

ANNUAL REPORT | 2012 – 2013

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Flat Out INC
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“fighting to protect the human rights of women in prison”

Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm except Public Holidays

Design by chalk creative: chalkcreative.com.au

Photography by Jessie Boylan & Phoebe Barton



HOW TO GET TO FLAT OUT BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Craigieburn line train to Newmarket Station, exit train station and travel through the railway underpass to Pin Oak Crescent.
Once here, turn left and Flat Out is located at no. 54 Pin Oak Crescent, Flemington, after The Girl in the Green Scarf shop.
Tram No. 57 – West Maribyrnong from Elizabeth St, Melbourne and travels along Racecourse Road, Flemington to Stop Number 26 – Newmarket Plaza, cross the road to Newmarket Plaza/Safeway, then travel through the railway underpass to Pin Oak Crescent.
Once here, turn left and Flat Out is located at no. 54 Pin Oak Crescent, Flemington, after The Girl in the Green Scarf shop.

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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 that make up part of the Kulin Nation, as the traditional owners of the land on which Flat Out is housed.

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 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.

We accept responsibility for challenging racism, exclusion and oppression in all its forms.



Special thank you

To all the women Flat Out has worked with over the past year and past 25 years. Thank you. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with you. Thank you for sharing your stories, insights, courage, advice and strength. Without you we would not be here.

Thank you to our funders

COMMONWEALTH & STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING – NGOTGP (Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program)

Louise Cahill, Contract Manager – Drugs & Mental Health Team, Health Strategies Branch

Josephine Jansen, Program Manager, Drug Treatment, Rural Outreach and Support

Eileen Bleakley & Cheryl Heath, Program Co-ordinators, NGOTGP and Improved Services

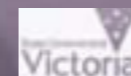
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - ADIS

David Wright, Information Analyst, Information, Analysis and Reporting, Mental Health Drugs Regions Division, Department of Health
ADIS Helpdesk

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Specialist Homelessness Services arising from the National Affordable Housing Agreement
Jane Turner, Agency Connection Officer, Local Connections, Brimbank Melton Area, West Division

Dayle Schwartzfeger, Program and Service Advisor, Community Programs Unit, North & West Metropolitan Region
Department of Human Services, ICMI (Intensive Case Management Initiative)



NON-GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Grassroots fundraising and donations
The R E Ross Trust
The Reichstein Foundation
Sidney Myer Fund
Street Smart Australia
Street Smart – Café Smart Grant
WCF Thomas Charitable Fund

DONATIONS

Amanda George
Gloria Prentice, Flat Out Management Collective
Jill Prior & family
Rachael Fry
FOFO dance party supporters

Flat Out would also like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support, advice, assistance, contribution of time, skills and resources to Flat Out and CHRIP

- Aboriginal Liaison/Koorie Court
- Adam Robinson, CEO Street Smart Australia
- Adona El-Murr, Flat Out Management Collective
- Alexandra Tink, WISE Employment
- Amanda George, Flat Out Management Collective
- Amanda Storey, Consumer Action Legal Centre
- Anthony Kelly, Tamar Hopkins & the team at Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre
- Antoinette Braybrook and the team, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
- Ashurst Australia
- Aunty Diane Kerr, Wurundjeri Elder and Traditional Custodian
- Barbara Whalen, Freehills
- Bree Carlton, Monash University
- Charandev Singh, Human Rights Advocate, Activist and Community Educator
- CHRIP Working Group: Emma Russell, Lorena Solin, Rachel Barrett, Terri Silvertree, Liz Patterson, Jan Black, Lara Spalinger, Ashleigh Trimmer and Phoebe Marshall
- Claire Waghorne, Samantha Ryan and the programs team at DPFC
- Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)
- Community Housing Federation Victoria (CHFV)
- Daniel Tome, Senior Adviser, Perpetual Private-Advisory
- David Provan, Adult Parole Board
- Debbie Kilroy, Sisters Inside
- Donna Williamson
- Eastern Emergency Relief Network
- Emma Russell, Monash University
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- First Step Clinic
- Fitzroy Legal Service
- Forensicare
- Gay and Lesbian Switchboard
- Glen Fairweather and Prison Fellowship
- Gloria Prentice, Flat Out Management Collective
- Good Company
- Grill'd Healthy Burgers, Local Matters Program
- Hanover Cheltenham Housing Services
- Harm Reduction Victoria
- Homeground Services
- Hugh De Kretser, Federation of Community Legal Centres & HRLC
- Inside Access at the Mental Health Legal Centre
- Jacinta Tyrrell, WISE Employment
- Jessie Boylan, photo-media artist and photographer
- Jill Prior, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Jobs Australia, in particular Caroline Ryan
- Joel Pringle, Australians for Affordable Housing
- Jo Smith, Flat Out Management Collective
- John Walsh, Bridge of Hope Foundation
- Jude McCulloch, Monash University
- Katherine Fairest
- Kay Dyson, Flat Out Management Collective
- Kayla Ta, Women's Housing Ltd
- Kaz Gurney, Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre - a division of Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre
- Kim Pate, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
- Liz Shield, Flat Out Management Collective
- Local Area Service Network (LASN), North & West Metropolitan Region
- Meghan Fitzgerald, Fitzroy Legal Service Inc.
- Mehran Erfanian, Centrax Computer Services
- Michelle McDonnell, Smart Justice
- Monique Thompson, New Horizons
- Nicola Cowling, ANEX
- Paul Arnold and Margot Powell, Inside Access at the Mental Health Legal Centre
- Phoebe Barton, photographer
- PILCH Homeless Persons Legal Clinic (HPLC)
- PILCH CONNECT
- Public Interest Law Clearing House (Vic) Inc. (PILCH)
- Prison Network Ministries
- Rotary Lions Club Op Shop, Flemington
- Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program
- Sally Goldner, Transgender Victoria
- Salvation Army Housing Services, Eastcare
- Salvation Army, SASHS
- Sam Biondo, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
- Sisters Inside, QLD
- St Kilda Crisis Centre
- Steve Womersley, Communications Worker, Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre
- Susan Shepherd
- Susan Zielin, Women's Housing Ltd
- Tom Hall, North Western Mental Health
- Vincentcare Community Housing, Glenroy
- Vince Chadwick, the 'AGE'
- WhiteDog GreenFrog team and Haleemon Woodard, IT consultants,
- Women's Housing Ltd
- Working Group for Young People in adult prison and solitary confinement campaign: Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre, Human Rights Law Centre, Jesuit Social Services, Melissa Chung-Victoria Legal Aid, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Social Services Council and Youthlaw
- Yarra Community Housing

Friends of Flat Out

Thank you to the amazing Flat Out supporters and contributors who have given time, energy and resources to Flat Out. We apologise if we have neglected to include you in the above list. We would be happy to honour your contribution in our forthcoming annual report.

FLAT OUT MANAGEMENT COLLECTIVE MEMBERS JULY 2012 – JUNE 2013

Amanda George, Crystal McKinnon, Jo Smith, Kay Dyson and Liz Shield, Gloria Prentice (co-opted) Adona El-Murr and Karren Walker – resigned

**FLAT OUT EMPLOYEES
JULY 2012 – JUNE 2013 – CURRENT**

Annie Nash

Executive Officer

Phoebe Barton

*Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People
Project Coordinator (parental leave April 2013-April 2014)*

Chantelle Higgs

*Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People
Project Coordinator*

Michelle Montague

Finance Manager

Michele Old

Administrative Resource

Sharon Villanueva

Outreach Support and Advocacy & Intensive Case Management Initiative

Elise Pointer

Outreach Support and Advocacy

Sarah Jones

Outreach Support and Advocacy

PREVIOUS EMPLOYEES

JULY 2012 – JUNE 2013

Jennifer Eva

*Outreach Support and Advocacy-resigned
December 2012*



Our Vision

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

The origin of Flat Out

Flat Out was first established in 1988 with the aim of developing housing opportunities for women exiting prison. Now in our 25th year of operation, Flat Out continues to advocate for more and better housing for women. We are a support and advocacy service that works with women who are criminalised, with a focus on women pre and post release prison. We also focus on women with a broad spectrum of support needs, with an emphasis on women needing intensive support (often longer term support) to address the underlying circumstances of criminalisation, including homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse.

