



About

Our Vision

To reduce the incidence and impact of road trauma.

Our Purpose

Amber Community is a not-forprofit organisation contributing to the safety and wellbeing of Victorian road users. We provide counselling and support to people affected by road trauma and address attitudes and behaviours of road users through education.

Our Values

Caring — We are committed to serving our clients with empathy and compassion.

Integrity — We display integrity,These people understood therespect and dignity in all ourneed for a specialist servicedealings with clients, stakeholderswhere support could be offeredand members of our workforce.to those who, like them, were

Quality — Our focus is on the people we serve, and we strive for excellence in service delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement.

Accountability — We are accountable for our actions in working to deliver our services and our mission.

Our History

Amber Community was founded in 1994 by a small group of people whose lives had been directly impacted by road trauma.

These people understood the need for a specialist service where support could be offered to those who, like them, were suffering because of the injury or loss of a loved one on the roads. They joined with professionals working in the area to provide counselling and support.

From this humble beginning,
Amber Community has grown to
offer state wide counselling and
support to people affected by a
road incident. Amber Community
now comprises a team of staff
and volunteers who provide
support and education services to
more than 5,000 people annually.

Contents

Our Impact	4
Chair's Report	5
CEO's Report	6
Volunteer Services	9
Volunteers	11
Counselling & Support Services	12
Art Therapy	15
Counselling Client Sharon	16
Counsellor Susan	17
Education Services	18
Across the Regions	20
Road to Hope Writers group	25
Lived Experience Speaker Tony	26
Emergency Services Volunteer Julie	27
Regional Coordinator/Facilitator Rae	28
Regional Coordinator Gillian	29
Shine a Light on Road Safety	31
Time for Remembering	33
Board Members	35
Subcommittees	36
Treasurer's Report	38
Auditor's Report	39
Financial Report	40
Supporters	42

Our Impact

Our clients

2,263

number of counselling interactions

326

clients attended counselling sessions

"Your service is amazing, and your staff show a care that goes beyond words."

- counselling client

12,000

participants have attended our RTAS program since 2012

94

per cent self-reported behaviour immediately following an RTAS program indicates that participants plan to make positive changes to their driving behaviour

"What really got to me, it made me realise it just affects everyone and woke me and everyone in the class Up." - RTAS participant

Our volunteers

8

people with many different experiences of the impacts of road trauma completed our volunteer lived experience speaker training

146

active volunteers

127

volunteers are involved in delivering our education programs, engaging participants in conversations about the impact of road trauma and the ripple effect on families, and communities

Our events

700+

people registered for our Shine a Light on Road Safety walk

4M+

people reached through our Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign

205

people registered for our Time for Remembering online ceremony

Chair's Report

Xander Alpherts



We are pleased that 2023 was a stable year for Amber Community.

It was the first year without COVID-19 interruptions, and we were able to move into our new office in Mitcham and operate under our new Amber Community brand. Our Time for Remembering ceremony was back in person at Queen's Hall, as was our (very cold) Shine a Light on Road Safety walk around Albert Park Lake. We are extremely grateful to have our funding agreement with the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) renewed for a further three years, bringing certainty and stability to the organisation.

Unfortunately, with a return to normal road usage, we have continued to see an upward trend in the number of lives lost on Victorian roads, up from 246 last year to 277 in the year to June 2023. The demand for our counselling services, therefore, remains high, while our educational services remain as relevant as ever.

In education, we are back to delivering our Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program across the state and online for people who cannot attend these sessions while continuing to provide a valuable program at Dhurringile Prison. The education team has been working closely with Community Correction Services to deliver a tailored program of our RTAS to their clients and working within their local communities to promote road safety. Our counselling team continues to support those impacted by road trauma, despite being only a small team.

Financially, we closed the year with a shortfall of \$32,784. While we strive to break even over time, we made a number of important investments in the organisation during the year, including a significant transformation of our digital platforms to enable much more efficient delivery of our services.

I would like to express our gratitude to our partners who

continue to support our services: the TAC, Victoria Police, the Magistrates' Courts, Community Correction Services, VicRoads, the Department of Transport and Planning, and our corporate partners.

Of course, providing these important counselling and educational services is only possible due to the tireless work of our wonderful staff, supported by our team of volunteers who contribute so much to how we can make an impact. The board and I are extremely grateful for everyone's dedication to the organisation and the community we support.

I would also like to thank my fellow directors who continue volunteering their time and expertise to Amber Community and Bernadette Nugent for continuing to lead the team with passion and compassion.

Xander AlphertsChair

CEO's Report

Bernadette Nugent



I am pleased to share the remarkable achievements and significant milestones we have reached in our ongoing pursuit of supporting individuals affected by road trauma and raising awareness about the profound impact serious crashes have on people's lives.

Regrettably, 2023 has posed challenges on our roads, leaving us deeply saddened by the increased number of lives lost and individuals severely injured compared to previous years.

Nevertheless, Amber Community continues to tirelessly work towards supporting these individuals and their families while striving to effect change within our community.

Impactful Programs and
Initiatives: We take pride in
reporting that our organisation
has consistently offered and
developed our core programs
and initiatives. Considerable time
and effort have been invested in
ensuring that our counselling and
education programs positively
impact all people who use our
services. We continually explore
new opportunities that enhance
our work, including recent
business development efforts
focused on workplace wellbeing,

and addressing employees' exposure to distressing stories and graphic images of car crashes.

Furthermore, as part of our funding agreement with the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), we have engaged with Phoenix Australia to evaluate our counselling and support services comprehensively. This 12-month project will provide reassurance that our services make a substantial impact while offering recommendations for areas of improvement.

Community Engagement: A

cornerstone of our organisation lies in the strong relationships we foster with the communities we serve. Our ongoing efforts to engage and collaborate with community members, partners, and stakeholders have led to meaningful connections. By actively listening to their needs and incorporating their feedback, we have adapted and evolved our programs to better address their challenges. This has been particularly evident in the work of our education team, as they actively network in the local community and cultivate relationships that promote collaboration to ensure community safety.

Collaborative Partnerships:We believe collaboration is vital for achieving sustainable and

lasting impact. Throughout the



year, we have strengthened relationships with our road safety partners, such as the TAC, Victoria Police, and the Department of Transport and Planning. These strategic partnerships allow us to pool resources, share expertise, and maximise our collective impact. Additionally, our collaborations with four legal firms enables us to provide comprehensive resources to our clients, ultimately improving their lives and wellbeing. These collaborations have expanded our reach, leveraged additional funding opportunities, and fostered synergies in addressing shared goals.

We bid farewell to Minister Ben Carroll from the role of Minister of Roads and Road Safety, who was a dedicated supporter of Amber Community and its mission. We warmly welcomed Minister Melissa Horne and eagerly anticipate working with her in the future. Also, after many years of service, Joe Calafiore resigned from his position as CEO of the TAC. We express our deepest gratitude for Joe's unwavering support, and we wish him and Minister Carroll all the best in their new endeavours.

Financial Stewardship:

Transparency and accountability are fundamental to our organisational values. We have remained diligent in our financial management and stewardship, ensuring the responsible

allocation of resources in alignment with our mission.
Diversifying our funding sources through business development activities and strengthening financial sustainability through robust fundraising initiatives, such as the Shine a Light on Road Safety Campaign, have enabled us to navigate challenges and seize new opportunities.

Innovation and Adaptability:

Recognising the importance of innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing landscape, our organisation has embraced new technologies. We have introduced a more efficient counselling database, an online human resources (HR) platform that streamlines onboarding, payroll, and HR requirements for all staff members, and a specialised fundraising and ticketing platform.

Relocation: After 18 years in the Blackburn office, we have secured a fantastic office space in Mitcham. We were grateful to have some assistance from the landlord to fit out the space to

suit our needs, which includes four counselling offices and a designated board/meeting room. We would like to acknowledge Karen and Mark Robinson for their incredible generosity in loaning us 12 stunning framed photographs taken by Karen and an incredible painting also by Karen. These works of art, together with many pieces of work created by the art therapy group over the last 11 years, have helped create a beautiful, user-friendly space for our head office staff.

Gratitude and Appreciation:

Above all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated volunteers, directors, staff, sponsors, and partners.

Special recognition goes to the TAC, our legal partners, and Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign sponsors. Their pivotal roles in assisting Amber Community to deliver vital services to the community cannot be overstated. Their unwavering support and commitment have been instrumental in our continued success.

