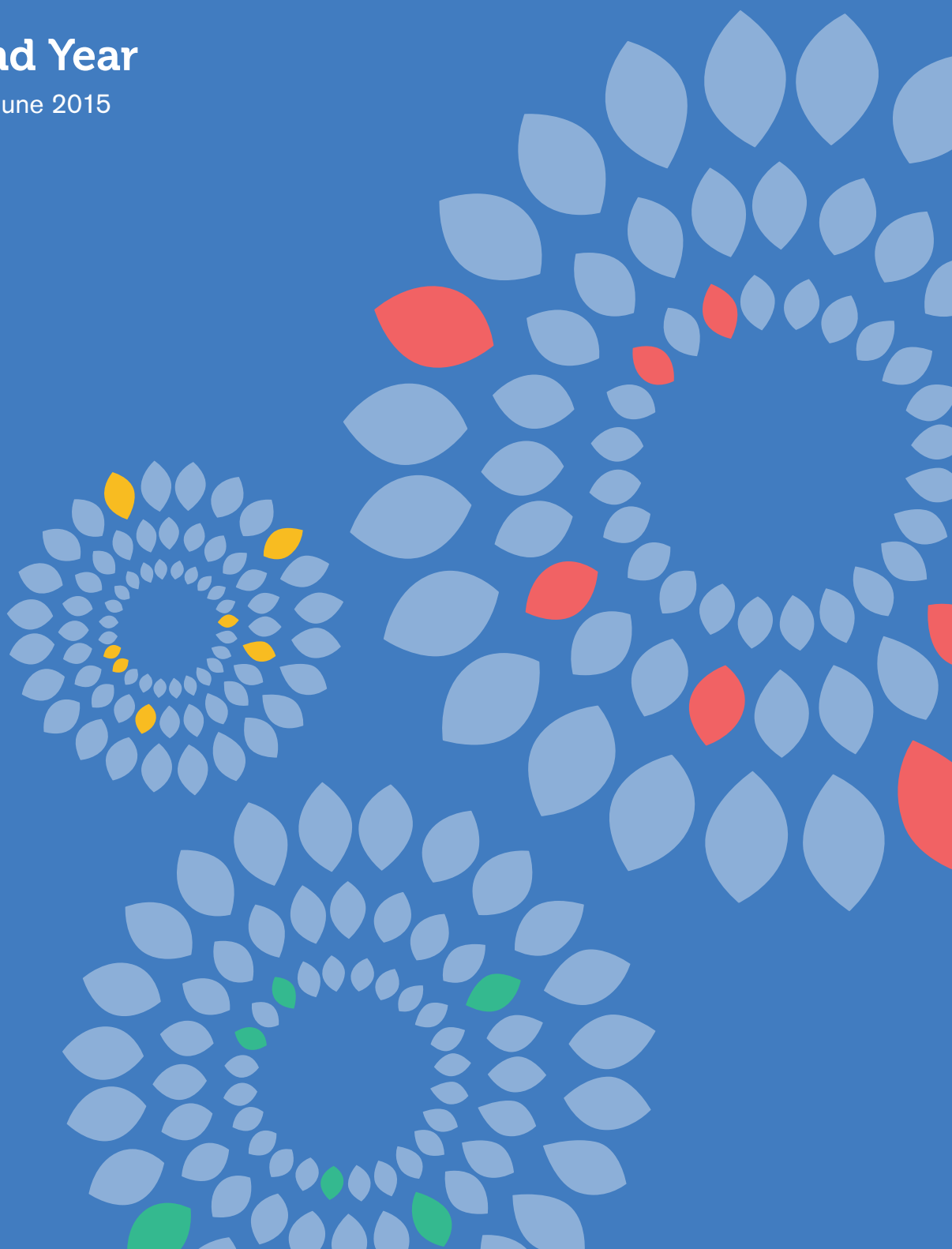


# know more

## Our Second Year

1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015



# Acknowledgements

**knowmore** acknowledges the Traditional owners of all the lands across Australia upon which we live and work, and the Traditional owners of the lands on which our four offices are situated, being the Gadigal people of the Eora nation; the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation; the Turrbul and Jagara peoples and the Wurundjeri people. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present. **knowmore** was established by, and operates as a separate program of, the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), with funding from the Australian Government, represented by the Attorney-General's Department.

## Who we are

**knowmore** is an independent legal service providing free legal advice and assistance, information and referrals for people engaging or considering engaging with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

## Website

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

## Email

[info@knowmore.org.au](mailto:info@knowmore.org.au)

## Free advice line

1800 605 762

## Opening Hours

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

## Our Offices

### Brisbane

Suite 1  
Level 16, 141 Queen St  
Brisbane QLD 4000

PO Box 2151  
Brisbane QLD 4001

T 07 3218 4500  
F 07 3218 4590

### Melbourne

Level 1  
180 Flinders St  
Melbourne VIC 3000

PO Box 84  
Flinders Lane VIC 8009

T 03 8663 7400  
F 03 8663 7490

### Perth

Level 9  
41 St Georges Terrace  
Perth WA 6000

PO Box 8095  
Cloisters Square WA 6850

T 08 9225 0200  
F 08 9225 0290

### Sydney

Suite G02  
Ground Floor  
233 Castlereagh St  
Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box 20319  
World Square NSW 2002

T 02 8267 7400  
F 02 8267 7490

# What's in our report



Who we are	4
Our mission and values	6
A message from our board	7
A message from our executive team	8
Our clients	12
<b>knowmore</b> supports an independent, national redress scheme	15
Our legal service	16
Our support services	18
Our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement	20
Informing change	23
Outreach & community engagement	24
Working in partnership	26
Where to from here	28

**"My gratitude for the belief,  
humanity, assistance and  
guidance you personally have  
provided to me in helping me  
get to this life-changing point  
in my journey."**

**knowmore** client feedback.





# Who we are

**knowmore** employs an innovative multidisciplinary model to provide legal assistance within a trauma-informed and culturally safe framework for our clients, who are primarily survivors of institutional child sexual abuse and who are thinking about engaging with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Our services (advice and assistance, information and referral services) are delivered by a multidisciplinary team comprising lawyers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors, counsellors and social workers. Our client work is facilitated via a free national advice line, face to face services and community outreach activities.

**knowmore's** services are delivered on a collaborative basis with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and a range of other legal, support and advocacy groups that are also working with survivors who may engage with the Royal Commission.

**knowmore** has a team of over 40 people. Our staff are experienced in working with disadvantaged clients, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those who have experienced trauma. Please visit our website for more details on our staff: [http://knowmore.org.au/about/our\\_people/](http://knowmore.org.au/about/our_people/).

**knowmore's** operations are managed by the Executive team comprising the Executive Officer, a Principal Lawyer and two General Managers – one specialising in operations and the other in compliance and reporting. **knowmore** reports to and is supported by a sub-committee of the NACLC Board.

**knowmore** works independently of the Royal Commission but coordinates activities and liaises closely with its staff to maximise support for our clients.

Although our clients are primarily survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, **knowmore** also assists any person engaging or considering engaging with the Royal Commission.

