



relationship
matters
Counselling & Mediation

YEAR IN REVIEW 2021-22

**Embracing
Change**

Relationship Matters promotes safe, respectful and fulfilling relationships by supporting individuals, couples, families and workforces within the Victorian and wider community. We are committed to supporting all relationships through life's changes. The pandemic and the economy have had many impacts on relationships and how we respond to the needs of our clients. Relationship Matters is embracing change and will continue to support all our clients to reinforce their relationships and look to the future with optimism and strength.

Relationship counselling

Specialised couples counselling, family and individual counselling, including counselling for children and adolescents.

Dispute resolution and mediation services

Assistance for separating couples, families, older people and community members in resolving conflict and reaching agreements on a wide range of issues. Services include family dispute resolution for parenting and property matters, child-inclusive practice, lawyer-assisted mediation and restorative practice.

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Relationship learning

Evidence-based learning programs, seminars and workshops for couples, parents and individuals.

Family violence prevention programs

One of the leading providers of Men's Behaviour Change Programs (including partner contact support), along with case management for perpetrators of family violence.

Accessible Psychological Interventions

Support for people impacted by mild or moderate mental health issues through evidence-based services. Available to people living or working in the Frankston and Glen Eira local government areas.

Employee Assistance Program

Counselling and critical incident response services supporting organisations across a range of industries and sectors.

Workplace services

Workplace training, e-training, coaching and mediation.

Specialist services

Authorised provider of the VicRoads Safe Driving Program.



2021–22 highlights



4,648
clients and
13,215
sessions

180
Rainbow
Door clients



58 online and
32 self-paced
virtual Parenting
after Separation
sessions

5,539
telehealth
counselling
sessions



80,483
website users –
an increase of
27.33%

246
Accessible
Psychological
Interventions
program clients



Chairperson's report

I am proud to present the Year in Review 2021–22 on behalf of Relationship Matters. We have continued to thrive while strengthening our services to our clients amid significant expansion of the organisation, while embracing change to further bolster our 74-year history.



We have successfully reinforced the value of counselling, relationship learning and mediation services that support strong relationships at work, at home and in the community. I would like to thank our valued clients, partners and supporters for their continued loyalty.

After eight years of admirable service, Janet Jukes OAM departed as Chief Executive Officer of Relationship Matters. Since 2014, Janet has played a critical role in the improvement, growth and success of Relationship Matters. We cannot thank her enough for her incredible commitment, passion, enthusiasm and motivation to expand Relationship Matters to where it is today.

It is with sadness I write that Peter Harcourt, our Board Chair from November 2010 to June 2017 and Board member from 2000 to 2019, passed away. We acknowledge his long-term commitment and dedication to Relationship Matters.

I am delighted to announce that Relationship Matters has purchased a new property in Geelong. This was a significant milestone in the history of the organisation. Our Geelong office now operates from 112 McKillop Street. The launch was inaugurated with the presence and blessings of the Right Reverend Kate Prowd – Bishop of Oodthenong Episcopate – Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, the Board, stakeholders and wellwishers.

This year we welcomed Catherine Allison and Annette Jones to the Relationship Matters Board. I would like to thank Stuart Soley for his nine years of service. Stuart retired in April 2022 and was a passionate advocate for Relationship Matters. Thank you also to Brooke Pearson, who retired from the Board this year. I sincerely thank my fellow Board members for their guidance, support and leadership of the organisation. In particular, I acknowledge the invaluable work of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee and the Clinical Governance Committee.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Janet Jukes for her leadership and commitment to delivering a successful result this financial year. Together with the Board, I sincerely thank the leadership team and staff of Relationship Matters for their continued dedication to the clients we serve and for working together to achieve outcomes for both the organisation and clients.

In a year with many challenges and new beginnings, we continue to thrive while embracing change. We are dedicated to delivering exceptional services to our clients and will continue our journey to strengthen relationships in our community.

