

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Phoenix
Professional Development
and Prevention Services



Phoenix
Support & Advocacy
Service Incorporated

I am so very grateful to Phoenix for providing such an amazing service. My Counsellor, Sally has been invaluable in helping me towards overcoming the traumas of my childhood.

Phoenix Client

Marc (who manages appointments) is so lovely and gorgeously enthusiastic. Every time I phone Marc makes me feel special. Thank you Marc.

Phoenix Client

Sally has an incredible ability to make a real difference. Sally's insight enables her to "cut through" - to see things so clearly and to articulate different strategies. Sally is compassionate and caring - so I feel supported - but at the same time encourages me to make bold steps forward.

Phoenix Client

Thank you so much Sally for all your incredible support over nearly three years of working with myself and my partner. You met me when I was utterly vulnerable and broken and was not able to imagine a way forward. However, your gentle, patient, determined manner and various methods achieved breakthroughs that I could not have imagined. We both believe that due to you, and through the incredible service provided by Phoenix, we have been able to achieve so much in understanding more about the nature of my trauma and coming to terms with how to live with and manage the many issues. I cannot thank you enough for "sticking" with me and for helping me to rediscover many things.

Phoenix Client

My Counsellor Claudia is caring and compassionate. Always lets me know that I'm in control of my session and doesn't push too hard. Always validates me.

Phoenix Client

Marc is amazing, caring & sensitive to my needs.

Phoenix Client

Excellent staff at Phoenix. The opportunity to zoom and it's affordable.

Phoenix Client

I was able to talk about things with someone who understood and could help just by listening.

Phoenix Client

Summary

2022-2023 in Review	
Board Members and Staff	6
Creating Compassionate Communities	7–9
Overview of PD	10–11
Phoenix Office Move	12
Chairperson & Chief Executive Officer 2022-2023 Reports	
Chairperson Report	16–17
Chief Executive Officer Report	18–19
Our Range of Therapeutic Interventions	
Trauma Transformation Program	24
Phoenix Trauma Sensitive Yoga Program	25
"Not Seen Not Heard"	26–27
Reflections About a Letter to an Inner Child	28–30
Our Finances	
Financial Report Overview	34–35
Our Advocacy	
Advocating for Survivors	38–41
Supporting Survivor Stories	44–51
Highlights from 2022-2023	54–55



2023

2022-2023 IN REVIEW



Board Members and Staff

2022-2023

2022-2023 - Board Members	Board Position	Appointed
Julie Woodhouse	Chair	October 2014
Leanne Sultan	Deputy Chair and Secretary	October 2016
Amit Kabra	Treasurer	October 2018
Gavin Bagley	Board Member	October 2019
Monica Taylor	Board Member	October 2019
Peter Le	Board Member	October 2019
Leanne Allison	Board Member	Retired June 2023

2022-2023 - Phoenix Staff	Staff Position (all part-time)	Appointed
Louise Lamont	Chief Executive Officer	February 2015
Marc Spradbury	Accountant and Office Duties	January 2019
Kaye Doolan	Finance Officer	June 2016
Sally Woods	Senior Counsellor	July 2019
Baljit Carroll	Senior Counsellor	August 2020
Claudia Da Silva	Senior Counsellor	January 2022
Jay Bradley	Project Manager and Admin Assistant	September 2022

2022–2023 In Review Creating Compassionate Communities Conference

12 OCTOBER 2022

The inaugural Phoenix Creating Compassionate Communities Conference was held on Wednesday 12 October 2022. More than 200 in-person and virtual registrations were received with delegate’s roles encompassing a diverse range of professions including social workers, counsellors, psychologists, project officers, policy officers, development officers, lawyers, advisors, program managers, operations managers, teachers, parents, students, research assistants, chaplains, and school nurses.

This highly successful Conference fostered networking across the sector and provided delegates with important information on early intervention to prevent child sexual abuse and childhood trauma. From the Hon. Simone McGurk’s address, to the interactive, trauma sensitive yoga session, the event was a unique opportunity for professional development and access to national resources and strategies.

The aim of the Conference was to generate conversations around how we create compassionate communities together, how to build respect, and what influences are shaping our society? The conference also explored how do we influence young minds and hearts surrounded by social media messages and pornography that are contrary to supporting the

development of respect, or fostering compassion for others, or demonstrating that love and kindness are the foundation on which healthy relationships are built?

Preventing childhood sexual abuse and trauma is everyone’s business!

The formal Conference program commenced from 9:00am with Welcome to Country from Gail Barrow, followed by a welcome and scene setting address from Phoenix CEO, Louise Lamont. The MC for the day was Dr Alec O’Connell, Headmaster of Scotch College, who kindly donated his time for the event. Maree Crabbe then spoke to: Its time We Talked – Porn, Young People, and the Prevention of Violence.

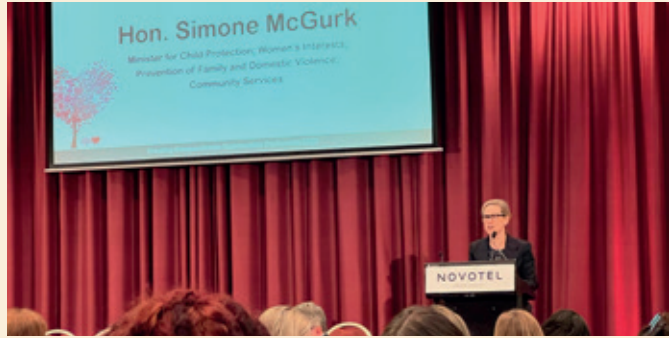
Following morning tea, key presentations were delivered by Kayelene Kerr on the topic: Reducing the Harm: Talking About Children and Pornography and Dr Carolyn Johnson and Nina Brown on the topic: Building Safer Communities: Engaging with School Communities for Solutions to Challenges. Delegates then had an opportunity to ask questions of the presenters during an interactive session before the lunch break.

Upon returning from lunch, the Hon. Simone McGurk, Minister for Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and Community Services provided an update on state-led initiatives and priorities within her broad portfolio. Dr Michel Flood’s livestreamed presentation from Queensland followed on the topic: Building Respect: Engaging Men & Boys in Change for Gender Justice. A panel discussion was then held to provide an overview on strategies to prevent child sexual abuse and sexual violence both nationally and in WA. The five Panel members were: Kathy Pickett, Nicole Lambert, Dr Alison Evans, Louise Lamont, and Amanda Paton.



▲ Nina Brown, Carolyn Johnson, Kayelene Kerr and Maree Crabbe





▲ Hon. Simone McGurk MLA



▲ Phoenix Chair, Julie Woodhouse



▲ Conference MC, Alec O'Connell

Afternoon tea provided further opportunity for networking with colleagues, then the session recommenced with Building Better Brains: the impact of stress on self-regulation and trauma on the brain delivered by Louise Lamont. This was followed by a pre-recorded interview between Louise and Dr Stuart Shanker, a world-renowned author from Canada.

Dr Shanker spoke from a neuroscience perspective with Louise about the impact of children accessing pornography on their brain development and their ability to self-regulate. Chair of The Phoenix Board, Julie Woodhouse, provided a conference summary and closing statement before the final surprise activity, a self-care chair yoga session for preventing vicarious trauma, led by Coby Greer. Phoenix would like to thank all those who made the day such a success and in particular, the generous event sponsors:

- Department of Communities WA
- Business Events Perth
- Lindentech
- Ruby Cubes
- Tonic Digital
- Coverforce
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, West Australian Branch

CONFERENCE QUOTES

Dear Louise and Phoenix Staff,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the conference, I could not have attended without the generosity of your organisational sponsors. It was so informative, and everyone was so helpful and friendly. I really look forward to incorporating what I learnt into my practice and my life. Again, thank you and I hope you all get to rest and rejuvenate knowing the energy that goes into putting on such a fabulous event.

Amazing event and highly informative

Thoroughly enjoyed it and learned much about the risks and impacts of online pornography on young people perceptions and behaviours

The last session was extremely informative.

It surpassed my expectations

The conference was professionally and strategically executed. Content was relevant and the presenters were outstanding. A high-quality event and the organisers should be immensely proud of their efforts.

FANTASTIC Day! Great Job!!!

Very well organised - the day was packed with relevant information

The event was relevant to my work and was filled with helpful information and learning as well as a great networking opportunity.

