



National Centre for Action  
on Child Sexual Abuse

# Annual Report

2023

# Acknowledgements

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The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (National Centre) respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the many Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Australia and pay our respects to ancestors of this country and Elders past and present. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culture and lore have existed within Australia continuously for over 65,000 years.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia and those who have and continue to work tirelessly to address inequalities and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice outcomes for children and young people. The National Centre is committed to ensuring that the voices of those whose lives are affected by the decisions governments make should fundamentally inform those decisions. First Nations voices must be heard, raised and amplified through a Voice to Parliament. It is time for genuine and significant reform to progress healing through the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

We seek to honour the lived and living expertise of all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, harnessing all ages, cultures, abilities and backgrounds, and commit to substantially addressing the harm of child sexual abuse, now and well into the future. We recognise that there are children and young people today who are experiencing sexual abuse and dedicate ourselves to doing all we can to promote their effective protection and care.

## Our Commitment

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The establishment of a national centre to raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of child sexual abuse, support help-seeking and guide best practice advocacy and support and therapeutic treatment was a key recommendation (9.9) of the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Royal Commission identified that ongoing national leadership is necessary to improve outcomes for victims and survivors of past child sexual abuse and prevent future child sexual abuse.

Established in late 2021, the National Centre is a partnership between three respected organisations with strong histories of leadership in responding to the child sexual abuse - Australian Childhood Foundation, Blue Knot Foundation and the Healing Foundation (each a Founding Member). The National Centre has an integrated governance structure that embeds the expertise of adults with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse, the rich strength of knowledge of First Nations peoples and the voices of children and young people, as well as the expertise of researchers, practitioners, justice organisations, corporate entities, government and policy leaders.

At its core, the National Centre is a symbol of hope and an essential vehicle for action for many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. Its vision is for a community where children are safe and victims and survivors are supported to heal and recover, free of stigma and shame – a future without child sexual abuse.

To achieve its vision, the National Centre:

- ensures the knowledge and voice of victim and survivors of child sexual abuse is at the core of all of its activities
- commissions critical research
- builds the workforce capability of organisations working with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
- strives to raise community awareness of the nature of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it.

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# Foreword

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For our inaugural Annual Report, we invited members of our Survivor-led Adult College to reflect on our first year of operation. Below are reflections from those who have participated.

Australia's new National Centre is the organisation that will help society become more aware of the damage of child sexual abuse and its lifelong impacts. I was recently told: "You have to get over it – get on with your life!" This was a very hurtful, obtuse statement. The members of the Survivor-led Adult College, with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse have tragically endured, but also survived their ordeal. They have a very powerful story to tell as sadly they hold compelling information. The stark reality is though, some people who were abused as innocent children do not survive their torment and just cannot cope. Their angelic young lives end far too early. This is the hideous crime of child sexual abuse! The National Centre has worked alongside the members of the Survivor-led Adult College, (brave people) to build the very foundations of this structure. One which will work to help survivors, strive to protect precious children, prevent child sexual abuse and empower society!

**Robbie Gambley**

Many of us were part of the multi-decade fight for the recognition and funding required to establish something like the National Centre.

The opportunity to contribute to setting it up has felt surreal in the best and worst ways; an honour, a delight, and sometimes a terrifying responsibility, given the lives at stake. The most encouraging development in the formation of the National Centre has been its emerging culture – a culture of respect, partnership, and openness to feedback and debate. Not only does the National Centre recognise the heterogeneity of victim-survivors' perspectives, it appreciates that this diversity is key to fulfilling its mandate and realising our shared vision. It feels surreal to be part of a national awakening and contribute to a new, no doubt multi-generational effort to defend children and prevent child sexual abuse.

**Scarlett Franks**

All too often survivors' testimony and experience has been appropriated and voiced by 'expert' researchers and commentators. Older survivors, especially, often find their experience of child sexual abuse described as historical, as if 'getting over it' is just a matter of time. I am pleased to have been able to add my voice to others in the formative stage of the National Centre as it affirms the proposition that lived experience is also living experience. The National Centre has listened intently to its experts by experience. We carry the power of history within us to help the National Centre interpret what it meant to be silent and powerless – and how best to confront the challenges the National Centre faces.

**Frank Golding**



## Stories to the forefront

The thumbprint illustrations throughout this report are first person stories from our College members and were designed as a key part of our brand development. This visual direction strives to bring the stories of victims and survivors to the forefront, to elevate their voices beyond the statistics, and honour their experiences and knowledge. We thank all our College members for their bravery and contribution to the work of the National Centre, both now and in the future.



ONCE UPON A TIME,  
HELD TIGHTLY INSIDE OF ME, WAS  
A BOX OF HURT KEPT CAREFULLY  
WRAPPED AND HIDDEN. IT FELT THAT IF  
IT WERE OPENED UP, ALL OF THE PAIN BURIED  
WITHIN, WOULD POUR OUT AND BE OVERWHELMING.  
WHEN MY DAUGHTERS WERE BORN, THERE WAS A  
POWERFUL DESIRE TO **HEAL**, FOR THEIR SAKE.  
REALLY, IT WAS FOR MYSELF.

BEGINNING WHAT WOULD BE MANY YEARS OF COUNSELLING,  
THE FEELINGS OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY TRAUMA NEVER  
HAPPENED. INSTEAD, IT WAS A STEADY PROCESS OF UNPACKING,  
**ACCEPTANCE** AND **SELF-CARING**.

IN TIME THE SHAME THAT WAS NEVER MINE TO CARRY, WAS SET  
DOWN. I SPOKE UP AGAINST MY ABUSER. I SPOKE OUT FOR MYSELF.  
NOW, BEING A MEMBER OF THE **NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ACTION ON**

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE** IS AN **EMPOWERING**  
OPPORTUNITY TO USE MY VOICE FOR OTHERS  
AND TO BE A PART OF MAKING POSITIVE,  
NECESSARY AND OVERDUE CHANGES.  
BRINGING AWARENESS TO THIS COMMON ABUSE THAT IS  
INFREQUENTLY AND UNCOMFORTABLY SPOKEN ABOUT, WE  
ARE SUPPORTING VICTIMS/SURVIVORS TO HEAL AND  
**THRIVE**.

PROTECTION! TOGETHER, WE ARE FOR  
ALL BODIES AND SOULS  
DESERVE RESPECT AND TO BE SAFE!

**Malika Reese**

Survivor-led Adult College Member

In joining the Survivor-led Adult College, I have allowed myself, after 55 years of silence, to finally speak publicly about my experience of sexual abuse as a child and an adolescent and the lifelong impact it has had. I can't help but reflect on the parallel I see to the early stages of the National Centre's life. I am gathering the mounds of knowledge inside me and around me, even after a long career as a helping professional, and choosing to equally value the lived expertise I have. Not just contributing my voice, but along with so many other victim-survivors, watching my actions forming part of the bedrock of the National Centre's growth. I am here in committed solidarity with the National Centre. Here for change...silent no more.

#### **Angela Obradovic**

I, Pascale Stendell, am grateful I was invited to put forward an expression of interest to become a part of the National Centre Survivor-led Adult College. Being a part of a varied group of passionate people with lived experience led by three respected organisations was an opportunity for change and I believe it is now starting to happen. The first 18 months proved difficult with changes in key staff members, difficulty in juggling all the agendas and in establishing trust, safety and authenticity with the entire college. Reflecting on this experience reveals the amount of work which will be required to establish the same level of trust and safety with all the players in this industry. I believe the lessons learnt will help the National Centre become the trauma-informed organisation it ought to be role-modelling, ultimately helping towards achieving its goals.

#### **Pascale Stendell**

It has been a true privilege to play a part in the establishment of the National Centre. As an inaugural member of the Survivor-led Adult College, it has been truly powerful to have my voice and experiences heard and validated. To shape and inform the purpose, values and the priorities of the National Centre has been a wonderful experience, and to empower change throughout Australia, for all Australians, is a true honour and privilege.

#### **Lyn MacLeod**

The past 12 months has been an exciting and challenging time yet so rewarding. It is like working on a giant jigsaw puzzle – at first daunting with so much to do and not really knowing where to start. Yet, with the amazing team that has been assembled, the jigsaw puzzle is beginning to take shape.

Structure, purpose and values have been established and for me knowing where I fit into the picture. Understanding my value, finding my voice and confidence to tackle the many challenges that are before us, and knowing that each time we gather, more of the jigsaw pieces are coming together. Knowing that my voice is being heard, acknowledged and respected.

Seeing the achievements, like funding research, defining language standards, outstanding 'In Conversation' pieces, creating a social media presence that adds value and a cove of supporting information, to simply being there for each other.

My little pebble in the pond is beginning to make waves – waves of progress, like a marathon. I will keep running and fighting the cause against childhood sexual abuse.

#### **Paul Klotz**

# First Nations College

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The First Nations College (College) is one of three foundational colleges of the National Centre. The College has been meeting for over a year, being one of the first advisory groups to be initiated through the National Centre. Previously co-chaired by the CEO of the Healing Foundation, Fiona Cornforth, and Executive Officer Tash Brunhuber, members of the College provide insights, advice and recommendations to the National Centre on policies, projects and reports that have an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The main role of the College is to ensure that the National Centre is culturally safe and informed and includes First Nations communities' voices, experiences and perspectives. By achieving this goal, the National Centre, and services that engage with First Nations peoples in the child sexual abuse space, will be held accountable to uphold a high level of cultural safety and respect.

# Children and Young People College

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it plain that children have a right to participate in decision making on matters that impact on their lives (UNCRC, Article 12, 1989). Some 34 years since its inception, however, studies show that children's voices are still not being taken seriously (McCafferty et al., 2023). Research shows that bureaucracy, professional attitudes and organisational culture can act as barriers to effective participation, which children and young people can experience as tokenistic as a result (McPherson et al, 2021).

Within this context and in line with the commitment of the National Centre to privilege the voices of those impacted by child sexual abuse, the Engage Project was commissioned. The project aimed to better understand from children and young people how to ideally support and facilitate their participation in the ongoing work of the National Centre.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, the National Centre commissioned the Australian Childhood Foundation and Southern Cross University to conduct groups with children and young people as part of the Engage Project – a national research project led by Southern Cross University.

