

Relationships Australia



ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Relationships Matter in Tough Times



OUR VISION

Positive and respectful
relationships for all
Australians

OUR MISSION

To build stronger
relationships which
enhance the lives of
individuals, families
and communities

www.relationships.com.au

Relationships Australia

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LOCATION OF SERVICES

CANBERRA AND REGION

Bega
Braidwood (outreach)
Canberra (two sites, three outreach locations)
Cooma
Cootamundra (outreach)
Goulburn (outreach)
Griffith (outreach)
Leeton (outreach)
Moruya
Tumut (outreach)
Wagga (two sites, one outreach location)

NEW SOUTH WALES

Bathurst
Blacktown (two sites)
Bondi Junction
Bowral
Campbelltown
Cowra (outreach)
Dee Why
Gosford (two sites)
Katoomba (outreach)
Lane Cove
Lithgow (outreach)
Maitland (outreach)
Neutral Bay
Newcastle (Broadmeadow)
North Parramatta
North Ryde
Orange (outreach)
Penrith (two sites)
Raymond Terrace (outreach)
Richmond (outreach)
Riverstone (outreach)
Rockdale
Rouse Hill
Summer Hill
Sydney City (two sites)
Westmead
Wollongong
Wyong

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Alice Springs (two sites)
Central Australia remote (telephone counselling)
Darwin
Jabiru (telephone counselling)
Katherine
Nhulunbuy
Tennant Creek (visiting service)

QUEENSLAND

Atherton
Beaudesert
Bowen
Bundaberg
Cairns
Caloundra
Cannonvale
Cannon Hill
Capalaba
Cherbourg
Chermside
Cleveland
Eight Mile Plains
Gladstone
Gympie
Hervey Bay
Inala
Innisfail
Ipswich
Kenmore
Lismore, NSW
Loganholme
Longreach
Mackay
Manunda
Maroochydore
Mermaid Beach
Murgon
Nerang
Noosaville
Palm Island
Port Douglas

Proserpine
Rockhampton
Sherwood
South Brisbane
Southport
Spring Hill
Strathpine
Thuringowa
Toowoomba (three sites)
Townsville
Upper Mt Gravatt
Yeppoon

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Adelaide
Barossa (outreach)
Berri / Riverland
Elizabeth
Gawler (outreach)
Hackham West (outreach)
Hindmarsh (two sites)
Kingscote (outreach)
Marion
Mount Barker (outreach)
Murray Bridge (outreach)
Ridgehaven
Salisbury
Victor Harbor (outreach)

TASMANIA

Bellerive
Burnie
Deloraine
Devonport
George Town
Hobart (two sites)
Huonville
Kingston
Launceston (two sites)
Scottsdale
Sorell
St Helens
St Marys
Ulverstone

VICTORIA

Ballarat
Berwick
Cranbourne
Croydon
Greensborough (two sites)
Kew
Melbourne
Shepparton
Sunshine (two sites)
Traralgon
Whittlesea (outreach)
Wonthaggi (outreach)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Albany
Armadale
Bunbury (two sites)
Busselton (outreach)
Carnarvon (outreach)
Esperance (outreach)
Fremantle
Geraldton (outreach)
Gosnells
Joondalup
Kalgoorlie (outreach)
Katanning (outreach)
Kojanup (outreach)
Mandurah (two sites)
Manjimup (outreach)
Margaret River (outreach)
Merredin (outreach)
Midland
Northam (outreach)
Perth
Rockingham
South Hedland (outreach)
Tambellup
Wanneroo (outreach)
Waroona (outreach)
West Leederville (two sites)

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President's Foreword



Looking back over the past 12 months always brings a sense of amazement about how much has occurred, both challenges and achievements.

Our 60th birthday celebration in Sydney in November 2008 was a special occasion when we looked back into the past and forward into the future to identify our legacy so far and anticipate the influences that will define us as we go forward. A panel discussion on social changes since 1948, broadcast live on 702 ABC Radio in Sydney, was a particular highlight of the celebrations and a great success.

Other highlights of the past year included a meeting with our newly appointed patron, the Governor-General Ms Quentin Bryce AC, where we discussed our work and shared our values and mutual concerns, particularly for rural Australians and their difficulties.

We reviewed our governance structure and will continue to ensure that our national governance arrangements meet the needs of our member organisations.

As we move through these tough economic times, Relationships Australia (RA) is committed to supporting Australians from all walks of life, and their communities, to keep their relationships positive and healthy.

In addition to difficult economic times, many Australians have been confronted with great adversity through fire, drought and flood. RA staff across the country have been deeply engaged in assisting those affected, providing the professional and practical support to help them cope and respond to challenges to their relationships.

The central importance of attending to our relationships through times of stress and continuing rapid change remains a persistent commitment for us. This is reflected in the work you will read about in the following pages. I hope you find it interesting and informative reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Harold Brownsword". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Harold Bates-Brownsword
President

National Director's Foreword



This past year has again been one of intense activity, development and achievement across Relationships Australia (RA). The theme of this year's annual report is RA's strong commitment to supporting and strengthening couple, family, workplace and community relationships as our most important asset for getting through tough times. Many Australians have faced major adversity in the past year from a range of economic and climatic crises and pressures. RA organisations around the country have responded with innovation and dedication to support people in their circumstances.

RA's 'business as usual' work addresses the impact of tough times on couple and family relationships which can arise at any time, such as family separation, problem gambling, child abuse and family violence, as well as the needs of humanitarian entrants and the persistent challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. RA's prevention work through relationships education and skills development also plays a key role in strengthening relationships before difficulties set in. Our education work covers the full life cycle, from children in the primary classroom through to longstanding couples looking for a boost in their lives together, and the milestones in between.

Our 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey, which marked the decade of the survey, highlighted the main relationship issues for couples, families and

communities at this time. A key finding was that financial insecurity or difficulties had more than doubled since the last survey in 2006.

Other major national achievements in the past year include gaining the contract for national training and accreditation of Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners and hosting a two-day training session with internationally renowned relationship experts Drs John and Julie Gottman. In these ways RA continues a leading role in developing the strength and professional standing of the sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Lawson Street".

