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Stepfamilies Australia vision, mission and principles

Stepfamilies Australia vision

is an Australia that celebrates and supports stepfamilies to achieve their highest potential.

Stepfamilies Australia's mission

is to provide leadership to strengthen stepfamilies, by working in partnership with stepfamilies, professionals, business and governments using an integrated approach of:

- Programs and practice development
- Training
- Resource development and dissemination
- Evaluation and research
- Advocacy

Stepfamilies Australia's values

In all that we do, we strive to work in a way that is

- Inclusive - open to all
- Respectful - in all our relationships
- Flexible - adaptable and open to change
- Reflective - learning from experience
- Transparent - open and honest and respectful of confidentiality
- Informed - consulting, listening, and learning.

our people

committee of management

Anthony Gross - Treasurer
Malcolm Rust - Secretary
Karen Field - Chairperson
Margaret Howden
Fiona Trembath
Melissa Pettit
Dolla Merrillees
Maryse Street
Katrine Hildyard
Steve Martin - Executive Officer

staff

Steve Martin
Kate Morton
Daniela Zimmermann
Nicole Millis
Simone Young

sessional staff

Margaret Howden
Irene Gerrard
Simone Oliver
Heike Berens
Krys Smith

stepfamilies australia

chairperson's report 2008 – 2009

When I look back on the past twelve months I feel great satisfaction and pride with the achievements of SAVI.

Firstly the Committee of Management and the SAVI staff together have worked to establish five year strategic plan that not only ensures SAVI's continued sustainability in Melbourne but also the organisation's growth well into the next decade.

Secondly the national stepfamily association working group has worked tirelessly to develop the most suitable platform from which to launch a national association. The preferred option of the working group is for SAVI itself to rebadge as Stepfamilies Australia. This will mean the new organisation will be based in Melbourne and that our current staff group along with our other resources will become the foundation of Stepfamilies Australia - the much anticipated and awaited national association. In the near future all stepfamilies throughout Australia will have access to the support, understanding, validation and encouragement they need.

SAVI will also be moving home. We need to maximise our resources and minimise our costs. The building we have been sub-letting is no longer cost effective and Drummond Street Relationship Centre has made us a very generous offer to share some space in their Carlton building.

Finally I take the opportunity to announce my resignation from the committee. It is time for me to move on and leave future decision making to others. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all associated with SAVI and the Stepfamilies Australia working group. Our sustainability and national presence would not be possible without the tireless energy, commitment and professionalism of all our staff and volunteers over the years. In my time with SAVI I have met many wonderful, genuine and skilled individuals whose dedication, belief, professionalism and commitment I can only regard with my utmost respect.

To Steve, the current committee and our wonderful volunteers and staff I give my heartfelt congratulations, thanks and sincere best wishes for all that lies ahead. To the stepfamilies of Australia and all our supporters I urge you to keep up the good work as I know you undoubtedly will.



David Jefferson
Chairperson

executive officer's report

This is my final report at Executive Officer of SAVI, as we move forward into a national focus through the creation of Stepfamilies Australia.

SAVI has continued working as a catalyst in partnership with government, philanthropic trusts, community service providers and interstate stepfamily associations to create good outcomes for stepfamilies. These include developing a new stepfamily counselling program, national practitioner training and a national stepfamily association.

External evaluations of our education and training programs (supported by Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and the Department of FaHCSIA) have also strengthened the evidence base for specialist stepfamily prevention and early intervention programs. The National Practitioner Training has provided a valuable template for Family Relationship sector development, which we will follow up with the Federal Government during the coming year.

Stepfamilies are still largely under the radar of government and community service providers. Development of the pilot Stepfamily Counselling Program, supported by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and Besen Family Foundation has struck a chord of unmet need, and is providing further evidence of the importance of working to strengthen stepfamilies.

SAVI has worked in a financially challenged environment. Efforts to minimise overheads expenditure have been boosted by our recent move to co-locate with Drummond Street Relationship Centre, and we thank them for their generosity in sharing their premises. We are also working to increase capacity, with four trainees participating in our group education leader training program.

This has all been a terrific achievement by our committed staff and volunteer team, as part of implementation of SAVI's Strategic Plan 2008-2012. We honour and celebrate the commitment of the many volunteers who have worked to keep the vision alive since SAVI was founded in 1981.

We are now at an exciting threshold, presenting both opportunity and challenge. Throughout the year SAVI has coordinated the work of the National Stepfamily Alliance and the national Steering Committee in development of the national association, and Stepfamilies Australia officially comes into being at 27th November, 2008. SAVI is providing its infrastructure as the initial basis for the new organisation.

