

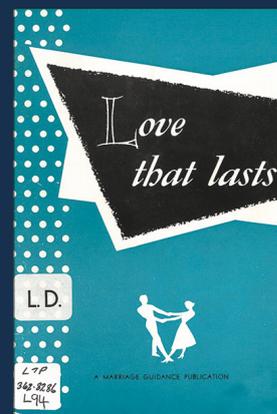
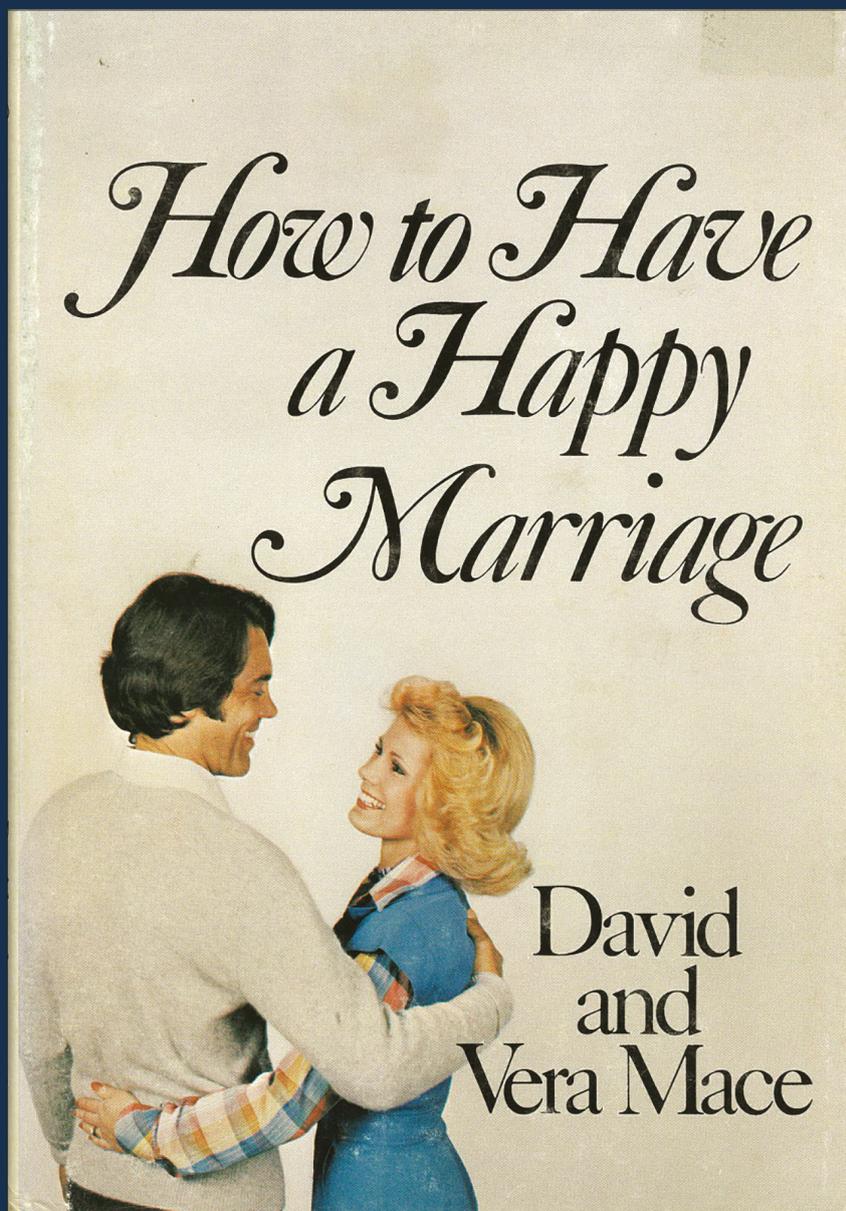
*How Far We've Come:  
Celebrating 75 years of  
Relationship Australia*

---

*Exhibition Catalogue*

*Relationships  
Australia*

**75** years of better  
understanding



**Above**

Focusing on educating people about marriage and family life, marriage guidance began as a series of talks presented by Dr. W L Carrington. These talks were later published into booklets.

*Marriage Guidance Council of Victoria (1957). Love that lasts. Forward by David Mace. Prahan, Victoria.*

**Left**

David Robert Mace, was a teacher and marriage counsellor who founded the National Marriage Guidance Council of Great Britain. He and his wife, Vera Mace collaborated on 33 books, several examples can be seen here in this exhibit. The books offered marriage advice and insights into relationships from across the world, as the couple travelled widely. The books had a strong religious element, something which the key leaders in Australia's movement sought to steer away from.

*Mace, D & V. (1977). How to Have a Happy Marriage. Abingdon Press. Nashville, Tennessee.*



First published 2023.

© Relationships Australia and Swinburne School of Design + Architecture, 2023.

ISBN: 978-0-646-88852-1

All rights reserved. Any reproduction of the content within this publication requires prior permission in writing from the publisher.

#### Disclaimer

All endeavours have been made to contact the copyright holders of this material, this includes the National Library. In the event you are the copyright holder of material contained within this catalogue please contact Relationships Australia immediately to discuss permission release and consent.

**Dr Jane Connory** has curated many exhibitions as part of her research exploring visibility, inclusivity and diversity in design. She is a lecturer at Swinburne University's School of Design + Architecture and has held positions as the National Head of Research at the Design Institute of Australian, the Vice President of Creative Women's Circle and Coordinator of the Emerging Scholars Workshop at the Design and Culture, Francis and Taylor journal.  
[jconnory@swin.edu.au](mailto:jconnory@swin.edu.au)

**Dr Fanny Suhendra** is a design researcher and educator in Indonesia and Australia. Her primary research focuses on the relationship between graphic design and its role as a behavioural change agent through the consideration of localised knowledge, intersectional diversity and inclusivity. As a Chinese-Indonesian designer educated in the West, she notices that hegemonic Western views present a lack of communication design identity and ownership in some non-Western communities. Her work focuses on decentering canonised design knowledge through self-reflective approaches in design education and practice as well as collaborative international research.  
[fsuhendra@swin.edu.au](mailto:fsuhendra@swin.edu.au)

**Claire Fisher** is the National Research and Project Manager at Relationships Australia National. With a research background in anthropology, she works with people across the Federation to create exciting opportunities for new research in a variety of fields. She has a passion for knowledge translation to create a stronger pathway from research to practice and recognises the need to explore a variety of research disciplines to understand our past and improve the quality of our services for the future.

## Introduction from Relationships Australia

**A**s Chair of the Board of Relationships Australia Inc., I extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have joined us to celebrate our remarkable journey of 75 years in advocating for and supporting respectful relationships. At this significant juncture, it is crucial to reflect upon our history, acknowledge our partners, and chart a course for our future. First and foremost, we must recognise the profound connection we share with the Traditional Owners of the lands where we live and work. We honor the Elders, both past and present, who have guided us and continue to do so. Additionally, we express our appreciation to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community partners, whose invaluable insights and wisdom enrich our mission.