The Year Ahead: We are currently in the process of preparing our next strategic plan review. During this time, we are considering our priorities, mindful of our resources, and consolidating our focus for the next three years.

In conclusion, I sincerely appreciate all our volunteers, staff, directors, and stakeholders who have joined us on this journey. It is through your unwavering support, trust, and belief in our mission that we can make a meaningful difference.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to enhancing our impact and serving our communities with unwavering dedication.

Bernadette Nugent





Volunteer Services



Amber Community has the privilege of working with 146 active volunteers, with 127 actively engaged in delivering our education programs and fostering meaningful conversations with participants on the profound impact of road trauma and its ripple effect on families and communities.

Many dedicated volunteers have also been featured in various media opportunities throughout the year. Their compelling and compassionate stories have accompanied key road safety campaigns initiated by the Minister's office, the TAC, the Department of Transport and Planning and Victoria Police.

Our volunteers, along with our lived experienced speakers, constitute a fundamental pillar that sets Amber Community apart within the realm of road safety initiatives. The compelling effect of sharing personal stories with listeners cannot be understated, and it continues to be a defining aspect of our organisation.

We maintain a steadfast commitment to supporting our volunteers, ensuring that they do not encounter adverse repercussions when sharing their experiences.

At the helm of Amber Community is a voluntary Board of Directors

comprising of nine dedicated members. They generously devote their time to attending board meetings, participating in sub-committees, and engaging in various Amber Community events. Each director brings a diverse range of skills to the table, which they willingly share for the betterment of the organisation. With effective governance processes in place, the Board plays a pivotal role in positioning Amber Community for a promising future.

Looking ahead, we are determined to continue to develop a peer support program that further bolsters individuals impacted by road trauma, reinforcing our unwavering commitment to making a meaningful difference in people's lives.



Volunteers

Abira Mitra Adrian Benson Alex Eleftheriou Amanda Patterson Andrea Korvin **Andrew Downes** Andrew Knowles Angela Nuss Anne Riches Anthony Bartl Anthony Johns Antoinette Tartaro Barb Bleicher Belinda Clark Ben Trotter Bernie Stanley **Bev Steart** Byron Carson Byron Sedgwick Carmel O'Brien Carolyn Cole-Sinclair Cassie McColl Chris Mair Chris Parkin Christian Ashby Corey Bray Dale McIvor Damian Sumner Darryl Crowley David Natenzon **David Simmons** Deanna Beaumont Diana Valentine Dominic Britt Eire Rowan Emilia Cruickshank Fiona D'Silva

Fiona Umbers Francine Davy Gail Noonan **Gary Frost** George Greaves Geraldine Harley Gerardine Eales Glenn Dunn Glenn Heazlewood Graham Milner Ian Aranyosi Irene Ackland Irene Harrington OAM James Thompson Jan Dilworth Janaya Wiggins Janine Gastevich Jason Naumann Jeanette Suhr OAM Jeremy Howard Jessica Prideaux Jessica Todd Jessica Zaghet Johan Meyer John Dows Jonathon Van Ek Julie Jochs Karen Robinson Karina Osgood Kathleen Clark Kellie Bishop Kerry Ann Norton Kristine Papworth Kristy French Leigh Booth Leonie Cooke

Les Beechey Liza Stewart Lou Harms Lynda Pottage Maeve Su Mi Luu Manisha Sheorey Manny Marchesin Maria Harkins Mark Cartledge Mark Musgrave Martin Wrangle Matthew Armour Matthew Pope Melinda Dine Merryn Henderson Merryn Wallace Michael Hellwege Michael Kenny Monica Mercieca Mumtaz Akhtar Nadine Ahfat Nadine Goldsmith Natalie Stanway Natasha Cook Navya Walia Nilsson Smyth Paul Illman Paul O'Dwyer Paul Sabo Peter Aldersea Peter Thomson Phillip Behan Rebecca Bishop Rebecca Reilly Reg Stott Rhys Thomas **Richard Watkins**

Robert Carter Robin Bowerman Robyn Greening Roger Astell Roni Forai Rosalie Dows Rosie Johnston Russell Harley Sam Curry Sam Wilson Samantha Bala Sean Kay Shane Jayasinghe Sharon O'Dwyer **Sherry Pratt** Sophie Owen Steve Williams Stuart Le Grand Stuart Morris Susan Hansford Tara Stark Teegan McDonald Thomas Piscioneri Thomas Smyth Tim Nolan Tony Hoeboer Vaughan Wright Victor Gartside Virginia Mahoney Wendy Bowler William Cole Wilma Felton Xander Alpherts Yeksan Altun

127

Education Services volunteers 10

Administration volunteers

9

Board Director volunteers

Counselling & Support Services

When I look back over the last twelve months, which were also my first at Amber Community, I think about the rationale behind the decision to rebrand and how our new name mirrors who we are and what we stand for inclusive. caring and respectful the very qualities that drew me to the organisation and the people behind it in the first place.

Highlights

Our organisation and counselling team have continued to adapt and evolve post COVID-19 with new ways of working and providing support services to those we serve. Working both from home and in the office has become the norm, and we have successfully relocated and settled into our new office in Mitcham. Our esteemed CEO and Office Manager, Bernadette Nugent and Virginia Cummings, worked hard and for long hours to ensure a smooth transition for the rest of the team. And the floorto-ceiling windows, fresh paint, multiple counselling rooms, board room and enticing kitchen space are a welcome and appreciated change. The addition of more counselling rooms and office

space provides for greater connection between teams and staff, with more people working in the office. It has also allowed for a greater capacity to meet the gradually increasing demand for face-to-face counselling sessions.

The counselling team and staff

admirably embraced the promise

of a new Client Information Management System (CIMS) along with the expected and unforeseeable challenges to come with implementation. Leanne Hyndman, Counsellor and Team Leader led the project beautifully, well and tirelessly in its set-up, resource development and impending transition that formally took place in April. We could not have done it without Leanne or without the commitment and support of the counselling team and key staff members: Bernadette Nugent for her unwavering input and support, Kirsten McLaren (RTAS Administrator) and Virginia Cummings for being so patient, enthusiastic and helpful, and Bronwyn Saville (Marketing and Communications Manager), for all her time, guidance and willingness to update our literature and resources. It has been a long journey, but one well worth taking to ensure quality and more seamless service delivery to those impacted by road trauma.

Rebranding and a new CIMS underway served as a timely opportunity and call to review and clarify who we are, what we do and how we do it. The counselling team was very keen for a new model of service to aid best practices and the delivery of quality support services we so proudly and genuinely value and strive to provide. As a result, a solid model of service draft has been carefully developed, and I feel confident that the counselling team have a renewed identity and scope of service to elevate the support provided to those impacted by road trauma.

Amber Community's Counselling and Support Services are being evaluated by Phoenix Australia, the leading expert in trauma, after they won the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) tender earlier this year. We are delighted to be working with Phoenix and look forward to their invaluable input and evaluation outcomes as we continue to work towards improving our services and reach. It could not have come at a better time, given that we were already working on our service model and genuinely seeking to support those we serve to the best of our ability.

Staff

The counselling team has grown as we welcomed two new members, Lisa Gelbart, who started in January, and then Irena Ziberman commencing as our new Intake Counsellor in June. Lisa and Irena quickly and easily became a natural and integral part of the team, that met them with enthusiasm and commitment.

We sadly farewelled Claire Mann, who is embarking on a new stage



of life and currently travelling around Australia. While we will miss Claire very much and the professionalism and integrity she brought to the team and service, we wish her the best in her future endeavours.

In the meantime, Leanne Hyndman, Susan Konstantas and Mustafa Kouklan remain as core and essential parts of the team, counselling and supporting those impacted by road trauma with great care and dedication. Leanne continues to work as our team leader one day a week and is an excellent support. Susan works three days a week, dedicating the extra day to work on groups, including our art therapy group, and expanding our support services. Thanks to Susan's hard work, we are pleased to be launching a new support group later this year.

Program and Systems

In light of our new CIMS and commitment to our clients and stakeholders, we continue to contact each and every referral by way of SMS, email, letter and/or phone call, depending on the nature of the referral. Those

who are referred to us are now automatically provided with information, invited to contact us and book a short intake conversation to offer some initial support and to ensure service fit. Those who would benefit from and choose to engage in our counselling services are put on a waiting list and are contacted by a counsellor as they become available. Our wait times have decreased substantially due to our new systems and processes, along with team spirit and collaboration. Our wait times currently fluctuate between three to four weeks, depending on resources and service demands.