---

## Our current client-facing team includes:

 20 lawyers

 7 social workers/counsellors

 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Advisors





Examples of the types of assistance that **knowmore** provides include:

- information about the Royal Commission, its legal powers and procedures, the roles of the Commissioners and others involved, rights of representation before it and the Commission's guidelines and statements about how it intends to proceed;
- legal advice for people considering providing information to the Royal Commission about their options and what they may mean, and on a range of other legal issues including witness and informant protections, the availability of compensation or other forms of action or redress, and the effect of confidentiality agreements in past proceedings;
- linking people with specialist counselling and support services and victims' support groups;
- preparation of statements and assistance with preparing submissions about needed reforms; and
- referrals and advice about legal representation and funding for survivors giving evidence or people summoned to appear as institutional witnesses in formal hearings of the Royal Commission.

**knowmore's** model is unique in a number of ways.

- It is the first truly national community legal service to be established with offices in more than one state.
- It uses an innovative multi-disciplinary model bringing together lawyers, social workers, counsellors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors, to provide combined support to clients.
- It was created to provide legal assistance for the duration of the Royal Commission and is therefore issue and event specific, with a limited lifespan.

# Our mission and values

Our mission is to help each person who comes to us to:

- understand the powers and procedures of the Royal Commission;
- understand the legal issues and legal options relevant to him or her;
- feel supported in making an informed decision about interacting with the Royal Commission; and
- be enabled to tell their story or provide information to the Royal Commission if they choose to do so.

Through this work, it is our goal to help prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in institutions in the future.

## Trauma-informed principles

We are guided in all aspects of our work by the five foundational principles of trauma informed practice. They are:

- Safety (including cultural safety)
- Trustworthiness
- Collaboration
- Choice
- Empowerment

The trauma-informed principles complement and expand on **knowmore's** core organisational values:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Courage

**knowmore** is guided by the values of NACLC and the Community Legal Centres sector.

---

**Trauma-informed services 'are informed about and sensitive to, trauma-related issues.' They do not directly treat trauma or the range of symptoms with which its different manifestations are associated. The possibility of trauma in the lives of all clients... is a central organising principle of trauma-informed care, practice and service provision. This is irrespective of the service provided, and of whether experience of trauma is known to exist in individual instances.**

Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery. Adults Surviving Child Abuse, p. 88

---



# A message from our board

A critical and long overdue movement is taking place. Right across Australia, real stories, for so long ignored, hidden or actively suppressed are being heard. Heard by esteemed Royal Commissioners in public hearings or confidential private sessions. Heard and shared by the mainstream media – often introduced with warnings that, “This story contains details listeners may find disturbing”. Heard in family, community and even in the institutions that for so long guarded silence. A movement is underway and it is a critical and overdue movement for change.

It is a movement for justice, but for so many victims or survivors justice will not be possible because being overdue simply became far too late. But the movement is calling the past to be present and accountable now. And the movement knows that much of the past is very recent or even continuing.

In the midst of that movement, that community shift, **knowmore** has become an absolutely essential and central service. While the establishment of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was imperative and rightly welcomed, it was always essential that there were a range of other mechanisms to assist people considering engaging with the Royal Commission and to ensure that its reach would be as wide and diverse as possible – particularly to reach out to include those who may be beyond usual access.

This report outlines the phenomenal work of **knowmore** in its second year. For such a thorough, broad, professional and integrated service it is astonishing to reflect it is so young in its development (although built on decades

of earlier good practice by many). NACLC, the legal and community sectors can all be rightly proud of the exceptional work of **knowmore** and its partners through this period.

As a new and innovative service model, both NACLC and the funder were keen to ensure a thorough service evaluation was established and developed through its progression. The independent evaluation has been well led by Effective Change (<http://effectivechange.com.au>). The three separate evaluation stages (to date, each with a different focus) have produced many positive findings about **knowmore's** unique service model and its recommendations are being implemented, resulting in further improvements. Through presentations at conferences and in other forums, **knowmore** is also contributing to legal assistance and other sectors by documenting and disseminating the model and the lessons learned from the work to date.

The Royal Commission has been extended for an additional two years, to allow it to complete its important

work and to afford more survivors opportunities to participate. The Royal Commission will now deliver its final report in December 2017. Consistent with the Royal Commission's extension, the Commonwealth Government has also provided additional funding for **knowmore** to operate until March 2018.

NACLC acknowledges the support of the Attorney-General, the Department, the Royal Commission and the many, many partners and support services who have worked with **knowmore**.

We have been delighted and inspired by the skills, collaboration and commitment of the **knowmore** team. In their various roles and locations, including traveling vast distances, they provide excellent understanding and assistance with clients who have experienced significant trauma. Over the last year, Warren Strange has guided the team in an exemplary manner, with highly skilled and empathetic leadership and management. NACLC thanks Warren, the Executive and all the staff for their outstanding efforts and achievements in this highly challenging and demanding work.

There is much more to be done. NACLC's **knowmore** team will stand with survivors and work together with all in that movement to carry it forward, knowing that only those who have lived those experiences can judge any success.

**Michael Smith**  
Chairperson  
NACLC

# A message from our executive team

In **knowmore's** second year of operations, we have continued to be inspired by our clients as they come forward to tell their stories. We are seeing more people disclosing childhood abuse for the first time and a marked increase in the number of people accessing our counselling support services as well as our legal services. These clients often report that they are coming forward now, after a lengthy period of observing the Royal Commission's work and progress, as they are influenced by the positive changes already resulting from the Royal Commission's work. Understandably, many of these clients have complex legal and other support needs.

Through the work of the Royal Commission, there is greater recognition and understanding now within society of what survivors have suffered: and that child safety and protection must be valued more highly than institutional interests or reputation. Through the Royal Commission's public hearings we have seen more institutions acknowledge their failures and inadequate responses.

After our first year of establishing **knowmore**, our second year has been a time of consolidation as well as increased demand for our services. In support of our efforts to provide effective and efficient services to so many vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community, our staff numbers have increased over the last

year, both in service delivery roles and operations and administrative roles, to provide more support to our client facing teams. This has helped us to operate at optimum levels over the current period, when all of the Royal Commission's programs (including private sessions, hearings, community engagement and policy work), are operating at peak levels and consequently the demands upon our service are very high.

**knowmore's** commitment to a multidisciplinary model – that combines the services of lawyers, social workers, counsellors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors to create an effective trauma-informed and culturally safe legal service – allows our focus to be on the needs of each individual client.

Our staff travel in multidisciplinary teams throughout Australia to inform as many people as possible about the Royal Commission, particularly those groups we have identified as facing barriers to their potential engagement. Our team has so far delivered or participated in more than 600 outreach activities across Australia, including in those states and territories where we do not have offices. For example, in South Australia, where we do not have an office, every major town and service centre had outreach contact with **knowmore** by the end of 2015.

In 2014/15 we have continued to build our relationships with other legal services and support agencies so that together we can provide the services and support needed by our clients. Because **knowmore** only provides advice and support related to the Royal Commission, we refer our clients to other agencies for longer term support for issues affecting their lives as a result of their abuse, including ongoing therapeutic support and practical support such as assistance with employment, homelessness and advice in relation to other legal problems.



