



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

project 
respect

Vision

Project Respect's Vision is a world where women are free from trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence and harm.

Purpose

Project Respect's purposes are to:

Provide support to women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry to achieve self-directed goals, including equitable access to services;

Provide support to women and gender diverse people who have experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, whether current, historic, international or domestic; and

Advocate for structural change to end sexual exploitation.

We provide a platform to elevate and amplify the voices of, while also being informed and guided by, those with past and present lived experience.

Philosophies

We are an intersectional feminist organisation, with all advocacy, support, and programs embodying a feminist philosophy

We position trafficking and sexual exploitation as a global, gendered, and structural issue

Our service provision is person-centred, collaborative, inclusive, and respectful of service users' decisions

Our strong evidence-base supports proactive and courageous work to advance human rights for women

Values



Service Users at the Heart

Our service users are at the centre of everything we do. Our commitment is to voice, choice, empowerment and collaboration.



Support Safety

Safety, access and inclusion are prioritised for all experiences of the sex industry or of exploitation, and in consideration of individual experiences of service users including those who identify as LGBTIQA+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, diverse migrant cultures, and as living with disability.



Welcome Diversity

Diversity is celebrated, with emphasis on authentically tailored person-centred service. Services are provided without bias or discrimination. Human rights are centred, with an understanding that best outcomes occur through the sharing of power, rather than the exerting of it.



Embrace Collaboration

Collaboration is central to relationships with service users, organisational partners and the wider community. Relationships are transparent, genuine and respectfully honest.



Be Adaptive - and Courageous

A spirit of continuous improvement and learning through strong service user partnership is fostered. Advocacy is informed by service user and community experience, and research.

The value of being flexible and adaptive is understood, and includes the ability to reflect and adjust direction and priorities in light of environmental changes, evolving evidence, and a deepened understanding of impact. The need for both adaptation and courage are acknowledged and supported, in the context of amplifying the voices of the lived experience of our service users, to bring about positive and impactful change.



Strategic Plan 2023 - 2025

Strategic Pillars

Strategic Goals	Strategic Pillars			
	A. Financial Performance	B. Research and Advocacy	C. Service Users and Stakeholders	D. People and Capacity
	1 Advocate for sustainable funding that reflects service delivery impact	Consolidate core capability as specialised service provider and knowledgeable advocate	Provide high quality targeted direct services, advised by and matched to service user needs	Recruit and develop a workforce matched to the needs of service users and organisational requirements
	2 Foster philanthropic and corporate funding	Present clear and evidence based organisational positions that are empowering for service users	Support sector capacity building through provision of training and secondary consultation	Recruit and develop a Committee of Management matched to the needs of service users and organisational requirements
	3 Explore innovative fee for service offerings for professionals	Centre lived experience voice in structure, advocacy positioning, and service design	Provide opportunities for community connection for service users	Ensure workforce support is reflective of human services work in complex and challenging circumstances
	4 Maintain proactive governance of financial risk		Reach potential service users through the targeted promotion of services	Develop intentional workforce culture reflective of organisational values

Commitments to Safety, Empowerment and Respect

Project Respect is committed to a diverse workplace where people are free from discrimination and disadvantage and are afforded dignity and respect.

Project Respect commits to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and supports anyone who self-identifies as a woman, including all LGBTQIA+ women, as well as gender diverse and non-binary people.

Project Respect acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge that these lands have never been ceded.

Project Respect is a youth and child safe organisation. We are committed to the safety of all children and young people including the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and young people, children and young people with a disability, and gender diverse and non-binary children and young people. We do not tolerate neglect, mistreatment or abuse of any kind.

Chair Report

I am honoured to present to you the Chair's Report for the past year, reflecting on Project Respect's journey, achievements, and challenges. Our purpose is rooted in serving our most valued constituents, our service users. Your needs and well-being remain at the forefront of our efforts, and it is for you that we strive to end gendered violence and exploitation.

I would like to extend my heartfelt acknowledgments to our dedicated team of individuals and partners who have contributed significantly to our progress over the past year. Our Committee of Management, the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG), our Executive Director, our committed staff, students, and passionate volunteers have all played pivotal roles in driving us forward.

As we move forward, we must bid farewell to two esteemed members of our Committee of Management, Fiona Elliot and Amanda Carlile. Their invaluable contributions and dedication to Project Respect have left an indelible mark on our organization, and we are grateful for their service.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to our Treasurer, Patricia Saca for her diligent oversight and stewardship of our financial resources, ensuring our sustainability and accountability. We have had a very tough financial year where State Government funding has not been at a sufficient level to cover the expenses of services meeting quality guidelines set out in their contracts. We received no Federal Government funding for service delivery.

Our journey has been made possible by the generosity of our supporters, including two anonymous donors who contributed \$50,000 in September 2022 and \$100,000 in June 2023. Your belief in our purpose empowers us to continue our vital work, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Over the past year, we have undertaken significant efforts in developing a consolidation

strategic plan, a critical step in ensuring the future growth and impact of Project Respect. This endeavour involved extensive consultation with our staff and the LEAG, ensuring that our strategies align with our collective vision.

In line with our strategic plan, we have also focused on refining our values, a process that began with the LEAG and was further developed by our Executive Director. These values reflect the evolving direction of our organization and guide our actions as we move forward. We are extremely proud of our values. They are our North Star.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed, as we have seen an elevation of our profile within State and Federal governments. We have actively engaged with Commissioners and provided input in the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, positioning ourselves as a key player in the fight against modern slavery and exploitation.

In our pursuit of funding, we achieved a significant milestone when the (former) Minister for Prevention of Family Violence recognized our value and increased our funding by \$200,000, allowing us to continue and consolidate our essential work. While we have secured an increase in funding from July 2023, we acknowledge that our long-term sustainability remains a challenge. We must explore additional sources of support and make prudent decisions to secure our future.

We were also fortunate to secure a one-off grant from the Federal government commencing in 2023 regarding a new modern slavery prevention initiative, although it does not directly support our core activities. This underscores the need for greater awareness and understanding of the support organizations like ours require, especially in the context of modern slavery. Our Executive Director presented at the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Modern Slavery conference. We raised awareness amongst corporates that even if they found

Chair Report continued

slavery in their supply chains, there were only a handful of specialist support organisations for victim survivors. Project Respect is a key provider, despite our lack of funding support.