I want to particularly acknowledge the work and commitment of all interstate stepfamily associations and volunteers in making Stepfamilies Australia a reality. Creation of Stepfamilies Australia has been a fantastic all-volunteer effort. Our challenge is that it currently has no funding to underwrite its development.

Our shared vision is that creating a national profile for stepfamilies will lead to a new inclusiveness which values and supports stepfamilies equally with all families.



Steve Martin
Executive Officer

Stepfamilies Australia case study

Jane (42) first discovered SAVI on the Internet about 12 months ago. "Google was my stepfamily's saviour" Jane told the Helpline volunteer when she first called SAVI. Jane lives with her two children from her previous marriage - a boy (15) and daughter (10) and her current partner, Mike (38). Mike has three girls (12, 10 and 7) from his first marriage. Jane said she found the information on SAVI's website was really helpful and after a while she joined the online group, Stepmums, as she experienced some difficulties with Mike's three daughters when they visited during school holidays. She found the online group allowed her to 'let off some steam' with other people who have similar experiences. She also downloaded the Tip Sheets from the Internet which she found to contain really useful and helpful information.

Jane called the Helpline for counselling support one day after her son and her partner Mike had a big argument. 'I've had enough!' Jane said. "I'm always stuck in the middle of those two! I am constantly explaining and excusing one's behaviour to the other! I feel so guilty for putting my children through this but I love my partner.extra support

" I don't know what to do." Jane continued to call into the Helpline whenever she felt the need for.

However things became really difficult for Jane and her partner when Mike's children came to live with them five days out of a fortnight. "Mike says I am too critical of his kids. I'm just trying to get five kids organised and do what I know is best. Mike and I are fighting constantly and I feel like I am second guessing everything I do. I don't know what I am meant to do or what I am in this family anymore!" The Helpline volunteer suggested Jane make a Counselling appointment with SAVI to find some strategies for both her and Mike to work through this changing period for their stepfamily.

Jane and Mike attended eight stepfamily counselling sessions. Mike said 'the counselling helped us both understand the different roles you find yourself in as either a biological or stepparent and how it can invite you to behave in a way you usually wouldn't.' 'As a couple we have a better understanding of how we fight and why we fight and how to operate as a stepfamily so we don't fight over the things that aren't worth it!' said Jane.

Jane and Mike decided together they wanted to understand more about stepfamilies so they enrolled in the Making Stepfamilies Work couple course. "The course gave us a chance to meet other couples just like us. We don't feel as isolated as we did before. The course left us with great tools and real hope for a successful stepfamily" said Jane.