The counselling team have worked at full capacity offering online, phone and face-to-face counselling sessions to those in need across Victoria. This year has been particularly full and distressing with the devastating number of lives that have been lost. It was both a privilege and with a heavy heart that we reached out to initiate contact and support with many of the local communities impacted by media-covered incidents, including Exford Primary School,

the Hamilton local community and the Warrandyte Football and Cricket Club. We thank them for taking the time to reach out, speak with us and for allowing Amber Community to be a part of their support base.

In November 2022, the counselling team staffed our annual Time for Remembering ceremony at Queen's Hall and then at Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign in May. Both events were and continue to be bittersweet as we come together to embrace the opportunity to remember loved ones lost and injured on our roads. It is an honour to be a part of, and to provide such a valuable space.

Our art therapy group continues to be held once a month, providing an alternate, safe and connected place for our Amber Community clients. Sessions are supported and facilitated by at least one counselling team member, most frequently Susan, and Lauren, our art therapist. Lauren brings wonderful skills, qualities and experience to the group, which everyone values and appreciates.

Statistics Summary

Amber Community has endured a lot of change and the inherent challenges over the last 12 months, all the while receiving and supporting 1,569 referrals, with 326 taking up counselling.

The counsellors delivered 2,263 counselling interventions consisting of 1,338 telephone sessions, 170 online sessions and 102 face-to-face sessions in addition to information provision, consultations, text communications, documentation and letter writing.

Since our official transition to our CIMS in April, we undertook 130 intake calls.

As per previous years, the majority of referrals (approx. 88 per cent) come from Victoria Police and are forwarded via their electronic referral system (VPeR), with the remainder of referrals being self-referrals and sent from other service providers.

Thank you

On behalf of the counselling team, I would like to thank our CEO, Bernadette, for her steadfast leadership and support, Bronwyn for walking beside us with such care and enthusiasm, Kirsten and Virginia for their understanding, help and patience and Chris Harrison for her time and overt passion. We'd also like to thank our regional coordinators and volunteers who work hard to promote our services and minimise road incidents.

I would also like to thank the Board, our legal partners, Victoria Police and the TAC for all their time, support, guidance and collaboration to help us ensure our road users' safety and support. To the counselling team, I am in awe of the work that you do and the support that you provide to your peers, colleagues and myself. It is an honour and a pleasure to be working with you, and together, I look forward to many more exciting opportunities and challenges ahead.

A final word from our clients

"Your service is amazing, and your staff show a care that goes beyond words."

"A reduction in the time taken for the individual to be contacted would help to provide hope and more appointment availabilities, but I understand that there are only so many counsellors available. But the appointment itself was great."

".... Once I finally had access to a counsellor, I was very happy with the service and professionalism.... my suggestion for improvement would be the ability to access counselling much sooner after the accident, and that may mean having more counsellors available. Having said that, grief is a long process, and it is helpful to have counselling at any period of the grieving period."

"A fantastic service already...."

Renee Brauer

Manager, Counselling and Support Services



Art Therapy

I began facilitating the art therapy group in 2022. Change being inevitable with a new facilitator, as embraced by the participants and staff.

This year the participants were given different art materials each month such as clay, paint, oil pastels, and an access point, or topic in which to inquire into through their art making. The participants used the art materials to express and represent parts of themselves, that they needed to find out more about

Once the participants had made an artistic representation they could then find out more about it by asking questions about their art and what it meant for them. They were then able to share with the group something of their art process, what happened in the creative process along the way, and perhaps what they had come to know about themselves and their patterns of behaviour. The new insight acquired, helped them to form ideas or to take action to make change in their lives.

Participants connected with each other through their sharing, often finding similarities, and resonating with each others images. In sharing the more vulnerable parts of themselves, participants connected authentically. They have used the art making to help find acceptance of experiences, and to help find potential for new ways forward with their lives.

The participants also used a few of the sessions to create mementos for the Time for Remembering ceremony, using a botanical dying process. They used natural materials to dye silk scarfs, a table runner and bookmarks. The natural dye from the leaves and flowers connected the participants to nature and the seasons. Drawing from the metaphor of seasons, they paralleled their experiences, of life and death, beauty and desolation. Some of the words spoken from participants whilst creating in the session, were then combined by them, to create the poem used for the Time for Remembering ceremony. Their hope was for other people who had suffered from road trauma know what the art therapy group provides for them.

Lauren Foster

Therapeutic Arts Practitioner (AThR)
Creative Spirit Arts Therapy

Community

A bond

Takes you away from your environment, meeting with people who empathise

Finding peace and beauty in creativity

Rebuilding together

Everyone is unique

Through vulnerability

Being non judgemental

Just being who we are

We are not alone

Trying to find comfort and peace of mind

Acceptance rather than resistance

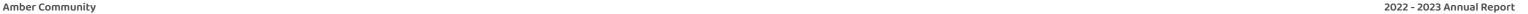
Self compassion

Finding a pathway forward can be exhausting

Support

Remembering the past, never forgotten

Haiku poem by the Art Therapy Group



Sharon

Counselling Client



Our youngest son Mathew was involved in a single-vehicle incident on 20 February 2021.

Mat had spent the morning with his brother-in-law Brendan, who was teaching Mat to use a chainsaw. Matty, as we sometimes called him, received a call to fill in for the Waaia Cricket Club as they were short of players. After the game, he and his mates went to the Waaia Hotel for dinner and a catch-up. At about 10pm, Matty decided to head home to feed his dog Zailee. Matty was on his way to Tallygaroopna when he lost control of his ute and collided with trees on Bowey Road, Bunbartha. Matty did not survive the crash and was killed instantly, and he is forever 26 years of age.

We had gone to Melbourne to watch our eldest son Josh play cricket as a surprise for his 31st birthday and to have dinner with his wife Zoe, her family and our daughter Kate and grandson Beau. Mat's girlfriend Chelsey was also away visiting her sister in Geelong, so no one was home.

We were staying with Josh and Zoe in Rosebud, where the police finally found us at 2:30am on the 21st. Just writing this brings back the awful punch in my stomach, breath-taken-away feeling

again. Those poor police officers had spent hours trying to find someone and finally got hold of Brendan, who understandably didn't want to be the one to tell us that our beautiful boy was gone.

Our grief journey was just beginning! I had often said no parent should ever have to bury their child, and now it was us!

It was the longest drive from Rosebud to Shepparton, Peter and I sat in silence, not believing it could be true.

I felt lost for a long time and still do at times, I would have liked to curl up in a ball and stay in bed forever, but I have a husband, other children and a grandchild who need me. And I know what it is like not to have a mum around, something I didn't want my children to feel. I had to find a way to a new 'normal' without Mat. The empty chair at the table on Sunday nights, the tears and the hole in my heart that will never truly heal.

The police were the ones to tell us about Amber Community (Road Trauma Support Services Victoria as it was known then) a few days after Mat's death. My husband Peter and I were contacted individually and allocated wonderful counsellors. Every few weeks, I would have a phone session. This allowed me to talk about Mat and cry without fear of judgement or expectation.

Due to circumstances, I had three lovely counsellors, each of whom offered me a shoulder to cry on and a sympathetic ear to listen to me. They have encouraged me to write about Mat's journey through life and gave me the opportunity to be the guest speaker at the Time for Remembering event in November 2022. It gave me much joy and many tears to reflect on Mat's life. He endured numerous injuries and a debilitating illness in his short time with us. He was very resilient and pushed himself to get through life challenges, and I must do this too.

I have been involved in the Writing for Hope course with Gillian Scaduto and Judy Bird, learning and having fun along the way. I have also put my hand up to become a volunteer with Amber Community to give back and help those who are also affected by road trauma.

This horrible event forever changes our dreams, hopes, and future. Mat will never marry or have children; however, I am forever grateful that we got 26 years with Mat, and the memories of his cheeky sense of humour, love of sport and love of family are ours to treasure always.

Susan

Counsellor



For the past two years, I have been a counsellor at Amber Community, where I provide support to individuals affected by road trauma.

It is a humbling experience to walk alongside individuals as they navigate the emotional and psychological aftermath of such experiences. Whether through face-to-face sessions, online platforms, or phone consultations, my goal is to help them adjust to their new realities and find hope and healing.

