

Relationships Australia[®]

CANBERRA & REGION

Strategic Plan 2023–2028



Relationships Australia
CANBERRA & REGION

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia. We value their cultures, identities and their continuing connection to land, sea, country, waterways and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Contents



Vision and purpose	2
Values and commitments	3
The environment we operate in	4
Our integrated strategy	5
Respectful relationships	6
Supporting our communities	7
Supporting people across the lifespan	8
Practice excellence and innovation	9
Sustainable organisation	10
Priority initiatives	11

The Board of Relationships Australia
Canberra & Region is delighted to endorse
this plan to guide our work and contribution
to our communities over the next five years.

Vision

Our vision is for people in our communities to enjoy healthy relationships and wellbeing, and to receive meaningful support at times they are in need.

Purpose

Our purpose is to be a trusted provider of relationship support services, counselling, mediation, mental health support, groupwork, restorative practices and case coordination to enable our vision to be realised.

Values and commitments

At Relationships Australia Canberra & Region (RACR) we see, hear and understand our clients and community. We live our values through:

- › walking alongside people, their families and communities with **kindness** and **respect**;
- › being **inclusive** and warmly welcoming everyone to our organisation;
- › committing to the **safety** and wellbeing of all people, especially children and young people;
- › utilising **relational** and restorative approaches in healing relationships;
- › **bravely** championing human rights and social justice;
- › committing to work towards reconciliation with Australia's First Peoples through **truth** and story-telling;
- › acting with **integrity**, being **transparent** and accountable.



The environment we operate in

RACR operates throughout the Australian Capital Territory and the New South Wales South Coast, Southern Tablelands and Riverina regions.

Each area has different social challenges, socio-economic profiles and population groups; as well as, employment and lifestyle opportunities and challenges. There are communities that are reliant on rural economies, those that rely on tourism, and those that rely on the Federal Government operating in its jurisdiction.

In 2023, we are operating in an environment where our community has, and continues to, endure a long period of heightened stress.

Over the last three years Australia has seen a number of natural disaster and extreme weather episodes including bushfires, floods, hailstorms and extreme drought. Some of which have devastated cities and communities, and have increased national fears surrounding global climate change.

Another contributor to stress has been the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Not only has the pandemic caused fear for our health and wellbeing - it has also placed unprecedented restrictions on our movement and interpersonal engagements.

We have seen the pandemic increase family and relationship tensions due to long term confinement; the inability to access regular outlets, such as sports or physical activities; limited social interactions; and additional parenting pressures.

The pandemic has also made a significant impact on connections within communities, increasing feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

The challenges experienced over the last three years have only increased our community's need for a range of support services.

