



CONFLICT **RESOLUTION** SERVICE

*Early Makes a Difference*

ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 2018





## From the Chief Executive Officer

*It is my pleasure to welcome you to  
Conflict Resolution Service 2017–2018 Annual Report  
Early Makes a Difference.*

*The focus for our report this year is to highlight the importance of how 'CRS' services  
assists the Canberra Community at the early stages of a conflict whether that be with  
neighbours, family members, workplaces or a family separation. CRS provides an  
array of facilitated early intervention methods depending on a dispute that  
ultimately provides people with a positive and sustainable outcome.*

*Mark Zuckerberg said 'The biggest risk is not taking any risk In a world that's  
changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks'.  
This statement is really reflective of where Conflict Resolution Service Board and  
Management are faced with coming out of the 2017/2018 financial year and the  
risks that will need to be taken going forward to ensure the future viability of the  
organisation. The next 12 months will see changes to our fee for service, new business  
offerings a solid and direct position and re-brand. This is an exhaustive task that  
will only come to fruition with the support of our partners, the Board  
and the wonderful staff and mediators here at CRS.*

*While only recently starting at CRS I have worked in the community sector for  
over 13 years. I have been involved in dramatically changing business structures  
to adapt to the ever changing environment of funding, client needs and  
workplace governance requirements. I look forward to this journey and providing  
you with an update on my first year as CRS's CEO in 2018–2019.*

*Melissa Haley*



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## Acknowledgment of Traditional Ownership

Conflict Resolution Service acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered as a result of European settlement. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their ongoing contribution to the ACT Community.



## Executive summary

Conflict Resolution Service (CRS) has for the 29th year provided mediation services to the Canberra Region focusing specifically on family, community, workplace and youths who are at risk of homelessness.

Over the 2017 / 2018 year CRS provided services to over 1,700 people. This is a decrease to the previous financial year. CRS realised in 2016-2017 that it was delivering services beyond its funding, resulting in an unsustainable loss for that year. This forced the Board to scale back services to better align with funding and to ensure services remained of a high standard.

A key accomplishment in the reporting period has been the process of developing our Strategic Plan for 2018-2020. This process led to our reconceptualising our *raison d'être*, our vision and new expression of our mission. These are worth citing for they remind us of our identity and provide a north star as we encounter challenges, address mistakes and steer CRS to its next 30 years as an important institution servicing Canberra and surrounding regions in resolving conflict.

Key activities undertaken during the reporting period have highlighted the extent to which providing a variety of dispute resolution methods has assisted people to reach an agreeable outcome before a dispute escalates. Paying attention to the 6-page spread on Early Intervention Services Supporting the Canberra Community, there are a variety of case studies that show the link between a situation, how it was handled and what would have happened if CRS wasn't an option for people to access. More importantly those people who did access CRS's services were supported, guided and educated on how best to handle their dispute from the first moment that contact was made through to the resolution.

Youth's at risk of homelessness, neighbourhood disputes and family conflict continue to be the highest number of referrals received during the reporting period. Family Tree House saw a significant increase in the number of young people who were at risk of becoming homeless. Staff worked with over 497 young people and their parents to rebuild the relationship in the home environment. This is an increase of over 17% compared to the previous financial year. More concerning, CRS worked with 80 young people who were under the age of 15 who were at risk of homelessness. This was an increase of 35%. CRS's main referrer remains SupportLink with 67% of referrals coming through this gateway.

The number of participants attending training increased by over 70% which was largely due to hosting the Restorative Practice Training. Hosting this training was a great achievement for CRS in progressing towards our vision of creating a restorative city built on relationships that positively transform conflict. CRS also successfully trained a further 16 Mediators over the course of the year.

CRS still faces challenges which the new and invigorated Board is determined to address. This includes charging for services, communicating our story well, establishing our position with a solid marketing strategy and exploring new sources of income whether that be by new business ventures or a potential merger. We are confident that between the Board and management we have the right attitude and experience to make the right decisions for the organisation.

## Message from the Chair

In recent years CRS has faced a series of existential crises. These have included the loss of our charitable status, non-compliance with the ACNC, unsustainable financial losses, significant cut backs to staffing and the departure of our Executive Director. The Board, staff and mediators have responded with courage and determination to address these issues. These challenges are now behind us with restored DGR status, compliance with all regulatory bodies, a small surplus in this financial year and the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer, Melissa Haley. There are now many positive and exciting opportunities for CRS, underpinned by good governance, financial prudence and visionary competent leadership.

A key activity in the reporting period has been the process of developing our Strategic Plan for 2018-2020. This process led to our reconceptualising our *raison d'être*, our vision and new expression of our mission. These are worth citing for they remind us of our identity and provide a north star as we encounter challenges, address mistakes and steer CRS to its next 30 years as an important institution servicing Canberra and surrounding regions in resolving conflict.

Our vision is to create a restorative Canberra built on relationships that positively transform conflict. Our mission is to repair and strengthen relationships by preventing, managing and resolving conflict. The emphasis increasingly is on being proactive through early intervention to prevent conflicts escalating which often cause significant damage to relationships whether in families, communities or in business. A suite of measures have been developed to provide appropriate and tailored services to the community.

This year we celebrate 30 years of contribution to the Canberra community as leaders in professional conflict resolution services. These quality independent services have been provided to thousands of local families, work places, neighbourhoods and community groups. These activities increasingly take place in the context of best restorative practice.

We still face challenges which our new invigorated Board is determined to address:

- Our story is not well communicated and known. We need to communicate our story and begin charging for our services. Our website marketing collateral and technology is in the throes of be updated.
- We are embarking on a new system of charging for our family dispute resolution services
- We need to find other new sources of funding using our DGR status that can sustain exiting services and allow new services to be developed
- We face funding challenges as the territory government (which currently provides about 90% of funding for CRS) moves from block grant funding to models that recognise service delivery and outcomes
- We need to assess whether we have sufficient critical mass to stand alone and/ or explore possibilities of merger with a like visioned organisation
- We need to attract new staff as part of succession planning and ensure a new generation is upskilled to continue this vital service

As Chair I am determined these issues are addressed by the Board and through Mel that CRS undertakes appropriate transformation.

I wish to express a vote of thanks to our leadership team. First to Shawn Van der Linden who provided very capable leadership steering CRS through our existential crises and leaving an important legacy. To Leon my predecessor and Margaret Morton our Deputy Chair thank you for such wise and effective leadership. To Lyn Walker and Amanda Plowright for their stirring work for 5 months in leading CRS. A job well done. To the staff thank you for graciously and with great effectiveness accepting significant reduction in hours. Thank you, fellow Board Members, for your greatly valued contribution. I wish to welcome Mel and am already confident that we have the right person who brings a wonderful skill set and commitment to address our challenges.

**Clive Rodger**

*Chairperson CRS September 2018  
2017-2018*







# Message from the Acting Executive Director

At the end of February 2018, the Executive Director, Shawn van der Linden, left CRS after having been head-hunted for a new position. While the CRS Board searched for his replacement, I took on the Acting Executive Director role of this wonderful organisation to help maintain our high-quality service to the Canberra community.

