

2023 - 2024

Annual Report



amber
community
ROAD INCIDENT SUPPORT & EDUCATION



About

Our Vision

To reduce the incidence and impact of road trauma.

Our Purpose

Amber Community is a not-for-profit 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, respect and dignity in all our dealings with clients, stakeholders and members of our workforce.

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.

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Our Impact

Our clients



"I feel valued and not judged by my counsellor, which enables free thought and development of a trusting relationship."

- counselling client

5,378

number of counselling interventions

1,494

counselling sessions

1,495

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar participants

"What really got to me, it made me realise it just affects everyone and woke me and everyone in the class up."

- Road Trauma Awareness Seminar participant

235

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar programs delivered across the state

Our volunteers



116

volunteers are involved in speaking in our education programs

131

active volunteers

"I didn't want anyone else to have to live through what we did."

- Lived experience volunteer speaker

Our events



"A wonderful event that is well organised and feels like one big hug."

- Shine a Light on Road Safety participant

700+

people attended our Shine a Light on Road Safety community walk

4M+

Victorian's reached through our Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign



Chair's Report

Xander Alpherts

The financial year 2023 – 2024 has been a period of focus on Amber Community's core activities, following a number of years of change with rebranding, an office move, and investment in new systems.

The number of road incidents remains stubbornly high, and unfortunately, the demand for our services continues to be unabated.

Management and the Board reviewed our strategic priorities, culminating in a revised strategic plan for 2024-2027 based on the themes of Embed, Expand and Evolve. It provides a renewed focus on four areas:

- our lived experiences differentiation
- combining our counselling work with an increased focus on prevention through our comprehensive education programs
- implementing evidence-based practices to further demonstrate the efficacy of our work
- a continued focus on the relationships with our key partners.

Parallel to the strategic review, Phoenix Australia, the Australian National Centre of Excellence in Post-traumatic Mental Health, performed an independent evaluation of Amber Community to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of the counselling and art therapy components of our service. The report reconfirmed the value of the counselling service to those impacted by road trauma and provided some welcome suggestions for areas in which we can further improve our services.

In education, we continue to build on delivering our Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program through face-to-face seminars across the state and offer online sessions for those unable to attend in person. We provided a valuable program at Dhurringile Prison. Our education team has been working closely with Justice Services Centres to develop and deliver a tailored version of our RTAS program for their clients. Continue to promote road safety within local communities.

Our dedicated team of lived experience volunteers continue to be a vital part of our education services. Their contributions significantly enhance the program's impact.

We ran well-attended key events during the year, such as our

Shine a Light on Road Safety community walk and our Time for Remembering service. We were also very grateful for the incredible effort of Alex Prestney's Run for Road Trauma and the funds he raised for Amber Community in 2023.

Financially, we completed the year with a minor surplus due to the team's continued focus on fundraising and cost control.

At the Annual General Meeting, we farewelled Richard Watkins, who had reached the mandatory retirement time of the Board after nine years of service. We thanked Richard for his strong contribution throughout the years and welcomed John Fitzpatrick, also of Victoria Police, to our Board.

I want to thank our CEO, Bernadette Nugent, staff, and volunteers for their limitless effort in our counselling and education programs. I am also very grateful for the continued support of our key partners: the Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police, the Magistrates' Courts, VicRoads, the Department of Transport and Planning, and our commercial partners. Finally, I much appreciate the time and expertise provided by my fellow Board members.

Xander Alpherts
Chair



CEO's Report

Bernadette Nugent

It is a privilege to present Amber Community's 2023-2024 annual report.

Our high-level goal, as an organisation, is to prevent road trauma from happening and minimise its impact. Sadly, this reporting period has not seen a reduction in road trauma, and as such, there has been a continued demand for our counselling services, and participant numbers in our largest education program, the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program, have seen a significant increase.

In light of this, Amber Community's dedication to our mission remains steadfast to support people impacted by road trauma by offering psychological post-crash care and reducing the incidence of road trauma through our education programs.

Gratitude and Appreciation: The work we do at Amber Community can be confronting, challenging, and humbling, but our staff and volunteers work together to foster meaningful change. I sincerely thank our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, sponsors, and partners. Special recognition goes to the Transport Accident

Commission (TAC), our legal partners, and the sponsors of the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign. Your unwavering support and commitment have been essential to our continued success.

Counselling and Support Services: The counselling team has continued to provide a sensitive, respectful and trauma-informed practice to support our clients. With a full team, including two new counsellors, they have continued to review work practices to enhance our ability to respond to referrals promptly and create meaningful and impactful programs through the Art Therapy and Road Trauma Support Group.

Phoenix Evaluation: Amber Community is committed to continuous improvement to ensure that we offer our clients and education program participants an evidence-based service that best suits their needs and meets our vision and purpose. We are grateful to the TAC, who funded an external evaluation conducted by Phoenix Australia. We are pleased to report that, overall, the feedback confirms that we are offering people impacted by road trauma an effective and appropriate service that aims

to improve client outcomes in ways that are meaningful to each person. We are working on the recommendations to ensure that we understand our impact and are clear about the parameters of our service.

Education Services: Strong relationships with the communities we serve continue to be at the heart of our organisation. We have been working to ensure that we have active referral pathways for counselling clients, and our education team has been effective in networking with key stakeholders and within their local community to increase referrals to the RTAS program and establish a clear understanding of Amber Community's role in promoting and enhancing road safety.

Collaborative Partnerships: Collaboration is vital for achieving the best possible outcomes for people impacted by road trauma. We continue to support the key road safety partners such as the TAC, Victoria Police, and the Department of Transport and Planning. Our collaborations with six legal firms have also enabled us to provide information, guidance, and legal support to our clients should they need assistance, and we work together

to achieve the best possible long-term outcomes for those we serve.

Leadership Changes: Over the last 12 months, we have established strong working relationships with Minister Melissa Horne and the TAC's CEO, Tracey Slatter. We continue to be grateful for their ongoing support, and we understand how important these relationships are in enhancing service delivery and longevity for Amber Community.

Financial Stewardship: As we acknowledge our 30th year, Amber Community is proud of the fact that in an economic environment where many not-for-profit organisations are sadly forced to close their doors, we continue to explore ways to validate our impact, diversify our funding streams and strengthen our financial sustainability. This year, our Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign raised more than \$89,000. The walk at Albert Park Lake continues to be a highlight of our organisation,

both financially and because of its social impact – it brings people together including those impacted by road trauma, to make a difference, and to reduce feelings of isolation.

Innovation and Adaptability: Last year, we introduced new technologies, including a more efficient counselling database, an online human resources platform, and a specialised fundraising and ticketing platform. These initiatives have most certainly increased our efficiency, and we are now investigating further support platforms across the organisation that will reduce duplication of work and assist us in developing a clear and efficient data management system.

Strategic Plan: In the second half of the financial year, we embarked on the journey of reviewing our strategic plan. By incorporating the diverse perspectives of internal and external stakeholders, we have developed a meaningful plan that provides us with clear

direction and focus. With a high-level lens of 'Embed, Expand and Evolve', we are committed to consolidating our strengths, exploring new opportunities and evolving our services and approach to better serve our community.

In conclusion, I am immensely proud to be part of such an important and impactful organisation. I deeply appreciate our dedicated staff, Board Directors, volunteers, and stakeholders. As a not-for-profit, we constantly face the challenge of making ends meet. Supporting those affected by road trauma and educating the community on road safety can be confronting and demanding, yet incredibly rewarding. We are often humbled by the experiences we encounter, but we take great pride in the work we do. Together, we ensure that we maintain a supportive workplace and prioritise the people we serve.

Bernadette Nugent
CEO



Bernadette Nugent, CEO, Amber Community, the Prestney family, Alex, Rachel, Belinda, Andrew and Eliza with Xander Alpherets, Chair, Amber Community

Volunteer Services

Amber Community has 131 active volunteers, 116 of whom are involved in delivering our education programs and engaging participants in conversations about the impact of road trauma.

Amber Community's volunteer lived experience and emergency services speakers predominantly work within our Road Trauma Awareness Seminar program state wide. They are also involved in speaking to the media, act as an Ambassador for the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign and talking to community groups, workplaces, and sporting clubs as part of other program activities. Our programs and activities raise awareness of the impacts of road trauma, road safety and support others going through a similar experience.

As one volunteer expressed:

"I think it's not about a sense of my purpose, but perhaps giving meaning and significance to the person that died."

It ensures they are remembered as significant. Even in death, they continue to have purpose and meaning."

Our volunteers include:

83 volunteer personal lived experience speakers, 33 volunteer emergency service speakers, nine volunteer Board members and six volunteers doing administration.



