vigil, **Safe Steps** was once again involved in the annual Walk Against Family Violence. We also built important relationships with educational colleges and schools to prevent violence happening before it occurs. Another highlight has been the large number of opportunities **Safe Steps** has had to contribute to the improved media coverage of family violence issues. The growing trend of media applying a gender lens to family violence reportage has been vital in creating a groundswell 'call to action' from the community to end violence against women and children by holding perpetrators of violence accountable for the harm they cause to our communities.

Presentations & Education

Eliminating violence against women requires a strategic, multi-pronged approach. **Safe Steps** is committed to educating the broader community about the causes of family violence and how all forms of violence against women can be prevented.

To this end, in 2014-2015, presentations were made across the state by **Safe Steps'** staff to various community groups, organisations, and forums, including the Country Women's Association AGM, the Victorian Emergency Management Conference, Mental Health & Family Violence Forum, and the Criterion Ending Domestic Violence Conference. Our reach extended into Federal Parliament including speaking to the Parliamentary Friends to End Violence Against Women group.

Safe Steps recognises the need to support the broader community through professional development. As a rich source of women's 'real time' experiences of family violence and the holder of statewide data, **Safe Steps** provided professional consultation to numerous community and corporate groups. We upskilled 35 survivors of violence to speak confidently to the media about their experience of violence and the broader issue of violence against women through our Survivor Advocate Program. We also provided a valuable professional development program in collaboration with the Office of Women's Affairs and the Human Rights Commission so that women mentoring other women in non-traditional female workplaces could promote and strengthen gender equality.

Partners

Family violence is not just a Victorian issue however, and ending violence against women requires a national, coordinated effort. To this end, **Safe Steps** auspices the Domestic and Family Violence Crisis Lines Network (DVFCLAN), a network of family violence crisis lines in every state and territory throughout Australia, including the national counselling line.

Of course, none of our vital work would have been possible without the commitment and dedication of our partner organisations and networks. The support of these groups, who also share the vision to eliminate violence in the home, has been invaluable. We were pleased to continue our partnership with the 'No More Deaths' Campaign and the ANZSOG – Australia & New Zealand School of Government live study.

Safe Steps was honoured to be chosen to take part in a new pilot initiative – the Melbourne Magistrates' Court Remote Witness Program – whereby survivors of family violence are able to give evidence in court cases from a safe location via video link. The importance of this project cannot be overstated as it not only reduces survivors' feelings of fear and anxiety at having to face their abuser but, in most cases, actually reduces their risk of harm.

Partnerships and collaborations with Women's Refuges, Outreach services and Housing services such as Hanover/ HomeGround (now Launch) throughout the year improved outcomes for women and children. While **Safe Steps'** involvement in I-Decide – Melbourne University's on-line self-determination risk assessment pilot project – helped provide another highly-accessible way for women to establish whether their relationship is healthy and connect them to appropriate support options.

Special mention must be made of our friendship and collaboration with Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. In partnership with Rosie, **Safe Steps** has responded to hundreds of women reaching out for support, many of whom have been living with violence for many years and have, until now, felt unable to tell their story. We are indebted to Rosie for all the support she's given to **Safe Steps** and the women who reach out to her for help.



Submissions

Central to its goal to influence government policy, inform legislation and promote social change, **Safe Steps** contributes towards women and children's safety via evidence-based written submissions and consultations. In 2014, **Safe Steps** was asked to appear before the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee Hearing to speak to the Committee's Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia. Further to this, we contributed to the Victoria Police review into the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Referral Process and were a partner in developing the Department of Justice's 'Defensive Homicide: Proposals for Legislative Reform' Consultation Paper.

Throughout the past year, **Safe Steps** has had a constructive relationship with the Victorian Government, which is integral to our goal of keeping family violence high on the political agenda. We were pleased to host visits from the Minister for Housing, the Honourable Martin Foley and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, as well as Senator Clare Moore and Tim Watts MP, Federal Member for Gellibrand. Various officials from Government agencies also visited our service during the year.

