



The Family Violence Prevention Foundation of Australia  
**annual report 2016**



violence free families

# The Family Violence Prevention Foundation of Australia



## Annual Report 2016

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The Family Violence Prevention Foundation of Australia trading as  
Violence Free Families.

Our fundamental belief is that children and adults all have the right to live  
in homes free of violence and trauma, in "Violence Free Families".

The potential for community benefit is enormous and it is our ambition  
that Violence Free Families will become a reality for all families in Australia.

[www.violencefreefamilies.org.au](http://www.violencefreefamilies.org.au)



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# The year in review



## Overview

This year has seen the near-completion of our longitudinal study into the outcomes of men's behaviour change programs by Monash University and preparation for delivering our new online men's behaviour change program on a large scale.

## Research

Data collection for the research study was completed in December 2015 and Professor Emeritus Thea Brown, our lead researcher, has presented preliminary findings to numerous organisations, including the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the Department of Health and Human Services (Vic) and other interested organisations.

**The key finding is that the programs work, they work well and they work in the long term.** This is the largest study ever conducted in Australia, and one of very few in the world. It will contribute substantially to removing past doubts about the outcomes of programs. In addition to the headline findings, there is a great deal of detail that will assist in developing future programs.

## The Online Behavior Change Program

The fourth online men's behaviour change program ran from February to May and was very successful. Clients from three States, regional and urban, and from indigenous and ethnically diverse communities participated. This confirmed the universal need for the program and the reasons that drove this initiative in the first place. We aim to start regular program provision in 2017.

## Rotary Exchange Ambassadorships

In February, Rotary District 9800, the Rotary Club of Balwyn and Violence Free Families awarded the first annual Rotary Exchange Ambassadorship for family violence prevention professionals. The Australian awardee, Superintendent Matthew Ryan, deputy head of Victoria Police's Family Violence Prevention unit, travelled to New Orleans and other parts of the USA for eight weeks, gathering information that will benefit the Victorian and Australian community. The incoming exchange ambassador, Marie-Claire Landry, Executive Director of the New Orleans Family Justice Center, visited Victorian organisations and addressed the Rotary District 9800 Conference in Bendigo in March 2016.

## Funding and Community Support

Our Ambassador, Colleen Hewett and her manager, Danny Finley, continued to support us and publicise our cause. They presented to a sold-out concert in Bendigo and Colleen did radio and TV interviews while continuing to air her anti-violence anthem, 'Let me Breathe'.

We welcomed the continuing official recognition of our programs by Rotary. Generous donations were received from Women in Rotary and clubs, as well as philanthropic trusts and individual donors. Many family violence prevention presentations were made to community organisations, spreading awareness of family violence and our contributions to prevention.

Dr David Smyth, Chairperson

# Vision, rationale & objectives

Our vision is summed up in our name, Violence Free Families. We aim to reduce all types of family violence: physical, psychological, financial and sexual. We provide a nation-wide community focus for action against violence. Fundamental to our existence is the belief that all children, and all adults, have the right to live in homes free of violence and trauma. The potential for community benefit is enormous.

Following Rosie Batty becoming the 2015 Australian of the Year, completion of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria and TV programs such as the ABC's 'Hitting Home', awareness of the issue of family violence remain high and the public are more prepared to openly discuss the issue. Governments have pledged funds to combat family violence, and the sector is seeing rapid development.

As a community-based organisation, Violence Free Families recognises that the most serious element of this complex problem is violence perpetrated by men against women and that one in four Australian children witnesses or experiences this violence or abuse. Our current programs are directed towards this element as a priority.

# History

The Family Violence Prevention Foundation of Australia, trading as Violence Free Families, was established in 2009 to build on the previous 14 years of experience in family violence prevention activities by the Rotary Club of Brighton, Victoria.

From 1995 to 2002 the Club provided men's behaviour change programs in the Bayside area through "Bayside Family Support", a non-profit company established for that purpose. In 2002 it transferred this service to prominent Melbourne counselling agency LifeWorks Relationships Counselling and Education Services. In 2003, the program received a national Crime Prevention Award.

From 2002 to 2006 the Club supported the Bayside program and others run by LifeWorks with funding and professional support. Thousands more families benefitted and an ongoing survey showed an encouragingly high success rate, at least in the short term.

In 2006, the Club sponsored a two-year evaluation by Monash University into men's behaviour change programs and their outcomes, with the aid of Australian Rotary Health and LifeWorks. This was completed in August, 2009 but it identified a further need for a longitudinal study into the outcomes of men's behaviour change programs for men, their partners (or former partners) and children. This vital research project commenced in 2011.