While **knowmore's** primary focus is on direct service delivery, one of our important objectives is to inform systemic change. To this end, we have provided submissions responding to the Royal Commission's Issues Papers, and other discussion papers released by state governments, and participated in policy hearings and roundtable discussions convened by the Royal Commission. Our work in this area gives voice to our clients by drawing on their reported experiences and making recommendations to bring about the changes they would like to see to better protect children in the future, and to obtain justice for their own experiences of child sexual abuse. As an independent legal service assisting clients from all around Australia, who have experienced abuse and institutional responses in a diverse range of environments, our service is uniquely placed to provide insights into the legal, policy and procedural changes that are necessary.

Recently the Royal Commission released its final report on redress and civil litigation reforms and recommended the creation of a national redress scheme for victims of institutional child sexual abuse. **knowmore** supports this central recommendation, having repeatedly raised in our own submissions the need for the establishment of a just and effective national redress scheme as the best option for ensuring justice for survivors.

Most of those who suffered institutional child sexual abuse have not yet received justice, nor the ongoing support they need to address the impact of complex trauma on their lives. Many survivors are now in their old age; many tell us they feel they have little time left to see significant changes implemented that will deliver any real benefits for them.

As we said in evidence at the Royal Commission's public hearing in March 2015 on redress and civil litigation reforms, we realise that while establishing a national redress scheme will be complex and time consuming, that is not an unusual position facing governments and policy makers, and we urge that work continues towards finding the solution that best delivers the outcome that survivors need.

**knowmore** could not have achieved all it has over the past two years without the enormous efforts of all of our staff, who consistently demonstrate extraordinary commitment to making a difference to our clients, and to the support of their colleagues. We thank them for their dedication, skill and compassion.

**Warren Strange**  
Executive Officer

**Prue Gregory**  
Principal Lawyer

**Victor Lee**  
General Manager (Operations)

**Sarah Price**  
General Manager  
(Compliance and Reporting)

---

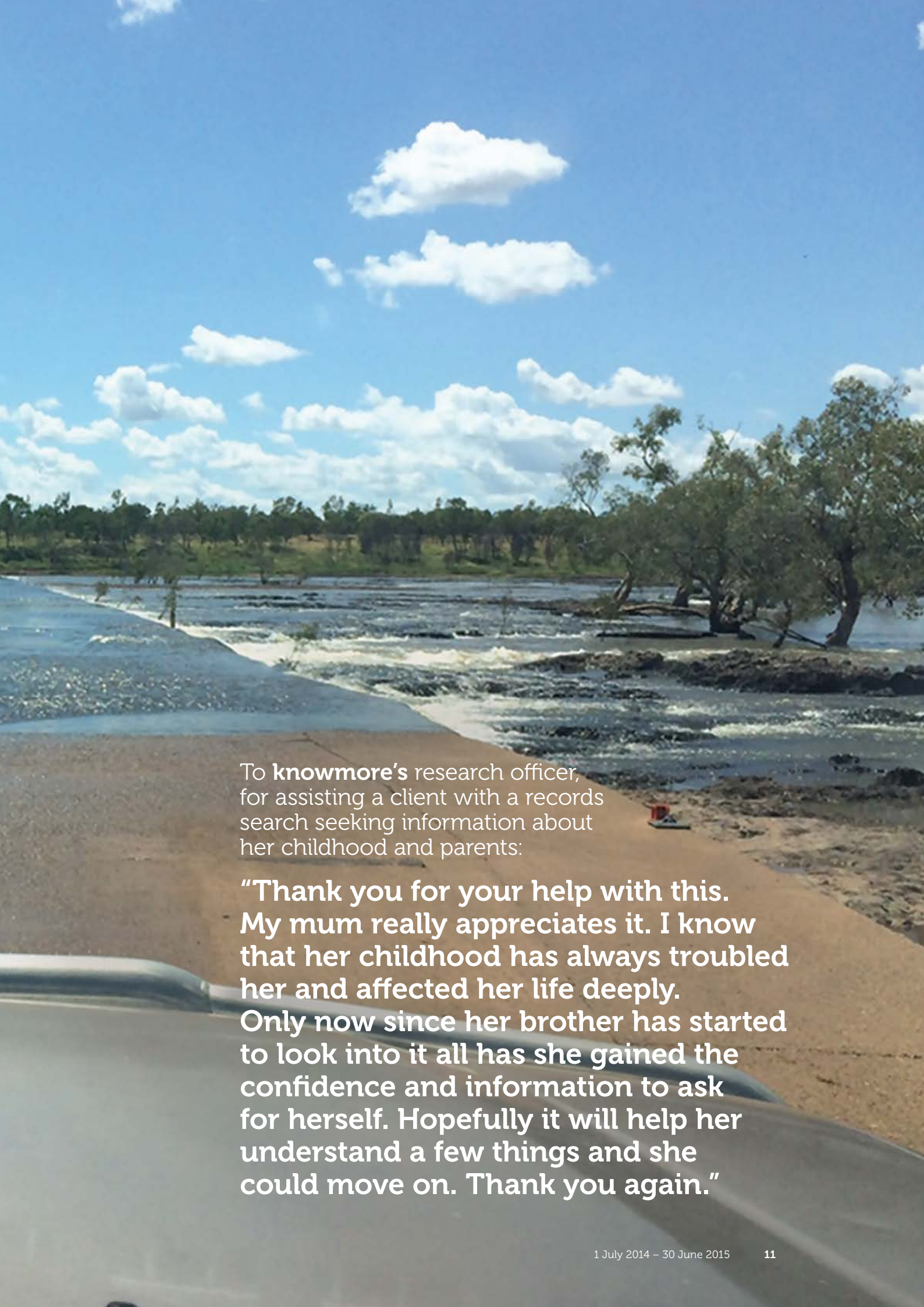
**"Thank you for your caring empathetic and professional (in that order) dealing with me today. I am very appreciative of how I have been looked after."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

---





A scenic view of a river with rapids, a sandy bank, and a blue sky with white clouds. The river flows from the left towards the right, with white water rapids visible. A sandy bank is in the foreground, and a line of trees is on the opposite bank. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds.

To **knowmore's** research officer,  
for assisting a client with a records  
search seeking information about  
her childhood and parents:

**"Thank you for your help with this.  
My mum really appreciates it. I know  
that her childhood has always troubled  
her and affected her life deeply.  
Only now since her brother has started  
to look into it all has she gained the  
confidence and information to ask  
for herself. Hopefully it will help her  
understand a few things and she  
could move on. Thank you again."**



# Our clients

In the two years since **knowmore** began providing services, through to 30 June 2015, more than 3200 unique clients have received legal advice, information and referral assistance and client demand continues to increase. Over 11,000 advices have been provided during this period via our telephone, face-to-face and outreach activities. Our clients are primarily survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse but we also assist other people engaging with the Royal Commission such as past and present employees of institutions who wish to disclose information, and people who have been summoned to appear as witnesses before Royal Commission hearings.

Most clients first contact **knowmore** by telephone. Callers to our 1800 free advice line initially speak with a lawyer who assesses their service needs and may also arrange contact with one of **knowmore's** counsellors or social workers, and/or a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory team.

Other clients come to **knowmore** following information or a contact made at a community outreach activity; or they may be referred to us directly by other agencies, including the Royal Commission.

