



Breaking Free

January/February 2017

From the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of Breaking Free for 2017, a combined Jan-Feb edition.

You will notice that we have changed the layout and introduced a few new areas. We hope our ever expanding online audience will find it easy to scroll through this format. You can share each story via email or social media with the easy buttons at the end of each article. Mail subscribers will receive their hard copies soon.

In our cover story Fragile February we explore and share new but simple ways to self-care. The 'In The News' section covers some of the news stories that affect survivors including Royal Commission updates and we offer a warning about a recent film release that stigmatises DID.

Our Fundraising article introduces some great ideas to help you raise funds for our important work. Do get in touch if you think you would like to contribute.

Two readers' items can be read in this issue. The poem 'Blue Knot' written by Judith P is a beautifully composed, emotional piece that describes her life experiences – a compelling read. Raine W. shares her uplifting story. After a really difficult childhood she has recovered and shares what inspires her to keep moving forward.

In this new format we are pleased to introduce a new section: SELF HELP RESOURCES. Each month we will review books, podcasts, websites or apps that the Helpline Counselling Team believe could be useful to support your recovery. What is helpful for one person may not be right for someone else so please experiment, explore and find what suits you.

If you have comments about what you have read in this issue or suggestions for future editions, please contact me at newsletter@blueknot.org.au.

Warm Regards,
Jane Macnaught | Editor

Fragile February

By Breaking Free editor Jane Macnaught

Rolling through the middle of February each year can be a tough time for many of us. In this piece, I invite you to consider self-compassion and self-reflection.

New Year resolutions may have already faded from focus – perhaps they were grandiose goals of unattainable ideals. Instead of questioning the soundness of the resolutions, we may blame ourselves, judging ourselves as incompetent and unsuccessful, which may lead to anxiety, harsh self-judgement and negative feelings.

In addition, Valentine’s Day – February 14 – is dedicated to promoting love, couples, and gift giving – it can cause us to feel left out, lonely or stagnant. Such days can add unnecessary negative thoughts to our minds.

I just don’t make New Year resolutions anymore. Rather I think about how I want to feel; I have become more clear about this lately. What are my “core desired feelings”? (see reference at end) What do I want to be feeling and doing, in say 6 months’ time? And then I make a list of what I need to do to get closer to my desired state.



For example, I want to feel more vibrant - so my list includes: ‘walk more often’, as I always feel great after a walk in nature; ‘eat more salads’, after nutritious light meals I feel like I have more energy; watch less TV especially current affairs & news, as the quickest way to bring negativity into my head is via a TV screen.

So you see my list is gentle, encouraging, realistic and focused on how I want to feel. The list helps me get closer to what I want (vibrancy) rather than a list of challenges and goals that I never seem to achieve. I want to encourage you to think about kindness, be a friend to yourself and practice self-acceptance and forgiveness. Make a list of activities/tasks that will help you get closer to what you would like.

Consider treating yourself the way you would treat people you value in your life. How would you help a friend who is struggling? What would you say to them? What would you do for them? You deserve to be loved and cared for as much as anyone else.

If you like, just now identify at least one way you could soothe and care for yourself. Perhaps write this down and see if this week you could take some time to care for your own needs.

Ideas in this article are inspired by:

“The Desire Map – A Guide To Creating Goals With Soul.” Danielle LaPorte, 2014 – in this book the author provides activities and ideas on creating your “core desired feelings”.

There is a library of suggested feelings here <http://www.daniellelaporte.com/cdf>

<http://www.arttherapyblog.com/art-therapy-ideas/fragile-february/#.WJbFQbZ96Rs> on the website there are loads of ideas and inspiring articles.

My Story – Poem by Judith P

The poem 'Blue Knot' is a beautifully composed and emotional piece that describes Judith's life experiences – a compelling read.

Blue knot, blue not
I am not the one
he shut in my room
alone with him
I am not the one
who saw him shut
the door on his wife
I am not the one
who saw his sweat
who heard him say
that I was bad
who felt his hands
I am not not not;
I forgot quickly
what else could I do?
My mother sick,
my father away.
I was a knot after that,
knot of denial
and double knot
of knowing
what I didn't know
and triple knot
of twisted knowledge,
knots of simpering
for his approval
to keep me safe
I hoped, but not.
I was quadruple knot of
knowledge and pain

I wanted not.
I was blue knots of failure,
abused and confused,
blamer and blamed
betrayed and betrayer
failing to stand up
for myself or my children.
Blue depressed, blue smoke,
blue drunk, blue tears,
blue paintings, blue words
in every poem.
Blue was a colour
I seldom wore
I wore black to mourn
for my nine-year-old self
and won't forget her
ever again.
I wore red for anger
at him at them at life at pain.
But now I wear blue
for so many knots
for my failures, regrets,
for damage I've done
my daughter, my son, myself.
Blue knots don't untie
but maybe
sometimes unite?

