



## Using art to give family violence victims a voice

**For victims of family violence, the impact of trauma can make it incredibly difficult to verbalise thoughts.**

Strong feelings of shame, humiliation, guilt and fear around speaking of the abuse can make it even more difficult for them to receive the support and direction they really need.

Women often arrive at Kara House with very little, having fled their home, job, family and community. It is an incredibly isolating and stressful time. Talking about trauma and engaging with trained specialists during the initial crisis is an incredibly important part of their road to recovery.

In 2018, we introduced the Art Therapy Program to help our clients during this time. Each fortnight, clients at the refuge participate in a two hour session where they are taken through a specifically designed artistic exercise. The program is facilitated by an

accredited Art Therapist and a Kara House Specialist Family Violence Practitioner.

The art therapy provides an empowering outlet to process feelings and thoughts, by allowing them to express themselves through art rather than verbal language. Clients can make sense of frightful memories and find their way through the chaos and raw emotion of abuse.

Most importantly, art therapy provides opportunities for discussion and engagement, allowing Kara House to help the women create strategies for a better future for themselves and their children.

Art therapy has been identified as a therapeutic response appropriate for women and children of all ages impacted by the trauma of family violence. We have had great feedback from the participants, and we believe initiatives like the Art Therapy Program greatly improve the long term outcome of the women and children we work with.



### Welcome

We are very proud to continue to offer Kara House initiatives like art therapy and specialist early intervention programs which are having a huge impact on the long term outcomes of the women and children we work with. We are incredibly thankful to donors like June Andrews, The Rotary Club Box Hill and the Zonta Club of Melbourne's East whose support allows us to provide industry leading services to women and children.

Catherine Lockstone  
CHAIR  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



# Support for high risk family violence victims on temporary visas

Veronica Coleman MANAGER – KARA HOUSE

**Experienced workers in the Specialist family violence sector know that family violence is prevalent in all areas of society. Some groups of women however are at higher risk.**

Each year Kara House provides support to a number of women from culturally diverse communities who come to Australia on temporary visas.

**“All people deserve to be safe and secure in their homes and to be adequately supported if they experience violence.”**

FAMILY SAFETY VICTORIA

Women come to Australia for various reasons including marriage, study, accompanying family, as tourists or refugees. All of these women come with the hope of a better life, but unfortunately, they are particularly vulnerable to experiencing family violence. This is due in part to

their lack of English language skills, unfamiliarity with the laws and supports available in Australia and social isolation.

In addition, some of these women are on temporary visas and their visa conditions limit their access to assistance such as Centrelink benefits, childcare, public housing and medical. Added to this, the process of seeking a change to their visa status and applying for residency is often lengthy and can take months. In the meantime, not only are these women experiencing significant stress, they also create challenges for service providers, as they usually have high needs and due to their income status, their support comes at a cost.

In 2018 the DHHS responded to this issue by providing services with funds to assist with the costs of accommodating women on temporary visas. The funding was welcomed by Kara House as it allows us the flexibility to financially provide for this group and provide intensive support determined by their needs determine.



## 5 QUICK BITES

### 1. So far this year we have handed out 50 new linen packs

Each pack includes linen, pillows and a doona which clients use while in refuge. When they move onto more stable accommodation they take the packs with them. It's a great start when setting up a home from scratch. (Family of 3 means 3 packs!)

### 2. 89% of our clients have experienced family violence before

Sadly, most of our clients have experienced some form of violence in their lives before coming to Kara House.

### 3. Every week we visit families staying in motels around Melbourne

Each week women and their children wait in motels for a room to become available in a Victorian refuge. We provide emotional support and essential items like toiletries, clothing, mobile phones and food vouchers.

### 4. Family violence can come in many forms like emotional abuse

Emotional abuse such as making threats, humiliation, privately and publicly, isolation from family, friends and social contacts can be just as painful as physical abuse.

### 5. We work with members of the LGBTI community experiencing domestic violence

We have specialist understanding of the complexities and offer the services specifically for the LGBTI community.

[Go online to find out more about what Kara House does >](#)



## How our early intervention programs for children helped Ajmal\*

Lilah was assisted by Kara House to have her son Ajmal aged 3, returned to her after her husband had her removed from their home. Ajmal had not spent a night away from his mother before so when he came into refuge, he clung to his mother and would cry if any other worker or resident came near him. At the refuge, Kara House provided Ajmal and his mother a range of books and toys to promote play and attachment between Ajmal and his mother.

Ajmal had experienced physical abuse and was displaying symptoms of trauma, including going back to wearing nappies when he used to be toilet trained. He also stopped using words and reverted to making noises to indicate his needs, he was out of his normal routine and had lost his appetite.