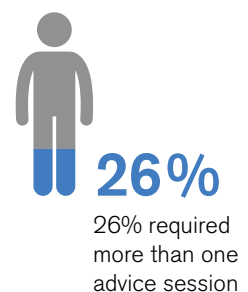
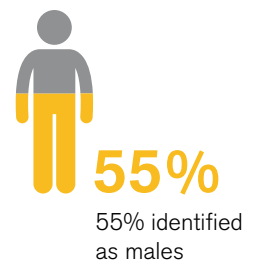
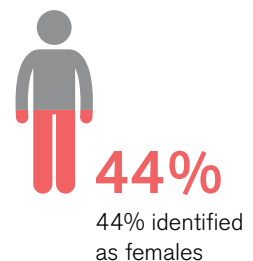
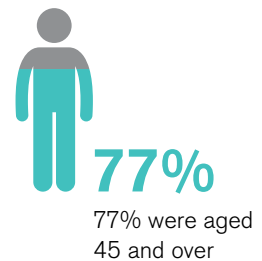
We recognise how difficult it can be for a person to share their story with us, which is why our staff are trained in trauma-informed practice. We also recognise that many have had adverse experiences with the legal system and lawyers in the past, and understandably may have a profound distrust of institutions. This recognition underpins our holistic service model.

## Priority groups

**knowmore** has developed a number of specific engagement strategies directed towards client groups, in line with the Royal Commission's priorities, who may otherwise experience barriers in engaging with the Royal Commission, and/or who are most in need of support in coming forward to tell of their experience. They are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Prisoners and those in juvenile justice detention
- People with disabilities
- Young people
- Immigration centre detainees
- People with mental illness
- Homeless people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

## Our clients





## Engagement strategies

Our engagement strategies guide our allocation of resources, and include the following general aims to support reaching as many people as possible who may wish to engage with the Royal Commission:

- to leverage our existing networks with each sector in each of the states and territories, recognising that some of these client groups are well-supported by other legal and service providers, and some are not;
- to identify the key organisations in each sector and formulate plans to establish new or to enhance existing partnerships and referral protocols;
- to customise our promotional material, factsheets and other resources to engage and address common items that are unique to each client group; and
- to update our infrastructure and provide additional training to our staff in order to increase the quality of our services for these client groups (e.g. deafness awareness training will enable our staff to better communicate with clients who are hearing impaired).

The Royal Commission's prison engagement strategy is now developing significant momentum across prisons in New South Wales and Victoria.

**knowmore** is partnering with the Royal Commission to present information and induction sessions for prison staff, followed by the holding of private sessions for prisoners. The Royal Commission's Community Engagement team has provided several instances of positive feedback acknowledging the valuable assistance **knowmore** staff have provided to prisoners.

**knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors have played key roles in ensuring Indigenous prisoners have sufficient information and trust to make informed decisions around engaging with the Royal Commission.

## Referral pathways

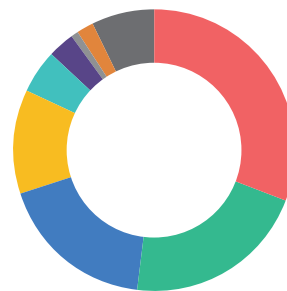
In our second year, we have continued to build and enhance our referral pathways not just for incoming clients but for those needing support in the long-term after leaving our core services.

Many clients require multiple contacts, often over some months. Many have complex legal needs and are also experiencing other legal and social problems. These needs often reflect the multiple and ongoing impacts of child sexual abuse. This trauma can affect relationships, physical and mental health, education, employment and other aspects of a survivor's life.

**"You got it, you really got the issues."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

## Calls came from

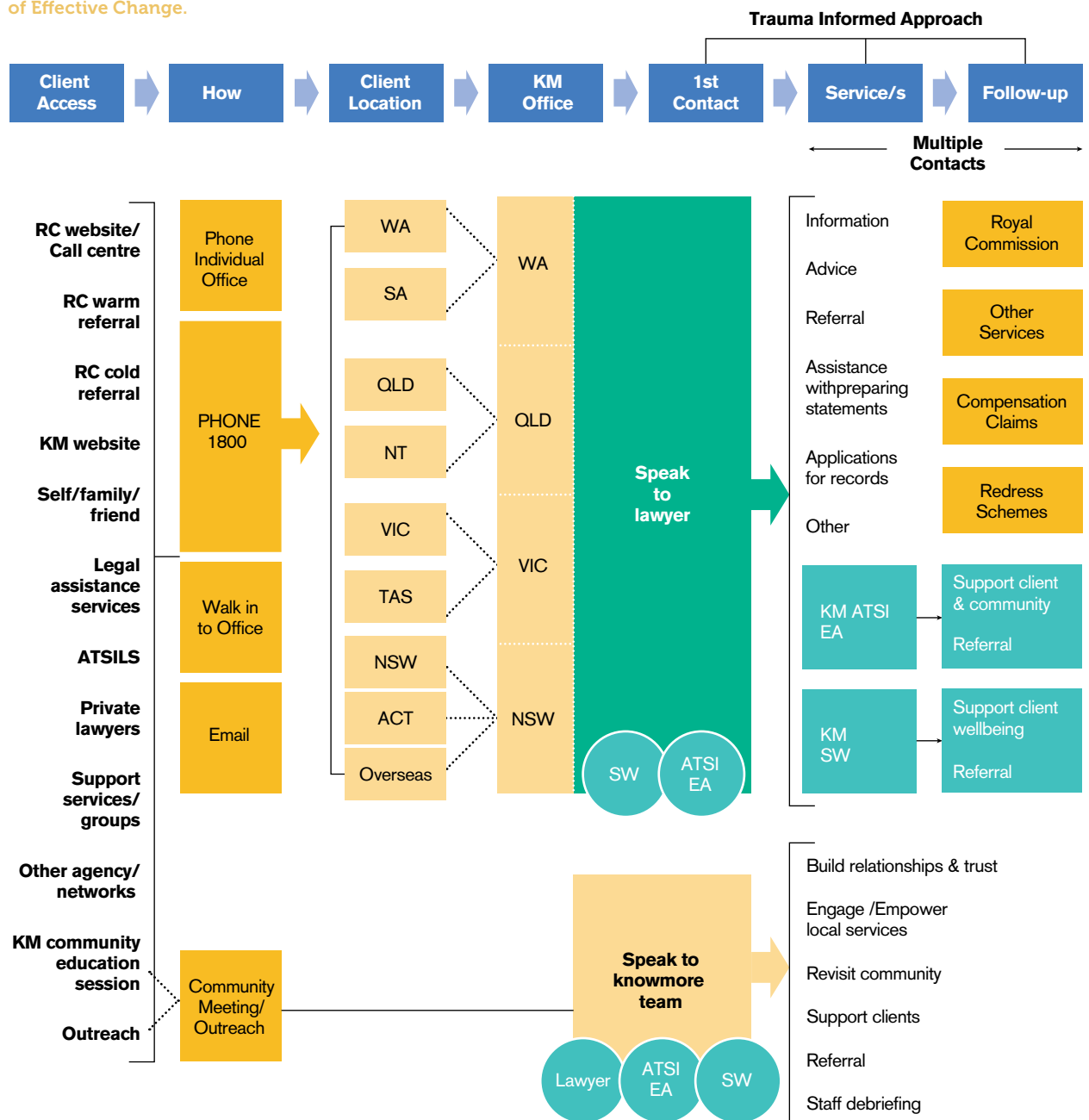


NSW	31%
QLD	21%
VIC	18%
WA	12%
SA	5%
TAS	3%
ACT	1%
NT	2%
Unspecified/Overseas	7%

# Our clients

**Figure 1. Pathways into knowmore.**

Reproduced with the permission  
of Effective Change.