Our inception 75 years ago in Melbourne, as a group of dedicated individuals addressing the pressing need for support for marriages, was the seed from which Relationships Australia Inc. grew. Over time, our mission expanded to encompass a wide range of relationship issues, evolving in tandem with the changing concerns of Australians. This journey is a testament to the commitment of countless individuals who have worked tirelessly to help relationships thrive. They have formed the bedrock of our organisation and are the driving force behind our ongoing evolution.

Our history is intrinsically tied to the broader social and political landscape of Australia. Major cultural movements, including the advocacy for civil rights by First Nations people, women's groups, LGBTQIA+ communities, refugee movements, and disability advocates, have influenced our service developments. Over 75 years we have adapted and expanded to embrace Australia's evolving identity.

**T**oday, we proudly stand as an organisation that offers services to all members of the community, regardless of their background or circumstances. Our commitment to inclusivity and our dedication to learning and understanding the unique needs of each family and community are unwavering.

As we showcase our history through this exhibition, we not only pay homage to our past and acknowledge our present, but also reaffirm our commitment to expanding support in the future. Our vision is one where every member of the community can access transformative support services that empower them to overcome relationship difficulties and lead fulfilling lives. In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been a part of this remarkable journey. Together, we will continue to shape a future where relationships flourish, and communities thrive.



**Dr Claire Ralfs**  
Chair of the Relationships Australia Board

## *Introduction from Swinburne University of Technology*

**A**s Relationships Australia marks its 75th anniversary, we are grateful for the opportunity to examine the organisation's transformative journey. From its conception as a marriage guidance movement to its current practice, our research investigates the question; how has Relationships Australia visually represented relationships in Australia throughout this time period.

This exhibition previews our findings on Relationships Australia's receptiveness as an organisation. Relationships Australia consistently adapted to meet the evolving needs of all Australians in the ever-shifting social landscape. This exhibition, rich with visual representations, features historical documents, brochures, and visual materials to mark this pivotal moment in Relationship Australia's history.

One of the most prominent themes that will resonate throughout the exhibition is the profound shift from Marriage Guidance Councils to Relationships Australia. This transformation signifies Relationship Australia's unwavering commitment to placing people at the forefront of its mission. The organisation has recognised that the concept of relationships extends far beyond the confines of traditional marriage and couple relationships, embracing the diverse tapestry of human connections, including friendships and familial bonds.

The artifacts on display will illustrate how the organisation's services and messaging have progressed in alignment with these core principles. The transition from the term "Marriage Guidance" to "Relationship Australia" was not just a rebranding, but a reflection of the broader scope of the organisation's mission and the vital role it plays in nurturing and supporting all types of relationships. It serves as a testament to Relationship Australia's evolution in parallel with the dynamic changes in both global and local society.

**F**urthermore, the exhibition underscores the organisation's transformation from its limited representation of Australian diversity at the beginning of its conception into its commendable effort to accurately represent diverse, contemporary Australian lives. The visual choices and the shift towards a more modern and dynamic identity become evident as Relationships Australia harnesses the power of digital media, incorporating web-based content, social media campaigns, and online resources.

These digital tools now play an integral role in expanding the organisation's reach and offering crucial support to all Australians. On behalf of Swinburne University of Technology we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Relationships Australia for 75 years of meaningful work, as well as their openness and steadfast support for research.

**Dr Jane Connory and Dr Fanny Suhendra**  
Swinburne School of Design + Architecture

## It began with a lecture

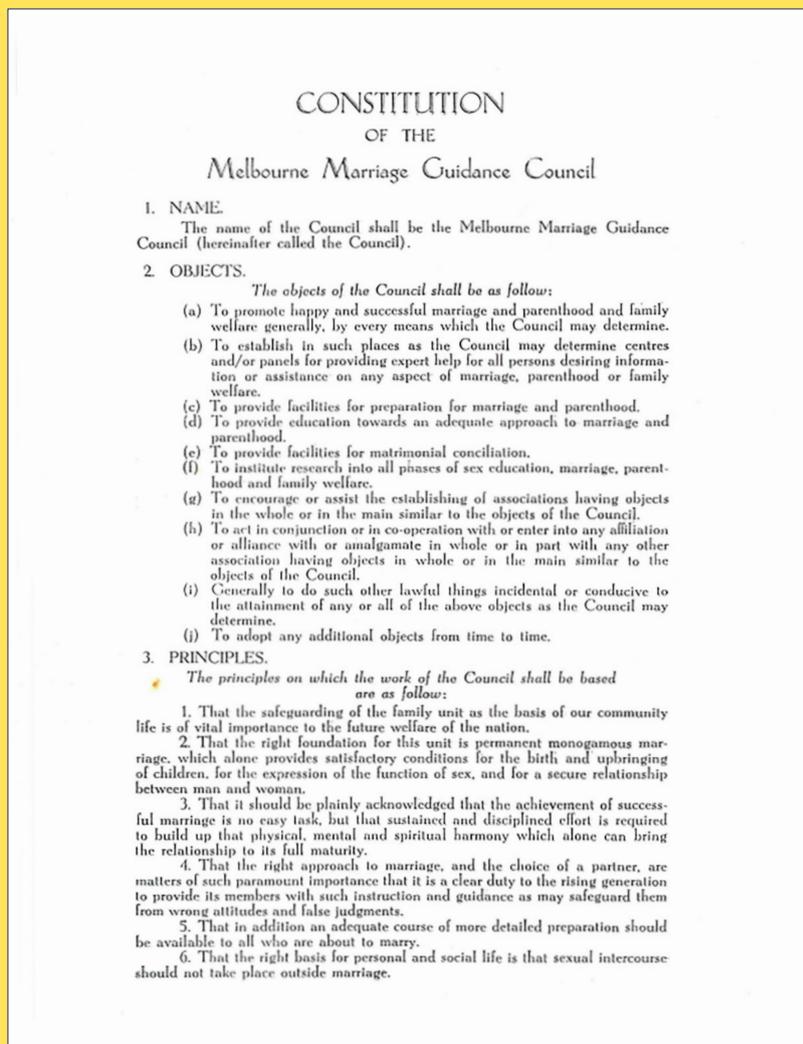
According to letters found in the RAV archives, Australia's Marriage Guidance movement began with a social worker at Lady Gowrie childcare centre in Melbourne. Following some discussions with mothers there, they asked Dr. F. Duras, the head of the Physical Education Department at the University of Melbourne, to run a series of information sessions answering questions submitted by attendees about the mysteries of married life.