**“Adults have been trying to solve this problem for a long time, and so far, they haven't been able to. So, it's time for some out of the box thinking. It's about time children and young people were more involved in the solutions.”**

(Focus Group Participant)

Children and young people from four states around Australia volunteered to be involved in the groups. Some had lived experience of child sexual abuse, including institutional abuse, some had lived experience of the out-of-home-care system. Within the groups, there were also members who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, as LGBTQIA+, as living with a disability, varied cultural and faith backgrounds, young people who were also young parents, school students, school leavers and some in higher education. The project partners are incredibly grateful to these children and young people for sharing their insights, for considering their own situations and those of their peers and then generously giving of their time. They offered expertise and insights and will continue to lead work in this area as the National Centre seeks to raise awareness and understanding, support help-seeking and guide best practice – improving outcomes and preventing future child sexual abuse.

Together, the groups worked to discover and share what they felt would support or prevent young people like them from engaging and participating in the work of the National Centre. They described a number of familial, system and environmental barriers. What mattered most to focus group participants was a sense that, as long as the doors were open for them to participate and really be heard, then they felt they could make a difference.

For this reason, the framework they have co-designed features the elements of rights-based participation within an environment which is informed and supported by an organisation that understands their needs, advocates for their right to participate and holds key values that make their participation safe and possible. We are so excited to be developing a model of participation that has been developed with and by children and young people.

**Lauren Thomas**  
Australian Childhood Foundation

**Associate Professor Lynne MacPherson**  
Centre for Children and Young People,  
Southern Cross University

**Dr Leanne Beagley**  
CEO National Centre

## Our vision

A community where children are safe and victims and survivors are supported to heal and recover, free of stigma and shame – a future without child sexual abuse.

## Our board

The National Centre Board is responsible for corporate governance and guiding and monitoring the business on behalf of the Founding Members. The board is dedicated to fulfilling these duties in a lawful and professional manner, with the utmost integrity and objectivity and is committed to achieving high standards of governance.

The board recognises the critical value of lived and living experience to support enhanced outcomes for victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds who have a range of needs. This approach honours and elevates their knowledge and expertise and will help us to achieve our goals.



**Dr Joe Tucci**  
Chair



**Dr Cathy Kezelman AM**  
Deputy Chair



**Janise Mitchell**  
Board Member



**Belinda Johnson**  
Board Member



**Fiona Cornforth**  
Board Member

## Our executive team

Reporting to and working closely in collaboration with the Board of Directors, the CEO drives the strategic vision planning, and operational leadership of the National Centre, working closely with the executive team.



**Dr Leanne Beagley**  
CEO



**Scott Thompson**  
Director, Finance and  
Corporate Services



**Alisa Hall**  
Director, Practice  
Development and  
Engagement



**A/Prof Dominiek Coates**  
Director, Research,  
Evidence and Knowledge  
Generation



## Our purpose

To disrupt the dynamics that have failed to stop child sexual abuse and prevented victims and survivors from being believed, validated and supported in the ways they need.



I TOLD MY WONDERFUL SOCIAL  
WORKER ABOUT THE ABUSE BECAUSE  
I TRUSTED HER & I BELIEVED SHE WOULD  
HELP ME, I FELT **SAFE**. SHE TOLD ME IT WAS  
NOT MY FAULT, THAT HE WAS THE PERPETRATOR & HE  
MAY HARM OTHER CHILDREN. I FELT AN IMMEDIATE URGENCY  
TO GO TO THE POLICE & TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED.  
HOW A SCHOOL TEACHER WHO HAD POWER OVER ME HAD ASSAULTED  
MY YOUNG, HAPPY, INNOCENT BEING & CHANGED THE TRAJECTORY &  
PLANS FOR MY LIFE FOREVER. I HAD TO WORK TO **PROTECT**  
**CHILDREN!** THE POLICE ALSO BELIEVED ME & PUT MY WORDS INTO ACTION.  
I TOILED ALONGSIDE THE DEDICATED DETECTIVES. THE PERPETRATOR -  
WHO AT THE TIME OF THE HORRIFIC ABUSE WAS A YOUNG, CHARISMATIC  
MAN - WAS ARRESTED, CHARGED & ULTIMATELY PLEADED GUILTY. VICTORY  
- I WON! THE **HEALING** BEGAN! I SPOKE TO THE NEWSPAPER TO  
TRY & HELP OTHERS. PEOPLE READ MY STORY, BELIEVED ME & WERE  
KIND TO ME. I GAVE EVIDENCE AT OUR ROYAL COMMISSION, THEY  
WERE **COMPASSIONATE** PEOPLE. A NATIONAL CENTRE  
WAS RECOMMENDED. NOW I WORK FOR **THE NATIONAL**  
**CENTRE** TO HELP SURVIVOR'S OF ABUSE, ( BRAVE  
PEOPLE ), & DO ALL I CAN TO PUT  
FORWARD TO PROTECT OUR  
**PRECIOUS** CHILDREN!  
SYSTEMS

Robbie Gambley

Survivor-led Adult College Member



## From the Chair

Child sexual abuse is an insidious problem. It occurs in secret. It relies on the manipulation and distortion of truth. It deeply influences the lives of victims and survivors over the course of their lives. They often carry with them the distress and pain of not being believed.

According to the Australian Child Maltreatment Study released this year, 28.5% of the whole population of Australians over the age of 16 have experienced sexual abuse as children. It also found that when a child experienced sexual abuse, they were far more likely to experience it multiple times.

It is with all of this in mind that we present the first Annual Report on behalf of the board and staff of the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse.

Starting a new organisation from scratch is a big task. It requires a spirit of generosity and collaboration to be experienced reciprocally. Adults with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse have been so supportive of our efforts. We are proud of the way their insights are built into the heart and soul of the way that the National Centre works. Practitioners, policy makers and researchers across disciplines and sectors have engaged with us and have validated our vision and the development of our organisational strategy.

In the past two years, we have scoped the extent of the work ahead, consulted on the appropriate strategic directions for the National Centre and built important partnerships to strengthen shared action. We have released *Here for Change – Our Five Year Strategy* to guide our next steps.

None of this would have been possible without the efforts of our team at the National Centre. Led with clarity of purpose by Dr Leanne Beagley, our CEO, they have worked tirelessly to not only support its establishment but also to build our capability to lead, undertake research, provide learning opportunities and engage the community in ways that privilege the need to offer all victims and survivors more compassionate and informed responses. They are an amazing group of staff.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and leadership provided by our Commonwealth Government colleagues (the Department of Social Services team and the National Office for Child Safety) and extend this acknowledgement to the many people, departments and services who have gathered around us through our governance structure and as critical friends. If the National Centre is going to achieve its mandate, this support will make all the difference.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Founding Member Board Directors – each leaders in their own right of organisations (Australian Childhood Foundation Blue Knot Foundation, the Healing Foundation) who have worked for many years with the trauma associated with childhood abuse. We remain as committed as ever to a future without child sexual abuse and improved responses to those who live with the lifelong impacts of sexual abuse as children.

Children need adults to stand up for them in order to protect them from sexual abuse. Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse need systems and the community to change the way they support them. It is this collective endeavour that we aspire to.

**Dr Joe Tucci**



## From the CEO

The National Centre is *here for change*. We chose that phrase for our five-year strategic plan through our comprehensive re-branding process. It is both a statement of intent and call to action for our stakeholder community.

Our ethos of *here for change* embodies this once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the conversation and create a paradigm shift in our approach to responding to child sexual abuse and its often life-long impacts.

We include the voices of victims and survivors to shape our work, knowledge and leadership to ensure it is useful, authentic and appropriate. As such, our victim and survivor College members have set the tone for this Annual Report by sharing their experience of the establishment of the National Centre with their *stories to the forefront*.

In setting the foundations for the National Centre, we are proud of having activated a governance and advisory structure that frames opportunities for broad engagement, and guidance from those with expertise to ensure the establishment of the National Centre and the priorities for action are sound and clear.

We have set up our internal processes with rigor and transparency, including financial management systems, risk management frameworks, procurement processes and “people” processes. The National Centre is in a strong financial position having carefully balanced the resourcing needs with the establishment priorities and capacity to support an expanding workforce. In this context, it is a pleasure to report on an unmodified audit result. The audited financial statements for the National Centre for year ending 30 June 2023 are available to download from our website.

On this fundamental base, we have consolidated our advisor Colleges who have, and continue to, contribute to the whole architecture of our approach. We have triggered our practice development program reaching more than 1,390 practitioners to participate in advising us through a workforce needs survey and reached more than 1,000 participants through our webinar program. We have initiated the in-house and funded research program in priority areas linked with Here for Change and we are laying the groundwork for sharing and amplifying what we learn together through this work. The National Centre has identified five knowledge areas for synthesis to action – lived and living experience, research knowledge, cultural knowledge, practitioner knowledge and system knowledges. We are confident that our established structure and communication approach sets a comprehensive platform on which to take the next steps, including advocating for change through our first submission on the link between children’s human rights and the prevention of child sexual abuse.

The National Centre Board has held their vision through the challenges of this establishment year and provided a sound foundation for us as an operational team to take things forward. Their support for me as the new CEO has been unwavering and I am very grateful to have together established a strong working relationship which will frame our efforts going forward.

Our people are our finest resource and we have been welcoming new people as the team has expanded throughout the year. I would like to pay tribute to all our staff and thank them each for a great year of hard work. In particular, my thanks to Alisa Hall and Dom Coates whose pioneering work from the beginning is reflected across all that we do.

On behalf of the whole team, I would like to thank you, our stakeholder community, for your welcome, your advice and your active collaboration.

The National Centre is *#HereforChange* and we look forward to working with you all.

As a symbol of hope and vehicle for action, the National Centre acknowledges the goals and also expectations of our stakeholders, and we look forward to working together to deliver on our vision and purpose.