I was able to have discussions with co-workers as I attended online



▲ The Phoenix Team



Overview of Phoenix Professional Development & Prevention Services

SAFE AND TOGETHER™ TRAINING

Since 2021, Phoenix has partnered with the Safe and Together™ Institute USA to deliver globally recognised evidence-based domestic violence training. More than 130 staff from the human services sector across Australia successfully completed Safe and Together™ courses held by Phoenix during the 2022-2023 financial year with more planned for later in the year.

Participants represented a wide range of organisations including Act for Kids, Centrecare, Holyoake, Good Shepherd, OzChild, Salvation Army, Key Assets, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Uniting, Family Life, Women's Legal Services WA, Life Without Barriers, AccordWest, and the Pat Giles Centre. Four "virtual" courses, and one face-to-face series were delivered over the period including:

SAFE AND TOGETHER™4-DAY CORE TRAINING (ONLINE)

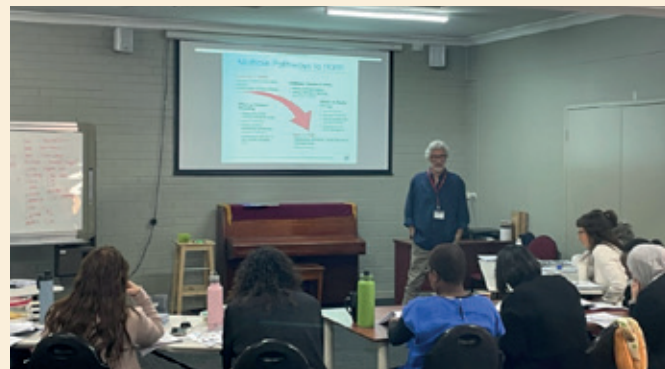
- 19-29 July 2022 - 8 half days – 24 participants
- 16-26 August 2022 - 8 half days – 39 participants
- 8-18 November 2022 - 8 half days – 35 participants

SAFE AND TOGETHER™4-DAY CORE TRAINING (IN PERSON FOR SINGLE NFP AGENCY)

- 13-19 June 2023 – 4 full days – 13 participants

SAFE AND TOGETHER™1-DAY OVERVIEW TRAINING (ONLINE)

- 24 May 2023 – 1 full day - 22 participants



▲ Safe and Together™ Training

Our trainer, Dawson Ruhl, continues to deliver the in person and online Safe and Together™ training on behalf of Phoenix. Dawson has been an advocate for ending abuse to women and children impacted by family and domestic violence (FDV) for more than 30 years. During his extensive career he introduced some of the first strategies for safely engaging perpetrators and survivors of domestic violence to mainstream service providers in Australia. Dawson has delivered dozens of FDV training events across Australia, including more than 20 Safe and Together™ Core training courses across Eastern states and territories as well as in regional and metropolitan WA. Feedback from Safe and Together™ participants includes:

TRAINING QUOTES

Dawson was very informative and very easy to listen to. It was so evident that Dawson had a lot of experience in this field. He was inspiring and really helped me to reflect on how I can change my practice and make it more FDV informed.

*From start to finish the trainer engage well with students, he made the course very enjoyable. I give Dawson 5*****Stars.*

It was obvious Dawson had a wealth of knowledge to share with our class. He was brilliant at listening to student's questions and comments and was completely present with us at all times.

We honestly couldn't have asked for a more competent and knowledgeable trainer. Thanks Dawson

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE TRAINING WORKSHOPS & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE SESSIONS

Phoenix is committed to the professional development of the sector and continues to offer tailored training workshops to organisations supporting survivors. On 28 September 2022 CEO Louise Lamont provided trauma informed training to staff at the Women's Legal Service WA. More recently, in May 2023, Louise was invited to the Street Law Centre to present on the topic of vicarious trauma.



▲ Louise Lamont with staff from the Street Law Centre and Women's Legal Service WA.

WEBINAR – REDUCING THE HARM: TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN & PORNOGRAPHY

Phoenix delivers activities aimed to prevent child sexual abuse, along with professional development services. Our collaborative work with Kayelene Kerr is part of the prevention work Phoenix contributes. Kayelene is recognised as one of Western Australia's most experienced specialist providers of Protective

Behaviours, Body Safety, Cyber Safety and Pornography education workshops, and the Founder of eSafeKids. Kayelene draws on over 24 years' experience of study and law enforcement, investigating sexual crimes, including technology facilitated crimes.



▲ KAYELENE KERR

On Monday 27 February 2023, twenty-nine parents & professionals were able to join an online conversation with Kayelene as she discussed the impact on children accessing pornography. This important Webinar included:

- Overview of children's access and exposure to pornography and sexualised media,
- The effect of pornography on a child's developing body, brain, and behaviour,
- How to create safe and supportive spaces for a conversation with your child/children, and
- Specific education to support parents of primary school aged children.

A total of 75% of evaluation respondents rated their overall experience as "excellent", and 25% "outstanding". We would like to thank Kayelene for her tireless efforts in preventing the sexual abuse of children and look forward to future collaborations.



▲ JAY BRADLEY
PROJECT MANAGER



Phoenix Office Move

We would like to welcome you to our new office! On the 16 June 2023, Phoenix relocated from the property at Walcott Street in Coolbinia where we had operated from for the past 11 years to a more centrally located space with better access to public transport.

OUR NEW OFFICE ADDRESS IS:
City West Lotteries House
2 Delhi Street, West Perth, WA 6005

The transition has been a smooth one, with staff enjoying the co-location with other not-for-profit tenancies. City West Lotteries House is also equipped with state-of-the-art meeting rooms and conference facilities which strengthens our ability to provide high-quality training and counselling services. Please note that all our phone numbers, email addresses, and other contact details remain unchanged.



The clinician was comfortable with the full range of my emotions, was able to meet me where I was at, provided full validation and displayed genuine empathy, were skilled in therapeutic intervention, understood the connection between mind and body and were able to prompt deeper insight, reflection and understanding within me.

Phoenix Client

They listened, never told me how or what I should feel. Made me feel safe and accepted. Made me feel that whatever I bring to therapy I will always be welcomed and treated with care. That I was the most important person in the room and that they were there to help me.

Phoenix Client

Fifty years after the sexual abuse stopped, I have finally found a counselling service which has helped me work through the traumas which arise and affect my partner and myself. Having Sally as my Counsellor to guide a pathway has been life changing.

Phoenix Client

The information a specialised service could give and the extensive experience and training they have had in this field made all the difference. I didn't feel scrutinized. I felt more cared for and believed. These counsellors were part of this centre as it was their calling in life to help survivors. I also didn't feel rushed as it was more affordable long-term.

Phoenix Client

I guess I was ready. I don't know what can be done about not being ready until 47 years old. Though it was completely unknown to me that there were more appropriate services like Phoenix I could have used much earlier. You don't see adds for that on the back of public toilet doors. Just ones for other causes of depression that is more socially acceptable.

Phoenix Client

Feeling validated. Feeling believed. Feeling I mattered. Feeling I existed. Recognising that I'm not ok. Being listened to. Having empathy, being patient, not treating me as a child, not taking my rights away, not forcing me to do anything. Being there, giving me knowledge, explaining things not just telling me, explaining why supporting me not judging me, sadly most still do this.

Phoenix Client





CHAIRPERSON & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER 2022-2023 REPORTS



Chairperson Report

2022-2023



JULIE WOODHOUSE
CHAIRPERSON

It has been an extraordinary year for Phoenix Support and Advocacy Service and as the Board Chair for the past 6 years, my observation is that Phoenix has matured to become an agile and sophisticated organisation.

As Chair of Phoenix's Board, I am privileged to be supported by board members who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to our organisation. A huge thank you to Leanne Sultan, Peter Le, Amit Kabra, Monica Taylor and Gavin Bagley for grasping the opportunities to differentiate our organisation, in what some may say is a crowded marketplace, in order to support vulnerable individuals because it is simply the right thing to do. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Leanne Allison who, due to work commitments, resigned from her position but who remains a strong advocate of our strategic intent.

As a Board, we have continued to strengthen our governance processes to ensure Phoenix is a strong, agile and sustainable organisation. Unfortunately, we continue to operate in an environment of uncertainty. Our effectiveness of operations is often hampered by contracting constraints, financing constraints and skill restraints. With little guarantee of continued funding streams, it becomes difficult to attract and retain highly skilled staff.

