

## Opportunity

To partner with us to accelerate the development of this innovation through licensing or direct investment, contact

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# LEFT WRITE HOOK

**Empowering adult survivors of sexual violence to take back their power through creative writing and boxing.**



## The Innovation

- Left Write Hook is an 8-week recovery empowerment program combining creative writing and boxing for survivors of child sexual abuse.

## Market need

- 1 in 3 women globally have experienced physical or sexual violence before the age of 18. The global mental health market is estimated to reach \$537.97 billion by 2030.

## Innovation status

- Left Write Hook is an evidence-based program that reduces PTSD anxiety, stress and depression, while increasing personal agency and resilience. The program has been delivered in a face to face setting with plans to scale up an online training program.

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## Market need

Estimating the true impact of childhood sexual abuse is notoriously difficult, but there is evidence of an urgent need to address the potentially lifelong effects on survivors. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Personal Safety Survey estimated that about 1.4 million Australian adults (7.7%) experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 (ABS, 2017). While the personal impact is immense, in 2003 the Kids First Foundation estimated that the long-term human and social costs of child abuse and neglect in Australia also accounted for over \$2 billion in government spending per annum (Kids First Foundation, 'The Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in Australia', 2003).

We understand that about half of all survivors of sexual violence will seek help, and that 4 in 10 of those will seek help through professional services, including health, counselling and medical providers. Left Write Hook is complementary to these services and provides a novel mode of support to survivors. Research shows trauma is stored in the body and that dealing with its impact is best done indirectly through creative and body-based practices. By regulating the nervous system, survivors can work on the mental and emotional aspects of their abuse in a better way.

Left Write Hook's creative focus also provides new avenues for survivors to learn about the program. Through an accompanying documentary film, there is a unique opportunity to reach other survivors who may not previously have engaged in support services. There is international evidence for the take-up of this kind of program among survivors. Shape Your Life, operating in Toronto, Canada (a city of about the same population as Melbourne, with similar prevalence of childhood sexual abuse) has supported almost 3200 local participants in their trauma-informed boxing program (Shape Your Life, 2018).

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## Solution

**Left Write Hook** is a community-based empowerment and recovery program that provides trauma-informed boxing and creative writing training to female-identified survivors of sexual and physical violence.

Survivors are typically offered 'talk therapy' approaches but there are no programs that help them to engage with their bodies in safe spaces and connect them with other survivors through creative arts practices. Left Write Hook provides a physical outlet to channel healthy aggression, and it provides new ways for survivors to learn, connect and heal through creativity and sport. The program enables survivors to feel strong and safe, and to reconnect to their experiences and bodies, while helping them move towards post-traumatic growth and healing.



Donna Lyon teaching a boxing class. Image: Ella Sowinska

**Tech ID and project name:** 2022-076 Left Write Hook: a recovery empowerment writing and boxing program for survivors of gendered violence.

**Researchers:** Donna Lyon, Shannon Owen

**Registered Intellectual Property :** none

**Keywords:** child abuse, gendered violence, sexual violence, physical violence, writing, boxing, women, empowerment.

## IP status

The IP in **Left Write Hook** as an intervention program consists of know-how and copyright that was developed outside of the University. In 2020, the program was taken into the University research space and further developed. We now have a well-established program, backed by research findings and strong industry support.

The implementation of the program is currently run in a face-to-face setting, directly with the end users and is cost neutral. An online trainer program would help this program achieve scale. The University of Melbourne brand on this training would bolster its credibility.

Left Write Hook was conceptualised by Donna Lyon and backed by research undertaken at the University. It has been piloted in a face to face setting and a documentary feature film has attracted \$750,000 investment, largely from state and national public agencies Vic Screen and Screen Australia. Plans are underway for an online trainer program, to leverage the profile that the film will bring to the program and achieve impact at scale. Investment is required to build the training program, sales and marketing to acquire trainers, coordination to connect them with end users and quality control in the management of trainer certification. We are seeking a start-up investment of \$1 million with the aim of being financially sustainable by 2025.

Our next step is to set up a social enterprise with a hybrid structure: a national association (company limited by guarantee) with charitable status to support those who cannot afford the program. The NFP Company will create online and F2F programs to train trainers to help run the program.

We now require a business manager to connect with gyms, sporting, and creative organisations to develop a database of venues where the program can be run. These would then be connected with shelters, women's centers and survivor organisations to build demand. We also need a brand and marketing manager and a programming coordinator.

Our aim is to develop a community-based, non-profit, social enterprise that is accessible to all survivors of trauma to create safe, empowering and healing environments to advance the well-being and health of their members and to encourage social inclusion. We are seeking a start-up investment of \$1 million to build the program in the first year so that we are sustainable by 2025. This is the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

**Trainer Quality Control:** Trainers to undergo police checks, working with children checks, reference checks and 20 hours' professional development certification with a one day skills-base

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## Publications

Lyon, Donna, Owen, Shannon. n.d. *Left Write Hook Feature Documentary*. Film. Australia: Bonsai Films.

Lyon, Donna, Claire Gaskin, Gabrielle Everall. 2023. "Left Write Hook: Boxing with the Boys". Springer Publishing

Lyon, Donna, Claire Gaskin, and Gabrielle Everall. 2022. "Writing + Boxing = Left / Write // Hook." *TEXT 26* (Special 67): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.37824>

Lyon, Donna (ed). 2021. *Left / Write // Hook: Survivor Stories from a Creative Arts Boxing And Writing Project*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor, MI: LOVING HEALING PRESS.

Lyon, Donna, Shannon Owen, Margaret S. Osborne, Khandis Blake, and Bruna Andrades. 2020. "Left / Write // Hook: A Mixed Method Study of a Writing and Boxing Workshop for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Trauma". *International Journal of Wellbeing* 10 (5): 64-82. doi:10.5502/ijw.v10i5.1505.

Ingen, Cathy. 2011. Shape Your Life and Embrace Your Aggression: A Boxing Project for Female and Trans Survivors of Violence. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*. (20). 66-77. 10.1123/wspaj.20.1.66.