

ANNUAL REPORT | 2019 – 2020

ABOLISH PRISON!
UNTIL EVERY CAGE IS EMPTY!



FLAT  OUT



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"fighting to protect the human rights of women in prison"

Flat Out and its staff are committed to supporting the rights, safety, participation and empowerment of all children

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

Annual Report Design Jacqui Rayner

Photography by Flat Out

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How to get to Flat Out, 255 Ballarat Rd, Footscray 3011

Trains – Sunbury or Werribee to Footscray Train Station

From Footscray Train Station (Irving St)

Bus 223 – Yarraville to Highpoint Shopping Centre – Eleanor St/Ballarat Road bus stop

From Paisley St, Footscray

Bus 410 – Sunshine to Footscray, via Ballarat Road – Eleanor St/Ballarat Road bus stop

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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

NORTH WESTERN MELBOURNE PRIMARY HEALTH NETWORK (NWMPHN), DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG TREATMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

Brad Pearce, NWMPHN, Director, Alcohol and Other Drugs

Emily Box, NWMPHN, Manager, Alcohol and Other Drugs

Monique Parker, NWMPHN, Program Officer, Alcohol and Other Drugs

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

Nigel Neale, Service Advisor, Brimbank/Melton Area, DHHS

Brendan Duffy, SHSC Support, DHHS

FAMILY SAFETY VICTORIA

Emma Black

NON-GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Grassroots fundraising and donations
 Brian & Virginia McNamee Foundation
 Melbourne Magistrates' Court of Victoria
 StreetSmart Australia
 Victorian Legal Services Board

Donations

Aesop, Eastern Emergency Relief Network, Citycare Hillsong and volunteers, Share the Dignity, Western Emergency Relief Network, and all of our wonderful individual donors - there are too many of you to name - we are so grateful for your support.

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
- Co-writing submissions and responses to Inquiries
- In-kind donations of time and resources
- Co-advocacy with clients and on systemic issues
- Heather Holst, Launch Housing and staff
- Hilary Knack, Flat Out Board
- Hui Zhou, Megan Pearce and the team at Darebin Community Legal Centre and Fitzroy Legal Service
- Inner Melbourne Legal
- Jobs Australia
- Justice Connect
- Karen Fletcher, Flat Out Board
- Law Advocacy Centre for Women
- Launch Housing, Southbank and East St Kilda Women's House
- Sarah Langmore, Meredith Gorman and Local Area Service Network (LASN), North & West Metropolitan Region
- Malcolm Feiner, Corrections Resource Centre
- Mehran Erfanian, Centrax Computer Services
- Reeanna Maloney, Flat Out Board
- Salvation Army Housing Services, EastCare
- St Kilda Crisis Centre
- Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
- WhiteDog GreenFrog IT consultants
- Women's Housing Alliance
- Women's Housing Ltd
- Unison Community Housing
- Adam Robinson, CEO StreetSmart Australia
- Abolitionist and Transformative Justice Centre
- Amanda George, Flat Out Board
- Amy Jenkins, Flat Out Management Collective Board
- Antoinette Braybrook and the team, Djirra
- Billi Clarke, Launch Housing, Southbank
- Bree Carlton, Flat Out Management Collective Board
- Caraniche, Employment Assistance Program
- Charandev Singh, Human Rights and Indigenous Education Advocate, Activist and Community Educator
- The Programs team at DPFC
- Cathy Whelan, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister for Corrections Victoria
- Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)
- David Humberstone and volunteers, Citycare Hillsong
- Debbie Kilroy and the team, Sisters Inside, QLD
- Eastern Emergency Relief Network
- Emeline Gaske, Flat Out Board
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre

Friends and Volunteers 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 would especially like to thank our amazing Social Work Student, Camille Fitzgerald, and our incredible volunteers this year: Eleanor Brown, Belinda O'Connor, Natalya Rooney, and Rachel Bowler

FLAT OUT MANAGEMENT COLLECTIVE MEMBERS

JULY 2019 – JUNE 2020

Amanda George, Bree Carlton, Emeline Gaske (to Feb 2020), Hilary Knack, Karen Fletcher & Rebecca Bunn
Emeline Gaske & Reeanna Maloney (to Feb 2020)