Our Research and Evaluation Working Group has seven people from various organisations, including Melbourne University and Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), who provide feedback and direction with research and evaluation processes and procedures.

The most common motivation for becoming a volunteer at Amber Community is to educate others about the impact of road trauma and make a positive change in the community.



In their own words:

'Planting the seed, the importance of being safe and being aware, and taking driving as a serious responsibility that deserves our full respect every time we get in the car.'

'If I can just stop one of those kids from turning their mum and dad into what it's done to me, I will continue to do it.'

Most participants found participating in volunteer storytelling to be therapeutic, as they could talk about their experience, increase acceptance of their story, and make better sense of their road trauma

experience, along with personal growth such as increasing confidence, increased empathy and acceptance towards others, and connecting to other opportunities.

The most commonly discussed benefits were the feeling of making a difference in the community and finding the experience rewarding and supportive.

In their own words:

'To see the difference in their faces, as they realised, and there is something in what they're saying, that was an advantage to me.'

This year, we explored new platforms for volunteer reporting and communication, delivered

training programs, and strengthened regional team connections. We supported volunteers in sharing their stories through media opportunities, regular meetings, self-care sessions, and feedback opportunities.

Volunteers

Adrian Benson
 Alex Eleftheriou
 Amanda Patterson
 Andrea Korvin
 Andrew Knowles
 Anne Riches
 Anthony Bartl
 Barb Bleicher
 Belinda Clark
 Belinda Dowel
 Ben Trotter
 Bernie Stanley
 Bev Steart
 Byron Carson
 Byron Sedgwick
 Carey McLaren
 Carmel O'Brien
 Catherine Hannah
 Cecilia Beaucasin
 Chris Latimer
 Chris Mair
 Chris Parkin
 Christian Ashby
 Corey Bray
 Dale McIvor
 Damian Sumner
 Darryl Crowley
 David Simmons
 Debra Mahy
 Fiona Adams
 Fiona D'Silva
 Fiona Umbers
 Gary Frost
 George Greaves
 Geraldine Harley
 Gerardine Eales
 Glenn Dunn
 Glenn Heazlewood

Graham Milner
 Heather Pickering
 Holly Larkspur
 Ian Aranyosi
 Irene Ackland
 Irene Harrington OAM
 Jacinta Stivala
 Jake Virtue
 James Thompson
 Jan Dilworth
 Janine Gastevich
 Jason Naumann
 Jeanette Suhr OAM
 Jennie Oxley
 Jessica Todd
 Jessica Zaghet
 Jo Keep
 Johan Meyer
 John Dows
 John Fitzpatrick
 John Heuvel
 Jonathon Van Ek
 Julie Jochs
 Kaitlyn Downs
 Karen Robinson
 Karina Osgood
 Kathleen Clark
 Katie Hughes
 Kellie Bishop
 Kerry Ann Norton
 Kristine Papworth
 Kristy French
 Leigh Booth
 Leonie Cooke
 Les Beechey
 Lou Harms
 Maeve Su Mi Luu
 Manny Marchesin

Maria Harkins
 Marie McNamara
 Mark Cartledge
 Mark Musgrave
 Martin Wrangle
 Matthew Armour
 Matthew Pope
 Melinda Dine
 Merryn Henderson
 Merryn Wallace
 Michael Hellwege
 Mumtaz Akhtar
 Nadine Ahfat
 Nadine Goldsmith
 Natalie Stanway
 Natasha Cook
 Nilsson Smyth
 Paul Illman
 Paul O'Dwyer
 Paul Sabo
 Peter Aldersea
 Peter Thomson
 Rebecca Bishop
 Reg Stott
 Rhys Thomas
 Richard Watkins
 Robert Carter
 Robin Bowerman
 Robyn Greening
 Roger Astell
 Roni Forai
 Rosalie Dows
 Rosie Johnston
 Russell Harley
 Sally Millar
 Samantha Bala
 Shane Jayasinghe
 Sharon O'Dwyer

Sophie Owen
 Steve Williams
 Stuart Le Grand
 Susan Hansford
 Teegan McDonald
 Thomas Smyth
 Tim Nolan
 Tony Hoeboer
 Valerie Seal
 Victor Gartside
 William Cole
 Xander Alpherts
 Yeksan Altun



Counselling & Support Services

I am very proud of what the counselling and support services team has accomplished over the last 12 months.

I am also very grateful for the support that other staff, clients and volunteers provided to help make it all happen.

Achievement highlights

It has been a very full year with many changes to adjust to and multiple projects to deliver as the counsellors continued to provide invaluable support to those impacted by road trauma. We settled into our new client information systems after transitioning over a year ago and learned a great deal. Leanne Hyndman's incredible job overseeing the project and supporting and developing the team, combined with the counsellors' willingness, commitment and overall support to get the project done, made it much easier to accomplish.

Thanks to Susan Konstantas' dedication, organisation and hard work, we were able to pilot our Road Trauma Support Group program in August 2023, designed to provide a safe space online for people with shared experiences to connect, learn about and explore trauma, their inner strengths and strategies to cope. We are very grateful to the people who attended the program pilot and who provided

their invaluable feedback. Being long-standing supporters of our organisation, their input was vital and important for the program's development. With more fine-tuning, the first official Road Trauma Support Group was launched in September, and five more programs were delivered in the fiscal year, with promising and positive feedback.

After careful deliberation, we made the important decision to modify our Art Therapy Group program. Up until December 2023, group members came together and made art among others who had similar and shared experiences of road trauma as an open group. In collaboration with our art therapist, Lauren Foster, a thoughtful, more structured and focused program was planned, incorporating gentle, trauma-informed and tentatively challenging therapeutic elements based on the experience of the counselling team.

It is a pleasure to share that we have also managed to enhance our intake service and process. Every referred person continues to be contacted and is provided with information, links and an invitation to book an intake call. These provide initial support with a counsellor, a warm introduction to our services and service fit assessment. Waitlisted clients receive regular check-in texts and email messages until a counsellor becomes available and systems are in place to respond to parents seeking

support for their children and for more urgent situations where possible.

Irena Zilberman, our Intake Counsellor, and Leanne have been instrumental in the intake development and processes.

We welcomed the opportunity and thank the Transport and Accident Commission (TAC) for arranging and supporting an evaluation of our counselling and support services by Phoenix Australia, the national leaders in post-traumatic mental health. The evaluation included consultation and interviews. The consultations were with an evaluation committee comprised of Phoenix Australia staff, TAC staff, members of Amber Community management and past volunteer clients. The interviews were held between Phoenix and our counsellors, management, the Art Therapy Group and individual counselling clients.

The much-anticipated final report affirmed that our counselling and support services are a much needed and valuable service for people impacted by road trauma, delivered by an experienced and caring team. The report identified important areas for improvement, primarily with regard to our model of service. I personally found this encouraging, having already begun working on these areas, and so, I feel we can move forward with our planning and implementation with even greater confidence.



Staff

We sadly farewelled Mustafa Koukklan earlier this year, who has been a core part of the counselling team for over five years. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

We are pleased to celebrate and are very fortunate to have had Lisa Gelbart join us over 18 months ago. Lisa continues to provide much needed care and support to our clients and is increasingly becoming more involved in our group programs and projects.

Irena has been with us for over a year. She took on the important role of Intake Counsellor and has made it her own. It is a pleasure to work with Irena, to watch her grow in her counselling career and in supporting the team.

Leanne recently decided to focus more on her private practice and works one day a week focussed on team development and support.

Susan agreed to work an extra day for 12 months to oversee, develop and implement our Road Trauma Support Group and Art

Therapy Group. Susan has done an incredible job. As the whole team takes on a more shared responsibility for these groups, Susan recently dropped back to two days a week working with clients.

We were very fortunate to welcome and recruit two new counselling team members earlier this year. Samantha Demmon and Daniel Fabris began in February and bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and wisdom.

The year ahead

I am looking forward to working with all the counsellors to formalise and refine our model of service, and to ensure that we continue to meet our clients' needs and develop our practice. Further, I look forward to working with our internal and external stakeholders to work toward and contribute to our organisational objectives while keeping our values at the forefront. There is much to be proud of and I am so grateful and privileged to be working with people who I trust, admire and connect with to deliver as such.

Thank you

I cannot thank my counselling team enough for their continued and unwavering support, vigorous open conversations and for all that they have taught me. It is an absolute privilege to have met and to work with them and we could not have accomplished all that we have without them.

Special thanks to the TAC, Louise Groves, and our legal partners for your support in ensuring the best care for our clients.

Thank you to our clients, past and present, and volunteers for your enthusiasm, keen participation, and support in helping us get our projects off the ground and keeping us accountable. You are invaluable.

Final word from one of our clients

"My counsellor is an angel. She is very compassionate and understands exactly what I am going through."

