



**EMPATHY.
INSIGHT.
ADVOCACY.**

ANNUAL REPORT
2022 - 2023



Engender
Equality

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Acknowledgments

Engender Equality acknowledges the profound impact of family violence on individuals, families, and communities and the resilience and courage of those who have endured such hardships.

We honour the memory of those who did not survive and their enduring legacy. Your memory remains a driving force behind our work.

Every client we assist has a unique story of family violence, yet they all share a common thread: the strength and courage to seek help and share their experiences with us. We express gratitude to our clients for entrusting us with their stories, for allowing us to listen, and for giving us the privilege of supporting their healing journey.

This report was made possible through the invaluable contributions of volunteers and the collaborative efforts of victim-survivors who shared their stories. We thank them for their generosity in sharing these narratives with you.

We acknowledge the courage, wisdom and passion of the people who form our Advocates for Change Program, and thank them for sharing their stories, voice and knowledge to create change in our communities.

We further acknowledge, with deep respect, the Palawa and Pakana people, the traditional owners of Lutruwita (Tasmania). The Palawa people belong to the oldest continuing culture in the world. They have lived in union with Country for many thousands of years. We express gratitude for their custodianship and stand with Palawa people in the declaration that sovereignty remains unceded.



About Engender Equality

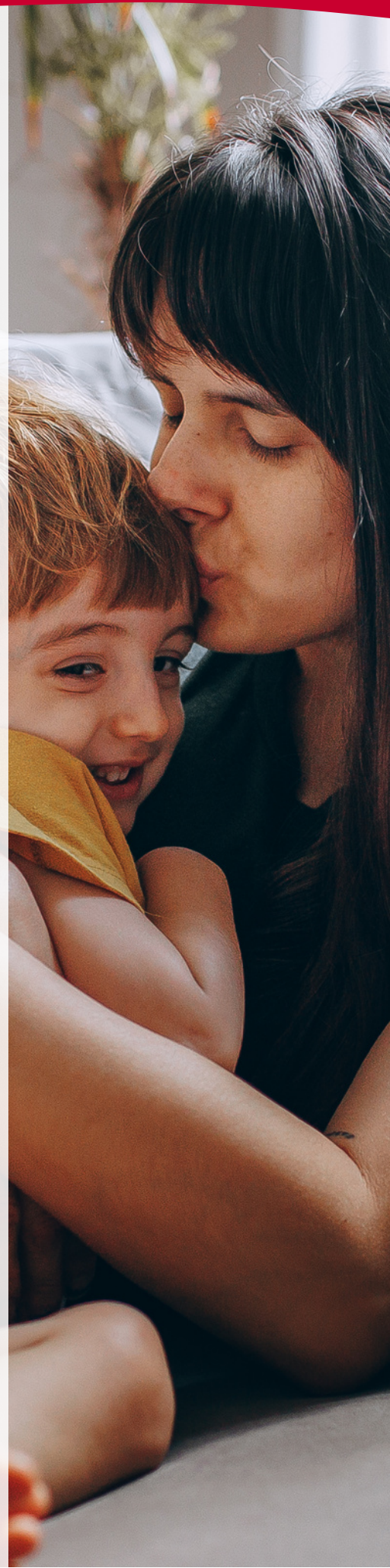
Welcome to the Annual Report of Engender Equality, a leading specialist family violence service, dedicated to creating a safer and more equitable Tasmania.

For over three decades, Engender Equality has been a relentless force for positive change, working tirelessly to support individuals, families, and communities affected by family and domestic violence in Tasmania.

We remain at the forefront of this vital mission, employing professional family violence experts who work within a therapeutic model to support victim-survivors throughout their lifespans. We support women, gender diverse, non-binary individuals and men, offering them the individualised care and support they need to reclaim their lives.

Beyond providing essential support, Engender Equality is committed to preventing family violence at its roots. We deliver training on family violence and gender equality, actively working to eliminate family violence from our communities. Through this primary prevention strategy, we aim to create a society where violence is not just addressed but eradicated.

Engender Equality is governed by a diverse and highly skilled board of women who provide strategic leadership informed by legal, financial, managerial, and business development expertise. Working closely with our CEO, they ensure proficient stewardship across Tasmania. Together, we strive to transform lives and build a more inclusive and equitable Tasmania for all.



About Engender Equality

Our Vision

Our communities living free from violence.

