

# know more

## Our third year

1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016



# 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 three offices are situated, being the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the Turrbul and Jagara peoples and the Wurundjeri people. We also acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation where our Perth office was located until December 2016. 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 (AEST / AEDT)

## Our Offices

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180 Flinders St  
Melbourne VIC 3000

PO Box 84  
Flinders Lane VIC 8009

T 03 8663 7400  
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### Sydney

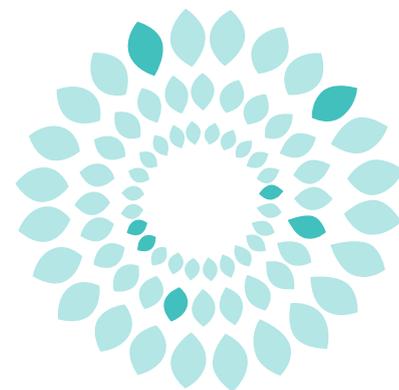
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233 Castlereagh St  
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# Who we are

**knowmore** uses an innovative multidisciplinary model to provide trauma-informed and culturally safe legal assistance to its 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 meetings 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 board of the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

**knowmore** works independently of the Royal Commission but coordinates activities and liaises closely with its staff to maximise support for 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 client-facing team includes:

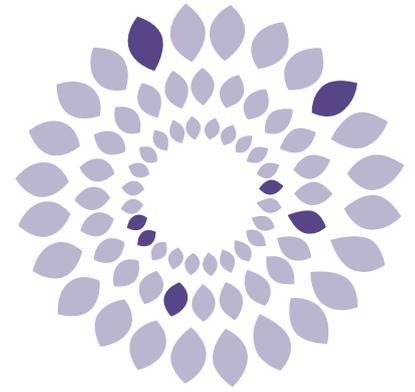


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**From a client after a private session with the Royal Commission...“I can’t thank you enough for your help, I couldn’t have got through today without [knowmore’s] support and I do know that.”**

**knowmore** client feedback.

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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.
- preparing statements and assistance with preparing submissions about needed reforms.
- 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 them
- feel supported in making an informed decision about interacting with the Royal Commission
- 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.

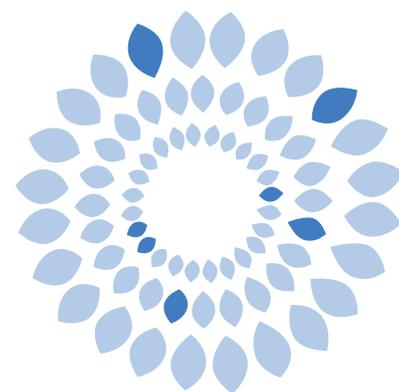
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**Trauma-informed services 'are informed about and sensitive to, trauma-related issues.' They do not directly treat trauma or the range of symptoms with which its different manifestations are associated. The possibility of trauma in the lives of all 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. Blue Knot Foundation, p. 88

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# A message from our board



## The journey has neared the peak. Will we reach the summit? What is on the other side?

**knowmore** acknowledges that so many of our clients and other survivors have been on a long, difficult and often traumatic journey for many years. While events of the past can never be undone, there may yet be some possibilities for some resolution or healing.

When in 2013 the new Royal Commission commenced its journey, **knowmore** was established to work alongside the Commission, but more important, to walk alongside these people who had already endured so much.

In stepping out on that journey, NACLCL and the **knowmore** team knew from the beginning that we faced a huge responsibility – not just to be respectful and to honour the earlier journeys but to actively work for a better future for all these clients – both individually and collectively.

We knew that this would require a new holistic model of service, using a multidisciplinary trauma-informed approach. We knew that it would require a highly skilled, professional and sensitive team. We knew that for some clients, we would not be able to improve their situation. We also knew that the work would be difficult, challenging and sometimes emotionally exhausting. And we also knew that at its most difficult, our experience would never compare to those endured by our clients.

In the pages and stories of this third report, the voices of our clients make clear that **knowmore** has indeed honoured the faith placed in the service by those many earlier travellers on this journey. Indeed the positive feedback is a key indication that in design and implementation the service is on the right track. Beyond

the anecdotal responses, in April, the final independent evaluation report into **knowmore** was completed. This also demonstrated the positive impact of the model and its work across Australia.

As expected and planned, this year has been the peak of activity for the **knowmore** team. The volume, breadth and quality of work is outstanding and approximately 5,000 clients have now been assisted. NACLCL, the broader sectors and the team can all be proud of the exceptional work of **knowmore** and its partners.

Having almost reached the summit of this particular mountain, the obvious question is what will be on the other side? For the many clients of **knowmore**, the forthcoming action on redress and other Royal Commission recommendations will be absolutely vital to the 'success' of the Commission itself. For a group that have had their hopes dashed so often, this journey must continue – at the pace they need.

The Australian Government has pleasingly made a commitment to implement a national redress scheme and is developing this model. **knowmore** has been actively engaged with these processes and some key issues are outlined in this report as well as **knowmore's** many published submissions.

As the Royal Commission itself draws to a close, the vision and confidence of those who saw a need to establish **knowmore** has been more than vindicated. NACLCL and **knowmore** are now also considering how the future legal and related needs of survivors can be addressed beyond this period and as the redress scheme is implemented.

