



Newsletter October 2022



Kara
family violence service

We are settling in with the kind support of the community

Welcome to our newsletter

The Kara FVS team have settled into our new crisis accommodation and welcomed clients; their response has been overwhelmingly positive. The setup and establishment brought us unexpected challenges, but we finalised furnishings and completed our move in May. Once again, we'd like to acknowledge the **Victorian Government** for their ongoing funding and support.

We are now up and running as a 24/7 responsive services. We have taken on 5 new staff members comprising of a Child and Youth Practitioner, Housing Support Worker and three Support Workers who provide our overnight response. We also welcomed our first pets to our new location; another important service that makes the decision around leaving an abusive situation much easier.

In this edition you will read an article by our Board Member **Geraldine Bilston**. Geraldine is a victim-survivor and provides our Board with valuable skills and knowledge. Her insights and experience inform how we put in place appropriate responses for our clients. In her article, Geraldine talks about the recent advances in victim-survivors access to justice.

In May, the **Rotary Clubs of Monash and Mount Waverley** facilitated a belated International Women's Day Breakfast and selected Kara FVS to be the recipient of all funds raised on the day. These funds will be used to establish an outdoor meeting space for clients. In this newsletter you will also read about our new Culturally Appropriate Kitchen Pack Program established with the help of a **District Rotary Centenary Grant**, we will now be able to provide clients with kitchen packs that respond to their individual needs.

The rest of 2022 will be a busy and exciting time as we establish a new rhythm at our new crisis accommodation and continue to provide safety and support for those impacted by family violence.

Catherine Lockstone
Chair – Kara Family Violence Service Board





Better access to justice for victim-survivors

Geraldine Bilston, victim-survivor of intimate partner violence and Kara FVS board member, shares her reflections on recent advancements in victim-survivors' access to justice.

In August, affirmative consent laws were passed in state parliament in Victoria. This significant reform propels the rights of victims of sexual violence. Reflecting our experiences in legislation is a sign of respect, and this change provides an essential step forward in our society shifting the scrutiny of behaviours from victims to perpetrators.

Affirmative consent means consent can no longer be presumed, it must be actively sought, and it must be clear and enthusiastic. This change also means that consent can be withdrawn and cannot be given freely if in fear or threat of family violence.

For many victim-survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault intersects with their perpetrator's other controlling and violent behaviours.

Sexual coercion occurs when a person is threatened, tricked, forced, or pressured into unwanted sexual activity. Sexual coercion is a prominent feature of long-term abusive relationships, providing perpetrators a way to continue to cause fear and erode their victim's sense of self. There cannot be consent where there is coercion, and severe harm occurs when psychological abuse intersects with a person's sexual autonomy.

Our understanding of family violence, and coercive and controlling behaviours, must include how sexual assault and sexual coercion can form part of a pattern of abuse used by perpetrators to abuse, violate and control their victims.

I am proud to have been part of the National Coercive Control Advisory group. The group contributed to the development of national principles to address coercive control. There are 8 draft principles that focus on:

- > **Common features and impacts of coercive control**
- > **Community understanding of coercive control**
- > **Effects of discrimination and inequality**

- > **Listening to and working with victim-survivors of family and domestic violence**
- > **Coordinated approaches to addressing coercive control**
- > **Criminalisation of coercive control, including any potential unintended consequences.**

You can contribute to a shared national understanding of coercive control by providing your feedback on the consultation draft of the national principles to address coercive control. The consultation process closes on Friday 11th November 2022.

To access the draft National Principles and respond to the survey, visit:
<https://consultations.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/coercive-control/>

"Sexual coercion is a prominent feature of long-term abusive relationships, providing perpetrators a way to continue to cause fear and erode their victim's sense of self."

The Rotary International Women's Day Breakfast

After facing the early challenges of 2022 the Women in Rotary belated International Women's Day Breakfast was finally able to go ahead on May 11

This yearly event is an opportunity for the **Rotary Clubs of Monash** and **Mount Waverley** to celebrate and advocate for women now and in the future with a morning of insightful presentations and networking opportunities.

This year's theme was **#breakthebias** which is a call-to-action to individually and collectively forge a world that is free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. The event focused on how we can break gender bias in leadership roles.

Speakers included **Peta Searle OAM** the first female coach in the AFL and **Dr. Tamara Kwarteng** the current chair of Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. Our own Board member **Dr Angela Spinney** spoke of the work of Kara Family Violence Service and our new crisis accommodation located in the city of Monash.

We were incredibly honored to be chosen as the recipient of donations raised on the morning. The donation was presented to our Manager Veronica Coleman at the Rotary Club of Mount Waverley Club meeting. The funds raised will be used fit out the outside meeting space at our new location with BBQ, vegetable garden and seating. Bunnings Notting Hill also came on board and donated a large umbrella. The space will provide a welcoming area for clients to meet and enjoy each others company.

