



Victorian Adoption Network for
Information and Self Help



Annual Report
2018 – 2019
Year 30
Year 31*



ABOUT US

OUR VISION

In 2018 VANISH developed a new vision as part of our Strategic Planning process. The vision is now

That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice.

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose as stated in the VANISH Rules is:

To empower and assist those who have experienced adoption, donor-assisted reproduction or other separation from family, by providing a formal structure through which to deliver efficient and effective advice, search and support services and advocacy.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Inclusiveness
- Self help

OUR SERVICES

VANISH offers the following services:

- Confidential specialist search assistance
- Information about the rights of individuals
- Assistance with applications for records
- Support – by phone, email or face to face
- Facilitated peer support groups
- In-house counselling service
- Counselling and other referrals
- Secondary consultations for professionals
- Counsellor training
- Community education
- Regional information sessions
- Advocating for our service users

OUR CLIENTS

Our services are for

- People affected by adoption in Victoria - mothers, fathers, adopted persons, natural relatives and adoptive parents
- People affected by adoption in other states and territories, overseas as well as intercountry adoption
- People affected by donor conception - donors, offspring and parents
- Forgotten Australians - former wards of state, de facto adoptions and/or those who were placed in institutional or foster care in Victoria

CONTENTS

Committee of Management & Staff	1
Highlights of the Year	2
Chairperson's Report	3
Manager's Report	5
Search & Support Services	6
Counselling & Art Therapy	8
Support Groups	9
Events	10
Community Outreach	11
Advocacy	12
Strategic Plan	13
Financial Report	14
Auditor's Report	20

VANISH acknowledges
the Department of Health and Human Services for the
funding and support of the work of VANISH.

* Due to a past error in the numbering sequence, please note that this Annual Report is for our 31st year. Previous reports from 2012 onwards will be republished with the corrected number.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT & STAFF

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2018 - 2019

Members	Representing	Term Commenced
Penny Mackieson (Chair)	Offspring	October 2014 - February 2019
Tricia Lester (Secretary)	Natural Parent	September 2013
Simon Pryor (Treasurer/Chair)	Offspring	May 2017
Cathy Burnett	Independent Expert	September 2013
Todd Dargan	Offspring	September 2018
Sue Green	Offspring	September 2015
Maureen Long	Independent Expert	May 2018
Lyn Moore	Offspring	October 2017
Romana Rossi	Natural Parent	October 2017
Paul Ruff	Natural Parent	September 2015
Charlotte Smith	Manager (Ex-Officio)	May 2016

STAFF TEAM

Name	Title	Joined VANISH
Charlotte Smith	Manager	July 2013
Elizabeth Tomlinson	Search and Support Coordinator/ Counsellor	November 2007
Jenny Conrick	Associate Counsellor	February 2017 - June 2019
Mary Rawson	Search and Support Worker	February 2004
SallyRose Carbines	Search and Support Worker	November 2016 - Nov 2018
Julie Gomez	Search and Support Worker	August 2017 - Dec 2018
Patricia Navaretti	Search and Support Worker	June 2018
Adelaide Tapper	Search and Support Worker	May 2019 - August 2019
Tracey Hudson	Search and Support Worker	August 2019
Gail Holstock	Community Outreach & Training Coordinator	August 2013
Adam D'Arcy	Quality and Compliance Officer	February 2017
Lorna Sleightholm	Administrator/Receptionist	September 2018
Hana Crisp	Administrator/Receptionist	March 2018 - March 2019
Barbara Burns	Accountant (Volunteer)	July 2010
Kerri Licheni	Bookkeeper (Contractor)	April 2011

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2018/19

SEARCH

305

new searches registered:
273 Searches related to Adoption and
Forgotten Australians
32 Searches related to donor conception

SUPPORT, INFORMATION & REFERRALS

1389

telephone, email and face-to-face contact
regarding search, contact, reunion,
relationships, accessing records and
providing resources

COUNSELLING

331

telephone and face-to-face counselling
sessions delivered from Melbourne,
Warrnambool and Geelong plus Art
Therapy attendances

SUPPORT GROUPS

375

attendances at support groups in Albury-
Wodonga, Ballarat, Bendigo, Melbourne
and Mildura

PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS

257

Secondary consultations, guidance, and
the provision of information to
professionals assisting clients

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

66

Participants at Counsellor Training and
other VANISH professional training

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

511

Attendances at presentations to historical
societies, allied health workers, medical
practitioners and public forums

For information about services contact vanish.org.au

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Dear Members,

Given our diminished funding for the 2018-19 financial year, VANISH has been extraordinarily productive this year. The Association owes a debt of gratitude to Chris Gillies who volunteered to lead VANISH through a strategic review and planning process resulting in a clear framework for our work through to 2021 which you can view later in this report. Its completion and adoption has allowed me to report to members through the prism of this Strategic Plan where the Committee of Management (COM), VANISH staff and members were able to clarify our vision (what we hope for); *That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice* and mission (what we do); *To assist people who have experienced separation from family members through adoption, out-of-home care and donor conception and advocate on behalf of these groups.*

Client Outcomes

Goal: VANISH provides high quality, accessible services to our members and service users who will be supported through application of our specialist skills and expertise. VANISH membership grew 6.5% to 871 and the data VANISH uses to report to our funding partners show a continuing demand for VANISH services with 305 searches registered this year, and 1389 requests for support, information and referrals responded to. As foreshadowed at last year's AGM, VANISH has broadened its membership categories to ensure that the needs and interests of the relatives of adopted persons can now be reflected in VANISH's overall membership profile.