Primary Task

- To support women who are exiting prison or who are at risk of being imprisoned, by providing access and referrals to appropriate and affordable transitional, supported, private, public or community housing
- To provide and link women to appropriate support, education and information to re-establish them in the community post-release
- To work with women to prevent their re-incarceration

Service Overview

Flat Out is a state wide advocacy and support service for women who have had contact with the criminal justice and/or prison system in Victoria. Flat Out receives government funding through the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health and Ageing and occasional project funds from various sources to enhance its capacity to provide innovative and effective services and advocacy.

Flat Out is a community based organisation that is anti-hierarchical; in keeping with its feminist philosophy and principles. Flat Out embraces fairness and equality through the essential roles of governance, management and leadership that are underpinned by a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and delegated authority.

Flat Out leads and participates in research and community education, seeking to inform the community and other service providers about the issues that occur for women in the prison system. Flat Out advocates for women who have experienced incarceration, and works towards improving the rights and conditions of women in prison. Flat Out works towards preventing women from going to prison, and keeping them out of prison once they are released.

Through community involvement and education, advocacy and research, Flat Out works towards having a strong voice in the prison abolition movement in Australia, in the hope that eventually prisons will not be seen as a legitimate arm of the justice system, but will be viewed as an antiquated, cruel and ultimately ineffective institution.

Core Work

The Flat Out approach to organisational and program development is underpinned by a commitment to feminist philosophy, continuous quality improvement and best practice. Flat Out's current Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013, comprises of seven Key Result Areas:

- Direct Support Services
- Organisational Development
- Partnerships and Projects
- Innovation and Service Development
- Financial Sustainability
- Involvement of Women's Lived Experience
- Public Profile and Systemic Advocacy

DIRECT SUPPORT SERVICES

Flat Out's direct service activities to women who have had contact with the criminal justice and/or prison system in Victoria comprises a range of support and case planning services including: information and referral, outreach and intensive case management support for women with high and complex needs.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a small community organisation, Flat Out operates on a limited pool of dedicated employees and collective members to achieve the organisation's vision and purpose. The new mandatory requirement to achieve accreditation as part of Department of Human Services Victoria funding, now means there is an added dimension to all operational aspects including the identification of internal system gaps and the development of new and improved systems for organisational business and service operations. As part of this process Flat Out has identified the need to further refine its organisational structure, role and purpose, and further strengthen systems for effective management of its financial and human resources.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

Partnership development is seen as an important aspect of maintaining a strong, healthy and sustainable organisation. Partnerships will frequently translate into improved access to resources and services for the women Flat Out seeks to support, as well as a heightened ability of the organisation to contribute to innovation, best practice and systemic advocacy.

INNOVATION AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Flat Out has more than 24 years experience in delivering support services to women at risk of incarceration or who are exiting the prison system. Over this time the organisation has built a solid reputation for service quality and professionalism as well as an ability to effectively engage with women within a strengths-based practice framework. Innovation and a commitment to on-going service development are seen as core components to maintaining a relevant and unique service.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

While Flat Out receives recurrent government funding as well as funding and grants from non-government sources for specific initiatives, the organisation is not adequately funded for service development, administration or infrastructure costs. Although Flat Out has continued to grow, dedicating resources to organisational development and improved services, further work needs to be achieved to generate diverse income sources in order to achieve the future directions of the organisation.

INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE

Flat Out is committed to ensuring that the voices of women with a lived experience of the criminal justice system are both heard and valued. This has been evident in a number of past Flat Out publications including *Flat Out – A Brief Herstory* and *Call Me By My First Name* and the *Digital Story Telling Project*. Flat Out believes that women's lived experience also needs to be incorporated into the way the organisation reviews and develops programs and services, as well as to educate and politicise the broader community.

PUBLIC PROFILE AND SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

Over its 24 years of operation Flat Out has achieved a unique and respected position within the sector as a systemic advocate for and on behalf of women at risk of incarceration and women who are exiting prison. This role is an important part of Flat Out's commitment to the abolition of the prison system and to the human rights of all women involved in the criminal justice system.

Since 1988, the theories and values that underpin Flat Out's work have remained constant. Through community involvement, education, advocacy and research, Flat Out works towards having a strong voice in the prison abolition movement in Australia. Our vision is that ultimately prisons will be broadly viewed as antiquated, cruel and ineffective institutions.

Not unlike the movement to abolish slavery, the movement to end racism, the women's liberation movement, and the movement to end homelessness; prison abolition is about ending inequality and injustice. We see all these movements as interconnected.

Help us celebrate our 25th birthday and make a valued financial contribution to our work

Donating to flat out allows us to continue our individual and social change work. Your contribution, however big or small, supports our work, and empowers us to advocate with and for criminalised and imprisoned women in victoria. All contributions are tax deductible and honoured through our annual report.

You can make a tax deductible donation at:
www.Givenow.Com.Au/flatout

Flat Out's first Annual Report, 1991.

Shelter is a basic human right.

Women and children experience unequal access to shelter because of social and economic inequalities.

Flat Out seeks to redress this inequality.

Flat Out has a particular focus on homeless female prisoners, ex-prisoners or offenders and their children because they confront extreme discrimination in relation to housing access.

Flat Out is celebrating its 25th year of operation. It's an important landmark and an important time for critical reflection-particularly in light of unprecedented criminalisation and imprisonment of women. Flat Out's journey over the coming year will include a further partnership with Monash University in reviewing Flat Out's social change and advocacy role-what we have done well, and how we can expand our impact.

Flat Out continues to be an organisation that is run by and for women. This is an achievement in and of itself. Over the past 25 years, many women's organisations have gone to the wall with cultural, political and economic changes that brought about their closure.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of our 25 year journey.

A very special thank you to all the women who have strived to maintain our values and our vision over the years: most importantly Amanda George; activist, cage rattler, lawyer, teacher, writer and founding member of Flat Out. Amanda has worked tirelessly to sustain and grow Flat Out as a dynamic independent community organisation; by women, with women, for women. Amanda has been leading and inspiring Flat Out since 1988. Over this time Amanda has received many well-earned community awards and honours for her achievements. Amanda continues to lead and inspire women at Flat Out. Thank you Amanda; you are well loved by your colleagues and fellow activists.

Throughout this past year Flat Out has continued to provide high quality support services; linked to our systemic advocacy and social change work. We have achieved this by combining the highest level of skill, commitment and passion-constantly inspired by the courageous women we serve. The Management Collective of Flat Out is privileged to have maintained an extraordinary hard working, highly skilled, innovative and dynamic team. We are immensely grateful to all our employees and volunteers for their work.

We welcomed a new Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People Project (CHRIP) Coordinator Chantelle Higgs (replacing Phoebe Barton on parental leave). Chantelle has come to Flat Out with swags of skills from her extensive personal, community law and youth work journeys.

Flat Out is very pleased to announce the safe arrival of Phoebe's beautiful baby Joni, and Liz's beautiful baby Clancy. Cause for many celebrations and smiling women at Flat Out.

We are also very grateful and wish to honour the contribution of partners, colleagues and fellow social change activists - locally, nationally and internationally. It's immensely empowering and enriching to belong to an international and highly regarded social movement that is working to end prisons.

Over the past year we have affirmed and improved Flat Out's funding, with the majority of our funding now confirmed through until June 2015. This is notwithstanding a small projected deficit,

which we hope will be ameliorated through the kind support of our core funders. The Flat Out Management Collective is very grateful for the funding and support we have achieved. We are also very pleased that Flat Out has been recredited following an enormous amount of work and commitment to building a quality organisation. The team of Flat Out is to be commended for their engagement with this important and demanding process. Flat Out was recommended for recreditation without need for immediate improvements. Flat Out has embraced opportunities for future quality improvements which were identified through the accreditation self-assessment and external review process.