Judith P.

My Story – by Raine

I was born in 1964 when children were told to be seen and not heard. Where what we had to say was often deemed unimportant and irrelevant. So, in terms of my abuse, I had no voice. Every day I was abused in some way and while the physical scars were severe it was the mental and emotional abuse that left permanent scars.

I was removed from my family at the age of nine, made a ward of the state and placed into a government institution for children. Over the following eight years I spent time in many different children's homes including foster care, a mental institution and a half way house for young girls.

During these years I was regularly beaten, brutally raped and sexual assaulted on a number of occasions. At the age of seventeen I was told that there was nothing more that could be done for me and so I was sent out from the women's institution to make it on my own. This was the beginning of the next chapter of my life.

Over the following sixteen years I struggled many times to find a reason to stay alive. Because of low self-esteem, incredible vulnerability and my naivety, I often fell into the wrong company. I was taken advantage of, abused and found myself homeless on many occasions. Somehow, throughout all of these years of trauma I managed to keep picking myself up and moving on. I later learned that this was called emotional resilience.



At the age of 20, I married a man almost double my age because, he was literally the first man, to ever treat me well. That was until the day we married at which point he showed his true colours. I spent the next five years being broken down and controlled mentally and emotionally, while physically I was taken advantage whenever he felt the need. Whilst on a trip interstate one year, my husband beat me so severely that something inside me snapped. I mustered all the courage I could find and I walked out of my five-year marriage with nothing except the clothes on my back and a few dollars in my pocket.

At the age of 33, I went back to school to obtain my Year 10 certificate so I could study childcare. It was during this time that I met my second husband. I did gain my certificate and then went on to study my Diploma in Early Childcare and Education graduating at the end of the following year. At the age of 38, after 9 miscarriages and one ectopic pregnancy, I finally gave birth to a beautiful baby boy who is today 15 years old, attending high school in an academic excellence program for high achievers.

It was during my son's year in grade prep that I had an emotional breakdown, which almost literally cost the lives of my husband and myself. This was the point when I sought help, to find out what was happening to me, and to save my life and my relationship.

I was diagnosed with PTSD, severe depression, bipolar, and anxiety. For the first time in my life I felt that I could breathe because there was a name, or two, to describe the mini tornado that had been continually growing inside me for years. I had always felt disconnected to everything and finally I understood why.

Counselling provided a space to safely begin to let go and unpack my trauma. It also allowed me to release the things that were not serving me in a healthy way and I was shown how to strengthen the parts of my character and personality that kept me going when I wanted to give up.

Since that initial diagnosis. I went on to study Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) becoming a Master practitioner. I also have certifications in Time Line Therapy, Hypnotherapy and Life Coaching. NLP taught me how to reframe my thinking by examining my past and taking the learning's from it. I found this a very profound experience. I had never really thought that out of trauma and abuse there were learnings to be had. I was shown how to use these learnings to my advantage.

Following my NLP training I studied and obtained my Diploma in Counselling, adding additional training in the area of Grief and Loss counselling. The counselling training was amazing as it showed me ways in which I could better cope with the triggers of my past when they popped up.

I have also found courage, strength, and possibilities in reading inspirational authors such as Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, Dr Wayne Dyer, Napoleon Hill, Louise Hay, Dr John F. Demartini and Eckhart Tolle. All of whom have had a very big impact on my decision to become an Abuse Recovery Coach and speaker assisting and supporting other women who have survived childhood abuse and trauma.

My husband and I have been together now 19 years and he is my biggest fan and supporter. At 52, my life is amazing and gets better each day. I wish to finish my story by sharing a quote that keeps me moving forward every day, keeps me committed to fulfilling my life purpose of helping others and fuels my drive and passion every day.

“Don't Die with your Music still in you” – Dr Wayne Dyer

By Raine

Fundraising...all work, rest or play?

Have you ever thought about fundraising to support Blue Knot Foundation's work but never been sure how? Or perhaps you simply just don't have the time. With this in mind, in this issue of *Breaking Free* we offer up some quick and easy ideas of how to fundraise through your work, rest or play!