Our Mission

We apply deep expertise through:

An individual approach - with trauma-informed counselling and services.

A community approach - with workplace training, psycho-education groups and public forums.

A systemic approach - with education, research and advocacy.

A social approach – promoting policy awareness and improvement.

Our Values

Ethical. We promote professional practices and service provision.

Inclusive. We are inclusive and embrace diversity.

Practice integrity. We challenge discriminatory behaviours and attitudes.

Expect safety. We ensure physical, psychological, and emotional safety.

Community focused. We facilitate community capacity.

Trust. We maintain trust by consistently applying our values, principles and service philosophy.

Chairperson's Report - Kathryn Lenton

It is an honour to be presenting the Engender Equality report on behalf of the board and staff for 2023. Engender Equality has continued to work tirelessly across Lutruwita /Tasmania to support people affected by family violence through counselling, education and training.

With White Ribbon Australia advising that a woman has been murdered every five days in Australia this year alone due to family violence, the work of Engender Equality continues to be a critically important service to Tasmanians.

We welcomed new board directors to the board this year, and I wish to thank and commend the work of the dedicated directors of both the existing board members and newer members.

CEO Alina Thomas has continued to work exceptionally hard in the context of competing demands and increasing referrals. Alina has been a highly valued media spokesperson and advocate.

The team at Engender Equality have continued to provide exceptional levels of care, counselling, advocacy and training. I wish to deeply thank the team and acknowledge their hard work and efforts. The professionalism and skill demonstrated across the team is commendable.

Engender Equality has delivered training for a variety of organisations including Department of Justice (recognise, respond and refer), Council of the Aging, (Lived Experience Advisory), Melbourne University, Pathways to Safety and Ambulance Tasmania, amongst others. The training, combined with high quality counselling and advocacy, continues to provide invaluable support to Tasmanians impacted by family violence.

I applaud the entire Engender Equality team for their dedication.

CEO's Report - Alina Thomas

I am honoured to present the CEO report for Engender Equality with highlights of the past year.

Therapeutic Practice

Thriving Practice Team - Under the leadership of our Practice Lead, our practice team has thrived. Their dedication and expertise is unprecedented in providing essential support to survivors of family violence.

Engender Equality Practice Guidelines - The release of the Engender Equality Practice Guidelines for Therapeutic Services underscores our commitment to best practices and sets a benchmark for excellence in our field.

Training in Blue Knot's Three-Phase Approach - Our therapy team has undergone training in the Blue Knot's three-phase approach. This investment in professional development ensures that we continue to provide the highest quality therapeutic services to our clients.

551 The number of clients accessing therapeutic services in 2022/23

Advocacy

Misidentification for Primary Aggressor Forum and Research Paper - The victim-survivor centred Misidentification for Primary Aggressor Forum, followed by our ground breaking research paper, attracting international attention from the high level of media interest. Our work has influenced the way the police process reciprocal family violence orders, contributing to more just law enforcement responses.

Tailored Advocates for Change Program - We have extended the reach of our Advocates for Change program by tailoring it to victims of child sex abuse in partnership with the Department of Justice and adapting it to address elder abuse in collaboration with the Council of the Ageing. This expansion reflects our commitment to meeting the unique needs of diverse communities.

CEO's Report - Alina Thomas

Media Presence and Representation - We have maintained a strong presence in the media, amplifying our voice in the fight against family violence and advocating for change at local and national levels.

National Representation - Our participation as representatives of Tasmania on the National Peaks of Family Violence Alliance has allowed us to contribute our expertise and insights to shape the national conversation on family violence prevention.

Training

Delivering Workforce Equality and Report Packages - Our partnership with two Tasmanian Local Governments to deliver Our Watch's Workforce Equality and Respect packages has yielded remarkable results. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in raising awareness and promoting gender equality, setting a strong foundation for future progress.

Major Training partnership with the Department of Justice - We are proud to have been chosen to deliver a major training package as part of the Department of Justice's Gender, Respect, and Fairness strategy.

967 The number of people who attended training workshops in 2022/23

Business and Training Development Role -The establishment of the business and training development role has allowed us to expand our reach and enhance our services. This strategic move has positioned us for sustainable growth and impact.

2022-2023 has been a testament to our dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to combating family violence. Our achievements reflect the tireless efforts of our team, the enduring support of our stakeholders, and the impact we continue to make in the lives of victim-survivors.