The first major project for the 17/18 financial year was to enable the organisation to ‘live within its means’. This involved the careful analysis of our funding and our staffing levels. It was necessary to find the right balance of staffing that would enable us to continue providing alternative dispute resolution while at the same time developing organisational infrastructure that would carry the organisation into the future. Some difficult decisions were necessary to secure the savings that needed to be made. Our hard-working and dedicated staff enabled these savings to be made without losing the rich experience that they carry.

However, this resulted in a reduction of staff hours, therefore, there was an associated reduction in the ability to handle the same number of cases as in previous years.

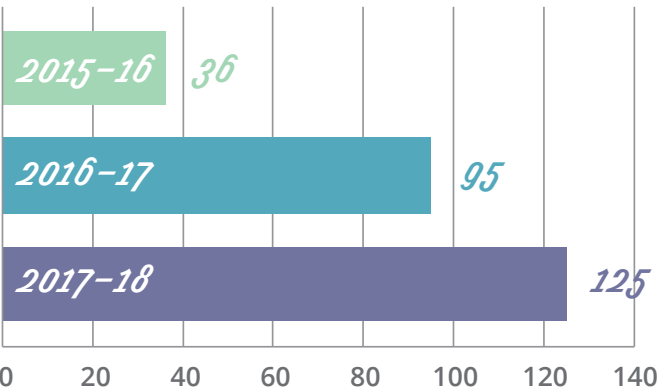
With the staffing profile settled, the next project was to minimise risks in our IT systems. After continuing problems with our server, it was decided that our database would be moved from our server to the latest cloud product. Phone systems were moved to a VOIP product which reduced costs to one-third of the amount. This necessitated a change in phone numbers which could have involved considerable risk but with a 6-month cross-over of both systems, the project is now successfully complete. CRS continues to implement updated systems in all areas of the organisation. The intention has been to implement cost-effective IT infrastructure that is future-proof and suited to the needs of a small community organisation that seeks to develop and grow.

CRS was fortunate to have received a one-off grant from the Government for developing Conflict Resolution for Seniors project, principally to develop information for our website and information that will assist us in providing mediations, facilitated conversations and restorative processes for Canberra’s older residents. This project has been called CR4Seniors (Conflict Resolution for Seniors) and has enabled consultation and collaboration with other relevant Canberra service providers who work in the area of elder abuse prevention. The CRS Board has planned for a new website for 18/19 where the community will be able to access an overview of the service offerings for this important area of work.

Our mediation training continues to be a source of additional income while at the same time providing professional development for members of the Canberra community.

## Referrals

- 36 referrals from ACT policing in 2015-16, increased to 95 in 2016-17, and increased again to 125 in 2017-18.



There was a concentrated effort made into increasing our media exposure of the 17/18 financial year in an attempt to make more visible the valuable work of the organisation. While CRS was hoping that we would receive an increase in funding levels that would enable us to meet the demand of an ever-growing city, this was not to be. The ACT budget was tight and there were many other community organisations appealing to the Government for increased funds. CRS, with a new Chief Executive Officer, will find new ways to access funds.

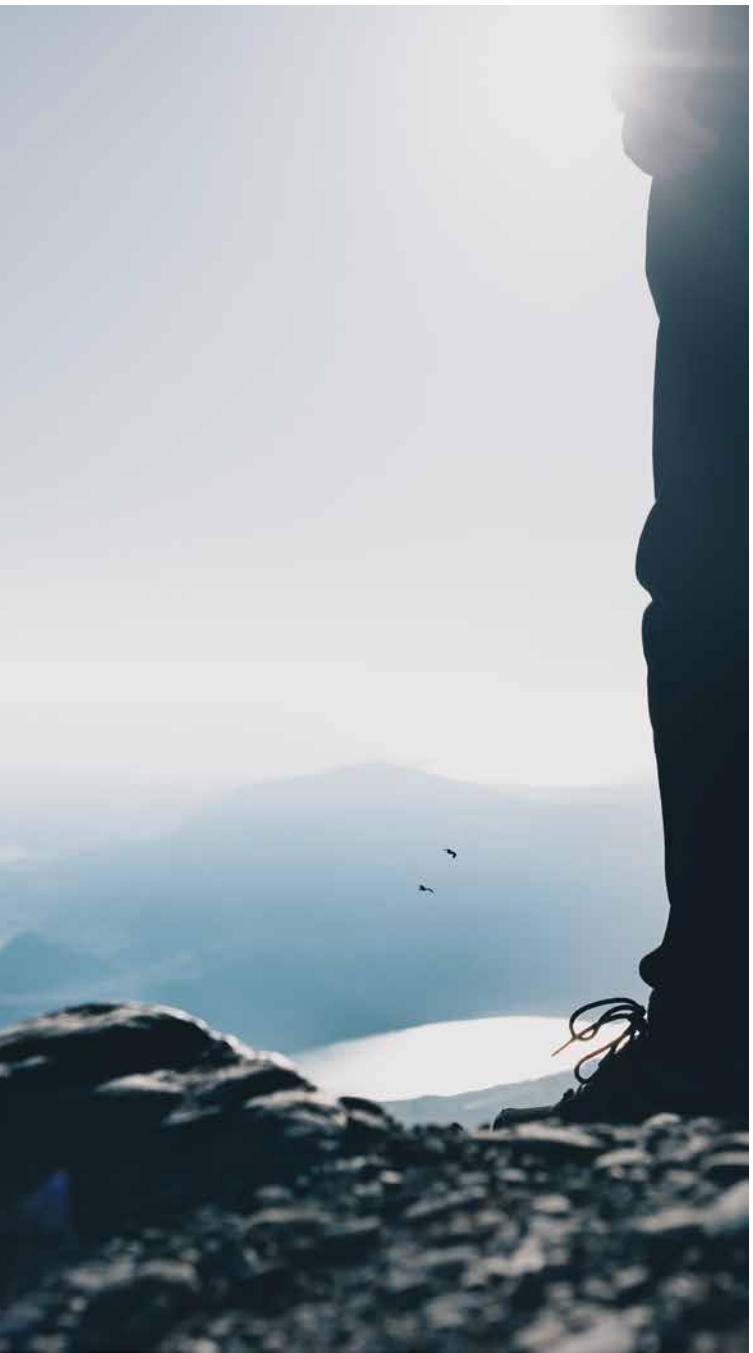
CRS would like to acknowledge the funding made available to us from the Community Services Directorate for our three programs:

- The Family Tree House program which provides services to young people and their parents or carers where there is conflict and a risk of homelessness;
- The Living in the Community Program which provides alternative dispute resolution services for Housing ACT tenants and Housing Managers;
- The Community Development program providing alternative dispute resolution to neighbours experiencing conflict, referrals from the Magistrates Court, and referrals from the Police.

CRS looks forward to providing these invaluable services in the years to come.

I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful contribution that Shawn van der Linden made to the development of the organisation and we all wish him well in his new position. Last of all, I would like to acknowledge and thank the dedicated staff and mediator panel. Their accomplished skill in working with others in dispute is exceptional and their support over the last few months, extremely generous.

