

project  
respect

# performance & impact report



2022

# Who We Supported

## Working With Women

Project Respect provided trauma-informed, strengths-based, goal-led and person-centred case coordination to women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, including experiences of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Our service users included people with experience in different areas of the sex and adult entertainment industry, including licensed and unlicensed, in-person and online work. Service users had diverse views of and experiences in the sex industry, from harm to empowerment and everything in between. Some service users were currently in the sex industry, whereas some had not been working in the sex industry for long periods of time.

Our support included specialised, individual complex case coordination to victim survivors of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, who are largely unable to access the government funded support program as they are unable or unwilling to assist the Australian Federal Police in an investigation. Support for women who have experienced trafficking is intensive due

to the complexities of issues, including where migration and visa status which can impede access to other services. Often this means women are engaged in support for multiple years, as they go through complex processes to secure protection, including protection visas.

- **54 Service Users Supported** / 77 Episodes of Support
- **21 Service Users Supported** / 27 Episodes of Support had Experienced Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation
- **20 Service Users** had not previously used Project Respect services
- **24 Service Users Supported** / 29 Episodes of Support were Active in the Sex Industry
- **57% Service Users Supported** / 48% Episodes of Support had Current or Previous Experiences of Family Violence at the Point of Intake
- **81 Referrals to External Service Providers**
- **36 Anonymous** Information and Referrals Given
- **22 Secondary Consults** Provided to External Service Providers

### Referrals by Episode of Support



#### Referrals to Project Respect – Total

- **52%** Self-Referral – Re-engagement
- **19%** Referral from external agency
- **10%** Referral from community member (other service users)
- **8%** Self-Referral – Web search
- **6%** Brothel Outreach
- **4%** Self-Referral (other)



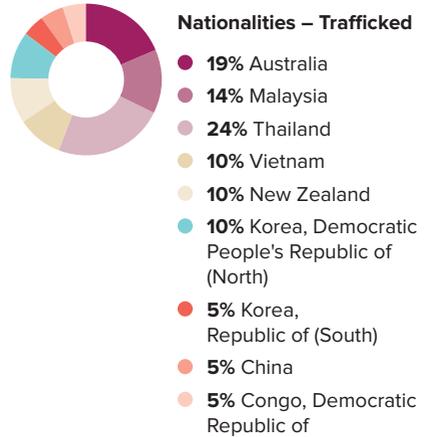
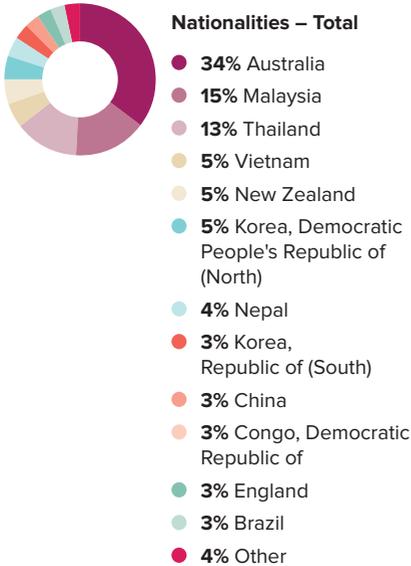
#### Referrals to Project Respect – Trafficking

- **56%** Self-Referral – Re-engagement
- **30%** Referral from external agency
- **4%** Referral from community member (other service users)
- **11%** Self-Referral – Web search
- **0%** Brothel Outreach
- **0%** Self-Referral (other)

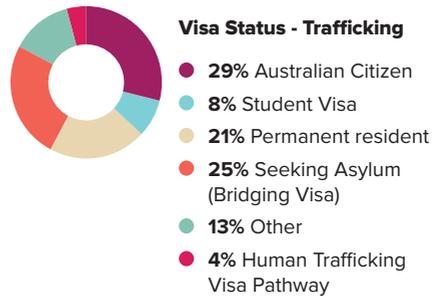
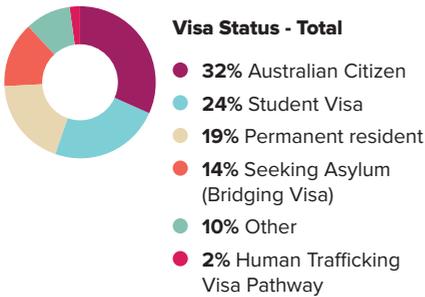
# Supporting Women

