



drummond street services

annual report 2014-15

what the
family



President's Report 2014-2015

'Change is a constant', is a relevant refrain in both contemporary life and the life-course of a not-for-profit organisation. As a long-time member of drummond street's Board of Directors for approximately 16 years, and as President since 2013, I have observed at close quarters these changes, many welcome or necessary, some imposed and a few disappointing, but over time we have extended substantially our service footprint, over the last 5 years.

One of the biggest achievements is the establishment of services beyond our Carlton location, starting with a small, stand-alone Family Mental Health Support Service in Geelong back in 2012. An earlier portent of change (via opportunity), was our auspicing of Stepfamilies Victoria in 2010 to secure the ongoing viability of this small service and advocacy agency and from there established a National Stepfamilies network.

From these small beginnings, we have been able to build on all our programs and applied research along with offering a constructive, social commentary on a national platform, expressing the diverse issues and concerns that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of many Australian families.

drummond street was (and remains) an early adopter in the advancement of practices and policies, including a strong advocate for a public health approach in the delivery of early intervention services, and evidence-informed practices via our academic partnerships and applied research projects with Deakin University, Beyondblue and Victorian Health over several years.

At the commencement of our last 5 year strategic plan, the Board and the Executive team discussed the priorities and opportunities ahead, inspired and ambitious in our aspirations for the organisation, whilst remaining true to our mission, vision and our organisational history; supporting and advancing the sector, maintaining our social justice and advocacy origins and supporting local community life through responsive, inclusive, non-denominational services.

However, the Board faced the bind of asset ownership, without the infrastructure and access to capital to re-invest and extend our service base. This was in the context of funders signalling the redirection of funds or the allocation of new monies into growth corridors, rather than the Inner Melbourne. We believed in the relevancy and fit of **drummond street services**, particularly for the high numbers of families with young children migrating to live in these areas, but without the infrastructure we could not extend or grow.

Almost 2 years ago, we sold our Carlton buildings, a momentous step in the history of the organisation, and re-locating our Inner Melbourne services to a modern, accessible building (just down the road – retaining our Drummond street address and identity), allowing for expanded services and the hosting of complementary and revenue-generating programs. Subsequently, we have been successful in extending our family mental health services to Wyndham, Brimbank and the Northern Melbourne growth areas of Epping/Whittlesea and Wallan.



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In the coming year, the Board will embark on the next 5 years' strategic planning process, progressing our ambitions to use some of our capital funds to support both social purpose investment and the generation of revenue to support the organisation's on-going viability. This will be an important and critical focus for the Board, including the scoping of our growth corridor service strategy in the Western region of Melbourne, as well as continued investment in research and innovative technologies as part of our broad support offers that augment our existing family-based interventions, counselling and support services and our child mental health programs.

The realising of these aspirations and opportunities would not be possible without the vision, dedication, commitment and energy of our CEO, Karen Field. Through her sustained efforts, **drummond street** is an innovative organisation of influence. The Board were very pleased this year to acknowledge Karen's ten years' of dedicated service. Along with our appreciation and thanks to the Executive team and all **drummond street** staff in maintaining our well-deserved reputation as a sector leader.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of all Board members, who offer and give their time, expertise and commitment willingly, (and voluntarily) to the mission and vision of this important community resource.

Professor Alun Jackson
President



CEO's Statement 2014-2015

A common expression at drummond street is *'it's a work in progress'*, sometimes code for something not quite finished, as we need to (or are pushed to) the next thing. Social purpose services, like us, need to continually shape-shift to maintain our relevance and effectiveness to the broader communities where we are located, and also to the diverse communities of interests who possess both shared and distinct aspirations and needs.

It is important to us, as a community-based, social justice, values-driven agency that the services we provide reflect the contemporary nature of families and address their needs. This all happens within an ever-changing policy and funding environment of increasingly, greater demands in terms of accountability, data collection and sharing and the articulation and demonstration of measurable outcomes, evidence-based practices and programming, collective and collaborative approaches and consumer-led, session-based funding.

Notwithstanding the day-to-day operations and governance of a mid-size, not-for-profit organisation; the human, clinical, financial, infrastructure and risk management, alongside the delivery of intentional and supportive services, undertaking research or evaluation, contributing to the sector, sourcing funding, developing our workforce, creating and designing innovative ways to increase reach,

advocacy and the cultivation of relationships and partnerships, all with the aim of providing positive help-seeking experiences for all who present to our service.

I am also proud to lead organisations (**drummond street** and Stepfamilies Australia) that continue to deliver services to all families, children and young people, regardless of income, origin, structure, faith, culture, orientation, gender or sexual identities. This is also important for all **drummond street** staff, and something we have to only occasionally remind ourselves, particularly on those days when the change, pace and service demands just feels relentless.

Not only are we required to continually shape-shift, but be our own *'progressive work'* as we continue to learn from our clients, our communities and our sector, community and government partners. This year has been another one of dynamic change and learning, as well as growth in services and programs, as we locate our FMHSS services in the growth corridors of Western and Northern Melbourne, the establishment of clinical mental health services; Kidztalk (Child ATAPs), alongside individual Adult ATAPs and Better Access mental health services to complement our family-based interventions, as well as support for the survivors of institutional child sexual abuse through the Royal Commission and

mental health support for our queer communities.

We welcome additional investment in mental health services for children and young people. The reduction of stigma and encouragement of early help-seeking has improved over the last decade, as a result of public health campaigns and greater public and media focus and awareness, specifically on depression and anxiety. However, there is still some ways to go, and it's of great national concern that ever-increasingly younger children are presenting to services, including our own, (and of course, the many children who do not access or engage with services). According to the *2nd Annual Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing* (Department of Health, 2015) 1 in 7 children, equating to 560,000 (13.9% of children and adolescents, 4–17 yrs) experienced a mental health disorder over a 12 month period. This includes 6.9% with anxiety and 2.8% depression, and a significant number of children with ADHD diagnosis, plus higher numbers of children across the board coming from low-income and one-parent, blended and stepfamilies.



