

## Final Evaluation Report

### EVALUATION OF **KNOWMORE** LEGAL SERVICE

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Prepared by Effective Change Pty Ltd  
for **knowmore** Legal Service  
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## Disclaimer

The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the **knowmore** Legal Service.

Report commissioned by **knowmore** Legal Service



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# Acronyms

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<b>AEA</b>	ATSI engagement advisor
<b>AGD</b>	Attorney-General's Department
<b>ATSI</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
<b>ATSILS</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and linguistically diverse
<b>CLC</b>	Community Legal Centre
<b>DSS</b>	Department of Social Services
<b>FCLC</b>	Federation of Community Legal Centres
<b>FVPLS</b>	Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>KIMS</b>	<b>knowmore</b> Information Management System
<b>KM</b>	<b>knowmore</b>
<b>KMS</b>	<b>knowmore</b> Sub-committee
<b>NACLC</b>	National Association of Community Legal Centres
<b>NFVPLS</b>	National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
<b>RC</b>	The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
<b>SW</b>	Support worker (social worker or counsellor)
<b>TI</b>	Trauma-informed
<b>WHS</b>	Workplace Health and Safety

# Use of terms

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## **Cultural safety and cultural security**

There is no single fixed and agreed definition of these terms, and it is outside the scope of this evaluation to establish these definitions.

The intention of both terms in a service delivery context is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members receive services from an organisation which demonstrates respect of culture and delivers services in ways which ensure the safety and respect of clients, from staff who are culturally competent.

The **knowmore** ATSI engagement team preferred the term ‘cultural security’ making the distinction that, in their interpretation, connections to their communities, families, traditions and country are what provides and nourishes their ‘cultural safety’. ‘Cultural security’ on the other hand is interpreted as the conditions that an organisation such as **knowmore** creates as a service provider and an employer and provides to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and staff.

However, both terms are acceptable, and both terms are used throughout this report.

## **Outreach and community engagement**

Outreach in the community legal sector is generally defined as the delivery of legal advice and clinics off-site. The term ‘community engagement’ generally applies to provision of information (for example, about the Royal Commission, or about the work of **knowmore** or a related topic) at a community event or forum.

Whilst **knowmore** conducts specific outreach activities, where lawyers provide legal information to individuals, the distinctions between community engagement and outreach can sometimes become blurred as people attending community events may approach **knowmore** staff seeking information on individual enquiries. In these instances, when possible, **knowmore** staff will respond to the individual enquiries, and ensure that the person can contact **knowmore**, or be contacted (if they consent to providing their contact details), so that the enquiry can be followed-up.

Established in mid-2013, **knowmore** is an independent service giving free legal advice to people who are considering telling their story or providing information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse ('the Royal Commission') **knowmore** is a program of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department (AGD) until March 2018.

***knowmore's** mission is to help each person who comes to us:*

- *understand the powers and procedures of the Royal Commission*
- *understand the legal issues and legal options relevant to him or her*
- *feel supported to make 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.*

Home page, **knowmore** website,  
[www.knowmore.org.au](http://www.knowmore.org.au)

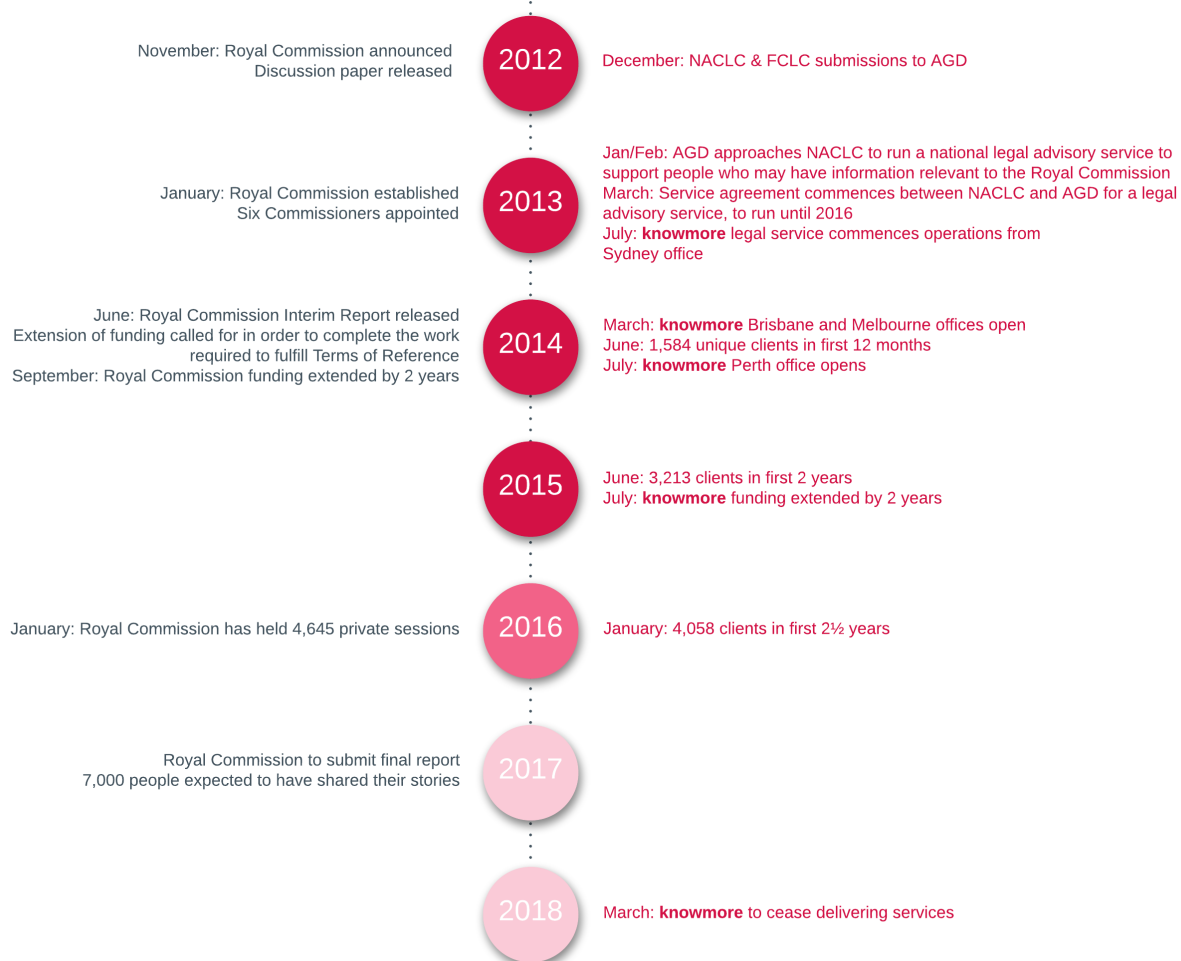
The Royal Commission was appointed in January 2013 to enquire into how institutions like schools, churches, sports clubs and government organisations have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse and will report to the Federal Government in December 2017. The terms of reference (set out in the Letters Patent), require the Royal Commission, through private sessions and public hearings:

- to bear witness to the abuse and trauma inflicted on children who suffered sexual abuse in an institutional context
- to identify and focus their inquiry and recommendations on systemic issues
- to consider justice for victims.

The Royal Commission is approaching its task in three ways:

- Private sessions
- Public hearings
- Research and policy

## Royal Commission & **knowmore** timeline .....



# Executive Summary

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When the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse ('the Royal Commission') was established, the number of people sexually abused as children in institutions, the number of people prepared to come forward to share their story and the extent of under-reporting of abuse was not known. By the time the Royal Commission finishes in 2017, it is anticipated that close to 7,000 people will have shared their stories.

The establishment of **knowmore** in 2013 represents the first time the Australian Government has funded an independent, national community legal service to operate alongside a Royal Commission. It is the first national community legal service to operate with offices in multiple capital cities, offering face-to-face and telephone consultations, and outreach activities in every state and territory.

**knowmore** is time-limited, issue-specific, responds to a specific event (the Royal Commission) and represents a new model of funding a legal service through an existing peak body (NACLC).

Commencing in 2014, the evaluation of **knowmore** was aligned with the organisation's four strategic objectives:

- Widely accessible, trauma-informed and culturally safe legal and support service
- Strong organisational partnerships that extend our influence and impact
- A strong and influential voice for systemic change
- A thriving and effective organisation.

The evaluation 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. 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, are important outcomes of the evaluation.

## How knowmore works

**knowmore's** client group is people who fall within the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference. They may:

- be considering engaging with the Royal Commission
- be in the process of engaging
- have completed their engagement with the Royal Commission.

People contact **knowmore** seeking advice and assistance on a wide range of matters relating to the Royal Commission. For most clients, their first contact with **knowmore** is via the 1800 telephone number but they may also simply walk into a **knowmore** office, make contact with a **knowmore** duty lawyer during the initial days of a Royal Commission public hearing, or engage with **knowmore** during an outreach activity in the community.



**knowmore** does not represent clients before hearings of the Royal Commission or undertake legal action for compensation claims. To assist clients with these legal needs, **knowmore** has established two panels of lawyers, one for legal representation and one for compensation/redress. Lawyers and firms on these panels have been selected on the basis of relevant expertise and experience of successfully working with the client group. Clients who have decided to pursue a claim for compensation or redress are supported by **knowmore** in gathering their documentation and preparation of a brief, to reduce time and costs to pursue the claim.

## Key Evaluation Findings

### Delivering widely accessible legal and support services

The evaluation found that **knowmore** services are widely accessible through the 1800 advice line and services delivered from its four capital city offices, supplemented by an active outreach program which pays particular attention to reaching regional and remote locations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, and states and territories without a **knowmore** office. Plain English and accessible information is provided on **knowmore's** website. Offices have disability access, and telephone or face-to-face interpreters are engaged when required. When needed and possible, **knowmore** staff visit clients incapacitated by their experiences at a preferred location.

More significantly, to increase access and reduce known barriers to accessing legal services **knowmore** has instituted practices focusing on reducing the risk of trauma for clients such as:

- having lawyers answer telephone calls which eliminates the need for clients to re-tell their story, ensures that the client is talking directly to someone who can assist their enquiry, demonstrates respect to people who often have a lifetime's experience of not being listened to or believed, and from a legal perspective, enables an early decision on issues of legal conflict
- providing access to a social worker/counsellor and/or an ATSI engagement advisor to debrief all conversations, receive referrals to support services and receive follow-up checks on wellbeing
- providing warm referrals for clients to lawyers or other support services which again reduces the need for detailed recounting of traumatic events.

Client data supports the finding of accessibility with:

- assistance provided to **4056** unique clients (between July 2013 up until December 2015), comprising 56% males and 43% females, with ages ranging from younger than 18 years to over 86 years old and people from every state and territory
- provision of direct advice and information to 1,622 clients attending outreach events
- conduct of 944 outreach events across Australia between July 2013 and December 2015
- reaching hard-to-reach groups, with:
  - 20% of clients identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
  - 7% of clients reporting being homeless
  - 5% of clients reporting having a mental illness or physical disability
  - 4% of clients either in juvenile detention or prison.

### Delivering a trauma-informed legal and support service

**knowmore** has developed a service model which integrates social workers and counsellors, and ATSI engagement advisors with lawyers to form client service teams and has explicitly adopted the principles of trauma-informed care and service delivery. Applying to both clients and staff, these principles are: Safety, Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration and Empowerment.

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*'.

Providing a trauma-informed service was found to be an organising principle for **knowmore**, and is systematically and coherently implemented in:

- workplace health and safety systems and practices
- organisational policies and procedures
- human resource management systems and practices
- workplace culture and environment.

### **Delivering culturally secure legal and support services**

The evaluation found that in order to deliver culturally secure legal and support services, **knowmore**:

- recruited staff with extensive experience of working with ATSI and/or vulnerable populations
- provides orientation and on-going cultural competence training for all staff
- employs five ATSI engagement advisors (one per office and two advisors in the Sydney office) who form the organisation's ATSI engagement team. Team members come from communities across Australia, and the team includes men and women so that men's and women's cultural business can be supported in culturally secure ways.
- has cooperative delivery arrangements with relevant ATSI legal services and a strong relationship with the Royal Commission's Community engagement team.

In addition to directly supporting clients to access **knowmore**, the ATSI engagement team:

- are always involved in visits to ATSI communities
- provides advice on community protocols and needs and on the conduct of culturally safe and appropriate consultations with ATSI communities
- provides secondary consultations to colleagues and referral organisations.

ATSI clients have consistently made up between 18-20% of all **knowmore** clients. While this figure speaks to the sadness of the community's over-representation amongst those sexually abused as children in institutions, it also highlights **knowmore's** success in reaching community members, and credibility with communities. Through the fully integrated ATSI engagement team:

- clients have access to a culturally safe and appropriate service
- mainstream organisations can refer their ATSI clients to **knowmore** with confidence, and seek secondary consultations on cultural issues
- the work of staff has deepened and strengthened in terms of cultural practice and understanding
- the management team applies a cultural lens to all decisions, systems and work practices
- **knowmore** has the credibility to advocate for culturally informed practices, such as the inclusion of the engagement team in the work of Royal Commission in prisons
- **knowmore** can contribute to, and share knowledge around culturally-informed legal practice informed by the practical experience and learnings from a significant ATSI client base.

## Strong organisational partnerships that extend influence and impact

**knowmore** has developed close working relationships with key stakeholders, with the Royal Commission, its legal team and call centre service, being primary stakeholders. **knowmore** works with other organisations to support individual clients, community engagement, sector and agency liaison and to support sector learning and knowledge. The top referral source in to **knowmore** is the Royal Commission (39%), and the top referral destination for clients is private lawyers (36%).

The overwhelming majority of stakeholders consulted for the evaluation reported that their working relationship with **knowmore** is both efficient and effective, and staff are professional and helpful.

The outcomes of strong working relationships have been found to provide benefits to:

- **clients:** through strengthened responses, reduced risks of re-traumatisation; ability to separate therapeutic relationships from legal advice relationships; better quality of representation because lawyers and support services are ‘talking together’
- **agencies:** through providing non-legal agencies access to specialised legal knowledge and to **knowmore’s** ATSI engagement team; reducing the workload for counselling and support agencies by having a single access point for legal information and referrals
- **service system:** through information and resource sharing and enhanced cooperation
- **community:** through joint work between the Royal Commission, **knowmore** and service providers giving communities access to well-informed advice and the opportunity to learn about the Royal Commission in a safe way.

## Voice for change

**knowmore** was found to be making important contributions to policy and law reform at the Commonwealth and state levels, and within institutions. **knowmore’s** public submissions to the Royal Commission and other public enquiries articulate the unique insights developed through the organisation’s collective, multi-disciplinary knowledge. They also importantly include the voice of clients in their submissions. These perspectives will contribute to shaping the agenda for change, particularly through informing the Royal Commission’s recommendations. **knowmore** has also assisted some clients to prepare their individual submissions in response to Issues Papers, demonstrating the organisation’s commitment to empowering clients.

**knowmore** is active in the public realm, contributing to practice and system knowledge through conference and public presentations, and the insights of **knowmore** are sought by governments and organisations grappling with responding in a legal context to the needs of complex clients.