Such positive outcomes are a measure of the extraordinary contribution staff, contractors and volunteers make to VANISH's position as an effective and respected service and advocacy organisation with strong links to its members. They are ably led by Manager Charlotte Smith, who deserves thanks from all VANISH members for her performance in what must seem at times to be a vast and is most certainly a complex role. As Chair I have valued her counsel and support this year as I learn to traverse the tricky terrain VANISH occupies.

Brand and Positioning

Goal: VANISH is known as the 'go to' specialists for search, support, counselling and training in relation to the needs of our members and service users. One clear

hallmark of VANISH's work this year has been the degree to which others have sought advice and education from VANISH staff and luminaries like Sue Green and Penny Mackieson. Indeed, this year 16 seminars or training programs were provided to other agencies and organisations. This work represents a solid base upon which to build, as the VANISH strategic goal suggests, an even greater impact by 2021.



Advocacy

Goal: VANISH influences decision makers and stakeholders to improve policy and practice to address the rights and needs of current and potential members and service users. The work of VANISH has been punctuated by both a Federal and State election and a spate of reviews across Australia into adoption law reform and matters to do with assistive reproductive technologies (ART). Indeed, VANISH responded to numerous inquiries with briefing meetings or submissions developed from the perspectives of members and supporters. It was frustrating that the State Government did not commence work to draft a new Adoption Act for Victoria during the life of the last Parliament, despite the finding by the Victorian Law Reform Commission that this was necessary.

At a Federal level the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs *National Inquiry into Local Adoption* suggested, predictably, that adoption laws around Australia be 'harmonised' and in a way that would undermine Victoria's long-standing preference for Permanent Care Orders, rather than adoption, as a child protection measure. VANISH involved Adoptee Rights Australia (ARA) and over two days in Canberra met with 26 politicians and their staff arguing that the adoption policies proposed in the report would have a detrimental impact on all Australian children in out-of-home care, as well as their families and subsequent generations. We were listened to. VANISH owes a debt of gratitude to past Chair Leigh Hubbard for helping to organise this effort and to Ged Kearney, the federal member for Cooper, for hosting the team whilst in Parliament House.

Organisational Sustainability

Goal: VANISH is a stable, sustainable, contemporary organisation with diverse income streams. Despite high demand and having established a clear ongoing need for additional counselling services and regional support groups, VANISH did not secure the continuation of funding for these services from the Minister for Families and Children. This highlighted the need for VANISH to indeed work to grow the funding base and diversify the way the Association generates income. Partly, this will involve developing a positive relationship with the State Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) which, since the 2018 State election has become the responsible agency for adoption and related functions, including the Government's service agreement with VANISH.

My fellow Committee of Management (CoM) members Cathy Burnett, newcomer Todd Dargan, Sue Green, Tricia Lester, Maureen Long, Lyn Moore, Romana Rossi and Paul Ruff have overseen the adoption of a Strategic Plan, worked to improve the governance of the Association and provided oversight of the work of VANISH in a busy year. The skills, wisdom and time of CoM members were tapped to a considerable degree. The 2018-19 CoM was certainly a 'value add' to the work of VANISH. Outgoing Independent Expert Cathy Burnett will be hard to replace. The VANISH Rules are notable for requiring the CoM to recruit professional experts. The wisdom of that was exemplified by the way Cathy was able to add her voice of experience and knowledge to CoM discussions - our decision making was all the better for her calmly delivered advice.

Our CoM colleague and Chair, Penny Mackieson, also definitively a 'value add', was able to provide drive, leadership and expertise to the CoM through to 27 February 2019. Personal and professional responsibilities meant that she then needed to leave the CoM and her role as Chair. Penny has been central to the campaigns and work of VANISH over several years and for that she merits a sincere thank you from us all. Further, though, VANISH will continue to benefit from Penny's remarkable legacy;

- A Strategic Plan.
- Intelligent, durable policy.
- Policy, processes and procedures for good governance.
- A sound reputation in the corridors of power for fearless, but effective and useful advice.

Following Penny's resignation, I was nominated by the Committee as Chair and so the position of Treasurer became vacant. The CoM conducted a formal recruitment process resulting in the recent appointment of François Petitto. His fellow CoM members look forward to working with François as we all strive to ensure that *"the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice"*.

I commend this Annual Report to you, the members of VANISH.

Sincerely,

Simon Pryor SAE
Chair

**The VANISH Committee of
Management and Staff
wholeheartedly thank
Penny Mackieson
for her extraordinary contribution
and her unwavering
enthusiasm and support**

MANAGER'S REPORT

Dear Members,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you VANISH's report for 2018-19. It has been an extraordinary year with significant changes to our external environment which we have successfully responded to while staying focussed on providing high quality services. This is largely thanks to the skill and commitment of the wonderful team at VANISH, which I am proud to lead.

One noteworthy outcome for our community this year is the stunning statue *Taken Not Given* - a memorial in Melbourne for people affected by forced adoptions. I would like congratulate ARMS Vic and Origins Victoria on this achievement which came about as the result of their incredible initiative, enthusiasm and commitment supported by funding from the Victorian Government.

In May, Attorney General Jill Hennessy announced a new Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria. VANISH welcomes this announcement particularly given the concrete outcomes of the national apology have been severely lacking.

VANISH services have involved increased demand for support, information, counselling, support groups, and community education this year, while search requests have decreased somewhat. A significant change we have seen is the exponential growth of DNA testing. This technology is useful for people to establish their identity and/or locate relatives, where records are unavailable, incorrect or incomplete. VANISH has started to assist service users to interpret their test results and identify and make contact with newfound relatives. We have also engaged with, and presented to, professional and amateur genealogists assisting those who have been tested - our key messages being about making contact sensitively and getting professional support.

