



# The Family Violence Prevention Foundation of Australia

ANNUAL REPORT **2017**



violence **free** families



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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)



violence free families



# Letter from the Chair



This year has been notable for the high level of interest shown in our ground-breaking online men's behaviour change program. Enquiries have come from police forces in three States, as well as many community welfare groups and individuals.

We have spent much of the year actively navigating the complex bureaucracies in the Victorian and New South Wales State Governments with the objective of obtaining government funding and rolling out the program on a sustainable basis.

As part of our preparations, the program materials have been upgraded to incorporate the results of recent research, refine our policies and procedures, and to adapt our materials to new versions of our delivery platform Blackboard Collaborate. For the latter project, we are greatly indebted to Blackboard International, which has assisted us most generously with their software platform, information and training.

Late in 2016, the last waves of data analysis and interpretation brought our longitudinal research project into the outcomes of men's behaviour change program to a conclusion. The final report was launched on 1 May 2017 by the Hon Marcia Neave, chairperson of the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence during 2015/16.

The results were most encouraging and have been summarised elsewhere in this Report. It ranks at the top level of research in this area, for the first time in Australia provides convincing evidence of the effectiveness of these programs and has attracted worldwide interest. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and acknowledge our lead researcher, Professor Thea Brown who is

also a director of Violence Free Families.

In the Australia Day 2017 Honours List, we were delighted to learn that our director Kerry Kornhauser had been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for outstanding community service. The award recognised her service on the board of Violence Free Families since 2011, her leadership of the successful national Women in Rotary initiative from the same year, innovative programs for Indigenous welfare and many other community service contributions through Rotary.

We were also delighted to be able to acknowledge the ongoing support of our Ambassador, Colleen Hewett, and her manager, Danny Finley, through Rotary with the presentations of Paul Harris Fellow recognition.

The Board reports, with regret, the resignation of two Board Members, Kaye Swanton and Helen Bird, during the year. We celebrate the significant contributions of both Kaye and Helen and wish them both the very best in their future endeavours.

We look forward to the 2018 year as one in which we start to reap the fruits of these endeavours and achieve our long-held ambition of delivering services that will save lives and improve others, as well as commencing the development of further much-needed programs.

Dr David Smyth  
Chairperson

## Vision, rationale and 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.

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 2013, we identified the need for an online men's behaviour change program, primarily for families in regional and rural areas where few, if any, face to face programs exist, and also for more urban dwellers who are unable to access face to face programs for a variety of reasons. In the following years, we raised funds, put together a consortium of experts and created an innovative program. This world-first program has now been run four times with outstanding results, as reported by the University of Melbourne from its comprehensive evaluations.



# 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 had ever been conducted in Australia.

Violence Free Families raised the funds for this study and it 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.

The academic reference committee brought together a cross-section of members with a wide range of relevant skills and knowledge to provide significant input and advice. The committee included:

- three program managers from agencies located in participating states
- a legal expert with human research ethics committee experience
- a medical practitioner with special interest in family medicine
- an agency chief executive
- a professional manager with a research background.

## 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 were 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 survey of agencies providing programs in 2012 by URBIS Research. Its importance was recognised by the award of \$100,000 grant from the Commonwealth Government.

## The results

The key results showed that the programs work, they work well and they work in the long term.

This is the first study in Australia to provide clarity in this highly contested area. It supports the results of a 15 year old study in the USA into earlier versions of these programs and a shorter more recent UK study. It began with 270 men and concluded with 71 still responding two to three years later.

The study showed that there is 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 the path of reform.

### The study also showed that:

- 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. Program design did not seem to play a great part.
- Partners, original or new, who were in a current relationship with the man were positive.
- Partners who had separated felt it had not protected them or had come too late.

Other factors of importance were:

### Substance abuse

Approximately 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 (~40%) were living in households with children. Another 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.



## Benefits

The benefits of this study, which cost in excess of \$500,000, will be:

- better quality programs through comparing the results of the different types of program in current use.
- improved funding for programs (from both Government and community sources) because decision makers can have greater confidence that the money will be well spent. The value of men's behaviour change programs seems to be poorly understood and they are chronically under-funded. Long waiting lists are normal and this is, effectively, denial of service because men lose interest. At present, families typically experience seven to ten years of violence before seeking help. In this time, irreparable damage can be done, especially to children.

The ultimate beneficiaries of this study will be the children and women in the community who suffer family violence.

A summary and the full report have been posted on our website [www.violencefreefamilies.org.au](http://www.violencefreefamilies.org.au)



# The Online Men’s Behaviour Change Program

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 group program designed to improve the safety and welfare of women and children who are suffering from male violence in their homes by changing the attitudes and behaviour of men.

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. 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 children and partners or former partners.

The concept was developed by a consortium of expert organisations under contract to Violence Free Families and four field trials were conducted during 2014 and 2015. Following the success of the first two trials, the last two trials were designed to test the limits of the program in group size and case difficulty.

