



The  
Sexual Assault  
& Family Violence  
Centre

# Our Year of Impact

2022 Annual Report



## Always was, always will be

It is a privilege to be working on the lands of First Nations Peoples and traditional custodians of the land and waterways across Barwon – the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation; the Gulidjan and Gadubanud people of the Eastern Maar Nation and the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia (Were-guy-ya), Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people across the Wimmera.

We respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners and custodians of the land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

## Honoring lived experience

We acknowledge the strength, trauma and resilience of all people impacted by sexual violence and women, children and young people impacted by family violence. We remember those whose lives were taken, and acknowledge the trauma of friends and family members who have lost loved ones.

We value the voices and lived experience of those impacted by violence to inform our organisation and services. We acknowledge those who are experiencing sexual and family violence today and offer our support.

## Who we are

### Our vision

Our vision for a community free from sexual assault and family violence, and a society underpinned by the principles of gender equality, social justice and human rights.

### Our purpose

- Provide services underpinned by a feminist philosophy that are empowering, respectful and inclusive, and which address barriers to service access.
- Provide high-quality, sensitive and responsive services to women and children who have been impacted by family violence and to people who have experienced and sexual assault.
- Design and implement effective evidence-based prevention of violence against women and gender equality programs and initiatives.
- Contribute to the evidence base and social policy frameworks which inform effective service provision.
- Contribute to the systematic and social change necessary to eliminate sexual and family violence.

### Our values

Our values unite us, guiding our decisions and actions in our roles, every day.

Respect

Integrity

Innovation

Collaboration

Commitment

### Our goals

Our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan is an aspirational and forward looking plan, guiding our goals and shaping the future direction of our organisation.



Primary  
prevention



Support and  
resources



Evidence



Partnerships



Sustainability



# Message from our Chair and Chief Executive Officer

The past 12 months has seen a focus on balance. Balancing the re-emergence of our community from lockdowns and the immediate risk of the pandemic, while ensuring the health and wellbeing of our clients, our staff and our community, has been at the forefront of our organisation.

As we reflect on the past year, the experience has shown us the true meanings of resilience and adaptability. Our deep appreciation to our clients, staff, partners and our communities who have trusted us throughout this past year.

We know the challenges that the pandemic presented to our clients and those in our community who have been impacted by sexual and family violence. Across the country, many victim-survivors who have been impacted by sexual violence have delayed seeking support which is reflected in the number of our clients we have supported this year, while the number of women and children seeking support for family violence has been high. Our focus has always been on being available and open to those needing support, and this past year, our staff have been flexible in their delivery of support to clients.

Balancing client choice in service delivery was a strong focus this year, with support provided across a range of settings, including in-person, health direct and over the phone support. This ongoing use of technology to connect with clients has provided many, particularly in our rural support areas, having greater accessibility to our staff for support. We have also been able to recommence our group programs in-person, providing essential connection and community for clients.

With the prevalence of sexual and family violence in our community, we remain steadfast to our vision of a community free from sexual assault and family violence and a society underpinned by the principles of gender equality, social justice and human rights. Our primary prevention work this year has been focused on education and amplifying the drivers of violence to create awareness and strong understanding within the community of the importance of gender equality. We are proud to collaborate with a number of organisations and local community groups to deliver initiatives that have a strong prevention focus.

A significant milestone this year has been the completion of our Women and Children Refuge for those impacted by family violence. This build saw six independent units built and furnished to ensure women and children across the state who are seeking refuge due to a high risk of family violence have a welcoming, safe and secure space to start their journey to recovery. This project was a whole organisation-wide program of work and the finished result speaks of the effort and dedication of our team.

This year we commenced the development of our Outcomes Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework project which is a strategic initiative that enhances our capacity to build a robust organisation wide evidence base to drive strategic decision-making, service delivery and to influence policy.

The dedication and expertise of our staff continues to inspire us. This past year has seen a number of new team members join our organisation, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience, along with a strong connection to our values and vision. We also welcomed a number of graduate positions to our team, bringing enthusiasm and eagerness to learn and build on their experience.

We thank and congratulate all of our staff for their commitment in embracing the year of change and balance and for their understanding and flexibility as we have moved through the year.

