



Annual Report 2018
Future Focussed



Chair



Gerlinde Scholz Chair of the Board of Directors

Welcome to Better Place Australia.

With this report on our company's performance in the 2017/18 financial year, we are introducing a new name and brand. The company's new name reflects its promise to our clients, as all our services support people struggling with relationship, financial or psychological challenges to get to a better place.

We are proud of the organisation's history from its inception as Family Mediation Centre to its more recent identity as FMC Mediation and Counselling. Mediation and counselling for families going through separation and divorce remains a vitally important part of what we do and that will not change. Yet with an eye to the future organisations, like people, need to grow and adapt.

The company was trading as FMC throughout the 2017/18 financial year. It performed strongly in financial terms, securing new income and returning a record operating surplus. At the same time, we progressed with a number of important capacity building investments, notably in IT infrastructure and strategic planning. Relevant details are covered in the financial statement.

Services reached close to 9,000 new clients, more people than ever before. Well over 80% of clients surveyed said they found a workable solution to the issues that brought them to FMC in the first place, and overall client satisfaction was 94%. Our new clients are also benefiting from our significant expansion into the provision of mental health services.

The most important measure of success will always be the impact for clients on a personal level: The life saved or transformed. The unhappy relationship that can be concluded in a more respectful manner than everyone thought possible. The family that manages to step back from the brink of emotionally or financially abusing an older relative. An intervention that opens up a brighter outlook for a client's future. This is what motivates the Better Place Australia team, from frontline staff to the executive team and the Board.

At the time of writing, we are preparing for the 2018 Annual General Meeting. It will be my seventh AGM since joining the Board in 2012, and the final one. I am retiring with deep appreciation to my board colleagues past and present for their work, wisdom and support, and to the Better Place Australia management team and all staff. It has been a privilege to be part of a dynamic period in this organisation's life and help drive so many significant changes. I leave with a sense of pride in what has been achieved and confident and excited about the future prospects for Better Place Australia.

Gerlinde Scholz
Chair of the Board, 2014–2018

CEO



Serge Sardo Chief Executive Officer

2018 has been a fast paced year of change and exciting developments.

I am very happy to report a \$1,056,018 surplus — this will be invaluable for investment in the organisational capability and to foster innovation in the organisation, bringing us one more step towards our vision of an Australia where all people experience positive relationships, truly value each other, and live safer, more confident lives.

This year we undertook a strategic planning process which drew upon sector and client changes, to establish our strategic pillars for change. We are now well placed to fulfill our ambition to help people to become more resilient, to empower them, and to help them enjoy healthier relationships by building their skills and knowledge by giving them guidance and tools.

To fulfill our strategic vision we reviewed and consulted staff and stakeholders on the relevance of our FMC Mediation & Counselling branding. The outcome of this was a decision to rebrand our organisation and become Better Place Australia. The response has been very positive and we hope readers of this report have a similar response.

We continue to provide more services to more people. We can report an increase of 10% in FDR clients and 7.5% in Financial Counselling clients compared to the previous year. There continues to be a pressing need to respond to the issue of family violence. Drawing from service experience, data and observations, we released two papers: the Response to the Review of the Family Law System Issues Paper 2018 and the Elder Abuse discussion paper. The papers have been well-received by the sector.

As I reflect upon the last twelve months I have been amazed by the dedication and contribution of our staff. Without all their efforts, we would not have received our accreditation for the Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) for Health and Community standards

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Board member Erika Owens and also express our thanks to Natalie Hughes who resigned from the Board after three years of Directorship.

2018 is also when we will see the retirement of our Board Chair, Gerlinde Scholz. In her four years as Chair, Gerlinde has provided invaluable governance advice and strategic direction. Better Place Australia would like to express its sincere thanks for her contribution to the thriving organisation that we are today.

As we embark upon a new year, I cannot conclude without the opportunity to thank the directors, executive team, front line practitioners and the support and administration staff for their tireless work, professionalism and commitment to making us truly, a better place for our clients. I would also like to extend my thanks to our funding partners, whose support has been pivotal to Better Place Australia's work in the community.

Serge Sardo
Chief Executive Officer

Board



Gerlinde Scholz
Chair of the Board
of Directors

Gerlinde is a not-for-profit sector specialist with extensive executive, board and advisory experience.

She is currently Executive Officer of Australian Community Philanthropy, the peak body for Australia's community foundations, and recently served as interim CEO of a family violence agency. In her earlier career she held senior executive positions at a medical research institute and the University of Melbourne and has advised a broad range of non-profit clients as a consultant. Gerlinde also serves on the boards of environmental sustainability organisation Renew, and the RANZCOG Women's Health Foundation.

At Better Place Australia, Gerlinde joined the Board in 2012. She chairs the Board Nominations and People Committee and is a Member of the Finance, Risk & Audit Committee.

Board Chair since 2014.



Erika Owens
Director

Erika Owens is CEO of Crime Stoppers in Victoria. She was previously with Relationship Australia (Vic) for 3 years where she held executive positions as Senior Manager, Southern & Eastern Melbourne and later as General Manager, State Services. Prior to this, Erika worked in the Department of Justice for several years.

