

Annual Impact Report for Families and Children Activity Services



Welcome

Healthy relationships are the cornerstone of individual wellbeing and community resilience. In a time when loneliness is rising, families are under pressure, and many people face complex challenges alone, the work of Relationships Australia has never been more vital. Our services are designed to create safe spaces where people can seek help, rebuild trust, and strengthen the connections that sustain them through life's most difficult moments.

With funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, we deliver a diverse suite of Families and Children Activity services that support people across the life course. These include counselling, children's services, family violence interventions, and programs that promote mental health and respectful relationships. Each service is grounded in evidence, responsive to community needs, and focused on real outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

Our impact extends beyond direct service delivery. Through advocacy, research, and national campaigns such as Neighbours Every Day, we champion social connection and influence systemic change. Initiatives like the Relationship Indicators survey provide critical insights into the state of relationships in Australia, informing policy and practice at every level. Together, these efforts reflect our commitment to addressing the root causes of isolation and distress, while building stronger, safer communities.

As a federation, we combine local knowledge with national leadership, ensuring that every program is culturally safe, inclusive, and accessible. This shared purpose – delivering services that make a meaningful difference – sets Relationships Australia apart as a trusted provider of critical support. In the current social climate, our work is not only relevant; it is essential for fostering wellbeing and resilience across generations.

Neighbours Every Day

Neighbours Every Day (NED) is Relationships Australia's year-round social connection campaign that empowers individuals, communities, organisations and governments to build a more connected, inclusive and resilient Australia. Starting from a simple idea - that small every day actions make a big difference - the campaign has grown into a proven, evidence-based national platform that addresses loneliness, supports mental health and strengthens community cohesion.

In 2024-25, Neighbours Every Day was endorsed as a leading prevention initiative in Australia's National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025-2035 (National Suicide Prevention Office, 2025). It was also highlighted in the World Health Organization's (WHO) report on social connection for its innovative, community-based model, that is one of the only evidence-based campaigns of its type worldwide (Garcia, Hunter & Anderson, 2025). The campaign has also been recommended as a priority investment by the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Loneliness (Standing Committee on Education & Community Inclusion, 2024) and the NSW Parliament's report on the prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness (Standing Committee on Social Issues, 2025), and is backed by over 20 years of cross-sector partnerships with local governments, not-for-profits and corporates.

Relationship Indicators

Relationship Indicators is a longitudinal survey of the state of relationships in Australia, based on a representative sample of the Australian population. In late 2024, Relationships Australia carried out a follow-up to the 2022 survey, the results of which have since been shared as a full report, fact sheets relevant to special interest groups (including people living with a disability and older persons), and presentations within the federation and beyond (for example to the Elder Abuse Action Australia network).

While we continue to interrogate the rich data, some of the key take-aways from the Relationship Indicators survey over time are that: loneliness is increasing; families with children are feeling the most pressure; people are feeling less safe disagreeing with their most important person (usually their partner), and more often than not, people are managing their relationship difficulties on their own. Men continue to be the least likely to seek support from others, and younger adults have less often listed a partner as their most important relationship.

The quality of relationships is intrinsically linked to mental health and wellbeing. Periods of relationship difficulties, particularly relationship breakdown, can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of family members, including the resilience of children. Meanwhile, the protective nature of healthy, supportive relationships cannot be overstated. People who are connected and enjoy respectful relationships experience greater well-being, are more productive, and more connected. The services provided by Relationships Australia are intended to foster healthy and respectful relationships and assist individuals, couples and families to recover from trauma.

Snapshot of our overall service delivery for 2024-25:

156,000+

Clients

2,300+

Staff

94

Locations

440

Services

Acknowledgment of Country

Relationships Australia acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters on which we live and work, and we pay our respect to their elders, past and present.

In recognising their profound connection to this country, we also honour the significance of family and relationships that have sustained and enriched their cultures for generations. May we continue to learn from and live these values as we walk together on this land. The supports and services offered by Relationships Australia are situated across many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations. This report was created at the national office of Relationships Australia, which is on Ngunnawal Country.

Services supported by Department of Social Services Families and Children Activity funding

This Impact Report focusses on the programs delivered by Relationships Australia under the generous funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) Families and Children Activity (FaC) for the 2024-25 financial year.

Services delivered by Relationships Australia with funding from DSS support individuals and families across key settings and life stages, including protecting and supporting families from the impacts of family violence. Across the Relationships Australia network, the DSS funded services include:



Family and
Relationships
Services



Specialised
Family
Violence
Services



Children and
Parenting
Support



The National
Redress
Scheme



Reconnect



Family
Mental Health
Support
Services



Communities
for Children
Facilitating
Partner
Programs



Find and
Connect
Support
Services



Forced
Adoption
Support
Services



Additional
DSS-funded
services and
programs

The 2024-25 impact report details a snapshot of Families and Children Activity funded services as they support individuals through key transitions throughout the life course. The specific impacts of the support provided are illustrated through outcomes data and impact stories across a number of DSS-funded services, including Family and Relationships Services (FaRS); Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS); Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS); and a range of specialised services.

Understanding our impact

Social impact refers to the influence we have on individuals, families and communities that occurs as a result of engagement with our programs. While there are clear legal and economic benefits arising from our programs, many of which are reported regularly pursuant to contractual requirements, this report focuses on the unique role we play as a relationship service. By focusing on relationships throughout the process, we create enduring and life-changing impacts that benefit families for generations.

The reach of Relationships Australia's services includes a broad spectrum of settings and communities in Australia. For this report, we present our impact across five domains that highlight different supports available across of the life course.

Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
Strengthening newly formed and established family relationships	Mental health support for children, young people and their families	Education for better relationships	Directing specialised family violence services to those most in need	Providing recognition and repair following trauma or abuse





Strengthening newly formed and established family relationships

Family and Relationship Services (FaRS) sit at the heart of our mission to help families thrive. These services provide early intervention and prevention to support families at risk of breakdown, children at risk of abuse or neglect, and families facing disadvantage or vulnerability. By offering counselling, education, and community outreach, FaRS helps families navigate periods of change and build stronger, healthier relationships.

Relationships are the foundation of family wellbeing. When families experience stress – whether through separation, financial hardship, or complex life transitions – the ripple effects can be profound, impacting children's safety, mental health, and future resilience. FaRS responds early, before challenges escalate, creating opportunities for families to repair trust, strengthen communication, and develop strategies that support long-term stability. These interventions not only reduce immediate distress but also foster environments where children can grow and thrive.

FaRS is grounded in evidence-based practice and delivered through a client-centred, collaborative model. Services are tailored to meet families where they are – whether that means face-to-face counselling, online support, or community-based programs. This flexibility ensures accessibility for people in remote areas, those with mobility challenges, and families juggling multiple responsibilities. Every interaction is designed to empower clients with practical tools and emotional support, helping them build resilience and confidence in managing life's complexities.

FaRS demonstrates that timely, respectful support can transform family dynamics. By focusing on prevention and early intervention, these services reduce the risk of breakdown and create lasting benefits for individuals, families, and communities. The program is available to a wide range of individuals, including those going through separation, blended families introducing new members, children and young people, couples, kinship carers such as grandparents, and extended family members who have caring responsibilities.

In 2024-25, Relationships Australia provided Family and Relationship Services to over:

37,000+
Clients

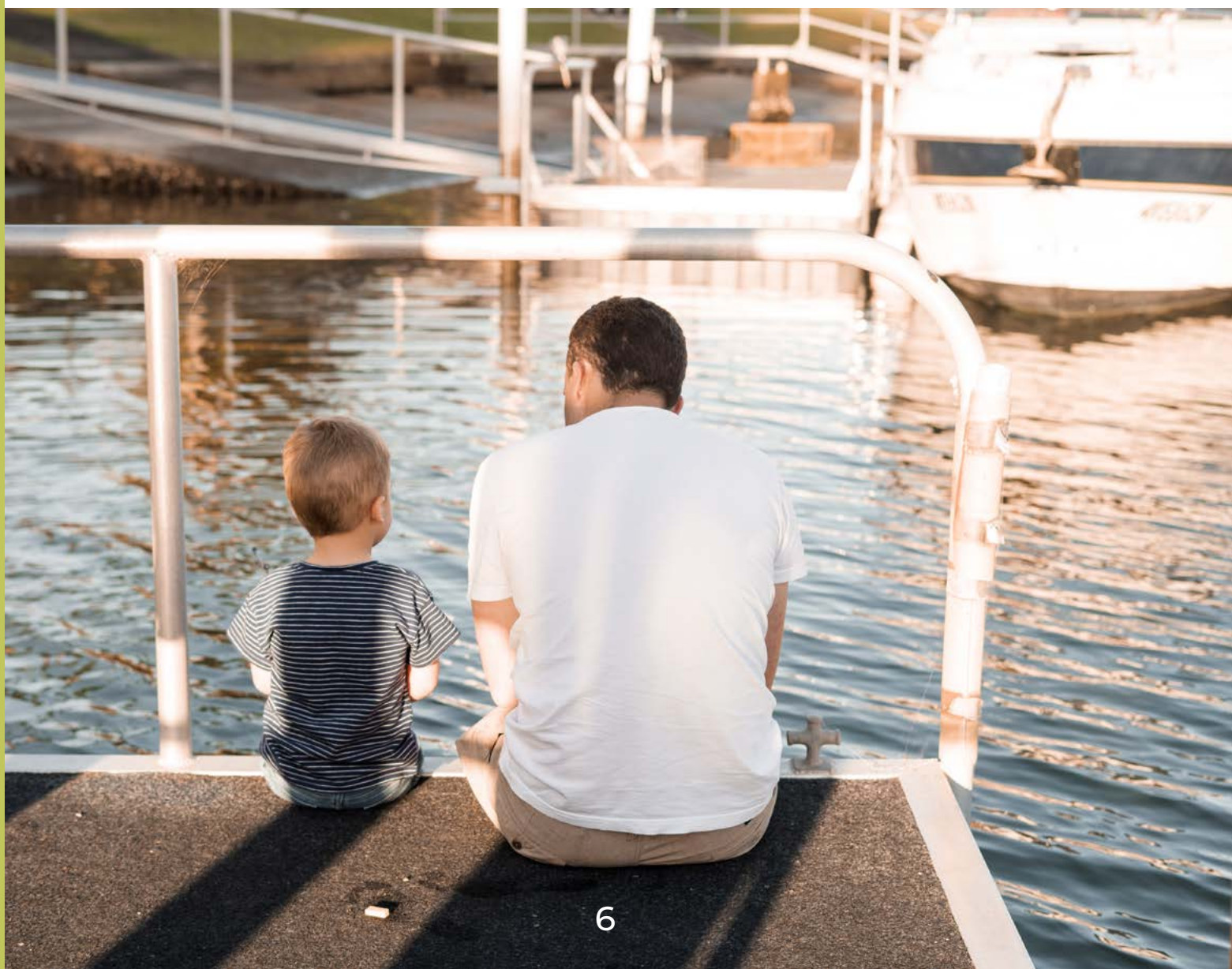
105,000+
Sessions

Improvements to service delivery through counselling service changes

The Family and Relationship Service at Relationships Australia Canberra & Region (RACR) aims to strengthen family relationships, prevent breakdown, and support the wellbeing and safety of children through counselling and education. The service aims to deliver positive outcomes for any issue impacting on relationships in all domains of life, including for partners, parents, siblings and children.