Following the popularity of these information sessions, a meeting was held in 1947 to explore the possibility of bringing the Marriage Guidance movement to Australia. The meeting was attended by around 50 professionals, including social workers, clergy and members of other organisations interested in addressing these social issues.

---

*“This council was the first attempt at making a scientific approach to one of the worlds greatest problems – the problem of marital relationships.”*

---



Above

Talks and resulting booklets led several to gather and write the Constitution of the Melbourne Marriage Guidance Council which focuses on several key concerns:

- Promotion of successful marriage through education and guidance;

- Research into sex education, marriage, parenthood and family welfare; and
- Establishing centres to undertake this work.

Melbourne Marriage Guidance Council. (1948). Constitution of the Melbourne Marriage Guidance Council. Melbourne, Victoria.

# 1940s

## Inspired by the US and UK.

Attendees were inspired by the movements pioneered by David Mace in Britain. In 1938 a group of professionals concerned about the rising divorce rates felt there should be a professional organisation preparing people for marriage to address problems once they arose. Marriage Guidance was normalised in Britain in 1943, following the financial and social stresses of the depression and the war.

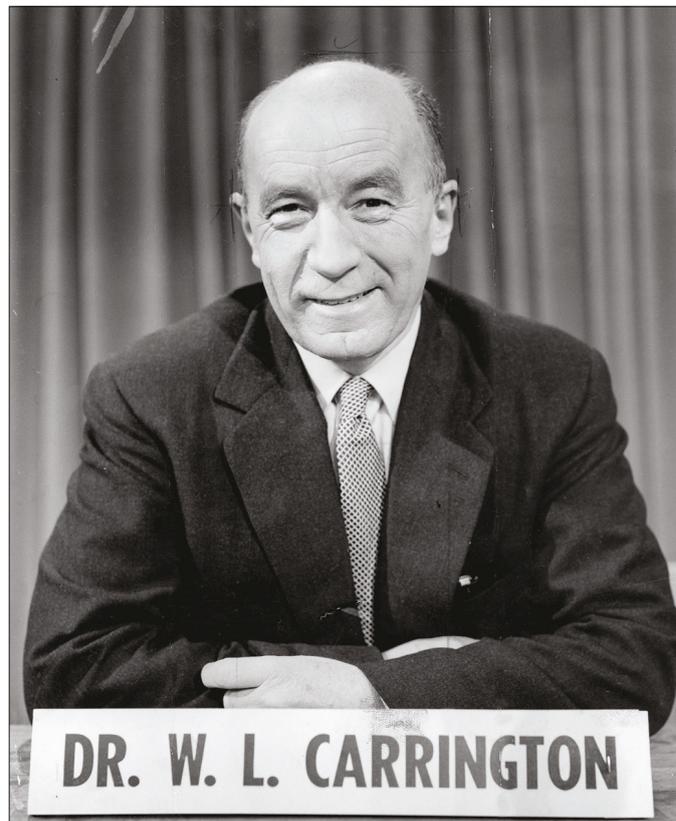
Concurrently, the Marriage Guidance movement was growing in the United States, based on the influences of Germany's marriage education movement. In Germany, the first centre for "Information and Advice on sex" was established at the Berlin Institute for Sexual Science in 1919.

**B**y 1932, there were several hundred marriage consultation centres across the German Reich, focused on providing information on eugenics, sex, contraception and marital problems. In 1949, Dr Carrington hosted a talk on the "Fine Art of Human Partnership".

This, along with several other popular talks led several to gather in the home of Mrs Kitchen to write the Constitution of the Melbourne Marriage Guidance Council. While Victoria was first cab off the rank, New South Wales and South Australia were very close behind, with a shared focus on educating people on marriage and supporting couples to safeguard the family unit. ■

## *Below*

*In 1949, Dr Carrington hosted a talk on the "Fine Art of Human Partnership".*





Left

Photo of marriage guidance council meeting at the home of Mrs Kitchen, 1953.

# 1950s

## Family Life Education

The early days of the Marriage Guidance movement were predominantly dedicated to 'Family Life Education'. Lectures focused on family and married life, with a particular focus on sexual issues such as foreplay and orgasm, sexual problems and issues of sexual adjustment.

While subversive in its approach to sex, and favoured by many women for this reason, this marriage guidance movement still upheld more traditional divisions of labour and ultimately felt that marriage was the ideal state. Due to resourcing limitations and advice from the British movement who were "drowning in marriage problems", they felt their efforts were best spent on educating the masses.

In 1952 the National Marriage Guidance Council of Australia was established, to support the movement across Australia to have more unified approaches to selection, training, and education. In the mid 50s, they started to focus on recruiting volunteers to conduct more guidance. Advertisements called for people with the ability to elicit

information, be impartial, free from embarrassment, non-directive, trustworthy and discreet and be personally well integrated, with no major unresolved personal problems of their own.

"Guidance was a mix between clergy's pastoral work, middle-class lay women's charitable activities and modern professional enthusiasm for rational management of personal and social problems." In practice, this led to married men and women aged between 30-50, often Clergymen's wives, psychologists, doctors and social workers volunteering their time. Difficult cases were referred elsewhere, based on the advice from professionals in the space.

### The Mace's arrive

The arrival of Mr and Mrs Mace to Australia in 1956 was a pivotal moment. David Mace conducted a series of lectures and authored an advice column in the Women's Weekly during his stay, leading to a huge public awareness of marriage guidance and the support promised. The government started providing funding for the premises

of approved centres and by 1957 demand for guidance outstripped the movement's resources. In 1959, the Matrimonial Causes Act provided Australia with federal divorce laws (replacing state-based laws) and led governments to begin funding Marriage Guidance centres to support divorcing couples.

Concurrently, the Marriage Guidance movement was growing in the United States, based on the influences of Germany's marriage education movement. In Germany, the first centre for "Information and Advice on sex" was established at the Berlin Institute for Sexual Science in 1919. By 1932, there were several hundred marriage consultation centres across the German Reich, focused on eugenics, sex, contraception and marital problems. In 1949, Dr Carrington hosted a talk on the "Fine Art of Human Partnership". While Victoria was first off the rank, New South Wales and South Australia were very close behind, with a shared focus on educating people on marriage and supporting couples to safeguard the family unit. ■

---

*“Happiness became as important as social obligation.”*  
– Coughlan 1969

---

*Opposite page, top row, left*  
*The foreword for the 1960–1 “Focus on Marriage Guidance” booklet was written by The Honourable Mr Acting Justice Selby. Justice Selby was involved in divorce reformation and wanted to ensure equal rights for both parents, more attention to be paid to the welfare and custody of children, and that the commonwealth provided legal aid in certain divorce cases.*

*Marriage Guidance Council of New South Wales (1961). Introduction by the Honorable Mr. Acting Justice Selby. Focus on Marriage Guidance. Sydney, New South Wales.*