At the end of this financial year machinery of government changes resulted in all adoption related services moving across from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). For VANISH this means a new funding agreement and relationship for the post adoption services we provide while remaining with DHHS for the Assisted Reproductive Treatment (ART) search service. We are very grateful to DHHS for supporting VANISH for the past 30 years and look forward to continuing this relationship through the ART service as well as to working with our new

colleagues at the DJCS. We wish our colleagues at what used to be the Family Information Networks and Discovery all the best in their new roles at Adoption Information Services.

There have been a number of changes to our team this year. Fortunately, we have two wonderful long-standing staff members, Mary Rawson and Liz Tomlinson, who have worked for VANISH for over ten years and generously share their knowledge with new staff members.

At the end of 2018 we bade farewell to SallyRose Carbines and Julie Gomez, both Search and Support Workers. Fortunately SallyRose remains involved with VANISH through facilitating the Bendigo and Ballarat Support Groups. Julie relocated to Sydney, but hopefully not forever. Earlier this year Hana Crisp completed her short-term contract as Research, Communications & Policy Officer. Hana has moved to Korea but again, hopefully not forever. In June, Jenny Conrick completed her contract as VANISH Associate Counsellor after providing counselling services out of Warnambool and Geelong for over two years. We are extremely grateful to Jenny for the good work she achieved there in that time. Finally, our Accountant Barbara Burns is retiring after more than nine years of volunteering for VANISH. It is impossible to put into words my gratitude to Barbara for sharing her time and expertise in assisting us to ensure that our funds and assets are appropriately accounted for and that our budgets are realistic.

I am extremely grateful to Simon Pryor, Chair of VANISH for his leadership, expertise and support. I also thank the rest of the Committee Members for their commitment, expertise and initiative. I am also eternally grateful to all the VANISH staff and volunteers listed on page one of this report for their exemplary work and professionalism and their noteworthy achievements this year. I look forward to us all working together 2019-20.

Charlotte Smith

Manager, VANISH Inc.



SEARCH & SUPPORT SERVICES

Overview

During the 2018-2019 financial year, VANISH continued to receive a steady number of requests for its search, support, counselling, information and community education services. This section provides details of some of these services: the number and types of new registrants using our services, the number of searches registered and who was being sought, and the number of instances of support, information and referrals delivered.

New Registrations

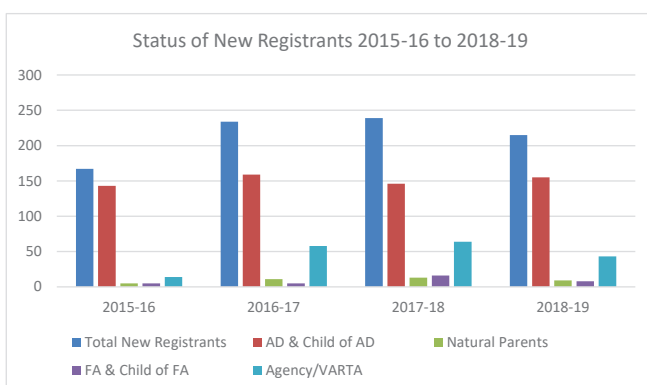
In 2018-2019, there were **215 new registrants**; 187 registered with the search service seeking assistance with the search for family members including Natural Parents (NPs), Adopted Persons (ADs), adult children of Adopted Persons (NRs), Forgotten Australians (FAs), relatives of Forgotten Australians (NRs), Agencies on behalf of Adopted Persons, Forgotten Australians and members of the Donor Conceived Community (DC). 28 individuals registered for the VANISH counselling service. The age range of new and existing registrants is from 25 years (born 1994) to 81 years (born 1938).

Status of New Registrants

As detailed below, the majority of new registrants were Adopted Persons. The breakdown of new registrants by status is as follows:

- 155 Adopted Persons and Children of Adopted Persons
- 9 Natural Parents of Adopted Persons,
- 8 Forgotten Australians and Children of Forgotten Australians
- 11 Agency requests on behalf of Adopted Persons and/or Forgotten Australians
- 32 VARTA requests on behalf of Donor Conceived Persons/Donors.

The chart below shows new registrants over four years.

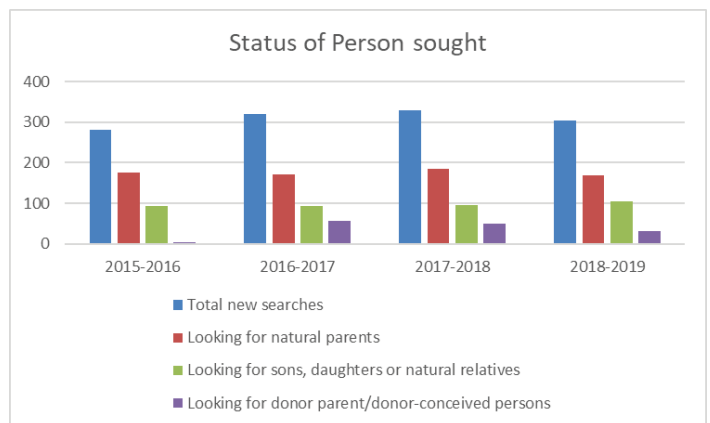


New Searches

There were **305 new searches** registered this year. 187 were on behalf of new registrants and 118 on behalf of returning service users. The status of the person they were seeking are as follows:

- 166 Natural Parents of Adopted Persons and Forgotten Australians
- 66 Natural Relatives of Adopted Persons
- 32 Adopted Persons or Adoption Records
- 9 Natural Relatives of Forgotten Australians
- 31 Donor Conceived Persons or Donors
- 1 Other

The Chart below shows the Status of Persons Sought for the past four years.