People & Culture

Safe Steps recognises the importance of a positive and encouraging workplace culture to ensure staff are well equipped to provide the level of care required to the women and children we support. The past year has seen us adopt several initiatives in keeping with this philosophy. Highlights include increased professional development and training opportunities, as well as a succession and staffing progression model. In November 2014, **Safe Steps** conducted a People and Culture Survey to identify strengths and opportunities to enhance the work place experience. The survey revealed that **Safe Steps** performed, on average, over and above industry standards in key performance areas.

Other improvements include the establishment of key operational positions, as well as a dedicated Community Development Team who work closely with Police, Courts, Child Protection and the Department of Justice to better develop family violence responses across the state. The Community Development Team is responsible for utilising the voices of survivors of violence to influence policy and systems improvements. The Team also strengthens partner relationships and evidences the value add that **Safe Steps** provides to the community through robust data collection and analysis methods.

In closing, I would like to thank the **Safe Steps** Board members for their strategic vision and leadership, as well as the incredibly hard-working and dedicated staff members and volunteers of **Safe Steps**. Their efforts have ensured countless numbers of women and children now have options for a safer future. It is the extensive experience and diverse skills of the **Safe Steps** Team that allows us to continue to be a leader in our field.

Annette Gillespie

Media Quote

"It's gender roles that allow this violence to thrive...For women, society's gender expectation is that they will meet the needs of men: women will look how men want them to look, say things men want to hear, and do things – make the right meal, stay home for the evening – to please and nurture men..."

Annette Gillespie, *The Monthly*, March 2015

The Evolution of Safe Steps

Women's domestic and family violence services in Victoria emerged in the 1970s from a broader feminist movement concerned with inequality between women and men. Then called the Women's Liberation Movement, feminists in Victoria established the Women's Liberation Centre in La Trobe Street in 1972. They were quickly overwhelmed with the number of women in crisis seeking assistance in relation to homelessness and family violence.

The Halfway House Group came together in 1973 to prepare to establish a dedicated accommodation site. Members of the Women's Liberation Centre were, at the time, accommodating women in their own homes as well as advocating about women's homelessness.

The Halfway House Group was very deliberate in its planning, and did not seek to occupy vacant properties like other refuges. **Safe Steps'** predecessor, a telephone line, was established at this point - before the refuge was operational.

The first Victorian women's refuge, Women's Liberation Halfway House, opened on 23rd September 1974, based out of a donated property. Volunteers also accommodated women in their homes.

During the mid to late 1970s several refuges opened across Victoria with support from a variety of sources. These included religious organisations, local government, community welfare, health and legal services. Specialist refuges were established from the very early years, with the Italian community organisation Co-As-It establishing a migrant women's refuge in 1975, and

the Aboriginal Advancement League establishing Elizabeth Hoffman House in 1979.

Refuges received their first government funding in 1975 under community health funding administered by the Federal Department of Health. In subsequent years as homelessness programs were established by the Commonwealth, refuges sought inclusion under homelessness programs, as they saw an opportunity to secure resources, and were concerned to advocate for the needs of women in crisis, and the gendered nature of homelessness.

The 1980s saw considerable growth in family violence specialist services. The Women's Legal Resource Group (now Women's Legal Service Victoria) was established in 1981, and the very first pilot outreach services were initiated in 1987. The Women's Refuge Referral Service (an earlier name of **Safe Steps**) was also funded to establish a short-term interim refuge (Trish's Place) in 1984. Both the Federal and Victorian Governments became more aware of family violence, giving more emphasis to instituting legal reforms and awareness programs, as well as expanding services.

The 1990s saw the stagnation of many community services programs, with governments instituting neoliberal reforms concerned with efficiency and streamlined service provision, and

which excluded funding for advocacy. It was not until the mid-2000s that the momentum of the 1980s for reforms and service development resumed.

The specialist family violence sector in Victoria has evolved considerably since the early 2000s, with a Victorian Law Reform Commission inquiry and State-wide Steering Committee initiating significant reforms to responses to family violence. These processes established the integrated family violence response, bringing in Victoria Police and courts.