Advocates for Change Report - Beth Rad

The Advocates for Change Program, now in its fifth year, continues to provide support to Advocates on their journey of sharing their expertise and experiences with the community to effect systemic change in the prevention of gender-based violence.

Victim-survivors often discover this program as they seek a platform that will empower and facilitate them to derive some positivity from the trauma and marginalisation they have endured. Each of them possesses valuable experiences they wish to impart to the community.

The training we provide equips Advocates with the necessary tools and skills to do so safely. It is imperative that we all recognise the voices of victim-survivors as a valuable source of expertise in shaping decision-making, legislation, policy development, and service delivery. We asked the Advocates what the program means to them. Here are their stories:*

*Names and identities have been protected as appropriate.

Anna

“After Tasmania Police misidentified me as a family violence perpetrator, I felt traumatised and powerless. I wanted systems to change, but my anger was consuming me like fire. Then I remember thinking, “Don’t be like fire. Be like water. Find the gaps, find the opportunities.” Soon after this I met Alina Thomas, CEO of Engender Equality, at the 2022 Misidentification of the Predominant Aggressor Forum and became an Advocate for Change. As an advocate I'm working towards changing systems and attitudes to protect and empower victim-survivors, and to make the future safer for many people.

I no longer feel powerless to change systems and influence attitudes. I'm using opportunities I am given and creating more opportunities for myself and others. I experience clarity, purpose, and agency.

Some of my attitudes have been transformed, helping me to understand and heal. A potential source of shame, misidentification, has been transformed into a badge of honour, and my suffering has meaning. Something good has come out of something bad. Being an Advocate for Change has been an incredible experience. I highly recommend it, for personal healing, a sense of common purpose with other advocates, and for making a real difference. This program has tapped into something very powerful - the desire to effect change.”

Advocates for Change Report

Deborah Hunter

“Disabled people have higher incidence of abuse including family and domestic violence than the population at large. Being physically disabled in any way or, having an “invisible” disability and different or less articulate communication style, should never mean one’s concerns, views or discomfort/distress are not treated seriously.

A person’s disability is not a licence to treat them like children and imbeciles, or to invalidate them, assassinate them (figuratively speaking) or ignore them. Because disclosure of disability usually evokes an abled person’s condescension and one’s views are invalidated compared to those of others because of disability, it can be difficult to hold onto the mission.

Being part of Engender Equality’s Advocates for Change program is essential to me in maintaining my resolve and bouncing back from each insult. I am an autistic woman aged 67 years and a survivor of family and domestic violence, with resulting complex PTSD. Life remains a struggle.



Deborah Hunter

As an older autistic woman, I am constantly ignored now, and the condescension is demeaning. I feel tired. I have to spend more and more time on my own to recover from social encounters. I do need ongoing support and psychological therapy. I have persistent pain from domestic violence and trauma injuries. Making sure that my suffering means something by standing up and speaking so that others are validated and encouraged to stand up for themselves.

Being a part of the program has been nothing short of my source of strength and resolve. I could never have persisted through my healing without the sense of being part of something bigger than me, somewhere, a community, where I am absolutely safe.”

Advocates for Change Report

Tania Thompson

“I became an advocate as it became my mission to educate the next generation and to educate others that this is everyone’s responsibility to end violence. Violence is not just physical or sexual, it is so much more than that. I was disappointed when I was stereotyped by bystanders saying I did not look like the typical “victim”. Abuse does not discriminate.

Being an advocate resonates with my values of kindness and treating people with respect and compassion. No one deserves to be abused. Being an advocate gives a voice and support to other victim-survivors, as we stand up for our rights and for those who cannot.

Being an advocate has given me knowledge. Knowledge is power and it has enabled me to have a voice. Even now when I reflect, I still see those red flags I once ignored or didn't know where there. This program has given me empowerment, accountability, and responsibility.

Voices are powerful the more we join forces the more we can make changes to legislation and societies opinions and perceptions.”



Advocates for Change Report

Deborah Thomson

“For me advocacy and activism go hand in hand. To change the story in a positive direction for victims of Domestic and Family Violence we advocates have an option for activism alongside advocacy. I became an advocate as it enables me to have a greater voice and stir things up a little (or a lot). Any achievements in this direction gives me an enormous sense of personal satisfaction and meaning.

