

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling warmly while holding a baby. The baby is wrapped in a thick, yellow, textured knit blanket. The woman is wearing a light-colored top. The background is a soft, warm yellow color.

**emerge**  
support network

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands where we live, work and gather. We pay our respects to elders past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty of these lands was never ceded.

Emerge acknowledges the strength, pride, advocacy and endurance of First Nations peoples.

We recognise that the impacts of colonisation, systemic racism, and intergenerational trauma endure.

We recognise and honour the deep and enduring connection that First Nations people have to land, waterways and culture. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



# WELCOME

We are delighted to present the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan for Emerge Support. Our Strategic Plan positions us to continue to achieve our transformative work with families affected by family violence and increase our sustainability, growth and impact.

Emerge commenced its operations in 1975, when it opened one of the first refuges in Victoria. For nearly 50 years, we have worked as leaders, feminists and advocates committed to creating better futures for women and children.

Today, we are looking forward to the changing face of family violence in the community. We see the need for innovation in therapeutic interventions to transform the outcomes of children. We see the need to ensure that our services are holistic, comprehensive and informed by leading practice to build better futures for families. We see the need to be part of the system of prevention to stop the cycles of violence.

Our Strategic Plan cements our commitment to being leaders, voices, advocates and innovators to drive the change we need to see across the system.

Our work is only achievable with the compassion, calibre and commitment of our staff and leadership team. They represent the values and strength of our organisation every day. Our Strategic Plan reflects our dedication and investment in their continuing development and support.

We are fortunate to be supported by a strong, skilled Board of women who are committed to the future of Emerge and the families we support. We are deeply grateful for their time and expertise.

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We are excited to continue to drive change and change lives. We will continue to work with families, our communities, our stakeholders and generous supporters to empower and resource victim survivors toward safety and autonomy.

**Debra Goldfinch**  
Board Chair

**Claire Marshall**  
Chief Executive Officer

# OUR PURPOSE, VISION AND VALUES

## OUR PURPOSE

We provide support to people who have experienced family violence toward safety, autonomy and healing and to rebuild their lives.



# OUR VALUES

<b>Collaboration</b>	By collaborating, we can incorporate diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources to maximise our impact and address the diverse and complex needs of our clients. Collaboration builds mutual respect, transparency, and accountability, and encourages innovative practice. We center collaboration in our work with clients, learn from each other, and empower each other and our clients.
<b>Respect</b>	Everyone deserves to be respected for who they are. At Emerge, we hear all voices, value all experiences and work with compassion, consideration and care. We communicate sensitively and treat everyone with dignity, professionalism and patience.
<b>Courage</b>	Change takes courage. We speak up for what is right, even when it is hard. Courage empowers us to persevere, to make informed choices, and speak out for the rights of victim survivors. We strive to create the best outcomes for our clients and to build a safer, more equal community. We challenge the norms and attitudes that drive family violence and advocate for change.
<b>Creativity</b>	Our team brings their unique perspectives and ideas to the table, and we know that diverse thinking leads to better outcomes. We value innovation and learning from both successes and failures. Creativity allows us to approach challenges with fresh eyes, explore new possibilities, and increase our impact. It also facilitates healing, exploration and identity for our clients through creativity in our therapeutic programs.
<b>Inclusivity</b>	Ensuring inclusion protects human rights. We create a culture of inclusivity where everyone feels welcome, valued, and empowered to contribute their views and experiences. We are committed to advocating for a just and equitable society where every person can thrive.
<b>Impact</b>	We are committed to creating meaningful and measurable change in the world and making a positive difference in the lives of both our clients and the broader community. We measure our success not just by the number of people we help, but by the transformative impact we have on their lives. We constantly strive to improve our programs and initiatives to ensure that we are maximizing our impact and achieving our goals.
<b>Kindness</b>	Kindness drives connection, safety and healing. We strive to be empathetic, understanding, and supportive. We believe that kindness is the foundation of a strong and connected community, and that kindness facilitates openness and autonomy. We know that kindness creates belonging.

# ABOUT US

*We work to break the cycle of family violence.*

Emerge is a specialist family violence service based in Melbourne's South East. We take clients from all over Victoria. We use client-centred, strengths-based approaches to break the cycle of family violence so that victim-survivors are empowered, resourced, and supported to return safely to the community.

We understand that family violence is cyclical, with patterns of violence deeply ingrained in the social structures of our

communities that maintain power and control. Economic disparities, inadequate social services, and limited access to support and resources also contribute to the cycle of violence. Without comprehensive, holistic support we know that many victim survivors return the perpetrator- often because they feel they have no choice.