An effective Management Collective recruitment strategy has ensured that the Management Collective has been maintained with a strong complement of skills required for the effective governance of the organisation. During 2012-2013 we welcomed and co-opted Gloria Prentice to the Management Collective. Gloria brings a breadth of skill and experience. Gloria is currently employed as an Alcohol and Drug Clinician with Odyssey House.

All Flat Out Management Collective meetings were well attended and quorate. We implemented a new reporting system, bi-monthly management collective meetings, updated our policies and procedures and participated in regular working group meetings to oversee financial management and fund raising, employment and human resource management, and communications and public relations.

The new management structure that has evolved over the last 3 years has shown itself to be appropriate, flexible with good boundaries between governance and operational activity.

The Management Collective has focused on ensuring:

- **The legal and financial requirements of the organisation are met**
- **Setting the overall direction of the organisation**
- **Accountability for organisational activities and decisions**
- **Ensuring that employees perform to job descriptions and organisational policies and procedures**

The Flat Out Management Collective members have furthermore supported the work of Flat Out through participation in a range of activities relating to our mission of ending women's criminalisation and imprisonment, as well as being active in community and sector development opportunities including:

- **Stop the TAFE cuts rallies and events**
- **Participation in CHRIP advocacy and activism trainings and other activities including the ABOLITION NOW forum (attended by more than a hundred community members on a week night in the middle of winter!)**
- **Reviewing Flat Out's policies and procedures and delegation of authority manual**
- **The Management Collective and CHRIP Volunteers have been active in supporting, organising and running fun and fund raising activities**
- **Public speaking engagements including the Association of Neighbourhood Houses Conference in Ballarat**
- **Participation in relevant external training opportunities**
- **Regular and effective use of mainstream and social media**
- **Revamping the Flat Out website and generating strong support through our face book presence**
- **Developing a social investment policy and strategy for Flat Out to grow and be sustained in its social change and systemic advocacy work**

Our expanded premises at 52 Pin Oak Crescent has been enormously successful in meeting our service expansion needs and a number of community organisations use this space on a regular basis. We are very grateful to our funders and community for supporting these important quality improvements.

With unprecedented expansion of police and prisons in Victoria, the challenges for Flat Out continue. There has been a higher demand for our services and Flat Out has exceeded all funding targets. Sustainable funding for the Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) has continued to be an important focus as we continue to maintain our vital systemic advocacy and social change work and community education. In particular we need to refute law and order campaigning and the trend towards more police and prisons as a primary solution to creating safer communities.

The Management Collective and employees are to be commended for their commitment and enthusiasm in continuing to support the individual and systemic advocacy needs of criminalised women and women exiting prison.

Thank you again to all the individuals and organisations that have supported the work of Flat Out over the past 25 years. We look forward to your ongoing support and involvement over the coming year; your support sustains us in so many important ways.

Flat Out is in a strong position and looks forward to another great year. In the same way we seek to end homelessness, poverty and trauma-we will continue to exercise our freedom and right to challenge the failure and harm of the prison industrial complex.

Flat Out Management Collective



“A very special thank you to all the women who have strived to maintain our values and our vision over the years: most importantly Amanda George; activist, cage rattler, lawyer, teacher, writer and founding member of Flat Out. Amanda has worked tirelessly to sustain and grow Flat Out as a dynamic independent community organisation; by women, with women, for women. Amanda has been leading and inspiring Flat Out since 1988. Over this time Amanda has received many well-earned community awards and honours for her achievements. Amanda continues to lead and inspire women at Flat Out. Thank you Amanda; you are well loved by your colleagues and fellow activists.”

The work of Flat Out builds on the intrinsic connections between service delivery and systemic social change work that has been central since Flat Out's inauguration. This model ensures that the individual needs of women who are criminalised are met alongside work to address broader structural issues such as poverty, institutional racism and violence against women. There is a symbiotic relationship between how we work on an individual and systemic level; we achieve this by creating learning links between the women we support, the environments in which they live, the environment which Flat Out occupies, and the broader community. We place a high emphasis and regard on all people's right to access information and support to enable them to reach their full potential. The learning links are visible throughout our work - starting with our vision, and articulated through our individual support and social change work and in our outcomes for women.

Being part of this activity and vision is an absolute honour and privilege.

Flat Out draws on internationally informed decarceration strategies as a critical foundation of our work. We strongly oppose the criminalisation and imprisonment of women as a means of correcting social and economic harm and injustice. Our aim is to keep women out of prison, support them to leave prison, and continue to support them once they are released from prison. An important pillar of our work is to work with women to challenge all the barriers that women face in achieving freedom and equality.

Flat Out honours women's rights and capacity to seek information through dedicating resources to the provision of information and education in and beyond the prison walls: this takes many forms; individual and group work, formal and informal presentations, the development of information based resources, the use of our website and social media, education sessions in the maximum security women's prison and through our training room at Flat Out where we run regular forums and events that are open to the community, (including women we support). Flat Out draws extensively on the knowledge and wisdom of the women we support by placing a high value on all forms of input and feedback; including formal and informal feedback. Flat Out consults with women in and beyond prison about the information based sessions they seek to have in the prison, and evaluate each session once delivered. We encourage self-advocacy and self-determination to reduce women's reliance on service systems for knowledge and resources. Whilst we are not always approved to run these sessions in the prison, Flat Out endeavours to make these opportunities available to women once they are in the community.

The vast majority of women we support experience homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and other forms of systemic violence - including histories of childhood abuse, sexual assault and discrimination, with the vast majority of women having experienced out of home care and some form of institutionalisation. Many of the women we support are also grappling with poor physical and mental health and addiction. The culmination of multiple traumas' can sadly lead women into cycles of criminalisation, incarceration and re-criminalisation as the community fails to address personal, social and economic harm and distress. Flat Out appreciates there is no simple solution; however it is very clear that prison expansion, criminalising and locking more women up - is not the answer.

Flat Out's approach to our work requires that we have a strong, dynamic, evidence based foundation to our work - we are continually building and rebuilding our frameworks for achieving

individual and systemic change. Flat Out prides itself on being a learning and adaptive organisation. Ensuring we are resilient, adaptive and dynamic requires a continual focus on learning in and beyond our organisation. All participants in our organisation; employees, Management Collective, clients, volunteers and stakeholders are encouraged and supported to participate in a range of internal and external learning forums that increase our capacity to achieve our vision with knowledge and integrity. The learning environment is crucial in contextualising the harm we all experience, and building our skills and resilience to tackle these harms including vicarious harm. In this report we include information about the various education opportunities that have been created through Flat Out and its approach.

Flat Out continues to challenge systems that are class, race and gender based; and discriminatory and punitive in outlook and response. Our vision is that women will no longer be invisible; their voices will be heard; and we will walk with them to ensure that as a community we address the underlying social circumstances that underpin women's criminalisation and imprisonment. There is no compelling argument or evidence base for putting women in jail. On the contrary, there is a strong evidence base for alternatives. Flat Out seeks to position its work as an alternative to criminalisation and prison.

There is also an unflinching focus within Flat Out on engaging the broader community in and behind our work. Apart from our social value, we provide enormous economic value. We save Victorians money. We are a small organisation in funding terms, but we have an extremely talented base of volunteers, pro bono providers and partnering organisations that enable us to punch high above our real weight. Together we have built a multimillion dollar, independent, community organisation that is advocating for an end to homelessness, and an end to prisons. Good Work!

It costs about \$6000 per year for Flat Out to support one woman in the community-compare this with more than \$100,000 per year, per woman, in prison.

Early in 2011 Flat Out was formally accredited by QICSA. This year we have been re-accredited by QIP, (formerly QICSA). As part of this process Flat Out, alongside reviewers, identified future quality improvements. Whilst the accreditation processes are at times gruelling and can feel like it's taking us away from our main game, we acknowledge the leaps in improvements that can be achieved through focus. Flat Out is pleased to be re-accredited and is planning implementation of future quality improvements. We remain hopeful that government will acknowledge the need to adequately resource continuous quality improvements and service development in line with the increasing demand for our services.