In our broader community, we have observed an increase in awareness about modern slavery, but it has not necessarily translated into increased support or funding. However, there is hope as more grassroots organizations and local councils have shown support for initiatives like our training offerings for sector professionals. Furthermore, we have expanded our collaborations with other organizations across sectors. These partnerships are essential in navigating the challenging landscape and economically tight conditions that impact our service users, who are facing increased cost of living pressures.

We were pleased to see the Commonwealth Government's release of the Action Plan for the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, a critical step in addressing this pressing

issue. However, more work needs to be done in understanding the intersection with the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, and we remain committed to advocating in this space.

Looking ahead, our Committee of Management is committed to increasing our organization's expertise in fundraising, governance, and legal matters. This poses a significant challenge, especially given our financial constraints. However, we recognize our responsibility in this regard, given the limited presence of other organizations in our field.

In closing, I want to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who has been a part of our journey. Your dedication, passion, and support have been instrumental in our progress. Together, we will continue to work toward our purpose, ensuring a brighter future for those we serve.

Julia Cookson

Chair



Executive Director's Report

Putting together our 2022-23 Annual Report has enabled all of us at Project Respect to take a moment to reflect on the depth and breadth of the work we have engaged in over the year. I have often found that professionals we interact with are either surprised at our very small size if they know the extent of the work we undertake, or, are surprised at what we are able to achieve, if they know the size of our organisation. In standing back and looking at this year in review, I think there is reason to be surprised at what can be achieved by such a small organisation, in what has not been the easiest of times.

This year has been a big year in terms of broadening our collaborations across multiple sectors – including outreaching to other organisations and resurrecting the face-to-face meetings across all levels and responsibilities, which are so important in sector understanding and creating better connected pathways for our service users. I thank my staff in supporting the challenge that exists from being a small but statewide (and nationwide where called upon) service, to foster and maintain such diverse connections.

We have been fortunate to have had engagement from city councils supporting our training programs and services outreach, recognising their need to be prepared for decriminalisation of the sex industry from December 2023, and to understand the intersectional needs of their communities generally. We acknowledge the efforts of various state and federal policing units and their willingness to engage to find pathways for justice and support for our service users. Despite our disappointment at the imminent closure of the Sex Industry Coordination Unit of the Victoria Police, and the resulting need for us to establish an increased number of relationships across various units of VicPol, we are heartened at the interactions we have seen with some policing units and their willingness to provide support to our service users.

We have had a wide variety of connections with advocates, survivors, community members seeking information and understanding, and corporates looking for ways to engage in their role as a good corporate citizen. We have had people offering to volunteer. Sometimes we have more offers than we can accommodate, and even where this occurs, we are grateful for the willingness to be part of our service.

We continue to learn from all of our collaborators. I reflect that the ability of a small organisation such as ours to understand the nuances and complexities of the environment we work in is not established overnight. The value of having achieved this understanding over time can sometimes be forgotten in funding models that focus on numbers and outputs.

This has also been a huge year in our advocacy for a sustainable level of funding. This advocacy has been thorough and often exhausting, as we have presented, reframed, and re-written our organisational information in ways that resonate with our potential funding bodies. This work is not about Project Respect, but about the advocacy for the needs of the people who trust us to provide them with support. To continue to provide that support, trust also needs to be won from funders, who need to appreciate the gaps we fill, and what would need to be done to provide support if we were not doing so. As we so often have reiterated, our belief is that the connection between the State and Federal systems is key to effective implementation of Family Violence and Modern Slavery action plans. Project Respect's goals in supporting these plans extend to supporting full sector responses that attempt to break down silos. We feel that we have a role to play and we take this responsibility seriously.

To also more fully understand the needs of service users and the responses that are required, we prioritise formal research. By doing so, we can provide an evidence base that can

Executive Director's Report continued

be relied upon, and that provides guidance to funders. We are currently engaged with three separate research projects. The project undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology which is based on data from Project Respect and Australian Red Cross is due to be published at the time this Annual Report is released. Our own comprehensive research project will be released early in 2024. More information about these projects can be found through the pages of this report.

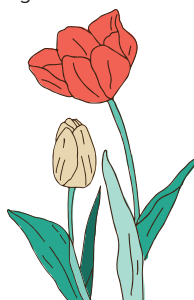
The past year has also been an opportunity for Project Respect to reflect on our own practice and messaging around our service. We have moved towards language that more accurately reflects the experiences of the people we support. For example, we now more frequently use the term “sexual exploitation”, as many of our service users are looking for support for experiences of exploitation and can find that “trafficking” is not always a term that represents their experience.

We have embraced changes during the year that have been of benefit to our service users and staff. We were successful in achieving a grant to refurbish our community spaces, we commenced a new monthly art and wellbeing program thanks to the generosity of Bank Australia, and commenced a new Employee Assistance Program for our staff and volunteers. We have relaunched our Women's Advisory Group as the Lived Experience Advisory Group, and through their expertise have developed our new organisational values. In the broader environment, we welcome the announcement of the upcoming pilot of the additional pathways to the Support for Trafficked People Program, an improvement we have advocated for jointly with other non-government organisations stretching back decades. We have engaged with the review into the Modern Slavery Act and the review of the modern slavery offences contained in the Criminal Code.

We are reminded through periods of change of the need to continually communicate with government and the community about the potential impacts of decisions made without consultation with lived experience. We have seen instances where recommendations have been made to government from commissioned reviews, where some recommendations can be contrary to lived experience advice, which then causes distress among those communities. It is our role to elevate lived experience voice. Our advocacy continues to be informed by our direct engagement with service users, research participants, the incorporation of lived experience within our workforce, and through our Lived Experience Advisory Group. While we expect a diversity of lived experience voice, we are conscious that not raising the voices that have engaged with us would mean that these voices would be missing from vital conversations that impact policy decisions – to the detriment of us all.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our donors and funders – including for their engagement with the challenges we face, within systems experiencing economic pressure. I would also like to thank our peak bodies, partners and collaborators. I thank our Committee of Management for their governance and support, particularly our Chair Julia Cookson and our Treasurer Patricia Saca for their support of our intensive funding advocacy. I especially would like to thank our amazing staff and volunteers for their skills and knowledge, and the commitment they bring to the organisation, particularly in times of uncertainty. I especially thank everyone involved for their commitment to our service users, for whom we are privileged to do the work that we do.