**Lyn Walker**  
Acting Executive Director  
March 2018 - July 2018





# Board

## Board Chair: Clive Rodger

Clive Rodger was for 25 years Managing Director of one of Australia's leading independent economic consultancies specialising in economic, trade, industry and tariff policy. Clive has experience across a broad spectrum of Australian industry and considerable involvement with international companies, in addressing issues of international competitiveness and strategic advantage.

In 1999 after specialising in industry restructuring Clive co-founded The WorkWise Group which focussed on workplace wellbeing, organisational health, change management and employee mentoring programs. Engaging over 400 psychologists and organisational experts Clive led a team in addressing and resolving workplace conflicts and dysfunctional cultures in workplaces. He is a passionate advocate for early intervention and resolution of conflict. The WorkWise Group serviced over 200,000 employees throughout Australia and New Zealand and was engaged by a number of Australia's largest public companies and professional practices.

Clive sits on a number of Boards including public companies, tertiary educational bodies, several community and church organisations. Clive brings expertise and experience in strategic planning, financial management, law and compliance and direct experience in conflict resolution. Clive hold three Bachelor's degrees and two Masters Degrees including a MLitt in conflict resolution. He was an accredited LEADR provider and is strongly committed to restorative practice. Clive served as Secretary of CRS before being elected Chair in February 2018.

## Deputy Chair: Matt Casey

In 2017 Matt retired from his role as the Director of Professional Standards and Safeguarding with the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. He is a Counsellor and Restorative Practice Consultant and was formerly a Detective Inspector and Head of the School of Investigation & Intelligence at the NSW Police Academy.

In 2000 he joined Real Justice Australia and with Goulburn Family Support Service pioneered the evolution of Explicit Affective Practice through the application of Affect Script Psychology to the principles and Practice of Restorative Justice.

With extensive experience in couples and family work, domestic violence, anger management and community conflict he conducts Restorative Practice seminars in Education, Christian Ministry, Law Enforcement and the Community Sector.

He is the Chair of the Management Committee of the Goulburn Family Support Service, the Vice Chair of Conflict Resolution Service, Canberra and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Council for the Pastoral Care of Prisoners, a member of the Management Committee of Karinya House (For Mothers and Babies), Canberra and a member of the Board of the Tomkins Institute.

Number of Board Meetings during 2017 / 2018		
	Eligible	Attended
Clive Rodger	9	8
Matt Casey	9	7
Tom Daly	9	8
John Ramadge	9	7
Genevieve Jacobs	4	3
Louisa Osborne	4	3
Zac Hattfield Dodds	4	2
Anya Aidman	3	3

## Treasurer: Tom Daly

Tom is a Chartered Accountant with 8 years' experience in professional services. Tom is currently a Manager at EY with experience in advising businesses from a range of industries on diverse accounting and taxation issues.

Tom is a member of Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand, a Future Directions Committee member of the ACT Property Council and previously involved with the Canberra Business Chamber's Small Business Taskforce.

Tom's experience includes providing business and personal tax compliance and advisory services for a variety of clients including listed and large private companies, small-to-medium enterprises, family groups, mutual organisations and not-for-profit entities. Through this experience, Tom has developed a passion for the small business and not-for-profit sectors due to the opportunities to work closely with business owners and community leaders.

## Secretary: Zac Hatfield – Dodds

Zac Hatfield-Dodds is a researcher at the Australian National University, with a background in moral and political philosophy, social sciences and policy, environmental, earth, and computer sciences. His current research focuses on autonomy, agency, and assurance in relation to artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, alongside a significant commitment to teaching and public engagement.

Zac has served on national leadership bodies of the Uniting Church continuously since 2012, with responsibilities for governance, oversight, consensus processes, and policy development.

He is a leader of and contributor to scientific and nonprofit software projects, Zac has spoken and run workshops at a range of international conferences - engaging a community ranging from the largest global technology companies to local students and teachers.

## Ordinary Member & Public Officer: John Ramadge

John Ramadge is widely experienced in education and training, the holistic development of young people and adults, procurement and contract management, conflict resolution, personnel and business management. His skills and experience evolved through a range of employment where strong technical, interpersonal and business acumen are valued. He was an elite level sportsman (track & field, Australian rules football) with National representation and coaching achievements.

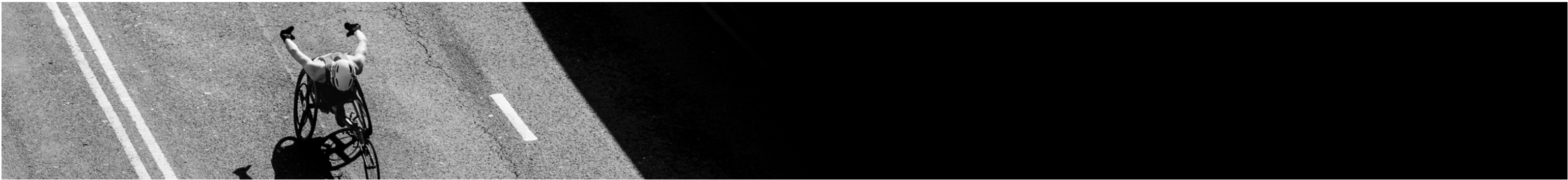
John holds graduate qualifications from Monash University and post-graduate qualifications from the University of Melbourne, plus the completion of a range of information technology, military and human resource courses. He is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company directors and a senior member of the Australian Institute of Management. He is a Justice of the Peace for the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales.

He was a teacher in rural Victoria before call-up for National Service, and was commissioned in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), completing over 20 years' service. Significant senior appointments were Director of Occupational Analysis for the Australian Defence Force, Director of Education and Training and Principal Education Officer for the RAAF.

On retirement from the RAAF he worked at the Australian Institute of Sport as manager of Elite Sport for ten years leading up to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, following which he had a pivotal role in the establishment of General Practice Education and Training Ltd, a central company for managing regional training and workforce for medical General Practitioners. He maintains a strong interest in the medical sector and indigenous health, worked as an administrator at an Aboriginal Medical Service, and ran a consultancy business primarily engaged with private sector health organisations, government agencies and the business sector.

He has been on the board of CRS since 2015 and has previous held board positions with the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association (now Athletics Victoria), the Central Riverina Football League (now wound up), sporting clubs and private schools.





## Board (cont.)

### Ordinary Member: Genevieve Jacobs

Genevieve has been a journalist for 30 years, working in print and radio. She is the former Mornings presenter for ABC Canberra reporting on everything from federal and local politics to human interest stories, and drawing on a deep understanding of her community. She works with a wide range of organisations including the Tara Costigan foundation, and Gift of Life ACT, sits on the ACT's advisory committee for historic places and the boards of the National Folk Festival and Canberra International Music Festival.

She has an enduring interest in building and strengthening community engagement.