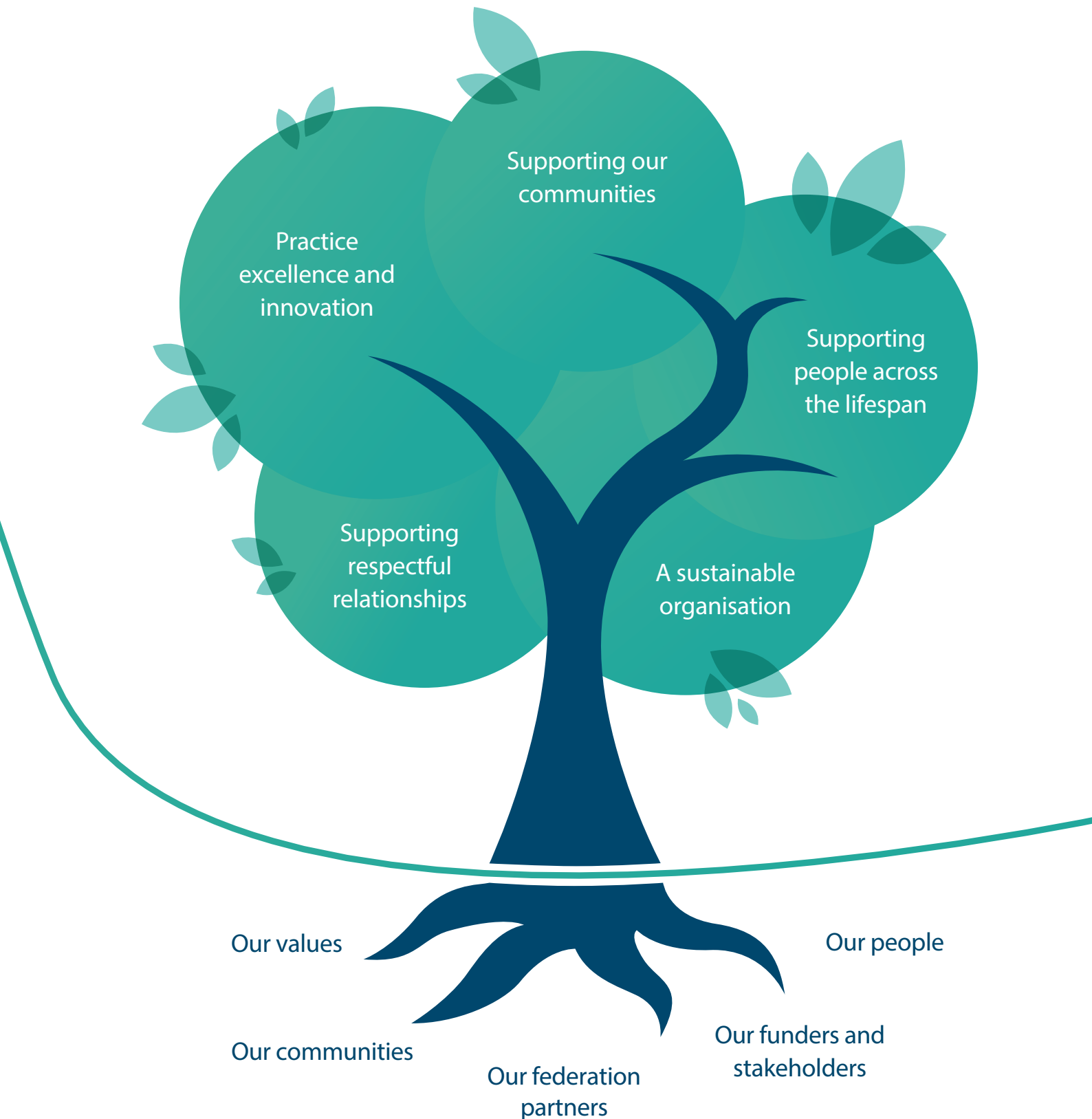
RACR works with people seeking help to improve or maintain a healthy relationship.

When couples decide to separate, RACR's key role is to assist families to separate in ways that minimise acrimony through non-adversarial mediation. Importantly, we are committed to understanding the perspective of, and hearing the voices of children and young people, to ensure their best interest is kept in mind.

Additionally we also provide support for trauma, disability, First Nation's people, gambling harm and a range of other challenges.

Our integrated strategy

Our five integrated priority areas focus how we will work over the next five years, across our organisation, and with our communities, stakeholders, consortium partners and government.



Supporting respectful relationships

We recognise the positive impact that healthy and respectful relationships have on an individual's health and wellbeing. We work with people who are experiencing vulnerability and challenges in their relationship, to develop skills and move towards positive change.

We skillfully work with couples and families to promote positive relationships. In line with our lifespan approach, relationship support services are provided for children and young people, adults and ageing Australians.

We continue to build an understanding of all services available across our geographic spread and how we can work collaboratively to support the safety of families. We also work with funders to build coherent systems of service delivery providing a 'no wrong door' support approach.

A key focus is on innovation in service delivery to ensure services are available to rural and remote communities.

Domestic and family violence is a prevalent issue for many of our clients. We work with those who have experienced, witnessed or perpetrated violence or abuse, in a coordinated and parallel set of supports.

We also use universal screening to identify where violence may be present. We work with couples and families to learn how to manage conflict and restore respect within relationships.





Supporting our communities

We work closely with our communities to identify need, and co-create services to support that need. These include a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people from different beliefs, people from LGBTIQ+ communities, and people living with disabilities. We work with all communities to provide relationship and other supports services.