SAVI at work



Stepfamilies Australia programs

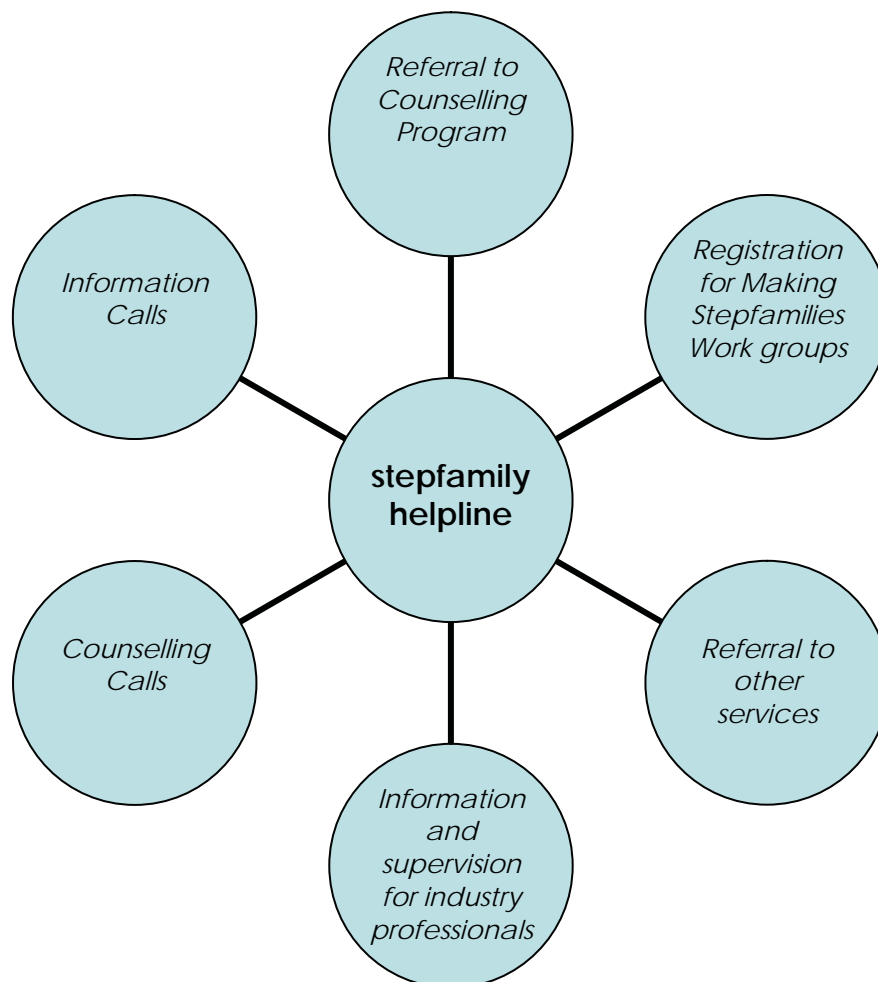
stepfamily helpline

The stepfamily helpline maintains its central function within our organisation despite receiving no specific funding support. A dedicated team of trained volunteers assist callers with much needed information about a wide range of stepfamily issues, referrals to other services (eg. Child Support Agency and Family Relationship Centres) and SAVI programs.

Time intensive counselling calls continue to make up the majority of calls received. So often callers comment on how isolated they have felt and how relieved and supported they feel after speaking to our volunteers. "I feel so much better now. Thank you" is often heard at the ending of a counselling call. The Stepfamily Helpline is taking on a new role as the major referral source for the new Counselling program.

online groups

The four SAVI online support groups are currently moderated by our Social Work placement students to ensure timely referral and assistance for group members. The online groups continue to provide that much need instant support stepfamilies need when facing difficulties. So popular are these groups some members are choosing to informally catch up for a coffee as well.



Stepfamilies Australia programs

national stepfamily practitioner training project

In 2008 SAVI was awarded Federal Government FRSP funding to become the official provider of Stepfamily Practitioner training throughout Australia. Our original agreement was to deliver ten workshops. Due to overwhelming demand we decided to offer four additional workshops. This was achieved within very tight time frames for both SAVI and our community partners.

A total of 179 participants attended the workshops held across Australia. Workshops were conducted in the following cities:

- Perth, Gosford, Bathurst, Melbourne, Launceston, Mildura, Tamworth, Adelaide, Darwin, Hobart, Cairns and Canberra.

This project has increased participants knowledge, confidence and skills when working with stepfamilies – an excellent outcome for FRSP's investment. Participants reported they gained a better understanding of

- the issues and challenges facing stepfamilies
- ways they can work with stepparents, biological parents and stepfamilies

It also clearly indicates a need for further specialised stepfamily training and supervision to support professional practice.

This suggests a clear pathway for further FRSP sector development to better respond to the unique needs of stepfamilies.

Daniela Zimmermann
Training Coordinator

professional training

SAVI continues to resource agencies and workers in Melbourne with specialised professional training in the complexities of stepfamilies. Around 120 professionals took part in our ten professional development workshops and their positive feedback continues to reinforce there is a need for highly specialised training to meet the needs of stepfamilies.

making stepfamilies work

Making Stepfamilies Work (MSW) is the six week course for couples in stepfamilies. In past 12 months SAVI conducted 12 courses across the four school year terms with approximately four couples attending each course. Living in a stepfamily can prove to be a very difficult experience for many couples. MSW gives these couples an opportunity to explore these difficulties with other people and discover valuable information and tips on how to make a success of their stepfamily.

In the past six month SAVI has begun a MSW facilitator trainee program to grow our team of facilitators. SAVI welcomes trainee facilitators Simone Oliver, Heike Berns, Kyr Smith and Simone Young. The wealth of training experience is now being handed down to a new generation, ensuring the future of the invaluable MSW program.

Stepfamilies Australia programs

counselling

Our new Stepfamily Counselling Program commenced on 1 June 2008. Following the success of the Strengthening Stepfamilies in Darebin project and thanks to funding received from both the Besen Family Foundation and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation SAVI is now providing a fee for service counselling program to meet the unique needs of stepfamilies.

For over 20 years a counselling service has been a long time dream of SAVI and I am so excited to be a part of making this dream a reality.

