

Welcome to The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre - Barwon



The
Sexual
Assault
& Family
Violence
Centre

Inclusion

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land we stand on. We are committed to working toward creating a community where all people indigenous and non-indigenous are safe, connected and empowered to live well.

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre respects and understands the rich diversity in our community and equally values the unique contributions of all persons.

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre workplace welcomes and values diversity and inclusion in our workforce and employment practices. We encourage employment applications from candidates who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who identify as LGBTIQ+, have a disability, young and older people, of faith communities or with a lived experience of sexual assault or family violence.



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Welcome to The SAFV Centre

Thank you for contacting our organisation and seeking our support. We have a range of services and programs designed to meet your needs. From crisis care to group support, case management and counselling services. You may find you receive support from one program or across many, we can assist you to find the support you require.

But let us tell you a little bit about our organisation so you know who we are.

Our Vision is for:

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

Our Purpose is to:

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

Our Values underpin our work:

- **Respect:** we value people, embrace diversity and demonstrate fairness.
- **Integrity:** we are open, honest and ethical. We are accountable for what we say we will do and for the impact of our actions.
- **Innovation:** we advocate for what can be and not settle for what is. We embrace ideas and approaches that will make a sustainable difference.
- **Collaboration:** we work as a team, sharing ideas and expertise with each other and our partners. We trust and empower people, harnessing their strengths.
- **Commitment:** we are driven by our deep commitment for gender equality, social justice and human rights. We are passionate about improving the lives of our clients and inspired to achieve our goals.

Our Organisation:

The SAFV Centre was created in 2016 following the merger between Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault (Barwon CASA) and Minerva Community

Services. The establishment of The SAFV Centre now means that clients can access all specialist sexual assault and family violence services under the one roof.

Our foundation organisations began in 1978, when Minerva and Barwon CASA were each established by a group of concerned community members about the issue of sexual assault and family violence in the community. This means to this day we are a community based, not for profit organisation offering a wide range of free and confidential services and programs to support people who have experienced or been impacted by sexual assault and family violence.

Our staff are located in Geelong, Horsham and Footscray and we offer our specialist services across the Barwon and Western Melbourne areas and Wimmera District of Victoria. We employ over 100 staff and see more than 5000 people each year.

In Geelong, we are a partner in the Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre, where we are co-located with Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team, Family Violence Investigation Unit, and the Department of Families Fairness and Housing Child Protection Sexual Abusive Intervention Team. We work closely with Victoria Police and Child Protection in Horsham as required. We are also a partner in The Orange Door in Barwon, and co-located with Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and other community service organisations across the Barwon area.

Although we can work closely with Police and Child Protection many of the people we support do not report what's happened to them. Anyone can access our service separately and independently of police or child protection and be assured of full privacy and confidentiality. In the MDC, we do not share information with other professionals and organisations unless subject to the provisions we mention on page 7 of this booklet.

We are committed to using continuous quality improvement mechanisms to ensure the delivery of evidence-based, high quality services. Our staff actively participate in regular internal and external reviews, audits and reflection. We seek feedback about our work and review the effectiveness of our services and programs.

The SAFV Centre is certified by HDAA to the Human Service Standards and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System requirements, which assures our clients that we have effective management systems in place.

Our Services:

Our services include:

- 24-hour crisis responses for people who have recently been sexually assaulted and women and children experiencing family violence, including risk assessment, safety planning, access to emergency accommodation, and coordination with other specialist services such as police investigators and forensic medical specialists.
- Case management and court support for women and their children who have or are experiencing family violence.
- Therapeutic counselling and group programs for women and children who have experienced family violence; and adults, young people and children who have experienced sexual assault (including support for non-offending family members and friends).
- Access to high security crisis accommodation for women and their children assessed as being at high risk of further harm from violence.
- Early intervention services for children and young people who have engaged in problematic or abusive sexualised behaviours, and young people engaging in family violence behaviours.

In addition to these services, we deliver training programs for professionals and community members, and training tailored to the needs of organisations and workplaces. We are also involved in a range of primary prevention initiatives focused on increasing awareness and understanding of the causes of gender-based violence – to stop it happening in the first place.

Our Staff:

From the moment you contact The SAFV Centre, you are talking to professionals. Our receptionists are trained and experienced in responding to sensitive matters, upholding confidentiality and assisting you in receiving appropriate support. Our practitioners are tertiary qualified and experienced social workers, psychologists and family therapists who are highly skilled in the specialist area of sexual assault and family violence. All our staff are professionally supervised and undertake specialist training and development to ensure we maintain our high standards of service delivery to you.

