

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre

Our Year of Impact

2023 Annual Report



Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre (The SAFV Centre) Annual Report 2022-2023 highlights the strength of our clients and our work, our achievements and challenges, and the impact we have had in our communities in which we support.

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; the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people across the Wimmera; and the Gunditjmara people of the Eastern Maar nation in the South West. We acknowledge that sovereignty was not ceded. 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.

Diversity and Inclusion

We celebrate inclusivity, diversity and intersectionality. We seek to ensure our services are accessible to all people and understand the complex interface between intersectionality and gender based violence and the impact this has upon the people we support.

Honoring lived experience

We acknowledge the strength, trauma and resilience of all people impacted by sexual and 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 and offer our ongoing support to those experiencing sexual and family violence today.

Our wonderful staff

We share our deep appreciation to each and every staff member throughout this year. Their commitment to our clients, stakeholders and purpose of the organisation; to each other and the broader organisation is acknowledged and appreciated.

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Our clients are at the centre of all we do. Our experienced staff work closely with people who has experienced sexual or family violence in supporting their recovery; to alleviate the negative impacts of violence on their lives; and create opportunities for them to rebuild their sense of control. We also work with anyone else affected, including family, friends and support people.



About us

A client-centred organisation established in 1978, we continue to grow, delivering integrated specialist response, early intervention, education and prevention services and programs.

Supporting the Victorian community throughout Barwon, Wimmera, and the South West regions, we offer a specialist range of support services to all people impacted by sexual and family violence, encompassing 24 hour crisis response, case management, therapeutic counselling and group programs, early intervention programs, refuge and housing support, legal services, professional training and primary prevention initiatives. We also provide specialised support for all victims of crime through the Victims Assistance Program for Barwon and the South West.

Working across multiple sites and locations, including co-location within the Barwon Multi-Disciplinary Centre, The Orange Doors in Barwon and the South West, outpost locations and within the locally known service Emma House in Warrnambool, our unique combination of services allows us to respond to those that need us, supporting them throughout their journey toward recovery and resilience, while also educating and working with our communities for gender equality to prevent violence from happening in the first place.

We are committed to 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 values of Respect, Integrity, Innovation, Collaboration and Commitment unite us, guiding our decisions and actions in our roles, every day.



Our vision

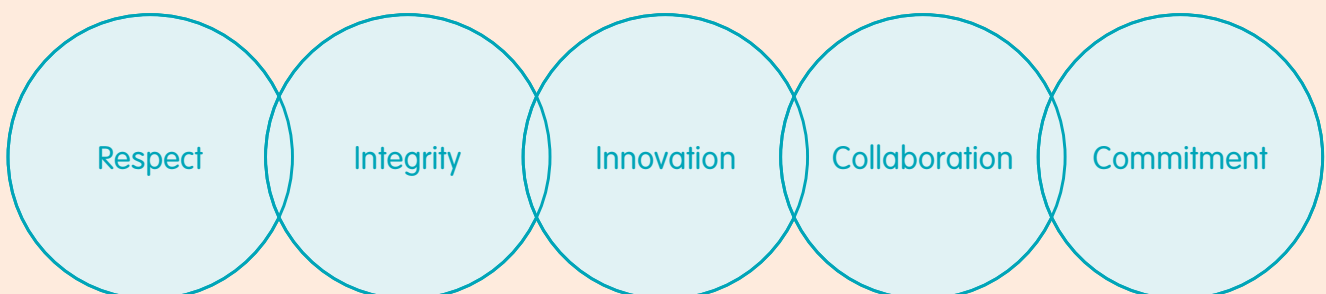
Our vision is for a community free from sexual assault and family violence, and a society underpinned by the principles of gender equality, social justice and human rights.

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 experienced and been impacted by family violence and to people who have experienced and been impacted by 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 family violence and sexual assault.