Presenting issues for individuals and families include relationship distress and breakdown, poor communication, conflict,

and a desire to improve their relationships, including couple, parent-child, and family relationships. Many clients present at a time of crisis in their life and concurrent presenting issues are often multiple and complex, including poor mental health or high psychological distress, family violence, child safety, and drug, alcohol and gambling dependencies. As a result of these broad presenting issues, the RACR service model embraces a client-centred, collaborative approach, operating from within an integrated service system.



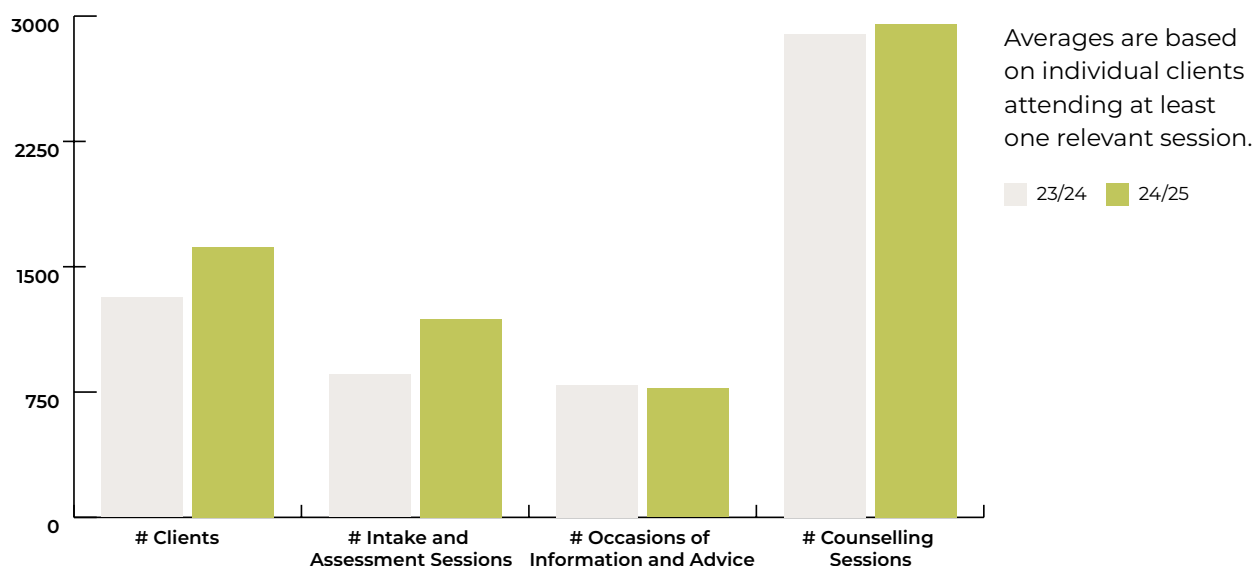
Outcomes

RACR delivered 2,954 counselling sessions to 1618 FaRS clients during the 2024–25 financial year, representing a 22.9% increase in clients and a 2.1% increase in counselling sessions on the 2023-24 period.

The introduction of RACR's counselling model of care has contributed to this

increase in client numbers by setting clear expectations around the number and focus of sessions. This approach enables more people to access support through targeted, goal-oriented therapeutic interventions, improving reach and service effectiveness.

Figure 1. FaRS Session Data Summary (RACR)



RACR's FaRS clients are diverse

60.2%
of clients identify as Female or Woman,
39.52% as Male or Man,
& **0.19%** as Gender Diverse;

5.3%
identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;

7.7%
were aged under 18;

4.9%
as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse;

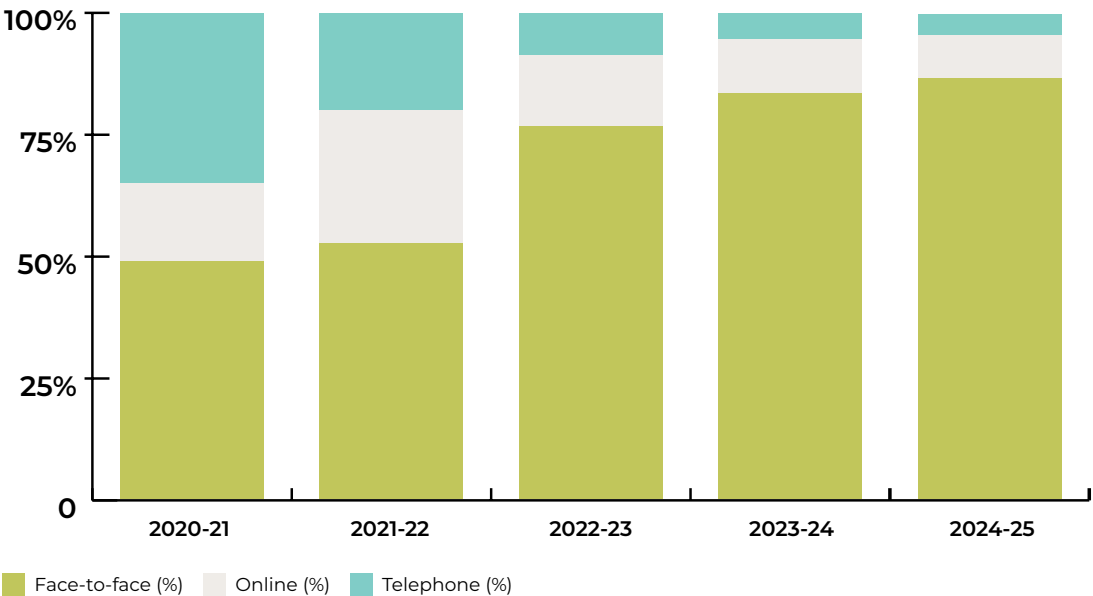
13.3%
as having a Disability; and

7.2%
were aged over 65

Continued demand for face-to-face counselling services:

While face-to-face counselling remains the most popular option, the convenience and accessibility of online or telephone counselling is valuable for those in remote areas, with mobility issues, or facing time constraints.

Figure 2. FaRS counselling modality over time for RACR



Satisfaction among FaRS clients:

“I appreciate the professionalism and strength of character that (FaRS counsellor) has. I will recommend Relationships Australia to any couples I know that might be having relationship troubles. I thought (FaRS counsellor) was also excellent”

In line with reporting requirements, over 50% of clients were fully assessed for ‘Circumstances’ and ‘Goals’ for each 6 monthly reporting period, using Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE).



Positive outcomes for clients:

"It has made a huge difference with my relationship with my [redacted]. I like the homework that we get given. It helps us have a structure to communicate."

For 2024-25 (n=196), FaRS has returned positive outcomes, with most clients reporting improvements.

78%

of respondents reported that the service made a positive difference in their life

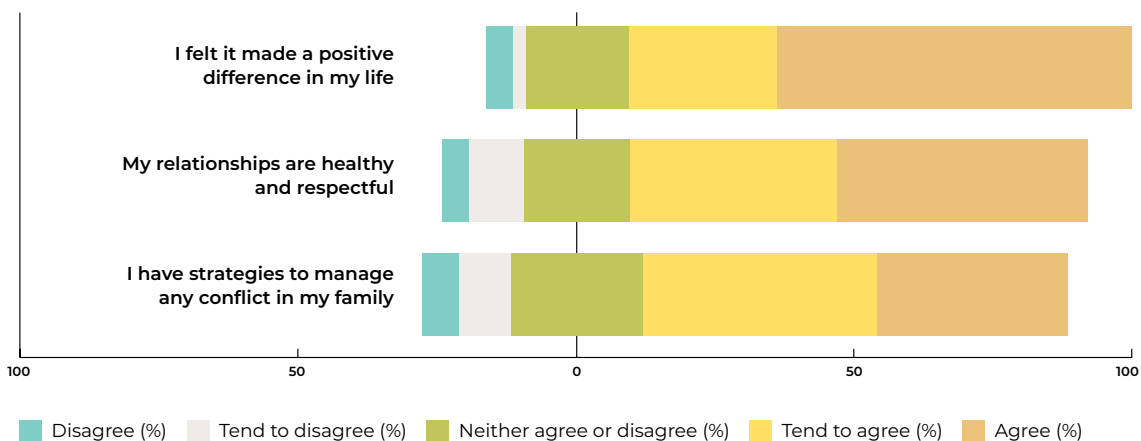
66%

report that they have strategies for managing familial conflict

71%

stated that their relationships are healthy and respectful

Figure 3. RACR Client survey responses, question set 1 (n=196)



"Achieved a better understanding of the conflict drivers that have affected the family and thought about strategies to cope, manage and tactical changes to improve the situation"

Statement	Disagree (%)	Tend to disagree (%)	Neither agree or disagree (%)	Tend to agree (%)	Agree (%)
The service listened to me and understood my issues	5	5	15	25	50
I am satisfied with the service I have received	0	2	8	20	70
I am better able to deal with issues that I sought help with	5	5	10	20	60

65%

"I was shown different ways to deal with issues I was having, which made sense & were very helpful"

[illegible]

Impact story

A heterosexual Australian couple, aged 48 and 38, self-referred for relationship counselling due to escalating stress, burnout, and communication difficulties arising from the demands of parenting and professional responsibilities. They found the transition from one to two children particularly challenging. One partner reported frequent frustration and yelling at the children, which escalated when both parents became overwhelmed. A conflict incident occurred where one partner, feeling ignored and upset, insulted the other, leading to a physical outburst, which became the catalyst for seeking professional support. One partner has expressed lingering shame about this event, while the other continues to experience trauma from the incident.

The couple had been married for approximately ten years and had two children aged 7 and 5. Both are employed, and they lived together and managed parenting responsibilities jointly.