FLAT OUT EMPLOYEES | JULY 2019 – JUNE 2020

Ayla Hope
Manager, Practice and Service Design

Adriana MacKay
Outreach Support & Advocacy

Caitlin Coleman
Women Transforming Justice Project
Senior Outreach

Denise Taylor
Outreach Support & Advocacy

Elisa Buggy
Executive Officer

Emma Law
Outreach Support & Advocacy

Gaylene Donaldson
Outreach Support & Advocacy

Jiembra Shiels
Chief Financial Officer

Kayla Ta
Executive Officer

Laura Button
Women Transforming Justice Project
Senior Outreach

Lauren Caulfield
Advocacy Coordinator – Policing & Family Violence

Melissa Walshe
Women Transforming Justice Project
Senior Outreach

Michele Old
Administration Resource Coordinator

Olivia Henry
Women Transforming Justice Project
Senior Outreach

Patrizia Archivio
Finance Manager

Rei Alphonso
Family Violence Justice Project

Ria Jago
Manager, Systemic Advocacy

Yasmine Jensem-Solyom
Program Support Worker, WTJ



Organisation Overview

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

Flat Out is committed to co-creating safer spaces, fostering support and self-determination for people who identify as sistergirls, intersex, transgender and/or gender diverse women.

We respect that identity is for the individual to define and work collectively to ensure that people with these identities are accorded respect and access to our support and advocacy and provided ongoing opportunities to inform policies concerning the intersection of their identities with experiences of criminalisation.

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 homelessness support and advocacy service for women 18+, (with/without children) 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 North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN), the Department of Health (Federal), Family Safety Victoria, through the Victorian Legal Services Board 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/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.

We are also grateful to the generosity of the Brian and Virginia McNamee Foundation, without whom we could not have set up our new innovative support program, the Women Inside and Out project.

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 2020-2023

Flat Out Board members and Staff spent an amazing Saturday with Erin O'Donoghue from Hive Collective and Elle Steele from iamellesteele designing our new Strategic Plan for 2020-2023. Keeping with our values and priority areas, we have developed a brand new set of goals for the next three years. A full version of our report can be found on our website at www.flatout.org.au

Our Vision

- Women are not criminalised or imprisoned

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

How we will get there.

- We will maintain Flat Out as an independent, not for profit organisation
- 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 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 18+ 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 33 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 Board 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.

Flat Out Board Report

This has been another year full of significant changes and challenges for Flat Out. COVID-19 and the global impact of the Black Lives Matter movement have had a significant impact on how we support women accessing Flat Out and envisage our work in the future. Central to the ongoing work of the Board this year has been how to increase our capacity for systemic advocacy and continue to diversify our funding streams.

This year we thanked our EO, Kayla Ta, for the support she provided Flat Out during her time with us, and in August 2019 we welcomed Elisa Buggy as our new EO. Elisa has brought a fierce determination to not only cultivate and expand the support Flat Out provides to women and their children, but also to strengthen our commitment to a feminist abolitionist agenda. Elisa's long experience, highly developed skills and sheer tenacity and hard work has proven transformative for the organisation and an enormous support to the Board.

In 2020 the leadership of the Black Lives Matter and Stop Black Deaths in Custody movements have opened significant space for a public discussion of the need to address the harms being caused by Victoria's bail laws and public housing crisis. The Board has focused on increasing our capacity to undertake systemic advocacy. We created a short term position to identify opportunities to fund and expand systemic advocacy.

The Board also held our first Build Homes, Not Prisons campaign meeting. We have identified a need for a strong, public campaign advocating against the expansion of prisons in Victoria and for increased funding for public housing, before the Victorian State Budget 2020. Unfortunately, the beginnings of our organised campaigns to protest these issues were impeded by the arrival of COVID. However a central part of all

Board discussions in 2020 have revolved around building solidarity and engaging with the broader abolitionist community to make this campaign happen.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused huge trauma and hardship for people in prison and their families and loved ones. Flat Out has actively supported the national and international campaign for decarceration as a public health measure. Social distancing and many other public health protections are just not possible in prisons. It is imperative that prison and detention centre populations are reduced to protect life and health during the pandemic and it has been pleasing to see a significant reduction in the number of women at Dame Phyllis Frost and Tarrengower prisons since March. It shows it can be done, and we hope the measures that have kept women out of prison continue, and expand, well after the pandemic is over.

Similarly we support campaigns to continue income support and increased accommodation options beyond their current deadlines. People shouldn't be homeless or living in poverty in a pandemic, but neither should they when the pandemic ends.

