

2022

Impact Review



Significant client figures



350

clients were supported
(128 women and 222 children)
25% increase on last year



255

arts therapy sessions were
offered to children aged
4 – 18 years



185

women and children received
a therapeutic service



37

volunteers provide safety and
enable independence for
women and children affected
by family violence

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Our Vision

A community free of family violence.

Our History

Emerge is the only individual specialist family violence, high security refuge, in the Southern Metropolitan area that also offers outreach programs to support women and children experiencing violence.

Established in 1975, it was the second family violence refuge to open in Victoria.

What We Do

Provide safe and secure accommodation for families in crisis within refuge and transitional housing, an outreach program for families at home, and a suite of therapeutic interventions to build independence and help heal from trauma.



From the Chairperson

The past year has yet again seen Emerge support more children than ever before, explore new ways to deliver our sought-after services, and create new services.

It has been a challenging year with another long COVID-19 lockdown but that has not stopped our staff and volunteers in their many efforts to welcome and assist **350** families in refuge and our other accommodation, our outreach program and therapeutic services. This represents a **25%** increase in the women and children we have supported to live safely free from family violence. All those supported in refuge came from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Our impact report reflects the central and ongoing focus of Emerge: providing a safe home and enabling women and children to flourish after they have left violence.

A highlight of the year has been the renovation of our five crisis properties with funding from **Homes Victoria**. The renovation has seen us build valuable partnerships with **ReLove, Built Construction** and **Koala**, and we look forward to growing these partnerships in future years. It has also resulted in Emerge shoring up support from real estate agents and other housing organisations to find new homes for those families who had to move from our accommodation while work was underway.

Our therapeutic services have expanded thanks to philanthropic support from the **Australian Communities Foundation - Paul Ramsay Foundation** and **Moorabbin Rotary** for assisted animal therapy for children and their mothers. We have expanded our renowned arts therapy program with new staff including a professional counsellor and a qualified teacher.

Over the past year we have strengthened our volunteer program, drawing from the commitment and diverse skills of the community to expand the support we provide to women. We now have 37 active volunteers working across Emerge. Each volunteer receives an extensive training program before starting.

During the year, Emerge endorsed the new child safe standards which have come into force in Victoria to better protect children from harm and abuse. The new 11 standards align more closely with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and replace the former seven standards. Critically, a new standard has been created to ensure the cultural safety of First Nations children and children from CALD backgrounds to ensure that services reflect a commitment to equity and accommodating diverse needs. Emerge is committed to continuing to provide a safe, supportive and equitable service for all children that centres their inherent value, safety and wellbeing.

We joined with other family violence services to work on the national plan to reduce violence against women. While we support the newly launched plan, we remain concerned about the lack of specific, time-bound, measurable objectives and targets in place and will continue to build on our advocacy and inform the evidence base to ensure that the critical vision of the national plan is realised.

In early 2022 we farewelled Executive Officer Paula Westhead who left Emerge after eight years. Her time with us saw the building of a new refuge, the development of new services supporting mothers in the Moorabbin magistrates court, research with Swinburne University of Technology and La Trobe University, and the extension of our arts therapy programs. We thank her for the passion and commitment she brought with her to Emerge.

Jane Evans stepped down temporarily from the Board to become the Interim Executive Officer while we searched for a Chief Executive Officer.

I am delighted to welcome Claire Marshall into the position. Claire is a human rights lawyer with a strong background working in senior leadership across government and in the not-for-profit sector. She is an experienced strategist and an expert in the prevention of gendered violence. Claire commenced her role on 2 November 2022.

We extend our gratitude to staff, who continue to work with compassion, professionalism and deep care to drive strong outcomes for the women and children we work with. We pay tribute to our many volunteers who work tirelessly alongside our staff. Emerge couldn't be possible without the amazing contribution from a dedication group of my fellow Board Members including Jane Evans, Shelly Park, Eva Perez, Jane Stuchberry, and Rowena Thiele.

Nothing would be possible without government and philanthropic funding, community and corporate donations and partnerships.

