



Flat Out Inc
Annual Report 2007-2008



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Formal Acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership

Flat Out acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Woi Wurrung Language Group both past and present who make up part of the Kulin Nation, as the traditional owners of the land in which Flat Out is built.

We acknowledge the Elders, families and forebears of the tribes of the Kulin Nation who were the custodians of the land which we occupy. We acknowledge that the land on which we meet was the place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal and that the Kulin Nation people's living culture had and has a unique role in the life of this region.

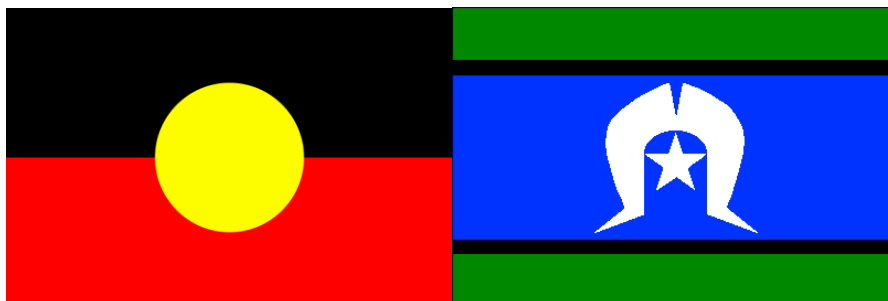
We recognise the loss and grief held by Indigenous people in Australia caused by alienation from traditional lands, the loss of lives and freedoms, and the forced removal of children.

We defend the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live according to their own beliefs, values and customs and the importance of their contribution to strengthening and enriching the heritage of all Australians.

We believe that equal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are integral to addressing the needs of communities.

We believe that that ignorance, apathy, resistance and opposition still exists about reconciliation and the need to overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage is great.

We believe that through understanding the spiritual relationship between the land and its first peoples, we share our future and take the steps towards living equally in harmony with dignity and respect.



Thank You

To all the women involved in Flat Out over the past year, and those who chose to contribute their stories or art to this year's annual report. Thank you for sharing with us your stories, insights, advice and strength.



Pet Parade, Where the Heart Is Festival, March 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Government Funding:

Department of Human Services – SAAP (Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program)

Department of Health and Ageing – NIDS (National Illicit Drug Strategy)

Department of Human Services – Intensive Case Management Initiative

Non Government Funding:

Street Smart
Pilotlight
Lord Mayor's Fund

R.E Ross Trust / Reichstein Foundation / Vic. Law Foundation – CHRIP

Flat Out would also like to thank the following:

Women's Housing Limited
Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO)
DHS – Peter Lake, Janelle Cribb & Sarah Langmore
First Step Clinic
ARBIAS
Forensicare
Council to Homeless Persons
Aboriginal Health Service
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Regina Coeli
Aboriginal Hostels Ltd
Terri Stewart-Aboriginal Liaison/Koorie Court
Eastern Emergency Relief Network
Vic Relief and Foodbank
Norwood Association
Macgregor Barristers & Solicitors
Dowling & MacGregor Solicitors
Greg Thomas - Solicitor
Jill Prior – Solicitor
Melinda Walker – Solicitor
Pearson's Barristers and Solicitors
Melbourne City Mission, Women's Integrated Support Program (WISP)
Paul Shearer – IT Saviour
Asylum Seekers Resource Centre
St Kilda Crisis Centre
The Queen's Trust
Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Person's Program
Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company
South Port Community Housing
Public Interest Law Clearing House (Vic) Inc. (PILCH)
Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre Inc.
The Lodge on Bell
Helen Barnacle
Deb Kilroy
Homeground Services
The Joelenes
Annamila Pty Ltd
Ali
Melinda Naden
Aunty Lynn Killeen

Deb Tsorbaris
Andrea Lott
Jan Carr
Mary Cotter
Revolver-Malvern
Jane-Louise Florist

Flat Out Staff

Billi Clarke

Manager

Dallas Taylor

Administrator (left Sept. 2008)

Brook Shearer

Case Worker (changed job-Oct. 2008)

Intensive Case Management Worker

Emily Piggott

Case Worker

Sharon Villanueva

Case Worker

Phoebe Barton

CHRIP project worker

***Centre for Human Rights of Imprisoned People**

Maggie Barford

Finance Worker

Michele Old

Duty/Resource Worker

Flat Out Collective Members

Amanda George

Shelley Burchfield

Karren Walker

Catherine Gow

Joanne Doherty

Maggie Barford

Amy Mallett

Kay Thompson

Koni Tsakonas

Billi Clarke

Dallas Taylor

Brook Shearer

Emily Piggott

Sharon Villanueva

Phoebe Barton

Michele Old

In Kind Support

A number of organisations and individuals have provided us with useful items, advice, support and understanding. We wish to thank everyone who has donated money, household items, clothes, computers, furniture, toiletries and presents for women and their children. We also wish to thank those who have been generous with their time and have assisted us to provide women with a better service.

