

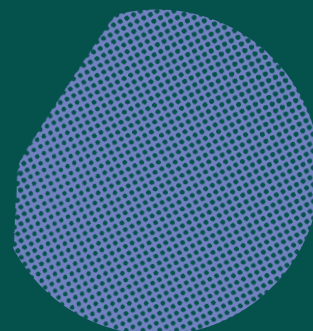
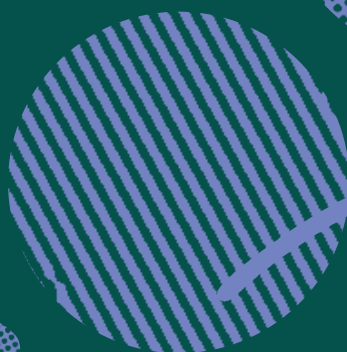


National Centre for Action  
on Child Sexual Abuse

# Annual Report

2024

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# Acknowledgement

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (National Centre) respectfully acknowledges and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations on 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, acknowledging those who have passed and those who 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.

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.



## Malika - College member

*// The National Centre has gathered a range of people from diverse backgrounds to share their stories and experiences. As College Members collectively, we have an impressive wealth of knowledge and skills. Not broken nor damaged, we share a great range of living experiences of abuse and trauma.*

*Some would say that we are Warriors and Bravehearts.*

*The people of the survivor colleges are powerful, phenomenal.*

*A force of good, when utilised well.*

*Patience, kindness and good communication is essential to everyone at the NC.*

*A feeling of safety is crucial, for me, too.*

*At the launch last October, the last time the NC all came together face-to-face, there was a palpable feeling of cohesiveness that we were all working together for common good.*

*I'm hopeful we'll feel that way again when we meet this October, and going forth.*

*The members of the Survivor College have many practical ideas to help other survivors and protect children. Research and practical action sit side-by-side.*

*We, as a society, are obliged to make tangible advances in helping to protect innocent children and in assisting survivors to heal, by any means necessary. It is our duty to inform and educate people. What occurs to children in up to every five (three to ten??) homes across our nation, needs to stop.*

*Together we must find solutions for the prevention of CSA.*

*This is why the National Centre was created. To bring to our communities, awareness and understanding about this too common, widespread abuse.*

*Here for change. Hear for change.*

*Listen. Be trauma led.*

*Governments know, that letting those with living experience in on the conversation, leads to positive, measurable changes.*

*It is essential to have diverse advocates who are themselves trauma informed and allow themselves to be respectfully trauma led.*

*This is vital for the well-being of Australian society. That is what I'm here for."*

**- Malika Elizabeth Reese,  
Member of the National Centre Survivor-led Adult College**

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# Vale Joe Tucci

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As we present this year's annual report we take a moment to honour the memory of Joe Tucci who sadly passed away earlier this year. Joe was a remarkable leader and a passionate advocate whose work has left a legacy in children's rights.

Joe served as inaugural chair of the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse, where his leadership was instrumental in shaping our strategic direction and expanding our impact. His advocacy not only elevated the profile of our organisation but also drove systemic changes that have improved many lives.

Joe was also a prominent voice in national and international forums, contributing to important dialogue on child safety and wellbeing. His dedication to research and education helped to advance our understanding of child sexual abuse and informed the development of best practices in prevention and intervention.

Throughout his career, Joe was known for his compassion, integrity, and commitment to protecting vulnerable children. His contributions have had a profound impact on the field, and his legacy will continue to guide and inspire our work.

We honour Joe's memory by continuing to pursue excellence in our mission. We are grateful for the mark he left on the National Centre.

Vale Joe Tucci.

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# Our vision

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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.

Through our principles, approach and actions, we demonstrate how we honour and respect the experiences and insights of victims and survivors, ensure their privacy and confidentiality, and empower their voices to collectively achieve our vision. We hold a commitment to the rights of children, young people and adults to safety and care.

We strongly believe that perpetrators of child sexual abuse should be held accountable for their behaviour. We will support efforts to identify and work with individuals at risk of perpetrating child sexual abuse. We will work to improve the criminal justice system so that such accountability is ensured, that victims and survivors do not experience additional trauma in seeking justice, and that the most effective interventions to reduce recidivism are implemented nationally.

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# Our mission / purpose

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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.



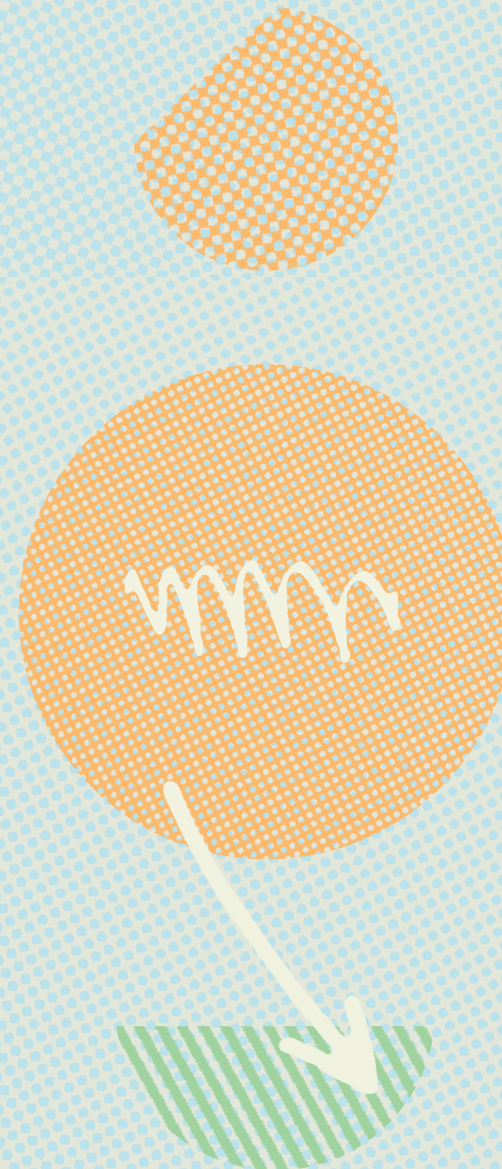
# National Centre commitment

The National Centre is a vehicle for action for many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. Its formation recognises the decades of advocacy by victims and survivors to be listened to, believed, validated, protected and ultimately supported to heal from the trauma they carry with them. Its focus extends beyond institutional child sexual abuse to abuse that occurs in the family, community and online.

We believe in the power of partnerships with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and everyone who cares about and supports them. We work to drive the generational change that is needed to tackle child sexual abuse in families, communities and institutions and online.

The National Centre provides an important avenue for focusing the community's attention firmly on the protection of children and young people from sexual abuse. It also works to ensure the experiences of victims and survivors influence and shape government policy, service responses and our collective commitment to an environment in which victims and survivors are safe to seek and receive the type of support they need, when they need it and wherever they are to help them heal and recover.

The National Centre is a partnership between three leading national organisations with a longstanding commitment to supporting children, young people and adults to heal from child sexual abuse. Blue Knot Foundation, the Healing Foundation and the Australian Childhood Foundation bring their collective expertise to enable the National Centre to fulfill the ambitions of victims and survivors, the Royal Commission, Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, service providers and the broader community.



