



*Our connections. Our lifeline.*

*Relationships Australia*  
QUEENSLAND

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

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1300 364 277





# Chair's foreword



*Supporting clients when they most needed us*

It is a great pleasure to present this report to all the people who contribute to Relationships Australia Queensland's (RAQ) ongoing success.

As Chair of the Board of RAQ, I would first like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners on whose countries we live and operate. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and pay tribute to their enduring stewardship of this country.

I would also like to acknowledge Helen Poropat's service as Chair for the last three years and Board member for another five years, during which time she has given dedicated and committed service to RAQ. Helen will be retiring at the 2020 Annual General Meeting and we wish her well and offer our thanks for her contribution. I would also like to recognise and sincerely thank Professor Analise O'Donovan for her contribution to the Board following her retirement at the 2019 Annual General Meeting.

As reported last year, we began a major Business Transformation project in late 2019. Fortunately, this meant that when COVID-19 hit in early March, we were well positioned to adjust our service delivery models to maintain operations.

The Board is extremely grateful to all staff for the tremendous efforts made to ensure that we were able to continue supporting clients when they most needed us.

We were particularly pleased that continuity of employment could be maintained during this difficult time. As an organisation, we have learned numerous lessons from the pandemic concerning our ability to respond quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances.

Many of the innovations introduced this year will become our standard ways of operating as we return to 'normal' and hold ourselves in readiness for the possibility of future large-scale dislocations such as this.

The Business Transformation project will continue to create new ways of working that will contribute to our ongoing effectiveness in providing our enormous range of services. One of the key items the Board seeks to review regularly concerns the impact of RAQ's programs and the outcomes achieved for clients. The Board is pleased to note that our client satisfaction rating increased during the COVID-19 period, along with our calls answered and reduced wait times.

As you will note in the financial section of this report, we have operated this past year at a deficit. This was a conscious decision by the Board and Management to allow us to make some large-scale investments in people and technology. We have used some of our reserves to do this work and anticipate that we will be able to return to operating with modest surpluses in the next couple of years.

We are an organisation that seeks to consciously uphold the values of Client Focus, Social Justice, Healthy Respectful Relationships, Accountability, Integrity, Respect, Professionalism and Reconciliation. Many examples of these values in action are presented in this report.

The last several years have been a time of great change for RAQ. The Board is grateful to Dr Ian Law as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for his continuing leadership of the organisation as these changes have taken place and continue to evolve. Ian also has continued to serve as Chairman of Relationships Australia at a national level, and we thank him for taking on that responsibility while maintaining a heavy workload at RAQ.

We cannot know what opportunities and challenges await us in the coming year. However, based on last year's performance, we are well positioned to meet whatever the next year brings. Such a position requires careful planning and forecasting, combined with the ability to quickly adapt as circumstances change.

Thank you for your support last year. I look forward to another year of working with all the people who make RAQ such a great organisation.

**Ian Sampson**

*Chair – Relationships Australia Queensland Board*





# CEO's year in review

## Welcome to our 2019/20 Annual Report

The past 12 months have been immensely challenging for Australia, with the devastating January bushfires and COVID-19 impacting individuals, families and communities all over the country.

The bushfires were described as a 'wake-up call for the world' due to the overwhelming scope of the crisis, and the increasing severity and frequency of natural disasters. This event emphasised the need for community connectedness that strengthens and builds capacity to both resist and recover.

With the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have entered an era that makes no sense to think of in a financial or calendar year, or an annual report cycle. We don't know how long this will last or how large the impact will be, but we will eventually be able to look back and reflect on this time as we've done throughout history.

Never has our mission been more important. Relationships and community connections are a lifeline during challenging times. We know from research that the strength of these connections mitigates negative physical and mental health outcomes, and combats the public health issues of social isolation and loneliness.

In response to the extraordinary circumstances our organisation was facing externally, in March 2020 we moved our operations and most of our workforce to remote working to ensure we could keep staff safe and offer uninterrupted services to our clients.

This significant undertaking – delivered in a matter of days – has only been possible thanks to our recent investment in a Business Transformation program, which leverages technology to enhance outcomes for clients and staff.

I'm pleased to report that throughout this period, our people have rallied and worked harder than ever before, allowing us to achieve great productivity during a time of great need. The answer rate for our telephone support increased by 20%, while wait times, call times and after-call work all decreased significantly. Telephone counselling productivity also increased thanks to a reduction in client non-attendance.

Looking ahead, we need to stay close to our 12-month plan to maintain service delivery capacity, fast track our ongoing Business Transformation, and avoid a reactive response to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

I would like to recognise our front-line staff for their adaptability and resilience during the past 12 months. Collectively, we have been able to maintain service delivery to our clients when they've needed us most.

I would also like to thank our Regional Managers who have worked tirelessly to move operations to working from home, and subsequently managed the controlled and gradual return to face-to-face services where safe to do so.

Our Head Office Support Services have engaged in an incredible amount of work behind the scenes to keep the organisation running. Our Executive and Senior Management team have also shown great leadership in adversity.

Importantly, our Board has overseen our strategy, asked challenging questions, and given sound advice throughout this time. I would like to acknowledge our Chair, Ian Sampson, who has been constantly available to support me through each step we take as an organisation.

Finally, I acknowledge our State and Federal funders who have shown great understanding and flexibility as we shape ourselves to community need, rather than the constraints of a contract.