All art, writing and photos in this annual report are used with the permission of the women involved.

FLAT OUT

The name

“Flat Out’s name came about for a number of reasons and after numerous long meetings at bars, spas, lounge room floors, offices and weekends away. At first (in 1988) we envisaged that we would get flats for women when they got out. We also thought women might be working flat out on their back paying the rent and that perhaps we would find women flat out on the floor overdosed. We were certain that our workers would be flat out meeting the demand”.

Amanda George

Our Vision

- People’s rights are understood and upheld
- There is a compassionate response to personal and social trauma
 - Women are not imprisoned

Primary Task

- To support women who are exiting prison or who are at risk of incarceration, by providing access and referrals to transitional, supported, public or community housing.
- To provide support, education and information to re-establish women in the community post-release.
 - To avoid re-incarceration.

CORE WORK

Flat Out's core work comprises three overlapping areas of activity:

- Direct Support Services
- Community Development, Education, Research and Advocacy
- Development and Maintenance of the Flat Out Collective

Direct Support Services:

- Providing information on rights, housing options, prison issues, income, legal issues, health services, family reunification, courts, financial and material aid.
- Facilitating access to transitional housing, crisis accommodation, public housing and community housing
- Supporting reunification with children and family
- Case planning, developing support plans in conjunction with women
- Crisis intervention and support
- Court Support
- Support to prepare for prison,
- Organising recreational activities

Community Development, Education, Research and Advocacy:

- Educating other service providers and the community on issues around women and imprisonment and about the experiences of women in prison
- Advocating on behalf of women who encounter the criminal justice system
- Continuing research into issues relating to women and incarceration with the aim of informing community and government

Development and Maintenance of a Feminist Collective:

- Continuous exploration and articulation of the importance of feminist philosophy and collective structure for Flat Out
- Developing clear goals and priorities for the Collective and continually reviewing the effectiveness of our work
- Supporting paid Collective members in their work by developing clear job roles, lines of accountability and providing professional development opportunities
- Managing the financial and physical resources of Flat Out
- Ensuring a safe, functional workplace.

PROGRAMS

SAAP (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program)

SAAP is a joint Commonwealth and State Government Initiative.

SAAP is governed by the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994. In Victoria, SAAP forms a key part of the Homelessness Service system, which also includes the Transitional Housing Management (THM) Program.

The overall aim of SAAP is to provide transitional supported accommodation and a range of related support services, in order to help people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, to achieve the maximum possible degree of self reliance and independence.

Within this aim, the goals are to:

- resolve crisis
- re-establish family links where appropriate; and
- re-establish the capacity of clients to live independently of SAAP

Flat Out has been funded by SAAP since establishment in 1988.

NIDS (National Illicit Drug Strategy)

NIDS is a funded Commonwealth Government Initiative. Flat Out has received NIDS funding since 2003.

(Non-Government Organisation treatment grants program).

NIDS key service requirements are:

- To provide short-term supported accommodation to clients affected by alcohol and drug issues who have undergone a drug withdrawal program or require assistance in controlling their drug and alcohol use.
- To provide support and assistance to enhance the woman's capacity for non-drug abusive community living, through skill acquisition, counselling, personal care activities and relapse prevention.
- To facilitate client access to other services appropriate to their health and welfare needs.
- To negotiate an "individual treatment plan" with the woman.
- To support the woman in safe, secure and affordable housing.
- To provide services for carers and families of those affected by alcohol and drug use.

WHAT WE DO

Flat Out works with women who are currently incarcerated or have been released within the last three months from an adult prison, or who have had or are having contact with the adult justice system. Flat Out aims to always be flexible in assessing our referrals. If a woman is referred who does not fit within our specific criteria we will not automatically refuse the referral.