Our sincere thanks to our partners who continue to support our organisation and work together to deliver support to those impacted by sexual and family violence in our community. It is the connection that we have with you that will help us achieve our vision.

The next 12 months are already showing exciting opportunities for growth and balance for our organisation. We are looking forward to seeing what the future of The SAFV Centre looks like, with the key focus on supporting our clients, staff, partners and our community.

Renee Fiolet and Helen Bolton



*"We are a people centred organisation first and foremost and together we remain steadfast in achieving our vision of a community free from sexual and family violence."*

## Our Year of Impact

Following a significant increase in client support in the last two financial years due the immediate impact of the global pandemic, our impact this year is lower as victim-survivors delay seeking support for their trauma, particularly those impacted by sexual violence.

3,712

clients supported across Barwon and Wimmera.

126

young people and children received therapeutic treatment for problem sexual and sexually abusive behaviours.

162

women received court support when applying for Family Violence Intervention Orders in Barwon.

2,229

adults, young people and children received a therapeutic service (counselling and group programs).

517

clients supported in Wimmera.

551

participants attended our professional training.

1,145

women, children and young people received family violence case management.

167

clients supported in Colac.

6,192

family violence cases supported by our staff within The Orange Door Barwon.





## Primary Prevention

*Our goal is to be an established gender equity and primary prevention provider across the Barwon area and Wimmera region.*

- Successful grants from Victorian Government Sport and Recreation, Give Where You Live and Safe and Equal to implement primary prevention initiatives. These grants highlight the focus on primary prevention as a key attribute in ending violence against women. We are proud through these funding opportunities to partner with a number of organisations and local community groups to deliver initiatives that have a strong prevention focus.
- Launch of our gender equality sporting club focused program – *Respect Starts Here*, that strengthened awareness and understanding of sexual assault and family violence in our community and encouraged the development of attitudes and behaviours to support healthy, safe and respectful relationships.
- Continued our role as a key partner in the CORE alliance in the Wimmera region.
- We acknowledged Walk Against Family Violence with a staff walk. As our first event back in-person, it was a impactful acknowledgement of victim survivors of family violence and violence against women together.
- International Women's Day provided a platform to highlight why violence against women is a national crisis in Australia and the urgent progress needed on gender inequality. We thank the Committee for Geelong for inviting Helen Bolton, our CEO, to deliver an important message about the impact of violence and the role our community can play in primary prevention.
- We welcomed our Graduate Primary Prevention Officer to our Primary Prevention team.

## Respect Starts Here; promoting respect on and off the field

*Respect Starts Here* – promoting respect on and off the field is a sexual assault and family violence prevention project led by The SAFV Centre and funded by the Give Where You Live Foundation.

Engaging local club, the Geelong West Giants Football and Netball Club (GWGFNC), the project applied a whole of sport approach, engaging with club executive, coaches, and members, senior and junior players.

The objective of the project was to increase sporting clubs' awareness and understanding of sexual assault and family violence, promote gender equality and safe and respectful relationships and support clubs 'capacity to respond to disclosures of violence.

Sport is an important setting to target the prevention of violence against women and has a key role in creating clubs, teams and communities where all women are safe, equal and valued. Sport has the ability to reach a large audience and exerts powerful influence on how society expects us to behave and is therefore able to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to occur.

The *Respect Starts Here* project engaged over 230 participants in a series of sessions. To support these sessions, a suite of resources were created to promote key messages of gender equality, bystander action and the gendered drivers of violence.

A key focus area of each session delivered to GWGFNC was bystander action training and the introduction of the 5 Ds of Bystander Action Tool, providing participants with

practical strategies they can use when witness to disrespectful behaviour at a sporting club or in their everyday lives.

The results of the program were overwhelmingly positive, with strong participant engagement and lasting tools and messages for participants to carry forward. As a result of their participation in the project:

- 88% of participants reported an increased understanding of sexual and family violence.
- 91% of workshop and 89% of presentation participants reported an increased understanding of key drivers of sexual and family violence.
- 88% of participants reported an increased confidence to intervene if witnessing disrespectful behaviours.
- 91% of participants also reported having an increased awareness of attitudes and behaviours to support healthy, safe and respectful relationships

Through their own words, the impact of the workshops demonstrates the importance of continuing prevention initiatives within a sport setting and empowering our community to actively promote gender equality and take action when witness to disrespectful behaviours.