Rhonda Lawson Street
National Director

National Organisation 2008-09

Member Organisations							
RA Canberra and Region	RA New South Wales	RA Northern Territory	RA Queensland	RA South Australia	RA Tasmania	RA Victoria	RA Western Australia
Sue Lyons President	John Seaman President	Andrew Hemming President	Eva-Marie Seeto President	Franco Camatta President	Glenn Hay President	Judi Anderson President	Richard Wilson President
Mary Pekin CEO	Anne Hollonds CEO	Marie Morrison CEO	Andrew Davis CEO	Judith Cross CEO	Susan Holmes CEO	Michael Hunt CEO	Terri Reilly CEO



National Board									
President	Vice President	Treasurer	Member	Member	Member	National Director	Member	Member	Member
Harold Bates-Brownsword	Anne Hollonds	Andrew Davis	Judith Cross	Susan Holmes	Michael Hunt	Rhonda Lawson Street	Marie Morrison	Mary Pekin	Terri Reilly

Facts and Figures

Organisation	Total Expenditure 2008-09	Staff as at 30 June 2009	No. Venues	Total Clients for 2008-09	No. ATSI Clients	% ATSI Clients	No. CALD Clients	% CALD Clients	No. Female Clients	No. Male Clients
RACR	\$5,363,391	77	8	5,778	204	4	304	5	3,038	2,740
RANSW	\$20,213,000	461	29	18,002	292	2	2,171	12	8,949	9,053
RANT	\$3,808,608	50	4	2,676	516	19	240	9	1,347	1,329
RAQ	\$22,865,324	379	50	26,075	1,689	6	2,265	9	12,603	13,472
RASA	\$13,590,929	249	10	20,574	730	4	4,502	22	11,697	8,877
RA Tas	\$6,242,295	150	13	7,952	149	2	156	2	3,045	4,907
RAV	\$16,728,981	259	12	18,956	85	0	2,700	14	9,897	9,059
RAWA	\$12,134,957	269	30	16,622	704	4	2,038	12	7,842	8,780
TOTAL	\$100,947,485	1,894	156	116,635	4,369	4	14,376	12	58,418	58,217

■ A photograph from one of the entrants in the Hobart FRC's photographic competition held to celebrate National Families Week, 10-16 May 2009.



The Year that Was

We had another strong year of growth, with the commencement of new services, the opening of more sites and further improvements in service delivery across the board.

On a national level, in 2008 we celebrated our **60th anniversary** by hosting a panel discussion on social changes since 1948. The discussion was broadcasted live on 702 ABC Radio in Sydney on 26 November and followed by an event held at the Powerhouse Museum.

This year we were also honoured to have the Governor-General Ms Quentin Bryce AC as **national patron**. With her commitment to the welfare of families, including advancing the rights and best interests of children, Ms Bryce's patronage is an invaluable pledge of support.

Our new community-business partnership with Credit Union Australia (CUA) was announced in 2008. The three-year national partnership program, **Invest in Your Relationships – Add Value to Your Life**, will provide Australians with the life skills and resources to affect positive personal change by building better relationships. The partnership also led to the launch of the **2008 Relationships Australia/CUA Relationships Indicators Survey**.

Extending our reach

RA member organisations across Australia have experienced **strong growth** and expansion into new locations and challenging areas of work.

RANSW opened **five new centres** and employed an additional 98 staff. Over the past five years RANT's staffing numbers and budget have grown more than 500%, while RAWA has expanded to offer services in 30 locations across Australia's largest state.

RAWA's new Family Relationship Centres (**FRCs**) in Perth and Bunbury, which are operated with consortium partners, have increased accessibility to services for families. The Perth FRC offers morning and lunchtime seminars for the public and provides an

innovative bi-cultural Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) service in collaboration with the Multicultural Services Centre.

New premises in West Leederville support RAWA's growth in education, family violence and Aboriginal programs. Among these is **Kidcare**, which trains school staff to be aware of signs that children are being exposed to family violence and/or child abuse.

RAWA's South Hedland branch is experiencing increasing demand for counselling and education services. RAWA also widened its reach by introducing parenting programs for men, such as **Rock and Water** (for fathers and sons) and **Raising Daughters**. RAWA's work for the Department of Corrective Services with perpetrators of domestic violence has increased to 16 programs a week.

In June 2009, RACR began a specialist **Family Therapy program**, in response to the increasing demand for 'whole of family' support services.

RACR now has 18 memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with government, commercial and community organisations to provide its **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**, under which it offers counselling, FDR services and a suite of information and skills-based seminars to employees and their families.

RASA continued to provide **Gambling Help Services**, extending to the southern area of Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island. Its work in supporting people affected by **HIV and hepatitis C** has also been boosted with additional case management, support and professional training roles.

RASA continued to provide support to families following separation. It opened the **Adelaide FRC** as well as introduced a support service for children following separation.

In Queensland, RAQ has slowly shifted its focus to assist the most vulnerable, in particular those contending with trauma, victimisation, violence, family breakdown

and poverty. RAQ's services have been extended to focus on serving more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and people from the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities.

In Devonport, RA Tas opened the **North West Children's Contact Service (NWCCS)**, a purpose-renovated space used for change-overs, supervised visits, child-focused and child counselling sessions.

The launch was a great opportunity to highlight other RA Tas services, such as relationship and breakeven counselling, relationship education and an outreach FRC.

Another highlight was Hobart FRC's **photographic competition**, as part of National Families Week 2009, which captured the ways people contribute to family life. Schools and community groups were invited to contribute a digital image exploring the diversity of family and the difference family members can make. The response was overwhelming, with an array of creative images that showed individual and group family members in traditional and non-traditional roles. The images are now being displayed in an installation at the centre.

Professional training

A significant focus for RASA's training division, the Australian Institute of Social Relations, has been the provision of new training qualifications, with the delivery of the first full courses in the **Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution and Relationship Counselling** in 2008.

In December, the Attorney-General's Department selected the **Australian FDR Training Group**, led by RASA, to nationally deliver its new accreditation training and assessment requirements to eligible FDR Practitioners (see page 16 for more details). The program is designed to ensure a set of nationally consistent standards through face-to-face training, online training and recognition assessments.

The RANSW training division, **Australian Institute of Relationship Studies (AIRS)**, now offers five accredited courses to students and professionals.

Another training highlight was RACR's commencement of the **Diploma of Counselling and Group Work** for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in partnership with AIRS. Funding support was received from the ACT Government; the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA); the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and a number of ACT community organisations. More than 20 talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers have enrolled and are on their way to achieving a mainstream counselling qualification. This project was inspired by the commitment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to keep moving on the path of reconciliation.

Other highlights included RANT's delivery of **mediation training** to members of an Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land and the development of the **Indigenous model** of mediation by the Indigenous advisors in Central Australia.



■ Indigenous smoking ceremony at the opening of the new Darwin Family Relationship Centre premises.

The Year that Was (continued)

Service quality and appropriateness

In our efforts to continuously improve the quality of our services, we look to the communities we serve for guidance. A **Community Needs Analysis** conducted by RACR will be used to identify needs and priority groups in the ACT and surrounding region and to guide RACR's three-year strategic plan.

RANT's **CALD** project (see page 13 for further details) seeks community involvement to better enhance the appropriateness of its services. RANT staff also undertook cross-cultural training and training in the use of interpreter services.

RACR, RANT and RAV were audited this year and were found to be fully compliant with FaHCSIA's **Family Relationship Services Program Approval Requirements**.

People and infrastructure

After three years of growth, this was a year of consolidation for RAV during which it committed to a major investment in technology and focused on delivering quality services.

RAV's three-year **technology program** will give its staff improved tools to meet clients' needs more effectively. It includes an industry-standard client information system, a website and intranet, and upgraded infrastructure. RAV also completed its organisational restructure this year, which included the creation of two new senior roles.

RANSW appointed new staff in clinical services leadership, finance, IT and senior management to support workforce growth and increased service demand. Its human resources achievements were recognised in its nomination for a **Business Achievement Award** from the Equal Employment for Women Agency.