Today, the heightened awareness by government and community, that family violence not only impacts individuals but affects society as a whole, has increased the desire to end family violence. Family violence specialist services are slowly increasing their visibility amongst other service sectors, with family violence now being acknowledged as a core issue to be addressed. The Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015-16 will no doubt highlight the need for systematic progress and a more sophisticated style of service delivery considering the complexities of identifying and responding well to family violence. These are times of hope for family violence specialist services as we strive to achieve safety, security and wellbeing for women and children who have been victimised by family violence, and deserve a service system that works for them.



Now, as always, Safe Steps staff are committed to helping women and children in need.

Year in review



Safe Steps CEO, Annette Gillespie, with peak bodies and statewide service and partner organisations at the No More Deaths rally, August 2014.

Advocacy and Community Development

2014-15 involved major policy advocacy and community development activities by **Safe Steps**.

The second half of 2014 saw us join with other statewide and peak family violence sector organisations to raise the issue of family violence in the lead-up to the Victorian State Election in November.

Titled 'No More Deaths', the campaign proposed 25 reforms to strengthen Victoria's response to family violence by:

- Keeping women and children safe and housed
- Making the justice system safe and supportive
- Holding violent perpetrators to account
- Breaking down the service silos that endanger women and children
- Preventing violence against women and children

The campaign was successful in raising family violence within the election platforms of both political parties, with the Coalition announcing an updated Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women & Children in October, and the ALP putting forward a costed election initiative including the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

2014 also saw the **Safe Steps** CEO appear before the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee hearing to speak to the Committee's Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia. The CEO emphasised the increased risk being identified by **Safe Steps'** clients, the need for national legislation on domestic and family violence, and a national operational framework to drive reforms.

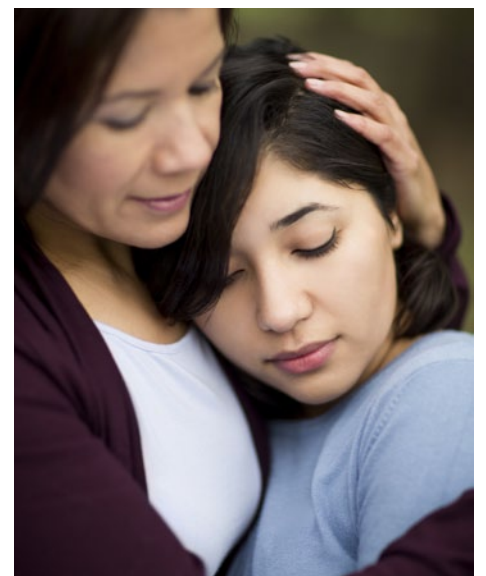
After the State Election, the first six months of 2015 were focused on the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which commenced formally in late February. **Safe Steps** went through a consultation process to determine the priority issues before preparing a comprehensive written submission to the Royal Commission.

The submission focused on providing a better response to women and children experiencing family violence, proposing a new service model, and changes to a number of related service systems including Child Protection and justice.

Safe Steps has also had ongoing engagement with the new Victorian Government in the first half of 2015. We provided data to the Crime Statistics Agency and the Royal Commission into Family Violence, as well as providing training to Royal Commission staff.

Safe Steps hosted visits to the service from the Minister for Housing, the Hon Martin Foley and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence the Hon Fiona Richardson, as well as officials from Government agencies. Tim Watts MP, Federal Member for Gellibrand, also visited the service in March 2015.

The Community Development Team advocated for support for survivors of family violence within the greater community in 2014-15. The Team also provided community education to homelessness services, doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, social workers and support workers to improve their response to women and children experiencing family violence.



Eliminating family violence against women and children is everybody's business.

Royal Commission

Royal Commission into Family Violence.



No More Deaths campaign. Roses laid on steps of Victorian Parliament in memory of women and children who have been killed as a result of family violence.

In December 2014, a newly elected State Government committed to establishing a Royal Commission into Family Violence for Victoria, and committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Commission.

The Premier appointed Justice Marcia Neave AO, then serving in the Court of Appeal in the Victorian Supreme Court, as Chair of the Commission. Patricia Faulkner, former Secretary of the Department of Human Services, and Tony Nicholson, CEO of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, were appointed Deputy Commissioners.

The Commission was established in late February 2015, and is required to hand down its final report to the Government by 29th February 2016. With 12 months to conduct a thorough investigation and evaluation of Victorian systems, strategies and programs that respond to family violence, the Commission had a major task.