Please look after yourselves and your friendships and family relationships. Our relationships truly are our lifeline.

**Dr Ian Law**

*CEO Relationships Australia, Queensland*





# Owl impact

*Achieving remarkable outcomes for clients*

## Collaboration is key for culturally appropriate dispute resolution outcomes

Three years of hard work has led to some amazing achievements for RAQ staff delivering Legally Assisted and Culturally Appropriate Family Dispute Resolution (LACA-FDR).

The program, funded as a pilot for three years in 2017, provided a legally assisted FDR model to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people who are experiencing family violence.

Our Family Relationship Centre in Upper Mount Gravatt was one of only eight pilot sites across Australia chosen to deliver the service.

Across the three years, our team held 1,750 sessions with 134 vulnerable families to help them navigate difficult, and high-conflict situations.

Due to the complex nature of cases that require LACA-FDR, practitioners focus more on case management, with each client receiving 13.1 sessions on average compared to the 4.1 sessions of a standard family dispute resolution.

This approach, combined with the hard work of the Mount Gravatt team, led to some excellent results for clients, including a 75% improvement in child wellbeing, a 70% improvement in personal safety, and a 67% improvement in mental health.

"I'm so proud of the team," said Lea-Anne Meehan, Brisbane's Regional Manager and the original program manager of LACA-FDR.

She said their willingness to collaborate and adhere to cultural protocols, such as ensuring a First Nations-led approach when dealing with First Nations clients, led to better outcomes.

"Through reflection, collaboration and learning, our staff have been able to provide individualised responses to complex clients who would have never been able to access mediation without this program."

Strong relationships with other organisations also played a key role in the program's success, with 16 of these organisations referring clients into LACA-FDR.

"Everyone working on this project brought their own wisdom and knowledge to the table so we could all work together to design and support the service delivery."

These relationships were also used by staff to recommend early legal assistance for cases that were not going to progress to FDR, circumventing a drawn-out litigation process.

"Everyone involved has worked to support, engage and educate families," said Lea-Anne.

"With our help they've managed to establish agreements, see children they haven't seen for often significant amounts of time, and most importantly, avoid having to take their issues to the family court."

*"With our help families have managed to establish agreements, see children they haven't seen for often significant amounts of time, and most importantly, avoid having to take their issues to the family court."*

*Lea-Anne Meehan, Brisbane Regional Manager*

## Virtual Services soar through adversity

As the first point of connection for clients, our Virtual Services staff have some of the most challenging jobs.

Our communities have faced significant and complex events during 2020, starting in January with devastating bushfires across Australia.

Just when it seemed like things had stabilised, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent public health restrictions meant RAQ was forced to move an entire call centre from a centralised location to remote working within just days.

Our Virtual Services team rallied to achieve some amazing results, overcoming both unprecedented call volumes and the task of transitioning to working from home, without disrupting service provision.

The team of 110 staff worked incredibly hard, achieving some remarkable outcomes for clients, many of whom needed emergency legal advice in the aftermath of Family Court closures. Despite increasing demand for support, the number of calls answered increased from 65% in January to over 80% consistently in June – so our team was able to reach and assist more people in need.

Additionally, wait times, call times, and after-call work all saw significant decreases, demonstrating that the team had truly mobilised and enhanced productivity levels for the benefit of clients.

*"Whenever I call to speak with you, you're so kind and your voices are soothing. I've felt so bullied this week, and it's really nice to call a service you know won't do that."* RAQ Client

Clients were over the moon about the approachability and availability of Virtual Services staff, with client satisfaction reaching an impressive 97.5% during the COVID-19 period, the highest number ever recorded for the organisation.

"Overwhelmingly, I heard how callers felt they were cared for at a very difficult and confusing time and this made a huge difference to their day," said Practice Manager Katrina Martinez.

Many clients reached out to compliment our Relationships Australia Queensland phone line, Family Relationships Advice Line (FRAL) and Telephone Dispute Resolution Service (TDRS) staff for their empathy and professionalism.

"Whenever I call to speak with you, you're so kind and your voices are soothing," one client said.

"I've felt so bullied this week and it's really nice to call a service you know won't do that."

Not only have our teams been forging strong connections with clients, but also with each other, using digital collaboration and communication tool, Workplace, to keep team morale high by sharing feedback, jokes and shout-outs.

"I'm so proud of the way the team has stayed supportive and connected through such a rough year. Truly the amount of effort put in week-on-week is mind blowing," said Joshua Ellis, Head of Virtual Services.





### RAQ Ipswich reaches out through the Murri Court

The staff at RAQ Ipswich have spent this year forming new connections with vulnerable clients through the recently reopened Murri Court.

The Murri Court is one of a few specialised courts throughout Queensland and was created to specifically work with First Nations people in a culturally appropriate way.

As part of sentencing at a Murri Court, the offender is often referred to various support services that address underlying contributors to their offending.

This was an opportunity for RAQ to take a proactive role in supporting First Nations people facing a range of challenges. South West Regional Manager Helen Poynten said the Ipswich team wanted to make it as easy as possible for vulnerable people to get the support they needed and forge these connections in a culturally sensitive way.

“Many First Nations people have trouble knocking on mainstream doors for help, so we wanted to make an effort to go to where they might be to reduce the barriers to getting help,” Helen said.

Ipswich Team Leader Nicole Huig made efforts to connect with key community members and stakeholders before stepping in to offer services.

