

ANNUAL REPORT | 2015 – 2016

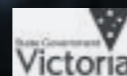


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“fighting to protect the human rights of women in prison”

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

Design by Jacqueline Rayner Photography by Flat Out and Lauren Caulfield.



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.

Flat Out is located at no. 54 Pin Oak Crescent, Flemington.

**Tram No. 57** – West Maribyrnong from Elizabeth St, Melbourne and travels along Racecourse Road, Flemington to **Stop Number**

**26 – Newmarket Plaza**. walk under train bridge, turn left into Pin Oak Crescent.

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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 based.

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 the Women Flat Out has worked with over the past year, thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with you. Thank you for sharing your stories, insights, courage, advice and strength.

## Thank you to our funders

### COMMONWEALTH & STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

#### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING (DOHA) – NGOTGP (NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION TREATMENT GRANTS PROGRAM)

Louise Cahill, Grant Officer, Regional Services Grants Branch – Vic/Tas, Grant Services Division, Australian Government Department of Health

#### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - ADIS

Anne-Marie Cupples, Information Support Desk Mental Health & Drugs, Information, Analysis & Reporting Unit Health Information & Reporting Branch Health Services Performance & Programs Division Department of Health & Human Services, DHHS/DOH

#### DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (FEDERAL) VOLUNTEER GRANTS FUNDS

#### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DHHS) SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES ARISING FROM THE NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING AGREEMENT

Helga Jennings, Area Manager, Brimbank Melton Area, West Division, DHHS

Lesley Murray, Local Engagement Officer, Local Connections, Brimbank Melton Area, West Division, DHHS

Brendan Duffy, Belinda Lu and Alexander Lee, SHSC Support, DHHS

#### NON-GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Grassroots fundraising and donations  
Melbourne Magistrates' Court of Victoria  
StreetSmart Australia

#### DONATIONS

Amanda G  
Charandev S  
Eastern Emergency Relief Network  
Glen Fairweather, Prison Fellowship and John Sparey, Citycare Hillsong  
Josephine S  
Samantha Sowerine  
Share the Dignity



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

- Speaking at public forums and conferences
- Training and facilitation inside of DPFC Women's prison
- Co-writing submissions and responses to Inquiries
- In-kind donations of time and resources
- Co-advocacy with clients and on systemic issues
- Adam Robinson, CEO Street Smart Australia
- Amanda George, Flat Out Management Collective
- Anthony Kelly and the team at Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre
- Antoinette Braybrook and the team, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
- Aunty Diane Kerr, Wurundjeri Elder and Traditional Custodian
- Billi Clarke, Launch Southbank
- Bree Carlton, Flat Out Management Collective
- Caraniche – Employment Assistance program
- Charandev Singh, Human Rights and Indigenous Education Advocate, Activist and Community Educator
- Celia Whelan, Susan Nash and the Programs team at DPFC
- Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)
- Community Housing Federation Victoria (CHFV)
- Crystal McKinnon, Flat Out Management Collective
- Debbie Kilroy and the team at Sisters Inside, QLD
- Eastern Emergency Relief Network
- Emma Russell, Flat Out Volunteer
- Ethical Jobs
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Fitzroy Legal Service
- Glen Fairweather and Prison Fellowship Victoria
- Gloria Prentice, Flat Out Management Collective
- Heather Holst, Launch Housing
- Inner Melbourne Legal
- Inside Access at the Mental Health Legal Centre
- Jill Prior, Flat Out Management Collective
- Jobs Australia
- Jo Smith, Flat Out Management Collective
- Justice Connect
- Kay Dyson, Flat Out Management Collective
- Liz Shield, Flat Out Management Collective
- Local Area Service Network (LASN), North & West Metropolitan Region
- Malcolm Feiner, Corrections Resource Centre
- Meghan Fitzgerald, Fitzroy Legal Service
- Mehran Erfanian, Centrax Computer Services
- Michelle McDonnell, Smart Justice, Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Moonee Valley Legal Service
- Prison Network Ministries
- Salvation Army Housing Services, Eastcare
- Sam Biondo, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
- St Kilda Crisis Centre
- WhiteDog GreenFrog IT consultants
- Women's Housing Ltd
- Yarra Community Housing

#### Friends of Flat Out

Thank you to all the amazing Flat Out supporters and contributors who have given time, energy and resources. It's your assistance and support that makes Flat Out a unique strong organisation.