RANT's continued secure financial position will enable **further consolidation and innovations**, including the possible purchase of property for the first time. RANT has a staffing level of 50, the youngest staff of any RA member organisation and a high proportion of men, CALD and Indigenous staff, in line with the demographic trend for the Northern Territory.

RAQ also enjoyed further growth, while consolidating its corporate services and functions. Additionally, the development of RAQ's online, telephone and virtual services has enabled it to reach a new group of people.

■ Meeting with our patron, the Governor-General, Government House Canberra, 7 April 2009. From left to right: Mary Pekin, CEO Relationships Australia Canberra and Region; Harold Bates-Brownsword, National President; Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General; Rhonda Lawson Street, National Director.



Relationships Matter in Tough Times

Across Australia we've been inspired by the people we've assisted through tough times and are humbled to be part of their stories of survival, resilience and growth.

Below are some of the ways we have worked with people facing drought, fire and economic hardship.

Some services are available across Australia while others are state or territory-specific. The snapshots below provide just a glimpse of our work. For a full list of services and locations, visit www.relationships.com.au.

Support in times of drought

Drought affects communities financially and personally, with many people experiencing grief, loss and trauma. Following are some of the ways we've assisted communities affected by drought.

Growing Strong, Embracing Change

In South Australia, RASA's Growing Strong, Embracing Change free drought program helps communities manage the effects of drought and respond to change.

RASA has taken a collaborative approach to strengthening communities' resilience and focuses on strengthening links between service providers and community members.

Family Support Drought Response

In Tasmania, RA Tas provides social and emotional support to individuals, families and communities through its Family Support Drought Response (FSDR) team. The team was funded for 12 months by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The team works primarily by giving people a call and dropping in to have a cuppa and a chat over the kitchen table. It also held stalls at numerous country agricultural shows across the state, including Agfest,

one of the largest annual agricultural shows in the country. This provided the opportunity to talk to the rural community and hand out information on recognising and managing mental health problems.

Other FSDR activities included free family-focused days as part of Country Spirit community events, and Boot the Drought, a program to engage women on the land who receive exceptional circumstances assistance from the Australian Government. As part of Boot the Drought, each participant painted and decorated one of their old pairs of boots, and received a new pair from Blundstone Boots. An artist from the Fingal Valley facilitated the artistic process, while an FSDR worker facilitated discussions.

Education and skills development

In Western Australia, suicide prevention through education and skills development in regional areas is among the practical community activities initiated by RAWA's Drought Response Teams.

In collaboration with Lifeline and the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service, RAWA also delivered workshops in the southern towns of Katanning and Albany. Open to service providers and the public, the workshops covered signs of suicide, communication and referral strategies, and counselling for bereaved families.

■ From left to right: Rebecca Williams, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment; artist Maggie Fletcher; Ange Saunder, RA Tasmania Rural Support Team; and Gabbi Bresnehan, Aussie Helpers.



Relationships Matter in Tough Times (continued)

On-farm visits and outreach

In the Australian Capital Territory, on-farm visits and outreach to small town centres were key features of RACR's support program in the Riverina and Murray-Darling Basin regions. In partnership with Mallee Family Care, RACR provided support services to over 200 people in the past year. Workers have built extensive networks throughout the regions, which have facilitated referral of clients who would not otherwise access traditional counselling services.



Bushfire response

Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires in February 2009 will long be remembered as one of the nation's most devastating natural disasters. Since then, RAV's Traralgon Centre has played a crucial role in Gippsland's recovery, where the fires devastated several communities.

The centre acted quickly in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, offering free counselling to residents and assistance to local schools whose children and staff were experiencing high levels of anxiety and grief. It has continued to respond to local people's needs in various ways.

Counselling has provided families, couples and individuals with strategies to protect and strengthen their relationships. One couple said they had been arguing continually since the fires had destroyed their home. By exploring what happened on the day, the counsellor was able to help them communicate their experiences and feelings with one another. The couple reported that this process was insightful as each of them had made assumptions as to what the other was experiencing.

A key challenge has been to respond appropriately and quickly to the different communities' needs. For example, people in towns damaged in the fires the week before Black Saturday reported feeling left out of the national bushfire response and were angry and resentful. By liaising with key local people and other service providers, the centre provided an outreach counselling service for these communities.

In April, RAV appointed a Bushfire Recovery Community Liaison Officer to build links with affected residents, identify gaps in service needs and explore opportunities to engage adolescents within the fire-affected areas. He and other RAV staff have taken part in community events which have offered some light relief and the opportunity for people to share their experiences.

The impact of the fires will continue to affect Victorian communities for many years. As a part of the Gippsland community, the Traralgon Centre will continue to offer counselling support, group work and community education activities to facilitate the recovery process.

Supporting remote and marginalised communities

Financial Counselling and Safe Haven

RAQ provides a number of programs that respond to the needs of isolated and disadvantaged communities. This past year it opened a financial counselling service and a Safe Haven service in Cherbourg, a predominantly Aboriginal community challenged by multiple disadvantages.

The financial counselling service is for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. The Safe Haven service in Cherbourg is designed to reduce the impact of domestic and family violence on Indigenous young people and their families. It includes family counselling, family support, youth work, night patrol and community development work.

Family Support Service

RAQ strategies for building resilience in rural communities include a Family Support Service in Longreach, a remote and isolated community nearly 700kms west of Rockhampton. The service provides advocacy, support, information and referrals. Its work has been strengthened by the appointment of a Gambling Help Counsellor and Community Educator. RAQ operated family support services from a number of other rural and remote locations including Palm Island, Bowen and Cannonvale.



Relationships Matter in Tough Times (continued)

Rainbow Service

Another example of RAQ forming partnerships to provide inclusive services in marginalised communities is the Rainbow Service, a family and relationships counselling outreach for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

The service operates from the Brisbane offices of partner organisation, the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities. It offers one of the few opportunities for members of these vulnerable communities to access affordable counselling support in Queensland's south-east.

Fly In Fly Out

In spite of the global economic downturn, RAWA's Fly In Fly Out workshops continue to provide education support for couples and families where one or both partners work remotely. The impact of work rosters being changed, to suit employers rather than employees, is among the recent topics for discussion.

Family relationship education

In New South Wales, RANSW provided tailored family relationship education programs/camps for families who have experienced domestic violence, grandparents raising grandchildren, and parent carers of children with chronic illness or disabilities.

In partnership with SDN Children's Services, RANSW delivered parenting programs to vulnerable families within early childhood centres. It also distributed almost 10,000 copies of its 'Best Dads' CD-ROM, which guides dads and kids through a fun, interactive game designed to strengthen their connection and build relationship skills.

Training for Aboriginal mentors

RANSW's Healthy Family Circles project, in partnership with Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation in Redfern, was extended for another year. The project has trained 10 Aboriginal mentors in leadership and group facilitation, developed a host of resources to support families in relationships and parenting, and helped to build cultural pride within the community.

RANSW's Bathurst Family Relationship Centre and Early Intervention Service now has two Aboriginal workers, and a specialised Aboriginal Counselling Service was launched in Northern Sydney.