KM – knowmore

ATSILS – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

SW – Social Worker

RC – Royal Commission

EA – Engagement Advisor

# knowmore supports an independent, national redress scheme

**knowmore** supports the establishment of a national, independent redress scheme for survivors of institutional abuse funded by relevant institutions and Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. Given the barriers that exist in accessing compensation through the court system, which in many cases entirely defeat potential claims, it is vital that survivors of childhood institutional sexual abuse have an alternate way to access compensation and support in recognition of that individual's experience.

**knowmore's** support for a national redress scheme recognises what has been a community-wide failure to protect children from institutional sexual abuse and as such, Australia's shared responsibility for the suffering experienced by survivors. In our experience, survivors wish to access a redress process, as an alternative to civil litigation, for many reasons. Obviously many clients wish to utilise a process to obtain an element of

financial compensation for the abuse that occurred, but many also wish to seek various non-financial and/or therapeutic outcomes. An appropriately designed redress scheme will ensure survivors will be able to have the abuse that has been perpetrated against them acknowledged in a therapeutic and supportive way. Importantly, an effective redress scheme will also ensure institutional accountability for that abuse and its impacts upon the survivor.

## Case study

James\*, a pensioner, came to our service for assistance to register with the Royal Commission to tell his story and for advice about compensation. James had been placed in a children's home at the age of eight. While James was at this home he attended the local church, where he was sexually abused by a minister and by some church volunteers. James kept running away from the home and because of this 'naughty' behaviour, was moved to another home. Here James was sexually abused again.

When James came to see **knowmore**, he was living in very difficult circumstances in public housing. He was very unhappy. While no amount of money could

make up for the devastating impact of the abuse, obtaining redress might help him change his circumstances.

After receiving assistance from **knowmore**, James was able to pursue two claims for redress, one against the church and one against the home. James was successful in both claims. The financial compensation James received was sufficient for him to purchase a unit in a retirement complex and to buy new furniture and white goods. James has now become part of his local community, working in the men's shed. The receipt of redress has made an enormous difference to James' life and well-being.

*Some survivor advocacy and support groups were opposed to interim arrangements [for redress for survivors] or raised a number of reservations about their likely success, particularly on their ability to overcome the difficulties with institutions themselves administering redress...*

**knowmore** submitted:

**" ... on the basis of our experience working with clients, we strongly agree with the observation made in the consultation paper that options for non-government institutions to adopt effective and co-operative approaches to redress, in the absence of government leadership and participation, appear limited. In this context, we would note that despite the proceedings of the Royal Commission over the last two years, **knowmore** continues to see significant inconsistencies within branches of the same institution (such as across dioceses, orders or territories) as to how redress issues are approached."**

From the Royal Commission's Redress and Civil Litigation Report at p 402 – 403.

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy



# Our legal service

Throughout 2014/15 **knowmore's** lawyers continued to provide frontline services by answering calls to our free national advice line, and undertaking face-to-face consultations and outreach activities. Our staff provide independent information and advice about the powers and procedures of the Royal Commission; explain the legal issues and options available to each person; and support people in making an informed decision about whether or how to participate.

**knowmore** does not represent clients before hearings of the Royal Commission, or in relation to taking legal action for compensation, such as civil claims for damages or claims under institutional redress schemes. For clients with these legal needs, **knowmore** provides referral services to an experienced lawyer. For these purposes, **knowmore** has established two panels of lawyers; one for compensation and one for legal representation. Panel members are experienced lawyers who are understanding of the needs of our client group and who are experienced in the legal work required.

As part of the referral, **knowmore's** lawyers will assist vulnerable clients, to help reduce the time the claim may take to pursue and the ultimate legal costs for the client. For example, for referral to one of our compensation panel members to pursue a possible redress claim, **knowmore** lawyers may support that referral and the client by gathering together as much relevant documentation as possible. This includes documents such as birth certificates; educational or institutional records; police statements; health records; details of any previous compensation received by the client and any other corroborating records.

**knowmore** also assists people summoned to appear at hearings of the Royal Commission, or asked to attend interviews with Commission staff, to source legal representation from our panel lawyers.

**knowmore** provides a 'duty lawyer' style of service for the initial days of each of the Royal Commission's public hearings, so that any witness or other interested party can seek legal assistance if needed, as the hearing unfolds. This work provides support for people involved in the Commission's hearings and ensures that those who want legal advice and assistance can access our services and obtain support in a timely way.

Our lawyers work closely with community and support organisations to provide advice and disseminate information about engaging with the Royal Commission. This includes regular free legal advice clinics at some service locations, such as Wattle Place in Sydney and Lotus Place in Brisbane, presentations at community events, attending community forums organised by the Royal Commission and attending prisons with the Royal Commission to provide information to prison staff and prisoners – frequently in regional Australia.

**knowmore's** lawyers are experienced in working with people who have complex needs including people with disabilities and/or mental illness. Our staff are trained in trauma-informed practice and all share a commitment to delivering multidisciplinary support at the same time as providing practical legal advice and information.

---

**"The lawyer was very clear and considerate and I understood the legal advice and the next steps."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

---



Lawyers from all firms on **knowmore's** civil/compensation referral panel attended a 2.5 hour session with **knowmore's** legal team at an all staff training event held in Sydney on 20 and 21 April 2015. There were 19 lawyers present representing the 12 law firms then on the panel. The session was extremely well-received, judging from feedback from panel members and **knowmore** staff. The lawyers took the opportunity to meet separately after lunch to discuss matters of mutual interest. This gathering was effectively the first opportunity for these firms to all meet and exchange practice information. A group email has been set up by **knowmore** to disseminate topical information about matters of interest to the group, such as developments about the responses of particular institutions.

---

**"One of our clients gave evidence yesterday, using a pseudonym. Some of the knowmore staff who watched her give evidence said she was amazingly strong. (knowmore lawyer) has worked extensively with this client to obtain her records, prepare her statement and to arrange her legal representation. Our client has advised that in giving evidence (knowmore lawyer) was 'her inspiration'."**

Feedback from a support agency.

---

### Duty lawyer scheme at the Royal Commission

Senior lawyers in each office have been leading the **knowmore** duty lawyer scheme, which operates at each of the public hearings of the Royal Commission. The main role of the lawyer leading the duty lawyer scheme is to link witnesses wanting legal representation before the Royal Commission with a lawyer to represent them at the hearings. Often it is necessary to find legal representatives at the last minute. For example a witness may strongly believe they do not need legal representation until the actual day of the hearing when they realise they need that extra support. In those circumstances the **knowmore** lawyers arrange a lawyer as quickly as possible.

The duty lawyer scheme relies on strong working relationships with the Royal Commission staff working on the public hearing; that is, the person leading the legal team and the person

leading the counselling team for that hearing. Referrals of witnesses often come from the Royal Commission's legal and counselling teams.