James McCarthy OAM
Chairperson

CEO's report

I would like to thank the Board and the entire Relationship Matters team for their efforts and achievements during the year. I am pleased that we were able to deliver a positive result in 2021–22, with a turnover of 6,767,295, while delivering 13,215 sessions to 4,648 clients and providing 5,539 telehealth counselling sessions.



I take this opportunity to thank Janet Jukes for her remarkable leadership and inspiration as she guided Relationship Matters for the past eight years. Janet will be deeply missed by the staff, Board members and partners. We wish her the best in her future endeavours.

I am delighted to report that we are fully operational at our newest property in Geelong. We currently offer family and relationship counselling and dispute resolution at the site, and hope to run relationship learning programs there in the future. We look forward to strengthening our services to Geelong and surrounding communities.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we delivered our services on online platforms. With the easing of pandemic rules, we have continued to support clients both face to face and online. More clients now want online consultations because of their convenience and effectiveness. Online delivery of services has enabled Relationship Matters to support more regional clients and more vulnerable clients. We are committed to providing our clients with exceptional service and meeting the changing needs of our clients and their circumstances.

I am deeply thankful to our dedicated team at Relationship Matters, who have worked tirelessly, adapted to online service delivery and continued to provide professional and nurturing support to all our clients. Thank you to all our staff and associates for their energy and adaptability. I also thank our stakeholders, partners and senior executive team for their support and dedication.

I am grateful to the Board members for their vision, commitment and guidance, which ensures the best outcomes for our clients and staff. I am confident that Relationship Matters has the right foundation, strategy and skills to expand and meet the demands of the community in the years to come. We will continue to deliver high-quality services with responsiveness, innovation and commitment.

Ann Smith
Acting Chief Executive Officer



We supported the establishment of the Moonee Valley Family Violence Practice Forum.

Relationship counselling

Relationship Matters is approved by the Federal Attorney-General's Department as both a mediation and counselling organisation under provision of the *Family Law Act 1975*.

Our services are available through a variety of family transition points. Sometimes this involves our clients embracing change in the form of new and emerging relationships or enriching existing ones. We also provide support and hope for people who are in dispute, separating or separated.

Our work is not always focused on a relationship being what it once was – sometimes we grow in different directions, and sometimes it is simply not safe – but on establishing respectful and fulfilling relationships where damage is repaired and trust is restored.

Family and Relationship Services aims to strengthen family relationships, prevent breakdown and ensure the wellbeing and safety of children.

Family Law Counselling aims to provide alternatives to formal legal processes to improve relationships and make arrangements that are in the best interests of the children involved.

This year we have continued to welcome partnerships and effective working relationships with organisations such as Switchboard Victoria, Open Arms and Moonee Valley Legal Service.

As a mainstream organisation with Rainbow Tick accreditation, we are proud of our highly qualified staff, who share their expertise in their work with all clients, including LGBTIQ+ communities. We are equally thankful for their willingness to engage in ongoing professional development, and for the depth of understanding that it brings.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

We provided almost 7,500 family relationship sessions to more than 3,000 clients.

2

We provided 777 sessions to 180 clients through the Rainbow Door program.

3

99.5% of our clients were satisfied with their counselling experience.



We provided
over 600 hours
of relationship
learning
sessions.

Relationship learning

Relationships are essential to daily life. However, relationships – with a spouse, child, parent, ex-partner or even a work colleague – can be complicated and, at times, challenging. They take time, thought and effort to develop, nurture and sustain. At Relationship Matters, our purpose has always been to support people to strengthen the relationships that matter the most to them.

During 2021–22, Relationship Matters provided a variety of online group and individual programs to help improve relationships. We continued to embrace digital technology, supporting clients who would have otherwise been unable to access our services, including people living in regional Victoria and interstate.

