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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.

A year in review

From grassroots beginnings over 40 years ago, **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre has grown to become **a leading first response service in Victoria** for women and their children experiencing family violence.

Today, **safe steps** provides 24/7 expert intervention, support, advocacy and referral pathways to women and children throughout Victoria to ensure those at highest risk receive an immediate family violence response to keep them from harm.

safe steps responds to women and children at risk by:

- Providing a statewide specialist family violence response 24/7 including public holidays and weekends when other services are closed
- Providing comprehensive risk assessment and risk management via skilled, specialist practitioners
- Assisting women to develop a safety plan and identify their support network
- Referring and linking women and children to support options in their community, including specialist family violence services and generalist supports
- Providing safe emergency accommodation and referrals into the refuge system
- Resourcing women to remain safe, supported and connected in their own homes and communities

safe steps' core values underpin the way we deliver services and engage with those who access support. We 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.

Prevention of Violence

safe steps is a social change organisation. This means the prevention of violence against women and children is a key component of our work. We capture and promote the voices of women and children to influence positive changes in community attitudes towards violence against women, and drive policy development and legal reform.



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.

Chair Report

Candy Broad



As the statewide 24/7 first response to women and children experiencing family violence in Victoria, **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre has a proud history of informing, protecting and connecting women and their children so they are safe and their voices are heard.

Never has the need for that immediate, frontline response been so apparent. One need only look at the data collected by **safe steps** and others, such as Victoria Police, to know both the level and severity of family violence has never been greater.

In the 2015-16 financial year, as a community leader and driver of social change, **safe steps** strove to improve our responsiveness to women and their children, consolidate our community partnerships, promote offender accountability and highlight systemic gaps that further disadvantage women and children.

We worked collaboratively with government, sector partners and the broader community for the continuous improvement of statewide service systems, along with the strengthening of available responses to women and children at risk of family violence.

Throughout the year, **safe steps** also geared up in readiness for the immense changes anticipated by the release of the findings of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence in March. We streamlined internal systems and processes to ensure our services were accessible, timely and met quality standards.

Fact: The number of women and children supported in from July 1 2015 to 30 June 2016 increased by over 60% from the previous financial year.

In 2015-16, as always, the staff of **safe steps** worked tirelessly to ensure women and children were able to live free from fear. The number of women and children supported by the agency in this period increased by over 60 per cent from the previous financial year. From July 1 2015 to 30 June 2016, we received an average of 168 calls a day to our 24-hour family violence response line, representing over 61,000 calls in the year. Further to this, **safe steps** provided over 21,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children escaping from violence.

While much of the work done at **safe steps** is about providing immediate support to survivors of family violence, another of our key strategic functions is to campaign and advocate for improvements to family violence policy and practice drawing on our specialised expertise.

In keeping with this, in July 2015, **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie, appeared as an expert witness before the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. Then, in November, she was invited to make a historic lay-person address to the Victorian Parliament to outline the central role of gender inequality in family violence. During the year, **safe steps**' Community Development Team prepared and lodged over a dozen formal submissions, while consulting or providing input on many more.

Always, at the centre of all we do, is the understanding that **safe steps** is a champion of the voices of women and children with a lived experience of family violence. Our determination that survivors' voices are heard by government, policy makers and the community has underpinned our work throughout the year

As the new Chair of **safe steps**, I wish to thank my fellow board members for their dedication and commitment to this vital work. I especially wish to thank Christine Gibbs and Jen Allen for fulfilling the role of Board Co-Chairs for much of the year. I wish to welcome Pam Newton to the Board team.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to thank **safe steps**' CEO, Annette Gillespie, and her team of passionate and dedicated staff and volunteers who work tirelessly for, and on behalf of, the women and children who rely on our service for pathways to safety.

safe steps thanks all its supporters over the past year – State and Local governments, individual donors, Philanthropic Trusts and our corporate and community partners. The loyalty and generosity of spirit shown by our community of friends and supporters is both humbling and inspirational.

However the greatest inspiration to us are the women and children who come to **safe steps** for help. The survivors of family violence who have shown such tremendous strength and courage in seeking assistance. It is the experiences and stories of these women and children which motivate us all to continue doing this vital work so that one day all may live free from violence and abuse.

There is still much work to do on both a global and local level in our work to ensure women and children are safe and living free from violence. **safe steps** is committed to remaining at the forefront of this work.

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.

Fact: Almost 15% of all clients supported in 2015-16 required assistance from safe steps more than once within the year.



CEO Report

Annette Gillespie

"Every one of us can do something small to make big changes. From taking the time to ask someone you know if they are ok, to challenging gender stereotypes and sexist behaviours when you see and hear them, to volunteering for a group that supports victims, calling upon our governments to resource support services and change laws to hold offenders to account... We can all be part of the solution."

