



National Centre of Excellence  
for Complex Trauma

# Breaking Free



## Welcome to the November/December edition of Breaking Free

Welcome to the November/December combined edition of Breaking Free. As we head into the holiday season, it can be an intense and challenging time. For survivors of complex trauma, this time of year can be especially difficult. For some, when others go away, feels of isolation and loss can be difficult. For others, when their families get together, emotions can run high and interpersonal pressures can mount. It is important to remember that we all have a right to what we do and don't want to do over the holiday period. There are some useful self-care strategies on our website, covering areas such as self-soothing, grounding, and self-nurture techniques. Importantly if you feel that you need support, contact the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380 AEST. We will be open right through the holiday period as will the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468.

Many survivors seek support from a range of services and practitioners on their path to healing and recovery. But how do you find the right service provider - one that is trauma-informed, and what does that actually mean? In this edition of the newsletter we give some tips on how to search for and what to look for around trauma-informed support, counselling or services.

We also feature the final part of guest contributor Bec Moran's findings from her study which looks at lessons learned from the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission. Specifically, this article looks at Belief and Recognition. Bec writes "It was important for many survivors participating in the Commission to feel that the severity and pain of the impacts of child abuse was understood, and acknowledged that they had been telling the truth all along. These acknowledgements carried another message too: that the Australian Royal Commission recognised the wrongdoing of perpetrators and those who had helped to conceal abuse."

Until next time, if you have any comments about what you have read in this issue, contributions for the My Story section, or suggestions for future issues, please contact the editor at [newsletter@blueknot.org.au](mailto:newsletter@blueknot.org.au)

With warm regards,  
The Blue Knot Team.



## Finding a trauma-informed service, support or counsellor

Many of us are impacted by adverse events and experiences that occurred to us in childhood, adolescence or during other times in our life. These might include interpersonal emotional and psychological abuse, neglect from our caregivers or other people in our families and communities, sexual and physical abuse as well as exposure to family violence and the impacts of unsafe and inconsistent living environments. Sometimes, our caregivers and parents have their own trauma histories and they are still impacting them when they have children.

The effects of trauma often mean that these events and experiences impact us in the way we relate to others, see ourselves or feel safe in the world. They can have an ongoing impact on our health, wellbeing, relationships and connections with our communities.

There are many ways for people to heal and recover from these experiences. Many survivors turn to health professionals for trauma-informed counselling. Others find other pathways which can include a range of different

approaches including cultural practices, creative pursuits, yoga, mindfulness etc. Trauma-informed care has become somewhat of a buzzword with health professionals and service providers, but what does it mean?

### Understanding trauma

At its essence trauma-informed interventions and approaches entail always considering the possibility that anyone with whom you are interacting may have

experienced or be experiencing trauma/s. As we go through life, we experience many ups and downs which impact us along the way. Normal ups and downs of life create challenges for us all but are not the kinds of traumas that we are talking about. Sometimes people experience a single incident of trauma or a series of single incidents that are traumatic or challenging. We call these single incident traumas. We all have our own experiences and most of us have experienced some kind of trauma, over time. This can include bushfires, floods, accidents or single episodes of assault as an adult.

Complex trauma is different from this. This kind of trauma occurs with people in our lives over time and repeatedly. Many trauma survivors have not identified that what happened to them was abusive or indeed traumatic. Some will have 'forgotten' about their experiences or not made the connections between what happened to them and their current challenges. Many times, community views about trauma are that the events need to be significant and physical in nature. Many survivors of trauma may have experienced these kinds of traumas but others will have experienced psychological and emotional traumas as well as neglect, bullying and unsafe living environments. Emotional /psychological and environmental traumas also have significant impacts.

Complex trauma often leads to a sense of self blame and shame for the survivor, and a belief that there is something wrong with them rather than an understanding that something unbearable happened to them. Many survivors have not realised how these relationships and situations impacted them as they were growing up.

While people survive these adverse experiences as best they can, experiences of trauma threaten a person's basic sense of safety and are often a fundamental abuse of power and betrayal of trust. The sheer power of surviving needs to be acknowledged and honoured. While many survivors display remarkable resilience and their strengths, and coping strategies need to be celebrated, trauma, especially when repeated, and experienced in childhood can leave the person struggling with significant impacts. Much of what has traditionally been called symptoms are coping strategies and impacts. A trauma-informed perspective understands people's struggles with shame, self-blame, low self-esteem, difficult relationships, every day activities, health and well-being in the context of what happened to the person. And looks past the difficult and challenging behaviours to their meaning for that person.

### Being trauma-informed

Trauma-informed services, and those who work in them, are aware of how common trauma is, of the ways the body, mind and emotions respond to trauma, especially when it is repeated and the ways survivors cope. This includes an understanding of the body's physiological fight, flight, appease and freeze responses, triggers, and the challenges many survivors have with regulating strong emotions and managing their different in levels of arousal i.e. from being hyper-aroused (hypervigilant and easily started) to shut down and hypo-aroused. These services understand trauma, its dynamics and its effects and how best to work with people to help them feel safe, build trust and understand their own reactions.

Practitioners who are trauma-informed understand the importance of working with the whole person – with their body, mind and emotions supporting each person to identify and build on their internal resources (this means supporting them to build their own capacity to understand what is happening to them and increase their capacity to manage triggers and challenging situations as they occur), and to start to identify and access external supports, as much as possible. In so doing workers and practitioners can support survivors to better manage their emotions, identify and their manage triggers, and calm their nervous system to allow them to think, process and respond rather than react.

When workers, practitioners and services are trauma-informed they support survivors in a way which seeks to not retraumatise them and which promotes healing, through a variety of strategies and approaches. Being trauma informed means adhering to 5 basic principles as well as attuning to the person being supported – this means attuning to all sorts of diversity and culture. The five core principles are safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

### How do you choose the service, support or counsellor for you?

We are all different and what helps one survivor might not suit another person. Many people do not wish to go to counselling or therapy and cannot either because they can't access it; it is not affordable; no one offers trauma-informed counselling in their area or the idea of counselling is not part of their culture. Many survivors have other needs – from housing support, assistance navigating Centrelink or finding a group, help with shopping or care in the home or finding culturally appropriate ways to heal and recover. Regardless of what support you need, it can make a big difference if the service, support worker or counsellor is trauma-informed. This is not always easy and often depends on where you live as to what is available.

### Here are a few things which might help you in your search.

- If I come to your service, what is it like? Is it in a place in which I will feel safe and comfortable.
- If access is challenging, does the service provide other ways of delivering their service, eg video conferencing, telephone, home visits?
- Do all the staff understand about trauma, including the people at the front desk?
- Is there a waiting list?
- What can and can't your service do?
- What are the spaces like? Can I have a choice as to where and when we meet?
- Who will see me? Will it be the same person as much as possible?
- Think about what you need to help you to feel safe, have choices and feel empowered and ask questions which help you see if those needs will be met? This can relate to different qualities in the practitioner and the way they work together with you.
- If you have needs that relate to your culture, does the service have workers from your culture or who understand these cultural needs and are culturally sensitive?
- Does it try to find out about your cultural needs?
- Does the service have a gender diverse approach?
- Does it welcome and attune to diversity?