### Ordinary Member: Louisa Osborne

Louisa combines her strong analysis and research skills with strategic thinking to contribute to significant design processes that drive systemic change. She has worked with a range of government organisations to explore the human understanding that shapes how they work, and signals where they won't. She has also developed strategies that guide direction, conducted ethnographic research to inform social policy, and assisted governments to develop innovation labs that drive social and economic transformation. Louisa works as a Strategic Designer with ThinkPlace, a global "human-centred design" consulting firm working to contribute to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Louisa has an interdisciplinary background that has strengthened her ability to draw out and understand diverse perspectives. At the Australian National University, Louisa facilitated the interdisciplinary Vice-Chancellor's course Creating Knowledge, co-founded the Cross-Disciplinary Student's Academy and co-founded the Global Cross-Disciplinary Tournament with the International Alliance of Research Universities. Louisa studied mathematics, philosophy, Indonesian and anthropology alongside electives from across the university.

### Ordinary Member: Anya Aidman

Anya works as a senior solicitor and practice group manager in private practice. Anya is a qualified mediator and a passionate believer in the power of alternative dispute resolution.

Anya's early years in legal practice were spent working in criminal law. She subsequently worked as a civil litigator in the community legal sector, before coming to private practice. Prior to joining the legal profession, Anya worked for several years as a political adviser to both Territory and Federal Government Ministers.

Anya is also currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Canberra(UC). She has taught a range of subjects for the past 8 years at the Australian National Univeristy and UC, including Evidence Law, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice at the ANU; and Evidence Law, Criminal Process, Cybercime and Alternative Dispute Resolution at UC.

Anya is appointed as a Director to the Board of Management of Canberra Community Law and Chair of the ACT Law Society Access to Justice & Human Rights Committee. Anya also volunteers regularly with the Women's Legal Centre.

## Staff



**Mel**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



**Amanda**  
*Executive Assistance*



**Janine**  
*Practitioner*



**Susan**  
*Practitioner*



**Lyn**  
*Practice Manager*



**Hamish**  
*Practitioner*



**Ros**  
*Practitioner*



**Elizabeth**  
*Practitioner*

## Mediator Panel

BIGINELL, Nigel  
DEVLIN, Jennifer Maree  
DUNNE, Jacob Peter  
GURUNG, Purnima  
HINCHEY, Mary Anne  
McILROY, Fiona Jill  
MELICAN, Anthony  
PURNELL, David  
QUAID, Jack  
QUIRK, Jeffrey Martin  
ROSS, Eleanor Jane  
ROWNTREE, Michael James  
ROYAL, Jamie  
SCOTT, Judith Rosemarie  
STANHOPE, Lydia  
WATSON, Terence John





# Early Intervention Services Supporting Canberra's Youth

## Family Treehouse

The Family Tree House program supports adolescents who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless due to family conflict. Family Tree House takes an evidence-based, family-focused approach to working with an entire family, not just the young person. The services offered by Family Tree House include facilitating family mediations and informal facilitated conversations, providing one-on-one support and 'coaching' to family members, outreach services, and working in close collaboration with other youth and family focused agencies across the ACT.

## Family Tree House: Case Study 1

### Family Details

Young person, female 15 yo, Eleanor

Mother and father, Nancy and Mark (of Greek origin but born in Australia), older sister, Charlotte 17 yo and older brother, Tom 19 yo

### Source of Referral

School Psychologist

### Summary of Issues

The young person was referred by the school psychologist to FTH as she had ceased attending school. The psychologist had been seeing Eleanor and knew how unhappy she was at home due to the high level of conflict. She was aware that the parents had threatened to "kick her out of the house" because of her low level of cooperation with the parents and her absolute refusal to attend school. She had fears for Eleanor's whereabouts.

The referral stated that most of the conflict was between Eleanor and her mother. There was a high level of distress experienced by them both when the mother became severely frustrated and challenged by what she saw as Eleanor's stubbornness. These observations were confirmed in FTH interview with the mother.

The referrer also stated that Eleanor absolutely refused to engage with her father. Further, she was not sleeping at night but preferred sleeping during the day making it impossible for Eleanor to get up to go to school. She had had very poor attendance since the middle of Year 8. Eleanor had also put on a great deal of weight which had the effect of making her less inclined to attend school. The mother apparently made comments about her weight which upset her.

The lack of communication between Eleanor and her father was a great contrast to what the relationship had been previously. It was reported that Nancy had advised Mark not to interfere so Mark had withdrawn from Eleanor. FTH understands that the research shows that adolescent girls do better developmentally when there is a bond with the father so this situation was of concern to the FTH worker.

### Service User Participation

The family support worker met with Nancy first. Nancy reported that they were going out of their minds with Eleanor. The support worker thought that they were all stuck in a rigid pattern of conflict within the family and did not know how to turn things around. Nancy was so entrenched in the conflict that she decided to go away for 10 days to get away from the stressful situation.

Against all predictions, Eleanor readily agreed to meet with the FTH worker a few days later. Contact had been difficult as she did not have a phone at the beginning of our work with the family. The first meeting took place at the shopping centre near Eleanor's home. She talked a great deal during the first session so the FTH worker did not treat it as an Intake. She told Eleanor that she was not there to convince her to go back to school as many other people were already prompting her to do so. The support worker used non-violent communication methods to discuss what Eleanor like about life and what was uncomfortable for her. Talked about her relationship with her father and she expressed that she missed him as they had previously been very close.

*Continued overleaf ...*





## Family Tree House: Case Study 2

The support worker then met with Mark. He reported that he wanted things to be better between him and Eleanor but he found himself getting extremely angry with her refusal to attend school. The support worker discussed ways that Mark might make attempts to repair the relationship. As Nancy was away, Mark and Eleanor were left in the house together and the older siblings came and went. Taking the advice of the support worker, he found that Eleanor quickly responded. She started coming out of her room for meals and assisted with meal preparation. This was the beginning of a new relationship between dad and Eleanor. When the mother returned, she could “feel” the different atmosphere in the house immediately.

The parents attended coaching together. The mother was encouraged to cease using negative language and to attempt to not take what was happening with Eleanor personally. The father was well on the way to building his new relationship with his daughter.

When the support worker met with Eleanor next, she reported that she knew both of her parents were trying very hard and that she was feeling much better. She was much brighter.

After another coaching session with the mother, there was a family meeting held between the mother and Eleanor. They were both able to express how the conflict had affected them and their hopes for their future relationship. Although Eleanor expressed a need for her mother’s physical affection, Nancy said that she couldn’t express this yet. Eleanor showed interest in returning to school and the family was going to explore this for the following school term.

A meeting was then held between Eleanor and her father where there were verbal agreements made. She acknowledged the efforts that her father was making in the relationship and she encouraged him to keep going. Mark agreed to help Eleanor with her idea of returning to school.

### Support Provided

The mother received three face to face coaching sessions, Eleanor four and the father three. There have been two meetings held so far during which there were agreements made about the future.

### Referrals and Collaboration

The support worker has collaborated with the school psychologist, advising her of the improvements made in the family dynamic and negotiating a warm return to school for Eleanor.

The support worker also had a discussion with the counsellor at Headspace where Eleanor had been going for counselling sessions, with the consent of Eleanor.