Flat Out works within a feminist framework and is non-judgemental in its provision of service. The overall objective in service provision is to secure long term housing and support the transition for women (and their children if applicable) to live independently.

Case Workers work alongside women (and their children) to develop support plans that strive to meet the immediate and long term needs of individuals and their families. Case plans are regularly revised to ensure their relevance to women/children and to ensure their appropriateness to the individual support needs.

Flat Out offers an accessible and flexible service. We provide a range of access points including prison visits and home visits. We also provide a welcoming office space that can cater to children. It's all about what makes the woman feel most comfortable and how she wants to work with the service.

Support needs can range from low to very high. Each Case Worker works with a range of women and has a case load of twelve on average, depending on the configuration of worker hours. Assistance provided can include: housing, financial/material aid, advocacy, transport, removals, storage of belongings and referrals to services such as: legal, drug/alcohol, mental health, sexual assault, children's services and employment.

The service can offer support periods of 13 weeks for women/children in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and up to 6 months for those in the National Illicit Drug Strategy Program. Although the funding bodies are directive in their support time lines, the service is always flexible, taking into account the complexity of need and the availability of the broader service system.

The service strives to develop networks that are relevant to the diverse needs of women/children accessing Flat Out. These include: Transitional Housing Managers, Crisis Accommodation Services, Drug and Alcohol Services and a range of medical/mental health providers.

QUOTES FROM THE GIRLS

When talking about Xanex, "There's a pinch in every pack"!

"You's are lucky you's are so good, coz you're the only service I haven't ripped off or punched on with me worker"

ALI'S STORY

It's all about time really, counting time and dates and anniversaries, like tonight, that your time goes by, it's how you separate your sentence. I was released on the 29th May 2007, it was 20 days after my birthday and 10 days before my son's birthday, and I'd totally missed my only daughter's birthday, her 1st double digits! And my partner of 6 years had hooked up with this chick while I was inside. Talk about timing, we passed through the custody centre at the exact same time; he had just finished a 4 month sentence the day I was remanded. Anyway, back to Flat Out cause my new journey starts from there, the day I was called 'Girly', cheers Brook! Flat Out were the ones who called me... all the fucking time... when there was no answer, she just fucking came around and threatened to climb my balcony and haul my ass to the doctors or counsellors or anywhere else that I really needed to go to.

Since April 2007, I've had stable housing for the first time in my life; I haven't had a single Notice to vacate, no nasty letters tellin me to pay my rent. I've got access with my kids for the first time... but most massively I haven't run a habit since August 2007, for the first time since I was 13 years old.

It's all about counting days inside. And 450 days later and I stand here trying to get work, no bails, nothing over my head except for a few fines. I've got my first job interview in 10 years this week; I got my first invite to a wedding and a Halloween party... How normal is THAT!

Happy Birthday Flat out, for 7,300 days of being Flat Out amazing!



FLAT OUT COLLECTIVE REPORT

The Flat Out collective is not a perfunctory board that sits once a month and is really only there for governance, financial and legal accountability requirements. The Collective meets once a month to discuss, question and keep each other informed and up-to-date on issues such as incarceration. Most importantly we provide direction for the service and continually review our work and most importantly, the way we work.

The Collective is made up of paid workers and community members. So on top of governance, accountability, keeping our work ethical and true, trying to ensure other institutions and agencies work ethically and appropriately with our clients, the workers at Flat Out are required to participate in their own management. This makes the task of a being a paid worker much broader and greater than in other organizations. This year we have again had inspiring, fantastic workers and have welcomed new women to the Collective with some familiar faces coming back for seconds and thirds!!

So if you have one evening a month plus another 6 hours a month to be part of an organisation that:

- rattles cages,
- assists women to turn their lives around,
- supports women moving from life in prison to life in the community and often into their own home for the first time in their lives,
- reunites women with their children,
- educates the community about what sending hundreds of women to prison a year really means for our community,
- **Come and join us!!!!**

Organisations like Flat Out can only support the workers, who support the women we work with, if there is a solid managing collective at its base.

The Collective recognizes that the work at Flat Out is often one of the hardest jobs that workers have had to do. Increasingly women in prison have complex and overlapping needs arising from issues such as child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, relentless housing change and often parental change, interrupted schooling, street life, day to day racism and consequent physical and mental health issues, all of which end up being dealt with in the criminal justice system.. This is hard work to tackle and our women clients often have great difficulty accessing and staying with mainstream support services. Our workers are often working with women rejected by other services, which adds another layer of complexity when women come to Flat Out.

