



new
story
company
theatre for change

New Story Company acknowledges
the traditional owners
of the land on which we work and live.
We pay our respects to Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Elders past,
present and emerging;
and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people
in this land.



Song: 5 days

Lyrics by Jami Bladel

Music by Gai Anderson and Ngaire Green
performed by Gai Anderson

New Story Company (NSC)

founded in 2021 to:

- Develop new works that tell transformative stories;
- Support personal growth through dramatic arts;
- Produce theatre for change projects;
- Stage and tour new works.



MOTHERING PROJECT

- A partnership between New Story Company, Anglicare Tasmania, T'gari Lia Child and Family Centre and mothers and grandmothers with lived experience of having children forcibly removed by the state child safety system.
- The project has resulted in the creation of a new work of theatre for change titled '***For a Mothers Love***' .

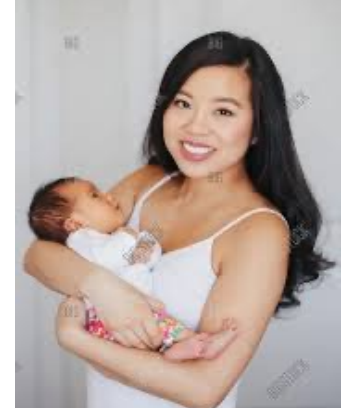
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What inspired the Mothering Project



An Art installation with over 300 mother and child images in a former colonial orphanage...



ALL

Sasisupa Singaribud

We are sorry
- I am sorry -
for your
suffering. Be in peace
and know that you are
loved

ent and time past
h present in
future
Future contained
time past.
ne is unredeemable

immortal in the hearts
of those who won't forget

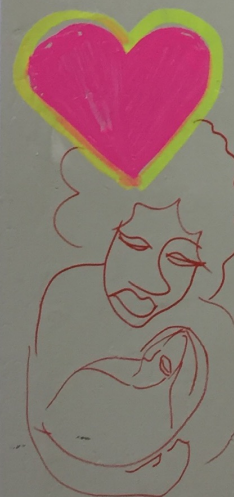
ONE

children.

[illegible]

Love
in the
walls

YOU HAVE
BEEN
FOUND

[illegible]

The writing on the wall

There are 2 people in these pictures



Our colonial heritage is felt in more than just sandstone



‘Protection’ — A Colonial System of Paternalistic Control

- A paternalistic approach to First Nations people on the part of the Australian government has been a pattern since the arrival of the First Fleet;
- Colonial state governments began enacting “protectionist” policies that made Aboriginal people wards of the state - controlling all aspects of their lives, via a system of confinement on reserves, institutionalisation and forced child removals;
- The results of these policies are still being experienced today. EG: the NT Intervention, the imposition of the cashless welfare card, deaths in custody, police brutality towards First Nations people, the failure of Closing the Gap, and continuing forced child removals.



Convict Children removed from their mothers

6,000 children entered the Queens Orphan School in New Town (Tas) between 1828 and 1879, yet few were actual orphans - most had living parents

The death rate was high. Those who survived remained in care and under instruction until the age of 12, when they were sent to work as unpaid and unfree, servants in settler households – in other words, they were slaves.



The Industrial Revolution changed our relationship to time, to family, to community and to nature.

Industrial Capitalism has predominated as the western economic model since the late 19th century.

Industrial capitalism is characterized by:

A photograph of an industrial facility, likely a power plant or refinery, situated along a body of water. Two tall smokestacks are visible, emitting thick plumes of dark smoke that drift across the sky. The scene is captured during sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange and yellow glow. The industrial structures are silhouetted against the bright sky. The image is partially framed by a white curved shape on the right side.

The Industrial Revolution
and Industrial Capitalism
set us on the course
that has led to
Climate Change

DISRESPECTING MOTHERS has been prevalent in our society for a long time

When my mother was having her children in the 1950s and 1960s, mothers were "knocked out" and babies were extracted with forceps and taken away. Many disrespectful practices still exist today...

EXAMPLE: According to a recent study by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

- The proportion of selected first-time mothers having a caesarean section has increased nationally and across all remoteness areas between 2004 and 2020.
- selected women were consistently more likely across all years to have a caesarean section if giving birth in a private hospital
- In 2020, 43% of selected women giving birth in a private hospital had a caesarean section compared to 29% in a public hospital.