**Dr Leanne Beagley**

MY INVOLVEMENT WITH  
THE NATIONAL CENTRE IS A JUNCTION  
IN MY LIFE SPAN, THAT IS ALLOWING ME TO THINK  
SAFELY AND CLEARLY ABOUT MY JOURNEY TO DATE – ONE  
THAT HAS BEEN DARK AND UGLY ON THE INSIDE, AS MY PAIN, SHAME, GUILT  
AND ALL THE OTHER EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS THAT HAVE HAUNTED AND  
TAUNTED ME FOR SO LONG. NOW, BY BEING INVOLVED, I AM DIRECTLY INVOLVED  
AND HOPING TO BRING ABOUT **AWARENESS, HOPE** AND CHANGE;  
AT ALL LEVELS OF THE COMMUNITY AND IN THE POLICY AND SYSTEM ARENAS.  
I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT (OR EVEN IN MY LIFETIME) AS  
SUSTAINABLE IMPACT AND CHANGE IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY. BUT TO REFLECT ON AN  
AFRICAN SAYING ... "YOU CANNOT EAT AN ELEPHANT IN ONE BITE, IT TAKES LOTS OF LITTLE  
BITES" ... AND THIS IS WHAT I SEE MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL CENTRE IS  
ABOUT ... TAKING THAT FIRST LITTLE BITE. IT IS ABOUT BEING THE STRONG VOICE FOR  
THE PAST VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS, BEING THE CHALLENGING VOICE FOR TODAY'S  
GENERATION AND BEING THE STANDARD VOICE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. IT IS  
ALSO A LIFE SAVING (SELF-CARE) TOOL THAT HAS ALLOWED ME TO  
CONFRONT MY DEMONS, BEGIN MY JOURNEY OF RECOVERY AND PROVIDE  
REAL FOCUS ON ME AS A 'WORTHY' AND 'IMPORTANT' PERSON  
THAT HAS A RIGHT TO REDISCOVER  
THE REASON, BEAUTY & **VALUE**  
OF BEING ALIVE.

Paul Klotz

Survivor-led Adult College Member

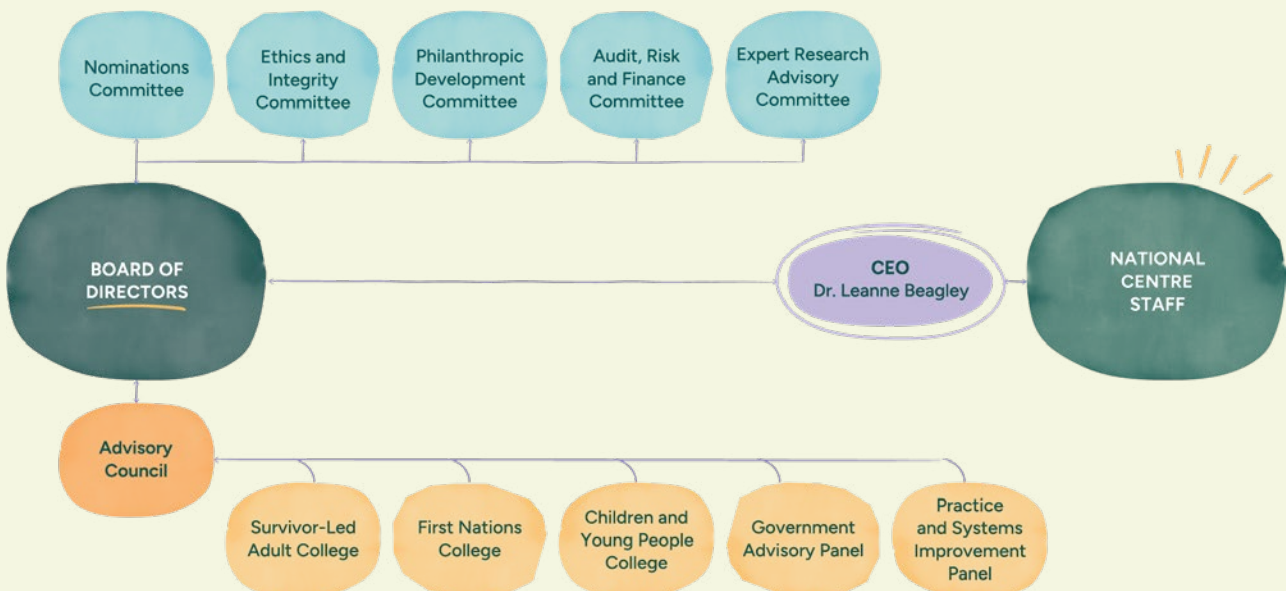


# Establishing the National Centre

## Setting our foundations

The National Centre is a new organisation which has required careful attention to laying a robust foundation for strong, accountable and transparent governance. Key to the leadership of the National Centre is the Board of Directors which oversees a comprehensive governance and advisory structure.

Within this, the operational systems of the National Centre have been developed and are outlined below. The National Centre is deeply grateful for the support of stakeholders and advisors as we move forward to build our offerings for the Australian community.



# Governance structure, advisory and colleges

The National Centre has been steadily building the network of advisory and governance structures over the past year, importantly commencing with the Survivor-led Adult College within which victims and survivors have lent their knowledges to the foundation and strategic development of the National Centre. The First Nations College was also established early and provides deeply valuable and valued guidance to the National Centre. The Children and Young People College is in development and will be established over the coming year.

On the **governance** side, the board has met at least monthly throughout the year and the Nominations Committee has supported the formal establishment of the leadership groups. The Expert Research Advisory Committee played an important early role in setting the frame for the Research Plan and commissioning program and have guided implementation on the Research Agenda. The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee has been established with external experts joining to support the development of financial, compliance and risk management systems. The Ethics and Integrity and the Philanthropy and Corporate Partnerships Committees are currently in development and will complete the set of Governance Committees.

On the **advisory** side, we are delighted to confirm that establishing all working groups is well progressed with the final group (the Advisory Council) due to have its inaugural meeting in September 2023.

The National Centre extends a very appreciative message of thanks to each member of these advisory groups which provide detailed and wise advice on a range of critical National Centre activities, such as government engagement, practice development, training and utilising the voices of lived experience. There is a crowd of active supporters whose guidance and commitment is at the heart of our work.





MY STORY OF TRAUMA, PAIN AND HEARTACHE STARTS WHEN I'M A LITTLE GIRL. SHE GREW UP HIDING HER PAIN BEHIND SMILES AND GOOD BEHAVIOUR – NO ONE AROUND HER SUSPECTED SHE WAS DYING INSIDE. EVERYDAY SHE'S REMINDED THAT IT WASN'T STRANGERS WHO HURT HER, BUT HER OWN FAMILY. PEOPLE SHE TRUSTED, CARED FOR DEEPLY AND LOVED. SHE DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD A CHOICE – SHE WAS FROZEN IN FEAR. SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WOULD DO TO HER THROUGHOUT HER LIFE. EVERY RELATIONSHIP WOULD SUFFER BECAUSE OF HER INABILITY TO TRUST. EVERY PERSON SHE MET WOULD BE KEPT AT A DISTANCE IN FEAR OF BEING HURT AGAIN. SHE DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WOULD MOULD AND CHANGE HER TO BECOME SOMEONE SHE DID NOT WANT TO BE. WITH HER **SPIRIT** BROKEN IN PIECES SHE WAS POWERLESS AND NOT IN CONTROL OF HER BEING. EACH DAY SHE WAS MASKING HER AUTHENTIC SELF BECAUSE SHE THOUGHT "NO ONE WOULD LOVE THE REAL ME." I WILL FOREVER CARRY THAT LITTLE GIRL WITH ME AND EACH DAY I WILL TRY MY BEST TO GIVE HER THE LOVE SHE DESERVED.

I AM PROUD AND PRIVILEGED TO BE IN A POSITION IN MY LIFE TO BE ABLE TO SHARE MY STORY AND FINALLY BEGIN MY JOURNEY OF **HEALING**. I KNOW THAT MANY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES ARE NOT AS PRIVILEGED TO BE IN THIS POSITION AS THERE ARE MANY BARRIERS WE FACE WHEN ACCESSING THE SAME SERVICES AS NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. MY HOPE FOR **THE NATIONAL CENTRE** IS TO REMOVE THOSE BARRIERS SO THAT ALL FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES CAN HAVE ACCESS TO TRAUMA-AWARE, HEALING-INFORMED, CULTURALLY SAFE AND APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALING SERVICES THAT CENTRE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES AND OUR **CULTURES**.

I HOPE THAT I CAN BE THE PERSON THAT I NEEDED GROWING UP FOR OTHERS AND MAYBE I CAN INSPIRE OTHERS TO SPEAK THEIR TRUTH AND SEEK HELP. IF I CAN HELP JUST ONE CHILD, ONE TEEN OR ONE ADULT BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY OF HEALING THEN I WILL HAVE ACHIEVED MY GOAL FOR JOINING THE FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE. WE ARE NOT AND WILL NOT BE DEFINED BY SOMEONE ELSE'S ACTIONS. I STAND IN MY STRENGTH KNOWING OUR **ANCESTORS** CONTINUE TO GUIDE US EVERY STEP OF THE WAY –WE ARE NEVER ALONE.



First Nations College Member



# Key policies and procedures

During the past year, the National Centre began building its Financial Management Framework to ensure:

- accountability and transparency in financial management
- long-term financial sustainability
- effective and efficient control over, and use of, financial resources
- accuracy, timeliness and completeness of financial information
- effective management of financial risks
- compliance with legislative and government policy requirements.

In addition, a number of key policies were finalised including the organisation's Delegations Policy, Procurement Policy, Compliance Register, Risk Framework and Financial Sustainability Plan.

Further to this, the National Centre Human Resource Framework was developed to provide a consistent and efficient mechanism for managing our workforce, along with a Policy Manual consisting of all policies and procedures to support team members through their employment lifecycle.