The difference between the number of registrants and the number of searches is that some registrants request more than one search, for example for a mother, for a father and if these were found deceased then for a natural relative such as an aunt/uncle or a sibling

Agency Searches

VANISH continues to have contractual arrangements to conduct searches on behalf of clients of several Agencies: Open Place, VARTA, Adotion INformaiton Services and Anglicare. In addition, VANISH has continued to conduct searches on a reciprocal basis for post-adoption agencies in England, New South Wales, New Zealand, South Australia and Western Australia; these arrangements are of many years standing. All of these arrangements whether at the request of VANISH or at the request of other agencies are invaluable as they have enabled many long and difficult searches to be completed.

SEARCH & SUPPORT SERVICES

Although there has been a small decrease in the number of search requests this financial year, there has been a noticeable increase in past service users registering for search assistance, some from as far back as 1989. Many of these requests have been as a result of DNA testing which has provided new family information. This new information has usually been a close DNA match providing an indication as to the identity of a parent whose name was previously unknown or about an unknown sibling/half-sibling.

Below is of a letter of gratitude from a service user who as a result of having her DNA tested was able with the assistance of VANISH to finally identify her father and then to meet her half-siblings.

I can't express enough the gratitude for the beautiful way you handled the search for my father. I said to my husband one day, how lucky I was to have been put through to you that day I phoned VANISH. There wasn't a day in which I didn't wonder who my father was and it is now a wonderful feeling that I can be at peace and have my beautifully completed family tree.

Your kindness, your quiet unassuming advice to which I listened and always did what you suggested made it a lot easier for me to cope in the last few weeks. I won't ever forget you and VANISH and the assistance you gave me.

Liz (aged 75 years).

Support, Information and Referrals

Requests for support, information and referrals via telephone, email, letter and face to face have increased by over 300 this year compared to last year and were a significant aspect of the work undertaken by the VANISH search and support team. During the 2018-2019 year, we received more than 1500 requests for information and support from service users and professionals. The number and type of requests received for new and follow up clients were as follows:

- Information and support was provided to 1389 individuals via telephone, email, letter and face to face compared to 1046 last year.
- 112 Referrals were made to government and non-government agencies and to counsellors compared with 123 last year
- Professionals contacting VANISH, while assisting clients with the search for family members, records, adoption and wardship related issues, totalled 262 compared with 269 last year.
- 566 people attended community education presentations including to health and mental health practitioners and historical societies, compared to 505 last year.
- 66 professionals attended training such as VANISH Counsellor Training.

VANISH receives many emails, letters and cards from our service users thanking us for the support they have received. We always appreciate and record this wonderful feedback.

VANISH Thanks.....

Volunteers

Thank you to the wonderful volunteers who have supported the work of VANISH over the past year. Your time, energy and contributions are very much appreciated. Barbara Burns (Accountant), Andrea Phillips (Legal)

Ryerson Index

Thank you to the following people for their contributions to the Ryerson Index over many years and for their ongoing support of VANISH: Jo Burns, Bernadette Harris, Tara McLaren and Judith Thorn.

Support Groups Facilitators

Thank you Support Group Facilitators, without you we would not be able to provide this valued service.

Melbourne Groups: Liz Tomlinson, Diane Jacobson, Gail Holstock, Caroline Spiers, Tania Curlis, David Cross, Melbourne Donor Conceived Adults Network: Chloe Allworthy and Kate Bourne (VARTA)

Regional Facilitators: SallyRose Carbines, Lin Davidson, Bonney Dietrich, Debbie Garratt and Anne Mangan.

Co-Facilitators & Support People: Helen Nicholson, Bobby (Neil Richards).

COUNSELLING SERVICE & ART THERAPY

Counselling Service

VANISH continued to receive a steady number of requests for counselling services from individuals living in metropolitan Melbourne, rural/regional Victoria and interstate. A total of 62 clients were provided counselling this year, 28 of whom were new to VANISH, registering for a service for the first time. The average age of clients was 50 years.

A total of 278 counselling sessions were conducted in person, by telephone and skype to individuals dealing with a range of issues concerning their adoption or the adoption of their now adult child.

Two-thirds of counselling clients were provided a service by our Melbourne based Counsellor Liz Tomlinson while more than half of the counselling sessions delivered were through our regional counselling service in Western Victoria, provided by Associate Counsellor, Dr Jenny Conrick. This service was established in 2017 with additional funding from DHHS. Unfortunately, we were

unable to secure further funding for this service so it has now been wound down.

VANISH will continue to operate a small counselling service out of the Melbourne office and provide referrals to counsellors and other therapists who have relevant expertise and have undergone the VANISH Counsellor Training. We will also continue to lobby for funding for regional counselling services.

Data for Counselling Services and Art Therapy delivered this financial year is shown in the table below

Counselling Services	No. Clients	No. Sessions
Clients - Melbourne	44	134
Clients - Western Victoria	18	144
Art Therapy	10	53
Totals	72	331

Art Therapy

VANISH delivered two Art Therapy courses this year, one for Adopted Persons and then, in October we trialled our first Art Therapy Course for Mothers.



Robyn painting during the tree exercise

During the six weekly sessions, facilitated by Art Therapist Michele Hutchins, participants were guided through creativity, mindfulness and self-reflection exercises to explore the central themes of loss, grief and trauma related to separation from a child or children through adoption.

The uptake of the mothers course was low, in a similar way to the course for Adoptees was initially. However the feedback was extremely positive and we feel that creative expression has enormous potential for healing the loss, grief and trauma experienced by the mothers as well as adopted persons.