Erika has a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Australian Cultural Studies) from Victoria University, a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Criminology) from the University of Melbourne and an Executive Master of Public Administration from the University of Melbourne.

Joined the Board in 2018.



Rachel Holthouse
Director

Rachel is currently Chief Executive Officer of RMIT Training located in Melbourne, Australia, a successful provider of education solutions to clients worldwide.

Rachel has held senior governance roles in the education sector across several countries. She has extensive international experience working with global partners and operating in highly regulated and multijurisdictional environments. In 2019 Rachel will commence the role of RMIT Deputy Vice Chancellor Global Development and Vice President.

Joined the Board in 2016.

Delia McIver
Director

Delia McIver has significant experience at a senior executive level across the post-secondary education sector in the areas of People and Culture/Human Resources, safety, risk and corporate services. Working across Australia and internationally in her career. Delia currently holds the position of Executive Director People, Culture and Safety at Chisholm Institute. She has held similar positions as Executive Director People & Capability at Box Hill Institute and Director Human Resources at Victoria University.

Delia has a keen interest in the not-for-profit sector has been a member of the Fitzroy Learning Network Board and on the Oakleigh Centre Board.

Delia is a graduate of the University of Melbourne, Monash University and La Trobe University and a member of the Australian Human Resources Institute.

Delia is a Member of the Nominations & People Committee (since August 2016 – initially external).

Joined the Board in 2016.



Brendan Rowswell
Director

Brendan is a Director at a leading public affairs firm in Melbourne whose clients are major Australian companies within the infrastructure, transport, information and technology, health and energy sectors. He regularly represents not-for-profit clients in their dealings with federal and state governments.

Brendan is a member of the Advisory Council of Artolution, an international public arts charity, based in New York. He was previously Public Affairs Manager at a Victorian industry association, member of FRAC, and adviser to a federal Member of Parliament for two terms in Government.

Joined the Board in 2015.



David Speyer
Director and
Treasurer

David is General Manager Commercial and National Services at Vision Australia. A Chartered Accountant by training, David has spent the last 28 years in senior executive and leadership roles in finance, mergers and acquisitions, business reorganisations in multi nationals and for purpose organisations.

David is Chair of Board for the Finance, Risk & Audit Committee.



Natalie Hughes
Director

Natalie has successfully led several companies through periods of business expansion with an emphasis on new product and service development and entry into new markets. She started her career as a chartered accountant before taking on marketing and strategic management roles in the leisure and entertainment industry. Natalie is currently a strategic business consultant, developing marketing strategies and programs.

Left the Board in March 2018.

Executive Team



Serge Sardo
Chief Executive
Officer

Serge is the CEO of Better Place Australia. Serge has accumulated over 10 years' experience as a CEO and non-executive director for not-for-profit or government organisations. In his previous role as CEO of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation he was instrumental in establishing the Foundation as a world leader in the delivery of counselling, support and prevention programs to over 100 different locations.

Serge has an MBA qualification and strong commercial experience. With an expertise in preventative programs, social policy and advocacy, he has delivered and managed a wide variety of community based therapeutic and prevention services.

Serge is a member of the Board for Family and Relationships Services Australia and Scope Disability.



Graeme Westaway
Executive Manager
Brand, Digital & Corporate
Communications

Graeme Westaway is an experienced senior executive with over 25 years' experience in Brand, organisational development, communications strategy and customer service development. With a Science, Marketing and Mediation educational background, Graeme brings to Better Place Australia expertise in communication & stakeholder management, Branding, services development utilising multiple platforms, growth generation, and Organisational planning. He has held a number of executive and senior leadership roles and has a background in developing and implementing strategies to drive revenue, digital engagement and service innovation across the not-for-profit, mutual and corporate sectors.



Jenni Dickson
Executive Manager
Quality Compliance, Service
Development & Outcomes

Jenni Dickson has over 20 years' experience in the health sector. She has a strong background in services development, quality improvement and has significant experience in improving client experience. Jenni has a Bachelor of Nursing and a Graduate Diploma in Community Health, and has significant experience in the Aged and Community Care sector. Her extensive experience in community and health services has led to the highly developed standard of reporting at Better Place Australia. Jenni was instrumental in the initiative to achieve QIC Accreditation for Better Place Australia, and works to constantly improve service standards.



Craig Dennis
Executive Manager
Business Systems

Craig has over 20 years experience in IT systems, information management and information technology strategy. Craig has held a number of senior and executive roles, and has an extensive experience in technology change consulting, advisory and business leadership roles. Craig's expertise in business automation systems for small to medium businesses has enabled Better Place Australia to develop new key IT strategies and systems. Craig has a long history in volunteer work, including helping senior roles in the Country Fire Authority and consulting to a number of not-for-profits.



Evan Nathanson
Executive Manager
Psychological Services

Evan Nathanson has over 25 years' experience working in the not-for-profit sector as both a Psychologist and a manager of services.



David Turen
Executive Manager
Human Resources

David Turen has extensive experience as an HR Executive across a variety of sectors including not-for-profit, health care, local government and commercial aviation. David has a Bachelor's Degree in Economics, a Master's Degree in Human Resources and Industrial Relations and is a Certified Practitioner of the Australian Human Resources Institute. His portfolio includes responsibility for HR Strategy, Enterprise Agreement administration, HR consultancy and People Policy.