WORK Have you ever wondered what Workplace Giving involves? It's a simple process where a nominated amount is deducted from an employee's salary at a set interval and sent directly to their charity of choice, with funds often matched by the employer.

Blue Knot Foundation supporter Al Nistelberger, from Western Australia, has found Workplace Giving to be an ideal way to contribute.

"It means so much to me to be able to make a personal contribution to Blue Knot Foundation", said Al, "because when I needed it, they were there to provide the support, the information and the contacts that I required to start my healing process. Calling the helpline was a life changing moment for me and I will be forever grateful.

Having my employer match this contribution means that twice as many survivors will benefit and have a chance at a similarly positive life changing moment."

Another way to spread awareness and raise funds is through social activities with work colleagues or members of a community group. QLD Rovers, a division of Scouting Australia, raise funds for various charities twice a year through fundraising lunches in and around Brisbane city centre. "Our next event will be in June this year and we would love to donate all proceeds towards your wonderful organisation and recognise the work it does for thousands of people", said Sekaihli Smith, QLD Rovers member.

REST How about raising funds through your very own relaxing movie marathon? Switch off the phone, break out the popcorn and donate any amount you choose for every movie you watch! Or turn your home into a cinema for the evening and invite family and friends around to join you in Australia's most restful fundraiser! You can sell popcorn, ice cream and



drinks and even charge an entry fee to your 'home cinema'. You can also theme the event, and add fun extras like movie trivia games!

Further tips and advice on organising a fundraiser for Blue Knot Foundation can be found in our [Event and Fundraising Guidelines](#). We can also equip you with a Fundraising Kit to help you run your event, once you have registered and completed the [Fundraiser Event form](#).

PLAY If getting outdoors is more your thing, registrations are now being taken for fun runs across Australia. By participating (either in part or full, at your own pace) you can help raise vital funds for Blue Knot Foundation. Registrations are now open for: The Sunday Mail Bay City Fun Run (19 March, Adelaide), the Canberra Times Australian Running Festival (8-9 April), the Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon (21 May), and the Sunshine Coast Marathon (18-20 August). To join in any of the events mentioned above, just visit everydayhero where you can fundraise for Blue Knot Foundation using a simple ready-made donation platform. If fundraising through everydayhero there is no need to complete a Fundraiser event form as everything is managed by the online platform.

Community fundraisers play a key role in ensuring that survivors of childhood trauma, including abuse, have access to essential resources and support and we thank all our community fundraisers across Australia who donate their time, resources and energy.

If you would like to help strengthen our fundraising community, would like further information, or have a fundraising idea to share, please call Cath James, our Fundraising Manager on (02) 8920 3611 or email events@blueknot.org.au



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 are need of 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.

WORKSHOPS FOR ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND ABUSE – LIMITED PLACES STILL AVAILABLE

- Darwin Sat 25th March 2017
- Hobart Sat 13th May 2017

This full-day educational workshop provides a safe space for people, who have experienced abuse or trauma in childhood, to learn more about what that experience means and how they have been affected then and now. It will raise awareness about survivors' strengths and resilience, the role of coping strategies, how the brain responds to stress, and most importantly research which shows that recovery is possible. Participants will gain information which may help them build on their strengths, understand their reactions and ways of coping and identify strategies for positive change. Participants will also receive information about finding and engaging good support, accessing helpful resources and self-care strategies. [Click here to find out more.](#)

Blue Knot Foundation would like to thank our supporters whose donations enabled the scheduling of a survivor workshop in every State and Territory over this financial year.

"Thank you very much for this course. I'm grateful to the people who donated money so that I could attend. I'm thankful for the opportunity to learn about how trauma has affected me and what steps I can take to get help. It was good to be in a room with people who have been through similar experiences to me. Made me feel 'normal'." -- Heidi, Newcastle, Nov 2016

"Very grateful for the opportunity to attend. Have finally made a connection with others in a similar situation - an important juncture in my own healing and moving on from the past." -- Anonymous, Brisbane, Oct 2016

SELF HELP RESOURCES

In this section, we will review self-help resources our Blue Knot Helpline counselling team collects to share with people who call the Helpline. We are delighted to share these ideas with our Breaking Free readers. What is helpful for one person may not be right for someone else so please experiment, explore and find what suits you.

