



Breaking Free

October 2017

From the Editor

Photo entries that encapsulate the meaning of unite in honour of Blue Knot Day have been featured on our Facebook page and the winner of the #unitebkd2017 photo competition, sponsored by Shine lawyers will be announced soon.

Read about some of the Blue Knot Day community events that were hosted including the screening of the important film "Don't Tell" which chronicles one survivor's journey for justice based on a book of the same name by Shine lawyer, Stephen Roche.

Also read about the church turned blue in SA, how blue hair helped one brave survivor draw attention to her campaign for legislative change in WA, morning teas across the country, thongs of support in QLD, and ENERGY LOCALS substantial support in honour of Blue Knot Day.

Our feature article reflects on how to stay within the Window of Tolerance when we are overwhelmed with feelings of distress or anger.

Finally I am happy to introduce Myrtle The Kindness Turtle. Shell shares how Myrtle helped bring comfort and kindness to her, her workplace and community. And the poem reminds us that in the end: "Don't fear, be kind to yourself, you've done great work. Both young and old, this is the time to let go of all the hurt."

We think you, our readers may enjoy Shell's message and like to share this poem with friends and family.

Finally the News section presents a few stories that we have been following this month. As always if you have comments about what you have read in this issue, contributions for the My Story section or suggestions for future issues, please contact me at newsletter@blueknot.org.au.

Warm regards

Jane Macnaught | Editor

Looking After Ourselves

by Jane Macnaught, editor

Recent reporting in The Australian newspaper has attempted to reignite past controversies around memory and specifically to raise settled questions about recovered memory in the context of child abuse.

During this period Blue Knot has witnessed a groundswell of support for survivors, the organisation and its work. Our office has received numerous messages, calls and emails from the broader community, some of who were negatively impacted by the various articles and letters, but who have stood united in solidarity regardless.

Some challenges are difficult and can feel destructive, hurtful and painful, but they can also provide an opportunity for strength, mutual support and growth. The Blue Knot community has responded to the recent challenges on several levels. I would like to share my reflections on what I have witnessed of people within Blue Knot and outside, and of the organisation as a whole.

Needless to say the overwhelming initial response to the media was of emotional distress and anger. However as I detail below, the situation soon calmed. Let me explain...

As human beings we all have innate physiological responses to challenging situations which include: 'fight, flight and freeze'. When you have previously experienced trauma, especially as a child, these habitual survival responses are often far more intense.

Understanding about the 'Window of Tolerance' (WOT) is a foundation of trauma work as being within that 'window' enables us all to take effective action. If you have not heard about this 'window' you might like to [read more here](#). The Window of Tolerance is as an emotional, physical, and social state which we can all inhabit. It is here, where we feel capable, able to attend to the task at hand, and can interact meaningfully with others, while also attending to our own emotional state and needs.

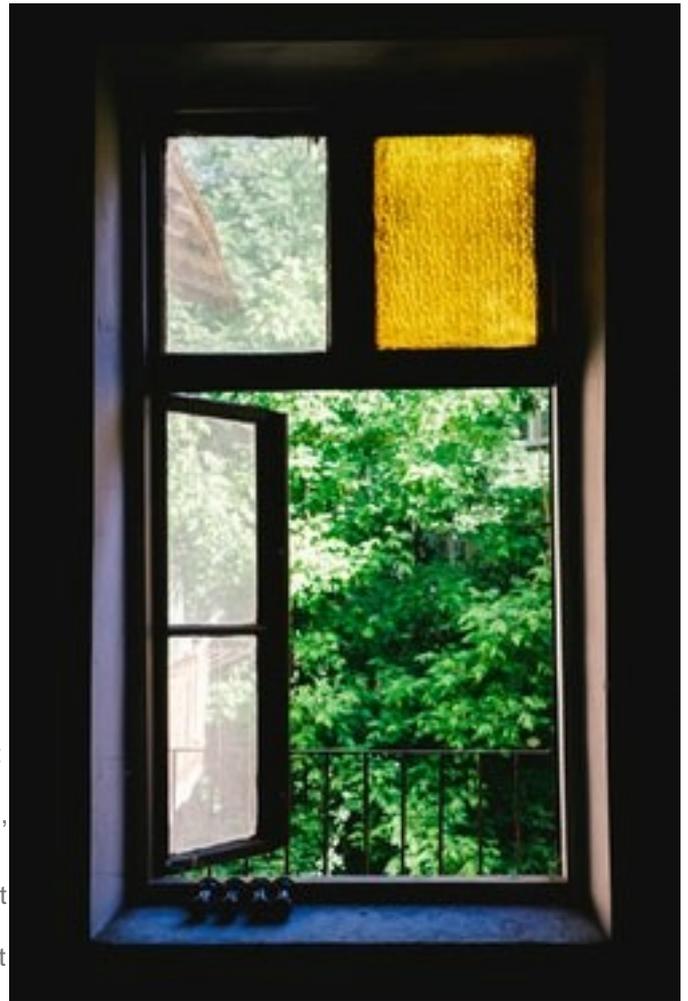
We can all feel more grounded when we bring ourselves back into our Window of Tolerance when distressed or traumatised. When we exceed our Window of Tolerance we are hyper-aroused and when we drop below it we become hypo-aroused. In these different states of arousal we can experience a range of feelings and changes including but not limited to: Hyper-arousal – tension, shaking, anger, racing thoughts, intrusive imagery. Hypo-arousal - numb, shut down, no energy, can't think, can't move.