### If FTH were not involved

Without the support provided by FTH, the outcomes achieved for Eleanor, Nancy and Mark would have been far different. Eleanor would likely have continued to not attend school, causing more frustration and conflict at home. Nancy and Mark’s frustration may have led them to force Eleanor from the family home. Eleanor would be facing the reality of staying with extended family members, or couch surfing with friends and acquaintances.

Eleanor would find herself in a vicious cycle; life as a couch surfer would further reduce her likelihood of attending school, and Nancy and Mark would be unlikely to accept Eleanor’s return home due to the perceived non-compliant behaviour.

### Family Details

Young person (Tom’ Male 15), Anglo-Australian mother (‘Jane’), currently living with new partner Bert. Tom has a younger sibling – Craig male 12. Both boys see Bert as their step-father.

Tom lives mostly with his father (Martin), and a few days a fortnight with his mother, brother and step-father. Craig lives mostly with his mother and step father, and a few days a fortnight with his father.

### Source of Referral

Police referred this family to mediation, when Tom reacted violently while he was at his mother’s home, smashing holes in the wall after an argument about house work, and the removal of his electronic games.

### Summary of Issues

Jane had wanted Tom to “learn a lesson” and reported him to the police for the damage he did to the wall. His step-father had backed Jane up in this action. Tom felt remorseful for the damage, which was very out of character for him, but deeply resented the action his mother and step father had taken in reporting him to the police. From the time of the incident, Tom did not want any further contact with his mother. Craig was very distressed by the fights that were occurring in the family and gave several examples of the harsh methods his step-father was using to discipline them.

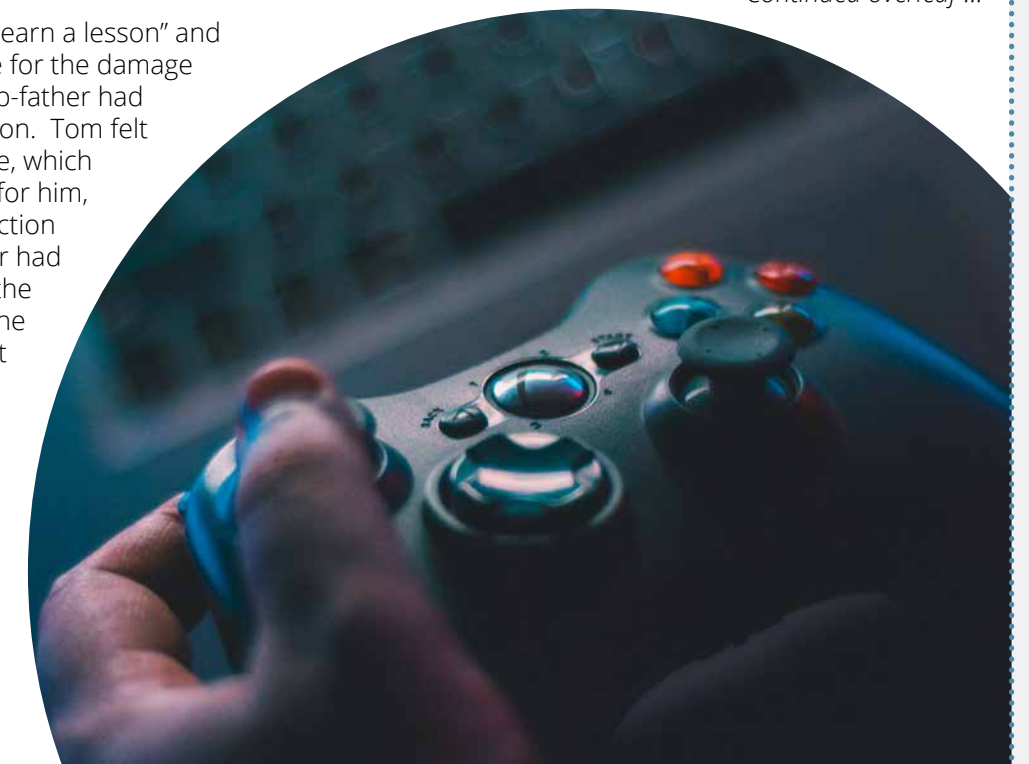
### Service User Participation

The family support worker began by conducting individual meetings with Jane, Tom and Craig. When the boys both expressed a strong warmth and sense of connection with their father, she also met with Martin. Martin understood the importance of Tom restoring his relationship with his mother and encouraged him to participate in a Family Meeting with her.

This meeting went well, with both Jane and Tom, speaking respectfully and consultatively with each other. Both were given ample opportunity to speak as well as to listen to points they may have missed in the heat of the moment.

They had a robust discussion and co-created several agreements that would help when they found themselves getting caught up in conflict again.

*Continued overleaf ...*







Having checked that Craig was willing to disclose his comments about his step-father to his mother, Jane came in for a feedback and coaching session about different parenting styles. Jane was concerned by Craig's feedback to the family support worker, and agreed that it would be beneficial for Bert to come in for coaching sessions in relation to his parenting style and methods of discipline.

**Support Provided**

This family entered the program in July, but the family meeting did not occur until November, due to the length of time it took to engage all the parties. There had been very little relationship between the boys' mother and father at the end of their marriage, as Jane had been unwilling to mediate and there was no parenting plan in place. Another delay was Tom's involvement with the court system for an unrelated offence, which was occurring simultaneously with his dispute with his mother and step-father. Learning to communicate better at FTH, was an additional benefit for Tom, as he worked his way through the court system.

Over the family's participation in the program, Jane had three individual appointment, Tom two individual appointments, Craig one and Martin one. Bert declined each offer to engage with the service, and left his relationship with Jane in December.

**Referrals and collaboration**

FTH made no referrals for the family, as there was already support in place from counsellors and school psychologists.

**Outcomes to Date**

The family meeting created a genuine shift in the relationship between Tom and his mother. While Jane had felt very distressed and disempowered in her relationship with Tom, her willingness to listen to the impact that "calling the police" had had on him, allowed them to move beyond the reactivity of harsh parenting style, to one of mutual respect and consideration.

Tom was grateful for the opportunity to meet with his mother in a facilitated meeting and spoke openly and directly with her. They could both reflect on the incident that had driven them apart and were able to co-create agreements that would allow both of them to act differently in similar circumstances.

**If FTH were not involved**

Without the intervention of FTH, the behaviours and issues facing the family would have likely continued, and possibly worsened. Without a change at home, Tom's aggressive reaction to Jane's attempt at discipline would possibly become a frequent interaction. Without support, Tom's use of property damage could eventually become assault and family violence. Tom may have become part of the ACT juvenile justice system.