In the past few years, our efforts have greatly expanded with the support of Rotary and the broader community, and we have focused on the two major projects described later in this report.

## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# The Online Men's Behaviour Change Program

## An exciting initiative

Many men in need of help, such as those who live outside the main cities, shift workers, and those who are too ashamed to attend, cannot access a face-to-face behaviour change program. This means a very large percentage of families in Australia are left without these services and the benefit these programs bring.

In an age where technology is used for long-range medicine, research, and education of many kinds, when most households have access to the Internet, and with the National Broadband Network rolling out, we have embraced the opportunity to make use of this technology for men's behaviour change programs.

The Online Men's Behaviour Change Program is a psycho-educational interactive group program designed to improve the safety and welfare of women and children who are suffering from male violence in their homes.

It uses a similar 'curriculum' to the face-to-face programs that have been provided for many years, and goes beyond them in significant respects. It brings men together online in a 'virtual classroom', in groups of up to about 12, for two hours each week over 14 weeks, guided by two trained facilitators. Interaction between the participants is an essential part of the therapeutic value of the OMBCP and a 'moderator' is also present, dealing with any technical problems that might arise and supporting facilitators with software manipulation.

The concept of web delivery of men's behaviour change programs is innovative and designed to maximise access for men and safety for their partners, or former partners, and children.

The concept was developed by a consortium of expert organisations under contract to Violence Free Families and it has now been run four times over the period 2014 to 2016.





The University of Melbourne’s Centre for Program Evaluation was engaged to monitor and evaluate the trials. Key features of the evaluation were:

<b>Partner and Family Safety</b>	Reports from all stakeholders: partners, men and facilitators, indicated no concerns or incidents during the trials, and the consensus of facilitators and the evaluator is that there is <b>no higher risk to partner and family safety from the online program than from a face-to-face program</b> . There are some indications that it might prove to be safer.
<b>Partner Satisfaction</b>	Contact with partners indicated a <b>high degree of satisfaction</b> with the outcomes of the program and many engaged with the men on program content outside session hours.
<b>Client Satisfaction</b>	Clients also indicated a <b>high degree of satisfaction</b> with the outcomes of the program through questionnaires, focus group remarks and emails.
<b>Client Attitudes</b>	It is considered by researchers in the social sciences generally that attitudes are good predictors of actions. The evaluators scored attitudes on several dimensions, showing small positive shifts but a <b>greater level of understanding</b> of the severity of the impact of their behaviour on partners and children.
<b>Facilitator Satisfaction</b>	Facilitators were highly satisfied with the process and outcomes. They reported that the men <b>opened up more readily</b> because of their relative anonymity and that it was generally easier to commence addressing their issues as a result.
<b>Technology</b>	Clients reported no difficulty in using the software and no problems were encountered that are not common to all internet users.

VFF recognises that the online men’s behaviour change program will not suit all men or that it should supersede face-to-face programs. We believe that both methods of delivery should co-exist to extend the reach and accessibility of program interventions.

The advantages of the online program are:

- Accessibility. It can be made available throughout Australia, wherever an Internet service is available.
- Greater anonymity for men wishing to avoid public identification and shame as perpetrators.

- Greater openness by clients, as demonstrated in trials, improving the level of engagement.
- Up to 30% more time spent by clients on the program, because ‘homework’ is required.
- No need to travel, saving costs and time.
- Improved quality control when delivered from a national hub from documented course material—(our research indicates that the quality of face-to-face programs is variable).
- Economies of scale as program demand increases.

# Research study into the Long Term Effectiveness of Male Family Violence Prevention Programs in Australia



This study examined the results of behaviour change programs for violent men over the long term. These programs are believed to be one of the most effective ways of helping men to stop their violence but no large scale systematic study of them has ever been conducted in Australia. The ultimate beneficiaries of this study will be the children and women in the community who suffer family violence.

Violence Free Families raised the funds for this study and the study was supported by a talented and diverse academic reference committee.

## Who did the study?

The lead researchers were:

- **Professor Emeritus Thea Brown**, former Professor of Social Work and Research Professor at Monash University, and
- **Dr Catherine Flynn**, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Monash University, with special responsibilities for honours studies.

## What is the study about?

The study assessed the short and long term results of men's behaviour change programs. Data was collected through a series of questionnaires to participants and their partners (or former partners). Additional data came from interviews and web data collection. Partner assessments are an important aspect of the study plan.

