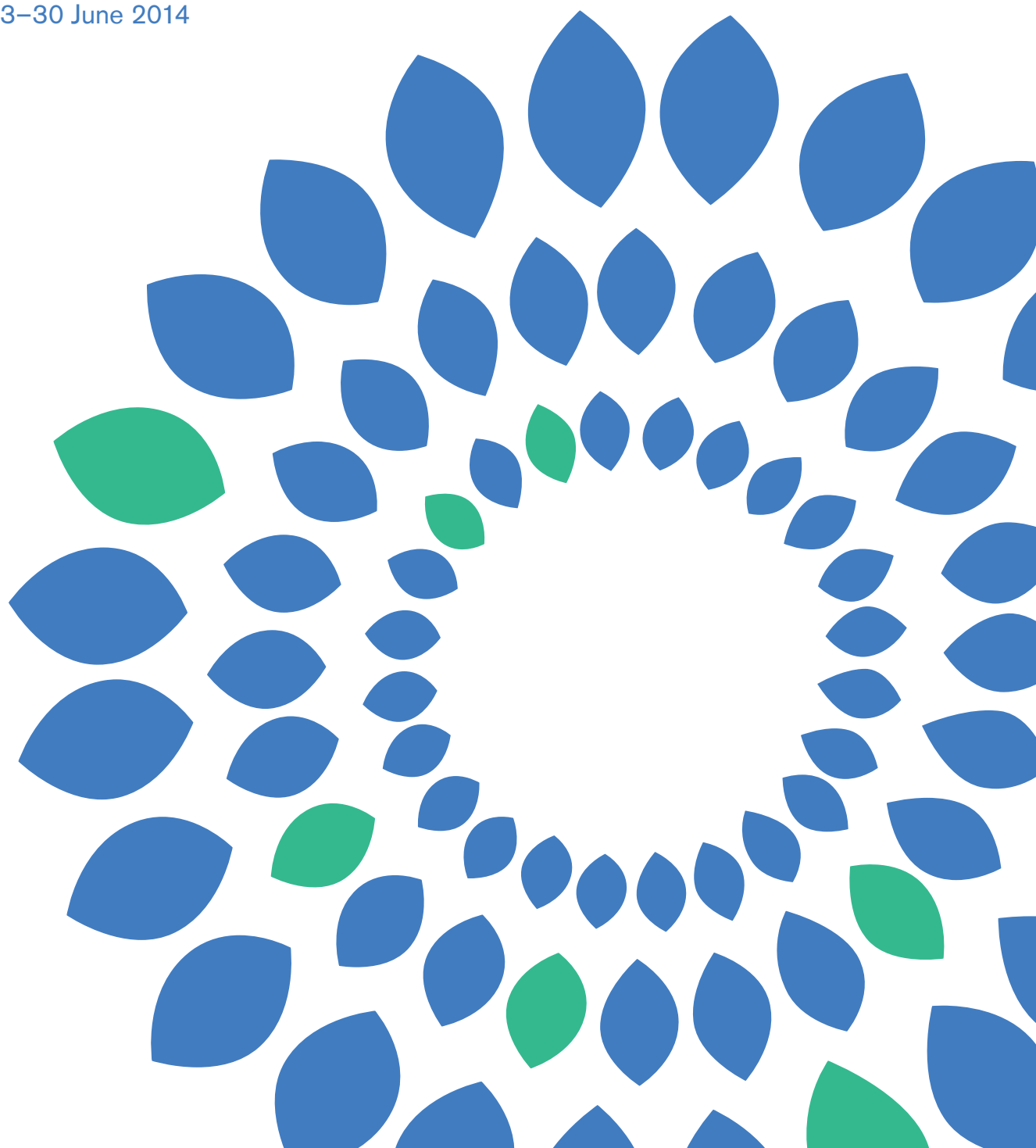




Our first 12 months

1 July 2013–30 June 2014



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, with funding from the Australian Government, represented by the Attorney-General's Department.