CEO's Statement 2014-2015

Over the many years we have supported parents and children through family-based interventions, we continue to assert for increased investment and the endorsement of interventions that support and strengthen healthy family relationships and functioning and that actively reduce risks and increase family-based protective factors for mental illness, rather than limited to brief, individual, clinical responses, important as they are, but which are limited in their ability to address the social determinants of mental health and improve the family environments over the longer-term of many children and young people.

Much of what we have achieved or progressed over the last year is based on our continued refinement of our Family Services practice model and evaluations of our universal and targeted parenting support and relationship and mental health counselling.

A key achievement was the development of **drummond street's** second child and family-focused, health promoting, innovative, smartphone technology with the development of our **WTF! What the Family App** (www.whatthefamily.com.au), an easy, accessible, early risk screening tool, including early family violence risks, and parent information to help self-identify risks and seek assistance

to support better outcomes for them, their relationships and in the critically important first year of their child's life. The **WTF! App** is supported by a Parent Education and a Professional training package, with plans to roll-out sector training to perinatal and early years services, such as Maternal Child Health Nurses and child care early learning professionals over the coming year.

The use of technology to increase our reach and promote positive parenting comes from the success of our first app – **MyMob** (www.mymob.com), a positive family and child communication tool created for time-poor, busy families or those with shared parenting arrangements, to help support their children across households and stay connected and child-focused through the sharing of child milestones, events and activities.

We would be unable to create and develop these innovative tools without our own investment in applied research over several years with Deakin University, School of Psychology and the establishment of **CFRE (Centre for Family Research & Evaluation)**, which forms part of our sector support service, providing training, advice and consultancy. Over the last six months we have been pleased to provide this assistance to peer organisations as part of

the **Expert Panel** project (outlined in more detail in this report), where we offer an understanding of the challenges in implementing this work within the confines of existing resources and capacities of many family services. We look forward to continue to build on this area of work in supporting evidence-based programming, evaluation and outcome-focused practices to demonstrate the high value of our sector's work.

As an adjunct to this support, we also offer sector training, based on our practice experience and research, in the specific areas of relationships, stepfamilies, LGBTIQ, parenting, and family and child mental health prevention and early intervention. An example of this was offering our parenting and stepfamilies expertise in the development of parent information resources as part of the Raising Children's Network's **Blended Families** project. (www.raisingchildren.net.au/single_parents_blended_families/).

Despite the ever-changing environment, it's important to acknowledge our 128 years' history, whilst looking to future opportunities. We need to maintain our connections to the current issues and concerns of communities, and apply this to our service design and delivery.

Reflecting on my own decade-long leadership of **drummond street** as we embark on

CEO's Statement 2014-2015

the next 5 year planning cycle, I remain committed to maintain the prerequisites of social purpose organisations which informed our last strategic plan and will continue to do so;

- > The *service delivery role*, underpinned by social justice principles, to support the most disadvantaged as part of a redistribution of resources and the righting of market failures.
- > The *community role*, supporting the expression of collective interests and the resolution of community problems, needs and aspirations.
- > The *political role*, advocacy and representation of citizen-focused, public policies and contributing actively and positively to social policy discourse.

I would like to thank the Board, in particular our President, Professor Alun Jackson, who has supported myself and the agency during this time of growth, opportunity and change. Many, many thanks to the large cohort of DS alumni, staff and supporters (both past and present) who in their different roles and ways continue to fly the flag and maintain our reputation as an inclusive, effective, responsive and creative organisation that promotes and advocates wellbeing and resilience for all and reflects family life in the 21st century – as we all continue to be 'a work in progress'.

