



*Building Stronger Relationships since 1978*

# ***RelateWell Building Stronger Relationships since 1978***

## **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**

The Family Relationships Institute Inc., trading as RelateWell, is a not-for-profit community educational organisation providing a range of family and relationship services at the significant transition points of forming relationships, marrying, living together, becoming parents and maturing in the couple relationship. Programs and services are in relationship and marriage education, parenting education, and individual, couple and family counselling. RelateWell is a leader in the prevention and early intervention space particularly in the areas of marriage and relationship education and counselling services; and in engaging people at key transitions in the lifecycle. Our programs are funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

## **Our History**

The story of the Family Relationships Institute Inc. started in 1978 when the organisation was founded by 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. There existed a need in service delivery to deliver Marriage and Relationship Education Training to couples at the prevention end of the lifecycle rather than at the tertiary end.

Since 1978, RelateWell has worked collaboratively with Government at all levels, key stakeholders and family services providers throughout metropolitan Melbourne to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, couples and families accessing our services and programs.

Our family and relationship education programs and counselling services are primarily in prevention and early intervention and target the significant family transition points including relationship formation, extension and separation. Essentially, our services prepare people with the skills to deal with life challenges and changes before they become big problems and provide assistance for relationship distress and breakdown.

RelateWell aims to provide family and relationship support services at a price which keeps them within financial reach of the majority of people in the community. This entails increasing the participation of vulnerable people in our services and community life.

The Institute is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act.



## Board of Management Charter

### Role of the Board of Management

The role of the Board is to provide leadership for and supervision over the Family Relationships Institute Inc. affairs.

### Responsibility of the Board

The Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the Institute by:

- Developing and approving the vision, purpose and values of the Institute.
- Monitoring management's performance, providing feedback and assistance in the implementation of strategy and ensuring appropriate resources are available.
- Approving key organisational policies.
- 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 any and 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; reviewing the work of the Board; 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, support for the organisation, conflict of interest policy and practice, acceptance of responsibility and collective decision-making.
- The Board should establish policies dealing with the number of consecutive terms a Board member or officeholder may serve.

## Executive Director's Report

RelateWell is in its fourth year of its five year contract with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to deliver services under the Family and Relationships Services (FaRS) sub-activity.

Each year, we are thankful for our partnership with the Commonwealth Government which commenced in 1978, following our inception, under a different departmental name, but nevertheless, a securement of Commonwealth funding. What this has allowed the organisation to do is develop on what it does best in the prevention and early intervention space, provide a range of education and counselling services to individuals, couples and families across the lifespan.

What we *do well* is deliver these significant services with our partner organisations through outreach services from within their spaces. 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. Our significant partnerships promote increased efficiencies, improved services, less duplication and a technological willingness to embrace change and progress with society.

The previous financial year saw a further embedding of quality standards across all our service streams, both funded and non-funded, ensuring good practice and evaluation measurements in place - both immediate, intermediate and follow-up - guiding service provision so that we continually improve the way we do things.

Our results for the 2016/2017 financial year should be applauded, particularly for a medium sized boutique organisation that prides itself on being relevant whilst not losing sight of the communities it supports. For the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, the organisation assisted **1041 unique clients** across various service streams which equated to **2110 unique client sessions**, a **37% increase** from the previous financial year.

Our counselling stream is expanding and demand for our services is increasing reflected in client numbers. In our funded stream, our partnership with Moreland Maternal and Child Health Unit and Springvale Service for Children is driving this demand for our services. Our mutual commitment and respect for one another's expertise, roles and experience in the sector has identified a niche which has been filled by our outreach services.

Similarly to the significant work done by our organisation in the relationship education space, we have been working with parents in the area of perinatal health, through the delivery of 'Self-Care' modules at New Parent Groups, where we are able to identify parents at risk or with a mental illness and those parents experiencing relationship and parenting distress. Maternal and Child



Health Nurse referrals to our service play a significant role in assisting parents early in the perinatal service space to seek out therapy.

Collaborative partnerships support inclusive practice. Families and young children make transitions every day, both within and between their early childhood, school and household environments. Children move between environments for numerous intentions and reasons. What we know is that transitions are complex and difficult, particularly for families and young children, and poor transitions can bring about a negative disconnection for children, particularly when there is relationship distress and breakdown within their setting (Branson and Bringham 2009). This is why our collaborative practices are important, as we are engaging people across significant transitions early in the life course.