The National Centre is a critical recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission). It has a key role that is separate and independent from government. Its role includes:

- providing leadership on integrated responses to child sexual abuse and its impacts across the country, for example, through national agendas
- increasing community understanding and recognition of child sexual abuse and the underlying power and contextual dynamics which drive it
- enhancing understanding about children and young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and how to best support and intervene with them and the network of important adults around them
- promoting effective policy and practices to protect children and young people from sexual abuse
- building a relevant and robust knowledge base including through collaboration on and alignment with the Child Safety Research Agenda being led by the National Office for Child Safety (National Office) under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030
- increasing professional expertise through workforce capability building to improve service responses to child and adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
- reducing the harm and stigma that child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour cause
- promoting whole of society understanding and change
- strengthening pathways for disclosure and healing for victims and survivors, including strategies to improve service coordination.



# Chair report

**Dr Cathy Kezelman AM is a medical practitioner, President of Blue Knot Foundation, Chair of National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse**



This last year has been bittersweet. While the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse has built a skilled cohesive staff team under the strong and steady leadership of Dr Leanne Beagley, CEO and the Executive Team, it was rocked by the untimely passing of Dr Joe Tucci, the organisation's inaugural chair. Joe has been and will continue to be sorely missed by so many people he connected with along the way. The Centre owes him a deep sense of gratitude for his vision and drive, which will continue to inspire us for decades to come.

Always focused on its purpose, the National Centre has progressed its extensive research agenda, refined its Community Attitudes Study – *The Australian Child Sexual Abuse Attitudes, Knowledge and Response Study*, developed its Learning and Development agenda, continued delivering its *In Conversation* Webinar series and achieved many of its *Here for Change* 5-year strategic objectives. The impact of the Centre is forever strengthened by the expertise of a growing community of lived and living experience contributors, practitioners, services, policy makers and researchers from diverse cultures, backgrounds and orientations united in our purpose of transforming the world in relation to child sexual abuse.

As a start up the National Centre had to grow rapidly, creating a brand, credibility and a presence concurrently with developing its foundations. With the challenge of sustainability front and centre, the National Centre continues to work hard to build key relationships and forge strategic partnerships with all governments, to honour the recommendations of the ground-breaking Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. As our burgeoning community joins us to celebrate the outcomes of our work, we will reach out for critical support through active philanthropic and community engagement.

In planning our 2024 Showcase, we reflected on the launch of our first Annual Report last year in Canberra. The event, led by our College members was a celebration of the power of collective voice – of victims and survivors, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, of children and young people, of people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and orientations. It was an inclusive voice garnering the many stakeholders who walk alongside us. Together we movingly and poignantly clarified the importance of staying focussed on our core purpose – to build a safer world for children, a world in which children are protected and nurtured and a world in which each and every victim and survivor can receive the compassion, support and understanding they need to heal.

The contribution of people with lived and living experience, in particular and of all members of all Advisory, reference and representative groups has been paramount. We could not do what we do without the collective wisdom and expertise of diverse individuals and groups. To all of our College, Panel, Council and Committee Members a special thank you for your generosity, time and expertise. To all of my fellow board members, and in particular our Deputy Chair, Glenn Kennedy, thank you for your passion, professionalism and commitment.



# CEO report

Dr Leanne Beagley



As we present this year's Annual Report we remain committed to being *Here for Change*. This phrase which guided our five-year strategic plan, the development of our website and remains a powerful statement of our mission and a call to action for our entire community.

The past year has been one of significance and progress for the National Centre. Building on the solid foundations laid in our inaugural year, we have further strengthened our role as a catalyst for meaningful change, with a focus on reshaping the conversation around child sexual abuse and addressing its enduring impacts with renewed vigour and insight.

The National Centre remains committed to keeping the knowledges of victims and survivors integral to our work and approach, shaping our strategies and ensuring that our efforts are both authentic and impactful. We have sought to develop the model of drawing on these and other cultural, policy, practice and research knowledges to guide our decisions and priorities.

We are gratified by the following progress in identifying the National Centre as a high-profile leader in this space.

Over the last year:

- Senior staff were invited to speak at and participate in a range of conferences as speakers and panellists including the:
  - The Early Childhood Australia Conference (on the role of early childhood educators in child safety and abuse prevention),
  - National Family Safety Summit,
  - Australasian Conference on Traumatic Stress, Courageous Conversations (Tasmania),
  - The 7th Perth Symposium on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention.
- We had a paper accepted for presentation at the 2024 Global STOP Domestic Violence Conference.
- A paper accepted for the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect Conference in Sweden August 2024 entitled "A global examination of child sexual abuse related attitudes, knowledge and beliefs."
- A paper accepted for FRSA Conference "Examining Australians' attitudes to child sexual abuse: Implications for supporting parents and carers."
- Commenced our series on Emerging Knowledge Exchange with the commissioned researchers and range of policy discussants.



Our practice development team has reached new heights, with many community members and stakeholders engaged through webinars and our monthly *In Conversation*, further solidifying our role as a leader in the field. We also produced 31 practice tools and foundational resources, with more to come in the new financial year as well as the launch of our Learning Management System.

We have initiated 18 pieces of research through the year and released our Australian child sexual abuse attitudes, knowledge and response study that addresses key gaps in our understanding of individual community members' attitudes towards, knowledge of, and capacity to respond in relation to child sexual abuse, victims and survivors' needs and harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) in children and young people. The research team also launched a register of active research, which houses research and quality improvement projects currently underway across Australia which investigate a range of topics associated with child sexual abuse.

There were a total of four formal submissions to government, independent commissions and inquiries on matters related to child sexual abuse and the needs of victims and survivors.

We want to thank the broad range of expert advisors, partners, collaborators and funders who have joined us on the journey of building our organisation and our impact. It is through these partnerships that together we can make change.

The support of our Board has been invaluable in navigating the complexities of our mission – their guidance, and during the passing of Joe Tucci, has been instrumental as we continue to implement and refine our strategy. I would also like to extend my gratitude to our dedicated staff, whose work and commitment drive our successes.

The National Centre is #HereforChange and we look forward to working with you all on the next phase of our journey.

# Knowledge to Action Framework

Knowledge grows when it is used and loses its value when it's not. How we leverage, create, share and activate 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.

The National Centre leads work across five functional areas underpinned by our [Theory of Change](#) and aligned to [Here for Change](#) Five Year Strategy which articulates seven critical challenges that represent our shared understanding of what must change.

To navigate this complex landscape the National Centre uses an inclusive definition of knowledge that encompasses five broad sources of expertise, experience and evidence:

- Lived and living Experience and knowledge
- Cultural knowledge
- Research and theory knowledge
- Practice and service knowledge
- Procedural and systems knowledge.

## Interconnected categories of knowledge



Through iterative and interactive processes, we mobilise knowledge using participatory action research, partnerships, collaborative and co-development approaches, engagement and exchange to build, shape and grow a shared body of usable and meaningful knowledge to positively influence beliefs, attitudes, practice and policy.

We were pleased this year to publish our approach to synthesising and mobilising these knowledges to work together to achieve our shared vision.



# Lived and living experience and knowledge

The National Centre is proud to have established a range of opportunities to draw on the central knowledges of those with lived experience of child sexual abuse and we are keen to keep building on the strong foundation established over our first two years. Our Survivor-led Adult College forged the way having been established in 2022. In the past year they led the first annual report launch and participated in a range of projects and activities across our research and practice development programs and informed our communications approach.