A highlight of the year was working with the staff at our annual strategic planning day. We reaffirmed Flat Out's vision and brought our diverse experiences and knowledge to inform our new Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023. An emphasis in our Strategic Plan is to develop a steering group for women with lived experience to guide our work. It also focuses on embedding a feminist abolitionist best practice framework to support our advocacy and build cultural safety and LGBTIQ inclusivity, particularly for trans and gender diverse people working in and accessing our services.

The very heart of Flat Out, remains case work with women who have experienced incarceration, through our Assertive Outreach program and the Women Transforming Justice Partnership. A strong focus of the Board's work has been to review and embed support and practice, that allow all staff to thrive even while undertaking work impeded by systemic barriers in the housing sector and for women leaving prison. A strong part of these initiatives has also been to ensure that we centre our practice in a feminist, decarcerationist framework. We want to ensure the women we work with can access the best possible support from Flat Out while Board and staff and supporters work together to strengthen and support the decarceration movement well beyond Flat Out.

Alongside so many achievements this year Flat Out was extremely happy to see both our program delivery and advocacy programs expand. Flat Out has established the Women's Inside and Out program and we are very grateful for the three year grant from the McNamee Trust that enabled this to happen. This program will provide women with pre and post release employment and vocational mentoring. We are very excited to be in partnership with Dress for Success and grateful for the additional support being provided by the Victorian Women's Trust.

We are also continuing to expand our family violence work. Funding for the Family Violence Justice project has been extended until mid 2021. The project builds the sector's capacity to work with women who have experienced incarceration. The overwhelming response from the service sector and our key partners has not only been an inspiring recognition of the solidarity that exists within the sector but also the significant need for this work.

“People shouldn't be homeless or living in poverty in a pandemic, but neither should they when the pandemic ends. should they when the pandemic ends”.

Flat Out has also been excited to take on the Policing Family Violence, Story telling project, which is part of Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre's, Police Accountability Program. The Board is committed identifying further opportunities to expand our work in this area in the future.

It has been with great sadness that we note that we have been without the support of Michele Old, Administrative Coordinator, for some time this year. Michele has been with Flat Out for over 10 years and provided valuable support to the Board throughout this time. We wish Michele all the best in her recovery.

The Board offers our heartfelt thanks to the miraculous Flat Out staff for the dedication and skill that they bring to their work, both supporting our women and challenging the systems that are creating so much injustice.

In solidarity,

Hilary Knack and Karen Fletcher,

On behalf of the Flat Out Board

Programs and Service Design Report

Ayla Hope – Manager, Practice and Service Design

The Practice Team at Flat Out (comprised of the Outreach Support & Advocacy Workers, the Women Transforming Justice Program, the Women Inside & Out Program, the Program Support Worker and Student Placements) have demonstrated an extraordinary level of care the support they provide in the past 12 months.

Within a global pandemic and a constantly shifting service system, they have continued to demonstrate their dedication and passion for the important service that Flat Out provides. Not just managing to continue much of our ‘business as usual’ (with some tweaks to the mode of delivery), but the team has also delivered significant developments in service design, organisational resource development, reflective practice and process improvement.

Flat Out operates at the extremely pointy end of the social and community services system; women’s criminalisation is inherently different to that of men. The women we serve are resilient survivors, deserving of care and respect. Overall, the women we support have survived combinations of most or all of the following:

- Removal into out of home care as children
- Victim/survivors of high levels of violence, including sexual violence
- Mental health challenges, some very severe, and often undiagnosed
- Substance use disorders, including the resulting ABI’s
- Homelessness and housing instability,
- Mis-identification as the primary aggressor in domestic violence incidents,
- Removal of their own children,
- Multiple and complex trauma and, ultimately
- Criminalisation and incarceration.

Due to factors inherent in this list, many have been barred or excluded from mainstream services. As such Flat Out’s Practice Team provides important

support to a systemically under-supported group of people, and our work is underpinned by an ongoing commitment to social justice and human rights.

Key points for the last 12 months include:

New Service Delivery Staff:

- Denise Taylor (Outreach Support & Advocacy Worker)
- Sienna Cleland (Commenced as locum Outreach Support & Advocacy Worker, and later appointed to Women Inside & Out Program Worker)
- Yasmine Jensen-Solyom (Program Support Worker)
- Adriana MacKay (Outreach Support & Advocacy Worker)
- Witt Gorrie (Outreach Social Worker, Policing Family Violence Project)

New Program Funding Secured:

- Women Inside & Out Program: The Brian & Virginia McNamee Mutual Trust awarded Flat Out \$310,025 over 3 years to develop and deliver an innovative new model for supporting women with experiences of criminalisation in Victoria. More detail about this program can be found in the relevant section of this Annual Report.
- Vocational Support Funding: The Victorian Women’s Trust awarded Flat Out \$16,000 to deliver vocational development coaching within the WIAO program.