# Growing our team

During the reporting year, we have grown our workforce in line with the unfolding needs to the National Centre, expectations and contracted responsibilities. The staff team as of **30 June 2023** was as follows:

- **Dr Leanne Beagley**  
Chief Executive Officer
- **Scott Thompson**  
Director, Finance and Corporate Services
- **Alisa Hall**  
Director, Practice Development and Engagement
- **A/Prof Dominiek Coates**  
Director, Research, Evidence and Knowledge Generation
- **Kirsty McIntyre**  
Systems Support Lead
- **Dr Rosa Flaherty**  
Manager, Practice Development
- **Ana Yap**  
Digital Learning and Development Lead
- **Alexandra Shriane**  
Manager, Research and Evaluation
- **Dr Natalia Krzyzaniak**  
Senior Research Officer
- **Ruth Carr**  
Manager, Communications and Digital
- **Laura Campbell**  
Communications and Digital Officer
- **Bretton Bartleet**  
Graphic and Multimedia Designer

All staff work entirely remotely which has posed new challenges and opportunities for flexible working models. We are spread across various city and rural Australian settings. The team comes together as needed and values such opportunities to gather and galvanise the organisational culture and context for our endeavours.

**The groundwork has been set for strong leadership and comprehensive transparent and inclusive governance for the National Centre. The operational team is guided by a wide-ranging strategic framework and practical policies that have set a sound foundation for success.**



# Our strategic direction and brand

## Here for Change

Here for Change – Our Five Year Strategy represents the start of a committed journey for the National Centre to transform the way that child sexual abuse is understood and responded to in Australia.

To deliver on our goals, the National Centre developed a strategy to guide its action over the coming five-year period. It frames seven critical challenges, each with a series of priorities we believe are achievable in the next five years, representing our shared understanding of what must change. See Table 1.

The seven challenges outlined in Here for Change align to the three key components of the Royal Commission's recommendations for the National Centre to:

- Recommendation 9.9a - raise awareness
- Recommendation 9.9b - increase practitioner knowledge and competence
- Recommendation 9.9c - build the evidence base.

Here for Change primarily focuses on the needs of victims and survivors in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission and describes a collective ambition in which we all work together to:

- empower, educate and enable families, communities and service providers to better meet the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across their lifespan
- empower children, young people and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse to heal and recover
- inspire community, policy and practice change to stop child sexual abuse from occurring.

The draft strategy, released in October 2022, was informed by a series of research projects which mapped the current state of knowledge and evidence in relation to child sexual abuse; the voices of people with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse; and comprehensive consultation with service providers, researchers, governments and other key stakeholders. Further consultations undertaken between October 2022 and January 2023 provided multiple options for people to engage with and provide feedback on the strategy through focus groups and workshops; individual interviews; presentations to existing networks; a written survey; and written email feedback. This feedback was collated and distilled into key themes and insights which were refined into the final version of the strategy.

The feedback received confirmed the National Centre was moving in the right direction.

90%

of people confirmed each challenge was very or extremely important

87%

of people supported the directions set out in the draft document

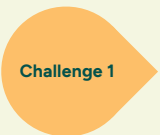




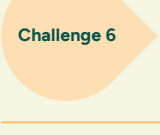
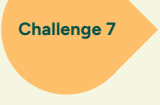
72%

of people thought the strategy would improve support for victims and survivors

The National Centre cannot achieve the commitments outlined in Here for Change without collaborating closely with the many national, state and local initiatives, and plans are in the making or already underway. We will work to support, collaborate with and lead in the various areas of our shared and respective agendas and seek to reduce duplication and build on the invaluable work happening across multiple intersecting initiatives and plans.

Here for Change recognises the complex, multifaceted and interconnected problems we face in preventing and better responding to child sexual abuse. Addressing these challenges in full will take more than five years given the scale of the problem and its entrenched and complex nature. It is through the power of partnerships with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and everyone who cares about and supports them, that we will drive the generational change needed to tackle child sexual abuse in families, communities, institutions and online. *Together we are Here for Change.*

**Table 1: Seven challenges**

	<b>The challenges we need to address</b>	<b>The change we want to see</b>
 Challenge 1	Child sexual abuse and its effects across the lifespan of victims and survivors are not well understood or identified in the community.	People and communities better identify and understand child sexual abuse and the ways it can affect victims and survivors across their lifespans, as well as their families and communities, leading to a reduction in stigma associated with child sexual abuse.
 Challenge 2	People with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse are often not believed and responded to with compassion.	The community is more compassionate and trauma aware and understands trauma associated with child sexual abuse is complex and compounding, often impacting the physical, social, mental and economic wellbeing of victims and survivors and their families.
 Challenge 3	Children, young people and adults with experiences of child sexual abuse (or their parents or carers) are often not identified, protected or well supported when they raise concerns or disclose.	Victims and survivors are seen, believed and supported in ways that help them to heal with strength and connections to others. Families, friends and service providers hold knowledge about how victims and survivors disclose their abuse experiences and seek support.
 Challenge 4	Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour require adults to better understand and meet their needs.	Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour (and their important adults) are better resourced to receive the support they need including to stop the behaviour. There is greater community understanding of harmful sexual behaviour.
 Challenge 5	Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are often unable to access the support and resources that meet their changing needs at different times in their lives.	It is easier for victims and survivors to receive the support they need, when and where they need it, to live and heal. Health and ageing, community and justice systems are more aware and responsive to people who have experienced child sexual abuse.
 Challenge 6	Knowledge about complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation does not generally inform responses to individuals with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse.	Victims and survivors are no longer stuck in a system driven by and delivering surface level responses, because workforces are better equipped to respond to their needs.
 Challenge 7	Child sexual abuse will not be stopped unless there is a comprehensive framework for addressing the power dynamics and factors which enable it.	Progress is made to stop child sexual abuse before it starts.

# Building our brand identity and public engagement

As part of its establishment, the National Centre in consultation with victims and survivors, explored the desire to rename the organisation. As a result, victims and survivors advised the board that the current name was clear, descriptive and purposeful. It was felt the name effectively established presence and credibility and emphasised the importance of National (scope), Action (impact) and Child Sexual Abuse (critical issue). The National Centre has continued to build momentum based on these insights, emphasising the action in our visual branding and evolving our domain name and associated email addresses to @nationalcentre to move away from NCACSA as an acronym. The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse was confirmed and approved as the organisation's name late 2022.

In early 2023, the National Centre worked in partnership with creative agency Storyfolk to build a compelling and authentic brand identity. Central to the rebrand was an initial "research and discovery" phase, which included extensive desktop research, industry mapping, and almost 40 hours of workshops and consultations with

**"Lived and living experience is crucial to understanding the challenges, opportunities and, ultimately, the solutions to protecting children from harm, supporting survivors, building capability and raising awareness. It recognises the unique insights, stories and understanding that only people who have experienced child sexual abuse can provide."**

key stakeholder groups, including people with lived and living experience, National Centre Board and staff, practitioners and leaders from different workforce sectors and government partners.

This led to defining the National Centre's founding and primary brand stories, concept and ideation, and testing of different brand directions, including colours, fonts, typography, photography and illustrative elements.

This process has provided a clear brand to position ourselves as a bold and fearless leader on the subject of child sexual abuse informed by the knowledge and expertise of victims and survivors.

## New logo rationale



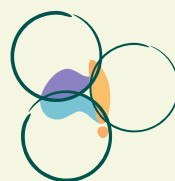
### National

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse is truly a 'national' centre. The brandmark strikes a balance between empathy and expertise to establish the National Centre as a symbol of unity, hope and healing that spans the entire nation.



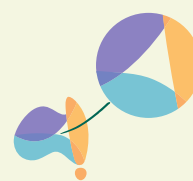
### Action

A focus on "action" has become a strong theme within the brand identity through the consultation with the lived experience panels. The brandmark on the East Coast of Australia creates a subtle yellow exclamation mark. The highlighting device under 'action' further emphasises this commitment to creating action and impact.



### Three coming together

The coming together of the Australian Childhood Foundation, Blue Knot Foundation and the Healing Foundation marks a huge milestone for child sexual abuse in Australia. The three circular shapes highlight the three brands coming together, and working together to create action.



### Measureable change

A symbol of change and tangible progress. Embedded in the brand is strong symbolism. The space within the logo creates an upwards arrow that reflects the mathematical delta symbol representing measurable change. This highlights our unwavering commitment to progress, change and making a tangible difference for victims and survivors. This is at the heart of the logo, and the heart of the organisation.

I HAVE BEEN INVISIBLE FOR  
SO LONG. LOST IN ABANDONED NEURO  
CONNECTIONS, MEMORIES TURNED TO VAPOUR,  
CLUTCHING AT ... NOTHING. THAT'S HOW I VIEWED MYSELF,  
AS NOTHING. WE ARE NOT NOTHING. WE WILL BE **HEARD**. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BEAR WITNESS **SEEN**.  
WE WILL BE **HEARD**. PLEASE DON'T TURN AWAY, PLEASE DON'T DIVERT  
TO PAIN UNIMAGINABLE. SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AS SOMETHING,  
YOUR EYES, DON'T SCROLL ON OR CLICK PAST. PLEASE JUST SIT WITH US  
SO WE ARE NOT ALONE. SOMETHING HORRIBLE YES, BUT SOMETHING WE CAN ALL  
**CHANGE TOGETHER.** BE THE PARENTS WHO  
SAW, THE AUNTS AND UNCLES WHO SAID SOMETHING,  
THE ADULTS WHO PROTECT. PLEASE DO SOMETHING.

Panda Cheong

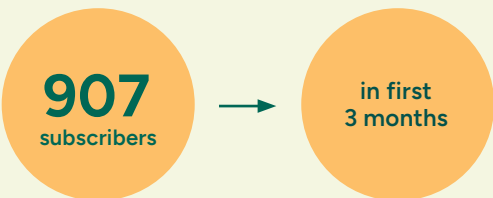
Survivor-led Adult College Member

Launching in June 2023, our new website balances human-centred design with hierarchy, accessibility and storytelling to create a responsive experience that is user-friendly, intuitive and has emotional impact. Importantly, it also provides a fit-for-purpose platform for public engagement linked to our functional area of reducing stigma. This includes the ability to download resources, read the stories of victims and survivors, sign up to our newsletter, follow links to our social media platforms – and more.

