



Supporting people since 1978

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MISSION STATEMENT

‘To assist individuals, partners and families, in all their diversity, to achieve and maintain quality and meaningful lives through quality and meaningful relationships’.



ABOUT US

Family Relationships Institute Inc. trading as RelateWell, was founded in 1978. It is a not-for-profit community organisation providing a range of essential prevention and early intervention support services at significant transition points in the lifecycle. Our family and relationship services target the significant family transition points of relationship formation, extension and separation; aiming to support family relationships, prevent breakdown and guarantee the wellbeing of people through broad-based counselling and psychoeducation. Our specialist mental health services match structured evidence-based interventions to individual's needs and complexities in the clinical delivery of targeted psychological support services to adults, adolescents and children. RelateWell is a leader in primary prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery, working with key stakeholders in supporting people's well-being during significant life events. RelateWell is committed to providing accessible, safe and inclusive services to all members of the community. Our family & relationship services (FaRS) are funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS); and have been Commonwealth funded since our inception in 1978. RelateWell is a Commonwealth service provider of mental health contracted services.

Our History

The Family Relationships Institute Inc. was founded in 1978 by the late Don Burnard, a Senior Psychologist who specialised in relationship development courses and Dr Ron Fitzgerald who was a Commissioner for the Education Section of the Henderson Poverty Report.

Our counselling and relationship, marriage and parenting psychoeducational services are primarily at the prevention and early intervention end of service provision and target the significant family transition points of relationship formation, moving in together, getting married, having a baby and maturing in the couple relationship. Essentially, our services prepare people with the skills to deal with life challenges and changes before they become big problems and issues. Healthy relationships are a crucial component of health and well-being. RelateWell aims to provide counselling and relationship and parenting education services at a price which keeps them within financial reach of the majority of people in the community. Priding itself in being a boutique-like provider of services, where people are welcomed, supported and treated like individuals. Where the most vulnerable people in society are treated with respect, leaving our services with improved family and community functioning; and a satisfaction with the service they have received. Strengthening access and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged families is a strategic key in service delivery.

The Family Relationships Institute Inc. is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act. ABN: 26 497 501 316



Board of Management

The Family Relationships Institute Inc. is governed by a Board of Management, who is committed to achieving our vision of building a sustainable business governed by sound governance.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

PRESIDENT

Stavros Sakellaris

VICE PRESIDENT

Luciana Martini

PUBLIC OFFICER

Donna Cossio (non-voting member)

BOARD MEMBERS

Russell Williams

Vanessa Field

Tina Douvos-Stathopoulos

Roslyn Monagle

Joan Pianta

HONORARY MEMBERS

Don Burnard

Dr Ron Fitzgerald

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Angela Damianopoulos

Board of Management Charter

The role of the Board is to provide leadership for and supervision over the organisations affairs:

- Developing and approving the vision, purpose and values of the Institute.
- Monitoring management's performance, providing feedback and assistance in the implementation of strategy. Ensuring appropriate resources are offered.
- Approving key organisational policies and approving and monitoring the progress of major capital expenditure, capital management and acquisitions.
- Reviewing and ratifying systems of risk management and internal compliance and control, codes of conduct and legal compliance.
- Approval of annual budget.
- Monitoring the financial performance of the Institute and ensuring there are adequate funds and resources for the organisation.
- Overall organisational governance, including conducting regular reviews of the balance of responsibilities within the organisation to ensure division of functions remains appropriate to the needs of the Institute.
- Liaising with the Institute's external auditors.
- Ensuring that all votes cast by members of the Board as a nominated proxy are cast in accordance with the instructions given on the proxy form.
- Ensuring the Board is functioning well and planning for the succession and orientation of Board members.
- The Board should seek advance commitment from perspective Board members to any particular policies concerning the expectations of the Board regarding matters such as investment of time, attendance requirements, conflict of interest policy and practice, acceptance of responsibility and collective decision-making.
- Policies in dealing with Board consecutive terms.

