



# Annual Report

2018-2019

*Relationships Australia*<sup>®</sup>  
NEW SOUTH WALES

Reshaping lives, one relationship at a time.

# From our CEO & Chair

It is with pleasure that we present to you our annual report for 2019. This year we have provided services to over 54,000 individuals, couples, families, workplaces and communities.



Although we already provide some on-line services to remote communities and those unable to attend our offices, we have commenced a significant investment in business transformation focused on developing an omni-channel approach which will open many more doors in coming years. An omni-channel approach means that our customers can reach us anytime, anywhere and through phone, text, video and centre attendance. They can download valuable resources, watch webinars and make enquiries at the time that suits them, not just in our office hours. The transformation will also modernize our business systems, making sure that our staff have the systems and technology they need to do their work efficiently - leaving more time to focus on quality services, which are our reason for being.

Our purpose is to forge connections between people and communities, and this investment over 2019 in readiness for significant change, will ensure that we deliver.

As one example of how we can extend our reach using technology, this year we have been very pleased to support farming families suffering in the drought with free services offered remotely or through one of our more regionally placed centres.

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We have also launched the on-line mental health platform Radiant, our first social enterprise. It's purpose is to reach the 4 out of 5 people not currently receiving assistance with their mental health concerns.

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Genuinely client centred, it has been co-designed with community and professionals, putting people in need at the centre of the decision making, and enabling them to find the right match for their individual requirements, at a time and in a way that suits them. Find us at [myradiant.com.au](http://myradiant.com.au).

We remain leaders in the delivery of professional training in relationship and family therapy and family dispute resolution in NSW. There is a strong call for well-trained people in these professional groups and so this is a significant contribution to the NSW professional landscape. This year we have invested strongly in building skill and capacity in our workforce so as to engage children more often, particularly in matters of separation and family safety, where despite good intentions, children's voices can be lost. Through detailed customer journey mapping we have built a new pathway for people attending our family relationship centres, which enhances the speed by which they can progress to mediation, and routinely include their children as part of the process. Through funding made available by the Attorney General's Department, we have also introduced property mediation at every one of our six Family Relationship Centres, ensuring that people can manage all aspects of their separation in one place, making the process so much easier in this very stressful time.

At our Family Referral Service, based in Mt Druitt and Rouse Hill, we have supported 1,425 families, and provided 321 school-based services. Although reaching all our funding benchmarks, we constantly strive to explore new ways to assist this high need and very diverse population at the vulnerable time of early childhood.

Through a Women NSW Domestic Violence Innovation Grant, we have been delighted to launch “Let’s Talk” – a service provided in partnership with the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline and Relationships Australia Canberra and Region, focused on the prevention of elder abuse, offering support and facilitated conversations for families experiencing difficulty with communication and decision making in the later years. Already older people as well as family members are using the service, and we have had many fruitful collaborations with engaged service providers such as The NSW Trustee and Guardian, NSW Police, NSW Seniors Rights Service, Dementia Australia, residential aged care services and multiple community stakeholders in metropolitan, regional and rural NSW. We intend to make service delivery with our community elders a key focus in the coming year.

Through another Women NSW Domestic Violence Innovation Grant, we have been working in partnership with Settlement Services International to provide programs for men who are refugees in Arabic, Tamil and Hazaragi languages, focused on their roles as fathers, so as to prevent abuse and violence from occurring. To date, family safety services have been provided in a largely mainstream way. This is the beginning of ways in which we will develop services that can be accessible to people from different cultural backgrounds utilising community connections with religious and other senior cultural leaders, bringing the best of our extensive experience in working with abuse and violence over the last 30 years.

Our family safety services have broadened further this year. Already providing men’s behaviour change programs in 7 areas across the state, as well as services to women and children in those family groups, we have also provided services to 3,912 male victims of violence through our grant from NSW Justice.

Through grants from Legal Aid we provide a Family Advocacy Support Service in Sydney, Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle family courts. Additionally, we have provided services in the Blacktown and Hunter regions, also funded by NSW Justice, to clients who have been charged

the process of facing court. These sessions are designed to prevent further violence at this high-risk time, to engage men in further work to take responsibility for the impacts of their behaviour, and to create safe respectful relationships in the family.