*// I watched the launch online and wanted to offer my congratulations to you and your team for a wonderfully moving, warm and inspiring event that made me feel very welcome, included and hopeful that changes being pursued through the work of The National Centre, will happen. Your final words from a submission to the website resonated for me (and I expect there were others watching who felt the same)."*



National Centre Survivor-led Adult College and First Nations College members speak at the National Centre's 2023 Annual Report launch.





A highlight this year was a meeting between the survivor-led adult College and the Minister of Social Services, Amanda Rishworth, to brief her on their leadership role and influence through the establishment and consolidation of the National Centre.

College members raised a number of concerns and issues:

- The fact that experiences are intersectional, layered, and non-homogeneous.
- Reaffirm the background, goals and work of the National Centre and the purpose and work of the Colleges, and the collective impact, reach and contribution to change.
- A reminder that where abuse has happened it has occurred in plain sight of others.
- The increased vulnerability, abuse, violence, neglect and exclusion of LGBTQIA+ children, speaking to the ACMS statistics, and linking to mental health outcomes.
- Government departments work in silos and the historical/current harm this has created/s.
- Acknowledging the changes already being implemented for Redress, commending the Government on these.
- Changes that could be implemented to improve the National Redress Scheme would be to apply indexing to the capped amount introduced in 2018. Indexation is automatically applied to fines – this could be applied to Redress and compensation.

- Encouragement to provide clear guidance on how Redress applications are assessed.

- Improved community health supports for survivors of child sexual abuse across the lifespan.

- Improved integration between systems and services.

- Improved trauma-informed services within the disability sector including improved service/system to support/respond to disclosure particularly for children with a disability.

The group wanted to underline the need for lived and living experience to be at the heart of government program design, with lived and living experience contribution funded adequately to facilitate diverse voices to guide government.

We have drawn in an ever-expanding circle of participants who have reached out to take part in the work of the National Centre. We were pleased to have established a leadership role within our executive team for Lived Experience Leadership over the past year and are looking forward to embedding expanding opportunities for the many individuals and groups who reach out to us each week sharing their story, providing feedback and encouragement and seeking opportunities to participate. Here is just a handful representing what we have been hearing from the victim and survivor community.

*// There is indeed so much work to be done, and it is encouraging to hear that already you are receiving contact from those wanting to make change in the area of CSA. Your organisation will be vital in this I believe. It is encouraging to also see conversations beginning to happen and I'm hopeful we can keep the momentum going not unlike the recent movement of acknowledging Domestic Violence."*

*// Thank you for taking the time to ask Victim/survivors our opinions on this."*

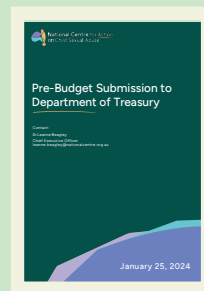
*// I simply want to affirm the great work you have undertaken and encourage you to continue with strength and courage. I have found this survey confronting, however, I chose to continue as I slowly realized that it gives me a voice in a new way and will empower me on my journey of healing my life."*

*// Thank you for the opportunity to participate. I felt this process was put together well in terms of the preparation for what was to come and the ways to seek support if needed."*



# Submission papers

The National Centre is committed to making formal submissions to government, independent commissions and inquiries on matters related to child sexual abuse and the needs of victims and survivors. Over the last financial year, we have submitted:



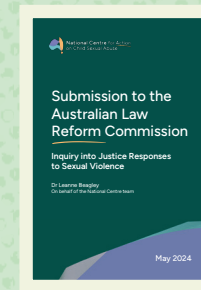
## Pre-Budget Submission to Department of Treasury:

This submission sought funding to establish and expand the lived experience platform already in place at the National Centre to include the coordination, training, support, engagement, and leadership of a 100-person victim and survivor expert panel, who could act across all levels of policy, legislation, planning, program design, service delivery and evaluation. Participation may occur in a range of ways from advisory groups, systemic advocacy, research, education, and project consultation.



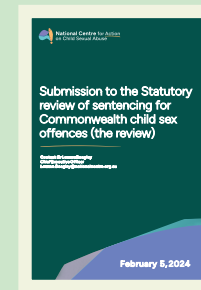
## Submission to the Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights:

A child-focused, human rights approach is foundational to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and should form a key mechanism within law and policy focused on improving protection of human rights in Australia. In the context of child sexual abuse, a child-focused human rights approach should reflect understandings of trauma, gender, culture and multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage, and is sensitive, inclusive and responsive to the needs of different communities.



## Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence:

The Commission should recommend that the States and Territories fund, develop and implement, together with victims and survivors, First Nations peoples, and service and legal system stakeholders, a co-designed range of information aids and resources to assist disclosure, and outline the various options and supports available for victim-survivors. Resources should be age and developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, culturally safe, accessible, inclusive, and widely publicised so that victims and survivors and their families or supporters can easily locate them. Formats should include online and also hard copies for those who do not have access to the internet, and they should be produced in a variety of languages and formats appropriate for victims and survivors with disability.



## Submission to the Statutory review of sentencing for Commonwealth child sex offences (the review):

1. Provide court-funded advocates and supports for victims and survivors through the criminal justice system, particularly the trial process.
2. Consider legislative changes to prevent perpetuating harms due to lack of judicial sentencing discretion.
3. Legislative reforms to harmonise the age of 'child' in relation to child sex offences throughout the Criminal Code.
4. Assess the suitability of applying these recommended practices in relation to Commonwealth offences, particularly as they relate to victims and survivors.
5. Commonwealth legislation is benchmarked against international standards in the next stage of reforms.
6. Implement regular, effective, evidence-based training and education programs for the range of professionals involved in the criminal justice system, and extend this to other areas of law such as Family law and Migration law, given the interactions in child sexual abuse cases.
7. Victims and survivors have access to court-provided support and assistance to understand the purpose of victim impact statements and to prepare them if they choose to do so.
8. Character evidence is omitted or, alternatively, cross-examination of character referees is permissible for child sexual abuse offences.