Bringing knowledge from its multi-disciplinary approach, **knowmore** has contributed to practice changes in the Royal Commission, and developed new practices to support clients in collaboration with the Royal Commission.

Staff reported to the evaluation that their practice is evolving and deepening as result of their collaboration with other professions. Lawyers in particular reported that they were developing:

- a deeper understanding of trauma in the context of client/lawyer interactions
- more sensitive and trauma-informed approaches to engaging with trauma-affected clients
- more culturally nuanced understandings of engaging with ATSI clients
- a deeper understanding of inter-generational transfer of trauma in ATSI communities
- the importance of a careful legal triage approach
- an understanding of the importance of self-care, and
- a better understanding of the risks of vicarious trauma on individuals and the workplace.

## Organisational effectiveness

In two and a half years, **knowmore** has established four capital city offices and recruited a full complement of staff (currently 46 staff). The organisation has assisted over 4,000 clients, and is responding to approximately 1,600 clients per annum. It has established strong relationships with the Royal Commission, and strong networks across service systems and with government departments.

**knowmore** is a well-established and key member of the network of services supporting survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. This has enabled and supported:

- more effective functioning of the Royal Commission
- the development of pathways for clients to move from the Royal Commission to a supported process to pursue claims for compensation or redress
- the creation of a national body of knowledge about victim redress and compensation options
- more efficient operation of support services by providing a single, reliable source of legal information and advice.

## Has knowmore made a difference?

The central, and final question for the evaluation is whether **knowmore** has ‘made a difference’. Feedback from the extensive range of service providers and legal practitioners consulted was unequivocal that the service has had a positive and demonstrable impact on the 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.

Without **knowmore**, stakeholders believed that:

- client disempowerment and further traumatisation would continue
- there would not be the same safety for clients
- clients would be less prepared when they come forward
- people would either not have access to lawyers at all, and not have their questions answered, or may end up with lawyers who are not trauma-informed, are overly litigious, or unscrupulous or unethical, or through whatever circumstances would not act in the best interests of the clients, and as a consequence, would submit clients, often for another time, to a disempowering and negative experience.

In addition to making a difference for clients, stakeholders reported that:

- the Royal Commission could not have functioned as well without **knowmore**
- the service has made positive impacts on the Royal Commission and its processes
- the service is critical because vulnerable people in particular need access to free and appropriate legal advice and to know their legal rights and options
- support services would not have been able to respond to clients’ needs for legal information and legal referrals, and therefore would not have been able to function as effectively
- other legal services would not have been able to meet demand without **knowmore** and costs to individuals and support services would have been astronomical
- a dedicated legal service has been essential because it is a specialist area of legal advice, with few specialists operating in private practice.

While **knowmore’s** model is still evolving, it has developed innovative practices and approaches which have the potential to inform the design and operation of integrated legal services in the future, particularly where there is an intersection between legal needs and the experience of trauma.

### Key messages:

1. To create a legal service which has the understanding, knowledge and experience to properly work with groups with extraordinary needs, requires a special response. In the case of **knowmore**, multi-disciplinary teams working in an organisation which has planned and scrutinised its work, and systems to ensure that they are trauma-informed and culturally secure, has been transformative and key to providing access to justice for survivors, and for ensuring that their pathway to justice is a sensitive and compassionate one.
2. To be genuinely widely accessible to a cohort of people sexually abused as children within an institutional setting, an organisation needs to understand the profound impact this experience has on people's lives. While the impacts are not uniform and people respond and cope in different ways, overtones of institutionalised approaches can be harmful. Organisations need to offer a wide range of methods to reach people, be sensitive to potential psychological triggers and adapt processes accordingly.
3. Understanding the profound and life-long impacts of childhood trauma has been central to **knowmore's** approach to creating a safe and accessible organisation for clients. **knowmore** has recruited staff and designed its systems from the ground up to be trauma-informed.
4. Appreciating and conceptualising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge as its own discipline has supported **knowmore's** sophisticated engagement strategy. **knowmore** has recruited a diverse, national staff team which provides greater knowledge of, and connections to, communities. The team structure provides cultural support to individual team members, and the leadership role ensures that cultural issues are maintained on the management agenda.

The organisation's deeply felt commitment to engaging with and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is also reflected through its values, its practices and the recruitment of all staff.

5. Productive organisational partnerships are supported by effective, two-way communication. With an initiative such as the Royal Commission which crosses multiple sectors, it is necessary to get to know other partners, and to adapt to the different communication styles and cultures.
6. **knowmore's** model has application in other legal settings and with other client groups, but would require replication of a similar, integrated organisational structure, with in-house teams of professionals working in a multi-disciplinary model. Successful replication would rely on careful planning, a commitment to trauma-informed service delivery and genuine openness to other professional frameworks. A supportive, and client-centred culture creates the right environment for rigorous cross-disciplinary discussions, which must be anticipated with an integrated model.
7. The effectiveness of **knowmore** as an organisation is derived through the combination of appropriate resourcing, a highly-principled and values driven approach and an adaptable, genuinely multi-disciplinary staff team, well-supported with in-house corporate resources.

'What **knowmore** does should be long term and is good for the Australian legal system.

Private lawyer, Representation panel

# Introduction

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Established in mid-2013, **knowmore** is an independent service giving free legal advice to people who are considering telling their story or providing information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse ('the Royal Commission').

This report presents the results of the evaluation of **knowmore**, conducted between June 2014 and December 2015.

**knowmore** is a program of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department (AGD) to deliver services until March 2018.

In establishing this time-limited and issue-specific legal service whose major client group would be survivors of child sexual abuse, from across the country, it was known that a new approach would be required.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples on every indicator of disadvantage, and their over-representation in institutions as a result of previous policies of child-removal served to predict that this group would once again be over-represented.

The service therefore developed a model which integrated social workers and counsellors, and ATSI engagement advisors with lawyers to form client service teams.

When the Royal Commission was established, the number of people sexually abused as children in institutions, the number of people prepared to come forward to share their story and the extent of under-reporting of abuse was not known.

With over 1,700 people sharing their personal stories in private sessions in the first years of the Royal Commission, and thousands registered to share their story, the government responded by extending the final reporting timeline from 2015 to December 2017.

Because of the extension...there will be an additional 30 public hearings, there will be the opportunity for an additional 3,000 private sessions, bringing the total number to 7,000 and the effective use of 52 research projects...All of this will build a much fuller and more complete picture of the scourge of institutional child abuse, but, most importantly, it will give those who need to tell their stories the opportunity to do so.

Senator George Brandis, Attorney-General  
addressing the Senate on the extension of the  
Royal Commission, September 2014

By the time the Royal Commission finishes in 2017, it is anticipated that close to 7,000 people will have shared their stories.

The number of clients accessing **knowmore**

has followed a similar trajectory. By the end of 2015, the service had supported over 4,000 individual clients.

The Australian government's investment in the Royal Commission and in **knowmore** has been substantial, and represents efforts to repair the damage of years past, and to prevent its occurrence in the future.

One of the purposes of the evaluation of **knowmore** includes providing an account of the work undertaken through this investment.

Of equal importance, the evaluation has sought to examine how this service 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.

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, are additional aims of the evaluation.

The Royal Commission estimates that up to 60,000 survivors of childhood sexual abuse nationally would be eligible claimants for redress, should a national scheme be implemented.<sup>1</sup> Obviously the lessons learnt in the development of **knowmore** should serve to guide future provision of legal advice to this group of people.

**knowmore's** mission is to help each person who comes to us:

- understand the powers and procedures of the Royal Commission
- understand the legal issues and legal options relevant to him or her
- feel supported to make 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.

Home page, **knowmore** website,  
[www.knowmore.org.au](http://www.knowmore.org.au)

## Structure of this report

This report:

- Provides background information relevant to understanding the work of **knowmore**
- Presents **knowmore's** model for delivering legal information and advice to enquirers and clients across the country
- Reports the evaluation findings on:
  - service delivery
  - organisational partnerships and working relationships
  - **knowmore's** work as a voice for change
  - organisational effectiveness.



# Background

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The role and functions of **knowmore** are inextricably linked to that of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This section provides an overview of the Royal Commission's work, and the history of **knowmore's** establishment. It also introduces and explains in summary the concept of 'trauma-informed service delivery', and how this applies to **knowmore's** work.

## The Royal Commission

Understanding the Royal Commission's purpose, and how it works is essential for understanding the work of **knowmore**.

The Royal Commission was appointed in January 2013 to enquire into how institutions like schools, churches, sports clubs and government organisations have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse.

The terms of reference (set out in the Letters Patent), require the Royal Commissioners, through private sessions and public hearings:

- to bear witness to the abuse and trauma inflicted on children who suffered sexual abuse in an institutional context
- to identify and focus their inquiry and recommendations on systemic issues
- to consider justice for victims.

The Royal Commission is approaching its task in three ways:

- *Private sessions* – a unique feature of this Commission which enables survivors and others affected by abuse to speak directly and confidentially with a Commissioner about their experiences in a private and supportive setting.
- *Public hearings* – a formal process used to examine abuse within a particular

institution or a number of institutions, during which the Royal Commission receives evidence following investigation, research and preparation. A range of institution types across Australia are examined through public hearings.

- *Research and policy* – a research program that includes research projects, roundtable discussions and issues papers, focussing on prevention, identification, response and justice for victims.

In 2014, the Federal Government agreed to the Royal Commission's request to extend its schedule and reporting date by two years, to December 2017.

The Royal Commission's Chair and five Commissioners are supported by 250 staff. As at 1 February 2016, the Royal Commission had handled 28,402 calls, received 15,676 letters and emails and held 4,707 private sessions.<sup>2</sup>

## Establishment of **knowmore**

In preparation for the Royal Commission, the Federal Government released a discussion paper seeking input on the Terms of Reference and other issues relating to its establishment. Submissions from the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and the Federation of Community



Legal Centres (FCLC) emphasised the need for an independent legal advice service that provided:

- effective victim participation
- cultural safety
- multi-disciplinary services to meet non-legal needs
- staff with experience working with victims of child sexual abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse clients, and clients with cognitive or communication disabilities.

NACLC also proposed that the legal service:

- adopt principles of trauma-informed practice and service delivery
- ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and include ATSI cultural liaison officers in order to provide access and cultural safety for community members considering approaching the Royal Commission
- be widely accessible across the country, providing a nationally free and accessible telephone service from a 1800 number
- facilitate information sharing and collaboration.

Following the consultation period, NACLC was approached by the Federal Attorney-General's Department (AGD) to establish a national legal advice service to support people who may have information relevant to the Royal Commission.

Funding for the service was confirmed in 2013 and **knowmore** was established as a program of NACLC in March of that year. Initially funded until 2016, **knowmore** is now funded to deliver services to March 2018 to align with the extension of the Royal Commission.

## Implementation

Senior **knowmore** staff were recruited in early 2013 and services commenced in July, including the national 1800 telephone advice line, from **knowmore's** Sydney office. Over the next twelve months, offices were established in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth and staff numbers increased from 15 to 40.

## Governance

**knowmore** is governed by the **knowmore** sub-committee (KMS), a sub-committee of the NACLC Board. **knowmore's** executive team, comprising the Executive Officer, Principal Lawyer and two General Managers, are non-voting members of the KMS. The KMS meets regularly and receives reports on operations, service delivery, financial expenditure, infrastructure, recruitment and staffing matters and risk management. The KMS oversees strategic issues and led the development of **knowmore's** Strategic Plan.

## Trauma-informed services

**knowmore** has explicitly adopted the principles of trauma-informed care and service delivery. These principles apply both to clients and staff. The principles of trauma-informed care are:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment.

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.'<sup>3</sup>

Trauma-informed services are 'designed specifically to avoid retraumatizing those who come seeking assistance, as well as staff working in service settings.'

*Cultures of Trauma-Informed Care*  
Roger D. Falloot & Maxine Harris

# Evaluation of knowmore

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An independent evaluation was a requirement of **knowmore's** funding agreement. This was commissioned in 2014 and Effective Change was engaged to undertake this task after a competitive tendering process.

## About the evaluation

The goals of the evaluation were to:

- assess the performance of the service in relation to its strategic objectives
- document the outcomes and impacts of the service on individuals, families, communities and institutions, and
- assess this unique service delivery model, investigating if it works, and if so, how and why, or alternatively, if not, why not.

The evaluation was aligned with **knowmore's** four strategic objectives for the organisation:

- Widely accessible, trauma-informed and culturally safe legal and support service
- Strong organisational partnerships that extend our influence and impact
- A strong and influential voice for systemic change
- A thriving and effective organisation.

## Interim reports

Three interim evaluation reports have been delivered:

- **Interim Report 1, September 2014**  
The first report on the evaluation focused on **knowmore's** strategic objectives relating to service delivery and organisational effectiveness, in particular exploring **knowmore's** work in terms of being a '*widely accessible, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate legal and support service*'.

- **Interim Report 2, March 2015**

The second evaluation phase and report focused on organisational partnerships and working relationships, exploring **knowmore's** objective to establish '*strong organisational partnerships that extend our influence and impact*'.

- **Interim Report 3, September 2015**

The third phase of the evaluation focused on **knowmore's** work in terms of being '*a strong and influential voice for change*' - a slight refinement of the original strategic objective which is expressed as '*a strong and influential voice for systemic change*.' With this refinement, approved by the KMS, the evaluation could also explore whether **knowmore's** model of operation itself is making a contribution to how legal services are delivered, particularly to people who have complex needs.

## Implementation of recommendations

All recommendations for improvement included in the interim evaluation reports have been accepted by **knowmore** and the KMS. The majority of recommendations have been implemented, and work is progressing on the remainder.

## Methodology

The evaluation has been undertaken as a program evaluation, with a process or formative component, and a focus on outcomes and impacts. It has been informed by Realist evaluation, as an approach recommended for ‘evaluating new initiatives or programs that seem to work but where, how and for whom is not yet understood.’<sup>14</sup> A program logic and evaluation framework were developed and appended to Interim Report 1. The evaluation has employed a range of methods, outlined below.

### Literature scans

At each phase, **knowmore’s** submissions to the Royal Commission and selected reports, research and Issues Paper produced by the Royal Commission have been scanned. Other relevant literature scanned and integrated in reports included literature relating to:

- Trauma-informed care and service delivery
- Access to justice/provision of legal services to people with complex needs
- Provision of legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Provision of legal services through integrated and multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary approaches
- Organisational partnership work.

### Interviews

- Face-to-face interviews with 32 **knowmore** staff (80% of staff at that time), from the four offices, using an adapted version of Fallot and Harris’ self-assessment tool for creating cultures of trauma-informed care.
- Face-to-face and telephone interviews with 102 staff from 82 organisations with working relationships with **knowmore** (out of the 200 organisations then on **knowmore’s** database, or 41%). The stakeholder sample included national organisations, and organisations from every state and territory, and a range of organisation types including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific, legal

centres, government departments, private lawyers, the Royal Commission, support services and survivor-specific organisations.