The Commission undertook community consultations in April, and invited written submissions in May. The Commission received nearly 1000 written submissions from a variety of organisations and individuals, demonstrating the importance of family violence as an issue to many in the community.

Safe Steps presented a detailed written submission to the Commission in June, outlining a comprehensive vision to keep women and children safe. We presented our statewide data on the experiences of women and children escaping family violence, and up-to-date knowledge of the gaps in meeting their needs. **Safe Steps** offered a strong rationale to shift current thinking towards a more proactive approach to keeping women and children safe. This rationale is supported by data captured in 'real time' and the voices of women and children with a lived experience of the Victorian family violence system.

With the Commission continuing its activities in the latter half of 2015, times are uncertain for family violence specialist services and related systems. The Royal Commission has facilitated a broad conversation whose resolution will come about over months and years to come through implementation and refinement of its recommendations.

"All responses to family violence must address the fact that domestic and family violence is a fundamentally gendered issue... Gender inequality is the main cause of family violence. A new approach to family violence must therefore address the causes of violence and seek to empower women and children."

Taken from **Safe Steps'** Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, June 2015

Team Member Acknowledgement

Faduma: Celebrating 15 Years of Empowering Women through Safe Steps

When Faduma started at **Safe Steps** Family Violence Response Centre 15 years ago, things were very different. Just five workers covered the 24/7 phone service, and the prevailing community attitude was that family violence was a 'private matter' in which

you didn't intervene. "Before, the attitude was, 'What is happening in the home is private'," says Faduma. "We definitely didn't have the amount of calls we have now. Through the years, the calls have increased...Through all of the work in the community, creating awareness about family violence, the service grew."

Born of Somali parents in Yemen, Faduma had come to Australia from

Egypt where she had been studying. Civil war in Somalia meant she was unable to return to her home country. Arriving here, she quickly linked in with community groups, first as a volunteer translator, then as a support worker helping women. Faduma was familiar with the work of the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (as **Safe Steps** was then known), so when the agency advertised for casual phone workers she jumped at the opportunity to apply. "As a young girl I always wanted to work for women's rights...When I started working here, I knew. This is what I want. This is where I belong."

Now, 15 years later, Faduma is heartened by the changes in attitude she sees within the community, the media and

Olivia's Story

Olivia was no stranger to violence in the home. As a child, her drug affected parents were frequently in and out of prison and she was continually being moved between relatives' and strangers' homes. Violence was the only constant in Olivia's life, as she was both physically and emotionally abused by her parents and the relatives she stayed with.

Tragically, when she grew older, Olivia continued to experience violence in her own domestic relationship. The father of her three children would physically and emotionally abuse her in front of the children. The violence grew increasingly worse as time went on.

Not only was she afraid for her safety, but Olivia was determined to give her children a better start in life than what she was given. She knew she had to leave her partner, even though she had no money or resources to do so.

By the time Olivia called the **Safe Steps** 24/7 Family Violence Response Line for information and support she was



35 per cent of all reported incidents of family violence have been witnessed by a child.

desperate and had nowhere else to go. Olivia had been contacted by Child Protection who were concerned about her and her three children who, having left the family home, had no permanent living arrangements. Child Protection wanted Olivia to enter into a refuge for her and her children's safety. Olivia felt there was no where they could go to feel safe.

Safe Steps were able to accommodate Olivia and her three children in Emergency Safe House Accommodation. This accommodation provides a safe haven for women and their children for up to two weeks until other, more permanent, arrangements can be made.

The safe house is warm and friendly, staffed by family violence specialists who were able to provide some comfort and relief to Olivia and her children before a longer-term place became available in a metropolitan refuge.

Further down the track, **Safe Steps** was able to work collaboratively with the longer-term refuge to ensure Olivia gained priority transitional housing, as well as supporting her through numerous court hearings to get full custody of her three children.

With assistance from **Safe Steps**, Olivia was on the path to providing the safe and happy childhood for her children she always dreamed of having herself.

the legal system towards violence in the home. "It used to be seen, when a woman was killed (by her partner), that she aggravated the situation or something... Like it was basically the woman's fault. Now, people understand this is not the case."