Message from the President



I am pleased to present my President report for another challenging but milestone year for RelateWell. This year marks the start of our 45th year, to be celebrated in 2023. In thinking back over the 21-22 financial year, despite the many challenges endured in Victoria by its ongoing lockdowns and legislative uncertainty, the organisation has been vigilant and adaptive in adhering to the pandemic's changing landscape; with consumers' needs always at the centre of service provision. RelateWell's ability to adapt swiftly from direct services to virtual services is a genuine testament of its firm commitment to support its mission and to support the many clients who attend its many services through tele-practice support.

As you will hear in the Executive Director's report, RelateWell has continued to perform exceptionally well in another unpredictable year ensuring to implement a multifaceted system of support to all its consumers. Thus breaking down barriers to support through an adaptive service environment which harnesses the benefits of tele-practice, but at no stages replaces it benefits through the minimisation of onsite support. Direct services will always be direct onsite services.

With that, on behalf of the Board, we look forward to celebrating our 45th anniversary in 2023. And with that, on behalf of the Board of Management, I will like to take this opportunity to embrace the considerable work undertaken by the late Don Burnard, a co-founder of the FRI; and the first Executive Director of the organisation whom passed away in January this year. Since its establishment in 1978, RelateWell has continued to engage people at key transition points in the lifecycle; a vision that was continually voiced by the late Don Burnard; and a vision that will continually be voiced in the years to come.

I will like to thank our collaborative partners in supporting our services. I will like to thank our Executive Director who continues to lead the organisation by example; and supported by a committed team.

And as always, I will take the opportunity to thank our Board; their knowledge and guidance ensures the strategic direction of the organisation is fulfilled in accordance with its mission; and that the implementation, maintaining and refining of its system of good governance is in keeping with its objectives defined in its constitution.

Stavros Sakellaris, President

Executive Directors Report at the Annual General Meeting of the Family Relationships Institute Inc. trading as RelateWell Thursday 10 November 2022



I would like to commence by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people, elders past and present.

I will now like to reflect on the passing of one of the founders of the organisation, Don Burnard.

For those whom knew Don, he was passionate about prevention and early intervention relationship and marriage services, particularly premarital psychoeducation right until his passing. Dedicatedly, working with a team of educators, he implemented the RelateWell Let's Make It Work and Let's Keep It Alive, experience-based interactive adult education model of learning; wherein the course participants provide the content and become the experts.

Working with Don every day, he was an important part of our lives; building our resilience to be future leaders in our service space. Someone we will miss; and are missing.

The organisation will continue to grow and share Don's vision that healthy and respectful relationships are a crucial component of health and well-being.

Family and Relationship Services

The organisation is now in its second year of its five-year Commonwealth Grant Agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Families and Communities Program. Specifically under the Family and Relationship Services (FaRS) sub-activity, to provide primary prevention and early intervention support services at the significant family transition points of relationship formation, extension and separation.

The organisation should be proud of its long history in delivering family and relationship services to consumers across Melbourne. Under its various departmental names, a service we have delivered since 1978.

Service Data: July 2021 to June 2022

In the 2021-2022 financial years, under the FaRS sub-activity, the organisation supported 628 unique clients and delivered 2,268 client sessions. In our private counselling stream wherein RelateWell is a Commonwealth service provider of contracted mental health services; as well as delivering Medicare-subsidised mental health-specific services, NDIS and self-referrals, a total of 382 unique clients were supported with the delivery of 1,320 client sessions.

A total of 1,010 unique clients were supported in 2021-2022; with the delivery of 3,588 client's sessions; quite a remarkable outcome for a boutique medium sized not-for-profit organisation.

Quite a remarkable outcome given that COVID-19 has continued to impact our psychoeducational services throughout 2021-2022 with Victorian Government lockdowns and associated legislative measures causing municipality closures subsequently impacting our reach.