We ran a suite of programs covering a range of topics across the different relationship, family and parenting stages. These included pre-marriage, pre-baby, separation and divorce, blended families, parenting children of all ages, as well as programs specifically designed for fatherhood, and for women managing their anger.

Our relationship learning programs were delivered by qualified and experienced practitioners from a variety of specialist backgrounds, including counselling, family therapy, law and mediation. Participants attended programs as individuals or couples, or participated in small group workshops.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

We ran more than 60 Parenting After Separation programs, supporting 347 clients who were navigating separation and parenting.

2

We supported over 500 clients. The most popular programs were Tuning into Teens, Tuning into Kids, Sea Change Anger Management for Women and Parenting After Separation.

3

95% of Parenting After Separation participants would recommend the program to others.



What our clients say:
'The mediator displayed
excellent empathy, good
exploring of possible ways
forward. I felt hope after
we spoke and this is a
wonderful gift in this
place of difficulty.'

Dispute resolution and mediation

Our dispute resolution team offer a professional and personalised service for separated couples and other family members who are in conflict. We support our clients to make decisions after separation, such as parenting arrangements and finalising property and financial matters.

Separation can be very traumatic. Where possible, our clients see the same practitioner from intake and assessment through to joint sessions and completion. This allows our practitioners to give caring and consistent support to their clients and ensure they really understand their needs. Our practitioners can also provide information and referrals to other services, such as counselling, mental health, family violence, and drug and alcohol services.

We offer parents resources and information to help them make the best decisions for themselves and their families, such as parenting and financial resources, legal advice and information about the Family Law Act.

Every family is different and not all issues are straightforward. For complex matters, we may include legal practitioners or other support people. We can also involve children, in a safe and appropriate manner, so their voices are included in decisions that will affect them. This process is known as child-inclusive mediation.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

We supported 571 clients to resolve their disputes.

2

Our practitioners recently attended advanced child-inclusive training to help them offer children a voice when their parents attend family dispute resolution.

3

76% of clients who attended joint sessions for parenting and/or property reached an agreement.



We began our first South Asian Men's Behaviour Change Program, offered to men from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. The program is run in English but both facilitators are multilingual and have lived experience of the cultures of the region.

Family violence prevention

With COVID-19 restrictions lifting, most of our family violence prevention programs are again face-to-face. We are currently delivering a hybrid model of the Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP), with some groups meeting online. Some clients preferred the online option, others could not meet our vaccination requirement and some faced geographical barriers and could not attend in person. This flexible approach will reduce waiting times for men who have been assessed and are waiting to start a program.

The Men's Behaviour Change Program offers men the opportunity to develop more satisfying relationships, learn non-abusive behaviour, challenge old ways of thinking and acting, and develop caring respect for themselves and others.

The program involves intensive work designed to support men to accept responsibility for their choices and behaviour and to handle strong emotions and conflict with understanding, confidence and self-control.

Facilitators support new learning and challenge unproductive attitudes in a safe setting that models respectful relationships. Relationship Matters staff also maintain contact with affected family members. The aim of the program is to create greater safety for victim-survivors, and in doing so, for them to have more agency in their own lives.

We also provide case management to perpetrators of family violence with the aim of preventing recidivism and increasing the safety of their partners and children.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