Dan Langelaan
Finance Manager

Dan Langelaan has over 15 years in the not-for-profit and health insurance industry. With an accounting and science educational background, Dan is also Certified Practising Accountant (FCPA). Dan is also a graduate of AICD with experience in compliance, risk management and corporate accountability functions, and has a passion for striving to achieve best practice in governance. He possesses strong skills and experience in finance strategy, financial and regulatory reporting, capital management and investments.

He has managed programs across a wide variety of areas including case management, counselling and mediation, corrections, the disability sector, child and family sector, family violence, work and mental health.

Evan is a registered Psychologist and has an MBA, a Masters of Management, and a Masters in Psychology.

Our Vision

An Australia where all people experience positive relationships, truly value each other, and live safer, more confident lives.

Our Mission

We help people to become more resilient, to empower them and to enjoy healthier relationships, by building their skills and knowledge, giving guidance and tools, and supporting them through challenging times.

Strategic Pillars and Key Priorities



Pillar 1 **Growth and Sustainability**

- By growing our funding base better meet service demands and enable easier access for clients
- Diversify as an organisation, and expand the breadth and depth of services
- Focus on providing clients with a seamless, gapless, wrap-around model of care
- Invest wisely for good returns and capital growth



Pillar 2 **Enterprising**

- Cultivate leaders and develop talent across the organisation
- Develop a culture which embraces change, innovation and revels in new ways of working
- Experiment with new technologies to better service clients and provide easier access



Pillar 3 **Brand and Reputation**

- Build a strong sector brand
- Grow our influence across stakeholders, policy makers and the sector
- Conduct valuable research as a means of advocacy to decision makers to inform better community outcome
- Be a prominent & credible media commentator on key issues impacting communities



Pillar 4 **Make A Difference**

- Use rigorous, evidence based approaches to service delivery and community engagement
- Measure the impact of what we do and how we can do it better
- Develop a workplace where staff feel supported, proud and committed
- Implement a public health framework for service delivery informed by prevention

Going to Better Places

2018 has been a year of change – from our new name Better Place Australia, greater community engagement and policy advocacy and strengthening our commitment to excellence

Financial Sustainability and Service Improvement

- Achievement of \$1,056,018 surplus
- 40% Growth in revenue FY14 - FY18
- 94% Clients found our services easily accessible
- 97% Financial Counselling clients felt more informed by their options

Service Growth

- Implementation of our Respecting Elders program and three new integrated care programs
- Three new mental health stepped care programs
- Several new partnerships with community organisations, to increase collaboration and service access for our community
- New contract providing financial counselling and training services to South East Water
- Selection and commencement of our new client management system

Communications

- Improved communication with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse clients
- Google Translation capability on website
- Smart Safe 'Quick Exit' button for clients
- Implemented Community and Consumer Engagement forum and survey on website for ongoing client feedback

People

- Consolidation of our core services - Mediation, Psychology, Financial Counselling and Skills Building.
- Growing our specialists skills across our senior leadership team
- Upskilling staff: Cultural sensitivity training
- Upskilling staff: LGBTI rainbow awareness and education training

Strategy

- Developed a comprehensive 5 year strategy
- Secured purpose built and client friendly premises in an accessible location
- Achieved our QIC Accreditation for Health and Community standards
- Developed new relationships with PHNs and local government
- Expanded our services to 28 locations across Victoria

Community Advocacy

- CEO Serge Sardo joined the Family and Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) Board
- Private audience with Attorney-General George Brandis to discuss community issues: Elder Abuse, Family Violence and Financial Abuse
- Release of our Elder Abuse Discussion paper
- Submission to the federal Government review of the Family Law Act

Our Staff

Diversity and Engagement

Highlights

At Better Place Australia we help people to become more **resilient**, to **empower** them and to enjoy **healthier relationships**. We help them by building their skills and knowledge, giving guidance and tools, and supporting them through challenging times.

2018 has been a whirlwind year for staff at Better Place Australia.

The unyielding pursuit of improvement and innovation has led to keystone achievements for Better Place Australia, such as being accredited under the QIC Health and Community Service Standard, which is an independent recognition of Better Place Australia's commitment to excellence, safety and quality. Achieving this accreditation was a huge collaborative effort, including reviewing of committees and governance actions, multiple staff team consultations focussing on supervision and general satisfaction, alongside the regular review of our strategic and annual plans and strengthening clinical governance. Staff across all locations were engaged long before the assessors came in to ensure that all key indicators would be fulfilled.

As always, staff have actively participated and represented Better Place Australia in a number of conferences, community events, forums and committees. Highlights include the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, FRSA working groups, the Bayside Peninsula Family Violence Partnership, No to Violence consultations and the Gippsland Family Law Pathways Network.

Leading the Change from Within

Our staff come from all walks of life. We are proud to be able to draw upon each other's expertise, experience and knowledge, allowing us to respond swiftly to the social, environmental and sector changes that surround us in the family and relationships sector.