"I left the sessions uplifted and although the deep sadness was very strong, I also had a deep sense of stability and oneness with myself and with my fellow participants."

- Tricia

We acknowledge and thank Relationships Australia Victoria for funding this course through the COMPASS small grants program.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Sharing stories to provide support

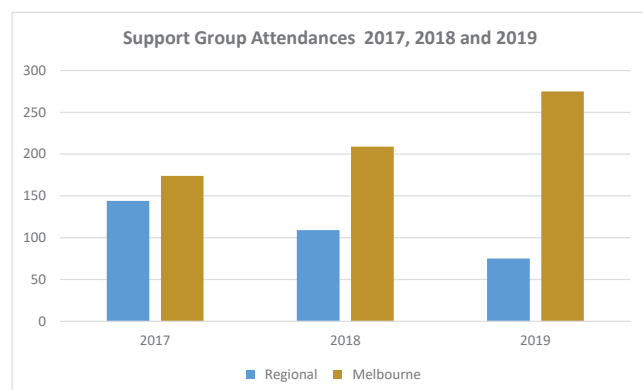
VANISH support groups are a safe place for people to share their stories, thoughts and feelings about their adoption experience, some of which can be intensely personal. Often the people who come to a support group don't know many, or even any, other people who have had similar experiences to them. This may leave them feeling as though they are isolated, marginalised and unable to cope. Support groups endeavor to help people feel less alone by providing validation, empathy and understanding, and to build their resilience through sharing ideas and strategies. VANISH support groups are open, drop-in groups. This means participants can attend when they feel the need and there is no beginning or end date for the group.

This financial year VANISH ran 66 groups which had a total of 350 attendances as shown in the table below.

Location	No. of groups	No. of attendees
Regional	32	75
Melbourne	34	275
Totals	66	350

Overall, the numbers of attendees have increased this year compared to last year despite the fact that fewer groups were run. However when comparing data for Melbourne to regional groups the emerging trend is that the demand for support via the support group model has significantly increased in Melbourne, but decreased in regional areas. Data for attendances the last three years is shown in the table and graph below.

	2017	2018	2019
Regional	144	109	75
Melbourne	174	209	275
Totals	318	318	350



In response to the significant increase in demand in Melbourne, particularly from adopted people, in 2019 VANISH established an additional monthly adoptee only group with the generous support of members and friends through crowdfunding. VANISH now holds three support groups a month in Melbourne, two for adopted people only and one mixed group which is for mothers, fathers, adopted people and other family members.

VANISH is extremely grateful to the people who generously donated to our *Chuffed* crowdfunding project. We were thrilled to raise \$4550 towards the costs of running the additional groups.



This year VANISH has been winding down the regional groups experiencing low uptake while continuing to support those that are well attended. We remain committed to running groups where there is demand, while in areas where groups are not attracting attendees, VANISH will develop support models that better suit regional and rural Victorians who might benefit from our services. We remain well connected with our network of local facilitators and stakeholders and continue to offer one on one support sessions where possible.

Support Group Facilitators

We are indebted to the amazing commitment and support we receive from our support group facilitators. We would like to thank them all for the wonderful support and guidance they provide. In Melbourne we have Cal Spiers, Gail Holstock, Liz Tomlinson, Di Jacobson, Tania Curlis and David Cross. In regional Victoria we have SallyRose Carbines, Anne Mangan, Deb Garratt and Lin Davidson. This year we would like to congratulate and say a special thank you to Cal Spiers, Anne Mangan and Deb Garratt who have facilitated their groups for five years. We sincerely hope they continue their fabulous work and follow in the footsteps of Liz (12 years) and Di (9 years)!

THANK YOU!!

'Taken Not Given' Statue Unveiling

In October 2018, the VANISH team joined nearly 200 others gathered to witness the unveiling of a new memorial to acknowledge and remember the loss and grief suffered by people affected by forced adoptions. The date was set to coincide with and commemorate the sixth anniversary of the Victorian Parliamentary Apology for Past Adoption practices.

The statue by sculptor Anne Ross was the initiative of ARMS (Vic) and Origins Victoria, with support from Premier Daniel Andrews and the Victorian Government. It is situated in St Andrew's Reserve behind Parliament House, Melbourne. The plaque next to the statue reads:

"This artwork remembers the mothers and children who were separated by forced adoptions. It acknowledges the loss and pain that this created – a lifetime of grief for us, the mothers; the loss of birthright for our sons and daughters. The right to love and care for our children was taken from us and the harm inflicted is irreparable. Following a damning Commonwealth Senate Inquiry, the Victorian State Government took steps towards ameliorating this shameful legacy by offering an unreserved apology."

Speakers at the event included Jo Fraser, Secretary of ARMS (MC); Jenny Mikakos, Minister for Families and Children; Marie Meggitt, Chair of ARMS with Elizabeth Edwards, Convenor of Origins, and Sally Capp, Lord Mayor of Melbourne. Also in attendance were former Premier Ted Baillieu, Senator Claire Moore, Senator Ged Kearney, MPs Lizzie Blandthorn, Danielle Green, Sue Pennicuik, former MPs Christine Campbell and Rob Hudson, and mothers, fathers, sons and daughters affected by forced adoptions, and other family members and friends supporting them.



While VANISH was not involved in the design or implementation of this project it is extremely significant to us and our community. St Andrew's Reserve and the 'Taken Not Given' statue will continue to be a place for us to gather, commemorate, reflect and support one another over the coming years.

A postcard memento of the sculpture has been printed by ARMS (Vic) so if you were unable to attend the event and would like one, please contact VANISH or ARMS (Vic) to have one sent out to you.

