

# Combating Vicarious Trauma



## About Us

The MacKillop Institute, part of MacKillop Family Services, delivers evidence-based programs that support organisations and schools to improve the lives of children and young people – and strengthen the capacity and wellbeing of the frontline staff who care for them.

MacKillop Family Services, founded in 1997, is grounded in a deep commitment to social justice and a vision to build safe, nurturing communities for all children and families. Inspired by our founders' mission, a 170-year legacy, and more than 2,500 staff across 53 sites nationally we provide high-quality services in family support, out-of-home care, disability and education, including operating our own schools and outreach programs. We have a strong focus on preventing harm and promoting healing.

Established in 2019, The MacKillop Institute draws on our over three decades of frontline experience, the expertise and practice of our staff and academic input from university partnerships. This real-world foundation from thousands of staff working across organisations, care, schools, clinical and outreach settings, combined with robust evidence-base and evaluations has led to the development of our trauma-informed professional learning programs, training and consultancy services. This includes our models ReLATE and Power to Kids, that embed sustainable, impactful approaches that foster safety, healing, and wellbeing.

## Who do we work with?

The MacKillop Institute, part of MacKillop Family Services, builds on a 170-year legacy of supporting some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Informed by the latest research, we know what works to improve safety, wellbeing and culture, and we walk alongside organisations to put that knowledge into practice.

Our team includes educators, clinicians, psychologists and social workers, who collaborate with schools, universities, government and organisations in health and community services to strengthen systems of care, culture and learning.

Through professional learning, training, tailored programs, and expert advice, the Institute helps create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where children, families, staff, and communities can thrive.

### Mackillop Institute Partners



## **VICARIOUS TRAUMA**

The MacKillop Institute recognises the significant risks posed to staff exposed to client trauma, public complaints and sensitive care issues. Our program is drawn from our 170 year experience and 2,300 staff walking daily alongside some of Australia's most vulnerable. We share our deep knowledge of best practice through evidence-based learning programs.

Our combatting vicarious trauma training is designed to prevent, identify, and mitigate vicarious trauma while fostering resilience, wellbeing, and psychological safety across organisations. Drawing on our extensive experience delivering trauma-informed training to sectors including aged care, health, justice, community services, and financial services, the MacKillop Institute offers a proven, evidence-based model.

Our approach combines professional learning, practical tools, and peer support structures to ensure sustainable outcomes. The program is designed to address immediate awareness and response, structured peer facilitation, and individual debriefing supports.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

We tailor our training plans to specifically meet the needs of an organisation's workforce, ensuring a blend of trauma theory, relevant case studies and hands-on skills that foster resilience and support a healthy, productive work environment.

The program has been designed to support a strong organisational culture and a psychologically safe workplace. The program objectives cover two key components:

- Professional Learning for the immediate creation of shared language and shared practice to prevent identify and respond to vicarious trauma.
- In-built peer support to reinforce evidence-based strategies profiled in foundational professional learning. These build staff resilience and capacity to manage self and others.

## Combatting Vicarious Trauma in the Workplace Workshop

### Upon workshop completion participants will be able to:

- Articulate definitions for vicarious trauma and toxic stress
- Reflect on the impact of this on themselves, colleagues, team functioning and clients
- Possess an understanding of the Window of Tolerance, their own triggers and strategies
- Understand the differences between compassion satisfaction, burnout and vicarious trauma
- Appreciate the roles of empathy and compassion in supporting wellbeing
- Recall the physical, behavioural and psychological warning signs of vicarious trauma
- Identify the 7 risk factors
- Understand the 8 evidence-based prevention strategies
- Articulate and share their personal safety plan
- Reflect upon their personal self-care inventory
- Reference a personal self-care plan, created in session
- Report increased capacity to better support themselves and others

### Within 3-months employees will be able to:

- Reflect on their safety and self-care within internal supervision and external Reflective Practice
- Identify scenarios and responses that place them at risk, and in real-time access tools and frameworks to help-seek
- Identify signs of escalation and stress with customers, and apply trauma-informed responses to promote regulation and resist re-traumatisation

### Within 6-months employees will be able to:

- Accommodate preventative self-care practices into their personal and professional lives
- Provide peer support for colleagues experiencing distressing situations, including referring them to tools and frameworks covered in workshops and debriefs
- Consider their work design and potential exposure, and discuss this in supervision

## TRAINING CONTENT

The proposed training content includes:

### **Combatting vicarious trauma in the workplace**

#### **Session 1: Overview | 10:00 am - 10:45 am**

Acknowledgment & introductions  
Subject overview & your organisational context  
Defining Trauma & Vicarious Trauma  
Organisation case study

#### **Session 2: Key Concepts | 10:45 am - 11:30 am**

Compassion Satisfaction – what is it, and how do we generate it?  
Burn-out and Vicarious Trauma  
Balancing empathy and compassion  
The Window of Tolerance