Carolyn Gowers
Executive Director



Performance & Impact



What We Do

Project Respect is a specialist support and referral service for women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, and for women and gender diverse people with experiences of sexual exploitation, including trafficking.

We have worked with our community since 1998, providing trauma informed, goal led and person-centred case coordination, community engagement activities including brothel outreach and community connection events, research, and capacity building training to support sector and community organisations' ability to effectively provide support to women in the sex industry without stigma or discrimination.

Project Respect's primary purposes are to:

- Provide support to women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry to achieve self-directed goals, including equitable access to services;
- Provide support to women and gender diverse people who have experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, whether current, historic, international or domestic;
- Advocate for structural change to end sexual exploitation.

We provide a platform to elevate and amplify the voices of, while also being informed and guided by, those with past and present lived experience - including through our Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG).

Who We Supported

Working With Women and Gender Diverse People

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

Some service users who disclosed having experienced sexual exploitation also identified as having experiences within the sex industry, and some did not. Some service users identified as having experience in the sex industry, but not as having experienced sexual exploitation. The intersection between these experiences differs from individual to individual.

For our service users who do identify as having experience in the sex and adult entertainment industry, this included licenced 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 engaging in work in the sex industry, and this included some service users who also identified as having experienced sexual exploitation at some time. Other service users were not currently engaging in work in the sex industry.

Our support included specialised, individual complex case coordination to service users who self identified as victim survivors of sexual exploitation, including trafficking for sexual exploitation. These experiences included recent and historical experiences. Most service users were unable to access the Commonwealth funded support program as they were unable, unwilling, or deemed ineligible to assist the Australian Federal Police in an investigation. The support provided by us can be intensive due to the complexities of the experiences, including where migration and visa status impede access to other services. This can mean service users engage with us for multiple years – either intermittently or continuously – as they go through complex processes to secure protection, including protection visas.

Other service users engage with Project Respect after having experienced significant trauma. Funded long term trauma recovery programs with specific focus on the experiences of women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry intersecting with experiences of violence are not available in the service system, resulting in longer term support being sought from Project Respect.

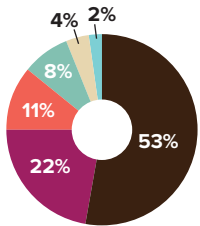
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- **47** Service Users Supported / **64** Episodes of Support
 - **34** Service Users Supported / **47** Episodes of Support self-identified as having experienced sexual exploitation (including trafficking)
 - **19** Service Users had not previously used Project Respect services
 - **20** Service Users supported / **27** Episodes of support were actively working in the sex industry
 - **133** Outward referrals were made to other service providers
 - **24** Anonymous information and referrals were provided
 - **18** Secondary consultations were provided to other service providers

Supporting Women and Gender Diverse People

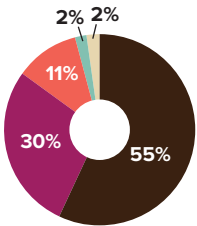
*With experience in the sex industry, or experience of sexual exploitation**

Referrals to Project Respect by Episode of Support

- Self-referral – Re-engagement
- Referral from External Agency
- Self-referral – Web Search
- Referral from Community member (other service users)
- Self-referral – Other
- Brothel Outreach



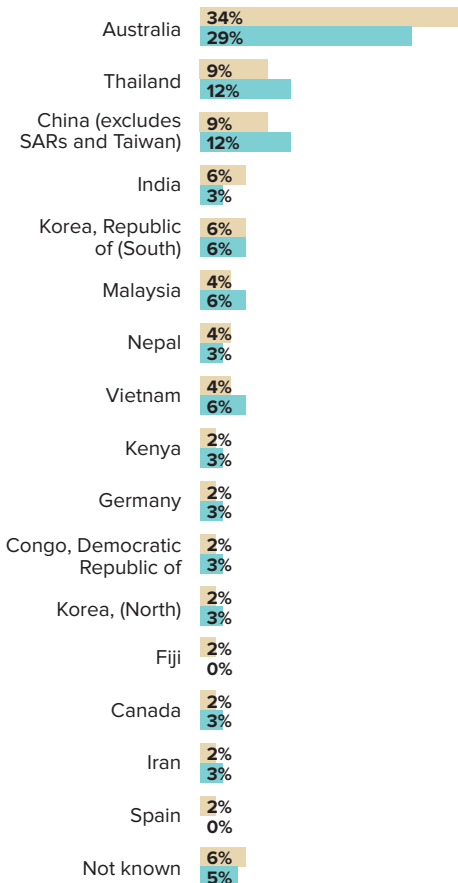
Referrals: Total



Referrals: Experiences of Sexual Exploitation

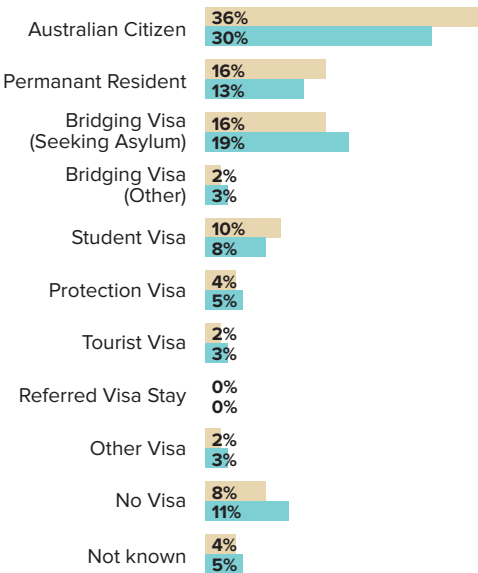
Service Users Supported by Country of Birth

- Service Users Supported
- Experiences of Sexual Exploitation



Service Users Supported by Visa Status

- Service Users Supported
- Experiences of Sexual Exploitation

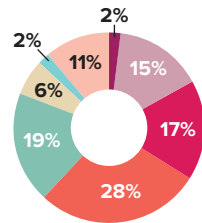


Supporting Women and Gender Diverse People

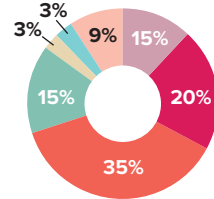
*With experience in the sex industry, or experience of sexual exploitation**

Service Users Supported by Age Range

- 18 - 20 years
- 21 - 25 years
- 26 - 35 years
- 36 - 45 years
- 46 - 55 years
- 56 - 65 years
- 66 - 85 years
- Not Known