LACA-FDR Practitioner Bevan Doyle was a valuable partner on this front, working with the Ipswich team to put them in touch with the coordinator of the Murri Court.

Practitioners were given plenty of guidance to ensure the services offered were following important cultural protocols.

This included making sure both male and female counsellors attended the Murri Court sessions each fortnight.

By doing this, they can personally introduce themselves and reduce some of the barriers to getting help straight away.

*“Connections are the heartbeat of why we exist. All the evidence on longevity shows it’s connections that matter the most, not your blood pressure.”* Helen Poynten, South West Regional Manager

Ryan Veivers, one of the counsellors at Ipswich who attends the Murri Court, said the visits have been one of the most rewarding aspects of his job.

“Sometimes, people in these situations are reluctant to even come into the venue. By making sure we’re there and can introduce ourselves personally, we’re able to help them take any first steps they need,” Ryan said.

“One instance that stuck with me was when a male client said our yarn had made him feel safe for the first time in 20 years.”

“By doing this work, I feel like I’m able to give back to one of the oldest and most beautiful cultures in the world.”

Helen believes reaching out in this way is an essential part of what Relationships Australia Queensland strives to do.

“When we say, ‘healthy relationships for all Australians’, we mean ‘all’. That’s why we need to strive to get out there and do our best for the people who need us most.”

Based on the success of the Murri Court outreach, a new program will be starting soon to provide support to parents in the prison system.

“Parents go to prison too, and in fact, this might be a time when they need all the support they can get to navigate the challenges with their family.”

Helen is excited to continue supporting practitioners reaching out to vulnerable members of the community and believes that making connections in times of crisis is at the heart of what Relationships Australia does.

“Connections are the heartbeat of why we exist. All the evidence on longevity shows it’s connections that matter the most, not your blood pressure,” Helen said.

“We know that, and that’s why we will always aim to form those connections with people who need them.”

Forging new connections with



## Forging new connections with First Nations communities

Throughout the past year, our First Nations staff have made it a priority to form strong bonds with new partners and reaffirm existing bonds.

The annual First Nations Forum, held from 11 – 13 March in Brisbane, allowed First Nations staff the opportunity to connect with each other, improve working relationships and hear about the fantastic work they were doing with their communities.

This year's forum was the largest to date. Team Leaders, Regional Managers, Executives and Board Members were all in attendance to hear from guest speaker Aunty Judith Atkinson.

The forum focused on her work in trauma-informed practice and demonstrated how to apply theoretical tools in practical settings to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples experiencing significant trauma.

The knowledge she shared was incredibly useful for RAQ's service delivery, as were the follow-on workshops conducted for the First Nations staff.

At these workshops, First Nations staff were able to voice and contextualise the tools needed for RAQ to create more culturally appropriate programs and services.

Our Far North Queensland (FNQ) staff and members of our Executive Team also made new connections to support work done in the Torres Straits and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) region.

Early in the year, Uncle John Abednego, Ian Law, Natasha Rae, Aunty Rose Elu and Deb Bennet met with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), seeking their support for future work in the region.

After presenting on work we have done to assist First Nations communities and our strategic vision for the future, we were met with enthusiasm and encouragement from the TSIRC.

To cement this new partnership, Councillor Philemon Mosby, Mayor for the Torres Strait Region, agreed to sit on our Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Board.

Mayor Mosby's guidance, working alongside RAQ Board member Professor Gary Thomas, will prove invaluable as our experienced staff continue to provide support in the FNQ region.

Throughout the year, strong connections were forged by our staff with Torres Strait health centres, high schools and community services.

This network proved vital when disaster struck later in the year, after a family did not return from a boat trip between NPA and the outer islands. Families and communities from across mainland Queensland, the Torres Straits, Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory were impacted by this event.

Deb Bennet, Aunty Rose and Heta Erueti were invited to offer Yarning Circles and talk with grieving members of the community.

"Our work was about sitting with all those families, sharing stories of strength and resilience. Not just in community settings, but also personally and privately in their own homes," said Deb Bennet.

The group engaged with intergenerational groups, and then with separate Women's and Men's groups in accordance with cultural protocol.

Deb believes that in the shared sorrow, strong bonds of trust and respect were built with families who struggled with the sudden loss of loved ones.

"It was not just about loss and grieving, but also about holding on to hope."

*"Our work was about sitting with all those families, sharing stories of strength and resilience. Not just in community settings, but also personally and privately in their own homes."*

*Deb Bennet, First Nations Community Engagement and Cultural Advisor*



## New service for Townsville – Specialised Family Violence

This year, RAQ secured a new tender for a **Specialised Family Violence Service** in Townsville, with funding for up to three years.

The service prioritises working with First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

We recognise a complex legacy of intergenerational trauma means Australia's First Nations people require community-led, local strategies that ensure culturally safe responses.

Preceding the impact of historical colonial violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a powerful narrative of laws including men's and women's roles in maintaining social harmony.

We maintain their right to use culture as a protective factor that supports families to be free of violence.

This service will be developed by community, for community.

This '**family and community-centred**' service recognises that family violence is a complex, multi-faceted, intergenerational issue.

Such an issue requires a holistic, flexible and innovative approach that considers presenting needs of the entire family within cultural and community context.

Most importantly, the service distinguishes between 'men's business' and 'women's business', providing specialist male and female Cultural Family Support Practitioners.