New Program or Process Improvement:

- Best Practice Framework: estimated delivery end of 2020.
- Updated Referral Pathways: Referral pathways with DPFC and Tarrengower Prison have been updated and communications and feedback loops with the prisons have improved.

New Intake Screening, Assessment & Allocation process: currently in the testing phase.

- Outcomes Monitoring Framework developed, to be piloted in the WIAO program and assessed for usefulness across Flat Out’s service provision more broadly.
- Boost to material aid: Following hugely successful social media drives requesting material aid, Flat Out has received an enormous amount of groceries. Flat Out has distributed 100’s of material aid / care packages since COVID began.
- Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders across the service system, MOU development, etc.

Service demand Data

This year the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the women we support are living in the context of increasing disadvantage, substance use, housing and social support needs; along side a 50% reduction in the number of women currently in custody.

Flat Out has seen an enormous increase in referrals received and support periods delivered, as well as an increase in the complexity of support required.

The table below compares the first half of the 2019/20 financial year, with the second half of the financial year, and provides the percentage change in the far-right column:

Service Delivery Data:

	1 Jul 2019 - 31 Dec 2019	1 Jan 2019 - 30 Jun 2020	Percentage change
Total distinct persons having recorded contact with Flat out	25	61	↑ 144%
Total recorded contacts made by Flat Out	279	818	↑ 193%
Number of those persons with an open plan during report period	4 (16% of clients had a support plan)	14 (23% of clients had a support plan)	↑ 250%
Total recorded time working with these persons at flat out	355 hr 2 min	730 hr 22 min	↑ 106%
Total recorded travel time (percentage of total time spent travel)	74 hr (21%)	126 hr (17%)	↑ 70%
Total payments made by Flat Out in support of these persons	\$2,516.50	\$13,469.44	↑ 435%

Client Demographics

100%
currently homeless or have a history of homelessness / unstable housing

Almost 100%
have concurrent AOD and mental health issues (NB: Sometimes mental health challenges are undiagnosed)

49%
people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

26%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

We are welcoming increasing numbers of trans women to our service.

Women Inside and Out Program

Sienna Cleland – WIAO Program Worker

Women Inside and Out (WIAO) aims to provide consistent, holistic, limitless, trauma-informed, therapeutic support services to women with experiences of criminalisation in Victoria.

The WIAO program is a new initiative in which a key worker will provide assertive inreach support to women for 6 months while incarcerated. This support will offer continuity of care, extending to provide assertive outreach support for women for 12 months after their release from custody. The allocated key worker will build a therapeutic, collaborative support relationship with women while also offering expressive therapeutic support to individuals who choose to engage in artmaking as part of their support. We work collaboratively with women towards reaching their self-identified goals, centring their voices and expertise and empowering women to feel independent in their community. The allocated key worker will engage with women to plan and establish day-of-release supports prior to their release from custody, with the aim of enabling a safer transition from custody to the community of their choice. As each individual progresses through the program, their supports will decrease in frequency as their capacity and independence within the community grows. WIAO will link women with vocational advice and support to explore their passions, skills and hobbies with the outcome of engagement in education, training and employment, when this is in line with a woman's self-identified goals. After completion of the program over a period of eighteen months, women will be offered the option to be referred into Flat Out's Outreach and Advocacy program for further support.

Reflections from some of our amazing staff and students on their experiences of being part of the team at Flat Out

After years of having a lived experience with a number of things I decided I wanted to help other people so started studying cert 4 in Community services.

While studying I really struggled to find an organisation that were willing to take me on because of my lived experience.

I was extremely stressed out and my teachers had heard about an org that work with Women that have been criminalised and mentioned to me that she thought it would be great for me.

Going into my first interview with Flat Out I was super nervous about how much of my lived experience I should or shouldn't disclose because of the experience I had with other orgs.

All my nerves went away almost the minute I walked in the building I felt so welcomed and accepted.

I successfully completed my work placement and was offered a job as a program support worker on the WTJ program.