Over the years, Faduma has helped thousands of women and children escape family violence. She is confident she has also made a difference to the women she helps who remain within the relationship. "Some women leave. Some women stay. Some women are confused about what to do and it takes them a long time to leave the situation...Even if the woman doesn't want to come to the service at the time when I speak to her, I feel she goes away and she has left with

something. Something that may give her power later on." Even when it is a brief intervention, you know that you have had some influence in that woman's journey."

As a woman who has given so much to her community, it is perhaps not surprising that Faduma says her own life journey has been enriched through her involvement with **Safe Steps** and the women who call on the service for help. "Over the years I have worked with a lot of amazing women who have had a lot of amazing experiences," she says. "Even though I work to empower women, I feel a lot of women who have come into my life through **Safe Steps** have empowered me."



Community Partnerships



Annette Gillespie with Senior Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Joy Murphy (L) and Deputy Chief Magistrate, Felicity Broughton (R).

Volunteer Survivor Advocate Program

Another hallmark of 2014-2015 was the ongoing success of the **Safe Steps** Volunteer Survivor Advocate Program, which saw a growing number of participants engage with audiences to influence change through the media and the wider community.

The Survivor Advocate Program empowers women who have experienced family violence to break their silence and have a voice in the prevention of violence against women and children. Women who have survived family violence are trained and supported on how to use their personal story to change society's attitudes and beliefs that fuel and enable violence against women.

This year, a key focus for the advocates has been to educate the community and the media to better understand that family violence can happen to anyone,

regardless of education, economic status, age, religion, culture or ethnicity.

A few highlights from the Safe Steps Volunteer Survivor Advocates during 2014-2015:

- November 2014 - an Advocate located in regional Victoria spoke to the ABC about the challenges of experiencing family violence in a rural location.
- December 2014 - an Advocate shared her personal experience with employees at the City of Whittlesea Council.
- March 2015 - an Advocate spoke at the 'Changing Culture, Changing Lives' - A forum on preventing violence against women held in St Kilda.
- March 2015 - an Advocate spoke at the Department of Human & Human Services for 'Cultural Diversity Week'.
- July 2015 - an advocate spoke alongside **Safe Steps'** CEO Annette Gillespie at 'A Conversation with Justice Students' at RMIT University.

During their speaking engagements, Advocates covered topics including family violence leave in the work force, people's attitudes towards violence against women, relationships, and sex and gender equality. Advocates were also invited to share their story and experience at the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Events

Re-launch 18 November 2014

In November 2014, after many months of consultation with key stakeholders, our organisation (formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service) changed its name to **Safe Steps** Family Violence Response Centre.

The choice was made to better reflect our broad client base and the wide range of services we deliver, including prevention, early intervention and advocacy.

But while our name has changed, our mission and vision remains the same, being to:

- Keep women and their children who are living with violence safe
- Provide women with access to 24/7 information, referrals, safe accommodation and support
- Empower women by giving them the steps they can take to make safe choices for themselves and their children
- Prevent violence against women and their children before it occurs
- Create sustainable intergenerational change through systemic development and community education

The new name **Safe Step** has been well received by our key stakeholders, including Victoria Police, partner agencies, state-wide refuges and community supporters and, most importantly, the women and children we support.

Shine Bright Candlelight Vigil

The inaugural **Shine Bright Candlelight Vigil**, held on Wednesday 6 May 2015 at Federation Square in Melbourne, was a poignant and stirring event which brought the community together to remember women and children who have lost their lives to family violence.

The Vigil saw **Safe Steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie, come together with Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona Richardson, Victoria Police Acting Commissioner, Tim Cartwright and the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, to light a candle to "Shine Bright" in memory of women and children who have lost their lives, as well as those who are still living with family violence.

Channel 7 news reporter and **Safe Steps** supporter, Jacqueline Felgate, was the MC for the event which saw nearly 1,000 people from within the community take part and light a candle to Shine Bright.

The Candlelight Vigil is a national event lead by the women's crisis service in each state and territory. It is planned that the Shine Bright Candlelight Vigil will take place annually on the first Wednesday in May in support of other vigils held simultaneously in each state and territory.