Renee Brauer
Manager Counselling & Support Services

Road Trauma Support Group

We were excited to pilot our new Road Trauma Support Group program in August 2023.

Over two sessions held across consecutive weeks, we invited some of our long-standing lived experience volunteers to participate in the pilot, offering their valuable feedback and insights on both the content and the group experience. Their input was essential in refining the program, which we officially launched in September 2023.

The Road Trauma Support Group provides a mix of peer support and education about trauma, coping strategies, and skills. It offers a safe and supportive environment to explore trauma

and post-traumatic growth, all facilitated by an experienced counsellor. The program is delivered online and runs for 1.5 hours each week across four weeks, with a maximum of eight group members to ensure a more intimate and supportive setting. The group is co-facilitated by two counselling team members, ensuring participants receive the best possible support.

Developed in response to the growing demand for our services and a desire to expand our counselling offerings, the program also draws on the recurring themes we encounter in individual counselling sessions. It's specifically designed to support individuals affected by road trauma who are not bereaved.

Participants have found the program immensely helpful. One participant shared:

"Being part of the group provided me with invaluable takeaways, especially the practical coping techniques like sleep strategies and breathing exercises, along with the comforting realisation that I am not alone in my journey."

Beyond the two pilot sessions, we ran six full four-week programs and an additional two sessions from a program that wrapped up in July 2024. We facilitated 28 individual sessions, offering support to 42 people.



Art Therapy Group

This year the Art Therapy Program's focus is to help participants learn more about themselves and their emotions – to find ways to navigate life, grief and loss, and to experience personal growth.

The participants have joined a closed group this year and create from a different starting point or theme each month. The year-long program includes topics and themes that were a collaboration of ideas from myself, Amber Community's experienced counsellors, and management to make sure the most important issues – that road trauma victims face and have to navigate are being addressed.

Each month, participants in the group use different art materials, making art to explore and represent their experiences. Some outcomes of their processes so far include insight into patterns of behaviour, conditioning, values, beliefs, what is important now, and the expression of difficult emotions. Some of the images created by participants express self-compassion, vulnerability, grief, loss, pain, anger, sadness, and hope.

After the participants finish making their art, they are invited

to describe their art and to find words to help voice their representation.

Participants can then journal about their experience and/or can write a poetic essence from their descriptive words about what they had come to know about themselves through the process, and any actions or changes they might make in their lives from this new knowledge.

Participants are invited to share something of their process with a partner or the group. This can help the participants to feel seen, and heard and have their experiences and emotions validated. Participants connect with each other through their shared experiences of grief and loss, knowing they are not alone, and that others have some understanding of what they have endured resulting from a road incident.

The courage of the participants has been inspiring. Trusting me, themselves and the art therapy process to step into self-exploration, doing the hard work to discover their own resilience and own answers to how they can live a wonderful life even after the experience of devastating road trauma.

Lauren Foster (AthR)

Art therapist

Creative Spirit Arts Therapy





Lisa Gelbart

Counsellor

I am one of the counsellors at Amber Community and have been in this role for about 18 months.

I applied for the position with the intention of finding an organisation whose culture aligned with my own values. When I saw the role advertised and met with Bernadette Nugent, CEO, and Renee Brauer, Manager of Counselling and Support Services, I felt that they were a great reflection of the organisation. When I was offered the position and met with the rest of the team, I quickly realised that I had landed where I was meant to be.

I have many years of experience working in trauma, grief and loss, for not-for-profit organisations and in my own private practice. My roles have included counselling, clinical supervision, coordination and training of volunteers, group facilitation, peer support, workshops, hospital presentations and public speaking. During the pandemic, I worked on the Covid-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Hotline and was transferred to the 1800 Respect line, due to the high increase in calls during lockdowns. I wanted to do my part in supporting the community at that time.

I have a bachelor's and master's degree in counselling, training and assessment and clinical supervision qualifications. I am also a lived experience advisor working on many projects to help improve Victoria's mental health system. I am a bereaved mother of two infant sons, and I have worked on several boards, including The Compassionate Friends Victoria. My lived experience and professional training encompass the LGBT+, disability, and mental health communities.

At Amber Community I have been able to assist with the Art Therapy Group and have co-facilitated the Road Trauma Support Group (RTSG) program. The RTSG is a relatively new addition to our counselling support services that offers clients/participants an opportunity to connect with trained and experienced counsellors and peers in an online platform. The aim of the group is to feel supported, learn about trauma, and to explore coping strategies, which can help to normalise and manage the impact of a person's experience.

I have attended the Shine a Light on Road Safety community walk around Albert Park Lake, and the Time for Remembering events. These provide a caring and supportive space to come together, while honouring those

who have been impacted by road trauma. I was asked to facilitate some wellbeing and self-care sessions at the education team gathering in July. This was an opportunity to meet more of the support team at Amber Community.

My aim as a therapist is to hear and understand the client, and to meet them where they are in their journey. Amber Community offers in-person (at the Mitcham office), online and telephone counselling options, enabling service users throughout Victoria to link in for support in the way that best suits them.

Amber Community is very supportive of professional development. I have recently added EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing), to my skill set. EMDR has been shown to have good efficacy with clients who have experienced trauma, and I am always seeking to expand my practice.

I feel that a lot of care and compassion is demonstrated by Amber Community towards staff, their skills and experience, clients and stakeholders. It is a privilege to be able to support people on their unique journeys, and it is nice to feel valued and cared for while doing this intense, but rewarding, work.



Belinda

Counselling Client

On 5 April 2020, the first weekend of Covid lockdowns, our eldest son Brandon left our home to head back to the house he was sharing with a couple of mates.

Within 20 minutes of him driving off, the siren from the Country Fire Association station went off. I looked at the VicEmergency app and noticed there was an incident at the top of the hill heading to Kangaroo Ground. I thought nothing of it until my husband, Anthony said, "Do you think Brandon would have made it through?" At this point, I picked up my phone and tried to call him. He didn't answer, so I tried again and again. I knew he would answer my call because he had put a hands-free system in his car, it was at that point I knew there was something wrong.

I said, "We have to go up there". So Anthony and I got in the car and headed up the hill. We didn't get too far because the police had blocked the road. We spoke to the police at the roadblock to see if they knew what sort of car was involved and we told them what Brandon was driving, and the information we were told didn't match his car but still there was no answer on his phone. We knew we had to get up to the top of the road to see if he was there.

On arriving at the top of the T-intersection, the road was also blocked, but we could see a red car at the crash site and knew instantly that it was Brandon's car. So, we parked the car off the road, and I went to talk to the police at the roadblock. They gave me no information about the incident as they didn't know any details. I then said "I know that's my son's car," and showed them a photo of the car and the registration number. They said they would go and talk to a senior police member and get back to us.

This time felt like an eternity. We sat up on the side of the road for about two hours, and then the police who were blocking the road drove away without coming and speaking to us, and I felt gutted. So out I got and went and spoke to the police member who had parked his car across the road, blocking traffic. On speaking with the sergeant, I went through the same details that I had previously done with the other police members. He told me that he had no information as he didn't know the occupant of the car, but that wasn't good. I then proceeded to tell him what Brandon was wearing and the photo of the car and rego, and he then said that with the information I had given him that, he would be the person who would normally be knocking on my door to inform us that

Brandon had passed away as a result of the crash.

He was unable to let me attend the crash site as they were waiting for the Major Collisions Investigation Unit to arrive and do what they needed to do. I asked if we could be called to see him before he was taken by the Coroners Court.

So, as a family — my husband, my daughter, my son, and my mum — we attended the scene. As we approached the roadblock, I knew one of the members from when I worked at Victoria Police in the late 80s, and she said to me, "You don't have to do this". And I said, "Yes, I do that's my baby, and I have to do this". She just nodded and said, "Well, I will tell you he has never been left alone. We then spent about half an hour with him before returning home to begin life without our beautiful boy.

We found out about Amber Community through the information supplied to us by Victoria Police. The support and care by the counselling service and art therapy have enabled me to slowly work through the grieving process.

I recommend Amber Community and suggest others don't hesitate to contact them. I have passed their details on to many people.

Education Services

“Stories that are personal and emotionally compelling engage more of the listener’s brain and thus are better remembered than simply stating a set of facts. Stories are an effective way to transmit important information and values from one individual or community to the next.” – Paul J. Zak.

Our programs have continued to involve volunteers who have experienced road incidents from varying perspectives and have highlighted them as experts for change in creating safer roads, challenging community thinking, and inspiring innovative approaches to road safety.

Through their unique perspectives, our lived experience and emergency services volunteer speakers have continually brought valuable insights into our work, emphasising the need to include them in our road safety prevention efforts.