When I first started I was mainly answering the phones and ringing some women to check in and offer support, I was learning things really quickly and wanted to do more. I was asked to do some case file audits for WTJ, while I was doing these I noticed some things from a lived experience perspective about the way organisations use language and how they might make a person feel if they were to read their 'case notes' I brought this to the team's attention and was really happy with the response and how my thought/opinions are valued and the changes Flat Out are making to language and names of things.

I am constantly reminded that my lived experience and ideas are valued and appreciated and am encouraged to talk as much or as little as I want to.

Yasmine

I undertook my final social work placement at Flat Out this year. During which we were all swept up in the COVID pandemic. I've been incredibly lucky to have been a part of the Flat Out team during tis challenging time. Flat Out truly works from a person-centred place and has been the most supportive and inclusive workspace I have ever experienced. I've had the opportunity to learn from all the women Flat Out walks with, the workers and different streams of amazing advocacy and outreach work they do. The highlights of this placement were getting to meet and work with some of the amazing women who Flat Out walks with, to hear some of their stories and the history of Flat Out. Also, the opportunity to be in reflective and constructive discussions about the current relevant social and practice issues. Within the team and the spaces carved out for reflection and discussion Flat Out did not shy away from having challenging conversations and supporting each other to do so. It has been a pleasure to show up and learn so richly from everyone at Flat Out.

During the placement the Flat Out Instagram was established by Natalya, a wonderful volunteer who did the fab staff portraits. I took over the admin and became a contributing admin on the Facebook page too. Social Media is playing such a vital role in social movements at the moment, in sharing info and knowledge, and connecting community. With abolition becoming a part of the public lexicon it has been a great tool for engaging community and sharing resources. We have seen a significant growth in followers and engagement which supports our work and abolitionist work reaching more people. It also has meant our donation drives have reached further, when our pantry was empty earlier in the year, through donations from the generous community it was filled to bursting. This has meant regular grocery drops to women and their families.

Camille

Outreach Support & Advocacy worker has many hats you wear to support our ladies we work with from counselling of all kinds, taxi drivers, shoppers, delivery driver, googler, helper and voice for them, listener but most of all someone who cares & and wants to make a different someone's life. And to shine the light on their path from darkness to be able to support them hear from them "we are here for you call us". It's a very humbling, rewarding and stressful job with love, laughter, sadness, joy, anger, disappointment, surprises, and bureaucracy all rolled in one. Their stories and traumas are similar but different and each one touches our heart to do better not just in our job but also in our lives and the community. As we walk alongside our ladies on their journey in life let us be the cup of hope and be the changes that need to break down an outdated , corrupted , unjust, stigmatised, broken system. Look at the whole person not on what they did or didn't do but at what they went through. So they can heal and be safe to make changes they want to do and be. We see things from our side, their side, government side which is painful, stressful, traumatised, violent, cruel, frightening, broken. Let's us be the voice to make changes in our community. I have been humbled by our ladies, I have cried with them, I have laughed with them but most importantly I have been inspired by the ladies. And with the Flat Out Team I have found a place to share my passion, ideas, friendship, knowledge, experience and dreams and hope and also been encouraged to learn new things that inspire me to be a better person. Let's keep doing what we are doing together to make a different in each other lives and a better place to live. Build homes not prison. No more injustice. Be a voice for others who can't.

Denise

Systemic Advocacy Report

Ria Jago – Manager Systemic Advocacy

Flat Out works within a system that can feel broken – and the challenges of helping bring change (of the kind that has a perceptible impact for the better on the lives of women we work with) can feel immense.

Our systemic advocacy work has continued to engage these challenges directly, and to balance rapid action with longer term, research-based and reflective work. As an organisation, we've made a number of story-led submissions to government reform processes in relation to homelessness, family violence, over-policing and imprisonment, and de-carceration. This analysis also yielded good practice recommendations for government drawn on FlatOut's deep experience working with criminalised women, as well as existing literature. We've advocated within, and learned from, peakbodies (the Federation of CLCs, the LASN, Council to Homeless Persons), campaign coalitions (eg. #Everybodyshome) and reform partners across the social services and legal sectors. We work alongside grassroots abolition (jails, and policing) movements, from whom we learn, particularly from our Indigenous sisters and brothers, about audacity. Systemic advocacy team members showed their agility in pivoting project work to meet the sharpened challenges facing criminalised women within the context of

COVID-19 and an already depleted and overpoliced social housing sector. Their dedication to their work continues to be outstanding: I have observed the team living to their marrow the centring of the stories, the experiences, and the advocacy aspirations, of the women that Flat Out walks with, while remaining attuned to the immediacy of some advocacy pathways (including media). As an organisation we are continuing to refine best practice approaches to storytelling – both as advocacy, and as therapeutic, tools.