It can be very helpful to recognise the signs, which tell us that we are outside of our Window of Tolerance, and to develop strategies to help us return to it. Different people find different strategies and resources helpful so we encourage you to experiment and find what works for you.

When I am within my Window of Tolerance I move peacefully, my breathing is slow and reaches fully into my belly, I am smiling, I notice beauty in the world around me e.g. sunshine and flowers; my voice is calm, my chest is light and my neck is free of tension. How are you when you are within your Window of Tolerance?

SO...

In terms of the recent situation at Blue Knot, it has been important for us to stay within our Window of Tolerance, individually and organisationally. Staying in a hyper- or hypo-aroused state, and hence acting impulsively or "freezing" and not responding at all would not be beneficial. So instead, individually and collectively we took action from within our Window of Tolerance.



We slowed down, allowed ourselves time to reflect, consulted with others and sought advice. We were gentle with one another, and offered empathy and support and we honoured different responses and respected our individuality. We opened ourselves to the influx of support and allowed the words and actions, which flowed to sustain and enrich us.

In the meantime, a number of colleagues from within our national and international community, including respected researchers, clinicians, and academics have published a number of measured evidence-based articles to inform a balanced discourse around the issues raised. Links to these news articles and resources on our website are provided below.

And finally I want to address some of the issues raised by reiterating that we know that:

“Traumatic memory is implicit, and manifests somatically (in the body) and via behavioural re-enactments rather than words (as the book titles *The Body Remembers* and *The Body Keeps the Score* convey). Memory too overwhelming (traumatic) to be assimilated by the central nervous system arises as ‘fragmented splinters of inchoate and indigestible sensations, emotions, images, smells, tastes, thoughts’ (Levine, 2015:7). It thus functions quite differently from conscious, explicit, memory...

In the late 1980s, lawyers argued that the limitation period or the "statute of limitations" for child sex offenses should be extended in cases where a complainant has suffered from traumatic amnesia... ‘Numerous cases in various parts of the world have demonstrated that recovered memories have been verified and corroborated by independent evidence or admissions of guilt by perpetrators or findings of guilt by courts’.” You can [read this article in full](#) on our website.

If you are looking for additional support, call our Helpline on 1300 657 380 (9am-5pm, 7 days AEST) and please spend some time exploring our website. As one survivor communicated to me recently:

“I don't believe there is any other website out there that gives so much support material for us survivors to be able to access. Blue Knot is a Godsend. Plus a big thank you for believing us. Having met other survivors throughout my life journey the most important thing I feel as a Survivor is to have people believe you. I feel it's an important part of healing when your friends, family or therapists believe what happened.” Tabbitha

Recent news articles available on our website:

[These false memory claims are false](#)

[Reporting Revives Bad Memories of Contentious Theories](#)

[Dissociative identity disorder exists and is the result of childhood trauma](#)

[Recovered Memories](#)

And a new resource – a fact sheet on memory can be found here: [Memory Fact Sheet](#)

References

Kerr, L 2009-2017, *Live within the window of tolerance*, viewed 19/10/17, <<https://www.laurakerr.com/2015/07/24/wot-guide/>>