Our website

www.knowmore.org.au

Email

info@knowmore.org.au

Free advice line

1800 605 762

Opening Hours

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, AEST

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

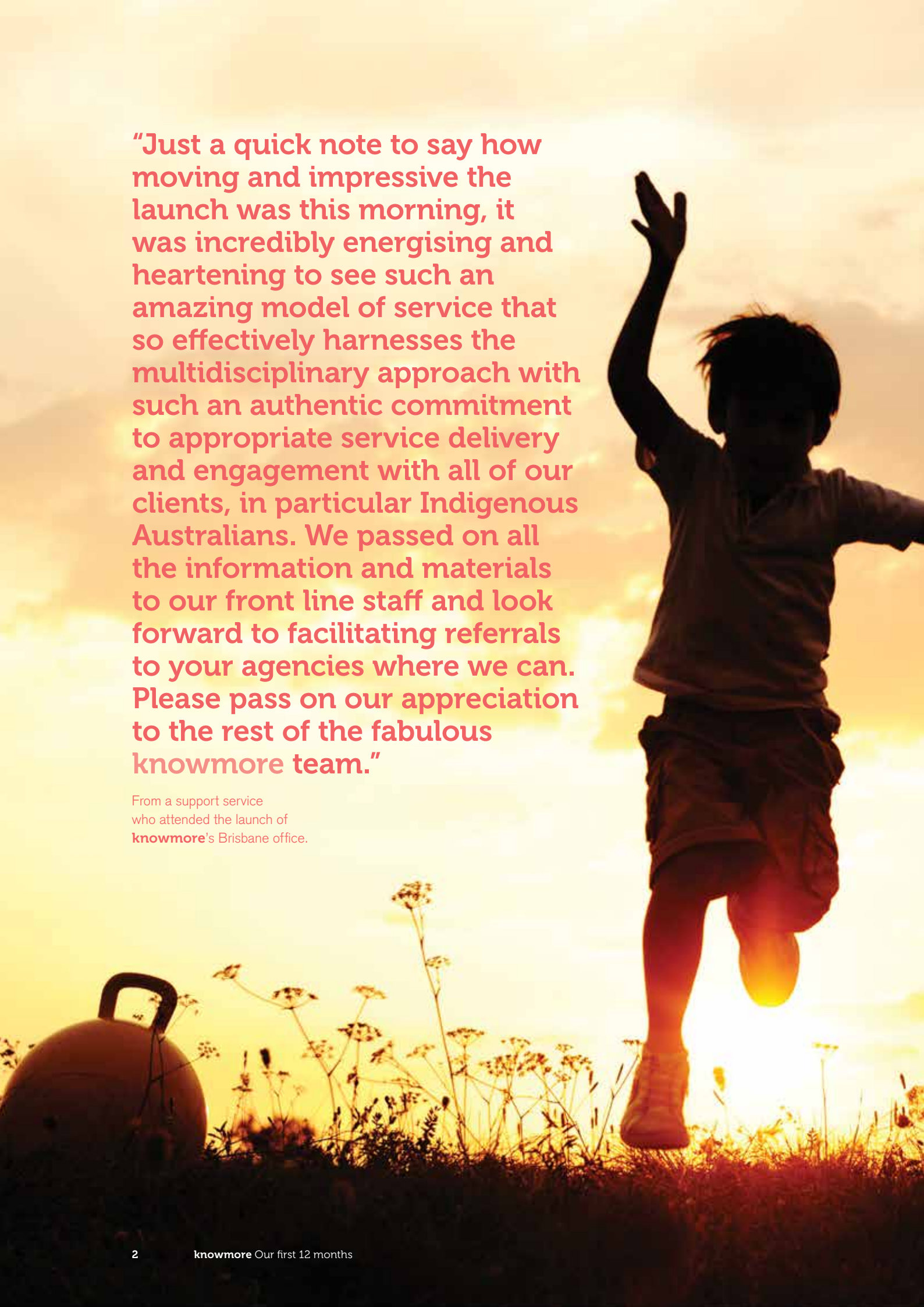
PO Box 20319,
World Square NSW 2002

T 02 8267 7400
F 02 8267 7490

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"Just a quick note to say how moving and impressive the launch was this morning, it was incredibly energising and heartening to see such an amazing model of service that so effectively harnesses the multidisciplinary approach with such an authentic commitment to appropriate service delivery and engagement with all of our clients, in particular Indigenous Australians. We passed on all the information and materials to our front line staff and look forward to facilitating referrals to your agencies where we can. Please pass on our appreciation to the rest of the fabulous knowmore team."

From a support service
who attended the launch of
knowmore's Brisbane office.



Who we are

In March 2013, the Attorney General's Department entered into a service agreement with the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) for the establishment of an independent, national legal service to provide free legal advice and assistance, information and referral services, via an advice line and face-to-face services in key locations, for people considering telling their story or providing information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This step was the beginning of what would become the **knowmore** legal service.

NACLC recruited **knowmore**'s first Executive Officer, Jenny Hardy, in April 2013 and together they managed the recruitment of our original team of lawyers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors, counsellors/social workers, finance

and administrative staff. After establishing premises in Castlereagh Street, Sydney, **knowmore** commenced operations on 8 July 2013 when our free national telephone advice line went 'live'. Further offices were established and opened in Brisbane

and Melbourne in March, and Perth in July 2014. **knowmore** gratefully acknowledges the valuable assistance of Clayton Utz, who generously provided pro bono legal assistance in respect of the leases for our Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth offices.

knowmore's staffing complement is now 41 people. **knowmore** is led by an Executive Officer, who together with the Principal Lawyer and General Manager form our Executive team. They are responsible for **knowmore**'s practice operations. **knowmore** reports to and is supported by a sub-committee of the NACLC Board.

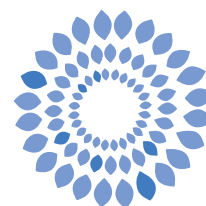
knowmore is unique on a number of levels. It is the first truly national community legal service to be established with offices in more than one state. It also uses an innovative multi-disciplinary model for providing legal advice and support to clients, bringing together lawyers, social workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors. It is issue-specific, and responds to a particular event (the Royal Commission), has a limited lifespan and represents a new service and funding model, auspiced through an existing peak body (NACLC).

knowmore also works on a collaborative basis with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and with the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services throughout Australia, as well as with a range of support agencies and advocacy groups who provide support to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse who may be engaging with the Royal Commission. We also liaise closely with the Royal Commission in undertaking many of our activities.

Our current client-facing team includes:



Team **knowmore**, June 2014



Our initial team July 2013

knowmore's lawyers, counsellors/ social workers and Aboriginal engagement advisors all have significant experience working with disadvantaged clients and those who have experienced trauma. They also have a depth of experience providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. For details of staff members, please visit the following link to our website: http://knowmore.org.au/about/our_people/

Our clients are primarily survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, but we assist any person engaging or considering engaging with the Royal Commission, including people who have been summoned to appear as witnesses before the Royal Commission. In delivering all of our services we are committed to trauma-informed practice. Examples of the types of assistance that **knowmore** provides include:

- 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; and
 - preparation of statements and assistance with preparing submissions about needed reforms.
- knowmore** does not provide legal representation but, if needed, will assist people giving evidence in formal hearings before the Royal Commission in finding suitable lawyers for representation and in obtaining funding for that representation through a financial assistance scheme established by the Australian Government.

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

In January 2013, the Australian Government announced the establishment of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – a large and crucial investigation responding to issues from a large cohort of survivors who have experienced major trauma and extended distress and disadvantage.

Survivors have endured many years of waiting and inaction despite strong efforts and advocacy; extended periods of being ignored or worse; and were further abused by institutional responses. The high levels of activity and action since the Royal Commission was announced have presented a stark contrast.

For NACLC and the **knowmore** team, this has certainly been evident. During the consultation phase for the Royal Commission, NACLC advocated to government regarding the terms of reference and how it should operate. NACLC strongly advocated for a range of legal and support services for survivors – indeed for the kind of service **knowmore** has become, with a multi-disciplinary approach and key staff to ensure strong engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. NACLC specifically did not seek funding for itself, but was ultimately approached by the Government and asked to assume the key role in establishing a national legal advice service.

The volume and quality of work to establish and develop **knowmore** over a short period has been truly remarkable. The achievements and successes in supporting people engaging with the Commission, reaching out to highly vulnerable communities requiring additional efforts to connect with this vital opportunity, and providing advice on systemic issues to the Commission itself are outlined in this report.

The establishment phase was led by the exceptional efforts of inaugural Executive Officer Jenny Hardy and NACLC's Executive Director, Julia Hall. As the team built, with Warren Strange and Victor Lee forming the Executive and further staff joining the team, the high levels of capability and commitment of all quickly became clear.

We particularly acknowledge the role of Jenny Hardy, Executive Officer of **knowmore** from April 2013 until October 2014. Jenny played a central and crucial role in the establishment of this ground-breaking legal service. The implementation of **knowmore** as a holistic, culturally safe, trauma informed and collaborative service was an extraordinary logistical challenge and Jenny has deservedly earned high praise for her excellent work from NACLC, clients and other stakeholders. NACLC and all of the **knowmore** staff thank Jenny for her very significant contribution and leadership during this key period.

We also thank Warren, Victor and all of the **knowmore** team for their outstanding work for their clients and communities. As you would expect, the work is acutely challenging and while the organisation has strong support systems, the determination and commitment of the whole team is never under-estimated.

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**. The time for waiting should be over and we will continue to work respectfully with survivors for the outcomes they deserve.

Michael Smith
Chairperson
NACLC

A message from our executive team



In **knowmore's** first year we have been incredibly inspired by the clients we have seen – what they have been through and how they have survived for so many years; often without ever having felt able to talk about what they went through, without ever being compensated for the abuse they suffered, or without ever receiving any form of justice. We have also been inspired by the advocates who have worked in this area for many years with unwavering commitment to see justice for their clients. It is a great privilege to be able to assist these clients and to really believe that finally they may receive some justice.