Annette Gillespie, Women in Focus magazine February 2016



In many ways the 2015-2016 financial year, more than any other time in its more than 40 year history, was a period of both consolidation of core services and operations and immense growth for **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre.

Being the only statewide 24/7 organisation available to women living with family violence, and given the ever increasing need for information, assistance and emergency accommodation, our organisation is expanding and evolving to deal with the unprecedented demand.

Now, more than ever, family violence plagues our community.

From July 1, 2015 to 30 June 2016, **safe steps** provided over 21,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children escaping from violence. In the same period, we received over 170 phone calls a day from women seeking assistance - representing more than 61,000 calls in the year.

In all, the number of women and children supported by **safe steps** in this period increased by over 60% from the previous financial year.

Coupled with these staggering numbers, is the fact that the level of danger for women and children experiencing violence in the home has intensified.

In 2015-16, **safe steps**' front line staff recorded increased levels of risk reported by women, an upsurge in incidents involving weapons and a rise in the number of women

whose perpetrators have previously been charged or convicted of homicide or manslaughter.

safe steps' staff have met the challenge head on, working tirelessly to deliver critical and immediate responses to women and children escaping abuse, and to cement our position as one of Victoria's leading family violence agencies.

Throughout the year, we enhanced existing practices, as well as developed new, innovative ways to respond to an ever growing number of women and children who have a lived experience of family violence.

March saw the release of the findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence with 227 recommendations handed down - and wholly endorsed by the Victorian Government - giving hope that more accessible and responsive outcomes will be delivered for women and children.

We ended the 2015-16 year by joining our service partners and the Victorian Government in working towards the co-design of a world-first, survivor-centred family violence response system. Our goal, as always, to keep women and children safe.

Fact: The number of risk factors identified by women continue to rise, with all indicators increasing since 2014-15. Of note is the rise seen in the incidence of strangulation, with more than 50 per cent of all clients assessed by safe steps identifying the occurrence of this lethality factor.

Service Delivery

The efforts of the **safe steps** team resulted in additional funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) allowing us to extend the response centre triage model of service across a 24/7 period. Additionally, Senior Practitioner staff were appointed both in the **safe steps** phone team and at the Safe House, further lifting the quality and effectiveness of the service response.

Facilities at safe steps' Safe House emergency accommodation were reviewed and a comprehensive refurbishment was undertaken. Wide-ranging improvements were made including replacing beds,

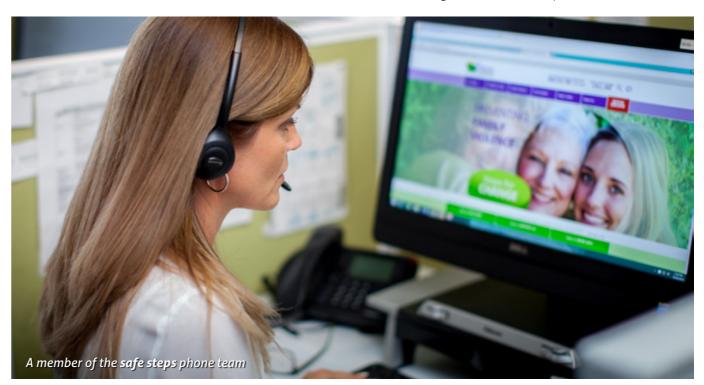
increasing storage capacity, and improving facilities for children.

Partnerships

Partnerships and collaborations are integral to the work of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre. While our ultimate goal is always to ensure that women and children know our services and how to access them, it is also a central concern to build relationships and alliances to extend and strengthen service provision.

Wherever and whenever possible, we seek to collaborate with like-minded specialist and universal services, government and statutory authorities to provide better outcomes for women and children. This year saw us partner with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and DHHS to develop and pilot a Resource Register that will electronically match the needs of women seeking safe accommodation with refuge vacancies across the state in real time. We also entered into a DHHS-initiated partnership with Women's Housing Ltd (WHL) to utilise Transitional Housing Management properties for women and children escaping violence.

Funding of **safe steps** for \$100,000 over four years was received from the Minister for Families, Children and Youth Affairs to provide statewide coordination of a program linking pets of women and children affected by family violence with pet welfare agencies to reduce barriers to women leaving violent relationships.



"The Federal Government must be willing to follow Victoria's lead and make wholesale necessary changes to family violence support systems and services as required; if not for the sake of political expediency, then for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of women and children across Australia who each day are being beaten, kicked, threatened, or otherwise hurt by a person who is meant to love and care for them."