Consumer Participation:

We undertake regular surveys, questionnaires and service and program evaluations. To assist us with our review processes we will ask if we can contact you in future (within two years) as part of our on-going service evaluation. You don't have to consent to this and can have your choice noted on your file.

Feedback, compliments and complaints;

We are committed to continuous quality improvement and we welcome your feedback in order to refine the way we develop and deliver our services to you. This includes responding to compliments and complaints fairly and without discrimination. Any concern you raise or information you provide will not impact on future services you or your family receives.

Compliments and complaints received by us will be managed and responded to in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and our organisation's Complaints and Compliments Policy.

If you have further questions, wish to provide feedback or make a complaint, you are encouraged to speak directly with our staff member supporting you or you are welcome to speak with their Manager or the Executive Manager Client Services.

Please call during business hours on 03 5222 4318 or feedback can be provided in writing via our online form: www.safvcentre.org.au. We also welcome feedback on how the support we have provided has been helpful for you and in some cases can assist to transform your life. We appreciate personal stories as they let us know what we are doing well, its inspiring for staff and we can celebrate your journey too.

Independent Advocacy Bodies

The SAFV Centre receives government funding to deliver services to our community. We encourage you to raise your concerns directly with our organisation in the first instance. If the matter remains unresolved, or you are concerned about the service you have received, you are welcome to make a complaint to the following independent advocacy bodies.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Phone: 1300 884 706

Website: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint

The Victims of Crime Commissioner

Phone: 1800 010 017

Website: [Make a complaint | Victims of Crime Commissioner](http://www.victimsofcrime.com.au/make-a-complaint)

Health Complaints Commissioner

Phone: 1300 582 113

Website: www.hcc.vic.gov.au/make-complaint

The Ombudsman (Victoria)

Phone: (03) 9613 6222 or 1800 806 314 (regional only)

Website: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

1. The Privacy of Your Personal Information

This section is designed to inform you of the information we are required to keep when you access our services. We must keep a record of all interactions with our clients and we will discuss this with you at your first appointment.

What information will The SAFV Centre collect about me?

We collect information, such as your name and contact details, and some statistical information relating to you such as your age, place of birth, cultural identity, sexual identity, language spoken and the type of assault or violence you have experienced.

Statistical information is 'non-identifying' – it will not identify who you are and may be used in non-identifying statistical reports. The statistical information can be captured into a report across all the people we see for a year. It helps us to understand more about the work we do, the trends and themes across our community. This can also be reported in this non identifying statistical way to our funding body in a report on the number of people we are supporting.

We will develop a client file that is specific to you. Your practitioner will take case notes describing their contact with you and this is recorded in your client file. Case notes provide a record of contact with you and other relevant people or professionals that you have given us consent to contact. Case notes may also be referred to if you require a written report or support letter. All case notes are kept securely. You can ask to see your client file at any time.

If you wish to remain anonymous while accessing our services, please talk about this with your practitioner.

Can I access my client file?

You have the right under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* to access your file. You can access your file by speaking to your practitioner and can read your file while accompanied by your practitioner who will answer any questions you may have. You can also request a copy or summary of your file and can request that changes be made if you identify any information that is incorrect or that you do not agree with.

Is my information stored safely?

Client files containing statistical information and file notes are stored electronically and are secure with dual password access restrictions. We fully

comply with legislation requirements regarding the collection and storage of your information.

How long will The SAFV Centre retain my file?

From 2013, Barwon CASA (now The SAFV Centre) made the decision to keep client files and not destroy them. In making this decision, we recognise that people who have experienced sexual assault may require many years to consider a decision to report a crime, if ever and may need their file to do that. Sometimes our former clients, who as a 12-year-old child accessed our service and now in their 40s want to look back on their journey might want their file. For many reasons such as this, we keep your file for you.

This means that any stage in the future you will be able to request your information. However, prior to 2013 client files were only retained by Barwon CASA for a period of 10 years after last contact date, this means our storage of files mainly goes back to 2003. Children's files were retained on the same basis, after the child had reached 18 years of age. If you accessed Barwon CASA or its predecessor before then we will no longer have your file, but still check with us. Please note that we do not hold any former files for Minerva prior to 2016.

Who else will have access to my information?

We are committed to the safe and respectful handling of personal information. Your information is primarily viewed by your practitioner; however, your file may be viewed by other SAFV Centre staff such as a team leader or Manager, on a need-to-know basis only.

Your information can only be shared with professionals from other organisations if you provide your consent. There are several exceptions to this:

- if a practitioner has reason to believe that a person under the age of 18 years is at risk of harm.
- if a practitioner has reason to believe that you may seriously hurt yourself or someone else.
- if a request for information is made under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme or Child Information Sharing Scheme that is relevant to support effective assessment and management of family violence risk.