Community has always been an integral part of my life, shaping my values and guiding my actions. Growing up, my parents taught me the importance of actively participating in the community and using my skills to support others. These lessons have profoundly influenced my career path. I am driven by a deep desire to work with people, helping them navigate life's challenges and empowering them to reach their fullest potential.

My journey began working with older members of the community, where I witnessed first-hand the impact of compassion and support on their lives. This experience sparked a passion within me, leading me to spend almost two decades in the disability support field.

During those years, I had the privilege of working alongside individuals with unique abilities, learning from their strengths and resilience.

I transitioned to the field of counselling; a decision driven by my belief in the transformative power of mental health support. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work in various counselling domains, broadening my skills and knowledge whilst making a positive impact on individuals and families.

One aspect of my work at Amber Community that holds special meaning to me is being the counsellor for our art therapy program. This program offers a creative and expressive outlet for individuals to process their emotions and connect with their inner selves. Witnessing their transformation and growth through art is incredibly rewarding.

In the past year, our counselling team at Amber Community has been implementing a new computing system and streamlining our processes, allowing us to dedicate more time to our clients. We have also experienced changes within our team, bidding farewell to cherished colleagues and welcoming new members who bring fresh perspectives and expertise. Throughout these changes, our commitment to supporting individuals remains steadfast.

As we continue to grow and evolve, we are always mindful of the impact we have on the community we serve. Our art therapy program has made significant contributions to our annual Time for Remembering service. Through heartfelt artworks and meaningful works, we honour the experiences and journeys of those we work with, acknowledging the strength and resilience that they embody.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the prospect of expanding our counselling services at Amber Community. We are developing a road trauma support program, which will provide education and support to individuals affected by road incidents. This program aims to create a safe space for healing, fostering connections among participants and equipping them with the tools to navigate their trauma.

At Amber Community, our commitment to personal and community growth remains at the heart of everything we do. It is a privilege to work alongside a dedicated team, living out our shared values daily. Knowing that our effort positively impacts not only individuals but also the larger community fills me with a deep sense of purpose and gratitude. Together we strive to build a stronger, more resilient community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Education Services

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Mahatma Gandhi

Amber Community is all about serving others to make a difference in road safety. Our team, mainly comprised of individuals who have been through road trauma, aims to raise awareness, educate, and advocate for safer road behaviours and policies by sharing personal stories.

At Amber Community, our team is comprised of dedicated individuals who deliver our education programs and activities across Victoria. We are proud to have 70 active lived experience speakers, 38 emergency service speakers, 26 group facilitators, seven regional coordinators, one Road Trauma Awareness Seminar administrator, and one education services manager.

It's been a busy and impactful time, and I'm excited to share the key highlights:

Firstly, at the Volunteer Victoria State Conference, I was privileged to spread awareness and knowledge by presenting alongside Professor Lou Harms. We delved into our lived experience program and the research we've conducted, exploring the experiences of those involved with Amber Community in sharing their lived experiences of road trauma.

Another significant event was presenting at the Australasian Conference on Road Safety in New Zealand. Teaming up once again, Professor Lou Harms and I discussed the powerful impact of lived experience in driving

change. The positive reception reinforced the need for more focus on this aspect alongside scientific and academic approaches.

Throughout the year, we actively sought partnerships and collaborations to promote road safety and wellbeing, particularly concerning preventing harm associated with exposure to traumatic material related to road incidents. We engaged in discussions with the Northern Territory Government Commissioner and Alliance representatives to provide support for first responders and witnesses to serious road incidents. We also explored peer support models with the Amy Gillett Foundation, designed specifically for cyclists. We have begun discussions with Wodonga TAFE on developing road safety awareness among apprentices and supervisors at Wodonga TAFE.

Additionally, community engagement has been a priority. We participated in two Road Safety Expos in collaboration with the Gippsland Road Safety Group and Berry Street. We also had a successful road safety session at the Ngwala Youth Gathering. We connected with young people, elders, youth leaders, and parents and shared personal experiences to raise awareness about road

We worked with the TAC on a film project by assisting lived experience individuals in preparing their stories. We collaborated with the filming crew, provided debriefing sessions, and ensured the wellbeing of all lived experience participants. The finished film, creative materials, and communication will feature our by-line and trigger warnings.

Additionally, meetings were held with Margie Grinter, Team Manager Performance and Coaching at the TAC, to discuss information sessions for staff on working with clients and supporting themselves in challenging contexts.

We were honoured to be invited to attend Amy's Gran Fondo, an event organised by the Amy Gillett Foundation. Being part of their memorial service for cyclists who tragically lost their lives was significant to us, and we're grateful for the invitation from CEO Dan Kniepp.

It has been an eventful and impactful year, and we remain committed to continuing our road trauma support and road safety awareness efforts.

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar Program

Our Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program continues to empower participants to make safer decisions on the road by influencing a shift in thinking.

Collaboration with Nathan Schram from Empresio resulted in developing an RTAS marketing and growth plan, bolstering our efforts to raise awareness about road safety and reach a wider audience.

Meanwhile Melbourne University has begun to look at the impacts and outcomes over ten years of delivering this program.

Demographic information, as of 8 July 2022 since 2012, shows 11,363 recorded participants attended an RTAS with the age range with the highest attendance being 18-24 years 36 per cent of participants] and 84 per cent

Participants were attending RTAS for a variety of reasons, including being over the alcohol limit (33 per cent combined), speeding (33 per cent combined), careless in a road crash. driving (28 per cent), driving during licence suspension time (20 per cent), dangerous driving (16 per cent), driving during licence disqualification time (14 per cent), drug driving (13 per cent) and other offences. These patterns are fairly consistent throughout the data from 2013 and 2019, except for drug driving. In 2013, drug driving was the reason for attendance for only 4 per cent of participants. By 2019, 17 per cent of participants attended an RTAS due to drug driving.

Workplace Wellbeing Program

The core focus of our workshops is on trauma and grief and their profound impact on individuals after road incidents. Facilitated by experienced Amber Community staff, our workshops are interactive and engaging, providing valuable informational materials to support participants beyond the workshop. Our ultimate goal is to equip everyone with the knowledge and tools to provide effective and compassionate support to those affected by road trauma and maintain their wellbeing within their roles across the organisation.

This year, we have had the privilege of collaborating with the Amy Gillett Foundation, Auto and General, CFA, and Victoria Police. Our partnership has allowed us to contribute to their mission of

creating safer communities.

Workplace Road Safety as Culture

In this program, the focus is on understanding the "why" behind road safety, emphasising the importance of remaining vigilant about road safety in both our work and daily lives. A lived experience speaker shares their personal story, shedding light on the long-term impacts and consequences of being involved in a road incident. In Mt Macedon, the team had the opportunity to hear from Lynda, who lost her son

Prison Program

Dhurringile Prison currently collects participant feedback on individual satisfaction of the Driving Better Choices Program. Participant feedback over the first four programs was overwhelmingly positive on all questions, with 86.67 per cent of participants responding positively on the question 'the program helped me develop skills and knowledge which I will be able to

Participant feedback was even higher on the question 'How do you rate this program?' with 93 per cent of participants providing a positive response.

Some emerging themes coming from the prisoner feedback are

Emotions

The impact of the program emotionally on the participants was the key theme to emerge from the participants' feedback. One participant shared:

'I never talked about my emotions before coming to jail here.'

Peer support

It was the second most mentioned theme by the participants. One participant explained it as:

'Speaking about it, getting stuff off the chest, sharing a story, other's opinion on my story.'

Change

A third theme from the participant's feedback was around change in the present and the future. One participant pointed out that:

'People are here because they want to change because the course was optional."

Role modelling or envisioning a future self (as a volunteer) Some participants spoke of wanting to become an SES worker, and others discussed wanting to stay on as a volunteer speaker for Amber Community and the program. One participant described this as:

'This impacted my life, and I want to be able to impact someone else's.'

Lived experience

Many comments centred around the hope for the future they had found in seeing and hearing from someone who had left prison and was living an everyday life that included employment, relationships, and lives as a role model to others through volunteering. One participant shared:

'I had a friend contact me by email, and reading the email brought me back to the old me, and I remember what [volunteer speaker] said and thought ', Where have you been the last nine months?"