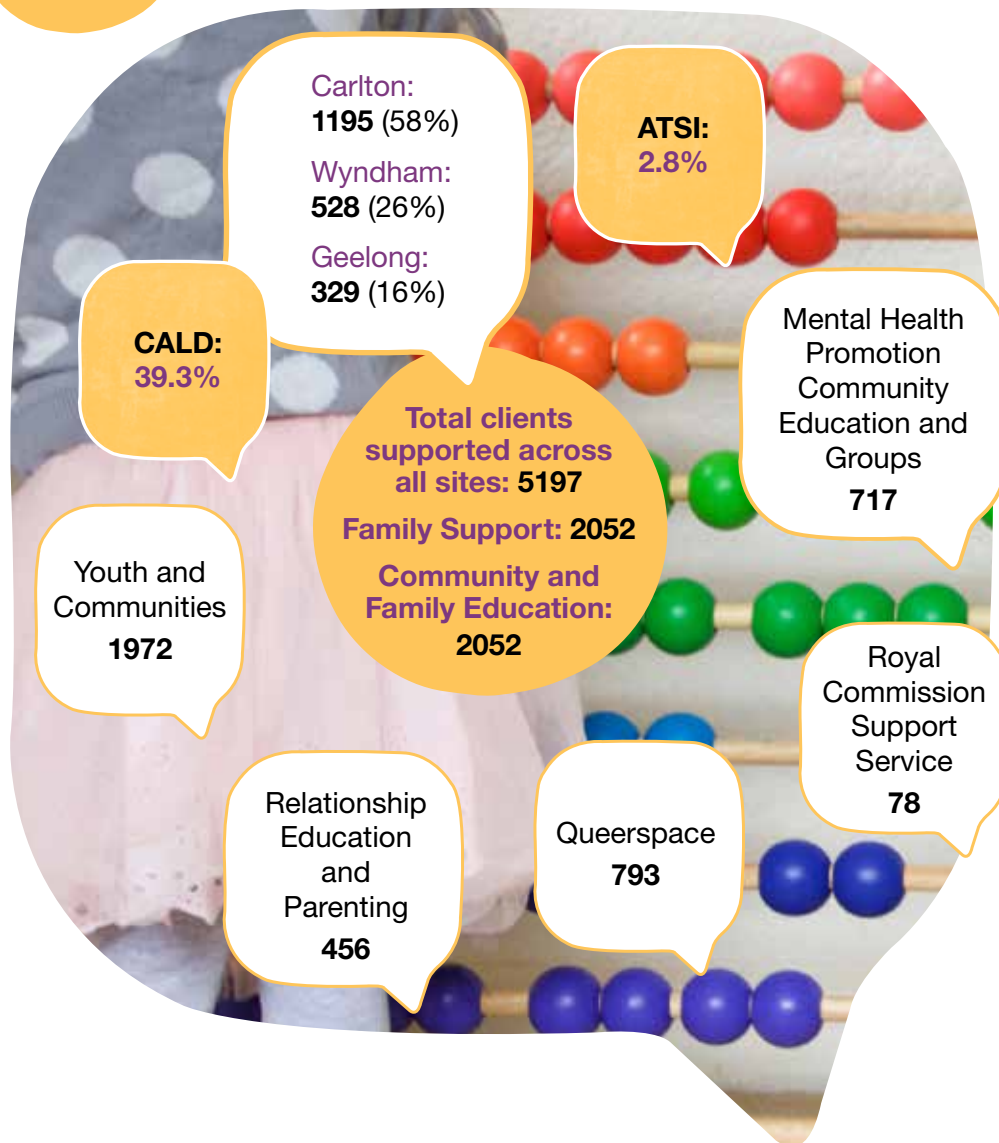
Karen Field
CEO



drummond street services Client Data 2014-2015

SNAPSHOT

drummond street services supported the following numbers of families, children, young people and individuals through counselling, support, case work and advocacy.



2014-2015 Financial Year Overview

	All sites totals	Carlton	Wyndham	Geelong
Family Support Work	2052	1195	528	329
Community & Family Education Programs	1173	572	314	287
Youth & Communities (Youth Services & African Family Support Program)	1972	1811 (the drum) 161 (AFSP)		
Grand Total	5197			
Family & Relationships Services	928	828	100	
Family Mental Health Support Service	881	233 (up to June 2015)	325	323
Child Mental Health (ATAPS)	103		103	
Stepfamilies	244	190	33	21
queerspace	793	346*	293*	154*
Queer ATAPS	62	62		
Children (0-11yrs)	405	70	239	96
Young people (12-25yrs) (Individual work & The drum Carlton case work)	471	337	73	61

* includes queer ATAPS

** includes non-identified

drummond street client data - Clinical Risk Alerts



Total Risk Alerts:					
		Carlton	Wyndham	Geelong	All Sites
	Mental Illness:	262	125	179	566
	Mental Ill-Health:	342	198	122	662
	At-Risk Children:	22	53	23	98
	At-Risk Youth:	53	15	18	86
	Family Violence:	137	107	52	296
	Post Separation:	266	101	29	396
	Drug and/or Alcohol:	72	21	11	104
	Physical Health:	47	17	37	101
	Homelessness / Financial:	63	21	14	98
	Sexual Abuse:	83	30	15	128
	Suicide:	53	19	14	86
	Gambling:	2	0	0	2
TOTALS		1402	707	514	2623

At the early stage of my separation, I was very fortunate to get immediate help which was critical as my son was only 14 months old.

Deb has been an incredible counsellor – supportive, informative and kind.

I hope more women (with children) in need are able to access this service.

Children (1–11) Risk Alerts					
		Carlton	Wyndham	Geelong	All Sites
	At Risk Children	3	29	5	37
	Drug and/or Alcohol	3	10	2	15
	Family Violence	18	50	12	80
	Homelessness/Financial	2	7	3	12
	Mental Illness/ill health	22	132	82	236
	Physical Health	4	9	7	20
	Post Separation	28	43	9	80
	Sexual Abuse	2	14	2	18
	Suicide	1	7	3	11
TOTALS		83	301	125	499

Young People (12–25) Risk Alerts					
		Carlton	Wyndham	Geelong	All Sites
	At Risk Youth	27	5	8	40
	Drug and/or Alcohol	18	3	2	23
	Family Violence	30	15	11	56
	Homelessness/Financial	15	5	2	22
	Mental Illness/ill health	106	45	53	204
	Physical Health	6	1	12	19
	Post Separation	35	12	5	52
	Sexual Abuse	11	6	2	19
	Suicide	11	1	4	16
TOTALS		259	93	99	451

What families say about drummond street

Excellent service, friendly and empathetic staff. Listen, care and share!

Thank you for accepting me as a client, I am very comfortable in this space and much appreciate the services provided.

I'm really grateful for the service. It's nice to get the help you need without the financial stress of it, so thank you!

Very much appreciated.

*My husband and I have used the services of **drummond street** on many occasions.*

On every occasion it has been a helpful, positive and at times quite life changing.

Ciaran made us both feel listened to and gave us strategies to make our marriage stronger.

We are greatly indebted to him.

Thank you.

*So grateful that **drummond street** exists!*

Awesome counsellor and services – very happy, thank you!

Anita was fantastic! She always listened intently and always gave good advice.

She made me feel so relaxed and I would feel that something had been achieved within that one hour.

Thank you! Also the receptionist was so warm and friendly!

I have found this service of great value and support during a trying and difficult time of my life. Thank you

Thank you Sue for giving my son the opportunity to sort some of his feelings of grief and anxiety.

He has a better understanding of the importance of talking about his feelings and anxieties which I hope will help us both out as he goes to high school next year!

Kate has been fantastic and we are finding the counselling very helpful.

Susan has been a great help in working through the concerns I have regarding the impact of anxiety and general life issues.

Found the intake process to be very good – it was explained well and handled sensitively.

Thank you!

Sue has been amazing, very helpful and I have learnt so much.

A lot of the suggestions I have put into place and they have worked.

I would recommend this service to others – Julie is a wonderfully warm and engaging practitioner who has benefited our family.

We enjoy and look forward to our sessions with her.

Frances is great, some very worthwhile information, perspective has been given during my time with her.

I would recommend this service to others – strongly agree.

I really enjoyed my time with Kerry. My kids adored spending time with Kerry and she was always very warm and gentle with them.

Kerry gave my family some fantastic coping strategies for the future.

drummond street's whole-of-family practice model

WHOLE-OF-FAMILY-BASED INTERVENTIONS – THE KNIGHT FAMILY

The Knight family were referred to drummond street by their local school wellbeing officer who reported that both children (Steven 9 yrs and Alice 11yrs) appeared sad and their interest in school had waned substantially. Steven was prone to outbursts of rage and bullied other students, whilst Alice frequently cried in class.