#### FLAT OUT MANAGEMENT COLLECTIVE MEMBERS JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016

Amanda George, Bree Carlton, Crystal McKinnon, Jill Prior, Kay Dyson and Liz Shield

#### RESIGNED MEMBERS

Gloria Prentice and Jo Smith

#### FLAT OUT EMPLOYEES JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016

**Jake Argyll**  
*Executive Officer*

**Elaine Cruse**  
*Outreach Support and Advocacy*

**Jagur McEwan**  
*Outreach Support and Advocacy*

**Michelle Montague**  
*Finance Manager*

**Michele Old**  
*Administration Resource Coordinator*

**Wendy Hedges**  
*Outreach Support and Advocacy*

**Bernadette Wilson**  
*Locum Outreach Support and Advocacy*

#### RESIGNED STAFF

**Colette Leber**  
*Outreach Support and Advocacy*

#### VOLUNTEERS JULY 2015 – JUNE 2016

Emma Russell and Lucy Burnett



This is a Stock image from Istock.



## Organisation Overview

Flat Out is an independent, not for profit, community based organisation that is managed by and for women.

The Flat Out Management Collective (Board) embraces fairness and equality through the essential roles of governance, management and leadership that are underpinned by a comprehensive set of values, policies and procedures and delegated authority.

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 Health and Human Services (Victoria), the Department of Health (Federal), and project funds from various sources to increase our capacity to deliver innovative and effective services, advocacy and social change. Government funding is for the purpose of providing individualised support and advocacy for women (with or without children) to address homelessness, drug and alcohol treatment and a range of other support and advocacy to address the underlying causes of criminalisation.

**Independent funding** is raised through donations, grants and grassroots fundraising for the purposes of Flat Out's social change and systemic advocacy work.

Flat Out leads and participates in research and community education, seeking to inform the wider community about the harms that occur for women in the criminal justice system. Flat Out works directly with women who have experienced criminalisation and/or incarceration and to improve the rights and conditions of women in prison. Flat Out works to prevent women from going to prison, and keeping women out of prison once they are released.

The theories and values that underpin Flat Out's work have remained constant since Flat Out's inception (1988). Through community involvement, education and research, Flat Out works toward having a strong voice in the prison abolition movement in Australia and internationally. Our vision is that eventually prisons will be viewed as antiquated, cruel and ineffective institutions. Not unlike the movements to abolish slavery; movements to end racism; the women's liberation movement, and the movement to end homelessness. Flat Out seeks to work alongside diverse communities to end all forms of inequality and unfairness. We see all these movements as interconnected.

# Flat Out Strategic Plan 2014-2016.

## Flat Out Values

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's as the first peoples of Australia
- Our organisation being run by and for women
- Working with women (and their children) who are criminalised
- Providing high quality support services and advocacy
- Freedom, equality and self-determination
- Social justice and economic opportunities for all
- Everyone has the right to lead safe, violence-free lives
- Being part of a movement to end criminalisation and imprisonment
- Working with the wider community toward our vision

## Our Vision

- Women are not criminalised or imprisoned

## How we will get there.

- We will remain focussed on working with women who are criminalised
- We will provide high quality woman centred support and advocacy
- We will support women to obtain appropriate and affordable housing
- We will support women in their journeys to good health and wellbeing
- We will support women to reconnect with family and community
- We will actively promote effective alternatives to criminalisation and imprisonment
- We will lead and contribute to effective social and systemic change
- We will work with the wider community towards our vision

## Key challenges for this plan

- Achieving Flat Out's vision and plan in a period of heightened focus on law and order, changes to sentencing practices and unprecedented prison expansion
- Securing Flat Out's substantive funding (government and philanthropic) beyond June 2015
- Returning our organisational deficit to surplus whilst maintaining quality improvements
- Retaining our skilled and committed management collective, employees and volunteers

## Key Result Areas

### Key Result Area 1:

**Led** by Women's Lived Experience

All platforms of Flat Out's activity are driven by women's lived experience.

### Key Result Area 2:

**Exemplary** Outreach Support and Advocacy

Flat Out's direct support service activities are for women who have had contact with the criminal justice and/or prison system in Victoria; with a focus on women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and for women seeking support to access drug and alcohol treatment and other therapeutic services.

### Key Result Area 3:

**Effective** Systemic Advocacy and Social Change

Over its 28 years of operation Flat Out has achieved a unique and respected position in the wider community as an advocate for systemic and social change. This role is an integral part of Flat Out's commitment to the rights of all women involved in the criminal justice system and the long term vision of abolishing the prisons.

### Key Result Area 4:

**Strategic** Organisational Development

Flat Out has dedicated management collective members, employees and volunteer activists that implement our vision and plans. Stakeholders and partners are also crucial to Flat Out's strength and viability. Flat Out is continually improving and strengthening its work through regular review, reflection and change. We are a learning and adaptive organisation.

### Key Result Area 5:

**Innovative** Financial Sustainability and Capacity Building

Flat Out receives recurrent government funding as well as funding and grants from non-government and independent sources for specific initiatives including Flat Out's systemic advocacy and social change work. Flat Out has continued to grow, dedicating significant resources to organisational development and improved services. This plan acknowledges Flat Out's sustained focus on continuous quality improvement. To achieve this Flat Out will maintain its commitment to generating income from diverse sources to achieve the future directions of the organisation.