But with that said, at no stage throughout the previous financial year did we not deliver any services. What we did was adapt our services to the presenting need. That is, instead of delivering a New Parent Group, we delivered counselling sessions. Which is reflected in the data as instead of providing primary prevention in the educational space to an audience of up to 15 participants, we provided targeted psychological support to an audience of one or two people. Therefore, our family and relationship funded services never stopped; they were just delivered and targeted differently.

And quite a remarkable outcome in our private counselling stream wherein clinician departures and subsequent skilled shortages did not impact our ability to achieve a 27% increase in unique clients being supported in the 2021-2022 financial year.

Skilled Shortages

As our waiting lists have grown, the biggest obstacle facing the organisation is the adverse impact of skilled shortages in the mental health space. From September 2021 to June 2022, five clinicians left the organisation. A circumstance we have never experienced; particularly given the investment made.

Although the organisation has successfully transitioned to delivering services via tele-practice, the method of service delivery via Telehealth poses a prime influence in staff departures. What policy makers need to be mindful of in allowing telehealth to be subsidised by Medicare treatment items is that health-related services and information via electronic information and telecommunication technologies has always been intended to support the most vulnerable individuals in society whom are unable to attend onsite service provision. The medium of telehealth was never intended to be used as a vehicle to exploit Commonwealth funded services; the full impact now be-

ing felt in skilled shortages in the mental health space as why work onsite when you can work virtually.

Nonetheless, RelateWell is up for the challenge. In balancing demonstrated benefits in attracting and retaining staff, we will continue to invest in our student internships of provisional psychologists and counsellors, nurturing their talent so that they choose to work and stay with our organisation over another.

RelateWell believes that everyone has the right to access the best care in improving their mental health, relationships and well-being; and throughout 2021-2022, continued to operate within a clinical governance framework that safeguards that people receiving our services obtain safe high-quality care within a safety and high quality culture. Operating within this framework ensures that the rights of consumers are upheld and protected; clients are given the opportunity to offer feedback on their experience of care; and our team have the appropriate skills, abilities and experience to provide targeted psychological support to those referred and seeking out our services.

Additionally, our multi-modal service delivery approach in adapting face-to-face and telehealth services around a consumer's needs, demonstrates our competence in improving efficiencies and accessibility to meet consumer preferences, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts whom experience geographic isolation; mobility impairment; culturally-based difficulties comprising stigma and discrimination related to mental illness; lack of confidence or competence in face-to-face communication; and lack of safety, inclusivity or responsiveness to the needs of diverse populations.

What we do well is go into collaborative spaces which increases our visibility and subsequently accessibility to our services.

Commonwealth Reporting Milestones

The organisation continued to comply with all its reporting milestones under its Service Agreement with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, Families and Children's Program. And excitedly participated in the CAREinMIND 22-23 Redesign which saw the organisation successful in its Expression of Interest (EOI) to continue providing CAREinMIND services to the North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN).

RelateWell has been providing CAREinMIND mental health services since November 2016; and looks forward to continuing to support communities in North Western Melbourne whom cannot afford fee-based services.

Continued to provide services

RelateWell is proud that it continued to provide services throughout the ongoing disruptions associated with the pandemic. And at no stage throughout 2021-2022 did we turn away an individual whom was not vaccinated or chose not to wear a mask. Always mindful not to discriminate against those in society whom for whatever their reasons, chose a different path to the majority.

A view that was supported by an independent review that the majority response to COVID-19 was “overreach” and worsened existing inequalities within vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, including low socio-economic families, women, children, those in aged care, people with disabilities, temporary migrants, and multicultural communities. The independent review bringing to the fore that the political “overreach” was neither realistic nor desirable in a responsible democracy; with the absence ‘of transparency in the expert advice going to leaders helping mask political calculations.’

(<https://theconversation.com/australias-covid-response-was-overreach-and-worsened-existing-inequalities-according-to-independent-review-192849>)

On that note, I am proud of our staff for their adaptability to change and their dedication to serving their clients with integrity.