Our values

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



Our Year of Impact

4,015

clients were supported across
The SAFV Centre

2,781

adults, young people and
children received a therapeutic
service including counselling
and group programs

115

young people and children
received therapeutic treatment
for problem sexual and
sexually abusive behaviours
across Barwon and Wimmera

1,005

women, children and young
people received family violence
case management or refuge

704

clients were supported in the
Wimmera district

74

clients were supported in the
Colac area

139

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

280

secondary consultations
provided to professionals within
Barwon and Wimmera

88

clients supported through
our youth Step Up program,
delivered in partnership
with Meli

1,235

participants attended our
professional training

147

staff employed at 30 June 2023

4,624

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



Message from our Chair and Chief Executive Officer



Welcome to The SAFV Centre's 2023 Annual Report, we are pleased to share our year of impact.

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; the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people across the Wimmera; and the Gunditjmara people of the Eastern Maar nation South West. We acknowledge that sovereignty was not ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

This year, we have continued to work towards 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.

We remain committed to supporting and advocating for those impacted by sexual and family violence and our work and services are centred around their journey.

Our focus has also been on prevention and addressing the causes of violence, harnessing the power of the lived experience and raising their voices, educating the community and expanding our breadth of work and service to ensure a holistic service is provided to our clients.

The past few years saw a significant increase in family violence and the need for case management support, however, in our region and across the country, we saw many victim-survivors delay seeking therapeutic counselling for sexual and family violence. This year, many we have seen many victim-survivors accessing therapeutic counselling, beginning their journey to recovery from the trauma of sexual and family violence.

We are pleased that all of our programs have now returned to face to face, with support for clients led by their choice, whether it be in-person, phone or health direct. Client choice is imperative to the recovery journey, taking back control, and through the learnings and need to introduce new ways of connection during the pandemic, our service offering now allows greater access for clients. Our therapeutic group programs, in Barwon and Wimmera, have had wonderful engagement, with many participants welcoming the opportunity to come together in person.

We officially opened and welcomed women and children to our new core and cluster refuge, a safe and welcoming space for those impacted by family violence. Nearing almost 12 months of support, the Refuge has welcomed a number of women and children throughout the past year, providing security and safety while they re-establish their lives and move through their journey toward recovery from family violence.

With a rich history in supporting all people impacted by sexual violence and women and children impacted by family violence, we were pleased to be announced as the service provider for the Victims Assistance Program (VAP) in Barwon and the South West. We bring a strong connection with a client-centred response and look forward to ensuring victims of crime are provided with a holistic service.

In August 2022, we entered into a partnership with Emma House Domestic Violence Service in the South West, to explore the viability of Emma House becoming part of The SAFV Centre, to provide a stronger and sustainable future for women's services across our regional locations, with robust governance, trauma-informed client services and cohesive leadership. After months of consultation and due diligence, we were pleased that Emma House members had the trust in our leadership and vision and passed a resolution for a voluntary acquisition, with the final transition to take place in mid-October 2023. We look forward to welcoming Emma House staff to our organisation, and continuing to ensure women and children in the South West have access to specialist family violence services.

Central to our vision, is our commitment to the prevention of sexual and family violence; and our work toward gender equality. We are pleased to be working with a number of sporting clubs through our community partnership with AFL Barwon to provide greater understanding of the attitudes and behaviours that lay the foundation for sexual and family violence to occur in the community and build their understanding of the role and impact each individual can have by being an active bystander in the community.

Our sincere appreciation to the many clients for trusting us with your experience and journey. Providing victim-survivors with the opportunity to use their voice to advocate for change and highlight the impact of violence has been a strong focus this year as we commence our client journey mapping project, which will establish and test a framework for engaging with people with lived experience of sexual and family violence.

We are grateful to all of our partners, donors and supporters who continue to advocate for the work of our organisation. We are also grateful to our partner organisations in working together to deliver support and services to our community.

Together, we thank and acknowledge our Board members, individually and collectively, for their dedication and contribution to our organisation and for your invaluable guidance and focus. We also welcome our new Board members and look forward to your contribution to our robust governance and stewardship.

Our staff are what makes our organisation thrive, living our values every day. Their warmth, dedication and expertise is inspiring and we thank and congratulate them for their commitment throughout the year.

The coming twelve months will see our organisation grow close to 200 staff, across a number of regions and locations. Our focus will be on harmonisation across our teams and services, providing specialist, trauma-informed support to our clients, partners and the community.

Renee Fiolet
Chairperson

Helen Bolton
Chief Executive Officer

Governance

Our Board provides strong stewardship for our organisation and the community by upholding our values and setting our strategic direction.