*With Experience in the Sex Industry*

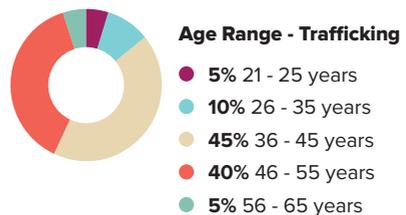
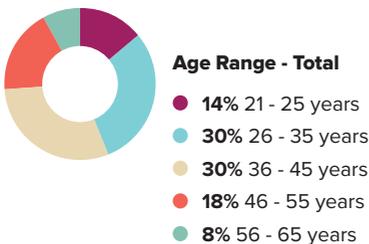
## Nationalities by Episode of Support



## Visa Status by Episode of Support



## Age Range by Episode of Support

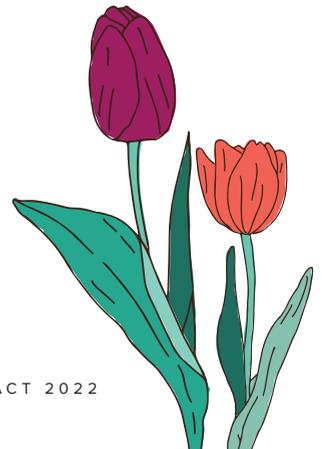
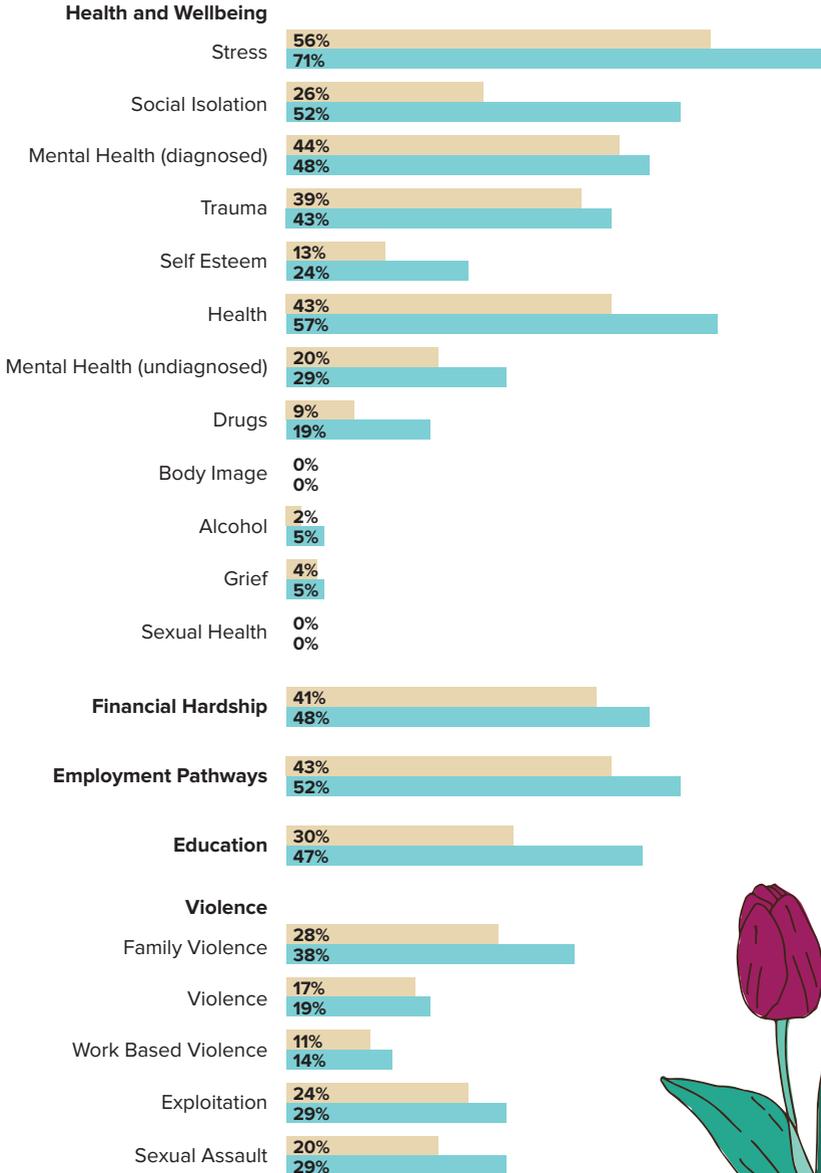