We thank you and know that your continued support will enable us to help more women and children stay safe, flourish and live free from violence.



Deb Goldfinch
Chairperson

Providing safe housing for women and children

The past year has seen **89%** of families with medium or high needs supported by Emerge. During their time with us, their needs can alter on a week to week, day to day basis.

A family may be subpoenaed to Family Court, discover multiple debts taken out in their name, and have a child diagnosed with a disability which can all add increased stressors to their mental health increasing challenges in other areas of their recovery.

Providing a safe place to live and prepare for their life outside Emerge is a vital aspect to our work. Our refuge has been full throughout the year, supporting more children than ever. Our crisis accommodation has been temporarily unavailable due to renovations.

Significant barriers to social housing remain an ongoing issue for women and children experiencing family violence, with only **3%** of families receiving an offer to move into Office of Housing properties. We have seen good access to private rentals with **18%** of clients leaving refuge to a rented home. Our staff have worked with women on their budgets, cover letters and applications to ensure that they are well positioned to secure and continue to rent a safe home. Volunteers have attended housing inspections and advocated with real estate agencies to support the applications.

Our Fresh Start Fund supports women and children to provide one month's rent paid in advance to secure their new beginning in the community. Our partnership with **ReLove** has enable used to provide additional furniture as well as applications to the Government's Flexible Support Program for furnishing and white goods.

A major success has been our partnership with Launch Housing to offer transitional housing to **18%** of our families. We look forward to bolstering this partnership and to more clients enjoying their independence in these properties as they step towards their forever homes.

Over the past year:



42 women and **123** children were housing in refuge and crisis accommodation



7 children in refuge were infants (0-2 years)



16 women and **28** children in transitional housing



100% women in refuge from CALD backgrounds



18% of women supported arrived in refuge without permanent residency and no income



100% women and children were homeless before arriving



19% of women and children were supported into private housing

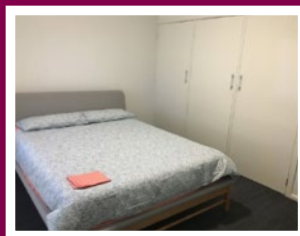


The most common age range for women was between **26** and **35** years



Family violence (all presenting) housing crisis affordability, stress continue to be the highest reasons for seeking refuge, and **100%** said they were unable to go home.

Our five crisis properties were renovated during the year. The renovations included work to kitchens and bathrooms, painting throughout the houses, repairs to water damage and plumbing, and replacement of floors. Building work was carried out by **FACE Construction** with Peter Wright, from **Wright Architects** supporting the completion of the works. Working in partnership with **ReLove**, **BUILT Construction** and **Koala**, we have been able to furnish the homes with new beds, mattresses, dining tables and chairs, bedding and kitchen sets.



Our outreach program at work

Emerge is one of the few family violence services in Victoria offering a comprehensive outreach program which covers every aspect of what women need after leaving family violence.

A hallmark of our work over the past year has been to become more flexible in reaching out to women and children. Across COVID-19 lockdowns we have increased the flexibility of our outreach with staff and volunteers with online and telephone engagement and service deliver. As we move into the new phase of the pandemic, we will continue to offer virtual services as well as our more traditional face-to-face work.

Through the year, our outreach program reached **66** new families including **99** children.

Our staff have provided personalised support to infants and teenagers, including their own safety plan and arts therapy sessions. We have appointed new children's case managers, a counsellor and qualified teacher to meet this demand. We have also put a team of family law support volunteers in place to support women as they move through the myriad of legal requirements.

Helping reduce fear of COVID-19 vaccines

Emerge was funded through the Priority Communities Vaccination Unit within the **Department of Families, Fairness and Housing** to run a program to support women and children get over their fear of COVID-19 vaccines.

Around **85%** of women who took part were from CALD backgrounds. We heard that their hesitation was centred around misinformation and fear that they had encountered.

In all, **30** women and children attended community sessions, **45** women receive one-one sessions with an interpreter involved; **36** women and older children attended group sessions; and **22** volunteers and staff attended information sessions on second and third doses.