Our Board Members

- Renee Fiolet, Chairperson
- Tess Lye, Deputy Chairperson
- Ben Meeke, Treasurer
- Jodie Haydon
- Kate Stowell
- Sheridan Emond-Salmon
- Teaghan Osborn
- Jenny McMahon (stepped down in April 2023)
- Sophie O'Keeffe (joined in June 2023)
- Simone Renyard (joined in June 2023)

Statement of transparency

The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre Board has a strong commitment to its clients, members, staff, stakeholders and the general public. The Board upholds the importance of transparency in

its operations to act responsibly so its actions and decisions can be easily understood.

The Board prides itself on its high standards of public administration and use of public resources for the benefit of all people requiring access to our services.

Our strategic goals

Our Strategic Plan is aspirational and forward looking, guiding our goals and shaping the future direction of our organisation.

Our five key areas of focus are:



Primary
prevention



Support and
resources



Evidence



Partnerships



Sustainability

As we reflect on the past year, we are pleased to highlight our top achievements, aligned to our five strategic goals.

Our goals:

Primary Prevention

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

2023 Highlights

- Successful grants from Geelong Community Foundation, Myer Community Fund 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.
- Created and delivered a Lived Experience Art Exhibition as part of 16 Days of Activism, using client creative expression and art to create awareness of what respect means to people with lived experience.
- We commenced the rollout of our *Leaders on and off the Field* program, funded by Sport and Recreation Victoria. The program supports sporting clubs across Barwon to strengthen an inclusive and respectful club culture, helping members to feel safe to participate as players, volunteers and leaders. Working with Grovedale Cricket Club and Ocean Grove Football and Netball Club, we have delivered six workshops and three Active Bystander Training sessions with positive feedback. As we move forward, we will continue to work with these clubs to continue the implementation of their gender equality action plans.
- Continued the delivery of our gender equality sporting club focused program - *Respect Starts Here* with St Albans Football and Netball Club and Portarlington Football and Netball Club. The program is focused on awareness and understanding of sexual and family violence in our community and encourages the development of attitudes and behaviours to support healthy, safe and respectful relationships.
- Through both *Respect Starts Here* and *Leaders on and off the Field* programs, we reached 218 participants, with 13 workshops delivered.
- Commenced a community partnership with AFL Barwon for the next three seasons, centering around the execution of the *Respect Starts Here* program, working with selected AFL Barwon football and netball clubs to promote equality and awareness to address violence against women.
- Key partner in the CORE Alliance in the Wimmera and Respect2040 in the Barwon Area.
- Supporting partner to Cultura for the development of Respectful Relationships video series, led by Cultura's Community Development team and co-designed with young members of the community. The videos cover topics from 'Sexting and the Law' to 'Age of Legal Consent'.



Using art to highlight respect during 16 Days of Activism

To showcase the lived experience of sexual and family violence victim-survivors and to give them a voice to our community through art, we hosted a Lived Experience Art Exhibition as part of 16 Days of Activism.

In partnership with the Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee and their member support service organisations, and with funding from Safe+Equal and Respect Victoria, the exhibition showcased the lived experience of women across the Barwon Area impacted by sexual and family violence.

The strength and resilience of the women has been showcased through creative expressions, highlighting their journey toward recovery from violence and sharing what respect means to them. By including and amplifying the voices of women with lived experience of violence, statistics are brought to life, and provide context of the impact to the community.

The campaign enabled 15 women with lived experience of sexual and family violence come together and participate in a therapeutic art class where they created their exhibition pieces under the guidance of a specialist trauma-informed art therapist and local Geelong artist.

The exhibition commenced on the first day of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, with the work displayed at Deakin University's waterfront campus for a week, before moving to the Geelong Regional Library where it was showcased throughout December and January, providing the community with the opportunity to engage with the pieces.

The exhibition provided an opportunity to platform the artistic expression of women with lived experience through an empowering and therapeutic process to highlight what respect means to them. Regaining power and control of their lives is an important part of the healing journey and we were pleased to provide this art exhibition as one form of advocacy for those impacted by violence in our community.