# Snapshot

Areas of Support

## Areas of Support

**Total**   **Trafficking**

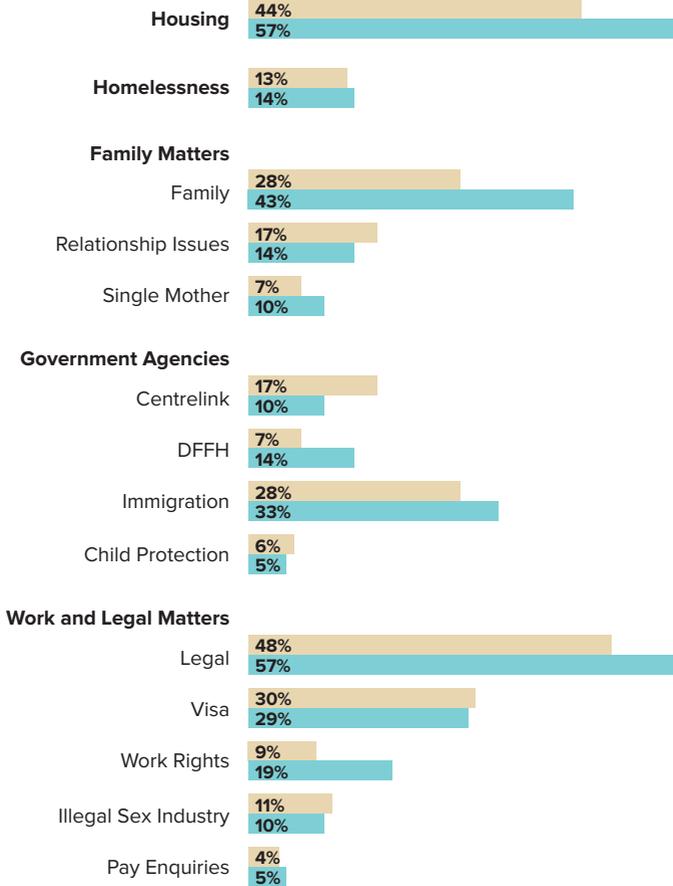


# Snapshot

Areas of Support

## Areas of Support

■ Total ■ Trafficking





## Themes & Trends

This year we saw the continued complexities of our service users' challenges, and how intersectional barriers compounded to increase the pressure felt by the women we supported.

We continued to see women on temporary visas facing barriers to access the support they needed, particularly International Students and people seeking asylum. The lengthy and uncertain timeframes in the resolution of asylum claims placed additional pressure on women using our services, and inhibited their ability to identify and work towards longer term goals.

The disclosure of historic domestic trafficking experiences continued to be a significant trend among women seeking our support, as was the experience of complex trauma and violence-induced disabilities.

Increased financial pressure, especially with the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, affected our service users' access to basic needs including housing and food. We saw a continued need for service users to access family violence support services and affordable mental health services that ensured inclusivity of our community's diverse experiences.