Within NACLCL, the **knowmore** Board Sub-committee provides governance and guidance to the service. This year we were delighted to welcome Angela Sdrinis and Craig Hughes-Cashmore to the sub-committee with fresh insights and advice. Over the year we farewelled Hugh de Kretser, Deb Phippen and James Farrell who all made extensive and highly significant contributions to **knowmore** since its inception.

NACLCL greatly appreciates the support of the Attorney-General, the Department, the Royal Commission and the many, many partners and support services who continue to work with **knowmore**.

We continue to be impressed and encouraged by our staff team's proficiency, teamwork and dedication. In their diverse roles and locations, they provide outstanding assistance and support to clients who have experienced significant trauma. Throughout this journey, Warren Strange has led the service and the team in a most accomplished and professional manner. On behalf of the **knowmore** sub-committee and NACLCL, I thank Warren, his management team and all the staff for their commitment, dedication and excellent efforts, throughout both good and bad days of the journey.

It is not yet clear how far remains ahead on the journey and where it will end. However **knowmore** has walked alongside many survivors for many critical steps so far. While there is much more to achieve, success will be judged by those who have been on the journey from the beginning. As far as we can, we walk with you.

### Michael Smith

Chair  
knowmore Sub-committee  
NACLCL

# A message from our executive team

**2015/16 has seen significant developments for knowmore and for our clients.**

Over the year all of the Royal Commission's programs – including private sessions, hearings, community engagement and policy work - operated at peak levels. Consequently, the demands upon our service were high. **knowmore's** third year of operations has seen the highest number of clients coming forward to seek assistance and, for many, to go on to tell their stories to the Royal Commission. Many of these clients are disclosing their childhood abuse in Australian institutions for the first time and have complex legal and other support needs. The counselling services provided by our support team, and the assistance provided to Indigenous clients by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors, have been crucial in enabling these clients to feel safe and supported when seeking help from our service.

In September 2015 the Royal Commission released its final report on redress and civil litigation reforms, which included recommendations for the creation of a national redress scheme for victims of institutional child sexual abuse and the removal of time limits for taking legal action. As a result of our work with survivors, **knowmore** has strongly supported the establishment of a national, independent redress scheme as an essential means for helping survivors achieve acknowledgment, compensation and justice; and for holding responsible institutions accountable. Such a scheme should operate alongside common law rights, which should be enhanced through the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations about civil litigation reform, such as the removal of limitation periods.

Accordingly, we welcomed the November 2016 announcement by the Federal Government that it would establish a Commonwealth Redress Scheme (CRS). The scheme will

operate from 2018 and will provide survivors with access to monetary payments of up to a maximum of \$150,000, as well as access to counselling services and the opportunity to receive a direct personal acknowledgement and response from the institution responsible for their abuse.

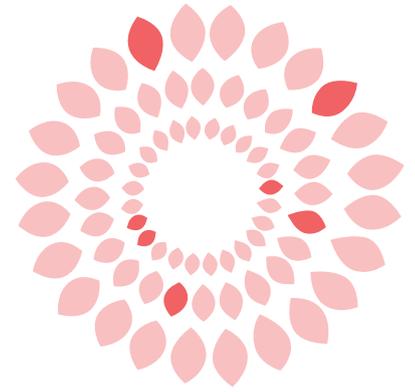
The CRS will provide redress for people who were sexually abused as children in Commonwealth institutional settings. It will also provide redress to survivors abused in other institutional settings, should state, territory and non-government institutions opt in to the scheme.

Without full participation by government and non-government institutions, the CRS risks replicating the unfairness and injustices involved in the current redress landscape, where outcomes for survivors are dependent on the attitude of relevant institutions. We urge all state and territory governments and non-government institutions to participate in the CRS. We also urge the Federal Government to use all means

at its disposal to achieve the maximum participation in the scheme by the institutions which should properly be held accountable for the child sexual abuse and resultant trauma suffered by so many Australian children, whose care was entrusted to those institutions. For all institutions, an opportunity now exists to do something that is surely right, and which will have tangible benefits for many survivors.

Similarly, it is important that the Australian state governments, all of whom supported the Royal Commission by issuing identical terms of reference to the same Commissioners under their respective state laws, deliver on that commitment and take responsibility by implementing all of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

Particularly important for survivors is the removal of unjust time limits which have operated for many years to effectively impede civil actions for damages for claims arising from childhood abuse. In its September 2015 report the Royal Commission recommended that these limitation periods be removed, and that the states do so as soon as possible. We have welcomed the changes to these laws enacted to date in Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's instruction to federal agencies in May 2016 to no longer rely on limitation defences. Tasmania and Western Australia have undertaken to introduce amending legislation in 2017. We hope that the coming year also sees South Australia and the Northern Territory following the leadership shown by all other governments, so that all survivors of child sexual abuse in Australia have equal access to justice through our courts.



Given the importance of the Royal Commission making informed and effective recommendations, and the relevant governments accepting and implementing those recommendations, during 2015/16 **knowmore** continued to support the Royal Commission's policy program by preparing several submissions responding to issues and other consultation papers. We also participated in other consultation activities conducted by the Commission, and delivered submissions to state governments considering implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations. In making such submissions, our aim is to contribute to the Commission's vital work of effecting systemic change, through giving voice to the collective experiences of our clients and what they tell us they need to achieve some justice.