The couple received psychoeducation and therapeutic support using the Gottman Method and Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). One partner self-identified as potentially neurodivergent (ADHD), and psychoeducation on sensory overload and emotional regulation was provided in this context. The counsellor worked with the couple on developing self-regulation and co-regulation strategies to manage intense emotional responses, particularly to prevent the recurrence of yelling and physical expressions of anger. These interventions have helped the couple shift from patterns of criticism and withdrawal

to more compassionate and supportive communication during times of stress.

Support has been provided for just under a month, with two intake sessions followed by four counselling sessions. Sessions are held fortnightly, in person, and each lasts approximately one hour. The couple continues to engage actively with the service. The clients are not accessing any other formal supports but report having a reliable informal support network of family and friends. The current counselling support is meeting the clients' identified needs, with no further formal referrals made.

In their feedback, the couple noted significant improvements in family dynamics, including reduced yelling, improved sleep for their children, and more peaceful interactions at home. They shared that they often reference therapeutic language and strategies in their day-to-day lives, saying, "We now look at each other with eyes of compassion rather than eyes of judgment, just like we just learned throughout the sessions."

The interventions have made a meaningful and positive impact on the couple's relationship and family life. They now experience greater emotional closeness, healthier communication, and mutual support during difficult moments. Patterns of judgment and micromanagement have decreased, and both partners report a renewed ability to appreciate and support each other's emotional needs. Their home environment has become more stable and nurturing, benefiting both the couple and their children.

"We have never felt as close to each other as we do now."



Improving child wellbeing and family functioning for Queensland families

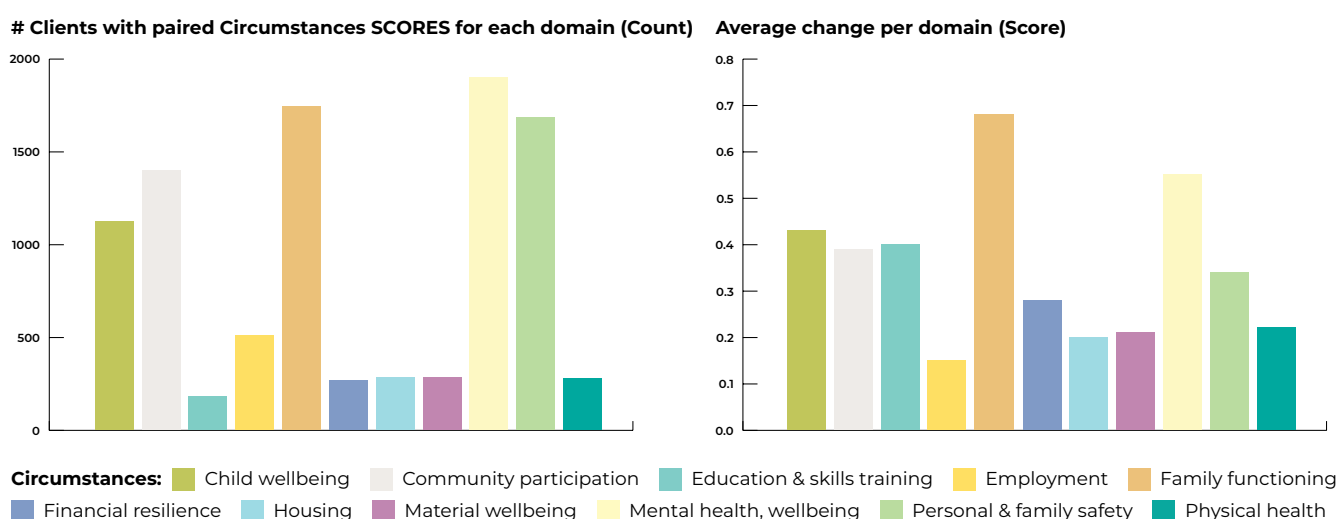
Recently, Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) explored the impact of Family and Relationship Services on two Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) domains: Child wellbeing and Family Functioning. Clients with initial scores of 1 or 2 were identified as those with the most to gain from accessing FaRS interventions. Distress experienced by these families and children is likely

akin to what researchers call adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), that have profound and lasting impacts on both physical and mental health throughout life. The future adult health outcomes for children with high ACE scores include difficulty with forming relationships, autoimmune disorders, depression, anxiety and suicidality (Petrucelli, Davis & Berman, 2019).

Outcomes

On the SCORE circumstances in the Jan-June 2025 reporting period, 61% of FaRS clients reported overall experiencing positive changes in their circumstances.

Figure 6. The percentage of RAQ FaRS clients reporting improvement in SCORE circumstances



61%

of clients with overall **positive** circumstances

31.7%

of clients with overall **neutral** circumstances

7.3%

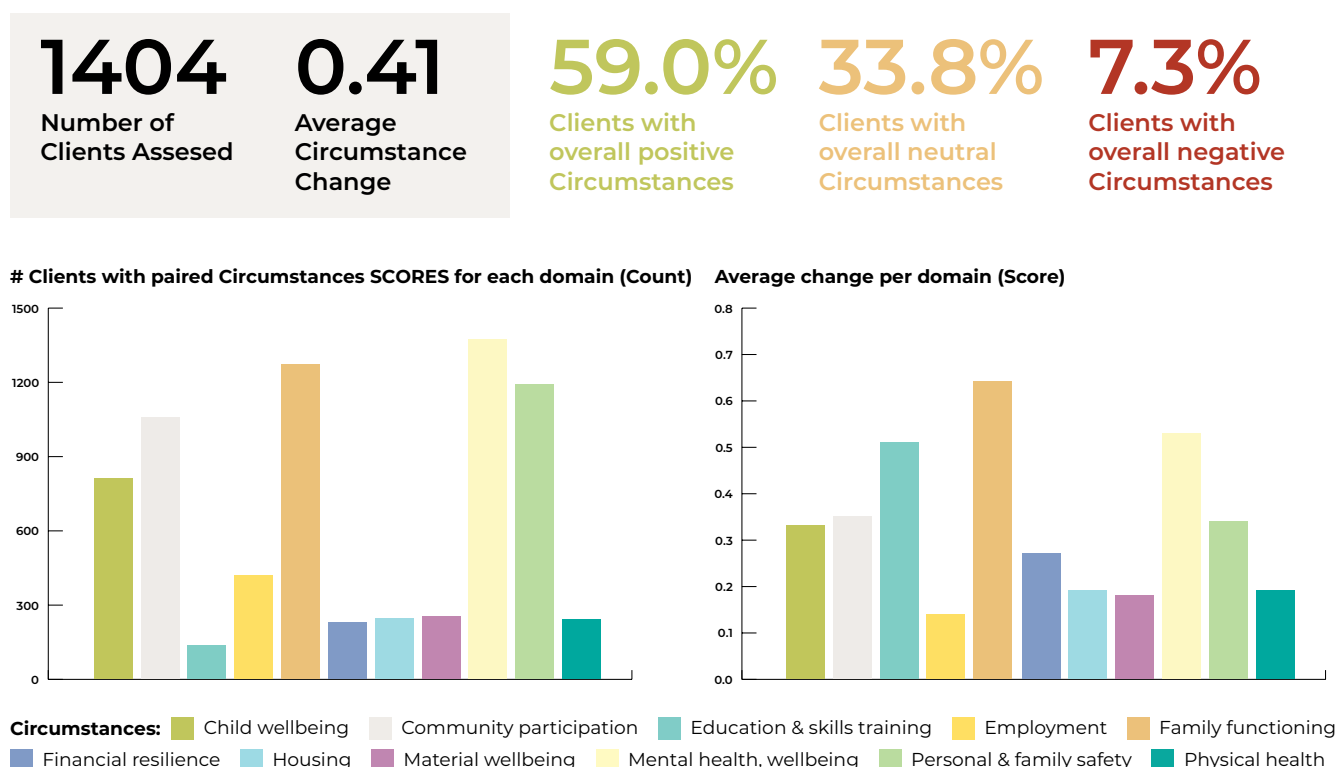
of clients with overall **negative** circumstances

The greatest improvements in SCORE circumstances domains were in family functioning, mental health and wellbeing, education & skills training, and community participation.

“this is exactly what I want to get out of the sessions – skills and awareness. The session has been good. It is great to talk to you. It is exactly what I am looking for, to help manage myself and my experience.”

Figure 7. The average change score in each of the SCORE circumstances (RAQ FaRS clients)

Circumstances are measured on a 1-5 scale with 1 = ‘Really struggling, needing help’ and 5 = ‘Doing really Well.’



“I wanted to compliment and thank L for saving my marriage. Before my husband and I started counselling with L, we were at the breaking point of our marriage... L was supportive and understanding from the start. I immediately felt at ease and safe to talk to her. She listened intently but also offered incredible advice. Our communication has improved immensely, and our relationship is the strongest it’s ever been....”

RAQ's FaRS outcomes are comparable to those reported in published effectiveness studies. For example, in naturalistic community-based settings (i.e., effectiveness studies) of couple and marital therapy approximately 40% to 50%

of couples experience clinically significant improvements in relationship outcomes (Halford, Pepping & Petch, 2016) and in psychological distress (Lohan, Cao, Petch, Murray & Howe, 2021).

Profound impacts for those most in need:

Analyses confirmed that FaRS has profound positive impacts on families and children who are most in need. On the Child Wellbeing domain, 76 families described their circumstances at intake as being very difficult: "children are struggling with school, relationships, managing their behaviour – they frequently experience sadness and hopelessness". Their average intake SCORE on the child wellbeing domain was 1.8. Post counselling, they reported significant positive changes: "children have improved learning and relationships – they are better able to manage strong feelings" – The average child wellbeing score reported by these families post counselling was a 4.0, representing an average change of 2.2 (across all FaRS clients average change score improvement was 0.33).

There were 175 families who described at intake that their Family Functioning was really struggling with: "frequent high levels of conflict, miscommunication – children distressed by the level of conflict between

their parents". The average intake SCORE on family functioning among these 175 families was 1.9. Family functioning was greatly improved after counselling, with families reporting "communication is effective and is done with kindness – children feel nurtured". The average post-counselling SCORE for these clients on the family functioning domain was 4.1, representing an average change of 2.2 (across all FaRS clients average change score improvement was 0.64). This further improves the outlook for children in these families, as parents/ carers increase their ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

The combined positive impact of FaRS on Child Wellbeing and Family Functioning for those families struggling the most, increases the potential for children to grow into adults who are physically and mentally well and capable of making a positive contribution to their own future families and communities.