Our service users described experiencing pressure to push their boundaries in providing different sexual services within their work in order to receive payment.



# Outreach

*Connecting to Women*

## BROTHEL OUTREACH

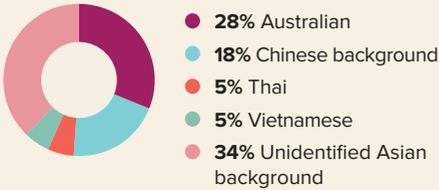
### Brothel Outreach - Impact

**75** Brothel Visits

**61** Women Met

**87%** Brothel Entry Rate

### Brothel Outreach - Nationalities



Engaging with women during Brothel Outreach is an important way for us to connect with our community, and provide access to our resources and support service should women wish to engage with these. We were able to return to a more comprehensive schedule of in-person brothel outreach in the second half of the year, and were pleased to see an increased proportion of brothels welcoming us in to meet women and provide our gift packs. Our outreach team provided Rapid Antigen Testing kits, face masks, Aesop, LUSH, and Taboo period products in our gift packs, and translated information that linked to support services, resources and COVID-19 information and updates in plain English, Chinese, Thai, Korean and Vietnamese.

During our brothel outreach visits, brothel management reported difficulties in finding women to work in the brothels, as many women were continuing to work from home or in other unlicensed situations after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

## VIRTUAL OUTREACH

Using virtual methods of engagement increases women's access to our services, particularly when physical access is restricted. We created

new Instagram and Linktree accounts, and used these to enhance our community's access to our existing resources, including our Community Newsletter and Resources List. These platforms allowed us to connect with more people and organisations to promote our service offerings, and provide engaging graphic-driven information about who we are.

These platforms allowed us to publish and promote Project Respect COVID-19 information and updates that were tailored to our community in plain English, Chinese, Thai, Korean and Vietnamese. We continued to use WeChat with new resource formats to connect to Chinese speaking women. Direct text messages to community members, and direct emails to brothels were successfully used to connect to community virtually.

The approaches we have trialled through the impact of the pandemic have enabled an increased reach into community, particularly to individuals who may not have previously known about or accessed our services, and will continue to be significant for years to come.

## REGIONAL OUTREACH

Thanks to a short-term grant from the Department of Health towards the end of the financial year, we were able to extend our reach into the regions, providing outreach to Shepparton, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. The outreach team completed 44 visits to regional service providers, community organisations and sex industry businesses. Regional outreach allowed our team to connect with place based services, particularly the regional family violence services to build pathways to increase the positive health outcomes for women with experience in the sex industry. The visits included the provision of COVID-19 resources to community members, and resulted in our delivery of further presentation sessions regarding our services to The Orange Door staff across Victoria.

# Community Programs

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

- **9 Community Events**
  - > Community Lunch
  - > Community Gardening
  - > COVID-19 Vaccination Pop Up
  - > End of Year Party
  - > Herbs Identification & Propagation Workshop (Holistic Health)
  - > Trauma Informed Yoga (Holistic Health)
  - > Art Therapy (Holistic Health)
- **35 direct text messages to the Project Respect Community Group**
- **12 monthly Community Newsletters**

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to build back our provision of community connection activities. The Community Lunch and Gardening Sessions are an opportunity for women with experience in the sex industry to come together in a peer-led, safe space. Our partners Cultivating Communities worked hard to ensure our garden provided the basis for our fresh and healthy lunches. These events were funded by Yarra City Council.

In the last few months of the year, we expanded our events to include some Holistic Health events, and a COVID-19 Vaccination Pop Up, both funded by the Department of Health.

Since the end of the financial year, we have further expanded our events to a once a month Art Therapy event, thanks to a grant we were successful in achieving from Bank Australia.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

It is important that Project Respect remains informed by our service users and community led. “Women’s Experience Surveys” were completed by our service users to provide feedback on their experience with services we referred them to. A common theme from this feedback was the importance of service providers demonstrating trustworthiness.