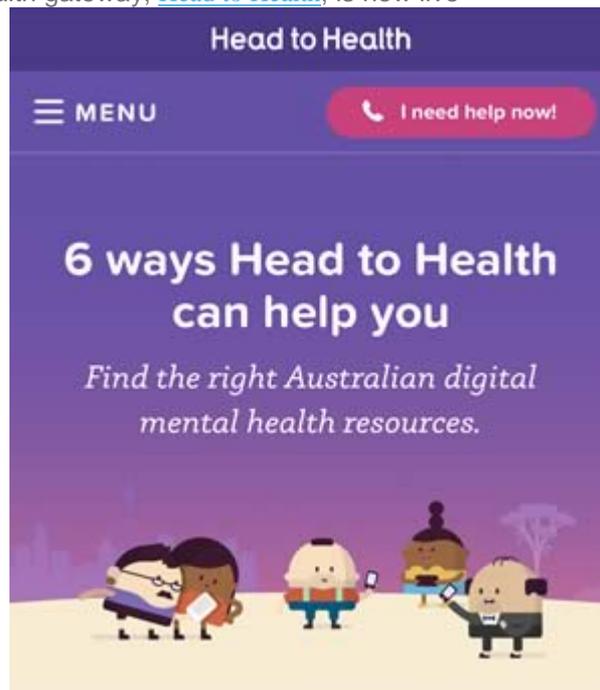
Kerr, L 2015, *Living Within The Window of Tolerance: The Different Zones of Arousal*, viewed 19/10/17, <http://www.laurakerr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/LauraKerr_Short_WOT_Handout.pdf>

Ogden, Pat, Kekuni Minton, and Clare Pain. 2006. *Trauma And The Body: A Sensorimotor Approach To Psychotherapy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Siegel, Daniel J. 2012. *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. Second ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

HEAD TO HEALTH

Australia's new digital mental health gateway, [Head to Health](#), is now live



A new website that links Australians to online and phone mental health services, information and resources is now live. Head to Health connects people to online and phone mental health services . Many people who have experienced childhood trauma also experience mental health challenges, meaning that this website might be of benefit to you or others you know.

Services and resources listed on Head to Health are delivered by Australia's trusted mental health service providers including Blue Knot Foundation. They include free or low-cost apps, online support communities, online courses, and phone services that are private and secure.

Head to Health is intended to support people with mental health issues, at a time and place convenient to them. It supports people seeking help- either for themselves or someone they care about. Head to Health also provides information about staying mentally well.

The site was developed in collaboration with the community, the mental health sector and the Department of Health. Blue Knot Foundation is one of the Head to Health service provider partners. Visit www.headtohealth.gov.au for more information.

Blue Knot Day

Blue Knot Day 2017 has seen a timely call for unity in support of adult survivors of childhood trauma, a call passionately supported by our Blue Knot Day sponsors, Shine lawyers. This Blue Knot Day heralded the closing months of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Royal Commission has been instrumental in providing survivors with a voice which individually and collectively, has grown stronger over the last five years since its inception. Not only have countless survivors come forward to provide testimony but those once silenced, have now been heard and believed, and the harm done to them, has been acknowledged.

This Blue Knot Day saw two private screenings of the Australian feature film, Don't Tell. The movie adapted from the book by Stephen Roche, from Shine Lawyers, presents how one survivor struggled and fought to be heard and believed. Lyndal's is a story of power, prestige and influence being held to account by courage, truth and determination.

Lyndal was sexually abused by the housemaster at Toowoomba Preparatory School, an institution. The Royal Commission has heard testimony from thousands of survivors, with 4,000 institutions named. Lyndal's is but one story, but the landmark case, prosecuted by Stephen Roche, represents the more universal fight for acknowledgement, justice and support, so many victims experience.

The case was instrumental in the creation of the Royal Commission to investigate institutional abuse. Shine Lawyers are proud to be catalysts for change who work to support victims of circumstance and society.

National Abuse Law Manager Lisa Flynn says "I feel very privileged to work for an organisation entirely dedicated to righting the wrongs of society." "The survivors we work with are brave, bold beacons of light for those who have suffered similar pain. When one individual speaks up, an army of people are empowered. It is important for me to be able to provide deserving survivors with a voice, a platform and a person to trust when they are ready to seek justice."