Collaboration with key partners to improve impact and outreach

Highlights include:

- Attendance at events like the Gran Fondo, country shows, and safety expos
- Co-hosting a webinar with the National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSP)
- Ongoing discussions with key stakeholders, including the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Victoria Police and Innovative Justice Centre
- Supporting the TAC with the Dear Driver infringement project

Collaborations to enhance service delivery

Key efforts include:

- Engagements with Melbourne University on ethics applications and evaluation tools for the Driving – Better Choices prison program and Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program
- Advocacy for program integration

- Exploring recidivist data for the RTAS program with MUARC
- Improving follow-up feedback processes with Insync and discussions with regard to developing online workplace programs with Alexium
- Potential partnerships with RYDA for school programs.

We focused on increasing the profile and messaging of our education services.

Achievements include:

- Reaccreditation with Social Traders and participation in training sessions and meetings
- Media engagements, such as interviews with ABC radio and News at Noon, and participation in road safety forums
- Enhancing data collection and reporting systems for ongoing feedback to referrers

Road safety and workplace wellbeing activities

Key achievements include:

- Training sessions for Country Fire Authority peer support staff and sessions at Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation youth gatherings
- Engagement with schools and communities, including sessions at Cobden Technical School, Strathmore and Yarrawonga Secondary College and Gippsland Youth Road Safety Expos.
- Delivery of two Driving – Better Choices programs at Dhurringile Prison
- Successful implementation of the Hume City road safety sessions with nine sessions delivered among diverse community groups

- Approval of the extension of the Community Corrections RTAS program
- Recruitment and training of 12 group facilitators to expand regional program delivery
- Participation in a parliamentary inquiry and industry events to advocate for road safety

Road Trauma Awareness Seminar Program

RTAS are for anyone who would like to increase their awareness of the responsibilities that come with using the road safely, to prevent being involved in road trauma, and address any risky driving behaviours.

Our skilled facilitators offer participants an inclusive, non-judgemental learning and development opportunity in a group work environment. The RTAS program provides all attendees with an opportunity to share their own experiences and hear and connect with our volunteers’ powerful and insightful lived experiences. We believe that our people-centred and peer group approach is key to improving the cultural thinking of road users.

Our participants are diverse and bring with them a vast range of driving experiences. This is reflected in our seminars through contextualised facilitation and content, ensuring that every seminar is unique, focussed, and relevant to the participants’ learning needs.

The people who attend are encouraged to reflect on their unsafe behaviours and the consequences that their choices have had directly and indirectly on themselves, their loved ones, and their wider community. The seminar

is designed to provide a supportive environment for participants to gain an improved understanding of their responsibilities as road users, an increased awareness of road safety and road trauma, and empower subsequent safer choices.

Participant

“The volunteer’s story had a big impact on the class and myself. I went in to reduce the severity of my fine and came out with a lot more! I share this experience with my friends and hope that it makes a difference.”

With 1,495 RTAS participants in the past financial year, we are confident we can build on this success. Given the rising number of deaths and serious injuries on Victorian roads, and the increasing number of individuals being apprehended by police or through safety cameras and going through the court system, our program’s relevance and impact continue to grow.

We implemented strategies to increase referrals to the RTAS program. Efforts included regional meetings with Justice Service Centres, Victoria Police, and Court Services Victoria, information packs for legal professionals, and bi-monthly communications with current referrers. We developed an RTAS webpage, enhanced our booking system, and attended state wide meetings with magistrates, judicial registrars, and CCS Regional Managers.

Driving – Better Choices

Held at Dhurringile Prison, the nine-week program is part of a bigger picture in addressing unmet needs within the prison for serious driving offences and is designed to foster a safe and supportive environment for participants, guiding them through a transformative journey that addresses the impact of their actions on themselves and others. At the beginning of the program, participants are welcomed and introduced to the program’s structure and goals. Initial activities focus on building trust and mutual respect, encouraging participants

to share their personal stories and understand the support available from the Amber Community.

As the program progresses into the middle phase, it delves deeper into critical themes such as recognising and coping with grief, trauma, shame, and remorse. Participants hear from volunteer speakers with lived experiences of road trauma or imprisonment for similar reasons, fostering a sense of community and empathy. The program also explores the causes and consequences of risky behaviours, highlighting the broader impacts on individuals and the community. Interactive discussions and activities help participants understand personal responsibility and develop coping strategies.

In the final phase, the focus shifts to reflection and empowerment. Participants engage in activities that promote self-care, set personal goals, and develop communication skills. They are encouraged to express their commitment to positive change through reflective writing and group discussions. Additionally, the possibility of a restorative justice conference is discussed, providing an avenue for reconciliation and fostering healing. This structured approach empowers participants to make lasting positive changes in their lives.

Whilst not all the program logic is in place yet, and we are seeing common themes for improvements from participants along the way, we have continued to provide a valued program within the prison for those who attend. Participants are championing the program to other prisoners with similar offences. Given that this program has been co-designed with individuals who were in the system for similar offences, we continue to explore and make changes along the way to meet evolving needs.

Participant feedback

“I would highly recommend this program because it will help you make better judgments in life and learn about different experiences from other people, and how driving has impacted their lives.”

Our team

- 1 RTAS administrator
- 7 regional coordinators
- 31 group facilitators
- 83 personal speakers
- 33 emergency service speakers
- 4 Melbourne University Master of Social Work students

The state education team meeting was held in July and was a great day with some new faces from the regions and a wonderful guest speaker Dr Ray Shuey. Dr Shuey has a long history in the road safety space beginning with the Victorian Police and then working across Australia and internationally on community road safety initiatives.

After a day of planning in February this year, our team has developed the education services directions for 2024–2025. Our goals will continue to focus on building our team and facilitating conversations to foster a safe culture among road users. We aim to expand our RTAS program through a new marketing strategy, returning to all pre-2020 venues and demonstrating the program’s impact and benefits in promoting safer road behaviour and reducing road incidents.

Additionally, we plan to enhance the visibility, support, and opportunities for our volunteer speakers, who share their experiences of the impacts of road incidents. By doing so, we aim to amplify their voices and leverage their powerful stories to further our mission of creating safer roads for everyone.

We continue to work collaboratively as a team and look forward to putting our plan into action.

Chris Harrison
Manager, Education Services

Across the Regions

Reports from Amber Community Regional Coordinators.



Barwon South West

This year saw many new faces across the Geelong, Warrnambool, and surrounding areas.

“Our volunteers Ian and Gerardine stepped up as faces of road safety campaigns, and we strengthened relationships with Victoria Police, emergency services, and local stakeholders.”

Ian was awarded Volunteer of the Year last year from Volunteer Victoria and helped in getting out road safety messages. Our team engaged the community through

events like the Camperdown show and training days, delivering powerful road safety messages. We welcomed new facilitators and volunteers, expanding the reach and impact of the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program in the region.

– Luke Elliot

South East Metro

Our team of lived experience volunteers, staff, and partners continue to advocate for safer roads. One of our volunteers joined the Board of Victims of Crime, amplifying the voice of

road trauma victims. We received a donation for Amber Community branded polo shirts that will help volunteers spread road safety messages in the community. Our participation in TRIP, workplace wellbeing sessions, and media opportunities, including Radio Eastern FM, helped spread the road safety message into the community.

“The Road to Hope Writing group, run through generous donations, provided another avenue for our volunteers to support and assist their wellbeing toolbox.”

We successfully ran two six-week volunteer training sessions and continue emphasising road safety as a choice that affects everyone on the road.

– Gillian Scaduto

Loddon Mallee

Loddon Mallee focused on promoting road safety through local community events, such as the Run for Road Trauma and the Swan Hill Colour Run.

“Our region supported the Clontarf Foundation in bringing road safety education to Indigenous youth.”



We also worked closely with volunteers, participating in online seminars and linking with local RoadSafe groups to promote road safety messaging across the region. Plans are in place to expand our reach to local youth through the Be Safe, Road Safe program.

– Karen Simpson

Hume

Our Hume team welcomed four new members this year and remains dedicated to promoting road safety through the RTAS program, the Driving Better Choices program at Dhurringile Prison, and media opportunities.

We meet quarterly to discuss our progress, enjoying support from the SES in Bendalla.

“Despite farewelling some long-time volunteers, Gail, Rosalie, and John, our new and existing members continue to share their lived experiences, significantly impacting road safety education in Shepparton, Wodonga, and beyond.”

– Carmel Maher

Grampians

The Grampians region has been in a rebuilding phase, focusing on expanding the RTAS program. We recruited a new volunteer, bringing our team to three, and have been reestablishing relationships with local stakeholders, particularly in the legal and health sectors.

“With increasing participant numbers, we look forward to relocating to a new venue due to the Ballarat Hospital expansion.”