Users Supported: Total



Users Supported: Experiences of Sexual Exploitation

** Note: This data refers to service users who have self identified as having experiences of sexual exploitation, including trafficking. In past years we have reported data related to trafficking only.*

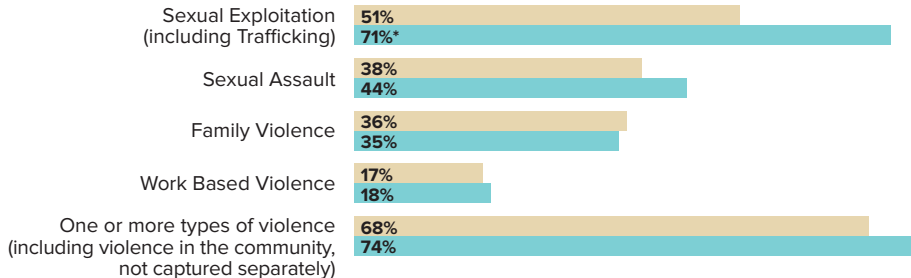
Areas of Support

Snapshot

Service Users by Area of Support

- All Service Users
- Service Users who have experienced exploitation

Support for Experiences of Violence

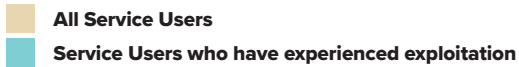


** Note, this number is not 100% as some service users who had experienced exploitation were not seeking support for this need, but had support needs in other categories.*

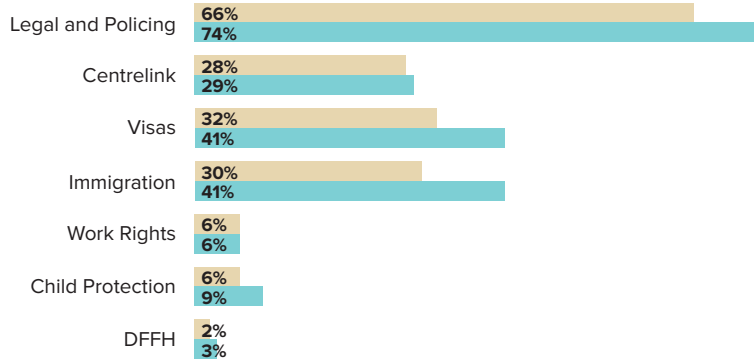
Areas of Support Continued

Snapshot

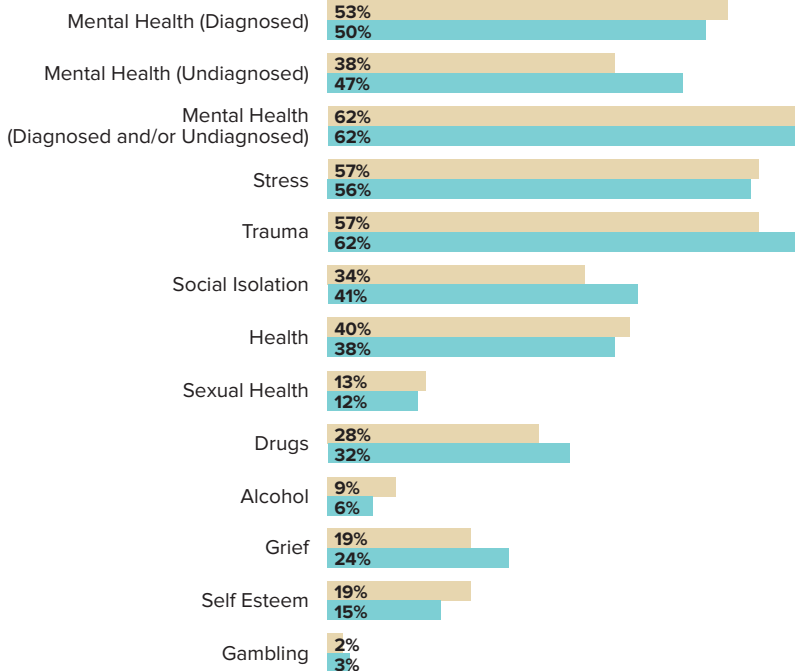
Service Users by Area of Support



Interactions with Government, Policing and Justice



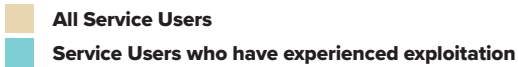
Health and Wellbeing



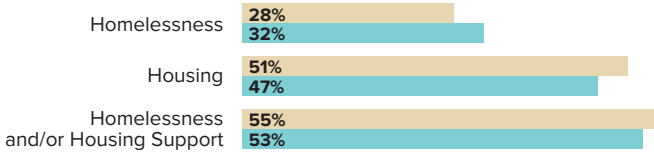
Areas of Support Continued

Snapshot

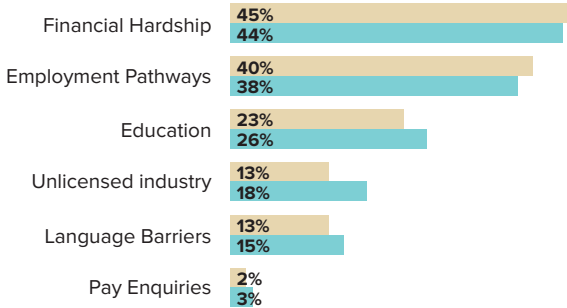
Service Users by Area of Support



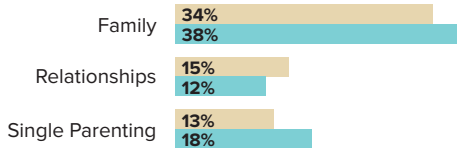
Homelessness and Housing



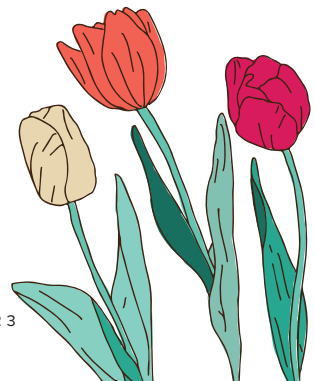
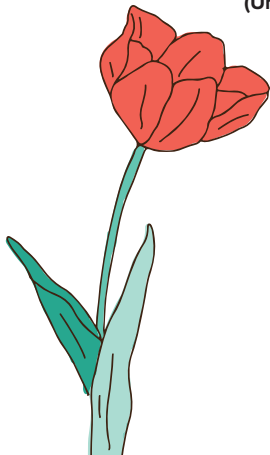
Financial, Work and Education



Family and Relationships Support



Other – Tailored Support (Uncategorised)



Themes & Trends

Our service users continued to experience complex challenges, and the impact of sometimes compounding systemic barriers. This particularly impacted people with unstable visa status, such as those on temporary or expired visas, which further restricted access to adequate supports and their ability to make plans for the future.