*Opposite page, top row, middle*  
*“Focus on Marriage Guidance” was a publication produced by the Marriage Guidance Council of New South Wales. It presented their annual report and collated articles on key issues for emerging guidance practices, including social shifts, legal issues, educational work and the incorporation of psychology and counselling techniques.*

*Marriage Guidance Council of New South Wales (1964). Focus on marriage guidance: an annual review of the work of the Marriage Guidance Council of New South Wales. Sydney, New South Wales.*

*Opposite page, top row, right*  
*Annual reports throughout the 1960s illustrate a shift from an emerging field into a more established one. Guidance Councils were interested in growing membership, increasing awareness of their work and refining exactly what their role was in society.*

*Marriage Guidance Council Australia (1969). Annual Report 1969. Melbourne, Victoria.*

## The start of competitive funding

The arrival of funding led to some rivalry among providers. While the Marriage Guidance Council of Australia was slowly shaking its religious roots, Catholic Guidance centres remained steeped in tradition.

The Attorney General Department’s Marriage Guidance advisor, Les Harvey, urged organisations to merge, however this was resisted. By the late 1960s, there were 11 church affiliated organisations, 7 secular, and 2 community based centres. Women were more likely to seek guidance than men.

### The swinging 60s

The movement was particularly affected by the social environment of the 1960s, including shifting attitudes towards marriage, sex and social conformity, as well as the rise of psychology. By this stage, Marriage Guidance movements in the United States and Britain had diverged.

The United States consisted of highly trained, professionalised paid workers, while Britain was solely volunteers providing advice

based on personal experience and social mores. Counsellors in the US began to integrate psychological approaches into their practice, particularly focusing on self-actualisation in the context of shifting social understandings of the purpose of marriage.

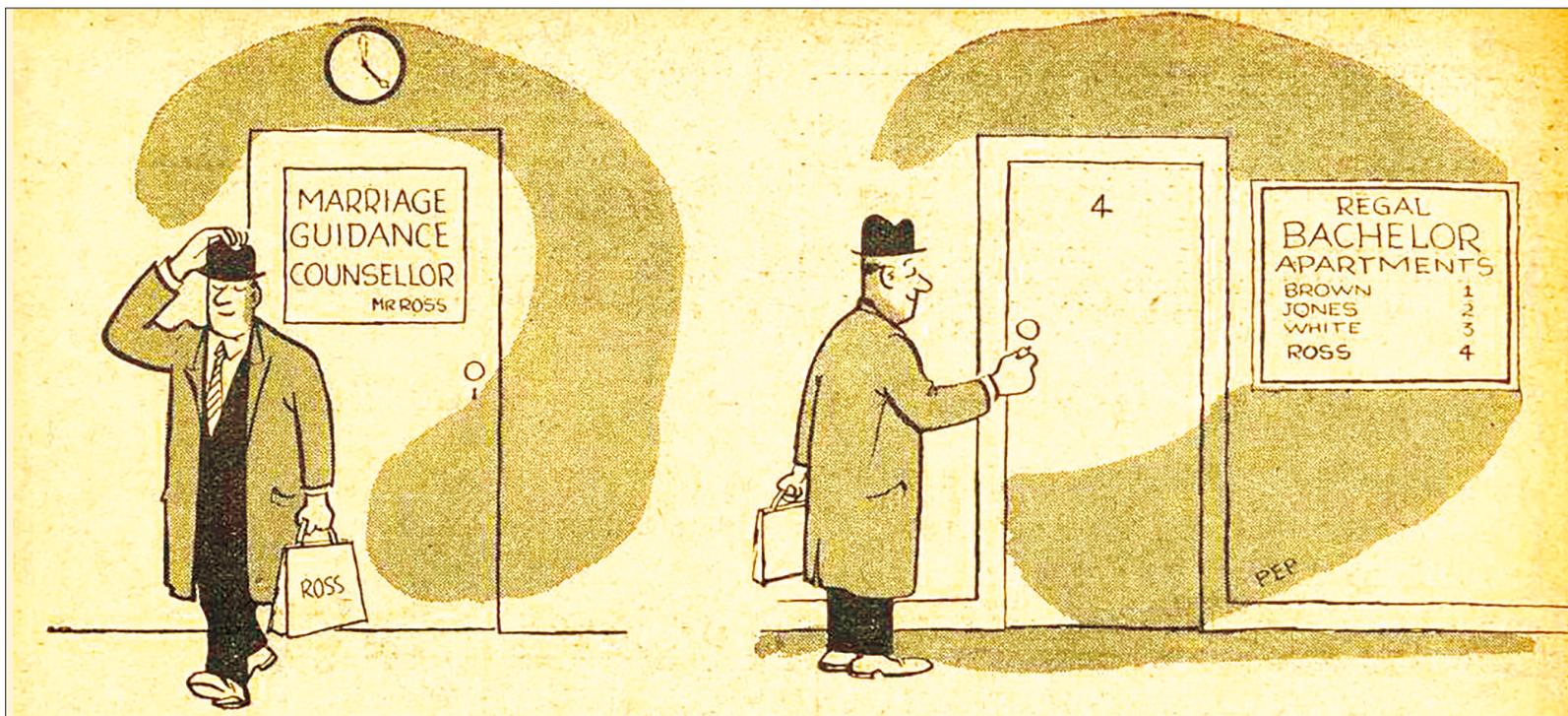
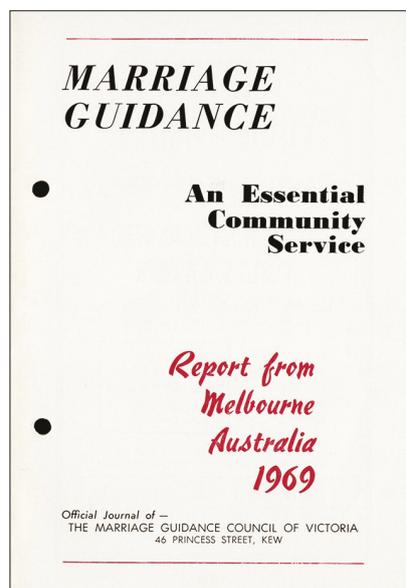
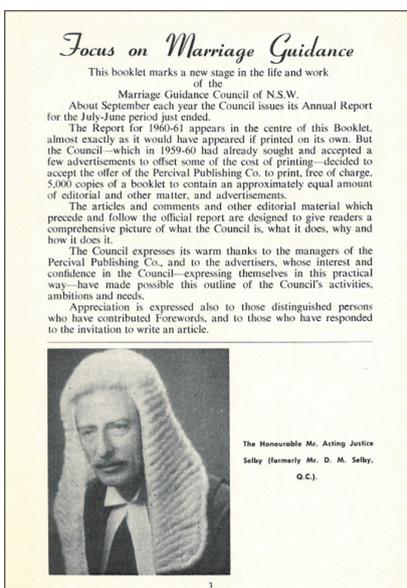
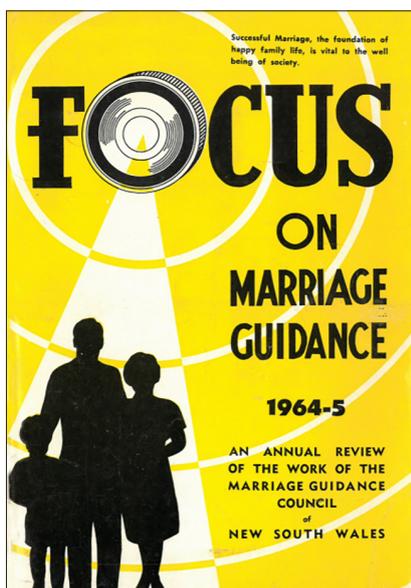
### The professionalisation of the movement