Flat Out's smallness and flexibility is the key to many of the achievements our clients are able to notch up, but with this smallness comes a number of difficulties which all boil down to resources. We have few and run on the smell of an oily rag. That we run as well as we do is a tribute to the skills of our finance worker and skipper and robust rambunctious cheery crew. This year we have been able to secure more funding, thanks to our work team, for various projects and specific work which has meant we

have expanded significantly, which always creates new work and unanticipated situations.

Our workers this year have embraced various community development and art-based activities to bring some diversity, creativity and fun into how Flat Out does its work. The never-ending conveyer belt of service delivery robs workers of much joy and underestimates the value of other ways of working with women to achieve the same ends.

It is really exciting that HOMELESSNESS is an issue again with the federal government!!!! It feels like that for over twenty years homelessness has been an issue that is on the fringes of government left for 'charities' to mop up. It is a relief that the right to housing and the devastating impact that homelessness has for ALL OF SOCIETY is being taken seriously by the Rudd government.

Flat Out this year saw Dallas Taylor leave us after 13 years, over half of Flat Outs life!! Dallas was a wonderful asset to the organisation and saw us through many difficult and challenging times and we honour the extraordinary contribution Dallas made to our survival and chutzpah. Flat Out had our 20th birthday celebration and produced a booklet of our Herstory and the activist herstory surrounding women's prison issues in Victoria over two decades. Written by Mary Cotter it is available on our website.

Individual members of the unpaid collective have given generously of their time and expertise. Many on our collective have full time jobs in equally challenging areas and to come to collective meetings at night to deal with a whole plethora of issues takes a great deal of commitment and good humour. We always eat together at Collective which enables us to chew through the issues on full stomachs.

Lastly we thank the workers who really are FLAT OUT. They are the ones the world sees and that women must trust. They do their work with the highest degree of professionalism, ethics, quick thinking, and courageous action, lateral thinking and give all this with a spirit of compassion, generosity and wicked humour.



SKIPPER'S REPORT

It's been a big year for Flat Out Inc. We turned 20 years old, set up a website, upgraded all our computer systems, lost a worker, gained two workers, developed some great partnerships and struggled along with the rest of the sector through the process of accreditation.

Dallas Taylor left Flat Out after 13 years of loyal service to the women and culture of the agency. Dallas started as a casual administrative worker and was then employed as a permanent worker. During this period, the service went through a number of difficult times, including funding cuts and several relocations. On behalf of everyone at Flat Out, I would like to thank Dallas for her valuable contribution and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.



Billi joins the Joelenes for a special performance at the birthday party

A significant milestone was Flat Out's 20th birthday celebration. We had a fundraising event at the Flemington/Kensington Bowling Club and raised almost \$1000. People came from far and wide and we were entertained by THE JOELENES, a local Melbourne band that were fantastic and worth seeing at a pub near you! The band generously played for free and made it a very successful night. Thanks Joelenes, your talent and enthusiasm was most appreciated.

One of our members celebrated her own 20th celebration as well. Amanda George has been on the Flat Out collective since the early beginnings, when a group of women got together and started to discuss issues and possible ways to support women pre and post incarceration. Amanda has always remained true to the original concept and been a strong advocate for women and the abolition of prisons. Twenty years on a feminist collective is a major achievement and is indicative of Amanda's commitment to social justice.

Flat Out Inc and Women's Housing Ltd successfully applied for a twelve month pilot position for an Intensive Case Worker. Brook Shearer was recruited from her current support worker position at Flat Out to take on the job, and we employed Sharon Villanueva to fill in for the duration of the project. This partnership has been able to provide support to women who have a number of complex issues to deal with pre and post release from prison. Indigenous women are prioritised and to date, feedback suggests that the enhanced support has improved access to services and provided a real opportunity for women to address issues that have contributed to recidivism. Women's Housing Ltd takes responsibility for completing priority housing applications, dispensing HEF for crisis accommodation and generally working towards improving housing options. Unfortunately the budget for this position is inadequate and Flat Out has had to contribute approximately \$20,000 to make the project viable.

The Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) approached Flat Out this year to discuss a possible partnership. At this time the existing steering committee was seeking funding to undertake a project that promoted access to justice and the human rights of prisoners in Victoria. CHRIP thought it was important that the project worker be based in a grassroots organisation that was working directly with prisoners and could provide up to date information on incarceration and related issues. CHRIP and Flat Out were successful in obtaining funding and I am pleased to say that Phoebe Barton was employed as project worker and has provided a written report for this annual report.

Flat Out was also funded by *Street Smart* to establish a website. We were granted \$4000 for this purpose and although it is a work in progress, the site is up and running and several women who are being supported by the service have contributed to the content. We are very grateful to Street Smart, as they have provided a real opportunity for us to raise the issues, educate the wider community and promote our services.

The Lord Mayors Fund allocated almost \$11,000 for the upgrading of computer systems at Flat Out. The computers we had were so old they actually groaned when turned on. Everything took twice as long as it should have and the system continually broke down, usually at a most crucial time. The upgrading made a huge difference to the service and we would like to extend our thanks to the Lord Mayors Fund for the generous donation.

Flat Out participates in a number of networks including: Opening Doors Implementation Reference Group, Northern and Western Local Area Service Networks, WISP reference Group, Corrections Victoria Stakeholders and is involved in various issue based groups through the Council to Homeless Persons. We are a small service, this has an impact on time and availability, and hence we prioritise participation and issues.

The process of accreditation has been a major drain on Flat Out and has taken us away from the core business of supporting women. The process has no resources attached and the service has struggled to get on top of things. I would like to use this opportunity to express our disappointment in the way accreditation has been presented and forced on a sector that has been under-resourced for years. Why are we going through accreditation when the Federal Government has made it absolutely clear through the white paper on homelessness that services will not operate under the same model of service that currently exists? This onerous task could result in the death of small specialist services such as Flat Out and although we support the concept of setting standards, it also makes sense to support and resource agencies through a planned process.

Flat Out has had a good and bad year, but one thing has been consistent, the high level of support provided to women pre and post incarceration. We have worked hard to provide a quality service that is responsive, respectful and true to the issues. We could have another ten workers and still struggle to meet demand.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has supported Flat Out over the last twelve months, to the workers, the collective and especially the women who generously share their lived experience.



CENTRE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF IMPRISONED PEOPLE

The Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) is a new project of Flat Out, with a vision of promoting access to justice and human rights for Victorian prisoners through individual legal services, legal education, community development, campaigning, and policy work, that is fundamentally informed by a social justice and decarceration framework; work to prevent people going to, and returning to prison.

CHRIP has four main objectives:

1. Continuity of CHRIP Steering Committee, achieved and developed Decarceration Framework and Network, demonstrated advocacy and policy role – assessed through media, events, submissions, evidence and credibility.
2. Greater and effective engagement of CHRIP with imprisoned people, formerly imprisoned people and their families - moving towards CHRIP project being led by imprisoned people, formerly imprisoned people and their families, with support from allies.
3. Legal capacity building: Successful and expanded access to justice and human rights for imprisoned people, through establishment of Prisoners Legal Service Consortium that is autonomous, self-sufficient, responsive, proactive, accountable, and respectful to needs of imprisoned people, formerly imprisoned people and their families.
4. Sound governance and accountability, in regards to: auspice organisation, trust, finances, strategic planning and policy, and evaluation.

CHRIP Background:

In February 2004 the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) convened a public planning day to discuss the establishment of a Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People. Housing organisations, welfare groups, community and private

legal services, Indigenous rights organisations and church and charity groups all participated, recognising the need for such a centre.

Stage 1 of the CHRIP project was funded for 6 months in 2007 by the Reichstein Foundation, through the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC). Karen Fletcher was employed by BMCLC as the Project Worker. In this time CHRIP:

- Wrote a report into establishing a Prisoners Legal Service (PLS) in Victoria, identifying the need for a PLS and possible models;
- Built a representative steering committee of 12 organisations to guide the project;
- Began consultation with imprisoned and formerly imprisoned people into their needs in access to justice and human rights;
- In the Legal Services Board (LSB) minor grants round, Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) with the support of CHRIP was successful in obtaining \$50,000 from the LSB to establish a 12 month Pilot Prisoners Legal Service, with 1 part-time lawyer seeing clients at the Dame Phyllis Frost and Port Phillip Prisons, which started in June 2008; and
- In the LSB major grants round, the Mental Health Community Legal Centre (MHCLC) with the support of CHRIP obtained \$60,000 (of the \$800,000 they applied for) to do a scoping project into the needs of people imprisoned with mental illnesses, and models of Prisoners Legal Services to meet these needs, which will begin in early 2009.