During the year, many of our service users trusted us with disclosures of their experiences of exploitation, and sexual, domestic and family violence. These experiences had far-reaching impacts into their lives, impacting their access to safety, needs for suitable housing, and ability to be financially secure. Experiences of violence also impacted our service users' mental and physical health, with many navigating complex trauma.

There was a significant need for the people we supported to access affordable, trauma informed and specialised counselling services and mental health supports that understand these often complex and always nuanced and individual experiences. The costs of such services presented a barrier, with limited fully bulk-billed services, and scarce options for those without Medicare.

In supporting people disclosing experiences of sexual exploitation, we saw the need for improvement by services across sectors in understanding exploitation, and the ability to identify and respond to it, in order to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and provide informed and adequate supports. Some service users reported failures they had encountered in various parts of the system to simply listen, acknowledge and validate their experiences.

While some service users maintained reservations in engaging with police and the justice system due to past negative experiences or fear of stigma, many worked closely with us as we sought to facilitate pathways to police and legal supports. Two thirds of our service users were supported in goals related to these challenges, which was the most consistent support need over the year.

Rapid increases in the cost of living impacted many of our service users. We saw an increase in people requiring financial and material aid. Challenges with homelessness and adequate housing addressing both short and longer term needs continued to impact more than half of the people we supported.

Our service users display strength, courage, kindness and resilience in the face of challenge, and we recognise our privilege in being trusted to walk alongside them on their journey.

Outcomes and Impact

"Thank you for the referrals that have had a positive influence in my life and I'm so grateful to connect with services like yours and others that connect with me without judgement".

Case Coordination Service User

While we regularly collect and act upon largely informal (and often unsolicited) feedback about our services and events, we acknowledge that we can improve the way we measure the impacts of our services on community. Our future goals include improving our measurement and our reporting. We also recognise that to do so will require funding that is commensurate with these goals

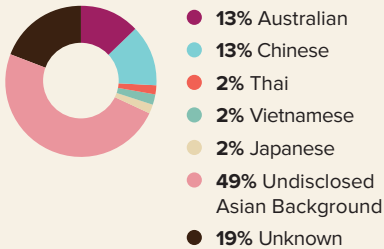
Community Engagement

BROTHEL OUTREACH

Brothel Outreach - Impact

55 Brothel Visits
63 Workers Met
93% Brothel Entry Rate

Brothel Outreach - Nationalities



Our brothel outreach program is undertaken to provide women with information about our services and community events, and to maintain connection within the community. These activities enable us to build relationships and establish accessible pathways to support, should those we meet wish to access it now or in the future. This long-term connection is important and can be beneficial where someone we have met later recommends our support to another worker or friend where this is needed.

While our ability to conduct brothel outreach can be restricted by our resource capacity, we conducted 55 visits to brothels in the year to 30 June 2023. During these visits, we met with 63 women.

During this outreach we provide gift packs that include information that links to our support services and resources, which is translated into Chinese, Thai, Korean and Vietnamese. The gift packs include high quality products including donations from Aesop, Lush and Taboo period

products, and Rapid Antigen Testing Kits. We also provided other items such as art and drawing kits and journals. The gift packs are well received and can help connection between our outreach team and the workers in the brothels visited.

We often also meet with brothel management during our visits. In the current year, brothels were frequently busy and reported not having enough workers. Some management also expressed concerns about unlicensed operators being less attentive to workplace safety and protections for workers, and whether regulations under decriminalisation would be sufficient to deter unscrupulous operators.

VIRTUAL OUTREACH

During the previous years impacted by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, we increased our virtual methods of engagement to ensure access to our services, given physical access was severely limited. This resulted in an increase in attention to our website, Linktr.ee and Instagram based information and resources, the development of a Community Newsletter, and a resources list on our website. This has continued to be an important way we reach potential, current and former service users, keeping our activities visible, and maintaining reminders about our services and what we can provide.

This is important, given 53% of our case coordination services provided are to service users who have re-engaged with us. Notably, 11% of our service users for the year contacted us after searching the internet for potential specialist services, and generally had not known about our service prior to doing that. This indicates not only the importance of maintaining our online presence, but the ongoing need for targeted specialist services – which those service users were specifically hoping to find.

Community Engagement

"As someone that's never done art therapy before, I was initially apprehensive because I am not very good at art, but today I learnt that's not what it's about... as soon as I started painting something, I wasn't thinking about other external stressors anymore and I was just focusing on the moment, and my mind felt peaceful."

- Art & Wellbeing participant

COMMUNITY EVENTS

At the beginning of this financial year, our community events were enhanced through the addition of Art Therapy sessions, later re-named as "Art and Wellbeing". Through a community survey in 2022, 60% of participants indicated they would like to engage in an activity which focused on overcoming trauma, stress and anxiety. Thanks to a successful grant with Bank Australia, and through engagement of qualified art therapists from Creative Art Therapy Australia (CATA), a new and different form of community engagement was made possible, and available for free, to our community. We combined this with catered lunches and provided a calm and relaxing atmosphere in which participants could explore materials.

For the first time, Project Respect also produced an activity based performance and impact report, for our Art and Wellbeing event. This report can be found on our website.

We found through this activity that 89% of participants reported a higher mood at the completion of the session as compared with the commencement. We also obtained qualitative feedback which indicated positive themes of wellbeing impacts, freedom to explore, and the opportunity to connect.

Thanks to grant funding from the City of Yarra, we were also able to continue our monthly community lunch and gardening events. In partnership with Cultivating Community, these

events included tending our onsite community garden, from which produce was utilised in the lunches prepared by our on-site chef.

While returns to in-person activities have been slow since the Covid-19 lockdowns, attendances at both events increased during the period.

We were also successful in receiving a grant from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, which allowed for the refurbishment of our community spaces – including our garden planter boxes – which has enhanced the welcoming nature of our community events. The refurbishment has included soft furnishings such as rugs and warm blankets.

"These sessions make me feel connected to my community without the pressure of having to talk or put on a mask".