The results of our program were significant and increased the safety of both the women and children we work with and the broader community. **133** bookings and vaccinations were carried out for the first vaccination dose; and **101** bookings and vaccinations for the second dose. Boosters were not due by the time the project ended.

Over the past year:



86 new families including **99** children were supported last year by outreach



185 clients were supported through program assessment, individual arts therapy and counselling



16 women were assisted with individual counselling



24 women were supported with parenting support



10 women were counselled through arts therapy group



1.5% of outreach clients identified as being from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.



Children first

Over the last year, Emerge supported 123 children in crisis and transitional accommodation, a 15% increase on the previous year. This is in part due to the larger units at refuge which can accommodate up to six children per unit.

Emerge staff liaise with childcare centres, schools and enhanced maternal child health nurses as well as run the specialist infant mental health groups on site at refuge.

Our work with children over the past year has benefited immensely from generous new partnerships with the **Australian Communities Foundation - Paul Ramsay Foundation** and **Street Smart**.

Children supported by Emerge have faced the double disadvantage of forced relocations from schools, friends and familiar communities while having to cope with almost two years of intermittent lockdowns. Isolation during Covid-19 has damaged their opportunity to build new relationships and feel safe.

Funding from the ACF – Paul Ramsay Foundation has enabled Emerge to develop and deliver a program to assist children to empower their social skills, learn how to play again, engage with friends and feel safe and supported.

The program, guided by a professional counsellor and qualified teacher and in conjunction with our therapeutic services, has seen children making progress with their social skills and rebuild their resilience and self-esteem. Children have improved in school and developed more positive relationships with other children and adults in critical steps toward healing from family violence.

Back to school with Street Smart

It is not easy starting a new school, and this is made particularly hard when you are living in refuge. Children in refuge face ongoing trauma as well as having to leave their family home and the communities they know. Many of children are reluctant to attend new schools. Their mothers are significantly impacted by limited finances to buy new uniforms, shoes and books. Thanks to funding from Street Smart, Emerge with the assistance of volunteers has been able to fund essential school items for all school-aged children living in refuge, ensuring that the children we work with have a strong start to school with the resources that they need.

Over the past year, Emerge has supported 123 children in crisis accommodation and 99 children in therapeutic and outreach programs. This represents a 15% increase on children supported through the previous year.



18 children aged between 0 – 2

51 children aged between 3 and five

— 68 children aged between 6 and 8

— 43 children aged between 9 and 11

— 28 children aged between 12 and 14

— 14 teenagers aged between 15 and 17.



Images: Volunteers from the Chelsea Heights Community Garden worked with children feeding chickens, planting vegetables, and tending to the worm farm.

Our therapeutic program is more than arts

The last year has seen our therapeutic program expand to include pet therapy with **Lead the Way** and play therapy working with volunteers in the refuge garden, as well as taking part in school holiday programs.

The comprehensive program is led by a team of art therapists, counsellors and play therapists who provide a flexible approach to working with clients, depending on their needs, age and preferences.

As with the outreach program, Emerge's therapeutic program now offers teletherapy and phone therapy. We have heard that a significant number of women (**75%**) prefer the virtual program as it more easily fits in with other work or family commitments.

There have been several highlights during the year. Notably Emerge is receiving many more referrals from other family violence and housing agencies to its therapeutic programs. It is a member of the Victorian Refuge Round Table where we are frequently called upon to provide advice and information to the broader sector due to our significant expertise and leading practice.

Emerge has also strengthened its dyadic work, where therapists work directly with mothers and their children to improve relationships. Over the years, we have found that family violence can impact the mother-children bond due to the mother's experience of trauma. Our therapists and counsellors work with mothers to understand their own reactions and their children's experiences through a trauma and attachment lens through parenting support and dyadic groups such as Scribble and Play and Peek-A-Boo™.

During the year, we introduced Scribble and Play, an arts and play based group for mothers and preschool aged children (3-5 years old) who have experienced family violence. The group is recovery focused and provides a space for connection to grow a sense of community. The group explores themes such as safety, emotional literacy and I regulation and working together. Emerge created Scribble and Play to address a waitlist of families with children in the pre-school age group who presented with a need for access to therapeutic services.