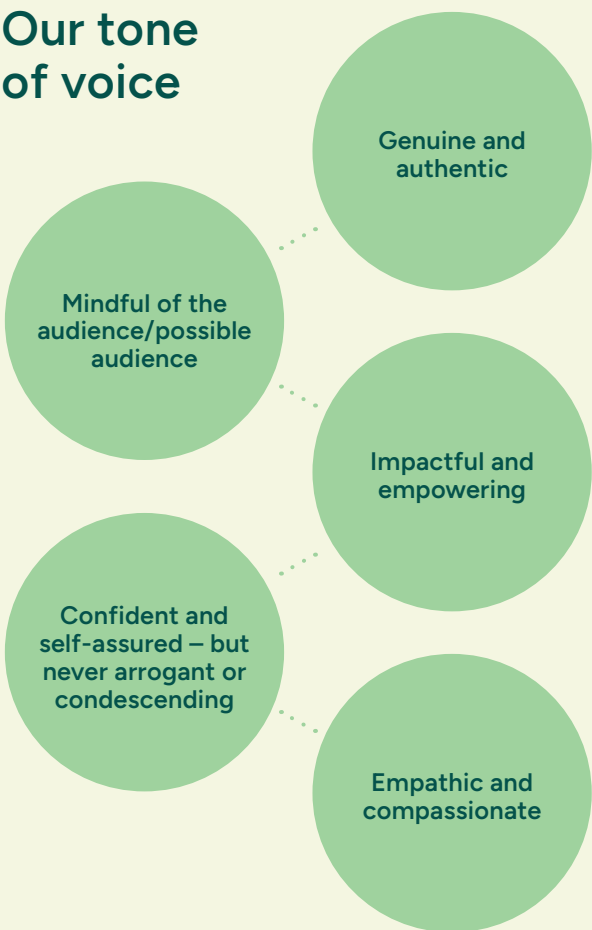
Both phases mark a significant milestone in the positioning of the National Centre brand and creating a strong foundation for future marketing and communication functions.

## Monthly Newsletter

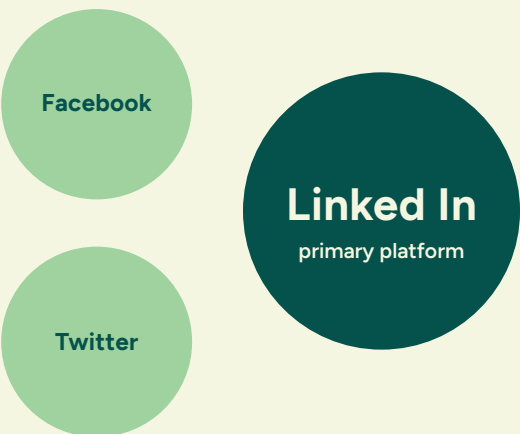
Launched April 2023



## Our tone of voice



## Social Media Platforms



### Audience

Practitioners and workforces, government and policymakers, academics and researchers, institutions, affiliated sectors e.g., mental health, child sexual abuse, social welfare, not-for-profit and peak body organisations.

### Growth



### Engagement





LET ME SHARE WITH YOU THE  
8-YEAR-OLD FEMALE CHILD, FULL OF  
INNOCENCE AND PROMISE AND AN UNIMAGINABLE,  
EXCITING, BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD. EMBRACED IN A FAMILY  
WHO WERE THERE TO LOVE ME, NURTURE ME TO GROW INTO  
THE BEST PERSON I CAN BE. ONLY TO EXPERIENCE GROOMING, AND  
UNSOLICITED, NON-CONSENSUAL INVASION OF MY BODY AND MIND, AND  
MANIPULATION BY A SIBLING FOUR YEARS OLDER.  
FAST FORWARD 40 YEARS, A MARRIAGE THAT ENDED AS A VICTIM  
OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, A LIFETIME OF OVERACHIEVING, MIXED  
WITH FEELINGS OF "I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH", DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND FINALLY  
A DIAGNOSIS OF PTSD. THIS FINAL DIAGNOSIS GAVE ME THE  
**STRENGTH** TO FINALLY REPORT TO THE BRITISH POLICE THE CRIMES  
I WAS SUBJECTED 42 YEARS AGO THAT SPANNED MY TEENAGE YEARS.  
**REGAINING CONTROL**, I CAN FINALLY START THE  
HEALING PROCESS, ACKNOWLEDGING THE HARMS AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF  
THIS ABUSE THAT HAPPENED SO MANY YEARS AGO.  
IN DOING SO, I FIND THE CAPACITY AND EQUALLY THE PRIVILEGE TO ENGAGE WITH  
THE NATIONAL CENTRE TO VEHEMENTLY WORK TOWARDS ERADICATING CHILD  
SEXUAL ABUSE. IF I CAN STOP  
**AT LEAST ONE CHILD**  
SUFFERING WHAT I  
HAVE ENDURED,  
THEN I HAVE **ACHIEVED MY LIFE GOAL.**

Lyn MacLeod

Survivor-led Adult College Member



# Our approach to mobilising knowledge

The National Centre will build, evolve and disseminate a shared and meaningful body of knowledge to shape attitudes, change behaviour and practice, and influence policy for better outcomes for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and to prevent future child sexual abuse.

Mobilising knowledge is the business of everyone at the National Centre and is integral to our ability to achieve the impact outlined in Here for Change. It connects all our work and underpins our national leadership.

Knowledge grows when it is used and loses its value when it's not. How we leverage, create and use knowledge from different sources in different ways is key to how we facilitate a world that is safer for children and better supports those who have experienced child sexual abuse.

During the year we further developed our Knowledge to Action Framework which draws from the literature on knowledge mobilisation and demonstrates how we move knowledge to action. The framework articulates five inter-related, mutually dependent domains: create, exchange, synthesis, innovate and sustain, to represent a holistic approach where the process of building and moving knowledge to action is iterative, dynamic and complex.



For the National Centre, knowledge includes expertise, evidence and experience from different sources. Individuals, communities and organisations can be both knowledge producers and users. We recognise five interconnected categories of knowledge.



By recognising diverse and interrelated knowledges we can articulate complex ideas, amplify different voices and disrupt traditional hierarchies of knowledge.

In doing so, we can get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, in the right format and style, to change community attitudes, reduce stigma, improve practice and service delivery and influence systems and policy.

# Setting our research program

This year, we developed and began to implement our Research Plan, which outlines the National Centre's approach to research and evaluation. Specifically, this aims to build and translate an accessible and robust evidence base that contributes to addressing the critical challenges that we believe must be addressed to achieve change.

Our approach to research recognises that research is one of a range of knowledges which have a role to play in supporting change. This includes through the lived and living experience of those who have experienced child sexual abuse, cultural knowledges, practice knowledges, organisational and system knowledges and formal research and evidence implementation.

To support the development of practice-ready knowledge, we position research as critical to knowledge mobilisation, and adopt an inclusive conceptualisation of research and evidence, to include all systematic investigations undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding, including practice knowledge, cultural knowledge and knowledge derived through lived and living experience.

To achieve our aim in research, we have four interrelated objectives:

1. Keep up to date with the evidence.
2. Undertake and commission high quality research and evaluations.
3. Support the adoption of continuous quality improvement practices.
4. Support effective dissemination and translation.

Over the past year, we have delivered on these objectives in the following ways.

To **keep up to date with the evidence** we have:

- started to develop strong relationships and partnerships with other researchers, with valued guidance from our Expert Research Advisory Committee
- contributed to the development of a nationally coordinated strategic research agenda, led by the National Office for Child Safety (NOCS)
- commenced a number of systematic reviews and evidence gap analyses to inform areas of focus for our own research agenda and that of the broader field
- commenced consultation around the possible development of a public facing register of active research to be housed on our website.



**To undertake and commission high quality research and evaluations** we have:

- commissioned our first research program, consisting of 18 projects
- commenced two in-house research projects:
  - Towards a framework to prevent and respond to children with Harmful Sexual Behaviours
  - Community members' attitudes towards, knowledge of, and capacity to respond to child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviours in children and the needs of adult survivors of child sexual abuse
- started to develop our approach to research partnerships.

**To support the adoption of continuous quality improvement practices** we have:

- commissioned a research stream for quality improvement projects as a mechanism to support the implementation of evidence into practice
- started the development of a partnerships brokerage model to facilitate collaboration between researchers and services.

**To support effective dissemination and translation** we have:

- developed an approach to dissemination and translation that will help to ensure that evidence is reached by those who will likely benefit from it: victims and survivors, practitioners and service designers, policy makers, researchers and the general public.

All research undertaken or commissioned by the National Centre has been done in consultation with victims and survivors and guided by five key research principles:

1. Participatory and collaborative
2. Development-, trauma- and healing-informed
3. Inclusive and culturally safe
4. Rigorous, ethical and transparent
5. Relevant and translational

This approach to research contributes to achieving our vision of a future in which children are safe and victims and survivors are supported to heal and recover from the trauma of child sexual abuse.



# 2022 Competitive Research Grants Round

The National Centre held its inaugural grants round in late 2022, inviting applications from across Australia. A total of up to \$3.38 million worth of research funding was available to commission research aligned with our seven key challenges outlined in Here for Change – Our Five Year Strategy.

Significantly, the grants round was a first of its kind in Australia: a Category 1 funding opportunity dedicated to child sexual abuse research.

By definition, Category 1 funding presents the most competitive and prestigious opportunity for research funding and is therefore the most highly sought form of funding for academics and research organisations. In order to qualify, the National Centre had to meet a specific set of criteria: be nationally competitive; provide funds solely for research purposes; advertise widely across Australia; demonstrate and implement a well-defined mechanism for assessing and selecting successful projects; and provide funds directly to the university, research organisation or individual.