Alice and Steven lived with their mother Alison (42 years) and her partner (stepfather) of 6 years Paul (60 years). The initial referral did not include any details about the children's father, Ryan. As part of drummond street's whole of family practice (despite Ryan's initial hesitation to engage, he talked at length during his first session about his mental health concerns, compounded by unemployment and feeling he was not a 'real father' as he was not able to provide financially for his children). Ryan was supported to access mental health support to treat his depression, improve self-esteem, and address issues that were impacting on his ability to parent.

Based on a whole of family assessment each family member was offered a mix of individual and group supportive interventions over many months including;

- > Parenting information and support strategies to respond to Alice and Steven's emotional and developmental needs.
- > Whole-of-Family counselling and coaching to challenge and strengthen dynamics across all relationships in the family.
- > Couples work to improve communication and reduce frustrations and misunderstandings.
- > Specialised Step family support to address and improve dynamics between children, and most importantly the adults.
- > All parents attended a parenting group to build their skills and confidence, along with making connections with other parents (Alison

and Paul attended together, whilst Ryan attended after his mental health sessions, feeling better equipped in managing his depression; and

- > Individual Child ATAPS sessions by a ds child psychologist to assist Steven and his parents with emotional and behavioural strategies and to manage his and their emotions.

Over 8 months, all family members participated in individual and group sessions focused on child mental health information and support strategies, pro-social modelling of positive communication and working through individual and family goals across a number of family wellbeing domains that inform all drummond street's practice, culminating in a positive, joint session of co-parents, stepparent and children, where each could reflect on what they had learnt about themselves and one another in a safe, facilitated environment and to develop some positive 'family rules' that could apply across households.

Alison reflected "that it wouldn't have been possible for them to all be in the same room together prior to getting support, let alone agree on co-parenting arrangements". Ryan felt better able to be 'present' for his children and was very proud that he was working part-time, now his own mental health issues were addressed.

Simon, previously the reluctant and frustrated step-father, talked about how the process was initially confronting and threatened by Ryan's presence in the children's and his partner's lives, however, as he was able to strengthen his relationship with Alison and focus on the formation of their stepfamily, he recognised and conceded the importance for Steven and Alice to maintain a positive relationship with their father. Both Steven and Alice were happier, enjoying spending time with their father as well as more accepting of their mother's partner. Feedback from the school was that Steven now had more control over his emotions and no longer had to fight with other children, and Alice had reconnected with her peers and her schoolwork.

FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING (FMHSS) – THE JASO FAMILY

The Jaso family presented for FMHSS support, based on a referral from the children's primary school, parents (Jon and Elsa) had separated four years earlier, with all 3 children in the primary care of their mother. The divorce was marred with high conflict and acrimony and difficult co-parenting arrangements due to the children's expressed aversion to their father. The children presented to the service distressed, anxious and withdrawn, particularly the eldest (Robert 10yrs).

Our FMHSS work is predicated on evidence-based practice principles that ensure interventions are child-focused and family based, as well as be clear in their intent and inclusive of all family members by engagement of all relevant care-givers within the lives of the children and respond to individual and family issues and where each individual is at. This meant that all adults participated in a number of sessions, including all the children, and the step-father (Elsa's new partner). Teachers and School Wellbeing Officers were consulted, specifically in regards to the behaviours, academic performance and the children's connections to peers and friends.

The children were doing generally well, but Robert was frequently disruptive and angry towards others in class without the presence of an obvious trigger. He had withdrawn from his friendship groups and increasingly didn't want to go to school, particularly after visiting his father. The father, Jon remained distressed about the divorce, stating that he found it difficult to move on, having problems with sleeping and drinking along with feelings of sadness and anger about not keeping his marriage or his family together. He did also acknowledge his behaviour towards his former wife was at times verbally abusive, unacceptable and undermining which also had a negative impact on his children and their relationship with him. Jon was also angry and hostile towards his wife's new relationship.

Elsa and her partner (David) did not always share their attitudes and approaches to parenting, which caused stress in their relationship, particularly in responding to Robert's apparent disinterest in connecting with both his father and his 'step-father' (David). The aim of the intervention was to develop an immediate and longer-term

I have enjoyed my service to help mine and my sons life.

Thank you for helping me put my thoughts into perspective.

Thank you for being neutral in the conflict with my former husband

I could continue on with more positive feedback, but I feel I've made it clear I am highly happy with the service and support.

Has been helpful to have reassurance what I have been trying to do was on the right track.

Helpful to have advice and build on strategies I was already trying to implement biggest plus was having a "sounding board" and the offer additional strategies to try.



support plan with a set of clear, achievable individual and family goals with the key aim of reducing child and parental stress and improve the children's experiences of family and adult relationships.

With now the whole family engaged and active in their want to resolve issues and improve their relationships with one another to create a more positive home environment for everyone. Jon was encouraged and supported to seek his own support, offered as part of our integrated family services practice, linking him to counselling to address his anger and grief regarding his marriage and his co-parenting with his children. The FMHSS allows for flexible responses, with sessions for all 3 children (individual and group), where they could explore and express their feelings about their parent's divorce, how their family had changed and the way their father talked about their mother at times and how the adults in the family communicated. Robert was able to explore his sense of responsibility to look after his siblings over the years when their parents were arguing, and understanding and accepting it was the parents (the adults) who are (and should be) responsible for keeping them safe.