- Face-to-face and telephone interviews with 18 selected stakeholders in relation to inter-disciplinary legal service provision, including academics, institutions, legal centres and community organisations.
- Six group interviews with mixed-discipline groups of **knowmore** staff, involving 26 staff members from the four offices.
- Group interviews with the ATSI engagement team, and the KMS.

### Service data

Service data (non-identifiable) collated on the **knowmore** Information Management System (KIMS) has been reviewed for each phase of the evaluation. This dataset includes client demographics, service provision information (type, number of services etc) and aggregate referral sources, and referrals made.

### Methodological limitations

The evaluators aimed to include direct consultations with clients as a key stakeholder group. Opportunities for this were explored during each evaluation phase, but did not eventuate. As any contact with clients regarding their legal matters (by mail, phone or face-to-face) can trigger memories of past abuse and harm, **knowmore’s** trauma-informed good practice is to have planned, supported contact with clients whenever possible and to actively limit non-essential contact with clients.

The evaluators and **knowmore** understood the value that client feedback would provide to the evaluation. However, it was agreed that the processes required to invite and recruit clients to participate in the evaluation had an unacceptably high potential for triggering trauma responses and causing unnecessary stress to a vulnerable client group. Client perspectives of **knowmore** were however collected through consultations with a wide range of professionals and service providers.

# How knowmore works

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**knowmore** is a unique service on a number levels and responds to a unique set of circumstances. This section of the report describes how **knowmore** works.

## What makes **knowmore** unique?

The establishment of **knowmore** represents the first time the Australian Government has funded an independent, national community legal service to operate alongside a Royal Commission. It is the first national community legal service to operate with offices in multiple capital cities, offering face-to-face and telephone consultations, and undertaking outreach activities in every state and territory.

**knowmore** is time-limited, issue-specific, responds to a specific event (the Royal Commission) and represents a new model of funding a legal service through an existing peak body (NACLC).

## Who does **knowmore** work with, and how?

**knowmore's** client group is people who fall within the Commission's Terms of Reference. They may:

- be considering engaging with the Royal Commission
- be in the process of engaging
- have completed their engagement with the Royal Commission.

## Pathways into **knowmore**

For most clients, first contact with **knowmore** is via the 1800 telephone number or through an email enquiry. Clients can also simply walk in to one of **knowmore's** four offices.

Telephone calls to **knowmore** are answered directly by a lawyer. This eliminates the need for the client to tell their story multiple times, and ensures that the client is talking directly to someone who can start assisting them with their enquiry. This practice demonstrates a mark of respect to people who have experienced significant levels of trauma, and the research indicates, have experienced their story not being listened to, believed or acknowledged.

From a legal perspective, talking directly and confidentially to a lawyer enables an early decision to be made about issues of legal conflict involving the client or **knowmore**. This is an important practice issue, as people adversely named as perpetrators, or people who are both victims and perpetrators of sexual assault within an institutional setting may contact **knowmore**.

All clients are offered the opportunity to either include a social worker/counsellor in the phone consultation with the lawyer, or to speak to the social worker/counsellor after talking to the lawyer. The social worker/counsellor can debrief the conversation, check on the client's levels of support, make referrals to support services, and/or offer a follow-up call to check on wellbeing.

Clients who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander are offered the opportunity to either include an ATSI engagement advisor in the phone consultation

with the lawyer, or to debrief after the conversation with the lawyer. The ATSI engagement advisor can check on the client's support needs, provide referrals to community and support services, and conduct follow-up checks on the client's wellbeing.

Phone calls coming in through the 1800 number are automatically routed to one of **knowmore's** four offices. Each office attends to calls from their own state and one other state or territory. Overseas calls are directed to the Sydney office, which has the largest team. A team of lawyers, and at least one social worker/counsellor, and one ATSI engagement advisor is located at each office.

**knowmore** conducts a duty lawyer service during the initial days of a Royal Commission public hearing, and clients or their support people may connect with **knowmore** through this service.

Sometimes, clients' first contact with **knowmore** occurs after their engagement with the Royal Commission. Typically this is after participating in a private session and the

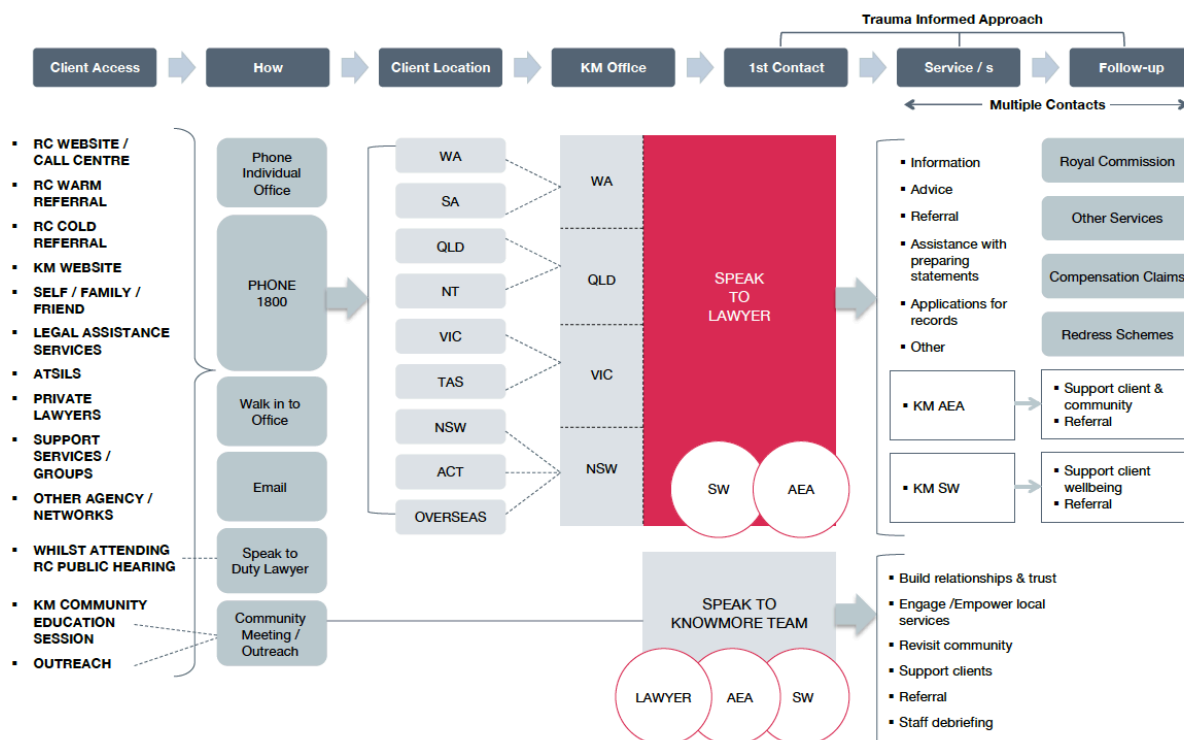
Royal Commission has referred the client to **knowmore** to seek information or advice about a claim for compensation or redress.

Clients may also first engage with **knowmore** during an outreach activity. **knowmore** undertakes a range of outreach activities, such as participating in community sessions with the Royal Commission, conducting outreach activities at the request of a community, or conducting community education sessions.

Most outreach activities are conducted or attended by a multi-disciplinary team of **knowmore** staff comprising a lawyer, a social worker/counsellor and an ATSI engagement advisor, providing participants with access to all of **knowmore's** supports. The composition of the team may vary, depending on the needs generated by the outreach request. For example, if the request came from a counselling support service, **knowmore** counsellors may not be required.

Figure 1 below shows the pathways clients may follow to engage with **knowmore**.

**Figure 1: Pathways into knowmore**



## What legal advice and assistance does knowmore provide?

People contact **knowmore** seeking advice and assistance on a wide range of matters relating to the Royal Commission. After more than two years of operation, it is known that people not only seek assistance to navigate their entry to the Royal Commission, but also to review their next steps after engaging with the Royal Commission, for example, by participating in a private session.

Many client enquiries are straightforward and others complicated. Figure 2 shows an indicative range of enquiries and the steps **knowmore** takes in response. Some enquiries are made anonymously. In these cases only general information can be provided. Some enquiries relate to matters outside the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference, such as the experience of child sexual abuse within a biological family. In such instances, the lawyer answering calls will ascertain the nature of the concerns and make appropriate referrals. The caller would still be offered the opportunity to talk to a social worker/counsellor or an ATSI engagement advisor, and receive referrals to appropriate support services if needed.

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, and receive numerous letters of advice.

**knowmore** endeavors to conduct a legal conflict check for all enquirers seeking legal assistance. If a conflict is established, **knowmore** provides the enquirer with information about their legal options and refers the person to appropriate lawyers/legal practices. At times it is not possible to conduct an immediate conflict check, such as during outreach visits in remote locations or when a caller refuses to provide identifying details. In these instances, a conservative approach is taken, limiting support to legal information only, until the conflict check has been undertaken.

**knowmore** does not represent clients before

hearings of the Royal Commission or undertake legal action for compensation claims. To assist clients with these legal needs, **knowmore** has established two panels of lawyers, one for legal representation and one for compensation/redress. Lawyers and firms on these panels have been selected on the basis of relevant expertise and experience of successfully working with the client group. Legal firms on the compensation/redress panel must have at least ten years of experience providing legal services to victims of sexual abuse, operate on a no-win, no-fee basis and receive referrals from established survivor support services.

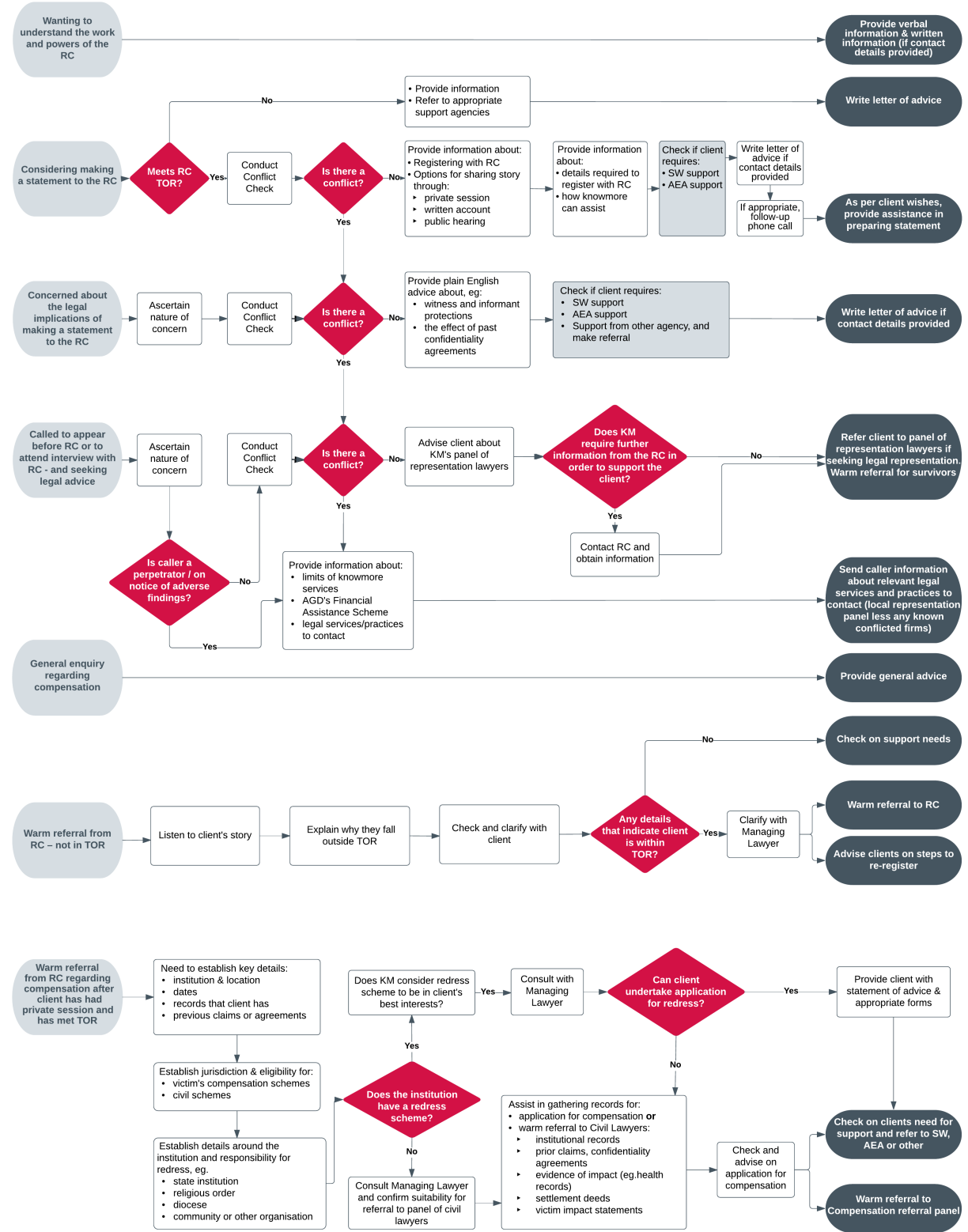
**knowmore** makes referrals to lawyers on the representation panel for witnesses participating in a public hearing and requiring representation. It is sometimes necessary to make these arrangements at short notice.

Clients seeking compensation or redress are referred to firms on **knowmore's** compensation/redress panel. Vulnerable clients are assisted through a 'warm referral' process to reduce time and costs to pursue the claim. To do this, **knowmore** lawyers assist the client's case by gathering together as much relevant documentation as possible. This includes documents such as birth certificates; educational or institutional records; police statements; health records; any previous agreements entered into and any other corroborating records. This exercise can become complex if, for example, records are no longer retained, the institution no longer exists, the client has changed their name or moved interstate, or needs to seek records from numerous institutions or states. The challenges can increase depending on the vulnerability and complexity of the client's personal circumstances. After collating records and preparing a brief, the **knowmore** lawyer arranges an initial consultation, and according to the client's wishes, may attend one or two consultations, until the client feels comfortable with the civil lawyer. A **knowmore** social worker and/or an ATSI engagement advisor may also attend if the client wishes.



**Figure 2: Range of client enquiries to knowmore and responses**

Nature of Client Enquiry



## Staff team and roles

**knowmore's** model in simple terms, includes a lawyer and support workers (social worker or counsellor) working together within a legal service and an ATSI engagement advisor who is available (with client consent) for clients who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This team structure is in place in all **knowmore** offices.

**knowmore** is led by an Executive Officer, supported by a Principal Lawyer and a General Manager (Operations) who is responsible for infrastructure and operational support, and a General Manager (Compliance and Reporting) who is responsible for business planning and reporting. There are also discipline team leaders for the support team and the ATSI engagement team. Line management is provided locally by the Managing Lawyers at each office location. Administrative and corporate staff (such as human resources, reception, finance and IT) complete the staff team. The organisation has 46 staff members.

Lawyers, social workers/counsellors and ATSI engagement advisors have most direct client contact, with the exception of reception staff who welcome clients attending a **knowmore** office and answer calls made directly to a **knowmore** office telephone number.