I am proud of the key partnerships we maintain with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, Merri-bek Maternal Child Health Service, Greater Dandenong City Council, North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (PHN), Springvale Service for Children, Pronia; Cairnmillar, Monash University, marrying celebrants; and over 350 GPs in the North Western region of Melbourne whom refer patients to our care.

Our collaborative partners provide us the means to increase accessibility to our services; and together, improving client outcomes.

I will like to thank our Board of Management, whom have guided and supported me in leading a wonderful team. You all give up your time, expertise, skill-sets and generosity willingly; sharing your wealth of wisdom in laying the groundwork for the organisations success and future successes. I am eternally grateful for your trust in Donna and I.

And to Donna Cossio, the office manager, words cannot reflect your importance to the organisation and to me in my role. Without your guidance, realism and administrative management of our wonderful team, we would not have achieved the successes of 2021-2022.

And to our team; your commitment, resilience, professionalism and empathy towards the people whom choose to invest their trust in your expertise and support does not go unnoticed. In these challenging times, your provision of services is ranked second to none.

Bring on our 45th anniversary!



Angela Damianopoulos
Executive Director

ORGANISATIONAL SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP SERVICES (FaRS)

Counselling:

- Adult & relationship counselling & support
- Parenting & family counselling & support
- Relationship & marriage counselling & support
- Perinatal-specific mental health counselling & support

Relationship & Marriage Education and Skills Training:

- Premarital Program (Let's Make It Work)
- Committed couples program (Let's Keep It Alive) & ENRICH Inventory style relationship program
- Building Respectful Relationships Program (City of Greater Dandenong)
- Starting Strong in Your Child's Education (City of Greater Dandenong)
- New Parent Groups (Merri-bek Maternal & Child Health Service)
- Circle of Security Parenting Education (COSP) (Merri-bek & Greater Dandenong City Councils)

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Commonwealth Contracted Mental Health Services:

- CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support (TPS) & Suicide Prevention Services (SPS)

Mental Health Services:

- Medicare-subsidised mental health-specific items
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIS), Therapeutic Supports
- Child Protection Health Program Victoria
- Self referrals

Adult Counselling & Support Parenting & Family Counselling & Support

The significant family transition point of “becoming parents” is a vulnerable period where couples are at-risk of marital/relationship discord and dissolution resultant from postpartum relationship stresses and pressures experienced through the early parenting period. As a result, targeting families in the postpartum period strengthens family relationships, prevents relationship/marital distress and breakdown; and ensures the wellbeing and safety of children.

Early intervention is vital in supporting families in the early parenting period. It is at this stage in a child's life, you can reduce a family's vulnerability to breakdown which significantly impacts on a child's life as it is in these early years that you are able to work on a child's significant developmental years from birth to school entry. The saying “Happy Families Flourish” cannot be underestimated, particularly as safe and secure early attachments early in life and subsequently through the early years of a child's life exists as a predictor of positive societal relationships and reduced antisocial behaviour and criminality for children. Our counselling services directly target families postpartum.

Collaborative Partners:

Merri-bek Maternal and Child Health Service

Our relationship with Merri-bek Maternal and Child Health Unit is invaluable.

Under our partnership, we break down barriers to accessibility of services by delivering accessible counselling and psychoeducation parenting services to individuals and families at the significant family transition point of becoming parents and raising children.

Our partnership is underpinned by improving the accessibility and equity of services so that people are able to access adequate targeted psychological interventions and support regardless of their financial situation. This entails developing responsive ways so that people do engage in support services.

Our provision of services encompasses the delivery of outreach counselling services within maternal & child health centres; and the delivery of NPGs to maternal and child health centres located throughout Merri-bek.