The need for more research into intervention programs was recognised in the Federal Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children, April 2009, and was further supported by a 2012 survey of agencies providing programs in 2012 by URBIS Research.

The Federal Government partly supported the research with a grant in 2012/13.

## What are the key results?

**The programs work, they work well, and they work in the long term.**

They show a sharp reduction in the nature and severity of violence over the duration of the programs and that this reduction is maintained and improved upon in subsequent months and years. Most of the men become violence free or almost violence free two years after their program.

This continued reduction in violence is not without effort. Men fear relapsing and often seek further help. This does not negate the value of the programs, which set them on this path.

There is no evidence that one type of violence is transferred to another, eg, physical to psychological. All types reduce together.

Mandated men have significantly better results than non-mandated men. This may be due to motivation and the role of Corrections in managing the men and possibly also to the lower incidence of mental health problems among mandated men.

A critical factor in the quality of programs, as viewed by the men, is the quality of the facilitators. The group dynamics are frequently cited as another vital factor.

## Features of the study

### 1. Reliability

Initial questionnaires were completed by 270 men. By the end of the study, over two years later, 71 remained in the study, a relatively high retention rate for this type of study.

### 2. Partner Views

Partners who were in a current relationship with the man, original or new, were positive.

Partners who had separated felt it had not protected them or had come too late.

### 3. Other Factors

#### ***Substance abuse***

Approx 27% reported problems with alcohol. This had improved to about 14% in later surveys.

#### ***Mental illness***

Approximately 34% reported mental illness and it might be speculated that this is an underestimate. The most frequent problem reported was depression. This rate did not change.

#### ***Parenting***

A high percentage of men (~80%) were in regular contact with children and a high percentage had been referred by courts in connection with child access and contact matters. The programs do not deal with parenting issues in an adequate way and this is a need that should be addressed more fully.



# The Directors



**DR DAVID SMYTH**  
(Chairperson)

BE (Elec), BA, PhD, FIE Aust., FIET, Chairperson. He is a former Director of the Rotary Club of Brighton and chair of its Family Violence Prevention Committee since 2002.

David was a consultant to the Board of Bayside Family Support from 1995 to 2002 (a provider of men's behaviour change programs), Chairman of John Knox Close (Victorian Housing Commission accommodation) for eight years and is a former Director of Girrawheen Aged Care. After a career as a telecommunications engineer and senior postal executive, he served for 17 years as a UN and World Bank expert on postal legislation and business planning.

His doctoral studies were in management theory and industrial sociology.



**MS KAYE SWANTON**  
(Deputy Chairperson)

Grad Cert Bus Mgmt, M App Sc, FAIM, MAICD, Kaye Swanton is the former CEO of one of Victoria's leading providers of relationship counselling and education services. As the CEO, she played a key role in their family violence prevention strategies and the expansion of their Men's Behaviour Change Programs.

Kaye is now the Principal Consultant of KPI Management Services, providing business consulting, coaching, counselling and conflict resolution services.

She is currently deputy chairperson of Violence Free Families and brings to the role a 25-year history in governance, strategic management and business development.

Kaye is a passionate advocate for social justice, equality and family violence prevention. She played a leading part in the design and development of the innovative Online Men's Behavior Change Program and VFF longitudinal research into the outcomes of MBCP, in partnership with Monash University.



**PROFESSOR EMERITUS  
THEA BROWN**

PhD, was Professor (Research) in the Department of Social Work at Monash University and former Head of Department. She is also the director of the Well Being of Children Following Separation and Divorce, an inter-university research consortium.

Thea's research in the last decade has covered family violence, family breakdown and family law. She co-authored a recent book on "Child Abuse and Family Law". Another book on "Community Based Mediation Following Parental Separation" was published in 2011. She was the lead researcher in the two-year evaluation completed in 2009 for the Rotary Club of Brighton, LifeWorks and Australian Rotary Health.



**MR BARRY HICKMAN**

Company Director and former Chief Executive of CI Studios, a promotional photography company.

He is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Brighton. Through Rotary, he has led fund raising activities, acted as a mentor for the White Lion Foundation for youth in trouble with the law and shared leadership of an international award-winning water and sanitation project in Cambodia.



**MS KATHERINE STRAIN**

Kate was the co-founder and foundation Director of Brainwave Australia 1994 - 2008, a charity established to support treatment and care of children suffering from brain illnesses. From 2002-2012 she was a Synod Board member of St. Leonard's College, Brighton. She is Managing Director of Sandangel Pty Ltd, importer and distributor, and a Past President of the Rotary Club of Brighton North.