Community Development and Prevention

Annette Gillespie, The New Daily, April 2016

safe steps' core commitment is to inform, protect and connect women and children so they are safe and their voices are heard. In keeping with this, we have a long and proud history of active campaigning for social change as well as advocating for improvements to government policy and sector practice around family violence.

By holding events such as the **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil, and participating in community events such as the Walk Against Family Violence, we help provide a space for the community to honour women and children killed through family violence, as well as to show solidarity and support to those still experiencing it.

In 2015-16, the **safe steps** Survivor Advocate program continued to provide women with a lived experience of violence a platform for their voice to be heard, as well as to bring attention to the effects of violence on women and children. One of our Survivor Advocates appeared as a lay witness at the Royal Commission into Family Violence and gave not only a powerful story but commended **safe steps** on its advocacy training and support, saying if she had not undertaken the training, she would not have had the courage to present to the Commissioners. **safe steps** received follow up congratulatory emails from partner agencies on our support for the witness.

In keeping with its aim to help shape government policy and promote social change through informing legislation, **safe steps** delivers evidence-based written submissions and consultations to government, statutory and judicial Commissions and Inquiries.

Significant submissions during 2015-16 included a submission to inform a Draft Bill on proposed legislation to criminalise non-consensual distribution of private sexual material; a submission to *Roadmap for Reform:*Strong Families, Safe Children, highlighting the need for children and family services to systematically integrate with family violence specialist services; and a submission, co-authored by Justice Connect Homeless Law, focussing on the need for women and children escaping family violence to be able to maintain their safety and attain stability in rental tenancies while not experiencing penalties for the actions of the perpetrator.

Sustainability

safe steps aims to be a strong and sustainable organisation so to ensure our ongoing ability to support women and children experiencing family violence.

In 2015-16, we continued to invest in our most valuable resource – our people and culture. Of note was the development of a comprehensive succession planning structure for all staff and volunteers, both clinical and non-clinical.

Staff numbers continued to grow to meet increased demand on services, which necessitated the implementation of improved infrastructure and IT systems with increased capacity.

The growth in staff numbers also saw a need for more office space in order to provide the best response possible to women and children in need. The latter half of the financial year was taken up with planning for a tenancy expansion which began in late June.

"When we have strong women step forward, and be able to tell the story on behalf of other women, from a gender specific lens, then we will see some change."

Annette Gillespie, Daily Life, December 2015

Stakeholder Engagement

In 2015-16, **safe steps** continued to seek broad engagement with a variety of internal and external stakeholders including donors, sector partners, police, government, media and the wider community.

We sought to forge new connections and open fresh channels of communication in order to enhance service delivery, better advocate on behalf of women and children, and to further educate the community about family violence.

We also worked hard to reach new audiences through social media and to further extend our presence in traditional, mainstream media with numerous articles and interviews appearing in The Age, Herald Sun, The Guardian, ABC Radio, The Project and all television nightly News services.

Throughout the year, **safe steps** staff and Survivor Advocates have been invited to either deliver or participate in over 100 presentations, consultations, workshops, professional development sessions and other speaking engagements on a range of topics related to the impacts of family violence within the community.

As **safe steps** CEO, I was honoured to be invited first to give evidence at a Royal Commission public hearing in July 2015, then, in November, speak before the Victorian Parliament in one of the only times in history that a layperson has addressed the House.

During the year, I undertook many other speaking engagements, including giving the keynote address to

the National Urban Planning and Design Conference, being a panel member at the Box Hill Institute Master Class Family Violence: Intervention, Prevention & Advocacy, and presenting at the Criterion Ending Domestic and Family Violence Conference in Melbourne along with a Survivor Advocate.

To close, I would like to thank the Board of **safe steps**, as well as our dedicated staff and volunteers for their wonderful contributions throughout the year. The relentless demand on our services, along with the complexity of the work we do, mean the work is never easy.

The sheer scale and breadth of quality service delivery undertaken by the **safe steps** team should not be underestimated. But, the tireless efforts of all involved have ensured countless numbers of women and children now have options for a safer future.

I'd also like to thank our sector partners for their unwavering commitment to keep women and children safe, as well as the survivors of family violence whose voices continue to inform and inspire us as we work to eliminate violence in the home once and for all.

Fact: More than half of all clients accommodated by safe steps in 2015-2016 were under the age of 18.



Annette Gillespie with Martin Foley MP and Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings

Royal Commission

into Family Violence and Family Violence Service Reform



In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down its final report. The release of the report was marked by both solemnity and celebration, as it marked the culmination of 13 months' work to review and evaluate systemic responses to family violence in Victoria.

The report makes for weighty reading, with seven volumes, forty-one chapters, and over two thousand pages overviewing Victorian systems and outlining ways forward. The report makes two hundred and twenty-seven recommendations to improve a range of services and systems including police, courts, crisis accommodation, health, education, child protection, financial and social services. The recommendations also focus on the processes to enable reform and effective service systems, by addressing governance, funding, implementation, and monitoring.