We undertook Community Access Surveys and Community Engagement Surveys at different points in the year. These surveys indicated that key reasons participants engaged with Project Respect were due to:

- Non-judgemental services
- Non-discriminatory services
- Safe spaces
- Safe workers
- A need to access services.

Feedback regarding our community engagement events included:

- “Loved the food”
- “Food was delicious, especially the desserts”
- “Lunch was a phenomenal experience – thumbs up to the team”
- “Community lunch was great, I always feel welcome and in no way judged, which means a lot to me”
- “The staff are sweet, friendly and amazing”

A survey regarding our COVID-19 resources was undertaken with 100% indicating the resources and staff were helpful. Additional individual comments included:

- “The newsletter is very informative”
- “The RAT test information was interesting”
- “I was supported to access PCR testing and vaccination services and was supported through my isolation”.

# Women's Advisory Group

The Women's Advisory Group (WAG) is a peer-led space, which consists of women with diverse current and past experiences in the sex and adult entertainment industry.

In the 2021-2022 financial year the WAG continued to meet, reflect and consult on important initiatives, positioning, strategy and operations of the organisation, including supporting a review of our Women's Experience Survey. These reflections and their critical expertise informed our lens in responding to external consultation opportunities.

In the coming year there will be a focus on membership recruitment, expanding the ways community members may access and contribute to the WAG, and capacity building of members.

## Research

### **RESEARCH PROJECT – IMPROVING SERVICE PATHWAYS: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN THE SEX INDUSTRY – GREATER MELBOURNE REGION**

The experience of COVID-19 threatened to further marginalise all communities of people who do not easily fit into mainstream service models. In the prior year, we had commenced work on a research project to understand the experience of women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and their experiences of being able to access the services they needed. We were able to secure funding from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) for the next stage of the project, which proceeded from 1 July 2022.

These subsequent stages of the project involve implementing the data collection tools, which include a community survey, interviews with community members, and interviews with service providers. The analysis of findings, and the publication of a report arising from those findings will follow. The intended outcomes of this report will be to improve the sector knowledge of the service needs of women with experience in the sex industry, and identify

current gaps and necessary improvements, particularly highlighted when a disruptive event such as the recent pandemic occurs. We are motivated by the potential to develop an expanded evidence base on which to improve the service responses to the needs of women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry.

A comprehensive State of Knowledge integrated literature review, that precedes the research findings, is due to be published at the time of writing.

### **JOINT AIC/RED CROSS/PROJECT RESPECT COLLABORATION - SERVICE NEEDS OF SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) has continued their comprehensive work on the qualitative research project, investigating the Service Needs of Survivors of Sexual Exploitation, supported by Project Respect and the Australian Red Cross. The research examines the barriers to service as well as service needs. Once complete, the research will be launched jointly by the three organisations. We look forward to the completion of the project and publishing of the extensive paper, due in late 2022 or early 2023.

# Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy

## CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

- 3 Capacity Building Training workshops for the City of Melbourne (Introduction to Supporting Women in the Sex industry) and EDVOS (Family Violence and Women in the Sex Industry)
- 2 e-Learning courses: Supporting Women in the Sex Industry

Project Respect's Capacity Building Training workshops continued to increase the knowledge and skills of service providers and community workers to support women with experience in the sex industry seeking to access their services. Our training offerings included our new e-learning course, produced through our partnership with Cahoot Learning, which includes engaging online modules and interactive activities.

The training we have provided to participants has been rated very highly, with participants agreeing that this training is crucial for delivery in the family violence sector. As we are not funded to develop or deliver training, we have attempted to deliver this training at a commercially viable fee, and had planned for this to improve the organisation's income streams. However, attempting to charge for the training has resulted in a much lower uptake than would have been possible if the training were free for participants, in a market that may be hungry for knowledge but is wary of training and adverse to payment for it. As our training mainly provides the opportunity for advanced 'sector knowledge' over and above 'individual knowledge', our approach will be to seek support at a sector level to fund the training delivery. We are conscious of the need to balance our ethical responsibility to upskill the service system's capacity to provide safe, non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory services, against our own need for financial survival where we have so little options for monetisation and so critically lack funding.