The funding agreement with the Commonwealth relating to the **knowmore** service required that an independent evaluation of the service be conducted. The final evaluation report, delivered in April 2016 (and available on our website), endorsed our approach to service delivery, finding that **knowmore**:

- was delivering widely accessible, trauma-informed and culturally secure legal and support services
- had developed strong organisational partnerships with key stakeholders
- was making important contributions to policy and law reform at the Commonwealth and state levels, and within institutions

- has had a positive and demonstrable impact on our client group's ability to reach the Royal Commission and to participate in its structures; *"Stakeholders attributed this to multiple factors, most importantly the trauma-informed and culturally secure practices, but also through a specialised, national legal service working across all state and territory jurisdictions"*.

These findings recognise the vision behind the establishment of our service, which has resulted in so many survivors placing their trust in us since the establishment of our service in 2013. The findings also reflect the skills and wonderful commitment shown by all members of the **knowmore** team. We look forward to continuing our important work as the Royal Commission approaches the delivery of its final report in December 2017.

**Warren Strange**  
Executive Officer

**Prue Gregory**  
Principal Lawyer

**Victor Lee**  
General Manager (Operations)

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

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**"Thanks again for everything. I know you and your colleagues have helped so many people and whilst it undoubtedly takes its toll you will have the richness of knowing you've made a difference to so many peoples' lives."**

**knowmore** client feedback.

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# Our clients

By 30 June 2016 4,910 individual clients had received legal advice, information and referral services from **knowmore**, via our telephone, face-to-face and outreach services. Most of our clients are 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 lawyers, as well as our counsellors and advisors, 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 service model whereby the support and advice needed is tailored to each client.

## Closure of registrations for private sessions with the Royal Commission

The high numbers of survivors coming forward to tell their stories to the Royal Commission has meant that the waiting period for private sessions has often been around 12 months from the date of registration. As it must report by 15 December 2017, the Royal Commission announced in April 2016 that registrations for private sessions would close on 30 September 2016. This was to ensure that the Commissioners would have sufficient time to hear from all of those who registered for a private session by that date.

In response to this announcement **knowmore** embarked on a significant program of outreach and community engagement work, to contribute to awareness of this closure date. This program was especially directed towards client groups that might experience particular barriers to engaging with the Royal Commission (see below). We also reviewed client matters to ensure that any clients who were undecided about registration were aware of the closing date for the opportunity to have a private session.

## 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

A focus during 2015/16 was supporting the Royal Commission's prison engagement strategy. Under this strategy, the Commission is seeking to visit every prison in Australia, to allow prisoners who experienced child sexual abuse in institutions the opportunity to tell the Commission their stories. The Commission's strategy acknowledges that high numbers of prisoners have suffered child sexual abuse, and that they otherwise would have limited opportunities for disclosing to the Commission. **knowmore** is partnering with the Royal Commission to present information and induction sessions for prison staff, information packs for all prisoners, and also directly engaging with prisoners in many correctional centres.

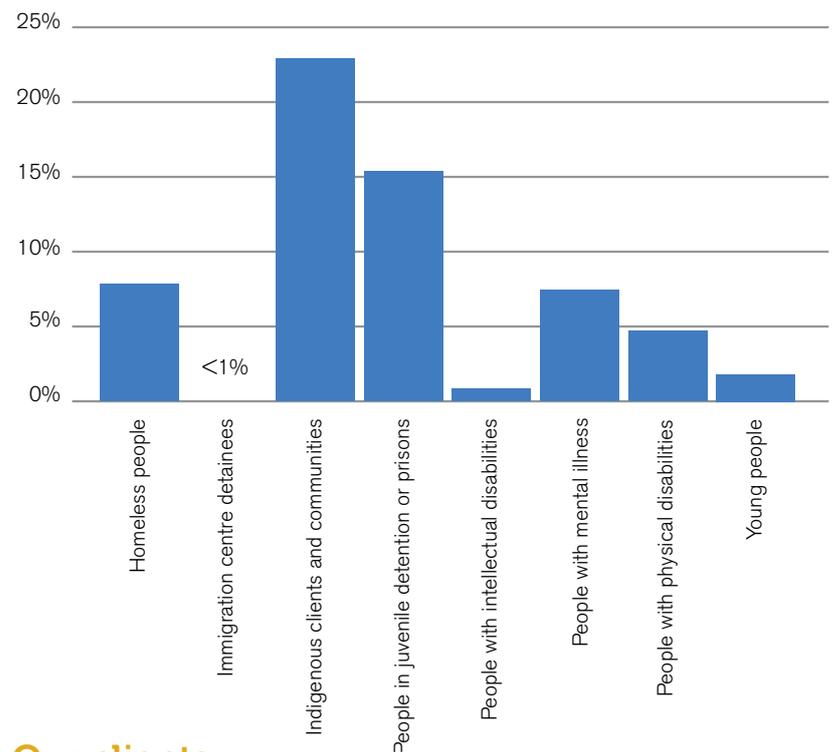


Working with survivors in the prison environment can be challenging, particularly around access to longer-term supports for clients. Significant numbers of prisoners have needed and accessed the support of our service, to enable them to engage with the Commission, and to pursue other rights arising from their abuse as children. Given the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian prisons, our engagement advisors have played a key role in ensuring Indigenous prisoners have sufficient information and trust to make informed decisions about engaging with the Royal Commission.