Selection criteria for all staff include prior experience working with victims of sexual assault or people who have suffered complex trauma. Irrespective of their level of client contact, all staff receive on-going trauma-informed training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence training. Support service staff and ATSI engagement advisors have responsibilities to support and mentor their **knowmore** colleagues in their discipline areas, as well as supporting clients.

In addition to service delivery responsibilities, **knowmore** responds to many Royal Commission issues papers, which is part of the Commission's research and policy program. To date, the Royal Commission has

released ten issues papers. A team of staff is assembled to research and draft **knowmore** submissions, which are then finalised through the executive team.

## Partnerships and work with other organisations

Through its service agreement with the AGD, **knowmore** is required to develop 'a close working relationship with key stakeholders and establish referral pathways'. The Royal Commission, its legal team and the call centre service retained by the Royal Commission are primary stakeholders, with approximately one third of referrals to **knowmore** coming from the Commission.

**knowmore** works with a range of other organisations for a variety of reasons.

### Supporting individual clients

Clients may be referred to **knowmore** from support, advocacy or legal services or other community agencies. **knowmore** also refers clients to support, advocacy or legal services, or other community or government agencies.

Most referrals from **knowmore** are made to a legal agency or a private solicitor to assist a client with a claim for compensation or redress, and/or to a support service.

In order to support effective referrals **knowmore** staff and various referring partners will often provide secondary consultations, and meet or teleconference to discuss complex or complicated client issues.

### Support community engagement

**knowmore** works in partnership and liaises with a range of organisations to organise community engagement activities. Community forums may be undertaken in partnership with the Royal Commission. **knowmore** may also be invited to undertake community-specific visits, e.g. to Aboriginal communities, or to prisons or to specific regions in preparation for the Royal Commission holding a public hearing in that region. In these instances, **knowmore** liaises with local service providers,



and other relevant agencies, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS).

### Supporting sector and agency liaison

**knowmore** is one of a wide range of services supporting people participating in, and/or affected by the work of the Royal Commission. In order to contribute to the effective operation of these services, there is a need for information-sharing and collaboration. **knowmore** will often attend, or make presentations to various forums and network meetings, education meetings and other consultations. At various times, **knowmore** will also contribute to meetings or forums organised by Commonwealth or state government departments.

### knowmore's working relationships

The literature recognises that partnerships

operate along a continuum, from networking through to collaboration.<sup>5</sup> The level, focus and depth of the interactions increase as the relationship moves through to collaboration. The table below applies this framework to **knowmore's** working relationships, showing the activities, ranging from networking to collaboration, which occur between **knowmore** and the various sectors.

### Supporting learning and knowledge

As an agency working in an area where new knowledge is being developed, **knowmore** contributes to knowledge-sharing through activities such as conference presentations, and participating in workshops and forums organised by professional or peak bodies. **knowmore** may also be invited to participate in special events, such as roundtable discussions organised by the Royal Commission.

**Figure 3: knowmore's working relationships**

Figure 3: knowmore's working relationships	Networking		Info/Education				Cooperation			Referrals		Collaboration		
	Attend same meetings / forums	Informal networking	Distribute brochures	Provide information sessions	km attends, presents information to professional networks	km attends, presents information to individual agencies	Information sharing	May use rooms for consultations (both agencies)	May use km rooms for consultation	Referrals to and from km (incl warm referrals)	Work closely on individual client referrals	Work closely on community visits	km convenes network, joint planning / projects	May be assisted by km staff (e.g. AEA, SW)
ATSI community organisations	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
ATSILS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Community Legal Centres	●	●	●	●	●		●			●	●	●		●
FVPLS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Government Departments	●				●		●							
Legal Aid Commissions		●	●		●		●	●		●	●			
Panel Lawyers		●	●		●		●		●	●	●			●
Royal Commission	●	●	●				●	●		●	●	●	●	
Statutory Authorities	●	●	●	●	●		●			●	●	●		
Support Services	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Survivor-specific organisations	●	●	●	●		●	●			●	●	●		●

## Impacts and outcomes:

# Service delivery

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This section of the report presents the evaluation results in relation to **knowmore's** work delivering a widely accessible, trauma-informed and culturally secure legal and support service.

### Widely accessible legal and support services

#### What was found?

**knowmore** provides its free, national legal advisory service by telephone, through a 1800 single point of entry telephone line, and through face-to-face consultations with individual clients.

**knowmore's** website provides information about its purpose; services; staff (with photos) by office location; information about, and links to the Royal Commission; information and links to a range of counselling and support services; resources and fact sheets; contact details and an automatic email enquiry option.

**knowmore** measures its performance in this area if services are 'targetted and accessible to vulnerable and hard-to-reach clients, with particular emphasis on reaching those least likely to be reached by other organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, prisoners and those in juvenile justice and immigration detention; people with an intellectual disability; people with mental health issues; people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and young people'. (**knowmore** Strategic Plan, 2014)

#### Barriers to access

Barriers to access to justice have been

catalogued in decades of legal research, and include cost, physical or geographic access and lack of access to information. In the circumstance of **knowmore's** target group, lifelong experiences of not being listened to or believed, or negative experiences arising from reaching legal settlements with institutions are additional barriers to their access to justice. Many eligible clients have also had negative experiences participating in previous Royal Commissions or state-based enquiries. The latter points apply particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, who may have participated in multiple enquiries.

#### Addressing barriers and increasing access

Funding provided by the Australian Government to support the work of the Royal Commission has enabled the provision of a free, national legal advisory service to eligible clients. At the same time, a financial assistance scheme was established for witnesses or people requested by the Royal Commission to attend an interview.

Additional strategies adopted by **knowmore** to reduce cost barriers include payment of photocopying and Freedom of Information fees for clients being assisted with a referral to a civil lawyer. Lawyers and legal firms on **knowmore's** compensation/redress panel operate on a no-win, no-fee basis. Assistance provided by **knowmore** to clients who wish to

pursue a claim for compensation or redress not only makes the process smoother for clients but also reduces time and legal fees. There is generally a warm referral made by **knowmore** to a civil lawyer.

Geographic barriers to access are addressed through the nationally accessible 1800 telephone advice line, with disability access and an after-hours messagebank service. The four state offices provide greater access for clients than a single national office would have provided. This is supplemented by **knowmore's** active outreach program, with particular attention paid to reaching regional and remote locations, including Aboriginal communities and states and territories without a **knowmore** office.

**knowmore's** outreach and community engagement program, with the Royal Commission, and independently, has also aimed to provide information to the community about the Royal Commission and **knowmore's** role supporting people to navigate the Commission.

A range of information is provided on **knowmore's** website, including submissions to the Royal Commission and 32 plain English fact sheets on a range of topics:

- *Taking care of you*
- *Supporting you* (outlining state and territory specific support services)
- *Legal issues*, including state and territory specific information about compensation
- *The Royal Commission*.

Information and community legal education about the service and the Royal Commission process is promulgated by **knowmore** through its engagements with referrers, such as survivor advocacy groups, support services and legal services.

**knowmore** has also implemented a range of strategies to address barriers which clients may experience through disability, age, frailty, concern about distress discussing the issues, or competency or capacity issues relating to the life-long affects of trauma. Practices focus

on providing safety for clients and helping where possible to sustain them through difficult processes. There is a focus on limiting the number of times a client needs to relate their story in order to reduce stress and distress. This occurs within **knowmore** and through warm referral processes with private lawyers and support services (always dependent on client consent). **knowmore** has also negotiated a protocol with the Royal Commission for **knowmore** and compensation/redress panel lawyers to be able to access private session recordings (with the consent of the client) to avoid re-traumatising clients through a further re-telling of their story. **knowmore** lawyers consciously avoid 'legalese' and in particular focus on explaining complex terms and concepts using clear, everyday language as far as possible.

**knowmore** offices have disability access and telephone interpreters or face to face interpreters can be engaged when needed. When required, and if feasible, staff (in pairs) will visit clients at home or a comfortable location if the client is unable to attend an office. Some clients, for example, can be so incapacitated by their experiences, that it is not possible for them to attend an office-based appointment, but they may be prepared to meet at the office of a trusted support service.

Fear of disclosure can concern clients. The option of making an anonymous telephone enquiry with immediate access to a lawyer can allay those concerns, as well as having information available on the website. Providing clients with immediate access to a counsellor/social worker to debrief difficult conversations or feelings of distress ensures that the service is accessible and supportive.

**knowmore** has implemented a range of strategies to ensure that the organisation is accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and that it provides a culturally competent, appropriate and safe environment. These are discussed further in this report under '*Culturally secure legal and support service*'.

## Outcomes

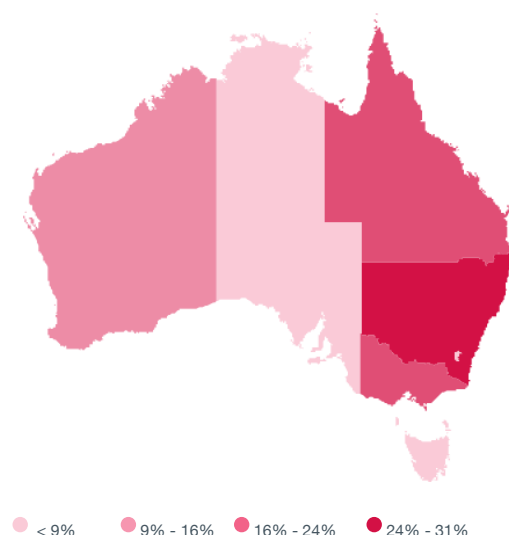
The accessibility of **knowmore** is demonstrated by the uptake of legal and support services. Between July 2013 when services commenced and December 2015 **knowmore** has assisted **4,056** unique clients. Over its first two years of operation **knowmore** provided advice to around 1,600 individuals per year. With 845 new clients between July and December 2015, this rate is likely to continue.

Based on data to 31 December 2015, the key demographics of **knowmore** clients include:

- **56%** male and **43%** female
- ages range from under 18 years to over 86 years
- **47%** of clients are aged between 46-65 years.

Clients come from all states and territories, with most clients based in New South Wales (**31%**), followed by Queensland (**22%**) and Victoria (**19%**). The heat map below shows the geographic distribution of clients.

**Figure 4:** Where **knowmore's** calls came from, July 2013 – December 2015



In terms of being accessible to vulnerable and hard to reach groups:

- **20%** of clients identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- **7%** of clients report being homeless

- **5%** of clients report having a mental illness or physical disability
- **4%** of clients are either in juvenile detention or prison.

**knowmore** has prioritised work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the service delivery data shows the success of this engagement, with 20% of clients identifying as ATSI, compared to 3% of the total population. At the same time this data indicates the disproportionate level of institutionalisation and experience of abuse in this community.

**knowmore's** work with prisoners has largely been coordinated with the Royal Commission's Prison Engagement Strategy, which to date has been delivered across all prisons in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. This strategy will be rolled out to other states and territories and it is anticipated that the number of prisoners engaging with **knowmore** will increase as the Royal Commission progresses this work.

Data relating to various characteristics of vulnerability is likely an under-representation for a number of reasons:

- the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients may be under-represented as Indigenous status is unspecified for 35% of clients
- as a free service, clients are not required to declare their income, and therefore receipt of a disability support pension as a proxy indicator is not used
- questions relating to vulnerability (e.g. disability, homelessness) can be 'triggering' for clients who have experienced trauma. While the database used by **knowmore** prompts collection of this data, in recognition that pressing the client for details may not be appropriate having regard to the client's safety, the database allows for the client record to be noted that this information was not provided.

In addition to contact with individual clients on the information and advice line, between July

2013 and December 2015 **knowmore** has:

- conducted or participated in **944** outreach events across Australia
- provided direct advice and information to **1,622** clients attending outreach events.

The number of outreach events that **knowmore** has participated in or conducted has increased by one and half times since the first year, and is continuing to increase.

**knowmore** staff have also accompanied **54** clients as a support person for a Royal Commission private session.

Up to December 2015, **knowmore** has provided **24,119** advices. The number of advices provided to clients has increased significantly since **knowmore** commenced, reflecting an increase in client numbers and presentations of more complex needs, and improvements in data collection and recording.

Whilst there is agreement that the true number of people in our community who have been sexually abused as children whilst in the care of an institution is not known, **knowmore's** 'reach' aligns well with the Royal Commission's statistics which shows that up to January 2016, the Commission had (in total):

- held 4,645 private sessions, and
- handled 27,985 calls.

**knowmore** staff emphasised that their practices are designed to limit distress to clients and provide them with a safe and supported experience. External stakeholders validated this, and highlighted the efforts of **knowmore** staff to support their clients, and that clients recognised and appreciated this.

### Lessons learnt along the way

Being flexible and adapting to fit the needs of the client group has been critical. For example, when **knowmore's** advice line opened to the public, calls were answered and a scripted approach was initially used when seeking to record client demographic data.

However, this was quickly abandoned, in favour of an approach that was more client-centred and less susceptible to risks of traumatising clients. Under this approach, questions about demographic details were often deferred until the client was more comfortable in providing their personal information. For similar reasons, **knowmore** chose at times not to ask demographic questions which were judged as being likely to cause distress to a client, such as disability status. This information was collected if disclosed.

Over time, **knowmore** has developed better strategies for planning and coordinating outreach activities. For example, there are better strategies in place for checking whether there are any isolated or incapacitated clients who should be offered a consultation whilst staff are on a regional visit.

'Most of the people I work with wouldn't have been able to access a private lawyer, so they wouldn't have been able to have their questions answered. Without **knowmore**, they would not have had the support to help them work through the pros and cons of approaching the Royal Commission.'

Support service provider

### Key messages

To be genuinely widely accessible to a cohort of people sexually abused as children within an institutional setting, an organisation needs to understand the profound impact this experience has on people's lives. While the impacts are not uniform and people learn to respond and cope in different ways, overtones of institutionalised approaches can be harmful. Organisations need to offer a wide range of methods to reach people, be sensitive to potential psychological triggers and adapt processes accordingly.

In addition to the practical elements that make information and services accessible,

stakeholders and staff observe that the real key to **knowmore's** accessibility is the organisational culture. This culture pervades the organisation from reception to the back-office, so that the organisation is accessible physically and in all inter-personal interactions.

## Delivering a trauma-informed legal and support service

Applying to both clients and staff, the principles of trauma-informed care are:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment.

