



Statement for Blue Knot Foundation

### **Redress: Responding to survivors within a trauma-informed framework**

The YMCA's journey towards the development of our approach to redress and our response to survivors of past abuse within the YMCA began over two years ago. Over this time we have learned a great deal from the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the learning of other organisations and most importantly, we have learned from listening to the experiences and wishes of survivors and those that support them.

The YMCA has engaged the expertise of the Blue Knot Foundation in order to broaden and deepen our knowledge and understanding of the impacts of childhood trauma and how, as an organisation and as individuals, we can bring a trauma-informed approach to our support for survivors.

We initially engaged Blue Knot to provide Trauma-Informed Redress – Direct Personal Response training for a number of our senior management staff and CEOs and we then followed up with a number of tailored training and presentation sessions to audiences at a variety of levels across our organisation nationally.

Our front-line staff come from a variety of backgrounds including child care, sport and recreation, youth and community services and they are one of our most important assets. While we have made every effort to encourage survivors to contact our National Office we know that some people may make contact with their local YMCA. As the public face of the YMCA, we wanted to ensure these staff were equipped with knowledge and understanding of childhood trauma to enable them to feel confident and capable in responding. The challenge in this training was to achieve the right balance between providing staff with enough information so they felt empowered to respond, but not too much detail that they felt overwhelmed. Our focus has been on responding to survivors of child sexual abuse, however the training has been valuable in terms of building a greater awareness of the broader issues of childhood trauma faced by many in our community. This is important not only for our staff engagement with all members of our community, but also in our interactions with one another. With a staff group of over 12,000 people nationally and over 4,000 volunteers, the training has been a powerful reminder that among our employees and volunteers there may be some people impacted by childhood trauma, and as an organisation we have a role in offering support.

For our managers and senior executives, the training has brought greater insight to the theoretical underpinnings of our approach to redress and our response to survivors. Some of our senior staff may have direct contact with survivors and the training has been highly valuable in a practical sense but also in term of understanding the levels of support required for our staff. Building a greater depth of understanding of providing redress within a survivor-focused and trauma-informed framework has also provided our senior staff with strong advocacy and capacity building skills.

Each of our 22 YMCA Associations is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and many of these directors have also participated in Blue Knot training. Developing our response to survivors has been one of the most significant cultural and governance issues for the YMCA and broadening our directors' understanding the impacts of childhood trauma and the importance of a trauma-informed approach has been a critical part of strengthening culture and governance.



As we progress in this journey of providing redress and responding to survivors our relationship with the Blue Knot Foundation will continue. While we will undertake further training across the organisation, Blue Knot have also offered support in terms of our staff wellbeing, debriefing as required and also ongoing advice about how we can learn and improve our response to survivors over the longer-term.



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