We have seen positive changes as a result of the Royal Commission already - institutions acknowledging their failures and addressing their past and inadequate responses; an increased focus by institutions on the development of child safe organisational policies and procedures; and compensation schemes for survivors being established

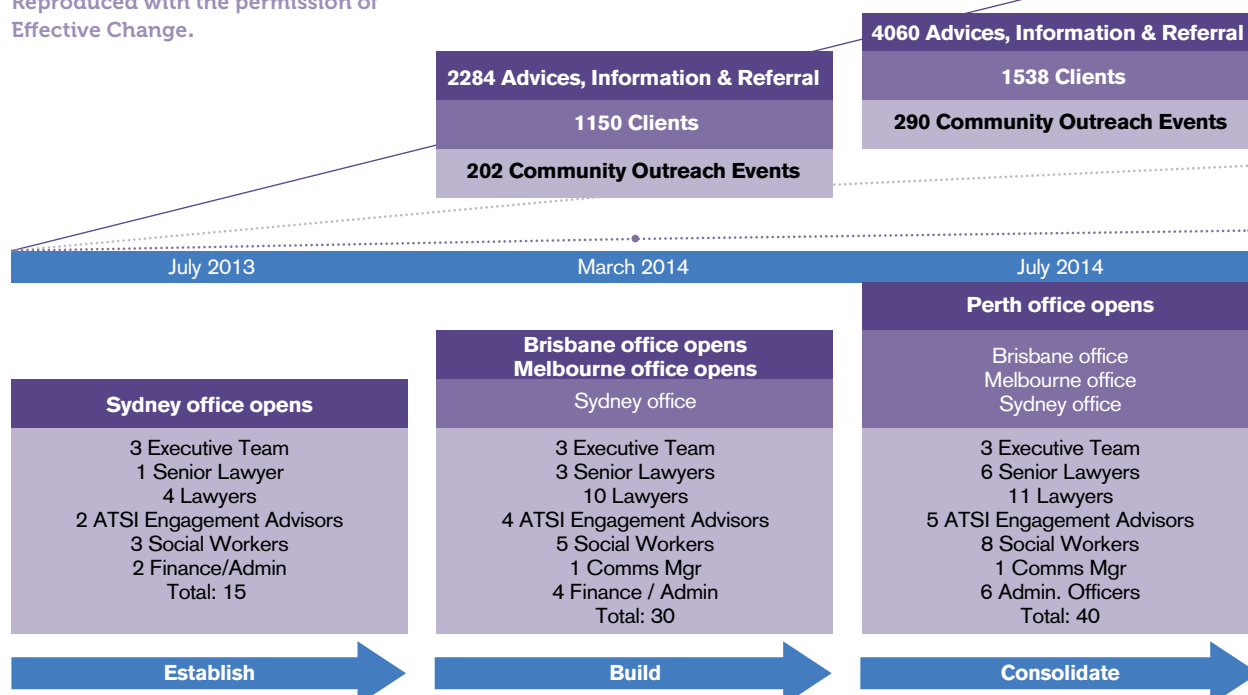
or revisited. Police and prosecution attitudes to prosecuting child sexual abuse are also changing. We have seen community recognition of the extent of the problem and much greater understanding of what survivors have suffered. It is also clear that the community is now more alert to the risks of child sexual abuse in

an institutional context and will no longer tolerate institutions operating in a way which does not prioritise the protection of children and operate in their best interests.

However, the problems are not solved. Most of those who suffered institutional child sexual abuse in an historic context have not received justice. Many are now elderly and don't have a lot of time. They also now fear they will be re-institutionalised in the last stages of their lives and many are terrified of that prospect. We all hope that the outcomes of the Royal Commission will include the establishment of a just and effective redress scheme, reforms of our civil litigation systems and the continuation of therapeutic services to assist survivors to seek to heal.

Figure 1. Timeline of knowmore's implementation.

Reproduced with the permission of Effective Change.



A message from our executive team

knowmore does not have any agendas other than to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people have the opportunity to engage with the Royal Commission, if they choose to do so, and that they have access to legal advice and counselling support to assist them to make informed choices that are right for them. We are independent of the Royal Commission and government and provide independent legal advice, assistance, information and support to allow people to understand the legal options that are open to them and to make their own informed decisions. We will provide support and legal assistance to help them in whatever decision they make.

8 July 2014 marked the first anniversary of when we opened the doors of our Sydney office and started delivering services to clients. Between our opening and 1 July 2014 we assisted nearly 1600 individual clients, with more than 3500 advices and information sessions provided. We saw over 300 clients on outreach trips. More than 250 clients received social work/counselling support and we attended 10 private sessions of the Royal Commission to support clients. We participated in more than 270 community outreach and liaison events. We established three additional offices, recruited staff for them, developed our work systems, prepared detailed submissions responding to a number of the Royal Commission's Issues



Sydney staff welcome the Perth team

Papers, produced resources for both external and internal use, and created working relationships with many partner agencies. We spent a lot of time focusing on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, in recognition of the barriers many Aboriginal people face in accessing justice, and in our first year around 16 per cent of our clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. There is more to do, but that is an impressive figure.

That is a huge body of work and we thank each of our staff for their amazing contributions. Our first year has flown by and while it seems there is always

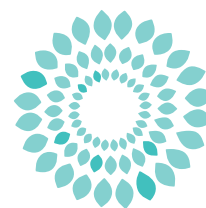
so much more to do, it is worth reflecting on what we have achieved, and the help we have been able to give to so many clients in real need of our support. This report outlines **knowmore**'s activities during our first year of operation.