Apart from linking witnesses with lawyers, the duty lawyer also ensures that people who have attended to watch the hearing can talk to the **knowmore** lawyer if they have any legal issues or questions.

Finally at some of the public hearings, the duty lawyer has been asked by Royal Commission staff to address survivors at the end of the hearing. This happened at the end of three public hearings into private schools. For various reasons these groups of survivors had not been well-connected with existing support services and had little information about legal issues or support services. This has led to **knowmore** providing ongoing assistance to these groups and individuals.

# Our support services

**knowmore's** support team of social workers and counsellors has extensive experience in working with complex trauma, including working with survivors of child sexual abuse. We have staff in each of the four offices who work closely with the lawyers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors as part of the **knowmore** person-centered, trauma-informed, culturally secure multidisciplinary service delivery.

The support services team exists to provide support to our clients so they can give instructions to, and understand the advice they receive from, their lawyer. This can take a variety of forms, including supporting them to navigate their engagement with **knowmore** and the broader Royal Commission process should they wish to do so. The support team also provides information and support to other members of the multidisciplinary team, including the lawyers, about the best ways to work to reduce distress for clients, and act as an internal resource for **knowmore** to support staff wellbeing, and reduce the risk of the impacts of our work, such as vicarious trauma.

In the last year there has been an increase in the number of survivors who are contacting **knowmore** to make a first disclosure about their historical experience of institutional child sexual abuse. Understandably, many of these clients have complex legal and other support needs and talking about their experiences of abuse can be very triggering for them. The support team's role is to provide 'time and place' assistance to people to help alleviate their emotional distress when working with **knowmore**, including crisis or short term counselling where required.

The support services team also looks to help people navigate the broader service system. Many clients have multiple needs and can find engaging with multiple support services difficult. They may also struggle with keeping supports in place. The support services team works to reduce these barriers for people so that they can better access ongoing support from victim and survivor services.

In 2014/15 approximately 39% of client activities involved support from social workers/counsellors and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors in the course of providing legal advice, information and referral services. This figure is a significant increase on the first year (18%), and reflects increased emphasis on members of **knowmore's** support team engaging with clients to provide assistance and to ensure safe service delivery. This strategy has led to improved overall support for our clients.

The support services team has co-presented **knowmore's** multidisciplinary model at conferences, including at a workshop about the **knowmore** service model at the 14th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect (ACCAN 2015). **knowmore** also presented at the 15th International Symposium of the World Society of Victimology about responses to child sexual assault.

Roles of staff in the team include:

- short-term/crisis counselling, defusing/debriefing
- information and supported referral
- advocacy and support to assist people to navigate the service system and find the right ongoing and/or specialised help
- support to attend private sessions
- co-working with lawyers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors
- co-outreach with lawyers including to regional, rural and remote communities, home visits and Community Legal Education sessions
- case consultation and discipline-specific practice/content support
- informal support/debriefing for our team as required



Social worker Michael Martin.



**"Whatever the outcome words can't say enough for what you have done."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

## Counselling/ social work

**All clients** have access to social work/counselling assistance in addition to legal assistance

**1262 clients** received social work/counselling support either directly or through case consultation



**887 clients** have been referred to other support services from **knowmore**

### Case study

Alison\* had been in foster care as a child and had lived with nine families in ten years.

At age eight, she was placed with a physically violent foster mother and was sexually abused by her foster father.

Alison had disclosed the sexual abuse in a private session with the Royal Commission and was referred to **knowmore** afterwards for legal advice and information on support services.

Alison had been diagnosed with complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the symptoms had led to her recent medical retirement from work.

At **knowmore**, Alison initially spoke with a lawyer who gave her legal advice related to her experiences in care. With Alison's consent, the lawyer made an official records request and made a warm referral to a private lawyer who could follow-up her claim for compensation.

The lawyer also encouraged Alison to speak to a **knowmore** counsellor about possible support services, particularly as she had recently relocated.

Alison agreed and a **knowmore** counsellor contacted her about her support needs.

Alison asked for assistance in accessing local counselling support and gave permission for a referral to be made to a clinical psychologist at a victim support service.

The **knowmore** counsellor then organised for Alison to travel to the appointments with the help of a local community transport service until she felt well enough to drive herself.

Together, Alison and the **knowmore** counsellor identified a group support service similar to the one she had attended before moving; and they located a nearby female GP who specialised in women's mental health issues.

Alison has now attended six sessions with her clinical psychologist and is engaging well with the service.

Alison has participated in several group support sessions that have relieved her sense of social isolation in a new place and she intends to keep going.

The new GP has also worked out well, with Alison attending her regular appointments and noticing a number of improvements to her health.

\* Names have been changed to protect privacy

# Our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement

By the end of June 2015, 18% of **knowmore's** clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This is a significant proportion of our client group, and owes much to the invaluable contributions made to our work by **knowmore's** five experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors.

Australia's Indigenous children have been over-represented among those placed in the care of institutions. The social, cultural and economic forces that created the Stolen Generations have since evolved into continuing high rates of child removal by child protection authorities, and the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in juvenile detention and prison populations.

This has made Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, past and present, a key focus of the Royal Commission and for the services provided by **knowmore**.

By working intensively with our staff and clients, **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors help us deliver culturally safe practices and establish culturally appropriate networks across other legal and support services. **knowmore** has worked closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support and legal services to ensure that its services are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are recognised as a particularly vulnerable group of clients and who **knowmore** has identified as often facing barriers in engaging with the Royal Commission.



Glendra Stubbs, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander team

**"I was amazed at how easy the session was and how very respectful and kind the lawyer and the Aboriginal engagement advisor were with me. They made everything very easy to understand and I was really impressed by how they handled everything, in spite of having a very long day, with a long drive still ahead."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

## Specialist staff for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

**knowmore** has a strong commitment to providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients



**18% of our clients** identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent



We employ 5 experienced male and female Aboriginal engagement advisors and an Aboriginal lawyer



We also work closely with interpreters and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to ensure that we are engaging respectfully and appropriately with people

In 2014/15 **knowmore** developed specific Indigenous engagement strategies for each state and territory to ensure a structured and coordinated approach to engaging with priority communities and regions. We recognise a number of potential barriers to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. People who don't speak English as their first language, or whose literacy skills exclude the use of written materials, are likely to encounter difficulties with understanding our service and the Royal Commission. Phone and internet access issues for people in remote communities, cultural differences between local communities, and the understandable historical context of distrust towards institutions can all impact on how we seek to engage with some Indigenous clients and communities.

**knowmore's** engagement advisors work closely and effectively with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

clients, and with stakeholder agencies and communities. Additionally, our engagement advisors have played an integral role in formulating an active outreach and culturally appropriate approach that emphasises community choice and personal, face-to-face engagement.

In engaging with communities, our team understands the importance of engaging with local leaders and respecting protocols. More than one visit is usually required to establish trust so relationships are built up over time and with careful attention to providing a safe environment in which survivors may choose to take initial steps towards coming forward. Respectful exit plans are considered well in advance and include empowering local people and services with long-term strategies for assisting survivors with the challenge of healing.

This approach takes time and is resource intensive. But through the guidance of **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement team, and the collaborative networks they have established with the Royal Commission's community engagement team and other agencies like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS), there has been significant progress in providing Indigenous clients with the information they need to make decisions.