Flat Out has exceeded its funding and service contract targets across the board. Over the past year we supported 89 women in their journeys. We also responded to significant numbers of requests for secondary consultation. In this climate of unprecedented prison expansion, a climate where every day is a new record in terms of the number of imprisoned people-all community organisations need to 'grasp the nettle' and consider capacity for providing advocacy and support that enables people to stay out of prison, or not return to prison. Prison is the worst possible outcome for individuals and communities. Prisons entrench rather than resolve harm. The alternative is for communities to ensure that people are able to live free from harm and violence, have access to housing, income, education and social supports and therapeutic services and support where needed. It's also crucial for all homelessness services, community legal centres, drug and alcohol treatment services and all other relevant services to advocate strongly for the maintenance of community based services to imprisoned women (and men), particularly for people imprisoned for short

periods. The vast majority of people imprisoned are for periods less than one year. When a person is stripped of all social connections and support, their chance for survival in the prison and in the community post release prison is severely compromised. We are very pleased that through the work we have done through our education and advocacy program that more and more services are feeding back they are now engaging in and beyond the prison walls.

Flat Out has maintained and expanded its partnerships, protocols and MOU's with a range of organisations in the community. We have protocols with 5 housing agencies and opening access to transitional housing properties. Flat Out is not funded to provide 7 day, 24 hour support; we therefore have support protocols with 24 hour emergency services including the St Kilda Crisis Centre. We also have protocols with community legal centres for front door access to appropriate legal advice and assistance - alongside strong working relationships with a number of individual private lawyers, barristers and firms, and a protocol with the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for our Women's Leadership Program.

Flat Out is continually working to increase opportunities for women to access transitional and long term housing. In the past year we have maintained most nomination rights to transitional housing which has been a critical opportunity in offsetting some of the discrimination that exists for criminalised women obtaining housing.

A further highlight of the past year has been the broadening and strengthening of our social change work achieved through the confirmation of further funding for our project, the Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People, CHRIP. Over the past twelve months Flat Out has consolidated its training and advocacy role through the generous support of its philanthropic partners.

Throughout this report there are many examples of the collaborative nature and importance of this work. Please read the CHRIP report herein for an overview of achievements.

(Please see individual acknowledgments at the beginning of this report). We look forward to your ongoing support and commitment to this vital work.

Congratulations and warm appreciation to everyone who has contributed to Flat Out and CHRIP 2012-2013, and over the past 25 years.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year/s.

If you haven't already, please consider our monthly giving program to support our important social change and systemic advocacy work.

Annie Nash
Executive Officer

www.flatout.org.au

"The women we work with demonstrate incredible strength, resilience and courage in the face of extreme and often heartbreaking circumstances. Their lives and that of their families and loved ones are put under enormous stress, and when women are imprisoned the rebuilding of lives is often a tough and demanding process. Flat Out is walking alongside women to repeal the damage and rebuild life; brick by brick."



“Flat Out assists in developing women’s skills to enable them to re-establish an independent life in the community, to regain self-esteem and to attain some degree of financial security to break the cycle of poverty, crime and punishment”

– Flat Out Inc.”

A Brief Herstory by Mary Cotter

Flat Out is a support, advocacy and research organisation that works alongside women with lived experience of criminalisation and imprisonment. We are a small team of dedicated and passionate women with varied strengths and diverse backgrounds and experience. We aim to be flexible, sensitive and non-judgemental in our approach.

We strive to empower women by informing them of their rights, listening to their individual needs and advocating for better outcomes and opportunities. We understand that women's experiences are unique; therefore employ unique outside the square framework of support as the 'one size fits all' model is proven to be ineffective. The team is challenged by the high number of women incarcerated and seeking support post release from prison. With more resources we could do more. The intensive outreach support and advocacy model is invaluable in contributing to a positive impact on women lives, their families and the broader community.

The women we work with demonstrate incredible strength, resilience and courage in the face of extreme adversity and often tragic circumstances. Their lives and that of their families are disrupted when women are imprisoned and the rebuilding of life is often a painstaking process. Flat Out draws on decarceration strategies as a critical foundation of our work, and strongly opposes imprisonment of women as a solution to their personal crises.

The vast majority of women we support are homelessness, experiencing poverty, domestic violence, childhood trauma, sexual assault and discrimination. The culmination of multiple traumas' can sadly lead women into the cycle of incarceration and recidivism as the community fails to address these issues. Flat Out understands that there is no simple solution; however it is very clear that prison expansion, locking more women up, is not the answer. In particular we are concerned about the rising number of women (and men) with disabilities being criminalised and sent to prison. Many of these women do not have the capacity to fully understand the implications of their actions, and the vast majority of these people are not being supported to live independently and free from harm. They are extremely vulnerable members of our community.

Flat Out continues to challenge the systems that are patriarchal in structure and punitive in response. Our vision is that women will no longer be invisible; their voices will be heard; and we will walk with them to ensure that as a community we address the underlying social issues that underpin criminalisation and imprisonment.

Flat Out receives funding from various sources. The majority of our funding for women's support and advocacy comes through the Department of Health and Ageing, Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program, (NGOTGP), and Homelessness Service funding arising from the National Affordable Housing Agreement. The Victorian Department of Human Services administers this funding. We are also funded .8EFT through the Intensive Case Management Initiative (ICMI) administered by DHS. The combination of funding enables Flat Out to work intensively and flexibly in terms of the type and timeframe of support provided.

FLAT OUT'S HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES ARISING FROM THE NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING AGREEMENT: OUTREACH SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

Over the past twelve months Flat Out have fully utilised the SHIP case management system as part of our adoption of the Specialist Homelessness Services Data Collection (SHIP/SHOR) system. The Flat Out team has been trained in all aspects of the system. The new system has improved the quality of our 'case management'; it is an extremely user friendly system that enables the team to systematically track the work and achievements against agreed plans with women. The reports generated from this system have given us a deeper understanding of our day to day work and outcomes.

In the last year, Flat Out has supported criminalised women of all ages; however the trend for 2012-2013 was the majority of women supported were in the age bracket of 30-34, followed by 40-44 years of age, 25-29 years of age then followed equally by the age groups of 20-24 and 45-49 years of age. A total of 89 individual people received support through Flat Out in 2012-2013. This comprised of 86 females and 3 males (partners or children of women). The women Flat Out supports come from a diverse range of social cultural backgrounds and contexts.

During the last 12 months we have seen an increase in referrals from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and culturally and linguistically diverse women. This has aligned with our aim to ensure equal access of support to women whom are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Flat Out continues to receive referrals from various sources; however the most common source of referrals were; self-referrals, followed by referrals from workers at prison, (mainly the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre), and community and other non-government organisations.

Women came to Flat Out with a wide range of complex support needs. The most common reason for women seeking assistance were; transition from custody, homelessness followed by financial difficulties/hardship, housing crisis and a clear lack of family or community support. The culmination of these issues makes these women some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Other common reasons for seeking assistance included eviction from accommodation and excessive rent and problematic substance use. Many of the women we support have intellectual disabilities, mental health issues and acquired brain injuries associated with violence and substance use.

Flat Out also works extensively with women in reunifying them with children and other family members and building

community connections and supports. Flat Out recognises that separation of mother from child is one of the greatest contributing risk factors associated with re-criminalisation and a return to prison, and thus an important core component of our support and advocacy work is family support and reunification. Flat Out also recognises that this is an area for Flat Out's specialist support to reduce the risk of children who are placed in out of home care with DHS child protection, ending up in the poverty trap, being socially disconnected and being criminalised as adults. In 2012-2013, through the strength and determination of a number of the women that Flat Out supports, we witnessed the ongoing importance of effective advocacy and support for women and their children involved with DHS child protection.

NGOTGP FUNDED OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE FOR CRIMINALISED WOMEN

Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program (NGOTGP) is a Commonwealth Government Initiative administered through the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA). Flat Out has received NGOTGP funding since 2003. This year Flat Out has exceeded the number of women it aimed to support during the twelve month period. Flat Out as a whole of service worked with 89 distinct clients over the past 12 months, 86 female, 3 male. More than 80% of these clients presented with past or current drug and alcohol misuse. Flat Out is contracted by DOHA to provide 32 episodes of care around drug and alcohol treatment and support annually. Flat Out ended the financial year having 39 terminated episodes of care and 11 episodes (care plans) ongoing.