Family violence still plays a grave and defining role in our client's lives, with over 36% of clients experiencing family violence. The sphere of family violence affects all groups within our society, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, the LGBTI community and people with disabilities.

Our organisational strategy works to recognise and embrace diversity, inclusivity and equity in practice and within Better Place Australia, whether in capacity building or public policy spheres. Professional development and training paved the way for staff participation in Cultural Sensitivity Training and LGBTI rainbow-inclusive workshops across the organisation. The workshops encourage internal dialogue, giving our staff the opportunity to reflect and learn from one another's experiences in improving service outcomes for clients, and adapt their practice customised to the client's unique situation.

As we reflect back on the year, we will continue to focus on strengthening our core competencies, developing new partnerships, including broaden our research opportunities. We thank staff for their tireless dedication to bringing us closer to our vision – an Australia where all people experience positive relationships, truly value each other, and live safer, more confident lives.



Case Study

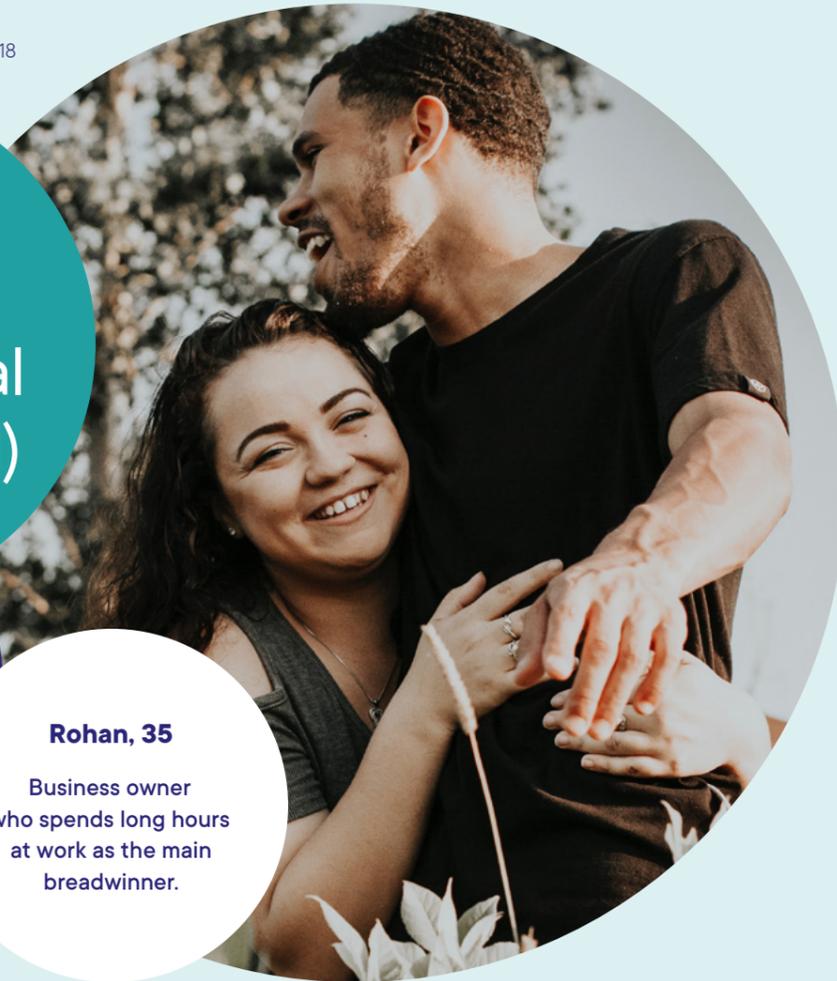
Accessible Psychological Services (API)

Melissa, 32

A recent mother going through difficulties in her marriage. Feels unsupported by her husband.

Rohan, 35

Business owner who spends long hours at work as the main breadwinner.



Scenario

Melissa recently had her first child. As a stay at home Mum and a first-time parent, she was stressed, anxious and felt isolated.

Rohan is the main income earner and runs the family business. The family income is dependent upon Rohan's business, which sees him work long hours, and can be unstable.

The couple had been experiencing issues with their relationship since they first married, but things had gotten worse following the birth of their child.

Cultural differences between the couple had also caused stress to both Melissa and Rohan. Both parties had different expectations, influenced by their cultural upbringing.

The situation had become so that there was significant conflict in the relationship. Both were anxious about the future and displayed depressive symptoms.

Outcome

Together with a Psychologist, Melissa learnt to take control and communicate her feelings of isolation as a first time parent to Rohan to feel heard.

Rohan had been stressed about providing financially for his new family and in turn, focussed his time and energy on his business.

A couples session facilitated by the Psychologist helped both Melissa and Rohan to begin the process of direct and open communication within their relationship.

Melissa worked together with the Psychologist to develop tools to manage her anxiety and cope with the stressors in her life.

The couple learnt to work together to verbalise the issues that affected them and discuss this with each other to find a solution.

The couple were referred to see a Financial Counsellor at Better Place Australia to address their financial concerns as a young family.