### If you are looking for a trauma-informed counsellor

It can be very hard for anyone to choose a counsellor, therapist or service. It can be especially challenging if you were abused or traumatised as a child. It can feel confusing and time-consuming. It is a good idea to 'shop around' before you choose.

### The following advice might help you:

- If you are in touch with other survivors in your area, ask them for their suggestions.
- Speak to a counsellor on Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380, 9-5 Mon-Sun AEST.
- Prepare a list of questions eg. What is his/her experience in working with survivors?
- Be clear about what you need and want from a therapist.
- What approach(es) does he/she use?
- How much will it cost? Is there a concessional rate? What are payment options?
- How available is he/she?
- What happens in a session? How long are they?
- What happens if I need to cancel a session?
- Can I make contact between sessions? What happens when you take holidays?
- What happens when we finish therapy? Could I come back again? Will I be part of the decision-making process?

- Beware of therapists who stress a particular approach or technique, or who are dogmatic about issues such as forgiveness, confrontation, etc.
- Beware of therapists who give hugs, shake hands too readily, or sit too close without invitation, who seem like they will be your friends or who suggest informal meetings.
- If you do feel uncomfortable when interviewing a therapist, trust your instincts.
- Beware if your therapist seems overly interested in your sexual history and questions you in detail, especially when the questioning appears irrelevant.
- Be aware of therapists who talk about their own abuse history - the sessions should be about you not about the therapist
- Beware if your therapist avoids sensitive issues and talks in generalities. Is your therapist able to handle the feelings and content that you bring to therapy?

### Ask yourself the following:

- Do I feel intimidated by this therapist?
- Does he/she listen to me?
- Do I believe that I can disagree with him/her?

The therapist you choose should be a good listener. They should be empathetic and non-judgmental. Your therapist needs to be a trusted partner in your process.

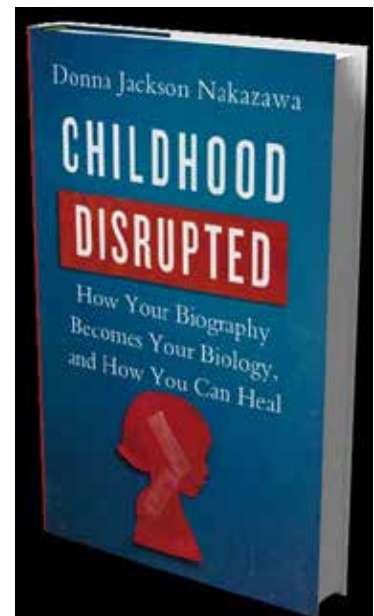
It is also important for your therapist or counsellor to seek your feedback in a genuine way. All relationships can experience ruptures from time to time. It is important for you to be able to share with the therapist situations that haven't gone well for you or that you are anxious or concerned about. This is part of relationship building and important in the work. A good therapist will welcome your feedback without being defensive.

You may wish to call Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380 to speak to one of our counsellors. The counsellor can explore your needs and access Blue Knot's referral database to identify therapists and agencies in your area, who are experienced in working with adult survivors.

# Book Recommendation

## Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal:

Donna Jackson Nakazawa:



The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study is a groundbreaking longitudinal study which has studied the impacts of 10 different categories of childhood trauma on health, everyday functioning and wellbeing. Award-winning health journalist Donna Jackson Nakazawa has reviewed this research, interviewed people with lived experience of ACE's and scientists to help improve outcomes for people affected. The book includes stories of people who not only have identified the relationship between what happened to them in childhood but have overcome their adverse experiences to live healthy constructive lives.

Not only does Childhood Disrupted show how childhood trauma can affect our very biology and so our health, but it also explains how to cope and heal from these emotional traumas.

The following reviews tell it all:

"A truly important gift of understanding—illuminates the heartbreaking costs of childhood trauma and like good medicine offers the promising science of healing and prevention." Author: Jack Kornfield, PhD, author of *A Path With Heart*

"This groundbreaking book connects the dots between early life trauma and the physical and mental suffering so many live with as adults. Author Donna Jackson Nakazawa fully engages us with fascinating, clearly written science and moving stories from her own and others' struggles with life-changing illness. Childhood Disrupted offers a blend of fresh insight into the impact of trauma and invaluable guidance in turning toward healing!" Author: Tara Brach, Ph.D. Author of *Radical Acceptance* and *True Refuge*

"Long overdue . . . Childhood Disrupted is a courageous, compassionate and rigorous every-persons guide through the common roots and enduring impact of childhood trauma in each of our lives. Linking breakthrough science with our everyday lived experience, Childhood Disrupted inescapably and artfully leads the reader to take practical steps and grasp the urgency of coming to terms with and taking a stand to heal the legacy of trauma in our personal and collective lives. This book reframes the common experience of childhood trauma through a lens of possibility for a life and society with an inexhaustible commitment to the safe, stable and nurturing relationships our health and healing require." Author: Christina Bethell, PhD, MBH, MPH Professor of Child Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

"If you want to know why you've been married three times. Or why you just can't stop smoking. Or why the ability to control your drinking is slipping away from you. Or why you have so many physical problems that doctors just can't seem to help you with. Or why you feel as if there's no joy in your life even though you're 'successful' . . . Read Childhood Disrupted, and you'll learn that the problems you've been grappling with in your adult life have their roots in childhood events that you probably didn't even consider had any bearing on what you're dealing with now. Donna Jackson Nakazawa does a thorough and outstanding investigation of exactly how your childhood made you ill and/or joyless, and how you can heal." Author: Jane Stevens, editor, ACEsConnection.com



# Survivor Workshops

This full-day educational workshop, informed by current research, provides a safe space for people who have experienced abuse or trauma in childhood, to learn more about abuse and other traumas and how trauma experiences can affect people, at the time of the trauma, and afterwards.

It will raise awareness about survivors' strengths and resilience, the role of coping strategies, how the brain responds to stress, and, most importantly, research which shows that recovery is possible.

**There are still places available for Survivor Workshops in the following cities:**

Launceston	14 March 2020
Darwin	20 June 2020

Go to <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Survivors/Support-through-connection/survivor-workshops> to book or call (02) 8920 3611

Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide sessions are now full. Please email [training@blueknot.org.au](mailto:training@blueknot.org.au) if you would like to be added to the waitlist. Please email [training@blueknot.org.au](mailto:training@blueknot.org.au) if you would like to be added to the waitlist.



# My Story

## Reader Contribution

### Troubled Feelings – Joan Duranti

Feelings have always been troublesome for me  
Sometimes I feel I'm floundering & all at sea  
As in autumn leaves on branches & falling from a tree  
There are some who don't understand, what can I  
achieve?

Those feelings, bad feelings come from deep within  
I try to keep planting new seeds, a new life begin  
I squash the feelings down, put them in a bin  
"What more can I do or say?" Of the surface skim!

It's when difficult issues arise & pile on one another  
I ask myself who do I call on, my sister or my brother

Or curl up in bed and just pull up the doona cover  
I try to distract, is there another way to recover?

Its time to use my grounding tools feelings ever so strong  
Being troubled once again, where do I belong?  
Cold & winter's days when the sun hasn't shone  
Will there be a time where my inner & outer get along?

Writing once again in the hope my pain will ease  
What of my problems will they ever take leave?  
Opening of old wounds I still oft do grieve  
This to me isn't a story of what I call make-believe.



# SANE Australia National Survey

Our Turn to Speak is a national survey that seeks to understand the life experiences of people living with severe and complex mental health issues in Australia.