Safety & Environment

Several participants commented that the program had worked for them because it provided a safe space or 'vibe' for participants to be open and vulnerable during the program. One participant compared this to his past experiences in the justice system, describing it as:

'This program wouldn't work at other prisons; it only works because it is here. When I was at Fulham, I wouldn't have been able to talk like this and be vulnerable.'

Chris Harrison

Manager, Education Services

Across the Regions

Barwon Southwest

This year in the Barwon Southwest region there have been some tragic incidents on our rural roads and the lives lost on our roads are well above this time last year.

The Barwon Southwest team of lived experience volunteers and facilitators have worked hard to get the message out about the counselling available, as well as the consequences of driver behaviour in our Road Trauma Awareness Seminar program. Elsewhere, the Geelong and Warrnambool volunteer teams also work hard to build awareness of Amber Community and we have seen an increase in their volunteers. We bid farewell to some facilitators and are training more.

The Shine a Light on Road Safety and illumination activities and fundraising events have continued to grow and develop with members from Barwon Southwest on various committees and teams. More and more buildings are lit up as part of illuminations, and the numbers grew at the annual walk around Albert Park Lake.

Personally, I attended the Australasian Road Safety Conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, last year on a scholarship and with help from Rotary Geelong. I was able to bring some of knowledge from other countries' perspectives and experiences back and apply it to our region. I have also been involved in building awareness around mental health and wellbeing, as a member of the wellness pod and via wellbeing

and relationship-building exercises at the annual Urban Camp organisation gathering in Melbourne.

We will continue to grow and develop, connect and educate and help the community keep safe in the Barwon Southwest region at a time when our roads seem less safe than they have been in a while.

Luke Elliot

Regional Coordinator

Hume Region

Our team of Hume Legends continued to bravely and generously share their lived experiences across the region and beyond through the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program in Shepparton and online, the Driving Better Choices Program at Dhurringile Prison, the Rural Aid Program, Youth Justice Conference Groups and through various media outlets.

In addition, next year we look forward to contributing to the Victoria Police Cool Heads Young Drivers Program in Alexandra, participating in school, sporting group, workplace, and community programs, and returning the RTAS program to a venue in Wodonga and other venues in the mid and southern communities across the Hume region.

As a team, we continue to meet quarterly in Benalla to discuss our regional activities and maintain our incredible connection and spirit. We celebrated our lived experience speakers during National Volunteer Week in May and gathered again for an endof-year celebration in December.

The team welcomed new lived experience volunteer speakers to our growing team, promoted our new name and brand across the region, and delivered brochures to our supporting network.

For the 10th anniversary of the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign, the Wodonga City Council and Greater Shepparton City Council once again supported Amber Community. They brought awareness in our region by illuminating the Wodonga and Mooroopna water towers and the Monash Street tree in Shepparton during National Road Safety Week.

With 52 fatalities in the Hume region from July 2022 – to June 2023 and hundreds of serious injuries, our goal is to continue our work in reaching communities across our region with a very clear message: road trauma is devastating and can be prevented. Each road user can make an essential difference by making responsible, safer choices because safe choices save lives.

Carmel Maher

Regional Coordinator

Loddon Mallee

Highlights of the Loddon Mallee Region consist of working closely with stakeholders such as Victoria Police, Community Corrections, and Magistrate Courts and supporting local communities to raise awareness of road safety, such as the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community and younger drivers. In October, we were invited to attend the



















Emergency Expo at Castlemaine, where all local services came together to showcase what they do and increase potential volunteers. After recent floods, Loddon Mallee roads have been damaged significantly, but now the busy intersections and road maintenance have commenced to create a more reliable, enjoyable journey. The future of Loddon Mallee is to further increase the awareness of Amber Community and road safety, through items like The North-West Victoria Football podcast - "The Paddock The Goals." which promotes road safety and awareness of other issues such as hooning.

Loddon Mallee region is a large geographical area, it is not an easy mission to get all volunteers together. Still, with this small handful of volunteers, they enjoy participating in the online seminars to make a difference in road safety. Some volunteers are also linked with their local Road Safe groups promoting Amber Community and other road-safe messages across the region. Volunteers were encouraged to join and challenge themselves and others in the Shine a Light Road Safety campaign. Some volunteers also joined in the webinar engagement session on hooning within the region.

Karen SimpsonRegional Coordinator

North West Metro

It has been great to see some of the North West Metro team sharing their stories in the community, Anthony was featured in The Age, Virginia was on Channel 9, Karen Robinson exhibited photographic works in Broadmeadows at the Town Hall. We had a get together at CERES café and I attended the Hume Council Volunteer Civic Reception with Jo and Yeksan.

Some of the significant achievements in the past year include participating in the Department of Transport and Planning, Community Forum in Hooning, and participating in a pilot program to deliver

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) programs in Broadmeadows, Sunshine and Reservoir Justice Service Centres in partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety. We also received a grant from Hume Council for road safety education sessions to local organisations and businesses. Elsewhere we participated in two Melton Council initiatives: the Melton Youth Focus Groups at various secondary schools where lived experience volunteers Virginia and Shane spoke. The Melton Community Road Safety Forum, this year piloted online where lived experience volunteer Tony

The focus in North West Metro for this year has been twofold: increasing referrals to our RTAS program through contacting magistrates and lawyers and engaging more lived experience speakers.

We look forward to continuing to build awareness of Amber Community, particularly after the change from Road Trauma Support Services Victoria. We also look forward to extending our communication with magistrates, lawyers and other referrers to Amber Community programs, and through 'on the street' engagement with all Victorians by taking road safety conversations 'to the people'.

Phil Preston

Regional Coordinator

South East Metro

Over the last year, we have returned to venue-based Road Trauma Awareness Seminars (RTAS) programs and community engagement. We have set up an RTAS at the Pakenham Community Corrections office, where we present once a month. We have attended the Road Safe Eastern Metro meetings where councils, police and Vic Roads collaborate to advocate for road safety. We presented to the Balwyn and Nunawading Rotary clubs, Carey Grammar and Traralgon road safety forum to year 11 and 12 students, attended

the Work Place expo as well as motorbike clubs. Many volunteers have spoken to the media of their lived experience of road trauma to advocate and educate road users about the impacts of road trauma.

I am privileged to be connected to such an inspiring group of eight facilitators and roughly 20 -25 volunteers. Volunteers get the message out there, attend youth justice forums, gain funding from the Berwick Opportunity Shop and EastLink, participate in the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign, and donate their time to Victims of Crime. We also offer the Road to Hope Writers, which has been running over two terms and delivering the volunteer training state wide on Zoom.

The new venue at the Pakenham Community Corrections received a letter from a participant who praised the facilitator and volunteer speaker. He was so impressed that he wrote to eight members of parliament to advocate for the program to be run in schools. It was a testament to the volunteer speakers' powerful message to the participants. They can't change the past but know that they can change the here and now – they can't say they don't know the consequences. That is what education does. It is up to them to take responsibility and own their driving choices. No matter the current trends in road safety, 95 per cent of crashes are human error, so the more we educate road users to take responsibility, allow enough time to get from A-B, and be considerate to others on the roads, the safer our roads will be.

Gillian Scaduto

Regional Coordinator



Student Research

Dhurringile Program – Driving Better Choices Evaluation

As a Masters student, I was assigned Amber Community as a placement to evaluate the Driving Better Choices program at Dhurringile Prison. I had no idea what to expect, but all the staff were welcoming and the experience was surprising.

The program gave me a new perspective on the complexity of road trauma incidents. I learned from Amber Community, that allowing victims to participate in restorative justice programs such as Driving Better Choices if they choose, increases their chance of healing after these events.

I previously had the naïve notion that an evaluation would be a simple observation and some opinion writing. However, the evaluation process is a long process that rightly demands high levels of ethics in its methodology, requiring lengthy ethics approval processes from multiple organisations. It also requires multiple methods of testing and evidence collection over long periods before any conclusions can be made.

Adam Ring

Master of Social Work Student, Melbourne University

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar Evaluation

I undertook a placement with Amber Community and the University of Melbourne as a part of my Master of Social Work degree. The placement was centred around research into the impacts and outcomes of the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program.

The research element of my placement involved looking through 10+ years of data collected from all participants of the RTAS program to pull out trends and identify growth opportunities. The vast majority of what we found was that

participants reported an increase in knowledge between their pre-RTAS survey and their post-RTAS survey. We found significant data outlining reasons for people engaging in behaviours, reasons for changing behaviour and elements of the program that were effective. By the end of our investigations, recommendations were made to Amber Community to ensure further data capture around the RTAS program and to conduct specialist interviews with previous participants to understand the long-term program impacts.