On 25 June 2008, Debbie Kilroy, Director of Sisters Inside, and members of the CHRIP Steering Group launched the Pilot Prisoners Legal Service at the Victorian Community Legal Centre Conference, "Leading Justice". The following day, CHRIP and the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) hosted a forum entitled: *Prisons, Strategies for Justice and Decarceration*. Up to 80 organisations from the community and legal sector attended the forum, and identified the following key priorities and strategies:

- The need to communicate broadly and strategically the financial as well as the human costs of imprisonment and increasing imprisonment rates;
- A continued lack of awareness surrounding women prisoner issues in and upon release from prison;
- Issues impacting imprisoned transgender people with a focus on vulnerability to sexual and physical violence in custody;
- The need to organise to oppose prevent the building of new prisons;
- The need to work with/alongside local government and their services around post-release and community development issues;
- Benefits of working with academics to increase research/evidence base capacities and to resource test case litigation;
- The necessity for a decarceration network that can pool and share information, develop email and website links, meet quarterly, develop and sustain database of pre and post release services, develop strategic alliances and potentially hold a equivalent forum in prisons;
- The need to share/minimise risks between organisations of speaking out on prison issues – threats to funding – silencing of community/service sectors;
- Defining and linking service provision to decarceration objectives;

With these priorities, CHRIP is developing a Decarceration Framework, which will be completed through consultation with imprisoned people, formerly imprisoned people and their families, and a Victorian Decarceration Network of organisations and individuals working together around imprisonment and related issues for the benefit and safety of the whole community.

Current CHRIP Work:

Flat Out employed Phoebe Barton as the CHRIP Project Worker in September 2008. Since then Phoebe has been seeking further funding for CHRIP to work with young criminalised women in Victoria through a multi-media storytelling project, doing research into funding models for community organisations in Australia and the USA, developing CHRIP's governance, strategic plan, Steering Committee terms of reference, and strengthening community networks. CHRIP has been involved in government inquiries, done extensive media, and made an ombudsman complaint about the failure of the Victoria Police and GEO Groups Australia to evacuate the Melbourne Custody Centre after a bomb threat to the adjoining Melbourne Magistrates Court. CHRIP has also been developing pro-bono relationships with law firms, and ran two training days of Effective Advocacy with Imprisoned People, to garner volunteers for the Prisoners Legal Service, and increase the capacity of Victorian lawyers and advocates to respond to the needs of imprisoned people.



Artwork by Melinda Naden

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE (ICMI)

Flat Out has successfully received money for an Intensive Case Management position. The Intensive Case Worker will have half the normal case load, to work intensively with women with complex needs. The ICMI position is Commonwealth funded from the Innovations and Investment Fund, it is a three year funded project and Flat Out was one of only a few to receive this funding (allocated in 12 month lots upon review). It is a State wide initiative targeting people with high & complex needs, requiring a response which is more intensive than General SAAP Case Management service delivery. The position also has a focus on community development, this component will allow time for networking, community education, participating in community events and contributing to the community development sector. The position targets and prioritises Indigenous Women who are at risk of being incarcerated or are currently incarcerated.

At the time of writing, Brook Shearer is starting this position soon and really looking forward to being able to work more intensively with fewer women. Most of our girls really need more support than what any service can actually provide; their issues are complex and multifaceted and require time and commitment. Brook looks forward to being able to work within this context and also focus some of her time on community development and community education.

Working with Indigenous Women

Indigenous women are over represented in Australia's prison and legal systems. Within the last two years, Flat Out has made significant attempts to broaden its network with Indigenous women, services and workers. Our current networks allow us to access Indigenous services for our Indigenous clients, and allow reciprocal referrals between agencies. Flat Out has an ongoing relationship with Aunty Lyn Killeen, the Aboriginal Well Being Officer at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC), and a commitment to supporting the work she does with Indigenous women within the DPFC. Flat Out workers have attended the NAIDOC day celebrations at the DPFC in the past three years, in support of the Indigenous women, past and present, who have experienced incarceration.