In her first year with us as EO, Jake Argyll has continued this essential work along with our Outreach Team, finding solutions where there appeared to be none. We are most grateful that all Flat Out staff and Management Collective members are strongly committed to the values and objectives of our Strategic Plan, which is reviewed and developed together in a special meeting each year. As a result of their endeavours

and despite a demanding year of change in 2016, Flat out has continued to provide high quality woman-centred support and advocacy; instigating meetings and discussions with relevant government representatives and others with regard to promoting effective alternatives to criminalisation and imprisonment. We thank Jake and all employees for their hard work and solidarity during this year.

The Flat Out Management Collective is very grateful for the continued funding and support we have received from the State and Federal governments. We are continuing to seek additional funds for maintaining and expanding our support services and are committed to ensuring the quality of our service to women and children is ongoing. The agency also undertook a review and adjustment of wages, along with other financial measures, which has contributed to the agency now posting a small surplus.

There have been changes in both our Management Collective and the Outreach team during this year. We thank Jo Smith and Gloria Prentice for their years of hard work in difficult times and welcome back Bree Carlton.

Our effective Management Collective recruitment strategy has ensured that the Management Collective has been maintained with a complement of skills required for the effective governance of the organisation.

Similarly, the changes in staff have occurred smoothly thanks to the support of th team.

As a result of scarcity of funding in the current financial climate and despite our applications and funding seeking efforts, our re-imagining of CHRIP (Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People) has been difficult but not forgotten. We will continue to develop this aspect of Flat Out into the future. Systemic advocacy is a key part of our work as we continue our endeavour to both educate and contribute to effective social and systemic change with regard to decarceration.

The Management Collective continues to oversee:

- The legal and financial requirements of the organisation.
- The overall direction of the organisation.
- The organisational activities and decisions.
- The quality of employee performance according to job descriptions and organisational policies and procedures.
- The support of the Executive Officer in performing and managing the daily functions of Flat Out.

The Management Collective members have also 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:

- Fundraising activities including a movie screening that took place in July 2016.
- Meetings with relevant members of the government and community.
- Participation in relevant external training.
- Regular and effective use of mainstream and social media.
- Generating strong community support through our facebook and twitter presence.
- Attendance and presentation at various events including the Space, Race, Bodies II conference in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

To all the individuals and organisations that have supported Flat Out this year we say thank you for your belief in Flat Out and your assistance in whatever capacity. We look forward to your ongoing support and involvement over the next year. With your help, Flat Out is in a strong position to continue to maintain and develop excellent services to furthering goals to end homelessness, poverty, inequality and discrimination.

Kay Dyson

On behalf of the Flat Out Management Collective



## Space, Race, Bodies II Conference Report

At the beginning of May 2016, Flat Out Management Collective Member Crystal McKinnon and Flat Out volunteer Emma Russell travelled to Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand, to present at the Space, Race, Bodies II conference following an invitation from conference organisers. It was held at the University of Otago, where activists, academics and others gathered over three days to discuss the conference theme: 'Sovereignty and Migration in a Carceral Age'.

On the second day of the conference, Crystal and Emma presented on a panel discussion alongside Emmy Rākete from No Pride in Prisons (Auckland) and Fadak Alfayadh from RISE Refugees, Survivors and Ex-Detainees (Melbourne). The panel, titled 'Beyond Walls and Cages: Dismantling Detention and Prison', brought together refugee and anti-prison activists.

The presenters designed questions that would enable the panel to interrogate the links and tensions between systems of offshore detention and domestic incarceration. This included how gender, race, sexuality and Indigeneity shape the operations of prisons everywhere, but also how resistant movements can mobilise these categories in efforts to bring them down. The goal of this conversation was to build solidarity and forge greater connections between refugee, Indigenous, and anti-prison movements.

As Crystal McKinnon articulated during the panel discussion:

*The prison system relies on capitalism and settler colonialism, so I don't think you can imagine abolition without unpacking and addressing these causes for its existence. It exists to contain. It creates and reproduces ideas about race and gender. You can't just have abolition without addressing all of these other things that produce systems of detention in the first place. We need to begin with decolonisation strategies, which centre Indigenous land ownership and sovereignty, and work out from there – that is how we need to start to change the world, that is how we need to think about what this world should look like.*

Thanks to Emma Russell for this report.