Jon grew to understand and act to show he was a present and engaged dad, regardless of his marriage breakdown, and to reflect on his own emotional behavioural patterns, his communication and the need to shift his focus if he was to achieve his expressed goal of being a 'different' dad, rather than angry and fixated on the past or his former wife's new relationship. Jon also participated in one-to-one practical parenting, as well as a parenting skills group to build his knowledge and confidence, including practical strategies to manage his own emotions and his interactions with his former partner and his children, particularly when they spent time with him. Additional support was provided for Elsa and her partner, David to facilitate the children's acceptance of the mother's new partner, the changes in their family unit, as well as managing her own anxieties towards her former husband, so her children could maintain positive relationships with their father. Robert, no longer refused to go to school and started to re-connect with his school work and his friends, and all 3 children and their father were slowly progressing their reacquaintance, whilst Elsa and David were able to work together as both strong partners and as a team



*I have been given HOPE!!!
Being in recovery is very
hard especially emotionally.*

*drummond street has been
my saviour in more
ways than words can explain!!*

*I have the deepest gratitude for this life saving
organisation.*

*Can't speak highly enough of the service we have
received!!! Marie is great!!*

*I am extremely appreciative and pleased, in
particular with my children's counsellors as they are
absolutely amazing comforting, understanding and
very supportive.*

*I appreciate the help that I have been given, it may
not have resolved the issue I have with my 16 yo ASD
son but I feel calmer and more able to deal with it.*

*I have enjoyed working with Tamara. She has been a
wonderful support to my family.*

*I have learnt new ways to deal with family
problems such as fights between my children and
understanding their feelings better.*

*I feel I am better able to communicate with my
children now days.*

Thanks you for everything :)

African Family Support Program

DOMAINS OF WELLBEING – HOUSING, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL MOBILITY – DRUMMOND STREET'S AFRICAN FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

KHADJA

Khadja is a 34 year Eritrean mother, with a son (12yrs) and daughter (8yrs). Much of her young life has been tumultuous and traumatic, witnessing her father and husband's execution as part of ongoing civil conflict, walking hundreds of kilometres to a Sudan refuge with her mother and her sisters, her mother's death at the refugee camp, leaving Khadja widowed and caring for both herself and her young children.

After many years waiting for approval to migrate to Australia, within days of her arrival, she was disowned by her sole relative, leaving herself and her children homeless. Khadja had no options and little knowledge, confidence or resources to access support. The local Eritrean community arranged for her to stay at different families' houses, moving between the lounge rooms of 'stranger' families for a few nights before moving on to another house.

Khadja demonstrated great resilience in managing the cross-town transits and house changes every few days to ensure her children were connected to and attended their respective schools. However, over the days, weeks and months it was difficult to sustain her hope, optimism or a semblance of wellbeing. Her

mental and physical health more and more diminished as she went through the many doors and reception areas of organisations seeking help, whilst 'holding on for her children'.

Khadja was referred to our African Family Support Program (AFSP) as she was told by some local community members that **drummond street** could help her and her children. The AFSP service is not just limited to a single presenting issue, but assesses a family or individual against a nexus of wellbeing domains, to address the immediate needs to engage, focus and to achieve some small successes or initial goals. Therefore, Khadja felt more empowered, informed and prepared to explore any longer-term issues or concerns at her pace, and in the context of what else was going on in her life and her priorities. The most important thing for Khadja was to find a safe place and home and 'start a life' with her children.

Unfortunately, despite the 'no wrong door' of many services and government, it is a common story, played out across communities, where help-seeking can become a complex navigation of service and system eligibility criteria and bureaucracies that overwhelm and corrode. Dealing with the service system obstacle course only exacerbated Khadja's despair, and without

drummond street's

professional, emotional and practical support, along with sustained advocacy (and only after many months) could Khadja and her children's dire circumstances be turned around.

The securing of safe, stable and family-appropriate social housing is no small achievement, needing culturally sensitive, practical and emotional support along with fearless advocacy. This was only possible after Khadja (and the AFSP) encountered countless closed doors in an under-resourced public and social housing system, which increasingly is unable to support families or parents with children, due to inappropriate, inaccessible or unsafe housing options.

Now that Khadja has addressed the fundamental need of shelter for herself and her children, she can embark on further work to address her mental health concerns, her post-settlement life and her parenting aspirations and dreams for her children.





WHAT IS MYMOB?

The MyMob app engages modern, changing and expanding families by offering a fun and practical communication tool that fosters positive communication in a family friendly tone, similar to how it might normally happen over the family kitchen table!

Whether organising the family diary or posting on the family fridge, MyMob connects families in a safe online environment to help them overcome issues that may be at play in direct communication with one another.

For kids, their parents are now only a swipe of a finger away, no matter how far away physically they might actually be.

MyMob helps work with complex co-parenting arrangements, recognising the flexibility families need to allow their new situations to gently develop and change over time as new relationships are formed and life circumstances for the parents and their children change.

RESEARCH-BASED INITIATIVE

Stepfamilies Australia & drummond street services have an ongoing collaboration with Deakin University in family research, program development and evaluation. Our research, along with other studies, show a number of risks are associated with parental separation, including mental health problems, alcohol and other drug abuse, high conflict and family violence.

Separated parents can also experience high levels of stress because of the required level of ongoing contact in shared parenting arrangements, particularly with new intimate relationships and the interactions between former and new partners, children and step-children.

INNOVATIVE NEW APPROACH USING TECHNOLOGY

Innovative, non-judgmental interventions that provide and encourage safe and supportive communication between family members within busy, changing and/or expanding arrangements can reduce these risks, supporting families to learn new ways of being and of communicating.

New technologies also offer us an innovative and exciting platform to provide a space for contemporary families to better navigate these normal family life issues as a starting point for more intensive supports to be accessed.

ENCOURAGING POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

MyMob is designed to encourage and support families with positive communication. MyMob has a built in positive communication filter that detects and prevents the use of negative and violent words. Users are encouraged to understand that use of this language isn't helpful around their children and are presented with helpful resources on how to improve their use of positive communication.

MODERN FAMILIES CAN BE COMPLEX

MyMob has specific functionality to help the modern and often complex family structures of today. MyMob helps parents and carers coordinate who is taking care of the kids throughout the week, what important events are happening and who needs to be there.

KIDS ARE THE FOCUS

MyMob was designed with the kids in mind, the App encourages the children of the family to participate, with their own special Kids Zone space where they can share their creativity and feelings with their family.

KEY POINTS

- > MyMob was created by Stepfamilies Australia and **drummond street services**
- > MyMob is a free application available for iPhone, iPad and Android devices on the App Store and Google Play or at **www.MyMob.com**
- > MyMob – Now it's easy for families to stay connected
- > You can also be part of multiple mobs – great for grandparents and blended families
- > Whether you're a busy family, or a shared parenting family, MyMob encourages positive communication to help you build a stronger family



The What the Family?! (WTFamily?!) App was developed based on our 5 year research project called Just Families.

drummond street services has for the past five years conducted (in-depth) explorative research into the first family transition stage, of 'couples transitioning to parenthood'. Our initial intention was to explore the issues which contribute to this perinatal period, of pregnancy and the first twelve months, being the *highest risk* times for onset of family violence and to develop a targeted family violence prevention and early intervention program.