We need to find more ways to respect mothers & motherhood

Give mothers a chance to be changed by motherhood and respect their right to grow and learn on the job

Recognise, respect and revalue the unique and important role a mother plays in the life and wellbeing of her child

Provide social support for mothers and children

As a society - encourage loving attention to children

Support women to exercise choice in childbirth and help them make educated decisions about birth and breastfeeding

Support mothers to achieve physical and psychological health and wellbeing

Nobody's job

In the current Child Safety System in Tasmania Nobody looks after and support the wellbeing of the parents who have their children removed



The MOTHERING project is evidence based.

- It sets out to advocate for the mothers who have had their children taken from them by Child Safety Services even though they didn't do anything wrong.
- The mothers in this project want to see the system change.
- For themselves. For their children.

And for other women and children who are suffering or may suffer at the hands of an unfair system that is out of date and out of touch.



PRODUCING PARTNERS

- This project is produced with the support and involvement of Anglicare Tasmania's **Social Action Research Centre** and the Tasmanian Government's **T'gari Lia Child and Family Centre**

SUPPORTED BY



Tasmanian
Government



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AnglicareTAS
Choice, support and hope

Enabled through state & federal Arts funding

This activity was supported
by Arts Tasmania

SUPPORTED BY



Australian Government



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

The Social Action and Research Centre (SARC) at Anglicare Tasmania



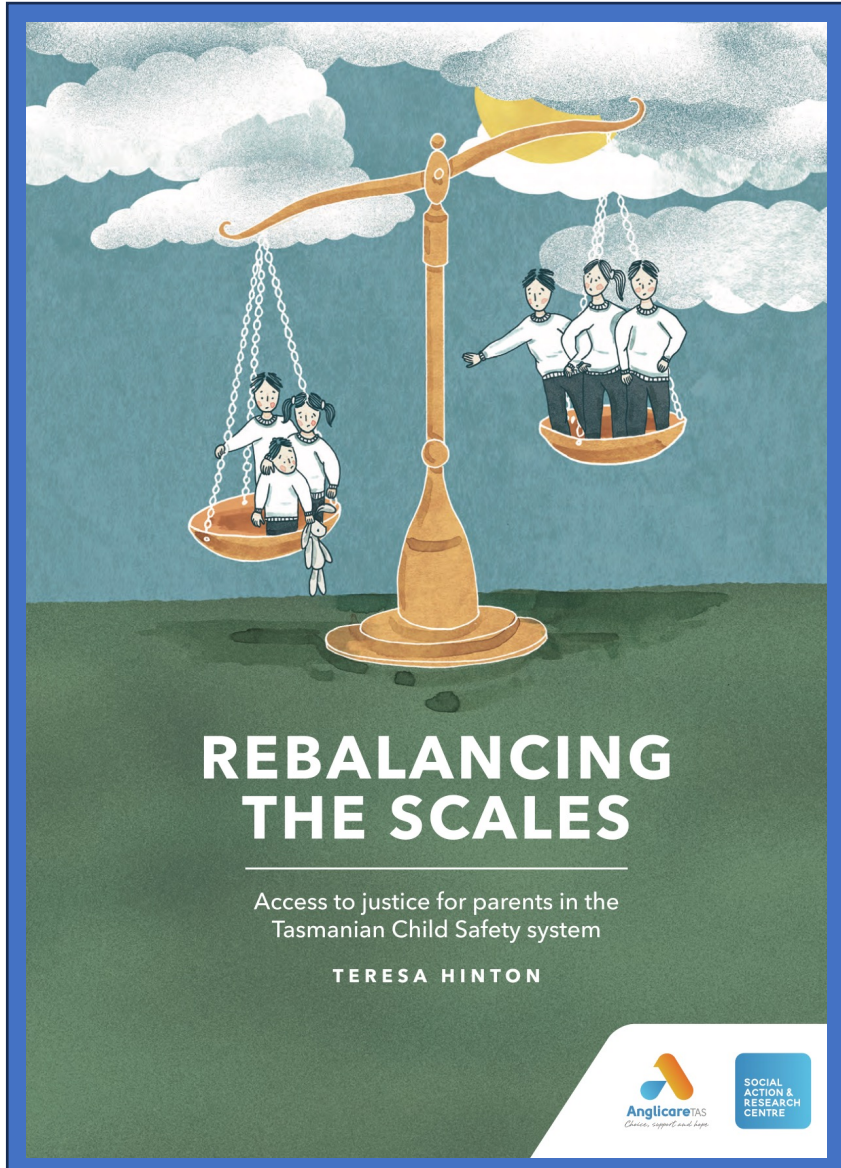
- SARC had, for a number of years, been undertaking research with parents involved in the Tasmanian Child Safety System.
- Having a child taken from you is a highly traumatic event but mothers in the child safety system are not well supported, their needs are often not well understood and their experience of the system is punitive and lacking in kindness.
- A group of mothers emerged who wanted to find a way of using their experiences to help other parents in the Child Safety System and to tackle the stigma they face in working to keep their families together.