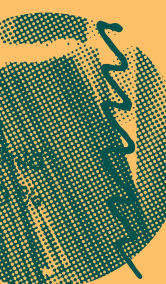
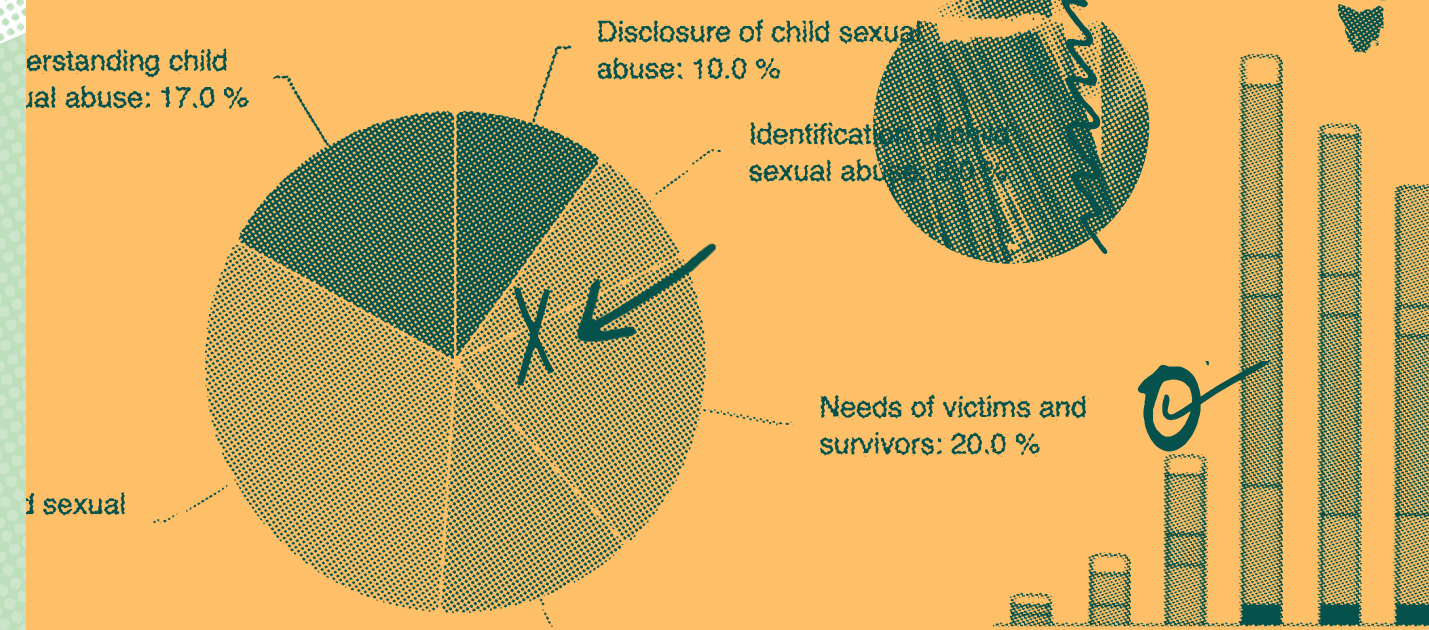
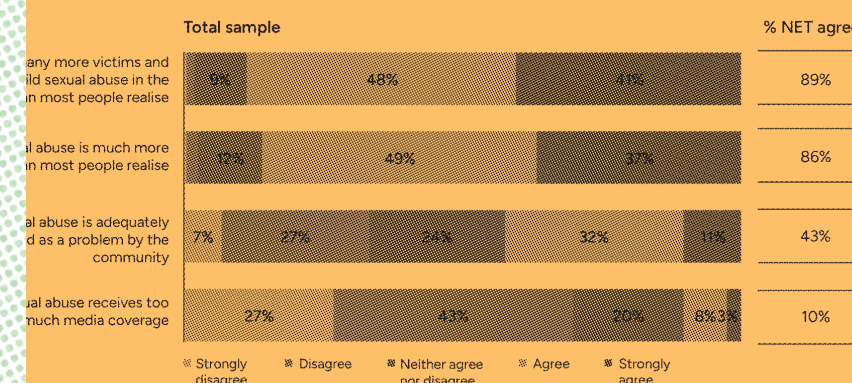
# Informing policy and driving change

In addition to the formal submissions we have made, National Centre staff are increasingly involved in dialogues in relation to policy, program and practice development. This provides an opportunity to share synthesized knowledges and drive change, but also to build partnerships and be stronger together.

We are particularly pleased to be represented on the National Strategy Advisory Group convened by the National Office for Child Safety and had the opportunity to work with key leaders from across the country to progress Australia's National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.



# Knowledge Generation, Research and Evaluation



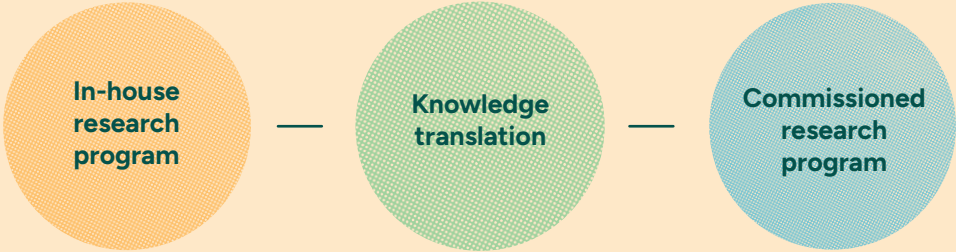


This year we continued to fulfil our aim of generating and translating an accessible and robust evidence base that contributes to addressing the critical challenges that we believe must be addressed to achieve change. Our work has four interrelated objectives:



Our approach is influenced by lived experience expertise and delivers on our commitment to strengthen the evidence base in key areas, mobilise and translate research and practice-based knowledge, and enable the design and evaluation of evidence-based solutions at the individual, community, organisation, service and system levels. We work closely with the National Centre Practice and Workforce Development team to translate research evidence into relevant and implementable solutions for change.

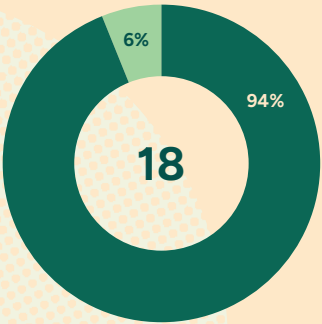
Our portfolio of activity has three key pillars:



## Commissioned Research Program

### Monthly Health Report: July 2024

#### Projects by project status



● On track: 17 projects (94%)  
● At risk: 1 project (6%)

17/18 (94%) projects are **on track**, with no concerns regarding project progress.

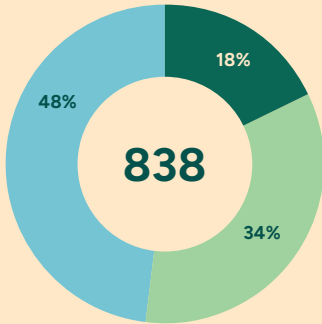
1/18 (6%) project is experiencing delays while incorporating amendments to their final deliverables.

#### Sum of Spend by portfolio



To date, the National Centre has been invoiced **\$1,383,158** worth of milestone payments (46% total cost).