**MS KERRY KORNHAUSER**

Kerry started her career in the advertising industry with the Clemenger's & George Patterson agencies. She

continued in the private health sector, creating the biggest private hospital chain in Australia.

She joined the Rotary Club of Albert Park in 2008 and was awarded the Royce Abbey Award in 2009. After serving in various Board positions, she was President of the Club in 2011/12. Kerry is also leader of the Women in Rotary Network, with a mission to increase the percentage of women members from 17% to 30%.



**MR TOM CRAMPTON**

BA, MBA, is the Managing Director of Trusted Impact Pty Ltd, a specialised consulting firm focused on information security. He has more than 30 years of management consulting, technology and business leadership experience working throughout Asia, North America, Europe and Australia. Tom is a member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne and was awarded the Rotary Royce Abbey Award in 2014.



**MS HELEN BIRD**  
(appointed 15 May 2015)

B.Hum Svc, Helen is a leading expert in charity fundraising, business development, public relations and communications, with 17 years in the community sector, serving as a Board Director, CEO, senior executive and volunteer. She is acknowledged as an industry

expert in new income streams and developing corporate and community partnerships in both Australian and overseas markets.

Directorships have included Bayside Community Health Service and Drummond Street Relationship Centre. She successfully founded a health charity and served as a Director and CEO, of NIDKIDS, which supports families with children who are suffering the life-threatening condition, Neuronal Intestinal Dysplasia (NID).

Helen is a member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Fundraising Institute of Australia. She is a member of The Lyceum Club.



**MR GABRIEL HAU**  
(appointed 9 December 2015)

B Econ, M App Fin, JD, CPA, is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Southbank and a Past Assistant Governor of Rotary International District 9800. He has over 17 years' experience in Rotary and has held various positions at club and district level. He is currently a member of the Rotary E-Club of Melbourne.

Gabe is an accountant and a lawyer and has worked in professional firms and corporates both in Australia and overseas. He also volunteered in various legal clinics providing free legal services to senior citizens and homeless persons for a number of years.

# Public relations & Fundraising



## Our Ambassador, Colleen Hewett

We are extremely grateful to blues singer extraordinaire, Colleen Hewett, for agreeing to become our Ambassador last year. Her performance at the Rotary Zone Institute in Melbourne in November 2015 was extremely well received. This event was enjoyed by then Rotary International President Elect John Germ. The Rotary Zone Institute is an annual gathering of senior Rotarians from around Australia, giving



us an opportunity to showcase VFF to a much wider Rotary community. Her dedication of some of the proceeds of her latest album, *Black and White*, to Violence Free Families and numerous other appearances and activities, were all highly appreciated. Her new song 'Let me Breathe', written especially by Tracey Bunn, and a video clip featuring her singing this 'anthem' for Violence Free families, supported by numerous national identities, including then Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, were outstanding contributions and also the product of much hard work by her manager, Danny Finley.

## Publicity to Rotary and Other Community Organisations

Active engagement with Rotary continued, with VFF having a presence at numerous meetings, conferences and training activities.

Rotary District 9800, which includes 70 clubs serving a large part of Victoria, continued its official endorsement and support for our work. At the District 9800 Conference at Bendigo in March 2016, VFF produced a playlet to showcase the work of VFF. Presentations to Rotary clubs and Rotary cluster meetings continue, increasing awareness of the work of VFF and paving the way for future fundraising.