In response to conflicting approaches, the movement began to be professionalised. Traditionalists focused on the continued need for family life education. Progressives felt there was a need for guidance workers to grow with the client, focusing on emerging psychological practices such as conjoint interviewing. As a result, selection, training and supervision changed and began to formalise the previously implied skills of empathy and listening. Marriage breakdown began to be understood as stemming from a mismatch of individual psychology as opposed to something which could be prevented through education and guidance. ■

Bottom of this page

Cartoon from the 'The Bulletin'.  
Illustrates growing concerns about bachelors completing the sensitive work of marriage guidance.

# 1960s





## What do you think?

### Do you have any special ideas about

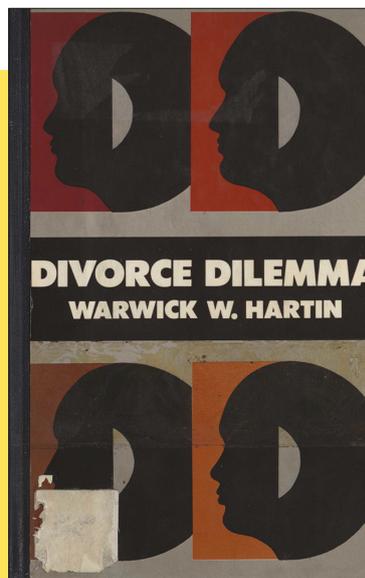
family life? parenthood? child care? women's problems? sex education? family planning? abortion? sex crimes? discrimination?

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships is dealing with questions like these.

The Commission has been set up to inquire and report to the Australian Government on the family, social, educational, legal and sexual aspects of male and female relationships.

You could help by writing to the Commission and saying what you think.

The address is: The Secretary  
Royal Commission on Human Relationships  
Box 58, Post Office  
KINGS CROSS, N.S.W. 2011 (Tel. 357 3322)



## Orange blossom blight

● At a conference of the National Marriage Guidance Council it was suggested that couples should be questioned about their financial and emotional affairs before being granted a marriage licence.

*If loving couples were required  
To pass a marriage test,  
Financial and emotional,  
To have their chance assessed,  
I'm quite prepared to prophesy  
And lay a little bet  
That sales of wedding rings would drop  
And clergymen would fret,  
For candidates would mostly fail  
Their licences to win.  
Result: A few would march alone,  
But most would live in sin.*

— Dorothy Drain

Left

Demonstrations for 'No Fault Divorce' petitions to be signed in Civic Plaza, Canberra, 1974.

# 1970s

## Divorce skyrockets

The formalisation of the work led there to be less counsellors and more work for each counsellor. Training intensified and they shifted from volunteers providing guidance to counsellors providing therapeutic intervention. The reduction in volunteers led organisations to ask clients to pay for the first time. Education shifted from divorce prevention towards therapeutic groupwork.

In 1974 the Royal Commission into Human Relationships took place, exploring issues of sexuality, family violence, gender inequality,

family planning and divorce. The Royal Commission and fervent campaigning by women's movements, led to the introduction of No Fault Divorce Law through the Family Law Act which passed in 1975. A huge backlog led to around 65,000 divorces and 1975 remains the year with the greatest number

---

*"...fervent campaigning by women's movements, led to the introduction of No Fault Divorce Law..."*

---

of divorces still today. The 1970s saw a huge shift in Australians conceptualisation of marriage and divorce, which is reflected in a variety of publications and approaches from the Marriage Guidance Council.

### Shifting priorities

As the workplace professionalises, the Marriage Guidance Council also begins to look inwards at their clientele. A study conducted across their centres notes that marriage guidance has mostly been a service provided by, and for, middle-class white Australians. ■

### Opposite page, far left

This leaflet, 1974, was distributed widely (90,000 copies), inviting the public to contribute to the 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships. The terms of reference included sexuality, family violence, gender inequality, family planning and divorce. The Royal Commission led to the no fault divorce law passing in 1975.

National Archives of Australia (1974). 'What do you think?' Pamphlet, Royal Commission into Human Relationships. Sydney, Australia.

### Opposite page, middle

Dr Warwick Hartin was a marriage guidance counsellor at the Council. *Divorce Dilemma* was written in the wake of No Fault Divorce Law and helped people navigate their failing marriage. Books such as *Divorce Dilemma* reframed failed marriages as a societal issue, as opposed to a flaw of the couple. This was revolutionary at the time.

Hartin, W. (1977). *Divorce Dilemma*. Hill of Content, Melbourne, Victoria.

### Opposite page, right

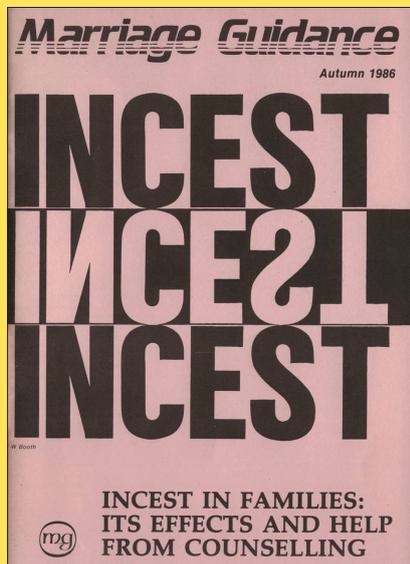
This poem was printed in *The Woman's Weekly* as a response to a suggestion, posited at the National Marriage Guidance Conference, that people should have their emotional and financial affairs in order before considering marriage.

Drain, D. (1971). 'Orange Blossom Light'. *The Australian Women's Weekly*. Are Media, Sydney, Australia.