Warren Strange
Acting Executive Officer

Prue Gregory
Acting Principal Lawyer

Victor Lee
General Manager

Our mission & 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

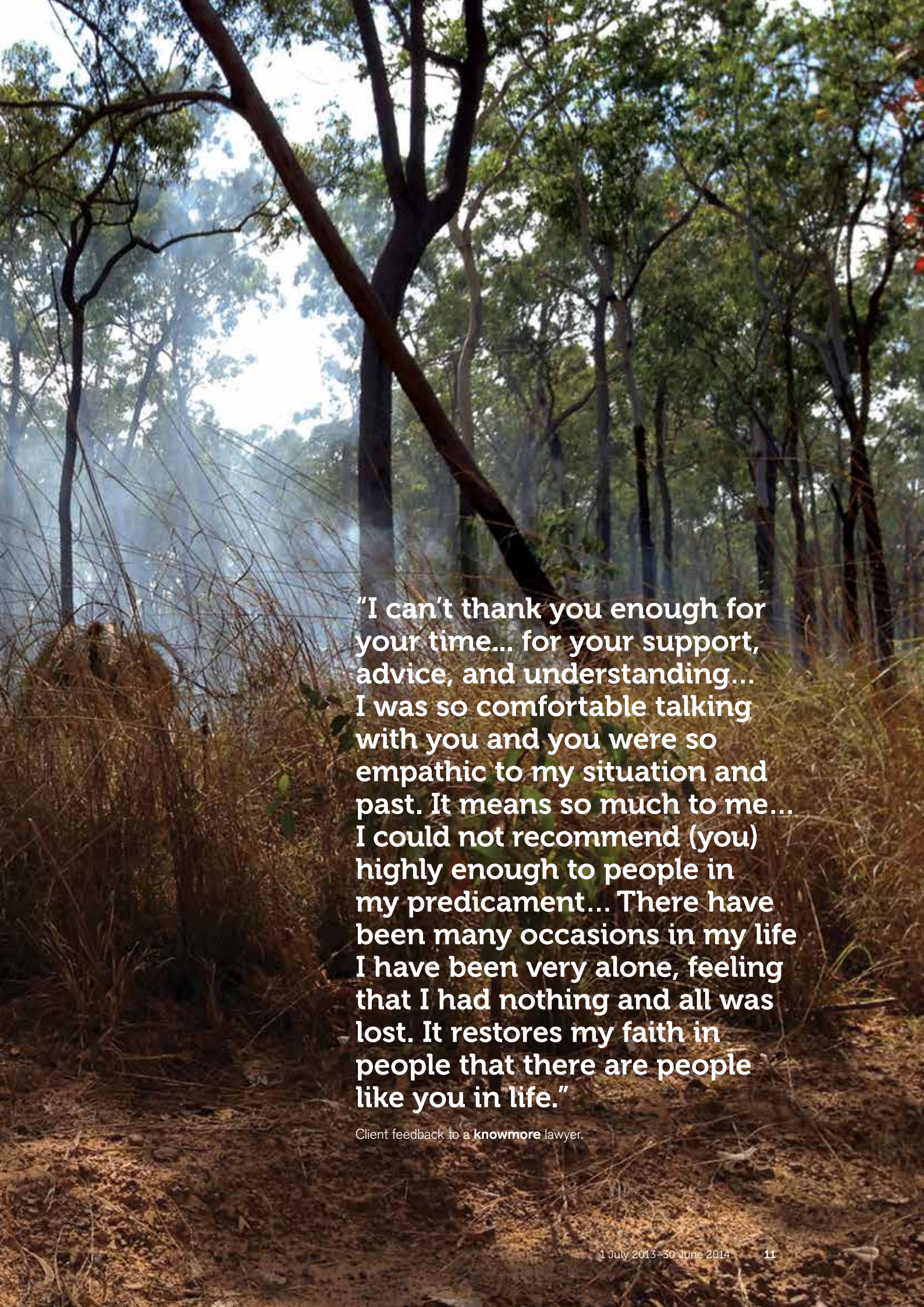
Case Study: Ms X

At the age of 52 she disclosed for the first time

Based on past Government policies of assimilation in the 1950s and '60s impacting 'half caste' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Ms X and her younger siblings were sent to reside in institutional care from the age of four years until 17 years. During Ms X's time in care, she had been the victim of severe sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Ms X was sexually abused from the age of five years and this continued at the hands of her foster parents up until the age of 13. Ms X had also experienced regular sexual interference from boys residing in care with her during her placement. She was denied any contact with her immediate and extended family, culture and community, and at the age of 17 years, during an external work experience placement, she met her now husband. Ms X saw marriage as an opportunity to leave her traumatic life of abuse at the institution. Beyond life in care, she was able to gain a level of normality, and she pursued her dream of having her own family and career. At the age of 52 Ms X disclosed for the first time to the Royal Commission her experiences of the abuse she suffered in care, and the torment she suffered in silence for many years. In sharing her story Ms X feels that there is a huge burden lifted from her conscience, and that she can now begin a process of healing. Ms X sees that she too can provide strength and support to her siblings who unfortunately also have their own stories of horrific abuse at the hands of the so called protectors of Aboriginal children. **knowmore** has assisted and guided numerous Aboriginal people to tell their stories of abuse. A very clear message from almost all victims of sexual abuse has been that they are driven to share their stories so that no other child has to suffer in silence, and that systems may encourage children to speak out and be heard.

knowmore Aboriginal Engagement Advisor





"I can't thank you enough for your time... for your support, advice, and understanding... I was so comfortable talking with you and you were so empathic to my situation and past. It means so much to me... I could not recommend (you) highly enough to people in my predicament... There have been many occasions in my life I have been very alone, feeling that I had nothing and all was lost. It restores my faith in people that there are people like you in life."

Client feedback to a **knowmore** lawyer.

Our legal service

People contact **knowmore** seeking advice and assistance on a wide range of matters relating to the Royal Commission. Figure 2 presents the most common pathways into **knowmore** and the processes followed for each enquiry type.

Some enquiries are straightforward and others complicated. Some enquiries are anonymous and in these cases only general information can be provided. Some enquiries relate to matters outside the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference; however, **knowmore**'s lawyers will still talk to the caller and endeavour to assist them with their concern through means such as offering them a referral to alternative, appropriate sources of support and advice. Clients within the Terms of Reference with complex issues are likely to have contact with **knowmore** multiple times, including face-to-face meetings if feasible and suitable for the client.

knowmore does not represent clients before hearings of the Royal Commission, or in relation to actions seeking compensation, such as civil claims for damages or claims under institutional redress schemes. However, **knowmore** has established panels of experienced lawyers, who are understanding of the needs of our client group, to refer clients to for such representation. We effect these referrals in ways that recognise the individual client's needs and situation. The level of assistance required will be affected by factors such as the client's recall of events, their level of distress, age, language spoken, literacy level, access to phone or computer, and their current level of wellbeing, emotional and physical safety.