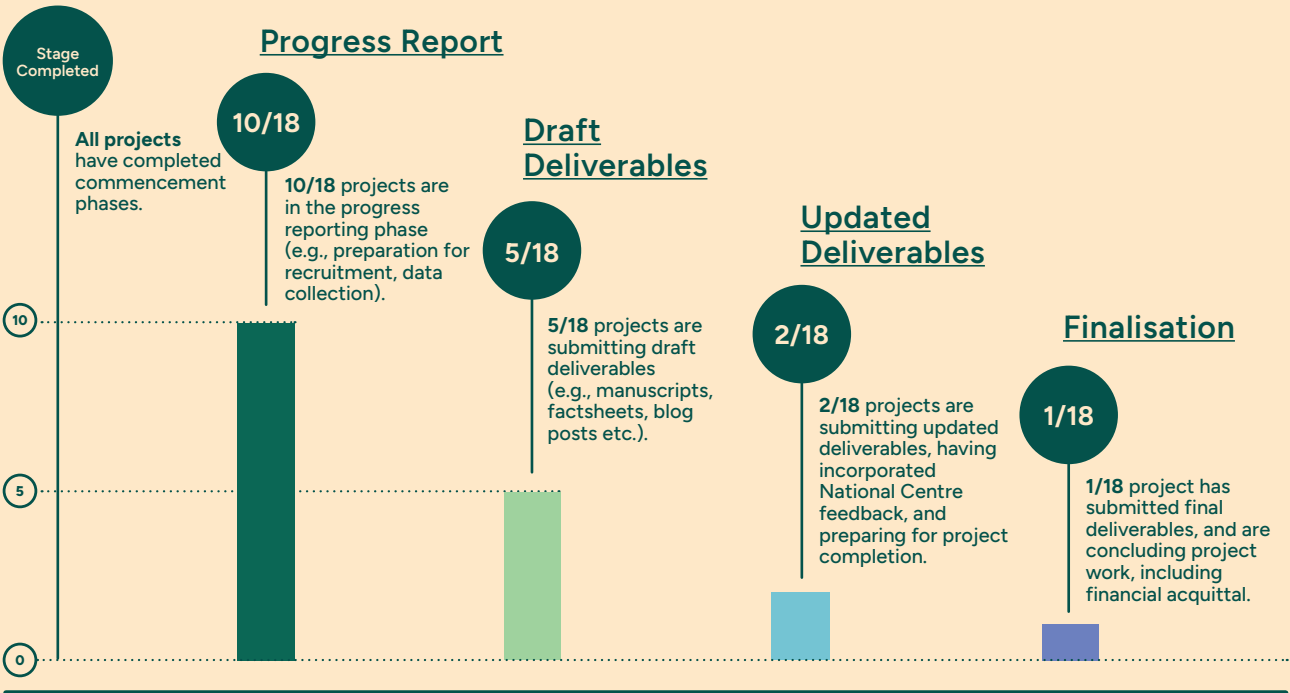
#### Task Completion



● Upcoming: 153 tasks (18%)  
● Unscheduled: 285 tasks (34%)  
● Completed: 400 tasks (48%)

**Almost half of all tasks (48%)** associated with the program have been **completed**, with no tasks overdue.

#### Commencement





# In-House Research

## The Australian child sexual abuse attitudes, knowledge and response study

The *Australian child sexual abuse attitudes, knowledge and response study* is the first of its kind in Australia; investigating the knowledge, attitudes, and responses of an Australian community sample on child sexual abuse topics. Data collection for the first wave of the project was completed in December 2023, with 4,055 Australian adults participating and providing a nationally representative sample.

At the end of June, the project team have participated in a variety of sense-making and knowledge translation activities:

- Hosting 4 sense-making and 2 result framing sessions, with internal and external stakeholders.
- Delivering 7 presentations, including to Government partners and scheduled to present at the 2024 International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse Conference in Sweden.
- A systematic scoping review, which includes 8 chapters on global attitudes, knowledge and understanding.

## Key findings:

*The community recognise that child sexual abuse is a prevalent and current issue*

Most respondents (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that there are many more victims and survivors in the community than people realise, with similarly high numbers (86%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that child sexual abuse is much more common than people realise. A high number of people (62%) also thought it was likely, very likely, or certain that someone they knew had been sexually abused as a child. Despite this, over half (56%) didn't agree that child sexual abuse happens where they live.

Respondents reported fairly accurate prevalence statistics, believing that 21% of boys and 33% of girls experience child sexual abuse – this is very close to recent findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study. For both boys and girls, respondents believed the main types of perpetrators were parents, step-parents, or another relative, and that children were most at risk at the homes or relatives or friends, or within their own homes.

Unfortunately, about 1 in 6 respondents (17%) felt there are many more urgent issues facing Australia than child sexual abuse, with a similar number of respondents (17%) believing it was unlikely that someone they knew had been sexually abused as a child. Elements of victim-blaming or problematic attitudes towards victims, particularly adolescents, did emerge in the data, for example, 40% of respondents believed that older children have a responsibility to actively resist adults' sexual advances.

## Reshaping the conversation: development of a shared language and preferred definitions guide endorsed by victims and survivors of child sexual abuse

The *Reshaping the conversation* project aims to develop Australia's first child sexual abuse language guide preferred by victims and survivors. It is hoped that this guide will address inconsistencies in language and reduce the use of harmful or outdated language. Project work commenced in late 2023 with the establishment of the Project Advisory Group, including Angela Obradovich (Lived Experience Project Advisor) and Prof Ben Mathews (Academic Project Advisor).

A draft compendium of language was compiled based on publicly available terms and definitions in Australia and overseas. This compendium, which included 94 terms and definitions, was presented to a co-design group of victims and survivors from the National Centre College to determine the final suite of terms and definitions to be carried forward into the Delphi questionnaire.



Victims and survivors from across Australia were invited to participate in the study by completing the Delphi questionnaire and 109 formally enrolled in the study. The Delphi questionnaire process remains ongoing, and this stage of work is anticipated to be completed in October 2024. Following this, a group of 'end-users' will be recruited to participate in the final stage of the project. This group, conceptualised as individuals who will be using the language guide (e.g., practitioners, researchers, policy makers, communications officers), will complete an online questionnaire exploring the utility of the language preferred by victims and survivors, as determined through the Delphi questionnaire. The language guide is then anticipated for completion and publication in late 2024.





## **Building a knowledge frame for responding to the needs of children and young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour**

This project, funded by the National Office for Child Safety, aimed to develop a framework for responding to children and young people who engage in harmful sexual behaviour. This framework sought to incorporate:

- An understanding of the diversity of the children and young people who engage in harmful sexual behaviour; and,
- Emerging or best practice principles for responding, to inform future pilot or evaluative activities; and,
- An understanding of how best to tailor assessment tools and therapeutic interventions to meet their needs.

Project work concluded in late 2023, and incorporated mixed methods data collection, including:

- Interviews with 40 international key informants
- National service mapping
- Systematic literature review

Key findings are summarised below, with this information forming a foundational part of the National Centre's knowledge resources on harmful sexual behaviour.

## **Key findings:**

The following key topics emerged:

- The factors that contribute to the development of harmful sexual behaviour, need to be considered in the context of the internal states of the child or young person, contextual factors contributing to the development of harmful sexual behaviour as a coping mechanism, and a lack of protective factors increasing vulnerability.
- Assessment should be holistic, developmentally appropriate, dynamic, and focused on informing intervention and response.
- Intervention and response should be multi-systemic, holistic, developmentally appropriate, culturally strong, trauma-informed, strengths-based, empowering, and relational.
- Early intervention and prevention efforts should focus on children at risk of adverse childhood experiences, cultural and social connectedness, the development of agency, parent and community education about developmentally appropriate behaviours, sex and consent education for children and young people, and the reduction of misogynistic and violent pornography.
- Workforce development should prioritise growing relevant sectors, with a particular focus on the First Nations workforce, as well as training, learning, and development for professionals working with children and young people.

Moving forward, the National Centre hopes to build on this work, exploring the perspectives of victims and survivors of harmful sexual behaviour, and developing a greater understanding of the diversity and needs of the children and young people who engage in this form of harm.

# **Commissioned Research Program**

In July 2023, our commissioned research program formally launched, with 18 projects commencing. The program spans a breadth of topic areas associated with child sexual abuse, including disclosure experiences, harmful sexual behaviours, out-of-home care contexts, safeguarding and community awareness, and legal system responses. Our external research program funds the project work of over 100 multidisciplinary investigators from more than 50 organisations across Australia.