The Commission's recommended approach to reform involves building on the reforms of previous years in order to maximise the benefits of previous initiatives. Many of the recommended changes are therefore incremental rather than large-scale new initiatives.

The major new initiatives recommended by the Commission include:

- Introduction of Support and Safety Hubs in local areas across Victoria, to be a visible entry point into specialist family violence services and support
- Redevelopment of all family violence refuges to a 'core and cluster' model that provides private facilities for each family
- New information sharing arrangements to enable services to exchange information to keep families safe, with a focus on keeping perpetrators 'in view'
- A dedicated funding stream for primary prevention of family violence

- An immediate funding boost to services
- Immediate injections of funds into housing for women and children escaping family violence
- More specialist family violence courts that can deal with criminal, civil and family law matters at the same time
- Stronger perpetrator programs
- Family violence training for a range of sectors including in hospitals and schools
- · Respectful relationships education in school curricula
- An independent Family Violence Agency to monitor the implementation of reforms.

The breadth of the report may have initially seemed overwhelming, as the scope of reform covers such a large number of systems. On 13th April the Victorian Government announced a commitment of \$572 million over two years to begin implementing the reforms, particularly the immediate increase of funding to a range of programs recommended by the Royal Commission.

"A bold and visionary approach is needed that comprehensively addresses the causes and consequences of violence, and which enshrines women's and children's right to safety as the central organising principle."

From safe steps' Submission to the Royal Commission

"A new approach to family violence must... address the causes of violence, and seek to empower women and children."

From *safe steps*' Submission to the Royal Commission



Lucy's Story

Implementation commenced with a large recruitment round from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a new section comprising nine branches to progress the implementation of the recommendations.

Further consultation occurred, particularly on the implementation of legislative changes around privacy and information sharing.

safe steps is to be a key part of the reform process, with the CEO appointed to the statewide Social Services Taskforce, Family Violence Steering Committee, the Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce, and a range of other bodies informing the Victorian Government's decision making. Together with partners in the specialist family violence sector, **safe steps** looks forward to making a contribution that will lead to better options to assist women and children effected by family violence, and to hold perpetrators accountable.

"The Safety and Support Hubs I think will give greater support to women and children in their local area. Also the commitment to fund frontline services and to have a blitz on emergency accommodation for women and their children to ensure there is sufficient accommodation is a big shift in thinking. The history of keeping women safe has involved removing them from their homes and taking them to secret locations. These recommendations will allow women to stay home and stay safe."

Annette Gillespie, The Guardian – April 2016

Annette joining sector partners and survivor advocates addressing Victorian Parliament





Lucy's husband had changed, becoming very aggressive and controlling. Not allowed to leave the house, not allowed to learn English and forbidden to communicate with anyone outside of her husband's presence, Lucy spent her first six months in Australia in despair for the bright future that she envisioned for herself and for her daughter.

Unaware of services that could assist women and children who experience family violence, and with no access to information around Australian laws, Lucy remained in the abusive household until one day the Police attended the family's home after a violent incident overheard by concerned neighbours. The police responded swiftly and, with Lucy's permission, connected her to **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre through their 1800 first response phone line. The **safe steps** Crisis Support Advocate who took Lucy's call was able to have a conversation with Lucy through the use of an interpreter and quickly determined she was in need of immediate help.

Lucy cried with relief at the fact that after six months of isolation and humiliation, as well as ongoing physical assaults, she was able to tell her story to someone who could help her.

Recognising Lucy had additional challenges to overcome, such as the language barrier, an unfamiliarity with Melbourne and limited community supports, the **safe steps**

Crisis Support Advocate organised for her and her daughter to go into the **safe steps** Safe House. It was explained to Lucy that this was a supported accommodation facility where she could talk to onsite workers and other residents who had also been subjected to violence at the hands of someone who claimed to love them.

During her stay at the Safe House, Lucy had the opportunity to talk to other women and interact in social activities for the first time since coming to Australia. Her daughter finally had the opportunity to play with her peers and do normal kid stuff.

Workers helped Lucy with goal setting and safety planning in order to help ensure her well-being when she went back into the community. They also arranged for Lucy and her daughter to receive the material items they needed including clothes and school items.

Lucy's English skills improved significantly during her time in the Safe House, contributing to her self-confidence and independence. So when Lucy and her daughter left the Safe House to go into high security Refuge accommodation two weeks later, not only were they linked to more community supports, but they left with a much more independent and empowered frame of mind than when they arrived.