Client Feedback

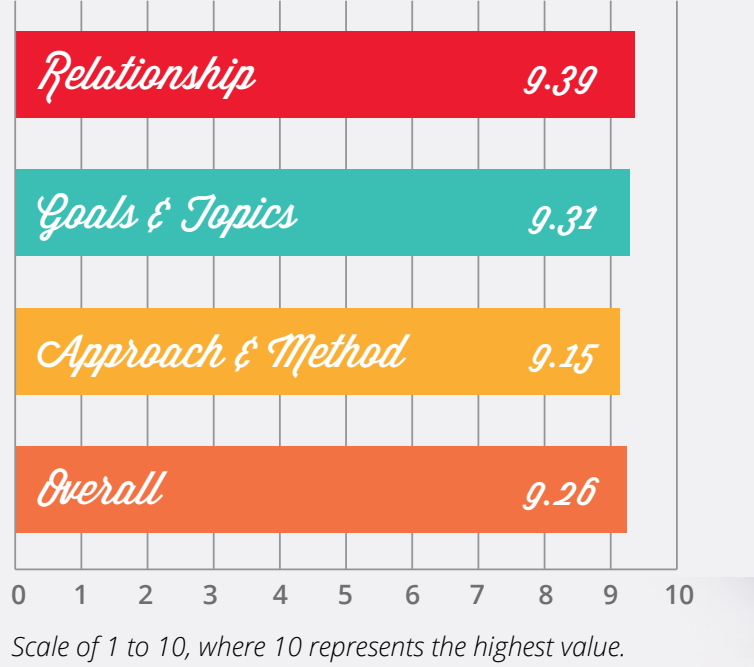
Clients were asked to rate the session they had with their Family Support Worker in the following areas.

**Relationship:**  
Did I feel heard, understood, and respected by the Family Support Worker?

**Goals and Topics:**  
Did we discuss topics that help me work towards my goals?

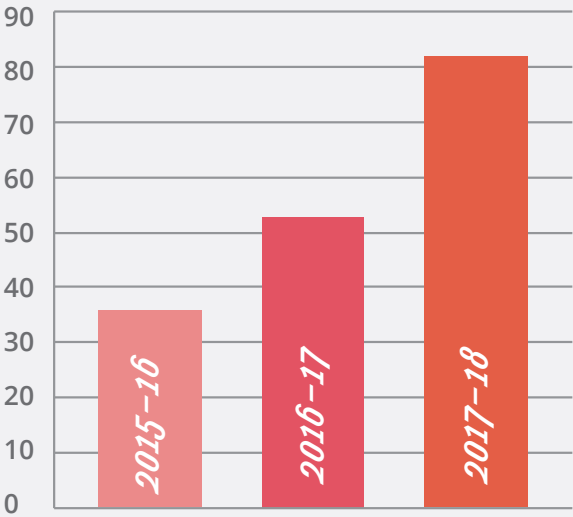
**Approach and Method:**  
Is the Family Support Worker's approach a good fit for me?

**Overall:**  
Was your appointment today a good experience for you?



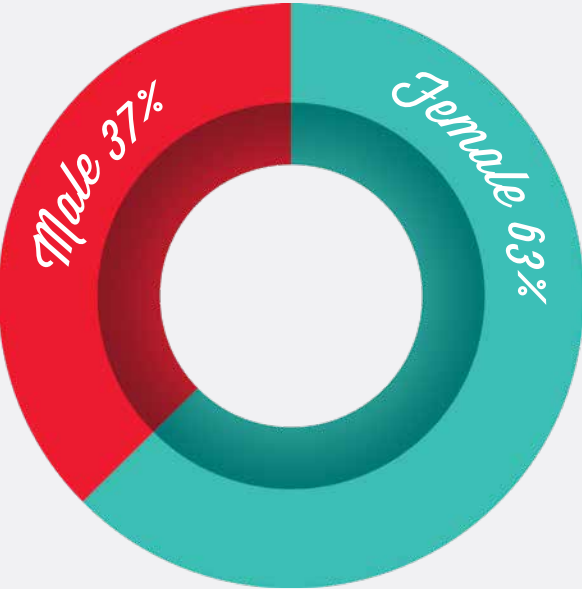
The aggregated results are as follows:

- FTH Clients under the age of 15**
- Noticing a significant increase in the number of referrals for young people under the age of 15
  - 36 in 2015-16, 53 in 2016-17, and 82 in 2017-18



FTH Clients by Gender

296 Female (63%)  
177 Male (37%)



Number of clients

- 497 in 2017-18
- Significant increase in the number of clients being referred to Family Tree House in the 2017-18 financial year.





# Early Intervention Services Supporting the Canberra Community

## Dispute Resolution

The Dispute Assessment Officers are the first point of call for people who are looking for resolution to disputes they have been unable to find on their own. The main reasons for calling CRS are:

1. For coaching to resolve their disputes on their own
2. to obtain advice about their rights and responsibilities in their situation
3. the Family Law Act requires an attempt at resolving concerns through Family Dispute Resolution before going to court
4. a court (eg Magistrate's Court) has ordered mediation
5. the police have suggested mediation
6. they have heard of mediation and hope that this may resolve their concerns.

All disputes are assessed whether mediation is the best course of action. Where mediation is appropriate, we determine the best style of mediation in each case.

All callers are looking for resolution to disputes they have been unable to find on their own.

### Case Study

Abby & Bianca were ordered by the Magistrates Court to attend Mediation after both Abby and Bianca filed with the court Personal Protection Orders. Abby and Bianca are gymnasts while also being cousins.

Abby and Bianca attend the same gymnastic centre and associated events. Increasingly the tension between the cousins had become unmanageable at gymnastic events and was even worse at family gatherings.

Bianca had made it quite clear in the pre-mediation sessions that she did not want a relationship with her cousin. Abby was hoping they could rekindle their friendship but was coached prior to the mediation that repairing the relationship may be an unreasonable expectation.

Both Abby and Bianca agreed that the hostility and aggression needed to stop as the conflict was having a huge impact on them and the rest of the family.

The parties were comfortable being in the same room but found it difficult to discuss the past without escalating tension. The process was altered to discuss the past and each party's concerns during the pre-mediation session and to focus solely on the future during the joint sessions. The parties made proposals about attending the gym and family events and were able to leave the mediation with a written agreement that could be used for future reference.

## Living in the Community

The Living in the Community Program (LitC) began formally in January 2013. Under an arrangement with Housing ACT, the program was established to provide support to public housing tenants experiencing neighbourhood problems, and to the housing managers who are the frontline in managing these disputes. CRS has been represented by Susan Rockliff on a weekly basis at Nature Conservation House in Belconnen.

### Case Study

#### Background:

A dispute between a cultural community and an adjacent residential complex of neighbours. The matter involved complaints from the residents about noise and parking problems emanating from the use of the organisation's premises next door. A third party was Housing ACT, which had built the residential complex. The premises of the cultural organisation had been built many years before the residential complex, and the members had objected to the development application, accurately predicting that the established and customary cultural practices might create noise problems for the residents. A mediation was held, with Housing ACT's participation. An outcome was achieved, in which Housing agreed to install noise mitigation measures in the form of extra fencing and landscaping. The representatives of the cultural organisation agreed to advise members not to use parking immediately adjacent to the residential development.







## Family Dispute Resolution

From 1 July 2008 changes to the family law system make Family Dispute Resolution a requirement before you can apply to the court for a parenting order.