The feedback from women who participated in the workshop and exhibition included:

"I am grateful that we had such a dignified platform to share our experiences on and in such a beautiful and professional layout and setting. This certainly made me feel validated and important and like our life experiences matter. It was an historical event, I think."

"I felt myself, totally free to express in the journey I am now."

"I thank you all so much for letting me be a part of it as this journey to freedom is so personal that it can be very isolating so the whole experience has enriched my life."

We acknowledge the strength, trauma and resilience of those impacted by sexual and family violence and we recognise that the response and prevention of sexual and family violence must be informed by the voices and lived experience of victim-survivors.

We thank Respect Victoria and Safe+Equal for their support of this exhibition, and acknowledge the Geelong Regional Library, Deakin University, The City of Greater Geelong along with artist Luisa La Fornara and Belle's Fine Art for their support on this important initiative.



Our goals:

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.

2023 Highlights

- The family violence risk levels of women we are supporting for case management continued to reflect the high risk women face within the community, with 55% of case management clients presenting at higher risk, serious risk or serious risk requiring immediate intervention. With a higher level of risk the complexity of providing client support increases, with a key focus on comprehensive risk assessment and safety planning.
- Our therapeutic group programs continued with strong connection and participation, welcoming 150 women, mothers and children and young people to receive trauma informed support and to connect to a peer community through these important programs. Our trauma-informed Yoga program continued to be delivered in both Barwon and the Wimmera throughout the year, with positive engagement and participation.
- This year, our Intake team provided more than 280 secondary consultations to professionals and practitioners from the health, education and community sectors, as well as private psychologists and police. Our support and advice for professionals enables them to provide a safe and respectful response to people impacted by sexual or family violence.
- This year, there was a 33% increase in young people (12-17 years) and a 34% increase in children (0-11 years) accessing support for therapeutic counselling. With this increase and to ensure we are reaching children and young people, we continue to provide outpost through Headspace along with developing new and engaging resources with information on what young people may be feeling, in a youth friendly language.
- We have continued to focus on support for clients in rural and regional Victoria and increase access to our services.
- 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. With the introduction of The Orange Door in the Wimmera, we have seen a surge in referrals for family violence counselling, with a 121% increase in clients provided with support.
- We continue to provide support across the Wimmera, with staff attending in-person outpost locations each week to ensure face to face access is available for clients within rural locations.
- Our Outpost team in Colac continued to provide specialist support through therapeutic counselling, group programs, family violence case management and court support when applying for Family Violence Intervention Orders at the Colac Magistrates' Court.
- Our Orange Door team saw 4,624 cases supported by our staff co-located at the Barwon Orange Door.
- We completed systems review of The Barwon Orange Door repeat clientele with a focus on providing a dedicated response to women who are referred by Police as both the victim-survivor and the predominant aggressor. Women are often misidentified as the primary aggressor and this project has sought to understand why and reduce this factor.
- Our Specialist Family Violence Child Protection Partnership practitioners provided 274 consults to child protection and 50 consults to agencies, representing 496 children in the child protection system. These consults included providing risk assessment and safety planning, and support in navigating the service system.
- Commenced our Client Journey Mapping project, which will establish and test a framework for engaging with clients and people with lived experience of sexual and family violence.

Welcoming clients to our refuge

This year we completed the build and fit out of our new core and cluster Refuge for women and children impacted by family violence, and we commenced welcoming them from October.

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

Since opening, we have supported 16 women and 19 children. Of the women and families staying at the refuge, 10 women identified with a multicultural background and one identified as Aboriginal. We have received wonderful feedback from clients, highlighting the important role the space has provided them during a difficult and challenging time.

We know how important pets are to families and the danger pets can face during family violence. This year we welcomed six pets residing onsite with their owners. Where this has not been possible, we have organised for the pets to be safely accommodated until we can reunite them with the family.

Referrals to our refuge come from Victoria's family violence referral service, Safe Steps, and women and children may be seeking refuge from anywhere across Victoria.

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. Individual units allow women the space, security and privacy they need for their own recovery and to support their child's safety and emotional recovery.

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, seven days a week, with our qualified staff providing support to residents.

With almost a year of service provided, we have introduced a number of key initiatives to provide clients with the best service possible.