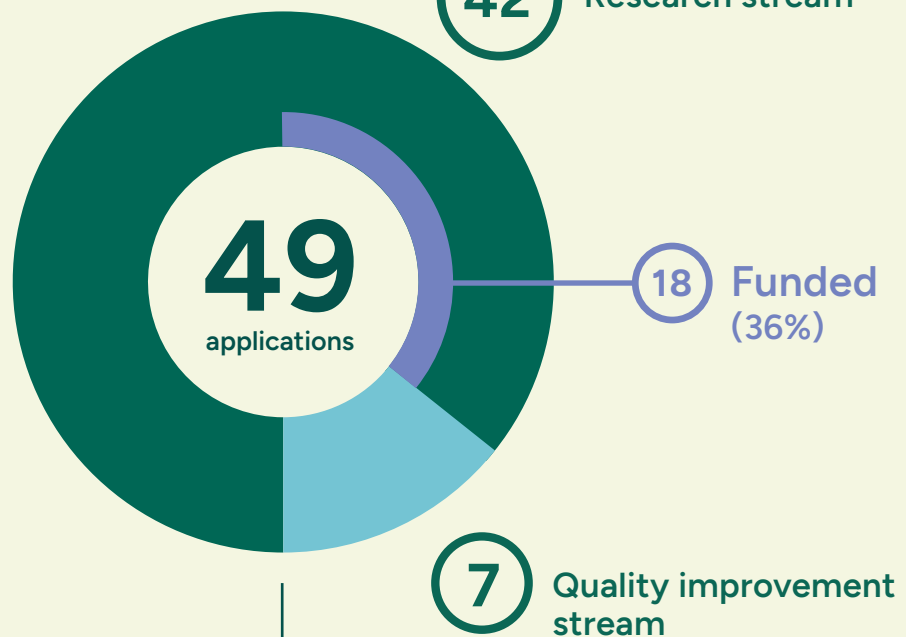
The National Centre also wanted to ensure this funding was accessible beyond the realm of traditional research, to a range of individuals and organisations, including service providers who focus on responding to child sexual abuse and its impacts across the life course. As such, the National Centre ran the grants round across two streams: research and quality improvement.

The grants round invited applications between October-December 2022, receiving a total of 49 applications – 42 research stream and seven quality improvement stream applications. The application pool totalled over \$9 million, almost triple the amount that the National Centre was able to commission.

The National Centre implemented a multidisciplinary peer assessment process. This process included the recruitment of 40 peer assessors from around Australia, including practitioners, policy makers, researchers and people with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse. Peer assessors were then formed into seven peer assessment panels, including a dedicated panel for assessing First Nations applications. Each panel assessed five to ten applications over a four-week period, using an assessment form to guide decision making. Panels then met to discuss their feedback and rank applications for funding.

	Research stream	Quality improvement stream
Personnel	Any	Practitioner or Service Manager
Organisation	Any	Service Provider
Research Type	Any	Evaluation, implementation, quality improvement
Funding	Max. \$250,000	Max. \$35,000
Project Support	None	National Centre support

The National Centre's inaugural competitive grants round was run successfully across late 2022-early 2023, commissioning \$2.99 million of research into child sexual abuse in Australia.



The National Centre received a total of 49 applications across research (42 applications) and quality improvement (7 applications) streams. Eighteen of these applications (36%) were funded.



The National Centre engaged a multidisciplinary approach to the assessment of applications, which included 40 peer assessors – researchers, practitioners, policy makers and people with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse.

The grants round was a first for the National Centre, and a first nationally – no previous competitive grants round had been run with a sole focus on child sexual abuse in Australia.



Each panel had at least one member who fulfilled the role of being a person with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse and providing expert advice from that perspective. This was a particular strength of the assessment process, as it ensured that decision making could be guided by this lived experience voice. Further, it allowed the assessment of applications to remain aligned with the National Centre's first research priority – ensuring that research activity is participatory and collaborative in order to elevate the knowledge and experience of victims and survivors through all that we do.

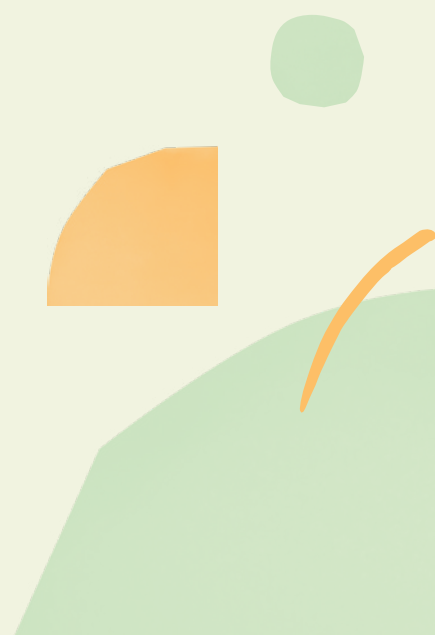
Following the peer assessment process, the National Centre Board confirmed a final list of 18 projects to be commissioned – 13 research and five quality improvement projects. This body of commissioned research totalled \$2.99 million and spanned the breadth of the National Centre's seven key challenges.

Following finalisation of the grants round, the National Centre used a range of forums to seek feedback on the process, including face-to-face meetings with applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) and an online survey with peer assessors. The feedback from all stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, with the following identified as particular strengths:

- In a survey of peer assessors, the process used to assess applications was rated, on average, 4.6 out of 5.
- Peer assessors reflected positively on the facilitation of peer assessment panel meetings, the ease of completing assessment paperwork, and the robust, yet fair, discussions that took place when assessing grant applications.
- Unsuccessful grant applicants were particularly complementary of the National Centre's approach to delivering feedback on their applications. They noted that most funders do not provide feedback, and if they do, this is communicated via email. The National Centre met with unsuccessful applicants to discuss their application and provide feedback from assessors, allowing them to clarify and seek further detail where necessary.
- Successful grant applicants also provided positive feedback about the commissioning process, particularly in relation to the conciseness of the National Centre's application process, and the ease of navigating requirements throughout the contract negotiation and project establishment phases.

With the grants round now complete and a body of research commissioned, the National Centre has identified research gaps that remain outstanding. We received few applications with a focus on certain priority populations – namely, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people living with disability. Only one application was received regarding each of these topics, but unfortunately, were unsuccessful in securing funding. However, the National Centre was pleased to receive a number of applications specific to First Nations research, most of which were funded through this grants round, following assessment by the dedicated First Nations panel of peer assessors. Moving forward, the National Centre will explore options to address these gaps, including offering more tailored funding opportunities in the future, conducting additional in-house research, or joining projects with a focus on these areas as an industry partner.

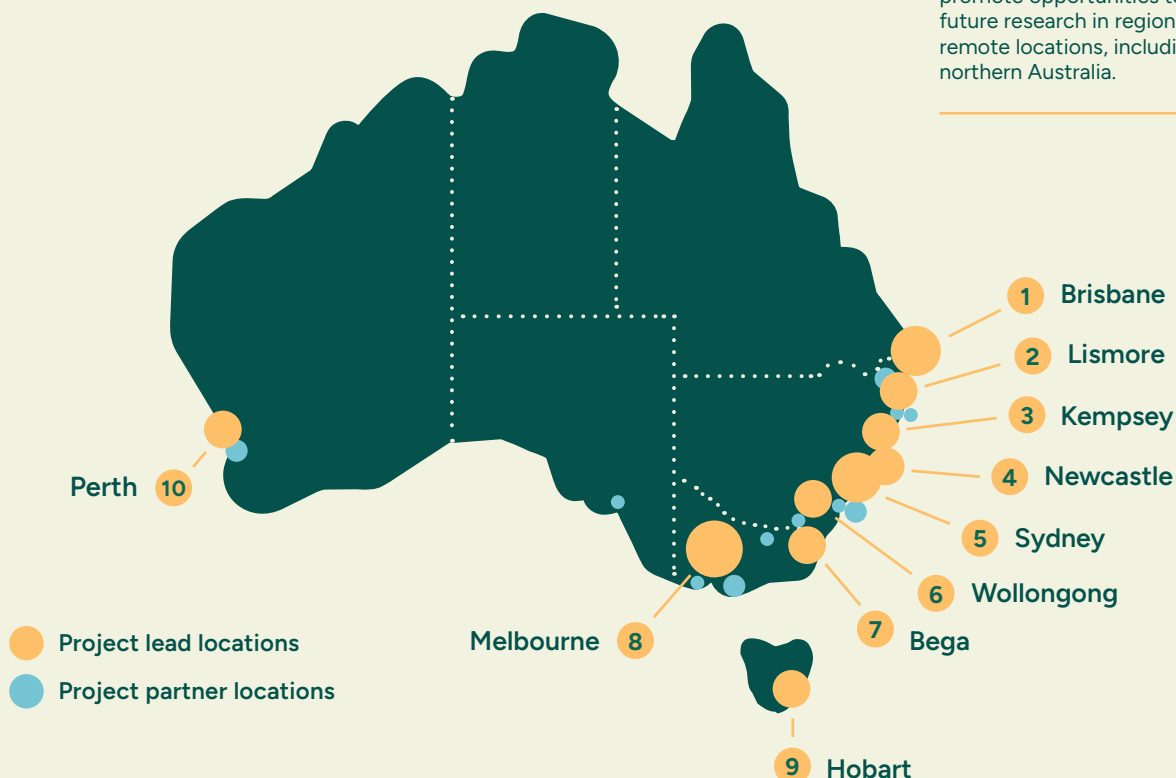
The research funded through the National Centre's inaugural grants round will run across the next three years, with project results and outputs, such as reports and knowledge translation products, shared as they become available. The National Centre looks forward to the important findings that are generated through this research and working with researchers to translate and disseminate these findings to have meaningful, real-world impact.





# Commissioned Research Program

The National Centre acknowledges that its initial body of commissioned research is not spread across all of Australia, and will prioritise and promote opportunities to conduct future research in regional, rural and remote locations, including across northern Australia.