Our Turn to Speak will investigate the lived experiences – both positive and negative – of people affected by these issues. SANE Australia’s Anne Deveson Research Centre (ADRC), in partnership with the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences (MSPS) at the University of Melbourne is seeking 7,000 people aged 18 and over who have experienced complex mental health issues in the last 12 months.

In order to advocate for better support for people affected by complex mental health issues and to improve social outcomes, we are seeking a sample of 7,000 respondents who reflect Australia’s diverse population.

SANE’s ultimate goal is to make a real difference in the lives of people affected by complex mental health issues through support, research and advocacy.

We want to understand people’s experiences across a broad range of areas (“life domains”), including: housing, employment, education, healthcare, mental healthcare, finance and insurance, public spaces and recreation, mass media, social media, relationships, welfare and social services, community groups, justice and legal services, and religious and faith practices.

More than 690,000 Australians aged 18 and over live with complex mental health issues. Our Turn to Speak will explore if and how these issues impact the many and varied aspects of participants’ lives. The survey findings will then be used to inform SANE’s future advocacy efforts, as we work towards improved social outcomes and support for all Australian affected by these issues.

Following a short (approximately 5 minutes) eligibility screening process, participants will be asked to complete the survey. The survey will take about 30 minutes and can be completed online right now, or over the phone. Participants can take the survey over the phone from Monday, 11 November 2019, between 9am–8pm (AEDT), Monday–Friday.

All responses will be kept confidential, and participants may be offered a \$25 electronic gift card as reimbursement for their time.

Participants must be aged 18 years or over, and must have experienced severe and complex mental health issues in the last 12 months. To see if you or someone you know is eligible to participate, take a look at the website:

**[ourturntospeak.com.au](http://ourturntospeak.com.au)**



# A Safe Place to Tell: Part 3

## Belief and Recognition

### Lessons from the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission

Rebecca J Moran, PhD Candidate, University of New South Wales School of Social Sciences

*To protect their privacy and anonymity, all of the survivors whose words are provided below have been given a pseudonym.*

This is the third and final article in the series published in *Breaking Free* drawn from the PhD of Bec Moran into lessons from the Australian child abuse Royal Commission

In interviews conducted with 26 adult survivors of child sexual abuse, participants described a variety of reasons for engaging with the Australian Royal Commission. Many participants identified that they saw the Commission as a place where they could not only tell someone about their experiences of abuse, but also about its impacts. This is in contrast to criminal justice and civil law processes which tend to focus on the details of the abuse with little space for survivors to discuss the impact of abuse within their lives. That's because these processes are intended to either prove or disprove that abuse occurred. In this case the survivor becomes simply a witness, required to provide a coherent and credible account of what happened.

The Australian Royal Commission had status and authority. This supported participants' sense that they were contributing meaningfully to a collective historical record. Some of these contributions were made in private sessions in which survivors told their story to one or more Commissioners. The Commissioners' wealth of life experience carried an aura of importance and being well informed, and many participants reported that Commissioners formed authentic connections with them during private sessions in ways that amplified the healing impacts of being heard and believed.

Jake describes the powerful impact of being able to tell his story in a setting which was formal and conveyed a sense of seriousness, yet still remained somehow human and warm, for him.

*They asked genuinely caring questions around, "Okay, well, you said this but is there more to it than that?" And then there was a lot of, "You seem like a smart lad you know. Have you observed anything? Learnt anything? Is there anything you would like to do differently?" And they listened to all of that with great genuine interest and care.*

*And that was no different in the final interaction which was my private session.*

*And I have said to Commissioners, I have said to Royal Commission lawyers that I have worked with, to federal police and State police that I have worked with through the Commission process. They (the Commissioners) have listened to thousands and thousands and thousands of horrendous stories and how they have kept their compassion through all of that and their sincerity and their genuine care and interest. It was just a thing to behold because I can't understand how they did it. And it really was that breathtaking. As a survivor it was that breathtaking.*

Jake also commented on the relief he felt from being believed, and from feeling that the Commission recognised how difficult the impacts of abuse had been for him.

In contrast, Bettina felt attacked, disbelieved, and as if she didn't matter. After a very positive experience in her private session, Bettina agreed to participate in a public hearing, in which an interrogative and aggressive approach resulted in a frightening, humiliating experience. Despite the best of intentions, for Bettina, the Australian Royal Commission was yet another traumatic attempt for her to tell, which compounded the negative impacts of her abuse.

*That was extreme trauma that day (having personal letters exposed in the public hearing). They just kept letting this guy go on and on and talking as if I was liar, and that I'd said things that were untrue. And then you had the Counsel Assisting the Commission saying, "Oh what do we do here? We've got a prior inconsistent statement." And I'm thinking, 'no you haven't.' And it was like the Commission had decided that I'd lied. And I ended up standing up. I mean, my hands were wringing like ... twisting ... my hands were twisting and I'd been obviously distressed earlier, embracing my eldest son, and it was horrible for him too to see that done to me. And the other survivor witnesses were sitting beside and behind me, and they all saw. And they were all horrified... It was really horrendously distressing and the commissioners had watched it go on...*

And when they rang me on that day and were talking to me, they said, "We heard how institutions attack witnesses, but we've never seen it happening before our eyes." And I thought 'Well, it wasn't just before your eyes, you were in control of it. You could have stopped it at any time.' But they were so bound up in their normal legalistic protocol, that, although they were supposedly there to ... we were there to... for healing, and to assist them in their work. Actually, we were treated ... you know. I wasn't treated that way.

Bettina experienced debilitating trauma responses after her experience at the public hearing, and many months later was still struggling to cope with the impacts.

*I was spending most of my time lying on the floor with my phone and computer within reach and a bottle of water. And I couldn't tell them what I needed. That was what they were saying, "What do you need?" And I thought, "You've had all of this the evidence before you, what it does and how the institution should have good follow-up and good support for anyone who's been victimised, and all the rest of it." And when it happens within your own organisation, that's not what you're providing me. You're asking me to tell you what I need. And I just felt, in the end I think said, "I feel like I've been hit by a car, run over. I've managed to crawl over to the gutter. And that's pretty much all I can do." So, it was horrendous. It was like I'd trusted, yet again. I'd trusted in the Commission. And after trusting in people again I've had everything just wiped away.*

Survivors are accustomed to reading their environments closely, in order to evaluate how safe or unsafe they are in each moment. The way the Australian Royal Commission connected with survivors sent important messages about their worth and safety: Phone calls returned quickly told them, 'You are important to us'. Carefully selected venues and the provision of cakes and cups of tea said, 'We want you to be comfortable'. Attentive and compassionate staff said, 'We see you. We believe you. We care about what happened to you, and we care what happens to you now.' Conversely, a hostile public hearing told Bettina, "You were wrong to think you could trust us."

A public inquiry must decide whether its goal is to gather the information necessary to make change, whether to attempt to provide some healing and justice for participants through the process itself -or, ambitiously, whether to combine these two goals. For survivors who participate in public inquiries, these possibilities are inextricably linked. If they provide evidence in a hostile environment, they are unlikely to feel valued. If they provide evidence in a warm and caring environment, yet see that after the inquiry nothing changes, they are unlikely to feel valued. Many survivors are driven to participate in public inquiries in the hope that they can help protect others from abuse, and contribute to a vision of a better future for people affected by trauma.