Addressing family violence

In the Australian Capital Territory, RACR continued to address and ameliorate the effects of violence and abuse in intimate relationships. Its family violence program promotes the cessation of violence and abuse, the restitution of personal and relational harm, and the reclamation of a sense of integrity for all those involved.

As part of the Family Violence Program, RACR ran separate anger management groups for men and women. A total of 215 men and women participated in these groups, which had high attendance rates and were positively evaluated.

Women's wellbeing

Physical and psychological wellbeing was the focus of RAWA's Blooming Health all-day health expo for women in the wheatbelt. Topics included coping with change and self-care. The expo was organised by RAWA staff and the Primary Health Network with the support of local groups. Held in the town of Merredin, the expo attracted participants from hundreds of kilometres away and was rated such a success that more all-day sessions are being considered.

Developing the cultural appropriateness of services

Through its Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) pilot project, RANT aims to increase CALD communities' knowledge and awareness of its services while increasing the cultural appropriateness of those services. The project fosters mutual understanding between RANT and the communities it serves, through reciprocal learning.

Strong working relationships have been developed with representatives from the Greek, Chinese, Italian, East Timorese and Karen communities. RANT

staff were invited to community meetings where community members learned about RANT services and met staff in a friendly and relaxed environment, while RANT staff gained awareness of cultural traditions affecting family issues.

RANT also provided a five-week information course for community representatives and support officers to learn about RANT services, with the aim of helping them make more appropriate referrals. The sessions were an opportunity for community capacity building and for building connections between the agency and communities. The project will continue over the next 12 months and will be made available to communities in the top end of the Northern Territory.

Increasing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse staff

RANSW continued to strengthen its connections with families in need across a broad spectrum of society. Strategies included the employment of more staff from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and programs targeted at particular communities. The Strength to Strength program, funded by FaHCSIA, in western Sydney assists humanitarian entrant families from the Middle East and the horn of Africa. Parenting and leadership programs, funded by the NSW government, support the Afghani, Korean and Chinese communities in the Ryde-Hunters Hill area.

■ Relationships Australia Northern Territory's CALD project information session with community representatives held 28 May 2009.



Relationships Matter in Tough Times (continued)

Preventing suicide

square: suicide questions, answers and resources

square is an educational resource and a support package for training and systems change in suicide risk assessment and response. It was developed by General Practice SA and RASA, in conjunction with the Australian Government and South Australian Government, to promote effective and collaborative practice in responding to suicide and self-harm. The package includes face-to-face training, video, hard copy resources and a website hosting the materials.

In 2008, RASA was commissioned by the Australian General Practice Network to deliver the *square* train the trainers program to community support workers across a number of states.

Participants say they have drawn on the knowledge and collaborative relationships forged through the program to respond to the acute distress and depression caused by long-term drought and to identify and support people at risk following the Black Saturday bushfires.

The Country Fire Association, whose members attended a *square* course in Mildura, is now planning to deliver the training to their 60,000 volunteers in Victoria.

The biggest learning of participants in the square community workshops is the recognition that suicide is not just the responsibility of health workers but of entire communities. In my work supporting drought-affected communities, I emphasise the direct correlation between social connectedness and mental health and square supports this methodology. The square model ably addresses the need to mitigate the risk of suicide 24/7 because of its inclusive and collaborative framework, and has become a springboard for related initiatives – Marita Sleep, Drought Project Officer, Mallee Division of General Practice.

More information can be found at www.square.org.au

Support through a changing economy

Greater Support Where Needed

During difficult economic times, increased pressures can lead to a need for greater support in a range of areas. Consequently, we have seen an increase in the numbers of clients across the majority of our services with RAWA in particular seeing an increase of 5500 clients over the last year. We have also moved to provide greater support to those seeking it with RANSW for example waiving or providing reduced fees to almost 50% of their clients.

Employee Assistance Program

Recognising the impact that economic pressures can have, many employers have been keen to support their staff experiencing organisational restructuring, retrenchment, workplace and personal relationship challenges. Consequently, demand for our Employee Assistance Programs has grown, with RAWA experiencing a 30% increase in the use of its EAP services since December 2008.



■ RANT CALD project interagency meeting with Melaleuca Refugee Centre held 28 May 2009.

National Innovation and Capacity Building

Research

We are continually planning, conducting or participating in new research projects to better understand issues, trends, needs and service gaps. Our national projects include the following:

- **Client Outcome Evaluation**, in partnership with the Australian National University, exploring the effectiveness of couple relationship enhancement courses.
- **Work, Love and Play in Diverse Family Life in Australia and New Zealand**, with the University of Melbourne, RAV, La Trobe University and The Bouverie Centre, examining factors that contribute to positive family connections, relationships and family resilience in same-sex parented families.
- **Relationships Indicators Survey 2008**, launched in November, which identified the main issues, supports, concerns and trends for Australians in their couple and family relationships.

Other research projects being undertaken in the states and territories are:

- RANSW's **What's changed?**, in collaboration with Baptist Community Services LifeCare, which assesses changes in the attitudes and behaviours of men who have participated in domestic violence intervention programs.
- RANT's action research, in partnership with the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, is developing more client-friendly information packs.
- RAQ's research into programs funded under the **Family Relationship Services Program**, which explored the impact of the new family law system.
- RA Tas's **Work life balance: social policy and implications for RA Tasmania**, in partnership with University of Tasmania, which will suggest ways to help employers and employees improve work-life balance.
- RAV's **Couple Counselling and Relationship Education and Family Dispute Resolution and Family Violence** research programs, in partnership with La Trobe University.
- RAWA's research into **post-screening interventions for 'at risk' pregnant women**, which seeks to improve health outcomes for women and children.

- Relationships Australia (SA) has been involved in research to determine '**How SA Venues and Support Services Respond to Patrons Requiring Gambling Assistance**'. This research is being conducted through the Southern Cross University's research facility, the Centre for Gambling Education and Research (CGER).
- A research study including Relationships Australia (SA) and the Melbourne Graduate School of Education Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre is currently underway also. This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods to study the effects of familial exposure to gambling upon propensity to gamble and to develop gambling problems amongst children of problem gamblers.



National Innovation and Capacity Building (continued)

Training

Nationally Accredited Training

We provide nationally accredited training across Australia through three Registered Training Organisations: RANSW, RASA and RAV.

RA provides professional, accredited training in a range of areas, including:

- Family Dispute Resolution (RASA, RANSW, RAV).
- Relationship Counselling (RASA).
- Community Services (RASA).
- Youth Work (RASA).

- Post Adoption Support (RASA).
- Systemic Therapy (Couple and Family) (RANSW).
- Couple and Family Therapy (RANSW, RAV).
- Counselling and Group Work (RASA, RANSW).

This year RASA began classroom delivery of the new **Vocational Graduate Diplomas of Family Dispute Resolution and Relationship Counselling**, in response to changes to the family law system and the development of new service models such as Family Relationship Centres. RANSW began delivering the Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution this year, and RAV has also gained approval to run it.



We were successful in being appointed to **re-accredit FDR Practitioners with the Attorney-General's Department** nationally this year. The process identified three units of competency from the Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution as the benchmark for re-accreditation.