Research

our starting point was Anglicare's published reports... and then we engaged in 12 months of on the ground, continuous consultation with people with lived experience

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REBALANCING THE SCALES

Access to justice for parents in the Tasmanian Child Safety system

- There are increasing concerns about how the legal system is able to support and respond to vulnerable families and ensure that justice is done.
- This report documents the experiences of Tasmanian parents in the Court and legal processes associated with the Child Safety system (CSS).

Anglicare Tasmania 2020

Hearing the Voices of Tasmanian Families Involved with the Child Safety System

Discussion Paper
November 2018



Working for a just Tasmania

This paper outlines the case for developing an effective individual and systemic advocacy service for Tasmanian parents and families involved with CSS.

Tasmania currently has few dedicated programs which can support and advocate for parents and families involved with CSS and no mechanism to routinely hear their voices so that they can contribute to the development and design of policy and services.

At a time of major reform to CSS this is a significant gap.

Anglicare Tasmania, 2018

Parents in the child protection system



Teresa Hinton
Social Action and Research Centre
Anglicare Tasmania



This report documents the experiences of 47 parents who have been involved with Tasmania's Child Protection Service.

It also covers the experiences of over 140 frontline workers employed by 40 different non-government services (NGOs) that have provided support to these parents.

In addition, the research involved speaking with 16 child protection staff from across the state and five lawyers involved in child protection work.

Anglicare Tasmania
June 2013

Theatre for Change

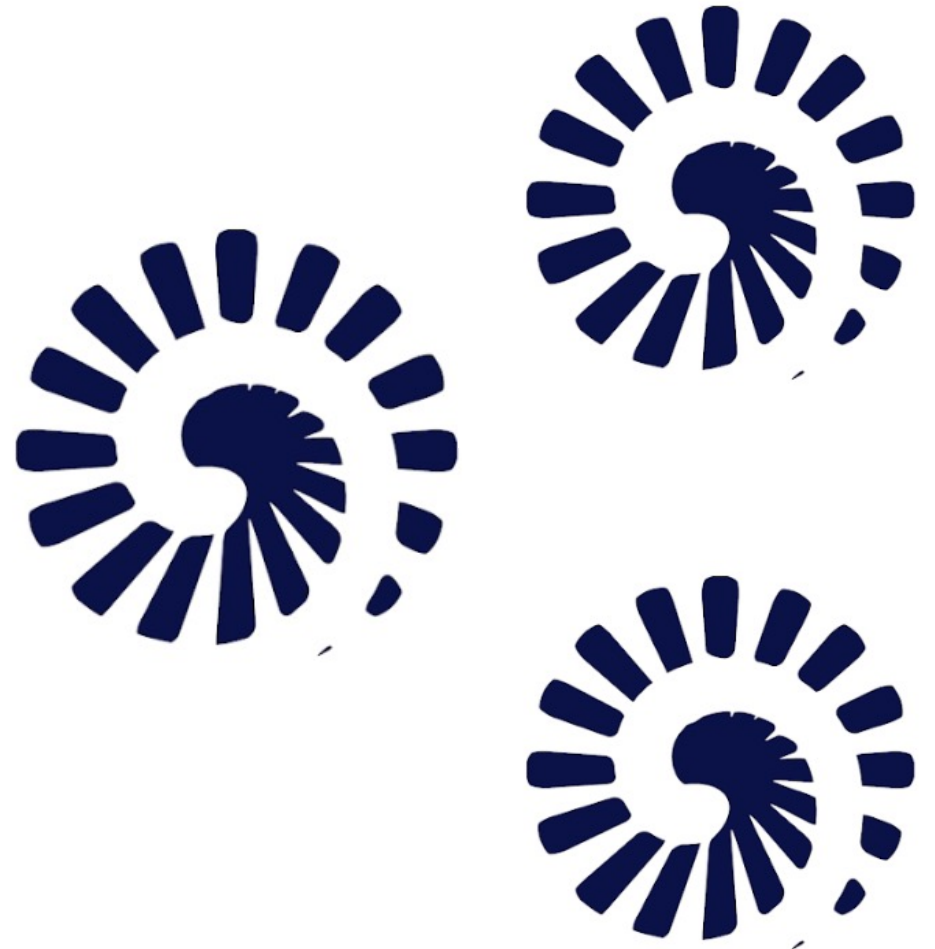
an innovative approach to advocacy

To our knowledge
this is the first attempt in Australia
to use the creative process to work
with mothers and grandmothers
in the child safety system
and to tell their stories to a wider audience.