A significant body of research underpins the design of these principles. In summary, services working with people affected by trauma need to apply these principles because:

- violent trauma is often self-perpetuating
- trauma affects the way people approach potentially helpful relationships
- the impact of trauma is often deep and life shaping
- trauma-survivors often experience services as unsafe, disempowering and/or invalidating
- trauma is insidious and preys particularly on the more vulnerable among us.<sup>6</sup>

The impacts of trauma on survivors of childhood sexual abuse are also well-documented. Survivors of childhood sexual abuse have experienced the most fundamental breach of trust, and have often experienced further breaches of trust throughout their life. As the Royal Commission states *'It is now clearly established that there is a link between experiences of child sexual abuse and a range of psychological problems and mental health issues throughout survivors' lives. These effects are many and varied and affect survivors in many ways:*

- *at the individual level: mental health and physical health*

- *at the interpersonal level: emotional, behavioural and interpersonal capacities*
- *at the societal level: quality of life and opportunity.*<sup>7</sup>

Organisations working with survivors of sexual abuse also need to understand that the work is emotionally strenuous and involves an unavoidable risk of vicarious trauma. The impacts of vicarious trauma on staff can parallel that of primary survivors. In response, organisations need to consciously develop trauma-sensitive resiliency. At an organisational level this includes developing a culture of reflective practice, provision of supervision, debriefing, and support and training for staff from trauma specialists, as well supporting staff in self-care strategies.<sup>8</sup>

## What was found?

The assessment of **knowmore** against the principles of trauma-informed care through staff interviews, and validated through feedback from external service providers found tangible and consistent examples. For clients, these include:

<b>Safety</b>	Physically safe, calm and welcoming reception and meeting spaces Emotional support offered and available at every point of contact with <b>knowmore</b>
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Phone call answered by lawyer - limits the client re-telling their story, professional relationship commences with first call Consistency of staff providing advice Advice on compensation avoids setting unrealistic expectations
<b>Choice and Control</b>	Choices offered where possible, e.g. gender of lawyer; consultation times and methods (e.g. phone, in person if preferred), inclusion of <b>knowmore</b> support worker or any other support person for the client
<b>Collaboration</b>	Centrality of the client and their experience drives support process Clients assured that their story is believed
<b>Empowerment</b>	Client's sense of agency is encouraged in decision-making Assist clients to prepare statements which best present their story



Examples found demonstrating application of the principles of trauma-informed care for staff include:

<b>Safety</b>	Duress alarms and swipe access Restricted view of office space from reception area Off-site visits conducted in pairs Continual monitoring of staff emotional wellbeing
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Organisational commitment to self-care, regular strategies in place Monitoring and supervisory structure to ensure consistency of legal advice
<b>Choice and Control</b>	Development opportunities offered Opportunities to have carriage of portfolio areas, e.g. preparing submissions to the Royal Commission Opportunities to have on-going carriage of specific outreach activities and programs
<b>Collaboration</b>	Consultative structures in place for discipline groups, offices and the whole staff team Involvement in organisation's strategic planning
<b>Empowerment</b>	Skill-building through inter-disciplinary mentoring and secondary consultations Extension activities available, such as conference presentations

### What did staff say?

Feedback gathered from staff during the evaluation interviews illustrates their perspectives of **knowmore** as a trauma-informed service, and as a trauma-informed organisation and employer. A selection of these comments below provides their insights on the application of trauma-informed principles within **knowmore**.

- ♦ *knowmore is probably the best place I've worked in terms of taking care holistically from the client up to every single person who works here.... [Physically] this office is amazing. They have thought of everything - right down to safety for staff, safety for clients, making a nice space, thinking about how clients come in and being very respectful.*
- ♦ *As a team, there is good checking in on the wellbeing of others. Still think certain aspects are just emotionally hazardous. You have no idea who will be on the other end of the phone. Sometimes people just explode...*

- ♦ *I think we mostly (provide realistic information to clients) quite well. Sometimes there is a dilemma between wanting to help and what is realistic. This can cause significant distress for workers. We explore those feelings in debriefing forums.*
- ♦ *Clients don't answer mobiles. We establish if it is ok to leave a message... On (our database) there are safety notes, e.g. 'wife doesn't know - don't call back, only text' etc.*
- ♦ *Having information about their options and someone bearing witness gives clients a sense of agency relating to how much to disclose.*
- ♦ *Much as the Royal Commission is an open forum, we can assist (clients) to be strategic. You can choose to give a message that will be heard. For individuals, there is a legacy in that.*
- ♦ *The ethos of knowmore...I haven't really encountered it before. It's not simply on the phone saying 'sorry we can't help you' or 'these are your options'. Part of the journey is this process for people, their healing journey...this is really important...A lot of time it's not legal work, it's actually spending the time with people. Listening... it's not just about getting the best compensation lawyer, it's about making people feel ok about what's happened in the past and what's happening now.*

### Perspectives of external stakeholders

External stakeholders provided further evidence of **knowmore's** trauma-informed approach. Organisations consulted represented the range of agencies referring to, or receiving referrals from **knowmore**, or working in other partnerships to provide information to the community. Understanding, or depth of understanding, of trauma-informed approaches varied. Nevertheless, most feedback reinforced the view that **knowmore** is a genuinely trauma-informed organisation. Stakeholders observed clients receiving respectful and trauma-informed services and/or received reports of this from their clients. The themes and observations raised in the feedback from external stakeholders included that **knowmore**:

- ♦ has an excellent understanding of trauma

- staff are respectful, ‘get the issues’ and understand the issues that clients will bring with them
- works to empower clients
- demonstrates flexibility and sensitivity in their work with survivors
- staff consistently make the effort to ensure that clients are comfortable with the process they are involved in, and ensure that through careful preparation, clients have the best opportunity to share their story.

Experienced trauma-informed practitioners and researchers observed that **knowmore**:

- provides a ‘text book’ example of trauma-informed care
- provides ‘best practice in legal services for adult survivors’.

The availability of social workers/counsellors for debriefing and/or referrals for clients was seen as critical to supporting this, coupled with the support team’s role in supporting the emotional wellbeing of other staff. The role of the ATSI engagement advisors was seen to add a further supportive, culturally nuanced level to the organisation’s trauma-informed approach. Stakeholders also emphasised the consistency of trauma-informed approaches from all staff in the organisation, i.e. lawyers, ATSI engagement advisors, reception and administrative staff in addition to the support team.

‘**knowmore** has a trauma-informed approach, they do in fact look after the wellbeing of people beyond just the legal advice...that’s a very good part of their model...People who engage with **knowmore**, once they are fully engaged... talk positively of the experience.’

Commissioner Fitzgerald, Royal Commission

### Coherence of knowmore’s approach

Provision of a trauma-informed service is an organising principle for **knowmore**. Evidence

of the organisation’s achievements in this area is found in its systematic and coherent implementation, rather than simply the sum of the work addressing the individual trauma-informed principles. Providing a trauma-informed service underpins or is integrated in:

- **recruitment:** selection criteria include experience working with complex clients, including survivors of sexual abuse
- **team composition:** multi-disciplinary teams include support team members (professionally qualified social workers and counsellors)
- **training:** new staff inducted with trauma-informed training, on-going trauma-informed education provided to staff; support team provides mentoring on strategies (e.g. language or questioning techniques to use with survivors)
- **workplace health and safety:** support team provides on-site, immediate debriefing after client contacts; formal, monthly team-based debriefing is provided by external debriefers; individual staff and teams have access to a range of external debriefers or an Employee Assistance Program if preferred
- **preventative workplace health:** various activities in place at each office to support self care and mental health and wellbeing, e.g. meditation or mindfulness sessions
- **leave provisions:** staff are allowed/ encouraged to take time out when affected by traumatic work
- **policies and procedures:** formally reflect trauma-informed practice
- **human resource management:** trauma-informed principles guide expectations of job performance and staff supervision
- **workload monitoring:** workloads are monitored (number of clients supported, complexity) to mitigate against the risk of vicarious trauma
- **workplace culture:** strong workplace culture of supporting, looking out for the wellbeing of colleagues
- **workplace environment:** designed to provide a calm, safe environment for clients and staff.



## Improvements implemented

**knowmore** has implemented numerous improvements to strengthen its trauma-informed approaches including:

- implementing whole-staff, discipline and team-based reflective practice sessions
- creation, and appointment of discipline team leader roles to ensure that all disciplines participate in management decisions and can advocate for discipline-specific issues
- collection and preparation of case studies documenting trauma-informed and culturally secure legal practices
- development of policies and procedures addressing workplace safety
- developing an organisational framework for health and safety issues, including establishment of a Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) committee with regular reporting within **knowmore** and to KMS.

## What has been learnt?

Despite the sophistication of **knowmore's** approach, the risks of workplace harm have been ever-present. The organisation has developed procedures to increase vigilance of monitoring and supervision, including monitoring for the cumulative affect of exposure to traumatic information. In a highly client-centred and collegiate organisation, there are risks that staff will not seek help when needed, for fear of 'letting the team down'. Providing staff with opportunities to take a break, or have non-client task variety, as well as regular supervision and access to debriefing, have been found to assist in mitigating these risks.

Implementing strategies for consumer involvement and feedback have proved to be challenging, although any feedback offered has been recorded. Client feedback opportunities will be implemented in the next 12 months. Consumer involvement at an advisory level has not been achieved, and is unlikely to occur. The organisation's original timelines, and work program, as well as **knowmore's** structure, as a program of

NACLC which has its own Board of Directors, further complicated this challenge. Maintaining close connections with bodies such as Australian Survivors of Child Abuse, support services and practitioners in the field and through maintaining the professional expertise and development of support staff, e.g. through attending conferences, maintaining professional reading and professional networks, are strategies followed to ensure that the organisation maintains its knowledge of best practice in relation to providing services to survivors of child sexual abuse. There are plans in place to expand the membership of KMS to include representation of key stakeholders, such as support services and panel lawyers.

## Outcomes

The outcomes of **knowmore's** trauma-informed approach include:

- the provision of high-quality and trauma-informed legal services
- high uptake of services by clients
- acceptance, trust and respect of referral agencies gained, including support services, legal services, ATSI specific agencies and legal services and the Royal Commission
- legal and community sector recognition of the approach, as demonstrated by invitations to present and share knowledge at sector forums (conferences, workshops).

## Key messages

Understanding the profound and life-long impacts of trauma experienced in childhood has been central to **knowmore's** approach to creating a safe and accessible service for clients.

As a start-up organisation, **knowmore** has been able to recruit staff and design its systems from the ground up to be trauma-informed. All systems, from service delivery to human resource management, need to be designed with trauma-informed lenses, regularly reviewed and adapted to fit changing circumstances.

## Delivering culturally secure legal and support services

### Context

Cultural security within the context of a trauma-informed service ensures an *‘understanding of how culture influences one’s perception of a response to traumatic events and the recovery process, respecting diversity within the program, providing opportunities for consumers to engage in cultural rituals, and using interventions respectful of and specific to cultural backgrounds.’*<sup>19</sup>

There are further nuances to the concept of cultural security within the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: *‘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... Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety is a practice and service framework that aims to provide positive and emotionally safe experiences for Aboriginal people in mainstream systems.’*<sup>10</sup>

The evaluation explored the concept of cultural security in relation to both clients and staff and the extent to which cultural security was integral to the provision of services and the functioning of the organisation. This examination has focused primarily on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural issues, given the significant over-representation of Aboriginal children in institutions and the relatively low numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children, and **knowmore’s** identification of the ATSI population as a priority group.

### What was found?

**knowmore** signals itself as an ATSI welcoming organisation through all contacts with the organisation - the branding on its website and resources, as well as through the

ATSI-specific information pamphlets, presentations, wallet cards, and posters.

**knowmore’s** offices are designed to be welcoming and accessible. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed at all reception areas and Aboriginal artwork is displayed throughout office foyers and rooms.

**knowmore** has recruited a high proportion of staff with extensive experience of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including direct experience working in an ATSILS or other Aboriginal agency. All client facing staff have previous experience in working with vulnerable populations. Cultural competence training, which includes concepts of cultural security and an understanding of diversity of communities and issues arising around engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Royal Commission processes, is part of all staff’s orientation and on-going professional development.

**knowmore** employs five ATSI engagement advisors (AEAs) – two staff in the Sydney office and one in the Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth offices, who form the organisation’s ATSI engagement team. The ATSI engagement team leader, based in Sydney, represents the team and relevant issues at management team meetings. This position was created as a result of a recommendation of the evaluation. At that time, the management team comprised only lawyers. With the inclusion of the support team leader and the engagement team leader, all disciplines are represented in management discussions.

Engagement team members come from communities ranging from the south west corner of Western Australia to the Torres Strait, and include men and women, so that men’s and women’s cultural business of clients can be supported in culturally secure ways. In total six of **knowmore’s** 46 staff identify as ATSI, including one lawyer, and ATSI staff represent 13% of **knowmore’s** workforce. In contrast, the Commonwealth public sector has a (yet to be achieved) target

of 3% ATSI representation.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to directly supporting clients to access **knowmore**, the ATSI engagement advisors provide:

- secondary consultations to colleagues and referral organisations
- consultations/advice/education to their colleagues around cultural protocols
- advice on the conduct of culturally safe and appropriate consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Engagement processes for individual clients are determined by need. It may take several phone calls or visits to gain the trust of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and reach a point where they feel safe enough to engage with the service. Engagement advisors support clients as needed with every consultation. Staff will conduct consultations off-site, in public spaces, or outdoors if preferred by the client.

**knowmore's** outreach work is designed to provide a culturally secure environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. This work acknowledges barriers that communities face, such as lack of access to public phones or no mobile reception, negative experiences with previous public inquiries, geographical distance, costs incurred in accessing services located in cities, and the absence of trusting relationships with service providers. ATSI engagement advisors are always involved in visits to communities and provide advice on community protocols, timing of visits, need for multiple visits, support needs before, during and as follow-up to the event. Whenever feasible, male and female engagement advisors will participate to provide choice for clients.

**knowmore** has cooperative delivery arrangements with ATSILS and FVPLS, and a strong relationship with the Royal Commission's Community Engagement Team, including regularly meeting and undertaking joint community engagement activities.

## ATSI engagement team perspectives

The ATSI engagement team was consulted for the evaluation to provide their perspectives on **knowmore's** delivery of culturally secure legal and support services.

The team reported that **knowmore** is aware of and sensitive to the challenges inherent in their work, including the need to be conscious of setting boundaries for their own role, and the limits of **knowmore's** role. As community members themselves, they reinforced the fine line they can sometimes walk in building relationships, working with communities, and working with other community agencies. ATSI engagement advisors *'have to protect our cultural integrity, maintain our culture, ourselves. We have to be able to own our law business, skin groups... Sometimes we can't be in certain meetings.'* *'We have to maintain our place, our role, our family.'*

The engagement team emphasised the importance of their work with communities, and the need to enter communities carefully, consciously, with permission and with integrity. It is imperative that an external service such as **knowmore** does not enter a community, particularly in remote and under-serviced areas, and make commitments that cannot be actioned. Organisations need insight and knowledge to work with communities across the country, and understand the diversity of issues, and how to keep relationships valid and robust, whilst, in **knowmore's** case, maintaining their independence. *'When we are bringing lawyers into our communities, we have to do this with cultural respect. We ask our elders 'Is it okay to take these lawyers to the community?''*

Team members talked about the need to understand the sensitivities of:

- talking to communities about sexual abuse, especially in communities where culturally, sexual abuse is not talked about
- engaging a community respectfully
- kinship systems which is essential in order to avoid unintentionally causing offence.

And, as a consequence, the importance of **knowmore** seeking and taking their cultural advice.