Culturally informed specialist support for women, children and men will include:

- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Counselling and therapeutic intervention
- Practical support, information, advice, and advocacy
- Men's and women's cultural and healing programs
- Community outreach, education and groups
- Referral to culturally relevant wrap-around services (internal and external).





"My marriage was irreparable, so I needed support and guidance for my 12-year-old daughter.

I reached out to RAQ's online counselling service and was able to book an appointment with someone who could help me.

In my experience, online counselling was a great way to access support. From the convenience of my own home and office, I could talk to a counsellor, and I didn't have to deal with the anxiety of getting to the appointment.

With the help of my counsellor, I've been able to work through the behaviours that kept me repressed and depressed.

I've also been able to better manage my emotions as they arise with the breakdown of the family unit, and to help manage my daughter through this time as well.

Having this support has made it possible for me to support my daughter.

All the people I have encountered at RAQ have been professional, respectful, and resourceful.

*Their ability to respond to information given is a testament to the level of their training and as great human beings."*

Natasha, RAQ Client



### Lola's story: 18 years at RAQ

"The only thing that stays the same is change."

No one knows this better than Senior Financial Protection Service Coordinator Lola Mashado, who has worked at RAQ for over 18 years.

Lola first came to RAQ as a financial counsellor working within the Gambling Help Service. She was first drawn to counselling because of her own personal experiences.

She was a single mother struggling with her finances, and when a company came to repossess her car, a friendly neighbour intervened, paying arrears on her behalf.

The neighbour then showed her how to budget and plan to stay in control of her own finances.

"It was like a door had been opened for me – it was fantastic!" she enthused.

The desire to open that door for other people has driven Lola to a long and varied career at RAQ, as a Manager, a Clinical Supervisor, and a Family Dispute Practitioner.

She said the opportunity to support and educate clients was both empowering and fulfilling.

"When I first started, I was talking to people like that neighbour had done years ago, teaching them how to handle their finances, and I loved it. I haven't looked back since."

### How has RAQ changed over the past 18 years?

Lola believes a lot has changed during her tenure, but the most important thing was an increased emphasis on team collaboration and reflection.

She thinks this approach has led to a more 'savvy and agile' RAQ which is more connected to clients and the real world.

"There is a truly mind-boggling amount of skill, knowledge and diverse backgrounds we have collectively. And working together and more collaboratively has really enhanced both our practice and our service delivery."

### Using digital to keep us connected

For Lola, this year's experiences with COVID-19 have been another opportunity for RAQ to find new ways of working and connecting with clients.

"I think by using our social media, Workplace and video conferencing, we've opened up a whole new world of connection with the community which allows us to support people in need, wherever they are," Lola said.

"I used to shy away from technology, but now I can use it to keep in touch with both my colleagues and my clients. I've learned that this is the way to go."

Her experience this year with adhering to social distancing protocols encouraged Lola to try new things, including looking for innovative and creative ways to achieve outcomes.

"I've managed to witness documents virtually, hold video chat with clients, and even run my own video meetings online. All things I never thought I'd be able to do."

She said RAQ's swift response to COVID-19, and their support and transparency throughout this year, has been vital in helping both staff and clients feel safe.

"I've always been proud to work for RAQ, but after this year, I'm just that little bit prouder."



# Year in review

## Our work

**131,536**

Total people supported via telephone services

- During 2019/20, RAQ assisted 131,536 people via telephone support, including clients seeking information and referral services
- Of these, 78,194 clients were registered to receive a service via face-to-face or virtual service delivery – they could choose the mode that suited them best
- Our Virtual Services team answered more calls – over 80% in June – this meant more clients were supported, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown period
- 10,323 clients received service via digital channels, including email and web-chat – digital delivery made it possible for us to scale up our services
- We registered more **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** clients (2,339) and **culturally and linguistically diverse** clients (11,757) than last year, and we provided support to 218 **LGBTIQ** clients and 2,268 clients with **disabilities** – we strive to provide support to our truly diverse community

**78,194**

Registered clients

- 239 clients were assisted through the Legally Assisted Culturally Appropriate Family Dispute Resolution (**LACAFDR**) program, receiving critical support during often stressful and complex scenarios
- Despite increased demand and pressures, overall positive client satisfaction was at 97.5% during June 2020 – the highest level of client satisfaction ever recorded at RAQ
- Education and support resources posted to our Facebook page reached 453,130 users during March-June 2020, providing an avenue to enhance support and promote our virtual services while face-to-face services were unavailable during COVID-19 restrictions
- Comprehensive client outcomes assessments (baseline and follow-up) were conducted for 5,652 clients across a variety of services. Clinically significant improvements were noted in every domain assessed, including child wellbeing, connection to community, family functioning, mental health and wellbeing, and personal and family safety.

**10,323**

Clients supported via digital channels

## Our people

**475**

Number of employees

**17%**  
Male

**83%**  
Female

**55%**  
Full time

**45%**  
Part time/  
casual

**88%**  
of staff attended  
professional  
development  
during the year

- In 2019/20, RAQ employed 475 people
- We invested in their professional development, with a significant 88% attending training during the year
- Women make up 83% of our workforce and we strive to offer a family friendly, flexible environment for our people – 45% of our employees are in part-time or casual positions





### Service delivery goes virtual

This year, we want to highlight all the ways our practitioners are using technology creatively to continue delivering our services.

No one could have predicted the extent of the coronavirus crisis and the significant impact it would have on communities.

But during this time, our practitioners showed their willingness to adapt and find new ways to provide much-needed support.