The following have been delivered from these projects in the first 12 months of the program:

**39 progress reports**

**6 literature reviews**

**3 manuscripts submitted for academic publication**

**1 webinar**

**1 research-in-brief**

In addition to measuring the outputs and impacts of the projects, quality improvement mechanisms have been implemented for the program more broadly. This includes an anonymous survey circulated to researchers annually, capturing:

- Accessibility and subject matter expertise of the National Centre Research team
- Support for the project, including recruitment, knowledge mobilisation, and networking opportunities
- Reporting and invoicing processes

The results from the first wave of the feedback survey are anticipated in late 2024.

Read more about our 18 commissioned research projects [here](#).





# Knowledge Translation

## Register of Active Research

The National Centre’s Register of Active Research is Australia’s first database for research and quality improvement projects currently underway which are investigating child sexual abuse-related topics. The register was soft launched in December 2023 at the inaugural Child Sexual Abuse Reduction Research Network workshop in Adelaide. A second phase of work was completed in June 2024, which saw interactive mapping features embedded in the register. The mapping infographics provide a real-time view of the content of the register, including:

### Project count:

- The register currently houses 36 projects, a 70% increase since its launch.

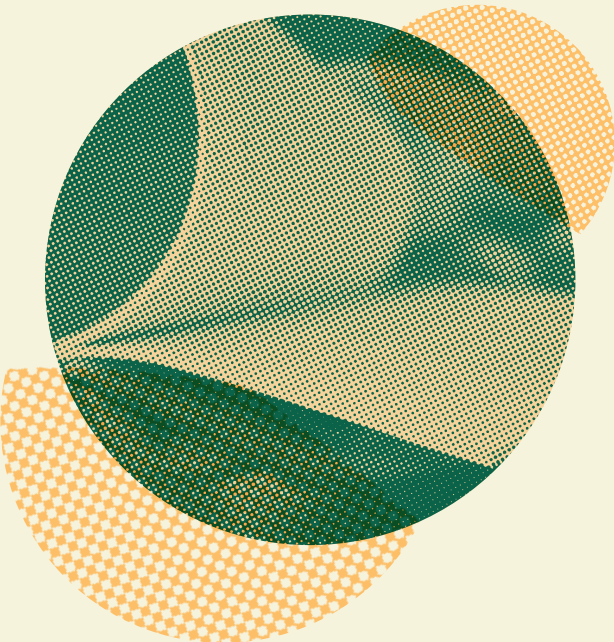
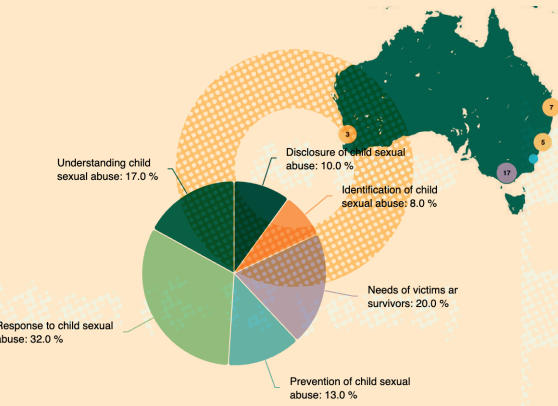
### Project themes:

- The most common theme being investigated by projects on the register is responses to child sexual abuse (32% projects), followed by understanding child sexual abuse (17% projects).
- The least common theme being investigated by projects on the register is the identification of child sexual abuse (8% projects).

### Population demographics:

- The most common age group investigated by projects on the register is young adults (58% projects), with children (6-12 years) being the least investigated (7% projects).
- The most common cohort investigated by projects on the register is the workforce (62% projects), followed by victims and survivors (54% projects), with parents (11% projects) and First Nations communities (6% projects) being the least investigated cohorts.

Bi-annual reports will be generated to explore changes in the Australian research landscape over time. It is hoped that these insights will assist the National Centre and other researchers to identify and address gaps in our collective efforts to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse.



## Emerging Knowledge Exchange

In early 2024, the National Centre launched a new knowledge translation initiative, Emerging Knowledge Exchange. Emerging Knowledge Exchange sessions are hosted by the National Centre online on a bi-monthly basis, focusing on fostering a multidisciplinary conversation around the early insights from child sexual abuse research projects that are being conducted by, or have been commissioned by, the National Centre. The selected audience members include practitioners, policy makers, First Nations leaders, and lived experience advocates.

To date, three Emerging Knowledge Exchange sessions have been held, with nine investigators and 35 audience members exploring the following topic areas:

- Trauma-informed responses for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviours by children and young people
- Disclosures of child sexual abuse and community responses

From an anonymous participant survey we have received positive feedback:

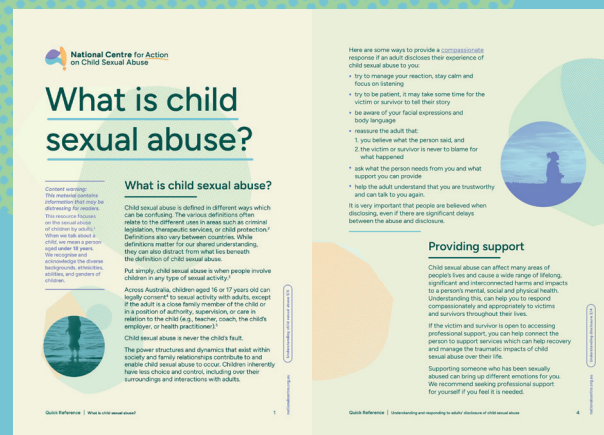
- the average rating for overall quality is 4.7/5
- attendees have described the sessions as 'incredibly useful' and 'a fantastic platform', providing 'a thorough understanding of research' and 'weaving intersections with policy and implementation'.



# Practice and Workforce Development



PHN Video shoot:  
Paul Klotz, Malika  
Elizabeth Reese and  
Dr Johanna Lynch



Foundational Resources



In Conversation

This year we continued our work to strengthen the capability of the different workers and organisations that protect children and young people and support and respond to adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Our approach is underpinned by a long-term commitment to lead, support and partner to build the capability of the workforce at the individual worker, organisation, service and system levels.

We work closely with the National Centre research team to ensure an integrated approach to the way we mobilise knowledge for change.

Our program of work includes:

- offering a range of professional learning and training activities and initiatives
- translating, synthesizing and disseminating knowledge through the development of practice based knowledge resources and tools
- undertaking targeted workforce capability building initiatives for different workforces
- partnering with key stakeholders to coordinate effort to build capability and influence systems

This last year we undertook 22 learning activities engaging 6165 participants; published 31 knowledge resources; established key relationships and partnerships including with the Practice and Systems Improvement Panel; commenced an initiative to support the implementation of the National Minimum Practice Standards and developed foundational content for embedding in our soon to launch online learning offerings.



## Some highlights of the past year include:

### In Conversation series:

Our monthly *In Conversation* is a public webinar series to raise the profile of key issues and explore and influence the narrative related to child sexual abuse. These moderated sessions take a conversational approach to exploring key topics related to child sexual abuse through different perspectives of cultural wisdom and lived experience, research and practice knowledges. The audience is broad and includes practitioners, policy makers, government and community.

### Quick Facts:

**Over 40 panellists**

**4157 registrations**

### Top three topics:

- Understanding and responding to disclosures from child sexual abuse from children and young people
- Introduction to Harmful Sexual Behaviours
- What helps and hinders healing after child sexual abuse? Perspectives of those with lived experience.