We have four well established diversity action networks, which are driving our focus on better responses to our varied communities. We have submitted a second Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan with the guidance of our experienced Mariyang Malang network, comprising our Aboriginal workforce. The other networks focus on diverse ability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and our LGBTQI communities. Each have an active schedule of awareness campaigns, events and strategies to improve staff inclusion as well as our customer’s experience. The Board has engaged in a number of strategies focused on improving governance through a diversity and inclusion lens. A Board diversity skills audit has been developed and implemented, and strategies for improvement are under development.

As always, we are proud of the professional staff we employ who provide quality, responsive services to our customers. Their dedication, through values driven and purposeful work, ensures that we continue to be the best we can be, in service of NSW communities. We note the leadership and wise guidance provided by our experienced and dedicated Board. We also acknowledge the partnerships and collaborations that assist us to do more, to do it well, and to reduce gaps and hurdles for people in need. We are always stronger when working together.



**Elisabeth Shaw**  
CEO,  
Relationships  
Australia NSW



**Chris Bertinshaw**  
Chairman,  
Relationships  
Australia NSW

# Resilience and wellbeing across the Life Span

## Strength

Across the life span there are many transitional moments which provide unique challenges for us all: when a baby is born and life as a parent begins; the expanding family; young people leaving school, entering the work force and leaving home; individuals becoming a couple; older parents adjusting to an empty nest; adult children supporting ageing parents; and the progression into retirement and elderly life.

Along life's pathway with our varied family constellations, gender and sexuality choices, and diverse cultural contexts, there are decisions to navigate, relationships to manage, and challenges to face. These may put considerable pressure on the resources and strengths we have at our disposal. So when we encounter difficulties and adverse life events, like the early death of a child or young person, an unexpected diagnosis or terminal illness, financial stress and/or unemployment, legal battles, separation/divorce, difficult friendships/ work relationships, drug and alcohol dependence, or mental ill health, our resources and energy can become vastly depleted.

RANSW offers a suite of interventions at all these transitional life stages, to enable individuals, couples and families develop strength and resilience in the face of adversity and change.



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We build on attitudes and skills that underpin wellbeing – self-awareness, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, positive relationships, self-care, and purpose – to strengthen meaningful connections with each other, communities and social supports.

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## Security

Couple relationships can form a secure base for the next stage of the journey together. After the decision about who to partner with, decisions about whether and when to have children, where to live, beliefs and values from families of origin, dealing with conflict, and what career to have, can all lead to challenging conversations. These may be compounded when adverse issues such as: an inability to fall pregnant, the pathway through IVF, a miscarriage, relationship conflict, alcohol and drugs, or financial pressures emerge. Relationship Counselling assists in the establishment of a safe foundation for the relationship, always assessing for and addressing the use of intimate partner violence and domestic abuse. When safe to proceed, we support partners to build strong communication and resolution skills so they feel secure in the relationship and their ability to manage future issues.

## Courage

The parenting foundation can be tested when a couple relationship breaks down, and the former couple need to work through how to parent their children from two houses. For these parents and those who are not in a relationship, Family Relationship Centres can help to strengthen the parenting alliance to assist in gaining skills and insight into the sort of parents their children need them to be. Through this transition we also help parents and children have safe contact at our Children's Contact Centres. We work on their attachment to each other and support a continuous relationship while living separately.

Where one person has used violence, we support safety and justice. We witness the great courage shown by women and children in resisting violence, at our Women's groups and work with children, and by men who experience violence who call our male family violence support service. Our Taking Responsibility groups and Family Advocacy Court Support Services, invite men to become safe and be the loving partner and father, they want to be.

## Hope

Families face transitions through the school years; children starting school, moving into high school, adolescence, and children developing relationships outside the family. For culturally and linguistically diverse families this second generation of cross cultural relationship building can introduce new ways of thinking which can confront the established rules, roles and expectations of how things 'should' be. Family and Adolescent Counselling facilitates complex family conversations about behavioural and emotional issues for children and young people, including parent /child conflict, school refusal, anxiety, bullying, and self-harming. During adolescence serious issues can emerge which require support and hope for a way forward – namely, mental health issues, depression, anxiety, self-harming, suicidal ideation, gender and sexuality issues, identity formation, managing peer relationships, exclusion and belonging, and coping with parental separation. When parents do separate and are attending Family Mediation for parenting arrangements, we listen to children and young people through our child inclusive practice so their individual wishes and needs are considered and they can regain hope in the future for their changing family.

