

FVREE FREE FROM
FAMILY
VIOLENCE

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



PLAY



We acknowledge that we live, work and deliver services, primarily on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin nation.

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples and acknowledge their ongoing connection to country, land, language, Lore, stories, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to all First Nations Peoples, Ancestors as well as Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families continue to be disproportionately affected by family violence due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation.



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1 IN 4 WOMEN

experienced violence by an intimate partner

OVER 60% OF THE LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITY

have experienced intimate partner violence

40% OF CHILDREN AGED <18

have experienced at least one form of abuse

3 IN 5 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN

have experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a male intimate partner

30% OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITY

have experienced intimate partner violence

THIS CAN AND MUST CHANGE.



Family violence disproportionately affects women and children.

We recognise that violence against women is driven by gender inequality and compounded by intersecting forms of oppression, creating overlapping experiences of discrimination.

We provide inclusive, accessible services to people experiencing family violence.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



SANDIE DE WOLF AM
CHAIR

Our Annual Report is a time to reflect on what all the people who are part of FVREE have been able to collectively achieve. While we all know there is still so much work to be done to ensure everyone feels safe and free from family violence, we should never take for granted the determination, expertise, commitment and resilience our staff continue to show in their daily work

Our previous CEO, Chris Mathieson, left us in January after nearly 5 years. We are immensely grateful for the wonderful leadership Chris provided, helping us rebuild, grow and significantly expand our capability and impact.

We are delighted that Megan Phelan joined us as CEO in January. Megan is building on the strong foundations Chris left and exploring new partnerships and opportunities, especially for young people who are not at all well served by the current service system.

Our FVREE board is made up of very skilled, committed, expert and strategic directors who continue to meet our governance responsibilities and provide great wisdom, advice and support to the leadership team.

We say special thanks to Prue Monument (deputy chair and chair of the Quality, Performance and Quality committee) who resigned in May after 6 years of great service. We also thank Susie Cotterill for her service over 2 and half years, and Trish Mitra-Kahn who also resigned in 2024-25 after 5 months on our board.

We were delighted to welcome Simona Gory and Fiona McCormack to the Board.

For all of us committed to a community free from family violence, it's easy to become disheartened, especially with some of the damaging backlash.

But as Katy Gallagher (Minister for Finance and Minister for Women) said recently we need to understand that progress is never linear and that we must keep 'showing up'.

So a heartfelt thank you to you all for doing just that.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

I was honoured to join FVREE in January, picking up the mantle from Chris Mathieson. FVREE's positive culture and commitment to keeping our community safe and free from family violence has been palpable from day one. I am extremely grateful for the leadership and support of our highly skilled Board, and the expertise and warm welcome of the Executive and senior leadership team.

We supported over 13,000 victims of family violence during the last year – overwhelmingly these are women and children. Our staff's deep and nuanced understanding of perpetrator behaviours, of shifting patterns of risk and the devastating impacts of family violence has helped thousands of victim survivors to achieve safety and reclaim autonomy of their lives.

The launch of our new Strategic Plan in December 2024 has sharpened our focus and fuelled our ambition to respond to the needs of all victim survivors: children and young people, clients facing intersecting system barriers to support, and the growing number of older Victorians experiencing family violence.

Our initial focus on better supporting young victims of family and intimate partner violence has been met with broad support from sector partners, young people and those working to support them. I am thrilled with the progress we have made to date and look forward to progressing this work in the years ahead.

Partnerships are central to all our work. Through our partner role in The Orange Doors, our auspice role in the Eastern Regional Family Violence Partnership, our work with multi-agency partners on Risk and Assessment Management Panels, and working with project partners to support young victims, we know that it is only through harnessing the diverse and expert perspectives of the broad service system that we can respond to the complexities of family violence, and its impacts.

This is also true for our work in prevention and early intervention. Across early years, schools, tertiary education and youth settings, with local Councils, corporates and targeted industries, we are working to build the capability of communities to promote gender equality, address harmful gender stereotypes and support workforces to recognise the signs of family violence and respond appropriately.