"I really appreciate the service I receive from RAQ. All the staff are friendly and efficient, and I feel welcomed and safe. My counsellor is exactly the person I needed to engage with at the right time. I have struggled to connect and stay with counselling in the past. My counsellor challenges me when necessary and nothing gets past her which is what I need, yet at the same time helps me acknowledge what I've been through, and I feel validated while still being called to account regarding my own behaviour and sphere of control. We need more rainbow counsellors like them in our community. Thank you, the work I'm doing with RAQ is helping me change my life for the better."

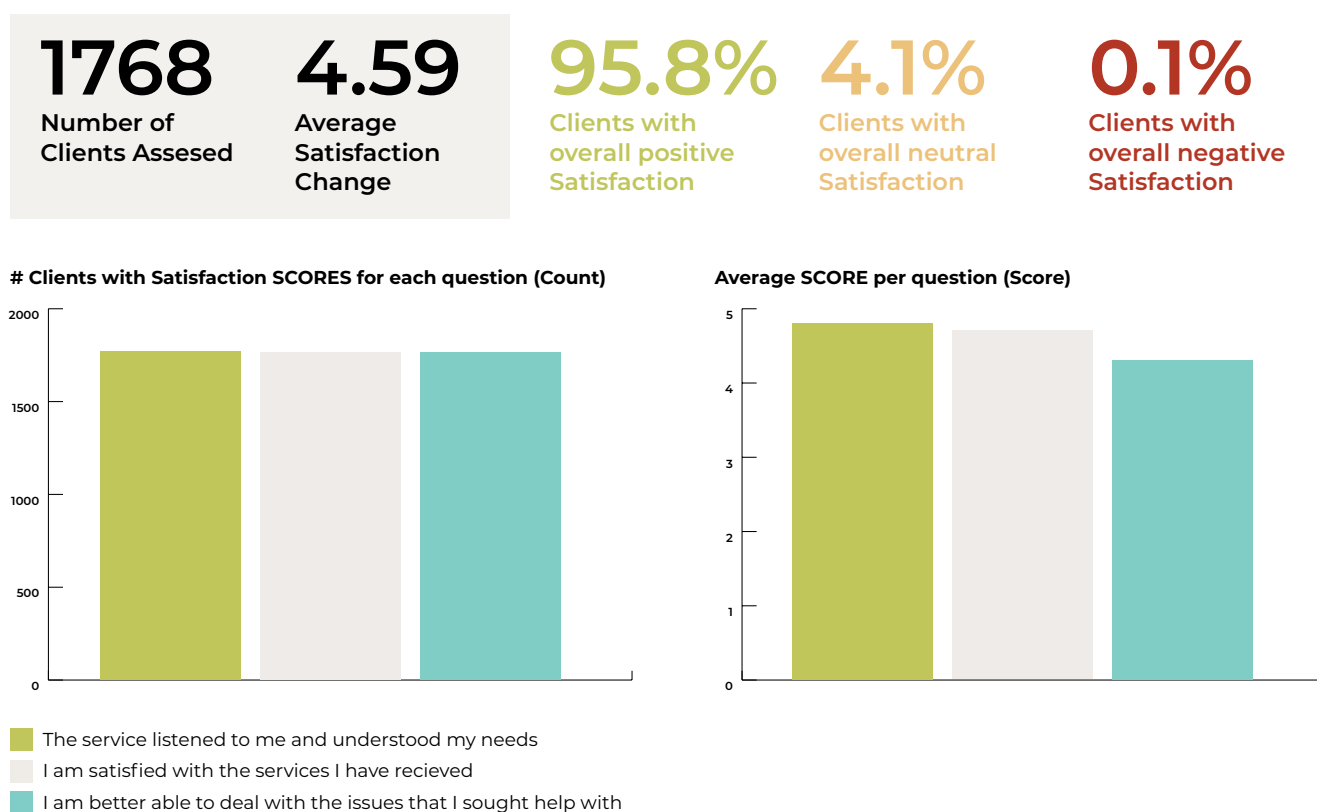


Overall FaRS client satisfaction:

"I'd like to thank you for all the help you have given us. I guess you've literally helped save our marriage. Thanks for all the extra work you have done as well to put into our relationship we really appreciate it. We got along great, it was good experience to share."

M provided feedback to Practitioner about his warm reception when he arrived at the Strathpine venue. M stated Admin Team Member was lovely and helpful, and he also appreciated the Indigenous artwork, further stating that it didn't feel tokenistic, as an Aboriginal man himself.

Figure 8. Client satisfaction with RAQ FaRS service



"Counsellors provided exceptional family support during family relationship difficulties. Courses offered are particularly helpful"

"Practitioner did a fantastic job supporting us, she is very experienced, and we appreciated her skills as a relationship counsellor" (A) "Excellent service, we got a lot out of it" (D).

"Hi S, it was such a pleasure and privilege to have you helping me go through my dark and traumatizing times. Thank you for your insight, understanding and 100% that you gave to me each time I saw you."



Mental health support for children, young people and their families

Mental health challenges in childhood and adolescence can shape a person's entire life trajectory. When these issues go unaddressed, they can lead to long-term impacts on wellbeing, relationships, and community participation. There is also strong evidence that mental health disorders in childhood and adolescence predict mental illness in adulthood (AIHW, 2020).

Through Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS), Relationships Australia delivers early intervention and practical support that helps children and young people thrive. These services provide short-term, early intervention, and non-clinical community mental health support for children and young people aged up to 18 years, who are showing signs of, or are at risk of, developing mental illness.

Mental health concerns rarely occur in isolation. They affect families, schools, and communities, influencing how children learn, connect, and grow. By intervening early, FMHSS reduces the risk of entrenched mental illness and strengthens protective factors that support resilience. These services empower families to respond to challenges before they escalate, creating safer, more nurturing environments for children and young people.

Delivered by Relationships Australia across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities, FMHSS is flexible and family-focused. Support is tailored to individual needs and provided in ways that meet families where they are – whether through in-home visits, outreach, or group programs that build skills and confidence. Practitioners work alongside parents and carers, combining counselling for children with capacity-building for families. This integrated approach ensures that support is holistic, practical, and culturally safe.

FMHSS demonstrates that early, relational support – delivered by Relationships Australia – can transform lives. By equipping families with tools and strategies, these services help children feel safer, more understood, and better able to manage life's challenges – laying the foundation for healthier futures. Those eligible for the service include vulnerable children and young people and their families – particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and those involved with the child protection system.

In 2024-25, Relationships Australia delivered Family Mental Health Support Services to:

3,000+
Clients

12,000+
Sessions



4Families

Relationships Australia Western Australia's (RAWA) Family Mental Health Support Service (known as 4families) offers counselling, practical and emotional support, and targeted group programs, to address the issues that affect the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable.

The service focuses on early intervention, with the aim of preventing the progression of early signs and symptoms of a mental health condition and reducing the impact of mental health issues. 4families offers whatever support children and young people and their families need, to strengthen protective factors and to link families to a range of services.

There are a number of unique strengths which support 4families to effectively engage with children, young people, and their families.

- Outreach services are offered when required, at no financial cost to the family. These provide access for people who have difficulty travelling, leaving their home, or accessing clinical settings, as well as providing a more natural environment for engagement with children and young people and their families.
- An integrated approach combines counselling for children, capacity building and support for parents and carers, alongside case management for the whole family. 4families uniquely delivers both these elements to ensure cohesive and coordinated support.
- 4families is provided across four areas in metropolitan Perth, as well as five regional locations. The majority of regions where 4families services are offered are identified as more highly disadvantaged than the Australian average, including Albany, Bunbury, Kwinana, Mandurah, Manjimup, and Rockingham (ABS, 2021). Many of these areas also have high proportions of children who are developmentally vulnerable, with over one in four children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in Albany (25.5% of all children), Kwinana (27.1%), Mandurah (27.5%), and Rockingham (25.7%) (ABS, 2024). Developmental vulnerability is a critical indicator of social, health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes into adulthood and can therefore provide important direction for targeting early intervention and prevention services for the communities which are most in need of support.

I had been struggling, as I felt that I was failing my child. (The 4families practitioner) was very calming and non-judgemental and I felt that I was in a safe space and could express my worries and concerns. There was a lot of lightbulb moments and the advice and strategies suggested will stay with me. I was given a number of different resources and they have been very helpful and useful.” – Parent

Outcomes

While 4families has a target to engage with 890 individual children and young people each year, the service often exceeds this target due to significant demand. In 2024-2025, 4families provided 2,461

counselling sessions, 1,176 family capacity building sessions, 672 advocacy and support sessions, and 534 information and referral sessions.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, 4families supported:

1,041

individual children and young people, and

Almost 10% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

1,013

parents, carers, and other family members.

Over 16% identified as living with a disability.

4families supports children and young people with significant and complex needs. In 2024-2025:

35%

of children and young people who were supported by 4families had experienced trauma

77%

were experiencing issues with family functioning, including conflict, separation, and family law-related issues

Feedback from 4families clients:

"(the 4families practitioner) was amazing and helpful. Gave me tools that I can use and still am using. In a world where I felt alone, this was amazing." – Parent

"(the 4families practitioner) was really good and related really well to my situation. If I wasn't able to get the support I needed, I wouldn't been able to help my grandchild." – Grandparent

"Second time using the service. I recommend it to everyone, it has really helped my son." – Parent

"(the 4families practitioner) was amazing, she really validated how I was feeling so I knew I wasn't alone." – Parent

"I recommend the service a lot, it really helped me to have the support when I did not have anyone else to help me at the time." – Parent

Impact story

The client accessed 4families for support for her 13-year-old grandson. The grandson had been living with his grandparents since he was two years old and did not have any contact with his parents, as they had ongoing issues with alcohol and other drug use.

The grandson had been experiencing depression and anxiety, had not been attending school or any of his usual activities, and had recently attempted suicide.

4families offered the client parenting strategies and support, as well as psychoeducation around the impacts of childhood trauma.

4families offered her grandson individual counselling sessions, including information and support around how to better understand and manage trauma and psychological distress.

As the grandson had recently attempted suicide, his 4families practitioner also offered to advocate for services with higher tier providers. If he is unable to engage with those higher-tier services, then 4families will continue to provide support.

The family have had three sessions with 4families and have further sessions scheduled over the next few months. While 4families support and interventions are designed to be short-term and early intervention, the service will support this family on an ongoing basis as they have not yet been able to access any other support services.





Evaluating Family and Mental Health Services using My Star and My Early Years

Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA) use My Star and My Early Years tools to evaluate their FMHSS. They are both evidence-based, validated tools that assist in developing tailored therapeutic plans for families and allow for the evaluation of client-reported progress by comparing

pre and post service delivery responses.

My Star is a version of the Outcomes Star for children and young people in a wide range of settings such as those in vulnerable families and looked after children.