Springvale Service for Children (SSC), City of Greater Dandenong

SSC is a multifaceted children's hub providing significant early childhood services to families living in Springvale and neighbouring suburbs. Our partnership with SSC is significant because a well-coordinated system of linkage and referral ensures that vulnerable families are supported and appropriate referrals are made within an accessible and timely manner.

From within SSC, RelateWell provides outreach counselling and educational services in the areas of family and relationship counselling and parenting psycho-education. Collaboratively, our services provide a universal platform for engaging families early in the intervention cycle, particularly in supporting people's mental health.

*RelateWell's family & relationship
services prepare people with the
skills to deal with life challenges and
changes before they become
immense problems and issues.*

*Seeking to achieve a cultural
mindset that the transition to family;
and a healthy relationship can
be supported to reduce
unrealistic expectations
and relationship stresses
postpartum.*

Relationship and Marriage Education and Skills Training

Providing relationship education at the significant transition points of forming relationships, marrying, living together and maturing in the couple relationship underpins our relationship and marriage education programs. Relationship education and skills training activities provide enrichment and enhancement principles that supports partners to increase their chances of having quality, meaningful, respectful and stable relationships.

Relationship education and skills training is divided into three categories based on the principles of the prevention discipline: universal prevention programs (Let's Make It Work), selected prevention programs; and indicated programs (Let's Keep It Alive).

At the prevention and early intervention point of service delivery, our education and skills training (Let's Make It Work) provides relationship and marital health and well-being interventions. At the latter point of service delivery (Let's Keep It Alive), where relationship distress and breakdown is evident, there is a combination of education and therapeutic approaches with counselling.

Evidence-based:

Our Relationship Programs have been developed by our experienced team through application, research, knowledge and an awareness of couple relationships.

The organisation has developed a successful model of curriculum-based adult education and skills training for positive respectful relationships since 1978. This model has provided couples with the knowledge, skills training and awareness that relationship/marriage is a lifelong commitment comprising of many transitions. It is because of our expertise in the relationship space; and comprehensive understanding of evidence based relationship theory, we can support couples at the significant transition points of marrying, living together and maturing in the couple relationship.

Education: New Parent Groups (NPG) 'Parenting and Relationship Well-Being'

The challenges related to the transition from a couple (dyad) to a family (triad) is significantly underestimated. The literature and our services specifically identify a range of psychological factors which contribute to declining relationship satisfaction postpartum which impacts people's ability to parent.

In partnership with Merri-bek maternal and child health service, our New Parent Groups support parents in the postpartum period; supporting their mental and emotional well-being post-birth which promotes healthy infant attachment and development.

In achieving desired outcomes, the NPG is empirically supported by an evidence-based foundation; and is delivered by appropriately qualified counsellors in an interactive, non-threatening group setting.

Education: Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) Education

In working with parents via our counselling and education services, we have seen an increase in presentations around the challenges encountered by mothers whom parent with mental illness and/or are at-risk of mental illness; and who experience relationship and parenting distress as a direct result of attachment to the infant. Acknowledgement of these presentations and the protective value of secure parent-child relationships has led the organisation to implement the COSP education intervention within its family and relationship services stream.

The COSP education program offers adaptable measures and interventions to families who would benefit from targeted support. Through use of the circle, adults can develop the process to look beyond a child's behaviour and reflecting on the underlying emotional needs (Dolby, 2007).

The COSP education program is based on decades of evidence-based research developed to help parents engage in, and reflect on, the back-and-forth dialogue that is the foundation of secure attachment.

Referrals are from Merri-bek maternal and child health services; and families attending Springvale Service for Children (Greater Dandenong).

Many of the health and social problems our communities face are preventable, which illustrates the significance of prevention and early intervention targeted responses at key transitional family points in the life course. Strengthening prevention and early intervention services underpins our purpose.

Mental Health Services



Our specialist mental health services match structured evidence-based interventions to consumer needs and complexities in the clinical delivery of targeted psychological support services to adults, youth and children. Operating within clinical governance and a quality assurance framework with clinicians providing front-line consumer care. The professional qualifications of the organisations clinical staff are approved by governing bodies and underpinned by good business practice.