The ATSI engagement advisors are sensitive to how the issues weigh on communities, and sometimes advise on providing information as part of other community events, so people don't feel too self-conscious. At other times, engagement advisors need to distance themselves from community events. They may bring another **knowmore** staff member to take the lead on a presentation, for example. *'We can be the bridge – assure the community this person (from **knowmore**) can be trusted, and the community can have the experience of dealing with a non-Aboriginal professional and learn that they can be trusted, and dealt with professionally. When they have a positive experience, this reflects well on our standing in the community and shows our professionalism, that we're trustworthy. This is good for **knowmore**, good for the AEA, good for the community.'*

In terms of how **knowmore** demonstrates its credentials as a culturally secure organisation, key elements identified by the team included:

- the importance of engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a founding principle of the organisation
- the organisation's respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural diversity
- recruitment of senior **knowmore** managers with ATSI experience and credibility
- the establishment of an ATSI engagement team, with the aim of recruiting a group with strong connections to communities, credibility, and a diversity of skills, professional backgrounds, networks and expertise
- the importance of the team structure in providing engagement advisors with cultural support and mentoring
- the team's breadth of expertise enabling the organisation to better respond to complex client and policy work
- the recruitment process for ATSI engagement advisors
- strong, clear and consistent messages from management about the importance of making **knowmore** an ATSI-welcoming organisation
- the value placed on the team's cultural, community and community network knowledge and on team members as 'the holders of the expertise'
- **knowmore's** understanding of the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from urban to tribal communities, cultural traditions and protocols, and language groups which the engagement team has been recruited to reflect, on a small scale (and contrasts to most mainstream organisations which apply the term 'cultural diversity' in the context of multicultural communities)
- **knowmore's** support for a dynamic learning environment – *'we are able to learn from the lawyers and counsellors, as they learn from us'*.
- **knowmore's** flexibility in how each engagement advisor works and can apply their skills and knowledge of community issues in different ways. *'We're not compartmentalised.'*

The human and interpersonal values of the organisation were seen to apply equally to staff and clients, and were highly valued. All team members found the organisation welcoming, caring and client-centred. *'People are genuine, loyal, respectful, very human, down to earth, and importantly, have a sense of humour.'*

### What did the engagement team say?

- ♦ *The recruitment process was the best I've been through – very informal, but I knew that Indigenous engagement was a genuine priority...*
- ♦ *Having the team is really important compared to having 'one blackfella who is our engagement officer.'* *'Love the team.'*
- ♦ *Definitely the best organisation I've ever worked in.*
- ♦ *When you look at what **knowmore** does compared to (working in identified positions in other public sector organisations), it's just*



*a completely different set-up and it's culturally safe and it gives people what they need and what they want.*

### Staff perspectives

Feedback from staff about working in **knowmore's** multi-disciplinary teams frequently highlighted the value they placed on working with ATSI engagement advisors, and how those relationships enriched their working experience.

- ♦ *One of the things I value so much about working with all of the ATSI engagement advisors... they're so open, you feel like you can go to them with your stupid question or your unknowingness or your whiteness and have a meaningful discussion, and that to me is really invaluable.*
- ♦ *I think the organisation really chose to be way more than 'tick a box' culturally appropriate early on in its foundation... Given that we are a national service and haven't been running that long, and won't run that long I actually think we've done it incredibly successfully.*
- ♦ *Definitely this is a learning about systemic change required within the CLC sector, every CLC should have an Indigenous support role....the fact that **knowmore** has had that support from the start, when they could have just had more lawyers, is something that is unique. It hasn't organically grown like other models. It has been a clear statement about 'This is our priority, our politics around Indigenous inclusion in the service, and around trauma-informed services with the support workers.'*

*'When I introduce someone from **knowmore** to my community, I say 'This is Uncle So & So, This is Auntie Such & Such...' It's my way of communicating to my family that **knowmore** as an organisation is worthy of respect. But it is also a sign to the **knowmore** staff, that the community has paid a mark of respect to you, and you need to appreciate and live up to the respect demonstrated to you.*

**knowmore** ATSI engagement advisor

### Perspectives of external stakeholders

External stakeholders provided further reinforcement of the importance of the ATSI engagement team's work.

- ♦ *Without **knowmore**, there would be far fewer Aboriginal people going to the Royal Commission. Provides the stepping stone to get people to the Royal Commission. (Legal Aid Commission)*
- ♦ *Think that the model is working really well for Aboriginal people. I have no doubt that without **knowmore** there would always be some people courageous enough to make it to the Royal Commission. But **knowmore** provides that stepping stone that just makes it possible for more people to come forward. (Panel lawyer, compensation)*
- ♦ *The benefits of working jointly with **knowmore** are shared expertise, but also giving the client the sense that there's a network of people who are there to support them. When I can make client visits with the **knowmore** engagement advisor, that's really important for me because I want to be culturally appropriate, and it's not something I've had a lot of practice in. So that's really helpful. (Panel lawyer, compensation)*
- ♦ *The support that **knowmore** gives individual (ATSI) agencies across the nation by bringing us together ensures that we are all exposed to different initiatives, but also allows us to affirm the similarities. There is a deep importance in the support of each other. Each of us is interwoven into that process of community healing. It is such an inspiration to know that this is happening on a national basis. Providing that support, acknowledgement of the work that we are undertaking provides us with some sustenance. Often, the only people who understand the depth of our work is the people who are doing the work. (ATSI community agency)*

Some ATSI agencies argued that 'a truly culturally appropriate service is an Aboriginal service – it's not enough to have an ATSI engagement advisor', and that the government could have provided better funding for ATSI agencies. However, these agencies also acknowledged that for a mainstream, non-Aboriginal service, '**knowmore** has done well.'

## Improvements implemented

Improvements implemented through the evaluation include:

- the creation of the engagement team leader role
- greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement work as a discipline in itself
- the display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at all reception areas.

## What has been learnt?

Over time, **knowmore** is taking a more considered and carefully planned approach to community outreach activities. All organisations consulted for the evaluation, including the Royal Commission, spoke of the initial sense of urgency in responding to the demand instigated through the establishment of the Commission. Further, the roles of all organisations needed to be negotiated and clarified. While **knowmore** was well aware of the principles of effective community engagement, some activities were not as well coordinated as they should have been. With the extension of the Royal Commission's timelines, some of this pressure has been alleviated.

Nevertheless, **knowmore** is conscious of the challenge of reaching communities even within current timelines. This applies particularly to remote communities. The organisation is also aware of the risks of opening up issues for remote communities where there are no support services, or very few services accessible.

The organisation has also developed a greater understanding of the cultural pressures on individual engagement advisors, and the need to provide appropriate support, and ensure that they are not placed in culturally compromising situations. Each member of the engagement team now has a cultural care plan.

## Outcomes

Over its two and a half years of operation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients have consistently made up between 18-20% of all **knowmore** clients. While this figure speaks to the sadness of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people amongst those sexually abused as children in institutions, it also highlights **knowmore's** success in reaching community members, and credibility with communities.

By having a fully integrated ATSI engagement team:

- clients have access to a culturally safe and appropriate service
- mainstream organisations can refer their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to **knowmore** with confidence, and seek secondary consultations on cultural issues
- the work of other staff and professionals in **knowmore** has deepened and strengthened in terms of cultural practice and understanding
- management discussions and decisions include the perspective of the engagement team
- the organisation applies a cultural lens to all of its systems and work
- **knowmore** has the credibility to advocate for culturally informed practices, such as the inclusion of the engagement team in the work of Royal Commission in prisons
- **knowmore** can contribute to, and share its knowledge around culturally-informed legal practice at conferences and forums, informed by the practical experience and learnings from a significant client base
- **knowmore** can contribute to the knowledge base and further shape the provision of legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and particularly informing understandings of inter-generational transfer of trauma, and impacts of institutional abuse.

The influence of **knowmore's** work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

communities also extends across service networks, and individuals.

**knowmore's** support for the networking of ATSI organisations and staff working with communities and individuals engaging with the Royal Commission provides a unique forum for staff to share their knowledge and experience. Staff in this group observed the importance of sharing their stories and knowledge, given that the organisations are often steeped in local cultural knowledge, yet may be called upon to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients from different parts of the country. Through this network, a national perspective can be gained, as well as the sharing of expertise and building of relationships. This supports collaboration for referrals and secondary consultations. This information can also flow back through the **knowmore** and Royal Commission engagement teams to their organisations.

Engagement advisors also advised that their roles with **knowmore** can provide positive influences on family and community levels: *'Through us our families, and communities, see the work of **knowmore**, and how we are respected in the organisation – it has the power to change perceptions of lawyers in our families, communities. It can have a big impact... They can see lawyers as people'*

## Key messages

Appreciating and conceptualising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge as its own discipline has supported **knowmore's** sophisticated engagement strategy.

**knowmore** has recruited a diverse, national staff team which provides greater knowledge of, and connections to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The team structure provides cultural support to individual team members, and the leadership role ensures that cultural issues are maintained on the management agenda.

The organisation's deeply felt commitment to engaging with and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is also reflected through its values, its practices and the recruitment of all staff.

Connecting to other ATSI professionals in the Royal Commission and other mainstream organisations, ATSI community organisations and ATSI networks is important in terms of broadening **knowmore's** access to communities, cultural knowledge and for the engagement team, providing the support and benefits of broad, national networks.

## Impacts and outcomes:

# Working relationships

This section of the report presents the evaluation results examining the effectiveness of **knowmore's** organisational partnerships and working relationships.

### Strong organisational partnerships that extend our influence and impact

For the second phase of the evaluation, the consultants interviewed or surveyed 102 people from a sample of 82 of the 200 organisations on **knowmore's** database at that time. As outlined in the discussion of '*How **knowmore** works*', relationships between **knowmore** and other organisations operate on a continuum from networking to collaboration, and interactions range from supporting individual clients, community engagement, networking and liaison to supporting learning and knowledge generation.

### Referral processes

Stakeholders were asked about the referral processes and practices between their organisation and **knowmore**, including information-sharing, feedback loops and processes to support clients during referrals.

The number of referrals made to and from **knowmore** varies by organisations and organisation-types. Some agencies make one or two referrals to **knowmore** in a year, others refer clients every couple of weeks. Community enquiries to agencies around Royal Commission issues, and referral patterns, can be affected by publicity around public hearings or visits by the Royal Commission to a particular location.

In addition, referral 'traffic' and sources vary:

- support services, typically make referrals to, and receive referrals from, **knowmore**
- legal practices are more likely to receive referrals from **knowmore**
- the majority of referrals to **knowmore** are made by the Royal Commission (39%)
- approximately 14% of referrals are self-initiated, or come from a family member or another support person, rather than from an organisation.

The top referral sources and destinations for **knowmore** are tabled below.

Referral sources (to knowmore)		%
1	Royal Commission	39
2	Self	11
3	Community agency	9
Referral destinations (from knowmore)*		
1	Private lawyer	36
2	Community legal service or other legal agency	20
3	Counselling service including DSS funded services	14

\*Note: Next four ranked destinations comprise 5% of all referrals.



## What was found?

### Efficiency and effectiveness

The overwhelming majority of stakeholders reported that their working relationship with **knowmore** is both efficient and effective.

Examples of efficiency included speedy and well-informed responses to queries, and the level and quality of communication.

Stakeholders reported that **knowmore** staff demonstrate a professional, consistent and helpful approach. The effectiveness of the relationship was demonstrated with examples around **knowmore's**:

- sensitivity to, and competence in working with clients with complex needs and respectful interactions with clients
- comprehensive legal knowledge, including knowledge of redress schemes, and of lawyers for civil claim actions and for representation in the Royal Commission
- strong ATSI engagement team providing:
  - options for Aboriginal clients to receive a culturally sensitive service
  - confidence for mainstream organisations with low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to refer to **knowmore**
- team of support staff with direct access to informed, competent lawyers
- community visits enabling vulnerable clients to consult a lawyer in a safe and familiar environment
- proactive liaison with the Royal Commission around client needs.

Stakeholders reported that their working relationships were supported by **knowmore's**:

- attendance at sector or agency events
- visits to agencies when conducting outreach events, especially to interstate, regional, rural and remote areas
- friendly, informal, flexible and open relationships with staff
- cooperative approaches with agencies, including sharing of rooms and resources
- understanding of challenges faced by community-sector agencies.

### Referral processes

Referral processes to and from **knowmore** were found to be informal but guided by:

- professional standards of practice, including obtaining the written consent of the client to share information, and
- the needs of the client.

The majority of stakeholders indicated that the number of clients referred do not warrant specific protocols because the organisations work together regularly and frequently, and/or because *'every client situation is different'*. Referral practices to and from **knowmore** often included phone contact to check on the suitability of the referral.

Referral processes for high needs clients are personalised, active and receive greater monitoring. Legal firms and private practitioners found the following to be helpful referral practices:

- collation of the client's materials, statements and any other relevant material which reduces the need for the client's retelling of events, and reduces time and costs
- calling to check on receipt of the referral, checking on whether contact has been made with the client
- **knowmore** lawyer attending first meeting, particularly for vulnerable clients and/or complex cases
- **knowmore** maintaining contact with the client, monitoring their wellbeing and gathering client records at times when the lawyer was unable to respond immediately to the referral.

While the majority of feedback indicated satisfaction with referral practices, feedback was received about wanting more transparency around:

- case allocations to panel lawyers
- how **knowmore** determines the legal practice's areas of expertise
- how **knowmore** forms the panels
- providing information to agencies about the lawyers on the panels.

## What did stakeholders say?

- ♦ *We find **knowmore** very effective and very comforting for the client. Some of our clients have started with other agencies, helping people get their cases to the Royal Commission and they end up at our door, very distressed. We just go straight to **knowmore** – very efficient, effective, know what they're talking about. Easy to understand. Have the social worker, Aboriginal engagement advisors. Easy for our clients to understand where they're going, and they need that.*

*National Support Service*

- ♦ *For our clients, the priority is to avoid calling 1800, for them it's a fast track. We have quick processes and a person is supported quickly...if the client wants more information we call **knowmore** on the spot so they get the information immediately. It is the client's journey and they dictate what happens.*

*ATSI agency*

- ♦ *There is a danger that our [remote location] can fall off the radar, but where necessary, we can get a quick response from **knowmore**.*

*ATSILS/FVPLS*

- ♦ *Communication was sometimes a bit difficult, the relationship was sometimes a bit clunky, especially when establishing the organisation. But **knowmore**'s systems and processes are now well bedded-down....*

*Survivor specific*

- ♦ *Would like **knowmore** to make (our practice) aware of how many potential clients they're likely to send through. We didn't anticipate there would be so many, neither did they.*

*Panel lawyer, Compensation*

- ♦ *...I took a very vulnerable client into the office and, after a lifetime of the after-effects of abuse, to see (the client) being spoken to in this beautiful, gentle manner...with the lawyer just constantly assuring (the client) that 'it wasn't your fault.' The client is now working really well with us. They're just wonderful, very supportive.*

*Support service*

- ♦ *I gather that they come to the hearings, to check up on us, check that we're competent. Think it's great the way they follow up...*

*Panel lawyer, Representation*

## Improvements implemented

Improvements to **knowmore**'s cooperative and collaborative practice are on-going. For example, more resources, such as client fact sheets and infographics are being developed, as well as resources to support community outreach and engagement activities, and templates for staff to share presentations at conferences and forums. The evaluation recommended that **knowmore** prepare and distribute regular information to referral partners. This is in train. Referral documentation and processes, e.g. confirmation of referrals has been tightened. Stakeholders reinforced that clients require jargon-free information. Whilst staff are well aware of this, the topic is raised as part of regular meetings as a continual reminder to team members.