To deliver the qualification, RASA led the formation of a consortium of training organisations around Australia, including RANSW's Australian Institute for Relationship Studies, UnitingCare Wesley's Institute of Family Practice (NSW) and RAV's The Training Ground. Training and assessment partnerships with RA entities in Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia were also established.

Short courses, workshops and seminars

A range of short courses, workshops and seminars were held throughout the year, with the aim of building new skills and knowledge within the community service industry.

Seminars included:

- **'Bridging the couple chasm'**, a two-day workshop for 150 people, presented by international leaders in couples therapy Drs John and Julie Gottman and hosted by RANSW on behalf of RA National with the support of FaHCSIA.
- **'Using children's voices to bring about change'**, delivered twice by RACR to more than 50 people by Bill Hewlett, Child Consultant.

Examples of short courses delivered this year include 'The accidental counsellor' (RANSW, RASA), 'Mental health training' (RANSW), 'Child at risk training' (RANSW), 'Community responses to child protection' (RAQ), 'Stress management in the workplace' (RAQ), and 'Relationships with ageing family members' (RAQ).

Networks

FRC Managers Network

The FRC Managers Network supports the analysis of common issues for FRCs such as reporting requirements, research, interface with government,

identification of staffing requirements, referrals and cross-agency work, and work with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and CALD communities. The network has been a driving force for establishing and maintaining a focus on the effectiveness of Child Inclusive Practice in the FRCs.

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) Network

The FDR Network's initiatives this year included documentation of current models for delivering FDR services, as phase one of a possible larger project to examine 'best practice'; preliminary work to review and document material on ethics in FDR; monitoring of progress on the national research project on FDR outcomes; and preparation of a booklet on property matters in FDR.

The network also facilitated helpful exchanges and updates on the training and (re)registration process for FDR practitioners.

National Education Network

This year, the National Education Network (NEN) began auditing all RA courses run across the country. This will enhance the standardisation of courses and the sharing of information and resources.

In consultation with the NEN, RANSW developed a seminar entitled 'Managing change' for Credit Union of Australia (CUA) staff and customers. The seminar is currently being rolled out.

Relationships Australia's Indigenous Network (RAIN)

This year the Indigenous Network's key project was developing a 'Cultural fitness' package. Designed to help RA staff engage with practices in a way that will enhance Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships, the cultural fitness package is a model to 'do the work differently'. The project sub-committee met to collate experiences, resources and information and to inform package content as a way of progressing recommendations in the nationally endorsed 'Framework for action'.

Our Work, Our People

National Office



NATIONAL OFFICE

Key Personnel

Rhonda Lawson Street, National Director

Josephine Ponsford, Business Manager

Deb Nichols, National Webmaster

Melissa Mercado, National Public Relations Coordinator
(August 2008 to June 2009)

Alison Wood-Pottle, Administration Officer (from March 2009)

Board Members

Harold Bates-Brownsword, President

Anne Hollonds, Vice President

Andrew Davis, Treasurer

Rhonda Lawson Street, National Director

Judith Cross

Susan Holmes

Michael Hunt

Marie Morrison

Mary Pekin

Terri Reilly

■ From left to right: Hugh Mackay, social commentator; Lyla Davies, former National President; Sue Pidgeon, Attorney-General's Department; Harold Bates-Brownsword, National President, at Relationships Australia's 60th anniversary event held at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, on 26 November 2008.



The past year has seen the continuing development and shaping of the RA national organisation. By the end of the financial year, we had completed a review of our current model of governance. Throughout the year the National Office has continued to advise and support the board, and to facilitate the collaboration of the RA CEOs around the country on national business.

Program-based national networks have again been an important feature for sharing information, knowledge and skills across the country. In the past year, National Office has coordinated two new networks – the National Communications Strategy Working Group and the Drought Workers Network. The participants have benefited from great support, collaboration and strategy development through these networks.

The advent of separate websites for some of our member organisations has prompted us to consider how users access the national site and member sites, and to develop the most appropriate pathways between the two.

Our national research activities in the past year have included the 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey and the Client Outcome Evaluation, which is evaluating the process and outcomes of RA relationships education programs.

In the national policy picture, we were very pleased to see the fruition of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children in April 2009, to which we contributed through the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Children. We continued to value our working relationships on policy and research issues with a wide range of peak bodies. We also became a foundation member of a new body, the Australian Community Services Industry Group. We look forward to continuing productive working relationships with these organisations into the future.

Our Work, Our People

Canberra and Region



Relationships Australia Canberra and Region (RACR) continued to grow and enrich the skill base of its team in 2008–09. The appointment of two family therapists and a relationship educator coordinator has extended the range of specialist skills we offer to clients.

Both the Canberra and Wagga Wagga Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) have continued to provide support through offering short-term Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) assistance, information, referral and support for the ACT and southern NSW regional service network.

All RACR FDR Practitioners completed training and assessment to achieve accreditation under the Australian Government's new FDR accreditation requirements. RACR managers and senior practitioners also supported RA South Australia (RASA) to train and assess FDR Practitioners working in the ACT and regional NSW.

RACR introduced a number of exciting initiatives this year, including the Diploma of Counselling and Group Work for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT. RACR also began providing counselling outreach services at Billabong Aboriginal Corporation in the ACT, furthering our relationship and links with the Indigenous community.

RACR extended its outreach capacity through a partnership to provide counselling services to the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre and the West Belconnen Health Cooperative opening at Charnwood in the coming year.

Following the appointment of a relationship educator coordinator and the completion of a community needs analysis, RACR established a CALD working group to progress initiatives and to form closer working relationships with multicultural services and people from CALD backgrounds.

RACR continued to increase its contact with secondary schools in regional NSW and the ACT through the delivery of the Love BiTES group education program and other community development activities and forums.

The Australian Government has extended its Drought Counselling program until 2010, along with Family Relationships Services Program contracts. This will allow the RACR Drought Response Team to continue the vital work of supporting families and couples experiencing hardship in regional NSW.

CANBERRA AND REGION

Key Personnel

Mary Pekin, Chief Executive Officer

Janenne Hamilton, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Jacki Lardner, Finance Manager

Bernadette Post, Riverina Branch Manager

Serena Griggs, Riverina Branch Assistant Manager

Felicity Hamilton, Policy and Research Manager

Amy McGinn, Manager, Canberra Family Relationship Centre

Ray Overvliet, Manager, Wagga Wagga Family Relationship Centre

Susanne Morton, Corporate Administrator

Alexandra Faulkner, Wagga Wagga Children's Contact Service Coordinator

Christopher Higginson, Family Violence Coordinator

Gisela Pullen-Gordon, Family Dispute Resolution Coordinator

Liz Preston, Family Dispute Resolution Coordinator

Board Members

Sue Lyons, President

Anne Reese, Vice President

Jim Dunn, Vice President and Chair Finance Committee (from October 2008)

Val Albrecht, Chair Finance Committee (to October 2008)

Marilyn Chalkley, Secretary

Peter Bailey

Lorraine Watt

Bernadette Post

Felicity Hamilton

Helen Moyle (to October 2008)