Our goal is to establish regular RTAS sessions in Horsham and other key areas of the region.

– Janeen Stewart

North West Metro

“Following a successful pilot, we expanded the RTAS program to multiple justice service centres in partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety.”

We received a Hume Council grant to deliver road safety presentations, which reached a broad audience, particularly

senior groups. We welcomed six new team members and bid farewell to long-time volunteer Chris. We are focused on continuing to innovate and implement effective ways to reduce road trauma across the North West Metro region.

– Phil Preston

Gippsland

The Gippsland region focused on reconnecting with volunteers, expanding RTAS program locations, and engaging with local courts and road safety stakeholders.

“We held gatherings for volunteers and participated in seminar days for Year 11 and 12 students, emphasising the importance of road safety education.”

We are working to reestablish Bairnsdale and Wonthaggi as RTAS program sites, and Khai Cooke has returned to co-ordinate the region with a focus on supporting volunteers and expanding our reach in Gippsland.

– Shaun Lennard



Byron

Lived experience volunteer

In 2019, my speech therapist suggested I consider becoming a volunteer with Amber Community. I had gone through a life-changing event when I was 23 years old, and volunteering felt like a chance to turn my tragedy into something meaningful.

On the night of 21 October, after drinking some beers and whisky with friends, I made the reckless decision to drive my 1972 LX Torana. I was going too fast down Warrandyte Road, lost control, and crashed into a tree. I was airlifted to the Alfred Hospital, where my family was told I had sustained a serious brain injury. I remained in a coma for four months, followed by three years in rehab. My injuries left me in a wheelchair, with no use of my right arm and significant difficulty speaking.

That night changed my life forever, but Amber Community gave me the opportunity to share my experience with others in the hope of preventing similar tragedies. Since becoming a volunteer, I've spoken to countless

groups, sharing my road trauma story. I've seen firsthand how powerful these sessions can be. Some participants, especially younger ones, leave visibly shaken. I'll always remember one strong, tough-looking guy who came up to me after a seminar, crying in the hallway, and thanked me for sharing. Those moments are what make this work worthwhile.

Through Amber Community, I've found a renewed sense of purpose. Sharing my story isn't just about reliving the worst night of my life—it's about using my experience to help others understand the serious consequences of dangerous driving. It's not just your life that's affected by a crash—it's your family, friends, and everyone around you. I'm living proof of how quickly life can change, and I hope that my story helps others think twice before getting behind the wheel after drinking.

Volunteering with Amber Community has given me something I thought I had lost: a sense of accomplishment. Every time I speak to a group, I hope I'm helping at least one person make a better decision. I can't turn back time, but if sharing my story prevents even one crash, then I know I'm making a difference.

I plan to continue volunteering and presenting my story for as long as I'm able. Amber Community has given me a way to contribute, and I hope to stay involved for many years to come. I strongly encourage anyone thinking about volunteering with Amber Community to do it. It's not always easy to relive your trauma, but the impact you can have on others makes it all worth it. You might just change someone's life.



Bob

Emergency services volunteer

I've come to be involved with Amber Community and the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program as an SES volunteer.

For ten years, I've been a member of a regional Victorian SES unit and, along with operational response, have the role of community engagement and media liaison.

SES volunteers respond to a wide range of non-fire emergencies and requests from the public for assistance – a tree across a road or driveway, flash or widespread flooding, building damage and landslides, to name a few. We respond to requests from Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria for assistance with searches and with rescues, some of which involve highly technical skills and procedures.

What brings SES and Amber Community together in shared purpose is the daily disaster of road trauma. SES volunteers are called to use their training, their skills and their specialised equipment to enable paramedics to gain access to casualties in crash incidents and to facilitate efficient and effective extrication

of casualties from vehicles and into the hands of paramedics. We see, far too often, the horror, the grief and the sadness that road trauma brings.

People sometimes ask emergency service volunteers and workers why they put themselves into the arena of trauma: bush and building fires, industrial accidents, medical emergencies, vehicle crashes and so on. A common explanation is the genuine wish to give back to the community.

Beyond that, it is knowing that one is trusted by the community to walk into these traumatic situations and carry away the knowledge of having made a positive difference.

Being part of an RTAS team brings the satisfaction of "giving back" and "making a difference". It is a situation, like an emergency service response, of comradeship between the facilitator, lived experience volunteer speaker, and the emergency service volunteer or worker. The difference made to the lives of the seminar participants arises from that teamwork and from the genuineness that each of the team brings to it.

At the heart of every seminar is the bravery, generosity and courage of the speakers who relate how road trauma has affected their lives and the lives of their families. It is an honour to work with them. Their impact cannot be over-stated.



Gayle Osmond

Facilitator

Training has always been part of my work history, mainly in a corporate setting, however, over time, I started to enjoy facilitating meaningful community prevention programs. My first exposure was delivering Cybersafe programs to primary and secondary school students. Then, in 2018, I commenced with VicRoads, delivering the RoadSmart Program to Year 10 students. Over time, I started as a facilitator for the L2P program, another VicRoads program. When I saw the advertisement for an Amber Community Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program facilitator, I felt that this was a natural fit to add to my facilitation skills using my road safety knowledge and I thought it was an interesting psychosocial program.

I am very fortunate that I have no personal experience with road trauma. I was certainly not naive about the impact of road trauma but had not had exposure to people who had been directly impacted until I started working at Amber Community. Seeing firsthand how our lived experience volunteers bravely share their stories, to help prevent others in the community from experiencing what they live with daily has been inspiring and I admire their courage to do so.

I've been facilitating the Dandenong RTAS session for 18 months now. What I enjoy

the most is seeing participants who turn up full of bravado and negativity and who turn their attitudes around to be fully engaged and active participants in the program. It is easy to present content, but it is not easy to actively engage participants who do not want to be there, and that is where strong facilitation skills come into play.

One of my most touching experiences was when a participant, who had been involved in a major road incident and was traumatised by the experience and the choices he had made around that incident, spoke to me after the session. He was full of remorse and struggling emotionally, particularly as he was due to attend court soon after his RTAS. He had tried some counselling, but because the therapist did not have experience with road trauma, he had seen no benefit and, in fact, felt the session had made things worse for him. Sensing that this was an innately good young man who had made one bad choice and desperately needed support, I spoke with him. We talked about how this incident did not have to define who he was and that he had a whole life ahead of him and to look forward to his future. I encouraged him to call the office for a counselling intake. He did, and I received a lovely email of gratitude from him sent via the office. I think about him often and

trust that the counselling support he received helped him to move forward. He promised one day, he would become a lived experience volunteer for Amber Community, and I hope he keeps that promise.

I have also been touched when, after hearing a lived experience story in an RTAS, inevitably, a participant thanks the volunteer for sharing their story and shows acknowledgement of how difficult sharing that story must be and the impact the story has had on them. Those moments are very meaningful for me, and I know that by sharing stories, we are making an impact.

I believe that "it is not hard to be nice", and I treat everyone with dignity and respect regardless of what attitude they bring into a session. I believe that this helps to actively engage them, although it does have to be balanced with a level of assertiveness as well.

Sadly, I have decided to finish with Amber Community only because my permanent part-time role has increased in hours, and I am struggling with all of my commitments.

I had never heard of Amber Community before working with them, and that is probably because I had not been touched by road trauma, but I have seen firsthand the incredible work they do and am thankful their services exist for those in need. Maybe one day I will be back.



Shaun Lennard

Regional Coordinator

I had been involved with road safety in both a professional and voluntary capacity for many years before joining the team at Amber Community, and I continue to work in a variety of areas.

My main area of interest and expertise is motorcycle safety. I've been riding motorcycles on the road for more than 40 years – since I was in high school.

I joined Amber Community in 2021 as a Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) program facilitator, and then in 2022, I also became regional coordinator for Gippsland. Gippsland is a huge region, and the role is now shared with Khai Cooke. We find this arrangement works really well.

Home for me is Sale, where I have lived since 2015. Prior to that, I had been in Hobart in Tasmania, and that's where my interest and connection with road safety commenced. I was president of the then newly-established Tasmanian Motorcycle Council from 2005 until 2014. During that time, I was also a member of the Tasmanian Government's Road Safety Advisory Council (RSAC) and of the Tasmanian Black

Spot Consultative Committee. I was the first motorcycle rider representative to be appointed to the RSAC by a Tasmanian Minister for Infrastructure.

In 2006, I was also elected chair of the Australian Motorcycle Council and have been in that role for all but two years of the past 18 years. As a small non-government organisation with no paid staff, I sometimes describe myself as the unpaid executive officer. I attend many meetings across the country and occasionally overseas, representing motorcycle riders. This has been a great honour. My proudest moment was when I spoke about motorcycle safety at a meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva.