While supporting the Royal Commission's prison engagement strategy has involved a significant workload, we anticipate that the Royal Commission will gain many insights from hearing of the experiences of this client group, many of whom have never previously disclosed their childhood abuse or talked about its impact.

**Figure 1. Clients by priority groups**

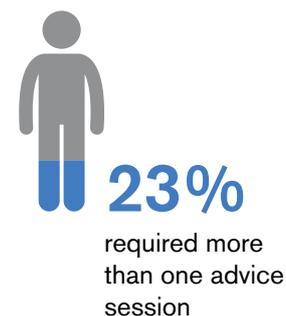
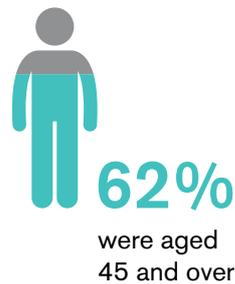
Note: some clients are represented in more than one group.



## Our clients

**"...thank you knowmore for supporting me and for always being so understanding, I'm very grateful that you always try to suit me with appointment times and most importantly for the high level of support."**

knowmore client feedback.



# Our clients

## Ongoing support needs - referral pathways

Many of our clients have complex needs, and require multiple contacts, often over some months, following their initial contact with our service. Many need help with other legal and social issues as well. These needs often reflect the multiple and ongoing impacts of child sexual abuse and the consequent complex trauma that can affect relationships, physical and mental health, education, employment and other aspects of a survivor's life.

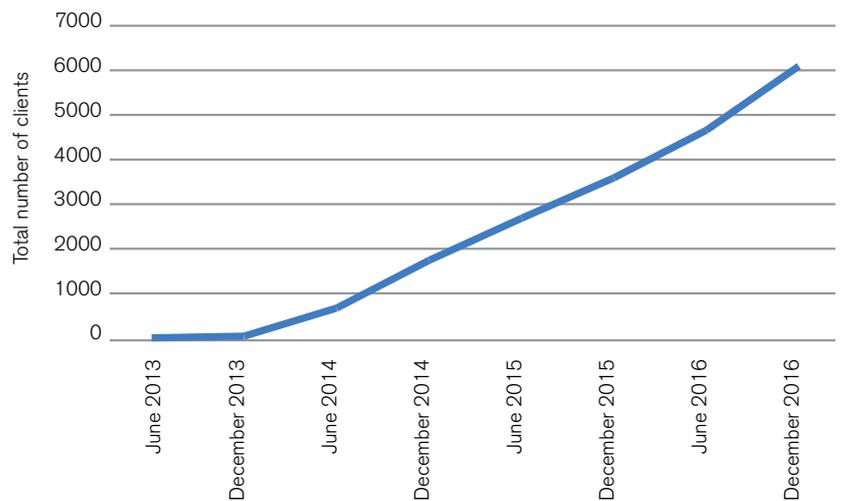
During the year, in recognition of the limited life and role of the **knowmore** service, we continued to build and enhance our referral pathways for clients who need longer-term support, such as ongoing counselling or help with a potential legal claim. We acknowledge the professional assistance that our partners have provided to these clients, and for their willingness to work co-operatively with **knowmore** to address client needs.

After the Royal Commission and **knowmore** close, survivors will need ongoing advice and support delivered by appropriately trained, trauma-informed staff. The legal and other needs of these survivors, particularly in making claims under the CRS, will not cease when the Royal Commission has delivered its final report.

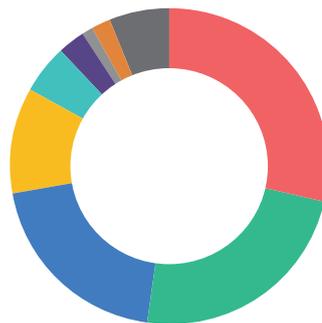
Figure 2. Total client numbers over time

### knowmore: Running total of clients

30 June 2013 to 31 December 2016



## Calls came from



NSW	29%
QLD	24%
VIC	20%
WA	11%
SA	5%
TAS	3%
ACT	1%
NT	2%
Unspecified/Overseas	6%

"I just wanted to say how difficult but also how important the opportunity to tell my story is and I think I have been very fortunate to have your gentle but purposeful focus guiding me, the way things are done is so critical and you have made it as good as it could be."

knowmore client feedback.

# The importance of knowmore's multidisciplinary service model

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

**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 independent evaluation of our service identified the importance of documenting **knowmore's** unique service delivery model and sharing the lessons learnt in its development with other services, particularly legal services working with clients affected by trauma. This has been a focus over the past year, with our service taking opportunities to share information about our multidisciplinary model in a variety of settings, including through presentations to the community legal sector and other lawyers, and to social workers and counsellors.

## Independent evaluation

As noted above, over the first three years of **knowmore's** life, an independent evaluation was undertaken (by Effective Change Pty Ltd) to assess the effectiveness of, and to learn from, **knowmore's** service delivery model. The final evaluation report was delivered in April 2016, with interim reports delivered in September 2014, March 2015 and October 2015.

The first interim evaluation report focused on **knowmore's** service delivery and organisational effectiveness. The second interim report examined **knowmore's** organisational partnerships and working relationships and contained many positive findings about **knowmore's** working relationships and the outcomes being achieved for clients. The third interim report, focussed on systemic change issues.