We've had a sustained focus on working with our former clients to understand how we can improve our practice, processes and communications. The bravery and generosity of these victim survivors who are helping us provide a better experience for current and future clients is truly humbling.

Finally, to our staff. All community service organisations are highly dependent on their workforce – this is particularly so in the family violence sector. I pay tribute to our staff whose commitment, resilience, and determination to prevent and respond to family violence is helping thousands of people in our community to achieve safety and a life free from violence.



MEGAN PHELAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

WHO WE ARE

We are a specialist family violence service in the Eastern Region of Melbourne (Naarm).

We lead work across family violence prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery. We offer practical, progressive, and evidence-based solutions that support victim survivors at the most critical and complex points of need.

We work in partnership across social services, justice and education systems, and with our community to improve long-term outcomes by providing comprehensive, integrated and holistic support, and by strengthening our community's capacity to prevent, recognise, and respond to family violence.

OUR ORGANISATION

13,444

victim survivors engaged with support

3,673

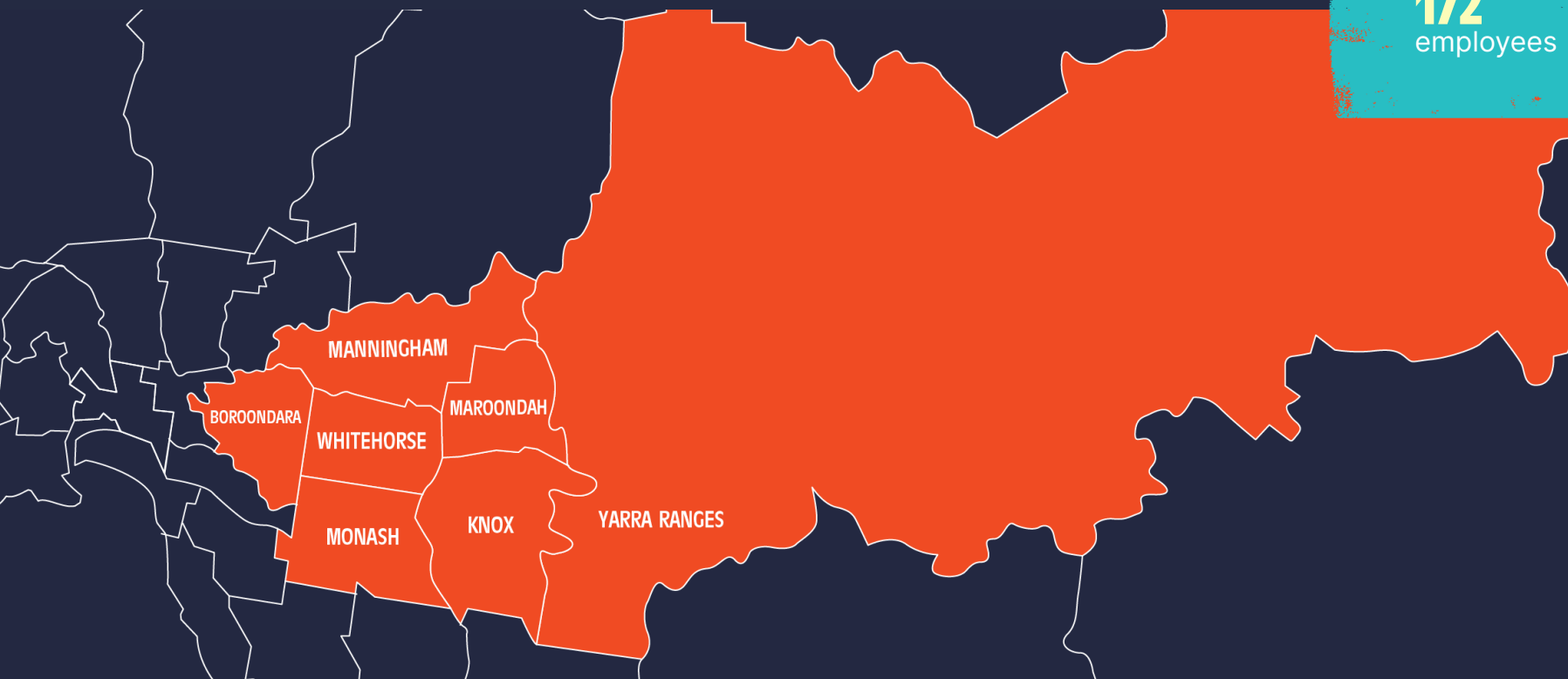
people reached through prevention and education