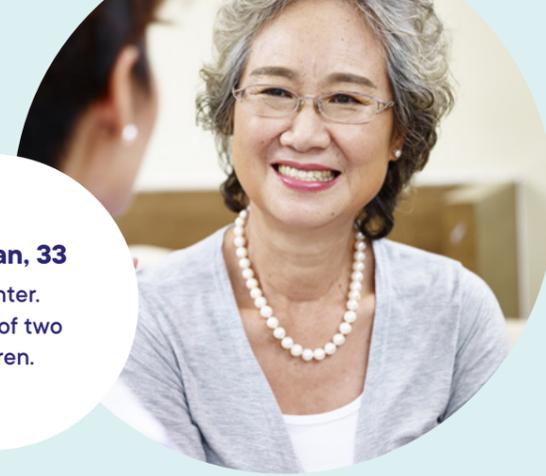
Both Melissa and her husband were better able to understand each other and work to manage the cultural expectations between them.

Case Study

Respecting Elders

**Mr Chan, 65
Mrs Chan, 63**
Lives with Amy and her husband.

Amy Han, 33
Daughter.
Mother of two children.



Mr and Mrs Chan are Mandarin-speaking grandparents who came to Australia from China to care for their grandchildren in 2015. Their visa was sponsored by their daughter Amy.

Mr and Mrs Chan arrived with no income and were looking forward to spending time with Amy and their grandchildren living as an extended family unit.

Mr and Mrs Chan were pressured to sign an agreement they did not fully understand, under duress, to sell their property in China and give the money to Amy. Although they were promised an income to them upon the sale, this did not happen.

Mr Chan became unwell due to his severe dementia and required 24-hour support. This had an impact on Mrs Chan's ability to care for her grandchildren.

Amy demanded Mr and Mrs Chan move to the garage and reduced their financial support. As well, Mr and Mrs Chan experienced emotional and physical abuse from Amy and James during this time. There was police involvement.

Mr and Mrs Chan are not entitled to any Centrelink payments or Government funded aged care services, despite having Medicare and Healthcare cards due to their visa status.

Mr and Mrs Chan now live confined in a single room of a shared house owned by their daughter. They have access to a shared kitchen and bathroom. They live in fear of their daughter evicting them and ceasing financial support.

The abuse has been ongoing for more than 18 months with increasing severity.

Process

Mr and Mrs Chan were referred to Better Place Australia by Chinese Community Social Services for assistance with mediation with their daughter to have their money returned as well as seeking security and safety.

A Family Consultant was assigned to manage and support Mr and Mrs Chan. A meeting was organised to ascertain their needs and develop an outcome based on their wishes. Due to their lack of English, all communication required a Mandarin interpreter.

Mrs Chan was very upset and felt helpless. The difficulty in accessing help has left her socially isolated, depressed

and anxious. This is further exacerbated by her declining health and carer burden in supporting her husband.

Mrs Chan has struggled to obtain age-related supports for her husband's condition. She expressed ongoing concern about the physical violence, financial abuse and the risk of homelessness given her husband's declining health and function. Attempts to contact Amy were met with aggression as she refused to give her parents any support.

Case Management

As a result of the complexity of their situation, a range of service providers were contacted to support Mr and Mrs Chan.

The Family Consultant liaised and coordinated with a range of providers:

- **Seniors Rights Victoria** for legal advice
- **Chinese Community Social Services Centre (CCSS)** for ongoing support
- **Housing services** for housing resources and support
- **Aged Care services, Respite services and Carer Support**
- **Centrelink**
- **Medical services** to manage Mr Chan's condition
- **Family Violence services** to support Mr and Mrs Chan through their experiences

Outcome

Through swift coordination and support, Mr and Mrs Chan had their medical and care issues addressed with access to NDIS, Centrelink and healthcare needs addressed.

Mr and Mrs Chan now live in a safe aged care facility with support which provide specialised care to manage Mr Chan's condition.

Mr and Mrs Chan's legal status with regard to their visa was clarified.

The Better Place Australia Family Consultant organised for Mediation with Mr and Mrs Chan and Amy to address their disagreements with one another as a family. Support for Mr and Mrs Chan is ongoing.

Case Study Integrated Model of Care



Margaret, 70
Suffers from terminal lung disease.

Ashleigh, 34
Margaret's daughter.

Thomas, 36
Margaret's estranged son.

Scenario

Margaret suffers from terminal lung disease and is on 24-hour life support.

Ashleigh lives under one roof with her aged mother together with her 4 children.

All adults in the household are unemployed and on Centrelink benefits.

Margaret was subsisting in poor conditions, living in an environment of financial, emotional, social, physical and verbal abuse, in addition to neglect.

Process

As a part of the Integrated Model of Care for Responding to Suspected Elder Abuse, workforce-enabled primary health care workers are trained to detect suspected elder abuse in a range of settings.

Margaret had been admitted more than ten times to the Emergency Department in the past year, leading workers to suspect abuse and contact the Integrated Model of Care Liaison officer.

The Liaison officer contacted Better Place Australia, a part of the Elder Abuse Prevention Network, and a Family Consultant was assigned to manage Margaret's case.

Upon making contact with Margaret, the Family Consultant organised a meeting to establish the issues and identify the next steps.