---

*“The huge rise in divorce  
leads to governments  
providing funding  
for mediation services.”*

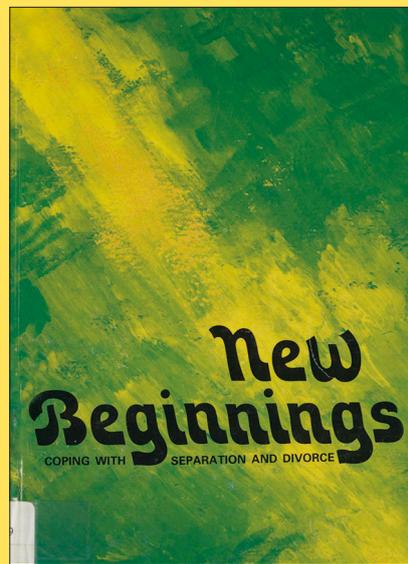
---



Above

The British Marriage Guidance Council released quarterly journals during the 60s, 70s and 80s exploring issues in the profession. The 80s saw a significant shift, bringing previously taboo topics into the light and providing counselling and other support to victims of sexual and family violence. The cover of their journals showcases the change of approach.

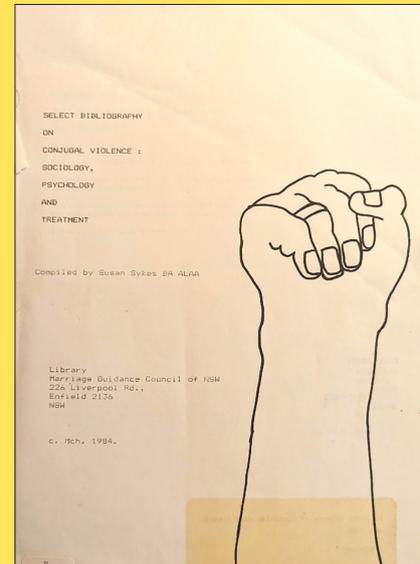
Booth, J. (1986). *Incest in Families: Its effects and help from counselling*. Marriage Guidance Council of Britain. London, United Kingdom.



Above

Warwick Hartin was the Director of the Marriage Guidance Council of Victoria. This book about separation and divorce was collected from Relationship Australia Victoria library. By the 1980s the focus was no longer the preservation of marriage, and divorce was less feared. This was reflected in a variety of publications and approaches from the Marriage Guidance councils. As separation and divorce was accepted as a solution to severe marital issues, more services became available to support people through this experience.

Hartin, W (1982). *New Beginnings: Coping with separation and divorce*. Family Life Movement of Australia. Sydney, New South Wales.



Above

The collated bibliography shows an emerging acknowledgement of the effect of conjugal violence (domestic violence) on relationships. It also became a valuable resource as Marriage Guidance Councils evolved from a marriage preservation movement into a service agency.

Sykes, S (1984). 'Select Bibliography on Conjugal Violence: Sociology, Psychology and Treatment'. Marriage Guidance Council of NSW. Enfield, Sydney.

Below

Cartoon by Geoff Pryor, from the Canberra Times, 1982, commenting on the Popes strong standing on divorce.

# 1980s

## Expanding services

In response to the growing multicultural society, Guidance Councils began recruiting multicultural counsellors. Government funding also became available for counselling programs targeting Italian and Greek communities. The huge rise in divorce led to governments providing funding for mediation services, which the Marriage Guidance Councils began providing. The Guidance Council also began evaluating supervision practices to explore how the professionalisation of these services has impacted its effectiveness.

The 1980s also saw a social shift towards recognising the impact domestic and family violence was having on many women and their children. The Marriage Guidance Council begins researching the topic and educating their employees on the effect it could be having on their clients.

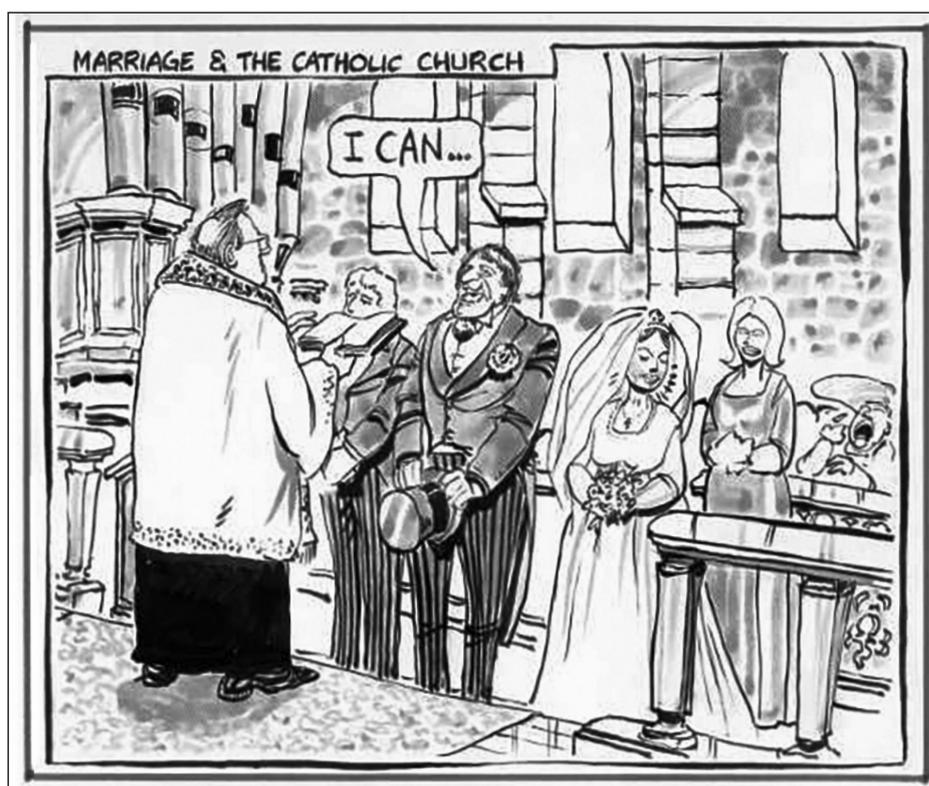
Notably, the feminist movements directly criticised marriage guidance as encouraging women to stay in violent marriages, or at the least, being unqualified to respond to these situations. Marriage Guidance Councils begin