*"Presentation was amazing, I loved it and think this program is not only beneficial but necessary in order to create change in our society..."*

*"The statistics against women are incredibly overwhelming and we as role models need to help stamp this out."*

*"Knowing what to do (other than calling someone out) is so helpful and it makes me feel more confident in my ability to deal with gender inequality"*



# Support and Resources

*Our goal is to provide appropriate and contemporary support and resources in a timely manner to all people who connect with our organisation.*

- The family violence risk levels of women we are supporting for case management continued to reflect the risk within the community, with 52% of case management clients presenting at higher risk, serious risk or serious risk requiring immediate protection.
- We completed the build and officially opened our new core and cluster Women and Children Refuge for women and children impacted by family violence. The refuge supports up to six women and their children at a time, with a purpose-built administration building and six self-contained units, including one accessibility unit, with a shared playground and outdoor space.
- Client choice in service delivery was a strong focus this year, with support provided across a range of settings, including in-person, Health Direct and over the phone support.
- Our therapeutic group programs returned to face to face delivery, welcoming 110 women, mothers and children and young people back together in-person to receive support and community through these important programs.
- Our Body and Mind program and trauma-informed Yoga have also recommenced face to face, in both Barwon and the Wimmera, with positive engagement and participation.
- We welcomed our Specialist Family Violence Disability Practice Leader to the team. This role focuses on capacity building and building relationships with a range of services to improve responses for people with a disability experiencing family violence and sexual assault.
- Our first two graduates from the Family Safety Victoria's new Rural and Regional Family Violence Social Work Graduate program commenced, with our Counsellor Advocate graduate recently moving from a graduate position to a full time role.
- Our Orange Door team saw an increase in support for women and children impacted by family violence, with a 10% increase in cases supported by our staff co-located at the Barwon Orange Door.
- Our Orange Door team are continuing our engagement with Cultura (Diversitat) to work in partnership to deliver family violence awareness raising and early intervention activities with multicultural community members.
- A strong and continued focus on support for clients in rural and regional Victoria:
  - Our Wimmera team continued to deliver much needed therapeutic and crisis care support for people impacted by sexual assault, along with counselling for women and children impacted by family violence. Our team delivered Health Direct appointments with clients spread throughout the Wimmera region, ensuring that clients had greater access to our services.
  - Our Outpost located team in Colac continued to provide specialist support through therapeutic support, group programs, family violence case management and court support when applying for Family Violence Intervention Orders at the Colac Magistrates' Court.
- Developed a series of age specific trauma-informed videos - Responding to the Impact of Trauma on Your Child/Young Person through Family Violence. These videos aim to increase parents and carers understanding of responding to the impact of family violence trauma on their child/young person, and support their child's safety and emotional recovery following trauma.



## A safe, welcoming and calm space for women and children

After many months of planning, negotiation and collaboration, we proudly opened our new Women and Children Refuge – a purpose-built multi-unit crisis accommodation facility for women and children who are at high risk of further and immediate harm from family violence.

The refuge is a safe place for women and children to stay as they re-establish their lives and move through their journey toward recovery from family violence, in a safe, supported, calm and welcoming space.

Our refuge aims to provide the most welcoming, respectful and dignified accommodation to those that need it most in our community.

We have a long and proud history in providing communal style refuge services to the community, with our first refuge established in 1985, and since then we have provided many women and children with high security accommodation, advocacy and support.

In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence made 227 recommendations to prevent family violence, keep victim survivors safe and supported, and hold perpetrators to account. One of these recommendations was to phase out communal style refuges and replace these with a core and cluster model refuges.

We are now officially open and welcoming women and children, with a positive response to the safety and warmth they feel from the space.

Under the core and cluster model, our refuge offers six self-contained units, with a mix of one, two and three bedroom units, all units offer disability access, with one unit specifically designed as an Accessibility Unit.