Recruitment

- **T'gari Lia Child and Family Centre** in Bridgewater were familiar with the previous SARC research and were able to offer a safe space, child care if necessary and a room for weekly meetings.
- They were also able to identify some women who were current users of the Centre who might be interested in participating.
- Recruiting mothers and grandmothers into the project was challenging.
- Lack of transport can make participating difficult







STORY CONSULTANTS 1

A core group of 9 women worked on the project

Representing the group here today are:

Leanne Crowden

Diane Leary

Jolene Barratt

Tracey Howard

Gai Anderson



Lived Experience

- All had long term involvement with the Child Safety System - ranging from two to twelve years
- between them they had 18 children who had experienced removal and eleven grandchildren.
- Another key characteristic was the high rate of disability among the children including ADHD, autism and Downs Syndrome.
- Three of the mothers identified as Aboriginal.



Supportive Environment

- A team was built around participating women to provide a supportive environment, childcare and transport if required.
- The team included a professional counsellor and a Pakana elder available for free consultations, debriefing and referral if any of the participants found the work triggering.
- As the work progressed the coordinator of the Centre, as a known figure and someone involved in the work, was considered to provide the best support to participants
- Tgari Lia Centre provided a safe haven



Reasons for getting
involved...





STORY CONSULTANTS 2

A core group of 9 women worked on the project.

Representing the group here today are:

Leanne Crowden

Diane Leary

Jolene Barratt

Tracey Howard

Gai Anderson

Sharing stories – creative process



- Regular weekly five-hour sessions at T'gari Lia
- Spread over a 12-month period
- NSC facilitated the process and operated as teacher, writer, producer and director
- Informal and relaxed atmosphere
- Principles of inclusivity, collaboration, respect, listening, reflecting back, trialing ideas and creative risk taking
- Creative processes to build trust and develop material

10
9
8
7
6
5
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3
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1
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+
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7
8
9
0

BIRTH
MOTHER -
NO
LOVE

4
Kinder
met best
friend

8
School
Camp.

13
independent
+ left School

14
left
boyfriend

Fight
2 Mum

15
induced coma
prescribed
drug over
dose
paracetamol
+
dads drugs

16
Home
to
Grandma
who
looked
after
me

17
Boy
turned
man
+ over
protective

Met
boy 1800
11/2/81

17
Escaped
out the window
+ back to study

1985
pregnant
fghas
Pamela
Muminton
wanted
baby
but not
me.

Remi led
2 1st boyfriend
+ moved in

2nd
Boyfriend

miscarriage

left him
+ took
2 kids
to stay
with
Grandma
+ he joined
me.

moved out
to own place
with partner
+ 2 kids

REFLECTIONS ON...