You can watch a video of the event here:
<http://bit.ly/TakenNotGivenMemorialVideo>

Commemorative Afternoon Tea for the Sixth Anniversary of the Federal Apology

The 21st March 2019 marked the sixth Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions. VANISH commemorated the occasion with an afternoon tea at our office in North Melbourne. VANISH Committee of Management members, the Manager and staff hosted guests including VANISH members and service users and representatives from ARMS and FIND. It was a lovely informal get together with a short speech by VANISH Manager Charlotte Smith, who read excerpts from the Apology and paid respect to those who continue to experience the affects of forced adoptions. She expressed the importance of coming together and supporting each other. Later in the afternoon some attendees joined the gathering hosted by ARMS (Vic) next to the statue by Anne Ross, 'Taken not Given' at St Andrew's Reserve where we were joined by more ARMS (Vic) members.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

During the past 12 months VANISH continued to work alongside the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Home And Community Care (HACC) programs to provide allied health and community welfare workers with specialised training in the effects of past and forced adoption practices. We also provided the same education through a new training program offered by Swinburne University. VANISH presented at 11 forums and expositions in total across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. These trainings and forums also included presentations about Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations.

Many of the participants expressed their shock and dismay on learning about past and forced adoptions and the realities experienced by people affected, stating that this was new information to them. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive:

"I can't believe I have never heard about this before!!"

"I felt privileged to hear the stories and will be more equipped to support someone who is a Care Leaver or experienced past adoption practices"

"The speakers were so strong and powerful - I believe the whole room was moved with the sharing of their stories"

"We can't change the past. But we can try to advocate to avoid repetition of such horrors, and we can try to



Charlotte Smith and SallyRose Carbines of VANISH with Lyn Langanke and Caroline Carroll from Open Place and Gilbert Wanganeen from Njernda Aboriginal Corporation at the forum for the Campaspe Murray Mental Health Network

give these people dignity, comfort and respect now, if we are helped to understand how"

We have reached over **550** allied health workers this year as a consequence of being involved in these programs. We are extremely grateful to the HACC and CHSP Diversity Advisors for the opportunity to assist them with this important work. Congratulations to Gail Holstock, Community Outreach & Training Coordinator and Liz Tomlinson, Counsellor, for their powerful educational presentations .



Outreach Activities FY 2019

- Support Groups
- HACC/CHSP Forums and presentations

VANISH advocates on behalf of past, current and future service users, as well as the broader Australian community. Often this involves combining forces with like-minded organisations across Australia. VANISH Committee of Management members and in particular our Independent Experts are instrumental in developing policy positions, writing submissions and lobbying politicians. This year our advocacy involved:

- **Submission to the Review of the *Assisted Reproductive Act 2008*.** The main concern we raised here was that while the guiding principles and objectives of the *Act* state up front the importance of the welfare and interests of people born or to be born through ART, the issues presented for review and the *Act* itself are still very much focussed on the needs of people seeking to create families through ART. Our recommendations were: a national law and model for altruistic surrogacy to provide a consistent approach; the continued high level of regulation; the rights and protections of donors and surrogates be given more prominence; ART clinics be obliged to provide realistic, evidence based information regarding how effective their services might be; donors and donor recipients be able to elect to receive counselling from a counsellor independent of the fertility clinic providing their treatment; and donor conceived individuals have access to counselling as they mature and, in particular, when making contact for the first time with their donor or half-siblings. Based upon the two reports emerging out of the Review we do not believe these points have been taken sufficiently into consideration. We will continue to advocate on these matters.

- **Victorian Adoption Regulations 2019.** It is a legal requirement that the Adoption Regulations be reviewed every 10 years which meant that even though the *Adoption Act 1984* is extremely outdated and a new *Act* is anticipated, the Regulations had to be reviewed. VANISH commended the statement confirming Victoria's continuing position that adoption is not an appropriate option to provide permanency for children following statutory child protection intervention, and also the detailing of the positives of permanent care orders, granted by the Children's Court. We raised questions and concerns regarding some elements of the proposed new regulations, in particular some of the language; the new forms for recording parents' wishes which are now more 'tick-box' in nature; the change of criteria for accreditation of bodies for intercountry adoptions from *incorporated non-profit* to just *incorporated*; the inclusion of known adoptions; the exclusion of adoption discharges; the

change from the term "inter-country" to "in or from a country"; and the application forms for original birth certificates. Disappointingly almost all of our recommendations were not responded to or taken up.

- **National Inquiry into Local Adoption.** Despite strong representations from VANISH and other Australian post-adoption support organisations, a major recommendation of this inquiry was a national framework for adoption from out of home care. VANISH responded to this by meeting with 26 federal parliamentarians to convey our endorsement of the Dissenting Report which cautioned against conflating stability with legal permanency and expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the recommendations particularly on First Nations communities.

- **Review of the Forced Adoption Support Services.** Whilst in Canberra we raised concerns about the Review of the Forced Adoption Support Services, particularly the lack of counselling services, the low numbers of clients supported and the high cost per client. VANISH recommended that this service be presented for expenditure review and be redesigned to better meet the needs of people affected by Forced Adoptions.

- **Children, Youth and Families Amendment (*Permanent Care and Other Matters*) Act 2014.** In response to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's report *Safe and Wanted* the Victorian Government has made some changes to strengthen permanency arrangements, but the recommendation that adoption be removed from the permanency hierarchy in the *CYF Act* has not been taken up despite the expressed concerns of numerous organisations including VANISH.