\$24.1M

total revenue

172

employees





**OUR VISION IS FOR A
COMMUNITY FREE
FROM FAMILY
VIOLENCE, WHERE
EVERYONE IS SAFE.**

This drives our commitment to support victim survivors of all ages, backgrounds and identities, and to hold to account adults choosing to use family violence.

REACH AND IMPACT

FVREE at the Orange Door

provided
50,000
hours of support



to
10,000
victim survivors

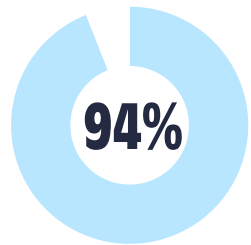


Support and Recovery

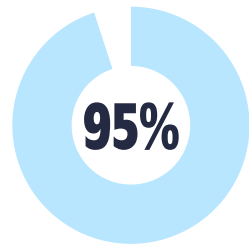
provided
68,000
hours of case
management support



to
3,000
victim survivors



of case management
clients felt FVREE
contributed to their
safety



of clients felt
supported and
understood by their
case manager

87%

of victim survivors
accessing Case
Management were
assessed as serious/
high risk

55%

of all victim
survivors were
children or young
people



OVER \$3.5M

was provided in
brokerage to support
victim survivors manage
crisis, get back on track,
and start to recover



4,245

nights of emergency
accommodation for
victim survivors in
crisis

228

adult victim
survivors (and their
families) supported
with a personal
safety initiative to
stay safe at home

“I am taking back authority of my own mind after decades of serious mental slavery, and I am doing it quickly. The care and support and practical assistance provided to me by FVREE, have literally helped to save my life.”

REACH AND IMPACT

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL VICTIM SURVIVORS



555

victim survivors with a disability



877

culturally and linguistically diverse clients



130

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors



250

LGBTIQ+ disclosures



9 PARTNERSHIPS

with specialist, community specific organisations to better assist victim survivors experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage

CHANGING ATTITUDES, BUILDING HOPE

127

education sessions



provided to

3,673

individuals



across

63

businesses/ organisations



100%

of young people felt motivated to challenge gender inequality in their community.

85%

of educators felt more confident delivering gender equity activities.

100%

of participants felt confident responding to family violence disclosures post training.



RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

OUR SERVICES

We offer practical, progressive, and evidence-based solutions that support victim survivors at the most critical and complex points of need.

THE ORANGE DOORS

We work alongside partner organisations to support victim survivors, as well as people using violence. A range of supports are available in person, online or on the phone. People can self-present or be referred by other services such as child protection or Victoria Police.

Supports can include:

- Risk assessments and safety planning
- Child safety and well-being
- Crisis response and emergency accommodation
- Financial support and material-aid
- Collaboration and case consultation with multidisciplinary teams
- Advocacy alongside victim survivors with the legal and justice system, other services, and in the community

CASE MANAGEMENT

Where required, crisis response or longer term case management is provided to meet the unique needs of the victim survivor, including children and young people wherever they are on their journey.