- Art & Wellbeing participant

COMMUNITY SERVICES OUTREACH

In 2023 our community services outreach was extended, as part of our renewed focus on sector capacity building and collaboration. This outreach had particular emphasis in some parts of Metropolitan Melbourne where supporting partnerships with City Councils have been developed. Key relationships with The Orange Doors (Victorian Family Violence Safety & Support Hubs) have been developed, resulting in Orange Door staff enrolling for our training.

We have delivered multiple presentations which has increased the network of service providers who know they can access our expertise through secondary consultation.

These presentations are also designed to increase sector understanding of the support needs for women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, as well as women and gender diverse people with experience of sexual exploitation.

Lived Experience Advisory Group

During the year we celebrated the relaunch of our Women's Advisory Group, comprised of lived experience voice, as "LEAG" – our Lived Experience Advisory Group. The renaming of the group was a more inclusive reflection of the diverse communities that comprise the service users and community members of Project Respect.

Among the activities undertaken by the LEAG during the year, was the leading of the development of our values. These values were imagined as 'active' values, that could be described in our 'ways of working', with service

users, internally between staff and volunteers, and with external collaborators. The process began with an open brainstorming of the values that connect us, and as aspirational for the organisation and its people. These were then grouped and re-examined by the Executive Director, reported back to the LEAG for review, and developed into the values described in this Annual Report. We could not have reached this stage without the engagement and leadership of our LEAG in this process. The next steps for our LEAG include a new recruitment drive, which will be implemented over the next financial year.

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

Research initiatives are key to developing improved service design. Project Respect has undertaken, with the support of Family Safety Victoria, a research project to understand the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns in Metropolitan Melbourne on women and gender diverse people working in the sex industry. The main aims are to understand the experience of violence, and the ability to access services during the major disruption. The research was preceded by a State of Knowledge integrated literature review, published in November 2022, which is available on our website. The subsequent research project incorporates a mixed methodology of a community survey, interviews with community members, and interviews with service providers. The resulting analysis and reporting is substantially underway and the publication of the report is expected to occur in early calendar 2024. We expect that this comprehensive and high quality report will improve the sector knowledge of the service needs of women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, and identify current gaps and necessary improvements, which are particularly highlighted through disruptive events such as the recent pandemic.

Joint AIC/Australian Red Cross/Project Respect Collaboration - Understanding support needs, and barriers to support provision, for victim-survivors of sexual exploitation

Project Respect has supported the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) on a qualitative research project, investigating the service needs of survivors of sexual exploitation. This landmark report was based on data from the case coordination records of Project Respect and Australian Red Cross, and is due to be launched with a webinar and report release on 14 November 2023. This report will highlight that victim survivors of sexual exploitation have complex support needs and require accessible and specialised services to support their recovery journeys. The report will provide a valuable resource to help policymakers support and fund such services.

University of Melbourne Social Equity Institute

In 2023 Project Respect commenced a project supported by the University of Melbourne Social Equity Institute, to understand the student wellbeing services available at higher educational institutions in Melbourne to support International Students with experience in the sex industry. This pilot study will be substantively undertaken in 2024.

Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy

CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

75 Participants enrolled in Project Respect training provisions

Project Respect remains committed to advancing the service system's capacity to provide safe, non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory services to women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry or who have experienced sexual exploitation. We have begun to enter partnerships with various city councils to provide training to service providers within their council area. This began with service providers in the City of Melton in June 2023, utilising the e-learning course developed with Cahoot Learning. In the coming year this opportunity will be extended to service providers in the City of Maribyrnong, the City of Greater Dandenong, and the City of Monash, thanks to these councils. We hope to also provide offerings in additional local government areas.

During the year we also provided presenter-live training to a large group of staff from the Orange Door in the North East Melbourne area, and a further session to a mixed group of participants. All participants rated the training highly.

SECONDARY CONSULTATIONS

18 Secondary Consultations Provided to External Service Providers

In order to increase system capacity and enhance the safety of services provided, Project Respect provides secondary consultation to other organisations. Secondary consultation supports those organisations to provide informed support for women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, or to women and gender diverse people with experiences of sexual exploitation.

COLLABORATIONS, CONNECTIONS AND SERVICE SYSTEM CRITICAL NEEDS

6 Presentations

23 Sector Consultations

53 Direct Consultations with Collaborating Organisations or Partnerships

21 Network Leadership Engagements

23 Resource Distribution Visits to Organisations

During the year, Project Respect has prioritised engaging with a broad variety of sector organisations, given our unique connections to both the Victorian Family and Sexual Violence response system and the Federally based anti-trafficking efforts. Improving our collaborations across all parts of the system, from community services to law and order, regulators, health sector, housing and mental health has been key to supporting the diversity of service users' needs and for sector education about the needs of the community we support.

Project Respect has continued to engage with a variety of sector conferences and meetings, including the 2023 Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department Modern Slavery Conference where our Executive Director presented within a panel on the topic of "Communities Leading the Way". Our Executive Director also presented in the newly appointed NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner's Kick off Webinar in October 2022, to mark the start of a consultation process to inform the Commissioner's strategic plan to combat modern slavery, discussing modern slavery risks that exist in New South Wales.

In the 2022-23 year we engaged with direct advocacy at all levels of government. This was important in raising the profile of our organisation, and increasing governments' understanding of the service needs of the people we support. This includes the

Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy continued

understanding of the importance of financial support for our organisation and the unique services we provide.

We enter the coming year with some disappointment that the Sex Industry Coordination Unit of Victoria Police (SICU) is soon to be disbanded. We note that in the 2022-23 year 66% of our overall service users and 74% of our service users who have experienced sexual exploitation had support needs related to policing and justice support. While not all of this support relates to engagement with SICU (or the Victoria Police), the ability to consult with SICU where this was requested by a service user often enabled the connection to either this unit or another unit of the police force. Our efforts to maintain relationships with other units of Victoria Police will continue but will be made more complex with the loss of this more specialised unit.

With decriminalisation of the sex industry due to be completed by December 2023, both Victoria Police and WorkSafe have been preparing for the changed legislation and regulatory environment. Both bodies have consulted widely with stakeholders, which has included Project Respect.