Flat Out is committed to Indigenous issues. Since early 2007 one of the Casework positions at Flat Out has unofficially had an Indigenous focus, allowing us to prioritise Indigenous women involved in the service, and ensuring that Indigenous women in prison are provided with a culturally appropriate response to their needs. As mentioned above, Flat Out recently applied to Department of Human Services for funding for an ICMI (Intensive Case Management Initiative) position: this will be specifically Indigenous focused. The ICMI Caseworker will have a case load of only 6 complex needs women to ensure that they receive an intensive response to their needs.

In our commitment to being a service that Indigenous women feel they are a part of, we have made an effort to provide a holistic, flexible and informal environment, one that listens and responds to identified needs. Upon request from a few of the Indigenous women we work with, we display Indigenous Art (being rented or on loan from some of the women), we have the Koori Mail delivered regularly, and one of our women donated her own flag to put up in Flat Out to signify our absolute dedication and commitment to working with Indigenous women in more practical ways.

Flat Out also has a close working relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, who provides legal services to the majority of the Indigenous women we work with. Flat Out case workers work closely with lawyers to ensure that our clients receive fair and appropriate treatment within the justice system. The case worker who works primarily with Indigenous women regularly attends the Koori Court in Broadmeadows and advocates on behalf of the client and engages in discussion about support of the client with the Elders who preside at the court with the Magistrate.

It is an ongoing commitment of Flat Out to provide a culturally appropriate service.

FLAT OUT 20TH BIRTHDAY PARTY/FUNDRAISER

Flat Out celebrated its 20th birthday with a party/fundraiser on Friday 17th October 2008 at the Flemington/Kensington Bowling Club, Flemington.

Over 60 supporters attended the party and enjoyed plenty of good food, great atmosphere, fantastic music provided by 'The Joelenes' who generously donated their time for free and played great music to dance to and a song about Flat Out workers performed by Beth Wilson, Health Commissioner, Victoria and accompanied by Billi and Brook.

Founding Collective Member Amanda George spoke about the history of Flat Out, the struggles for funding and recognition that Flat Out was needed, various community actions, numerous campaigns, community development projects and work, acknowledgements of past and present workers, past and current collective members, friends, community organisations and particularly the women and children over the past 20 years, who have sought out, been supported and resourced by Flat Out. It is the many women, whose stories, experiences, tenacity, sorrows, triumphs and courage, make the work of Flat Out unique.

Several women who have done time and are working with Flat Out shared some of their experiences and added to the night. We thank them for sharing a part of their life and making it a great celebration. Thanks also to Vicki, who acknowledged traditional owners past and present.

Flat Out was fortunate enough to have donations for a door prize, raffle prizes, in-kind donations, helping out on the night and gratefully acknowledge the following businesses, organisations & individuals:

Revolver Malvern – guitar
Somebody's Daughter Theatre – painting
Helen Barnacle – Signed book
Deb Kilroy – Signed book
Jane-Louise Florist, Flemington – voucher
VACRO – donation of wine
Nat, Heather, Amanda Kingston, Dallas Taylor, Flat Out Collective Members-
Amanda, Amy, Jo, Maggie, Karren, Shelley

FLAT OUT'S 20TH BIRTHDAY PARTY



*Flat Out staff,
Collective members,
friends and family
party on at the 20th
Birthday Party*



MORE PHOTOS!!!



**Infection Control Song (Traditional Folk Song)
With Words by Beth Wilson**

-Chorus-

They're ain't no bugs (x2)
They're ain't no bugs on me
There may be bugs
On some of you mugs
But they're ain't no bugs on me

Prison nurse didn't give a curse
Said they're ain't no bugs on me
I didn't give a toss and
I ain't gonna wash
Cos they're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

Forensic physician
Made a big decision
There'd be no bugs on her
She made a pact to
Clean up her act
And now she smells so pure

-Chorus-

I was on the list
Of an orthodontist
There were no bugs on me
He got pissed
Hygiene got missed
Now I've got Hep C

-Chorus-

Surgeon got an urgin'
To eat a bowl of sturgeon
While operatin' on my knee
Silly old love
Didn't wear his gloves
And he infected me

-Chorus-

Professor No-worry
In a great big hurry
Said they're ain't no bugs on me
Didn't wash his hands
Before touchin' my glands
Now some of his bugs are in me

-Chorus-

Flat Out verses

Moira Rayner
Went to Western Australia
Said they're ain't no bugs
on me
She went to see a man
Ended up in the can
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