Despite the challenges, we ensure our work is informed by lived experiences of our clients; those who have survived childhood sexual abuse. Our team undertook a consultation study of adults who had experienced child sexual abuse in Western Australia to hear their voice about future service design. This type of commitment, dedication and expertise of our Chief Executive Officer, Louise Lamont and our fantastic staff ensures we can deliver positive outcomes for victim-survivors of abuse.

Throughout the year, Phoenix Professional Development and Prevention Service provided Safe and Together CORE training for a number of organisations across Australia.

After much deliberation and market research, the Board made the decision to relocate our organisation from Coolbinia to City West Lotteries House in West Perth. This was a huge undertaking and I want to acknowledge the Phoenix staff who went above and beyond to ensure a smooth transition with minimum disruption to our clients.

As we head towards our 40th year anniversary in 2024, our organisation was incorporated in 1984 but was founded in 1978 as the first service to support survivors in WA, it is critical that we continue to think about alternative ways of delivering positive change for those affected by child sexual abuse and our ongoing journey as an organisation.

Phoenix has been good because I've felt like I could speak about things for the first time without judgement or discomfort from the therapist.

Phoenix Client





Chief Executive Officer's Perspective

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



LOUISE LAMONT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

This past financial year has been one of the busiest and most active for Phoenix and has included a range of activities for building the business arm, delivering a major conference, and contributing to the development of State and Federal Government Strategies aimed at preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and sexual violence.

The year then ended with the major task of physically moving the organisation to a more accessible location and preparing the previous premises for sale. Packing up was a demanding task after 11 years in one location.

The stability of funding offered from last year's three-year service agreement with the WA State Government has also facilitated Phoenix being able to focus more this past year on service innovation and the broader advocacy work of raising community awareness about the epidemic of child maltreatment in Australia. The recent gold standard Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) found a significant number of Australians have been subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and exposure to domestic violence.

2022-2023 PHOENIX INITIATIVES

Phoenix Training

Phoenix delivered training across Australia throughout the financial year via our fee-for-service business arm **Phoenix Professional Development and Prevention Services**. Further details about these training workshops, including the delivery of the Safe and Together™ model, have been noted in this report by Phoenix Project Manager Jay Bradley. These trainings have been delivered both online and in person and have received positive feedback.

FINDINGS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CHILD MALTREATMENT STUDY ©

Across the Australian population (ages 16-65+) we found:



In childhood before the age of 18*

The findings are deeply sobering. Child maltreatment is widespread in Australia and associated with early and persistent harm.

The ACMS has found that Australians who experience maltreatment are substantially more likely to have

- mental health disorders
- health risk behaviours
- higher health service utilisation.



Phoenix Conference

The highlight of 2022 was the delivery of the **“Creating Compassionate Communities” Conference** held in October with more than 200 delegates from around Australia. The conference hosted international, national, and local key-note speakers and was very well received by the delegates. Highlights of the conference are featured in this report.



▲ Delegates listening to a presentation at the Creating Compassionate Communities Conference 2022

Advocacy

Phoenix has continued our advocacy work with the support of the WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS) and is delighted to take on a secretariat role over the next financial year supporting the 11 service providers delivering Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services (CSATS) and Indigenous Healing Services (IHS) across the State.

One-Off Funding

This Secretariat initiative has been supported by the WA Department of Communities for 2023-2024 and Phoenix will have a role in supporting the CSATS and IHS providers with holding two roundtables prior to 30 June 2024. Plans also include the development of a Service Directory, tailored Newsletters, and the delivery of a Sector Event to launch of the National Minimum Practice Standards for responding to child sexual abuse.

Phoenix Trauma Transformation

Due to some additional one-off funding brokered by the WA Department of Communities, Phoenix has been able once again to deliver our innovative Trauma Transformation program. This is a holistic psycho-educational program supporting survivors of child sexual abuse. Having developed the concepts for this program I was delighted to co-facilitate along with former Phoenix Senior Counsellor Coby Greer. More information is provided in this report.

Phoenix E-Services

The E-Services offered by Phoenix have really taken off and include online delivery of training, Trauma Sensitive Yoga and of course our counselling services. The flexibility offered by E-Services has proved to be very popular with Phoenix clients who appreciate working from the safety of their own home or familiar



▲ Jay Bradley, Marc Spradbury, Claudia Da Silva, Kaye Doolan, Sally Woods, Baljit Carroll

environments and has addressed challenges such as less time off work, assisting with childcare or carer responsibilities, eliminating fuel expenses and lost travel time, and has offered greater access for those with mobility issues. Phoenix has also refined its Information Technology systems to accommodate this preferred mode of service delivery.

THE PHOENIX TEAM

The success of a very small organisation relies on a team of individuals willing to take on extra tasks and duties beyond the usual to ensure the service runs professionally and efficiently. Examples of this include packing boxes for moving, cleaning up after events, and offering flexibility around availability. Phoenix is very fortunate to have a team of professionals that are committed to the organisation and the clients. This commitment is evident in the feedback we receive from the people we serve, and I am proud to lead such a dedicated team.

Each year Phoenix holds an annual staff activity for team building and self-care and is Phoenix’s way of showing appreciation for the team’s efforts throughout the year. At the end of 2022 the team spent the day together beginning with a game of mini golf followed by a relaxing lunch in the lovely surrounds of the Swan Valley. We also take the opportunity to meet a few times throughout the year for Planning sessions and sharing lunch together.

SECTOR NETWORKING

Phoenix’s representation on several committees and Advisory Groups has allowed the organisation to establish strong and valued networks within the sector both at the local, State, and National levels. In early 2022 Phoenix attended the annual WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS) Sector Breakfast along with other members and WA Government Cabinet Ministers. This event offers a great networking opportunity and is one that the sector keenly looks forward to and one that is always a sellout.



2023 brought the appointment of **Hon. Sabine Winton MLA** as Minister for Early Childhood Education; Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; and Community Services. Phoenix welcomes the Minister and wishes her all the best with these important responsibilities.



Phoenix also wishes to thank **Hon. Simone McGurk MLA** for her commitment to the community services sector and the challenges of similar portfolios when she was Minister, while also acknowledging her contribution to the WA Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy.

REPRESENTING PHOENIX

As CEO I am delighted to represent Phoenix on the committees listed below.

- WACOSS Children’s Policy Advisory Council (CPAC)
- Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing - Sexual Violence Expert Advisory Group (SVEAG)



▲ National Strategy Advisory Group Meeting held in Canberra in June 2023

- Advisory Group for the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse
- Reference Group for the WA Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy

Being involved in these committees offers many opportunities for advocacy, collaboration, and growing collegial networks.

PHOENIX GOVERNANCE

Phoenix has been very fortunate to have stable membership within the Board, and under their skilled, dedicated, and consistent leadership continuous improvement of the organisation’s governance processes and practice has been facilitated and achieved.

The Phoenix staff and I are most grateful for the commitment and volunteer time given by the **Phoenix Board members**, and we appreciate that the Board encourages and supports all our endeavours. Phoenix Accountant Marc Spradbury and I value the support and financial guidance provided by Treasurer Amit Kabra.

Special thanks go to Phoenix Chair Julie Woodhouse and Deputy Chair/Secretary Leanne Sultan for their long-term leadership, efficient and effective management of Board meetings, and the ongoing value adding support they offer to me in my role as CEO and to the organisation.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

As you will gather from various aspects of this annual report Phoenix has many initiatives under way and more planned for 2024. The highlight for next year will be celebrating 40 years since the organisation was formally incorporated in 1984.

This year’s Annual Report once again is committed to “Supporting Survivor Stories” and we are delighted to showcase some of the poetry, writings and artwork of some of Phoenix’s creative clients. It is the bravery and resilience of the clients we work with that inspire and motivate the Phoenix team to provide the best service we can within the current constraints of the funding context.

As a very small part-time service we find comfort and pride in knowing that we always “Punch above our weight!”

OUR RANGE OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

Phoenix Shining A Light On Child
Sexual Abuse Healing & Recovery

Trauma Transformation Program

In May and June 2023 Phoenix held our Trauma Transformation Program, a holistic, psychoeducational mind-body awareness program specifically developed by Phoenix for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

A group of courageous Phoenix clients attended the sessions for four hours over six consecutive weeks. The Program was facilitated by Trauma Counsellor Coby Greer, and Phoenix CEO, Louise Lamont. Group sessions included information on how trauma impacts the brain, the nervous system, and the ability to self-regulate.

In addition, the program included:

- Mindfulness and Meditation practice;
- Trauma Sensitive Yoga;
- Additional Self-Regulation activities; and
- Nutrition information on the mind-gut connection.