Our staff are experts and specialists in crisis support, case management, and therapeutic practice with extensive training and experience. We are fortunate to have dedicated, passionate and skilled workforce.

## OUR SERVICES



### **Crisis support and accommodation**

at a safe, secure refuge and in crisis housing



### **Case management**

for victim-survivors providing strength based intensive support, including risk assessment, safety planning, referrals and advocacy.



### **Transitional housing**

providing accommodation in the community after refuge



### **Specialised outreach,**

including safety planning and support with specialised case managers who work with children



### **Therapeutic support**

to assist recovery from trauma, including arts therapy, play therapy, infant wellbeing and dyadic therapy



### **Volunteer support**

to assist victim-survivors to rebuild their lives and create social connections.

## OUR CLIENTS

Family violence is widespread, devastating and has a significant and enduring impact on the safety, health and wellbeing of people who experience it and the communities they live in. It is a leading cause of death and homelessness for Australian women.


Our clients often come to our refuge with little more than the clothes on their backs. We work with them from the point of crisis and support them through a holistic, trauma-informed and empowerment-based model of care to return safely to the community.

Emerge specialises in providing evidence-based support and therapeutic services for children as victim-survivors in their own right. Experiencing family violence can impact all areas of a child's development, their mental health, and their ability to form relationships and participate in our community. We provide safe environments that allow children to process their experiences of family violence and overcome trauma.

Women and children living in the community, who have separated from the person using violence are also able to access Emerge for a range of therapeutic supports. These clients have often experienced significant trauma, disruption in attachment and other important relationships and need support to process and understand their experiences, navigate service systems and repair relationships with self and others.

Our clients are from a diverse range of backgrounds and frequently have experienced intersectional disadvantage, poverty and trauma across their lives. We understand that the compounding impact of intersectional disadvantage and family violence can exacerbate trauma and perpetuate inequality. We provide culturally safe, responsive services that address complex needs and intersectional trauma with respect, care and compassion.

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Our integrated services create transformative change. We support our clients to form positive relationships, build positive self-esteem, rebuild their lives and heal. We deliver responsive, tailored support that centres the client's autonomy, builds trust and collaboration, and ensures that they emerge from their experiences of violence and trauma to empowerment and safety.

# THE FRAMEWORKS AND THEORIES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

Our work with victim-survivors, the community, our partners and each other embeds evidence-based practices, frameworks and theories. We strive to deliver best practice, embed learning across our work and continuously improve our service delivery to get the best for our clients.

## FRAMEWORKS THAT WE USE

**Code of Practice:** The Family Violence Code of Practice sets standards of service delivery for specialist family violence services, including guidelines for risk assessment, safety planning, and confidentiality. The Code creates a coordinated response to family violence across the sector, prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and their children.

**The MARAM:** legislates system-wide standards for identifying and responding to family violence. It creates a consistent framework for managing and assessing family violence risk, and collaboration and information-sharing among professionals to ensure the safety of victim-survivors.

**The Family Violence Capability Framework:** sets core competencies and skills for professionals working with victims and perpetrators of family violence in key domains. Emerge implements the FVCF by developing our staff, implementing best practice policies and procedures, and ensuring a workplace culture embedding safety, respect and continuous improvement.

**The Case Management Program Requirements:** require practitioners to conduct comprehensive assessments, develop and implementing safety and support plans, provide ongoing monitoring and review, ensure cultural safety and responsiveness, and maintain accurate and confidential records. We collaborate with other services and professionals, provide information and referrals, and ensure client participation and empowerment throughout the case management process.

# THEORIES THAT FRAME THE WAY WE WORK

**Feminism:** structural inequalities and power imbalances drive gender inequality and family violence. Feminism guides our work as we advocate for equality and the end of violence.

**Trauma-informed:** trauma can have a profound and lasting impact on a person's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Trauma-informed approaches to work ensure that a victim-survivors choices and autonomy are prioritised in processes that promote safety, empowerment, and healing.

**Person-centred, strength-based approaches:** we recognise the unique needs, experiences, and preferences of each victim-survivor and involving them in decision-making processes to centre their safety, healing, and empowerment. We focus on building the capacity and resources of victim-survivors, supporting them to take control of their own lives.

**Intersectionality:** multiple forms of oppression and discrimination can impact a victim survivor, intersecting and compounding the impact of family violence and impeding the recovery of victim survivors. At Emerge, our intersectional approach recognises and actively, safely addresses the impact of systemic marginalisation.