## SECONDARY CONSULTATIONS

22 Secondary Consults Provided to External Service Providers.

Project Respect provides secondary consultations to other organisations, supporting those organisations to provide knowledgeable support for women or gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, or to women or gender diverse people with experiences of trafficking for sexual exploitation. This enables a stronger capacity of the sector to provide safe services, and helps maintain engagement with services for those who need them.

## SECTOR CONSULTATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, COLLABORATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS

- 5 Sector Consultations
- 5 Presentations
- 3 Network Leadership Engagements
- 25 Direct Consultations with Collaborating Organisations or Partnerships
- 30 Resource Drop Offs

In the year under review, our small organisation undertook extraordinary efforts to re-establish our connections with collaborating organisations, the networks we are part of and provide input and consultation to, our funders, the family violence sector, the human trafficking sectors, government, police agencies, local councils, gender advocacy groups and individual advocates, particularly in the second six months of the year. For an organisation with full time equivalent staff of less than 6, but with a State-wide and at times National reach, this is both crucial and daunting. A common theme we heard from these collaborators was an acknowledgement of the need within the whole of the community sector to do this, with the impacts of the past few years of COVID-19 being a restriction in achieving good levels of collaboration. We have continued these

# Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy

efforts subsequent to year end with about as many engagements in the first four months of the year as detailed above for the 2021-22 financial year in full. We thank the efforts of our collaborators and partners in supporting these re-establishments, so we can achieve the best possible outcomes for our service users.

Highlights of the year included presenting to the service system navigators in the statewide Orange Door network as well as to other Orange Door teams, participating in the Equality Rights Alliance conference, and re-establishing meaningful connections with several police units.

Some of the networks we collaborate with and participate in include:

- Be Slavery Free
- City of Moreland Family Violence Network Meeting
- City of Monash Multicultural and Settlement Services Meeting
- Equality Rights Alliance
- Queer Family Violence Sector Network
- Safe and Equal
- National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery

## **SUPPORT FOR TRAFFICKED PEOPLE PROGRAM (STPP) ADDITIONAL REFERRAL PATHWAY WORKING GROUP**

Arising from our original joint advocacy with ACRATH, Anti-Slavery Australia and the Australian Red Cross, which resulted in the establishment of “Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) Additional Referral Pathway Working Group” convened by the Australian Red Cross, a comprehensive recommendations paper was presented to the Federal government which advocated for additional access pathways to support

for people impacted by human trafficking. At the date of writing, there has not yet been a clear statement of support from the Federal Government or an indication of the timing of any trial of the recommendations. We look forward to further announcements on this subject at the next National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery and will continue to advocate for change alongside our working group partners.

## **IMPROVING THE RESPONSE OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO SEXUAL OFFENCES VLRC REPORT**

The Victorian Law Reform Commission released their report "Improving the Response of the Justice System to Sexual Offences" in November 2021. We were very pleased to see our responses to the 2020 Victorian Law Reform Consultation on Sexual Offences, including direct consultation with our WAG, included in the report. The report highlighted our strong messaging that women in the sex industry face additional barriers when reporting crimes to authorities and accessing support services, and that these barriers often deter women in the sex industry from accessing services and seeking support.

Subsequent to year end, the first stage of the Victorian Government's legislative response to the report commenced, with the passing of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The bill includes laws to introduce affirmative consent, criminalise “stealthling”, and target “deepfake” pornography. We participated in additional consultation with the Department of Justice during the 2021-22 year, ahead of the preparation of this Bill.