Thank you to the **Women in Rotary** organising committee including Kehela Vandenberg and Nicole Osner for creating such a valuable event which champions the success of women and advocates for societal change. We'd also like to thank the speakers who donated their time and the sponsor for supporting this wonderful event. Thank you again to the **Rotary Clubs of Monash** and **Mount Waverley**. We look forward to sharing images of the meeting space when its fitted out.



IWD organising committee, speakers, sponsors and Rotary representatives



IWD Breakfast guests



The Rotary Club of Mount Waverley handover a cheque to Veronica Coleman from Kara FVS

Culturally appropriate kitchen packs

We are excited to be the recipients of a DISTRICT ROTARY CENTENARY GRANT celebrating 100 years of Rotary. The grant has enabled us to finally get our Culturally Appropriate Kitchen Pack Program up and running.

Last year Kara Family Violence Service worked with clients from 46 different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In the initial days of crisis, we encourage our clients to develop routines as quickly as possible and many of these routines are underpinned by existing habits and rituals specific to their cultural heritage. Our current kitchen packs did not reflect the everyday needs of our diverse client base and we developed a project to provide this cohort with the appropriate tools to cook their different cultural foods.

In consultation with our clients and cultural representatives, we identified four regions which cover the majority of the cultural backgrounds of our clients and selected items that broadly reflect the needs of each region.

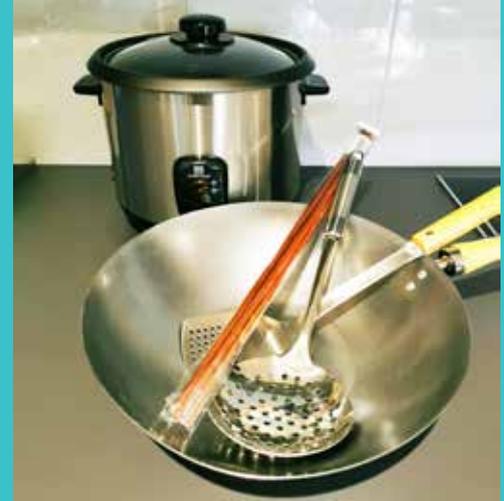
A **District Rotary Centenary Grant** has enabled us to get the project up and running. These packs are offered to families who come into our crisis accommodation and clients supported in transitional accommodation.

The grant will provide 30-35 packs to clients like Ashaki*: Ashaki* was presented with her Cultural Cooking Pack when she came into refuge. Ashaki said she felt like she was receiving a beautiful birthday present. She said it was lovely to make coffee in her own Ibrik. She expressed her gratitude in receiving her own prayer mat and Quran. Many thanks to the people who are helping her.

A huge thank you to **Rotary District 9810** and Anne Teese from **Rotary Club of Mont Albert & Surrey Hills** for assisting us with the grant. Feeling safe and stable is incredibly important in helping our client's regain their self confidence. The Culturally Appropriate Kitchen Packs will make a significant impact in assisting our clients on their road to recovery.



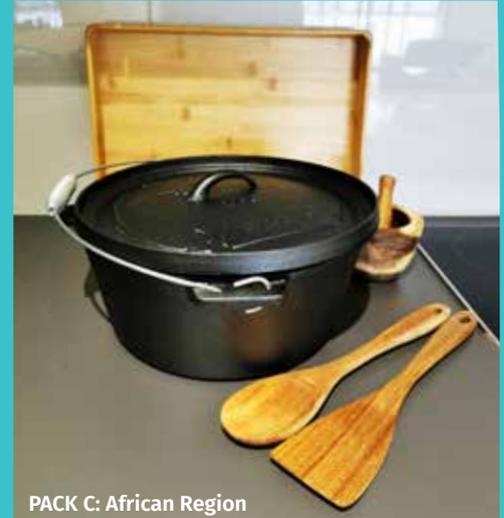
Anne Teese from Rotary MASH presenting the kitchen packs



PACK A: East Asia



PACK B: South Asia



PACK C: African Region



PACK D: Middle East

Wellbeing via creativity



Adult activity:
Gratitude Jars

We've kicked off our Wellbeing Activity Program in the crisis accommodation with activities for adults, youth and children. The program is specifically designed by one of our Specialist Family Violence Practitioner to engage, stimulate conversation and promote wellbeing. Each week we offer a schedule of activities that respond to the types of client currently staying. Here are some examples of activities in the program.

GRATITUDE JARS: The participants create a personalised gratitude jar, write down 3 things they are grateful for and then place them inside. It's an opportunity to concentrate on what is positive in their lives, explore feelings and connect with our practitioners.

DONUT DECORATING: It's a fun activity for the littler ones in which they decorate pre-made donuts with sprinkles, lollies and icing. Refuge can be isolating and the activity gives the children some time out to have fun and meet other children.



Children's
activity:
Donut decorating

A welcoming pantry of food

No matter what time of day new clients arrive, the pantry in their unit will be stocked with basics to prepare a meal straight away. We also have on hand frozen meals, bread and milk so clients can relax and settle into the safety of their units rather than heading out to the supermarket.