Survivors often struggle to speak out, be heard and believed not only within institutional settings, but in the home, family and society more generally. This is not only survivors of sexual abuse but those who have experienced other abuses, neglect and other traumas in childhood.

The ongoing attempts to silence victims and blame them for their own victimhood, alongside the forces which perpetuate disbelief and denial show us the importance of uniting in solidarity, with compassion and empathy and care. Survivors cannot recover in isolation, but with a community of mutual respect, safety and trust, can find a way through, just like Lyndal.

My Story – By Shell

AS I GROW OLDER – WITH MYRTLE

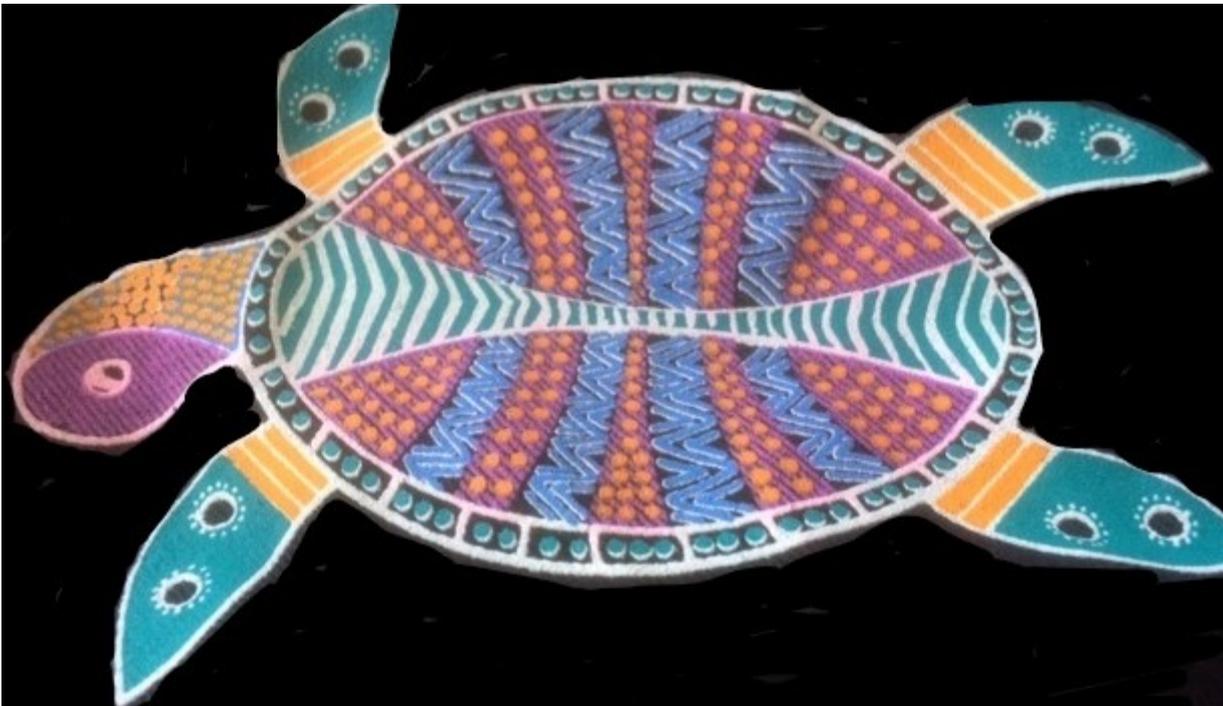
One day I discovered and purchased a small sand filled material turtle; I found that turtle was comforting to hold. It was brightly coloured, cheerful and fitted into the palm of a hand. I named it Myrtle and over time I discovered that at times it helped me settle and not feel so alone.

Not long after I found Myrtle, I experienced the tragic loss of a work colleague/friend through suicide. I saw so much pain and guilt etched on people's faces at that time and trying to connect with these souls was extremely challenging for me. I then realised Myrtle was not just here to bring me comfort, she might also be needed elsewhere. So Myrtle sat in the palm of the hand of one of the flatmates of this lost workmate and the turtle listened.

A new friend hearing this story has bestowed the name "Myrtle The Kindness Turtle". And then over time, I realised this friend is actually a kindness turtle soul as her days are spent holding the hands of the elderly, listening and relieving their pain, sharing her kindness heart just like Myrtle would do.