Your file may be requested by a legal representative if there are court proceedings. If this happens we may oppose the request in order to protect the privacy of your file. However, in the event that we are unsuccessful we are then legally required to submit your file. We will try to contact you and inform you of this prior to any action being taken.

We will always aim to seek your consent and views on sharing your information and inform you when your information is shared. Wherever possible, we will inform you that your information has been shared. We will not share your

information with the perpetrator of sexual assault or family violence or any person without your prior consent.

What Laws protect my information?

There are a range of regulations and legal obligations which we must meet in the handling of personal information. The SAFV Centre complies with the requirements of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, the *Health Records Act 2001*, and other legal obligations. The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* and the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* also govern the sharing of information that we hold and privacy obligations. These Acts govern how your information is collected, held, managed, used, disclosed, transferred or destroyed.

Need more information about your privacy?

If you have further questions in relation to your privacy, you may speak with your practitioner.

2. Your Rights and Responsibilities

The SAFV Centre is committed to ensuring all people who access our services have adequate information about their rights and responsibilities. Your practitioner will also talk to you about your rights and responsibilities when you first attend our services and you are welcome to ask for information at any time.

Your Rights

In accessing our services, you have the right to:

- quality and respectful services regardless of gender, ability, race, social status or sexual preference, taking into account such things as cultural background, health status and individual needs.
- confidentiality, in respecting your privacy and dignity with services provided in a safe and non-threatening environment.
- remain anonymous and not provide any personal details.
- adequate and easy to understand information regarding all aspects of the services provided, so that you can make informed choices regarding your support and options available.
- consent to, or decline our services, or decline to participate in educational, research or evaluation activities, including services provided by students.
- request who will be present at an appointment, including a support person, interpreter or a student.
- know the name and qualifications of your practitioner.
- request a transfer to another practitioner.

- read or request a copy of your file in accordance with our policies and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.
- be fully informed of your choices on any issue that affects you and to participate in decision-making toward mutually agreed goals in your case plan or counselling plan.
- be heard and acknowledged and treated with dignity and respect; and to have your choices respected.
- make a complaint about the services received from The SAFV Centre, the Barwon MDC, or Orange Door in Barwon and to expect that complaints will be investigated appropriately and in confidence.
- live free from fear and violence.

Your Responsibilities

We support you taking responsibility for your own wellbeing, as far as this is possible. Promotion of a mutually acceptable partnership between you and our service is desirable and this can be facilitated if you are aware of your following responsibilities:

- to keep appointments or give notice of cancellation as early as possible if you are unable to attend.
- to show consideration and respect and act in a manner which does not cause undue disruption to staff and others accessing our services.
- to maintain confidentiality regarding information about other clients or participants in groups or programs conducted by The SAFV Centre.

Our Responsibilities

All our staff support the statement of your rights and responsibilities. Staff responsibilities are to:

- Be aware of, and adhere to your rights and responsibilities.
- To comply with the SAFV Centre Code of Conduct and the ethics of relevant professional standards and ethics.
- Ensure that you receive this booklet and a verbal explanation regarding your rights and responsibilities at the time of first contact and, where possible, ensure that this information is provided in your preferred language with the use of an interpreter service.
- Discuss confidentiality issues and possible limitations to confidentiality with you; including relevant information sharing schemes, duty of care, criminal justice processes and subpoenas. We will attempt to obtain your permission before discussing or releasing any personal information to third parties.
- If you are involved in group programs, discuss with you the importance of maintaining confidentiality in regard to other participants.

What if my rights have not been respected?

The SAFV Centre upholds; the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. If you think your rights have not been respected, in the first instance you may raise your concerns with your practitioner. If this has not resolved the matter or you do not feel able to raise the issue with your practitioner, you may ask to speak to a Manager or the CEO.

Need more information about your rights and responsibilities?

If you have further questions regarding your rights and responsibilities, please speak directly with our staff.

Professional Boundaries

Our staff are required to uphold professional boundaries and are guided by organisation and professional standards and ethics. It is our staff responsibility to set and maintain these boundaries and to engage in professional supervision and other development opportunities to ensure your interests, rights and safety are upheld at all times and the focus of their support to you, is you.

Examples of boundary crossings may be:

- sharing personal information such as phone number, email address or private messaging details.
- pursuing a personal relationship with you or your relatives or significant others, while you are accessing our services and for a duration after.
- breaching your confidentiality.
- inappropriate touching.
- accepting gifts from you or give you gifts, or loan you their personal items.