In 2014/15 **knowmore's** community outreach and liaison work included meetings with Stolen Generations groups and many Aboriginal agencies likely to be a source of referral of clients to **knowmore**. This work has contributed to a database established by **knowmore** of more than 700 individual workers who are engaged in Indigenous client service provision.



Dean Bell

---

**"You can't just go into a community and expect things to work. You have to visit over and over again. Then when they trust you, they'll let you know."**

Dean Bell, Team Leader, **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement team.

---

# Our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement

**knowmore** has attended community events held in each state and territory and in many remote and regional locations, where **knowmore** staff have met with clients and distributed information materials.

Significant outreach has been conducted in regional and remote locations, including the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory; various locations in Central, North and Far North Queensland; and regional areas of Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia (the latter including visits to the Pilbara and Kimberley regions).

Other notable examples of co-operative community engagement to deliver services to Indigenous clients included **knowmore** attending outreach:

- with the Queensland ATSILS worker to support a cluster of clients at a community in Far North Queensland;
- with the Royal Commission and other agencies at follow-up events for a group of survivors from another Queensland community; and
- in Alice Springs to work with the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service to provide information sessions to staff and services to clients.

## Case study

Alf\* had already met **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisor several times before disclosing his experiences of sexual abuse as a child.

Born to an Aboriginal mother and a non-Aboriginal father, Alf was five years of age when he was removed from his mother's family following the death of his father.

He was placed in the care of a nearby church mission where he resided for 10 years.

At the mission, the boys dormitory had an enclosed veranda that was used as a sleep out for visitors.

The arrangement gave a priest, who made monthly visits, easy access to the dormitory and he sexually abused Alf and others for several years.

Fifty years later, Alf was working as a member of a local justice group when he first met **knowmore's** outreach team including their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisor.

On the team's third visit to his community, Alf felt he knew the advisor well enough to share his story and talk about the fears he had of something similar happening to a child in his family.

The advisor and Alf spoke with a **knowmore** lawyer who, at Alf's

request, registered him with the Royal Commission for a private session.

Having met the **knowmore** team face-to-face, Alf agreed to continue working by phone. Numerous calls were made to him as they prepared his statement ahead of the session.

At times, Alf found it difficult to talk about his past, so a **knowmore** social worker began supporting him as he worked through the pain of his memories.

The Royal Commission arranged for Alf to travel to a nearby regional centre for his private session. At his request, the social worker met him outside the meeting room and sat with him during the session.

Alf felt believed by the Commissioner and was relieved to find that others shared his concerns about protecting children in the care of authorities.

At the suggestion of the Commissioner, Alf asked **knowmore** for information about compensation and a warm referral was made to a civil lawyer.

Follow-up calls by **knowmore's** social worker indicated Alf was managing well and she arranged for him to recontact her if he needed further assistance in the future.

\* Names have been changed to protect privacy



# Informing change

**“ ... it is important that claims of systemic failures by institutions in relation to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse and any related unlawful or improper treatment of children be fully explored, and that best practice is identified so that it may be followed in the future both to protect against the occurrence of child sexual abuse and to respond appropriately when any allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse occur, including holding perpetrators to account and providing justice to victims.”**

*Terms of Reference (Letters Patent: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse).*

It is the task of the Royal Commission to uncover where systems have failed and to make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices. While much of this work relies on the information supplied by individuals and gathered through public hearings, the Royal Commission also runs comprehensive policy and research programs, often calling for submissions from interested parties, responding to 'Issues Papers' on specific topics.

To 30 June 2015, **knowmore** had responded to six Issues Papers released by the Royal Commission. These submissions related to:

- the Catholic Church's *Towards Healing* procedure
- preventing child sexual abuse in out of home care
- civil litigation
- redress
- statutory victims' compensation schemes, and
- experiences of police and prosecution responses.

**knowmore** has also provided submissions to:

- the Victorian Attorney-General in response to a Draft Bill to amend the Victorian *Limitation of Actions Act 1958* to exclude criminal child abuse from the operation of the limitation period under that Act;
- a review of the Queensland Victims of *Crime Assistance Act 2009*, conducted by the Queensland Department of Justice & Attorney-General; and
- the New South Wales Department of Justice, on the review of limitation periods in civil claims for child sexual abuse.

**knowmore's** submissions draw heavily on information gathered from our clients, and seek to give voice to their collective experiences and needs. Our recommendations reflect how they would like to see systems and institutions changed to prevent child sexual abuse, and how responses can be made more appropriate when it does occur.

Copies of **knowmore's** submissions can be found at <http://knowmore.org.au/resources/>

In March 2015 **knowmore's** Executive Officer Warren Strange and Sydney lawyer Kit Baigent appeared before the Royal Commission at its public hearing (Case Study 25, featuring evidence from invited key stakeholders), speaking to the submissions lodged by **knowmore** responding to the Commission's consultation papers on redress and civil litigation.



# Outreach & community engagement

By 30 June 2015, **knowmore** had conducted or participated in 688 community outreach and liaison events throughout Australia.

Our staff travel to locations in metropolitan and regional areas to talk to service providers and community members about engaging with the Royal Commission, and to provide clients with the opportunity to meet in person. Activities include information sessions with legal and support service providers; liaison with peak bodies; cooperative outreach activities conducted in association with the Royal Commission (including public forums); presentations to community groups; speaking at conferences; and one-to-one consultations with individuals. Each event is tailored to the audience and explores such topics as the Royal Commission's work, understanding **knowmore's** role and our trauma informed approach, and our referral procedures. After community forums, staff make themselves available for people wanting more information or simply wishing to debrief after the session.

The last year has seen **knowmore's** multidisciplinary teams deliver outreach services to remote, rural, regional and metropolitan centres in every state and territory.

Outreach engagement is fundamental to the work of **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team. They have met with representatives of the Stolen Generations; visited with Traditional owners and Elders on country; conducted joint sessions with staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services; and reached out to many others living and/or working across Indigenous Australia. The team strives to overcome the many language, cultural and geographical barriers to communication, in order to inform as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as possible about the work of the Royal Commission and the services **knowmore** offers.

While **knowmore** takes a proactive approach to organising outreach events, our staff have also participated in activities led by other agencies. An example is **knowmore's** liaison with the Royal Commission's prison engagement strategy team. During 2015 this collaborative approach has facilitated access to **knowmore's** services for many prisoners within New South Wales and Victorian prisons.

## Community outreach and liaison



Face to face legal services were provided to **1171 clients**



**knowmore** has conducted or participated in **688** community outreach and liaison events



**45** Royal Commission private sessions that **knowmore** staff have accompanied clients to as their support person

As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015

## Case Study

A lawyer, Aboriginal engagement advisor and social worker from our Perth team travelled to regional WA to visit regional centres and smaller more remote towns and communities.

When researching the region to plan the visit, it was felt important to visit a particular remote community. In order to facilitate an introduction to this community, we first met with one of the local Aboriginal organisations to obtain contact details for the Traditional owners and senior community members. On arrival, we met with these community leaders first, to introduce **knowmore** and explain the purpose of our visit. We also met with service providers, including office managers and clinic staff, so that information about **knowmore** and the Royal Commission was available throughout the community.