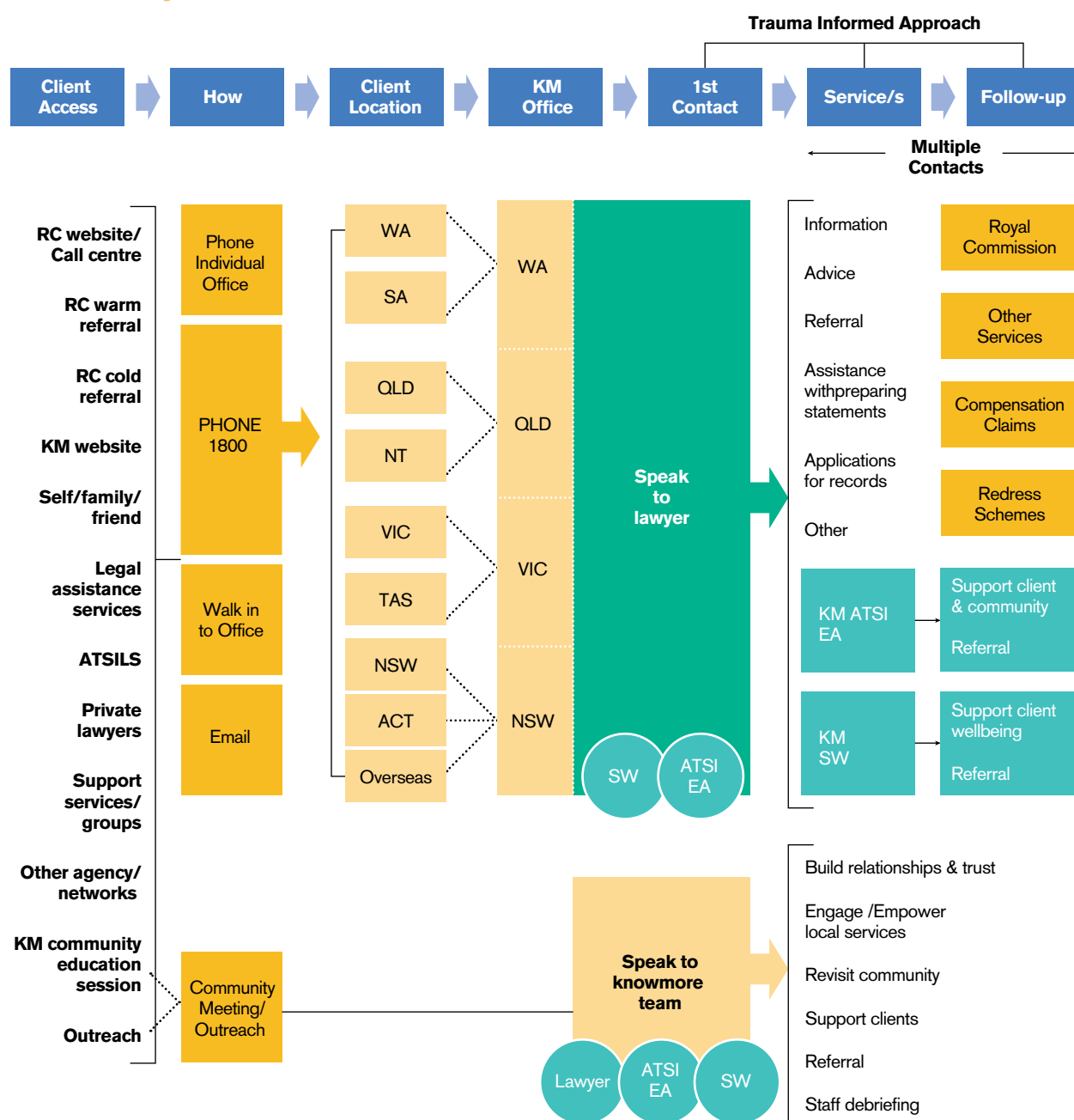
For example, to assist a client who may be referred to one of our compensation panel members to pursue a possible redress claim, **knowmore** lawyers may support that referral and the client by gathering together as much relevant documentation as possible. This includes documents such as birth certificates; educational or institutional records; police statements; health records; details of any previous compensation received by the client and any other corroborating records. Undertaking this work also helps to reduce the time the claim may take to pursue and the ultimate legal costs for the client.

knowmore also assists people summoned to appear at hearings of the Royal Commission, or asked to attend interviews with Commission staff, in sourcing legal representation. **knowmore** also provides a 'duty lawyer' style of service for the initial days 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 that support in a timely way.



Figure 2. 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

Our legal service

Case Study: Ms B

“Thank you for giving me back my life”

I assisted an Aboriginal woman with intellectual disability to prepare a statement for her private session, which eventually turned into a brief for a law firm to assist her with obtaining redress. The client spent time at a children's home run by a religious organisation. That organisation, and the police, had considered her complaints but had not taken further action. I worked collaboratively with her counsellor to obtain extensive records from police, the religious organisation, the child welfare agency and hospitals. These records assisted me to prepare the client's statement and unravel the complexity of her childhood. It also helped to corroborate the client's account of what occurred. This information formed a brief for the private law firm, which substantially reduced the amount of time (and money) required to assist the client. I attended a two hour meeting between the client, her counsellor and the law firm to introduce the client to the firm and support her to make a decision about how she wished to proceed. The client later sent me this thank you letter.

knowmore Lawyer

Dear (knowmore lawyer)

Like to say thankyou for prepared my statements you done a great job for me glad what done for me and was very happy with it.

I have none body listing to me all these years until meet you I say Thankyou for list me.

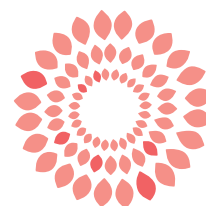
I hope you and staff help lot of people who have been sexually assaulted like me. you are very nice person for your job Keep it up.

Thank you for giving me back my life



Lawyer Ben Crompton preparing for a Community Legal Education session with an Aboriginal Council in Port Lincoln

Therapeutic support services



The Counsellors and Social Workers who make up **knowmore's** support team are all specialists in complex trauma with extensive experience working with survivors of child sexual abuse.



The field of complex trauma is a relatively new, though rapidly expanding area which is gaining more mainstream acknowledgement as research on the brain demonstrates what we have known through our interactions with clients for many years. The understanding of the impact of trauma on the minds, bodies, relationships and day-to-day 'being in the world' of people who have experienced interpersonal trauma, is the foundation of our work with our clients.

The support team offers brief, strengths-based and trauma-informed support to clients through the process of their engagement with **knowmore**. Depending on the client's wishes, a Counsellor/Social worker can be present during consultations with a lawyer, can provide post consultation debriefing and support, make follow-up calls to clients and/or referrals to support services. Counsellors/Social Workers accompany lawyers and/or Aboriginal Engagement Advisors on meetings with clients outside the office and on outreach trips across regional, rural and remote communities.

Understanding the best practice approach to trauma, the team focuses on 'safety first' as a foundational principle. Often this means providing in-the-moment grounding techniques during interactions with lawyers to assist clients who have become distressed to regain a sense of emotional balance. They can then continue to receive legal advice and/or give instructions.

'Safety first' also means assisting clients to prioritise and champion their safety themselves. Exploring if and when engaging in legal processes is right for them, identifying what is involved and the possible impacts, exploring expectations and identifying current supports all form part of helping clients to make informed and empowered decisions about how to proceed. The respectful client processes demonstrate the staff's trauma-informed understanding that the client is the ultimate expert on her or his own experiences.

Counselling/ social work

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

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



knowmore staff have accompanied clients to over **10 Royal Commission private** sessions, as their support persons

Therapeutic support services

One of the most important tasks of the Counsellors and Social Workers is to link clients with appropriate ongoing counselling and support. A great deal of work was undertaken in the first few months of **knowmore**'s operation to build a picture of the support services available for clients. We are constantly reviewing that picture, building relationships with other agencies and working together to support clients. Long-term specialist support is key to survivors' recovery.

"It was wonderful to meet you and I cannot thank you enough for being available for (client) at such short notice! I will continue working with (client) in my capacity...whereby my role is to link (client) to support services such as knowmore. Your support was absolutely amazing and I do not know what we would have done without you. I know we would have managed but your knowledge of the process, your expertise in this area and your overall calmness was a blessing in considering the circumstances. We will keep in contact in relation to supporting (the client)."

From a Qld mental health support service from whom we received a referral.

