

# Understanding Trauma

Blue Knot Foundation fact sheet to foster understanding around trauma



- 1** The word 'trauma' describes events and experiences which are so stressful that they are overwhelming.
- 2** The word 'trauma' also describes the impacts of the experience/s. The impacts depend on a number of factors.
- 3** People can experience trauma at any age. Many people experience trauma across different ages.
- 4** Trauma can happen once, or it can be repeated. Experiences of trauma are common and can have many sources.
- 5** Trauma can affect us at the time it occurs as well as later. If we don't receive the right support, trauma can affect us right through our life.
- 6** We all know someone who has experienced trauma. It can be a friend, a family member, a colleague, or a client... or it can be us.

- 7** It can be hard to recognise that a person has experienced trauma and that it is still affecting them.
- 8** Trauma is often experienced as emotional and physical harm. It can cause fear, hopelessness and helplessness.
- 9** Trauma interrupts the connections ('integration') between different aspects of the way we function.
- 10** Trauma can stop our body systems from working together. This can affect our mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 11** While people who experience trauma often have similar reactions, each person and their experience is unique.
- 12** Trauma can affect whole communities. It can also occur between and across generations, e.g. the trauma of our First Nations people.
- 13** For our First Nations people, colonisation and policies such as the forced removal of children shattered important bonds between families and kin and damaged people's connection to land and place.
- 14** Many different groups of people experience high levels of trauma. This includes refugees and asylum seekers, as well as women and children. This is not to deny that many men and boys also experienced trauma.
- 15** Certain life situations and difference can make trauma more common. People with disability of all ages experience and witness trauma more often than people without disability. LGBTQI people also experience high levels of trauma which is often due to discrimination.