#### **Break: 11:30 am - 11:45 am**

#### **Session 2 | Continued 11:45 am - 12:45 pm**

System Responses  
Contagion and Parallel Process  
5 Dysfunctions of a Team

#### **Lunch: 12:45 pm - 1:15 pm**

#### **Session 3: Awareness and Action | 1:15 pm - 2:45 pm**

Warning Signs  
Risk Factors  
Prevention Strategies  
Safety Plan Creation (activity)

#### **Break: 2:45 pm - 2:55 pm**

#### **Session 4: Sustaining Wellbeing | 2:55 pm - 4:30 pm**

Self-Care to foster resilience  
Self-Care Planning (activity)  
Content review  
Open Discussion – application to organisational context  
Wrap up – from knowledge to practice

## SOME OF OUR TEAM



**Cameron Burgess**

**National Program Director Sanctuary  
The MacKillop Institute**

*(Workshop Facilitator and Key Contact)*

Cameron holds a Master of Business Psychology, a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons), a Diploma of Front-Line Management, as well as qualifications in Leadership, Workplace Training and Assessment and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

Cameron has over 25 years' experience across the Human Services Sector, in Australia and Asia, and has held senior roles in large Not for Profits such as Mission Australia, as well as having worked in Government. During this time, Cameron has created and delivered multiple professional learning packages to build the capacity of adult learners.

In his role as Australian Director for the sanctuary model, Cameron currently supports organisations such as Anglicare, Kanda, Victims of Crime, and The Department of Child Protection with trauma-informed professional learning, as well as certifying organisations as Trauma Informed Sanctuary Organisations. Cameron has coached the Services Australia's Executive Team to respond to the psychological needs of their workforce following the Robodebt Royal Commission and worked with multiple C-Suite leaders to enhance workplace wellbeing.

Cameron has also customised vicarious trauma training to support organisations such as The Brotherhood of St. Lawrence's Aged Care team, NSW Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Sport Integrity Australia, Westpac, and Milton Lawyers.



**Dr. Julie Avery**

**Director**

*(Workshop Facilitator)*

Julie is a registered Educational and Developmental Psychologist (Reg. #90-02533) with over 35 years practice experience across the Aged, Disability, Out of Home Care and Education sectors.

Julie holds a PhD in Public Health & Preventative Medicine, conferred by the Health and Social Care Unit of Monash University, Melbourne.

Julie also holds a Post Graduate Diploma of Educational Psychology, a Master of Social Science, a Bachelor of Social Science, and a Certificate in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. Julie's previous roles have included working in an allied geriatric health team within a large hospital and provided aged care assessments in her role as a private practitioner. This included identifying undiagnosed cognitive delays and the provision of supervision to practitioners working within Aged and Disability Care. Julie also provided supervision to palliative care nurses within a geriatric setting.

In Julie's role as Principal Clinical Practitioner with MacKillop Family Services, Julie regularly provided group reflective practice, individual supervision and critical incident debriefing.

Julie is a faculty member for the Sanctuary model, a trauma-informed, whole-of-organisation cultural change program. Within this, Julie provides professional learning, coaching and assessment against quality standards to a range of not-for-profits and Governments.

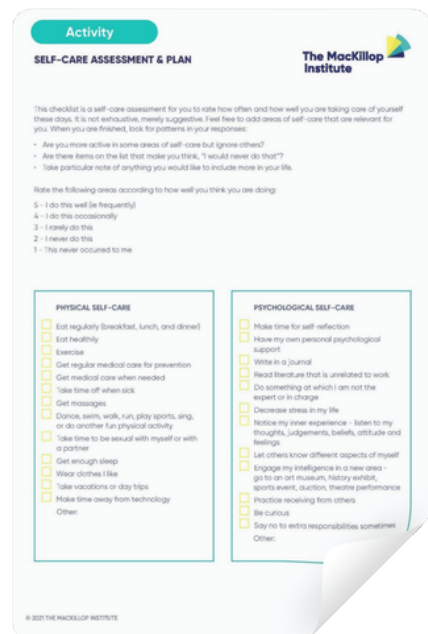
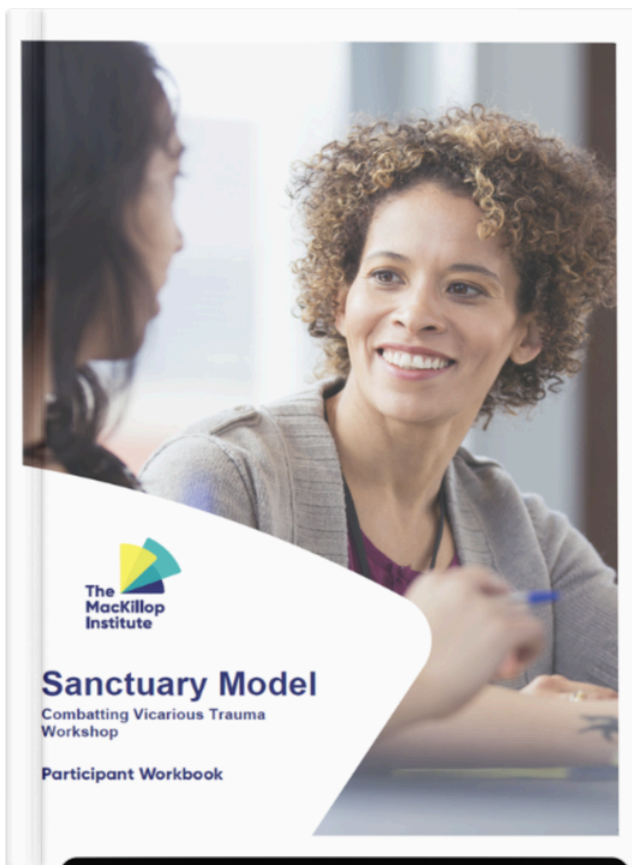
## SUPPORT MATERIALS

Participants will receive a Participant Workbook allowing them to capture key learnings, and reference post training.