*“Flat Out has continued to enrich the connection between service delivery and social change work that makes our organisation unique.”*

It's hard to grasp that I've been the Executive Officer of Flat Out now for over a year and what a year it's been! Firstly, I want to take a moment to thank all the amazing staff of Flat Out for their passion, dedication and commitment to the agency and to the women we work with. I am in awe of the work you all do and the contributions you all make to keeping Flat Out, going strong. I also want to thank the Management Collective for their support, time, encouragement and insight; all of which helps us strive towards a stronger and bolder Flat Out.

This year has seen a little bit of movement in the Outreach Team: Colette Leber left in February 2016 and returned to tertiary study, Wendy Hedges left in March 2016 but returned in May 2016 and during Wendy's absence we had the pleasure of working with locum Bernie Wilson from Tradewind.

We have also enjoyed the company of a volunteer, Lucy Burnett (a student completing her Masters in Social Work at Melbourne University), who assisted in updating some of our agency information. Lucy has now found casual employment with Jesuits Social Services whilst she completes her studies and we wish her all the best with her career.

In June 2016, we filled the last Outreach staff vacancy with Jagur McEwan. Jagur comes to us from Twenty10 in Sydney, NSW, bringing a range of experience having worked in the queer and gender diverse community. I am certain Jagur will assist us to grow and refine our response to the LGBTIQ

community and I'm looking forward to seeing where this work takes us over the coming years.

The Management Collective also experienced some small shifts with the resignations of Gloria Prentice and Jo Smith who needed to turn their attention to other commitments in their lives. Thank you Gloria and Jo for your time, skills and knowledge. We also welcome the return of Bree Carlton to the Management Collective. Bree is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Monash University and brings with her a long list of connections in decarceration and abolitionist networks.

This year Flat Out has continued to enrich the connection between service delivery and social change work that makes our organisation unique. We have focussed specifically on achieving housing outcomes for incarcerated women eligible for parole.

The changes to adult parole guidelines has resulted in women remaining in prison until they have an approved address to go to, long public housing wait lists, little or no affordable housing and little or no access to transitional housing. Subsequently, women are waiting months past their parole eligibility date to be released.

In one extremely memorable case, Flat Out assisted a woman who had been waiting more than 14 months past her eligibility date to be released from prison on parole. This is not only grossly inhumane, it is unconscionable and an outrage. Flat Out lobbied hard with every contact we had in the housing and homelessness sector (who were supportive but unable to assist with accommodation).

It took a Ministerial response to eventually secure housing, which enabled the woman to get approval for release. Whilst we were all delighted with the result, the process was arduous and enormously frustrating for the woman involved and clearly demonstrates the many reasons why we need improved access to housing for incarcerated women.

The absence of housing options has driven the staff of Flat Out to proactively pursue connections, agreements and support with various organisations to help us create a series of direct housing pathways for women who remain incarcerated as a result of the changes to parole. Though we are doubtful of any meaningful systemic change (for housing or the legal system) anytime soon, we will continue to disrupt, circumvent and overcome these structural obstacles in any way we can and as boldly as we can!

In this ongoing and escalating climate of unprecedented prison expansion and heightened 'law and order' policies, it remains critical for all community organisations to assess and build their capacity to provide advocacy and support that enables people to stay out of prison. As for the application of onerous parole conditions for some women, Flat Out continues to advocate for flexibility and to provide direct (and intensive) support in every way we can to ensure women are not disadvantaged in their attempts to meet parole conditions or subject to arbitrary penalties should they be unable to meet such conditions due to the vicissitudes of their lives.

Flat Out emphasises women's self-defined goals and women's conceptions of the support they require in order to achieve them. We dedicate resources to the provision of information and education within and beyond the prison walls and work tirelessly to ensure the women we work with have a voice in the decisions that affect them and their loved ones.

Flat Out receives funding through State and Federal Government to provide a support service to criminalised women experiencing homelessness and for those women who use drugs and alcohol. This past financial year we exceeded our targets for both the State and Federal Government funding; this is of course indicative of the level of need out there and the importance of Flat Out in ensuring this need is met.

The overwhelming majority of women we support experience homelessness, poverty, family violence, various forms of discrimination and violence from police, prisons and other forms of systemic abuse and neglect. We are noticing a marked increase in the number of women we support who have diagnosed or undiagnosed acquired brain injuries or other cognitive challenges. We have faced multiple obstacles ensuring these women are able to access the right kind of community/health support and it remains to be seen what the impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be on the lives of these women in the months and years to come.

The other area of interest for Flat Out is the government's response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. In line with our submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence in May 2015, the agency has been continuing its advocacy work around police responses to criminalised women and family violence and we have been lobbying for funding to deliver specialist outreach support for these women.