I had a wonderful experience at Amber Community and have met many wonderful people. My placement experience has opened my eyes to the incredible amount of work and dedication that the team all bring to changing behaviours in the community.

Gabi Minutillo

Master of Social Work Student, Melbourne University

Road to Hope

"The tools I have gained from my experience in the program have been many. These range mostly from the various writing techniques taught each week and being shown different ways to write. This has given me a lot of options when writing, namely the ability to express myself through writing which has been enormous. I feel these tools will be used now throughout my entire life. They are invaluable. They have helped create a space for me to process and communicate my thoughts and feelings on paper."

The Road to Hope Writers group offers a non-judgemental, self-paced, structured, and step-by-step approach to writing as a therapeutic resource for people impacted by road trauma. The online sessions provide peer-to-peer support and tools that can continue to be used throughout life

Sessions are kept to under 10 participants over two terms and are facilitated by Judy Bird and coordinated by Gillian Scaduto.

The sessions are structured to build on one another with the aim of gently putting the writer in control of the overwhelm often experienced as a significant part of trauma.

During the sessions the themes and topics are explored including those that arise naturally, require privacy and reflect an understanding of evidence based effects of trauma on the mind.

Writing allows the mind to process the trauma so that it becomes a part of the person's history and less of a front-of-themind experience.

Achievements and breakthroughs in therapy are always to be evaluated by the person involved and whether or not they feel the therapy has helped. Those who have been able to attend more sessions than not, have written short testimonials to improve in their personal

management of their livedexperience presentations and feel that writing supports them rather than being something to dread. Some have expressed the change through taking on more roles at Amber Community and in life, through wanting to return to continue with writing, and through statements that they would like to see the writing sessions available to more participants.

Participants in last year's group and those who have been able to attend most sessions have said that they've seen improvement in how they deal with the effects of their road trauma and also that they've found the skills developed useful in other areas of their lives.



Tony Lived experience volunteer



Approximately eighteen months ago, I approached **Amber Community** because I wanted to do something in memory of our son Chris.

26

Chris was travelling home on the freeway in Hoppers Crossing. He pulled up behind other stationary vehicles waiting to exit the freeway. As he waited, a truck collided with his car, and five others, instantly killing him. Sixteen other people needed to be assessed by emergency service personnel. The ripple effect of this collision has been enormous and ongoing.

I remember feeling at the time like I was a lost soul. I asked myself, either I could sit on my hands and do nothing or go out and do something in his memory. Amber Community helped me put my story together, enabling me to begin presenting at their education programs, road safety seminars, and other events.

I have seen the impact of presenting as a lived experience speaker at a Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program. I watch the participants enter the room at the beginning of a session. Some enter the room with bravado, I am better than everyone else, and nothing will happen to me attitude.

After they tell everyone else about themselves, prompted by the facilitator, they listen to the speaker. As others who volunteer as speakers can relate, it feels like a change occurs in the room when perhaps realisation sets in on what can occur through their actions. There have been tears shed in some seminars. In fact, it's been noted that participants begin acting sombre towards the end of the session.

A rewarding experience with Amber Community would have to be the many friends I've made along the way. It's gratifying to know you are not alone in the grieving process. The support given by other members of Amber Community is horizon. Amber Community outstanding. In fact, I am now up to the stage of supporting others once again in their time of need.

Volunteering with Amber Community has impacted me by making me feel stronger. Every time I present, my confidence grows. Through different activities offered by Amber Community, I've been given skills to help cope with those difficult days of grieving.

I plan to continue to develop my presenting skills. Continue to try and get the message out there about the horrors of road trauma. I aim to continue going with the flow and see where it leads me. Perhaps one day, I may become a facilitator in some capacity. Maybe it might be supporting

others further that may be experiencing what we've been through. Perhaps I may continue presenting at more events, e.g., road safety seminars. Who knows?

I would say that volunteering with Amber Community is a very rewarding experience. Grieving is a challenging time to work through. Amber Community gives you the opportunity to make you feel better about yourself and what you are going through. Reach out for the support offered. Do the activities offered. Value being with people who are going through the same thing you are. Remember, you are not alone. There are brighter days on the assists in getting you there.

Julie

Emergency services volunteer



If you are considering volunteering with Amber Community, give it a go.

Seeing someone wanting to make changes with their choices on the roads and with their driving is so rewarding. We need as many volunteers as possible to get the message out there that we need to reduce the carnage on our roads. And we need to spread the message about the great job Amber Community is doing to assist those impacted by road trauma.

My volunteering journey commenced in July 2000 when I joined the Victoria State Emergency Service (SES), Swan Hill Unit. Since then, I have responded to all sorts of requests for assistance, including attending many road crashes.

I became aware of Amber Community, or as it was then known, Road Trauma Support Services Victoria through my volunteer work as an SES peer. Amber Community provided the SES with brochures, which we handed out to those who were in some way impacted by the road trauma they were involved in or had witnessed.

A fellow SES volunteer approached me asking if I would be interested in becoming an **Emergency Service speaker**

for Amber Community. After some time I met with an Amber Community facilitator at a Road Safe Central Murray meeting, and my interest was rekindled. I participated in a seminar to see what was involved and was impressed with the professionalism of the presenters and the program.

I commenced my initial training with Amber Community in 2021 and presented at my first online seminar in April 2022.

And I love being able to tell participants about what the SES is and what the SES does.

It is interesting to listen to the participant's stories and how they came to be in attendance at the seminars. Sometimes, at first there is a level of indifference, as if their attendance isn't important and they are only doing it because they have been told to.

However, after listening to the volunteers with lived experience, there is often a complete change of atmosphere, almost like a light bulb has been switched on. It can be the first time the participants have thought about how their behaviour has or may have affected so many other people.

Initially I found the attitudes of the participants a little frustrating. Did they not realise there are consequences for their choices? Did they not realise how many lives their choices have affected?

I sometimes feel sad to see where the participant's choices have led them, and I always hope they get the assistance they need to change their outlook on life.

As I continued to volunteer, I found it more rewarding. During the second or third online seminar, the participants thanked me for the work I do as an SES volunteer. We do not do what we do for accolades or thanks; we do what we do because we love to help our community. We want to make a difference.

In the same spirit, I would love to continue volunteering with Amber Community as an emergency services speaker and will help whenever possible.

Rae

Regional Coordinator/Facilitator



My name is Rae, and I'm the newly appointed South West Warrnambool Regional Coordinator and seminar facilitator. I work closely with and under the guidance of Luke Elliot.

I have qualifications and experience within the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sector, where I currently work full time. In my previous life, I was a Corrections Officer within the Department of Justice, which gave me the tools to assist with and guide behaviour change within our seminars. Demonstrating pro-social values and gently challenging thoughts and attitudes around road trauma within a safe and inclusive environment gives the participant the tools they need to move through the stages of change and not only make better choices themselves but have the confidence and awareness to continue to promote the learnings from the seminar to their peers and others at risk.

I was drawn to Amber Community because I have a story like all of us. A story of my little boy, who lost his dad when he was three years old, almost 29 years ago, to a motorbike crash. It's a ripple effect story that has

no ending, but it empowered me to be a part of the change and work my hardest at preventing another little boy from growing up significantly impacted by road without his dad, like Rhys did.

My story is always there and will remain my motivator; however, the stories of our lived experience awareness part of our everyday volunteers and emergency services workers complement the already impactful seminar content.

Each of our volunteers has to be able to share a story of often the worst day of their lives to a group of strangers. Their bravery and courage will continue to inspire me as it no doubt has previous and future participants.

So, to our much-valued volunteers, thank you just isn't enough for the selfless work you do for Amber Community and the broader communities.

Being directly exposed to road trauma through almost 14 years within the Victorian State Emergency Service has given me useful tools to share within the seminars. I can also share gratitude that I have the opportunity to meet participants within this forum rather than the many other not-so-fortunate situations.

Being local to Warrnambool, I have formed good community relationships and look forward to bringing the Amber Community

message to Warrnambool and surrounding areas that, like the rest of Victoria, have been

I'm grateful for the opportunity to help make road trauma conversations. But I'm not alone in this journey; I'm a part of a team within Amber Community who all share the same compassion and enthusiasm as myself and place value on being a part of a big

Thank you for the past 18 months, and I look forward to what the future holds for all of us.