We are also deepening the integration of our service delivery advocacy, and our systemic advocacy work, through a series of all staff case-based peer learning, skilling, and reflective processes. As examples: we now have in place a warm referral pathway into Justice Connect's Homeless Law service for women facing eviction and homelessness; the Service Design team have also refined their client intake process so that it captures primary data for systemic advocacy. In the time ahead, those data will provide current, irrefutable evidence of the impacts - still too readily overlooked in policy making and law reform - on Victorian women and their children of our criminal justice system. Flat Out has been deeply supported by our MP colleagues, particularly Minister Williams, and MP Ingrid Stitt, (who else to name – Fiona Patten?) in our efforts, particularly as we've searched for recurrent funding for the position of Manager, Systemic Advocacy. With the help of our wonderful intern Camille (see her blurb), and our volunteers (Belinda, Natalya, Eleanor) we have significantly expanded FlatOut's social media capacity, and redesigned FlatOut's website to help improve service access, to platform campaign work, and to provide original data and analysis for researchers and policy makers (watch this space). A particular shout out to Rachel Bowler for her dedicated preparation of the daily media round-up, which has saved us collectively countless hours, and kept us current.

Family Violence Justice Project

Rei Alphonso – Family Violence Justice Project Coordinator

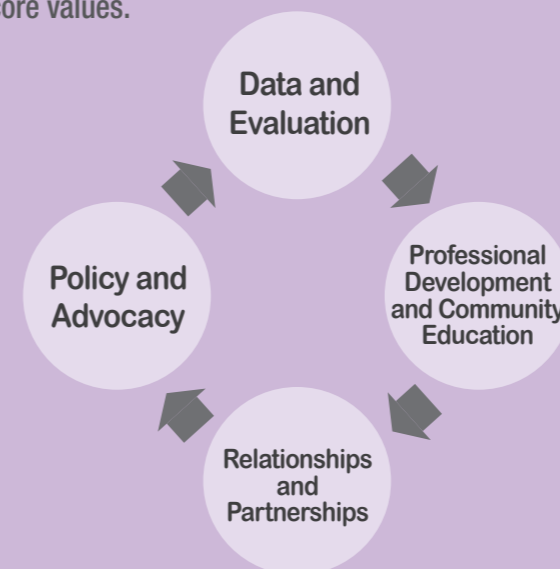
“participation in this project reconnected me to the reasons I do this work - to a bigger picture of activism and hope”

Flat Out Support Worker

The Family Violence Justice Project (FV Justice Project) was piloted in 2019 in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) which identified that criminalised women experience high rates of family violence, yet have very poor engagement with the service system. Family Safety Victoria (FSV) funded Flat Out to undertake this project with the aim of improving the accessibility and responsiveness of the service system for women who are criminalised and experiencing family violence. We developed a dedicated role in partnership with FSV to lead the project across the following key domains:

- Professional Education and Community Development;
- Relationships and Partnerships;
- Policy and Advocacy; and • Data and Evaluation.

The FV Justice Project strategically developed these domains in tandem, using a highly adaptive and holistic project approach that held accountability, flexibility and receptivity as core values.



Data and feedback were utilised across the project to stitch together the learnings and outcomes that sprang from each of the four domains. This generative approach means that the findings, outcomes and recommendations outlined below are truly alive, relevant to the sector and responsive to the needs of the women we walk alongside.

“I was introduced to frameworks useful to my practice and had the opportunity to think deeply about Misidentification and systems collusion... I came to understand the level of self-exclusion that criminalised women will engage in... and that we need to be much more assertive if we are to engage them. This has affected not only my own practice, but the practice of my supervisees... I feel inspired”

Team leader (Women's Counselling – external service)

Refunded in 2020 for Phase 2, the project became embedded in the Systemic Advocacy Team and has continued to engage in internal and external capacity building including training, resource development, research, data and evaluation, and collaborative development of a Best Practice Framework that ensures the integrity of Flat Out's values are embedded in all the work we do by providing a bridge between individual advocacy and service delivery, operational development, sector capacity building and partnership.