Intervening early before violence has occurred is of the utmost importance, and the transition to parenthood brings many issues to the fore that impact on the health and wellbeing of both the child, parents and other family members. This is a critical, early intervention opportunity that is unfortunately too often missed as services and systems are either too narrow in their focus, don't consider the totality of risks or are not confident in asking the questions and the assessment of relevant risk factors.

The following were identified as *early risk* factors during this transition which can flag future family violence, mental health and other problems:

- > Relationship Conflict (including those relating to Attachment styles)

- > Transition-Related Issues – Parenting and issues to do with the child
- > Mental health vulnerabilities – Adults and Infant
- > Anger and violence (or Withdrawal)
- > Problematic alcohol or other drug use
- > Lack of support /isolation
- > Conflicts in relation to extended family/ culture
- > Past experience of abuse/trauma
- > Financial pressures
- > Problematic gender role attitudes

drummond street services' along with broader Australian research indicate strongly that during pregnancy and prior to the arrival of the baby, issues arise for both women and men that impact on their couple relationship, and on their mental health and coping. The arrival of a baby with the resultant lack of sleep and new emotional and material demands, external stressors relating to finances, work and inadequate levels of family or community support all impede parents' abilities to adapt to this transition, their coping capacities, and at times the provision of the essential basic physical, emotional and mental health for their infant, and for one another. Conversely, it is this

transition that is an optimal and important early intervention point, as families (including fathers) come into positive and frequent contact with universal services and are open to education, information and support, that promotes the well-being of their children. (Positive paternal involvement in their children's care is well documented as a protective factor and a contributor to improved wellbeing outcomes for children and families.)

On the basis of these 10 identified early risk factors, an Early Intervention (EIS) Screening Tool (Checklist) was developed which asks gentle, non-intrusive questions to enable the identification of early risk, vulnerabilities and potential supportive responses. Further, psycho-education and community support resources, relating to these 10 early risk factors, were developed to support prevention and pathways to early intervention and specialist services.

The (EIS) Screening Tool can be administered by Perinatal Practitioners, Family Support and Early Years Practitioners or self-administered by couples. This provides professionals and the couple or individual new parent with ideas and suggestions about potential challenges and vulnerabilities for their family (often pre-dating the pregnancy) and provides information resources and actively link them to community and service supports.

The development of the What the Family?! Screening and Resources Tool into a smart phone/device application has come about through research showing positive population reach and outcomes via the use of technology, and the high user rates of Smartphone applications of couples at this transitional life stage.

The What the Family?! app is essentially the Early Intervention Screening tool adapted for maximum population reach and accessibility. It is a universal application downloadable to anyone with a smart phone or tablet. The app highlights these 10 risk factors in an inclusive, low stress way using an interface that is slightly humorous, interactive and friendly.

The references to conflictual and family violence risks are non-confrontational, instead the app will detect 'at risk' users

and signpost them to comprehensive helpful tips and/or further resources. It also aims to encourage positive and early help-seeking behaviours which are so important if we are to respond effectively to early risks including the escalation of family violence risks.

drummond street services designed this app to provide maximum reach for the What the Family?! model and the opportunity for both parents, family members and service professionals to identify the potential negative impacts for new parents and sign post them to accessible trusted help. By identifying negative consequences early the WTFamily?! app, along with information resources and professional sector training, aims to prevent family violence and address and build protective factors that achieve safe and positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes for children and new parents.



Centre for Family Research Evaluation (CFRE)

drummond street established a research and practice partnership with Deakin University several years ago, resulting in the establishment of the Centre for Family Research and Evaluation (CFRE).

CFRE partners have the shared aims of;

- > promoting the health and wellbeing of all Australian families by contributing to the evidence-base of family based interventions; and
- > building sector capacity to strengthen evidence-based programs through expertise and collaboration.

Over this time, this partnership has enabled us to undertake in-depth evaluation of our programs, with particular focus on key family transitions and the use of family-based approaches within a public health promotion framework, and the use of universal and targeted interventions to support the refinement of our own Family Services Practice model. Specific research projects such as Just Families; Couples transitioning to Parenthood research project, has now been embedded into our own practices, such as the screening of risks on a parent's presentation to our services and for individual and group support to parents and children, which has now morphed to the development of our family-based '**WTF! What the Family' App** and Professional

Training package which increases our reach to parents and practitioners with key health and wellbeing information and as a pathway to support during this critical transition for children and parents.

CFRE's combined skillsets, brings together practice expertise, academic rigour, and importantly the perspectives of practice to research, as well as access to contemporary evidence that helps support practices and programming that will have the greatest impact or contribute to positive help-seeking experiences to those children, young people, individuals and families who come to organisations (like us) for assistance and support.

As an organisation with a long history of delivering different family support, relationship and mental health counselling, parent support, youth services, community engagement and mental health promotion programs, alongside child and adolescent and adult mental health interventions, over many years, and all within the often challenging context of changes in funding and contractual requirements and the costs of resourcing data collection and investing in evaluation. Even with access to academic partners, there still needs to be tangible and practical ways to bridge the research, evidence, policies and practice gap.



Expert Panel Project

For many organisations, despite a willingness and an interest in engaging with research, evidence and evaluation, as a means to determine the investment of resources, specific programming, or to validate or assess the effectiveness of approaches, it can be very difficult for many organisations (irrespective of size and will) to systematically and consistently engage with these important processes or know where to start.

We have been pleased to offer our 'expertise' and experiences as part of the Australian Government's, Department of Social Services, **Expert Panel Project** (managed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)), and through our CFRE sector support program, to support a number of Family and Children's services in the specific areas of *Outcomes Measurement* and *Programme Planning and Implementation* across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Often all agencies need is information and methods that are understandable and relevant to their practice, that are practical and simple to implement over time. This is where the **Expert Panel** has a useful role, in supporting, accessing and synthesising the relevant research evidence into an efficient, coherent framework and methods for agencies to implement into their practices and bring research expertise to validate their efforts.