I also do some professional road safety work. I'm a qualified road safety auditor, specialising in safe roads and roadside infrastructure for motorcycles. I'm a friend of the United States Transportation Research Board's committee on Safe Roadside Design and have recently attended the committee's annual meeting in Florida in July 2024.

With Amber Community in Gippsland, we are going through a "rebuild" phase following two years of online seminars. We currently run in-person seminars in Traralgon only. It's been an

absolute honour to meet our lived experience volunteers, who each have powerful stories to tell. Hearing their stories provides me with more personal motivation to make our roads safer.

I feel Amber Community has an important role in the road safety space. Within the "safe system" for managing road safety, there is an appropriately strong focus on safe roads, safe vehicles and safe speeds, but I often feel that safe road users don't receive the attention they should. With 95 per cent of serious casualty crashes primarily due to human error, I see a lot of potential in educating the whole community about safe road use. A safe system is great, but as I often say in the motorcycle community, the best thing is not to crash.

Over the coming 12 months, I look forward to Amber Community having a greater presence across Gippsland and working to spread our message about safe road use as widely as possible.

Road to Hope Writing group

“Judy and Gillian are a great mix of personalities that enable comfort, challenge, and respect for everyone and anything you bring to the group. I am a little short on words to express my gratitude for their efforts and the opportunity to participate in this program. To anyone given the opportunity, it is not so much about your ability to write, but about your willingness to think, and trust an unknown process. Don't be afraid of 'writing' as that is not the focus.”

It has been three years since we began the Road to Hope Writers group within Amber Community, which provides a therapeutic tool for our volunteers and those affected by road trauma. I had previously worked with Judy Bird, group facilitator of the Road to Hope Writers, in other areas of my professional life. I have witnessed the transformation of writing for oneself firsthand, and so I approached Judy to work with Amber Community.

We were fortunate to receive our first grant with EastLink to begin the program. Then a volunteer speaker within Amber Community, Karen Robinson, kindly donated proceeds from her photography exhibition towards the group. This year we also had a generous donation through another volunteer speaker, Kerry Ann, from the Berwick Opportunity Shop. We appreciate the support and generous donations to continue offering the Road to Hope Writers group.

Most people don't think of themselves as writers. As in the comment above from a past participant, the Road to Hope session focus is not on the writing and needs to be experienced to fully understand the results. The writing we usually do is to interact with the world. Writing for yourself can reduce stress, anxiety and untangle your emotions.

Many members who join the group have only written a shopping list in the previous year, while others may have journalled, or tried journalling. At first, members are a little nervous about what is required. Judy, with her gentle and encouraging guidance and clear boundaries on caring for oneself and others in the group, shows how to control the writing and open the gates when you're ready. And this is where the sun shines.

I have developed a great respect for Judy and the members of the group who were willing to look

inside themselves honestly, to express the thread of emotions and feelings, their grief, and show the vulnerability that comes from road trauma, as they were ready. This comes through looking for the light in life with fun writing exercises and savouring the peer interaction where stories are shared, as well as ditty poems, fun rants, and even shopping lists.

Together we share our writing as we're ready, allowing for the dark and light, heart and hope, fears and friendship.

As with road trauma, every experience is different. The Road to Hope Writing group offers members a step-by-step structure to gently put the writer in control of the overwhelming experience of trauma.

Every member's journey has been enriched by developing their own creativity and strengths through writing.

Gillian Scaduto
Regional Coordinator

Alex Prestney Run for Road Trauma

Alex's 'Run for Road Trauma' highlighted the ongoing need for road safety advocacy and support.



Alex Prestney, a current member of Victoria Police, embarked on a journey to raise awareness and funds for road trauma support. Inspired by personal loss and a desire to make a positive impact.

Alex's motivation to undertake this challenging run was deeply personal. Tragically, Alex's 28-year-old brother Josh Prestney was one of four Victorian police officers, along with Lynette Taylor, Kevin King and Glen Humphris, who died on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway after they were hit by a truck during a traffic stop on 22 April 2020.

This devastating event left a profound impact on Alex and his family, driving him to find a meaningful way to honour Josh's memory. Alex's run aimed to raise awareness about the dangers on our roads and the critical importance of supporting those affected by road trauma.

The route Alex chose was both symbolic and demanding.

Spanning 560km, the journey began at the Mildura Police Station in North-West Victoria and concluded at the Victoria Police Memorial in Melbourne CBD. Over 25 days, that included 18 legs, Alex passed through various rural and regional communities, sharing his message of road safety and the importance of support for people impacted by road trauma.

“My goal is to help make our roads a safe environment for everyone who uses them and to prevent tragedy from occurring, as it is avoidable.”

This sentiment resonates deeply with our mission at Amber Community, and we are incredibly grateful for his support.

The overwhelming support for Alex's run underscores the community's recognition of the importance of road safety and

the need for continuous efforts to support those affected by road trauma. Alex Prestney's run is a testament to an individual's power in driving awareness and change. His journey has not only honoured his brother's memory but has also made a significant contribution to supporting those impacted by road trauma.

After Alex concluded this epic run, Amber Community warmly welcomed him and his family to our Mitcham office. We hosted a special afternoon tea to express our gratitude for Alex's outstanding efforts in raising awareness for road trauma through his run and fundraising for our organisation. Thanks to Alex's dedication, an impressive \$31,500 was raised to support vital road trauma support, education and advocacy programs.

Thank you, Alex, for taking on this huge challenge, promoting road safety, and fundraising for Amber Community. Your efforts are making a real difference.

Shine a Light on Road Safety



“A wonderful event that is well organised and feels like one big hug.”

This year marks the eleventh anniversary of the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign, a milestone reflecting our commitment to advocating for safer roads and supporting those affected by road trauma. Over 700 people gathered at Albert Park Lake on a sunny autumn day to walk in solidarity for safer roads and raise funds for Amber Community’s counselling and education services. The event was filled with vibrant colours representing loved ones, highlighting its emotional significance.

Our ambassador, Gerardine Eales, shared her personal story of loss to emphasise the importance of road safety. Gerardine lost her 27-year-old son, Jackson, on 26 December 2016 in a crash in Lara. A fuel tanker drove through a stop sign, and Jackson died at the scene. Gerardine spoke about the loved ones killed and injured on our roads and the enormous ripple effect on those who love them. Her words resonated with attendees, reminding everyone of the devastating impacts of road trauma.

We were honoured to have representatives from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Victoria Police, Road Safety Victoria, and the Honourable Melissa Horne, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, attend the event, showing their ongoing support and commitment. Buildings across the state were illuminated in yellow in support of the Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign and National Road Safety Week. EastLink and Transurban displayed messages on major toll roads and freeways across Melbourne, encouraging drivers to turn on their headlights on Friday 3 May, in support of road safety awareness.

The event, which has grown each year, was supported by the generosity of our sponsors, road safety partners, and the community. Coffee and pastries were kindly provided by the TAC, while food trucks and roving entertainment created a welcoming space for participants to connect and support each other. Local businesses provided amazing items and experiences for our raffle, with three lucky winners taking home a hamper on the day.

The Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign is crucial for sustaining our efforts in providing free counselling, support, and

education services to those impacted by road trauma while raising awareness about the importance of road safety. This year, thanks to our generous sponsors, supporters, and the community, we raised \$89,431, enabling us to continue delivering these vital services. Additionally, the TAC generously provided funding to support the delivery of the Albert Park Lake event, ensuring that every dollar raised could be put back into the organisation to deliver services.

As we reflect on this year’s achievements, we remain dedicated to promoting road safety and supporting those affected by road trauma. Together, with the continued support of our partners and the community, we will continue to shine a light on road safety.

Thank you to our sponsors & donors

We are extremely grateful for the support given by our sponsors and partners.

Sponsors

- EastLink
- Guardian Injury Law
- Henry Carus & Associates
- Narva
- Nevin Lenne Gross Lawyers
- Polaris Lawyers
- Shine Lawyers
- Slater & Gordon Lawyers

Community Partners

- Bendigo Community Bank Blackburn South
- Earth’s Choice
- Foundstone Advisory

Supporters

- Department of Transport and Planning
- TAC
- Transurban
- Victoria Police

We would also like to thank the generosity of businesses who donated items and experiences for our raffle. Thank you to:

- AFL
- Alba Thermal Springs
- Australian Sports Camps
- Bounce Inc.
- Brazen Brownies
- Four Pillars Gin
- Global Ballooning
- Gumbuya World
- Hampers with Bite
- Jayden Ong Winery & Bar
- Luna Park
- Ministry of Chocolate
- Provincial Home Living
- THE LUME Melbourne
- Yarra Valley Chocolaterie & Ice Creamery.