Looking ahead to the big picture issues on our radar we will be closely watching the progress of the National Productivity Commission and its public inquiry into the increased application of competition, contestability and informed user choice for human services. The not for profit sector is one of the sectors being considered for 'reform' and with the buzz word 'efficiencies' sitting in the mix, we can probably imagine the impact of (and motivation for) such changes. My concern is that we will see a shift away from small responsive services like Flat Out and a move toward mega privatised homogenised services with profit making central to their values and consumer care/rights at the bottom of their priorities.

Every day we see the results of careless and short-sighted policy directives based on cultivating fear and resentment of our most vulnerable peoples. Any policy which asks us to put a dollar figure on dignity, equity and human rights, without consideration for our moral and social obligations deserves the harshest of condemnations. Flat Out urges everyone to closely watch this space and take every opportunity they can to voice their strongest objections to the very thought of a privatised community sector. I can't possibly describe how real a threat this policy direction will be to our women if it indeed comes to pass.

Another big picture item we will focus on over the coming year will be the Housing & Homelessness Reform; this State Government's undertaking holds the promise of some interesting new initiatives, especially in regard to support/service delivery and housing. Flat Out has been actively engaged in the discussions/forums and we will continue to advocate for fair and flexible access to housing and specialised support for our women, wherever possible.

In closing, and once again, I would like to sincerely thank our funders Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Health, all the staff and Management Collective of Flat Out, our friends, supporters and collaborators and most of all, the wonderful women we work with every day. We are in awe of your guts and determination and we are deeply humbled by your trust in us, thank you.

Jake Argyll  
Executive Officer

[www.flatout.org.au](http://www.flatout.org.au)

The Outreach Support and Advocacy team at Flat Out works with women who have been criminalised and imprisoned. We are a small team of three dedicated and passionate workers from varied backgrounds and disciplines who understand and respect the unique experiences of the women we support and we are guided by listening to women's individual needs and circumstances.

Our approach is flexible, person centred and non-judgemental and we understand that the women we work with have often been involved with the criminal justice system from a young age, some having been removed from their families of origin by Child Protective Services. This group of women often have trust issues due to their experiences and Flat Out workers strive to empower women and recognise their strength and courage working in an "alongside model" rather than from an "expert" or clinical perspective.

Flat Out also supports the children of the women we work with and considers their needs are paramount in all case planning and management.

In the last twelve months the issues around affordable housing and homelessness have been at the forefront of media and public attention, in part due to the visibility of rough sleepers who are bedding down in our city shop doorways and lanes. The increasing numbers of homeless people in our society is putting extra pressure on services to do more to assist these people, many of whom are women.

While the reasons for homelessness are complex and many, we know that if a woman is released from prison without a safe place to go she will be much more likely to reoffend within a short time and probably find herself back in prison.

Many of the incarcerated women that Flat Out work with have experienced long delays in being released on parole due to being unable to access housing options (a condition of parole); in order to address these issues, Flat Out has created new pathways with emergency housing providers to facilitate women's timely release from prison. The Executive Officer and Outreach team are working very hard alongside our partners to try and make this process as smooth as possible so that women do not have to be held in custody for any longer than they need to be. Not having a definite release date adds further to a woman's anxiety about going back into the community and makes planning ahead very difficult.

During 2015/2016 Flat Out has exceeded its funded targets, got outreach support for women (and their children) who have found their way to our service through referrals from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, various community support agencies, Office of Corrections, Tarrenghower Prison and as always through self-referral.

The women we have worked with this year are aged between 22 and 71 years old and have come from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds. They have complex support needs and request our assistance with a range of issues which include transition from custody, homelessness, family violence, substance misuse issues and financial hardship. The majority of the women we work with have little or no family support, are disconnected from community and are fleeing violent relationships. These women are often vulnerable, in poor health mentally and physically and many have acquired brain injuries or cognitive deficits including foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

**Reasons for seeking assistance**

The reasons for seeking assistance are many and varied, in all cases women have multiple reasons for seeking support; the table below notes the top ten identified issues for why women approached Flat Out for assistance:

Reason	Cases	Percentage
Housing crisis	39	18.80%
Transition from custodial arrangements	29	13.90%
Lack of family and/or community support	21	10.10%
Financial difficulties	15	7.20%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	12	5.80%
Mental health issues	10	4.80%
Problematic drug or substance use	10	4.80%
Domestic and family violence	7	3.40%
Housing affordability stress	4	1.90%
Relationship/family breakdown	4	1.90%

**Where do our referrals come from?**

Flat Out receives referrals from a number of sources, as indicated below (in our top 5 sources), the bulk of our referrals come from the women themselves and directly from prisons (mostly Dame Phyllis Frost Centre).