This **Expert Panel** work has enabled us to be a combination of peer practitioners, researchers, coaches, mentors, translators and navigators, and it has been a privilege to contribute actively to this much-needed shift to evidence-based practices and policies to ensure the greatest impacts and contribute to both frontline and organisational services to support the children, young people, individuals and families who come to organisations (like us) for assistance and support.

Additionally our **Expert Panel** work has allowed us to reflect on our continued work in this area and what would be a beneficial research and evaluation focus to contribute to our sector's practice, as well as assisting peer agencies to access and apply the relevant evidence as part of their day-to-day practice. We are happy to continue to provide the support as part of (and beyond the life) of the **Expert Panel Project**.



Please contact our sector support service at **drummond street services**, Centre for Family Research Education (CFRE) and our Research and Evaluation team on +61 03 9663 6733 or at DrummondSectorSupport@ds.org.au or enquiries@ds.org.au

Royal Commission Community-based Support Service

drummond street's Royal Commission Community-Based Support Service (RCCBSS) is a community-based, evidence-informed individual and whole-family support model of care, underpinned by a trauma informed framework, recognising the nexus between poor mental health, substance abuse, family violence, suicide ideation, relationship formation and child sexual abuse (CSA) histories and the long-term impacts on survivors and their families, including risks of transmission of intergenerational sexual abuse.

Our dedicated RCCBSS team are skilled, multi-disciplinary practitioners providing one-to-one support, case work and support peer-led activities through either direct contact, telephone or web-based counselling and groups across Melbourne and Geelong.

Our support and care model constitutes stepped support to ensure the intensity and frequency of support meets the needs, for each survivor and their family, including children. Our RCCBSS needs to embody both our claims and the expectations of survivors, particularly in terms of flexibility and accessibility, and at the time and place an individual directs their support needs; including CSA survivors, their families and those impacted vicariously.

The RCCBSS support enables survivors (and families) to make informed decisions in the sharing of their stories with the Commission (prior, throughout and after), along with accessing either brief, immediate or longer-term support to deal with the stress and distress resulting from the increased community attention of CSA (indirect impacts); and the specific issues for survivors, including engagement or re-connections with family or peers as part of healing and recovery goals.

Acknowledging that sustained exposure to complex trauma can impact on practitioner's wellbeing, the RCCBSS team is supported by **drummond street's** practitioner workforce. Operating within our broader trauma-informed, whole-of-family service framework, recognising the constellation of risks, i.e. poorer mental health, physical health and wellbeing, problematic alcohol and substance abuse, family violence, CSA and relationships histories and the childhood trauma impacts taken into their adult lives and the lives of their families and children.

Our RCCBSS intake screening and assessment (applicable to all ds clients) identifies risks and protective strengths (as per *Mental Health Intervention Spectrum* (Mrazek and Haggerty, 1994,) which asserts that addressing health risks requires support efforts across the entire

spectrum of interventions and whole-of-family assessments are completed, particularly where multiple and complex risks are present. This is foundational in all our client work.

Although we have delivered these types of interventions, including complex trauma resulting from CSA, over many years, our work with survivors, alongside a legal and redress process, has given us an invaluable learning for our practice. It has affirmed our family-focused approach, locating each 'client' as a person within the context of family, peers, and community, particularly important for healing and recovery beyond the limits of any professional support.

This context is self-evident, but can often be put aside during the process of individual 'clinical' work. This family protective factors frame is a key influence on impact and recovery trajectories, it is vital that support is family-aware, (and where appropriate) family-inclusive. This lens also acknowledges both historical and current survivor's experiences and relationships; from those with families to protect and support, whereas others have no support and those who have also experienced familial abuse, alongside institutional abuse. Other learning emphasises that client needs and circumstances in this setting requires responses that can shift between advocacy and therapeutic

interventions, cognisant that the advocacy process (albeit important and necessary), can be a triggering event, therefore we need to be able to hold, contain, respond and shift with each individual.

As survivors have experienced abuse within institutional settings, any advocacy also needs to maintain respect, empowerment and dignity. We need to maintain our 'no wrong door' approach and be transparent in our reach and limits and facilitate the involvement of other supports and resources when needed.

Support needs to be safe and offer empowering choices that offer personal agency, with knowledge and support to engage with the social and legal infrastructure of this RC process.

We have actively encouraged and welcomed feedback, particularly those from survivors, which has validated or strengthened our approaches or assisted us to shift, adapt and refine our service support and consolidate some of the following critical care and support elements;

RCCBSS PRACTICE LEARNING AND PRINCIPLES

- > Practitioners demonstrate their commitment, patience, compassion, sincerity, along with practice expertise.
- > Transparency, regarding support limits and boundaries.
- > Flexibility to be privileged so survivors can define the nature and extent of support.
- > Recognise the dynamics between 'practitioner' and 'client' and a willingness to explore this.
- > Respond to where clients are at; from intensive and frequent case or therapeutic support, to one-off debriefing or 'as needed' support.
- > Trust, as an action, not just a concept – *'Say what you do and Do what you say'* at all times.
- > The importance of practitioner and client 'fit'. If the match isn't right then change the practitioner to allow the therapeutic relationship to flourish.

- > Flexibility in regards to privacy and anonymity to requests to forgo consents, case documentation and non-disclosure within reasonable limits, duty of care and the management of client and organisational risks. A willingness to accommodate, negotiate and communicate with each individual circumstances.
- > The import of normalizing experiences, with links to peer supports, to reduce social isolation and disconnection and to enhance the experiences of being heard and believed.
- > Offering a broad range of support through different modes and locations, including centre-based, telephone, web-based, outreach and home-based support to address any financial, emotional and geographical barriers.
- > Skill-building through psycho-education and practical coping strategies to assist the regulation of trauma reactions and physiological, stress responses and functioning.