Campaign highlights

Eleven years of Shine a Light on Road Safety

Raised \$89,431 for vital road trauma support, education and advocacy

More than 700 people walked together at Albert Park Lake

The campaign reached over 162,000 people on social media

Ambassador Gerardine Eales shared her story and the campaign with media, reaching over 1 million people via the evening news



Time for Remembering



Our 2023 Time for Remembering ceremony centered on the theme of connection.

Held in the beautiful Queen’s Hall, the ceremony was also live-streamed to ensure that those unable to attend in person could still be a part of this special occasion.

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

Ian Aranyosi shared his personal story of loss and survival following a car crash in May 2019. In the crash, he tragically lost his wife, Heather. His daughter, Cassie, was injured, while his grandson,

Hamish, thankfully, escaped with only minor bruising.

“The pain never subsides but I have learnt that my heart can and has expanded and I know this is what Heather would have wanted for me.”

Families lit candles of remembrance as the names of people injured and 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; Gerardine Eales, Volunteer, Amber Community; Natasha Cook, Volunteer, Amber Community; Amanda Patterson Volunteer, Amber Community; Sam Cockfield, Executive General Manager Road Safety, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC); Assistant Commissioner Glenn Weir, Victoria Police; Irena Zilberman, Counsellor, Amber Community; and Stuart Le Grand, Director, Amber Community.

Special thank you to Ian Aranyosi for sharing his personal story.

We warmly thank the choir, singers from La La Ville with special guest Irine Vela on guitar, 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
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Nadine Goldsmith
Secretary/Public Office



Robin Bowerman
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John Fitzpatrick APM
Board Member



Sue Hansford
Board Member



Stuart LeGrand
Board Member



Merryn Wallace
Board Member

Working Group and Subcommittee

Research and Evaluation Working Group

The Research and Evaluation Working Group develops and oversees a comprehensive research agenda to ensure all Amber Community programs are evidence-based. Their focus includes best practice development, program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The group also fosters research partnerships with road safety organisations, secures funding for research activities, and provides expert insights into road safety policy. Additionally, they enhance Amber Community’s research capabilities by supporting staff skill development and training. Meeting quarterly, these experts play a vital role in evaluating our programs and collaborating with students from the University of Melbourne. We are deeply grateful for their invaluable contributions to improving our education and counselling services.



Jennie Oxley

Professor Jennie Oxley is an expert in injury prevention research, specialising in safety for vulnerable populations. Her work spans health promotion, education, behaviour change, and road safety design.

Jennie has collaborated with Amber Community for more than 15 years, conducting research and evaluations. She is a frequent consultant for the World Health Organisation and supervises major projects in road safety and injury prevention, with her work influencing policy both in Australia and internationally.



Lou Harms

Professor Lou Harms is the Chair and Head of Social Work at The University of Melbourne. With experience as a social worker at the Royal Children’s Hospital and the Transport Accident Commission Rehabilitation Hospital, Lou has supported individuals and families impacted by road trauma.

Over the past 25 years, her academic work has focused on trauma, resilience, and recovery. A Life Member of Amber Community since 2022, Lou has been involved in its work since the 1990s, including serving on the Research and Evaluation Working Group and supporting social work students in their placements.



Belinda Clark

Belinda Clark is a Research Fellow at Monash University, specialising in road safety, particularly in high-risk driving behaviours. A member of the Human Research Ethics Committee for 15 years, she is completing a PhD on license sanctions and unlicensed driving.

Belinda has been involved with Amber Community since 2010, currently serving on the Research and Evaluation Working Group, and was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in 2020.



Tim Nolan

Tim Nolan has been a volunteer with Amber Community for more than ten years, holding degrees in counselling, social science and a master’s in policy and social research.

With personal experience of road trauma, Tim has worked in areas such as men’s behavioural change programs. He contributes to Amber Community’s programs, including the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar Program, Victoria Police Road Investigators Program, and the Driving Better Choices Prison Program.



Samantha Bala

Sam Bala is a provisional psychologist with a degree in Applied Science (Psychology, HR) and is completing a Masters in Organisational Psychology.

With extensive experience across government, academia, and industry, Sam previously directed ISCRR at Monash University, leading research on worker safety and wellbeing. Sam is passionate about using data to support those impacted by road trauma.



Sophie Owen

Sophie Owen is a Principal at Insync, a consulting company specialising in health, education, and community sectors. She has partnered with Amber Community for over 12 years, leading the administration, analysis, and reporting of its Road Trauma Awareness Seminar Program evaluation.

Sophie’s work provides valuable evidence of the impact of Amber Community’s programs on road safety awareness and driving behaviour.



Richard Watkins

Richard Watkins served as a police officer for 42 years, with significant experience in road policing, policy, and collision investigation. He also worked in corporate statistics, focusing on road trauma data.

Richard holds a Bachelor of Arts, a Master’s in Criminology, and a Master’s in Public Policy and Management. He joined Amber Community’s Research and Evaluation Working Group in 2012, contributing his expertise in road policing and policy evaluation.

Financial and Risk Committee

The Financial 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.



Treasurer's Report

Johan Meyer

Amber Community had a strong financial performance for the year ending 30 June 2024.

Trading income increased to \$1,672,204, exceeding budget by three per cent and showing growth of \$282,570 (20 per cent) on last year. This growth has enabled Amber Community to reach more people in need through its services, for which we are extremely grateful.

Amber Community received \$820,206 in grants, aligning with the budgeted amount (up 17.2 per cent from last year), enabling more counselling resources to help those in need. The grant funding received from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) is critical to our counselling services, which support those impacted by road trauma. We are grateful to continue with our long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship.

Income from our education services amounted to \$553,291 (up 18.4 per cent from last year), which brought our participant numbers back to pre-covid levels. We look forward to continuing our efforts in educating road users about the impact of road incidents on the community.

Amber Community raised \$265,592 through memberships and fundraising efforts (up 29.4 per cent on last year). The annual

Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign was a success, raising more than \$89,000. Although it was lower than our \$100,000 goal, we are extremely appreciative of the generous support received from the community. The funds raised during this event will be instrumental in supporting our services.

Tragically, the number of lives lost on our roads during the past 12-month period increased by 5.9 per cent compared to the previous year. The total number of lives lost was 287, surpassing the previous year's figure of 271. The ongoing increase in lives lost and people injured on the roads underscores the urgency and importance of our work in promoting road safety and supporting those affected by road trauma.

Although expenses grew by 17 per cent on last year, they remained well below budget and amounted to \$1,663,925. Cost of living pressures remain high and are placing upward pressure on operating expenses. Amber Community remained conscious of spending and invested in initiatives that directly impacted its service offering. There were no significant one-off expenses in the last financial year following 2023, when several strategic projects were implemented including the relocation to our new office and investments in our digital transformation. The investment in our technology will continue over the next 12

months as these advancements serve as a foundation for future improvements, particularly in the development of our counselling database, ensuring that we can better support our community and meet their evolving needs. Additionally, we are investing in a new Customer Relationship Management system.

Amber Community recorded a surplus for the year of \$8,280 after it posted a deficit in 2023.

In conclusion, the financial performance of Amber Community for the year 2024 is in stark contrast to that of the previous year where all the foundational work was completed, setting up Amber Community for the amazing work it does in supporting those impacted by road trauma.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our strategic partners for their ongoing support. Without your financial contributions, it would not be possible to provide the counselling and support to those impacted by road trauma. Finally, I would also like to thank our accountant Theresa Cocking, our auditing body LDAssurance, Amber Community's CEO Bernadette Nugent, our staff, volunteers, the finance and risk committee, and fellow Board members for their tireless contribution, and look forward to your ongoing support over the coming year.

Johan Meyer
Treasurer

Auditor's Report

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

Opinion

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises of the summary statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, 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 2024.

In our opinion, the summary financial statements derived from the audited financial report of Amber Community Incorporated for the year ended 30 June 2024 are consistent, in all material aspects, with the audited financial report. 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.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Australian

Accounting Standards for the financial report. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon. The summary financial statements and the audited financial report do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited financial report.

The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified auditor's opinion on that financial report in our report dated 3 September 2024. That report also includes:

- An emphasis of matter – basis of accounting section that draws attention to note 1 in the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting
- An emphasis of matter – economic dependency section that draw attention to note 17 in the financial report, which describes the reliance of the entity on the from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) grant, and the uncertainty related to the extension of this Agreement

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.