**Attachment theory:** the parent/carer-child relationship is crucial to emotional and social development. Trauma can disrupt secure attachment patterns and lead to insecure attachment styles, which impacts an individual's ability to form healthy self esteem, relationships, regulate emotions and maintain psychological health. Our work centres rebuilding disrupted attachment through specialised dyadic therapeutic intervention to help the child and parent to develop a secure attachment bond, by promoting trust, emotional regulation, and effective communication skills.

We recognise the unique needs, experiences, and preferences of each victim-survivor and involving them in decision-making processes.





## THE LAWS THAT SHAPE OUR WORK

**The Equal Opportunity Act**, which prohibits discrimination in employment, education, and provision of goods and services, on the basis of attributes including as age, race, gender, and disability. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation and promoting equality and diversity to create a fair and inclusive workplace for everyone.

**The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006** sets out the human rights and freedoms that must be respected and protected by not-for-profits that provide a public function. At Emerge, we embed human rights in our practice, our philosophies and our values. We build a culture of respect, dignity, and equality, where everyone is valued, heard, and empowered to advocate for their rights.

**The Victorian Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) laws** requires that employees create a safe and healthy workplace for their staff. We understand that our work is complex and that the wellbeing and physical and psychological safety of our staff is crucial. Through policy, practice and ongoing support we strive to ensure our staff are safe.

**The Family Violence Protection Act** protects people who have experienced family violence by providing them with legal and practical support, such as intervention orders, counselling, and housing assistance. At Emerge, we ensure that clients are provided with referrals for support and assistance and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of everyone we work with.

# OUR GOALS

## GOAL 1

Driving a sustainable organisation that is positioned to grow and impact change

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### How will we do it?

- We will create diversified income streams to ensure our ongoing flexibility and viability
- We will build a new fundraising model to engage new donors, corporate relationships, supporters and partners
- We will develop and sustain resilient budgets with increased income growth targets

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### Indicators that we've achieved it

- Increase in diversified revenue streams, including fee-for-service
- Increase in donations from increased donor growth and diversity
- Increase in client numbers for outreach
- Increase in client numbers for therapeutic services



## Supporting our staff and retaining a highly skilled workforce to achieve the best outcomes for our clients

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### How will we do it?

- We will ensure a sustainable and capable workforce and lead in the sector as an Employer of Excellence
- We will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our staff, fostering best practice, values-driven-work and collaboration
- We will develop our staff to deliver the best outcomes for our clients
- We will expand our hiring strategies to move beyond the gender binary and drive inclusion

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### Indicators that we've achieved it

- Increased rates of employee retention
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Increased investment in and development of the skills of our people
- More progression opportunities for staff
- Improved infrastructure
- Reaching more clients through refuge and therapeutic support



## Continuing to ensure best-practice, holistic, comprehensive and tailored support for our clients

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### How will we do it?

- We will continue to provide the highest levels of crisis and refuge support to our clients and specialist therapeutic services to support healing from family violence trauma
- We will pilot a new therapeutic program for victim-survivors with a focus on addressing trauma
- We will measure our impact and client outcomes using fit-for purpose evaluation methods and partner with experts to build our evidence base
- We will demonstrate our commitment to intersectionality, cultural safety, Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation in policy and practice

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### Indicators that we've achieved it

- Compliance with new regulatory and practice requirements
- Consistently positive client feedback
- Creation and piloting of new therapeutic programs
- Development and implementation of an evaluation and outcome monitoring framework
- Utilisation of our data to advocate and increase our impact
- Development of a Reconciliation Action Plan
- Rainbow Tick accreditation

# GOAL 4

## Working as leaders to advocate, influence and drive system change for victim-survivors

### How will we do it?

- We will deliver a communications strategy to increase awareness and support for our work
- We will increase our media and online impact with targeted advocacy and a strong social media presence
- We will strengthen our role in public policy, submissions and comment
- We will create platforms for the voices of victim-survivors to center their stories in our work
- We will continue to advocate on behalf of our clients to build capacity and understanding of family violence and its impacts in other services, schools and systems.

### Indicators that we've achieved it

- A strengthened media and online presence
- Increased voice in the community
- Improved access to services and support for victim-survivors we work with
- Increased engagement and participation of victim-survivors in organisational policy and practice
- Increased collaboration and partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders



## CONTACT US

If you are immediate danger call 000.

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence please call the Safe Steps 24/7 Family Violence Response line on 1800 015 188.

**[emergesupport.org.au](https://emergesupport.org.au)**

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