## What has been learnt?

Partnership and collaborative work was challenged in the initial stages of **knowmore** when demand outstripped capacity. Establishment of the Royal Commission and **knowmore**, and funding for Royal Commission-related legal and support services in 2013 occurred relatively quickly, with a two to three year work program. There was not a cohesive system or service network in place or guiding collaborative work practices. All agencies consulted, including the Royal Commission, agree that the initial sense of urgency was extremely challenging in the first 12 months.

The importance of appropriate infrastructure, accurate information, clear roles and responsibilities and effective communication was underscored by the experience.

One of the lessons from **knowmore**'s experience is the importance of investing in key relationships. The relationship with the Royal Commission is critical for **knowmore** and has developed over time with regular meetings implemented. Equally important are the relationships with networks, sectors, organisations, and government, and each relationship requires effort to maintain.

## Outcomes

The outcomes of strong working relationships have been found to provide benefits to a range of groups including:

- **clients:** strengthened responses, reduced risks of re-traumatisation; ability to separate therapeutic relationships from legal advice relationships; better quality of representation because lawyers and support services are ‘talking together’
- **agencies:** non-legal agencies have access to specialised legal knowledge and to **knowmore’s** ATSI engagement team; reduced workload for counselling and support agencies through having a single access point for legal information and referrals
- **service system:** information and resource sharing, enhanced cooperation
- **community:** joint work between the Royal Commission, **knowmore** and service providers gives communities access to well-informed advice and the opportunity to learn about the Royal Commission in a safe way.

*‘**knowmore** do the best they can. At the start there was a little working it around our experience with therapy. Now it’s positive, we recognise the partnership. We do the therapeutic elements and they do the legal work. Clients need the wrap-around support – if you want quality information, you need the warm-up, otherwise it might be traumatising because clients have been done over previously by the legal system. It is partnership work.’*

Community support agency

## Key messages

Productive organisational partnerships are supported by effective, two-way communication. With a cross-sectoral initiative, it is also necessary to get to know the other partners, and to adapt and tap into the different communication styles and cultures. For example, **knowmore** listened to its partners and was aware that having strong, open inter-personal relationships was more important to making effective referrals than having formal processes.

## Impacts and outcomes:

# Voice for change

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This section of the report presents the evaluation results looking at **knowmore** as a 'strong and influential voice for change'. This was explored in terms of direct contributions made to influence change, and in terms of **knowmore's** service delivery model itself as an expression of its potential to influence change and development in the way legal services are delivered.

### Context

**knowmore's** direct contributions to legal and policy reform work were examined through the evaluation. This work fits with the reform agendas of multiple organisations, most significantly that of the Royal Commission with its reform brief, but also that of advocacy groups, academics, support services, peak and professional bodies. This work necessarily has a long-term focus, and impacts of individual agencies are challenging to isolate.

The third phase of the evaluation also explored whether **knowmore's** model itself is contributing, or can contribute to how legal services are delivered, particularly to people who are vulnerable, have been exposed to trauma and/or have complex needs. This included a review of select literature, interviews with **knowmore** staff, representatives of institutions and victim advocacy groups who have dealt with **knowmore**, and interviews with a purposive sample of thought and practice leaders around the multi-disciplinary service model.

**knowmore's** integrated, multi-disciplinary legal service team model builds on a history of lawyers and social workers working together in the CLC sector. This model also connects the organisation to contemporary issues

examining ways legal services can best assist clients, particularly those with complex needs. The need to integrate legal services with other professionals as a means of improving access to justice is a consistent theme of research into legal needs. The Legal Australia-Wide Survey highlights *'the value of a holistic, integrated, multifaceted approach to justice that addresses the diverse needs of different people and, in particular, addresses the needs of disadvantaged people, who are especially vulnerable to legal problems'*.<sup>12</sup>

Numerous models exist of lawyers working in partnership with social workers and health professionals, both in Australia and internationally, and momentum is growing for better collaboration between professionals in the legal assistance sector. The Australian Government recently funded trials of integrated legal service models to provide support to women affected by domestic violence to 'provide access to coordinated legal, social work and cultural liaison services for women in a single location'.<sup>13</sup>

As **knowmore's** model of working has been outlined previously in this report this section focuses on elements of the model not discussed elsewhere.

## What was found?

**knowmore's** contributions to legal and policy change is informed by the knowledge and insights gained through its multi-disciplinary practice. This is reflected in **knowmore's** eight submissions to Royal Commission Issues Papers and response to the Royal Commission's consultation paper on civil redress, responses to state enquiries and consultation papers, and public presentations, which argue with authority in relation to the legal, support and cultural needs of clients.

Further, viewed against models of integrated service delivery in the literature and through examples provided by stakeholders, **knowmore's** model was found to be distinctive on the basis of:

- the depth and comprehensiveness of the integration of the social work and cultural engagement work within the legal practice
- the acceptance and implementation of the philosophical underpinnings of trauma-informed service delivery and principles of cultural engagement
- the application of these principles to all internally focussed systems (e.g. human resource management) and externally focussed systems (e.g. service delivery)
- the multi-disciplinary model in place in all office locations
- the representation of all disciplines in the management of the organisation
- the multiple roles of support staff and the engagement team in supporting clients, providing secondary consultations and mentoring and educating colleagues in their areas of expertise
- the capacity and flexibility the organisation has to create small, multi-disciplinary teams to support individual clients when needed
- the breadth of the organisation's connections across service systems and service providers through the combined professional networks of staff
- the dynamic influence that the mix of disciplines has on the practice of the individual professions.

## What did staff say?

Whilst all staff have significant experience working with vulnerable clients, they consistently reported that the **knowmore** model was extending and changing their practice.

- ♦ *I feel I can deal with trauma better here because I can treat the person with humanity, I don't lose my humanity in the legal role, compared to other settings when I've been under-resourced and simply not able to get clients other, necessary supports.*
- ♦ *There's really good processes here, that allow people to shed (the toxic elements) at the end of the day, and work things through with one another. Making sure they are healthy enough to be able to help other people. I think that's really the key aspect.*
- ♦ *Everyone comes from a very person-centred place. The legal matter and appropriate, professional legal response is important, but it's very considered and...very much about where the person is up to and what they need from the process...different from other legal processes where it is about the timeframe, the process and the person is not very powerful in the process...*
- ♦ *I think one of our strengths is that when we raise (challenging, inter-disciplinary issues) in a group for discussion, it hasn't become a hostile environment...We haven't started attacking ourselves on that issue, which is very positive...There is a high degree of candour.*

## Improvements implemented

The **knowmore** model is under-going continuous improvement and development. Over the past two and a half years, the organisation has moved to a more fully integrated model, with greater integration of the three disciplines in the management and delivery of services. The organisation has implemented a range of reflective practice opportunities, at discipline, team and whole staff levels in order to reflect on and identify the ways in which practice is changing, developing and responding to the needs of clients.



## What has been learnt?

Developing a genuinely integrated legal service model requires far more than simply engaging one or two other practitioners as members of a legal team. As the work needs to respect the professional frameworks of the other disciplines, there is a need to examine and create new ways for professionals to work together, and new ways to manage the service. Similarly, there is a need to respect and seek and use the knowledge of other disciplines in the delivery of services.

Creating a supportive, and client-centred culture creates the right environment for rigorous cross-disciplinary discussions, which must be anticipated with an integrated model.

## Outcomes

**knowmore** is making important contributions to policy and law reform at the Commonwealth and state levels, and within institutions. **knowmore's** public submissions to the Royal Commission and other public enquiries articulate the unique insights developed through the organisation's collective, multi-disciplinary knowledge. They also importantly include the voice of clients in their submissions. These perspectives will contribute to shaping the agenda for change, particularly through informing the Royal Commission's recommendations. In addition to preparing the organisation's own submissions **knowmore** has also assisted some clients to prepare their own individual submissions in response to Issues Papers, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to empowering clients and ensuring that their direct voice contributes to the change process.

**knowmore** is active in the public realm, contributing to practice and system knowledge through conference and public presentations, and the insights of **knowmore** are sought by governments and organisations grappling with responding in a legal context to the needs of complex clients.

Bringing knowledge from its multi-disciplinary approach, **knowmore** has contributed to practice changes in the Royal Commission including:

- acknowledgement of the need for legal representation for many survivor-witnesses at public hearings
- referral of clients to **knowmore** for the provision of legal advice and assistance, often around redress options and reporting of complaints to police, following their attendance at a private session
- ensuring potential whistleblowers, such as former and current employees of institutions, are able to engage with the Royal Commission in ways that reduce their risk of exposure to reprisals or adverse action
- institution of a process to enable access to the recording of a private session, with the client's authority, to enhance the information accompanying referrals and reducing the client's trauma through avoiding the need to re-tell their story.

In collaboration with the Royal Commission, **knowmore** has developed practices to support clients and improve engagement processes, including:

- appointing a senior lawyer to liaise with the Royal Commission for each public hearing, who usually then runs the duty lawyer service for that hearing
- working closely on the Royal Commission's prisoner engagement strategy, and advocating for greater inclusion of community engagement staff to support Indigenous people, who are significantly over-represented in this population, and for best access to on-going counselling support for prisoners engaging with the Royal Commission
- collaborating on the preparation of resources and written materials so that readers are aware of **knowmore** and its services.

Staff reported to the evaluation that their practice is evolving and deepening as result of their collaboration with other professions. Lawyers in particular reported that they were developing:

- a deeper understanding of trauma in the context of client/lawyer interactions
- more sensitive and trauma-informed approaches to engaging with trauma-affected clients and taking instructions
- more culturally nuanced understandings of engaging with ATSI clients
- a deeper understanding of the complex inter-generational impacts of the transfer of trauma in ATSI communities
- the importance of a careful legal triage approach
- an understanding of the importance of self-care in order to best service clients and work with colleagues, and
- a better understanding of the risks of vicarious trauma on individuals and the workplace.

Staff also reported that the way they approach their next position will be different, directly as a result of their professional development in **knowmore**.

- *I think personally relating to people is where I have changed... I am more patient, and perhaps less demanding of them over a longer period of time...So the next (legal) position may be a challenge as the demands legally are likely to be much higher than they are in this position...I won't bring into the position new legal knowledge or skills, but I will bring in a new way of relating to people.*
- *We've had so much training about self-care and self-awareness – I would hope I can retain that, and in five years time I can self-regulate and so on...This is a really unique model...it's been very well thought out and very well-funded. I think it's going to be many years before other legal services and firms really fully adopt this. I think they will get there but it's not going to be in two years.*

**knowmore** itself is essentially creating a new generation of specialist practitioners, who will act as change agents as they eventually move to new positions in the private, public and community sectors.

Benefits for clients of **knowmore's** joined-up approach (not discussed elsewhere) include:

- easier access to and transitions to other services
- reduced stress and embarrassment accessing services
- increased consistency and continuity of services
- seeing, and appreciating that all staff are working as a team, for them
- access to a single legal service able to provide information across Commonwealth, state, territory and institutional jurisdictions
- referrals to appropriately vetted private lawyers, able to provide supportive legal advice to survivors of child sexual abuse (and with appropriate Royal Commission experience, and/or experience in claims for redress).

**knowmore's** model of operation as a single-issue, multi-disciplinary legal service providing wrap-around care for clients during their contact with the organisation, holds interest and is providing new lessons about inter-disciplinary legal practice, with particular emphasis on the importance of the role of the ATSI engagement team.

Stakeholders saw great potential to transfer **knowmore's** tripartite, multi-disciplinary model to a range of other settings, including but not limited to, work in the family violence context or work with people affected by trauma through disasters or emergencies.

### Key messages

**knowmore's** model has application in other legal settings and with other client groups, but would require replication of a similar, integrated organisational structure, with in-house teams of professionals working in a multi-disciplinary model. Successful replication would rely on the same careful and deliberate planning, recruitment and implementation followed by **knowmore**, commitment to trauma-informed service delivery and genuine openness to accepting other professional frameworks.



## Impacts and outcomes:

# Organisational effectiveness

This section of the report presents the evaluation results examining **knowmore's** work in relation to establishing a thriving and effective organisation.

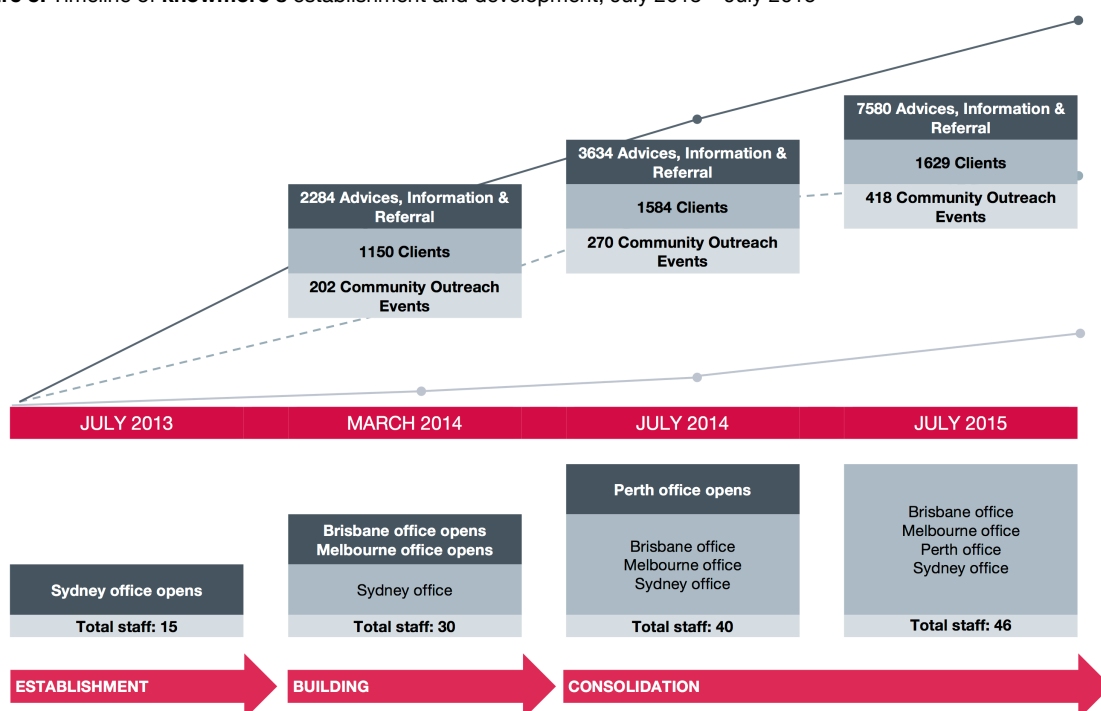
### Context

The effectiveness of **knowmore** as an organisation must be viewed through the lens of the organisation's short history.

The timeline at the front of this report shows the history of **knowmore's** establishment. Commencing in 2013, **knowmore** originally had a three-year service agreement to operate alongside the Royal Commission. The immediate focus therefore was to create and build the organisation, so that legal assistance could be delivered nationally, and within the Royal Commission's timelines.