Providing a safe nest

Emma is an Art Therapy masters student at MIECAT (Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy) who has been completing her placement with Emerge during the year. As part of the placement, students are required to create something to leave at the organisation. Emma's project was to work with staff and families to produce 'Nest' which is now installed in the refuge's large group room. It is a soft and safe space for mothers and children to take some time out when they need it.

In Emma's words, the nest is:

'A radically soft, warm, accessible and age-fluid sensory cocoon born from the collective wisdom and knowing of co-inquirers at Emerge. Tendrils of recycled fabric have been braided by the members of Emerge to co-create a soft and safe landing space for our bodies. As a participatory installation, the space hopes to blur the boundaries between ages and identities. For all who are connected to Emerge, the space is an invitation to rest, be and connect to our bodies in whatever way that may be.'

Over the past year, Emerge's therapy services have supported:



18 children in 128 arts therapy sessions



30 children in 45 group art therapy sessions, (15% on Zoom)



7 mothers and 7 children in 28 dyadic therapy sessions.



70% of the families are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CALD)



Pets supporting therapy for children

Guinea pigs and dogs have become familiar faces in Emerge’s refuge thanks to the generous support of Moorabbin Rotary, the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Victorian Government.

Our donors have been sponsoring an animal therapy program run by LEAD THE WAY. The animals come in during school term to help children overcome anxiety and stress driven by experiences of family violence.

Animal assisted therapy is an emerging practice in Australia and Emerge is seeing strong outcomes for children who engage with animal therapy as part of our range of therapeutic offerings..

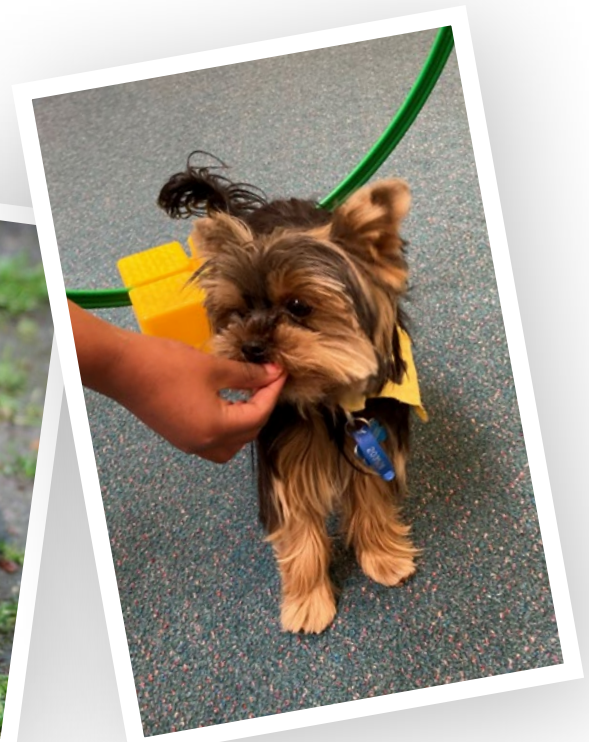
The pets have an immediate positive impact on the children in refuge. Many who find it difficult to regulate their emotions because of the significant trauma of family violence are immediately calmed when they meet and greet the animals. They slow down, tuning into the calmness of the animals as they pet and brush them gently.

Caylee, one of the dogs that is a frequent visitor, has made a huge impact on Pladia*, a nine- year-old girl and Grohnnin*, a four-year-old boy.

Initially very shy and hesitant to engage with Caylee at the first session, Pladia eventually became able to intuit Caylee’s needs and connect to them. Her confidence grew and her curiosity did too. She went from hardly speaking, in a soft and nearly inaudible voice, to confidently working with Caylee and successfully training her. Trainer Denise commented that Pladia’s level of attunement to Caylee was impressive and after seeing the transformation that Pladia had made commented that Pladia was a natural with animals and may work with animals in the future.