The aim is to create a national movement to remember the women, children and men whose lives have been taken by perpetrators of family violence.



Candlelight Vigil, May 2015. Annette Gillespie with Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner, Dean McWhirter and the then Acting Chief Commissioner, Tim Cartwright.



Annette Gillespie with Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty and students from Korowa Anglican Girls School, 2015 Shine Bright Candlelight Vigil.



At the Walk Against Family Violence

Walk Against Family Violence

This long running, annual event was held on Tuesday 25 November 2014, at Federation Square in Melbourne. It saw over 2,000 people stand together for the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The premise of the day is to raise awareness that women around the world continue to be subjected to family violence, rape and other forms of violence.

A key aim of the day is to highlight that the scale and true nature of the issue is often hidden. This year the event was supported by Australian of the Year Rosie Batty and Former Police Commissioner Ken Lay.

New Day Box Initiative

2014-2015 saw a record number of shoe boxes filled with donated cosmetics and toiletries delivered to women in emergency accommodation as part of the New Day Box initiative. **Safe Steps'** corporate partner, Envato PL, headed the charge organising and inspiring other 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.

A huge thanks to Envato PL for their amazing efforts making the New Day Box initiative such a success.

Financial Summary

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income for year ended 30 June 2015

	2015 (\$)	2014 (\$)
Total Income	4,235,109	3,193,124
Expenditure		
Client Direct Relief	1,250,233	563,011
Operating costs	2,734,379	2,244,467
Total expenditure	3,984,612	2,807,478
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year	250,497	385,646

Summary Balance Sheet as at June 2015

Current assets	3,163,500	2,303,500
Non-current assets	67,766	92,023
Total Assets	3,231,266	2,395,523
Current liabilities	954,191	361,277
Non-current liabilities	8,520	16,188
Total Liabilities	962,711	377,465
Net Assets	2,268,555	2,018,058
Equity		
Retained earnings	2,268,555	2,018,058
Total Equity	2,268,555	2,018,058

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 2015

Report on the Summary Financial Report

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises the summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2015 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 2015.

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that financial report in our report dated 20 October 2015.

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 2015 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
20th October, 2015

SAWARD DAWSON
chartered accountants

Client Demographic Snapshot

For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, **Safe Steps** provided over 16,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children for whom the family home had become too dangerous.

Safe Steps fielded over 150 calls a day – over 55,000 calls in the period – from women seeking help. In peak times, we

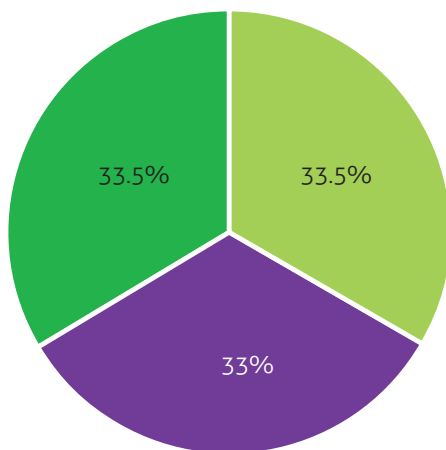
responded to a call for assistance from women at risk every three minutes. A third of these calls were from women at high risk of serious injury and/or death who needed an immediate response to get them to safety.

Of those not requiring accommodation, **Safe Steps** provided all with extensive risk

assessment, safety planning and referral to community support.

More than 50% of women who contacted **Safe Steps** experienced more than one of the risk indicators likely for serious injury or death: threats to kill, strangulation, sexual assault, threats with a weapon and stalking.