In Far North Queensland Parenting Orders Program (POP) Case Coordinator Ally Winstone and Community Education and Development Officer Mike Friganiotis used video conferencing to continue hosting their Focus on Kids group program.

In Ipswich, Family Counsellor and Educator Kristyn Stanbury and Community Educator Ryan Vievers have accomplished a similar feat, hosting their Raising Rainbows workshop over video conference.

Meanwhile, on the Sunshine Coast, RAQ's Transcendence team were also using video conferencing to go virtual.

These virtual groups meant that clients were able to continue to participate in our programs uninterrupted during the COVID-19 period.

Not only did all virtual groups have a high attendance rate, but all the participants also actively engaged with their material, asking questions and providing peer support to each other.

Clients appreciated being able to access their groups remotely, saying this new method of service delivery opened new opportunities for other clients who couldn't otherwise access face-to-face sessions.

"A number of people who live in rural areas of the community can really benefit from these online sessions," one participant commented.

Many clients said they would even like to continue videoconferencing sessions after the pandemic was over, as it was so easy and convenient for them.

Our staff's ability to be client-focused and adaptable has been crucial in such an uncertain year, where strong connections are more important than ever.





## Virtual connection in Central Queensland

After the COVID-19 crisis forced Australia into quarantine, many of our services were adapted to be delivered remotely.

In the heart of Central Queensland, this new kind of service delivery was essential for many clients with complex needs.

Domestic and Family Violence Children's Counsellor Joan Low-Neville has been conducting her sessions using RAQ's video conferencing tool since self-isolation measures started. She said remote service delivery had been surprisingly effective for certain people.

"I was really struggling to figure out how to help some clients, but then COVID-19 came along, we tried remote service delivery, and it was like 'boom', magic," she said.

Joan said the flexibility and convenience of video sessions made it easier for some clients to engage with her regularly compared to face-to-face sessions.

In particular, her younger clients have been enjoying the whiteboard feature to draw pictures.

"We've found a lot of creative uses for our video conferencing tool. Sometimes they screen-share pictures of their family or use the whiteboard for storytelling."

Digital service delivery has even offered opportunities to put a new spin on some challenging discussions.

"I love that I can ask an emotionally difficult question and the children can choose to respond non-verbally on the whiteboard."

Joan wouldn't be surprised if some families opt to continue with online sessions even after face-to-face counselling sessions are an option again.

"Children seem to be so much more willing to be vulnerable over video than they are in-person," she said.

Many other clients have also expressed how much they enjoy videoconferencing, and in some instances found it easier than face-to-face counselling.

"The flexibility offered by remote services has been very helpful, for both counsellors and clients," said Joan.

"The last few weeks have been the best time of my life. My children are engaging so well with home-based learning. Up until now there's been a lot of behavioural difficulties in school. I've received lots of complaints from the school about them not paying attention, daydreaming and being disruptive.

It turns out they've been bored because they only take a fraction of the time needed to do the given piece of work but have to wait for other classmates to finish theirs.

Since I began with the home-based learning, all behavioural issues have disappeared because they can be as efficient as they want to be and spend the rest of their time learning other things. I've also been working from home and able to spend more time with my children and give them attention. I'm more relaxed, my children are calmer and happier, and they're spending time bonding and playing. I'm not yelling at them so much anymore, which helps them relax.

*My children have loved the online sessions, and overall, I've felt really supported during this time."*

*Children's Counselling Client*





## Using technology to keep in touch – a practitioner's perspective

Relationships Counsellor Shirley Hussie has been working from her home since Easter. Like many RAQ practitioners, she's been providing counselling sessions via telephone and video conference.

Shirley believes RAQ's support was fundamental to her being able to quickly provide remote service delivery and continue supporting her clients.

"What they were able to accomplish in that first week was phenomenal with getting everyone set up to work remotely," she says.

"The support that has been offered by Management has been extraordinary – that includes my Team Leader, Supervisor, and everyone up the line. I have felt so supported through the whole process, which has made the day-to-day struggles easy and effortless."

Shirley explained there were a few challenges at first, including feeling isolated and lonely without the face-to-face contact with other staff members. She also noted logistical bumps along the road.

"The initial challenge was gaining access to a computer and feeling comfortable and secure with using the technology – primarily video conferencing," Shirley said.

*"I believe the services provided to the clients via online and telephone have been just as – if not more powerful and transformative as face-to-face sessions."* Shirley Hussie, Relationships Counsellor

"RAQ offered plenty of support. They allowed time to become confident and competent using it before going live with clients. I'm proficient with using video and love it now!"

She also said that RAQ's willingness to update devices where necessary aided her service delivery.

"I used an older computer from the venue for the first week. After that I was provided a brand-new computer, which is fabulous," she explained.

These computers were provided to many employees through the organisation's Business Transformation program to support their service delivery.

Shirley commends her colleagues for being resilient, resourceful, and innovative, while continuing to provide quality services for clients during this time.

"I believe the services provided to the clients via online and telephone have been just as – if not more powerful and transformative as face-to-face sessions."

"Clients have the luxury of staying in the safety of their own home and don't have to deal with the stress of childcare, traffic, or taking time off work."

"I would love to continue offering video sessions once we return to the office."



*A digital platform to communicate and collaborate*

### Workplace: Keeping employees together while apart

When COVID-19 restrictions were implemented in March 2020, our Support Services employees fast-tracked the build and launch of Workplace, a digital platform for employees to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Workplace allows employees to share news and stories, message each other, share documents and make decisions as a team online, even when they're not in the same location.