Hence, I was inspired to write this poem about Myrtle to bring comfort to people who are struggling, and perhaps older in age, to help lift the silence and isolation. I know that for many older people, they may find their techno capacity and abilities declining and maybe missed the growing era of online help and resources that organisations such as Blue Knot provide in supporting, educating, raising awareness and listening to a story that maybe is only told once without judgement or jury.

I dedicate this poem to you and to my turtles.



Myrtle The Kindness Turtle

Myrtle has made her way to the last place for many.
Where souls relax in the last care being made calm and steady.
Allowing reflection with smiles of joy and tears of sorrow.
With the mind searching the new journey of tomorrow.
The turtle chirps 'Don't fear, be kind to yourself, you have done great work'.
Both young and old, this is the time to let go of all the hurt.
When it's time to let go, their wings spread to fly.
Looking towards their rainbows far away in the sky.
To start another chapter, a part of the karmic existence.
With more knowledge, courage and love to go a greater distance.
What chances will emerge that will see others amends.
New oceans, mountains, and pathways full of tricky bends.
They may return like Myrtle's shell, worn and chipped, with a subtle rainbow tinge.
That holds a soul transitioning with the gentle roar of a squeaky hinge.
Ready to do battle and improve on the time before.
With the aim of living and loving more and not evening out a score.

HAVE YOU MADE A VICTIM SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Are you interested in talking about what this experience was like?



You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Rebecca Moran, a PhD student at Western Sydney University. The study seeks to understand people's experiences of making a victim submission (written, verbal or both) to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The study is focused on how you felt and feel about providing testimony, the impact of the experience on you, and the difference that you think or hope your testimony will make – on you, and on society.

If you are interested in being interviewed about your experience of telling your story to the Royal Commission, please contact Rebecca for more information by emailing r.moran@westernsydney.edu.au.

- Participation is entirely voluntary and confidential.
- Your interview will take around two hours, and can be in person, or via telephone or Skype if you prefer.
- Participating in this research project is intended to be a validating and safe experience for you, and it is hoped that you will find it meaningful to reflect on the experience of telling your story to the Royal Commission.

Please feel free to share this information with anyone you know who may be interested in participating.

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H12332.

Uniting Together in Support

“Today we stand with Member Org @BlueKnotOrg supporting 5 million Australian adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse. We acknowledge the pain felt by those affected and the role we can all play in uniting for healing and recovery” Suicide Prevention Australia

On Sunday 1st October Blue Knot Foundation launched the #unitebkd2017 Facebook Campaign as part of Blue Knot Day celebrations, providing an opportunity to unite online in support of adult survivors of childhood trauma. A huge thank you to everyone who has posted the hashtag, uploaded and shared images and posts, reposted, retweeted, liked and promoted our messages online, held Facebook livestreams, ran online fundraising events and campaigns and emailed us so many messages of support! Thank you so much to you all.

The #unitebkd2017 Facebook Campaign was made possible through the generous support of Shine Lawyers, who we welcomed back on board once again this year as Blue Knot Day partners.

“Shine Lawyers is honoured to work in partnership with Blue Knot Foundation for another year”, said Lisa Flynn, National Special Counsel - Abuse Law, Shine Lawyers. “Blue Knot Foundation is a powerful, purpose-driven organisation that we feel privileged to work with as we create new and brighter trajectories for the very courageous survivors that we represent”.

This year the [Blue Knot Day 2017 Photography Competition](#) has been incorporated into the #unitebkd2017 Facebook Campaign, encouraging entrants to upload a Facebook image representing the word ‘unite’, in the context of recovery from childhood trauma. A selection of Blue Knot Day and #unite images are being shared online at [Blue Knot Foundation’s own Facebook site](#) throughout October. Those featuring the hashtag #unitebkd2017 will be automatically entered into the Blue Knot Day 2017 Photography Competition, which this year features a cash prize of \$500, thanks to Blue Knot Day partner, Shine Lawyers.

#unitebkd2017 will run until Tuesday 31 October, with competition entries closing at midnight. Throughout the week of 16-22 October, Blue Knot Day Ambassadors organised fun runs, BBQs, fundraisers and faith-based services throughout the country, seeing communities unite together under many umbrellas. “It’s been so affirming to see support for survivors in the community, with such a public and creative display of unity”, said Blue Knot Foundation Fundraising Manager, Cath James. “Blue Knot Day events have included trivia and bingo nights, BBQs and communities uniting to create murals and messages of support together. Thank you so much to everyone who has united in support”.