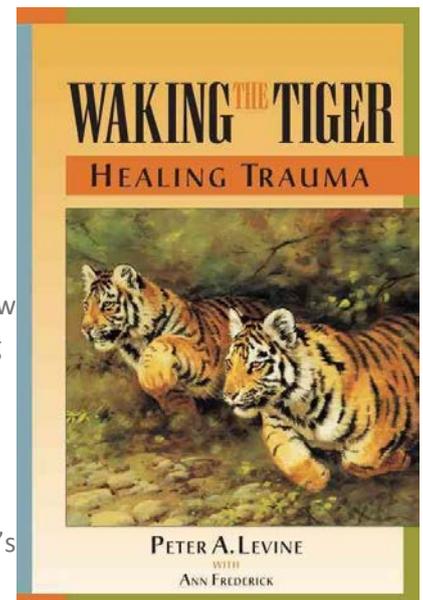
Reading suggestion from the Blue Knot Helpline

Waking The Tiger - Healing Trauma. *The Innate Capacity To Transform Overwhelming Experiences.* Peter Levine Ph.D. with Ann Frederick. 1997

Peter Levine believes that each of us has a great capacity to heal ourselves with support of family, friends and counselling. In his book *Waking the Tiger*, Levine offers a hopeful vision of trauma recovery.

He explains how old cultures that use rituals and shamans to heal trauma may use primitive and superstitious practices, “but they have one important advantage – they address the problem directly... most modern cultures, including ours, fall victim to the prevailing attitude that strength means endurance; that it is somehow heroic to be able to carry on regardless of the severity of our symptoms...(ignoring the gentle urges to acknowledge and heal the pain).”

When ignored ...”the traumatic effects will grow steadily more severe, firmly entrenched, and chronic... frozen in our nervous systems like indestructible time bombs... real heroism comes from having the courage to openly acknowledge one’s experiences, not from suppressing or denying them.” (p62-63)



Levine describes a series of exercises that can be tried at home inviting the reader to develop self awareness and recover sensations by developing an understanding of felt sense which is the foundation of somatic experiencing therapies. These easy activities are excellent for family and supporters of survivors.

Later chapters discuss the human instinctual healing forces that are shared with our primitive past stating that “nature has not forgotten us, we have forgotten it. A traumatised person’s nervous system is not damaged; it is frozen...rediscovering the felt sense will bring warmth and vitality to our experiences.” (p86)

In addition the book discuss the human response to threat, the unified defense system - fight, flee or freeze. Freezing being the more common response for children experiencing trauma and abuse – Levine discusses the cumulative effects of freezing. This helps explain how many survivors will sometimes live with unresolved trauma until their middle or older adult years at which time they may be triggered into an overwhelming response that brings all of the past trauma experiences into the foreground, requiring immediate attention and treatment.

In this book Peter Levine explains: “Somatic Experiencing is a gentle step-by-step approach to renegotiation of trauma. Using the felt sense... it is akin to slowly peeling the layers of skin off an onion, carefully revealing the traumatized inner core.” Levine acknowledges that this process is very slow and can run over many years. He recommends to seek support with a counsellor trained in somatic therapy. The process is not explained in the book however many counsellors in Australia have trained in this area. Some can be accessed by calling the Blue Knot Helpline and asking the counsellor for their details.

Levine goes on to describe and explain many of the very common symptoms of complex trauma - hyperarousal, dissociation, and helplessness. He provides a series of easy exercises that explore these symptoms so that everyone can get a sense of what they feel like. Later he discusses the larger list of possible symptoms and how they affect physical and mental states.

This book is recommended reading for many callers to the Blue Knot Helpline and anyone who wants to explore the premise that trauma is part of a natural physiological process. Levine normalises the symptoms of trauma and the steps needed to heal.

Waking the Tiger is full of interesting information, case studies, stories and reflections.

Podcast suggestion from the Blue Knot Helpline

Yoga Ethics – Podcast from ABC The Spirit of Things

This podcast takes a look at yoga in Australia today. The host interviews a range of people from the recent Yoga Australia conference. Yoga Australia is the peak body that sets professional standards for the industry.

Yoga teachers are encouraged to promote student empowerment in yoga classes. The traditional Indian yoga practice can be taught with some strict regimes. However in our Australian setting yoga students are invited to explore: practice-based learning. Yoga is a heuristic subject where people discover or learn for themselves by practicing/doing yoga. In the practice of yoga, people learn what is right for them; they find what is comfortable, what they prefer – a good teacher allows the students to be free to work within their own comfort zone and abilities.