Stephen O'Kane

Partner
LDAssurance
Chartered Accountants

Dated: 3 September 2024
330 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Financial Report

| Income | 2024 | 2023 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Grants | 820,206 | 700,000 |
| Fees and charges | 553,291 | 467,340 |
| Fundraising | 177,340 | 131,837 |
| Donations | 90,308 | 75,916 |
| Interest | 31,059 | 14,541 |
| Total | 1,672,204 | 1,389,634 |

| Expenses | 2024 | 2023 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Advertising, branding and business development | (678) | (1,318) |
| Amortisation - right-of-use assets | (61,726) | (51,956) |
| Audit fees | (7,992) | (7,000) |
| Bank charges | (7,163) | (6,512) |
| Cleaning expenses | (4,449) | (4,325) |
| Client support projects | (20,643) | (7,530) |
| Depreciation | (4,612) | (5,224) |
| Education venue hire | (39,188) | (26,655) |
| Entertainment and gifts | (3,057) | (1,018) |
| Fundraising expenses and commissions | (23,281) | (27,115) |
| HR recruitment, meeting and other expenses | (24,694) | (26,376) |
| Insurance | (13,322) | (13,690) |
| Interest expense | (9,430) | (9,492) |
| Legal fees | - | (5,000) |
| Loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment | - | (4,532) |
| Minor equipment, service and maintenance | (54,441) | (37,386) |
| Office and business consultancy expenses | (7,305) | (9,331) |
| Office rent, rates and body corporate fees | (9,744) | (20,174) |
| Postage and stationery | (22,137) | (12,362) |
| Relocation costs | - | (6,639) |
| Salaries and wages | (1,128,153) | (963,019) |
| Superannuation | (122,996) | (98,091) |
| Support groups and memberships | (5,643) | (4,414) |
| Telephone and communication | (10,993) | (11,562) |
| Time for Remembering | (21,191) | (12,650) |
| Training and development | (4,884) | (3,969) |
| Travel, accommodation, parking and motor vehicle expenses | (13,361) | (11,619) |
| Utilities and permits | (4,095) | (5,093) |
| Volunteer expenses | (6,609) | (3,238) |
| Website | (2,250) | (3,099) |
| WorkCover | (29,887) | (22,029) |
| Total | (1,663,924) | (1,422,418) |
| Profit/(loss) for the year | 8,280 | (32,784) |
| Other comprehensive income | - | - |
| Total comprehensive income for the year | 8,280 | (32,784) |

| Assets | 2024 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Current assets | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 763,295 | 759,504 |
| Trade and other receivables | 40,616 | 33,700 |
| Other assets | 21,050 | 13,005 |
| Total current assets | 824,961 | 806,209 |

| Non-current assets | 2024 | 2023 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Property, plant and equipment | 12,275 | 12,617 |
| Right-of-use assets | 186,140 | 247,866 |
| Total non-current assets | 198,415 | 260,483 |
| Total assets | 1,023,376 | 1,066,692 |

| Liabilities | 2024 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Current liabilities | | |
| Trade and other payables | 109,700 | 82,298 |
| Lease liabilities | 58,183 | 56,587 |
| Employee benefits | 212,875 | 184,972 |
| Other financial liabilities | 132,969 | 179,427 |
| Total current liabilities | 513,727 | 503,284 |

| Non-current liabilities | 2024 | 2023 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Lease liabilities | 140,290 | 198,473 |
| Employee benefit | 13,636 | 17,492 |
| Total non-current liabilities | 153,926 | 215,965 |
| Total liabilities | 667,653 | 719,249 |
| Net assets | 355,723 | 347,443 |

| Equity | 2024 | 2023 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Retained earnings | 355,723 | 347,443 |
| Total equity | 355,723 | 347,443 |

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.

| | |
|--|--|
| Acton Print | Gumbuaya World |
| AFL | Hampers with Bite |
| Alba Thermal Springs | Insync, Sophie Owen |
| Amy Gillett Foundation | Jayden Ong Winery & Bar |
| Anne Wicking Consulting | Luna Park |
| Australasian College of Road Safety | Melbourne Fire Brigade |
| Australian Clothing Company | Metec |
| Australian Sports Camps | Ministry of Chocolate |
| Benalla Ensign | MUARC |
| Benalla Rural City Council | National Road Safety Partnerships Program |
| Bounce Inc. | NGWALA Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation |
| Brazen Brownies | One FM Shepparton |
| Bunnings Nunawading | Provincial Home Living |
| Cool Heads Young Driver Program | Road Safe Goulburn Valley & Road Safe North East |
| David Bunn & Rowena Ritchie | Road Safety Victoria |
| David Rose from Melbourne University – Research and Evaluation | Rotary Club of Bayside Geelong |
| Dhurringile Prison | Rotary Club of Geelong |
| Eastern Solicitors Law Association | Sentencing Advisory Council |
| Four Pillars Gin | SES Benalla Unit |
| Frank Amato Photography | Shepparton News |
| Frankston Arts Centre | Stan Winford, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University |
| Global Ballooning | Stuart Newstead, MUARC |
| Greater Shepparton City Council | |

Tamer Sahin, North West Metro Region, Department of Justice and Community Safety
 THE LUME Melbourne
 Vaka Consulting – Emmagness Ruzvidzo
 Victoria State Emergency Service – Peer Support
 Volunteering Geelong
 Volunteers Victoria
 Werkling
 Wheelton Investments P/L – Budget Car and Rental
 WIN News Albury/Wodonga
 WIN News Shepparton
 Wodonga TAFE
 Yarra Valley Chocolatarie & Ice Creamery

Our major corporate partners

Bendigo Bank Community Bank
 Blackburn South
 Earth's Choice
 EastLink
 Foundstone Advisory
 Guardian Injury Law
 Henry Carus + Associates
 Narva
 Nevin Lenne Gross Lawyers
 Polaris Lawyers
 Shine Lawyers
 Slater & Gordon Lawyers

Our road safety partners and supporters

Ambulance Victoria
 Community Correctional Services
 Country Fire Authority
 Department of Justice
 Department of Transport and Planning
 Magistrates' Court of Victoria
 Transport Accident Commission
 The Victorian Government
 VicRoads
 Victoria Police
 Victoria State Emergency Services

Supporters – Our major donors and community fundraisers

Andrew, Belinda, Alex, Rachel and Eliza Prestney, in memory of Josh Prestney
 Arnold Dallas McPherson walking for Lachlan McLaren
 Bayside Geelong Rotary Club supporting those impacted by road trauma
 Bellarine North Rotary Club supporting those impacted by road trauma
 Berwick Opportunity Inc.
 Caroline's Angels walking in honour of Caroline Buttigieg

Evolve Skate Store and their generous community of Sneakerheads. In the memory of Chris "Spanto" Printup
 Eyes on the road for Koby, walking for Koby Wellman taken far too soon
 Iain McHaffie and family in loving memory of Margaret
 Jarney Newey – supporting people impacted by road trauma
 JYE105 walking for our loved one – Jye Eiffert
 Nationwide Group, walking for safer roads for our drivers
 Planet Possible
 RACV

Slater & Gordon Lawyers are proud to support the amazing work of Amber Community
 South Warrandyte FRV
 Team Brans walking for Brandon Kyle Dowel, AKA Brans
 Team Duong walking for our dearest Duong, we love and miss you dearly
 Team Holly walking for our beloved Holly
 Team Jacojay, in loving memory of Jayden Robbins Brown
 Team Twenty-Two walking for Stephanie
 Team Tybunny walking for our precious angel, Tyler Jae Shaw
 The Kirpichnikov Family

The Lachlan McLaren Foundation, in loving memory of Lachlan
 The Rotary Club of Horsham East Inc., in loving memory of our member, Mrs Sue Holmes
 Uyen, family and friends, in loving memory of our dearest Duong
 Walk for Scotty, walking for Scott Lang
 Xander Alpherts and family in loving memory of Freya

Werkling WorkInKind Grant

We were privileged to be a recipient of Werkling's WorkInKind social impact program. Werkling connects businesses with on-demand talent across Australia and developed this program to support not-for-profit organisations with limited funding sources.

The WorkInKind grant provided Amber Community with a highly skilled professional who worked closely with our Marketing Manager, Bronwyn Saville, to review our website and social media plan, implement SEO, and improve our overall online presence. Beginning in December 2023, this project resulted in significant improvements in our search engine rankings, page views, and engagement.

We are incredibly grateful to Werkling for funding this important project and pairing Amber Community with a talented marketing and SEO professional. The assessment and enhancements made to our website enable us to reach more people in our community.

We would also like to thank Emmagness Ruzvidzo from AKA Marketing Consulting, who completed this project and went above and beyond to ensure we had all the tools necessary to increase our community outreach. We can't speak highly enough of her skills, knowledge and work ethic. Emmagness's enthusiasm was contagious and made this project seamless.

Thank you to Werkling for facilitating the grant and this invaluable opportunity.



Amber Community

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

1300 367 797 | www.ambercommunity.org.au

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