Gillian

Regional Coordinator



I spent many years living with challenging thoughts as I wondered how to cope after experiencing road trauma within my family.

I didn't know there was any organisation that supported people affected by road trauma,

Then, some 15 years ago, a colleague introduced me to Road Trauma Support Services Victoria, now Amber Community. I approached Amber Community, thinking of taking on the role of a lived experience volunteer speaker. After chatting with Chris Harrison and having a background in education and community health, I took on the role of Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) facilitator. As the education area grew, my role expanded to become the South East Metro Regional Coordinator.

The role of the regional coordinator is diverse. We connect with local road safety groups, including councils, to discuss actions towards safer roads within the community. We do presentations with lived experience volunteers to magistrates, and the court user groups, to feed back the volunteer concerns, which can be promoted into RTAS programs. We work alongside Community Corrections, police, and emergency services. We provide

our 'After the Crash' cards and links, connecting people to our counselling services. We give presentations to Rotary groups, schools, football clubs, motorbike clubs, workplaces, multicultural organisations, and others.

I also work on recruiting, training, and supporting our livedexperience volunteers within the region. Each volunteer is unique. Their road trauma is never the same as someone else's. They include bereaved, seriously injured, witnesses, first on the scene, and capable drivers.

The Road to Hope writing group is now in its second year of operation after generous funding support from EastLink and Karen Robinson (volunteer). This group provides a stepped therapeutic approach to wrapping words around a volunteer's experience, giving them a tool to aid recovery.

A generous donation from the Berwick Op Shop to the team was made to support the work of volunteers. A volunteer, Kerry Ann, who runs the second-hand book store at Akoonah Market, has a connection with the Opportunity Shop, and they have heard about the important work Kerry Ann does with Amber Community.

We have established a link with a rehabilitation centre for people who have acquired head injuries from road trauma. Over the last few years, the SE Metro team has welcomed two lived experience volunteers who have complex

needs and are an asset to our RTAS program, with continued support from their case workers and carers.

We presented to a private school with an RTAS participant who, back in 2011, approached me after the seminar to become a volunteer speaker. His driving choices contributed to the road trauma he lives with daily. He has volunteered within the Prison program, RTAS program, school learner drivers and community groups.

Often when working with people, they will acknowledge that just being heard, respected, not judged, and validated takes the weight off their shoulders. Having had the lived experience of road trauma four times in my family gives me a personal peer approach which creates the connection of a shared experience.

Amber Community exists today to assist in preventing road trauma through education and connection so that no one in the future lives in need of the counselling we provide to assist those living with its effects.

I see my role as one of working with the unique opportunity provided by each volunteer to advocate for safer road use, support each volunteer through recovery, and educate the community to help end the need for road trauma services.





Shine a Light on Road Safety

This year, we took immense pride in commemorating our 10th annual Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign.

Despite not having a dedicated campaign and stakeholder relationship staff member in the position for the majority of the past 12 months, with the collaboration of the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign committee, comprising of committed staff members from across the state, and the additional work done by Bronwyn Saville, our Marketing and Communications Manager, we were able to orchestrate a profoundly meaningful and impactful event. Moreover, we successfully extended the campaign's reach and fundraising efforts throughout the entire month of May.

The event saw an impressive turnout of more than 700 attendees, demonstrating their commitment to road safety, even in adverse weather conditions.

Dignitaries and representatives from the TAC, Victoria Police, and the presence of Minister Horne added significant stature to the occasion. Our keynote speaker, Bek Bishop, delivered a compelling and relatable account of her lived experience, resonating with many present and underscoring the enduring trauma and repercussions of road accidents on individuals' lives.

We are always grateful for the support of our Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign sponsors Henry Carus + Associates Lawyers, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, Narva, Nevin Lenne Gross Lawyers, Polaris Lawyers and Slater + Gordon Lawyers. Including

EastLink and Transurban who provided the display of overhead signage on Friday 5 May, along major freeways in Melbourne, encouraging drivers to illuminate their headlights in support of road safety awareness.

As we reflect on the success of this year's campaign, we extend our gratitude to all those who played a vital role in making it possible and supporting the campaign.

With unwavering dedication and the support of our valued partners, and community we remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting road safety and striving for a safer community for all.

Landmarks were also illuminated in yellow during the first week of May.



Time for Remembering

After two years of hosting our annual Time for Remembering ceremony solely online due to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we finally reunited in 2022 at Queen's Hall for this heartfelt occasion.

The ceremony was opened by Xander Alpherts, Chair of Amber Community and facilitated by Bernadette Nugent, CEO, Amber Community.

Sharon O'Dwyer shared her story about losing her son Mathew in a single vehicle car accident in February 2021. Mathew was 26 years old. Losing Mathew has been absolutely devastating and life will never be same.

"We have been shown that we can survive and maybe eventually thrive again with lessons learnt from our beautiful son."

Families lit candles of remembrance as the names of lost loved ones were acknowledged. It was poignant to see everyone lighting their candles and holding up photos and other mementoes.

We thank everyone who contributed to this special event – sharing the names and photos of their loved ones – and to all our guest contributors, including Jeanette Suhr OAM; Wendy Bowler; Rev. Dr Andy Calder; Sargent Sam Howie, Victoria Police; Anne Harris, Director, Behaviour, Education & Community Road Safety, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC); Assistant Commissioner Glenn Weir, Victoria Police; Susan Konstantas, Counsellor, Amber Community; and Stuart Le Grand, Director, Amber Community.

We warmly thank the choir, Tierce de Picardie, and harpist Michael Johnson for their beautiful music. We are very grateful to the TAC and the Parliament of Victoria for their ongoing support.



Board Members



Xander Alpherts
Chairman



Mark Musgrave
Deputy Chairman



Johan Meyer
Treasurer



Richard Watkins
Secretary/Public Office



Robin Bowerman

Board Member



Nadine Goldsmith

Board Member



Sue Hansford

Board Member



Stuart LeGrand

Board Member



Merryn Wallace
Board Member

Subcommittees

Finance and Risk Subcommittee

The Finance and Risk Management Subcommittee made up of directors and CEO meets every two months to discuss the organisation's financial management and any risks identified that could cause issues impacting on Amber Community's service delivery and financial security. Members: Johan Meyer (Chair), Xander Alpherts, Mark Musgrave, Merryn Wallace, Bernadette Nugent.

Evaluation and Research Subcommittee

Work currently being addressed as part of the Evaluation and Research Subcommittee is ongoing with placements of Master of Social Work Students with Melbourne University.

Students have been working with Associate Professor David Rose in evaluating the Driving - Better Choices program, delivered through Dhurringile prison.

Professor Lou Harms has been working with students looking into the experience of our lived experience volunteer speakers on themselves and others, and now conducting an impact and outcomes evaluation on the RTAS program.

We have been highly privileged to have the ongoing expertise of Lou Harms, Belinda Clarke, Samantha Barker, Jennie Oxley, and Richard Watkins in the directions of evaluation and research. This input assists in the evidence needed behind what we do and the efficacy of all our work.



Treasurer's Report

Johan Meyer

The financial performance of Amber Community for the year 2023 reflects a mixed outcome.

Total trading income amounted to \$1,389,634 which fell short of the overall budget by \$92,066.

The specific components of trading income are as follows:

Amber Community secured a new three-year funding agreement with the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). The partnership with the TAC has been crucial in enabling us to provide the necessary assistance to individuals and families affected by road incidents. We are grateful to continue with our long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship.

Income from education services amounted to \$467,340, slightly lower than the budgeted amount, resulting in a variance of \$38,660. In recent months, we have seen an improvement in attendance of the RTAS program and look forward to continuing efforts in educating road users about the impact road incidents have on many Victorian lives.

Amber Community raised \$205,312 through memberships and fundraising efforts, falling short of the budget by \$65,688. We are very grateful for the generous support received from the community, our partners and volunteers for their fundraising efforts.

The annual Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign, our major fundraiser, surpassed expectations by raising more than \$80,000. This significant achievement was made possible through the generous support and contributions from our community members, partners, and sponsors. The funds raised during this campaign will be instrumental in supporting our programs and initiatives

Operating expenses for the year totalled \$1,422,418, slightly below the budgeted amount of \$1,500,762, resulting in a variance of \$78,344. Amber Community recorded a deficit of \$32,784 which was higher than the planned budgeted deficit of \$19,062.

throughout the upcoming year.