Rachel Kohn, the interviewer is curious about the way yoga has supported people with chronic pain and depression. If you want to read some of the research you can find it here link: <https://www.yogaaustralia.org.au/about-us/research-studies/>



Laughter Yoga is introduced in this podcast – practiced without body poses, and often in groups, laughter yoga can be part of mindfulness practice. It is grounding which helps reduce stress; learning to develop deep belly laughter can help people to see life more simply. For more information Google “Laughter clubs” or Laughter Yoga” add you suburb/town for local ideas. Many clubs have free entry or entry by donation.

Blue Knot Foundation does not recommend any particular style of yoga. However there is a growing field of research showing that a trauma sensitive yoga teacher or practitioner is a safer way to introduce yoga if you are easily stressed and triggered.

For more info find it here link: <http://www.traumasensitivetyogaaustralia.com/>

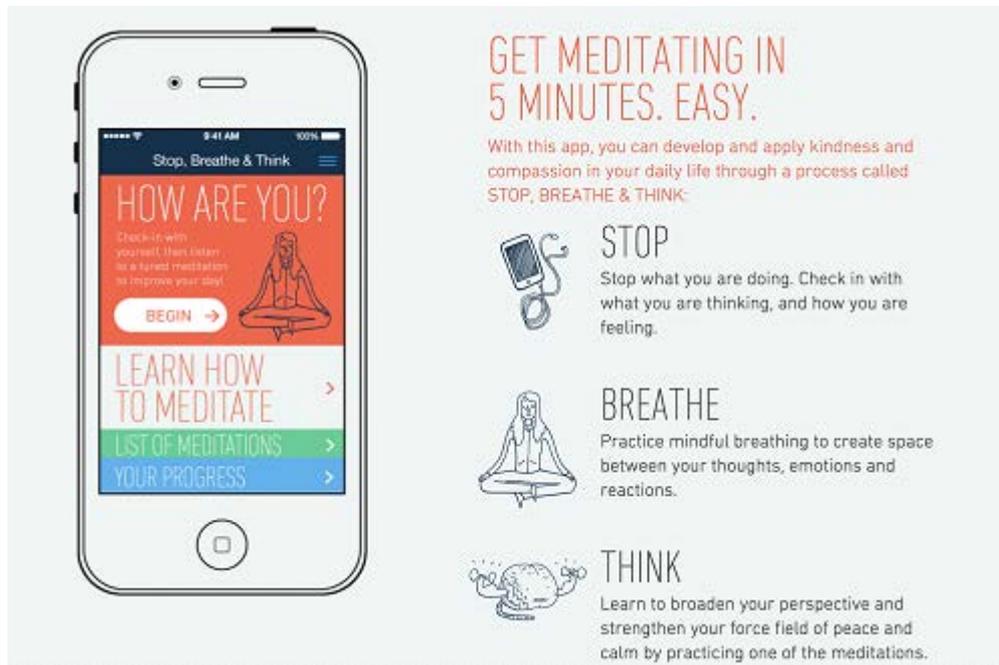
Find the podcast here:

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/spirit-things-program-podcast/id75423045?mt=2&i=1000367839181> or <https://audioboom.com/posts/4506292-yoga-ethics>

App: Stop, Breathe & Think

A meditation app to boost compassion, self-regulation and lower anxiety.

This app is interactive, beginner friendly and it actually listens to you. There are loads of free options so you can try out different activities – breathing, grounding, meditation, mindfulness, soothing sounds, and yoga. Each section has simple instructions and options for duration and voices, also – you can stop the sessions at any time.



Once logged into the app it takes you through a self reflection 'check in'.

I love this section – you record how you are feeling PHYSICALLY (Great, Good, Meh, Poor, Rough) and then EMOTIONALLY (loads of emotions to choose from) and then you will be offered some suggestions – or just choose to do what you like.

The personal progress section records how many times you check in and what activities you favour over time. The 'check in' gives you a chance to quieten down, tune into yourself and develop greater self-awareness over time. The app could help you to feel calmer and more grounded.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED *****

IN THE NEWS

Members Revealed for National Redress Scheme

A broad group of specialists from across Australia have been appointed to advise the national redress scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, creating “a unique opportunity to show survivors that they have been listened to and heard”.

The 15 member Independent Advisory Council on Redress, named on Friday, includes survivors of institutional abuse, representatives from support organisations, legal and psychological experts, Indigenous and disability experts, institutional interest groups and those with a background in government.

Former solicitor and Western Australian Attorney General Hon Cheryl Edwardes AM, who has had a long career in victim advocacy and support, will chair the council.