- **Adoption Act 1984.** The Victoria Law Reform Commission's recommendation was that the *Adoption Act 1984* be repealed and replaced with a new *Act*. It was hoped that work on this would commence after the State election however there have been no indications of progress thus far. Now that adoption services have moved across to the Department of Justice and Safety and been restructured, we hope to see significant progress in the near future, including the recommendation to implement Integrated Birth Certificates. VANISH will keep members fully abreast of any developments in this regard.

As noted in the Managers Report, the Victorian Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions is anticipated to commence this year.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This year the VANISH Committee of Management and staff finalised a three-year Strategic Plan which is now in effect. The process involved undertaking analysis of the internal and external environment, considering emerging opportunities and challenges, and reviewing recent service user and partner surveys. The environment in which VANISH operates has undergone significant changes since the last Strategic Plan was written so there was much to discuss. Fortunately we had strategic planning expert Chris Gillies (pictured opposite) to guide us through the process. We are extremely grateful to Chris for the expertise and advice she generously provided to VANISH on a pro bono basis. THANK YOU!



VANISH Strategic Plan				
Vision (what we hope for): That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice.				
Mission (what we do): To assist people who have experienced separation from family members through adoption, out-of-home care and donor conception and advocate on behalf of these groups.				
Values/Principles (how we behave): * Respect * Empowerment * Integrity * Professionalism * Inclusiveness *Self Help				
	Client Outcomes	Brand and Positioning	Advocacy	Organisational Sustainability
2021 Goals	VANISH provides high quality, accessible services to our members and service users who will be supported through application of our specialist skills and expertise.	VANISH is known as the 'go to' specialists for search, support, counselling and training in relation to the needs of our members and service users.	VANISH influences decision makers and stakeholders to improve policy and practice to address the rights and needs of current and potential members and service users.	VANISH is a stable, sustainable, contemporary organisation with diverse income streams.
Strategic Intent	VANISH is committed to delivering high quality specialist services to existing and new clients. We are particularly concerned with addressing social, economic and physical barriers clients face in accessing our services and wish to reach people who are vulnerable, remote and/or isolated. Our integrated model seeks to provide different services for clients according to their different stages and needs.	VANISH is well known and respected among organisations, policy makers and academics engaged in this field. VANISH intends to increase our profile across the health and community welfare sector in order to increase our reach and impact both in terms of those directly affected by family separation and individuals/families who might support them.	VANISH represents the rights and needs of members and current/future service users to policy makers and to professionals who interface with them. It is important that the knowledge and insights gained through 30 years of service inform policy and practice while at the same time maintaining a positive reputation with our government partners and funding bodies.	VANISH needs to be viable and sustainable in order to support current and future service users. This involves having appropriate, contemporary governance and operational structures, increasing and diversifying the types of funding, ensuring an appropriately skilled and stable workforce and having a contemporary workspace, technology and systems.
Operational Strategies	<p>Partnerships: VANISH requires strategic and operational partnerships in order to: promote the rights and needs of service users, promote VANISH services, maximise our reach and impact, jointly advocate on behalf of the community we work with, and undertake joint research and analysis. VANISH will map out potential partners for these purposes and analyse which to develop and prioritise.</p> <p>Quality and Compliance : VANISH is committed to continuous quality improvement and to complying with accreditation standards. This requires resources, COM and staff engagement, and appropriate evidence gathering systems. VANISH will review the existing monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure it captures evidence to promote our successes, meet reporting requirements and continuously improve.</p>			

Committee's Report for the year ended 30 June 2019

Your committee members submit the financial accounts of the VANISH Inc. for the financial year ended 30 June 2019

Committee Members

The names of committee members at the date of this report are:

Simon Pryor (Treasurer/Chair)
Trish Lester (Secretary)
Cathy Burnett
Sue Green
Maureen Long
Lyn Moore
Romana Rossi
Paul Ruff
Todd Dargon
Ex-officio, Charlotte Smith (Manager)

Principal Activities

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were: Search and support services provided for those separated from their family of origin as outlined in the Rules of VANISH Inc., and additional services for care leavers, donor conceived and intercountry adopted people and their families.

Operating Result

The profit from ordinary activities after providing for income tax amounted to:

Year ended	Year ended
30 June 2019	30 June 2018
\$(-74) (loss)	\$34,191 (profit)

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:



Simon Pryor (Chairperson)



Tricia Lester (Secretary)

FINANCIAL REPORT

Summary Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended 30 June 2019

	2019	2018
Revenue	\$	\$
DHHS Funding	627,744	606,352
Partner Memorandums of Understanding		
Open Place	43,103	42,259
RAV Small Grants	12,479	11,486
Interest Received	5,811	4,847
Donations	5,499	1,681
Other Income	11,055	2,741
Total Revenue	\$705,691	\$669,366
Expenses		
Communications	5,214	5,564
Finance	7,801	6,714
Administration	15,783	21,227
Depreciation	12,280	13,629
Information Technology	7,531	8,100
Governance and Compliance	4,278	4,278
Small Grants	12,479	11,486
Service Expenses	38,894	27,775
Support Groups	4,610	7,094
Employment	518,676	451,740
Property	56,886	53,972
Utilities	7,748	7,839
Stakeholder Engagement	3,366	2,574
Professional Development, Training and Supervision	10,219	13,183
Total Expenses	\$705,765	\$635,175
Net (Loss)/Profit	(\$74)	\$34,191