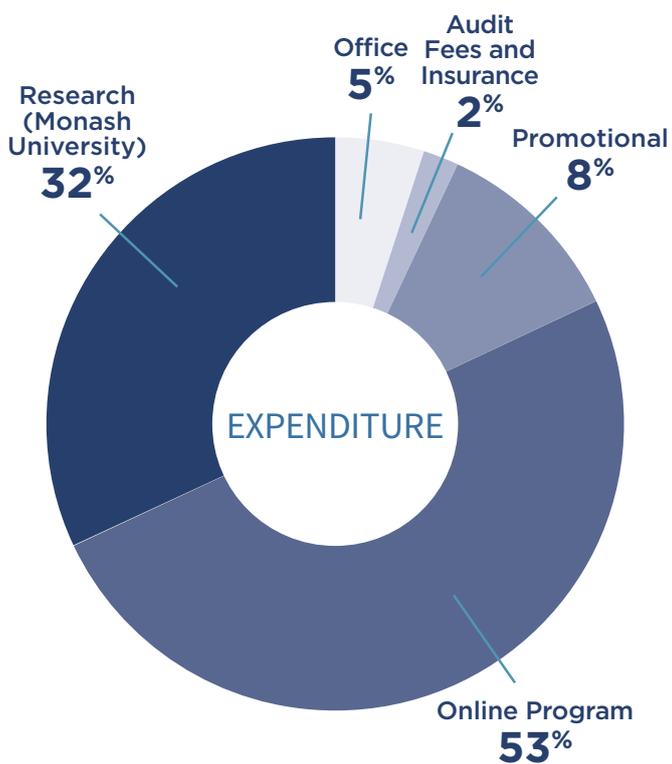
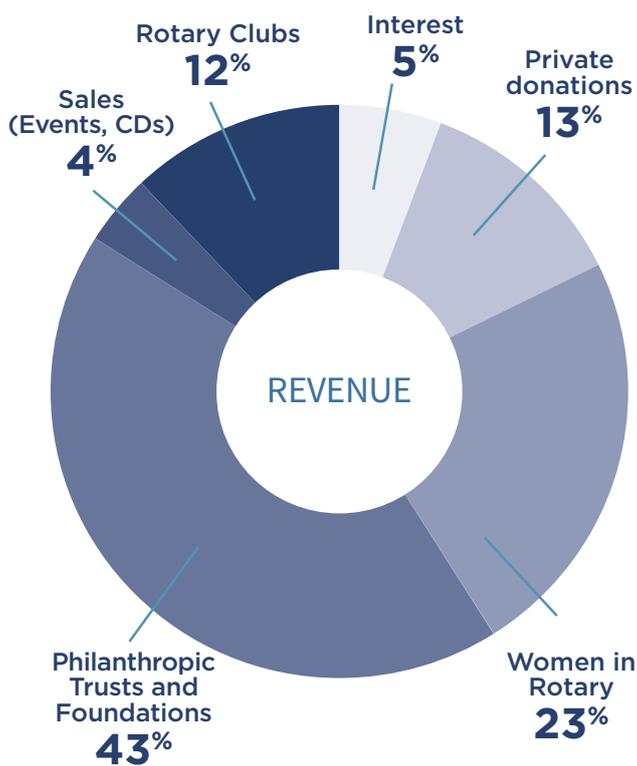
## Fund Raising

Fund raising continued to be difficult. The cash income of \$69,000 was down from last year but once again a tribute to our many hard-working supporters.

The chart below shows the breakdown of sources of income. Significant contributions from philanthropic institutions were most gratefully received. They allowed us to complete the development and trials of the online men's behaviour change program and to extend the contract for our long-term study.

Rotary Clubs continued to provide most valuable support. A total of \$8,400 was received, and a further welcome \$16,000 from Women in Rotary (sponsored by the Rotary Club of Albert Park) from the proceeds of its 2016 International Women's Day Breakfast.

# Breakdown of Revenue and Expenditure





# Community support

VFF continues to rely heavily on Rotary volunteers and their support is vital to realising our vision. An active working group of 14 individuals from many professional and business backgrounds, drawn from nine Rotary clubs, assists with various aspects of our work.

A number of non Rotarians who share our vision also help. We were pleased to appoint Glenys McInnes as a part time Administrative Assistant during the year to function as Board Minute Secretary and assist with office work.

We have been pleased to welcome strong recognition by the Australian Women in Rotary network for the fifth year. Its outstanding International Women's Day Breakfasts at Crown Casino in Melbourne reached the capacity of this large venue in 2016.

The activities of VFF have also attracted widespread support from the professional community and the following organisations and individuals are involved in various capacities:

- Monash University Department of Social Work.
- Social Welfare Agencies including LifeWorks Relationship Counselling and Education Services, Child and Family Services Ballarat, Relationships Australia (NSW), Catholic Care (NSW), Relationships Australia (WA), MonashLink and others who participated in the long term research study.
- Advice on the online behaviour change project from Federation Training (incorporating Gippsland TAFE) and Trusted Impact Pty Ltd, South Melbourne.
- The University of Melbourne Centre for Program Evaluation, Graduate School of Management for advice and evaluation of the online behaviour change program trials.
- The Baker Foundation.
- The Collier Foundation.
- The 5Point Foundation
- Jayco
- The King Family Foundation
- Kerani White from Whitesites, for website management.
- Ms Rebecca Heitbaum for management of Facebook content.

We record our sincere thanks to all of those who have contributed to our work in the reporting period.



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