Being a Mother
Pregnancy

Baby
early childhood

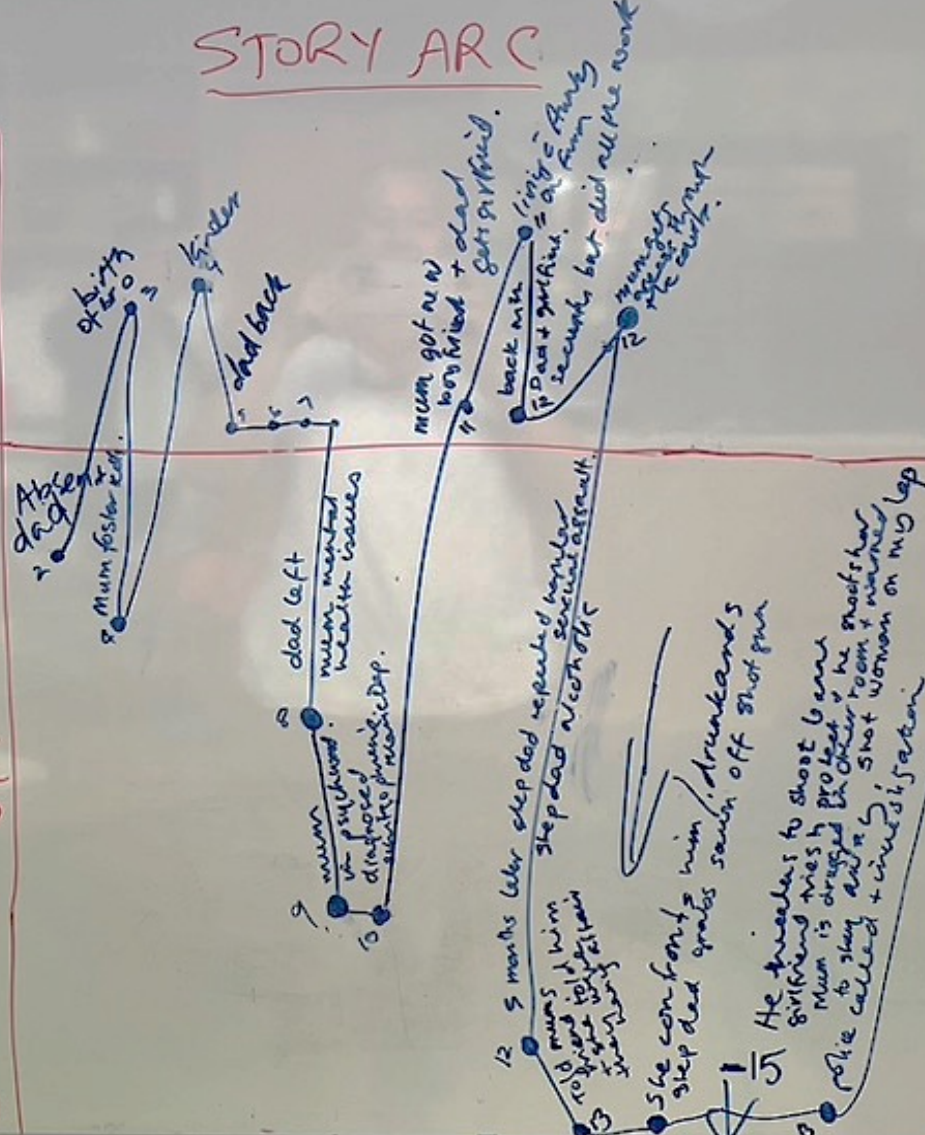
School years
leaving school

Adult Children
Grandchildren

Pulse / 123/
Word at a time
50 up

STORY ARC

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 + 1 2 3 4 5



13 Dad got 5
to do
No count
for me
7 1/2 yrs.

his crimes - 2 attempted
murders, GBH, repeated
rapes of a child.

Creative Development Activities

- drama and theatre games
- personal body mapping
- learning about how stories evolve and are written and how they might be used to represent individual lives;
- letters to children
- ‘blankies’ – using kantha quilts as security blankets to wrap in for comfort when talking about deeply traumatic events.
- a history session about colonial child removal policies;





- Improvised scenes and playback theatre
- studying the wheel model of the Cycle of Abuse;
- exploring statistics about women's lives across the world
- learning about theatre craft and play structure,
- writing a sample story with three acts,
- studying the concept and 12 stages of the Hero's Journey, ordering scenes in the play accordingly;
- making a musical score by creating a chart that represented key life events and ranking them on a scale including negative, neutral and positive ratings. The chart was then 'sung' back to the story owner as a melody.



A close-up photograph of a woman with long brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a young child with light brown hair, who is also looking towards the camera. The child is wearing a white, textured knit sweater. The background is a solid, vibrant magenta color.

The New Story Company presents

FOR A MOTHERS LOVE

A woman's journey to find safety

TRIGGER WARNING - SOME AUDIENCE
MEMBERS MAY FIND CONTENT DISTURBING -
NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

**A new play
about a woman
who has her children
forcibly removed
after being a victim
of domestic violence**

written by Jami Bladel
working closely with story
consultants

Leanne Crowden,
Diane Leary,
Jolene Barratt,
Elizabeth Cowen,
Natasha Neale
Tracey Howard.

VIDEO:
The making of
For a Mother's Love



Developing the script



- All sessions were audio recorded and the early sessions transcribed.
- Sharing a morning tea and lunch made it easier and more affordable for women to attend.
- Shared food created a casual and warm-hearted atmosphere where stories could be told.
- A Facebook group was established with regular postings about group activities. This became a way of keeping in touch between sessions and during the eight-week break.
- Led by the playwright who also spent time in the studio writing, supported by a professional dramaturg.





STORY CONSULTANTS 3

A core group of 9 women worked on the project.