By condensing a nine-week implementation plan into just a matter of days, RAQ was able to ensure Workplace was operational during the very first stage of COVID restrictions.

This would prove crucial in allowing employees to stay connected during the uncertainty of the pandemic and changed working conditions, with user uptake at 92% in just days of launching the platform.

"I don't know how we would have managed the transition to remote service delivery without Workplace," said Natasha Rae, General Manager of Client Services.

Surveys conducted by the People and Culture Group during the time of implementation show that 94% of employees were satisfied with communications during COVID-19.

Workplace has now become an integral part of our internal communications program. Over 89% of people are using the platform daily, with over 135,000 staff messages sent since launching the platform.

Our Executive Management Team can easily deliver video or text information to the entire workforce base using the organisation-wide channel 'RAQ Connect'. Employees have a much more direct line of engagement with the CEO and Executive, and vice versa, thanks to Workplace.



## Workplace

Since Workplace went live on 9 April, employee engagement with the platform has been strong:

### User uptake is at 98%

almost the entire workforce is using Workplace to connect and collaborate, anywhere, any time

### Over 80%

of employees are using the platform every day – individuals and groups seek and give feedback to help each other to do their jobs



### More than 2,000

messages are sent each day via Workplace chat and 135,000 messages were sent in the first three months of utilisation – employees are using the chat function to communicate informally

### Sharing

of information across the organisation has improved as a result of moving from an Intranet platform to Workplace

### Employees

now have a direct line of engagement with the CEO and Executive, and vice versa, thanks to Workplace

## What our staff think about Workplace

*"I love being able to stay updated and connected on what's been happening across different teams, departments and projects. The most valuable part is knowing what others are thinking, feeling and saying. The ability to access this platform via my mobile means I can check in at any time. Video posts from teams and EMT make me feel more connected at a time where we're more physically distant."*

*Eileen McWatters, Portfolio Manager, Strategy & Innovation*

*"The platform helps to keep you linked to the organisation as a whole and the programs related to you, along with letting you know about interesting events and activities."* Joanne Aitchison, Relationship Counsellor



*"Workplace makes me feel more connected to the rest of the state. I also love that I send less emails! The private chat has been so useful to deliver info to my team, but also to stay connected and share some laughs."* Sam Mitchell, Team Leader

*"I love the ability to shift what were once individual one-on-one conversations out into the open. It means less email traffic and more transparency and collaboration. It's been the greatest enabler to working from home – I can't imagine the experience we would have had without Workplace."* Tom Teelow, Change Manager



# Strengthening workplace culture

## New initiatives keep employee culture strong

This year, RAQ's People and Culture Group has been hard at work introducing new ways to support our most valuable asset – our employees.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team worked hard to put together some accessible resources on everything our employees might need, from working at home safely to taking care of their wellbeing.

They used the Workplace platform to connect the workforce with these resources, as well as communicate important information around pay allowances and leave conditions.

The result? Over 90% of employees said they felt supported by RAQ during the coronavirus outbreak and were confident the organisation had responded to the crisis well.

Additionally, four out of five employees still felt connected to the organisation even when working from home, which undoubtedly contributed to our impressive client satisfactions outcomes during the period.

The team is still taking even more steps to strengthen the workforce and workplace culture, including the introduction of a new recognition program. This program offers numerous ways to recognise our employees via multiple channels, and responds to a workforce that is dispersed across the whole state, with the intent to connect them in a positive purpose.

We are focused on how we acquire the best talent for our organisation, and invested in a new Talent Acquisition Manager position, held by Ben Bolt.

Ben has led the implementation of a new tracking system and recruitment technology to streamline the hiring process.

He has also been using digital tools like LinkedIn and market mapping, to strengthen our recruitment pipelines in universities, regional and remote areas, and Indigenous employment.

These digital tools, along with the introduction of webinars, video screening and psychometric testing, meant the organisation was well positioned to continue to recruit highly qualified candidates to important roles, even in the middle of quarantining measures.

Finally, our Learning & Development Team has also enhanced working life for RAQ employees with the introduction of a new LEAP program.

LEAP – Learn, Engage, Achieve, Progress – is a new learning and performance system that provides a wide variety of learning tools for employees to engage in self-directed learning.

This improves opportunities for professional development and makes it easier for employees to access and engage with development activities.

The introduction of the Leadership Development Program is also building a pipeline of confident, capable leaders at RAQ.

These are just several of the initiatives in place that position RAQ as an employer of choice. It ensures that we have a workforce that is committed to having a positive impact, and that we are well-equipped and skilled to deliver the best service to our clients.

## Using technology to reach clients anytime, anywhere

When RAQ adapted to deliver services remotely, our education and client outreach strategies also shifted gears.

Clients were expecting to connect with us online, so we started using our website and social media platforms to create and promote new content to reach vulnerable people.

“We wanted to share relevant, unique content and expertise to support people during social isolation,” said Communications Manager Lauren Fisher.

“This kind of activity was also a really important step in reinforcing a positive, approachable ‘face’ of the organisation online so people will feel comfortable to engage with our programs if and when they need to.”

Over three months, the Communications team created a diverse suite of content focussed on maintaining positive physical and emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships.

These articles were generated based on an intensive research process that provided insights into the types of information and support people were looking for online.