*// I'm a survivor and researched a lot of the papers written by Australian, UK and USA professionals in this field for my memoir/guide. Yours was the best webinar I've attended so far since being in this space."*

*// Great to have a panel made up from lived experience as well as professional, really gives the full perspective."*

*// Lived experience panel were so human and I soaked up every word as someone with lived experience, very powerful and meaningful."*

Still images from our video resource, "Working with victims and survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence".



### Strengthening Primary Care Workforce Initiative:

This year we progressed a project to strengthen the capability of the primary health care workforce to better respond to children and adults who have experienced sexual violence and abuse, through the development of practice-based knowledge resources. The resources will be developed as part of a three-year project funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

### Quick Facts:

Established a representation Project Advisory Group to oversee the initiative

Completed a desktop review of currently available practice-based resources for Primary Health Care workers on child sexual abuse

Undertook extensive sector consultation

Developed three foundational resources including:

- Practice Tool: [Strengthening General Practitioner Responses to Sexual Violence](#) - amongst top three downloaded resources from National Centre Website  
RACGP accepted clinical resource
- Practice Tool: [Strengthening General Practitioner Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) – amongst top three downloaded resources from National Centre Website  
RACGP accepted clinical resource
- Video: Working with victims and survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence - the video highlights the lived experiences of sexual violence and child sexual abuse, prevalence, and considerations for General Practitioners working in Primary Care settings.



# Foundational Knowledge Resources

The National Centre developed a suite of knowledge resources to provide foundational level information to a broad range of workers and the community on child sexual abuse and harmful sexual abuse. The suite consisted of 10 separate Practice Tools covering four separate topics.

The development of the resources was informed by research evidence, practice knowledge and lived experience.

## Quick Facts:

### 10 Practice Tools

- [What is child sexual abuse](#)
- [Indicators and Impacts of child sexual abuse](#)
- [Perpetrators and Grooming](#)
- [Responding and taking action](#)
- [Understanding children’s disclosure of child sexual abuse](#)
- [Responding to children’s disclosure of child sexual abuse](#)
- [What prevents and helps children to disclose child sexual abuse](#)
- [Understanding and responding to adults disclosure of child sexual abuse](#)
- [Sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people that can be harmful](#)
- [How to support children and young people who display or are victims of harmful sexual behaviours](#)

# Professional Learning Partnerships

Working in partnerships with other agencies, peaks and organisations is critical to our ability to strengthen the capability of different workforces. This not only supports us to reach a broader audience, but complements the great work done by others and minimises duplication.

## Quick Facts:

Established Partnerships to reach different workforce groups through targeted learning activities and presentations including:

- Police
- Volunteers
- Lawyers and Legal Assistants
- Family and Relationship Services
- General Practitioners



The National Centre’s Quick Reference Foundational Resources, providing essential information on understanding child sexual abuse, disclosure, and harmful sexual behaviour.





# Northern Territory Healing Project

NT Health have funded the National Centre to support the development of an Aboriginal-led response to child sexual assault through regional pilot programs. This project aligns with the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) Action Plan 2. The Big Rivers region was identified as the location for the first pilot iteration.

Through bringing together five knowledge areas for action - lived and living experience, cultural knowledge, research knowledge, practitioner knowledge and systems knowledge, our approach has sought to work alongside the Big Rivers region weaving these knowledge areas into the fabric of service development. In support of the position of The Healing Foundation 2017, any meaningful approach to respond to sexual abuse for Aboriginal children and young people must be centred in truth through acknowledging the historic and ongoing impacts of founding violence, oppression, intergenerational trauma, dispossession, and disempowerment.

The objective is to pilot an Aboriginal-led service to build remote and regional capacity to support healing and recovery for children, young people and their families impacted by sexual abuse.

The National Centre hosts a Knowledge Circle of experts and leaders to provide guidance and advice to the Senior Project Manager. It is made up of National Centre Board members, senior leadership, and members of our First Nations College.

The consultation and program design sought to understand what support and recovery looks like for children and young people in the region, identify strengths and barriers and opportunities to build on what is working well. Consultation has included meetings with organisations and services, workshops with specialist services, and community workshops focused on what supports healing and recovery. The National Centre will open a grants process shortly for Aboriginal-led organisations to apply to deliver support and recovery services. The National Centre will provide resources and training to ensure organisations have the support they need to deliver trauma-informed services for children, young people and their families.



Working with the Big Rivers region to yarn about healing, support and recovery.



Evaluation, monitoring, and reporting will support community healing and knowledge generation as both process and outcome. Process and outcome learnings from the pilot can be shared with other communities as appropriate and with permission in future iterations of the project. It is hoped that this could highlight the critical importance of place-based healing projects enabling sustainability through future funding.

Important considerations include data sovereignty in line with Priority Reform Four of the Closing the Gap National Agreement, community control, and reporting to the community. Decisions will need to be made at the local level as to what information is retained, reported, and utilised moving forward.



# Communications

Last year we launched our new brand which 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.

### 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.

### During the year we:

#### Reached

1,484,838  
on our social platforms

#### Had nearly

14,000  
interactions with our content

### Our channels grew an average of over

225%

### Our website had:

#### Total users:

34,645

#### Website views:

87,000

#### File downloads:

4,255

### Top page:

‘Research’  
19,337

### Top Research view:

The Australian child sexual abuse attitudes, knowledge and response study

### Top Resource view:

PHN video, ‘Working with victims and survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence’

### Top blog:

Chances are you know someone who has experienced child sexual abuse. Do you know how to respond?

A leader of generational change with

user sharp focus on child sexual abuse

Australia

### Most downloaded resources:

National Centre Annual Report 2023 (349)

Strengthening General Practitioner responses to sexual violence in primary health care (239)

Strengthening General Practitioner responses to child sexual abuse in primary health care (192)

### Website traffic (by users)

#### Direct:

25,000

#### Organic Search:

6,900

#### Organic Social:

2,000

#### Referral:

982

A once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the conversation on child sexual abuse.



# Staff + roles

## Growing our team

During the reporting year, we have grown our workforce in line with the unfolding needs of the National Centre, expectations and contracted responsibilities. The staff team as of 30 June 2024 was as follows:

- Dr Leanne Beagley, Chief Executive Officer
- Scott Thompson, Director, Finance and Corporate Services
- Alisa Hall, Director, Practice Development and Engagement
- Prof Andrea de Silva, Director, Research, Evidence and Knowledge Generation
- Debbie Taylor, Governance Lead
- Emma Mossman, Senior Program Manager First Nations people-led Child Sexual Abuse Response
- Melissa Simpson, Manager, Philanthropy & Corporate Engagement
- Jo Warneke, Manager, Practice Development
- Dr Peter Kremer, Research Project Lead – Reshaping the Conversation
- Dr Amanda Robertson, Acting Senior Research Officer
- Alexandra Shriane, Manager, Research
- Dr Michaela Guthridge, Research Officer
- Lee Edmonds, Training & Learning Lead
- Rychelle Carmody, Learning Designer

- Cathy Stirling, Practice Improvement Lead (Knowledge Mobilisation)
- Stacy Oehlman, Practice Improvement Lead
- Reem Fekri, Manager, Communications and Digital
- Millie Constable, 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 in-person gatherings, held in Melbourne in August 2023 and again in June 2024, have proven to be invaluable in team cohesion and advancing our objectives. These events provide essential opportunities for staff to connect, collaborate, and align on our agenda, strengthening our efforts and enhancing our overall effectiveness. Such face-to-face interactions are crucial for building meaningful relationships and driving our shared goals forward.