We have welcomed National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) support workers into the refuge to support clients with a disability. This has provided great accessibility for families with additional needs and vastly improves their journey to recovery.

We have built strong local community connections, to enable families to feel welcomed, safe and included in the community. With a majority of the children residing in the Refuge with us of school age, building the connection with the local school principal has been key to ensuring a smooth transition to school, along with connecting children with local sporting clubs and extra-curriculum activities.

Creating more connections for families has been a priority and with the generous support of the community through donations, we have been able to support families to attend events together, with a key highlight this year attending the Adventure Park Winter Glow Festival. This provided the opportunity to connect in a positive way, with many children never seeing snow prior to the festival.

As we move into the next year, we recognise the barriers facing many of the women who stay with us, with affordable housing the primary barrier for families exiting refuge. We continue to advocate to government for access to safe and affordable housing for those impacted by family violence.



Our goals:

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.

2023 Highlights

- Implemented our Outcomes Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, an important project supporting a number of strategic initiatives across our organisation. The framework creates opportunities to understand whether our programs and services 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. The measurement tools have been implemented within our Refuge and our Connect group, with outcomes to be reviewed in late 2023.
- We welcomed our first facility dog to our organisation, providing additional care and support for clients and staff.
- Client choice in service delivery was a strong focus this year, with a return to pre-pandemic service delivery preference, with two-thirds of our service delivery provided in-person, followed by phone support and through health direct.
- With the lived experience of clients key to informing service delivery, reforms and messages, this year, we provided a number of client advocacy opportunities through media, an art program and public speaking events.
- We successfully completed our recertification assessment 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 quality of our work and the commitment to our clients by all staff. The assessment highlighted positive feedback from clients and staff.
- This year, we were successful in our submissions to a number of grants. These grants have contributed to supporting clients and programs, along with working towards primary prevention. We thank all philanthropic and corporate grants and donors for their support of the important work of our organisation, and for our community.
- As an organisation, we are committed and driven to creating social, political, and cultural change, challenging gender stereotypes, and supporting women to recognise the cause and impact of gender based violence, to enhance their safety, respect and equality. We continue to focus and deliver community education and initiatives.

"It is absolutely clear you know your core business. You know where you sit in the world. You're really becoming leaders in this sector in terms of driving community and policy change."

A focus on wellbeing

This year, we welcomed a special new team member to our organisation – Baila, our Facility Dog to engage and enhance the wellbeing of our clients and our staff.

In March, Baila, a 17 month old Labrador, joined us from Guide Dogs Victoria. Baila is trained with the skills of a therapy dog in addition to specialist skills specific to our organisation.

Our organisation seeks to assist clients to feel comfortable, safe and supported during appointments and through the introduction of Baila, she provides a point of conversation and helps people to engage in a chat, offers support and companionship to people who may feel isolated or uncomfortable in appointments, and creates a distraction from any overwhelming negative feelings and reduces stress or anxiety.

During an eight week trial period Baila was integrated within our Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Service (SABTS) team, supporting young people visiting our organisation. She is a companion in the room and is intuitive in recognising behavioral cues and subsequently offers comfort to clients.

Throughout the eight week pilot, clients and staff shared positive feedback on the support provided by Baila, with 100% of clients indicating it was helpful or very helpful having Baila in their session.

Staff have overwhelmingly enjoyed having Baila around the office. She puts a smile on their face, supports staff wellbeing and also helps when having a particularly tough day. There have been many requests from both clients and staff to see Baila - to know how she's doing and also if they can say hello to her while at the Centre.

Baila has made herself very comfortable at home with her Guardian, as well as around the office. She has thrived with routine and regular naps, and has set an early 4pm finish for herself each day – her focus is firmly on self-care (or more specifically the pending arrival of dinner).

Following the eight week pilot and evaluation, we are pleased that Baila will continue to work at The SAFV Centre, expanding her client support to all services. Within the Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre, Baila will also attend shared client appointments with Child Protection and the Sexual Offences and Child-abuse Investigation Team, with the partner agencies expressing enthusiastic support for Baila.

Some special moments at work...