Source	Number
No formal referral (self-referral)	58
Adult correctional facility	40
Other agency (government or non-government)	9
Specialist Homelessness Agency/outreach worker	8
Drug and alcohol service	2

**Support and or referral for additional support delivered.**

For every contact with one of our case managed women, we deliver a range of supports (or referrals for support), one visit may include up to 10 different types of support, hence the high numbers we see in the right hand column. For example, one woman may be experiencing a difficult time so we might see her (or speak to her) 3 or 4 times a week, during that contact period, we may have provided many of the supports in the left hand column or arranged a referral for specialist support.

**Support required**

**Number of times for all cases where support and or referral was delivered:**

Advice/information	1020
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	529
Medium term/transitional housing	141
Long term housing	135
Transport	58
Living skills/personal development	58
Material aid/brokerage	53
Legal information (referral)	26
Short term or emergency accommodation (referral)	25
Assistance for trauma	24
Family/relationship assistance	22
Financial information (referral)	21
Retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings	20
Assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems	18
Meals	13
Court support	12
Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction	11
Recreation	9
Health/medical services (referral)	9
Mental health services (referral)	8
Assistance for domestic/family violence (referral)	8
Financial advice and counselling (referral)	7
Educational assistance (referral)	7
Psychiatric services (referral)	5
Professional legal services (referral)	5
Counselling for problem gambling (referral)	5
Assertive outreach	5
Parenting skills education (referral)	4
Interpreter services (referral)	4
Specialist counselling services (referral)	3
Drug/alcohol counselling (referral)	3
Psychological services (referral)	2
Laundry/shower facilities	2
Child protection services (referral)	2
Assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance	2
Intellectual disability services (referral)	1

**NGOTGP Funded Outreach Support Service for Criminalised Women**

Flat Out receives funds from the Federal Government Department of Health & Ageing (DoHA) under the National Illicit Drugs Strategy (NIDS) to deliver support to our clients to enable them to either reduce harm from the use of illicit substances or to reduce usage of such substances.

We provide support around a range of issues regarding substance use and misuse these include, but are not limited to; harm minimisation, information and referral to detox/rehab programs, health and health monitoring, information about the short and long term effects of various substances and safe use (especially after release from prison). During the 2015/2016 financial year, Flat Out exceeded its funded targets for this program.

The following (abridged) excerpt from our report for the NIDS program provides an overview of our work and our data indicates that support (episode of care) was delivered to women whose primary drug use was heroin – 17 (down from 24 last year) and amphetamines – 19 (up from 11 last year).

In general; support included the following:

**Support to complete formal (AOD) program:**

- Relapse prevention.
- Linked to other AOD service.
- Reduced risk (in) drug use.
- Reduced substance of concern.
- Stabilised substance use.

**Health outcomes related to:**

- Improve physical health.
- Reduced risk taking.

**Improved level of connectedness outcomes was related to:**

- Improved accommodation (accessing transitional housing or stabilising housing through drug use interventions).
- Linked to activities in community.
- Improved connectedness (to supports, friends, family etc).
- Reduced Offending (in regards to drug related offences).
- Met legal requirements (in regards to drug related issues).

**Improved emotional and psychological wellbeing indicators:**

- Improved emotional wellbeing.
- Improved well-being (in general).
- Linked to General Practitioner (sympathetic GP).
- Reduced self-harm (e.g. either reduced intentional misuse of substances to cause harm to self or other types of intentional self-harm)
- Resolved presenting crisis.

The outcomes for this area mostly revolve around supporting women to secure a mental health plan from their GP and referring women to professional counselling and other psychological supports including arranging neuropsychiatric and psychology assessments where it is suspected a woman may have underlying cognitive issues requiring diagnosis and support. These activities are indicative of our continued emphasis on client centred plans that seek to address the underlying causes of drug misuse and criminalisation and seek to disrupt patterns of behaviour that may lead to re-incarceration due to substance use/misuse.

100% of women have been supported to obtain or maintain secure, affordable and appropriate housing and access to relevant drug and alcohol treatment services, general health practitioners and other supports. Flat Out continues to conduct a thorough and regular formal review and reflection of our support role in relation to each woman; in particular our role in supporting women to engage with necessary and appropriate specialist services and support.

# StreetSmart Grant

Flat Out is very grateful to Street Smart for funds 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.

Homelessness continues to be a common feature in the underlying circumstances for why women go to prison. The result of a tough on crime environment is that more homeless people will be targeted and imprisoned unless we can provide a timely, targeted and practical crisis response. Our emergency fund has been crucial.