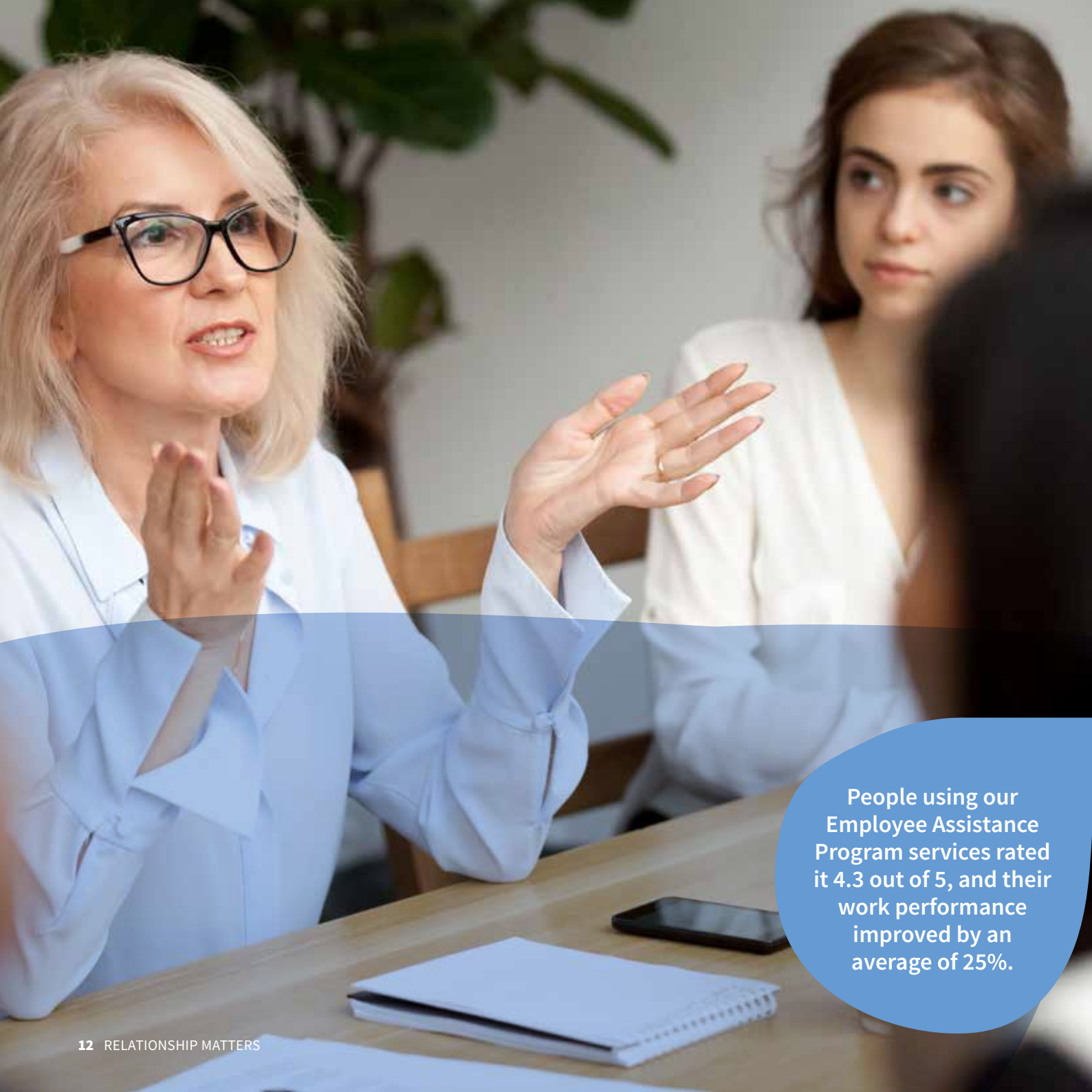
With over 60 sessions of 'rolling intake' MBCPs now completed in the CBD, a new rolling intake MBCP will begin in October at Wyndham.

2

The rolling intake MBCP has serviced 54 clients in the reporting period, compared to 42 if we had used a 'closed' group model.

3

We have delivered 321 MBCP sessions this year, which translates to 642 program hours and 12,000 hours of direct client work by our facilitators.



People using our Employee Assistance Program services rated it 4.3 out of 5, and their work performance improved by an average of 25%.

Workplace services

Workplace services include Employee Assistance Programs and business services, such as training, coaching, supervision and mediation.

An Employee Assistance Program is internationally defined as ‘a work-based early intervention aimed at the identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance’. We have over two decades of experience in this area and we continue to deliver high-quality services under the peak body standards.