Suffering from a debilitating illness did not interfere with Margaret's decision-making capability. Margaret expressed her distress at her current situation and her desire to leave her current living arrangement.

In addition to the environment of abuse and neglect, Margaret disclosed that she had no sustained access to necessities in life including food, medication and secure living arrangements.

When it was further revealed that the occupants of the house were also involved in drug-related activities, it was determined that immediate action needed to be taken to secure Margaret's safety.

In addition to removing her from the housing situation, she was given assistance in accessing transitional care, so she could consider alternative housing and care options in a safe environment.

Margaret was referred to Better Place Australia Financial Counsellors, who worked with the bank to isolate her bank accounts to remove all external access so only she had access. Financial Counsellors negotiated access to a hardship fund with the bank to provide debt relief.

Margaret received counselling support to help her respond to abusive situations and avoidance strategies to prevent future abuse.

Outcome

Margaret was empowered to make an informed decision about her future place of residence, and care and future of her family relationships. She is also finally secure and financially independent.

With her newfound confidence, in safe surrounds and with access to appropriate care and facilities, Margaret expressed her happiness in finally remembering how it felt to feel safe, needed and appreciated.

Margaret was able to reach out to and find support from her estranged son for the first time in over a decade.

With ongoing support and counselling, Margaret feels safe enough to maintain a relationship with her daughter Ashleigh and her grandchildren in spite of their past behaviour.

The Integrated Model of Care is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Human Services.

Case Study Family Dispute Resolution



Shaun, 40
Has a history of depression and anxiety.

Olivia, 39
Stay at home parent. Dependent on Shaun for financial support.

Milly and Reese, 6 & 9

Scenario

Shaun and Olivia had separated after over 10 years together and sought parenting arrangements for their children, Milly and Reese.

Six months ago, during the time of their separation, Shaun had attempted suicide resulting in emergency services being called.

Also around the time of separation, Shaun had sought to control their finances by limiting the amount of money available in their joint bank account.

Olivia had experienced financial control through most of the relationship and had recently started working with a family violence counsellor for ongoing support.

Since his suicide attempt, Shaun had been referred to a psychiatrist and had also started seeing a psychologist to manage his long-standing anxiety and depression.

Olivia contacted Better Place Australia seeking a safe and conducive environment to work through their issues.

Outcome

Taking into account Shaun's attempted suicide and heightened anxiety, both Shaun and Olivia were separately referred to individual Pre-mediation coaching sessions at Better Place Australia with different coaches.

The sessions helped them to recognise communication and emotional patterns in their relationship, and focus on some key strategies to remain constructive in their upcoming joint mediation session.

Risk factors and considerations taken into account were: long term history of financial control and disempowerment, long-standing mental health difficulties, and financial issues from the separation.

At the Mediation, Shaun and Olivia were able to use some specific communication strategies to listen to each other's concerns and to how they each wished to spend time with Milly and Reese.

With the facilitation of a Family Dispute Resolution practitioner (FDRP), and with two private sessions, both Shaun and Olivia felt they were successful in staying mostly child-focused.

Shaun, through coaching, had been able to reflect upon the adverse effects of his behaviour on Olivia and their children. Shaun made an apology in the mediation session for his past behaviour.

Shaun outlined his commitment to his health management plan, including ongoing support with a psychologist and managing his symptoms with medication.

Shaun's apology and honesty about his treatment opened the door to a genuine discussion with Olivia of what they both could agree to as a parenting plan.

Shaun and Olivia agreed to develop a parenting plan for three months and then review it. Neither felt the need to pursue further legal pathways.

They agreed to communicate weekly using text messages and a digital parenting calendar, and to focus their communication on the needs of Milly and Reese.

Olivia found the mediation was another positive step for her in learning to draw clear boundaries and feel safe and heard.

Shaun felt he had repaired some of the damage between him and Olivia, and gained confidence that they would slowly be able to work out a long term parenting plan for the children.

He strengthened his resolve to maintain the respectful parental relationship agreed on in their Parenting Plan.

Case Study

Financial Counselling

Mina, 64

Widowed Pensioner on Disability support. Non-English speaking.



Scenario

Mina came to Better Place Australia seeking help about an impending bankruptcy.

Her health had deteriorated due to the stressful situation. Mina was also severely depressed as her adult son had passed away 12 months prior.

Mina was being harassed by debt collectors for a range of debts that she could not pay which included unpaid fines. She had also fallen behind on her utility bills.

One of these involved a dispute with a repairer and her insurance company after a car accident. The repairer proceeded with car repairs without authorisation from the insurer. Mina was billed for the repairs including additional costs such as car hire and storage costs.

Outcome

An assessment was made of Mina's current situation before working with her to identify and prioritise her financial and non-financial needs.

Together with a Better Place Australia Financial Counsellor, Mina completed and reviewed a fortnightly income and expenditure assessment to ascertain her financial position.

Outstanding Fines The Financial Counsellor liaised with the local community legal service to ascertain Mina's options for her fines. A payment plan was successfully arranged with Civic Compliance.