This includes new applications, and applications seeking changes to an existing Parenting Order.

All families at some time experience difficulties and stress. Family disputes include any conflict between people who are related in some way, or who are part of a family or have been part of a family in the past. This can include:

- within families, such as between couples, parents and children, siblings
- between families, such as adult siblings and their families, grandparents and their children's families, blended or step-families
- between separated couples and their families

*Over  
300 couples  
received support  
through our  
Family Dispute  
Resolution  
Service.*

### Case Study

Paul and Ruth separated when their 3 children were very young. They maintained 50/50 shared care arrangements. All went well until the children reached the ages of 8, 9 and 10 years when Paul re-partnered. Paul's new partner is Sue.

Both parents are very experienced and very caring towards the children but the two households don't always run smoothly despite everyone's best efforts and the parenting styles differ, although the intention to have happy, contented children is identical for both.

Sue is not very experienced with children but she does her best as a new step parent – a role that is not at all easy.

Stories fly between the two households. The children bring tales of their day to day lives to each parent in turn. Ruth is appalled by some of the things she hears and even more shocked when she considers that Paul and Sue often "minimise" what the children are saying. She is unwilling to explore the possibility that children do relate stories without understanding the implications and for a variety of reasons. The children claim to Ruth that they don't like being at Dad's.

The parents agree to mediation when their efforts to sort matters out for themselves are unsuccessful. The mediation focuses on the communication between the parents, which Ruth believes needs urgent attention. Ruth specifically asks that Sue be present during mediation and declines the opportunity to have a support person herself. Sue is present as a party but Paul is tasked with being the main spokesperson the couple. Sue does contribute and demonstrates willingness to be open to the process.

The parties are well able to express their anxieties. For Ruth it is a fear that the children are being subjected to levels of insensitivity at Dad's place which increase their tendencies towards anxiety. The youngest child, seems to be more severely affected than the others and Ruth thinks that Sue should be told how she has a negative impact on the children, when she makes certain comments to them.

Paul is extremely anxious that somehow Ruth is wishing to remove the children from his care for more of the time and that his parenting is not being of equal value to Ruth's. Ruth refers to the children as "my children".

The exploration part of mediation is lengthy and offers an excellent opportunity for mediators to see why communication between the parents is so difficult. Accusations are made in highly critical

language. Fortunately, the parties are keen to achieve stated goals "to support each other" and even to be on friendly terms. They also agree that speaking face to face is their best mode of communication. So, despite the high level of criticism on Ruth's part and defensiveness on Paul's, it is possible for the mediators to keep asking the parties how they could achieve their goals. The lengthy exploration provides time for parties to hear how things have happened in a way that disconfirms their assumptions and with some coaching and encouragement from the mediators they start thinking about better ways to communicate. Despite the overall negative tone of the conversation, both parties when asked, agree that there are many more good stories told by the children than negative ones and as time passes they acknowledge good parenting work on both parts.

The negotiation stage encapsulates their shared ideas about what good communication will look like and how there is a need to keep a flow of communication going so that matters can be swiftly sorted out if need be. This is written up as an agreement together with a plan for how they will review their agreement.

Although Ruth seems exhausted by this process she admits feeling better that all the tension has now left the situation for her and she wonders why they couldn't have done this process sooner.





# Training

Our mediation training continues to be a source of professional development for members of the Canberra Community. Our mediation training is compliant with the Mediator Standards Board set of standards for the way in which mediations will be conducted by any mediator. Anyone who completes this training is eligible to be registered with this national organisation. Registered mediators are published on their website allowing members of the public to have confidence in any mediator who may be delivering this process for them.

In addition to this training, Conflict Resolution Service has run two-day courses. This course is designed for those who do not necessarily want to be fully trained mediators but non-the-less, on occasion are required to use effective strategies to prevent, manage and resolve disputes in their workplace, family and community. This course enables people to have more confidence and a strong skill set to take a proactive approach to conflict situations.

One such tailored training was within a specific section of the Australian Federal Police. Due to the high level of stress brought about by conflicting deadlines, their daily work was infused by frustrations which caused conflict within the team.

A modest 3-hour training was delivered which focussed on basic communication and self care skills. This training was satisfying as the participants managed to be open and honest about what they were experiencing in their relationships at work and were grateful for the opportunity to express their discomfort about the communication that was sometimes damaging to their working environment.