Collectively, we are putting in place the means and skills to address many of the risk factors early in the intervention cycle, so that we can integrate prevention and early intervention responses all through the health, education and community support sectors.

RelateWell is also working collaboratively with stakeholders in the private counselling space, particularly in mental health.

November 2016 signified the commencement of a contractual relationship between our organisation and North Western Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) to deliver mental health services under its CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support Services (formerly known as Access to Allied Psychological Services). Given that our counselling services are underpinned by good business practice, RelateWell has been re-contracted to deliver these services in the current financial year.

Since January 2017, when we first started receiving CAREinMIND referrals, we have conducted 43 client sessions with seven different general practices referring. I would like to thank Sonia Treseder, our Senior Psychologist, for the phenomenal work she provides to clients in this service stream.

Our partnership with NWMPHN builds on our significant work in the mental health space where we see clients presenting under Mental Health Treatment Plans. For the previous financial year, 186 client sessions were conducted under these plans with 67 different general practices referring to our service. As part of an allied health team, our psychologists assist general practitioners 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.

Also of substance is that 240 client sessions were self-referred. Given the competitive nature of psychological services from within the Moreland municipality alone, this figure demonstrates our respected standing in the marketplace.

How do we achieve these results? By working tirelessly in breaking down accessibility barriers to service provision through collaborative outreach practices and by integrating prevention and early intervention responses in all our service streams in assisting people to navigate life's significant events.

Next year marks our 40th anniversary in being a leader in the prevention and early intervention space in building supportive relationships in the family and relationships services sector. We look forward to providing another 40 years of service guided by the standard that people leave our service with improved family and community engagement, a satisfaction with the service received, and a sense that the relationships within their family unit are functioning and *Relating Well*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Management for their dedication, passion and guidance.

I would like to thank our community partners in assisting our organisation in breaking down barriers to service provision. Our shared vision and expertise in what we do best has enabled a greater number of people to access and benefit from our combined forces.

Finally, the key to our achievements will always be driven by our people.

I would like to thank Donna Cossio our Office Manager. You not only perform an exceptional role in the managerial space, but you perform an exceptional role in meeting our accountability requirements via our DSS reporting portal.

To the whole team, thank you for your enthusiasm and dedication in assisting RelateWell in achieving its mission in supporting people to *Relate Well*. Without your efforts, the task would be a difficult one – for this I thank you.



Angela Damianopoulos

# OUR SERVICES

RelateWell, through its delivery of family and relationship support services, at the significant transition points of forming relationships, marrying, cohabiting, becoming parents, maturing in the couple relationship and separation, aims to strengthen relationships and support families through the provision of prevention and early intervention education and counselling services.

## WHAT WE DO

### Relationship and Marriage Education comprising:

- Premarital Courses - 'Let's Make It Work'
- Relationship and Marriage Courses - 'Let's Keep It Alive'
- PREPARE / ENRICH Relationship Inventory
- Understanding Cross-Cultural Relationships Seminars

### Individual and Couple Counselling:

- Relationship and Marriage Counselling
- Individual Counselling
- Cross-cultural / bi-cultural / Interfaith Relationship Counselling

### Parenting Education and Counselling comprising:

- Parent, Child and Family Counselling
- New Parent Groups
- Supported Playgroups
- PREPARE / ENRICH Parenting Inventory

### Perinatal Mental Health comprising:

- Perinatal Counselling

### Mental Health Psychological Support Services comprising:

- Mental Health Treatment Plans
- CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support Services (formerly Access to Allied Psychological Services)

### Therapeutic Supports under the NDIS:

- Mental Health Counselling Services

*'Our aim is to ensure that people leave our service with improved family and community engagement, a satisfaction with the service received, and a sense that the relationships within their family unit are functioning and Relating Well.'*

# SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## Funded Stream: Family and Relationship Services (FaRS)

### Relationship and Marriage Education Stream

#### 'Let's Make It Work' Program

Since 1978, RelateWell has been working with couples at the significant transition point of marrying. The organisation is a leader in the prevention and early intervention space in the area of marriage and relationship education.

What we know is that partners in healthy, fulfilling and committed relationships benefit in many aspects of their life, including improved personal, physical and mental health. Our *Let's Make It Work* premarital programs generally work with couples presently satisfied with their relationship. Through their participation, we put in place early processes to prevent relationship distress and breakdown through an emphasis on building the foundations for a positive and stable life together.