“during the training in particular, I felt a sense of empowerment in giving voice to the tension between my work ethic and the requirements of my role - the ways in which I feel I am sometimes complicit in the system, in ways I find uncomfortable. The resources and information provided helped me to re-conceptualise this, and to feel hopeful”

Family Violence Specialist Advocate (external service)

Executive Officers report

Elisa Buggy – Executive Officer

It has been almost one year since I first joined Flat Out – and what an extraordinary year it has been to join such an extraordinary organisation. I knew that Flat Out was one of those increasingly rare organisations who truly walk the talk and who would unfailingly walk beside the women we have existed to support since 1988. What I didn't know was how inspiring and energising the wonderful team would be – and what incredible support we had, even in the face of the extreme adversity that 2020 has thrown at us all.

In amongst the horror of the bushfires and the introduction of COVID-19, women continue to be the fastest growing prison population in Australia, increasing by more than fifty percent in Victoria alone in the last decade. Shamefully this picture is even worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who represent nearly one third of all women in prison across Australia. This is not acceptable. It cannot go on. Even as we see the actual prison numbers decreasing across the board in the midst of a pandemic, still just under half of the women in our State's prisons today are unsentenced; and all are facing the uncertainty of what a state of disaster might mean for them – right now, and in the future.

This backdrop combined with Black Lives Matter and the calls for abolition that are louder now than ever before make this one of the most important twelve months in Flat Out's history, and we have certainly stepped up to the challenge. We have continued to unwaveringly bang the drum in every sector, from family violence and homelessness, to mental health, disability and alcohol and other drugs – at almost every turn I have been shocked by the number of closed doors that a criminalised woman will face simply trying to seek the help she needs – simply

because of her criminalisation. It is increasingly clear that the 'advocacy' part of our mandate is needed at every level, from systemic, through sectoral, to individual organisations and workers, and I am extremely proud of the Flat Out team for showing up every day to continue their efforts to help open some of those doors.

In the 2019-2020 financial year we have continued to build our services to make them more relevant for the women we support. We have welcomed Sienna Cleland to the team to lead our new long-term outreach and support program, Women Inside and Out, gratefully funded by the Brian and Virginia McNamee Foundation and the Victorian Women's Trust; we have welcomed Ria Jago to coordinate the systemic advocacy arm of the organisation; and we have welcomed Lauren Caulfield who has joined Flat Out to continue the incredible work of coordinating the Policing Family Violence project, with Witt Gorrie coming across to join her in July. Caitlin Coleman and Yasmine Jensen-Solyom have both deftly taken over the support work of the Women Transforming Justice program; and Adriana MacKay and Denise Taylor have joined the team as our brand new Outreach Support and Advocacy workers – all led by the system-design extraordinaire, Ayla Hope, who has led the team and supported the organisation with enormous passion and care. Along the way we have also been grateful for the support of Lisa Chamouras, who held the fort for a little while with Caitlin in the WTJ program, and have had our share of farewells – I would particularly like to thank Kayla Ta, whose shoes were not easy to fill when I stepped into them in August.

Along with our incredible team, we could not have done this important work without the support of our funders and donors – thank you

to Helga and the team at DHHS; to Monique and Emily and the team at the NWMPHN; to Sue and Katrina and the team at VLSB; to Emma and the team at Family Safety Victoria; to Rachel English and the Brian and Virginia McNamee Foundation, the Bolger Family Trust, the Victorian Women's Trust, the Magistrate's Court Fee Pool Fund; Street Smart; and all of the wonderful donors who chipped in to fill our community pantries and make sure we got as much material aid and support as possible to the women who need it most.

Thank you also to all of our partners, particularly Claudia and the team at Fitzroy Legal Service, Jill and Ellie and the team at Law and Advocacy Centre for Women, and all of the incredible people who we have been fortunate enough to stand beside throughout the year.

Thank you to our incredible Management Committee. Amanda George, Karen Fletcher, Hilary Knack, Emeline Gaske, Reeanna Maloney, Bree Carlton, and Rebecca Bunn – none of this would be possible without your leadership and support.

And finally, thank you to all of the people we have had the privilege to support over the last year. You have taught us more than you will ever know. We hear you. We see you. We are here. And we look forward to carrying this important work into next year and every year after, until one day, women truly are free from prisons.

“In amongst the horror of the bushfires and the introduction of COVID-19, women continue to be the fastest growing prison population in Australia, increasing by more than fifty percent in Victoria alone in the last decade. Shamefully this picture is even worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who represent nearly one third of all women in prison across Australia. This is not acceptable. It cannot go on”.

StreetSmart Grant

Essential Support Program

Flat Out is very grateful to StreetSmart 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.