Participants will also receive a template for a Self-Care Plan which they will populate within session, along with a physical safety plan which can be carried with them as a visible aid.

Organisations will be provided with the Power Point presentation from which they can create infographics or resources. A PDF copy of the Participant Workbook will similarly be provided, along with 1-page explainers for the tools provided: Community Meetings, Effective Supervision, Self Care and Safety Plans.

A list of recommended and reputable reading, videos and websites will also be provided, allowing organisations to share these on their chosen portal for continuous learning.



# EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

The MacKillop Institute evaluates each workshop delivery, sharing feedback with the organisation, and using this for continuous improvement. We welcome the opportunity to co-design a workshop evaluation to meet your specific needs. Our standard evaluation can be viewed here: <https://nam.dcv.ms/ETKP9CDm6l>

The MacKillop Institute also regularly uses the Professional Quality of Life measure (ProQOL) with clients as an evaluation tool. ProQOL is a commonly used measure, of the positive and negative effects of working with people who have experienced extremely stressful experiences. It provides measures across compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress). The MacKillop Institute can discuss the use of ProQOL with your organisation.

## The ProQOL incorporates two aspects:

1. Compassion Satisfaction and;
2. Compassion Fatigue

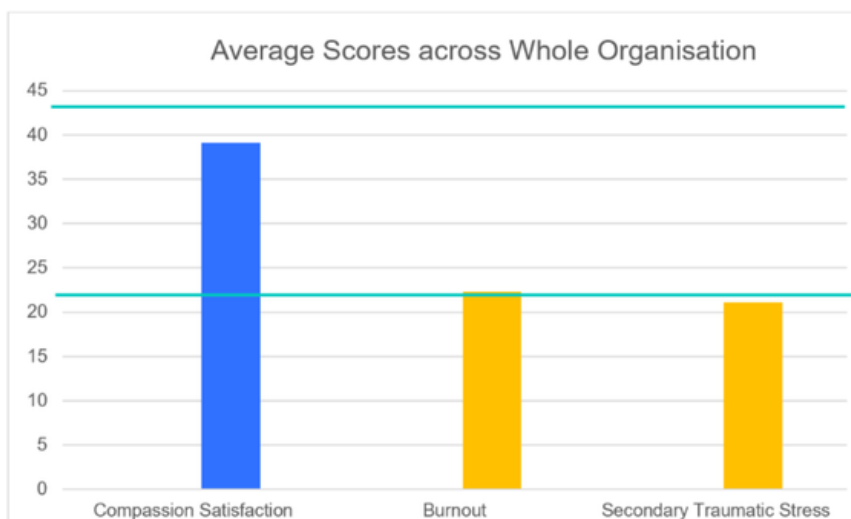
Compassion Fatigue has two dimensions:

- Burnout – exhaustion, frustration, anger and depression are typical of burnout;
- Secondary traumatic stress which includes negative feelings driven by fear and work-related trauma.

While some trauma may be direct, in other cases work related trauma can be a combination of both primary and secondary trauma.

The ProQOL is an assessment and planning tool and is not meant to be used as a diagnostic test. It is important to consider other aspects when applying the tool including gender, culture or the 'helping' experience.

In administering ProQOL, organisations are able to measure the contribution training, peer support and other mental health interventions have made to overall workplace wellbeing, better resourcing and managing interventions.



## FEEDBACK



**The expertise of MacKillop staff has benefited our employees in many ways, and on several levels, such as providing information and training to help our teams cope with and manage trauma and its aftermath”.**

Megan Prest. Operations Manager,  
Westpac Safer Children Safer Communities Program



**“Your efforts to embed knowledge beyond training day so appreciated. Thank you for bringing all that effort and personality to your delivery of today’s training. This is so important to our department.**

Participant,  
Royal Children’s Hospital CASA team



**I loved the Safety Plan...it’s a very helpful reminder to self-regulate. The training day helped me feel psychologically safer with my colleagues”**

Participant,  
Miltons Lawyers



# Contact us

**Cameron Burgess**

National Program Director, Sanctuary  
MacKillop Institute  
cameron.burgess@mackillop.org.au  
**M 0427 741 985**

 [mackillopinstitute.org.au](http://mackillopinstitute.org.au)

 [linkedin.com/company/themackillopinstitute](https://linkedin.com/company/themackillopinstitute)



*Mackillop Family Services acknowledges  
the Traditional Custodians and their  
Elders in each of the communities where  
we work.*