The fact that we are engaging couples early in the intervention cycle is significant as we are fostering a cultural mindset that healthy relationships involve more than meeting "the one". We are fostering a mindset that relationships take work.

Just like any other new skill you wish to acquire, relationships require knowledge, training and attentiveness. Developing the ability of effective relating skills is no different. Many people do not see the linkage of the two, that relationships are something that you need to develop skills for. It is easy to forget that *relating well* is no different than the development of other competencies. The time and willingness that partners spend in the early stages of their relationship learning from their experiences and interactions, the closer they will embrace the skills and competencies that good relationships require. This involves a replacing of old defensive habits with more effective practices that become more natural and easier as they transition in their relationship.

#### Challenges

- More work will need to be done to engage couples marrying in civil ceremonies given that civil celebrants have overseen the majority of marriages since 1999. Given this, the percentage of marriage ceremonies administered by a civil celebrant have once again increased to 74.9% of all marriages in 2015 (ABS, Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2015).
- Many groups, such as cohabiting couples, are not represented by relationship education programs. Incorporating relationship education into other programs such as prenatal classes, offers an opportunity to reach such an under-served target group.



#### PREPARE/ENRICH Relationships Inventory

The PREPARE/ENRICH Relationship Inventory helps couples identify important relationship dimensions, their strengths and the areas they would like to improve in their relationship.

The inventory report assists couples in:

- Identifying the strength and growth areas in their relationship
- Explore personality behaviours and traits
- Strengthen communication and conflict resolution skills
- Compare family backgrounds
- Discuss financial issues in a comfortable environment
- Put in place individual, couple and family goals

#### Our Professional Staff

Our premarital programs are run by tertiary qualified, experienced adult educators who are either psychologists, counsellors or lecturers, working in the field of couple relationships. They have a comprehensive understanding of evidence-based relationship theory and provide an interactive, insightful learning space for couples.

## **‘Let’s Keep It Alive’ Program:**

The ‘Let’s Keep It Alive’ program began in 1980 through the delivery of couples workshops at Mt Dandenong. Couples chose to either live-in or non-live-in over a weekend with an opportunity to communicate and spend time together developing their relationship. The workshop emphasised that the nature of a successful partnership required partners to take responsibility for meeting their own needs within their relationship.

Since then, the workshop has evolved into a one-day intensive workshop instilling a mindset that regular relationship “emotional well-being” check-ups are not a sign of trouble in one’s relationship rather a preventative measure which can actually improve it.

### **Evidence-based:**

The workshop is an evidence-based relationship enhancement program. It has been developed by our experienced team through application, research, knowledge and an awareness of couple relationships.

### **Workshop Outcomes:**

- Assess relationship strengths and vulnerabilities
- Express the relationship you want
- Develop and acquire essential relationship skills
- Identify acts to strengthen and grow your relationship

## **Two Cultures - One Relationship: How does your culture impact your relationship?**

Since 2012, RelateWell has been collaborating with PRONIA (formerly Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd) in the cross-cultural relationships space. Our partnership is significant because evidence shows that the implementation of culturally responsive prevention and early intervention service responses are critical to a person’s well-being and how they relate to others and their environment. Collaboratively, we are bringing to the fore an important issue in understanding cultural diversity in developing respectful and safe relationships which currently lacks investment in evidence-base and long-term following-up.

### **Program Logic:**

Cross-cultural couples have issues of difference based on their cultural backgrounds. These issues of difference can cause conflict especially when there is some level of resistance from the other party to incorporate a cultural element into their life. Sometimes it’s about ego, other times it is about loyalty to extended family. It can come from external pressures (family) or internal values.

### **Delivery Mode:**

- Group based information seminar (quarterly) which is activity based followed by discussion
- PREPARE/ENRICH Relationship Inventory of interfaith context
- Individual, couple and family counselling (counselling delivered from two outlets: RelateWell and Pronia).

*‘Focusing on our core capabilities, that is, what we do best in the areas of family and relationship support services, will guide our operational and strategic directions for the next five years.’*

### *Happy Parents - Positive Parenting and Relationships*



#### **Barriers to service provision:**

From our extensive work in the maternal and child health space, barriers to service provision are:

**Cost:** When parents on tight budgets have to pay for a babysitter to look after their child(ren) or gap fees for services or public transport to attend a service, the indirect costs can be excessive.