The final evaluation report was delivered in April 2016. As set out in the report, it "has examined how **knowmore** has responded to the challenge of providing a service to clients deeply aggrieved personally and legally, and carrying a legacy of trauma into their adult lives.."

The independent evaluation findings concluded, in part, that, "the assessment of **knowmore** against the principles of trauma-informed care found tangible and consistent examples of this in place for clients and staff. Themes and observations raised in the feedback from external stakeholders included that **knowmore**:

- has an excellent understanding of trauma and works to empower clients
- staff are respectful and understand the issues that clients bring with them
- demonstrates flexibility and sensitivity in their work with survivors
- staff consistently make the effort to ensure that clients are comfortable with the process and ensure that through careful preparation, clients have the best opportunity to share their story.

Experienced trauma-informed practitioners observed that **knowmore** provides a 'text book' example of trauma-informed care and provides 'best practice' in legal services for adult survivors."

The full report is available on the home page of **knowmore's** website [www.knowmore.org.au](http://www.knowmore.org.au)

# Our legal service

**knowmore's** lawyers provide frontline services by:

- answering calls to our free national advice line
- undertaking face-to-face consultations
- providing a 'duty lawyer' style of service at the Royal Commission's public hearings to provide assistance to anyone involved in the hearing, and to others in attendance
- attending prisons to support the Royal Commission's prison engagement strategy
- supporting the Royal Commission's policy work by contributing to submissions and other consultations
- providing services to clients on outreach visits, and presenting information to communities and service providers.

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, nor 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 to experienced lawyers. For these purposes, **knowmore** has established two panels of lawyers; one for legal representation and one for compensation. Panel members are experienced lawyers who are understanding of the needs of our client group and who have expertise in the area of law required.

As part of the referral process, **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 will gather together as much relevant documentation as possible. This includes documents such as birth certificates; educational or institutional records; police statements; 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' service for the initial days of each of the Royal Commission's public hearings, so that any witness or

## Case study – the importance to clients of redress

Peter\*, a man in his 60s, came to **knowmore** for advice on engaging with the Royal Commission and advice about his compensation options. He had experienced prolonged sexual abuse from a teacher at the private primary school he attended during the 1960s. **knowmore** provided Peter with advice on registering for a private session with the Royal Commission and made a warm referral to one of **knowmore's** panel law firms.

Within six months of Peter having contacted **knowmore**, his compensation claim against the school had settled and he was on the waiting list to have a private session with the Royal Commission. Peter was very pleased with the outcome and the time period within which the matter was finalised. The receipt of compensation will allow Peter to enjoy some things in retirement that he would otherwise have been unable to afford.

\*names have been changed to protect privacy



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

In 2015/16 there were 13 public hearings conducted by the Royal Commission, including lengthy hearings into the Anglican and Catholic churches held in multiple cities and regional centres. This resulted in intense periods of work for our service involving the provision of assistance to and the sourcing of legal representation for multiple witnesses, often at short notice.

During the year it was also necessary for **knowmore** to increase the size of its legal referral panels, due to the rising demand for representation given the higher numbers of hearings and increased demand for ongoing legal support for compensation and other claims. **knowmore** works closely with these panel lawyers to ensure effective referrals are made and clients are supported.

### Royal Commission Public Hearings – Case study 37

The Royal Commission is often not in a position to release witness lists for public hearings until shortly before the hearing is due to start. This means lawyers at **knowmore** sometimes only have a short period of time to arrange legal representation for witnesses. Apart from addressing the issue of availability of suitable panel lawyers at short notice, **knowmore** lawyers are also confronted with issues of possible conflicts of interest within groups of witnesses and the possibility of witnesses being the subject of adverse evidence.

**knowmore** lawyers need to exercise care, ensuring the most appropriate referral options are provided to any witness who wishes to be legally represented at the hearing.

In February 2016 for case study 37, **knowmore** arranged for 15 witnesses to be referred to lawyers on its legal representation panel. Almost all of these witnesses were referred in the three days prior to the hearing starting.

Our lawyers also 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.

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**“Thank you so much for your amazing and hard work on this issue. It’s quite amazing. And for people on the outside the processes are quite opaque – having your guidance is amazing.”**

**knowmore** client feedback.

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# Our support services

**knowmore's** support team of social workers and counsellors are experienced in working with complex trauma, including working with survivors of child sexual abuse. They work closely with the lawyers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors in each office as part of **knowmore's** person-centred, 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 also the 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.

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 2015/16 approximately 25% of client activities involved support from social workers/counsellors and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors in the course of receiving legal advice, information and referral services. This figure, like the previous year, shows an increase in clients choosing to work with our support team while engaging with our service, and the commitment of our staff towards ensuring that clients feel safe and supported during this work.

The support team has also actively participated in **knowmore's** prison engagement work by attending prison visits with **knowmore's** lawyers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors. Over the past year the team has also worked hard to source a limited number of service providers willing to provide ongoing therapeutic support to survivors who are in prison.

As the end of the Royal Commission and **knowmore** approaches, the support team is looking at how to best support clients as they disengage with **knowmore**, and build relationships with other support service providers who can address their future needs.

