

Thursday, 24 November 2016

Celebrating 90 years of relationship and sexuality education in Australia

Interrelate is celebrating a significant milestone this year, with 2016 marking 90 years since its courageous group of founders decided to take on relationships and sex education in 1926. For 90 years Interrelate has advised on this controversial topic without fear of criticism or social reaction.

“Talking responsibly about relationship management and sexuality, and teaching healthy information to the next generation, has not always been easy and is not something that has been embarked upon by those who lack courage” said Interrelate CEO, Patricia Ocelli.

Interrelate specialises in these areas, with the organisation growing from strength to strength since the initial meeting of the founders of the Father and Son Welfare Movement, who were concerned because they knew that there were too many young boys growing up without a strong male role model in their homes. The focus of the operation broadened in 1934 to include comprehensive services for women and girls and today the organisation is proudly known as Interrelate.

“Society usually attributes many qualities to those that have lived 90 years: wisdom, having experienced change, witnessing and being part of challenging social discourse.”

The services and support now provided by Interrelate is a reflection of its 90-year evolution and is as varied as the communities it supports. With 9 centres, 26 outreach locations and operating another 7 Family Relationship Centres on behalf of the Australian Government, Interrelate’s footprint is significant and widespread. Throughout its history it has had national reach and has undertaken missionary work overseas.

“Interrelate staff work each day to build individual knowledge, capacity, strength, resilience, tolerance, and worth amongst our many service offerings and yet the social dilemmas of today continue to impact at an individual, family, community and systemic level in shocking proportions. As we celebrate our 90th anniversary this week, we will be mindful to acknowledge that it is also White Ribbon Day. Two women are killed nearly every week in Australia due to family and domestic violence and 61% of women who experienced domestic violence had children in their care when the violence occurred, resulting in more than one million children in Australia being affected.”

“We believe that practicing respectful interactions with each other from a young age can have a lasting impact on having a healthy relationship with oneself and others into the future.”

Interrelate’s founding service was in school programs and in 2017, Interrelate will rejoin with one of the former sister branches, Family Life Victoria, in a move that will see mutual benefit for both and see important relationship education delivered to over 70,000 students and their families.

Interrelate has evolved over the past 90 years in line with society and has been responsive to the needs of social change.

Throughout its centres Interrelate now provides an extensive range of services to help during life’s ups and downs:

- Individual, couple and family counselling
- Family dispute resolution
- Children’s contact service
- Relationship support programs
- Parenting groups
- Mental health support for individuals and families
- Community engagement
- Aboriginal-specific services
- School programs
- Assistance for people affected by child sexual abuse in institutions

Today, Interrelate is a friend, a safe place, a shoulder to lean on and a source of advice and comfort during life’s transitions.

About Interrelate

Interrelate has been a not-for-profit provider of relationship services to individuals, couples, families, children, schools and communities for more than 90 years. Our working relationship with almost 1000 schools enables us to deliver programs covering bullying, sexuality, puberty and healthy relationships to more than 70,000 children and families. We were the first family service organisation in Australia to provide sexuality education.

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