FINANCIAL REPORT

Summary Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2019

	2019	2018
	\$	\$
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	311,498	302,044
Income Owing	21,333	42,259
Prepaid Expenses	<u>1,917</u>	<u>1,596</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>\$334,748</u>	<u>\$345,899</u>
Non-current Assets		
Security Deposit Howard Street	10,000	10,000
Property, Plant and Equipment	<u>17,992</u>	<u>28,349</u>
Total Non-Current Assets	<u>\$27,992</u>	<u>\$38,349</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$362,740</u>	<u>\$384,248</u>
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors and Accruals	8,441	5,976
GST Liability	11,846	6,257
Payroll Liabilities	10,085	8,615
Grants Carried Forward	1,206	38,812
Provisions	<u>23,413</u>	<u>15,969</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$54,991</u>	<u>\$75,629</u>
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provision for Long Service leave	<u>28,705</u>	<u>29,501</u>
Total Non-Current Liabilities	<u>\$28,705</u>	<u>\$29,501</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>\$83,696</u>	<u>\$105,130</u>
Net Assets	<u>\$279,044</u>	<u>\$279,118</u>
VANISH Funds		
Retained Earnings	<u>\$279,044</u>	<u>\$279,118</u>
Total VANISH Funds	<u>\$279,044</u>	<u>\$279,118</u>

FINANCIAL REPORT

Summary Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2019

	Inflows, (outflows)	
	2019	2018
Cash Flows Operating Activities	\$	\$
DHHS Funding	592,744	568,900
RAV Small Grants	0	4,711
Partner Memorandums of Understanding	64,027	2,725
Interest Received	5,811	4,847
Donations	5,499	1,681
Sundry Income	11,055	2,741
Payments to Suppliers and Employees	(662,171)	(652,198)
GST (net)	(5,589)	6,749
Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities	\$11,376	\$(59,844)
Cash Flows Investing Activities		
Plant and Equipment and Leasehold Improvements	(1,922)	(6,208)
Net Cash Outflow from Investing Activities	\$(1,922)	\$(6,208)
Cash Flows Financing Activities		
Net Cash Inflow from Financing Activities	\$0	\$0
Total Net Cash Inflow for the Year	\$9,454	\$(66,052)
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held for the Year	\$9,454	\$(66,052)
Cash at the Beginning of the Year	\$312,044	\$378,096
Cash at 30th June 2019	\$321,498	\$312,044

Summary Statement of Change in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2019

Balance at 1 July 2018	\$279,118	\$244,927
Net Loss for the Year	(74)	34,191
Balance at 30 June 2019	\$279,044	\$279,118

A copy of the full financial reports is available to members upon request
by emailing info@vanish.org.au or telephoning (03) 9328 8611.

Certificate by Members of the Committee for the year ended 30 June 2019

The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the Income and Expenditure Statement, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows and Notes to the Financial Statements:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of VANISH Inc. as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

Simon Pryor (Chairperson)



Tricia Lester (Secretary)



A VOTE OF THANKS - BARBARA BURNS

The VANISH Committee of Management and Staff would like to express our sincere gratitude to Barbara Burns, our Accountant for her extraordinary contribution to the organisation over the past ten years. Thank you!



FINANCIAL REPORT

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2019

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(a) Basis of Preparation

In the opinion of the Committee of Management, the Association is not a reporting entity since there are unlikely to exist users of the financial report who are not able to command the preparation of reports tailored so as to satisfy specifically all of their information needs. These special purpose financial statements have been prepared to meet the reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards and Accounting Interpretations, and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements, AASB 107 Statement of Cash Flows, AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes. The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based in Accounting Estimates and Errors and AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs modified, where applicable, by the measurement at fair value of selected non-current assets, financial assets and financial liabilities.

Significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and are consistent with prior reporting periods unless otherwise stated.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(b) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash on hand, demand deposits and short term investments which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

(c) Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured.

(d) Employee Benefits

Provision is made for the association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits that are expected to be wholly settled within one year have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Employee benefits expected to be settled more than one year after the end of the reporting period have been measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made for those benefits. In determining the liability, consideration is given to employee wage increases and the probability that the employee may satisfy vesting requirements. Changes in the measurement of the liability are recognised in profit or loss.

(e) Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment are carried at cost, independent or association's valuation. All assets excluding freehold land, are depreciated over their useful lives to the business. Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

(f) Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is recognised when the amount of the revenue can be measured reliably, it is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the entity and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue as noted below, has been satisfied. Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is presented net of returns, discounts and rebates. All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

Interest Revenue

Interest is recognised using the effective interest method.

Other Revenue

Other revenue is recognised when the entity is entitled to the funds.

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These financial statements have been subject to audit or review and should be read in conjunction with the attached Audit Review Report.



J L Collyer & Partners

Unit 7 603 Boronia Road
WANTIRNA VIC 3152
Phone: 03 97206666
E-mail: lionel@jllcollyerpartners.com.au

Directors

Lionel R. Arnold CA B.Bus
Raelene Cheng CPA B.Com

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF VANISH INC.

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of VANISH INC, which comprises the financial position as at 30th June 2019, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including summary of significant accounting policies and managements assertion statement.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of VANISH INC. as at 30th June 2019, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter-Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist VANISH INC. to meet the requirements of Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the *applicable legislation* and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

J. L. Collyer & Partners
Accountants

Lionel R. Arnold

Partner

Dated in Glen Waverley on 4th September 2019

Liability limited by a scheme
approved under Professional
Standards Legislation.



J L Collyer & Partners
Is a CPA Practice



VANISH welcomes voluntary donations at any time to enable us to extend our services.

Give now at www.givenow.com.au/vanishinc

PO Box 112 Carlton South 3053

(03) 9328 8611

1300 826 474 (1300 VANISH)

info@vanish.org.au

www.vanish.org.au

1st Floor, 50 Howard Street,

North Melbourne

Victoria 3051

ABN 35 582 901 627