Being an advocate comes with a responsibility to speak out against violence in our communities whether speaking is in the form of media engagements and public speaking or in the equally important behind the scenes way- online discussions with Family Violence services and fellow advocates, changing government policies that support victims and writing articles that encourage public discourse around intimate partner violence.



Deborah Thompson

As an advocate I can focus on helping others rather than dwelling on personal past experiences of abuse and the ensuing trauma associated with being abused. Engender Equality is an empowering organisation, very supportive of the advocacy process and always there for advocates, helping us when we struggle and acknowledging and cheering our achievements. Outward support of others through volunteering has hastened my healing process, given me a purpose in life and an ability to makes sense of the senseless abuse I once experienced”.

Training and Education Report - Carolyn Self

As a specialist service that recognises family and sexual violence as a whole-of-community issue, Engender Equality is a leader in promoting gender equality. We are dedicated to leveraging community and social action to empower people to make a stand against violence against women. As such, our training is delivered as a social enterprise where proceeds from the training workshops we deliver contribute directly to our mission of benefiting the community. Income from our training arm assists in funding the support services we offer to victim-survivors of family and sexual violence.

Our training social enterprise has continued to grow in the 2022-2023 financial year, as over 1000 members of the community have benefitted from the education we have provided across workplaces, community and government services. With the introduction of our philanthropically funded Social Enterprise and Business Development Manager in 2023, we are enjoying the continued growth of our training arm, and look forward to the social impact this section of our organisation will continue to have.

264 The number of training hours delivered in 22/23

Engender Equality has continued to work as endorsed training providers for White Ribbon workplace accreditation training, while also continuing to conduct Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect training in the state. We have also been invited, and have become, endorsed trainers of Gender and Disaster Australia's Lessons in Disaster training being provided nationally. Of course, we deliver this training alongside our highly regarded suite of family violence training offerings under the Engender Equality organisational brand.

Engender Equality prides itself on the high level of expertise and experience that both our trainers and our training frameworks hold around gender equality and family violence, enriched by our work across the family violence sector. We have enjoyed continuing to grow our reputation as experts in the family violence training and education sector, and look forward to seeing our social enterprise expand even further, contributing to the ongoing impact of primary prevention within Tasmania and beyond.

Shark Cage™ Report

Engender Equality is proud to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Jetty Foundation in our mission to create safer, more empowered communities.

Thanks to their generosity, we have successfully launched several Shark Cage Groups throughout 2022/23 in partnership with locally-based services, including tagari lia, Ptnurra, Uniting, and the TAC.

Our Shark Cage Groups are built on the strong foundation of empowering women to reclaim their rights and agency after enduring abuse and victimisation.

These programs guide participants in recognising unsafe and unhealthy relationships while fostering personal agency, enabling them to define their rights and establish boundaries within their family and social networks.

We deeply appreciate the collaborative relationships formed with our partner organisations, who host and co-facilitate these programs. These partnerships not only enhance our organisation by providing access to established community networks but also allow us to share our expertise with fellow service providers.

Together, we are expanding access to specialised family violence support across the state and working towards a safer, more equitable future for all Tasmanians.



07/10

Special Report - Alina Thomas

The Critical Role of Community-Based Specialist Services in Family Violence Service Provision

Community-based specialist services are indispensable in the provision of family violence services. The discretion, expertise, support with legal processes, and systems integration make us a cornerstone of the efforts to end family violence. As we reflect on our work at Engender Equality we express our commitment to provide vital services to victim-survivors and to advocate for the importance of community-based specialist services in addressing family violence.

For victim-survivors. Community-based specialist services offer a discreet and confidential environment for people impacted by family violence. This discretion is vital as many victims-survivors are living in fear and may not feel comfortable seeking help through more public channels. By providing a safe and confidential space, individuals are encouraged and supported to come forward and received support without the fear of judgment, criticism or exposure.

Our expertise in complexity. Family violence is a multifaceted and intricate problem with numerous underlying factors. Community-based specialist services possess a high level of expertise in dealing with the complex dynamics of family violence. At Engender Equality our staff are trained to understand the various forms of abuse, the power dynamics involved, and the psychological trauma experienced by victims-survivors. This specialised knowledge enables us to provide tailored and effective support to those in need.