Supports can include:

- Ongoing risk assessment and safety planning
- Support to access emergency accommodation or maintain safe housing
- Short-term financial assistance
- Psychoeducation
- Advocacy and liaison with police, courts, schools and other services
- Referrals to financial counselling, housing, health, mental health, and alcohol and other drug services
- Specialist intersectional supports including disability, First Nations, LGBTIQA+ and Children and Young People

THERAPEUTIC RECOVERY PROGRAM

Specialist family violence counselling and therapeutic support to victim survivors, including programs specifically designed for children and young people.

“

Anyone starting should just remember that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. If you had told me last year, this is where you're going to be this year, I would have said no, because there was no way out.”

CHANGING ATTITUDES IN THE COMMUNITY

OUR PROGRAMS

We create environments of change by providing effective, evidence-based solutions in building awareness of family violence, addressing the drivers of gender-based violence, and supporting people to be active, safe participants in responding to disclosures.

EARLY YEARS

Level Playground promotes gender equality across early childhood programs for children, families, and educators.

What we offer:

- **Practical tools and resources** supporting services to embed gender equality into everyday practice.
- **Play-based workshops** for families challenging stereotypes and supporting children to explore their full potential.
- **Training for Early Childhood Educators and the Community** in Gender Equality, Body Safety and Addressing Resistance.

YOUNG PEOPLE

We work with young people through programs and training that build leadership, confidence, and skills to challenge violence-supportive attitudes and prevent violence before it starts.

Programs include:

- **Young Leaders** – empowers primary school students to take action on gender equality and respect in their communities.
- **Leaders for Change** – equips young people to champion cultural change and promote respect, inclusion and equality as violence prevention leaders.
- **Let's Talk** – builds the skills and knowledge of 15-25 year olds to understand and respond to intimate partner violence.

3RS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Our trauma-informed 3Rs training empowers communities, workplaces and professionals to confidently **recognise** signs of family violence, **respond** to family violence disclosures and **refer** individuals to support.

Our 3Rs training packages include:

- **3Rs of Family Violence** – for workplaces, people leaders, and community.
- **Hair3Rs** – for salon professionals.
- **Animal3Rs** – for animal care and local laws.
- **Youth3Rs** – for services and settings working with young people.
- **Rainbow3Rs** – for LGBTIQ+ communities, allies and professionals.

“

The session has given me a better understanding of how to approach someone that may be in a suspected FV situation and where to guide them for additional help and support. Additionally, how to keep safe.”

SAFE AND TOGETHER

Embedding Child-Centred Practice



The Safe and Together model is a child-centred, strengths-based, and systems-informed approach that shifts the focus from blaming protective care givers to holding perpetrators to account as parents.

The three key principles are:

- keeping the child safe and together with the non-offending parent
- partnering with the non-offending parent as a default position
- and intervening with the perpetrator to reduce risk and harm

By implementing the Safe and Together model we are improving safety and wellbeing for children and families.

This model has been widely adopted by other services across the sector, including those located in The Orange Door.

100% of direct services staff completed the training by end of 2024-25.

Sessions are planned for our non-client facing staff for 2025-26.

PARTNERING IN PRACTICE

Piloting a Dual Response Model

Our pilot model wraps therapeutic healing conversations around a case management response, enabling risk assessment and management, safety planning and therapeutic work to occur concurrently.

Our case manager and therapeutic worker collaborate with other service providers, for a coordinated and holistic response. The therapeutic response is also offered to the children connected to the parent, recognising the profound impacts on children exposed to family violence, and the need for responses in their own right.

Impact so far:

- Clients are better equipped to understand the impacts of trauma and work on practical coping strategies
- Healing and repair of relationships is supported through work with the parent and child/ren
- Children build trust and share experiences in a safe space, leading to improved case management
- Therapeutic conversations inform improved risk assessments and safety planning



“

Being involved in a care team while working with a complex case allowed us to work on the mother's confidence and understanding of the system. We were able to encourage her to apply for an IVO which she had previously not sought. We built her understanding of her right to say no, and her children's right to say no to their father.”