Our Employee Assistance Program is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It includes sessional counselling for a broad range of staff, including a specialist helpline for managers and a critical incident response service.

Most counselling sessions address key themes such as relationships, communication issues, stress and the common mental health issues of depression and anxiety. In recent years, we have seen underlying grief, loss and adjustment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our counsellors are highly flexible in responding to this additional complexity, as well as to issues of bereavement, trauma, bullying, harassment, discrimination, alcohol and other drug use, family violence, community violence, suicidality and mental health issues.

Positive change occurs when we have the courage to seek help, and the determination to address issues that are often easier to ignore. This positive change is not limited to direct outcomes for our clients, it also helps their colleagues and families, and their workplace, and helps to show everyone that change is possible.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

Feedback on our Employee Assistance Programs has praised them for ‘ease of access’, ‘rapid support’ and ‘great staff’.

2

The availability of support cannot be underestimated, with one client describing significant value in ‘the fact that we offer this service to our staff’.

3

Our services are highly affordable. Through supporting almost 200 organisations, we have achieved a small but notable improvement in profit this year.

A young man with dark, curly hair is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a brown hoodie with a light green hood and drawstrings. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a basketball hoop visible in the distance.

Dedicated
recruitment
efforts led to a
fully staffed team
by year's end.

Accessible Psychological Interventions

The Accessible Psychological Intervention program provides brief, goal-oriented psychological support to clients who experience mild to moderate mental illness. Offering flexible client-led services, our staff work with priority groups who are often at the more complex end of the eligibility scale.

People who access the service have a broad range of backgrounds and presenting issues. These include but are not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people experiencing homelessness, people at risk of suicide, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people diagnosed with perinatal depression, people with substance use disorders and people who have experienced family violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of many people, which has led to an increase in demand for our services. Despite the environmental challenges of recruitment, our dedicated efforts have meant we ended the financial year with a full complement of staff. Not only has this increased our general capacity to respond to demand, it has made it possible for us to work with clients from a wider age range, including young people.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

We have developed stronger relationships and communication with GPs, with 95% of clients having their treatment plans sent to their GP at the commencement of their treatment.

2

We have developed stronger relationships with our local networks and stakeholders, which has enabled greater cross referral and support for clients.

3

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the proportion of appointments that were conducted face to face increased by almost 70%.



In 2021-22, 357 people participated in the VicRoads Safe Driving Program: 297 men, 59 women and one person who identified as other. Most (92.7%) were aged 18-44 years, 6.5 % were 45-65, and the remaining 0.8% were over 65.

VicRoads Safe Driving Program

The VicRoads Safe Driving Program is a court-mandated program for people who have been found guilty of certain high-risk driving offences. Successful completion of this program is compulsory for these people to get their driver licence back. Relationship Matters has been successfully facilitating this program on behalf of VicRoads for almost a decade.

This group program is designed to address behaviours that lead to offending by providing statistical information on offending and consequences, and using motivational interviewing techniques to engage with participants and help them reflect on their behaviours and the consequences. In a small group environment, they can challenge their individual belief systems, motivations and behaviours and develop strategies that may prevent future unsafe driving.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, this group is now testing a mixed model of some face-to-face groups and some online groups, which are prioritised for those who are unvaccinated or who struggle to physically attend because of distance.

Group size is approximately six online or a maximum of ten people face to face. Participants can choose the model that best suits their circumstances. Sessions are run at various times and days during the week.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1

We continue to have strong interest from staff in facilitating this group, without the need to advertise externally for facilitators.

2

Clients rarely have to wait longer than a few weeks to attend a group with our instant online booking system.

3

The mixed model of service delivery has received very positive feedback from facilitators, who can fit the program around their other commitments.