RelateWell is a Commonwealth service provider of contracted mental health services.

Commonwealth Contracted Mental Health Services

RelateWell is contracted by North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHIN) to deliver CAREin-MIND Targeted Psychological Support (TPS) and Suicide Prevention Services (SPS) to North Western Melbourne.

Other Mental Health Services:

Medicare-subsidised mental health specific items

As part of an allied health team, our psychologists assist GPs in undertaking early intervention, assessment and management of patients who present with a range of clinically diagnosable disorders that significantly interfere with their cognitive, emotional or social abilities.

Self-Managed NDIS: Therapeutic support

The organisation provides therapeutic support to people whose plans are managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIS).

Therapeutic supports assist individuals to gain skills and improve independence related to identified needs in areas such as language and communication, personal care, mobility and movement, interpersonal interactions, community living to support positive changes in the person's functioning, development and well-being.

In caring for individuals well-being via therapeutic supports, counselling provides participants and carers with assistance to understand and manage situations, behaviours and relationships associated with their need for care and mental health.

Self-referrals

There are no barriers to accessing RelateWell mental health services.

Memorandum of Understanding to provide mental health services

1. Merri-bek Universal & Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service
2. Merri-bek Youth Services
3. Child Protection Health Program Victoria

Evidence Base

A number of evidence-based therapeutic approaches are used: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Person-Centred Therapy, Compassion Focused Therapy, Psychodynamic Therapy, Emotion-focused therapy, Humanistic-existential Therapy, Existential Therapy, Person-Centred Therapy (also known as client-centred counselling), Art Therapy, Humanistic-Existential Therapy Family/Systemic Therapy, Group Therapy, Mindfulness based approaches and solution focused therapy, Play Therapy.

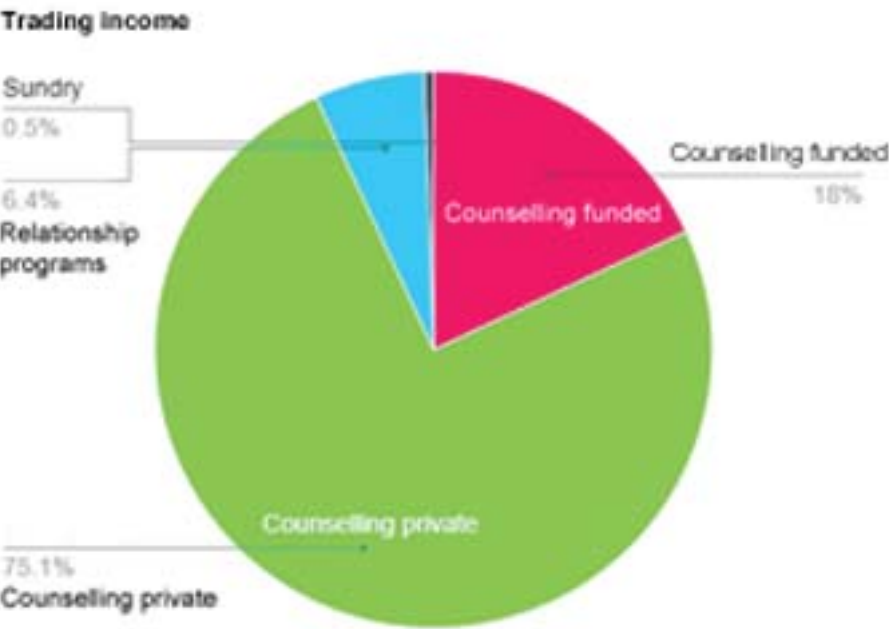
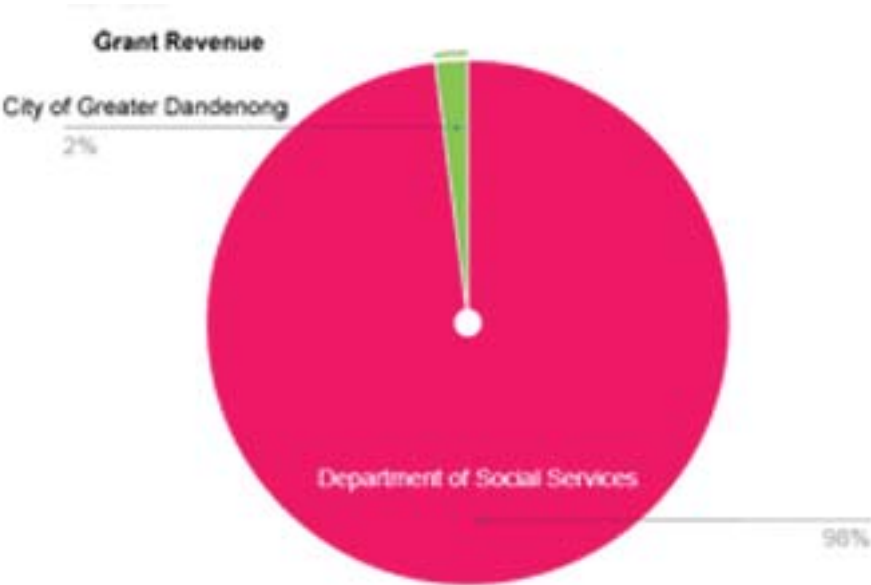
Our clinicians use a variety of evidence-based approaches dependent on presentation.