President of Blue Knot Foundation Dr Cathy Kezelman AM said the broad representation of the council was “critical” to the creation of a fair and equitable scheme.

“The establishment of a national redress scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse creates a unique opportunity to show survivors that they have been listened to and heard – that what happened to them mattered,” Kezelman said.

“The harm done to them has been acknowledged and they will receive support and some compensation.

“The broad representation of this advisory council is critical to the creation of a fair and equitable scheme.

“Survivors must be at the centre of the scheme – it must be developed with trauma-informed principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment and sensitivity to culture and diversity.

“I look forward to representing Blue Knot Foundation survivors voices and the need for appropriate counselling and psychological care for survivors.”

[Click here to read more.](#)

'It's stigmatising': Doctor slams film 'Split' for multiple personality disorder portrayal

Warning: This article may contain content that may disturb some readers. If reading this story causes you distress and you need help, please call the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380 (9am-5pm ADST, 7 days). Calls that cannot be answered directly will be returned as soon as possible, please provide a telephone number including area code when leaving message.

A leading Australian mental health expert has slammed the creators of the US horror film 'Split', saying it wrongfully portrays a debilitating multiple personality disorder.

Australian doctor Cathy Kezelman has panned the movie, accusing the creators of stigmatising people with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), commonly known as multiple personality disorder.

The film, which opened in Australian cinemas today, featured Scottish actor James McAvoy in the role of Kevin, a sadistic Dissociative Identity Disorder sufferer with 23 different personalities, who abducts and terrorises three teenage girls.

Dr Kezelman said the character's portrayal was a "gross generalisation" of the disorder and that sufferers would find it insulting and traumatising.

"Having a film that stereotypes and sensationalises those that struggle with mental illness only adds to the stigma attached with such a disorder," she told SBS.

"It stigmatises people with mental health conditions such as this one, as dangerous.

"Research shows that's not the case because people with this diagnosis are no more likely to be violent offenders than the rest of the population. So for people to experience it, and see a movie about their diagnosis, is very traumatising."

[Click here to read more.](#)

Police commissioners set to apologise over handling of child abuse cases

Thousands of people have given evidence to Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with police forces around the country now planning a formal apology over their treatment of the cases.

Co-founder of the Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) support group Leonie Sheedy said many of the crimes against children were ignored by police at the time.

"Children did try to speak out about the crimes being committed against them, but the Police didn't believe them." Ms Sheedy said.

"To not be believed is horrendous."

The apology was discussed at a meeting of Australia's police chiefs in September last year, after ongoing requests from CLAN.

"They have a moral obligation to own their history, acknowledge it, and apologise," CLAN's Leonie Sheedy said.

Cathy Kezelman, president of the BlueKnot support group said the apology is "long overdue".

"It's very good news. I think it's high time that people in a position of power and hierarchy apologise to survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions."

But Victoria Police chief commissioner Graham Ashton said the commissioners will wait until after the royal

commission's final report is released in December.

"It's best to wait until we get the report from the Royal Commission, then we can shape the apology in the best way that we think's going to have the best effect," Commissioner Ashton said.

[Click here to read more.](#)

Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released a new research report exploring children and young people's views about their safety in residential care. Most of the children and young people who participated in the research described feeling unsafe in residential care due to bullying, harassment and the threat of sexual assault.

Royal Commission CEO, Philip Reed, said "The research adds to the growing consensus that children and young people need an opportunity to participate in decisions about their own safety, and to be taken seriously," he said.

"It also highlights the need for stable placements so that children and young people can develop trusting relationships."

Mr Reed said the research will directly contribute to the Royal Commission's final report and may inform any recommendations that may be made in relation to residential care or out-of-home care.

[Read article here.](#)

ROYAL COMMISSION SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITY

February

Mon 6 - Mon 27 Public Hearing [Case Study 50 Catholic Church authorities in Australia](#)

March

Mon 6 - Thurs 9 Public Hearing [Case Study 51 Commonwealth and the State and Territory governments](#)

Fri 10 Public Hearing [Case Study 54 Jehovah's Witnesses and Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd](#)

Public Hearing [Case Study 55 Australian Christian Churches and affiliated Pentecostal churches](#)

Mon 20 - Thurs 23 Public Hearing [Case Study 52 Anglican Church authorities in Australia](#)

Fri 24

Public Hearing [Case Study 56 Uniting Church in Australia.](#)

Public Hearing [Case Study 53 Yeshivah Melbourne and Yeshiva Bondi](#)

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