Advocacy and Community Development



2015 saw a significant increase in public and community attention to violence against women, with many years of work from the women's movement bearing fruit. The appointment of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year, and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence created unprecedented opportunities to highlight the needs of women and children affected by family violence and to initiate better responses to their needs.

safe steps was active in community development and advocacy in 2015-16, with the Royal Commission having an impact on the whole organisation.

safe steps CEO, Annette Gillespie, appeared at a Royal Commission public hearing in July 2015, providing a strong rationale to address family violence through holistic and comprehensive service delivery through a 'hub' model of service. Building on the written submission and data that safe steps provided to the Commission, the CEO joined other voices from the specialist family violence sector to highlight the need to respond to family violence in its own right, and not as part of a response to homelessness.

2015-16 was a year of growth in the organisation's response to children and young people. Through the Children and Youth Practice Development Project, **safe steps** is preparing for a specific and individual response to children and young people affected by family violence.

The Children and Youth Practice Development Project has provided individual assessment and support to children and young people in our services, as well as supporting a changed focus towards more child and youth focused practice across client service delivery.

The project has also promoted more child focused practice across the specialist family violence and community sectors by delivering presentations, training, participating in sector networks and policy development.

safe steps was also able to provide a voice for women and children experiencing family violence during the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women. The Victorian Government marked this occasion with a series of public events titled 'Victoria Against Violence'

The highlight saw Annette Gillespie speaking before the Victorian Parliament, one of the only times in history that a layperson has addressed the Parliament during a sitting period. It was a monumental opportunity to address the leadership of the State Government and highlight the challenges faced by women and children affected by violence. The CEO spoke of the women and children supported by **safe steps** in crisis accommodation, and the need to develop much better systems to keep them safe.

safe steps has also consistently sought to use data and evidence to inform policy and system development. In 2015-16, the organisation contributed its statewide data to the Family Violence Index being developed by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and Melbourne University, one of the few specialist family violence organisations to contribute data to the Index.

As an organisation specialising in responding to women and children at high risk of severe harm, **safe steps** was also able to draw on this expertise to inform the review of the Victorian Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) conducted by Monash University. **safe steps** provided a range of feedback to the review as well as participating in the Advisory Board. Feedback focused on the need for specialised family violence risk assessment of children and young people as individuals and a more nuanced approach to assessing levels of risk.

safe steps also plays a central role with statewide and national networks, particularly SafeNet Australia, the national network of family violence crisis services. As the auspicing organisation, **safe steps** provided additional support with communications, advocacy and projects in order to make the most of opportunities arising from increased activity around family violence.

Throughout 2015-16, **safe steps** has worked consistently with government, other services and the community to address and eliminate family violence. Other significant initiatives include the statewide pet response project, contribution to the Victorian Government's Listening Project, and the commencement of a new register to improve the system of crisis accommodation management. From policy development to community education, projects and contributing to the evidence base, safe steps has worked hard to build on the foundations of previous years in order to pave the way for a future without violence against women and their children.



Federal Minister Tim Watts learning about our work first hand

In the Community



Survivor advocates talking to the Premier about Royal Commission Recommendations

Survivor Advocate Program

The **safe steps** Survivor Advocate program empowers women who have experienced family violence to break their silence, share their story and help educate the community about abuse in the home.

2015-2016 was a successful year for this vital program with advocates taking part in community presentations and media engagements across Victoria.

Covering topics from family violence leave in the work force, people's attitudes towards violence against women, relationships, sex and gender equality, the advocates continued to make a significant contribution towards changing society's attitudes and beliefs that fuel and enable violence against women and children.

Several advocates were even invited to the announcement of the Royal Commission's recommendations at Parliament House in March 2016.

Highlights from the safe steps Survivor Advocates program included:

- December 2015 Four advocates were invited to share their story as part of the Victorian Government's 'The Listening Project: Victim's Voices and Survivor Stories' at Parliament House.
- February 2016 Two advocates joined a panel discussion on 774 ABC Radio Melbourne with Rafael Epstein in response to the 227 recommendations made by the 'Royal Commission into Family Violence'.
- March 2016 An advocate had a Feature Article on her Personal Story in the online publication, Mama Mia.
- April 2016 an advocate had an interview with FutureGov regarding her direct experience of the Family Violence Intervention Order process.

safe steps acknowledges the amazing contributions of our Survivor advocates. Without their commitment, strength and generosity of spirit, the Survivor Advocacy Program would not exist.

Candlelight Vigil

Hundreds of men, women and children braved a chilly Autumn evening on the first Wednesday in May to attend the **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil at Federation Square in Melbourne.

In what was an extremely moving event, the Vigil saw safe steps CEO, Annette Gillespie, joined on stage by the Victorian Minister for Women, the Honourable Fiona Richardson; Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner, Dean McWhirter; as well as Tarang Chawla who has been an avid campaigner against family violence since his sister, Nikita was murdered by her ex-partner in 2015.