PARTNERING IN PRACTICE

Elevating the voice of victim survivors

Our Lived Experience Partnership Framework provides a structure for purposeful and ethical partnering practice. Former clients and external victim survivor advocates have supported us to identify areas for improvement and enhance our response to victim survivors accessing our services.

13 LIVED EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

DEFINED OUR PARTNERING PRACTICE AND

REVIEWED OUR CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FLYER

Close to **100 PEOPLE**

with lived experience have expressed interest in partnering with us



Our lived experience partners generously shared their experiences of family violence and the services system that are used in this report.

“I was actually in a position where I felt confident to speak out about my experience, to feel confident in my own ability to add value to a service. And it was good to come to the realisation that I don't feel like a victim anymore. I feel like an advocate.”





**“ It could happen to anyone.
It isn't just stereotypes, it has no
class, it has nothing.
It does not discriminate.”**

PARTNERING IN PRACTICE

Responding to victim survivors with disabilities

The Family Violence and Disability Practice Lead Initiative aims to strengthen access to specialist family violence and sexual assault support for women and children with disability and ensure that support is inclusive of and tailored to the needs of people with disabilities. We do this through secondary consultations and capacity building activities across the Eastern Region.

We have partnered with the Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault, the Inner East Child and Family Services Alliance and Lived Experience Experts to deliver Disability Inclusion and Safety Forums. Focusing on building capacity, safety forums strengthen collaboration between key services and highlight best practice approaches to reduce barriers to safety for women and children with disabilities.

**255 SECONDARY
CONSULTATIONS**



to support victim survivors with disabilities, adults with disabilities who use family violence, and build practitioner capability when working with these groups

Forums this year

- Upholding the rights of people with disabilities when involved with Victoria Police and the Justice System
- Centering the voice of people with disability to increase safety from Family Violence
- Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices in the context of Family Violence
- When young people with disabilities are identified by the system as using violence in the home

> ACCESS THE FORUMS



PARTNERING IN PRACTICE

A Case Study



A young woman and her mother* from a culturally diverse background were referred to The Orange Door (TOD) by Police, following a physical assault by the young woman's male partner. The assault occurred at the point the young woman separated with him, and both she and her mother sustained serious injuries that saw them hospitalised as a result.

Although the young woman and her mother were referred as a family unit, both received individual support from FVREE practitioners in the Orange Door.

There was extensive collaboration with other services, including the hospital, Victoria Police, and the Southern Metro TOD, who focused on the person using violence. Initial support included empathic psychoeducation, safety planning, provision of material aid including a safe phone, and sharing of information with a range of other support services at the request of the clients.

The young woman and her mother were then referred to FVREE for case management which supported access to therapeutic services and payment for ongoing medical costs, as well as the Victims Assistance Program. Due to the severe nature of the assault, the perpetrator was remanded and charged without bail and both women feel significantly safer as they journey towards recovery.

**We've taken measures to protect the identity of victim survivors, including changing names, ages and personal details.*

MEET ELIZABETH*

“ I was in an abusive relationship for 15 years, but because it wasn't physical, I didn't realise it. It had sort of become normal. Things got bad when I had a child and my partner became very jealous.

They'd put our child in dangerous situations, sometimes when they were on drugs, in order to control me, and I got very anxious. My psychologist identified the abuse and put me in touch with The Orange Door (TOD). From there, I was referred to FVREE Case Management and that was really good. My case manager was understanding, sympathetic and supportive.

I left my partner, but the abuse towards my child continued and I found that navigating Child Protection and the Police were challenging for me. I contacted TOD again, and they referred me for FVREE case management a second time, and I was supported to apply for an extension of the Family Violence Intervention Order (IVO), and my case manager supported me to report all the breaches.

That resulted in my ex being held accountable through the justice system and protective measures implemented. I felt more hopeful in the system after that.