For more years than we can remember, the **Halal Foodbank** have donated unlimited food packs for every client that arrives. The well thought out packs contain items that combine for basic meals and also respond to the spiritual and cultural needs of some clients. The Halal boxes really help make the first few days a lot easier for our clients.



Working more closely with our younger clients

Our new dedicated Child and Youth Practitioner will expand the ways we respond to children impacted by family violence

Research shows that children and young people need to grow up in a secure and nurturing environment. When children are exposed to family violence their sense of security is adversely impacted and they may be afraid for their future and the people they love. Whatever their level of exposure, family violence is a traumatic experience for children and can have long term effects on their physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

Kara Family Violence Service provides crisis accommodation and support to women who have experienced family violence but also to their accompanying children. All Kara FVS Specialist Family Violence Practitioners have training and skill in working with children but the move to our new crisis accommodation presented the ideal opportunity to expand this support and employ a dedicated Child and Youth Practitioner.

The Child and Youth Practitioner works alongside the Specialist Family Violence Practitioners but with a dedicated focus on the individual child's needs. The process of assessing these needs commences at the point of referral and before the child comes into crisis accommodation.

The role of the specialist family violence practitioners is to conduct safety, risk and needs assessments based on the initial referral and conversations with the mother. When the child comes into crisis accommodation the Child and Youth Practitioner will introduce herself to the child and talk directly to them about their wants and needs and conduct a formal developmental and needs assessment with the child and mother depending on the child's age or capability. This assessment will assist the Child and Youth Practitioner and specialist family violence practitioner to prioritise and coordinate referrals and actions.

Regularly during their stay in crisis accommodation, the Child and Youth Practitioner will meet with the child, check-in on their needs and wellbeing and conduct structured activities as well as finding opportunities for informal connection. Play is the primary method used to engage children and young people.

Through various play-based activities, the Child and Youth Practitioner builds trust and rapport with young people whilst conducting intentional conversations that lead to a greater understanding of the challenges, strengths and needs of the children and their families. The Child and Youth Practitioner uses child-friendly case plans and safety plans as well as linkages to external and ongoing educational and health and wellbeing support services to establish safety and support.

Kara FVS is confident that as a result of the involvement of the Child and Youth Practitioner, children will feel seen and heard as victim-survivors in their own right and both mothers and children will feel increased empowerment and confidence in stepping forward into safety and healthy family relationships.

To find out more about our service call 03 9899 5666 or email support@karaFVS.org.au



Imaginative play: Building a village to start discussion about family and community

Team profile: Charlotte

Charlotte – Specialist Family Violence Practitioner

Q: Explain your background and qualifications and how you achieved them?

I completed a Bachelor of Human Services and Master of Social Work at Latrobe University in 2019. I pursued Social work as I have a passion for social justice, empowerment and self-determination. This was sparked after completing some volunteer work in the community providing a youth program and assisting young people to access necessary supports.

Q: What made you decide to pursue a career in family violence?

I completed my final placement for my studies at another family violence service in the Eastern Suburbs, I thoroughly enjoyed this placement opportunity and felt the need in the community for family violence support and intervention. It was this placement which sparked an interest in continuing to pursue a role in a family violence service to support women and children experiencing and recovering from family violence. I decided to pursue a role with a refuge provider to continue to expand my knowledge of and experience within the family violence service system.

Q: How does Kara FVS specifically work with victims of family violence?

Kara FVS provide support to victim/survivors of family violence in a number of ways, specifically Kara FVS works with women to identify their goals and needs and provide information, advocacy and support to achieve these goals.

Q: What's the favourite part of your role?

I enjoy that each day in the role is different. I enjoy supporting women to make informed choices about their risk and safety and empowering them to achieve their goals. I enjoy being part of the process for a woman to leave and recover from family violence and be more informed of their rights and how they deserve to be treated.

Q: A bit about yourself – how do you wind down after a long day at work?

More recently, I have discovered my love for reading again, so lately I can be often found winding down with a book in hand. However, I also am quite a social person filling my nights and weekends with events and activities. I enjoy exploring outdoors and travelling, although often can't do this after a day at work, the photo above is from one of my favourite places I have explored.

Thanks to our donors

We'd like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support and generosity:

- **James Maurer**
- **Stephen Crosby**
- **Drew Flowers**
- **Andrea Dillion**
- **Bethany Whitcher**
- **Lauren Walhuter**
- **Judith Eadon**
- **Sheridan/Streetsmart**

Special thanks to the Ferntree Gully View Club



Every month the members of the Ferntree Gully View Club collect donations for our clients. They put together much needed cleaning packs, as well as toiletries, toys, clothing and books. Thank you to Elaine, Shirley and members for their ongoing help and kindness. Thanks!

For more information about the services we provide:

T: 03 9899 5666

E: admin@karaFVS.org.au

W: www.karaFVS.org.au

Kara House Inc. ABN: 20 305 734



We would like to thank the Victorian Government 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 Family Violence Service is a child safe and child focused organisation.



In the spirit of reconciliation Kara Family Violence Service acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Kara

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