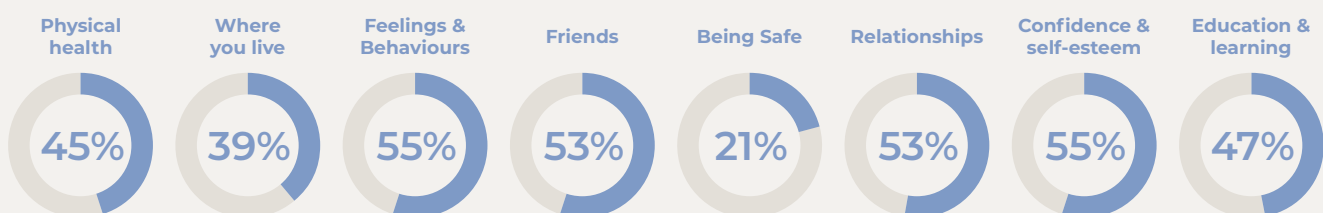
Outcomes

Table 1. FMHSS services in the North and West, South Australia

Service provided to:	FMHSS North	FMHSS West (Port Adelaide)
Individual clients	433	334
Support persons	169	165
Children & young people	264	169
Children receiving long-term intensive support	63 (23.9%)	53 (31.3%)
Children receiving short-term immediate assistance (up to 6 sessions)	201 (76%)	

Figure 9. Client progress and insight based on Outcomes Star ratings for initial and closing sessions

Percentage of clients/children making progress in each outcome area



The Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) is a self-rating tool measuring personal, relational, social, and overall well-being, that helps to track change over time. Between July 2024 and June 2025, 177 clients completed the ORS, comprising a total of 656 self-ratings (0–40 scale).

- The largest improvements occur within the first 3 sessions, with scores rising from 28 to around 31.
- After this, the average progress levels out, suggesting that most positive changes happen early in the support process.
- For clients who begin below the clinical cutoff, longer engagement may be needed to achieve stronger outcomes.

36% (64 of 177) started in the clinical range (<25 points), indicating significant distress.

41% of these clients improved to 25 or above by their last session, moving into a healthier functioning range.

Impact story

A mother in her early 30s is the primary carer of her nine-year-old child. The family has experienced significant adversity, including historic family violence with no contact with the child's father for many years. Both mother and child live with health and developmental challenges: the child was born with congenital difficulties requiring many additional

supports for mental and physical health. While the mother has National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) support, she still faced significant additional mental health challenges. She is supported by a psychiatrist. Creativity, music and their pet cat are part of their home life.



When the child was younger, the family needed significant safety planning and monitoring – included kinship placement – to keep the family functioning. At times, when she was alone, the mother questioned herself and deeply doubted her ability to be the kind of Mum she knew her child needed. She saw how her child began to question his identity and place in his family. But with strong support from her psychiatrist and NDIS, she has since re-engaged in her caring role and sought support to strengthen her parenting.

When the family first engaged with the service, the child presented with symptoms of anxiety in the context of early childhood adversity. Practitioners completed a universal Detection of Overall Risk Screen (DOORS) screening with the mother and elaboration of potential risks as they related to the child. Outcome star “Family Star Plus” was also completed. Together, they developed goals to support:

- The child’s regulation strategies for stress
- The child’s strategies to manage the transition when getting to school
- Strengthening the child’s interoceptive skills

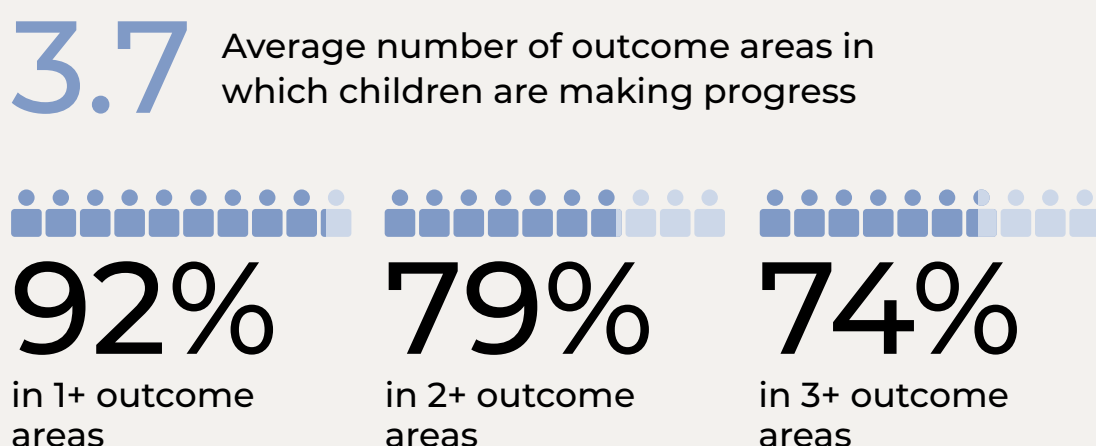
- Building the mother’s parenting capacity

Interventions included creative and body-based approaches such as body mapping, body regulation strategies, the Tree of Life, and interoception activities. Psychoeducation supported both mother (trauma informed development) and child (stress/ anxiety) to understand stress and trauma, while practical tools such as social stories, “body break” cards, and emotion resources were co-developed for everyday use.

Collaboration with other services was central. Practitioners worked alongside the mother’s psychiatrist to support a referral for a developmental assessment. The school’s wellbeing team and classroom teacher were engaged to ensure consistent strategies in the classroom.

As a result, the mother reported feeling more confident in supporting her child’s transitions and regulation. The school is now equipped with tools to help the child remain engaged in learning, and school attendance has improved. Sessions are now held on school grounds, allowing the child to practise strategies in real-time with the support of the therapeutic worker.

Figure 10. Number of outcomes with recorded progress





Education for better relationships

Strong relationships are built through understanding, communication, and respect. Relationships Australia delivers education programs that empower individuals, couples, and families with practical skills to navigate life's challenges and strengthen connections.

From parenting programs to school-based initiatives, these courses provide safe, inclusive spaces for learning and reflection. They help participants manage emotions, resolve conflict, and foster empathy – transferrable skills that ripple through homes, workplaces, and communities.

By equipping people with tools for healthier relationships, these programs contribute to long-term wellbeing and prevention of harm, reinforcing our commitment to building safer, more connected communities across Australia. Each state offers a variety of courses, including programs for parents, children and young people about good communication, emotional development and managing conflict; school-based programs; and resources and information sessions for targeted groups, for example for dads and father-figures, or to support community members in recognising and responding to mental health issues.

Healthy relationships for children and young people through the school years

Respect and Connect is a four-session, school-based primary prevention program developed by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV). It promotes respectful relationships and supports mental wellbeing to help prevent family violence. Since 2014, the program has been delivered to over 13,000 Victorian students and continues to evolve through youth-led feedback and evidence-informed practice.

Taking a strengths-based and interactive approach, Respect and Connect builds students' skills to form healthy relationships, recognise and reject abusive behaviours, communicate effectively, and seek help when needed. It is closely aligned with the Victorian Respectful Relationships curriculum and the Personal and Social Capability Learning Continuum reinforcing a whole-of-school prevention approach.

In 2024-25, Relationships Australia provided training and education courses to:

950+
Courses

12,000+
Participants

20,000+
Sessions

Outcomes

In 2024–25, the program engaged 1,426 students, alongside additional information sessions for teachers and parents to reinforce key messages and strengthen the capacity of the broader school community. Robust, mixed-methods evaluations from 2019–2024 consistently show measurable improvements in students’ understanding

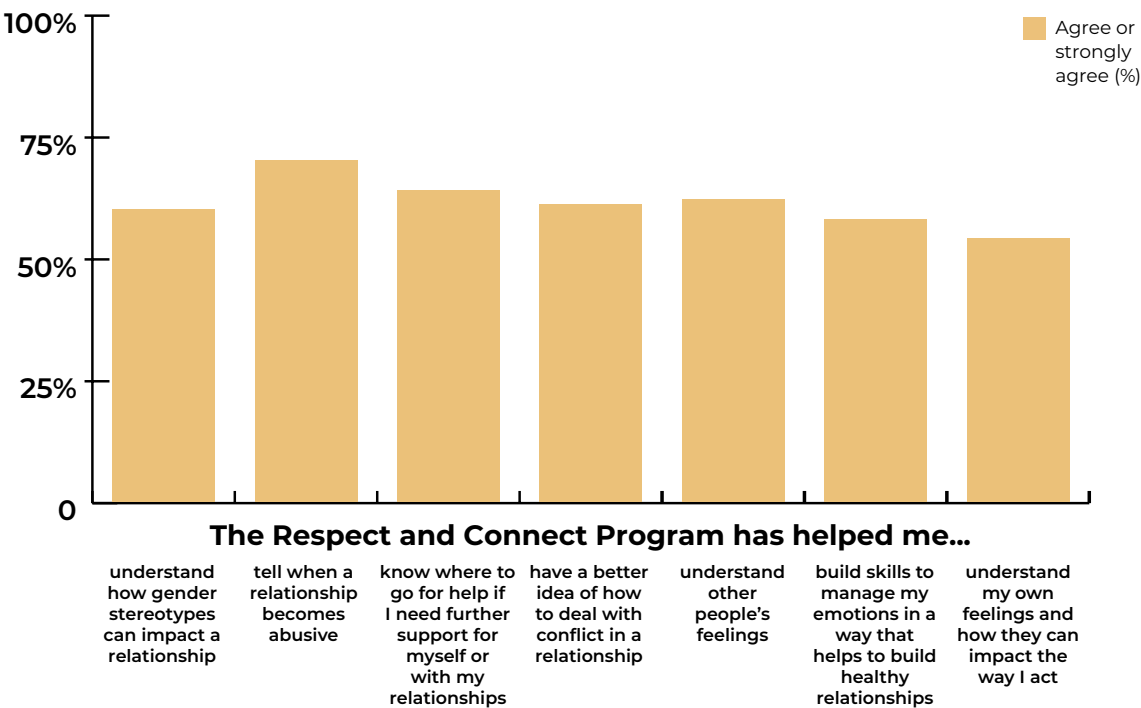
of respectful relationships, empathy, emotional regulation and help-seeking behaviours. These outcomes demonstrate the program’s sustained impact on student wellbeing and violence prevention, and its contribution to broader cultural and systemic change in school communities.

