Kris Behets

WA VIEW 25th Silver Anniversary

The History of VIEW Clubs in Western Australia (2001–2026)

Good afternoon ladies, I'm here today to tell you a story, let me take you on a journey!

Bringing VIEW to Western Australia

There is something wonderfully fitting about the way VIEW began in Western Australia — through a chance meeting, a shared conversation, and a car rally trip to Tasmania.. but that's our story!

It began when Barb Colson attended the Vauxhall Owners' Car Rally in the Apple Isle. During a cruise on the Gordon River, she met Bev Holland, a National Councillor from Orange, New South Wales, who introduced her to VIEW Clubs of Australia and explained that The Smith Family was preparing to establish operations in Western Australia - *This is the true VIEW network in action!*

Recognising the opportunity to bring VIEW to the state, Barb returned to Perth and contacted friends and neighbours she believed would be interested in becoming foundation members. Their names were forwarded to National Office, marking the first step towards establishing VIEW in Western Australia.

Soon afterwards, Laurel Fatherly, former National Vice President of VIEW, contacted Barb. Living in Perth at the time, Laurel had volunteered to assist National Office with introducing VIEW to Western Australia.

Together with Ann McClintock, VIEW National Manager, they met to discuss the establishment of the state's first club and the practical arrangements needed to support its development.

These early discussions laid the foundations for what would become twenty-five years of continuous growth.

Introduction

VIEW Clubs in Western Australia began in 2001 with the establishment of The First WAVE VIEW Club. During the following twenty-five years, VIEW expanded from that single club in Perth to a network of now 9 clubs serving metropolitan and regional communities across the state.

This growth was achieved through the commitment of members like you who established new clubs, mentored emerging leaders and strengthened the organisation through friendship, volunteer service and community involvement. Throughout this period, the partnership between VIEW and The Smith Family remained central to the organisation's purpose, with members supporting *Learning for Life* students through fundraising, volunteering and student sponsorship.

In Western Australia we now have a strong and active VIEW community, contributing not only to the growth of the organisation within the state but also to its leadership at national level.

Building the Foundation

First WAVE VIEW Club

Under Barb's leadership, First WAVE VIEW Club was inaugurated in July 2001.

As many of the foundation members were employed, the club initially met in the evenings. Its name reflected both its position as Western Australia's first VIEW evening club and the beginning of VIEW's expansion across the state.

From its inception, the club supported The Smith Family through fundraising, and a broad range of volunteering activities and *Learning for Life* student sponsorship. In 2019, the club transitioned from evening to daytime meetings and became known simply as First Wave VIEW Club.

Twenty-five years later, foundation members Marlene Gordon, Monica O'Donoghue, Lorraine Johnson and Joan Newnham continue to be actively involved with the club, providing a direct link with its beginnings.

Western Suburbs VIEW Club

Later in 2001, Laurel established Western Australia's second club, Subiaco Centro Evening VIEW Club.

Although the club later became inactive, it never formally closed. In 2005, Jacqui Griffiths revived the club after advertising locally to

determine community interest. National Council approved its transition to a day club, and it subsequently became Subiaco Day VIEW Club before later adopting its current name, WA Western Suburbs VIEW Club.

Rockingham Sound Day VIEW Club

VIEW continued to expand in 2003 when Laurel worked with Mor Williams to establish Rockingham Sound Day VIEW Club. The club was inaugurated in March 2003, becoming Western Australia's third VIEW club.

Foundation members Mim Taylor, Mabel Laidlaw and Kathy Fairweather remain actively involved with the club.

West Coast VIEW Club

Expansion continued in 2005 when Laurel established Woodvale VIEW Club, later renamed West Coast VIEW Club, extending VIEW into Perth's northern suburbs.

By the end of 2005, VIEW had established five clubs across metropolitan Perth. More importantly, a strong foundation of experienced members had emerged who would spend the following two decades mentoring new clubs, supporting new leaders and contributing to the continued growth of VIEW throughout Western Australia.

Dianella VIEW Club was established in July 2006, extending VIEW's presence into Perth's northern suburbs. The club operated for just two years before closing in 2008, becoming the only VIEW club established in Western Australia to have closed. Despite this setback, VIEW continued its growth and development across Western Australia.

Growing Across Western Australia

The next phase of development saw VIEW expand beyond its original metropolitan base into new communities across Western Australia.

Melville City VIEW Club was inaugurated in October 2011 after Helen Reynolds expressed an interest in establishing a new club while attending a West Coast VIEW Club function. Barb and Joan assembled a development team comprising Bev Lawson, Dawn Gillis, Marlene Gordon and Vera Daddow to assist with the club's formation. Helen became the inaugural President.