The support team also has the lead role in attending to the emotional safety of staff. Being a trauma-informed service means integrating the principles of Safety, Trustworthiness, Collaboration, Choice and Empowerment across the organisation – not just embedding them in our work with clients.

A Wellbeing Strategy, grounded in neuroscience and current understandings of managing vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue guides the range of supports offered to staff, from formal and informal debriefings, 'mindfulness' sessions, small and large group discussions to on-going education around trauma, trauma-informed practice, managing vicarious trauma and fostering resilience. In this context, we particularly acknowledge the important training and ongoing support provided to our staff by Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA).

We are constantly growing and sharing our learning in these areas. We are also amassing a body of knowledge through our work with our clients and colleagues, about the impacts of child sexual abuse on secondary victims, the particular opportunities created through **knowmore**'s unique multidisciplinary model, and the profound capacity for post-traumatic growth in our clients and for vicarious resilience to be an outcome of this work.

knowmore has created a range of resources to assist survivors and workers. You can find our Taking Care of You series of factsheets at <http://knowmore.org.au/resources/fact-sheets/>

"knowmore is probably the best place I've worked in terms of taking care holistically from the client up to every single person that works here...I've never experienced meeting our needs to this extent. (Physically) this office is amazing. They have thought of everything... safety for staff, safety for clients, making a nice space, thinking about how clients come in and being very respectful."

knowmore staff member.



Case study: Mr M

Couldn't bring himself to read his statement

Mr M contacted **knowmore** seeking information about our service and about how he could tell the Royal Commission his story. We worked with him to put together a statement to be used for his private session and also as the basis of a compensation claim. Mr M is an Aboriginal man in his seventies. He spent more than 30 years in and out of gaol. Mr M was incarcerated in juvenile detention on and off from the age of 14. He was sexually assaulted as a teenager in state government institutions.

His decision to come forward and tell his story was a hard one to make. It has led to a fracturing of his relationship with his daughter. He lives alone in a Department of Housing home and struggles to make ends meet. He asked us to come and see him in his home to go over his statement. Mr M was anxious when our meeting commenced. He talked at length about different aspects of his life, from his childhood, to his time in gaol and his marriage ending. We were able to spend time with him generally talking before raising the statement that had been prepared.

Mr M couldn't bring himself to read the statement. In the end the lawyer read it to him, making amendments as required. He cried at various times during this process, explaining how he'd never felt believed and how important it was to him that we believed him. We spent time talking about how he was coping, discussing options for counselling for him and how he had bad experiences previously with a counsellor. We were able to address all of these issues with him. We also discussed locating his records from the state government. We were able to talk at length to him about claiming compensation through Victims' Services and what this entailed – primarily being willing to talk to a counsellor about the impact of the abuse.

We left having covered many issues with this client. The relationship we had built by being able to meet face to face, coupled with the amount of time we were able to spend with him, both on this day and over several months of phone work, really added to this experience. His journey with the Royal Commission continues.

knowmore Social Worker

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement

In our first year, around 16% of our clients have been Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We were always aware that a national phone service was not likely to be the most accessible way for many vulnerable clients to receive assistance, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities and people in prisons.

We have therefore focussed much of our attention on establishing referral pathways between support services and other legal services and on being prepared to go to the clients on an outreach basis, rather than waiting for them to come to us.

There are many reasons we have chosen to focus a lot of our service provision on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Aboriginal children are over-represented among the children placed in institutions over the last 50 years, taking into account reported child protection and juvenile detention data and Stolen Generation policies. Many Aboriginal people have engaged with other inquiries into these

and related issues, for example, the 'Bringing Them Home' report, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and the 'Little Children are Sacred' report. We often get a response from Aboriginal clients of "what's the point? We told our story to these inquiries and nothing happened and nothing changed". Also, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not generally had positive experiences with the legal system and there is a higher level of distrust of authorities and institutions from our Aboriginal clients than other clients. They also face significant barriers to accessing justice, taking into account the above factors, as well as language, cultural and remoteness barriers.

"A lot of people just don't want to come into the city or the office setting... A lot just want to meet in their country. Some might just want to sit on the ground. The engagement adviser picks up if people are comfortable or not and can go off with them and have a yarn. That's the beauty with knowmore – it's the type of organisation that allows you to do that."

knowmore staff member

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



16% of our clients identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent



We employ 5 experienced male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Engagement Advisors, an Aboriginal social worker/counsellor 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



Auntie Glendra on
her way to Tiwi



Engaging with Aboriginal people in the context of our work requires a lot of time and resources. One visit to a community is nowhere near enough. It often takes a lot of time to build the trust that is so important for meaningful engagement. In relation to one former Stolen Generation community in Queensland, we have met with survivors on six occasions over our first 12 months. On the last occasion, 37 people sought legal advice. We employ five Aboriginal Engagement Advisors and two other Aboriginal staff across the country to assist with this work. Their commitment and the quality of the work they do is evidenced by the 16 per cent of our clients who identify as Indigenous and who have sought our assistance.

"An understanding that the trans-generational transmission of trauma is at the core of Aboriginal people's experience through the processes of colonisation and neo-colonisation needs to inform practice. Trauma-informed care and practice services and systems need to emphasise the high risk of re-traumatisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

Durey, A. 2010. 'Reducing racism in Aboriginal health care in Australia: where does cultural education fit?' Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health, Vol. 34, Issue Supplement s1, pp 87-92.

knowmore's Cultural Safety practices involve:

- A community-driven approach where the number of visits, duration of visit, who visits and so on, are all determined by community need and circumstances.
- Meeting / introductions to Elders and Traditional Owners first, seeking permission to enter their land and then setting up understandings and partnerships.
- A personal approach and engaging in face-to-face contact and a safe environment for survivors to take initial steps.
- Meeting and engaging the community to establish relationships and trust.
- Establishing contacts, links and engagement between survivors and services.
- Empowering community and local services with long-term strategies for community and survivors to assist healing.
- Thinking through and planning exit plans.
- Ensuring against setting up expectations/commitments that cannot be met.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, Darwin



Case Study: Retta Dixon Homes, Darwin

In early 2014 **knowmore** commenced assisting a number of survivors of abuse at the Retta Dixon homes in Darwin. The Retta Dixon homes were an initiative of the then Aborigines Inland Mission which, pursuant to government policy of the day, removed so called 'half caste' Indigenous children from their families and placed them in the institution. These survivors report that as children they lost their connection with their culture and families, most were neglected and physically and emotionally abused, and many were sexually abused.

knowmore's lawyers, social workers and Aboriginal engagement staff worked closely to support these Retta Dixon survivors who were understandably mistrustful of lawyers and institutions such as the courts, and cynical about more government intervention.

Ultimately, five **knowmore** clients gave evidence about their abuse at the public hearing. Much of that evidence was powerful and moving. Two of those people had never imagined having the courage to do this, and one cited **knowmore** as her "inspiration". We were honoured to learn that these survivors found the process really beneficial and spoke about being empowered by standing up to talk in public, no longer ashamed. They spoke of the significance of finally having their experiences acknowledged and believed.

knowmore Lawyer

"Congratulations on the approach you have taken to providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. I've never heard of a new service that is not an identified Indigenous organisation being able to so quickly and successfully engage with Aboriginal people. Full credit to your organisation."