This new model of refuge offers women and children

privacy and independence, rather than the former model of women sharing a communal house. Parenting though family violence can, at times, be difficult and overwhelming, even more so when you have to relocate.

Individual units allow women the space, security and privacy they need to respond to their child's safety and emotional recovery following trauma. Each unit has its own kitchen, bathroom, living area, laundry and private courtyard. Outside we have a shared playground, barbecue area, sensory garden and secured parking.

Our refuge is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with our highly qualified staff providing support to residents.

Through contributions and the generous support from community members and the Victorian Government, we have created a homely space that feels safe and dignified the moment a woman walks through the door.

"With our communities support we have been able to fully furnish the units with new items such as beds, linen, furniture, whitegoods, small electrical items, kitchen utensils, bathroom essentials, diffusers, patchwork quilts, artwork, and plants; all items creating a welcoming, comfortable and settled environment for our clients. There are even vouchers available so they can purchase the clothing that they would like."

Many of the items supplied are intended for the women and children to take with them when they leave, to continue to support them to re-establish their own homes.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Victorian Government for their funding and ongoing focus and support for women and children impacted by family violence. Our thanks to our builders and trades and special thanks to our community supporters who have contributed to making our refuge the warm and welcoming space that it is.







## Evidence

*Our goal is that all of our services and programs contribute to an organisation wide evidence base that is used for strategic decision-making, service delivery and to influence policy.*

- Commenced the development of our Outcomes Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, an important project supporting a number of strategic initiatives across our organisation.
- We successfully completed our annual external surveillance audit and have met all criteria of the standards assessed for AS/NZS ISO 9001 - Quality Management System Requirements and Human Services Standards – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Service Funding Requirements. This achievement collectively recognises the outcomes and standard of our work and the commitment to our clients by all staff. The assessment highlighted positive feedback from clients and staff.
- Introduction of a new team – our Evidence and Strategic Advocacy Team, to build upon our, research and evaluation activities, and use organisational data and research to advocate and influence change that is consistent with our organisation's strategic direction and vision.
- We continue to focus and deliver community activism and advocacy.

## Creating a framework to measure our impact

In early 2022, we commenced the development of our Outcomes Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework project – an important strategic initiative for our organisation.

This project creates opportunities for our organisation to understand whether the programs and services we are delivering have the desired outcomes for our clients. It also enhances our capacity to provide key stakeholders with crucial information about our services and provide evidence to advocate for system change. This framework aligns with key sector level frameworks and provides greater transparency for our funders, as we will be able to demonstrate what we are doing has the intended outcome.

Both evidence and client voice has an incredible impact on our organisation and how it shapes our service delivery. This project brings these two areas together to develop a greater understanding of our work to support us when demonstrating our impact, and to learn and adapt our services and programs for our clients and the community.

An important part of the development of our Outcomes MEL Framework has been establishing our organisational and program level Theories of Change. A Theory of Change outlines what we aim to achieve, how and why.

The voices of our clients and staff have been crucial to the development of the Outcomes MEL Framework. To inform the Theories of Change, we have held client interviews, staff workshops and online surveys.

The feedback received from clients, as a result of their experience with The SAFV Centre:

- 95%+ of respondents felt heard and respected
- 100% of respondents felt supported
- 95% of respondents had a better understanding of the role of The SAFV Centre
- 81% of respondents agreed that The SAFV Centre contributes to increasing trauma-informed services and institutional responses to sexual assault, family violence and harmful violent behaviour.
- 80% of respondents agreed that The SAFV Centre contributes to reducing stigma and shifting understandings of sexual and family violence.

As we move through 2022, the next phase for the Outcomes MEL framework will involve fine-tuning the measurement tools we have now developed to ensure these are implemented effectively, and measure all levels of our outcomes accurately and effectively. Embedding client voice will become an integral and regular part of our practice in all programs.

As with all of the phases of the Outcomes MEL Framework journey so far, staff and client voices and participation will be central, with further opportunities for interviews, focus groups and the trialling of our measurement tools as we move into the implementation phase.