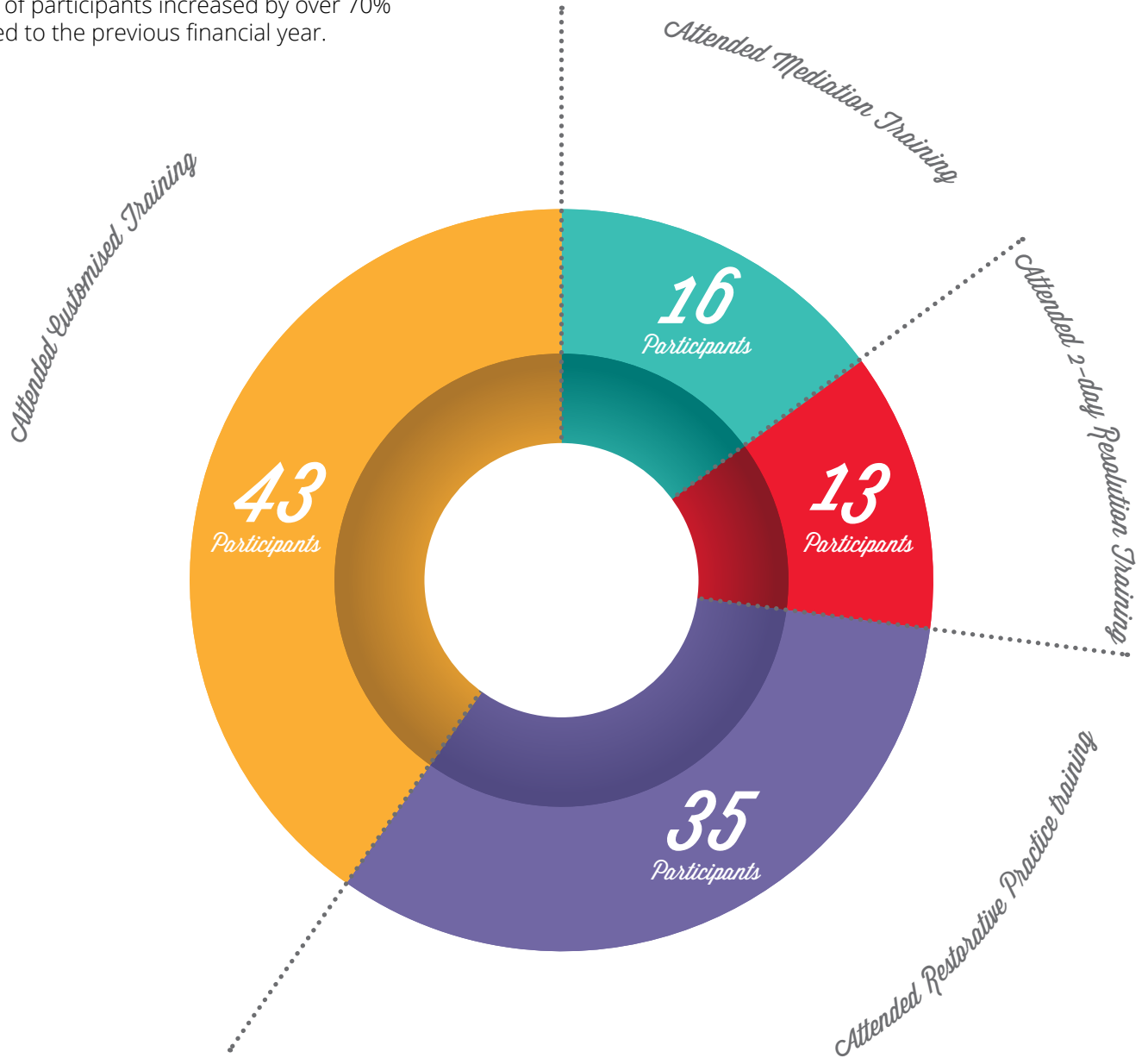


# Statistics

- 16 participants attended Mediation training
- 13 participants attended 2-day resolution training
- 35 participants attended Restorative Practice training
- 43 participants attended customised training

**TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 107**

Number of participants increased by over 70% compared to the previous financial year.



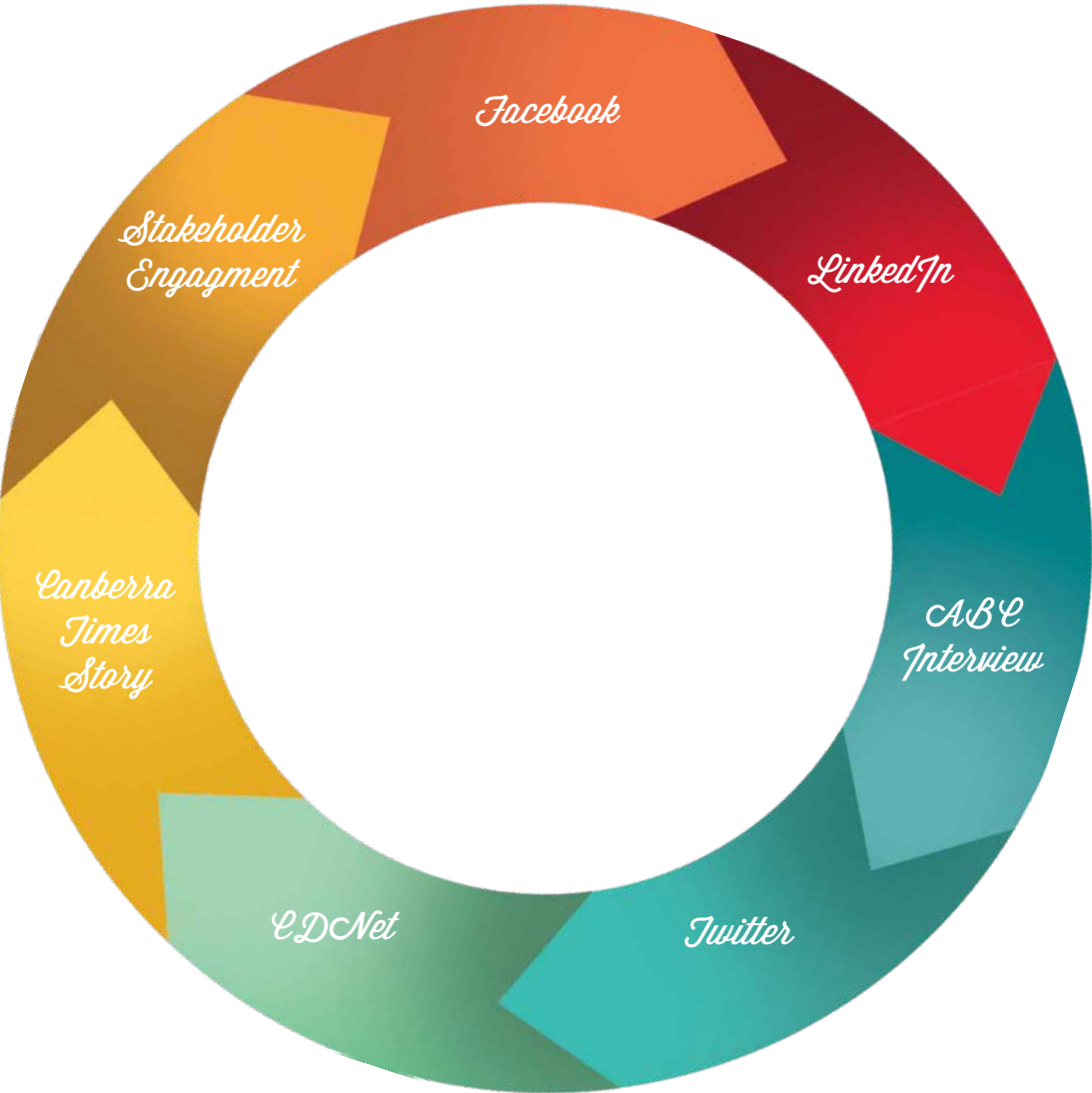




# Strategic Plan Achievements

Raise profile across the ACT community, ensuring clients, funders and partners know who we are and what we do.

Conflict Resolution Service has increased its profile across all social and print media streams. Entering in to the social media has proven to be beneficial to increase the awareness of what CRS does. A focus moving in to the 2018 / 2019 financial year will be an intensive marketing campaign that aims to convert awareness to a financial outcome.



Ensure relevance to our community, clients, funders and potential partners, supported by a strong evidence base.

Conflict Resolution Staff continue, to be involved in working groups that assist Government in policy development and best practice frameworks.

Being involved in these groups has seen CRS present information sessions and training to the public sector, Government departments and community councils.

Ensure financial viability and competitiveness.

The following were reviewed over the financial year:

- Fees charged in non-funded areas
- Alternative training offerings
- Increased marketing about CRS to the private sector

Number of participants that attended training increased by over 70% compared to the previous financial year.



## Supporters

CRS would like to thank the following partners and contributors over the 2017 – 2018 financial year:

- |                                |                              |                                     |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A Counting Edge                | Legal Aid ACT                | SupportLink                         |
| Magistrates Court              | Justice and Community Safety | Wot-link                            |
| Australian Federal Police      | Marymead                     | Youth Coalition                     |
| Financial Integrity Group      | Mediator Standards Board     | South Star Design                   |
| Community Services Directorate | Think Place                  | Child and Youth Protection Services |



## Who we are

We are leaders in professional conflict resolution support services. For over 30 years we have provided quality, independent services to Canberra families, workplaces, neighbours and community groups.

## Our vision

A restorative Canberra built on relationships that positively transform conflict.

## Our mission

To repair and strengthen relationships by preventing, managing and resolving conflict.

[www.crs.org.au](http://www.crs.org.au)