For our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, building on the strengths of our Dhunlung Yarra team, we work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (CCOs) and local Elders to understand community needs. We do not seek Aboriginal CCO funding, but are committed to utilising our own funding streams, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. We are also committed to employing First Nation's staff and building capacity in First Nation's communities through traineeships, work-based professional development, and clinical and cultural supervision.

We have an ongoing commitment to make our organisation one that welcomes all people from all communities, and to work appropriately and respectfully with all who seek our support.

Our community stakeholders including our funders, service partners, universities and training institutions, client reference groups, and community interest groups are very important to us. We work together to identify local need and provide coherent sector responses to that need.



Supporting people across the lifespan

RACR has a long history of working closely with couples and adults in their relationships. Increasingly over the past decade we have included children's voices in matters of family separation and developed services for children and young people as the primary client. We are now developing support services for ageing or elderly individuals experiencing a period of vulnerability.

We are dedicated to provide a system of supports for people across their lifespan and meet with vulnerable people at any age with the same passion and commitment.

We are a child safe organisation committed to the safety and wellbeing, including the cultural safety, of children and young people. We adhere to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and seek that children and young people's voices are heard.

We are committed to building our capacity, skills and practice wisdom to work with complex needs in children, young people, adults and older Australians to ensure that all people can live their lives well, safely, and with healthy relationships.

Practice excellence and innovation

We are accountable for continuously improving the quality of our work by creating an environment in which excellence in service delivery will flourish. We are responsible for looking to new, innovative ways to support our clients and communities.

We embrace research and evidence that enhances our ability to provide support to our clients and communities. This includes client feedback, professional practice wisdom, as well as the voice of our clients, carers and community. Our service framework places the client at its centre.

We continue to stay contemporary through broader research from national and international sources, enabling us to reflect on our practices and develop new models of service delivery.

We actively engage in opportunities to partner in research and evaluation, especially in programs that prioritise lived experience and client voices.

We also continue to develop common understandings of safety, quality and clinical governance with a blame-free, accountable and learning culture.

We have a robust and evidence-based clinical governance framework and supporting policies. We also conduct quality accreditation, evaluation and ongoing reviews of program logic and theories-of-change.

All staff are qualified and equipped for their role and actively engage in continuing their professional development through training, partnerships, communities of practice and clinical supervision.



A sustainable organisation

We work in the interests of the people we support. All decision making is based on what is best for our clients' wellbeing. Balancing staff wellbeing and community needs with limited resources is sometimes delicate. Our job is to find that balance, so we can continue to provide support to local families and communities well into future decades.

Our role is to ensure that the systems that support our services are expertly led, coordinated and clearly understood by our Board, our staff, clients, funders, stakeholders and community.

Our Senior Executive Team work to ensure that we have robust systems that support our staff to deliver services to clients. Our priorities include ensuring a client management system that supports intake, risk screening, confidential and secure record keeping, data reporting, evaluation and coordinated care.

We utilise emerging technology to continue to implement agile service delivery models, expand resources for clients and staff, enhance communication, as well as financial and human resource systems.

This work is enhanced by leveraging the knowledge and experience of the Relationships Australia Federation and actively participating in joint initiatives.



Priority initiatives

Respectful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• building support to rural and remote communities• implementing innovations to support families living with domestic and family violence
Supporting our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• continuing to support the professional development of our First Nations trainees• building our lived experience capability
Supporting people across the lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expanding our group offerings particularly for young people• strengthening our capability to assist elderly clients with mediation
Practice excellence and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• increasing our supports for people who have experienced trauma• partnering in research that gives voice to clients especially children and young people
Sustainable organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• leveraging technology to improve access to services• prioritising staff wellbeing, training and development



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racr.org.au

Relationships Australia acknowledges the funding provided by federal, state and local governments across Australia, which underpins the services we deliver. We thank the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and Attorney-General's Department in particular for the ongoing trust they place in the Relationships Australia Federation to deliver crucial services in support of Australian families and communities.