If you are concerned that a possible breach of our code of conduct is happening, please speak to the staff member or ask for their manager.

3. Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC)

What is the MDC?

The MDC is a highly collaborative service model that brings together key partners under the one roof to provide coordinated, sensitive and timely services for people experiencing sexual assault and family violence.

The Barwon MDC, located in Geelong, is a partnership between The SAFV Centre, Victoria Police's Sexual Offences & Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) and Family Violence Investigation Unit (FVIU) and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection Sexual Abusive Investigation Team (SAIT).

What services does the MDC provide?

Through the Barwon MDC, people can access a range of sexual assault and family violence services, including crisis responses and case management support, therapeutic services and early intervention programs. Victoria Police provides a full suite of investigation services and DFFH Child Protection provides support to children and families. Other services are also available to support people accessing the Barwon MDC, including community health nurses from Barwon Health, legal practitioners from Barwon Community Legal Service, and financial counsellors from Diversitat.

Will I need to talk to Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection?

You can access The SAFV Centre without being involved with Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection.

However, for young people, mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse applies for young people under 18 years of age in Victoria. When children or young people have been sexually assaulted, Victoria Police's SOCIT and/or DFFH Child Protection must be informed.

What are the benefits of the MDC?

There are many benefits for you from our co-location in the MDC, including:

- capacity across all key partner organisations to provide holistic and coordinated support to you and your non-offending family members.
- more timely assessment of your needs and capacity to connect you with the appropriate professional support.
- improved continuity of care and ongoing support to you.
- improved access to all partner organisations for people with disabilities or cognitive impairments
- reduced barriers to your access, participation and inclusion
- can lead to improved longer term wellbeing and outcomes through the provision of coordinated support.

Will my information be shared within the MDC?

Similar to the privacy requirements for The SAFV Centre, all key partner MDC organisations comply with the privacy legislation in Victoria.

Your information is stored securely and separately by each organisation. The MDC partner organisations do not have access to the other organisation's files. Your information can only be shared with professionals from our partner organisations with your knowledge and written consent. The exceptions to this are outlined in the previous section on 'Who else will have access to my information?'

4. The Orange Door in Barwon

What is The Orange Door?

In addition, our organisation is a partner in The Barwon Orange Door. The Orange Door includes a mix of staff employed by Family Safety Victoria and staff from Community Support Organisations in the Barwon area, including The SAFV Centre.

By bringing together different workforces and practices, The Orange Door provides an integrated team and consolidated access point for:

- women, children, young people and families experiencing family violence;
- perpetrators of family violence; and
- families in need of support with the care, development and well-being of children.

The SAFV Centre has approximately 20 staff based at the Orange Door in Barwon with additional access points in Colac and the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative. We work closely with the Orange Door and you may have been referred by them to our organisation.

What services does The Orange Door provide?

The Orange Door in Barwon offers coordinated and integrated access points for specialist services for women, children and young people experiencing family violence, men perpetrating family violence, and families who need support with the care and wellbeing of their children. The approach is designed to keep perpetrators in view, assess the risk they pose, and hold them to account.

Practitioners located within The Orange Door combine their specialist expertise to streamline how people access, navigate and connect with key services across the Barwon area.

Need more information about The Orange Door?

If you would like further information about The Orange Door in Barwon, please visit The Orange Door website: www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au or call 1800 312 820.

5. How You Can Contact The SAFV Centre

Business Hours:

The SAFV Centre is open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. Appointments may be negotiated outside of standard business hours on exception.

We provide specialist sexual assault and family violence services across the Barwon area and Wimmera District. Our offices are located at:

Geelong:

Main Office

59-63 Spring Street, Geelong West, Vic 3218

Phone: 03 5222 4318

Postal Address: PO Box 7205, Geelong West, Vic 3218

Email: reception@safvcentre.org.au

Website: www.safvcentre.org.au

Barwon Orange Door

Address: 83 Moorabool Street, Geelong, Vic 3220

Phone: Ph 1800 312 820

Wimmera:

Phone: 03 5381 1211

Address: 25 Roberts Avenue, Horsham, Vic 3400

Postal Address: PO Box 648, Horsham, Vic 3402

Email: wimmera@safvcentre.org.au

Outside Standard Business Hours:

24-hour telephone crisis support is available for yourself, family members, friends or other support people who are distressed, anxious, or experiencing trauma as a result of sexual assault or family violence.

- Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL) 1800 806 292 (24/7)
- Safe steps Family Violence Response Centre 1800 015 188 (24/7)

Our After Hours team work closely with these two statewide 24/7 services to deliver face-to-face crisis response services and practical support for those in immediate crisis after an assault.

Your Notes