Flat Out's extensive experience in working with and alongside women with substance misuse issues has strengthened the success of the treatment plans and reduced the risks to the women whom we support. Each episode of care developed between Flat Out and women requiring support reflects a treatment plan tailored to individuals needs and modelled on a non-judgemental and harm reduction approach. Flat Out has a strong role in individual support and advocacy to ensure that the implementation of these plans is in partnership with appropriate specialist services. Flat Out is able to think beyond the box to ensure holistic treatment plans including working alongside drug and alcohol services, health services, housing services, recreation, social inclusion services and alternative therapies. The focus is on agreed plans that resolve the underlying causes of drug and alcohol misuse and criminalisation.

ICMI (INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE)

ICMI is a developmental project where services provide support and brokerage funds for creative approaches to work with people who have high and complex needs. Flat Out has received funding through the ICMI program since September 2008. Historically, Hanover was the lead agency of the ICMI pilot project, (with funding and support from the Department of Human Services, Victoria). This funding was extended through until June 2012, and has since been made recurrent alongside our homelessness service funding.

Over the past 12 months we supported 18 women against a target of 10.

The goals of ICMI are:

- **To provide assistance to clients who have high and complex needs to stabilise their personal circumstances and assist them out of homelessness**
- **To provide a creative and flexible service response**
- **To contribute to the development of a model that promotes planning, coordination and sustainable assistance to high and complex needs clients.**

“There are long wait lists for suitable therapeutic programs, particularly in rural and regional areas where there are increasing social problems and concerns associated with people with mental health issues combined with drug and alcohol misuse. Women are often forced to stay in situations of drug dependency until services are available. It's a revolving door back to prison and a no brainer to fix.

We need more and better therapeutic options to end the criminalisation of people who need quality care and support.”

Annie Nash, Executive Officer

THE FLAT OUT MODEL: WHAT WORKS?

The assertive outreach model is successful in working with women dealing with drug dependency who often have busy 'justice' schedules. The outreach support team will make every endeavour to locate women if they are difficult to contact by phone or through visits. We see women's engagement with Flat Out as a mutual responsibility. This is vital to the success of the service, because women will regularly be without finances for transport and phone. Many of the women we support have experienced being 'dumped' by services that will ascribe notions of 'non engagement' as a valid reason for 'exiting' them from their essential services and support. Flat Out has had very successful engagement with clients - women rarely miss appointments - this is enhanced through meeting women on their turf, in their time.

Flat Out in 2012-2013 has specialised in fearless advocacy and secondary consult to community services to ensure that discrimination on gender, criminalisation and or drug use are challenged to ensure transparent access for women whom have been criminalised.

The periods of support that we offer are critical to our success. Many of the women we supported for longer periods. In the period of 2012-2013 Flat Out also focused on ensuring that where women had previously been supported and required new periods of support that they were able to re-access our service. Many services disengage after twelve months; this can be detrimental to women seeking to address a myriad of long term underlying issues associated with homelessness and criminalisation.

All outreach support employees are well trained and experienced and they have a good working knowledge of other services and supports. Flat Out strives to be a learning organisation that encourages employees to undertake a range of professional development and training opportunities alongside their work.

Flat Out has a multidisciplinary approach, and is skilled in support planning and coordination.

Women trust that Flat Out will advocate for them and for the systems to be improved. Flat Out recently engaged an independent evaluator who interviewed women being supported, these consultations confirmed this assertion.

"Since F.O. have been involved my life is starting to be manageable. I couldn't keep appt. I had A.O.D. problems. I have found a good doctor and psych."

Quote from woman interviewed by PESP for Flat Out evaluation.

Flat Out regularly supports women in court by writing court reports and attending court. Attending court with a woman will often result in a non-custodial sentence where we are able to confirm with the magistrate there is an alternative to prison. Our success however is being impeded through new and tougher sentencing regimes where more women are being sent to jail. It's devastating to see women sentenced to jail as we know only too well the enduring impacts.

Flat Out has extensive relationships, partnerships and protocols with organisations as a means of addressing the broad ranging needs of women; this approach also enhances our overall capacity.

Flat Out has sourced independent funding to assist women with meeting their basic needs of food, shelter, medication and maintaining pharmacotherapy. This fund has been particularly important in situations where women are primary care providers where they will often put the financial needs of their children ahead of their health and therapeutic treatment.

Flat Out has continued to maintain a focus on working with Aboriginal and Vietnamese women: both groups are severely over represented in the criminal justice system.

"Was trying to get my children back, ended up in prison, my life was a mess, that's when I met Flat Out through a worker inside and contacted them when I came out."

Quote from woman interviewed by PESP for Flat Out evaluation.

Challenges, what can be improved

- **There is a dire need for more and better affordable housing. Long housing waiting lists are causing grid locks in support service systems**
- **Women who are criminalised and have criminal histories are discriminated against throughout the community and also through many publicly and privately funded service systems. We need robust laws and policies and procedures to end criminal records discrimination**
- **There is a dire need for more community based alcohol and drug treatment services across all regional areas. A lack of suitable treatment services increases the risk of women being re-criminalised and returning to prison**
- **The current child protection system leans to removal of children in circumstances where appropriate and adequate support would enable families to stabilise and stay together. There needs to be a full review of this system to ensure that there is a genuine focus on best interests of the child.**

FLAT OUT WOMEN'S FEEDBACK PROJECT

In 2012-2013 Flat Out engaged the Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education Support Program (PESP) to seek feedback from women about the services we provide. PESP is an independent and peer service that worked with us to ensure that women we support had the opportunity to talk honestly and critically provide feedback about their experiences of Flat Out and the ways in which our service can improve.

Flat Out has used the findings of this report to inform our work and planning, including our re-accreditation review with QIP and annual and strategic planning in progress. Most heartening from the feedback was an affirmation of our service model, our focus on working with women to obtain appropriate safe and affordable housing, our non-judgemental approach to our work, and our strident advocacy. Women also commented on the location of our service being accessible, and being close to public transport was a winner.

Some women said we could improve our service through making complaints procedures clearer and more accessible, and through having more funds available to assist them through

financial crises. Flat Out has taken these suggestions on and implemented quality improvements.

Continuing on from this project Flat Out has been collecting women's feedback through a range of different means-as part of our external review we were commended on our work in this area.

" I'm so happy it's the first time I've been able to go on holidays as for so many of them I've been unable to as my drug use or jail had all of my time so I'd like to let you know I'm glad I've had your support it means a lot to me... "

Woman supported by Flat Out.

WOMEN'S INFORMATION, LEADERSHIP AND SELF ADVOCACY PROGRAM AT DAME PHYLLIS FROST CENTRE (DPFC), (VICTORIA'S MAXIMUM SECURITY WOMEN'S PRISON)

Unprecedented prison expansion has enormous ripple effects into the community; not just in terms of numbers of women going to prison, it impacts on all levels of support and services available to women in and beyond the prison system. Funds get drained from communities into prisons. Flat Out is under immense unrelenting pressure to be able to provide services to meet the needs of all women seeking our support.

In 2010 we developed an idea for a Flat Out/CHRIP program in the DPFC prison where we would have the opportunity to meet with up to 15 women in a workshop environment to empower them with information, prior to release, to maximise their opportunities to exercise choice in finding and selecting services and support beyond the prison.

At the end of 2010 we sought input from women in the prison about topics for the program, and with the support and assistance of program staff at DPFC, we signed a protocol with the prison in early 2011.

The Women's Information, Leadership and Self Advocacy Program at DPFC has now been successfully running for approximately three years and we have begun planning sessions with women inside for the leadership program for 2014.

Information and educational opportunities are crucial to women's capacity as leaders and self-advocates.