**Thank you to Adam Robinson & StreetSmart**

## EMERGENCY AND ESSENTIAL ITEMS INCLUDED

- **Cooking equipment and kitchenware**
- **Emergency accommodation expenses (where other funds are not available)**
- **Emergency food where Vic Food bank and other sources aren't available**
- **Manchester: sheets/doona/pillows**
- **Mobile phones and phone cards**
- **MYKI tickets and travel costs associated with family reunification**
- **Pharmacotherapy and other prescription medication**
- **Proof of identification documents**
- **Refurbished computers/IT hardware for women seeking education and employment**
- **Specialist psychological and other medical reports**
- **Sport and recreation memberships and/or equipment**
- **Toiletries including sanitary supplies**
- **Warm clothing and footwear**
- **Women's underwear and other essential clothing**

# Flat Out Protocols & Partnerships

## FLAT OUT HAS PROTOCOLS WITH THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

- **Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) Women's Information, Leadership and Self-Advocacy Program**
- **Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre**
- **Haven HomeSafe**
- **Launch Housing – East St Kilda Women's House and Southbank**
- **Local Area Service Network (LASN), North West Metropolitan Region**
- **McAuley Women's Services**
- **Salvation Army EastCare Housing Services**
- **Smart Justice**
- **St Kilda Crisis Centre**
- **Women's Housing Limited**
- **Yarra Community Housing**

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

- **Launch Housing THM**
- **Salvation Army EastCare Housing Services**
- **Women's Housing Limited**
- **Yarra Community Housing**

## Training and professional development undertaken by Flat Out

- AHURI Conference - My way home: competition and choice in human services
- Antipode Foundation, Otago University Aotearoa/New Zealand-Space, Race, Bodies II: Sovereignty and Migration in a Carceral Age Conference presentation
- AOD Service Providers Conference
- Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Sector CEO and Managers forum
- Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People (CHRIP) Effective Advocacy training session – We were never meant to survive - Gendered and Racialised State Violence and Impunity: Through and Beyond Official Inquiries and Coronial Inquests
- CoHealth – Hoarding and Squalor forum
- McAuley House orientation session
- Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) orientation training for access
- Department of Justice Corrections Stakeholders forum x 2
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Funded Agency Channel training
- DHHS Housing & Homelessness Reform-Brimbank Melton Launch Site forum
- DHHS Service Delivery Tracking Acquittals training
- Essendon Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), speaking at their AGM
- First Aid Refresher courses for Outreach Support employees
- Information session presentation to Monash University Honours Students
- Law and Advocacy Centre for Women launch event
- Local Area Service Network (LASN) Frequent Users forum
- LASN Launch of “More houses for people” campaign
- PRACE presentation – introduction to Flat Out’s services for Women performing CBO activities
- Practical Strategies for Turning Around a Small Association with Few Cash Reserves and Minimal Staff Resources training
- Practice Exchange Forum: Responding to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women who have experienced family violence
- Provided SHIP overview training for Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
- QIP Accreditation training
- Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Introduction to Homelessness and Social Housing training
- SHS-Making your numbers count: using data effectively training
- Strategic Planning day for Flat Out
- Talk given about Flat Out to the Anglesea PROBUS event
- Talk given about Flat Out at Victoria Surf Coast municipality event
- Talk given about Flat Out and homelessness to a class of Chisolm Institute TAFE students
- Turning Point, SHARC & Bouverie Family Therapy Centre - BreakThrough ICE Education for Families pilot workshop training
- VAADA Conference
- Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) mental health plan roundtable forum
- Women’s Leadership Program at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) Art event for International Women’s Day
- Women’s Leadership Program at DPFC-Have Your Say session
- Women’s Leadership Program at DPFC-Payday Lenders in English session
- Women’s Leadership Program at DPFC-Payday Lenders in Vietnamese session
- Women’s Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) launch of report: Stepping Stones: Legal barriers to economic equality after family violence
- WorkSafe Health & Safety sessions

**Directors**

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
FLAT OUT INC.**

**To the members of Flat Out Inc.**

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Flat Out Inc., which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30th June 2016, and the statement of comprehensive income for the year then ended, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information and the Management Collective Members assertion statement.

**The Management Collective Members responsibility for the financial report**

The Management Collective Members of Flat Out Inc. are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and for such internal control as The Management Collective Members determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

**Auditor's responsibility**

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about 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 assessment, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Associations preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements 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 the accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by The Management Collective Members, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

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 independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies.

**Electronic publication of the audited financial report**

It is our understanding that the Flat Out Inc. intends to electronically present the audited financial report and auditor's report on its internet website. Responsibility for the electronic presentation of the financial report on the Flat Out Inc. website is that of The Management Collective Members of the Flat Out Inc. The security and controls over information on the website should be addressed by the Flat Out Inc. to maintain the integrity of the data presented. The examination of the controls over the electronic presentation of audited financial report(s) on the Flat Out Inc. website is beyond the scope of the audit of the financial report.