The selection of evidence-based treatment strategies necessitates knowledge of interventions and the research supporting their effectiveness. Along with competencies which address different psycho-sociocultural contexts in any given client situation.

Implementing clinical expertise and knowledge, and introducing new therapies and interventions, is a significant way to care for the well-being of clients and to minimise cognitive and behavioural (functional) decline in people. Ensuring that in the medium to long term, clients leave our service with improved mental health and family functioning including child wellbeing; children with improved development (achieving milestones) and well-being; and clients are included in and socially connected to their community.

*RelateWell mental health
services operate within a clinical
governance framework that
safeguards that people receiving
mental health treatment obtain
safe high-quality care within a
safety and high quality culture.*

AUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT SNAPSHOT 2021/2022



Service Data from July 2021 to June 2022

1,010 unique clients supported

2,712 client sessions conducted

97% of clients report improved knowledge and skills

99% of clients satisfied with the service they received

95% of clients report improved access and engagement with services

95% of clients report improved family, community and economic engagement

Breakdown of client and session data for 2021/2022:

Family & Relationship Services (FaRS) Stream

628 unique clients

1,392 client sessions

Private Counselling Stream

382 unique clients

1,320 client sessions

‘Our objective to increase our overall reach in supporting all members of the community has seen a proactive approach to streamlining our operations to better invest in our core capabilities and boost profitability in our private streams which supports expansion. This process is ongoing and involves an evaluation of all aspects of the business to determine whether the cost allotted to each service stream is appropriate and is generating appropriate returns for the organisation.’ At RelateWell, collaboration is embraced as a coming together of professionals from a range of backgrounds, working together to achieve the best outcomes for people accessing our services.’ (Angela Damianopoulos, Executive Director)

Funding Partners



Proudly supported by
City of Greater Dandenong

National Regulator



Peak Body



OUR PARTNERS

RelateWell would like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) for their ongoing support and funding; and all those organisations that have worked in partnership with us to reach our mission over 2021/2022:

Belle Vue Park Primary School
Cairnmillar Institute
Child Protection Health Program Victoria
City of Merri-bek Maternal & Child Health Service
City of Greater Dandenong
Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA)
Monash University
North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN)
PRONIA
Springvale Service for Children
Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

OUR TEAM

The key to the organisations success will always be attributed to its fabulous team -
THANK YOU.