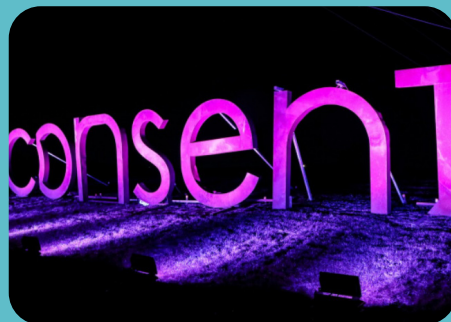
*“This service has been invaluable for our family and many many others. It has given us hope for the future and empowered us to take on that future with courage. I feel that a lot more can be done to make aware of the resources and services available to people experiencing this situation to help them make the decision to be able to escape the situation that they are dealing with on a daily basis.”*



# Partnerships

*Our goal is that we are visible and seen positively by partners, funders and investors and our relationships with them improve outcomes for individuals and communities, and influence systems change.*

- We held our first two Women and Children Health Pop-Ups, part of our Government grant for supporting the community to access COVID information and vaccination. These events were held in partnership with Bethany Community Support, Barwon Health and City of Greater Geelong, along with support from The Little Coffee Spot, Sensory Kingdom and Modibodi with resources and activities packs.
- Geelong landmarks and workplaces turned purple as part of Safe Steps' Candlelight Vigil, honouring and remembering the women and children who have lost their lives as a result of family violence.
- Our community education program saw the delivery of our training modules online, with more than 551 participants trained in trauma, understanding and responding to family violence and sexual assault and MARAM Collaborative Practice.
- Designed and delivered two new training modules – *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* and *Thrive – How do we create wellbeing and stability when faced with uncertainty and vicarious trauma?*
- Working in collaboration with all Orange Door Barwon partners, we commenced rollout of a Bellarine local access point, with further work and implementation to take place over the next financial year.
- With the help and generosity of our community, we have been able to provide additional support to more than 700 clients in the Barwon and Wimmera areas with essential items like food, public transport tickets and petrol vouchers, along with mobile phones for safety and connection. We have also been able to further engage with our clients by using therapeutic resources for art and sensory supplies and enhance client experiences by providing children's entertainment activities including cinema tickets and activity centre passes.
- Senator Jenny McAllister, Shadow Assistant Minister for Communities and the Prevention of Family Violence visited our office with Federal MP, Libby Coker, Federal Member for Corangamite to announce the Opposition's funding proposal, with a focus on housing, response and prevention. We welcome the commitment to fund additional specialist workers to support women and children impacted by family violence and their focus on recovery and prevention, while listening to the voices of victim survivors.
- Our collaborating partnership within the Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC) continued with our team contributing to the MDC family violence evaluation workshops and MDC Data Governance Group.



## Turning purple to acknowledge the impact of family violence

In May, Geelong turned purple to honour and remember the women and children who lost their lives as a result of family violence, and to stand together with victim survivors as part of Safe Step's Candlelight Vigil.

Family violence is a serious and prevalent issue in our community. On average in Australia, a woman a week is killed at the hands of a current or former partner. And, far too many people live with the ongoing trauma of family, domestic and gender-based violence, every day.

Many landmarks across Victoria turned purple to create community awareness and we are grateful to the Geelong and Surf Coast community in joining in this important event.

Working with Bethany Community Support, in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong, we had a fantastic response, with a number of Geelong locations turning their lights purple.

Horsham also turned purple with the Town Hall lighting up purple.

The candlelight vigil was an opportunity to reflect and remember, while bringing light to the national crisis of family violence.

It allows us to honour and remember the women and children who have lost their lives as a result of family violence. It's also a night to hold those currently living with violence in our thoughts and remind them that they aren't alone and that we won't tolerate family violence in our community.

The impact on women and children who live with family violence is devastating and long lasting. While family violence is prevalent, it is preventable. We all need to come together as a community to prevent family violence – we all have a role to play. While we have a range of services available in our community to respond and support women and children impacted by family violence, it will take a shift in our attitudes towards women and working towards gender equality that will ultimately end violence against women and children.