- A young person requested to have Baila present in their session. Unfortunately Baila wasn't available at that time, however the staff member was able to connect with the young person in a new way as the client enthusiastically shared their love of dogs and interest in working with them in a therapeutic way. Baila didn't even have to be present in order to be helpful!
- A family accessing support were able to engage in some lighter moments while patting Baila and chatting about her. The family were navigating a very challenging situation involving family violence, however for a precious moment they were able to soak up a little bit of distraction, unconditional friendship and support from Baila.



Our goals:

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.

2023 Highlights

- We partnered and agreed to Emma House joining The SAFV Centre, which will see the South West based family violence service join our organisation at the end of 2023.
- Collaborating with Cultura and Meli, on the Working Together – Strengthening Family Violence Responses for Multicultural Communities project. This project includes co-design workshops with multicultural women discussing a range of topics to assist with identifying barriers to access, development of a culturally appropriate training module for practitioners working with multicultural women across the Barwon area and undertaking a cultural audit across our organisation.
- Our community education program engaged with more than 1,235 participants, through our professional training modules. Our reach has grown by 124% this year, providing further education and resources to community, organisations and workplaces across Barwon.
- Understanding the additional training needs within workplaces and the community, we designed and delivered three new training modules – Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Thrive - Vicarious trauma and worker wellbeing, and Mother and Child training. These sessions were delivered to Barwon Water, SAS Vic and the City of Greater Geelong.
- With the help and generosity of our community, we were able to provide more than \$120,000 from community donations to clients with essential items including food, housing, and petrol vouchers, along with mobile phones for safety and connection.
- Working in collaboration with all Orange Door Barwon partners, we completed the rollout of The Orange Door Bellarine Access Point, providing face to face responses to clients, with staff located within Bellarine Community Health.
- We continued our partnership within The Orange Door and Cultura with a Multicultural outpost practitioner providing access and responsiveness for people from diverse communities to remove systemic barriers when accessing family violence and other specialist services such as child and family services. This partnership is the first in Victoria.
- Our partnership within the Barwon Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC) continued, with a number of clients provided with a holistic service from all MDC partners including our staff, together with Victoria Police, Child Protection and Barwon Health nurses. Facilitating safety, confidentiality and client choice, this partnership model ensures we are all providing a client-centred response. We have also been working closely to discuss Harmful Sexual Behaviours cases, and any systemic issues that arise, in order to improve the service system response to young people who have engaged in Harmful Sexual Behaviours program and their families.
- 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. Working with Meli, we had a fantastic response from the Geelong community in joining us in this important event.
- We held our first in-person volunteer event, welcoming some of our long-term supporters and friends to help sort and collate donations and bags for Share the Dignity *It's in the Bag* campaign.
- Bringing joy to our clients at Christmas time, through the Geelong Giving Tree Appeal, in partnership with Meli and a number of corporate partners, we were thrilled to raise more than \$100,000 that was shared among clients from many Geelong community service organisations.

Stability and sustainability in the South West

In mid-2022, The SAFV Centre was invited by Emma House Domestic Violence Service (Emma House) to form a partnership to explore the opportunity of Emma House being voluntarily acquired by The SAFV Centre, to create a strong and sustainable future for family violence services across South West Victoria, with robust governance, trauma-informed client services and cohesive leadership.

The SAFV Centre and Emma House share a strong alliance as specialist family violence organisations; with a similar philosophy, purpose and values in delivering services to women and children impacted by family violence. Both organisations have long and proud histories dating back to the late 1970s and were established by passionate women who were leaders in their community, offering support to women experiencing violence when no other services existed.

In August, the two boards signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing an opportunity to work closely together in a considered process to explore the benefits of a more formal alignment of the two organisations. This included consultation with staff, members, clients and stakeholders to gain further input and support our decision making.

Following robust consultation and due diligence, Emma House members voted unanimously in favour of the acquisition by The SAFV Centre in December 2022, with transition to occur in late 2023 following formal approval from our funding bodies, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Victoria Legal Aid.

For clients, it is vital that women and children in the South West area continue to receive specialist family violence services and that the future of Emma House is secured for women and children for generations to come. As one organisation, we will provide enhanced access and coordinated family violence responses across the Barwon, South West and Wimmera.