Roles of staff in the support 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
- working with lawyers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors
- attending outreach with lawyers to regional, rural and remote communities, home visits and Community Legal Education sessions
- case consultation and discipline-specific practice/content support
- contributing to **knowmore's** submissions to the Royal Commission and governments
- informal support/debriefing for the team as required



## Counselling/ social work

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

**2808 clients** received social work/counselling support either directly or through case consultation



**2302 clients** have been referred to other support services from **knowmore**

### Case study – Supporting clients as they engage with the Royal Commission

John\* contacted **knowmore** in relation to the time he spent in a number of government run boys homes. John was an elderly Aboriginal man with a disability who had been removed from his parents' care when he was just nine years of age and remained in government institutions until he was 15. Upon contacting **knowmore** John was supported by an Aboriginal engagement advisor, a counsellor and a lawyer until he felt comfortable enough to discuss the sexual abuse he had experienced by staff at a boys home. The abuse had occurred in the 1960s, but John had not previously disclosed the

abuse to anyone. **knowmore** supported John in registering with the Royal Commission, in writing his story and accompanying him to his private session with a Commissioner. John said that he felt as though a weight had been lifted from his shoulders as a result of speaking with **knowmore** and the Royal Commission about his abuse. **knowmore** is now referring John to one of our panel lawyers as he has very good prospects of obtaining compensation for his experiences of abuse.

\*names have been changed to protect privacy

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**“I’m doing what [knowmore counsellor] suggested and writing things down so I can hopefully get a completed story for that part of my life, then I may settle somewhat. Thank you so very much, you have not just provided me with support, but comfort and incentive, if that’s the right word.”**

**knowmore** client feedback

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# Our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander engagement

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 consequently 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**. A number of the Royal Commission's public hearings have explored the experiences of Indigenous children placed in institutions across Australia.

During 2015/16 the percentage of **knowmore's** clients who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander increased from 18% to 20% and continues to increase. One factor contributing to this is the high numbers of prisoners engaging with **knowmore** and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the prison population.

The invaluable contributions made by **knowmore's** six experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors have continued to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access our service, and to feel safe and supported in working with our lawyers.

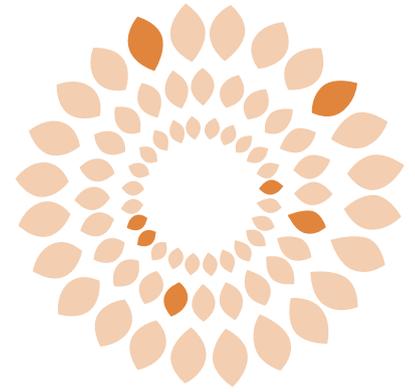
By working intensively with our staff and clients, **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors help us deliver culturally safe practices and establish culturally appropriate networks across other legal and support services. This is a key part of **knowmore's** client-focused multidisciplinary model.

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 2015/16 **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement team attended community events held in each state and territory and in many remote and regional locations, often also meeting with clients, other service agencies and local representatives, and distributing information materials. They have met with representatives of the Stolen Generations; visited with Traditional Owners and Elders on country; conducted joint events with

staff from the Royal Commission's community engagement team, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS), and the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) ; 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.

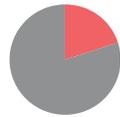
This approach takes time and is resource intensive. But through the guidance of **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement team, and the collaborative networks they have established with the Royal Commission's community engagement team and other agencies like the ATSILS and the FVPLS,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

The three members of our Sydney based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement team - Dean Bell, Glendra Stubbs and Robert Young - were finalists in the NSW Law and Justice Foundation's Aboriginal Justice Award for 2016.



## 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



**20% of our clients** identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent



We employ 6 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

### Case Study – Visiting remote communities

**knowmore** has visited the Tiwi Islands on a regular basis, liaising with Elders and community groups to support survivors considering engaging with the Royal Commission. Through the Royal Commission, healing camps and private sessions for survivors were organised in 2016. **knowmore** staff attended and gave assistance to participants, using trauma-informed practices.

**“I was one of the Silent for so long. And it was a lot of weight off my shoulders, like so many before and after me, to tell my story, even though it took 50 so years to tell it. Thank you for the confidence and support.”**

**knowmore** client feedback



Aboriginal engagement advisors Robert Young, Glendra Stubbs and Dean Bell, finalists at the NSW Law & Justice Foundation's Aboriginal Justice Award, 2016

# Informing change

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, and holding roundtable consultations.

**knowmore** provides information to the Royal Commission and where relevant, to governments, in order to give voice to our clients by drawing on their experiences, and using this information to make recommendations about the changes they would like to see to better protect children in the future, as well as to obtain justice for their own experiences of child sexual abuse. **knowmore** provides submissions responding to the Royal Commission's Issues and Consultation Papers, and other discussion papers released by state governments, and participates in policy hearings and roundtable discussions convened by the Royal Commission. 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 to make a meaningful difference for survivors. While **knowmore's** primary focus is on service delivery, our work provides an important opportunity to inform systemic change and to contribute to lasting and effective reforms that will meet the ongoing needs of survivors.