## The Commissioned Research Program comprises the following 18 projects across the above 10 locations.

- 1 Understanding the experiences of child sexual abuse disclosure in Australia in the wake of the Royal Commission (O'Leary, Griffith University)
- 1 Differentiating adverse childhood experience profiles of male youths who exhibit harmful sexual behaviours (Thomsen, Griffith University)
- 1 Online child sexual abuse victimisation and associated mental health outcomes (Walsh & Mathews, Queensland University of Technology)
- 2 Listen UP! Learning from victims and survivors about what helps disclosure and responses to child sexual abuse (McPherson, Southern Cross University)
- 3 The more I talk, the stronger I get: unlocking our past to free our future (Welsh & McComsey, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation)
- 4 Evaluating a harmful sexual behaviour education program in a residential care setting (Clarke, Life Without Barriers)
- 5 The dignity by design project: survivor-led system redesign (Heward-Belle, University of Sydney)
- 5 Improving legal, policy and practice responses to the intersection of domestic violence perpetration and child sexual abuse offending (Salter, University of New South Wales)
- 6 CHANGE - curtailing harm and navigating growth: evidence for change pathways of young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours (Spangaro & Kor, University of Wollongong)
- 7 Community as experts: investigating the context, needs and help-seeking pathways for child sexual abuse survivors and their supporters in the NSW Bega Valley (Brenner & Milligan, Sapphire Neighbourhood Services)
- 8 Developing and implementing a framework for abuse prevention through culture change and organisational development (Boyle, Kooyoora)
- 8 Supporting continuous quality improvement in safeguarding at Hockey Australia and other national sporting organisations (Dowdy, Hockey Australia)
- 8 Amplifying the voices of victim-survivors: advancing the harmful sexual behaviour evidence base - the Ava project (McKibbin, University of Melbourne)
- 8 Building trauma-responsive sexual health and relationship education (Moore, Australian Catholic University)
- 8 Delivering trauma-informed support for child sexual abuse victims in Victoria: mapping the knowledge gaps and training needs of the specialist sectors (Webster, Sexual Assault Services Victoria)
- 8 Survivor perspectives on institutional use of child sexual abuse material (Wilson, Monash University)
- 8 Creating safer futures: raising public awareness of child sexual abuse among young adults through digital storytelling (Wright, La Trobe University)
- 9 Into the war zone: disclosure and disbelief in the Family Court (Petridis & MacSween, consultants/sole traders)
- 10

# Building workforce capability

This year, we developed and began to implement our Learning and Professional Development Plan to build the capability of workforces who support and work with children and adult survivors of child sexual abuse. This plan contributes to achieving our vision of a future in which children are safe and victims and survivors are supported to heal and recover from the trauma of child sexual abuse.

Victims and survivors seek support from a diverse range of general and specialist workers and organisations, which span multiple service areas across government, non-government, private and not-for-profit settings. To ensure victims and survivors are listened to, respected and supported to meet their unique needs and recovery goals, the services and support they receive need to be trauma-informed, person-centred and culturally safe.

For the National Centre, the child sexual abuse 'workforce' reflects this broad and diverse landscape and includes general and specialist services encompassing child and family welfare, child protection, health and mental health, including primary care. It extends to policing, legal and justice, early education, schools and care, sport and recreation, as well as intersecting service areas such as aged care, domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drugs, and disability.

Our approach outlines a long-term commitment to lead, commission, support and partner to build the capability of the workforce at the individual worker, organisation, service and system levels. We assume a holistic, iterative and dynamic approach to connect people to and with knowledge in different ways.

To achieve our aim, we have four interrelated objectives and related priorities:

1. Upskill individual professionals.
2. Develop organisation leadership, capability and service models.
3. Influence education and service systems to better equip professionals and organisations.
4. Understand need and context.



Over the past year, we have delivered on these objectives in the following ways:

- Established the Practice and Systems Improvement Panel to ensure practice and systems intelligence and insights guide our approach.
- Developed a suite of knowledge-based resources informed by evidence, lived experience, practice and procedural knowledge and cultural wisdom. Resources ranged from Knowledge Summaries, Snapshots, Blogs, Evidence Briefs to Reports.
- Established a public In Conversation webinar series to explore critical issues related to child sexual abuse to prompt public awareness, and action. A total of 856 people attended the four sessions with an additional 398 viewing post session. Key topics of discussion included:
  - The dangers of online abuse: how technology is used to harm and abuse children and young people
  - Exploring complex trauma and child sexual abuse through lived experience
  - The importance of compassionate responses to child sexual abuse related trauma
  - What do we know about the prevalence and nature of child sexual abuse

**“Absolutely eye opening hearing first hand accounts and the long-term implications of trauma and abuse. Heartfelt thanks to both who shared their journeys and experiences so we can learn from it and hopefully prevent such abuse and support those who have been abused.”**

**“It was a really valuable session - the sort that would make for a great in-house PD session for any organisation wanting to enhance staff understanding of the pressing need to address the impact of child sexual abuse.”**

- Established a whole of organisation Knowledge to Action Framework to guide the National Centre's approach to mobilising knowledge, including but not limited to our work to build workforce capability.
- Established relationships with government agencies such as the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, E-Safety and National Office for Child Safety to partner on key workforce strategies.
- Undertook a National Learning and Development Survey to inform the learning and development activities, opportunities and resources we would offer and partner with others on.
- Commenced scanning and mapping of the education and training environment as relevant to child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Established partnerships with key peak bodies, agencies and providers to plan for and resource different and diverse workforces.
- Commenced a three-year project to develop nationally consistent sexual violence and child sexual abuse resources for General Practitioners and the broader Primary Care Workforce.

Our learning and professional development work will be guided by five key principles which are:

- inclusive and culturally safe
- participatory and collaborative
- translational and sustaining
- trauma- and healing-informed
- accessible and responsive.

Embedded in our approach is our commitment to avoid duplication and respond to identified knowledge needs in ways which complement and extend existing initiatives and activities.

# Understanding practitioner needs

As part of our commitment to understanding the learning and professional development needs of a broad range of workers and organisations in October 2022, the National Centre undertook a National Learning and Development Survey.

The survey aimed to:

- identify the most pressing self-identified learning and professional development needs
- identify preferred style and quality of learning
- understand other key challenges and issues for workers.

The online self-reported survey was sent to workers and organisations across Australia and consisted of 14 questions with both fixed response and free text response options.

The survey audience was purposefully broad, designed to be completed by anyone who directly provides services and supports to children, young people or adults, extending to those who have a responsibility for protecting children and young people from harm.

Of the 1,398 people who responded to the survey, participants were predominantly female (83%), practiced in metropolitan areas (39%), and worked in an organisation that provided universal services; i.e., characterised as services that engaged with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse as part of their work but not their primary business (59%).

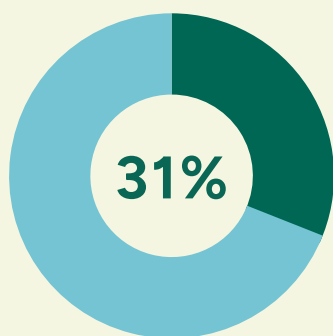
**“Once a history of sexual abuse has been disclosed...I don’t feel I have access to the resources to help them with recovery and healing. I don’t know who or where to refer to, and I don’t have the skills myself to help with sexual trauma or to help children with sexualised behaviours.”**

## What we learned

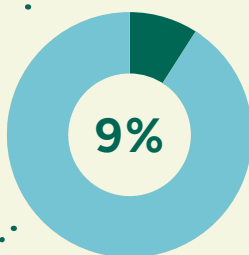
Key findings included that 31% of participants identified as **having lived experience of child sexual abuse** (either themselves or a family member). Another 11% elected not to respond to this question so it is reasonable to assume that this number is higher. This equates to nearly one third of the workforce.

This finding highlights that the status of having lived and living experience and being a worker in the area of child sexual abuse is not binary. Being cognisant of this context is critical in creating the environments that are needed to support people in the workplace. Suggestions were provided on key enablers for an optimal workplace which included: embedding trauma informed approaches into policies and procedures not just service delivery; recognising the prevalence of child sexual abuse and what this means for your workforce; increasing the knowledge and understanding of the impacts of child sexual abuse across the life course; and confronting stigmatising attitudes and language in the workplace.

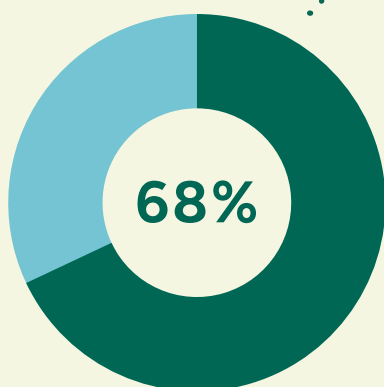
In regard to **learning needs**, participants were asked to indicate their level of interest or need for different knowledge areas and topics. There was a high level of interest and need indicated for all 13 learning areas provided and participants were able to choose as many learning areas as they wanted. Broadly, access to further training and learning was considered crucial for workers to assist victims and survivors to access services and resources for healing and recovery. In demand learning areas included: using a trauma-informed approach when supporting victims and survivors of child sexual abuse (67%); understanding what works in the prevention of child sexual abuse (66%); managing wellbeing when working with trauma (62%); and responding to disclosures from children and young people (61%).



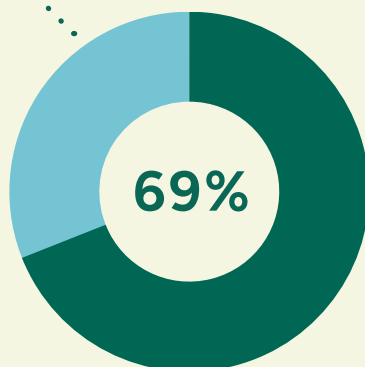
31% of participants reported as having a **lived experience of child sexual abuse**  
(with a further 11% preferring not to say)



Only 9% of participants indicated they were **adequately equipped** to do this work through their tertiary studies



The top rated training and learning area categorised as 'critical' (to help me do my role) was **culturally appropriate approaches** for healing and recovery from trauma (68%) with another 26% saying this was 'of somewhat interest and need'



The most preferred style of learning was via **online webinars and workshops**

There was a clear need for low cost, affordable and non-burdensome learning and development on child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.



Additional areas of learning were suggested such as: clinical treatment and modalities; legislation and the law; engaging with perpetrators; and the intersections between child sexual abuse, family violence and disability.

The importance of a broad and inclusive **cultural lens and considerations** were highlighted throughout many of the survey responses. The top-rated training and learning area from 1,207 responses, categorised as 'critical (to help me do my role)', was "culturally appropriate approaches for healing and recovery from trauma" (68%), with another 26% saying this was of somewhat interest and need. The importance of the cultural authority that comes with being Aboriginal was emphasised, as was the need for an understanding of the history of trauma for Aboriginal survivors to be included in training and learning. Culturally safe training and supervision was highlighted, as was the need for access to traditional healing and programs.