We see the value in collaborating in information and thought leadership across a variety of cross sector organisations and individuals. During the year we met with organisations and individuals as diverse as 1800Respect, Allan Ball from White Ribbon, ACRATH, Australian Executors Trust, the Human Trafficking division of the Australian Federal Police, and others. We undertook an event for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence with Fitted for Work. Project Respect staff represented our organisation at the Australian Institute of Criminology led Trauma Informed Service conference, and the Right to Recovery conference hosted by the Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Recovery Alliance. Discussions about our respective work and

perspectives enriches and informs a more connected and responsive sector.

Our commitment to providing input into mental health sector responses to our service users' needs resulted in our Executive Director's participation in the Mental Health & Family Violence intersections roundtable hosted by Women's Health Victoria, participation in the Victorian Wellbeing Plan community workshop, and participation in the Victorian Suicide Response strategy workshop. We also contributed in the workshops to develop the Guidelines for the Victims of Crime Charter, and workshops concerning the changes to the Social Services Regulations Act. During the year, our Executive Director was also selected to take part in Family Safety Victoria's Multicultural Working Group. We maintain participation in forums of our multiple sector peaks, including Safe & Equal, and the Equality Rights Alliance. The diversity of the groups we engage with is indicative of the diverse needs of the community we support, as well as the importance of keeping abreast of sectors undergoing rapid changes. This is important but also challenging for an organisation of our small size, as we navigate our advocacy for our service users across multiple domains.

We thank the efforts of our collaborators and partners in enhancing our connections with them, so we can achieve the best possible outcomes for our service users.

Our regular collaboration networks and memberships include:

- The National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery
- Family Safety Victoria's Multicultural Working Group
- Safe & Equal
- Equality Rights Alliance
- Be Slavery Free
- Hume Merri-Bek Family Violence Network

Partnerships, Collaborations & Advocacy continued

SUBMISSIONS & MEDIA RELEASES

- Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy, August 2022
- Draft of the National Principles to Address Coercive Control, November 2022
- Review of Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018, November 2022
- Review of the Developing Guidelines for the Victims of Crime Charter (Victoria), November 2022
- Intensive interventions for serious-risk adults using family violence, November 2022
- Response to the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner Strategic Plan Discussion Paper, December 2022
- Targeted Review of Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth), March 2023

Project Respect prioritises engagement in varied forms of consultation to raise the voices and reflect the service needs of the women and gender diverse people we support. Where these consultations are public, our papers are available on our website.

COMMUNICATIONS

14,540 Website Views

2,960 Supporter Update Subscribers

471 Linktr.ee views

10,988 Annual LinkedIn Reach

88,527 Annual Facebook Reach

131,548 Annual Instagram Reach

Project Respect utilises multiple external communications methodologies to support the reach of our advocacy work, strengthen and increase our existing partnerships and networks, and connect with our community. Platforms are used to provide newsletters to our supporter network, and a separate community based newsletter.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (INCLUDING TRAFFICKING) ADVOCACY

Part of the advocacy that Project Respect engages with relates to women and gender diverse people with experience of sexual exploitation, including trafficking. Sexual exploitation can take several different forms, and can include people working in the sex industry, and people who have been exploited in other contexts, such as within intimate partner or other family relationships. Our advocacy in this area includes within the context of our membership of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery.

Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) – Additional Referral Pathway pilot:

In May 2023 we celebrated the strengthening of Australia's response to modern slavery, with the Federal Government's announcement of a future pilot for an additional pathway to the STPP. This change will reduce the barriers to accessing support experienced by victim survivors of human trafficking and is a move towards delinking this funded support program from requiring cooperation with an Australian Federal Police investigation as an entry criterion. As a member of the National Roundtable, we advocated, alongside other Non-Government Organisational members, for enhanced pathways to the STPP. We participated in the working group and contributed to the position paper presented on this topic. The recent announcement was made as part of the women's safety initiatives in the federal budget. While we appreciate that the STPP is not a gendered program, we see this as a recognition that women and children continue to be the most disproportionately impacted by modern slavery. We understand the needed intersection between the National Plan to Combat Modern Slavery and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, and any reduction in siloing between these plans is welcome. We also welcome the budget measures to support the establishment of a Federal Anti-Slavery commissioner.

10th Anniversary of Royal Assent of the Crimes Legislation Amendment: The 10th anniversary of key amendments to the modern slavery offences contained in the Criminal Code was marked by the Federal Government in March of 2023 and attended (remotely) by Project Respect. Our patron, Fiona McLeod AO SC was a speaker at the event.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Modern Slavery: As a member of the roundtable, Project Respect was invited to meet with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Modern Slavery, Mr Tomoya Obokata, in early May. The impacts of homelessness on modern slavery vulnerabilities were discussed, as part of the Rapporteur's resultant report. The event was hosted by Rose Norton Fullbright solicitors.

Modern Slavery Act Review: Project Respect contributed to the Melbourne workshop for the review of the Modern Slavery Act and provided a written submission. Our advocacy included our position that the narrow focus of the Act on supply chain reporting has diverted attention and resources away from other forms of Modern Slavery, and the challenges with providing services to victim survivors, including the funding structure.

Review of the Criminal Code: Project Respect attended an in-person consultation on the review of Division 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code, and provided a written consultation response. The government response was issued after year end. It was heartening to see Project Respect's submission was taken into account in many aspects. The next steps will however be slow as the report is a recommendation to the legislators and next actions will be at the government's option. Our advocacy positions can be read in our submission, available on our website.

Other Advocacy: Project Respect believes support options for victim survivors is an essential element in response and recovery work. While we do not currently receive Federal government funding for our ongoing work in supporting women and gender diverse people who have experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, we remain strong advocates for centring the needs of victim survivors, the need for sustainable, ongoing funding for direct service provision, and the establishment of a national compensation scheme for victim survivors.



Supporter Engagement

While we often acknowledge in our Annual Reports that our work couldn't continue without the financial support of our donors, this has never been more true than it was in the 2022-23 financial year. We started the year with extreme financial uncertainty and very low government funding support. Between the increase in support from the Victorian State Government directly from the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and the generosity of our donors, this position had changed radically by the end of the year, enabling us to continue operations for the remainder of the financial year and with increased optimism of continued support into 2023-24.

We must convey our enormous gratitude in particular to two anonymous donors who between them provided \$150,000 to our organisation, with \$100,000 of this right at the end of the financial year. In addition to this, we greatly thank our monthly and one-off donors over the course of the year – it is the combination of all of these methods of support that enable our work to continue.