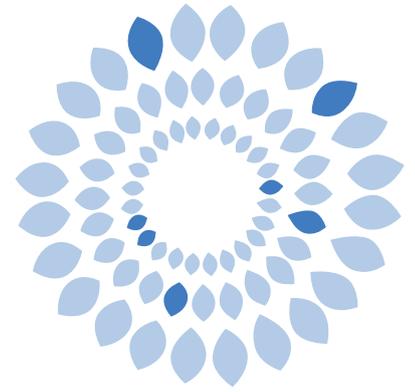
To 30 June 2016, **knowmore** had responded to nine Issues Papers released by the Royal Commission. These submissions related to:

- Towards Healing (procedure of the Catholic Church)
- Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children in Out-of-Home Care
- Civil Litigation
- Redress Schemes
- Statutory victims of crime compensation schemes
- Experiences of police and prosecution responses
- Risk of child sexual abuse in schools
- Advocacy and Support and Therapeutic Treatment Services
- Catholic Church Final Hearing

In 2015/16 **knowmore** also provided a detailed submission to the Victorian Government, responding to its Public Consultation paper regarding a state redress scheme. **knowmore** also met with government officials involved in the consideration of a possible Victorian scheme and assisted the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review project concerning the role of victims in the criminal trial process, through attending consultation forums involving the community legal sector.

In May 2016 a forum, jointly organised by **knowmore** and Micah Projects, was held at Queensland Parliament House, regarding implementation of the Commission's recommendations about removing limitation periods. The Queensland Parliament has since passed legislation removing limitation periods for all child sexual abuse, and, in a first for Australia, providing courts with the power to set aside past settlements in such claims, entered into under the operation of a limitation period, where it is reasonable and just to do so.

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



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"I have never worked for a better employer. I will remember **knowmore** as a place where I felt respected and appreciated and where the best that could be done to ensure that the work did not take a toll on an employee, was done."

**knowmore** staff member

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**knowmore** staff attending a NAIDOC week event

# Outreach & community engagement

By 30 June 2016, **knowmore** had conducted or participated in 1,234 community outreach and liaison events throughout Australia.

Our staff travel to locations in metropolitan, regional and remote 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. After community forums, staff make themselves available for people wanting more information or simply wishing to debrief after the session.

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. Outreach is also organised to disseminate important information, such as the closure of registrations for private sessions on 30 September 2016. After the closure was announced in April 2016, significant outreach was planned for the following five months to ensure service providers, clients and potential clients were aware that they needed to register in order not to miss the opportunity to speak with a Commissioner.

In 2015/16 **knowmore's** multidisciplinary teams delivered outreach services to remote, rural, regional and metropolitan centres in every state and territory.

## Community outreach and liaison



Face to face legal services were provided to **417 clients**

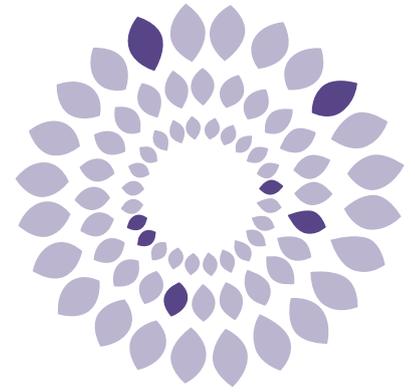
As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016



**knowmore** has conducted or participated in **1234** community outreach and liaison events



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



### Case study – knowmore’s support team provides community legal education to hospital based social workers

**knowmore** has presented to hospital staff who may come into contact with patients who are survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. During these sessions **knowmore** provides information about how people may engage with the Royal Commission and also advice about working with survivors of child sexual abuse. The **knowmore** team explain that some survivors will be traumatised by feeling detained in a hospital, because they are reminded of or triggered by their childhood experiences in institutions.

**knowmore** received the following feedback after presenting to a hospital community development team: *“Thanks so much to you and your colleagues for presenting, it was very informative and raised our awareness on both the complexities of the issues and some of the resources that are available. Your work is critical to the wellbeing of so many people, so I thank you on behalf of those present for giving up your time and sharing your expertise with us.”*

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**“Thank you. We have received great feedback from [a Disability Service Provider] about assistance you have been providing to one of their clients.”**

Feedback from a service provider

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Travelling on outreach to remote communities

# Working in partnership

## Working with the Royal Commission

**knowmore** and the Royal Commission have a co-operative relationship and continue to enhance communication and efficiencies between the organisations. Regular liaison meetings, effective referral procedures and shared community engagement initiatives continued in 2015/16.

As at 30 June 2016 39% of **knowmore's** clients have been referred by the Royal Commission, making it the largest single source of referrals to **knowmore**. Referral arrangements arising during the public hearings have continued with witnesses being referred by the Royal Commission legal team and counsellors to **knowmore** for advice and further referral assistance. Other referral pathways have included Commissioners providing **knowmore's** contact details to people engaging in private sessions, to facilitate these survivors receiving legal advice about their possible rights to obtain compensation, or to access their records, and other legal issues. Staff from the Commission's intake/call-centre and counselling team also routinely contact **knowmore** about clients who wish to receive call-backs for legal assistance.

**knowmore** staff have also attended community forums organised by the Royal Commission in a variety of locations across Australia. Members of **knowmore's** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement team have also provided specific cultural information to Royal Commission staff to help the Commission prepare for

and undertake engagement activities in some remote communities.

**knowmore's** Executive Officer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement advisor Elsja Dewis were invited to attend a Commission criminal justice roundtable forum in Sydney in June 2016 about the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of child sexual abuse and communities with current criminal justice system responses.

## 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 funded 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.

Referral pathways have been established between **knowmore** and 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.