Grohnnin was initially unable to be in the room or to concentrate for longer than five minutes. By the end of the term, he was able to sit calmly with Caylee and enjoy patting her, no longer running away when he felt she was too close. He could sit or stand comfortably by her side, feeding her treats and squealing with delight when she would affectionately lick his hand. His speech began to develop as he communicated with the animals, and with the therapists about them.

**Not their real names*



Refocused volunteer program boosts support for women and children

The last year has seen Emerge expand and strengthen its volunteer program including the creation of **11** different new roles, a new data system, and the introduction of a revitalised induction and training program.

There are **37** active volunteers, with more commencing with the Moorabbin Court's childcare program. The roles include refuge office administration, refuge weekend support, housing support, English tutors as well as primary and secondary school support, children's buddies, and resume and job interview support.

A range of new projects include trauma informed yoga for mothers living in the refuge, and food and meals being provided through FareShare and facilitated by volunteer support. A family law support program was introduced with volunteers helping with matters relating to family law, family court processes, and helping women prepare for court cases. Each volunteer is experienced with family law either through their studies or work.

The comprehensive training program covers first aid, information about family violence, child safety, cultural competency and reflective practice.

Over the past year, Emerge's volunteer program has included:



1,500 volunteer hours for the last financial year



37 volunteers



11 new volunteer roles

Meet Vicki, a family law support volunteer

Vicki joined the Emerge volunteer team in 2022 when the new role of 'Family Law Support Volunteer' was created. She is one of six volunteers helping Emerge clients understand many issues relating to family law including legal processes, attending mediation sessions and court hearings in a support role, and providing emotional support.

Vicki comes from a diverse background. She worked in Social Work and Human Resources before returning to university to study Law with the University of New England and follow her passion for Family Law. Her wealth of knowledge in this area has benefited clients as well as informed staff. Vicki intends to specialise in this legal area when she completes upon her degree.



Thank you to our supporters, funders and donors

The last year has continued to see our supporters, funders and donors provide generous support to our work. We thank everyone for their contributions. It makes a huge difference.

Annual Festive Season appeal

A call-out to the community for gifts for children and their mothers saw one of the most generous annual Festive Season appeals run by Emerge. Through donations from local businesses, local philanthropic supporters and partnerships with larger not for profit organisations, over 100 gift bags were made up and distributed to women and children.

Donors included: **Next Steps**, with new toys for children and bedding; **Bayside Community Emergency Relief**, gift cards and food; **Impact for Women**, gift bags and cash; **Brighton Soroptimists**, cash; and other support from many different organisations such as **Glow Beauty** and **RizeUp**.

Snapshot of partner support

We thank our many partners for their continued support through the year. They include **The Funding Network**, **VicHealth Sports**, **VicHealth Holiday Program**, **Built**, **ReLove and Koala** and the **Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victoria)**.

We welcome new partners **Face Construction**, **Peter Wright & Associates** and **Homes Victoria**.

Snapshot of local government support

A multi-year program with **Kingston City Council** has enabled Emerge to run vital therapeutic arts and technology programs for children in the community. The program has embraced the Little Sparkz program which was run at the Chelsea Heights Community Centre. A range of different workshops had a special focus on children from CALD backgrounds. Children were also engaged with the technology robot Matilda. An extension of the program was offered to mothers who were able to access music, dance, and drama therapists, as well as take part in horticultural therapy.

Snapshot of philanthropic support

We welcome the philanthropic support of the **Australian Communities Foundation – Paul Ramsay Foundation**, **FareShare** and **The Funding Network**, among others.

Funding from **Street Smart** enabled Emerge to buy safety devices and fund safety audits and for women and children vacating the refuge. Many of the women and children receiving services from Emerge face long-term homelessness due to a backlog of referrals to housing services. When they finally gain access to accommodation, the first thing they need to assess is the safety of themselves and their children. Many of the available properties are often in new areas they have never lived in before, and areas they are unfamiliar with. It was taking up to 6 weeks minimum for audit and safety recommendations to be provided. Thanks to the funding, Emerge is now able to provide the Safety Audits and the Personal Safety Devices as soon as the families access a property. This helps women and children feel safer from the moment they leave the refuge.