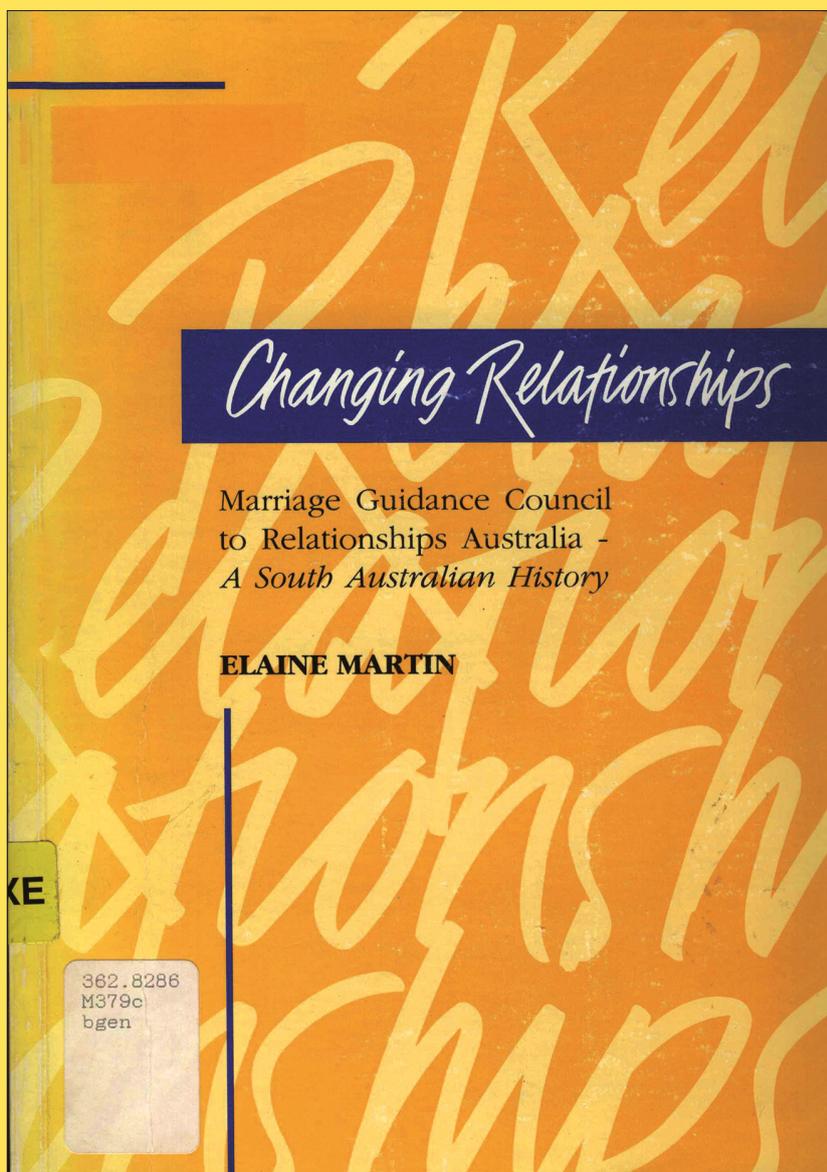
spending significant time and effort educating and training staff, however as an emerging field, very little evidence was available at the time on the best practice to respond to these situations.

### Uncertain futures

It is now operating as a service agency by the late 1980s, the movement is struggling financially. It is now considered a service agency

and requires significant funding to continue. The concept of marriage guidance has shifted and expanded radically. Funding is mostly provided for couples to navigate relationship breakdown safely and respectfully, as opposed to guidance on how couples could stay together. Marriage Guidance councils begin appealing to the media and supporters to support them, on the basis of the importance of the health and wellbeing of families. ■





**Above**

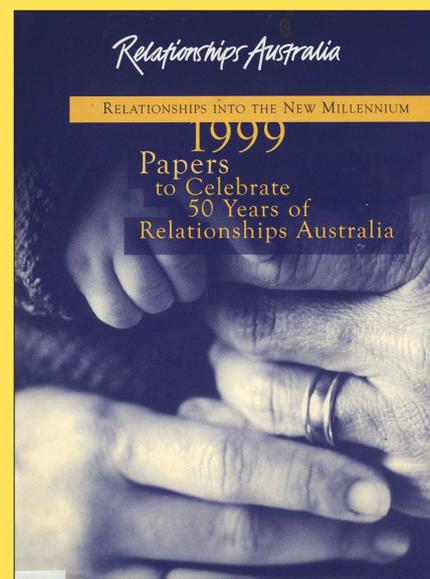
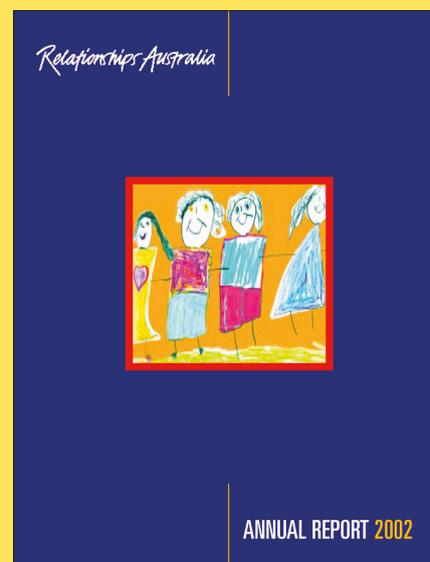
This book marked the change of name from "Marriage Guidance Council" to "Relationships Australia". It outlines the history of the organisation and its ideological shifts that took place to situate it to become a relationship service provider across the public health, mental health and legal sectors.

*Relationships Australia (1999). Relationships into the new millennium: Papers to celebrate 50 years of Relationships Australia. Relationships Australia Inc. Canberra, Australia Capital Territory.*

**Above right**

Annual reports from the 1990s chronicle funding issues, as the expanding service offerings and new training requirements are not appropriately supported by funders. Visually, we can see the clear shift from couples and marriages to other familial and collegial relationships.

*Martin, E (1998). Changing Relationships: Marriage Guidance Council to Relationships Australia - a South Australian history. Relationships Australia South Australia Inc. Adelaide, South Australia.*



**Above**

The book collated essays by prominent Australian figures to celebrate 50 years since the National Marriage Guidance Council was established. Visually, this period marks a clear focus on family relationships.

*Relationships Australia (1990-9). Annual Reports. Relationships Australia Inc. Canberra, Australia Capital Territory.*

# 1990s

## New horizons

Marriage Guidance continues to expand its work outside of the focus on the couple. They begin releasing research and programs targeted at exploring the effect of relationship breakdown on workplaces. While children and teenagers have been a focus of Family Life Education throughout the 20th century, specific services targeting children emerge in the 1990s. For example, the effect of separation on children was a key focus of mediation services.