FVREE also organised play therapy for my child, which made a great difference to their emotional resilience and regulation. My experience with FVREE was very positive and my advice to other victim survivors would be to be brave, not give up, and keep putting pressure on the system and to keep striving to what they're entitled to, which is to feel safe and supported by the services that are funded to do so.”

**We've taken measures to protect the identity of victim survivors, including changing names, ages and personal details.*



BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPABILITY

LGBTIQA+ Inclusion

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Building on our 3Rs of Family Violence Training, we collaborated with Thorne Harbour Health* to co-design and pilot the Rainbow 3Rs training program.

Rainbow 3Rs addresses the distinct experiences of violence within the Rainbow Community and builds knowledge of what to do if someone from the community discloses that they are experiencing family violence.

2 PILOT SESSIONS

60 PARTICIPANTS

100% REPORTED HIGH OR MEDIUM

CONFIDENCE IN RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

COMPARED TO 46% BEFORE TRAINING

“ I think it is great training to raise awareness and respond and refer LGBTIQA+ people in family violence situations ”

**Thorne Harbour Health is a specialist organisation supporting LGBTIQA+ individuals affected by family violence*



300% INCREASE IN VICTIM SURVIVORS PRESENTING TO FVREE DISCLOSING MEMBERSHIP OF THE LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITY IN THE PAST 2 YEARS

“

I know that while I'll never fully recover from the damage that he's caused to me and the damage to our child, just having FVREE support me to navigate the system with more confidence makes me feel that safety is still within reach and it's still something that's possible. It just unfortunately takes a lot more time and effort than I think it should.”



BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPABILITY

Creating gender equitable learning environments

Launched in March 2025, our Gender Equity Resource Kit is a practical, evidence-based resource co-created with educators, early childhood experts, councils and families.

Part of our Level Playground initiative, the kits support early years professionals to embed gender-equitable and inclusive learning environments to reshape attitudes contributing to family violence, challenge outdated gender stereotypes and pave the way for safer, more equitable communities.

100% OF EDUCATORS

reported an increased understanding of gender equality in the early years

95% OF EDUCATORS

felt more confident delivering equity-focused activities



Partner Spotlight

Jayneen Sanders and Educate2Empower

I am honoured to have several of my children's books included in the Gender Equity Resource Kit. With its wide range of resources, including books, posters, cards, and lesson plans, it is a powerful tool to help address gender inequality before it starts. It is an essential resource for every early learning centre.

“Real change happens when educators, families, and communities work together to create environments where children can express themselves free from gender stereotypes.”



MEET SAMANTHA*

“My partner and I met in my home country and, while there was a hint of the control factor early on, I kind of put it down to my partner’s own trauma. Because my family were around, it wasn’t too bad. We decided to come to Australia, and that’s when things got bad.

It got to a point where I was getting 17 or 18 calls a day, and that’s not counting the text messages. I had a full-time job, and children to look after, and I wasn’t allowed to have any friends. He had control of the finances, and everything was in his name, so I had literally nothing. My friend from work told me about The Orange Door (TOD), and one day, when it started – messages, messages, messages – I emailed them. I don’t remember the context of the email, but I remember ending it with ‘I need help’ and they rang me. Then they referred me to FVREE.

My FVREE case manager was great. She asked me what I wanted to achieve, then she helped me plan to leave my partner safely. She also helped me with getting a bank account, moving into a new place and getting the escaping family violence payment. That was a massive help, because I didn’t know what services were available and what I was entitled to. If I didn’t get that payment, I wouldn’t have been able to leave. That’s absolutely reality.

The support I got at FVREE changed my life. It absolutely changed my life. When I left him, I had very little money and a really old car. Now I have savings and a brand-new car and it’s only been one year on my own.

I didn’t want to go to the police or go down the whole legal avenue, but I didn’t want to be silent either. Partnering with FVREE means I can get involved and say things, and every other woman that’s in the group has been through the same thing. Knowing that, it’s like you’re not alone. I feel very welcome. And, yeah, I love coming in.