Stepfamily counselling offers any member of a stepfamily – an individual, couples, children and extended family members – an opportunity to discuss and explore their thoughts and feelings to find new ways of dealing with stepfamily issues and relationships.

At the time of publishing SAVI has conducted 158 counselling sessions. In effect around 80 families have so far been assisted by stepfamily counselling.

Simone Young
Counselling Coordinator

stepfamily news

What an exciting time for the future of stepfamilies as far flung groups across the nation come together to form Stepfamilies Australia. This amalgamation will provide a range of possibilities for the future direction of the newsletter.

Our aim for the coming year is:

- to continue the regular features including: research, book reviews, tips for handling situations and legal information,
- to bring back 'Step 4 Kids' the children's section,
- and to introduce some new features.

The editorial committee's challenge is to be 'real' yet bring stepfamilies hope for the future. We are therefore delighted to welcome Fiona Trembath. Fiona not only has personal experience in a stepfamily but brings professional journalistic skills as well. In a taste of what is to come Fiona has written several articles in which she recounted the highs and lows of life as a stepmother interwoven with gentle humour. These provided just the right flavour and we look forward to reading more.

For the past 27 years and into the foreseeable future the Stepfamily Association will continue to rely on contributions by volunteers. Without their ideas, articles, contacts, computer skills, and general hands on help when needed the newsletter would not be possible.

During the year there have been several changes. With regards to the editorial committee Bridget Tehan is unable to continue. We thank Bridget for her input and in particular we appreciate the skills she brought to the job. Several years ago Bridget gave a new face to the newsletter and in so doing incorporated easier ways to produce each edition. These changes brought a more interesting read and the new format made a huge difference for those involved in planning and the production process.

On the publishing front a demanding full time job leaves Daniele Cerretti little time to assist anymore. Neerja Choahan has now taken over and in the interim Daniele was kind enough to tutor Kate Morton (SAVI staff) until a new volunteer desktop publisher was found. We thank her for the time she gave over several years. Integral to the newsletter is the input by Steve Martin, Kate Morton, SAVI staff and students. We thank them for their continuing enthusiasm and ideas.

Margaret Howden
Member of the Editorial Team

evaluation

SAVI staff have known for many years and our service users continually tell us that stepfamily issues are complex and unique, that there are very few specialist programs out there which address their needs, and that they find our programs very helpful.

We've used our knowledge base of 'practice wisdom' to create specialist education and training programs, and information resources, but until now have not had the resources to have their efficacy assessed at 'arms length'.

external evaluation of stepfamily education and training programs

This year, funding of \$22,000 from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust has resourced an External Evaluation of Stepfamily Education and Training Programs.

Evaluators John Bamberg and Jess Heerde from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Centre for Adolescent Health conducted a thorough search of the literature using a Program Logic model. Their findings

1. Document the 'complex and unique nature of stepfamilies'; the 'unique and vital nature of SAVI's service'; and the need for dedicated funding for stepfamily treatment, educational and research practices.
2. Document evidence that supports SAVI's work as being of "world class standard" in interventions, education and training. However, lack of evidence for some components of SAVI's work shows the need for further research and evaluation studies; and for dissemination through publications and presentations.
3. Recommend a pathway for further development of training workshops through structured curriculum, addition of specialised clinical supervision, and retrospective study of participants to assess ongoing impact on trainees and ultimately the outcome for stepfamilies.

Further evaluation conducted by the same evaluation team for SAVI's National Stepfamily Training Program (see separate report) also supported the value of and the need for further specialised training; and the need for supervision to support professional practice.

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust funding for the External Evaluation project has provided a very valuable benchmark. Follow up funding for research and evaluation to address the findings and recommendations will now be critical.



partnerships

SAVI actively provides leadership to strengthen stepfamilies, by working in partnership with stepfamilies, professionals, business and governments. Partnerships with other community organisations, peak bodies, government agencies and philanthropic trusts have been at the core of our work this year.

Our approach integrates programs and practice development, training, resource development and dissemination, evaluation and research and advocacy.

Our work in partnerships has grown significantly over the past year. Nationally SAVI has worked with interstate stepfamily associations in developing Stepfamilies Australia and promoting National Stepfamily Awareness Day.

SAVI has resourced nearly 200 service providers through our national practitioner stepfamily training project, funded by Department of FaHCSIA, and working with community partners in all states and territories.