Jacqueline Felgate from Channel 7 News, MC'ed the Vigil, and led the crowd in lighting a candle both in remembrance of lives lost, but also to show solidarity to women and children still living in an abusive environment. An Honour Roll featuring the names of women and children killed through family violence played on Federation Square's giant screen, while a piper from Victoria Police's Pipe Band provided a moving musical backdrop.

The 'No Excuses Choir' – made up of local women who themselves are survivors of family violence – ended the evening with a harmonious message of hope and empowerment.

The **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil is a part of a national movement and coincided with other family violence vigils held simultaneously across the country.



Students at the Candlelight Vigi



Candles shining in remembrance



Over 1200 people attended this year's Candlelight Vigil



At the Walk Against Family Violence

Walk Against Family Violence

The 7th Annual Walk Against Family Violence was held on Wednesday 25th November 2015, at Federation Square in Melbourne. More than 2,500 participants, including **safe steps** representatives, remembered lives lost and those affected by the epidemic of family violence in our community.

The Walk was well supported by Government, Victoria Police, the family violence sector and the broader community.



At the Walk Against Family Violence

SAFEtea for Women

In June 2016, **safe steps** held its first 'SAFEtea for Women' high tea event at the Garden Room at Crown.

This event brought together over 80 men and women to raise awareness about family violence and help raise vital funds to help provide emergency accommodation and support for women and children escaping abuse. The MC on the day was Melina Sarris from Channel 7 News and guests were entertained by Imogen Brough, contestant on The Voice Australia 2013. The SAFEtea for Women will be an annual event.



Enjoying the SAFEtea for Women



Victoria Police at the Candlelight Vigil

Fact: Over a quarter of all women and children accommodated by safe steps in 2015-2016 were supported to enter refuge.

Fact: More than a quarter of safe steps clients reported the perpetrator has threatened to harm or kill children.

New Day Box Initiative

This inspiring initiative hit new heights in 2015-16 with over 3,500 shoe boxes filled with cosmetics and toiletries delivered to women in emergency accommodation over the 2015 holiday season.

safe steps' corporate partner, Envato, coordinates the collection of shoe boxes filled with pamper items and special gifts donated by individuals, businesses and other groups. The New Day Boxes are then distributed by safe steps to our accommodation partners across the state to women in their care. A massive thank you to Envato for their amazing efforts making the New Day Box initiative such a success each year.



New Day Boxes awaiting collection

Thi's Story



Social Media Campaign



Annette at Women in Focus luncheon



Secondary students collecting mobile phones, chargers and travel cards for women escaping violence.

Community Fundraising

This year saw an increase in the number of community fundraising events organised to support the delivery services to women and children and to help raise awareness of family violence.

The large variety of events and activities included BBQ's, cake sales, raffles and movie nights just to name a few with all proceeds going to assist women and children seeking support through **safe steps**. Highlights were:

'IWIRC Footy Finals Luncheon' organised by International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation – Victoria Branch.

'Empower Me Family Fun Day' organised by Lucy Padula.

'The Madwomen Monologues' a play by Baggage Productions.

'Say No to Domestic Violence' live music night presented by South Side Soul.

We 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.

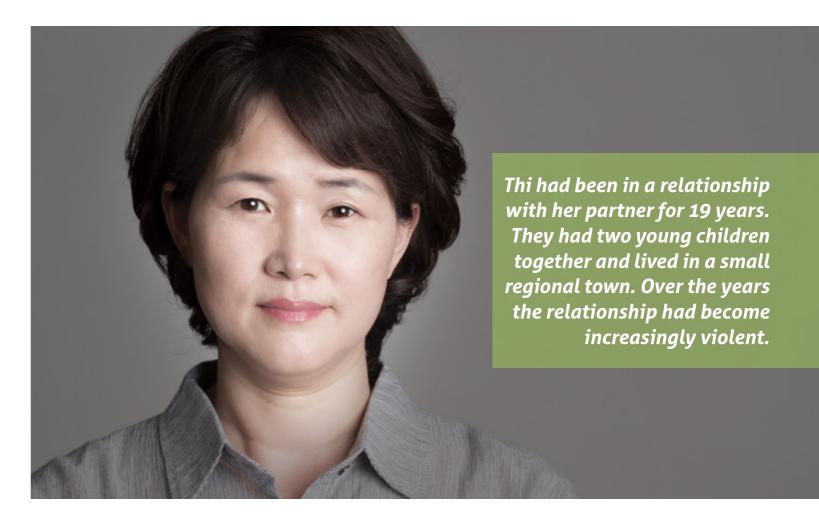
Speaking Requests

During 2015-2016, more than 100 presentations on family violence were made to corporate and community groups.