“The idea was that by engaging with our multi-channel content, clients could access relevant information at a time, place, and on a device that suited them,” said Lauren.

“This activity also fuels our Business Transformation efforts as we work to deliver exceptional service to clients across multiple channels – essentially, it’s made it possible for people to join our online community in a more informal way and to benefit from the experience.”

These articles paid dividends, with over 453,000 people interacting with and seeing these posts on Facebook over just 12 weeks.

RAQ also saw an 80% increase in website traffic over this time, and a 2,998% increase in our engagement with the public on social media platforms- the articles were successfully channelling people into our website to find out more about our services.

Top-performing posts reached over 30,000 people, with an engagement rate four times higher than the benchmark for the sector.

Many people commented that they were grateful for the articles and the helpful information provided about serious issues such as toxic and abusive relationships, domestic and family violence, and financial abuse.

Our digital media channels were also used by some of our programs to augment their community education practices.

A campaign for the Senior Financial Protection Service reached a targeted audience of over 1,917 people in a matter of weeks.

“This year we’ve been able to connect with people in a new way, and the opportunities to use this platform to provide targeted, personalised information and support before people reach crisis, is a really exciting proposition,” said Lauren.

*“Clients could access relevant information at a time and place that suited them”*  
Lauren Fisher, Communications Manager



# Financials

## Summary statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2020

Revenue	2020 (\$)	2019 (\$)
Government funding	43,355,525	38,778,958
Client fees	621,936	633,090
Other income	973,752	1,310,120
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>44,951,213</b>	<b>40,722,168</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Employee costs	39,832,262	31,091,310
Property costs	3,405,142	3,242,411
Travel and motor vehicles costs	905,127	1,295,995
Operating administration costs	4,753,681	3,531,509
Other costs	72,362	64,579
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>48,968,574</b>	<b>39,225,804</b>
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	<b>(4,017,361)</b>	<b>1,496,364</b>

## Summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2019

Assets	2020 (\$)	2019 (\$)
Current assets	20,501,561	21,188,986
Non-current assets	16,725,740	14,164,669
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>37,227,301</b>	<b>35,353,655</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current liabilities	13,073,234	8,612,584
Non-current liabilities	1,946,534	516,177
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>15,019,768</b>	<b>9,128,761</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>22,207,533</b>	<b>26,224,894</b>





# Meet our board



**Ian Sampson – Chair**  
*B.Comm., LLB., FAICD*

Ian Sampson is an experienced non-executive director with expertise in governance, strategy development, risk, financial and audit management, board evaluation, remuneration and development. He is Chairman of 139Club Ltd, a centre for people experiencing homelessness in Brisbane, a syndicate Chairman of The CEO Institute, and chairs the Board of Chartered Accounting firm, Marsh Tincknell Pty Ltd. He has run a strategic advisory consultancy since 2004, and prior to that enjoyed a wide-ranging career in human resources and general management at companies including BHP, CSR, Lonmin and Thiess, both in Australia and overseas.

## Helen Poropat



*GAICD, PRIAdvMed, Arb3*

Helen has more than 25 years' experience as a dispute resolution specialist and is currently a Principal Director of a consultancy rebuilding workplace relationships by facilitating complex and sensitive discussions, providing coaching and mentoring, and strategic and organisational reviews. Helen has previously held roles as Chair of the Board and Non-Executive Director for the National Education and Employment Foundation, and as a senior leader for Ergon Energy. In these positions, she provided strategic advice on improvements to services and consumer advocacy, representing the corporation in mediation, conciliation, arbitration and court processes.



**Kerrie Mahon**  
*B.Bus., MPhil(Mgt), MAICD*

Kerrie Mahon is an accomplished senior executive and board director with more than 25 years of experience leading and managing health and human services. Her experience includes chief executive roles and executive positions leading strategy, operations, risk, quality, and performance. Kerrie is CEO of Montrose Therapy & Respite Services and is an Honorary Assoc. Adjunct Prof. of the Faculty of Health Sciences & Medicine, Bond University. She holds a Master of Philosophy in Corporate Governance, Strategy and Risk.



**Angela Moody**  
*B Econ, BA, MProf Econ, Post Grad Dip Applied Finance, GAICD*

Angela is an experienced non-executive director who has worked for more than ten years on 'for purpose' boards spanning a range of industries and sectors, including education, CALD communities, migrant and refugee settlement services and economic development. Angela is also an accomplished executive, experienced in strategic development and implementation, stakeholder management, economic regulation and reform, corporate governance and commercial operations, across private and public sectors.



**Bruce Moffat**  
*BCom, FCPA, FIML, GAICD*

Bruce is an experienced Chief Financial Officer, organisational consultant and Certified Practising Accountant, with an extensive history in the not-for-profit, private and tertiary education sectors. He is an Official Visitor with Queensland Corrective Services and a mentor with Mentoring for Growth as part of Advancing Small Business Queensland. Bruce volunteers with small not-for-profits and is a Board Member with St David's Neighbourhood Centre.



**Professor Kim Halford**  
*BBSoc (Hons) PhD FAPsS FAACBT FABCT GAICD*

Professor Kim Halford is a registered clinical psychologist and Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology at The University of Queensland. Kim has 35 years' experience as a university leader, researcher, educator and practitioner. His work is internationally recognised – he has trained more than 12,000 professionals in couple therapy worldwide and has served as an advisor on family-related social policy to the Australian, German and US governments. Kim has over 200 research publications, some done in collaboration with RAQ staff, plus eight books. He serves as Chair of the RAQ Board Quality and Performance Committee.