In 2014, the Royal Commission's timelines were extended by two years. **knowmore's** service agreement was subsequently extended by two years, with service delivery ceasing in March 2018. The development of the organisation has therefore been undertaken in two and a half years, whilst changing its focus from a three-year to a five-year lifespan, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 5:** Timeline of **knowmore's** establishment and development, July 2013 – July 2015



## What was found?

In two and a half years, **knowmore** has established four capital city offices and recruited a full complement of staff (currently 46 staff). The organisation has assisted over 4,000 clients, and is responding to approximately 1,600 clients per annum. It has also established strong relationships with the Royal Commission, and strong networks across a range of service systems (from Aboriginal agencies, to legal assistance networks, to support services and survivor-specific groups), as well as with Commonwealth and state government departments.

The first 12 months start-up period was a very intense time. As well as creating an organisation from the ground up, **knowmore** was amongst the group of funded services working with the Royal Commission that needed to create new service systems and modes of operation. In the first 12 months, **knowmore's** executive travelled more 100,000 kilometres, and receive over 3,000 job applications and participated in hundreds of staff interviews.

**knowmore** is a program of NACLC which has ultimate responsibility for **knowmore** delivering on the terms and conditions of its service agreement. NACLC is responsible for signing off and delivering **knowmore's** progress reports to the AGD as the funder of the service. **knowmore** is governed by a sub-committee of the NACLC Board (KMS). The KMS comprises the NACLC CEO and Board representatives and **knowmore's** executive team, as non-voting members. The KMS is responsible for the strategic and financial decisions of **knowmore**. This committee commenced with monthly meetings, but has moved to less frequent but regular meetings (approximately 6 weekly) as **knowmore** has moved into its consolidation phase. The KMS reviews operational reports, financial expenditure, infrastructure, recruitment and staff and risk management.

In terms of the physical distribution of the

team, the Sydney office is the largest of the four offices, and located in proximity to the Royal Commission offices and NACLC. The leadership team and most of the organisational support staff (financial, information technology, human resources) are located in Sydney. The three other offices in Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne have teams comprising lawyers, at least one social worker/counsellor, an ATSI engagement advisor and administrative staff. Staff in the organisation are highly mobile, and often spend time in other offices, for example to cover for leave periods, to mentor or orient new staff or to conduct outreach activities.

The organisational structure provides for discipline and site supervision. Lawyers report to Managing Lawyers, and the legal team is supervised by the Principal Lawyer. The support and engagement teams receive guidance from their respective team leaders on matters relating to their discipline. On day-to-day matters, staff report to their local Managing Lawyer. The two General Managers, for Compliance and Reporting, and Operations, share responsibility for the administrative and organisational support team.

Staff have been carefully recruited for their area of expertise, and for their experience working with complex clients, including survivors of sexual abuse. Initially a recruitment agency assisted with this process as each **knowmore** office opened, but this is now undertaken in-house as recruitment is largely settled, and **knowmore** also has a human resources specialist.

Staff meet regularly in their local teams and then participate in regular teleconference meetings by discipline type. The organisation holds full staff meetings twice a year in Sydney.

**knowmore** has developed policies, procedures and practices to guide its operation, which are subject to regular review. This work has needed to respond to the challenges inherent in the work, taking care to

attend to the needs of clients and of staff. Practice guides have been developed, paying particular attention to articulate the distinctive elements of practice within a multi-disciplinary legal service.

**knowmore** created a data management system – the **knowmore** information management system (KIMS) to capture client data. The information management system has been refined through several iterations, and is now supported by dedicated in-house IT support.

Further, **knowmore** has established its brand, developed its infrastructure, including a website and national telephone system.

This has taken place while developing a new service delivery model to respond to unique circumstances and, like the Royal Commission, having no knowledge at the outset of the level of demand. The organisation's development has taken place against an intense period of service delivery, community engagement, outreach, relationship and network development, contributions to the Royal Commission and other inquiries.

There is an appreciation within **knowmore** that building a new legal service, with new ways of doing business, is best achieved through a supportive and inclusive workplace culture. Staff reported high levels of trust in the workplace.

*...people feel supported and empowered to be themselves...they can bring their own style and authenticity-I don't feel conflicted at work on a personal level*

*knowmore staff member*

In discussing the effectiveness of the organisation, both **knowmore** and NACLC acknowledge that the organisation has been funded to provide quality services, and has benefited from not needing to work to targets, but has been able to plan and operate as a start-up organisation.

## What did external stakeholders say?

- *I have never heard of a new service that is not an identified Indigenous organisation being able to so quickly and so successfully engage with Aboriginal people. Full credit to your organisation.*

*Aboriginal health organisation*

- *We have received prompt, comprehensive responses when we have asked questions...*

*Survivor specific agency*

- *Very efficient and very effective. Basically if we ask for help, they give it.*

*Panel lawyer, Compensation*

- *If we didn't have the relationship, we would certainly have a knowledge gap and would be less effective in managing our funded services. It would impact on our relationship with funded services, as we would not have as full an understanding of the policy and practical environment the services are working in.*

*Government department*

- *With every model, it always comes down to the individuals who are working in that model. We have got a lovely team in (capital city), and they are very supportive of us, and us of them...They are very, very important to us.*

*Support service*

## Improvements implemented

As a start-up organisation, improving the organisational effectiveness has been an on-going and dynamic process for **knowmore**. The extension of the funding agreement enabled **knowmore** to take a longer-term view, and consolidate the organisation.

Some examples of organisational improvements implemented include:

- **organisational structure:** appointing team leaders for the support team and the ATSI engagement team has enabled the senior management group to have genuine multi-disciplinary representation; instituting the local Managing Lawyer position has provided a more efficient and sensible structure for local management.
- **leadership team:** creating the role of General Manager (Compliance and Reporting) with a focus on systems

development has enabled this, whilst relieving other senior managers of this task and allowing more effective focus on their roles as Principal Lawyer and General Manager (Operations).

- **non-legal support:** specialist staff have been recruited to the roles of IT and telecommunications, and human resources, providing more in-house expertise and reducing reliance on external advice and support; additional administrative staff have been recruited, relieving other staff of these duties.
- **intranet:** an in-house intranet system has been established to support document sharing and communication across the four offices.
- **data management:** the KIMS database has been upgraded and data recording processes improved, with in-house support can be adjusted as needed.
- **policies, practices and procedures:** development is on-going, and focuses on creating policies tailored to the therapeutic and trauma-informed multi-disciplinary practice of **knowmore**, with special regard to workplace health and safety.

## Outcomes

**knowmore** is now a well-established organisation and a key member of the network of services supporting survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. Whilst the level of resourcing of **knowmore** has been significant, this has enabled and supported:

- more effective functioning of the Royal Commission
- the development of pathways for clients to move from the Royal Commission to a supported process to pursue claims for compensation or redress
- the creation of a national body of knowledge about victim redress and compensation options
- more efficient operation of support services by providing a single, reliable source of legal information and advice
- clients to obtain legal information through processes which provide support, limit the traumatic effects of re-telling their stories

and make the process of pursuing claims more efficient and less costly.

## What has been learnt?

The organisation's national and evolving structure has contributed to its effectiveness in multiple ways. The multi-disciplinary teams, and the overall number of staff in four states allows the organisation to respond to workload spikes and staff absences. Calls can be switched to other offices when needed. Resources can be reallocated to respond to outreach activities, Royal Commission hearings and client work. The size of the team means that clients can nearly always be offered multi-disciplinary support and choice of gender of worker. The profile of the national team provides a breadth and depth of corporate knowledge that could not be replicated through separate teams or organisations.

*'The lesson we take from **knowmore** is having the right people in the positions. **knowmore** has recruited really well. The ATSI engagement advisors are terrific, have the right level of life and work experience. Really well respected in communities. But also – lawyers have been really well recruited – they don't come in as the experts on everything – they understand that they need to seek advice around cultural protocols and sensitivities. This is really important. To repeat the model, this lesson is critical.'*

ATSILS

## Key messages:

The effectiveness of **knowmore** as an organisation is derived through the combination of appropriate resourcing, a highly-principled and values driven approach and an adaptable, genuinely multi-disciplinary staff team, well-supported with in-house corporate resources.

# Conclusions

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The evaluation of **knowmore** legal service has examined a range of questions about provision of services. The central, and final question for the evaluation is whether the organisation has made a difference.

The evaluation has examined whether **knowmore** has provided free, accessible, trauma-informed and culturally secure services, how effective these have been, and whether the organisation's engagement strategies have been successful. The findings of this report demonstrate that these objectives have been successfully achieved.

The final question for the evaluation to address is that of the difference made by the service. It should be noted when the evaluation was commissioned, and this question framed, it was anticipated that **knowmore** would be entering its final year of service delivery in 2016. With a further two years of operation, it is likely that the answers to this question will continue to develop.

At this point, with two and a half years experience, and an extensive period of evaluation, the simple response to this question is an emphatic, positive response. The detailed answer is that the service has made a difference and has done so on a number of levels.

## Has knowmore made a difference?

Feedback from the extensive range of service providers and legal practitioners consulted were unequivocal that the service has had a positive and demonstrable impact on clients' ability to reach the Royal Commission, and to participate in its structures (private sessions, providing written feedback, public hearings).

Stakeholders attributed this to multiple factors, most importantly the organisation's trauma-informed and culturally secure practices, but also having access to a specialised, national legal service working with clients from across all state and territory jurisdictions.

Without **knowmore**, themes that emerged from the feedback included:

- client disempowerment and further traumatisation would continue
- there would not be the same safety for clients
- clients would be less prepared when they come forward
- unrepresented clients 'would be torn apart in the Royal Commission. Giving advice freely and openly changes the paradigm.'
- people (with criminal records, perpetrators + victim) may risk self-incrimination
- people would either not have access to lawyers at all, and not have their questions answered, or may end up with lawyers who are not trauma-informed, are overly litigious, or unscrupulous or unethical, or through whatever circumstances would not act in the best interests of the clients, and as a consequence, would submit clients, often for another time, to a disempowering and negative experience.

In addition to strong and consistent feedback that **knowmore** has made a difference for clients, stakeholders reported that:



- the Royal Commission could not have functioned as well without **knowmore**
- the service has made positive impacts on the Royal Commission and Royal Commission processes
- the service is critical because vulnerable people in particular need access to free and appropriate legal advice and to know their legal rights and options
- the broader support service system would not have been able to support clients' needs for legal information and legal referrals, and therefore would not have been able to function as effectively on the provision of support services
- without **knowmore**, other legal services, including private lawyers, would have not been able to meet demand and costs to individuals and support services would have been astronomical
- a dedicated, specialist trauma-informed legal service has been essential, because it is a specialist area of legal advice, with few specialists operating in private practice.

As outlined in this report, the model is perceived to be highly positive. Further, through its model, **knowmore** is able to link with and liaise between the Royal Commission, legal services, counselling and support services, government departments and agencies and peak bodies and professional associations.

'What **knowmore** does should be long term and is good for the Australian legal system.

Private lawyer, Representation panel

**knowmore** legal service came into being as a result of the establishment of the Royal Commission. Predating the Royal Commission was decades of work on the part of individuals and groups advocating for justice for those who had been sexually abused as children in institutions. **knowmore's** establishment was also linked to the advocacy of NACLC to

ensure that the people participating in the Royal Commission's structures were provided with legal advice and information, from a service with a deep understanding of the affects of sexual abuse experienced as a child, knowledge of how these affects may have been carried into the person's life, competence in working with this group, commitment to assisting them in accessing justice and, most importantly, compassion.

The nature of future Royal Commissions and enquiries are not known. But it is known that public enquiries have often been held to address questions of injustice and suffering, such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The innovative approaches adopted by this Royal Commission are likely to influence the way future enquiries approach their work with vulnerable people and those affected by trauma whose stories are sought by public enquiry.

Irrespective of whether there are future Royal Commissions seeking input from people affected by trauma, we know that there are many in the community in these circumstances.

While **knowmore** is only two years old, and the model is still evolving, it has developed, and continues to develop, innovative practices and approaches which have the potential to inform the design and operation of integrated legal services in the future. The work of **knowmore** has the potential to influence both the design of legal services for future Royal Commissions, but also the provision of contemporary legal services generally. The government is actively considering options for a national redress scheme (at the time of writing). The Royal Commission has estimated that as many as 60,000 people may be eligible for compensation under such a scheme, and has recommended that applicants have access to legal advice and support.

Understanding trauma, and providing trauma-informed legal services is relevant to the



provision of legal services to those affected by family violence, sexual assault, or exposure to any other type of violence and/or trauma, including natural disasters.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people are known to be disproportionately over-represented in the experience of trauma. Previous Royal Commissions, such as Bringing Them Home, have been instrumental in helping the Australian community to understand the issues of the Stolen Generations, and its trans-generational impacts.

One of the key messages from the evaluation of **knowmore** is that to create a legal service which has the understanding, knowledge and experience to properly work with groups with extraordinary needs, requires a special response. In the case of **knowmore**, multi-disciplinary teams working in an organisation which has planned and scrutinised its work, and systems to ensure that they are trauma-informed and culturally secure, has been transformative and key to providing access to justice for survivors, and for ensuring that their pathway to justice is a sensitive and compassionate one.

### *How does knowmore's model make a difference?*

#### *A support service provider's perspective*

*Individuals are faced with a range of legal options for redress - institutional schemes, civil redress and so on.*

*All of these pathways could be options for an individual, or one pathway, or none. That is why we see it as being so important so that clients can access good, independent legal advice. **knowmore** is the only legal service that holds detailed, nuanced knowledge of national compensation schemes. It is so important that **knowmore** has the skills and experience to provide advice to this cohort of clients.*

*Some of our clients have commenced processes directly with institutional redress schemes, and they have had very poor experiences (cases being dragged out for years, conflicting advice etc.).*

*The experience of institutional abuse as a child can be so profoundly damaging and can really disturb someone's world-view, and profoundly affect their capacity to trust, which is why they can find themselves in conflict with everyone.*

*Because the experience of trauma affects people's relational abilities, sometimes they can end up with a constellation of conflicts – some of which have become legal issues, such as conflicts with neighbours, families, business, government departments. In some cases, clients provoke these responses, but then find they can't get out of them.*

*That's where **knowmore** is excellent – a good front door for the client. They can help people on a practical level with some of these intractable legal problems, but because of their understanding of trauma and their multi-disciplinary approach, they are really able to help the client navigate some of this labyrinth, and also assist them in thinking about or dealing with addressing the fundamental issue of seeking some form of redress for the institutional abuse they suffered.*

*Clients can be very suspicious, and assisting them can take months, even years. To help them, it is essential to create a safe engagement, and one they can enter and disengage from if they wish, and re-connect when they feel ready.*

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- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/about/jobs-land-and-economy-programme/indigenous-representation-commonwealth-public-sector>
- <sup>12</sup> Coumarelos et al, *Legal Australia-Wide Survey: legal needs in Australia*, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, 2012, p.206
- <sup>13</sup> Prime Minister of Australia. (2015, September 24). 'Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence' [Media release]. <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/2015-09-24/womens-safety-package-stop-violence>