Ajmal had regular sessions with the Children's Worker where they would discuss routine and how to create a calm safe environment in order to reduce the impact of trauma on his developing brain. Kara House also linked Ajmal and his mother in with the Mother Goose program which promotes storytelling, eye-contact and singing between mothers and children up to the age of five.

**Kara House works with almost 200 children like Ajmal each year and 100% of them have experienced family violence**

Ajmal responded well to this approach and began to explore the refuge environment. He enjoyed playing in the cubby house in the refuge playground and liked to be outdoors. In the cooler weather, he enjoyed snuggling up with his mother on the couch reading books or playing with the other children in the shared playroom.

Ajmal was linked in with other services to assist his mother with parenting skills and he continues to be supported by Kara House in medium term accommodation today. He is attending childcare and loves to play with other children. He is ahead with his literacy skills and continues to have a strong bond with his mother. Ajmal no longer cries when workers come over to see the family, instead he runs up to give them a hug.

\*Name changed



DONOR STORY  
JUNE ANDREWS

### One of our favorites shows us all how to live life

June Andrews has been part of Kara House for more years than we can count. She has been arriving with boot loads of clothing, household goods, knitted items, fluffy bears and pretty much anything she thought a young family might need.

With the support of her church 'Doncaster Church of Christ', her ongoing donations have made a huge difference to the lives of the women and children by providing essential items to get them on the road to recovery.

June says she was stunned when she found out how many refuges there were in Victoria and immediately felt the need to help. When her son was just 5 months old she was widowed, leaving her to raise her children by herself, and this gives her a special understanding of the difficulties of being a single mother. Fourteen years later her second husband Gordon came into the picture and they made a very happy life together helping others.

For 40 years, June has volunteered as a chaplain and providing pastoral care to patients at the Epworth Hospital. Part of this work included making sure that every child in the hospital received a gift on Monday mornings to make their stay just a little bit better.

Volunteering, fundraising and providing support have always been a part of her life. We are very grateful to have June on our side and her years of support have really improved the long-term outcomes of the women and children we work with. *Thank you June from everyone at Kara House.*

# Now and next

Catherine Lockstone CHAIR – MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Help from our community this year has allowed us to make significant improvements to the refuge. The Rotary Club of Box Hill generously donated a new fridge for the bedsit to replace the current bar fridge. We often house a woman and up to three children in the bedsit, and this new fridge gives the family the ability to plan and prepare for meals. Ongoing support from DHHS and our generous donors have enabled us to refresh the furniture and fittings in the refuge this May. The lounge room and kids playroom are both now looking great and the positive reaction from our clients has been wonderful. It's important to provide the best possible environment for our clients, to help them feel secure and respected.

The new development, with the Department is still at an early stage, and I will keep you advised on its progress over the next year. Plans for the site are being drawn up and agreed, and it's an exciting time for Kara House.

Art therapy in the refuge has been a therapeutic and relaxing outlet for the women and children, and with our donors support we hope to continue offering this throughout 2020. Other items that our clients seem to really appreciate are things like **vouchers, excursion packs** (e.g. family movie tickets and snack food vouchers), and personal care items.

We continue to keep the refuge in good condition, again thanks to the time and dedication of our donors and volunteers. On our list upcoming is a **new kitchen floor** – the old vinyl floor is wearing thin so we are going to look to replace it. **Refreshing the picnic table** in the backyard is a planned project as well – it needs sanding and re-oiling. We have lots of books and games for the children in refuge, but are low on **good books for our women**. New and second-hand books in good condition would be welcomed.

I thank everyone involved with Kara House – our staff, our donors, our supporters – for all the work to get us to this place today. The remainder of 2019 and 2020 promise to be huge for Kara House and we appreciated the support and care of all involved in the journey.



## Thank you for your kindness

We'd like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support, kindness and generosity.



- Lincoln Sentry
- Wavelery Day View club
- Ferntree Gully View Club
- Doncaster View Club
- Generic Health Pharmaceuticals
- Stephen Crosby
- June Andrews
- Sally Feeney
- Reece
- Department of Justice
- Angela Forthum
- Knitting for the Needy
- Nino Early Learning Centre

### Interested in finding out more?

Please contact **Ruby Lampard – Development Officer** Email [ruby.l@karahouse.org.au](mailto:ruby.l@karahouse.org.au) or phone **1800 900 520**



Health and Human Services

We would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services who provide our operational funding under the Funding and Service Agreement and to the staff in the Eastern Region who have assisted with their donation collections and ongoing support.

Kara House is a child safe and child focused organisation.

Kara House respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land we work on and pay respect to their Elders past, present and future generations.