During the past year, Amber
Community also successfully
completed the office relocation
project. The move to a new
location was executed without
major issues, allowing the
organisation to continue its
operations seamlessly. The
new office not only provides an
improved working environment for
our dedicated staff and volunteers
but also for those impacted by
road incidents and needing faceto-face counselling support.

Also, Amber Community has undergone a significant digital transformation, embracing new technologies to enhance our operations and service delivery. A crucial aspect of this transformation was transitioning from Reckon to Xero for our accounting needs. This transition has streamlined



our financial processes, providing greater efficiency and accuracy in managing our finances. Additionally, we have implemented Employment Hero as our new HR system, enabling us to efficiently manage employee-related matters.

In conclusion, the financial performance of Amber Community for the year 2023 had its challenges, with a deficit incurred. However, the completion of the office relocation, progress made on the digital transformation plan and the continuation of funding from the TAC provide positive momentum for the organisation. The increase in lives lost on the roads underscores the urgency and importance of our work in promoting road safety and supporting those affected by road trauma.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our strategic partners for their ongoing support. Without your financial contributions, providing counselling and support to those impacted by road trauma would not be possible. Finally, I would also like to thank Theresa Cocking (Accountant), LDAssurance (Auditor), Bernadette Nugent (CEO), our staff, volunteers, Finance and Risk Committee and fellow board members for your tireless contribution, and I look forward to your ongoing support over the coming year as we strive to make a lasting impact on our community.

Johan Meyer Treasurer

Auditor's Statement

Report of the independent auditor on the summary financial statements to the members of Amber Community Incorporated

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises of the summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the summary statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows are derived from the audited financial report of Amber Community Incorporated for the year ended 30 June 2023. We expressed an unmodified auditor's opinion on that financial report in our report dated 19 September 2023.

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards for the financial report. Reading the summary financial statements, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report of Amber Community Incorporated.

Board members' responsibility for the financial report

The members of the board are responsible for the preparation of a summary of the audited financial report in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations).

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the summary financial statements derived from the audited financial report of Amber Community Incorporated based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

Auditor's opinion

In our opinion, the summary financial statements derived from the audited financial report of

Amber Community Incorporated for the year ended 30 June 2023 are consistent, in all material aspects, with the financial report from which it was derived. For a better understanding of the scope of the audit, this auditor's report should be read in conjunction with our audit report on the financial report.

Stephen O'Kane

Partne

LDAssurance Chartered Accountants

Dated: 19 September 2023 330 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Financial Report

Income	2023	2022
Grants	700,000	566,074
Fees and charges	467,340	447,302
Fundraising	131,837	117,659
Donations	75,916	87,920
Interest	14,541	3,453
Total	1,389,634	1,222,408
Expenses	2023	2022
Advertising, branding and business development	(1,318)	(804)
Amortisation - right-of-use assets	(51,956)	(49,710)
Audit fees	(7,000)	(6,000)
Bank charges	(6,512)	(6,082)
Cleaning expenses	(4,325)	(2,149)
Client support projects	(7,530)	(7,017)
Depreciation	(5,224)	(8,480)
Education venue hire	(26,655)	(9,944)
Entertainment and gifts	(1,018)	(1,132)
Fundraising expenses and commissions	(27,115)	(10,559)
HR recruitment, meeting and other expenses	(26,376)	(11,913)
Insurance	(13,690)	(10,987)
Interest expense	(9,492)	(994)
Legal fees	(5,000)	_
Loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment	(4,532)	-
Minor equipment, service and maintenance	(37,386)	(23,722)
Office and business consultancy expenses	(9,331)	(7,386)
Office rent, rates and body corporate fees	(20,174)	(11,960)
Postage and stationery	(12,362)	(6,075)
Rebranding	(3,099)	(41,484)
Relocation costs	(6,639)	
Salaries and wages	(963,019)	(983,841)
Superannuation	(98,091)	(92,648)
Support groups and memberships	(4,414)	(2,863)
Telephone and communication	(11,562)	(10,145)
Time for Remembering	(12,650)	(8,601)
Training and development	(3,969)	(2,400)
Travel, accommodation, parking and motor vehicle expenses	(11,619)	(7,287)
Utilities and permits	(5,093)	(2,069)
Volunteer expenses	(3,238)	(1,928)
WorkCover	(22,029)	(20,288)
Total	(1,422,418)	(1,348,468)
Profit/(loss) for the year	(32,784)	(126,060)
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(32,784)	(126,060)

Non-Current Assets	2023	2022
Cash and cash equivalents	759,504	632,61
Trade and other receivables	33,700	33,634
Other assets	13,005	10,339
Total current assets	806,209	676,584
Non-Current Assets	2023	2022
Property, plant and equipment	12,617	13,866
Right-of-use assets	247,866	6,734
Total non-current assets	260,483	20,600
Total assets	1,066,692	697,184
Liabilities	2023	2022
Trade and other payables	82,298	84,64
Lease liabilities	56,587	3,108
Employee benefits	184,972	175,10
Other financial liabilities	179,427	39,90
Total current liabilities	503,284	302,75
Non-Current Liabilities	2023	2022
Lease liabilities	198,473	3,626
Employee benefit	17,492	10,576
Total non-current liabilities	215,965	14,202
Total liabilities	719,249	316,95
Net assets	347,443	380,22
Accumulated Funds	2023	2022
	347,443	380,22
Retained earnings		

Supporters

We are very grateful to the Transport Accident Commission who have supported our services since 1999.

We thank our generous supporters who raise funds and awareness to help us reduce the impact and incidence of road trauma. We are especially grateful to those who have supported our work in memory of a loved one – your kindness and generosity has touched the lives of many others.

ABC Ballarat local Radio

Acton Print

Alpine Shire Council

Amy Gillett Foundation

Anne Wicking Consulting

Archie Graham Community Centre,

Australasian College of Road Safety

Australia Post

Belinda Clark

Berwick Op Shop

Budget Direct

City of Ballarat

City of Melbourne

City of Whitehorse

Collingwood Neighbourhood

Justice Centre

David Bunn

Deng T Yong Deng and Jessica Migrant Resource Centre, St

Department of Justice and

Dhurringile Prison

Dr Rob Gordon, Clinical Psychologist

Eastern Hub Community Centre

Frank Amato Photography

Gen u Geelong

Greater Shepparton City Council

Industrie & co

ISSR - Research and Evaluation

Jennie Oxley, MUARC - Research and Evaluation

Melbourne Fire Brigade

Ministry of Chocolate

Moira Shire Council

National Road Safety Partnerships

Evaluation group from Melbourne

Road Trauma Support WA

Road2Zero Steering Committee, Melton City Council

Rotary Club of Bayside Geelong

Rotary Club of Geelong

Rural Financial Counselling Services

Samantha Barker, Institute for Safety Compensation and

SARAH group

Recovery Research

Sophie Owen, Ruby Palmer-

South East REM

South Gippsland Shire Council

Stan Winford, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University

Strathbogie Shire Council

Stuart Newstead, MUARC

Tamer Sahin, North West Metro Region, Department of Justice and

Driver Program

Victoria State Emergency Service -

Peer Support

Volunteering Geelong

Volunteering Victoria

Wallies Lollies

Warrnambool City Council

Wimmera Mail Times

Workplace Health and Safety Show

Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve

Supporters — Our maior donors and community fundraisers

Andrew Rowe

Danielle Roczniak

"Eyes on the road for Koby", walking for Koby Wellman taken far too

Iain McHaffie and family in loving

Ian Aranyosi and family in loving memory of Heather Aranyosi

Jarney Newey - to support people impacted by road trauma

Nationwide Group - walking to get

Rhoda Whitten

Rose's Legacy of love, walking in loving memory of our daughter Rose McMahon

Team "JYE 105" Jye Eiffert we love and miss you everyday

of Caleb

Our road safety partners and supporters

Ambulance Victoria

Department of Transport and

The Transport Accident

The Victorian Government

Victoria Police

Our major corporate partners

Henry Carus + Associates Lawyers

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

Narva

Nevin Lenne Gross Lawyers

Polaris Lawyers

Amber Community

Wurundjeri Country Suite B, Ground Floor, Building 2 630 Mitcham Road, Mitcham VIC 3132

1300 367 797 | www.ambercommunity.org.au

© Amber Community 2023