## Sustainability

*Our goal is to ensure our organisation has transformational capability, and is effective and viable.*

- Our staffing group continues to grow, with 128 employees.
- We continued our focus on staff wellbeing with a cautious transition back to working from the office, lunches and care packages provided to staff.
- We conducted an Employee Engagement Survey with 89% participation rate, with results highlighting a strong dedication to our vision, confidence in our leadership and appreciation of our open and two-way communication. Our focus from the survey is on professional development, systems and engagement.
- We launched new compliance modules - Workplace Bullying and Violence, Diversity in the workplace, Sexual Harassment Prevention, Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity and Code of Conduct for all employees.
- We welcomed a number of new leadership appointments across the organisation to strengthen in internal career pathways and support the growth of our leaders, and explored new ways of expanding, attracting and recruiting our workforce using new models, such as the Graduate program, Traineeship program and Student Placement program.

## Strengthening our workforce

In early 2022, we welcomed three new graduates as part of the Family Safety Victoria 2022 Family Violence and Sexual Assault Graduate Program. The three positions – Graduate Counsellor Advocate - Barwon, Graduate Counsellor Advocate - Wimmera and Graduate Primary Prevention Officer, commenced in February this year.

The graduate program aims to provide the opportunity to support and develop passionate graduates across Victoria and strengthen the family violence, sexual assault and primary prevention workforces, with an opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge; and improve retention of new entrants into the sector by providing a positive experience in their first job out of university.

Not only do the graduates receive support from our organisation, but through the program, they also have access to monthly-facilitated Communities of Practice sessions, an extensive induction, a tailored training and development program and additional supervision and mentoring opportunities.

For Ashleigh, our Graduate Counsellor Advocate – Wimmera, joining the team meant a move from South Australia to the quieter rural area of Horsham.

“I was studying social work and working in mental health as a support worker and saw the graduate position in Horsham and thought it was a fantastic opportunity to not only have experience in the field, but to also have the additional support that was provided through the program.”

“The team at The SAFV Centre have really taken me under their wing and helped me feel like I’ve always been a part of the team. When I started, I begin in Intake shadowing a colleague for a few months before taking on my own caseload.

“I’ve been really surprised how much I enjoy the counselling, particularly in the therapeutic space. While moving has been hard without my partner and family, I really love what I’ve been doing.”

“The challenge for me as part of this program has been getting started. I was eager to get started on the work straight away but I understand the reasons for the gradual steps to building up understanding and confidence in the therapeutic space and it has helped me develop a strong understanding and awareness of trauma that clients have experienced.

Our Graduate Primary Prevention Officer, Georgia, found the program has provided a wonderful opportunity to become familiar with the sector and continue learning and applying practical skills in a supported environment.

“The program has cemented to me that working in family violence and sexual assault is an area I would like to continue my career into the foreseeable future.”

“I have had wonderful internal support and have been encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities the graduate program offered for professional development, on top of this my manager has supported me to establish external relationships with a mentor working in primary prevention and given the time to meet with them bi-monthly. I have always been supported within my work and especially when undertaking new tasks and given the opportunity to take more responsibility when comfortable.”

“It’s been so useful to hear from other graduates working in response and this has helped me develop a greater understanding of how response and prevention influence one-another.”

“If the program is available again, I would encourage others to apply for the graduate position, it provides a wonderful opportunity to become familiar with the sector and continue learning and applying practical skills in a supported environment.”

This year, we were also pleased to appoint one of our graduates from last year’s Family Safety Victoria’s Rural and Regional Family Violence Social Work Graduate program to a full time permanent position as Counsellor Advocate. Meredith has since increased her caseload and working with more complex, high risk cases.

“From my first day, The SAFV Centre has been such a warm and welcoming environment, and a workplace that has strong values aligned with my own personal values. I was also very interested in the number of different programs and services provided and how it is embedded within the wider Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre.”

“Learning and gradually building up my workload is one of the reasons I was interested in the grad program. I knew at the end of the program that I really wanted to continue with my position and my Team Leader advocated for me. Most of the jobs in this field require prior experience in the workforce and I would not have the job I have now without completing the graduate program first.”

*“The program has been a strong stepping stone for me to understand the work I want to do. When you finish a degree, it can be overwhelming and this opportunity is a supportive pathway to getting started. It’s really set me up for my career.”*



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