We also see this model as an opportunity to get input from women about the types of services and support they are seeking; an innovative model for seeking feedback and direction from women about what needs to be available to them post release prison.

This program also allows Flat Out to reach out to a wider range of women and is a grass roots approach to education and advocacy by involving women in directing the content of the program. This program runs monthly with community 'specialist' guest speakers on a wide variety of women's concerns.

Topics for this year included:

- **Changes to Suspended Sentences and Home Detention**
- **Criminal Records Discrimination (with a focus on employment)**
- **GLBTI Services and Support**
- **Family Violence**
- **'Have Your Say', a workshop session developing the program for 2013**
- **Finding the Right Lawyer**
- **Financial issues: debts**

A number of individuals and community organisations have assisted Flat Out in providing information sessions to women in prison. We thank you for your involvement.

Most importantly, Flat Out would like to acknowledge the women imprisoned at DPFC who have participated in this project over the past 3 years.

STREET SMART

Flat Out is very grateful to StreetSmart for funding we used to support women coming out of prison. The primary purpose of this grant was to optimise opportunities for homeless women post release prison.

The main outcome of this project has been to have necessary funds available for the purchase of essential personal items which directly connect to women's capacity to obtain and maintain housing and avoid re-criminalisation.

Essential personal items have included:

- **Underwear**
- **Toiletries**
- **Proof of identification documents**
- **Mobile phones and phone cards (we work on an assertive outreach model, phone contact is essential to this model)**
- **Met tickets/MYKI**
- **Emergency food where Foodbank Victoria and other sources aren't available**
- **Pharmacotherapy and other prescription medication**
- **Manchester: sheets/doona/pillows**
- **Diaries (in particular for women with memory loss associated with ABI)**
- **Warm clothing and footwear**
- **Carry bag for departure from prison (women currently leave prison with corrections issue plastic bag)**
- **Children's essential items including food, nappies and bedding.**

The Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP)

The Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) is a project of Flat Out focusing on education, community capacity building, and systemic advocacy. The work of Flat Out and CHRIP builds on the intrinsic connections between service delivery and systemic social change work that has been present since Flat Out's inception. This model ensures that the individual needs of women who are criminalised, imprisoned or recently released from prison are met alongside work to address broader structural issues such as poverty, institutional racism and violence against women.

The CHRIP project was initiated in the community legal sector in 2007 with seed funding from the Reichstein Foundation. The project was originally auspiced by the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (BMCLC) and had a strong focus on legal capacity building.

In 2008, CHRIP became an auspiced project of Flat Out and two years later transitioned to an ongoing project of the organisation. CHRIP currently receives funding from Sidney Myer Fund, the W.C.F Thomas Trust as well as grassroots funding and donations.

CHRIP's work as a project of Flat Out falls into three main categories:

- **Community Capacity Building and Education;**
- **Public Opinion and Systemic Advocacy;**
- **Organisational Development.**

CHRIP's work over the past year has included the following highlights:

- Organising the public event, Abolition Now; Challenges that the Abolition Movement and Those Supporting Criminalised Women Face which was attended by more than 100 people. Guest speakers included Kim Pate (Canada), Amanda George, Debbie Kilroy and Susan Shepherd. The event was co-convened with Monash University to release Women Exiting Prison: Critical Essays on Gender, Post Release Support and Survival, edited by Bree Carlton and Marie Segrave. The book contains work of world class scholars and the chapter Decentring the Prison: Abolitionist Approaches to Working with Criminalized Women co-authored by Phoebe Barton, Debbie Kilroy, Suzi Quixley, Amanda George and Emma Russell;
- Running the Effective Advocacy and Activism Training Programs in 2012 and 2013 which attracted around 90 participants including students, community sector lawyers and advocates, women who have been impacted by the criminal justice system, and family members of imprisoned people. Topics included Corrections Resource Centre Tour; Media and Public Speaking; Campaigning to Change the World, Pre-election Campaigning and Lobbying and Adult Parole Board Advocacy;
- Other community education and capacity building highlights included facilitating Joint Practice Forums including sessions on Changes to Sentencing and Parole and Child Protection for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and Working with a Person Who is Suicidal;
- Preparing four written submissions with Flat Out for 2013 to government and peak human rights bodies on the key issues for women in the Victorian prison system including; The Corrections Amendment Bill; Inquiry into the Value of a Justice Reinvestment Approach to Criminal Justice in Australia; Koori Women and Prison; People with Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System;
- Publishing the second edition of the CHRIP End to Prisons poster with the much appreciated support of the CHRIP working group;
- Sustaining the Victorian Decarceration Network, including monthly E-bulletins, which grew to include more than 300 organisations and individuals sharing information and resources on how to keep people out of prison, reduce periods of incarceration and preventing an individual's return to prison;
- Involvement in co-organising Flat Out's Women's Information, Self-Advocacy and Leadership Development Program at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. The monthly sessions continued to focus on increasing the information available to imprisoned women to strengthen their self-advocacy skills whilst incarcerated and when they return to the community. Program topics are chosen by women inside, and run with support from community organisations with expertise in areas nominated by the women. Topics have included: Criminal Record Discrimination and Employment Pathways; Changes to Suspended Sentences; Family Violence; Homelessness and the Housing Sector; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Intersex Community Programs and Finding the Right Lawyer;
- Publicly advocating in the media on issues such as young people in adult prisons and solitary confinement and the importance of rehabilitation in current debates on Victoria's exploding prison population on Channel 10's The Project;
- Involvement in the coalition Noprison4kids to campaign on the issue of young people being transferred into adult prison and solitary confinement. Over the past year the group has meet with stakeholders such as Department of Human Services, Operations Manager at Youth Justice Precinct, Children and Young People Commissioners, Youth Parole Board and Corrections Victoria to raise concerns about this practice and to advocate for changes that would increase safeguards for young people and increase accountability of bodies making decisions that affect young people.

Prisons: a cruel and costly response to homelessness

Authors Chantelle Higgs Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) and Crystal McKinnon

Founded in 1988 Flat Out is a Victorian state-wide support and advocacy service for women who have had contact with the criminal justice system. Flat Out's vision is that women are not imprisoned; women's rights are understood and upheld; and there is a compassionate response to personal and social trauma. Flat Out works toward making this vision a reality by providing individualised support, systemic advocacy and social change work. Support involves co-advocating with women to access affordable housing, drug and alcohol treatment services and other necessary supports that reduce the likelihood they will be re-criminalised and re-incarcerated. Flat Out's systemic advocacy work involves taking a lead role in agitating for change by informing the community and other service providers about the issues that occur for women who are criminalised, when they are incarcerated and after they are released. Flat Out is a strong voice in the prison abolition movement in Australia; believing that one day prisons will be fully exposed as antiquated, cruel and ultimately ineffective institutions. CHRIP is a project of Flat Out focusing on education, community capacity building and systemic advocacy. The work of Flat Out and CHRIP builds on the intrinsic connections between service delivery and social change work present since Flat Out's inception. This model ensures that the individual needs of women who are criminalised, imprisoned or recently released from prison are met alongside work to address broader structural issues such as poverty, institutional racism and violence against women.

'AN END TO PRISONS' POSTER

One of CHRIP's projects is the production of the poster 'An End to Prisons', which provides information and analysis about who is imprisoned in Victoria, the harms of imprisonment and its social and economic costs to the community along with decarceration strategies for community organisations. Decarceration is a cornerstone of Flat Out's ethos and it refers to people and organisations committing to policies and practices that reduce the number of people in prison and finding alternative responses to pressing social issues. We include the 2013 edition of the poster as an insert in the Preventing Homelessness edition of Parity as the issue of homelessness is inextricably bound with the issues of criminalisation and imprisonment. As a community resource we hope that the poster continues the conversation about the long-term goal of abolishing imprisonment and encourages community organisations to use their voice, knowledge and resources to educate and advocate for decarceration. Along with the poster, the brief article below considers key aspects of the relationship between homelessness, criminalisation and the imprisonment of women and provides decarceration strategies to prevent homelessness.