Whether the Australian Royal Commission succeeds at creating meaningful and lasting change on the issue of child abuse remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that being believed, feeling seen and heard, being treated in a way which conveys that the person matters, and having someone in a position of authority communicate that what happened to them was not okay and was not their fault, can be a transformative experience for survivors. In contrast, interactions which mirror other invalidating, adversarial, or skeptical responses to disclosure compound the impacts of abuse and subject survivors to further trauma.

As Larry says so eloquently:

*I have a very clear image of Commissioner Atkinson talking to me, and it's a bit like the father, if you like. A very generous, open father saying, "I understand what you've told me, and you are an acceptable person." That's what I heard. "I understand what happened to you, and I understand that you are an acceptable person. That you are okay." And that's what I walked away with.*

*To me that was really quite profound because it meant that all the things that I'd been believing that I wasn't an okay person, that I was second-rate, that I really was a blight on humanity were being challenged. And he was the first person that actually really challenged them. And he was a person with status. A Royal Commissioner, that's a pretty, you know, in my mind that was a really high-status person telling me I'm okay. And that was really powerful for me. And so from that I took away the sense that, yes, I can move on from here, that I can do something.... I walked away feeling reassured. I walked away feeling of some value. And I walked away feeling that, as a human being, that I did have some potential that I could make my life better.*

It was important for many survivors participating in the Commission to feel that the severity and pain of the impacts of child abuse was understood, and acknowledged that they had been telling the truth all along. These acknowledgements carried another message too: that the Australian Royal Commission recognised the wrongdoing of perpetrators and those who had helped to conceal abuse.

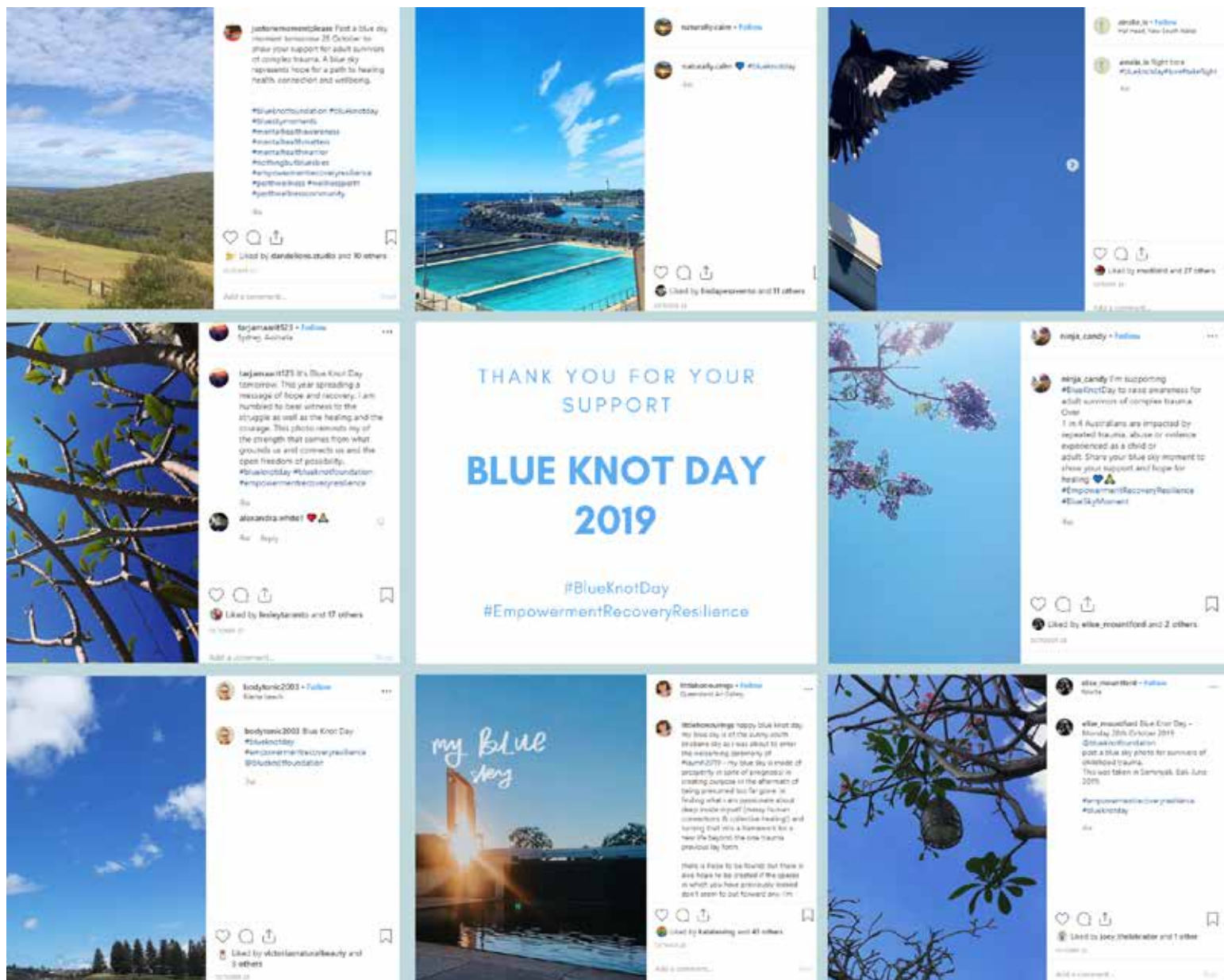
While recognition cannot undo the harms of child abuse, it can provide some sense of fairness, restoration or justice. For people who, as children, were often made to feel responsible for what had happened to them, and that their suffering was not important enough for bystanders to intervene, the recognition of innocence and suffering provided by a dedicated, courageous inquiry sends an important message about survivors' value as members of the community. It tells survivors, "you matter to us".

For further information about this study please email Rebecca at [rebecca.moran@student.unsw.edu.au](mailto:rebecca.moran@student.unsw.edu.au)

# Blue Knot Day 2019

This year we asked survivors, partners, friends and family, and interested community members to post a piece of blue sky in support of survivors of complex trauma. Many of you shared some truly inspiring images through social media, letting survivors know that they are not alone, and that a glimpse of blue sky can embody a sign of

hope and possibility of healing. Here are some of the wonderful images that were shared in the lead-up and on Blue Knot Day. We thank everyone who took part by sharing on social media, holding an event and helping raise awareness for the over 1 in 4 adult Australians experiencing the long-term effects of complex trauma.



# Blue Knot Day Interfaith Service

An interfaith service of reflection for adult survivors of complex trauma was held on Sunday November 3, outside the Park Café on Chalmers Street. The service, included prayers, symbolic gestures and statements of support from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hari Krishna, Baha'i and atheist representatives.

Following a smoking ceremony led by Uncle Max Eulo, Gumbaynggirr-Wiradjuri musician Tim Gray offered an acknowledgement of country by way of an original song called "Barraminya" (a Wiradjuri word meaning "recovery"). Cr Linda Scott poured water into a large glass bowl, symbolising tears of pain and grief.

The Sydney Baha'i Temple Choir offered a very moving prayer in response to writer Alana Valentine's account of testimonies collected in the process of writing her play, *Swimming Upstream* (2012).