Addressing concerns about justice. Victims-survivors of family violence often have concerns about the responses of the legal system, including police and court outcomes. Community-based specialist services bridge the gap between legal processes and victims-survivors by offering advocacy and guidance. They can help individuals navigate the legal system, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights are protected. This support is especially crucial in cases where victims-survivors may fear retaliation or retribution from their abusers or where they might have been misidentified as the person using abusive behaviour.

Special Report - Alina Thomas

The Critical Role of Community-Based Specialist Services in Family Violence Service Provision (cont'd)

Therapy and recovery. Community-based specialist services understand that family violence affects all aspects of a person's life, including their physical and mental well-being, housing, employment, and social connections. We understand that living with trauma is not straightforward but can be a changing dynamic process with frequent wins and set-backs. Community-based specialist services work with victims-survivors, “where they are at” to rebuild their lives and regain their independence.

Community Integration. Specialist services are deeply connected in our communities. We foster partnerships with local organisations, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and in doing so contributes to a network of support for victims-survivors. By working collaboratively with other stakeholders, we contribute to a more coordinated and effective response to family violence, ultimately making communities safer.



Special Report - Kellie Chugg

Engender Equality's Impact on Government Policy and Public Awareness: Misidentification of the Primary Aggressor

In the past year, Engender Equality has been at the forefront of driving significant changes in government policy and raising public awareness regarding the misidentification of the primary aggressor as it relates to family violence. This initiative began when the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee (DVCC) recognised the pressing need to address this issue.

Over 2023 the DVCC formed a working group comprising four dedicated individuals who engaged with victim-survivors, creating impactful case studies that shed light on the consequences of misidentification. A forum was organised, drawing over 100 attendees, including representatives from Tasmania Police, legal services, No to Violence and the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service (FVCSS).

To deepen the conversation, Engender Equality collaborated with student, Erin Deverell, who was conducting research for her master's thesis on the Misidentification of the Primary Aggressor. A secondary research report was developed to deliver information about Misidentification of the Primary Aggressor for the Tasmanian environment. The paper was launched at Government House in March 2023. The launch featured lived experience speakers, including individuals who had experienced misidentification.

During this transformative process, Engender Equality strategically liaised with ABC journalist Hayley Gleeson, whose significant article gained international traction, amplifying the impact of Engender Equality's advocacy on a global scale. This external recognition undoubtedly fuelled DPAC's motivation to host a significant consultative forum for representatives across government and the community sector.

The forum provided a platform for an in-depth discussion about the issue, fostering collaboration on understanding the problem and identifying comprehensive solutions.

Special Report - Kellie Chugg

Engender Equality's Impact on Government Policy and Public Awareness: Misidentification of the Primary Aggressor (cont'd)

The police response to issuing mutual Police Family Violence Orders underwent a review. Orders are now systematically assessed by the Safe at Home Integrated Coordinating Committee, ensuring a more nuanced and informed approach, and which generally leads to the revocation of one of the mutual Police Family Violence Orders. This change is currently an emerging practice but will hopefully be embedded via rigorous policy.

The impact is tangible. One of the lawyers from DVCC presented these findings to a Magistrate, leading to an altered response based on Engender Equality's information. The evolving judiciary response signifies a paradigm shift in the system, demonstrating that Engender Equality's efforts are not just acknowledged but actively shaping the way authorities approach cases of misidentification.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, Engender Equality remains committed to further embedding these changes into the system, ensuring a lasting legacy of progress in advocacy against the misidentification of the primary aggressor.



Volunteers Report

Engender Equality extends deep gratitude to the dedicated volunteers and pro-bono contributors who have so generously donated their invaluable time and skills in 2022/23.

These devoted individuals play pivotal roles within our organisation, offering their expertise and enthusiasm to advance our cause and amplify our influence. Their steadfast support enhances our ability to create meaningful change within our community, extending our reach and impact far and wide.

Their contributions have been instrumental in achieving our mission and expanding our programs. As we reflect on the past year, we acknowledge the unwavering dedication of our volunteers and contributors, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative journey towards a more equitable society. Together, we are making a significant difference in the lives of those we serve.



The Board

Kathryn Lenton
Karen Hind
Lisa Schimanski
Ruth Forrest
Prue Cameron
Jacqueline Nicholls

Volunteers

Annalise, Wes, Pip

Student Placements

Erin, Beth



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