Jennifer Cavenagh (to October 2008)

Our Work, Our People

New South Wales



NEW SOUTH WALES

Key Personnel

Anne Hollonds, Chief Executive Officer

Lesley Brookes, Chief Finance Officer

Margaret Hill, Chief Finance Officer (to September 2008)

Lyn Fletcher, Director of Operations

Pam Lewis, Director of Client Services

Gail Westcott, Business Development Manager

Kathy Wood, Senior Manager

Kerrie McFadden, Senior Manager

Greg McKay, Senior Manager for Information Communications and Technology (ICT)

David Allan, Manager, RAPS Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation Service and ARC Aftercare Resource Centre and Support Service

Akivra Bouris, Manager, Hunter Region (to August 2008)

Rick Greene, Manager, Mediation Service / Telephone Dispute Resolution Service

Janet Carmichael, Manager, City of Sydney Family Relationship Centre

Cheryl Charlesworth, Manager, Blacktown Family Relationship Centre

Megan Frost, Manager, Brookvale Family Relationship Centre

Matt Garrett, Manager, Hunter Region (from September 2008)

Steve Hackett, Manager, Penrith Family Relationship Centre (to December 2008)

Jonathan Sykes, Manager, Penrith Family Relationship Centre (from April 2009)

Gary Hodson, Manager, South East Region

Lorraine Murphy, Manager, Relationship Education / Family Skills Training Program

Brian O'Neill, Manager, Illawarra Region

David Roberts, Manager, North Ryde Family Relationship Centre

Christine Sinclair, Manager, Bathurst Family Relationship Centre (to May 2009)

David Sokol, Manager, West Region

Anita Vosper, Manager, North Region

Andy Spaulding, Manager of Australian Institute of Relationship Studies (AIRS)

Board Members

John Seaman, President

Sarah Fogg, Vice President

John Longworth, Vice President

Edna Blanchard (to November 2008)

Louise Fitt

Margaret Scott

Lynette Lennard

Lynne Fishwick (from 30 April 2009)

Laura Raymer (from 30 April 2009)

A major initiative for Relationships Australia NSW (RA NSW) was a new pilot project on models of interdisciplinary collaborative practice to assist separating families. The project involves an interdisciplinary group of practitioners – including family lawyers, financial advisors, child consultants, coaches and family dispute resolution practitioners – working collaboratively to assist separating parents with their disputes. It will be evaluated by the University of Technology Sydney.

Developing better access to our services and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients has been another major focus. Our new Bathurst centre, providing early intervention services and a Family Relationship Centre, employed an Aboriginal community development worker, and in March 2009 we launched the Aboriginal Counselling Service to address needs expressed by the Indigenous community in northern Sydney.

We also held a forum on integrating culturally sensitive practice and awareness across program delivery areas in the organisation and are applying the key learnings across all our work.

RANSW continues to provide online counselling for people unable to access local services, looking for anonymity, or those who prefer an online service. We anticipate further development of this service as we continue to adapt to technological shifts in communication about relationships.

Our Work, Our People

Northern Territory



This year Relationships Australia Northern Territory (RANT) has seen considerable consolidation and further growth. Many programs have grown, some with additional funding and others despite funding constraints.

The Counselling program has grown and is now more than adequately staffed with extremely competent practitioners. The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), originally a pilot, has received increased and ongoing funding in recognition of its valuable work. The Men's program doubled its client numbers. The Relationship Education program has undertaken new initiatives such as the Building Connections pilot and continues to offer a suite of valuable programs.

The Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) program saw a large number of clients, many with complex needs. Again this can be attributed to the quality of its staff and management. The FRC, now in its third year, continued to provide high quality services and a variety of innovative training programs to other agencies, including professional development training for the Law Society and culturally appropriate mediation training for Indigenous staff in Arnhem Land.

Professional training is now being offered in partnership with RASA, including Vocational Graduate Diplomas of Family Dispute Resolution and Relationship Counselling. Professional development for clinical staff was provided by international presenters David Epston, John Winslade and Karl Tomm.

In Alice Springs, existing programs are growing and new programs commencing. RANT was successful in the Post Separation Cooperative Parenting tender, in partnership with Centacare, and in two small innovation grants from WISE Employment. Indigenous advisors Don Mallard and Cheryl Ross were accredited as FDR Practitioners, and Don Mallard's Father's Day project, 'Best Man for the Job', was a very successful innovation.

In partnership with WISE employment, RANT was successful in the Job Services Network tender.

The many successes of the year reflect the sound governance provided by the board and the skills and enthusiasm of the staff.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Key Personnel

Marie Morrison, Chief Executive Officer

Belinda Emmerson-Whyte, Manager of Counselling and Relationship Education (to December 2008)

Janet Muirhead, Manager of Counselling (from January 2009)

Barry Sullivan, Family Dispute Resolution Manager

Michelle Menzies, Family Relationship Centre Manager

Robyn Donnelly, Alice Springs Branch Manager

Kaliopi Kavouklis, Human Resources Officer

Gary Lambert, Finance Officer

Board Members

Andrew Hemming, President

Christine Millowick, Vice President

Doug Gillanders, Public Officer

Julie Wells

James O'Sullivan

Mahasti Fashidi

Natalie Bellew

■ Dragon Blessing, Chinese New Year celebration at the Darwin Family Relationship Centre.



Our Work, Our People

Queensland



QUEENSLAND

Key Personnel

Andrew Davis, Chief Executive Officer

Shane Klintworth, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Samantha Aldridge, Executive Director, Practice and Development

Rebecca O'Connor, Director, Information Technology and Communication

Judith Hunt, Director, Finance and Asset Management

Tracey McMaster, Director, Human Resources

Paul Simmons, Director, Training and Professional Development

Noeline Davis, Zone Director Border

Matt Gardiner, Zone Director Metropolitan

Steve Parker, Zone Director North

Elisabeth Wilson-Evered, Director, Research

Julia Arnold, Director, Commonwealth Programs

Barry Walton, Director, State Programs

Adina Pizzato, Director, Marketing and Business Development

Debra Bennet, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs

Board Members

Eva-Marie Seeto, President

Nita Vogler, Vice President

Bruce Ballment

Catherine Ketton

Peter Swarbrick

Michelle Bradford

Andrew Davis, Secretary

Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) assisted more than 26,000 clients in 50 venues throughout Queensland and northern NSW this past year.

Following strong growth in our services over the past few years, we spent energy in 2008–09 rearranging our corporate affairs and infrastructure. We expanded our finance, human resources and marketing departments and brought together professional development, client service management, practice management and leadership, training, professional development and quality coordination into a new directorate. RAQ also appointed its first Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs.

During the year we refitted premises at Spring Hill, Ipswich (to be known as Lyla Davies Place in honour of our former long-serving president), Loganholme (replacing the office at Logan) and Chermside. We also opened new offices at Cannonvale and Cannon Hill and purchased premises at Eight Mile Plains. Although we are unable to fully occupy the new Eight Mile Plain offices until 2011, their availability will coincide with the end of our lease for the current Training Centre and Client Contact Centre at Eight Mile Plains.