We also thank our supporters who advocated on our behalf to funders, collaborate on advocacy work, subscribe to our supporter updates, encourage us in various ways to continue our work, and generally take the time and effort to self-educate on the experiences of the communities we support.

To all of our supporters – THANK YOU

Acknowledgements

FUNDERS

- The Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- The Victorian Department of Health
- The Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- The City of Monash
- The City of Yarra
- The City of Melton
- The City of Maribyrnong
- The City of Hume
- Bank Australia
- Safe and Equal
- The University of Melbourne Social Equity Institute



Project Respect acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Thank you to all of our funders for supporting our work.

Graphic design donated by Louise Gault.

TEAM

Committee of Management

- Julia Cookson - Chair
- Amanda Carlile – Deputy Chair (resigned 18 July 2023)
- Patricia Saca – Treasurer
- Charmaine Jessup – Company Secretary
- Bettina Twyman – Interim Deputy Chair
- Sarah Ogilvie
- Christine Teo
- Fiona Elliot (resigned 5 March 2023)

Executive

- Executive Director – Carolyn Gowers

Ambassador

- Fiona McLeod – AO SC

External Support

- Compass Bookkeeping
- Cultivating Communities
- Creative Art Therapy Australia

A huge thank you to everyone in our team – especially our hardworking staff, LEAG members, volunteers and students for your commitment and contributions to the organisation.

Balance Sheet

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2023

ASSETS	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	448,575	472,346
Trade and other receivables	27,964	1,174
Prepayments	5,279	5,563
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	481,818	479,083
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	26,414	19,481
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	26,414	19,481
TOTAL ASSETS	508,232	498,564

LIABILITIES	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	42,285	51,236
Short-term provisions	23,857	15,584
Income in advance	45,699	122,199
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	111,841	189,019
Non-Current Liabilities		
Long-term provisions	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	111,841	189,019

NET ASSETS	396,391	309,545
Accumulated Surplus	396,391	309,545
TOTAL EQUITY	396,391	309,545

Cash Flow

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	(5,345)	(60,516)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	(18,426)	(4,557)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	(23,771)	(65,073)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	472,346	537,419
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	448,575	472,346



Income & Expenditure

Profit and Loss Account

For the year ended 30 June

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
Income		
DFFH - Service Delivery Income	152,137	152,137
DFFH - Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Service Delivery Income Top-Up	200,000	-
DFFH - Research Grant	62,214	-
DFFH - Grant - Multicultural Community Outreach Covid-19 Information	52,500	60,000
Department of Health - Grant - Vaccination Program & Covid-19 Grants	14,550	18,182
Department of Health - Partners for Change	-	26,500
DJPR - Communities Grant (Capital Items)	18,393	-
DJPR - Communities Grant (Non-Capital Items)	603	-
DJPR - Working for Victoria Grant	-	31,393
Job keeper and cash flow boost	-	350
Safe & Equal – 16 Days of Activism Grant	3,350	-
City of Monash – Grant	40,000	40,000
City of Yarra – Grant	12,484	10,994
City of Melton – Grant	5,000	-
City of Maribyrnong – Grant	3,594	-
City of Hume - Grant	235	-
City of Melbourne - Grant	-	5,869
Bank Australia – Grant	15,684	-
Australian Executor Trustees – Grant	-	12,146
University of Melbourne – Research Grant	4,667	-
Donations – Tax Deductible	177,513	60,871
Training Provision Income	4,004	-
Fundraising / Miscellaneous	500	33,413
Interest	383	384
TOTAL INCOME	767,811	452,239

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
Less: Expenses		
Accounting fees	11,153	14,441
Accreditation	-	13,125
Advertising and Promotion	3,669	3,643
AGM and Annual Report	380	160
Audit Fees	2,800	2,500
Bank charges	(33)	(6)
Computer expenses	11,650	10,770
Consultancy fees	-	9,282
Depreciation	10,470	5,985
Employee Benefits Expenses	562,299	494,392
Equipment hire	585	900
Fundraising expenses	283	1,572
Insurance - business insurance	966	896
Insurance - tax probe	30	331
Internet expense	804	700
Loss on disposal of fixed assets (net)	1,023	-
Operating / program expenses	51,671	50,016
Office supplies	884	2,809
Postage	384	539
Printing and stationery	734	1,472
Premises Expenses	14,848	14,306
Staff amenities	2,024	4,896
Telephone and fax	4,341	3,843
Total Expenses	680,965	636,572
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE (DEFICIT) /SURPLUS		
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	86,846	(184,333)

How can you support Project Respect

DONATE

Your donation helps us continue our much needed services and programs to support women and gender diverse people in the sex industry, and women and gender diverse people who have experienced sexual exploitation, including trafficking.



You can donate monthly or as a one off, either through our website or through Shout for Good via the QR code.

WORKPLACE GIVING

Workplace giving is a great way to donate to us and reduce your taxable income. You can set this up with your workplace Human Resources team. You can find out more about the process from the Australian Taxation Office or use a specialist organisation such as Good2Give or Good Company.

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 and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, and women and gender diverse people who have experienced sexual exploitation.

SPONSORSHIP

Your organisation or philanthropic body can play an important community role by sponsoring our programs or providing crucial pro-bono advice and support in a number of ways. This may also assist you in improving your corporate good citizenship and supporting ending modern slavery practices in Australia.

BECOME A FUNDRAISER FOR PROJECT RESPECT

You can become a fundraising champion for us! There are many ways to fundraise, including organising and sponsoring events. This also helps relieve the administrative burden on our hard working staff, so that we can concentrate more of our efforts on working with our service users.

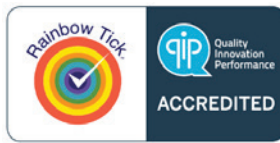
TRAINING PARTICIPATION

We offer training packages that cover supporting women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, and knowledge about sexual exploitation, including trafficking. You can join in one of our advertised training sessions, or contact us for a bespoke training package. We welcome partnerships with City Councils in providing these training packages.

SHARING OUR INFORMATION AND EVENTS

We are active on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. You can follow our pages and share our posts. You can also join our subscriber news via our website, to be in touch with our activities and advocacy. We send news no more often than monthly and work to ensure we provide informative and engaging supporter updates.

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



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

PO Box 1323 Collingwood 3066
Incorporation No. A0037368T
T (03) 9416 3401 | info@projectrespect.org.au
PROJECTRESPECT.ORG.AU

project 
respect