**Opinion**

In our opinion, the financial report of Flat Out Inc. presents fairly, in all material respects the Flat Out Inc. financial position as at 30th June 2016 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

**J. L. Collyer & Partners**

**Lionel R. Arnold**

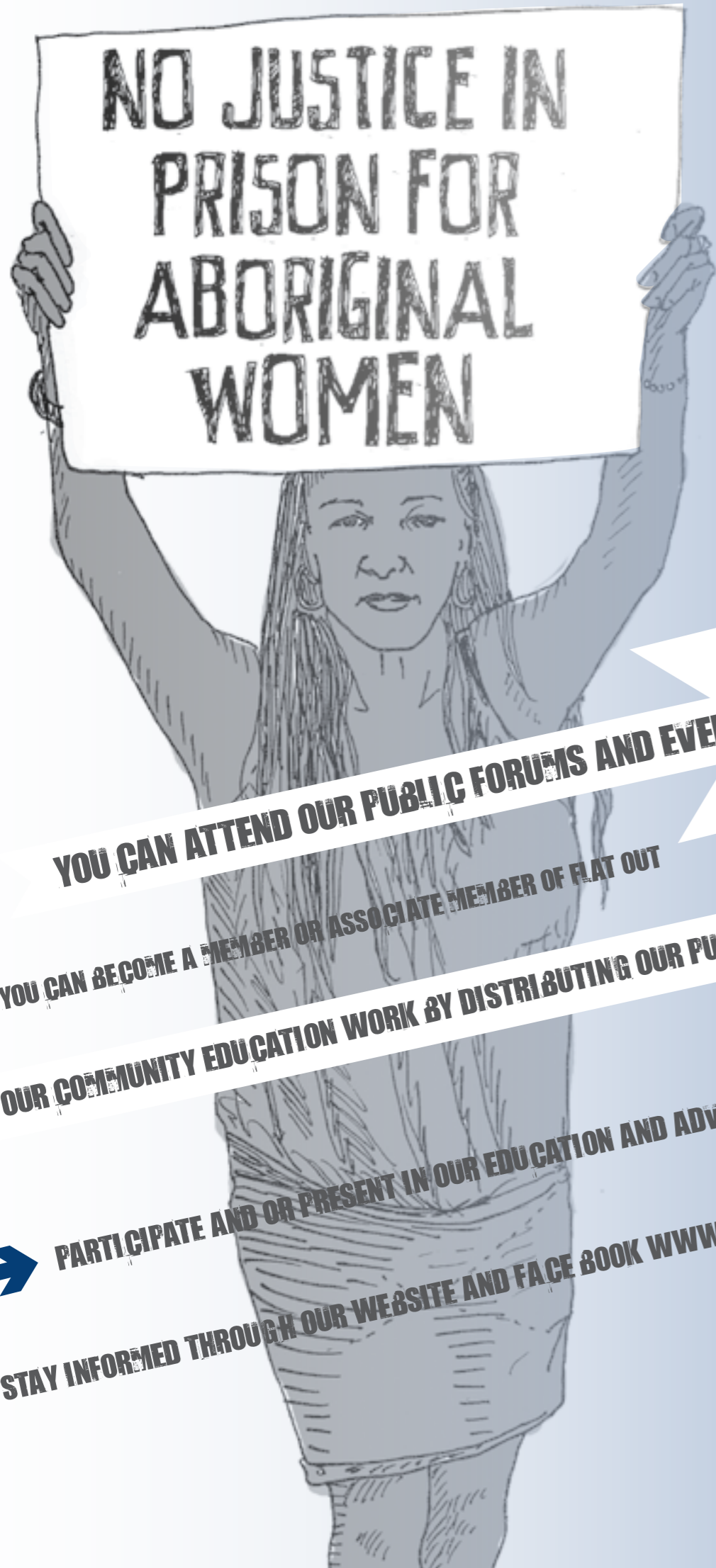


**Accountants**

**Partner**

Dated in Glen Waverley on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016





# FLAT OUT WELCOMES YOUR SUPPORT & INVOLVEMENT

YOU CAN ATTEND OUR PUBLIC FORUMS AND EVENTS

YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OR ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF FLAT OUT

SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION WORK BY DISTRIBUTING OUR PUBLISHED MATERIALS

PARTICIPATE AND OR PRESENT IN OUR EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY TRAININGS

STAY INFORMED THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AND FACE BOOK [WWW.FLATOUT.ORG.AU](http://WWW.FLATOUT.ORG.AU)

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE SO ALREADY, PLEASE CONSIDER OUR MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM TO SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT SOCIAL CHANGE AND SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY WORK. WE WOULD BE VERY HAPPY IF YOU WOULD CONSIDER DONATING THE PRICE OF ONE COFFEE A DAY.

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](http://WWW.GIVENOW.COM.AU/FLATOUT)

FOR A COPY OF FLAT OUT'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PLEASE CONTACT FLAT OUT EXECUTIVE OFFICER ON 9 372 6155.





FLAT  OUT

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