As the rain fell softly, a story of recovery was shared by Scarlett Rose Franks, who spoke of exiled emotions, resilience, slow progress towards healing, and the invaluable support of community. Her extraordinary words were warmly received.

The With One Voice Redfern community choir brought the service to a joyful and hopeful close. Their rendition of Neil Murray's "My Island Home" – an evocation of safety and belonging – enticed many of those present to stand and dance.

The message of Blue Knot Day is that even in the face of distant justice and painful waiting, recovery is possible.



# Professional Trauma Training Calendar

**Book your professional training for next year and lock-in early bird discounts**

<b>Sydney</b>	10 Feb	Intro to Working Therapeutically with Complex Trauma Clients (L1)
<b>Adelaide</b>	10 Feb	Foundation for Trauma Informed Care and Practice (L1)
<b>Brisbane</b>	14 Feb	Managing Vicarious Trauma
<b>Gold Coast</b>	12 Mar	Working Therapeutically with Complex Trauma Clients (L2)
<b>Launceston</b>	13 Mar	Intro to Working Therapeutically with Complex Trauma Clients (L1)
<b>Melbourne</b>	16 Mar	Foundation for Trauma Informed Care and Practice (L1)
<b>Adelaide</b>	19 Mar	Working Therapeutically with Complex Trauma Clients (L2)
<b>Sydney</b>	20 Mar	Trauma-Informed Care and Practice: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
<b>Melbourne</b>	24 Mar	Trauma-Informed Transgender and Gender Diverse Affirmative Care - Masterclass
<b>Brisbane</b>	27 Mar	Intro to Working Therapeutically with Complex Trauma Clients (L1)
<b>Canberra</b>	27 Mar	Embedding Trauma-Informed Care and Practice for Managers
<b>Perth</b>	30 Mar	Trauma-Informed Care and Practice (L2)

Blue Knot's trauma training is informative, interactive and engaging, and is facilitated by experienced clinicians and trauma trainers around Australia. Professionals may claim CPD hours/credits/points as a pre-approved or self directed learning activity. Go to <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Training-Services/Training-for-you> to learn more and book



# Fact Sheet

## Trauma-Informed Conversations

This fact sheet explores how to help a person who has experienced interpersonal trauma feel safe when you are having a conversation with them. The fact sheet gives guidance around safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment. Download the Fact Sheet here to learn more.

**BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION**  
FACT SHEET:  
APPLYING TRAUMA-INFORMED  
PRINCIPLES TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TRAUMA


**GUIDING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES:**  
Safety Trustworthiness Choice Collaboration Empowerment

*SAFETY Tips to help a person who has experienced interpersonal trauma feel safe when you are having a conversation with them:*

**1 (a) PHYSICAL SAFETY**

- **Is the physical/geographical space in which you are having the conversation safe?** Is it away from busy roads if outside or in a room in which you are unlikely to be interrupted if you are inside?
- **Have you asked the person if there is anything you can do to make the space more comfortable?** Many factors, some which we can't predict, can lead to stress reactions e.g. some people might be triggered by a particular visual cue.
- **Will the person be physically safe after, as well as during, the conversation?** This applies to the situation to which they are returning as well as their general levels of arousal. You may need to help them with a basic Grounding Exercise.

Please see Fact Sheet: Talking About Trauma – Having Safe Conversations (For General Public)

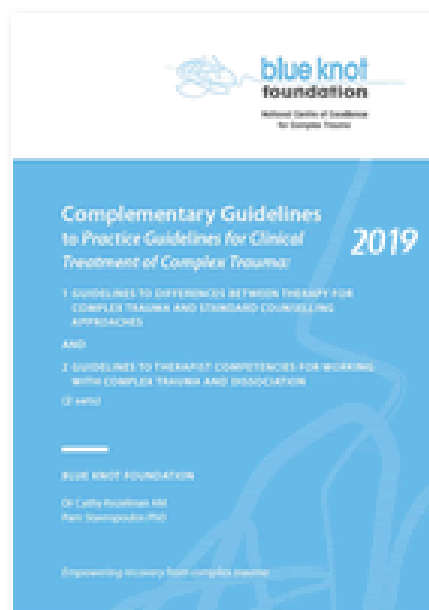
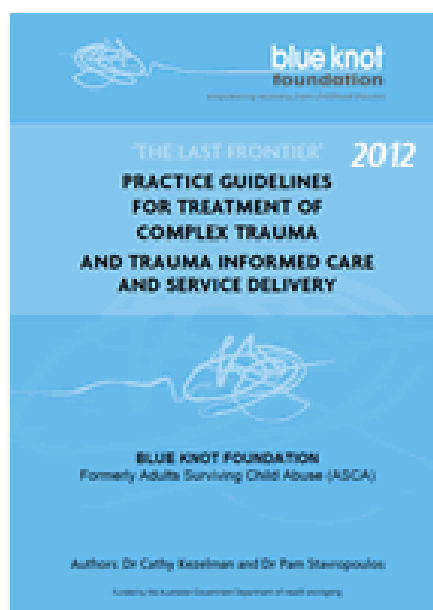
  
Blue Knot Helpline 1300 657 380 | [blueknot.org.au](http://blueknot.org.au) | 02 8920 3611 | [admin@blueknot.org.au](mailto:admin@blueknot.org.au)

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# Blue Knot Foundation Launches 2019 Practice Guidelines

On Thursday 31st October, Belmont Private Hospital in Brisbane – the hospital which has the only inpatient Trauma and Dissociation Unit in the Southern Hemisphere – hosted the launch of the 2019 Practice Guidelines for Clinical Treatment of Complex Trauma. More information on the Guidelines can be found at [https://www.blueknot.org.au/resources/Publications/Practice-Guidelines?fbclid=IwAR0ipWy38vjfPRBpYzCuVpKKCtUM2Ini5SVereGf8d\\_vd2EfH3KPM--Ts](https://www.blueknot.org.au/resources/Publications/Practice-Guidelines?fbclid=IwAR0ipWy38vjfPRBpYzCuVpKKCtUM2Ini5SVereGf8d_vd2EfH3KPM--Ts)





## Blue skies for trauma survivors

By Andrew Collis November 5, 2019

REDFERN: An interfaith service of reflection for adult survivors of complex trauma was held on Sunday November 3, outside the Park Café on Chalmers Street. The service, registered with Blue Knot Foundation as a Blue Knot Day event, included prayers, symbolic gestures and statements of support from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hari Krishna, Baha'i and atheist representatives.

Following a smoking ceremony led by Uncle Max Eulo, Gumbaynggirr-Wiradjuri musician Tim Gray offered an acknowledgement of country by way of an original song called "Barraminyra" (a Wiradjuri word meaning "recovery"). Cr Linda Scott poured water into a large glass bowl, symbolising tears of pain and grief.

The Sydney Baha'i Temple Choir offered a very moving prayer in response to writer Alana Valentine's account of testimonies collected in the process of writing her play, *Swimming Upstream* (2012).

Ms Valentine concluded: "I'd always thought that childhood trauma was like a crack in a vase, or a stain on a vase, or a hole in a vase that leaked pain in endless hot tears. But what I learned is that childhood trauma is not a hole in the vase, it is the vase dropped on the ground, shattered into pieces.