During our visit, a local community councillor thanked us for travelling out to her community, saying that

she had just seen a news report about a Royal Commission public hearing that was being held thousands of kilometres away on the other side of Australia. At the time she had thought that the Royal Commission might be relevant for members of her community, but was unsure how her community could engage. She thought that it might be particularly relevant for the older people in the community who had been placed in missions as children.

When visiting another town on this trip, we met with a client who had contacted **knowmore** after family members we had met with on a previous outreach trip provided our contact details to him.

When we met him, he said that we were the first people he had spoken to outside immediate family members. He was able to tell his story, seek legal advice and engage with the Royal Commission because he had the opportunity to meet with a lawyer face to face.



# Working in partnership

## Working with support agencies

**knowmore** works with a range of agencies that have been funded by the Australian Government to provide support to people affected by the Royal Commission's work. This includes services provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS), and the Family Violence Protection Legal Services (FVPLS). This work is collaborative and focuses on sharing service information and improving the support and referral networks available for clients.

Over the past year, **knowmore** has worked to establish and improve referral pathways with non-legal service providers funded by DSS. These arrangements enable **knowmore** to make appropriate referrals to address the ongoing counselling needs of our clients, and for the DSS funded services to refer clients to us for legal assistance. The referral arrangements are working well and **knowmore** has strong relationships with the funded agencies.

The ATSILS and **knowmore** have worked closely, including hosting (and funding) three joint staff meetings to share learnings, attending outreach events together with ATSILS staff, and providing training and information to staff about issues relating to the Royal Commission and legal issues likely to arise.

FVPLS and **knowmore** have collaboratively planned and undertaken joint outreach community engagement events in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

## Working with the Royal Commission

**knowmore** and the Royal Commission have developed a co-operative relationship by enhancing communication and efficiencies. We have streamlined our regular liaison meetings, built effective referral procedures and worked jointly on some shared community engagement initiatives. Effective referral arrangements have been embedded in each organisation's operations.

To date, around 38% of **knowmore's** clients have been referred from the Royal Commission, making it the largest single source of referrals to **knowmore**.

**knowmore** has also continued providing a duty lawyer to attend at least the initial days of each public

hearing, and often for the entirety of a hearing, to ensure legal advice is available to all witnesses and to meet any emerging legal needs, such as providing assistance to survivors who may have come to observe the hearing. These arrangements have resulted in the majority of survivors called as witnesses in recent public hearings having their own legal representation.

In April 2015, Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM, General Manager Pia van de Zandt and Solicitor Assisting Tony Giugni presented to **knowmore** staff, providing updates about the Royal Commission's work and answering questions from staff.

In 2015 **knowmore** staff have attended community forums organised by the Royal Commission in a variety of locations across Australia including Lismore, Warrnambool and Rockhampton.



Working with **knowmore**.





---

**"You're all incredible at what you do and make a huge difference to the experience of our clients engaging with the Royal Commission. Thank you so much for all of your hard work on behalf of our clients. Your sensitivity to their needs and flexibility in your approach provides our service users with a soft entry into the sticky legal system of compensation and redress and the daunting task of relaying their experience to the Royal Commission."**

---

Feedback from a support agency.

---

## Case Study

### FVPLS and **knowmore** Community Information Forums

This year the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Prevention Service, in collaboration with **knowmore** hosted regional Royal Commission Information sessions to Aboriginal community members and key service providers. The sessions were held in Warrnambool (Gunditjmara Country) Bairnsdale (Kurnai Country) Mildura (Latje Latje Country) and Melton (Wurundjeri Country). The forums provided participants the opportunity to receive information about family violence, options for engaging with the Royal Commission and the assistance that **knowmore's** multidisciplinary service can provide in a culturally safe and appropriate way.

The program also included Aboriginal actress Tammy Anderson performing her play, "I don't wanna play house," about her experiences of childhood sexual abuse and family violence. Tammy Anderson is a Palawa woman from Tasmania and her powerful play debuted at the Malthouse Theatre in 2001. Tammy's courage in sharing her story in such a public and emotionally engaging way resonated strongly with participants and opened up a culturally safe space for others to talk about their experiences and to receive information about legal and support options available to them. A fantastic combination of information and experience for all those who attended.

# Where to from here

**knowmore** is now well established with four capital city offices and a full complement of staff responding to high levels of client demand through the delivery of telephone, face-to-face and outreach services across Australia.

We anticipate that during 2015/16 consistently high levels of client demand will continue, as the Royal Commission continues its period of peak activity.

In this coming year we will continue to ensure the ongoing development and delivery of targeted outreach and engagement activities to client groups who may experience barriers in seeking to engage with the Royal Commission or who need high levels of support. We will keep drawing upon our clients' collective experiences to inform our submissions; to contribute where-ever possible to achieving positive systemic reforms for our clients and for children in the future.

We will maintain our trauma-informed and culturally safe principles in our approach to our work, while providing our staff with ongoing training and debriefing and support, in order to build resilience and address the impacts of the challenging work we do.

On an organisational level, **knowmore** has been guided by the recommendations made in the reports arising from the independent evaluation of our operations. The final evaluation report will be completed in early 2016. In line with the recommendations we will work to improve our systems and processes.

As we enter the next stage of **knowmore's** life, we will also begin planning to meet the demands that will be placed on our service until the end of our funded activities in March 2018.

Most importantly, **knowmore** will continue to strive to assist our clients and to give a voice to those who have survived so many years of institutionalised silence and denial of the sexual abuse they have suffered.

## Feedback

From a client...

"After so many decades of 'suffering in silence' I feel so lucky that I am believed and heard, without judgment. I guess those were the issues that held me back from speaking sooner aside from my feeling of embarrassment and shame. After I spoke with you I finally got up the courage, to talk with my family about what happened to me and the impact it had on me over my life. I was ready to have this conversation after I had spoken with you."

From a service provider...

"Thank you for the responsive and flexible service you have afforded our clients – its been a pleasure working along side you."

From a client...

"You've given me more information and clarity about my matter than I've been able to get in a long time so thanks."

From a client...

"The letter and factsheets you posted to me were very much appreciated and helped me prepare for my private session because they were very practical and easy steps to follow."

---

If you or someone you know needs support around issues of child sexual abuse, please contact one of the following services:

**Adults Surviving Child Abuse**

1300 657 380

<http://www.asca.org.au>

**1800 RESPECT**

1800 737 732

<http://www.1800respect.org.au>

**Sexual Assault Counselling Australia**

1800 211 028

**Bravehearts**

1800 272 831

<http://www.bravehearts.org.au>

**Care Leavers Australia Network**

1800 008 774

<http://www.clan.org.au>

**Child Migrants Trust**

1800 040 509

<http://www.childmigrantstrust.com>

**Find and Connect**

1800 161 109

<http://www.findandconnect.gov.au>

---

## Crisis Services

**Lifeline**

13 11 14

<http://www.lifeline.org.au/>

**Kids Helpline**

1800 55 1800

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/>

**Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (incorporating NSW Rape Crisis Centre)**

1800 424 017

<http://www.nswrapecrisis.com.au>

**Suicide Call Back Service**

1300 659 467

<https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>

---

**Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

1800 099 340

**knowmore's free legal advice line is:**

1800 605 762