Phoenix is delighted that the women will continue meeting regularly via their own informal peer support network they have named the "Trauma Transformation Warriors".

Their reflections on the program included:

"Human connection is powerful, enriching and meaningful. I am forever grateful for the 6 weeks you have given me to be able to connect with other "WARRIORS". One of the best experiences of my LIFE. You two ladies are our healing warriors".

"Dear Coby and Louise, These past weeks have been a gift. A gift in community, acceptance, knowledge, and curiosity. You have been amazing and empowering. Even though we have driven the cart off the tracks sometimes, you always brought us back. This time will always be appreciated."

"I felt I wasn't judged and could be myself and allow myself to speak freely about the impact of my trauma with people who understood the perspective, not gaslight or reduce it, it made me feel a sense of belonging."

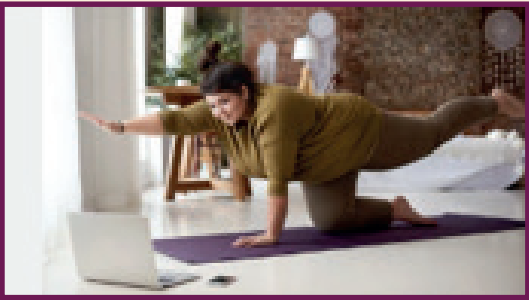
"So meaningful, something I have been eagerly waiting for. From Day 1 a non-judgemental environment. I felt accepted, I felt that I belong, and I felt I mattered."

"It was helpful being with others who have experienced childhood trauma and learning from them and being understood and seen for who I am."



LOUISE LAMONT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Trauma Sensitive Yoga Program



Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga is an evidence-based modality of yoga specifically developed for survivors of trauma. Current research indicates that trauma experiences can be held in the body and then be experienced as tension, anxiety, depression, pain, dissociation etc. This type of yoga helps the survivor to reconnect with their body in a safe way and facilitate a gentle release of some of the trauma held. This can reduce the trauma symptoms and improve wellbeing.

The Phoenix Trauma Sensitive Yoga program offered is for adult survivors of complex trauma resulting from being subjected to sexual abuse in childhood, with the aim of further assisting their healing and recovery journey. The program was delivered over 6 weeks as an online virtual course once a week for one hour and was facilitated by a qualified yoga instructor and counsellor (Coby Greer) who is accredited via the Trauma Centre (based in the US) in the specialised area of Trauma Sensitive Yoga.

Participants were current or former clients of Phoenix Support and Advocacy Service, and all had received counselling support from Phoenix and were assessed as ready to participate in a Trauma Sensitive Yoga program. Participants all had a safety plan in place should they need additional support during or following their participation.

At the end of the program participants were sent a link to an online survey. The outcomes of the program were considered very positive. **100% of respondents who attended the Trauma Sensitive Yoga program stated they felt welcomed, safe, & respected.**

Quotes

Well run, professional, safe, respectful, and catered to all levels of fitness and ability. I love how it reinforced the work I am already doing with the Phoenix councillors, to make my own choices with my body and to notice what feelings that may arise.

Thank you for allowing me to attend. I really liked giving it a go without judgement. Coby was a wonderful facilitator. A quiet and calm voice with lots of encouragement and opportunities for choice. I liked that Coby gave suggestions on doing yoga from a standing position, seated, lying down, etc to cater for everyone.

Just a big "Thank You" - it is really appreciated. And also to Marc who has given us so many Sundays - to make sure it all works.

The Phoenix Staff, Board, and Yoga participants, wish to thank the **Zonta Club** Northern Suburbs members and the **Fremantle Foundation** donor for providing funds to make this opportunity possible.



COBY GREER
ACCREDITED TRAUMA CENTRE
SENSITIVE YOGA FACILITATOR



"Not Seen Not Heard"

Child sexual abuse is an abhorrent trauma to suffer and so it is understandable mental health treatment services concentrate efforts to distance and desensitize the traumatic events but what many Phoenix clients are reporting and backed by neurological research is that attachment wounds are the more determinant factor of dissociation and emotional dysregulation. Specifically, when a main care giver is neglectful of their child's emotional needs, so they repeatedly fail to be attuned, give warm affection, encourage, or soothe their child. The child then feels and believes themselves to be worthless.

When a client is struggling to regulate their emotions and be in touch with their body, they first need help to learn to be able to be present and to trust that it is safe to feel. Paulsen has a technique of resetting a clients affect circuitry to ensure clients are in touch with and can regulate their emotions which is a requirement before safely moving further forward in therapy.

When a client can both feel and socially connect instead of being overwhelmed or dissociated, then the person is ready to process trauma, but which trauma to start with, Schmitt (2023) distinguishes between trauma wounds from unmet physical safety needs and attachment wounds from unmet emotional needs? Many of Phoenix clients have experienced both a repeated feeling of being physically unsafe and emotionally abandoned and find that it is not the physical wounds, but it is the broken attachment they find the most painful. Schmitt notes we know desensitization is an effective trauma treatment, but we can't desensitize unmet needs, instead attachment wounds only heal when unmet emotional needs get seen and repaired.

When we ask our clients about their first memories of emotional abandonment/neglect many of them say

'I don't remember' and this is because of two main factors:

1. They are trying to recall explicit memory of who, when, where and what happened to them, but this is usually only recalled from age of 3years upwards.
2. When trauma occurs the brain goes into survival mode and puts its efforts into *flight, flight, freeze, fawn, or flop* responses and so shuts off non-essential survival modes such as language/narrative of events but what does stay switched on is the bodily felt experience so the child is on alert to the threat happening again.

This bodily emotional felt sense is part of implicit memory and can be remembered from preverbal time in life. Katie O'Shea and Sandra Paulsen (2009) developed an Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR) Early Trauma Protocol (ETP) for when there are no words and goes back to the first trimester as some researchers (Shore 2009) are formulating that this can be the start of lifelong psychopathology.

As there is no explicit memory from the womb the ETP targets blocks of three-month time frames and asks the client to imagine what it may have been like for the foetus. Working with clients I have found they do not struggle to imagine this time but do worry about blaming their mother saying 'I know my mum was going through a tough time of... domestic violence...or drugs.... or had her own trauma to deal with.' Paulsen teaches us to tell clients that the ETP is not about you the adult, but this is the time for your inner baby self to be seen and heard, giving her/him what s/he never had back in the womb. With this explanation clients seem to give themselves the permission to do this work.

In processing each 3-month time frame the client is asked to review what comes up for them and often they access painful emotional trauma which is given time to be released and then they are asked to imagine what they think baby needed and did not get at the time. Usually, it is a need to be seen and heard and very often they can bring their adult selves in to give their baby selves the loving attachment they have so longed for and needed.

It is important not to rush processing each time frame so that all the emotionally held memory is released and attachment needs are fully met. I have been privileged to witness clients experiencing their inner baby selves become integrated into their adult selves and have a body felt sense they are now seen, heard and safe and a healthy adaptive belief of self-worth begins to develop. To build on this loving adult/baby connection a poignant question Philip Mansfield asks of clients is 'what did baby do to deserve the love?' 'nothing' comes back the reply, and so clients start to have an assimilation of an embodied experience and belief that they are worthy regardless of what they do or don't do.

References:

O'Shea K. and Paulsen S. (2009) When There Are No Words EMDR for Early Trauma Neglect Held in Implicit Memory.

Mansfield P. (2010) Dyadic Resourcing: Creating a Foundation for Processing Trauma.

Schmitt S. J. (2023) Preparing Dysregulated Dissociative Attachment Wounded Clients for EMDR -Presented at EMDRAA Conference Melbourne Australia.

Shore, A.N. (2009) Right brain regulation: An essential mechanism of development, trauma, dissociation, and psychotherapy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the EMDR International Association August Atlanta, GA.

 **SALLY WOODS**
SENIOR COUNSELLOR
EMDR PRACTITIONER



Sally is awesome. Very professional. It was the strong reputation of your service which led me to contact you as a first point after ceasing therapy with my psychologist. I think you met my expectations during the assessment.

Phoenix Client

A huge thank you to Baljit for being such a lovely, understanding, and knowledgeable counsellor.

Phoenix Client

I have to say that the service provided by the reception staff was amazing, and in itself healing. Thank you Marc.