**Bill Owens**  
*BA (Hons), GDBA, GAICD*

Bill Owens is an experienced executive and non-executive director specialising in governance, strategy, risk and ICT strategy development and governance. He has run his own ICT services company since 2016, after building an executive career over 30 years in technology and business consultancy at Elders IXL, PwC (UK), Adventis (UK) and MSL Solutions. Bill has particular expertise in designing and governing technology-led business transformation programs.



**Mikhara Ramsing**  
*LLB(Hons)/Econ(Hons), GAICD*

Mikhara Ramsing is a social entrepreneur who runs two social enterprises in the human rights space: Miks Chai and Ethnic LGBT+. She believes stories save lives and has travelled around Australia in a self-built tiny home connecting with rural youth. Mikhara has been nominated as the Young Australian of the Year QLD 2019, listed in the AFR Top 100 Women of Influence, and was awarded a Westpac Social Change Fellowship to attend Harvard University and work with LGBTIQ+ communities around the world.



**Professor Gary Thomas**  
*BA PgDipED PhD PFHEA MAICD*

Professor Gary Thomas is the University of the Sunshine Coast's inaugural Dean, Indigenous Education and Engagement, and is responsible for whole-of-institution approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, learning and teaching, research, and community engagement. Professor Thomas has held academic, professional and senior executive roles, and contributed to Indigenous education at both national and international levels over many years. In 2016, Professor Thomas became the first Indigenous Australian to be awarded Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK). He is particularly interested in opportunities for clients to shape services and experiences within organisations.

## Departed Board Member

### Professor Analise O'Donovan

Retired November, 2019





## Conferences, publications and presentations

Relationships Australia Queensland continues to be an expert voice leading the conversation around healthy relationships and families. We have created strong partnerships with like-minded organisations and our experienced practitioners provide valuable insights into service delivery for the community sector, with 16 papers published this year covering a wide range of topics.

### Conferences

Fisher, C., & Talbott, H. (2019, December). Gender and loneliness in problem gambling. National Association for Gambling Studies Annual Conference. Hobart, Australia.

Milic, J., & Poynten, H. (2019, December). Motivational Interviewing (MI) effectiveness in a community Gambling Help Service. National Association for Gambling Studies Annual Conference. Hobart, Australia.

Achia, T., Louis, W.L., Pye, C., & Petch, J. (2019, November). Positive contact with minority groups and uptake of diversity initiatives in organisations: Benefits and blindspots. The Australian Sociological Association Symposium on Applied Sociology. Sydney, Australia.

Cao, Y. (2019, November). Effectiveness of an intervention in reducing loneliness among older people: Research protocol and progress. The Australian Association of Gerontology Conference. Sydney, Australia.

Cao, Y., & Model, M. (2019, November). It is all about relationships. A holistic case management approach to elder abuse prevention. Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Cao, Y. (2019, November). Individual relationships counselling effectiveness in an Australian counselling organisation. Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Marshall, K. (2019, November). Is language influencing child inclusive practice. Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Rae, N., Lezanski, J., Haller, E., Ritter, C., & Culshaw, J. (2019, November). Collaborative service delivery between the Family Law National Enquiry Centre and Family Relationship Advice Line (Symposium). Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Sturgess, E., & Holden, V. (2019, November). Tailoring service delivery to embrace modern family dynamics – Supporting grandparent carers. Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Holden, V., & Sturgess, E. (2019, November). Family & systemic work with intrafamilial violence and all forms of abuse. Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference. Hunter Valley, Australia.

Poynten, H. (2019, November). Empowering the role of Women's Advocate: Keeping the focus on partners in men's DFV perpetrator intervention programs. Australian Association of Social Workers Conference. Adelaide, Australia.

Rahimullah, R. (2019, August). Mental illness and Terrorism. Presentation at the 2nd Quarterly Challenging Realities Forum (Theme: Radical Addictions & Indulgent Obsessions). Brisbane, Australia.

Rahimullah, R. (2019, July-August). Age matters: Its influence on stress levels amidst relationship counselling (Poster Presentation). The International Mental Health Conference. Gold Coast, Australia.

Cao, Y. (2019, July-August). Individual relationships counselling effectiveness in an Australian counselling organisation (Poster Presentation). The International Mental Health Conference. Gold Coast, Australia.

Cao, Y. (2019, July). Individual relationships counselling effectiveness in an Australian counselling organisation. 6th World Congress on Positive Psychology. Melbourne, Australia.

Elston, J. (2019, July). Putting it into Practice: Establishing Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs in Logan and the Southern Moreton Bay Islands (SMBI) (Poster Presentation). 6th World Congress on Positive Psychology. Melbourne, Australia.





# Locations

## Head Office

6/107 Miles Platting Road  
Eight Mile Plains  
QLD 4113  
07 3423 6950  
[www.raq.org.au](http://www.raq.org.au)

## Venues

Bowen  
Bundaberg  
Cairns  
Capalaba  
Chermside  
Eight Mile Plains  
Gladstone  
Gympie  
Ipswich  
Logan Central  
Longreach  
Mackay

Maroochydore  
Maryborough  
Morayfield  
Mount Morgan  
Robina  
Rockhampton  
Spring Hill  
Strathpine  
Thursday Island  
Toowoomba  
Townsville  
Tully  
Upper Mount Gravatt  
Yeppoon



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