Student Feedback:

In 2024–25, a total of 474 students completed post-program surveys. The majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them across all skill and knowledge areas, with particularly strong results in managing conflict, recognising abuse and knowing how to seek help. These are critical protective factors that help young people

identify unhealthy relationship dynamics early, seek appropriate support and respond constructively to interpersonal challenges. This feedback indicates the program is achieving its core aim of equipping students with the knowledge and tools to prevent future relationship abuse and violence.

Figure 11. Student feedback from Respect and Connect



“I will resolve conflict by talking about things.”

Feedback from students shows high engagement with activities that enabled them to explore program concepts dynamically and interactively with their peers. These opportunities helped students practise skills such as disagreeing respectfully, communicating clearly and seeing things from different points of view. Notably, 38% of students identified the agree/disagree discussion as their

favourite activity, well ahead of any other. This exercise involved choosing whether they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement and then discussing and defending their position with the group. The popularity of this activity demonstrates that the program is responsive to students' desire to engage meaningfully with ideas and develop practical communication skills within a safe, supportive environment.

Figure 12. Areas of planned behaviour change



“I will better control my thinking and emotions.”

“I will ask for consent.”

“I will be more empathetic.”

“I will only interact with people online if I know them in real life.”

Students were asked to share one thing they would do differently as a result of the Respect and Connect program. Their responses demonstrated genuine reflection and engagement, particularly in relation to conflict resolution, emotional awareness, kindness, respect, and empathy.

The most common changes students described involved approaching conflict more calmly and constructively, such as resolving disagreements through communication rather than escalation. Many also noted intentions to be more thoughtful and emotionally aware, including using strategies like box breathing, thinking before speaking, and recognising their own triggers.

Kindness and respect came through strongly, with students expressing a desire to treat peers more kindly, maintain

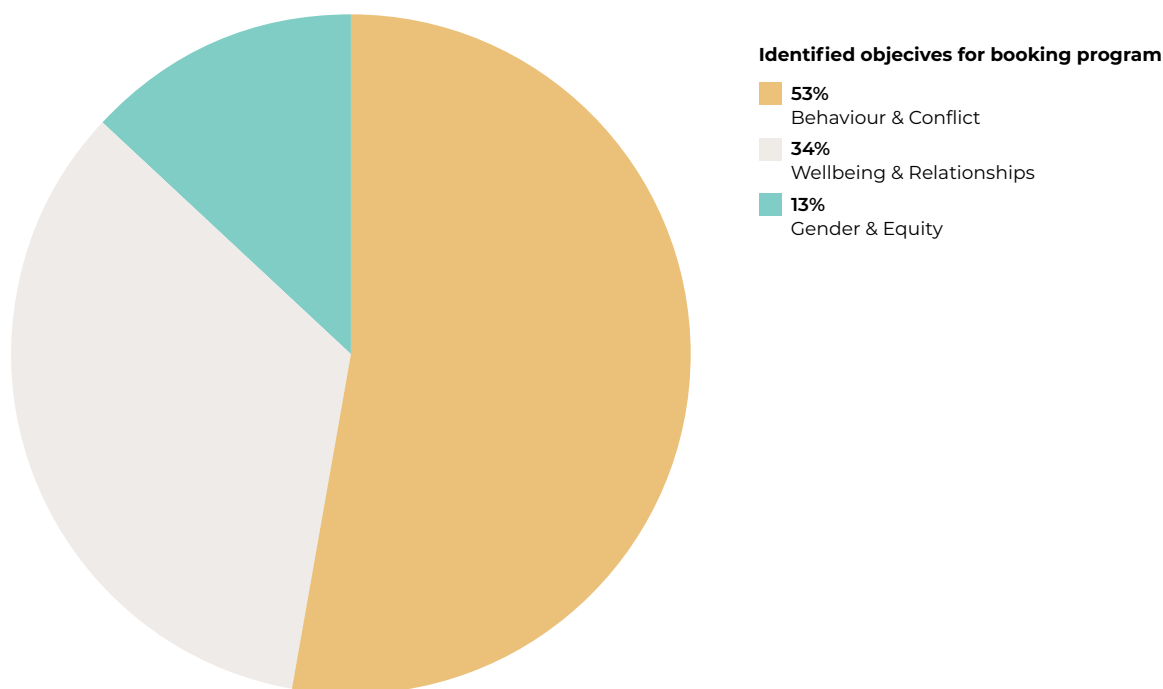
healthy friendships, and listen more carefully to others. A large number also reflected on the importance of empathy and perspective-taking, recognising that their actions and words impact those around them.

Another significant theme was consent and safety, with students mentioning that they would now ask for consent, recognise red flags, and be more cautious in both in-person and online interactions. A smaller group said they would be more careful online, while others said they would now feel more confident seeking support from parents or trusted adults.

Overall, student reflections suggest that in addition to building awareness, the program also provided practical tools and language to approach relationships more thoughtfully and constructively.

Teacher Feedback:

Figure 13. Teacher objectives for booking Respect and Connect



“Students are more respectful and accepting of differences,”

Across the year, 23 teachers completed surveys about the Respect and Connect program. They rated it highly, giving an average score of 4.5 out of 5 for how well it addressed their identified objectives, and an overall satisfaction score of 4.3 out of 5.

Teachers consistently highlighted the program's interactive, student-centred design as its best feature. Standout elements included activities that invited students to actively engage, particularly in discussion, personal reflection, and choosing positions on statements.

Teachers also valued the space the program created for student voice and peer dialogue, and several praised the content for being relatable, age-appropriate, and well designed for this group. The facilitators, trained in youth mental health, were frequently mentioned as a strength of the program described as engaging, effective, and instrumental in setting a tone that supported participation. A number of teachers also appreciated the program's emphasis on emotional intelligence, respectful communication, and exploring personal values.

When asked whether they had noticed any changes in students or the school community following the program, some described early signs of impact, such as improved classroom climate, greater peer respect, and a shared language for discussing respectful relationships.

The Respect and Connect program continues to demonstrate strong, measurable impact in promoting respectful relationships, emotional literacy, and violence prevention among school-aged children. Grounded in student voice, evidence-informed practice, and alignment with curriculum frameworks, the program equips young people with the skills, language, and confidence to build healthier relationships and communities. With consistently positive feedback from both students and educators, and strong indicators of attitudinal and skill development, Respect and Connect makes a meaningful contribution to the long-term wellbeing of children and broader cultural shifts.

"It has given staff some language to talk to."

"The classroom climate has changed — students are listening to each other"



"The safety circle is new for us Asian parents. If every parent could learn this, it would make families stronger." – Circle of Security (Mandarin) group participant.

Helping people strengthen relationships and manage emotions

Across NSW, Relationships Australia's group programs continue to make a powerful difference in helping people strengthen their relationships and navigate life's challenges with greater confidence. Through the Relationship Education Program (REP), participants learn practical tools to communicate more effectively, manage emotions, and build stronger connections in a safe, supportive environment.

Delivered both online and in person, REP includes programs such as Parenting After Separation, Tuning in to Kids and Tuning in to Teens, Circle of Security, Managing Strong Emotions and Managing Anger. Each program provides space for reflection, self-awareness, and skill building – empowering people to respond to conflict with empathy, regulate stress more effectively, and create healthier relationships in every part of their lives.

Outcomes

In 2024-25, 2,245 people took part in 128 group programs – a 12% increase

in participation from the previous year. Satisfaction remained high, with 88% of participants rating their experience positively and praising facilitators as “great” or “excellent.” Attendance and engagement also continued to grow across all programs.

Over the past two years, Relationships Australia New South Wales (RANSW) have adapted their delivery model to make programs more accessible and flexible. Today, around two-thirds of all Relationship Education Programs are delivered online, allowing parents, carers, and individuals across NSW to participate without travel or time barriers. Importantly, this shift hasn't reduced connection or impact – satisfaction and engagement have stayed consistently strong.

Participants reported wide-ranging benefits: calmer homes, improved communication, stronger emotional awareness, and a deeper understanding of their children's needs.

Many also shared that these changes have flowed into their workplaces and

communities, strengthening relationships well beyond the program itself.

“Our family feels calmer – there's no need to raise voices anymore.” – Circle of Security (Mandarin) group participant.

“This program changed how I relate to my children, my students and even my colleagues.” – Tuning in to Teens group participant.

“The course gave me real tools to deal with conflict and stress – not just with my ex, but in how I show up for my children. I'm calmer and more in control now.”

– Parenting After Separation (Working Towards Reunion) group participant

Culturally responsive delivery continues to strengthen inclusion and impact. Circle of Security groups offered in Mandarin have supported parents to reflect on traditional approaches to discipline and embrace more patient, emotionally attuned ways of parenting.

Participants also expressed a strong desire for longer programs and follow-up sessions to stay connected and continue practising their skills – a clear sign of how deeply valued and transformative these groups have become.

Impact story 1

Managing anger and finding calm

For much of her life, one group participant, a 68 year old woman, felt controlled by anger. Rooted in childhood trauma, her reactions could flare suddenly and intensely, often hurting the people she loved most. “Even small frustrations could set me off,” she recalled. “It cost me friendships and created distance in my family.” Despite years of trying other therapies, nothing brought lasting change.

Joining the Managing Anger online group became a turning point. Over eight weeks, she explored the roots of her anger, learned to recognise triggers, and

practised new ways to communicate and respond.

The group not only offered strategies, but more importantly, hope. “My mum is 94 and used to walk on eggshells around me. Now I’m calmer, more in control, and more relaxed. It’s touched so many aspects of my life – it’s worth it beyond words.”

Programs like Managing Anger often provide a lifeline for people who’ve struggled in silence for years, helping them break long-held patterns and rebuild safer, more peaceful relationships.

Impact story 2

Building security and confidence through Circle of Security

The Circle of Security program helps parents understand their child’s emotional world and strengthens attachment and trust. Participants consistently describe the experience as eye-opening, practical, and deeply relevant to everyday parenting.

Feedback from 650 participants in NSW shows clear themes – stronger relationships with children, calmer homes, and greater self-awareness. Parents said they were more able to recognise their child’s needs, stay calm during emotional moments, and repair conflict more effectively.


Many also reflected on how the program changed their own patterns. Parents learned to pause before reacting, manage their own stress or fear, and show compassion toward themselves as well

as their children. Several participants said this insight improved relationships beyond parenting, including with partners, extended family and colleagues.

Quantitative feedback echoed these outcomes. Among the participants who completed post-program surveys, most reported higher scores for connection, relationship quality, and resilience. Almost all said the program helped them to feel more confident in their parenting and better able to handle difficult moments.

The findings confirm that Circle of Security continues to make a meaningful difference in how parents connect with their children – helping families feel safer and more capable of managing challenges together.