Phoenix Client



Reflections about a letter to an inner child *“A powerful counselling intervention to understand parts of self.”*

The concept of writing a letter to your inner child as a therapeutic intervention comes from various therapeutic approaches, including inner child work and parts work. These approaches are often used in psychodynamic, Emotion-Focused Psychotherapy, psychodrama, and trauma-focused therapies. The idea is to address and heal past wounds, traumas, and unmet needs by connecting with younger aspects of oneself that may have been hurt or neglected. Below is a reflective process from an inner child and parts work.

CASE STUDY: LETTER TO AN 'INNER CHILD' PART.

You were an unexpected arrival for your mother. She was in her forties, and the last thing she wanted was another child. Life was not easy, and her husband was absent. She longed for her family and her homeland, leaving no time for the responsibilities of raising a child. Your mother concealed your existence under oversized t-shirts, fearful of judgment from others. She was worried about being perceived as a sinful woman for conceiving a child in her forties.

Even your siblings, who were twenty years older than you, were unaware of your impending arrival. They were taken by surprise when your mother went to the hospital to deliver you. How could Mama have a baby? Only your older sister knew and promised to care for you. Your mother was in survival mode, so many parts were playing in her mind. Angry about becoming pregnant (the 'fight' response). Fearful that others would judge her (the 'flight' response). Numbness when recalling her Mother's death when delivering your youngest brother (the 'freeze' response).

Despite the circumstances, you arrived as an act of defiance, weighing 5 kilograms, a healthy and robust

baby. You were the largest infant in the nursery, and your father couldn't have been prouder. He would excitedly exclaim, "She's mine! I did it!" Your childhood memories are scant, and the few that remain are traumatic recollections from difficult times. At a very young age, you struggled to sleep due to terrors and nightmares. Your 'flight' part was so activated, and you feared to sleep at night. A recurring dream featured a homeless man under your bed. One wonders whether you were inherently anxious from birth or inherited it from your anxious fearful mother. Can we also inherit our parent's parts? Your mother managed to comfort you until you fell back asleep. You would grasp her pinkie, the only means by which you could self-soothe. However, physical touch was challenging for your mother, and she would quickly find excuses to distance herself from the mother-daughter attachment. She always seemed occupied with cleaning, cooking, or other tasks. Her 'protective' part prevented her from getting too close to you, what if she also was to die like her mother? What about you? How would you feel? Better not get too close for everyone's sake.

The 'protector' parts attempt to shield the person from emotional pain and vulnerability. For instance, the 'flight' part within the mother seeks to avoid judgment, leading her to conceal the pregnancy. The 'angry' part of the mother could be seen as her way of defending herself against further emotional pain. Similarly, the 'angry child' part within the person may have developed to express unmet needs and seek attention. Your mother's expression of love was through food. She believed in the beauty of fullness and encouraged you to eat more. Cakes and bread rolls with tomato salad became cherished moments of connection between the two of you, perhaps influencing your affinity for food.

During kindergarten days, your mother appeared older than other mothers, causing you to feel ashamed and different. A friend even remarked, "Your Grandma is here waiting for you." Shame and guilt became early emotions in your life. Connecting with other children was a challenge, and you often played alone and submitted in this part, yearning for connection. Your mother never taught you how to care for yourself – hygiene, teeth brushing, or homework. You had to learn through observation and creativity. However, your mother was swift to shame you for mistakes, often doing so in front of others. It seemed she took pleasure in belittling you, perhaps viewing you as a disturbance to her peace, an 'angry' child seeking attention and love, this was the way your angry part was presented to society.

Your life took a different turn when you faced a sudden tumour in your head. Three unsuccessful surgeries later, a miraculous healer, Mrs. Aurora, ended your pain and suffering. She told you that your faith would save you, and indeed, your unwavering faith has been your saviour, it learns from the pain and sadness parts. I'm wondering what your body was holding, so much inflammation in your need for connection? According to Bessel Van der Kolk's theory, traumatic events can dysregulate the nervous system and lead to chronic activation of the body's stress response. This chronic activation can result in inflammation, which, over time, can contribute to various physical and psychological symptoms. The body's natural response to trauma, such as the need for connections, might indeed contribute to the inflammation and distress experienced by the child. Your mother, afflicted by mood swings, oscillated between anger and sadness, parts of her unresolved grief state. Family rumours hinted at instances where

she harshly disciplined you, even going so far as to slam your head against the door. This anger might have been compounded by your bedwetting habit until the age of ten, potentially testing your mother's patience. Her dissociation and difficulty functioning like an adult woman was clear.

Dissociation is a psychological defence mechanism that involves a disconnection or separation of certain thoughts, feelings, sensations, or memories from conscious awareness. It can occur as a response to overwhelming or traumatic experiences, serving as a way for the mind to protect itself from emotional pain. Your mother had varied reactions. Sometimes, she would resort to derogatory Italian terms she learned from her grandmother. On other occasions, she would encourage you to pray to the Virgin Mary. You prayed diligently, and your bedwetting eventually stopped. Labelled as an 'angry child', you wondered about the underlying reasons for your anger. Could it have been a plea for connection? Was your angry part fighting for connection? Your absent father worked tirelessly in two jobs to provide for the family. But you later discovered he also had another family. Yet, he stood apart – sensitive, caring, giving you simple gifts, foot massages, and fresh orange juice. He had a 'functional father' sweet part. Truthfully, it seemed your mother resented the attention you received from your father. He wasn't kind to her, and this would activate her angry part. Your mother spent her days cooking rice and beans, often crying in front of the oven. You observed her sorrow through the curtains, feeling that you could have been a better daughter, unaware of why she disliked you or why she was so sad. You internalized blame, feeling that your supposed 'anger' was the cause. You both had angry parts because you both could not have your needs met.



Your sister and her family had disappeared for about a year after that sad carnival where your brother-in-law tried to touch you inappropriately, and no one ever spoke of it again. Your family excelled at pretending, didn't they? After marriage, your mother revealed that your sister had almost committed suicide that day. She left a letter, but your mother changed the subject when you asked for details. You always felt you were in the wrong, inappropriate, or born into the wrong family. You used to fly from them, lock yourself in the bedroom and collapse with overwhelming feelings. When child sexual assault occurs, some families may avoid discussing it due to feelings of shame, fear or discomfort. This can leave the child feeling guilty and responsible for what happened to them. This silence and lack of acknowledgment can worsen the emotional impact on the child, making them feel isolated and unable to seek support.

It's essential for families to address these issues openly, provide emotional support, and seek professional help to assist the child to heal and overcome the trauma. My dear child, you longed for validation and love, just like any other child. I am sorry for what you endured. You are a good person, and I will be there for you, offering validation and ensuring you never feel alone again, I will integrate all your 'parts' and together we will find harmony and peace, now you are able to feel, to talk and to trust again! With heartfelt love, from your functional adult part.

The above letter illustrates how these different parts interact within the person's inner system. The child longs for nurturing and validation, while the mother part explains her struggles and limitations. The protector parts, like the flight and angry parts, are activated in response to perceived threats or unmet needs. These interactions can lead to internal conflicts and a difficulty

with attachment. From an Internal Family Systems perspective, the goal of therapy would be to facilitate communication and understanding among these parts. This process can lead to healing and integration. The person would work to unburden the protector parts and understand the roles they play. The mother part might be supported in acknowledging her own limitations while expressing love and care in more effective ways. The child part would be nurtured and healed, and both the child and mother parts could learn to collaborate for the person's well-being.

Claudia is able to provide the kind of support desperately needed by incest family members, support which, in my experience, most psychologists are incapable of.

Phoenix Client

 **CLAUDIA DA SILVA**
SENIOR COUNSELLOR



The Phoenix is an immortal bird that cyclically regenerates or is otherwise born again. While it's part of Greek mythology it has connections to other cultures such as Egyptian and Persian. Associated with the sun, the legend says a phoenix obtains a new life by rising from the ashes after dying in a shower of flames.



2022-2023 FINANCES



Financial Report Overview

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Phoenix recorded an audited operating deficit of \$12.9k for the financial year ending 2023 (2022 - surplus \$2.5K). Gross revenue included state funding, grants and sponsorships, conference revenue, training, and fee for service. State and grant funding represented 82% of total revenue (2022 - 96%), an encouraging reduction as the organisation continues to grow its fee-for-service business arm. Service delivery costs as a percentage of total revenue (87%) were at similar levels to the previous financial year.