### Focus on conferences and milestones

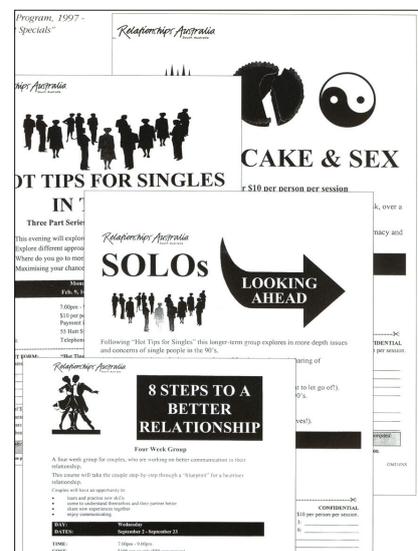
Conferences were popular during the 1990s as the family and relationships sector emerged. In 1992 marriage guidance counsellors attend the Summit on the Family in Canberra. In 1998, to celebrate 50 years of Marriage Guidance in Australia, they hosted a conference on domestic violence in New South Wales. Family Law conferences were also an important date in the calendar, as well as educators conferences, exploring the ever-expanding education services provided by the Councils. A book of essays

*"In 1993, the federation of Marriage Guidance Councils voted to rename to Relationships Australia."*

released in 1999, to celebrate 50 years since the National Marriage Guidance Council was established to focus on concepts such as same-sex couples, gender and men, changing family structures, working mothers and the concept of marriage going out of fashion. Other services included community development work, gambling prevention, children's contact services, Veterans support, child abuse programs and employee assistance programs.

### From Marriage Guidance to Relationships Australia

In 1993, The federation of Marriage Guidance Councils voted to rename to Relationships Australia, in response to the much broader scope of services provided and the new society they found themselves operating in. ■



Above

Background Image. Brochures courtesy of Relationships Australia South Australia.

**Bottom**

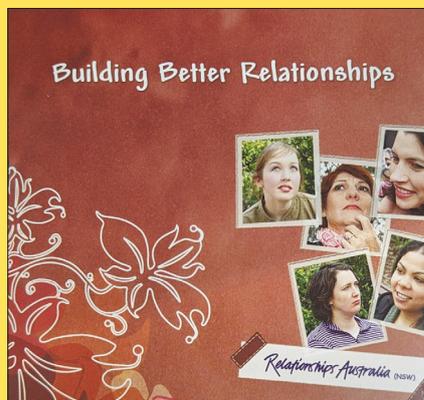
The Relationships Australia community walking in the Mardi Gras parade for the first time in 2014.

## Now and into the future

**B**y the 2000s, Relationships Australia was exploring alternative methods of connecting with clients. Telephone counselling continued, as well as the use of CD-ROMs, booklets and social media usage from 2012.

In 2003, the first annual “check on your neighbour day” takes place in Victoria, Australia, founded by Andrew Heslop. This grew into the campaign Neighbour Day, gifted to Relationships Australia in 2014 and now known as Neighbours Every Day, Relationships Australia’s social connection campaign.

**I**n 2006, Relationships Australia was funded to begin operating over 30 Family Relationship Centres across Australia, providing government subsidised support services for forming new relationships, overcoming relationship difficulties or dealing with separation. Family Relationship Centres reflected a growing commitment from the government to support respectful relationships across the lifespan. Also in 2006, Relationships Australia Queensland established the



Family Relationships Advice Line (FRAL). FRAL is a national telephone service that helps families affected by relationship or separation issues, including information on parenting arrangements after separation.

In the 2010s, Relationships Australia continues its efforts to become more inclusive and diverse and

demonstrates its commitment to strengthening the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities by developing the Action Plan on a Page. A culture of learning, research and evaluation continues, to ensure that prevention and overall wellbeing remain a central aspect of the services provided. ■

# 2000s

## Far left

Relationships Australia continues working as a service agency and provides a variety of resources and materials to help Australians with their relationships. The 2000s saw a diverse range of support materials and an exploration of alternative methods to connect with clients. This included telephone counselling as well as the use of CD-ROMS.

RANSW (2004). *Building Better Relationships. CD-ROM. Office for Women's Policy, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, in partnership with the Talent2 Learning Group Pty. Ltd. Sydney, New South Wales.*

## Left

Relationships Australia begins engaging with social media, showing a commitment to becoming more inclusive and diverse in both its service offerings and visual representation. The current service offerings support all kinds of relationships, including LGBTQ+ communities, First Nations peoples as well as Culturally and Linguistically diverse families.

Suhendra, F. (2023). *'Social Media Video'. Swinburne University of Technology. Hawthorn, Melbourne.*

## Below

Relationships Australia's Indigenous Network was established in 2007. The Action Plan on a Page was developed by the network and demonstrates a commitment to strengthening the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities and the work that must occur across the Federation to do so.

Relationships Australia (2018). *Walking Together Relationships Australia Indigenous Network | Action Plan on a Page. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.*

### Walking Together

Relationships Australia Indigenous Network | Action Plan on a Page

Relationships Australia

HOW WE WILL DO IT

#### SPIRIT OF INTENT

Relationships Australia acknowledges the cultural, spiritual and economic sovereignty of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we understand that the ongoing violation of this sovereignty continues to harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health, wellbeing and aspirations. Relationships Australia is committed to strengthening the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities. We recognise that respecting and nurturing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a benefit for all Australians.

#### WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Culturally safe organisational space and practice.
- Well supported and thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Services and programs that work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.
- Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and self-determination.
- Healthy and safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who have pride in their cultural traditions and optimism for the future.
- Culturally and spiritually strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families that are safe and economically secure.
- Safety and respect for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### HOW WE'LL BEHAVE

Sit together

- Engage with cultural differences, including conflicts and disagreements.
- Appreciate the vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when they challenge mainstream systems.
- Learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.
- Recognise there is significant diversity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including differing cultural traditions, different experiences of discrimination and dispossession, and diverse ways of living culture in contemporary Australia.
- Create places for building meaningful partnerships based on respect, where differences remain visible, are welcomed and we work together not expecting uniformity.
- Understand this is an effort and can be challenging.

Listen

- Listen deeply and carefully – walk in others' shoes.
- Unpack and unsettle assumptions.
- Clarify understanding and avoid making judgements.
- Remember, acknowledgement is not the same as agreement.
- Notice and respect the intersectionality of various forms of stigma and discrimination that individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with.

#### HOW WE WILL KNOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Cultural fitness training for all RA staff annually.
- Monitor numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in what positions.
- Monitor numbers of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeships in the organisation.
- Monitor numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership roles.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific programs are ongoing within the organisation.
- The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities are evident in evaluations.

#### Give time

- Sit with uncomfortable responses.
- Recognise that cultural fitness cannot be finished.
- Understand that all healthy relationships require time, focus and effort.

#### Respect cultural knowledge

- Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have different cultural knowledge, ways of relating and parenting practices.

#### Take responsibility

- Understand the practices and impacts of privilege and mainstream culture.
- Understand how racism operates systemically and not just as individual intentional abuse.
- Take individual and collective responsibility for making change.
- Use restorative practices (high challenge – high support).

The RAIN Executive developed this plan after many months consultation. RA CEOs endorsed the plan on Thursday, 22 August 2019



*Background Image*

*Iconic graphic used by Relationships Australia on covers of published materials during this decade.*