Two Board members from Emma House have joined The SAFV Centre Board and we welcome them in governing the broader organisation and providing continuity for Emma House.

Throughout 2023, both organisations have worked closely to plan the transition, with Emma House staff to officially join The SAFV Centre in October 2023. For clients and stakeholders, Emma House continues to operate as business as usual, providing specialist support to women and children impacted by family violence.



Our goals:

Sustainability

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

2023 Highlights

- Our staffing group continues to grow, with a 14% increase. We now have 147 employees and a number of new roles and positions created across the organisation as we continue to build and enhance our services.
- We remain in a strong financial situation to ensure a sustainable and long future for our organisation. Yearly budgets and reforecasts are undertaken to align income with funding allocated to the organisation.
- Organisational reserves were diversified over a variety of ethical investment platforms and equities, while a healthy balance with cash reserves are held for current liabilities.
- Throughout the year, we welcomed five new graduates and three student placements to our organisation, across response and prevention. We appointed three graduates from the previous graduate program to full time positions.
- We continued to strengthen our infrastructure by streamlining processes and implementing technology systems to support our workforce. This year saw the implementation of new accounting and finance software to improve efficiency. An ICT governance and cyber safety review of our technology infrastructure was conducted with strengthened improvements introduced to our systems technology as our organisation continues to grow and evolve.
- We were successful in receiving funding from the Victorian Government to participate in a traineeship program with four staff members building their skills and qualifications across social work, project management and training and assessment.
- This year, we realigned our Strategic Plan to extend its delivery to take into consideration the disruptive impact upon our strategic aspirations in necessarily responding to the COVID 19 pandemic. Our refined Strategic Plan now has five key priorities as we move into next year which includes
 - Goal 1 – Primary Prevention Strategy and Action Plan
 - Goal 2 – Client Journey Mapping and Services Blueprint
 - Goal 3 – Outcomes Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework Implementation
 - Goal 4 – Wimmera Strategic Action Plan
 - Goal 5 – Workforce Wellbeing Framework
- As part of our commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community, we are moving towards obtaining the Rainbow Tick. We have been selected as an organisation to participate in the How2 Program with Rainbow Health, which will support our organisation to embed LGBTQIA+ inclusive practices across our workplace and services.
- We launched our hybrid working model for staff, focused on ensuing client choice in how they wish to access support, ie in person or by technology was the top priority, while still providing staff with options for their flexibility. The model commenced in January, with an evaluation to take place in 2024 to measure its impact.
- With a focus on enabling our services and practices are inclusive, safe and welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and visitors to our organisation, we provided cultural training for all staff, along with providing cultural supervision for staff providing outpost support at Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative.



Providing assistance to victims of crime

This year, The SAFV Centre was appointed to deliver the Victims Assistance Program (VAP) across Barwon South West region for three years, commencing 1 July 2023.

This is significant achievement for our organisation, expanding our trauma informed services for victims of crime across our community and strengthening our funding across multiple government departments, with funding provided by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Department of Justice and Community Safety, further bolstering our reputation as a leading organisation, focused on client outcomes

VAP is a critical part of the state-wide response to all victims of crime, providing services to victims at a local level and delivered by community agencies. It works to reduce the impacts of crime and supports victim recovery by providing practical assistance, advocacy, case management support and access to a range of services, including engagement with the criminal justice system and helping victims recover from the impact.

VAP provides trauma informed services that are responsive to the complex and diverse needs of victims of reported and unreported crime against the person. Victims span across all genders, sex, race and cultural backgrounds within Victoria.

We recognise that people who have been the victim of a crime need holistic services that encompass physical, emotional, psychological, material, legal and health needs. Each individual's needs are varied and their experiences diverse, and our focus will be on providing client choice and individualised support.

We are excited by the opportunity to provide VAP throughout the Barwon South West region, drawing on our experience and support for clients. We have a long history of providing support for adults, children and young people impacted by sexual assault and women and children impacted by family violence and we are looking forward to building on our knowledge, experience and service offering to provide support for all victims of crime with victim-led and trauma informed, holistic, equitable, coordinated, timely, specialised, accountable, and culturally respectful and inclusive services.