Investment in information technology support has been maintained to improve workplace efficiencies in the organisation. On the balance sheet total assets increased by \$40k and total liabilities by \$52k from the previous financial year, resulting in the organisation's operating deficit of \$12k. All staff entitlements were accrued in full at year-end.

Overall, the financial position of the organisation is healthy with a solid foundation of accumulated reserves that will support the sustainability and viability of the organisation in an uncertain and unpredictable funding environment.

 **MARC SPRADBURY**
PHOENIX ACCOUNTANT



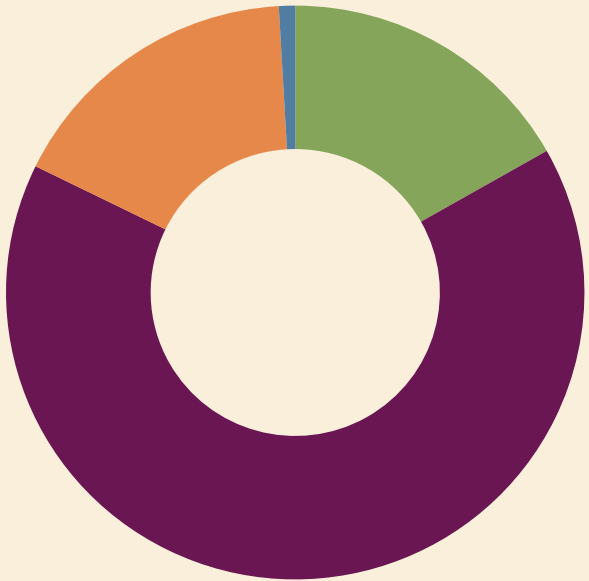
Service Delivery Funding provided by:



*Department of
Communities*

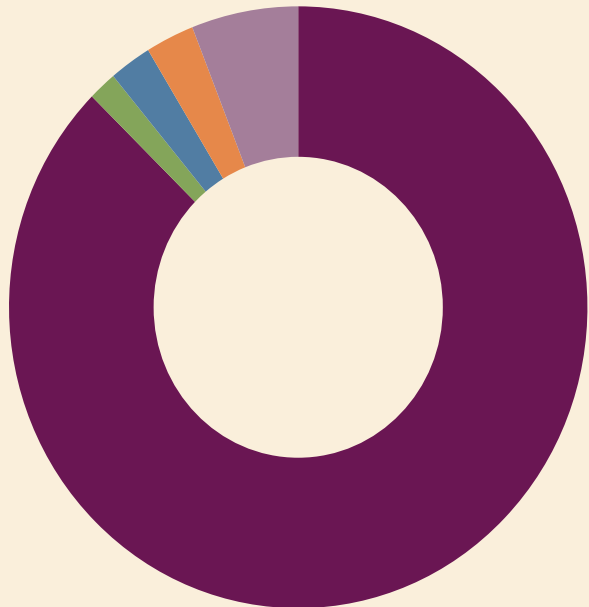
INCOME

- Fee for service 17%
- Funding 65%
- Grants & Sponsorships 17%
- Interest Earned 1%



EXPENDITURE

- Service Delivery 87%
- Insurance 2%
- Operating Costs 6%
- Depreciation 2%
- Information Technology 3%





OUR ADVOCACY

Our Advocacy

1. SUPPORTING THE WEST AUSTRALIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR RESPONDING TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Phoenix has received a one-off payment to undertake a 12-month Secretariat role to provide support to the 11 Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services (CSATS) and Indigenous Healing Services (IHS) across the State of WA along with coordinating activities that will enable the following:

1. Information and resource sharing amongst CSATS & IHS providers including in relation to initiatives commissioned under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse

Phoenix is a member of the National Strategy Advisory Group.

2. Advocacy and support for embedding quality requirements, including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and Minimum Practice Standards for Support Services Responding to Child Sexual Abuse.

Phoenix has contributed to the minimum standards and will host the launch of those standards at a Sector Event in September 2023. Phoenix is also represented on the WACOSS Children's Policy Advisory Council (CPAC). WACOSS has been resourced by the WA Department of Communities to provide sector support for the implementation of the National Principles.

3. Consideration of sector workforce development needs and agreement on the use of CSATS and IHS sector support brokerage funding held in trust by Uniting WA.

Phoenix will undertake a training needs analysis for the CSATS and IHS providers along with a survey to help guide the agenda for the two roundtables to be held in 2024.

4. Representation of issues related to child sexual abuse in policy and strategy development, for example, in the development of the WA Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy.

Phoenix is a member of the Reference Group for the WA Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy and has contributed to the development of the Strategy.

5. Promotion of contemporary best practice including via knowledge translation activities.

Phoenix brings experience in writing Best Practice, developing Screening and Assessment tools, along with Operational Frameworks for State and Federal Government.

6. Sourcing professional development opportunities for the contracted CSATS and IHS Providers.

Phoenix, through its training arm has links with relevant networks and training providers and some capacity to deliver training.

The Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services (CSATS) and Indigenous Healing Services (IHS) are provided in Western Australia by the following organisations.

- Allambee
- Anglicare WA
- Carnarvon Family Support Services
- Desert Blue Connect
- MacKillop Family Services
- Parkerville Child and Youth Care
- Phoenix Support and Advocacy Service
- Uniting WA
- Waratah Support Service
- Yaandina Community Services
- Yorgum Healing Services



2. ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE NATIONAL STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Phoenix's Chief Executive Officer Louise Lamont was appointed in 2022 to the Advisory Group for the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030. Since attending the inaugural meeting in June 2022, Louise has attended a further five meetings held in Brisbane, Adelaide, and Canberra, and with another two National Strategy Advisory Group meetings planned before the end of 2023.

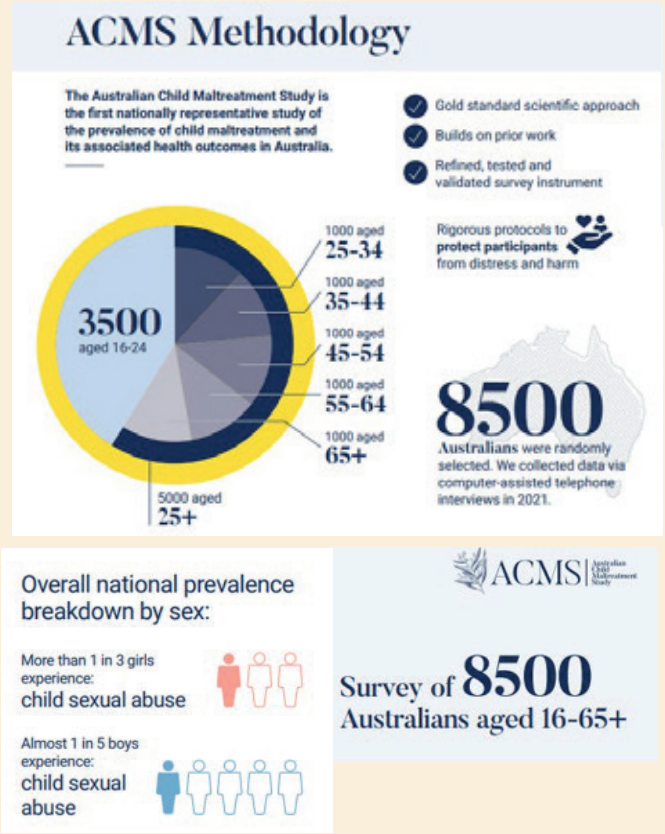
Members of the group were selected for their lived experience, and for having cared for, supported, or advocated for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. Louise feels privileged to join with the other 19 members who are incredibly insightful and experienced individuals from across the country and passionate about making Australia a safer place for all children and young people.

At the December 2022 meeting held in Canberra Louise and the other members had the privilege of meeting with the Federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus. The Attorney spent the afternoon with the Advisory Group and invited each member to highlight their three top priorities. The Group were impressed with the Attorney's genuine interest in our concerns and his commitment to addressing these. The Attorney plans to meet with the Advisory Group members again in December 2023 in Melbourne.



3. AUSTRALIAN CHILD MALTREATMENT STUDY (ACMS) ©

At the March 2023 meeting held in Adelaide the National Strategy Advisory Group members had the privilege of being presented with the findings of the Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study (ACMS) by the principal researcher Professor Ben Mathews. The findings were sobering and sadly indicated that Child Maltreatment currently in Australia is at epidemic levels. The information below from the study demonstrates the extent of the problem and the massive challenge facing Australia in terms of addressing these issues and their lifelong impacts. Phoenix bears witness to these impacts every day in our work with the victims and survivors that access our service.



Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) ©

What we measured

5 types of child maltreatment

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Exposure to domestic violence

4 mental health disorders

- Major depressive disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Generalised anxiety disorder
- Alcohol use disorder

Health risk behaviours

- Tobacco use
- Binge drinking
- Obesity
- Cannabis dependence
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempts

Across the Australian population (ages 16-65+) we found:

32.0%

experienced physical abuse

28.5%

experienced sexual abuse

30.9%

experienced emotional abuse

8.9%

experienced neglect

39.6%

experienced exposure to domestic violence

In childhood before the age of 18*

The findings are deeply sobering. Child maltreatment is widespread in Australia and associated with early and persistent harm.

The ACMS has found that Australians who experience maltreatment are substantially more likely to have

- mental health disorders
- health risk behaviours
- higher health service utilisation.

The findings from this study are critical to inform policy and practises to help prevent and reduce child maltreatment in Australia. The first wave of the ACMS was conducted by an international team of experts with extensive experience and different disciplinary expertise. The ACMS identified for the first time how many Australians in the general population experienced any of the five types of child abuse and neglect.

Prevalence of child sexual abuse

Overall national prevalence of child sexual abuse in Australia:

28.5%

Almost 1 in 4 experienced 1 or more types of: **contact child sexual abuse**

Almost 1 in 5 experienced: **non-contact child sexual abuse**

8.7% of Australians experienced: **forced sex in childhood (rape) 1 in 12**

Massive gender disparity

Full sample (aged 16-65+):
Girls experience **double** the rate of **child sexual abuse** than boys

37.3%

18.8%

Youth sample (aged 16-24):
Girls experience **2.4 times** the rate of **child sexual abuse**

35.2%

14.5%

Health Service Use

Child maltreatment is associated with a **significant increase** in health service use.

1.4x

more likely to have had an overnight hospital admission

2.4x

more likely to have been admitted for a mental disorder

2.7x

more likely to have consulted with a mental health nurse

2.4x

more likely to have 6 or more visits to a GP

2.4x

more likely to have seen a psychologist

3.0x

more likely to have seen a psychiatrist

Health risk behaviours

People who have experienced child maltreatment are:

6.2x

more likely to be cannabis dependent

4.6x

more likely to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months

1.9x

more likely to be a current smoker

3.9x

more likely to have self-harmed in the past 12 months

1.3x

more likely to binge drink at least weekly

1.2x

more likely to have obesity

These increased odds account for other explanatory factors



SUPPORTING SURVIVOR STORIES



Seen Not Silenced

To the House on the Hill

BY BRIDDIE W ©

Sometimes I am big
Sometimes I am small
Sometimes I am nothing,
Nothing at all.

This World it is big
My world it is small
How can I get out there
When I'm chained to the floor?

Yes, you can do it
Reach for the stars
Yes, I can see them
But I'm behind bars.

Excluded from work
Excluded from play
I have very little
And still, I must pay.

I fight for my freedom
I battle each day
Then told I'm too angry
And still, I must stay.

You stand on my head
And call me nasty names
How can you say
This is all just a game.

So much for fairness
The game it is rigged
I've paid a high price
For the things that you did.

Life isn't easy
Of that I am sure
But how can I get through
If you won't open the door.

I don't have the keys
I stare at the lock
It really does feel
Like you don't give a fuck.

Children are precious
But are thrown in the bin
And yet you still blame them
What a terrible sin.

Locked up and beaten
By a system so huge
Say it's Me who must change
While I polish your shoes

Yes Sir, no Sir
3 bags full
Why do you treat me
Like a stupid fool?

You push and you poke
From your house on the hill
Demanding austerity
While you get fatter still.

'You can do better'
Say the rich to the poor
'I'd love to' I say
'If you open the door.'

The Cost of Surviving

"I survived 25 years of abuse,
But I wish I didn't,
My body struggles with years of misuse,
Living is non-existent.

Surviving isn't living,
A mind that is a prison,
With a child or teenager driving,
An adult, empty and broken.

Desperate to be freed,
A lifetime of suffering in silence,
My scars bleed,
But somehow determined to make a difference.

A little girl's soul shattered,
A developing brain that was wired wrongly,
Continually emotionally triggered,
Leaving me forever lonely.

Suffocating from unstable emotions,
Darkness dominates my life,
A life filled with negative perceptions,
And failing to end it all with a knife.

Burdened by a series of trauma's,
Re victimised in teens and adulthood,
Battling through life with mental health disorders,
Pain and darkness that is not understood.

Dissociation protects me,
Anger gives me power to fight,
Depression and anxiety paralyses me,
But in spite of this, I fight hard for the light.

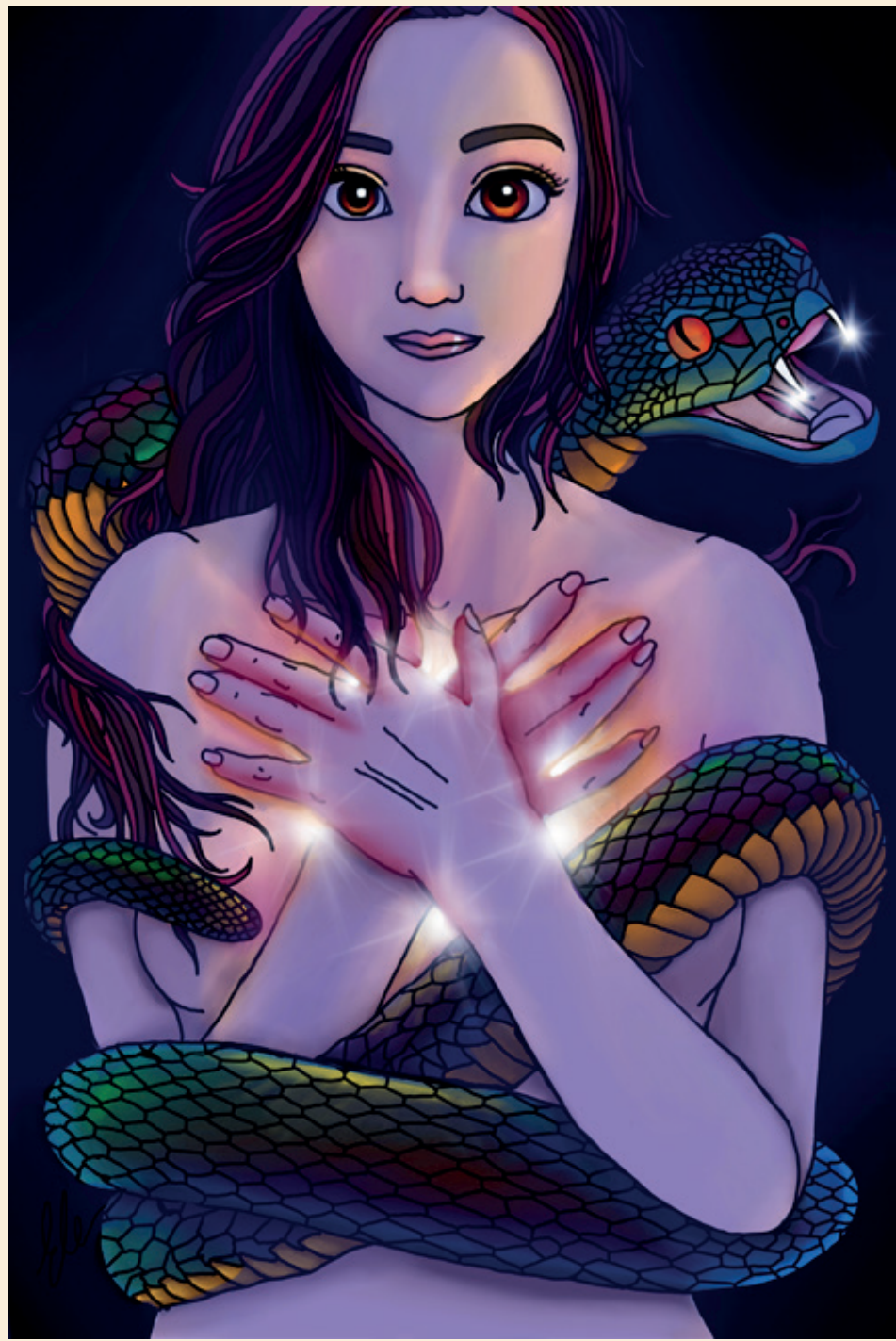
Battling and suffering through daily life and daily tasks,
Tormented by guilt and shame that runs through my veins,
That no ordinary person can grasp,
Ultimately challenging my parts to not see my life go up in flames.