Philanthropic trusts have responded generously to SAVI's initiatives to strengthen stepfamilies, enabling the development of the stepfamily counselling program (Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Besen Family Foundation), and the evaluation of our education and training programs (Helen Macpherson Smith Trust).

Our developing partnership with the innovative Drummond Street Relationship Centre has led to co-location. Their generosity will greatly help SAVI's sustainability.

Advocacy over 10 years with the Australian Bureau of Statistics has resulted in new data which include non residential stepfamilies for the first time, demonstrating that stepfamilies are almost double past estimates of families with dependent children – 344,000 (13.3%), not 170,000 (7%).

Stepfamilies Australia treasurer's & auditor's report

treasurer's report

This is the last financial report for SAVI as future financial reports will be for Stepfamilies Australia. From the attached financial statements, I wish to highlight the following achievements: Total income for the past year was in the order of \$236,000 an increase of 11% on the previous year. Cash surplus for the year was just under \$7,000, down about \$1,500 from the previous year. Accumulated funds were in the order of \$17,500. Policies are in place to ensure that employees' entitlements and grants in advance were recognised and separated within the accounts.

The Association's accounts have been audited on a pro bono basis by J. Weston Elvins and his audit report is included. This year the audit opinion found no issues with our financial process and presentation of the financial statements. An audit process is one of the necessary conditions in the Association's Governance plan and a requirement for the Association to receive major funding from the Australian Government and major Foundations. For the coming year our auditor has requested that in view of his many years of service that the Association seek a new professional to continue the role.

We have continued a major liaison and fund-raising program targeting the Australian Government, to broaden the funding base of the Association.

I wish to state these fund-raising submissions would not have seen the light of day without the tireless and professional work of our Executive Officer Steve Martin. Approaches have been made to appropriate Government ministers and also local electoral representatives of all political parties to increase awareness of the Association's work and as a forerunner to possible funding submissions. It has been gratifying to see these submissions received with positive endorsement of more than one serving Commonwealth Minister. Both Foundations' staff and serving Parliamentarians have been helpful and offer useful advice and possible direction for further funding submissions. This has been an interesting exercise for me personally, and I hope we can continue and adapt this approach under our new national structure of Stepfamilies Australia.

The budget for 2008 - 09 has been prepared on the assumption that some of the Government funding approaches will come to fruition, and also that funding applications to philanthropic trusts and foundations will be successful, so that the Association does not continue to run some of our activities at a cash cost to the Association.



Anthony Gross
B. Econ. (Hons) FFinsia

auditor's report

I have audited the Financial Statements of the Stepfamily Association of Victoria Inc for the year ended 30th June 2008. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial reports in order to express an opinion on them to the Association.

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements the Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet of The Stepfamily Association of Victoria Inc for the year ended 30th June 2008.

J. Weston Elvins ASA.

J. Weston Elvins A.S.A
Auditor - 6.10.08

Stepfamilies Australia statement of financial performance

STEPFAMILIES AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2009

INCOME:	2009	2008		
Grant - FACSIA (FRSP)	49263	49856		
Grant - FACSIA (FRSP TRAINING)	6528	53472		
Grant - FACSIA (NATIONAL TRAINING)	12498	0		
Grant - FACSIA (DAREBIN PROJECT)	0	23986		
Grant - FACSIA (FRSP) F.I.P.	0	12226		
Grant - FACSIA (OTHER)	0	2413		
Donation - HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST	2325	19675		
Donation - JACK BROCKHOFF FOUNDATION	0	1455		
Donation - COLLIER CHARITABLE FUND	12000	0		
Donation - IAN POTTER FOUNDATION	20000	0		
Donation - BESEN FAMILY FOUNDATION	0	10000		
Donation - DRUMMOND STREET RELATIONSHIP CENTRE	15000	0		
Donation - WILLIAM ANGLISS TRUST	909	1000		
Donation - LORD MAYOR'S FUND	13396	1604		
Sales - Tip Sheets	503	674		
Consultancy Fees	0	6250		
Workshop Fees & Grants	11418	22992		
Project Account Receipts	1000	16354		
Membership Fees	422	415		
Donations/Fundraising	2675	1353		
Sales of Publications	4230	2798		
Fees - Family Services	7707	4548		
Fees - Counselling Program	24682	480		
Event Income	2317	0		
Interest	2204	4690		
	<u>189077</u>	<u>236241</u>		

LESS EXPENDITURE:

Salaries	131384	123619		
Superannuation	10122	8914		
Insurances	5272	6412		
Venue Hire & Catering	1312	292		
Computer Costs	3675	4031		
Telephone/Internet Costs	6877	5149		
Accounting, Audit & Bank Charges	3505	3456		
Postage/Printing & Stationery	3759	5725		
Staff Travel	3103	8913		
Publications & Subscriptions & Library	2494	1571		
Other Expenses	273	670		
Advertising & Promotions	82	2836		
Volunteer Equipment Grant Expenses	0	2413		
Consultancy & Professional Fees	727	29607		
Furniture & Fittings(Minor) & Off.Equipment.	0	982		
Workshops & Conferences & Staff Develop	6463	995		
Office Rental & Property Costs	7983	15987		
Fundraising: Other Costs	0	0		
Evaluation Expenses	4568	2319		
Program Development	0	91		
Depreciation	1069	1710		
Recruitment Costs	128	1569		
Printing of Tip Sheets(Provision)	503	2060	193299	229321
	<u>503</u>	<u>2060</u>	<u>193299</u>	<u>229321</u>

SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD: -4222 6920

Stepfamilies Australia statement of financial position

AS AT 30th JUNE 2008

ACCUMULATED FUNDS:

	2008	2007
Balance as at 30th June 2007	10549	2067
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	<u>6920</u>	<u>8482</u>
Balance as at 30th June 2008	<u>17469</u>	<u>10549</u>

Represented by:

CURRENT ASSETS:

Cash at Fitzroy & Carlton Credit Co-op Ltd #4248	2532	2225
Cash at Fitzroy & Carlton Credit Co-op Ltd #5062	1	1
Cash at ING Direct	62468	44853
Cash at ANZ	46	0
Petty Cash Advance	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>
	<u>65247</u>	<u>47279</u>

FIXED ASSETS:

Computer & Printer	12594	12594	
Less: Prov. for Depreciation	<u>-12171</u>	423	<u>-10826</u> 1768
Telephone System	1990		1990
Less: Prov. for Depreciation	<u>-1737</u>	253	<u>-1533</u> 457
Office Furniture & Fittings	560		560
Less: Prov. for Depreciation	<u>-324</u>	236	<u>-216</u> 344

TOTAL ASSETS:

<u>66159</u>	<u>49848</u>
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LESS:CURRENT LIABILITIES:

Accrued Expenses	6456	1807	
G.S.T. Clearing A/C	460	227	
Provision for Audit Fees	200	200	
Provision for Annual Leave	8397	7156	
Provision for Long Service Leave	6486	6091	
Provision for Printing (Tip Sheets)	<u>4442</u>	<u>2382</u>	<u>17863</u>
	<u>39718</u>	<u>31985</u>	

LESS:ACCRUED PROGRAM FUNDING:

Donations: Lord Mayor's Fund	13396	0	
Donations: Helen MacPherson Smith Trust	2325	0	
Donation: Besen Family Foundation	0	10000	
Grant: FACSIA (Training)	6528	0	
Grant: FACSIA (Darebin)	0	8451	
Grant: FACSIA (FRSP)	0	1559	
Grant: FACSIA (FIP)	<u>0</u>	<u>1426</u>	<u>21436</u>
	<u>22249</u>	<u>1426</u>	<u>10549</u>
NET ASSETS:	<u>17469</u>	<u>10549</u>	

acknowledgements

Freehills – pro bono legal advice

Funding Sources

Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

- Family Relationship Services Program

- Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

Besen Family Foundation

Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

The Jack Brockhoff Foundation

William Angliss (Vic) Charitable Fund

Donors

SAVI values the gifts in kind
and financial gifts contributed
by those named below:

Kay and Geoff Bayly

Noel Belfrage

Jo Elvins and Westin Elvins

Diana Gilbert

Lisa Howden

Margaret & Rob Howden

Eileen Hurley

Denise Rundle

Chris Pattison

Anthony Gross

Life Members

Irene Gerrard

Margaret Howden

2007 - 08 Volunteers

Heike Berens

Daniele Cerretti

Diane Clarke

Irene Gerrard

Anthony Gross

Geoff Horsfall

Margaret Howden

Rob Howden

Tracey Jamieson

David Jefferson

Yi Jiang

Li Chew Pan Kenny

Loo Sim Sun

Malcolm Rust

Krys Smith

Louise Watson

Neerja Choahan

Aditi Roy Chowdhury

Dolla Merrillees

Karen Field

Sean Hughes

Fiona Trembath

Students

Candice Olsen

Priya Murugapoopathy