"And the job of the adult whose child has been dropped on the ground is to try and find a way to glue the pieces

back together and make the vase try to hold water, or the life to hold meaning. And I learned that it is possible for a damaged vase, a glued-together and repaired vase to hold immense beauty, even more beauty sometimes than a perfect vase with no visible damage."

The message of Blue Knot Day is that even in the face of distant justice and painful waiting, recovery is possible. Blue Knot Foundation tells us that it is possible in relationship, because positive relationships of good care and appropriate support can make a real difference.

As the rain fell softly, a story of recovery was shared by Scarlett Rose Franks, who spoke of exiled emotions, resilience, slow progress towards healing, and the invaluable support of community. Her extraordinary words were warmly received.

The With One Voice Redfern community choir brought the service to a joyful and hopeful close. Their rendition of Neil Murray's "My Island Home" – an evocation of safety and belonging – enticed many of those present to stand and dance.



## A guide to the Disability Royal Commission

POSTED 3 WEEKS AGO BY LIZ ALDERSLADE

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has its first set of hearings from today, and will run until Thursday, 7 November.

Taking place in Townsville, Queensland, this first week of hearings will begin the inquest into the experiences of people with disability, with a focus on education and the existing policies and procedures.

There is a lot to unpack with how this Royal Commission will work and what the overall aim of this inquest is. Below we're explaining some of the background of the Royal Commission.

### How it will work

The Disability Royal Commission was called to investigate violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, how this could happen and what can be done to make sure it won't happen again.

The Royal Commission starts today and is expected to run for 3 years and will cost \$527.9 million.

During this time the Commissioners will review all the

information presented to them in the submissions and also hold a series of hearings, each focused on a different aspect of the industry.

The Commissioners are required to provide an interim report by 30 October 2020, and a final report by 29 April 2022.

Anyone affected by or involved with the focus points of the Royal Commission is able to share their story with the Commission. They may be asked to appear as a witness and give evidence during a public hearing.

The witnesses will be examined and questioned by the Counsel Assisting, with Commissioners able to question the witness as well.

The hearings will move around the country, from capital cities to regional areas, and times and locations will be announced before the actual hearings.

Commission hearings are open for the public to attend, however, there is limited seating, but there will also be a live stream of the hearings.

Media are allowed to attend the hearings and watch the hearings, and report on what happens during the Commission. However, media is not allowed to report on any witnesses who want to remain anonymous or any information not for publication.

### How did it start?

The Disability Royal Commission was pushed through by Greens Senator Jordon Steele-John.

The Commission was provided \$528 million by the Government to run a three year inquiry covering all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in all settings, including residential and home care.

On 4 April of this year, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General, the Honourable, Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC, established the Commission.

### Why is it important?

There is a very good reason why the Disability Royal Commission has been called; because too many people with disability are still experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

National consumer peak body, People with Disability Australia (PWDA), state that people with disability experience higher rates of violence than their peers without a disability.

People with intellectual disability are ten times more likely to experience violence than people without disability.

Around twenty percent of women with disability report a history of unwanted sex, compared to 8.2 percent of women without disability.

Chief Executive Officer at People with Disability Australia, Jeff Smith, says, "The terrible toll that violence and abuse has taken on people with disability will finally be brought to light, as people with disability start to tell their stories to the Commission.

"The Disability Royal Commission needs to be the start of the significant changes that are needed to stop the violence against us, such as ending segregation and discrimination against us.

"We know that there are many people with disability around the country who are writing their submissions right now, and sending them into the Commission."

The Commissioners will be providing an interim report to Government by 30 October 2020, with a final report to be delivered by 29 April 2022.

## The Commissioners

A Royal Commission is run by Commissioners who will read all the submissions and listen to and question any witnesses to then make recommendations to the Government in a final report. The people appointed to the Commission are usually people with specific knowledge or experience that is relevant to the Royal Commission.

Appointed as Chair of the Royal Commission was Honourable Ronald Sackville AO QC.

Commissioner Sackville has past experience as a Judge for the Federal Court of Australia between 1994 to 2009.

Commissioner Sackville has chaired a number of Commissions over the years, including the Victorian Accident Compensation Commission (1985-1989); Commonwealth Schools Commission (1984 - 1985); Commissioner for Law and Poverty, Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1973-1975); Chair of the South Australian Royal Commission into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs (1977-1979); Chair of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission (1981-1984); Assistant Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption (1992); and Chair, Commonwealth Access to Justice Advisory Committee (1994).

Also sitting alongside Commissioner Sackville is:

- Roslyn Atkinson AO - Former Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland (1998 - 2018).
- Barbara Bennett PSM - 20 years experience in senior positions at the Department of Social Services and Department of Human Services.
- Dr Rhonda Galbally AC - Living with a disability herself, she was a board member of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and Principal Member of the Independent Advisory Council.
- Andrea Mason OAM - Former CEO of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council.
- Alastair McEwin AM - Former Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner from 2016 to 2019. He has spent time as a Manager of the Australian Centre for Disability Law and CEO of People with Disability Australia.
- John Ryan AM - Former Shadow Minister for Disability Services (2003-2009). He was in the teaching sector for nearly a decade before being elected to the NSW Parliament in 1991.

## The controversy

The Commission has been plagued by controversy since it was announced. From the appointed Commissioners to the timing of the hearings, the Commission has divided public opinion.

The main concerns were raised by Craig Wallace, convenor of the Disability Royal Commission Action Group, and the potential bias from Commissioner John Ryan and Commissioner Barbara Bennett PSM. Since they both have backgrounds in the disability sector in some form.

On the Commission website, the Commissioners have outlined any conflict of interest they may potentially have.

Commissioner Bennett specified that to avoid any “perceived or potential conflict of interest”, she will not be involved in hearings that have officials from the Department of Social Services providing evidence to the Commission.

Commissioner John Ryan AM was employed in the NSW public sector in multiple departments, due to those working relationships with senior operational staff, he will not be participating in Commission hearings that involve NSW Government departments as a disability service, accommodation provider or any organisation that he has had a working relationship with.

Additionally, at last week’s Senate Estimates, Senator Steele-John has some tough questions for the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee officials around the Disability Royal Commission.

Through the questioning, Senator Jordon Steele-John was able to clarify that the legal and emotional supports were scaling but not currently to scale, the accessibility strategy is still being finalised, two senior legal figures have stepped away before the start of hearings, and disability organisations are concerned about the first hearings timeline.

Ms Toni Pirani, Official Secretary, told the Senate Estimates that the Commission is “confident” that the issues raised can be resolved in time for the first hearing.

“The Counsel that we have appointed have been appointed for some time. They’re very experienced. They’re very well advanced in their preparation for the hearing. The commission is very confident that we are ready to go ahead and conduct the hearings,” says Ms Pirani.

Not happy with the response, Senator Steele-John quoted a letter sent to Commissioner Ronald Sackville by disability organisations, which states that disability advocacy groups are advising people not to engage with the Commission until the processes of supports are available.

“They have asked you specifically not to go ahead with this time frame, in the spirit of putting disabled people at the centre of everything the commission does. It is not a good look, folks,” says Senator Steele-John.

## What peak bodies are thinking about the Royal Commission

While People with Disability Australia (PWDA) feel that the Royal Commission is beginning sooner than expected, they still want the first hearings to go ahead.

PWDA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Jeff Smith, says, “We do have some concerns about these changes at the Royal Commission, but we believe that the first hearing can go ahead.