We also support children and parents to not feel alone, through Relationship Education Programs, Seminars and casework support, family referral services and Community programs, addressing school readiness, working with teachers around parent/child attachment, and with faith leaders to address family violence in communities. When families are struggling, hope involves helping other possibilities emerge.

## Openness

When young people move out of home, their parents can experience considerable changes in their lives, with one or both grieving the loss of their children's presence, experiencing loneliness, loss of the full-time parenting role, or challenges re-negotiating adult relationships with their children. Their children's new partners may have differing expectations of family time and contact, family rules and roles.

A parent with an addiction or mental health issue, can bring additional challenges, when grandchildren enter the family system, with conflict over which grandparent looks after the children. These are all times when relationships are put under strain and relationship resilience is needed to build trust in the bonds in the family and acknowledge certain vulnerabilities.

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Adult family therapy provides a good meeting place to talk openly and honestly about needs and expectations, while building a strong platform of communicating together.

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## Justice and identity

For some people, being able to grow up with their own family and community is not part of their story. This is especially true for Aboriginal Stolen Generations who come to our Wattle Place Service, for help to search and reclaim connection to culture, identity, family and Country. Through working with Stolen Generations and Forgotten Australians who also grew up in institutions, we witness the resilience and courage of individuals who dare to connect with others, to belong, to try new relationships, to be proud parents themselves. For adults who experienced abuse in institutions and at the hands of the 'system', now seeking acknowledgement of what happened and redress for their suffering, Counselling is a space to support these journeys towards justice, identity, connection and healing.

## Love and Care

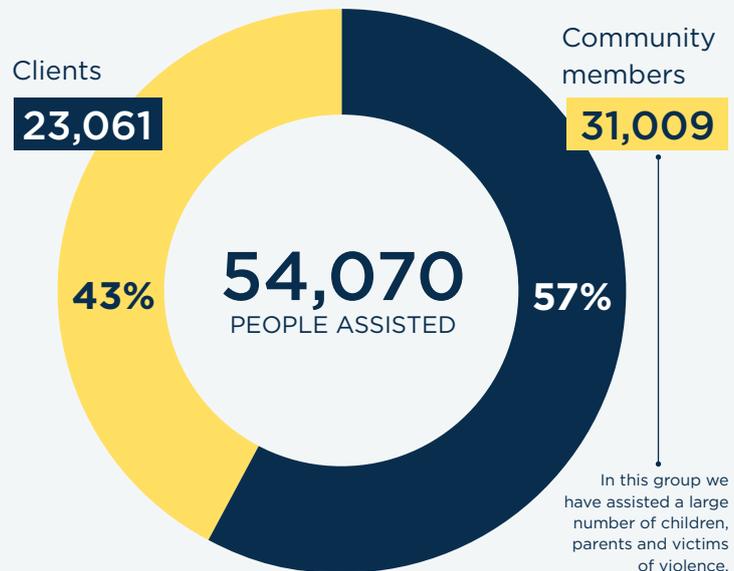
Empty nesters face a number of decisions, perhaps moving into new roles as grandparents, considering retirement, and how to find meaning as they age. They may decide to downsize and sell the family home which can present an emotional transition in a family when everyone's attachment to their experiences and memories in the home emerge. Elder Mediation, assists adult families and elders talk together, addressing elder abuse, concerns over cognitive capacity, guardianship and end of life decision making for elders, their family and carers. Love can be further forged in the fires of this later 'end of life' transition, when adult children often become caregivers of their parents.

## Connectedness

In all, life is a journey best supported by strong and secure relationships. When these are put under strain, Relationships Australia NSW can support individuals, couples and whole families build resilience so they can thrive into the future.

# Reshaping lives in NSW

In 2018-19 we helped our clients reshape their lives through counselling, mediation, casework and group programs. We assisted many others via broader community, school-based, online and telephone support.