The requests ranged from hospitals to kindergartens, to corporate groups, schools and people in the community and covered all topics regarding the impact of family violence on individuals, families, community and the economy.

"For us, as a frontline family violence service, our challenge is to do everything we can to help keep women and their children safe from violence and abuse,"

Annette Gillespie, Women in Focus magazine February 2016



Over the years the relationship had become increasingly violent. What had started with verbal abuse by Thi's partner towards her had escalated to physical violence. Her partner had also recently started making threats against Thi's extended family.

It was a difficult decision to leave her home and everything she knew, but Thi knew she had to get as far away from the house as possible to protect herself and her children.

Thi had attempted to leave once before, but her partner had used Thi's mother's addiction to gambling and alcohol to coerce Thi's whereabouts from her to track her and the children down. The second time Thi left, she contacted **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre who assisted her to go into emergency accommodation at an undisclosed location.

While in emergency accommodation, Thi received multiple Police reports that her partner was attempting to find her. This reinforced her concern for her and her children's safety.

safe steps staff worked intensively with Thi and her children. Not only did they help her with safety planning

and provide her with clothes, toiletries and other necessities, but they worked with Thi and her children on beginning to overcome the trauma they had experienced. One of Thi's sons had developed challenging behaviours as a result of being exposed to abuse and also due to the recent upheavals in his life and his routine, so the family violence workers spent time helping him make sense of his situation and manage his emotions in a more positive way.

Thi was prioritised for a high security Refuge vacancy where she and her children could remain in secure and supported accommodation for a six week period. While in the Refuge, Thi was provided with an option to move into a transitional housing unit in a safe location where she has since been residing with her children and making a new life for herself in the local community.

Fact: 20% of all clients supported by safe steps in 2015-16 were born overseas.

About Us

Board and Staff

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

obligations and oversight of performance and management activities undertaken by the CEO.

Board Members bring extensive experience and diverse skills to support the governance of **safe steps**, including financial, corporate, marketing, communications, legal, HR, government, community and IT.

Board Directors



Candy Broad (Chair: From June 2016)



Christine Gibbs (Co-Chair: June 15-May 16) Jen Allen (Co-Chair: June 15-May 16)





Gayle King (Treasurer)



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

safe steps consists of a team of passionate and dedicated staff and volunteers who work on behalf of the women and children who rely on our service for pathways to safety.

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

The management and staff of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre are committed to providing responses that respect the rights of women and children to be supported in their efforts to be free from violence in an environment that is safe from physical, sexual, emotional/ psychological, economic and verbal abuse.

Executive Team

In 2015-2016, the Executive Team comprised:

Annette Gillespie: Chief Executive Officer

Molly O'Shaughnessy: General Manager Operations

Christine Arthur: Manager Corporate Services

Astrid Horter: Manager Client Services

Kristine Robertson: Manager Marketing, Fundraising and Communications

"Public safety surveys show that the majority of women who experience violence never contact support services."

Annette Gillespie, Daily Life, December 2015

Samantha's Story



Highly concerned about the risk identified, escalation of violence experienced, and also the ongoing nature of the violence, **safe steps** staff strongly advocated for Samantha to come into emergency accommodation due to the genuine concern that she would eventually be killed.

Samantha was at first resistant to this idea, however after building up rapport with **safe steps** staff, admitted that the reason that she was unsure about coming into emergency accommodation was because she was transgender and was not sure whether **safe steps** would assist her knowing this.

Samantha's hesitation had come about after several outreach services had refused to provide support to her stating that her presentation was "masculine". She was concerned that emergency accommodation providers would discriminate against her because of her appearance.

She was also unsure about whether she would feel comfortable in a supported accommodation facility given she identified as transgender.

safe steps family violence workers were able to encourage Samantha to come into emergency accommodation, and

emphasised that **safe steps**' policy is to support all women who have experienced family violence, whether they identify as being in a heterosexual relationship or whether they identify as part of the LGBTIQ community.

Once she entered into the Safe House accommodation, Samantha not only felt safe from the perpetrator, but she also felt emotionally safer about reaching out for help from **safe steps**, knowing that she would not be judged or treated differently to other women due to being transgender.

Fact: safe steps is committed to improving services for all women, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women living with a disability and those who identify as LGBTIQ.