Emergency and essential items included

- Emergency accommodation expenses (where other funds are not available)
- Emergency food where other sources are not available
- Household items such as kitchen utensils, sheets/duona/pillows
- Mobile phones and phone cards
- MYKI and Day Passes
- 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
- Undergarments, warm clothing, footwear and other essential clothing

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.

Thank you to Adam Robinson
& StreetSmart



Flat Out Protocols & Partnerships

FLAT OUT HAS PROTOCOLS WITH THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

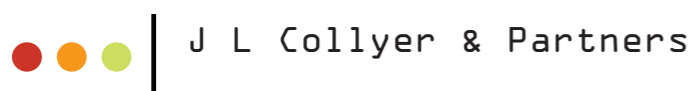
- Flat Out has protocols with the following agencies:
- Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC)
- Haven HomeSafe
- Launch Housing – East St Kilda Women’s House and Southbank
- Local Area Service Network (LASN), North West Metropolitan Region
- Salvation Army, EastCare Housing Services
- St Kilda Crisis Centre
- Women’s Housing Limited

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

- Launch Housing
- Salvation Army, EastCare Housing Services
- Women’s Housing Limited
- Unison Community Housing



Independent Auditor's Report 2019-2020



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

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of FLAT OUT INC., which comprises the financial position as at 30th June 2020, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including summary of significant accounting policies and managements assertion statement.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of FLAT OUT INC. as at 30th June 2020, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter-Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist FLAT OUT INC. to meet the requirements of Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the *applicable legislation* and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

J. L. Collyer & Partners
Accountants

Lionel R. Arnold

Dated in Wantirna on 23rd September 2020

Liability limited by a scheme
approved under Professional
Standards Legislation.



J L Collyer & Partners
Is a CPA Practice



Flat Out INC - Balance Sheet As at 30th June 2020

ASSETS	NOTE	2020	2019
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank		737,450	652,859
Cash on Hand & Workers Floats		100	100
Debtors		131,403	-
Bond-Footscray Premises		3,300	3,300
Other Debtors-Cashflow Boost		934	-
Pre-Paid Expense Claim		-	123
		873,187	656,382
Non-current Assets			
Furniture & Equipment		74,328	57,599
Less accumulated depreciation		(56,262)	(50,251)
Leashold Improvements		44,285	44,285
Less accumulated depreciation		(10,494)	(8,812)
Motor Vehicles		53,967	53,967
Less accumulated depreciation	1 (b)	(48,337)	(46,703)
		57,487	50,085
TOTAL ASSETS		930,674	706,467
LIABILITIES			
Current Liabilities			
Trade Creditors		7,212	4,831
Salary Clearing Account		-	-
Credit Card		1,949	2,064
Funds in Trust		72,998	117,998
Other Payroll Liabilities		6,220	3,748
Grants in Advance		371,570	159,310
Staff Leave Provisions	1 (c)	38,560	27,359
PAYG Withholding		9,792	15,203
Provision for GST		26,416	4,311
		534,717	334,824
Non- Current Liabilities			
Staff Leave Provisions - L.S.L.	1 (c)	5,664	11,837
		5,664	11,837
TOTAL LIABILITIES		540,381	346,661
NET ASSETS		390,293	359,806
EQUITY			
Retained Earnings		390,293	359,806
		390,293	359,806



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SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION WORK BY DISTRIBUTING OUR PUBLISHED MATERIALS

FLAT OUT WELCOMES YOUR SUPPORT & INVOLVEMENT

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION YOU CAN MAKE A TAX
DEDUCTIBLE DONATION AT**

**WWW.GIVENOW.COM.AU/FLATOUT OR CONTACT FLAT OUT
YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OR ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF FLAT OUT**

**STAY INFORMED THROUGH OUR WEBSITE
WWW.FLATOUT.ORG.AU**

OR ON FACEBOOK  TWITTER  OR INSTAGRAM 





FEELINGS & EMOTIONS

- isolation
- being culture - understood
- excitement/
- confusion
- hope
- fear/sc
- brave
- disappo

WANTS & NEEDS

- Community connection
- acceptance
- safe housing / feeling safe
- employment / finance
- respect
- language (ESL)
- knowledge of justice
- appropriate
- one stop

PAIN POINTS

- police attitudes
- colour

instead of
open fire
language about
the structural
of systemic oppression
is restrictive
- is not an asset
- institution
achieve



ANNUAL REPORT | 2019 - 2020

the only vehicle for prison reform is a BULLDOZER