The new legislation adds five additional circumstances in which a person does not consent, including where there is false or misleading representations about payment for commercial sexual services. This conduct was

# Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy

previously only captured by the lesser offence of procuring a sexual act by fraud. The Bill makes it clear that in some situations, this conduct could be rape or sexual assault. The Bill also makes it clear that there is no consent if a person submits because of force, fear of force, harm of any type, and fear of harm of any type.

To address misconceptions about sexual violence, the legislation will also prohibit statements in court that attempt to diminish the credibility of complainants on the basis that they provide sexual services.

## SUBMISSIONS

- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2021
- Decriminalising Sex Work in Victoria 2021
- Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

## MEDIA RELEASES

- Decriminalisation: A first step towards improving safety for women in the sex industry – 2021
- Welcome Project Respect's New Chair: Julia Cookson - 2021
- Sex Work Decriminalised in Victoria - 2022

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 19,649 Website views
- 3,014 Supporter Update Subscribers
- 28 Email Campaigns
- 12 Community Newsletters
- 2,431 Facebook Likes
- 151 Facebook Posts
- 623 Instagram Follows
- 175 Instagram Posts
- 501 LinkedIn Follows
- 108 LinkedIn Posts
- 761 Linktree Views
- 88 WeChat Posts
- 61 QR Code Scans

Project Respect uses external communications to expand the reach of our advocacy work, strengthen and increase our existing partnerships and networks, and connect to our community. This year our communications strategies and platforms were overhauled to increase the accessibility of our support and work to stakeholders.

Project Respect's website was updated with a new user-friendly design and quick exit button. The Virtual Outreach communication process was upgraded to include a new Instagram Page and Linktree to reduce barriers for service users and community members to easily engage in our resources and connect to services. Existing communication formats including our WeChat posts, use of our QR code and Community Newsletter were also updated to increase community member's access.



# How can you support Project Respect

*together we can do so much*

## **DONATE**

Your donations will help us extend our services and programs to support women in the sex industry, including women who have experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation. Whether you donate monthly or once, your contribution will assist us in supporting women. Jump on to our website to donate today!

## **WORKPLACE GIVING**

Workplace Giving is a great way to donate to us and provides an immediate tax benefit by reducing your taxable income! You will need to speak to your Payroll and/or Human Resources department to set this up, but there are a number of organisations out there who provide workplace giving platforms.

## **LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL**

A bequest is a very significant way to make a positive difference to the lives and welfare of women in the sex industry, including women who have experienced trafficking.

## **SPONSORSHIP**

Your organisation can play an important community role by sponsoring our programs or providing crucial pro-bono advice and support in a number of key areas.

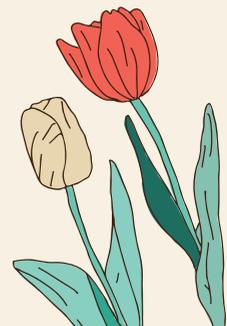
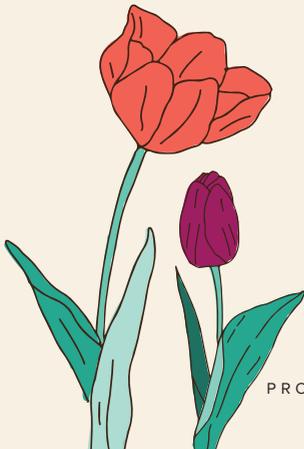
## **BECOME A FUNDRAISER FOR PROJECT RESPECT**

You can become a fundraising champion for us! There are many ways to fundraise for us, including involvement in fun runs or other fundraising events.

## **CUSTOMISED FEE-FOR-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION**

Need to know more about human trafficking for sexual exploitation? Or Issues impacting on women in the sex industry? We can develop a customised training session to suit the needs of your workplace to build your knowledge and skills. Get in touch today to find out more.

**For further information or ideas, please email [info@projectrespect.org.au](mailto:info@projectrespect.org.au) or contact (03) 9416 3401**







Proud to be an accredited organisation across  
the QIC Health & Community Services Standards,  
Human Services Standards and Rainbow Tick.

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