“The whole group was an ‘aha moment.’ Being with others, hearing yourself back, and being acknowledged – it’s very powerful.”

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair and a young boy with blonde hair. Both are shown in profile, facing each other with their mouths wide open as if shouting or yelling. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. The lighting is warm, and the overall tone is one of intense emotion.

"I used to focus on correcting behaviour. Now I can see the reason behind it. Our family is calmer and there's no need to raise voices anymore."



Directing specialised family violence services to those most in need

Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS) use a whole-of-family approach to improve personal and family safety for those experiencing, or at risk of, family and domestic violence. The program supports a range of individuals, including adults, couples, children, and families.

Relationships Australia is one of 38 service providers within the SFVS that deliver a variety of specialised supports, which may include counselling for children, family capacity building, educational programs, and men's behaviour change initiatives. These services aim to address the needs of all affected family members and work with:

- Children as victims in their own right
- Individuals who use violent or abusive behaviour
- Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) that provide culturally safe services in the Northern Territory.

Children's Counselling is delivered through Children Specific Counselling (CSC) by Relationships Australia nationwide. This service places children at the centre of support, contributing to a national response to family violence and its impact on children and their families.

Men's Behaviour Change Programs are also available as part of early intervention efforts for individuals who use violence. Relationships Australia organisations deliver these and other perpetrator intervention programs to support men in changing harmful behaviours.

In 2024-25, Specialised Family Violence Services were delivered by Relationships Australia to:

4,000+
Clients

12,000+
Sessions

Supporting children in the wake of domestic and family violence

Relationships Australia Northern Territory (RA-NT) have achieved positive outcomes through SFVS support for children.

Impact story 1

Restoring Safety and Voice for a 10-Year-Old Boy

Background

A 10-year-old child and his parent were referred to the SFVS following experiences of coercive control, including physical and emotional abuse by the boy's previous stepfather. The perpetrator was no longer in the family's life, but the child continued to experience psychological distress around his weekly visitation with their other parent.

The child initially presented as shy and socially withdrawn, except when discussing their interests in Pokémon, mechanics, and soccer. At school, the child was described as hyperactive, noisy, and occasionally destructive. These behaviours were often misunderstood as defiance rather than indicators of distress.

Challenges

- Ongoing psychological distress around times of visitation with his father
 - Hypervigilance to noise and environmental changes
 - Social withdrawal and difficulty trusting adults
- School misinterpretation of distress behaviours as behavioural issues
- A caregiver with limited support networks, navigating complex legal and child protection systems

Intervention

Over 18 months, Relationships Australia practitioners provided:

- Child-led therapy in a safe, grounding space where the child could explore feelings and interests
- Strengths-based parent coaching to support the parent in understanding their child's behaviours as trauma responses
- Guidance to help the parent advocate to the school, to the other parent, and external agencies for the child's needs
- Collaboration with legal services and child protection to address safety concerns as they arose over engagement

Through consistent support, the child became more regulated after sessions, less serious, and able to engage in play – regaining aspects of childhood that trauma had restricted.

Outcomes

- The child was able to communicate safety concerns to appropriate services
- The parent gained confidence in advocating for their child's wellbeing
- The family is now linked into ongoing safety and support networks
- The school shifted its perspective from seeing the child's behaviour as "problematic" to understanding it as trauma-related

Family Feedback

The parent expressed deep appreciation for the service, acknowledging that the support helped rebuild trust, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and give the child a sense of safety and voice.

Impact story 2

Building Presence, Safety, and Self-Advocacy for an 8-Year-Old Girl

Background
A young Aboriginal child was referred by the local Domestic Violence Shelter's Counsellor. The child presented with frequent dissociation, often "zoning out," which limited their ability to engage in daily life. The child was developing trust in themselves, the courage to take positive risks, and the skills to express and maintain personal boundaries.
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent disconnection from the body and present moment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem and limited self-advocacy skills • Difficulty asserting and maintaining boundaries • Navigating the emotional impact of family breakdown
Intervention
<p>This child and caregiver have been engaged with the SFVS for 2-months and have completed 6 sessions, with ongoing plans to continue service. The practitioner used a combination of Children's Counselling and Art Psychotherapy, incorporating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drama Therapy: Role play, storytelling, and improvisation to explore courage, self-assertion, and safe risk-taking. • Child-led Non-directive Play Therapy: Opportunities for authentic expression and autonomy, including hide-and-seek play to explore attachment and separation. • Synergetic Play Therapy Principles: Tracking bodily sensations and nervous system responses to strengthen self-awareness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Grounding Techniques: Using sensory experiences (e.g., temperature of metal, feel of grass, breeze) to anchor in the present moment. <p>Collaboration was central, and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly calls with the school to address daily needs and track progress. • Regular caregiver consultations, plus ongoing communication to align strategies at home and in the classroom.
Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ability to remain present and grounded during sessions • Increased confidence in expressing needs and asserting boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger sense of autonomy and safety • Consistency of approach between home, school, and therapy sessions
Ongoing Plan
Continue building the client's mind-body connection so the child can independently identify feelings of safety and confidently advocate for their needs in different environments. Sessions will maintain a focus on empowerment and reinforcing the child's sense of worthiness of safety.

ACORN – Specialist Children's Family Violence Counselling

ACORN is a free counselling service provided by Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA-Tas) for children and young people aged 5 to 18 across Tasmania who have experienced or witnessed family violence. The program provides a safe, supportive environment where children can process their experiences,

learn to express their feelings, and develop strategies to cope with the impacts of trauma.

By offering both emotional support and practical guidance, ACORN helps children build resilience and fosters safer, stronger family connections.

Impact story

A 12 year old boy was referred internally from RA-Tas' Parenting Orders Program. His mother sought support for both her children, wanting counselling to help them express themselves during Family Law Court proceedings and Child Contact Centre visits. She was particularly worried about her son, who had been experiencing significant sleep disturbances and heightened anxiety. The family situation had changed abruptly in 2024 when the parents separated while the father was in hospital. A Police Family Violence Order (PFVO) was issued, naming the mother and children as impacted parties and the father as the perpetrator. Following the father's discharge, the boy was unable to see him in person, and all communication was restricted to email, something the child found very difficult to initiate.

At the time of referral, the boy lived with his mother and sister in a private rental. He had recently started Year 7 at a new school but reported having no friends there, though he maintained some online contact with friends from previous schools. He presented with a history of panic attacks and ongoing poor sleep, which had worsened due to the upheaval at home. He often felt anxious and distressed, with nightmares and a reversed sleep cycle. His anxiety intensified as he prepared to meet

with an independent child lawyer for his parents' court proceedings and anticipated reconnecting with his father at the contact centre after a prolonged separation. Limited communication with his father and the uncertainty of legal processes continued to fuel his stress. While his social supports were mostly limited to family and online friends, he benefited from his mother's strong support and his own intelligence, engagement, and willingness to participate in therapy.

Therapeutic work with the ACORN program focused on a solutions focused approach, starting with sleep hygiene strategies and establishing routines. He was referred back to his general practitioner for additional support. Psychoeducation sessions explored how emotions and anxiety affect sleep, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques helped him manage his anxiety and bodily sensations. He learned grounding and relaxation exercises, including paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and five senses grounding. Therapy also supported his self esteem through identifying personal values and validating his experiences, alongside developing interpersonal skills such as assertive communication, safety behaviours, and self advocacy.

By the end of his sessions, the boy reported a noticeable reduction in anxiety symptoms and an improvement in sleep quality, returning to a more regular rhythm. His school attendance became consistent, and he began forming new friendships; he was even elected as his class representative. He successfully spoke with the independent child's lawyer, clearly expressing his needs regarding future living arrangements.

He also began rebuilding his relationship with his father, now seeing him fortnightly and feeling more confident initiating email contact. The relaxation techniques he learned continue to help him manage stress and anxiety. While some nightmares persisted, he was referred to his GP for further support after discharge from the program.





Supporting recovery in meaningful ways

Supporting Recovery (SR) is a tailored domestic, family and sexual violence support service provided by RANSW in the Central Coast and Newcastle areas.

Impact story

Presenting Issues:

The client is from an African cultural background and moved to Australia for marriage. She had recently become a permanent Australian Resident.

The relationship lasted 7 years, and the client left 12 months ago. She lives with her daughter who is 18 years old. The client presented with selective mutism and was referred by the Coast Shelter, a Supported Recovery (SR) Caseworker communicated with her via email to begin with to build rapport and respecting her need to not communicate verbally. Over time the client agreed to a phone call, and the engagement progressed very well, with the client opening up more and more each session. She has now attended 12 sessions, some via phone, some face-to-face.

The client did not want to discuss her DFV experience, and was extremely traumatised, experiencing PTSD symptoms, even at the mention of her former partner's name. She was diagnosed with PTSD & Depression and had engaged with a psychiatrist and counsellor. The client was in severe financial hardship and was not entitled to full Centrelink benefits until she had achieved two years of permanent residency. Her rent exceeded her income, and she relied completely upon emergency relief for food and her

daughter's income from part time work to pay the bills. The client stated that she would like to return to Africa, but her former partner has continued his coercive control by staying in contact with her African family and turning them against her, in addition to this the client believed that life in Africa would be very hard for her as she would be frowned upon for being single and for leaving her husband.

The Supporting Recovery program has provided:

- Regular sessions, needs assessment, emotional support, practical information and referrals for day-to-day needs.
- Brokerage for transport so that the client can access medical appointments and emergency relief food.
- Brokerage for psychiatry appointment to ensure continued management of mental health concerns.
- Warm Referral to Seen and Heard, a Primary Health Network (PHN) funded healing and recovery program, to cater to the client's preference for non-talk therapy.
- Transport by SR caseworker to and from Seen and Heard as it is in a rural location not accessible by public transport.



Thriving Kinnections

The Thriving Kinnections Service delivered by Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) is a Specialised Family Violence Service that provides support to children, individuals and families impacted by family and domestic violence. Services are aimed at reducing family violence in the Townsville region by working with men

who use violence and supporting women and children who experience or witness violence, particularly First Nations People - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The Townsville population includes a high percentage of First Nations residents (11.8%) when compared to the Qld average (4%).

Impact story

Yorta Yorta, Kulin Nations and Wurundjeri Male MBCP facilitator talks about a client's experience of the program:

We had a gentleman who was in his 40s. He was a strong communal man and went through lore. His cultural identity was rich and strong. His upbringing, he described, was disorganised and unsafe and he often moved from family home to family home. By the age of 11 years he was in care with his grandparents, and his grandparents were the ones who demonstrated the love between a man and a woman – and what safety looked like.