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

- program outcomes were at least as good as the average for programs assessed in our longitudinal study
- family safety was also at least as good as in face to face programs (see below)
- client, partner and facilitator satisfaction ratings were very high

Special attention was paid to partner and family safety when designing the program and during the trials. No issues were identified by any stakeholder and no reason was identified that safety levels will differ from those of a face-to-face program; indeed they may also prove to be better due to the increased partner contact compared with the usual levels for face to face programs.

VFF recognises that the online men’s behaviour change program will not suit all men or believe 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 through vigorous paper and digital documentation (our research indicates that the quality of face-to-face programs is variable).
- Economies of scale as program numbers ramp up.

Violence Free Families and the wider community are deeply indebted to Denyse McKay and a team of contributors for the creative and inspiring work that has gone into designing and continually improving this program.



# The Directors



**DR DAVID SMYTH**  
(Chairperson)

BE (Elec), BA, PhD, FIE Aust., FIET, Chairman and member of Research Committee. He is a former Director of the Rotary Club of Brighton.

David was a consultant to the Board of Bayside Family Support (a provider of men's behaviour change programs) from 1995 to 2002, 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**  
(resigned  
10 October 2016)

Grad Cert Bus Mgmt, M App Sc, FAIM, MAICD, Kaye Swanton is the former CEO of LifeWorks Relationship Counselling and Education Services, a position which she held for 14 years. Kaye is now the Principal Consultant of KPI Management Services, providing business consulting, coaching, counselling and conflict resolution services.

As the CEO of LifeWorks, she played a key role in their family violence prevention strategies and the expansion of their Men's Behaviour Change Programs. Until her resignation, Kaye was the deputy chairperson of Violence Free Families. She has a 25-year history in governance, strategic management and business development, and has previously served on the management committee of No To Violence.

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 Online Men's Behavior Change Program and the longitudinal research study into the outcomes of MBCPs 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 and leader of the longitudinal research study.



**MR BARRY HICKMAN**  
(Deputy Chairperson  
from 10 October 2016)

Company Director and former Chief Executive of CI Studios, a promotional photography company. He is a former Director, Community Services and 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 Past President of the Rotary Club of Brighton North.



**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 25 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 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. For some time she held a management position in a corporate hotel in Carlton.

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% and has joined the Rotary Club of Melbourne.



**MS HELEN BIRD**  
(resigned  
29 August 2016)

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 past member 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**

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 people for a number of years.



**MR GERRY AROOZOO**  
(appointed  
26 April 2017)

BE, Grad Dip PM, CSM, Member PMI, has been involved in not-for-profit organisations for over 15 years, starting as a consultant to World Vision, Australia with their donations management system and including time in the field, supporting schools in Nigeria through the Ishahayi Beach School Foundation.

Gerry is passionate about making a difference by providing a platform for others to carry their message. He brings a wealth of life experiences and technical expertise, with his early professional life involving work on complex real time systems, including betting systems at the TAB and major defence projects.

He is a certified ScrumMaster (CSM) and a Project Management Professional with the Project Management Institute (PMI).

Gerry enjoys cycling and has participated in the annual One Day events, raising funds for the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute in memory of his daughter, Tash.



# Public relations & Fundraising



Photo: Susan Braudfield photography



Danny Finley receiving his Paul Harris Fellow Recognition from VFF directors Dr David Smyth and Gabe Hau

## Our Ambassador, Colleen Hewett and her Manager, Danny Finley

Colleen and Danny have unwaveringly and tirelessly supported Violence Free Families for many years.

Our Ambassador, Colleen Hewett, continues to draw attention to our cause in her busy schedule of concerts and media interviews.

Her manager, Danny Finley, has also continued his unrelenting support for our work in many ways behind the scenes.

To show our gratitude and appreciation, we were able to acknowledge their invaluable contributions in a special way this year.

On 30 June 2017, before the Rotary Club of Brighton, Violence Free Families formally presented Colleen and Danny with the coveted Rotary Foundation’s Paul Harris Fellow Recognition to honour and acknowledge their continuing valuable efforts.



The International Women’s Day Breakfast at Crown Casino attracted a capacity crowd of 1200 and continued its support of Violence Free Families over the past five years.