From the head of a Victorian Aboriginal health organisation at a public meeting in Ballarat.

Our clients



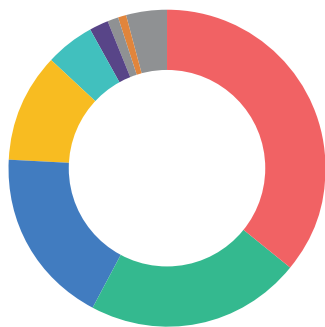
“I have never told anyone about this...”

These are the words we often hear at the beginning of our conversations with clients. They are often telling their stories for the first time in 50 to 60, and in some cases, 80 years. The number of people who have been affected by institutional child sexual abuse and the extent of the abuse that was inflicted on children is deeply confronting. One 70 year old client we saw had been taken into care when she was three, placed in seven different institutions and then placed in domestic servitude with three different families. She was abused in four of the institutions and two of the domestic placements. On one occasion she was hospitalised as a result of abuse inflicted by older girls in an institution and the

hospital treated her and sent her back to the institution. She received \$10,000 under the Queensland redress scheme for the appalling treatment she suffered. This is sadly not an uncommon example.

We have also started to understand the impact of trauma on people's lives – how the trauma they suffered has affected their ability to obtain an education, maintain relationships, maintain employment, and the effects on their physical and mental health. We have also started to understand the intergenerational impact of that trauma, particularly where people were separated from their families. Many of our clients who were abused have told us how they felt unable to touch their children or show them any love. They had never received any parenting or love themselves and thus had no frame of reference for normal affection.

Calls came from



NSW	35%
QLD	24%
VIC	17%
WA	11%
SA	5%
TAS	2%
ACT	1%
NT	1%
Unspecified/Overseas	4%



Our clients

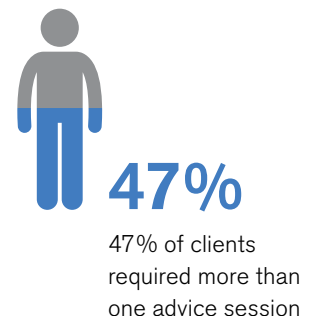
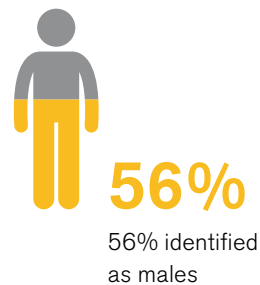


We recognise how difficult it can be for many of our clients to share their stories with us and that when they contact us, they often need more than legal advice. This recognition underpins our holistic service model. We also recognise that many clients have had past adverse experiences with the legal system and with lawyers, and many have a profound distrust of institutions because of their past abuse.

We understand that in order to respond effectively to our clients' needs, we must first listen respectfully to their experiences and concerns.

Fifty-six per cent of our clients are men and 42 percent are women. Most are over 45 years of age. Many were abused by officials or employees of institutions but many were also abused by older children in those institutions. A majority of the abusers were male but many abusers were females who were officials or employees of institutions, or older female children in an institution.

Our clients





Case Study: Mr P

knowmore was the first to hear him properly

When I first met Mr P he had a plethora of issues stemming from horrific childhood sexual abuse from 50 years ago. At the time he intended doing a private session with the Royal Commission; however, he was too overwhelmed by his day to day life issues to follow through with it. He decided to put that on hold and the Royal Commission agreed to come back to him in three months.

Since then I have met with Mr P a number of times about possible compensation options. However, he had previously received a negative response from the institution involved. I referred him to a **knowmore** panel lawyer and we initially met in the **knowmore** office for more than two hours. Since then the client's life has slowly fallen into place and he rings me each time he has another lifestyle improvement. While Mr P's day to day life is improving, (the panel lawyer) has met with the institution which has now reversed its previous response, acknowledged they have a responsibility to the client, investigated the matter, identified the perpetrator (which the client hadn't been able to identify for 50 years) and is now moving forward to a settlement.

The client has repeated that **knowmore** is the first legal organisation to hear him properly and support him to get some closure of what occurred when he was a child and the impact it has had on him throughout his life. I attribute the recent positive steps in his life to the meeting with our panel lawyer. It is a privilege to be part of this brief journey in Mr P's life and to provide ongoing support to him and his panel lawyer.

knowmore Lawyer

Engaging with prisoners

Working closely with the Royal Commission, in our first year **knowmore** supported the Commission's pilot project engaging with survivors who are now incarcerated in New South Wales' prisons. It is anticipated that this work will inform approaches to be undertaken nationally in seeking to engage with other prison populations in coming years. This is very difficult work, particularly making sure prisoners have access to counselling and support services. Client confidentiality is also a major issue within the prison environment. This work continues.

Outreach & community engagement

Community outreach and liaison events include speaking engagements at conferences; meetings with legal and support service providers across the country including peak bodies; cooperative outreach activities conducted in association with other legal and support service providers; cooperative outreach activities conducted in association with the Royal Commission; and community information sessions to potential clients and support services. Many of these meetings have also led to participants identifying themselves as survivors who have then sought individual advice and information from **knowmore**.

knowmore's holistic service delivery model is reflected in the way we approach our outreach activities. We can draw on the strength of a multi-disciplinary team comprising lawyers, social worker/counsellors and Aboriginal engagement advisors, as required by each event.

Members of the team are available after community information sessions for people who wish to discuss their options further, find out about making contact with **knowmore**, or if they simply wish to debrief after the session.

Outreach sessions are also conducted for groups of organisations, such as service providers, or for all staff of a single organisation, such as a Community Legal Centre. These presentations and discussions are tailored for staff who work with or come into contact with people who may have experienced childhood sexual abuse in an institutional context. The sessions can focus on topics such as referral protocols, understanding **knowmore**'s role and trauma informed approach, and the role of staff. We also often share our learning and resources around managing the risk of vicarious trauma.

Community outreach and liaison



Face to face services were provided to over **300 clients** on an outreach basis



knowmore has conducted or participated in **270** community outreach and liaison events.



We have also met with Stolen Generations groups and many Aboriginal agencies likely to be a source of referral of clients to **knowmore**. Importantly, this work has contributed to a database established by **knowmore** of more than 700 individual workers who are engaged in Aboriginal client service provision. It has also included attendance at community events where **knowmore** materials have been distributed to members of the public. In our first year of operation, around 10,000 general information brochures and 10,000 brochures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been distributed.

Case Study: Mr B 'Strangely good afterwards'

Mr B was sexually abused in a school in the 1980s. He described having 'lost 15 years' thereafter; a time when he drifted between jobs and, for a time, 'disappeared' overseas, where he used drugs extensively and cut himself off from his family.

Eventually he settled down, got a qualification and formed a relationship that led to marriage and children. While his experience of child sexual abuse was pushed into the background, the memories of the abuse come to him in quiet moments and when lying awake early in the morning.