This year we made significant progress in developing a new client information system, which will be completed in another year. Details of the new system are on the dedicated website www.spectrumapplications.com.au.

Our Work, Our People

South Australia



Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA) has grown significantly over the past 12 months and embraced new projects and challenges. We are committed to providing services appropriate for the unique and varied needs of families in South Australia.

Our recent expansion of Gambling Help Services in the southern area of Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island has enabled us to employ a number of highly skilled staff to support and assist new clients.

Another new program this year was iKiDs (I Know, I Do) which supports children following the separation of their parents. We value our staff for their rigor, leadership and ability to reflect upon their work.

RASA's dedicated and respected reputation as a Registered Training Organisation has enabled us to be successfully appointed as the lead agency for a national process through the Attorney-General's Department to re-accredit FDR practitioners.

In this lead role, the Australian Institute of Social Relations played a major role in the design and development of all learning and assessment activities which were rolled out across Australia. Over 1,200 people were accredited between 1 March and 31 August 2009 and we received positive feedback from our partners, students and the Attorney-General's Department.

Over the past year, RASA combined with the Riverland Response Centre (RRC) and developed a project involving local youth in positive activities. The student photographic competition, 'Celebrating the Riverland', grew into an exciting initiative involving the entire Riverland community. Exactly 300 disposable cameras were distributed to students throughout 20 local schools with each of the students having participated in a photography workshop presented by RASA.

Photographs were displayed initially at the Riverland Field Days and then in many areas including schools and public areas in the Riverland. Judging was carried out by local photographers and the RRC. During December and January, selected photographs will be displayed in the Photographic Wholesaler's Gallery next to Relationships Australia (SA)'s Hutt Street office in Adelaide.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Key Personnel

Judith Cross, Chief Executive Officer

Claire Ralfs, Director of Services

Adam Green, Director of Finance and Operations

Sandra Vallance, Director of IT and Marketing

Sandra Schultz, Finance Manager

Joanna Retnam, Business Systems Manager

Jen Hamer, Senior Manager, Primary Health, Education and Training

Simon Curran, Senior Manager, Family Services

Lorraine Baker, Manager, Human Resources

Grant Pearson, Regional Manager, Northern and Riverland Regions

Mergo Ray, Regional Manager, Central and Southern Regions

Enaam Oudih, Manager, PEACE Multicultural Services

Rosemary Hambledon, Manager, Gambling Help Services

Iain Henderson, Practice Manager, Education and Training

Virginia Leeuwenburg, Practice Manager, Dispute Resolution and Post Separation Services

Deborah Lockwood, Practice Manager, Community and Workforce Development

Sue Mann, Clinical Practice Manager, Counselling

Joanne Willmot, Practice Manager, Aboriginal Services

Kate Brett, Team Manager, Adelaide Family Relationship Centre

Shirley Rutter, Team Manager, Salisbury/Elizabeth Family Relationship Centre

Board Members

Franco Camatta, President

Peter Lee, Vice President

Geoff Kay, Treasurer

Sandy Miller, Member

Vaia Proios, Member

Stephanie Ziersch, Member

Judith Cross, Member

Our Work, Our People

Tasmania



TASMANIA

Key Personnel

Susan Holmes, Chief Executive Officer

Debbie Evans, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Leanne Bishop, Manager, Launceston Family Relationship Centre

Roseanne Brumby, Manager, Counselling Services – South

Brendan Griggs, Corporate Services Manager

Tim Henry, Regional Manager – North

Michael Kelly, Manager Family Services – South

Louise Knopman, Acting Manager, Hobart Family Relationship Centre

Michael Voumard, Development Officer

Board Members

Glenn Hay, President

Tim Maddock, Vice President

Penny Brown, Secretary

Richard Colquhoun, Treasurer

Melanie Bartlett, North Western Representative

Pat Fitzgerald, Southern Representative

Diana Williams, General Representative

Janet Patford, Northern Representative

In 2008–09 Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) continued to deliver excellent professional services to a diverse range of clients.

The launch of the Supporting Children After Separation program in November 2008 added to the suite of services we provide for families after separation. With its focus on children after separation, it has strengthened our commitment to working in new ways with children.

The Drought Team's work for the year culminated in five large-scale community events in key rural centres. The events combined information, support and referral with fun, relaxation and entertainment for all members of community families.

Our work with new Tasmanians has increased and has expanded to include parenting groups and play-groups for Sierra Leonean, Congolese, Burundi, Sudanese and Karen families. These groups are valued by participants and bring joy to the staff who work with these wonderful parents and their children. Our rooms are alive with the sounds of singing, laughter, chatter and high levels of participation.

The successful launch of the North West Children's Contact Service was a testament to the work that the Roland Children's Service and RA Tas Devonport Children's Contact Services have done to amalgamate the two services.

The management team has spent considerable time on implementing the first year of the 2008–11 Strategic Plan. The plan includes the provision of services to an increasingly diverse group of clients, focusing on the evolving social inclusion agenda and developing staff competencies to meet the needs of emerging client groups.

The RA Tas board, management team and staff are committed to finding more effective ways of supporting family and community relationships in the current difficult times.

Our Work, Our People

Victoria



Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) completed another challenging year in which the number of clients continued to increase and their needs become more complex.

We provided a diverse range of services from 12 centres – eight client service centres and four Family Relationship Centres (FRCs). The former Narre Warren Centre was relocated from temporary premises in Springvale to its new site at Cranbourne. The Greensborough Centre opened an outreach service at Whittlesea to improve access to counselling for outer northern suburbs residents. The new Melbourne FRC was officially opened by the Australian Government Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, on 7 August 2008.

We increased our involvement in community activities through drought counselling programs in the Shepparton region and Gippsland and the bushfire recovery program in Gippsland. Staff from our Gamblers Help service participated in community education forums and events to encourage responsible gambling and provide information for people who have difficulty managing their gambling behaviour. The FRCs worked closely with their respective Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to raise awareness about the centres' services and to ensure they were able to meet the communities' specific needs.

In May 2009, we welcomed announcements from the Australian Government about continued funding for our family relationship and drought counselling services, as well as ongoing funding for early intervention services and our FRC operations at Sunshine, Berwick and Greensborough. RAV was allocated new funding for the bushfire recovery program being undertaken by our Traralgon Centre in Gippsland.

RAV's training division, The Training Ground, was part of the successful consortium – the Australian FDR Training Group – which won the National FDR Practitioner Accreditation and Training contract. As part of the training group, RAV delivered training and assessment in FDR and other family services.

RAV continued to develop strong and productive working relationships with government, consortium partners, other service providers, the legal community and educational institutions, creating a very strong network of organisations committed to the wellbeing of Victorians.