When she got out
She went to Flat Out
They're ain't no bugs on me
They got her a flat
Where she's still at
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

Hard workin' Dallas
Didn't wanna tell us
They're ain't no bugs on me
She started to pine
For a glass of wine
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

Emily's a Gothic brat
Who loves her cat
They're ain't no bugs on me
She won't wake up
Til she's put on make up
They're ain't no bugs on me

We all love Brook
She's really got The Look
They're ain't no bugs on me
She's pierced her nose
Got tats on her toes
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

Big Maori Michele
Said you never can tell
They're ain't no bugs on me
You better believe her
She's a quiet achiever
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

Billi Clarke
Didn't give an ...ark
They're ain't no bugs on me
She said I feel real beaut
Ridin' in my ute
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus-

So we know all about
Our friends at Flat Out
They're ain't no bugs on me
We love you plenty
Now that you're twenty
They're ain't no bugs on me

-Chorus x 2-

“Where the Heart is” RDNS Homeless Person’s Community Festival

The *Where the Heart is* Community Festival is a day which celebrates the skills and optimism of the diverse community groups who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in inner and metropolitan Melbourne. 2008 was the fifth year of the festival.



The festival promotes meaningful participation, social inclusion, skills development and positive interactions through music and performance, creative arts, recreation activities, the sharing and enjoyment of great food and drink, socialising and fun. The development of the festival involves workshops, meetings and art activities in the months leading up to the festival. The festival is produced through partnerships between more than 30 organisations and involves collaboration, contribution, and participation by up to 1,000 people experiencing homelessness and 120 workers and volunteers.

The aim of the festival is to create and develop an event in a public space where people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are central to the ownership and conduct of the day. It provides opportunities to challenge myths and stereotypes about homelessness, and provide positive images of the creative contribution people experiencing homelessness can make to our community. The festival also aims to showcase and celebrate the wide range of skills and talents among the target groups and to provide opportunities for them to connect with others, to develop relationships and explore opportunities for community participation beyond the scope of the festival.

The involvement of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the planning and development of the festival has increased each year, reflecting the value of the festival being a regular event. There is a core group of people who have been involved each year, and a changing group who join up and take part at festival time. For the past two years, Flat Out has actively participated in the planning and organising of the festival. We have a stall which provides information, badges, stickers and some other fun things to give out.

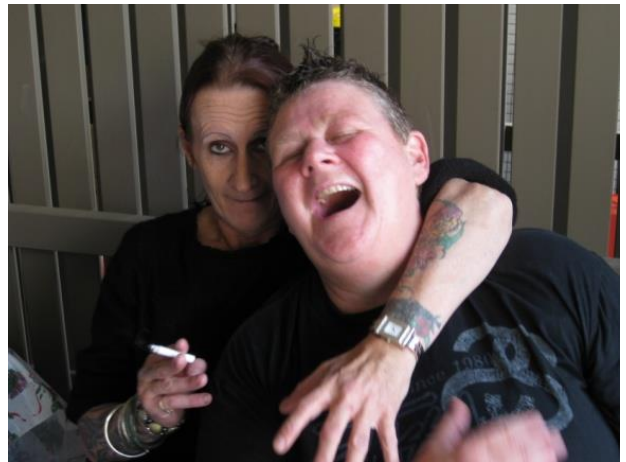
Leading up to the festival, Flat Out had a community artist, Jessica Neath, come out to the office and run some art groups with our women. The groups screen printed t-shirts with the women’s own designs; each woman got a t-shirt to take home and printed a few more copies for volunteers to wear on the day of the festival. The women got a real buzz out of seeing their t-shirt designs being worn by workers, volunteers and staff.



Several of our women help us on the day. Last year, two of our women who are enthusiastic pet lovers staffed a “Pet Parade”. A Pet Marquee provided food, water, grooming, toys for pets, and a place for their owners to rest. Our women worked with Lort Smith Animal Hospital volunteers and Veterinarians in providing information and advice to pet owners, they provided the parade winners with their ribbons and prizes! A lot of fun had by all!

XMAS PARTY PICS '08





Flat Out Publications

Call Me By My First Name – book - Women's issues pre and post release from prison - published 2007 – cost \$10 / \$5 concession

Flat Out Inc.: A Brief History – Mary Cotter – published 2008 – cost \$10

These are available from Flat Out – email - mail@flatout.org.au or by ph. 03 9372 6155.