## Of our clients:



**44%**

Clients presenting with Domestic Violence



**7%**

Australia's First People Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders



**21%**

Migrants



**6%**

Children



**\$132,145**

Pro bono services provided

**9 out of 10 people**  
felt listened to and understood



**4 out of 5 people**  
were satisfied with the services provided



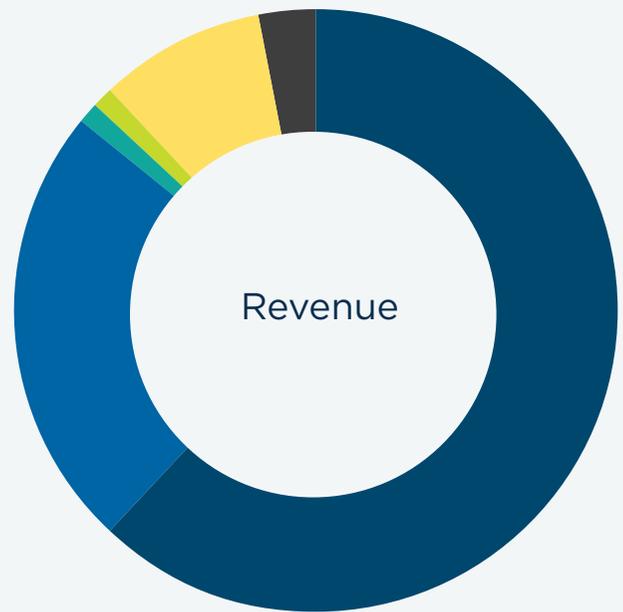
**4 out of 5 people**  
were able to deal with their issues better



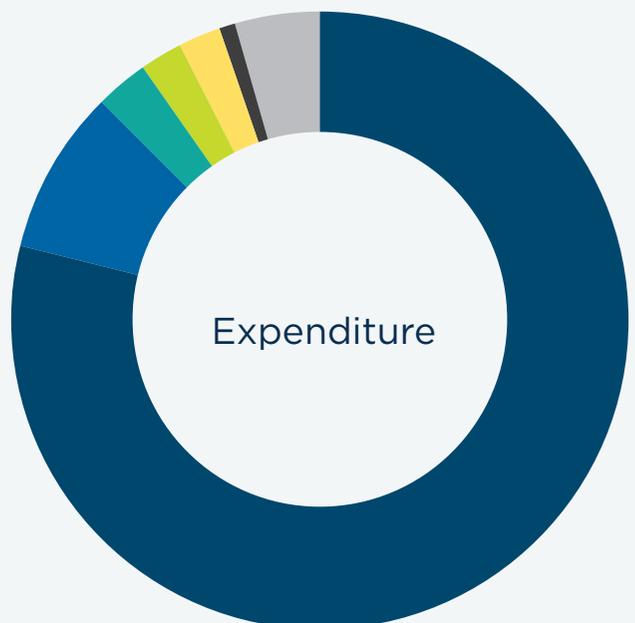
# Financial Results

In this financial year Relationships Australia NSW achieved a net surplus of \$369,225. We received funding of \$30.3m from various government sources including the Australian Department of Social Services, Attorney-General's Department, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice

Additional Financial Report details are available from [relationshipsnsw.org.au/about-us/annual-reports](http://relationshipsnsw.org.au/about-us/annual-reports).



- Federal Gov. Grants
- Other Gov. Grants
- State Gov. Grants
- Fees
- Education Revenue
- Other Income



- Staff
- Admin, IT & Promotion
- Property
- National Levy Affiliation
- Depreciation
- Other
- Brokerage

## Top 5 Presenting Issues

1. RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT
2. COMPLEX FAMILY ISSUES
3. BEHAVIOUR CHANGE
4. FAMILY VIOLENCE
5. CHILD BEHAVIOUR ISSUES

## Governance

Relationships Australia NSW is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated in Australia and governed by a Board of Directors. We are grateful to our Board of Directors for their guidance and support this year.

Directors who served during the year include:

- Chair: Chris Bertinshaw
- Vice Chair: Steve Rust
- Andrea Christie-David
- Peter Ricketts
- Kathryn Greiner AO
- Dr Stephen Hollings
- Jennifer Alexander
- Cameron O'Reilly

For judgement free support  
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