Outstanding Utility Bills Contact was made with the utility company to advocate for Mina's outstanding debt. Mina was eligible for a Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URG) and an affordable payment plan was arranged. Mina also learnt to best utilise off-peak times to reduce her utility costs.

Dispute with Insurer and Repairer The Financial Counsellor contacted the insurer on Mina's behalf to organise a facilitated meeting with the insurance investigator and Mina.

Copies of the contract were obtained from the repairer. It was revealed that the terms within the contract were not clear and allowed for repairs to proceed without the insurer's consent. The car hire was not a free service as advertised but a care hire agreement in disguise.

The Financial Counsellor liaised with the Consumer Action Law Centre and it was ascertained that the repairer had provided information that was misleading and deceptive.

The insurer agreed to have Mina pay the \$500 excess in a monthly payment arrangement before they would pay the repairer for the car repairs. The repairer agreed to allow Mina use of the loan car at no cost.

Bankruptcy The Financial Counsellor supported Mina in preparing the application to petition for bankruptcy. They were successful in petitioning \$24,000 of debt Mina was unable to afford.

Mina's mental health improved after the stress of the debt looming over her stopped. She has since learned to manage her ongoing expenses and feels able to make a 'fresh start' in life.

Advocacy: Mobilising Community Action

Elder Abuse Discussion Paper

Our Elder Abuse discussion paper was developed from data drawn from over 140 cases of elder abuse which Better Place Australia responded to through our elder abuse management programs.

Drawing from risk factors observed amongst clients of our Respecting Elders support and conflict resolution service, the paper concludes elder abuse requires a nuanced response. This response must acknowledge an older person's wishes to maintain their personal relationships where safe and possible to do so. It must also provide access to a multidisciplinary hub of services with the legal response as a key spoke.

Response to the Review of the Family Law System Issues Paper 2018

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) conducted its first comprehensive review of the Australian Family Law system in 2017. The Better Place Australia response draws on 33 years of active participation in the Family Law system. Our submission highlights the need for review across the whole system which considers the risk for clients experiencing high conflict and the compound and long term detrimental impact on children. Addressing system fragmentation is key reform to ensure the family law system meets the contemporary needs of families and effectively addresses family violence and child abuse.

Community Forum

Better Place Australia hosted a number of community forums in collaboration with local government and community partner organisations to raise awareness of elder abuse and family violence.

A Morning of Awareness: Bayside Community Forum

with special guest, Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians and Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention. This community awareness session was held in collaboration with Bayside City Council to raise awareness for older people, their carers and family members of seniors rights, elder abuse and where to seek support. Speakers included local Cr Laurence Evan from Bayside City Council. The session explored maintaining independence, preventing elder abuse and the importance of staying connected to the community through social participation.

"Protecting Your Future" Community Forum on

Elder abuse in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, Seniors Rights Victoria, and Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership (SMPCP) this forum provided community members with vital information on a range of topics from power of attorney risks, elder abuse triggers and safeguarding themselves from financial abuse. Held on World Elder Abuse Awareness day, speakers included Cr Ron Brownlees from the City of Kingston and volunteers from Senior Rights Victoria.

Community and Consumer Engagement Committee

Our Community and Consumer Engagement Committee met over the year and heard from former clients of our key services services. The forum gives clients the opportunity to participate in the continuous improvement of key services and improving client experience. Forum themes over the year have included:

- Exploring the effects of Elder Abuse and considerations surrounding seeking help and support with clients of the Respecting Elders support and conflict resolution service.
- The experience of relationship separation, the detrimental impact for the entire family, and the financial impacts of separation.

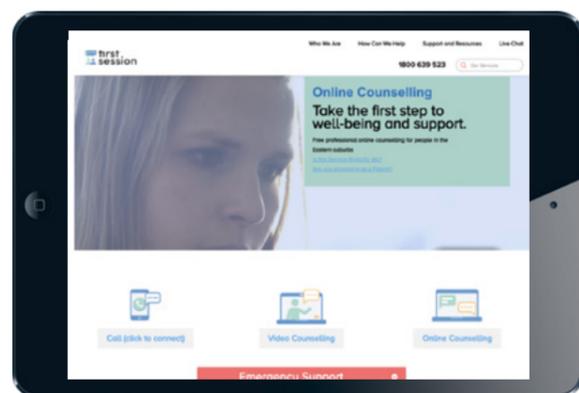
Service clients can find the latest community and consumer engagement forum dates on the Better Place Australia website and express their interest in participating.