The grandparents passed away when he was a teenager and he turned to alcohol and violence. He had long stays in incarceration from domestic and family violence. After this, he experienced homelessness – staying with different family members. But still there was no stability and he was often unsafe. He hung onto deep feelings of rejection and feeling unwanted.

He was referred to the Thriving Kinnections men's behaviour change program by parole and their concerns were for his behaviour. They hoped that this program could offer him something cultural as that was what he was looking for.

When he started coming to the program, he was in culture shock as there was a women co-facilitator. His understanding was that the program we were delivering was men's business. We – as female and male co-facilitators – challenged this through doing one on one sessions with

him. We explored 'What are the effects of DFV on him. What have the impacts been?' These conversations showed that DFV wasn't a male or female or coloured concern, and the experience and impact was a global concern and a discussion that needed to be had by everybody.

Through this conversation we found was that he was more open to the idea of seeing how a woman and a man could work together and provide him some insight into what a healthy relationship between a man and woman could look like. And this feedback was that this was the "first time he's seen an aboriginal man and aboriginal woman working together" since seeing his grandparents and his eyes filled with tears – "it makes me remember my grandparents". He shared that "he hopes to find something of that happiness in his life".

For him to go through lore and be a cultural fellow and be open to be challenged about how he sees violence, and for him to even accept a female co-facilitator and to show her the respect by listening to what she had to say about a women's experience of abuse or a child's experience of abuse was a key measure of success of the program.

He started to understand what happened to him as a child was not his fault – the trauma was not his, but the responsibility for healing was his and it was also his responsibility to not replicate the trauma of violence on to others. Seeing this man's change made the co-facilitators feel very proud and humble.



Providing recognition & repair following trauma or abuse

Relationships Australia provides a range of support services to people who have experienced trauma, abuse or disconnection. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, a bespoke suite of crucial trauma support services exist to assist people who have suffered past traumas due to institutional abuse and adoption. These include:

- Intercountry Adoptee and Family Support Services
- Forced Adoption Support Services,
- Find & Connect Support Services, and
- National Redress Support Services.

We are the national provider of Intercountry Adoptee and Family Support Services, providing tailored, high-quality support for intercountry adoptees and their families.

We are one of seven specialist organisations that provide nationwide support for people affected by forced adoption. This is a free support service for people impacted by past forced adoptions and is run in coordination with existing state and national services such as the national helpline.

The Find & Connect Support Service provides specialised support for people who spent time in an orphanage or children's home in Australia between 1920 and 1990 (Forgotten Australians), and former child migrants, to understand their

trauma, trace their history, and where possible reconnect with family.

Redress Support Services are part of the National Redress Scheme established as part of the response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Royal Commission was established to investigate how institutions and governments could better protect children from sexual abuse. Over several years, the Commission heard from thousands of survivors who shared their experiences of abuse as children in a wide range of settings, including orphanages, children's homes, schools, churches and other religious organisations, sports clubs, hospitals, foster care, and other institutions.

The National Redress Scheme is designed to ensure that institutions take responsibility for the sexual abuse of children in their care. The scheme began on 1 July 2018 and will operate until 30 June 2028.

The scheme:

- Acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions
- Recognises the serious harm caused by this abuse
- Holds institutions accountable
- Provides eligible survivors with access to counselling and psychological support, a direct personal response from the responsible institution, and a monetary payment

In 2024-25, Relationships Australia provided the following services to clients across the country:

600+
Forced Adoption

1,100+
Find and Connect

2,500+
Redress

325
Intercountry
Adoptee and Family
Support Services



Forced Adoption Support Services and Find & Connect

Forced adoption programs provide trauma informed support to people affected by adoption. The services are for adoptee adults and children, parents who have lost a child or children to adoption, and adoptive parents. Family members can also access the services. Services can include therapeutic counselling, casework, emotional support, records tracing, assistance with family search and reunion, group activities, community grants and professional development.

Find & Connect services are specifically for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants who were in-care between 1920 and 1989, including those in foster care, orphanages, and other church and state institutions. These services include counselling focused on childhood trauma and relationships, support for obtaining records, and developing social connections through events and groups.

Impact story

At 83, a woman who had been adopted as an infant turned to NSW's Forced Adoptions Support Service at Wattle Place to fill in the missing pieces of her life story. Growing up, she had little information about her biological parents. Her mother's details had been cut from her birth certificate, and her father's name was left blank. For decades, she and her twin brother searched for answers.

With support from her Wattle Place caseworker, she began a new chapter in her search. The team coordinated DNA

testing, family tree research, and official record requests, carefully guiding her through each step. Months of work led to a remarkable discovery – not only did she finally learn her father's name, but she also found two half-siblings living nearby.

With Wattle Place by her side, she was finally able to meet them in person – an emotional reunion that brought joy, belonging, and closure after a lifetime of questions.

Now 88, she says she feels at peace.

"I want people to know that you deserve to know the whole story of your life. I finally feel like I belong."



National Redress Support Services

Impact story

Empowering Healing and Justice in Remote Top End Community

After seeing a poster for Relationships Australia NT's Redress Support Service at the local shops, a First Nations woman living in a remote Top End Community reached out for help. Because a practitioner was visiting the community that day, she was able to meet face-to-face immediately and begin her healing journey.

Using a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach, the practitioner supported the client to share her story at her own pace, often meeting outdoors where she felt most comfortable. Together they traced her early life records, clarified her adoption status, and gathered documentation needed for her National Redress Scheme (NRS) and Territories Stolen Generations Redress applications.

Warm referrals were made to Find & Connect Support Services, the NT Adoptions Unit, and Knowmore Legal Service, ensuring the client received emotional, legal, and practical support. With this guidance, she chose to proceed with her NRS application, which was successfully submitted.

The client expressed deep gratitude for the consistent, respectful support she received, saying she felt truly understood and empowered. Her story demonstrates how trauma-informed outreach and culturally grounded practice enable survivors in remote communities to access justice and healing with dignity.

Outcomes

In the last fiscal year 2024-25 Relationships Australia Northern Territory (RA-NT) had:

236

clients in their National Redress Scheme program

2,431

client facing sessions delivered

78%

of these clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Impact story 2

Healing, Trust, and Transformation in a Remote Community

During an outreach visit, a Relationships Australia NT Redress Support Service counsellor met a young First Nations man who, at first, wanted nothing to do with the service. He voiced strong distrust and was reluctant to engage, having carried deep wounds from past institutional mistrust. Yet, through patience, cultural sensitivity, and gentle presence, rapport was slowly built over two visits.

When he finally felt safe enough to share his story, it marked a profound turning point. Over time, he began to speak openly about his experiences of sexual abuse, shame, guilt, and struggles with identity and sexuality. Regular face-to-face and phone sessions helped him find words for pain he had never voiced, and the courage to reconnect with himself and others.

With ongoing support, he built the confidence to regularly check in, advocate for his own needs, and face the National

Redress Scheme (NRS) process with strength. He asked for his outcome to be delivered in person rather than over the phone, so he could receive it safely, surrounded by care and support in his community which RA-NT advocated strongly on his behalf.

After receiving his redress outcome, he worked with a financial counsellor to manage his payment thoughtfully, made positive changes to his home and family life, and bravely shared his experiences with his partner for the first time. What began as deep distrust transformed into empowerment, connection, and hope.

Today, he has become a community connector and advocate, encouraging younger people to access support and share their own stories. His healing journey stands as a powerful example of how trauma-informed outreach and relational trust can open pathways to dignity, justice, and renewed purpose.

Providing support to Intercountry Adoptees and their families

In the 2024–25 financial year, the Intercountry Adoptee and Family Support Service (ICAFSS) delivered vital support to **325 clients**, including **137 new clients**. Across the year, we facilitated **2,376 client support events**, with **932 sessions dedicated to therapeutic counselling**. These figures reflect our ongoing commitment to providing tailored, high-quality support for intercountry adoptees and their families.

Community Capacity Building

Beyond therapeutic services, ICAFSS prioritises **community capacity building** – strengthening social connections, fostering peer support networks, and building social capital within the adoption community.

Leadership and Advocacy

This year ICAFSS supported **Shaun Kwak**, President of the **Korean Adoptees in Australia Network**, in his successful application for a **Churchill Fellowship**. Shaun's lived expertise and leadership have significantly influenced our service design and advocacy efforts. His fellowship will take him overseas to engage with some of the world's longest-standing adoptee-led organisations, bringing back insights to strengthen Australia's intercountry adoptee networks.

Knowledge Sharing

ICAFSS released a series of **18 educational videos** addressing key topics such as:

Getting to Know Australia's Adoptee-Led Communities

Adoptee Leadership and Why It's Important
Lived Expertise and Experience



Conclusion

In a social climate marked by rising loneliness, family stress, and complex challenges, the services delivered by Relationships Australia are essential. From strengthening family bonds and supporting children's mental health, to educating communities about respectful relationships, addressing family violence, and providing recognition and repair for those impacted by institutional abuse, our programs create pathways to safety, healing, and connection.

These services do more than respond to immediate needs; they build resilience for the future. By focusing on relationships as the foundation of wellbeing, we help individuals and families navigate life's most difficult moments and emerge stronger. Whether it is a parent learning to manage conflict, a child finding their voice after trauma, or a community coming together to reduce isolation, the impact is profound and enduring.

In today's environment – where social fragmentation and mental health concerns are pressing – our work stands as a trusted anchor. What sets Relationships Australia apart is our commitment to evidence-based practice, cultural safety, and person-centred care. We meet people where they are, offering support that is inclusive, respectful, and grounded in decades of expertise. Our federation model ensures local responsiveness while maintaining a shared purpose: to deliver services that make a real difference.

As we look ahead, the need for these services will only grow. By continuing to champion connection and advocate for systemic change, Relationships Australia remains a vital partner in building a more compassionate, resilient society – one relationship at a time.

Glossary

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CCS – Children's Contact Service
DFV – Domestic and Family Violence
DOORS – Detection of Overall Risk Screen
DSS – Australian Government Department of Social Services
FaC – Families and Children Activity
FaRS – Family and Relationship Services
FCSS – Find and Connect Support Services
FMHSS – Family Mental Health Support Services
MBCP – Men's Behaviour Change Program
NDIS – National Disability Insurance Scheme
NRS – National Redress Scheme
ORS – Outcome Rating Scale
PFVO – Police Family Violence Order
PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
REP – Relationship Education Program
SCORE – Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting
SFVS – Specialised Family Violence Service

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Canberra and Region

racr.org.au

New South Wales

relationshipsnsw.org.au

Northern Territory

nt.relationships.org.au

Queensland

raq.org.au

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