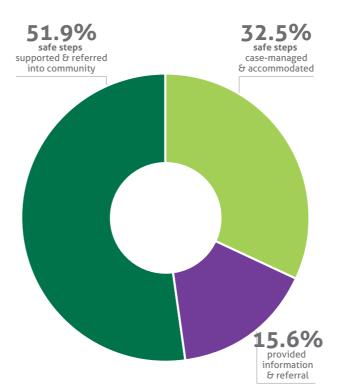
Client Demographic Snapshot

From July 1 2015 to 30 June 2016:

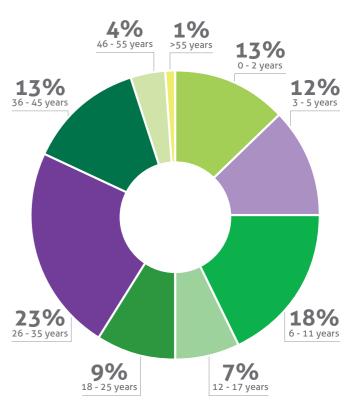
- safe steps provided over 21,000 emergency accommodation beds for women and children escaping from violence.
- Of those not requiring accommodation, safe steps provided all with extensive assessment, safety planning and referral to community support.
- The number of calls received by safe steps almost doubled between July 2015 and July 2016.

- An average of 168 phone calls a day were received from women seeking assistance, representing over 61,000 calls in the year.
- The number of women and children supported in this period increased by over 60% from the previous financial year.
- More than two thirds of 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 accommodated



Assessed Level of Risk

Requires immediate protection	67%
Elevated risk	16%
At Risk	14%
Not at risk	3%

Fact: On any given night, safe steps will accommodate an average of 50 women and children escaping a violent household.

Financial Summary

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income

for year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 (\$)	2015 (\$)
Total income	5,331,644	4,235,109
Expenditure		
Client Direct Relief	1,529,479	1,250,233
Operating costs	3,560,863	2,734,379
Total expenditure	5,090,342	3,984,612
Total comprehensive income for the year	241,302	250,497

Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2016

	2016 (\$)	2015 (\$)
Current assets	3,161,611	3,163,500
Non-current assets	235,388	67,766
Total Assets	3,396,999	3,231,266
Current Liabilities	829,621	954,191
Non-current liabilities	57,521	8,520
Total Liabilities	887,142	962,711
Net Assets	2,509,857	2,268,555
Equity		
Retained earnings	2,509,857	2,268,555
Total Equity	2,509,857	2,268,555

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 2016.

Report on the Summary Financial Report

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises the Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2016 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 2016.

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that financial report in our report dated 15th November, 2016.

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 2016 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 15th November, 2016



Thank you and acknowledgements



The support of Government, the community, donors, volunteers, schools, businesses and corporations is fundamental to **safe step**'s ability to deliver quality services to women and children. We would like to sincerely thank all of those who have generously contributed to the organisation. We expressly acknowledge the following for their generous support:

- The Honourable Martin Foley, MP
- The Honourable Gavin Jennings MLA
- The Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP
- The Honourable Jenny Mikakos, MP
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Vic Health
- Victoria Police
- Federation Square
- Tink PR
- Is Advertising
- Virage IT
- Jacqueline Felgate
- Harrison Craig

- Melina Sarris
- Nancy Bassett
- Envato and New Day Box
- Financial Ombudsman Service Australia
- Commonwealth Bank Women in Focus
- Justice Connect
- Women's Legal Service
- Melbourne Magistrates Court
- Launch Housing
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Methodist Ladies' College
- Korowa Anglican Girls School
- Melbourne Grammar School
- Brighton Grammar
- Imogen Brough

- Heathmont College
- Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust
- Pierce Armstrong Trust
- Klooger Family Foundation
- Gandel Philanthropy
- The Wales Family Foundation
- The Pratt Family Foundation

Foundation

- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- The Jack and Hedy Brent
- Victorian Women's Trust
- The Chrysalis Foundation
- The Holland Foundation
- IWIRC Victoria Branch
- No Excuses Choir

- Mantra Group
- Mural Hall & THE BIG GROUP
- Crown Resorts
- Bunnings
- Good Guys
- Harvey Norman
- Impact Philanthropy
- Norte
- Flowers Across Melbourne
- Berwick Opportunity Shop
- safe steps Volunteer Survivor Advocates
- safe steps Staff
- safe steps Partner Agencies
- Royal Commission into Family Violence
- Victoria Police Pipe Band

"Everyone has the right to be safe and live free from violence and abuse."

For confidential support and information call 1800 015 188 at any time or visit www.safesteps.org.au

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre provides 24/7 expert intervention, support, advocacy and referral pathways to women and children throughout Victoria to ensure that those at highest risk receive an immediate family violence response to keep them from harm.

safe steps is the only Victorian family violence statewide service that is available to help women and children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, no matter where they contact our service from.



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Capture and share via Instagram Instagram.com/safestepsFV

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

برای حمایت محرمانه و کسب اطلاعات با شماره رایگان ذیل تماش 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

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ABN: 86 138 521 643