Instant Access and Convenience

From First steps to wellness to Continuing Support

Taking the First Step

- Launch of the new First Session online and video counselling service website with emergency support options
- Ability to live chat, email or call for support
- Smart Safe 'Quick Exit' button
- Smarter locations page for easier location service listings, timings and accessibility options



Enhanced Support

- Anytime, anywhere support: phone, Skype, online or video counselling option
- Google translation web app for instant and live translation in over 94 languages
- LGBTI Hub with inclusive practice service support and resources

Continuing Support and Check-Ins

- Financial First Aid website: Targeted online financial literacy resource for financial guidance
- Instant Accessibility: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for updates, resources and latest news
- Community and Consumer Engagement for client experience feedback
- Client Feedback surveys for service and website feedback

Social Media

- 10,000 average Twitter impressions
- Over 15,000 people reached on Facebook for the NMAS Accredited Mediator Course
- **24% ↑** Growth in users

Online

betterplaceaustralia.com.au

- Over 35,000 new users
- **8% ↑** Visits from women aged 55 - 64
- **116% ↑** Click to Call on mobile

financialfirstaid.org.au

- Over 20,000 unique views
- Most popular help page Build your capability budget planner
- Time of day most visited **12pm - 2pm**
- **70% ↑** Growth of visitors coming from Social Media

Financials

Statement of profit and loss	2018 \$	2017 \$
Revenue	10,128,345	9,065,018
Employee benefits	(6,717,097)	(6,395,202)
Depreciation and amortisation	(221,896)	(220,596)
Marketing	(182,578)	(237,448)
Occupancy and utilities	(674,645)	(712,969)
IT software and support	(492,645)	(478,249)
Other expenses	(783,466)	(935,091)
Surplus for the Year	1,056,018	85,463

Statement of financial position	2018 \$	2017 \$
Assets		
Current Assets	4,145,779	2,825,270
Non-Current Assets	2,290,513	2,440,672
Total Assets	6,436,292	5,265,942
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities	1,250,146	1,192,045
Non-Current Liabilities	127,169	70,938
Total Liabilities	1,377,315	1,262,983
Net Assets	5,058,977	4,002,959

About Better Place Australia

19 Bendigo

At Better Place Australia, we have been helping people to become more resilient, to empower them and to enjoy healthier relationships for over 30 years.

We have evolved into one of the most successful providers of counselling and community support services in Victoria, seeing over 9,000 new clients a year across 28 locations.

Better Place Australia Suite of Services

Psychological Services

Counselling

- Child and Youth Counselling
- Relationship Counselling
- Family Counselling
- Bulk-billing for Individuals

Family Mental Health Support (Family Counselling)

Family Dispute Resolution

Mediation

Respecting Elders support and conflict resolution

Financial First Aid

- Financial Capability
- Financial Counselling

Skills Building

- Training
- STAR School Learning Programs
- Parent & Group Programs

8 Seymour



Locations

- 1 Cheltenham (Head Office)**
Level 1, 16 Park Road
(Cnr Nepean Highway)
Cheltenham Vic 3192
- 2 Chadstone***
41 Stamford Road
Oakleigh Vic 3166
- 3 Broadmeadows**
B1, 1-13 The Gateway
Broadmeadows Vic 3047
- 4 Narre Warren**
86-88 Victor Crescent
Narre Warren Vic 3805
- 5 Ringwood**
367 Maroondah Highway
Ringwood Vic 3134
- 6 Heidelberg West**
Shop 48 Bell Street Mall
Heidelberg West Vic 3081
- 7 Greensborough**
Level 3 Greensborough Plaza
Greensborough Vic 3088
- 8 Seymour**
Shop 5-6 78 Station Street
Seymour Vic 3660
- 9 Westall**
35 Fairbank Road
Clayton South Vic 3169
- 10 Cardinia**
High Street Medical Centre
17 High Street
Bunyip Vic 3815
- 11 Koo Wee Rup**
Black Fish Medical Centre
215/235 Rossiter Road
Koo Wee Rup Vic 3981
- 12 Pakenham**
Springs Cente
5 Livingstone Blvd
Pakenham Vic 3810
- 13 Lakeside Centre**
2 Olympic Way
Pakenham Vic 3810
- 14 Chelsea**
1A Chelsea Road
Chelsea Vic 3196
- 15 Box Hill**
3 / 27 Bank Street
Box Hill Vic 3128
- 16 Fitzroy**
Fitzroy Legal Service
Level 4, 126 Moor Street
Fitzroy Vic 3065
- 17 Geelong**
62 McKillop Street
Geelong Vic 3220
- 18 Grovedale**
373 Torquay Road
Grovedale Vic 3216
- 19 Bendigo**
65-67 Baxter Street
Bendigo Vic 3550
- 20 Frankston**
Level 2, 60-64 Wells Street
Frankston Vic 3199
- 21 South East Water**
101 Wells Street
Frankston Vic 3199
- 22 Wyndham Vale**
IPC Health , 510 Ballan Road
Wyndham Vale Vic 3024
- 23 Caroline Springs**
22-50 Becca Way
Caroline Springs Vic 3023
- 24 Melton**
390-392 High Street
Melton Vic 3337
- 25 Traralgon***
41 Grey Street
Traralgon Vic 3844
- 26 Bairnsdale**
306 Main Street
Bairnsdale Vic 3875
- 27 Leongatha**
5A Church Street
Leongatha Vic 3953
- 28 Warragul**
31-35 Gladstone Street
Warragul Vic 3820

- Better Place Australia Offices
- Co-Locations
- Outreach Locations
- * Branded Family Relationship Centre (FRC)

26 Bairnsdale

25 Traralgon*

27 Leongatha



betterplace.com.au
financialfirstaid.org.au
1800 639 523
enquiry@betterplace.com.au

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Visit www.dss.gov.au for more information.