“People with disability have waited a long time to have their stories heard, and we know that the first hearing will be welcomed as a step towards a future free of violence and abuse.

“Our advocates have been taking calls from people with disability for some time, and are assisting people with disability right now with submissions. We’re looking forward to having more resources coming on board very soon.”

PWDA has been in talks with Minister for Families and Social Services, Anne Ruston, along with other Disabled Peoples’ Organisations and people with disability about the supports they require through the Royal Commission.

Mr Smith is pleased to see counselling services and legal services available, and he is aware that other advocacy organisations, like PWDA, are ramping up their own services.

PWDA has also received Government funding from individual advocacy services in New South Wales and Queensland, as well as small amounts of funding to support systemic policy work for the Commission.

Mr Smith says, “We will be continuing to monitor what people with disability need, and advocate strongly to the Australian Government about further supports.”

## How to submit to the Commission?

If you are wanting to make a submission to the Commission about your own experiences of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation as a person with disability or a carer of a person with disability, there are a few ways this can be done.

Depending on what makes you feel most comfortable, a submission can be provided by phone, email or through the Commission website.

The importance of the Commission has resulted in the wide variety of ways you can share your story.

If you speak another language, the Commission will accept submissions in your first language, including Indigenous languages.

The submission process has been translated into Auslan.

There are videos providing information on how to make a submission, such as an overview of the submission process, making a submission, and answers frequently asked questions.

If you require an Easy Read document, that is available to assist people in the steps and processes of making a submission.

The Commission is creating more processes at the moment to make submissions more streamlined and accessible.

There are forms available on the Commission website to make a submission.

If you need assistance, contact 1800 517 99 or +61 7 3734 1900 between 9 am to 5 pm AEDT (Australian Eastern Daylight Time) from Monday to Friday, excluding national public holidays.

You are also able to make a submission via the above phone numbers during the allocated times.

You can email the Commission on their email, [DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au), or mail your submission to GPO Box 1422, Brisbane, Queensland 4001.

### Supports available

Due to the sensitive nature of the Disability Royal Commission, a range of emotional and legal support services have been set up to help people providing evidence.

There are free legal advisory services people can access for their interactions with the Commission. You can register your interest with National Legal Aid (NLA) or the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS).

To register, call 1800 771 800 between 9:15 am to 5:15 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT) from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays.

The Department of Social Services have launched a national free counselling and referral service, delivered by the Blue Knot Foundation.

This is available for people with disability, their families or carers, or anyone affected by the Disability Royal Commission. Call the service on 1800 421 468 or 02 6146 1468.

This service is available from 9 am to 6 pm weekdays or from 9 am to 5 pm on weekends (AEDT).

If you are deaf, hearing impaired and/or have a speech impairment, you can contact the National Relay Services (NRS) on 133 677.

For people that need support in another language, there is a free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) available.

Call the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468 and ask for an interpreter. The counsellor will make arrangement to suit your needs.

Or you can call TIS National, 131 450, first and ask to be connected to the Counselling service.

For more immediate 24/7 crisis support, contact Beyond Blue Support Service on 1300 224 636 or Lifeline Crisis Support on 13 11 14.

Legal financial support has been set up for people who need assistance meeting the costs of legal representation associated with formal engagement with the Commission.

To visit the website to find out more, head to the Commonwealth Legal Financial Assistance Scheme website.

Other advocacy services which may be helpful include disability peak bodies or organisations, like People with Disability Australia (PWDA).

Talking Disability will be covering the whole Disability Royal Commission, so continue checking our website for thorough overviews of the hearings.



George Pell, once treasurer to the Vatican and the most senior member of the Catholic clergy in Australia, has been given leave to appeal to Australia's highest court over his conviction for child sexual abuse. (File: Mark Dadswell/Reuters)

## Australia's highest court agrees to hear Cardinal Pell appeal

by **Kate Walton** 13 Nov 2019

Court agrees to hear final appeal of Cardinal George Pell, the most senior Catholic ever to be convicted of child abuse.

Canberra, Australia - Australia's highest court on Wednesday has given disgraced Cardinal George Pell the chance to appeal his child sexual abuse conviction.

Pell, 78, was found guilty last year of the rape and sexual assault of two 13-year-old choirboys in the mid-1990s. He is currently serving a six-year jail term in Melbourne.

Pell was once Australia's most senior Catholic cleric and the third most powerful one in the world, holding the position of treasurer to the Vatican. He has repeatedly denied the accusations and did not appear in court for Wednesday's decision. He no longer holds any positions in the church.

The High Court appeal is the final legal avenue for Pell to overturn his conviction and is expected to be heard in early 2020. The full bench of the High Court's seven justices will hear the appeal, with each justice making their own decision and the case decided on a majority.

Pell, who was previously the archbishop of Melbourne, was unanimously convicted of the two sex offences against children in December 2018 by a jury in Victoria.

He appealed that decision, but it was upheld 2-1 in August.

"The outcome of the (August) appeal, which saw George Pell return to serve his custodial sentence, vindicated the testimony of the survivor who told the truth in the face of extreme power, disbelief and denial," said Dr Cathy Kezelman, president of the Blue Knot Foundation, an

organisation that supports adult survivors of childhood abuse.

She told Al Jazeera the original decision to deny an appeal “provided hope to survivors that they too would be believed”.

### ‘Marked my life’

Pell’s conviction relied heavily on the testimony of a man who alleged Pell had sexually abused him and a male friend in 1996 and 1997. The two were just 13 years old at the time.

Pell’s legal team appealed the verdict, arguing that the man’s testimony was unreliable.

“The journey has taken me to places that, in my darkest moments, I feared I could not return from,” the victim, known only as Witness J, said in a statement at the time of the first appeal in August.

He said he spoke up because “I felt I should say what I saw and what happened to me. I had experienced something terrible as a child, something that marked my life. I wanted at least some good to come of it ... After attending the funeral of my childhood friend, the other choirboy, I felt a responsibility to come forward.”

Two of the three judges who heard the initial appeal believed the survivor spoke truthfully.

“Throughout his evidence, the complainant came across as someone who was telling the truth,” Chief Justice Anne Ferguson said in that decision. “Justice Maxwell and I accepted the prosecution’s submission that the complainant was a compelling witness, was clearly not a liar, was not a fantasist and was a witness of truth.”

The third judge disagreed, leading to Pell’s decision to appeal to the High Court, arguing that there was reasonable doubt as to whether Pell had committed the crimes alleged.

Many prominent Australians gave character witnesses in support of Pell, arguing that he would never have abused children. Former Prime Minister John Howard wrote that Cardinal Pell was “a person of both high intelligence and exemplary character” who “dedicated his life to his nation and his church”.

Lawyer Lisa Flynn represents the father of one of the two

schoolboys abused by Pell.

The father became involved in the case after his son died at the age of 31 from a heroin overdose linked to post-traumatic stress disorder.

She said the man was “guttled” by the High Court’s decision.

“The pain is now prolonged,” Flynn told the media. “But he is still hopeful that when the High Court does hear the appeal, that they will ensure that the unanimous jury decision is upheld ... He is still hopeful that George Pell will remain the convicted paedophile that he is.”



## Say no to discrimination

### Grace McKinnon

Brunswick's Christian Astoutian is urging those living with a disability to have a say in the upcoming Royal Commission on Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Mr Astoutian has cerebral palsy and has been a disability advocate for the past 20 years.