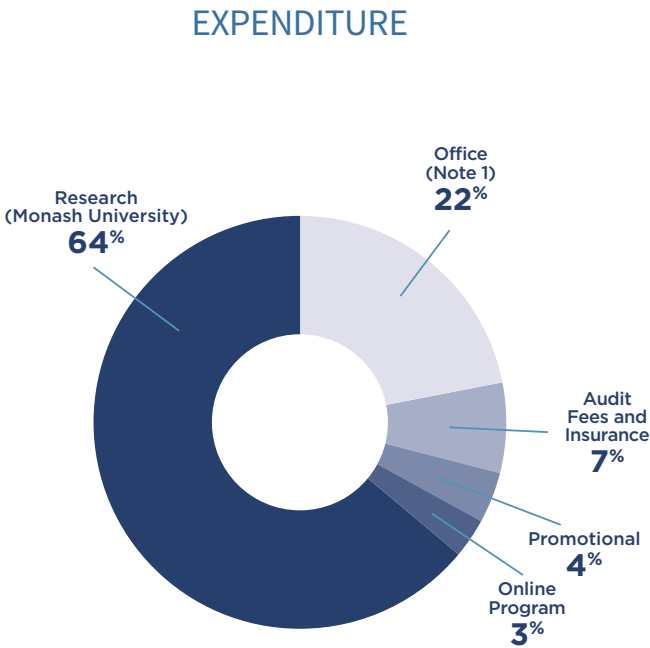
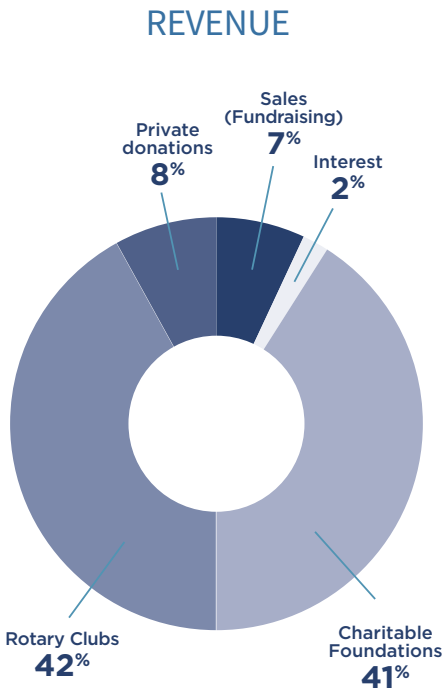
## Fund Raising

Our fund raising was well down on last year, primarily due to completion of our research work and the need to focus our efforts on gaining recognition for the online men’s family violence program.

The chart below shows the breakdown of sources of income. Significant contributions from philanthropic institutions, notably the King Family Foundation and the Eileen Lucas Foundation, were most gratefully received. They will help to allow us to develop our work next year.

Rotary Clubs continued to provide most valuable support. A total of \$14,500 was received, \$13,000 of this from Women in Rotary (sponsored by the Rotary Club of Albert Park) from the proceeds of its 2017 International Women’s Day Breakfast.

## Breakdown of Revenue and Expenditure



Note 1. While the percentage of admin costs appears higher than last year, the dollar cost was little different, reflecting our continuing focus on overheads management.

# 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 ten Rotary clubs in three Districts, including NSW, assists with various aspects of our work.

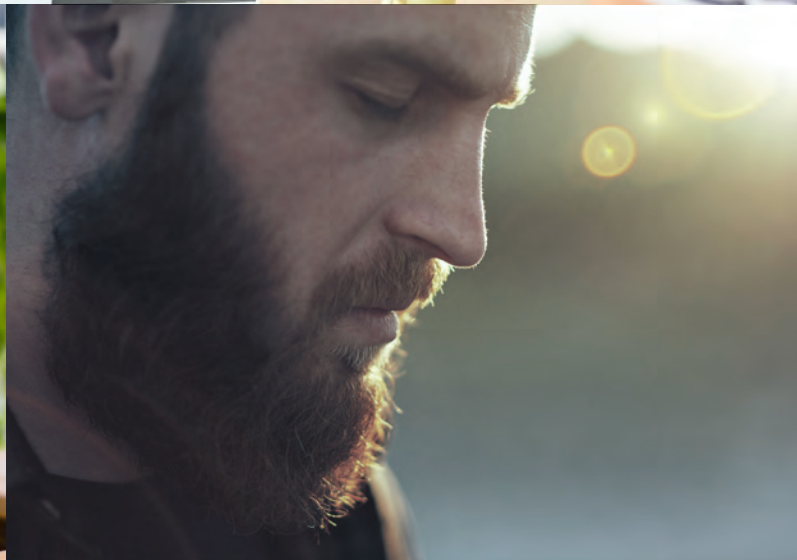
The contribution of Women in Rotary and the Rotary Club of Albert Park of part of the proceeds of its International Women's Day Breakfast is especially appreciated.

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 services agencies that participated in the long term research study including LifeWorks Relationship Counselling and Education Services, Child and Family Services Ballarat, Relationships Australia (NSW), Catholic Care (NSW), Relationships Australia (WA), MonashLink and others.
- The University of Melbourne Centre for Program Evaluation, Graduate School of Management for advice and evaluation of the online behaviour change program trials.
- The King Family Foundation.
- The Eileen Lucas Foundation.
- Kereni White of White Sites, for website management.
- 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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