Bayswater VIEW Club followed in July 2013 under inaugural President Linda Migro. Despite early challenges, the club developed into an active and successful day club.

VIEW reached Western Australia's South-West region in 2017 when Sue Siddall identified an opportunity to establish a club in Dunsborough. Assisted by Marlene Gordon and Charmaine Sherman, local women came together to establish **Capes VIEW Club**, with Sue serving as inaugural President.

The organisation's presence in the South West continued to grow with the establishment of **Busselton VIEW Club** in 2024 through the efforts of Mary Deakin and Wendy Lewis. Pauline Rockley became the club's inaugural President.

In 2026, again assisted by Mary Deakin and the WA development team, **Mandurah VIEW Club** became Western Australia's newest club under the joint leadership of Sara Adams and Dee Buckland, marking twenty-five years of continuous growth since VIEW was first established in the state.

Supporting The Smith Family

The partnership between VIEW Clubs of Australia and The Smith Family was and is central to the organisation's work in Western Australia.

In 2001, David Ansell became The Smith Family's first Western Australian General Manager and worked closely with the state's newly established VIEW clubs as both organisations expanded.

Because WA VIEW Clubs were established after The Smith Family had shifted its focus to education, their work was centred from the beginning on supporting students through sponsorship rather than emergency relief such as food or clothing. This gave WA clubs a clear and consistent purpose, and their commitment to sponsorship has remained strong, with student numbers consistently high in relation to the size of their membership base.

Members became involved in the Student2Student Reading Program, volunteering as reading partners for *Learning for Life* students. They also supported fundraising activities, volunteered in schools and community programs, assisted in The Smith Family offices, attended student graduation ceremonies and participated in local activities throughout the state.

Child and Parent Centres

Unique to The Smith Family and WA are the Child and Parent Centres - VIEW members have had a strong connection to these Parent and Child centres since their formation in 2014.

Julie McKay, Manager Child and Parent Centre – Westminster was asked comment on VIEW Clubs support and said

"*For more than 12 years, the First Wave, West Coast and Western Suburbs VIEW Clubs have been valued community partners of the Child and Parent Centres Westminster and Roseworth.*

Through their ongoing commitment, VIEW Club members have made a significant contribution to the wellbeing of local children and families and to the delivery of high-quality early learning experiences.

Their support has taken many forms, including regular volunteering at the centres, where members have dedicated time each week to creating resources that enhance early learning programs.

They have also generously provided home-made wooden toys, hand-knitted beanies, blankets and dolls' clothing, as well as used children's books which have been distributed to children and families attending the centres".

.."*VIEW Clubs have done much more for our families than just knitting and we are extremely grateful for the ongoing partnership"..*

As VIEW Club members, we can take great pride in this heartfelt endorsement and in the lasting difference our support continues to make for children and families in Western Australia.

Supporting children and young people through the *Learning for Life program* remains the common purpose of every VIEW club in Western Australia. Through fundraising, student sponsorship and volunteering, members have contributed thousands of hours in support of children, families and education initiatives.

Developing Leaders

During the early years of VIEW in Western Australia, the state did not have its own National Councillor. Instead, mentoring, guidance and encouragement was provided by the VIEW National Executive to WA VIEW Zone Councillors and members.

Recognition of Western Australia's contribution continued to grow as the organisation matured.

In 2013, Greg Ryan Gadsden, The Smith Family's Western Australian General Manager, nominated Barb Colson for Western Australian Senior of the Year. During the same year, Barb received the National President's Award of VIEW Clubs of Australia in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the organisation.

In 2025, we were finally allocated our first National Councillor position in Western Australian, providing the state with direct representation on National Leadership Team for the first time.

In 2026, Rena O'Sullivan and Michelle McGrath became the first Western Australian members to jointly undertake the role of Zone Councillor.

Legacy

From the establishment of First WAVE VIEW Club in 2001 to the inauguration of Mandurah VIEW Club in 2026, VIEW has become firmly established in Western Australia through the commitment of its members.

Over twenty-five years, VIEW members have established 9 clubs across metropolitan and regional communities, developed new

leaders, supported The Smith Family in many ways through fundraising, raising awareness, volunteering and *Learning for Life* student sponsorship.

The history of VIEW in Western Australia is the history of the members who built it. Their leadership, collaboration and commitment created an organisation that continues to strengthen communities while supporting Australian children experiencing disadvantage through education.

What I admire most is your genuine passion and unwavering commitment to the students we support, along with the warmth, friendship and enthusiasm you bring to every part of VIEW life.

Congratulations to each and every one of you. Through your dedication, generosity and shared belief in VIEW's purpose, you have all helped shape the growth and success of this wonderful organisation in Western Australia.

Thank you