With the commission due to begin in less than six months, he is joining the call of advocates urging people to speak up now.

Mr Astoutian said those with disability didn't have the same lives as others, but should have the same opportunities to participate and contribute.

"Violence and abuse of people with a disability has been around forever, it comes with a power imbalance and a history of discrimination," he said.

"The problem is, some people have a very low expectation of what people with a disability can do."

Free counselling and support is available through the Blue Knot Foundation and through the National Disability Advocacy program.

Meanwhile, Moreland Council created a community art event 'Visible/Invisible - Making Invisible Disability Visible', for International Day of People with Disability last Monday. The event showcases art and stories from people with disabilities.

The street gallery will be on display at public spaces including Coburg Town Hall until December 9. There will also be an audio description tour.

To find out more about the Royal Commission, or if you wish to make a submission, phone 1800 517 199.



Christian Astoutian.



## Next steps in the fight against institutional abuse

**Kirrily Schwarz**

A royal commission and a high-profile court case have cast a brutal light on child sexual abuse in Australia. Here's how survivors can take the next steps.

Institutional abuse has been on the front cover of every newspaper this year. Australians have read the headlines; they've watched the crowds outside court on television.

Significant steps have been made in the fight for justice. However, experts estimate there are still thousands of survivors of child sexual abuse who have not yet obtained legal advice about their rights.

Michelle James is head of the national abuse law litigation practice at Maurice Blackburn. She tells the Herald Sun it's important that we're finally acknowledging the darkest parts of our community.

"For a long time, (child sexual abuse) was either brushed under the carpet or actively hidden. That's the first thing I would say: if we have this conversation now, it finally

acknowledges the hurt and the damage done to so many people over decades," she says.

"We know that there are some people who told no-one, but there were others who did tell and weren't believed. It was really heaping hurt on hurt... When someone makes the choice to come forward and make a claim, they're really coming forward and saying, 'I was hurt. It was me. I was injured. I wasn't believed'. This person then takes back some power in seeking some sort of restitution from the institution concerned."

### Managing trauma

One of the most challenging things about this area of law is managing the risk of re-trauma, particularly when working with people who were abused as children by people they trusted.

Dr Cathy Kezelman AM is a former medical practitioner who now works as president of the Blue Knot Foundation, which empowers recovery and builds resilience for adults impacted by complex trauma. One of its key objectives



is providing training for people - including lawyers - who work with survivors.

"It can take a long time for people to reach out and engage with you because of that lack of trust. They've had that experience of being harmed through personal relationships," she says.

"Try to put yourself in that person's shoes as much as you can. It doesn't mean you need to know all the details of what happened to them, but to understand that something has happened to them along life's journey to affect them so profoundly."

The decision to come forward, she says, is an enormous first step. Many people who have tried to speak out about abuse in the past have been dismissed or even punished for telling the truth, and Dr Kezelman explains that trusting someone enough to tell your story takes a huge amount of courage.

The key is to be patient, to listen and to meet people where they are.

In the training sessions, she says the Blue Knot Foundation teaches people how to negate perceived power imbalances, really collaborate with survivors and to give them choices - even around things like where they would like to sit or who they would like to have in the room - to put them in control of the situation.

### Legal process

The big challenge in the legal process is the risk of re-traumatising a survivor by having them repeat the story of what happened to them again and again and again.

This is something Ms James takes very seriously. When clients come into the firm, they're given a choice about whether they would prefer to work with a male or female lawyer. The lawyer explains at the outset that while the survivor will have to explain what happened, they don't need to repeat it endlessly.

"We talk about the abuse as little as possible," Ms James explains. "There are a lot of things we can do. If they're already made a complaint to police, for example, we'll get a copy of that and go from there so we don't need to go over it again. Everything we do is from the point of view of minimising trauma."

When survivors decide to proceed with a claim for compensation, the first step is to establish that they attended the church, school, orphanage or other institution where the abuse occurred. There are rarely witnesses to abuse, so Ms James explains that in most cases the next step is to look for other cases where paedophiles have been active within that community.

"Our clients tell us what occurred and we try to corroborate that," she says. "As more cases have come forward, we have built our knowledge around these crimes. We know where the paedophiles were and the dates." There are also a number of online groups where people share this information.

### Finding justice

Money alone cannot fix the past. However, it can provide assistance to survivors whose health, ability to hold a job and ability to enjoy healthy relationships have been marred by abuse.

"It doesn't cost anything to find out where they stand," says Ms James. "It shouldn't be thought of as a daunting process, just to take that first step and get legal advice. We're very geared up towards having these conversations, understanding the concerns and desires of our clients. I would encourage people to come forward. Whether they decide to go through with the claim or just have that conversation is up to them."

There are approximately 60,000 people in Australia who have, in the past, suffered severe institutional abuse and could be entitled to compensation. The law in this space is constantly changing, but Maurice Blackburn wants to support survivors in knowing their rights. To talk with one of our abuse law experts, call 1800 810 812 or visit our website to learn more.

## Timeline set down for George Pell appeal

By AAP

George Pell's lawyers have less than two months to tell Australia's highest court why the sex offender's convictions should be overturned.

A timeline for the Catholic cardinal's High Court case has been set down, with written submissions on his behalf due by January 8.

The 78-year-old was jailed for six years in March for sexually assaulting two choirboys at Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral in 1996.

He was Archbishop of Melbourne at the time and is the most senior Catholic cleric to be jailed for sexually abusing children.

However, the High Court has agreed to hear Pell's case to plead his innocence, before deciding whether to grant special leave to hear the appeal.

Prosecutors have until February 5 to respond to the cardinal's arguments, with Pell then to respond by February 26.


The High Court has previously held hearings within about a month of parties making their submissions.

# Talking About Trauma


## - Having Safe Conversations

**TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA**

Tips for safe conversations with a friend you know or suspect has experienced trauma


 **TIP 1:**  
**TAKE A NON-JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE; VALIDATE THE PERSON.**


**TIP 2:**  
**ENGAGE IN 'QUALITY LISTENING' AND BE SENSITIVE TO NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**



~~**SHAME**~~ **TIP 3:**  
**AVOID SHAMING THE PERSON FOR ANY 'PROBLEMATIC' BEHAVIOURS**

**TIP 4:**  
**YOU CAN POSSIBLY START BY ASKING: 'ARE YOU OKAY?'**



 **blue knot foundation**  
National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma



**Breaking Free** is Blue Knot Foundation's monthly eNewsletter for survivors of childhood trauma, their supporters and community members. For feedback or to contribute, please email [newsletter@blueknot.org.au](mailto:newsletter@blueknot.org.au) or call (02) 8920 3611.



## In-house Training for the second half of 2019

You can browse through our In-House training options for the second half of 2019 [here](#). Please email [trainingandservices@blueknot.org.au](mailto:trainingandservices@blueknot.org.au) or call (02) 8920 3611 to find out more.

The administration office for Blue Knot Foundation will be closed for the holiday season from Monday 23 December 2019, returning Thursday 2 January, 2019.

Our Helpline will operate every day through the holiday period. If you need someone to talk to please call our support line on 1300 657 380 Monday to Sunday 9am to 5pm or email [helpline@blueknot.org.au](mailto:helpline@blueknot.org.au)