BY Lisa. H ©
FROM HER BOOK IN THE MAKING,
"FOREVER IN DARKNESS"



Seen Not Silenced

EMMA E'S ARTWORK ©



Five Years Ago

BY BRIDDIE W ©

Five years Ago, things might have been different from what they are today.
Encouraged to look forward and look back to see how far I have come.
Its all well and good to try and measure the improvements in my life but there is a time when the "bell curve" is obviously traveling down.
5 years ago, I was at the beginning of a relationship that has since finished.
5 years ago, I didn't have a prison record.
5 years ago, I had more pets, some have died, one I had to re-home because I didn't have the energy or finances to look after her properly.
5 years ago, my mortgage payments were less than they are now
5 years ago, the cost of living was lower than today.
5 years ago, I had less grey hair
5 years ago, I had better teeth
5 years ago, I spent most of my spare cash on illicit drugs, now I spend it on prescription drugs.
5 years ago, I had been unemployed for 5 yrs, now I have been unemployed for 10 yrs
5 years ago, I had one hearing aid, now I have two
5 years ago, all my friends where drug addicts, now I have fk all friends
5 years ago, I had a much better car.
5 years ago, I had a personality disorder, now I have 32 different personalities.
5 years ago, I still owned all my jewellery
5 years ago, I wasn't under pressure to sell my home
5 years ago, I wasn't so lonely
5 years ago, I wasn't in therapy
5 years ago, I was delusional enough to think I was ok
5 years ago, some of my dreams seemed achievable
5 years ago, somebody loved me, even if it was only skin deep

5 years ago, I thought my mother was toxic, now I know she is EVIL
5 years ago, I disassociated a lot, now reality sucks
5 years ago, I was collecting treasures. Now I need to dispose of 80% of my stuff.
5 years ago, I thought I was a fine wine, improving with age. Now my life tastes like vinegar.
5 years later, I'm not getting any younger, any richer, any healthier
5 years later, life is not any easier
5 years later discrimination is still rampant
5 years later my conditions still exist
5 years later my kids are still dead
5 years later, no matter how much I try to reframe, re-invent, re-phrase, my life has been pretty much appalling.
It doesn't really matter how much you polish a turd it's still shit.
I'm tired of minimising how crap my life has been.
I'm tired of sounding like I'm whingeing about my lot by simply speaking the truth
I'm tired of fabricating stories to make other people feel comfortable
I'm encouraged to be authentic but therapy wants me to use my imagination.
Too loud, I must settle down, too quiet, I need to open up and speak of things that hurt Me.
I need some honesty from professionals that can't help me.
If I was a car, lets be honest I'd be a write off. A lemon from the very start, that's why the system won't invest in a car that will never start and would be happier if I passed.
5 years from now I will be in a different house, this much I am sure
5 years from now I will be 5 years closer to the exit door.



So Far From "Normal"

BY BRIDDIE W ©

I'm so far from "normal",
I dream of things I will never have
Happy family dinners
Long gone. It's very sad.

No parents to support Me
No children here to love
Even friends are wary
Of letting me into their lives.

I'm classified as toxic
I cannot hide my pain
No matter how much I modify
I'm left alone again

I work so hard to recognise
The nasty things I do
I keep turning up for therapy
But still my world is blue.

I have a brain disorder
I medicate to keep the peace
I do everything I can
To try and find relief.

See me walking down the street
My disability is hidden
But as soon as I open up my mouth
You can tell I'm damage ridden

No hope of being "normal"
No matter how hard I try

The ache of things I'll never have
Makes me break down and cry

How do I learn to accept
The life that I've been given
When all the World looks at me
As if I am a demon.

It's not my fault what happened to me
The legacy is harsh
I try to be kind to myself
But my happiness never lasts

I am so far from "normal"
I try so hard to fit in
Perhaps the World could give me grace
If they only knew where I have been

When I share my trauma
Folks are horrified
I'm supposed to keep that stuff to myself
The shame I'm supposed to hide.

I'm sorry that I scare you
I leave to keep you safe
I walk alone, no hand to hold
While tears roll down my face

I am so far from "normal"
Why is it so hard to understand
That because I'm different
I still need a helping hand

Seen Not Silenced

ASHLEE H'S ARTWORK ©



Psychiatric Alphabet

BY BRIDDIE W ©

I'd like to tell a little ditty, about the latest community
That wants to share the alphabet with the LGBTIQ unity
We are the psychiatric set the World would prefer to forget
For we often reflect the trauma that haunts their realities.
There is a neurotic in so many families.

We all have a story of how we grew up. The people, the places, the schools
Behind closed doors, for better or worse, our dreams and fears all home grown.
Now rather than gender or sexuality the alphabet I quote is PD,
Personality Disorders of which there is a few.

Let's start with the classic ABC
Cluster A includes the paranoid, the schizoid. You know, the full-on tripper.
The media would have you believe, I am the Yorkshire Ripper.
Cluster B are the bad asses, the ones that lose their shit.
The anti-social, the angry, the drama filled bitch.
BPD is the Borderline label.
If ya meet this girl, walk away while you're able.
Now im sure you've heard all about the narcissist.
No doubt they will tell you what they do best.
Cluster C's hide at home like rats in a trap
Relying on others to bring something back.
Co-dependency runs thick, still stuck with the fact
Its Me who must change, and that is that.

OCD lives closely here. Maybe if I cross my fingers and blink 3 times,
My fear might disappear.
Now all that is a lot. Ever wondered "What's the cause?"
Some of it's in your genes. Part of the tribe and blood you grew up with
The rest is forged from trauma, abuse I had to put up with.
It affects the actual brain structure. It's a child brain developmental picture.
These are the NDD's – neuro developmental disorders.
NT's are neuro-typicals with so-called 'normal' brains
ND's are neuro-divergent. The secret super hero's, but still you are suspicious.
Next we introduce ADHD's, are you concentrating guys?
And the AS, Aspies, do you like the black and white?
Who are now with the ASD, Autism spectrum.
Not so bad you might think, that is unless you have them.
So what does all this BS mean? It means I'm quirky and funny.
I'm sensitive and smart. But I've lived with C.PTSD right from the very start.
The trauma, I'm told, is what makes me so. The horrors I lived as a kid.
I've travelled the waves of the latest craze of the dissociative spectrum.
Now at the far end with 10/10 is what they call Dissociative Identity Disorder.

In old school terms its still quite rare, Multiple Personality
Jekyl and Hyde? I'll let you decide.
But I think you will see more than 5 "parts" of Me that are on regular display.
All cogs in the wheel, all the emotions I feel when I think of the alphabet that describes Me.
Now the NT's (God bless their hearts) might think I'm having a whinge for attention
While my ND mates all carry the weight of always trying to fit in.
To mask, to mould, to mimic. Trying to follow the order.
I might be very different but I am NOT the disorder.
I am a person with feelings. I am flesh and bone.
My heart it can be broken by your alphabet stones.
Personality disorders are as common as muck.
None of us perfect, we all get stuck.
So, if going shopping puts your head in a spin and the parking lot makes you break out in ptsd sweat.
Or if you're OCD about watching TV in you're favourite PJs with sox on you're feet,
Don't let you're GAD stop your L I F E from being useful and constructive.
Go see a T (that's a therapist) and get a check-up on those cluster ABC's
The work you do is worth it. To find you are actually a person
And not a shitty alphabet.

I was allowed to do it at my own pace, and I only had to come in when I felt it would help me. I could stop coming at any time and there was no guilt trip. My recovery has been a bit piecemeal - but I think that's a normal way of interacting with services when you are used to feeling scared and judged and like a freak. My recovery has also taken a long time - but again, I could only do it when I felt strong enough. I was scared, shy, and terribly untrusting, and it took time for me to learn how to trust services and people in them. But I think persisting in the journey has been important.

Phoenix Client

Once I accessed a specialised service, they were very professional and created a safe space to work through my trauma.

Phoenix Client





Phoenix has been good because I've felt like I could speak about things for the first time without judgement or discomfort from the therapist.

Phoenix Client

I finally found an amazing counsellor.

Phoenix Client

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There is no quick fix.

Phoenix Client



Highlights from 2022 - 2023



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