People were asked if they felt adequately **equipped to deal with child sexual abuse and trauma related impacts** by their formal studies (undergraduate, postgraduate or other). Of the 1,032 participants who responded, indicating that they had completed a relevant undergraduate, postgraduate or a formal program of study, only 9% said they felt their tertiary education had adequately equipped them with the required skills and knowledge in the area of child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour or trauma related impacts across the lifespan, with 39% responding that they were 'not at all' equipped. This highlights the need to work with tertiary education providers on pre-service education to better embed skills and knowledge in the curricula of key qualifications.

**“I think [training] needs to be very aware of the triggering nature of these topics and the complexity of this work for Aboriginal survivors, who are also survivors of complex trauma due to the impacts of colonisation, genocide, past policies and current day racism and systemic racism.”**

**“I think there is a real gap around normalising and building capacity of services to talk about, identify and respond to child sexual abuse... there is a gap in creating cross organisation and sector opportunities... organisations need spaces to re-build relationships and to stop working in siloes.”**

Participants were asked to describe how their organisation does or could support their wellbeing in identifying and managing the **impact of working with trauma**. An array of suggestions were offered which spanned multiple themes including: funded Employee Assistance Programs and other mental health supports; positive leadership and associated work practices such as practice frameworks, work and case load management; and wellbeing strategies and industrial provisions, such as flexible work hours and conditions and mental health leave.

When it came to **learning style and mode** the following themes emerged:

- low cost and affordable, particularly for rural/ regional and remote areas
- flexible and non-burdensome with weekend, after hours and on-demand access
- bite size, quick and easy to consume, such as webinars, seminars and workshops
- an emphasis on less theory and more application on everyday practice
- short courses and modules and industry specific resources, training and learning.





## What next

The response to the National Centre's Learning and Development Survey was remarkable with 1,398 participants. Six years on from the Royal Commission Report, some of the insights learned through this survey confirm the Commission's findings. Yet, fresh knowledge provides a guide for the National Centre's activities and work. There was strong integration and alignment to the National Centre's Challenges outlined in Here For Change – Our Five Year Strategy.

While no questions were asked about the broader role of the National Centre, responses from participants highlighted the desire for us to undertake **system-wide influence and leadership** on specific issues. This included a system-wide approach to fostering best outcomes and interventions through best practice guidelines and approaches for children, young people and families affected by child sexual abuse; advocating for National and State/Territory level consistency in relevant policies and legislation; investment and planning in areas of workforce shortages; and supporting policies that enable effective prevention of child sexual abuse.

**“Bachelor of Social Work did not equip me with practical skills or knowledge to respond to child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour or trauma/pain-based behaviours.”**

The National Centre will evolve the design and approach for future surveys to ensure we continue to be informed by the right insights and intelligence to respond to the learning and development needs of multiple child sexual abuse workforces across Australia. As part of this, we will strengthen our focus on understanding more about the unique challenges and learning needs faced through working with priority groups, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability, older persons, those living in rural and remote areas and people from LGBTQIA+ communities.

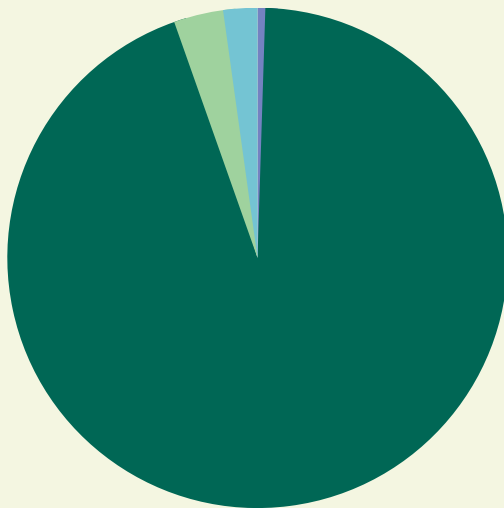
We extend our thanks to all those who participated and engaged in this important survey.



# Financial summary

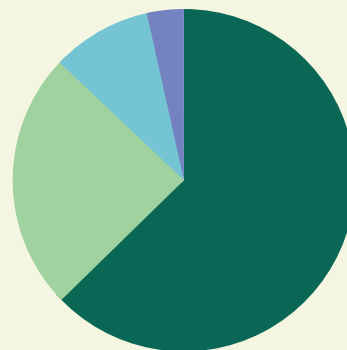
With principal funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, the National Centre has been able to establish a solid organisational structure, support our advisory and governance structures, and significantly, invest in research and the production of knowledge resources.

## Revenue



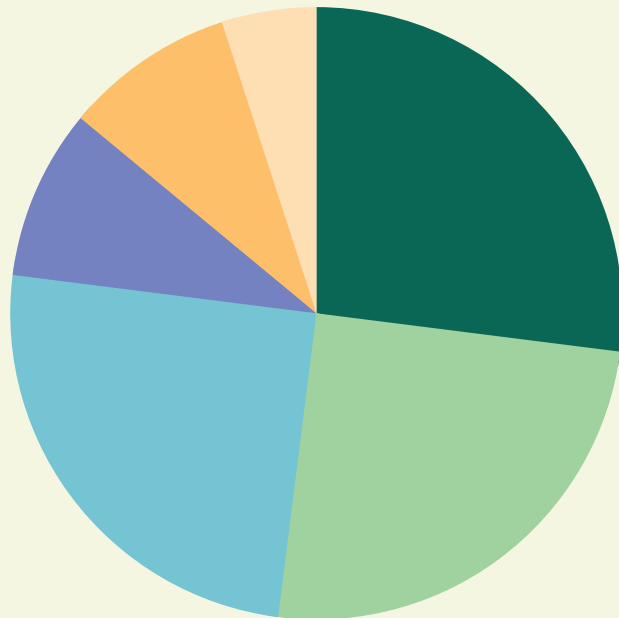
- Department of Social Services (94%)
- Department of Health (3%)
- National Office of Child Safety (2%)
- Interest (1%)

## Contract and project costs



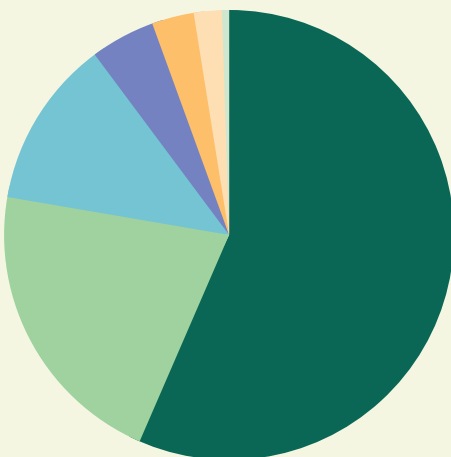
- Research (63%)
- Learning and Knowledge (24%)
- Project Costs (10%)
- Colleges and Panels (3%)

## Expenditure by functional area



- Research and Evaluation (27%)
- Leadership (25%)
- Build Capability (25%)
- Awareness Raising (9%)
- Stigma Reduction (9%)
- Investing in Sustainability (5%)

## Salaries and overhead



- Salaries (56.5%)
- Other (21%)
- Business Support (12%)
- Organisational (4.5%)
- Travel (3.5%)
- Information Technology (2%)
- Office (.5%)

# Selected summary of achievements



- 1 Consultation Findings Report
- 2 Here for Change – Our Five Year Strategy published
- 3 Implementation Plan published
- 4 Operational and Business Plan 2022-23
- 5 Communication Plan
- 6 Final branding launched
- 7 Procurement, Governance, Finance, Risk Management and HR policies and structures finalised and implemented
- 8 Research competitive grants program finalised and projects commissioned
- 9 Learning and Professional Development Strategy published
- 10 Charter of Engagement with people with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse published
- 11 Advisory architecture finalised, established and implemented commencing with the Survivor-led Adult College and the First Nations College
- 12 Formalised and initiated a Government Engagement Strategy
- 13 Broad collaborative relationships and partnerships established
- 14 New website launched
- 15 Established two new in-house research projects “Community Attitudes Study” and “Harmful Sexual Behaviours”
- 16 Delivery of collaborative learning activities
- 17 Suite of Practice Based Knowledge Resources published

FROM INNOCENCE TO CHAOS TO PEACE  
IN THE MAKING.  
FROM SEXUAL ABUSE TO A JAILED UNCLE. FROM A SECRET TO  
DISCLOSURE AGED 12 PROMPTED BY MY GRAND-MOTHER'S DEATH.  
NOW TWO IN THE SECRET WITHIN A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY BORN IN COLONY AND  
FORCEABLY MIGRATED TO A COUNTRY THEY KNEW LITTLE ABOUT; PARENTS WHOSE  
PRIORITY WAS TO SURVIVE WITH LITTLE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO THEIR KIDS. THE  
SUICIDE POSTER IN MY TEENAGER BEDROOM NEVER ALARMED ANYONE: **BELIEVED** AND  
**SAFE** BUT **NOT HEARD**. FROM REBELLION TO EXTREME DECISIONS; MIGRATED  
20,000KMS, THE PROBLEMS FOLLOWED.  
ADDICTED TO COACHING TENNIS, COMPLETING A MASTERS DEGREE, WORKING FOR REPUTABLE  
FIRMS. SEXUAL ABUSE AFFECTS ANYONE. FROM BAD RELATIONSHIPS TO A MARRIAGE I CHOSE.  
FROM LOVE, TO HURT AND RELEASED PAIN. FROM CBT TO PSYCHODRAMA TO ART THERAPY  
WHERE I FOUND **PEACE** WITHIN.  
I NO LONGER NEEDED EXTERNAL VALIDATION; I FOUND THE LOVE,  
UNDERSTANDING, AND **SUPPORT** SYSTEM WITHIN.  
ANOTHER VOICE BRINGING DIVERSITY TO RESOLVING THE PROBLEM OF CHILD  
SEXUAL ABUSE: FROM A SOCIETY TREATING CHILDREN AS THEIR MOST  
PRECIOUS ASSETS TO PROFESSIONALS BETTER SUPPORTING, AND  
SURVIVORS BELIEVING THEY CAN **HEAL** THROUGH  
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS,  
WITH NATURE, AND WITHIN.

Pascale Stendell

Survivor-led Adult College Member



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