While Mr B sees his drug and alcohol use as now dramatically reduced, he acknowledges that he 'still drinks too much'.

He decided to tell his story to the Royal Commission. He reported that his experience of a private session was very positive; he felt the people that met with him were very professional and caring in their approach.

Mr B described himself as 'definitely not a crier...I've cried maybe three times in my life'. However, he described crying for 24 hours after the private session and feeling 'strangely good afterwards'.

He then resolved to make a report to police. He discovered the perpetrator was well known to them, had faced many convictions and spent time in jail. (Mr B was not aware of this). The perpetrator is also now deceased.

Mr B also decided that he needs counselling to finally 'sort this out'. ASCA provided the details of an appropriate person and a warm referral was made to a trauma-informed counsellor.

knowmore Social Worker

Informing change

"The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is investigating how institutions like schools, churches, sports clubs and government organisations have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse. It is the job of the Royal Commission to uncover where systems have failed to protect children so it can make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices."

From the Royal Commission website:
<http://childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/about-us>

The Royal Commission has released seven Issues Papers on topics of interest to its work and recommendations, to allow organisations and individuals an opportunity to provide their opinions and expertise in an open forum, through making submissions. **knowmore** plays an active role in giving our clients a collective voice by making submissions responding to relevant Issues Papers. We have written five submissions to assist the Royal Commission in its development of recommendations for systemic reform. These submissions have drawn heavily upon the experiences of **knowmore** clients, and our recommendations have been based on how clients have indicated they would like to see systems and institutions

changed to prevent child sexual abuse, and to respond more appropriately when it does occur. **knowmore**'s responses have addressed:

- Issues Paper 2 on the Catholic Church's Towards Healing procedure;
- Issues Paper 4 on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Out of Home Care;
- Issues Paper 5 on Civil Litigation;
- Issues Paper 6 on Redress; and
- Issues Paper 7 on Statutory Victims Compensation Schemes.

Our submissions can be viewed at:
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/our-work/issues-papers/issues-papers/>

"In Issues Paper No 5, we asked whether elements of the current civil litigation systems could adversely affect litigation conducted by survivors. We received 40 submissions in response. Some supported reforms, while others recommended caution.

knowmore's submission criticised the civil litigation system as a whole, saying:

"[It] operates in such a way that its capacity to compensate survivors and deter institutions that repeatedly fail to prevent child sexual abuse is circumvented. Specific to child sexual abuse, this circumvention shifts huge social, health and financial costs away from institutions and back onto survivors and the broader Australian community."

From the Royal Commission's Interim Report, Volume 1, at p. 182

Working in Partnership



Department of Social Services (DSS) funded support services

The Australian Government has funded a range of services to provide support to people affected by the Royal Commission. **knowmore** has been working closely with these support agencies to address the ongoing counselling needs of our clients.

We have attended numerous meetings of funded support services to provide information and education to their staff about the Royal Commission and about **knowmore**'s services, and to address specific issues of concern to particularly vulnerable clients. We also operate several legal advice clinics. For example, **knowmore** visits Wattle Place in NSW monthly to speak to groups of clients and see clients on an individual basis, and we have established a close working relationship with the Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN).

"Thank-you for such a comprehensive piece of information. I will take this to our RC team here for further discussion at our next meeting. I appreciate your assistance. There are many unforeseen aspects to this work that continue to emerge as I'm sure they do for your team also. It's reassuring to know that **knowmore is there to provide relevant information to support the clinical work organisations like ours are doing."**

From a NSW DSS funded counselling service where we provided community legal education.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (the ATSILS)

knowmore's success in establishing and maintaining a close and effective working relationship with the ATSILS is evidenced by the number and range of joint activities and collaborations which have been held in each State and Territory with ATSILS staff, and the number of Indigenous clients who have sought our help.

Funding was provided by the Australian Government to each ATSILS to provide assistance to clients engaging or considering engaging with the Royal Commission. Each ATSILS employed a person to provide community legal education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people regarding the Royal Commission. **knowmore** has worked closely with each of these workers, including funding and hosting two meetings of these staff; attending outreach events together with ATSILS staff; providing training to the ATSILS staff around issues relating to the Royal Commission and the legal issues likely to arise; providing community legal education material to ATSILS staff to assist in their work with clients; and providing support to ATSILS staff to ensure their wellbeing in undertaking their work.

Family Violence Protection Legal Services (FVPLS)

knowmore has also worked closely with the FVPLS national secretariat to establish guidelines and a process for individual FVPLS to access funding provided to the FVPLS by the Australian Government to undertake activities related to the Royal Commission. This funding is used for community legal education projects, to provide information and education about the Royal Commission to their client groups. In these project activities the FVPLS work closely with **knowmore**. In our first year a range of outreach events has been conducted by individual FVPLS together with **knowmore** staff, including five events in regional Victoria, six events in regional WA, three events in regional SA, six in Central Australia and five in regional NSW. This work has led to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking legal advice from **knowmore**. For example, following recent outreach to Tennant Creek, 16 clients contacted **knowmore** for advice.

Where to from here

knowmore is now a fundamentally different organisation from the much smaller start-up that turned on its phone line in July 2013. We have matured into a truly national, multidisciplinary service, now in the consolidation phase of our evolution. However, there is much important work yet to be done. We are conscious of the need to engage with other groups in the community identified by the Royal Commission as being vulnerable to suffering child sexual abuse in an institutional context, and who may face barriers in accessing the Royal Commission without support, to ensure that those groups also have the opportunity to engage with the Royal Commission.

In addition to the client groups already identified, in 2014/15 we will have an increased focus on engaging with people with disability, people with mental health problems, homeless people, young people and people in immigration detention centres. We are eager to work with the Royal Commission and those service providers already engaging with these groups in ways that complement existing engagement strategies and supports.

knowmore is committed to continuously improving our services. We are undergoing an independent evaluation, being conducted by *Effective Change* (<http://www.effectivechange.com.au/>) that considers our unique service delivery model and the impacts we are having through our services. This work is helping us to further improve our service delivery.

Organisational priorities for the future include streamlining our data collection processes; improving our reporting capabilities; investigating the possibility of providing opportunities to include consumer advocate perspectives on **knowmore**'s operation and management; providing optional mechanisms for clients to give us feedback; building in more regular opportunities for reflection upon our practices and possible improvements; and continuing the development of policies and practices that prioritise staff and client wellbeing.

Client feedback

"When you have been downtrodden so much in your life and someone shows genuine care and concern – it means so much"

"knowmore staff have been a great support and are changing lives"

"Thank you so much for coming to see and help me today – now I know someone is listening to me and I am being heard"

"Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to discuss my case and for your kindness. I value your guidance and advice and have taken on board what you have said. Also, thank you to the social worker for 'grounding' me before I left . . . a simple technique that worked really well"

"Remember the healing and empowerment you have helped bring to this very grateful family"

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/>

Suicide Callback Service

1300 659 467

<https://www.suicidecallbackservice.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>

knowmore's free legal advice

line is: 1800 605 762