For example,

- **knowmore** is working closely with all of the state offices of Relationships Australia (RA). Outreach activities are often conducted in conjunction with staff from RA offices, in particular with RA Northern Territory, RA Tasmania and RA Western Australia.
- In line with the **knowmore** engagement strategy of seeking to enable access to justice for people with disability, regular contact is maintained with People with Disabilities Australia (PWDA). In conjunction with PWDA, information sessions were provided in June 2016 to centres in regional Victoria. PWDA has also provided training to **knowmore** staff.
- The ATSILS and **knowmore** work closely, including outreach and providing training and information to staff about issues relating to the Royal Commission and legal issues likely to arise. In 2015 one of our Aboriginal engagement advisors attended the Indigenous Rugby League carnival at Dubbo over the October long week-end, working with the ATSILS Community Engagement worker throughout this event, attended by approximately 46,000 people.
- FVPLS and **knowmore** have collaboratively planned and undertaken numerous joint outreach community engagement events in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

# Where to from here?



The Royal Commission is due to hand its final report to the Governor General on 15 December 2017. **knowmore** is funded to deliver services until 31 March 2018, in order to allow sufficient time to provide assistance to those clients who contact our service in late 2017.

We anticipate that we will remain in a period of peak service delivery for much of the 2016/17 year. In particular, significant resources will continue to be needed to support clients coming forward as a result of the Commission's prison engagement strategy and ongoing public hearings program.

Following the closure of private session registrations, survivors will still be able to engage with the Royal Commission through providing written statements, and the focus of **knowmore's** community engagement and outreach work, after 30 September 2016, will shift away from community education and information activities and more towards assisting individual clients.

Insights gained from our work, and particularly around our client's experiences and their needs, will continue to inform **knowmore's** submissions responding to the Royal Commission's Issues and Consultation Papers, and other law reform initiatives being undertaken by governments in response to the Commission's work.

We see that it is vitally important that the investment by Australia in the Royal Commission in turn results in the timely implementation of its recommendations, and the delivery of effective reforms that are to the benefit of survivors, and ultimately, the children of future generations. In particular, it is critical that the proposed Commonwealth Redress Scheme (CRS) is supported by government and non-government institutions, and that the scheme operates in a way that is independent and effective, minimising as far as possible any re-traumatisation of claimants.

It is also important that under the CRS claimants have access to independent and trauma-informed legal assistance, to help them make informed choices about what legal action to take, and to assist them with redress claims. Our experience in working with survivors over the past three years has conclusively demonstrated that no matter how much the processes of any legal scheme are simplified, the effects of the complex trauma resulting from childhood sexual abuse are such that many survivors will need legal, counselling and cultural support to effectively navigate the CRS and achieve a fair outcome. While claimants should be free to choose who supports them, the results obtained over the last three years by **knowmore** in working with survivors presents a strong case for the continuation of a national, free, trauma-informed and multidisciplinary community legal service dedicated to assisting with the legal and related needs of survivors.

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**"Thank you so much for the great work and words and deeds in support and understanding you have been putting into my case with me and for me, resulting greatly in the way I am feeling about myself today."**

**knowmore** client feedback

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# Where to from here?

In preparation for the eventual winding down of our service in 2018, **knowmore's** Perth office closed from 31 December 2016. We have carefully planned how ongoing services will be delivered to existing and future clients living in Western Australia after that date. Additionally, as the end of **knowmore's** activities in 2018 approaches, the service needs to carefully plan for this winding-down, including implementing actions to maintain staff engagement and retention, and service delivery, during the final phases of the service's life. An important aspect of this planning and implementation work, and one identified in the independent evaluation, is to capture and record information gained from **knowmore's** operations that may inform and assist the community legal sector and other services in the future. This work will be a continuing focus as the service moves towards the end of its activities in 2018.

There is also a continuing need to ensure that clients who have been assisted by **knowmore** are linked with appropriate service providers to address their ongoing support needs, including in relation to future legal assistance. In this context, some of our compensation panel firms are reaching capacity, so additional suitable providers will continue to be sought in 2016/17, through the identification of, and liaison with, suitable lawyers and law firms.

The independent evaluation work has provided an opportunity for **knowmore** to review its performance, assess its service delivery model and identify further opportunities for improvement. The findings of all evaluation reports have informed our strategic and service planning and will continue to inform our approach and our planning work. The first three evaluation reports each contained a number of recommendations, which have been adopted and are being implemented. This work will continue in 2016/17.

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 clinical educator at a hospital...

"The team came back talking about the presentation given by the **knowmore** counsellor and lawyer and all had glowing praise in terms of the information provided plus the style of the presentation itself."

From a client to a lawyer and counsellor...

"I just wanted to thank both of you for your time yesterday, I appreciated your empathy and support and cannot emphasize enough how well suited you both are to the work you undertake."



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

**Blue Knot Foundation**

1300 657 380  
<http://www.blueknot.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>

**Survivors & Mates Support Network (SAMSN)**

1800 472 676  
[www.samsn.org.au](http://www.samsn.org.au)

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## 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>

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

1800 099 340

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

1800 605 762



**knowmore**

Free legal help to navigate  
the Royal Commission

**knowmore** has been established by the National Association of Community Legal Centres with funding from the Australian Government represented by the Attorney-General's Department.