On Blue Knot Day itself, Monday 16 October, many workplace morning teas were held throughout the country, providing private opportunities to open the dialogue around childhood trauma and its impact on adult survivors. We thank all our supporters from community groups, not-for-profit organisations and the corporate sector who have helped raise awareness within your own, unique workplace community. In particular we would like to acknowledge the participation of the team at Shine Lawyers, who have once again supported us on a national level through their own Blue Knot Day morning teas. As this issue of Breaking Free goes to print, Blue Knot Day events are still taking place throughout the country. We look forward to sharing some of our favourite highlights with you in the next issue!



Things of support, uniting in recovery!

Community messages of hope and unity from ‘CQ Supports for Adult Survivors of Child Abuse’ Blue Knot Day held in Rockhampton, QLD, earlier this month.

Energy Locals



EnergyLocals

COMMUNITY POWER

Power Up for Blue Knot Day

Our thanks to Blue Knot Foundation supporter and independent energy retailer, Energy Locals, who have helped to significantly raise awareness of Blue Knot Day and support for adult survivors of childhood trauma this month.

On Monday 16 October 2017, the Energy Locals customer service team promoted Blue Knot Day to existing and new customers, raising awareness of Blue Knot Day itself and referring callers to the Blue Knot Foundation website for further information on our range of programs and services.



“We are delighted to say that a number of new customers who switched their energy supplier to Energy Locals on the day, selected Blue Knot Foundation as their charity of choice”, said Luke Melisi, Energy Locals Partnerships Manager (pictured far left). “This will translate as a direct increase in donations towards Blue Knot Foundation’s vital work in the community”.

With 50% of the social enterprise’s profits redirected back into communities and new, local renewable energy, Energy Locals has partnered with a number of charities, offering customers the choice to support their own cause. Energy Locals welcomed Blue Knot Foundation as an official Charity Partner earlier this year and in addition to engaging customers on Blue Knot Day, has promoted Blue Knot Foundation through their own social media and online platforms.

“Blue Knot Day provided a great opportunity for us to help raise the profile of Blue Knot Foundation and we look forward to uniting with you in a bigger and brighter Blue Knot Day in 2018!” said Luke, from Energy Locals.

Our thanks to Luke and the team at Energy Locals for all your support. For further details on Energy Locals services and their work in the community,

visit <https://energylocals.com.au> or call 1300 693 637.

Blue Knot Helpline

The Blue Knot Helpline is staffed with experienced trauma-informed counsellors who provide:

- Professional short-term telephone counselling support
- Information
- Referrals for ongoing support
- Support and guidance for engaging with the Royal Commission

If you need information or counselling support during this time, call the Blue Knot Helpline on **1300 657 380** between 9am to 5pm ADST 7 days or email helpline@blueknot.org.au

If the counsellors are unable to take your call, please leave a message including a telephone number with an area code, and a counsellor will call you back within 48hrs.



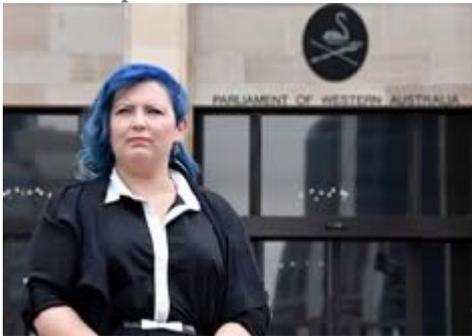
IN THE NEWS

St John the Baptist Cathedral at Murray Bridge is turning **BLUE**



[Read full story here](#)

Child sex abuse survivor **Kirsty Pratt** vows to keep watch of WA Parliament until Labor deliver on election promise



[Read full story here](#)

\$150,000 cap proposed on redress scheme for child sexual abuse victims



[Read full story here](#)

Disclaimer – Blue Knot Foundation makes every effort to provide readers of its website and newsletters with information which is accurate and helpful. It is not however a substitute for counselling or professional advice. While all attempts have been made to verify all information provided, Blue Knot Foundation cannot guarantee and does not assume any responsibility for currency, errors, omissions or contrary interpretation of the information provided.