VICTORIA

Key Personnel

Michael Hunt, Chief Executive Officer

Andrew Bickerdike, General Manager Operations

Carole Baker, General Manager Business Systems and Technology

Ann Wright, General Manager FRC Operations and Training

Edwin Lang, General Manager Corporate Services

Max Wright, Senior Manager Practice Quality

Board Members

Judi Anderson, President

Ronda Jacobs, Vice President

Ken Heyward, immediate past President (to October 2008)

Lyn Littlefield

Michael Shaw

Paul Staindl

Michael Wootten

Peter Boehm (from October 2008)

Lyn Brodie (from October 2008)

John Lovell (from October 2008)

Our Work, Our People

Western Australia



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Key Personnel

Terri Reilly, Chief Executive Officer

Ian Roberts, Director, Corporate Services

Penny Glanville, Director, Operations

Marian Affleck, Director, Clinical Practice

Mandy Flahavin, Senior Manager Family Dispute Resolution

Fiona McDonald, Senior Manager Education and Training

Michael Sheehan, Senior Manager Children's Services

Susan Visser, Senior Manager Branches

Board Members

Richard Wilson, President

Tony Dobbs, Vice President (from October 2008)

Pauline Phillips, Vice President (to May 2009)

Rob Donovan

John King

Chris Lewis

Brian Krause (to May 2009)

Helen Shurven (from September 2008)

Noelene Jennings (from October 2008)

Lucy Bourne (from May 2009)

An innovative step for Relationships Australia Western Australia (RAWA) this year was participation in an interactive drama performance, 'The lives of men: understanding men through stories'. The performance, held at a community centre in Mandurah, was coordinated by Perth Playback Theatre and RAWA's Men and Family Relationships staff.

Playback actors – three female and one male – listened to brief personal stories from the audience and acted out the scenario, without rehearsal or planning. The aim was to find fresh ways to encourage men to talk about their feelings and emotions. Several audience members said they gained a new perspective by watching what other people made of their scenario.

RAWA also played a major role in supporting people making applications to the WA State Government under the Redress program. Redress is a compensation scheme for people who have suffered abuse or neglect in state care and is designed to avoid the stress of a court process. It offers eligible applicants an acknowledgement of the abuse, an apology from the State Government, an ex gratia payment and access to services such as counselling.

RAWA is funded to provide counselling and support to applicants and to help manage their associated distress. Highest demand for the service has been experienced in regional areas, where it has run in close collaboration with other organisations.

With most of the applications submitted in March and April, staff have demonstrated exceptional dedication in responding to the challenge of providing services to a large number of people in a short period of time.

Out and About

CONFERENCE PAPERS

International

Little, Peter (RAV), 'The icy pole stick dance and more', Smart Marriages Conference, San Francisco, USA, 30 June – 5 July 2008.

Australian

Aldridge, Samantha (RAQ), and Rae, Natasha (RAQ), 'Crossing program boundaries – seamless service delivery for clients', Collective Wisdom: Together We Are Better, Family Relationship Services National Conference, Cairns, QLD, 5–7 November 2008.

Bickerdike, Andrew (RAV), 'Transforming the landscape. Family dispute resolution and family law reform – the first 1,000 clients', 9th National Mediation Conference, Perth, WA, 10–12 September 2008.

Chapman, Astrid (RAWA), 'New country; new challenges for young refugee women in forming relationships', 1st International Women's Day Conference, Fremantle, WA, 6–7 March 2009.

Flahavin, Mandy (RAWA), and Sankaran, Ramdas (Multicultural Services Centre WA), 'Including the excluded – the one that didn't get away', Partnerships for Social Inclusion Conference, Melbourne, VIC, 15–16 October, 2008.

Flahavin, Mandy (RAWA), 'Cross cultural exploration of mediation – a collaborative approach between Relationships Australia WA and Multicultural Services Centre WA', Collective Wisdom: Together We Are Better, Family Relationship Services National Conference, Cairns, QLD, 5–7 November 2008.

Hall, Scott (RAV), 'Parenting programs specifically for dads', Collective Wisdom: Together We Are Better, Family Relationship Services National Conference, Cairns, QLD, 5–7 November 2008.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Family Relationship Centres and changes to the family law system', ACWA08 – Strong, Safe and Sustainable: Responding to Children, Young People and Families in a Civil Society, Associations of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference, Sydney, NSW, 18–20 August 2008.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Equal shared parental responsibility and the child: a psychologist's perspective', The Second Annual Family Law Conference, QLD, October 2008.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Understanding Family Relationship Centres and sharing progress to date', Family and Child Law Conference, Sydney, NSW, November 2008.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Child centred collaborative law: purpose and possibilities', Collaborating Down Under, Sydney, NSW, 26–29 March 2009.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Dealing with family violence – joining the dots', National Family Law Intensive, Sydney, NSW, April 2009.

Hollonds, Anne (RANSW), 'Strengthening community connections', Happiness and Its Causes Conference, Sydney, NSW, 14–15 May 2009.

Holmes, Susan (RA Tas), 'The nature and effects of family violence', 13th Annual Family Law Intensive, Melbourne, VIC, 2 May 2009.

Holt, Lillian (RASA), 'Inclusivity', Noah's Ark Early Childhood Education Conference, Melbourne, VIC, July 2008.

Holt, Lillian (RASA), 'My idea of justice', Inaugural Crime and Justice Festival, Melbourne, VIC, July 2008.

Holt, Lillian (RASA), 'Reclaiming ourselves', Reclaim the Night 30th Anniversary, Adelaide, SA, October 2008.

Holt, Lillian (RASA), 'Why whiteness', Womenspeak – An Initiative of the YWCA in Australia, Adelaide, SA, Perth, WA, Canberra, ACT, Sydney, NSW, Toowoomba, QLD, March, April, July, September and November 2008.

Holt, Lillian (RASA), 'Aboriginal education – panel speaker', Australian Education Union Conference (Aboriginal Members), Adelaide, SA, June 2009.

Hunt, Chris, Lowe, Roger, and Simmons, Paul (RAQ), 'Towards multi-positioned live supervision in family therapy training', 29th Australian Family Therapy Conference, Brisbane, QLD, 1–3 October 2008.

Kelly, Susan (RAQ) and Olman, Vicki (RAQ), 'Celebrating me: A service response to re-traumatisation', Strength in Unity Conference, Australian Association of Social Workers, Sydney, NSW, 9–12 November 2008.

McDonald, Fiona (RAWA), and Sheehan, Michael (RAWA), 'Family connections: a parenting program with a difference', Collective Wisdom: Together We Are Better, Family Relationship Services National Conference, Cairns, QLD, 5–7 November 2008.

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Abbreviations

AIRS	Australian Institute of Relationship Studies	RA	Relationships Australia
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	RACR	Relationships Australia Canberra and Region
CCS	Children's Contact Service	RAIN	Relationships Australia Indigenous Network
CUA	Credit Union Australia	RANSW	Relationships Australia New South Wales
EAP	Employee Assistance Program	RANT	Relationships Australia Northern Territory
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	RAQ	Relationships Australia Queensland
FDR	Family Dispute Resolution	RASA	Relationships Australia South Australia
FSDR	Family Support Drought Response	RA Tas	Relationships Australia Tasmania
FRC	Family Relationship Centre	RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
FRSP	Family Relationship Services Program	RAWA	Relationships Australia Western Australia
MOU	Memorandum of understanding	RTO	Registered Training Organisation
NWCCS	North West Children's Contact Service	SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
PEACE	Personal Education and Community Empowerment		

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