I never want anyone to feel the way I did. I’d like to pay it forward and I just want one person that feels like they have no choice to read this and know they just have to ask. Put your hand up and say, I need help. There’s so much out there and don’t give up.”

**We've taken measures to protect the identity of victim survivors, including changing names, ages and personal details.*



OUR PEOPLE

Our people are the heart and soul of our organisation.

We are proud of their passion, dedication and professionalism in working alongside victim survivors for better outcomes and person-centred support.

WORKFORCE

172 Staff across the Orange Doors and FVREE



“ I am incredibly proud to be even a small a part of an organisation like FVREE. The work our staff does is incredible and I feel fortunate to be a part of that.”

“ I am proud to work at FVREE because we are a leader in our sector with LGBTIQA+ inclusivity. Also our strong focus on then experiences of children and young people.”

93%

of our staff are proud to work with us

91%

of our people would recommend us as a great place to work

OUR BOARD & CEO



Sandie de Wolf AM

Board Chair and Governance
and Strategy Committee
Chair



Sonia Sharp

Deputy Board Chair



Denise McLaughlin

Board Director and Quality
Performance and Risk Chair



Tony Pititto

Board Director and Finance
and Audit Committee Chair



Kelly Shay

Board Director



Gary Trytell

Board Director



Sue Campion

Board Director



Chloe Symes

Board Director



Simona Gory

Board Director - from
November 2024



Fiona McCormack

Board Director - from May
2025



Prue Monument

Board Director - to May
2025



Trishima Mitra-Kahn

Board Director - to February
2025



Susie Cotterill

Board Director - to
November 2024



Christine Mathieson

CEO - to December 2024



Megan Phelan

CEO - from January 2025

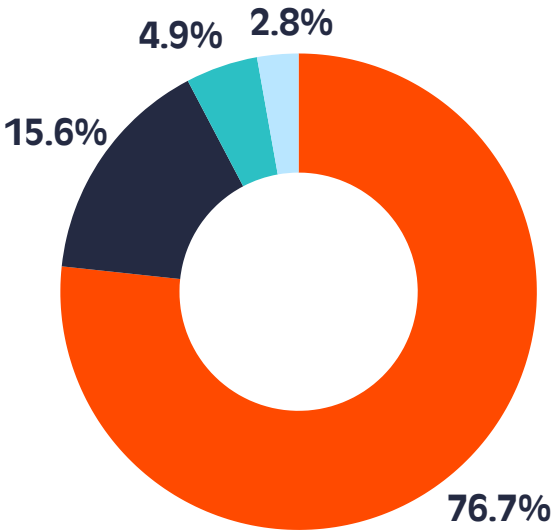
SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

FVREE generated revenue of \$24.1m with the net result being a deficit of \$871k for the financial year ended 30 June 2025 (\$260k surplus in 2024). The net asset position is sound, totalling \$4.5m at year end. Funding is principally received from the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and utilised to fund operations.

The current funding and service agreement continues through to 30 June 2028.

The full Financial Statements have been audited by Moore Australia who concluded that they give a true and fair view of FVREE's financial position and performance, and comply with Australian Accounting Standards.

HOW OUR FUNDS ARE USED



- Employee Costs
- Program Costs
- Administration and Occupancy
- Depreciation and Interest

\$24.1M
Revenue

\$4.5M
Net assets

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2024/2025 \$'000s	2023/2024 \$'000s
Current assets	8,657	9,774
Non-current assets	5,059	3,632
Total assets	13,716	13,406
Current liabilities	5,570	4,527
Non-current liabilities	3,361	3,494
Total liabilities	9,202	8,020
Net assets	4,514	5,385

[DOWNLOAD FULL FINANCIAL STATEMENT](#)

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Our thanks to the wide range of partners we work with to support victim survivors of family violence, educate the community and advance gender equality. It is through partnership that we can amplify our impact and improve outcomes for our community.

In particular, FVREE acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



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