Financial statements

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue and other income	6,767,295	8,627,202
Employee benefits expense	(4,945,428)	(5,426,610)
Advertising and marketing expenses	(25,365)	(22,847)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(537,227)	(572,315)
Contract and partner service delivery	(108,141)	(411,303)
Employee development and training expenses	(37,709)	(23,296)
Occupancy expenses	(118,587)	(58,853)
Net loss on financial assets at FVTPL	(14,405)	(819)
Finance expense	(15,798)	(25,104)
Other expenses	(582,917)	(655,746)
Operating surplus before income tax	381,718	1,430,309
Income tax expense	–	–
Net surplus for the year	381,718	1,430,309
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	–	–
Items that will be reclassified to profit or loss when specific conditions are met	–	–
Total comprehensive income for the year	381,718	1,430,309

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	3,075,575	3,085,208
Trade and other receivables	195,534	126,730
Other financial assets	1,156,788	1,886,607
Other assets	20,297	76,346
Total current assets	4,448,194	5,174,891
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	1,183,692	178,469
Intangible assets	1	1,581
Right-of-use assets	650,416	874,859
Other assets	11,400	11,881
Total non-current assets	1,845,509	1,066,790
TOTAL ASSETS	6,293,703	6,241,681
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	427,354	405,583
Contract liabilities	150,879	136,844
Lease liabilities	382,238	408,685
Employee benefits	445,424	546,033
Total current liabilities	1,405,895	1,497,145
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	319,481	538,393
Employee benefits	14,013	33,547
Total non-current liabilities	339,494	571,940
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,739,389	2,069,085
NET ASSETS	4,554,314	4,172,596
Members' funds		
Accumulated surplus	4,554,314	4,172,596
Total members' funds	4,554,314	4,172,596

Team Relationship Matters

Our Board

The Relationship Matters Board is comprised of non-executive directors who are committed to the vision and mission of the organisation. Board members generously volunteer their time and professional expertise to drive the strategic focus and overarching aims of the organisation.

- James McCarthy OAM
- Rev. Stuart Soley (resigned 22 April)
- Sally Baker
- Brooke Pearson (resigned 21 September)
- William Couche
- Christopher McDermott
- Catherine Allison
- Annette Jones

Our management team

- Ann Smith, Acting Chief Executive Officer; Executive Manager, Service Development and Quality
- Matt Needham, Executive Manager, Clinical Practice and Outcomes
- Luis Menezes, Executive Manager, Finance and Corporate Services
- Cath Tregillis, Executive Manager, Dispute Resolution and Learning
- Shini Kelly, Manager, Marketing and Communications
- Adrian Harris, Manager, City and North Region
- Tanya De Mel, Manager, South East Region

Thank you

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have supported us in 2021–22. In particular, we would like to thank our funders:

- Australian Government Department of Social Services
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Corrections Victoria
- Anglicare Victoria: Communities for Children
- South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network.

We also thank our partners and those organisations that we have worked closely with in 2021–22, including:

- Anglicare Victoria
- Latrobe Health Centre
- No to Violence
- LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
- Women's Legal Service Victoria
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Thorne Harbour Health
- Switchboard Victoria.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Relationship Matters acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



Acknowledgements

Relationship Matters acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land from which we serve and respects their spiritual and physical relationship with their country. We are an access-for-all organisation. Our staff have a sensitivity to, and an awareness of, diverse communities including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

We welcome LGBTIQ+ people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services to LGBTIQ+ clients.

Statistics are taken from the 2021–22 Performance Monitoring and Review Survey and internal data processes.

Locations

Melbourne City
Level 4, 255 Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000

Frankston
White Street Mall
Frankston 3199

Geelong
112 McKillop Street
Geelong 3220

Glen Eira
191 Balaclava Road
Caulfield North 3161

Wyndham
1 Johnson Avenue
Hoppers Crossing 3029

Wangaratta
15–17 Ely Street
Wangaratta 3676

Preston
648 High Street
Reservoir 3073

Moonee Ponds
Level 1, 5 Everage Street
Moonee Ponds 3039



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