Representing the group here today are:

Leanne Crowden

Diane Leary

Jolene Barratt

Tracey Howard

Gai Anderson



Reading the first
draft for invited
audience



STORY CONSULTANTS 4

A core group of 9 women worked on the project.

Representing the group here today are:

Leanne Crowden

Diane Leary

Jolene Barratt

Tracey Howard

Gai Anderson

Public Reading by Professional Actors



INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION,
conducted
byTeresa Hinton

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PROJECT AIMS

- provide a supported and therapeutic space for mothers and grandmothers to tell their stories;
- involve women in a creative and transformative process which validates and endorses their experiences, tackles the stigma and isolation they face, rebuilds their identity as mothers and assists them to deal with the challenges they face in the child safety system;
- further the goal of mothers and grandmothers to raise community awareness and understanding amongst a wider audience, have their voices heard and advocate for changes in the way in which children and their families are supported in their journey through the child safety system;
- provide a space for the child safety system and policy makers to consider the culture and efficacy of the services they provide, including support for mothers, and to ask how things can change for future generations.





Outcomes

Measured against the aims of the project

The play elicited strong feelings

Table 1: How did the play reading make you feel?

Feelings	Percentage of respondents %
Angry	63
Sad, despairing	80
Amused	29
Hopeful	37
Confused	7
Unsure, other	20

It changed how people think and inspired many to
want to take action



Table 2: Has the play reading changed the way you think about these issues?

Issue	Percentage of audience %
People involved in the project	22
Child Safety System	37
Domestic violence	29
Theatre, art generally	22
Inspired to take action/change own life or work	61
Unsure, don't know	24





Successful Partnership

- The partnership between mothers and grandmothers, NSC, T'gari Lia Child and Family Centre and Anglicare provided a firm platform and therapeutic space for Mothering to operate over a period of 12 months with a core group of women.

Skilled facilitation

- Skilled facilitation created an environment where women were empowered to tell stories about their experiences and to learn about a creative process which can turn these stories into performance and a powerful tool able to promote and advocate for change.





Benefits

- The benefits of participating in Mothering for women were numerous.
- The story owners described how by tackling the stigma, shame and guilt they faced, it had improved their confidence and ability to work with the child safety system,
- They had rebuilt their identity as mothers
- They had reduced the stress and anxiety they experienced

Learning

The learnings had been multiple and wide-ranging and included:”

- communication skills
- how to work as a team,
- being spontaneous and thinking on the spot,
- play and song structure
- the process of writing and re-drafting,
- working with actors
- exploring their own abilities to perform in public in front of an audience.
- Most significantly participating in Mothering was described as ‘fun’





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Hope

The combined effect had given participating story owners:

- a different, more hopeful, perspective on their own futures and what might be possible,
- a desire to participate in any future theatre projects.
- The Centre coordinator witnessed the recovery and healing that Mothering instigated and how visible and significant it had been.

Motivating Emotional Impact

- The Public Reading of the rehearsal script For a Mothers Love – had a significant emotional impact and evoked strong emotions in its audience.
- As well as being appreciated for its artistic quality it had allowed the audience to connect more deeply with the issues presented.
- It created empathy and understanding and
- It inspired action and motivation to work towards change in the culture and delivery of current child safety services.



Sense of Achievement

- The story owners' have a strong sense of achievement in the play script and performance
- The opportunity to speak out and be heard has been healing and inspiring
- Being able to advocate for change and understanding of domestic violence is important to them



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Opened up new dialogue

- Locally, and not just amongst those who attended the play reading, Mothering opened up a dialogue about domestic violence across the community which had not been there before
- Mothering promoted a better understanding about how to provide community support to women who found themselves in domestic violence or forced child removal situations.
- As an innovative approach to advocating for change and for the way in which government services and policy makers think about systems the play reading had a deep impact on those working in the sector.



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Thinking Differently

- This potentially opens the way to thinking differently about systems which seek to protect children from abuse and neglect and initiating change in the culture of services.
- It also suggests that, with some editing of the script, the play can be developed into further productions for both mainstage and professional development purposes.



STORY CONSULTANTS 5

A core group of 9 women worked on the project.

Representing the group here today are:

Leanne Crowden

Diane Leary

Jolene Barratt

Tracey Howard

Gai Anderson



Song: My secret friend

Lyrics by Jami Bladel

Music by Gai Anderson and Ngaire Green

performed by Gai Anderson

for more information or
a copy of the independent
evaluation report

Email

admin@newstorycompany.org