Women and Children Assisted



- Provided information & referral
- **Safe Steps** supported & referred into community
- **Safe Steps** case-managed & accommodated

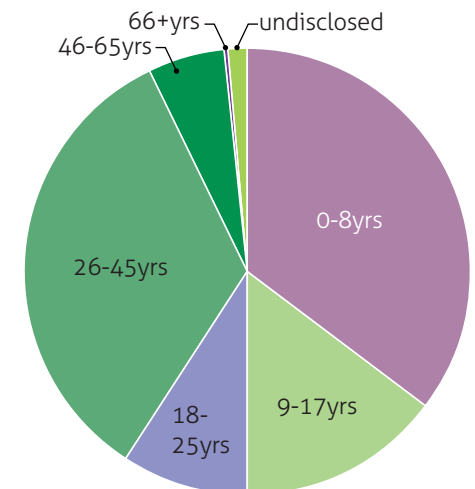
Country of Birth of those Accommodated

The majority of women and children accommodated by **Safe Steps** in 2014-15 were born in Australia. Other common countries of origin were New Zealand, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Iran and the Republic of the Sudan. Significant numbers of those we helped were also born in India, China, the Philippines and Lebanon. The total proportion of those born overseas was 20.6%.

Country of birth	Percentage
Australia	57.42%
New Zealand	2.78%
Afghanistan	2.49%
Vietnam	1.37%
Iran	1.21%
Sudan	1.10%
Other	13.58%
Undisclosed	22.00%

Age of those Accommodated

In 2014-15, more than half of all clients accommodated by **Safe Steps** were children, with 50.14% of accommodated clients aged under 18.



Increase in Risk Factors

The overall risk factors experienced by our clients have also increased in the past 12 months:

Assessed Level of Risk – 2014-15	Percentage
Requires immediate protection	57.42%
Elevated risk	2.78%
At Risk	2.49%
Not at risk	1.37%

Statistics

- The number of women and children requiring high security accommodation from **Safe Steps** more than doubled (130.8% increase) between March 2013 and March 2015
- The number of calls **Safe Steps** receives increased by 58.7% between March 2013 and March 2015.

- Safe Steps** received calls for support from women in every postcode in Victoria and every State and Territory in Australia.
- Safe Steps** experienced a 23% increase in calls over the period November 2014 to January 2015 correlating with the Royal Commission into Family Violence announcement.
- There was a 36% increase in the level of risk identified to women and children in the community between 2012 and mid 2015.



Jen Allen (Co-Chair)



Christine Gibbs (Co-Chair)



Gayle King (Treasurer)



Cora Clough



Gayathri Paramasivam



Joan Richardson



About Us

Members of the **Safe Steps** staff Leadership Team

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre is incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and is governed by a board of directors who are responsible for the strategic direction that will lead the organisation to achieving its values and goals.

Working closely with the Chief Executive Officer, the Board monitors the performance of **Safe Steps** to achieve our strategic goals within budget and to build strong foundations that will secure long term sustainability.

The Board's primary role is to set the strategic direction for the organisation and monitor performance against budget. It also ensures that the activities of **Safe Steps** are directed towards achieving its mission to be the voice for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children in Victoria.

The Board will ensure that this mission is achieved in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Collectively, the Board Members of **Safe Steps** bring extensive experience and diverse skills to support the Chief Executive Officer to implement the strategic plan.

Safe Steps Management and Staff

Staff and volunteers are the backbone of **Safe Steps** Family Violence Response Centre. They work tirelessly to ensure that women and children are kept safe and out of harm in our community. In the 2014-2015 financial year we saw the organisation grow as a result of the

growing demand on our service. Within the growth we saw the recruitment of more staff for the service delivery team as well as Officer roles to support the Executive Managing team.

The **Safe Steps** Executive Management Team support the Chief Executive Officer in implementing the strategic plan and managing the operations and functions of the organisation.

In 2014-2015, the Executive Team comprised:

Annette Gillespie:
Chief Executive Officer

Molly O'Shaughnessy:
General Manager Operations

Carolyn Moorshead:
Manager Marketing,
Fundraising & Communications

Christine Arthur/Kerry Durrant:
Manager Corporate Services

The Executive Team is supported by a Leadership Team which is made up of members of staff who provide the organisation with support and leadership, most assist a member of the Executive Team on a daily basis. The Leadership Team's dedicated planning days identify the challenges and opportunities currently facing the organisation.

Management and staff are committed to implementing effective family violence strategies that support women, children and communities to be free from violence and abuse. Whilst there is still much to do we are confident progress is being made towards improving women and children's safety. Together, and with determination, we will improve the lives of women and their children and help them achieve safety while reaching their full potential.