**Accessibility:** The mere inconvenience of not having a service logistically and conveniently within reach, impacts on a person's decision whether to engage in a service.

**Stigma:** Stigma is a barrier to mental health care. As a result, the prejudgement and discrimination of mental illness is as restrictive as the illness or issue itself.

**Lack of Child Care:** Many parents do not have the social networks in place to have their children looked after, which in turn, discourages attendance.

**Lack of confidence:** This factor is associated with financial hardship, poverty, cultural minority status, language and cultural difficulties and personal feelings of failure.

**Lack of trust of effectiveness of service being provided:** Our intermediate client outcome evaluations indicate that clients / participants are overstretched with daily commitments and that attendance at a service would take up precious time.

#### **Potential threat to mother and child(ren):**

Mothers who are victims of domestic violence and have young children are sometimes too frightened to seek services for concern of child removal. Due to their experience and vulnerable state, they may feel that there are few suitable services, if any, for young children exposed to domestic violence. Also, it is difficult to find a service that meets the needs of both the children and the adults.

#### **What we know:**

- As service providers, we face challenges in promoting early targeted interventions to increase people's participation in prevention and early intervention programs, services and engagement in community life, particularly when there are differing scales of socio-economic disadvantage, poor health and well-being, as evident in the municipality of Moreland.
- By wrapping services around people's needs and providing 'soft entry points' to engage them sooner rather than later, we are -
  - 1) making services accessible, affordable, non-threatening and inclusive; and
  - 2) motivating people to seek services or take advantage of services available to them at the prevention and early intervention point of service provision rather than at the tertiary end.



## Partnership with Moreland Maternal and Child Health Unit

Our partnership with Moreland's Maternal and Child Health Unit is instrumental to our service delivery model. Specifically, wrapping services around a person's needs is delivering a more integrated service to people thus strengthening existing infrastructure and allocation of resources and minimising duplication.

The fundamental reason why our collaboration is succeeding is because of our family-centred approach in working with families at the prevention and early intervention stage of service provision. Under the partnership, individuals referred via their maternal and child health nurse, have access to affordable individual and couples counselling at two locations, three times a week. Given the demand for the service, the new financial year will see another location added to the service stream as well as more days.

By focusing on the couple relationship, particularly at the significant transition point of becoming parents, we are encouraging people to obtain assistance NOW as it will work towards offsetting future problems.

When people find themselves at the tertiary end of intervention, our counselling services aim to soften the impact of an ongoing mental health issue, ongoing illness or family breakdown that has lasting effects. At this stage, the principle is to assist people to manage their often complex, long-term mental health and physical problems in order to improve as much as possible the quality of their lives and their ability to function in society.

Also, by providing targeted psychological support services to parents referred via our partnership, we are able to assist individuals presenting with or at risk of a perinatal mental health disorder.

### New Parent Groups: "Self Care" Module

Mental health conditions through pregnancy and early parenthood can affect any person, irrespective of family background. Perinatal anxiety and depression normally do not have one specific cause – something we can point towards as being the issue.



As part of our partnership with Moreland Maternal and Child Health, RelateWell presents a module at Moreland's New Parent Groups which are run by Maternal and Child Health Nurses. The module focuses on 'Taking Care of Self' during the significant transition point of parenthood.

### Partnership with Springvale Service for Children

Springvale Service for Children (SSC) is a multifaceted children's hub providing significant early childhood services to the culturally and linguistically diverse families of Springvale and neighbouring suburbs. Located in the City of Greater Dandenong, SCC provides early learning programs (long day-care and sessional), maternal and child health, playgroups and toy library. SSC plays a pivotal role in engaging families early in the lifecycle by promoting a "safe" and "non-stigmatised" means to early learning services and formal and informal support.

Our partnership with SSC is significant. It began in 2012 and continues to grow. From their premises, RelateWell provides outreach psychological and educational services in the areas of individual, couple and family counselling and parenting education. Collaboratively, our services and programs provide a universal platform for engaging families early in the intervention cycle, particularly in the areas of perinatal mental health and those families affected by, or at risk of, family violence.

*Caring for your personal, emotional and mental health since 1978*



RelateWell delivers both a funded and private counselling stream so that psychological services are within the financial reach of all members of the community.

### **FUNDED Counselling Stream (FaRS)**

Our funded counselling stream aims to support people in navigating life's challenges particularly at the significant transition points of relationship formation, extension and separation.