Snapshot of community support

During the year Emerge set up a clothing pop-up shop thanks to the generous donation of mannequins and clothing rails from the owner of a fashion shop in Sorrento. New clothing is available through **Threads Together**, an organisation which collects end-of-line brand new clothing from fashion retailers around the country. Clothing, shoes and accessories are provided for free from **Good360** and donations from **Big W**.

Moorabbin and Mordialloc Rotary Clubs continued to support the refuge by providing an electric BBQ, several outdoor table and chairs and help prepare garden beds.

MacLeod retiree **Rolf Schwabe** donated a dolls' house he had handcrafted to the refuge. Emerge contacted him after seeing a story about the three-storey grand and colourful dolls' house he wanted to give to a worthy cause. Rolf built the one metre house during the pandemic. He also made the furniture, ranging from a fridge to a baby's crib, beds, an oven and a grandfather clock. The house includes a fireplace with little wooden sticks for logs, tiny fish paintings on walls, and its own lavatory. His wife **Gertie** also became involved, sewing the curtains and bed quilts for the dolls' house.



How you can help

Emerge has been helping women and children live free from family violence for over 40 years.

We rely on support from government, philanthropic organisations, businesses and the community to help deliver our vital services, housing and support programs.

By donating or partnering with us you will make a direct impact to helping women and children rebuild their lives after surviving family violence.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

Donate

Donations are vital to our ongoing work and allow us to develop innovative therapeutic programs for women and children that fall outside of our government-funded services. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

To donate please visit our website: emergesupport.org.au/support-our-work/donations

Partnerships

Emerge is committed to long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with local community groups, philanthropic organisations and businesses who share our vision of ending family violence and assisting women and children to rebuild their lives.

Our major donors and partners enable us to ensure our financial stability and continue to deliver our innovative services.

We can offer a diverse range of activities for businesses to engage with our work. This includes enhancing your profile by aligning with our brand, pro-bono work, helping to build staff motivation through volunteering and fundraising work, workplace giving and more.

Schools and community groups

Community groups, such as Rotary and Lions' groups, church groups, and others also work as volunteers on specific projects. We can come and present at your school or your church, and we welcome clubs willing to assist us.

Volunteer

By becoming a volunteer and supporting Emerge, you will form part of a team working to help women and children have safer, brighter lives, while also gaining a unique and valuable personal experience.

Walking in solidarity to end violence against women and children

On Wednesday 25 November 2021, Emerge led one of the many Walk Against Family Violence walks through Victoria to raise awareness and support for survivors. More than 30 employees and volunteers went through Cheltenham. They were joined by the Mayor of the City of Kingston Cr Steve Staikos and the Deputy Mayor Cr Jenna Davey-Burns attended, and police from Cheltenham Police Station. The walkers all wore orange – either clothing or face masks – which is the colour designated by the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign.

The Walk Against Family Violence is timed to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence. The 16-day campaign ends on International Human Rights Day (10 December).



In their own words

'I love coming here. I wanna stay here forever!'

Omar, 8 who attended the Open Studio art therapy group

'It's been a such pleasure spending time volunteering with clients from Emerge, engaging with children either through playtime or tutoring, and supporting mothers as they grow from strength to strength. It's heart-warming and rewarding to be a part of such a great volunteer organisation and see women and their children prosper after difficult and challenging times in their lives.'

Lorna who is a volunteer as a Children's Buddy, English Tutor and Primary Tutor

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work. As we create safe and welcoming homes, we honour the people of the Kulin nation and their enduring connection to their home we call Naarm, Melbourne.

We pay our respects to all First Nations Elders, past and present. And we urge all Australians to embrace the Uluru statement from the heart and what it asks of us.

Emerge would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Family Safety Victoria.



Families,
Fairness
and Housing



Tel: 1300 536 330

mail@emergesupport.org.au

www.emergesupport.org.au

facebook.com/emergesupport

ABN: 66 688 254 017