PRISONS, A DEFAULT RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

Prisons are Australia's current 'default response' to homelessness, mental health issues and poverty.¹ The amount of money that governments allocate towards prisons is evidence of this. For instance, Victoria directed \$131.5 million in the 2013/14 budget in addition to the \$819 million in the previous year for the expansion of prisons.² Consequently, \$950.5 million has been diverted away from education, housing, health care including supports for drug and alcohol mis-use, compromised or poor mental health and other services that would address the growing levels of economic and social disadvantage in Victoria. An example of the consequences of this re-direction is the TAFE system which had its funding cut by \$750 million in last year's budget. TAFE has traditionally provided educational opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and thus provided pathways away from prisons.

The redistribution of funds to prisons demonstrates a lack of political will to address the root causes of poverty, homelessness and compromised or poor mental health. The road to prison is paved by these issues and other complex factors, such as substance mis-use, low educational outcomes and lack of employment opportunities. Rather than deal with inequality and injustice through community driven programs and policy and institutional change, the government chooses to focus on prison expansion. Criminalising drug and alcohol mis-use does little to address the health and therapeutic concerns of individuals and the community and instead diverts funds into police and prisons.³

In June 2012 there were on average 4,884 people in prison in Victoria on any given day, of which approximately 340 were women.⁴ Disturbingly, rates of imprisonment of Australian women have risen by 48% since 2002.⁵ Many of the women we incarcerate have histories of victimisation, sexual violence, family violence and socio-economic disadvantage.⁶ Rather than the common misconception of prisons as places for rehabilitation, prisons, like homelessness, further traumatise women, often worsening their mental and physical health. It also increases a woman's likelihood of experiencing violence, and entrenched poverty.⁸ The issue of homelessness and its links to criminalising women is clear as we know that women are more likely than men to be homeless prior to imprisonment.⁹ The cycle of homelessness continues when women exit prison as

1. Kilroy, Debbie (2005) Prisons: Australia's Default Response to Poverty, Homelessness and Mental Illness- Especially for Women.
2. Smart Justice (2013) Growing imprisonment rates an expensive non-solution to community safety.
3. VAADA (2013) News March-April.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Prisoners in Australia, page 32.
5. Ibid, page 32.
6. Women in Prison Advocacy Network (2011) No exit into homelessness, still a dream? The housing needs of women leaving prison discussion paper.
7. Strahopoulos, Mary (2012) Addressing women's victimisation histories in custodial setting, page3.
8. Smart Justice (2011) More prisons are not the answer to reducing crime.
9. Women in Prison Advocacy Network (2011) No exit into homelessness, still a dream? The housing needs of women leaving prison discussion paper.

they are more likely than men to have unstable housing when leaving prison.¹⁰

Along with factors previously discussed, incarcerated women's histories continue to be influenced by inequalities related to their gender, race and class.¹¹ Discrimination and racism is a compounding factor which adds to the risk of a person being homeless and incarcerated. Homelessness and imprisonment disproportionately affect communities that experience racism. Aboriginal women constitute the fastest growing group of incarcerated people in Australia.¹²

HOMELESSNESS LEADS TO IMPRISONMENT, AND IMPRISONMENT LEADS TO HOMELESSNESS

Between 2010-2011, of the women incarcerated in Victoria:¹³

- 21.6% were on remand
- 46.8% received sentences of less than 6 months
- 64.1% were sentenced for a period of less than 12 months
- 32.3% were serving a sentence of 6 to less than 12 months

These statistics show an alarming number of women are being remanded and receiving short prison sentences. Homelessness can lead women to spending more time in prison and can be a barrier to women achieving bail or parole. Short sentences are a major contributing factor to homelessness because they disrupt existing housing, employment and other protective factors that mitigate risk of future incarceration. These short sentences are often the result of women being criminalised for circumstances related to poverty and drug use. Short sentences fail to support a sustained recovery from addiction in the same way that homelessness often prevents people from addressing their addictions.¹⁴

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Australian Institute of Criminology (2010) Indigenous women's offending patterns: a literature review.
13. Corrections Victoria, (2012) Statistical Profile of Victorian Prisoners 2006- 07 to 2010- 11, page 76.
14. Wright, Serena (2013) "Being set up to fail?" The role of CJS in perpetuating cycles of repeat criminalisation for substance addicted women, ECAN Bulletin.

DECARCERATION STRATEGIES CAN PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

Ending homelessness and imprisonment will require the judiciary and broader criminal justice system to fully acknowledge the impact of all its punitive decisions. This includes being fully cognisant of regimes including remand and prison sentences which directly impede the ability of criminalised women to access and maintain housing. The judicial process needs to work with criminalised people to address their social disadvantage, including homelessness - rather than incarcerate them for it, or to generate homelessness through extended periods of remand and imprisonment. Enabling women to maintain their existing housing is a primary way to prevent homelessness and further incarceration. This can be achieved by increasing the capacity of the broader community and agencies to support women to advocate for housing and support services to be maintained when a woman is imprisoned. Women could then be supported to take advantage of legislative provisions that allow the maintenance of public housing for up to 6 months and transitional housing for up to 3 months.

At the organisational level agencies can prioritise their energy towards women at risk of imprisonment. One way they can achieve this is through the delivery of services that meet the needs of women such as assertive outreach support. This will enable community workers to provide court support, including bail applications, and link women with other necessary services as an alternative to imprisonment. They can also provide intensive support to women being released from prison to facilitate a successful re-entry into the community and reduce the risk of future incarceration.

Flat Out believes strongly that economic and social justice is the short and long term goal for resolving high rates of homelessness, criminalisation and imprisonment. We call on governments and communities to be pro-active in addressing social and economic disadvantage. We likewise call on Government and the community for funds and support to be redirected away from punitive regimes and responses towards community programs and therapeutic services and supports that enhance women's autonomy and safety.

www.flatout.org.au/learn-more/

Poster Authors: CHRIP Project Worker: Phoebe Barton and working group: Emma Russell, Lorena Solin, Terri Silvertree, Liz Patterson, Rachel Barrett.

Flat Out Protocols & Nomination Rights

FLAT OUT HAS PROTOCOLS WITH THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

- Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) Women's Information, Leadership and Self-Advocacy Program
- Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre
- Hanover Cheltenham
- Homeground
- Local Area Service Network (LASN), North West Metropolitan Region
- Newmarket Baptist Church, Flemington
- Vincentcare Community Housing, Glenroy
- Salvation Army, EastCare
- Smart Justice
- St Kilda Crisis Centre
- Women's Housing Limited
- Women's Housing Limited Private Rental Brokerage Program
- Yarra Community Housing

FLAT OUT HAS ACCESS RIGHTS TO TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROPERTIES WITH THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

- Homeground
- Salvation Army SASHS Western
- Salvation Army EastCare Housing Services
- Vincentcare Community Housing, Glenroy
- Women's Housing Limited
- Hanover Cheltenham
- Yarra Community Housing

Training and professional development undertaken by Flat Out

- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service National Conference
- ANEX presentation on pharmaceuticals
- ANHLC Conference session, Effective Advocacy & Media training
- Bette Phillips, Creative Ministries Network – Self Care workshop
- CHRIP Effective Advocacy Training Program
 - Corrections Resource Centre
 - Holistic Health Advocacy
 - Introduction to Prison Advocacy
 - Introduction to Prison Advocacy – re-run due to demand
 - Pre-Election Campaigning and Lobbying
 - Working with the Person who is Suicidal (PreSAP) – an introductory workshop
- Communities in Control Social Media boot camp conference
- Community Service Organisations Forum
- DHS FAC Service Agreement module
- DHS forum
- DHS Independent Review Expo
- DHS Service Standards information session
- DHS West Division Community Agency forum
- Friends of Victoria University public forum-Save TAFE, No Cuts, No Sell Offs
- Flat Out's Women's Information, Leadership and Self-Advocacy Program sessions at DPFC
 - Criminal Record Discrimination & Employment Pathways
 - Changes to Sentencing
 - Have Your Say
 - Homelessness and the housing sector
- Forensic Risk Management for Young People with violent behaviours
- Hepatitis Victoria Hep C forum
- Hepatitis Victoria Hep C training
- 'How Australia Gives' philanthropy forum
- Lecture presentation to Victoria University students
- Melbourne City Council Supply Reduction Forum
- Perpetual Not For Profit IP workshop
- PILCH – OH&S & your community organisations
- Practice Forum with Deb Kilroy, Sisters Inside presentation
- Tony Milne workshop
- Turning Point oration – 'A plague of prisons'
- Turning Point Symposium
- VAADA & ANEX Naloxone forum
- VLAF Strategic Campaigning Forum
- WhiteDog GreenFrog online website training