Importantly, as a new organisation we have taken time to consider and set our internal organisational values. These now frame our work together as a team and guide our approach.



## Our Values

### Better, together

Collaboration is the beating heart of the National Centre. It's the driving force behind everything we do, the change we create, and the future we envision. "Better, together" isn't just a phrase; it's our fierce commitment to partner with victims and survivors, our esteemed Founding Members, working together and joining forces with the wider landscape to drive action.

### Driving action

Within our domain, knowledge is far from a static concept; it stands as the dynamic force propelling us into action. At the heart of our work lies an unwavering commitment to harness the power of knowledge in all forms, driving change with intention. We are devoted do'ers, guided by a profound sense of purpose and empowerment.

### Inclusive

To be "inclusive" represents our commitment to embracing diversity, upholding equity, and nurturing a sense of belonging and safety. Inclusivity empowers us to build bridges, not construct walls. We take pride in honouring differences, amplifying voices, and engaging in collective collaboration to promote healing and hope for victims and survivors and ensure the protection of children.

### Trustworthy

In every interaction, every strategic decision, and every progressive step, our commitment is to establish lasting change through our actions and progress, cementing trust among victims, survivors, and the broader community. We understand the significance of being a trusted entity for victims and survivors, and our determination to create a lasting positive impact through our work is synonymous with trustworthiness and transparency.

### Bold

With bold determination, we are committed to dismantling barriers, nurturing innovation, and inscribing a new narrative of compassion and empowerment. We move forward boldly and purposefully, forging a path toward a brighter future taking resolute action for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, to challenge the ineffective systems, and take progressive steps to drive change, and action.





# Finance

With principal funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, the National Centre has continued to invest in research, the production of knowledge resources and further strengthening the organisational structure.

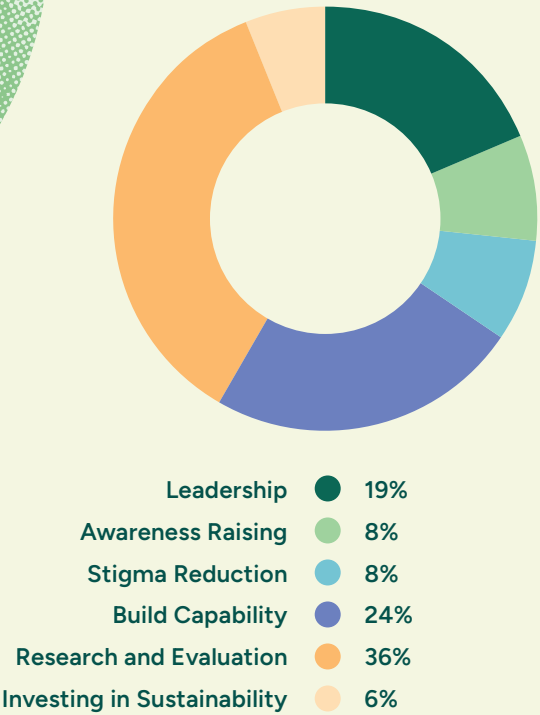
The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care have funded the National Centre to strengthen the capability of the primary health care workforce to better respond to children and adults who have experienced sexual violence and abuse, through the development of practice resources.

The Northern Territory Department of Health have funded the National Centre to establish an Aboriginal-led community-based special sexual assault response to build local and regional capacity.

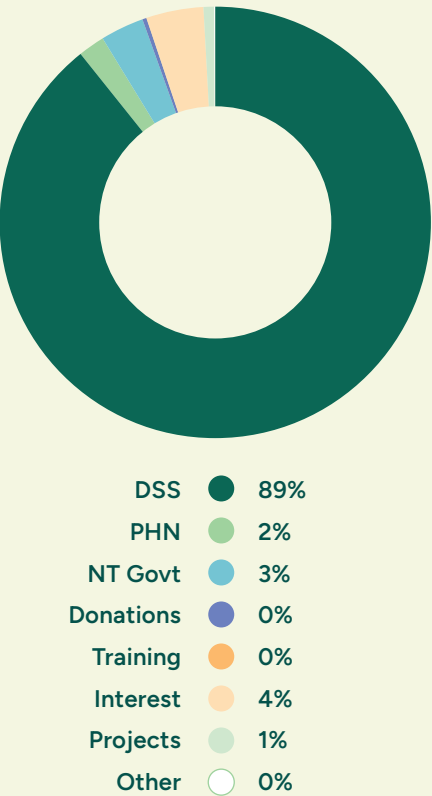
The Tasmanian Government funded the National Centre to review and advise on their response to the Commission of Inquiry into Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings and to expand our Community Attitudes Study to focus specifically on the Tasmanian population.

For more detail on our audited financial statements you can go to our website: [Annual Reports - The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse](#).

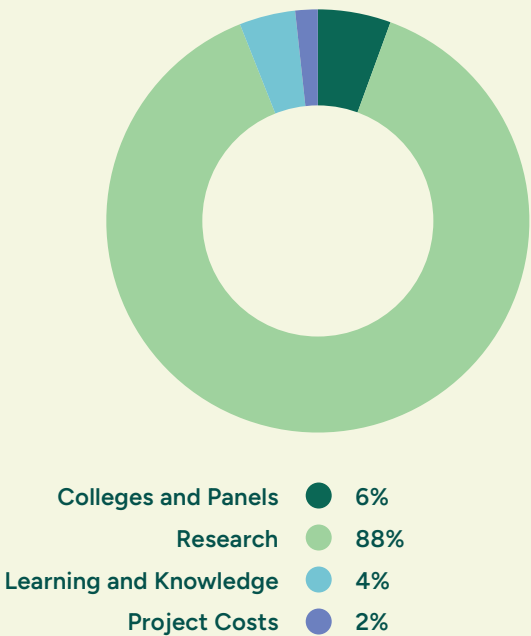
**Expenditure by Functional Area**



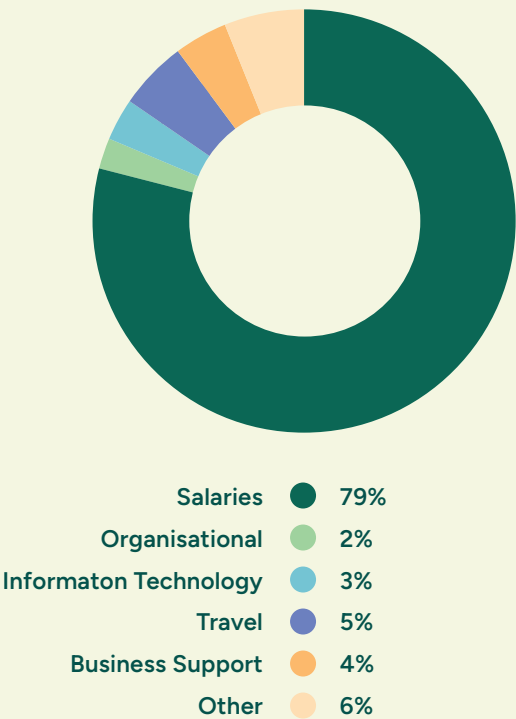
**Revenue**



**Contract and Project Costs**



**Salaries and Overhead**



\*percentages are rounded to the closest whole number





## National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse



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