As part of the new team, we have introduced new roles to ensure a stronger connection for clients and best practice. Our team will include an Aboriginal Engagement Worker, co-located within local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations where they will support Aboriginal victims of crime to access information, culturally safe and localised services and supports. The role will build trust and engagement with local communities to address systemic barriers for Aboriginal victims' participation in the criminal justice system.

Our VAP Family Violence Practice Lead will bring the trauma-informed family violence lens to our VAP services across all genders impacted by family violence.

With a team of 10 employees working across the Barwon South West region, our team can assist clients with:

- help to make informed decisions about the support a client needs or action they wish to take (e.g. reporting a crime)
- referrals to other services or supports
- support with making victim impact statements, attending court proceedings, and helping clients navigate the justice system from beginning to end
- help with VOCAT applications (compensation for criminal acts)
- access to counselling and therapeutic related services as well as practical supports.

For more information about our VAP services, please visit www.vapbsw.org.au

Financials

The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre Inc
Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income
for the year ended 30 June 2023.

	NOTE	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Revenue	3	15,233,216	12,358,455
Expenses			
Employee benefits expense		(12,752,632)	9,507,665
Depreciation expense		(448,542)	428,998
Administrative expense		(1,015,989)	747,763
Motor vehicle expense		(52,649)	46,549
Other expenses from ordinary activities		(1,163,771)	868,736
Surplus/(loss) before income tax expense		(200,368)	758,744
Income tax expense	1	-	-
Surplus/(loss) after income tax expense for the year		(200,368)	758,744
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax			
- Asset revaluation	15	-	1,091,264
Total comprehensive income for the year		(200,368)	1,850,008

The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre Inc
Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023

	NOTE	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	6,359,009	6,372,403
Trade and other receivables	6	98,882	30,761
Other assets		49,377	148,193
Inventory		27,779	30,348
Total current assets		6,535,048	6,581,705
Non-current assets			
Trade and other receivables	6	46,537	46,537
Investments	7	3,521,321	3,052,402
Property, plant and equipment	8	1,818,878	1,914,844
Right of use Assets	9	8,210,656	7,975,341
Total non-current assets			
Total assets		14,745,704	14,557,046
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	1,383,964	1,257,045
Employee benefits	11	1,228,838	987,577
Grants in advance	12	2,496,931	2,485,658
Lease liabilities	13	266,724	229,210
Total current liabilities		5,376,457	4,959,490
Non-current liabilities			
Employee benefits	11	405,049	278,168
Lease liabilities	13	2,745,126	2,899,948
Total non-current liabilities		3,150,175	3,178,116
Total liabilities		8,526,632	8,137,606
Net assets		6,219,072	6,419,440
Equity			
Reserves	14	330,700	330,700
Asset revaluation reserve	15	1,091,264	1,091,264
Accumulated surplus		4,797,108	4,997,476
Total equity		6,219,072	6,419,440

Acknowledgement of support

We would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the generosity of individuals, community organisations and businesses that have generously supported our organisation over the past 12 months.

It has been an incredible year of impact enabling us to offer our clients so much more to enhance their healing outcomes. Over the past year, we have received funds from our wonderful community, individually or as part of a corporate, local business, philanthropic organisation, school or community group.

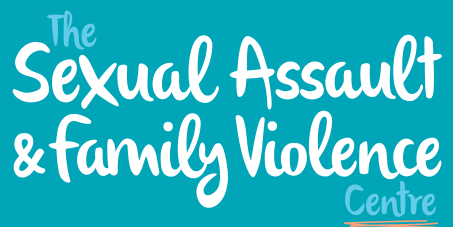
Not only have they raised funds and awareness about sexual and family violence through events, ticket sales, winter sleep-outs, rounding up sales and staff raffles, but also highlighted our services to those impacted by sexual and family violence, and how they can contact us to receive support.

We continue to focus on supporting clients with essential items and increasing connection for families, while also working throughout the community to stop violence before it starts through our primary prevention and education programs.

We would also like to extend our gratitude and thanks to our partners, funding bodies and collaborators who enable our services reach those that need us in the community.







Contact us

A 59-63 Spring St, Geelong West VIC 3218

P 03 5222 4318

E reception@safvcentre.org.au

safvcentre.org.au