Acknowledgements

The support of the community, donors, volunteers, schools, businesses and corporations is fundamental to our ability to deliver quality services to women and children. A sincere thank you is extended to all who have generously contributed to the organisation.

We expressly acknowledge the following for their continual support:

- Victorian State Government
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Vic Health
- Victoria Police
- Federation Square
- Tink PR
- is. advertising
- Virage IT
- Rosie Batty
- The Luke Batty Foundation
- Jacqueline Felgate
- Nancy Bassett
- Envato PL
- Secure Pay
- Women's Legal Service Victoria
- Melbourne Magistrates Court
- Launch
- White House Institute of Design
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Independent School Victoria
- Brighton Grammar
- Wesley College
- Melbourne Grammar School
- Trinity Grammar School
- Medibank
- Mercedes-Benz Brighton
- Jayco
- Boncal Family Foundation
- Street Smart
- The Pratt Family Foundation
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- The Jack and Hedy Brent Foundation
- Victorian Women's Trust
- Funk Family Trust
- Carla Zampatti Foundation
- IWIRC Victoria Branch
- The Holland Foundation
- Grill'd QV
- **Safe Steps** Volunteer Survivor Advocates
- **Safe Steps** Staff
- **Safe Steps** Partner Agencies



*Partnerships are vital to the success of **Safe Steps***



New Day Boxes awaiting collection

Partnering with **Safe Steps**

Part of our focus here at **Safe Steps** is to work with all who want to eliminate violence against women and children. Therefore, we are always keen to establish partnerships with businesses or corporate groups within the community.

Not only are there plenty of simple and practical ways you and your colleagues can work together to help women and children affected by family violence through **Safe Steps**, but there are also many things we, as an organisation, can do for you and your team.

This includes:

- Arranging for a **Safe Steps** worker or Survivor Advocate to speak about the issue of family violence at your workplace.
- Provide executive or staff development around gender issues and family violence awareness.
- Provide support and resources to staff members experiencing family violence.
- Provide secondary consultation to senior staff and HR departments around supporting a staff member experiencing family violence.

For more information, please contact Safe Steps on (03) 9928 9600

Safe Steps is the Victorian state-wide service for women experiencing violence and abuse from a partner, ex-partner, another family member or someone close to you.

The service is staffed by women and you can call confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



One in three women experience family violence.

For confidential support and information call:

Free Call 1800 015 188 or visit safesteps.org.au

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

برای حمایت محرمانه و کسب اطلاعات با شماره رایگان ذیل تماس بگیرید

गोपनीय सहायता और जानकारी के लिए टोल फ्री कॉल करें

如欲寻求帮助或了解相关信息，请拨打免费电话
我们会对相关内容严格保密。

برای کسب حمایت و اطلاعات به صورت محرمانه با تلفن رایگان
تماس بگیرید

Para sa suporta at impormasyong kompidensiyal,
tumelepono sa toll free na

இரகசிய உதவி மற்றும் தகவல்களைப்
பெற இலவசமாக அழையுங்கள்

Size özel destek ve bilgi hizmetlerinden
yararlanmak için ücretsiz arayabilirsiniz

Để được hỗ trợ và nhận thông tin theo cách bí mật,
vui lòng gọi số điện thoại miễn cước dưới đây

1800 015 188

You can help by:

- Making a donation
- Making a monthly gift
- Remembering **Safe Steps** in your Will
- Holding a fundraising event
- Becoming a corporate sponsor
- Donating your time or service
- Becoming a volunteer
- Making a Gifts in Kind Donation

Testimonials

"The workers listened to me and enabled me to say out loud to someone all that has happened and they reassured me that I was going to be safe and have a lot of support."

- Woman who was supported by **Safe Steps**

"Thank you for all your help, you have been really helpful and made us feel safe. Once again thank you, because of you we are more happy in ourselves. We are going to miss you".

- Two children who stayed in **Safe Steps** safe house, aged 9 and 11.



For further information contact us at our head office on the details below:

Email: admin@safesteps.org.au

Phone: (03) 9928 9600

Post:

GPO Box 4396 Melbourne VIC 3001

safe steps
Family Violence Response Centre

ABN: 86 138 521 643