With the Royal Commission expected to continue over the next year, discussions between survivors, families, supporters, advocates, organisations, sectors, institutions and governments will continue to work through future redress and support mechanisms. It is important, at this juncture, to acknowledge survivors who have shared their harrowing experiences in the hope that what happened to them will never happen again to another child (in care or otherwise), that telling, sharing, hearing and believing is powerful and healing, that connections with others who truly understand is important, that support needs to be long-term and recovery is hard, but possible.

Finally, any future support services need to be informed by what has been learned, that 'do no harm', trauma-informed care and practice is front and centre, and is therapeutic, not just transactional, 'pathologising or 'over-medicalised'. Truly client-led, strengths-based, optimistic, flexible recovery approaches connected to other support systems; i.e. housing, financial, education and employment will strengthen capacities, hope and engagement and will result in sustained, achievable, authentic and respectful recovery and healing pathways.



What does drummond street services do?

drummond street delivers a range of prevention, early intervention and targeted, specialist support for children, young people, adults and families across the family life-course, and at key family transitions. Our services are open to all and reflect the diversity of contemporary life and families that *Promote Wellbeing for Life* & support all relationships.

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS SERVICES (FARS)

drummond street's *Family and Relationship Services* supports couples, families and parents with family relationship issues, at all stages and life-course transitions, including forming relationships, overcoming difficulties or dealing with separation, parenting and the care of children. It includes *Family Law Counselling* to support those wanting to remain together, or who are separated, separating or in dispute to improve their relationships in the best interests of children.

HOPE (HANDS ON PARENTING EDUCATION)

Supporting parents and their children to affirm and promote positive parenting and instil greater parental confidence through information, skill-building and promoting positive help-seeking. This include group and home-based practical parenting support for families with children 0–5yrs.

FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES (FMHSS)

drummond street delivers evidence-informed, community-based, child-focused, family-based interventions across a number of service sites in Melbourne and Geelong.

FMHSS provides support to families with children and young people (0-18yrs) through 3 levels of engagement; information and brief and longer-term supportive interventions;

- > Intensive, (up to 12 mths) longer term, early risk, early-onset child and adolescent-focused interventions, along with practical whole-of-family assistance to improve the long-term outcomes for vulnerable children and young people at risk of, or affected by, mental illness. This includes targeted therapeutic group work.
- > Brief Interventions: Counselling, case support, information and referral for families requiring short-term immediate assistance; and
- > Mental Health Community Awareness & Engagement activities; working with community members and local service partners with mental health & wellbeing health promotion, education and community engagement activities that increase community and individual's (particularly parent's) understanding and responsiveness to children or young people at risk of, or affected by mental illness.

What does drummond street services do?

KIDZTALK (ATAPS)

In partnership with the Melbourne Primary Care Network, **drummond street** delivers the *Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS)* Program providing short term mental health services for children (0-11yrs) with, or at risk of mental health, emotional and behavioural concerns or disorders.

Kidztalk offers clinically appropriate interventions by skilled, allied mental health professionals for up to 12 sessions (with a GP referral) with a focus on families and individuals who do not have the capacity to pay for full-fee psychological services.

drummond street also offers Adult-focused ATAPs and Better Access mental health support, including queer specific ATAPS, general adult ATAPS.

QUEERSPACE

queerspace provides a safe and supportive space aimed at improving mental health and wellbeing by specialist queer and queer affirmative mental health practitioners. It is Australia's first LGBTIQ mental health service.



QUEERSPACE OFFERS

- > Individual, couple and whole-of-family counselling
- > Relationship and parenting support services
- > Better Access & ATAPS counselling
- > Youth counselling, support and groups programs
- > Group education programs and;
- > Peer support and social activities

Building strong, healthy relationships can be a challenge when dealing with issues relating to intimacy, communication, conflict, parenting and families.

LGBTIQ individuals, couples and their families often have additional stresses on their wellbeing and their personal relationships, i.e. coming out, parenting, families and navigating medical and other service systems.

queerspace offers support that is affirming & sensitive to individual's and the queer communities' diversity, including sexual and gender identities.

ROYAL COMMISSION COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (RCCBS)

On 11 January 2013, the Australian Government appointed a six-member *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.

drummond street is one of three Victorian providers delivering support services for survivors across Melbourne and Victoria.

RCCBS PROVIDES:

Support for individuals (survivors and their families) to engage with the Royal Commission process, including:

- > Case management, and supportive counselling.
- > Supported referrals to the Royal Commission and other agencies, including information on engaging with the Commission and sharing their stories.
- > De-briefing, supportive counselling and support and links to appropriate longer-term therapeutic supports.
- > Provision therapeutic support for those engaged with or affected by the Royal Commission process, including:

- > Face-to-face counselling/support; telephone counselling; and
- > Individual, support and issues-based advocacy.

AFRICAN FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM (AFSP)

The AFSP (supported by the City of Melbourne) builds on **drummond street's** community development and family support to local families, specifically those from Horn of Africa communities and living in Inner Melbourne. Our support focus strengthens communities and individuals and promotes the social inclusion, participation and economic mobility of many local families through advocacy, housing and parenting support and facilitated pathways to practical and mental health support.



THE DRUM YOUTH SERVICES

drummond street delivers *the drum youth services* for young people (aged 12-25yrs) who live, work, study and play in Carlton/ Parkville (on behalf of the City of Melbourne).

The drum delivers positive, pro-social community engagement and recreational activities that reflects and affirms the diversity of young people in Inner Melbourne; including CALD young people, public and community housing tenants, international students and queer and gender diverse young people.

The drum delivers services within the local community, schools and in partnership with local services to support the aspirations and participation of young people within school, educational, creative and vocational environments and within their communities. In addition, individual case support for young people and their families is an important element of **the drum's** support, along with a facilitated pathway to mental health support, when needed.



STEPFAMILIES AUSTRALIA

drummond street auspices the National Stepfamilies network, providing training, advocacy, resource development, in addition to individual counselling and links to local services across Australia, acknowledging the unique challenges and support needs for stepfamilies.

Our individual, couple and family support addresses the complexity of stepfamily formation, dynamics, relationships and parenting issues, including supporting children and young people's emotional needs and resilience in dealing with changes in their families and home environments.

Stepfamilies Australia also supports the sector in the delivery of training, evaluation, policy and resource development.

drummond street services

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