Flat Out Statement of Cash Flows

For the period ending 30 June 2013

Cash Flow from Operating Activities	2013	2012
Receipts for Monies in Trust	-	86,000
Receipts from grants etc.	505,412	425,209
Receipts from interest	16,169	19,966
Payments to suppliers and employees	(514,428)	(536,017)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities (Note 2)	7,153	(4,842)
Cash Flow from Investing Activities		
Proceeds from (payment for) property, plant and equipment, and motor vehicles	(5,500)	(10,213)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(5,500)	(10,213)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	1,653	(15,055)
Cash at beginning of year	395,577	410,632
Cash at end of reporting period (Note 1)	397,230	395,577

Notes to the Statement of Cash Flows

NOTE 1. Reconciliation of cash

For the purposes of the statement of the cash flows, cash includes cash on hand and in at call deposits with banks or financial institutions, investments in money market instruments maturing within less than two months, net of bank overdrafts

(a) Reconciliation of Cash

Cash at the end of the reporting period as shown in the statement of cash flows is reconciled to the related items in the balance sheet as follows:

	2013	2012
Cash at Bank	396,355	395,002
Cash on Hand	875	575
	397,230	395,577

NOTE 2. Reconciliation of net cash provided by operating activities to operating profit

	2013	2012
Operating Profit (Loss)	(55,269)	62,064
Depreciation/Amortisation	12,861	12,697
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	-	5,432
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	13,999	(12,489)
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	19,310	15,141
Increase/(decrease) in income in advance	-	(165,578)
Assets change-over	-	(8,109)
Increase/(decrease) in Funds in Trust	16,169	86,000
Prior Year Adjustment	83	-
	7,153	(4,842)

NOTE 3. All interest received has been added to increase the Funds in Trust.

Flat Out Balance Sheet

As at 30 June 2013

	2013	2012
	\$	\$
Equity		
Committed Funds	237,453	292,638
Total Equity	237,453	292,638
Represented by:		
Current Assets		
Cash on Hand	500	200
Bond - Cabcharge	500	500
ANZ Online Saver	288,735	133,400
ANZ Term Deposit	103,484	257,990
ANZ Cheque A/C	4,136	3,612
Outreach Workers Floats	375	375
	397,731	396,077
Non-Current Assets		
Motor Vehicles	45,780	45,780
Less Accumulated Depreciation	12,972	3,432
	32,808	42,348
Office Furniture & Equipment	34,746	29,246
Less Accumulated Depreciation	25,199	21,878
	9,547	7,368
	42,355	49,716
TOTAL ASSETS	440,086	445,793
Current Liabilities		
Sundry Creditors	184	817
Trade Creditors	7,961	659
Funds in Trust	102,169	86,000
PAYG Withholding Payable	3,520	2,966
Superannuation Payable	5,557	-
Provision for Annual Leave	28,779	22,487
Provision for Long Service Leave	28,092	20,928
Provision for Sick Leave	22,907	17,053
Provision for GST	3,464	2,245
Total Liabilities	202,633	153,155
NET ASSETS	237,453	292,638

Flat Out Income Statement

For the Year ended 30 June 2013

	2013	2012
	\$	\$
Income		
Auspice/Management Fees	2,520	15,983
Donations Income	920	14,782
Registration & Membership Fees	1,203	-
Interest Received	-	19,966
Establishment Grant	-	10,909
Other Revenue	1,706	1,869
Dept of Health & Ageing Grants	180,742	183,931
Dept of Human Services Grants	253,041	170,851
HEF Grants	-	6,489
Hanover Grants (ICM)	-	93,708
Reichstein Foundation Grants	10,000	10,000
Melb City Mission - WISP	-	12,396
Other Grants	5,727	37,189
Sidney Myer Foundation	13,636	30,000
ANZ Trustees	25,000	-
Centrelink - PPL	10,917	-
Profit on Sale of Non-current Assets	-	8,112
	505,412	616,185
Expenditure		
Auditor fee	1,728	1,731
Auspice/Management fees	2,520	13,550
Bank Charges	29	100
CHRIP	6,482	3,814
Cleaning	2,500	2,914
Client Expenses	11,329	9,522
Collective Expenses	2,167	781
Conferences	1,264	2,583
Computer Expenses	1,411	2,211
Depreciation	12,861	12,697
Establishment Cost	530	4,175
Fire Services	400	320
FOFO Expenses	-	669
HEF Expenses	7,944	6,217
Holiday Pay	6,292	284
Insurance	990	1,036
Light & Power	4,767	5,082
Long Service Leave	7,164	9,614
Meeting Expenses	35	1,196
Motor Vehicle Expenses	19,015	19,127
OH & S Expenses	214	2,202
Promotional Materials	-	125
Postage	642	735

Printing & Stationery	3,703	4,947
Relief Staff	-	5,683
Resources	120	52
Rent	51,036	48,943
Repairs & Maintenance	18	24
Rental Payments	2,375	1,583
Salaries	344,578	324,862
Security Costs	451	377
Sick Leave	5,854	4,764
Supervision	-	45
Staff Amenities & Welfare	3,424	3,369
Staff Training	1,520	3,445
Staff Recruitment	324	757
Sundry expenses	175	73
Subscriptions & Memberships	6,752	2,814
Superannuation Contributions	28,384	28,324
Telephone	9,412	10,602
Trust Payment	-	145
Travelling Expenses	4,838	4,271
Workcover	7,433	8,355
	560,681	554,120
OPERATING PROFIT (LOSS)	(55,269)	62,065

Flat Out Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year ended 30 June 2013

	2013	2012
	\$	\$
Committed Funds at the beginning of the financial year	292,638	230,573
Profit (Loss) Attributable to Members	(55,269)	62,065
Prior Year Adjustments	84	-
COMMITTED FUNDS AT 30 JUNE 2013	237,453	292,638

Notes to and Forming Part of the Financial Statements

For the Year ended 30 June 2013

NOTE 1 – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

This financial report is a special purpose financial report that has been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards, Urgent Issues Group Consensus Views and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where stated, current valuations of non-current assets. Cost is based on the fair values of the consideration given in exchange for assets. The accounting policies have been consistently applied, unless otherwise stated.

The following is a summary of the material accounting policies adopted by the economic entity in the preparation of the financial report.

FIXED ASSETS

Each Class of fixed assets is carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all fixed assets are depreciated using the prime cost method or the diminishing value method over their useful lives to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS

Provision is made for the association's liability for employee entitlements arising from services rendered by employees to balance date. Employee entitlements expected to be settled within one year together with entitlements arising from wages and salaries, annual leave and sick leave which will be settled after one year, have been measured at their minimal amount. Other employee entitlements payable later than one year have been measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made for those entitlements.

Contributions are made by the association to employee superannuation fund and are charged as expenses when incurred.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of the GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office. In these circumstances the GST is recognised as part of the cost of the acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the Balance Sheet are shown inclusive of GST.



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of FLAT OUT INC.

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of **FLAT OUT INC.** which comprises the balance sheet as at 30th June 2013, and the income statement, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The management of **FLAT OUT INC.** is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, which form part of the financial report, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The management's responsibility also includes designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, as described in Note 1, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the Management's financial reporting requirement. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.



Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the relevant independence requirements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion the financial report of **FLAT OUT INC.**

- (a) gives a true and fair view of **FLAT OUT INC's** financial position as at 30th June 2013 and of its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1.


Janet Collyer
J L COLLYER & PARTNERS

14th August 2013

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