Our funded stream sees individuals and couples presenting with:

- Relationship, marriage and family issues
- Separation or divorce
- Anger management
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Perinatal mental health
- Parenting issues
- Family conflict and family dispute issues
- Cross-cultural & bi-cultural issues
- Interpersonal issues
- Self-esteem & developmental Issues
- Sexuality and sexual identity
- Grief & Loss
- Abuse & violence in relationships
- Stress management
- Life Transitions & Adjustment Issues
- Career Guidance

The funded counselling stream is delivered from three outreach locations:

RelateWell Centre, Coburg  
Brunswick Maternal & Child Health Centre  
Springvale Service for Children

### **PRIVATE Counselling Stream**

Our private counselling stream provides support services to clients that are self-referred, presenting with Mental Health Care Treatment Plans and via CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support Services (formerly known as Access to Allied Psychological Services).

#### **Mental Health Care Treatment Plans**

As part of an allied health team, our psychologists assist general practitioners 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. For the period 2016/2017, 67 referrals were received from different general practices throughout North Western Melbourne.

#### **CAREinMIND**

RelateWell is contracted by North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHIN) to deliver CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support Services to North Western Melbourne. Since January 2017, seven different general practices have been referring patients to our service under this stream.

#### **Collaboration Key to Service Stream:**

Our private counselling stream enables our organisation to work collaboratively with General Practitioners and other allied health professionals in assisting patients presenting with mental disorders with a structured approach using GP Mental Health Treatment Items or CAREinMIND Targeted Psychological Support Services.

## SERVICE LOCATIONS

### Relationship, Marriage and Parenting Education

#### **Burgess Family Centre**

15 Barwon Street  
Box Hill North

#### **Bentleigh Bayside Community Health**

Gardeners Road  
Bentleigh East

#### **RelateWell Centre (Head Office)**

Suite 102, 398 Sydney Road  
Coburg

#### **Springvale Service for Children**

23-28 Lightwood Road  
Springvale

### **New Parent Groups:**

Various Maternal & Child Health Centres  
throughout the Moreland Municipality

### **Counselling Services**

#### **Brunswick West Maternal & Child Health Centre**

482 Victoria Street  
Brunswick West

#### **RelateWell Centre (Head Office)**

Suite 102, 398 Sydney Road  
Coburg

#### **Springvale Service for Children**

23-28 Lightwood Road  
Springvale



## OUR PERFORMANCE IN 2016/2017

**1041** unique clients supported in 2016/2017

**2110** client sessions in 2016/2017

**37%** increase in overall client engagement

### Breakdown of unique client data for 2016/2017:

#### Family and Relationship Services (FaRS) Stream

848 unique clients

1641 client sessions

#### Private Counselling Stream

193 unique clients

469 client sessions

*Our objective to increase overall services by 20% by 30 June 2017 has seen a proactive approach to streamlining our operations to better invest in our core capabilities and boost profitability 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.'*

## **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

### **PRESIDENT**

Denis O'Donnell

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Luciana Martini

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

Kerrie Dawes

Jen Lawrie-Smith

Stavros Sakellaris

Russell Williams

### **HONORARY MEMBERS**

Don Burnard

Dr Ron Fitzgerald

## **MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **Executive Director**

Angela Damianopoulos

### **Office Manager**

Donna Cossio

## **OUR PARTNERS**

RelateWell would like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) for their ongoing support and all those organisations that have worked in partnership with us to reach our mission over 2016/2017:

Cairnmillar

Employsure

Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA)

Milkyway Multimedia

Moreland Maternal & Child Health Unit

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN)

PRONIA (formerly Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd)

Springvale Service for Children

## **OUR TEAM**

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

### **Independence**

In conducting my audit, I have complied with the independence requirements of the Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

### **Auditor's Opinion**

In my opinion, the financial report of Family Relationships Institute Inc. has been prepared in accordance with the *Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012* including:-

- a) Giving a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2017 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- b) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards as referred to in Note 1 to the financial statements.

### **Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution**

Without modifying my opinion, I draw attention to the notes to the financial statements, which describe the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the committee's financial reporting requirements under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012*, and where appropriate the Department of Social Services.



**Haines Muir Hill**  
**Chartered Accountant**  
**Level 1, 888 Doncaster Road**  
**DONCASTER EAST VIC 3109**



**Kristian Lunardello**  
**Partner**

Dated this 21 day of November 2017.